

DATA, DISCOURSE & DEMOCRACY WORKSHOP SERIES

African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science

WORKSHOP:

IS CONTENT MODERATION ANTI-DEMOCRATIC? A FIRST

Professor Corrado Fumagalli

5 November 11:00-13:00 SAST

ZOOM LINK: <https://zoom.us/j/97141503245>

VENUE: 11TH Floor Boardroom, [UJ on Empire](#), Johannesburg South Africa

In my presentation, I first compare different attempts at justifying the democratic value of the equal right to free speech. I then present a new justification for this democratic value: namely, that the equal right to free speech supports a bottom-up legitimation of democratic societies by ensuring that all citizens share responsibility for guiding society within specific domains. Against this backdrop, I argue that privatized content moderation has a fundamentally antidemocratic character. While critiques of privatized moderation often focus on issues like transparency, accountability, and exploitation, I suggest a deeper concern: privatized content moderation causes a shift in the responsibility for establishing shared speech-related standards, from citizens to corporations, which act as quasi-authoritarian political powers. Finally, I discuss potential solutions to contain the anti-democratic character of privatized content moderation.



Corrado Fumagalli is an Assistant Professor in Political Philosophy at the University of Genoa and a Senior Research Associate at the African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science (University of Johannesburg). He is working on normative issues connected with free speech and citizens' engagement in countering intolerant discourses. His work on this topic appeared in journals such as the *European Journal of Political Theory*, the *Journal of Politics*, *Political Theory*, *Social Theory and Practice*, and *The Philosophical Quarterly*.



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