



GPSG Working Paper #33

Covering the Covid-19 crisis in Greece: Extreme-Right Blogs and Conspiracy Theories

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Abstract

This article analyses how the Greek extreme right covered the Covid-19 pandemic in Greece, with a special focus in the period of the Greek lockdown. We argue that as parts of the Greek society favoured conspiracy theories during the last years, extreme right could benefit from that trend, spreading its ideas and capitalising on the rising levels of suspicion and dissatisfaction in the Greek society. This paper brings our attention to the emergence of blogs as a crucial digital tool for the diffusion of conspiracy theories and other anti-scientific discourses. Based on a discourse analysis of the blogs' uploaded content during the Greek lockdown the paper focuses on the construction of discursive frames by looking into the way conspiracy theories benefit the extreme right. It further highlights the need for more attention on the various narratives constructed during the Covid-19 crisis in Greece and their connection to conspiracy theories.

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Keywords: Extreme-Right, Conspiracy Theories, Blogs, Greece, Covid-19 Lockdown

Introduction

Conspiracy theories – a preferred story for extreme-right – have been strengthened due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown that took place in many countries. As previous research has shown, many Greeks support conspiracy theories (Antoniou et al., 2017; Gemenis, 2020) while conspiracy theories constitute a fertile ground for the extreme right. After the breakout of the pandemic, their content became attractive to parts of the Greek society, creating a clash in the public life between a conspiracist and a mainstream part of the society. Acclaiming the lack of time to understand the effects of such a discourse in the public sphere, the research question of this paper is “*how have the Greek extreme right blogs covered the Covid-19 pandemic, and especially the period of lockdown?*” In order to answer this research question, the paper first, offers a brief overview of the discussion around extreme right, blogs, and conspiracy theories – which forms the main focus of the current research. Then, the paper employs discourse analysis to identify the key frames promoted by the extreme right in blogspots, thus presenting and analysing collected data. The conclusion section analyses the research findings arguing that even though the visibility of extreme right blogs in Greece has risen, more research is needed to clarify their dynamics and their social diffusion.

Literature Review

The literature review on extreme right and conspiracy theories indicates the peculiarities and difficulties contained in the research upon which this paper builds. In looking into the Greek

extreme right blogs, we acknowledge the extreme right's sympathy for conspiracy theories and attempt to briefly import conspiracy theories' bibliography to the extreme right research through the use of blogs.

Extreme Right

Researchers have long highlighted the different definitions extremism could get. Back in 1959, Seymour Martin Lipset (1959, p.347) acknowledged a similar to political parties classification for extremism describing right-wing extremism as a conservative one (Lipset, 1959, p.348). Later, in the middle '60s, G.B. Rush highlighted the importance of using the adjective "extreme" when research focuses on phenomena of political extremism (Rush, 1963, p. 64). Rush focused on the individualistic nature of extreme-right, comparing it with the collectivist nature of governments and societies (Rush, 1963, p. 73). "Authoritarian Personality" –Adorno's (1950) seminal work– set the road for most studies of the extreme right. Following Adorno, Falter and Schumann created a ten-point scheme to define right-wing extremism, with the following features: hyper-nationalism, ethnocentrism, anti-communism, anti-parliamentarism, anti-pluralism, militarism, law and order thinking, a demand for a strong political leader, anti-Americanism and cultural pessimism (Falter & Schumann, 1988, p. 101).

Notwithstanding the importance of those works, the term "extreme right" became part of the chaotic – and difficult to define – field of far-right. Back in the middle '90s, Cas Mudde (1996) attempted to clarify the differences between radicalism and extremism. Characterising the latter as unconstitutional in comparison with radicalism, Mudde made a significant contribution to the field (Mudde, 1996, p. 231). A decade later, Bert Klendermans and Nonna Mayer (2006, p. 6) in their research about extreme right activism reached four core criteria which could transform someone

into a right-wing extremist supporter, these being authoritarianism, lack of education, economic insecurity and social isolation. Nevertheless, Mudde's approach remains much more acceptable. Uwe Backes (Backes, 2010, p. 163-167) highlighted the importance of Mudde's definition, as he used it to emphasise the differentiation between radicalism and extremism, rejecting radicalism's replacement by extremism from the German researchers of the Cologne Institute for Comparative Research. As Backes explains (2010, p. 166), it is the acceptance or not of democratic methods that differentiates radicalism to extremism. Thus, while radicalism accepts democratic methods but not democratic values, extremism dismisses anything related to democracy.

Conspiracy Theories

Conspiracy theories and conspiracies are two terms researchers have tried to clarify during the last years. While conspiracy has to do with a real plot against someone or something in a local level, conspiracy theories are based on claims of secret plots, while they take place on grand schemes, having a universal view (Jane & Fleming 2014, p. 130; Douglas et al., 2019, p. 4). Whoever attempts to understand the nature of conspiracy theories, must go back to Hofstadter's (1965) work about the "paranoid style". Uncertainty, distrust, inability to influence the political process, belief in paranormal or even too complicated causal phenomena, as well as to the idea that conspiracies move history, have strengthened peoples' belief in conspiracy theories (Hofstadter 1965, p. 29; Radnitz & Underwood, 2017, p. 115; Douglas et al., 2019, p. 7). Beyond the role of personal characteristics, researchers have highlighted a secure link between conspiracy theories and the members of underprivileged or under threat religious and national minorities, as well as political groups (van Prooijen & Douglas, 2018, p. 902; Douglas et al., 2019, p. 9).

Regarding conspiracies' political implications, studies have shown an association between conspiracy theories and an increase in radicalised and extremist behaviour, or as Bartlett and Miller expressed it, there may be a "radicalising multiplier" (2010, p. 4; van Prooijen et al., 2015; Douglas et al., 2019, p. 20). Van Prooijen et al. (2015, p. 570) have focused on the connection between conspiracy theories and extremist behaviour, defining extremists' worldview as crippled epistemology which creates a monological belief system. As the authors mention (Van Prooijen et al., 2015, p. 576), extremists tend to believe their ideas construct the only solution for the problems conspiracies have created, and now they face and have to solve. Moreover, van Prooijen et al. (2015, p. 576) have separated conspiracy theories according to the extremist side of the political spectrum they are connected with, acknowledging in extreme right familiarity with scientific conspiracies. In contrast, the extreme left is deemed to be more prone to conspiracies regarding capitalism.

To better understand how a conspiracy theory is formed, Matthew R.X. Dentith offers us a scheme of three conditions. Proposing a simple definition, Dentith suggests as essential the existence of conspirators. Those are the persons or agents who plan the conspiracy and, as a result, they will take all the necessary measures to distract the public of their work (the secrecy condition). The final step, the goal condition, consists of conspiracy's desired end for the conspirators (Dentith 2015, p. 32). Believing that Dentith's definition unlocks how conspiracy theories are constructed, we will use its scheme in our analysis.

Blogs

By entering their third decade of existence in the digital world (Myers, 2010, p. 17), blogs have attracted the interest not only of researchers but also of politicians. All of them have seen in

blogging the opportunity to move into a new era in information especially as blogs at first adopted newspapers' traditional structure while nowadays encourage the expression of personal beliefs (Myers, 2010, p. 118). Except that, being compared with other social media platforms, blogs remain more attractive as they lack any accountability regarding their upload material. During the years, what is known as blogosphere has achieved in transforming its environment and affecting straightaway policy-making procedures. Blogs, as an active part of the web, inter-communicate with a dense net of similar blogs and sites which they try to promote to their audience (Myers, 2010, pp. 3, 30). The way they achieve such communication is through hyperlinks in every blog, which link directly to other blogs with shared interests (Farell & Drezner 2007, p. 1). Except that, as Myers has highlighted, blogs are characterised from personal uses of place and time, to serve bloggers' purposes (Myers 2010, p. 9).

In light of the above literature review, how have the Greek extreme right blogs covered the Covid-19 pandemic, especially during the period of lockdown in spring 2020?

Greek extreme right blogs covering the Covid-19 pandemic

In looking into how blogs are used by the Greek extreme right, the incident of the murder of Pavlos Fyssas back in September 2013 is as a turning point. Before that, extreme right blogs – some of them connected to the Golden Dawn while others were critical against the party – had achieved high visibility in the digital sphere, as a result of the growing support for the far-right in Greece. Furthermore, the economic crisis had led to a decline of trust for political parties and other institutions offering support to anti-mainstream voices (Georgiadou, 2019, p. 173; Halikiopoulou, 2020, p. 37). Notwithstanding the absence of official numbers for all those years, what we were

able to observe after Pavlos Fyssas’ murder was the disappearance not only of such blogs but also the removal of sensitive material able to betray members of extreme-right organisations.

Nowadays, after witnessing the split of Golden Dawn, the Greek extreme right blogosphere has returned to more traditional schemes. Mavros Krinos (Black Lilly) seems to be the leader in the blogosphere. Observing the number of hyperlinks the blog offers to its readers, we can count 96 hyperlinks, 76 of which are referring to blogs. Only fourteen out of those blogs were still active during 2020. Regarding the rest of the blogs, some became inactive during the years and developed different content. While there were blogs that kept their content as it was the last time they were active, there were also cases of ending their presence in the blogosphere, as well as cases that chose a “safe mode” function in which one must have an invitation to follow their uploads. The structure of Greek extreme right blogs seems to be in line with what the bibliography suggests: unspecific name for the uploader and time for the uploading, serving specific purposes linked with other similar blogs and creating a dense network. It also offers the ability to the bloggers to adjust their appearances and disappearances. Table 1 is based on the active blogs during 2020 and builds on Mavros Krinos as the “reference blog”.

Table 1: Extreme Right Blogs Activity during 2020 and the Covid-19 lockdown (Greece)

Blog name	Last upload	Active during the Covid-19 lockdown (Greece)
Propatria	01/04/2020	Yes
Eschati Grammi Anascheseos (Ultimate Line of Prevention)	11/07/2020	Yes
Red Sky Warning	06/07/2020	Yes
Theodotus	23/3/2020	Yes
Hellas Casuals	05/07/2020	Yes
Skoteinos Ierofantis (Dark Hierophant)	10/05/2020	Yes
Fallen Nobles	06/03/2020	No
Omaimon Paradosis (Same-blood Tradition)	05/07/2020	Yes
ErosHellas	08/05/2020	Yes

Black Lilly (Mavros Krinos)	07/2020	Yes
Erimi Xora (Lonely Country)	28/04/2020	Yes
Antipliroforisi (Counter-Information)	09/07/2020	Yes
War Flag	01/06/2020	Yes

As table 1 indicates, fourteen blogs were active between 10th of March – when the Greek government took the first measures² in what became known after the 23rd of March as lockdown³ – and 4th of May when the lockdown officially ended⁴. What was the content of the blogs’ material and the frequency that new material was uploaded? Most of the blogs were rather inactive, having little to none action during the studied period. However, the circulation of similar articles during specific periods points to linkages between them. Applying a chronological order, one can see at the beginning of the lockdown both a favour for conspiracy theories and an attempt to be part of the new COVID and quarantine reality. As known, extreme right proclaims the importance of workout and body exercise, adapting a nazist approach (Bengtsson, 2018, p. 425). Thus, Propatria – a blog known for actions like gym festivals and martial arts exercises – uploaded just after the declaration of quarantine in Greece two programs for training⁵ in order not to lose moment and to

²ToBHMA Team (2020) *Greece hunkers down to limit spread of Covid-19* [Online] Available at <https://www.tovima.gr/2020/03/10/international/greece-hunkers-down-to-limit-spread-of-covid-19/> (Accessed 28 July 2020)

³Stamouli, N. (2020) *Greece to go into coronavirus-induced lockdown* [Online] Available at <https://www.politico.eu/article/greece-to-go-into-coronavirus-induced-lockdown/> (Accessed 28 July 2020)

⁴Kampourakis, G. (2020) *To plano twv dio minwn gia ti lixi tis karantinas* (A two-month plan until the end of the quarantine) [Online] Available at <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/story/1593398/to-plano-ton-duo-minon-gia-ti-liksi-tis-karantinas> (Accessed 28 July 2020)

⁵ProPatria (2020), Coronavirus Workout [Blog] *ProPatria* Available at <https://propatria.fc.wordpress.com/2020/03/13/coronavirus-workout/> (Accessed 02 August 2020) ,_ProPatria

(2020), Quarantine Workout [Blog] *ProPatria* Available at <https://propatria.fc.wordpress.com/2020/03/16/quarantine-workout/> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

keep its members fit⁶. Although Propatria stopped its uploads as of 1st of April, it had time not only to organise a trip in nature⁷ but also to publish a kind of small manifesto in which a new struggle against the old system was announced⁸.

Mavros Krinos (Black Lilly) is one of the oldest, independent and still active blogs of Greek extreme-right. Nevertheless, it was not the most active one during the examined period. Mavros Krinos had just three uploads, all of which in March, with a vision in the post-pandemic world describing how the new geopolitical balances will be shaped and who will control the “global island”, the area from Europe to Southeast Asia. In that way, Mavros Krinos uploads reflect theories about a bipolar competition to control the world, around which other multipolar circles will be created⁹. A blog called Red Sky Warning had the most uploads acting as an alternative

⁶ By behaving like a part of the system, the blog abandons its anti-systemic profile, declaring the following: “Now that they have closed our gyms, and we have nowhere to exercise and have fun, our society, with responsibility offers a great program to help you stay fit. There is no cost, and the most important is that you will not exist your quarantine. It is only 14 days, so they will pass”. ProPatria (2020), Coronavirus Workout [Blog] *ProPatria* Available at <https://propatria.fc.wordpress.com/2020/03/13/coronavirus-workout/> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

⁷ ProPatria (2020) Pezoporia (Trekking) [Blog] *ProPatria* Available at <https://propatria.fc.wordpress.com/2020/03/16/%cf%80%ce%b5%ce%b6%ce%bf%cf%80%ce%bf%cf%81%ce%af%ce%b1/> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

⁸ Kar. N. (2020), Emeis omws tha ginoume kaliteroi (But we will become better) [Blog] *ProPatria* Available at <https://propatria.fc.wordpress.com/2020/04/01/%ce%b5%ce%bc%ce%b5%ce%af%cf%82-%cf%8c%ce%bc%cf%89%cf%82-%ce%b8%ce%b1-%ce%b3%ce%af%ce%bd%ce%bf%cf%85%ce%bc%ce%b5-%ce%ba%ce%b1%ce%bb%cf%8d%cf%84%ce%b5%cf%81%ce%bf%ce%b9/> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

⁹ Titos (2020), To zitima den einai h Kiriarchia stin Pagkosmia Oikonomia , alla I Kiriarchia sto Pagkosmio Nisi (The Matter is not who will control the Global Economy, but the control in Global Island) [Blog] *Mavros Krinos* Available at http://mavroskrinos.blogspot.com/2020/03/blog-post_26.html (Accessed 02 August 2020), Titos (2020), Katastasi Exairesis I Feoudarchikopoiisi tis Autokratorias kai Pollaplasiasmos tw n Synorwn me peraiterw sygchwnousi Prwtou kai Tritou Kosmou? (Situation of Exclusion or Feudalism of the Empire and Multiplication with further Merger of the

news channel. Naming itself as “alternative” the blog attempted to collect, translate and upload international news whose content focused on reactions against COVID-19 in the USA and Russia. Hellenic Action (Elliniki Drasi), Counter-Information (Anti-pliroforisi) and Der Kamerad were blogs with significant action at the same period.

Acknowledging that taking every blog and just recording their uploads would be tiring and with no importance about research, we will attempt to sketch the discursive frames that can be drawn from those uploads. The manipulation and finally, the control of the public with the help of the pandemic is an often reproduced theory by those blogs. The conspirators are mostly the philanthropists and billionaires Bill Gates and George Soros, but blaming the United Nations, World Health Organisation, or economic elites is not rare¹⁰. Soros is linked with attempts to abolish the traditional family using pandemic as an excellent chance for his purposes¹¹. At the same time, WHO is connected with the imposition of global governance¹² in nation-states and the kidnapping of Covid-19 patients from their families¹³. Bill Gates is the person those blogs target

First and the Third World?) [Blog] *Mavros Krinos* Available at http://mavroskrinos.blogspot.com/2020/03/blog-post_22.html (Accessed 02 August 2020)

¹⁰ Chatziyiannis, M. (2020) Giati ekatontades diefthinontes simvouloi koloswn paraitithikan ligo prin xespasei I trela? (Why hundreds of CEOs’ resigned just before the outbreak of the madness?) [Blog] *Anti-pliroforisi Blog Spot* Available at http://antipliroforisi.blogspot.com/2020/03/blog-post_27.html (Accessed 02 August 2020)

¹¹ Sky Watcher (2020) Ta “paidia” tou Soros vlepon ton paniko tou koronoiou ws tin teleia efkairia gia na katargitheh h oikogeneia (The “children” of Soros see the panic of the COVID-19 as the perfect chance to abolish the family) [Blog] *Red Sky Warning* Available at https://redskywarning.blogspot.com/2020/04/blog-post_4.html (Accessed 02 August 2020)

¹² Sky Watcher (2020) [Blog] Slavoi Zizek: “I krisi tou koronaiou prepei na ferei enan pagkosmio kommounismo” (Slavoi Zizek; “ The COVID-19 crisis must bring a global communism) *Red Sky Warning* Available at <http://redskywarning.blogspot.com/2020/04/blog-post.html> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

¹³ Sky Watcher (2020) Anwtatos aksiwmatouxos tou POY: “Mporei na chreiatesti na mpoume kai sta spitia sas kai na paroume meli tis oikogeneias sas” (The highest official of the WHO: “It may need even to enter your houses and

more often, accused as the one whose plots create a need for vaccines, for his own profit. The pandemic crisis and the resulting demand for vaccines serve the end goal of the global elites to establish a “New World Order”¹⁴.

Another favourite topic seems to be an imagined clash between religious servants around the world and the official state, with the latter being portrayed to diminish the role of religion in everyday life¹⁵. Such attempts, where the state is presented having an illiberal and anti-religious face, in combination with extreme right’s rhetoric against an old enemy (Saul 2015: 25; Chrysogelos 2015: 93), that of communism,¹⁶ create a fertile ground for the diffusion of conspiracy

grab members of your family” (video) [Blog] *Red Sky Warning* Available at <http://redskywarning.blogspot.com/2020/04/video.html> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

¹⁴SkyWatcher (2020) Kivernisi apo disekatommyriouchous? O Cuomo anaferi oti o proin dieuthinon simvoulos tis Google tha entaxthei stin omada tw’n Gates kai Bloomberg stin ekponisi meta-pandimikwn “metarrithimisewn” (A billionaires’ government? Cuomo mentions that the former CEO of Google will integrate Gates and Bloomberg’s team to devise post-pandemic “transformations”) [Blog] *Red Sky Warning* Available at <http://redskywarning.blogspot.com/2020/05/cuomo-google-gates-bloomberg.html> (Accessed 28 July 2020), Antipliroforisi Blog Spot (2020), Me chrimatodotisi Bill Gates etoimazoun sfragisma sto cheri gia osous emvoliastoun gia ton koronoio (With the funding of Bill Gates they prepare the seal in the arm for those who will get vaccinated for the coronavirus) [Blog] *Antipliroforisi Blog Spot* Available at http://antipliroforisi.blogspot.com/2020/03/blog-post_21.html (Accessed 02 August 2020)

¹⁵SkyWatcher (2020) IPA: O kivernitis tou Illinois leei oti oi ekklisies endechetai na min anoixoun xana gia ena chrono. Roumanoï christianoi tou apantoun “ta zisame epi kommounismou, emeis tha anoixoume” (The governor of Illinois says that it is possible the churches not to reopen for a year. Romanian Christians answer him “we lived such situation during communism, we will open them”) [Blog] *Red Sky Warning* Available at http://redskywarning.blogspot.com/2020/05/blog-post_8.html (Accessed 28 July 2020), Der Kamerad (2020), Theia Metalipsi Kai Koronoios...! (Holy Communion and Coronavirus...!) (Photo) [Blog] *Der Kamerad* Available at <https://derkamerad.com/2020/03/13/%ce%b8%ce%b5%ce%af%ce%b1-%ce%bc%ce%b5%cf%84%ce%ac%ce%bb%ce%b7%cf%88%ce%b7-%ce%ba%ce%b1%ce%b9-%ce%ba%ce%bf%cf%81%cf%89%ce%bd%ce%bf%cf%8a%cf%8c%cf%82-photo/> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

¹⁶ Sky Watcher (2020) Otan oi bolsevikoï katigorisani tis eikones ws “esties metadosis pandimias” (When the Bolsheviks blamed the icons as the “epicentre for the contagion of the pandemic”) [Blog] *Red Sky Warning* Available at http://redskywarning.blogspot.com/2020/04/blog-post_22.html (Accessed 02 August 2020), Der Kamerad (2020)

theories. Covid-19 pandemic is also portrayed as the return of individualism in a Europe without open borders¹⁷, as a hoax regarding the official number of deaths¹⁸, or as a scientific plot, where only a minority of people stands against the corrupted system¹⁹.

Lefkorwsia: Oi Lefkorwsoi Giortasan to Pascha me Anoichtes tis Ekklisies. O Loukatsenko Antitachthike Stin “Logiki” Tis Mazikis Psychwsis...! (Belarus: Belarusians celebrate the Easter with open churches. Loukatsenko objected the “logic” of mass psychosis...!) (Photos) [Blog] *Der Kamerad* Available at <https://derkamerad.com/2020/04/23/%ce%bb%ce%b5%cf%85%ce%ba%ce%bf%cf%81%cf%89%cf%83%ce%af%ce%b1-%ce%bf%ce%b9-%ce%bb%ce%b5%cf%85%ce%ba%ce%bf%cf%81%cf%8e%cf%83%ce%bf%ce%b9-%ce%b3%ce%b9%cf%8c%cf%81%cf%84%ce%b1%cf%83%ce%b1%ce%bd-%cf%84/> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

¹⁷ Buchanan, P.J. (2020) Twra o kathenas gia ton eafto tou. Pws I pandimia swriase tin Ewropi twn open borders (Now each one for oneself. How the pandemic demolished the Europe of open borders) [Blog] *Red Sky Warning* Available at <http://redskywarning.blogspot.com/2020/03/open-borders.html> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

¹⁸Sky Watcher (2020) IPA: O epoptis tou San Diego anefere oti mono 6 apo tous 194 thanatous pou echoun katagraphei ws thanatoid apo koronoio einai “katharoi” thanatoid apo koronoio (USA: The invigilator of San Diego reported that only 6 from the 194 deaths that have recorded as connected with the coronavirus are connected with the coronavirus) [Blog] *Red Sky Warning* Available at <http://redskywarning.blogspot.com/2020/05/6-194.html> (Accessed 02 August 2020), Der Kamerad (2020) Italia: Koronoios – Italos Kathigitis Nanopathologias: “To Lockdown Tha Skotwsei Perissoterous Apo Ton Koronoio. To Metro Einai Epizimio Gia Tin Dimosia Ygeia. Mono 3 Italous Skotwse O Koronoios, Tous Ypoloipous Tous Skotwse To Systema Ygeias, I Diafthora...! (Italy: Coronavirus – Italian Professor of Nanopathology: “Lockdown will kill much more than the coronavirus. That measure is harmful for public health. Only 3 Italians were killed from coronavirus, and all the others were killed from the public health system, the corruption...!) (Video+Photo) [Blog] *Der Kamerad* Available at <https://derkamerad.com/2020/04/06/%ce%b9%cf%84%ce%b1%ce%bb%ce%af%ce%b1-%ce%ba%ce%bf%cf%81%ce%bf%ce%bd%ce%bf%cf%8a%cf%8c%cf%82-%ce%b9%cf%84%ce%b1%ce%bb%cf%8c%cf%82-%ce%ba%ce%b1%ce%b8%ce%b7%ce%b3%ce%b7%cf%84%ce%ae%cf%82-%ce%bd%ce%b1/> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

¹⁹Cheiladakis, N. (2020) DWDEKA DIETHNOUS FIMIS EPISTIMONES APOKALYPTOUN TIN MEGALI APATI TOU KORONOIOU (12 Scientists of global reputation reveal the great hoax of coronavirus) [Blog] *Antiapiroforisi Blog Spot* Available at http://antiapiroforisi.blogspot.com/2020/03/blog-post_26.html (Accessed 02 August 2020), Der Kamerad (2020) I Gnwm 10 Diakekrimenwn Giatrwn Empeirognwmonwn Gia Ton Koronaio, Aposiwpthike Entelws...! (Photo) (The opinion of 10 prominent experts doctors about the coronavirus, was suppressed...!) [Blog]

Migrants and refugees create another target for the believers of conspiracy theories, especially amidst a migratory and refugee crisis in Greece. Specifically, the lockdown imposed by the Greek government is presented as a golden opportunity for the advancement of the government's anthellenic plans to (re)settle immigrants in Greek territory²⁰. According to that narrative, there is a worldwide plot for the use of migrants and refugees who will replace the indigenous Greek population.²¹ Thus, one can observe bloggers' revolt against globalisation while defending the national state.

Several assumptions can draw on the above findings. Kostas Gemenis earlier this year (2020: 99-100) highlighted how conspiracy theories fed on pandemics, while they are more prone to diffuse in countries facing long-time crises and international pressure. Greece is such a country, with vast numbers of believers in conspiracy theories. Antoniou et al. (2017, p. 34) have found that 75% of the Greek population, believes economic crisis was a result of international agents. They have also measured different ways antisemitism has been present in Greek society (Antoniou

Der Kamerad Available at <https://derkamerad.com/2020/04/11/%ce%b7-%ce%b3%ce%bd%cf%8e%ce%bc%ce%b7-10-%ce%b4%ce%b9%ce%b1%ce%ba%ce%b5%ce%ba%cf%81%ce%b9%ce%bc%ce%ad%ce%bd%cf%89%ce%bd-%ce%b9%ce%b1%cf%84%cf%81%cf%8e%ce%bd-%ce%b5%ce%bc%cf%80%ce%b5%ce%b9%cf%81%ce%bf/>
(Accessed 02 August 2020)

²⁰Potamianos, K. (2020) Erchontai Ragdaies Exelixeis (Rapid changes are coming) [Blog] *Elliniki Drasi* Available at <https://ellinikidrasi.wordpress.com/2020/03/31/%ce%b5%cf%81%cf%87%ce%bf%ce%bd%cf%84%ce%b1%ce%b9-%cf%81%ce%b1%ce%b3%ce%b4%ce%b1%ce%b9%ce%b5%cf%83-%ce%b5%ce%be%ce%b5%ce%bb%ce%b9%ce%be%ce%b5%ce%b9%cf%83/> (Accessed 02 August 2020)

²¹ Kokkinos Ouranos (2020), Oi Entoles Tis Diethnis Amnistias Ston Prwthypourgo... Kai Ta Schedia Tou OHE Gia Antikatastasi Tou Plithismou Tis Evrwpis (The Orders of the International Amnesty to the Prime Minister... and the UN plans for the replacement of the European population) [Blog] *Antiqliroforisi Blog Spot* Available at http://antiqliroforisi.blogspot.com/2020/03/blog-post_28.html (Accessed 02 August 2020)

et al., 2017, p. 20-26). Bloggers and their readers seem to favour a narrative according to which the conspirators act as foreign agents who aim to destroy Greece through well planned plots, including the pandemic crisis, attacks to Greek Orthodox religion or to Greek nationalism through the forces of globalisation.

Emily Turner-Graham (2014, p. 420) drawing on how extreme right youth understands Breivik's personality, argues that bloggers and their readers have a particular vision of reality fundamentally different to the dominant one in the society. That same vision can be observed in the case of Greek blogs. By acclaiming an anti-systemic role, the Greek extreme-right bloggers present themselves as being repressed and rebels (Turner-Graham, 2014, p. 420), whose narratives feed not only extreme right's anti-system rhetoric, but also anti-migration, anti-vaccination, anti-abortion and broadly anti-scientific stands.

Conclusion

Concluding, what this paper presented was findings of ongoing research on the way blogs linked with extreme-right groups disseminated conspiracy theories during the pandemic lockdown in Greece in spring 2020. By focusing on bloggers' actions after the Greek government announced the first anti-coronavirus measures and until Greece exited lockdown, one can observe the ways those blogs reproduced and popularised material with unsubstantial content feeding an anti-systemic narrative. During the last decade, the blogosphere has become as much important in Greece as in the whole world. Nevertheless, the way it affects political and social life has not caught researchers' attention the way it has in the United States of America. What makes this more interesting is that blogging allows for freedom in uploading any material offering thus a fertile ground for the cultivation and diffusion of anti-systemic discourses.

To better understand how blogs have become the new reality in the political expression of anti-systemic groups, research needs to focus more on blogs' promoted actions, uploaded material and the way they construct networks. The global transformation being created by the COVID-19 crisis and the related lockdown offers an opportunity to study blogs through a new perspective: as anti-systemic and information tools. What became obvious, especially during the pandemic lockdown between March and May this year, was a clash between mainstream science and conspiracy theories. While government officials abided with scientific explanations and suggestions, there was a certain level of suspicion and dissatisfaction within the Greek society as well as in extreme-right followers. To better understand how the Covid-19 crisis related to conspiracy theories in Greece further research is needed on various strands of the society and their narratives.

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