
Città e reti solidali. Il mutuo sostegno in tempo di Covid

Oriol Nello, Ismael Blanco and Ricard Gomà (eds.)

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Cartographies of togetherness in crises. Notes based on experiences of mutual support in times of COVID-19

Jean-Luc Nancy (2005) reminds us that reading is an asymptotic way of generating coherence between what a book proposes and the cosmography of its time. Thus, the times of a book are both those that the book explains and the time it is written, translated, disseminated and read. Therefore, when reading *Città e reti solidali. Il mutuo sostegno in tempo di Covid* published by Cooperativa Libreria Editrice Architettura Napoli (CLEAN) in 2023, its trajectory is particularly interesting.

The book is the Italian edition of the text *El apoyo mutuo en tiempos de crisis. La solidaridad ciudadana durante la pandemia COVID-19* published by Clasco and edited by Oriol Nello, Ismael Blanco and Ricard Gomà in 2022. The volume contains reflections and takes stock of the SOLIVID project launched in March 2020, given the evidence of the seriousness of the pandemic which was spreading around the world and the many solidarity initiatives that were cropping up in response to it.

The purpose of the SOLIVID project, which was spearheaded by the editors of the book, was twofold. It first sought to build a collaborative cartography of the solidarity initiatives that were spreading around the territories affected by the virus in an effort to help disseminate and reinforce them. It secondly aimed to collect information on the nature, goals and *modus operandi* of these practices in order to delineate both the needs that were emerging in different territories and the communities' activation and response capacities.

Therefore, the starting point of the project was understanding the *krisis* in the terms suggested by its etymology, that is, as the decisive point or the best time to understand how the initial

conditions should change. As Edgar Morin (1976) suggests, a crisis entails first a hardening and jamming of an organisation's devices, which is evidenced in this case by the limitations on public action during the early stages of the pandemic, and next the unleashing of potentialities that had been inhibited until then, which can be capitalised on if properly observed and analysed in a necessary evolutionary transformation of the system in crisis.

The backbone of the project was the volunteer work of 34 research groups in Europe and South America, which used a digital platform to build collaborative cartographies of community actions and share both announcements of the different solidarity initiatives and the most important news and articles that were useful to the debate.

Getting back to the "times" of books suggested by Nancy, we note that in its slightly over 230 pages, this volume aims to capture almost three years of activities, maps, articles, analyses and reflections and more than 3,000 solidarity actions produced in more than 30 countries around the world, information that has been made public and open-access via the aforementioned platform.

Specifically, the volume analyses the distribution, operations and potential of the solidarity initiatives that emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic based on the experiences of seven countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Spain, Italy and Portugal. The text is divided into two main parts. The first analyses the crisis and the response modalities that existed in different states, providing further information and comparing dynamics in locations in different countries. The book also outlines the type of solidarity actors activated during the pandemic, the number of participants in each project, their propensity to collaborate with public institutions, the areas and themes of the initiatives' actions, their innovative nature, the geographic scale of the actions and their degree of concentration in the territory. Depending on the context, this information has been crossed with the virus's spread pattern, an analysis of the sociodemographic and economic status of the people and their degree of vulnerability in access to housing and public facilities.

The second part of the book examines case studies which are of particular interest because of the groups, topics or territories analysed. Examples include the analysis of the conditions of women during the pandemic in the city of Porto Alegre, food safety in the city of Madrid and the complex relationship between socioeconomic vulnerability, demographic density and the propagation of the virus in Naples.

Therefore, it is a book that contains many times and many reading pathways, one that is worthwhile whether you are looking for a report on the immune capacity (Esposito, 2005) of solidarity actions or wanting to learn about and further explore the studies conducted in specific places and the numerous collaborative cartographies of community activation. Finally, the volume embodies the originality of the approach that the SOLIVID project has proposed, a similar approach to what the authors proposed when analysing the solidarity actions that occurred in the wake of the economic and financial crisis in 2008, as reported in the volume

Barrios y crisis (Blanco & Nel·lo, 2018) and in numerous articles. Indeed, this book also draws from the results of the study on the 2008 crisis by showing similarities and differences in the response to the pandemic.

As gleaned from the essential final chapter, many new groups cropped up and were reinforced in response to the need created by the spread of the virus and the restrictions instituted by the different state administrations. In their actions, the importance of everyday life and the specificity of the place/habitat (Magnaghi, 2020) seems to definitively outweigh the overarching value and ideology systems on which the capital-labour struggle was based in the Fordist system. They are initiatives that once again place socioeconomic issues at the heart of the action (Fraser & Honnet, 2006), issues which again became the main challenge during both the economic crisis and the pandemic crisis. Forms of organisation that are often rhizomatic emerge, along with a repertoire of actions defined by the authors as “creative dissent”, aimed at foreshadowing tangible alternatives that are directly viable in everyday life.

The Italian version of the book contains a prologue written by Michelangelo Russo, in which he reflects on the relationships between pandemics and urban planning, or even earlier between the city and contagion. If the immunisation of the community, with its twofold potential of co-existence and contagion, has historically been treated by the field of urban planning with hygiene, and often with the separation and isolation of the individuals in it, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Roberto Esposito (2022) claimed the need to seek immunity in inclusive, communal terms. The originality of the book we are reviewing consists of seeking *immunitas* no longer in the institution in the Hobbesian tradition but in the very vitality and capacity for performative action of the *communitas* itself.

Congruent with this epistemic turn, the project of the post-pandemic city proposed in the epilogue written by Marina Albanese, Emanuela Coppola and Angelino Mazza leaves behind any reference to the gutting and demolition typical of the hygienist approach and instead focuses on the value of community. The authors recognise this *being-in-common* as a fundamental factor in the habitability and preparedness (Lakoff, 2017) of urban systems and question the way to value social and social-environmental relations in a city that can be considered first and foremost the infrastructure of the common.

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