TESTING IN THE WILD

19. –
22. 09.
2022

Publics Practices Infrastructures

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The objects, means, and situations of testing have multiplied rapidly in the digital age. Practices of testing have become ubiquitous. They have moved beyond the spatial and institutional confines of scientific laboratories (testing hypotheses), classrooms and exam halls (testing students), consumer organizations (testing products), and inspection agencies (testing systems and protocols) into the wild of everyday digital lifeworlds.

Human beings and technological systems are today both subjects and objects of continuous testing. Paradigms such as A/B testing, machine learning, and test-driven development infuse a logic of testing into the creation, construction and maintenance of digital systems. Digital devices are equipped with ever more sensors that facilitate the monitoring of our health, behavior, and performance, directing our sensibilities towards new modes of data-based sense-making, evaluation, and justification. Platforms incentivise consumers to become critics by testing and reviewing products in public. In parallel, grassroots testing through 'unboxings' and 'teardowns' have become genres of user-generated content in themselves. Away from online platforms, users grapple with products delivered with rudimentary manuals or generic support, and whose functionality is expected to be extendable, adaptable, and fixable in the wild. Variations of updates are rolled out to select publics in order to test their respective acceptance within, or across, targeted demographics. Testing and evaluating digital products and services 'on the fly' has not only become concurrent with ordinary use, but part of it.

Practices of testing commonly rely on data: its collection, processing, circulation, (re)presentation, justification, and analysis. In fact, datafication and testing co-evolve. The proliferation of testing in the wild and associated controversies can be observed at various levels. On the one hand the intentional organization, analysis and discussion of tests and their results based on data remains relevant and has been controversially discussed in recent years, either with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic (Schnelltests, 7-day incidence rates, intensive bed capacity etc.), climate change (ice core tests, gtCO2, RCPs etc.), or financial crises (banking 'stress tests', REAs, leverage ratios etc.). On the other hand the everyday, continuous, and casual capture of data through digital media has led both to practices of self-tracking as well as critiques of a growing and pervasive monitoring and exploitation of users through corporate data practices.

Countering this, initiatives and policy makers test alternative measures, platforms, and standards to develop digital services that offer enhanced and/or protected user experiences, from routing data through secure pathways, ensuring data 'portability', or by restricting data collection altogether. In other respects, the likes of cryptocurrencies and other cryptographic innovations face increasing scrutiny as reckless social, financial and ecological experiments. As the earth system is itself being put to the test by the sum and history of human practices and their consequences, new methods for testing, evaluating, and critiquing the impact of data practices and digital infrastructures are urgently required.

The conference takes place onsite at FoKoS, Weidenauer Str. 167, 57076 Siegen.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

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15:00 — 15:30	*Welcome*

Panel 1

15:45 — 17:15

Testing Alexa:
Practices of Private Users & Third-Party Developers
Chair: David Waldecker

Speakers and Their Attachments:
Frustration Free Through Testing?
Niklas Strüver (University of Siegen)

From Initial Setup to Routine Operation:
Mundane Experiments for Domesticating Smart Speakers
in Private Homes
Stephan Habscheid & Dagmar Hoffmann (University of Siegen)

Repair Strategies in Dealing with Smart Speakers
Silke Reineke & Henrike Helmer
(Leibniz-Institute for German Language, Mannheim)

Keynote

17:30 — 19:00

Perpetual Beta:
Genealogies of Permanent Testing
Markus Krajewski (University of Basel)
Chair: Marcus Burkhardt

19:30	*Conference Dinner*

Panel 2

10:00 — 11:30

Trying Times?
Temporal Orders of Technology Testing

Chair: Philippe Sormani

Remaking Intelligence? Of Machines, Media and Montage

Philippe Sormani (University of Lausanne)

Why Experiment?
Sociologies of Testing, Scenarios of Lifeworlds

Michael Guggenheim (Goldsmiths College, London)

Artificial Fear? Future Pasts Revisited

Lauren Huret & Hunter Longe (Geneva)

Panel 3

11:45 — 13:15

Slopes, Trails, Air and Streets:
Sharing and Testing Outdoor Environments
in Everyday and Adventure Activities

Chair: Susanne Förster

Cycling & Sensory Media:
Vlogs, Apps & Circulating Practices

Julia Bee (University of Siegen)

Follow-Me:
Drones as semi-autonomous companions

Hendrik Bender (University of Siegen)

Live-tracks/reports in remote destinations

Karina Kirsten (University of Siegen)

Panel 4

14:30 — 16:00

Con-testing Sensing Practices

Co-chairs: Daniela van Geenen, Vesna Schierbaum & Regina Wuzella

Escaping Sensors: A Human "Turn to Sensing"

Anna Berti Suman (European Commission Joint Research Center, Sensing for Justice)

Sensor-Media-Environments as Experimental Systems: Medianaturecultural Aspects of Putting "Nature" to the Test

Sebastian Scholz (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

"A Smile Looks The Same On Everyone´s Face" - Narratives in the use of facial emotion recognition in market research

Daniel Stoecker (The Brandenburg Center for Media Studies)

Keynote

16:15 — 17:45

Towards the test society:
On the un-doing of experimental accountability

Noortje Marres (Warwick University)
Chair: Carolin Gerlitz

18:30 — 19:30

MGK Siegen

Digital Studies Meets Digital Arts: MGK Walls

19:30

Conference Dinner

Panel 5

10:00 — 11:30

Speaking Truth:
Testing Language Technologies

Chair: Marcus Burkhardt

Testing for Faithfulness: Hallucinating Language Models

Susanne Förster (University of Siegen)

"Artificial Journalism"?: How "Communicative AI"
is Making its Way into the News Production Cycle

Wiebke Loosen (Hans Bredow Institut)

Establishing Facts Under Uncertainty:
How Truth is Put to the Test on Facebook

Yarden Skop (University of Siegen)

Panel 6

11:45 — 13:15

"Fake it 'til you make it":
The Economies, Tactics, & Ethics of Synthetic Data

Chair: Sam Hind

Adjacency: Characterizing the Distinction Between
Synthetic and Organic Data

Tanja Wiehn (University of Copenhagen)

Synthetic Data & Post-surveillance Data-intensive capitalism

James Steinhoff (University of Toronto Mississauga)

13:15 — 13:30

Closing Remarks

TESTING

Registration
& Contact

The conference
"Testing in the Wild: Publics, Practices, and Infrastructures"
takes place in Siegen. Attendance is free of charge. For
onsite attendance please register via email at
info@sfb1187.uni-siegen.de

Safety precautions will be taken according to the current
pandemic situation. Any regulations will be communicated in
advance to all registered participants via email.

Talks will also be streamed online. The link for the
conference stream will be published on the conference website
on the day of the event. Registration for online attendance is
not required.

If you have any questions or would like more information,
please send us an email or visit our website.

Adress:

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Email:
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Conference website:
www.mediacoop.uni-siegen.de/en/annual-conference-2022/

PANELS & KEYNOTES

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MGK WALLS