

# Otniel-Bogdan Mercea, Ph.D.(current)

🌐 merceaotniel.github.io/ | 🐙 github.com/MerceaOtniel | 📄 stackoverflow.com/u/4178517  
in linkedin.com/in/otnielmercea | 🌐 bit.ly/GoogleScholarOtniel  
✉️ otimercea@gmail.com

## EDUCATION

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- **Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems and University of Tübingen** Tübingen, Germany  
*PhD in Computer Science* May 2021 - May 2024
  - **PhD student** in the IMPRS-IS program, supervised by Prof. Zeynep Akata and Prof. Andreas Geiger.
  - **PhD Topics:** multi-modal learning, zero/few-shot learning, explainability and interpretability, foundation models.
  - **Responsibilities:** Maintaining and improving the EML group website.
- **The University of Edinburgh** Edinburgh, Scotland  
*MSc in Artificial Intelligence; Distinction (Overall 76%)* Sept. 2019 - Aug. 2020
  - **MSc thesis:** "What Neural Networks can not learn?". **Supervisor:** Amos Storkey. Grade: 77% (Distinction)
  - **Relevant Courses:** Accelerated Natural Language Processing || Algorithmic Game Theory and Applications || Machine Learning and Pattern Recognition || Machine Learning Practical || Natural Language Understanding, Generation and Machine Translation || Reinforcement Learning.
- **Politehnica University of Timisoara** Timisoara, Romania  
*BSc in Computers and Information Technology; Top 3% (Overall 9.70/10)* Oct. 2015 - June 2019
  - **BSc Thesis:** "HybridAlpha-Reinforcement Learning on Resource-Constrained Systems". **Supervisor:** Calin-Adrian Popa. Grade: 10/10
  - **Relevant Courses:** Data Structures and Algorithms || Object Oriented Design || Foundations Of Software Engineering || Linear Algebra, Probabilities and Statistics || Computer Security || Operating systems || Bases of Artificial Intelligence.







## EXPERIENCE

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- **Everseen** Timisoara, Romania  
*Machine Learning Researcher* Nov 2020 - Apr 2021
  - Secured two patents for advancements in real-time multi-camera tracking systems.
  - Researched ways of improving tracking systems through self-supervised depth estimation.
  - Implemented the first iteration of the real-time multi-camera tracking system in the project I was working on.
  - **Technologies:** Python, PyTorch, NumPy, Matplotlib, Shell Script.
- **Presslabs** Timisoara, Romania  
*Junior Software Engineer* July 2018 - Sept. 2018
  - Contributed to the development of the open-source MySQL operator 🐙 for Kubernetes, including the implementation of new functionalities, bug fixing, and testing.
  - **Technologies:** Go, Kubernetes.
- **3Pillar Global** Timisoara, Romania  
*Junior Software Engineer* June 2017- Sept. 2017
  - Successfully refactored and optimized key components of the software, while also identifying and resolving bugs to improve overall performance. This led to a more readable and easier to maintain codebase.
  - **Technologies:** TypeScript, React, Redux.
- **"DSPLabs" research group at Politehnica University of Timisoara** Timisoara, Romania  
*Undergraduate Research Assistant* Feb. 2017 - June 2018
  - I was selected to develop an interface for the [FENP algorithm](#), a real-time scheduling algorithm and had my work featured in a tutorial on the [Litmus-RT page](#). **Technologies:** Shell script, C, Linux.

## PUBLICATIONS

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- **CoRL 2022:** "Learning an Explainable Planner for Autonomous Driving". Katrin Renz, Kashyap Chitta, **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea**, A. Sophia Koepke, Zeynep Akata, Andreas Geiger.  .
- **ECCV 2022:** "Temporal and cross-modal attention for audio-visual zero-shot learning". **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea\***, Thomas Hummel\*, A. Sophia Koepke, Zeynep Akata.  .
- **CVPR 2022:** "Audio-visual Generalised Zero-shot Learning with Cross-modal Attention and Language". **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea**, Lukas Riesch, A. Sophia Koepke, Zeynep Akata.  .

## TALKS

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- **The University of Amsterdam, May 2022:** Title of the talk: "Audio-visual Generalised Zero-shot Learning with Cross-modal Attention and Language".
- **IMPRS-IS symposium, Tübingen Feb. 2021:** Title of the talk: "From explainability and interpretability to 3D computer vision and efficient learning: increasing the performance of autonomous agents" (acceptance rate 14%).

## SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS AND AWARDS

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- **1st Prize** in the Kaggle competition "EEML 2019 - Electricity prediction".
- **Best Smart Mobility Project** awarded at UniHack 2019 for the project entitled "Wave".
- **Honour Student** awarded in 2018 by the Romanian Academy and Timisoara City Council for outstanding achievements in my professional activity.
- **Grand Prize** awarded at HackTM Sibiu 2018 edition, for the project named "SafeStreet".
- **Second place** awarded at national competition "Java competition for universities 2018" organized by Oracle Academy for the project named "SPark - Community-Driven Smart Parking".
- **Honors Diploma** awarded in 2015 by Sebis Town Hall for exceptional achievements in Informatics/Mathematics competitions and for enhancing the prestige of the high school and town.
- **International Contest of Mathematics and Informatics Caius Iacob: Programming section:** "Second place" in 2014 and "Mention" in 2015. **Mathematics section:** "Second Place" in 2015.
- **Informatics Olympiad county phase:** "Mention" in 2014 and "Second place" in 2015.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

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- **IMPRS-IS Scholarship** awarded in 2021 as one of the top 57 successful candidates out of 968 applications (5.8% acceptance rate) for a fully-funded PhD program at the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent systems.
- **Performance Scholarships** awarded every semester by Politehnica University of Timisoara during my undergraduate for excellent academic performance.
- **Special Scholarship** awarded in 2018 by Politehnica University of Timisoara, recognizing exceptional academic performance and results in national contests.

## REVIEWING

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- CVPRw 2022 (L3D-IVU), ECCV 2022, CVPR 2023, ICCV 2023.

## HIGHLY SELECTIVE COURSES AND SUMMER SCHOOLS

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- **Eastern European Machine Learning Summer School (EEML):** I have been selected as one of only 12 undergraduate students to attend EEML 2019, an event organized by Google DeepMind with a competitive admission rate of just 21%.
- **Bitdefender:** I was selected to attend a highly competitive Cybersecurity courses (acceptance rate <10%). Learned to debug desktop/mobile applications and malware using Assembly. **Technologies: Shell script, Android, Assembly.**
- **Microsoft Timisoara:** Demonstrated aptitude for software development by successfully completing a highly selective course with an acceptance rate <6.6%. Learned to develop applications in C# using Bing Maps. **Technologies: C#.**

## SELECTED PROJECTS

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- **SafeStreet** is a project that detects violence in videos by using a drone and a neural network. **Technologies: Python, Keras, Shell script, OpenCV, NumPy.**
- **Wave** is a project that reduces the physical interaction between a driver and the mobile phone by using the mobile phone's camera to detect hand gestures using neural networks. **Technologies: Python, Android, PyTorch, NumPy.**
- **HybridAlpha** is an hybrid based on AlphaGo Zero and AlphaZero and it improves the performance of AlphaZero on resource-constrained systems. **Technologies: Python, TensorFlow, NumPy.**
- **What Neural Networks can not learn?** is a project that investigates from multiple perspectives what current CNNs can not learn in non-distributional shift scenario. **Technologies: Python, PyTorch, NumPy, Matplotlib.**