

Counting Clicks instead of Citations - YouTube Videos as Scientific Currency

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Abstract

YouTube videos have become a regular feature of the scientific practices in robotics as well as in other sciences. Nevertheless, video demos remained an under-explored topic in STS. By bringing together our ethnographic studies on the realities of social robotics on the one hand and self-driving car research on the other hand, we aim at advancing the discussion on video demos. In our contribution to the panel we seek to map a possible range of video demos, using robotics as an example. Rather than studying video demos as a thing-in-itself, we follow a relational approach by focussing on the life worlds of video demos. In the presentation we will look at three different analytical dimensions: 1.) the organizational identity of the research institutions 2.), the culture of robotics research, and 3.) video demos as boundary objects.

Thereby we are able to distinguish between different processes and meanings closely entangled to the increasing production and consumption of such videos. We are going to discuss our analysis of the social functions of these videos mainly in two ways. On the one hand we will examine the meaning of YouTube videos for robotics and its generalized assumptions, narratives and imaginaries of possible futures (Suchman 2011). On the other hand we are seeking to contribute to the discussion about the mediatization of science (Schäfer 2014) by interpreting our results as sub-processes of this overarching development.

References

Schäfer, Mike (2014): The Media in the Labs, and the Labs in the Media. What we Know about the Mediatization of Science. In Lundby, Knut (Ed.): Mediatization of Communication. Vol. 21 of the „Handbooks of Communication Science“. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton: 571-594.

Suchman, Lucy (2011): Subject objects. In Feminist Theory 12.2 (2011): 119-145.