

Curriculum Vitae

Dr.-Ing. Thomas Eßmeyer (né Mildner)
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Education.

- **2021-2024:** University of Bremen – **Ph.D. in Computer Science (Dr.-Ing.)**, Thesis title: *Mitigating Dark Patterns Through Responsible Design – Ethical Design Considerations for User-Centred Technologies*, (summa cum laude), Advisor: Prof. Dr. Rainer Malaka
 - **2018-2020:** University College Dublin – **M.Sc. in Computer Science**, Thesis title: *Scéalability – Assessing Multi-Agent Storytelling Performances With Amazon’s Alexa*, Advisor: Prof. Dr. Tony Veale
 - **2014-2017:** University of the Arts, Bremen – **B.A. in Digital Media**, Thesis title: *Anwendung von Style Transfer Algorithmen auf die Generierung geographischer Karten*, Advisor: Prof. Peter von Maydell and Prof. Dr. Johannes Schöning
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Teaching activities.

I am passionate about my teaching and mentoring Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Ph.D. students. In 2025, I received the authorisation to examine student theses by the University of Bremen. Further, I assisted for or took lecturing roles the following courses:

- **Guest Lecturer** – Grundlagen der Mensch-Maschine Systeme I (Summer Term 2025) - Technische Universität Berlin
 - **Guest Lecturer** – Angewandte und aktuelle Forschungsthemen in Prävention und Gesundheitsförderung (2024) - University of Bremen
 - **Mentoring** – User Experience Project (2024) - Indiana University Bloomington
 - **Lecturer** – Seminar on “Information Security, Data Protection, and How Dark Patterns Navigate Johnny’s Behaviour” (2022) – University of Bremen
 - **TA** – Formal Foundations (2019) - University College Dublin
 - **TA** – Software Engineering Project (2019) - University College Dublin
 - **TA** – Computational Creativity (2018) - University College Dublin
 - **TA** – Introduction to Relational Databases and SQL (2018) – University College Dublin
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Experience.

- **Since 2024:** Postdoc and research cluster coordinator at the Leibniz ScienceCampus DiPH.
- **2021-2024:** Researcher at the University of Bremen in the Digital Media Lab.
- **Since 2020:** Freelance full stack developer and consultation.
- **2018-2020:** Researcher at the University College Dublin in the Creative Language Systems group.
- **2018:** Erasmus+ at the University College Dublin in the Creative Language Systems group.

Academic activities.

I was a student volunteer at the following conferences CHI in 2022 and 2023. Further, I chaired for different roles at the following conferences:

- **General Chair** – CUI 2026
- **Interactivity & Creativity Chair** – CUI 2025
- **Web Chair** – MuC 2025
- **Assistant Subcommittee Chair** – CHI 2025
- **Paper Chair** – MUM 2024
- **Associate Chair** – MuC 2024

Reviewing

I volunteered as a reviewer for various HCI conferences and journals, including, but not limited to, ACM CHI, ACM DIS, ACM CUI, ACM CSCW, Behaviour & Information Technology, and IJHCS, 6 of which received special recognitions for outstanding reviews.

Talks

Outside conferences, I was invited to engage with communities and present my research at the following venues as talks or lectures:

- LSC DiPH Summer School – “A Human-Computer Interaction Perspective on Digital Public Health” (2025)
- Technical University of Eindhoven (2024) – “Introduction to Responsible Design and Dark Patterns”
- Lorentz Workshop on Fair Patterns (2024)
- AI IN HEALTH Bremen (2023) – “Auf der Schattenseite von Sozialen Medien - Wie Dark Patterns unsere Entscheidungen beeinflussen”
- Portugal Digital Wellbeing Week (2023) – “How Dark Patterns Influence Our Decision Making”
- M-EPLI Talks (2023) – “Uncovering Dark Patterns In Social Media”

Active memberships in scientific societies, fellowships in renowned academies

- I am an active member of the Association of Computing Machinery (ACM), contributing to conferences associated with ACM and serving as an active reviewer in the ACM community and beyond.
- Moreover, I am a member of the Early Career Research Academy (ECRA) of the Leibniz Science-Campus Digital Public Health (DiPH).

Awards

- Bremer Studienpreis 2025 (Bremer Study Award 2025) for my Ph.D. (Dr.-Ing) Dissertation “*Mitigating Dark Patterns Through Responsible Design – Ethical Design Considerations for User-Centred Technologies*”

- Honourable Mention Award – MobileHCI 2025 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, for the paper: *Give and Take: Perceptions of a Conversational Coach Agent in Fitness Trackers*
- Honourable Mention Award – MUM 2024 in Stockholm, Sweden, for the paper: *Finding a Way Through the Social Media Labyrinth: Guiding Design by Following User Expectations*
- Honourable Mention Award – CHI 2023 in Hamburg, Germany, for the paper: *About Engaging and Governing Strategies: A Thematic Analysis of Dark Patterns in Social Networking Services*

Public Dissemination

Outside conferences, I was invited to engage with communities and present my research at the following venues as talks or lectures:

- Interview for The Wahsington Post (2025). Article: *How TikTok keeps its users scrolling for hours a day*
- Interview for the Digital Public Health Podcast (2024). Episode: *How Dark Patterns Manipulate Our Behaviour*
- Interview for Spektrum der Wissenschaft (2024). Article: *Manipulation im Netz*
- Interview for El País (2021). Article: *Sesiones siempre abiertas y privacidad a medio proteger: así nos afecta el diseño de las redes sociales*

List of Publications

I have contributed to and presented my research at many relevant conferences in HCI, such as ACM CHI, ACM DIS, ACM CUI, and MuC. I have published peer-reviewed full articles as a first author and have contributed to other work as a co-author. Furthermore, I co-organised several workshops and special interest groups (SIGs) at high-ranking conferences in the field.

Scientific Publications

Top publications are marked with an asterisk.

1. Herrera-Espejel, P. S., **Mildner, T.**, Pohlabein, H., Genedl, C., Jasker, L., & Rach, S. (2025). Access to translated invitations online increases involvement of linguistically diverse households in a population-based study: a cluster randomized controlled study. *Scientific Reports*, 15(1), 27829.
2. Meinhardt, L.-M., Demharter, S., Rietzer, M., Colley, M., **Eßmeyer, T.**, Rukzio, E. (2025) *ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact.*, Vol. 9, No. 5, Article MHCI014. 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3743709>
3. * Loerakker, M., Stefanidi, E., Niess, J., **Eßmeyer, T.**, Woźniak, P. (2025). 'Give and Take': Perceptions of a Conversational Coach Agent in Fitness Trackers. *Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact.*, Vol. 9, No. 5, Article MHCI014. 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3743718>
4. * **Mildner, T.**, Fidel, D., Stefanidi, E., Woźniak, M. P., Malaka, R., & Niess, J. (2025). A Comparative Study of How People With and Without ADHD Recognise and Avoid Dark Patterns on Social Media. *Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3713776>
5. * Gray, C. M., **Mildner, T.**, & Gairola, R. (2025). Getting Trapped in Amazon's "Iliad Flow": A Foundation for the Temporal Analysis of Dark Patterns. *Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3713828>
6. Spillner L., Santagiustina, C. R. M. A., **Mildner, T.**, Porzel, R. (2025). Mapping and Exploring the Dynamics of Inequality Narratives Through Social Media. In *Narrative-based Understanding of Society*. <https://hal.science/hal-05031924>
7. * **Mildner, T.**, Savino, G.-L., Putze, S., & Malaka, R. (2024). Finding a Way Through the Social Media Labyrinth: Guiding Design by Following User Expectations. *Proceedings of the 23rd International Conference on Mobile and Ubiquitous Multimedia (MUM '24)*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3701571.3701605>
8. Niknejad, S., **Mildner, T.**, Zargham, N., Putze, S., and Malaka, R. (2024). Level Up or Game Over: Exploring How Dark Patterns Shape Mobile Games. *Proceedings of the 23rd International Conference on Mobile and Ubiquitous Multimedia (MUM '24)*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3701571.3701604>
9. Zargham, N., Avanesi, V., **Mildner, T.**, Javanmardi, K., Porzel, R., and Malaka, R. (2024). HASI: A Model for Human-Agent Speech Interaction. *ACM Conversational User Interfaces 2024*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3640794.3665885>

10. **Mildner, T.**, Savino, G.-L., Schöning, J., and Malaka, R. (2024). Dark Patterns: Manipulative Designstrategien in digitalen Gesundheitsanwendungen. Bundesgesundheitsblatt - Gesundheitsforschung - Gesundheitsschutz. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00103-024-03840-6>
11. * Gray, C. M., Santos, C. T., Bielova, N., and **Mildner, T.** (2024). An Ontology of Dark Patterns Knowledge: Foundations, Definitions, and a Pathway for Shared Knowledge-Building. Proceedings of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3613904.3642436>
12. * **Mildner, T.**, Cooney, O., Meck, A.-M., Bartl, M., Savino, G.-L., Doyle, P. R., Garaialde, D., Clark, L., Sloan, J., Wenig, N., Malaka, R. and Niess, J. (2024). Listening to the Voices: Describing Ethical Caveats of Conversational User Interfaces According to Experts and Frequent Users. Proceedings of the 2024 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3613904.3642542>
13. Zargham, N., Alexandrovsky, D., **Mildner, T.**, Porzel, R., and Malaka, R. (2023). “Let’s Face It”: Investigating User Preferences for Virtual Humanoid Home Assistants”. International Conference on Human-Agent Interaction, 246–256. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3623809.3623821>
14. * **Mildner, T.**, Freye, M., Savino, G.-L., Doyle, P. R., Cowan, B. R., and Malaka, R. (2023). Defending Against the Dark Arts: Recognising Dark Patterns in Social Media. Proceedings of the 2023 ACM Designing Interactive Systems Conference, 2362–2374. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3563657.3595964>
15. * **Mildner, T.**, Savino, G.-L., Doyle, P. R., Cowan, B. R. and Malaka, R. (2023). About Engaging and Governing Strategies: A Thematic Analysis of Dark Patterns in Social Networking Services. Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3544548.3580695>
16. Stefanidi, E., Bentvelzen, M., Woźniak, P. W., Kosch, T., Woźniak, M. P., **Mildner, T.**, Schneegass, S., Müller, H. and Niess, J. (2023). Literature Reviews in HCI: A Review of Reviews. Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3544548.3581332>
17. Wagener, N., Reicherts, L., Zargham, N., Bartłomiejczyk, N., Scott, A. E., Wang, K., Bentvelzen, M., Stefanidi, E., **Mildner, T.**, Rogers, Y. and Niess, J. (2023). SelVReflect: A Guided VR Experience Fostering Reflection on Personal Challenges. Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3544548.3580763>
18. **Mildner, T.**, Doyle, P., Savino, G.-L. and Malaka, R. (2022). Rules Of Engagement: Levelling Up To Combat Unethical CUI Design. 4th Conference on Conversational User Interfaces, 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3543829.3544528>
19. **Mildner, T.** and Savino, G.-L. (2021). Ethical User Interfaces: Exploring the Effects of Dark Patterns on Facebook. In Extended Abstracts of the 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (pp. 1–7). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3411763.3451659>
20. Veale, T., Wicke, P. and **Mildner, T.** (2020). Duets Ex Machina: On The Performative Aspects of “Double Acts” in Computational Creativity.

21. Reinschluessel, A. V., Teuber, J., Herrlich, M., Bissel, J., Van Eikeren, M., Ganser, J., Koeller, F., Kollasch, F., **Mildner, T.**, Raimondo, L., Reisig, L., Ruedel, M., Thieme, D., Vahl, T., Zachmann, G. and Malaka, R. (2017). Virtual Reality for User-Centered Design and Evaluation of Touch-free Interaction Techniques for Navigating Medical Images in the Operating Room. Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 2001–2009. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3027063.3053173>

Workshops, Symposia, and SIGs

1. Maaß, L., Pedrós Barnils, N., Schüz, B., Jöst, M., Loganathan, G., Müllmann, S., Zeeb, H., Klinke, C., Krüppel, S., Macedo Silva, A., **Eßmeyer, T.**, von Mandelsloh, F. (2025). Leibniz ScienceCampus Digital Public Health (LSC DiPH) Summer School 2025: Designing, evaluating, and implementing digital public health interventions. August 18th-22th. Bremen, Germany.
2. Desai, S., Dubiel, M., Zargham, N., **Mildner, T.**, Spillner, L. (2025). Personas Evolved: Designing Ethical LLM-Based Conversational Agent Personalities. Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Conversational User Interfaces, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3571884.3597441>
3. Seaborn, K., Gray, C. M., Gunawan, J., **Mildner, T.**, Schäfer, R., Sanchez Chamorro, L., Nakamura, S. (2025). Global and Transdisciplinary Perspectives on Dark Patterns and Deceptive Design Practice – ダークパターンとひとをだますデザインに関する国際的かつ学際的な交流. Proceedings of the Extended Abstracts of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706599.3716294>
4. Zargham, N., Dubiel, M., Desai, S., **Mildner, T.**, and Belz, H.-J. (2024). Designing AI Personalities: Enhancing Human-Agent Interaction Through Thoughtful Persona Design. Proceedings of the 23rd International Conference on Mobile and Ubiquitous Multimedia, 1-6. December 1st - 4th, Stockholm, Sweden. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3701571.370160>
5. **Mildner, T.**, Zargham N., and Malaka, R. (2024). Workshop on Responsible and Ethical AI in CUI Technologies (REACT). November 4th-6th. Bremen, Germany.
6. Gray, C. M., Gunawan, J., Schäfer, R., Bielova, N., Chamorro, L. S., Seaborn, K., **Mildner, T.**, and Sandhaus, H. (2024). Mobilizing Research and Regulatory Action on Dark Patterns and Deceptive Design Practices. Extended Abstracts of the 2024 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3613905.3636310>
7. Gray, C. M., Santos, C. T., Tong, N., **Mildner, T.**, Rossi, A., Gunawan, J. T., and Sinderson, C. (2023). Dark Patterns and the Emerging Threats of Deceptive Design Practices. Extended Abstracts of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3544549.3583173>
8. Avanesi, V., Rockstroh, J., **Mildner, T.**, Zargham, N., Reicherts, L., Friehs, M. A., Kontogiorgos, D., Wenig, N. and Malaka, R. (2023). From C-3PO to HAL: Opening The Discourse About The Dark Side of Multi-Modal Social Agents. Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Conversational User Interfaces, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3571884.3597441>