

**When participation is contested:
lessons from the opposition to
gas shale industry in Québec
(Canada) for the understanding of
social acceptability**

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IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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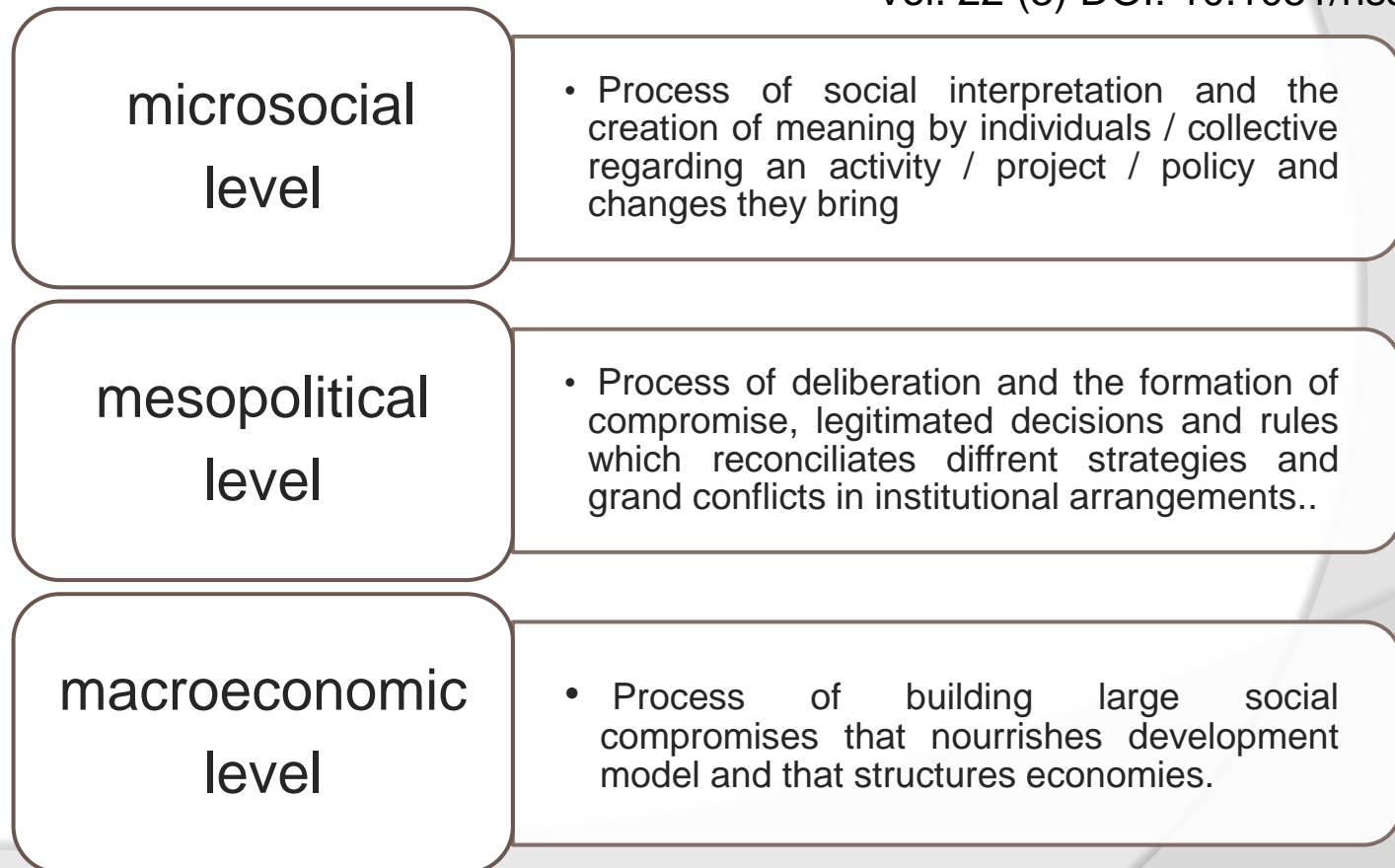
Social acceptability: changes in scientific papers (wind energy)

- 1.** From the “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) syndrome towards more constructivist approaches;
- 2.** From an individual perspective towards interaction models, with multiplicity of stake holders and scales in the articulation of energy projects;
- 3.** From «social» as obstacles, irrational public, resisting agents toward social actors with their own logics and capacities;
- 4.** From “acceptance” as an individual, passive and even fixed attitude, to «social acceptability» as a collective process that could lead projects to evolve and take different paths.

Proposal : three levels of processes

Distincts processes, associated with varied temporalities and forms of regulation: toward a relative convergence?

Fortin, M-J and Fournis, Y, *Natures, sciences et sociétés*,
Vol. 22 (3) DOI: 10.1051/nss/2014037



Source: Adapted from Bélanger et Lévesque (1992)

Proposal : three levels of processes

Distincts processes, associated with varied temporalities and forms of regulation: toward a relative convergence?

Définition: social acceptability is a «**political evaluation process** of a sociotechnical project involving a plurality of **stakeholders** involved at **different levels** who increasingly reach **agreements** and institutional rules deemed to be **legitimate**, as they are coherent with both the **vision of the territory** and the **development model** favored by the affected people.» Fournis et Fortin (2013: 13)

A complex process:

- Inherent tensions, conflicts
- Power relationships... often asymmetric
- Explicit decision making process

Fortin, M-J and Fournis, Y,

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Energy context

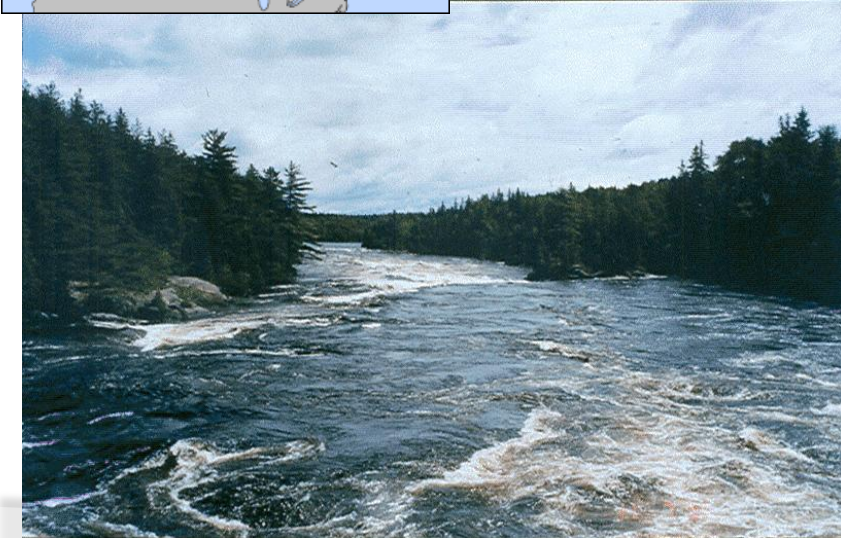
Quebec's historical choices: a political perspective

- Public company: Hydro-Quebec, among largest world producer
- Mega projects: installed capacity of 40 000 MW (98% hydro)



Abundant and

Accessible Energy

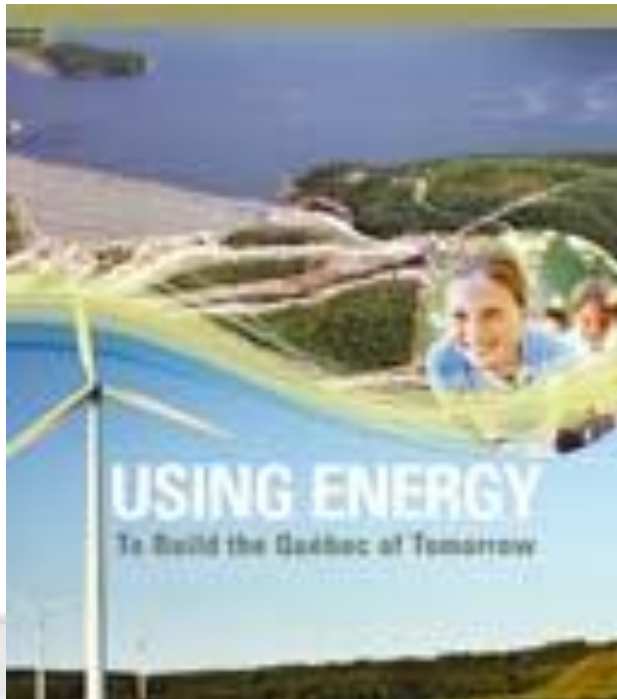


Context

Actual policy reaffirms : energy and economy

- *2th objective: «We must make better use of **energy as a lever for economic development**. Priority is given to **hydroelectricity, wind energy potential**, hydrocarbon, reserves and the **diversification of our natural gas supplies**.»*

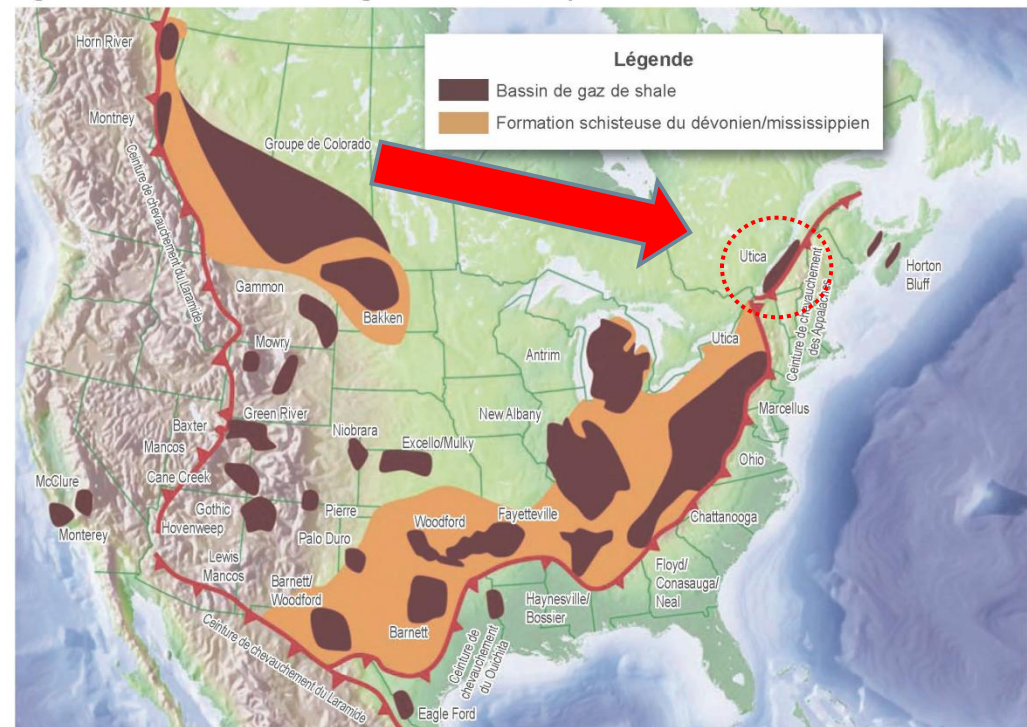
Quebec Energy Strategy 2006-2014
(summary: 9, underlined)



Shale gas in Québec: A controversial energy

- «fracking revolution» in US, energetic autonomy not the rational
- Utica shale formation = new potentiel for energy resource

Figure 8 Localisation des shales gazéifères en Amérique du Nord

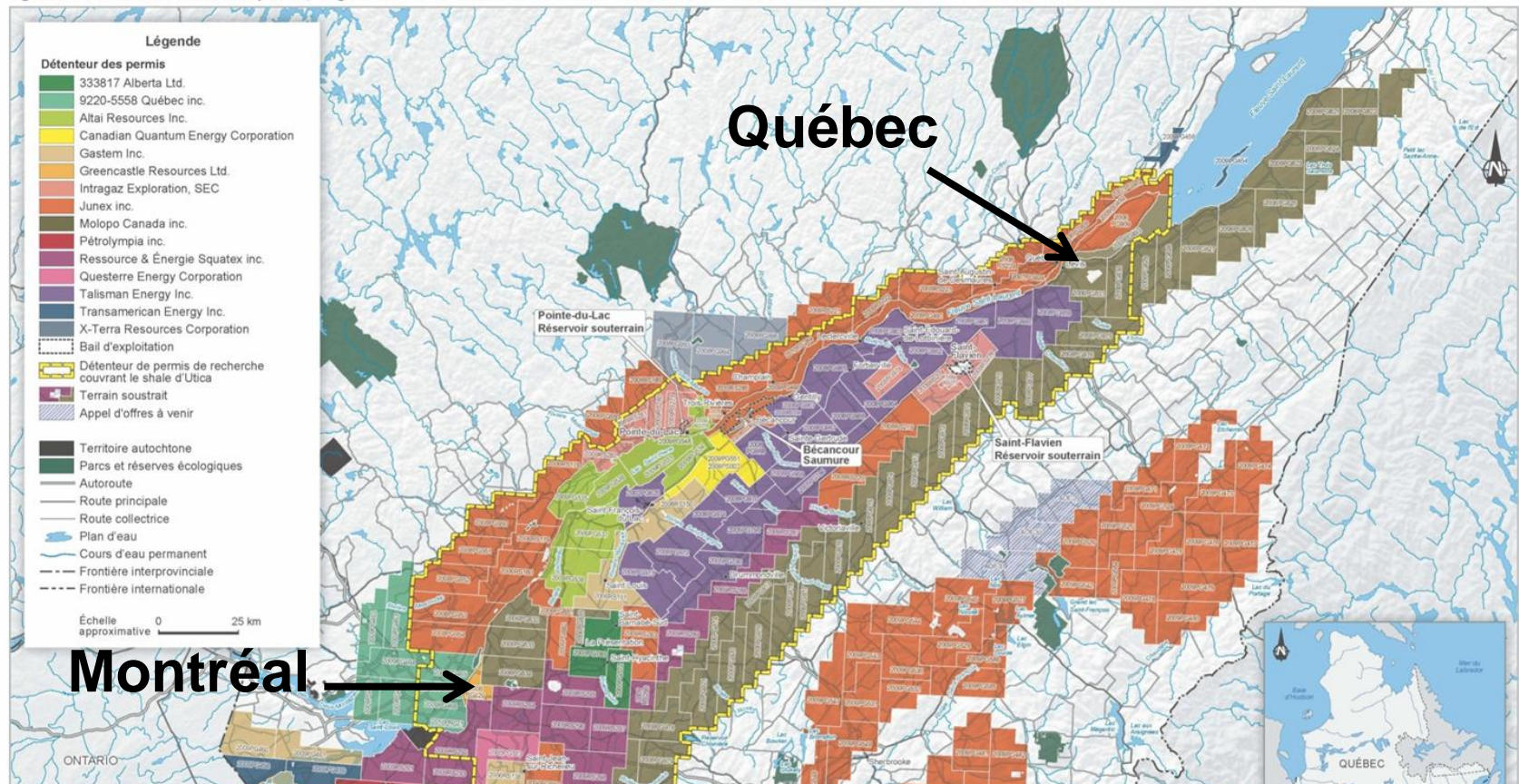


Source: BAPE, 2011: 33

Source : adaptée de DB4

- A build resource ... initial conditions
- Resource based economy in Quebec: a favorable *a priori* by government
- Regulation by old mining regimes (1864): land private / underneath public property
- 462 exclusives permits («claims») delivered to 26 companies

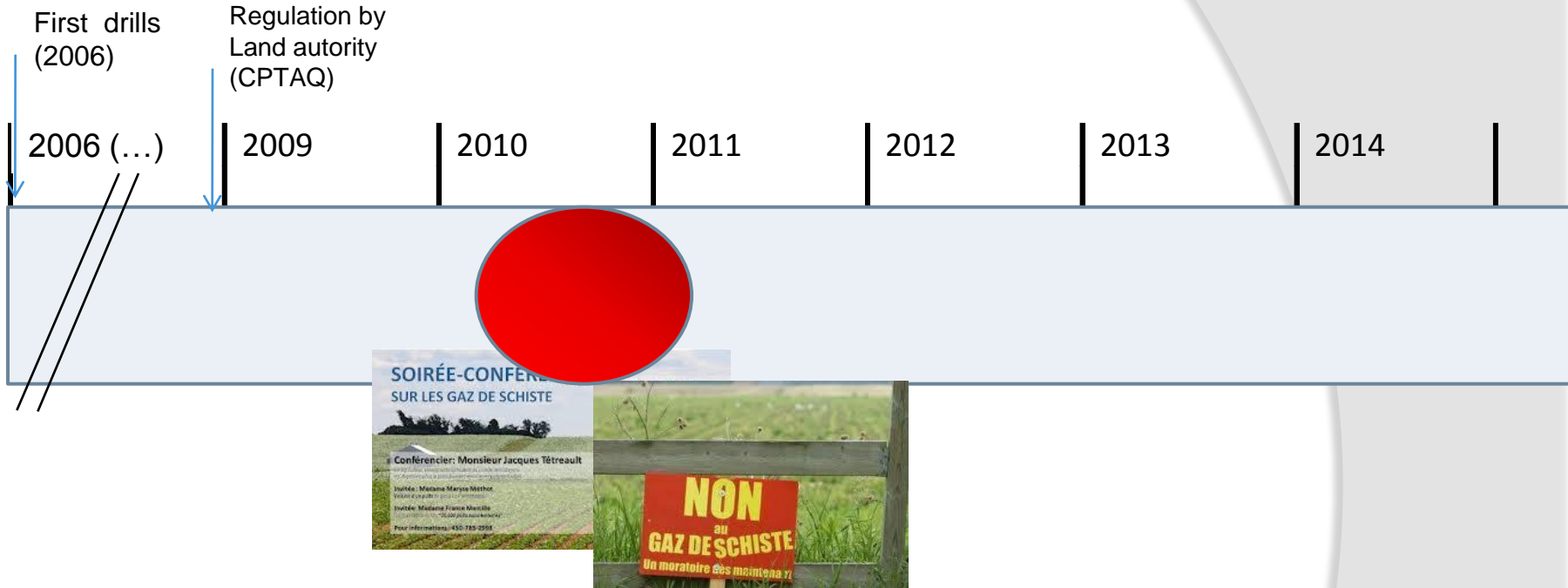
Figure 11 Permis de recherche de pétrole, de gaz naturel et de réservoir souterrain – basses-terres du Saint-Laurent



Map of permits allocated for petroleum and natural gas in the Saint-Lawrence valley

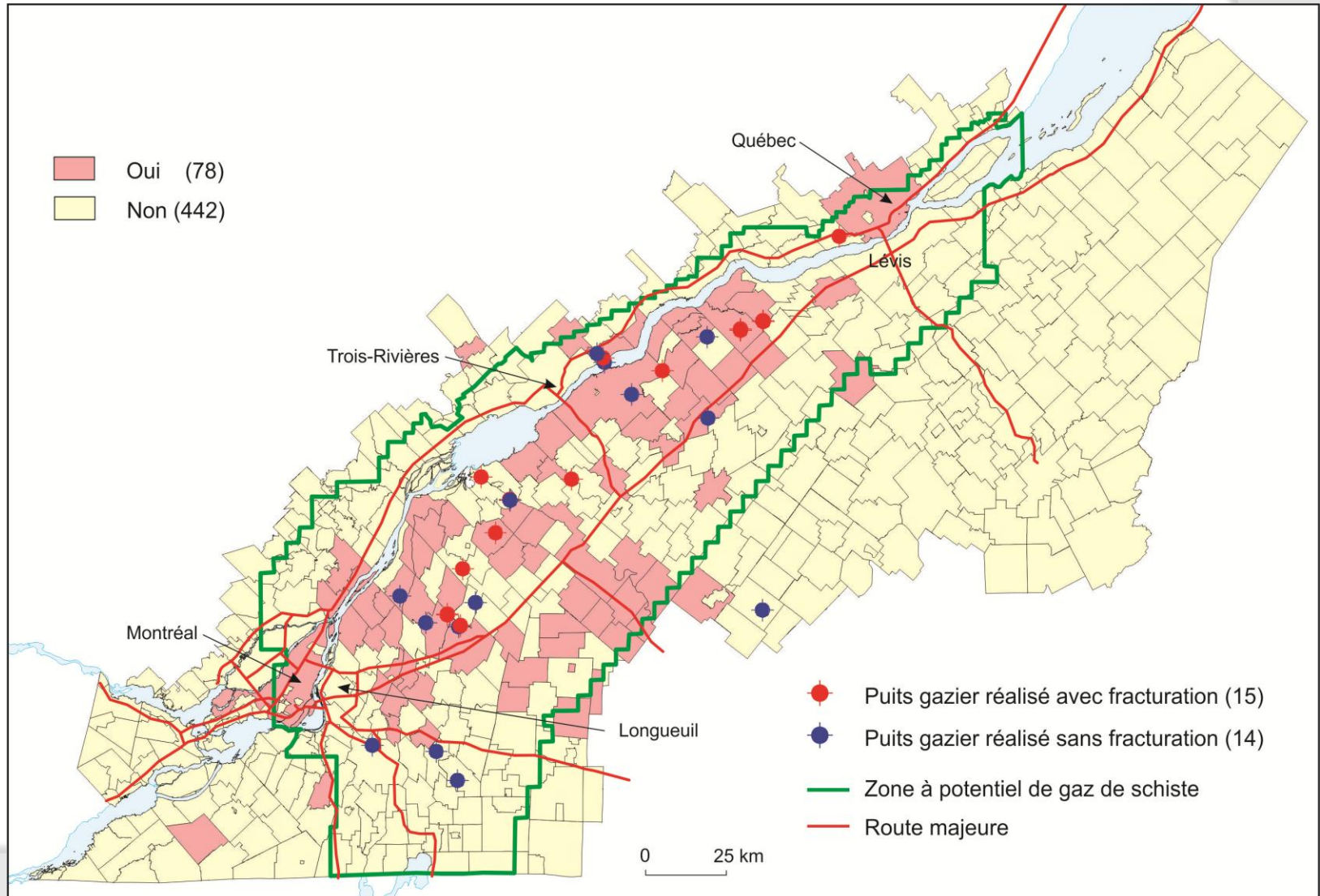
Source: BAPE (2011: 41)

Citizen' mobilization starting point

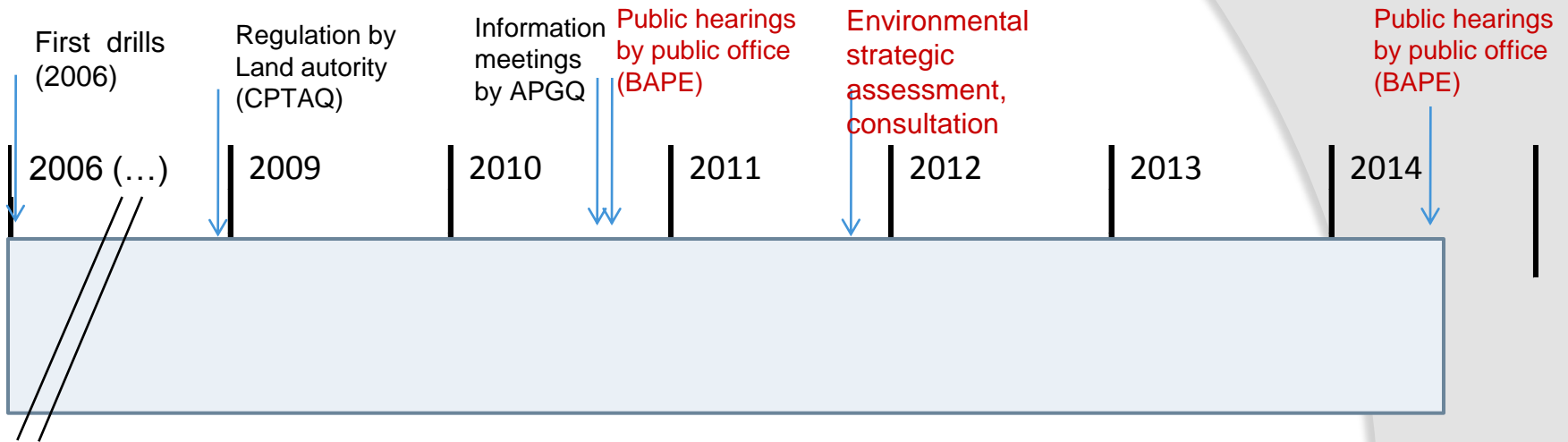


- 29 wells, 18 with hydraulic fracturing technology
- Questions and concerns
- Creation of «Local watchful committees»
- Dilemma for communities

- 78 local watchful committees (2013);
- mainly in the target area
- what factors help / constraint the mobilization?

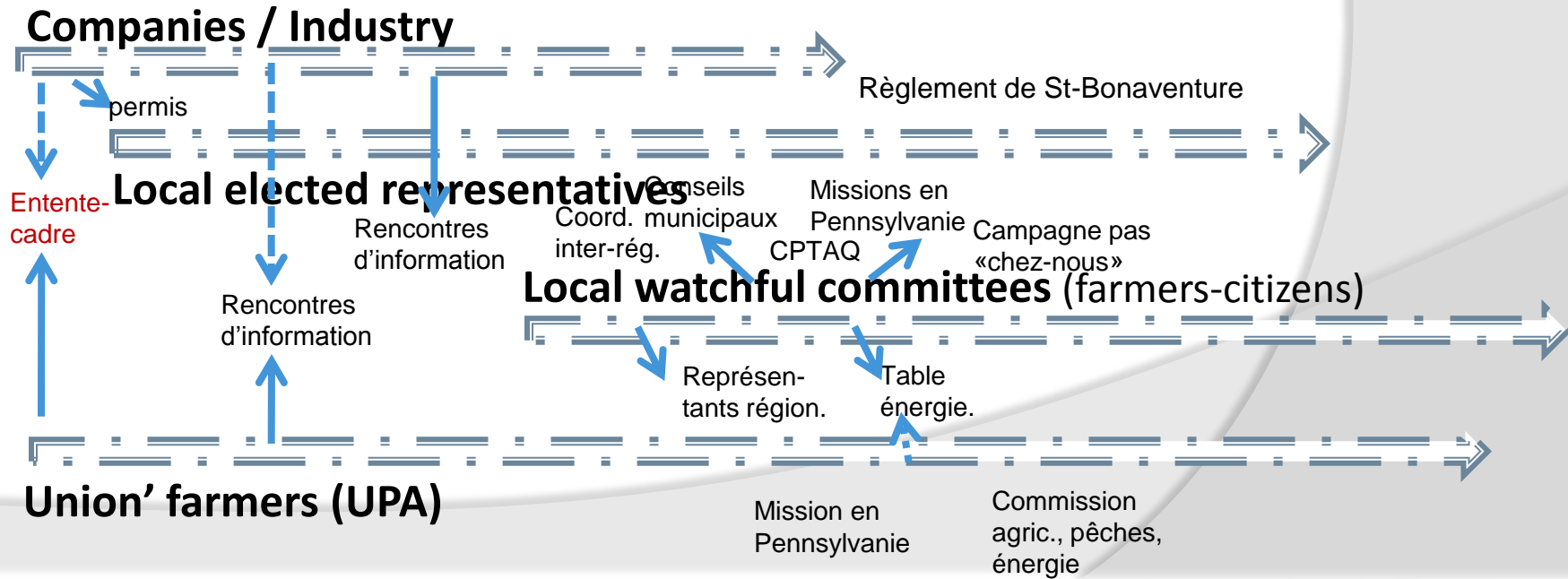
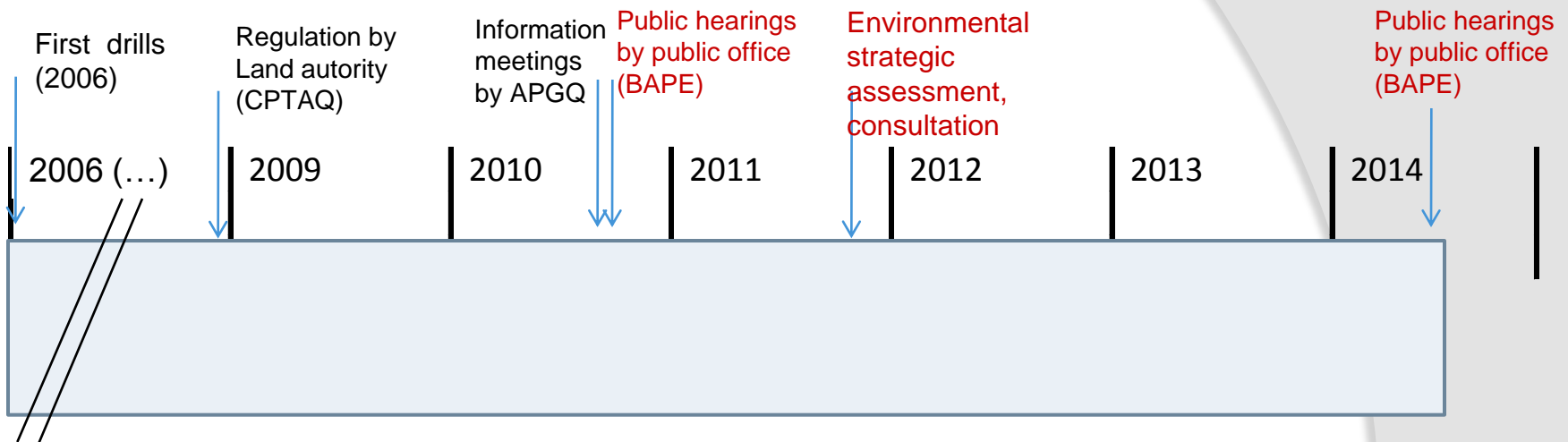


Participation: official chanel

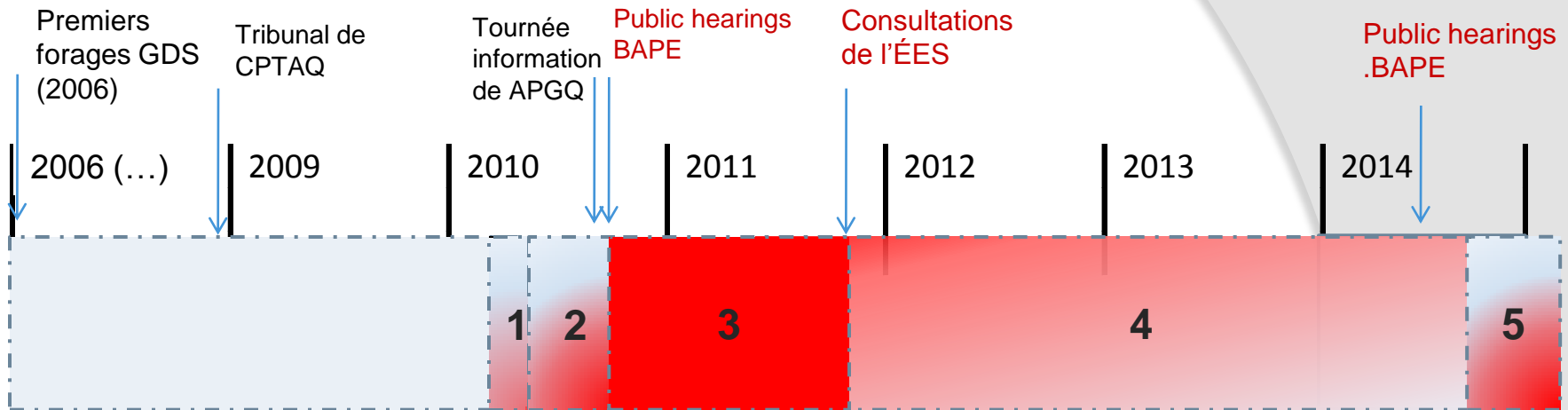


- Participation through strong instruments
- Refuse to play by the rules = refusal to participate??

Participation: official, not directly related & informel



Phases of the mobilization



Discrete entry of industry and hopes of informed people

1. Brokerage, actor constitution and rising of collective action
2. Mobilization of information & knowledge via social networks
3. Framing and coalition formation with elected representatives
4. Scale shift and radicalization: towards a regional movement (NIABY)
5. Boundary and identity shift of the movement in two parts

A pathway towards «non-acceptability»

Refusal («non-acceptation») is not settled at first stage, neither once and for ever

Evolving framing: from well as potentiel *resource* for local community to megaproject as a *threat* (if in commercial exploitation)

Not only cognitive reasons :

- Role and capacities of authorities (Central State)
- Decision making process
- Dominance of a sectorial perspective
- Information and Knowledge : accessible, independant
- Recognition of territorial dynamics
- Uncertainty



Conclusion

- Purpose of participation: build strong & legitimate decisions
- Refusal should also be as an option...
- Social acceptance as a build pathway
- Capacities to connect different processes, related to varied scales and times?
- From top-down approach to the time of communities?

Thank you!

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