

## **WHEN THE YOUNG THINK THAT EVERY PLANT IS PARSLEY. SOCIAL VARIABILITY OF ETHNOBOTANICAL KNOWLEDGE AND PLANT CATEGORIZATION IN TWO RURAL AREAS FROM PORTUGAL**

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The ethnobotanical research in two Portuguese natural protected areas allows us to discuss the process of perceiving plants and building plant knowledge and the cultural transformations in the conceptions of plant, nature and environment in rural contexts that face social and economical changes. The aim of this paper is to present and understand how various people select and invoke different ethnobotanical knowledge and different classificatory principles in plant categorization according to social differences such as age, gender, schooling, professional skills and individual experience. The social variability of cognitive processes of plant categorization will be related to the recent changes of cultural appropriation of nature. Pile sort tests were carried out on 78 subjects from two villages. The results were interpreted on basis of ethnobotanical and ethnographic data collected by participant observation and interview methodologies. The results show clearly that younger people who are nowadays removed from agricultural activities have different perceptions of plants, while some other people develop concepts that integrate traditional and exogenous knowledge in the plant categorization process. The cognitive operation that was activated during categorisation tasks is influenced by each person's social ambience and daily practices. Data also reflect the dynamics of local knowledge and nature conceptions in rural contexts that are undergoing social and economic change: different perceptions, non transmitted practices, transitional knowledge, eventual biodiversity loss and external influences in lifestyle (e.g. every day life, new jobs and gardening).