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## 197th GELLNER SEMINAR

February 23, 2023, 4pm

Venue:

EÚ AV ČR, Na Florenci 3, Prague 1 (5th floor) and on-line (link below)

### *Virtuosos of mimesis and mimicry: movements propagating conspiracy theories in Ireland and Poland*

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In recent years, conspiracy theories have been increasingly defined as a new social enemy, a threat to democracy. But scholars of conspiracy theories also point out that we have very little research that examines a direct link between conspiracy theories and political practice. We still know very little about the ways in which conspiratorial beliefs influence different forms of civic engagement and democratic participation. By examining Irish and Polish movements that endorse vaccination-related conspiracy theories, this article explores what relation they have to civil society. I argue that, in order to shed the negative label of conspiracy theories, such movements engage in the practices of mimesis and mimicry. According to Markus Hoehne, mimesis is a form of positive appraisal, an art of imitating well-established models of social and political organization. Mimicry, on the other hand, involves the deceptive imitation of such models in order to attain one's own political agenda. What, then, are the Covid-19 era protests: masters of mimicry or masters of mimesis?

**Elżbieta Drązkiewicz** obtained PhD from the Cambridge University and then moved to Ireland where she held Marie-Curie Fellowship and later a Lecturship. That period of her work resulted in the book *Institutionalised Dreams: the art of managing foreign aid* (2020). Currently she is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Sociology (SAV). She was recently awarded ERC grant for the "Conspirations" project that examines conflicts over conspiracy theories in Europe. Drązkiewicz is also Principal Investigator in the CHASE project REDACT analysing how digitalisation shapes the form, content, and consequences of conspiracy theories. She is also leading the APPV project PanTruth analysing conspiratorial milieu in the Visegrad countries.

**MS Teams *link***