Call for Papers

“Testing under crisis / Testing the crises”

International Workshop
12-13 December, 2024
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

A public health crisis, especially an epidemic, and the responses formulated to address it are interwoven with a wide range of medical, social and political interventions. The aim of the CrisisTesting International Workshop is to bring together novel perspectives with regards to the study of public health crises by attending to the role of the development and use of diagnostic tests, to the emergence of a multitude of testing practices and to the materialities associated with testing infrastructure.

By bringing into dialogue interdisciplinary perspectives from the history of science, technology and medicine, the social sciences, the medical/health humanities, Science and Technology Studies, Media Studies and other relevant fields, we would like to explore the significance and crucial role of testing for medical practice and public health policy-making. The workshop has a double focus. On the one hand, it explores the social appropriations of testing in diverse settings and public health crises.1 On the other hand, it investigates possible radical changes in the history and the sociology of testing practices, be it either about testing that “occurs inside the social environment” or about testing that “involves the very modification of social environments”.2

We invite contributions that address, but are not limited to, the following research questions:

- How testing is being used by governments/public health authorities to inform public health interventions and to measure their performance?
- How can we better understand the sociotechnical tradeoffs of testing during a crisis?
- How does the design of the testing infrastructure favor certain public health policies in relation to the allocation of available resources? Does the configuration of testing, afforded by technological infrastructure, respond to the dynamics of health crises?

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How do cases of contested testing practices affect public health policy and the appropriations of testing in society?

What happens in cases of disruption to the supply of consumables that affect testing capacity? How does the availability or lack of testing resources and associated infrastructure impact clinical practice and policy-making during a crisis?

In which ways testing (and screening) shapes subjectivities and collective identities? How are the notions of health and illness being (re)shaped by testing?

How different uses of testing and different tests are being promoted, judged or challenged by public health authorities and the media in the context of science communication?

In which ways the social preferences are reflected in the balancing between the level of testing specificity and sensitivity?

This is the first of two workshops to be organized in the context of the research project “Testing under crisis, a history from HIV/AIDS to Covid-19: between public debates and health policies -- CrisisTesting” (2024-25). The aim of these workshops is to provide a space for discussion and meaningful exchanges on the aforementioned topics. Our plan is to publish an edited volume with contributions addressing diverse aspects of medical testing in the context of public health crises. The second Workshop will take place in autumn 2025.

Those interested in presenting their work, please send your abstract (approx. 250 words) and a brief biographical note (approx. 150 words) to crisistesting@phs.uoa.gr by the 10th of September 2024. The two-day workshop will take place in the premises of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and it is an in-person event. Participation is cost-free; the refreshments and meals are covered by the organizers. In exceptional cases, we will try to accommodate hybrid solutions (virtual participation).

The workshop is organized by the research team members of the CrisisTesting project: Katerina Vlantoni (Principal Investigator), assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy and History of Science, NKUA; Athanasios Barlagiannis, researcher in the Modern Greek History Research Centre, Academy of Athens; Eirini Mergoupi-Savaidou, postdoctoral researcher; Marilena Pateraki, postdoctoral researcher; and, Kostas Raptis, postdoctoral researcher.

If you have any questions, please contact us at crisistesting@phs.uoa.gr.

Project website: https://www.crisistesting.gr