

Delarication Covid 10

HET JAAR
2020



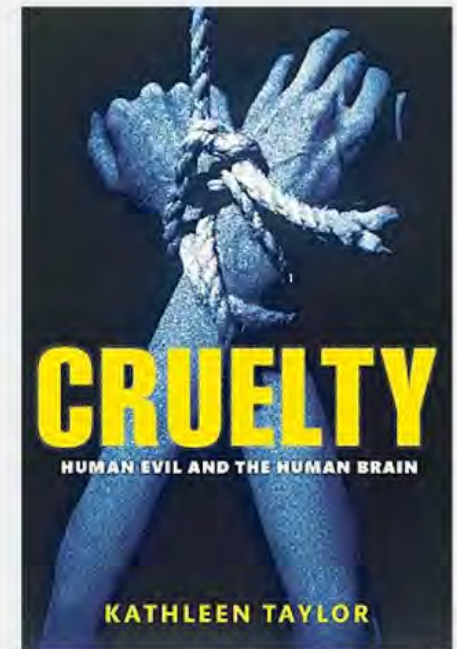
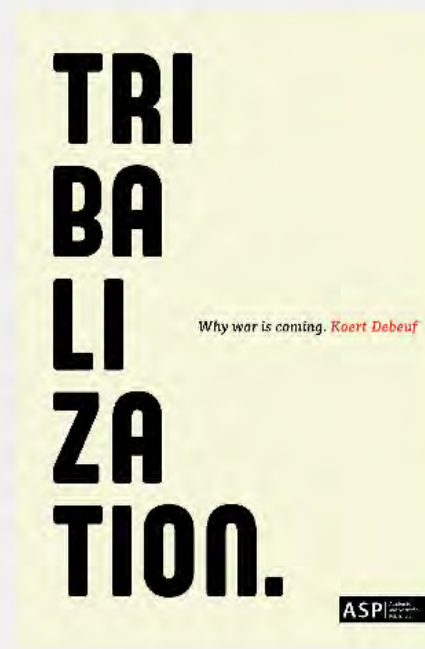
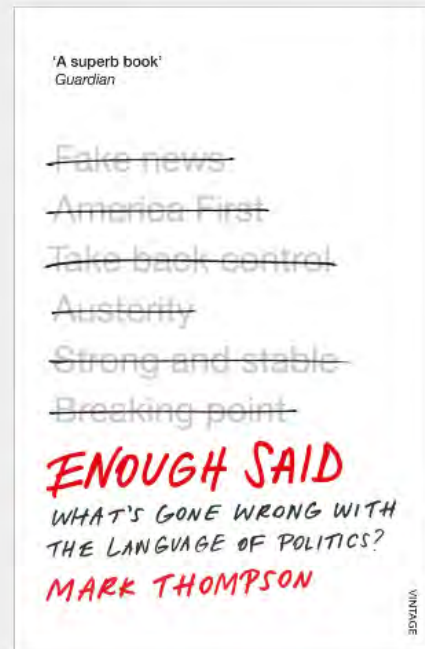
Polarisation: what's in a name?

Processen van toenadering => harmonisatie

Processen van verwijdering => **polarisatie**

groepen / connecties / informatie

process of **Otherization**



Polarisation: what's in a name?

po·la·ri·sa·tie

(de; v; meervoud: polarisaties)
1 de vorming van tegenstellingen,
van uitersten, van tegengestelde
polen -

polarisatie is universeel
motieven zijn universeel



politieke polarisatie versus toxische polarisatie

thematische of ideologisch

affectieve, sociale, interetnische

geen emancipatie zonder polarisatie

maatschappelijk: verbrokking sociaal weefsel

politiek zonder polen bestaat niet
wel neutrale rechtsstaat

Balkan syndroom (zwijggebieden)
geweldprocessen als complex & circulair

Nodig: verantwoorde vorm van polarisatie in een heterogene samenleving

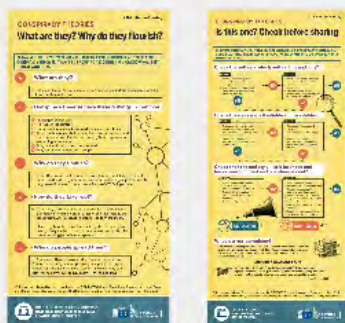
Identiteit / sociale categorisatie / groepsdynamiek

=> +/- polarisatie / wederkerige radicalisering / conflict /

Conspiracy thinking

The belief that certain events or situations are secretly manipulated behind the scenes by powerful forces with negative intent.

1. An alleged, secret plot.
2. A group of conspirators.
3. 'Evidence' that seems to support the conspiracy theory.
4. They falsely suggest that nothing happens by accident and that there are no coincidences; nothing is as it appears and everything is connected.
5. They divide the world into good or bad.
6. They scapegoat people and groups.



https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation/identifying-conspiracy-theories_en

THE CONSPIRACY CHART



Credit to ABBIE RICHARDS

@tofofology @abbiesr @abbieasr

For licensing & creative questions: tofofology@gmail.com

Design @ @anti_conspiracy_memevars

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2. A group of co

3. 'Evidence' th
theory.

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#ThinkBeforeSharing


CONSPIRACY THEORIES


What are they? Why do they flourish?

BE WARNED: THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS SEEN A RISE IN HARMFUL AND MISLEADING CONSPIRACY THEORIES. IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO RECOGNIZE THEM OR KNOW HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH THEM.

- 1. What are they?**
→ The belief that events are secretly manipulated behind the scenes by powerful forces with negative intent.
- 2. Conspiracy theories have these 6 things in common**
 1. An alleged, secret plot
 2. A group of conspirators
 3. 'Evidence' that seems to support the conspiracy theory
 4. They falsely suggest that nothing happens by accident and that there are no coincidences; nothing is as it appears and everything is connected.
 5. They divide the world into good or bad.
 6. They scapegoat people and groups.
- 3. Why do they flourish?**
→ They offer an explanation of events or situations which are difficult to understand and bring a false sense of control and agency. This need is heightened in times of uncertainty like the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4. How do they take root?**
→ Conspiracy theories often start as a suspicion. They ask who is benefiting from the event or situation and thus identify the conspirators. Any 'evidence' is then forced to fit the theory.
Once they have taken root, conspiracy theories can grow quickly. They are hard to refute because any person who tries is seen as being part of the conspiracy.
- 5. Why do people spread them?**
→ There are different reasons: Most believe they are true. Others deliberately want to provoke, manipulate or target people for political or financial reasons. Beware: They can come from many sources e.g. internet, friends, relatives.

With thanks to Michael Butter, co-author of the **COMPACT Guide to Conspiracy Theories**, and John Cook and Stephan Lewandowsky, authors of **The Debunking Handbook** and **The Conspiracy Theory Handbook**.

 THE FIRST STEP TO PREVENT CONSPIRACY THEORIES IS TO KNOW THAT THEY EXIST. BE AWARE. STOP THE SPREAD.

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CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Is this one? Check before sharing

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Check the author – who is writing this and why?

UNLIKELY <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ The author has no relevant qualifications and credentials in the topic→ The author uses verbiage filled with scientific research YES	LIKELY <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ The author is a self-proclaimed expert and has expertise in a reputable organization or institution→ The author claims to have expertise but they don't elaborate on why or how they achieved it NO
--	---

Check the source – Is it reliable and reputable?

UNLIKELY <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ The source has been quoted in several reputable media outlets→ The information is backed by many well-known leaders→ Independent fact-checking websites support the source and related claims YES	LIKELY <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ The source of information is not clear→ The information is shared only by well-known experts→ Independent fact-checking websites do not support the story and have related claims NO
--	---

Check the tone and style – Is it balanced and fair or sensationalist and one-dimensional?


UNLIKELY <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ The author does not try to give different perspectives→ The author is presenting knowledge in a one-sided way→ The text is subjective, biased NO	LIKELY <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ The author presents multiple perspectives or the only valid truth→ The author or source is not biased or presenting a one-sided view→ The author is not presenting a one-sided view→ The source is subjective, not objectively balanced→ The source is not presenting a one-sided view YES
---	---


OK TO SHARE **DON'T SHARE**

What is a real conspiracy?
Real conspiracies large and small DO exist. They are more often centered on single, self-contained events or an individual like an assassination or a coup d'état. They are orchestrated by elite players and the media, using verifiable facts and evidence.

Looking for A REAL CONSPIRACY?
In 2006, the U.S. District Court in Washington DC (USA) ruled that major Spanish companies were guilty of conspiracy. For decades they had hidden evidence of health data attached to smoking to promote higher sales.
—LA Times, 2006

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 CHECK YOUR SOURCES. WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T SHARE. STOP THE SPREAD.

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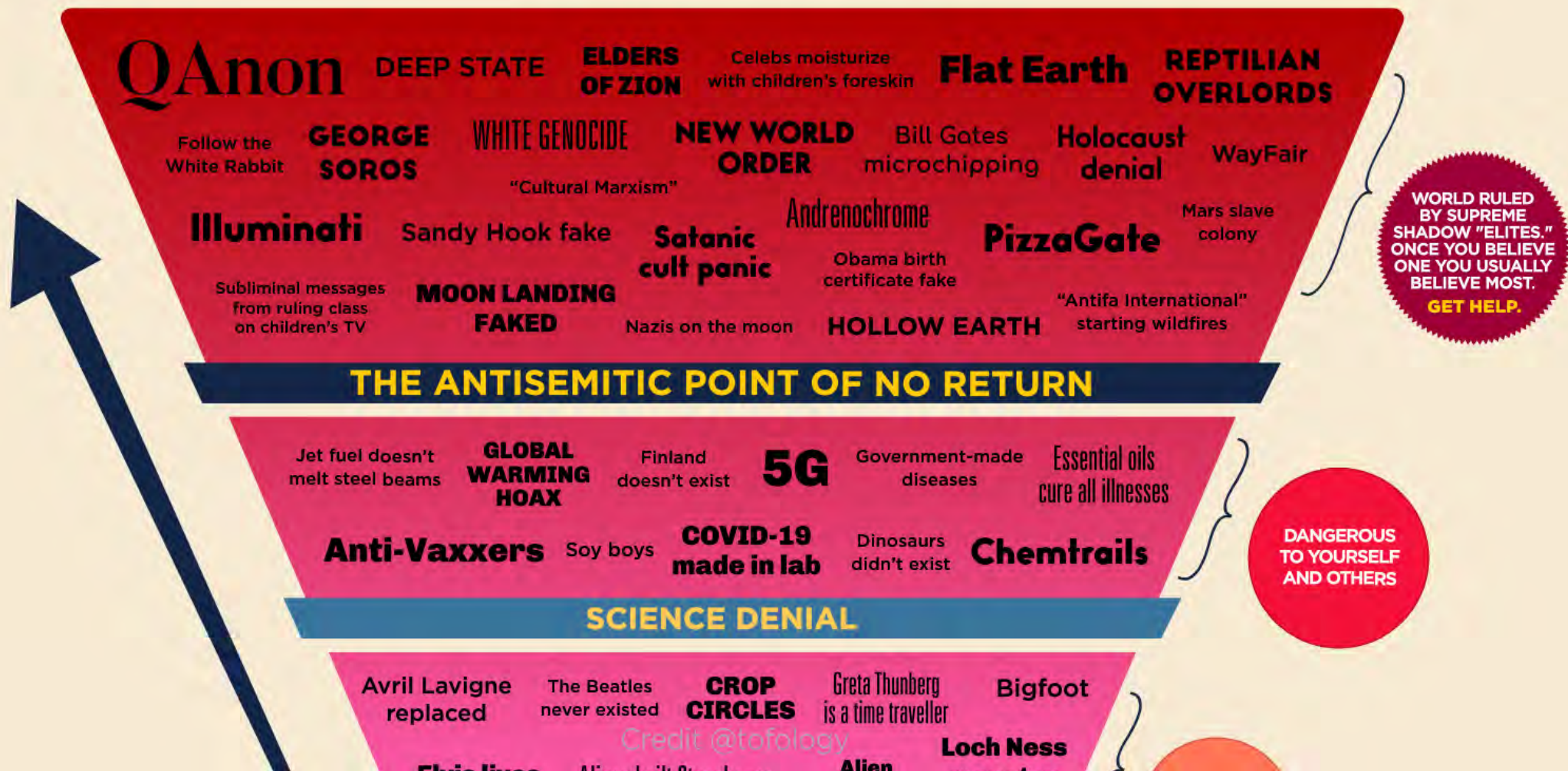
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THE CONSPIRACY CHAIN

DETACHED FROM REALITY



Illuminati

Subliminal messages
from ruling class
on children's TV

Sandy Hook fake

**MOON LANDING
FAKED**

**Satanic
cult panic**

Nazis on the moon

Andrenochrome

Obama birth
certificate fake

PizzaGate

Mars slave
colony

"Antifa International"
starting wildfires

HOLLOW EARTH

THE ANTISEMITIC POINT OF NO RETURN

Jet fuel doesn't
melt steel beams

**GLOBAL
WARMING
HOAX**

Finland
doesn't exist

5G

Government-made
diseases

Essential oils
cure all illnesses

Anti-Vaxxers

Soy boys

**COVID-19
made in lab**

Dinosaurs
didn't exist

Chemtrails

SCIENCE DENIAL

Avril Lavigne
replaced

The Beatles
never existed

**CROP
CIRCLES**

Greta Thunberg
is a time traveller

Bigfoot

Elvis lives

Aliens built Stonehenge

**Alien
abductions**

**Loch Ness
monster**

Prince Charles vampire

Mattress Firm

CRYPTIDS

LEAVING REALITY

#FreeBritney

Marilyn
Monroe

**JFK
assassination**

Denver Int'l
Airport

Roswell

UFOs

Area 51

**EPSTEIN DIDN'T
KILL HIMSELF**

Princess
Diana

SPECULATION LINE

COINTELPRO

Big Tobacco lied
about cancer

Operation
Mockingbird

**NSA mass
surveillance**

**NAYIRAH
TESTIMONY**

Tuskegee

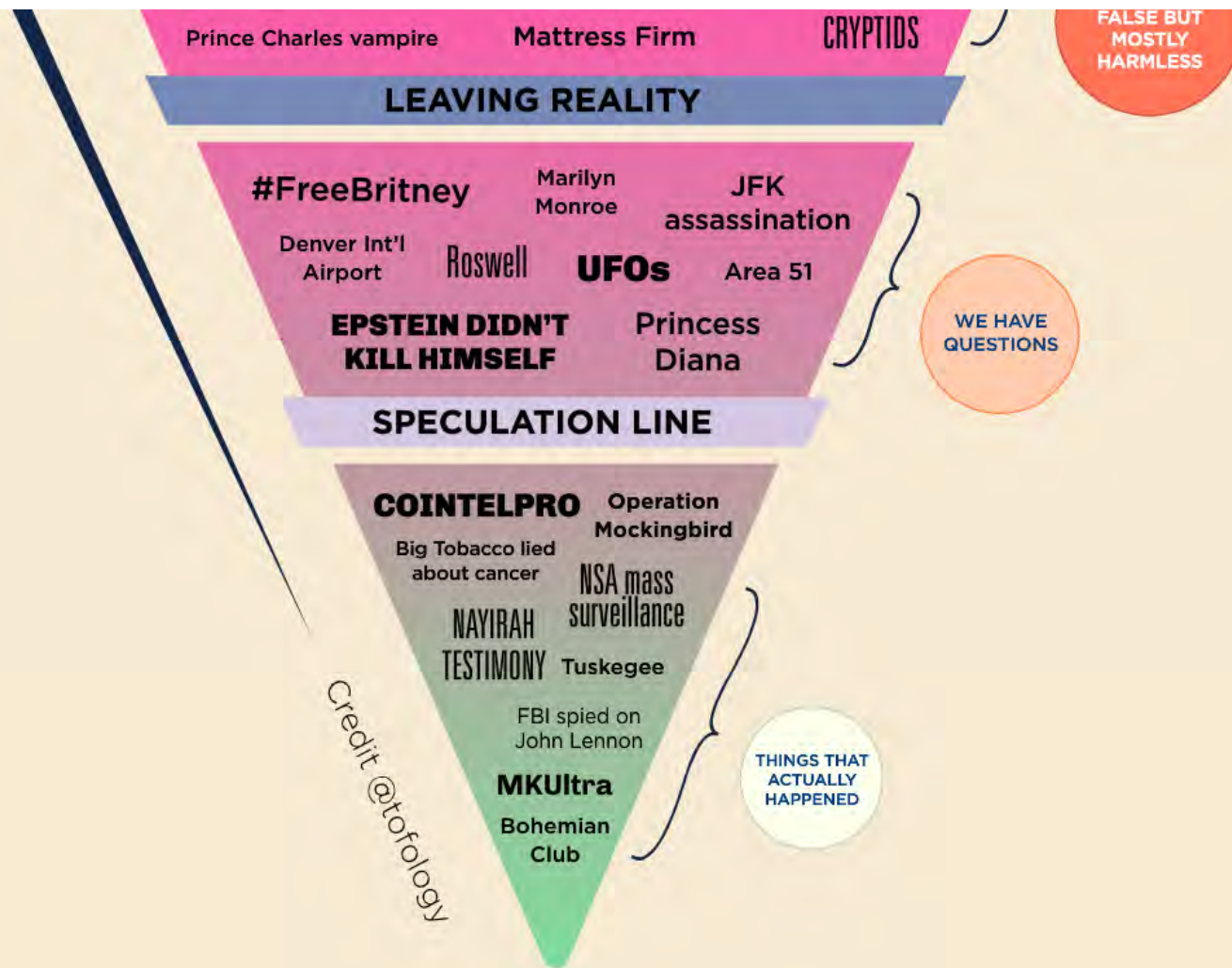
FBI spied on

WORLD RULED
BY SUPREME
SHADOW "ELITES."
ONCE YOU BELIEVE
ONE YOU USUALLY
BELIEVE MOST.
GET HELP.

**DANGEROUS
TO YOURSELF
AND OTHERS**

**UNEQUIVOCALLY
FALSE BUT
MOSTLY
HARMLESS**

**WE HAVE
QUESTIONS**



**GROUND
ED
IN
REALITY**

The belief that certain events or situations are secretly manipulated behind the scenes by powerful forces with negative intent.

- [illegible]



THE CONSPIRACY CHART



#ThinkBeforeSharing

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

What about my own beliefs?

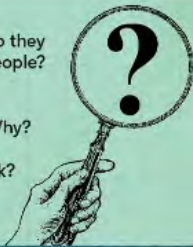


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NOBODY IS FREE OF BIASES OR FEARS WHICH COULD OPEN THE DOOR TO BELIEVING IN A CONSPIRACY THEORY. WHERE DO MY FEARS, BELIEFS AND VALUES COME FROM?

! Interview yourself: Why do I believe what I believe?

- What are my fears, beliefs and values? How do they affect my decisions and how I interact with people?
- Do I have prejudices? Why?
- Do I feel disadvantaged? In what way?
- Do I feel the need to blame somebody else? Why?
- How do I choose my sources of information?
- Has this changed since the COVID-19 outbreak?



COVID-19 IS FRIGHTENING. IT'S NORMAL TO FEEL OVERWHELMED AND SEARCH FOR ANSWERS. KEEP IN MIND: NOBODY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATING THE VIRUS BUT WE ALL CAN HELP CURB THE OUTBREAK.

With thanks to Michael Butler, co-author of the *COMPACT Guide to Conspiracy Theories*, and John Cook and Stephan Lewandowsky, authors of *The Debunking Handbook* and *The Conspiracy Theory Handbook*.



BE AWARE OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD.
RELY ON VERIFIED INFORMATION.
STOP THE SPREAD.



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CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The link to antisemitism

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- Not all conspiracy theories target Jews, but Jews have been the target of conspiracy theories for centuries. Jews have been falsely blamed for moments of crisis, such as diseases, wars, and economic crises.
- Some of the most common antisemitic narratives include claims that "Jews" control the government, the media, or banks for malicious purposes. Despite vast historical evidence, some antisemites falsely claim that the Holocaust was caused by Jews or never took place.

What to watch out for:

- ! → Openly insulting and demeaning language
- ! → Implicit and coded antisemitic language (e.g. "East Coast elites" in the United States)
- ! → Linking an alleged conspiracy to Jewish individuals or groups (e.g. the Rothschild family or George Soros, a philanthropist) or the State of Israel
- ! → References to The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a forged pamphlet of a Jewish plan for world domination behind many antisemitic conspiracy narratives

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ANTISEMITISM IS A FORM OF
DISCRIMINATION. CHECK BEFORE
SHARING. STOP THE SPREAD.



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WJC
WORLD
JEWISH
CONGRESS

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CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Prebunking and debunking



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STOPPING THE SPREAD OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES IS CHALLENGING. THERE IS NO ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH. IT DEPENDS ON THE LEVEL OF EXPOSURE. PEOPLE WHO FIRMLY BELIEVE IN CONSPIRACY THEORIES ARE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO REACH.

Level 1: Low exposure to conspiracy theories



PREBUNKING - Empowered people are more resilient:

- Warn people early on that conspiracy theories exist
- Encourage rational thinking, questioning and fact-checking
- Alert people about the arguments behind the most common COVID-19 conspiracy theories and the key traits of conspiratorial thinking - suspicion of official accounts, immunity to contrary evidence, reinterpreting random events as part of a broader pattern.

Level 2: High exposure to conspiracy theories



DEBUNKING - Facts and logic matter

DO's:

- ✓ Focus on the facts you want to communicate, not the myths you want to debunk
- ✓ Choose your target - the author, source or logic behind the conspiracy theory
- ✓ Always state clearly that the information is wrong, before quoting a conspiracy theory
- ✓ Provide a fact-based alternative explanation
- ✓ If possible, use visual aids to back your argument

DON'Ts:

- ✗ Don't focus on the conspiracy theory first. Don't reinforce it
- ✗ Don't overwhelm with information

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KNOW HOW TO TAKE ACTION.
STOP THE SPREAD.



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CONSPIRACY THEORIES

How to talk to people who firmly believe in conspiracy theories

BE WARNED: THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS SEEN A RISE IN HARMFUL AND MISLEADING CONSPIRACY THEORIES. IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO RECOGNIZE THEM OR KNOW HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH THEM.

MANY CONSPIRACY THEORIES ARE BASED ON BIASES, BELIEFS, FEARS AND VALUES. THEIR WHOLE LIFE IS A CONSPIRACY THEORY.

When talking to people who firmly believe in a conspiracy theory

- ! Any argument challenges their beliefs
- ! They probably believe in the conspiracy theory
- ! They will probably not change their beliefs

So, what can you do?

- ✓ Encourage open dialogue
- ✓ Ask detailed questions
- ✓ Enlist trusted friends to help you
- ✓ Be cautious and use your own judgment
- ✓ Don't ridicule. Try to understand their perspective
- ✓ Show empathy. Offer support
- ✓ Go step by step. Focus on one issue at a time
- ✓ Don't push. Too much information can be overwhelming
- ✓ Don't give up. It's a long process and try again

With thanks to Michael Butler, co-author of the *COMPACT Guide to Conspiracy Theories*, and John Cook and Stephan Lewandowsky, authors of *The Debunking Handbook* and *The Conspiracy Theory Handbook*.



USE EMPATHY AND
STOP THE SPREAD.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

#ThinkBeforeSharing

How to talk to somebody who firmly believes in them



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MANY CONSPIRACY THEORISTS ARE DEEPLY CONVINCED OF THEIR BELIEFS. THEIR WHOLE LIFE AND WORLDVIEW ARE CENTRED AROUND THEM.

When talking to somebody who firmly believes in a conspiracy theory be aware that:

- Any argument challenging the conspiracy theory may be taken as proof that you are part of the conspiracy and reinforce the belief.
- They probably believe in more than one conspiracy theory
- They will probably argue hard to defend their beliefs

So, what can you do?

- Encourage open debate and questions.
- Ask detailed questions about their theory in order to trigger self-reflection.
- Enlist trusted former conspiracy theorists who once believed the same thing.
- Be cautious and use a variety of sources around the theme.
- Don't ridicule. Try to understand why they believe what they believe.
- Show empathy. Often the person may be truly fearful and distressed.
- Go step by step. Focus on simple facts and logic instead of covering every detail.
- Don't push. Too much pressure might backfire. Leave them time to process and try again.

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USE EMPATHY AND QUESTIONS.
STOP THE SPREAD.



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CONSPIRACY THEORIES

#ThinkBeforeSharing

The link to COVID-19



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→ COVID-19 is a new disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. Scientific evidence shows that coronaviruses generally originate from animals. The animal source for COVID-19 has not been confirmed yet (WHO, 2020).

→ Uncertainty, fear and the complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic have fuelled related conspiracy theories. They attempt to 'explain' why the pandemic happened and who is benefiting from it.

BE CAREFUL, CONSPIRACY THEORIES ARE DECEPTIVE: THEY IGNORE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE AND FALSELY BLAME INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS THAT ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PANDEMIC. **DO NOT SHARE THEM.**

What are the red flags?

- Claims that the virus was artificially created (e.g. in a laboratory) by people with a specific interest (e.g. reducing world population)
- Claims that the virus was spread intentionally, or its natural spread artificially augmented to harm as many people as possible (e.g. through 5G signals)
- Claims that vaccines and cures are intentionally withheld to not disrupt the spread and to harm as many people as possible
- Claims that certain sanitary measures to counter the spread of the virus are used to intentionally harm or control society (e.g. vaccines, masks)

STUDY RESULTS:

A global study of 26 countries revealed that more than 3 in 10 people surveyed believe that a foreign power or other force is deliberately causing the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Gallup International, March 2020).

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RELY ON VERIFIED INFORMATION.
WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T SHARE.
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CONSPIRACY THEORIES

#ThinkBeforeSharing

Concrete counter actions



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IF YOU ARE CERTAIN YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED A CONSPIRACY THEORY, REACT RATHER THAN IGNORE. HERE ARE SOME CONCRETE WAYS:



On social media:

- Comment with verified information (e.g. from fact-checking website)
- Do not share the post

On websites and blogs:

- Contact the author or the web manager with verified information and ask them to make corrections
- Do not share the website or blog post



On media outlets:

- Contact the editorial board
- Contact your local/national press council or press ombudsperson
- Do not share the material

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COUNTER FALSE INFORMATION.
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CONSPIRACY THEORIES

#ThinkBeforeSharing

How can journalists report on them?

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→ Reliable sources of information are essential to counter the spread of conspiracy theories and disinformation. Journalists should report responsibly using verified sources, making sure not to reinforce conspiracy theories. This can be a challenge.



In reporting on conspiracy theories, journalists should:

→ Emphasize core facts, not conspiracy theories in headlines

→ Reinforce core facts in the main text, using verified information

→ Warn about related conspiracy theories circulating, before referencing them

→ Explain how they are misleading



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BE A QUALITY JOURNALIST.
RELY ON VERIFIED INFORMATION.
STOP THE SPREAD.



Conspiracy thinking

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THE CONSPIRACY CHART



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Design @ @anti_conspiracy_memevars

1880-1890 Gilded age: newspaper battles and "yellow journalism"

1920-1930 Roaring Twenties / Great depression and "Jazz journalism"

1960-1970 Vietnam War and new or investigative journalism

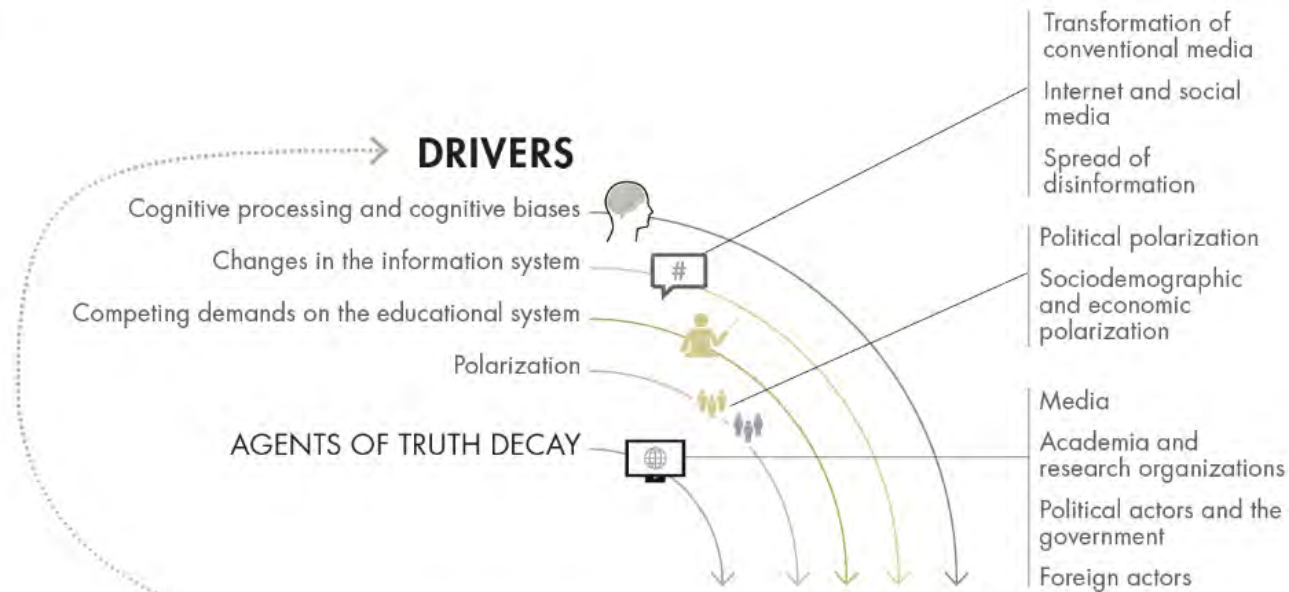
2000-2010 social media and online outlets

Table 3.4
Evidence of Truth Decay in Different Eras

Era	Increasing Disagreement About Facts and Analytical Interpretations of Facts and Data	A Blurring of the Line Between Opinion and Fact	The Increasing Relative Volume, and Resulting Influence, of Opinion and Personal Experience over Fact	Declining Trust in Formerly Respected Sources of Information
1880s–1890s	No evidence	Reasonable evidence	Reasonable evidence	No evidence
1920s–1930s	No evidence	Reasonable evidence	Reasonable evidence	Some evidence
1960s–1970s	No evidence	Reasonable evidence	Reasonable evidence	Reasonable evidence
2000s–2010s	Reasonable evidence	Reasonable evidence	Reasonable evidence	Reasonable evidence

NOTE: It would be ideal to compare the severity of each of the four trends across periods, but we do not have sufficient data to make a precise assessment.





TRUTH DECAY'S FOUR TRENDS

Increasing disagreement about facts and data

A blurring of the line between opinion and fact

The increasing relative volume and resulting influence of opinion over fact

Declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information

CONSEQUENCES

at the personal, community, national, and international levels



Erosion of civil discourse



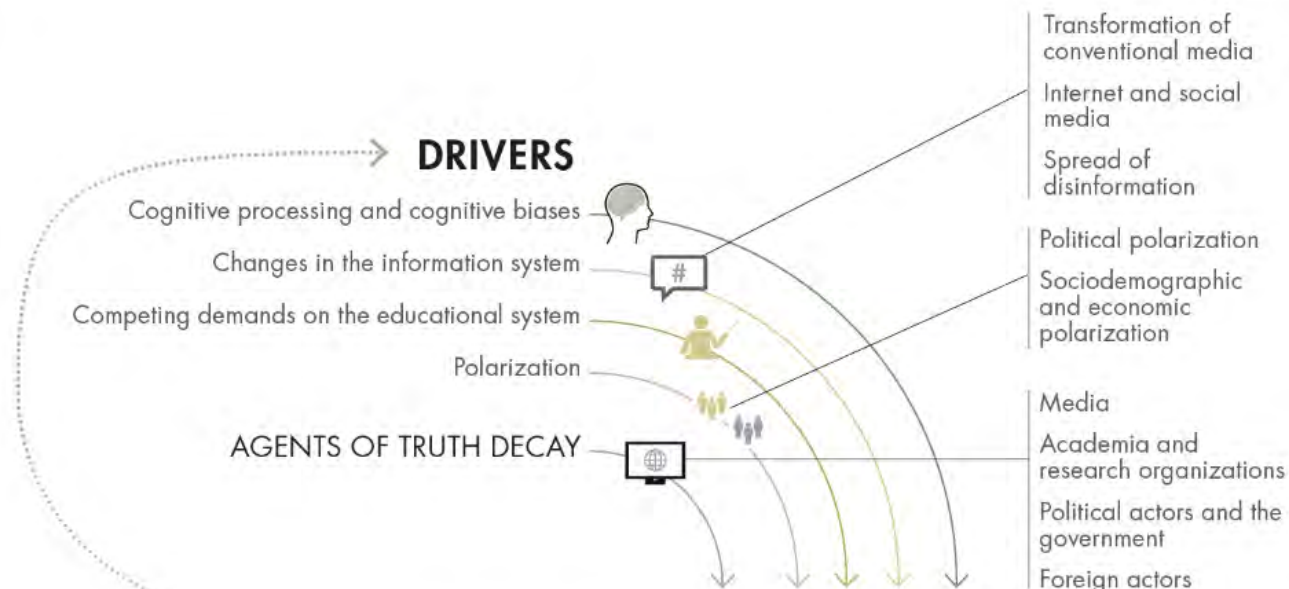
Political paralysis



Alienation and disengagement



Uncertainty



TRUTH DECAY'S FOUR TRENDS

Increasing **disagreement** about facts and data

A **blurring of the line** between opinion and fact

The increasing **relative volume and resulting influence of opinion** over fact

Declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information

CONSEQUENCES

at the personal, community, national, and international levels



Erosion of civil discourse



Political paralysis



Alienation and disengagement



Uncertainty

Process of de-pluralisation

narratives are shifting

de-pluralisation + sense of urgency

binary framework (good vs evil)



Opvallend veel Russische interesse in steungroep Conings: "We moeten ons zorgen maken"

Hiermee Facebook heeft profiel van de gedoopte extreemrechtse korpskapitein Jürgen Conings en de grootste steungroep officieel toegevoegd. Hij is onderdeel van de groep die zich op sociale media inzet tegen de Nederlandse Staat. Dat zegt de Nederlandse Interactiespectator van Dax, die ook onderzoek naar de Nederlandse steungroepen verricht naar de vervolgende steungroep.

Geenert nieuwsbrief 23.03.21 10:07 · Laatst op datum: 17:30



AND are influenced to shift
(manipulation & amplification)



In de Facebook-groep 'Als 1 achter Jürge' werden steunbepalingen gedeeld, zoals een fotomontage van de (Franse) filmplakkaat van 'Saving Private Ryan' © (v)AP

Opvallend veel Russische interesse in steungroep Conings: "We moeten ons zorgen maken"

Hoewel Facebook het profiel van de gezochte extremistische korporaal Jürge Conings en de grootste steungroep offline haalde, blijft zijn gedachtegoed zich op sociale media zoals Telegram verspreiden. Dat zegt de Nederlandse internetexpert Henk van Ess, die ook onderzocht welke Facebookgroepen verwezen naar de verwijderde steungroep.

Lennert Hoedaert 26-05-21, 16:57 Laatste update: 17:35



HENK VAN ESS
@henkvaness

So what?

1. Biggest impact in other groups, quoting the group of the fugitive military person, was in Russian groups - not in Belgian groups what you normally would expect.
2. Dutch groups also joined the chorus
3. Some of the groups are anti-vaccine, anti-gov M(18/)

Group Name	Members	Created	Language	Location	Topic	Activity	Comments	Replies	Shares	Views	Followers	Subscribers	Members	Created	Language	Location	Topic	Activity	Comments	Replies	Shares	Views	Followers	Subscribers
...

12:42 PM · May 26, 2021



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See the latest COVID-19 information on Twitter

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Geenert nieuwsbrief 23/02/21 16:07 Laatste update: 17:33



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