

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

Torino, 10th - 11th - 12th July 2008

Organised by Co-ordination of Italian Design Research Doctorates with
Conference of Italian Design Faculty Deans and Programme Heads.

In the framework of WORLD DESIGN CAPITAL TORINO 2008 | © ICSID
An ICSID initiative of the IDA.

Roberto Bartholo [bartholo@pep.ufrj.br]

Professor at Graduate Programme of Industrial Engineering of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Ivan Bursztyn [ivan@lb.com.br]

PhD student at Graduate Programme of Industrial Engineering of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Luiza Farmese de Paula Lana [luiza@pep.ufrj.br]

Master student at Graduate Programme of Industrial Engineering of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

NEW CONFIGURATIONS FOR NETWORKS: THE CASE OF THE VIRTUAL INSTITUTES

Abstract

It is permanently stressed that information technologies are a powerful tool to change our lives. The designer, as a “bridge builder” between technology and society (FLUSSER 2007), has a new field to work on: translating, adapting and designing instruments that may realize the full potential of change of these new technologies. One of the contemporary challenges concerns the use of internet as a basis for new types of social relations. The countless possibilities of use of the worldwide web can contribute to the formulation of new behavior paradigms in modern global society.

This article aims at analyzing the idea of Virtual Institutes as a tool for exchanging experience and for establishing dialogic relationships among people interested in a given field of study. It examines the implementation of the Virtual Institute of Tourism. Its main theoretical references are Ivan Illich’s “tools for conviviality” (1975), Ezio Manzini’s “enabling systems” (2007) and Cassio Martinho’s “network systems” (2003). Vilém Flusser thoughts about the role of design and of the designer in contemporaneity were also important references. After presenting the experience of the Virtual Institute of Tourism, the paper will discuss the creation of the Virtual Institute of Social Innovation.

The objective of the Virtual Institute of Tourism is to “support the creation of research networks on relevant themes for society”. It was established in 1999 by the Laboratory of Technology and Social Development of the Industrial Engineering Graduate Program of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (LTDS). The Virtual Institute aims at facilitating the exchange of information, knowledge and services through a network involving researchers, experts, professors, students and institutions whose work deals on tourism. The Internet is its most important mean of diffusion, and the site which houses the Institute is found at <www.ivt-rj.net>.

Nine years after its foundation, the Virtual Institute of Tourism is a central locus for interaction and collaboration for its more than 2,000 participants, that include brazilians and foreigners. However, keeping this network active and productive is a continuous challenge. It has demanded several strategies of mobilization its participants. It has been necessary to overcome obstacles as physical distance and the daily duties of the participants, not to mention the common reluctance to make use of collaborative communication tools. Throughout the years the coordination team has noticed that the

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

network participants are more apt to make contributions when demanded to perform specific activities. Therefore, the Institute restructured its activities so as to stimulate the participation of its members. As a result, we can mention the publication of the book “Turismo e Sustentabilidade no Estado do Rio de Janeiro”, the organization of the “Virtual Workshop: Tourism and Social Development” and the creation of the peer review board for the journal “Caderno Virtual de Turismo” (ISSN: 1676-6976).

As a consequence of the recent strengthening of the relations between the LTDS and the Politecnico di Milano, through professor Manzini, new possibilities of collaboration have emerged. One of them is the creation of a virtual institute dedicated to the subject of social innovation and design in Brazil. The interest on social innovation in the Brazilian context has arisen from the participation of the LTDS in the project Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyle (CCSL), coordinated by Prof. Manzini. There are already academics from 17 universities affiliated with VISI. Another theme of interest is the role of design in the formulation of strategies for mobilizing and enlivening networks.

The Virtual Institute on Social Innovation is still at an early stage, but the idea is to build on the experience of implementing Virtual Institute of Tourism. Besides supporting the academic debate about social innovation, it aims at stimulating the exchange of experience and information among socially innovative initiatives, including the stakeholders directly responsible for those activities.

References

Illich, Ivan. 1975. Tools for conviviality. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins.

Martinho, Cássio. 2003. Redes – uma introdução as dinâmicas da conectividade e da auto-organização. Brasília: WWF-Brasil.

Flusser, Vilem. 2007. O mundo codificado. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.

Manzini, Ezio. 2007. Design, Inovação Social e Desenvolvimento Sustentável. Webpage of Graduate Programme of Industrial Engineering. <http://www.producao.ufrj.br> (accessed February 15, 2008).

CCSL. 2007. Project presentation & background documents. <http://www.sustainable-everyday.net/> .

WebPages:

Sustainable Everyday Project - <http://www.sustainable-everyday.net/>

Graduate Programme of Industrial Engineering - <http://www.producao.ufrj.br/>

Research Foundation of the State of Rio de Janeiro – <http://www.faperj.br/>

Virtual Institute of Tourism – <http://www.ivt-rj.net/>

Virtual Institute of Social Innovation – <http://www.ivis.pep.ufrj.br/>

Journal “Caderno Virtual de Turismo” – <http://www.ivt-rj.net/caderno/>