

Ontology Based Query Answering with Existential Rules

Michaël Thomazo

University of Montpellier

France

thomazo@lirmm.fr

1 Framework and objectives

Ontology-Based Query Answering (OBQA) is currently a problem that receives a lot of attention both from knowledge representation and databases communities. The aim is to answer queries that are at least as expressive as conjunctive queries while taking an ontology into account. This is important in order to improve the quality of query answering and interoperability between different sources of data.

The mainstream formalism to deal with ontologies is *description logics* (DLs) ([Baader *et al.*, 2007]). While historical DLs are very expressive, most of the OBQA research focus on recently introduced lightweight DLs (\mathcal{EL} [Baader, 2003] and DL-Lite [Calvanese *et al.*, 2007]). Real-world ontologies expressed in these DLs already exist, such as the medical ontology SNOMED-CT (based on \mathcal{EL}).

During my Ph.D, I am considering an alternative, rule-based formalism. I use existential rules [Baget *et al.*, 2011b] (rules for short, also known as Tuple Generating Dependencies [Abiteboul *et al.*, 1994], Datalog+/- [Calì *et al.*, 2009]), which despite their simple syntactic form are very expressive. Moreover, they allow for a smooth integration to database systems since, in contrast to DLs, they allow for any predicate arity and support variable cycles. Indeed, their form is:

$$\forall \mathbf{x} \forall \mathbf{y} (B[\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}] \rightarrow \exists \mathbf{z} H[\mathbf{y}, \mathbf{z}]),$$

where B (resp. H) is an arbitrary conjunction of atoms called the body (resp. the head) of the rule. The OBQA problem is thus formalized as follows: given two facts (existentially closed conjunctions of atoms) F and Q , a set of rules \mathcal{R} , does $F, \mathcal{R} \models Q$ hold? (where \models denotes logical entailment). However, the ability to create new unknown individuals, via existentially quantified variables, makes reasoning extremely complex: the OBQA problem is undecidable, even with a single rule with a single binary predicate ([Baget *et al.*, 2011b]). A lot of work has been done in the last years in order to define decidable classes of rules, aiming at a good tradeoff between expressivity and complexity. The interested reader can consult [Mugnier, 2011] for a survey of such classes. Some of these class cover the lightweight DLs used for OBQA¹.

Algorithms for OBQA can be split in two big categories: either they materialize, that is, they use \mathcal{R} to infer new data

from F , or not. When for any fact F , this materialization yields a finite fact entailing all possible consequence of F and \mathcal{R} , \mathcal{R} is called a finite expansion set (*fes*). When this fact is not finite, but has a bounded treewidth, \mathcal{R} is said a bounded treewidth set (*bts*)². Both conditions ensures decidability of OBQA, but none are recognizable. Non-materializing algorithms perform query rewriting: the initial query Q is rewritten into a query Q' , such that Q is entailed by F, \mathcal{R} iff Q' is entailed by F . When Q' is a finite union of conjunctive queries (UCQs), \mathcal{R} is said a finite unification set (*fus*). Rules translating DL-Lite ontologies are both *bts* and *fus*, while rules translating \mathcal{EL} are only *bts*.

The aim of my Ph.D thesis is to identify expressive decidable classes, study the complexity of reasoning for these classes, and design efficient algorithms in the sense that they improve state of the art algorithms.

2 Contributions

In my Ph.D work, I consider both materialization-based and query rewriting approaches. Natural brute-force algorithms exist for *fes* and *fus*, but no such algorithm is known for *bts*. In a joint work with J.-F. Baget, M.-L. Mugnier and S. Rudolph, we have defined an abstract class, named *greedy bounded treewidth set* (*gbts*) and provided a worst-case optimal algorithm for it. This class is a subset of *bts* that covers most of the known recognizable *bts* classes of rules. Slight adaptation of this algorithm makes it also optimal for these subclasses. This work has been published in [Baget *et al.*, 2011a; Thomazo *et al.*, 2012; Thomazo, 2012].

Pure query rewriting approaches suffer from the exponential blow-up of the size of rewritings w.r.t. to the query, even with solely class or role hierarchies. UCQs are then too large to be efficiently dealt with by RDMS. In [König *et al.*, 2012], we show that this is inherent to UCQs by characterizing the smallest rewriting using that shape of formulas. In [Thomazo, 2013], I use *semi-conjunctive queries*, which are a more general form of positive existential formula. I present an algorithm for computing such rewritings, and experimentally evaluate their quality by checking the efficiency of evaluation of such queries. First results show that this approach is more efficient than using UCQs.

¹Constraints and equality rules are also needed, but this is out of the scope of this summary.

²See [Baget *et al.*, 2011b] for formal definition of these classes.

3 Related work

Recognizability of set of rules suited for a materialization-based approach relies on two main criteria: guardedness and acyclicity. Guarded rules (where an atom of the body contains all variables of the body) have been generalized in several ways [Calì *et al.*, 2009; Baget *et al.*, 2011b; Krötzsch and Rudolph, 2011].

Weak-acyclicity [Fagin *et al.*, 2005] has been generalized into super-weak acyclicity [Marnette, 2009] and join acyclicity [Krötzsch and Rudolph, 2011]. An incomparable notion relies on the notion of rule dependency [Baget *et al.*, 2011b]. [Grau *et al.*, 2012] proposes a semantic condition of acyclicity that generalizes all these notions.

Last, the combined approach mixes materialization and query rewriting: it both extends the data by applying rules (independently of the query) and rewrite the queries with respect to the rules (independently of the data). This has proven to be useful for both DL-Lite and \mathcal{EL} ontologies.

Query rewriting approaches are applicable in particular to linear [Calì *et al.*, 2009; Baget *et al.*, 2011b] and sticky [Gottlob *et al.*, 2011] rules, which are *fus*. Several algorithms have been implemented for linear rules or DL-Lite ontologies, rewriting either into a union of conjunctive queries ([Pérez-Urbina *et al.*, 2009; Gottlob *et al.*, 2011; Venetis *et al.*, 2012; Chortaras *et al.*, 2011]) or into a Datalog program (Presto [Rosati and Almatelli, 2010]). All *fus* are processed by the algorithm presented in [König *et al.*, 2012]. The question of finding polynomial cases has also been addressed [Kikot *et al.*, 2011].

References

- [Abiteboul *et al.*, 1994] Serge Abiteboul, Richard Hull, and Victor Vianu. *Foundations of Databases*. Addison Wesley, 1994.
- [Baader *et al.*, 2007] Franz Baader, Diego Calvanese, Deborah McGuinness, Daniele Nardi, and Peter Patel-Schneider, editors. *The Description Logic Handbook: Theory, Implementation, and Applications*. Cambridge University Press, second edition, 2007.
- [Baader, 2003] F. Baader. Terminological cycles in a description logic with existential restrictions. In *IJCAI*, pages 325–330, 2003.
- [Baget *et al.*, 2011a] J.-F. Baget, M.-L. Mugnier, S. Rudolph, and M. Thomazo. Walking the Complexity Lines for Generalized Guarded Existential Rules. In *IJCAI*, pages 712–717, 2011.
- [Baget *et al.*, 2011b] Jean-François Baget, Michel Leclère, Marie-Laure Mugnier, and Eric Salvat. On Rules with Existential Variables: Walking the Decidability Line. *Artif. Intell.*, 175(9-10):1620–1654, 2011.
- [Calì *et al.*, 2009] Andrea Calì, Georg Gottlob, and Thomas Lukasiewicz. A General Datalog-Based Framework for Tractable Query Answering over Ontologies. In *PODS*, pages 77–86. ACM, 2009.
- [Calvanese *et al.*, 2007] Diego Calvanese, Giuseppe De Giacomo, Domenico Lembo, Maurizio Lenzerini, and Riccardo Rosati. Tractable reasoning and efficient query answering in description logics: The *dl-lite* family. *J. Autom. Reasoning*, 39(3):385–429, 2007.
- [Chortaras *et al.*, 2011] Alexandros Chortaras, Despoina Trivela, and Giorgos B. Stamou. Optimized query rewriting for OWL 2 QL. In *CADE*, pages 192–206, 2011.
- [Fagin *et al.*, 2005] R. Fagin, P. G. Kolaitis, R. J. Miller, and L. Popa. Data Exchange: Semantics and Query Answering. *Theor. Comput. Sci.*, 336(1):89–124, 2005.
- [Gottlob *et al.*, 2011] Georg Gottlob, Giorgio Orsi, and Andreas Pieris. Ontological queries: Rewriting and optimization. In *ICDE*, pages 2–13, 2011.
- [Grau *et al.*, 2012] Bernardo Cuenca Grau, Ian Horrocks, Markus Krötzsch, Clemens Kupke, Despoina Magka, Boris Motik, and Zhe Wang. Acyclicity conditions and their application to query answering in description logics. In *KR*, 2012.
- [Kikot *et al.*, 2011] Stanislav Kikot, Roman Kontchakov, and Michael Zakharyashev. Polynomial conjunctive query rewriting under unary inclusion dependencies. In *RR*, pages 124–138, 2011.
- [König *et al.*, 2012] Mélanie König, Michel Leclère, Marie-Laure Mugnier, and Michaël Thomazo. A sound and complete backward chaining algorithm for existential rules. In *RR*, pages 122–138, 2012.
- [Krötzsch and Rudolph, 2011] M. Krötzsch and S. Rudolph. Extending Decidable Existential Rules by Joining Acyclicity and Guardedness. In *IJCAI*, pages 963–968, 2011.
- [Marnette, 2009] Bruno Marnette. Generalized schemamappings: from termination to tractability. In *PODS*, pages 13–22, 2009.
- [Mugnier, 2011] M.-L. Mugnier. Ontological Query Answering with Existential Rules. In *RR*, pages 2–23, 2011.
- [Pérez-Urbina *et al.*, 2009] Héctor Pérez-Urbina, Ian Horrocks, and Boris Motik. Efficient query answering for OWL 2. In *International Semantic Web Conference*, pages 489–504, 2009.
- [Rosati and Almatelli, 2010] Riccardo Rosati and Alessandro Almatelli. Improving query answering over dl-lite ontologies. In *KR*, 2010.
- [Thomazo *et al.*, 2012] Michaël Thomazo, Jean-François Baget, Marie-Laure Mugnier, and Sebastian Rudolph. A generic querying algorithm for greedy sets of existential rules. In *KR*, 2012.
- [Thomazo, 2012] Michaël Thomazo. From el to tractable existential rules with complex role inclusions. In *Description Logics*, 2012.
- [Thomazo, 2013] M. Thomazo. Compact rewriting for existential rules. In *IJCAI*, 2013.
- [Venetis *et al.*, 2012] Tassos Venetis, Giorgos Stoilos, and Giorgos B. Stamou. Incremental query rewriting for OWL 2 QL. In *Description Logics*, 2012.