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Controlling or rewilding the river: local expressions of a tension between revitalization and risk control, case study of the Vistreplain

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► To cite this version:

Ghita Serrhini-Naji, Juliette Cerceau, Sylvain Olivier, Marc Vinches, Raphael Mathevet. Controlling or rewilding the river: local expressions of a tension between revitalization and risk control, case study of the Vistreplain. AISH 2022 - XIème Assemblée Scientifique de l'Association Internationale des Sciences Hydrologiques, May 2022, Montpellier, France. , 2022. hal-03702932

HAL Id: hal-03702932

<https://imt-mines-ales.hal.science/hal-03702932>

Submitted on 29 Jun 2022

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Controlling or rewilding the river: local expressions of a tension between revitalization and risk control

Case study of the Vistre plain, France



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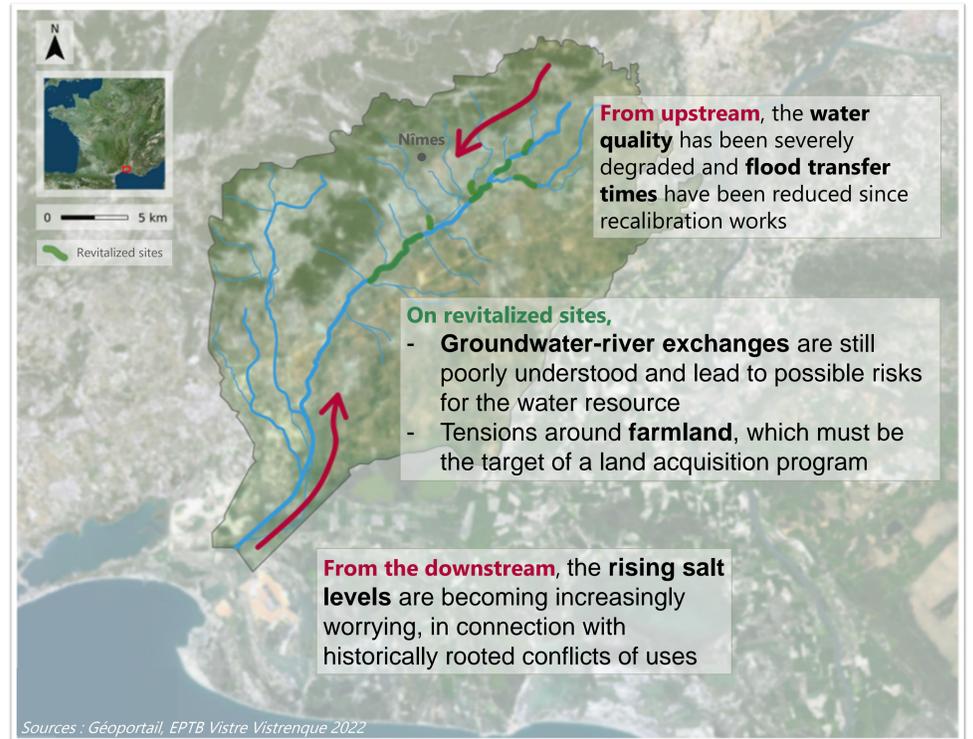


Recreation of meanders in the village of Milhaud, Gard Department. Credits : EPTB Vistre Vistrenque, 2016

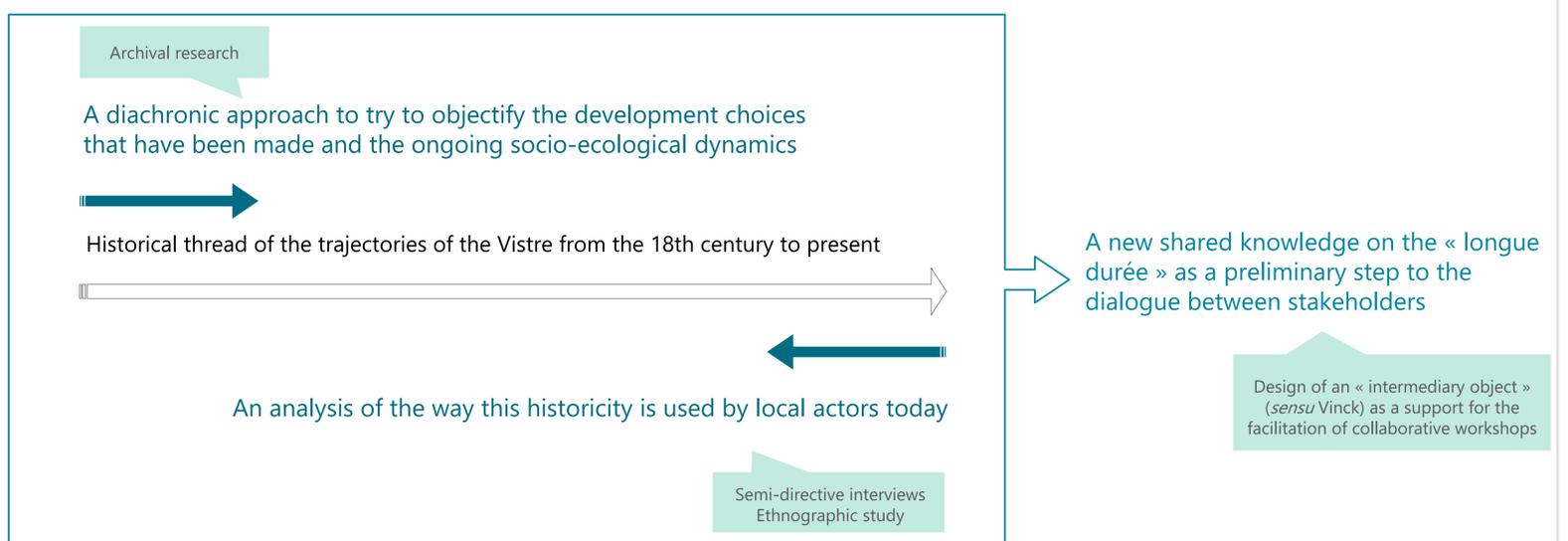
Located in the south of France, in the department of Gard, between Costières and Garrigues, the Vistre is a Mediterranean river that rises north of the city of Nîmes in the town of Bezouce before joining the sea via the Rhone to Sète navigation canal.

This coastal river has known the usual trajectory of French rivers since the end of the Second World War: it has been dug and canalized. By becoming a straight canal for the discharge of wastewater and floods that are particularly frequent and destructive in this region, it has lost most of its ecological functions. For the past twenty years, this river has been the object of an extensive revitalization project. In the long term, the aim is to enable the river to recover its hydro-geomorphological dynamics, which is beneficial to biodiversity, by creating meanders and deploying ecological engineering techniques along its entire course. These actions result in a kind of rewilding of some riparian areas and question the modalities of articulation of a restoration ecology based on the free evolution of the environments and of a genuinely integrated management on the catchment scale.

Could the **territorial interdependencies**, currently at the origin of **tensions**, be the source of **new social and ecological solidarities** ?



A **back and forth** historical approach that feeds an **action research** project



Can the revitalization of the Vistre **reinvent commons** for resilient water management through the transformation of hydrosociological interdependencies?

Existence of extensive communal goods until the XVIIIth century (pastures, irrigation systems and management of water levels)



Expansion of the Ostromian paradigm (common pool resources) and consideration of potential new commons (water and landscape as resources)

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