



CREATION

October 2007

SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

(Lignite) mining around the town of Gardanne for almost two centuries; associated industrial and urban development.

DISRUPTING EVENT

The abrupt end of mining activities in 2003 profoundly affected the territory, undermining its industrial identity and economic organization. The consequences are still being felt today, particularly in view of the planned shutting down of the last coal unit of the thermal power plant and looming questions about the future of the alumina industry; sensitive issues given that mining, thermal power production, and alumina production are all part of the same economic-industrial model that characterizes this territory.

KEY TOPICS

- The post-mining future - economic, social and environmental dimensions
- The environment, geological, physical and chemical characterisation and dynamics
- Pollutants, resilience, health
- Perception of environmental quality
- Conflicts in the use of space, and urban dynamics
- Biodiversity, landscape and mining impact



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TERRITORY

The former coalfield in Provence, also known as *Gardanne coalfield*, is the study area. Situated in the east of the *département* of the *Bouches-du-Rhône*, between Marseille and Aix-en-Provence, it comprises 17 *communes* with almost 110,000 inhabitants in 2015. For almost two centuries, this entire area was developed around lignite mining and the related industrialisation. Surrounded by the mont *Sainte-Victoire* in the north, the *Étoile* range and the *Régagnas* massif in the south, this area of typical provencal countryside has dynamics characteristic of the peri-urban and industrial parts of the Mediterranean region. These dynamics, which are often contradictory, have been profoundly influenced by the definitive end of mining operations at the beginning of the 2000s.



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SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

Influenced by the Marseille-Aix metropolitan zone, the Provence coalfield area is now facing a transition phase with numerous issues: management of the mining legacy and economic reconversion (closure of the last pit in 2003); urbanisation progressing from west to east; the significant changes in the political scene; the maintenance of farming and preservation of the natural environment; space-use conflicts; pressure on the quality of the environment and the landscape.

In this metropolitan context, the OHM's aim is to study adaptation to the new situation brought about by the halting of mining operations: environmental and social consequences of the mine's closure; acceptability and future of the large industrial companies; habitability of the landscape and health; governance and environmental management; energy production - continuity and innovation (conversion of coal-fired Provence power station into imported and local biomass unit).

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