

Interaction design pedagogy for digital degrowth

Lessons learned from student inquiry

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Abstract

In the wake of increasing computationally-driven ecological destruction, what shifts are necessary in interaction design pedagogy? This paper explores lessons learned from interaction design students encountering and responding to themes of degrowth, digital ecocide, and permacomputing as manifested in an interaction design brief that asks: what new rituals of digital (dis)engagement are necessary for degrowth? Each student project tackles one facet of techno-maximalist practices common in everyday life—such as “doomscrolling”, oversharing, or constant distraction. Techno-maximalist practices often require extraction of both human and the more-than-human ecologies. Student projects imagine new (or existing) practice that might fulfill the same human needs, often in healthier ways. Each replacement practice is ensconced within a ritual that serves as a portal into new ways of living. In particular, rituals are powerful for digital degrowth by connecting the mundane and forgotten low-resolution replacement interaction through their profound connectedness to living in concert with ecological constraints. Each design student shares their lessons learned in encountering and designing for interaction design for digital degrowth, which serve as heuristics for expanding interaction design pedagogy in this realm.