

# P / REFERENCES OF DESIGN

## DXT—DIGITAL EXPERIENCE THEATRE: EXPLORING POST- HUMANIST DIGITAL PRODUCT DESIGN THROUGH AI AND SPECULATIVE IMAGERY.

**António Gorgel Pinto<sup>\*ab</sup>, Paula Reaes Pinto<sup>a</sup>**

a Universidade de Évora, CHAIA, Portugal

b Universidade Europeia, IADE, Portugal

\* antonio.gorgel@universidadeeuropeia.pt

**DOI: 10.63442/SITT4866**

**KEYWORDS | HUMAN-COMPUTER INTERACTION (HCI), POSTHUMAN DESIGN, SPECULATIVE DESIGN,  
IDEATION TOOL, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IMAGERY**

**ABSTRACT** | The Digital Experience Theatre (DXT) is metaphorically characterised as a rubber band ideation tool, stretching from dystopias to micro-utopias. The ideation tool is supported by a website (<https://dxt.cargo.site/>) with resources for the DXT workshop focusing on developing post-humanist UX/UI design concepts.

The tool is characterised by a step-by-step method inspired by Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) (Boal 2019), which, in turn, is influenced by Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire 2014). Freire's pedagogical proposal can be summarised as a process of critical awareness of a social reality that allows the subject to intervene in it and, ultimately, their emancipation from relations of oppression. Boal also developed his methodology based on the desire to contribute to resolving social and political problems and thought of theatre as a tool available to everyone to develop strategies to escape oppressive relationships.

Within the DXT workshop, participants, who are also users of digital products, are regarded as vulnerable human beings who must contend with many useless and redundant solutions that place them in similar oppressive situations. The DXT, adopting the TO methodology, seeks to develop innovative solutions to represent a new post-humanist design paradigm (Wakkary 2021). An ideation tool with the capacity to operate with creatives in digital technologies to contribute to the transformation of unsustainable realities by promoting the creation of digital products that are simultaneously community-based and humanity-centred (Norman 2023).

The DXT workshop lasts 120 minutes maximum, starting with a brief explanation of the main theories that inform the research, the ideation tool concept, and the workshop mechanics. It's planned for 10 to 20 participant designers and creatives of digital products in groups of between 5 and 10 elements. Each group has two conductor-designers, and the remaining elements are the antagonist-designers. The goal is to discuss dystopian ideas (Featherstone 2017, Claeys 2016) and create a set of AI-based images (Manovich 2023). The starting point is selecting a problem based on threats to the earth's ecology or societal needs affecting a community (Norman 2023). The workshop has nine steps; the conductor-designers lead the process and begin the dialogue with the antagonist designers by creating the first AI image (step one). In turn, the antagonist designers confront the conductor designer's ideas with AI imagery iterations. After the nine steps, where both sides explore and deepen dystopian ideas through dialogue and participation, the whole group must propose digital design solutions that tackle the same problem that raised the discussion.

The DXT workshop can happen in a space with a good Wi-Fi connection, where groups can gather in conversation; each participant needs to bring their laptop; at the beginning of the workshop, a few AI tools for image creation are recommended.



## References

Boal, A. (2019). *Teatro do oprimido e outras poéticas políticas*. Editora 34.

Claeys, G. (2016). *Dystopia: A natural history*. Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198785682.001.0001>

Featherstone, M. (2017). *Planet utopia: Utopia, dystopia, and globalisation*. Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315212500>

Freire, P. (2014). *Pedagogia do oprimido*. Paz e Terra.

Manovich, L. (2023). AI image and generative media: Notes on ongoing revolution. In E. Arielli & L. Manovich (Eds.), *Artificial aesthetics*. Retrieved August 21, 2024, from  
<http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/artificial-aesthetics>

Norman, D. A. (2023). *Design for a better world: Meaningful, sustainable, humanity centered*. MIT Press.

Wakkary, R. (2021). *Things we could design: For more than human-centered worlds*. MIT Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/13649.001.0001>

### About the Authors:

**António Gorgel Pinto** is a professor at IADE Universidade Europeia, researcher and designer whose primary interest is questioning social, technological, and ecological issues through a transdisciplinary and participatory art and design practice with vulnerable communities.

**Paula Reaes Pinto** is a professor at the School of the Arts, University of Évora, researcher, and visual artist developing a participatory art and design practice whose projects with at-risk rural communities revolve around the interconnectedness of place, labor, and culture.

**Acknowledgements:** The DXT is a research financed with National Funds through FCT – Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, within the scope of the following projects: UIDB/00112/2020, UIDB/00711/2020.

# P / REFERENCES OF DESIGN

**This contribution was presented at Cumulus Budapest 2024: P/References of Design conference, hosted by the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest, Hungary between May 15-17, 2024.**

## **Conference Website**

[cumulusbudapest2024.mome.hu](https://cumulusbudapest2024.mome.hu)

## **Conference Tracks**

Centres and Peripheries  
Converging Bodies of Knowledge  
Redefining Data Boundaries  
Bridging Design and Economics  
Speculative Perspectives  
The Power of Immersion  
The Future of Well-being  
Taming Entropy: Systems Design for Climate and Change  
Ways of Living Together  
Cumulus PhD Network

## **Full Conference Proceedings**

<https://cumulusbudapest2024.mome.hu/proceedings>

ISBN Volume 1: 978-952-7549-02-5 (PDF)

ISBN Volume 2: 978-952-7549-03-2 (PDF)

DOI Volume 1: <https://doi.org/10.63442/IZUP8898>

DOI Volume 2: <https://doi.org/10.63442/TADX4016>

## **Conference Organisers**

Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest (MOME)

[mome.hu](https://mome.hu)

Cumulus Association

[cumulusassociation.org](https://cumulusassociation.org)