

**Florian Jatton**

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**Education**

- Oct. 2013–Nov. 2017      University of Lausanne  
PhD in Social Sciences  
*The Constitution of Algorithms: Ground-Truthing, Programming, Formulating*  
Supervisor: Prof. Dominique Vinck (UNIL)  
Co-supervisor: Prof. Sabine Süssstrunk (EPFL)
- March 2016–April 2017      University of Californie, Irvine  
Research stay as *Junior Specialist*  
Donald Bren School of Information & Computer Sciences  
EVOKE Lab & Studio, headed by prof. Geoffrey C. Bowker
- Sep. 2011–Feb. 2013      University of Lausanne  
Master in Political Science
- Sep. 2007–June 2010      University of Lausanne  
Bachelor in Arts  
English Literature  
Philosophy

**Professional academic experiences**

- Oct. 2013–Sep. 2017      SNF PhD Student at the University of Lausanne  
Director : Prof. Dominique Vinck

**Institutional activities**

- Oct. 2013–Dec. 2016      In charge of the research seminars of the Laboratory for Digital Humanities of the University of Lausanne (LaDHUL)

**Funded research projects**

- Oct. 2013–Sep. 2017      Opening the Black Box of Digital Tools: An Ethnography of Computational Photography  
Four-year NSF Grant Doc.ch (SHS), POLAP1 148948

**Teaching activities**

Sep. 2014–Jan. 2015 With Dominique Vinck, in charge of the Bachelor course (EPFL) *Software Studies*

**Editorial activities**

August 2017 Reviewer for the journal *Sociologie et Sociétés*

July 2016 Reviewer for the journal *Revue d'Anthropologie des Connaissances*

Nov. 2015–June 2016 With Dominique Vinck, guest editor for the Special Issue of the journal *Revue d'Anthropologie des Connaissances* entitled “Ce que les data font faire aux Humanités (et vice-versa). Processus frictionnels de mise en base de données”

**Organization of conferences**

September 2017 With Alexandre Camus and Pierre-Nicolas Oberhauser, organization of the workshop “Ethnographier les infrastructures informationnelles. Résultats et méthodes”  
University of Lausanne

August 2017 Chairman of the panel “Making Algorithms : Inscriptions, Benchmarks and Computers”  
Annual Meeting of the Society for Social Studies of Science, Boston

**Recognitions**

May 2018 *Société Académique Vaudoise* Award for the Best PhD Thesis of the University of Lausanne

October 2013 Excellence Grant Doc.ch (SHS)

March 2013 University of Lausanne Faculty Award for Best Master’s Thesis in Social & Political Sciences.

**Skills**

Languages French (mother language)  
English  
Spanish  
German

Computer skills Matlab  
Python  
Javascript  
PHP  
HTML  
Adobe Illustrator/Photoshop  
Microsoft Office

## Main publications

Jatón F (2017) [We get the algorithms of our ground truths: Designing referential databases in digital image processing](#). *Social Studies of Science* 47(6) : 811-840. doi: 10.1177/0306312717730428

In this open-access paper published in *Social Studies of Science* – the reference journal in *Science & Technology Studies* – I document the practical efforts of a group of scientists designing an image-processing algorithm. The article shows – for the very first time – that the problems often considered to be the starting points of computational models are in fact provisional results of time-consuming, collective and highly material processes that engage habits, desires, skills and values. In the project being studied, problematization processes lead to the constitution of referential databases called ‘ground truths’ that enable both the effective shaping of algorithms and the evaluation of their performances. Working as important common touchstones for research communities in image processing, the ground truths are inherited from prior problematization processes and may be imparted to subsequent ones. The ethnographic results of this study suggest two complementary analytical perspectives on algorithms: (1) an ‘axiomatic’ perspective that understands algorithms as sets of instructions designed to solve given problems computationally in the best possible way, and (2) a ‘problem-oriented’ perspective that understands algorithms as sets of instructions designed to computationally retrieve outputs designed and designated during specific problematization processes. If the axiomatic perspective on algorithms puts the emphasis on the numerical transformations of inputs into outputs, the problem-oriented perspective puts the emphasis on the definition of both inputs and outputs.

Jatón F (2017) [The Constitution of Algorithms. Ground-Truthing. Programming. Formulating](#). PhD thesis, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland.

In this PhD monograph, I account for practices whose articulation sometimes ends up constituting computerized methods of calculation, often called “algorithms.” Contrary to most contemporary studies that document what existing algorithms do, this laboratory study documents what is done in order to make algorithms come into existence. This exploratory journey into computer science in action is marked by three main findings. First, many computerized methods of calculation rely upon referential databases called “ground truths” that gather sets of “input-data” and their manually designed “output-targets” counterparts. The processes leading to the definition of these ground truths heavily impact on the nature of the algorithms they help to constitute and evaluate. Second, writing lines of code capable of modifying digital data in some desired ways is, not surprisingly, central to the constitution of algorithms. Yet it is only by considering computer programming also as a practice – and not only as the expression of mental skills – that we may begin to fully appreciate this fascinating yet neglected activity. Third, the progressive reduction of ground-truth databases may help to formulate relationships between their data and their targets. These formulating practices may sometimes enable the enrollment of certified mathematical claims that will establish the horizons of further computer programs. These three discoveries are intimately related: formulating practices rely on, and sometimes influence, ground-truthing practices that themselves are supported by programming practices that are themselves sometimes irrigated by the results of formulating practices. What we call an “algorithm” may thus be considered, to a certain extent, an uncertain product of these three interrelated activities. In May 2018, this PhD thesis was awarded the *Société Académique Vaudoise* Award for the Best PhD Thesis of the University of Lausanne.

Jatón F and Vinck D (2016) [Processus frictionnels de mise en bases de données](#). *Revue d'Anthropologie des Connaissances* 10(4) : 489-501. doi: 10.3917/rac.033.0489

In this introductory paper to a special issue I co-directed with Dominique Vinck for the *Revue d'Anthropologie des Connaissances*, we started from the following observation: while most of the database projects that are under way in the Human and Social Sciences (HSS) are sources of controversies and disputes, almost nothing has been said about these heuristic frictions. How come? Many social studies of databases analyzed the effect databases have on society. But as different and interesting as they are, these studies have in common that they largely ignore the relationships between digital databases and HSS and the mutations they may provoke. Today, more and more funding for innovative projects that gather practitioners of HSS and of computer science and technologies are allocated; what happens when these actors work together in order to design a database? How do (dis)agreements and compromises arise? What paths do collective practices of data structuration take? The papers of this special issue try to tackle all these questions.