



«ΤΙ ΜΑΣ ΚΡΥΒΟΥΝ;» ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΙ ΓΙΑ ΤΗ ΣΥΝΩΜΟΣΙΟΛΟΓΙΑ

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ΑΠΟ ΤΙΣ ΥΠΟΨΙΕΣ ΣΤΙΣ
ΘΕΩΡΙΕΣ ΣΥΝΩΜΟΣΙΑΣ:
ΘΕΩΡΗΤΙΚΕΣ ΠΡΟΣΕΓΓΙΣΕΙΣ
ΚΑΙ ΛΟΓΟΘΕΤΙΚΕΣ
ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΕΣ ΜΕ ΑΦΟΡΜΗ ΤΗΝ
ΠΕΡΙΠΤΩΣΗ ΤΩΝ ΤΕΜΠΩΝ

ΣΥΝΤΟΝΙΣΤΗΣ-ΣΥΖΗΤΗΤΗΣ:
ΛΕΩΝΙΔΑΣ ΚΑΡΑΚΑΤΣΑΝΗΣ [ΠΑΜΑΚ]

5 ΙΟΥΝΙΟΥ / 19:00 / ONLINE



"What Are They Hiding From Us?": Dialogues on Conspiracism: 4th Seminar (05/06/2025)

“From Suspicions to Conspiracy Theories: Theoretical Approaches and Discursive Practices in Light of the Tempi Incident”

Speaker: Athena Skoulariki (Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Crete)

Discussant-Moderator: Leonidas Karakatsanis (Scientific Director, POLIS Research Laboratory; Assistant Professor, Department of Balkan, Slavic, and Oriental Studies, University of Macedonia)

Newsletter

Dear readers,

This newsletter provides a summary of the presentation held during the fourth—and final for this academic year—seminar, along with highlights from the discussion that followed, an introduction to the organizing members, and ways to stay informed about upcoming events.

Adopting a less theoretical and more empirically grounded approach, Athena Skoulariki addressed the case of conspiracy theories that do not emerge from the social margins, but rather form part of institutional narratives—often serving purposes of concealment, denial of responsibility, or justification of political actions. Building on her previous research, and following a brief overview of general theoretical assumptions surrounding the phenomenon (as already discussed in earlier seminars), she emphasized the issue through the lens of discourse analysis, which is her principal field of inquiry.

Among the points raised was the delicate boundary between the existence of classified information (e.g., the Kennedy assassination) and the development of conspiratorial discourse. Similarly blurry is the line separating critical discourse (e.g., by the media) from conspiracy theories: both exhibit chains of logical inference—even beyond the extreme narratives—but, in the latter case, such inferences remain unsupported and unsubstantiated, which is a key feature of conspiracy discourse.

Turning to the role of social trauma as a catalyst for such discourse, it was noted that the search for intent and the assignment of blame serve as vital mechanisms for collective relief—precisely as seen in the aftermath of the Tempi train tragedy. The intensity of speculation and the



rush to assign motive led to the rapid adoption of a specific version of “truth,” wherein intentionality was attributed primarily to the handling of the crisis, rather than to the accident itself.

Through a review of indicative newspaper front pages, Skoulariki outlined a timeline of the case, highlighting—among other things—the pivotal role played by contradictory expert reports in generating public doubt and suspicion of a cover-up. While such disagreements are not unfamiliar within the scientific community, they nonetheless fueled mistrust among the general public. Additionally, the gradual instrumentalization of conspiracy rhetoric by the government was examined: ascribing opposition-driven motives to such discourse, coupled with a lack of tolerance for critical perspectives, which were in turn stigmatized as conspiratorial.

This process, especially when viewed in conjunction with the prior wiretapping scandal—which failed to generate the same collective emotional identification as Tempi—further exacerbated the erosion of public trust in traditional institutions (e.g., politics, science) and, ultimately, in democracy itself.

Among the issues raised during the subsequent discussion with Leonidas Karakatsanis and the audience, particular emphasis was placed on:

- The role of science in the formation of conspiracy theories, in relation to the aforementioned trust deficit
- The potential anti-political function of such discourse, insofar as it channels public focus toward isolated demands while concealing broader structural problems and institutional failures
- The risk of intensified disillusionment and political cynicism in the face of unmet social expectations
- The role of television in the personal targeting and vilification of individuals
- The relationship between conspiracy theories and Enlightenment traditions—as a form of critical thinking
- Their performative similarities to populism and nationalism (e.g., alarmism and Manichaean logic)
- The unfounded association between conspiracy discourse and conservatism
- The link between post-truth dynamics and anti-Enlightenment logics



- The organic connection between times of crisis and the delegitimization of experts, fostering conspiracy narratives (e.g., economic crisis—economists & politicians; health crisis—health scientists & politicians; Tempi crisis—engineers & politicians)
- The need for digital literacy and fact-checking mechanisms
- The comparison between conspiracy narratives disseminated “from below” and those originating “from above”

We warmly thank you for your interest and time, and we invite you to stay connected through our communication channels for updates on our seminar series, which will resume in the autumn!

Sincerely,

The Organizing Team

Team Members:

- Leonidas Karakatsanis, Scientific Supervisor, Member of POLIS LAB, Assistant Professor, Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies, University of Macedonia
- Grigoris Markou, General Coordinator, Post-doctoral Researcher, Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies, University of Macedonia
- Georgia Rina, Post-doctoral Researcher, Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies, University of Macedonia
- Katerina Ppseniskof, PhD Candidate, School of Political Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- Dimitris Tsirimpas, PhD Candidate, School of Political Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- Konstantina Kastoriadou, Alumna, Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies, University of Macedonia



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Facebook page: «Τι μας κρύβουν;»: Διάλογοι για τη Συνωμοσιολογία

The seminar is available on the POLIS Lab's YouTube channel [εδώ](#).

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