

C++ State Template Class Library STTCL Concept

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History:

| Version | Date | Changes | Author |
|---------|------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| 1.0 | 27.01.2009 | Initial version | G. Makulik |
| 1.0 | 19.09.2009 | Minor changes and text formattings | G. Makulik |

1 Overview

The C++ **State Template Class Library** provides a set of platform independent C++ template classes, that help to implement finite state machines as they are modeled with UML 2.1 *State Machine Diagrams*. The template classes, their attributes and operations provide a certain mapping to the UML notation elements.

The basic approach is based on the GoF **State** design pattern. The template classes are designed as base of implementation classes, that mainly concentrate on the problem domain specific functionality.

1.1 The GoF State pattern

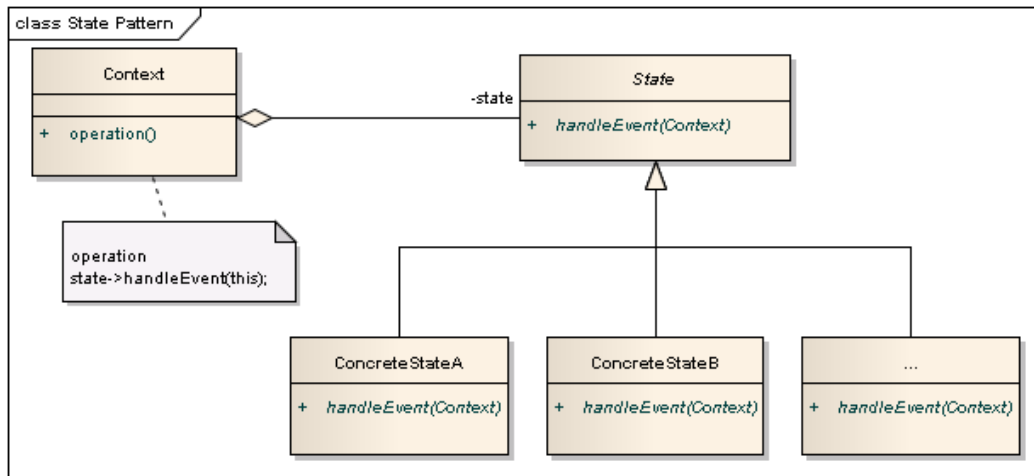
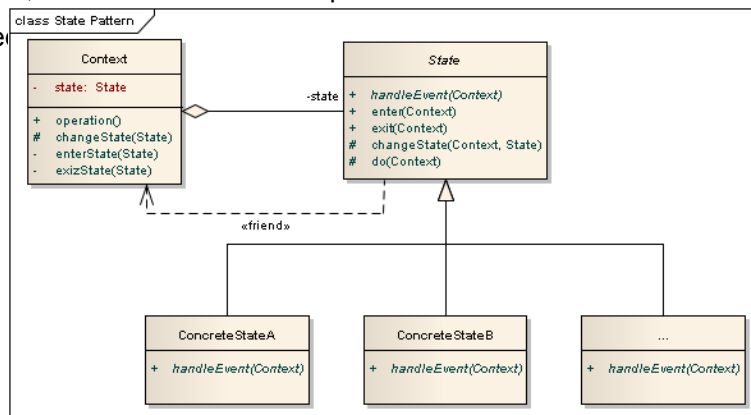


Fig 1: The structural UML representation of the GoF **State** design pattern

The class diagram in Fig 1 shows that the **Context** class exposes **operation()** to clients and internally calls one or more **handleEvent()** operations of the actual **state** member. The **State** class is abstract, and the state specific behavior is implemented in the **ConcreteStateA**, **ConcreteStateB**, ... classes. Changing the **state** reference member will change the behavior of a **Context** class object, as it would have been replaced with another class.

Fig 2 Shows a refined



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Fig 2: GoF State design pattern implementation details

1.2 Mapping UML State Machine notation elements

Fig 3 Shows a simple *UML State Machine Diagram*, that uses basic UML State Machine Diagram notation elements.

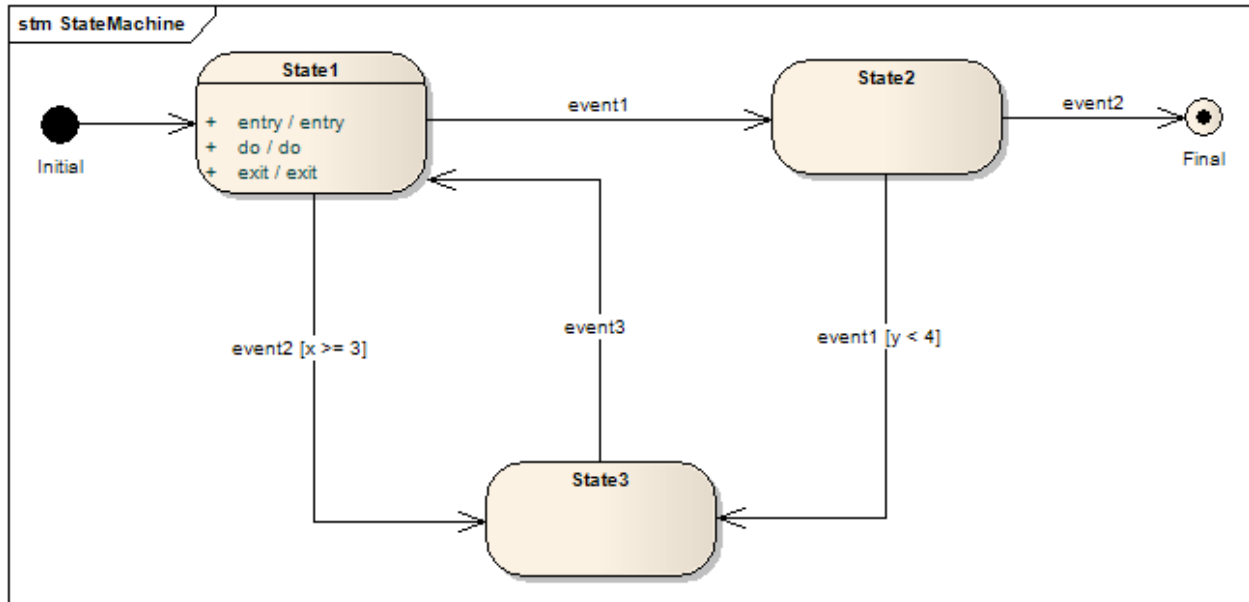
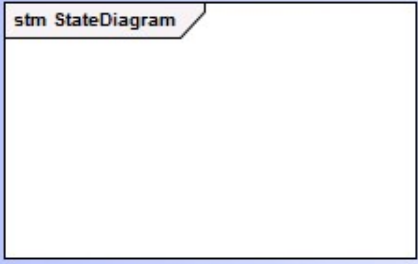
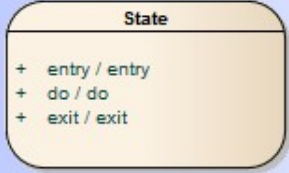
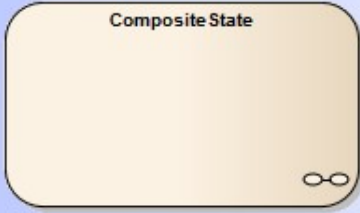
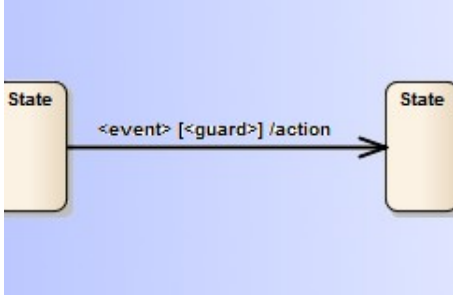


Fig 3: Simple sample UML State Machine Diagram

The following table shows how the basic *UML State Machine Diagrams* notation elements map to the elements described in the GoF *State* design pattern:

| UML state machine diagram notation | GoF <i>State</i> design pattern element |
|--|--|
|  <p>The state machine diagram itself</p> | <p>A Context class instance.</p> |
|  <p>A state (atomic)</p> | <p>A <i>State</i> class instance (<i>ConcreteStateA</i>, <i>ConcreteStateB</i>).</p> |
| <p><Internal event>:= entry, do, exit, <event></p> <p>A state internal event. The do event is intrinsically triggered by the internal enter event.</p> | <p>A call to the <i>State</i> classes entry(), exit() or do() operation.</p> |
|  <p>A composite state. The internal states are modeled in a sub-state machine diagram</p> | <p>A <i>State</i> class instance, that also serves as another Context classes instance.</p> |

| UML state machine diagram notation | GoF <i>State</i> design pattern element |
|--|--|
|  <p>A transition between two states</p> | <p>A call of the Context::changeState() operation.</p> |
| <p><event> An event that triggers the associated transition</p> | <p>A call to a public Context::operation() operation, that delegates behavior to a State::handleEvent() operation. All events visible in the state machine diagram can be triggered via the public Context::operation() operations.</p> |
| <p>[guard] A conditional expression, that must return true to execute the associated transition. Guard conditions that are associated to the same source state must be mutually exclusive.</p> | <p>A conditional statement inside the Context::operation() or State::handle() operations, that decides to call Context::changeState().</p> |
| <p>: action, ... A list of specified event triggered operations</p> | <p>The specified action operations are called inside the implementation State::handleEvent() event handler operation¹. The calling order may be unspecified.</p> |

¹⁾ Action operations that appear on a transition are not allowed to access the contexts current state. In fact these operations should be performed after the current state was exited and before the new state is entered. That's difficult to achieve with the GoF *State* design pattern, since changing state is an atomic operation in the Context class. Anyway additional behaviors can be implemented before calling the **sttcl::State<>::changeState()** operation.






| UML state machine diagram notation | GoF <i>State</i> design pattern element |
|---|--|
| <div data-bbox="196 281 646 577">  </div> <div data-bbox="646 281 971 415"> <p>Separates concurrently active regions within a composite state or state machine diagram.</p> </div> | <p>This requires concurrent program execution mechanisms (e.g. threading) supported by an operating system. Each region defines an associated <i>State</i> class reference, to delegate the event handling to a <i>State::handleEvent()</i> operation concurrently.</p> <p>A single region can also be considered as a concrete composite state implementation, that supports a non blocking <i>State::do()</i> operation, that executes asynchronously in a loop. Further it is necessary to have a mechanism to propagate events to the asynchronously executed operation loop. STTCL provides the <i>ConcurrentCompositeState<></i> and <i>Region<></i> template base classes to design these UML features.</p> |


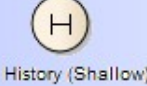
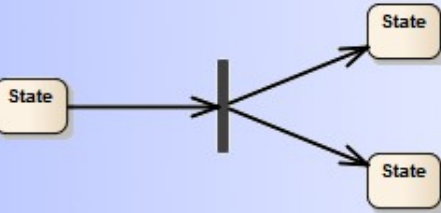
Table 1: Basic UML State Machine Elements

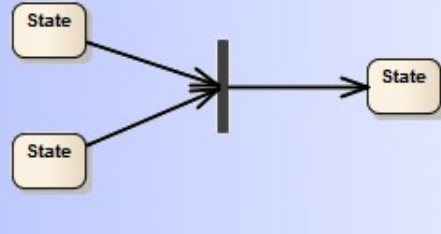
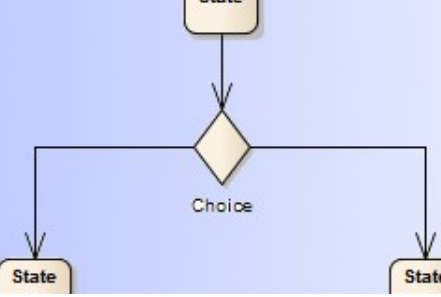
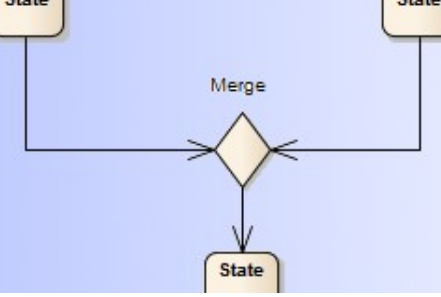
There's a number of advanced *UML State Machine Diagram* notation elements, that do not directly map to any conceptual element described in the GoF **State** design pattern. These can be mapped to certain aspects of implementation and behavior though.

This mainly concerns the so called pseudo-states, that also have incoming and/or outgoing transitions. But vs. concrete states, pseudo-states only a kind of transient states, that represent complex or intrinsic transition paths in a state machine diagram or composite state.

The following table lists possible implementation approaches for further *UML State Machine Diagram* notation elements:

| UML state machine diagram notation | | GoF <i>State</i> design pattern implementation |
|---|---|--|
| Pseudo-States | | |
|  | <p>An entry point of the state machine diagram. Initial pseudo-states never have the target role of a transition.</p> | <p>A constructor call to create a Context class instance in the simplest case. The constructor calls the Context::changeState() operation to set the initial <i>State</i> reference.</p> <p>If any events and/or guards are specified for the associated outgoing transitions, the Context class should provide a property attribute to check it's initialization status, and leave the decision, which initial <i>State</i> reference to set, to the associated Context::operation() event operations. This behavior may be encapsulated in a Context::initialize() operation.</p> |
|  | <p>An exit point of the state machine diagram. Final pseudo-states never have the source role of a transition.</p> | <p>A <i>State</i> class implementation, that never calls the Context::changeState() operation.</p> |
|  | <p>An exit point of a state machine or composite state triggered by the incoming transition's event.</p> | <p>A Context::finalize() operation, that calls the actual <i>State</i> references exit() operation.</p> |
|  | <p>Exits the composite state or state machine triggered by the incoming transition's event.</p> | <p>A destructor call to a Context class instance in the simplest case.</p> |

| UML state machine diagram notation | GoF <i>State</i> design pattern implementation |
|--|--|
|  <p>History (Deep)</p> <p>Represents the most recent active configuration of a composite state. In opposite to the shallow history pseudo-state, this includes all sub states of all regions and their recently active sub states recursively.</p> | <p>The composite Context class instance must keep track of the most recent sub <i>State</i> reference, when the composite <i>State</i> classes exit() operation is called. When the composite <i>State</i> classes enter() operation is called later on, the composite Context class directly transits to the remembered most recent sub <i>State</i> reference.</p> <p>STTCL composite state classes provide the <i>HistoryType</i> template parameter to determine the history behavior.</p> |
|  <p>History (Shallow)</p> <p>Represents the most recent sub state of a composite state. A composite state can have at most one history pseudo-state. At most one transition to the default sub state may originate the history pseudo-state. This transition is executed in case the composite state was never active before.</p> | <p>The same behavior as described for the deep History. But In case, that a reentered sub <i>State</i> reference also represents a composite state, it's composite Context class must be (re-)initialized.</p> <p>STTCL composite state classes provide the <i>HistoryType</i> template parameter to determine the history behavior.</p> |
|  <p>A Fork. Serves to split a single incoming transition into concurrently executed outgoing transitions. No guards are allowed on any associated transitions.</p> | <p>A fork represents the initiation of concurrently executed operations (i.e. tasks, threads) of a composite Context class. This can be implemented as a non blocking operation that starts all of the associated concurrently executed operations.</p> |

| UML state machine diagram notation | GoF <i>State</i> design pattern implementation |
|--|--|
|  <p>A Join. Serves to synchronize multiple concurrently executed incoming transitions into a single outgoing transitions. No guards are allowed on any associated transitions.</p> | <p>A join represents a synchronization point (i.e. semaphore, mutex) for formerly initiated concurrently executed operations of a composite <i>Context</i> class. This can be implemented in a blocking operation, that waits on completion of all the associated concurrently executed operations.</p> |
|  <p>A Choice. Serves to select the outgoing transitions according runtime conditions represented by the guards, associated to them. The guard conditions must be mutually exclusive, to choose a certain transition path. The model requires at least one of the guard conditions to evaluate to true, therefore one of the outgoing transitions should cover the else/default case. Unlike the Fork pseudo-state, a Choice node doesn't initiate any concurrently executed transitions.</p> | <p>A Choice can be implemented as a <code>if ...else if ..else</code> or <code>switch</code> conditional block in a <i>State</i> classes implementation (<i>ConcreteStateA</i>, <i>ConcreteStateB</i>), that choose the appropriate target <i>State</i> reference parameter for a call to the <i>Context</i>: <code>changeState()</code> operation.</p> <p>Note: Choices don't serve to split transition paths into concurrently executed operations!</p> |
|  <p>A Merge. Serves to combine alternate execution flows into a single outgoing transition. Unlike the Join pseudo-state, a Merge node doesn't provide synchronization of concurrently executed transitions, that originate from different regions. Also a Merges incoming transitions may have guard conditions associated.</p> | <p>A Merge can be implemented as an operation, that is shared by a number of <i>State</i> class implementations (<i>ConcreteStateA</i>, <i>ConcreteStateB</i>), and ends up in a single call of <i>Context</i>: <code>changeState()</code> operation. The decision to call this operation is done in the implementation of the <i>State</i>: <code>handleEvent()</code> operation, according the associated guard condition.</p> |

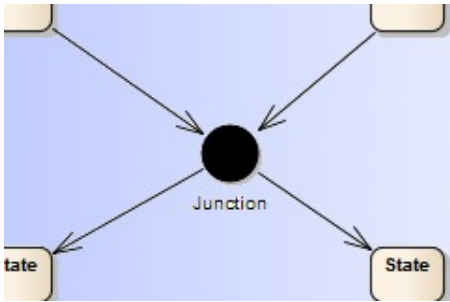
| UML state machine diagram notation | GoF <i>State</i> design pattern implementation |
|--|--|
|  <p>A Junction. Serves to share transition paths for the incoming transitions. The incoming and or outgoing transitions have guard conditions associated. Incoming transitions are shared between the source states. Outgoing transitions must have mutually exclusive guard conditions. The model requires at least one of the guard conditions to evaluate to true, therefore one of the outgoing transitions should cover the else/default case.</p> | <p>The Junction serves complex conditional path transitions that can be implemented in a similar way as the Choice and Merge pseudo-states.</p> <p>UML 2.1 specification restricts the guard conditions to be static (actively waiting for all incoming events). IMHO this can be interpreted, that the Junction node should be another implementation of the <i>State</i> class. Such implementation should not affect the <i>Context</i> classes attributes, but just serve to forward incoming events to outgoing transitions (i.e. <i>Context::changeState()</i> calls).</p> |

Table 2: Advanced UML State Machine Elements

2 Implementation Design

The basic implementation approach of the C++ **STTCL** is, to provide abstractions of the GoF *State* design patterns static structures. This is accomplished using parameterized base classes that serve certain functionality, associated to the formerly listed *UML State Machine Diagram* notation elements.

The **Context**: `operation()` and `State::handleEvent()` operations, described in the design pattern, can be considered as a pair of compliant, application specific interfaces (source/sink).

The interface realized by the **Context** class is visible to any clients of the state machine implementation. The interface realized by the **State** class implementations, and those implementations themselves, shouldn't be visible to any clients of the state machine implementation.

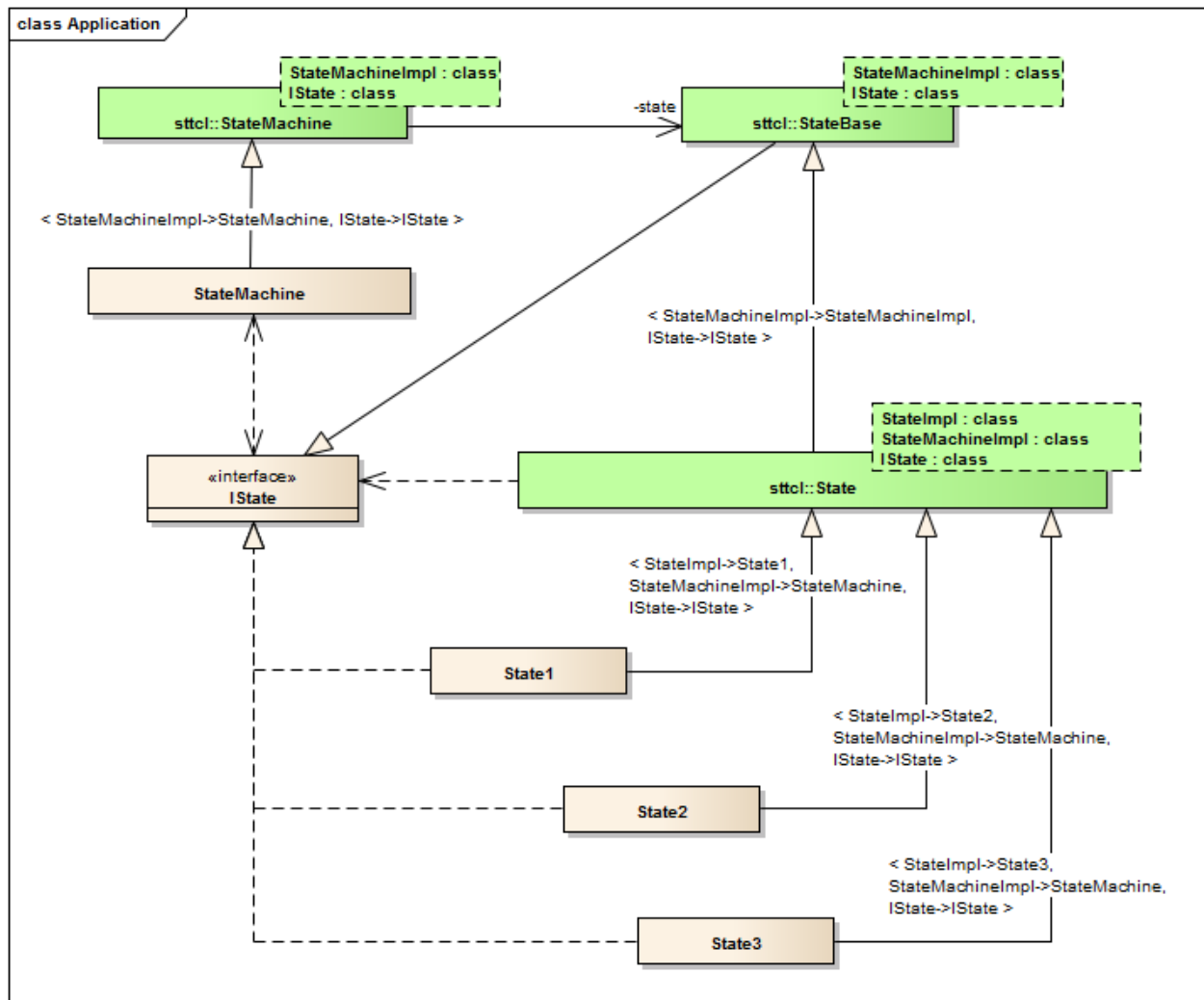


Fig 4: The basic STTCL **State** design pattern abstraction

Fig 4 Shows a class diagram, that illustrates a state machine implementation that uses the STTCL basic classes. The highlighted elements represent the application specific stuff.

The **State<>** template base class will provide certain common state specific operations, like **entry()**, **exit()** and **do()**. These operations are not intended to be called by the implementation classes, but rather by the corresponding **StateMachine** class. The **State** class also provides a protected operation **changeState()**, that will delegate to a call to the **StateMachineImpl** context parameters **StateMachine<>::changeState()** operation. This operation enables the concrete state implementations, to implement transitions to another concrete state. As formerly stated, the **StateMachine<>::changeState()** operation shouldn't be directly accessible for any client (or actor) classes of the state machine. This requires, that the **State<>::changeState()** operation is allowed to friendly access the **StateMachine<>::changeState()** operation.

The **StateMachine<>** class mainly serves to implement the transitions' behavior, when they are enabled and passed the guard conditions implemented in a concrete state. This concerns control of the exited and entered state's synchronous and asynchronous execution behavior.

As discussed in the GoF **State** design pattern, the concrete state implementations may provide singleton instances (accessible through a static operation of the class), as far no state runtime attributes need to be maintained. This approach will guarantee, that the **StateMachine<>** implementation doesn't need to reference concrete **State<>** implementations, other than it's initial state.

2.1 Aspect Oriented Modelling of State Machines

STTCL uses aspect oriented design for certain aspects of UML 2.2 state diagram notation elements. The different aspect **variations** are selected through template parameters and concern the following:

- Concurrency
 - Active states
 - State Machine regions
- Composite states
 - State history behavior

The concurrency features need some OS specific implementation for threads, mutexes, semaphores and "real" timing capabilities.

2.2 STTCL Base Classes

The STTCL template base classes provide default implementations for standard state machine context and state behavior. The behavioral aspects may be overridden by the implementation class that is passed as template parameter. The methods called to implement behavioral aspects are designed as implementation hooks, such that the base class implements a default behaviour and the specific method is called using a static cast to the implementation class.

2.2.1 *sttcl::StateMachine<>*

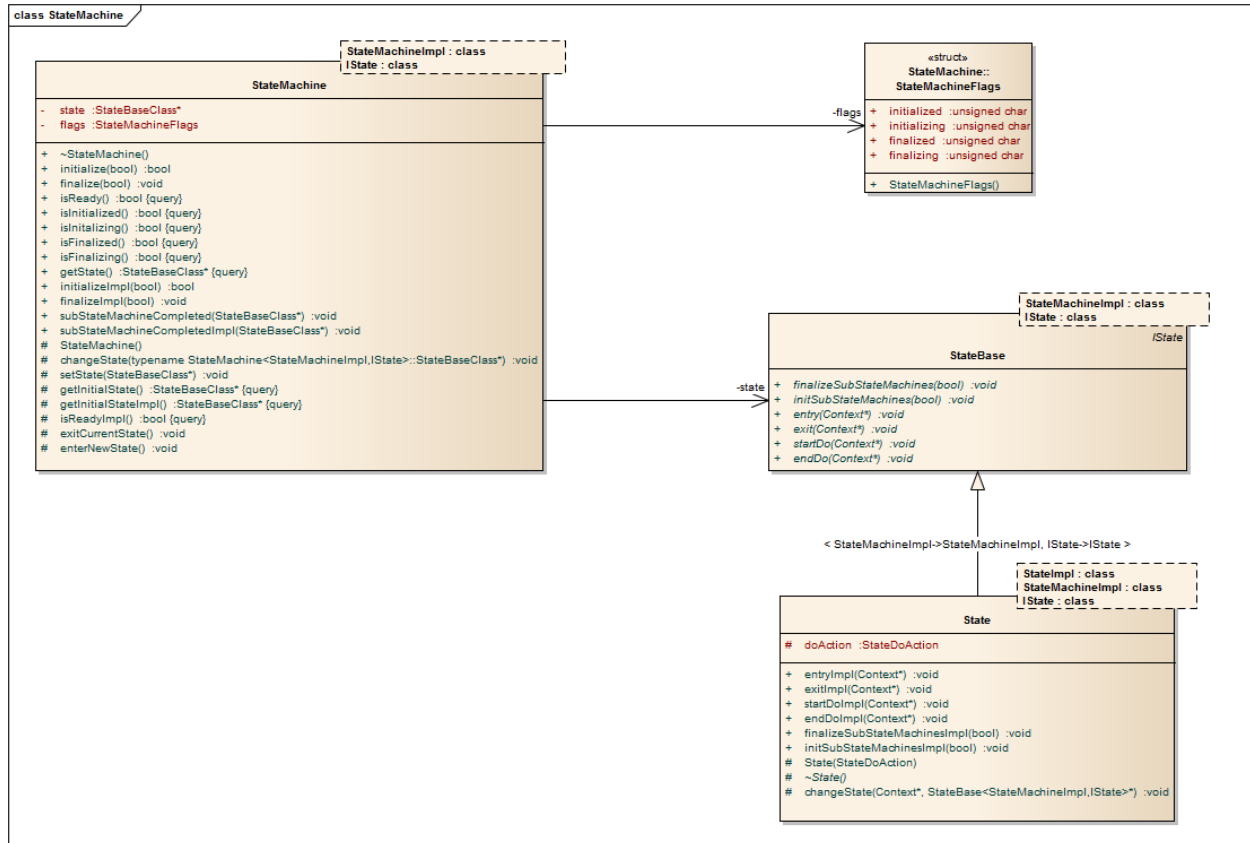


Fig 5: *sttcl::StateMachine<>* class diagram

Template signature:

```
template<class StateMachineImpl, class IState>
class StateMachine;
```

StateMachineImpl specifies the inheriting class.

IState specifies the internal state interface class.

The *StateMachine<>* template base class implements the following main operations:

+initialize()

Sets the state machine to its initial state.

+finalize()

Exits the state machines current state and resets the state machine.

+getState()

Gets the state machines current state.

#changeState()

Changes the state machines current state.

Implementation hooks:

+initializeImpl()

Overrides the default initialize() behavior. An override should call the default implementation.

+finalizeImpl()

Overrides the default finalize() behavior. An override should call the default implementation.

+getInitialStateImpl()

Must be implemented. Returns the initial state of the state machine implementation.

2.2.2 sttcl::State<>

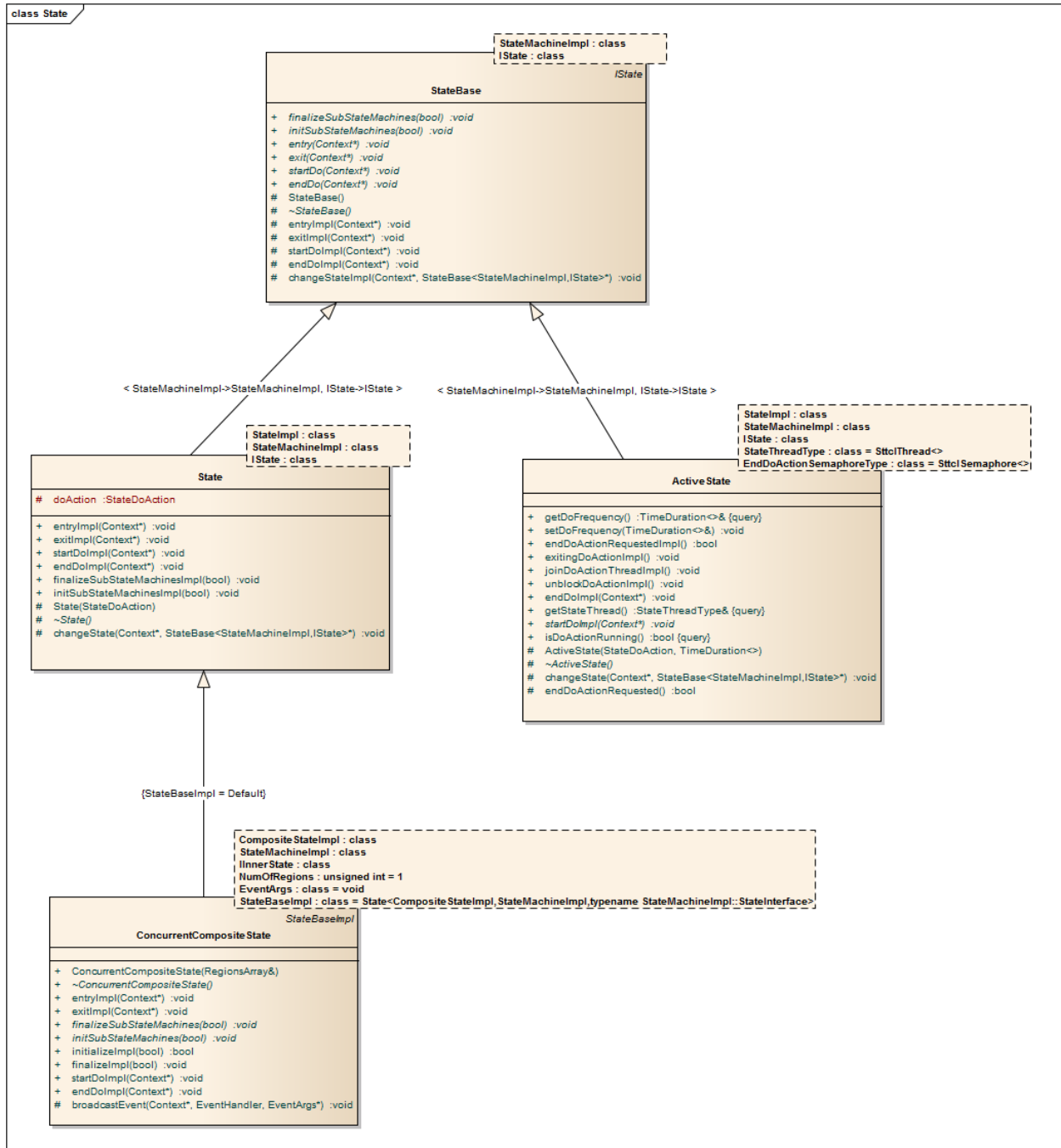


Fig 6: sttcl::State<> class diagram

Template signature:

```
template<class StateImpl, class StateMachineImpl, class IState>
class State;
```

StateImpl specifies the inheriting class.

StateMachineImpl specifies the containing state machine implementation.

IState specifies the internal state interface class.

The **State<>** template base class implements the following main operations:

entry()

startDo()

endDo()

exit()

initSubStateMachines()

finalizeSubStateMachines()

Implementation hooks:

2.2.3 *sttcl::ActiveState<>*

2.2.4 *sttcl::CompositeState<>*

2.2.5 *sttcl::ConcurrentCompositeState<>*

2.2.6 *sttcl::Region<>*

2.3 STTCL configuration adapters

2.3.1 *sttcl::SttclThread<>*

2.3.2 *sttcl::SttclMutex<>*

2.3.3 *sttcl::SttclSemaphore<>*

2.3.4 *sttcl::TimeDuration<>*