

CONVERGE COVID-19 Working Groups for Public Health and Social Sciences Research

Research Agenda-Setting Paper

This paper was written to help advance convergence-oriented research in the hazards and disaster field. It highlights areas where additional research could contribute new knowledge to the response to and recovery from the pandemic and other disasters yet to come. Questions about the research topics and ethical and methodological issues highlighted here should be directed to the authors who contributed to this paper.

Working Group Name:

COVID-19 and Viral Violence

Working Group Description:

During the emergency situation and the related crisis emerging from the impact of COVID-19, there has been a manifestation of conflictual situations and social frictions in some regions of the world, where the lockdown was understood and interpreted according to different cultural, social, political backgrounds. Accordingly, the COVID-19 and Viral Violence Working Group focuses on empirical considerations about the relations between the COVID-19 pandemic and various forms of violence, emerging during the crisis management phase. The focus area consists of multidisciplinary perspectives (criminology, sociology, and anthropology) on: political extremists taking advantage from the pandemic; violent responses to violations of the quarantine; interpersonal violence; law enforcement/authority violence in order to enforce quarantine-lockdown measures; and civil unrest against crisis management measures.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

Priority Research Topics	Potential Research Questions
1. Defining the concept of violence during the pandemic under common multidisciplinary perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: How can the concept of violence in the time of a/the pandemic be addressed? From which perspectives? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: Is it possible to provide a multidisciplinary definition of the concept of violence in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: Which are the main aspects of the concept of violence that have emerged in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. Different forms of violence, conflicts and social tensions that have emerged during the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in different countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: Which are the cultural aspects addressing the violence phenomena, social conflicts, and tensions in the time of pandemic? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: Is it possible to address this issue from a cross-regional perspective?

<p>3. Political but not limited to, extremism narratives in both digital and offline domains are potentially trying to take advantage of the pandemic, promoting their missions and ideas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: Which extremist groups are potentially trying to take advantage from the pandemic crisis? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: What are their main communicative dynamics? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: What are their main sociological, ideological, and cultural features?
<p>4. Authorities/law enforcement violence that has occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: Has police brutality been connected to the enforcement of COVID-19 measures? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: Can racist motives/treatment be detected in police violence connected to the enforcement of COVID-19 measures?
<p>5. Civil unrest against crisis management measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: What is the framework of civil unrest and violence that has taken place related to COVID-19 measures (for example religious, ideological, related to civil liberties, etc.)?
<p>6. Symbolic violence: Motives and dynamics that inspired individuals and groups to make practices that degrade places and objects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: How has the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 fueled beliefs that, in some cases, have led to forms of violence towards places and objects? This is the case, for example, of the attacks against the 5G towers, that a conspiracy theory believe they are linked to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How were these rumors fueled by the misinformation, sometimes toward mainstream media and social media?
<p>7. Symbolic aspects of violence: The violent practices towards certain places or objects were made in the name of certain political, philosophical, religious, and ecological visions, but above all for their exemplary value, rather than for their concrete effectiveness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: What groups have carried out attacks against places and objects, for example against 5G towers? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: These acts of violence have a limited effectiveness with respect to the pursuit of the cause of those who promoted them, but they act above all as a warning. In the case of the “suspicions” against 5G technology, which institutional sides have “legitimized” the violence or which local authorities have “given in” them?

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

The focus of the COVID-19 and Viral Violence Working Group offers multiple opportunities for methodological reflections to be addressed in the development of the research project. The research methods adopted to carry out these research activities are open source analysis of different media communication sources; online ethnography for extremist groups potentially taking advantage of the pandemic, and experts interviews with up to ten people. All possible interviews will be collected according to the willingness and availability of the experts; anonymously and considering gender representativeness.

Addressing the issue of violence and crisis management during pandemic will give the possibility to reflect on the current challenges and future actions, considering both policy purposes and the needed awareness about the topic of violence and extremism in the fieldwork of risk and crisis management. The new frontiers of this project consist of insights and results that will define innovative socio - cultural practices in crisis management and risk communication; a better understanding of social justice matters in time of crisis; the role played by different extremist actors during a crisis such as this COVID-19 pandemic and community resilience practices in time of crisis.

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