

Abstract submission deadline extended to 28th of February, 2025

Call for Papers

International Symposium

From the extremes to the centre and back again? Radicalisation, mainstreaming and reconciliation in local, national and global context

Instituto Cultura y Sociedad (ICS)

Public Discourse Research Group

Universidad de Navarra, Spain

5th-7th of June, 2025

Keynote Speakers:

Prof. Dr. Teun A. van Dijk, the Centre of Discourse Studies, Barcelona

Prof. Dr. Artur Lipiński, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Prof. Dr. Umut Korkut, Glasgow Caledonian University

Different actors, such as political parties, political figures, and the media, occupy distinct positions within the public sphere, and these varying spaces can shape their behaviour and discourse in diverse ways. Those within mainstream circles benefit from extensive exposure, which may make them appear more secure or legitimate to the public. However, this visibility also subjects them to heightened scrutiny, often prompting them to adopt less risky positions or employ more nuanced rhetoric. In contrast, actors on the margins may be less recognizable to a wider audience and, consequently, face less public criticism. This can enable them to take clearer and, at times, more confrontational or unfiltered discursive approaches.

These positions are highly fluid, and what once existed on the margins may become mainstream, and vice versa. These processes, whether occurring by chance or design, are observable in their discourse. For example, politicians operating on the margins for a long time will likely adapt their discourse when becoming mainstream, either by mitigating, transforming, or concealing aspects of their ideology, or by linguistically adjusting their discourse.

At the same time, the centrifugal and centripetal forces that redistribute positions in the public sphere also affect political actors who have not undertaken significant shifts in position. In some contexts, polarization occurs within traditionally mainstream political parties in response to new movements from the margins.

The complexities of these processes need to be addressed across various disciplines. We are pleased to invite submissions for an interdisciplinary conference exploring the dynamics of negotiating political, ideological, and social positions within national and global contexts. The conference will focus on processes of radicalization, mainstreaming, and reconciliation in discourse, politics, and social interactions.

This conference invites scholars from the research fields of discourse studies, discourse analysis, political science, international relations, law, sociology, communication studies, social psychology, and linguistics to explore these questions through various theoretical and empirical lenses. We encourage contributions that investigate these dynamics from both national and global perspectives, as well as historical and contemporary case studies. The conference will be held in-person at ICS, University of Navarra (Pamplona, Spain).

Conference Themes:

- **Claiming the Centre:** How do political actors, social movements, and institutions assert their positions as "mainstream"? What discursive and strategic tools are used to legitimize their claims? How do these claims vary across different sociopolitical and cultural landscapes?
- **Contested Ground:** How do actors negotiate and compete for positions within the public sphere? What strategies are employed to gain or lose influence?
- **Subverting the Centre:** How do marginalized actors challenge and redefine the concept of "mainstream"? Can the centre be a fluid or contested space?
- **Moving to the Extremes:** What drives individuals, groups, or political movements to adopt more radical positions? How do these radical shifts occur, and what social, psychological, economic, or cultural factors fuel them? This theme encourages exploration of the role of social media, echo chambers, political and ideological identities, and the narratives of "othering" that facilitate radicalization and polarizing behaviours. How do marginal movements use media and digital spaces to amplify their messages and shift mainstream discourse?
- **Reconciliation and Return to the Centre:** How do societies, political actors, or movements reintegrate radicalized individuals or groups back into the mainstream? What role do dialogue, restorative justice, or transitional mechanisms play in fostering reconciliation in deeply divided communities?
- **Collateral Effects of the Redistribution of Positions in the Public Sphere:** How do shifts in political positions impact other actors, both within and outside the mainstream? What are the unintended consequences of these changes? What are the broader impacts on actors that remain stationary while others shift toward extremes or the centre? How do these non-shifting actors influence or react to these shifts? Can polarization be understood as a consequence of mainstreaming formerly marginal ideologies? This theme invites papers that explore how discourse around identity, loyalty, and belonging changes when positions in the public sphere are realigned.
- **Globalism vs. Localism in Shaping Political Identities:** How do global and local forces compete or converge in shaping political discourse? How do cultural, historical, and political contexts shape the dynamics of radicalization, mainstreaming, and reconciliation? Are there cross-cultural patterns or unique national characteristics? What roles do nationalism, populism, and transnational ideologies play in either radicalizing or reconciling political actors? Papers in this theme may examine how economic disparities, immigration, global conflicts, and cultural clashes influence movements towards the extremes or back toward the centre.
- **Media, Technology, and the Shaping of Political Narratives:** In an era of digital globalization, how do traditional and social media contribute to the amplification of extreme viewpoints, and how do they support efforts for reconciliation or mainstreaming? This theme welcomes research on the algorithms, platforms, and media ecosystems that facilitate both polarization and de-escalation, as well as their implications for democratic processes and public discourse.

Key Topics Include:

- **Political discourse and framing:** examining the narratives, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies that shape political positioning.
- **Radicalization and deradicalization processes:** exploring pathways to and from extremism, and the psychological, social, and cultural drivers involved.
- **The role of social media and communication networks in political polarization:** investigating how digital technologies contribute to the spread of polarized ideas and enable both radicalization and deradicalization.
- **Sociocultural dimensions of mainstreaming ideologies:** studying how ideologies migrate from the margins to the mainstream and the social, cultural, and historical contexts that facilitate these movements.
- **Psychological and social mechanisms of reconciliation and peacebuilding:** addressing how individual and collective processes of healing, empathy, and communication contribute to de-escalation and re-entry into mainstream discourse.
- **The interplay of nationalism, globalism, and identity politics in shaping public discourse:** analysing how competing forces of local and global identities impact political movements, polarization, and reconciliation efforts.
- **Polarization as a political strategy:** investigating how polarization is not only a consequence but also a deliberate tactic employed by political figures and movements.
- **The ethics and challenges of political reintegration:** exploring the ethical questions involved in reintroducing radicalized actors back into the mainstream and the societal tensions this might create.
- **Legal Studies:** How do legal frameworks and institutions shape political discourse and power dynamics? This topic invites exploration of how laws, courts, and legal policies either reinforce or mitigate polarization, radicalization, and mainstreaming, and the role of legal institutions in promoting reconciliation and social cohesion.

Format: The symposium will be held in-person at University of Navarra, Pamplona, Spain.

Submissions: Submissions will be evaluated by the scientific committee of the conference. Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words outlining the scope of your research, methodology, and key findings to conferencepolipos@unav.es by 31 January, 2025. We welcome both individual papers and panel proposals. The conference will be held in English. Certificates of attendance and participation will be provided.

Key Dates:

- Abstract submission deadline: ~~31st January, 2025~~ **28th of February, 2025**
- Notification of acceptance: 14th of February, 2025
- Conference dates: 5th-7th of June, 2025

Conference Fees:

80 Euros for participants
40 Euros for Ph.D. students