

# Online Colloquium Emotions and Democracy

1<sup>st</sup> session

27th February, 12-13 CET

**Microsoft Teams Meeting:**

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/35542434438508?p=5dmG2kOZwWtsSqsIKg>

**Meeting ID:** 355 424 344 385 08

**Passcode:** AU9ib7g9

## 1. Presentation

# Social Representations of Protection and Employment: A Macro Analysis

### Abstract

Societies are composed of several social groups that vary in their understanding of reality and access to protection. Based on the Central Core Theory of Social Representations, this study explores the meanings attributed to protection by 11690 participants residing in 11 countries, considering their position towards employment. Data were collected using a self-reported online questionnaire. The data analysis involved translation and homogenization of words and meanings in two stages, resulting in 16 categories and Prototypical Analysis. The results indicate that social representations of protection differ depending on employment status. They also indicate that protection is considered multidimensional and is associated with affective elements. The results can be used to inform protection policies that meet the expectations and needs of the groups under study.

### Authors



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**Sofia Morgado Pereira** integrates the Portuguese team of PROTEMO project and is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the **University of the Azores**. She has a Ph.D. in Social and Cognitive Psychology from University of Coimbra.

## 2. Presentation

# Protective Policies, Divided Hearts: Preliminary Findings from the PROTEMO Focus Groups Analysis

### Abstract

Protective policies are central to democratic legitimacy, yet citizens do not evaluate “protection” only in technical terms. Drawing on online focus groups conducted in June 2025 across six countries (UK, Germany, Poland, Denmark, Portugal, Israel; N=41), we analyse how citizens emotionally experience protective governance across four domains: COVID-19, immigration, climate change, and criminal justice. We introduce the Emotional Footprint Framework of Protection, which conceptualises each policy domain as generating a distinct patterned emotional configuration—an “emotional footprint”—that conditions citizens’ emotional responses and legitimacy judgements. While the baseline emotional climate is marked by frustration, insecurity, perceived injustice, and distrust, domain-specific footprints vary systematically: COVID-19 is characterised by conditional trust and anxiety followed by fatigue and resentment; immigration activates insecurity, anger, and distributive fairness concerns; climate change combines concern with powerlessness and resentment over unequal burdens; and criminal justice elicits moralised anger and demands for predictability and visible enforcement. Across domains and countries, three recurring emotional expectations anchor legitimacy judgements—safety/security, predictability/control, and recognition/fair treatment—highlighting protection as a relational, not only instrumental, governance claim. We also identify differentiated protection as a cross-domain phenomenon: perceptions that protection is unevenly distributed, selectively applied, coercive, or unresponsive consolidate grievance narratives across domains and erode trust. The framework offers an empirical pathway for analysing how protective governance can either sustain legitimacy or generate grievance, with implications for understanding democratic vulnerability and resilience.

### Authors



**Tereza Capelos** is Professor of Political Psychology at the **University of Southampton**, UK. Her research focuses on grievance politics, resentful emotionality, and reactionary orientations driving anti-democratic and autocratic preferences. She is lead researcher on Horizon Europe projects PLEDGE and PROTEMO, and a former President of the International Society of Political Psychology.



**Dr Donatella Bonansinga** is a Research Fellow at the **University of Southampton**, UK, working on the Horizon Europe project PROTEMO. Her expertise lies in the emotional and affective dimensions of the populist phenomenon. Her work has been published in leading international journals such as the British Journal of Politics and International Relations, Politics and Governance, and Ethnic and Racial Studies.

No prior registration is required. For any inquiries, please contact the organizers: **Dr. Beatriz Carbone** ([beatriz.junqueira-lage-carbone@uni-saarland.de](mailto:beatriz.junqueira-lage-carbone@uni-saarland.de)) and **Janna Fischer** ([janna.fischer@uni-saarland.de](mailto:janna.fischer@uni-saarland.de)).



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