

# 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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## THE EMERGENCE OF SHAMANIC WISDOM IN THE CULTURE OF BRAZILIAN MODERN PROJECT

### The perspective of a new rationality for design

#### Abstract

Designers move among the various areas of knowledge in a transversal way. This gives them the advantage of appreciating a wide range of realities already known. At the same time, it gives them the possibility of exploring other rationalities that were structured in a different manner from that Western (in many cases, these logics are not that well known). The proposal of the paper is to bring to light one of these logics, in a process that intends to decompose and recompose the parts of its structure. The main goal is to provide a new reading key to the contemporary designer, which could help him to overcome the limits of materiality, giving him the possibility to renew the energies of the current design.

Considering the context presented above, the theme involves the Shamanic logic of the indigenous cosmology of the Amazon tribes that, in the role of a little explored mentality in design, has been adopted unconsciously by designers in Brazil. The Brazilian contemporary designers develop their projects within a rationality that is magic. This thought does not have the same parameters that define the logic of Western scientific thought. To understand its parameters, the most appropriate step has been diverting the eyes of current humanity and then following the trajectory of an upward parabolic curve whose apex is the wisdom of the shamanic traditions. The return to a nature that valorizes the instinctive side of the human being has shown that the Western civilization functions horizontally whereas magic civilization functions directly on verticality. In this sense, the argumentation of the paper does not aim to oppose magic and science, but to compare these two models of thought within a vision that is more vertical than horizontal.

The discussion that involves the Shamanic tradition of the Amazon Indians and the culture of the modern project in Brazil suggests that in the evolutionary process of Brazilian design there is a symbiosis between the universe which was created from the European and indigenous parameters, and the structure of the universe that is perceived by the people of the indigenous tribes of the Amazon. This means that, although of a different nature, the circumstances of this research, which resulted from an artistic intuition, indicates that the designers and shamans developed an analogue form to structure their worlds. So far, two fundamental principles that belong simultaneously to both worlds were identified: the experimentation and contiguity. By a vision that comes from above, these worlds work in a dimension that transcends the rational and sensory exploring the world through free associations of elements: in design, these principles are perceived when Brazilian contemporary designers, for projecting their products, merge trivial elements with technology; in indigenous cosmology, such principles offer reasons

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for the shamans to believe there is a basic interconnection reuniting everything. To say it in another way, this form of connecting fragments shows that designers and shamans are not satisfied only in perceiving the connections between things and beings: they modify the original context, they recontextualize the things.

The perspective of recontextualization can lead the contemporary designer towards a vision that goes beyond the rationalists' proposals developed by the Western world. This new vision would be based in the immateriality where perception and intuition would be the sensorial elements considered responsible for stimulating new results and emerging new languages. My proposal is not to discuss the functional or stylistic elements that involve these two worlds, but rather, to highlight that the non-Western civilizations have logics rich in interesting energy which may give a renewed face to the current projects.

Considering that other logics can also generate products capable of satisfying the wishes of human beings inside a conjuncture that can lead them closer to their more introspective desires, I hope to stimulate other researchers towards studies about other rationalities that are still little investigated - and probably still not well understood. Studies like these could collaborate with the creative and inventive process inherent in the world of design, but in a completely conscious way.

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