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# Interpretations: Towards the Future

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## The Anthropologies of the Future. Anticipating the Energy Transition

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### The Maturing Present

We live in the era of a gestating (as if it were yet to mature) present that is continuously unfolding, leading to the chronotope of the “eternal now.” “The extended present [...] tries to diminish the uncertainty of the future by recalling cyclicity and seeking to combine it with linearity.”<sup>1</sup> As the future penetrates the present, it becomes diffuse and, in a certain sense, conceptually vanishes. What really invests life with meaning are the present, simultaneity and synchronicity;<sup>2</sup> this does not, however, imply that one should refrain from reflecting on what is already looming on the horizon and what is still difficult to envisage. The maturing present, which Kim Fortun refers to as “late industrialism,” is “a historical period characterized by aging industrial infrastructure, landscapes dotted with

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1 Helga Nowotny, *Time: The Modern and Postmodern Experience* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 58.

2 Elżbieta Tarkowska, *Kategoria wykluczenia społecznego a polskie realia* [The category of social exclusion and Polish realities], in *Skazani na wykluczenie*, ed. Małgorzata Orłowska (Warszawa: Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. Marii Grzegorzewskiej, 2005), 51.

toxic-waste ponds, rising incidence of cancer and chronic disease, climate instability, exhausted paradigms and disciplines, and the remarkable imbrication of commercial interests in knowledge production, legal decisions, and politics at all scales.”<sup>3</sup> Since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, fossil fuels have been the driving force behind the industrialized world and its economic growth. The contemporary pursuit of economic growth, industrialization and the maximal exploitation of high-energy raw materials is one of the clearest symptoms of a present in which human efforts to extract natural resources are occurring at the expense of environmental, climate and socio-cultural harm on a historically unprecedented scale. The multi-dimensional crises of our times require “an anthropology [...] that takes landscapes as its starting point and that attunes itself to the structural synchronicities between ecology, capital, and the human and more-than-human histories through which uneven landscapes are made and unmade.”<sup>4</sup> By activating an anthropological perspective in the process of analyzing a phenomenon within which matter, economics and the environment are intertwined, one can identify the multiple hazards and perils inherent in new technologies and (post)industrial practices.<sup>5</sup> All of these function within specific temporalities that, along with the dominance of the logic of neoliberalism and late capitalism, constitute sequences correlated with work and profit<sup>6</sup> that serve a regime based on the development and accumulation of capital that shapes the normative fabric of everyday life.

### Thinking about What is to Come Has a Future

Even though anthropology was perceived for many decades “as a ‘time machine’ taking people back through time by the study of the Other,”<sup>7</sup> since the mid twentieth century it has become a discipline relatively open to reflecting on the future. In 1971, Margaret Mead published her article titled “A Note on

3 Kim Fortun, “Ethnography in Late Industrialism,” in *Writing Culture. Life of Anthropology*, ed. Orin Starn (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 158.

4 Anna Tsing, Andrew Mathews and Nils Bubandt, “Patchy Anthropocene: Landscape Structure, Multispecies History, and The Retooling of Anthropology,” *Current Anthropology* 60 (2019): 186.

5 Kim Fortun, “Anthropology in Farm Safety,” *Journal of Agriculture* 22 (1) (2017): 1–18, accessed June 2, 2024, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2016.1254697>.

6 Jeff Sugarman and Erin Thrift, “Neoliberalism and the Psychology of Time,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 60 (6) (2017): 807–828.

7 Samuel G. Collins, *All Tomorrow's Cultures: Anthropological Engagements with The Future* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2021).

Contributions of Anthropology to the Science of the Future” (1971; 1978),<sup>8</sup> which envisioned a discipline interested in the future of societies and cultures, which was somewhat of a *novum* at the time, because in twentieth-century anthropology, the topic of temporality was usually approached as one of the more important research categories when attempts were being made to create typologies of the life rhythms of the communities among which ethnographic research was being conducted. A significant contribution to that research trend was made by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his reflections on “hot cultures,” which retain an awareness of the existence of a social hierarchy and disparate resources and forms of possession, and “cold cultures,” which seek to preserve their equilibrium and continuity by closing themselves off to the influence of external knowledge sources.<sup>9</sup> Lévi-Strauss compared the former to a clock-like mechanism functioning in an unflinching, repetitive manner, while the latter reminded him of steam engines with their dynamism, high temperature and potential for change. Field research undertaken by Edward Hall yielded the concepts of polychronic and monochronic time,<sup>10</sup> in which past and future shape the temporal dimension of the present. In monochronic time cultures, the anthropologist perceived events occurring in a linear fashion that also structures planning and thinking about the future. He drew a contrast between that conception of time and polychronic temporality, in which social practices and events unfold in synchrony, causing time to fragment and condense in such a way that what has occurred in the past and what is yet to occur comes to influence the present.<sup>11</sup> Time became a monographic object of theoretical reflections in Alfred Gell’s book *The Anthropology of Time. Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images* (1992), while the phenomenon of temporality was taken up by Johannes Fabian, who argued that anthropologists systematically place those about whom they are writing in the past – in a different time dimension to their crafted representation, which may be characterized in allochthonous anthropological discourse as the “denial of the present” effect.<sup>12</sup>

8 Margaret Mead, “The Contribution of Anthropology to The Science of The Future,” in *Cultures of The Future*, ed. Magoroh Maruyama and Arthur M. Harkins (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978), 3–6.

9 Claude Lévi Strauss, *Zegary i maszyny parowe* [Clocks and steam engines], in *Rozmowy z Claude Lévi Straussem*, ed. Georges Charbonnier, trans. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2000), 27–35.

10 Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Press, 1976).

11 Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Garden City, 1966).

12 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Others: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

However, little attention has been paid in anthropology to futurology due to a marked tendency to focus attention on the present and its past origins. As late as the early 1990s, Nancy Munn asserted that in anthropology “furity is poorly tended as a specifically temporal phenomenon,”<sup>13</sup> which she attributed to a tendency of anthropologists to perceive the future in “shreds and patches,” as opposed to the special attention with which “the past in the present”<sup>14</sup> is analyzed within the discipline. Arjun Appadurai points out in a separate context that “in spite of many technical moves in the understanding of culture, the future remains a stranger to most anthropological models of culture.”<sup>15</sup> Peter Pels suggests in turn that anthropology’s negligible interest in the future stems from the ethical obligations of the “unfinished project of postcolonial reflexivity,”<sup>16</sup> adding elsewhere: “while not denying that things change, anthropologists first tend to contextualize futuristic discourse in a cultural *longue durée*.”<sup>17</sup>

It is becoming increasingly clear how the social sciences, new humanities, natural sciences, science and technology studies, ecocriticism, environmental anthropology, anthropology of energy, multispecies and transrelational ethnography, and many other fields of study, are reorienting themselves towards the future. The call, formulated some time ago, for attempts to be undertaken to anticipate the cultures and societies of tomorrow is gaining particular relevance as scholars of every gender strive to create a social imaginary open to unknown futures.<sup>18</sup> What is looming on the horizon or merely languishing in vague potentiality is seeking avenues of articulation within different circuits of knowledge. Both the academic establishment and public space need wise stories about the future, capable of activating social imaginaries and jolting them out of states of uncertainty,

13 Nancy Munn, “The Cultural Anthropology of Time: A Critical Essay,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (2012): 115.

14 *Ibid.*, 115–116.

15 Arjun Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition* (London: Verso, 2013), 5.

16 Peter Pels, “Modern Times: Seven Steps toward an Anthropology of the Future,” *Current Anthropology* 56 (6) (2015): 779–796.

17 Peter Pels, “Anthropology as Science Fiction, or How Print Capitalism Enchanted Victorian Science,” in *Magical Capitalism Enchantment, Spells, and Occult Practices in Contemporary Economies*, ed. Brian Moeran and Timothy de Waal Malefyt (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 242.

18 Samuel G. Collins, *All Tomorrow’s Cultures: Anthropological Engagements with the Future* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2021).

lethargy and fear of the unknown. It is in the spirit of a clear need to create perspectives and narratives directed towards what is to come that a trend is developing for a future-oriented anthropology<sup>19</sup> that, as Sarah Pink and Juan Francisco Salazar propose, “calls for a renewed, open and future-focused approach to understanding the present, anticipating the unknown and intervening in the world.”<sup>20</sup> By developing a futurological perspective, the anthropologists argue, the discipline should be able to shed the constraints of conventional mainstream anthropological practice, thereby liberating itself of any need to document and analyze the past, according to the premise that “the creative, improvisational, speculative, and participatory techniques of a renewed anthropological ethnography have the potential to make a significant contribution in the making of alternative futures.”<sup>21</sup> Within the realm of cognition, this means “creating generative forms of not knowing with others, which might involve imagining, planning, designing, enacting, intervening or anticipating the future on an everyday basis.”<sup>22</sup> The authors of a book titled *The Anthropology of the Future* (2019) argue in a similar vein, proposing the perspective of cognition should encompass orientations such as “anticipation,” “expectation,” “speculation,” “potentiality,” “hope” and “destiny,” “all represent differing depths of time and different, though often related, ways in which the future may orient our present.”<sup>23</sup> The aforementioned premises correspond well with the anthropology of the present, the tenets of which were presented by Paul Rabinow in his book *Anthropos Today: Reflections on Modern Equipment* (2003). Borrowing from Michel Foucault’s ontology of the present (1984),<sup>24</sup> Rabinow developed a conception of the anthropology of the present by postulating its cognitive perspectivism and reflecting on notional constructs of reality while taking into consideration the indispensable practice of writing in line with the assumption that the graphy of ethos, logos and pathos establishes a privileged place for study

19 See *Manifest Antropologii Przyszłości*, accessed June 23, 2023, <http://www.nomadit.co.uk/easa/easa2014/panels.php?PanellID=3230>.

20 Juan F. Salazar, Sarah Pink, Andrew Irving and Johannes Sjöberg, eds., *Anthropologies and Futures. Researching Emerging and Uncertain Worlds* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 3.

21 *Ibid.*, 3.

22 *Ibid.*, 16.

23 Rebecca Bryant and Daniel M. Knight, *The Anthropology of the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 8.

24 Michel Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 32–50.

and experimentation.<sup>25</sup> In the light of Rabinow's premises, the aim of a discipline thus designed is to follow the rhythm of the appearance of the relational, emergent phenomena of reality – or assemblages – for the purpose of explaining them and making them accessible, not only to anthropological thought, but also to social reasoning and critical reflection.

### **Dysfunctional Topographies, Fragmented Temporalities**

One perspective, which developed alongside the “anthropology of the future” research trend, privileges the practicing of anticipation and projection as important cognitive strategies that need not lead anthropology down blind alleys and avenues of uncertainty. The aforementioned cognitive orientations turn out to be useful for the analysis and explication of the transitional processes taking place in many places in the world, within spaces of social, political and economic life and within varied contexts and settings. My interest in anthropology oriented towards the present<sup>26</sup> and the future was sparked by my research on the prelude to the energy transition, which I have been observing and evaluating in the area surrounding the Turów energy and mining complex in the Bogatynia commune in the region of Upper Lusatia. Given its status as a country with substantial lignite deposits, Poland has been participating for years in the implementation of the European Union's climate and energy policy. Within the Polish public space, visions for energy policy are being shaped that are clear enough to enable the pursuit and exercise of power through energy management. While the political transition of the 1990s brought new economic challenges rooted in Poland's desire to catch up with the economies of the developed world, which led to the profiling of economic policies for development and growth, the energy transition requires a radical reorientation of energy policy and profound changes based on the profiling of the contemporary late-capitalist economy in such a way as to make it less carbon-intensive, more cyclical, and ideally, degrowth. However, the vision of a green future is not only ill-defined, but demonstrates ambivalences and contradictions in the perception and evaluation of natural resources in Poland within the context of the climate crisis, economic growth and specific political goals. The desire

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25 Paul Rabinow, *Anthropos Today. Reflections on Modern Equipment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 77.

26 Katarzyna Majbroda, *W relacjach, sieciach, splotach asamblaży. Wyobrażenia antropologii społeczno-kulturowej wobec aktualnego* [In relationships, networks, and assemblages. The imagination of socio-cultural anthropology towards the current] (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut, 2019).

to comprehend the processes behind the emergence of transformative energy futures<sup>27</sup> requires constant interrogation as well as a readjustment of scales and values stringent enough to perceive, in this field of observation, various conflicting interests and varied perspectives and ways of establishing certain hierarchies: socio-cultural, environmental, economic, material and political. It is still open to question how the current situation affecting the area around the Turów mining and power complex, the decisions of decision makers and European and domestic plans for the decarbonization of Upper Lusatia are creating a post-coalmining future for that place. How is what is planned for the future reconfiguring the social practices of the present? And in what way is it influencing affective social poetics? Is a truly equitable energy transition possible? In this article, I present a history of Wigancice Żytawskie and Opolno-Zdrój – two localities located in an area rich in lignite deposits – that weaves together the past, present and anticipated future of the region on different scales and in different dimensions, testifying to the fact that sociocultural phenomena associated with energy and transformation are strong on temporal issues.<sup>28</sup>

Numerous analyses of the impact of the mining industry and its sprawling infrastructure on landscapes and the local communities' places of residence are dominated by the use of spatial metaphors and topographical research categories, such as energycapes, mining spaces, living on mineral seams, multi-species neighborhoods and spatial cleansing. There is also a clear tendency to situate the phenomena being studied along spatial scales, such as global–local, urban–rural, or center–periphery,<sup>29</sup> reflecting the work of a topographical imaginary oriented towards fields, ranges and areas.<sup>30</sup>

However, it is hardly possible to confine oneself to the spatial dimension of the explored terrain when dealing with momentary encounters of different temporalities and trajectories, heterogeneous landscapes of

27 Dominic Boyer, *Energopolitics: Wind and Power in the Anthropocene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

28 Frank W. Geels, Tim Schwanen, Steve Sorrell, Kristen Jenkins and Benjamin K. Sovacool, "Reducing Energy Demand through Low Carbon Innovation: A Sociotechnical Transitions Perspective and Thirteen Research Debates," *Energy Research & Social Science* 40 (2018): 23–35.

29 Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier, eds., *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

30 Lars Coenen, Paul Benneworth and Bernhard Truffer, "Toward a Spatial Perspective on Sustainability Transitions," *Research Policy* 41 (6) (2012): 968–979.

multiple temporal phenomena and “shifting assemblages of humans and non-humans”<sup>31</sup> in uncertain living conditions and uncertain environments, in an arena of irregularities. Complex aspects of the interspecies neighborhood in energyscapes, such as the relations between people, coal, technology and the environment, require analyses sensitive to the changing rhythms and temporalities of those phenomena. It could be said that a terrain that is in itself a dynamic and ad hoc assemblage acquires added instability and temporality during the process of transformation to which it is being subjected. By incorporating the temporality variables of the analyzed phenomena into anthropological research we can dynamize them and capture both their transitions and new configurations. The above strategy would appear to be of key importance when the anthropologist’s attention is being focused on the lives of people in the mining spaces being transformed according to the rhythms of nature, a mining and power complex, machinery and technology. Despite its awareness of the consequences of extracting and burning fossil fuels, the late-capitalist narrative is still dominated by the conviction that the energy industry is a so-called “growth pole,” around which various industries and services can develop, contributing to the enhancement of local communities’ well-being. Publications addressing Poland’s abundance of lignite deposits use such terms as “the prospective development of electricity production,” lignite is described as “the optimal energy offer for Poland,” the development of energy complexes relying on coal seams is described using such language as “milestones for the Polish energy doctrine for the development of the lignite industry in the twenty-first century,” and it is emphasized that “lignite is the optimal fuel for the Polish energy industry.” Narratives of development, enrichment and economic growth shape the public imagination, even though, as critics of the mining industry argue, dependence on the extraction of natural resources is inversely correlated with economic development, a phenomenon referred to as “conflict minerals”<sup>32</sup> or “the resource curse.”<sup>33</sup> Extraction sites are also associated with environmental and climate disasters, areas of contamination, polluted air and toxic post-production waste, all of which affect the wellbeing of local communities. The ambiguity of the socio-environmental situation at mineral exploitation sites has led Stuart Kirsch to employ the

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31 Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of The World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 20.

32 Deanna Kemp and John Owen, “Community Relations and Mining: Core To Business But Not ‘Core Business,’” *Resources Policy* 38 (4) (2013): 524.

33 Michael Ross, “The Political Economy of the Resource Curse,” *World Politics* 51 (2): 297–322.



notion of “colliding ecologies,” which draws attention to the paradox that while the living circumstances of people residing on, or in the immediate vicinity of, extraction sites is constantly improving, their economic, social, cultural situation and health are often severely harmed as a consequence of functioning within the spaces of late industrialism and the pollution of their local surroundings<sup>34</sup> during the process of accumulation by dispossession that impacts socio-spatial transitions.<sup>35</sup>

Any attempt to comprehend the specific tactics and operating strategies employed by a local community functioning under the environmental, economic, political and cultural conditions of the present requires the prism of the future to be activated, for what it is at stake in the transition game is more than just a fixed stage in the functioning of the mining industry. It is the future of energy itself. Social life in the area surrounding the Turów mining and power complex revolves around the rhythm of many times, experienced individually and communally and arranged in hierarchies that are intertwined despite being more often than not mutually exclusive. The transformation of the environmental, material, technological, socio-cultural and economic is accompanied by the transformation of fragments of the space around the mines and power stations, which takes the form of barren landscapes, displaced villages, tree-covered slag heaps, and waste dumps given over to nature, and these transformations occur within entanglements of people and non-human existences. Consequently, mining areas are no longer analyzed exclusively within economic and technological parameters as a depopulated landscape, but are increasingly being viewed in terms of an assemblage,<sup>36</sup> which makes it possible to see them as a relational entity co-constituted by people, coal as a raw material, the lie of the land, plants, architecture, material objects, machinery and the mining infrastructure – the open pit and external dump. While examining the energy transition, I consider how the individual factors co-constituting the mining landscape of Wigancice and the wider region of Upper Lusatia interact with one another and in what way they constitute a dynamic whole, open to successive transformations, which makes it possible to “conceptualize relationships between stability and change.”<sup>37</sup>

34 Stuart Kirsch, *Mining Capitalism. The Relationship between Corporations and Their Critics* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 18.

35 David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

36 Majbroda, *W relacjach, sieciach, splotach asamblaży*, 133–164.

37 Hvard Haarstad and Tarje I. Wanvik, “Carbonscapes and Beyond: Conceptualizing the Instability of Oil Landscapes,” *Progress in Human Geography* 41 (4) (2016): 440.

### The Transformations of an Energyscape

The energyscape molded during the process of the foundation and expansion of the Turów mining and power complex in the Bogatynia commune in Lower Silesia constitutes an accumulation of both its historical shapes of the past and the local manifestations of global scenarios of environmental, economic and social transformations. The Turów mine and power station have their own times of establishment and operation and the work of those places has its own rhythms and intervals comprising the activities of people and machines; the lignite seam has its own separate time. The local community living in the area functions according to its own rhythms; the landscape surrounding the mining and energy complex is being transformed in definite time sequences from a space of nature into an industrial mining energyscape modified by the decisions and hand of humans – making it anthropogenic. Today, the immediate space surrounding “Turów” is being transformed into barren landscapes, displaced villages and tree-covered heaps and waste dumps centered around an open lignite pit expanding ever outwards. The erstwhile agrarian landscape of the region has been radically transformed into an industrial and post-industrial one. Cultivated fields, orchards and gardens were replaced by “huge mining waste dumps and tips, sinkholes caused by underground mining, brick kilns, stones, lead, sand and gravel pits, ash and cinder dumps, road cuttings, rail and road embankments, micro-sculptural elements of dumps and excavations, post-mining zones and re-routed riverbeds.”<sup>38</sup> The complex’s construction precipitated interference in that area’s pre-existing topography and the rearrangement of the natural environment into a complex assemblage of raw materials, matter, geological existences, hydrographic networks, industrial and technological elements of infrastructure set in motion by the action of humans and machinery. The development of the mining and power industry not only equated to a radical change in the landscape surrounding the Turów complex, but also significant transformations in the local community’s pre-existing life patterns, culture and well-being.

That process is very clearly embodied in the story of Wigancice Żytawskie, one of the ghost villages located in the vicinity of the external dump that was created by the expansion of the mining industry but destroyed at the dawn of the twenty-first century.<sup>39</sup> During the coal extraction process, the external dump built from the overburden removed along with coal, ash and soil grew

38 Adam Szpotański, *Kotlina Turoszowska. Monografia miasta i gminy Bogatynia w okresie 1945–2010* [Turoszowska Valley. Monograph of the city and commune of Bogatynia in the period 1945–2010] (Legnica: Biblioteka Diecezji Legnickiej, 2019), 113.

39 Katarzyna Majbroda, “A Ghost Village. Spatial Cleansing in Wigancice Żytawskie in the Landscape of the Turów Mining and Power Complex, Lower Silesia,” *Lud* 106 (2022): 261–297.

large enough to begin encroaching on the village. An environmental survey carried out in the 1970s concluded that the dump's subsidence was endangering the villagers' lives. The decision to demolish the village was taken in the 1980s, prompting a procedure for the villagers' displacement and resettlement that I refer to elsewhere – after Michael Herzfeld – as spatial cleansing.<sup>40</sup> In view of the genuine threat facing the village, residents of private and council houses began to be dispossessed of their homes, which were repurchased from their owners, while villagers who had lived in rented accommodation were resettled. Some of the buildings destroyed by mining operations had sunk into the ground while others had been buried. In 1999, the village disappeared from the face of the earth. The village's remote location far from transport routes and the increasingly oppressive proximity of the pit meant that much of the local community made no protest against the dispossessions, with some even striving to accelerate the process. This is mentioned by one of the village's former residents, who stressed that the fact that there was no proper road and it was so difficult to get to neighboring villages effectively discouraged the community from staying in that place:

The flooding of the village during torrential rain from unsecured water bodies on the slag heaps was a major inconvenience. It was ash mixed with mud. As soon as I stepped into it in wellingtons, it was impossible to pull the wellingtons out again...because they were lodged in the thick ash. Time and again, the residents tried to restore order and normality on their own. The mine partially covered the cost of any damage incurred. People were tired of constantly battling against the slag heap. Life had become unbearable. The locals started to demand better living conditions, at which point the mine started to resettle them in stages because that was easier for them. (Inhabitant of Zagorzelec, 67 years old)

Shortly after the activation of the dispossession and resettlement procedure, it became apparent that the local authorities and mine management had made a rash decision and the village could have actually continued to exist despite its close proximity to the dump. The awareness that the village's fate could have played out according to a different scenario has led some villagers to make it completely clear today that they consider the village's demolition to make way for the development of the mining industry to have been harmful socially, economically and culturally. They are also keen to emphasize the effect of losing family homes, a neighborhood, local traditions and cultural heritage, as the following comment illustrates:

<sup>40</sup> Michael Herzfeld, *Siege of the Spirit. Community and Polity in Bangkok* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

We had our past taken away. Supposedly, you could have bought a house anywhere you wanted, because they paid us well, a lot. But nowhere is anything like where you grew up, lived with your friends, family, knew places, your home, surroundings, everything. That won't return now, it won't be like it was in Wigancice. (Inhabitant of Zagorzelec, 63 years old)

Looking at the village's present form, it could be said that the depopulated village has been ultimately engulfed by forest. The scanty remains of old houses are overgrown with the vegetation that stretches over the roads, colonizing former farmyards and encroaching on farmland and spaces once jointly occupied by the local community. However, the village's removal from the face of the earth was primarily topographical in nature, because in the memories of former Wigancice residents, the village still exists. Since 2008, the former inhabitants of Wigancice and succeeding generations have been displaying their roots at an annual celebration of community held at Kołodziej's house – an Upper Lusatian house (or Umgebindehaus) translocated there from Wigancice. Local cultural animators and historical conservationists strive to get the public interested in Wigancice's history by spreading knowledge and memory of that place. The cultural animation and educational activities have evolved into a concrete plan for rebuilding the village that involves attracting cooperation partners, including architects, archaeologists, botanists, engineers and investors, whose combined efforts should lead to the village being reconstructed and restored to its former splendor.

The example of Wigancice Żytawskie demonstrates that the linear perception of time that forms the bedrock of the capitalist logic of growth, acting as a vector for imposing order on strategies, plans and actions, is not immune to shortcomings and disruptions. Strategic development concepts are liable to modification provoked by unforeseeable environmental disturbances and social interventions. Now it has been colonized by vegetation, the village has become a testing ground for the intertwining of different temporalities – despite not existing in topographical terms, it endures, not only in the identity-based and emotional–affective dimensions of the former villagers' stories and memories, but also as a rehabilitation project to be implemented in the not-too-distant future based on the transformative, equitable restoration of the cultural heritage of the Tripoint and Upper Lusatia.

### **The Time Machine – A Return to the Past**

Even though the appearance of mines, and subsequently power stations, gradually transformed the Upper Lusatian landscape into an anthropogenic

landscape shaped by technology and man, and subsequently into a mining landscape, the memory still persists among the local community of a time when all that was visible against the sky were the soaring spires of churches built on the Polish, Czech and German sides of the Tripoint, and the only chimneys visible in that space formed part of a local architecture comprising Umgebinderhäuser or spa bath houses. Taking place on a micro-scale within the village of Opolno Zdrój's local environment are the global transformation processes associated with the decarbonization and zero-emission policies being pursued by Europe and the international community. It is a heterogeneous, stratified space marked by the co-existence of three worlds: that of the opencast lignite mine, the world of nature and the world of people. In this quaint, compact village famous for its imposing Umgebinderhäuser, bath houses, large park and walkway under generously arching linden trees, the local mud was once used to treat rheumatic diseases and "frazzled" nerves. In those times, before the construction of the mine and subsequent power station, Opolno Zdrój was a charming, picturesque place located by the Tripoint, on the route leading to the Czech lands and Germany, which was an added bonus. This characterization belongs to times gone by. The Opolno of today situated by the Tripoint, on the Polish-Czech-German border, is in state of decline and in limbo, with the threat very real that it could be engulfed by an ever expanding open lignite pit. The fear exists among the local community that Opolno will share the fate of its neighbouring villages – Wigancice and Rybarzowice – whose inhabitants were locally resettled in other places following the destruction of their homes, which basically disappeared from the face of the earth. Bordering Opolno to the north is Bogatynia, less formally known as the "Commune with the Energy," while to the south-west of Opolno, a tarmac road tapers off into a dirt path, which halts at an abyss, or "the hole," as the locals call it – in fact, it is the open lignite pit. Abutting Opolno's western boundary are meadows, the edge of a forest and open fields, while a road there leads to the German city of Zittau (formerly Żytawa in Poland) and Uhelná, the small Czech village from where, in 2021, the "Turów dispute," which made the press, began. Presently, the village situated on the edge of the open lignite pit is functioning in a peculiar temporo-spatial fissure – between its health-spa past, a present full of stagnation and foreboding, and an uncertain future that is difficult for villagers to envisage. For the past three years, an open-air event has been organized in the village under the banner "Taking a Time Machine to Opolno Zdrój." This undertaking was initiated by a number of local non-governmental organizations primarily focused on the discovery of hotspots of local culture and the evocation and preservation of memories relating to the villages surrounding the mine whose fates are closely intertwined with the development of the mining industry.

While navigating in time, the residents of Opolno “develop representations or time maps which mediate and shape personal experiences of it.”<sup>41</sup> In the world they are experiencing, the spatial and temporal dimensions cannot be disentangled; it is necessary to understand this entanglement,<sup>42</sup> which means that social life is experienced space-time.<sup>43</sup> The time machine-themed event, which takes place at the beginning of September, is a moment when times gone by are symbolically restored during what amounts to a retroactive celebration of the village’s health-spa past. Charming cafés are set up in the central square in front of the village hall, and locals and visitors in costumes of the 1920s and 1930s stroll through the streets and health spa grounds; they dance the tango, chat with friends, sip coffee and wine and listen to music. On that day, the organizers take curious visitors on a tour of those old spa houses and bath houses that have survived somehow despite the successive demolitions associated with the expansion of the open pit, which is swallowing up more and more parts of the village. Many of the surviving spa houses are in ruins; some are overgrown with plants that often invade their interiors, tumble over their verandas, block their windows and bedeck their walls. In this entanglement of architecture and nature, one can perceive the workings of time and the outcome of the inexorable advance of the destruction of a spa heritage that was left to its own devices. However, this merging of disparate elements can also be seen as a symbolic figuration of the impending future, as the natural environment’s intrusion into buildings destroyed by humans, which provides the local community with some hope of their village being rehabilitated through being granted a new, post-coal life.

When the villagers retroactively evoke the past, they devote a great deal of energy to finding a common element important for the identity of the place. Their conceptual retrograde movement activates a stream of memories relating to Opolno’s topography, the functioning of cultural and entertainment venues – restaurants, cafés, a cinema and a small amphitheatre whose existence would be difficult to surmise today. The questions posed by the anthropologist about what the future holds for Opolno and the area surrounding “Turów” during the process of gradual decarbonization and what life after coal may look like clash with the fears articulated by her interviewees, who sense

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41 Alfred Gell, *The Anthropology of Time. Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images* (London: Routledge, 1992), after Laura Bear, “Doubt, Conflict, Mediation: The Anthropology of Modern Time,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* (2014): 15.

42 Nancy Munn, “The Cultural Anthropology of Time: A Critical Essay,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (1992): 94.

43 Ibid.

that they are losing control over their own lives as they grapple with a great unknown. For them, thinking about horizons or a reality without mines and power plants is a meaningless and abstract endeavour. “What’s the point of speculating if nothing’s going to be cooked up anyway?”; “What will happen? – The mine will happen, because it has always been there.” “Without the chimneys, there is no landscape, just like there’s no ship without a mast.” “The only thing awaiting us is a big open pit, and then a black hole.” “The world will end here and even stray dogs will be a thing of the past.” “Nothing will happen and that will be the end of it.”

As if to spite the genuine threat of being swallowed up by the open pit, Opolno-Zdrój presently functions as a venue for meetings, workshops and cultural animation and educational activities, which are being developed by external actors – activists and artists-in-residence – sculptors, performance artists, educators and cultural animators. Some of these people are looking for hotspots of local culture, while others are pursuing specific social and political goals within this space. The contemporary interest in Opolno could be called retroactive. In the 1970s, it was the inspiring site of an en-plein-air art workshop titled *The Zgorzelec Land 1971: Science and Art in the Process of Protecting the Natural Human Environment*, which brought together art people wishing to demonstrate the relations between people, coal and the environment. Five decades later, the place’s artistic and ecologically engaged spirit has returned within the context of the climate crisis and opposition to the late-capitalist policy of continuous growth and modernistically engineered development, which found expression in an art event organized by the Eko-Unia Foundation<sup>44</sup> whose title, *The Zgorzelec Land: Opolno 2071*, was supposed to stir the locals from their stagnation and sense of powerlessness by directing their attention to the post-transformation future of this place on the principle that “people’s actions are all the time informed by possible worlds which are not yet realized.”<sup>45</sup>

Contemplations on the transformation are moments in which an indeterminate future takes on a definite form, what Stine Krøijer calls a “figuration of the future,”<sup>46</sup> arguing that the future, rather than being conceptualized as

44 Hanna Schudy, *Aktorzy transformacji – między czasem linearnym a cyrkularnym* [Transformation actors – between linear and circular time], in *Pomiędzy wzrostem a katastrofą. Identyfikacje i analizy*, ed. Krzysztof Łukasiewicz, Jacek Schindler and Hanna Schudy (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut, 2021), 127–150.

45 Marlin Strathern, *Kinship, Law and the Unexpected: Relatives Are Always a Surprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 51.

46 Stine Krøijer, *Figurations of the Future. Forms and Temporalities of Left Radical Politics in Northern Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 42.

an emergent point in linear time, should be viewed as a co-present bodily perspective. This means that social practices of the present accumulate, originating in a retroactive process of remembering, imagining and anticipating what may occur in the future. On a terrain continuously anticipating an inevitable, albeit deferred, transformation, many of the local community's actions arise from concern for their wellbeing and a desire to prevent economic, architectural, environmental, climatic and cultural/social harm. People living on a coalfield whose concerns about their loved ones' wellbeing are closely correlated with their work in the mining industry find it difficult to accept visions of a post-coal future, so banish the inevitability of the decarbonization process from their memory. Survival strategies are all too often developed on the discursive and symbolic plane – when they talk about the abundance of local deposits and the likelihood of further extraction, almost without limit, negating, as it were, the available expert knowledge on the gradual depletion of the lignite seam and negating the rational premises inherent in the existing mining concessions (until 2026) and plans for a maximum limit to be set for the exploitation of that resource until 2044. The Bogatynia commune residents have learnt to live on the coalfield over the course of their many years of proximity to the mine. They have woven the lignite seams into their histories, stories relating to their neighborhood and community and family narratives, producing something akin to a symbolic “coal community.” “People constantly produce and reproduce life stories on the basis of memories, interpreting the past through the lens of social information and using this information to formulate present and future life stories.”<sup>47</sup> Living on the coalfield is becoming a crucial element in their identity project, as numerous statements from my interviewees make clear:

I was born here and for as long as I can remember, we've had coal at home – my father and before him, my grandfather, worked down the mines. My husband, my brother and also my brother-in-law – same thing. We talk about the mine, laugh about it. They talk every day; not a day passes without my father talking about the mine at home. They are one and the same – our home and the mine, it's a kind of second life. Also, I don't know what will happen further on down the road without the mine. They can't close it, because that would mean the end of life here. (Inhabitant of Bogatynia, 65 years old)

The mine is an octopus, you think you can't see it, but it's continually reminding you of its existence, entwining the whole region, providing jobs, taking away homes, even whole villages, sustaining the community, connecting people, often

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47 Steph Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 32.



for years. Half of my family is connected with the mine. (Inhabitant of Opolno-Zdrój, 54 years old)

How could that be, no mine, no coal? There's always been a mine here, and those chimneys have been here since I was a kid. When I was little, I used to attend summer camps, yes, there were summer camps, holidays provided by the mine. No matter whether I was in the mountains or by the seaside, I pined for those chimneys. They're really lovely, a constant sight around here. That power station, even children draw those chimneys when they're making cards. It's always been like that, they're important. Once I see the chimneys, I know I'm home. (Inhabitant of Bogatynia, 42 years old)

### Affective Social Poetics

Navigating a terrain awaiting transformation lends confirmation to the validity of the observation that “the future is never a tabula rasa of endless possibilities. Futures are already crowded with fantasies, paranoias, traumas, hopes, and fears of the past and the present.”<sup>48</sup> What is yet to exist can be discerned in affective social poetics, where future states and phenomena are “already here,” engendering certain attitudes and social practices. Imagining the future in the present allows people to step into the “elsewhere” and cultivate affects and actions that could otherwise be abandoned or not perceived at all. Using the landscape to tell the story of life in the vicinity of the mine and power station is a multi-contextual endeavor that deals with many different relations and temporalities at the same time: memories of times past, memories of time spent in the landscape, the context of working in the mine and power station, the process of rehabilitating the external dumps and heaps and the sustainable tourism that could potentially be developed in the post-transformation reality – in a post-coal future. In the narratives of my interviewees, there is also no shortage of concerns about the region's future, and even of catastrophic visions, in which each village sinks below the ground, swallowed up by the ever expanding open lignite pit:

We'll be swallowed up, I'm telling you that some time, one day, the ground will begin to subside and we'll go tumbling with our homes, our trees, into that hole. And that's how things are going to end up, like in Rybarzowice. Some dust and dirt will be left, and that's it. (Inhabitant of Bogatynia, 41 years old)

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Rosenberg and Susan Harding, *Histories of The Future* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

Everything flows into the open pit, into the mine. It acts like a huge vacuum nozzle. When it starts sucking water away from the land, everything will be under water and we'll end up in the opencast. Every year the ground moves more. I can see it from my allotment. It's such a [powerful] suction force that I barely know [what to say – K. M.]. (Inhabitant of Opolno-Zdrój, 50 years old)

When the space around the mine and the power plant are evaluated, it becomes clear that strategies for perceiving the landscape and the manner in which it is being valorised are intertwined with the current geopolitical and economic-environmental situation, drawing from the political debate and discourses present in the public space. Weaving stories about the energy landscape around “Turów” is becoming a way of expressing opinions on the activities being pursued by the mine and the power plant as well as the Polish-Czech-German relations prevailing around the Tripoint. My interviewees' statements also contain comments addressing political and economic decisions connected with the operation of the Turów complex:

I don't know why the Czechs are bothered by the view of the open pit, and the chimneys from the power station are actually troubling them as well. Now behind Opolno they're constructing a kind of screen, a wall of sorts, so the Czechs can't see the pit from their side. What's so dreadful about it? After all, the power station has great chimneys, at night it looks like a whole metropolis, something like Las Vegas, there are so many lights. One night, I was giving a friend a ride in my car and he asked me what this city was, and it was the power station. I don't know what's so terrible about it. It displeases the Czechs. (Inhabitant of Jasna Góra, 40 years old)

Wind turbines are what they are, you can see them, they are visible. We don't have a wind power station on the Polish side, because we have the Turów power station. If they want to take energy from the wind, they take it, but it is not windy all the time, and so many houses need to be supplied. Maybe we will have them one day as well, but it would be a hydroelectric power plant instead; there are plans for that after the open pit has been flooded. (Inhabitant of Bogatynia, 37 years old)

Accumulating within stories about the space and landscape are specific affective social poetics, and when my research partners talk about the environment within which they are functioning, they are giving expression to their opinions, emotions, hopes and fears connected with the region's present and post-coal future. I first proposed the conceptual category “affective social poetics” when analyzing sociocultural anthropology's imaginary vis-à-vis the

present,<sup>49</sup> (defining it as “a conceptual tool for perceiving and interpreting human practices denoting a focus on their relational and emotional dimensions as well as their manners [verbal, symbolic, embodied, performative – K. M.] of expression”).<sup>50</sup> I still share the conviction that even though modes of expressing emotions, moods and feelings, much like experiences and memories, are ostensibly personal and most often located within so-called “intimate experience,” they are still constructed and shared by culturally and socially mediated narrative forms.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, I propose that they are intertwined with the sphere of social practices developed in specific shared spaces and temporalities.

Drawing from the theory developed by Theodore Schatzki, it could be said that sequences of everyday life practices are ordered by time brackets that may overlap or be entangled, each characterized by sets of directed affects. The time when an energy transformation is being anticipated is full of restlessness, apprehension, prognosis, hope and apocalyptic speculation. In this peculiar fissure – the interval between a remembered past and an unknown future – individuals and communities orient themselves towards specific goals and objectives, a project accompanied by emotions and affects linked by the motivation to either undertake or abandon certain actions.<sup>52</sup> “More specifically, the doings and sayings that compose a given practice are linked through (1) practical understandings, (2) rules, (3) a teleoaffective structure, and (4) general understandings. Together, the understandings, rules, and teleoaffective structure that link the doings and sayings of a practice form its organization.”<sup>53</sup> Rather than being a property of social actors, teleoaffective structures are a feature of individual practices further characterized by Schatzki as “a range of normativized and hierarchically ordered ends, projects, and tasks, to varying degrees allied with normativized emotions and even moods.”<sup>54</sup> In a given teleoaffective regime, this structure takes on a collective character, becoming the property of a particular time, such as the era of transformation and the transitions associated with it. A community forming

49 Katarzyna Majbroda, *W relacjach, sieciach, splotach asamblaży*.

50 *Ibid.*, 255.

51 James Olney, *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

52 Theodore Schatzki, *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

53 *Ibid.*, 77.

54 *Ibid.*, 80.

part of an energy culture and living in a country “based on coal” struggles to make any effort to imagine a post-transformation future, which does not mean the complete lack of existence of any assumptions, fears and hopes relating to life in the region after coal has been phased out. Temporal cognition can be conceptualized as a triangular relationship between perception (output data), memory (schema, recall) and anticipation (prediction, projection).<sup>55</sup> Anthropological scrutiny of the daily life of the community living in the vicinity of the mine and the power station demonstrates very clearly how vivid and detailed the memoir narratives of the past of that place are, and how difficult a practice it is to talk about what is to come. The post-transformation future of that place, or life after the coal, seems to my interlocutors to be an implausible, nebulous time, a temporality with fuzzy shapes and contours. The lignite around which the life of the local community revolves is not only conceptualized in terms of a high-energy raw material, but also in a symbolic manner as that place’s foundation – the ever-present bedrock of its existence. The lignite-bearing seam is intertwined with many of the Opolno residents’ memories and pervades family stories and childhood memories, causing it to become a crucial component of the local identity of a community with a special affinity for coal.

The local community mentions green tourism, a pumped-storage power plant that will be capable of operating on the site of the previously water-filled open pit; there is talk of the post-mining spoil heaps being used for recreational purposes, the rehabilitation of the “big hole” by means of afforestation and the creation of water reservoirs along the lines of those that drive seasonal tourism in nearby Zittau (formerly Żytawa). Nevertheless, the post-coal reality appears unstable, and it is not entirely clear when it can be expected to take place. Polish decision makers are battling to keep the mine in operation until 2044, but in the European debate, a binding date for its closure is yet to be agreed, which has blocked financial support from the European Union’s Just Transition Fund. Political and economic decisions on that issue are still liable to change, which has caused the vision of the region’s transformation to lose its clarity and forecasts of post-transformation futures to falter once they are confronted with more pressing concerns relating to everyday life unfolding in the maturing present. “Temporal textures of experience”<sup>56</sup> oriented towards what is to come are embedded in everyday life; the future is present in every action and interaction, in aspirations and inertia. This means that living

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55 Bryant and Knight, *The Anthropology of the Future*, 8.

56 Anand Pandian, “The Time of Anthropology: Notes from a Field of Contemporary Experience,” *Cultural Anthropology* 27 (4) (2012): 548.

in a state of anticipation and immobility or in moments of (in)decision and (in)action is also designing the future.

### **An Inability to Anticipate – The Path to Crisis**

Kim Fortun argues that the climate crisis has provided a clear impetus to “think geology” after its terminology was introduced into the social sciences under the influence of Gilles Deleuze, who opened scholars’ imagination to sedimentation, lines, fissures and faults, which can help us outline the ways in which “knowledge is being defined and made at the edge of times and places called modernity.”<sup>57</sup> The spatial anchoring of the anthropological imaginary enables skillful routing, mapping and navigation in the process of following emerging research fields. However, the aforementioned fields oscillate between the past, the present and what the future holds, encouraging us to broaden our cognitive perspective to incorporate aspects relating to time, its rhythms, scales and loops. Identifying what is emerging on the horizon can also be exploited from a research point of view in the form of clues hinting at the directions in which individuals, groups and communities are heading when orienting themselves towards the times to come. This knowledge turns out to be useful when one is attempting to comprehend what people do, say and aspire to, and why they act in that manner, as Kirsten Hastrup once demonstrated very clearly by tracking the hunters of North Greenland. Upon observing the actions of hunters who also forecast the potential of their own environment and the opportunities it creates, allowing them to take suitable action in the interests of the future without claiming the right to comprehend it, the anthropologist posits that the aforementioned use of inference and the ability to anticipate could become the basis for new anthropological knowledge that would exert an influence on human life.<sup>58</sup> The “anticipation” is here understood, after Mark Nuttall, as “a form of knowledge, as ontology, as foresight and insight, as engagement, as orientation, as self-realization, and as a consideration of potential.”<sup>59</sup>

57 Kim Fortun, “Figuring out Ethnography,” in *Fieldwork Is Not What It Used to Be: Learning Anthropology’s Method in a Time of Transition*, ed. James Faubion and Geogre Marcus (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 168; Kim Fortun, “Scaling and Vizualizing,” in *Multi-sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research*, ed. Mark-Anthony Falzon (London: Routledge, 2009), 73.

58 Kristen Hastrup, “Świadomość mięśniowa. Wytwarzanie wiedzy w Arktyce” [Muscle awareness. Knowledge production in the Arctic], trans. Ewa Klekot, *Teksty Drugie* 1 (2018): 143.

59 Mark Nuttall, “Anticipation, Climate Change, and Movement in Greenland,” *Études/Inuit/Studies* 34 (1) 2010: 33.

A similar conception of anthropological cognition was proposed by Kim Fortun, who argued that “ethnography, it seems to me, can be designed to elicit these new forms,” because researchers “have an affordance for unimaginable futures.”<sup>60</sup> As anthropologists, we must not lose sight of imagining the present which it also has not yet.<sup>61</sup> There is also a growing awareness of the consequences of making no attempt to anticipate the future, a phenomenon to which Rebecca Bryant drew attention almost a decade ago, warning that the inability to make predictions creates a state of crisis, which also has a cognitive dimension, while – at the most elementary, affective level – being in a present deprived of a future outlook creates anxiety and fear as well as a sense of helplessness.<sup>62</sup>

The outlook of the anthropology of the future – which could also be characterized as anticipatory thanks to the activation of numerous contexts and readjustment of scales and contexts – enables us to analyze contemporary situations, events and the transition-related phenomena we are studying, on a micro scale. This does not, however, mean that the door has been closed to researchers wishing to undertake analyses with a broader, more-than-local dimension. The development of the mining industry, the emergence of industrial mining landscapes and the trajectories of the energy transition are transcending the localness of specific places, impacting environmental, economic and social changes intertwined in a macro perspective that does not recognize national borders and administrative divisions. On the one hand, the anthropology of the future, by drawing on the perspective of the anthropology of the present, is offering us an opportunity to anticipate possible versions of the future. On the other hand, however, the knowledge and experience arising from that process is encouraging researchers to focus on developing new research techniques and tools and also construct theories that are more sensitive to time as a category. Consequently, when it comes to the laboratory testing of tools and methods, the range of possible practices is expanding as the anthropology of the future is created along with its as yet unnamed trends and perspectives. The horizon of the future is therefore not only dynamizing the research field, but also the discipline itself, mobilizing anthropologists to creatively develop, by trial and error, an instrumentarium and new perspectives of cognition. That challenge is also allied to a need to more closely examine

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60 Kim Fortun, “Ethnography in Late Industrialism,” *Cultural Anthropology* 27 (2012): 458.

61 *Ibid.*, 450.

62 Rebecca Bryant, “History’s Reminders: On Time and Objects after Conflict in Cyprus,” *American Ethnologist* 41 (4) (2014): 681–697.

the temporal dimensions of explored worlds along with their human and non-human arrangements.

In anthropological study of the energy transition, anticipating the future and attempting to outline the forms it may plausibly take, rather than equating to a desire to create a closed vision of the post-coal world, actually reflects a wish to leave it open and susceptible to further modifications. Moreover, I share the conviction of the importance of “any creative engagement with possible futures crafted using imaginative anthropological approaches toward the aim of building just and ethical relations across spatial and temporal scale.”<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, however, Samuel Gerald Collins is largely correct when he stresses, when contemplating the directions and possibilities of anthropological action for the cultures of tomorrow, that “anthropology needs to interrogate its role vis-à-vis the legitimation of the status quo and the naturalization of capitalism’s inequalities,” because we, as researchers, “have a moral injunction not only to interrogate power and inequality today but also to work toward societies that are better than they are now.”<sup>64</sup>

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63 Michael Oman-Reagan, “First Contact with Possible Futures,” *Theorizing the Contemporary*, December 18, 2018, accessed June 3, 2020, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/first-contact-with-possible-futures>.

64 Samuel G. Collins, *All Tomorrow's Cultures: Anthropological Engagements with The Future* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2021), xv.

## Abstract

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*The Anthropologies of the Future. Anticipating the Energy Transition*

The article considers how the categories of time and, especially, the future can be employed in anthropological reflection; both as study object and direction and as a horizon for current affects, emotions, experiences, and social moods, which are happening "here and now" and are associated with people's functioning in landscapes of energy resources extraction. The mining industry development transforms local countryside, changing the realities of living on coal reserves. To properly recognize such changes, we must activate spatial and temporal perspectives, while any explanation attempts encourage us to shift scales and values. Faced with an unknown future of transitions, local communities create narratives about the past and the maturing present by developing specific affective social poetics. Thus, energy transition studies provide an ethnographic contribution to the developing anthropology of the future, thus co-creating an imagination of the post-coal future.

## Keywords

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anticipation, anthropology of the future, prognosis, transformative future, Turów mine and power plant