

# Voices of women in Silesia

## (Case study from Southern Poland)

### Environment and decarbonization

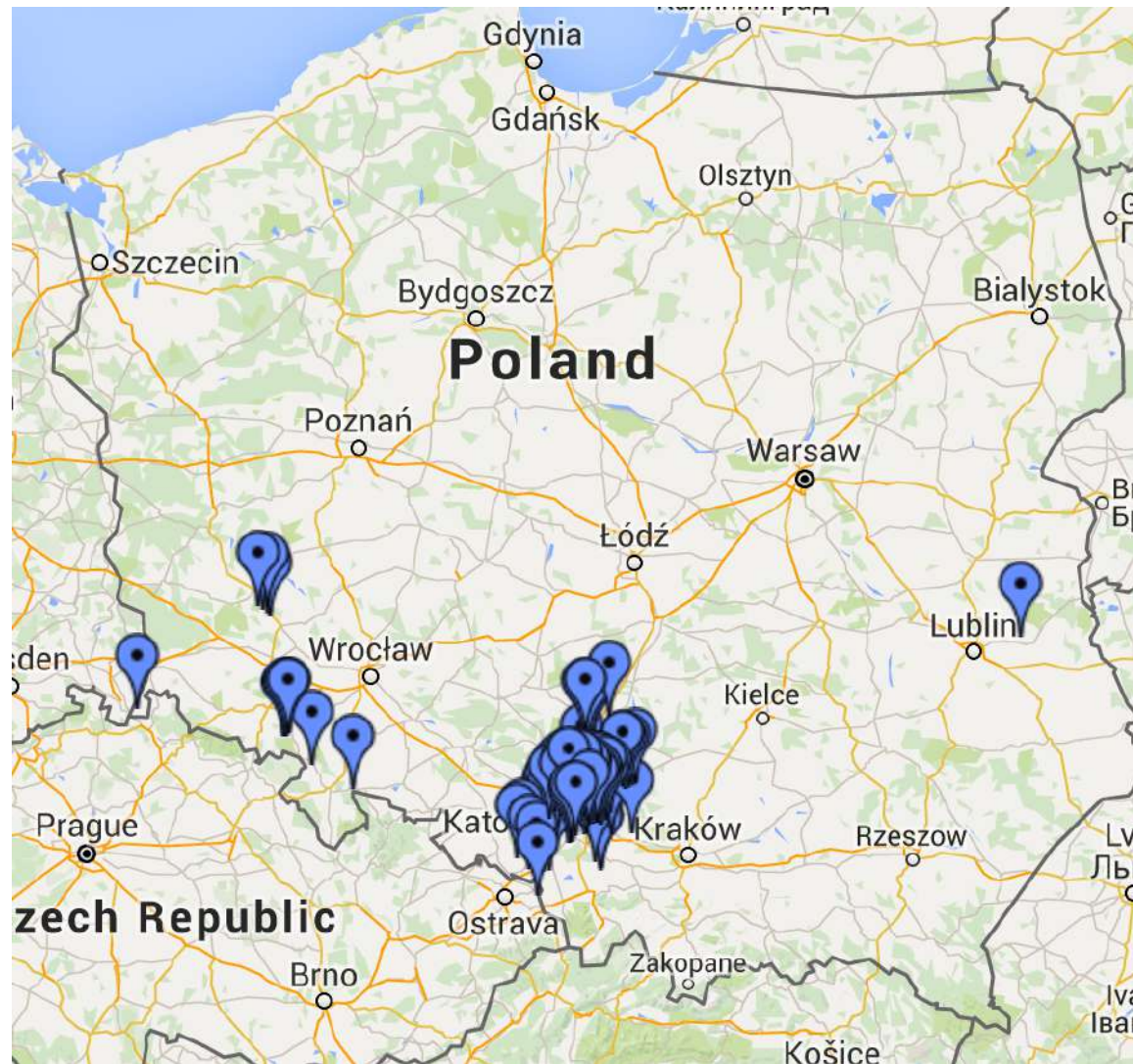
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<https://coaltransitions.org/findings/>

**28<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

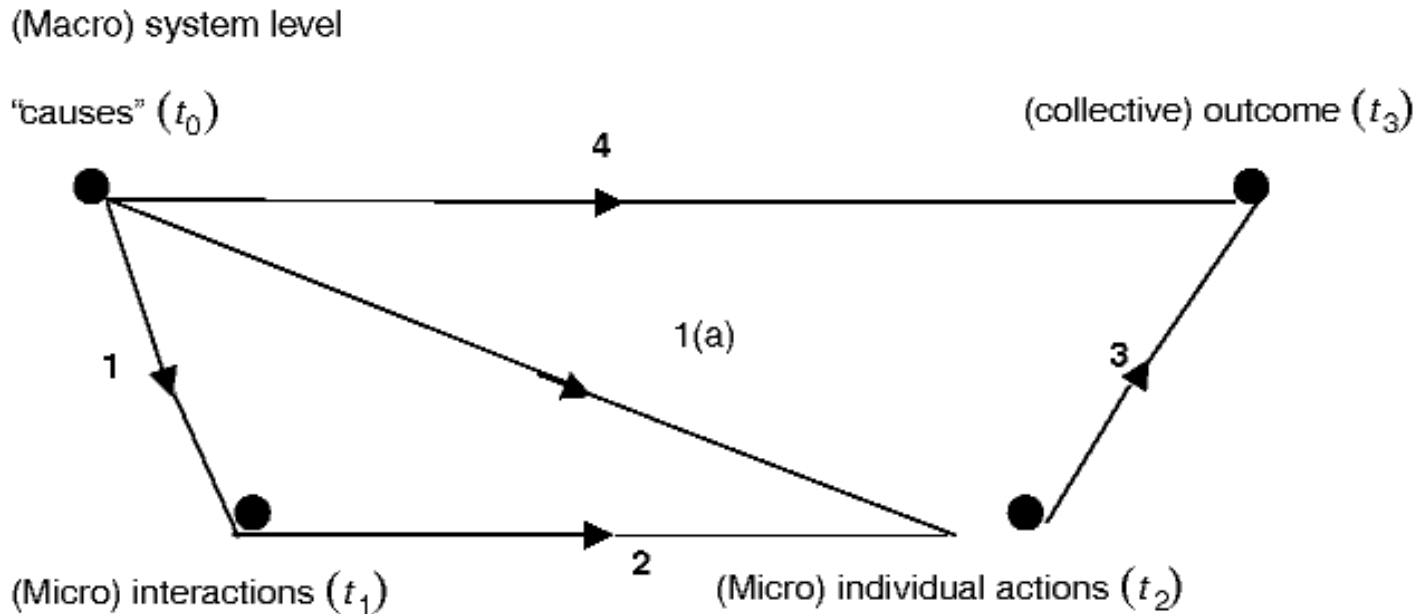
## Poland – Upper Silesia Region, postcommunist CEE perspective

- Polish mining has been running at a heavy loss – just last year it experienced net losses of over PLN 2 bn (approx. 500 mn EUR)
- In 2016, the prime minister stated that **coal would remain a pillar of Poland's energy mix**, and that changes in the mining industry, though necessary, would be 'rational'; since then there were constant negotiations (...)
- New Polish energy strategy: use of **coal for electricity production is expected to drop to 37%** in 2030 (at the current level of 70%), while **in 2040 – up to 11% or 28%**.  
In individual heating, we are to give up coal by 2030, and outside cities – by 2040, introduction of nuclear energy in 2033 (PEP2040)



# Theoretical paradigm

FIGURE 1. – *An adapted Coleman diagram*



*Note:* t= a time signature

## Protest of miners' wives



# Theoretical paradigms (2)

- **Eco-feminist scholarship:** deep ecology ((Mathews 1994), environmental concern (Mellor 1997; MacGregor 2017), petro-masculinity (Daggett 2018 )
- **Pro-environmental behaviour and activism:** gender differences in environmental activism among women are substantially lower than among men (Mohai 1992; Goldsmith et al. 2013).
- **Energy Justice and Just Transitions** (Sovacool and Dworkin 2015, Jenkins et al. 2018, Jenkins et al. 2020, Feenstra and Ozerol 2021)



# OIL, GAS, COAL – petro masculinity

*“Yes, I feel that it’s [coal] an element of my culture” (P20).*



# To set up the scene

- Coal is traditionally treated as a „black gold”, coal criticism used to be a **taboo**
- Energy is a topic for men (**males are experts**)
- **Women voices are rarely heard**
- Two social WORLDS: miners wives are more „traditional” and more concerned about the consequences of energy changes in Poland than other women (not connected to the coal sector, which is the minority); ALL are concerned, ALL ARE AFFECTED
- There is little connection between these two worlds/groups, the perception of **inevitable change** is noticeable in both groups...
- More and more women try to be active in different fields... (not only household), focus on self-development or family&health,
- They are worrying of environmental impacts (air pollution), **plan actions**
- New ways to accommodate are revealing...

# Decarbonization:

## 3 types of narratives

General Narratives (Gubrium and Holstein 2007) in Silesia :

*„...We cannot do anything about it... („Warsaw decides“/means: they/government)”*

1. No public agency but private life:

*„It is not my problem (not real issue now), I'm focused on my life... no idea what to do with the general problem, but I recycle, eat organic, buy locally, etc.”*

2. Pragmatical perspective (Younger generation):

*„I know that changes are going to be real but for now we just need to use the situation (it is already worse than it used to be), can't effort to do more than the others in eco-life.”*

3. Consent to change ? (Older generation):

*„The changes had already been done, I know it will be worse so we need to adjust, hopefully we do not have small kids and we are on our own, ecology means recycling...”*



# 4 types of narratives

## 1. Middle class women (no work, at trainings)

*I try to live ecologically, so to speak. I'm trying as it is, yes, I'm ecologically correct. I mean, I realize that there is, there will be problems with electricity, with water, that we don't know what will happen next and so on. I know what's happened in the last seventy years, how terribly we have degraded this environment, I am aware of it (P3).*

## 2. Middle class women (professionals, self-employed):

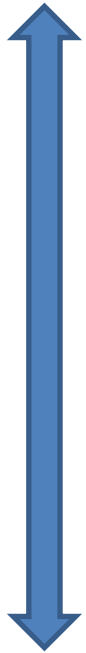
*It is not my problem (not real issue now), I m focused on my life... no idea what to do with the general problem, but I recycle, eat organic, buy locally, etc.*

## 3. Working class/miners wives (Younger generation):

*I know that changes are going to be real but for now we just need to use the situation (it is already worse that it used to be), cant effort to do more than the others in eco-life.*

## 4. Working class/miners wives (Older generation):

*I do not believe that there will be any change in the burning of coal and coal mining, people are going to burn coal well in the future, it's a kind of local patriotism ... (P40)*



# Changes in perception

Early modern "traditional" ecology	Post-modern ecology
the discourse of the first modernity (industrial society)	the "second modernization" discourse (postmodern society)
striving for rationalization and implementation of particular needs (maintaining the status quo)	striving for a holistic understanding of the world / surroundings
narration of the USE of nature, USING resources, practical awareness (unreflective)	narration of coexistence with nature, more or less reflexive "ecological life"
ACT/work for the family, a narrow community group	creating a new community, e.g. around a "local farmer"
reproduction of family patterns (ie. healthy, home-cooked meals)	focusing on oneself in a broader context (ie. philosophy of deep ecology), conscious return to the roots
activities for the home, garden, children (ie. making a compote instead of buying juice)	actions for the "world", space around (ie. fight against logging)
saving, managing the household so that "do not lose", do not waste, recycle, High consumption	buying more expensive healthy food, riding a bike, searching for eco-products Try for limiting consumption

# Newborn women activism

The image shows a screenshot of a video player displaying a Zoom meeting. The video player has an orange background. At the top left, there is a circular profile picture placeholder and a black box containing the text "Part 1 Activists PASSION". Below this, another black box contains the text "Dział Badań Naukowych". The meeting area shows three video thumbnails: two at the top and one at the bottom center. The top-left thumbnail shows a woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue patterned top, smiling. The top-right thumbnail shows a woman with dark hair wearing a headset and a dark patterned top. The bottom-center thumbnail shows a woman with a headscarf and a dark top. The video player interface includes a play button on the left, a progress bar in the middle, and a "vimeo" logo on the right. There are also various control icons like a heart, a clock, and a speech bubble on the right side of the video area.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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