DESIS and Covid-19: It's Time to Hit the Reset Button

DESIS-Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability is a network of design-led research labs based in universities around the world created to trigger and support social change towards sustainability. The network started in 2009, in the wave of social innovation that characterized that period: innovations emerging mainly from grassroots initiatives aiming to solve, in a collaborative way, problems that people had to face in mature industrial societies. It is not rhetorical to say that the context we were in when we started, seems a century ago. The tragedy of Covid-19 is, in fact, one of those events that force us to push on the reset button. Where, in this case, "resetting" means the need to adjust what we are doing, and how and why we do it, considering what the Covid19 crisis has taught us and could still teach us. The double special issue of SDRJ we are presenting here goes in this direction.

In these introductory notes, we just want to make three practical observations, intended as a contribution to the construction of a framework within which to read the rich and diversified contributions that this double special issue is bringing us.

Re-territorialisation. After decades in which, in the name of globalization, connectivity, virtualization, and of what appeared to be the economic convenience, those in power operated as if the territory did not exist. Today, many people and entire institutions seem to have noticed its importance. *This observation should lead us to propose regenerative strategies (based on the reconstruction of the relationship between human beings and the places where they live) with more force and more chance of success.*

Micro-sociality. For many people, the lockdown period meant the (re)discovery of micro-sociability. That is, the value of getting in touch with those who live really close, in the same building and/or in the same street. Therefore, we have seen this type of sociality emerge everywhere: there have been those who organized themselves to help the elderly or people in isolation. *This observation should lead us to reflect on the issue of proximity (physical and otherwise) and its role in social innovation.*

More online life. With the lockdown, a large number of people have been forced to overcome the threshold of practical and psychological difficulties in the use of digital technologies in sectors previously not practiced. The result has been that many have begun to consider it "normal" to do online activities that, before, were considered to be normal in the physical world. As it is well known, this fact has implications that can be both positive and negative. *This observation should lead us to reflect on the issue of the emerging communities of place: communities living in hybrid, physical and digital spaces, where the latter (the digital spaces) supports the former (the physical ones). And where places refer not only to us, the humans, but also to all the other living and non-living entities that, with us, constitute the web of life.*

The patronage of DESIS on the SDRJ's call for papers "Design Contributions for the Covid-19 Emergency" was part of a series of activities under development in the network. The main aim is being to intensify the learning process required for us to hit the 'reset button' and rethink our ways of doing and organizing in the view of the pandemic and beyond.

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