



Alicante, Spain & Virtual event

Urban Challenges and Sustainable Technological Revolution

Special Session Proposal

A look backwards at Covid-19: Mental health, uncertainty, and place

Dani Broitman – danib@technion.ac.il
Technion – Israeli Institute of Technology

Abstract

The occurrence of an infectious disease epidemic can be a source not only of morbidity and mortality, but also considerable disruptions in people's lives, causing psychological, social, and economic damage. In terms of mental health, elevated levels of anxiety, depression as well as psychological trauma are expected over the short and midterm. Past research on the long-term psychological consequences of an epidemic outbreak was based on infectious disease spreads which were concentrated in specific geographic areas, and quarantine measures were limited to specific groups during short periods of time. It is difficult to know the extent to which the results of these previous studies apply to the Covid-19 virus outbreak, where entire populations of many countries were summoned to implement social distancing measures for preventive purposes. In particular, a key question is the extent to which symptoms of psychological distress and anxiety during the course of the epidemic can become chronic, get worse, and have a significant impact on individuals' functioning.

Therefore, the aims of this special session are looking backwards at the Covid-19 outbreak and discuss its consequences and implications in terms of mental health, uncertainty, and place. The special session is intended to focus, among others, on the following inter-related questions: (1) What is the specific role of the COVID-19 epidemic and associated precautionary measures (lockdown, distance-working, partial unemployment) on individuals' mental health? (2) To what extent do neighborhood characteristics influence individuals' mental and psychological well-being in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic? (3) Can we forecast patterns of future mental health based on prior knowledge of levels of psychological distress as well as occurrence of risk and protective factors during the COVID-19 epidemic? Addressing these questions, and perhaps additional ones, this special session aims to gather researchers interested in the temporal and spatial impacts of Covid-19 and its related uncertainties, to discuss possible ways to model a robust and reliable forecast of future mental health outcomes.