



Department

SEMINARS

"Refueling a quiet fire: old truthers and new discontent in the wake of COVID-19"

GABRIELE BECCARI

Scuola Normale Superiore

THURSDAY, 11 MAY 2023
12:15 PM

Seminar Room Bruguier Pacini, DEM



A B S T R A C T

This paper investigates the determinants that contributed to the proliferation of online COVID skepticism on Twitter across Italian municipalities. We focus on economic lockdown measures that had severe economic implications for suspended workers belonging to non-essential economic sectors. Exploiting the spatial heterogeneity of economic restrictive policies, we find that COVID skepticism spreads more in municipalities with a higher share of suspended workers from non-essential sectors.

We also study the effect of online pre-COVID anti-vax sentiment on Twitter COVID conspiracy. Our findings suggest that old "truthers" amplify the online COVID skepticism in local communities. Finally, the spread of COVID mistrust is positively associated with COVID vaccine hesitancy. Our results highlight the potential unintended consequences of stringent policies on public opinion and health-related decisions.