Conspiracy Theories as Stigmatized Knowledge

A visual synopsis

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Reference
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Conspiracy theories as stigmatized knowledge

Conspiracy theories ≠ Conspiracies

It is important that conspiracies and conspiracy theories are differentiated from one another.

Conspiracies are schemes organized and executed in secrecy by two or more entities.

RUMOUR HAS IT THAT YOU ARE TRANSPORTING A WHALE

WHALE?! PREPOSERDUS.

The mental constructs assert that a secret group exists, controlling worldly events without the majority of the general public being aware of this.

Conspiracy theories believe that they are the few that are aware of this fact.

ALL THESE LIES

They perceive themselves as special, the ones who are 'truly' aware of what is happening in the world, and why.

Conspiracy theories are often in conflict with information that is routine to a society — general knowledge.

Conspiracies are mental constructs used to organize events into a cohesive narrative.
Conspiracy theories can be considered stigmatised knowledge.

"By stigmatised knowledge, I mean knowledge claims that have been ignored or rejected by institutions, (Barkun, 2016)"

Examples of these institutions are:

Knowledge that is not verified or accepted by these institutions becomes stigmatised.

Other beliefs are also included in the domain of stigmatised knowledge:

It is likely that people who believe in one manifestation of stigmatised knowledge also believe in other manifestations.
They perceive all institutions as being in control by the ‘ secrect group’, who use them to distort their ‘true’ reality.

Conspiracy theories therefore easily strengthen one another, and, especially the all-encompassing theories, mix easily with other manifestations of stigmatised knowledge.

Nonetheless, mainstream knowledge and stigmatised or ‘fringe’ knowledge remain separate.
For a long time, there was a clear boundary between 'fringe' knowledge and general knowledge.

This boundary was defended and kept in a good condition by gatekeepers, like journalists.

Only rarely was the boundary crossed by knowledge from the 'fringe'.

For the majority of the general public this boundary was well understood.

Stigmatised knowledge kept on being refused and unacknowledged by institutions.

You are not coming through here.

Aww... come on.

As a consequence, stigmatised knowledge remained:

Hard to find.

Excluded.

In the shadows.
The boundary between 'fringe' knowledge and mainstream knowledge began to wear away in the 1990s.

The internet created a new media environment that enabled conspiracy theories to flourish.

Especially, the proliferation of 'conspiracy theories' had a significant effect on the flourishing of conspiracy theories.

Manifestations of stigmatised knowledge that had been kept outside of mainstream knowledge could now be accessed from almost anywhere.

Stigmatised knowledge could now easily be shared...

...enabling it to reach a wider audience...

...and increasing its credibility.

Stigmatised knowledge now even starts to appear regularly in mainstream media.

And now, manifestations of stigmatised knowledge have been enabled to become part of mainstream knowledge.
A VISUAL SYNOPSIS OF BARKUN (2016)

Despite, conspiracy theories also regularly play a part in popular entertainment.

Some of these media expressions have received a lot of recognition amongst the general public.

Nonetheless, the boundary between 'fringe' knowledge and mainstream knowledge is not completely gone.

Still, when conspiracy theories are allowed to become part of mainstream knowledge they can transgress into political discourse without much difficulty.

Can’t we talk about serious matters?

Please...

What about Atlantis?

Prove you are from Earth!

Where is the whale?