

Transcript Aida Martori:

Hello, I'm Dr. Aida Martori Montsant, from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and I'm going to talk about the risks of polarisation in social networks.

In the current context, social networks and digital media have made it possible to democratise social discourse, facilitating free access to information and allowing users to be senders of messages. This enables citizens to have a voice in the public debate. However, there are risks. Filter bubbles or echo chambers can lead to fewer interactions between different or opposing viewpoints. This results in citizens forming a narrower or more limited view of the world, and having less space and opportunities to have constructive debates. They may also be less prepared to accept opinions different from their own, without being overly conscious of it.

Algorithms are not transparent and show and prioritise content, without letting us know what is outside the bubble and why. Behind the content are the interests of large corporations, which differ from creating and maintaining a healthy media and social space. Moreover, comments that contribute to polarisation, with vocabulary that may incite hatred rather than dialogue, have more impact and views on social media than conciliatory comments. These factors affect our increasingly digital public sphere, and can lead to a society that is less open to dialogue, while hate speech finds new spaces to grow, to expand.

The danger posed by these phenomena is therefore on the table. Most of all, it is worth mentioning the path towards a regression of rights and freedoms caused by these communication dynamics, negatively affecting minorities, when conflicts become more polarised and there is less understanding between the two sides. Thank you very much.