

Taming Aspects with Managed Data

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Contents

Abstract	3
1 Introduction	4
1.1 Initial Study	4
1.2 Problem statement	5
1.2.1 Problem Analysis	5
1.2.2 Research Questions	6
1.2.3 Solution Outline	6
1.2.4 Research Method	7
1.3 Contributions	7
1.4 Related Work	8
1.5 Document Outline	9
2 Background	10
2.1 Cross Cutting Concerns	10
2.2 Aspect Oriented Programming	10
2.2.1 AspectJ	11
2.2.2 Design Patterns in Aspect Oriented Programming	11
2.2.3 Evolvability issues	12
2.3 Managed Data	12
2.3.1 Schemas	13
2.3.2 Data Managers	13
2.4 Java Reflection and Dynamic Proxies	13
2.4.1 Reflection	13
2.4.2 Dynamic Proxies	14
2.5 JHotDraw And AJHotDraw	16
2.5.1 Refactoring of Crosscutting Concerns	16
2.5.2 The “Undo” Concern of JHotDraw	18
3 Example Application: State Machine Monitoring	20
3.1 Schemas definition	20
3.2 Factory definition	22
3.3 Basic Data Manager	22
3.3.1 A simple without concerns program	22
3.4 Monitoring and notification concerns	24
3.4.1 Observable Data Manager	24
3.4.2 Monitor and notify concerns	24
4 Managed data in Java	26
4.1 Managed Data Implementation	26
4.1.1 Data description with Schemas	26
4.1.2 Schema Factories	27
4.1.3 Data Managers Implementation	28
4.1.4 Managed Objects	30

4.2	Self-Describing Schemas	31
4.2.1	SchemaSchema	31
4.2.2	SchemaFactory	31
4.2.3	Schema Loading	32
4.3	Bootstrapping	33
4.3.1	Cutting the umbilical cord	34
4.4	Implementation Issues	34
4.4.1	Equivalence	34
4.4.2	The classOf field	35
4.4.3	Hash-code of Managed Objects	35
4.5	Benefits and Limitations	35
4.6	Claims	35
5	Aspect refactoring of JHotDraw in managed data	36
5.1	Introduction	36
5.2	Aspect Refactoring	36
5.3	Aspect Refactoring of JHotDraw	36
5.3.1	Undo Concern of JHotDraw	36
5.3.2	The Observer Pattern in JHotDraw	36
5.4	Compare to AJHotDraw	36
6	Evaluation	37
6.1	Research Questions and Answers	37
6.2	Evidence	37
6.3	Results	37
6.3.1	Locality	37
6.3.2	Reusability	37
6.3.3	Composition transparency	37
6.3.4	(Un)pluggability	37
6.4	Claims	37
6.5	Discussion	37
6.5.1	In Practice	37
6.5.2	Benefits and Pitfalls	37
6.5.3	Modularity	37
6.6	Remarks	37
7	Conclusion	38
8	Further Work	39
	Bibliography	41

Abstract

Chapter 1

Introduction

Cross Cutting Concerns (CCC) is a problem the classic programming techniques can not tackle with sufficiently. This results in scattered and tangled code, which affects the system's modularity and it's ease of maintenance and evolution. Since Object Oriented Programming (OOP) and Procedural Programming (PP) techniques can not solve this problem, Aspect Oriented Programming (AOP) was introduced [KLM⁺97] in order to provide a solution to the problem, by presenting the notion of *aspects*.

AOP results in a modular and *single-responsibility* based design, whose properties must be implemented as *components* (cleanly encapsulated procedure) and *aspects* (not clearly encapsulated procedure), both separate concepts that are combined for the result through an automated process called *weaving*. However, relying on AOP, paradoxically, does not improve the evolution of a project even with the modularity that it provides. The reason is that it introduces tight coupling between the aspects and the application. As a result, the way to address this problem is to consider of a new sophisticated and expressing crosscut language. CCC could be handled on a higher level of the language such as the data structuring and management mechanisms.

Managed data [LvdSC12] allows the developers to take control of important aspects of data as reusable modules. Using managed data a developer can build *data managers* that handle the fundamental data manipulation primitives that are usually hard-coded in the programming language, by introducing custom data manipulation mechanisms. Managed data have been researched and implemented under the Enso project¹, which is developed in Ruby² (a dynamic programming language) using the meta-programming framework of Ruby. Furthermore, it is considered [LvdSC12] that managed data cannot be fully supported in static languages directly, which makes it more challenging for this thesis since it is implemented in Java. In this thesis we use the Java reflection API in order to implement managed data and focus on specific aspects and design patterns implementations using the data managers concept.

Finally, in order to evaluate the implementation of aspects and how we deal with CCC in managed data, we have reimplemented a part of a well-known use case, the JHotDraw, and evaluated the results on a number of explicit criteria.

1.1 Initial Study

In their study on managed data, Loh et al. [LvdSC12] present the main idea of managed data, while using a show case of it in an implementation in Ruby. As a use case they present the Enso project in order to reuse database management and access control mechanisms across different data definitions.

This thesis is an extension of their work; we implement managed data in Java (a static programming language) using the Java reflection API³ and dynamic proxies⁴. Although proxies in static programming languages can not implement the full range of managed data [LvdSC12]. Java provides a strong

¹<http://enso-lang.org/>

²<https://www.ruby-lang.org/en/>

³<https://docs.oracle.com/javase/tutorial/reflect/>

⁴<https://docs.oracle.com/javase/8/docs/api/java/lang/reflect/Proxy.html>

implementation of the [Meta-Object Protocol \(MPO\)](#) [KDRB91], which can be used through the Java Reflection API [FFI04]. Additionally, our work focuses on the aspects perspective and it provides a solution to the [CCC](#) problem by using managed data and their data managers.

The most famous implementation of [AOP](#) is the one provided by Kiczales et al. called AspectJ [KHH⁺01]. Although AspectJ has been used by a number of projects, some of them with significant research results [HK02] [MM], it includes all the trade-offs of [AOP](#), which are presented in detail in section 1.2. In this thesis we show how we use managed data in order to tame aspects and compare the results with an AspectJ show case, the AJHotDraw.

1.2 Problem statement

1.2.1 Problem Analysis

Predefined data structuring mechanisms

One of the most important characteristics of programming languages is the data structures definition. Different types of data structures can be found on different languages and paradigms including *structures*, *objects*, *predefined data structures*, *abstract data types* and more. The common characteristic of these definitions is that they are all predefined. Thus, they do not allow the developers to take control on the data structuring and management mechanisms, but only to create data of these types [LvdSC12].

The problem with this approach is that the predefined data structuring mechanisms can not implement [Cross Cutting Concerns](#) and other “common requirements” for data management. More specifically, those requirements are not properties that belong to a data structure definition, since, although it is easy to define them individually for every data type, that introduces a significant amount of duplicated and scattered code through the program.

Consequently, in this thesis we implement managed data, which gives the programmers control over the data structuring mechanisms.

Crosscutting concerns

As it has been seen [HMK05] there are a number of concerns during software implementation, that a developer has to work with. For good software modularity, these concerns have to be implemented on different modules, each of these modules implement only one concern. However, some of these concerns can not fit to separate modules but their implementation cuts across the system’s modules. Those concerns are called [Cross Cutting Concerns](#) and result to the problem of *scattered* and *tangled* code.

The problem we study focuses on the [CCC](#) that are scattered around the application, resulting in a hard to maintain system by tangling implementation logic and concerns code together. In order to deal with this problem a refactoring of those concerns has to take place, in which the tangled and scattered implementation has to be replaced with an equivalent *aspect* [HMK05].

In this thesis we focus on the modularization of such [CCC](#) in aspects, using managed data. We refactor those concerns in modular data structures each of which implement only one concern by lifting the data management up to the application level and allowing the developers to define the concerns in their own data structures.

Aspect Oriented Programming problems

Even though, [AOP](#) provides new modularization mechanisms, which should result in easier evolving software, it delivers solutions that are as hard and sometimes even harder to evolve than before [TBG03]. The problem lays on the aspects, which have to include a crosscut description of all places in the application where this code yields an influence. Thus, the aspects are tightly coupled to the application and this greatly affects the evolvability of the overall system.

Additionally, Steimann [Ste05] argues that modeling languages are not aspect ready. The problem that arises is located at the level of software modeling. More specifically, whereas in [OOP](#) roles are

tied to the collaborations, in *roles modeling* collaborations rely on interactions of objects and aspects are typically defined independently of one another.

Furthermore, in terms of order, it has been observed that aspects are not elements of the domain, they rather describe the order than the domain. Finally, aspects invariably express non-functional requirements, but if the non-functional requirements are not elements of domain models then neither are aspects.

1.2.2 Research Questions

Managed data has not been practically implemented in a static language before, therefore our first research questions states “*Can managed data be implemented in a static language?*”. Based on the previous argumentation about the relevance of AOP and the solutions that managed data can provide in [Cross Cutting Concerns](#), our second research question is “*Can managed data solve CCC and to what extent does it improve the software evolution problems that AOP introduces in a modular solution?*”. Finally by using a software showcase, the JHotDraw framework, as well as its AOP implementation AJHotDraw [MM], we evaluate the implementation of managed data on an inventory of aspects and design patterns. As a result the third research question states “*To what extent can managed data tame an inventory of aspects and design patterns in the JHotDraw framework, compared to the original and the AOP implementation.*”.

1.2.3 Solution Outline

Our solution consists of an implementation of managed data in Java. More specifically, we have implemented a framework that can be used in order to create managed data in Java. This framework provides all the mechanisms of managed data using Java reflection and dynamic proxies. Additionally, one can use the framework in order to refactor the CCC of an application.

As it has been already mentioned, to validate our hypotheses we have implemented managed data in Java using the Java Reflection API and Dynamic Proxies. More specifically we define *schemas* using Java interfaces and dynamic proxies for the *data managers*. Furthermore, we provide a proof of concept the examples given in [LvdSC12] but this time developed in Java using our framework. To stack data managers [LvdSC12], we use the *Decorator Pattern* [Gam95].

In order to see if managed data solves the problems that AOP introduces, we have implemented an inventory of the following aspects and design patterns from JHotDraw using data managers:

The Observer Pattern, which as presented in literature [TBG03] [HMK05] [MMvD05], is by nature not modularized and the scatters pattern code through the classes. This pattern is considered as a difficult case because it is used a lot in the original JHotDraw source code but with multiple variations, thus it is difficult to extract an abstract version.

The Undo aspect, which is analyzed extensively [Mar04] and a solution is provided by AJHotDraw. More specifically, this aspect consists of aspect-oriented refactoring of the *Command* pattern with *Undo* actions.

The Singleton Pattern, which as presented [HMK05] [HK02], can easily be abstracted as an aspect and replace the OOP usage in JHotDraw.

The Template Method, which as presented [HMK05] [HK02], scatters code by introducing roles such as those of *AbstractClass* and *ConcreteClass*.

This inventory is implemented using data managers that have modularity as a main characteristic and is evaluated in a new JHotDraw implementation. We compared those aspects with the original version of JHotDraw, and the aspect version, AJHotDraw. Since our solution is a refactoring of the JHotDraw framework we needed a way to ensure the behavioral equivalence between the original and the refactored solution [Fow09]. However, JHotDraw comes with no tests. Thus, we use TestJHotDraw, which is a subproject of the AJHotDraw development team, and is developed in order to contribute to a gradual and safe adoption of aspect-oriented techniques in existing applications allowing for a better assessment of aspect orientation. Since we use our JHotDraw implementation

for the functional evaluation of our solution, we can use some already researched criteria [HK02], which consist of *Locality*, *Re-usability*, *Composition Transparency*, and *(Un)pluggability*, in order to present metrics of our solution.

1.2.4 Research Method

In order to answer our research questions we studied the theoretical background, we examined our managed data implementation in Java and we evaluated our implementation in an existing use case system, the JHotDraw.

Managed data implementation in a static programming language. In order to answer the question if managed data could be implemented in a static language, we've implemented managed data in Java using Java's reflection capabilities⁵, Java interfaces for schemas definition and dynamic proxies⁶ for the data managers. An extensive presentation of the implementation is given in Chapter 4.

Use case implementation. In order to argue about the contribution of our implementation and managed data for aspects handling in general, we've used a use case application (JHotDraw) which is considered as a good design use case for **OOP**, along with its **AOP** implementation (AJHotDraw). Thus, we have built our version of the JHotDraw application using our managed data framework to refactor the **CCC**.

Use case evaluation. In order to show if our managed data solved the issues of **AOP** in terms of modularity, we have gathered a number of metrics for each of the three implementations the results are presented extensively in Chapter 6.

1.3 Contributions

Contribution 1: Managed data implementation in Java. Our first contribution is the implementation of managed data in a static language, in our case we chose Java. The reason we chose Java as the programming language is because Java is a very popular, static, object oriented programming language, with meta-programming (reflective) capabilities which we took advantage of. Managed data implemented as an internal **Domain Specific Language (DSL)** in Java, using interfaces for schema definitions and dynamic proxies for the data managers.

Contribution 2: Managed data Java framework. The final deliverable is a Java library, which the developer can use to define managed data and data managers for them. Additionally, the developer can define and implement aspects as reusable modules and introduce them in an application without mixing the business logic with the concern logic. More specifically, the schemas and the data managers have to be defined by the developer, as well as any additional functionality that needs to be integrated to the patterns or roles of the application.

Contribution 3: Managed data Evaluation in JHotDraw. We implemented a new version of the JHotDraw application using our framework in order to evaluate our refactoring of **CCC**. More specifically, we focused on the *Undo* concern, which is a *Command Pattern* and it is scattered around the modules of the JHotDraw, as well as the *Observer Pattern* which has been used in multiple parts of JHotDraw and cuts "pattern code" on different modules.

Contribution 4: JHotDraw implementation results assessment and comparison with AJHotDraw. Finally, we present the results of our evaluation and we compare them with AJHotDraw which implements **AOP** using the AspectJ language, again in Java.

⁵<https://docs.oracle.com/javase/tutorial/reflect/>

⁶<https://docs.oracle.com/javase/8/docs/api/java/lang/reflect/Proxy.html>

1.4 Related Work

In this section we discuss the related work of research that inspired this thesis. More specifically, we discuss points that we followed and points that we’ve tried to improve as well as the reason of doing it.

Meta-Object Protocol

Managed data can be implemented using reflection and the [MPO](#). The authors of Enso [[LvdSC12](#)] implemented it in Ruby using the meta-programming framework and more specifically, the **method_missing** mechanism. In other languages (such as Java, JavaScript or C#) that support dynamic proxies, they can be used for the managed data implementation, which is the way we’ve implemented it. The [MPO](#) [[KDRB91](#)] was first implemented for simple [OOP](#) capabilities of the Lisp language in order to satisfy some developer demands including compatibility, extensibility and developers experimentation. The idea was that the languages have been designed to be viewed as black box abstractions without giving the programmers the control over semantics or the implementation of those abstractions. [MPO](#) opens up those abstractions to the programmer so he can adjust aspects of the implementation strategy. Providing an open implementation can be advantageous in a wide range of high-level languages and thus [MPO](#) technology is a powerful tool for providing that power to the programmer [[KDRB91](#)]. Furthermore, [MPO](#) provides flexibility to the programmer because as a language becomes more and more high level and it’s expressive power becomes more and more focused, the ability to cleanly integrate something outside the language’s scope becomes more and more difficult. Thus, both [MPO](#) and managed data allow the programmer to be able to control the interpretation of structure and behavior in a program. However, [MPO](#) focuses on behavior of the objects and classes, while in managed data the focus rests solely on the data management. One could conclude that managed data is a subset of the [MPO](#) approach since managed data have a more narrow scope.

Adaptive Object Model

Managed data [[LvdSC12](#)] is closely related to the [Adaptive Object Model \(AOM\)](#). [AOM](#) [[YJ02](#)] is an architectural style that emphasizes flexibility and runtime dynamic configuration. Architectures that are designed to adapt at runtime to new user requirements by retrieving descriptive information that can be interpreted at runtime, are sometimes called a “reflective architecture” or a “meta architecture”. An [AOM](#) system, is a system that represents classes, attributes, relationships, and behavior as metadata, something that is closely related to the managed data. However, on one hand [AOM](#) style is more general than the managed data since it is described at a very high level as a pattern language and it covers business rules and user interfaces, in addition to data management. On the other hand, [AOM](#) does not discuss issues of integration with programming languages, the representation of data schemas, or bootstrapping, which are central characteristics of managed data. [AOM](#) is also presented as a technique for implementing business systems, not as a general programming or data abstraction technique [[LvdSC12](#)].

Model Driven Software Development

[Model Driven Software Development \(MDS\)](#) refers to a software development method which generates code from defined models. The models represent abstract data that consist of the structure and properties definition of an entity. The idea of the model in [MDS](#) is closely related to the *schemas* in managed data. Similarly to the model definition, schemas define the structure, the properties and any metadata that describe an entity, followed by code generation that adds any extra functionality and manipulation mechanisms to that entity.

The Enso Language

Enso project⁷ is the first implementation of managed data, it is open source⁸ and is used for EnsoWeb, a web framework written with managed data. Although Enso is implemented in Ruby, which is a dynamic language, the source code was a very helpful resource for our static implementation in Java. The design of Enso was an inspiration for our implementation even

⁷<http://enso-lang.org/>

⁸<https://github.com/enso-lang/enso>

though some parts have changed completely in order to conform to our needs and support Java's static type system. Additionally, examples presented in Enso, are also implemented in our case and are presented in Chapter 3.

Aspect Oriented Programming

Although AOP is not directly connected to managed data, it is a mechanism that is relatively easy to be supported in managed data. This mechanism consists of the *weaving* of aspect code in specific join points. The way to support this in managed data is through data managers. How to tame aspects in managed data is the main topic of this thesis and is going to be presented extensively in the following chapters.

1.5 Document Outline

In this section we outline the structure of this thesis. In Chapter 2 we introduce the background, focusing on the concepts, which the reader must be familiar with in order to follow the next chapters. In Chapter 3 we demonstrate an example to show the capabilities of our implementation. In Chapter 4 the implementation of managed data in Java is presented and discussed, providing detailed explanation of our issues and implementation details. Next, in Chapter 5 a showcase is presented, by applying our implementation to refactor aspects in JHotDraw. In Chapter 6 an evaluation of the aspect refactoring is illustrated. Additionally, some metrics, claims and results are presented. Finally, a conclusion is given in Chapter 7 followed by further work in Chapter 8.

Chapter 2

Background

2.1 Cross Cutting Concerns

There is significant research in software engineering that focuses on the importance of software modularity. The most significant, among the many, advantage of modular systems is the extensibility and evolution of a system [Par72].

However, during the development of a system there is a number of concerns that have to be considered and implemented into the system. In order to follow the modularity principles, those concerns have to be implemented in separate modules, this way the program will be extensible and its evolution will be easier. Nonetheless, many of those concerns can not fit into the existing modular mechanisms in any of the existing programming paradigms including both [Object Oriented Programming](#) and [Procedural Programming](#). In those cases, the concerns are scattered through the modules of the system, resulting to scattered and tangled code. Those concerns are called [Cross Cutting Concerns](#) [HMK05]. CCC are considered a serious issue for the evolution of a system and their effects of tangled and scattered code can be disastrous for a system's extensibility.

The reason is that the code which is related to a concern is scattered in multiple modules, while the concern code is tangled with the each module's logic resulting in a system, which does not follow the *Single Responsibility Principle* and consequently is hard to maintain.

Among many examples of those CCC are persistence, caching, logging, error handling [LL00] and access control. Additionally, some design patterns scatter "design pattern code" through the application, for instance the *Observer Pattern*, *Template Pattern*, *Command Pattern* etc. [HK02] [Mar04].

In order to solve this problem we need a way to refactor and transform the non-modularized CCC into a modular *aspect*. In other words, refactorings of CCC should replace all the scattered and tangled code of a concern with an equivalent module [HMK05], which in AOP terminology is called *aspect* [KLM⁺97].

2.2 Aspect Oriented Programming

Kiczales et al. present AOP [KLM⁺97] by using an example of a very simple image processing application. In that system, as in every system, whenever two properties which are being programmed must compose different tasks and yet be coordinated (in the example filters and loop-fusion), they **crosscut** each other. Because general purposes languages provide only one composition mechanism, which leads to complexity and tangling, the programmer must do the co-composition manually. According to their theory, a system's property can be either a *component*, if it can be clearly encapsulated in a generalized procedure, otherwise it is an *aspect*. AOP supports the programmer in separating components and aspects from each other by providing mechanisms that make it possible to abstract and compose them together when producing the whole system (*aspect weaving*). Alternatively to the common programming paradigms, OOP and PP that allow programmers to only separate the *components* from each other but crosscut the concerns.

However, implementing AOP programs is not that easy since several tools are needed in order to

succeed. More specifically, a general purpose language needs only a language, a *compiler* and a *program* written in the language that implements the application. In the case of an AOP based implementation, a program consists of a *component language*, in which the components are programmed, one or more *aspect languages*, in which the aspects are programmed, an *aspect weaver* for the combined languages, a *component program* that implements the components using the component language and finally, one or more *aspect programs* that implement the aspects using the aspect languages. Additionally, an essential function of the aspect weaver is the concept of *join points*, namely the elements of the component language semantics that the aspect programs coordinate with.

2.2.1 AspectJ

There is significant work in the area of aspect oriented languages but one the most important contribution is the AspectJ¹ project, which is a simple and practical aspect-oriented extension to Java and it has been introduced by Kiczales et al. [KHH⁺01]. The authors of AspectJ provide examples of programs developed in AspectJ and show that by using it, CCC can be implemented in clear form, which in other general purpose languages would lead to tangled and scattered code. AspectJ was developed as a compatible extension to Java so that it would facilitate adoption by current Java programmers. The compatibility lays on upward compatibility, platform compatibility, tool compatibility and programmer compatibility. One of the most important characteristics of AspectJ is that it is not a DSL but a general purpose language that uses Java’s static type system. Our goal is to apply those properties for our managed data implementation.

2.2.2 Design Patterns in Aspect Oriented Programming

Hannemann et al. present a showcase of AOP [HK02] in which they conduct an aspect-oriented implementation of the Gang of Four design patterns [Gam95] in AspectJ, in which 17 out of 23 cases show modularity improvements. Even though design patterns offer flexible solutions to common software problems, those patterns involve crosscutting structures between roles and classes / objects. There are several problems that the OOP design patterns introduce in respect to CCC, specifically in cases when one object plays multiple roles, many objects play one role, or an object play roles in multiple patterns [Sul02] (design pattern composition).

The problem lays on the way a design pattern influences the structure of the system and its implementation. Pattern implementations are often binded to the instance of use resulting in their scattering into the code and losing their modularity [HK02].

Even worse, in case of multiple patterns used in a system (pattern overlay and pattern composition), it can become difficult to trace particular instances of a design pattern. Composition creates large clusters of mutually dependent classes [Sul02] and some design patterns explicitly use other patterns in their solution.

Observer pattern in Aspect Oriented Programming

Hannemann et al. [HK02] provide some example implementations of several design patterns, including the *Observer Pattern* in which they focus on a detailed implementation. As they mention, in an observer pattern implementation, both the *Subject* and the *Observer* have to know about their roles and have “pattern related code” in them. As a result, adding or removing code from a class requires changes of code in that class.

In their implementation [HK02] of the observer pattern in AspectJ, they separate abstract aspects for:

- The *Subject* and *Observer* roles in classes.
- Maintenance of a mapping from *Subjects* to *Observers*.
- The trigger of *Subjects* that update *Observers*.

¹<https://eclipse.org/aspectj/>

And concrete aspects for each instance of the pattern fills in the specific parts:

- Which classes can be *Subjects* and which *Observers*.
- A set of changes on the *Subjects* that triggers the *Observers*.
- The specific means of updating each kind of *Observer* when the update logic requires it.

Modularity Properties

The modularity properties implemented in this thesis are[HK02]:

Locality: All the code that implements the observer pattern is in the abstract and concrete observer aspects, none of it is in the participant classes. The participant classes are entirely free of the pattern context and as a consequence there is no coupling between the participants.

Reusability: The core pattern code is abstracted and reusable. The abstract aspect can be reused and shared across multiple observer pattern instances.

Composition transparency: Because a pattern participants implementation is not coupled to the pattern, if a *Subject* or *Observer* takes part in multiple observing relationships their code does not become more complicated and the pattern instances are not confused.

(Un)pluggability: Because *Subjects* and *Observers* don't need to be aware of their role in any pattern instance, it is possible to switch between using a pattern and not using it in the system.

In general an object or a class that is not coupled to its role in a pattern can be used in different contexts without modifications and the reusability of participants can be increased. The locality also means that existing classes can be incorporated into a pattern instance without the need to adapt them with extra effort. All the changes are made in the pattern instance. This makes the pattern implementations themselves relatively (un)pluggable. If we can reuse generalized pattern code and localize the code for a particular pattern instance, this can result in multiple instances of the same pattern in one application, making it easy to understand (composition transparency). This solves the common problem of having multiple instances of a design pattern in one application.

2.2.3 Evolvability issues

Since modularization and separation of concerns make the evolution of an application a lot easier and [AOP](#) provides mechanisms for modularization and system decomposition, aspect-oriented programs should be easier to be evolved and maintained. Paradoxically, this is not the case [TBG03] since [AOP](#) technologies deliver applications that are as hard, and sometimes even harder, as non-[AOP](#).

According to Tourwe et al. [TBG03] the problem is that aspects have to include a crosscut description of all places in the application. Thus, it is much harder to make such crosscuts oblivious to the application and most importantly to the rest of the modules. Additionally, current means for specifying concerns rely heavily in the existing structure of the application, therefore the aspects are tightly coupled to the application (and its structure) and of course this affects negatively the evolvability of a system since it makes it hard to change it's structural. As Tourwe [TBG03] proposes, a solution for this problem would be the creation of a new, more sophisticated crosscut language. A language that enables the developer to discriminate between methods based on what they actually do instead of what they look like, in a more intentional way. This new language that implements [CCC](#) in a modular way is something try to realize in our thesis.

2.3 Managed Data

Managed data [LvdSC12] is a data abstraction mechanism that allows the programmer to control the definition of the data and their manipulation mechanisms. Additionally it provides a modular way to control aspects of data. Managed data helps the programmer by giving them control over

the structuring mechanisms, which until now were predefined by the programming languages. The developers could not take control of them, they could only create data of those types. Managed data provides significant flexibility since it lifts data management up to the application level, by allowing the programmer to build data managers that handle the fundamental data manipulation primitives, normally hard-coded into the programming language.

Managed data has three essential components:

Data description language, that describes the desired structure and properties of data.

Data managers, that enable creation and manipulation of instances of data.

Integration, with a programming language to allow data to be created and manipulated.

In the traditional approach, the programming language includes data definition mechanisms and their processes, which are both predefined. However, with managed data, the data structuring mechanisms are defined by the programmer by interpretation of data definitions. Of course, since a data definition model is also data, it requires a meta-definition mechanism.

2.3.1 Schemas

The schemas are the way to describe the structure of the data to be managed. They can be just a simple data description language which programmers can use to describe simple kind of data. For example Loh et al. [LvdSC12] used Ruby hash for the data description on a simple example where the hash was an object that represented a mapping from values to values. However, a simple schema format like this can not be used to describe itself because it is not a record.

A self-describing schema would allow schemas to be managed data themselves. We therefore need a self-describing schema that can be used to describe schemas, namely the “Schema-Schema”. A Schema-Schema is also managed data with its own data manager. This process is called *Bootstrapping* and it is needed in order to “jumpstart” the process. This extends the benefits of programmable data structuring to their own implementation. Schemas can be interpreted in many different ways to create different kinds of records based on the manipulation provided by the data managers.

2.3.2 Data Managers

Data managers are the mechanisms that interpret *schemas* with defined manipulation strategies set by the programmers. The input to a data manager is a schema, which describes the structure of the data to be managed. Since the schema is only known dynamically, the data managers must be able to determine the fields and methods of the managed data object dynamically as well. In order to implement such an operation we need a meta-programming mechanism that dynamically analyses the structure of a schema and applies to it the functionality of the data managers. In their implementation Loh et al. [LvdSC12] used the “missing_method” implementation in order to succeed that. In our case we will use Java’s reflection API and dynamic proxies.

2.4 Java Reflection and Dynamic Proxies

The Java programming language provides the programmer with a Reflection API² that offers the ability to examine or modify the runtime behavior of applications running in the [Java Virtual Machine \(JVM\)](#). Additionally, Java comes with an implementation of Dynamic Proxies³ which is a class that implements a list of interfaces specified at runtime.

2.4.1 Reflection

Reflection is the ability of a running program to examine itself and its environment and to change what it does depending on what it finds [FFI04].

²<https://docs.oracle.com/javase/tutorial/reflect/>

³<https://docs.oracle.com/javase/8/docs/api/java/lang/reflect/Proxy.html>

In order for this self-examination to be successful, the program needs to have a representation of itself, which is called *metadata*. In a [OOP](#) language this metadata is organized into objects, hence they are called *metaobjects*. Finally, the process of the runtime self-examination of these metaobjects is called *introspection*.

Java supports reflection with its reflection API since the version 1.1. Java provides many operations for using metaobjects performing intercession. Using Java reflection a running program can learn a lot about itself. This information may derive from classes (the `Class` metaobject), class name, class methods, a class super and sub classes, methods (the `Method` metaobject), method name, method parameters, method type, variables, variables handlers and more. Querying information from these metaobjects is called introspection. Additionally to the examining of the these metaobjects, a developer has the ability to dynamically call a method that is discovered at runtime. This process is called *dynamic invocation*. Using dynamic invocation, a `Method` metaobject can be instructed to invoke the method that it represents during the program's runtime.

Although reflection is considered helpful for developing flexible software, it has some known pitfalls:

Security. Since metaobjects give a developer the ability to invoke and change underlined data of the program, it also gives access them to places that are supposed to be secure (e.g. `private` variables).

Code complexity. Consider a program that uses both normal objects and metaobjects. That introduces an extra level of complexity since now a developer has to deal with different kinds of objects on different levels, meta and normal level.

Runtime performance. Of course the runtime dynamic examination and introspection introduce significant overhead on most language implementations. In the case of Java's dynamic proxies a 6.5x overhead observed [\[MSD15\]](#). However, this is not something that we take into consideration in our implementation.

2.4.2 Dynamic Proxies

Since 1.3 version Java supports the concept of *Dynamic Proxies*. A *proxy* is an object that supports the interface of another object (*target*), so that the proxy can substitute for the target for all practical purposes[\[FFI04\]](#). A proxy has to have the same interface as the *target* so that it can be used in exactly the same way. Additionally it *delegates* some or all of the calls that it receives to its target and thus acts as either an intermediary or a substitute object. As a result, a programmer has the capability to add behavior to objects dynamically. The Java reflection API contains a dynamic proxy-creation facility, in `java.lang.reflect.Proxy`.

There are several examples of dynamic proxies implementation in Java including implicit conformance, future invocations [\[PSH04\]](#), dynamic multi dispatch, design by contract or [AOP](#) [\[Eug06\]](#).

Proxy Objects

A proxy is an object which conforms to a set of interfaces, for which that proxy was created for. The corresponding proxy class extends the class `Proxy` and implements all its interfaces. Thus, conforming to all those interfaces, a proxy can be casted to any of them and any method defined in those interfaces can be invoked on the proxy object [\[Eug06\]](#).

Invocation Handlers

All the proxy objects have an associated object of type `InvocationHandler`, which handles the method invocations performed on the proxy, and its interface is shown in listing [2.1](#).

The arguments of the `invoke` method include the object on which the method was originally invoked (i.e., the proxy), the method itself that was invoked on the proxy, and the arguments of that method, if any. Therefore, the `invoke` method is capable of handling any method invocation.


```

1 public interface InvocationHandler {
2     public Object invoke(Object proxy, Method method, Object[] args) throws Throwable;
3 }

```

Listing 2.1: The Invocation Handler Interface

Issues

A proxy instance is an object and it responds to the methods declared by `java.lang.Object`. Thus, when these methods should be invoked and from which object is an issue that arises [FFI04].

The methods `equals`, `hashCode`, and `toString` are inherited by all classes from the `Object` class and they are handled just like custom methods. If they are proxied then they are also overridden by the proxy classes and invocations to them are forwarded to the invocation handler of the proxy. Other methods defined in `Object` are not overridden by proxy classes, as they are `final` [Eug06].

Logging Example

Previously we mentioned the *logging CCC 2.1*. Image that every method invocation of an object has to be logged into the console, in that case we would need to write logging code on each of the methods of that class. This would lead to scattered logging code through the methods. This is problem can be solved with dynamic proxies and a simple solution is presented in listing 2.2.

```

1 import java.lang.reflect.*;
2 import java.io.PrintWriter;
3
4 public class TracingIH implements InvocationHandler {
5     public static Object createProxy( Object obj, PrintWriter out) {
6         return Proxy.newProxyInstance(
7             obj.getClass().getClassLoader(),
8             obj.getClass().getInterfaces(),
9             new TracingIH( obj, out));
10    }
11
12    private Object target;
13    private PrintWriter out;
14
15    private TracingIH(Object obj, PrintWriter out) {
16        target = obj;
17        this.out = out;
18    }
19
20    public Object invoke(Object proxy, Method method, Object[] args) throws Throwable {
21        Object result = null;
22
23        try {
24            out.println( method.getName() + "(...) called" );
25            result = method.invoke( target, args );
26        } catch (InvocationTargetException e) {
27            out.println( method.getName() + " throws " + e.getCause() );
28            throw e.getCause();
29        }
30        out.println( method.getName() + " returns" );
31        return result;
32    }
33 }

```

Listing 2.2: An invocation handler for a proxy that traces calls [FFI04]

2.5 JHotDraw And AJHotDraw

JHotDraw⁴ is a Java GUI framework for technical and structured graphics. It is an open-source, well-designed and flexible drawing framework of around 18,000 non-comment lines of Java code. JHotDraw's design relies heavily on some well-known design patterns[Gam95] and it is considered as a showcase for software quality techniques provided to the OOP community.

The fact that JHotDraw is appraised as a so well-designed application makes it an ideal candidate as a showcase for an aspect oriented migration. Marin and Moonen [MM] use this showcase for adoption of aspect-oriented techniques in existing systems. More specifically, they present AJHotDraw⁵, which is an aspect-oriented version of JHotDraw developed in Java and AspectJ. The goal of AJHotDraw is to take the existing JHotDraw and migrate it to a functionally equivalent aspect-oriented version. According to the authors the contributions of AJHotDraw include:

1. Identification and documentation of crosscutting concerns in JHotDraw, which helps to aware the developers of the existence of CCC in JHotDraw.
2. Building a common benchmark for testing aspect mining techniques and tools.
3. Associating aspect solutions to the identified CCC and extra general solutions including design patterns, good practices etc.
4. Assessing reliability of proposed aspect solutions to known CCC in the context of JHotDraw.
5. Building a model application based on an aspect-oriented solution.
6. Providing support for refactoring from an object-oriented solution to an aspect oriented solution.
7. Addressing the challenges risen by testing aspect oriented systems.

In order to refactor the existing framework, the first thing that AJHotDraw developers needed to do was to create a test subproject for the JHotDraw, which is called TestJHotDraw⁶ in order to ensure behavioral equivalence between the original and the refactored solution. Refactoring implies preserving the observable behavior of an application[Fow09] and since the original JHotDraw comes without tests, TestJHotDraw was created. There are several contributions of the aspect-oriented implementation approach[MM]. The authors suggest that the project contributes to a gradual and safe adoption of aspect-oriented techniques in existing applications and allow for a better assessment of aspect orientation.

In this thesis we have used JHotDraw and AJHotDraw as well as the test project, TestJHotDraw, in order to evaluate our CCC refactoring in managed data. The detailed evaluation is described in Chapter 6.

2.5.1 Refactoring of Crosscutting Concerns

The refactoring of legacy code to aspect oriented code is also known as *Aspect Refactoring* [MMvD05]. During this process it is important to identify which elements are going to be refactored and which *aspect* solutions will replace them. To evaluate the refactored elements [Fow09], a testing component is needed in order to ensure behavior conservation, hence some coherent criteria to organize CCC are needed. Marin, Moonen and Deursen [MMvD05] organize the CCC into types, which are descriptions of similar concerns that share the following properties:

- A generic behavioral, design or policy requirement to describe the concern within a formalized, consistent context (e.g., role superimposition to modular units (classes), enforced consistent behavior, etc.),
- An associated legacy implementation idiom in a given (non-aspect oriented) language (e.g., interface implementations, method calls, etc.)

⁴<http://www.jhotdraw.org/>

⁵<http://swierl.tudelft.nl/bin/view/AMR/AJHotDraw>

⁶<http://swierl.tudelft.nl/bin/view/AMR/TestJHotDraw>

- An associated (desired) aspect language mechanism to support the modularization of the type's concerns (e.g., *pointcut* and *advice*, introduction, composition models).

During AJHotDraw implementation [MMvD05] [HMK05], the authors propose a type-based refactoring on the same *Observer* instance, *SelectionListener*, in JHotDraw.

The legacy code architecture of JHotDraw is displayed in figure 2.1.

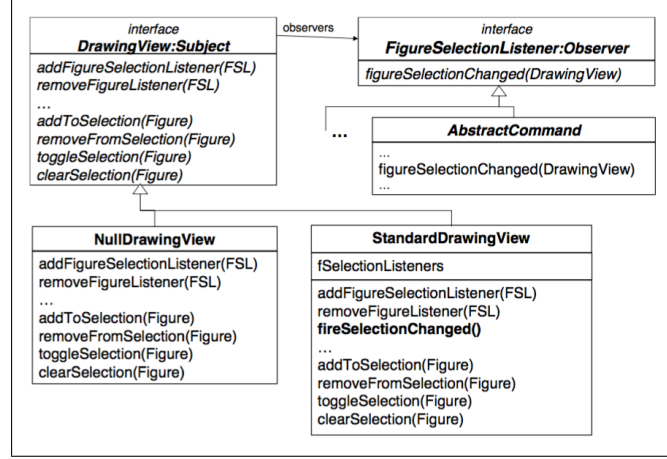


Figure 2.1: Observer pattern: Selection Listener [MMvD05]

The *FigureSelectionListener* interface defines the *Observer* role as its primary concern. The interface is implemented by all classes interested in changes of the selection of figures in a drawing view. The *DrawingView* interface partially defines the *Subject* role. The *Subject* role is a secondary concern for the *DrawingView* interface. Two classes implement this interface and only one, *StandardDrawingView*, contains a non-empty implementation of the *Subject* role.

The aspect refactoring could be described as the aspect construct comprising both the *Subject* and *Observer* roles definition and maintaining a list of associations between each *Subject* and its *Observer* objects. The type-based refactoring [MMvD05] distinguishes several crosscutting elements that occur in an implementation of the *Observer* pattern: role superimposition, applied twice, for each of the two roles and consistent behavior to notify the observers of the changes in the *Subject* object. The *GenericRole* (empty) interface documents the crosscutting type of role superimposition. Specific roles, like *Observer* and *Subject* (*SelectionSubject*) extend the interface. These elements are shown in figure 2.2.

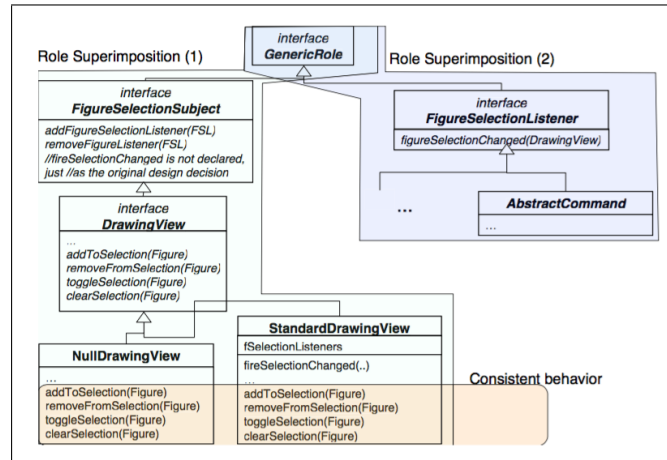


Figure 2.2: The concern types in Selection Listener [MMvD05]

2.5.2 The “Undo” Concern of JHotDraw

After a fan-in analysis of JHotDraw [MVD04], Marin identified the “Undo” concern in JHotDraw and he presents an approach to its aspect-oriented refactoring [Mar04]. He uses the *(un)pluggability* property of a concern as an estimate of its refactoring cost. The author proposes the refactoring of the “Undo” concern in JHotDraw using AspectJ with the implementation of AJHotDraw. During the fan-in analysis [MVD04], the results have shown about 30 undo activities defined for various elements of JHotDraw. A representation of the elements in the JHotDraw implementation of the “Undo” concern can be seen in figure 2.3.

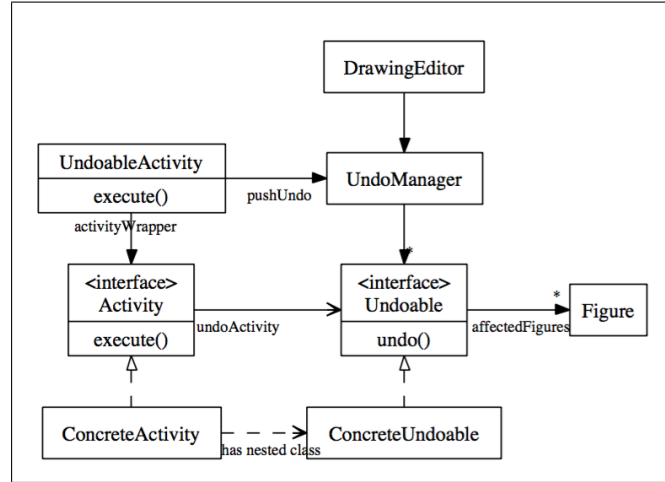


Figure 2.3: Participants for undo in JHotDraw [Mar04]

The **Activity** component participates in the implementation of the *Command* design pattern [Gam95]. Many of these activities have support for undo functionality, which in JHotDraw is implemented by means of nested (undo) classes. The nested class knows how to undo the given activity which maintains a list of affected figures whose state is also affected if the activity would be “undone”. Whenever the activity modifies its state it also updates fields in its associated undo activity to actually perform the undo. The **Undoable Command** object serves three roles:

- it consumes the request to execute the command
- then, it delegates the command’s execution to the wrapped command
- and last, acquires a reference to the undo activity associated with the wrapped command and it pushes it into a stack managed by an **UndoManager**. When executing an **Undo Command**, the top undo activity in the stack is extracted and, after the execution of its **undo()** method, is pushed into a redo stack managed by the same **UndoManager**.

Given this implementation, it is obvious that the primary decomposition of *Command* is crosscut by a number of elements as follows:

- The field by **AbstractCommand** for storing the reference to the associated **Undo Activity**.
- The accessors for this field implemented by the same class.
- The **UndoActivity** nested classes implemented by most of the concrete commands that support undo.
- The factory methods for the undo activities declared by each concrete command that can be undone.
- The references to the before enumerated elements from non-undo related members.

The implementation of AJHotDraw succeeded in refactoring this concern in JHotDraw through the following steps [Mar04]:

1. An undo-dedicated aspect is associated to each of undo-able command. The aspect will implement the entire undo functionality for the given command, while the undo code is removed from the command class.
2. Each aspect will consistently be named by appending `UndoActivity` to the name of its associated command class to enforce the relation between the two.
3. Next, the command's nested `UndoActivity` class moves to the aspect. The factory methods for the undo activities also move to the the aspect, from where are introduced back, into the associated command classes, using inter-type declarations.
4. Finally, the undo setup is attached to those methods from which was previously removed, namely `execute()` method, by means of an AspectJ `advice`.

This proposition [Mar04] provides an easy migration to an aspect-based solution. The CCC has been identified, then removed from the system, and finally re-added in an aspect-specific manner.

(Un)pluggability of the Undo concern

In order to evaluate the CCC refactoring of “Undo” Marin [Mar04] used the (Un)pluggability property. The author groups the complexity of the commands based two criteria. First, on the degree of *tangling* of the undo setup in the command's logic, particularly the activity's `execute()` method. Second, on the impact of removing the undo-related part from its original site, which can be estimated by the number of references to the factory method and to the methods of the nested undo activity. Thus, the (un)pluggability property gives a measure of how clearly the concern is distinguished in the original code and is a good estimate of the refactoring costs.

AspectJ Drawbacks in the Undo Solution

By executing aspect-refactoring the two concerns are separated, modularized and the secondary concern of undo is no longer tangled into the implementation of the primary one.

However, there are certain drawbacks to this approach. For instance, AspectJ's mechanisms do not allow introduction of nested classes, the post-refactoring association will only be an indirect one, based on naming conventions (“`UndoActivity`”). This is a weaker connection than the one provided by the original solution. Another drawback that is observed is the change of the visibility of the methods introduced from the aspects, for example the inter-type declarations. The visibility declared in the aspect refers to the aspect and not to the target class. Such drawbacks could be overcome by a better aspect language support, which will be further discussed in this thesis.

Chapter 3

Example Application: State Machine Monitoring

In order to show how our managed data implementation works, in terms aspect refactoring, we to present a showcase in this chapter. The example consists of a very simple state machines application, which is inspired by Martin Fowler [Fow10].

The requirements of a state machine are the following:

- A state **Machine** consists of a number of named **State** declarations.
- Each **State** contains **Transitions** to other states, which are identified by a **name**, when a certain event happens.
- A **Transition** is identified by a certain **event**.

For simplicity, this example will be a very basic *door state machine*, which includes two states **Open** and **Closed** along with two transitions for them; **open_door** and **close_door** respectively. Figure 3.1 illustrates our door state machine.

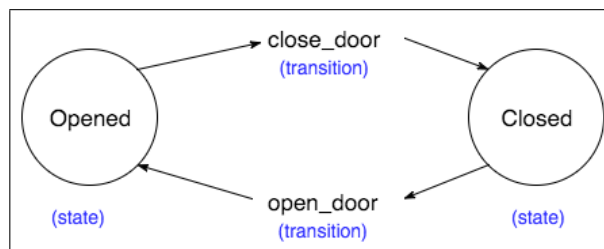


Figure 3.1: Basic door state machine

In order to implement the above we first need to define the models, next interpret the definition given a list of event and finally add any additional functionality (*concern*) needed, for instance monitor the state of the door.

3.1 Schemas definition

First, we need to define all the models of the state machine program. In our implementation this is done using Java interfaces for the definition, with some additional meta-data described with Java annotation. Thus, as extracted from the requirements, we need **Machine 3.3**, **State 3.4**, and **Transition 3.5** models (schemas).

```

1 public interface Machine extends M {
2     State start(State... startingState);
3
4     State current(State... currentState);
5
6     @Contain
7     Set<State> states(State... states);
8 }

```

Listing 3.3: The Machine Schema

As it can be seen in listing 3.3, for the **Machine** schema definition we need a **starting** state, the **current** state of the machine and a set of **states** that the machine can be into at each time. Note that, the **@Contain** annotation defines that the **states** field of this schema is part of the spine tree and it is not a cross-reference, but more about it in the implementation Chapter 4.1.1.

```

1 public interface State extends M {
2     @Key
3     String name(String... name);
4
5     @Inverse(other = Machine.class, field = "states")
6     Machine machine(Machine... machine);
7
8     @Contain
9     Set<Transition> out(Transition... transition);
10
11     @Contain
12     Set<Transition> in(Transition... transition);
13 }

```

Listing 3.4: The State Schema

For the **State** definition, listing 3.4, we need a **name** field, which is representing name of the state. The **name** field has been annotated with the **@Key** annotation, which indicates that this field will be used as a key in case of a **Set** instance of this schema. Moreover, the schema includes a set of **in** and **out Transitions**. Since those two fields are of type **Set**, that means that a field of the **Transition** schema has to be marked as key. In this case is the name (line 2 listing 3.5). Finally, the field **machine** represents which is the state machine that the current state part of. As it can be seen in the schema definition, listing 3.4, the **machine** field has been annotated with **@Inverse**, which indicates that this field is a *reference* to a field of an other schema, in this case this schema is the **Machine** schema and the field is the **states** field. Thus, the **machine** field of **State** schema is a reference to **states** field of **Machine** schema.

```

1 public interface Transition extends M {
2     @Key
3     String event(String... event);
4
5     @Inverse(other = State.class, field = "out")
6     State from(State... from);
7
8     @Inverse(other = State.class, field = "in")
9     State to(State... to);
10 }

```

Listing 3.5: The Transition Schema

Finally, for the `Transition` schema definition, listing 3.5, all we need is an `event` which represents the event of the transition and it is also the `key`. Additionally, the `from` and `to` states represent the state that the machine changes from and to respectively. However, those are just reference to the `State` schema, listing 3.4, to the `in` and `out` fields respectively, since they are defined with the `@Inverse` annotation.

3.2 Factory definition

Since we have our schemas now we need a way to build instances of managed objects of those schemas. For Java to create the three schemas as managed data we need to define a factory, which will be the one that creates managed data instances (managed objects) for each of these schemas 3.6. Note that those definitions work as **Constructors** of managed objects.

```
1 public interface StateMachineFactory {
2     Machine Machine(); // builds a Machine managed object
3     State State();     // builds a State managed object
4     Transition Transition(); // builds a Transition managed object
5 }
```

Listing 3.6: The StateMachine Factory

3.3 Basic Data Manager

As it is mentioned previously 2.3, in order to interpret and manage the defined data we need data managers. Our implementation includes the definition of a **Basic data manager** that is responsible of making a schema definition to an instance of *managed object*. However, in order to make the *managed object* it needs its schema definition (the interfaces that define the schemas) and the schema factory (the interface that defines the constructors of the schemas).

3.3.1 A simple without concerns program

In the case of a simple program without any concerns, we have to use our managed data to define the state machine and then interpret it. The listing 3.7 presents the program of the door state machine. In this code, we focus after line 9 since lines 5 and 6 are not relevant, for now, but they are going to be explained in Chapter 4.

Since there is a `stateMachineSchema`, we need the basic data manager in order to have a mechanisms that interprets the managed objects, line 9. The definition of the door state machine is given listing 3.7 with a simple interpreter in line 42. As it can be seen, the schemas factory is used to create managed objects and the *wiring* of the fields is done automatically by the data manager who is responsible for the managed object interpretation.

```

1 public class StateMachineExample {
2     // ... static constants definitions
3
4     public static void main(String[] args) {
5         final Schema schemaSchema = ...;
6         final Schema stateMachineSchema = ....;
7
8         final BasicDataManager basicDataManagerForStateMachines =
9             new BasicDataManager(StateMachineFactory.class, stateMachineSchema);
10        final StateMachineFactory stateMachineFactory = basicDataManagerForStateMachines.make();
11
12        // Door State Machine definition
13        final Machine doorStateMachine = stateMachineFactory.Machine();
14
15        // Open State definition
16        final State openState = stateMachineFactory.State(OPEN_STATE);
17        openState.machine(doorStateMachine);
18
19        // Closed State definition
20        final State closedState = stateMachineFactory.State(CLOSED_STATE);
21        closedState.machine(doorStateMachine);
22
23        // Close Transition
24        final Transition closeTransition = stateMachineFactory.Transition(CLOSE_TRANSITION);
25        closeTransition.from(openState);
26        closeTransition.to(closedState);
27
28        // Open Transition
29        final Transition openTransition = stateMachineFactory.Transition(OPEN_TRANSITION);
30        openTransition.from(closedState);
31        openTransition.to(openState);
32
33        // State machine starting state
34        doorStateMachine.start(openState);
35
36        interpretStateMachine(doorStateMachine, new LinkedList<>(Arrays.asList(
37            CLOSE_TRANSITION,
38            OPEN_TRANSITION)));
39    }
40 }
41
42 private static void interpretStateMachine(Machine stateMachine, List<String> commands) {
43     stateMachine.current(stateMachine.start());
44     for (String event : commands) {
45         for (Transition trans : stateMachine.current().out()) {
46             if (trans.event().equals(event)) {
47                 stateMachine.current(trans.to());
48                 break;
49             }
50         }
51     }
52 }

```

Listing 3.7: Door state machine

3.4 Monitoring and notification concerns

What about the case in which we want to add some concerns at the previous door state machine implementation? A simple concern would be a *monitoring* concern, which will log every change in the current state of the state machine. In this case Another concern would be the *notification* specify state that the machine is current at.

More specifically, for this example, the case is a system that the door has to stay open for safety reasons. In the case that the door closes, **Closed** state, then we want to notify someone responsible by e-mail. That looks similar to the *monitoring* concern but in this case the notification is a specific action, send an e-mail in case the door is closed.

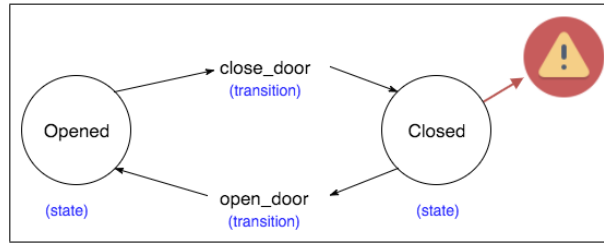


Figure 3.2: Simple door state machine: notify closed door

In order to implement those concerns we need a mechanism that continuously monitors the changes (transitions) of the machine's **current** state and react accordingly. In a traditional way this would lead to scattered *monitoring* and *notification* code inside the interpretation method or the models themselves (the machine model). However, in managed data there are data managers for that. A data manager can implement concerns as modular aspects without crosscut code to the components. Therefore, by implementing our concerns with data managers we can keep the interpretation and model definition code, shown in listing 3.7, modular.

3.4.1 Observable Data Manager

In order to *observe* for changes in the current state of our door state machine we need a data manager that observes changes in the managed object. More specifically the **Machine's** current **State**. This data manager creates concrete managed objects, namely *observable managed object* with which one attach observers that will be notified in case of changes.

3.4.2 Monitor and notify concerns

In the example, the observers are the concerns, which are *monitoring* and *notification* by e-mail in case of closed door. The definition of those concerns is given in listing 3.8.

```

1 public class StateMachineMonitoring {
2     public static void monitor(Object obj, String field, Object value) {
3         if (field.equals("current")) {
4             logger.log(" > Current state changed to " + ((State) value).name());
5         }
6     }
7
8     public static void notify(Object obj, String field, Object value) {
9         if (field.equals("current") && ((State) value).name().equals(CLOSED_STATE)) {
10             if (EmailSender.send("Danger!", "Someone just closed the door!")) {
11                 logger.log(" > Danger e-mail sent!");
12             }
13         }
14     }
15 }

```

Listing 3.8: Door state machine concerns definition

Since there is an observable data manager and the concerns implemented in a separate and reusable module, completely unrelated to our logic code, it is still needed to be integrate them in the door state machine original code. The integration code is presented in listing 3.9. The only part that it changes is the line 13 of the original code, in which the data manager of the **Machine** managed object has changed to the new observable data manager. Additionally, the concerns are attached to the machine object very easily, as can be seen in lines 12 and 13 of listing 3.9.

```

1 ...
2 // State Machine monitoring
3 final ObservableDataManager observableDataManager =
4     new ObservableDataManager(StateMachineFactory.class, stateMachineSchema);
5
6 final StateMachineFactory observableStateMachineFactory = observableDataManager.make();
7
8 // Door State Machine definition, with observable data manager
9 final Machine doorStateMachine = observableStateMachineFactory.Machine();
10
11 // Add monitoring and notofication concerns
12 ((Observable) doorStateMachine).observe(StateMachineMonitoring::monitor);
13 ((Observable) doorStateMachine).observe(StateMachineMonitoring::notify);
14 ...

```

Listing 3.9: Door state machine with concerns

By running the program with the two commands `OPEN_TRANSITION` and `CLOSE_TRANSITION`, the output is presented in listing 3.10 along with an e-mail sent.

```

> Current state changed to Open
> Current state changed to Closed
> Danger e-mail sent!
> Current state changed to Open

```

Listing 3.10: Door state machine with concerns: output

The basic data manager allows to just build managed object, but the observable data manager provided with the functionality of attaching concerns in the managed objects after an specified observed event. Concluding, that example just presented a modular solution of [CCC](#) without scattering and tangling code in the components.

Chapter 4

Managed data in Java

As it has been already mentioned, the programming languages include data definition mechanisms that are predefined, which makes them insufficient to define CCC without repeating and scatter code through the components [LvdSC12]. Notably, the problem is that CCC consider as features of the data management and not of the data types themselves. As a result, we implement managed data to allow the developer to define the mechanisms of data manipulation. This chapter describes our managed data implementation in Java, which consists of our first research question, which is “*Can managed data be implemented in a static language?*”. It is important to mention that our implementation is inspired by Enso¹, which is written in Ruby. Although Ruby is a dynamic language, Enso significantly contributed on our implementation’s structure.

4.1 Managed Data Implementation

Managed data provides the programmer to handle the fundamental data manipulation mechanisms using *Data Managers* and emphasizes strongly on modularity. Using a data description language the programmer can define *Schemas* that are the input of the *Data Managers*. The *Data Manager* in turn interprets the data description language that is used to define the structure and the behavior of the data to be managed. The *Schemas* and the *Data Managers* are the essential components of managed data along with the *Integration* with the programming language which in our case is Java.

4.1.1 Data description with Schemas

In order to define *Schemas* in managed data we need a data description language that allows to define records as collections of fields. This language can be anything, e.g. XML, JSON or a different formalism like in Enso. However, in our implementation we chose to use **Java Interfaces** for data description language that allows to define records of managed data. By using Java interfaces the *Schema* classes are tightly coupled structurally to the Java interface we use to define them. Moreover, Java interfaces use several conventions to encode semantics, for instance Java annotations, which are very useful for meta data definition on *Schemas*.

Consequently, to define a *Schema* we first need to define a set of classes that describe that schema. A schema **Klass**² is described by a name and a set of **Fields**, each of which has a name and a **Type**. Since Java interfaces are used to define **schemaKlass** we need a way to define **Fields** for a **schemaKlass**. A **Field** in our data description language can be defined by using **Java’s Method** definition.

Additionally, there are several attributes that help with the structure defining of a *Schema*, which considered as meta data. In order to define the meta data in our data description language (interfaces), we use *Java Annotations*. Annotations consist of a very declarative way to express meta data in interfaces and they are coupled structurally to the Java system. Thus, to annotated a field with meta

¹<https://github.com/enso-lang/enso>

² We use the “Klass” instead of “Class” convention in order to avoid any kind of ambiguities between Java’s Class type and our type system. Klass is used to describe our own class type while Class describes Java’s native class type.

data, we define annotations in a *Method* target level since a `Field` is defined by a *Method* declaration Java interfaces.

Note that, using Java interfaces and annotations for our schemas definition, we gain a first level of type checking from `JVM`. The reason is that before we run our runtime interpretation of schemas, `JVM` performs type checking in the definitions and in case wrong types it notifies the programmer. Additionally, this benefits the programmer who uses IDE's that perform real time type inspection³ while typing, since errors on the definitions will be spotted immediately.

A list of the available structure concepts that are supported in our language is the following [LvdSC12]:

@Key When a method (field definition) is annotated with the `@Key` annotation that forces its value to be unique within collections of this field's `Klass`. The key should be used on a single field of a `Type` and its value represents the uniqueness of its `Klass`'s instance. Another way to look at this is as a counterpart of the `hashCode` in traditional Java programs. This way when many values of a `Klass` are in a `Set`, the key field ensures uniqueness in its context.

@Inverse This annotation includes two *annotation element definitions*⁴. When a method is annotated with the `@Inverse(Class other, String field)` annotation, then the inverse field element must be a `Field`'s name in the `Class` interface, given by the `type` element. This meta data is used as a reference declaration in schemas meaning that when a programmer updates the value of a field that is annotated with inverse, then the value of the field that refers to will be also updated. This mechanism is interpreter by the managed object and is used for automated *wiring* of the field across a schema.

@Contain When a field is annotated with the `@Contain` annotation, then this field is considered as *traversal*. In general, traversals describe a minimum spanning tree that is called *spine* and ensures reachability of values. The spine is used in implementations that need a depth-first search by distinguishing between the actual information and the cross-references of the spanning tree. An example of such functionality is the equivalence between managed objects that is presented in Section 4.4.1. Sometimes traversal fields describe composition, or “is a part of”, relationships [LvdSC12].

@Optional When the `@Optional` annotation is on a field's definition this field is allowed to not include value (`null`). *Inverse* fields are *Optional*.

Java Inheritance In addition to the Java annotations, our language uses more Java mechanisms for schemas definition. Java inheritance is one of them. A `schemaKlass` can extend another `Klass` (super), which works as the traditional Java inheritance, supporting sub typing mechanisms. Implementing this we introduce a *Type Hierarchy* model that includes super and sub classes on managed objects. Note that since we use interfaces for `schemaKlass`, we implicitly support multiple inheritance because a Java interface can extend more than one interfaces.

Java Collections Finally, another Java mechanism that we use is the definition of a field that includes many values. To define such a field, a programmer has to declare a field's `Type` as a `java.util.List` or a `java.util.Set` of this `Type`.

Using all the aforementioned constructs of our data definition language, a programmer can define any kind of schemas, even itself (see Section 4.2). An example of schema definition is presented in Chapter 3 Listings 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5. In those definition the above concepts can be recognized and their meaning in context can be revealed.

4.1.2 Schema Factories

However, even if we have the definitions of schemas, we still need a way to create instances of managed data described by them. We can not use Java's mechanisms for this functionality since we need them

³<https://www.jetbrains.com/help/idea/15.0/code-analysis.html>

⁴<https://docs.oracle.com/javase/tutorial/java/annotations/declaring.html>

to be managed data and not ordinary objects. Thus, we use Java interfaces (again) to define *Schema Factories*. A *Schema Factory* is a list of constructor definitions for specific schema *Klasses*.

The methods of this interface are used like the constructor definition on a Java class. However, in our case they are defined as methods in a Java interface while their implementation is handled by the data managers. Since those methods are constructors, we can define a constructor with or without initial values. Unfortunately, we have encountered a limitation that considers the constructors with initialization values, which makes them inappropriate to use in complicated schemas.

Methods Ordering Issue

The problem lays on Java's reflection mechanisms in terms of methods ordering. More specifically, when the methods of a `java.lang.Class` are requested by using the `public Method[] getMethods()` method⁵, the returned values are not ordered with the same order as they are defined in the source code. Consequently, since the schema definition is reflectively analyzed in the data managers and it depends on that order, those methods can not be used in the initialization of values.

However, we have implemented an alternative way in order to support such feature. In our implementation we **alphabetical order** by name both the defined methods and the fields before we initialize them. That feature can be used by the programmers although it can be proved confusing. Therefore, as an advice about the usage of the constructor definition, we suggest to either provide only constructors without initialization values or to write constructors with only **primitive** initialization values in **alphabetical order**. In the case of initialization with values the danger that the fields of the schema will get values in different order exists, leading to an error or a wrong value assignment.

4.1.3 Data Managers Implementation

However, the schemas are not a complete managed data specification without a corresponding **Data Manager**. A data manager is responsible to interpret the schema and build virtual objects (managed objects). The managed object's fields are specified by the given schema and acts according to the specification given by the data manager. Additionally, the data manager ensures that the data given are valid with respect to schema. More specifically, the data managers describe how a schema definition is handled from the outside world and what are its specifications. These properties many include **CCC** that can be described separately by special data manager, separating schema and concern definitions. Thus, a managed object can have multiple interpretations based on the data manager that they interpret it.

A data manager is initialized with a **Schema** and provides a new **Managed Object** instance which has the properties given by that data manager. Additional to the **Schema** that includes a Set of **Types** (**Primitives** or **Klasses**), it also needs a **Schema Factory** that declares the constructors of the given schema **Klass**. After the initialization of data manager and the interpretation of the schemas, a data manager provides the mechanism of creation new **Schema Factories**, which in turn create **Managed Objects** with the specifications of the data manager.

An example presented in Chapter 3 is shown in listing 4.11, the Line 3 defines a basic data manager, that gets as input the schema factory and the schema of a state machine. The schema in these case has been already loaded, this processes is described in Section 4.2.3. Next, in Line 6 a new schema factory is created that builds managed objects with the specification that are attached from the basic data manager. Finally, Line 9 shows how those managed object instances with those specification can be built.

⁵ As it is mentioned in <https://docs.oracle.com/javase/8/docs/api/java/lang/Class.html#getMethods-->, the elements in the returned array are not sorted and are not in any particular order.

```

1 // Create a basic data manager for state machines
2 final BasicDataManager basicDataManagerForStateMachines =
3     new BasicDataManager(StateMachineFactory.class, stateMachineSchema);
4
5 // Create a schema factory that makes managed objects with the specifications of the basic data manager.
6 final StateMachineFactory stateMachineFactory = basicDataManagerForStateMachines.make();
7
8 // Build an instance of managed object with those specifications .
9 final Machine stateMachineInstance = stateMachineFactory.Machine();

```

Listing 4.11: Basic data Manager Example

Basic Data Manager

As described, we use Java interfaces to define schema Classes that include fields. Those fields are known only dynamically and a data manager has to be able to determine the fields and methods of the managed data object during runtime. In addition, when a data manager adds functionality on a managed object then it delegates the calls to the fields of an instance, to its specifications first. In order to dynamically interpret a schema inside a data manager and delegate functionality, we used Java Reflection and Dynamic Proxies.

In our implementation we have separated the Proxy factory (**DataManager**) from the Invocation Handlers (**MObject**s). This way, the **DataManager** class is responsible for creating proxied instances of managed data, while the **MObject** instances are responsible for interpreting the schema and delegate actions with their invocation handling mechanisms. Figure 4.1 illustrates their structure. As it can be seen the data manager is a *factory* that has only one exposed method, **make()** that it is used to build an **SchemaFactory**, which in turn builds **MObject** instances.

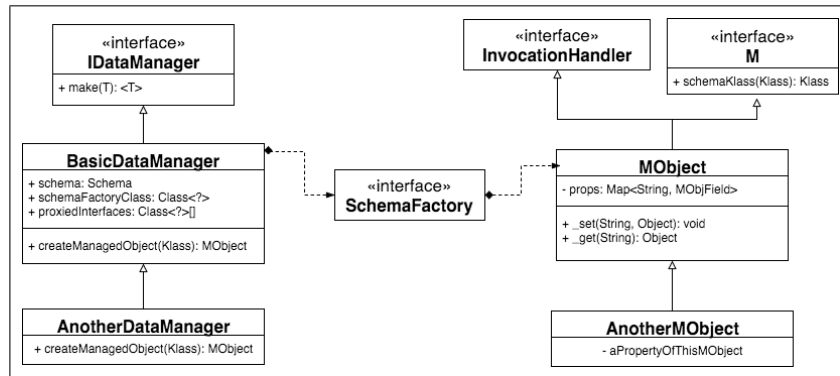


Figure 4.1: Data Manager and MObject

Stacking Data Managers

In order to create a stack of data managers that they combine the behavior and specifications, we can use inheritance. Figure 4.1 show how this works. In detail, the **AnotherDataManager** data manager extends the **BasicDataManager** and overrides only the **createManagedObject()** method. This method is responsible for creating a new instance of an **MObject**. In the case of **AnotherDataManager** implementation the **createManagedObject()** method will create a new **AnotherMObject** instance. Additionally, the constructor of data managers needs to accept a dictionary of initialization parameters for overriding data managers that require different inputs. Note that it is important that the data managers inherit from a base one, this leads to the **modular aspect** of the data managers. As it can be seen for stacking data managers we used *Decorator Pattern* [Gam95] which is mentioned also in Loh et al. [LvdSC12] as a strategy for static OOP languages.

4.1.4 Managed Objects

As it is mentioned the `MObject`, is an implementation of the `InvocationHandler` interface. Thus, the `MObject`'s `invoke()` method is called in every field access of an managed object's instance. To manipulate the its fields values this object has two methods, `_set()` and `_get()`. In the implementation of these methods additional checks are performed to ensure the correctness of types and structure of the values. Those methods can be overridden from derived `MObjects` in order to *Decorate* the basic `MObject` with their functionality, of course they require to call their `supers` for running all the checks.

The fields of the `MObject` are specified by its the `schemaKlass`. The `MObject` is the *backing object* that stores a reference to the `schemaKlass`. That `schemaKlass` is a meta class that describes the layout of the `MObject`. The `schemaKlass` is a `Klass` that keeps the `Fields` and their `Types` of the `MObject`. The `MObject` implementation is an instance of that `schemaKlass`. During construction, the `MObject` setups all the fields based on its `schemaKlass`. Then whenever a field check has to be performed, the `MObject` uses its `schemaKlass`. The usage of the `schemaKlass` for setup the fields is shown in Listing 4.12.

The `schemaKlass` is given to the `MObject` by the `DataManager` that is responsible for creating it. Using this `schemaKlass` the `MObject` setups the `Fields` of the `Klass`, Line 3. Inside the `setupField` method the interpretation of the schema is performed. More specifically, in Line 10 we check if that field is a multi-value field, if it is not we just setup it as a `Primitive` or a `Klass` accordingly. Consider that the `field.type().schemaKlass().name()` is used like a common `instanceof` in Line 12. In the case that the field has many values, then we first check if it is `Primitive` because we do not support Set of `Primitives`. If not, we check if a `Key` field exists on that field's type and if it is that field is therefore a Set otherwise is a List.

```
1 public MObject(Klass schemaKlass, Object... initializers) {
2     this.schemaKlass = schemaKlass;
3     this.schemaKlass.fields().forEach(this::safeSetupField);
4     if (initializers != null) {
5         this.safeInitializeProps(initializers);
6     }
7 }
8
9 protected void setupField(Field field) {
10     if (!field.many()) {
11         // if it is a primitive make it a Primitive field, otherwise a reference (managed object)
12         if (field.type().schemaKlass().name().equals("Primitive")) {
13             this.props.put(field.name(), new MObjectFieldSinglePrimitive(this, field));
14         } else {
15             this.props.put(field.name(), new MObjectFieldSingleMObj(this, field));
16         }
17     } else {
18         // in case it is a Primitive, then is always a List
19         // Sets of Primitives are not supported (yet)
20         if (field.type().schemaKlass().name().equals("Primitive")) {
21             this.props.put(field.name(), new MObjectFieldManyList(this, field));
22         } else {
23             final Klass klassType = (Klass) field.type();
24             if (klassType.key() != null) {
25                 this.props.put(field.name(), new MObjectFieldManySet(this, field));
26             } else {
27                 this.props.put(field.name(), new MObjectFieldManyList(this, field));
28             }
29         }
30     }
31 }
```

Listing 4.12: MObject: setup fields

4.2 Self-Describing Schemas

As it is described by Loh et al. [LvdSC12], a self-describing schema is a schema that can be used to define schemas, including itself. To allow schemas to be managed data we need a “self-describing schema mechanism” or *SchemaSchema*. Through the *SchemaSchema* the approach of managed data can be applied at the meta level as well.

4.2.1 SchemaSchema

Since we want to decouple from Java reflection we need our own *Klass* system. In order to be self-describing we want this *Klass* system to be represented as managed data as well. To model the structure of a *Schema* itself we need to be able to describe a class as a collection of *Fields*, each of which it has a *name* and a *Type* [LvdSC12]. Thus, for our *SchemaSchema* definition we need a *Type*, a *Field* and a *Schema* as a collection of *Types*. A *Type* could be both a *Primitive*, no *Fields* and a *Klass*, has a set of *Fields*. Additionally, those *Fields* may have some extra meta data attributes that explained in Section 4.1.1.

A schema like this can describe itself since every concept used in the explanation is included in the definition. For a self-describing implementation we need to describe our own *SchemaSchema*.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the modeling of this definition.

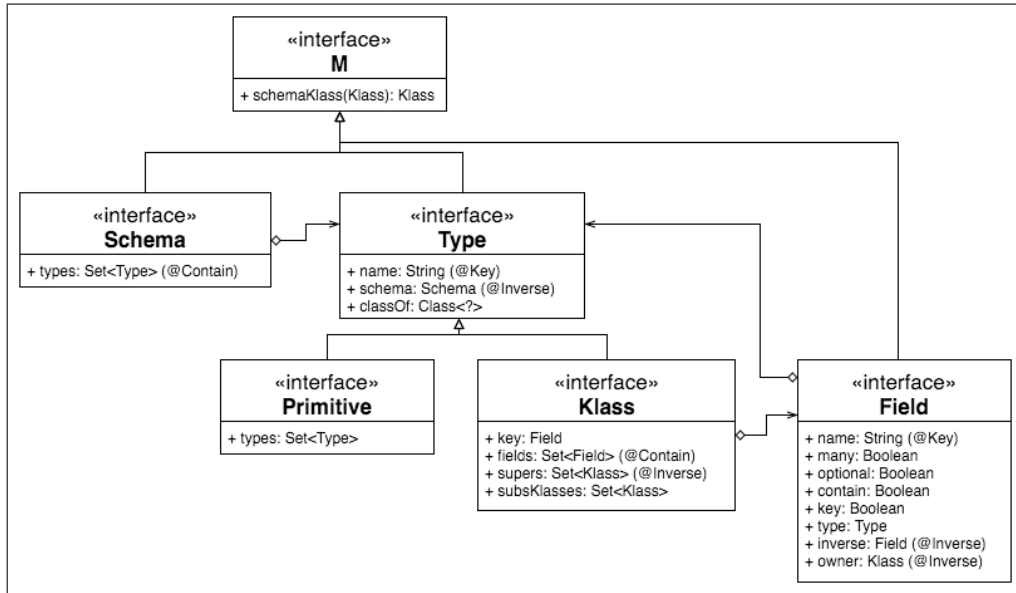


Figure 4.2: SchemaSchema Definition Model

4.2.2 SchemaFactory

Considering that we have the schema of our schema (*SchemaSchema*) we need a way to create instances of those *schemaSchemaKlasses*. In this case, as we do in the normal schemas, we use a schema factory. However, this time it is a *schemaSchemaFactory* that defines constructors of all the schema classes that need to describe our *SchemaSchema*. Listing 4.13 shows its definition.


```

1 public interface SchemaFactory {
2     Schema Schema();
3     Primitive Primitive();
4     Klass Klass();
5     Field Field();
6     Field Field(Boolean contain, Boolean key, Boolean many, String name, Boolean optional);
7 }

```

Listing 4.13: Schema SchemaFactory

4.2.3 Schema Loading

To construct the Klass system we need to analyze the Java interfaces, using reflection, and then build actual instances of the Schema, Klass, Field etc. using the appropriate factory. The **SchemaLoader** is responsible of this process.

SchemaLoader's **load** static method takes as input a Set of interfaces, which are the schema definitions, a **SchemaSchemaFactory** that includes constructor definitions of the **SchemaSchema** and a instance of the **SchemaSchema**. During the reflective analysis of the input interfaces the **SchemaLoader** builds the corresponding **Types** and **Fields** of those interfaces using the **SchemaSchemaFactory**. A **Schema** consists of the Set of these **Types**. An example taken from Chapter 3, is shown in listing 4.14.

```

1 final Schema schemaSchema = ...;
2 final SchemaFactory schemaFactory = ...;
3
4 final Schema stateMachineSchema = SchemaLoader.load(
5     schemaFactory,
6     schemaSchema,
7     Machine.class,
8     State.class,
9     Transition.class);

```

Listing 4.14: SchemaLoader Example

In the code, the **SchemaLoader** gets as input a **SchemaSchemaFactory** and a **SchemaSchema**, which are not important how they have created yet. Moreover, it gets a set of interfaces that describe the state machine schema. This schema consists of a set of schema Klasses that are described by interfaces, namely **Machine.class**, **State.class** and **Transition.class**. Next, the **SchemaLoader** analyzes the definition of those schemas using reflection and then makes a **Schema** by using the **SchemaFactory** that has been given. A simple description of that process is shown in Listing⁶ 4.15. It can be seen that first we implement the instances and after we use setters to wire them up and the reason for is that not everything exists the time that needs to be set.

⁶ Most of the implementation has been excluded for brevity.

```

1 public static Schema load(SchemaFactory factory, Schema schemaSchema, Class<?>... schemaClassesDef) {
2
3     // create an empty schema using the factory, will wire it later
4     final Schema schema = factory.Schema();
5
6     // build the types from the schema classes definition
7     final Set<Type> types = new LinkedHashMap<>();
8     for (Class<?> schemaKlassDefinition : schemaClassesDefinition) {
9         final String className = schemaKlassDefinition.getSimpleName();
10
11        // build the fields from method definitions
12        final Set<Field> fieldsForKlass = new LinkedHashMap<>();
13        for (Method schemaKlassField : schemaKlassDefinition.getMethods()) {
14
15            // field the field metadata though annotations
16            // ...
17            // add its fields , the owner Klass will be added later
18            final Field field = factory.Field();
19            field.name(fieldName);
20            field.contain(contain);
21            field.key(key);
22            field.many(many);
23            field.optional(optional);
24
25            fieldsForKlass.add(field);
26        }
27
28        // create a new klass
29        final Klass klass = factory.Klass();
30        klass.name(className);
31        klass.schema(schema);
32
33        // wire the owner klass in fields ,
34        fieldsForKlass.values().forEach(field -> field.owner(klass));
35    }
36
37    // wire the types on schema, it is inverse so it will refer to schema.types() directly
38    types.forEach(type -> type.schema(schema));
39
40    return schema;
41 }

```

Listing 4.15: SchemaLoader

Listing 4.15 shows the usage of Java reflection in our implementation. However, because Java reflection capabilities are limited, this restricted us in our implementation as well.

4.3 Bootstrapping

Considering that SchemaSchema is itself managed data, we can use the SchemaLoader to build a new SchemaSchema. Nonetheless, we need a description of that SchemaSchema, which will be used during the loading process to build the schema Klasses. As a result, we need a *Bootstrap Schema* to jumpstart this process. The *Bootstrap Schema* is necessarily self-describing as it must manage itself [LvdSC12] and it is hardcoded in its own class `BootSchema`.

4.3.1 Cutting the umbilical cord

Having a `BootSchema` in place we can now create “real” `SchemaSchemas` ⁷. For Consistency, we use those “real” `SchemaSchemas` in order to build other schemas, this way everything is managed data. After building a real `SchemaSchema` we do not need the `BootSchema` anymore, which leads to a process that we can call “Cutting the umbilical cord”. An example of “Cutting the umbilical cord” is shown in Listing 4.3.1, in which we use the `BootSchema` to build the `realSchemaSchema` and then we use this `realSchemaSchema` to build another `realSchemaSchema` (`realSchemaSchema2`).

```
1 final Schema bootstrapSchema = new BootSchema();
2
3 final BasicDataManager basicFactory = new BasicDataManager(SchemaFactory.class, bootstrapSchema);
4
5 // Create a schema Factory which creates Schema instances.
6 final SchemaFactory schemaFactory = basicFactory.make();
7
8 // The schemas are described by the SchemaSchema.
9 // This schemaSchema is also self-describing.
10 final Schema realSchemaSchema =
11     SchemaLoader.load(
12         schemaFactory,
13         bootstrapSchema,
14         Schema.class,
15         Type.class,
16         Primitive.class,
17         Klass.class,
18         Field.class);
19
20 final BasicDataManager basicFactory2 =
21     new BasicDataManager(SchemaFactory.class, realSchemaSchema);
22 final SchemaFactory schemaFactory2 = basicFactory2.make();
23 final Schema realSchemaSchema2 =
24     SchemaLoader.load(
25         schemaFactory2,
26         realSchemaSchema,
27         Schema.class,
28         Type.class,
29         Primitive.class,
30         Klass.class,
31         Field.class);
```

Listing 4.16: Cutting the umbilical cord

4.4 Implementation Issues

The fact that we use Java reflection and dynamic proxies, along with the fact that everything is managed data, even the `schemaSchema`, introduces some issues including the methods ordering problem described in Section 4.1.2.

4.4.1 Equivalence

The `bootstrapSchema`, `realSchemaSchema` and `realSchemaSchema2` managed objects from the Listing 4.3.1 should be equal because they ultimately describe the same *Schema*. However, since they are managed data and not normal Java objects, at least the real `SchemaSchemas`, we need a to check for equality on managed objects. We have implemented the equivalence functionality for managed

⁷ We call them real because they are managed data and not hard-coded.

objects, using the *Equality Checking for Trees and Graphs algorithm* by Michael D. Adams and R. Kent Dybvig [AD08].

4.4.2 The classOf field

As it has been presented in Section 2.4.2, for a proxy object to conform with interfaces and be casted to any of them, it needs these interfaces during its initialization. To support that, we have added the `classOf` field in the `Type` schema `Klass`, which is of type `java.lang.Class` and is a reference of the Java class that this schema `Klass` is described to.

4.4.3 Hash-code of Managed Objects

To avoid any unpredictable activities that a `hashCode` invocation would bring in case of its invocation in managed objects, we have omitted it. We do not depend on the ordinary `hashCode` for managed objects, we have not implemented it and we do not call it. If it is a collection field type, then the field has to have a `Key` field, thus, we obtain the value of the key field and index into a `HashMap`. Using the `Key` field as the key of the hashmap works either it is a primitive or not, since we get the `Object.hashCode()` of that key. However, that suggests that the key is not of our schema `Klass` system but a Java type. Finally, the `MObject` invocation handler delegates the call of `hashCode` method to the real object so that would never fail, although this is not suggested because it may lead to unpredictable results.

4.5 Benefits and Limitations

One of the advantages of this language is the simplicity of its usage. A programmer just needs to define the schemas followed by the data managers and can easily write a program using them. The language takes care of the dependencies, references and any other underline mechanisms. Moreover, it uses Java concepts, which it makes it safer in terms of type checking and definitions it is easier for Java developers to adapt. Furthermore, by being a self-describing language it is no longer bounded to the Java constructs and everything now is managed data. Finally, the effortless mechanism of stacking data managers makes it significantly modular on every level, meta or not.

On the other hand, in addition to the implementation issues which described in the previous section, there are significant performance implications since we use Java reflection and dynamic proxies to dynamically interpret schemas. This makes it undesirable for applications that focus on performance and are based on JVM optimizations. Another issue that arises is that it is hard to be used in existing systems because to make a consistent integration, every model has to be redefined as schema and every functionality to be reimplemented in data managers. However, an existing system integration is presented in Chapter 5.

4.6 Claims

We claim that managed data leads to a powerful data abstraction that gives the programmers control over fundamental mechanisms of creation and manipulation of data [LvdSC12]. Those mechanisms are used to be predefined by the programming languages and managed data gives control over them using data managers. Moreover, we claim that managed data introduces a modular way to define data and aspects of them. We are going to present it in Chapter 5, by showing how can we *aspect refactor* an existing application using managed data.

Chapter 5

Aspect refactoring of JHotDraw in managed data

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Aspect Refactoring

5.3 Aspect Refactoring of JHotDraw

5.3.1 Undo Concern of JHotDraw

Command Pattern

5.3.2 The Observer Pattern in JHotDraw

5.4 Compare to AJHotDraw

Chapter 6

Evaluation

6.1 Research Questions and Answers

6.2 Evidence

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Locality

6.3.2 Reusability

6.3.3 Composition transparency

6.3.4 (Un)pluggability

6.4 Claims

6.5 Discussion

6.5.1 In Practice

6.5.2 Benefits and Pitfalls

6.5.3 Modularity

6.6 Remarks

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Chapter 8

Further Work

Acknowledgments

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