

Abdallah El Ali

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

Human-computer interaction (HCI), social computing, CSCW, computational social science, data science

EXPERIENCE

Postdoctoral Researcher

Oldenburg, DE

University of Oldenburg / OFFIS

Media Informatics and Multimedia Systems group

Feb, 2015 - Present

- I am involved in (a) coordinating and helping write national and European ICT research proposals (b) co-supervising doctoral, master's, and bachelor's students (c) co-teaching bachelor and master's HCI courses
- I carry out independent HCI research (supervised by Prof. Susanne Boll), of which projects include: (a) designing and evaluating sensor-based behavior tracking technology (b) running studies to understand mobile users in developing countries (c) large-scale mining of social media data and crowdsourcing to understand global crises (d) smartphone emoji keyboard layout reorganization using facial expression emotion recognition and crowdsourcing

User Experience Designer

Amsterdam, NL

Osudio

Jan, 2014 - Nov, 2014

- I helped win pitches, ran UX strategy sessions with clients, and designed e-commerce focused (responsive) digital experiences across web and other devices. This included market research, carrying out persona and Customer Experience Map sessions, conducting expert reviews, making concept designs, wireframing, and analyzing web analytics. Worked with agile, pure scrum, and waterfall processes

Research Intern

Berlin, DE

Telekom Innovation Laboratories

Quality & Usability Lab

Apr, 2012 - Jun, 2012

- Designed and executed (with Dr. Hamed Ketabdar) (a) a usability study (part of the MagiThings Project) on magnet-based gesture interaction for music composition (El Ali et al., 2013) (b) a usability and security study on the use of magnet-based air signatures for user authentication (El Ali & Ketabdar, 2015)

Research Intern

Tampere, FI

Nokia Research Center (NRC)

Organic User Interfaces team

Apr, 2011 - Jul, 2011

- Helped in setting up, data analysis, and writing up of a large-scale in-the-wild qualitative user study on mobile interaction with public interfaces (Holopainen et al., 2011)
- Designed and executed (with NRC Helsinki) a usability study that investigated effects of error on device-based gesture interaction (El Ali et al., 2012; best student paper award)

Research Assistant

Amsterdam, NL

Leibniz Center for Law (Research Institute)

Sep 4, 2007 - Dec 31, 2008

- Modeled Dutch legislation in the Web Ontology Language (OWL-DL), with the aim of providing Semantic Web compliant automated normative assessment services as part of the ESTRELLA EU project

EDUCATION

PhD., Computer Science

Amsterdam, NL

University of Amsterdam

Apr, 2009 - Nov, 2013

Information and Language Processing Systems group

- My research (supervised by Dr. Frank Nack and Prof. Lynda Hardman) focused on context-awareness techniques and 3D gestural interaction input as means to minimize interaction with mobile devices.
- Thesis: Minimal Mobile Human Computer Interaction

M.Sc., Cognitive Science

Amsterdam, NL

University of Amsterdam

Sept, 2006 - Aug, 2008

- Two-year program, Total ECTS: 124, Total Grade (Dutch Grading System): 8.4/10 (GPA: 3.71 or A)
- Thesis: Reproducing the Passage of Time: Effects of Stimulus Complexity, Quantity, and Cognitive Interference (Thesis Grade: 9.5/10)

B.A., Linguistics (English Language)

Beirut, LB

American University of Beirut

Sept, 2002 - Jun, 2006

- Four-year program (incl. Freshman year), Total Grade: 85/100 (GPA conversion = 3.63 or A); Graduated with distinction
- Minor in Cognitive Science, minor in Philosophy

SKILLS

User Research

User-centered design, usability testing (controlled, field), remote testing (A/B, MVT), contextual inquiry, heuristic evaluation, card sorting, Wizard-of-Oz, interviews (+ open coding), surveys, affinity diagramming

Data Science

Social media data (Twitter, Flickr) crawling, cleaning and analysis; facial emotion recognition using deep convolutional neural networks (TFlearn, TensorFlow); crowdsourcing; descriptive and inferential statistics (incl. correlation, regression, ANOVA, t-test, chi-square, factor analysis); applied machine learning (supervised, unsupervised); R (incl. ggplot2), Python (incl. Pandas, NumPy, SciPy, OpenCV, ScikitLearn), iPython, SQL

Soft Skills

Mentoring colleagues / students, coordinating and writing grant proposals, scientific and non-scientific presentations

Languages

Arabic (native), English (fluent), Dutch (intermediate), German (basic)

PUBLICATIONS

1. **El Ali, A.**, Stratmann, T., Park, S., Heuten, W. & Boll, S. (2018). Measuring and Understanding Overall News Media Sympathy on Twitter in the Aftermath of Crisis Events. Submitted to CSCW '18. New York, USA.
2. **El Ali, A.**, Wallbaum, T., Wasmann, M., Heuten, W. & Boll, S. (2017). Face2Emoji: Using Facial Emotional Expressions to Filter Emojis. In Proc. CHI '17 EA. Denver, Colorado.
3. Meyer, J., Wasmann, M., Heuten, W., **El Ali, A.**, & Boll, S. (2017). Identification and Classification of Usage Patterns in Long-Term Activity Tracking. To be published in Proc. CHI '17. Denver, CO, USA.
4. Cobus, V., Bräuer, N., Pistor, A., Precht, H., **El Ali, A.**, & Boll, S. (2016). Badum Tss! - A Paper-based Interaction to Augment Everyday Situations with Sound Effects. In Adj. Proc. NordiCHI '16. Gothenburg, Sweden.
5. Sadeghian, S., **El Ali, A.**, Heuten, W., & Boll, S. (2016). Peripheral Light Cues for In-Vehicle Task Resumption. In Proc. NordiCHI '16. Gothenburg, Sweden.
6. **El Ali, A.**, Bachour, K., Heuten, W. & Boll, S. (2016). Technology Literacy in Poor Infrastructure Environments: Characterizing Wayfinding Strategies in Lebanon. In Proc. MobileHCI '16. Florence, Italy.
7. **El Ali, A.**, Matviienko, A., Feld, Y., Heuten, W. & Boll, S. (2016). VapeTracker: Tracking Vapor Consumption to Help E-cigarette Users Quit. In Proc. CHI '16 EA. San Jose, CA, USA
8. **El Ali, A.**, & Ketabdar, H. (2015). Investigating Handedness in Air Signatures for Magnetic 3D Gestural User Authentication. In Proc. MobileHCI '15. Copenhagen, Denmark.
9. Wolbert, M. & **El Ali, A.** & Nack, F. (2014). CountMeIn: Evaluating Social Presence in a Collaborative Pervasive Mobile Game Using NFC and Touchscreen Interaction. In Proc. ACE '14. Madeira, Portugal.
10. **El Ali, A.** (2013). Minimal Mobile Human Computer Interaction. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Amsterdam.
11. **El Ali, A.** & Ketabdar, H. (2013). Magnet-based Around Device Interaction for Playful Music Composition and Gaming. To be published in International Journal of Mobile Human Computer Interaction (IJMHCI).
12. Wolbert, M. & **El Ali, A.** (2013). Evaluating NFC and Touchscreen Interactions in Collaborative Mobile Pervasive Games. In Proc. MobileHCI '13. Munich, Germany.
13. **El Ali, A.**, van Sas, S. & Nack, F. (2013). Photographer Paths: Sequence Alignment of Geotagged Photos for Exploration-based Route Planning. In Proc. CSCW '13. San Antonio, Texas.
14. **El Ali, A.**, Kildal, J. & Lantz, V. (2012). Fishing or a Z?: Investigating the Effects of Error on Mimetic and Alphabet Device-based Gesture Interaction. In Proc. ICMI '12. Santa Monica, California. **[Best student paper award]**
15. **El Ali, A.**, Nack, F. & Hardman, L. (2011). Good Times?! 3 Problems and Design Considerations for Playful HCI. In the International Journal of Mobile Human-Computer Interaction (IJMHCI), 3, 3, p.50-65.
16. Bouwer, A., Nack, F. & **El Ali, A.** (2012). Lost in Navigation: Evaluating a Mobile Map App for a Fair. In Proceedings of the 14th international conference on Multimodal Interaction (ICMI '12), 2012, Santa Monica, California.
17. Holopainen, J., Lucero, A., Saarenpää, H., Nummenmaa, **El Ali, A.**, & Jokela, T. (2011). Social and Privacy Aspects of a System for Collaborative Public Expression. In Proceedings of Advances in Computer Entertainment (ACE'11), Lisbon, Portugal.
18. **El Ali, A.** (2011). Studying and Designing for Mobile Social Awareness Cues in Urban Interactions. In Proceedings of MobileHCI'11 (Extended Abstracts), Doctoral Consortium, Stockholm, Sweden.
19. **El Ali, A.**, Lucero, A. & Aaltonen, V. (2011). Multimodal Interaction Design in Collocated Mobile Phone Use. MobileGestures 2011 workshop at MobileHCI'11, Stockholm, Sweden.

20. **El Ali, A.**, Nack, F. & Hardman, L. (2010). Understanding contextual factors in location-aware multimedia messaging. In Proceedings of the 12th international conference on Multimodal Interfaces (ICMI'10), Beijing, China.
21. Nack, F., **El Ali, A.**, van Kemenade, P., Overgoor, J. and van der Weij., B. (2010). A story to go, please. In Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling (ICIDS'10), Edinburgh, Scotland.
22. **El Ali, A.**, Nack, F. & Hardman, L. (2010). Good Times?! Playful Aspects of Location-based Experience Capture. Please Enjoy 10 workshop at MobileHCI'10, Lisbon, Portugal. **[Best workshop paper award]**
23. **El Ali, A.** & Nack, F. (2009). Touring in a Living Lab: some methodological considerations. MobileHCI'09. Mobile Living Labs 09 workshop, Bonn, Germany.
24. van de Ven, S., Hoekstra, R., Breuker, J., Wortel, L., & **El Ali, A.** Judging Amy: Automated legal assessment using OWL 2. In Proceedings of OWL: Experiences and Directions (OWLED 2008 EU), October 2008.

PROJECTS

1. Participated in the SmartINSIDE (ID: 5 262, part of H2020 Eurostars Programme) project, which aims to develop a GNSS-enabled standard smartphone for better indoor navigation. 2010-2012. Cost: €1,590,000
2. Participated in a nationally funded project to provide personalized cultural information access to tourists "Mobile Cultural Access for Tourists" (MOCATOUR). 2009-2011. Cost: approx. €968,280.
3. Participated in a project on Semantic Web compliant automated normative assessment services as part of the European project for Standardized Transparent Representations in order to Extend Legal Accessibility (ES-TRELLA, IST-2004-027655). 2006-2008. Cost: €3,811,943.

PROPOSAL WRITING

1. Edited and proofread DFG proposal on "Take Over Requests in Automated Driving". *To be submitted.*
2. Contributed to an ERC consolidator grant proposal on guiding human attention with digital technology for interacting with cyber-physical system (ATTENTION).
3. Successfully coordinated and contributed to H2020 grant proposal on "Monitoring and Early Diagnosis of frailty in the Elderly" (MEDLEY).

AWARDS

- CHI 2016 excellent reviewer
- Won the FNWI (Faculty of Science) 2nd Science Slam (2013) for most exciting research. Certificate available
- Best student paper award at ICMI 2012
- Best workshop paper at Please Enjoy workshop at MobileHCI 2011
- Awarded National Science Foundation (NSF) travel grant for ICMI-MLMI 2010 (Beijing, China)
- Dean's Honor List (American University of Beirut): Spring 2003, Spring 2004, Fall 2005, Spring 2005, Fall 2006

PRESS

- VapeTracker in the VapingPost. New Technology: A cessation tool for vapers

INVITED TALKS

- 2016: Challenges in measuring and understanding cross-cultural crisis news media bias on Twitter. 3rd GESIS Computational Social Science Winter Symposium 2016 (Cologne, DE).
- 2015: Urban data and wayfinding in developing countries (2015). Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica (CWI) - Information Access (Amsterdam, NL).
- 2015: Leveraging Flickr photos to build exploration-based route planners. Pervasive Interaction Technology (PIT) Laboratory (Copenhagen, DK)
- 2011, 2012: Introduction to multimodal interaction (slides here.) University of Amsterdam (Amsterdam, NL)

TEACHING

Courses Co-taught

- 2015, 2016: Bsc course 'Interaktive Systeme'; Msc course 'Human Computer Interaction'; Msc course 'Wearable Computing'
- 2010, 2011, 2012: Msc Information Science course 'Intelligent Interactive Systems'. Designed and executed entire practical course syllabus from scratch.
- 2009, 2010: Bsc course 'Human-Centered Multimedia'
- 2009, 2010: Bsc course 'Knowledge-based Media Systems'

Students Supervised

- 2016: Rieke Von Bargaen (Bsc Informatics) || *Wearable Vibro-tactile Pedestrian Navigation*
- 2013: Michael Wolbert (Msc Information Science) || *Improving the Waiting Time Experience Through a Pervasive Collaborative NFC-enabled Mobile Game*
- 2013: Patrick Mast (Msc Artificial Intelligence) || *Applying Sequence Alignment Techniques to Give Personalized Travel Suggestions*
- 2013: Bardia Khalesi (Msc Artificial Intelligence) || *Using Social Network Analysis Techniques on Foursquare data for Location-Based Recommendations*
- 2011: Theresa Kriese (Msc Information Science) || *Measuring User Experience of User-defined Cross-domain Motion Gestures*
- 2011: Haska Steltenpohl (Bsc Information Science) || *Visualizing Route Information on Mobile Devices*
- 2010: Sicco van Sas (Bsc Artificial Intelligence) || *Generating route recommendations using geotagged Flickr photos and sequence alignment*
- 2009: Jan Overgoor, Philo van Kemenade, Bastiaan van der Weij (Bsc Artificial Intelligence) || *Narranotation: Mobile storytelling using a context-free grammar*

COURSES & WORKSHOPS TAKEN

- 2nd Summer School on Computational Interaction. Certificate available.
- R Programming. Johns Hopkins University (Coursera). Grade: 97%. Certificate available
- Google Analytics - Digital Analytics Fundamentals - Score: 94%
- Information Visualization (Master's AI course)
- Teaching Skills for Science Teaching Assistants. Certificate available
- Machine Learning: Pattern Recognition (Master's AI course)
- SIKS Summer School on Data Mining
- UBI Summer School 2010 on Ubiquitous Computing. Grade: 5/5. Workshop 'Urban Social Network Analysis'
- 2nd NIRICT-SIKS Spring School - Social Interaction Computing
- Cognitive Modeling. CSCA summer school

SERVICE

- **AutomotiveUI 2017** - Local Chair

- **Google NL Startup Week (2015)** - UX Mentor
- **CareerFoundry UX Hackathon (2015)** - UX Mentor
- **AWESOME IT (2011)** - Program Chair
- **Conference & Journal reviewer:** CHI (2017, 2016, 2013, 2012); CSCW (2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2013); Mobile-HCI (2017, 2016, 2015, 2013); AutoUI (2015); CHI Play (2015); UIST (2013); DIS (2017, 2012); ICMI (2011); CIE

REFERENCES

Susanne Boll

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Lynda Hardman

Professor, Computer Science, Utrecht University / Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica (CWI)
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Frank Nack

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