



Forum Neuzeit  
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## Conspiratorial Thinking: Narratives in Modern History

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### What are we Talking about when we Talk about Conspiracy Theories? The Conceptual History of Conspiracy Theory

Conspiracy theories have existed for a long time, though exactly how long is a matter of debate among historians. Obviously the different positions in this debate are a result of different understandings of what a conspiracy theory is. But for how long have people been talking about conspiracy theories? The answer to this question might seem more straightforward, yet an inquiry that adopts the approach of conceptual history reveals surprising complexities. The study of these complexities has, however, the capacity to yield genuine insights into the historical phenomenon itself. As this lecture will demonstrate, working out when and why people began to talk about conspiracy theories can help us better understand what conspiracy theories are.

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