

CS-234

Technologies for societal self-organization

Week 11

Polarization - Radicalization

- Composition of self-secting groups
- How do we choose groups? Tendency to converge
- Negative consequences
 - "Echo chamber" effect, "preaching to the choir"
 - no opinion to confront - no real challenge/opposition
 - boring
 - intellectually stagnant, unchanging
 - can make people/interactions narrow-minded ("groupthink")
 - can create/accentuate inaccurate/wrong perceptions (conspiracy theories)
 - inaccurate perceptions about what others think (perceptions of Bias)
 - Tribalism: people make decisions/judgments less based on fact, more based on group identity

Polarization & Radicalization online

- Algorithmic recommendations
 - optimized to increase/maximize "eyeball time"
 - sell more ads
 - extreme content → stronger reactions (emotional)
 - "addictive algorithms"?
- Online "echo chamber" effect?
 - Social media - "following", friend-centric content selection
 - extremist groups just "work harder"
 - "silent majority" versus "radical/loud minority"
 - are radical groups using more "ruthless" methods? (Sybil attacks, sock puppets)
 - are the platforms "neutral" or biased?
 - is it the platform's job to censor/govern content?
 - not representative or accountable

Mitigations for polarization tendencies?

- Diversity in group, "information diet"
 - deliberately introduce contrast
 - can we make "diverse" content selections also "representative"?
 - sortition-based recommendations?
- Transparency, labeling

