Versionnement de graphe pour des données urbaines évolutives

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To cite this version:

Jey PUGET GIL, Emmanuel Coquery, John Samuel, Gilles Gesquière. Versionnement de graphe pour des données urbaines évolutives : Système de recherche de connaissance pour des données représentatives de l’évolution urbaine. BDA 2023, Oct 2023, Montpellier, France. hal-04257528

HAL Id: hal-04257528
https://hal.science/hal-04257528
Submitted on 25 Oct 2023

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ABSTRACT
The continuous evolution of cities poses significant challenges in terms of managing and understanding their complex dynamics. With the increasing demand for transparency and the growing availability of open urban data, it has become important to ensure the reproducibility of scientific research and computations in urban planning. To understand past decisions and other possible scenarios, we require solutions that go beyond the management of urban knowledge graphs. In this work, we explore existing solutions and their limits and explain the need and possible approaches for querying across multiple graph versions.

1 INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION
Urban planners, historians, archaeologists, and researchers are continuously analyzing the constant development of cities. They are interested in an understanding of the possible versions and scenarios of the city [2], both in the past and in the future, if certain decisions were to be made. The choices made and the lessons learned in urban planning in the past serve as a guide for future decisions.

As the availability of open data increases across all sectors, so too does the demand for transparency in decision-making. Urban data come in different forms, they can be structured (sensors, building data, ...), semi-structured (urban system logs, ...) or unstructured (images, text, ...). Decisions are made on the basis of the data available at a given point in time. In other words, both the most recent version of the city and the previous versions are taken into account. In certain cases, complex calculations on this existing data guide the decision-makers. Reproducibility of these calculations is therefore also a requirement for transparency.

We provide the following sample queries from urban planning project proposals to better illustrate our research work:

- Q1: Which city versions have a metro station accessible to people with disabilities?
- Q2: Across multiple concurrent city versions, what is the maximum known height of a particular building? (aggregation)

Our previous research work proposed the use of graph formats [4] for the transformation and management of heterogeneous and concurrent urban data. In this work, we want to go beyond this and explore and develop a system that can query multiple versions of the graph simultaneously to answer complex queries like the ones above. This requires not only versioning of code (complex calculations) and data. It also requires efficient querying techniques across versions.

This article briefly reviews different ways to address the need for effective tools and methodologies to analyze urban development, emphasizing the importance of versioned data management.
2 STATE OF THE ART
Data and code evolution have been at the heart of many recent research and industrial advances. Taken together, they make up an important part of urban knowledge evolution. Given their growing use, our research is particularly focused on version control systems.

2.1 Code and Data versioning
Versioned repositories are systems that track and manage changes to data and code over time, allowing researchers to maintain a historical record of their work and facilitate collaboration. When these two concepts are integrated, they provide several benefits in scientific research, such as reproducibility, transparency, and collaboration. Version control allows different deductive paths to be explored and merged, facilitating collaboration among researchers with different expertise. Code versioning systems like Git and SVN play a critical role in software development, enabling collaborative work, code reuse, and traceability. There also exist some dedicated solutions for versioning data such as DVC, DagsHub, Delta Lake, Dolt, Qri, Weights and Biases, Git LFS, Comet, and LakeFS.

These different approaches are not suitable for our case study, since we want to work with concurrent versions and scenarios [2]. To answer even simple queries like Q1, current solutions require querying multiple database instances or checking out multiple version commits, which limits query response times.

2.2 Database versioning
A recent interesting solution called DoltHub, an online platform and hosting service provides version control for databases. This technology allows users to create, manage, and collaborate on databases using Git-style workflows and supports branching and merging, enabling teams to work on different features or versions of a database. However, cross-version querying of RDF data with such a solution is a challenge. Native SPARQL (SPARQL Protocol and RDF Query Language) queries are not inherently version-aware. Another solution called QuitStore [1] is an RDF data versioning system that addresses the need for efficient data retrieval across different versions. By implementing an RDF-based approach, QuitStore allows users to track changes and revisions to their semantic data over time. However, these versioning systems provide little support for cross-version queries. Indeed, they can either query metadata on multiple versions or query data on a single version.

Temporal databases, also known as historicized databases, are specialized databases that are designed to capture and store historical snapshots of data over a while. Some advanced temporal databases allow the analysis and querying of data at different points in time from two perspectives: how the data appeared in the real world and how it evolved within the database. However, by their nature, such databases are limited to a linear history and cannot be directly used to store a dataset with a branching history.

3 CONTRIBUTIONS PERSPECTIVES
Our motivation is to find a method for retrieving knowledge from a set of urban data versions stored in RDF format[4]. Resource Description Framework (RDF) offers a flexible and standardized format for representing the state of the city. RDF’s graph-based structure allows the integration of diverse data sources, enabling a comprehensive view of the city’s attributes and relationships. By versioning the city dataset, we can systematically track and record changes, modifications, and additions over time. This comprehensive version of history provides a foundation for analyzing the city’s evolution, identifying trends, and extracting valuable knowledge. For example, if we have an urban dataset, we can identify the following problem: How to analyze a set of versions of a city to produce additional knowledge?

From a semantics point of view, a versioned graph can be assimilated to a collection of graphs, that is one graph for each version. Together with the GRAPH statement in SPARQL, this provides a way to query multiple versions at the same time. For example, the accessibility status of a given metro (Q1) or the height of the building (Q2). However, separately storing each version would cost too much space and would probably lead to inefficient query processing.

Borrowing from historicized databases, one can associate version metadata to RDF triples. However, while a tuple in historicized database can be associated with a validity time interval, the branching nature of versioning history requires a different representation. Using provenance techniques [3], this information could then be used at the query engine level to compute partial answers for several versions at once. We aim at implementing such a query engine and compare its efficiency with solutions using existing approaches with version checkout. We also aim at comparing the efficiency of different representations of version metadata associated to triples (for example representing the set of versions in extension or by a set of version intervals).

Note that this representation is independent from version metadata, we can thus reuse representation of version graph such as in [1] to trace the origin and lineage of data, for example for reference the code used to produce the data. It helps to understand its authenticity and assess its trustworthiness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
This work Knowledge Hub for Evolving Urban Cities is supported and funded by the IADoc@UDL (Université de Lyon, Université de Lyon 1) and LIRIS UMR 5205. We also acknowledge the BD team and the Virtual City Project1 members for their invaluable advice and assistance.

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Received June 7, 2023; revised August 21, 2023

1https://projet.liris.cnrs.fr/vcity/