

# Conspiracy Theories in Times of Crisis

Methods and Results of an Online Survey

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# Communication Patterns of Radicalization

Study 1: Content analysis of websites from the left-wing, right-wing and Islamist spectrum with the aid of RADIX (2017-2020) category system. Altogether, N=11.712 postings were analyzed with RADIX. Core study of the project.

Study 2: Survey about the connection between extreme political views and conspiracy theories, prejudice and world views. (Dec. 2017, N=509)

Study 3: Effect of news coverage about left and right extremist violence on world views and political opinions. (Dec. 2017, 2 x 509 data sets with pre- and post measuring)

Study 4: Survey and effect study on news coverage about political extremism in Europe. (Dec. 2018, N=516)

Survey 5: Study on crisis behavior and political opinion during the Corona pandemic. (2020, N=607).

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# Corona Study, Vienna June 2020

## Research Questions

1. How do young academics cope with restrictions during the Corona crisis? To what extent do they support the pandemic measures of the government? Are there indications for processes of radicalization?
2. What role do conspiracy theories play in times of crisis?
3. How do conspiracy theories interact with other world view structures and with political ideologies?
4. How are cave-related dispositions connected with world view management and radicalization in times of crisis?

# Corona Study, Vienna June 2020

## World View Management 1: Theoretical Framework

### Definition

*World view management* (WM) is cognition regulation via epistemological convictions and world view structures, among which are: *scary-world-views*, world view division, anomy and conspiracy theories.

Concept of WM is based on the scheme theory of perception (Abelson 1981, Kintsch 1998) and its further development to a concept of „metacognition“ (Schwarz 2015).

### Scheme-Theory und Metacognition

Postulated is that information processing takes place in a concept-driven way with the help of cognitive schemes and is regulated by *metacognitions* about the world and its recognizability. Among the regulating parameters are epistemological convictions like general criticism, media use, media trust, preference for orthodox or heterodox knowledge, etc. Examples of regulating world views are controllability of living conditions, degree of threat, differentiation of world views and images of mankind.

*Metacognitions* are generally pre-ideological, i.e. evolutionary or have developed spontaneously by learning, but can interact with political ideologies that are propagated by interested parties.

In the context of *world view management*, metacognitions are geared towards:

- (1) adequate understanding of situations,
- (2) cognitive consistency and
- (3) stable identity.

### Hypothesis 1

The Corona crisis activates dispositions acquired in the evolutionary process, which, as metacognitions, influence information processing in times of crisis.



# Corona Study, Vienna, June 2020

## World View Management 2: Rationality and Radicalization

### Function of World View Management

*World View Management* helps lifeworld subjects (Schütz & Luckmann 1979, 1984) in coping with everyday life. On the one hand they strive for flexible solutions for problems, on the other hand they strive for longer-term acting motifs and „meaning of life“. This implies an assumption of rationality also with regard to bizarre world views and conspiracy theories in times of crisis. At the same time, metacognitions in which a (suddenly) changed world view is expressed are a potential disruptive factor on the political systemic level, if every day-rationality and system-rationality drift apart. In this case, WM can explain processes of radicalization.

### Hypothesis 2

Cave-related dispositions can explain differences of world view management during the Corona crises leading to the strengthening of conspiracy beliefs and right-wing thinking in a part of the population. Especially people with high cave pathology are susceptible for radicalization.

# Corona Study, Vienna, June 2020

## Sample

The online-survey with the cave test took place between June 10th and June 15th in 2020. All 607 participants were students and lived in Vienna. The average age was 21,9 years. 17,3% were male, 82,7 % were female. 5,1% were in full-time employment, 33,4% in part-time employment. No religious confession 21,7%; catholic 55,4%; protestant 9,1%, other confession 13,8. Austrian nationality 66,4%; German 17,1%; other nationality 16,5%. In a steady relationship were 44,6%; without steady relationship 55,4%. Social status (self-evaluation on a scale from 0-100) is at  $m=53,3$ . Personal quality of life (Salea 0-100):  $m=87,1$ . Self-evaluation on a scale „left-wing“ 0 to „right-wing“ 100  $m=29,7$ . Political party preference: SPÖ 12,5%, ÖVP 10,4%, GRÜNE 45,0%, NEOS 7,7%, other party 3,7%; don't know/no answer 24,4.

The sample can be characterized as a cluster sample of young academics: mainly female, about half of them in steady relationships, social status in a medium hierarchy range, with an overall „good“ quality of life and politically mainly with ecological/ left-liberal views.

# Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories

## What does it mean?

### Narratological Definition:

Conspiracy theories are narratives where worldly or extra-terrestrial powers secretly strive for world dominance or have already reached it.

### Cognition-theoretical Definition

Conspiracy beliefs contain the conviction that the „world“ is controlled by secret powers that have conspired against the rest of humanity. Secret operations and anti-human goals make the „conspirators“ „legitimate enemies“.

CBs are part of a world view management where a threat situation is resolved in a militant way by naming a responsible „enemy“.

⇒ CB=Scary+Enemy

### Core elements of conspiracy beliefs are:

- a) Powers striving for world domination
  - b) Diagnosis of a global disinformation
  - c) Omnipresence of secret societies
- ⇒ Operationalization of CB

# Corona Study, Vienna June 2020

## Test Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

<i>I agree with the statement...</i>	Not at all							Fully
A few Jewish families control the world affairs behind the scenes for their own purposes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Muslims are on their way to extend their power all over the globe.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The world is ruled by very few super-rich people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The USA as the only superpower control the world as they like it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supernatural powers manipulate humankind.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Many events the media tell us about never happened that way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In secret and hidden away, the „Fake News“ are centrally controlled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Elections are manipulated by purposeful indiscretions and false reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The media support the politics of the power elite by causing confusion and manipulating people to act against their own interests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dark elemental forces control our perception by disinformation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secret societies control the world's governments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International trade agreements are concluded behind closed doors to secure the supremacy of the finance capital.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We are under full surveyance by the secret services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The EU is ruled by a small conspirational group that ignores the views of ordinary people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extraterrestrials influence society.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cronbach's Alpha	Original Items	Standardized
World Domination	0,744	0,761
Global Disinformation	0,843	0,842
Secrete Powers	0,811	0,810
Conspiracy beliefs Total	0,915	0,916

3x5 Items, sub-indices: *World domination* (above), *Global disinformation*, (middle), *Secret powers* (below)



# Corona-Study, Vienna June 2020

## Test Cave Disposition 1: Cave Experience

Now imagine that you yourself are inside a cave and cannot leave it for the time being. Only a small opening lets you catch a glimpse of the world outside. What would you probably do?

<i>Being inside the cave, I would ...</i>	Not likely at all								very likely
... make myself comfortable and wait for better times to come.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... feel a great urge to get outside.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... ask myself if it was more dangerous outside than inside the cave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... be afraid of wild animals inside the cave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... think about something to pass the time away.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... think about pleasant situations that I have experienced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... think about what I will do later on	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... be glad to be inside and not outside	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... think about how prehistoric cavemen used to live	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... feel trapped and limited	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... think about who is responsible for my situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... think that my present situation has not occurred by mere chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... take it as a bad omen for the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Indices:

Cave acceptance (cacc)

Cave anxiety (canx)

Positive cave fantasy (posfan)

Negative cave interpretation (negint)

# Corona-Study, Vienna June 2020

## Test Cave Disposition 2: Cave Adaptation

Now imagine that you have already spent many weeks inside the cave. How would you probably feel now?

<i>After many weeks inside the cave ...</i>	Not likely at all								Very likely
... I would have adapted well to the new situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I would have become emotionally dull	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I would feel very lonely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I would become more and more impatient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I would at some point lose all hope	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I would be scared to get outside again	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I would be terribly bored	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Indizes:

Good adaptation to cave (single item)

Cave suffering (csuf)

Hospitalization (hosp)

Cave Competence

CCOMP=CACC+POSFAN

Cave Pathology

CPATH=CSUF+HOSP+NEGINT

# **Conspiracy Beliefs and Radicalization 2017-2020**

# Studies 2017-2020:

## Right-wing Extremism and Conspiracy Beliefs

N=1632, G1=509 G2=516 G3=607		Right-wing1 Authoritarian Government	Right-wing2 DP National Socialism	Right-wing3 Social Darwinism	Right-wing Extremism Total	Conspiracy1 World Domination	Conspiracy2 Global Dis- information	Conspiracy3 Secret Powers	Conspiracy Beliefs Total
Study Dec 17	Mean	12,04	10,78	9,07	10,63	28,71	40,08	32,34	33,71
	STD	19,48	17,55	16,49	15,94	18,78	21,62	18,29	17,22
Study Dec 18	Mean	12,19	10,49	10,24	10,98	27,65	39,00	30,48	32,38
	STD	18,77	16,29	17,60	15,40	19,40	21,83	19,24	17,81
Study June 20	Mean	9,75	7,15	6,57	7,82	22,08	34,21	25,24	27,20
	STD	17,25	14,66	14,22	13,44	17,17	22,84	19,26	17,86
Total	Mean	11,24	9,34	8,51	9,69	25,91	37,57	29,12	30,88
	STD	18,48	16,20	16,13	14,94	18,63	22,29	19,19	17,87
Sign:		0,044	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
Dif20-17		-2,29	-3,62	-2,50	-2,80	-6,63	-5,87	-7,11	-6,51
Dif20-18		-2,44	-3,34	-3,68	-3,15	-5,58	-4,79	-5,24	-5,18

Right-wing extremist opinions (Heyder & Decker 2011) acceptance is about 10%. Susceptibility for conspiracy beliefs is about 30%.

- ⇒ Surprisingly, acceptance of conspiracy beliefs decreases during the Corona crisis in 2020. But the standard deviation is slightly higher. This implies the difference between believers and non-believers is bigger during the crisis than in normal times.
- ⇒ Also, right-wing extremism in 2020 is less accepted than in 2017. No clear trend regarding standard deviation.

# Studies 2017-2020:

## World View Management and Trust in Mass Media

N=1632, G1=509 G2=516 G3=607		Scary World	World View Divide 1 Wealth	World View Divide 2 Safety	World View Divide Total	Internal Control 1 Lifeworld	Internal Control 2 Politics	Mass Media Trust	Mass Media Reactance	Mass Media Inferences
Study Dec 17	Mean	46,35	69,98	71,05	70,52	53,78	47,54	40,25	51,80	45,12
	STD	21,17	20,96	18,24	16,00	28,91	33,07	18,88	22,57	22,59
Study Dec 18	Mean	46,04	72,47	71,33	71,90	56,15	53,15			
	STD	20,69	20,43	18,12	15,61	28,59	32,58			
Study June 20	Mean	46,86	76,42	72,59	74,51	46,42	58,40	35,97	44,99	50,25
	STD	20,21	20,16	17,00	14,94	28,08	30,93	16,54	21,01	20,36
Total	Mean	46,44	73,16	71,71	72,44	51,79	53,35	37,92	48,09	47,91
	STD	20,66	20,66	17,75	15,57	28,80	32,42	17,77	21,99	21,55
Sign:		0,000	0,000	0,295	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
Dif20-17		0,50	6,43	1,54	3,99	-7,37	10,86	-4,27	-6,81	5,13
Dif20-18		0,82	3,95	1,26	2,61	-9,74	5,25	MD	MD	MD

- *Scary world-views* are stable. No increase in paranoid deformed world views during Corona crisis.
- World view divide increases. Hint for differentiated *world view management*. Explanation for decreased susceptibility for conspiracy theories in times of crisis.
- Ambivalent impact of Corona crisis on control expectation: Internal control of lifeworld decreases, but control expectation of politics increases.
- Strong decrease of trust in the media, but increase of learning via mass media and reduction of reactance

# Studies 2017-2020:

## Protest Behavior

N=1632, G1=509 G2=516 G3=607		Protest1 Declarative Demonstrat	Protest2 Civil Dis- obedience	Protest3 Violent Demonstrat	Protest Total
Study Dec 17	Mean	68,36	30,07	10,16	36,19
	STD	24,60	25,34	16,85	17,11
Study Dec 18	Mean	70,47	29,02	8,69	36,06
	STD	24,10	23,97	15,45	15,73
Study June 20	Mean	75,85	36,04	10,19	40,69
	STD	21,26	24,52	15,03	15,86
Total	Mean	71,81	31,96	9,71	37,83
	STD	23,46	24,79	15,75	16,36
Sign:		0,000	0,000	0,206	0,000
Dif20-17		7,50	5,97	0,03	4,50
Dif20-18		5,38	7,02	1,50	4,63

- Readiness for protest increases strongly: this is true with regard to declarative demonstration and civil disobedience.
- No increase in violent demonstration yet (aggression against police and people with different opinions)



# Study 2020:

## Cognitive-political Correlates of Conspiracy Beliefs

N=607		Scary World	Distrust in Elites	Distrust in Science	Anomia	Political Alienation	Group focused Enmity	Devaluation of Democracy	Political Violence	Right-wing Extremism
Conspiracy 1 World Domination	Cor	<b>,346**</b>	<b>,336**</b>	<b>,395**</b>	<b>,548**</b>	<b>,472**</b>	<b>,554**</b>	<b>,492**</b>	<b>,216**</b>	<b>,488**</b>
	Sign	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Conspiracy 2 Global Disinformation	Cor	<b>,382**</b>	<b>,363**</b>	<b>,461**</b>	<b>,499**</b>	<b>,519**</b>	<b>,380**</b>	<b>,509**</b>	<b>,238**</b>	<b>,397**</b>
	Sign	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Conspiracy 3 Secret Powers	Cor	<b>,332**</b>	<b>,417**</b>	<b>,452**</b>	<b>,554**</b>	<b>,528**</b>	<b>,497**</b>	<b>,542**</b>	<b>,255**</b>	<b>,485**</b>
	Sign	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Conspiracy Beliefs Total	Cor	<b>,394**</b>	<b>,412**</b>	<b>,487**</b>	<b>,589**</b>	<b>,563**</b>	<b>,519**</b>	<b>,571**</b>	<b>,264**</b>	<b>,501**</b>
	Sign	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000

- Correlation of conspiracy beliefs (CB) with right-wing extremism (RE) remain constantly high
- Correlation between CB and prejudices is in 2020 already higher than in 2017.

⇒ The conspiracy syndrom includes:

World view dominated by perception of threat

Distrust in science

Distrust in elites

Anomy (decay of moral and values, anarchic conditions, misanthropia)

Political alienation (above-below-dichotomy, negative image of politicians)

Prejudices toward minorities (group-focused enmity)

Devaluation of democracy (Radicalization 1)

Political violence (Radicalization 2)

Right-wing extremism (authoritarian government, downplay of National Socialism, Social Darwinism)

# Study 2020: Conspiracy Beliefs and Cave Disposition

N=607		Cave Exper1 Acceptance	Cave Exper2 Anxiety	Cave Exper3 Positive Fantasy	Cave Experi4 Negative Eplanation	Cave Adapt1 Good	Cave Adapt2 Hospitalisat	Cave Adapt3 Suffering	Cave Pathology	Cave Competence
Conspiracy 1 World Domination	Cor	,012	,046	-,074	<b>,251**</b>	,008	,035	-,043	<b>,177**</b>	-,034
	Sign	,773	,261	,068	,000	,848	,395	,289	,000	,396
Conspiracy 2 Global Disinfor- mation	Cor	,049	<b>,090*</b>	,013	<b>,300**</b>	,062	-,005	-,032	<b>,204**</b>	,040
	Sign	,231	,028	,741	,000	,129	,903	,438	,000	,333
Conspiracy 3 Secret Powers	Cor	,018	,009	-,054	<b>,288**</b>	,028	,026	-,070	<b>,191**</b>	-,019
	Sign	,650	,830	,181	,000	,485	,521	,086	,000	,643
Conspiracy Beliefs Total	Cor	,030	,058	-,037	<b>,313**</b>	,038	,019	-,052	<b>,214**</b>	-,001
	Sign	,455	,159	,358	,000	,349	,641	,199	,000	,974

Highly significant correlation of conspiracy beliefs with negative cave explanation and cave pathology: People inside the cave who focus their imagination on negative thinking and the search for someone to blame for the situation, are also highly likely to speculate about secret powers that strive for world domination.

⇒ Paleoanthropological cognitive schemes increase beliefs in conspiracy theories especially in people with a highly pathological cave experience. (Partly) Explanation for the division between believers and no-believers in conspiracy theories while corona crises.

# Study 2020: Factor-Structure of World Views

N=607, 35 Variables	Right-wing authoritarian Complex	Alienation Syndrom	Scary-conspiratory World	Left-wing Protest Dynamic
	RA Factor 1	ALIEN Factor 2	SCA-CP Factor 3	LPROT Factor 4
RE Social Darwinism	<b>,797</b>	,105	<b>,208</b>	,069
VO Islamophobia	<b>,793</b>	<b>,218</b>	,035	-,111
RE Down Play of National Socialism	<b>,785</b>	,064	,121	,128
PRE Traditional Woman Role	<b>,761</b>	,146	,057	-,013
PRE Xenophobia	<b>,756</b>	<b>,211</b>	,047	-,150
PRE Antisemitism	<b>,747</b>	,053	,137	,030
RE Right-wing Authoritarian Government	<b>,714</b>	,143	<b>,206</b>	,033
PRE Racism	<b>,696</b>	,052	,167	-,063
DNI Nationalism	<b>,662</b>	,102	,128	-,196
PRE Homophobia	<b>,661</b>	,179	-,013	-,015
DEF Cocooning	<b>,520</b>	<b>,264</b>	<b>,360</b>	<b>-,390</b>
AUT Authoritarianism	<b>,435</b>	,082	<b>,416</b>	<b>-,398</b>
WD World View Divide	<b>-,152</b>	-,001	<b>-,137</b>	<b>,127</b>
PALIEN Above-below-Dichotomy	,162	<b>,752</b>	<b>,291</b>	,048
PALIEN Negative Image of Politicians	,076	<b>,739</b>	<b>,285</b>	,056
RAD Devaluation of Democracy	<b>,251</b>	<b>,661</b>	<b>,332</b>	,174
ANOM Misanthropy	<b>,301</b>	<b>,644</b>	,039	<b>-,279</b>
ANOM Anarchic Circumstances	<b>,249</b>	<b>,636</b>	<b>,327</b>	<b>-,262</b>
IH Social Image of Human Beings	-,102	<b>-,603</b>	<b>,255</b>	,120
ELIT Mistrust Elites	-,019	<b>,580</b>	<b>,287</b>	,153
RAD Criticism of System/- Change	-,010	<b>,576</b>	<b>,256</b>	<b>,363</b>
GLOB Disadvantages of Globalization	,068	<b>,543</b>	-,095	,013
ANO Decay of Moral and Values	<b>,331</b>	<b>,514</b>	<b>,223</b>	<b>-,365</b>
INFOST Reactance towards Media	,075	<b>,316</b>	,113	-,118
CONSP Global Disinformation	<b>,267</b>	<b>,446</b>	<b>,580</b>	-,091
SCARYW Self-defence/- Arming	<b>,339</b>	<b>,279</b>	<b>,570</b>	<b>-,331</b>
SCARYW Scary World View	,139	,188	<b>,562</b>	<b>-,443</b>
EPISTEM Heterodox Knowledge	,160	<b>,271</b>	<b>,560</b>	-,142
CONSP Secret Powers	<b>,385</b>	<b>,475</b>	<b>,541</b>	,015
INFOST Trust in the Internet	,065	-,057	<b>,526</b>	,085
CONSP World Domination	<b>,461</b>	<b>,416</b>	<b>,485</b>	-,080
RAD Readiness to Political Violence	,001	,193	<b>,418</b>	,131
PROT Civil Disobedience	,027	,040	,058	<b>,796</b>
PROT Violent Demonstration	<b>,363</b>	,053	,022	<b>,663</b>
PROT Declarative Protest	<b>-,373</b>	-,063	-,068	<b>,553</b>

Component	Rotated Sum of Loading		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulated %
1	7,186	20,532	20,532
2	5,166	14,759	35,291
3	3,439	9,827	45,118
4	2,670	7,628	52,746

## Right-wing Authoritarian Complex:

Life as struggle,  
Homogeneous community,  
Lifeworld and Moral Cocooning  
Hierarchy and subordination,  
De-differentiation of world view,  
Structural fighting mode,  
Evolutionary basis: Parochial altruism/ territorialism.

## Syndrom of Political Alienation

Above-below-dichotomy,  
Anti-elitism,  
Anomy world view,  
Susceptibility for conspiratory theories  
Evolutionary basis: Criticism of alphas.

## Scary-Conspiratory World

Paranoid world view plus enemies,  
Radicalization,  
Narrowing of world view,  
Active fighting mode,  
Evolutionary basis: Fight-flight.

## Left-wing Protest Dynamic

No scary-world belief  
No cocooning  
Universal morality,  
Weak group cohesion,  
Positive image of humanity,  
Weak adaptation to majority and readiness to protest  
Evolutionary basis: Curiosity, change and expansion

Main component analysis, VARIMAX-Rotation, 4 Factors

# Study 2020: World View Factors and Cave Disposition

N=607, MD=24, G1=312 G2=271		Right-wing Authoritarian C	Alienation Syndrom	Scary-conspi- ratory World	Left-wing Protest
Cave Patho- logy low	Mean	-,074	-,165	-,156	-,002
	STD	,914	,956	,925	,993
Cave Patho- logy high	Mean	,061	,196	,159	-,033
	STD	1,001	1,019	1,054	,989
Total	Mean	-,011	,003	-,009	-,016
	STD	,957	1,001	,998	,991
ANOVA	Sign	0,0878	0,0000	0,0001	0,7056
	Diff G2-G1	0,14	0,36	0,31	-0,03

- Strongly and highly significant influence of **Cave Pathology** on *alienation syndrome* and *scary-conspiracy world view*
- Weak influence on *right-wing authoritarian complex*
- No influence on *left-wing protest dynamic*

- Strong and highly significant negative influence of **Cave Competence** on *right-wing-authoritarian complex*
- Weak negative influence on *left-wing protest dynamic*

N=607, MD=24, G1=157 G2=426		Right-wing Authoritarian C	Alienation Syndrom	Scary-conspi- ratory World	Left-wing Protest
Cave Compe- tence low	Mean	,172	,028	-,086	,113
	STD	1,171	1,023	,967	1,072
Cave Compe- tence high	Mean	-,079	-,006	,019	-,064
	STD	,857	,994	1,010	,956
Total	Mean	-,011	,003	-,009	-,016
	STD	,957	1,001	,998	,991
ANOVA	Sign	0,005	0,714	0,262	0,055
	Diff G2-G1	-0,25	-0,03	0,10	-0,18

# Conclusion

- No decrease in susceptibility for conspiracy beliefs (CB) 2020, but divide between believers and no-believers in conspiracy theories during Corona crisis.
- Conspiracy beliefs are embedded in a syndrom of imagination, which spans from prejudices against minorities, political alienation and skepticism of democracy to right-wing extremism and political violence.
- Causes for conspiracy beliefs are scary world-views, which correlate with a low ability for differentiation under the dominant imagination of threat and a tendency towards uniform and closed perception of what is relevant in „reality“. Additionally, an enemy is defined who is responsible for the state of threat.  
Pointedly: CB=Scary-World + Enemy-Definition.
- Cave pathology increases susceptibility for scary-conspiracy factor within world views and the alienation syndrome.  
Cave competence acts as a barrier against right-wing authoritarian thoughts.
- ⇒ Persistence of paleo-anthropological cognitive schemes as chance and risk for modern societies. Relevant for anti-pandemic politics and prevention against radicalization
- ⇒ Further research should focus on mechanism of interplay between world view management, bio-social cognitive schemes and radicalization.  
Open question: evaluation within other social groups. Role of education unclear.

