

The Power of Well-Structured Transition Systems

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Based on CONCUR 2013 invited paper, see my web page for pdf

THE PROBLEM WITH WSTS

- ▶ **Well-structured transition systems** (WSTS) are a family of infinite-state models supporting generic verification algorithms based on well-quasi-ordering (WQO) theory.
- ▶ WSTS invented in 1987, developed and popularized in 1996–2005 by Abdulla & Jonsson, Finkel & Schnoebelen, etc. First used with Petri nets (or VAS) extensions, channel systems, counter machines, integral automata, etc.
- ▶ **Still thriving today**, with several new WSTS models (based on wqos on graphs, etc.), or applications (deciding data logics, modal logics, etc.) appearing every year
- ▶ Main question **not answered** during all these developments: what is the complexity of WSTS verification? Related question: what is the expressive power of these WSTS models?

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SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS (2008—)

Exact complexity determined for verification problems on Petri net extensions, lossy channel systems, timed-arc Petri nets, etc.

More generally, we have been developing a set of theoretical tools for the **complexity analysis of algorithms that rely on WQO-theory**:

- Length-function theorems to bound the length of bad sequences
- Robust encodings of Hardy computations in WSTS
- Ordinal-recursive complexity classes with catalog of complete problems

These tools borrow from proof theory, WQO and ordinals theory, combinatorics à la Ramsey, . . . but repackaging was required

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OUTLINE OF THE TALK

- ▶ Part 1: **Basics of WSTS.** Recalling the [basic definition](#), with [broadcast protocols](#) as an example
- ▶ Part 2: **Verifying WSTS.** Two [simple verification algorithms](#), deciding Termination and Coverability
- ▶ Part 3: **Bounding Running Time.** By bounding the length of [controlled bad sequences](#)
- ▶ Part 4: **Proving (Matching) Lower Bounds.** By weakly computing [ordinal-recursive functions](#)

Technical details mostly avoided, see CONCUR paper for more.
Also, see our lecture notes “Algorithmic Aspects of WQO Theory”.

Part 1

Basics of WSTS

WHAT ARE WSTS?

Def. A WSTS is an **ordered TS** $\mathcal{S} = (S, \rightarrow, \leq)$ that is **monotonic** and such that (S, \leq) is a **well-quasi-ordering** (a wqo, more later).

Recall:

- **transition system (TS)**: $\mathcal{S} = (S, \rightarrow)$ with steps e.g. “ $s \rightarrow s'$ ”
- **ordered TS**: $\mathcal{S} = (S, \rightarrow, \leq)$ with smaller and larger states, e.g. $s \leq t$
- **monotonic TS**: ordered TS with
($s_1 \rightarrow s_2$ and $s_1 \leq t_1$) implies $\exists t_2 \in S : (t_1 \rightarrow t_2 \text{ and } s_2 \leq t_2)$,
i.e., “larger states simulate smaller states”.

Equivalently: \leq is a wqo and a simulation.

NB. Starting from any $t_0 \geq s_0$, a run $s_0 \rightarrow s_1 \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow s_n$ can be simulated “from above” with some $t_0 \rightarrow t_1 \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow t_n$

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WELL-QUASI-ORDERING (WQO)

Now what was meant by “ (S, \leq) is wqo”?

Def1. (X, \leq) is a wqo $\stackrel{\text{def}}{\Leftrightarrow}$ any infinite sequence x_0, x_1, x_2, \dots contains an **increasing pair**: $x_i \leq x_j$ for some $i < j$.

Def2. (X, \leq) is a wqo $\stackrel{\text{def}}{\Leftrightarrow}$ any infinite sequence x_0, x_1, x_2, \dots contains an **infinite increasing subsequence**: $x_{n_0} \leq x_{n_1} \leq x_{n_2} \leq \dots$

NB. These definitions are equivalent (not trivially).

Example. (Dickson's Lemma) (\mathbb{N}^k, \leq_x) is a wqo, with

$$\mathbf{a} = (a_1, \dots, a_k) \leq_x \mathbf{b} = (b_1, \dots, b_k) \stackrel{\text{def}}{\Leftrightarrow} a_1 \leq b_1 \wedge \dots \wedge a_k \leq b_k$$

Other important/useful wqos: **words** with the subword relation (Higman's Lemma), **trees** (also multisets) ordered by embedding (Kruskal's Theorem), and **graphs** with minors (Robertson & Seymour's Graph Minor Theorem).

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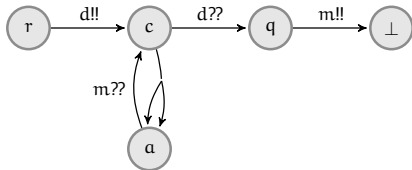
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EXAMPLE: BROADCAST PROTOCOLS

Broadcast protocols (Esparza et al.'99) are dynamic & distributed collections of finite-state processes communicating via broadcasts and rendez-vous.



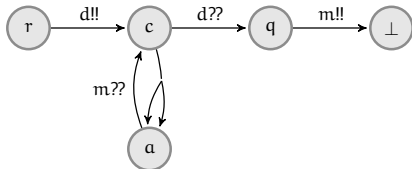
A **configuration** collects the local states of all processes. E.g., $s = \{c, r, c\}$, also denoted $\{c^2, r\}$.

Steps: $\{c^2, q, r\} \xrightarrow{a} \{a^2, c, q, r\} \xrightarrow{a} \{a^4, q, r\} \xrightarrow{m} \{c^4, r, \perp\} \xrightarrow{d} \{c, q^4, \perp\}$

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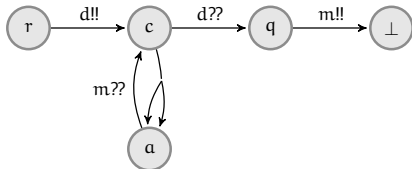
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BROADCAST PROTOCOLS ARE WSTS

Ordering of configurations is multiset inclusion, e.g., $\{c, q\} \subseteq \{c^2, r, q\}$

Fact. Configurations $(\mathbb{N}^{\{r, c, a, q, \perp\}}, \subseteq)$ is a wqo.

Proof: this is exactly (\mathbb{N}^5, \leq_x)

Fact. Broadcast protocols are monotonic TS

Proof Idea: assume $s_1 \subseteq t_1$ and consider all cases for a step $s_1 \rightarrow s_2$

Coro. Broadcast protocols are WSTS

Part 2

Verification of WSTS

TERMINATION

Termination is the question, given a TS $\mathcal{S} = (S, \rightarrow, \dots)$ and a state s_{init} , whether \mathcal{S} has **no infinite runs** starting from s_{init}

Lem. [Finite Witnesses for Infinite Runs]

A WSTS \mathcal{S} has an infinite run from s_{init} **iff** it has a **finite** run from s_{init} that is a **good** sequence.

Recall: $s_0, s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n$ is **good** $\stackrel{\text{def}}{\Leftrightarrow}$ there exist $i < j$ s.t. $s_i \leq s_j$

\Rightarrow one can decide Termination for a WSTS \mathcal{S} by enumerating all finite runs from s_{init} until a good sequence is found.

NB: This requires some minimal effectiveness assumptions on the WSTS, e.g., that the ordering is decidable

Algorithm extends and allows deciding inevitability, finiteness, and regular simulation

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COVERABILITY

Coverability is the question, given $\mathcal{S} = (S, \rightarrow, \dots)$, a state s_{init} and a target state t , whether \mathcal{S} has a run $s_{init} \rightarrow s_1 \rightarrow s_2 \dots \rightarrow s_n$ with $s_n \geq t$.

This is equivalent to having a pseudorun $s_{init}, s_1, \dots, s_n$ with $s_n \geq t$, where a **pseudorun** is a sequence s_0, s_1, \dots such that for all $i > 0$, there is a step $s_{i-1} \rightarrow t_i$ with $t_i \geq s_i$.

Lem. [Finite Witnesses for Covering]

A WSTS \mathcal{S} has a pseudorun s_{init}, \dots, s_n covering t **iff** it has a minimal pseudorun from some $s_0 \leq s_{init}$ to t that is a bad sequence in reverse.

NB. a pseudorun s_0, \dots, s_n is **minimal** $\stackrel{\text{def}}{\iff}$ for all $0 \leq i < n$, s_i is a minimal (pseudo) predecessor of s_{i+1} .

\Rightarrow one can decide Coverability by enumerating all pseudoruns ending in t (hence backward chaining) that are minimal and bad sequences in reverse.

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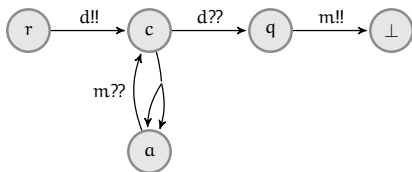
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Part 3

Bounding Running Time

BROADCAST PROTOCOLS AND TERMINATION



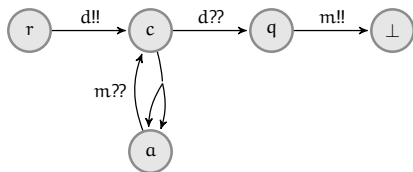
This broadcast protocol terminates: **all its runs are bad sequences**, hence are finite

Proof. Assume $s_0 \rightarrow s_1 \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow s_n$ and pick two positions $i < j$. Write $s_i = \{a^{n_1}, c^{n_2}, q^{n_3}, r^{n_4}, \perp^*\}$, and $s_j = \{a^{n'_1}, c^{n'_2}, q^{n'_3}, r^{n'_4}, \perp^*\}$.

- if $s_i \xrightarrow{+} s_j$ uses only spawn steps then $n'_2 < n_2$,
- if a m and no d have been broadcast, then $n'_3 < n_3$,
- if a d has been broadcast, and then $n'_4 < n_4$.

In all cases, $s_i \not\preceq s_j$. QED

BROADCAST PROTOCOLS AND TERMINATION



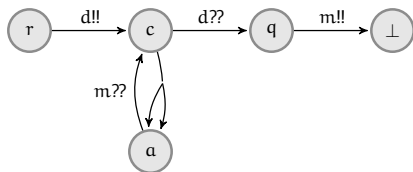
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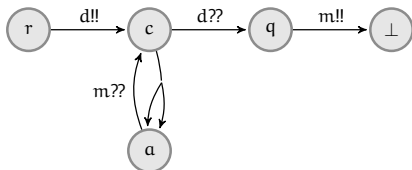
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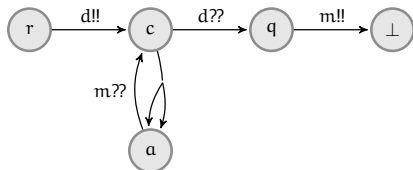


“Doubling” run: $\{c^n, q, (\perp^*)\} \xrightarrow{a^n} \{a^{2^n}, q, (\perp^*)\} \xrightarrow{m} \{c^{2^n}, (\perp^*)\}$

Building up: $\{c^{2^0}, q^n, r\} \xrightarrow{a^{2^0} m} \{c^{2^1}, q^{n-1}, r\} \xrightarrow{a^{2^1} m} \{c^{2^2}, q^{n-2}, r\} \rightarrow$
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Then: $\{c, q, r^n\} \xrightarrow{*} \{c, q^{2^n}, r^{n-1}\} \xrightarrow{*} \{c, q^{\text{tower}(n)}\}$

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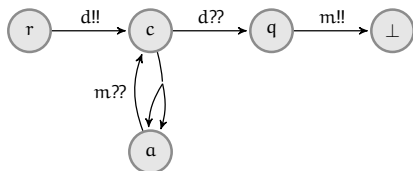


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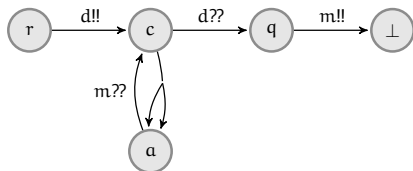
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Then: $\{c, q, r^n\} \xrightarrow{*} \{c, q^{2^n}, r^{n-1}\} \xrightarrow{*} \{c, q^{\text{tower}(n)}\}$

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BROADCAST PROTOCOLS TAKE THEIR TIME



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⇒ Runs of terminating systems may have nonelementary lengths

⇒ Running time of termination verification algorithm is not elementary (for broadcast protocols)

COMPLEXITY ANALYSIS?

When analyzing the termination algorithm, the main question is “**how long can a bad sequence be?**”

WQO-theory only says that a bad sequence is **finite**

Over (\mathbb{N}^k, \leq_x) , one can find arbitrarily long bad sequences:

— 999, 998, ..., 1, 0

— (2,2), (2,1), (2,0), (1,999), ..., (1,0), (0,999999999), ...

Two tricks: **unbounded start** element, or **unbounded increase** in a step

The runs of a broadcast protocol don't play these tricks!

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CONTROLLED BAD SEQUENCES

Def. A **control** is a pair of $n_0 \in \mathbb{N}$ and $g : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$.

Def. A sequence x_0, x_1, \dots is **controlled** $\stackrel{\text{def}}{\Leftrightarrow} |x_i| \leq g^i(n_0)$ for all $i = 0, 1, \dots$

Fact. For a fixed wqo $(A, \leq, |\cdot|)$ and control (n_0, g) , there is a bound on the length of controlled bad sequences.

Write $L_{g,A}(n_0)$ for this maximum length.

Length Function Theorem for (\mathbb{N}^k, \leq_x) :

- $L_{g,\mathbb{N}^k}(n_0) \leq g^{\omega^k}(n_0)$
- L_{g,\mathbb{N}^k} is in \mathcal{F}_{k+m-1} for g in \mathcal{F}_m [McAloon'84, Figueira²SS'11]
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APPLYING TO BROADCAST PROTOCOLS

Fact. The runs explored by the Termination algorithm are **controlled** with $|s_{init}|$ and $Succ: \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$.

\Rightarrow Time/space bound in \mathcal{F}_{k-1} for broadcast protocols with k states, and in \mathcal{F}_ω when k is not fixed.

Fact. The minimal pseudoruns explored by the backward-chaining Coverability algorithm are **controlled** by $|t|$ and $Succ$.

$\Rightarrow \dots$ *same upper bounds* \dots

This is a general situation:

- WSTS model (or WQO-based algorithm) provides g
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THE FAST-GROWING HIERARCHY

An ordinal-indexed family $(F_\alpha)_{\alpha \in \text{Ord}}$ of functions $\mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$

$$F_0(x) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} x + 1 \quad F_{\alpha+1}(x) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \overbrace{F_\alpha(F_\alpha(\dots F_\alpha(x)\dots))}^{x+1}$$
$$F_\omega(x) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} F_{x+1}(x)$$

gives $F_1(x) \sim 2x$, $F_2(x) \sim 2^x$, $F_3(x) \sim \text{tower}(x)$ and $F_\omega(x) \sim \text{ACKERMANN}(x)$, the first F_α that is not primitive recursive.

$F_\lambda(x) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} F_{\lambda_x}(x)$ for λ a limit ordinal with a fundamental sequence $\lambda_0 < \lambda_1 < \lambda_2 < \dots < \lambda$.

$$\text{E.g. } F_{\omega^2}(x) = F_{\omega \cdot (x+1)}(x) = F_{\omega \cdot x + x + 1}(x) = \overbrace{F_{\omega \cdot x + x}(F_{\omega \cdot x + x}(\dots F_{\omega \cdot x + x}(x)\dots))}^{x+1}$$

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MORE LENGTH FUNCTION THEOREMS

For finite words with embedding, L_{Σ^*} is in $\mathcal{F}_{\omega^{|\Sigma|-1}}$, and in $\mathcal{F}_{\omega^\omega}$ when alphabet is not fixed [Cichon'98, SS'11]. Applies e.g. to lossy channel systems.

For sequences over \mathbb{N}^k with embedding, $L_{(\mathbb{N}^k)^*}$ is in $\mathcal{F}_{\omega^{\omega^k}}$, and in $\mathcal{F}_{\omega^\omega}$ when k is not fixed [SS'11]. Applies e.g. to timed-arc Petri nets.

For finite words with priority ordering, L_{Σ^*} is in \mathcal{F}_{ϵ_0} [HaaseSS'13]. Applies e.g. to priority channel systems.

Bottom line: we can provide definite complexity upper bounds for WQO-based algorithms

Some research goals: more varied/complex wqos, less crude notion of controlled sequences, analysis of complex algorithms

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Part 4

Proving Lower Bounds

WHAT ABOUT LOWER BOUNDS?

Q. Are the upper bounds for Termination and Coverability optimal?

In the case of broadcast protocols:

The upper bound is tight for the algorithms we presented

But there may exist better algorithms (as with VASS, e.g.)

One can prove that the Termination and Coverability problems are F_ω -hard, hence F_ω -complete, for broadcast protocols [S'10]

and F_{ω^ω} -complete for lossy channel systems [ChambartS'08], F_{ω^ω} -complete for timed-arc Petri nets [HaddadSS'12], F_{ϵ_0} -complete for priority channel systems [HaaseSS'13]

These results/characterizations have applications outside verification: WSTS models are often used for decidability (or hardness) of problems in logic.

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PROVING F_α -HARDNESS

The four hardness results we just mentioned have all been proved using the same techniques:

One shows how the WSTS model can weakly compute F_α and its inverse F_α^{-1} .

Encode initial ordinals in (S, \leq) & implement Hardy computations in S .
Hardy computations: $(\alpha + 1, x) \mapsto (\alpha, x + 1)$ and $(\lambda, x) \mapsto (\lambda_x, x)$.

Main technical issue: **robustness**

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WSTS have applications outside verification

Join the fun! Technical details are lighter than it seems, see our lecture notes “Algorithmic aspects of wqo theory”

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST