

PREFE RENCE OF DESIGN

CUMULUS CONFERENCE
PROCEEDINGS
BUDAPEST 2024

VOLUME 2

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P/REFERENCES OF DESIGN



DIGITAL EXPERIENCE THEATRE. FROM DYSTOPIAN TO POST- HUMAN DIGITAL PRODUCT DESIGN.

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DIGITAL EXPERIENCE THEATRE. FROM DYSTOPIAN TO POST-HUMAN DIGITAL PRODUCT DESIGN.

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P/REFLECTIONS
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SPECULATIVE
PERSPECTIVES

Is the integration of technology in digital devices guided by sustainability across economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions?

Can a participatory UX/UI method, metaphorically described as a rubber band problem-focused ideation tool shifting from dystopian to micro-utopian thinking, drive innovation in socio-technological design?

These are among the issues explored in the Digital Experience Theatre (DXT), a research project and a novel problem-focused ideation tool for conceptualising technology-based, humanity-centered solutions.

The tool follows a step-by-step method inspired by Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) [1], influenced by Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed [2]. Freire's pedagogical approach involves critical awareness of social reality, enabling intervention and emancipation from oppressive relations. Boal, aligning with these principles, devised a methodology using theatre as a universally accessible tool to develop strategies for escaping oppressive relationships.

The DXT tool aims to enhance the ideation process, particularly focusing on the design problem before exploring a solution, offering a significant and disruptive approach to creativity for interaction designers. The method assumes that these creatives, also users of digital products, face numerous useless solutions. Adopting the TO methodology, the DXT seeks to develop innovative solutions, representing a new paradigm in post-humanist digital product design [3]. It serves as an ideation tool, operating with participant designers, contributing to transforming unsustainable realities by promoting community-based and humanity-centred digital product creation.

The research delves around significant subjects that inform the tool development, such as the Theatre of the Oppressed and the Image Theatre [1], the concepts of dystopia [4] [5] and heterotopia [6] [7], speculative design [8] [9], image-making through AI technology [10], and the notion of designing e-things [3] for a non-anthropocentric pluriverse [11], which can be understood as a glocal phenomenon that can happen within a community but aiming at a global impact that contributes to the notion of more-than-human care.

Through participatory AI image creation and speculative dystopian fiction, the DXT design practice can stimulate a better mindset for creatives in the field, focusing on the world as it could or should be. It's based on creating futures with more sustainable digital products and experiences that may serve as propositions for alternative realities. The idea is to conduct design speculations not as narratives or coherent worlds but through an experimental fictional practice that contributes to holistic thinking about difficult hurdles.

The DXT has already been experimented with students and discussed and tested in an international context with other professors and students of interaction design (Lisbon, Portugal, and Berlin and Stuttgart, Germany).

A website is being developed with resources for the development of speculative scenarios, that may leverage disruptive socio-technological design interactions, focusing on a step-by-step method inspired by Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed methodology, where designers of digital products start by exploring dystopian design fictions through AI image creation, ending with concepts for sustainable, holistic, and humanity-based digital solutions. The process of creating the image focused on the subject prompted allows creatives using the DXT to explore unexpected formulations and dare to enter a representational dystopian domain. This new groundbreaking standard of images creates adequate conditions to discuss what might be innovative solutions for the real needs of the pluriverse.

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