



The discursive architecture of conspiracism in politics: An Essex School discourse analysis

Grigoris Markou*

* University of Macedonia; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3777-4670>

Abstract

In recent years, research on conspiracy theories has expanded, yet few studies have examined them from a discursive post-structuralist perspective. This paper provides a theoretical mapping of the structure of conspiracism as articulated in political discourse. Drawing on the Essex School of Discourse Analysis, it highlights the main discursive features of conspiracy theories and the conditions under which political discourse can be classified as conspiratorial. Moreover, focusing on Greece—a country marked by recurrent political and economic crises—this paper analyzes how conspiratorial motifs are mobilized in the discourse of different political actors in the country, identifying their central or peripheral role. While the focus is not on verifying the truth of conspiracy theories or evaluating their political impact, we emphasize the importance of understanding how these theories are constructed and expressed in political contexts. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper theoretical and empirical understanding of the discursive architecture of conspiracism in politics.¹

Keywords: Conspiracy theories; conspiracism; discourse; Essex School discourse analysis; Greek politics

1 Introduction

Throughout history, humans have consistently sought answers to complex political, economic, social, and other critical issues, striving to understand the world around them. However, official accounts — whether scientific or governmental — have often been met with skepticism. Many people adopt views on various aspects of society and politics that are based on the existence of conspiracies, believing that hidden forces are shaping events behind their backs. Conspiracy theories have emerged regarding almost

¹ This paper extends and revises an earlier, shorter version presented at the 9th Regular Conference of the Hellenic Sociological Society (HSS), which will appear in the conference proceedings in Greek.



everything, from the claim that the ancient Atlanteans built the pyramids to the belief that the Apollo moon landing was filmed in a studio (Brotherton, 2015, p. 9). Nevertheless, conspiracy theories should not be equated with falsehoods. History is filled with both real and imaginary conspiracies (Taguieff, 2017, p. 183), while many conspiracy theories have ultimately been proven true (Dentith, 2018, p. 330).

Conspiracy theories are inherently political (Uscinski & Enders, 2023, p. 32; Lenis, 2023, p. 11) and constitute questions about power (Lenis, 2023, p. 241). It is therefore difficult to avoid encountering political discourses that contain conspiracist elements. Most of the time, conspiracism is embedded in political discourses to critique or challenge those in power, especially when those in government struggle to address emerging problems. As a result, they tend to thrive during times of crisis (Breakwell, 2021, p. 143; Nilan, 2021, p. 46), significantly influencing the political landscape and electoral processes (Nefes and Romero-Reche 2024). According to Taguieff (2017, p. 186), “waves of conspiracism emerge in contexts of overall crisis or profound upheavals in the social order, which shake the foundations of values and norms.”

Scholars appear to have increasingly turned their attention to the study of conspiracy theories around the mid-20th century. As Thalmann (2019, p. 14) emphasises, “while the term dates back to the second half of the 19th century it only developed into a mainstream vocabulary in the second half of the 20th century, at the same time that scholars increasingly studied the phenomenon of conspiracy theorizing.” Recently, a significant portion of the academic community (Dentith, 2014; Uscinski, 2019; Demata, Zorzi & Zottola, 2022) has enthusiastically engaged with the study of conspiracy theories, while some focused on the relationship between conspiracy theories and other phenomena, such as populism (Butter et al., 2025; Markou, 2022; Pirro & Taggart, 2023) and nationalism (Posocco & Watson, 2024; Mir & Siddiqui, 2024). Nonetheless, despite the growing interest in the field, relatively few studies have applied discourse analysis — particularly poststructuralist approaches — to examine this phenomenon within political contexts, even though conspiracy theories maintain a persistent and prominent presence in the political sphere. This is especially noteworthy given that discourse analysis is increasingly employed in the social and political sciences, gaining attention from scholars around the world (Demata, Zorzi & Zottola, 2022, p. 8). There are not many studies that attempt to trace the core essence of conspiracy thinking or that highlight the varying forms and intensity of conspiratorial political discourse. This gap in literature presents an opportunity to explore conspiracism through the lens of poststructuralist discourse analysis, offering new insights into the ways in which these theories are constructed and disseminated.

In this paper, I aim to provide a theoretical mapping of the structure of conspiracism as it is articulated in political discourse, employing the conceptual and methodological perspective of the Essex School of discourse analysis. More specifically, our analysis proceeds in three directions:

1. I theoretically define the concept of conspiracism and identify its core features in political discourse;
2. I distinguish conspiracism from other phenomena with which it is often erroneously equated, such as populism and nationalism, even though these tendencies frequently intersect;
3. Since conspiracist thinking is widespread in society and even occasionally expressed by all individuals (see Pigden, 2022) — including politicians — I seek to highlight the role of nodal points and other significant signifiers in determining whether a discourse can be characterized as conspiracist or not. The Greek case will be used as an illustrative example to demonstrate that conspiracism can emerge across the political spectrum, albeit with varying intensity and depth, as well as to emphasize the significance of nodal points and other signifiers in determining the conspiratorial character of each case.

My focus is not on affirming or denying the “truth” of conspiracy theories, nor on analyzing their impact on politics and democracy, but rather on examining how they are constructed and expressed in political discourse. This study is primarily theoretical and, for the most part, builds upon existing theoretical and empirical studies from various research fields that have addressed conspiracy theories. However, a small set of original data is used illustratively to support certain points.

2 The notion of “conspiracy theories”

The systematic study of conspiracy theories within academic circles is a relatively recent phenomenon. As already noted, it was not until the mid-20th century that scholars began to rigorously engage with the topic (Thalmann, 2019, p. 14). Since then, numerous researchers have attempted to define what constitutes a conspiracy theory (Barkun, 2003; Dentith, 2014; Butter & Knight, 2020; Uscinski & Enders, 2023), without fully agreeing on how it should be conceptualized. There are numerous conspiracy theories that have developed around the world over the years. For example, some individuals claim the existence of a multinational force, often referred to as the “New World Order,” with the aim of governing the world through an authoritarian regime (Fenster, 2008, p. 54-59). Others assert that scientists are concealing significant information with some ulterior motive, such as the notion that the Earth is flat, that humans never landed on the Moon, or that extraterrestrials have visited Earth (Pleionis, 2023). Recently, a wave of conspiracy narratives has inundated the media and social media platforms globally, largely stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. These include the belief that COVID-19 mRNA vaccines contain toxic ingredients meant to harm or kill people, that the vaccine was designed to alter DNA and cause infertility to reduce the global population, or that it is part of a secret plan orchestrated by the government or Bill Gates to implant microchips in humans for tracking and control (Domaradzki, Jabkowski & Walkowiak, 2024).

Conspiracy theories are often presented as a pathological and irrational phenomenon that negatively affects politics and society, a view that appears to dominate public discourse. The term “conspiracy theorist/conspiracist” is viewed as a label that no one wishes to be associated with. Nonetheless, this perspective has not always been the case. Thalmann (2019) argues that the shift of the term towards a derogatory connotation occurred in the mid-20th century. As she notes, the term was used in the late 19th century in forensic and legal contexts, and in the early 20th century to describe cases of potential crimes, but in the 1940s and 1950s, it took on a more negative connotation when scholars, notably Karl Popper, began to challenge the epistemological foundations of conspiracy beliefs (Thalmann, 2019, p. 10). According to Swami and Furnham (2014, p. 222), Richard Hofstadter’s work further influenced the creation of the image of a “paranoid” phenomenon. This is reminiscent of the trajectory that populism took over the years in academic perspective, which was “re-evaluated” through a pathological lens in the 1950s, particularly through the work of Hofstadter and “his ‘liberal’ and ‘pluralist’ fellow-travelers” (Stavrakakis, 2017, p. 4).

The negative (predetermined) evaluation of all conspiracy theories is not universally accepted by scholars. Specifically, the study of conspiracy theories has created two main approaches in philosophy: One approach argues that it is necessary to analyze each conspiracy theory separately in order to assess its validity (particularism), while the other suggests that all conspiracy theories should be examined and evaluated collectively as a specific category (generalism) (Dentith, 2018, p. 330; Harris, 2022). More specifically, the first perspective highlights that we must not reject a conspiracy theory just because is a theory about a possible (or not) conspiracy, while the second argument suggests that conspiracy theories are either false or, at the very least, suspicious and should be approached with a dismissive attitude

(Dentith, 2019, pp. 94-95). Although this second perspective acknowledges the existence of conspiracies in the world, it holds that they can be considered unjustifiable at first glance (Dentith, 2022).

According to Dentith (2022), particularists, who argue the case-by-case examination of conspiracy theories, “often use examples of well-attested to conspiracies” [...] “to show that merely accepting ‘conspiracy theory’ as a label which refers to unwarranted claims or unfounded speculation about the existence of conspiracies can have unfortunate social consequences”. Furthermore, particularists cite well-known events that were previously categorised as “conspiracy theories” but were later proven to be true, such as the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 and the Ford Pinto scandal in 1977, while highlighting historical works that demonstrate how conspiracies, often underestimated, are an integral part of our recent history² (Dentith, 2018, p. 330). We could not say that this perspective is far from reality. After all, there are scholars who emphasise that conspiracy theories do not always lie (Knight, 2003, p. 16; Uscinski & Enders, 2023, p. 32).

One of the problems with the perspective of those who recognise conspiracy theories as false and equate them with irrationality is that they often associate them with mental health issues, the development of hostile sentiments, and radicalization. A multitude of studies have rejected these specific arguments. Sunstein and Vermeule (2009, p. 204) argue that belief in unwarranted conspiracy theories by specific groups is not the result of any kind of mental illness or mere irrationality. Let us not forget, after all, that for many people, conspiracy theories represent an attempt to make sense of a dystopian and distressing situation that generates uncertainty, in which they feel insecure and trapped by existing power structures (see Green & Douglas, 2018, pp. 30-37; Swami et al., 2016, pp. 72-76). According to Rakopoulos (2017, p. 26), who analyzes the concept through an anthropological lens, the “paranoia” approach is mistaken, emphasizing that conspiracy theories constitute an analytical framework that poses a challenge for social research, testing the limits of enlightened academic knowledge.

Dentith (2018, p. 333) underlines that analyses that regard all conspiracy theories as problematic assume that belief in them is driven by anything but arguments and evidence, leading to skepticism toward any conspiracy theory even before it becomes the focus of study. However, we could argue that this skepticism toward every conspiracy theory has the potential to dismiss as “false” or “irrational” even substantial criticism of the establishment – for instance, criticism regarding the suspicion of a political scandal (Markou, 2022, p. 158). Furthermore, the direct association of conspiracy theories with irrationality has enabled politicians to “delegitimise” political opponents who follow radical directions. As Husting and Orr (2007, p. 127) point out, one can strategically exclude others from the public sphere and discussions by associating them with the concept of conspiracy theories, regardless of whether what they are arguing is true or false.

After all, how can one maintain that conspiracy theories are inherently problematic, or that those who endorse them suffer from some kind of mental health issue, when such narratives are so widespread across human societies that it becomes difficult – if not impossible – for anyone to entirely avoid, adopt, or express them at some point in their life? According to Dentith (2019b), we are all conspiracy theorists when it comes to certain conspiracy theories. Pigden (2022) states that “if a conspiracy theory is simply a theory that posits a conspiracy, then every politically and historically literate person is a big-time conspiracy theorist, since every such person subscribes to a vast range of conspiracy theories”. According to him, the only way for someone to avoid conspiracy theories and not believe in any is to surround themselves with such a thick dust of ignorance and indifference that it makes them incapable of political thought or action (Pigden, 2022). Indeed, it would be difficult to disagree with the widespread prevalence of conspiracy theories in human societies, unless we attempted to impose very narrow limits on the concept itself and

² Taguieff (2016, p. 29-30) emphasises that “world history is filled with real conspiracies, which either succeeded or failed.”

accepted only specific theories as conspiratorial. But who would be able, after all, to draw the boundaries of what constitutes a conspiracy theory? As Ginzburg (2012, p. 164) rightly wonders, “is it possible to trace a dividing line between a healthy skepticism toward certain official versions and a conspiratorial obsession?”

Precisely because conspiracy theories are not easily distinguished from skepticism, because they are so widespread in human society, and because they are not always false or irrational, it is more appropriate to rely on a more neutral definition to avoid problems in our analysis. The truth is that we could adopt a definition such as the one proposed by Uscinski (2019, p. 48), who defines a conspiracy theory as “an explanation of past, ongoing, or future events or circumstances that cites as a main causal factor a small group of powerful persons, the conspirators, acting in secret for their own benefit and against the common good”. However, although this neutral definition largely captures the phenomenon, it may not fully reflect its complexity, as it presupposes certain elements that are not necessarily consistent—such as the key characteristics of the “conspirator” (e.g., “a small group,” “powerful”)—thus excluding cases in which conspiracy theories may identify entire power structures as conspirators. Keeley (1999, p. 116) notes that “conspiracy theory need not propose that the conspirators are all powerful, only that they have played some pivotal role in bringing about the event”, while underlying that “the group of conspirators must be small, although the upper bounds are necessarily vague”. Therefore, it might be better to adopt a simpler definition, recognizing them as an explanation of an event that cites a conspiracy as the main cause of it (Dentith, 2019, p. 102).

The fact that I adopt such a simple definition does not imply that everyone who expresses a conspiracy theory in the political sphere can be classified as a conspiracist. After all, (almost) every political party has probably referred at some point to the existence of some conspiracy. But who is conspiracist in politics? How can we analyse the political discourse on conspiracies?

3 Theoretical and methodological framework: The Essex school discourse analysis

I examine the architecture of conspiratorial discourse through the post-structuralist framework of the “Essex School Discourse Analysis”, initially developed by Laclau and Mouffe, but later expanded and strengthened through the contributions of other influential theorists. According to this theoretical framework, all social phenomena acquire meaning through Discourse, which is considered a process that is constantly under negotiation and construction (Carpentier, 2010, p. 252). Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000, p. 3) underline that “discourse theory investigates the way in which social practices articulate and contest the discourses that constitute social reality.” Discourse is not necessarily equated with rhetoric, but it encompasses both discursive and non-discursive practices. As Laclau and Mouffe [2001 (1985), p. 107] note “every object is constituted as an object of discourse, insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence”.

Within the framework of the poststructuralist theory developed by Laclau and Mouffe, which sought to reinterpret the Gramscian concept of hegemony, a complex conceptual system emerges, incorporating terms such as “articulation”, “nodal points”, and “empty signifier” (Stavrakakis & Galanopoulos, 2023). The process of articulation is highly significant, as the structured totality that emerges through the practice of articulation is essentially “discourse” [Laclau & Mouffe 2001 (1985), p. 105]. A fundamental concept in their analysis, which will be useful in the study of conspiracy theories, is that of nodal points (and signifiers). The formation of discourse requires the articulation of meaning around specific nodal points, which function as central signifiers, structuring and arranging other concepts within a discursive construction. According to

Laclau and Mouffe [2001 (1985), p. 112], “any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre. We will call the privileged discursive points of this partial fixation, nodal points”. As De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017, p. 306) note, nodal points “overdetermine the meaning of a whole structuration of meaning” and their position “can best be understood through a spatial figuration: the nodal point at the centre of a certain discourse with the various moments located at the periphery of the articulation”. As they note, “for example, in liberalism the signifier “freedom” or “liberty” plays such a role. Other signifiers, such as “state”, “individual” and “society”, acquire meaning in relation to the nodal point “freedom” (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017, p. 306).

The analysis of the discourse of political parties and leaders requires empirical material to assist in this task. Such material allows us to identify the nodal points of each discourse and the signifiers surrounding them, ultimately enabling us to draw conclusions regarding the architecture of the discourse, the meaning it constructs, and the strategy it seeks to achieve. According to Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000, p. 4), discourse analysis “refers to practice of analysing empirical raw materials and information as discursive forms. This means that discourse analysts treat a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic data – speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even organisations and institutions – as ‘texts’ or ‘writing’.”

The widespread dissemination of conspiracy theories within societies and in public discourse makes it challenging to precisely define the characteristics of this concept. If, as Dentith (2019b) suggests, we are all essentially conspiracy theorists in the sense that we have all, at some point in our lives, believed in or expressed a possible conspiracy, then what meaning does the concept itself hold? If every political party includes individuals who have expressed a conspiratorial idea at some point in their political careers, then what is the value of using conspiracy theories in political analysis? This is where the discourse analysis of the “Essex School” becomes relevant, guiding us in identifying discourses that incorporate a deeply conspiratorial logic by emphasizing the central core of a discourse. By identifying the nodal points and signifiers within a discourse, we can determine its key elements and assess the intensity with which they appear. At the same time, we can identify the connection between conspiracy theories and other phenomena, such as populism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism, and the role that conspiracy theory plays (primary, secondary, peripheral, etc.) within the context of a discourse. This process allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the structure of discourse and the dynamics of the content being articulated. Therefore, this particular methodology does not dismiss the existence of conspiratorial patterns in different political discourses, but helps us identify discourses that are based on conspiratorial frameworks. Additionally, it does not predefine the internal structure of political discourse, as it does not assess a discourse as either positive or negative (*a priori*), but rather focuses on how the nodal points and signifiers emerge within it. Thus, it does not aim to confirm or reject the “truth” of each conspiratorial idea, but rather seeks to understand the way in which it is expressed in political discourse.

4 The discursive structure of conspiracy theories in politics

In contemporary political discourse, numerous political parties, organizations, and leaders rely on conspiracy theories to mobilize supporters and exert political influence. It is well-established that conspiracy theories are predominantly expressed by far-right parties³; however, this does not imply that they are confined to this political space. There are many examples, including those of progressive parties, that adopt conspiratorial narratives to interpret various events and decisions, seeking to rally support by

³ For far-right conspiracy theories: Busbridge, Moffitt, & Thorburn, 2020; Al-Rawi et al., 2025.

drawing on widespread distrust among the electorate. For example, according to Skoulariki (2018, pp. 95-101), in Greece during the crisis, some left-wing forces expressed conspiratorial narratives, accusing the hegemonic financial politics of Germany, the US, and the IMF of causing the collapse of Greece's socio-economic conditions⁴. Nevertheless, under what circumstances can a discourse be accurately characterized as conspiratorial? Through an in-depth review of the international literature, encompassing both theoretical and empirical studies—which are employed in this article both in the present section and the following one—I identify the key elements of conspiratorial discourse, clarified through the lens of the Essex School.

Political discourse typically articulates nodal points associated with the political subject to whom it is addressed. These include concepts such as “the people,” “the nation,” the nationality of the people (e.g., French, German, etc.) and “citizens”. Simultaneously, the nodal points may assume the form of the “enemy” of the people/the nation/the citizens, as well as more abstract notions such as “democracy,” “freedom,” or “justice.” Nonetheless, at the same time, other concepts may also emerge in a central position—sometimes with comparable, sometimes with lesser prominence—thereby contributing to the overall structure of meaning. Some of these concepts are associated with purported conspiracies, thereby imparting a conspiratorial character to political discourse. These concepts are not necessarily explicit notions such as “secret plans” or “conspiracy,” but may include some or more of the following:

1. The “conspirator(s)”, namely the group perceived as responsible for the conspiracy, orchestrating events behind the scenes, and embodying the perceived threat. These alleged conspirators often include groups such as “the Jews,” “the Freemasons,” “the Illuminati,” “global elites,” “intelligence agencies,” “the state,” “international organizations,” “scientists,” “pharmaceutical companies,” “communists,” or “the political left” more broadly, as well as foreign powerful countries (e.g. USA), minorities and religious groups.⁵ Within conspiratorial narratives, the supposed conspirator frequently functions as a nodal point⁶. In many cases, multiple conspirators are implicated simultaneously—for instance, a narrative may link “the Jews,” “the Freemasons,” and “global governance” within a single framework. Conspirators are typically regarded as “enemies” of the citizens/state/people/nation/democracy and are uncovered by conspiracy theorists who “know the truth.”^{7 8}

4 The far-right conspiratorial narratives regarding the crisis referred also to the Jews and “Zionism”, international bankers and other magnates, as well as the New World Order (Skoulariki, 2018, pp. 100-101).

5 According to Uscinski (2019, p. 48), “the conspirators could be foreign or domestic governments, nongovernmental actors, scientists, religious and fraternal organizations, or any other group perceived as powerful and treacherous.” For example, as Douglas et al. (2019, p. 4) underline “conspiracy theories about the 9/11 terror attacks accuse the Bush administration, the Saudi Government, corporations, the financial industry, and the Jews; conspiracy theories about climate change accuse scientists, communists, the United Nations, Democrats, the government, and the oil industry among others”.

6 In the case of conspiracy theories about Jews, the specific names of historical families (Rothschild) or prominent Jewish figures (Soros) can serve as nodal points. More on conspiracy theories about Soros: Langer, 2021; Richardson & Wodak, 2022.

7 Given that each conspiracy discourse targets specific groups (often in a racist and/or derogatory manner), it can be classified accordingly, such as antisemitic, anti-communist, and so forth.

8 In the USA, Donald Trump has developed and promoted many conspiracy theories. For instance, he characterized the coronavirus pandemic as the “worst attack” in US history, attributing responsibility to China (bbc.com, 2020). Here, “China” emerges discursively as a conspiratorial actor intent on harming the United States. In Greece, Artemis Sorras, frequently targets alleged conspirators who are purportedly undermining the country's welfare. Among these, he positions, inter alia, “the regime”, “the corrupt media” and “traitorous” politicians, as well as “Freemasons” and “Jews”. Regarding the character of his party and its antisemitism, see Rakopoulos, 2018.

2. A specific concept or phrase associated with the alleged conspiracy, such as “New World Order”⁹ and “they are spraying us”. For instance, anti-vaccination discourse can simultaneously be conspiratorial if it asserts that “vaccines” are part of a secret plan to control the population or to serve the financial interests of pharmaceutical corporations and multinational companies¹⁰. Similarly, discourse surrounding a supposed conspiracy in space exploration may frequently employ terms such as *aliens*, *hidden technology*, *fake moon landing*, and *reptilian beings*.¹¹
3. General concepts, such as “truth,” “control,” “plans,” “the system” and “freedom”, which are associated with conspiratorial logic by some politicians.¹² Conspiracy theorists support that citizens can, through the “revelation of the truth” about “people’s control”, gain their “freedom”, which has been taken from them by “the system”. From their perspective, their discourse can be understood as a discourse of truth — the unveiling of hidden conspiracies — and a discourse of freedom, insofar as it promises the liberation of the citizen from perceived lies. The above signifiers can attract different social groups under the banner of a political party.

Most of these nodal points alone do not suffice to determine whether a discourse is conspiratorial. In contrast to populist discourse — where the recurring reference to “the people” (in opposition to “the elites”) provides a relatively clear indicator of its populist nature (Markou, 2017) — in this case, the interpretive task is more complex. The presence of a central signifier does not reveal everything. Identifying a discourse as genuinely conspiratorial often requires deeper analysis — particularly of how the figure of the “enemy” is constructed (e.g., as a conspirator) and how this construction interacts with the broader network of signifiers surrounding the nodal point. For instance, when the notion of the “communist” appears frequently and in a negatively charged manner, the discourse can be identified as anti-communist. However, this alone is not sufficient to characterise it conspiratorial. It becomes conspiratorial when the “communist” is explicitly framed as a conspirator — an agent orchestrating events from behind the scenes — a narrative revealed through the signifiers that surround the nodal point. Signifiers such as “secret plans,” “revelation,” “manipulation,” and popular rhetorical tropes like “what they are hiding from us,” as well as broader concepts like “truth,” “control,” and “freedom,” often function as indicators of a conspiratorial interpretive context. Hence, the core pattern of conspiratorial discourse lies in the development of a denunciatory discourse directed against alleged conspirators and covert plots, which are constructed as the hidden causes of events impacting society. This denunciation functions as an act of “unveiling” the plan — a plan presumed to harm the society.¹³ Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that certain concepts serve as markers of conspiratorial discourse because of their strong association with specific conspiracy theories. In other words, when one encounters these concepts, they are likely to recognize them as referring to a conspiracy theory. Terms such as “New World Order,” “Jewish-Bolsheviks,” “Freemasons,” “chemtrails”, or “Hellanians” (a term we find in the Greek context) help clarify the internal core of a given discourse.

9 In Greece, Panos Kammenos, the leader of ANEL, has frequently invoked the concept of the “New World Order” to suggest the existence of a purported threat over the country. As he states: “No new world order will make us surrender our homeland, our national sovereignty, or our territorial integrity” (Parapolitika Newsroom, 2015).

10 See Lee et al., 2022.

11 For conspiracy theories on space exploration and moon landings, see Eversberg, 2019.

12 Donald Trump, known for his conspiratorial rhetoric, frequently invokes concepts of “truth” and “lies” in his discourse, either portraying himself as a politician who speaks the truth (bbc.com, 2018) or asserting that other politicians are dishonest (for example, he claimed that Barack Obama had lied about his place of birth) (see Moore, 2019, p. 111).

13 Taguieff argues that conspiracy theories denounce a fictional conspiracy (Taguieff, 2016, p. 38). However, it is not certain that the conspiracy constructed is always “fictional.”

In what way does a conspiracist politician call upon the political subject? A conspiracist leader or party typically calls upon a political subject, which is often portrayed as either resisting the conspiracy or capable of destroying it. This political subject may be a specific signifier (e.g., people, patriots, nation, fellow citizens, citizens, etc.), but it may also shift periodically within its discourse. This constitutes one of the main reasons why populism cannot be equated with conspiracy theories, as populist leaders call upon “the people” (Markou, 2022). The political subject of a conspiracy theorist is typically portrayed as an “awakened” political subject who perceives “who the rulers are” and “what their intentions are” (see Markou, 2022). This subject is depicted as the people who does not believe their lies and actively resists them. Nonetheless, occasionally, a conspiratorial leader may not present their supporters as already “awakened” but rather as individuals who are unaware and whom the leader intends to guide toward the “truth”. Naturally, the way a leader calls upon a specific subject is closely related to the central components of a discursive construction and its direction. For instance, a populist discourse places at its core the signifier of the “people,” while a nationalist discourse centers around the concept of the “nation” (along with related terms) (see De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017). This suggests, for example, that when the concept of “the nation” is combined with a notion tied to a conspiracy theory (e.g., “New World Order”), a discourse that is both nationalist and conspiracist is produced.

Conspiracy theories invariably involve an “antagonist” or “enemy”, who is most often portrayed as the very conspirator himself. Still, the “enemy” in relation to the political subject is not limited to just the “conspirators.” It can also include the power structures, the political establishment, the elites, economic interests, and the media (unless they are a key part of the “conspirators”). These groups are believed to be aware of the conspiracy unfolding but either “cover it up” or turn a blind eye. In general, the conspirators are identified as governments, NGOs, scientific institutions, religious organizations, and secret fraternities (Pleionis & Demertzis, 2023, p. 25). According to Taguieff, conspiracies are often attributed to “acting minorities (revolutionary groups, subversive forces) or to established powers (governments, secret services, etc.)” (Taguieff, 2017, pp. 185-186). It is obvious that a conspiracy theorist calls upon the political subject to confront the conspirator, thereby forming an antagonistic relationship between the “awakened” or “victimized” political subject and conspirators / broader enemies.

The intensity and variety in the use of specific conspiratorial patterns and nodal points create a colorful mosaic of conspiracist discourses on the political stage. Therefore, not all instances of conspiratorial discourses are identical. Furthermore, the differentiation between conspiratorial discourses becomes clear through the signifiers with which they align within the framework of a discursive construction. Conspiracy theories, in some cases, align with populist schemes, while in others, they align with nationalist, anti-Semitic, or other ones. As I have underlined before, conspiracism is rarely articulated in isolation, devoid of other fundamental discursive elements. It is challenging to find political discourse that engages with a political subject without consistently invoking concepts such as “the people,” “the nation,” “citizens,” “democracy,” or “freedom.”¹⁴ Indeed, conspiracist narratives frequently coexist with other central political concepts. For instance, the figure of the “conspirator” associated with alleged conspiracies (e.g., vaccines, chemtrails) may either co-occur with traditional political notions, such as “the nation,” or assume a subordinate role in relation to them. In the former case, where conspiracist and nationalist elements are equally prominent, the discourse can be characterised as both conspiracist and nationalist. In the latter case, where nationalism remains dominant while conspiracist elements play a secondary role, the discourse may be more accurately described as nationalist with significant conspiracist dimensions. In many instances, conspiracy theories align with extreme nationalist and racist ideologies, targeting specific social,

¹⁴ Besides, a reference to a conspiracy narrative about “Jews” or “communists” simultaneously renders the discourse antisemitic or anti-communist, respectively.

national, ethnic, or religious groups and posing direct threats to them (see Dyrendal, Robertson, & Asprem, 2018). However, numerous discourses based on populist, anti-populist, or nationalist logics do not necessarily incorporate strong conspiracist narratives (Markou, 2022).

To gain a deeper insight into the architecture of conspiracism, let's explore some of the most prominent conspiracy theories, which sometimes surface in political discourses.¹⁵ One of the most common in public discourse is the claim that Jews control the forces behind global events. According to Taguieff, the so-called Jewish conspiracy has developed over many centuries, taking various forms throughout the years (Jewish-Masonic, Jewish-Capitalist, Jewish-Bolshevik, Global-Jewish, Jewish-Crusader or American-Zionist). In the 20th century, it found its primary vehicle in the famous anti-Semitic forgery titled "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (Taguieff, 2017, pp. 203-208). In the discourse of conspiracy theories about Jews, which persist to this day, Jews occupy a central role in the discursive construction, often being portrayed as orchestrators of secret plans for global domination. The nodal point in this type of discourse is the figure of the alleged conspirator—one who is imagined as possessing hidden agendas of worldwide control and who simultaneously functions as the enemy of the interpellated subject (e.g., "the people", "the nation", or "the citizens"). It is worth noting that conspiratorial narratives about Jews are frequently aligned with ultranationalist rhetoric and marked by strong antisemitic sentiment. According to Chapelan (2024), "an antisemitic conspiracy theory can be defined as 1) a narrative that Jews/Israel/Israeli/Zionism exercise (a secret) control over certain institutions, corporations/interest groups, countries or the whole world and 2) an explanation of historic or current events that purport a hidden nefarious role of Jewish individuals/groups."

During the pandemic, numerous conspiracy theories emerged regarding COVID-19 (Douglas, 2021; Ullah et al., 2021) and COVID-19 vaccines (Magra, 2020; Ullah et al., 2021). Douglas (2021, p. 270) underlines that some people speculated that COVID-19 was deliberately manufactured by China to wage war on the USA (or vice versa), while others contended that the virus was either a hoax or exaggerated by left-wing groups to undermine Donald Trump's reelection campaign. At the same time, COVID-19 vaccines were considered by some people as highly dangerous and as a strategy to achieve dark, hidden objectives.¹⁶ For instances, there were developed conspiracy theories that supported that Bill Gates or other powerful people created the virus to mandate vaccines, which would inject people with microchips to monitor them (Lee et al., 2022). In the view of Ullah et al. (2021), "the core of anti-vaccine beliefs is a conspiracy theory that vaccines do not work and/or are actively harmful because cause autism, autoimmune disease, infertility in teenaged girls or others." Many of these arguments were expressed by public figures, including doctors, who seized the opportunity to create political movements. Within anti-vaccination discourse, the concept of the "vaccine" — particularly in terms of opposition to it (namely "no to vaccination")— has emerged as a nodal point. In anti-vaccination discourse, the conspiracist positioned society in opposition to the perceived "profit-driven" and "dangerous" forces backing (compulsory) vaccination — including governments, international bodies (such as the WHO), and the pharmaceutical industry. The fact that the vaccine has been considered part of a secret plan for the destruction or control of humanity signifies that the vaccine,

¹⁵ For various conspiracy theories, see Önnersfors and Krouwel 2021; Pleionis 2023.

¹⁶ The study by Domaradzki, Jabkowski, and Walkowiak (2024) offers valuable insights into conspiracy theories and vaccination. Opposition to vaccines is not a new phenomenon but dates back to the time of Jenner's cowpox vaccine. Some individuals believed that, because it originated from an animal, it was "unchristian," while others claimed it would cause people to grow horns. At the same time, the mandatory nature of vaccination fueled distrust toward authorities and reinforced the perception that personal freedom was being violated. As a result, Anti-Vaccination Leagues or Societies were established in several countries, including the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, advocating for the abolition of mandatory vaccination and the protection of individual liberties. The anti-vaccination movement gained traction in the late 1990s, when doctor Andrew Wakefield claimed a link between the MMR vaccine and autism (Domaradzki, Jabkowski & Walkowiak, 2024).

as a nodal point, played a central role in the discourse about a potential conspiracy lurking behind the backs of the citizens.¹⁷

Finally, another widely circulated conspiracy theory, which frequently appears in everyday discourse but less commonly in political discourses, is the chemtrail (the claim that “they are spraying us”), the belief that there is a secret plan by a group of people (it is not always clear who these people are) who release harmful chemicals into the air from airplanes (creating visible trails in the sky).¹⁸ Specifically, as it is supported, governments (and possibly other actors) are said to systematically organise aerial spraying with mysterious chemical compounds (chemtrails) in order to control human behavior, reduce life expectancy, achieve sterilization, lead us into biological warfare, or at least test biological or chemical weapons on specific populations (Lagouvardos & Kotroni, 2023, p. 123). Bakalaki (2016, p. 12) notes that “the chemtrail narrative emerged in North America in the 1990s and, like many other narratives that challenge official knowledge about nature and causes of global dangers, spread around the world through the Internet”. In this theory, the expression “they are spraying us” serves as the nodal point of the discourse, the concept that defines the entire framework of the discourse construction and is essentially linked to “mind control.” The political subject here is determined by the pronoun “us,” which can be “translated” as the people, the citizens, humanity, etc. Depending on the context of the political discourse (populism, nationalism, etc.), the political subject may vary, while the enemy can be considered either a government, a domestic or international organization, specific interests, or may not be defined at all within the discourse. According to Lenis (2023, p. 248), within the context of this discourse, the concept of “spraying” functions essentially as a metonym for the idea that our societies are indifferent, passive, and inactive in the face of inequalities, wars, excessive consumerism, ecological destruction, and so on.

As we observe, conspiracism is a “flexible” discourse, as it may or may not be associated with different discourses and phenomena. Each conspiratorial narrative is characterized by distinct nodal points, which are always connected to a supposed conspiracy and the conspirators who are hidden from the political subject (people, citizens, etc.). The conspiracist narrative clearly contrasts with official explanations of events, without it being possible to determine its truth or falsity. A conspiracy theorist, through the repeated use of specific concepts, seeks to “awaken” the citizens, targeting particular actors (e.g., the system, international organisations, etc.) and attempting to reveal a fabricated scenario, which they deem to be dangerous. Accordingly, a politician may be identified as conspiracist when a nodal is linked to the idea of a possible conspiracy. Importantly, conspiratorial patterns must occupy a central position in political discourse, even when other elements—such as populist, nationalist, or anti-populist themes—are present with equal or greater intensity.

5 Conspiracism in crisis-ridden Greece: A paradigm

The case of crisis-ridden Greece provides a particularly instructive context for examining how conspiratorial patterns manifest across the political spectrum, while showing that not all such discourses are predominantly conspiratorial. Greece is a country where conspiracy theories flourish, many of which

¹⁷ At the same time, the anti-vaccine conspiratorial discourse can be connected in some cases to other concepts, such as “the nation”, “truth”, and “freedom.”

¹⁸ According to David Keith’s Research Group “chemtrails refers to the theory that governments or other parties are engaged in a secret program to add toxic chemicals to the atmosphere from aircraft in a way that forms visible plumes in the sky, somewhat similar to contrails. Various different motivations for this alleged spraying are speculated, including sterilization, reduction of life expectancy, mind control or weather control.”

appear to originate from the far right. One of the most prominent and diachronic among them—widely embraced by far-right circles—is the so-called “Polytechnic Generation” theory. According to this narrative, the generation that participated in the Athens Polytechnic uprising (1973) against the dictatorship (1967-1974) managed, particularly during the years of PASOK governance, to infiltrate the state apparatus. Since then, the theory suggests, they have maintained control over key institutions, regardless of which political party holds power (Lenis, 2023, p. 150). In recent years, especially during the economic crisis, there has been a resurgence of various conspiratorial discourses. Political forces from across the political spectrum expressed arguments about potential conspiracies. In some cases, parties heavily relied on conspiracist ideas within their discourse, while in other instances, conspiracy theories appeared sporadically and with minimal intensity, without shaping the core structure of the discourse. Skoulariki refers to various conspiracy theories that recently developed in Greece, placing significant emphasis on conspiracy theories that emerged during the economic crisis. For example, she describes the view circulating at the time that there was a deliberate plan by “foreign powers” to destroy Greece, specifically to reduce the country’s independence or exploit its bankruptcy in order to gain access to Greek assets and resources. This plan was also said to be aimed at using Greece’s financial collapse as an example to deter other countries from challenging austerity policies (Skoulariki, 2018, pp. 95-96).

Let’s now turn to a more detailed examination of how the various discourses were structured during the country’s crisis and their relation to conspiracist theories.

The radical left developed a discourse primarily grounded in populist style, with the concept of “the people” occupying a central position in opposition to the establishment, the banks, traditional political parties, fascism, and related forces (Markou, 2017). This is why its discourse is primarily characterized as populist. Nevertheless, we cannot overlook the fact that austerity policies in Greece were often presented as an explicit, rather than secret, plan of neoliberal forces. It is true that some arguments regarding the functioning of the EU were framed, in some cases, within a conspiratorial logic, such as the belief that members of the German government aimed to impose exemplary punishment on Greece (syriza.gr, 2016). This “punishment” was presented as a “political plan” of neoliberal Europe (syriza.gr, 2016), based on specific interpretations of the crisis, the failure of neoliberal capitalism, and Europe’s authoritarian shift. As the party supported in the election program of 2012, “The economic crisis that is now shaking capitalism across the world was the culmination that shattered illusions. [...] More and more people are realizing that private capitalist initiative and speculation are not only inhumane but also an ineffective principle for governing society. [...] Today, the entire Eurozone is being shaken. The new agreements are pushing the EU in an increasingly authoritarian direction, making it clear that this neoliberal structure, function, and policy of the EU must be overturned” (syn.gr, 2012). We should assess here whether the claims of the radical left regarding austerity policies and neoliberalism were true or false. However, the argument invoking a “political plan” is purely conspiratorial in nature, as it presupposes the existence of a conspiracy to economically destroy the country.

The radical right and far-right parties, in turn, developed a series of conspiratorial arguments about crisis, Memorandums and austerity, which were accompanied by strongly nationalist—and at times populist—elements. Germany and the EU was portrayed as conspiracist and entirely hostile to the Greek people and Greece, equating them with a “foreign conqueror” and the “Fourth Reich” that seek to impose its dominance over the country.¹⁹ For example, Panos Kammenos, the president of the Independent Greeks (ANEL), stated in 2012 that “this is not the European Union of nation-states that we believed in; this is the European Union of the 4th German Reich” (newsbomb.gr, 2012). Similarly, Kyriakos Velopoulos, the current president of the Greek Solution party, published a book titled “The 4th Reich is Here: The

¹⁹ The theory of the “Fourth Reich” was also developed in the Greek press (see Tsotsou, 2021).

Dissolution of the European Idea” (Velopoulos, 2016).²⁰ In this case, political discourse is primarily shaped by nationalist and conspiratorial motifs, with Germany and the EU essentially depicted as conspirators intending to harm the Greek nation.

During the same period, conspiracist arguments were also developed by parties and politicians from the liberal-conservative spectrum, who referred to a supposed secret plan within the country for its return to the drachma (the “drachma lobby”) (see Propaganda Team, 2017), presenting specific factions/organizations/parties of the (populist) left and right as dangerous for the country. For example, in 2015, members of New Democracy (ND) accused the SYRIZA-ANEL government of serving the “drachma lobby” (Lifo Newsroom, 2015). During that period, the concept of the “drachma lobby” was primarily part of anti-populist discourse, with populism considered its central element and a major threat to democracy. However, even if such conspiracist arguments existed, we could not claim that the entire political discourse of this political camp was presented through a conspiratorial lens.

Certainly, it would not be difficult to identify other instances during the crisis where politicians have referred to some “conspiracy” or “plot” allegedly woven against them or the country. A simple online search could convince anyone. Nonetheless, one of the cases that has been particularly characterised as conspiracist both in the media and in academic studies is that of “Ellinon Synelefsis” (Assembly of Greeks) of Artemis Sorras. Artemis Sorras appeared during the economic crisis and claimed that he and his movement, “Ellinon Synelefsis,” could solve Greece’s economic problems that emerged after the outbreak of the global financial crisis (Rakopoulos, 2017, p. 25). According to Lazaridis (2024, p. 160), this political formation, through a radical narrative, became known to the Greek society through the promotion of “international super-conspiracies”. Sorras’ discourse is based on the belief that there are certain forces conspiring to prevent Hellenism from standing upright and overcoming its difficulties. While he himself possesses the means to resolve Greece’s problems (600 billion), there are some forces who obstruct his efforts. Therefore, he requires the assistance of the Greeks (Hellenians). In Sorras’s discourse, the “Greeks” or the “Hellenians” represent the political subject to whom the political leader of the “Ellinon Synelefsis” typically addresses, and they constitute one of his central discursive elements (along with “Greece”, “Greek indigenous”, “nation” “Greek politeia”, etc.). They are depicted as the people who will resist those who threaten and conspire against Greece and the Greeks. The concept of “Hellenians” appears to be employed to highlight a distinct identity and aims to strengthen the sense of “exclusivity” of the Greeks, emphasizing a belief in a superior Greek heritage and tradition, which is called upon to resist both external and internal threats.²¹ Sorra’s conspiracism is combined with extreme nationalism, while according to Rakopoulos is intertwined with antisemitism. According to him, “the anti-Semitism of Sorras’ statements alludes to the long history of conspiratory thought regarding ‘immoral’ wealth and secretive power that conspiracy theorists cognitively struggle and politically engage with. Fascinated with the potential of hidden wealth and suspicious of ‘other’ bearers of wealth, conspiracy theorists in Greece have often scapegoated marginal groups. Freemasons and Jews are constant targets of their concerns, precisely because of a historical assumption that they had made fortunes out of conspiracy and usury” (Rakopoulos, 2018, p. 381).

Summarizing, over the past years in Greece, a range of perspectives regarding the (alleged) existence of conspiracies has surfaced, articulated by various political parties and leaders from across the ideological spectrum. In some cases, conspiracy theories have not only been present but have served as the foundational basis for political arguments, influencing the very core of the discourse. In other instances, however, these theories have played a peripheral role, where they are invoked occasionally, but without defining or fundamentally altering the structure of a discourse. While in some cases conspiracy thinking is

²⁰ Velopoulos’ case has been analyzed through the lens of conspiracy theory by Kourdis (2016).

²¹ A search on the internet for Sorras’ arguments can reveal the frequent use of such concepts (see Delta TV, 2016).

not particularly pronounced, there are instances where conspicuous conspiratorial elements are easily identifiable — for example, in the case of the “Ellinon Synelefsis”. Such variations reflect the dynamic nature of political discourse in Greece, highlighting how the invocation of conspiracies may serve distinct discursive functions.

6 Conclusion

In this article, I focused on the architecture of conspiratorial discourse through the lens of the poststructuralist analysis developed by the “Essex School.” Specifically, after highlighting the key aspects of the debate surrounding the concept of conspiracy theories and maintaining a critical stance toward approaches that equate conspiracy theories with falsehood and pathology, I examined the structure of conspiracism, the common nodal points they engage with (e.g. the conspirators), the ways in which they call upon political subjects, and the construction of “enemies.” I have observed that the frequent use of a particular term in political discourse (e.g., “communists”) is not sufficient in itself to classify a discourse as conspiratorial; such references must be linked to an underlying conspiratorial claim (e.g., that communists are orchestrating a covert plan). Moreover, I show that conspiracism should not be equated with other phenomena (e.g., populism or nationalism), although it is evident that they often co-occur within the context of different discourses.

Subsequently, I presented the case of crisis-ridden Greece as an illustrative example, highlighting that while conspiratorial thinking may manifest across ideological spaces, it does not define all political discourse as inherently conspiratorial. Besides, in an environment where ideas about potential conspiracies are widely disseminated and play their own role in politics, it is essential to be able to identify those discourses that present and rely on a conspiratorial character. Even Hofstadter (1996, p. 29) stated that “the distinguishing thing about the paranoid style is not that its exponents see conspiracies or plots here and there in history, but that they regard a “vast” or “gigantic” conspiracy as the motive force in historical events.” Therefore, not all political actors can be considered conspiracists in politics, even if they have occasionally expressed views that align with conspiratorial thinking. After all, the concept itself would hold little analytical value if everyone were to be recognized as a conspiracist.

The fact that conspiratorial reasoning can emerge even within progressive political discourses raises a critical question: can conspiracy theories—when they don’t contain racist or otherwise dangerous elements—play a constructive role within democratic politics? As we observed, in the context of the Greek crisis, segments of the Left’s anti-austerity rhetoric occasionally adopted a conspiratorial logic. Could such forms of political critique be understood as a mode of political engagement capable of producing meaningful outcomes for marginalized people, or should they be regarded as potentially harmful to democratic life? After all, as previously noted, conspiracies are not necessarily synonymous with falsehood, irrationality, or pathology. This question may seem provocative—given the deeply ingrained belief that conspiracy theories are solely dangerous and anti-democratic—but it is likely not. Conspiracy thinking can, in some cases, present elements of social critique which, despite their weak empirical foundations, challenge social structures (Demata, Zorzi, & Zottola, 2022, pp. 7-8). While these questions fall beyond the scope of our study, they merit further analysis in future research.

Disclosure statement: No potential conflict of interest has been reported by the author(s).

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to obtain permission for the use of potentially copyrighted material in this article. In the event of errors or omissions, please notify the publisher of any corrections that will need to be incorporated in future editions of this article.

References

- Al-Rawi, A., Celestini, C., Stewart K. N., Nicolaï, M. J. & Worku, N. (2025). *The Canadian far-right and conspiracy theories*. Routledge
- Bakalaki, A. (2016). Chemtrails, crisis, and loss in an interconnected world. *Visual Anthropology Review*, 32(1), 12–23.
- Barkun, M. (2003). *A culture of conspiracy: Apocalyptic visions in contemporary America*. University of California Press.
- Bbc.com (2018, November 2). Trump says he always tries to tell the truth when he can. *bbc.com*, Retrieved August 10, 2025, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46061646>.
- Bbc.com. (2020, May 7). Trump says coronavirus worse ‘attack’ than Pearl Harbor. *bbc.com*, Retrieved August 10, 2025, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52568405>.
- Breakwell, M. G. (2021). *Mistrust*. SAGE.
- Brotherton, R. (2015). *Suspicious minds: Why we believe conspiracy theories*. Bloomsbury.
- Busbridge, R., Moffitt B., & Thorburn J. (2020). Cultural Marxism: Far-right conspiracy theory in Australia’s culture wars. *Social Identities*, 26(6), 722-738. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2020.1787822>
- Butter, M., & Knight, P. (Eds.) (2020). *Routledge handbook of conspiracy theories*. Routledge.
- Butter, M., Hatzikidi, K., Jeitler, C., Loperfido, G., & Turza, L. (Eds.) (2025). *Populism and conspiracy theory: Case studies and theoretical perspectives*. Routledge.
- Carpentier, N. (2010). Deploying discourse theory: An introduction to discourse theory and discourse theoretical analysis. In N. Carpentier et al. (Eds.), *Media and communication studies interventions and intersections*, pp. 251-265. Tartu University Press.
- Chapelan, A. (2024). Conspiracy Theories. In M.J. Becker, H. Troschke, M. Bolton, A. Chapelan (Eds.) *Decoding antisemitism. Postdisciplinary studies in discourse*, pp. 175-190. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-49238-9_13
- David Keith’s Research Group. Chemtrails Conspiracy Theory, keith.seas.harvard.edu, Available at: <https://keith.seas.harvard.edu/chemtrails-conspiracy-theory>.
- De Cleen, B., & Stavrakakis, Y. (2017). Distinctions and articulations: A discourse theoretical framework for the study of populism and nationalism. *Javnost - The Public*, 24(4), 301-319.
- Delta TV. (2016, November 6). Artemis Sorras in Alexandroupoli [Ο Αρτέμης Σώρρας στην Αλεξανδρούπολη] [Video]. *Delta TV* (in YouTube), Retrieved March 30, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaMeup1aVdM>. [Greek]
- Demata, M., Virginia, Z., & Zottola, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Conspiracy theory discourses*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Dentith, M.R.X. (2014). *The philosophy of conspiracy theories*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dentith, M.R.X. (2018). The problem of conspiracism. *Argumenta*, 3, (2), 327-343.

- Dentith, M.R.X. (2019). Conspiracy theories and philosophy: Bringing the epistemology of a freighted term into the social sciences. In J. E. Uscinski (Ed.), *Conspiracy theories and the people who believe them*, pp. 94-108. Oxford University Press.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190844073.003.0006>
- Dentith, M.R.X. (2019b). Conspiracy theories on the basis of the evidence. *Synthese*, 196, 2243-2261.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-017-1532-7>
- Dentith, M.R.X. (2022). Suspicious conspiracy theories. *Synthese*, 200, 243.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-022-03602-4>
- Domaradzki J., Jabkowski P., & Walkowiak D. (2024). Investigating beliefs in anti-vax conspiracy theories among medical students. *Vaccines* (Basel), 12(4), 359.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/vaccines12040359>
- Douglas, K.M., Uscinski, E.J., Sutton, R.M., Cichocka, A., Nefes, T., Siang Ang, C., & Deravi, F. (2019). Understanding conspiracy theories. *Advances in Political Psychology*, 40(1).
- Douglas, K.M. (2021). COVID-19 conspiracy theories. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 24(2), 270-275.
- Dyrendal, A., Robertson, D. G., & Aspren, E. (2018). *Handbook of conspiracy theories and contemporary religion*. Brill.
- Fenster, M. (2008). *Conspiracy theories: Secrecy and power in American cultures*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Eversberg, T. (2019). *The moon hoax? Conspiracy theories on trial*. Springer.
- Ginzburg, C. (2012). *Thread and traces: True false fictive*. University of California Press.
- Green, R., & Douglas, M. K. (2018). Anxious attachment and belief in conspiracy theories. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 125(15), 30-37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.12.023>
- Harris, K. (2022). Some problems with particularism. *Synthese*, 200, 447.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-022-03948-9>
- Hofstadter, R. (1996) [1965]. *The paranoid style in American politics and other essays*. Harvard University Press.
- Howarth, D., & Stavrakakis, Y. (2000). Introducing discourse theory and political Analysis. In D. Howarth, A. J. Norval & Y. Stavrakakis (Eds.), *Discourse theory and political analysis: Identities, hegemonies and social change*. Manchester University Press.
- Husting, G., & Orr, M. (2007). Dangerous machinery: 'Conspiracy theorist' as a transpersonal strategy of exclusion. *Symbolic Interaction*, 30(2), 127-150. <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2007.30.2.127>
- Keeley, B. (1999). Of conspiracy theories. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 96(3), 109-126.
- Knight, P. (Ed.). (2003). *Conspiracy theories in American history: An encyclopedia, volume 1*. ABC CLIO.
- Kourdis, E. (2016). The velopoulos-liakopoulos phenomenon. A semiotic view of the explosion of Greek conspiracy theories and urban legends in the economic crisis. *Lexia: Rivista di Semiotica*, 23-24, 225-244. <https://doi.org/10.4399/978885489931513>
- Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (2001) [1985]. *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. Verso.
- Lagouvardos, K., & Kotroni, V. (2023). Contrail-type clouds and chemtrails [Νέφη τύπου contrail και αεροψεκασμοί]. In M. Pleionis (Ed.), *Pseudosciences and Conspiracy Theories: A Navigation Guide* (pp. 123-131) [Ψευδοεπιστήμες και Θεωρίες Συνωμοσίας: Ένας οδηγός πλοήγησης]. Heraklion: University of Crete Press. [Greek]

- Langer, A. (2021). The eternal George Soros: The rise of an antisemitic and Islamophobic conspiracy theory. In A. Önnersfors, & A. Krouwel (Eds.), *Europe: Continent of Conspiracies: Conspiracy Theories in and about Europe* (pp. 163-184). Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Lazaridis, T. (2024). Private Television and the Reproduction of Conspiracy Theories: The Greek Case. In Y. Mylonas & E. Psyllakou (Eds.), *Class, Culture, and the Media in Greece, Volume 1: Otherness, Reactionary Politics, the Glass Gaze*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-55127-7_8
- Lee, S.K., Sun, J., Jang, S., & Connelly, S. (2022). Misinformation of COVID-19 vaccines and vaccine hesitancy. *Scientific Reports*, 12, 13681. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-17430-6>
- Lenis, D. (2023). *Conspiracy Theories: History, Theory and Practice (An Introduction)* [Θεωρίες Συνωμοσίας: Ιστορία, Θεωρία και Πρακτική (Μια Εισαγωγή)], Athens: Topos. [Greek]
- Lifo Newsroom. (2015, July 26). Political Council of ND: The government serves the drachma lobby [Πολιτικό Συμβούλιο ΝΔ: Η κυβέρνηση εξυπηρετεί το λόμπι της δραχμής]. *lifo.gr*, Retrieved January 10, 2025, from <https://www.lifo.gr/now/politics/politiko-symboylio-nd-i-kybernisi-exypiretei-lompi-tis-drahmis> [Greek]
- Magra, I. (2020, December 14). Pandemic...of conspiracy theories for vaccines [Πανδημία... θεωριών συνωμοσίας για τα εμβόλια]. *kathimerini.gr*, Retrieved January 20, 2025, from <https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/561193585/pandimia-theorion-synomosias-gia-ta-emvolia/>. [Greek]
- Markou, G. (2017). The rise of inclusionary populism in Europe: The case of SYRIZA. *Contemporary Southeastern Europe*, 4(1), 54-71.
- Markou, G. (2022). Is Conspiracism Endogenous to Populism? A Discursive-Theoretical Analysis. *Redescriptions: Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory*, 25(2), 154-170. <https://doi.org/10.33134/rds.376>
- Mir, A., & Siddiqui N. (2024). Nationalism, Status, and Conspiracy Theories: Evidence from Pakistan. *British Journal of Political Science*, 54(4), 1159-1179. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424000140>
- Moore, A. (2019). On the Democratic Problem of Conspiracy Politics. In J.E. Uscinski (Ed.), *Conspiracy Theories and the People who Believe Them*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nefes, T. S., & Romero-Reche, A. (2024). Exploring the impacts of conspiracy theories on election dynamics in Spain and Turkey. *Mediterranean Politics*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2024.2355032>
- Newsbomb.gr. (2012, October 18). P. Kammenos: The Fourth German Reich [Πάνος Καμμένος: 4ο Γερμανικό Ράιχ]. *newsbomb.gr*, Retrieved February 20, 2025, from <https://www.newsbomb.gr/politikh/story/244457/p-kammenos-4o-germaniko-raih>. [Greek]
- Nilan, P. (2021). *Young People and the Far Right*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Önnersfors, A., & Krouwel, A. (Eds.). (2021). *Europe: Continent of Conspiracies: Conspiracy Theories in and about Europe*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Parapolitika Newsroom. (2015, June 30). No new world order will compel us to surrender our homeland [Καμμένος: "Καμία νέα τάξη πραγμάτων δεν θα μας κάνει να παραδώσουμε την πατρίδα μας"] *parapolitika.gr*, Retrieved August 10, 2025, from <https://www.parapolitika.gr/ellada/article/78460/kammenos-kamia-nea-taxi-pragmaton-den-tha-mas-kanei-na-paradosoume-tin-patrida-mas/> [Greek]
- Pigden, C. (2022). Conspiracy Theories and the Conventional Wisdom Revisited. In O. Loukola & L. Donskis (Eds.), *Secrets and Conspiracies* (pp. 126-156). Leiden and Boston: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004499720_009

- Pirro, A., & Taggart, P. (2023), Populists in power and conspiracy theories. *Party Politics*, 29(3), 413–423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688221077071>
- Pleionis, M. (Ed.). (2023). *Pseudosciences and Conspiracy Theories: A Navigation Guide* [Ψευδοεπιστήμες και Θεωρίες Συνωμοσίας: Ένας οδηγός πλοήγησης]. Heraklion: University of Crete Press. [Greek]
- Pleionis, M., & Demertzis, N. (2023). What is pseudoscience, and what is a conspiracy theory? In Pleionis, M. (Ed.), *Pseudosciences and Conspiracy Theories: A Navigation Guide* [Ψευδοεπιστήμες και Θεωρίες Συνωμοσίας: Ένας οδηγός πλοήγησης]. Heraklion: University of Crete Press. [Greek]
- Posocco, L., & Watson, I. (2024). Conspiracy theories and nationalism. Exploring the intersections and implications. *Politica & Società, Periodico di filosofia politica e studi sociali*, 1, 89-122. <https://doi.org/10.4476/115027>
- Propaganda Team (2017, March 28). Drachma Lobby: Uncomfortable Reality or Convenient Myth? [Λόμπι της δραχμής: Άβολη πραγματικότητα ή βολικός μύθος;] *parapolitika.gr*, Retrieved February 20, 2025, from <https://www.parapolitika.gr/stiles/propaganda-team/article/253713/lompi-tis-drachmis-avoli-pragmatikotita-volikos-mithos/> [Greek]
- Rakopoulos, T. (2017). “Approaching” Sorras: “Conspiracy Theories” and Social Sciences [«Προσεγγίζοντας» τον Σώρρα: «Θεωρίες συνωμοσίας» και κοινωνικές επιστήμες]. *Σύγχρονα Θέματα*, 136, 24-27. [Greek]
- Rakopoulos, T. (2018). Show me the money: Conspiracy theories and distant wealth, *History and Anthropology*, 29(3), 376-391. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2018.1458723>
- Richardson, E.J., & Wodak, R. (2022). Anti-Sorosism: Reviving the “Jewish world conspiracy”. In M. Demata, Z. Virginia & A. Zottola (Eds.), *Conspiracy Theory Discourses* (pp. 395-420). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/dapsac.98.17ric?locatt=mode:legacy>
- Rosenfeld, G. (2019). *The Fourth Reich: The Specter of Nazism from World War 2 to the Present*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Skoulariki, A. (2018). Conspiracy theories before and after the Greek crisis: Discursive patterns and political use of the ‘enemy’ theme. *Επιστήμη και Κοινωνία: Επιθεώρηση Πολιτικής και Ηθικής Θεωρίας*, 37, 73-108. <https://doi.org/10.12681/sas.14656>
- Stavrakakis, Y. (2017). How did ‘populism’ become a pejorative concept? And why is this important today? A genealogy of double hermeneutics*. *POPULISMUS Working Papers*, 6, Available at <https://ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/313933/files/stavrakakis-populismus-wp-6-upload.pdf>.
- Stavrakakis, Y., & Galanopoulos, A. (2023). Ernesto Laclau. *Oxford Biographies*, <https://10.1093/obo/9780190221911-0127>
- Sutton, M. R. & Douglas, K. M. (2014). Examining the monological nature of conspiracy theories. In J-W. Van Prooijen & P.A.M. Van Lange (Eds.), *Power Politics and Paranoia: Why People are Suspicious of their Leaders* (pp. 254-272). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sunstein, C. R., & Vermeule, A. (2009). Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures*. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 17(2), 202-227.
- Swami, V., & Furnham, A. (2014). Political Paranoia and Conspiracy Theories. In J. W. van Prooijen, & P. A. M. van Lange, *Power Politics, and Paranoia: Why People Are Suspicious about Their Leaders* (pp. 218-236). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139565417.016>
- Swami, V., Furnham, A., Smyth, N., Weis, L., Lay, A., & Clow, A. (2016). Putting the Stress on Conspiracy Theories: Examining Associations between Psychological Stress, Anxiety, and Belief in Conspiracy

- Theories, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 99, 72-76.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.paid.2016.04.084>
- Syn.gr. (2012, April 27). Syriza electoral program united social front - may 6th, 2012 elections [Εκλογικό πρόγραμμα ΣΥΡΙΖΑ ενωτικό κοινωνικό μέτωπο - εκλογές 6ης Μαΐου 2012]. *syn.gr*, Retrieved March 30, 2025, from <http://www.syn.gr/gr/keimeno.php?id=26945>. [Greek]
- Syriza.gr. (2016, December 15). Dimitris Papadimoulis: Political plans that involve the involvement and punishment of Greeks will not prevail [Δημ. Παπαδημούλης: Τα πολιτικά σχέδια που περιλαμβάνουν εμπλοκή και τιμωρία των Ελλήνων δεν θα περάσουν]. *syriza.gr*, Retrieved March 30, 2025, from <https://syriza.gr/dhm-papadhmoylhs-ta-politika-schedia-poy-perilambanoy-n-emplok-h-kai-timwria-twn-ellhnwn-den-tha-perasoy-n/>. [Greek]
- Taguieff, Pierre-André. (2016). *A Brief Treatise on Conspiracy Theories* [Σύντομη Πραγματεία περί Συνωμοσιολογίας]. Athens: Patakí. [Greek]
- Taguieff, P. A. (2017). *Extremism and Its Idols: Contemporary Thoughts on Jihadism, the Far Right, Anti-Semitism, Populism, and Conspiracy Theories* [Ο εξτρεμισμός και τα είδωλα του. Επικαιρες σκέψεις για τον τζιχαντισμό, την άκρα δεξιά, τον αντισημιτισμό, τον λαϊκισμό και τη συνωμοσιολογία]. Thessaloniki: Epikentro. [Greek]
- Thalmann, K. (2019). *The Stigmatization of Conspiracy Theory Since the 1950s: "A Plot to Make Us Look Foolish"*. Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Tsotsou, A. (2021). The Fourth Reich in Europe: Conspiracy theories about Germany in the Greek press during the economic crisis. In A. Önnertfors & A. Krouwel, *Europe: Continent of Conspiracies: Conspiracy Theories in and about Europe*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Ullah, I., Khan K.S., Tahir, M.J., Ahmed, A., & Harapan, H. (2021). Myths and conspiracy theories on vaccines and COVID-19: Potential effect on global vaccine refusals. *Vacunas (English Edition)*, 22(2): 93–7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vacune.2021.01.009>
- Uscinski, E. J. (2019). What is a Conspiracy Theory? In J.E. Uscinski (Ed.), *Conspiracy Theories and the People who Believe Them*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Uscinski, E. J., & Enders, A. M. (2023). *Conspiracy Theories (A Primer)*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Velopoulos, K. (2016). *The 4th Reich is Here: The Dissolution of the European Idea* [Το 4ο Ράιχ είναι εδώ: Η διάλυση της Ευρωπαϊκής ιδέας]. Thessaloniki: Kadmos. [Greek]