

RESEARCH SEMINAR

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

People as sensors: mental health signals of the public towards COVID-19 at the regional, national and global level

17 Jan 2023 (Tues)
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Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has induced a mental health crisis. Social media data offer a unique opportunity to track the mental health signals of a given population and quantify their mental reaction towards COVID-19. Since May, 2020, I led several COVID-related projects at the national and global level, addressing how negative sentiments differ across countries and how these relate to the shifting policy landscape through the pandemic in US, Australia and 200+ countries worldwide. In the latest global study, we collected 2.1 billion individual-level geotagged tweets posted between 1 February 2020 and 31 March 2021, and monitored the shifts in negativity across 217 countries and unpack its relationship with COVID-19 policies. Findings reveal that countries with more stringent policies were associated with lower levels of negativity, however such a relationship weakened in later phases of the pandemic. This study offers a novel framework to monitor mental health signals globally, helping international authorizations, including UN and WHO, to design smart country-specific mental health initiatives in response to future public emergencies.

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Dr Wang is holding the Bachelor in Urban Planning from Sun Yat-Sen University, China, Master in GIScience from Northern Illinois University, US and PhD in Geography from University of Queensland, Australia. Her research interests lie in developing and applying GIScience and big data analytics to solve real-world problems in the domain of digital health geography, built environment, human mobility and migration, social vulnerability, and human-environment interactions. Since her PhD conferral in 2018, she has 45 peer-reviewed journal articles, as the first/co-first/corresponding author in 33 articles. She leads four research projects funded in Australia and Japan, with a total 2.2 million HKD granted. She currently acts as the Associate Chair of Spatial Data Lab affiliated to Harvard University, the editorial member and reviewer of +20 international journals.



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