

Catalysing collective action through action-research on the margins of the just transition in the former mining region of León, Spain

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Bottom-up collective action is increasingly suggested as an alternative to both top-down government-led interventions and market-based approaches to transformative change. Catalysing and sustaining collective action, however, is a challenging task, especially in cases, where such actions are: 1) not based on pre-existing communities as is often the case with individuals and groups on the margins of existing socio-economic structures, political processes, and cultural constructs and norms, and/or 2) take place in contexts with a limited culture of participatory planning, self-organization and collective action, as is often the case in centralised political systems and/or enterprise-based industrial monocultures. In this study we explore the challenges and opportunities for mobilizing collective action in the face of both of those constraints. We do so through a reflection on a process of action-research aimed to enable three types of groups on the margins of the transition to a post-carbon future in the former mining region of León, Spain, namely unemployed individuals, migrants and children. In doing so, we draw on recent research on commoning as a social practice but problematize the often idealised and non-political approach to presenting and promoting such practices as a way of informing both future practice and research. Specifically, we bring in notions of conflict and conflict resolution in community practice and highlight their importance as a means of transformative learning and change. The study is based on research conducted in the framework of the EU-funded BOLSTER project, which aims to inform the design of more inclusive governance frameworks in the process of decarbonization at the regional and EU scale.