



Social discourses on deep geothermal energy

Michael Stauffacher (ETHZ) & Olivier Ejderyan (ETHZ)

Transdisciplinarity Lab - Department of Environmental Systems Science

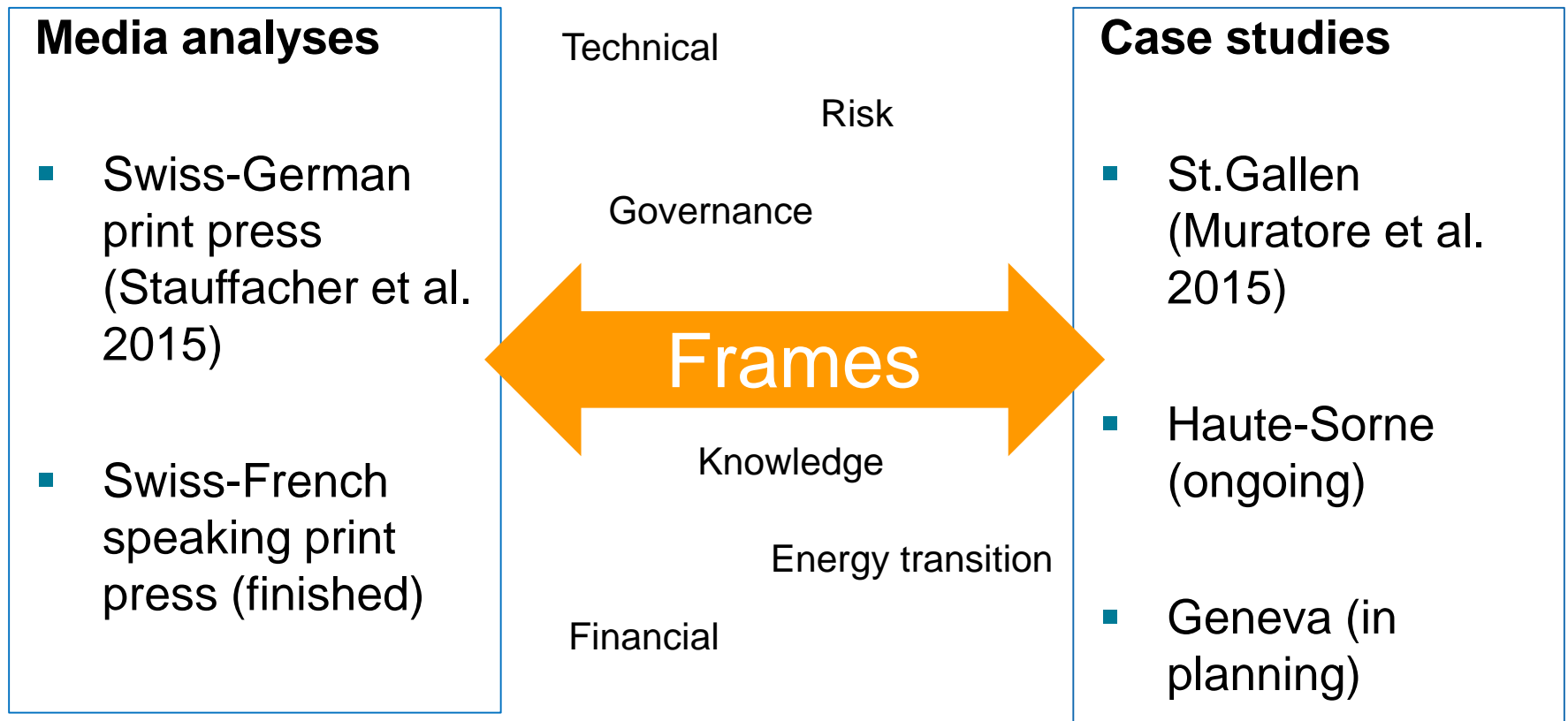
Swiss Competence Center for Energy Research - Supply of Electricity

SCCER-SoE Annual Conference 2016, Sion, 13 September

Why focus on “social discourses”, i.e. how the issue is understood, framed, discussed in public?

- Social discourses give access to perceptions and representations of actors
 - Informs siting and communication, provides knowledge about concerns of actors
- Social discourses provide the elements that will be debated in the public sphere
 - Informs public engagement, helps anticipating key issues that might arise during a project
- Social discourses are performative: shape attitudes, can be self-fulfilling
 - Informs process but continuous monitoring important

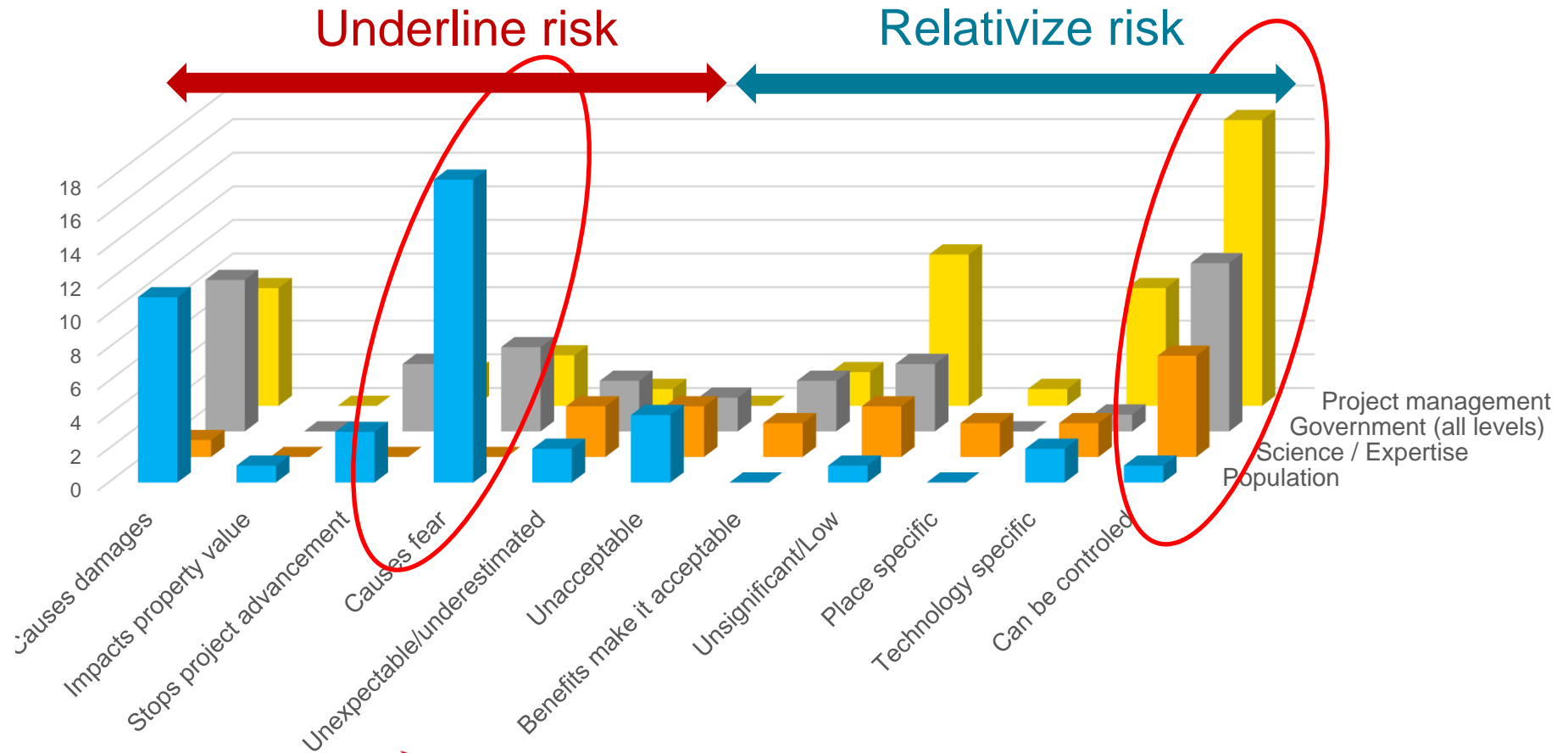
Analysing social discourses on deep geothermal energy



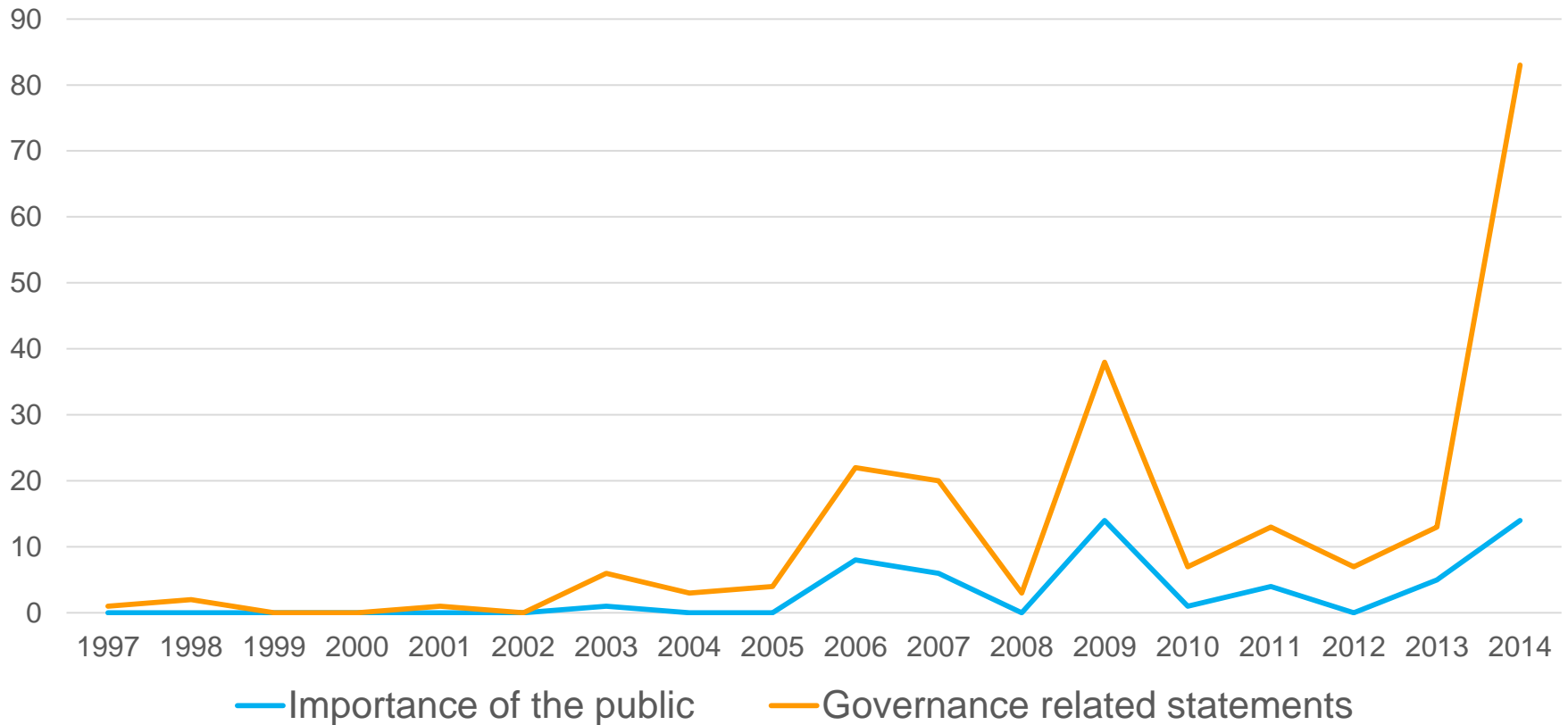
Lessons to be learned from our case study St.Gallen

- **Public vote was essential**, public felt taken seriously, developed ownership
- **Communication** took up concerns and was honest, **transparent from the very beginning**
- Risks were communicated and there was always an **emphasis on measures in place to deal with risks**
- Charismatic leader Fredy Brunner played key role; illustrates importance of **having a local leader**
- One characteristic of the communication was its emotional dimension: **public felt clear engagement of all**

French speaking media: statements qualifying seismic risk in relationship to DGE by type of actor (1997-2015)



Statements relating to the governance frame in Le Temps/TDG (1997-2014)



Promises of EGS: Deep geothermal unbound?

“[HDR] These three letters, initials of « Hot Dry Rock », name a technique that enables to use geothermal energy **independently from the availability of hot springs or hot aquifers.**” *Tribune de Genève* 29.12.2003

“**Only stimulated geothermal has a large development potential**’ says Peter Meier, estimating that small power plants **could be installed everywhere** between Geneva and the Lake Constance” *Le Temps*, 23.07.2013.

Recommendations based on our results from social science research

- Media reporting offers polarized interpretation: population vs. promoters of DGE
 - Reality more nuanced, actors' concerns and positions must be examined thoroughly and differentiated
- Governance issues are important with regard to the legitimacy of deep geothermal
 - Necessitates involvement of public authorities, giving them a key role in the process
- Portrayal of EGS as “geographically unbound” challenges siting and concrete locations selected
 - Siting must be transparent and well communicated