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► To cite this version:

Jessie Haus, Magalie Marais, Julie Olivero. Discursive strategies for organizational legitimization in a context of high visibility of environmental risks: The case of the environmental scandal of the red mud of the industrialist Alteo in Gardanne (France). International Symposium of Labex DRIIHM - Inter-Disciplinary Research Facility on Human-Environment Interactions, Sep 2021, Toulouse, France. hal-04137219

HAL Id: hal-04137219

<https://hal.science/hal-04137219v1>

Submitted on 22 Jun 2023

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Discursive strategies for organizational legitimization in a context of high visibility of environmental risks: The case of the environmental scandal of the red mud of the industrialist Alteo in Gardanne (France)

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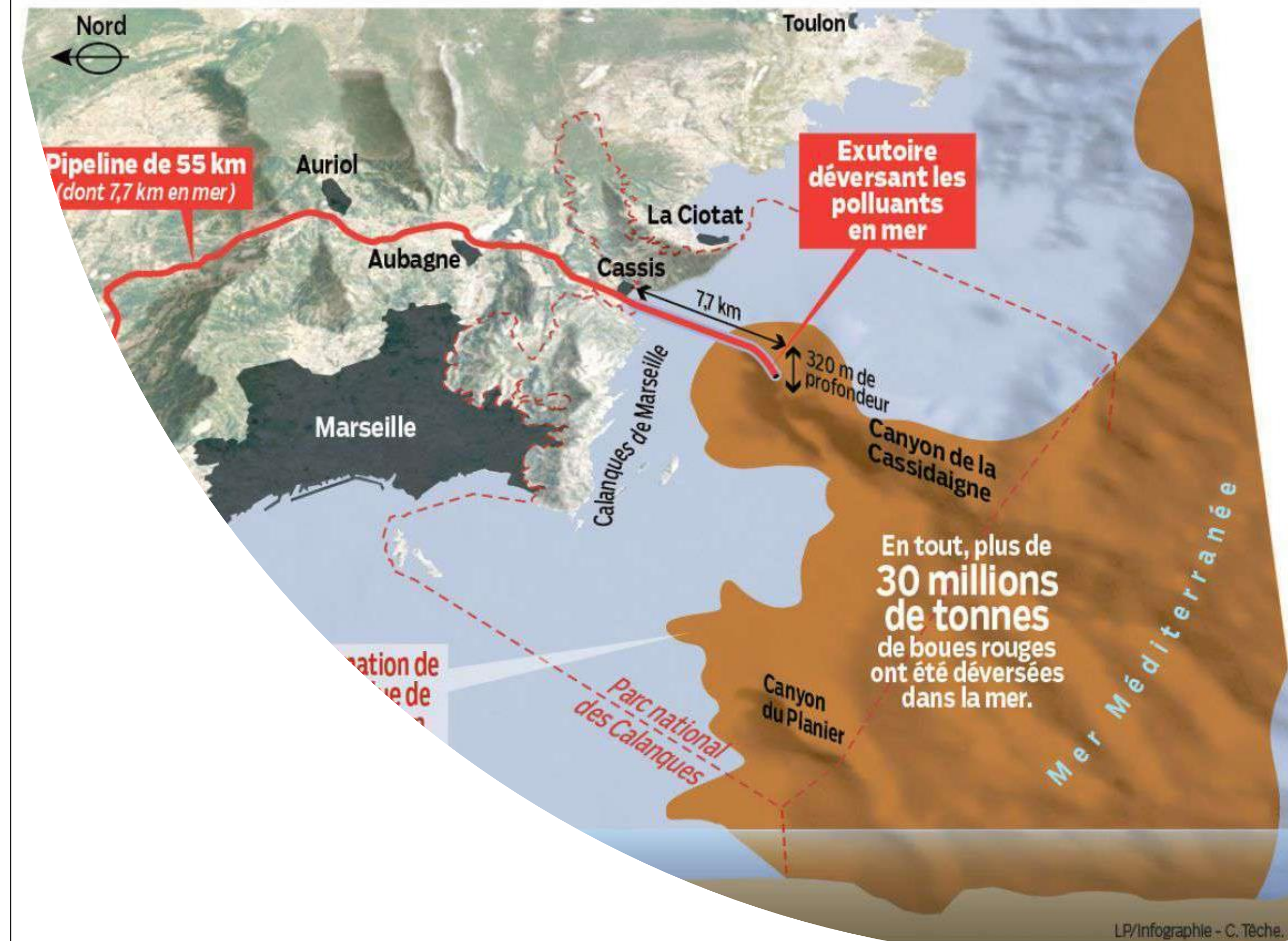
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SUMMARY

The industrial company Alteo in Gardanne (France) has been the subject of a major controversy about its discharge into ecosystems of industrial residues - red mud - particularly in the Calanques National Park (Marseille). The objective of this research work is to analyze *how the industrial company has managed (or not) to legitimize itself through its discursive communication and its actions towards its stakeholders*. These stakeholders were, in fact, the bearers of various criticisms against the company, that over the years had to respond to them with actions aimed at adapting to the changing expectations of its environment. This controversy is characterized, moreover, by a high visibility of the environmental impacts of the industrialist and by a strong use of images and visuals which have impacted the legitimation strategies and logics involved. The poster presents the theoretical analysis framework of the research, the qualitative methodology by case study conducted over the period 2014-2021 and the discourse analysis developed, as well as the first results or avenues of results emanating from this research in management science.



1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Which logics are used by Alteo to diffuse environmental information towards its stakeholders during the 2014-2021 controversy?

How does this impact the possibility for Alteo to sustain its legitimacy and to demonstrate its organizational agility?

Which are the consequences for the company and for its stakeholders in a context of a high visibility of risks?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- **Discursive legitimization strategies** (Fraser, 2019; Gendron, 2014; Gloser et al., 2019; Nyberg & Wright, 2012) and **Boltanski and Thevenot (1991)'s logics for justification**.
- **Organizational agility** (Goldman, 1994; Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Weber & Tarba, 2014; Teece et al., 2016; Felipe et al., 2020) and **environmental communication** (Olivero, 2014; Plot-Vicard, 2010).
- **High visibility, risks, and legitimization strategies** (De Vajauny & Vaast, 2016; Weiss, 2016; Rovisco & Veneti, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

- **Single case study of an industrial controversy** (Yin, 2003, 2014) – **Extreme case** (Patton, 2002; Fraser, 2019)
- **Qualitative discourse analysis of secondary data from 2014-2021** (Allard-Poesi et al., 1999; Belem, 2009; Miles and Huberman, 1994);
- **Narrative strategy** (Langley, 1997, 1999; Pettigrew, 1990)
- **Visuality and visual practices** (Bell and Davison, 2013; Meyer et al., 2013; Putnam and Mumby, 2014)

4. FINDINGS – DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES AND TRAJECTORY OF THE INDUSTRIAL CONTROVERSY

