Research Project: Smart Contract Vulnerability Detection Methods

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Abstract

The `ntnuthesis` document class is a customised version of the standard LaTeX `report` document class. It can be used for theses at all levels – bachelor, master and PhD – and is available in English (British and American) and Norwegian (Bokmål and Nynorsk). This document is ment to serve (i) as a description of the document class, (ii) as an example of how to use it, and (iii) as a thesis template.

Sammendrag

Dokumentklassen `ntnuthesis` er en tilpasset versjon av LaTeX' standard `report`-klasse. Den er tilrettelagt for avhandlinger på alle nivåer – bachelor, master og PhD – og er tilgjengelig på både norsk (bokmål og nynorsk) og engelsk (britisk og amerikansk). Dette dokumentet er ment å tjene (i) som en beskrivelse av dokumentklassen, (ii) som et eksempel på bruken av den, og (iii) som en mal for avhandlingen.

Contents

Figures

Tables

Code Listings

Acronyms

IR Intermediate Representation. viii, 11, *Glossary:* Intermediate Representation

ML Machine Learning. 12

NFT Non Fungible Tokens. viii, 2, *Glossary:* Non Fungible Tokens

SC Smart Contract. iv, vii, ix, 1–5, 10–13

Glossary

gas Gas in crypto refers to the computational effort required to execute operations. This is normally paid in the blockchain's plattform cryptocurrency.. 7

Intermediate Representation A representation for use as an intermediate step. 11

LLVM A compiler toolchain providing a complete infrastructure for creating compiler frontends and backends.. 11

LLVM-IR LLVM-IR is the intermediate representation of the LLVM compiler toolchain. 11

Non Fungible Tokens A type of token that is unique. 2

Solidity Solidity is a Smart Contract language developed for Ethereum. 11

Chapter 1

Introduction

Over the years, several thesis templates for LaTeX have been developed by different groups at NTNU. Typically, there have been local templates for given study programmes, or different templates for the different study levels – bachelor, master, and phd.[1]

Based on this experience, the CoPCSE[2] is hereby offering a template that should in principle be applicable for theses at all study levels. It is closely based on the standard LaTeX `report` document class as well as previous thesis templates. Since the central regulations for thesis design have been relaxed – at least for some of the historical university colleges now part of NTNU – the template has been simlified and put closer to the default LaTeX look and feel.

The purpose of the present document is threefold. It should serve (i) as a description of the document class, (ii) as an example of how to use it, and (iii) as a thesis template.

Cross-chain vulnerability detection is a method for detecting vulnerabilities in smart contract code across multiple blockchains. Little efforts have been made to develop a cross-chain vulnerability detection framework. We discuss the challenges and opportunities of cross-chain vulnerability detection.

The purpose of this document is to investigate the current state-of-the-art in cross-chain vulnerability detection. We will discuss the challenges and opportunities of cross-chain vulnerability detection.

Once a SC is deployed to a blockchain, any present vulnerabilities are permanent. There are some solutions for making SCs amendable, but this undermines the immutable property of SCs.

[1] see, e.g., `https://github.com/COPCSE-NTNU/bachelor-thesis-NTNU` and `https://github.com/COPCSE-NTNU/master-theses-NTNU`

[2] `https://www.ntnu.no/wiki/display/copcse/Community+of+Practice+in+Computer+Science+Education+Home`

Chapter 2

Background

Research projects should always be based on previous research on the same and/or related topics. This should be described as a background to the thesis with adequate bibliographical references. If the material needed is too voluminous to fit nicely in the review part of the introduction, it can be presented in a separate background chapter.

2.1 Blockchain

A blockchain is a distributed ledger that is public and immutable. It is a record of transactions that can be verified by a number of parties. The blockchain is a public ledger that is distributed across the internet. Blockchain technology was popularized by Bitcoin in 2008. It enabled users to conduct transactions without the need for a central authority. From Bitcoin sprang several other cryptocurrencies and blockchain platforms such as Ethereum, Litecoin, and Ripple.

2.2 Smart Contracts

The term "Smart Contract" was introduced with the Ethereum platform in 2014. A Smart Contract (SC) is a program that is executed on a blockchain, enabling non-trusting parties to create an *agreement*. SCs have enabled several interesting new concepts, such as Non Fungible Tokens (NFT) and entirely new business models.

2.3 Ethereum

Ethereum is a decentralized platform that allows users to create, store, and transfer digital assets. It is a peer-to-peer network that operates without a central server. Ethereum introduces the concept of smart contracts, which are computer programs that run automatically on the blockchain. Smart contracts are used to automate the creation of new digital assets, such as tokens, and to create new business models.

Solidity is a programming language that is used to write smart contracts. Solidity is a subset of the Ethereum programming language.

2.4 Smart Contract Security Vulnerabilities

There are many vulnerabilities in smart contracts that can be exploited by malicious actors. Throughout the last years, an increase in use of the Ethereum network has led to the development of smart contracts that are vulnerable to attacks. Due to the nature of blockchain technology, the attack surface of smart contracts is different from that of traditional computing systems.

Following is a list of the most common vulnerabilities in smart contracts:

2.4.1 Integer Overflow and Underflow

2.4.2 Transaction-Ordering Dependence

In blockchain systems there is no guarantee on the execution order of transactions.

2.4.3 Stack Size Limit

2.4.4 Timestamp Dependency

Considering changing to "Block state dependence"

Code listing 2.1: Timestamp Dependency vulnerabile Solidity Smart Contract code

```
1   contract Roulette {
2       uint public pastBlockTime; // forces one bet per block
3       constructor() external payable {} // initially fund contract
4       // fallback function used to make a bet
5       function () external payable {
6           require(msg.value == 10 ether); // must send 10 ether to play
7           require(now != pastBlockTime); // only 1 transaction per block
8           pastBlockTime = now;
9           if(now % 15 == 0) { // winner
10              msg.sender.transfer(this.balance);
11          }
12      }
13  }
```

2.4.5 Reentrancy

Reentrancy is a vulnerability that occurs when a smart contract calls external contracts. Most blockchain platforms that implements smart contracts provides some form of external contract calls.

Code listing 2.2: Timestamp Dependency vulnerabile Solidity Smart Contract code

```
1    function withdraw() external {
2        uint256 amount = balances[msg.sender];
3        require(msg.sender.call.value(amount)());
4        balances[msg.sender] = 0;
5    }
```

2.4.6 Unfair Contracts

Chapter 3

Related work

There have been a number of literature- surveys and reviews related to Smart Contracts.

Sousa Matsumura *et al.* [1] conducts a systematic literature mapping. They identify several tools for analyzing SC and how to deal with the identified vulnerabilities. However, solutions for the detected vulnerabilities are primarily for avoiding the security issues, and not for correcting them.

There are many existing methods and tools for vulnerability detection. These can be divided up into three categories: Static Vulnerability Detection, Dynamic Vulnerability Detection, and Machine Learning based Vulnerability Detection. The following table lists the tools and their respective categories.

3.1 Static Vulnerability Detection Methods

"Static detection techniques analyze the smart contract in a static environment by examining its source code or bytecode."

3.1.1 Information Flow Analysis-based Vulnerability Detection

3.1.2 Symbolic Execution-based

3.1.3 Oyente

Oyente is a symbolic execution tool for smart contract analysis.

3.2 Dynamic Vulnerability Detection Methods

"Dynamic testing techniques execute the program and observe its behaviors to determine the vulnerability's existence."

Table 3.1: Existing smart contract vulnerability detection tools.

Name	Method	Capability	Required input	Generalizability
ContractWard	ML (bigram model)	Binary decision	Opcode	
ESCORT	ML (LSTM) + transfer learning	Multi-label	Bytecode	
Zeus [2]				
Oyente	Symbolic execution	Multi-class	Source code and bytecode	
Maian	Symbolic analysis	Multi-class	Source code and bytecode	
Manticore [3]	Symbolic execution	Code coverage	Bytecode	Decoupled from execution env
Mythril	Symbolic execution, taint analysis, and SMT	Multi-class	Bytecode	
Dedaub	Flow and loop analysis	Gas-focused vulnerability	Sources code	
Securify [4]	Symbolic analysis	Binary decision	Bytecode	
Vandal [5]	Logic-driven static program analysis	Multi-class	Bytecode	
Towards Sequential	ML (LSTM)	Binary decision	Opcode	
NLP-inspried [6]	ML (AWD-LSTM)	Multi-class	Opcode	
Color-inspried [7]	ML (CNN)	Multi-label	Bytecode	
Graph NN-based [8]	ML (GNN)	Multi-class	Source code	

Table 3.2: Vulnerabilities enumeration.

#	Vulnerability name	#	Vulnerability name
1	Integer Overflow	4	Stack Size Limit (deprecated)
2	Integer Underflow	5	Timestamp Dependency
3	Transaction-Ordering Dependence	6	Reentrancy

Table 3.3: Comparison of vulnerability types detectable by existing tools.

Tool	**Vulnerability**					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
ContractWard	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ESCORT						
Zeus	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Oyente	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Maian[1]	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Manticore[2]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mythril	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dedaub	?	?	?	?	?	✓
Securify	✗	✗	✓	✗	?	✓
Vandal	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Towards Sequential[3]	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
NLP-inspried[4]	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Color-inspriedtnote5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Graph NN-based	✗	✗	✗	✓[6]	✓	✓

[1] Detects Greedy, suicidal and prodigal contracts.
[2] Focuses on maximizing code coverage. Can be somewhat extended to detect more bugs/vulnerabilities.
[3] Based on Maian.
[4] Categories are Suicidal, Prodigal, Greedy, Normal Smart Contracts, and "Prodigal and Greedy".
[5] Authors don't specifically list the detectable vulnerabilities.
[6] Expressed as infinite loop vulnerabilities. This is also problematic for gas consumption.

3.2.1 Fuzzing-based

MythX ReGuard (Reentrancy) ContractFuzzer (ABI specifications) Echidna ILF

3.2.2 Validation-based

ContractLarva (runtime verification) Maian ("combines symbolic analysis and concrete validation to inspect the smart contract's bytecode. In concrete validation, the contract is executed on a fork of Ethereum for tracing and vali- dation.") Sereum

3.3 Machine Learning for Vulnerability Detection

"Several works have attempted to perform automated contract scan- ning using machine learning techniques. We discuss their working mechanisms and limitations below."

3.3.1 ContractWard

ContractWard [9] implements a smart contract vulnerability detection tool based on machine learning. It is a state-of-the-art tool for detecting smart contract vulnerabilities. It is a multi-label classifier that can detect multiple vulnerabilities. The method is based on a bigram model. The input is the bytecode of the smart contract. The output is a binary decision. The decision is 1 if the contract is vulnerable, 0 otherwise.

Models for Ethereum Smart Contracts Uses XGBoost as multi label classifier with SMOTETomke as sampling method. ses simplified smar contract opcodes as input. the static opcodes represent static featturesof contracts. the tool is appropriate for rapid batch detection of vulnerabilities in smart contracts, with an average detection speed of 4 seconds per contract. Reliable with Micro-F1 and Macro-F1 over 96%. Only operates on opcodes as input. simplified smart contract opcodes are extracted from the bytecode of smart contracts.

3.3.2 ESCORT

ESCORT provides a long short-term memory machine learning model in order to detect smart contract vulnerabilities. ContractScraper is used to extract the bytecode of the smart contract. The model is based on a long short-term memory (LSTM) network. The model is trained on the Ethereum blockchain. The model is able to detect multiple vulnerabilities. The model is capable of detecting the following vulnerabilities:

"ESCORT, the first Deep Neural Network (DNN)-based vulnerability detection framework for Ethereum smart contracts that supports lightweight transfer learning on unseen security vulnerabilities, thus is exten- sible and generalizable"

3.4 Cross-chain Vulnerability Detection

"Cross-chain vulnerability detection is a method for detecting vulnerabilities in smart contract code across multiple blockchains. Little efforts have been made to develop a cross-chain vulnerability detection framework. We discuss the challenges and opportunities of cross-chain vulnerability detection."

3.5 General security frameworks

Lewis-Pye and Roughgarden [10] conducts a systematic literature mapping identifying

Chapter 4

Research Method

Research projects should always be based on previous research on the same and/or related topics. This should be described as a background to the thesis with adequate bibliographical references. If the material needed is too voluminous to fit nicely in the review part of the introduction, it can be presented in a separate background chapter.

4.1 Research Motivation

Most prior works related to the detection and mitigation software vulnerabilities have been focused on the software development life cycle. The software development process is a complex and iterative process. However, SC requires a very different approach. Due to the immutable properties of SC, all bugs and vulnerabilities needs to be removed before the code is put in production.

4.2 Research Questions

RQ1: What is the top Smart Contract vulnerabilities? RQ2: What are the current approaches for Smart Contract vulnerability detection? RQ3: What are the current defenses against Smart Contract vulnerabilities? RQ4: What is the current research on cross-chain Smart Contract vulnerability detection? RQ5: How to make Smart Contract vulnerability detecting possible cross-chain?

Chapter 5

Results

The results chapter should simply present the results of applying the methods presented in the method chapter without further ado. This chapter will typically contain many graphs, tables, etc. Sometimes it is natural to discuss the results as they are presented, combining them into a 'Results and Discussion' chapter, but more often they are kept separate.

5.1 Research Question 1: What are the current approaches for Smart Contract vulnerability detection?

5.2 Research Question 2: What are the current defenses against Smart Contract vulnerabilities?

Not so many tools for actually fixing the vulnerabilities. Maybe some ML techniques? There are however many tools and techniques for avoiding to introduce vulnerabilities.

Language-Based Security Manual Inspection and correction

5.3 Research Question 3: What is the current research on cross-chain Smart Contract vulnerability detection?

Kalra *et al.* [2] provides a tool called Zeus. Zeus translates the Solidity SC language into LLVM-IR language. LLVM is a compiler toolchain, that supports a large ecosystem of code analysis tools. However, the LLVM-IR is very is an IR that that can be used to detect vulnerabilities in the SCs language.

Lewis-Pye and Roughgarden [10] conducts a systematic literature mapping identifying A General Framework for the Security Analysis of Blockchain Protocols

5.4 Research Question 4: How to make Smart Contract vulnerability detecting possible cross-chain?

Sousa Matsumura *et al.* [1] suggest MLs for automatic vulnerability detection as future work. This because it is a promising vulnerability detection technique for traditional software, it doesn't rely heavy on human-defined rules and has obtained competitive results.

for SCs vulnerability detection. This because MLs has been shown to be a promising vulnerability detection technique

since it is a promising vulnerability detection technique even for traditional software [7,15], does not rely heavily on rules defined by human experts and has obtained competitive results; research proposing solutions involving dynamic analysis or software testing, seeking to deal with the limitations of the execution environment.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Several of the tools and

The results indicates that the research of vulnerability analysis of other blockchain platforms are lacking.

From the findings presented in Chapter, we can clearly see that the research of vulnerability analysis of other blockchain platforms are lacking. The area of blockchain is immature. It is therefore normal that the popularity of Ethereum steals most of the research resources. However, with the increasing popularity of other platforms, so does the need for security research on these chains. The few analyses that has been conducted on other SC-supporting chains than Ethereum has mainly been restricted to the analysis of the security of the chain itself. Primarily consenceus protocolls,

Best practices for secure smart contracts. (some specific for ethereum)

It also seems that most research

Possible to detect ponzi schemes?

Explainable vulnerabilities in terms of locating the source of the vulnerability (by lines).

Chapter 7

Conclusion

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[11] K. K. Landes, "A scrutiny of the abstract," *Bulletin of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists*, vol. 35, no. 7, p. 1660, 1951.

Paper I

Here, you may add a description of the paper, an illustration, or just give the bibliographic reference:

> K. K. Landes, “A scrutiny of the abstract,” *Bulletin of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists*, vol. 35, no. 7, p. 1660, 1951

Or you may leave it empty, if you like.

BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PETROLEUM GEOLOGISTS
VOL. 50, NO. 9 (SEPTEMBER, 1966), P. 1992-1999, 2 FIGS.

GEOLOGICAL NOTES

A SCRUTINY OF THE ABSTRACT, II[1]

KENNETH K. LANDES[2]
Ann Arbor, Michigan

ABSTRACT

A partial biography of the writer is given. The inadequate abstract is discussed. What should be covered by an abstract is considered. The importance of the abstract is described. Dictionary definitions of "abstract" are quoted. At the conclusion a revised abstract is presented.

For many years I have been annoyed by the inadequate abstract. This became acute while I was serving a term as editor of the *Bulletin* of The American Association of Petroleum Geologists. In addition to returning manuscripts to authors for rewriting of abstracts, I also took 30 minutes in which to lower my ire by writing, "A Scrutiny of the Abstract."[1] This little squib has had a fantastic distribution. If only one of my scientific outpourings would do as well! Now the editorial board of the Association has requested a revision. This is it.

The inadequate abstract is illustrated at the top of the page. The passive voice is positively screaming at the reader! It is an outline, with each item in the outline expanded into a sentence. The reader is told what the paper is about, but not what it contributes. Such abstracts are merely overgrown titles. They are produced by writers who are either (1) beginners, (2) lazy, or (3) have not written the paper yet.

To many writers the preparation of an abstract is an unwanted chore required at the last minute by an editor or insisted upon even before the paper has been written by a deadline-bedeviled program chairman. However, in terms of market reached, the abstract is *the most important part of the paper*. For every individual who reads or listens to your entire paper, from 10 to 500 will read the abstract.

If you are presenting a paper before a learned society, the abstract alone may appear in a preconvention issue of the society journal as well as in the convention program; it may also be run by trade journals. The abstract which accompanies a published paper will most certainly reappear in abstract journals in various languages, and perhaps in company internal circulars as well. It is much better to please than to antagonize this great audience. Papers written for oral presentation should be *completed prior to the deadline for the abstract*, so that the abstract can be prepared from the written paper and not from raw ideas gestating in the writer's mind.

My dictionary describes an abstract as "a summary of a statement, document, speech, etc. . . ." and that which *concentrates in itself the essential information* of a paper or article. The definition I prefer has been set in italics. May all writers learn the art (it is not easy) of preparing an abstract containing the *essential information* in their compositions. With this goal in mind, I append an abstract that should be an improvement over the one appearing at the beginning of this discussion.

ABSTRACT

The abstract is of utmost importance, for it is read by 10 to 500 times more people than hear or read the entire article. It should not be a mere recital of the subjects covered. Expressions such as "is discussed" and "is described" should *never* be included! The abstract should be a condensation and concentration of the *essential information* in the paper.

[1] Revised from K. K. Landes' "A Scrutiny of the Abstract," first published in the *Bulletin* in 1951 (*Bulletin*, v. 35, no. 7, p. 1660). Manuscript received, June 3, 1966; accepted, June 10, 1966.

Editor's note: this abstract is published together with The Royal Society's "Guide for Preparation and Publication of Abstracts" to give *Bulletin* authors two viewpoints on the writing of abstracts.

[2] Professor of geology and mineralogy, University of Michigan. Past editor of the *Bulletin*.

Appendix A

Additional Material

Additional material that does not fit in the main thesis but may still be relevant to share, e.g., raw data from experiments and surveys, code listings, additional plots, pre-project reports, project agreements, contracts, logs etc., can be put in appendices. Simply issue the command `\appendix` in the main `.tex` file, and make one chapter per appendix.

If the appendix is in the form of a ready-made PDF file, it should be supported by a small descriptive text, and included using the `pdfpages` package. To illustrate how it works, a standard project agreement (for the IE faculty at NTNU in Gjøvik) is attached here. You would probably want the included PDF file to begin on an odd (right hand) page, which is achieved by using the `\cleardoublepage` command immediately before the `\includepdf[]{}` command. Use the option `[pages=-]` to include all pages of the PDF document, or, e.g., `[pages=2-4]` to include only the given page range.

NTNU

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_____

_____ (oppdragsgiver), og

_____

_____

_____ (student(er))

Avtalen angir avtalepartenes plikter vedrørende gjennomføring av prosjektet og rettigheter til anvendelse av de resultater som prosjektet frembringer:

1. Studenten(e) skal gjennomføre prosjektet i perioden fra _____ til_____ .

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8. Denne avtalen utferdiges med ett eksemplar til hver av partene. På vegne av NTNU, IE er det instituttleder/faggruppeleder som godkjenner avtalen.

9. I det enkelte tilfelle kan det inngås egen avtale mellom oppdragsgiver, student(er) og NTNU som regulerer nærmere forhold vedrørende bl.a. eiendomsrett, videre bruk, konfidensialitet, kostnadsdekning og økonomisk utnyttelse av resultatene. Dersom oppdragsgiver og student(er) ønsker en videre eller ny avtale med oppdragsgiver, skjer dette uten NTNU som partner.

10. Når NTNU også opptrer som oppdragsgiver, trer NTNU inn i kontrakten både som utdanningsinstitusjon og som oppdragsgiver.

11. Eventuell uenighet vedrørende forståelse av denne avtale løses ved forhandlinger avtalepartene imellom. Dersom det ikke oppnås enighet, er partene enige om at tvisten løses av voldgift, etter bestemmelsene i tvistemålsloven av 13.8.1915 nr. 6, kapittel 32.

12. Deltakende personer ved prosjektgjennomføringen:

NTNUs veileder (navn): _____

Oppdragsgivers kontaktperson (navn): _____

Student(er) (signatur): _____ dato _____

_____ dato _____

_____ dato _____

_____ dato _____

Oppdragsgiver (signatur):_____ dato _____

Signert avtale leveres digitalt i Blackboard, rom for bacheloroppgaven.
Godkjennes digitalt av instituttleder/faggruppeleder.

Om papirversjon med signatur er ønskelig, må papirversjon leveres til instituttet i tillegg.
Plass for evt sign:

Instituttleder/faggruppeleder (signatur): _____ dato _____