

New Age and Norwegian 'Conspirituality'

Asbjørn Dyrendal

During the early 2000's, a new, surprising phenomenon occurred: the fusion of New Age spirituality and conspiracy culture into 'conspirituality'. This is the argument of Charlotte Ward and David Voas (2011). Contrary to Ward and Voas, this paper takes as its starting point the view that theories of conspiracy are not really surprising anywhere. The current conspiratorial scene is but the continuation of older traditions, spinning out of the dynamics of 'the cultic milieu' (Asprem & Dyrendal, forthcoming). Esoteric discourses on secrecy and concealment have always also encompassed the attribution of both to hidden, *evil* actors. Narratives about such actors and their deeds perform, among other things, the work of theodicy.

The current actors have their acknowledged 'foremothers' in earlier conspiratorialities, and this holds true also for Norway (Dyrendal, forthcoming). But the visibility and prominence of conspiratoriality within both international and local scenes vary widely over time – possibly in contradiction to conspiracy discourse in general society: While social conspiracy talk in general seems to show a stable and downward trend (Uscinski and Parent 2014), Ward and Voas (2011, 109) quite rightly insist that the particular international trend they discuss, from meager beginnings in the 1990's, has gained prominence after September 11th 2001.

This holds, from my own observations, true for Norway as well. During the period in question, we see the rise (and partial fall) of a scene within the New Age milieu where conspiracy discourses took center stage. The scene investigated here is the Norwegian group blog *Nyhetspeilet*, in that it, and its rise and 'fall', serves as the primary material. The blog was chosen as the central and most important Norwegian example of international conspiratoriality. It was also, for a time, the hub where Norwegian conspiracy culture met 'New Age' concerns. What did this scene look like? Why did it rise, and why did it 'fall'? I shall argue that part of the answer lies in trends that include heightened millennial expectations in parts of the New Age milieu: it was, partially, a manifestation of Norwegian New Age entering 'apocalyptic time', with its decline following the down side of the apocalyptic wave (Landes 2011, 52-61).

Slettet: a

Before we can get to the material however, we need to delve a bit into some of the terms least familiar to religious studies scholars, and place them into context of the study of 'New Age'. Then I shall introduce *Nyhetsspeilet* in its Norwegian and international context, before moving on to its constructions of enemies, with particular emphasis on the central role of epistemic authority. Closing, I look at the 'apocalyptic wave' of its rise and fall.

Conspiracy Theory and Conspirituality

I stated above that the attribution of conspiracy to others is not to be treated as surprising. The general reasons are intertwined. First, humans are social animals with communicative capacity. We have the ability to both plan, communicate and co-operate with each other to further our own cause. Sometimes, the causes in which we co-operate are ones that others find to their own disadvantage, or to their own dislike. When strategies for furthering such goals are made in secret, they are deemed to be a 'conspiracy'. Second, being social animals with a 'theory of mind', humans *recognize* the capacities for planned behavior in others. Since we meaning-making humans are overly good at finding patterns, we also find patterns in what is random: it may be costly to not see dangerous patterns when they are there, thus false positives abound.

A tendency towards false positives in identifying conspiracy, often by routes of certain (and bad) habits of thought (e.g. Bruder et.al. 2013), is one marker for 'conspiracy belief' and what commonly passes for 'conspiracy theory' in everyday language. It is however, merely one of them. While there is evidence of personality playing a role (e.g. Swami et.al. 2011), there is no particular reason to choose *either* "innate" *or* "historically developed" when explaining or analyzing conspiracy discourse. It is necessarily both. Particular rhetorical patterns, *topoi* etc clearly reflect historical processes, both global and local. Patterns of reasoning and discursive activity are permeated by *learned* behavior. Thus we should not be surprised that although the *capacity* for conspiracy thinking is innate, and the *tendency* to engage in it is partially influenced by personality, the strongest predictor of partaking in conspiracy discourse of specific types is participation in a social group where this kind of discourse is prevalent (e.g. Byford 2011).

The promotion of conspiracy theories thus has multiple causes and/or motives. The theories may be involved in a variety of context-based and sometimes strategic uses. Beliefs are held with any degree of sincerity, and both promotion and belief are guided by multiple possible dynamics (e.g. Fenster 2008; Gray 2010). Top-down, elites may use conspiracy discourse to distract and derail criticism, mobilize the public around ethno-nationalist causes, or a host of other concerns. Bottom-up, interest groups may mobilize conspiracy discourse as e.g. explanation of misfortune, as claims to knowledge that demands re-allocation of power, or as critique of political and other powers-that-be. Conspiracy theory claims a form of esoteric knowledge, and it may also be used explicitly as such by religious movements (e.g. Dyrendal 2013).

Conspiracy discourse may be embraced in different forms and at different levels of commitment. It is common to differentiate between belief in small-scale, event-oriented theories of conspiracy, and theories that conspiracy is more ubiquitous (e.g. Pipes 1997; Gray 2010; Barkun 2003). The latter kind of theories makes use of the former, and the most ubiquitous sense of conspiracy is often termed 'conspiracism'. It is this type of conspiracy discourse that permeates *conspirativity*.

In their original formulation of the concept, Ward and Voas (2011, 104) describe *conspirativity* as a hybrid, "politico-spiritual philosophy", manifesting in two core "convictions": that "a secret group covertly controls, or is trying to control, the political and social order", and that "[h]umanity is undergoing a 'paradigm shift' in consciousness". Conspiracy culture presents a problem in the form of a worldly evil to be overcome, while (New Age) spirituality provides the soteriological solution: to act in accordance with an awakened 'new paradigm' worldview and usher in a global change in consciousness. To Ward and Voas, *conspirativity* was a new phenomenon anchored in the marriage of conspiracy culture and a segment of the New Age movement through the world wide web. While Asprem and I (Dyrendal & Asprem 2013; Asprem & Dyrendal, forthcoming) would redefine the concept to take into consideration much older and more pervasive involvement of conspiracism in esoteric discourse, the area delineated in the original formulation is very much the one with which this article is concerned. Nevertheless: to understand the phenomenon slightly deeper in history and

social dynamics, I will briefly sketch the underlying dynamics whereby the discourses of 'New Age' and conspiracism are intertwined more generally.¹

If we, as Wouter Hanegraaff (1996) suggests, see New Age as a phase in the history of the cultic milieu (Campbell 1972) we should take a brief look at the description of the latter. What we find, is that Campbell insisted that deviance from "dominant cultural orthodoxies" (1972, 122) is one of two central features (the other being 'mystical religion') of this 'cultural underground'. Moreover, with secularization, science and its institutions more and more take the place of theology and the institutions of the church as being the space from which the relevant cultural orthodoxies are being promoted. Thus the alternative treatments, history, physics, economics etc of the milieu become more important for the defining characteristic of 'deviance' than its alternative theology. Stressing the aspects of deviance, Michael Barkun (2003) suggested that a new type of conspiracy culture, 'improvised millennialism', was based on dynamics relating to the embrace of what he called 'stigmatized knowledge-claims'.

The stigma is a crucial factor. If something has a stigma, somebody is (perceived to be) doing the work of stigmatization. In this case, the knowledge-insiders, the institutions of authorized knowledge, belong to the culprits, since they refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the claims, which thus receive stigma. Since the field of 'New Age' continues the tradition of counter-knowledge, from astrology and numerology to crystal healing and ufology, there is never any dearth of knowledge-claims to be dismissed. This is no superficial and new trend: the search for hidden knowledge in the past, among outsiders, and from higher sources, partly stem from traditions of esoteric knowledge-claims generally (Hammer 2001; cf. Hanegraaff 2012). Their history and their attraction lie partially with precisely their status as hidden, rejected, and forbidden. The implication, spoken or not, is that this knowledge is being actively suppressed by forces that know better (cf. Barkun 2003). The tradition thus partly takes for granted, partly gives an impetus to conspiracy thinking.

To this picture belongs a utopian, 'millennial' dimension. The observation of Olav Hammer (2001) about New Age history as a U-shaped curve, with a long fall from a high

¹ For deeper discussions, see the references above.

position, and a long climb back upwards, also applies to claims of knowledge being lost, and then recovered. The knowledge-claims of the cultic milieu are filled not only with 'lost' and 'hidden' knowledge, but also with promises of how the light of *gnosis* will at one point – soon – shine through, with e.g. 'the paradigm shift'. At this time, the 'epistemically dispossessed', their claims, and their counter-epistemology (cf. Robertson 2014) will be recognized, and the agency lost by the stigma of non-recognition will be recovered. With the paradigm shift looming, scenes within the milieu (or the milieu more broadly) at times become 'semiotically aroused' (cf. Landes 2011), seeing current events as evidence of forthcoming changes. However, like the millennium, the paradigm shifts tend to not appear. This sets the scene for conspiracy theory as, e.g., a strategy to deal with cognitive dissonance, but also for larger scale disappointment that may lead to disaffiliation.

How did this play out in the ongoing saga of modern Norwegian conspiratorality as seen on *Nyhetsspeilet*?

Introducing Nyhetspeilet

Nyhetspeilet published its first blog post, a post about *Zeitgeist: The Movie*, in January 2009. The topic was fitting, in that it addressed several central concerns of the blog, which started on a wave of Norwegian conspiracy interest following events like 9/11, an important part of *Zeitgeist*. The increased globalization of American conspiracy culture also shows in that the interest for conspiracy theories about finance and the money system, important both to the movie and the blog, tended to center on the Federal Reserve system.

The group venture had its background in a convergence of interest among some of the Norwegian proponents of alternative history and spirituality. The instigators found each other mainly through the alternative forum *altnett.ning*, the official forum for Norwegian 'Alternativt Nettverk'. An important factor in drawing them together was – over and against the mainly spiritual interests of most other users – their shared desire to address larger social and political issues, and to do so through conspiracist convictions.

They were by no means alone: the interest in wide-ranging conspiracy theories had exploded in the 'New Age' milieu during the first decade of the new century. Conspiracy theories had, of course, bloomed before, as part of alternative history, and as explanation for the lack of recognition of the alternative physics, treatment modalities, and spirituality of the 'cultic milieu'. Conspiracy theories were alluded to in articles and talks on the dangers of vaccination, and they were explicit in articles and talks on the suppression of UFO-evidence. Both 'big pharma' and 'the military-industrial complex' were recognized as villains capable of, and probably guilty of, almost anything in general, and numerous crimes in particular (cf. Dyrendal, forthcoming; Lie 2009; Færseth 2013a). These theories, at their abstract level, may be seen as generalized expressions of political and spiritual dissent (cf. Imhoff and Bruder 2014). They tended to be expressed as part of a generalized suspicion of 'negative forces' in society. Sometimes presenting the dark forces of conspiracy was part of a wider, more positive vision for spirituality-based change. The latter, anecdotally, seemed to play the central role in the milieu.

As in the international scene described by Ward and Voas (2011), conspiracism gradually came more to the forefront. This process accelerated after the events on September 11th 2001, or to be more precise: the American foreign policy adventures following September 11th. Earlier, central adopters of international conspiracism in the New Age milieu were met with harsh internal criticism (see Heilund 2003), but through the years after 2001, grand conspiracy theories became more mainstreamed. By 2006, the audience for conspiracist speculation had grown big enough to sustain a more-or-less self-published conspiracy book, Per-Aslak Ertresvågs *Makten bak makten*, at the top of the best-seller lists for 'non-fiction' several months running.

The book recapped many of the most important conspiracy theories of the American far right, with a small dose of others, e.g. 'green leftist' theories, thrown in for good measure. The villains were thus the usual ones: the Illuminati, the bankers, globalization, popular music, big pharma etc, and they were behind all the usual plots, from JFK, 9/11 and the world wars to 'chemtrails', Ebola and HIV. Alternative history vied with alternative medicine and alternative economics for space. The book was a typical case of narrating a nested "superconspiracy" (Barkun 2003), with a wide variety of specific

targets, and underlying antagonism against globalized society, capitalism, medical, cultural, and academic establishment. It appealed to a wide readership, and not least the Norwegian alternative spiritual community in which Ertresvåg was a veteran. Parts of his book were reprinted in Alternativt Nettverk's flagship journal *Visjon*, and Ertresvåg joined other speakers at fairs, talking about the global conspiracy. He also participated in one of the competing Norwegian '911 Truth'-groups, '911 PK-gruppen', with one of those behind *Nyhetspeilet*.

The conspiracy theories about September 11th were important in the promotion of broader conspiracy claims in the Norwegian public. They also played a part in getting an active readership and a community of commenters for *Nyhetspeilet*, where 9/11 joined other conspiracy topics in its section on 'society'. 'Society' was one of three sections, related to the blog's goal of a 'triple awakening' for its readers in three areas: 'consciousness' (spirituality), 'extra-terrestrial contacts' ('cosmos'), and 'society'. The three were interrelated. Extra-terrestrial contact were seen to supply spiritual messages, while their very existence, and all the evidence for it, was seen as suppressed by epistemic and political power. 'Consciousness' involved prophetic messages of both spiritual and political transformation, including the fall of reigning powers and epistemic paradigms. While not present in every single article, conspiracism permeated presentations regardless of topic.²

Conspiracism was most dominant in the blog posts tagged with 'society', which tabulated at 714 of 1085 posts by December 2014. The extra-terrestrial topic (the 'cosmos'-tag) was, in line with general developments in the alternative movement, least used, including only 95 posts. Spirituality does not quite make up the rest, as some posts are untagged and some are also (double-)tagged as 'video', but considering that these topics could flow over into each other, we gain an impression of the relative interest. All of the categories could include apocalyptic messages of forewarning, including forewarnings about very tumultuous times, related to the 2012-apocalypse.

² There was a gradual change here, with one of the more prominent contributors gradually (and only partially) breaking with a conspiracist paradigm, relegating it to a lower grade of importance, most clearly from 2012.

One of the reasons for the dominance of spirituality and conspiracy theory as topics, was that they could *also* be driven by events. Constructing conspiracy *theory* in a manner that delineates the complex relations of postmodern “superconspiracies” is time consuming and can make for dry reading. Conspiracist *interpretations of events* is less difficult, continually actualizes itself as ‘news’, and can draw on an international community of interpreters. At the height of activities, relevant events could be anything from a prophesied collapse of the financial system, forthcoming or recent alien visitations (and the lack of media interest), to earthquakes, terrorism, or international conflicts; all were construed as acts of the conspiracy. There will thus always be numerous international events that can be interpreted and integrated into a larger ideological framework, especially when millennial expectations have driven semiotic arousal to the level of promiscuity (cf. Landes 2011). So while the theories presented were often related to a global conspiracy – in the earliest formulations of triple awakening, the “New World Order” was an important area of interest – the superconspiracy was often constructed through its alleged influence on specific events.

This use of events and interpretation made it easier to accommodate a community of partially conflicting voices, via multiple interpretations that often involved both internal and external contradictions. As noted by Wood, Douglas, and Sutton (2012), the contradictions are not central as long as they each appeal to higher order beliefs that cohere with the worldview. The antagonisms raised and the higher order enemies tend to be the central points, rather than the details. This contributes to a general characteristic of conspiracism.

Enemies as Populist Cultural Work

It is commonly accepted that conspiracy theories constitute a form of populist discourse. They do cultural work Michael Butter (2014, 18-20) pointedly summarizes as *distortion* and *deflection* in specific areas of conflicting interests.³ Everything associated with the

³ Conspiracy theories by Butter’s definition necessarily distort (‘misrepresent’) matters of fact. He uses the paired concepts distortion-deflection (mostly) to dissociate between conspiracy theories where ‘scapegoating’ (deflection) is the central part of blaming, and those where the reasons for conflict are ‘merely’ distorted, and blame is still delivered

conflicts becomes, in line with the logic of populist dualism, associated with either friends or enemies, and the conflict gets similarly simplified into black and white. If we take this as our starting point: who were the culprits, or, more interestingly, which areas of antagonism were delineated and what were the primary solutions offered during the height of *Nyhetsspeilets* activities?

If we start out with the broadest picture, 'enemies' could be almost anyone outside the conspiratorial milieu, as the theories create *potential* conflicts that cover almost all sectors. This follows from the superconspiracist New World Order-theories. Obviously, the 'could' was not always realized in explicit accusation. Choices were made, they form a pattern, and 'internal', or local, enemies were notoriously related to 'external' enemies as acting on behalf of the latter as agents or dupes. For the most part, they signaled the same areas of conflict. (I shall return to a subsection related to knowledge below.)

In good conspiracist tradition, everything was interrelated, the big with the small, the issues with each other, and the internal enemies with the external ones. One such area of entanglement may be seen when The Norwegian Institute of Public Health was tied to the larger global conspiracy like this:

Former [foreign] minister Thorvald Stoltenberg has for many years been in league with the "godfather" of big pharma, David Rockefeller, among other things through his membership in the Rockefeller-led secret societies *The Trilateral Commission* and *The Bilderberg Group*. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health – FHI (publicly known as the Norwegian Institute of Public Poisoning after the swineflu vaccine scandal) has a key role in the hidden co-operation between Rockefeller/Stoltenberg.⁴ (Gaarder 2010)

The father was tied to the son (then prime minister) and daughter (then director of the institute), implicating a whole order of government and public health. Through activities (vaccine campaigns) both levels and people were tied to money-making schemes for Rockefeller, secret plots to decimate the world's population, and to schemes for enslaving the remaining world population. The latter was achieved through their

within society or group. I have adapted the terms here, so distortion is a necessary relation with regard to 'facts', while 'deflection' is a scale of degree regarding blame.

⁴ All translations from original sources in Norwegian are my own.

connections to the wider 'Rockefeller scheme' of Bilderberg and other 'New World Order' organizations, which include a satanized Roman Catholic Church.

The internal enemies had, necessarily, local faces, but the vitally important ones were the external enemies running the show. The *external* enemy could be divided into the (semi)hidden power at the top of the conspiratorial pyramid, and its executive arms. The latter shows the antagonisms and parts of the ideological heritage. At the top of the list, we may summarize the enemies as financial elites and global, military power. Geopolitically, the United States, its institutions, government, and elites were at the center of theories. This was also the case if one excludes articles on 9/11. More locally, but still partially geopolitical, institutions, laws, and regulations related to the European Union were also among the popular targets. In line with the logic of superconspiracy theory, the "real" power behind the scenes was opaque. This opened for participants, either as contributors or as commenters, who blamed the Jews, the Vatican, the Illuminati, global bankers, the military-industrial complex, the Communists, evil aliens, or any combination of these and more. *Religion* was both a topic on its own and a way of uniting and demonizing 'the enemy' as, when e.g. the Catholic church, Judaism and esoteric societies were tied to an occult, Satanic conspiracy.

The multiplicity of possible villains was, in Norwegian as international conspiratoriality, tied to a more limited range of overarching topics. Most relate to knowledge, power, and freedom, with power at the center: power limits freedom and dominates what passes for knowledge. Still from a bird's eye perspective, but a little closer to particulars, many of the more popular themes relate to globalization, in the shape of imperial, *martial* dominance over nation states and the *financial* dominance of a global elite. Conspiracy theories about prophesied or current events related to the 'war on terror' – theories about 'false flag'-terrorism – tended to present the events as caused by authorities hungry for further limits to personal and political freedom. When used to interpret what is commonly accepted as natural disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes etc), the conspiracy theories could vacillate between *politically* instrumental interpretations and interpretations fixed on the hidden *knowledge*. The political interpretations could present the 'natural disaster' as e.g. *punishment* for some political transgression against the globalist agenda, or as *warning* to others. For instance:

The Japanese finance minister told Benjamin Fulford in a video interview last year that Japan was threatened with earthquakes by New World Order (NWO) agents if they did not hand over [control of] the Japanese monetary system to American oligarchs. And shortly afterwards, two earthquakes [hit Japan] with epicenter directly under a nuclear power plant. (Karlstad 2011)

When 'knowledge' came into focus, the events could be seen as *experiments* with e.g. the reach of new weapons. One such 'weapon' was frequently thought to be Alaska's High Frequency Active Auroral Research Programme (HAARP), and its alleged underlings in the European Incoherent SCATter (EISCAT). These were, among many other things, speculated as behind the Haiti earthquakes of 2010, a host of disasters in 2002, as well as hurricanes through weather control (e.g. Hanssen 2010; 2013). The fact of HAARP being closed down since 2013 has not done any harm to its secret powers of destruction. In either case, misuse of power or misuse of knowledge, the disasters – especially when we include diseases – were also made to thematize corrupt and evil expertise, showing the hidden reach of science and technology in the service of the conspiracy. (I shall defer further treatments of this side until next section.)

The range of specific theories, as mentioned above, shows American theorists as the primary center from which ideas flow to the European and Norwegian periphery.⁵ Hypertext linking habits and the textual focus on American topics and American governance all attest to this. This is not only the case for topics relating to international politics and local ramifications. Looking merely at the *economic* conspiracy theories, we may note that although the alleged Jewishness of certain bankers could be viewed as relevant, common knowledge, the primary interest has more often been directed towards the Federal Reserve system. This interest is more than passing; theories of 'the Fed' are, especially when tied to the Rockefeller and/or Rothschild family, linchpins integrating the concerns expressed in networks of partially overlapping theories. Again, even when the focus is Norway and local cases, the alternative history of the Federal Reserve can be prominent. Moreover, this history mostly follows something

⁵ Theories from Russia Today and other anti-American propaganda sites dealing in conspiracy theory were also frequently used by some.

approaching a John Birch Society-version or a Sovereign Citizen-movement (more on this below) version, with explicit references to the same.

It is probably no coincidence that some of the primary concerns we may see reflected in *Nyhetspeilets* articles are about power in the form of imperialism in foreign policy and the financial dominance of elites. These are, albeit mostly 'leftish', not only populist but mainstream political topics of debate. The handling of 9/11 and the international banking crisis did not make them any less central. In the populist, conspiracist version, they serve as prime areas of conflict, with analyses projecting a dualist worldview onto the actors and extending their range of evil. There is a partial 'deflection' of blame. It is quite clear that the assumption of guilt follows, not deflects from, the main line of conflict when political and financial power are at the center. However, when the tales of evil's course and causes center on invisible actors (e.g. an esoteric, satanic-globalist elite), particular family lines, or specific ethnicities, the distortion of fact necessarily also deflects blame. One example of this is when those following the Sovereign Citizen version of economic history, with its background in Christian Identity, even while disclaiming anti-Semitism evoke and make use of old-school anti-Semitic theories.

The evocation of such theories seems to have been an important contributing factor to the site extending its reach to a more narrowly politically interested, right-wing audience. Since most of the writers shared neither the political allegiance nor the narrower interest, what kinds of solutions did they see for the problems they presented? The 'easy' answer points towards that of an apocalyptic millennium, but that is only part of a more complex tale.

We may start with the catastrophic millennium that, during the height of the blog, was often connected to the wider expectation of the '2012 milieu' (see Gelfer 2011). Rarely directly related to the 'old' date of December 21st, the multiple apocalypses of the 2012 milieu involved everything from a disaster related to a 'pole shift' following the coming of 'planet X' (Nibiru), to a spiritual renewal that would turn everything upside-down and right every wrong. Gradually. Participants but rarely foresaw a *passive* millennium. A few certainly did, but in the conspiritual scene, Norway included, most seem to have

followed the countercultural forerunners⁶ and saw any coming cataclysm as an opportunity for more long-running cultural work in alternative economics, agriculture, medicine etc to take center stage in rebuilding a better world. The spiritual renewal of the cataclysm was not *always* presented as 'heightening vibrations' with the spiritual manifesting more clearly in the material world, but it generally was expected to lend a hand.

There were two elements here important to how the conspirituals saw a solution to the power of conspiracy. On the one hand, the current situation with the domination of current regimes of power-knowledge was not primarily presented as something to reform, step-by-step. Still, the step-by-step method *outside* and as *alternative* to the system was the primary answer when change was the topic. It did however, on the other hand, seem to have to wait for the system to collapse first, before the new culture could take over. It was no revolutionary (or even 'evolutionary', as with Reality Sandwich's *Evolver*) measure; at best, it was a protest and a way to prepare.

The most 'revolutionary' protest came later, with the adoption of Sovereign Citizen-ideas to the European conspiritual scene. What is this? Very briefly, the 'movement' developed as extreme versions of protests against U.S. federalism, and it denies legitimacy to authorities above local level. An idea essential to the theory of Sovereign Citizens (or 'Freemen', which is another label for theories that overlap) is a division between the 'legal person' ('strawman') and the physical self. Individuals are, in their physical selves, 'sovereign citizens', and not answerable to laws passed by what are deemed illegal authorities. The ideas have served to legitimize tax denial, and, indeed, to deny authority to any law outside its own, peculiar understanding of common law. An idea basic to the Freeman-variety is that governments have taken illegal ownership of individuals through their name, birth certificate, or other official documents, but that this is a contract that can be revoked by relinquishing the name and documents. Freeman ideology furthermore includes an idea that money (as token of value – 'fiat money' as opposed to e.g. gold) is issued by taking the 'legal person' as guarantee for

⁶ E.g. Reality Sandwich and its related activities, such as *Evolver*.

value, effectively giving authorities ownership of the 'strawman'.⁷ This idea is sometimes used to ground a particular set of actions: it is claimed that one, by the right juridical formulae may not only free oneself of the state's claims, but also of any financial claims from banks etc, and instead *claim* large sums from the bank (see e.g. Wessinger 2000; Barkun 1994).

This alternative theory of money and jurisprudence has taken hold of Freeman-on-the-land to the degree that its practice tends to be viewed as a financial scam (e.g. Rooke 2012). From a legal point of view, that is probably correct. Catherine Wessinger (2000) has a sociologically more astute observation when she compares the byzantine, pseudo-legal and -financial theories to traditional nativist movements' magical rites and remedies to counter the Europeans' bullets. The slings and arrows of modernity take the shape of incomprehensible power, and integrated global economies may take turns that affect private incomes in a similarly incomprehensible manner. Thus remedies take the form of Richard Feynman's 'cargo cult science', mimicking the shapes, sounds, and sights of the legal and financial language, institutions etc that are seen as suppressive.

The following piece of writing from *Nyhetsspeilet* gives an example of the kind of reasoning involved:

To become a freewoman I first did three things:

1. Announced to the state that there is no contract or anything enforceable between us, referring to my natural right to live in the country because I was born here. ...

In this letter I specify that I refrain from provision of state benefits and that I will not be contributing to this community. ...

2. In the letter above, I asked the government to inform all their agents via its registers that there is no contract between us ... I ... also sent a legal document to some public agencies ... and informed that there exists no authority to act, sign, negotiate or anything else on my behalf. ...

3. Then, most importantly: I am in the process of establishing a company through a private process (no registration in public registers) and then pledge my birth certificate in a

⁷ Accordingly, one of the sometime writers at *Nyhetsspeilet* has recently tried to raise a court case against the prime minister for enslaving the Norwegian people through such means. (http://www.ta.no/Ingunn_truer_nye_eiere_av_Niceland_-5-50-32758.html)

holding company. My birth certificate is a security that I rightfully own. (Sigurdsdatter 2013)

Among the declarations we find statements that the author's house was an independent state, that the mortgage with the bank was invalid, and, of course, that there would be no taxes paid. There are multiple examples of the particular pseudo-legal language⁸, but these are mainly reserved as legal documents and prescriptions for others who want to follow the same road.

Unsurprisingly, neither the bank nor the government took heed. The author was expelled from her state, and the house foreclosed. Her remedial acts are perhaps, as Wessinger argues, best seen as 'magical', but this is a matter of degree, with Norwegian conspirituals ranging close to the pure type. In the U.S., by contrast, movements proposing the theory and acting accordingly are defending 'their' property and their interpretations with guns. They have shot police officers and tax collectors, and sometimes they are rallying a group of armed believers in hope of a revolutionary uprising. Acting along the lines of ideology ascertains that governments and banks will retaliate, and so it guarantees a further radicalization among some of the believers. In Norway, and as covered by *Nyhetspeilet*, 'freemen' may write about the ideology, lecture on it, and in some cases, adhere to it to the extent that they become homeless – but in the three cases nationally to date, believers have gathered and sung 'Kumbaya'. They have become angered, but they have not taken up arms, nor appealed for such. The protest is thus resolved – so far – as a purely ideological struggle. It has a high personal cost, but the 'solution', when protests and attempts at withdrawal from the corruption of society have been tried to the end, is still the conspiritual 'love and light' (cf. Eggen 2014).

The Conflict Over Epistemic Authority

The generalized overview above gives a vague impression of some superordinate areas of conflict. It does not attempt to give full insight into the multiform theories and their

⁸ See <http://www.sigurdsdatter.com/juridisk-hoveddokument-edssvoren-erklaeligring.html>

|

multitude of specific pictures of enemies internal and external. Nor have I yet done more than mention an important, specific area of conflict – that over what gets to count as knowledge. This was and is a central topic for conspiracy culture, both in the conspiratorial sense and outside, and for *Nyhetsspeilet* as a modern day venue for a wider ‘cultic milieu’.⁹

The problem is a general one. Within a fully conspiracist worldview, the complicity of knowledge workers becomes central to the explanation of how truth is hidden. One of the early ways this was written into *Nyhetsspeilet*, was a list of the ‘taboos’ of mainstream media (e.g. Gaarder 2009, 2010). The early version was relatively brief, and centered on foreign policy, recent history and current events. Later, it filled out, and areas where science and scientists were explicitly presented as part of the conspiracy became more numerous. The audience expanded, and the articles expanded both in territory and in reach.

This creates its own set of dynamics. With relative success in attracting an audience, writers, and a high public profile, come countering voices. The social elite previously attacked for hiding masonic, Jewish, or other identities deemed problematic did not answer, but certain academics did.¹⁰ Obviously, the response engendered (heightened) conflict.

There were two general, topical responses from the conspiracy scene, sometimes from the same people: the individual, activist academics were dismissed and tied to a conspiracy against the truth-tellers, or the whole enterprise of institutionalized science was dismissed as corrupt. When tied to current events or particular lines of history, the local enemies could be particular individuals representing institutions, the whole institution (e.g. Norwegian Institute of Public Health) or both. The first line, especially the one where the critics were dismissed as skeptics (or ‘septics’) is the one I have

⁹ I will not address the criticism of Campbell’s theory here, but I will note that the evocation of the theory is highly instrumental and focused on Campbell’s interest in science as the new orthodoxy from which ‘alternatives’ are being cast as heterodox (and wrong). See Aspren and Dyrendal, forthcoming.

¹⁰ Disclosure: I was among the earliest, as an established public voice on and against conspiracism. Thus other critics were, for a time, seen as my dupes, while I was construed as a dupe of, complicit with, or small-time, paid lackey of “Them”.

followed most closely. Since some of the publicly profiled critics (such as myself) were organized skeptics, the conclusion tended to be that any kind of critic – including those from alternative religion forums – was also a hidden skeptic, sent out by the Skeptics society. These were often, but not always, then tied to external enemies in the larger conspiracy: the established truth of the government being run by alien forces (e.g. the Bilderberg-group, NWO, etc) was temporarily forgotten as some wanted to appeal to authorities, local and national, to stop all this critical attention.

As more skeptics at grassroots level started blogging critically, the attention shifted again. When the Humanist society started a campaign for critical thinking¹¹ directed specifically against alternative business forms, alternative treatment modalities, conspiracy theory, vaccine denial etc, these became proof of a many-headed, local conspiracy (Humanist-Skeptics) against e.g. health freedom and religious freedom. This particular constellation was again, of course, tied to a broader conspiracy: a socialist (Fabian society), satanic-pedophile, occult, and/or Catholic-Jewish one. The latter designations were optional, and seemed less important, other than as integrating the local enemy within a total worldview. The *important* enemies were the local, visible individuals and groups, and while the conspiracist discourse certainly *distorted* the scientific evidence and the position of its critics, it is more difficult to dismiss completely the blame as *deflection* (cf. Butter 2014). The skeptical voices did become scapegoats for the grand conspiracy, and by protesting the distortion of history or facts of natural science, served as opposition in epistemic claims even where they may have shared concern about *issues*. But protesting claims to truth is central on its own.

Slettet: in

¹¹ The campaign was called "Ingen Liker Å Bli Lurt" – nobody likes to be fooled, and manifested primarily as a web page and a Facebook group. It engendered debate and conflict so hard, the controversy was enough to spill over in both media and court rooms. (I should mention that although I've had no part in the campaign after it started, I was commissioned to write part of the campaign's original 'manifesto' on critical thinking, possibly contributed some ideas on direction, and played in one of the campaign YouTube-videos – on conspiracy theories. All this is well-known to interested parties, and has contributed to some interesting varieties of predictable hostilities: Starring in homoerotic 'anti-fan fiction' is a long step up from death threats, and this kind of satire certainly puts its own twist on 'love' as the solution to all problems. (For a brief review, see Eggen 2012; Færseth 2013b.)

The question of what gets to count as knowledge is obviously not wholly removed from the question of economy and power. It is, rather, related at many levels. At the level of daily life and daily bread, it is related when we look at the part of the alternative scene where many make their living from 'holistic' medicine and its multitude of services and products.¹² To the conspiracy *theorists* it is even more important. Counter-knowledge is their coin *and* often their way of salvation (e.g. Dyrendal 2013). David Robertson (2014) notes that while conspiracy theory is a theodicy of the dispossessed, the theorists generally present as an epistemic counter-elite:

Whether aligned with left or right political values, metaphysical conspiracist narratives reframe Marxist critiques in terms of epistemic rather than economic capital. The liberation of the oppressed is re-constructed as being realised through a revolution in knowledge, a seizing not of the means of production, but of the means of cognition. Knowledge is power. (Robertson 2014, 196)

The conspiracy theorists in question have little other cultural capital *qua* theorists. What they *can* claim is special insight. The claims to special knowledge, 'epistemic capital', stand at the center of the whole venture. It is therefore unsurprising that those who publicly argue that the coin is counterfeit and that the 'counter-epistemic elite' should generally be seen as epistemically dispossessed come high on the list of specific, local enemies. Academics, journalists, newspaper editors and other knowledge workers who perform a role of gate-keepers, by closing them for the claims of conspiratorial claims, naturally become part of the bigger scheme.

Skeptical voices are, therefore, central to the conflict. They may or may not reflect the conflict over *values* or *issues*, but they are vital, and real, opponents in the antagonism over facts, epistemology, and the complexities of power and knowledge. But the antagonism serves as deflection at another level: when some go out of their way to counter the conspiracy claims, they become an identifiable, hostile, local out-group.

¹² Theorists, practitioners, and/or vendors were a minority among *Nyhetsspeilets* authors, but theories of conspiracy against 'health freedom' (another American, Bircher-based import) were among those broadening the appeal of *Nyhetsspeilet*. This became most clearly visible with the implosion of the milieu as *Nyhetsspeilet* lost traction.

|

Focusing on such enemies contributes to communal identity and to keep internal tensions under the carpet.

This may have become more important over time, as the conspiratorial discourse had its set of fault lines. It may, perhaps, have had more of them than most, as the scene attracted people with widely different primary interests and differing primary religious and political identities. Internal tensions were always visible, so what kept the 'community' together and what brought it apart? Could rise and fall be seen as part of the rise and fall of apocalyptic expectations?

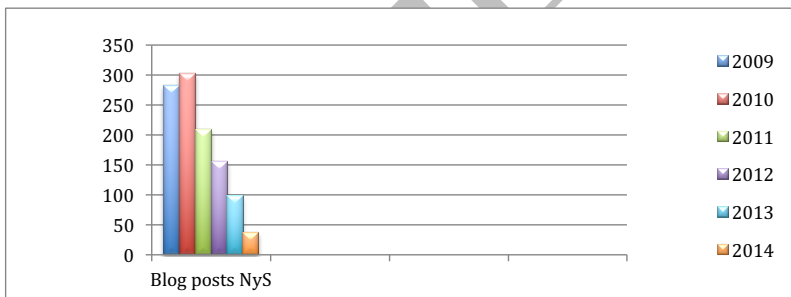
Growth and Decline of an Apocalyptic Wave

When *Nyhetsspeilet* started out in 2009, they had the Norwegian scene mostly to themselves (cf. Dyrendal, forthcoming). The flagship of the alternative movement, *Visjon*, may have printed similar material (cf. Lie 2009), and older actors in the scene had also become more interested in conspiracy theory. Neither put conspiracy at the center, and neither focused on web presence. One of the central actors behind *Nyhetsspeilet* had long experience in IT and online publishing. Others had long experience in writing for an alternative scene, and they reached out to a crowd that had gotten familiar with "web 2.0", that is: online comments, blogs, and other interactive, "alternative media". But there was, as yet, none filling this niche. *Nyhetsspeilet* reached broader than they may have planned, and since it was the place where things were happening, people with more single-issue interests also frequented the pages as commenters or even (often one-shot) writers.

Creating and maintaining an audience online demands visibility, and regular activity along lines of public interest. *Nyhetsspeilet* presented a slick, well-designed page from the start, and posted frequently, often relating their theories to current events. Already the first year, in 2009, they published 282 blog posts. Next year saw even more activity. They built a following, with at times very large activity in the comment fields from a varied mass of commenters. Sometimes the posts consisted of little but embedded video links with short (or no) text between, but more often, they were more essayistic. Since they wanted to be an alternative *magazine*, the blog posts could be feature length or longer.

As we have seen above, and in line with the original concept of conspiratoriality, *Nyhetspeilet* carried a millennial vision. To be precise, they were carried by and promoted several varieties of millennial ideas, some more explicit and focused in time than others. With the general ideological and semiotic promiscuity of the milieu, the explicitly millennial visions derived from many different sources. The 2012 prophecies were widely in play, and accordingly many drew on ideas current in the broader 2012-milieu. They did so without, in general, identifying with the particular date or a very specific stance (e.g. Aune 2010, 2011, 2012). To the degree some did, it was typically *not* December 21st 2012 or the main theorists of 2012: when upheavals were expected, they were typically expected *in advance* of the key date (e.g. Myhre 2010).

This is one of several things that also fit the pattern of activity over time, as we can see in the table below:



Looking at the levels of activity over time, we note a high of 303 posts in 2010, with a low of 37 by mid-December 2014. Comments behave in a corresponding (but not identical¹³) pattern, and the forum, a late addition, has had very little activity.

¹³ I have also broken down the publications on a monthly basis. While doing so, I anecdotally got the impression of a possible trend: a drop in comments, combined with a more hostile tone towards some of the writers, seemed to presage less activity on behalf of the writers.

There are many reasons for the fervor in the early period and the drop off since 2011. We can take the obvious first. Both one-person and group blogs tend to be temporary ventures, with more enthusiasm and energy at the beginning. As with movements, they are dependent on someone to carry the venture, and the fewer who are able and willing, the more strain on those who do. Eventually, most tire. Group blogs have another source of strain that will eventually turn up almost anywhere: internal, personal conflicts, and dissent over ideology, authority or both. In cases of defection or schism, such dissent tends to become ideologized.

With the exception of the last part, we may observe all this in the brief history of *Nyhetsspeilet* (cf. Færseth 2013a). While there were more writers joining than leaving at the beginning, the opposite happened later. Some were, according to gossip, 'forced' out, others dropped out. One of those who left, was one of the most active writers. When he moved back to his own solo venture (*Riksavisen*), he seems to have taken the others inclined towards Nordic Israelism, or his highly esoteric version of it, mostly along. Since these were, at the time, among the most active commenters, both posting and comments became more rare. Others had already left, some to start out on group blogs or Facebook groups, focusing on topics and theories closer to their own particular interests. The fission created a differentiated conspiritual landscape, but apart from *Riksavisen*, none of the others put as much *emphasis* on the combined topics of spirituality and conspiracy as *Nyhetsspeilet*.

It is thus anything but surprising that we see a sharp decline after a highly active start. Judging from both social activity and social media, the conspiritual scene does not, at the same time, seem to have become smaller. It has become more diverse, but with few exceptions, the millennial aspects have been toned down severely. This is one of the reasons why I want to present 'millennial fervor' as another possible factor. Another indicator leading to this interpretation was the varied reception of prophecies in the comments over time.

Nyhetsspeilet started their movie links with *Zeitgeist* and later moved on to *Thrive*, both combining conspiracy theory and alternative culture with a sharper apocalyptic twist in the latter. Ward and Voas (2011, 109) note the importance of *Zeitgeist* for the

international trend, but the 'zeitgeist' of the period and scene also quite clearly related apocalypticism to the 'Maya calendar'-prophecies. The presentation and reception of such prophecies in the international scene could be quite contentious.¹⁴ The range of comments varied from highly positive and strong belief, to doubt, cynicism, and harsh criticism. That is *before* I take visiting skeptics into account; parts of the 2012-culture were sophisticated and jaded users of prophecy. We see something similar with *Nyhetsspeilet* as well, but as in other online settings, there was a development. Part of the early criticism came from loosely interested participants, whose interest in conspiracy was more selectively political, parts from participants whose particular take on conspiratoriality excluded the specific version of millennialist prophecy. Many more of the comments engaged in their own prophecies, or related 'signs' or prophecies from other sources.

Two of the regular writers were more interested in specific time periods for apocalyptic expectations than others. One in particular tied date-setting to catastrophic coming events (e.g. Myhre 2010; cf. Aune 2010). Both showed a high level of interest in millennial dreams, with clear, albeit different specific expectations. One gradually dropped activities to nearly nil after prophecies had failed. The other shifted his blogging to other topics. This did not, initially, help. Hostile reactions followed, and his posts tended to be voted down to a lower level than others. Commenters positive to the mayanist prophecies dropped out, or dropped commenting. The tone and content of comments shifted. A sharper, Biblicist language suggested that the 'Nordic Israelites' had taken over comments. Then they dropped out, too.

Certainly not all of this was related to the end of 2012 prophecies, or even jaded attitudes towards prophecy. First, conspiratorial activities elsewhere continued. Secondly, the trend started earlier, in the first months of 2011. There is no clearly visible drop in activity immediately after the bombing of government buildings in Oslo and mass murders at Utøya on July 22nd. Rather, the events revitalized the scene at a part of the year when activities are low on almost all blogs, group or otherwise. But the

¹⁴ Brief note on background: I followed the 2012 scene online for many years, systematically with students in a related course each Fall term from 2009 through 2012, and had three master's students writing about the varied scene.

conspiracism of Breivik combined with the slaughter of children led to a more explicitly critical attention towards, and action against conspiracy theory. This happened broadly in society, and it also happened specifically within the broader New Age scene.

Conspiracists had antagonized and alienated others at altnett.ning earlier. Now many of them were banned. The flagship journal and organizers of the alternative fairs took issue, and conspiracist contributors were shut out – including Ertresvåg, a previously popular speaker. The alternative mainstream asserted itself, and it restigmatized the most aggressively conspiritual scene from ‘inside’ New Age as being morally beyond the pale.

The shock of the terror attack and group pressure from inside the alternative scene may have added to the lack of activity, and the increasingly sharper drop in activity. When ‘hangers-on’ saw no bonus in using *Nyhetsspeilet* as a venue, but a possible gain in doing it on their own, the scene was set for exodus.

All the above is also consistent with, and may be seen as the expression of, the passing crest of an ‘apocalyptic wave’.

The “anatomy of an apocalyptic wave” Richard Landes (2011, 52-61) explains, forms a bell-shaped curve, with a curve of activity from the onset of apocalyptic time to people re-entering normal time. He describes two relevant sets of perception of time, normal and apocalyptic, with the first a flat (time-)line, where people expects the future to be a continuation of the past. Apocalyptic time presents the possibility for (or inevitability of) a *break* with the past. With the growing perception of a crisis about to be resolved through such a break with the past, the flat line curves upwards with rising expectations and activity. On the rising crest, apocalyptic expectations enter the public sphere, more people are recruited to belief, and current events are turned into signs of the coming resolution (‘semiotic arousal’). As expectations rise further, semiotic arousal is turned into full-scale promiscuity, with any- and everything becoming a sign of what, when, who, and why.

While believers need not set particular dates, the wave-form comes of the tendency (or inevitability) of millennial expectations to fail, even or especially when they grow to

their most intense levels. Cognitive dissonance sets in, certainty fails, adherents are lost, activity drops, and with the re-emergence of “normal time”, there is a tendency to retreat to the private sphere.

We may now return to the ‘curve’ of publications, and their relation to apocalyptic expectations. As noted, two of the central writers were highly involved in presenting interpretations of apocalyptic prophecies, and at the height, many more of the commentators were similarly engaged in giving their own – ‘intuitive’, channeled, prophetic or other – takes on the coming turnabout. However, far from all of the writers, and a smaller percentage of commenters, were actively engaged in *this* kind of revealed knowledge, or from a similar stance. Engaging in “rolling prophecy” (Robertson 2013) is a risky venture. When successful, one may take credit for whatever happens or has happened, but this often means adhering to the rhetorical strategies of the psychic trade: vagueness, ambiguity, semantic forks, shotgunning, etc. One should have established authority enough to make the audience *want* to interpret you as correct in the aftermath of events. With *Nyhetsspeilet*, the apocalyptic prophecies were fairly straightforward and relatively unambiguous, they were delivered in writing (thus easy to check), and to a diverse audience where the writers had not established sufficient authority. Thus, they contributed to making a possible fault line an actual one when the prophecies inevitably and quite clearly failed.

We can add to this that other believers also clearly seem to have become disappointed in the lack of progress. Some floated back to an alternative mainstream less affected with millennial fervor. Others may have become disappointed with the internal mainstreaming of *Nyhetsspeilet*: posts gradually changed focus as it re-entered ‘normal time’. They became longer, many became more ‘theoretical’, more academic, and when not, the spiritual message was more mainstream, inspired by e.g. late Theosophy. Current events played a much lesser role in the increasingly smaller output of posts. There may be signs of revitalization, particularly with events relating to ‘Freemen’-ideology playing out, but effectively, the (first) crest has passed. Norwegian conspiratoriality has diversified, but for the moment seems less intense.

Final Remarks

Conspiracy theory is rarely a stranger to any human scene. This is also true for 'New Age' in both the broad and narrow sense. The wider New Age scene tends to be less enamored of the dualism, harsh language, and antagonism-driven activism of the conspirituals. A version of e.g. the conspiracy theory of ignorance is nonetheless a natural side effect of the ideas of hidden knowledge that dominate the same scene. Whether addressing history, health, economics, self-development, channeling revelations or other activities, alternative routes to alternative knowledge are unavoidable. So is the, at best, disinterest of science. When the knowledge elites disrupt claims of 'counter-knowledge elites', conspiracy theory is close at hand.

This does not mean explicit conspiracy theory is equally important to, or welcome in, all alternative circles at all time. Norwegian conspirituality may have a long history (Dyrendal, forthcoming), but it blossomed in millennial fervor during a few, short years during the final years of the 'noughties', then cooled off. But while the fervor may be less intense, the phenomenon looks unlikely to go anywhere soon. The first scene to set conspirituality at its center took its inspiration from a US-dominated, international conspiracy scene. New Age millennialism, with a dream of a kinder, more spiritual world, was one part of the background, but writers borrowed frequently from more militant sources as well. While the specific theories may have seemed strange to outsiders, the *general concerns* were common ones. They ranged from agency loss to health issues, to religious, cultural, political, military, and economic power. With semiotic promiscuity, they could see evidence anywhere, and their enemies could be everywhere and anyone. The enemies were powerful, but the tone was often optimistic. Certainly, there were clear tendencies towards presenting Western democracies as hidden dictatorships ruled by a global oligarchy, but the attempts at "raising awareness" showed implicit or explicit ideas that an informed populace can still prevent a full take-over. At the most pessimistic, they could still shake off their chains, albeit mainly by magical means or after apocalyptic events. Helpful aliens or other spiritual forces could be invoked as help, but still, the important thing was to handle both the current and the forthcoming situation by developing oneself spiritually and building good alternatives on the side of a culture ruled by greed.

The example addressed here rose to prominence as an 'early adopter' of international trends, and served to present 'rolling prophecy' (Robertson 2013) that predicted and presented events in the light of conspiracy and millennial change. It thus served to generate and maintain a state of 'semiotic arousal' in a diverse audience, drawing on the 2012 milieu (e.g. Gelfer 2011). The weight of failed expectations, internal dissent, and reactions to events contributed to the 'fall', with the temporary amalgamation of people and interests dissolving and new unions establishing new, related ventures. The rise to dominance of Facebook (especially its group function) did nothing to help older online media. Following the implosion of the first scene, there has also been a change in focus. The new websites and groups center their attention on more specialized, smaller spectrum of issues. Their conspiracy theories are rarely as wide-ranging, the issue of spiritual development has become less important, and the extra-terrestrials are rarely addressed at all. None of the topics are dead, but at the present time, others are more important.

But although many of the current sites read almost like secular conspiracy theorists, and the mainstream New Age has distanced itself even more clearly from conspiracism, conspirativity is still a vital discourse and a living milieu. It shapes Norwegian (as European) 'Freemen-on-the-land'-ideas, and many of the original concerns are addressed in both lectures and texts, committed by more people than the original entrepreneurs. Dreams of the millennium may have currently passed for most, but social critique in a conspiracist manner has not.

Bibliography

Asprem, Egil and Asbjørn Dyrendal. Forthcoming. Conspirativity Reconsidered: How surprising and how new is the confluence of spirituality and conspiracy theory? *Journal of Contemporary Religion*.

Aune, Frank. 2010. 2012: Det store dimensjonsskiftet. *Nyhetsspeilet* June 21st 2010.
<http://www.nyhetsspeilet.no/2010/06/2012-det-store-dimensjonsskiftet/>

|

Aune, Frank. 2011. NB: Oppstigning pågår! *Nyhetspeilet* August 6th 2011.

<http://www.nyhetspeilet.no/2011/08/nb-oppstigning-pagar/>

Aune, Frank. 2012. Enden er nær. *Nyhetspeilet* June 21st 2012.

<http://www.nyhetspeilet.no/2012/06/enden-er-naer/>

Barkun, Michael. 1994. *Religion and the Racist Right*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Barkun, Michael. 2003. *A Culture of Conspiracy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bruder, Martin, Peter Haffke, Nick Neave, Nina Nouripanha, Roland Imhoff. 2013. Measuring Individual Differences in Generic Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories Across Cultures: Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire. *Frontiers in Psychology*. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00225

Butter, Michael. 2014. *Plots, Designs, and Schemes. American Conspiracy Theories from the Puritans to the Present*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Byford, Jovan. 2011. *Conspiracy Theories. A Critical Introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Campbell, Colin. 1972. The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization. *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5, 119-136.

Dyrendal, Asbjørn. 2013. Hidden Knowledge, Hidden Powers: Esotericism and Conspiracy Culture. Pp. 200-225 in Asprem, Egil and Kennet Granholm (eds.) *Contemporary Esotericism*. Sheffield: Equinox.

Dyrendal, Asbjørn. Forthcoming. Conspirituality in Norway: A Brief Sketch. In Tøllefsen, Inga B. & James R. Lewis (eds.) *Nordic New Religions. Brill Handbook of Contemporary Religion*. Vol.9. Leiden: Brill Academic.

Dyrendal, Asbjørn and Egil Aspren. 2013. Sorte brorskap, mørke korrespondanser og frelsende avsløringer. Konspirasjonsteori som esoterisk diskurs. *Din. Tidsskrift for religion og kultur*. 2, 32-61

Eggen, Torgrim. 2012. I skitstormen. *Humanist* 2012:2, 4-25.

Eggen, Torgrim. 2014. De som hater staten. *Humanist* 2014:3, 5-24

Fenster, Mark. 2008. *Conspiracy Theories. Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Færseth, John. 2013a. *KonspiraNorge*. Oslo: Humanist forlag.

Færseth, John. 2013b. Med Human-Etisk Forbund som skyteskive. *Humanist* 2013:4, 48-71

Gaarder, Hans. 2009. Tabu-oversikten for norske redaktører. *Nyhetspeilet*, March 10th 2009. <http://www.nyhetspeilet.no/2009/03/tabu-oversikten-for-norske-redaktorer/>

Gaarder, Hans. 2010. Norske mediers samlede tabu-oversikt. *Nyhetspeilet*, March 21st 2010. <http://www.nyhetspeilet.no/2010/03/norske-mediers-samlede-tabu-oversikt/>

Gelfer, Joseph. 2011. *2012. Decoding the Countercultural Apocalypse*. Sheffield: Equinox.

Gray, Matthew. 2010. *Conspiracy Theories in the Arab World*. New York: Routledge

Hammer, Olav. 2001. *Claiming Knowledge. Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*. Leiden: Brill.

Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 1996. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Leiden: Brill.

Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2012. *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hanssen, Maarit M. 2010. HAARP et geofysisk våpen. *Nyhetspeilet* Jan.18, 2010. <http://www.nyhetspeilet.no/2010/01/haarp-et-geofysisk-vapen/>

Hanssen, Maarit M. 2013. EISCAT og HAARP er ferdigstilt som våpen i 2013. *Nyhetspeilet* Jan.4, 2013. <http://www.nyhetspeilet.no/2013/01/eiscat-og-haarp-er-ferdigstilt-som-vapen-i-2013/>

Heilund, J.B. 2003. Konspiratører og det ytre rom. Konspirasjonsteorier i norske ufo-miljøer. in Pettersen, A. & Emberland, T. (red.): *Konspiranoia. Konspirasjonsteorier fra 666 til WTC*. Oslo: Humanist forlag.

Imhoff, Roland, and Martin Bruder. 2014. Speaking (Un-)Truth to Power: Conspiracy Mentality as a Generalised Political Attitude. *European Journal of Personality* 28:25-43.

Karlstad, Tor. 2011. Japan truet med jordskjelv av NWO. *Nyhetspeilet* March 13, 2011. <http://www.nyhetspeilet.no/2011/03/japan-truet-med-jordskjelv-av-nwo/>

Landes, Richard. 2011. *Heaven on Earth. The Varieties of the Millennial Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lie, Jørgen. 2009. *Ondskapsforståelse i New Age. En diskursanalyse av magasinet Visjon*. MA.Thesis, Department of Archaeology and Religious Studies, NTNU.

Myhre, Rolf Kenneth. 2010. Mens vi venter på Nivå 7-kataklysmene. *Nyhetspeilet* July 23rd 2010. <http://www.nyhetspeilet.no/2010/07/mens-vi-venter-pa-niva-7-kataklysmen/>

Pipes, Daniel. 1997. *Conspiracy*. New York: Free Press.

Robertson, David G. 2013. (Always) Living in the End Times: The 'Rolling Prophecy' of the Conspiracy Milieu. Pp. 207-219 in Harvey, Sarah and Suzanne Newcombe (eds.), *Prophecy in the New Millennium: When Prophecies Persist*. Farnham: Ashgate..

Robertson, David G. 2014. *Metaphysical Conspiracism: UFOs as Discursive Objects Between Popular Millennial and Conspiracist Fields*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh.

Rooke, J.D. 2012. *Meads v. Meads, 2012 ABQB 571. Reasons for the Decision of the Associate Chief Justice J.D. Rooke*. Edmonton, Canada: Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta.

Sigrudsdatter, Ingunn. 2013. Så hvorfor bli frikvinne og hvordan gå fram? *Nyhetspeilet* May 30, 2013 <http://www.nyhetspeilet.no/2013/05/sa-hvorfor-bli-frikvinne-og-hvordan-ga-fram-artikkel-1-av-to/>

Swami, Viren, Rebecca Coles, Stefan Stieger, Jakob Pietschnig, Adrian Furnham, Sherry Rehim and Martin Voracek. 2011. Conspiracist ideation in Britain and Austria: evidence of a monological belief system and associations between individual psychological differences and real-world and fictitious conspiracy theories. *British Journal of Psychology* 102, 443–463.

Uscinski, Joseph E. and Joseph Parent. 2014. *American Conspiracy Theories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Ward, Charlotte, and David Voas. 2011. "The Emergence of Conspiritoriality." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 26.1, 103-121.

Wessinger, Catherine. 2000. *How the Millennium Comes Violently*. New York: Seven Bridges Press

Wood, Michael J., Karen Douglas, and Robert Sutton. 2012. Dead and Alive: Belief in Contradictory Conspiracy Theories. *Social Psychology and Personality Science*, 3. 767-773