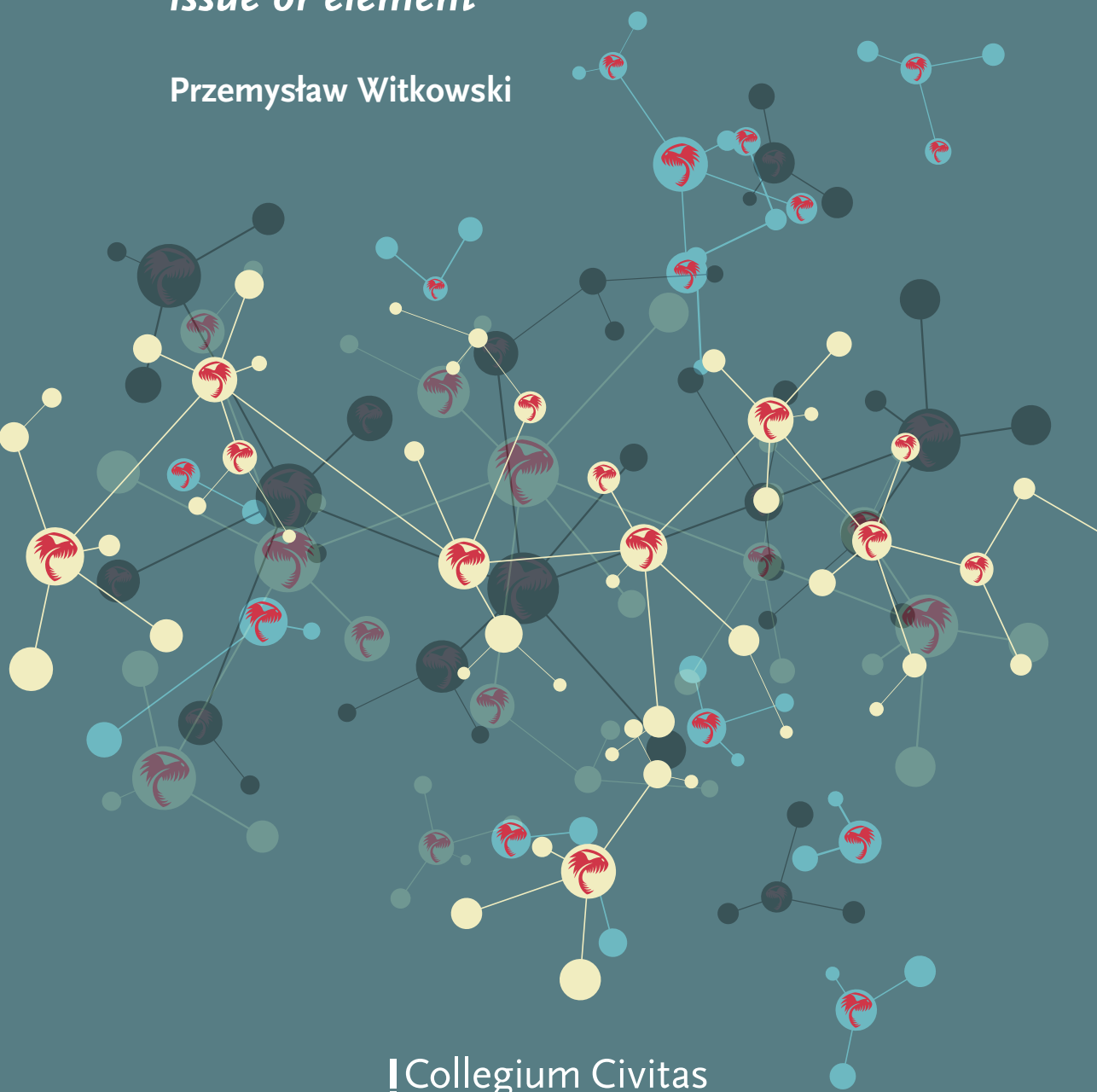


*“The 5G files” – the movement to combat
the introduction of fifth generation
telephony – radicalization around one
issue or element*

Przemysław Witkowski



C O L L E G I U M C I V I T A S

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“The 5G files”
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radicalization around one issue or element

Przemysław Witkowski

Abstract

The Enlightenment and its values, such as naturalism, rationalism, humanistic and cognitive optimism, faith in progress, criticism, empiricism, sensualism and utilitarianism, are coming under increasing fire from social and political movements. One strand of this attack is anti-science protest movements, for example against vaccination and fifth-generation telephony. This text is an attempt to consider whether anti-5G activity can be considered a politically radicalized movement, and if so, whether it is focused solely on one issue or part of a larger wave. The article shows the roots and content of conspiracy theories related to the fight against 5G, as well as the structure, goals, and activities of the Polish part of this movement.

Keywords

COVID-19, Plandemia, 5G, Anti-Enlightenment, Conspiracy Theories

Anti-Enlightenment conspiracy theories and their development at the beginning of the twenty-first century

Conspiracy theories are an increasingly popular element of today's socio-political reality, additionally amplified by the spread of social media and information wars and disinformation actions by countries in conflict with each other. Jews, Freemasons, Illuminati, Jesuits (Butter, Knight 2020), and other demonic forces behind diabolical conspiracies have been joined in recent decades by reptilians, members of the New World Order, Big Pharma, Bill Gates, and George Soros (Key 2011).

Between 2008 and 2022, economic crises, pandemics, natural disasters, progressive climate change, and wars only strengthened the uncertainty in Western countries; this was answered by numerous conspiracy theories (Dentith 2015). In many of them, especially the newer ones, irrationalism and anti-scientism are essential components. The lack of confirmatory scientific evidence does not seem to bother the supporters of these conspiracy theories. On the contrary, there is often a component in them indicating that the lack of evidence for a given concept only confirms the participation of scientists in the conspiracy. Groups attacked by "alternative researchers" include archaeologists (crypto-archaeological movement), astronomers and physicists (ufology, anti-5G movement), anthropologists (ariosophy, turbo-Slavism), virologists (anti-vaccine movement), biologists (anti-GMO movement), and doctors (alternative medicine).

The common element in these activities is opposition to the values associated with science in general, and the Enlightenment. This name (French – Les Lumières, German – die Aufklärung, Spanish – la ilustración, Italian – l'illuminazione) refers to light, understood as a force that dissipates darkness and superstition. In its spirit, the enlightened mind – that is, the human mind freed from bonds and fetters – is a light that illuminates the way to learn the truth about the world and man. The latter should be guided in his approach to reality by

naturalism, rationalism, humanistic and cognitive optimism, faith in progress, criticism, empiricism, sensualism, and utilitarianism; he should strive to change the world for the better (Chaunu 2010).

As a result, liberalism and socialism, especially the former, can be regarded as political representations of Enlightenment values. It is from the circles hostile to these two ideologies that the simultaneous condemnation of Enlightenment values most often comes. Opponents blame liberalism for the anomy of social ties, the breakdown of traditional values, changes in the models of family and relationships, growing individualism, ecological crises, religious crises, the Americanization of global culture, technocracy, corporate rule, the oligarchization of politics, treating economic growth as the only determinant of state success, and plans to create secret government (Teitelbaum 2020).

At the same time, various figures have accused the Enlightenment of being the root of totalitarianism. Zygmunt Bauman (2009) sees the sources of right-wing totalitarianism in the Enlightenment, Roger Scruton (Callahan, McIntyre 2020) sees the same for leftist totalitarianism, and Michel Foucault (1987; 2021) sees both. A vital, often pivotal anti-Enlightenment component can be found in integral traditionalism (Sedgwick 2004); fundamentalisms of various religions, including Islam, Christianity, and new spirituality / New Age and new religious movements (Meltzer 2021); monarchism-legitimism (Bartyzel 2006); neo-pagan neo-fascism (Bar-On 2013; 2019); Volkism (Mosse 1972); ariosophy (*Ibidem*); deep ecology (Scerri 2015) and several other currents of environmentalism, in particular those related to new spirituality and new religious movements (Evans 2020); and the conservative revolution (Woods 1996). Comparing the abovementioned currents of thought, one may notice a set of common elements. Most are characterized by a greater or lesser distrust of science, and even technophobia; also by irrationalism, nativism, emotionalism, strong

opposition to the ideas of progress and modernity, and fantasies about the Arcadian past. Most are anti-democratic and anti-liberal.

Extreme right movements are particularly anti-Enlightenment, so this is where people who oppose some vital aspects of the value of the heritage of this era often end up. However, it is worth noting that there are also several similar anti-scientific theories that are more popular on the left; involving, for example, the harmfulness to health and nature of genetically modified food (GMO), the dangers of the use of nuclear energy, or the beneficial health effects of veganism. There are also conspiracy theories shared by representatives of various political ideologies, such as the concept of a “plandemic” (Hotez, 2020ab); that is, the alleged planned and hidden goals of the COVID-19 epidemic. It should be noted, however, that each group of supporters has a different motivation to act. Right-wingers fight against restrictions on freedom; left-wingers fight against medical corporations.

A similar right-left conspiracy theory concerned the harmfulness of fifth-generation (5G) telephony; this peaked in popularity just before the COVID-19 pandemic and during its first year. Due to the short duration of the broader popularity of this conspiracy theory (around 2018–2021; after this, it was practically replaced by the theory of the “plandemic” among conspirators) and the violent actions of its supporters (setting fire to base stations and destroying telecommunications masts), it is particularly interesting to research this case of a highly radicalized anti-scientific conspiracy theory.

This text will aim to present the theory itself and its assumptions and foundations, as well as its prominent representatives and promoters, both in Poland and elsewhere, but with a particular focus on Poland. It will attempt to consider whether the violent actions of supporters can be considered as radicalization around one issue or as part of a more significant wave of anti-Enlightenment movements. In this study, radicalization is understood as the process by which individuals or groups come to embrace attitudes or engage in actions that support

violence in the pursuit of extremist causes (Borum 2011). Populism is understood here as anti-elitist sentiments, opposition to the Establishment, and speaking to or for the “common people” (Eatwell, Goodwin 2018). Extremism is understood as vocal or active opposition to democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs (Home Office 2021). Terrorism is defined as an action or threat of action involving serious violence against a person or serious damage to property, or else one that endangers the life of someone other than the person committing the action, creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or is designed to interfere with or seriously disrupt an electronic system, where the action or threat is designed to influence the government or an international governmental organization, to intimidate the public or a section of the public, or to advance a political, religious, racial, or ideological cause (Home Office 2022).

The main elements of the 5G conspiracy theory

“Electromagnetic smog,” “pollution with electromagnetic fields,” and “electrosmog” – these are slogans and concepts that are increasingly penetrating the mainstream. On the one hand, they are ridiculed as a “tin foil hatter” conspiracy theory. On the other, they have gained new supporters, not only among the anonymous, but also MPs, artists, and celebrities. In recent years, there has been an increasingly popular conspiracy theory stating that the currently implemented 5G network is harmful to health: it causes brain cancer, infertility, autism, and Alzheimer’s (Broad 2019). The theory’s more radical supporters believe that it is also used to control the mind and control people through applications on their phones or even nanochips implanted into their bodies (Soler, Busiño 2019).

According to believers in these theories, the frequencies of the 5G network are similar to “electromagnetic weapons” that “destroy the

neurological functioning of the body” (Dziermański 2019a). Proof of this would be, for example, a post on Facebook that spun intensely in November 2018, blaming a 5G test mast for the mysterious death of 300 birds in the Netherlands (Dziermański 2018). This technology is also supposed to cause mutations of viruses, which become more resistant and multiply faster (Dziermański 2019a). It may also target and attack people, leading, for example, to a change in the hormones produced by the body (*Ibidem*). According to those fighting the development of 5G technology, more than fifty different types of diseases can be caused by electromagnetic waves, from cancer to changes in the psyche, leading to mass suicide and intoxication of the body, similar to arsenic poisoning (*Ibidem*).

“Torsion fields” are an additional threat. These would be next to the gravitational, electromagnetic, strong, and weak fifth interaction, and living organisms would be adapted to receive them. According to proponents, this para-scientific concept is responsible for recognizing signaling particles by the receptor, antigens by the antibody, and the substrate by the enzyme. With their help, DNA can be transferred. Believers think this makes it possible to trigger a cancer epidemic, send viruses directly to the human body, and perform selective killings (Krawczyk 2019).

None of these symptoms and problems are confirmed by mainstream scientific research, and all are considered para-scientific and fabricated. Symptoms reported by people associated with 5G combat are often identical to those described by people suffering from disorders belonging to the schizophrenia spectrum; for example, the feeling of being monitored and tortured by invisible beings, being a victim of invisible rays that cause pain or physical trauma, belief in the existence of a conspiracy against them, a sense of uniqueness, and a sense of mission (Jarema 2010).

Sources of 5G conspiracy theories

Conspiracy theories about cell phone technology have a long history. Doctors first talked about “radiophobia” around 1900. Next came concern about power lines and microwaves in the 1970s, and opposition to 2G technology in the 1990s (Kiparoidze 2021). In the 1980s, it was suggested that radiation from cell phones could cause cancer and that this information had been obscured (Burgess 2003). The anti-5G idea is also somewhat similar to 1990s rumors about HAARP (the US High-Frequency Active Auroral Research Program). HAARP was an extensive array of radio transmitters in Alaska, funded by the US Department of Defense in collaboration with several research universities. The program conducted experiments with the ionosphere (upper atmosphere) using radio waves; it was shut down in 2014. Conspiracy theorists, however, argued that it was developing a weapon to control the weather and the mind (Chaigne 2021). Likewise, they fear that 5G may, in fact, be a hi-tech weapon, the use of which poses “a threat to the existence of humanity” (Admin 2019).

Perhaps the most famous “hub” of the anti-5G movement is John Kühles, the Dutch “ufologist” who founded the Facebook group “Stop5G” in 2018. Kühles entered the world of conspiracy theories in the early 1990s, inspired by Australian journalist David Summers. He declares that his interest in the subject stems from the fact that in 1990, he saw an alien vehicle (Kühles 2010). In late 1992, Summers and Kühles gave lectures at the “UFO and NWO” conference, where UFOs were linked to a conspiracy theory about the existence of a secret world government called the New World Order. In 1993, they founded the Contact Network International (CNI) foundation to research and publish on UFOs and conspiracy theories (*Ibidem*). They made an evening broadcast on Dutch Indymedia, and Kühles also had several broadcasts on cable TV in Amsterdam. In 1996 and 1997, he organized two festivals in the Netherlands under the name “The Real X-Files!” and “Beyond the X-

Files.” In 1998, he made two broadcasts for the independent channel Leiden Koekoeroe Reedio. However, they were taken off the air after the programs were accused of containing anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi elements (Kühles 2020). Today, Kühles runs several conspiracy sites against 5G, and is also on social media. His main Facebook group, “Stop5G,” was removed by the site when it had around 50,000 members. Its successor, “Stop5G Legal Resistance – Research Stop5G (dot) net,” currently has 33,200 members.

On November 5, 2018, alternative medicine blogger Erin Elizabeth’s site Health Nut News described a disturbing story from the Netherlands with the headline “Hundreds of Birds Killed in the 5G Experiment in The Hague, The Netherlands.” Her post has been shared over 125,000 times on Facebook; it was a copy of Kühles’ posts on the subject. On Facebook, he had claimed that the deaths of 297 starlings at Huijgenspark in The Hague around October 19, 2018, were due to a 5G cellular network test which, he claimed, coincided with the deaths of the birds. However, local authorities never recognized the 5G network as the cause of the animal deaths, and the test described by Kühles took place on June 28, several months before the starlings died (Kasprak 2018). In addition, similar deaths of birds have occurred in the US states of Arkansas (Lang 2011), Wisconsin (Borenstein 2011), and Louisiana (Lang 2011), as well as in Sweden (Choi 2011), Japan (Lang 2011), Thailand (*Ibidem*), and Brazil (*Ibidem*). They all had nothing to do with 5G technology and happened long before its emergence. Despite this, the post started spinning on Facebook and health blogs. This is not Kühles’s only theory about 5G. In another post, he suggested that the Californian fires in November 2018 were punishments by the “ruling elite” for opposition to the implementation of 5G technology in the state. They were supposed to have been triggered by a direct attack with “energy weapons.” His followers disseminated this theory on social media (Reuters Staff 2020b).

The Russian factor in 5G conspiracy theories

However, the supporters of conspiracy theories would not be so audible were it not for the help of state actors. The Russian media is one of the most common spreaders of various conspiracy theories; this is no different in the case of 5G. In May 2018, RT America, the US branch of Russian state television, aired over a dozen news segments warning of brain cancer, infertility, autism, heart cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, nosebleeds, and other health risks, using sensational phrases such as “apocalypse 5G” or “a dangerous experiment on humanity,” and saying 5G “can kill you” (Broad 2019). “This is an economic war,” said Ryan Fox, COO of New Knowledge, a technology company that tracks disinformation, of the actions of RT television. “Russia does not have a good 5G play, so it tries to undermine and discredit ours” (cited by England 2020). There is also growing friction between Washington and Beijing over 5G, with each side looking for allies in one of today’s most important technology races. It is believed that Moscow and Beijing are currently allies on this issue. The Kremlin “would be very happy to see democratic governments engaged in the fight for the environmental and health threats of 5G,” said Molly McKew, head of the consulting firm Fianna Strategies in Washington, which is trying to counter Russian disinformation (cited by Broad 2019).

Hundreds of blogs and websites copy alarmist news about 5G, rarely if ever noting its Russian origins. Analysts call it the “treacherous fog.” Meanwhile, the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence, in a 2017 report, described RT as “the Kremlin’s main international propaganda channel” (cited by *ibidem*). Experts say that Moscow’s goal is to destabilize the West by undermining confidence in democratic leaders, institutions, and political life. To this end, the RT network strengthens the voices of the opposition in order to sow discord and widen social divisions. It gives marginal groups a megaphone and visibility under false pluralism (*Ibidem*). Earlier campaigns attacked

fracking, vaccination, and genetically modified organisms. One program called GMO tomatoes a “beautiful poison” (*Ibidem*).

RT is applying its *modus operandi* to 5G, selectively airing the most sensational claims and giving a few marginal opponents of wireless technology a new, prominent forum. RT America gathers anti-5G activists in one place. For decades, some have accused cell phones, power lines, and other everyday sources of electromagnetic waves of worsening health and causing disease. Most of their work appears not in reputable scientific journals but in little-known reports, publications, and the treatises they publish, sometimes along with copious notes of dubious importance. Usually, they also quote their own or each other’s research. Sometimes RT simply uses pre-existing recordings and texts, editing them to reflect this perspective (*Ibidem*).

All cell phones use radio waves. However, RT America calls the signals “radiation,” associating them with powerful rays at the other end of the electromagnetic spectrum, such as X-rays and ultraviolet rays, which can damage DNA and cause cancer at high doses (*Ibidem*). RT played an active role in raising concerns by placing the debut of 5G in the context of Biblical Apocalypse. The caption on the January show was “5G Apocalypse” (Zappone 2019). The lecturer reported that doctors, scientists, and environmental groups were now calling for a ban on the technology. “«Dangerous» experiment on humanity,” “How to survive the danger of 5G,” “5G Tech is a crime under international law,” “Absolute madness: the telecommunications industry ignores the dangers of 5G,” “Could 5G expose more children to cancer?”; these are just a few titles of programs broadcast in 2019 by this station (*Ibidem*). Experts from EU agencies and the Australian government came to similar conclusions about the origin of publicity about the “5G threat.” Also, materials showing this technology as dangerous came primarily from RT (*Ibidem*).

Mariusz Busiło, an expert in the field of “electromagnetic fields PEM” from the Polish Chamber of Information Technology and Telecommunications, points to the account and figure of Oleg A.

Grigoriev, who works on Twitter as an expert in “radiobiology” and is chairman of the Russian National Committee on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (RusCNIRP). On his own, he does not have much reach – just over 800 followers – but his tweets in both Russian and English are being boosted by successions of accounts linking to increasingly terrifying stories about 5G and radiation threats. There are thousands of such accounts, and they are becoming increasingly active – as shown, for example, by the report of the EU East Stratcom Task Force, a unit of the European Commission dealing with detecting and combating Russian disinformation. As Busiło stated in 2020: “it may also be important that most countries plan 3.4–3.8 GHz frequencies for 5G, which traditionally belong to military systems. Although President Vladimir Putin announced this year that Russia will also start building 5G in the coming years, he still did not support the idea that the military would release the 3.4–3.8 GHz frequency for this purpose” (cited by Czubkowska 2020).

5G and COVID-19

Tension related to 5G increased significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the first versions of the conspiracy theory claimed that it was no coincidence that 5G technology was tested in Wuhan, where the pandemic began. Others said the coronavirus crisis was deliberately created to keep people at home while 5G engineers installed the technology. Others, in turn, argued that 5G radiation weakens people’s immune systems, making them more susceptible to COVID-19 infection. Another 5G conspiracy theory mutation argues that 5G directly transmits the virus (Dziermański 2020a).

In February 2020, BBC News reported that there were posts in social media groups for conspiracy theorists about a link between the coronavirus and 5G mobile networks, claiming that the outbreaks in Wuhan and on the ship *Diamond Princess* had been directly caused by

electromagnetic fields and the introduction of wireless and 5G technologies (Cellan-Jones 2020). Some have also argued that the coronavirus outbreak was a cover for 5G-related disease. The evidence was that the disease did not significantly affect African countries where this technology had not been introduced (McDermott 2020).

“Let the masts collapse” – terrorist attacks on 5G telephone masts

The belief that the 5G network is harmful to human health and life has produced more and more acts of vandalism and terror. In the UK, four Vodafone transmitters were set on fire and destroyed in just one day. The masts were adapted to support the new 5G network (Warren 2020). By May 2020, at least 90 cell phone masts had been devastated in the UK (Boyd 2020).

By April 2020, 39 British Telecom fitters had been physically or verbally attacked by people who believed the 5G network was causing the coronavirus. “This week, we saw telephone poles wrapped in barbed wire to keep our fitters from doing their jobs,” said BT CEO Philip Jansen. “These poles hold standard telecommunications lines and have nothing to do with cell phones. It is hard for me to figure out how to begin to translate here using scientific knowledge, reason, or logic to refute something so meaningless” (cited by Sbeglia Nin 2020).

There have been 30 attempts to set fire to cell phone masts in the Netherlands, including one in which “Fuck 5G” was written at the scene. In France, there have been up to 17. Similar cases have occurred three times in Ireland (including Co Donegal), and also in Belgium, Italy, Germany, Cyprus (Limassol), and Sweden, where a total of 18 people attacked a mast. In Sweden, the government representative responsible for telecommunications was also threatened with death (Braw 2020). In France, two men were arrested, accused of setting fire to a transmitter in Foncine-le-Haut using Molotov cocktails on April 15. Material damage was initially estimated at €20,000 (Czubkowska 2020). By May 18,

2020, there had been as many as 142 arsons and physical destruction attempts in Europe, including attacks with saws and axes and the dismantling of telecommunications towers and transmitters (*Ibidem*). In the Netherlands, authorities characterized the perpetrators of mast attacks as hooligans taking part in the “European Mast Burning Championship” (Fildes, Di Stefano, Murphy 2020).

In many cases, the relay towers or stations had nothing to do with the new technology. Several telecommunications masts were also destroyed in Bolivia by people who feared that 5G technology could transmit the coronavirus, even though this South American country does not yet have this generation of wireless infrastructure. Four towers were destroyed in Yapacani, near the city of Santa Cruz, and others in San Julian and Ichilo. Local police chief Franklin Villazon compared the incident to a “terrorist attack” (AFP 2020).

In some European cities and municipalities, including Brussels, protest movements have delayed the introduction of 5G (Chamberlain 2019). In the Netherlands, a spokesman for a telecommunications industry group received death threats, and operators also registered three cases of harassment of network maintenance workers. On its website, the Dutch government’s Security and Counter-Terrorism (NCTV) representative stated in April 2020 that it had recorded “various incidents” around broadcasting masts, including arson and other sabotage, and that opposition to the introduction of 5G was possibly responsible. “This is a worrying development (...). Disruption of the broadcasting masts (...) may have consequences for the coverage of the telecommunications network and the coverage of emergency services” (Reuters Staff 2020a).

Attacks on masts also took place in Poland. In 2019 in Krakow, a group of people declaring themselves opposed to the introduction of the 5G network in Poland tried to destroy the base station belonging to T-Mobile Polska. The action failed due to police intervention; the mast was not damaged. The participants managed to get onto the roof of the

building and began to enforce security measures protecting the mast against unauthorized access (ps 2019). Also, in Łódź, at the end of May 2020, the telecommunications base station was set on fire with Molotov cocktails; two masts of mobile operators, Play and T-Mobile (tw 2020), suffered as a result. In Krakow, telecommunications operators hired security companies to supervise and protect their base stations, and the Polish Chamber of Information Technology and Telecommunications appealed to the government, local governments, and law enforcement agencies to “take decisive action in connection with criminal activity disrupting the operation of technology, on which depends the life and health of citizens and the functioning of the state” (ps 2020). Another attack took place in the Lublin region. On May 28, in Chełm, police detained a 35-year-old who had cut metal parts of the telecommunications relay tower in the village of Sielec. The losses were estimated at 45,000 PLN; the man was threatened with up to five years in prison (EP 2020). Further arson attacks took place in 2020 between Gołub and Sikorzyn, in the commune of Stężyca, and in Złójec (ps 2022).

The structure of the Polish anti-5G movement and its most essential members

The Polish anti-5G movement can be divided into four groups. First, activists holding local protests and “whistleblowers” trying to publicize the struggle others are waging. Second, self-styled “experts” trying to describe the harmfulness of this telecommunications service in a quasi-scientific way. Third, non-governmental organizations that specialize in the fight against 5G, and those for which 5G is only part of their activity. Fourth, politicians publicizing the 5G issue in parliament and press conferences.

The main Polish activists/“whistleblowers” of resistance to the introduction of fifth-generation telephony are Ewa Paweła, Hanna Kazahari, Witold Hake, Sławomir Dul, Zbigniew Gelzok, Paweł A.

Fijałkowski, Tobiasz Żuchiewicz, Rafik Ennaoui, and Mateusz Jarosiewicz. None of these people have a polytechnic education or other professional competencies to assess the harmfulness of 5G. They base their opinions on Internet reports, some of which have been described above. Pawela is a French philologist who claims to be a victim of electronic mind control (Dziermański 2019a). She believes that 5G and compulsory vaccinations are intended to lead to another pandemic and result in the depopulation of the Earth, for which Jews from the Chabad Lubawicz religious group are planning. They want to introduce a New World Order (Pawela 2021). Another “whistleblower,” Wiktor Hake, claims that he is a so-called target (this is how people consider themselves “victims of electronic torture” – that is, mind control via, for example, electronic beams – because they “know too much” (Dziermański 2019a). Kazahari says COVID-19 does not exist. In her opinion, the global government turns up 5G antennas to modify oxygen, preventing hemoglobin from absorbing it. The effect? People suffocate and die (Witkowski 2020). Most whistleblowers spread similar theories involving conspiracies, anti-Semitism, fake news, or misinterpreted research results.

Initially, the central organization for fighting EMR, and later 5G, was the “STOPZET – STOP Organized Electronic Torture Association.” This began as a Facebook group, bringing together mainly people suffering from various delusions, including persecution, poisoning, paranoia, persecution mania, and schizophrenia-spectrum disorders, including fantasies of being harassed by other people who stole their minds and caused headaches. They eventually formed an association to deal with “electronic harassment” and “manipulation of the human nervous system.” Over time, other organizations were added, such as “We Free People,” “Ecological Social Action – 5G – Let the Masts Run,” and the Polish Association for Counteracting Electro-contamination, “Right to Life.” Jadwiga Łopata and Zbigniew Gelzok stand out among their creators. The former comes from the ecological movement; she already

ran a farm belonging to the Hindu religious group Ananda Marga (The Path of Happiness). She fought against GMOs, and finally, together with her partner, the English anti-Semitic baronet Julian Rose, she established an ecological farm near Wadowice. Gelzok was a former telecommunications installation fitter who accused his employer of causing him to get cancer; he founded the National Association for Counteracting Electro-contamination, “Right to Life,” to help other alleged 5G victims like him.

The group of opponents of 5G also includes several “expert” scientists. Most often, they are people with a low professional status in their fields of research, with a feeling of rejection by the Academy, occupying themselves in hobby fields. They treat them as extensions of their scientific careers and they use their academic titles, even though they relate to completely different research areas. The most famous are Dr. Diana Wojtkowiak, and the James Clerk Maxwell Institute of Electromagnetic Research Foundation, founded by Dr. Jerzy Gremba. Wojtkowiak claims to be a researcher on “homeopathy,” “radionics,” and “physical therapy” (Administrator 2019). However, she obtained her doctorate based on a dissertation in microbiology (Makarewicz, Łojkowska (Eds.) 2020). Her main speaking topic is the pseudoscientific theory of torsion fields (TPT). In Poland, this concept is mainly promoted by Jerzy Zięba and the followers of alternative medicine gathered around him. The theory was developed in the 1980s in the USSR and has continued to be active in Russia. The originators of this pseudoscientific theory are Gennady Shipov and Anatoly Akimov.

Shipov and Dr. Wojtkowiak “prove” that TPT is the explanation for COVID-19 and is related to homeopathy, chakras, radiesthesia, organites, chemtrails, and even magic (Dziermański 2020c). Meanwhile, the James Clerk Maxwell Institute of Electromagnetic Research is not a research institution but a foundation. Dr. Eng performs the functions of the president, Jerzy Gremba (born 1950). For years he ran an electronic services facility called “Jim Elektronik,” which in

practice repaired household appliances. His doctoral dissertation concerned not telephony but interference with the reception of satellite TV signals. He does not work at any university and does not publish works that can be considered scientific (Dziermański 2020b). The “Institute” itself is registered in Krakow at the apartment of Dr. Barbara Galdzińska-Calik, who received her scientific title in economics. She is a co-author of only one scientific article on the study of magnetic radiation, published in the Polish journal *Przegląd Lekarski* (*Ibidem*). In 2006, she moved to the Bielany estate in Krakow. After a miscarriage, she decided that a base station near her home was to blame. She recognized her daughter as an “electro-sensitive child” and began actions to combat 5G. The last member of the board of the “Institute” is Paweł Wypychowski, a graduate of electronics and telecommunications at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering of the Szczecin University of Technology. In 2007, he established an EMF3 company, Electromagnetic Safety, the purpose of which is to sell devices supposed to protect against electromagnetic fields (EMF). Its products include “shielding paint” with a grounding kit, priced 1245.85 at PLN; men’s shielding shorts for 339 PLN; and a meter of unique curtain fabric for 509.97 PLN (*Ibidem*).

Originally, the main outlets for conspiracy theories related to 5G were the Internet TV stations *Niezależna Telewizja* and *Porozmawiajmy.tv*, led respectively by a hotelier from Sobótka, Janusz Zagórski (Kamil 2021), and a former officer of the Polish Army, Aleksander Berdowicz (*Porozmawiajmy.tv* 2019). Both channels are mainly concerned with publicizing “alternative” medicine, ufology, and numerous conspiracy theories. Over time, the topic of 5G also found its way onto extreme-right YouTube channels, such as *Polskie Sprawy* (*Polskie Sprawy* 2018), *Centrum Edukacyjne Polska* (*Centrum Edukacyjne Polska* 2022), *wRealu24.pl* (KMJ Archiwum Polityczne 2020), *Media Narodowe* (*Media Narodowe* 2020), and the National Television (EugeniuszSendecki71 2020). There, it could count on a much

larger audience. As a result, larger non-governmental organizations such as the National Institute for Strategic Studies and the Institute of Civic Affairs became interested in this topic, adding 5G to their portfolio of activities.

The National Institute of Strategic Studies has nothing to do with the renowned Polish Institute of Strategic Studies (ISS). NISS's leaders are Wojciech Edward Dobrzyński and Marek Sas-Kulczycki, co-creators of the extreme right-wing movement 1Polska.pl. This also included Rafał Mossakowski, a former activist of the pro-Russian party Change Nabil al Malazi; and Hanna Kazahari, Tobiasz Żuchiewicz, Jarosław Bogusławski, and Robert Majka, known for their protests against 5G (1polska.pl 2015). So far, the Institute's funding has come from the founder's compensation for internment and imprisonment under martial law. NaviTY, the official NISS channel, published videos about the enfranchisement of Poles and the plunder of Polish land. Recently, however, there has been a marked shift in interest towards technology. There are videos about the "matrix of social networks," the "channel through which all computer plague passes to us, i.e. email," and finally, "does 5G activate the coronavirus?" (Czubkowska 2020). The topic of 5G has appeared on NISS repeatedly, and their associate Mateusz Jarosiewicz has repeatedly commented on and participated in protests against 5G.

The project of introducing 5G to Poland was strongly criticized by the Lodz foundation – the Institute of Civic Affairs (ISO). This organization published a large brochure in which it repeated some of the myths and conspiracy theories associated with 5G in the form of questions; it asked for a nationwide debate on the opportunities and threats of the new technology for Polish women and Poles. It also demanded that the draft amendment to the act supporting the development of telecommunications services and networks regarding 5G be suspended until a debate was held between supporters and opponents (Wypychowski 2019). The president of the ISO is Rafał

Górski, an ex-journalist of the left-wing magazine *Nowy Obywatel*, who is close to the PiS National Freedom Institute – Center for Civil Society Development, an executive agency established in 2017 to support the development of civil society, as well as public benefit activities and volunteering. He is a former ecologist and activist, and recently the candidate of Kukiz'15 for the position of Mayor of Łódź (Losik 2018). The publication of the brochure was supported by PiS.

By the end of 2021, protests against 5G had taken place in Kraków (Tymczak 2020), Gdańsk (Gov.pl 2021), Radom (Gniwny 2019), Radomsko (TVP3 Łódź, 2020), Koszalin (Redakcja Koszalininfo 2020), Kołobrzeg (Czerniak 2020), Gliwice (Taler 2018), Bieruń (Wojciech 2020), Bielsko Biała (Szutiak 2021), Kielce (Dziarmaga 2020), Bolesławiec (Redakcja 2020a), Opole (Zapotoczny 2020), Wrocław and Gniechowice near Wrocław (Kaszuwara 2020), and Warsaw (Rymsza 2019).

Protests had also been held in smaller towns such as Lutomia Górna (Szymkiewicz 2019), Gniechowice (Zespół wGospodarce 2019), Rzyki (MG 2020), Izdebnik (Płaszczycza 2020), Stara Wieś (Limanowa.in 2020), Myślec (Stachura 2020), Olkusz (a.n.q.a. 2020), Dębogóra (Danielewicz 2020), Łuków (Łuków24 2020), Puchły (Koścín 2020), Korczyna (Jefimow 2020), Lutoryż (Piecyk 2020), Henryków (Ossowicz 2020) and a dozen more. Protesters have often managed, especially in smaller towns, to block the construction of a telecommunications mast, whether it was fifth-generation telephony or earlier. They create petitions, collect signatures, poster the neighborhood, and publicize the issue in the local media. Local politicians are also interested. If there is a local protest leader, such as Jadwiga Łopata in the area of Wadowice, they often go to MPs, who in turn intervene at the central level, transferring the demands to Warsaw or to their home parties.

In addition, due to the actions of the extreme right-wing media and non-governmental organizations, mainstream politicians have become interested in the topic of 5G. Interpellations on the harmfulness of fifth-generation telephony have been submitted mainly by MPs from the

Confederation (Rafał Majka and Grzegorz Braun), and Coalition Poland – Kukiz'15: Jarosław Sachajko, Jarosław Rzepa, Agnieszka Ścigaj, Urszula Nowogórska, Paweł Szramka, Marek Jakubiak, Bartosz Józwiak, Barbara Chrobak, Józef Brynkus, Stefan Józef Romecki, and Maciej Masłowski. Several Civic Coalition and Law and Justice MPs have also joined in (Redakcja 2020b). Jarosław Sachajko, an MP from the Lublin region (Gliwa 2019), was crucial for keeping the topic prominent. He is not a telecommunications specialist; he studied economics and agricultural studies, and he also has a doctorate.

One forum for presenting the views of anti-5G activists was the Parliamentary Team on Child Cybersecurity meeting, led by Sachajko, in December 2019. Its leitmotif was to be public consultations on the harmonization of PEM standards. Those appearing included the head of the Institute of Communications; representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Digitization, and the Institute of Labor Medicine in Łódź; and telecommunications operators. Groups of protesters from all over the country were also widely represented (Krakow and the STOPZet association with Ewa Pawela and the Right to Life). The talks ended in a fiasco, and the governing party did not appear in parliament at subsequent meetings organized by Sachajko (Dziermański 2019b).

Ultimately, with the expansion of the COVID-19 pandemic and the sanitary restrictions related to it, the anti-5G movement lost its importance, and anti-scientific protest movements became dominated by conspiracists focused on non-scientific and quasi-scientific explanations of the pandemic or narrating the dangers of vaccination. Meanwhile, far-right politicians and media have largely lost interest in the issue of 5G and switched to the abovementioned topics and narratives.

Conclusions

Few of the 5G conspiracy theories are entirely new. Most are mutations or reconnections of existing themes, often drawing on narrative tropes

and rhetorical maneuvers that have a long history. In addition, when confronting a new phenomenon, conspiracy theorists usually have a complete worldview. They interpret new information and events to fit them into an existing theory. One of the hallmarks of this kind of thinking is that it is self-sealing and resistant to challenges. The lack of evidence is ironically often taken as evidence of a mass cover-up.

Anti-5G theories try to present themselves as “scientific,” based on concepts gathered in a paradigmatic bundle, just like Enlightenment science. However, these concepts are not empirically validated; are unfalsifiable, based on the concepts of an alleged secret conspiracy of the elite to enslave humanity; and are strongly powered by anti-Semitic, ufological, and populist elements. Thus, the bundle of concepts targeting fifth-generation telephony can be regarded as an anti-science theory, part of a broader set of anti-Enlightenment movements.

However, it is difficult to consider the anti-5G movement as extremist directly. It did not undermine democracy or individual freedoms. On the contrary, its activists positioned themselves as their defenders against the threat posed by big concerns or political elites. Conspiracy theories on 5G and the coronavirus connect people from very different parts of the political spectrum. On the one hand, they attract the far right, which sees them as part of a global government’s technological attack on individual freedom. On the other, they appeal to a well-established anti-vaccine community that often allies with leftists wary of corporate Big Pharma. However, it is most accurate to regard the supporters of this conspiracy theory as a group of radicalized, populist-minded liberals. At the same time, the violent actions of numerous activists against base stations for mobile telephony are terrorist acts (it should be noted, however, that the scale of these attacks was significantly larger in Western Europe).

So, is there radicalization around one issue? When we look at the biographies of activists and the activities of their organizations, it can be noticed that they are often people with many years of experience in

public action on various issues: anti-GMO campaigns, environmental movements, or alterglobalist movements. Publicity channels are also important here: the far-right media and right-wing populist politicians. In Poland, the topic of the fight against 5G, thanks to far-right internet channels, has penetrated mainstream politics, finding its promoters among extreme-right parties (Confederation) and the populist right (Kukiz'15). This was reflected in parliamentary interpellations. In this group, anti-5G postulates are mixed with content originating in other anti-Enlightenment movements, such as integral traditionalism, religious fundamentalism and integrism, new spirituality and New Age, monarchism-legitimism, and neo-pagan neo-fascism or Volkism. They also share a lack of trust in science and even technophobia, irrationalism, nativism, emotionalism, strong opposition to the ideas of progress and modernity, and fantasies about the Arcadian past. In fact, the only elements that are different are their attitudes towards democracy and liberalism. Therefore, the anti-5G movement can be considered part of a broader wave of anti-Enlightenment movements, and the radicalization of its activists is analogous to other representatives of this attitude.

Meanwhile, through its introduction of 5G, China is technologically accelerating. Thanks to the authorities' strict supervision of political life, they do not have to be afraid that citizen activity against 5G will make this process difficult. Liberal democracies face a completely different situation. Therefore, the anti-5G movement is just one of the streams of the anti-Enlightenment river, which is flooding more and more over the countries of the West, and also reaching for violence. Moreover, even if any of these streams dry up, which seems to be happening with the anti-5G movement, it can be assumed that pressure from anti-Enlightenment movements on the Enlightenment order will continue to increase.

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About the book "The Virus of Radicalization":

"I regard this monograph as an example of high-quality academic craftsmanship. It is an important supplement to the literature on the phenomena and processes of radicalization and extremism (primarily those taking place in the Polish socio-political system, but not only). It will be interesting both for scientists, students and a wider audience interested in socio-political issues."

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"The volume is a collection of chapters on the topic of mostly right-wing political radicalization in Poland, Europe, and the world. (...) Excellent empirical case studies of particular cases of political radicalization in Poland and Europe are the bulk and the highlight of the volume. (...) Overall, the volume is a useful, well-written and well-conceived contribution to literature on political radicalism and crisis of liberal democracy."

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