

Energy Democracy Project

Collaborative Strategy Session: Summary Report

February 8, 2016

The Energy Democracy Project convening on February 8, 2016 had the goal of building a stronger community of energy democracy leaders by discussing a shared political framework and principles, identifying a common set of long-term goals, strengthening relationships, and furthering collective action.

The convening drew 25 activists from 20 different organizations, individuals who were interested in collaborating to advance energy democracy as a key strategic perspective within the climate and new economy movements.

Those who attended saw energy democracy as the promotion of a decentralized energy model, which brings energy resources under public or community ownership and/or control—a key aspect of the struggle for climate justice and an essential step toward building a more just, equitable, sustainable, and resilient economy. Framed in this way, the goal of energy democracy is to replace our current corporate fossil-fuel economy with one that puts racial, social, and economic justice at the center of the transition to a 100% renewable energy future.

Participants in the Collaborative Strategy Session represented a diverse set of experiences and expertise regarding decentralized renewable energy advocacy in the U.S. (see the attached participant list)—from those who do conceptual and strategy work, to those who develop policy and program, to those who build the movement through grassroots organizing, to those who work to develop, finance, and build the kind of energy projects we envision in an Energy Democracy program.

The Strategy Session

The collaborative strategy session consisted of a number of parts. Because this was a first gathering of these participants, they first introduced themselves, the kind of energy democracy work that they and their organizations do, and key questions they had about energy democracy. This was followed by a discussion of some of the key perspectives represented by energy democracy (as described above), and an exercise to capture the landscape of networks (both those represented at the convening and those not) in the energy democracy space—that is, at the intersection of the renewable energy transition and racial/economic justice.

Participants then broke into small groups to discuss proposed long-term goals of the Energy Democracy Project collaboration: 1) to promote an energy democracy/just transition framework in which racial, social, and economic justice and community empowerment are at the center of a renewable energy transition, 2) to increase collaboration among energy democracy organizations/networks through the development of common understandings, programs, actions, and shared resources, and 3) to provide models of community-based equitable, energy development that could move to scale.

While these goals were generally affirmed, participants discussed a number of refinements, clarifications, and unresolved issues. The discussions drew out the diversity of opinions and

perspectives that could be expected of such a diverse set of participants. A number of significant challenges were raised that could not be fully addressed in a one-day gathering, but are on the agenda for further exploration.

Key Issues/Questions/Challenges for the Energy Democracy Project

What follows are few of the key issues raised at the strategy session that impact the development of a closer collaboration among energy democracy advocates:

- How to develop a simple narrative around energy democracy that is meaningful to struggles in the community over more immediate needs, such as anti-displacement, police brutality, healthy food, and poisoning.
- How to bring together those advocates who possess certain kinds of technical, project development, and energy policy expertise with social justice base-building forces rooted in their communities, which have experienced the impact of white privilege on many levels. Progress toward a community-based energy model requires a collaboration across a diverse set of players that can build capacity by leveraging the strengths of others.
- How to engage in a rapidly evolving regulatory environment on the state and national levels, amidst a highly contested policy terrain with powerful players: the establishment corporate energy and utility interests and an increasingly powerful renewable energy industry, neither of which support a transformative energy model. How can energy democracy proponents consolidate quickly enough to challenge the dominant narratives and establishment energy models?
- How to build models of renewable resource project development that are reproducible and can achieve the scale needed to demonstrate a real alternative.
- How to create and structure a collaboration among energy democracy forces at the intersection of an already-existing complex set of networks and organizations in renewable energy, climate/environmental justice, racial (social/economic) justice, new economy, resilient community, and youth movements?

Next Steps

The February 8 Strategy Session identified a number of areas of work that encompassed many of the above issues and would be the basis of the next phase of the Energy Democracy Project:

- Refining the Energy Democracy Framework
- Mapping the landscape of energy democracy networks and relationships
- Furthering collaboration and exchange (including through the New Economy Coalition's CommonBound 2016 Conference)
- Proposing a more formalized structure of collaboration and engagement

We hope to engage Strategy Session participants and other Energy Democracy Project collaborators in pursuing these areas of work in the lead-up to the CommonBound Conference this summer, where we hope to forge a closer collaboration based on a shared program and collective action.

Energy Democracy Project

Collaborative Strategy Session: Participant List

February 8, 2016

First Name	Last Name	Organizational Affiliation(s)
Al	Weinrub	Local Clean Energy Alliance
Anthony	Giancatarino	Center for Social Inclusion
Anya	Schoolman	Community Power Network
Cecilia	Martinez	Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy
Clarke	Gocker	PUSH Buffalo
Colette	Pichon Battle	Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
Colin	Miller	Local Clean Energy Alliance
Denise	Fairchild	Emerald Cities Collaborative
Evan	Weber	U.S. Climate Plan
Felipe	Floresca	Emerald Cities Collaborative
Iliana	Salazar-Dodge	Columbia Divest for Climate Justice / Divestment Student Network
Isaac	Baker	Co-op Power
Jacqueline	Patterson	NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program
Jarrid	Green	Center for Social Inclusion
Jessica	Azulay	Alliance for a Green Economy / NY Energy Democracy Alliance
Jessica	Tovar	Local Clean Energy Alliance
Mark	Magana	GreenLatinos
Mike	Sandmel	New Economy Coalition
Noel	Ortega	The Democracy Collaborative
Rosa	Gonzalez	Facilitating Power
Sachie	Hayakawa	New Economy Coalition/Divestment Student Network
Sarah	Robinson	Emerald Cities Collaborative
Sean	Sweeney	Trade Unions for Energy Democracy
Shiva	Patel	Energy Solidarity Cooperative
Timothy	DenHerder-Thomas	Cooperative Energy Futures