



Routledge Studies in Media, Communication, and Politics

HATE SPEECH AND POLARIZATION IN PARTICIPATORY SOCIETY

Edited by
Marta Pérez-Escolar and
José Manuel Noguera-Vivo



This volume brings a whole range of colours in the black-and-white debate on technologies and participatory society. Both the cyber-optimistic views about a brave new Internet fuelled participatory democracy and the simplistic techno-fatalist criticism solely focused on data-driven corporations contribute to misguide the understanding of the complex social process that characterises media in the 21st century. Between these two extremes there is a necessary room for a rich comprehension of the entanglements amongst the new connectivities, the new flows of information and the social configurations that come along them. The state-of-the-art analyses included in this volume definitely contribute to relocate the discussion on hate speech and disinformation in the open, wide frame its complexity demands.

Juan Miguel Aguado, Full Professor of Media and Communication, Mobile Media Research Lab, School of Information and Media Studies, University of Murcia, Spain

Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society provides a timely perspective on core issues of contemporary society and culture. The lineup of authors is admirable and delivers a truly multi-national approach on the many facets and contexts of hate speech and polarization. Although hate speech is often practiced under the guise of free speech, it can in fact be used to impede deliberation and freedom of speech of others – these phenomena are not only dark sides of peer-to-peer social media, but exist also in political and media representations. The volume thus assembles a rich and many-sided perspective on hate speech and polarization, adopting realistic connotations of the potentials of participatory society.

Mikko Villi, Professor of Journalism Studies, Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

This book is an astute volume that challenges preconceptions and informs perspectives on one of the most pressing issues of our time. Hate speech and polarization have significant consequences for society if they are left misunderstood and misrepresented. Cognizant that hate speech and polarization are global challenges, *Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society* brings together a broad range of leading scholars from across the world to provide shrewd insights from diverse contexts. The edited collection is a nuanced intervention that unpacks the potential, promise and peril of participatory media.

Alfred Hermida, Professor of Journalism, Writing, and Media, University of British Columbia, Canada



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Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society

This timely volume offers a comprehensive and rigorous overview of the role of communication in the construction of hate speech and polarization in the online and offline arena.

Delving into the meanings, implications, contexts and effects of extreme speech and gated communities in the media landscape, the chapters analyse misleading metaphors and rhetoric via focused case studies to understand how we can overcome the risks and threats stemming from the past decade's defining communicative phenomena. The book brings together an international team of experts, enabling a broad, multidisciplinary approach that examines hate speech, dislike, polarization and enclave deliberation as cross axes that influence offline and digital conversations. The diverse case studies herein offer insights into international news media, television drama and social media in a range of contexts, suggesting an academic frame of reference for examining this emerging phenomenon within the field of communication studies.

Offering thoughtful and much-needed analysis, this collection will be of great interest to scholars and students working in communication studies, media studies, journalism, sociology, political science, political communication and cultural industries.

Marta Pérez-Escolar is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at Loyola University (Sevilla, Spain). She received the Civic Participation, Transparency and Good Governance PhD Extraordinary Award in 2018, awarded by the Region of Murcia (Spain). Her main lines of research are focused on civic participation, public opinion, political communication and information disorders.

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Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society

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Marta Pérez-Escolar and
José Manuel Noguera-Vivo

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Preface

“I hate, therefore I am somebody”¹

Fernando Iwasaki²

THE STUDIES GATHERED by José Manuel Noguera-Vivo and Marta Pérez-Escolar for this book imply both a diagnosis of political malaise and a serious warning for all seafarers, since it is not possible to separate the evil nature of the tumor from the inexorable metastasis one glimpses after reading each of the contributions collected in *Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society*.

In reality, the political vocation of the research in this work is not oblivious to the shamelessness upon which hatred has been crowned in contemporary society, thanks to what Hannah Arendt referred to as the “banality of evil.” With regard to the topic that concerns us, it results not only in an obscene exhibition of hatred but also in the desperate hunger of many people for attracting haters to their social networks, with the same or greater desire than when they sought fans or followers in the past. Why should we be surprised that politics spread hate when the current school, university, professional, artistic, familiar and conjugal coexistence are nothing more exemplary, nor calmer? However, the novelty is not the hatred. Rather, the novelty is the statute of hate in the contemporary world.

In 1936, after publishing the clandestine edition of *Story of the Eye* (1928)—comprising barely 134 signed copies under the pseudonym Lord Auch—George Bataille founded Acéphale, a secret society formed by the Friends of Human Sacrifices, whose anagram was a headless man. For the presentation into society of this secret community, Bataille and other members invited and called people to witness a live execution. Unfortunately, none of the founding partners offered to act as executioner, in spite of the numerous members willing to let themselves have their heads cut off during the opening ceremony. I cannot imagine a coterie more modest than those Friends of Human Sacrifices, who were unable to deprive themselves, even in the most absolute clandestinity. Would the same thing happen today? Not at all, because our era has found out that executions are performances,

and that the difference between zombie executions on television and real victims just depends on the prime time.

Naturally, we are very concerned about hatred in politics, but why are treachery, malice and ferocity costless, excessive and pornographic in contemporary fictions? Because after centuries of concealed wickedness and cruelty, hatred is no longer hidden and does not embarrass the people who practice it. Nowadays, hate is part of the show, and thus one of the fine arts that triumphs in series, movies and novels. What do *Breaking Bad*, *Nefando*, *Amores Perros* and *The Sopranos* have in common? An *Ars Malefica*, an *Ars Delendi* and an *Ars Maligna*. Thanks to the hegemony of spectacle, vileness and abjectness have abolished—as Guy Debord suspected—the boundaries between what is *possible* and what is *allowed*, so that hatred has turned into another expression of the spectacular. And due to contemporary politics having also evolved into a spectacle, hate is one of their consubstantial ingredients.

Alejandro Barranquero and Susana Morais' chapter about the documentary *The Internet Warriors* comes to mind, and I perceive that the topic swings from the analysis of racist tweets conducted by Ana Barragán-Romero and María Elena Villar, to the evidence of misogyny that Laura Cortés-Selva and Susana Martínez-Guillem find in the series *The Handmaid's Tale*; not to mention the image of the “other” Muslim that Cristina Algaba, Beatriz Tomé-Alonso and Giulia Cimini have elucidated through their analysis of Spanish series. Nevertheless, hatred in fictions also floods the political sphere in social networks, as the contributions from Axel Bruns, Monika Brusenbauch, João Figueira, Juan Antonio Marín Albadalejo, Marta Pérez-Escolar and José Manuel Noguera-Vivo show; however racial and ideological hate speeches—analyzed by Liriam Sponholz, Allen Munoriyarwa, Gisella Menguelli, Carma Ferré-Paria, Nurkan Törenli, Zafer Kiyani, Güllüm Şener, Hakan Yücel, Umor Yedikardeş, Niko Carpentier, Vaia Doudaki, Ali Ihsan Akbaş, Tiany Wang, Alberto Monroy-Trujillo, Graciela Padilla-Castillo and Francisco Cabezuelo-Lorenzo—are those that overfill the measure of hatred as an agent of dehumanization.

Indeed, “in hatred there is no place for compassion,” because the fantasy of hate-filled people lies in destroying the object of their hate (Castilla del Pino, 2000, pp. 292–296), and thus, in the hate speech spread on social networks and audiovisual media, the absence of negativity of the “other” dehumanizes,³ and then denigrates, destroys and erases, because hatred thrives thanks to anonymity and impunity in social networks.⁴ Therefore, the “digital hitman” is actually someone because they hate.

The classical philosopher Carlos García Gual reflected on hatred in the *Iliad*, since from the first verse the poem announces the rage of Achilles, who was blind with anger due to Patroclus' death. Devastated by the hatred, the Achaean hero kills all the Trojans that come his way with icy cruelty, until he meets Hector, who, aware of the imminence of his death, asks him to respect his corpse and allow his family to bury him. But Achilles hates

him so much that he denies Hector his humanity with a terrible threat: “the dogs and birds of prey will divide your body.” However, the poem has an unexpected ending, because the gods protect Hector’s corpse and allow King Priam to come to the tent of his son’s slayer, to beg him, hugging his knees, to allow him to take the corpse:

The pathetic force of the epic, on which Homer has imposed a tragic idea, reaches its most impressive moment in the torn tears of Achilles and Priam, embraced for a few moments. Hatred yields there to the vision of the respective humanity. At a deeper level than the enmity of the warriors, both kings have discovered in their mutual pain, the common humanity, precisely what Achilles wanted to deny Hector, precisely what old Priam did not expect to find in the bloodthirsty murderer of so many of his children. The overcoming of hatred is thus offered as a magnificent climax to a cruel tale of revenge in that emotional end of our Iliad.

(García Gual, 2002, p. 164)

The reading of *Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society* should have as its objective the restoration of the human dimension as an antidote against polarization and hate speech, because many times academic bronze also demands the loss of the wax of humanity, in name of the index or rankings. That is why I unite with the authors of this book to rescue the human condition from the clutches of hatred, although not at all to celebrate authors’ funerals or perform an autopsy, but to *be* human and enthrone humanity.

Notes

- 1 Günther Anders deconstructed the famous Descartes precept—*cogito ergo sum*—into three distressing sayings—“I hate, therefore I am” (*Ich hasse, als bin ich*); “I hate, therefore I am me” (*Ich hasse, also bin ich ich*), and “I hate, therefore I am Somebody” (*Ich hasse, also bin ich wer*)—to reinforce that the third expression means “self-affirmation and self-constitution through the denial and annihilation of the other” (Anders, 2019, pp. 34–35).
- 2 Fernando Iwasaki is a Peruvian writer of *El descubrimiento de España* (1996), *Somos libros, seámoslo siempre* (2014) and *Ajuar funerario* (2014). To learn more about the author, please visit his personal website: www.fernandoiwasaki.com
- 3 “Digital media is much more disembodied than letters. Calligraphy is still a bodily sign. All digital alphabets look alike. Digital media and what the other has to the contrary. They really deprive us of the ability to think about the man who is far away and to touch a man who is near” (Han, 2017, p. 85).
- 4 “Respect is bound to name. Anonymity and respect are mutually exclusive. Anonymous communication, which is promoted by digital media, massively destroys respect” (Han, 2019, p. 15).



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Original Preface in Spanish

«Odio, por lo tanto, soy Alguien»¹

Fernando Iwasaki²

*Ódiame, por piedad, yo te lo pido.
Ódiame, sin medida ni clemencia.
Odio quiero más, que indiferencia,
pues el rencor hiere menos que el olvido*

Canción popular latinoamericana³

LAS INVESTIGACIONES REUNIDAS en esta obra por José Manuel Noguera-Vivo y Marta Pérez Escolar, constituyen al mismo tiempo un diagnóstico del malestar político y un serio aviso de navegantes, pues no es posible disociar la naturaleza maligna del tumor, de la inexorable metástasis que uno entrevé al concluir la lectura de cada una de las contribuciones compiladas en *Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society*.

En realidad, la vocación política de los estudios de la presente obra no es ajena a la impudicia con que el odio se ha entronizado en la sociedad contemporánea, gracias a lo que Hanna Arendt denominó la «banalidad del mal», y que en el tema que nos ocupa se traduce no sólo en la exhibición obscena del odio, sino en la angurria de muchas personas por atraer *haters* hacia sus redes sociales, con la misma o mayor avidez con la que antes buscaban *fans* o *followers*. ¿Por qué debería extrañarnos que la política siempre el odio, si la convivencia escolar, universitaria, profesional, artística, familiar y conyugal de nuestros días no es ni más ejemplar ni más bonanizable? Sin embargo, la novedad no es el odio. Más bien, lo novedoso es el estatuto del odio en el mundo contemporáneo.

Hacia 1936 y después de haber publicado *Historia del ojo* (1928) en una edición clandestina de apenas 134 ejemplares firmados bajo el seudónimo de Lord Auch, Georges Bataille fundó «Acéphale», una sociedad secreta de Amigos de los Sacrificios Humanos, cuyo anagrama era un hombre decapitado y que para su presentación en sociedad convocó a los interesados

a presenciar una ejecución en vivo. Por desgracia, ninguno de los socios fundadores se ofreció a ejercer de verdugo, a pesar de los numerosos afiliados dispuestos a dejarse cortar la cabeza durante la ceremonia inaugural. No puedo imaginar cenáculo más pudoroso que aquellos Amigos de los Sacrificios Humanos incapaces de sacrificarse entre ellos, incluso en la claudestinidad más absoluta. ¿Ocurriría lo mismo en nuestros días? De ninguna manera, porque nuestra época ha descubierto que las degollaciones son *performances*, y que la diferencia entre las decapitaciones televisivas de zombies y víctimas verdaderas sólo depende del *prime time*.

Nos preocupa el odio en la política, por supuesto, ¿pero por qué en las ficciones contemporáneas la alevosía, lo canalla y la ferocidad son gratuitas, excesivas y pornográficas? Porque después de siglos de maldad y crueldad disimuladas, el odio ya no se oculta y no avergüenza a quienes lo ejercen. El odio en nuestros días es parte del espectáculo y -por lo tanto- una de las bellas artes que arrasa en series, películas y novelas. ¿Qué tienen en común *Breaking Bad*, *Nefando*, *Amores Perros* y *Los Soprano*? Un *Ars Malefica*, un *Ars Delendi* y un *Ars Maligna*. Gracias a la hegemonía del espectáculo, la vileza y la abyección han abolido -como intuyó Guy Debord- las fronteras entre lo *posible* y lo *permitido*, de forma que el odio se ha convertido en otra expresión de lo espectacular. Y como la política contemporánea también ha devenido espectáculo, el odio es uno de sus ingredientes consustanciales.

Pienso en el artículo de Alejandro Barranquero y Susana Morais sobre el documental *The Internet Warriors*, y veo que el tema oscila entre el análisis de los tuits racistas realizado por Ana Barragán-Romero y María Elena Villar, y las evidencias de misoginia que Laura Cortés-Selva y Susana Martínez-Guillem hallaron en la serie *El cuento de la criada*, por no hablar de la imagen del «otro» musulmán que Cristina Algaba, Beatriz Tomé-Alonso y Giulia Cimini han dilucidado a través de las series españolas. No obstante, el odio de las ficciones anega también la esfera política de las redes sociales, como lo demuestran las contribuciones de Axel Bruns, Monika Brusenbauch, João Figueira, Juan Antonio Marín Albadalejo, Marta Pérez Escolar y José Manuel Noguera-Vivo, aunque los discursos del odio racial e ideológico -analizados por Liriam Sponholz, Allen Munoriyarwa, Gisella Mengueli, Carma Ferré-Paria, Nurkan Törenli, Zafer Kiyan, Güllüm Şener, Hakan Yücel, Umut Yedikardeş, Niko Carpentier, Vaia Doudaki, Ali Ihsan Akbaş, Tiany Wang, Alberto Monroy-Trujillo, Graciela Padilla-Castillo y Francisco Cabezuelo-Lorenzo- son los que colman la medida del odio como agente de la deshumanización.

En efecto, “en el odio no hay lugar para la compasión”, porque la fantasía del odiador consiste en la destrucción del objeto de su odio (Castilla del Pino, 2000, pp. 292–296) y así, en los discursos del odio a través de las redes y los medios audiovisuales, la ausencia de negatividad del «otro» deshumaniza⁴ y luego denigra, destruye y borra, porque el odio prospera

gracias al anonimato y la impunidad en las redes⁵. Por lo tanto, el «sicario digital» realmente es *Alguien* porque odia.

El filólogo clásico Carlos García Gual, reflexionó acerca del odio en la *Iliada*, pues desde su primer verso el poema anuncia la cólera de Aquiles, ciego de ira por la muerte de Patroclo. Arrasado por el odio, el héroe aqueo mata con glacial crueldad a todos los troyanos que le salen al paso hasta que se encuentra con Héctor, quien consciente de la inminencia de su muerte le pide que respete su cadáver y permita que su familia lo sepiulte, pero Aquiles lo odia tanto que le niega la humanidad con una terrible amenaza: “los perros y las aves de rapiña se repartirán tu cuerpo”. Sin embargo, el poema tiene un final inesperado, porque los dioses protegen el cadáver de Héctor y permiten que el rey Príamo llegue hasta la tienda del matador de su hijo, para suplicarle abrazado a sus rodillas que le permita llevarse el cadáver:

La fuerza patética de la epopeya, a la que Homero ha impuesto una idea trágica, alcanza su momento más impresionante en el llanto desgarrado de Aquiles y Príamo, abrazados por unos instantes. El odio cede ahí ante la visión de la humanidad respectiva. A un nivel más profundo que el de la enemistad de los guerreros, ambos reyes han descubierto en su recíproco dolor, la humanidad común, justamente lo que Aquiles quería negarle a Héctor, justamente lo que el viejo Príamo no esperaba encontrar en el sanguinario asesino de tantos hijos suyos. La superación del odio se ofrece así como un magnífico colofón para una cruel historia de venganza en ese emotivo final de nuestra *Iliada* (García Gual, 2002, p. 164).

La lectura de *Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society*, debe tener como objetivo la restauración de la dimensión humana como antídoto contra la polarización y los discursos del odio, porque muchas veces el bronce académico también exige la pérdida de la cera de la humanidad, en nombre del índice h o los rankings. Por eso me conjuro con los autores de este libro para rescatar de las garras del odio la condición humana, aunque en ningún caso para celebrar sus funerales o practicarle la autopsia, sino para *ser* humanos y entronizar la humanidad.

Notes

- 1 Günther Anders deconstruyó la célebre máxima de Descartes -*cogito ergo sum*- en tres desoladoras sentencias -«odio, por lo tanto, soy» (*Ich hasse, als bin ich*); «odio, por lo tanto, yo soy yo» (*Ich hasse, also bin ich*), y «odio, por lo tanto, soy Alguien» (*Ich hasse, also bin ich wer*)- para hacer hincapié en cómo la tercera expresión supone “la autoafirmación y la autoconstitución por medio de la negación y la aniquilación del otro” (Anders, 2019, pp. 34–35).
- 2 Fernando Iwasaki autor de *El descubrimiento de España* (1996), *Somos libros, seámoslo siempre* (2014) y *Ajuar funerario* (2014). Para saber más sobre el autor, consulte su página web personal: www.fernandoiwasaki.com
- 3 La autoría de *Ódame* se la atribuyen poetas y músicos de Colombia, Ecuador y Perú, pues unos dicen que el autor fue el colombiano Guillermo Valencia (1873–1943) y otros aseguran que fue el peruano Federico Barreto (1886–1929),

aunque el dúo ecuatoriano Martínez-Dougard la grabó en 1913 con melodía de pasillo en Lima y Sebastián Rosado volvió a grabarlo como pasillo en 1914 en Guayaquil. Sin embargo, en 1945 el peruano Rafael Otero López la registró como un vals de su autoría, y así fue reconocido en los créditos cuando «Los tres reyes» de México la grabaron en 1959. Con todo, el ecuatoriano Julio Jaramillo volvió a popularizar la canción como pasillo en la década de los 60 y la polémica no ha cesado, porque reivindicar la cuna de *Ódiame* se ha convertido en una cuestión nacional.

- 4 “Los medios de comunicación digital son mucho más incorpóreos que las cartas. La caligrafía es todavía un signo corporal. Todos los alfabetos digitales se parecen. Los medios digitales lijan lo que el otro tiene de contrario. Nos privan realmente de la capacidad de pensar en el hombre que está lejos y de tocar a un hombre que está cerca” (Han, 2017, p. 85).
- 5 “El respeto va unido al nombre. Anonimato y respeto se excluyen entre sí. La comunicación anónima, que es fomentada por el medio digital, destruye masivamente el respeto” (Han, 2019, p. 15).

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Hope we can meet again in the future and collaborate on further projects.



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1 Introduction to the dilemmas and struggles of participatory society

Marta Pérez-Escolar and José Manuel Noguera-Vivo

Tracing complex realities

The term ‘participatory society’ has traditionally had positive connotations and has even been associated with a more democratic, fair and equal civilization. Drawing upon the cyber-optimistic perspective (Dahlgren, 2000, 2005, 2011, 2012; Rheingold, 2000, 2002; Sánchez, 2001; Davis, Elin & Reeher, 2002; Lévy, 2004; Surowiecki, 2005; Siedschlag, 2007; Mossberger et al., 2008; Castells, 2010, 2013; Borge & Cardenal, 2011; Sampedro & Sánchez, 2011; Jenkins, Ford & Green, 2013; Herberos, 2013; Vilché, 2015; Jenkins, 2016), the digital realm offers new forms of participation in such a way that contributes to the progress of society and the evolution of citizenship; individuals have the power to change the current landscape positively by encouraging sustainable practices and empathic behaviors. However, participation is also a tricky empowerment tool, since a participatory society does not always represent an open democratic model, but could also serve as a catalyst for reinforcing hate speech, increasing ideological polarization and spreading disinformation.

Multiple authors have already warned about the disadvantages that arise in participatory society due to the peculiarities and traits of online scenarios: Van Alstyne and Brynjolfsson (1996) proposed the term ‘cyberbalkanization’ to describe the fragmentation of the internet into special interest groups. Users interact with only like-minded others and “thereby close themselves off from ideological opposition, alternative understandings, and uncomfortable discussions” (Brainard, 2009, p. 598). According to Putnam (2001), “real world interactions often force us to deal with diversity, whereas the virtual world may be more homogeneous, not in demographic terms, but in terms of interest and outlook. Place-based communities may be supplanted by interest-based communities” (Putnam, 2001, p. 178). This strong ideological polarization (Stroud, 2007, 2008) favors the growth of communication cyber-ghettos in which users tend to support their own points of view and criticize opposing ones (Johnson, Bichard & Zhang, 2009).

Thus, the current digital environment is creating a spiral of selective attention (Neuman, Bimber & Hindman, 2011, p. 34): users actively seek out information that supports their opinions and beliefs and avoid interacting with people who challenge their existing convictions (Redlawsk, 2002; Taber & Lodge, 2006). The ‘selective exposure’ theory (Festinger, 1957) also describes this online phenomenon as a way to reduce dissonance in online communities: individuals select news, information, interactions and relations that reinforce their existing attitudes and mindset, and reject dissident, alternative or opposing speeches (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985; Chaffee et al., 2001; Mutz & Martin, 2001; Best, Chmielewski & Krueger, 2005; Stroud, 2007, 2008; Cinelli et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Parmelee & Roman, 2020; Stier et al., 2020).

Similarly, Thompson (2008) argues that “if the participants are mostly like-minded or hold the same views before they enter into the discussion, they are not situated in the circumstances of deliberation” (p. 502). When like-minded people simply follow the beliefs provided by the members of the same deliberating group and only have discussions with one other, then these polarized communities are engaged in ‘enclave deliberation’ (Sunstein, 2000, 2008, 2009), where disinformation, misinformation, rumors and hate speech may be amplified due to the lack of contrary evidence (Grönlund, Herne & Setälä, 2015) and by groups of users living in ‘echo chambers’ (Sunstein, 2008). This results in an increased ideological polarization, extremist behaviors and a deep information bias.

One of the most representative and recent examples of the dark side of participatory society was the attack on the US Capitol at the beginning of January 2021. After the 2020 presidential elections, Donald Trump repeated false claims of electoral fraud, stating that he had won the ‘legal vote’. This conspiracy theory pushed thousands of pro-Trump extremists to carry out a violent invasion of one of the most iconic American buildings, seeking to fight against the election of Joe Biden. The mob of Donald Trump’s supporters was mainly made up of members of different right-wing nationalist extremist groups, like the Proud Boys, Qanon or ‘rednecks’, among others, who firmly believed Trump’s false statements and rejected evidence or proof that challenged their existing convictions outright.

For that reason, when polarized ideological ghettos magnify information disorders (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017) and reinforce outrageous behaviors, like the assault on the US Capitol, it is essential to start counter-attacking the falsehood, combating hate speech and breaking up social segregation and political fragmentation. Twitter, for example, has permanently suspended the official account of Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump) “due to the risk of further incitement of violence” (Twitter, 2021) as well as the great amount of misleading information he disseminated. According to Newtral, a Spanish fact-checking media, Donald Trump has spread 29,508 false or deceitful statements in 1,386 days (Baeza, 2021). In addition, Parler – the social network used by pro-Trump extremists to spread

hatred – went offline after Amazon suspended it from its server hosting; Google Play and Apple both also decided to remove the social media platform from their app stores. Furthermore, Wikipedia has just published the *Universal Code of Conduct* to provide a baseline of behavior based on mutual respect, civility, collegiality, mutual support and good citizenship, thus condemning harassment, abuse of power, privilege, influence, content vandalism and abuse of the projects (Wikipedia, 2021).

In the same spirit of these initiatives, the main contribution of this book is to offer a context whereby it is understood that the democratizing and empowering functions of the digital realm are being exaggerated and a more realistic perspective is needed to face the communicative, social, cultural and political problems of our era. This book is written for anyone with academic or professional interests in media representations of polarization and hate speech, as well as their consequences in many different international contexts. The studies included in this volume confirm that it is relevant to adopt a cyber-realistic perspective when we discuss the revolutionary and emancipatory potential participatory society has for changing the current landscape. Thus, by drawing on different theoretical concepts, focusing on various methods and meeting a broad range of research problems, the chapters included here shape the nature and the character of contemporary participatory society. More precisely, the book is structured according to three perspectives on the complex world of hate speech, ideological polarization and their consequences: *contextualizing participatory society: metaphors for polarization and hate speech*; *political and ideological polarization*; and *hate speech in social, traditional, and community media*.

Contextualizing participatory society: metaphors for polarization and hate speech

The perspective of the authors in the first section of this book is the widest because they tackle broad aspects of participatory society. The chapters in this section encompass different approaches to the complex connections in participatory society, and the particular linkages forged between ideological polarization, disinformation and hate speech. By placing their analyses in the political context of Spain, Marta Pérez-Escolar and José Manuel Noguera-Vivo evaluate in the first chapter some of the most popular Spanish political leaders' false statements. The authors conclude that fabricated contents – misinformation or disinformation – nourish the diversification of opinions, because citizens only perceive a frame of reality that is distorted and divides people into multiple polarized groups. As a consequence, the act of lying increases what the authors call *diversification of polarization*, which refers to people becoming isolated in multiple bubble cyber-ghettos depending upon the nature of the issue under debate (e.g. inequality between sexes, climate change, immigration issues, the high prices of rent or the Catalanian independence movement, among others).

Therefore, *diversification of polarization* increases the number of enemies and reduces the possibilities of achieving consensus. As a consequence, the *diversification of polarization* increasingly hinders the possibilities for raising a collective understanding, as well as weakening the values of a democracy based on mutual respect, tolerance and equality.

In the following chapter, Axel Bruns critically argues that ‘echo chambers’ and ‘filter bubbles’ principally constitute an unfounded moral panic that presents a convenient technological scapegoat for a much more critical, fundamentally human-made problem: growing social and political polarization. Bruns affirms that the ‘echo chamber’ and ‘filter bubble’ metaphors are doing us a fundamental disservice by misdirecting our attention to online platforms as the root cause of these problems. The rise of hyper-partisan, populist and illiberal ideological agitators and propagandists from the fringes of the political spectrum, and their rejection of established democratic principles and processes, is not principally a phenomenon related to the communications technologies they use; it is, centrally, a societal problem. For that reason, the author conveys that our continuing debate about ill-considered metaphors such as ‘echo chambers’ and ‘filter bubbles’ is a distraction that we can no longer afford, because it keeps us from confronting far more important matters head-on. Therefore, the central question now is *what they do* with such information when they encounter it. *This* is the debate we need to have: not a proxy argument about the impact of platforms and algorithms, but a meaningful discussion about the complex and compound causes of political and societal polarization. The ‘echo chamber’ and ‘filter bubble’ metaphors have kept us from pursuing that debate and must now be put to rest.

Liriam Sponholz provides a taxonomy of hate speech in digital conversations, allowing an identification of how hate speech manifests in online conversations, how these forms can be assessed empirically and what differentiated effects they have on online deliberation. Her findings suggest that different subsets of hate speech incorporated in different digital objects also have differentiated consequences for deliberative processes. For example, hateful speech may affect how respectfully participants deal with each other in digital conversations, while in the case of hate-fueled speech, ‘true believers’ may justify assertions and validity claims by packaging their group-libeling positions in argumentation processes. Hatred-inciting speech provokes debates where speakers submit the worthiness of human beings to processes of argumentation. Sponholz conveys that online hate speech poses a specific threat to democracy, created by both social action and the media logic of digital platforms, particularly social networking sites. With regard to media logic, these forms of hate speech manifest themselves not only in content, but first and foremost in the form of digital objects. More generally, the theoretical framework she provides in her chapter is an attempt to assess hate speech in a way that goes beyond ‘words-that-wound’ in online comments. The main objective of Sponholz’s work is to address a

digital threat that not only targets groups that are systematically discriminated against but also affects everybody by undercutting one of the pillars of participatory societies: deliberation.

Political and ideological polarization

The second section includes studies conducted from the perspective of political polarization. The chapters in this section consider the troubles and tensions between political aims, decision-making and political fragmentation on the one hand, and social consequences on the other. In the fifth chapter, Allen Munoriyarwa examines what sort of discourses emerged from the hashtag #Penny Sparrow and #VickyMomberg, both referring to two racist incidents that were trendy topics between 2016 and 2017. The selected hashtags juxtaposed both anti-black and anti-white discourses that were equally vitriolic. The author concludes that the Twittersphere has amplified and escalated racial tensions in post-apartheid South Africa. In showing this, Munoriyarwa argues that Twitter discourses have shattered the hopes of a 'rainbow nation' by promoting exclusionary discourses that advance – hate and polarizing – narratives of in-groups and out-groups.

Laura Cortés-Selva and Susana Martínez-Guillem focus on the *Handmaid's movement* and reflect on the misogynistic and anti-feminist content present in the fictitious Republic of Gilead. Toward this end, the authors analyze a set of audiovisual codes featured through the *mise en scene*, comparing them to those acquired by women activists in the real world. The authors conclude that Atwood's warning message urging women to resist and fight against extreme and hateful speech, through action and voice, has firmly influenced and shaped the current feminist movement.

Monika Brusenbauch Meislová explores which topics, discursive strategies and linguistic devices have been employed by British politicians to construct Leave and Remain identities in a sense of out-group antagonism(s) in contra-distinction to the given in-group. By looking at how Leavers and Remainers discursively construct the 'other', the author provides an empirical example of (a part of) collective identity formation and meaning-making in the process of Brexit and adds to the literature on growing affective polarization along Brexit lines in the United Kingdom. Meislová concludes that the political discourse of both Leavers and Remainers is continually and abundantly replete with references to the out-groups, which are constructed not in terms of similarities, but in terms of differences. With people on both sides of the Leave-Remain divide engaging vigorously in discursive tugs-of-war with each other, the analysis demonstrates their readiness to exclude the others from their in-group as the constructed collective and to debase (and even demonize) them. In both cases, the deployed 'us versus them' narratives and the various assertions of out-group hate/outrage effectively draw attention to opinion-based group differences, pit one group against another and create inter-group tension.

Juan Antonio Marín Albaladejo and João Figueira offer a comparative approach to the political, media and citizen discourses within Twitter in the two Iberian countries, Spain and Portugal. In particular, Marín Albaladejo and Figueira's work analyzes the tweets posted by journalists or political commentators and party leaders, as well as the topics that generate the greatest interest on media accounts and the users' replies to information related to political issues. The authors' findings suggest that although the polarization and the hostile tone of journalistic discourse are lower than in Spain, the ideological alignment and high doses of criticism focused on certain parties are also observed in the accounts of Portuguese journalists. Notwithstanding the differences in journalistic and political speeches, a negative tone and offensive language or messages that contain accusations and promote prejudice and intolerance appear with a similar frequency in the interventions of citizens in both countries. According to Marín Albaladejo and Figueira, although this behavior is not representative of the majority among users, it offers a sample of the significant hostility against dissenting positions in this environment. This convergent trend between the citizen speeches reveals that the radicalism of public debate on Twitter seems to be homogeneous and independent of the political and media cultures of each country.

Gülüm Şener, Hakan Yücel and Umur Yedikardeş reconsider the potential of left populism to overcome polarization created by authoritarian populist politics. In an extremely polarized political climate, Ekrem İmamoğlu, the candidate of the CHP, the main opposition party in Turkey, won the local elections on June 23, 2019, and became the new mayor of Istanbul by defeating the ruling party AKP, which lost control of Istanbul for the first time since 1994. The authors argue that his election campaign provided important clues on how to fight authoritarian populist politics and overcome political and social polarization. From Şener, Yücel and Yedikardeş' point of view, İmamoğlu's campaign matches left-wing populism embracing inclusive, pluralist and egalitarian discourses; democratic values; and social democrat projects. The unification of 'the People' against polarization, the politics of hope against politics of fear of the AKP, an emphasis on democratic values and institutions, the recognition of subaltern identities created by neoliberal politics, and the inclusion of various identities are the prominent populist discourses of his campaign. The inclusion of all segments of society and the portrayal of 'the People' as a plural and heterogeneous collective subject are in contrast with the exclusionary and polarizing populism of the AKP.

Ana I. Barragán-Romero and María Elena Villar observe two politicians, Trump (US) and Abascal (Spain), and the hate speech that circulates through analysis of their official Twitter accounts. Specifically, they focus on the messages related to immigrants, the scapegoats of these new political leaders. The authors conclude that Abascal and Trump both use social media as a way to promote negative feelings against immigrants, framing

them as threats and implying that they are responsible for crisis, crimes and violent acts. This fits with the goal of propaganda to oversimplify a common enemy. In terms of propaganda types, Trump was more preoccupied with advancing his agenda than putting down opposition agenda, although he still used negating or reaction propaganda. In contrast, the majority of Abascal's tweets focused on the opposition's ideas by criticizing or contrasting them with his. The analysis of themes conducted by Barragán-Romero and Villar leads to the conceptualization of frames that extend beyond those previously identified around immigration: Law and Defense and Preserving Values.

Finally, Gisella Meneguelli and Carme Ferré-Pavia study the socio-political course that enabled the rise of Jair Bolsonaro in the context of political hate speech. Their findings show the leading role of traditional Brazilian media in building a social-discursive imaginary that circulated hate speech to further weaken agitations that had already been underway in Brazil since 2013. Hate speech gave a sense of legitimacy to Rousseff's impeachment and to all the following chapters of Brazil's recent socio-political history. Meneguelli and Ferré-Pavia conclude that the discourse that led to polarization was circulated largely through the media as part of a political game that had been defined in the 2014 election. Some right-wing parties were unsatisfied with the election results; thus, the media and judicial support gave legitimacy not only to the organization of Rousseff's impeachment, but to the creation of a character who would fit the role whose script was ready: Jair Bolsonaro.

Hate speech in social, traditional and community media

The third section tackles questions related to the nature of hate speech. The chapters in this last part of the present volume examine how and the degree to which hate speech influences social, traditional and community media. Focusing on the Swedish street paper *Situation Sthlm*, Nico Carpentier, Vaia Doudaki, Ali İhsan Akbaş and Tianyi Wang demonstrate not only how *Situation Sthlm* counters polarization and stigmatization, but also what the limits of these counter-hegemonic strategies are. The authors acknowledge that homeless people are constructed as an out-group through the centrality of the home as a site of civilization, the removal of social agency and the denial of citizenship. However, street papers, publications that are distributed, and in a modest way co-produced, by homeless people, attempt to counter this hegemonic stigma by re-humanizing homeless people. Carpentier, Doudaki, Akbaş and Wang's findings suggest that street papers invite a reconfiguration of the representation of marginalized and stigmatized social groups in ways that reverse the state of polarization that has left the homeless in the position of an out-group.

Alejandro Barranquero and Susana Morais investigate the complex narrative strategies of the testimonial documentary *The Internet Warriors*

(2017), which aims at understanding the motivations and social contexts behind the people who confront the internet daily regarding identities, political beliefs or religious values. The documentary ultimately states that we are all subject to hate, since hatred is usually introjected from masters to victims, and the latter may paradoxically turn to it if they feel offended or discriminated against. The authors conclude that online hate speech is a dialectic process that confronts victims and prosecutors, who may also become hate mongers when they feel challenged and need to defend their beliefs. In other words, hate mongers are not an amorphous mass of trolls and false identities, since hate may also be produced by identified and ordinary people like the spectator.

Nurcan Törenli and Zafer Kıyan determine the extent to which individuals' proximity to the governing party or the opposition affects their discourse on Syrian asylum seekers in a highly polarized Turkey. Their findings showed that a sample of Twitter users acted in alignment with the political party that they felt close to. Accordingly, while Twitter users close to the party with a negative attitude toward Syrian asylum seekers created a negative discourse, those close to the party with a positive attitude created a positive discourse. Törenli and Kıyan recognize that the tension between the asylum seekers and indigenous population in Turkey is not a new situation, since the country has experienced many major population movements throughout history. What is new is that the language of politics is increasingly fed by this tension between the asylum seekers and local people, escalating the polarization at the individual level. The authors conclude that politics is the source of positive and negative discourses on Syrian asylum seekers. Then, the responsibility of ending the racist and exclusionary discourse against asylum seekers falls primarily on the actors of institutional politics.

Aiming to contribute to the accumulative knowledge about stereotypes and distorted images disseminated by mass media, Cristina Algaba, Beatriz Tomé-Alonso and Giulia Cimini attempt to study the representation of the Muslim world in prime-time TV series broadcast in Spain, a country with a long-established Muslim population and a strategic migratory destination. Specifically, the narratives the authors have chosen are constructed to offer a deliberate image of Muslim characters. For this purpose, Algaba, Tomé-Alonso and Cimini analyze two TV series that have had a special impact on Spanish audiences: *El tiempo entre costuras* (Antena 3, 2013–2014) and *El príncipe* (Telecinco, 2014–2016). Their findings suggest that the orientalist representation of Muslim 'others' contributes to the differentiation between their space and the Spanish/Western one. In this sense, the authors conclude that these cultural artifacts help reinforce national identities and highlight the common traits that countries like Spain, as a 'peripheral' Southern European region, share with other EU Member States.

Finally, Alberto Monroy-Trujillo, Graciela Padilla-Castillo and Francisco Cabezuelo-Lorenzo argue that hate speech is one of the most important

scourges users must live with nowadays, particularly in the case of soccer. Therefore, in this chapter, the authors study several issues, such as the theory of the Internet, social media and hate speech with a longitudinal analysis of the bibliography in this field and data, legislation and examples of sentences that illustrate hate speech. In addition, to explore the hate speech phenomenon, the authors also analyze the specific case of the Seville Football Club (@sevillaafc) Instagram account.

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