

Inside the SCTO Ontology

How SignalWatch turns 120 conspiracy theories into structured, comparable data — the controlled vocabularies, the cast of villains, the anatomy of 'proof', and what the structure reveals about why some theories spread and others fizzle.

SignalWatch · Structured Conspiracy-Theory Ontology (SCTO) · Reference & Findings

A conspiracy theory feels like a story, but underneath it has parts that recur everywhere: a hidden villain, a thing they're covering up, a threat to you, and a pile of 'evidence.' The **Structured Conspiracy-Theory Ontology (SCTO)** names those parts with fixed, controlled vocabularies so that 120 wildly different theories — flat earth, the stolen election, Maui lasers, the Great Replacement — become rows in one comparable dataset. This document walks the ontology from a single theory out to the whole graph, and mines it for what makes a theory catch on.

1 · The anatomy of one theory

Every theory is decomposed onto the same axes — each drawn from a **controlled vocabulary** (a fixed list of allowed values). Below is the Great Replacement as the ontology stores it, beside the two vocabularies that do the most work: the **Arena** (which battlefield the theory is fought on) and the **Controlling Interest** (who the hidden 'THEM' is).

Anatomy of a Conspiracy Theory

Every theory is decomposed into the same controlled-vocabulary axes — here, the Great Replacement.

SCTO single-record view + the Arena and Controlling-Interest vocabularies across all 120 theories

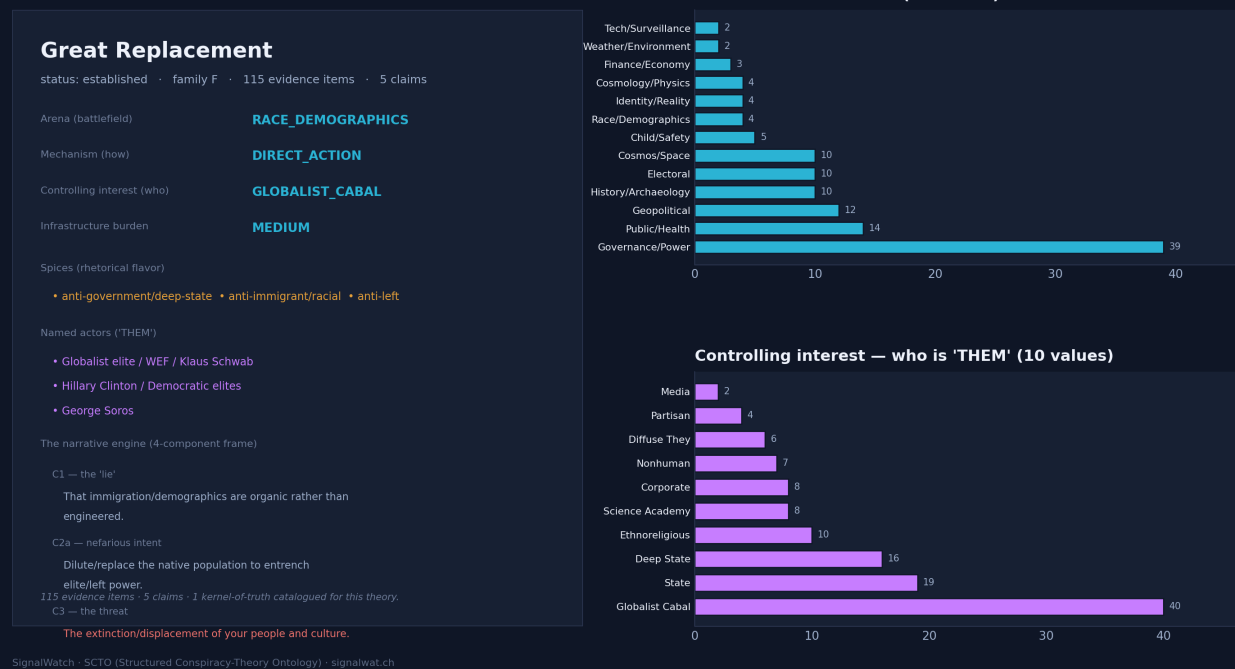


Figure 1 — a single theory's controlled-vocabulary record, plus the Arena and Controlling-Interest distributions across all 120 theories.

The narrative engine: how the axes combine (in plain English)

The axes aren't a flat checklist — they snap together into a sentence. SignalWatch decomposes each theory into a four-component frame, and the vocabulary axes describe each component:

- **C1 — the 'lie':** the official account the believer rejects ("immigration is organic, not engineered").
- **C2a — nefarious intent + C2b — the actors:** *who* is doing it and *why* — this is the **Controlling Interest** vocabulary (Globalist Cabal, Deep State, State, ...) plus named actors.
- **C3 — the threat:** what you personally lose ("the extinction of your people and culture").
- **C4 — spices:** the rhetorical flavors layered on top (anti-immigrant, anti-left, antisemitism ...).

Read as a sentence: "*They tell you X is innocent (C1); really a [Controlling Interest] is doing it via [Mechanism] (C2) to inflict [Threat] on you (C3)*" — fought in a given **Arena**, requiring a given **Infrastructure Burden** (how many institutions and how much secrecy the plot would actually take), and seasoned with **Spices**. The Mechanism vocabulary is the verb of that sentence: COVERUP (hide a real event's true cause), FALSE_FLAG (stage it), INFILTRATION (secretly run the institutions), SUBSTITUTION (a person/place is faked), PROPHECY (it was foretold/planned), and so on.

Arena — the 13 battlefields (controlled vocabulary)

Code	Meaning	n
Governance Power	who really rules	39
Public Health	medicine, disease, vaccines	14
Geopolitical	war, nations, foreign threat	12
Cosmos Space	space, astronomy, extraterrestrials	10
Electoral	elections & legitimacy of power	10
History Archaeology	the true past / lost civilizations	10
Child Safety	trafficking, ritual abuse of children	5
Cosmology Physics	the fundamental nature of reality/physics	4
Identity Reality	is this person/place/reality real	4
Race Demographics	population, immigration, ethnicity	4
Finance Economy	money, banking, control via economy	3
Tech Surveillance	technology as control	2
Weather Environment	weather, climate, geo-engineering	2

Controlling Interest — the 10 versions of 'THEM' (controlled vocabulary)

Code	Meaning	n
Globalist Cabal	Supranational cabal / globalists	40
State	The State / government apparatus	19
Deep State	Intelligence / 'deep state'	16
Ethnoreligious	Ethno-religious power (antisemitic core); recurs as a substrate under GlobalistCabal.	10
Corporate	Corporate / industry	8
Science Academy	Scientific / academic establishment	8
Nonhuman	Hidden / non-human power (ET, simulation operators, occult)	7

Code	Meaning	n
Diffuse They	Unnamed / diffuse 'they'	6
Partisan	Domestic political faction	4
Media	Media / culture industry	2

One reading already jumps out: **Governance/Power** is the single most common arena (39 theories) and the **Globalist Cabal** the single most common villain (40) — most conspiracy theories are, at heart, about who secretly rules.

2 · The map: families, mechanisms, lifecycle, burden

Above the per-theory axes sit grouping layers that let theories connect to one another. A **Family** (or cluster) is a thematic lineage — the antisemitic master-template (A), election-integrity (D), the QAnon constellation (E), Illuminati/NWO (J). A **sub-theory** link records when one theory is a child of another (e.g. a specific 'no-virus' claim under the broader anti-vaccine family). **Status** tracks each theory's lifecycle, and **Infrastructure Burden** grades how large the alleged plot would have to be to be real.

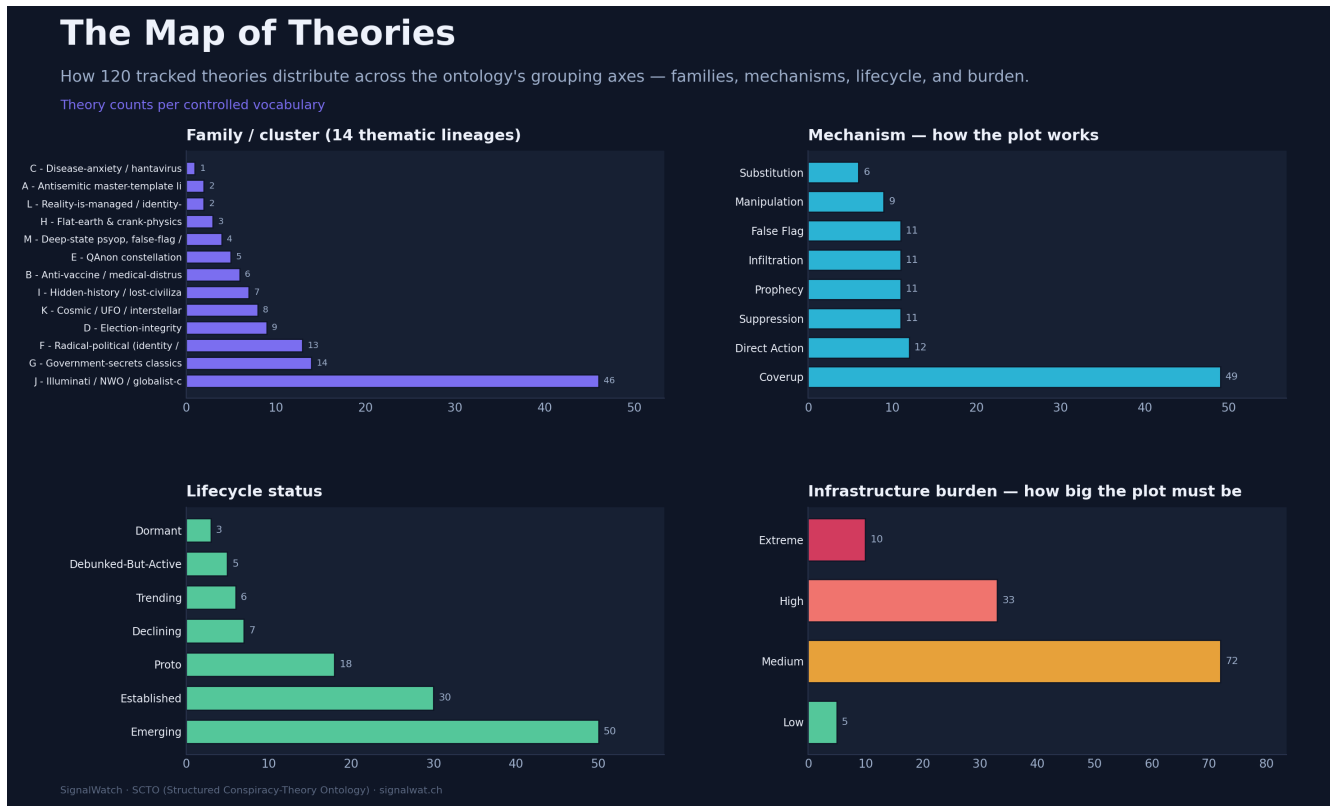


Figure 2 — how 120 theories distribute across the four grouping axes.

- **One family dominates.** Illuminati / NWO / globalist-control (J) holds 46 of 120 theories — the gravitational center of the modern conspiracy universe — followed by Government-secrets classics (G, 14) and Radical-political (F, 13).
- **COVERUP is the default verb.** 49 theories run on covering up a real event's true cause; the next mechanism (Direct Action) has only 12. Most theories don't claim nothing happened — they claim the *explanation* is hidden.
- **Most plots are 'medium' burden.** 72 theories need just one institution sustaining a cover-up; only 10 require the EXTREME tier (global coordination + reality-scale fabrication over decades).
- **The corpus skews young.** 50 theories are 'emerging' and 18 are proto-theories (thin, may never reach escape velocity) versus 30 'established' — SignalWatch is catching theories early.

3 · The expanded universe: actors, roles, and events

Theories don't exist in isolation — they share a cast. The ontology resolves the free-text villains of each theory to a registry of canonical **actors** (named people and institutions), which is what lets us see that the *same* figures recur across unrelated theories.

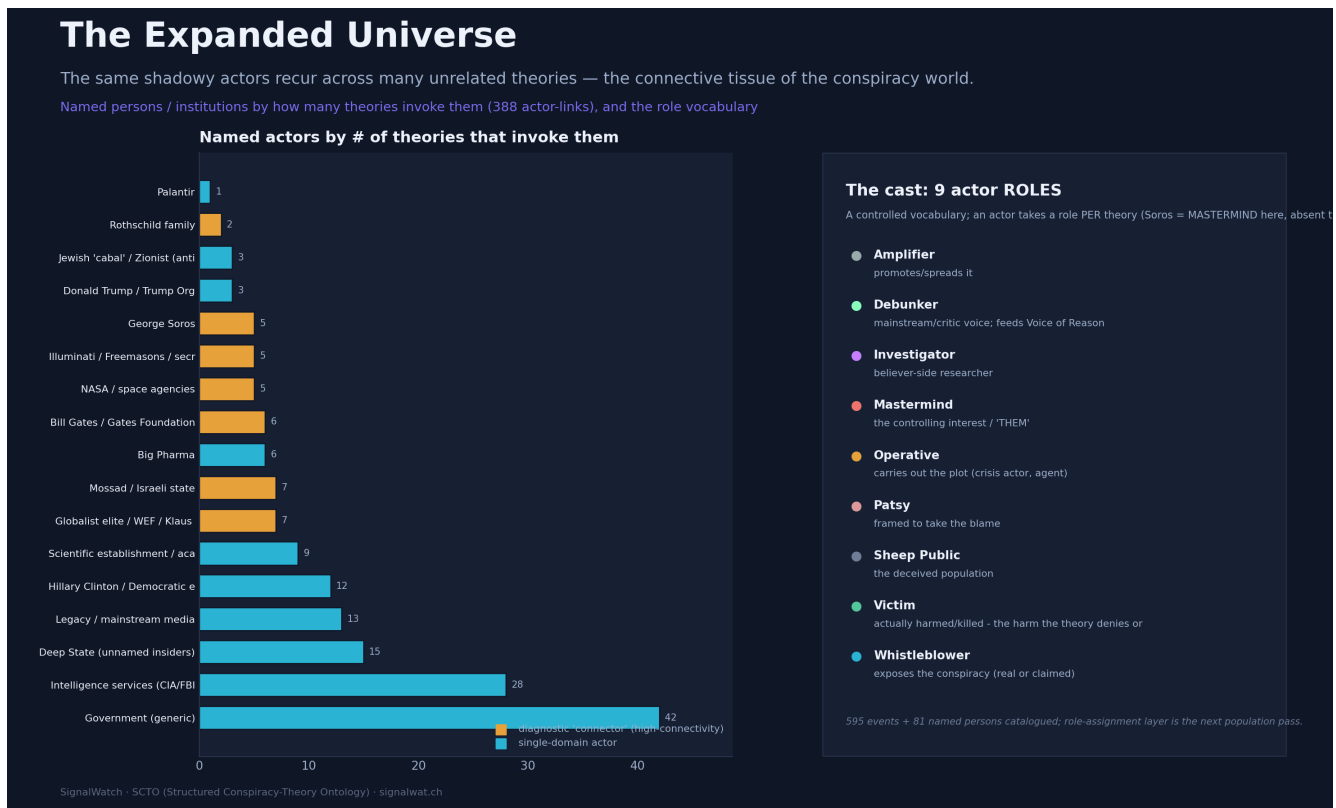


Figure 3 — named actors by how many theories invoke them; gold marks the seven 'high-connectivity' connectors. Right: the 9-value role vocabulary.

A generic Government appears in 42 theories and Intelligence services in 28 — the ambient 'they.' But the more telling group is the seven **diagnostic connectors** (gold): Soros, the Rothschilds, Bill Gates, the WEF, the Illuminati, Mossad, and NASA. These are the names that, when invoked, signal a theory is reaching for the grand-unified-cabal template — they are the threads that stitch separate theories into one imagined super-conspiracy.

How roles work

An actor is not intrinsically a villain — it plays a **role per theory**, drawn from a 9-value controlled vocabulary. George Soros is the MASTERMIND in one theory and merely an AMPLIFIER in another; the same person can be a VICTIM (the harm a theory denies) or a PATSY (framed to take the blame). The full role vocabulary:

Role	What they do
Amplifier	promotes/spreads it
Debunker	mainstream/critic voice; feeds Voice of Reason
Investigator	believer-side researcher
Mastermind	the controlling interest / 'THEM'
Operative	carries out the plot (crisis actor, agent)

Role	What they do
Patsy	framed to take the blame
Sheep Public	the deceived population
Victim	actually harmed/killed - the harm the theory denies or re-attributes
Whistleblower	exposes the conspiracy (real or claimed)

This role layer (and the 595-event registry, which distinguishes real **Events** from staged or *implied* ones via FALSE_FLAG / COVERUP flags) is the ontology's next population pass; the actor registry and role vocabulary are in place today.

4 · The research layer: claims, truths, lies, and 'evidence'

This is where the ontology gets sharp. Each theory is a small argument graph. A **Core Claim** is the theory's central assertion. Believers support it with **Truths** (BELIEVER_TRUTH — things they hold to be true) and define themselves against **Lies** (MAINSTREAM_CLAIM — the official accounts they reject). Where a theory distorts something real, a **Kernel-of-Truth** records the actual fact and how it was twisted. And believers marshal **Evidence**.



Figure 4 — the research layer: 459 claims, 13,452 evidence artifacts, 94 kernels-of-truth, each typed by controlled vocabulary.

Evidence is what believers invoke to 'prove' it — not proof

Critically, **Evidence** in the SCTO sense is not scientific proof. It is whatever a believer puts forward to try to *establish* the theory: a TikTok clip, an out-of-context official document read as an admission, a 'too aligned to be chance' coincidence, a figure's stray remark heard as a tell. The ontology types each artifact by its **function** (what rhetorical job it does — an anomaly artifact, a breadcrumb 'planted' by the conspirators, a kernel stretched past its scope), its **form** (where it lives), and its **verification status**. Two facts about the 13,452 catalogued artifacts say it all:

- **Of evidence with a verification verdict, 82% is UNVERIFIED** and only 11% DOCUMENTED — the 'proof' is overwhelmingly unconfirmed.
- **It lives on video.** Among the most common forms, short video dominates (TikTok, YouTube, generic video) — the modern conspiracy 'document' is a clip, not a paper.

- **The dominant function is the 'anomaly artifact'** (an image with a called-out detail) followed by the 'breadcrumb' (material supposedly planted by the conspirators as a hint) — the epistemics of pattern-spotting, not investigation.

The mirror image of evidence is the **Kernel-of-Truth**: the real fact a theory abuses. The most common distortion is FALSE_CAUSATION (a real correlation reframed as cause), then EXTRAPOLATION (a real capability stretched past its limits). This is how a theory stays sticky — it is anchored to something true, then over-read.

The two vocabularies of belief and denial

Believer-truth type	How they 'know' it	n
Hidden Motive	'they had reason/benefit to do it' - cui bono	34
Anomaly Reading	'this physical detail proves tampering'	34
Identity Swap	'this person/thing isn't who/what they claim'	27
Pattern Design	'too aligned to be chance, so it's designed'	25
Foundational Doctrine	'the bedrock worldview is X' - the axiom	14
Capability Claim	'the official story is physically (im)possible'	11
Mainstream-'lie' type	What they reject	n
Denial Of Plot	'there is no cover-up / X does not exist'	14
Official Account	'the event happened as reported'	9
Innocent Explanation	'the anomaly has a benign cause'	4
Identity Affirmation	'this person is who they say they are'	3
Settled Science	'the science/history is established'	2

5 • What makes a theory spread

Because every theory carries the same structured features, we can ask which features track with reach. Splitting the corpus into the 37 largest and 37 smallest theories by footprint, and averaging footprint across each vocabulary, a consistent profile of a 'big' theory emerges.

What Makes a Theory Spread

Comparing the 37 largest vs 37 smallest theories by corpus footprint — which ontology features track with reach.

Data mining over per-theory footprint, controlling interest, mechanism, spices and actors

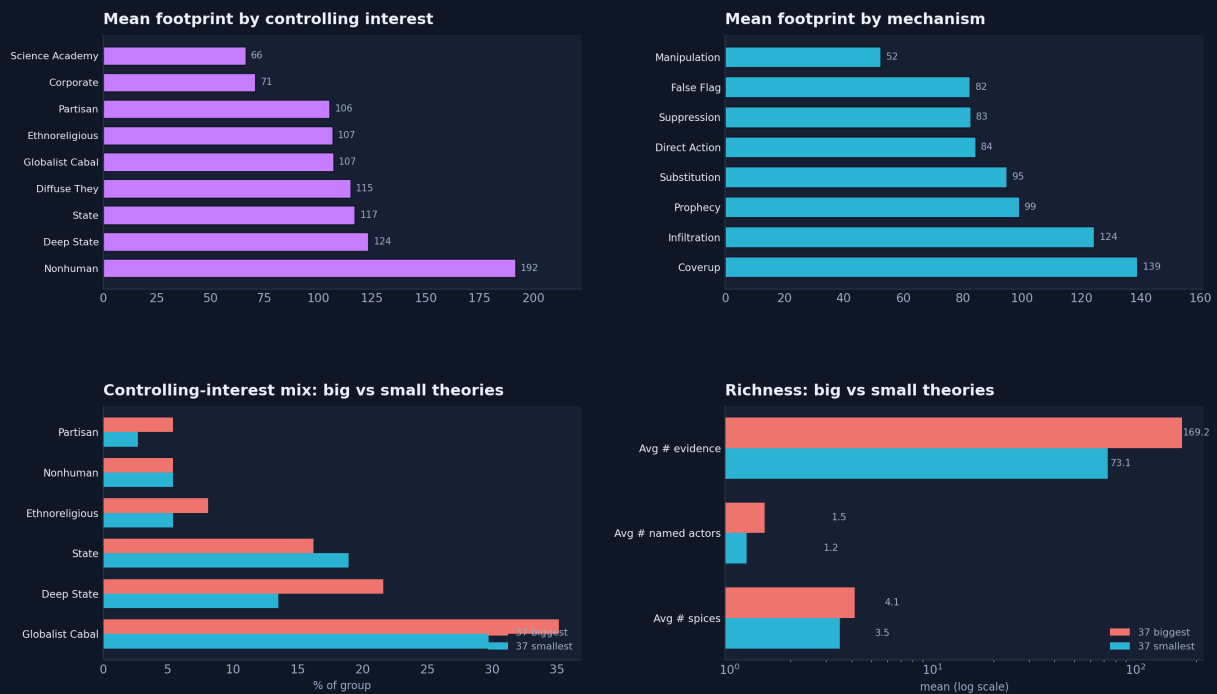


Figure 5 — data-mining the ontology: which controlling interests, mechanisms, and richness features track with corpus footprint.

- **The grander and vaguer the villain, the bigger the theory.** Theories blaming a NONHUMAN power (~192 avg footprint), the DEEP STATE (~124), or the STATE (~117) dwarf those blaming the SCIENCE/ACADEMY establishment (~66). A diffuse, unfalsifiable 'them' travels further than a specific one.
- **Hidden ongoing plots beat staged single events.** COVERUP (~139) and INFILTRATION (~124) theories spread far more than MANIPULATION (~52) or FALSE_FLAG (~82) ones — an open-ended 'they're hiding it' sustains attention; a one-time 'it was staged' burns out.
- **Big theories are richer.** The largest theories carry more rhetorical spices (4.1 vs 3.5 on average) and name more villains (1.5 vs 1.2) — more handholds for more audiences.
- **Big theories cluster on the Globalist-Cabal / Deep-State controlling interests**, while the smallest spread across niche, single-domain villains.

The insight

The profile of a theory built to spread is remarkably coherent: **pin the blame on a grand, unfalsifiable power; make the crime an ongoing hidden cover-up rather than a single staged event; anchor it to a real kernel; and layer on several rhetorical flavors and several familiar villains.** The smallest theories do the opposite — a narrow blame target (a single agency, the science establishment), a one-shot mechanism, few spices, one villain. Reach, in other words, is partly a property of *structure*, and the ontology makes that structure measurable.

Two honest caveats. Footprint is a corpus-capture proxy, not a survey of belief — it measures how much a theory is *discussed* in the sources SignalWatch harvests. And these are correlations across 120 theories, not causes; a richly-spiced grand-cabal theory may spread because it was already popular. The value of the ontology is that it turns these once-impressionistic claims into quantities you can test.

6 · When the model almost breaks

A controlled vocabulary is only as honest as its edge cases. Most of the 120 theories drop cleanly onto the axes — but a handful sit awkwardly, and they are the most instructive theories in the corpus: each one strains a different load-bearing assumption of the model. The ontology absorbs them through two deliberate pressure valves — a NONHUMAN / DIFFUSE_THEY catch-all on the villain axis, and an explicit *is-hypothesis-not-deception* flag — but watching *where* it has to reach for them maps the model's outer boundary.

Edge-case class	Examples	Which assumption it strains	n
Hypothesis, not deception	Simulation Theory, Dark Forest Theory	The entire 4-component frame — there is no liar and no hidden intent	
A non-human 'THEM'	2026 Digital Simulation Sync Phenomenon, Area 51/UFO Coverup, Bulga Sphere	Controlling Interest — built for human power structures	
'Is reality itself real?'	Flat Earth, Transvestigation, Body Double Theory	Arena + villain — the crime is a false worldview, not a hidden act	
Satire read as sincere	Finland Does Not Exist, Torenza Passport Hoax	No axis for intent-to-believe — a joke looks structurally identical	
No nameable villain	Baba Vanga 2026 Predictions & Hantavirus Prophecy, Challenger Crew Still Alive, Phantom Time Hypothesis	C2b actors / Controlling Interest — the 'they' is impersonal	
Unplaceable	Nazi Wonder Weapons	Arena left NULL — fits no single battlefield	

The deception that has no deceiver

The purest model-breakers are **Simulation Theory** and **Dark Forest Theory**. The whole SCTO frame assumes someone is lying to you for a hidden purpose — C1 (the lie), C2a (intent), C2b (the villain). But these are cosmological *hypotheses*, not accusations: nobody is covering up the simulation, and the 'dark forest' predator hasn't deceived anyone — the threat is that humanity foolishly broadcast its own location. They carry no perpetrator, only an existential condition. The ontology only holds them by setting an explicit *is-hypothesis-not-deception* flag — the one switch that says 'the rest of this model does not apply.'

When 'who rules' isn't a person

Seven theories give the Controlling Interest as **NONHUMAN** — reptilian shapeshifters, simulation operators, extraterrestrials, occult forces. The villain vocabulary was designed for human power (states, cabals, corporations, the deep state); NONHUMAN is the seam where 'who secretly rules?' stops having a human answer. The **Reptilian Elite** theory is the sharpest case: it borrows a thoroughly human mechanism (INFILTRATION of governments) but the infiltrators aren't human at all.

Theories about truth, not power

Eight theories live in the IDENTITY_REALITY or COSMOLOGY_PHYSICS arenas — **Flat Earth**, the gravity-denial theories, **Transvestigation**, **Body Double**. These aren't really about who rules; they're about what is *true*. They fit the SUPPRESSION mechanism (a true cosmology is being hidden) but the villain is awkward: Flat Earth blames the SCIENCE/ACADEMY establishment — an epistemic authority, not a scheming cabal. The model is built around a hidden *act*; here the alleged crime is a false *worldview*, and the machinery groans accordingly.

The joke the model can't get, and the villain that isn't there

Finland Does Not Exist is satire — yet it carries an EXTREME infrastructure burden and a real corpus footprint, because the ontology measures structure, not sincerity. There is no axis for 'do its sharers actually believe it,' so a knowing joke is indistinguishable from a sincere claim. At the opposite pole sit theories with **no nameable villain at all** — Baba Vanga's hantavirus *prophecy* has no perpetrator, only a foretelling; **Phantom Time** and the **Challenger Crew** theory fall back on a diffuse 'they' the actor-resolver can't pin to anyone. These drift from conspiracy toward folklore and rumor — a reminder that not everything tracked as a 'theory' has a conspiracy's shape.

Two patterns unify the outliers. First, they **cluster in the cosmic and metaphysical themes** (families K and L) — the further a theory gets from earthly politics, the worse it fits a model built to describe hidden human plots. Second, and more surprisingly, **straining the model is not the same as failing to spread**. Proto-theories are over-represented among the outliers (about a quarter of them, versus a sixth of the corpus as a whole — roughly 1.7×), but they are still a minority: the plurality are 'emerging,' and several of the very theories that bend the ontology hardest are among the most durable in the canon — **Flat Earth** and **Simulation Theory** are firmly established, and **Area 51** and **Medbeds** are actively trending. A theory can sit awkwardly on every axis and still thrive. That the model bends rather than breaks for these cases, via a small set of deliberate escape hatches, is the strongest evidence that its core assumptions — a human villain, a deceptive intent, a knowable battlefield — capture what an *ordinary* conspiracy theory is, while leaving room for the extraordinary ones that don't play by those rules.

The SCTO comprises 120 theories on shared controlled-vocabulary axes (family, arena, mechanism, controlling interest, infrastructure burden, spices), a resolved actor registry with a role vocabulary, a 595-event registry, and a research graph of 459 claims, 94 kernels-of-truth, and 13,452 evidence artifacts. Full machine-readable exports (CSV + OWL/Turtle) are available on the Data page. © SignalWatch — free to use with attribution.