

Udacity Data Analysis Degree Project 01: Weather Trends

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Abstract—Structured Query Language (SQL) was used to download Comma Separated Value files (CSV) containing the yearly average temperatures of Berlin and the planet, which was then analyzed using Python. It was found that global temperatures have been rising exponentially over recent years. It has been hypothesised that the trend in rising temperature is due to increased carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere since this rise in temperature takes place roughly at the same time as the industrial revolution.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE discussion on Global warming has been a topic of fierce debate in politics in recent years. The debate is largely centered around whether or not global temperatures are spiking, what mechanisms drive this change and what is to be done about it. In this publication, global weather data has been analyzed to determine whether or not temperatures are climbing over time and, if so, how fast it is changing. The mechanisms behind any observed changes and what can be done to address it are outside the scope of this publication.

II. METHODS

The data used in this analysis was collected from a database using Structured Query Language (SQL) and was subsequently processed using various libraries in Python. (i.e. Pandas, Numpy and Matplotlib) The scripts that contain step by step information about how it was written and can be found at the following url ¹. After a simple visualisation was created, the data was then transformed using a seven year moving average in order to make trends more clear and less prone to random fluctuations in the data.

A. SQL

The data was exported using the following code;

```
SELECT *
FROM city_data
WHERE city = 'Berlin';

Select *
FROM global_data;
```

The resulting CSV files were saved to the github repository.

¹<https://github.com/SThornewillvE/Udacity-Project—Exploring-Weather-Trends>

B. Python

The CSV files were imported into Python using Pandas. Initial investigation of the data revealed that there were missing values prior to the year 1950 for the Berlin dataset. The global dataset also had missing values for the years past 2013. Subsequently, these entries were dropped in order to give the data the same shape for analysis. Cleaning the data in this way meant that no imputation was necessary which is preferable since imputation would create fake data which can sometimes create misleading trends if not done properly.

The data was then transformed into a 7 year moving average using the following Python algorithm, where the variable “moving” is the amount of years used for the moving average:

```
moving = 7
average = []
TempMovingAverageDF = AvgTempDF

for i in range(len(AvgTempDF)):
    average.append(
        np.average(
            AvgTempDF.iloc[(i-moving):i, 1]))

for i in range(len(AvgTempDF)):
    TempMovingAverageDF.iloc[i, 1] = average[i]
```

It should be noted that this is an abstracted algorithm and is not an exact copy of the code, for more information see the github repository. After the data was cleaned and transformed it was plotted using the Matplotlib library.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was found that the average global temperature is increasing over time as can be seen in figure 1 where the average global temperature, shown in orange, has high fluctuations in the mid 1700s which slowly stabilizes into an upward trend. The beginning of the upward trend coincides with the start of the industrial revolution where humans began to harness fossil fuels as a form of energy resulting in the rise greenhouse gas emissions.

The average temperature in Berlin has a wider variance than the global average over time due to the global average containing various biomes with differing atmospheric properties such as pressure and chemical composition, precipitation types, latitude/longitude, altitude relative to sea level and sunlight exposure. Covering large and varied areas means that it is difficult to change the global average values. The average temperature is also driven downward relative to Berlin because it does not have icy tundras and arctic areas.

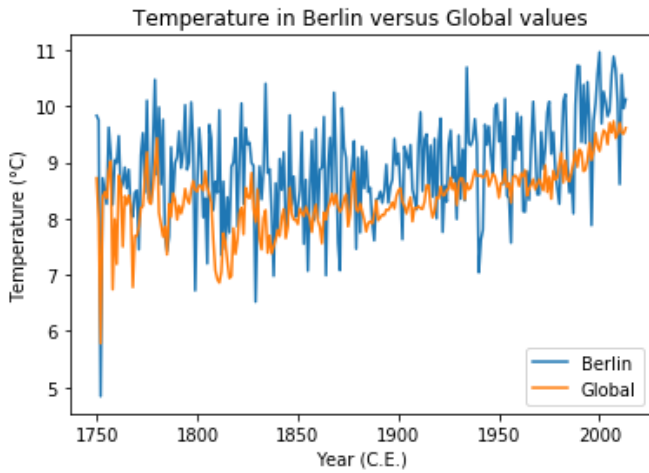


Fig. 1. Average temperature in Celsius over time in years before data transformations with Berlin shown in blue and Global values shown in orange.

However, Berlin also does not contain scorching deserts either, this means that the global average tends to have more cold places relative to Berlin than warm ones.

When the data was transformed to a 7 year moving average, as can be seen by figure 2. The trends become more obvious because they are less obscured by sporadic fluctuation and become more consistent as they become less prone to outliers as seen with the consistent global temperatures. However, if temperatures rise uniformly then this will result in a higher average.

It is well known to statisticians that the mean is a metric that is prone to outliers, this means that it could be possible to stabilise the values further by using a metric which does not have this drawback. The mode is a metric which meets this condition as metric of central tendency which is known to be less prone to outliers making likely to be a better candidate than the mean.

The same trend of Berlin having a higher temperature relative to the global average and the presence of large fluctuations in temperatures during the late 1700s is still evident. However, the exponential rise of temperature over time becomes easier to spot as the temperature rises at an accelerating rate as the years progress. This suggests that the forces which are driving climbing temperatures are compounding themselves. This could coincide with the rising carbon dioxide emissions per capita as the global population increases exponentially. However, the causal reason for the change cannot be inferred from this data alone and thus what problems rising temperatures will have and what should be done about them cannot be discussed in this analysis.

This evidence could cause for alarm because there are many systems on the planet which are dependent on temperature from atmospheric chemistry which determines the quality of air to dissolved carbon dioxide in the water, which can

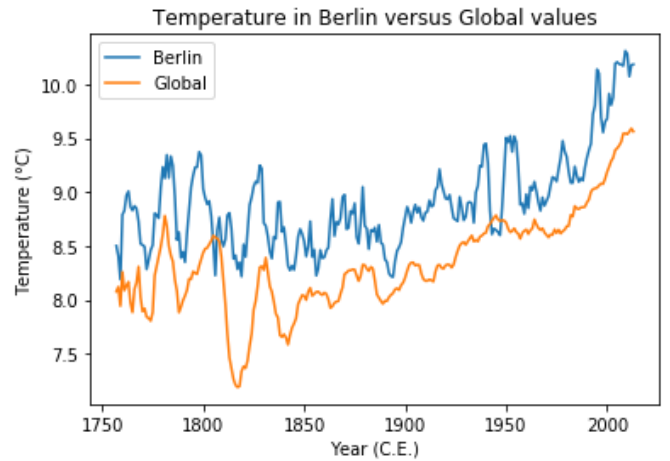


Fig. 2. Seven year moving average of the temperature in Berlin (shown in blue) against the corresponding Global values.

decrease the acidity of various bodies of water, which can then have knock on effects for aquatic life or oceanic currents. Affected organisms which are part of a large network can also propagate problems further. Hence, if the rising temperature should be a problem then it should also be able to see these effects across various scientific disciplines. It is worth noting that the rising temperature of the globe by roughly 1.5°C is not trivial and requires a large amount of energy to do as discussed earlier in this document. Hence, whatever is causing this ought to be a proportionally large process.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is evidence to suggest that the temperature of the globe has been rising over the past century at a rate which seems to be exponential. This could have a profound effect on global ecosystems as many of them are dependent on temperature in order to function naturally. More research is required in order to determine where this change in temperature comes from and what should be done about it if at all and what this could mean for the world.