

Introduction to version control with Git

Day 1: Concepts and a basic workflow

Selina Baldauf

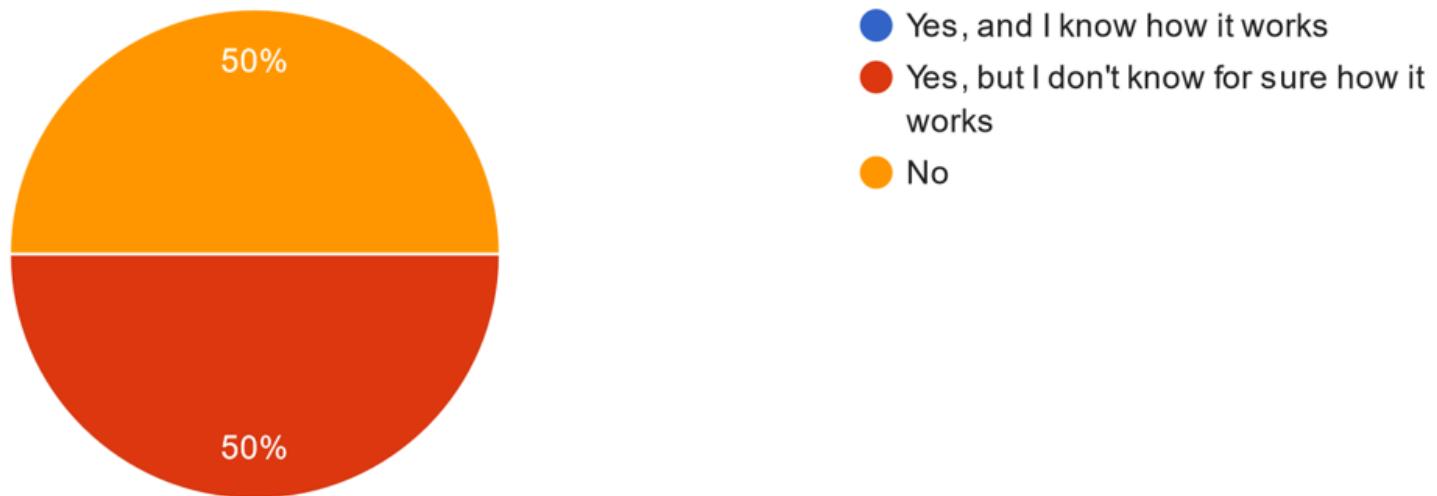
September 24, 2025

Who am I?

-  Scientific programmer @ theoretical ecology group
-  PhD in **dryland ecology** modelling dryland ecohydrology
-  Teaching R, Git, good scientific practice, ...

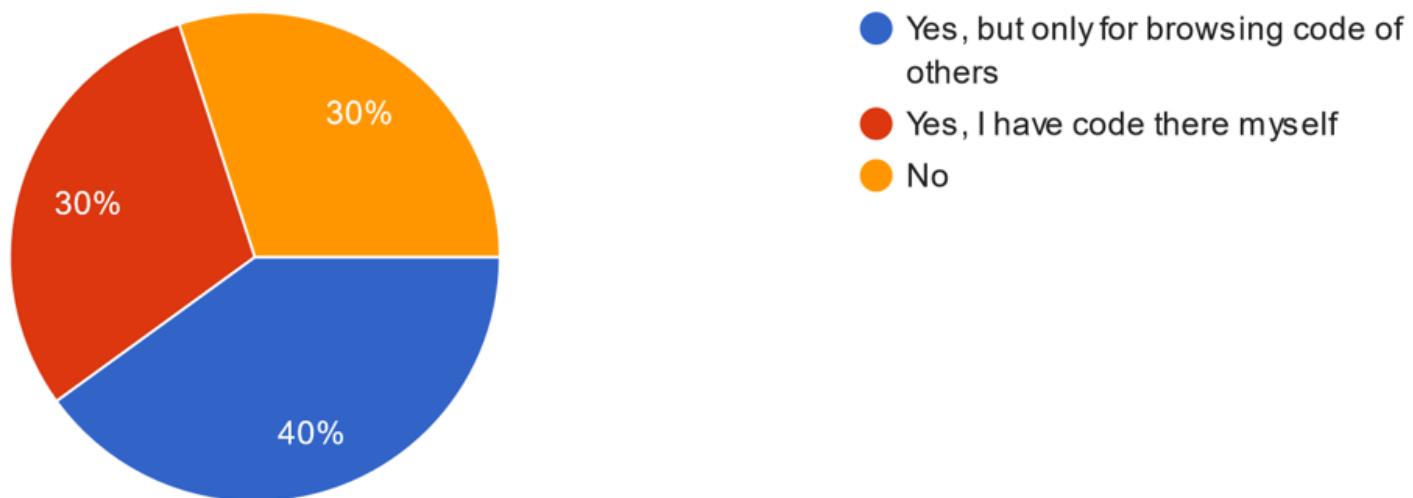
Do/Did you already use git?

12 responses



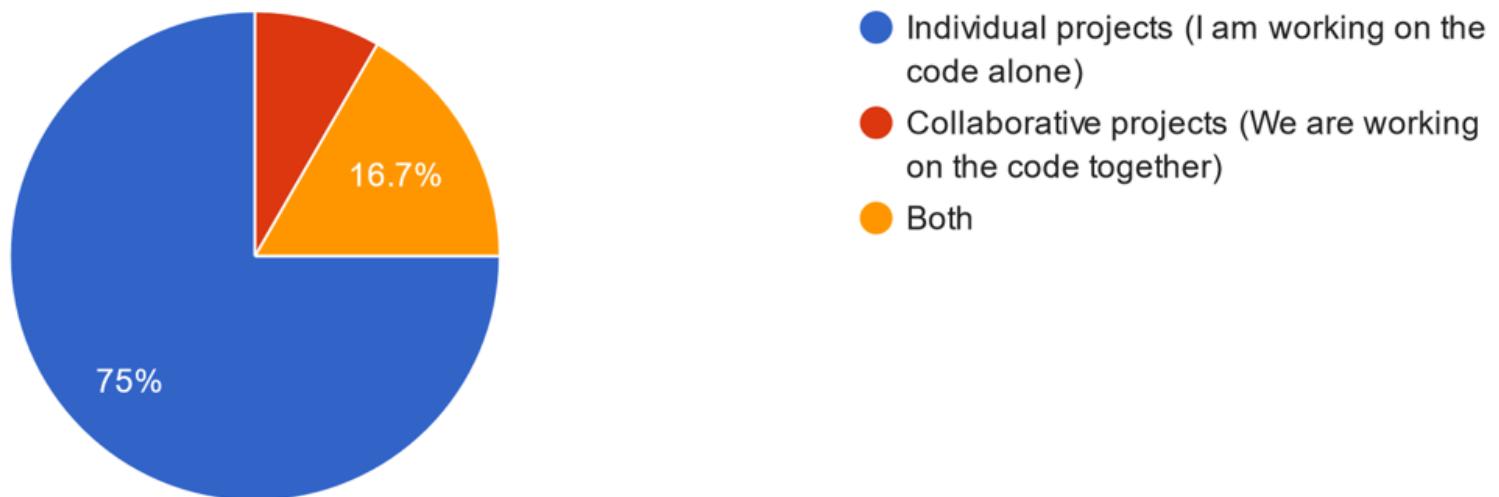
Do you already use Github/Gitlab/...?

10 responses



Which types of projects do you usually work on?

12 responses



What do you want to learn?

how to **efficiently** use
github and what are
the main advantages

... version control for
my **R** projects

... **easily applicable**
workflows

overview on how
git/github does work and
how I can improve **using it**
in the command line

... incorporate an **easy** version
control in my workflow, hopefully
making mobile working easier by
working locally and then pushing
things back to the common storage

... ways to **work collaboratively**
without getting lost in code versions ...

... use git/github for **looking at**
code of others and how to use
it for **keeping my own code.**

... how to **publish code**
as supplement for
journal publications.

Why should I and how
can I use it?

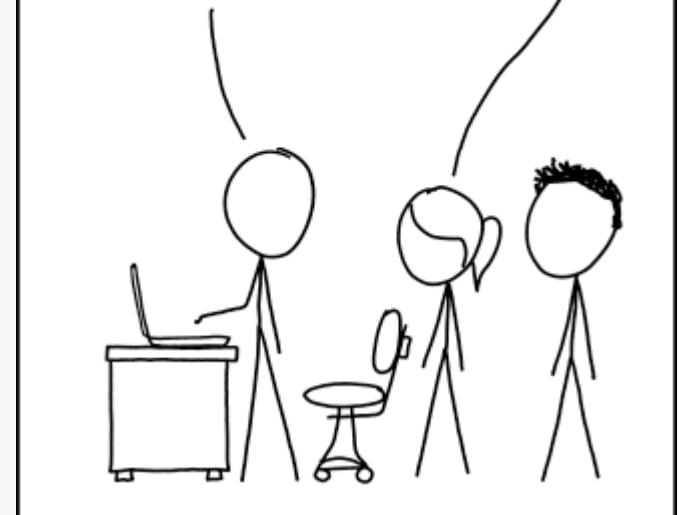
Aims of the workshop

Git is very powerful ...

... but can also be confusing in the beginning.

- 🎯 Learn simple Git workflows in theory and practice that you can immediately apply to your research projects.

THIS IS GIT. IT TRACKS COLLABORATIVE WORK ON PROJECTS THROUGH A BEAUTIFUL DISTRIBUTED GRAPH THEORY TREE MODEL.
COOL. HOW DO WE USE IT?
NO IDEA. JUST MEMORIZIZE THESE SHELL COMMANDS AND TYPE THEM TO SYNC UP. IF YOU GET ERRORS, SAVE YOUR WORK ELSEWHERE, DELETE THE PROJECT, AND DOWNLOAD A FRESH COPY.



xkcd on Git

Topics

Today 2 - 4 pm

Introduction to Git concepts and a simple workflow for your individual projects

Tomorrow 2 - 4 pm

Collaborate using Git and GitHub

Next Monday 2 - 3 pm

Q&A session and/or more advanced topics

Until then: work with Git on your own projects

Organization

- Material is all online
 - View and download slides, tasks and more from there
 - Will stay online after the workshop
- Certificate of attendance from the graduate center
- All questions and comments are welcome
- Feedback is welcome (Evaluation at the end of the workshop)
- If possible, please turn on your camera

Before we start

Did anyone have problems with the workshop preparation?

- Install Git
- Install GitHub Desktop
- Get a GitHub account and connect it with GitHub Desktop

Let's get started

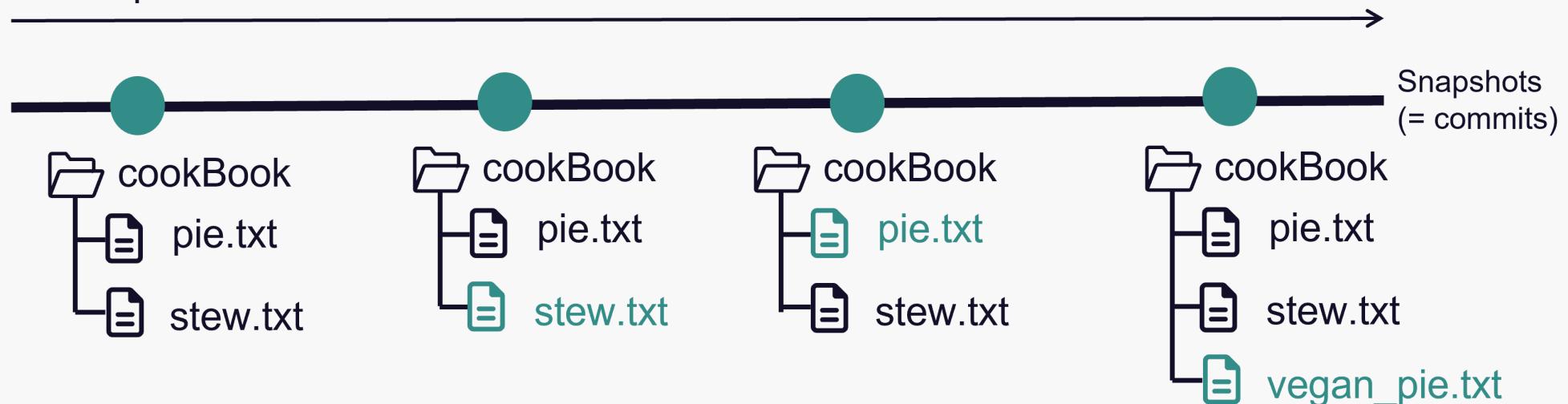
Version control with Git

- Complete and **long-term** history of every file in your project
- Open source and **free** to use version control software
- Quasi **standard** for software development
- A whole universe of **other software and services** around it

Version control with Git

- For projects with **mainly text files** (e.g. code, markdown files, ...)
- Basic idea: Take snapshots (**commits**) of your project over time

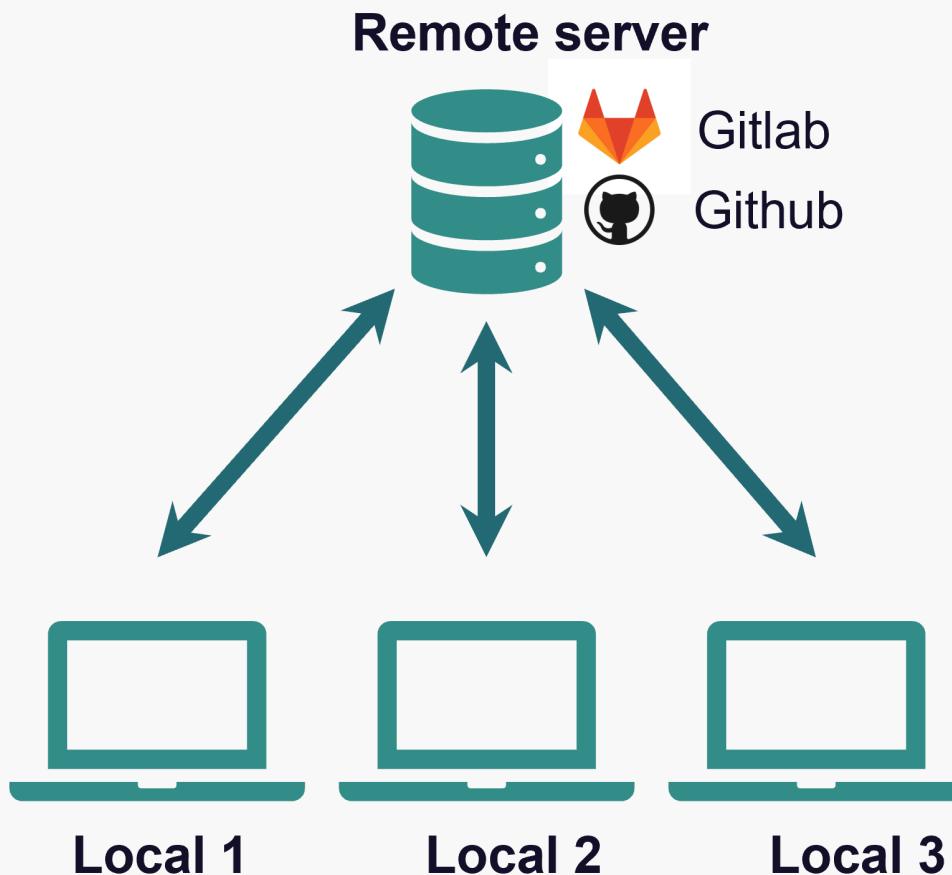
Development over time



- A project version controlled with Git is a **Git repository (repo)**

Version control with Git

Git is a **distributed version control system**



- Idea: many *local* repositories synced via one *remote* repo
- Everyone has a complete copy of the repo

Why to use Git?

- **Version control:** Keep a history of your project and roll back if needed
 - Git makes it very hard for you to loose things
 - Easy to figure out why code is suddenly broken
- **Collaboration:** Work together on the same project without loosing track
- **Publication:** Easily share your project with others (e.g. on Github)
- **Backup:** Have multiple copies of your project, one of them on a remote server
- ...

How to use Git

After you [installed](#) it there are different ways to interact with the software.

How to use Git - Terminal

Using Git from the terminal

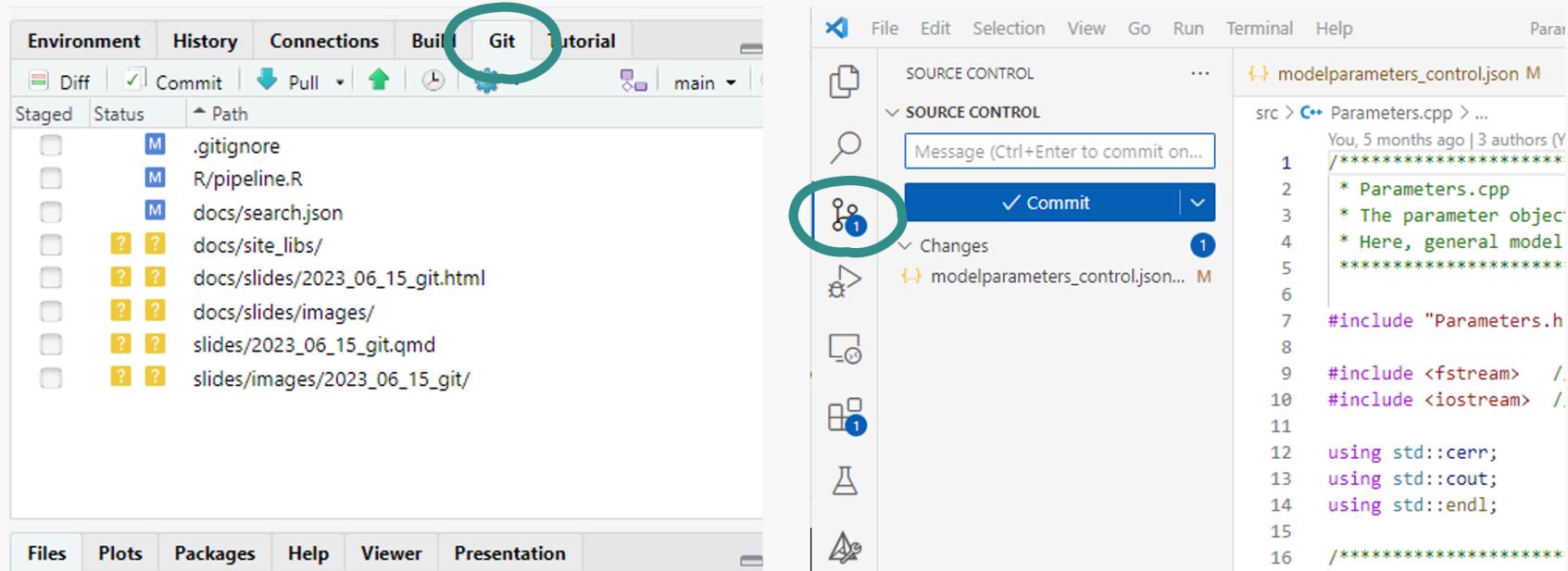
```
selina_user@DESKTOP-G0RM7MS MINGW64 ~/Files_Selina
$ cd Repos/02_workshops/first_git_project/

selina_user@DESKTOP-G0RM7MS MINGW64 ~/Files_Selina/Repos/02_workshops/first_git_
project
$ git init
Initialized empty Git repository in C:/Users/selina_user/Files_Selina/Repos/02_w
orkshops/first_git_project/.git/
selina_user@DESKTOP-G0RM7MS MINGW64 ~/Files_Selina/Repos/02_workshops/first_git_
project (master)
$ ..
```

- + Most control
- You need to use terminal 😱
- + A lot of help/answers online

How to use Git - Integrated GUIs

A Git GUI is integrated in most (all?) IDEs, e.g. R Studio, VS Code

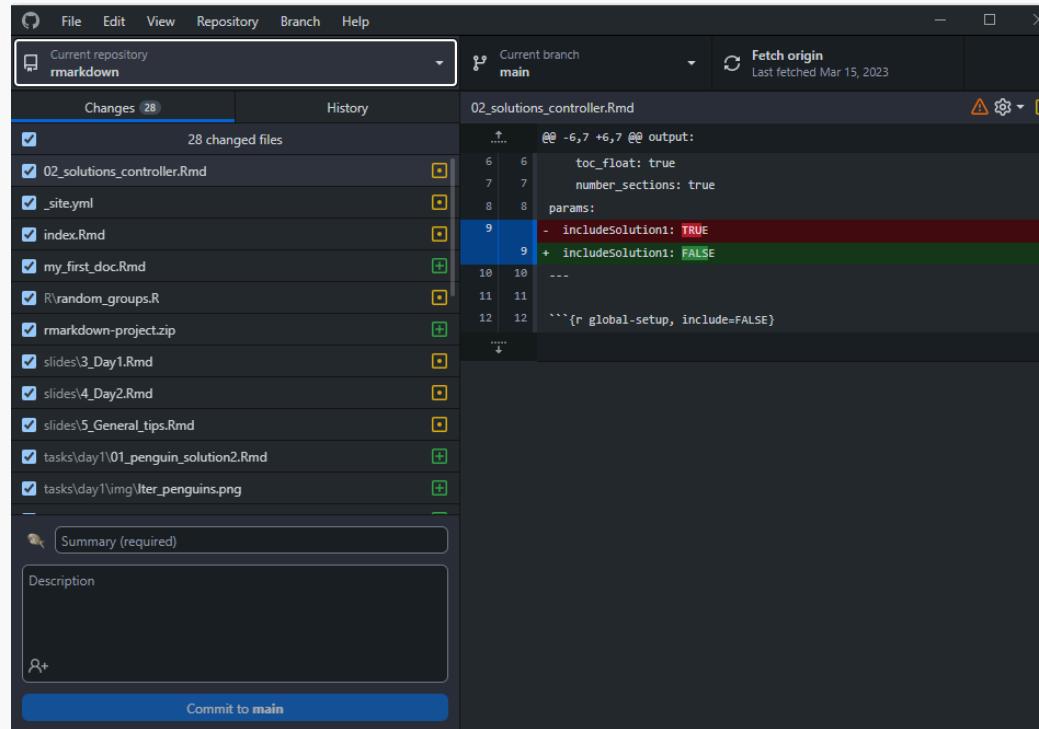


- + Easy and intuitive
- + Stay inside IDE

- Different for every program

How to use Git - Standalone GUIs

Standalone Git GUI software, e.g. GitHub Desktop, Source Tree, ...



- + Easy and intuitive
- + Use for all projects

- Switch programs to use Git

How to use Git

Which one to choose?

- Depends on experience and taste
- You can mix methods because they are all interfaces to the same Git
- We will use GitHub Desktop
 - Beginner-friendly, intuitive and convenient
 - Nice integration with GitHub



Tip

Have a look at the [website](#) where you find **How-To guides for the other methods** as well.

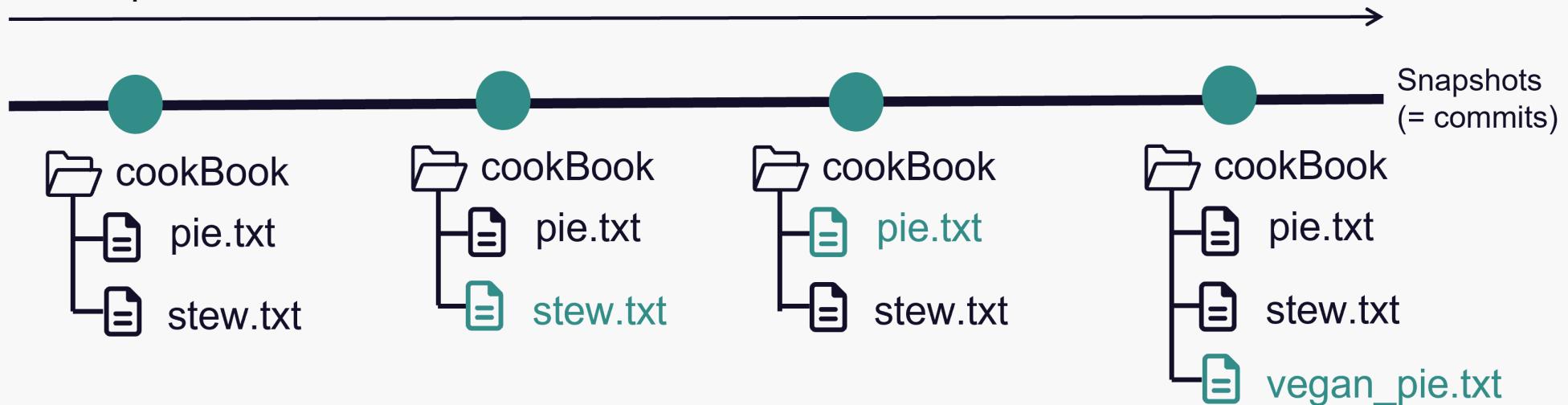
The basic Git workflow

git init, git add, git commit, git push

Example

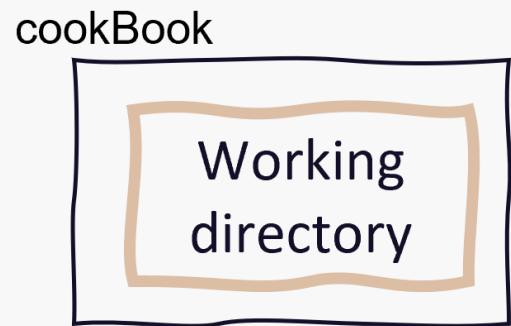
A cook book project to collect all my favorite recipes.

Development over time

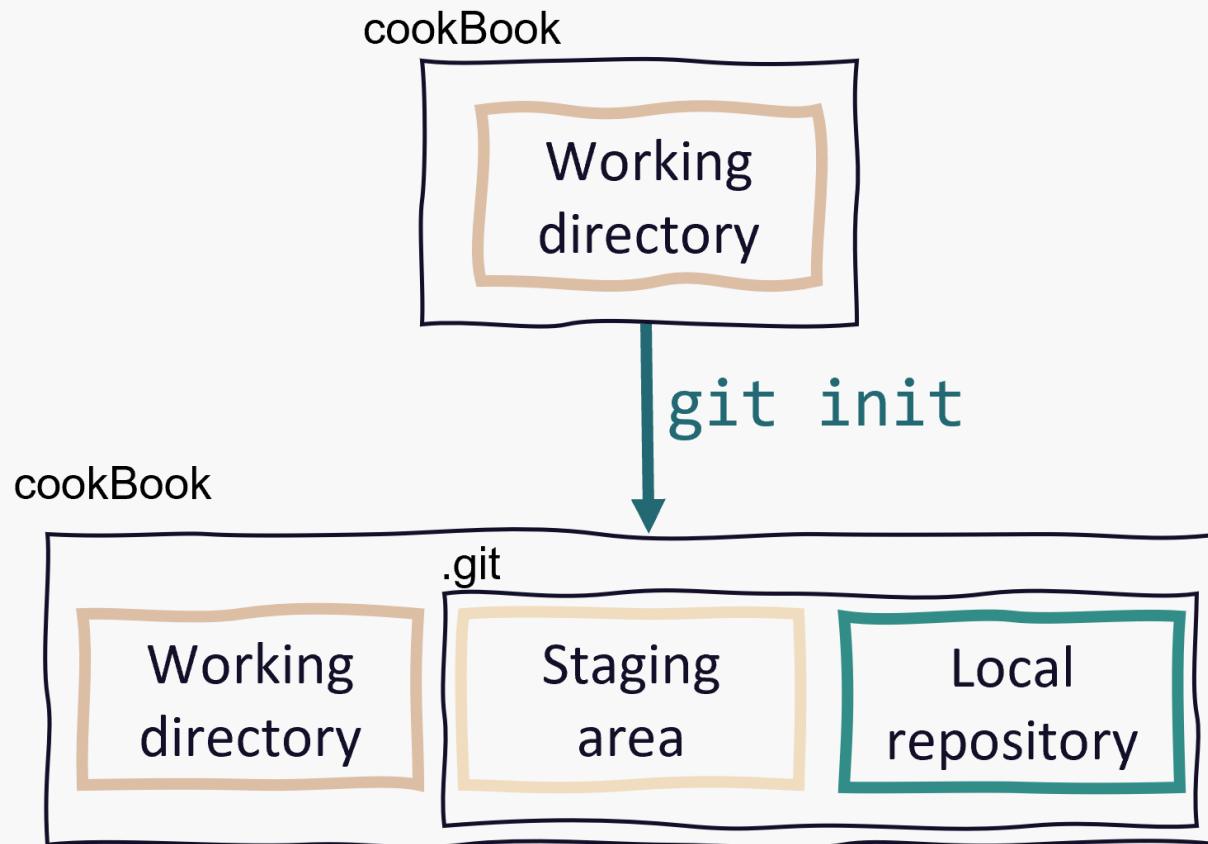


In real life this would be e.g. a data analysis project, your thesis in LaTex, a software project, ...

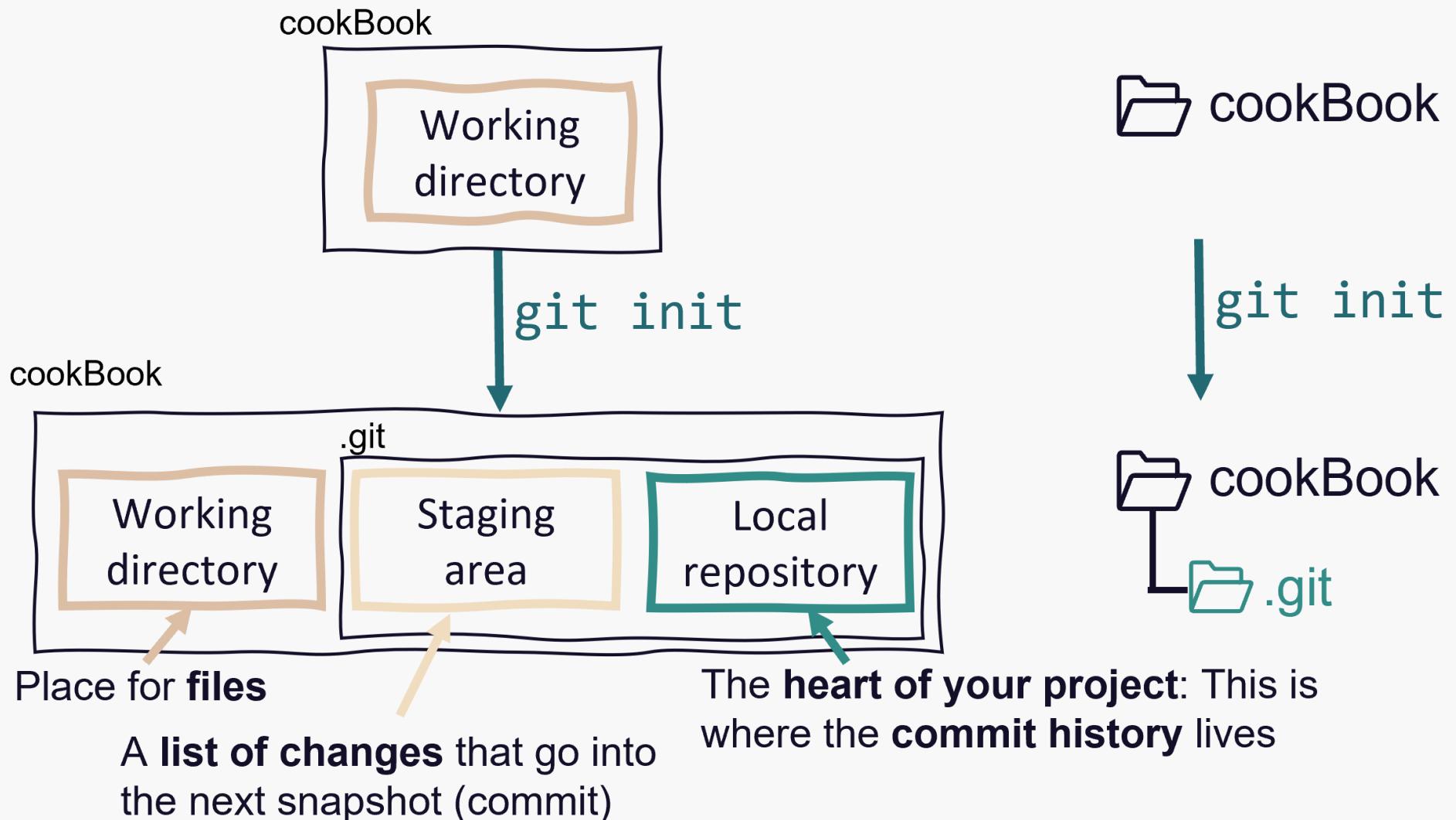
Step 1: Initialize a Git repository



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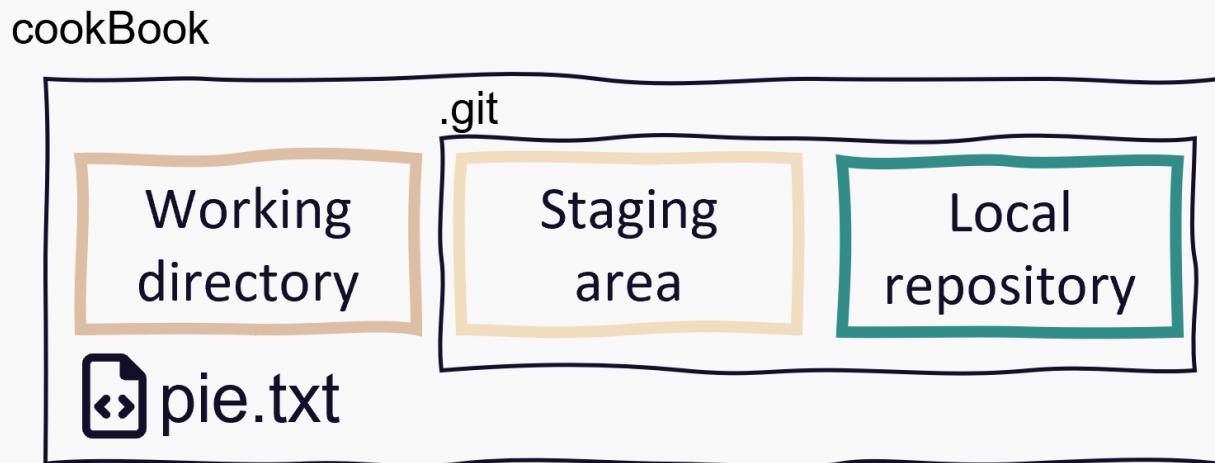


Step 1: Initialize a Git repository



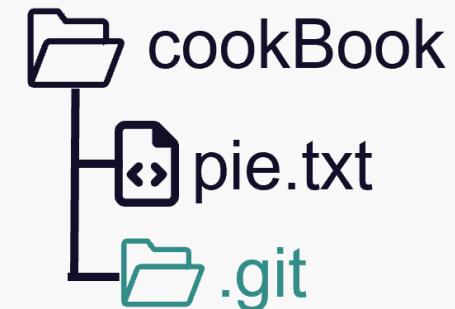
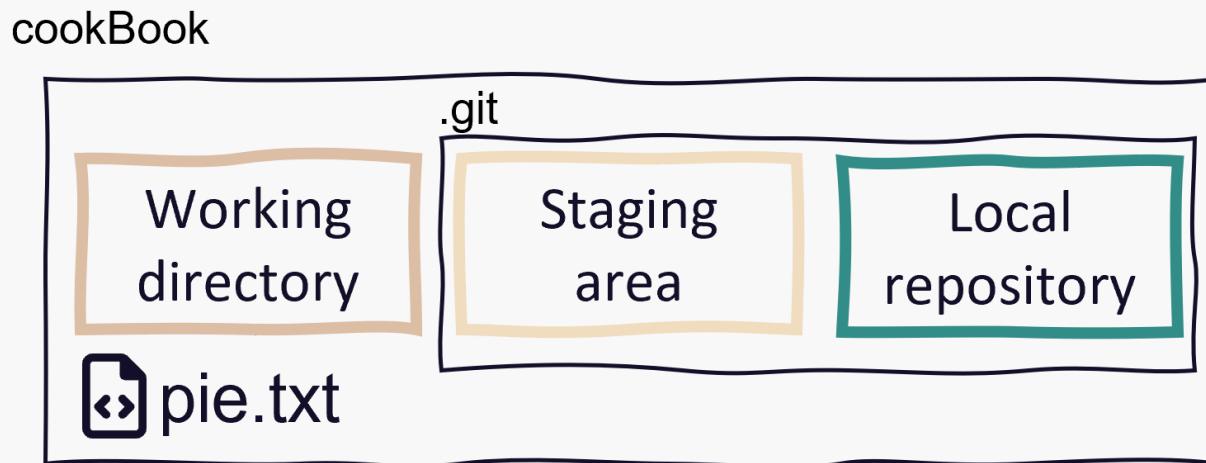
Step 2: Add and modify files

Git detects any changes in the working directory



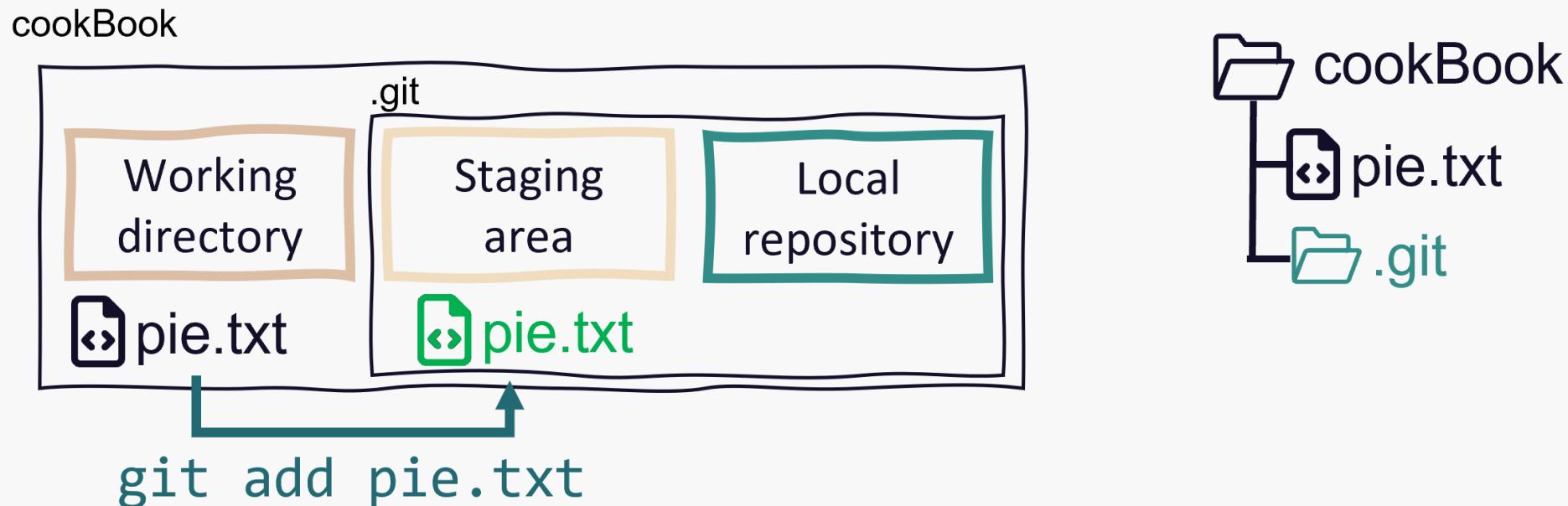
Step 2: Stage changes

Staging a file means to list it for the next commit.



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Staging a file means to list it for the next commit.



Step 3: Commit changes

Commits are the snapshots of your project state

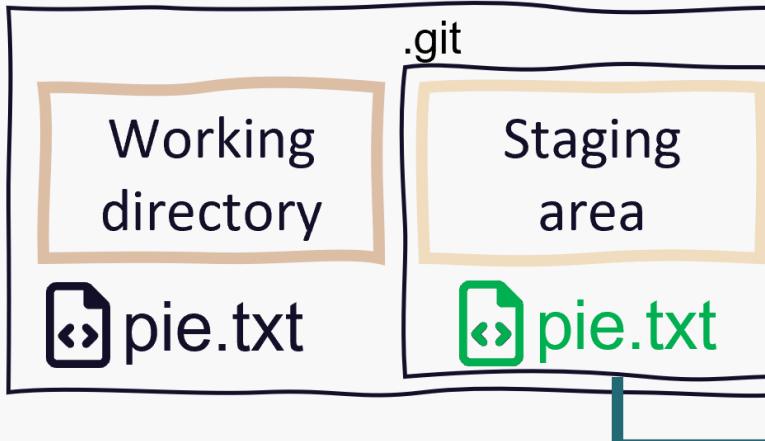
cookBook



Step 3: Commit changes

Commits are the snapshots of your project state

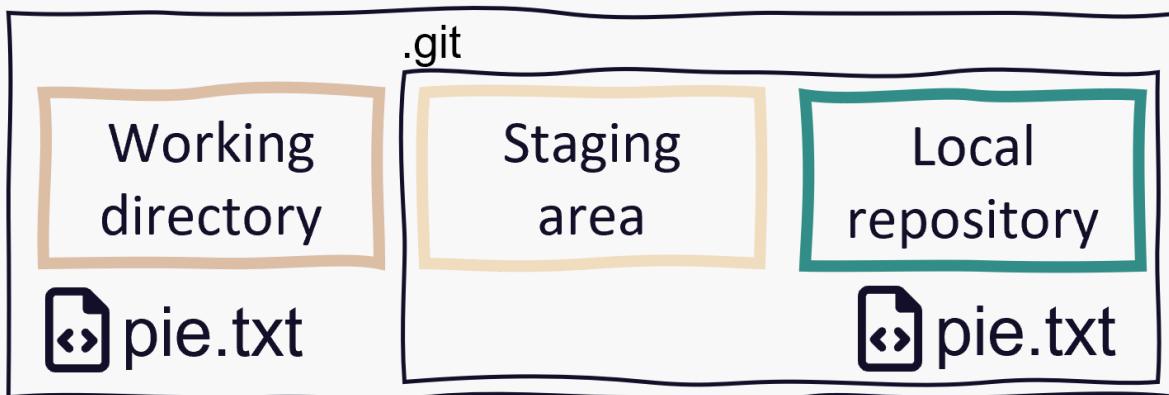
cookBook



Step 3: Commit changes

Changes are part of Git history and staging area is clear again

cookBook



How to write good commit messages?

	COMMENT	DATE
O	CREATED MAIN LOOP & TIMING CONTROL	14 HOURS AGO
O	ENABLED CONFIG FILE PARSING	9 HOURS AGO
O	MISC BUGFIXES	5 HOURS AGO
O	CODE ADDITIONS/EDITS	4 HOURS AGO
O	MORE CODE	4 HOURS AGO
O	HERE HAVE CODE	4 HOURS AGO
O	AAAAAAA	3 HOURS AGO
O	ADKFJSLKDFJSOKLFJ	3 HOURS AGO
O	MY HANDS ARE TYPING WORDS	2 HOURS AGO
O	HAAAAAAAAANDS	2 HOURS AGO

AS A PROJECT DRAGS ON, MY GIT COMMIT MESSAGES GET LESS AND LESS INFORMATIVE.

xkcd on commit messages

How to write good commit messages?



Add pie recipe

This is my favorite pie in the world.
The recipe comes from my grandfather and
he learned it from his neighbor.



added a file.

This is really good.

See [here](#) for more details but some general rules:

1. Limit summary line to 50 characters
2. Capitalize summary line
3. Do not end summary line with period
4. Use imperative mood in the subject line
5. Use the *Description* to explain **what** and **why**, not **how**

Now you (15 min)

Start your own cook book

Complete Task 1 “Local repo”

Stay in the meeting for the task.

Ask if you are stuck.

Turn down/off volume if you are disturbed.

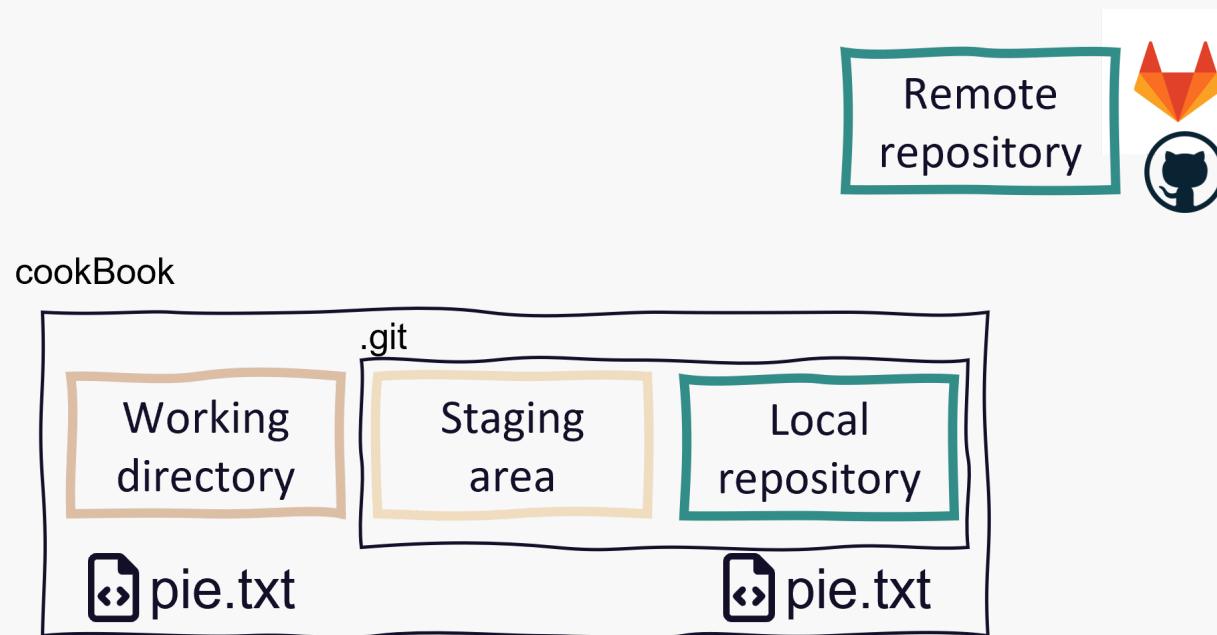
The commit history

			
8a800	97061	61f20	d96a0
Add pie recipe This is my favourite pie in the world. The recipe comes from my grandfather and he learned it from his neighbor.	Add lentil stew recipe	Replace milk with soy milk This is better for the environment and for cows	Add cooking duration Alice reminded me that I forgot to add the cooking duration. This was bad because the food got burned. This is now fixed.
+Best pie ever +100 ml milk +2 eggs	+stew.txt	- 100 ml milk +100 ml soy milk	+Bake time: 45 min +Cook time: 30 min
Selina Baldauf <selina.baldauf@fu-berlin.de.de>	Selina Baldauf <selina.baldauf@fu-berlin.de.de>	Bob Example <bob.example@email.com>	Selina Baldauf <selina.baldauf@fu-berlin.de.de>
Wed Jul 19 18:23:15 2023 +0200	Wed Jul 19 20:23:15 2023 +0200	Wed Jul 20 15:23:15 2023 +0200	Tue Aug 20 12:25:15 2023 +0200

Step 4: Share changes with the remote repo

Use remote repos (on a server) to **synchronize**, **share** and **collaborate**

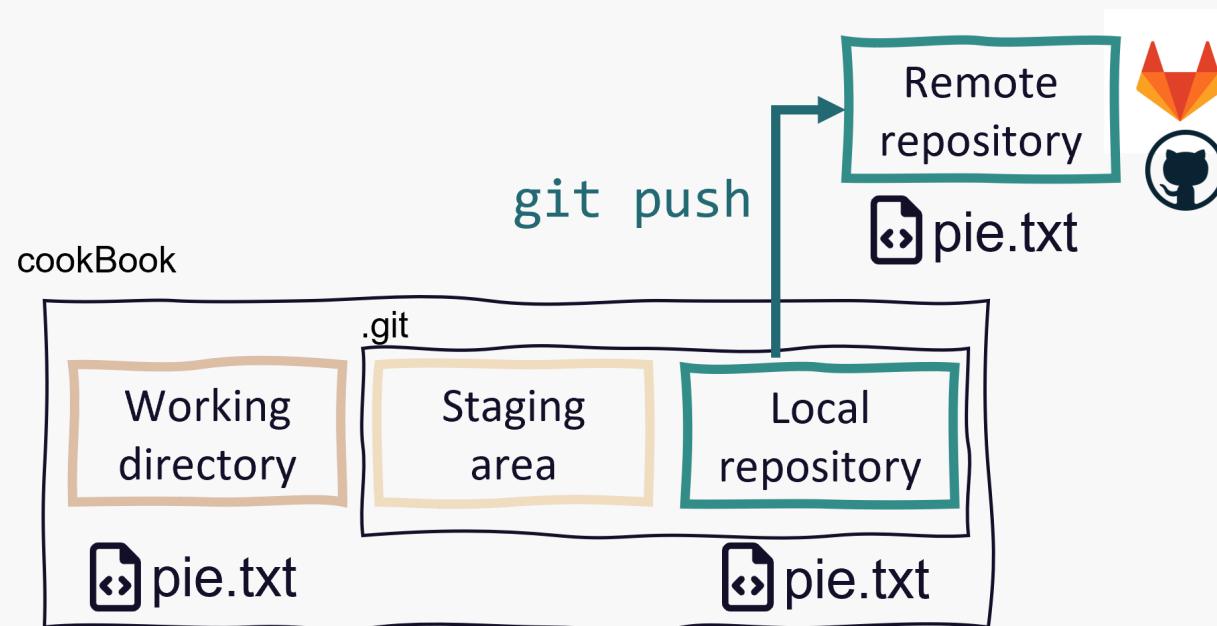
- Remote repos can be **private** (you + collaborators) or **public** (visible to anyone)



Step 4: Share changes with the remote repo

Use remote repos (on a server) to **synchronize**, **share** and **collaborate**

- Remote repos can be **private** (you + collaborators) or **public** (visible to anyone)



Different remote repositories

- There are **commercial** and **self-hosted** options for your remote repositories
 - Commercial: GitHub, Gitlab, Bitbucket, ...
 - Self-hosted: Gitlab (maybe at your institution?)
- Please be aware of your institutional guidelines
 - Servers outside EU
 - Privacy rules might apply depending on type of data

Make your repositories public

GitHub/Gitlab are a good way to publish and share your work.

Advantages of publishing your code

- Others can build on your work
- Citations
- Reproducibility
- Get feedback

Make your repositories public

You can increase the quality/complexity of your repo by

- Adding a nice README.md file
- Connecting the repo with Zenodo to get a DOI
- ...

If you are interested, browse some nice GitHub repositories for inspiration (e.g. [Git training repository](#), [Computational notebooks](#), [Repo to publish code from a manuscript](#))

Now you (10 min)

Publish your cook book on GitHub
Complete Task 2 “GitHub”

Summary of the basic steps

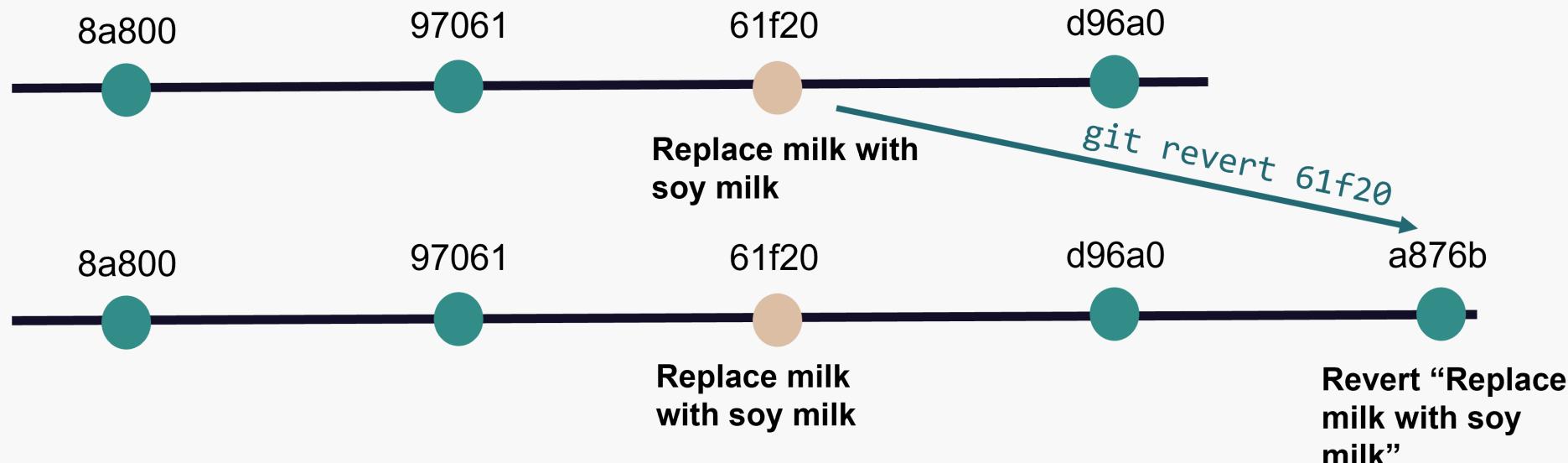
- `git init`: Initialize a git repository
 - Adds a `.git` folder to your working directory
- `git add`: Add files to the staging area
 - This marks the files as being part of the next commit
- `git commit`: Take a snapshot of your current project version
 - Includes time stamp, commit message and information on the person who did the commit
- `git push`: Push new commits to the remote repository
 - Sync your local project version with the remote e.g. on GitHub

Undo things

git revert

Revert changes

- Use `git revert` to revert specific commits
- This does not delete the commit, it creates a **new commit that undoes a previous commit**
 - It's a safe way to undo committed changes



Now you (5 min)

| Revert a commit from your cook book

Thanks for your attention

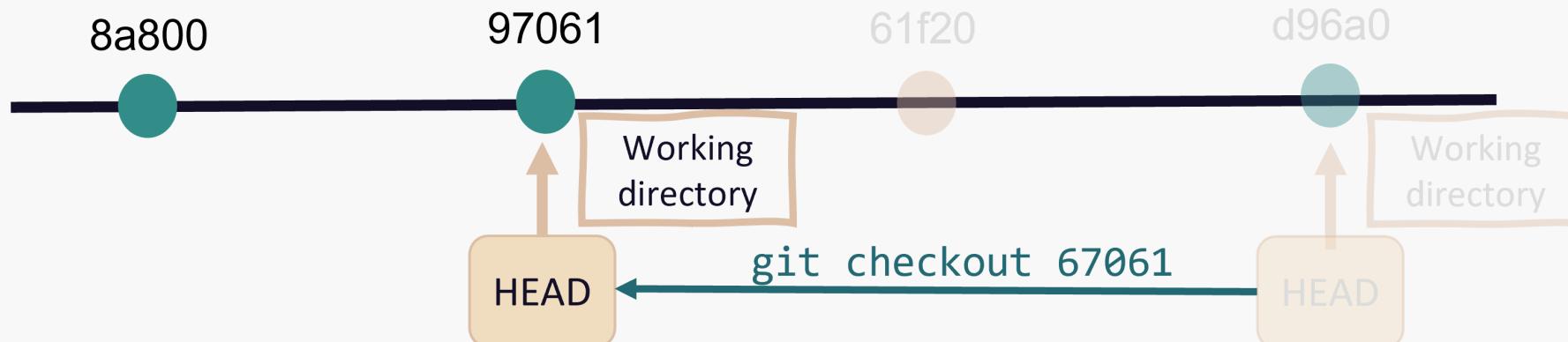
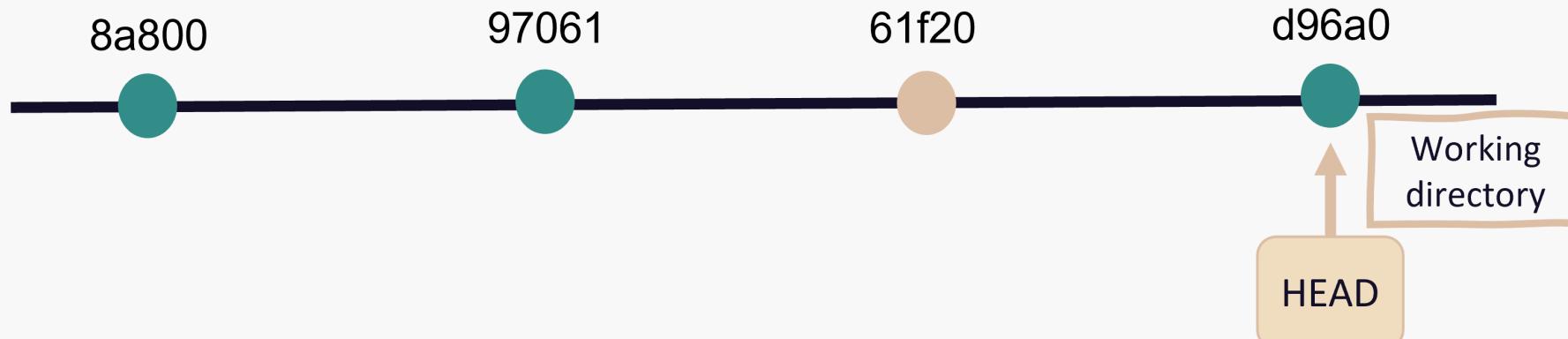
Questions?

Go back in time

```
git checkout
```

Checkout a previous commit

Take your work space back in time temporarily with `git checkout`



Ignoring files with
.gitignore

Ignore files with `.gitignore`

- Useful to ignore e.g.
 - Compiled code and build directories
 - Log files
 - Hidden system files
 - Personal IDE config files
 - ...

Ignore files with `.gitignore`

- Create a file with the name `.gitignore` in working directory
- Add all files and directories you want to ignore to the `.gitignore` file

Example

```
*.html      # ignore all .html files  
*.pdf       # ignore all .pdf files  
  
debug.log    # ignore the file debug.log  
  
build/      # ignore all files in subdirectory build
```

See [here](#) for more ignore patterns that you can use.

Preparation for tomorrow

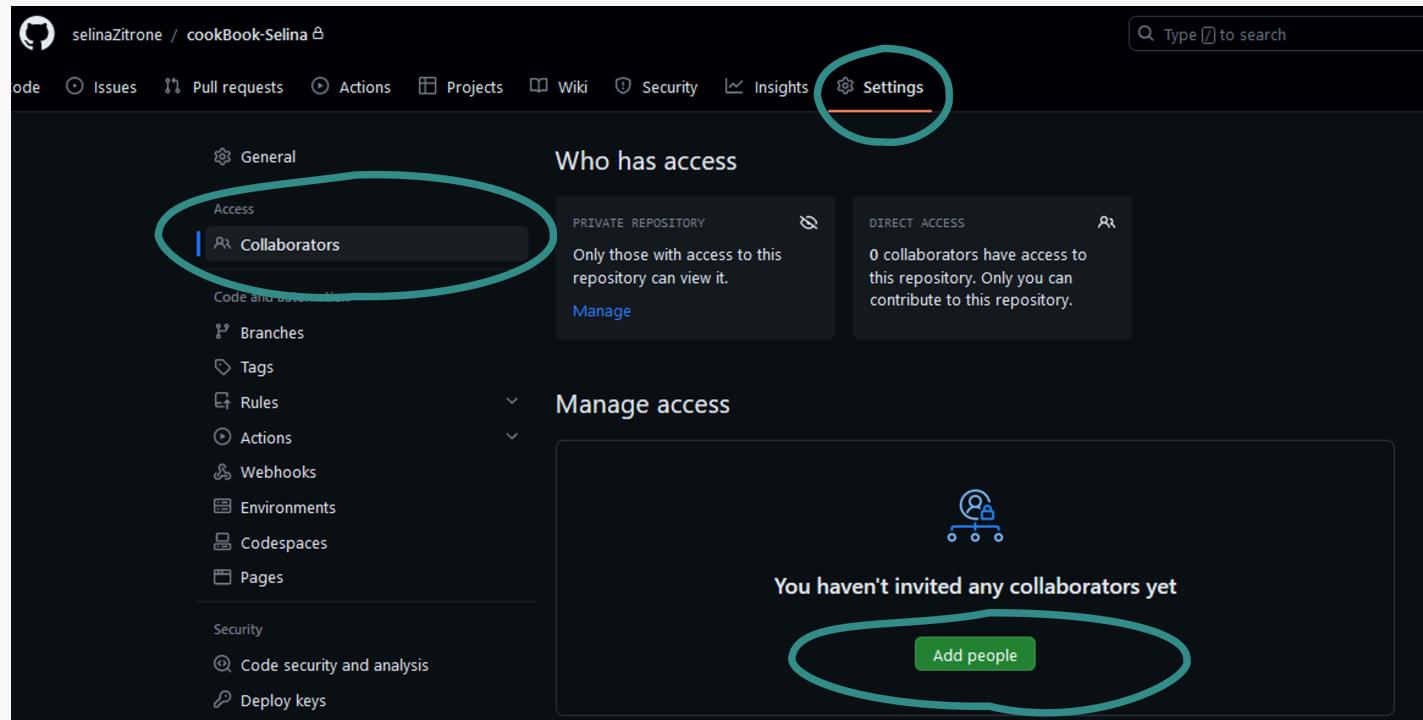
- Tomorrow we have teams of 2
- Collaborate on the cook book of your team mate

Preparation for tomorrow

1. Enter your GitHub Account Name and the link to your repo [here](#)

Preparation for tomorrow

1. Enter your GitHub Account Name and the link to your repo [here](#)
2. Look for the GitHub Name of your team mate and add them as a collaborator to your repository



Preparation for tomorrow

1. Enter your GitHub Account Name and the link to your repo [here](#)
2. Look for the GitHub Name of your team mate and add them as a collaborator to your repository
3. Accept the invitation of your team mate to their repository
 - You will get an Email or you can do it on GitHub