

**POLARIZED
SOCIETIES ?**

**CHALLENGES
FOR
SOCIOLOGY**

XII PORTUGUESE
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CONVENT OF SAN FRANCISCO – FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF COIMBRA



CALL FOR PAPERS

THEMATIC SECTION ART, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

Coordinators:

José Soares Neves (ISCTE-IUL/CIES-Iscte)

Paula Abreu (FEUC/CES)

Paula Guerra (FLUP/IS-UP/ CITCEM/DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte)

The Thematic Section of Art, Culture and Communication of the Portuguese Sociological Association invites to a reflection around the challenges for sociology in contemporary times having as motto the polarization of societies. We may divide polarization into two topics: one concerning the adjective 'polarized', that is, the one who has become polarized or the one who has let himself be dominated by the other; the other topic focuses on the verb 'polarize', which is, in itself, the act of causing polarization, of provoking concentration. Thus, for the purposes of this call, we invite and encourage the submission of proposals that analyse the two poles of the concept, in order to broaden our fields of discussion and debate with an eye on the arts, culture and communication.

In fact, there are several cases of polarisation, some external and others internal. Regarding the external ones, we can mention the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the fear of a nuclear conflagration, as well as the tension about the need to fight or to give in to Russian threats; the continuous rise of the extreme right in Europe, increasingly present in the parliaments and governments of many countries, with all that this represents as a threat to the affirmation of differences and to democracy; the effects of mankind on the climate and the growing impacts on global warming; the fear of a future economic and financial crisis, aggravated by the joint effects of post-Covid 19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, among others. Regarding the internal ones, we identify the accumulation of social crises, be it youth unemployment and precariousness, lack of housing, the retreat of some causes taken for granted, etc. All this against the backdrop of a new generation marked by what several sociologists call 'superdiversity' (Peláez et al., 2022), a generation that has grown up and comes of age in a society characterised by the explosion and proliferation of identities, beliefs and values.

In essence, we are dealing with the emergence of a new generation with values that will oppose many of the established political values: data from the latest British Social Attitudes suggests that the zoomers are the ones who show the least pride in their country; that they show the greatest concern for immigrants and ethnic/religious/sexual minorities and this concern is reflected in their daily lives, with more than half of US zoomers claiming to know someone who is transgender (Goodwin, 2022). This enunciates a possible generational polarisation, with many segmentations, and on the other hand, between the structural forces of polarisation and the forces of diversity.

This superdiversity inevitably has its impacts on the worlds of art and culture, in which it is possible to observe artists committed and getting involved in political and social struggles, as is the case of movements such as #MeToo or the anti-racist struggle, with works by artists such as Clara Não or Grada Kilomba reaching more and more people. The old concern of art for art's sake is crumbling, replaced by activism, where art and social and political activism go hand in hand and respond quickly to socio-political events.

Thus, art is a means of revolt and denunciation, but also a means of survival, as the do-it-yourself trajectories marked by job insecurity and instability show. Concurrently, concerns are emerging around the expansion of digital NFT (non-fungible token) art markets that can be seen as a new wave of the culturalisation of the economy, now transported to the digital. These disparities create gaps in the discipline itself, as - and using irony - some are always one step ahead, sometimes oblivious to the difficulties of the Other. In fact, Marx already wrote that individuals have control over their lives, but that this same control is only exercised within a historical context that led them to that moment.

Nevertheless, sociology results from diversity of experience. That is, sociology as a discipline is not only affected by the polarization of societies but also grows with that polarization. And the concept of superdiversity opens new perspectives for sociological research for the coming times, in order to portray religious, social, cultural, political, economic, educational or gender differences, while challenging the understanding of this diversity in the context of the structural power relations that generate polarizations. Thus, the concepts of polarisation and superdiversity seek to respond to the challenges faced by contemporary societies. Both concepts, then, establish the motto for this call, which is to reflect through the self the positioning of the other.

What we intend with this call is to challenge the debate on how the artistic, cultural and communicational worlds, their professionals, in various institutional contexts, networks and publics, get involved in these recent controversies. Where does art, culture and communication stand in relation to these polarised societies? What is the role of artists and cultural agents in promoting and combating contemporary political, economic, cultural, social, artistic and

environmental polarisation? How can they serve as 'bridges' to reach points of contact (but not unanimity)? How, and in which fields, do markets and public policies act in relation to this polarisation? How are individual and national identities affected by the polarisation of societies? What about modes of production, consumption, and distribution of artistic and cultural products? Will they continue to be affected by this polarisation and division of societies? Or, more briefly, what will be the role of sociology in this context? What are sociologists' prospects for the future of sociological research? What is the role of superdiversity in contemporary sociological research? These questions aim to break with the Eurocentric and polarized vision that has dominated the social sciences and, in particular, the sociology of culture, arts and communication, both from an epistemological and ontological point of view, in order to correspond to the challenges posed by contemporary realities.

Thus, we invite all sociologists to submit proposals for research abstracts situated in academic and non-academic contexts in response to our call.

Posters and visual documents such as short films or short movies focusing on artistic, cultural and communicational projects or interventions will be accepted. These proposals, despite the differences between academic and non-academic contexts, should be formulated considering a theoretical framework, objectives, methodologies used, diagnosis, results and conclusions. These same proposals should be increased by three ambitions: innovation, social (and sociological) change and monitoring. The rules and deadlines to consider for the submission of abstracts, as well as more information about the XII Portuguese Congress of Sociology, can be consulted on the APS website at <http://www.aps.pt>.

The Thematic Section's coordination will select the best communications to be proposed for publication in the journal *SOCIOLOGIA ON LINE*.

Abstract submission until November 7, 2022.

You can submit your proposal at <https://xii-congresso-aps.eventqualia.net>

Email contact: congresso-aps@eventqualia.net

