

# Levent Sagun

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**Affiliation:** EPFL **DOB:** March 28, 1987 **Contact:** leventsagun@gmail.com

## Research Interests

Probability theory, statistical physics, and their applications on deep learning.  
Statistical and geometric properties of loss functions in machine learning.

## Education

- 2011 - 2017** Ph.D. in Mathematics, Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, New York University  
*Thesis title:* Explorations on High Dimensional Landscapes: Spin Glasses and Deep Learning  
*Academic advisors:* Gérard Ben Arous and Yann LeCun
- 2006 - 2011** B.S. in Mathematics, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey  
*Exchange program:* Columbia University, New York, Fall 2009
- 2001 - 2006** High School, İstanbul Lisesi, Istanbul, Turkey

## Academic Employment

- 2018 - 2019** Postdoctoral Fellow, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland  
*Simons Collaboration on Cracking the Glass Problem*
- 2017 - 2018** Postdoctoral Fellow, École Normale Supérieure Paris & CEA Saclay, France  
*Simons Collaboration on Cracking the Glass Problem*
- 2015 - 2016** Teaching Assistant, Center for Data Science, New York University
- 2011 - 2017** Research & Teaching Assistant, Department of Mathematics, Courant Institute, NYU

## Industry Employment

- 2016 - 2017** Research Intern and Contractor, Facebook AI Research, New York  
*Manager:* Léon Bottou

## Papers

- David Lopez-Paz, Levent Sagun. Easing non-convex optimization with neural networks. ICLR 2018 Workshop Poster, 2018.
- Marco Baity-Jesi, Levent Sagun, Mario Geiger, Stefano Spigler, Gérard Ben Arous, Chiara Cammarota, Yann LeCun, Matthieu Wyart, Giulio Biroli. Comparing Dynamics: Deep Neural Networks versus Glassy Systems. ICML 2018 Conference Paper, 2018.
- Levent Sagun, Utku Evci, V. Uğur Güney, Yann Dauphin, Léon Bottou. Empirical Analysis of the Hessian of Over-Parametrized Neural Networks. ICLR 2018 Workshop Poster, 2017.

Andrew J. Ballard, Ritankar Das, Stefano Martiniani, Dhagash Mehta, Levent Sagun, Jacob D. Stevenson, David J. Wales. Perspective: Energy Landscapes for Machine Learning. *Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys.*, **19**, 12585-12603, 2017.

Matthew Dunn, Levent Sagun, Hale Şirin, Daniel Chen. Early Predictability of Asylum Court Decisions. ML and the Law, ICAIL Pages 233-236, 2017.

Pratik Chaudhari, Anna Choromanska, Stefano Soatto, Yann LeCun, Carlo Baldassi, Christian Borgs, Jennifer Chayes, Levent Sagun, Riccardo Zecchina. Entropy-SGD: Biasing Gradient Descent Into Wide Valleys. ICLR 2017 Conference Poster, 2016.

Levent Sagun, Thomas Trogdon, Yann LeCun. Universal halting times in optimization and machine learning. *Quart. Appl. Math.*, **76** (2018), 289-301 (also appeared at ICML 2016 Optimization Workshop as a Spotlight Poster), 2016.

Levent Sagun, Uğur Güney, Gérard Ben Arous, Yann LeCun. Explorations on high dimensional landscapes. ICLR Workshop Poster, 2015.

## Preprints

Mario Geiger, Stefano Spigler, Stéphane d’Ascoli, Levent Sagun, Marco Baity-Jesi, Giulio Biroli, Matthieu Wyart. The jamming transition as a paradigm to understand the loss landscape of deep neural networks. Preprint, available at arXiv:1809.09349, 2018.

Matthew Dunn, Levent Sagun, Mike Higgins, Uğur Güney, Volkan Cirik, Kyunghyun Cho. SearchQA: A New Q&A Dataset Augmented with Context from a Search Engine. Preprint, available at arXiv:1704.05179, 2017.

Levent Sagun, Léon Bottou, Yann LeCun. Eigenvalues of the Hessian in Deep Learning: Singularity and Beyond. Preprint, available at arXiv:1611.07476, 2017.

## Reviewer duties

ICLR, JMLR, COLT, NIPS, TPAMI, SIAM Journal, Cambridge University Press

## Talks and Presentations

An empirical look at the loss landscape: shape, dynamics, and loose ends, Statistical Physics and Machine Learning back together, Institut d’Études Scientifiques de Cargèse, Corsica, August 2018

Over-parametrization in Deep Learning, Institut für Theoretische Physik, Heidelberg, July 2018

Easing non-convex optimization with neural networks, ICLR 2018 Poster, May 2018

Empirical Analysis of the Hessian of Over-Parametrized Neural Networks, ICLR 2018 Poster, May 2018

Shape and Dynamics of the Loss Landscape, CILVR Lab Meetings, NYU, New York, April 2018

Shape and Dynamics of the Loss Landscape, High-Dimensional Dynamics Workshop, New York, April 2018

Comparing Dynamics: Deep Neural Networks versus Glassy Systems, Mathematics, Information and Computation Seminar, NYU, New York, March 2018

Over-parametrization in Deep Learning, Invited Visit at Google Brain, Zurich, January 2018

Over-parametrization in Deep Learning, Télécom ParisTech, Paris, November 2017

Over-parametrization in Deep Learning, Université Paris-Sud, Paris, November 2017

Over-parametrization in Deep Learning, Facebook AI Research, Paris, October 2017

Over-parametrization in Deep Learning, ENS, Paris, October 2017

The Role of Over-Parametrization in Optimization, Nonlinear and Stochastic Optimization at SIAM Conference on Optimization, Vancouver, May 2017  
 Singularity of the Hessian in deep learning, CILVR Lab Meetings, NYU, New York, November 2016  
 Universality in Halting Time, Spotlight talk at Optimization Workshop, ICML, New York, June 2016  
 Universality in Halting Time and Optimization, CILVR Lab Meetings, NYU, New York, April 2016  
 Explorations on High Dimensional Landscapes, Spotlight presentation, MLSS Kyoto, September 2015  
 Explorations on High Dimensional Landscapes, Poster presentation, DLSS, U. of Montreal, August 2015  
 Explorations on High Dimensional Landscapes, Poster presentation, ICLR, San Diego, May 2015  
 Optimization in High Dimensional Landscapes, ML Seminar, Boğaziçi University, January 2015  
 High Dimensional Landscapes: Spin Glasses and Deep Learning, ML Seminar, NYU, September 2014  
 Critical Points in High Dimensional Landscapes, NCAP Presentations by Participants, U of T, August 2014  
 An Introduction to Longest Increasing Subsequences, Boğaziçi University, June 2011  
 Insight into Theory of Large Deviations, Department of Mathematics, Boğaziçi University, May 2010  
 Conjugate Gradient Method, Student Seminars in Mathematics and Physics, Boğaziçi University, April 2010

## Educational Experience

Deep Learning and Statistical Physics, Beg Rohu Summer School, June 2018  
 Machine Learning Summer School, University of Kyoto, September 2015  
 Deep Learning Summer School, University of Montreal, August 2015  
 CIFAR Neural Computation & Adaptive Perception Summer School, University of Toronto, August 2014  
 Workshop on Stochastic Gradient Methods, IPAM, February 2014  
 St. Petersburg School in Probability and Statistical Physics, Chebyshev Laboratory, June 2012  
 Minicourse on Compressed Sensing by Emmanuel Candès, University of Cambridge, March 2011  
 Summer School on Complex Systems, Institute for Theoretical and Applied Physics, Summer 2010  
 Summer School on Computational Solution of Inverse Problems, Helsinki University, Summer 2010  
 Summer School on Dynamical Systems and Their Applications, Utrecht University, Summer 2009  
 Independent Study on Dynamical Systems, Boğaziçi University, Summer 2009

## Teaching Experience

Recitation leader, Statistical and Mathematical Methods, NYU - Center for Data Science, Fall 2016  
 Recitation leader, Theory of Probability, Courant Institute, Fall 2016  
 Recitation leader, Machine Learning, NYU - Center for Data Science, Fall 2015  
 Recitation leader, Statistical and Mathematical Methods, NYU - Center for Data Science, Fall 2015  
 Recitation leader, Probability and Statistics, Courant Institute, Spring 2015  
 Recitation leader, Theory of Probability, Courant Institute, Fall 2014  
 Teaching assistant, Introduction to Mathematical Analysis II, Courant Institute, Spring 2014  
 Instructor for the Written Exam Workshop, Courant Institute, Fall 2013  
 Teaching Assistant for Statistics and Probability, Boğaziçi University, 2009-2010

## Honors, Awards & Fellowships

MacCracken Fellowship, New York University, 2011-2016  
 Dora Aksoy Award, Department of Mathematics, Boğaziçi University, 2011  
 Hilmi Tolun Award, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Boğaziçi University, 2011  
 Honorable Mention, 9<sup>th</sup> National Mathematical Olympiads, Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey, 2004  
 Silver Medal, 5<sup>th</sup> National Mathematical Olympiads for Junior High School Students, TÜBİTAK, 2001