

A research-action project: developing an adaptation to climate change strategy at the regional level

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Adaptation to climate change and mitigation

- ▶ The large amount of GHGs already present in the atmosphere, hydrosphere and geosphere will produce their effect, most probably for centuries to come (IPCC, AR5, 2014), whatever we manage to do in reductions. And it is recognized that what is already done on that respect is not nearly enough.
- ▶ What does it mean to adapt? Revising the places people chose to live, the ways to build, renovate and transform urban settings, the servicing infrastructure.

What is then required

- ▶ This implies first to look and analyze their vulnerability, then help all kinds of decision-makers to make choices for improving resilience. Which requires to organize a process to obtain and share the required knowledge.
- ▶ This also supposes to accept the requirements of a mitigation approach that aims to help our countries, states, provinces and cities to diminish their respective GHG emissions in the environment. Example: notion of Low Carbon Resilience.

1. An action-research project

- ▶ Experimental research-action: developing a strategy for helping mid-size, regional and multi-city entities to adapt to climate change. This involves multi-level concertation inside a given territory. In accordance with Canada's and Québec's public policy towards adaptation.
- ▶ A particular region of the southern part of Québec Province [the MRC Memphrémagog]. Ouranos, Mitacs, MRC, Centre Sève, Observatoire Ivanhoé Cambridge, 2017-2020. <https://www.ouranos.ca/en/>
- ▶ Two co-researchers: a practical-philosophy professor: environmental governance centering on communication processes (as co-creation) including ethical-political issues (Alain Létourneau), and a geographer, urban studies specializing in vulnerability analysis (Isabelle Thomas); with the help of climatologists, hydrogeologists, an economist, and political science (inside the Ouranos Consortium). Inter- and transdisciplinarity.

Network participatory governance

- ▶ The idea of network governance (Evans, J.P., 2012; Young, O., 2013; Paquet, 2011). We do not have to choose between abandoning the states and government, relying exclusively on the market on one side, and imposing everything from the top to the bottom in a states-only perspective (Létourneau, 2015). Power is something distributed in society.
- ▶ Value attributions as enacted in shared discourse and operations. This means to be able to pass progressively from prizing to appraisal (Dewey, 1939). Starts with valuing/acknowledging the relationship of the human communities with their environment - needs to be sustained. Specific issues of ordering will come with potential value conflicts or tension. There is also some justificatory element from the start.

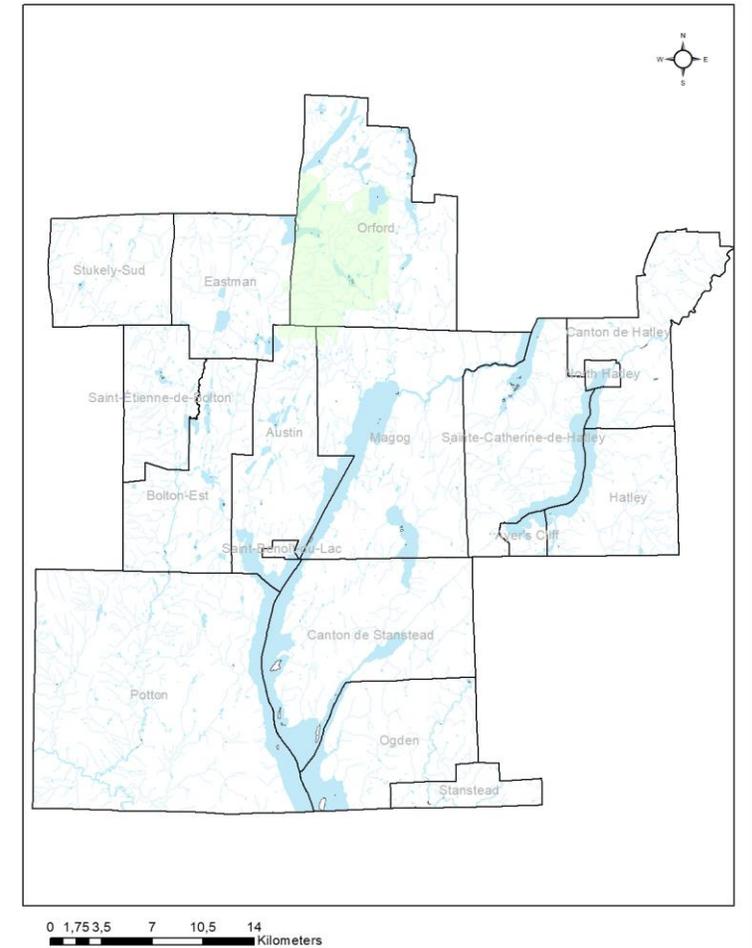
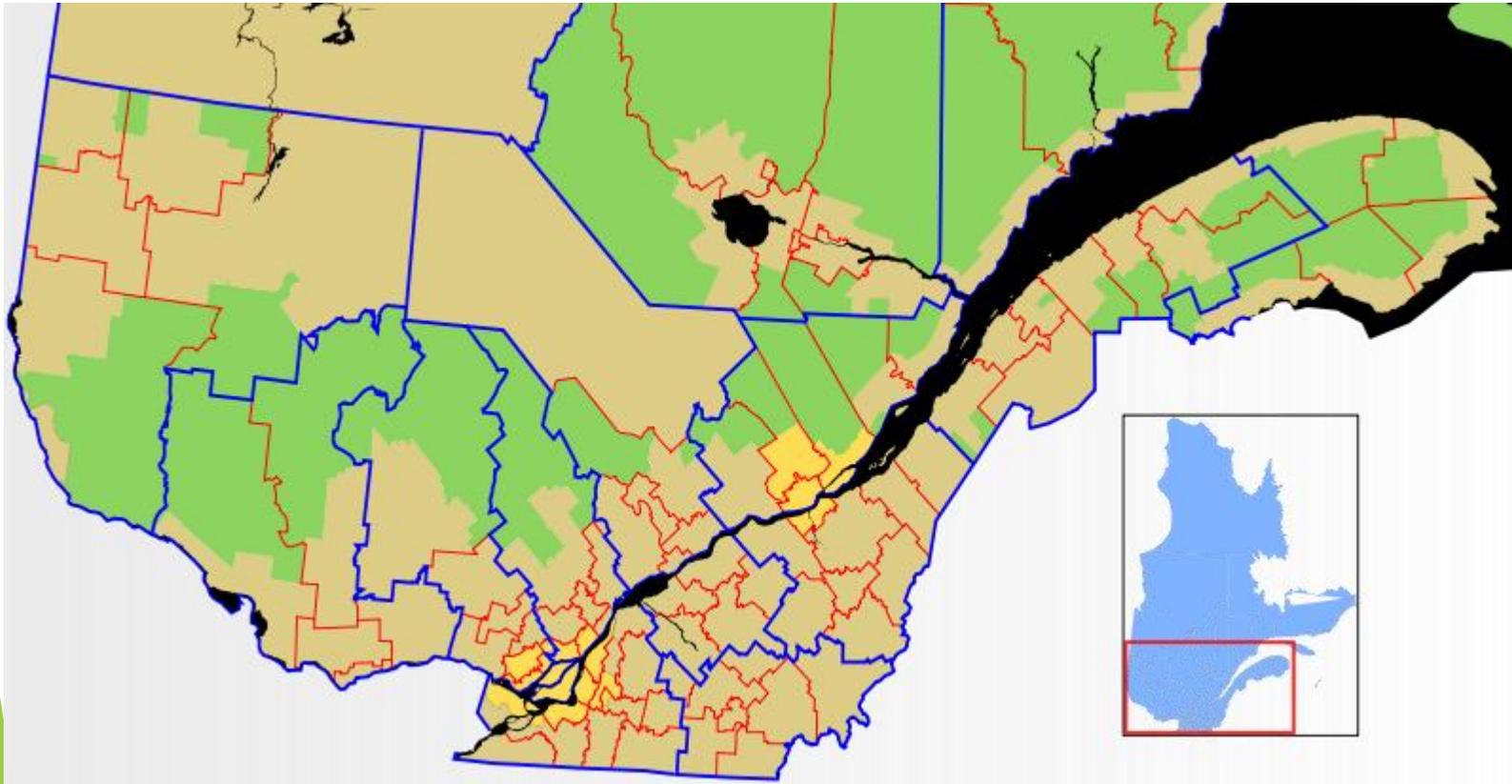
Governance networks as a complement to political offices

- ▶ Decision happens on the basis of a plurality of elements, among which the actors and their intervention certainly play an important part. Instead of being money-driven only, access can be organized, structured and available/debatable in the open.
- ▶ Crucial link between environmental governance and a democratic and practical political philosophy are of crucial importance (Young, 2012; Dryzek and Dunleavy, 2009).
- ▶ Adopting a polycentric perspective [with Ostrom, 2005] supposes to recognize that power is not something that is the property of a few at one end of the social spectrum. It certainly does not mean that official authorities should have no role or voice.

2. The different political regional levels. Especially this MRC

- ▶ Case of important cities like Montreal, Sherbrooke and Trois-Rivières in Québec Province: plans have already been adopted.
- ▶ Not yet the case with the jurisdiction level (MRC) *Municipalités Régionales de Comté*. Typically they comprise many small cities on a given territory, that can be quite large. Lakes, rivers, mountains and plains, cities and valleys, farms and forests. Pilote project.
<https://www.google.ca/maps/place/Memphr%C3%A9magog,+QC/@45.2038662,-72.6374872,8.96z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x4cb63839907ec671:0x2a7db846ff7a1cad!8m2!3d45.2285619!4d-72.2066235>. And:
- ▶ http://www.mamot.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/publications/organisation_municipale/cartotheque/Region_05.pdf





3. Ways for cities to develop an Adaptation Plan

- ▶ The classical division of labor inside a well developed bureaucracy will produce specific tasks to accomplish for particular agencies. Forcibly the question of integrating the new plan into the existing set of plans is going to surface (Le Templier, 2017). This is particularly true with big cities (for example, the Montreal adaptation plan that was finalized in 2016).
- ▶ Different offices concerned, different timetables, almost exclusively inside the different units of the city managers and between them.
- ▶ In the case of smaller cities, and also with regional municipal regroupings like an MRC, lots of coordination and communication is required. Basic idea: if the relevant groups are involved along the way in the analysis, it might give to decision makers a good basis for legitimizing specific actions.

4. Hypothesis about people's involvement, science building and its use

- ▶ Giving people the opportunity to voice their stories + exposing them to other stories and relevant data: awareness will develop progressively.
- ▶ Historical trends can be substantiated (available data, for instance on floods and low water periods).
- ▶ Knowledge: mediated by ordinary discourse, stories, images, graphs, charts, maps. It is something that is constructed by actors in interaction.
- ▶ Climatic projections at the regional level (Ouranos' specialists in climatology). Geographical information systems (GIS); Vulnerability analysis (Thomas&Bleau 2012); maps of flood prone regions.
- ▶ Complementarity of these tools in the face of complexity. Plurality of scenarios to deal with probability issues. Hybrid approach.

5. Relevant networks for participation

- ▶ In a network participatory governance perspective, layers are added to representative democracy.
- ▶ Organizing that participation in such a way that it becomes conducive to a better policy development.
- ▶ Giving a chance for a dialogue between “technical experts” and “practical expertise” (Létourneau, 2016) by making them work together on the MRC case.
- ▶ Crucial question: who do we invite, how do we structure participation (trying to enlarge democracy).

6. Justifying the appeal to some characteristic persons

- ▶ In our particular case, six sectors were selected: urban managers, public security people, health and social services, agricultural, touristic services - because they are of particular importance in that region.
- ▶ A farmer, a forester, a fireman, an engineer in urban planning, a nurse or a doctor working in a retirement home, a homeowner in a flood zone, or a business person operating a Ski station, or a restaurant depending on tourism for, let us say, half of her yearly revenue.
- ▶ The input of these kinds of people will represent some specific practices and uses, of importance at the regional level. These actions on which they make a living, are facing risks with climate change.

7. Summary of method

- ▶ Tools will be developed, adjusted with the partners. Adaptation can only function if it is by itself an adapting process.
- ▶ We started with a detailed plan for what we call a strategy. The MRC is a partner in the project, they have the power and authority to adopt an Adaptation Plan, later on: some action are to be inserted into what is called a Schéma d'aménagement (Layout Plan).
- ▶ We surmise that a set of priorities can emerge by joining a diversity of expertise and involvements on the field.

Structure of the work

- ▶ In the first year, the five sectorial tables regrouping the interested people in the five fields were organized. Goals: give people a space to express their experiences with CC, provide basic information, and situate vulnerabilities. Plus a regional table devoted to adaptation (we call it the TRACC, Table régionale d'adaptation aux changements climatiques): integrating these different elements for the emergence of global perspectives.
- ▶ The come-and-go between the TRACC and the tables: a set of shared analyses and priorities to provide a common reference basis for the Adaptation plan.
- ▶ In the second year, starting this Fall, smaller groups to be selected in function of their place on the map and the kinds of practices that characterize them. Spaces of discussion around possible practical orientations to be validated. We will go back to the sectorial tables in the third year, to come up with action proposals.

Conclusion

- ▶ Those kinds of research-action processes could obviously be done on a larger basis. Our goal: test the process and see if it can work, and might then be partially or completely repeatable/adaptable/transformable.
- ▶ If similar projects are developing, it would be in the interest of everyone to share results and difficulties.
- ▶ Here theory and practice hopefully will complement each other nicely.

Reference to the project

- ▶ Alain Létourneau and Isabelle Thomas, *Quelles stratégies pour quels changements climatique ? Stratégies durables d'adaptation aux changements climatiques à l'échelle d'une MRC*. Projet de recherche 2017-2020, Ouranos-Mitacs-MRC Memphrémagog, Centre Sève.