



Call for Incentive Research Collaboration 2025 Laureate

Project HONE

How Narratives Emerge:
A Complexity-Science Approach To Public Discourse

AURORA



Co-funded by
the European Union



PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Project title:

How Narratives Emerge: A Complexity-Science Approach to Public Discourse

Project acronym: HONE

COORDINATOR

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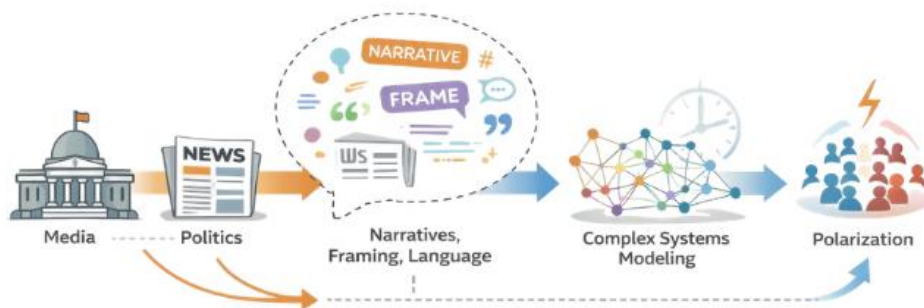
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OBJECTIVE

Public debate shapes how societies understand complex issues. Polarization has become a defining feature of contemporary debates, but by the time it is visible, it is already entrenched. This project examines how dividing narratives spread and take hold. Focusing on immigration discourse, it uses tools from complex systems research to model how linguistic choices shape the circulation of narratives across media and online discussion, with the aim of identifying early signals of polarization.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROJECT




SOCIAL IMPACTS AND TARGETED SDG

HONE examines how public debates evolve, with a focus on how linguistic choices shape which narratives spread, gain traction or fade. Understanding these dynamics will make it possible to recognise early signs of polarization before they are fully entrenched. Drawing on insights from complexity science, the project investigates whether and how small shifts in how issues are described can lead to larger changes in how debates develop. The findings are relevant for those working with complex and polarizing issues, including journalists and public administration, but also for understanding how public debate can shift and become polarized more generally.

The project contributes to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) by addressing polarization and supporting more informed and balanced public debate. It also contributes to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by showing how different ways of describing issues can foreground or marginalize particular groups.

AURORA ADDED VALUE

This project brings together expertise in complexity science, digital humanities and linguistics that is not available within any single partner. Each institution contributes a distinct part of the workflow, from discourse analysis to formal modelling ; this network provides the time and setting to align these approaches and develop a shared method. This makes it possible to test, in a concrete way, whether tools from complex systems research can be applied to the study of public discourse.

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