

Formal Methods for Software Development

Introduction to PROMELA

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Towards Model Checking

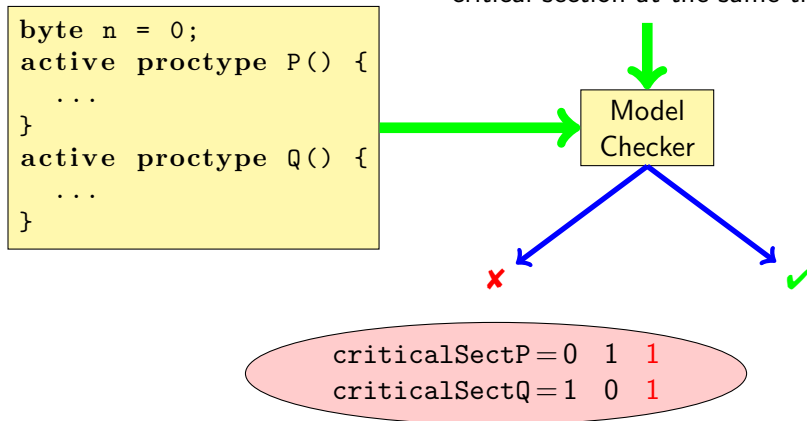
System Model

Promela Program

```
byte n = 0;  
active proctype P() {  
  ...  
}  
active proctype Q() {  
  ...  
}
```

System Property

P, Q are never in their
critical section at the same time



What is PROMELA?

PROMELA is an acronym

PROcess META-Language

PROMELA is a language for **modeling concurrent** systems

- ▶ multi-threaded, synchronisation
- ▶ shared memory as well as message passing
- ▶ few control structures, pure (side-effect free) expressions
- ▶ data structures with fixed bounds

What is PROMELA **Not**?

PROMELA is **not** a programming language

Very small language, not intended to program real systems
(we will master most of it in today's lecture!)

- ▶ No pointers/references
- ▶ No methods/procedures
- ▶ No libraries
- ▶ No GUI, no standard input
- ▶ No floating point types
- ▶ No data encapsulation
- ▶ **Nondeterministic**

A First PROMELA Program

```
active proctype P() {  
    printf("Hello world\n")  
}
```

Command Line Execution

Simulating (i.e., interpreting) a PROMELA program

```
> spin hello.pml  
    Hello world  
1 process created
```

- ▶ keyword `proctype` declares process named P
- ▶ keyword `active` creates one instance of P
- ▶ C-like command and expression syntax
- ▶ no ";" needed here (only for sequencing of commands)
- ▶ C-like (simplified) formatted print

Arithmetic Data Types

```
active proctype P() {  
    int val = 123;  
    int rev;  
    rev = (val % 10) * 100 + /* % is modulo */  
          ((val / 10) % 10) * 10 + (val / 100);  
    printf("val_ = %d, rev_ = %d\n", val, rev)  
}
```

Observations

- ▶ Data types `byte`, `short`, `int`, `unsigned` with operations `+`, `-`, `*`, `/`, `%`
- ▶ Expressions computed as `int`, then converted to container type
- ▶ No floats, no side effects, C/Java-style comments
- ▶ No string variables (strings only in print statements)

Booleans and Enumerations

```
bit  b1 = 0;  
bool b2 = true;
```

Observations

- ▶ bit numeric type containing 0, 1
- ▶ bool, true, false syntactic sugar for bit, 1, 0

Enumerations

```
mtype = { red, yellow, green } //in global context

active proctype P() {
  mtype light = green;
  printf("the light is %e\n", light)
}
```

Observations

- ▶ literals represented as non-0 byte: at most 255
- ▶ `mtype` stands for **message type** (first used for message names)
- ▶ There is at most one `mtype` per program
- ▶ `%e` “prints” `mtype` constant

Control Statements

Sequence using ; as *separator*
(not terminator like in C/Java)

Guarded Command:

- Selection non-deterministic choice of an alternative
- Repetition loop until `break` (or forever)
- Goto jump to a label

Guarded Commands: Selection

```
active proctype P() {  
    byte a = 5, b = 5;  
    byte max, branch;  
    if  
        :: a >= b -> max = a; branch = 1  
        :: a <= b -> max = b; branch = 2  
    fi  
}
```

Command Line Execution

Trace of random simulation of multiple runs

```
> spin -v max.pml  
> spin -v max.pml  
> ...
```

Guarded Commands: Selection

```
active proctype P() {  
    byte a = 5, b = 5;  
    byte max, branch;  
    if  
        :: a >= b -> max = a; branch = 1  
        :: a <= b -> max = b; branch = 2  
    fi  
}
```

Observations

- ▶ Each alternative starts with a **guard** (here $a \geq b$, $a \leq b$)
- ▶ Guards may “**overlap**” (more than one can be true at the same time)
- ▶ An alternative whose guard is true is **randomly** selected
- ▶ When no guard true: process **blocks** until one becomes true
- ▶ **if** statements can have any number of alternatives

Guarded Commands: Selection Cont'd

```
bool p;  
...  
if  
  :: p      -> ...  
  :: true  -> ...  
fi
```

- ▶ Instance of the general case
- ▶ `true` can be selected **anytime**, regardless of other guards

```
bool p;  
...  
if  
  :: p      -> ...  
  :: else  -> ...  
fi
```

- ▶ Special case
- ▶ `else` selected **only if all other guards are false**

Guarded Statement Syntax

```
:: guard -> command
```

Observations

- ▶ `->` is synonym for `;`
- ▶ Therefore: can use `;` instead of `->`
(Relation guards vs. statements will get clearer later)
- ▶ First statement after `::` used as guard
- ▶ `-> command` can be omitted
- ▶ (`->` overloaded, see conditional expressions)

Guarded Commands: Repetition

```
active proctype P() { /* computes gcd */
  int a = 15, b = 20;
  do
    :: a > b -> a = a - b
    :: b > a -> b = b - a
    :: a == b -> break
  od
}
```

Command Line Execution

Trace with values of local variables

```
> spin -p -l gcd.pml
> spin --help
```

Guarded Commands: Repetition

```
active proctype P() { /* computes gcd */
  int a = 15, b = 20;
  do
    :: a > b -> a = a - b
    :: b > a -> b = b - a
    :: a == b -> break
  od
}
```

Observations

- ▶ An alternative whose guard is true is **randomly** selected
- ▶ Only way to exit loop is via **break** or **goto**
- ▶ When no guard true: loop **blocks** until one becomes true

Counting Loops

Counting loops can be realized with `break` after termination condition

```
#define N 10 /* C-style preprocessing */

active proctype P() {
    int sum = 0; byte i = 1;
    ...
    do
        :: i > N -> break /* test */
        :: else -> sum = sum + i; i++ /* body, increase */
    od
    ...
}
```

Observations

- ▶ Don't forget `else`, otherwise strange behaviour

For-loops

Since SPIN 6, support for native for-loops.

```
byte i;  
for (i : 1..10) {  
    /* loop body */  
}
```

Internally translated to:

```
byte i;  
i = 1;  
do  
    :: i <= 10 ->  
        /* loop body */  
        i++  
    :: else -> break  
od  
}
```

Awareness of translation helps when analyzing runs and interleavings.

Arrays

```
active proctype P() {
    byte a[5]; /* declare + initialize byte array a */
    a[0]=0; a[1]=10; a[2]=20; a[3]=30; a[4]=40;
    byte sum = 0, i = 0;
    do
        :: i > N-1 -> break
        :: else      -> sum = sum + a[i]; i++
    od
}
```

Observations

- ▶ Arrays are scalar types: a and b always different arrays
- ▶ Array bounds are constant and cannot be changed
- ▶ Only one-dimensional arrays (there is an ugly workaround)

Record Types

```
typedef DATE {
    byte day, month, year;
}
active proctype P() {
    DATE D;
    D.day = 23; D.month = 5; D.year = 67
}
```

Observations

- ▶ may include previously declared record types, but **no** self-references
- ▶ Can be used to realize multi-dimensional arrays:

```
typedef VECTOR {
    int vec[10]
}
VECTOR matrix[5]; /* base type array in record */
matrix[3].vec[6] = 17;
```

Jumps

```
#define N 10
active proctype P() {
    int sum = 0; byte i = 1;
    do
        :: i > N -> goto exitloop
        :: else -> sum = sum + i; i++
    od;
exitloop:
    printf("End of loop")
}
```

Observations

- ▶ Jumps allowed only within a process
- ▶ Labels must be unique for a process
- ▶ Can't place labels in front of guards (inside alternative ok)
- ▶ Easy to write messy code with goto

Inlining Code

PROMELA has no method or procedure calls

```
typedef DATE {  
  byte day, month, year;  
}  
  
inline setDate(D, DD, MM, YY) {  
  D.day = DD; D.month = MM; D.year = YY  
}  
  
active proctype P() {  
  DATE d;  
  setDate(d,1,7,62)  
}
```

- ▶ macro-like abbreviation mechanism for code that occurs multiply
- ▶ **inline** creates new scope for locally declared variables^a
- ▶ but initializers moved outside the **inline** ⇒ use with care

^asince SPIN 6, see [Ben-Ari, Supplementary Material on SPIN 6]

Non-Deterministic Programs

Deterministic PROMELA programs are trivial

Assume PROMELA program with **one process** and **no overlapping guards**

- ▶ All variables are (implicitly or explicitly) initialized
- ▶ No user input possible
- ▶ Each state is either blocking or has exactly one successor state

Such a program has exactly one possible computation!

Non-trivial PROMELA programs are non-deterministic!

Possible sources of non-determinism

1. Non-deterministic choice of alternatives with overlapping guards
2. Scheduling of concurrent processes

Non-Deterministic Generation of Values

```
byte x;  
if  
  :: x = 1  
  :: x = 2  
  :: x = 3  
  :: x = 4  
fi
```

Observations

- ▶ assignment statement used as guard
 - ▶ assignment statement, as guard, evaluates to 'true'
 - ▶ side effect of guard is desired effect of this alternative
- ▶ selects non-deterministically a value in $\{1, 2, 3, 4\}$ for x

Non-Deterministic Generation of Values Cont'd

Generation of values from explicit list impractical for large range

```
#define LOW 0
#define HIGH 9
byte x = LOW;
do
  :: x < HIGH -> x++
  :: break
od
```

Observations

- ▶ In each iteration, equal chance for increase of range and loop exit
- ▶ Chance of generating n in random simulation is $2^{-(n+1)}$
 - ▶ Obtain no representative test cases from random simulation!
 - ▶ OK for verification, because all computations are considered

Select construct

Since SPIN 6, support for native select operator.

```
select(row : 1..8)
```

Internally translated to:

```
row = 1;  
do  
  :: row < 8 -> row++  
  :: break  
od
```

Awareness of translation helps when analyzing runs and interleavings.

Sources of Non-Determinism

1. Non-deterministic choice of alternatives with overlapping guards
2. Scheduling of concurrent processes

Concurrent Processes

```
active proctype P() {  
    printf("Process P, statement 1\n");  
    printf("Process P, statement 2\n");  
}
```

```
active proctype Q() {  
    printf("Process Q, statement 1\n");  
    printf("Process Q, statement 2\n");  
}
```

Observations

- ▶ Can declare more than one process (need unique identifier)
- ▶ SPIN allows at most 255 processes

Execution of Concurrent Processes

Command Line Execution

Random simulation of two processes

```
> spin interleave.pml
```

Observations

- ▶ Scheduling of concurrent processes 'on one processor'
- ▶ Scheduler randomly selects process to make next step
- ▶ Many different computations are possible: non-determinism
- ▶ Use `-p/-g/-1` options to see more execution details

Sets of Processes

```
active [2] proctype P() {  
    printf("Process %d, statement 1\n", _pid);  
    printf("Process %d, statement 2\n", _pid)  
}
```

Observations

- ▶ Can create set of identical processes
- ▶ Current process identified with reserved variable `_pid`
- ▶ Each process can have its own local variables

Command Line Execution

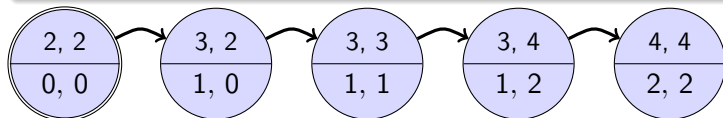
Random simulation of set of two processes

```
> spin interleave_set.pml
```

PROMELA Computations

```
1 active [2] proctype P() {  
2   byte n;  
3   n = 1;  
4   n = 2  
5 }
```

One possible computation ('run') of this program



Notation

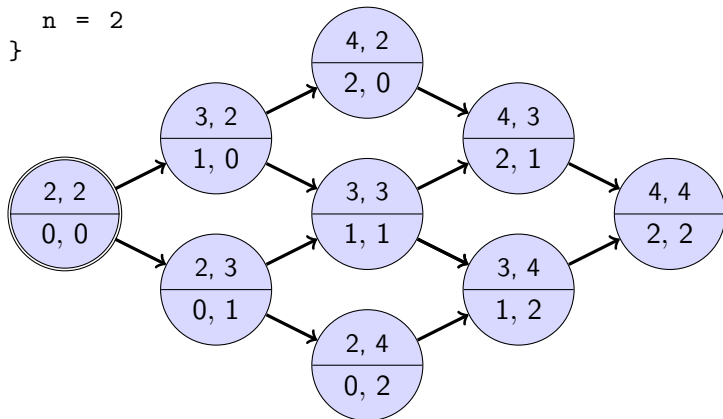
- ▶ Program pointer for each process in upper compartment
- ▶ Value of local n for each process in lower compartment

Computations are either infinite or terminating or blocking

Interleaving

Can represent possible interleavings in a DAG

```
1 active [2] proctype P() {  
2   byte n;  
3   n = 1;  
4   n = 2  
5 }
```



Atomicity

At which granularity of execution can interleaving occur?

Definition (Atomicity)

An expression or statement of a process that is executed entirely without the possibility of interleaving is called **atomic**.

Atomicity in PROMELA

- ▶ Assignments, jumps, skip, and expressions are **atomic**
 - ▶ In particular, conditional expressions are atomic:
($p \rightarrow q : r$), C-style syntax, brackets required
- ▶ Guarded commands?

Atomicity Cont'd

```
int a,b,c;

active proctype P() {
  a = 1; b = 1; c = 1;
  if
    :: a != 0 -> c = b / a
    :: else -> c = b
  fi
}

active proctype Q() { a = 0 }
```

Variables declared outside proctype are **global**.

Command Line Execution

Particular interleaving enforced by interactive simulation

```
> spin -p -g -i zero.pml
```

Atomicity Cont'd

Atomicity in PROMELA

- ▶ Alternatives in guarded commands are **not atomic**

How to prevent interleaving?

1. Consider to use expression instead of selection statement:

```
c = (a != 0 -> (b / a): b)
```

2. Put code inside **atomic** (but potentially unfaithful model):

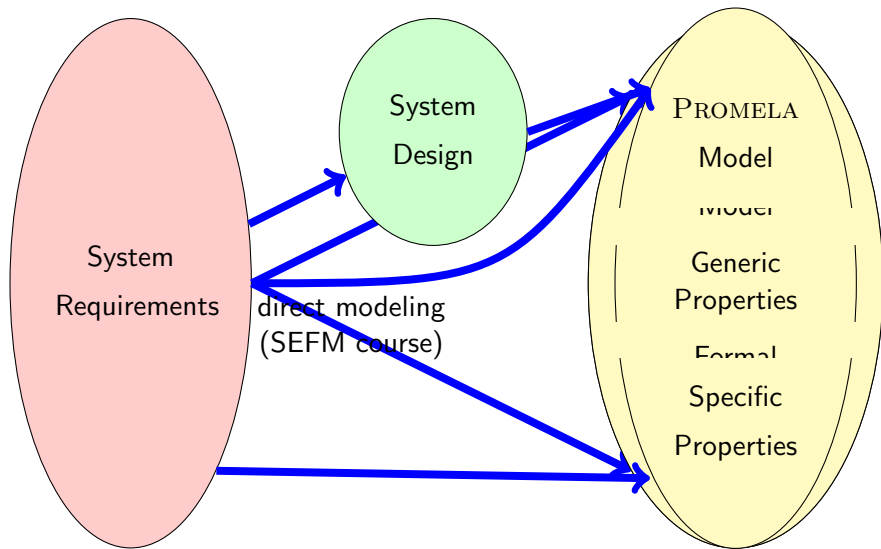
```
atomic {  
  if  
    :: a != 0 -> c = b / a  
    :: else -> c = b  
  fi  
}
```

Remark: Blocking statement in **atomic** may lead to interleaving (Lect. "Concurrency")

Usage Scenario of PROMELA

1. Model the essential features of a system in PROMELA
 - ▶ abstract away, or simplify, complex (numeric) computations
 - ▶ make use of non-deterministic choice
 - ▶ replace unbound data structures with fixed size data structures
 - ▶ replace large variety by small variety
2. Select properties that the PROMELA model must satisfy
 - ▶ Generic Properties (discussed in later lectures)
 - ▶ Mutual exclusion for access to critical resources
 - ▶ Absence of deadlock
 - ▶ Absence of starvation
 - ▶ Event sequences (e.g., system responsiveness)
 - ▶ Specific Properties

Formalisation with PROMELA **Abstraction**



Usage Scenario of PROMELA Cont'd

1. **Model** the **essential** features of a system in PROMELA
 - ▶ **abstract** away from complex (numerical) computations
 - ▶ make use of **non-deterministic** choice
 - ▶ replace unbound data structures with **fixed size** data structures
 - ▶ replace large variety by small variety
2. **Select properties** that the PROMELA model must satisfy
 - ▶ Mutual exclusion for access to critical resources
 - ▶ Absence of deadlock
 - ▶ Absence of starvation
 - ▶ Event sequences (e.g., system responsiveness)
3. **Verify** that all possible runs of PROMELA model **satisfy** properties
 - ▶ Typically, need many **iterations** to get model and properties right
 - ▶ Failed verification attempts provide feedback via **counter examples**

Literature for this Lecture

- Ben-Ari** Chapter 1, Sections 3.1–3.3, 3.5, 4.6, Chapter 6
- Ben-Ari-sup** Supplementary Material on SPIN Version 6
 - Spin** Reference card
 - jspin** User manual, file `doc/jspin-user.pdf` in distribution