Lessons learnt? The EU's responses to educational dilemmata during the Covid-19 pandemic

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Socio-ecological systems (SES), like biological systems, aim to maintain homeostasis through learning and constant internal-external information feedback loops (Bateson, 1979; Folke 2006; Thompson, 2010; Von Bertalanffy, 1993). However, different from biological SES, human SES largely depend on the intentional capacity to respond to perturbations, which in turn depends on axiological frameworks chosen to drive behavior (Folke et al., 2005). The Covid-19 crisis has caused an unprecedented massive disruption in SES's equilibrium and it represents a substantial perturbation to its ordinary trajectory. Several functions of the European and global SES have stopped, and many others have been interrupted or heavily reduced. Among them, education systems have been severely affected. As such, the Covid-19 pandemic appears to be an *experimentum crucis* to evaluate resilience and ability to respond (*response-ability*).

In this paper, we discuss the European Union's (EU) responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. We provide a conceptual analysis of the EU's systemic reaction, and in particular the reactions of the European Parliament and the European Commission (EC). The EC, in its attempt to respond to the crisis, adopts a specific narrative (e.g. EC, 2020). We analyze such a narrative with a focus on the theoretical and ethical frameworks and the intended outcomes. We conclude with theoretical considerations. Europe faces an unprecedented socio-economic and environmental crisis, and the question is: what lessons can be learnt from this crisis? Within systems theory literature, it seems clear that increasing learning capacities of SES increase resilience and response efficacy (Liu et al., 2007), however such learning capacity must be necessarily intended in a broad sense to include ethics, which plays a vital role in guiding human systems trajectory. We outline how the Covid-19 crisis can represent a wake-up call to renew the European ethical framework toward a responsible (*ethics of responsibility*, Jonas, 1979) and sustainable developmental model.

***Keywords**:* Socio-Ecological Systems (SES), Systems Theory, Resilience, Ethical Responsibility

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