

# Otniel-Bogdan Mercea

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## EDUCATION

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- **Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems (MPI-IS) and University of Tübingen** Tübingen, Germany  
*PhD in Computer Science*  
May 2021 - Current
  - **PhD program:** International Max Planck research school for Intelligent Systems (IMPRS-IS).
  - **Supervisors:** Prof. Zeynep Akata and Prof. Andreas Geiger.
  - **PhD Topics:** multi-modal and zero/few-shot learning, and efficient adaptation of large-scale models.
  - **Duties:** Maintaining the [EML website](#), supervising MSc theses, teaching, organising reading groups, interviewing ELLIS candidates.
- **The University of Edinburgh** Edinburgh, Scotland  
*Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence; Distinction (Overall 76%)*  
Sept. 2019 - Aug. 2020
  - **Thesis:** "What Neural Networks can not learn?". **Supervisor:** Amos Storkey. **Grade:** Distinction (77%)
  - **Courses:** Algorithmic Game Theory, Machine Learning, Reinforcement Learning, Natural Language Processing, Computer Vision.
- **Politehnica University of Timisoara** Timisoara, Romania  
*Bachelor of Engineering in Computers and Information Technology; Top 3% (Overall 9.70/10)*  
Oct. 2015 - June 2019
  - **Thesis:** "HybridAlpha-Reinforcement Learning on Resource-Constrained Systems". **Supervisor:** Calin-Adrian Popa. **Grade:** 10/10. Thesis also accepted at RAAI 2019 conference.
  - **Courses:** Data Structures and Algorithms, Linear Algebra, Statistics, Software Engineering, Computer Security.

## EXPERIENCE

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- **Helmholtz Munich and and Technical University of Munich** Munich, Germany  
*Guest PhD student*  
Jan. 2024/June 2024 - Current
  - Conducting research in multi-modal learning, supervised by Prof. Zeynep Akata, as part of my PhD. I also helped teaching a seminar.
- **Google Research** Grenoble, France  
*Research Intern (4 months) + Student Researcher (4 months)*  
July 2023 - Mar. 2024
  - Working on efficient adaptation of large-scale models, supervised by Anurag Arnab, Alexey Gritsenko and Cordelia Schmid.
  - Collaborated with Aleksandra Nowak, Utku Evci, Yann Dauphin from Google DeepMind on a related project on efficient adaptation.
  - Outcome: a patent filling, a CVPR 2024 Highlight paper and a return internship offer for Summer 2024 at Google DeepMind.
- **Everseen** Timisoara, Romania  
*Machine Learning Researcher*  
Nov. 2020 - Apr. 2021
  - Researched ways of improving tracking systems in real-time multi-camera scenario.
  - Outcome: two US patent fillings on real-time multi-camera tracking.
- **Presslabs** Timisoara, Romania  
*Junior Software Engineer*  
July 2018 - Sept. 2018
  - Successfully contributed to the development of the open-source MySQL operator ( 989 ☆) for Kubernetes.
  - Outcome: implementation of new functionalities, bug fixing, and testing.
- **3Pillar Global** Timisoara, Romania  
*Junior Software Engineer*  
June 2017- Sept. 2017
  - Successfully refactored and optimized key components of the software, and identified and resolved bugs to improve overall performance. Worked in the Decision Lens team.
  - Outcome: a significantly more readable and easier to maintain codebase.
- **"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 real-time scheduling algorithm](#). Worked with Cristina and Valentin Stangaciu.
  - Outcome: assessed the suitability of Litmus-RT for our project. Part of my work was featured in a tutorial on [Litmus-RT page](#).

## PATENTS

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- **US 20230200569-A1:** "System and method for adjusting a position of an order taking device". Ana Cristina Todoran, **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea**, Razvan-Dorel Cioarga.
- **US 20230206466-A1:** "System and method for tracking and identifying moving objects". Ana Cristina Todoran, **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea**.

## PUBLICATIONS

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- **CVPRw 2024 (L3D-IVU)**: "Audio-Visual Generalized Zero-Shot Learning using Pre-Trained Large Multi-Modal Models". David Kurzendörfer\*, **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea\***, A. Sophia Koepke, Zeynep Akata. (🏆 11 ☆)/🏆. This was a MSc thesis co-supervised by me.
- **CVPR 2024 (Highlight - Top 3.60%)**: "Time-, Memory- and Parameter-Efficient Visual Adaptation". **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea**, Alexey Gritsenko, Cordelia Schmid, Anurag Arnab 🏆.
- **BMVC 2023 (Oral)**: "Video-adverb retrieval with compositional adverb-action embeddings". Thomas Hummel, **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea**, A. Sophia Koepke, Zeynep Akata. (🏆 5 ☆)/🏆.
- **DAGM GCPR 2023**: "Text-to-feature diffusion for audio-visual few-shot learning". **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea**, Thomas Hummel, A. Sophia Koepke, Zeynep Akata. (🏆 8 ☆)/🏆.
- **CoRL 2022**: "Learning an Explainable Planner for Autonomous Driving". Katrin Renz, Kashyap Chitta, **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea**, A. Sophia Koepke, Zeynep Akata, Andreas Geiger. (🏆 205 ☆)/🏆.
- **ECCV 2022**: "Temporal and cross-modal attention for audio-visual zero-shot learning". **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea\***, Thomas Hummel\*, A. Sophia Koepke, Zeynep Akata. (🏆 24 ☆)/🏆.
- **CVPR 2022**: "Audio-visual Generalised Zero-shot Learning with Cross-modal Attention and Language". **Otniel-Bogdan Mercea**, Lukas Riesch, A. Sophia Koepke, Zeynep Akata. (🏆 32 ☆)/🏆.

## TECHNOLOGIES USED

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- **Fluent in**: Python.
- **Competent in**: Java, C/C++, Shell Scripting, Linux, Android.
- **Some experience in**: Go, Assembly, C#, Kubernetes, TypeScript, JavaScript, HTML, CSS.
- **Libraries used**: React, Redux, NumPy, Pandas, Matplotlib, JAX, PyTorch, TensorFlow, Keras.

## TALKS

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- **Video & Image Sense Lab**, The University of Amsterdam, May 2022. "Audio-visual Generalised Zero-shot Learning with Cross-modal Attention and Language".
- **IMPRS-IS symposium**, Tübingen Feb. 2021. "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.
- **Honour Student** awarded in 2018 by the Romanian Academy, Timisoara City Council and Association "Orizonturi Universitare" for outstanding achievements. Every year, only a single student from the whole faculty (BSc and MSc) receives this distinction.
- **Grand Prize** awarded at HackTM Sibiu 2018 edition. HackTm is the biggest software and hardware hackathon in South Eastern Europe.
- **Second place** awarded at national competition "Java competition for universities 2018" organized by Oracle Academy.
- **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**.
  - **Competitive 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.

## SELECTED SCHOLARSHIPS

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- **Google RS Conference Scholarship** awarded to cover all my conference-related travel expenses for CVPR 2024.
- **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 International Max Planck Research School for Intelligent Systems.
- **Performance Scholarships** awarded every term during my undergraduate for excellent academic performance.
- **Special Scholarship** awarded in 2018, recognizing exceptional results in national contests.

## SUPERVISION

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- **MSc thesis**: "Audio-Visual Generalized Zero-Shot Learning using Large Pre-Trained Models". **Student**: David Kurzendörfer. Accepted at CVPRw 2024 (L3D-IVU)

## TEACHING

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- **Teaching Assistant** for the course "Introduction to Machine Learning (INF 3151)" (BSc level) at University of Tübingen in 2023.
- **Teaching Assistant** for the seminar "Advanced Topics in Vision-Language Models" (MSc level) at Technical University of Munich in 2024.

## REVIEWING

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- CVPR 2022-2024, ECCV 2022-2024, ICCV 2023, NeurIPS 2023, TPAMI 2023, ICLR 2024, Best Romanian AI Thesis Awards 2024.

## HIGHLY SELECTIVE COURSES AND SUMMER SCHOOLS

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- **Oxford Machine Learning Summer School (OxML)**: Selected in 2024 to attend MLx Fundamentals and MLx Representation Learning & Gen. AI, organised by Oxford University' Deep Medicine Program, CIFAR and AI for Global Goals.
- **Eastern European Machine Learning Summer School (EEML)**: Selected as one of only 12 undergraduate students to attend EEML 2019, mainly organized by Google DeepMind, with a competitive *admission rate of just 21%*.
- **Bitdefender**: Attend a highly competitive Cybersecurity course with an *acceptance rate of 10%*. Learned to debug desktop/mobile applications and malware using Assembly.
- **Microsoft Timisoara**: Successfully completed a highly selective software development course with an *acceptance rate of 6.6%*. Learned to develop applications in C# using Bing Maps.