# Notes 06-5: Density Methods

A density method groups neighbouring objects into clusters based upon density conditions (i.e., such as the number of objects within a given radius of each object in the cluster exceeding some threshold).

The DBSCAN (Density-Based Spatial Clustering of Applications with Noise) method grows regions with sufficiently high density into clusters and discovers clusters of arbitrary shape in databases with noise (i.e., outliers).

Example – shape of clusters that DBSCAN can find

DIAGRAM = Clustering.G.1.a

The basic idea is that for each instance in a cluster, the neighbourhood of a given radius has to contain at least a minimum number of instances (i.e., the density in the neighbourhood has to exceed some threshold).

A discussion of DBSCAN relies on a number of concepts:

The *ε*-*neighbourhood* of an instance (i.e., a point) consists of the instances (i.e., points) within a radius *ε* of the instance.

A *core instance* is an instance whose *ε*-neighbourhood contains at least some minimum number of instances, minPts.

Example – core instances

DIAGRAM = Clustering.G.1.c1

Given a set of instances, *D*, an instance *i* is directly density-reachable from instances *j* if *i* is within the *ε*-neighbourhood of *j*, and *j* is a core instance.

Example – directly density-reachable instances

DIAGRAM = Clustering.G.1.c2

An instance *i* is *density-reachable* from instance *j* with respect to *ε* and minPts in a set of instances, *D*, if there is a chain of instances *i*1, *i*2, …, *in*, *i*1 = *j* and *in* = *i*, such that *ik*+1 is directly density-reachable from *ik* with respect to *ε* and minPts, for 1 ≤ *k* ≤ *n*, *ik* ∈ *D*.

Example – density-reachable instances

DIAGRAM = Clustering.G.1.c3

An instance *i* is *density-connected* to instance *j* with respect to *ε* and minPts in a set of instances, *D*, if there is an instance *p* ∈ *D* such that both *i* and *j* are density-reachable from *p* with respect to *ε* and minPts.

Example – density-connected instances

DIAGRAM = Clustering.G.1.c4

A cluster *K* with respect to *ε* and minPts is a non-empty subset of a set of instances, *D*, that satisfies the following conditions:

* For all instances *i* and *j*, if *i* ∈ *K* and *j* is density reachable from *i* with respect to *ε* and minPts, then *j* ∈ *K*.
* For all instances *i*, *j* ∈ *K*, *i* is density-connected to *j* with respect to *ε* and minPts.

If *K*1, …, *Kk* are the clusters of a set of instances, *D*, with respect to *εi* and minPts*i*, *i* = 1, …, *k*, then noise is the set of instances in *D* not belonging to any *Ki*.

The general approach used by DBSCAN

DBSCAN searches for clusters by checking the *ε*-neighbourhood of each instance in the database.

If the *ε*-neighbourhood of an instance *i* contains more than minPts, a new cluster with *i* as the core instance is created.

Directly density-reachable instances from these core instances are iteratively collected (may involve merging of a few density-reachable clusters).

The process terminates when no new instances are added to any cluster.

The DBSCAN method

Algorithm: DBSCAN

Input: *D* = a set of n instances of the form (*p*1, *p*2, …, *pm*)

*ε* = the radius of the neighbourhood for each instance

minPts = the minimum number of instances in an *ε*-neighbourhood required for an instance to be a core instance

Output: *K* = a set of clusters

Method:

1. clusterID = 1
2. for i = 1 to |*D*|
3. currentInstance = GetNextInstance (*D*, i)
4. if currentInstance.clusterID == UNCLASSIFIED
5. if ExpandCluster (*D*, currentInstance, clusterID, *ε*, minPts)
6. clusterID ++
7. for i = 1 to |*D*|
8. currentInstance = GetNextInstance (*D*, i)
9. if currentInstance.clusterID != NOISE
10. *K*currentInstance.clusterID = *K*currentInstance.clusterID ∪ currentInstance
11. for i = 1 to clusterID - 1
12. *K* = *K* ∪ *Ki*

Algorithm: ExpandCluster

Input: *D* = a set of n instances of the form (*p*1, *p*2, …, *pm*)

currentInstance = an instance in *D*

clusterID = identifier for the cluster currently being expanded

*ε* = the radius of the neighbourhood for each instance

minPts = the minimum number of instances in an *ε*-neighbourhood required for an instance to be a core instance

Output: TRUE if the cluster was expanded, otherwise, FALSE

Method:

1. *D*seeds = InstancesIn\_*ε*\_Neighbourhood (currentInstance, *D*, *ε*)
2. if minPts > |*D*seeds|
3. ChangeClusterID (*D*, currentInstance, NOISE)
4. return FALSE
5. else
6. for i = 1 to |*D*seeds|
7. currentSeed = GetNextInstance (*D*seeds, i)
8. ChangeClusterID (*D*, currentSeed, clusterID)
9. Delete (currentInstance, *D*seeds)
10. while | *D*seeds | > 0
11. currentInstance = GetFirstInstance (*D*seeds)
12. *ε*\_Neighbourhood = InstancesIn\_*ε*\_Neighbourhood (currentInstance, *D*, *ε*)
13. if |*ε*\_Neighbourhood| >= minPts
14. for i = 1 to |*ε*\_Neighbourhood|
15. candidateInstance = GetNextInstance (*ε*\_Neighbourhood, i)
16. if candidateInstance.clusterID *ε* {UNCLASSIFIED, NOISE}
17. if candidateInstance.clusterID == UNCLASSIFIED
18. Append (*D*seeds, candidateInstance)
19. ChangeClusterID (*D*, candidateInstance, clusterID)
20. Delete (*D*seeds, currentInstance)
21. return TRUE

Example – DBSCAN

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Instance | x | y | clusterID |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | *Unclassified* |
| 2 | 2 | 5 | *Unclassified* |
| 3 | 2 | 6 | *Unclassified* |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | *Unclassified* |
| 5 | 3 | 4 | *Unclassified* |
| 6 | 3 | 6 | *Unclassified* |
| 7 | 3 | 7 | *Unclassified* |
| 8 | 4 | 1 | *Unclassified* |
| 9 | 4 | 4 | *Unclassified* |
| 10 | 4 | 5 | *Unclassified* |
| 11 | 4 | 7 | *Unclassified* |
| 12 | 5 | 2 | *Unclassified* |
| 13 | 5 | 6 | *Unclassified* |
| 14 | 5 | 9 | *Unclassified* |
| 15 | 6 | 2 | *Unclassified* |
| 16 | 6 | 5 | *Unclassified* |
| 17 | 6 | 7 | *Unclassified* |
| 18 | 6 | 9 | *Unclassified* |
| 19 | 7 | 6 | *Unclassified* |
| 20 | 7 | 7 | *Unclassified* |
| 21 | 8 | 6 | *Unclassified* |

Assume *ε* = 1 and minPts = 3.

Step 1: Initialize clusterID.

Step 2: Initialize i = 1. Since i <= |*D*|, go to Step 3.

Step 3: currentInstance = (2,3,U)

Step 4: Since currentInstance.clusterID = UNCLASSIFIED, go to Step 5.

Step 5: ExpandCluster (*D*,(2,3,U),1,1,3)

Step 5.1: Determine the instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood of currentInstance = (2,3,U). Thus, *D*seeds = {(2,3,U)}.

Step 5.2: Since minPts > |*D*seeds|, there are not sufficient instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood, so go to Step 5.3.

Step 5.3: At this point, currentInstances is considered to be noise. Thus, currentInstance = (2,3,N).

Step 5.4: The cluster could not be expanded around currentInstance, so return FALSE and go back to Step 2.

Step 2: Increment i = 2. Since i <= |*D*|, go to Step 3.

Step 3: currentInstance = (2,5,U).

Step 4: Since currentInstance.clusterID = UNCLASSIFIED, go to Step 5.

Step 5: ExpandCluster (*D*,(2,5,U),1,1,3).

Step 5.1: Determine the instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood of currentInstance = (2,5,U). Thus, *D*seeds = {(2,5,U), (2,6,U)}.

Step 5.2: Since minPts > |*D*seeds|, there are not sufficient instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood, so go to Step 5.3.

Step 5.3: At this point, currentInstance is considered to be noise. Thus, currentInstance = (2,5,N).

Step 5.4: The cluster could not be expanded around currentInstance, so return FALSE and go back to Step 2.

Step 2: Increment i = 3. Since i <= |*D*|, go to Step 3.

Step 3: currentInstance = (2,6,U).

Step 4: Since currentInstance.clusterID = UNCLASSIFIED, go to Step 5.

Step 5: ExpandCluster (*D*,(2,6,U),1,1,3).

Step 5.1: Determine the instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood of currentInstance = (2,6,U). Thus, *D*seeds = {(2,6,U), (2,5,N), (3,6,U)}.

Step 5.2: Since minPts = |*D*seeds|, there are sufficient instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood, so go to Step 5.6.

Step 5.6: Initialize i = 1. Since i <= |*D*seeds|, go to step 5.7.

Step 5.7: currentSeed = (2,6,U).

Step 5.8: Since clusterID = 1, currentSeed = (2,6,1).

Step 5.6: Increment i = 2. Since i <= |*D*seeds|, go to step 5.7.

Step 5.7: currentSeed = (2,5,N).

Step 5.8: Since clusterID = 1, currentSeed = (2,5,1).

Step 5.6: Increment i = 3. Since i <= |*D*seeds|, go to step 5.7.

Step 5.7: currentSeed = (3,6,U).

Step 5.8: Since clusterID = 1, currentSeed = (3,6,1).

Step 5.9: currentInstance = (2,6,1) is removed from *D*seeds. Thus, *D*seeds = {(2,5,1), (3,6,1)}.

Step 5.10: Since |*D*seeds| > 0, go to step 5.11.

Step 5.11: currentInstance = (2,5,1).

Step 5.12: *ε*\_neighbourhood = {(2,5,1)}.

Step 5.13: Since | *ε*\_neighbourhood| < minPts, go to step 5.20.

Step 5.20: currentInstance = (2,5,1) is removed from *D*seeds. Thus, *D*seeds = {(3,6,1)}. Go back to step 5.10.

Step 5.10: Since |*D*seeds| > 0, go to step 5.11.

Step 5.11: currentInstance = (3,6,1).

Step 5.12: *ε*\_neighbourhood = {(3,6,1), (2,6,1), (3,7,U)}.

Step 5.13: Since |*ε*\_neighbourhood| >= minPts, go to step 5.14.

Step 5.14: Initialize i = 1. Since i <= |*ε*\_neighbourhood|, go to step 5.15.

Step 5.15: candidateInstance = (3,6,1).

Step 5.16: Since candidateInstance.ClusterID = 1, go back to step 5.14.

Step 5.14: Increment i = 2. Since i <= |*ε*\_neighbourhood|, go to step 5.15.

Step 5.15: candidateInstance = (2,6,1).

Step 5.16: Since candidateInstance.ClusterID = 1, go back to step 5.14.

Step 5.14: Increment i = 3. Since i <= |*ε*\_neighbourhood|, go to step 5.15.

Step 5.15: candidateInstance = (3,7,U).

Step 5.16: Since candidateInstance.ClusterID = UNCLASSIFIED, go to step 5.17.

Step 5.17: Since candidateInstance.ClusterID = UNCLASSIFIED, go to step 5.18.

Step 5.18: candidateInstance has the potential to expand the cluster, so *D*seeds = {(3,6,1), (3,7,U)}.

Step 5.19: Since clusterID = 1, candidateInstance = (3,7,1).

Step 5.20: currentInstance = (3,6,1) is removed from *D*seeds. Thus, *D*seeds = {(3,7,1)}. Go back to step 5.10.

Step 5.10: Since |*D*seeds| > 0, go to step 5.11.

Step 5.11: currentInstance = (3,7,1).

Step 5.12: *ε*\_neighbourhood = {(3,7,1), (3,6,1), (4,7,U)}.

Step 5.13: Since |*ε*\_neighbourhood| >= minPts, go to step 5.14 and repeat step 5.14 to 5.16 for (3,7,1) and (3,6,1). As a result of this, there is no change to (3,7,1), (3,6,1) and *D*seeds.

Step 5.14: Initialize i = 3. Since i <= |*ε*\_neighbourhood|, go to step 5.15.

Step 5.15: candidateInstance = (4,7,U).

Step 5.16: Since candidateInstance.ClusterID = UNCLASSIFIED, go to step 5.17.

Step 5.17: Since candidateInstance.ClusterID = UNCLASSIFIED, go to step 5.18.

Step 5.18: candidateInstance has the potential to expand the cluster, so *D*seeds = {(3,7,1), (4,7,U)}.

Step 5.19: Since clusterID = 1, candidateInstance = (4,7,1).

Step 5.20: currentInstance = (3,7,1) is removed from *D*seeds. Thus, *D*seeds = {(4,7,1)}. Go back to step 5.10.

Step 5.10: Since |*D*seeds| > 0, go to step 5.11.

Step 5.11: currentInstance = (4,7,1).

Step 5.12: *ε*\_neighbourhood = {(4,7,1), (3,7,1)}.

Step 5.13: Since |*ε*\_neighbourhood| < minPts, go to step 5.20.

Step 5.20: currentInstance = (4,7,1) is removed from *D*seeds. Thus, *D*seeds = Ø. Go back to step 5.10.

Step 5.10: Since |*D*seeds| = 0, go to step 5.21.

Step 5.21: Return TRUE.

Step 6: Increment clusterID = 2. Go back to step 2.

Step 2: Increment i = 4. Since i <= |*D*|, go to Step 3.

Step 3: currentInstance = (3,2,U).

Step 4: Since currentInstance.clusterID = UNCLASSIFIED, go to Step 5.

Step 5: ExpandCluster (*D*,(3,2,U),2,1,3).

Step 5.1: Determine the instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood of currentInstance = (3,2,U). Thus, *D*seeds = {(3,2,U)}.

Step 5.2: Since minPts > |*D*seeds|, there are not sufficient instance within the *ε*-neighbourhood, so go to Step 5.3.

Step 5.3: At this point, currentInstance is considered to be noise. Thus, currentInstance = (3,2,N).

Step 5.4: The cluster could not be expanded around currentInstance, so return FALSE and go back to Step 2.

Step 2: Increment i = 5. Since i <= |*D*|, go to Step 3.

Step 3: currentInstance = (3,4,U).

Step 4: Since currentInstance.clusterID = UNCLASSIFIED, go to Step 5.

Step 5: ExpandCluster (*D*,(3,4,U),2,1,3).

Step 5.1: Determine the instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood of currentInstance = (3,4,U). Thus, *D*seeds = {(3,4,U), (4,4,U)}.

Step 5.2: Since minPts > |*D*seeds|, there are not sufficient instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood, so go to Step 5.3.

Step 5.3: At this point, currentInstance is considered to be noise. Thus, currentInstance = (3,4,N).

Step 5.4: The cluster could not be expanded around currentInstance, so return FALSE and go back to Step 2.

Step 2: Increment i = 6 and i = 7 and repeat steps 3 and 4 for (3,6,1) and (3,7,1) which are have already been placed in cluster 1.

Step 2: Increment i = 8 and do steps 2 to 5.4 for (4,1,N) which has already been classified as noise.

Step 2: Increment i = 9. Since i <= |*D*|, go to Step 3.

Step 3: currentInstance = (4,4,U).

Step 4: Since currentInstance.clusterID = UNCLASSIFIED, go to Step 5.

Step 5: ExpandCluster (*D*,(4,4,U),2,1,3).

Step 5.1: Determine the instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood of currentInstance = (4,4,U). Thus, *D*seeds = {(4,4,U), (3,4,N), (4,5,U)}.

Step 5.2: Since minPts = |*D*seeds|, there are sufficient instances within the *ε*-neighbourhood, so go to Step 5.6.

Step 5.6: Initialize i = 1. Since i <= |*D*seeds|, go to step 5.7.

Step 5.7: currentSeed = (4,4,U).

Step 5.8: Since clusterID = 2, currentSeed = (4,4,2).

Step 5.6: Increment i = 2. Since i <= |*D*seeds|, go to step 5.7.

Step 5.7: currentSeed = (3,4,N).

Step 5.8: Since clusterID = 2, currentSeed = (3,4,2).

Step 5.6: Increment i = 3. Since i <= |*D*seeds|, go to step 5.7.

Step 5.7: currentSeed = (4,5,U).

Step 5.8: Since clusterID = 1, currentSeed = (4,5,2).

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Step 7: Initialize i = 1. Since i <= |*D*|, go to Step 8.

Step 8: currentInstance = (2,3,N).

Step 9: Since currentInstance.clusterID = NOISE, go back to step 7.

Step 7: Increment i = 2. Since i <= |*D*|, go to Step 8.

Step 8: currentInstance = (2,5,1).

Step 9: Since currentInstance.clusterID = 1, go to step 10.

Step 10: *K*1 = {(2,5,1)}. Go back to step 7.

Step 7: Increment i = 3. Since i <= |*D*|, go to Step 8.

Step 8: currentInstance = (2,6,1).

Step 9: Since currentInstance.clusterID = 1, go to step 10.

Step 10: *K*1 = {(2,5,1), (2,6,1)}. Go back to step 7.

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Step 7: Increment i = 5. Since i <= |*D*|, go to Step 8.

Step 8: currentInstance = (3,4,2).

Step 9: Since currentInstance.clusterID = 2, go to step 10.

Step 10: *K*2 = {(3,4,2)}. Go back to step 7.

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Step 10: *K*1 = {(2,5,1), (2,6,1), (3,6,1)}. Go back to step 7.

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Step 10: *K*2 = {(3,4,2), (4,4,2)}. Go back to step 7.

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Step 11: Initialize i = 1. Since i <= clusterID – 1, go to step 12.

Step 12: *K* = {{2,5,1), (2,6,1), (3,6,1), (3,7,1), (4,7,1)}}. Go back to step 11.

Step 11: Initialize i = 2. Since i <= clusterID – 1, go to step 12.

Step 12: *K* = {{2,5,1), (2,6,1), (3,6,1), (3,7,1), (4,7,1)}, {(3,4,2), (4,4,2), (4,5,2)}}. Go back to step 11.

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The average run time complexity of DBSCAN is O(*n* log *n*).

The experimental results reported in the original paper are all incorrect because the authors were unaware of a serious bug in their program (they weren’t clustering all the points in the dataset).

The OPTICS (Ordering Points To Identify the Clustering Structure) method extends the DBSCAN method to consider a set of distance parameter values (i.e., a set of *ε*’s) in order to generate a set of clusters whose densities may be different.

Example – Clusters with different density parameters

DIAGRAM = Clustering.G.2.a

Example – Nested clusters

DIAGRAM = Clustering.G.2.b