#### **Restricted Chase Termination**

You Want More than Fairness

David Carral<sup>1</sup>

Lukas Gerlach<sup>2</sup>

Lucas Larroque<sup>3</sup>

Michaël Thomazo<sup>3</sup>

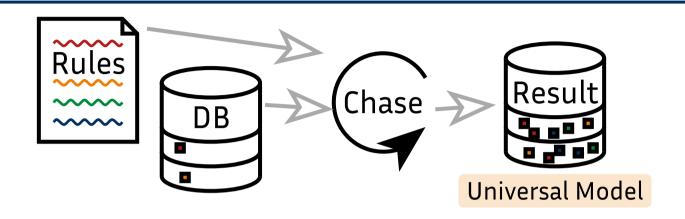
<sup>1</sup>LIRMM, Inria, University of Montpellier, CNRS, France <sup>2</sup>Knowledge-Based Systems Group, TU Dresden, Germany <sup>3</sup>Inria, DI ENS, ENS, CNRS, PSL University, France

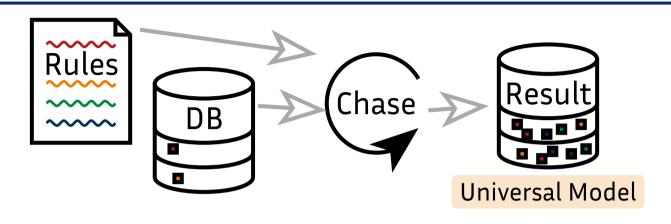
05.09.2025



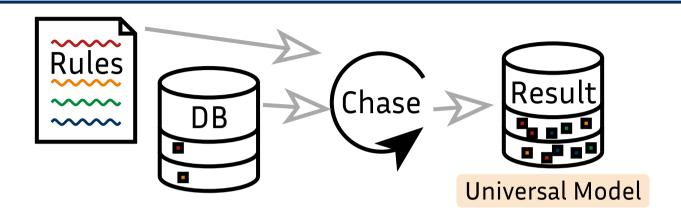






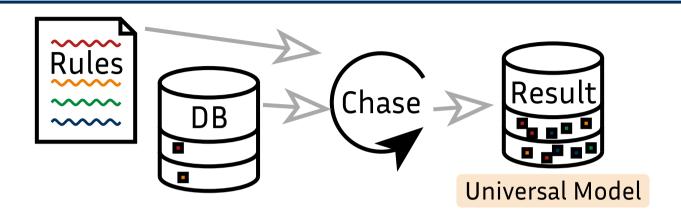


$$egin{aligned} \mathbf{A}(x) &
ightarrow \exists z. \ \mathrm{R}(x,\,z) \wedge \mathrm{B}(z) \ \mathrm{B}(x) &
ightarrow \mathrm{A}(x) \ \mathrm{R}(x,\,y) &
ightarrow \mathrm{R}(y,\,x) \end{aligned}$$



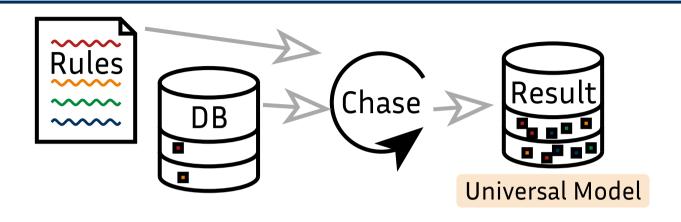
$$egin{aligned} \mathbf{A}(x) &
ightarrow \exists z. \ \mathrm{R}(x,\,z) \wedge \mathrm{B}(z) \ &\mathrm{B}(x) &
ightarrow \mathbf{A}(x) \ &\mathrm{R}(x,\,y) &
ightarrow \mathrm{R}(y,\,x) \end{aligned}$$

$$\mathsf{DB}$$
:  $\mathsf{A}(c)$ ,  $\mathsf{B}(c)$ 



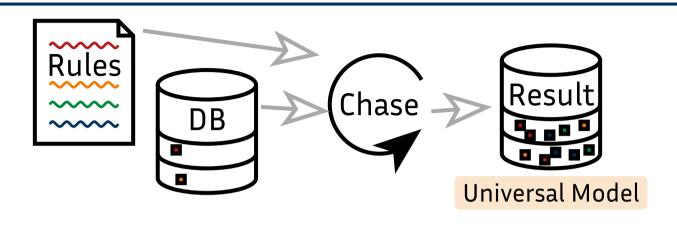
$$A(x) o \exists z. \ R(x, z) \land B(z)$$
 $B(x) o A(x)$ 
 $R(x, y) o R(y, x)$ 

DB: A(c), B(c)Step 1:  $R(c, n_1)$ ,  $B(n_1)$ 



$$A(x) 
ightharpoonup \exists z. \ R(x, z) \land B(z)$$
 $B(x) 
ightharpoonup A(x)$ 
 $R(x, y) 
ightharpoonup R(y, x)$ 

DB: A(c), B(c)Step 1:  $R(c, n_1)$ ,  $B(n_1)$ Step 2:  $A(n_1)$ ; Step 3:  $R(n_1, c)$ 



$$A(x) \rightarrow \exists z. \ R(x, z) \land B(z)$$
 $B(x) \rightarrow A(x)$ 
 $R(x, y) \rightarrow R(y, x)$ 

DB: 
$$A(c)$$
,  $B(c)$   
Step 1:  $R(c, n_1)$ ,  $B(n_1)$   
Step 2:  $A(n_1)$ ; Step 3:  $R(n_1, c)$ 

Universal Models are "most general" and can answer conjunctive queries.

$$A(x) \rightarrow \exists z. \ R(x, z) \land B(z)$$
 $B(x) \rightarrow A(x)$ 
 $R(x, y) \rightarrow R(y, x)$ 

DB: 
$$A(c)$$
,  $B(c)$   
Step 1-2:  $R(c,\,n_1)$ ,  $B(n_1)$ ,  $A(n_1)$ 

$$A(x) 
ightharpoonup \exists z. \ \mathrm{R}(x,\,z) \wedge \mathrm{B}(z)$$
  $\mathrm{B}(x) 
ightharpoonup \mathrm{A}(x)$   $\mathrm{R}(x,\,y) 
ightharpoonup \mathrm{R}(y,\,x)$ 

```
DB: A(c), B(c)
Step 1-2: R(c,\,n_1), B(n_1), A(n_1)
Step 3: R(n_1,\,n_2), B(n_2)
```

$$egin{aligned} \mathbf{A}(x) &
ightarrow \exists z. \ \mathrm{R}(x,\,z) \wedge \mathrm{B}(z) \ \mathrm{B}(x) &
ightarrow \mathbf{A}(x) \ \mathrm{R}(x,\,y) &
ightarrow \mathrm{R}(y,\,x) \end{aligned}$$

```
DB: A(c), B(c)
Step 1-2: R(c, n_1), B(n_1), A(n_1)
Step 3: R(n_1, n_2), B(n_2)
Step N: R(n_1, c) (due to Fairness)
```

$$A(x) \rightarrow \exists z. \ R(x, z) \land B(z)$$
 $B(x) \rightarrow A(x)$ 
 $R(x, y) \rightarrow R(y, x)$ 

```
DB: A(c), B(c)
Step 1-2: R(c, n_1), B(n_1), A(n_1)
Step 3: R(n_1, n_2), B(n_2)
Step N: R(n_1, c) (due to Fairness)
```

Termination of the example depends on rule application order (and more)!

$$A(x) \rightarrow \exists z. \ R(x, z) \land B(z)$$
 $B(x) \rightarrow A(x)$ 
 $R(x, y) \rightarrow R(y, x)$ 

```
DB: A(c), B(c)

Step 1-2: R(c, n_1), B(n_1), A(n_1)

Step 3: R(n_1, n_2), B(n_2)

Step N: R(n_1, c) (due to Fairness)
```

Termination of the example depends on rule application order (and more)!

 $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.

$$A(x) 
ightharpoonup \exists z. \ \mathrm{R}(x,\,z) \wedge \mathrm{B}(z)$$
  $\mathrm{B}(x) 
ightharpoonup \mathrm{A}(x)$   $\mathrm{R}(x,\,y) 
ightharpoonup \mathrm{R}(y,\,x)$ 

```
DB: A(c), B(c)

Step 1-2: R(c, n_1), B(n_1), A(n_1)

Step 3: R(n_1, n_2), B(n_2)

Step N: R(n_1, c) (due to Fairness)
```

Termination of the example depends on rule application order (and more)!

 $\mathrm{CTK}^r_\forall$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.  $\mathrm{CTR}^r_\forall$  is analogous for rule sets by  $\forall$ -quantifying over all databases.

 $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.  $CTR_{\forall}^{r}$  is analogous for rule sets by  $\forall$ -quantifying over all databases.

 $\operatorname{CTK}_{\forall}^r$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.  $\operatorname{CTR}_{\forall}^r$  is analogous for rule sets by  $\forall$ -quantifying over all databases.

#### Overview from (Grahne and Onet 2018)

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$		A
K	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete
$\mathbb{R}$	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete

 $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.  $CTR_{\forall}^{r}$  is analogous for rule sets by  $\forall$ -quantifying over all databases.

#### Overview from (Grahne and Onet 2018)

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$		$\forall$
K	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete

 $\Sigma_1^0$  - Semi-Decidable Languages (e.g. Halting Problem)

 $\Pi_2^0$  - Co-Semi-Decidable with Semi-Decision Oracle (e.g. Universal Halting Problem)

 $\mathrm{CTK}^r_\forall$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.  $\mathrm{CTR}^r_\forall$  is analogous for rule sets by  $\forall$ -quantifying over all databases.

#### Overview from (Grahne and Onet 2018)

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$		$\forall$
K	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete

Membership: Run all Chase Sequences in Parallel

Hardness: TM can be simulated with Existential Rules

 $\operatorname{CTK}_{\forall}^r$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.  $\operatorname{CTR}_{\forall}^r$  is analogous for rule sets by  $\forall$ -quantifying over all databases.

#### Overview from (Grahne and Onet 2018)

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$		A
K	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete

*Membership:* Use  $CTK_{\exists}^{r}$  oracle.

Hardness: (more involved) see (Grahne and Onet 2018)

 $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.  $CTR_{\forall}^{r}$  is analogous for rule sets by  $\forall$ -quantifying over all databases.

#### Overview from (Grahne and Onet 2018)

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$		$\forall$
K	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete

Membership: Run all Chase Sequences in Parallel?

 $\operatorname{CTK}_{\forall}^r$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.  $\operatorname{CTR}_{\forall}^r$  is analogous for rule sets by  $\forall$ -quantifying over all databases.

#### Overview from (Grahne and Onet 2018)

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$		$\forall$
K	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete

Membership: Run all Chase Sequences in Parallel?

This does not work because of *fairness*!

 $\mathrm{CTK}^r_\forall$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.  $\mathrm{CTR}^r_\forall$  is analogous for rule sets by  $\forall$ -quantifying over all databases.

#### Overview from (Grahne and Onet 2018)

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$		$\forall$
K	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete	$\Pi_2^0$ -hard
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi_2^0$ -hard

(Carral et al. 2022) have shown  $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  to be at least  $\Pi_{2}^{0}$ -hard.

 $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  is the set of all knowledge bases, i.e. pairs of rule sets, and databases, on which every ( $\forall$ ) restricted (r) chase sequence terminates.  $CTR_{\forall}^{r}$  is analogous for rule sets by  $\forall$ -quantifying over all databases.

#### Overview from (Grahne and Onet 2018)

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$		$\forall$
K	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete	$\Pi_2^0$ -hard
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi_2^0$ -hard

(Carral et al. 2022) have shown  $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  to be at least  $\Pi_{2}^{0}$ -hard.

The upper bound was still unknown! (Until slide 6)

Why does the  $CTK_{\forall}^r$  membership idea (parallel chase) not work?

Why does the  $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  membership idea (parallel chase) not work?

There could be an inf. unfair sequence while all fair sequences are finite.

Why does the  $CTK_{\forall}^r$  membership idea (parallel chase) not work?

There could be an inf. unfair sequence while all fair sequences are finite.

Example from (Gogacz et al. 2023)

DB: R(a, b, b)

$$R(x, y, y) \rightarrow \exists z. R(x, z, y) \land R(z, y, y)$$

$$R(x, y, z) \rightarrow R(z, z, z)$$

Why does the  $CTK_{\forall}^r$  membership idea (parallel chase) not work? There could be an inf. unfair sequence while all fair sequences are finite.

Example from (Gogacz et al. 2023)

DB: R(a, b, b)

$$R(x, y, y) \rightarrow \exists z. R(x, z, y) \land R(z, y, y)$$

$$R(x, y, z) \rightarrow R(z, z, z)$$

We can derive a chain of  $R(n_1, b, b), R(n_2, b, b), ...$  but R(b, b, b) stops everything eventually.

Why does the  $CTK_{\forall}^r$  membership idea (parallel chase) not work? There could be an inf. unfair sequence while all fair sequences are finite.

Example from (Gogacz et al. 2023)

DB: R(a, b, b)

$$R(x, y, y) \rightarrow \exists z. R(x, z, y) \land R(z, y, y)$$

$$R(x, y, z) \rightarrow R(z, z, z)$$

We can derive a chain of  $R(n_1,\,b,\,b), R(n_2,\,b,\,b), ...$  but  $R(b,\,b,\,b)$  stops everything eventually.

Fairness demands that rules are applied after finitely many steps.

Why does the  $CTK_{\forall}^r$  membership idea (parallel chase) not work? There could be an inf. unfair sequence while all fair sequences are finite.

Example from (Gogacz et al. 2023)

DB: R(a, b, b)

$$R(x, y, y) \rightarrow \exists z. R(x, z, y) \land R(z, y, y)$$

$$R(x, y, z) \rightarrow R(z, z, z)$$

We can derive a chain of

$$R(n_1, b, b), R(n_2, b, b), \dots$$

but  $\mathrm{R}(b,\,b,\,b)$  stops

everything eventually.

Fairness demands that rules are applied after finitely many steps.

Possible Fix: We could demand something stronger, e.g. "breadth-first".

## Fairness for NTMs - based on (Harel 1986)

Decide if a given non-deterministic Turing machine admits a run on  $\varepsilon$  that visits a designated state  $q_r$  infinitely often. (Harel 1986)

### Fairness for NTMs - based on (Harel 1986)

Decide if a given non-deterministic Turing machine admits a run on w that visits a designated state  $q_r$  recurringly after finitely many steps.

If this is the case, we say that the NTM is recurring through  $q_r$  on w.

## Fairness for NTMs - based on (Harel 1986)

Decide if a given non-deterministic Turing machine admits a run on w that visits a designated state  $q_r$  recurringly after finitely many steps.

If this is the case, we say that the NTM is recurring through  $q_r$  on w.

This problem is  $\Sigma_1^1$ -complete - first analytical hierarchy level - beyond infinitely many Turing jumps. (Harel 1986)

Decide if a given non-deterministic Turing machine admits a run on w that visits a designated state  $q_r$  recurringly after finitely many steps.

Decide if a given non-deterministic Turing machine admits a run on w that visits a designated state  $q_r$  recurringly after finitely many steps.

Proof Idea: Describe NTM that computes a chase sequence for a KB.

•

•

Decide if a given non-deterministic Turing machine admits a run on w that visits a designated state  $q_r$  recurringly after finitely many steps.

Proof Idea: Describe NTM that computes a chase sequence for a KB.

• Keep a backlog of applicable rules  $R_i$  for each step i and a counter j.

-

Decide if a given non-deterministic Turing machine admits a run on w that visits a designated state  $q_r$  recurringly after finitely many steps.

Proof Idea: Describe NTM that computes a chase sequence for a KB.

- Keep a backlog of applicable rules  $R_i$  for each step i and a counter j.
- If during the chase computation, all applications in  $R_j$  are obsolete, increment j and visit the designated state.

Decide if a given non-deterministic Turing machine admits a run on w that visits a designated state  $q_r$  recurringly after finitely many steps.

Proof Idea: Describe NTM that computes a chase sequence for a KB.

- Keep a backlog of applicable rules  $R_i$  for each step i and a counter j.
- If during the chase computation, all applications in  $R_j$  are obsolete, increment j and visit the designated state.

Run visiting the desig. state infinitely often **iff** infinite fair chase sequence. Hence: Complement of  $CTK_{\forall}^r$  is in  $\Sigma_1^1$ ; therefore  $CTK_{\forall}^r$  is in  $\Pi_1^1$ .

We know that we can simulate (N)TMs with existential rules.

Can we simulate the non-recurrence problem through  $q_r$  on  $\varepsilon$  with rules?

We know that we can simulate (N)TMs with existential rules.

Can we simulate the non-recurrence problem through  $q_r$  on  $\varepsilon$  with rules?

*Goal:* Construct KB that is in  $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  iff NTM has this property.

We know that we can simulate (N)TMs with existential rules.

Can we simulate the non-recurrence problem through  $q_r$  on  $\varepsilon$  with rules?

*Goal:* Construct KB that is in  $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  iff NTM has this property.

Issue: NTM has infinite runs that visit the desig. state only finitely often but we need to ensure that the chase terminates in such cases.

We know that we can simulate (N)TMs with existential rules.

Can we simulate the non-recurrence problem through  $q_r$  on  $\varepsilon$  with rules?

*Goal:* Construct KB that is in  $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  iff NTM has this property.

Issue: NTM has infinite runs that visit the desig. state only finitely often but we need to ensure that the chase terminates in such cases.

*Idea:* With emergency brakes, we can force the chase to terminate after finitely many steps. If the designated state is visited, we create a new brake.

*Membership:* Similar to  $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  case using universal non-recurrence.

*Membership:* Similar to  $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  case using universal non-recurrence.

Hardness: Tricky even with robust non-recurrence since ill-shaped databases may not correspond to TM configurations...

*Membership:* Similar to  $CTK_{\forall}^{r}$  case using universal non-recurrence.

Hardness: Tricky even with robust non-recurrence since ill-shaped databases may not correspond to TM configurations...

Key Observation: The simulation "heals" malformed configurations, giving us a proper configuration after finitely many steps, which is good enough!

*Membership:* Similar to  $CTK^r_{\forall}$  case using universal non-recurrence.

Hardness: Tricky even with robust non-recurrence since ill-shaped databases may not correspond to TM configurations...

Key Observation: The simulation "heals" malformed configurations, giving us a proper configuration after finitely many steps, which is good enough!

$\operatorname{CTX}^r_{\mathbf{Q}}$		A
K	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete	$\Pi^1_1$ -complete
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi^1_1$ -complete

Fairness makes Chase Termination highly Undecidable.

Stricter, finitely verifiable conditions could solve this (e.g. breadth-first).

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$		A
K	$\Sigma_1^0$ -complete	$\Pi^1_1$ -complete
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi^1_1$ -complete

Fairness makes Chase Termination highly Undecidable.

Stricter, finitely verifiable conditions could solve this (e.g. breadth-first).

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$	Ξ	$\forall$
K	$\Sigma^0_1$ -complete	$\Pi^1_1$ -complete
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi^1_1$ -complete

#### Some Open Problems:

- Disjunctive Skolem Chase Termination complete for  $\Pi_1^1$  ? (Likely true.)
- •

Fairness makes Chase Termination highly Undecidable.

Stricter, finitely verifiable conditions could solve this (e.g. breadth-first).

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$	Э	A
K	$\Sigma^0_1$ -complete	$\Pi^1_1$ -complete
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi^1_1$ -complete

#### Some Open Problems:

- Disjunctive Skolem Chase Termination complete for  $\Pi_1^1$  ? (Likely true.)
- What about single-head rules (in the  $CTR^r_{\forall}$  case)?

Fairness makes Chase Termination highly Undecidable.

Stricter, finitely verifiable conditions could solve this (e.g. breadth-first).

$CTX_{Q}^{r}$	Э	A
K	$\Sigma^0_1$ -complete	$\Pi^1_1$ -complete
R	$\Pi_2^0$ -complete	$\Pi^1_1$ -complete

#### Some Open Problems:

- Disjunctive Skolem Chase Termination complete for  $\Pi_1^1$  ? (Likely true.)
- What about single-head rules (in the  $CTR^r_{\forall}$  case)?

📢 Talk to me about Lean and Typst 🤓

Carral D, Dragoste I, Krötzsch M (2017) Restricted Chase (Non)Termination for Existential Rules with Disjunctions. In: Sierra C (ed) Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence, IJCAI 2017, Melbourne, Australia, August 19-25, 2017. ijcai.org, pp 922–928

Carral D, Gerlach L, Larroque L, Thomazo M (2025) Restricted Chase Termination: You Want More than Fairness. Proc ACM Manag Data 3:. https://doi.org/10.1145/3725246

Carral D, Larroque L, Mugnier M-L, Thomazo M (2022) Normalisations of Existential Rules: Not so Innocuous! In: Kern-Isberner G, Lakemeyer G, Meyer T (eds) Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Principles of Knowledge Representation and Reasoning, KR 2022, Haifa, Israel, July 31 - August 5, 2022

Gerlach L, Carral D (2023a) General Acyclicity and Cyclicity Notions for the Disjunctive Skolem Chase. In: Williams B, Chen Y, Neville J (eds) Thirty-Seventh AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence, AAAI 2023, Thirty-Fifth Conference on Innovative Applications of Artificial Intelligence, IAAI 2023, Thirteenth Symposium on Educational Advances in Artificial

Intelligence, EAAI 2023, Washington, DC, USA, February 7-14, 2023. AAAI Press, pp 6372–6379

Gerlach L, Carral D (2023b) Do Repeat Yourself: Understanding Sufficient Conditions for Restricted Chase Non-Termination. In: Marquis P, Son TC, Kern-Isberner G (eds) Proceedings of the 20th International Conference on Principles of Knowledge Representation and Reasoning, KR 2023, Rhodes, Greece, September 2-8, 2023. pp 301–310

Gerlach L, Carral D, Hecher M (2024) Finite Groundings for ASP with Functions: A Journey through Consistency. In: Proceedings of the Thirty-

Third International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence, IJCAI 2024, Jeju, South Korea, August 3-9, 2024. ijcai.org, pp 3386–3394

Gogacz T, Marcinkowski J, Pieris A (2023) Uniform Restricted Chase Termination. SIAM J Comput 52:641–683. https://doi.org/10.1137/20M 1377035

Grahne G, Onet A (2018) Anatomy of the Chase. Fundam Informaticae 157:221–270. https://doi.org/10.3233/FI-2018-1627

- Grau BC, Horrocks I, Krötzsch M, et al (2013) Acyclicity Notions for Existential Rules and Their Application to Query Answering in Ontologies. J Artif Intell Res 47:741–808. https://doi.org/10.1613/JAIR.3949
- Harel D (1986) Effective transformations on infinite trees, with applications to high undecidability, dominoes, and fairness. J ACM 33:224–248. https://doi.org/10.1145/4904.4993
- Ivliev A, Gerlach L, Meusel S, et al (2024) Nemo: Your Friendly and Versatile Rule Reasoning Toolkit. In: Marquis P, Ortiz M, Pagnucco M (eds)

  Proceedings of the 21st International Conference on Principles of

Knowledge Representation and Reasoning, KR 2024, Hanoi, Vietnam. November 2-8, 2024

Krötzsch M, Marx M, Rudolph S (2019) The Power of the Terminating Chase (Invited Talk). In: Barceló P, Calautti M (eds) 22nd International Conference on Database Theory, ICDT 2019, March 26-28, 2019, Lisbon, Portugal. Schloss Dagstuhl - Leibniz-Zentrum für Informatik, pp 1–17