

# An Extension of PlusCal for Modeling Distributed Algorithms

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## Formal Specification Languages

- ▶ Algorithms modeled using  $\text{TLA}^+$  can be formally verified using the  $\text{TLA}^+$  Toolbox
- ▶ PlusCal algorithms have a more familiar syntax and can be translated to  $\text{TLA}^+$

# Distributed PlusCal Algorithms

## Motivation

An extension of PlusCal with a syntax that offers constructs for modeling distributed algorithms naturally

## Features

- ▶ Introduces
  - ▶ Sub-processes
  - ▶ Communication channels
- ▶ Can be translated into a TLA+ specification

# Motivating example

## Lamport's Mutex Algorithm

- ▶ An algorithm for Mutual Exclusion in Distributed Systems
- ▶ Critical section requests are ordered based on timestamps
- ▶ Processes exchange 3 types of messages
  - ▶ Request
  - ▶ Acknowledge
  - ▶ Release
- ▶ Processes asynchronously receive messages from each other

# Algorithm in PlusCal: main process

*/\* Variables must be declared globally to be used by the inter-playing processes representing this algorithm*

**variables** network, clock ...

**(\*\*--algorithm** LamportMutex {

Process executing  
the main algorithm

**process** (proc \in Proc) {

ncs: **while** (TRUE) {

*/\* non-critical section*

**try:** */\* multicast a message requesting access to cs*

**enter:** */\* wait for acknowledgements*

**cs:** */\* critical section*

**exit:** */\* multicast the release message*

**}** */\* end while*

**}** */\* end process*

## Algorithm in PlusCal: helper process

Process handling  
messages

```
process (comm \in Comm) {  
  
  rcv: while (TRUE) {  
    with (prc = node(self), ...) {  
      /* handle request, ack and release messages  
    }  
  } /* end while  
} /* end process
```

## Algorithm in PlusCal: helper process

```
process (comm \in Comm) {  
  rcv: while (TRUE) {  
    with (prc = node(self), ...) {  
      /* handle request, ack and release messages  
    }  
  } /* end while  
} /* end process  
**)
```

Proc == 1 .. N  
Comm == N+1..N+N  
node(c) == c - N

# Lamport Mutex in Distributed PlusCal

```
fifos network[Proc, Proc];
process(p \in Proc)
  variables ..
{
  ncs: /*non-critical section
  ..
  exit: /* multicast the
        /* release message
} {
  rcv: /* receive msg from channel
       /* handle request, ack and release messages
} /* end message handling thread
**)
```

sub-process executing  
the main algorithm

message handling  
sub-process



# Modeling channels

## Declaration (in PlusCal)

```
network=[p,q \in Proc |-> <>]
```

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## Declaration (in Distributed PlusCal)

```
fifos network[Proc, Proc];
```

## Operation (in PlusCal)

```
macro mcast(p, m) {  
  network := [s,d \in Proc |->  
    IF s = p /\ d # p  
    THEN Append(network[s,d], m)  
    ELSE network[s,d]]  
}  
mcast(self, Request(clock));
```

# Modeling channels

## Declaration (in PlusCal)

```
network=[p,q \in Proc |-> <>]
```

## Declaration (in Distributed PlusCal)

```
fifos network[Proc, Proc];
```

## Operation (in PlusCal)

```
macro mcast(p, m) {  
  network := [s,d \in Proc |->  
    IF s = p /\ d # p  
    THEN Append(network[s,d], m)  
    ELSE network[s,d]]  
}  
mcast(self, Request(clock));
```

## Operation (in Distributed PlusCal)

```
/* 1st argument: channel name  
   * 2nd argument specifies  
   * recipients and message  
  
multicast(network,  
           [self, p \in Proc |->  
             Request(clock)]);
```

# General Structure of an algorithm

```
(* --algorithm <algorithm name>
(* Declaration section *)
variables <variable declarations>
channels <channel declarations>
fifos <fifo declarations>
(* ... *)
(* Processes section *)
process (<name> [= | \in] <Expr>))
    variables <variable declarations>
    <subprocesses>
*)
```

# Operations on channels

- ▶ Supported operators

- ▶ `send(ch, el)`
- ▶ `receive(ch, var)`
- ▶ `broadcast(ch, [x \in S \mapsto e(x)])`
- ▶ `multicast(ch, [x \in S \mapsto e(x)])`
- ▶ `clear(ch)`

# Translation of Unordered Channels

**channel**  $\langle id \rangle [\langle Expr_1 \rangle, \dots, \langle Expr_N \rangle];$

- ▶ Translation based on TLA<sup>+</sup> sets

- ▶  $\text{send}(\text{chan}[e], \text{msg}) \triangleq$   
 $\text{chan}' = [\text{chan} \text{ EXCEPT } ![e] = \text{chan}[e] \setminus \text{cup } \{\text{msg}\}]$

- ▶  $\text{receive}(\text{chan}[e], \text{var}) \triangleq$   
 $\backslash E \text{ temp } \backslash \text{in } \text{chan}[e]:$   
     $\backslash \text{var}' = \text{temp}$   
     $\backslash \text{chan}' = [\text{chan} \text{ EXCEPT } ![e] = \text{chan}[e] \setminus \{\text{temp}\}]$

# Translation of FIFO Channels

**fifo**  $\langle id \rangle [\langle Expr_1 \rangle, \dots, \langle Expr_N \rangle];$

- ▶ Translation based on TLA<sup>+</sup> sequences
  - ▶  $\text{send}(\text{chan}[e], \text{msg}) \triangleq$   
 $\text{chan}' = [\text{chan} \text{ EXCEPT } ![e] = \text{Append}(@, \text{msg})]$
  - ▶  $\text{receive}(\text{chan}[e], \text{var}) \triangleq$   
 $\wedge \text{Len}(\text{chan}[e]) > 0$   
 $\wedge \text{var}' = [\text{Head}(\text{chan}[e])]$   
 $\wedge \text{chan}' = [\text{chan} \text{ EXCEPT } ![e] = \text{Tail}(@)]$



# Program counter

- ▶ The variable  $pc$  is indexed by processes and sub-processes

```
pc = [self \in ProcSet|->  
      IF self \in  $P_1$   
      THEN <<  $lbl_{11}$ ,  $lbl_{12}$ , ...>>  
      ELSE IF ...]
```

where the  $lbl_{ij}$  are the entry labels of the subprocesses of the process type  $P_i$ .

## Translation to TLA<sup>+</sup>

```
exit: clock := clock + 1;  
      multicast(network, [self, p \in Proc \ {self} |->  
                          Release(clock)]);
```

Multicast  
Translation

```
exit(self) ==  
  /\ pc[self][1] = "exit"  
  /\ clock' = [clock EXCEPT ![self] = clock[self] + 1]  
  /\ network' = [<<slf, p>> \in DOMAIN network |->  
    IF  
      slf = self /\ p \in Proc \ { self }  
    THEN  
      Append(network[slf, p], Release(clock'[self]))  
    ELSE  
      network[slf, p]]  
  /\ pc' = [pc EXCEPT ![self][1] = "ncs"]  
  /\ UNCHANGED << req, ack, sndr, msg >>
```

# Contributions and future work

## Contributions

- ▶ An extension of PlusCal offering the possibility to define
  - ▶ Sub-Processes
  - ▶ Communication Channels
- ▶ A backward compatible translator to TLA<sup>+</sup>

## Future Work

- ▶ Introduce more types of communication channels
- ▶ Consider defining channel operations in a TLA<sup>+</sup> module