

On Expressibility of Non-Monotone Operators in SPARQL

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joint work with **Egor V. Kostylev** (*University of Oxford*)

Basic SPARQL

SPARQL query

```
SELECT ?d WHERE {  
  ?d a :Department  
}  
a = rdf:type
```



Basic Graph Pattern (BGP)
(a set of triple patterns)

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data instance

(an RDF graph
= a set of triples)

T is the set of **terms**, i.e.,
IRIs and literals (integers, strings, etc.)

Basic Graph Pattern (BGP)
(a set of triple patterns)

:CS	a	:Department
:Maths	a	:Department
:Adams	a	:Prof
:Brown	a	:Prof
:Clarke	a	:Prof
:Clarke	:worksIn	:Maths
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\mathbf{T} is the set of **terms**, i.e.,
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answer is a set of solution mappings

?d
:CS
:Maths

set of variables
solution mapping μ is a *partial* map from $\widehat{\mathbf{V}}$ to \mathbf{T}
 $\text{dom}(\mu)$ is the **domain** of μ

$\llbracket P \rrbracket_G = \{ \mu : \text{var}(P) \rightarrow \mathbf{T} \mid \mu(P) \subseteq G \}$ for a BGP P

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NB: we consider set semantics (SPARQL uses bag semantics, but our negative results hold)

Monotone SPARQL: FILTER

```
SELECT ?p1 ?p2 ?d WHERE {  
  ?p1 :worksIn ?d .  
  ?p2 :worksIn ?d  
  FILTER (?p1 != ?p2)  
}
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answer

	?p1	?p2	?d
μ_1	:Davies	:Brown	:CS
μ_2	:Brown	:Davies	:CS

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filters F are **Boolean combinations** of $?v_1 = ?v_2$, $?v = d$, etc.

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NB: SPARQL uses 3-valued logic (like SQL)

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- the 'missing' values are like **NULL** in SQL with the 3-valued logic

$(?d = :CS)^{\mu_4}$

is $\varepsilon \rightarrow \text{false}$

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(similar to **IS NOT NULL** in SQL)

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NB: the 3-valued logic it is not essential — see [Zhang & Van den Bussche \(2014\)](#)

Monotone SPARQL: JOIN

μ_1 and μ_2 are **compatible**

$\mu_1 \sim \mu_2$ if

$\mu_1(?v) = \mu_2(?v)$, for all $?v \in \text{dom}(\mu_1) \cap \text{dom}(\mu_2)$

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?p	?d	?t
:Adams	:Maths	
:Clarke		8506

JOIN

?p	?d
:Adams	
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JOIN

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compatibility in SQL is quite different!

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JOIN^{DB}

?p	?d
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JOIN

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JOIN^{DB}

?p	?d
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=

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NB: careful use of **COALESCE** (or **IF**) is required, see **Prud'hommeaux & Bertails (2008)**

Monotone SPARQL: Algebraic View

unique μ_\emptyset with $\text{dom}(\mu_\emptyset) = \emptyset$ is compatible with **any** solution mapping
empty BGP $\{\}$ $\llbracket \{\} \rrbracket_G = \{\mu_\emptyset\}$, for any G

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Pérez et al. (2006), Schmidt et al. (2010), Geerts et al. (2013)

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under the set semantics: $S \text{ UNION } S = S$

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2. FILTER distributes over UNION

$$\text{FILTER}_F(S_1 \text{ UNION } S_2) = \text{FILTER}_F S_1 \text{ UNION } \text{FILTER}_F S_2$$

~~$$\text{FILTER}_F(S_1 \text{ JOIN } S_2) = \text{FILTER}_F S_1 \text{ JOIN } \text{FILTER}_F S_2$$~~

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$$P_1 \text{ OPT}_F P_2 = \text{FILTER}_F(P_1 \text{ JOIN } P_2) \text{ UNION } P_1 \text{ DIFF}_F P_2$$

$\underbrace{\hspace{15em}}_{P_1 \text{ that have a compatible } P_2 \text{ with } F}$

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Non-monotone SPARQL: OPTIONAL

```
SELECT ?p ?d WHERE {
  ?p a :Prof
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}
```

:Adams	a	:Prof
:Brown	a	:Prof
:Clarke	a	:Prof
:Brown	:worksIn	:CS
:Clarke	:worksIn	:Maths

$$\llbracket P_1 \text{ DIFF}_F P_2 \rrbracket_G = \left\{ \mu_1 \in \llbracket P_1 \rrbracket_G \mid \text{there is no } \mu_2 \in \llbracket P_2 \rrbracket_G \text{ with } \mu_1 \sim \mu_2 \text{ and } F^{\mu_1 \oplus \mu_2} = \text{true} \right\}$$

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answer

	?p	?d
μ_1	:Adams	
μ_2	:Clarke	:Maths
μ_3	:Brown	

$\overbrace{\mu_1, \mu_2, \mu_3}^{\text{'P}_1 \text{ that have a compatible P}_2 \text{ with F'}}$

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$$\begin{aligned} \llbracket P_1 \text{ OPT}_F P_2 \rrbracket_G &= \{ \mu_1 \oplus \mu_2 \mid \mu_1 \in \llbracket P_1 \rrbracket_G, \mu_2 \in \llbracket P_2 \rrbracket_G \text{ and } F^{\mu_1 \oplus \mu_2} = \text{true} \} \\ &\cup \{ \mu_1 \in \llbracket P_1 \rrbracket_G \mid \mu_1 \not\sim \mu_2, \text{ for all } \mu_2 \in \llbracket P_2 \rrbracket_G, \text{ or } \llbracket P_2 \rrbracket_G = \emptyset \} \\ &\cup \{ \mu_1 \in \llbracket P_1 \rrbracket_G \mid \text{there is } \mu_2 \in \llbracket P_2 \rrbracket_G \text{ with } \mu_1 \sim \mu_2 \text{ and } F^{\mu_1 \oplus \mu_2} = \text{false} \} \end{aligned}$$

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On DIFF and OPT (1)

equivalent patterns $P_1 \equiv P_2 \iff \llbracket P_1 \rrbracket_G = \llbracket P_2 \rrbracket_G$, for all G

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Angles & Gutierrez (2008)

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but $\llbracket \{?u ?v ?w\} \rrbracket_G = \emptyset$ and so, $\llbracket P_1 \text{ OPT}_F \dots \rrbracket_G = \{\mu_\emptyset\}$

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Polleres (2009): a fix that avoids the problem
by effectively making the dataset non-empty (GRAPH operation)

On DIFF and OPT (2)

\mathcal{S} is a set of SPARQL operators

e.g., $\mathcal{S} = \{ \text{FILTER}, \text{UNION}, \text{JOIN} \}$

operator O is **\mathcal{S} -expressible** if,

for any pattern over $\mathcal{S} \cup \{O\}$, there is an equivalent pattern over \mathcal{S}

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Zhang & Van den Bussche (2014) JOIN is $\{\text{FILTER}, \text{OPT}_T\}$ -expressible;

all other operators in the set $\{\text{JOIN}, \text{UNION}, \text{OPT}_T, \text{FILTER}, \text{PROJ}\}$

are not expressible via the rest.

proof idea:

$$P_1 \text{ JOIN } P_2 \equiv (P_1 \text{ OPT}_T P_2) \text{ DIFF}_T (P_1 \text{ DIFF}_T P_2)$$

and then DIFF_T **carefully** via FILTER and OPT_T

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Theorem DIFF_T is **not** $\mathcal{S} \cup \{\text{OPT}_F\}$ -expressible

proof idea: P over $\mathcal{S} \cup \{\text{OPT}_F\} \implies$ if $\mu_\emptyset \in \llbracket P \rrbracket_G$ then $\mu_\emptyset \in \llbracket P \rrbracket_\emptyset$

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$$P = \{ \} \text{ DIFF}_T \text{ FILTER}_{\text{-bound}(?u)}(\{ \} \text{ OPT}_T \{ ?u ?v ?w \})$$

$\llbracket P \rrbracket_\emptyset = \emptyset$ but $\llbracket P \rrbracket_G = \{ \mu_\emptyset \}$, for any $G \neq \emptyset$

Projection in SPARQL. On DIFF and OPT (3)

```
SELECT ?p WHERE {  
  ?p :worksIn ?d ← ?d is projected away  
}
```

:Adams	a	:Prof
:Brown	a	:Prof
:Clarke	a	:Prof
:Brown	:worksIn	:CS
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?p
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$$\llbracket \text{PROJ}_V P \rrbracket_G = \{ \mu|_V \mid \mu \in \llbracket P \rrbracket_G \}$$

where $\mu|_V$ is the restriction of μ to V

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NB: projection in SPARQL is only at the top level
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$P_1 \text{ DIFF}_F P_2$ on the empty graph

$$P_1 \text{ DIFF}_F P_2 \equiv \text{ON_EMPTY}_{P_1 \text{ DIFF}_F P_2} \text{ UNION} \\ \text{PROJ}_{\text{var}(P_1)} \text{ FILTER}_{\neg \text{bound}(?u_2)} ((P_1 \text{ JOIN } \{?u_1 ?v_1 ?w_1\}) \text{ OPT}_F \\ (P_2 \text{ JOIN } \{?u_2 ?v_2 ?w_2\}))$$

Ternary OPTIONAL of SPARQL

Angles and Gutierrez (2008), (Pérez et al., 2009), ...

$$P_1 \text{ OPT}_F P_2 \equiv P_1 \text{ OPT}_T \text{ FILTER}_F(P_1 \text{ JOIN } P_2)$$

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$\llbracket P_1 \rrbracket_G$		$\llbracket P_2 \rrbracket_G$	
?u	?v	?u	?w
:a	:b	:a	:c
:a			

$$F = \text{bound}(?v)$$

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$[[P_1 \text{ OPT}_F P_2]]_G$

?u	?v	?w
:a	:b	:c
:a		

$[[P_1]]_G$

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:a	:b
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:a	:b	:c
:a		:c

$[[P_1]]_G$

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:a	:b
:a	

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?u	?v	?w
:a	:b	:c
:a		

≠

$$[[P_1 \text{ OPT}_T \dots]]_G$$

?u	?v	?w
:a	:b	:c

$$[[P_1 \text{ JOIN } P_2]]_G$$

?u	?v	?w
:a	:b	:c
:a		:c

$$[[P_1]]_G$$

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[[P ₁ OPT _F P ₂]] _G		
?u	?v	?w
:a	:b	:c
:a		

≠

[[P ₁ OPT _T ...]] _G		
?u	?v	?w
:a	:b	:c

[[P ₁ JOIN P ₂]] _G		
?u	?v	?w
:a	:b	:c
:a		:c

[[P ₁]] _G	
?u	?v
:a	:b
:a	

[[P ₂]] _G	
?u	?w
:a	:c

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Theorem OPT_F is {FILTER, UNION, OPT_T}-expressible

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[[P ₁]] _G	
?u	?v
:a	:b
:a	

[[P ₂]] _G	
?u	?w
:a	:c

[[P ₁ OPT _F P ₂]] _G		
?u	?v	?w
:a	:b	:c
:a		

 \neq

[[P ₁ OPT _T ...]] _G		
?u	?v	?w
:a	:b	:c

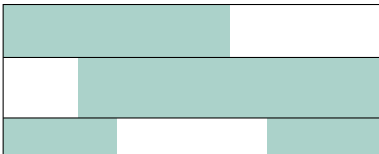
[[P ₁ JOIN P ₂]] _G		
?u	?v	?w
:a	:b	:c
:a		:c

$F = \text{bound}(?v)$

Theorem OPT_F is {FILTER, UNION, OPT_T}-expressible

$$P_1 \text{ OPT}_F P_2 \equiv \bigcup_{V \subseteq \text{var}(P_1) \cap \text{var}(P_2)} [(\text{FILTER}_{F_V} P_1) \text{ OPT}_T \text{ FILTER}_F((\text{FILTER}_{F_V} P_1) \text{ JOIN } P_2)]$$

F_V selects the **V-uniform slice** of P_1 : $F_V = \bigwedge_{?v \in V} \text{bound}(?v) \wedge \bigwedge_{?v \in (\text{var}(P_1) \cap \text{var}(P_2)) \setminus V} \neg \text{bound}(?v)$



horizontal decomposition in DBs

Ternary OPTIONAL of SPARQL

Angles and Gutierrez (2008), (Pérez et al., 2009), ...

$$P_1 \text{ OPT}_F P_2 \equiv P_1 \text{ OPT}_T \text{ FILTER}_F(P_1 \text{ JOIN } P_2)$$

[[P ₁]] _G	
?u	?v
:a	:b
:a	

[[P ₂]] _G	
?u	?w
:a	:c

[[P ₁ OPT _F P ₂]] _G		
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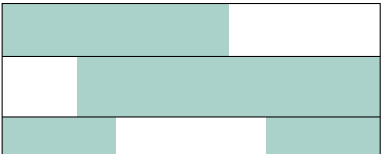
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horizontal decomposition in DBs

the UNION is exponential... is it unavoidable?

Polynomial Expressibility

operator O is **polynomially \mathcal{S} -expressible** if there is a polynomial f such that,
for any $P = O(P_1, \dots, P_n)$ with the P_i over \mathcal{S} ,
there is an equivalent pattern P' over \mathcal{S} with $|P'| = f(|P|)$

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but **not polynomially** (under the standard complexity-theoretic assumptions)

Ternary OPT is NOT Polynomially Expressible via Binary OPT

singular graph $G_a = \{(:a :a :a)\}$

L1 ' $\llbracket P \rrbracket_{G_a} \neq \emptyset$ ' for patterns P over $\mathcal{S} \cup \{\text{OPT}_F\}$ of $\underbrace{\text{o-rank}}_{\text{nesting depth of } \text{OPT}_F} \leq n$ is Σ_{n+1}^P -hard

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Proof by encoding QBF $\exists \vec{x}_1 \forall \vec{x}_2 \dots Q \vec{x}_{n+1} \psi$

if n is odd and $Q = \forall$, then $\phi_{n+1} = \neg \psi$ and $\phi_k = \forall \vec{x}_{k+1} \neg \phi_{k+1}$, for $k \leq n$

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polynomial deterministic algorithm with $|P| + 1$ calls to an NP-oracle (P^{NP})

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L1 + L2 for $P_1 \text{OPT}_F P_2 \longrightarrow$ **not poly-expressible** (unless $\Delta_2^P = \Sigma_2^P$)

Expressing Ternary OPT via Binary OPT

E1

$P_1 \text{ DIFF}_F P_2 \equiv P_1 \text{ SETMINUS}$

pattern that selects $\mu_1 \in \llbracket P_1 \rrbracket_G$
that have a compatible $\mu_2 \in \llbracket P_2 \rrbracket_G$
with $F^{\mu_1 \oplus \mu_2} = \text{true}$

where

$\llbracket P_1 \text{ SETMINUS } P_2 \rrbracket_G = \llbracket P_1 \rrbracket_G \setminus \llbracket P_2 \rrbracket_G$

not the MINUS of SPARQL

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E2

$P_1 \text{ SETMINUS } P_2 \equiv$

$\text{ON_EMPTY}_{P_1 \text{ SETMINUS } P_2} \text{ UNION}$

$(P_1 \text{ MONOMINUS } P_2) \text{ JOIN ONE UNION}$

pattern that uses two distinct elements
as indicators for 'not bound'

JOIN TWO

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ON_EMPTY _{$P_1 \text{ SETMINUS } P_2$} UNION

($P_1 \text{ MONOMINUS } P_2$) JOIN ONE UNION

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JOIN TWO

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E3

if NP = cONP then,

for every pattern $P_1 \text{ MONOMINUS } P_2$, with the P_i over $\mathcal{S} \cup \{\text{PROJ}\}$, there is
a **polynomial** pattern over $\mathcal{S} \cup \{\text{PROJ}\}$ that gives the same answers
on singular graphs

MINUS of SPARQL 1.1

not to be confused with

- MINUS of (Angles & Gutierrez, 2008)
- set-theoretic complement SETMINUS, or \setminus

$$\llbracket P_1 \text{ MINUS } P_2 \rrbracket_G = \{ \mu_1 \in \llbracket P_1 \rrbracket_G \mid \text{there is no } \mu_2 \in \llbracket P_2 \rrbracket_G \text{ with} \\ \mu_1 \sim \mu_2 \text{ and } \text{dom}(\mu_1) \cap \text{dom}(\mu_2) \neq \emptyset \}$$

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Theorem MINUS is polynomially $\{\text{DIFF}_F\}$ - and $\{\text{OPT}_F, \text{FILTER}\}$ -expressible
 DIFF_\top and OPT_\top are not $\mathcal{S} \cup \{\text{PROJ}, \text{MINUS}\}$ -expressible

$\mathcal{S} \cup \{O'\}$ - and $\mathcal{S}_\pi \cup \{O'\}$ -expressibility of O

$\mathcal{S} = \{ \text{FILTER, UNION, JOIN} \}$

$O' \setminus O$	DIFF_F	OPT_F	DIFF_T	OPT_T	MINUS
DIFF_F		+	+	+	+
OPT_F	-		-	+	+
DIFF_T	\pm	\pm		+	$+?$
OPT_T	-	\pm	-		$+?$
MINUS	-	-	-	-	

$\mathcal{S}_\pi = \mathcal{S} \cup \{ \text{PROJ} \}$

$O' \setminus O$	DIFF_F	OPT_F	DIFF_T	OPT_T	MINUS
DIFF_F		+	+	+	+
OPT_F	+		+	+	+
DIFF_T	\pm^\dagger	\pm^\dagger		+	$+?^\dagger$
OPT_T	\pm^\dagger	\pm^\dagger	+		$+?^\dagger$
MINUS	-	-	-	-	

- not expressible
- + polynomially expressible
- \pm expressible, but not polynomially if $\Delta_2^P \neq \Sigma_2^P$
- $+?$ expressible, but not known if polynomially

the results with \dagger become + if $\text{NP} = \text{coNP}$

Summary and Open Problems

- the **ternary** OPTIONAL in SPARQL is more complex than commonly assumed
- some widely-known SPARQL equivalences are **false**
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Is SPARQL intuitive?

or is it just confusing names, e.g., OPTIONAL v LEFTJOIN?
MINUS v \