



## IKMZ Speaker Series

### **Fencing Deviant Belief:**

**Discursive interactions between believers  
in conventional and alternative fact**

**Monday, 14 April 2025, 4.15 p.m., room AND-4-06**

## **Christian Baden**

**Associate Professor**

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of Jerusalem



Christian Baden's work focuses on the collaborative construction and dynamic negotiation of meanings in political public discourse. His research examines processes of

cultural resonance, contestation, and the discursive processing of dissent and deviant belief, including the formation of resilient, identity-based disagreement and polarization. Baden combines qualitative discourse analysis, frame analysis, and network-analytic perspectives with automated processing of large-scale discourse. He chairs the European COST network OPINION and serves as associate editor for the Journal of Communication.

### **Abstract**

In today's digital landscape, conventional notions of shared, institutionally verified truth face challenges from persistent, organized deviant beliefs. Conspiracy theories, sectarianism, and alternative belief systems coexist with conventional

accounts, eroding public confidence in sanctioned knowledge. Both mainstream and deviant beliefs have developed strategies to manage disagreement, policing the boundaries of what can be "reasonably" believed while delegitimizing what lies beyond.

Drawing upon a study of Covid-19-discussions in German, Israeli, Swedish and U.S. news user forums, this talk discusses the epistemic and normative strategies used to validate or discard contested claims. It explores how participants on both sides engage with discrepant claims, proposing a framework for understanding knowledge management in contested spaces. Developing key hypotheses on how deviant belief communities emerge and maintain themselves in explicit difference from conventional mainstream society, it proposes a research agenda for the study of contested knowledge and its disruptive impact on democratic political discourse.

**Please join us for the first talk of the spring semester 2025!**

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