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## ► To cite this version:

Xavier Arnauld de Sartre, Justin Missaghieh-Poncet. Deep geothermal energy policies within the context of the depolitisation of sub-surface in France. Geothermal energy workshop (ANR MRSEI EDGE Program), Mar 2022, Toulouse, France. hal-03726339

HAL Id: hal-03726339

<https://univ-pau.hal.science/hal-03726339>

Submitted on 18 Jul 2022

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# Deep geothermal energy policies within the context of the depolitisation of sub-surface in France

Xavier Arnauld de Sartre, Justin Missaghieh--Poncet

# Presentation outline

- ▶ Context: Depoliticization of subsurface in France
- ▶ Case study of geothermy France – Strasbourg
- ▶ Insights of the seismicity in Strasbourg
- ▶ Conclusions



# Context – Depoliticisation of sub-surface in France

- ▶ Politicization: the fact that a topic becomes a matter of concern for political actors
- ▶ In France, a slow disappearance of subsurface from political debates:
  - Until 1980': state driven
  - 1980-2000': state facilitating
  - 2000-2010': multiple crisis
- Subsurface: ill politicized topic

Nature Sciences Sociétés 29, S81-S90 (2021)  
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<https://doi.org/10.1051/nss/2021049>

Supplément : Pour une géologie politique

## Regards – Focus

**Évolution de la perception et de la gestion du sous-sol dans l'administration centrale française :  
 vue de l'intérieur de Carole Mercier\***  
 Propos recueillis par Xavier Arnauld de Sartre et Sébastien Chailleux

Carole Mercier<sup>1</sup>, Sébastien Chailleux<sup>2,\*</sup> et Xavier Arnauld de Sartre<sup>3</sup>

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Nature Sciences  
 Sociétés

Disponible en ligne :  
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La Rédaction



Carole Mercier a été responsable opérationnelle entre 1999 et 2011 du service en charge de l'activité d'exploration et d'exploitation des matières premières énergétiques et des stockages souterrains sur le territoire français dans les ministères en charge des mines et de l'énergie. Elle a plus particulièrement suivi la problématique des hydrocarbures en France de la fin des années 1980 à la fin des années 2010, trois décennies qui lui ont permis de voir se redéfinir les stratégies de la France à l'endroit du sous-sol en général et des hydrocarbures en particulier.

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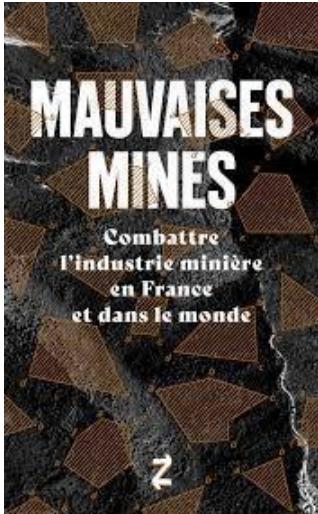
\* Cet article est une contribution au numéro coordonné par X. Arnauld de Sartre et S. Chailleux, intitulé « Pour une géologie politique ».

# Context – multiple crisis



Shale gaz are less important  
than social conflicts

PHILIPPE ZITTOUN  
SÉBASTIEN CHAILLEUX



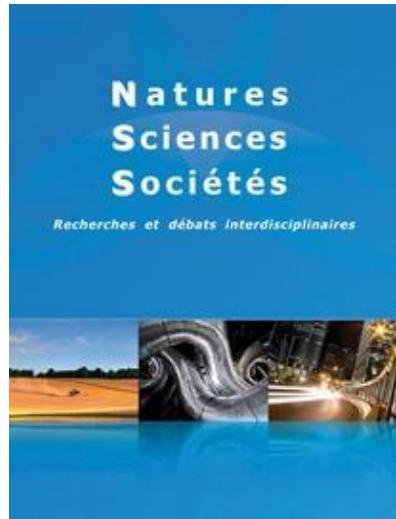
No real project for subsurface

Ressources minérales et transitions.  
Trajectoires politiques du sous-sol français  
au 21<sup>me</sup> siècle.

Sébastien CHAILLEUX, Sylvain LE BERRE,  
Yann GUNZBURGER (coord.)



# Context – politicization of subsurface



**Special issue: pour une géologie politique**

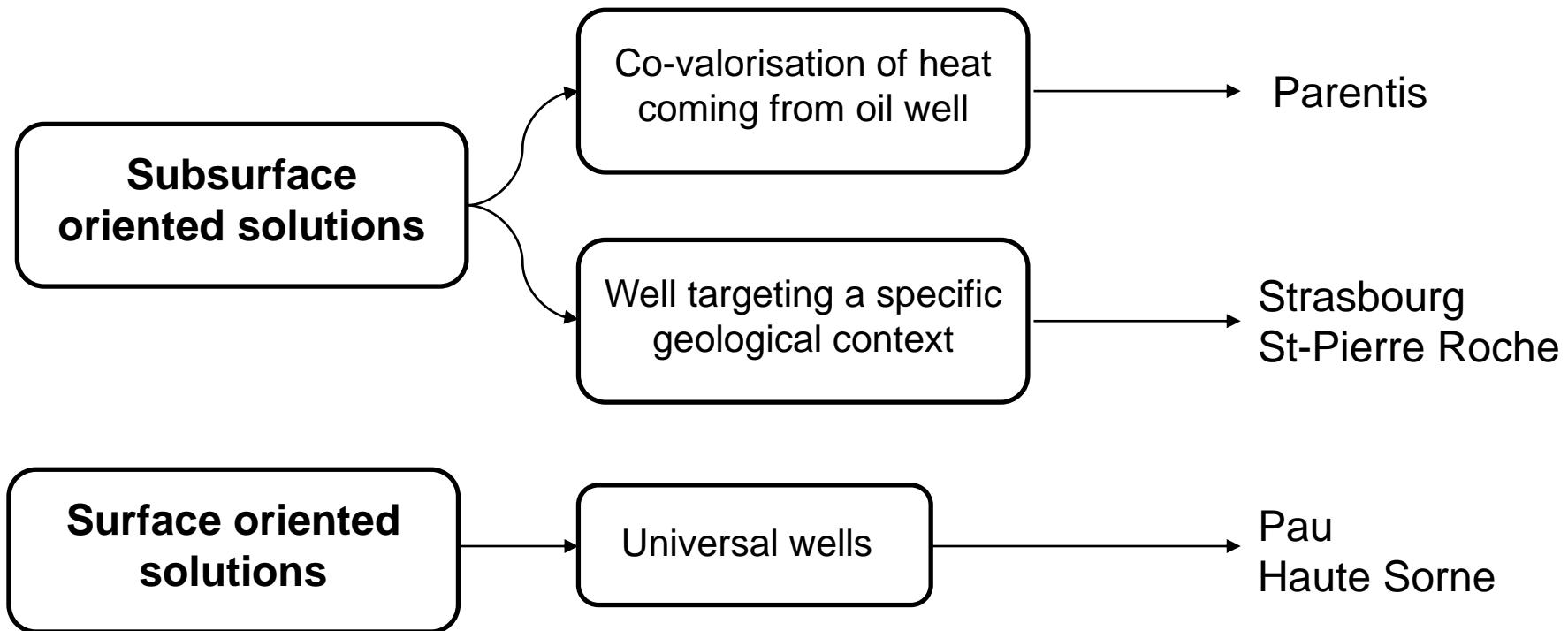
Expect for nuclear waste storage,

Subsurface is not an issue

# Context – Energy transition, a chance for subsurface issues

- ▶ Multiple uses are possible within a context of energy transition:
    - Geothermy
    - CO<sub>2</sub> storage
    - Raw material extraction
    - Energy storage
- ➔ **What is currently being done? The case of geothermy in France**

# Case study – Different deployment strategies



# Case study – Seismicity in Strasbourg: context

- ▶ Ecosystem for geothermal energy (industrial chair, energy policies : 20 % of the renewable heat in 2050)
- ▶ Fonroche projects : Vendenheim (2015), Eckbolsheim (2015), Hurtigheim (2016)

# Case study – Seismicity in Strasbourg: context

## ► Public debate

- 3 favourable remarks, 3 favourable remarks with reservations,  
885 unfavourable remarks

## ► Main unfavourable remarks :

- The technical capabilities of the industry and the maturity of the technology;
- The financial soundness of the company and insurance;
- The issue of risks: protection of the aquifer, induced seismicity, corrosion of the pipes, and swelling of the soil.

➔ Even like that, the projects went on



# Case study – Seismicity in Strasbourg: earthquakes

- ▶ 12 november 2019 : series of earthquakes
    - ▶ Hydrogeological tests to remove uncertainty
  - ▶ October 2020 : series of earthquakes (1.1, 2.7) → local media coverage
  - ▶ December 2020: new serie of earthquake, national media coverage
  - ▶ Prefecture will then suspend current geothermal project
- The end of the project is due to earthquakes management



# Case study – Seismicity in Strasbourg: insights

Prefecture administrative investigation : lack of control and leadership:

- Not possible to reach a consensual expertise on the origins of seismicity
- Drilled deeper than planned (5,000m instead of 4,200m)
- Discrepancy in the sampling pressure (150 bars instead of 100 bars)

➡ **Subsurface is not becoming an issue**



# Conclusions

- Huge gap between intentions and achievements, that is quite common in France
  - ➡ Generate a debate on subsurface issues for energy transition?
- The swiss case-study remains interesting...