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Corinne, a Tool for Choreography Automata^{*}

Simone Orlando¹, Vairo Di Pasquale¹, Franco Barbanera²^[0000-0002-8039-1085], Ivan Lanese³^[0000-0003-2527-9995], and Emilio Tuosto⁴^[0000-0002-7032-3281]
simoneorlando.cs@gmail.com, vairo.dp@gmail.com, barba@dmi.unict.it,
ivan.lanese@gmail.com, emilio.tuosto@gssi.it

¹ University of Bologna (Italy)

² Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Catania (Italy)

³ Focus Team, University of Bologna/INRIA (Italy)

⁴ Gran Sasso Science Institute (Italy)

Abstract. Choreography automata are a model of choreographies envisaging high-level views of the behaviour of communicating systems as finite-state automata. The behaviour of each participant of a choreography can be obtained via a projection operation from a choreography automaton. The system of participants obtained by projection is well-behaved if the choreography automaton satisfies some well-formedness conditions. We present Corinne, a tool allowing one to render, compute projections of and compose choreography automata, as well as to check well-formedness conditions.

1 Introduction

Programming and understanding distributed systems is notoriously difficult due to the need to reason on multiple flows of execution and many possible behaviours; yet distributed systems are fundamental nowadays. Indeed most of our systems, from social networks to apps, from games to scientific software, are distributed. A main challenge when programming distributed systems, in particular multiparty ones, is how to define communication protocols avoiding subtle bugs such as deadlocks.

In order to reason on the correctness and properties of multiparty communication protocols, dedicated models such as conversation protocols [24], choreographies [11,28,31], global graphs [35], and multiparty session types [12,26,27] have been proposed. Their common trait is to provide global descriptions of the behaviour of a distributed system, and to allow one to ensure desirable properties such as deadlock freedom by checking some structural conditions on the model. Also, they provide an operation, called projection, to extract from the global specification a description of the (local) behaviour that each participant has to follow in order to implement the desired global behaviour.

In this paper we focus on choreography automata (c-automata) [4], which are an automata model belonging to the family described above. Essentially, c-automata are finite-state automata whose transitions are labelled by interactions representing point-to-point communications between a sender and a receiver. Despite its simplicity, manually performing the constructions and analysis

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(such as the ones in [4]) on c-automata is tedious, error prone even for simple cases, and its complexity increases with the size of c-automata to the point that it becomes practically impossible even on moderately large instances.

Thus, we decided to automate the main constructions and analysis on c-automata in a prototype tool called *Corinne*. This tool allows us to experiment with c-automata. We illustrate the usefulness of *Corinne* by applying it to the examples in [4,3]. This exercise allowed us to spot a couple of (minor) errors in [4]. We will come back to this when describing the tool. It is worth noticing that the definitions of choreography automaton and of its projection are independent of the chosen communication model (synchronous or asynchronous). Indeed, this choice affects only the definition of well-formedness conditions.

After reviewing the main constructions and operations of c-automata (§ 2), we introduce *Corinne* (§ 3). We will conclude the paper (§ 4) with some final remarks.

Corinne is available at [14] (under the open-source MIT license), together with all the examples discussed in this paper.

2 Choreography Automata

This section surveys choreography automata (c-automata) borrowing definitions and concepts from [4,5]; for full details about this formalism we refer the reader to [4,5]. C-automata (ranged over by \mathbb{CA} , \mathbb{CB} , etc.) are Finite-State Automata (FSAs) whose transitions are labelled by interactions of the form $A \rightarrow B: m$; such interaction represents a communication between participants A and B where the former sends a message (of type) m to the latter, which is supposed to receive m . We let λ range over the set \mathcal{L}_{int} of interactions.

Definition 2.1 (Choreography automata). *A choreography automaton (c-automaton) is an FSA on the alphabet \mathcal{L}_{int} , namely a tuple $\langle Q, q_0, \mathcal{L}_{int}, \rightarrow \rangle$ where Q is a finite set of states, q_0 the initial state, and $\rightarrow \subseteq Q \times \mathcal{L}_{int} \times Q$ the transition relation. We write $q \xrightarrow{\lambda} q'$ when $(q, \lambda, q') \in \rightarrow$.*

Given a c-automaton, the projection operation builds the corresponding communicating system consisting of the set of projections of the c-automaton on each participant. Each projection is an FSA as well, on the alphabet \mathcal{L}_{act} of actions, which have the form $A B!m, A B?m$. The former denotes the action of sending message m from A to B , the latter the corresponding receiving action. Such FSAs are called Communicating Finite State Machines (CFSMs) [10]. Hereafter, $\mathcal{P}_{\mathbb{CA}}$ denotes the set of participants of a c-automaton \mathbb{CA} ; note that $\mathcal{P}_{\mathbb{CA}}$ is necessarily finite.

Definition 2.2 (Automata projection). *The projection on A of a transition $t = q \xrightarrow{\lambda} q'$ of a c-automaton, written $t \downarrow_A$, is defined by:*

$$t \downarrow_A = \begin{cases} q \xrightarrow{A B!m} q' & \text{if } \lambda = A \rightarrow B: m \\ q \xrightarrow{B A?m} q' & \text{if } \lambda = B \rightarrow A: m \\ q \xrightarrow{\epsilon} q' & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

The projection of a c-automaton $\mathbb{CA} = \langle Q, q_0, \mathcal{L}_{int}, \rightarrow \rangle$ on a participant $A \in \mathcal{P}_{\mathbb{CA}}$, denoted $\mathbb{CA} \downarrow_A$, is obtained by determinising¹ up-to-language equivalence the intermediate automaton

$$A_A = \langle Q, q_0, \mathcal{L}_{act} \cup \{\epsilon\}, \{ (q \xrightarrow{\lambda} q') \downarrow_A \mid q \xrightarrow{\lambda} q' \} \rangle$$

The projection of \mathbb{CA} , written $\mathbb{CA} \downarrow$, is the communicating system $(\mathbb{CA} \downarrow_A)_{A \in \mathcal{P}_{\mathbb{CA}}}$.

¹ In [4] also minimisation is performed, but this is not needed for the correctness of the constructions, and it is not currently performed by *Corinne*.

The projection of c-automata is essentially obtained by transferring projections of global specifications present in several choreography-based approaches such as, e.g., [12,26,13,27,35]. A composition operation on c-automata has been recently proposed by the last three authors in [5]. The idea is to *lift* at the choreographic level a version of the composition of systems of CFSMs described in [2] and applied in a multiparty session type setting in [3]. This technique enables to overcome the fact that in choreographic approaches systems are usually intended to be *closed*. Actually, it is instead possible to look at any system as an *open* one (so enabling modular development) by looking at any of its participants as a possible interface. Hence, the composition of systems is essentially obtained by taking two systems, selecting two of their participants (one per system) provided that they meet some *compatibility* conditions, and removing them while redirecting communications to them towards the other system. More precisely, if a message is sent by some participant **A** to the chosen interface of the system it belongs to, compatibility conditions require the interface of the other system to send an identical message to some participant **B**. In the composed system **A** sends the message directly to **B**. This way of composing systems can be obtained by applying one after the other two operations:

1. the product of c-automata, building a c-automaton corresponding to the concurrent execution of the two original c-automata; and
2. a *blending* operation that, given two participants (the chosen interfaces) of a same c-automaton, removes them and adjusts the c-automaton as described above.

The formalisation of these operations can be found in [5], while an example will be discussed in the next section (Fig. 3).

3 Corinne

The operations of projection and composition of c-automata described in § 2 are implemented in **Corinne** [14]. The tool is written in python3 and works on c-automata represented as particular directed graphs in the DOT format [23]. Rendering of DOT files is performed using the **graphviz** library [25]. Other formats can be used as input of **Corinne**; more precisely the tool also parses regular expressions used as the syntax of global graphs [35] in **ChorGram** [15,17], or the DOT representation [23] of global graphs produced by **Domitilla** [22]. We remark that only global graphs with no parallel composition correspond to c-automata and can thus be imported. All parsers are defined using ANTLR4 [32].

Users interact with **Corinne** through a graphical interface based on the **tkinter** package [34]. The GUI of **Corinne** displays FSAs that are either c-automata or CFSMs obtained via projection. As shown in the screenshot in Fig. 1, each FSA appears in a separate tab. The tab also reports basic information on the FSA (e.g., number of states and of edges) as well as a graphical rendering of the FSA itself.

Besides utility menus **File** and **Help**, **Corinne** has two menus to work on c-automata. Menu **Transformations** allows one to compute projections² on a given participant, the product of two c-automata as well as the blending (synchronisation) operation via interfaces following the approach described in [5].

Menu **Properties** instead allows one to check the well-formedness conditions discussed in [4] ensuring that the language of the c-automaton coincides with the one of the (synchronous) system obtained via projection, and that the latter is live, lock-free, and deadlock-free (we refer to [4] for

² Determinisation required for projection is computed using the classical subset construction for FSAs with ϵ -transitions.

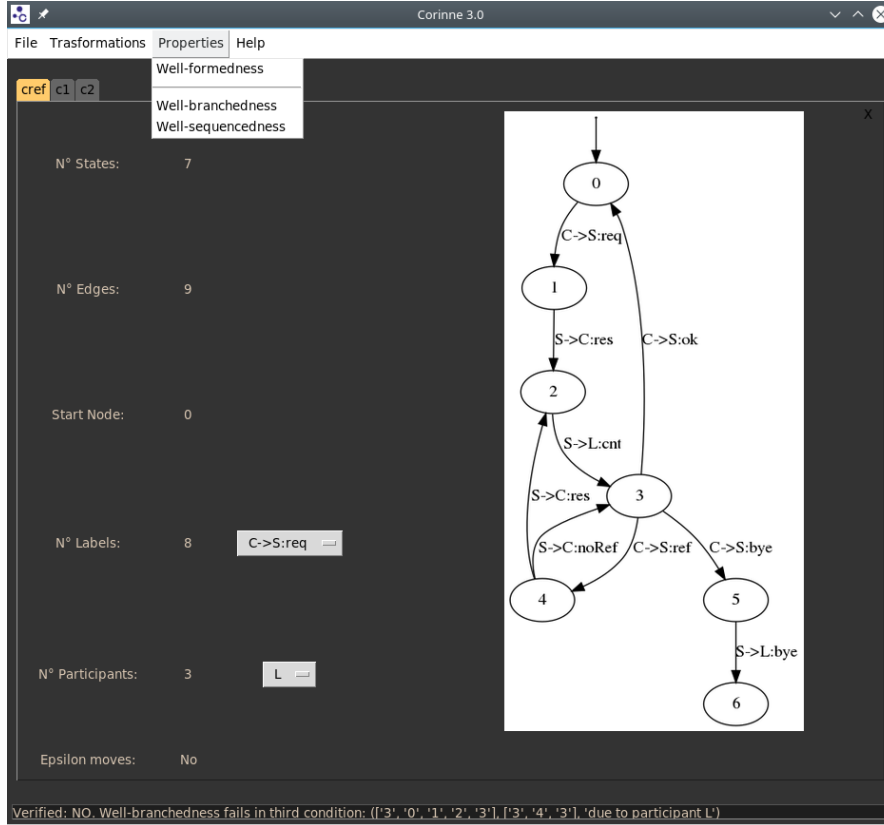


Fig. 1. Corinne screenshot

the definition of these properties in the context of c -automata as well as for formal statements and proofs of the results hinted at above).

The screenshot in Fig. 1 depicts the c -automaton $Cref$ used in [4, Introduction] as a running example. $Cref$ specifies the coordination among participants C , S , and L whereby a request **req** from client C is served by server S which replies with a message (of type) **res** and logs some meta-information **cnt** on a service L (e.g., for billing purposes). Client C may acknowledge a response of S (*i*) with an **ok** message to restart the protocol, or (*ii*) by requiring a refinement of the response with a **ref** message, or else (*iii*) by ending the protocol with a **bye** message which S forwards to L . In the second case, S sends C either a **noRef** message, if no refinement is possible, or another **res** (with the corresponding **cnt** to L). Using *Corinne* we can generate the projections of $Cref$. Fig. 2 contrasts the projection on participant S returned by *Corinne* and the one in [4, Example 3.4], manually computed. The two CFMS differ on the labels of the transition from state 4 to 6 and $\{5\}$ to $\{6\}$, respectively from the left and the right CFMS, which should correspond to each other. In fact, the label $S!bye$ on the transition from $\{5\}$ to $\{6\}$ is wrong.

We can also check the well-formedness of $Cref$, which is the conjunction of two conditions, well-branchedness and well-sequencedness. Intuitively, well-branchedness requires that all the participants are aware of which branch is taken in a choice, if they have to behave differently on the available branches. Well-sequencedness instead requires concurrency (due to communications

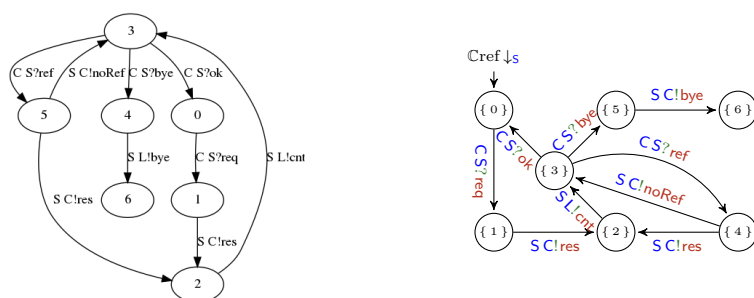


Fig. 2. Projections of Cref on S from *Corinne* (left) and [4] (right)

involving disjoint sets of participants) to be explicitly represented as commuting diamonds. As expected *Corinne* reports Cref to be well-sequenced. Unexpectedly, the check of well-branchedness fails. This is shown in the message in the bottom part of Fig. 1. The message means that the third condition in [4, Definition 4.6] fails on the pair of paths 3-0-1-2-3 and 3-4-3 because of participant L. The reason is that L occurs in the former but not in the latter. This implies that, in case the system reaches state 3 and participant C keeps on choosing indefinitely to send message *ref* to S, participant L will never be aware of what is going on. So L gets stuck waiting for a message *bye* that will never arrive. We refer to [4] for further details on well-formedness conditions. We conjecture that Cref is nevertheless well-behaved under suitable fairness assumptions, but the theory in [4] needs to be generalised to prove it.

We now demonstrate the composition operation relying on the running example of [3], where (referring to the UML representations) the diagrams in [3, Fig. 5] and [3, Fig. 6] are composed to derive the one in [3, Fig. 8]. Fig. 3 shows the two c-automata involved and the result of the composition. The top-left c-automaton (let's dub it CA1) represents the global behaviour of a system with participants P, Q, and H interacting according to the following protocol. Participant P keeps on sending text messages to Q, which has to deliver them to H. Participant P can send a new message only if H has ascertained the propriety of language of the previous one, i.e if the latter does not contain, say, rude or offensive words. Participant H acknowledges to Q the propriety of language of a received text by means of the message *ack*. In such a case, Q sends to P an *ok* message so that P can proceed by sending a further message. If the message does not pass the check, then H sends a *nack* message to inform Q that the text has not the required propriety of language. In such a case, Q produces *transf* (a semantically invariant reformulation of the text), sends it back to H and so that it can be checked. Before doing that, Q informs P (through the *notyet* message) that the text has not been accepted yet and a reformulation has been requested. After receiving a message, H may also decide to stop the interaction, sending a *stop* message to inform Q that no more text will be accepted. In such a case, Q informs P of that.

The bottom-left c-automaton (let's dub it CA2), instead describes a system formed by participants K, R, and S interacting according to the following protocol. Participant K sends text messages to R and S in an alternating way, starting with R. Participants R and S inform K that a text has been accepted or refused by sending back, respectively, either *ack* or *nack*. In the former case, it is the other receiver's turn to receive the text: a message *go* is exchanged between R and S to signal this case. In case *nack* is sent back, the sender has to resend the text until it is accepted. Meanwhile, the participant currently selected by K asks the other one to *wait*, since the previous message is being resent in a *transformed* form.

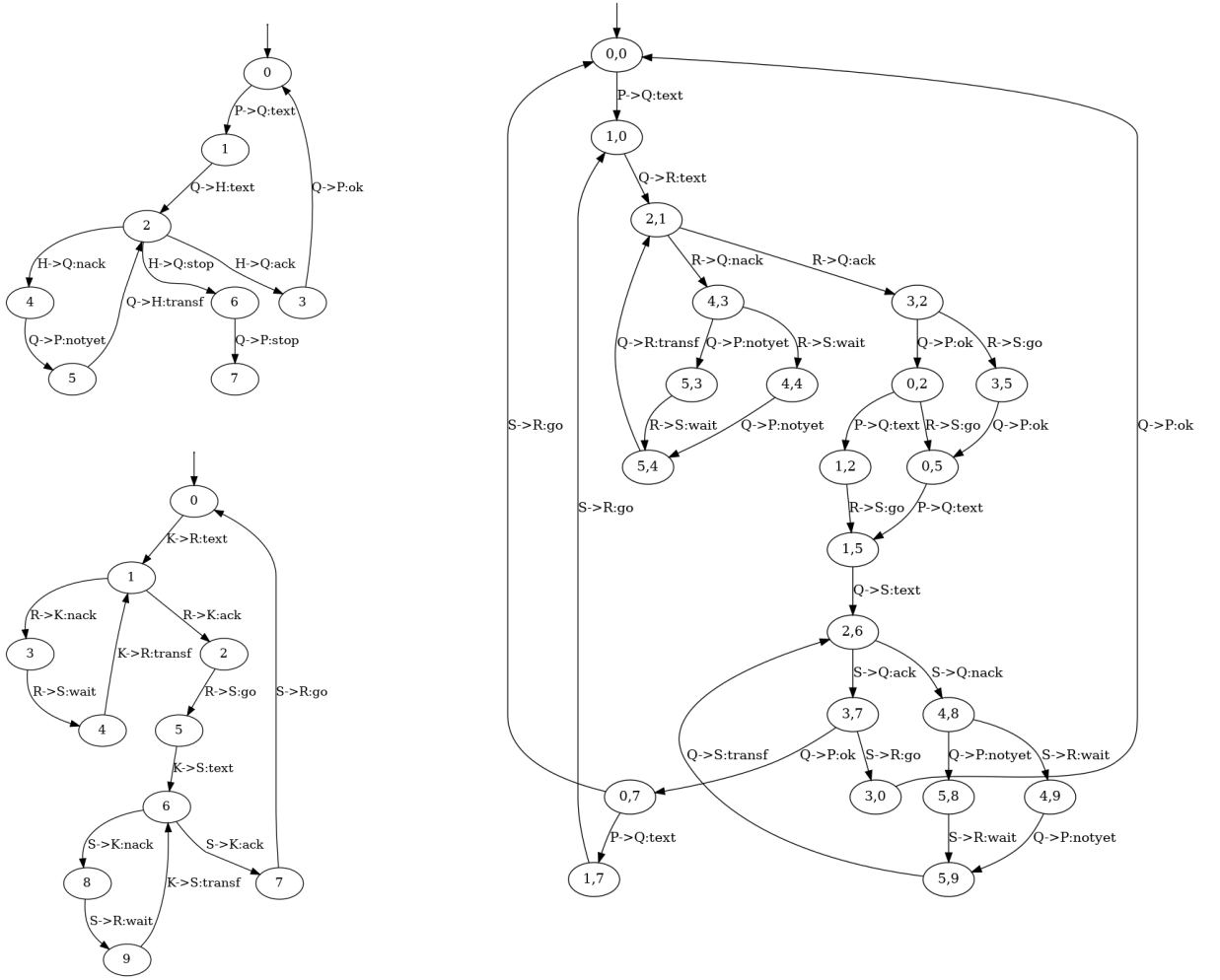


Fig. 3. Composition of c-automata in *Corinne*

In the composition, participants *H* and *K* in, respectively, CA1 and CA2 of Fig. 3 are chosen as interfaces. This means that, e.g., when participant *Q* sends a *text*, it will send it alternatively to *R* and *S*. This can be thought somehow as if CA1 invokes CA2 for sending the message. However, w.r.t. choreographies with procedure invocations such as [20,19], our approach on the one hand allows a complex interaction between caller and callee choreographies but, on the other hand, does not allow for parameter passing in the invocation. Notice that the interfaces *H* and *K* are *compatible*; specifically, the languages of $CA1 \downarrow_H$ and $CA2 \downarrow_K$ are *dual* to each other if we disregard the name of participants other than *H* and *K* in the input/output actions (duality corresponds to the exchange of ‘!’ with ‘?’ and vice versa in the actions). Compatibility, roughly, enables the composition not to modify in an essential way the behaviour of participants other than *H* and *K*. To obtain in *Corinne* the composition of CA1 and CA2 via the chosen interfaces *H* and *K*, we need first to apply **Product** on the two c-automata and then to apply **Synch** on *H* and *K* on the result. The only relevant difference between the composition performed by *Corinne* and the one in [3] is that the synchronisation in [3] transforms *H* and *K* into gateways while our composition

drops them. Actually, our composition precisely corresponds to the direct composition in [3], but there is no example in [3] of this form of composition. We can obtain our result from the one in [3] by transforming sequences of communications $A-H-K-B$ into $A-B$ and $B-K-H-A$ into $B-A$ for any A and B . We also remark that the representation as c -automata highlights concurrency as commuting diamonds, e.g., the one at states $(4,3)$, $(5,3)$, $(4,4)$, $(5,4)$. Both the component c -automata and their composition can be checked to be both well-sequenced and well-branched. However, the check of well-branchedness on the composition is quite heavy.

4 Conclusion, Related Work, and Future Work

We refer to [4] for a comparison between c -automata and related models, while here we focus on the relations between [Corinne](#) and the most related tools.

Possibly [Corinne](#)'s closest sibling is [ChorGram](#), a tool chain based on global graphs to support choreographic development of message-oriented applications [17,29]. Global graphs are not directly comparable with c -automata: on the one hand they are more general since they allow one to specify parallelism, but on the other hand they require structured interactions. As a result, global graphs without parallel composition correspond to a strict subset of c -automata. In a sense, [ChorGram](#) complements [Corinne](#)'s functionalities; for instance, it supports different semantics of global graphs and some experimental ideas on choreography amendment or model-driven testing of message passing applications [18]. While [Corinne](#) can already take as input global graphs without parallel composition produced by [ChorGram](#), we plan to further integrate the two tools in the future. We are currently considering to encode the parallel composition of global graphs as interleaving of independent transitions. We also plan to extend [ChorGram](#) so that it imports c -automata produced by [Corinne](#). This paves the way to extensions of [Corinne](#) with features to import models based, e.g., on multiparty session types such as [33,21] once proper mappings to c -automata are defined. We remark that this might not be simple for models relying on asynchronous communications such as [30,13] for [Corinne](#)'s semantics is synchronous.

Another toolkit close to [Corinne](#) is [CAT](#), a tool introduced in [6] to support the verification of communication protocols expressed as contract automata via the analysis of *agreement* properties. Contract automata are a versatile model of automata featuring the synthesis of controllers for communicating components; a thorough analysis based on [CAT](#) of the relations between choreographic- and orchestration-based controllers (initiated in [7]) has been recently developed in [9]. This suggests a possible entanglement of the complementary features of [Corinne](#) and [CAT](#) also in the light of the recent refactoring of the latter tool [8]. In fact, recently this model is being applied to choreography automata; [Corinne](#) could be useful in this context to validate choreography automata synthesised with contract automata.

We believe that [Corinne](#) is useful to experiment with c -automata, yet a number of improvements are desirable. First, right now the complexity of the check for well-branchedness is too high. We believe this can be reduced, at least in the average case, by avoiding checking multiple times analogous choices which are repeated in many states due to concurrency. Also, other functionalities would be useful, such as performing composition via gateways as described in [3] or checking well-formedness conditions also for the asynchronous semantics [4].

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