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TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT  
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# Diploma Thesis

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades

Web Engineering

vorgelegt von

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Development of IDE extensions for artificial,  
schema-driven generation and visualization of RDF  
A-Box Resources

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## Summary

The Resource Description Framework (RDF) is a standard for describing resources on the web. RDF extends the Web's linking structure by using URIs to name the relationships between resources and the two ends of the link. It is designed for machine readability rather than human readability.

Developers often struggle with the time-consuming and complex task of manually generating example instances for new RDF schemas, which can lower their productivity and the seamless integration of these schemas into software projects.

This thesis aims to improve the user-friendliness visualization of RDF schema, by using a code editor extension that allows not just to better visualize the schema and the relations within but also provides automatically generated example instances for a better understanding.

The main challenge for this project is the User Interface Design. RDF data is structured as a graph of triples (subject-predicate-object), which can be difficult to represent visually. Unlike traditional tabular data, RDF's graph-based nature requires a UI that can effectively display nodes and their relationships. RDF schemas can vary widely in structure and content. Designing a UI that can dynamically adapt to different schemas and data types while remaining clear is a significant challenge. The UI should handle many types of vocabularies and ontologies.

Addressing this challenge will require regular software/web development knowledge but also a deep understanding of the Semantic web and its technologies, like RDFs and SPARQL.



## Task

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The World Wide Web (W3) is a wide-area hypermedia information retrieval initiative aiming to give universal access to a large universe of documents [12].

The Web works thanks to a set of standards and protocols that guarantee interoperability at various levels. It is designed for human interaction, but the next generation web aims to make the Web understandable by machines: The Semantic Web [10].

As described by in *Scientific American*, "The Semantic Web is an extension of the current web in which information is given well-defined meaning, better enabling computers and people to work in cooperation" [1].

The Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) is the standard markup language use for structuring and displaying documents on the Web. While this language is great for human-users, it is not optimized for structure data processing [2].

Consider the following Airline Scraper example:

Listing 1.1: Example of HTML flight data from a Airline company

```
<div class="flight-result">
  <h2>Berlin to New York</h2>
  <p>Airline: Lufthansa</p>
  <p>Price: $450</p>
  <p>Departure: 10:00 AM</p>
</div>
```

In this scenario, the labels of fields like "Price", "Departure", etc., are not standardized. If the Airline changes any of those label, the data extractor algorithm breaks. Developers would need to monitor every single Airline website and update the data extractor algorithm as soon as possible in order to guarantee the availability of their scraping service [2].

It is now clear why the Semantic Web needs its own standard to describe web resources that need to process by machines.

The Resource Description Framework (RDF) is a standard model for data exchange on the Web. It has features that facilitate the merging of data with different schemas, and it supports the evolution of schemas over time without requiring all the data consumers to be changed [6].

RDF enhance the linking structure of the Web to use URIs to label both the relationships between entities and the entities themselves (aka “triple”). This model allows structured and semi-structured data to be mixed, exposed, and shared among different applications. This linking structure forms a directed, labeled graph, where the edges represent the named link between two resources, represented by the graph nodes. This graph view provides an accessible mental model for understanding RDF and it’s often used with its visual explanations

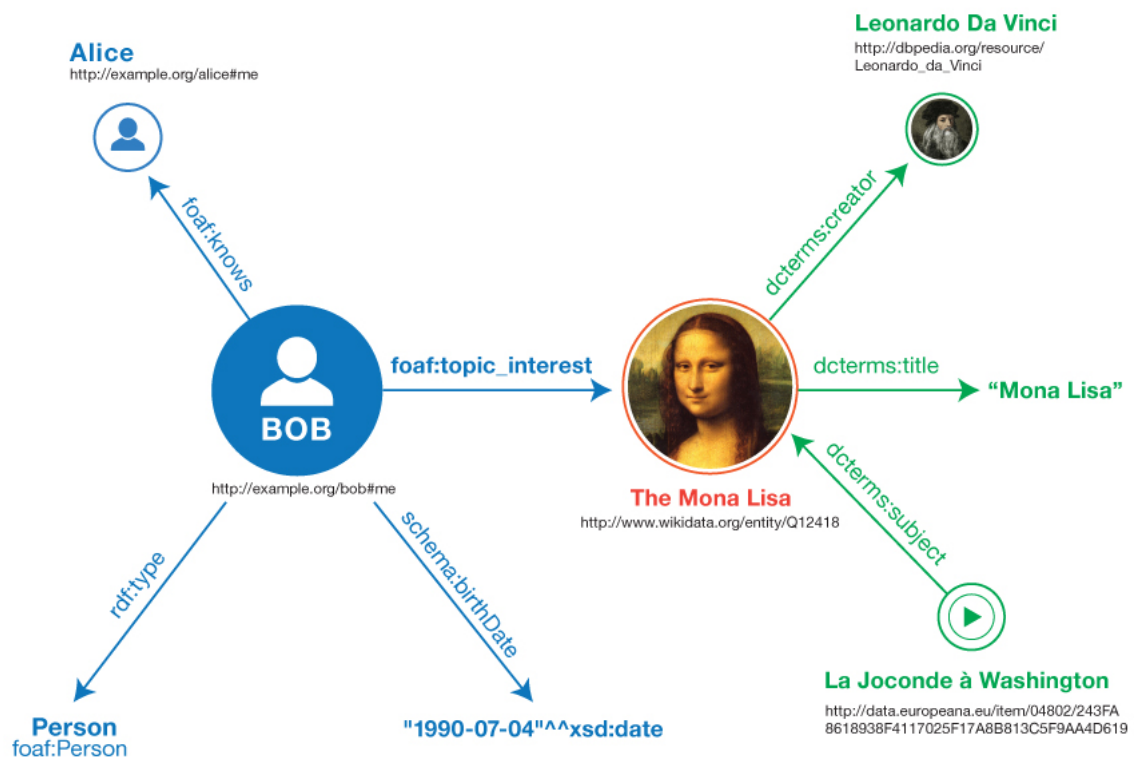


Figure 1.1: Example of RDF triple

Consider the following Airline Scraper RDF example:

Listing 1.2: RDF representation of the flight data

@prefix schema: <https://schema.org/> .

```
<https://example.com/flights/12345> a schema:Flight ;  
    schema:departureAirport "Berlin" ;  
    schema:arrivalAirport "New_York" ;  
    schema:airline "Lufthansa" ;  
    schema:price "450"^^xsd:decimal ;  
    schema:departureTime "10:00_AM"^^xsd:time .
```

In this scenario scenario, the Airline company has decided to adopt the RDF standard to describe their data. Developers can now query the Airline web service without worrying about breaks due to changes from the Airline componay [2].

The RDF standard is not exclusively used by web developers. It is also widely utilized by scientists, engineers, and researchers across various disciplines:

- **Data Scientists:**

- RDF aligns with their work on structured data, semantic queries, and knowledge graphs.
- They use RDF to model relationships, extract insights from interconnected datasets, and support machine learning on graph data.

- **Computer Scientists and Engineers:**

- They focus on RDF's theoretical foundations, optimization of storage and querying, and application development for the Semantic Web.
- They are often involved in creating RDF tools like RDF stores and query languages.

- **Knowledge Engineers:**

- Specialize in designing ontologies and frameworks using RDF to represent knowledge in areas like AI, natural language processing, and expert systems.

To assist scientists in their work, the Semantic Web supports a set of tools and technologies that enable the creation, sharing, and analysis of structured data. Platforms like Protégé, Apollo, and NeOn are well-known in the ontology engineering community.

"An Ontology is a knowledge structure used to formally represent and share domain knowledge through the modelling and creation of a framework of relevant concepts and the semantic relationships between the concepts" [8].

These ontology editors offer comprehensive support for creating and editing ontologies and RDF datasets through their graphical user interfaces (GUIs), which enhance visualization and make RDF development easier.

## 1.1 Motivation Scenario

The following hypothetical scenario illustrates the current situation.

John Doe is a Junior Software Developer and just started working in his first company as Web Developer. He quickly immersed himself in his daily tasks, working with his favorite IDE, Visual Studio Code, to craft the backbone of their innovative web application—a platform with social media-like features.

While John primarily worked with VSCode due to its lightweight and customizable nature, he soon realized that his workflow differed significantly from that of his colleagues. Some teammates preferred IntelliJ IDEA for its extensive refactoring tools, while others relied on Protégé because its visual representation of ontologies helped them better understand and manage complex data relationships.

A significant part of the project involved working with RDF files, mainly RDF/XML and Turtle formats, to define the application's semantic data structure and its RDF schema. Although the project repository already contained some instances examples, John found himself losing a lot of time creating a valuable amount of example instances to test the limitation his RDF schema. This extra step, required to ensure that every modification produced the intended results, often disrupted his coding flow.

Although he is writing in Turtle language for the majority of his time and Turtle is the most readable among all the RDF's formats, John also struggles to read and understand many lines of code and often does mistake like every other human being. Just like his colleagues, he started using an RDF schema visualizer like "isSemantic.net" or RDF Grapher, to see a graphical representation of his RDF schema [3, 5]. The representation helps him a lot to identify relations error, but importing his schema in another software every time contribute to the interruption of his workflow.

## 1.2 Theses and Scientific Contribution

The previous scenario highlights two big challenges. The first is the lack of seamless integration between specialized development environments and RDF visualization tools. Developers should be free to choose the IDE that best suits them, but the disjointed process of visualizing semantic data remains a critical bottleneck.

The second challenge lies in the inefficiency of testing and validating RDF schemas. Manually generating new instances to test schema's limitations remains a major time-consuming task. Developers must invest considerable effort in creating and maintaining test data, moving their focus from core development activities. This repetitive manual work not only delays progress but also increases the risk of inconsistencies and undetected schema flaws.

This Master's Thesis aims to address these challenges and tries to incorporate all developer tools into a single environment. By developing an IDE extension, developers will be able to handle RDF writing, data visualization and instances generation in one place. This IDE extension could support the direct editing of the generated instances, allowing for a more streamlined and efficient workflow.

### 1.3 Positioning within the Scientific Context

This Thesis is positioned in the domain of Semantic Web and RDFs. It tries to address in the integration of development environments, RDF visualization and RDF instances generation, to enhance both theoretical understanding and practical application in the field.

As state in the previous sections, the Semantic Web and RDFs, are very important for the scientific community. Their goal is to simplify computers and computer scientists lives when extracting and processing a vast amount of information from the W3. Despite all its advantages, the Semantic Web struggles to move beyond academic use and find widespread commercial applications. There is indeed a lack of tools that can help engineers to work with RDFs and Semantic Web to facilitate the creation and management of RDF Data. Among the most popular Integrated Development Environments, like Visual Studio Code, IntelliJ IDEA and others, we can mainly find extension that support syntax highlighting, with grammar checker and SHACL validators, and only one VSCode extension for the visualization of RDFs limited to the N3 and Turtle formats [11, 4, 9] (see Figure 1.2).

The Semantic Web community need a solution that could bridge this gap, something that is not limited to a specific software, architecture or environment. A solution that could potentially compatible with every IDE and Browser. An open source software with and MIT license that can be enhanced not just by the community, but also by companies and institutions. A program with a core that allows an easy integration of modules and plugins.

For this Master's Thesis, I will develop a Web Service using python 3.11 and the Fastapi

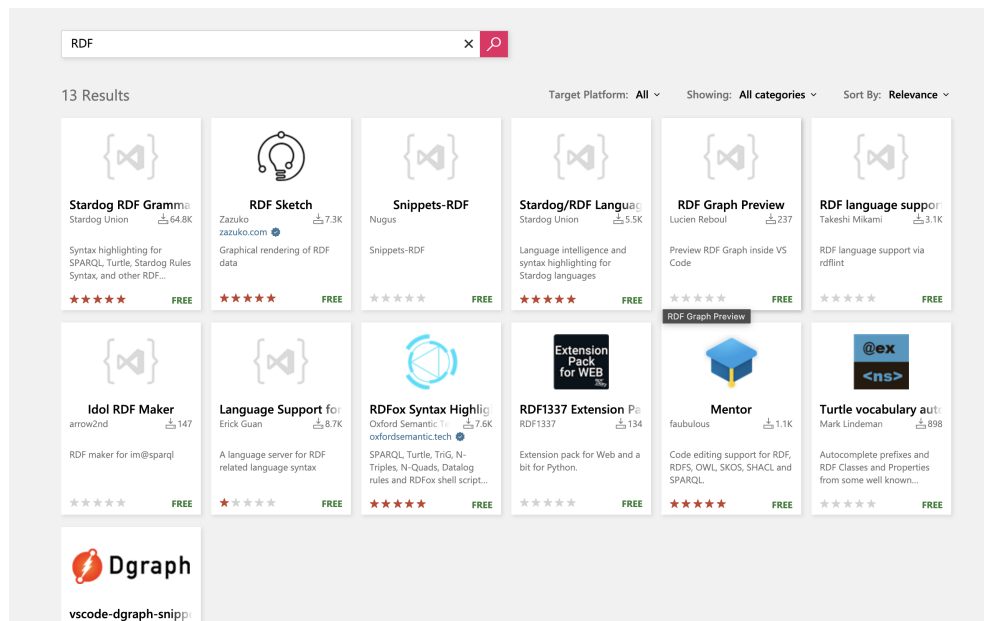


Figure 1.2: Limited Support: A Search for 'RDF' in the Plugin Marketplace Yields Only 13 Results, Highlighting the Scarcity of RDF-Specific Extensions for Developers.

library, able to process the most common RDF formats, generate n amount of instances for a given RDF schema, and return the desired results. The outcome will be provided in different formats, but mainly served as HTML pages, so that can be processed by a Visual Studio Code extension in a Web View. This approach will limit the service to be used only by the VSCode IDE, but by all the ones that support rendering of HTML content in their environment.

To prove the validity of this approach, I will develop not just the Visual Studio Code extension using TypeScript, but also a dedicated browser frontend view, and an IntelliJ IDEA plug-in, in Kotlin, with limited set of features. These Client Side applications will communicate with the Web Service, and via REST calls. The user will be able to:

- Send an RDF Schema to the Web Service
- Request an n amount of instances for the given schema
- Edit the RDF Schema with the instances generated by the server
- Visualize the RDF
- Download the Graph as an image.

Due to the vastness of this project, some features will only be deepened in a theoretical manner, like the AI Instance Generation, and only some because features for the IntelliJ

IDEA plugin will be covered.

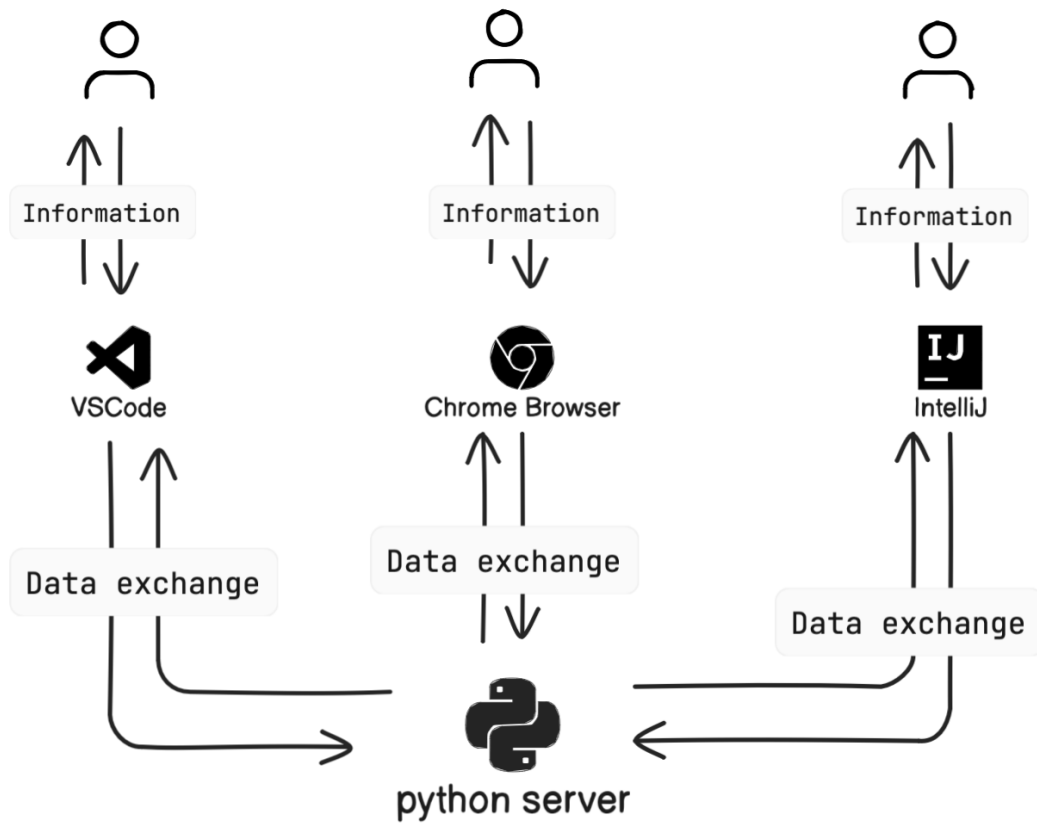


Figure 1.3: System Architecture: Information Flow and Data Exchange between Users, Development Environments (VSCode, IntelliJ), Chrome Browser, and a Python Server.

## 1.4 Structure of the Work

This thesis is separated into 7 chapters.

**Chapter 2: State of the Art** covers the related work in the RDF world, from the instance generation to the graph visualization.

A short view on existing tools and project in the same domain, like GAIA and Ontodia.

A comparison of the two different approaches in terms of instance creation (Manual vs Automatic). A brief look at the current standards and technologies compatible with the semantic Web and RDFs.

**Chapter 3: Concept** includes the requirements for the project, a view on the technologies and high-level architecture, and the constraint and goals of this work.

**Chapter 4: Implementation** features the implementation of the project with all its component. Describes in very details the design choices, building blocks and algorithms of this system.

**Chapter 5: Evaluation** explains how the implementation is validated. Portrays benchmarks and measurements regarding the performance of the solution. Showcases some examples of RDF generation and graph visualization. Cite the experience of a group of Computer Scientists.

**Chapter 6: Conclusion and Limitations** summarizes the thesis, describes the problems that occurred.

**Chapter 7: Outlook** Discusses the future of the project, and the possible improvements that can be done, like the integration of an AI model and the support for further ontologies.



## Chapter 2

# Fundamentals and Related Work

This section is intended to give an introduction about relevant terms, technologies and standards in the field of X. You do not have to explain common technologies such as HTML or XML.

### 2.1 Technologies

This section describes relevant technologies, starting with X followed by Y, concluding with Z.

#### 2.1.1 Technology A

It's always a good idea to explain a technology or a system with a citation of a prominent source, such as a widely accepted technical book or a famous person or organization.

Example: Tim-Berners-Lee describes the "WorldWideWeb" as follows:

*"The WorldWideWeb (W3) is a wide-area hypermedia information retrieval initiative aiming to give universal access to a large universe of documents."* [timwww]

You can also cite different claims about the same term.

According to Bill Gates *"Windows 7 is the best operating system that has ever been released"* [billgates] (no real quote) In opposite Steve Jobs claims Leopard to be *"the one and only operating system"* [stevejobs]

If the topic you are talking about can be grouped into different categories you can start with a classification. Example: According to Tim Berners-Lee XYZ can be classified into three different groups, depending on foobar [timwww]:

- Mobile X

- Fixed X
- Combined X

### **2.1.2 Technology B**

For internal references use the 'ref' tag of LaTeX. Technology B is similar to Technology A as described in section 2.1.1.

### 2.1.3 Comparison of Technologies

Name	Vendor	Release Year	Platform
A	Microsoft	2000	Windows
B	Yahoo!	2003	Windows, Mac OS
C	Apple	2005	Mac OS
D	Google	2005	Windows, Linux, Mac OS

Table 2.1: Comparison of technologies

## 2.2 Standardization

This sections outlines standardization approaches regarding X.

### 2.2.1 Internet Engineering Task Force

The IETF defines SIP as '...' [7]

### 2.2.2 International Telecommunication Union

Lorem Ipsum...

### 2.2.3 3GPP

Lorem Ipsum...

### 2.2.4 Open Mobile Alliance

Lorem Ipsum...

## 2.3 Concurrent Approaches

There are lots of people who tried to implement Component X. The most relevant are ...



## Chapter 3

# Design and Specification

This section determines the requirements and design choices necessary for developing the RDF Instance Generator Schema Visualizer and the RDF web service.

### 3.1 Overview

This project aims to simplify RDF schema exploration, validation, and instance generation. To achieve this the following requirements are defined:

- Functional requirements, for core features like, instance generation, schema validation, and visualization.
- Non-functional requirements, to take into account performance, usability and compatibility.
- Technical requirements, specified for underlying technologies and system design.
- Data privacy and Security, useful to ensure the security and privacy of user data.

The design prioritizes a client-server architecture, and cross-platform compatibility to enhance usability and efficiency.

The Web Service is designed to be compatible with various Browsers and IDEs.

The IDE extension will support users and will seamlessly integrate in their workflow.

### 3.2 Functional requirements

#### 3.2.1 Instance Generation

The very first requirement for this project is the generation of synthetic RDF instances. When the user is writing an RDF file, in turtle, N3, xml or other RDF formats, it will

generate some synthetic RDF instances that could save him a lot of time avoiding the insertion of testing data.

The application will not just generate compatible triples instances, but also allow the user to modify the automatically generated instances.

### **3.2.2 Schema Validation**

The Program should be designed to validate a user-defined RDF schema by checking the structural integrity and semantic consistency of its triples. Each triple conforms to syntactic constraints (e.g., proper use of IRIs, literals, and blank nodes) and the asserted relationships lead to any logical contradictions or unexpected inferences.

In case of errors in the schema description, feedback should be provided to the user, via UI or Terminal.

### **3.2.3 Multi-Vocabulary Support**

Interoperability and semantic richness are crucial for ensuring seamless data integration, enhancing knowledge representation, and enabling efficient querying and reasoning across diverse RDF datasets. By supporting multiple vocabularies and ontologies such as RDFS, FOAF, Schema.org and others, the system should be able to handle a wide range of RDF data sources and their visualization as graphs.

### **3.2.4 Import and Export**

The software should allow the users to import their custom RDF files, and export the file with the automatic generated instances in the same format.

### **3.2.5 Schema Visualization**

To simplify the exploration and analyzes of an RDF from a human eye, the program should be able to display the described RDF schema with its graphical representation. The displayed graph should have some interactive features like zooming, panning and node collapse.

The graphical representation should adapt based on the schema complexity and hierarchical structure.

In the IDE extension, the user should be able to visualize the graph in a side panel window next to the RDF file their working on.

### **3.3 Non-functional requirements**

#### **3.3.1 Performance**

The system should ensure high performance rendering of large RDF graphs to facilitate seamless visualization and interaction. Additionally, operations such as node selection and zooming should be executed with minimal latency to maintain a responsive user experience. The system should optimize rendering pipelines to support real-time exploration of complex RDF schemas without compromising efficiency.

#### **3.3.2 Usability**

Both the IDE extension and the web application should feature an intuitive and user-centric interface that enhances accessibility and minimizes the learning curve for users. To achieve this objective, the design should incorporate familiar UI elements or skeuomorphic design principles, ensuring a seamless and intuitive user experience.

#### **3.3.3 Compatibility**

To ensure seamless integration across various development environments, the web service should be designed with cross-platform compatibility, enabling effortless adoption in different IDEs with minimal modifications. This approach enhances interoperability, allowing the service to function efficiently within diverse software ecosystems while maintaining consistent performance and usability.

To validate this, minor features in a secondary IDE should be implemented.

### **3.4 Technical Requirements**

#### **3.4.1 Web Architecture**

The system should be designed with a client-server architecture. There are no constraints on the specific technologies (e.g. SOAP, REST, gRPC), but it must follow the web principles and use Web technologies, such as HTML, CSS, JavaScript or WebAssembly, and protocols (e.g. HTTP, WebSockets).

#### **3.4.2 IDE extension**

The application should be accessible via a web-based client to ensure broad availability; however, primary emphasis should be placed on its integration as an extension within widely used IDEs.

## 3.5 Data privacy and Security

### 3.5.1 Security

To ensure the confidentiality and integrity of RDF data, the system should implement secure data transmission protocols, such as HTTPS, to protect sensitive information during transmission.

### 3.5.2 Confidentiality

Based on the current design, no information should be saved from the Business Logic Layer.

All data processing occurs in-memory, either on the client-side or server-side, ensuring that no persistent storage of user data takes place within the system. This ephemeral data handling approach significantly reduces the risk of data retention and unauthorized access. As a result, compliance requirements related to long-term data storage, such as those outlined in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), are minimized.

## 3.6 Solution strategy

As stated previously in the requirements section, the system is designed with a client-server architecture, where the client and server play distinct roles in the overall functionality.

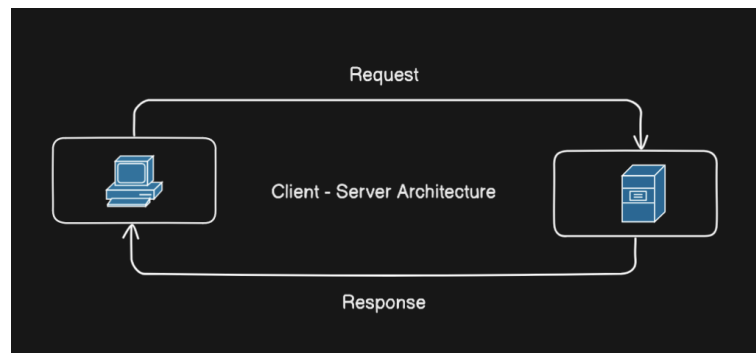


Figure 3.1: Client / Server

### 3.6.1 Client

To ensure a broad availability of the system, the system is designed to support two type of user-agents:

- Browsers
- Integrated Development Environments



The Browser chosen by the user, should be able to access the web application via HTTP requests protocol. The user will then upload their RDF file and send it to the server. The Client will then receive the processed information and display the resulting graph.

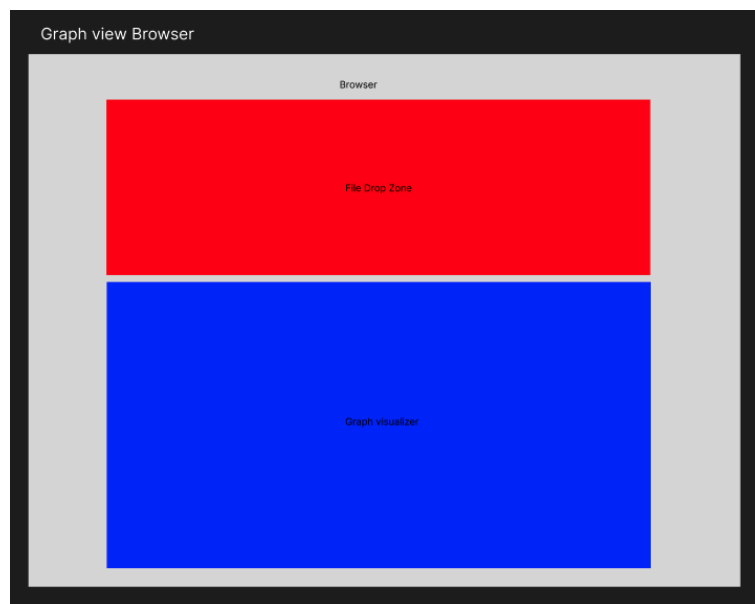


Figure 3.2: Browser file drop zone and graph view

In addition to this, the user should be able to read the RDF file with the generated instances next to its graphical representation.

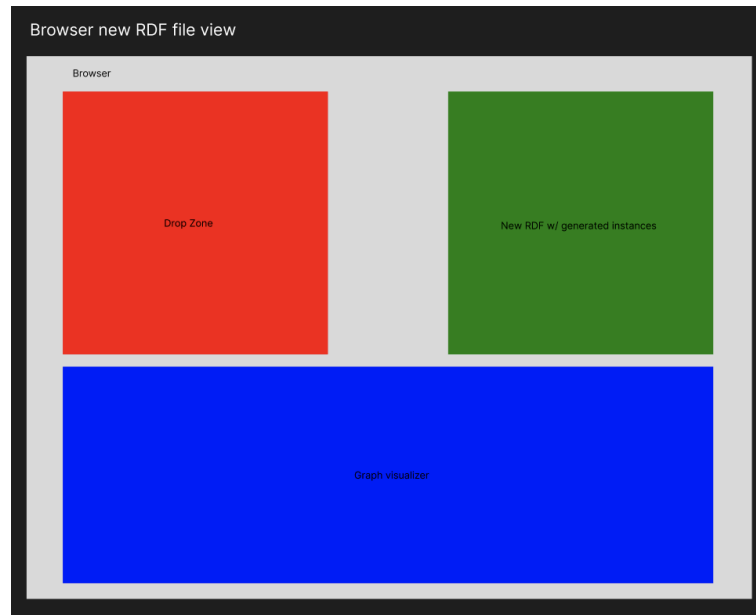


Figure 3.3: Browser new RDF side panel view

Within the IDE, the user experience UX will be slight different from the Browser one. Instead of manually uploading an RDF file, users will interact with the system directly within the IDE. By working on an RDF file and executing a predefined command, a web-based visualization panel of the file on focus will be dynamically launched as a side panel within the IDE. This panel will render an interactive graphical representation of the RDF schema in real time, allowing users to analyze relationships, structures, and dependencies without disrupting their coding environment.



Figure 3.4: IDE Graph side panel view

The extension will not only support the visualization of RDF files in the format requested by the user, similar to its browser counterpart, but it will also enable real-time modification of the file.

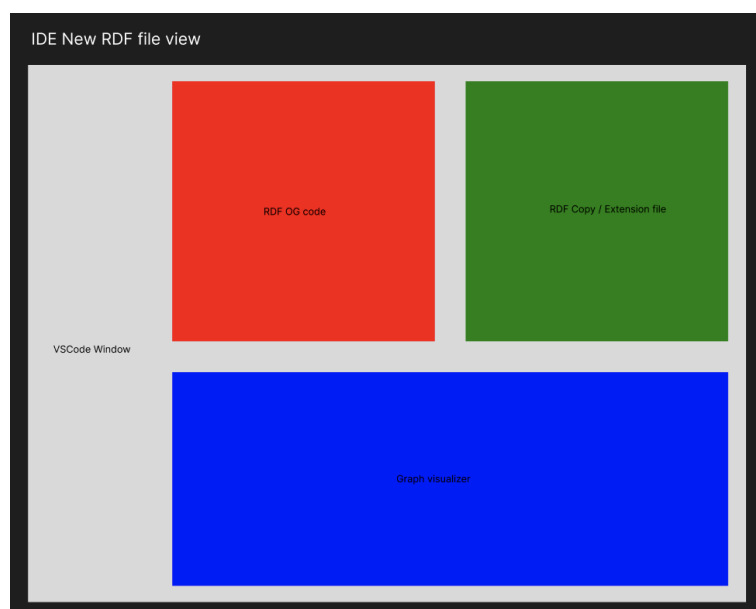


Figure 3.5: IDE new RDF side panel view

### 3.6.2 Server

To assure system interoperability across various device, Operative Systems, and User-Agents, the server is responsible for all computational tasks and data processing. By centralizing calculations and graph data manipulation on the server side, the server minimizes client-side resource consumption and enhances performance consistency.

The server place a crucial role in managing RDF data ensuring schema validation, instance generation, SPARQL query processing, and graph construction.

When the server receives an RDF file, it must scan the file to see potential floss, syntactic or semantic errors. It should be able to handle multiple RDF serialization formats such as Turtle, N3, XML, and JSON-LD.

The service must be able to generate synthetic RDF instances based on a given schema. It must ensure logical consistency between the generated schema and the original one. The system should be able to identify classes and properties within an RDF schema and generate additional instances where necessary to maintain semantic correctness. This is particularly important in cases where a property references an instance of a specific class that has not been explicitly defined in the dataset. For example, if a schema includes a `hasCar` property that requires an instance of the `Car` class, but no such instance exists, the system should automatically create one. This ensures that the schema remains logically consistent and that all property constraints are met. By dynamically generating required instances, the system helps maintain data integrity, prevents incomplete assertions, and improves the reliability of reasoning processes within RDF applications.

The additional instance generated should have properties and values in order to be consistent

## Chapter 4

# Concept

This chapter introduces the architectural design of Component X. The component consists of subcomponent A, B and C.

In the end of this chapter you should write a specification for your solution, including interfaces, protocols and parameters.

### 4.1 Sub-component A

The concept chapter provides a high-level explanation of your solution. Try to explain the overall structure with a picture. You can also use UML sequence diagrams for explanation.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the situation between Alice and Bob. (sequence diagram from [www.websequencediagrams.com](http://www.websequencediagrams.com))

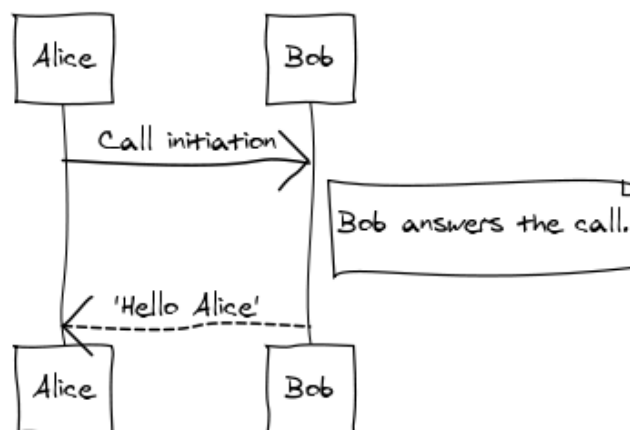


Figure 4.1: Alice and Bob

## **4.2 Sub-component B**

Lorem Ipsum...

## **4.3 Proposed API**

Lorem Ipsum...

## **4.4 Layer X**

Lorem Ipsum...

## **4.5 Interworking of X and Y**

Lorem Ipsum...

## **4.6 Interface Specification**

Lorem Ipsum...

## Chapter 5

# Implementation

This chapter describes the implementation of component X. Three systems were chosen as reference implementations: a desktop version for Windows and Linux PCs, a Windows Mobile version for Pocket PCs and a mobile version based on Android.

### 5.1 Environment

The following software, respectively operating systems, were used for the implementation:

- Windows XP and Ubuntu 6
- Java Development Kit (JDK) 6 Update 10
- Eclipse Ganymede 3.4
- Standard Widget Toolkit 3.4

### 5.2 Project Structure

The implementation is separated into 2 distinguished eclipse projects as depicted in figure 5.1.

The following listing briefly describes the single packages of both projects in alphabetical order to give an overview of the implementation:

#### **config**

Lorem Ipsum...

#### **server**

Lorem Ipsum...

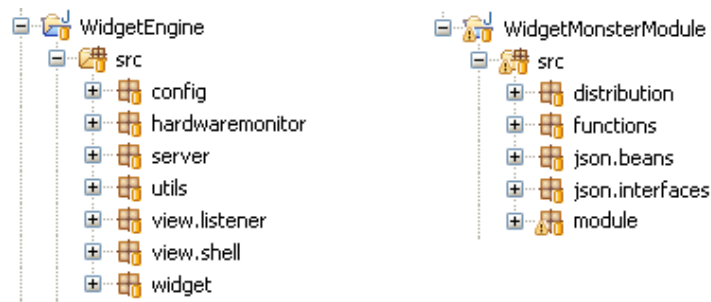


Figure 5.1: Project Structure

## utils

Lorem Ipsum...

## 5.3 Important Implementation Aspects

Do not explain every class in detail. Give a short introduction about the modules or the eclipse projects. If you want to explain relevant code snippets use the 'lstlisting' tag of LaTeX. Put only short snippets into your thesis. Long listing should be part of the annex.

Listing 5.1: JSON String Code Snippet

```
{
    id: 1,
    method: "myInstance.getGroup",
    params: ["Teammates", 2, true]
}

{
    id: 2,
    result: [
        "groupDesc":" These are my teammates",
        {
            "javaClass ":" src . package . MemberClass",
            "memberName": "Bob",
        }
    ]
}
```

You can also compare different approaches. Example: Since the implementation based on X failed I choosed to implement the same aspect based on Y. The new approach resulted in



a much faster ...

## **5.4 Graphical User Interface**

Lorem Ipsum...

## **5.5 Documentation**

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# Chapter 6

## Evaluation

In this chapter the implementation of Component X is evaluated. An example instance was created for every service. The following chapter validates the component implemented in the previous chapter against the requirements.

Put some screenshots in this section! Map the requirements with your proposed solution. Compare it with related work. Why is your solution better than a concurrent approach from another organization?

### 6.1 Test Environment

Fraunhofer Institute FOKUS' Open IMS Playground was used as a test environment for the telecommunication services. The IMS Playground ...

### 6.2 Scalability

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### 6.3 Usability

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### 6.4 Performance Measurements

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# Chapter 7

## Conclusion

The final chapter summarizes the thesis. The first subsection outlines the main ideas behind Component X and recapitulates the work steps. Issues that remained unsolved are then described. Finally the potential of the proposed solution and future work is surveyed in an outlook.

### 7.1 Summary

Explain what you did during the last 6 month on 1 or 2 pages!

The work done can be summarized into the following work steps

- Analysis of available technologies
- Selection of 3 relevant services for implementation
- Design and implementation of X on Windows
- Design and implementation of X on mobile devices
- Documentation based on X
- Evaluation of the proposed solution

### 7.2 Dissemination

Who uses your component or who will use it? Industry projects, EU projects, open source...? Is it integrated into a larger environment? Did you publish any papers?

### 7.3 Problems Encountered

Summarize the main problems. How did you solve them? Why didn't you solve them?

## 7.4 Outlook

Future work will enhance Component X with new services and features that can be used

...

# Appendix





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## Acknowledgment

Since with a thesis usually a personal phase of life ends, it is customary to end the work with an acknowledgment. But it should not be phrased too pathetically, that it seems exaggerated.

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