

Coal mining and the related heavy industries have deeply affected the economic and social life in several Central European regions. The process of moving away from coal, which we are currently experiencing undoubtedly requires fundamental economic changes, but it also brings a lot of cultural challenges. It appears that a dense and strong network between culture, the environment, and industry allows humanities to become an important agent in the ongoing transformation of

industrial regions. The proposed project envisages a distinctly interdisciplinary approach to humanities research. Among other things, it considers literature, visual arts, and folklore as important sources for understanding the environmental memory of Central-Eastern Europe. However, this does not mean that literature and culture in our concept lose their artistic essence. On the contrary, we emphasize that artistic imagination and unique narratives can deepen sensitivity to environmental issues and can express experiences, traumas, and everyday situations of industrial regions uniquely, thereby provoking a deeper reflection on pressing questions directly affecting our present. We thus build on the latest work in this area, e.g., on the research of Karen Pinkus, who, through the concept of "Thinking Decarbonization with Literature", shows that the medium of culture, and especially literature, can be effective both in the process of raising awareness of what the climate crisis is and why it exists at all and what led to it. We intend to focus on the industrial literature and culture of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin (Górnosląskie Zagłębie Węglowe / Hornoslezská uhelná pánev). Its history dates back to the 18th century and the beginnings of the coal industry in the world. It is the history of the great modernization of a small part of Europe, closely connected with the industrial revolution in the world. The Upper Silesian Coal Basin developed later than the basins in Germany and Great Britain, it is much weaker and smaller, but to this day it is called the black heart of Europe.

Of the dozens of large coal basins in Europe, only the Upper Silesian Coal Basin is still being exploited. It is a highly populated region with a very large area (7,250 km²), located within the borders of two countries (Czech Republic and Poland), historically and culturally diverse. Both parts of this area, i.e. Ostrava-Karviná urban area on the Czech part and the Katowice urban area on the Polish part, also share many common elements, due to their complicated historical development. They were part of various state entities (Austria-Hungary, Prussia, Czechoslovakia, Greater German Reich, Czech Republic, Poland, etc.), and had and to some extent still have diverse national and ethnic structures (Poles, Czechs, Germans, Jews, or Silesians, as the case may be), while being also shaped by waves of migration. Both regions were strongly shaped not only by the mining industry, but also by iron and steel industry, the intensive development of the transportation and energy industry. As a result of industrialisation, similar social structures, analogous housing patterns, as well as cultural activities, developed in them. During the overall transformation after the year 1989, both regions were confronted with similar economic, environmental, and social problems. Today they are primarily significant post-industrial locations, i.e. zones with many abandoned industrial facilities and other traces of industrial activity and at the same time territories with many industrial monuments and museums. Industrial and post-industrial traditions belong very strongly to the cultural identity of both the Czech and Polish parts of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin.

The activity will involve two teams: from Ostrava and Katowice (fourteen people in total). They are dominated by the history of industrial literature, including translators, but also ethnographers, historians and artist-researchers. Both systems already cooperate with each other, creating a humanities research team.