

Building In Place

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In the Valley of the Holston

From nearly any point on the campus of Emory & Henry College, persons can see the mountains from which the Holston River descends.¹ The Holston's North Fork flows from the ridges and limestone ledges of Bland County, under the southern lee of Burke's Garden and Clinch Mountain. The first tentative streams of the Holston's South Fork surface beneath the rhododendron and hardwoods on high ridges between Washington and Grayson counties, from springs that come from the rocky faces of Whitetop and Mount Rogers, the highest mountains in Virginia, and from the seeps and creeks on the side of Iron Mountain. Emory & Henry is located in the valley of the Holston's Middle Fork, which rises at the base of Walker Mountain, thirty-five miles east of the College.

Beyond this watershed, to the north and west, is the Allegheny Plateau with its confusing maze of streams and narrow hollows where the limestone bedrock gives way to shale and seams of bituminous coal. To the south and east, are the Blue Ridge Mountains with their peaks often obscured in fog banks. Together, the geographies of this Holston watershed and the areas just beyond it constitute the central and southern portions of the Appalachian region.

Engraved on the landscapes of this region are the stories of the natural environment—geologic time, tectonic shifts, seas rising and falling, mountain formations and erosions, complex

ecosystems, and the traces and memories of a once-vast expanse of hardwood forests that stretched beyond the horizon in every direction.

There is the long history of the built environment—the human response to the demands and opportunities of climate, topography, and hydrography. The legacy of the first people in this place, taking shelter in caves and beneath overhanging rocks, and later the tribal peoples who built villages along the river banks. Following the valleys and watercourses, stretching across the ridge tops, were travel routes for tribal warring parties, diplomatic emissaries, and trading missions. This landscape offers up the history of a temperate and fertile place in which the native peoples and the generations of Europeans to come after them realized that nearly anything could be grown here, and in a plenteous abundance. Across this landscape, there are the elegancies and functionalities in design and architecture the Anglo-European farmers produced in response to this bountiful land.

Into this built environment are also carved the legacies and scars of the misuses and devastations and the downright ugliness humans have wrought across this landscape. At points, the forks of the Holston pass denuded hillsides made sterile by emissions from chemical plants and long stretches where the waters have been made lethal from manufacturers that used for decades this river to dispose of heavy metals. Set within this built environment is the story of how small-scale agriculture—a network of family farms and the connections of kin and neighbors forged in shared work—has been so crippled and weakened that we now grow virtually nothing here.

Infusing this place are stories of people's long habitation together. The prolonged tribal conflicts as well as the story of competing bands and groups of native peoples stepping back from warfare over who would control these resources, determining to hold this good and fertile

place in common between them. This landscape carries on it the stories of the movements of Europeans into the region, of the systematic and violent replacement of one way of life with another, the drawing of maps and the giving of land grants, the founding and building of towns. From both the time of tribal cultures and the European settlers who followed them, there are stories of conquest, slavery, war, and the myriad troubles and sufferings to which such evils always give rise. There is the story of American industrialization, beginning in the eighteenth century, and with it the stories of those who have understood this place only as fuel for the American economic engine; the value of this place and the worth of its people only that which the market affixed to the goods and products produced.

This place, with its mountains blue in the distance, also offers stories of ordinary people who have labored for justice, who have stood against oppression, and who routinely make choices for civic leadership and building strong communities. There are here stories of those who make choices to abide in a place that the wider cultures no longer acknowledge as valuable. In their civic work, these people have written on this place their struggles with the difficult issues of changing demographics, economic, financial, and workplace instability, environmental distress and sustainability, and the need to meet food, shelter, and healthcare disparities.

The totality and complexity of this three-part interaction of the natural environment, the built environment, and human culture and history, and the stories etched into this place call into question traditional models of education and long-held assumptions about what it is that constitutes effective citizenship (Johnston 1991, 97). These stories remind us that this place is rife with conflicts and contradictions, raising questions of citizenship and justice for which there is no right or easy answer. In this place, traditional understandings of citizenship fall short and ineffectual before these prevailing realities of conflicts, questions, and the examples of citizens

who have written by their civic choices stories of honesty and courage. This place compels us to challenge and resist the thoughtless and damaging glibness of a civic engagement pedagogy that is satisfied with short-term partnerships naively touted for transforming society, an understanding of citizenship that ignores the ways that American and global economic structures devalue places and people, and a pedagogy that does not build in place.

If, however, this place challenges traditional models of citizenship and education, it also holds out the promise of an educational model that takes seriously the whole way of life of a place, offering new insights into the critical and shared importance of place, education, and citizenship. Building in place, the teaching and practice of a citizenship of place, opens a deeper appreciation of how complex effective citizenship really is, and what might be required of educational institutions to equip a more effective and participatory citizenry.

Building in this Place

Emory & Henry was established on this landscape and became a participant in this place's stories and conflicts in 1836 when civic and religious leaders founded an institution intended to educate leaders for the new American republic. Implicated in the most profound moral and social contradictions of human history, these founders chartered Emory & Henry as an institution of the Methodist Church, calling for teaching and learning that would join faith and civic service. That faith was for whites only and that education was for white men only. The first buildings erected on this campus are representative of the best of indigenous, nineteenth century architecture in this place; they were constructed using slave labor. Those founders located the College adjacent to the Great Wagon Road, by which settlers were streaming into the new territories of the northwest and southwest to build new lives, to claim for themselves the promises of the new democracy, and, paradoxically, to wrest those territorial lands from the

native peoples who had long claimed them. Along this same road were herded long coffles of women, children, and men, chattel for the burgeoning plantation economy of the Deep South. The founders intended that with its access to this principal highway the new college would serve both the immediate area and the wider republic. Citizenship in that republic was severely limited by race, sex, education, and property.

In the social processes that form this place, Emory & Henry has changed in many ways, dismantling the barriers that first shaped the education it offered. The College has served as the region's common ground, offering welcome and opportunity to this place and its people. Emory & Henry has long defined itself in the education it extends to first-generation college students, many of whom have come from this region and without the College's intervention could never have achieved a college education. For all of its history, Emory & Henry has been about the work of educating public school teachers, ministers, doctors and lawyers, other professionals, and civic leaders who have served in the places they have settled.

In other ways and at other times, Emory & Henry has aligned itself with particular forces and interests, cultural values and educational practices that have systematically silenced or ignored the lives and experiences of many people and places. Over the years, there was a general public impression of Emory & Henry as an elitist institution, equipping young people for effective leadership but also preparing them to leave the region. Among many who did not have access to college education, there was the feeling that Emory & Henry had distanced itself from the travails of the people and places around it. There have also been times when the college and its people have stood as brave witnesses for new understandings and new social orders, arguing for and supporting the work for tolerance, change, and justice, both in the college and in the wider world.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s this work of brave and challenging witness gained new focus through the teaching of Dr. Steve Fisher. A scholar-activist, Dr. Fisher called his students to question and contend against the systems of power and privilege at the root of the conflicts and forces that were helping to shape and limit this place. Beginning in the early 1980s and drawing from Paulo Freire's pedagogical models and the work of Noam Chomsky, Francis Moore Lappe, Parker Palmer, and bell hooks, and such Appalachian scholar-activists as Helen Lewis and Dick Couto, Dr. Fisher increasingly called his students to bring to the classroom their own stories and those of their families. Before service learning and civic engagement were fashionable trends in American higher education, Dr. Fisher was finding ways to implement these practices in his classrooms putting his students to work in this place, sharpening the effectiveness of his classrooms.

In 1996, Emory & Henry College applied for and received a major grant from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund to integrate further into its mission the teaching and engagement that had come to define Dr. Fisher's work. The core insights underwriting the duPont proposal were that service is more complex and more important than volunteerism or charity; that service is integral to education; that service, participatory citizenship, policymaking, justice, and democracy are deeply intertwined and profoundly interdisciplinary. The grant made possible the development of an interdisciplinary degree program, Public Policy and Community Service, at first housed within the Political Science Department and a decade later becoming its own academic department. The grant also provided for the establishment of the Appalachian Center for Community Service.

The duPont proposal was the culmination of a long planning process involving faculty, staff, students, and representatives from outside the institution. This committee laid the

foundation for the degree program and the Appalachian Center. Because the work a duPont grant would support ran counter to most traditional approaches to education and such an undertaking would require advocates and practitioners from across the institution, the planning involved persons who were enthusiastic about its possibilities and those who were skeptical, even hostile, to any idea that would challenge the familiar ways of higher education. Emory & Henry is an institution defined in its commitment to traditional, classically focused liberal arts education, and many members of the faculty viewed with doubt and suspicion a process that made clear it would undertake dismantling the divisions that have defined higher education.

Such reservations speak of the frequent rigidity of traditional disciplinary departments, the antipathy toward interdisciplinary scholarship, as well as a view of citizenship as expressed only through voting, political participation, and keeping abreast of current events. There was the criticism that a college such as Emory & Henry could not offer a program in public policy because it lacked the resources and the status of a research university to produce sweeping quantitative research, or the writing of white papers, or the support of policy institutes and think tanks. Many colleagues looked warily at a degree program that had community service as one of its components; a number of faculty members believed that service was certainly not a venue for critical thinking or effective teaching. These critics maintained that the Public Policy and Community Service program, while perhaps valuable for a certain category of students, was too soft, too nontraditional for students who had the skills and abilities to be serious academics. Any effort to link education with service, citizenship, and public policy was questionable.

In thinking through the many components of a proposal for a new and unconventional academic program at the same time charting the focus and mission for a center for community service, the planning committee worked collaboratively, dividing duties between its members,

making routine reports and updates to the campus community, asking for input and counsel from all quarters. All of this was instrumental in bringing credibility and integrity to the idea of a civically engaged curriculum. When it came before the faculty for final vote, the plan had been fully vetted and every voting member of the faculty had had ample opportunity to express all concerns. With grudging approval from a slender minority of faculty members but with enthusiastic support from many more, the plan passed the faculty with unanimous consent. The duPont proposal carried with it the full weight of this support and was clearly consonant with Emory & Henry's mission and legacy.

The proposal also had significant internal integrity; in structure and in process, in theory and in practice, the means and ends were one, and they were consistent with the goals set forth for the program. The degree program's objectives focused on providing students with the interdisciplinary tools and skills for effective engagement in public policy and community building, giving practical meaning to the pedagogical philosophy that puts the teaching of citizens and the formation of character and community at the center of liberal education. The proposal to duPont argued that such an educational practice would provide firm grounding in the interdisciplinary and interrelated concepts of citizenship, service, and democratic processes of policymaking, justice, and the recognition of contributions made by diverse peoples in a democratic society.

Setting the proposal apart from every other program or department at the college and many across higher education at the time was the inclusion of a service-learning component. The proposal called for service not just in support of this education, but also as a full expression of it. Every course in the new major was to integrate into its curriculum a service component designed

to enhance classroom teaching, challenging students with demanding responsibilities and at the same time offering tangible and substantive good to the places in which the students would work.

At the core of the degree program is the precept that public policy is the means by which a nation or a community lives out its values, its priorities, and its ideologies; the means by which it makes regular and routine its self-understanding. Necessarily ingrained in every public policy are the contradictions, conflicts, and inconsistencies of the people of a locality, state, or the nation, particularly when policy formation is reserved as the purview of the few and only large research universities are the practitioners of policy research and advocacy. In such instances, public policy reinstates the values of the market economy, often to the detriment of individuals and places little valued in that economy. The Emory & Henry program premises policymaking and policy advocacy as the responsibilities of all citizens, putting into action, and making enduring the values and insights that have been forged in service and an encompassing citizenship of place.

In its initial years few students came to Emory & Henry expecting to select Public Policy and Community Service as their major area of study; most were unaware there is such a program. Developing strong relationships with admissions personnel and representatives was necessary and ongoing, training them in the strengths of the program and the profile of students who might be most interested in it. We have found a way to speak of the goals and scope of the Public Policy and Community Service program so that persons who are not familiar with it can easily grasp its significance and potential. Moreover, faculty and staff associated with the program have had to think of themselves as recruiters; there could be no division of labor or responsibilities. Now, some fifteen years into the program, even though it has gained considerable national attention, faculty still make telephone calls, write letters, speak with

prospective students and their families, and attend many admissions events, encouraging prospective students not just to select Public Policy and Community Service as their major or minor but to consider taking a class during their first year. In many cases, students who take the introductory course as an elective in their first year will determine to follow this as their major focus area.

The Public Policy and Community Service program enacts a coherent developmental model, the cornerstone of which is relational learning, with all of the courses interlocking and in full conversation with each other through ongoing themes, ideas, concepts, and questions. This model rests upon what Paulo Freire describes as the problem-solving model of education, dismantling barriers between classroom and this place, creating a learning space in which students and teachers are co-learners and co-educators together (Freire, 1970, 57, 66-74). Students move through the curriculum as a cohort, taking most of their courses together. Over their four years, they develop strong relationships between each other and the teaching faculty, learning how to trust their colleagues enough to depend on them, to be collaborators and partners, to be teachers and students of each other, to learn to know and appreciate the others' stories and perspectives. Participants must learn to deal with their differences, to negotiate and work through a range of conflicts. This is neither simple nor easy, and introduces a new and often difficult dynamic into the learning environment that can take months and years to resolve, if resolution is even possible.

Bringing their own lives and stories into the classroom, through their readings and their questions of their colleagues, students empower each other to move from considering the problems they encounter in their service as always matters of individual choices, individual responsibility, and individual blame, to the lived results of societal structures and historical

movements and questions (Mills, 1959, 3-22). In the places in which they serve, from the civic partners who are also their teachers, students learn to challenge a vision of citizenship that focuses on voting and electoral participation as the only means of democratic expression. They come to question the values that suggest being successful in America implies moving away from places American culture devalues. Whether they choose to major in Public Policy and Community Service or take only a course or two, many students come to claim for themselves a vision of participatory democracy in which citizens are individually committed and collectively engaged. Students also learn that this multi-voice, dynamic classroom and civic work are representative of the caliber of work that must be undertaken in public life if ours is to be a participatory democracy fostering the common good.

Because there was much suspicion among educational traditionalists about the academic rigor of a program such as this, the degree program has demanding reading and writing expectations, bringing students to wrestle with material that is more often found in graduate-level courses. Writing in a daily journal, asking students to struggle with questions for which there are no answers, and to strive for connections between their personal stories, the work they are doing in the places in which they are engaged, and the classroom conversations are expectations of all courses in the program. In courses that have a heavy civic engagement component, there must be some modification of traditional classroom expectations, such as fewer formal research papers or seminar presentations, but these modifications are kept to a minimum. Students often complain of the amount of work associated with a degree in Public Policy and Community Service.

As a means of structuring the program's curriculum, the developmental model means that in the program's introductory course, students undertake service that offers opportunities for one-on-one work with persons served. Students learn here the importance of the relational model

for understanding the intersection of education, service, and larger questions of power. Joining their classroom learning with the one-on-one service experiences, they confront the failure of individual and singular approaches to addressing systemic issues. In the Community Organizing course, students collaborate in teams, taking on larger projects that require people to work together. They learn the process of negotiation and consensus building; they come to understand that democracy is not always an individual undertaking and that all effective, sustainable, democratic change in any place derives from people organized. They also learn to discern and to question the ideological and cultural barriers to thinking collectively and organizing for effective citizen action in the American context. Offering other disciplinary perspectives and constituting the major's core curriculum are also courses in other departments: Political Science, Economics, Environmental Studies, Sociology, Psychology, and Geography.

Later in the sequence, students build on and apply classroom learning and service experiences in courses in sustainable development, social and cultural identity, civic methodologies, and politics and public policy. In these courses, students' civic engagement in this place is as teams or as a class in support of major initiatives, the outcomes and goals may extend beyond the semester. In the senior practicum and senior project, the program's capstone experiences, the civic engagements are individually defined, but students meet weekly with the learning collective they have built and strengthened over four years of shared experiences, to grapple with questions of justice, identity, service, citizenship, and public policy as they confront them in their placements. In all the service learning experiences, students are engaged in efforts civic partners have identified and helped design, which is connected to the curriculum of the individual course, and is coordinated through the Appalachian Center in support of long-term regional and local partnerships.

Simultaneous with the launch of the major in Public Policy and Community Service, the planners called for the development of the Appalachian Center for Community Service to build a culture of service on the Emory & Henry campus. The goal was to centralize and coordinate all aspects of service then ongoing at Emory & Henry, to create and sustain new programs and initiatives, and to weave service into the fabric of the whole way of life of this institution. The Appalachian Center would oversee service learning opportunities related to the degree program, but also provide faculty development opportunities and logistical support to integrate service learning across the Emory & Henry curriculum. The center's mission was to bring this institution to serve the needs of the people of this region and to dismantle the barriers between this college and this place. Central to this mission, the center challenges and dismantles traditional divisions of curricular and co-curricular service. Therefore, in both theory and practice, at every level, the degree program and the other initiatives coordinated through the Appalachian Center offer an education that brings students into the reality of relationships and conflict, a thoroughgoing examination of what it means to be an effective citizen of this or any place, at the same time learning that one important means of giving expression to the education that shapes them is service.

There were no maps and blueprints for the centralized, cohesive, relational model of service and civic engagement envisioned for the Appalachian Center and the degree program in Public Policy and Community Service. Few such centers then existed; there were even fewer academic degree programs of this type, and none of them then in rural areas. There was some idea of the direction better relationships between the college and its neighbors might take, but there were only limited examples of institutions that had overcome their elitist reputations to acquire the sense and bearing of a responsible public citizen. Although the collaborative planning

process had produced a visionary structure, the committee could not foresee all that would be required to bring that structure into a living reality with creative force. Despite the endorsement afforded the proposal when it came before the faculty and the support it received from across the campus, there was much debate, and no consensus on what this culture of service should, could, or would entail.

The duPont grant carried limited funds to bring to Emory & Henry a person to coordinate the development of the Appalachian Center for Community Service. A tenth generation Southwest Virginian and a 1983 graduate of Emory & Henry College, in 1996, I was just finishing my Ph.D. in American Studies at Emory University. The position called for in the duPont proposal was for a volunteer service coordinator, to facilitate both curricular and co-curricular service, overseeing service-learning placements, and directing the Bonner Scholars Program.

My dissertation had been a study of place and culture in twentieth century America, seen through the lens of my family's struggle to enter the American middle class in the coalfields of Appalachia. At that time, place or the politics of place were not terms or concepts that occupied much space in common or in academic parlance and certainly did not figure in discussions of service learning and civically engaged pedagogy. The dominant and emerging usage, the newest academic fashion, was community service.

Although the planning committee provided the structure and the goals, both the program in Public Policy and Community Service and the Appalachian Center required a compass point that would ground and structure the work and its long-term direction. In January 1997, less than four months after the launch of the Appalachian Center and the major in Public Policy, I articulated an understanding of what a place-based model of education and service would be at

Emory & Henry College. The Bonner Foundation had asked all schools in its affiliated network to produce a document outlining how best to expand the scope of the Bonner Scholars Program in that school. Writing the Emory & Henry document provided an opportunity to move beyond a narrow focus on Bonner to articulate a unified vision for the Appalachian Center and the degree program in Public Policy, and the principles and philosophies, the values and vision that are its heartbeat. Building on the structure for which the original planning committee had called and the duPont Foundation had endorsed, I put forward what a deep attentiveness to this place might teach about educational practice and the art and craft of citizenship. Just as the mountains rising to the east of the college mark the boundaries of the Holston watershed, the writing of this internal document was a watershed event, defining who we were to be and what we could and would do in this place.

This watershed document called the college to build in *place*—to build and sustain in this place a program that springs from and is part of its fibers and sinews. This document also called for the college to *build in* place: to integrate this place into the way it taught, into the values it espoused, into what it sought to accomplish as an institution for teaching and learning. It called Emory & Henry to come to an awareness of itself as an institutional, public citizen of this place. Much as the tributaries and headwaters of the Holston arise from within this place, to build in place requires that the history, stories, experiences, and social processes imbued across this landscape, beginning with the very foundations of the earth and continuing into tomorrow, shape every aspect of this pedagogy.

As the lodestar of this building, place came to function in two ways. Place is this particular place with its distinctive stories and histories, its contradictions and conflicts. Place is also a general theoretical concept, offering a civic, intellectual, and ethical framework informing

and shaping one's life choices, thinking, and citizenship; a collection of values and perspectives, tools and insights, methodologies and skills students take with them when they graduate. Two responsibilities, two callings, and two understandings of place, simultaneously undertaken, joined in deep and important ways, both equally never finished, both consuming and dynamic, and both with lessons for American higher education.

Informing both of these functions of place and both of these ways of building is the understanding that all persons have the gifts, talents, abilities, passions, and vision to make a difference in the lives of others and in the life of their places, quite apart from any value or worth that accrues to them in the market economy. Some will see this as social capital as Richard Couto defines the term (Couto, 1999, 36-69). Moreover, persons do not have to wait until they graduate from college or have advanced education or enough money to make this difference, persons can enter immediately into this work; indeed, such is the very stuff of citizenship and of service learning. If this is true of people, it is also true of places as socially constituted; if people can have social capital, so too can places. Every place has the potential to be a safe, healthy, and good place for all of its people, regardless of that place's role in the economic exchange, or the value attached to that place in the market economy, or the social conflicts that have roiled it.

Whether students or faculty or civic partners in our places, one of the first things this educational process asks is that its participants begin to make the distinction between service and charity. Although it is now an assumed commonplace among service learning practitioners, a developmental model that is relational and accepting of conflict and that begins from the point where persons are, asks its participants to understand first the connection between service and education. Whether inside the academy or without, service confronts issues of power, questions of justice, and the enduring realities of conflict. Service understands that all places are

constituted in analogous processes and the needs of the people in any place are connected to larger questions, global forces, and issues. Service in a place provides opportunity for us to move beyond the narrow limits of our private world or neighborhood to raise questions of power and privilege and to come to awareness of our own deep complicity in systems of oppression and destruction. Service is a force for building common ground between divided and disparate peoples, offering the lived experiences from which persons build and sustain coalitions, can confront societal and individual conflicts, and organize to achieve systemic solutions to real problems, creating opportunities for citizens to be agents of social change. Service learns from this place and from any place in which it is undertaken. Service is necessarily complex, multi-layered, interdisciplinary, and ongoing, just as is this or any place.

Building in place requires that the College's service partnerships not be with a single agency or organization. Instead, the partnerships necessary for building in place are with a place and its people in a long-term relationship to identify needs and issues, capitalize on assets and resources, defining strategies and solutions from within the place and that are consonant with that place. Partnerships that build in place struggle with systemic forces to address systemic needs and issues, recognizing that to do so involves reaching across the single issues and narrow focus that define any one agency or organization, any one approach, drawing on wide collaborations and an embracing common ground.

Radical Particularity

In discussing the political and intellectual legacy of Raymond Williams, the geographer and cultural critic David Harvey attributes to Williams what Harvey describes as a militant or radical particularity, knowing a place in its fullness, with its contradictions, its conflicts, its questions, what it means to be a citizen in that place (Harvey 1996, 19-45). Building in place,

practicing a pedagogy and a citizenship of place, are practices requiring radical, militant particularity, focused on the interaction of the natural environment, the built environment, and the human culture and history over the millennia. At Emory & Henry, we have built and continue to build in this place, but our work of a radical, militant particularity is defined in partnerships with three specific places, Meadowview, in the Valley of the Holston in Washington County, Virginia, Fries, on the New River in Grayson County, Virginia, and Caretta, in the Big Creek watershed of McDowell County, West Virginia, just across the Virginia-West Virginia border.

In his novel, *Jayber Crow*, Wendell Berry describes the town of Port William. “In the eyes of the powers that be, we Port Williamites live and move and have our being within a black period about the size of the one that ends a sentence. Thousands of leaders...entire administrations, corporate board meetings, university sessions, synods and councils of the church have come and gone without hearing or pronouncing the name of Port William” (Berry, 2000, 139). The same can be said, in fact is said, of Fries, Caretta, and Meadowview. Marsha Timpson, a life-long resident of McDowell, once told me, “America would rather not have to deal with us” (Timpson, 2007). She was speaking of Caretta and McDowell County, but her thoughts have their echoes in Meadowview and Fries. These three places offer ways of seeing much of what has transpired in this landscape and America over the last century and a half and ways of exploring what it means to be an effective citizen in the twenty-first century.

These are places “from which capital has moved on,” taking with it power, prestige, and the attention of American culture (Harvey, 1993, 3, 5, 7). Until the 1960s, Meadowview, in Washington County, was the commercial center of a great agricultural region—producing dairy products, beef, pork, wool, poultry and eggs, apples, wheat and small grains, corn, and burley

tobacco. A shipping center, the town of Meadowview was economically vibrant with stores, restaurants, craft artisans, services. By the turn of the new century, all of that was gone and the Meadowview Town Square was lined with abandoned and collapsing buildings. In 2010, 67 percent of households qualified as low or moderate income, and over 50 percent of the children in the Meadowview Elementary School qualified for free and reduced price lunches.

In 1948, McDowell County, West Virginia, had a population of over 100,000 people. At the mid-point of the twentieth century, McDowell was one of the wealthiest counties in the United States, its wealth built on its coal resources. In the 1930s, boosters described McDowell as the billion-dollar coalfield. By 2010, its population was less than 20,000 people. When measured by median household income, in 2010 McDowell ranked as the eighth poorest county in the United States; 46 percent of its children lived below the poverty line. Caretta is located in the southern-most portion of the county, in the area most economically distressed.

Fries, on the New River, came into being as a cotton mill town. From 1903 through 1988, the Washington Mills was the largest employer in Fries, providing jobs for generations of families. The mill closed in 1988, and by 2010, 542 people were living in Fries. With an aging populace, Fries counted 20 percent of its total population living below the poverty line, but 30 percent of its children.

Both Fries and Caretta were company towns, towns in which the industrialists that built them controlled them lock, stock, and barrel until they were sold to another company. When profits declined, when the American economy yet again restructured itself, capital moved on, leaving behind the place and its people. Meadowview was not a company town, but the same

economic shifts and forces that made Fries and Caretta redundant and lessened their importance and value, accomplished the same results here.

The work of building in place teaches us that these three places, and any place, need people who are prepared to see and to understand the world from the perspective of a place, to have a deep attentiveness to all the realities of a place. I have been involved in work in McDowell County, West Virginia for almost twenty years. Sometimes at night, I can close my eyes and see serrated bluffs and cliffs along the ridge tops. Sometimes, when I close my eyes, I can see coal slurry impoundments, with millions of tons of rock and dirt, and billions of gallons of tarry and smoking sludge, collecting behind earthen dams, looming over towns and neighborhoods, the wastes of our efforts to satisfy an insatiable national and global thirst for cheap fuel. Sometimes, I see the former company towns, and hear in the dialects that are so familiar to me, the stories of those places. Some of those towns were washed away in the floods of July 2001 and May 2002, and the towns and places I can see are gone forever, the dialects are of people that can no longer live in McDowell. This is part of what it means to build in place and what it means to be attentive to the particularity of this place. This is what makes place-based work so elusive and never fixed, always evolving and deepening, always maturing, because places are so. Nothing in most graduate programs and even less in American academic culture teaches this attentiveness. I have learned it from the places in which I live and work. This attentiveness is a value and a way of being that only our places can teach us over a very long time. Our responsibility as citizens is to learn this attentiveness to the particularity of our places. Our responsibility as teachers is to create opportunities for students to see and understand the values and acquire the skills that lead to such attentiveness, to such particularity, to this building in place.

These places have challenged me to move beyond the cliché of social justice to create spaces in classrooms and service experiences for students to grapple with this concept with a radical, militant particularity, in ways that it can be applied. In this, we have together come to appreciate Paul Theobald's concept of *intradependence*, which he defines as "exist[ing] by virtue of the necessary relations *within a place*" (Theobald, 1997, 7-31, emphasis original). Theobald's intradependence echoes the same ideas that Wendell Berry suggests, "There are moments when the heart is generous and then it knows that for better or worse our lives are woven together here, one with one another and with the place and all the living things" (Berry, 2000, 210). These places are teaching us that weaving together, intradependence, justice, is built and enacted within lived relationships with the natural environment, with other individuals, with groups, but also in relationships with the history and culture of a place, as well as with the distant future of a place. Living by virtue of the necessary relations within a place is what makes justice social; all that constitutes a place serves as the standard and measure of justice. Ideas, actions, policies, habits, assumptions, politics, processes, decisions, and approaches that together or individually expand, encourage, enrich, enliven the weaving together of relationships necessary within a place are just. Those ideas, actions, policies, habits, assumptions, politics, processes, decisions, and approaches that together or individually discourage, damage, or destroy the relationships necessary within a place, are not just.

This place, in connection with every place, becomes the standard of justice, raising questions, offering ideas, troubling all easy assumptions. That a person in suburban Washington, DC can have access to affordable electricity for all manner of technological applications seems a good thing, perhaps outside the arena of social justice. That the means of production of that affordable electricity are mountaintop removal in McDowell County, West Virginia, and that

there are both profound environmental and social issues involved in this process make it an issue of social justice in Northern Virginia and in McDowell County and throughout Appalachia and America.

These places teach me, in ways subtle and opaque, and in ways direct and pellucid, that building in place is the way of deep questions. People in Fries, in Caretta, in Meadowview will say we do not need your answers, we need citizens who can struggle with tough questions, we need citizens and partners with the capacities to put down roots, to understand, and take the long, long view. Do not send us answers, they say, send us people, young people, who have the capacity to hear our stories, endure the conflicts, keep silent when silence is called for, and understand the questions. These places teach that the academy's power and assumptions lead its people to think and to live as if they will change the place; serve it, perhaps, but be the final and authoritative answer to the issues faced in that place. The academy often appears on the scene with all the answers, never having heard the questions. The painful truth is that there is little difference between that approach and the power that mill owners and mine owners exerted in Fries or in Caretta; they grow from the same consciousness.

These places teach that building in place means that our relationships in a place must be reciprocal. My Meadowview neighbor plows my garden. When his wife's brother died, we took a pound cake by the house. What service-learning professionals may call reciprocity others usually call neighborliness. This neighborliness means that in the processes by which we address the central issues of our places, we of the academy must be changed and our power must be challenged in the lived relationships in a place. My friends in Caretta, Meadowview, and Fries tell me that one of the means that educators work to maintain their power and to deny a mutual

neighborliness is the use of jargon. I have seen this. Academics are masters of jargon—CBR, action research, place-based work, service learning, community service learning, academic service learning, participatory evaluation. Our places teach us that such language, such jargon is both pretentious and dishonest. We must find a language that speaks less of the academy's power and more of the place. If what we want to say, if what we want to undertake is important enough to be heard, to be joined, it is important enough to be put in such language that the people of a place can know our meanings. The particularities of these places teach that building in place is a question of accessibility and relationship, of fairness and justice—of neighborliness.

In contemporary public life, politics is too often a debate over the one right answer, the narrow ground that an individual or a group must claim and defend against all others if victory is to be declared. Politics has become a series of campaigns to own the narrow space of the one right answer, vanquishing the claims or questions of all others. Meadowview, Caretta, and Fries teach us that the defining conflicts of a place are about questions and issues for which there is no single right answer. An education and a citizenship built in place, and defined in radical particularity, struggles with the difference between the right answers and the honest responses. The academy is about the right answer—give the right answer, you will pass the quiz; give the right answer, you will get tenure; give the right answer, you will fix the problem and then can move on, and we teach our students so. Sometimes, we must give the right answer, as when authorities hold grant funds until we firmly outline in prescribed language and terms what our vision is for our place. More often, however, what are most needed in a place are the honest response and the ability to discern the differences between the honest response and the right answer. The academy and its members must develop the courage to create learning spaces, whether involving service learning or not, in which silence is allowed and the honest response,

often stumblingly articulated, perhaps even inchoate, perhaps wrong or unconventional in a traditional classroom, is accepted and honored.

This interweaving, this intradependence, this understanding of justice as social, this commitment to difficult questions and honest struggles give rise to civic choices that often run counter to mainstream American culture that sees as flip sides of the same coin upward professional and economic mobility and geographic mobility. These places are teaching us to challenge the values and structures that have encouraged the academy to produce a wandering, nomadic professoriate and administrative class that often devalue or dismiss a citizenship of place or the processes of building in place. The academy has taught us to value more highly appointments in elite colleges and universities, located far away, both geographically and emotionally from places like Fries or Caretta or Meadowview—where schools are better, where there are more cultural opportunities, where good coffee and good music go hand in hand. Building in this place has required us to leave the vacuum tube of the Interstate that runs between the fashionable places and their universities and colleges and make the ethical choices to dwell and abide and practice our citizenship in places with little significance in the market economy.

This work of building in place and the success of the proposal for the major are due in large measure to the continuity of key faculty and staff. Dr. Fisher had lived and worked across this landscape for over twenty years when the college formed the planning committee that built the foundation of this place-based education. I have now been at the college for fifteen years, and my roots are generations deep in this region. Both Dr. Fisher and I have made decisions to stay, to abide here, when other positions beckoned. Although Dr. Fisher retired in 2006 after 35 years of teaching, he remains here, this was the place that defined his lifework. The success of

programs, the growth of a culture of service on this campus, have significantly benefited from faculty and staff who abide, who are committed to the long, hard journey of building in this place.

This continuity has also meant that after fifteen years of building in place, we have come to the end of the easy answers. If the Emory & Henry program were one from which key faculty and administrators were frequently moving to other institutions, if other persons were frequently arriving with new packages of ideas, theories, and practices, the degree program and the center would be continually reshaped and reinvented, shining with the newest fashions in civic engagement, the most up-to-date jargon. In this process, the work of building in place would lose the continuity and stability necessary for knowing and understanding the stories and conflicts of this place and people; with every new hire, the stories must be relearned, the relationships rebuilt, the particularity re-discerned. Our continuity has made possible many successes, more than would be possible otherwise, but the Emory & Henry degree program and Appalachian Center must now confront questions many other programs with a more transitory or nationally-focused leadership have not yet confronted. The questions we face in these places are too difficult, the global structures and their local expressions too impervious to challenge, and the progress we have made seems too meager for us to say honestly that we are changing the world or that we have transformed forever concepts of citizenship or the academy's self-understanding.

Our continuity has also produced an awareness that the language we use to speak of place and citizenship, the values we say are at the core of this building in place, are losing their relevancy to new student generations at Emory & Henry and even to those faculty members who are coming to us just out of graduate school. For too long we have contented ourselves to building in place with students who self-select to be engaged in this education; students who are

like us in thinking and vision and students whom we like. As does every campus, Emory & Henry has students who profess an ideology of civic engagement and are adept at providing the expected answers, but who choose not to assume the responsibilities of citizenship. What then is the responsibility of service learning and civic engagement? If our responsibility is the education and equipping of an effective and participatory citizenry, what then is our responsibility to these students who are also citizens with all the rights and privileges and obligations of citizenship? To say that sometimes education takes root only years later, or that we cannot take responsibility for those who refuse responsibility for themselves, seems somehow wrong or lazy or woefully complacent when set in the particularity of the places with which we are joined in partnership and the issues and questions prevailing in those places.

If our abiding here, if building in these places, has brought us to confront the end of the easy answers, a point at which our relevancy might be slipping, these places, this building in place, has also brought us to a new understanding of what citizenship means and what is required to equip persons for it. Global citizenship, citizenship in the American republic of the twenty-first century, must also be a citizenship of place—whether that place is Caretta, or Meadowview, or Fries, or the Upper West Side of Manhattan, or the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, or the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans. This is a citizenship of questions and honesty, of abiding, of service, of intradependence. American higher education must find ways to make relevant this concept and to equip our students for this citizenship. In this, again, the places in which we live and teach, the places in which we build, places imbued with stories and conflicts, are our teachers, requiring of us careful, honest listening, born of and returning to a radical particularity.

¹ Portions of this essay were delivered as keynote addresses I have delivered, *Building In Place*, at the North Carolina Campus Compact Civic Engagement Administrator Conference, May 26, 2010, at Barton College, Wilson, North Carolina, and *Places Your G.P.S. Can't Take You*, at the Gulf-South Summit, March 2-4, 2011, at Roanoke, Virginia.

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