

The Hidden Drug.

A STUDY ON THE
ADDICTIVE POWER
OF POLARIZING
PUBLIC DEBATE.

INTRODUCTION.

The Hidden Drug.

Oddly enough, the term "polarization" is one of the concepts that least polarizes society the general consensus over recent decades has been that the rising polarization constitutes one of the greatest risks to the stability of democratic states, the only ones where dissent can be exercised, even from the most extreme positions.

Countless studies have investigated the causes, extent, and consequences of polarization in our societies. Issues such as the social fragmentation caused by the growth of inequality, the weakening of traditional political parties -generally the guardians of moderation- and the consequent rise of populist movements, or the degradation of educational levels appear in all the analyses. However, this phenomenon would certainly not reach its current worrying dimension without the help of social networks as an ideal space for its expansion.

THE MECHANICS OF POLARIZATION.

POLARIZATION CONSTITUTES A COMPONENT OF PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND CONDITIONS THE WAY IN WHICH INFORMATION IS INTERPRETED, AND MESSAGES FROM THE POLITICAL SPHERE ARE DECODED IN THE CIVIL SPHERE.

The term "polarization" has become a synonym with value concepts such as "radicalization" or "extremism". Polarization denotes a process of reaffirming one's beliefs after participating in a debate about a controversial topic in which alternative evidence and interpretations are available. Therefore, the novelty is not so much that the positions resulting from this interaction are extreme (although on many occasions this is the result), but the attitude of willful ignorance (if not contempt) of the evidence and arguments that would force one to modify one's beliefs. It is therefore useful to cast light on some of the psychological, cognitive, sociological, and ethical mechanisms involved in the social reproduction of polarization.

1. Ideological polarization is not the same as affective polarization. Many authors indicate that the disparity of private opinions in relation to specific legislative measures is usually less than that expressed publicly: while attitudes in private tend to be more moderate, and favorable to a certain degree of ideological compromise, in public, differences are emphasized and evaluations are more bipolar (Garmendia and León, 2021). In turn, political party spokespersons tend to defend more radical and watertight positions than those expressed in private by their electorate. This points to shorting (alignment) as one of the main causes of social polarization: the need to "trust and partially" delegate judgment to the agents results in a polarization of personal opinions. The case of abortion in the United States is paradigmatic in this regard.

2. Moral absolutism (Viciara et. al., 2019) is behind many of the polarizing dynamics of our public space. Issues that are not in themselves moral are framed, interpreted, and communicated as if they were. Disagreements in economic, political, and administrative matters are thus expressed in terms of indignation, intolerance, or aberration. Neuroscience and contemporary experimental psychology both have shown that these moral emotions are evolutionary reactions physiologically distinct from those of our deliberative system.

3. This phenomenon, in turn, is linked to the tendency for more and more people to consider that their moral judgments have the value of objective knowledge that, therefore, cannot be subject to discussion. Research has demonstrated this tendency through experimental studies revealing a greater conviction among public debate participants, but also a greater reluctance to take into account evidence and arguments that would force them to change their own position.

4. Those who are the **most convinced** are the ones who participate more in public debates and on social media. This coincides with the findings that the most radicalized people are the ones who are most involved in active political organizations, and also the ones who most publicly express their opinions. The public debate is monopolized by "convinced" and militants, who thus condition the structure of the discussion and falsify the "real" state of the majority opinion.

5. The consequence of this is a **change in the role of disagreement in deliberative contexts**. Traditionally, disagreement is considered to presuppose the revision of one's beliefs (if the diners arrive at a different result after a meal in a restaurant, it is assumed that they will revise their calculation of the distribution). The rise of "convinced" attitudes means that, on the contrary, disagreement generates the strengthening and polarization of one's own positions.

6. Digital mediation has increased the perception of the bond of belonging to communities marked by ideology, aesthetics, adhesions, and rivalries. Although individual cognition is always mediated by the group, selective exposure to like-minded opinions in social networks has catalyzed this phenomenon. This has led to recent proposals to replace the concept of "epistemic bubbles" (Nguyen, 2020) with "epistemic bunkers" (Furman, 2022) to emphasize the affective and identity component.

7. Finally, these psychological mechanisms must be contextualized in the **current crisis of the intermediaries** described by Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca (2022), fundamentally political parties and the media. This leads to greater confidence in one's own opinions, to the point that discrepancy with respect to consensus can be considered a factor of confirmation in the validity of one's own beliefs.

POLARIZATION, A NEW SOCIAL DRUG.

LLYC's polarization study dives precisely into social networks to explain the evolution of polarization in twelve countries¹ over the past five years, taking into account the social conversation on the most controversial topics. According to the analysis of Google's search results pages for the most controversial topics, the ten territories that generate the most interest in the selected countries are: abortion, climate change, human rights, feminism, immigration, freedom of speech, death penalty, racism, minimum wage, and unions.

Drawing insights from an analysis of over 601 million Tweets between September 1st, 2017, and August 31st, 2022, the report sheds light on topics attracting the highest volume of conversations in each country, their variations over this time period, the level of interconnectedness between the communities involved in the debate, the addiction they provoke, and the role of activists on both sides of the political spectrum.

The use of artificial intelligence to analyze the enormous volume of messages exchanged on social media is essential to understanding what is being talked about, how opinions are expressed, who is triggering the debates and what reactions they provoke. This yields a true picture of the moment and evolution of conversations, free of bias, which facilitates a better understanding of opinion trends, allows identifying those areas of opportunity in which an organization is entitled to interact, and can contribute ideas and content of value while detecting the associated risks. A wealth of information to define reliable, positive, and effective communication and relationship strategies.

STUDY METHODOLOGY.

Polarization measurement starts by identifying the main communities based on engagement analysis (algorithms: Lefebvre modularity and ForceAtlas2 Layout) followed by assessing the level of interconnectedness between opposing communities and measuring the probability that a message from one community can reach the opposing community (algorithms: PageRank and Betweenness Centrality). The inference of the progressive/conservative conversation involved manually tabbing the main communities by country, and all data processing and metrics calculation was carried out entirely in Python.

The addiction measurement methodology is based on the purpose of having an independent metric. Comment-type engagement was measured, as opposed to share-type engagement used to measure polarization. It also measures the level of this type of engagement by profile in each territory. The hypothesis was validated by testing for a significant correlation between polarization and measured addiction.

ADDICTED TO CONFLICT.

Social media addiction is in certain cases comparable to drug addiction: a drug hidden behind the apparent normality of the use of these digital platforms. The literature on this type of addiction refers to effects such as loss of control, absorption at the mental level, or severe alteration of the person's daily functioning. According to Enrique Echeburúa (2018), Professor Emeritus of Clinical Psychology at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), emotional states such as impulsivity, emotional discomfort, or the exaggerated search for strong emotions increase addiction.

For neuroscientist Mariano Sigman, author of "The Power of Words" (2022), "it is difficult to measure the exact risk of addiction. In some cases it is well known but in others, such as polarization, it is not. The great human tragedies and massacres result from moments of incomprehension, from the exacerbation of this mechanism by which one group cannot understand the ideas of the other. This failure to understand drives one group to hate the other to such an extent that they decide that the only way to settle the matter is to kill everyone in a war. This may be the real risk of a drug-like polarization."

(anex p. 8)

(anex p. 9)

(anex p. 18)

(anex p. 14)

Is it this craving for strong emotions, coupled with the need to reaffirm one's own ideas and confront anyone attempting to assert their own, driving up levels of polarization? There is a progressive increase in this "addiction" throughout the universe covered in this report; namely, the level of involvement or engagement of tweeters on both sides of the political spectrum in the territories of conversation. In Ibero-America (Spain, Portugal, and Latin America), addiction to conversation increases after the pandemic and maintains a progression of 8% per year, with climate change, racism, minimum wage, and immigration being the territories where it increases the most (8). It is also accelerating in the United States (+13%), especially for discussions on the death penalty and human rights (9). A singular trend in Spain has been a poignant addiction to the conversation about feminism and trade unions, the latter linked to the controversy over labor reform (18).

Polarization throughout the examined Ibero-American countries has thus grown by 39% since 2017 with the striking emergence over the past year of "conservative" views against the overwhelming conversational dominance by the sector that we will refer to as "progressive", almost to a point of prevailing their rivals (14).

There are remarkable differences between countries in the balance between "progressives" and "conservatives". The first ones clearly dominate the conversation in the United States, Colombia, Brazil, and Portugal. In contrast, conservative views reign supreme in Mexico, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, and Panama. Balance is the keynote in the remaining countries analyzed (15).

Looking deeper into the data, in some countries, there is an evident "rearmament" of far-right groups, which are organizing themselves to shore up their presence on Twitter. In Spain, the appearance of Vox on the political scene shifted the status quo to the point that, by the end of 2022, the share of the digital conversation is practically tied (20).

Brazil, as the most polarized country in the world, has experienced a similar phenomenon in recent months with the emergence of right-wing activists in debates such as abortion and freedom of expression, thus evening up the playing field (25).

This is not the case in Mexico, where the conservative faction has dominated the conversation since President López Obrador was sworn in (30).

(anex p. 15)

(anex p. 20)

(anex p. 25)

(anex p. 34)

BATTLEFIELDS.

The scale of the societal debate seems to be overwhelming. Any issue, no matter how minor, can be elevated to an object of discussion: all it takes is for two to want it (and a blessing from the networks). However, some issues command the attention and concern of the contending masses because they appeal directly to the most deeply rooted convictions and stir emotion rather than reason. In LLYC's study, abortion is the most polarizing issue in all countries; others, such as feminism, immigration, climate change, freedom of expression, and human rights or racism, also promote heated discussions, although with nuances depending on the country (11).

(annex p. 11)

An important point to note is that the volume of conversation on a topic is not equivalent to the level of polarization, which is registered when the interaction between the communities participating in the debate is very low or almost non-existent and the dissent in opinions is greater. An example of this difference is the conversation about racism in the United States, which after the murder of George Floyd reached very high volumes but saw the polarization index lowered by up to 74% for several months due to greater consensus in the networks. Remarkably, in the last twelve months analyzed, the debate on racism in the United States has lost momentum in the face of controversies over abortion, climate change, and immigration; feminism is not even among the major issues of debate.

(annex p. 17)

On the contrary, in Spain (7) it is notable that feminism concentrates the highest volume of conversation with a low level of polarization, compared to a topic such as immigration, which presents a high volume of highly polarized conversation. Polarization around climate change has been the fastest-growing issue in Spain over the last five years (4.1 times more), followed by immigration (1.6 times more).

(annex p. 10)

Latin American countries (10), on their part, are bringing issues such as freedom of expression and human rights into social media conversations, ranking second and third respectively after abortion in terms of the intensity of their polarization in the last year. The debate on feminism in the region generates less polarization, in line with the relatively low volume of conversation it accumulates, although a progressive growth in conversation is detected (+18% annual average).

(annex p. 22)

Brazil ranks highest in the South American continent in terms of the volume of conversation around issues such as racism (leveraged by progressives) and freedom of expression (championed by conservatives), though freedom of expression is the more polarized of the two. It is abortion, however, that marks by far the highest rates of polarization. It is striking that in the country which is home to the world's lungs (the Amazon rainforest), climate change generates 80% less volume of conversation than in other countries (22).

(annex p. 27)

Mexico differs in terms of its low polarization index compared to the other countries analyzed. The country's most polarized debate centers around freedom of expression, closely linked to the more generic conversation on human rights, the conversation with the highest volume (27). The prominence of this sentiment is justified by assassinations of journalists, drug cartel attacks, and the abuse and violations of rights by certain authorities.

NETWORKS AND MEDIA.

An analysis of the evolutionary process of the aforementioned conversations in the different countries reveals the existence of "triggers" that stir up debate in the networks, such as judicial decisions, events, or new laws, for example. However, other issues remain in the public forum regardless of specific milestones. As professors Jordi Rodríguez-Virgili and Javier Serrano Puche (2018) point out, "the irruption and popularization of the Internet, especially of social networks, makes it necessary to rethink or update the theory of agenda setting in relation to public opinion" (p. 37).

There is no empirical proof, we add, of the extent to which debates in the networks are spontaneously generated by citizens or induced by third parties such as governments, the media, political parties, trade unions, or other organizations. What does seem evident is that its growth and recurrence are closely linked to activists of one or the other sign who have the resources and time to influence the course of the discussions and to further polarization.

LLYC's "Polarization" report probes deeply the pulse of polarization across social media and provides insight into which issues provoke intense tachycardia in the public debate.

Twitter is a particularly prominent forum on which tensions, consensus, and controversies that shake our communities are collected and amplified, but the debate on whether the networks are the cause of polarization is still open. Turning to Byung-Chul Han (2022): "it is the disappearance of the other, the inability to listen, and not the algorithmic personalization of the internet that is responsible for the crisis of democracy" (p.23). Unlike the philosopher's observations, there are studies such as the one entitled "Modeling the emergence of affective polarization in the social media society" that directly situate political groups as instigators of the tension reflected in the networks, which would therefore be the powerful loudspeaker for the messages of those with the support of legions of highly ideologized followers (Törnberg et. al., 2021).

Regardless of the degree to which the networks are to blame for the state of social confrontation provoked by polarization, it is certain that in their macrocosm they develop roles that help to intensify controversy and fuel confrontation. A post published in **Hateblockers.es**, an initiative fighting against social-media-driven hate, gives an account for example of the "incendiary" attitude of the so-called influencers, anyone having a central position in social media compared to the rest of the nodes thanks to a much greater number of connections than the rest and who, due to their condition, shape, direct and radicalize the opinion of thousands of followers (Hateblockers, s.f.).

While there are many studies on polarization and its causes, the existing literature on ways to overcome it remains rather lacking. Recent experiences in the field of social psychology have shown that strongly radicalized individuals can moderate their positions and reach a consensus on moral issues through deliberative processes in the presence of others (Navajas et. al., 2019). However, the virtual nature of social media networks may not be the ideal environment to emulate such experiences.

The perception that society is becoming unstoppably polarized is gaining ground in all political, economic, and sociological analyses. The expansive force of social networks contributes to both reinforcing this perception and fueling the problem. Likewise, public opinion tends to conform to the idea that there is hardly any room left for a public debate without stridency: an average of 66% of citizens believe that people in their country do not have the ability to debate in a civil and constructive manner (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2022).

However, some may still think that social media cannot be considered a virtual representation of public opinion as a whole, whose positions are usually more tempered than what is viewed in them.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

While this report seeks to describe a clearly perceptible trend with the value of data, we do not want to give up some ideas on how to ensure that responsible consumption does not drown in addictions. Our goal should consist of being able to take charge of our own responsibilities, obtain information, and accept that our beliefs may be fallible since we neither have access to all the evidence nor are we able to account for all the arguments, recognizing the authority of others in the discrepancy.

However, if we accept, as Fernando Broncano (2019) argues, that the novelty of polarization is not the cognitive dynamic itself, but that it has come to structure our entire public space due to the systematic exploitation of our cognitive biases, then we cannot accept that the response should be merely individual, via education or awareness-raising.

It is advisable to accept that some of the mechanisms described above are inherent to our way of knowing and forming beliefs. Levy (2022) explains it through the logic of "recommendation": always, in any context, we form our own opinion based on the recommendation of others and the presumption that the recommendations of some are more authoritative than those of others, which does not prevent us from reserving a margin of autonomy if the recommendation we have trusted turns out to be unfounded (if turns out that the restaurant recommended to us by a friend renowned for his good taste did not meet expectations).

Like other existing drugs, polarization has effects on the individual and on society. It has become a drug that we use every day without even knowing it and can lead to depression, irritability, dependency, social withdrawal, general tension, and an increase in hate speech. In a world where inflammatory messages have taken over the conversation, polarization makes it impossible to find consensus and meeting points between people. That is **why we have the responsibility to create spaces for conciliation, peace, and relaxation in order to find a way out of this situation.**

These spaces are both an individual and a public responsibility. If the media and digital debate is already an increasingly segmented architecture of recommendations (on politics, science, society, and lifestyles...) if there is no neutral space for discussion, why not intervene to provide access to certain types of recommendations that favor or nudge decisions and beliefs favorable to the deliberative public space and democratic life?

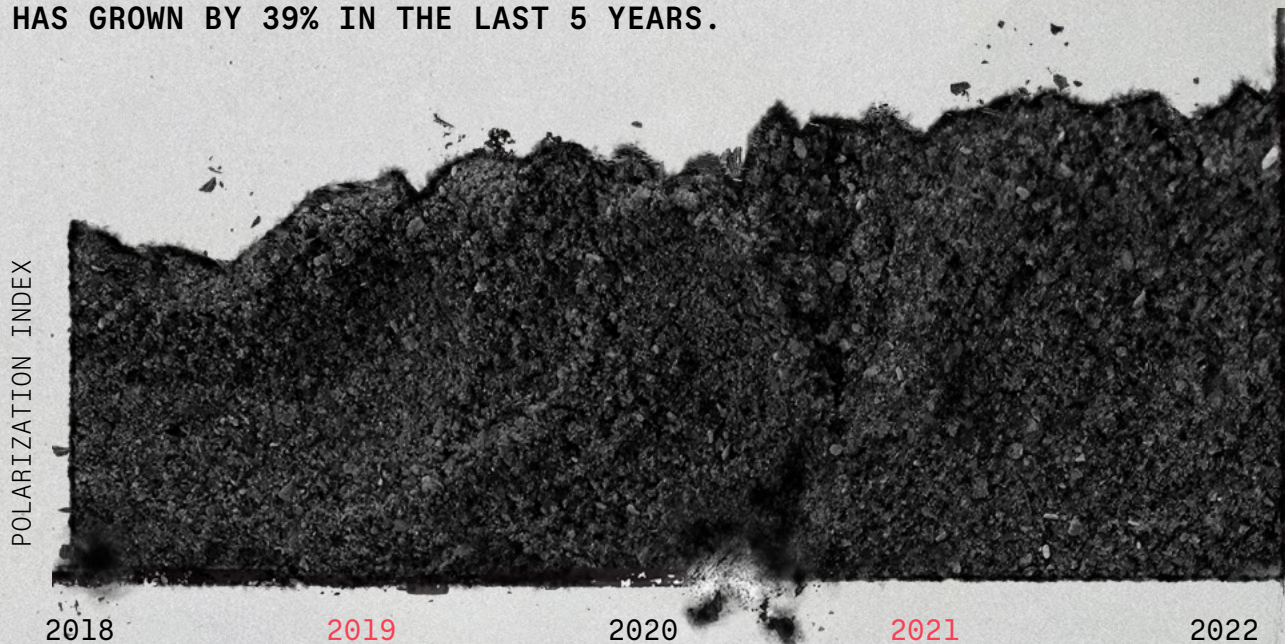
Not just because we "can't quit", but because we shouldn't. For Cristina Monge, president of Más Democracia, "a quality democracy requires a safe public space for deliberation. As long as the polarization in political and media circles prevents this, they are compromising the quality of democracies to an extent that we cannot yet pinpoint". Notwithstanding its problems and the unintended consequences it generates, some of which have been highlighted in this report, digital mediation of democratic deliberation is a fact. Forming opinions, and gaining access to information and expert opinions, but also the participation of citizens as agents necessarily involves social networks. The Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot argued that, when he enters the theater, the spectator suspends his disbelief in order to feel the representation as real. It is up to us today to

follow the opposite path, and suspend credulity about social networks as the only possible way to carry out the public discussion. Arias Maldonado (2016) has recommended the attitude of the "melancholic ironist" who does not take the seriousness of disagreements so seriously, who lowers his militancy for his own ideas, and stops confusing the expression of his opinions with his most intimate identity. This ethos of humility, which opposes the arrogance of the convinced, will allow us a "controlled consumption" of a structurally addictive public debate.

Nevertheless, we must continue to dare to think.

GLOBAL INSIGHTS.

THE LEVEL OF POLARIZATION OF THE CONVERSATION IN IBERO-AMERICA HAS GROWN BY 39% IN THE LAST 5 YEARS.

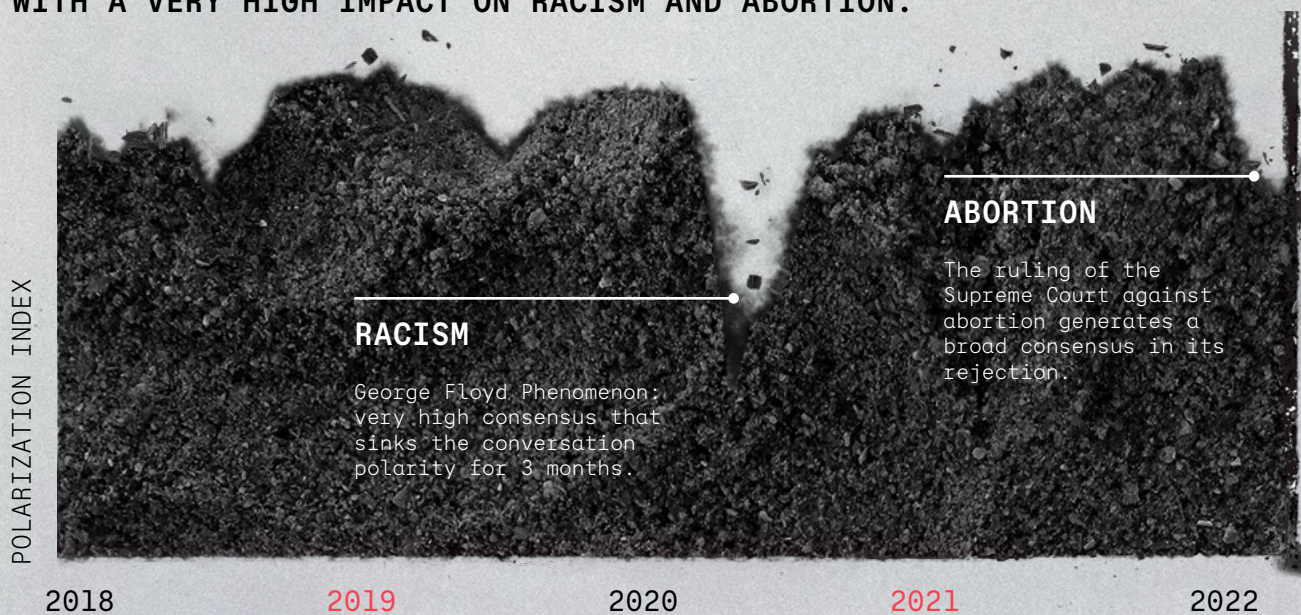


EVOLUTION OF POLARIZATION IN IBERO-AMERICA

Fewer controversies regarding feminism and abortion explain an initial downward trend.

It is followed by a period of strong growth driven by an increasingly polarized Brazilian conversation.

THE USA SHOWS A GROWING TREND, CUSHIONED BY TWO UNIQUE MILESTONES WITH A VERY HIGH IMPACT ON RACISM AND ABORTION.

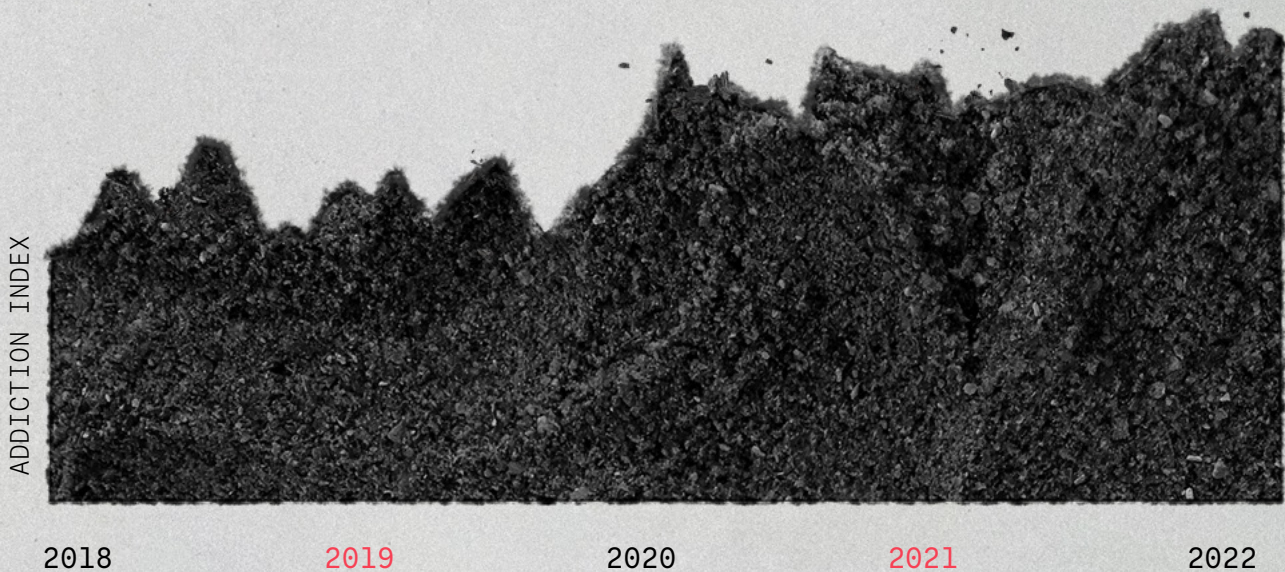


EVOLUTION OF POLARIZATION IN THE USA

The case of George Floyd supposes a social rejection of the high volume and consensus that results in a temporary drop in polarization of 74%.

The judicial decisions of recent months against abortion generate a high consensus rejection movement (-27%).

THE ADDICTION TO CONVERSATION IN IBERO-AMERICA GREW BY 11% THE MONTH THE PANDEMIC WAS DECLARED AND HAS NOT STOPPED GROWING SINCE.

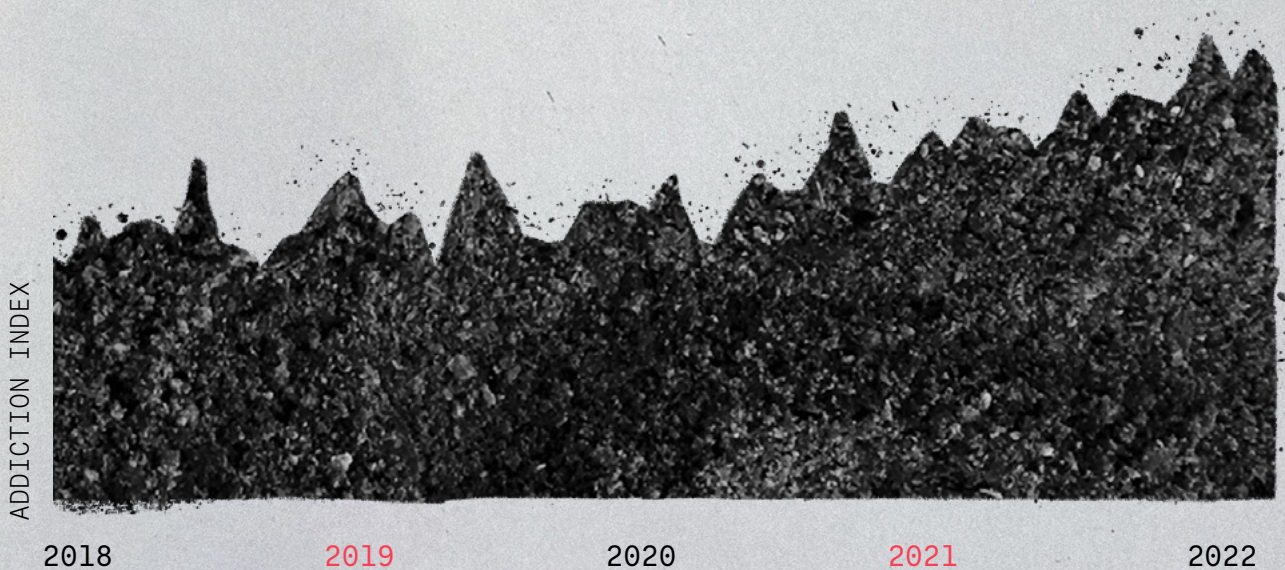


ADDICTION TO SOCIAL CONVERSATION IN IBERO-AMERICA

The pandemic considerably increases the addiction to conversation, which to date has been showing a flat profile.

With Covid comes addiction levels of continuous growth, at a rate of 8% per year.

IN THE USA, THE LEVELS OF CONVERSATION ADDICTION SHOW A CONTINUOUS GROWTH OF 15% PER YEAR.



ADDICTION TO SOCIAL CONVERSATION IN THE USA

The territories with the highest level of addiction are the death penalty (+19% higher than the average) and human rights (+12%).

During the last few months, the growth slope has even accelerated (+13%) above average.

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ABORTION, THE TERRITORIES THAT MOST POLARIZE THE CONVERSATION ARE DIFFERENT IN THE USA AND IN LATIN AMERICA.

IBERO-AMERICA

1. Abortion

2. Freedom of expression

3. Human rights

4. Feminism

5. Racism

USA

1. Abortion

2. Climate change

3. Immigration

4. Racism

5. Human rights

TOP TERRITORIES BY POLARIZATION (LAST 12 MONTHS)

Conversation



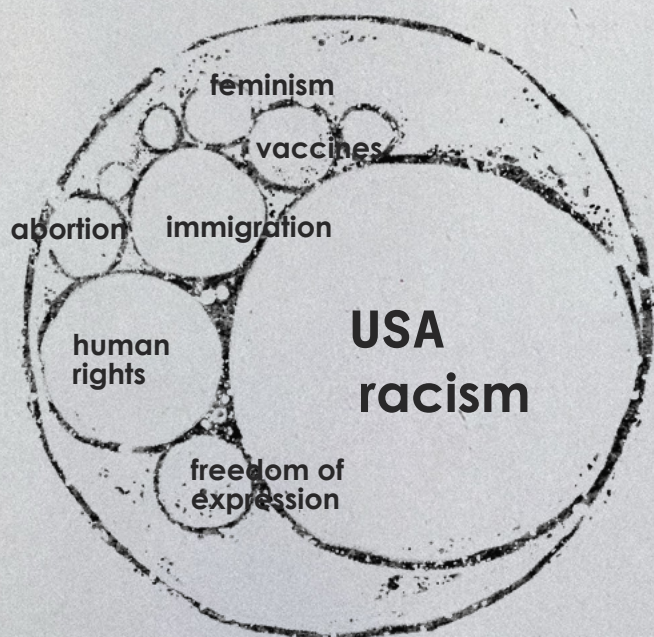
Polarization



While in Ibero-America freedom of expression and human rights are the most controversial areas after abortion, in the USA, the most polar debate is divided between climate change and immigration.

Feminism only reaches top notoriety in Ibero-America.

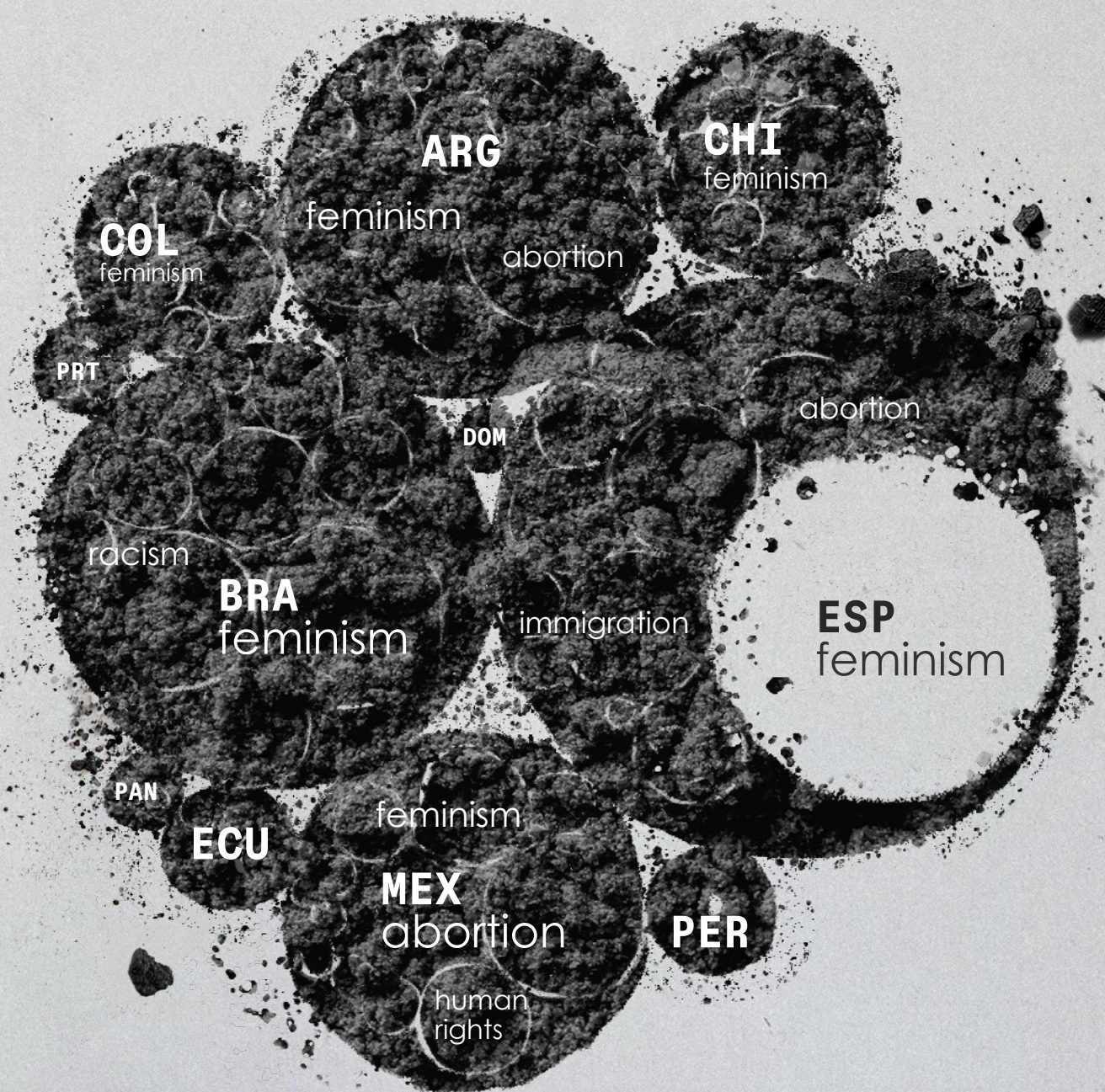
RACISM IS THE TERRITORY IN WHICH THE GREATEST TENDENCY TOWARDS CONSENSUS IS OBSERVED, DRIVEN BY THE GEORGE FLOYD PHENOMENON AS AN ICON.



ADDICTION TO SOCIAL CONVERSATION IN THE USA

The Floyd case changes the trend of a territory that since then has gained notoriety (72%) and reduced its rates of polarization.

WHILE FEMINISM ESTABLISHES ITSELF
AS A TERRITORY IN IBERO-AMERICA.



ADDICTION TO SOCIAL
CONVERSATION IN IBERO-AMERICA

In Ibero-America, feminism is one of the main territories that shows a lower than average level of polarization (-16%).

EVEN COMING FROM LOWER LEVELS OF CONTROVERSY, THE POLARIZATION OF FEMINISM IN IBERO-AMERICA GROWS (+18%/YEAR), WHILE IN THE USA IT REMAINS CONSTANT.

POLARIZATION INDEX



2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

EVOLUTION OF POLARIZATION ON FEMINISM

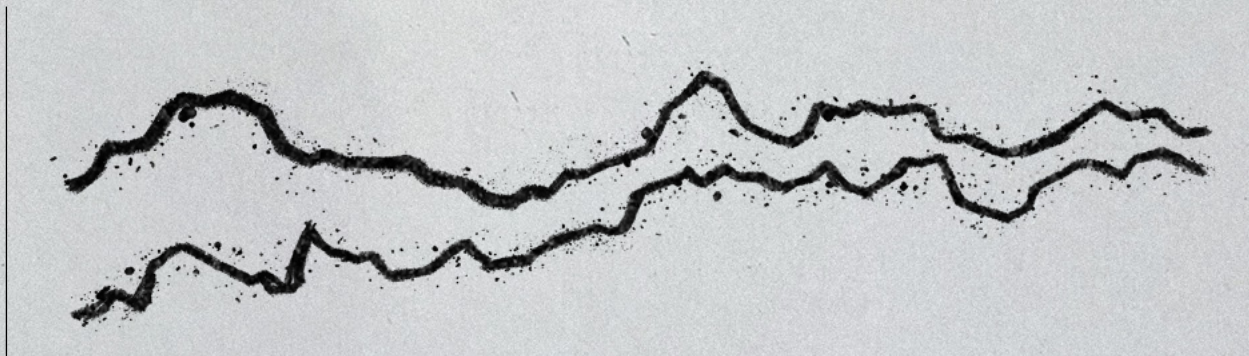
↑ Ibero-America
↓ USA

After a first few months in decline, the polarization of Ibero-American feminism is growing steadily, only interrupted by the pandemic confinement.

In the US, the prominence of abortion deadens the debate on feminism.

CLIMATE CHANGE POLARIZES MORE IN THE US THAN IN IBERO-AMERICA (+30%), AND ALSO MOBILIZES A GREATER VOLUME OF CONVERSATION (+98%).

POLARIZATION INDEX



2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

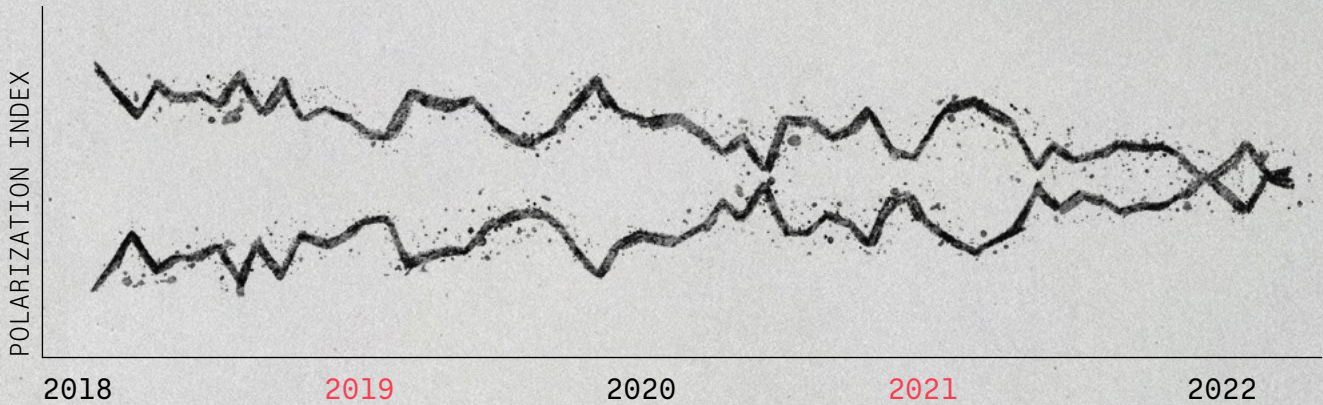
EVOLUTION OF POLARIZATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

↑ Ibero-America
↓ USA

The polarization on climate change in Ibero-America rose 82% until June 2020, when it stabilized.

In the USA, polarization once again grew with the campaign for the 2020 Presidential Elections.

THE INCORPORATION OF THE RIGHT TO THE IBERO-AMERICAN CONVERSATION MAKES THE PROGRESSIVE/CONSERVATIVE GAP DISAPPEAR (FROM 40% TO 0).

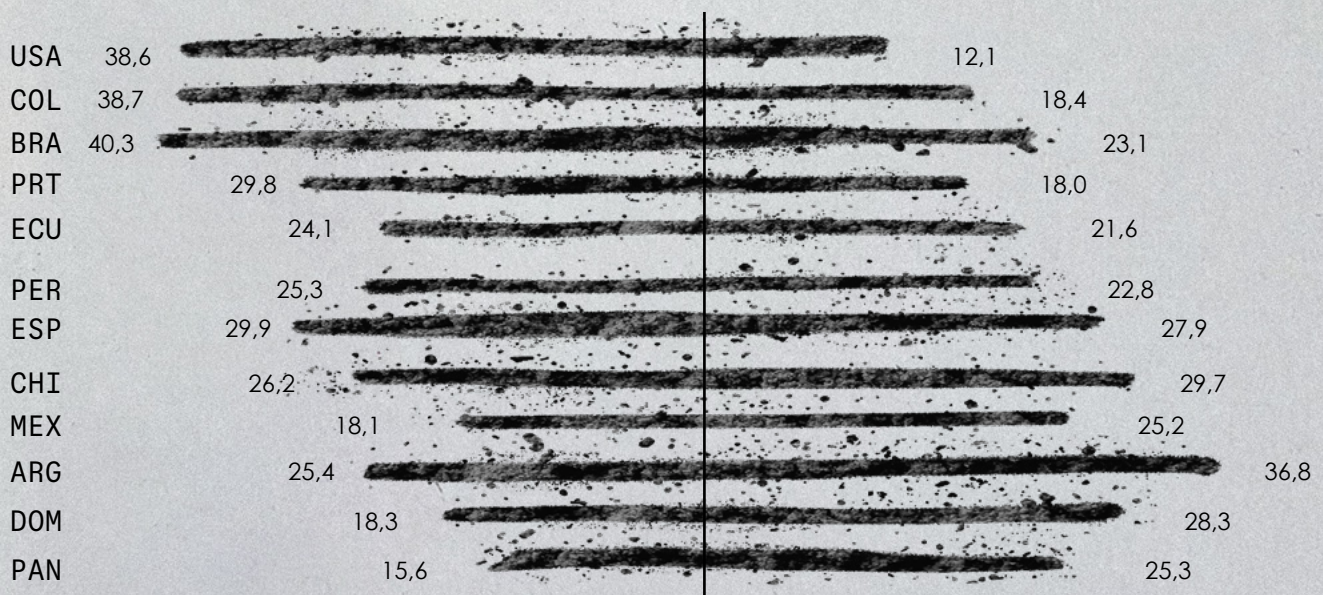


CONVERSATION VOLUME BY IDEOLOGY IN IBERO-AMERICA

↑ Progressives
↓ Conservatives

On the contrary, in the USA there is a reverse trend: the progressive voices continue to increase the difference with respect to the conservative ones.

ALTHOUGH ITS SPECIFIC WEIGHT IN THE CONVERSATION IS NOT THE SAME IN ALL COUNTRIES.



The graph shows the balance of the conversation for each of the blocs (conservative/progressive) in the 12 countries studied during the last 12 months.

The countries are ordered from highest to lowest by the progressive-conservative differential.

IN
SPAIN.

IMMIGRATION IS THE TERRITORY THAT MOST POLARIZES SPANISH SOCIETY TODAY.

TOP TERRITORIES IN SPAIN TODAY

Feminism leads by volume of conversation, but shows a lower level of polarization.

Unions is the third territory in the ranking, although its prominence has been greater in the last year than in previous years due to circumstantial issues (the labor reform).

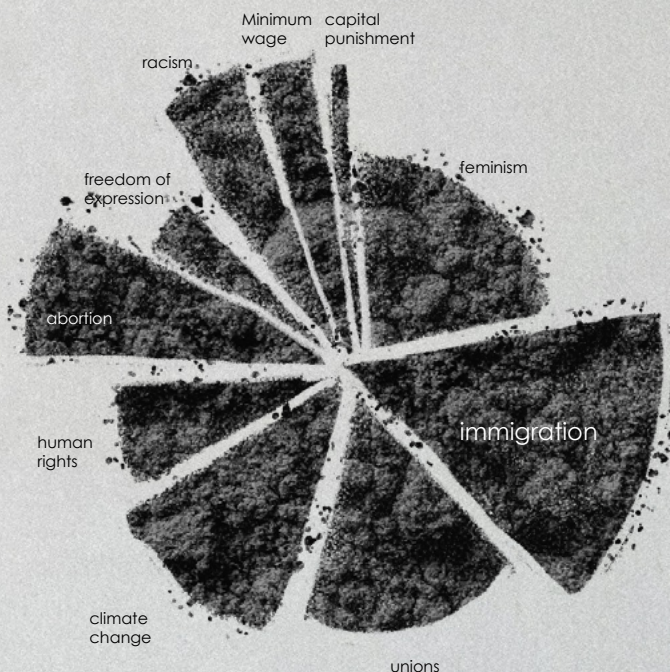
Note: The angle of the cheese represents conversation volume, while the radius represents the polarization in the different territories in Spain during the last 12 months.

Conversation volume

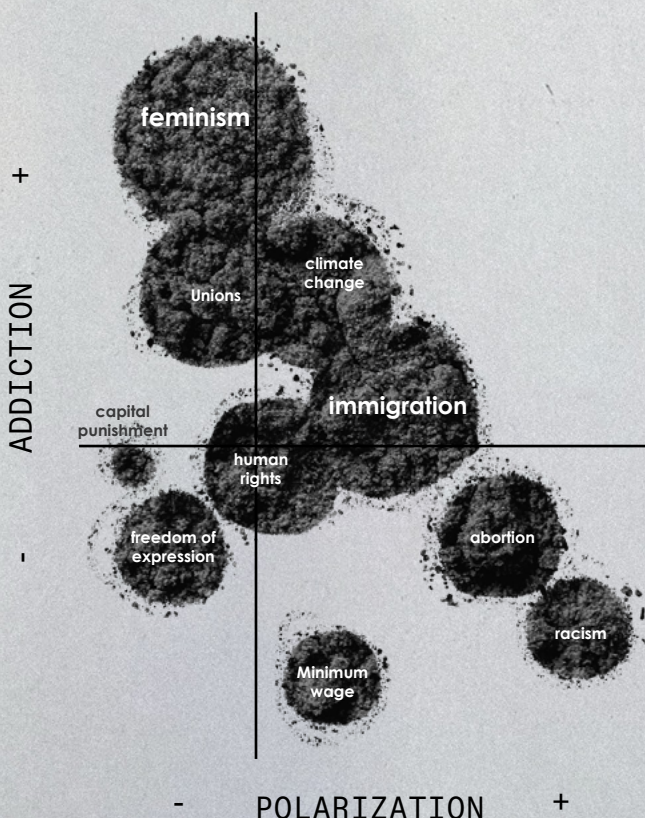
- ▽ ▹ ▸ +

Polarization

- ▽ ▹ ▸ +



FEMINISM AND UNIONS GENERATE MORE ADDICTION IN SPAIN, WHILE RACISM AND ABORTION GREATER POLARIZATION.



DIFFERENTIAL OF THE SPANISH CONVERSATION COMPARED TO THE GLOBAL ONE TODAY.

Immigration, among the most significant territories by volume, is the one that generates the greatest polarization differential.

Freedom of expression, although present by volume, shows lower levels of polarization and addiction, especially when compared to the main countries of Latin America.

Note: The graph represents the differences in polarization and addiction of the different territories in the Spanish conversation compared to the global conversation (that of the 12 countries as a whole) in the last 12 months. The position (0,0) means the same polarization and addiction as in the global conversation. The size of the ball expresses the volume of conversation.

CLIMATE CHANGE (4.1 TIMES MORE) AND IMMIGRATION (1.6 TIMES MORE) ARE THE TERRITORIES THAT HAVE BECOME MORE POLARIZED IN SPAIN IN THE LAST 5 YEARS.

1. Climate change

2. Immigration

3. Abortion

4. Unions

5. Feminism

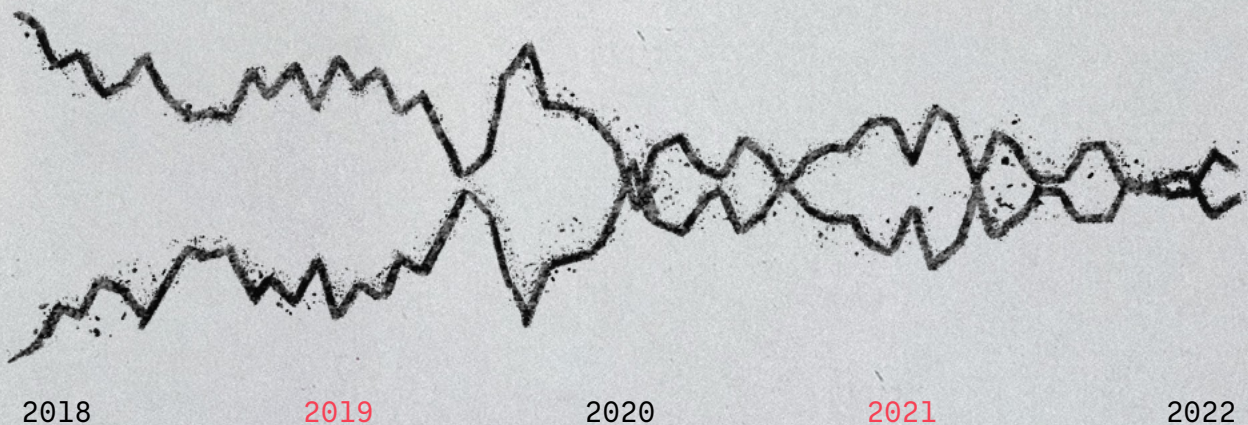
TERRITORIES WITH THE HIGHEST POLARIZATION GROWTH IN SPAIN

* comparative growth from the initial 6 months to the final 6 months of the study.

On the other hand, freedom of expression and human rights are the territories that have experienced the greatest decrease in polarization.

Abortion grows in polarization fundamentally due to legislative changes throughout 2022.

THE BALANCE OF CONSERVATIVE AND PROGRESSIVE VOICES IN SPAIN HAS REACHED EQUILIBRIUM DURING 2022.



CONVERSATION VOLUME BY IDEOLOGY IN SPAIN

↑ Progressives
↓ Conservatives

In 2017, progressive voices dominated the territories of maximum polarization with a prominence of more than double.

Coinciding with the development of Vox's party structure, the growth of the conversation share of conservative voices begins.

IN
BRAZIL.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ABORTION AMONG THE MOST PROMINENT IN THE POLARITY OF BRAZIL.

TOP TERRITORIES IN BRAZIL TODAY

Racism, although with a smaller polarization than freedom of expression (-9%), is the territory that produces the most conversation.

Despite containing the largest tropical forest in the world, climate change produces 80% less conversation volume in Brazil than in the global of countries.

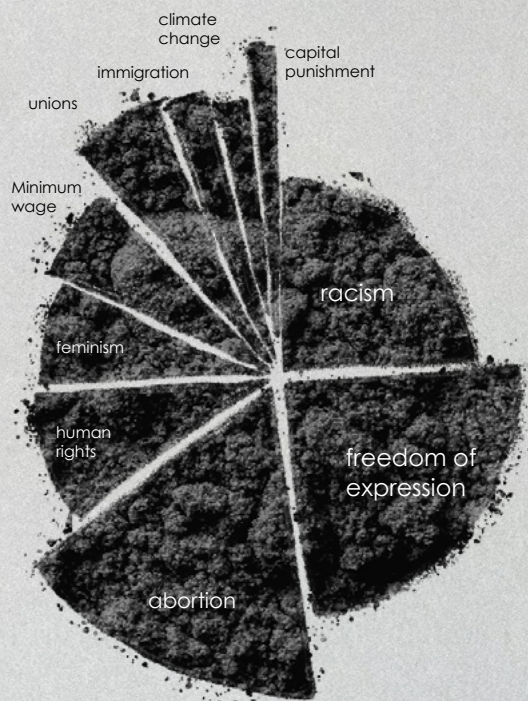
Note: The angle of the cheese represents conversation volume, while the radius represents the polarization in the different territories in Spain during the last 12 months.

Conversation volume

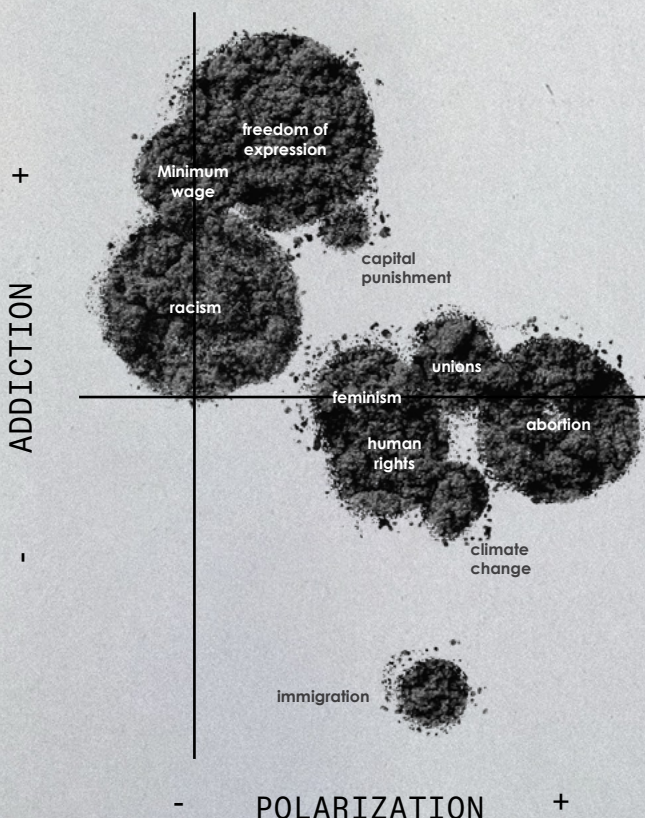
- ▽ ▹ ▸ +

Polarization

- ▽ ▹ ▸ +



BRAZIL: IT IS THE COUNTRY WITH THE GREATEST POLARIZATION.



DIFFERENTIAL OF THE BRAZILIAN CONVERSATION COMPARED TO THE GLOBAL ONE TODAY

Abortion, human rights and feminism, the territories that generate the most comparative polarity among those of significant volume.

Freedom of expression above the average in polarity and the one with the greatest addition differential.

Minimum wage and racism are the only ones with a polarity similar to the global one.

Note: The graph represents the differences in polarization and addition of the different territories in the Spanish conversation compared to the global conversation (that of the 12 countries as a whole) in the last 12 months. The position (0,0) means the same polarization and addition as in the global conversation. The size of the ball expresses the volume of conversation.

THE CONVERSATION AROUND ABORTION IS POLARIZED AND GROWS BY 183% DUE TO THE OPPOSING POSITIONS BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND THOSE WHO WANT TO END THE CLANDESTINITY.



TERRITORIES WITH THE HIGHEST POLARIZATION GROWTH IN BRAZIL

* comparative growth from the initial 6 months to the final 6 months of the study.

Freedom of expression, starting from a moderate position, is the territory that has had the greatest relative growth, becoming 2.3 times more polarized.

Immigration, a polar territory but with little volume, the only one that goes backward.

CONSERVATIVE VOICES TIE IN THE PANDEMIC AND IN THE 2022 ELECTION CAMPAIGN.



2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

CONVERSATION VOLUME BY IDEOLOGY IN BRAZIL

↑ Progressives
↓ Conservatives

Progressives have 5 times more presence when it comes to talking about racism.

Led by a higher volume of conversation on free speech and abortion, the Conservatives have regained 31% of the ground in the last 5 months to tie.

IN
MEXICO.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IS THE MOST POLARIZING TERRITORY IN MEXICO.

TOP TERRITORIES IN MEXICO TODAY

Human rights, the one that mobilizes the highest volume of conversation, is closely linked to freedom of expression (88% correlation) but with 28% less polarization.

Due to the border situation with the USA, few negative connotations are observed regarding immigration, and it is one of the territories with the least notoriety in the country.

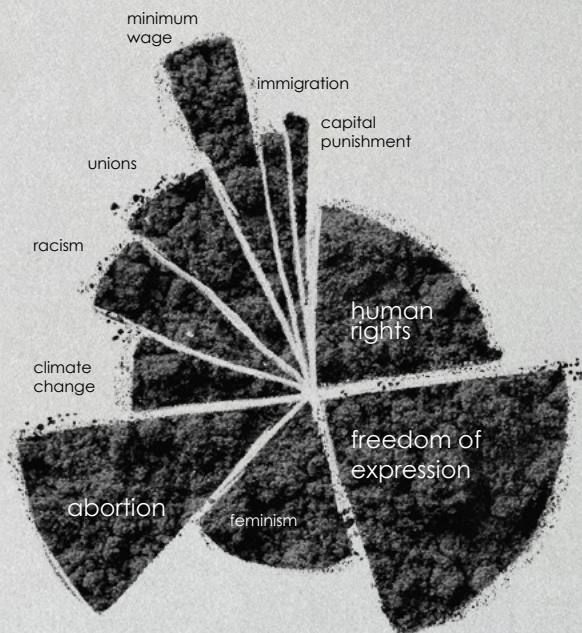
Note: The angle of the cheese represents conversation volume, while the radius represents the polarization in the different territories in Spain during the last 12 months.

Conversation volume

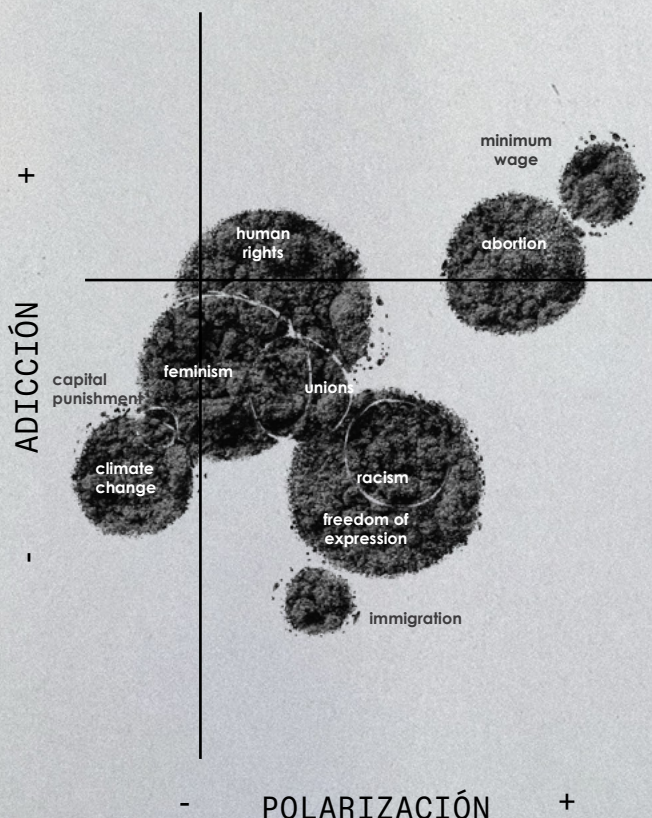
- ▽ ▷ ▢ +

Polarization

- ▷ ▢ ▢ +



MEXICO, CLEARLY, IS THE LEAST POLARIZED COUNTRY.



DIFFERENTIAL OF THE MEXICAN CONVERSATION COMPARED TO THE GLOBAL ONE TODAY

Only abortion and minimum wage show polarization and addiction higher than the global average.

Although they have a considerable volume, there is a greater consensus on feminism and climate change compared to the rest of the Ibero-American countries, showing a much lower polarity and a more moderate addiction.

Note: The graph represents the differences in polarization and addiction of the different territories in the Spanish conversation compared to the global conversation (that of the 12 countries as a whole) in the last 12 months. The position (0,0) means the same polarization and addiction as in the global conversation. The size of the ball expresses the volume of conversation.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION GENERATES 7.4 TIMES MORE POLARIZED CONVERSATION AND IS THE TERRITORY THAT HAS GROWN THE MOST IN THE LAST 5 YEARS, FOLLOWED BY HUMAN RIGHTS (1.6 TIMES MORE).

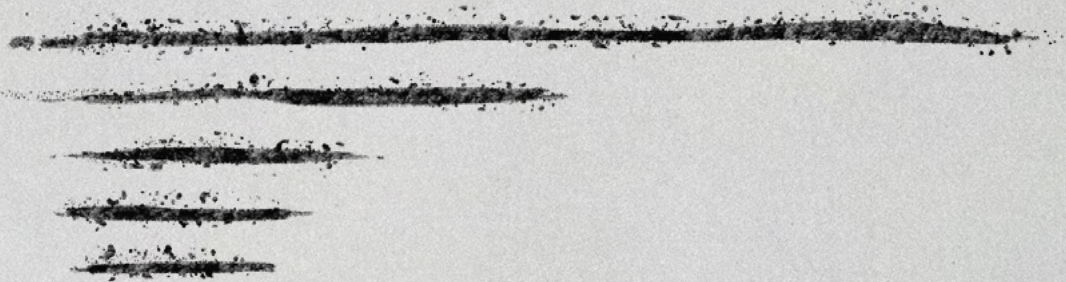
1. Freedom of expression

2. Human rights

3. Racism

4. Abortion

5. Feminism



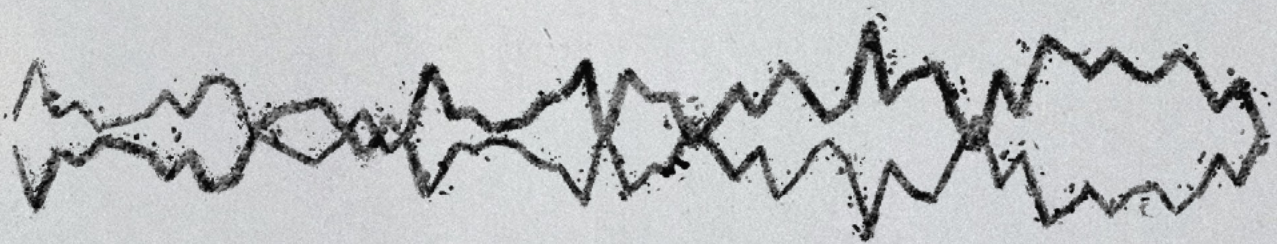
TERRITORIES WITH THE HIGHEST POLARIZATION GROWTH IN MEXICO

* comparative growth of the initial 6 months and final 6 months of the study.

The state laws approved for the legalization of abortion make it one of the most polar territories with a growth of 76%.

Death penalty and minimum wage are the territories that decrease.

CONSERVATIVE VOICES HAVE HAD A SLIGHT ADVANTAGE OVER PROGRESSIVE VOICES SINCE LÓPEZ OBRADOR'S INAUGURATION.



2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

CONVERSATION VOLUME BY IDEOLOGY IN MEXICO

↑ Progressives
↓ Conservatives

Abortion (+57%) and racism (+52) are the main territories dominated by progressives.

Notably, the feminist struggle is led by communities with no clear political affiliation, with conservatives having a stronger presence.

EXPERTS INVITED

MÁS DEMOCRACIA

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

JOAN NAVARRO

Professor of Philosophy in the Department of Humanities: Philosophy, Language and Literature at the University Carlos III of Madrid

Email: gvelasco@hum.uc3m.es

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

PATRICIA FERNÁNDEZ

Clinical Psychologist

Email: patricia.fernandez.hrc@gmail.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

BELÉN CARRASCO

Senior Researcher and Deputy Director of Eyes on Russia, Centre for Information Resilience

Email: belen@info-res.org

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

MARIANO SIGMAN

Neuroscientist and author of "The power of words".

Email: mariuchu@gmail.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

FERNANDO NIETO MORALES

Professor of Public Administration at the Colegio de México (COLMEX)

Email: fnieto@colmex.mx

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

CRISTINA MONGE

Ph.D.PhD in Political Science from the University of Zaragoza, she is an expert in environmental policies and sustainability

Email: cmonge@advisors.llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

GONZALO VELASCO

Professor of Philosophy in the Department of Humanities: Philosophy, Language and Literature at the University Carlos III of Madrid

Email: gvelasco@hum.uc3m.es

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

LLYC TEAM

GENERAL MANAGEMENT OF THE

ADOLFO CORUJO

Partner and CEO Deep Digital Business

Email: acorujo@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

DAVID GONZÁLEZ NATAL

Partner and General Manager Northern Region

Email: dgonzalez@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

ALBERT MEDRÁN

Senior Corporate Director

Email: amedran@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

MARKETING/ GENERAL COORDINATION OF THE PROJECT

MARIANA MALAGUTTI

Global Director

Email: mmalagutti@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

CRISTINA PEÑALOZA SANDOBAL

Europe Region Manager

Email: cpenaloza@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

ADRIANA SANDOBAL

Senior Graphic Designer

Email: asandobal@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

DATA ANALYSIS

MIGUEL LUCAS

Innovation Director

Email: mlucas@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

BEÑAT SAN SEBASTIAN

Manager

Email: benat.sansebastian@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

CREATIVITY AND DESIGN

JULIO ALONSO CABALLERO

Executive Creative Director

Email: jalonso@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

GUSTAVO RODRÍGUEZ

Art Director

Email: grodriguez@llorenteycuenca.com

MARTA CORDOMÍ PRAT

Senior Consultant

Email: mcordomi@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

PABLO HERNÁNDEZ DE URRUTIA

Consultant

Email: daniel.rosoero@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

DANIEL ROSERO

Consultant

Email: daniel.rosoero@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

JESSICA RUEDA

Graphic Designer

Email: jrueda@llorenteycuenca.com

REPORT WRITING

ARTURO PINEDO

Partner and Chief Client Officer Europe

Email: apinedo@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

CORPORATE GENERAL MANAGEMENT

IGNACIO DOADRIO

Manager

Email: idoadrio@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

ANDREA PAREDES

Senior Consultant

Email: aparedes@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTION

REBECA GARROBO

Manager

Email: rgarrobo@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

ORIOL CUADERN PUIG

Developer and Producer

Email: ocuadern@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

WEB DEVELOPMENT

DANIEL FERNÁNDEZ TREJO

Senior Director of Deep Learning

Email: dfernandez@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

JOSÉ LUIS RODRÍGUEZ

Director

Email: jlrodriguez@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

PR

TERESA REY

Director of Consumer Engagement and Digital

Email: trey@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

JOAQUÍN VIZMANOS

Director of Information Relations

Email: jvizmanos@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

ALEJANDRO SAMPEDRO

Financial Communications Manager

Email: asampedrol@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

DIGITAL INFLUENCE

STEPHANY HIGHGRACE

Senior Consultant

Email: saltagracia@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

[twitter](#)

NEUS CUADRADO

Junior Consultant

Email: neus.cuadrado@llorenteycuenca.com

[linkedin](#)

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Arias Maldonado, M. (2016). La democracia sentimental: política y emociones en el siglo XXI. Madrid: Página Indómita.
- Broncano, F. (2019). Puntos ciegos. Ignorancia pública y conocimiento privado. Madrid: Lengua de Trapo.
- HAN, B. (2022). Infocracia: La digitalización y la crisis de la democracia, Barcelona, Taurus, (ePub)
- Echeburúa, E. (18 de abril de 2018). "¿Cómo y quiénes se hacen adictos a las redes sociales?". El País. https://elpais.com/tecnologia/2018/04/06/actualidad/1523003059_867092.html
- Edelman Trust Barometer (2022) <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2022-trust-barometer>
- Furman, K. (2022). Epistemic Bunkers, Social Epistemology, DOI: 10.1080/02691728.2022.2122756
- Garmendia, A., León, S. (2021). Polarización y convivencia en España en 2021. El papel de lo territorial. Encuesta ICIP - EsadeEcPol2021.
- Hateblockers. (s.f.). <https://hateblockers.es/polarizacion-redes-sociales-papel-de-influencers/>
- Levy, N (2022). Bad Beliefs. Why They Happen to Good People. Oxford University Press.
- Navajas, J., Álvarez, F., Heduan, J., Garrido, M., González, P., Garabulsky, G., Ariely, D., Sigman, M. (2019). Reaching Consensus in Polarized Moral Debates. Current Biology Report, 4124-4129.
- Nguyen, C. (2020). Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles. Episteme, 17(2), 141-161. doi:10.1017/epi.2018.32
- Rodríguez-Virgili, J., Serrano-Puche, J. (2018). Medios de comunicación y opinión pública en España: una aproximación desde la teoría de Agenda Setting, 27-39, Universidad de Navarra
- Sánchez Cuenca, I. (2022). El desorden político. Democracia sin intermediación. Barcelona: Catarata.
- Sigman, M. (2022). El poder de las palabras: cómo cambiar tu cerebro (y tu vida) conversando. Madrid: Debate.
- Törnberg, P., Andersson, C., Lindgren, K., Banisch, S. (2021) Modeling the emergence of affective polarization in the social media society, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0258259> <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0258259>
- Vicián H, Hannikainen IR, Gaitán Torres A (2019) The dual nature of partisan prejudice: Morality and identity in a multiparty system. PLoS ONE 14(7): e0219509.

THE

**The
Hidden
Drug.**