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Seeking sustainability through new laws:  
representation, resistance and local knowledge

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Societal change presents us with a paradox.

On the one hand, change, often experienced as uncontrollable, is a constant in our societies.

On the other hand, and in contrast, change also persistently fails to happen in our societies, as certain transformations recognized as highly desirable remain unaccomplished.



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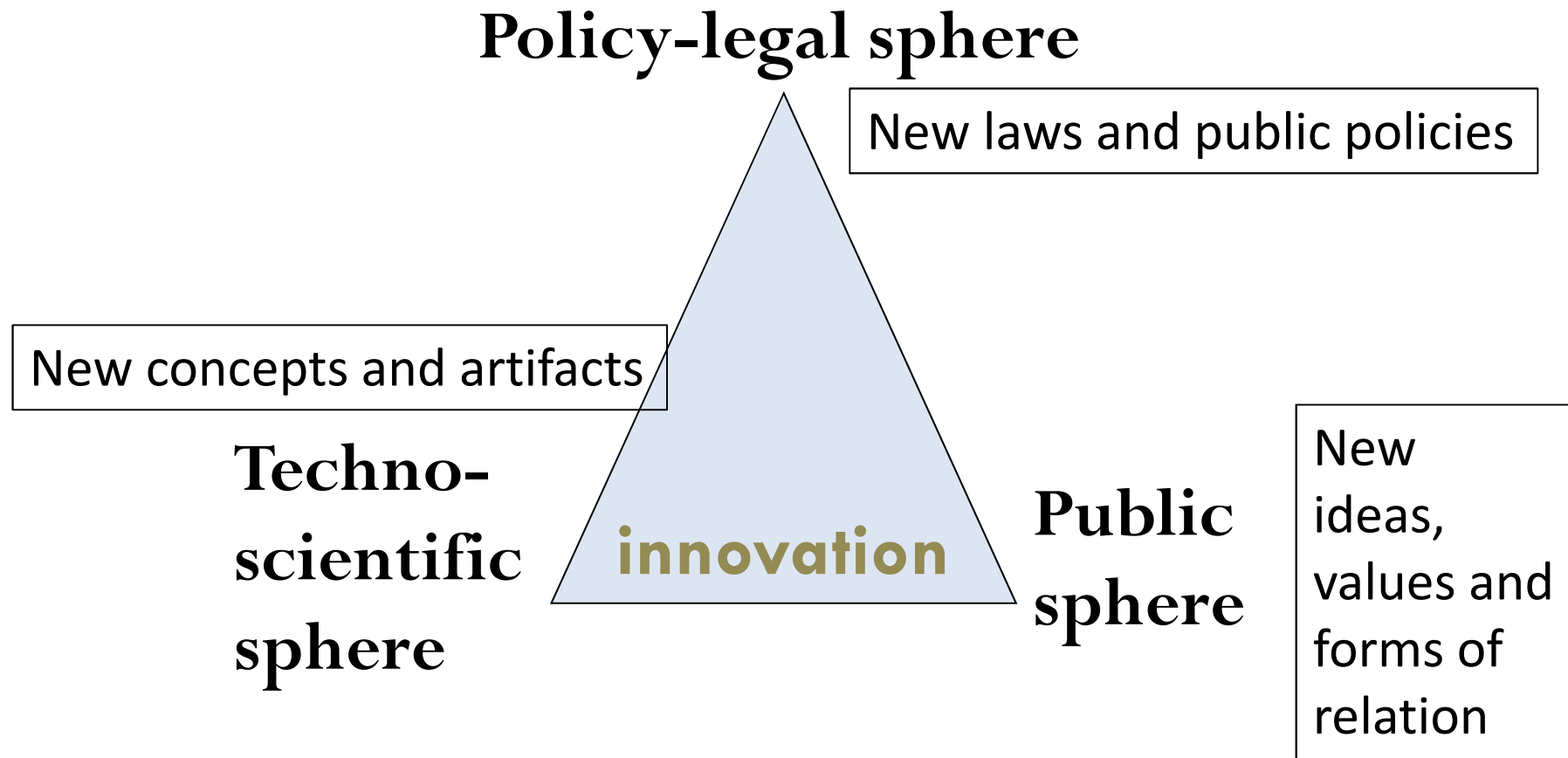
certain transformations recognized as highly desirable remain unaccomplished.

Why? How?

*Castro, 2012, Political Psychology, 33, pp. 105-121*

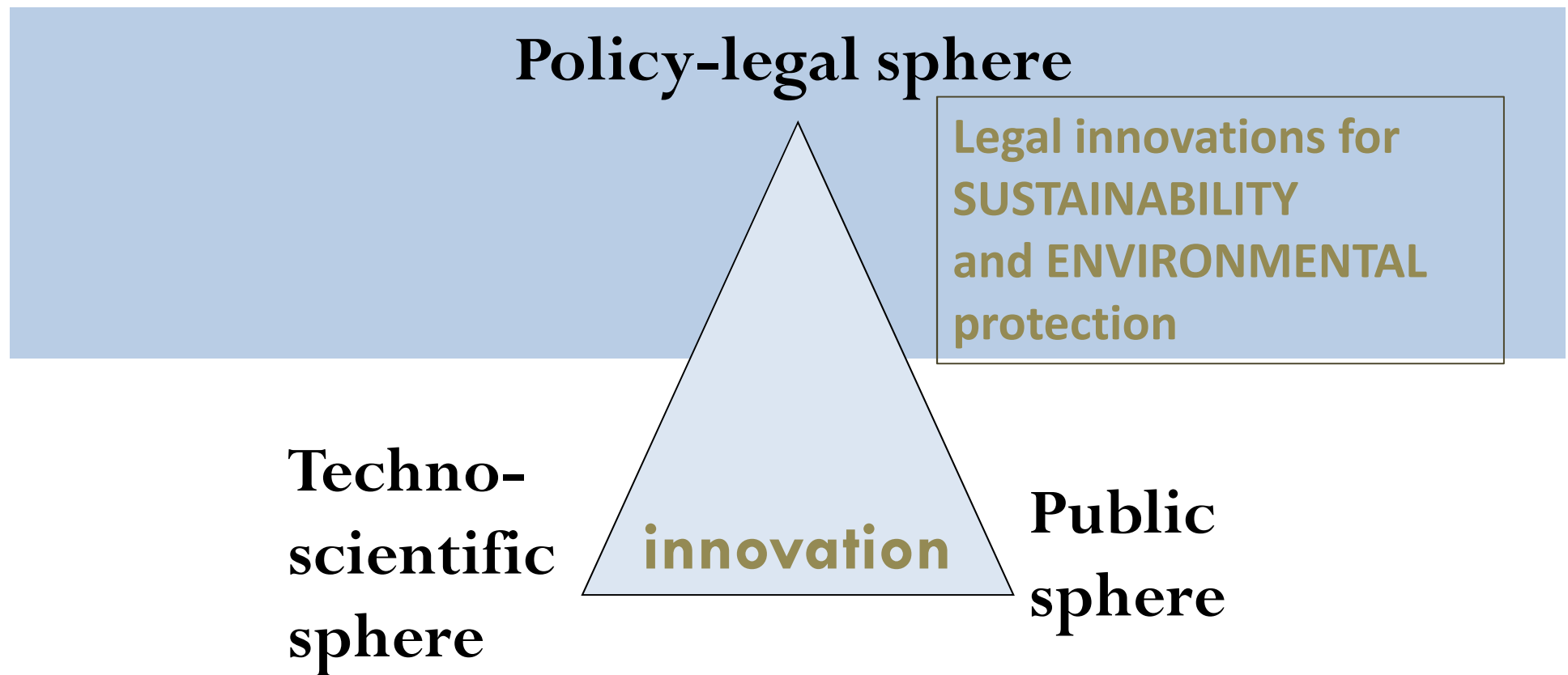


# Three different types of innovation, stimulating societal change

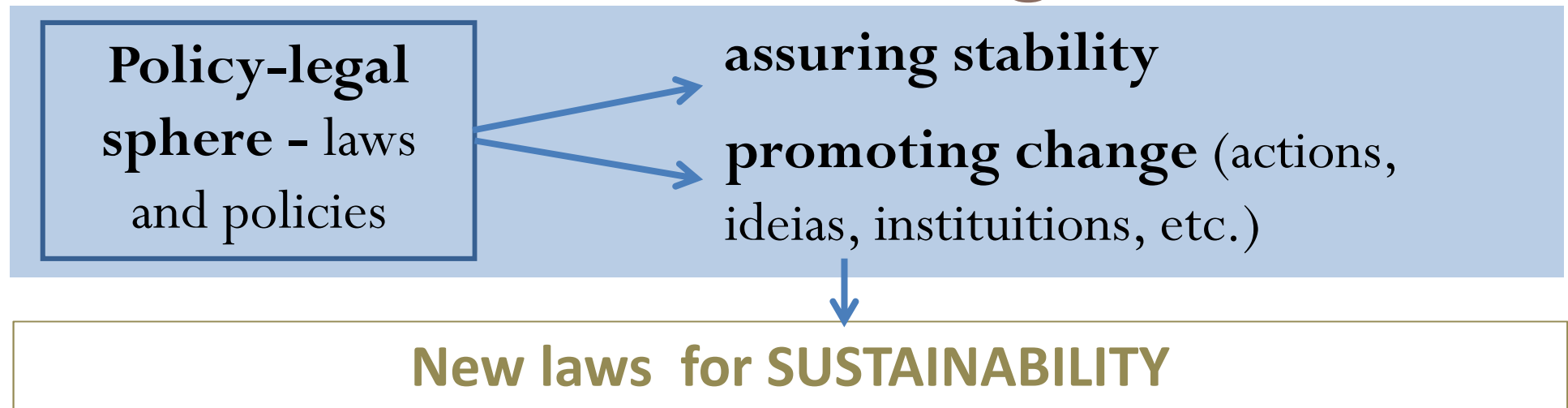


# Societal change

So - what **PREVENTS** or **DELAYS** CHANGE PROMOTED  
BY NEW LAWS ?



# Societal change



SPECIALLY IN EUROPE – numerous new laws for:

- ✓ biodiversity protection
- ✓ climate change adaptation
- ✓ public involvement for sustainability
- ✓ recycling of domestic waste
- ✓ Energy saving and energy efficiency
- ✓ etc...etc... etc...

# Societal change

## The reception of new laws: CHANGE AND RESISTANCE

- ✓ biodiversity protection laws - residents in *Natura 2000* areas - **National & EU funds**
  - ✓ public involvement laws— residents in protected areas
  - ✓ & urban areas - **national and EU funds**
  - ✓ recycling and energy saving and efficiency laws and targets- **national funds**
  - ✓ climate change— the press and NGOs as mediating systems - **national funds**
  - ✓ Laws for the professional integration of disabled people
- SR, norms, ambivalence, communication & discursive patterns



**CMouro**



**SBatel**



**RBertoldo**



**ACorreia**

**PNeca**

**RGouveia**

**SJacinto**

**LBettencourt**

**RBarata**



**MUzelgun**

# 1. Theories linking the societal, contextual & individual

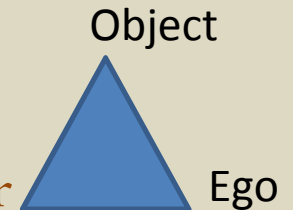
## 1. A view of society:

Society is made and imagined and not the expression of a natural order or necessity (Unger). So:

- All social order is provisional –
- and constantly contested & reproduced
- by institutions, relations, **meaning systems, communication, rituals**

## **Theory of Social Representations**

- Representations, as meaning systems,
- are always mediated by an Other, elaborated to an Other/Alter
- RS take part in the construction and contestation of social orders
- SO- SR and communication play a role in both CHANGE and RESISTANCE to change



HOW are they involved in DELAYING CHANGE promoted by laws????



## 2. Good descriptions

### Change

1. happens in time and so it happens in stages
  - a stage model of change promoted by laws and policies  
(Castro, 2012)

2. in a certain social order, SR are not all alike, since they express different:

positions in the social order & levels of consensus & levels of institutionalisation and & capacities for reproducing the social order

– polemic, hegemonic, emancipated

3. Change - Involves different types of representations in different stages

## Good descriptions - a stage model for legal change

	Stages
1. New knowledge enters society - <b>active minority</b> - social debate (ex: environmental activism of the '70s)	(1) Emergence
2. If debate is well succeeded - new laws, treaties, quotas, offices, ministries are born	(2) Institutionalization
3. legal and policy systems try to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• extend change to ALL CONTEXTS of a society,</li><li>• transform <b>ideas AND actions</b></li></ul>	(3) Generalization
4. <b>SOMETIMES</b> they succeed...	(4) Stabilization

## A stage model to study change promoted by legal innovations (Castro, 2012)

	Stages
POLEMIC SR	(1) Emergence
EMANCIPATED SR	(2) Institutionalization
EMANCIPATED SR	(3) Generalization
HEGEMONIC SR	(4) Stabilization

# A stage model

	Stages
POLEMIC SR	(1) Emergence
EMANCIPATED SR	(2) Institutionalization
EMANCIPATED SR	(3) Generalization
<del>HEGEMONIC SR</del>	(4) Stabilization

# types of representations

## Hegemonic SR

“uniform and coercive across a structured group, like a nation”

(Moscovici, 1988, p. 221).

## Emancipated SR

(despite the support offered to the generic values on which these SR are founded), **“each subgroup creates its own version”** of them **“and shares it with the others”**

(Moscovici, 1988, p. 221).

BEING  
NEGOTIATED

## Polemic SR

Opposition/struggle between groups, often expressed in terms of a (confrontational) dialogue (Moscovici, 1988)



# Societal change

Societal change presents us with a paradox.

On the one hand, change, often experienced as uncontrollable, is a constant in our societies.

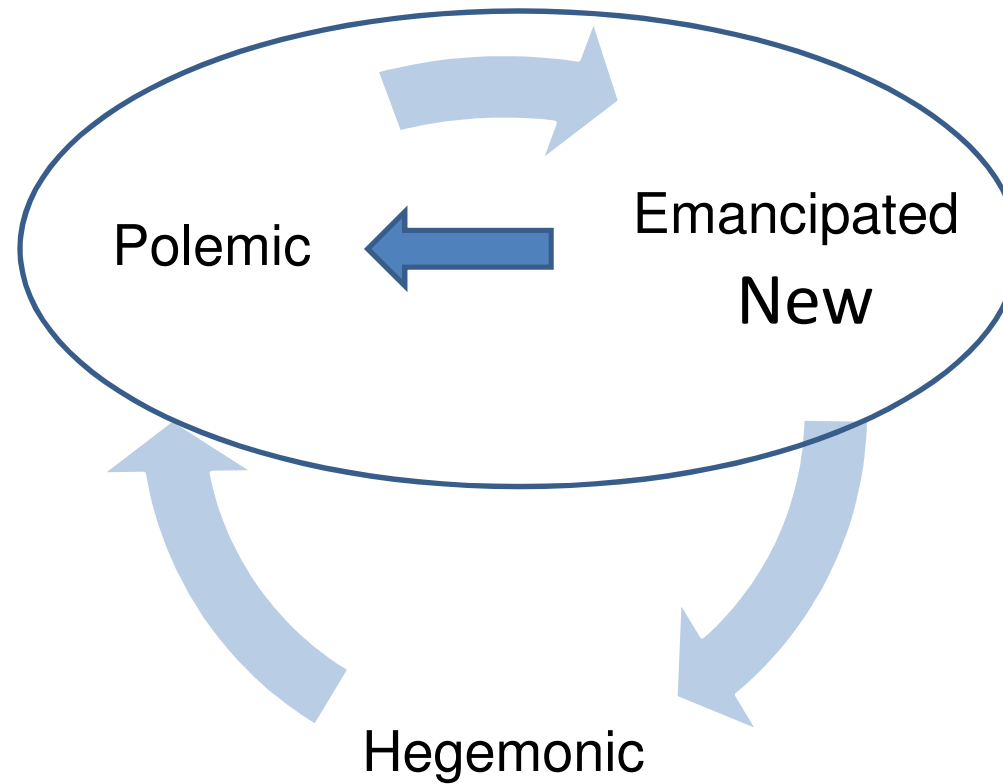
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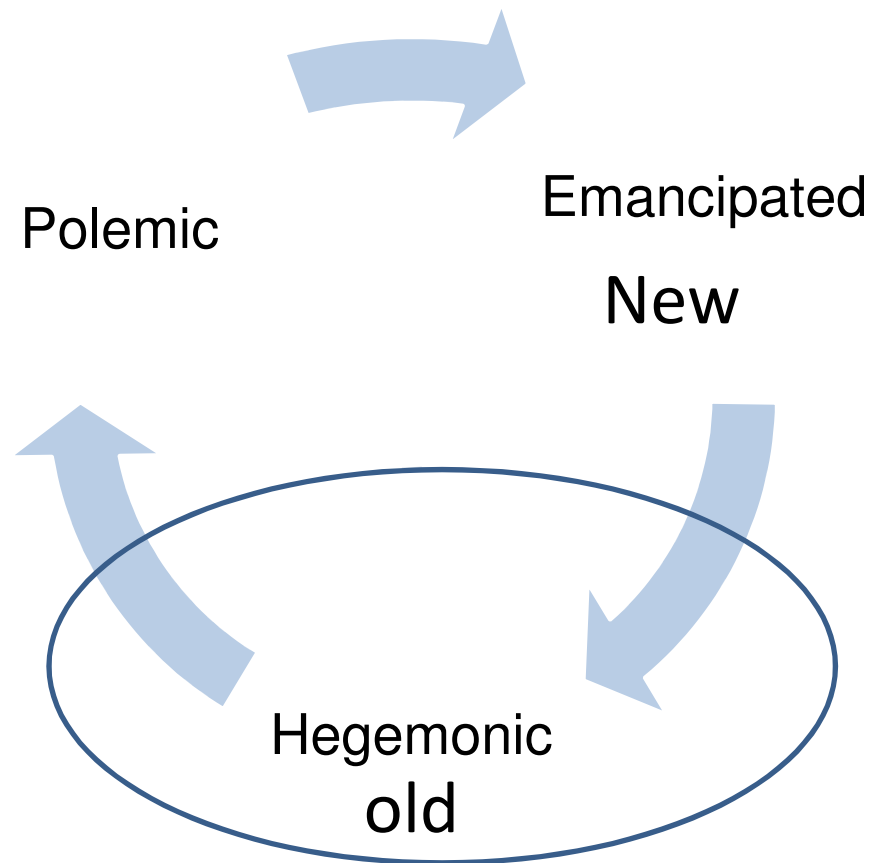
**From a societal perspective & when examining the reception of laws the goal is – to look at the interplay of the different types of representations in a society or a culture**

# 1. ONE FORM OF DELAYING CHANGE:

keeping the cycle of transformation restricted to emancipated-polemic?



## 2. ANOTHER FORM OF DELAYING CHANGE: OLD hegemonic SR closing down new meaning?



# NEW questions this model helps formulating

- WHAT exactly does it mean to say that Social Representations are Emancipated or Hegemonic?
- How do we recognize them?
- Are there any specific criteria we can use?
- HOW are NEW emancipated SR kept emancipated? HOW can OLD hegemonic SR prevent new ones?
- What are the psycho-social processes involved ?



## HEGEMONIC, EMANCIPATED and POLEMIC SR

*Going back to the literature:*

*A proposal for diagnostic criteria*

DOES the literature provide clues/criteria for  
identifying each type?  
(helping us *recognize each of them*)?



## ... theoretical and empirical contributions that may help

### Hegemonic SR

1. enduring societal support, incorporated in institutions (Farr, 1998; Castro, 2012)
2. Supported by clear social norms
3. Consistency
  - ✓ across contexts (Castro & Batel, 2008)
  - ✓ belief/behaviour
4. Positive social value for self-presentation and hetero-judgement (Dubois & Beauvois, 2005)

### Emancipated SR

1. enduring societal support **usually** incorporated in social institutions
2. Supported by norms – always clear?
2. Consistency
  - ✓ - expressed in **SOME** contexts, not all (Wagner et al., 2000; Mouro & Castro, 2012)
  - ✓ - **NO** belief/behaviour consistency (Spini & Doise, 1998; Brondi et al., 2012)
  - ✓ - Associated with ambivalence (Castro et al., 2009)

3. Unstable social value? ?

# MORE... possibly helpful theoretical and empirical contributions

Hegemonic RS	Emancipated RS
communicated by	communicated by
1. Monophasic arguments	1. Polyphasic arguments (Jovchelovitch , 2007)
2. Reification arguments	2. <i>Consensualising</i> arguments (Batel & Castro, 2009)
3. <i>Conventionalising</i> arguments (re-affirming an idea, but leaving it un-discussed, Marková, 2008)	3. <i>Thematising</i> arguments (Mouro & Castro, 2012)
4. In sum: highly shared, undiscussed, often invisible and rarely negotiated ideas	4. Distinctions general/concrete (Spini & Doise, 1998, 2005; Castro & Batel, 2008)
	SHARED, but highly discussed and constantly negotiated ideas



## **2 EMPIRICAL EXAMPLES**

**1. BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION LAWS**

**2. RESOURCE CONSERVATION (RECYCLING AND ENERGY)**



## **BIODIVERSITY protection in the EU** – in the early 1990s

the European Commission with the help of experts (biologists and ecologists)

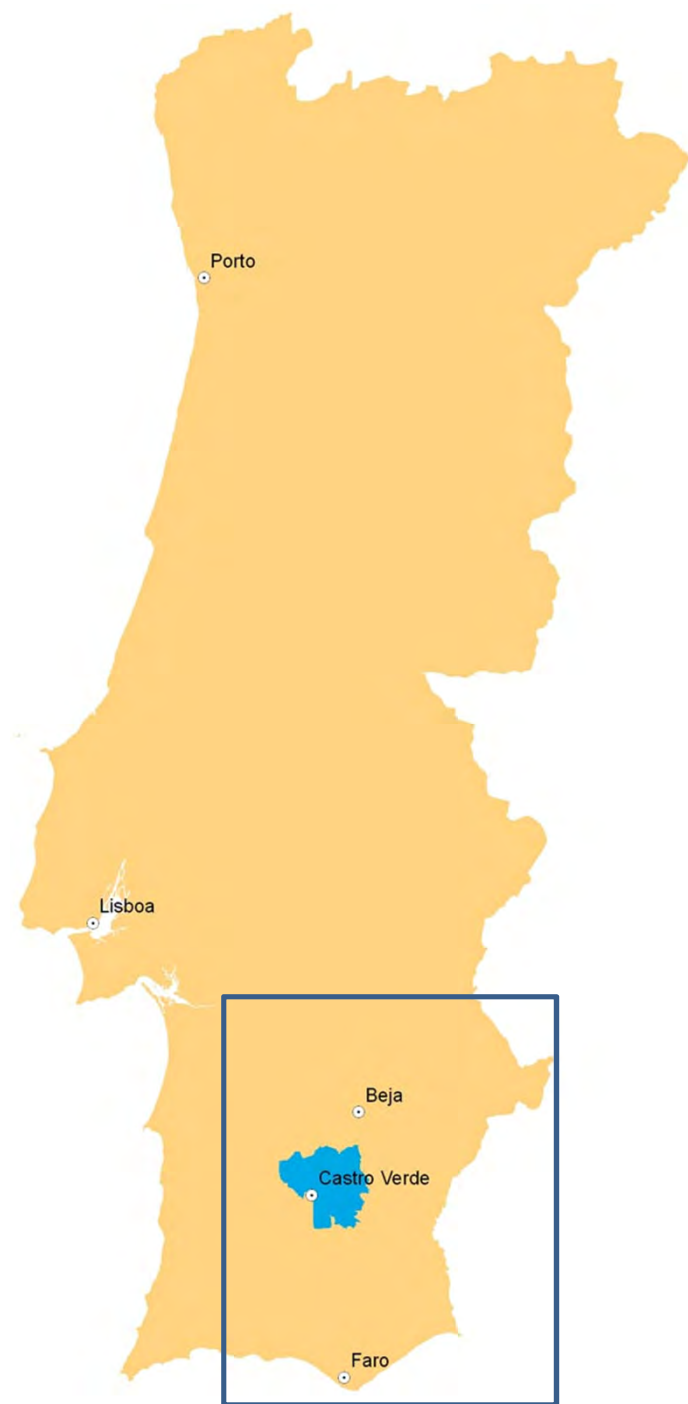
- Chose and defined *Natura 2000 protected* sites
- Prepared NEW laws regulating them - transposed to the legal frameworks of member-states – laws regulate type of constructions, plantation, crops, etc. allowed and forbidden – on private and public land.

Reception of Natura 2000 laws – along the years in Europe

- endorsement of biodiversity protection as valid societal goal
- but ALSO
- local contestation

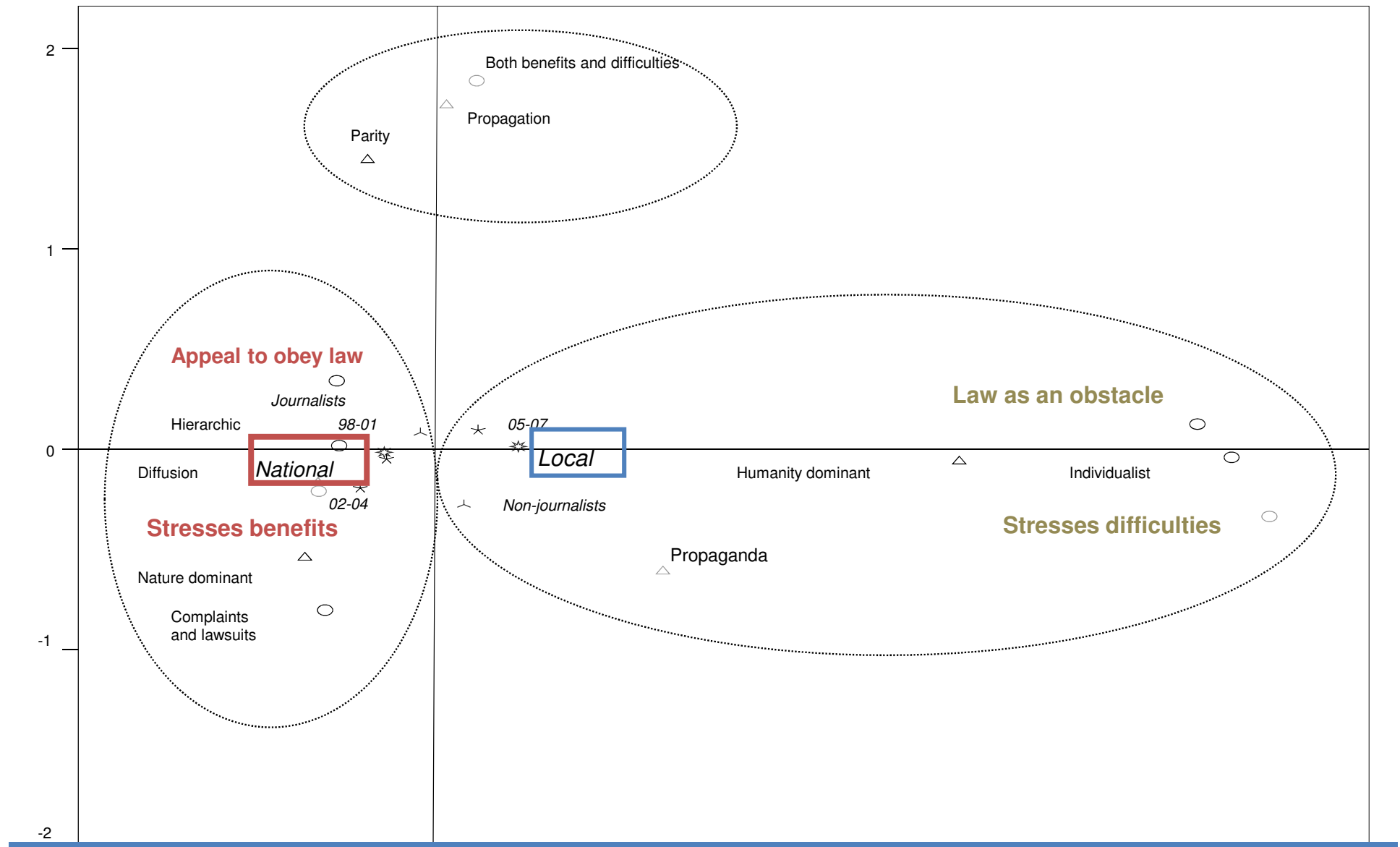
(Buijs, 2009; Mouro, 2011; Castro, Mouro & Gouveia, 2012; Hovardas & Korfiatis, 2008; Mouro & Castro, 2010; Visser, et al., 2007; Hiedenpaa, 2005; **Buijs et al., 2012**).





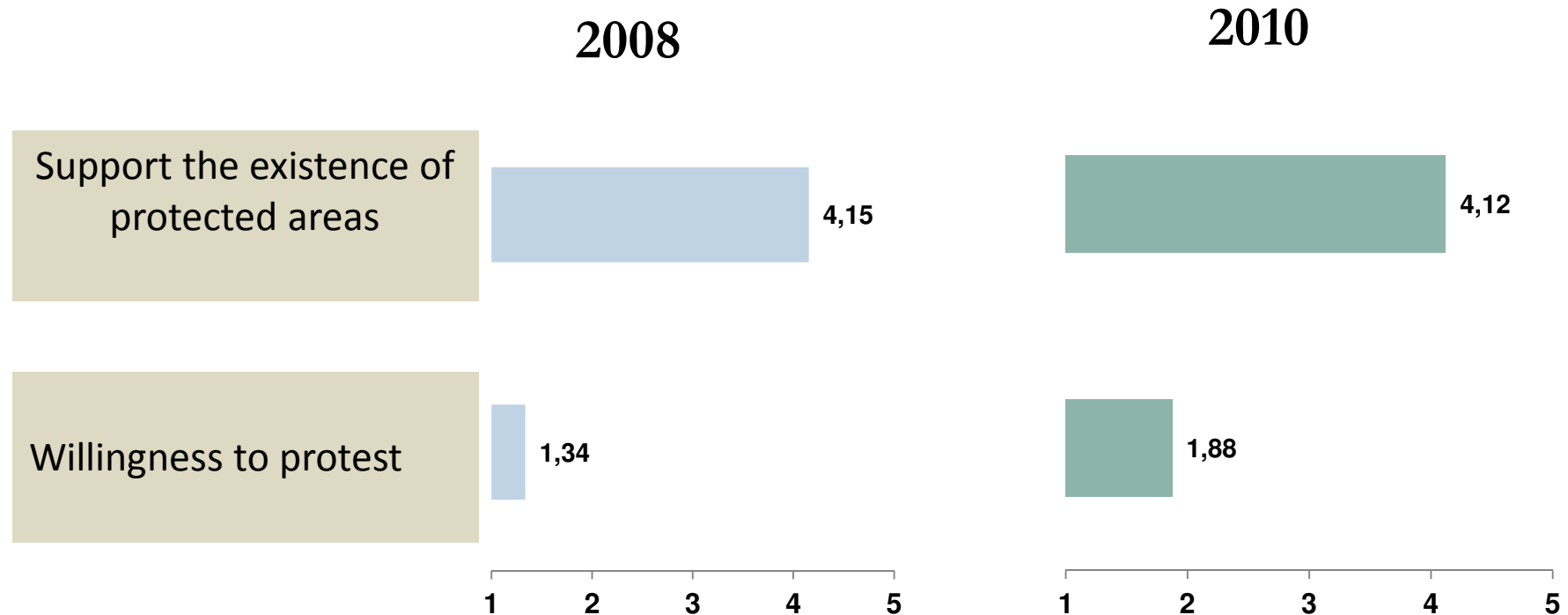


## Content analysis of 402 newspaper articles, from 1998 to 2007 – national and local



Castro, P., Mouro, C. & Gouveia, R. (2012). The conservation of biodiversity in protected areas: comparing the presentation of legal innovations in the national and the regional press. *Society and Natural Resources*

# Position regarding *Natura* Protected areas

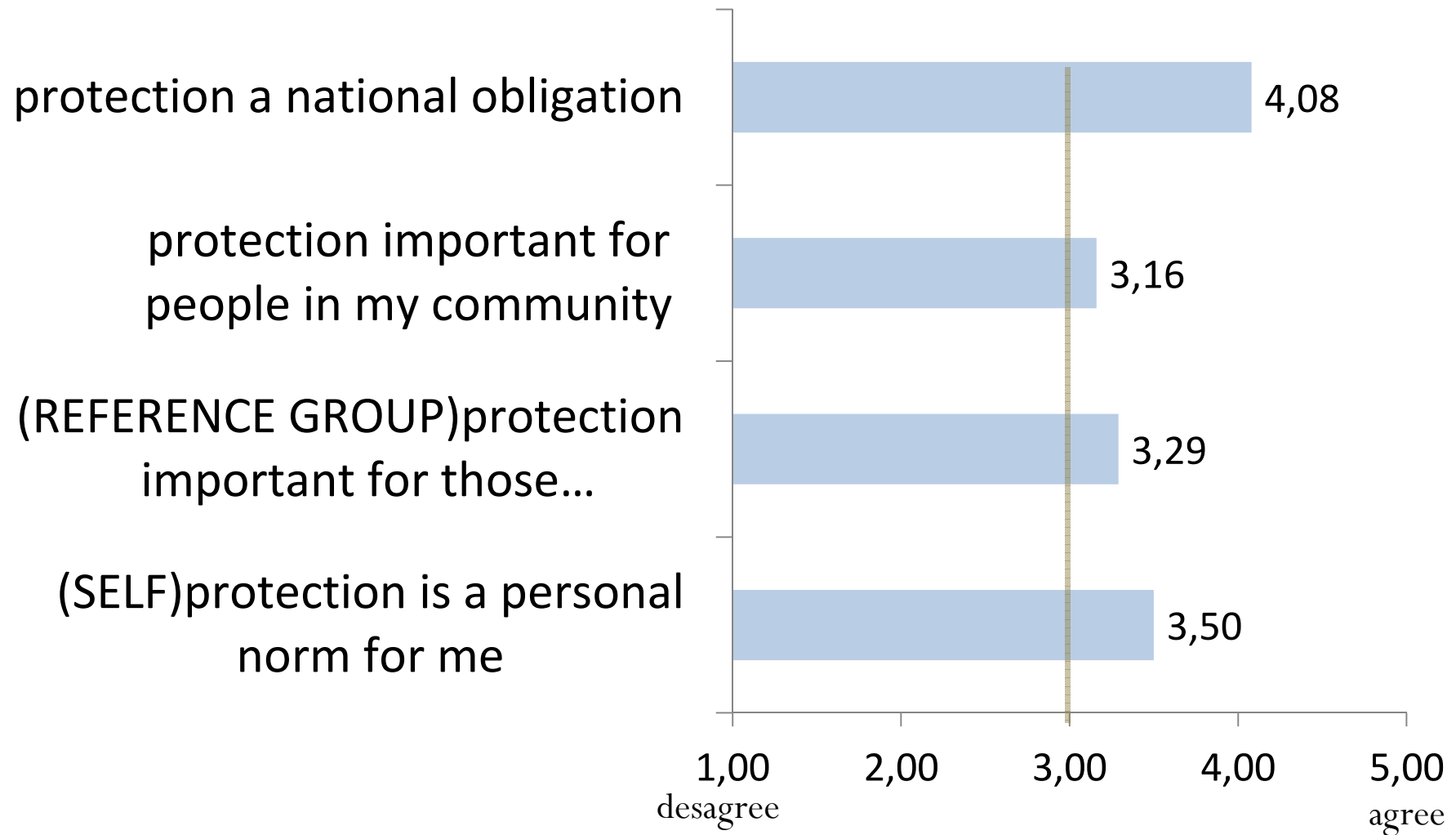


**Strong support, low willingness to protest, no change in last years**

2008 Survey – n= 229 participants,

2010 survey – N=450 respondents, representative sample, telephone survey 3 zones  
Interior South of Portugal .

## I and the others



2010 survey – n=450

If they are to be generalized, and move to the stabilization stage:

Laws need to become also in time informal norms:

- The cycle of cultural and societal transformation:
- Laws (formal norms)      informal norms      personal norms

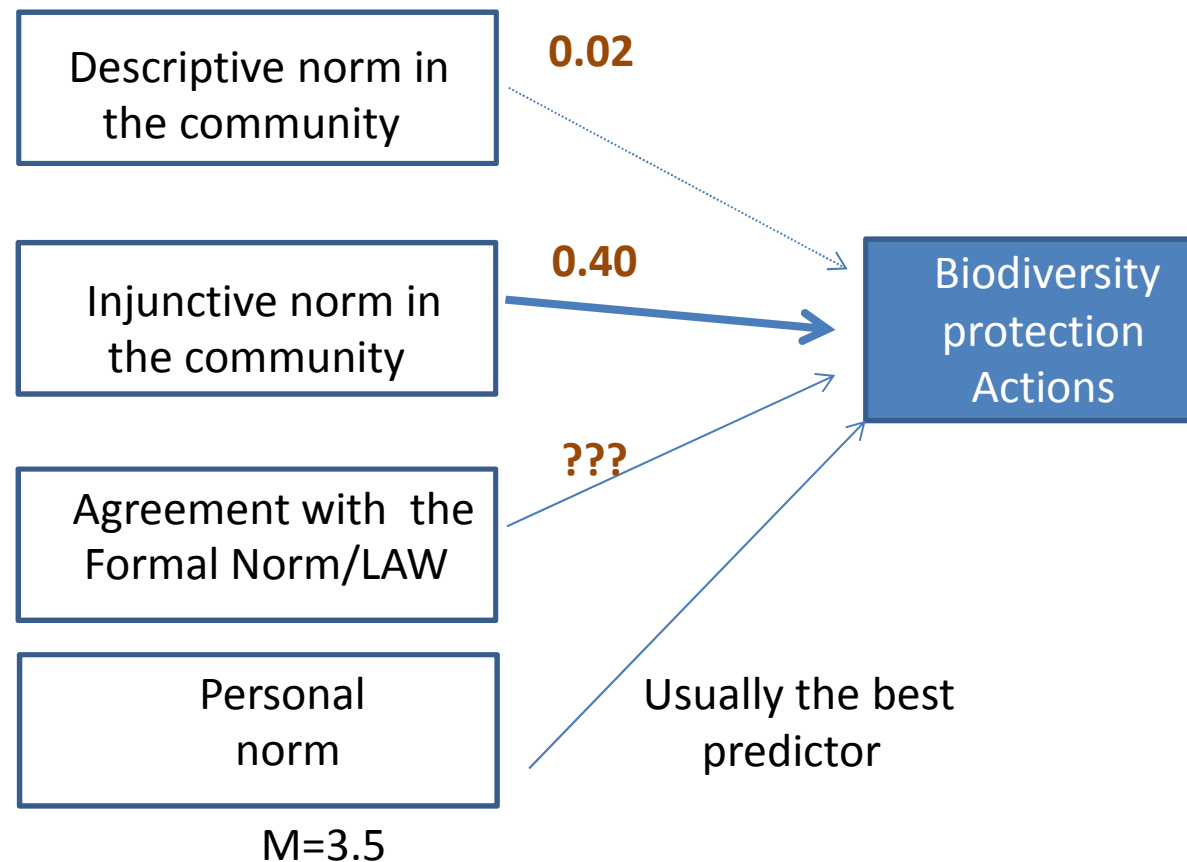


- Are laws important in the formation of biodiversity relevant social and personal norms?
- Can they help predict willingness to act?
- (Is there a point in having laws and public policies)?

Are laws important in the formation of biodiversity relevant personal norms?

## Norms as predictors of biodiversity protection actions

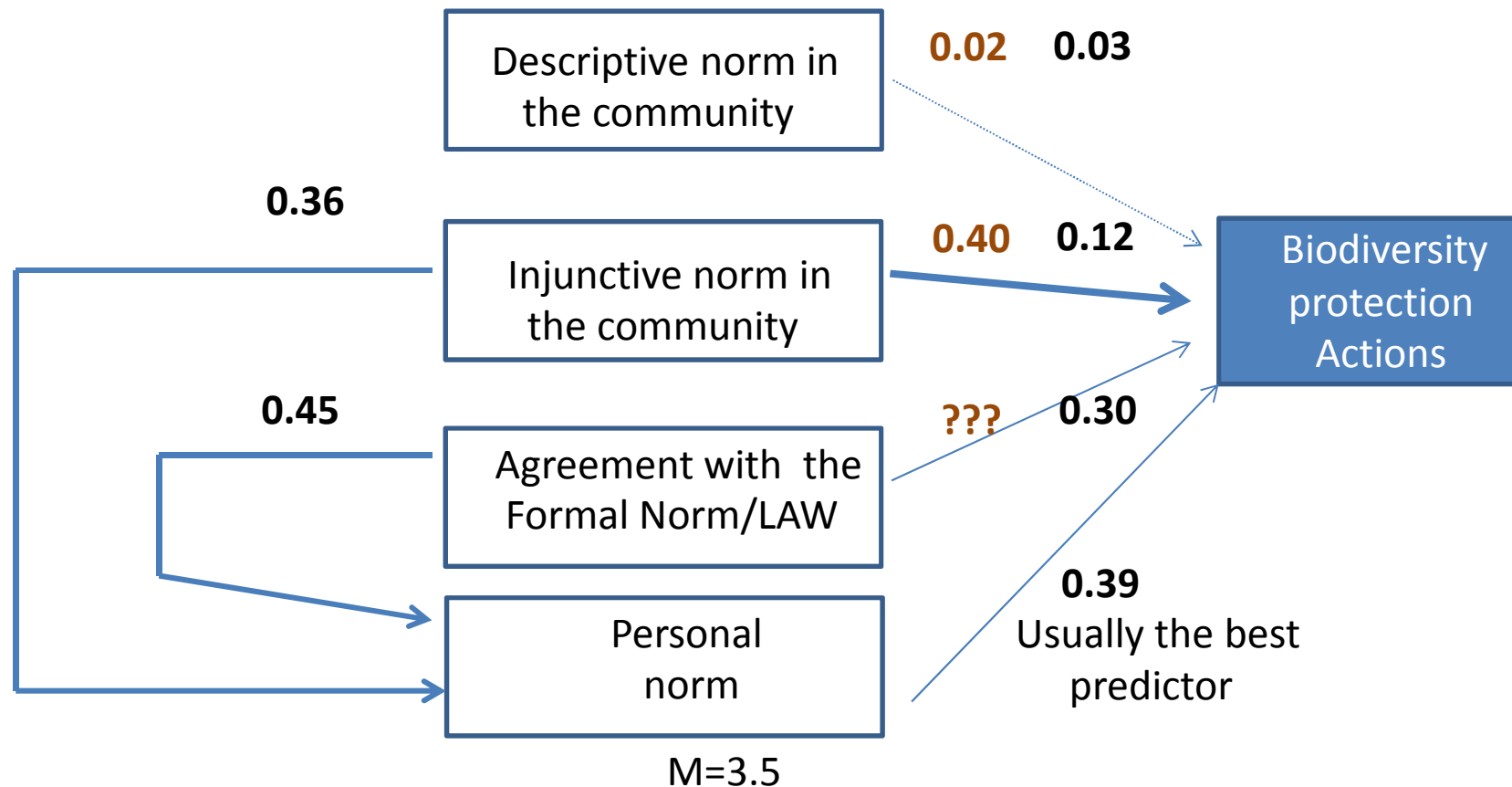
(N=132), 2010.  
56.8% men,  
52.3%  
employed,  
mean age **51.5**  
(SD=18.7;  
Min.=18,  
Max.=86).





Are laws important in the formation of biodiversity relevant personal norms?

## Norms as predictors of biodiversity protection actions



## In sum, from surveys and press analysis

- biodiversity protection –a valid societal goal
- as a local goal – not so clear...
- a personal goal/norm? well..., for some ...
- the existence of LAWS matters for forming personal norms,
- and for predicting actions...
- some local contestation and resistance remain

- **new Questions – for looking at communication and discourse:**
  - how do individuals and communities **resist and contest** in practice the laws they **generically accept**?
  - how can individuals and communities simultaneously attempt to **negotiate the laws and respect the normative meta-system**?

# Looking at communication and discourse

- analysis of focus groups and interviews – 2 important argumentative formats (1) “Yes... but” & (2) “normative warning”

- Yes... but – a communicative format

1. which first offers generic support to the law (through “conventionalization”: *(YES, in general I agree with the law)*)
2. then contests it through “thematization”; 2 main themes emerged:
  - **stringency** (*BUT, in practice, the law is too strict & difficult to implement*)
  - **legitimacy and involvement** (*BUT, the law was not negotiated with us...*)

**Mouro, 2011 and Mouro & Castro, Papers on Social Representations, 2012**

# Yes, but...

LA3: *I really agree and I think that, for example, regarding the bats or the lynx, or whatever animal it may be, very well, if they exist or existed, I believe they must be preserved.*

**BUT**, *I cannot accept that two bats, a bat-couple, will, for two years, prevent the construction of what could be an asset for the community.*  
(local authority, FG.1)

*Well, yes, I agree, I do agree;*

**but** *I would like to know better what kind of protection is expected to occur, when can people get involved, and when they cannot get involved, because I think that these things should always be defined with the locals*  
(landowner, Interview 2)

- The “yes, but...” discursive organization enables **cognitive polyphasia**
  - enables the expression of SR which
  - attempt to maintain cooperation
  - while re-negotiation and re-adjustment of meaning goes on.

## So – an hypothesis

**Polyphasia** is one the main processes of **emancipated representations**

- **ESR** sustain the everyday conflicts of interpretations but do not polarize them
- **ESR** assure variation and stability at the same time

- **Another hypothesis –**

Emancipated SR are not equally valued in all contexts, but only in some.

- So, another characteristic of ESR - their social value is not stable
- One diagnostic criteria for the value of a SR:
- impression management - we want to use positively valued SR for positive self-presentation

- Socio-cognitive approach (Dubois & Beauvois, 2005; Gillibert & Cambon, 2003) –
- a **marked difference between a positive and a negative self-presentation – indicates a valued SR**
- **If we compare value of same ideas across contexts – we are examining the stability of their value**

see: Bertoldo, Castro & Bousfield, 2013

a marked difference between a positive and a negative self-presentation – indicates a valued SR

- Procedure (Study 1)
  - Self-Presentation: positive or negative
  - 2 Contexts: cement plant or ecological institute

Design 2 (type of presentation) X 2 (type of context)

N=161 students; 51% women, Mean age= 19; 51% living in *Natura* areas

### Dependent variables:

- Biodiversity protection beliefs (7 items,  $\alpha = .87$ )

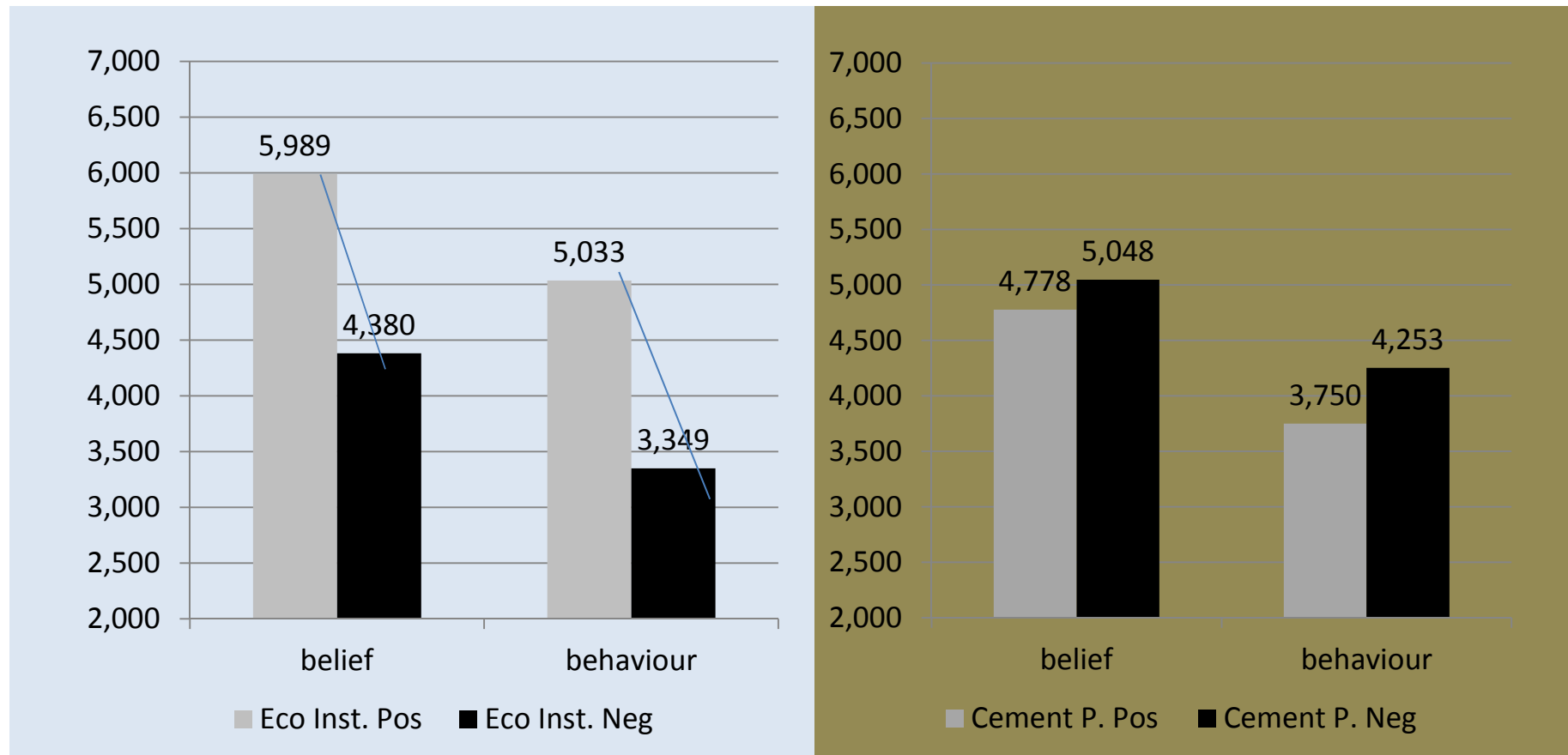
e.g., To protect biodiversity governments should rely on specific laws and regulations

- Biodiversity protection behaviours (6 items,  $\alpha = .90$ )

e.g., I publicly defend, in my conversations with friends and acquaintances, the need to protect biodiversity

# 1: Means of positive and negative self-presentations to the Ecological Institute and the Cement Plant

H1 - *difference positive/negative presentations only for ecological context*



main effect of valence ( $F(1,119)=8.4, p<.00$ ) no context effect

Interaction ( $F(1,119)=21.9, p<.000$ )



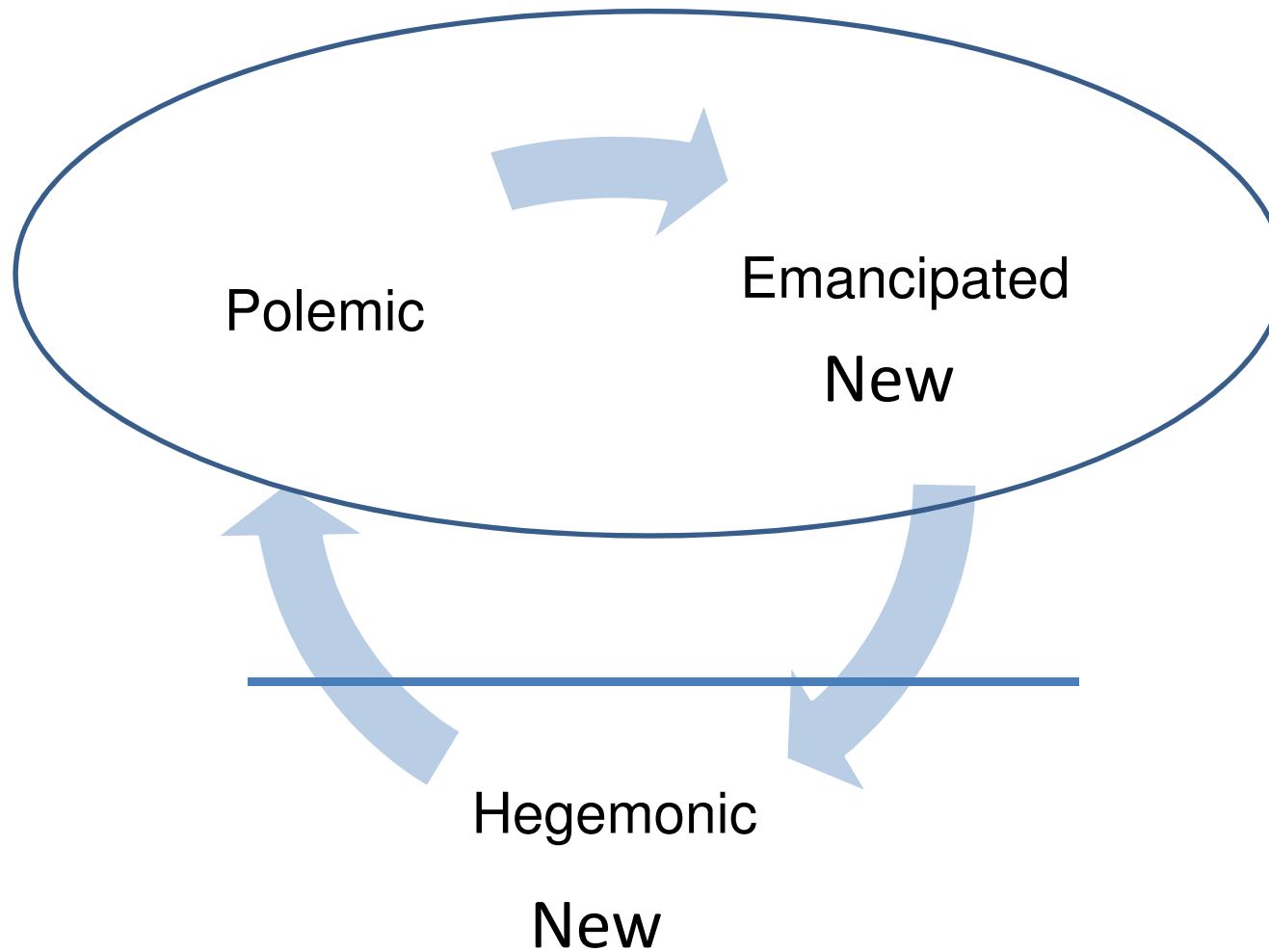
# In sum: Diagnostic criteria for Emancipated representations

- polyphasia
- “Yes... but” discursive formats
- Ambivalence
- Belief/behavior consistency not always present
- Societal valorization but- local and/or personal contestation
- Unstable value accross contexts (offering possibilities for unstable self-presentations)

Implications for societal change — subtle resistance to societal and cultural change can be maintained for a long time, making the process of making laws into norms a long one

- See: Castro & Mouro, 2011; Castro, 2012

# Biodiversity protection: the debate about the laws affecting farmers and land owners



- Biodiversity protection:  
there are laws affecting also experts and decision makers
- The public participation laws
- Now: a look at the debate about  
**Public participation and engagement in  
Natura sites**

## Although there are Public Participation laws in EU countries

The literature has CONSISTENTLY shown how EXPERTS & DECISION MAKERS PERSISTENTLY view the public as:

1. indifferent, disengaged, lacking interest in participating
2. un-informed, mis-informed, ignorant, etc

Hyp. – “the public does not know and does not get involved, and experts are the ones who know and should decide” - an hegemonic representation (in our societies – plural)

This hegemonic rep seems to have shaped the scientific decisions taken for

✓ choosing Natura 2000 sites and species & devising the Natura 2000 laws,

These dimensions also shaped

✓ The initial lack of engagement opportunities

✓ the engagement opportunities more recently now offered to the residents – erratic, unsystematic, unpredictable (see Mouro & castro, 2010; Castro & Mouro, 2011)



## Method

- 9 focus groups (n=49) in communities living in Natura 2000 biodiversity protection sites.
- Some groups with farmers only, others mixed
- participants asked
  - to describe **episodes of local engagement** regarding biodiversity and species
  - to talk about **barriers and facilitators** to this engagement and biodiversity protection.

# Focus groups - demographics

Total of participants	49
Percentage of men	65,3%
Most prevalent age group	36-45 (28,6%)
Most prevalent educational level	College education (12º) (30,6%)
Percentage of farmers	59,2%
Percentage of landowners* (property >100 ha)	65,3% (65,2%)

\*all properties are within a Natura 2000 site

## A discourse of Reproduction - The public is indifferent/does not get involved

the Ego is  
absent from the  
arguments

the Alter is

indifferentiated,  
and both  
national and  
local

MN: I tell you, people were there because there was a free lunch, because a lot of people that never go anywhere to be informed, they were there... if there is food, they go.

PA: people here have no initiative.

MR: People are suspicious. The alentejano is individualist (Mértola)

FR: For instance, if you try to put together some people to discuss some serious topic, only 2 or 3 seem to be interested.

# A discourse of Resistance – we know

The Ego -

present  
and NOT  
ignorant

the Alter -  
government,  
local  
experts...  
environ-  
mentalists

JFF: Most of the time, these people that come to tell us what to do, they have no skills for that, because we are the ones who are here, in the field, and we know better than them, we simply do.

The problem is that they do not know. My neighbour Chico Figueira, he always tells this story: he was sowing white barley, and this engineer comes and says “great-looking wheat you have here!”, and my neighbour goes: this is not wheat, this is white barley.

Environmentalists are fantastic, but they should know what they are talking about, because it is not by studying in Lisbon or working in an office in Lisbon that one gets to know about the country and about the land.

Because, for instance, the land in Barrancos is different from the land in Moura, this needs to be taken into account. We know the land, the soil here. Some soils are good for wheat, some are good for oat, it is the farmer who knows the soils.



in sum, is the hegemonic representation of the public reproduced or resisted by these farmers/public?

### **reproduction**

1. Yes, there is indifference and lack of involvement...
2. But the actors of that indifference are abstract,

are not the concrete Ego

### **Resistance –**

A discourse in which

the Ego is present, often collective – and claims that the Alter – knows less

And the Alter is - the government, the environmentalist local experts – everybody...

## Another example, similar processes: the “Hospital and District without Pain” project (Nencini et al, 2014)

The representation of pain by health professionals

- ✓ shared knowledge
- ✓ NOT debated and NOT negotiated

what cannot be framed within its definition of cognizable pain

- ✓ cannot be treated or cured
- ✓ is readdressed, e.g. to the psychologist
- ✓ or is redefined as, e.g. ‘fake pain’
- ✓ or is re-absorbed by older meaning (pain ruler)

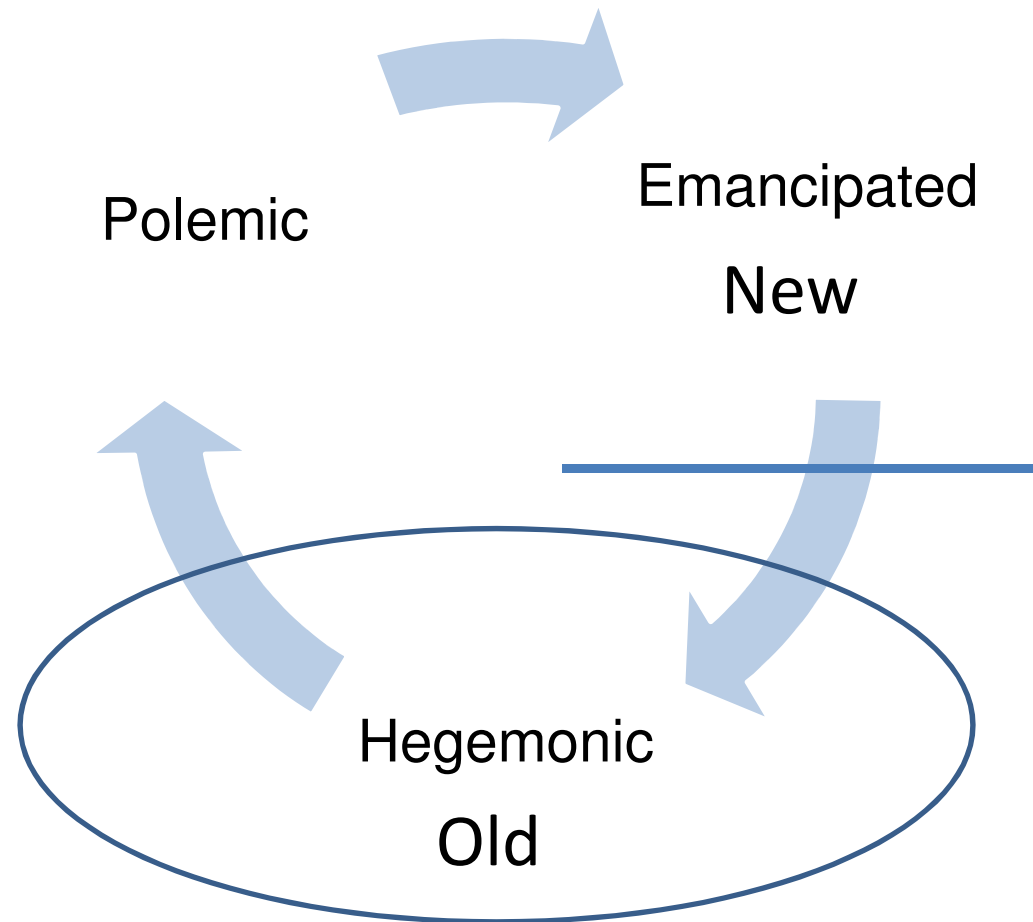
so- a hegemonic representation?

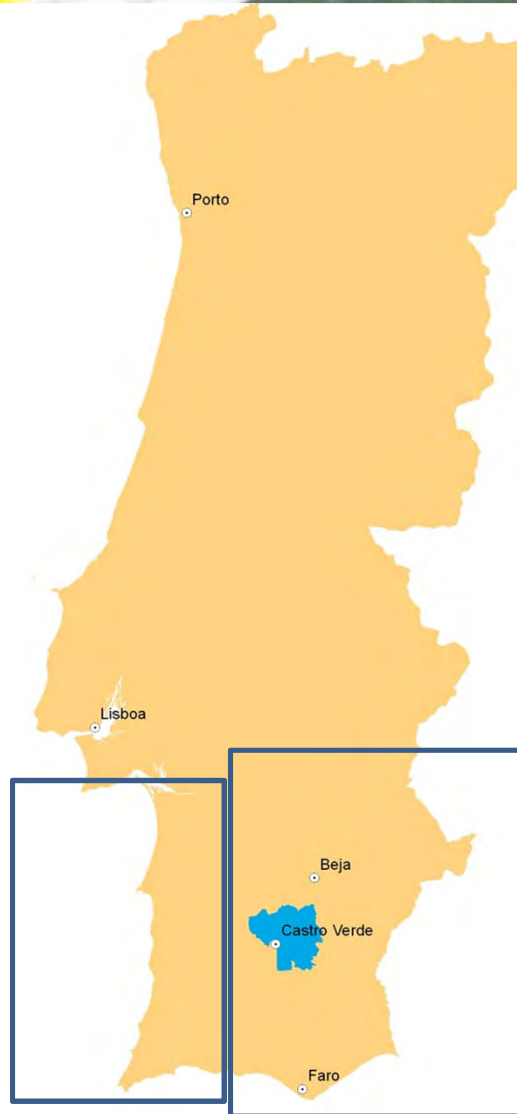
On the other hand, the Ottawa Charter endorses a broader definition of pain which solicits a change in the entire system.

reproduction –

is this preventing the PAIN project and Charter to be better succeeded?

The two examples seem to share the same format:  
old hegemonic meaning closing down change





**now the  
future**

## MEMOTRADE

**Social memory of water-related  
trades and practices: local  
knowledge and climate change  
adaptation  
(2013-2016)**

*CIRCLE-2 ERA-NET*

Lisbon (CIS-IUL – PCastro, PI),

Nimes (LPS - PRateau)

Thessaloniki (SPS – THovardas)  
&

Algarve (CCMAR – MCastro)



**GOAL 1** - To document the social memory and local knowledge of communities in 3 Natura 2000 coastal sites

By - constructing a “memory bank” of water-related trades and practices (fishing, seaweed use, etc) and associated forms of social organization.

**GOAL 2** - To investigate how:

- social memory and local knowledge are linked to local norms, place representations and place attachment
- social memory, local knowledge and local norms combine or conflict with the legal and scientific rules governing *Natura* sites for climate change adaptation and biodiversity protection

**GOAL 3** - To make scientists, decision-makers and local populations more aware of each others knowledge relevant for climate change adaptation and biodiversity protection

**GOAL 4** - to stimulate the emergence of new ideas and forms of organisation relevant for climate adaptation



- 1- To produce locally meaningful information, culturally and contextually relevant FOR climate change adaptation and biodiversity protection
- 2 – to improve the flow of knowledge across different groups in the community
- 3 - to improve the flow of knowledge across different stakeholders and different types of knowledge
- 4 - to improve communities' resilience , promoting more integrated solutions for climate change related problems





# Social change - what we will be studying

- ✓ **Biodiversity**
- ✓ **climate change**
- ✓ public involvement
- ✓ **Relations amongst LOCAL, LEGAL and SCIENTIFIC knowledge**

✓ Energy efficiency

✓ Social memory and Place relation in a Urban neighbourhood

✓ Legal innovation for the professional integration of disabled people

## MEMOTRADE

- ✓ A pos-doc to be engaged
- ✓ Rteixeira – memory and place attachment
- ✓ Pos-doc CMouro – comparing coast with interior
- ✓ Pos-doc RBertoldo? – heat waves
- ✓ MUzelgun

✓ Pos-doc SBatel

✓ LBettencourt

✓ PNeca



## Discussion

*For understanding how legal innovations change/fail to change societies and cultures*

(papers in bold more directly relevant for the topic of the seminar)

1. **Castro, P. (2014, in press). The approach of social representations to sustainability: Researching time, institution, conflict and communication. In G. Sammut, E. Andreouli, G. Gaskell, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Representations*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.**
2. Uzelgun, M. & Castro, P. (2014). The voice of science on climate change in the mainstream Turkish press. *Environmental Communication*, 1-19.
3. **Bertoldo, R., Castro, P., & Bousfield, B. (2013). Pro-environmental beliefs and behaviors: two levels of response to environmental social norms. *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicologia* 45, 435-446.**
4. Vala, J. & Castro, P. (2013). Pensamento social e Representações Sociais. In J. Vala e M. B. Monteiro (Eds.) *Psicologia Social* (pp. 569-602). Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
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6. Barata, R. & Castro, P. (2013). I feel recycling matters... sometimes: The negative influence of ambivalence on waste separation among teenagers. *The Social Science Journal*, 50, 313-320.
7. **Mouro, C. & Castro, P. (2012). Cognitive Polyphasia in the Reception of Legal Innovations for Biodiversity Conservation. *Papers on Social Representations*. 21, 3.1-3.21.**
8. **Castro, P. (2012). Legal Innovation for Social Change: Exploring Change and Resistance to Different Types of Sustainability Laws. *Political Psychology*, 33, 89-106.**
9. **Castro, P., Mouro, C. & Gouveia, R. (2012). A decade of debates about the conservation of biodiversity: Comparing the national and regional press. *Society & Natural Resources*, 25, 539-555.**
10. **Buijs, A., Hovardas, T., Figari, H., Castro, P., Devine-Wright, P., Fisher, A., Mouro, C. & Selge, S. (2012). Understanding people's ideas on natural resource management: research on social representations of nature. *Society & Natural Resources*, 25, 1167-1181.**
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13. Howarth, C., Kalampalikis, N. And Castro, P. (2011). 50 years of research on Social Representations: central debates and challenging questions. *Papers on Social Representations*.
14. **Castro, P., & Mouro, C. (2011). Socio-psychological processes in dealing with change in the community: Some lessons learned from biodiversity conservation. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 47, 362–373.**
15. **Mouro, C., & Castro, P. (2010). Local communities responding to ecological challenges - A psychosocial approach to the Natura 2000 Network. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 20, 139-155.**
16. **Castro, P., Garrido, M., Reis, E. & Menezes, J. (2009). Ambivalence and conservation behaviour: an exploratory study on the recycling of metal waste. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 29, 24-33.**
17. **Batel, S. & Castro, P. (2009). Reification and consensualization in communication: An analysis of the impacts of two distinctive discursive formats. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 39, 415-433.**
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