

# Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

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

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## RESEARCH IN STRATEGIC DESIGN A TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The higher education reality in Brazilian universities, especially in design area, has faced some problems. Among them, is important to consider the fact that design research in Brazil are, most of times, developed inside the university walls and separated from market and industries. This is reinforced by a misunderstanding of the design concept, perceived in our country, only related to product design. At the same time, the development of design disciplinary area in Brazilian universities is relatively young.

Considering these questions, University of Vale dos Sinos (UNISINOS), in a partnership with POLI.design, Consorzio del Politecnico di Milano proposed the construction of the first Design Research School, in Rio Grande do Sul, south of Brazil.

The result of this process was a new concept, comprehending the implementation of a design school, outside the original campus of UNISINOS – that is located in São Leopoldo. This campus was building in the heart of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, south of Brazil.

The school is composing of three different areas (teaching, research and consultancy) and propose a space, that considers research as a key factor, to build a dialog between university, society and industry, achieving a new form of Sustainable development, a new model of change involving companies, university and local institutions.

This paper presents the principles of this new school, which considers the real necessities of Brazilian society; and propose a new model, where sustainability is a key factor to all areas, in the different school actuation levels. Besides that, some cases are introduced. In the under graduation level, we will discuss a project developed by students for an industry that produces different products (door hangers, auxiliary tables, magazine holders, office accessories) using plastic components. The company had defined a project briefing and had followed all process, supporting students work. At the end, they had chosen some design concepts that will generate prototypes for new products.

Another important experience had occurred in a strategic design *latu sensu* course. In this case an entrepreneur had provided part of his land (in a rural area), to be used in a design applied exercise for developing a new kind local development project. As a result, our students developed a project that connects this region to the heart of Porto Alegre.

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Finally, we present a case study developed in a furniture company. In this case, we present a project where the main objective was defining a new concept for product development. This cases are specified in this article, as examples of the methodology used in Design School of UNISINOS.

This paper is organized as follow: first, we present the principles of this new teaching and research structure, which consider market necessities and look for sustainability. Then, we describe the design concept used by our design school, which considers the strategic dimension of design. In this moment, we compare our understanding of design with concepts in use in others schools in Brazil. Following, we present three case studies that were developed by our students and consultants. Finally, we present the conclusion of this paper, considering the results obtained and future projects.

## References

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