



Special Session Proposal

Subversive Narratives and Polarization across Space

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Abstract

An unprecedented level of polarized perceptions of reality, controversial and conflicting narratives and radicalization in the political vote are manifested with growing intensity across the Western world. From witches in modern UK, to Prosperity Gospel and QAnon conspiracy theories in the USA, through the earlier relatively milder wave of revival of ultra-right neo-Nazi narrative in the political reality of the European countries and the implementation of Brexit in a divided UK, polarization and subversive narratives plagues our world just as infectiously as the biological pandemic of COVID-19.

This poses the question – is there a relationship between the socio-economic conditions under which people’s perceptions start to exhibit such polarizing and radicalizing tendencies and what is the geographical spread of this pandemic of conflicting narratives.

Inspired by classical work by Karl Polanyi and Hirschman and Rothschild (1973) as well as the most recent outstanding contributions by the late Alberto Alesina, whom we sadly lost in 2020, the proposed special session will provide a series of analysis and empirical examples of socio-economic reasons for polarization of people’s perceptions across space and will offer illustrations of the spatial pattern of polarization in the USA, the UK and other countries.

Democratic and evidence-based decision making clearly depend on the beliefs and attitudes of the general voter. Regional policies and decision making are even more dependent on them.

Therefore, we should understand what shapes and directs the changes in people’s belief system in order to monitor and manage regional political economies sustainably and ensure local resilience.

Related literature:

Alesina, A., A. Miano, and S. Stantcheva (2021). The Polarization of Reality. *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*, forthcoming.

Reissner, V., M. Rosien, K. Jochh, O. Kuhnigk, H. Dietrich, A. Hollederer and J. Hebebrand (2011). Psychiatric disorders and health service utilization in unemployed youth. In: Health risk behaviour in adolescents and capacity building for health promotion, *Journal of Public Health* 19(1): (13-20).

Tubadji, A., Colwill, T., & Webber, D. (2021). Voting with Your Feet or Voting for Brexit: The Tale of Those Stuck Behind. *Regional Science Policy & Practice*. forthcoming

Wrenn, M. V. (2020). On Veblenian waste and Polanyian protective responses: Evidence from the US. *Panoeconomicus*, 67(4): 449-464.