

Beyond Human

*Reclaiming post-mining territories as laboratories for integrative transformation
based on the example of the region Upper Silesia, Poland*

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Msc3 Research Plan

*Explore Lab 32
2021-2022*

"I'm planning something geographical."

Werner Herzog, Fitzcarraldo, 1982

“Landscape is not given, but made and remade”

James Corner in ‘Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture’ (1999, p.12)

Introduction.

What if we never halted mines? - Rather, what if we extended their lifespan, cherished them, and get the best out of their miserable life. What if we inverted the destruction of the leviathan without inverting the time? Imagine - from a machine dismantling landscapes to the machine recovering landscape. The bridges to the wilderness have been burnt. The old Arcadia was lost and a new one has to be built. There is no other way.

Having a history rich in heavy industry, Poland has an extensive heritage of bituminous coal mining sites, which, if had not been closed, are awaiting their final day. Political changes of 1989 and progressive unprofitability of Polish coal mines gave birth to urban areas in a state of decay. Short-term contracts for excavation, lack of foresights, and instability of political decisions put a question mark on both still existing and abandoned coal mining territories. The highest concentration of these territories, and thereby questions, is based in the south-west of Poland, in Upper Silesia - a historical bordering region known for black coal mining. Locked in-between historic Polish and German lands, Upper Silesia has long been a territory where different agendas clashed amid and over-rich mineral deposits. The in-between existence resulted in the emergence of the distinct cultural identity of its historic inhabitants, the identity characteristic of ambiguity, and unspecified national affiliation (Kunce 2007, p.72). Recently, this peculiar ethnographic context is juxtaposed with ongoing energetic transformation aimed at reaching the goal of energetical neutrality by 2050. This results in forthcoming closures and leaves behind questions regarding the after-life of mining infrastructure and approaches to their transformation.

These approaches can be based on different perspectives on the position of the human within the revitalized space, wherein this theoretical position varies from ecocentric to anthropocentric. Recently, as the anthropocentric approach is prevalent, it is a result of deficits in understanding the necessity of paradigm shift in the relationship with the natural environment. The unconscious choice of anthropocentric approach results in 'disneylandisation' of former mines that manifests itself in the establishment of human amusement parks serving the most recent human needs. Once mining infrastructure accelerated the degradation of ecosystems, now it hosts, among others, museums, music venues, or memorials of anthropocentric past. On the core, these existing examples of revitalization are based on the same dualistic approach, man vs. nature, that led to the establishment of mining industry in the first place. In face of this approach, the following phases of land appropriation, excavation, abandonment, and revitalization are results of the same human greed to exploit natural resources. A question arises: how this innate human trait can be channeled into a positive feature for the recovery of the degraded landscape?

As I wrote about human ‘amusement parks’, it is not the only straightforward way. Dualism man vs. nature can lead to an entirely different project proposal, and that is reclaiming primeval wilderness. If we follow this promising path, we perceive the landscape as an attractive antithesis to the built environment or an idyllic Arcadia. As appealing as it might seem, this perspective strengthens the passive role of landscape pushing it even more onto the margin of urban territory. However, while future of many of the mining sites of Upper Silesia is still undefined, there is a chance to rethink them differently. Here, I notice a chance in a progressive ecological perspective that advocates the recovery of post-mining space as a laboratory producing and enriching culture, thus, extending the original machinic life. Rather than passive, I foresee an active role of culture in recovering nature. This statement begs a question that will channel my further research: how the post-mining landscape can be transformed into an experimental laboratory for the production of recovering landscape?

And the question concerns the process. Therefore, in my research based on the multiscale analysis of the region, a study of an ecological approach, and selected case studies, I am planning to deliver guidelines for the process of recovering a post-mining site. While providing the understanding of the interdependence of conditions in the macro-scale of the region, in mezzo-scale I intend to define and analyze a subregion carrying the most issues, within which in micro-scale, I will identify and analyze one very characteristic site that I will later focus on in the design phase.

Research question:

From ecological perspective, how the post-mining landscape can be transformed into an experimental laboratory for the production of recovering landscape?

Subquestions:

1. Mind: what is the current state of the Upper Silesian collective identity co-created by heavy industry, where its transformation is heading, and how the potential emerging identity can support recovering of post-mining landscape?

2. Society: what is the current state of geopolitical conditions of the Upper Silesia region in face of the energy transformation, and how these changing conditions can be supportive for recovering of post-mining landscape?

3. Environment: what is the current state of environmental conditions, and how to initiate the process of recovering landscape interweaving multiscale transformations of mind, society and environment?

“It is in vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves. There is none such. It is the bog in our brain and bowels, the primitive vigor of Nature in us, that inspires that dream. I shall never find in the wilds of Labrador any greater wildness than in some recess in Concord.”

Henry David Thoreau
in Journal (August 30, 1856)



Figure 1. Michelangelo, 'Fall and Expulsion from Garden of Eden' (1509-1510)
(*image source: wikipedia*)

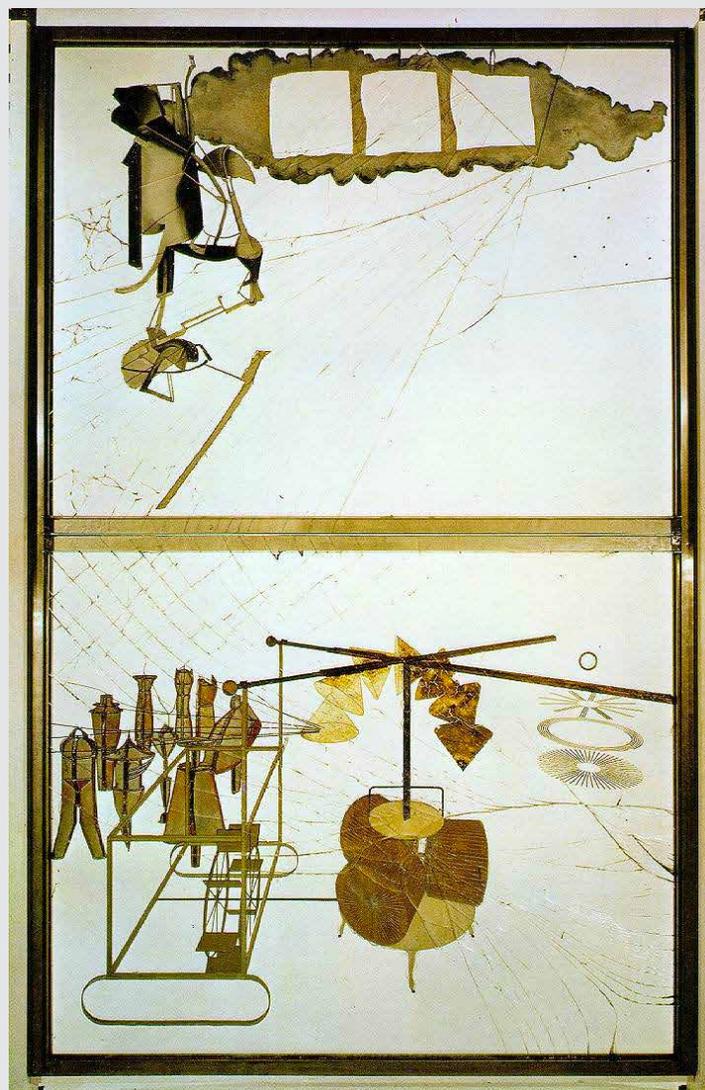


Figure 2. Marcel Duchamp, 'The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even' (most often called 'The Large Glass') (1915-1923). The most 'diagrammatic' and 'machinic' among the Duchamps's works.
(image source: wikipedia)

Theoretical Reflection.

In collective imagination the concepts of land, landscape, terrain, and territory - all deal with the matter of the soil. Understanding these seemingly clear but ambiguous concepts underlines the trajectory of further literature review. The ambiguity of these terms lies in the self-evidence of their meaning and results in their interchangeable use without the preceding theoretical reflection on what they in fact are. Which of those concepts should I address while elaborating on the recovery of mines? Shall I speak about reclaiming post-mining land, landscape, terrain, or territories? Which one of these concepts is the most appropriate in the face of spatial transition? Or perhaps all of them are relevant depending on the scope or the lens. As the scope of the research follows the investigation of the process of recovering landscape, I will be in demand of terminology that relates to it.

My journey begins with the recent literary attempts to define the notion of 'landscape'. I am particularly drawn to this term, as contemporary landscape thinkers such as James Corner, Sebastien Marot, or Georges Descombes frame it as a cross-disciplinary spatial medium following multiple explanations. According to this progressive discourse, landscape should be perceived as an active rather than passive space. While considering Corner's multiple attempts to clarify the recent perception of landscape, I conclude that a proper understanding of this notion follows the recognition of its plurality. In his essay 'Recovering Landscape as a Critical Cultural Practice' James Corner argues that landscape is 'an idea that is neither universally shared nor manifested in the same way across cultures and times; its meaning and value together with its physical and formal characteristics, are not fixed' (Corner 1999a, p.5). Perhaps his understanding is influenced by John Brinckerhoff Jackson, an honored essayist and cultural geographer, who in his widely acclaimed 'Discovering the Vernacular Landscape' concluded that there is no single 'landscape', yet there are 'landscapes' (Jackson 1984, p.156).

Apart from the plurality of meanings, the discourse presented in 'Recovering landscape' is opposed to the modernist recognition of landscape as an Arcadian, untouched wilderness. In his essay, Corner proves that landscape has long been stigmatized as an idyllic counterpart to the built environment. This image, constructed by media on nostalgia, has been present in culture ever since the end of IIWW (Corner 1999, p.8). While on one hand it rightly summons to protect the natural environment from the destructive power of man, on the second it deepens dualistic divergence between culture and nature. In literature, absurdity of this division has long been studied, among others, by Donna Haraway, an author of 'A Cyborg Manifesto' who in response to the dualistic perception coined the transcendent term of 'nature-culture'. Similar conclusions were presented by Gregory Bateson, an English anthropologist, linguist, and cyberneticist, who in 1972 his 'Steps to Ecology of Mind' derived the human-nature divergence from Darwin's falsely posed 'unit of survival' - species vs. species (Bateson 1972, p.491).

As environmental atrophy was finally proved in the late 1970s (Rich 2018), the concept of the landscape became a battlefield for advocates of diverse and contradictory ecologies. Followers of inter alia resourcism, deep ecology, or ecofeminism began to argue over the right approach towards nature (Corner 1999, p.14). Among them, Bateson stood out as a figure who laid the foundation for a progressive model of ecologies linking three scales of mind, society, and environment. His model was later advanced in hands of Felix Guattari, a French psychoanalyst and poststructuralist theorist well-known for his collaboration with Gilles Deleuze. In his 'Three Ecologies' (1989) Guattari refined Bateson's model of ecologies by providing more details and installing a layer of poststructuralist Marxism. Once again, in Guattari's philosophy titled 'ecosophy' it is possible to find a kind request to mankind to halt and reorient the detachment of culture from nature. In this matter, Guattari states that 'now more than ever, nature cannot be separated from culture; to comprehend the interactions between ecosystems, the mecosphere and the social and individual Universes of reference, we must learn to think 'transversally' (Guattari 1989, p.43).

Guattari's intoxicating and widely reproduced manifesto echos in the philosophy of posthumanism as recently it became a major debate site in light of the broadly proclaimed epoch of Anthropocene. In fact, a large share of recent scholarship in this field is influenced by the philosophy developed by the collaboration Deleuze-Guattari who once again reopened the gate for the critique of humanism. Recently, Rossi Braidotti, a contemporary continental philosopher and feminist theorist, reap the harvest sown by the duet while exploring philosophy through Deleuzian lense of cartographies. In the edited-by-her book 'Post-Human Ecologies' (2019) Braidotti delves into posthuman turn defining it as a convergence between post-humanism and post-anthropocentrism. Further, she stresses the necessity to think beyond the anthropocentric frame while abandoning hierarchical comparisons (Braidotti 2019, p.19). However, posthumanism's main focus is not merely the critique of anthropocentrism, but of the humanist ideal of the enlightened 'Man' (Braidotti 2019, p.23). Is it possible to redefine this ideal using the remarks of posthuman turn, or perhaps the single ideal does not exist?

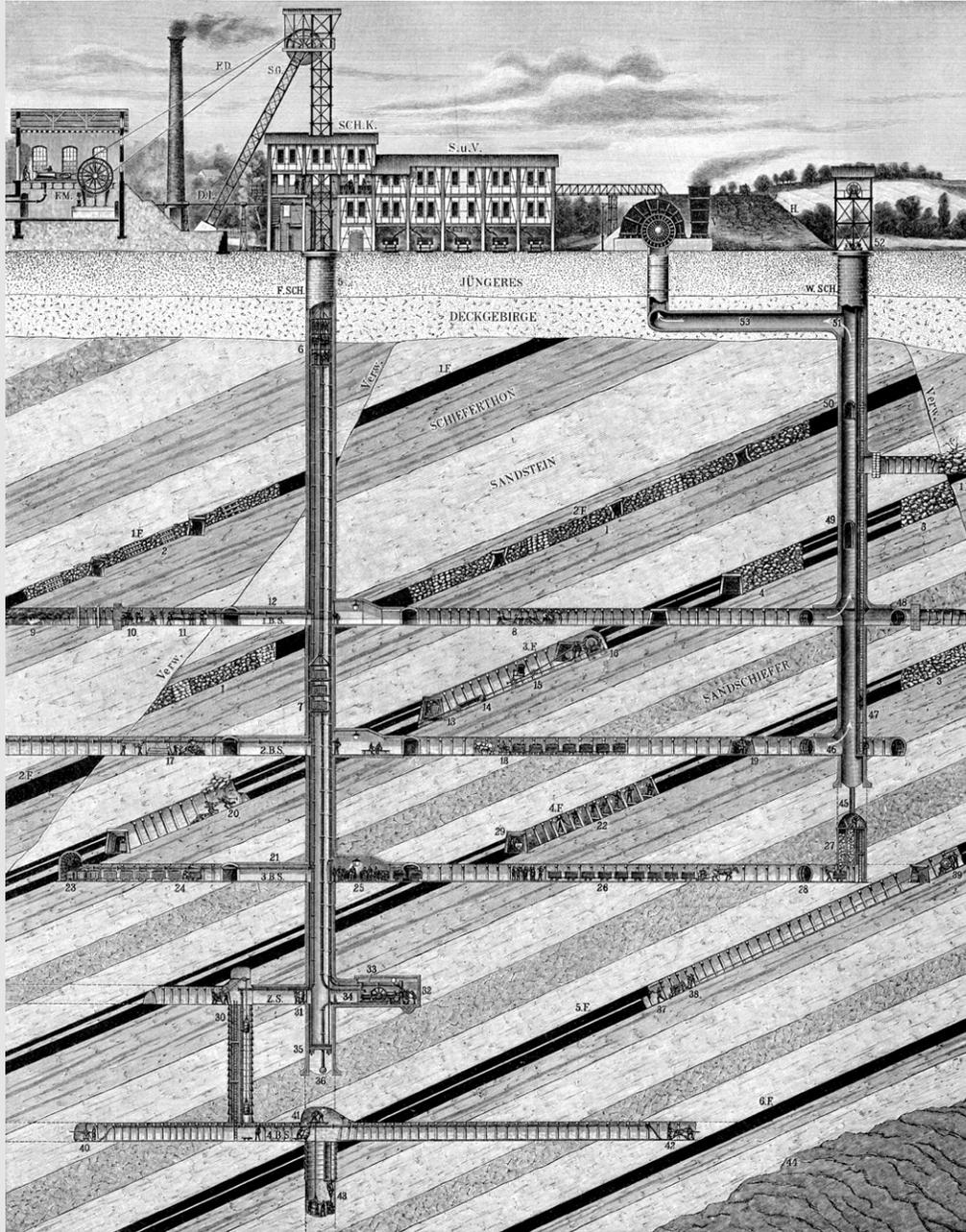
Thinking through soil.

To lay the course in the terrain of the Anthropocene, it is best, to begin with the understanding of its origin. Popularized in the early 2000s by Paul J. Crutzen, a prominent Dutch scientist and a Nobel Prize winner, the term of Anthropocene quickly began to undermine the validity of its predecessor - Holocene, a long-operating term widely accredited by the scientific community. Whereas the Holocene stood for a formal name for the most recent epoch of the history of Earth history dating back to the end of the last ice age 11,700 years ago, the informal Anthropocene is an attempt to label the most recent human impact on Earth's geology and ecosystems (Revkin 2016). As of April 2021, neither the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) nor the International Commission of Stratigraphy (ICS) has officially recognized the validity of the term. Still, after over 20 years from the birth of the concept, the opinions on its correctness are divided as initially Anthropocene was not derived from ICS records, yet announced provocatively during a scientific meeting (Finney & Edwards 2016).

As it might not seem in the beginning, the informal Anthropocene not only echoed in the scientific community but became a major site of debate. In scholarship academics such as Zalasiewicz et al. (2008) considered the anthropogenic effects mentioned by Crutzen and questioned whether these effects required the introduction of a new epoch. Since the article 'Are we now living in the Anthropocene?' (Zalasiewicz et al. 2008) was published in *GSA Today*, the idea for the establishment of a new epoch of geologic time has been considered with an escalating interest both in public and scientific media (e.g. *Nature*, *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *National Geographic*, *Der Spiegel*) (Finney & Edwards 2016). In their article, Zalasiewicz et. al. (2008) advocate the thesis that there has been sufficient evidence of stratigraphically significant change to recognize the birth of the Anthropocene. To clarify the correctness of the new nomenclature, in 2009 the ICS Subcommittee on Quaternary Stratigraphy formed a research group to consider the questions regarding the establishment of the new epoch (Finney & Edwards 2016). Apart from the scientific debate, a question addressing common sense can be raised - is mankind's impact on the spaceship Earth still not evident enough?

In the core, the Anthropocene theory considers mankind one of many geomorphic forces shaping Earth systems (Crutzen 2002 in Yusoff 2012, p.780). However, looking from an even wider perspective it is possible to recognize the whole 'life as a geological force' (Westbroek 1991 in Yusoff 2012, p.780), and this life that has both its beginning and the end in the soil. The 'geo-logic' of Anthropocene (Frode-man 2003 in Yusoff 2012) strives for fossil fuel extraction that later manifests itself in political structures of the late capitalism (Crutzen 2002 in Yusoff 2012, p. 780). This, in turn, shapes a new lens of 'social geology', as Kathryn Yusoff (2012, p.780) refers to it. Recently, this perception is often overlooked and undertheorized, and as Yusoff (2012, p. 780) claims it has not been given enough attention in social sciences. Looking at society through the lens of 'social geology' or geological effects is an

emerging field that will gain recognition as the anthropogenic change escalates. This perception invites us to 'imagine ourselves as geomorphic agents and see our ways of being as geological rather than biological per se' (Yusoff 2012, p. 781). As geomorphic agents on Earth, we are situated among other extraterrestrial forces. However, unlike other forces, to capitalize the power we-humans can incorporate geologic forces of preceding fossilizations (Grosz 2012, p.975 in Yusoff 2012, p.781). Here, the key to the rapid increase of capital is found in 'the discovery of force of life in dead matter, or life in reminders of life' (Povinelli 2016, p.167), and these discoveries are coal and petroleum. These desirable commodities hidden deep below Earth's surface become a major force fueling civilization. However, once these commodities are taken out of the subterrestrial geological context, their geological terrestrial and superterrestrial consequences tie our hands. Being a cornerstone for the Deleuzoguattarian processes of territorialization and deterritorialization the dead matter becomes a critical lens for the investigation of scapes underpinned by mining activity. More than just a lens, the dead matter-soil becomes a mirror of humans in the epoch of Anthropocene.



M. = Fördermaschine, F.D. = Förderdrahtseile, S.G. = Seilscheibengerüst, D.L. = Dampfleitung, SCH.K. = Schachtkäue, S.u.V. = Sieberei u. Verladung, V. = Ventilator, H. = Bergehalde, SCH. = Förderschacht, W.SCH. = Wetterschacht, Verw. = Verwerfung, 1.-6.F. = 1.-6. Flöz, 1.-4.B.S. = 1.-4. Bausohle, Z.S. = Zwischensohle. — (Ziffern s. Text des Artikels.)

Figure 3. Section through the bituminous coal mine, author unknown.

(image source: zeno.com)

Methodological Reflection.

The family of Imaging.

There is no such thing as landscape without image. 'Without image there is no such thing as landscape - only unmediated environment' (Corner 1999b, p.153). In fact, the notion of the landscape originates from Middle Dutch *lantscap* meaning denoting a picture of scenery (OED). As a result of this definition, landscape architecture, a profession understood as shaping the land, is depended on the preceding act of imaging, where the imaging follows different schemes and structures representative of designer's aim. However, as Corner (1999b, p.153) claims, in his essay 'Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes', there is a notable difference between exclusively retinal image and an eidetic image, among which the latter frames more holistic and memorable perception engaging multiple senses. In turn, this multi-sensory engagement of the eidetic image is closer German *landschaft* than to the Dutch *lantscap*, as the German word embraces more than a picturesque composition of objects; in a sense it hosts an underlying layer of becoming. Thus, in landscape understood as *landschaft* the attention shifts from a fixed state to the process. As each process comprises multiple phases and conditions, in depicting the recovery of landscape there is a need to provide different forms of imagining that present: how things become, how things relate, and how things transform (Corner 1999b, p.159). According to Corner (1999b, p.162) these forms follow techniques, such as, diagramming, mapping, planning, and sectioning. They are used to construct and project new landscapes or to imagine the process. Corner claims that "(...) the future of landscape as a culturally significant practice is depended on the capacity of its inventors to imagine the world in new ways and to body forth those images in richly phenomenal and efficacious terms" (1999b, p.167).

Diagramming.

The notion of Corner's representation of 'becoming' can be associated with deleuzo-guattarian use of diagram, who use this technique to depict the relationship between territoriality and deterritorialization. In this matter Guattari (1995, p. 44) states that 'the diagram is conceived as an autopoietic machine which not only gives it a functional and material consistency, but requires it to deploy its diverse registers of alterity, freeing it from an identity locked into simple structural relations'. Here, diagram represents association of thoughts with images, media, icons or other kinds of imagination. Rather than simplifying in a structuralist way, in Deleuzoguattarian sense the diagram carries an underlying layer of the image represented, thus, is better in capturing 'functional articulations' (Gensko 1996, p.17). This understanding can be traced back to Dadaism and the work of Marcel Duchamp, who in his artwork 'The Large Glass' delivers a representations of diagram and abstract machines - the notions later borrowed and refined by the duet Deleuze-Guattari.

The Deleuzoguattarian diagram evolves in the hands of Corner (1999b, p.153) who in his essay 'Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes' elaborates on the recent significance of these techniques. Corner states that the methods of hybridized and composite diagrams will soon enable even more profound advancements in the formation of landscape as a result of their inclusiveness and instrumentality (Corner 1999b, p.166). While assigning the special attention to diagram, Corner recalls the examples of diagrams by acknowledged architects – Koolhaas, Tschumi or Eisenman. In his essay he points that their diagrams incorporate multiple levels of information and can be considered as 'strategic layer-diagrams' unfolding further steps in the design process. While concluding Corner captures the essence of the diagramming technique. He states that 'the future of landscape as a culturally significant practice is dependent on the capacity of its inventors to imagine world in new ways and to body forth those images in richly phenomenal and efficacious terms' (Corner 1999b, p.167).

“The diagram is conceived as an autopoietic machine which not only gives it a functional and material consistency, but requires it to deploy its diverse registers of alterity, freeing it from an identity locked into simple structural relations”

Felix Guattari
in *Chaosmosis* (1995, p.44)

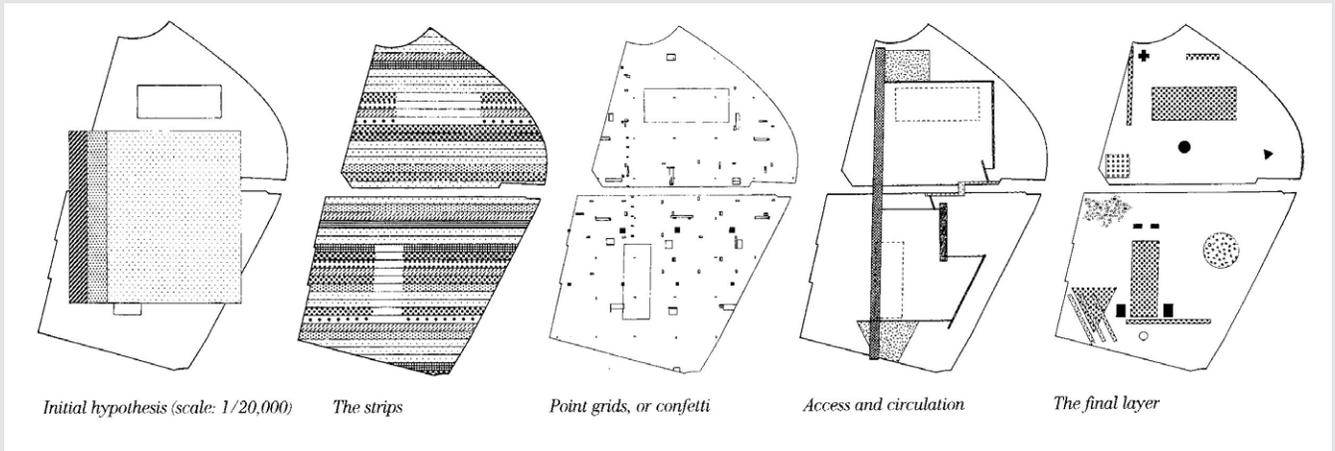
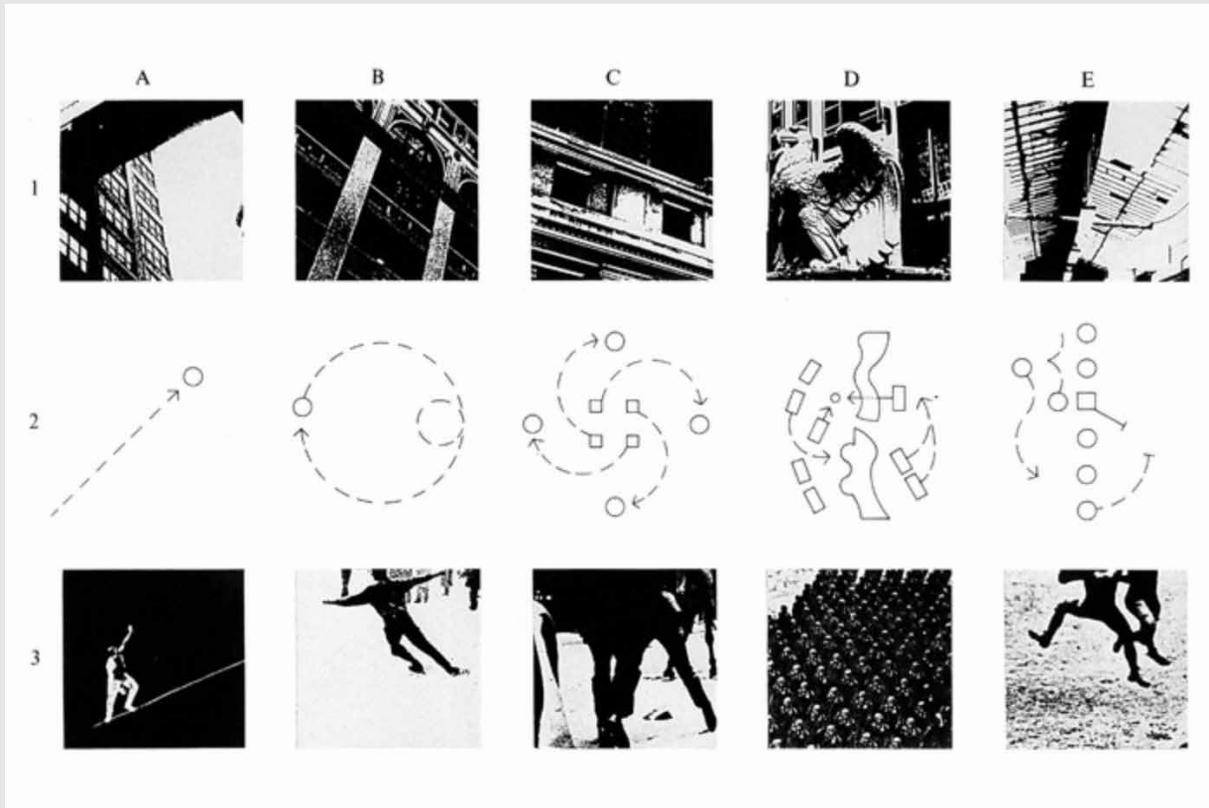


Figure 4. OMA, competition entry for the design of Parc la Vilette, Paris.
 The layer-diagram famous for isolation of superimposed spatial systems.
 (image source: OMA)



[1]

Figure 5. Bernard Tschumi, The Manhattan Transcripts

(image source: Bernard Tschumi Architects)

“

“Thinking is neither a line drawn between subject and object nor a revolving of one around the other. Rather, thinking takes place in relationship of territory and the earth”

- Deleuze and Guattari in ‘What is Philosophy?’, (1994, p.84)

Cartographies - Ground for thoughts.

In their 1991 book 'What Is Philosophy?' Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari develop a philosophical approach of 'geophilosophy' by emphasizing the concept of space as such over the subject-oriented phenomenological space. According to their newly proposed approach thoughts are not present on the line subject - object, rather 'thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth'. Their position is akin to Husserl's who appeals for ground for thoughts. However, Deleuze and Guattari depart from his position on the stability and permanence of earth. Rather, they notice that earth constantly undergoes processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization that underlay the thinking processes (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p.84). In what follows they perceive earth and territory as two pieces of the same indiscernible equations – deterritorialization (from territory to earth) and reterritorialization (from earth to territory) (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p.86). What comes first? – this is the question.

The notion of 'geophilosophy' as thoughts hovering over shifting territory can be imagined as a three-dimensional system where these three dimensions follow: thoughts (subject-object relationship perceived in a phenomenological sense), territory (in a constant state of flux) and soil (serving as an objective background). As thoughts and territory are purely intangible concepts, soil as such is not. Therefore, if philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari were to be applied, I conclude that there is a need for the translation between the tangible and the intangible – between the soil and the territory. This translation can be found in the techniques of cartographies, which historically represents territories of political and cultural divisions most often on a flat surface of a map. According to Corner (1999b, p.162) these techniques should appear as an active tool for projection of new futures - construing (imaging) and constructing (projecting) new landscapes (Corner 1999b, p.162).

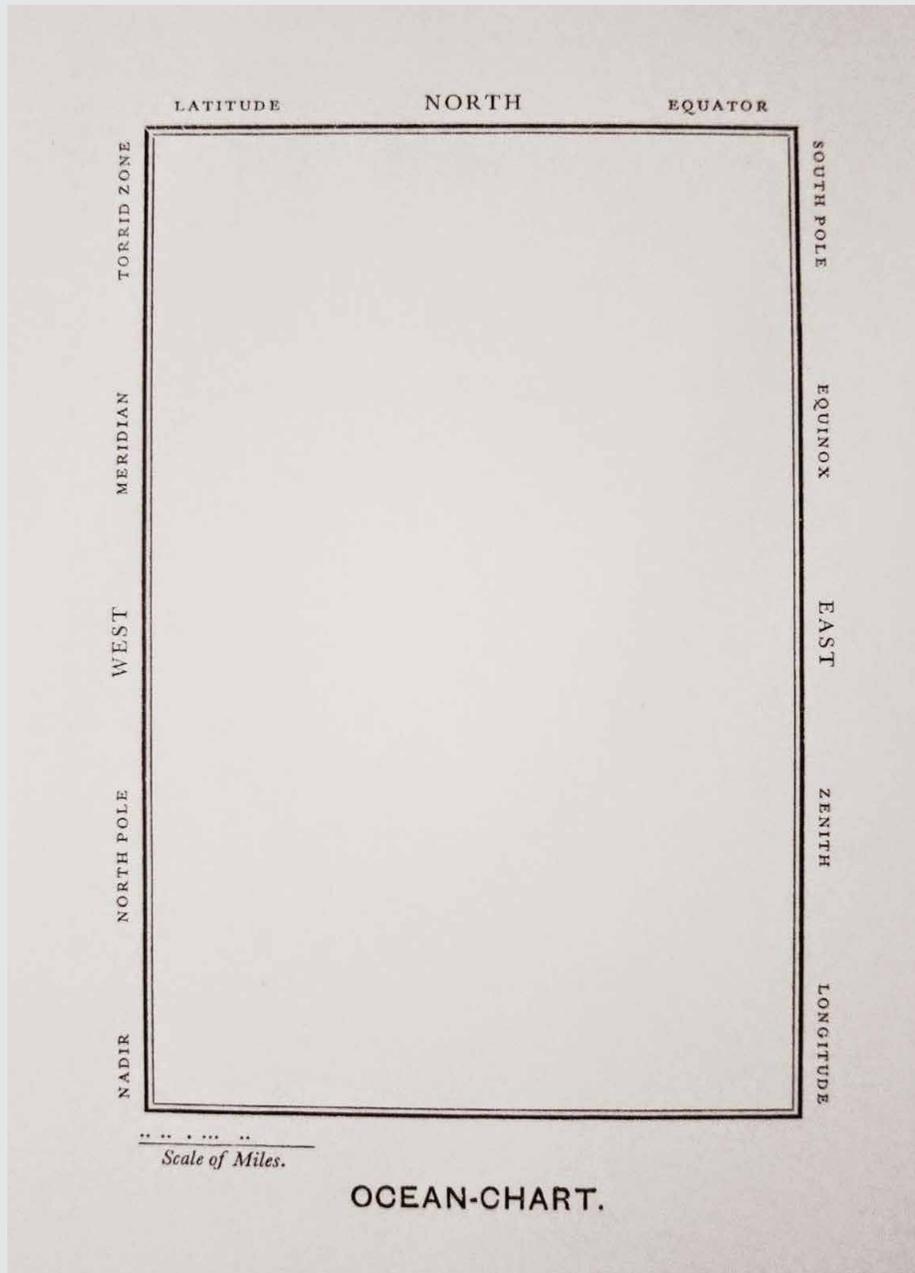
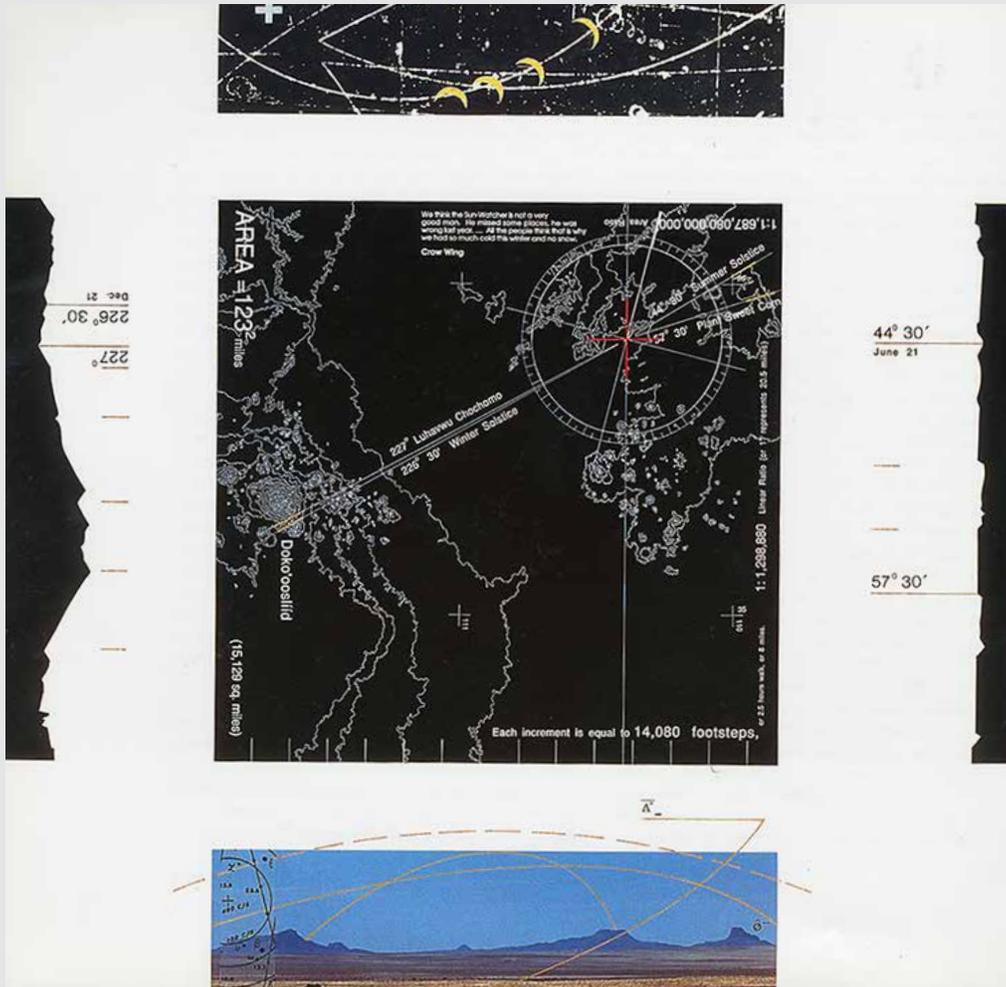


Figure 7. Lewis Carroll, 'Ocean Chart', 1876.
(image source: nundo.org)



[3]

Figure 8. James Corner, Measurements in American Landscape
 (image source: wordsin.space.net)

Cartographies of Research

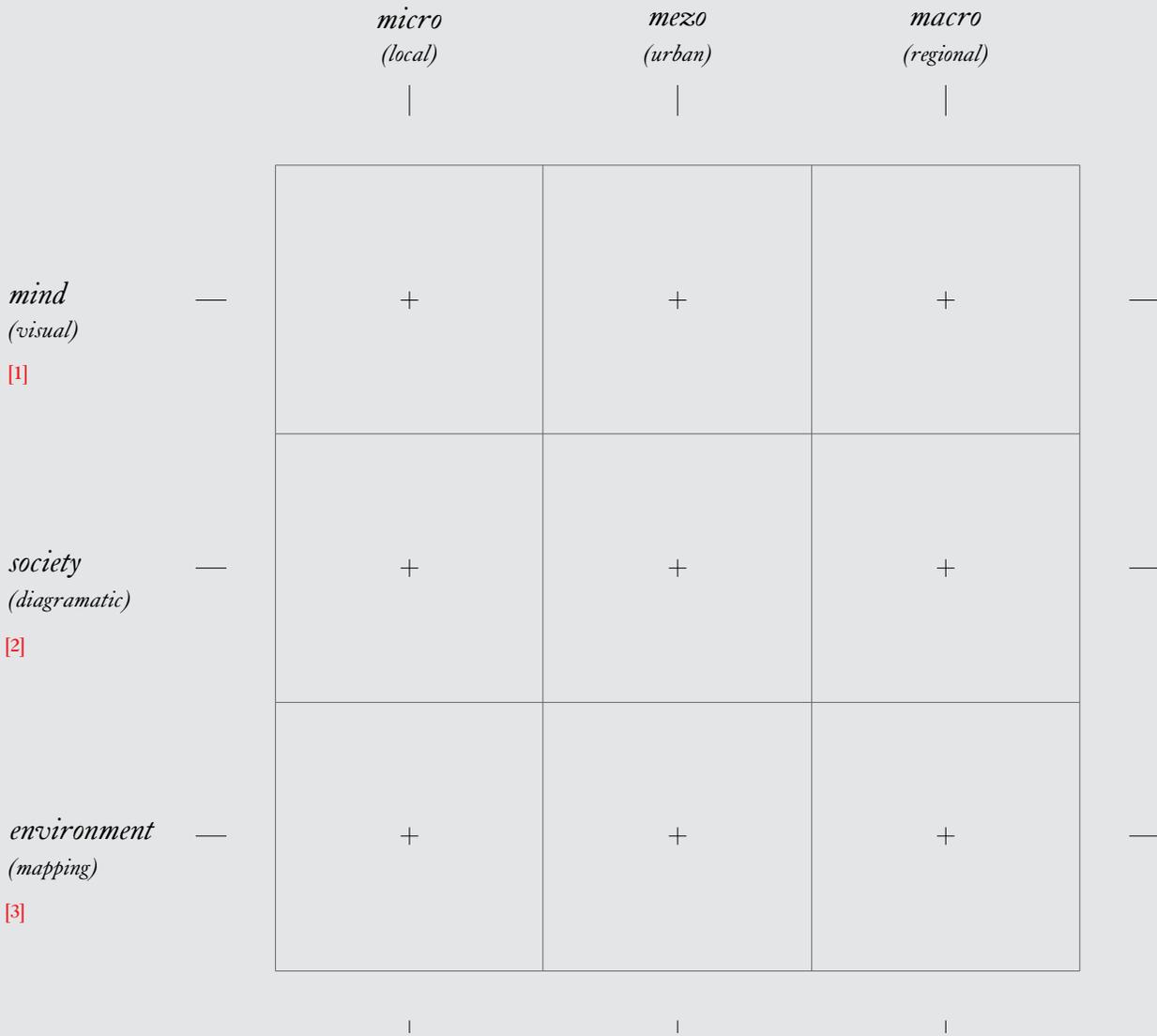
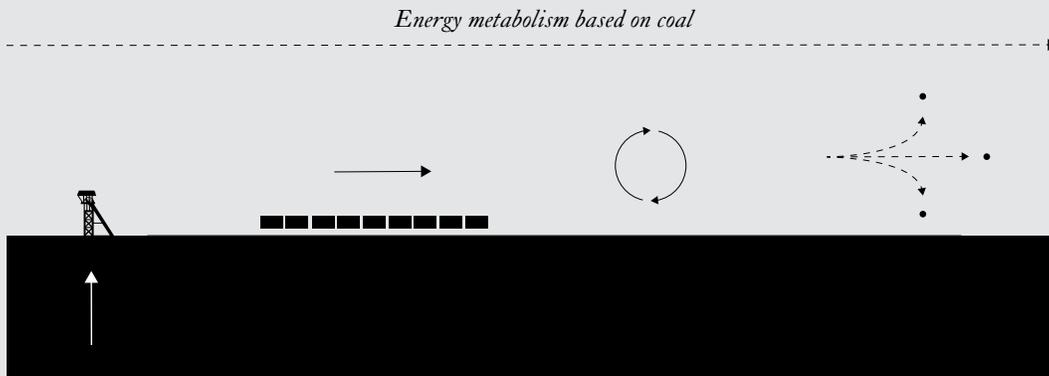
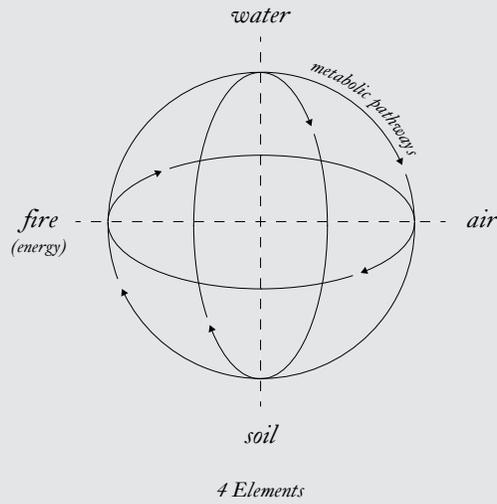


Figure 9. ‘Cartographies of Research’ - 9 maps interweaving 3 scales of ecosohy - mind, society, environment with 3 levels of analysis - micro, mezo, macro. Rather than representing how things are, these maps are intended to render realities or reveal the ‘becoming’.

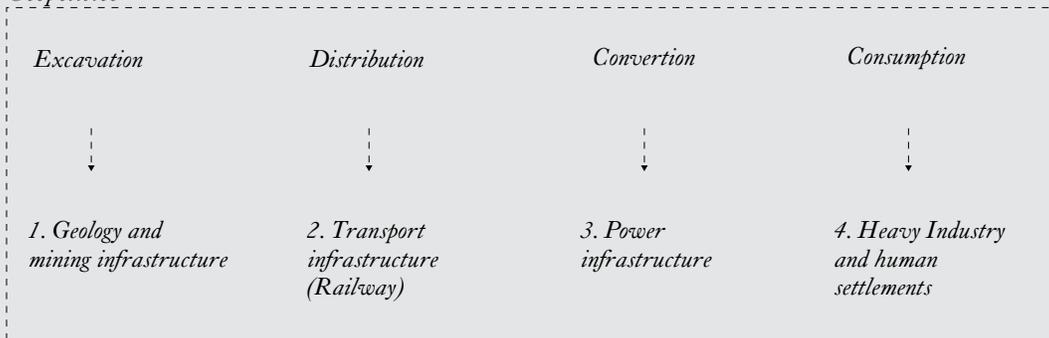
Figure 10. ‘Filtering Conditions’ - conditions characteristic for the region of Upper Silesia and the focus of ‘Cartographies of Research’. Here, I stress the significance of *soil* wherein the mining activity has both its beginning and the end. Understanding the subterrrestrial mining effects on terrestrial and superterrestrial conditions is crucial for recovery of degraded natural landscape.

[1], [2], [3] - references to the examples of the representations of the consecutive scales of mind, society and environment. These examples with the corresponding numbers can be found on previous pages of this Reseach Plan.

Filtering Conditions



Geopolitics



Conditions:

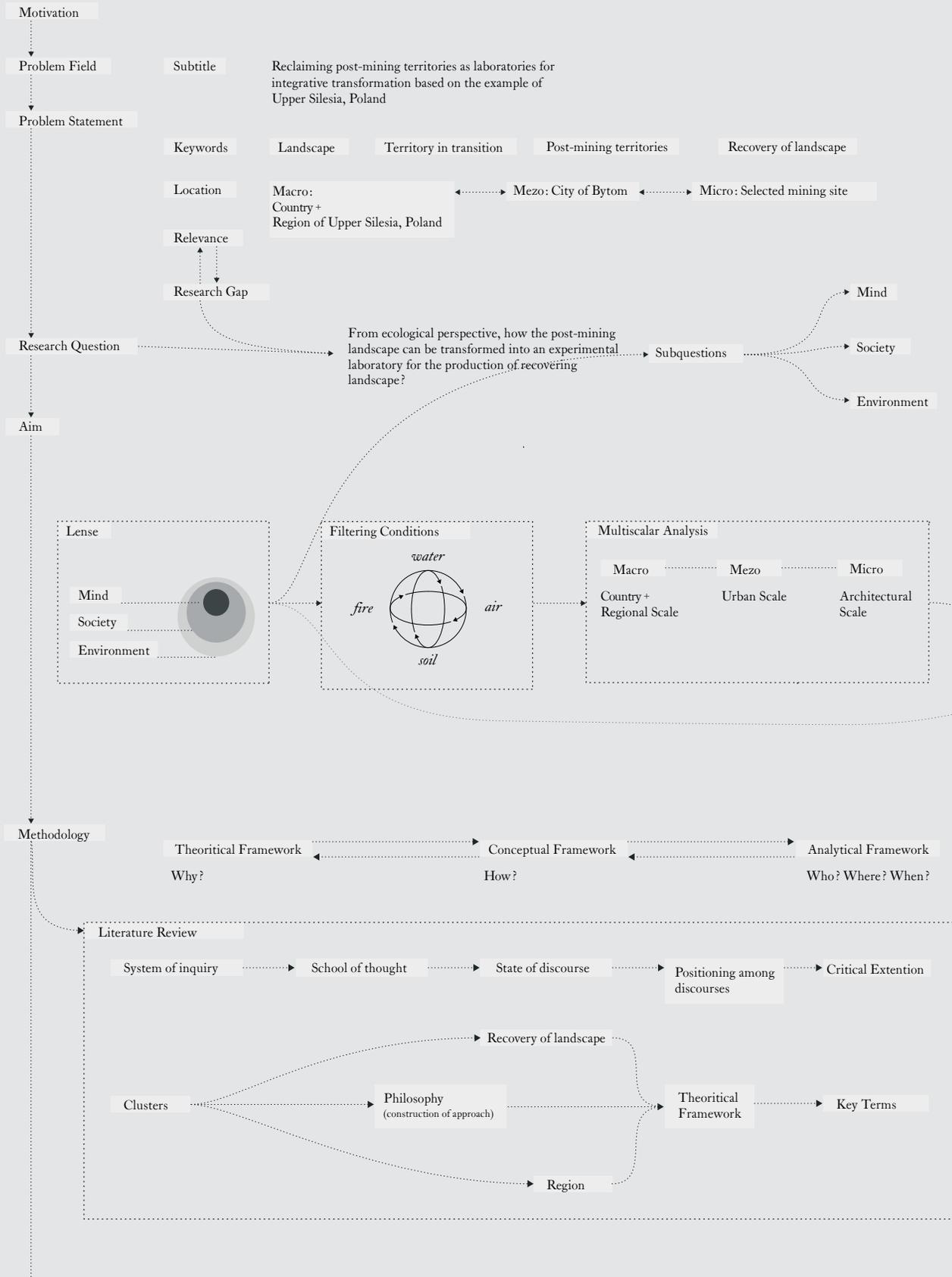
Including inter alia:
 Study of distribution of bituminous coal mines, study of the mining infrastructure, study of soil contamination and post-mining leftover, the subterrestrial effects of excavation on the terrestrial and superterrestrial

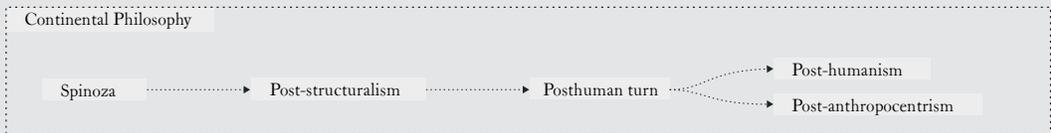
Including inter alia:
 Study of coal transport pathways; understanding of dependence of the regional transport infrastructure on coal.

Including inter alia:
 Overview of main places of supply; understanding the dependence of Polish power infrastructure on coal

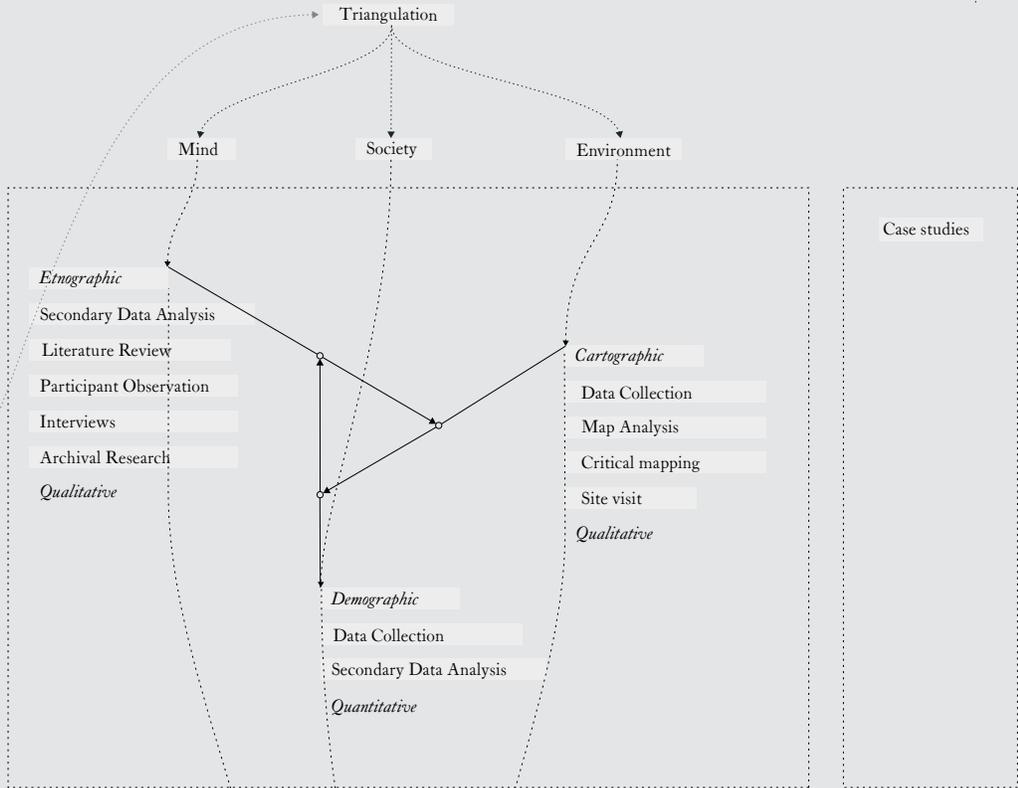
Including inter alia:
 disposition of heavy industry in relation to mining infrastructure, historical dependence of urban form on industry

Research Framework





Methods



Evaluation

Design Reflection

- type of project
- projective
- experimental
- speculative
- ...

Filtering Conditions

Mode of translation: visual, diagrammatic, cartographic

Outcomes

	<i>mind</i>	<i>society</i>	<i>environment</i>	
	+	+	+	<i>micro</i>
	+	+	+	<i>mezo</i>
	+	+	+	<i>macro</i>

what is the current state of the Upper Silesian collective identity co-created by heavy industry, where its transformation is heading, and how the potential emerging identity can support recovering of post-mining landscape?

what is the current state of geopolitical conditions of the Upper Silesia region in face of the energy transformation, and how these changing conditions can be supportive for recovering of post-mining landscape?

what is the current state of environmental conditions, and how to initiate the process of recovering landscape interweaving multiscalar transformations of mind, society and environment?

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