

ΤΟ ΕΡΓΑΣΤΗΡΙΟ ΔΙΕΘΝΩΝ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΝΟΜΙΚΩΝ ΣΠΟΥΔΩΝ (POLIS LAB)
ΤΟΥ ΤΜΗΜΑΤΟΣ ΒΑΛΚΑΝΙΚΩΝ, ΣΛΑΒΙΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΚΩΝ ΣΠΟΥΔΩΝ ΤΟΥ
ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟΥ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑΣ ΣΑΣ ΠΡΟΣΚΑΛΕΙ ΣΤΗ ΣΕΙΡΑ ΣΕΜΙΝΑΡΙΩΝ:



«ΤΙ ΜΑΣ ΚΡΥΒΟΥΝ;» ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΙ ΓΙΑ ΤΗ ΣΥΝΩΜΟΣΙΟΛΟΓΙΑ

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ΠΡΟΠΑΓΑΝΔΑ, ΘΕΩΡΙΕΣ ΣΥΝΩΜΟΣΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ FACT-CHECKING: ΠΟΙΟΣ ΔΙΑΜΟΡΦΩΝΕΙ ΤΗΝ «ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ»;

ΟΜΙΛΗΤΗΣ: ΣΤΑΜΑΤΗΣ ΠΟΥΛΑΚΙΔΑΚΟΣ
[ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΔΥΤΙΚΗΣ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑΣ]

ΣΥΝΤΟΝΙΣΤΡΙΑ: ΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΑ ΠΨΕΝΙΣΚΩΦ [ΑΠΘ]

ΣΥΖΗΤΗΤΗΣ: ΓΡΗΓΟΡΗΣ ΜΑΡΚΟΥ [ΠΑΜΑΚ]

13 ΜΑΡΤΙΟΥ 2025 | 19:00 | ONLINE

ΔΙΟΡΓΑΝΩΣΗ:

ΤΑ ΠΑΡΑΚΑΤΩ ΕΡΕΥΝΗΤΙΚΑ ΕΡΓΑ/ΦΟΡΕΙΣ ΥΠΟΣΤΗΡΙΖΟΥΝ ΤΟ ΕΡΓΟ ΤΟΥ ΟΜΙΛΗΤΗ:



"What Are They Hiding From Us?": Dialogues on Conspiracism: 1st seminar (13/03/2025)

“Propaganda, conspiracy theories and fact-checking: who shapes the 'truth'?”

Speaker: Stamatis Poulakidakos (Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication and Digital Media, University of Western Macedonia)

Discussant: Grigoris Markou (Post-doctoral Researcher, Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies, University of Macedonia)

Moderator: Katerina Ppseniskof (PhD Candidate, School of Political Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

NEWSLETTER

Dear readers,

This newsletter includes a summary of the presentation that took place at the first seminar, the key points of the ensuing dialogue, the next scheduled event of the group, the presentation of its members, as well as ways to communicate and stay informed about upcoming events.

Initially, Stamatis Poulakidakos highlighted the complexity of the modern polyphonic communication environment due to the increased power of discourse in constructing reality, through the ease of expressing personal opinions—an especially *individualized massification* context. In contrast, during the past, the expression of personal opinions was hindered by traditional, state-controlled environments and the self-censorship reflexes that often accompanied them. The silence of that time is now replaced by *late-stage propaganda*, a blend of institutional and individual propagandistic discourse. The latter, the increased power of *post-truth*, in other words, turns discourse into fact, focusing on interpretation at the expense of factuality. This is not entirely new, however, as it mirrors the logic of the increased informational authority of television in the past.

Related to propaganda is the development of conspiracy theories—oversimplified, deliberate narratives of instigation—which, with the legitimization of pseudoscientific theories, ultimately become appealing in the public sphere, aided by the ease of dissemination in the modern digital landscape. This condition makes the implementation of fact-checking processes an urgent necessity, with the positive aspects lying, among other things, in their preventative and educational role in information dissemination. The negative aspects, however, range from

the difficulty of identifying and deconstructing fake news, the connection of such initiatives with political or economic interests and the resulting lack of trust, to the low recognition and usage of such tools.

Following this, in a brief intervention by the seminar discussant, Grigoris Markou, the importance of academic study of conspiracy theories was emphasized, as well as the implications of this dialogue, viewed from the perspective of a potential positive influence. In other words, the question was raised regarding the boundary between healthy skepticism and conspiracy theories. The most significant points, among other issues raised during the discussion with the audience, were:

- The effectiveness of fact-checking in detecting conspiracy theories,
- The connection of their development with (justified) political cynicism and related feelings of frustration,
- (Prompted by the re-election of U.S. President Trump) the research-proven link between conspiracy thinking and the dominance of conservative socio-political reflexes, particularly based on feelings of insecurity, which lead citizens to construct related theories or scapegoats instead of a social reaction,
- (Inquiries that brought forward the psychoanalytic dimension and political theories, such as those of Althusser) the complex web of psychological and social factors that blur the line between truth and fantasy in interpreting social reality,
- (Prompted by the management period of the COVID-19 pandemic) the flawed communicative handling of experts and science, which, due to its absolutism, led societies to deep skepticism, ultimately resulting in the weaponization of this sentiment by those opposed to mandatory vaccination,
- The modern need for *informed decision-making* and the concept of *slow journalism*, both of which focus on time investment in research at the expense of the speed of mass media,
- The qualitative characteristics of those citizens who appear to be more susceptible to receiving or disseminating conspiracy theories, including references to Hofstadter's theory about the loss of agency.
- Finally, following questions related to the field of fact-checking initiatives, the need for full transparency was emphasized, as the absence of institutional oversight mechanisms for their activities potentially raises issues of credibility in the public sphere due to the

identification of the roles of checker and checked. The discussion about which entity could take on this oversight role concluded with the response from academic research produced at relevant university institutions.

In summary, the above points highlighted the need for deeper critical thinking among citizens in a world where the speed and ease of information production, especially within social media, are overwhelmingly greater than the uncertainty that arises from fact-checking efforts due to its limitations.

The next scheduled seminar will take place on Thursday, April 10, 2025, at 19:00 online, with speaker Katerina Chatzikidi (Universität Tübingen) about "Conspiracy Theories as a Research Subject of Social and Human Sciences."

Thank you warmly for your response and time!

Stay tuned for upcoming seminar activities!

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

For more information: <https://dialoguesconsp.wixsite.com/dialoguesconspiracy>

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

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

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