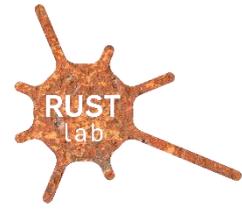


Call for participation:

Data Walk: Craft, analyse and visualise data on digital infrastructure, surveillance, and gender in the city

20.05.2022, Paderborn and online



Ruhr University Science & Technology Studies Laboratory

Ryoko Asai, Ruth Eggel, Olga Galanova, Laura Kocksch, Jan Schmutzler, und Estrid Sørensen

<https://rustlab.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/>

Introduction:

The Data Walk is a mobile method of collective observation, documentation and discussion. As a research process, it is characterised by the critical and creative collection and documentation of data during a collective stroll, following the ethnographic model (cf. Powel 2021, Kühl 2015, Weber/John 2018). STS researchers (e.g., Vertesi & Ribes 2019) are increasingly drawing attention to how data - digital and analogue - are anything but given. Rather, they must be crafted and curated, and they degrade if not cared for (cf. Sørensen & Kocksch, 2021). Additionally, the Data Walk draws on current STS data research that is concerned with the question of how data can be experienced and how a researched object is transformed through the data pipeline (collection->analysis->visualisation). The Data Walk in Paderborn focuses on the question of how data are constructed and how and what they construct.

Data are both the object and the medium of the data walk. Data are sought out, traced and noticed, while they at the same time are produced through observational methods (notetaking, photographing, GPS tracking, etc.). Inspired by the data sprint method (e.g., Venturini & Munk 2022) we will visualise the data gathered through the walks in a short-term workshop fashion with both low-tech and digital tools. Data, their transformation, and agency are thus collectively experienced and reflected upon.

The Paderborn Data Walk is dedicated to three topics: Data infrastructure, surveillance and gender. Although they are largely invisible in everyday life, these topics are central dimensions of digitalisation and datafication of/in the city. During the Data Walk we engage in making them more visible. We collectively train our gaze towards invisible data infrastructures that are necessary for the constitution of data flows, surveillance and gender. Specifically, the following questions should be attended to during the Data Walk: Which data infrastructures contribute to the constitution of urban environments? Where do surveillance techniques of people and data flows begin in the city? How does gender become data and data become gender(ed) in the city/in urban environments? Thus, data and their effects are experienced in and through engagement, categorisations, meanings, materialities and objects, and these experiences can in turn be observed, recorded and critically reflected upon.

Practical implementation

The Data Walks can be conducted in German or English.

Participants will group themselves according to thematic interests, and methods will be adapted to competencies of the participants. The organizers will provide communication platforms for (optional) preparation prior the meeting in Paderborn, such as collecting data and speculating on relevant routes.

The Data Walks starts at a named location. Each participant is assigned a role: signpost, map guide, photographer, note taker, twitterer and object collector. The walk lasts 45 minutes.

After the walk, all participants gather at the university. Data are compiled, stored and visualized, combining digital and analogue data: Photos, text, numerical data, tracking data, etc. The session aims at "quick and dirty" data visualisation that evokes discussions about the experience of the Walks, the crafting of data and the respective topics related to data in the city.

In Paderborn and remote

Data walks make questions of data accessible and locally situated, not only to the walkers. The experiment can enable participation beyond participants (Powell 2018). While moving through the city Data Walkers may spark curiosity in passers-by or actively engage in conversations with people around, e.g., construction workers, tram drivers and others.

We furthermore invite participation online by following and interacting with the Data Walkers through Twitter or as, what we call, "people in chairs". Engaging with the local data collectors, remote participants prompt questions or do complementing online research. They may even compare Data Walker's experience with their own surrounding. An ongoing exchange between local participants and remote participants is facilitated through the use of a defined hashtag via Twitter. The integration of Twitter allows the networking of Data Walk teams and other people. Remote participants are also invited to participate, think along and comment. Text, photos and Twitter data from remote participants will be merged with the rest. If possible, remote participants will also be able to participate in the data analysis and visualization via Zoom. *Please contact the organizers of the experiment for remote participation: rustlab@rub.de*

An experiment

Bogusz (2020) describes the experiment as a pragmatic and reflexive tool for ethnographic practice. The data walk is an experiment in this respect, as it is not only about verbal thinking practices, but also about appropriating, reconfiguring, tinkering, and indeed experiencing. As an experiment, the Data Walk combines approaches to intervention and critique with concrete, active, collaborative and creative movement through the city. In addition, the 'in-situ' production and analysis of data, both digital and observational, allows participants to come into direct contact with digital data, thus entering into "critical proximity" with data (Birkbak et al 2015, Latour 2003). By simultaneously observing data in its situational production in the city and at the same time producing data themselves (and possibly inviting others to do the same), technologies are removed from their abstractness and "black box" form and become a situated part of the critical and participatory engagement with the city.

*Registration to the on-site **Data Walk in Paderborn** and the **symposium**:*

<https://bit.ly/3LZlfqN>

*Registration to participate **remotely** in the data walk: rustlab@rub.de*