



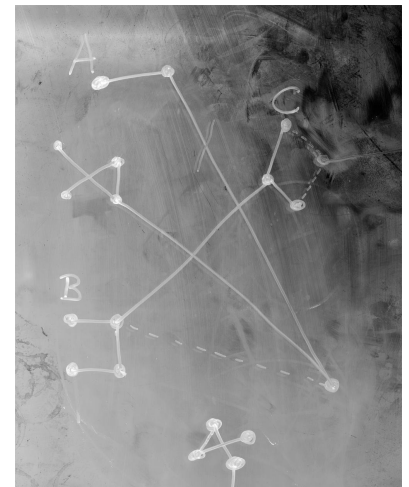
Reality by Design: Understanding the World-Building Practices of Online Conspiracy Theory Communities through Embodied Art Installation

William Lakin

London College of Communication, University of the Arts London, UK

16/7/24

Content warning



Workshop Schedule

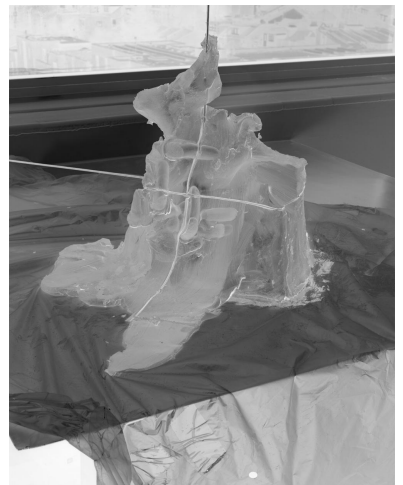
9 - 9.45 – Intro to research project

9.45 – 10.30 – View and interact with artworks

10.30 – 11 – Break

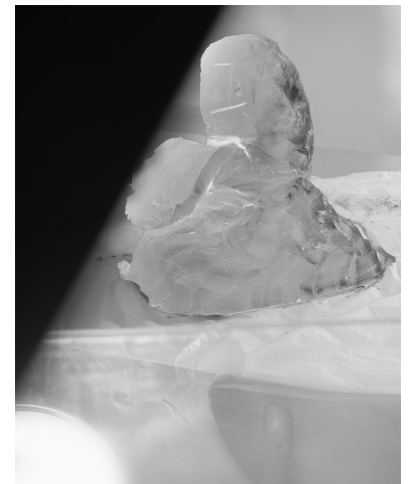
11 – 12 – Guided discussion

12 – 12.30 – Conclusion and written feedback (optional)



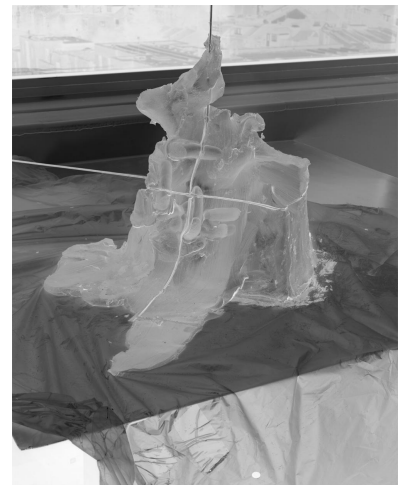
Workshop Objectives:

- To think about the practice of conspiracy theorising as an exercise in world-building.
- To engage in a dialogue with the works and your peers.
- To consider the utility of practice-based responses.



Imaginative leaps to 'hidden knowledge': a practice-centred response to the rhetoric of contemporary conspiracy theories.

- Thematic Analysis of conspiracy theory communications focusing on the motivations for engaging with these narratives.
- Art practice designed to facilitate an embodied understanding of my TA findings.



Defining 'conspiracy theory'

Barkun defines *real* conspiracies as...

'actual covert plots, planned and/or carried out by two or more persons'

as opposed to conspiracy *theories* which...

'are intellectual constructs... modes of thinking, templates imposed on the world to give the appearance of order to events.'

Defining 'conspiracy theory'

'big tent' conspiracy theories

(Zuckerman, 2019)

 PIZZAGATE



Did you leave a handkerchief

FROM: Susan Sandler
TO: John Podesta

09-02-2014

The realtor found a handkerchief (I think it has a map that seems pizza-related. Is it yours? They can send it if you want. I know you're busy, so feel free not to respond if it's not yours or you don't want it.

Source: Wikileaks

FROM: John Podesta
TO: Susan Sandler

09-04-2014

It's mine, but not worth worrying about.

Source: Wikileaks





Conspiratorial Patchwork



From: john.podesta@gmail.com
To: hms326@gmail.com
Date: 2007-05-04 18:17
Subject: American Family Voices Voters' Alliance mailing information

<https://wikileaks.org/podesta-emails/email5/5364>

Hi Mr. Sandler,

I enjoyed seeing you and Mrs. Sandler this week. Please let me know if you need additional information.

American Family Voices Voters' Alliance
ATTN: Mike Lux
888 16th St. NW, Suite 303
Washington, DC 20006

Have a safe trip.

Makeleine Beth McCann (born 12 May 2003) disappeared on the evening of 3 May 2007 from her bed in a holiday apartment in Praia da Luz, a resort in the Algarve region of Portugal, sparking what one newspaper called "the most heavily reported missing-person case in modern history"^[1] Her whereabouts remain unknown.^[4]



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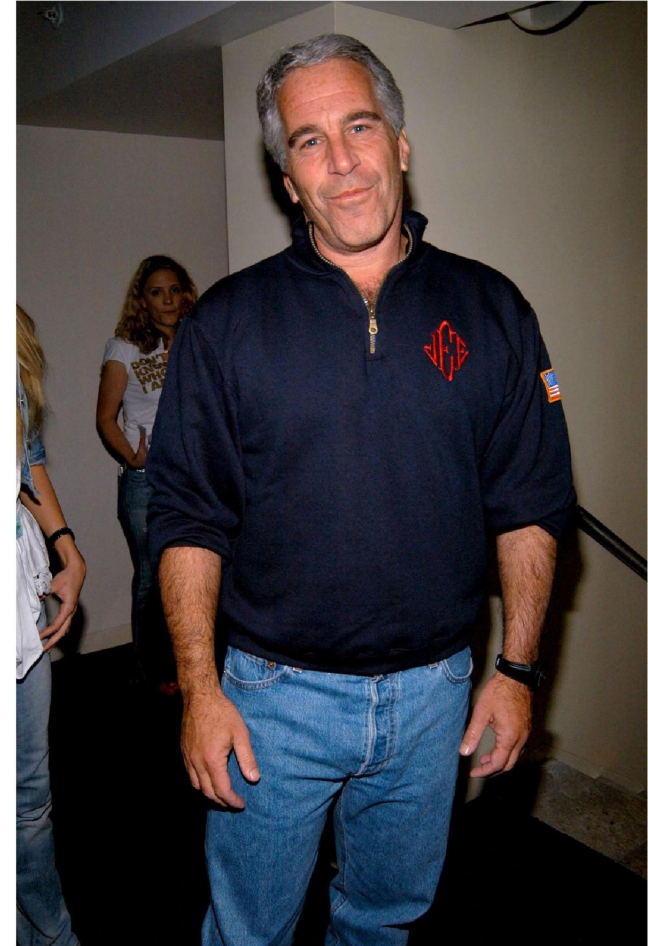
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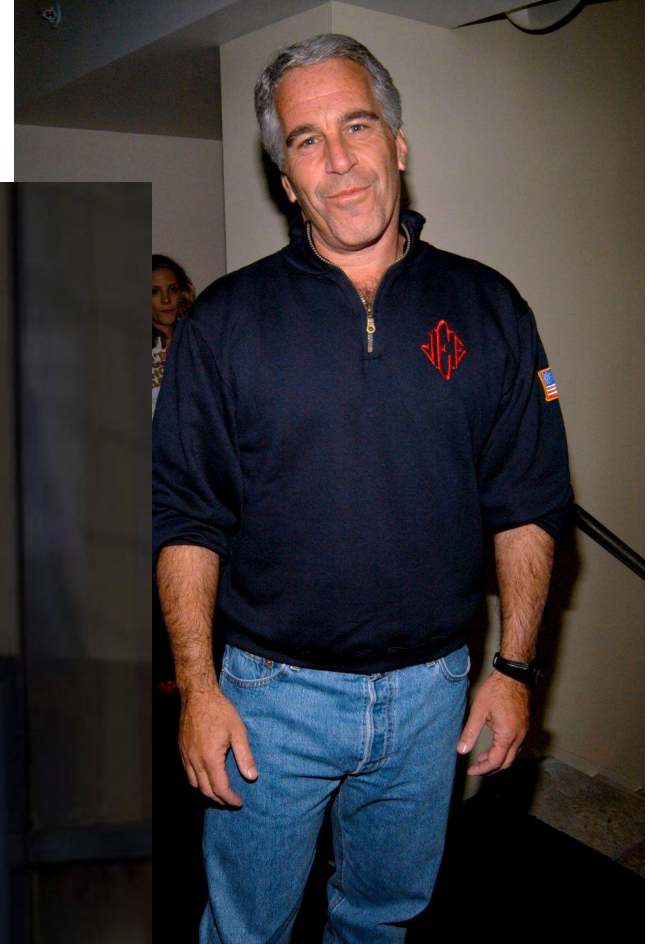
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I refered earlier you and Mrs. Sandler this week. Please let me know if you

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USA DID
9/11 

Remember
 Remember

BBC NEWS



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T.: I :!! @gea41.com
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Subject: American Family Voices Voters'
<https://www.faks.org/podcasts-emails/emails/936>
Hi Mr. Sandler,

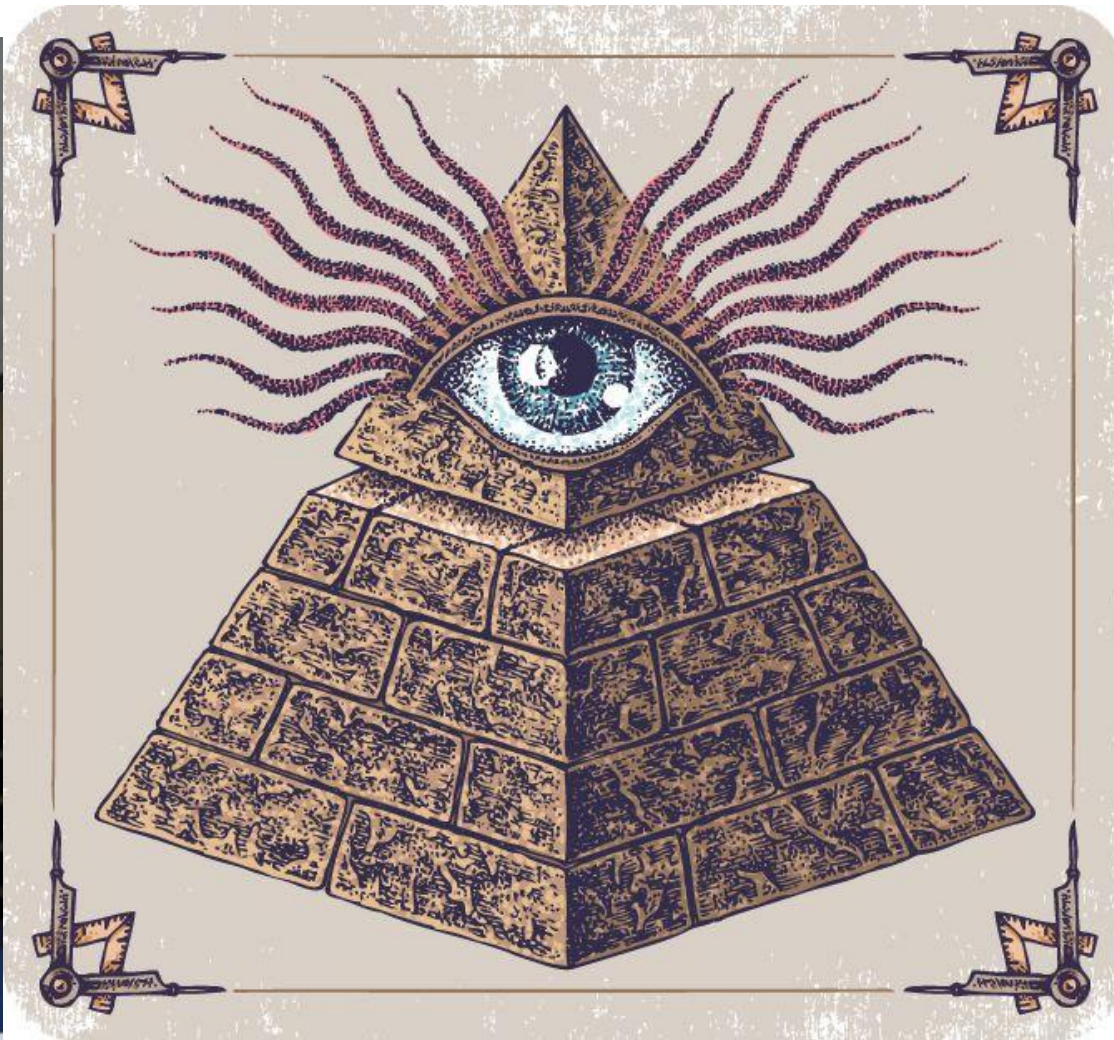


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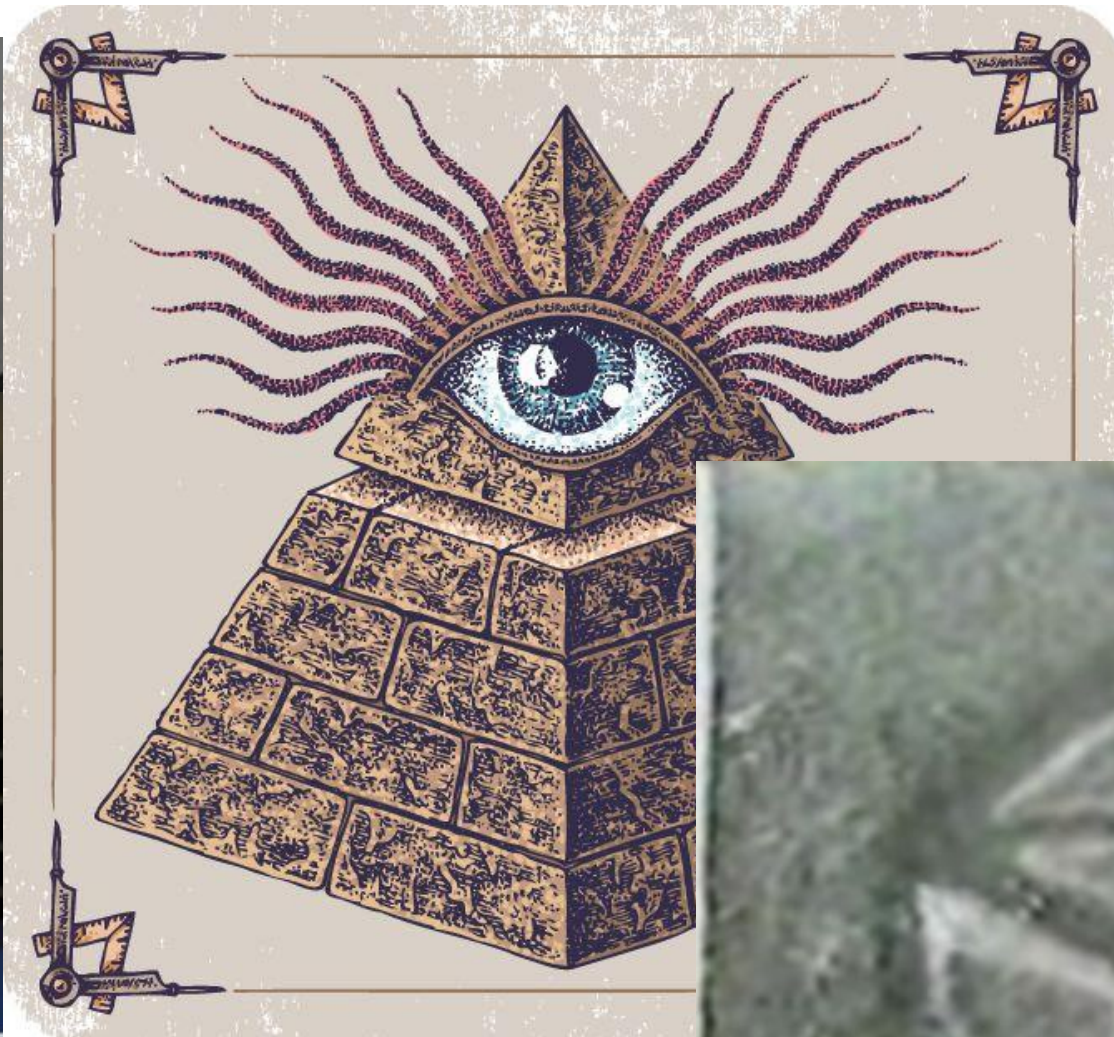


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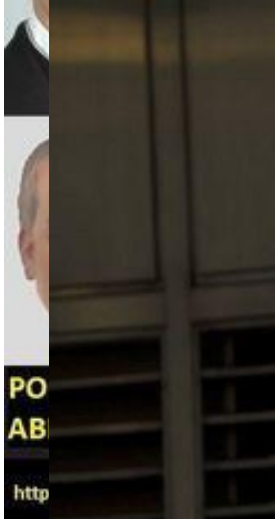


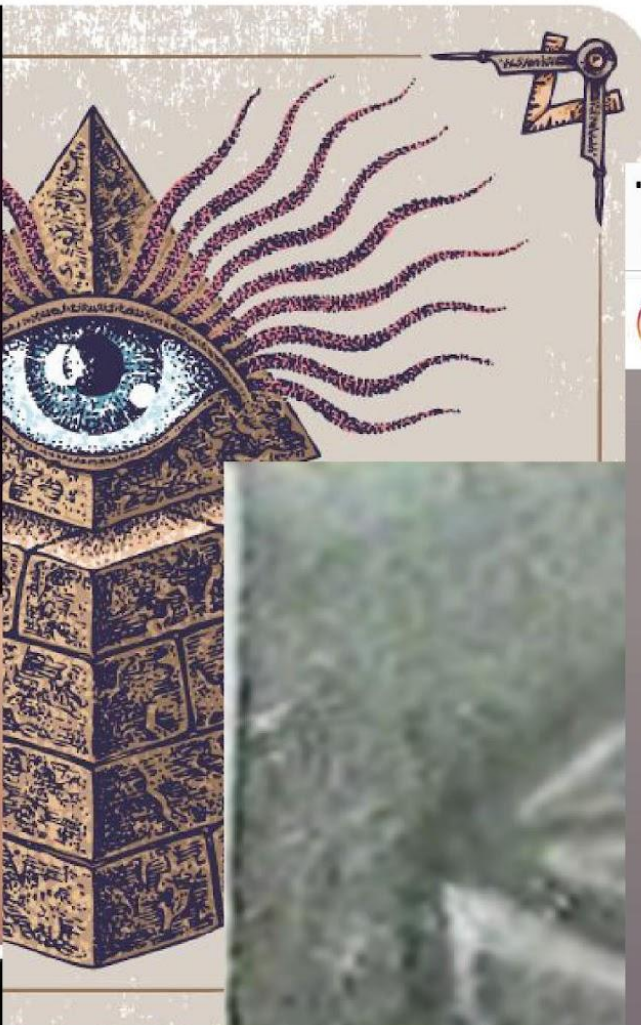


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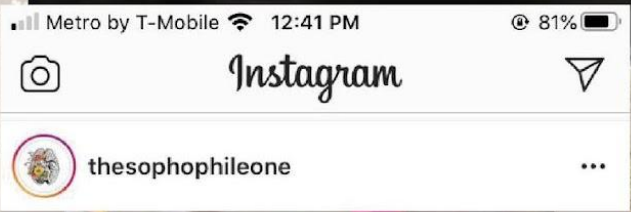


BBC NEWS





CLINTON

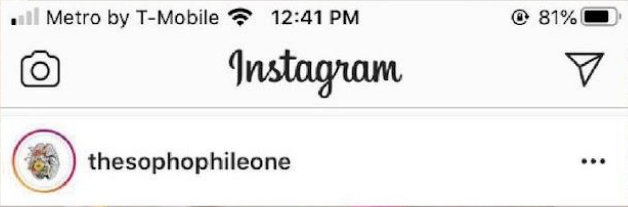


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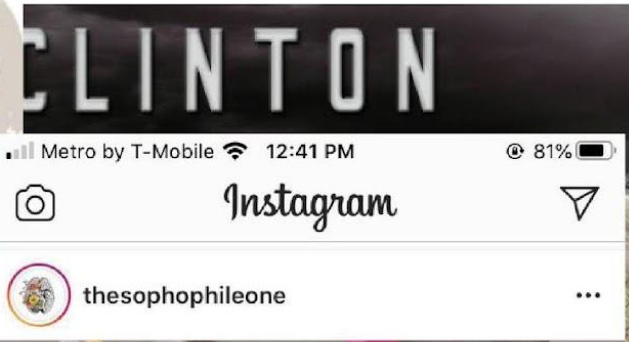


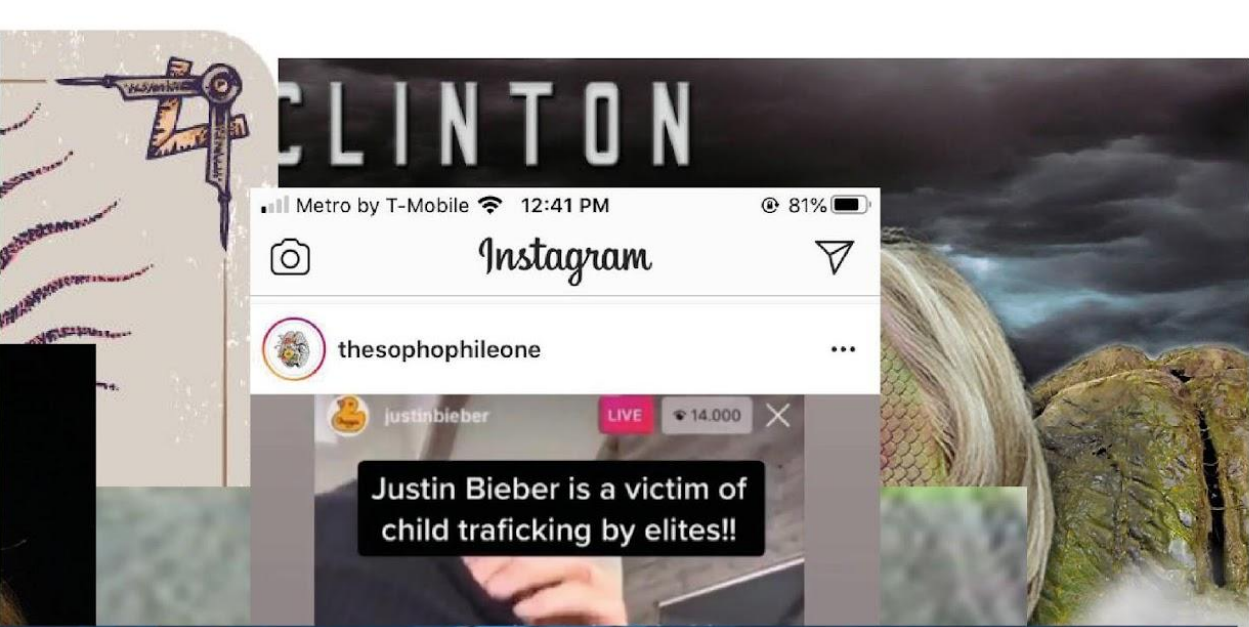
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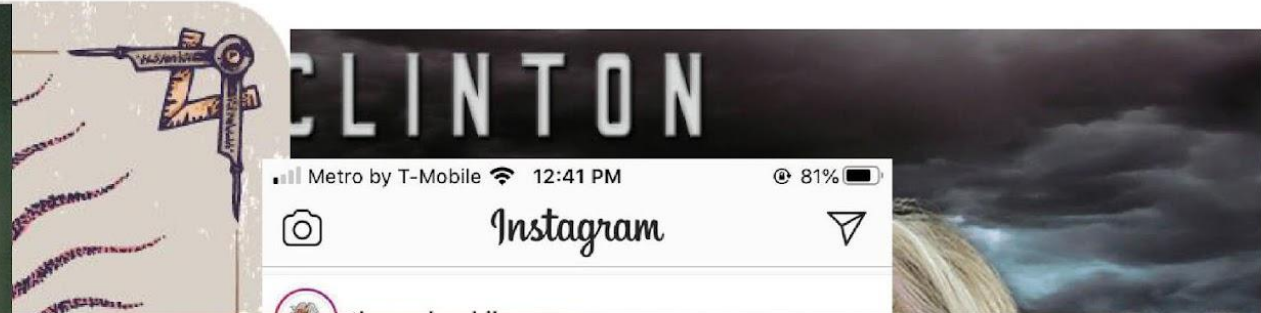


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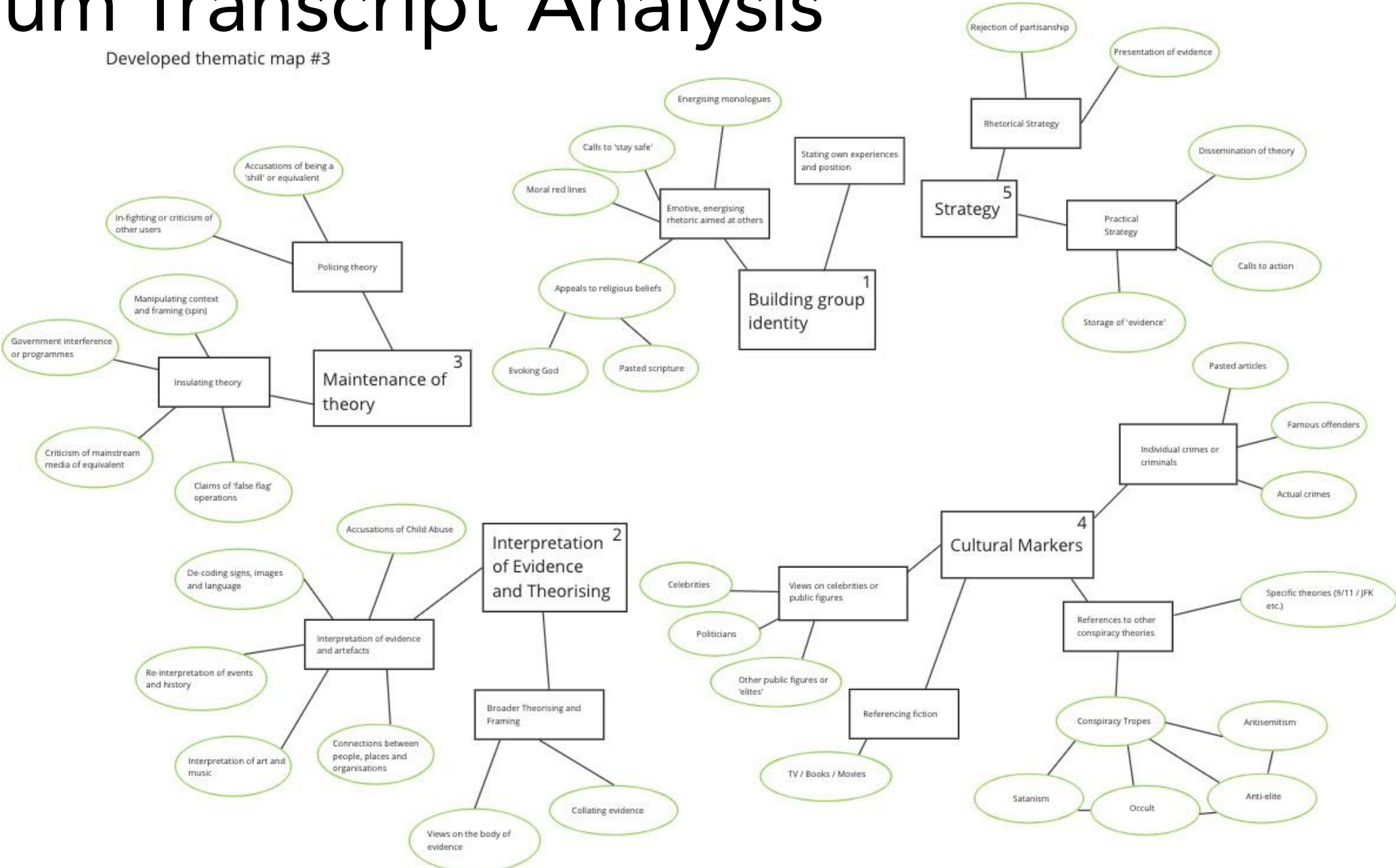




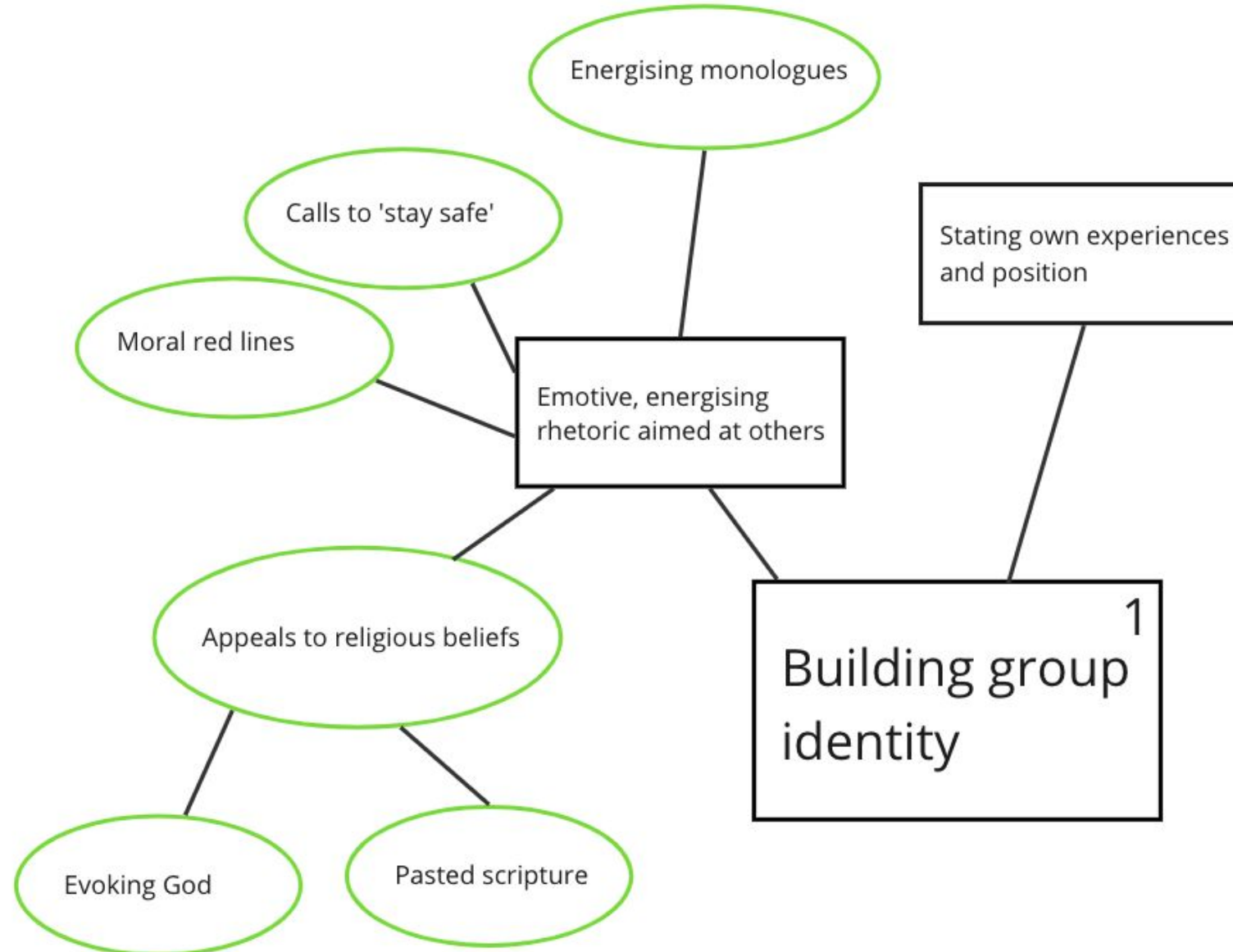
WORLD-BUILDING

Forum Transcript Analysis

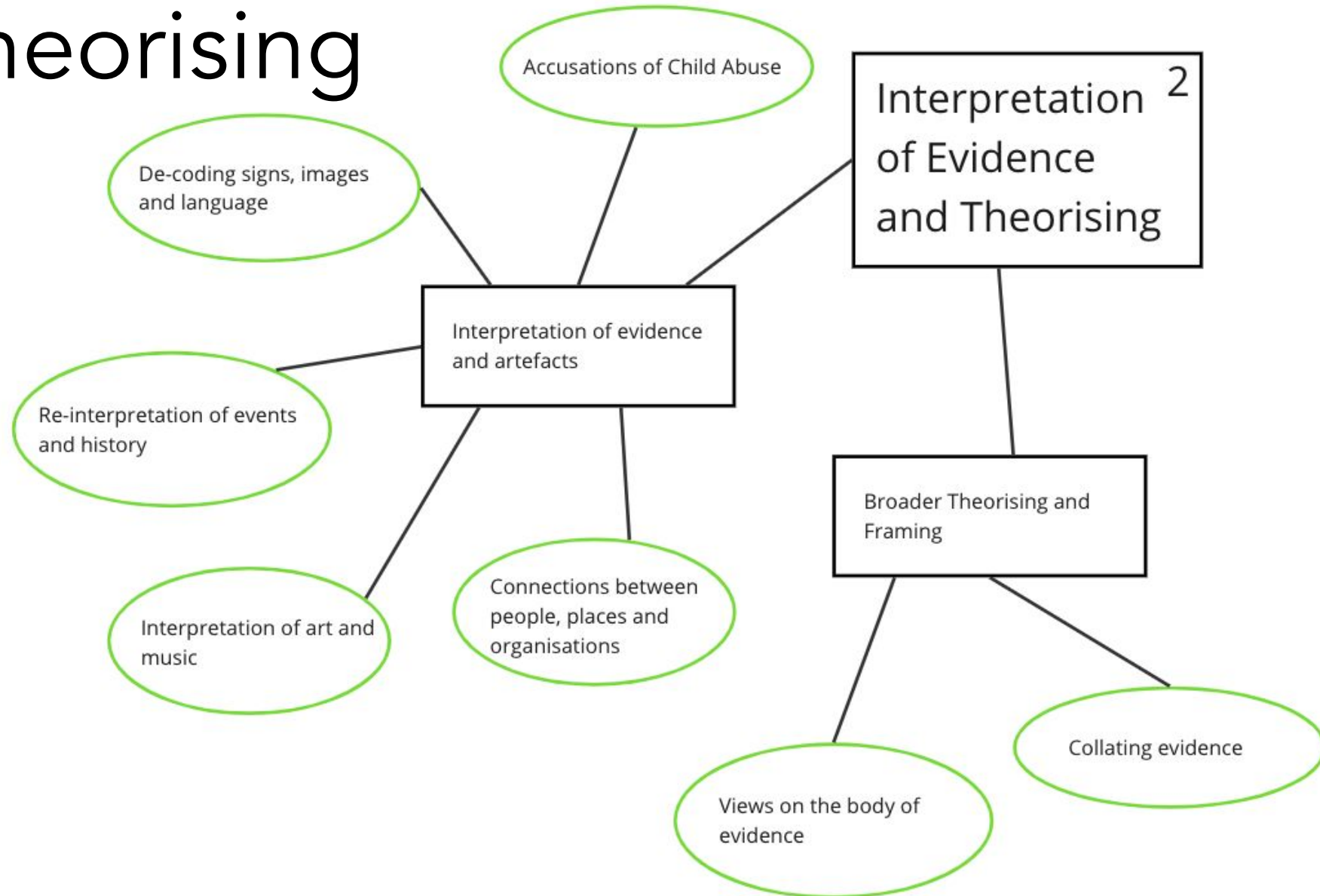
Developed thematic map #3



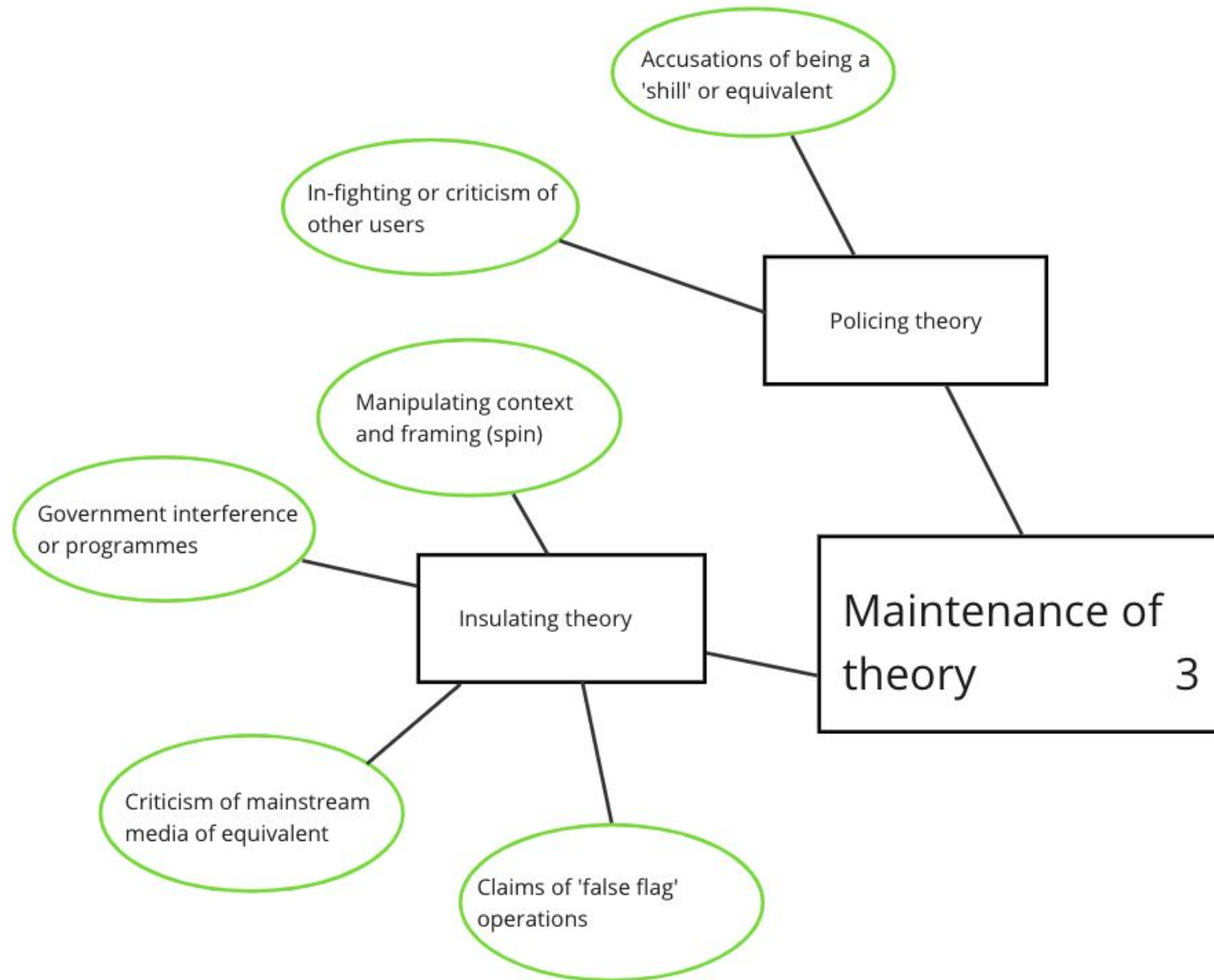
Theme 1 – Building Group Identity



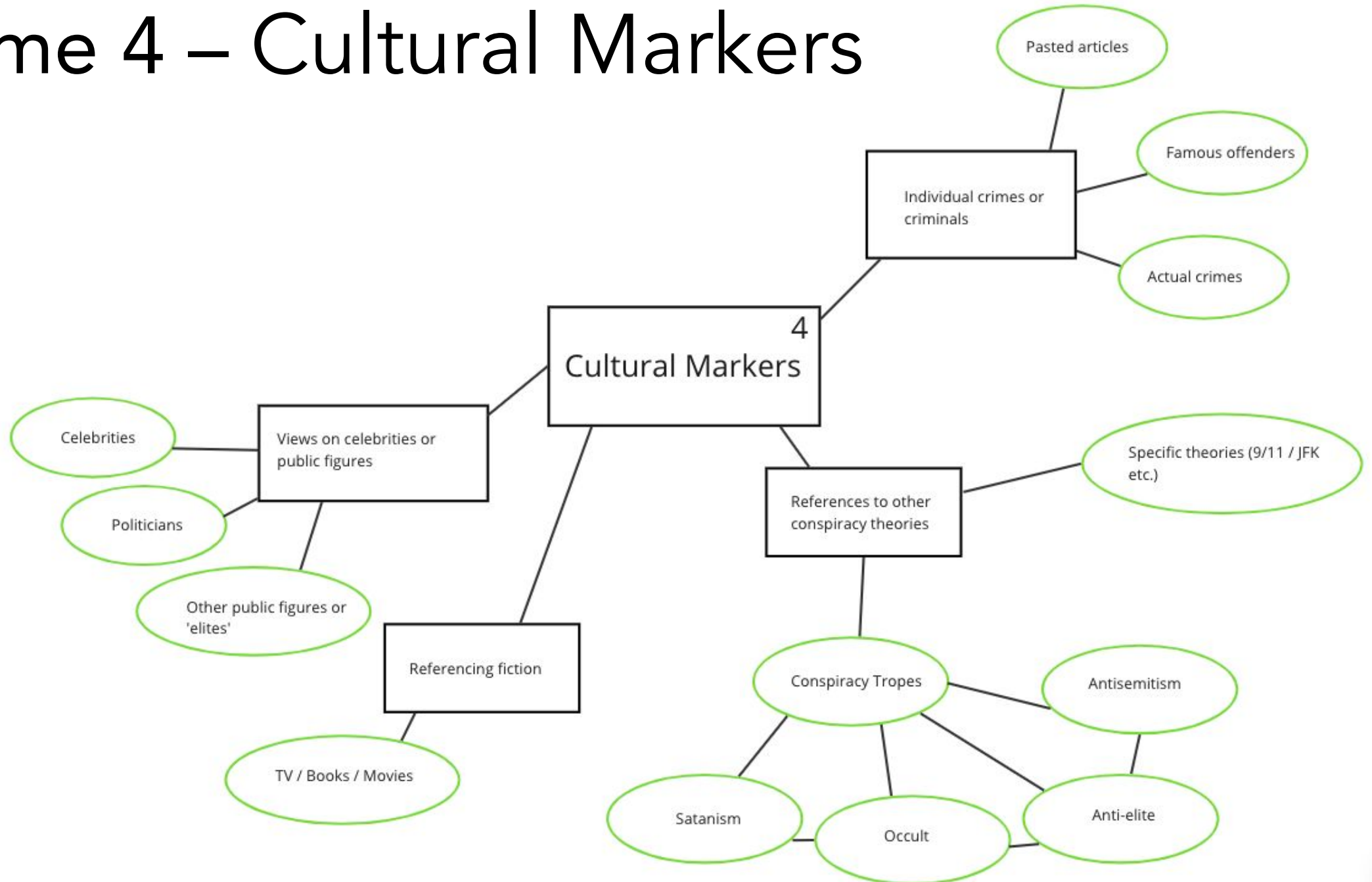
Theme 2 – Interpretation of Evidence and theorising



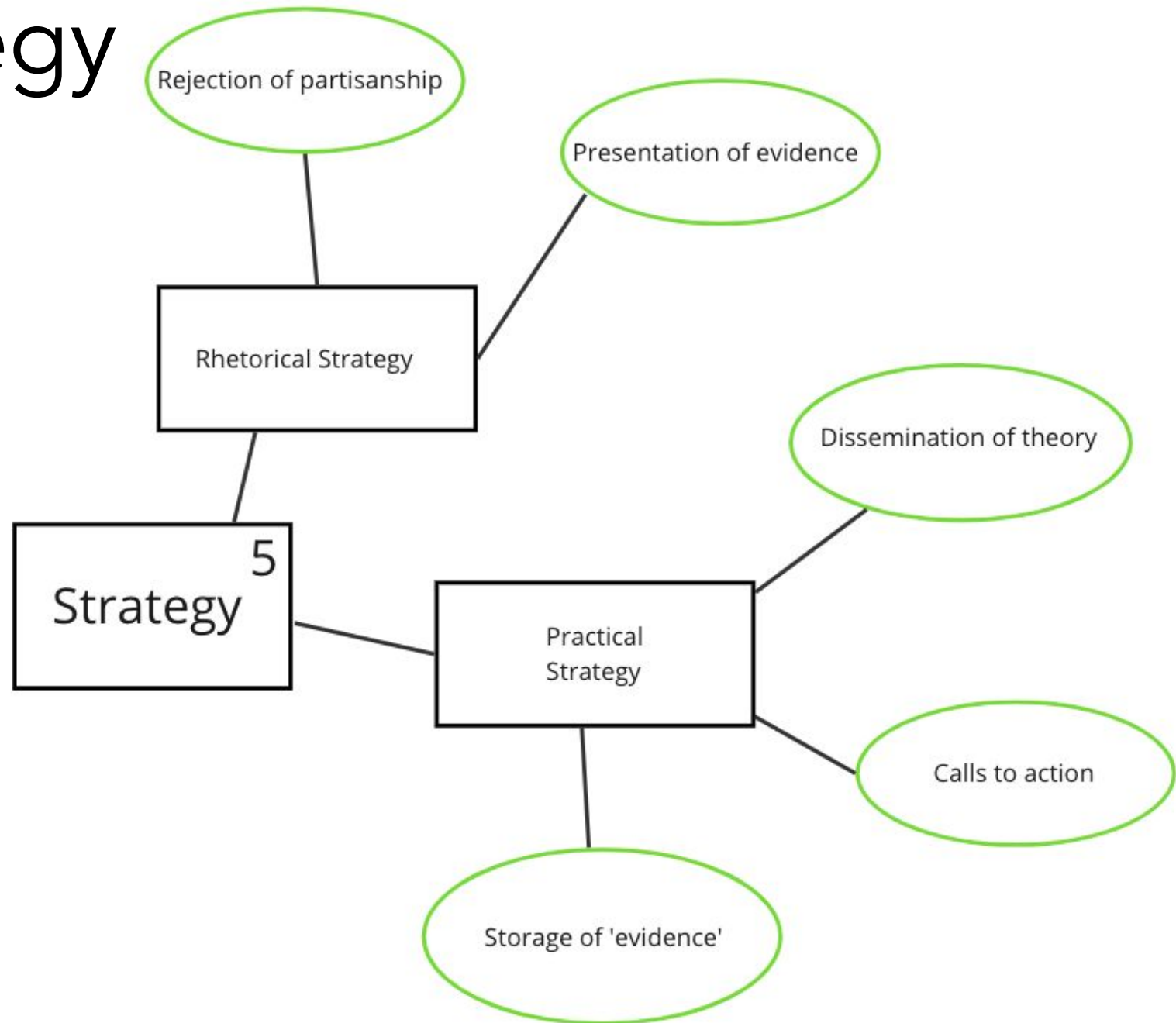
Theme 3 – Maintenance of Theory



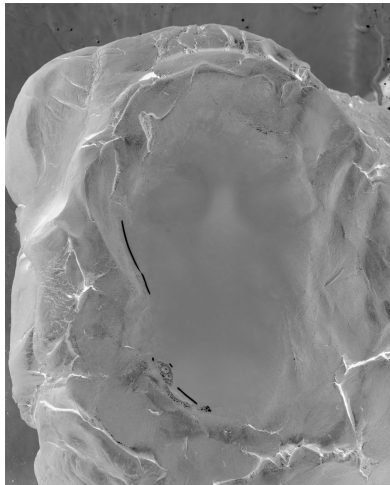
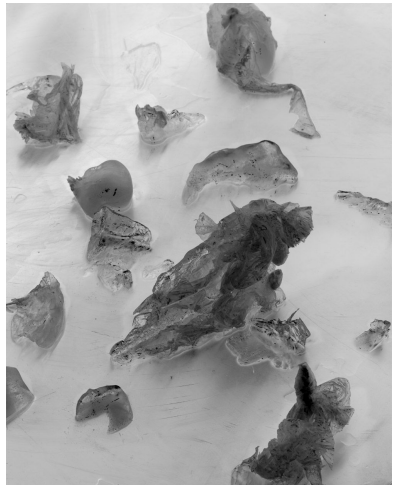
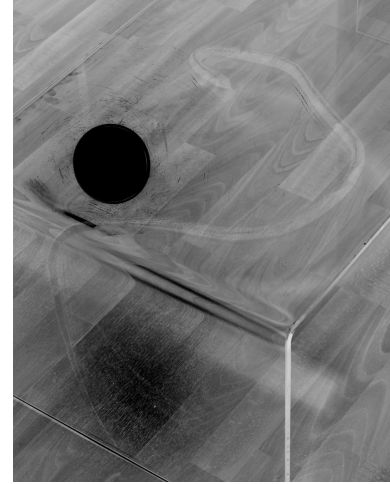
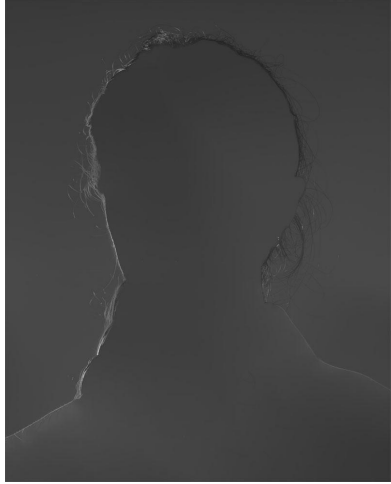
Theme 4 – Cultural Markers



Theme 5 – Strategy



WORLD-BUILDING



What does the term 'conspiracy theory' mean to you?

Get into pairs and briefly discuss what conspiracy theory means to you:

You could describe very broadly how you feel when confronted with the subject.

Or you may want to share an experience with a friend or a loved one who has expressed what you consider to be conspiratorial beliefs.

You can be as vague or specific as you want.

Part 2

DISCUSSION

Immediate responses...

How did the exhibition make you feel?

What themes were evident in the artworks?

In what ways did your individual interpretations of the works differ?

Considering the value of creative and visual methods...

Who might these methods appeal to?

Where should work like this be shown?

How effective is it in communicating the underlying analysis?

Reflecting on your own research methods...

How could your own research be communicated in creative and/or visual ways?

Do you already use creative or visual methods in your research? (this could include graphs, graphics, data visualisation etc.) and what purpose do they serve?

In your groups, put together a five point manifesto for addressing conspiracy theory culture.

This can include actions to be taken in any domain....

Feedback

