Thomy Phan

Curriculum Vitae

Contact Information

Email

thomy.phan@usc.edu

Website

thomyphan.github.io

Research Interests

Multi-Agent Systems, Reinforcement Learning, Optimization

Education

2018 - 2023

Ph.D. in Computer Science, LMU Munich, Germany

- Thesis: "Emergence and Resilience in Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning"
 - Thesis committee: Claudia Linnhoff-Popien, Sven Koenig, Long Tran-Thanh
 - Based on work published at AAMAS, AAAI, IJCAI, NeurIPS, and ICML

2015 - 2017

M.Sc. in Computer Science, LMU Munich, Germany

- Focus on artificial intelligence, data science, and autonomous systems
- Master thesis: "EVADE: Emergent Value Function Approximation for Distributed Environments'
 - Supervision: Claudia Linnhoff-Popien, Lenz Belzner
 - Results published at AAMAS 2018 as a full conference paper

2011 - 2015 B.Sc. in Computer Science, Munich University of Applied Sciences, Germany

- Collaborative study program (duales Studium) with the City of Munich
- Focus on software development and image processing
- Bachelor thesis: "Quantification and Feature Extraction of 3D Single-Molecule Switching Microscopy Data"
 - Supervision: Alfred Nischwitz, Joerg Bewersdorf
 - Practical work done at Bewersdorf Lab, Yale University
 - Results published in Cell 2016 as a journal paper (cover story)

Professional Experience

2023 - Present

Postdoctoral Scholar, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

- Advisor: Sven Koenig
- Focus on multi-agent algorithms for scalable optimization.

2018 - 2023

Research Assistant, LMU Munich, Germany

- Advisor: Claudia Linnhoff-Popien
- Focus on emergence and resilience in multi-agent systems.

2015 - 2018

Software Developer (Part-Time), it@M, City of Munich, Germany

Development, maintainance, and integration of business applications.

Internships

2015

Visiting Scholar in Research (3 Months), Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA

- Advisor: Joerg Bewersdorf
- Focus on data analysis and feature extraction of cellular structures in super-resolution microscopy data. Co-authored publication in Cell 2016 (cover story).

Working Student (Collaborative Study Program), City of Munich, Germany 2012 - 2014Regular internships focusing on IT architecture, project management, and software development during the semester holidays.

Thomy Phan 1/8

Honors and Awards

- Nomination for the GI Dissertation Award 2023, German Informatics Society (GI), Dagstuhl, Germany
 Nominated candidate by LMU Munich for the dissertation award of the German Informatics Society. The final decision will be made in summer/fall 2024.
- 2024 CRA Travel Grant for the CCC Artificial Intelligence/Operations Research Workshop III, Computing Community Consortium (CCC), Washington, DC, USA Invitation and financial support from the Computing Research Association (CRA).
- 2024 ICAART 2024 Springer Selection, Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence Invitation to submit an extended version of our ICAART 2024 paper "Multi-Agent Quantum Reinforcement Learning using Evolutionary Optimization" (co-author). Preprint at https://arxiv.org/pdf/2311.05546
- Outstanding Reviewer (Top 10%), Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS), New Orleans, LA, USA
 Listed at https://neurips.cc/Conferences/2023/ProgramCommittee
- 2022 Premier Paper of AAMAS 2022, Journal of the International Foundation for Autonomous Agents and Multi-Agent Systems (JAAMAS)
 Invitation to submit an extended version of our AAMAS 2022 paper "Emergent Cooperation from Mutual Acknowledgment Exchange" (main author). Published at https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10458-024-09666-5
- 2022 **Highlight Paper at the Workshop on Ad Hoc Teamwork**, International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), Vienna, Austria Recognition of our AAMAS 2022 paper "Emergent Cooperation from Mutual Acknowledgment Exchange" (main author). More details at https://sites.google.com/view/ad-hoc-teamwork/waht-2022
- Outstanding Reviewer (Top 10%), International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML), Baltimore, MD, USA
 Listed at https://icml.cc/Conferences/2022/Reviewers
- 2021 ICAART 2021 Springer Selection, Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence Invitation to submit an extended version of our ICAART 2021 paper "SAT-MARL: Specification Aware Training in Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning" (co-author). Published at https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-10161-8_1
- 2019 **DAAD Travel Grant for AAMAS 2019**, *German Academic Exchange Service*, Montreal, Canada
- 2016 **Best Bachelor Award**, Rohde & Schwarz GmbH & Co. KG, Munich, Germany
- 2016 Award for an Outstanding Bachelor Thesis in the Field of Image Processing, Stemmer Imaging GmbH, Munich, Germany
- 2012 2017 **Scholarship**, *German Academic Scholarship Foundation*, Munich, Germany In Germany, the top 0.5% of university or high school students get selected for funding by the German Academic Scholarship Foundation.

Research Projects

- 2024 Present **Causal Foundations of Decision-Making and Learning**, *National Science Foundation*, Los Angeles, CA, USA
 - Research on causal reinforcement learning and planning together with Columbia University and University of California, Irvine.
- 2023 Present Al4OPT Al Institute for Advances in Optimization, National Science Foundation, Los Angeles, CA, USA
 Research on multi-agent algorithms for scalable optimization together with the Georgia Institute of Technology and University of California, Berkeley.
 - 2023 **Dependability of Machine Learning in Industrial Robotics**, *Siemens AG*, Munich, Germany

Research on robust machine learning in industrial robotics. Assisted acquisition.

Thomy Phan 2/8

- 2022 2024 Intelligent and Cognitive Systems, Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs, Regional Development, and Energy, Munich, Germany
 Research on emergence in multi-agent learning together with Fraunhofer IKS. Assisted acquisition.
 - Validation and Verification of Modular Machine Learning Systems, Siemens AG, Munich, Germany
 Research on modular machine learning. Assisted acquisition.
- 2020 2021 **Dependable MLOps in Industrial Environments**, *Siemens AG*, Munich, Germany Research on adaptive testing in MLOps systems. Assisted acquisition.
 - 2019 **Dependability of Machine Learning in Industrial Environments**, *Siemens AG*, Munich, Germany Research on resilience in multi-agent reinforcement learning.
 - 2018 Coevolution in Machine Learning Based Industrial Environments, Siemens AG, Munich, Germany
 Research on scenario coevolution in reinforcement learning.
- 2018 2023 InnoMI Innovation Center Mobile Internet, Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs, Regional Development, and Energy, Munich, Germany Research on innovative mobile and distributed systems.

Selected Publications

Conferences

Extended abstracts (≤ 3 pages) with a full conference or journal version are not listed.

2024 [C19] Adaptive Anytime Multi-Agent Path Finding using Bandit-Based Large Neighborhood Search
Thomy Phan, Taoan Huang, Bistra Dilkina, and Sven Koenig.

AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI), pages 17514–17522, 2024.

- [C18] Confidence-Based Curriculum Learning for Multi-Agent Path Finding Thomy Phan, Joseph Driscoll, Justin Romberg, and Sven Koenig. International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS), pages 1558–1566, 2024.
- [C17] Anytime Multi-Agent Path Finding Using Operator Parallelism in Large Neighborhood Search (Extended Abstract)
 Shao-Hung Chan, Zhe Chen, Dian-Lun Lin, Yue Zhang, Daniel Harabor, Sven Koenig, Tsung-Wei Huang, and <u>Thomy Phan</u>.
 International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS), pages 2183–2185, 2024.
- [C16] Multi-Agent Quantum Reinforcement Learning Using Evolutionary Optimization Michael Kölle, Felix Topp, Thomy Phan, Philipp Altmann, Jonas Nüßlein, Claudia Linnhoff-Popien. International Conference on Agents and Artificial Intelligence (ICAART), pages 71–82, 2024
- 2023 [C15] Attention-Based Recurrence for Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning under Stochastic Partial Observability

 Thomy Phan, Fabian Ritz, Philipp Altmann, Maximilian Zorn, Jonas Nüßlein, Michael Kölle, Thomas Gabor, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

 International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML), pages 27840–27853, 2023.
 - [C14] CROP: Towards Distributional-Shift Robust Reinforcement Learning using Compact Reshaped Observation Processing
 Philipp Altmann, Leonard Feuchtinger, Fabian Ritz, Jonas Nüßlein, Claudia Linnhoff-Popien, and Thomy Phan.
 International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), pages 3414–3422, 2023.
- 2022 [C13] Emergent Cooperation from Mutual Acknowledgment Exchange
 Thomy Phan, Felix Sommer, Philipp Altmann, Fabian Ritz, Lenz Belzner, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.
 International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS), pages 1047–1055, 2022.

Thomy Phan 3/8

- [C12] Towards Anomaly Detection in Reinforcement Learning (Blue Sky Ideas)
 Robert Müller, Steffen Illium, <u>Thomy Phan</u>, Tom Haider, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.
 International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS),
 pages 1799–1803, 2022.
- 2021 [C11] VAST: Value Function Factorization with Variable Agent Sub-Teams

 Thomy Phan, Fabian Ritz, Lenz Belzner, Philipp Altmann, Thomas Gabor, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

 Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS), pages 24018–24032, 2021.
 - [C10] Resilient Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning with Adversarial Value Decomposition

Thomy Phan, Lenz Belzner, Thomas Gabor, Andreas Sedlmeier, Fabian Ritz, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI), pages 11308–11316, 2021.

- [C9] SAT-MARL: Specification Aware Training in Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning Fabian Ritz, Thomy Phan, Robert Müller, Thomas Gabor, Andreas Sedlmeier, Marc Zeller, Jan Wieghardt, Reiner Schmid, Horst Sauer, Cornel Klein, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien. International Conference on Agents and Artificial Intelligence (ICAART), pages 28—37, 2021.
- 2020 [C8] Learning and Testing Resilience in Cooperative Multi-Agent Systems

 Thomy Phan, Thomas Gabor, Andreas Sedlmeier, Fabian Ritz, Bernhard Kempter, Cornel Klein, Horst Sauer, Reiner Schmid, Jan Wieghardt, Marc Zeller, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

 International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS), pages 1055–1063, 2020.
 - [C7] A Quantum Annealing Algorithm for Finding Pure Nash Equilibria in Graphical Games
 Christoph Roch, <u>Thomy Phan</u>, Sebastian Feld, Robert Müller, Thomas Gabor, Carsten Hahn, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.
 International Conference on Computational Science (ICCS), pages 488–501, 2020.
- 2019 [C6] Memory Bounded Open-Loop Planning in Large POMDPs using Thompson Sampling

 Thomy Phan, Lenz Belzner, Marie Kiermeier, Markus Friedrich, Kyrill Schmid, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

 AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI), pages 7941–7948, 2019.
 - [C5] Adaptive Thompson Sampling Stacks for Memory Bounded Open-Loop Planning Thomy Phan, Thomas Gabor, Robert Müller, Christoph Roch, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), pages 5607–5613, 2019.

- [C4] Subgoal-Based Temporal Abstraction in Monte-Carlo Tree Search
 Thomas Gabor, Jan Peter, <u>Thomy Phan</u>, Christian Meyer, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.
 International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), pages 5562–5568, 2019.
- [C3] Distributed Policy Iteration for Scalable Approximation of Cooperative Multi-Agent Policies (Extended Abstract)
 Thomy Phan, Kyrill Schmid, Lenz Belzner, Thomas Gabor, Sebastian Feld, and Claudia

Linnhoff-Popien.
International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (**AAMAS**), pages 2162–2164, 2019.

- [C2] Scenario Co-Evolution for Reinforcement Learning on a Grid World Smart Factory Domain
 - Thomas Gabor, Andreas Sedlmeier, Marie Kiermeier, <u>Thomy Phan</u>, Marcel Henrich, Monika Pichlmair, Bernhard Kempter, Cornel Klein, Horst Sauer, Reiner Schmid, and Jan Wieghardt.

Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference (GECCO), pages 898–906, 2019.

2018 [C1] Leveraging Statistical Multi-Agent Online Planning with Emergent Value Function Approximation

Thomy Phan, Lenz Belzner, Thomas Gabor, and Kyrill Schmid. International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (**AAMAS**), pages 730–738, 2018.

Thomy Phan 4/8

Journals

2024 [J5] Emergent Cooperation from Mutual Acknowledgment Exchange in Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning

Thomy Phan, Felix Sommer, Fabian Ritz, Philipp Altmann, Jonas Nüßlein, Michael Kölle, Lenz Belzner, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

Autonomous Agents and Multi-Agent Systems (JAAMAS), 38(34), 2024. Invited from AAMAS 2022.

2022 [J4] Specification Aware Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning

Fabian Ritz, **Thomy Phan**, Robert Müller, Thomas Gabor, Andreas Sedlmeier, Marc Zeller, Jan Wieghardt, Reiner Schmid, Horst Sauer, Cornel Klein, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien. *Springer Book of ICAART 2021*, pages 3–21, 2022. Invited from ICAART 2021.

2021 [J3] **Productive Fitness in Diversity-Aware Evolutionary Algorithms**Thomas Gabor, **Thomy Phan**, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

Natural Computing, 20(3): 363–376, 2021.

2020 [J2] The Scenario Coevolution Paradigm: Adaptive Quality Assurance for Adaptive Systems

Thomas Gabor, Andreas Sedlmeier, **Thomy Phan**, Fabian Ritz, Marie Kiermeier, Lenz Belzner, Bernhard Kempter, Cornel Klein, Horst Sauer, Reiner Schmid, Jan Wieghardt, Marc Zeller, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

International Journal on Software Tools for Technology Transfer (STTT), 22(4): 457–476, 2020.

2016 [J1] Ultra-High Resolution 3D Imaging of Whole Cells (Cover Story)

Fang Huang, George Sirinakis, Edward S Allgeyer, Lena K Schroeder, Whitney C Duim, Emil B Kromann, **Thomy Phan**, Felix E Rivera-Molina, Jordan R Myers, Irnov Irnov, Mark Lessard, Yongdeng Zhang, Mary Ann Handel, Christine Jacobs-Wagner, C Patrick Lusk, James E Rothman, Derek Toomre, Martin J Booth, and Joerg Bewersdorf. *Cell*, 166(4): 1028–1040, 2016.

Workshops

Workshop papers with a conference or journal version are not listed.

2023 [W3] DIRECT: Learning from Sparse and Shifting Rewards using Discriminative Reward Co-Training

Philipp Altmann, <u>Thomy Phan</u>, Fabian Ritz, Thomas Gabor, and Claudia Linnhof-Popien. Adaptive and Learning Agents Workshop (**ALA**) at AAMAS, 2023.

2020 [W2] The Holy Grail of Quantum Artificial Intelligence: Major Challenges in Accelerating the Machine Learning Pipeline

Thomas Gabor, Leo Sünkel, Fabian Ritz, <u>Thomy Phan</u>, Lenz Belzner, Christoph Roch, Sebastian Feld, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

International Workshop on Quantum Software Engineering (**Q-SE**) at ICSE 2020, pages 456–461, 2020.

[W1] A Distributed Policy Iteration Scheme for Cooperative Multi-Agent Policy Approximation

Thomy Phan, Lenz Belzner, Kyrill Schmid, Thomas Gabor, Fabian Ritz, Sebastian Feld, and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien.

Adaptive and Learning Agents Workshop (ALA) at AAMAS, 2020.

Academic Activities

Organizing Committee

2019 International Symposium on Applied Artificial Intelligence (ISAAI). More details at https://digitaleweltmagazin.de/digicon-2019/symposium/

Action Editor

2024 Transactions on Machine Learning Research (TMLR)

Program Committee

2021 - 2025 AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI)

2022 - 2024 Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS)

Thomy Phan 5/8

2023 - 2024 2022 - 2024 2024 2024 2023 - 2024 2024 2023	International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI) International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML) International Conference on Automated Planning and Scheduling (ICAPS) International Conference on Learning Representations (ICLR) European Conference on Artificial Intelligence (ECAI) Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference (GECCO) International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS – Blue Sky Ideas)
2024 2024 2024	Reviewer (of Individual Papers) Journal on Autonomous Agents and Multi-Agent Systems (JAAMAS) Artificial Intelligence Journal (AIJ) AAAI 2024 Workshop on Cooperative Multi-Agent Systems Decision-making and
2023 2018, 2022 2021 2020	Learning (CMASDL) International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS) International Symposium On Leveraging Applications of Formal Methods (ISoLA) PLOS ONE Journal International Journal on Software Tools for Technology Transfer (STTT)
	Talks
	Invited Talks
06/2024	Reinforcement Learning-Based Multi-Agent Path Finding, Bosch Research, Renningen, Germany (virtual) Presentation of our AAMAS 2024 paper "Confidence-Based Curriculum Learning for Multi-Agent Path Finding" and the latest results of ongoing research.
06/2024	Towards Scalable Optimization via Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning, Interactive Visualization and Intelligence Augmentation Lab (IVIA), ETH Zürich (virtual), Switzerland Invited talk at the IVIA-lab headed by Prof. Mennatallah El-Assady.
07/2022	
07/2022	Emergent Cooperation from Mutual Acknowledgment Exchange, Workshop on Ad Hoc Teamwork at IJCAI 2022 (virtual) Highlight presentation of our AAMAS 2022 paper "Emergent Cooperation from Mutual Acknowledgment Exchange" (main author). More details at https://sites.google.com/view/ad-hoc-teamwork/waht-2022
06/2021	Stability in Al-Systems, Digitale Stadt München e.V., Germany (virtual) DigiTalk event on Safe Intelligence of the Digital City Association of Munich. More details at https://digitalestadtmuenchen.de/event/safe-intelligence/
12/2020	"Künstliche Intelligenz: Wie lernen Roboter?", Gymnasium Berchtesgaden, Germany (virtual) P-seminar talk for high school students and the Junior Science Café. I received an invitation because of my successful talk at the Unitag event of LMU Munich in 2019 (see below).
03/2019	Building Autonomous Systems with AI , <i>University of Augsburg</i> , Germany AI workshop for students of the Software Engineering Elite Graduate Program in Bavaria.
	Presentations at Conferences as the Main Author
02/2024	Adaptive Anytime Multi-Agent Path Finding Using Bandit-Based Large Neighborhood Search, Vancouver, Canada AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI).
07/2023	Attention-Based Recurrence for Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning under Stochastic Partial Observability, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Thomy Phan 6/8

International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML).

05/2022	Emergent Cooperation from Mutual Acknowledgment Exchange , virtual International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS).
12/2021	VAST: Value Function Factorization with Variable Agent Sub-Teams, virtual Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS).
02/2021	Resilient Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning with Adversarial Value Decomposition, virtual AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI).
05/2020	Learning and Testing Resilience in Cooperative Multi-Agent Systems, virtual International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS).
08/2019	Adaptive Thompson Sampling Stacks for Memory Bounded Open-Loop Planning, Macao, China International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI).
05/2019	Distributed Policy Iteration for Scalable Approximation of Cooperative Multi- Agent Policies, Montreal, Canada International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS).
02/2019	Memory Bounded Open-Loop Planning in Large POMDPs using Thompson Sampling, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI).
07/2018	Leveraging Statistical Multi-Agent Online Planning with Emergent Value Function Approximation, Stockholm, Sweden International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS).
2019	Other Talks Unitag — "Künstliche Intelligenz: Wie lernen Roboter?", LMU Munich Germany University event for gifted high school students from Upper Bavaria.
	Teaching
	University of Southern California, USA
Spring 2024	CSCI 599: Autonomous Decision-Making New lecture on reinforcement learning, planning, and multi-agent systems Primary instructor Syllabus and registration count provided at https://classes.usc.edu/term-20241/course/csci-599/
Spring 2024	
2023 – 2024	

Thomy Phan 7/8

https://uni2work.ifi.lmu.de/course/S22/IfI/ASP

Primary supervising assistant until summer semester 2022
 Syllabus and registration count for summer semester 2022 provided at

- New practical course for 12-18 master students on planning and reinforcement learning

LMU Munich, Germany

Autonomous Systems

2019 - 2023

2019 – 2023 Working Group "Artificial Intelligence"

- Voluntary working group for more than 100 bachelor and master students on current AI topics
- Primary supervising assistant
- Syllabus and registration count for summer semester 2022 provided at https://uni2work.ifi.lmu.de/course/S22/IfI/AIAG

Winter 2022 Computational Intelligence (Guest Lecture)

- Lecture on intelligent optimization algorithms given by Dr. Thomas Gabor
- Guest lecturer for one session on multi-agent optimization
- Syllabus and registration count provided at https://uni2work.ifi.lmu.de/course/W22/IfI/CoIn

2018 – 2019 Mobile and Distributed Systems

- Practical course for 12 18 master students on mobile app development and on-device machine learning
- Secondary supervising assistant

2018 – 2023 **Student Mentoring**

- 1 PhD student with one publication at *IJCAI 2023*
- 26 master theses with publications at IJCAI 2019, AAMAS 2022, and JAAMAS 2024.
- 24 bachelor theses with one student admitted to the Max Planck Research School for Intelligent Systems (IMPRS-IS) program for outstanding PhD students
- 8 individual research projects

Thomy Phan 8/8