University of Zurich[UZH]

MASTER BASIS MODULE – Communication Systems Group, Prof. Dr. Burkhard Stiller

Cooperative Signaling Protocol

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Date of Submission: February 15, 2019

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Zusammenfassung

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Abstract

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Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank Bruno Rodrigues for his valuable support and feedback with which he has contributed significantly to the successful completion of this work. I would also like to thank Professor Dr. Burkhard Stiller, head of the Communication Systems Group at the University of Zurich, for the opportunity to write this highly interesting work at his chair.

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

As mentioned by [1] and [2] in their work, Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks still pose an unmitigated threat to the availability of the Internet. In connection with a growing number of devices, also given by the rapid growth of Internet Of Things, attackers thus have an ever larger field of potential targets.

However, most of the currently available detection or mitigation systems are either in-house or single-domain. In particular, in-house systems have shown that some of them do not have the hardware or software capacity required to fend off major attacks. Since DDoS attacks are more and more often coordinated, a distributed and coordinated defense is required. Thus, the load, which normally lies on a single target, can be distributed among many, thus increasing the chance of successfully repulsing the attack.

However, in a competitive environment it cannot simply be trusted that the individual participants will behave for the good of all. Nor can it be expected that everyone voluntarily participates in the effective work and is not just a beneficiary. The scheme consists of three steps according to [2]. Firstly, an attacker publishes the harmful IP addresses, secondly these are blocked or filtered by the other participants through the actual mitigation services and in a third step the target evaluates the effectiveness. To ensure this process, a reward system for cooperation between participants is required [2]. At this point the Blockchain comes into play, as it is not only suitable for signaling against attacks, but also as a trustworthy and distributed platform for reputation management. This work deals with the implementation of the Cooperative Signaling Protocol, which was presented by [1] and [2] in their work and is further described in chapter 3. Ethereum will serve as platform and the whole process will be implemented as Smart Contract.

1.1 Task Description

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The Task is divided into two goals which are described as follows:

- **Design and development of the protoype.** This MBM needs to implement the aforementioned exchange of messages as defined in the cooperative signaling protocol. To achieve this, the Ethereum Blockchain has to be used with at least two instances (target and mitigator) interacting with each other.
- **Evalaution** The MBM needs to deliver a short evaluation of the implementation and a indication of performance expectations.

  The decision which development environment to use was left to the writer, but it was recommended to use Truffle in conjunction with Ganache as this provides an out-of-the-box solution for Ethereum based blockchain development.

1.2 Outline

The remaining of this work is structured as follows. The next chapter will mainly focus on related work and provide a brief introduction to the overall context this paper is written in. Chapter 3 describes the underlying scheme, which has to be implemented, in further details. Chapter 4 focuses on the design decisions that were made, whereas Chapter 5 will describe the actual implementation and the steps taken. Finally, Chapter 6 is used to evaluate the solution at hand and in Chapter 7 conclusions are drawn

Chapter 2

Basic Concepts

This chapter is intended to give a more detailed insight into the technologies and related work that the writer was confronted with during the implementation of his Tak.

2.1 Blockchain

ADD CONTENT HERE

2.2 Ethereum

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Is described in [3] as a distributed platform that executes smart contracts, i.e. applications that run exactly as they are programmed, without the possibility of downtime, censorship, fraud or third-party intervention.

According to [3], this allows developers to create markets, store registers of debts or promises, move funds or many other use cases, all without a trusted third party.

2.3 Smart Contracts

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2.4 Blockchain Signaling System

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Chapter 3

Protocol Requirements

This chapter is intended to provide a more detailed insight into the protocol to be implemented and explain why such a protocol is necessary to ratify the quality of service provided by the mitigators.

3.1 Cooperative Signaling Protocol Scheme

The overall objective of the Cooperative Signaling Protocol is to have a mitigation service evaluated by the service providing mitigator and the potential target of an attack. Depending on the evaluation or final state of the process, the mitigator, the target, or neither will be rewarded. The schema of the protocol is depicted in Fig. 3.1.

The process begins with an initial cooperative defense request of target T to a potential mitigator M, which can accept or reject it. If the request is accepted, T must transfer the promised sum to the contract, which is kept there until the final evaluation. However, if the request is rejected, the process is terminated. After sending the agreed sum, the Deadline Timer t0 starts which defines in which time interval the Mitigator M must send a confirmation of the performed service. M can now act rationally and send a proof or let the time elapse. In both cases, however, it is not possible to guarantee the basic correctness or quality of the proof. Even if the blockchain ensures an audit trail, as mentioned by [1], no ground truth can be ensured. This problem exists for the upload of the proof as well as for the user rating, but unfortunately there is no fully automated way to guarantee truthfulness Next, T has to rate M's service accordingly, which is again limited by a validation deathline. If a proof has been uploaded, T can either be satisfied, not satisfied or not answering. After the expiration of the deadline or an early response from T, M may in turn issue a rating. A rational M will rate T as negative if the service is refused. However, if T has given positive feedback, M will also give positive feedback. If T is self-referral (no response), M will also respond negatively. All these decisions eventually lead to the options listed in the last column.

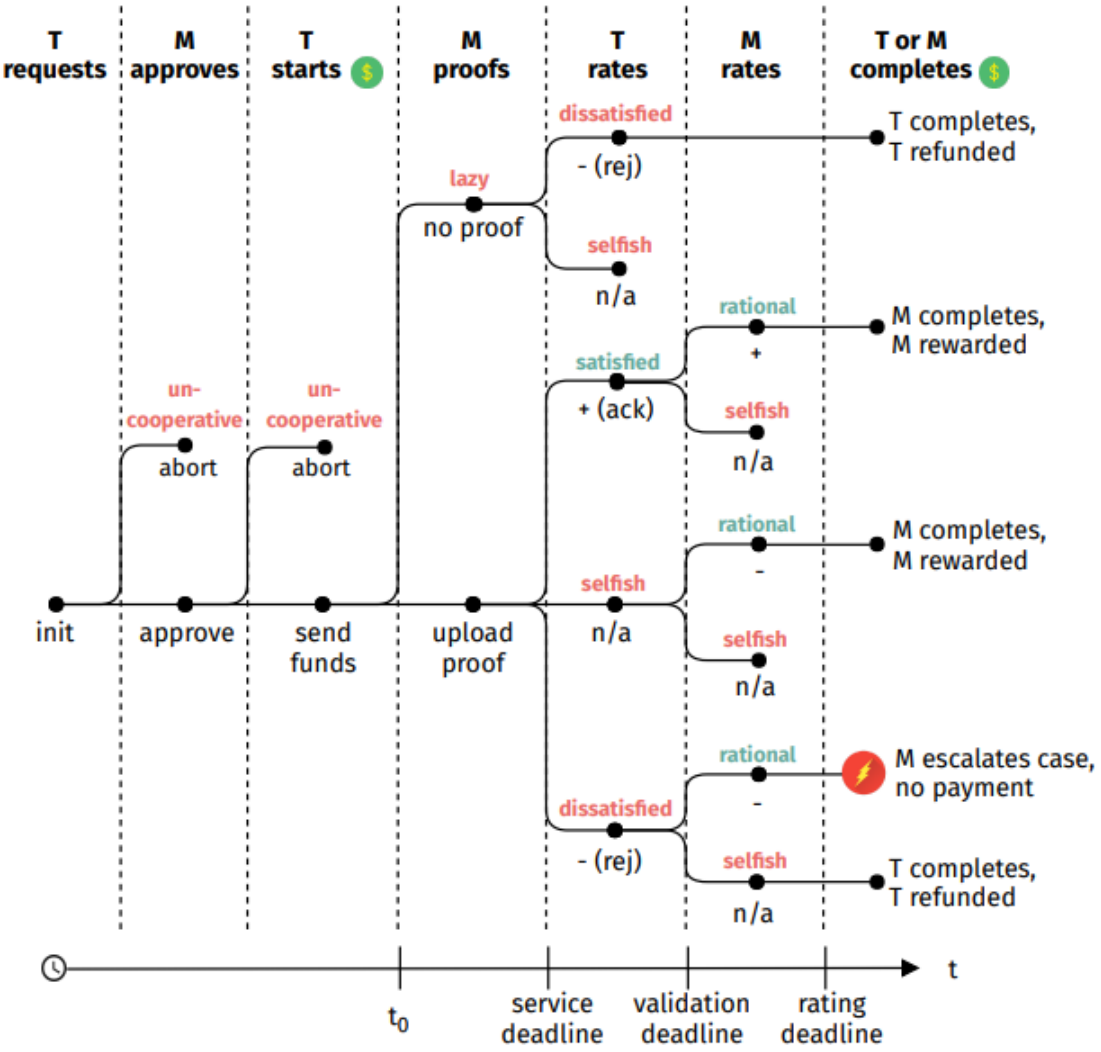

Figure 3.1: Definition of the Protocol by [1]

Chapter 4

Design

Since this was a completely new topic for the writer, it was decided to explore the possible problems through an explorative process. Truffle was selected as the development environment in cooperation with Ganache. The first approach was clearly aimed at ensuring the functionality, which unfortunately was at the expense of expandability and maintainability. In a second attempt, the problems of the first prototype were taken into consideration and above all the maintainability and expandability were addressed. In order to achieve these goals, it was decided to implement the state pattern. Due to the writer's suspicion that the implementation using state pattern could be too complex, it was decided to offer an alternative, which continues the simplicity of the first prototype, but makes some selective adjustments.

4.1 First Approach

The first approach for the development of the Cooperative Signaling Protocol consisted of a very simple and limited architecture as depicted in 4.1. The aim was to provide the user with an interface where a user could perform actions via the main contract (Protocol.sol). A new process could be initiated and driven by function calls (approve, fund, proof, rateByTarget, rateByMitigator). It was crucial to include the address of the desired process, since an account can, for example, be involved in several active processes and therefore the sender of a message cannot be traced to the process. At the end, the evaluation (located in the process itself) was initiated and the payment or non-payment was regulated based on the defined scheme.

A closer look revealed some problems or misunderstandings regarding the implementation (e.g. a mitigator has to specify how much he wants per blocked address and therefore it is not enough to start the process with the user's account only), or that an adjustment of the evaluation is a bit cumbersome if the whole code has to be handled.

For these reasons, it was decided to adapt the structure and introduce a state pattern based on the individual states. This architecture will be explained in more detail in section 4.2. In order to be able to draw a certain comparison nevertheless, the simpler, first model

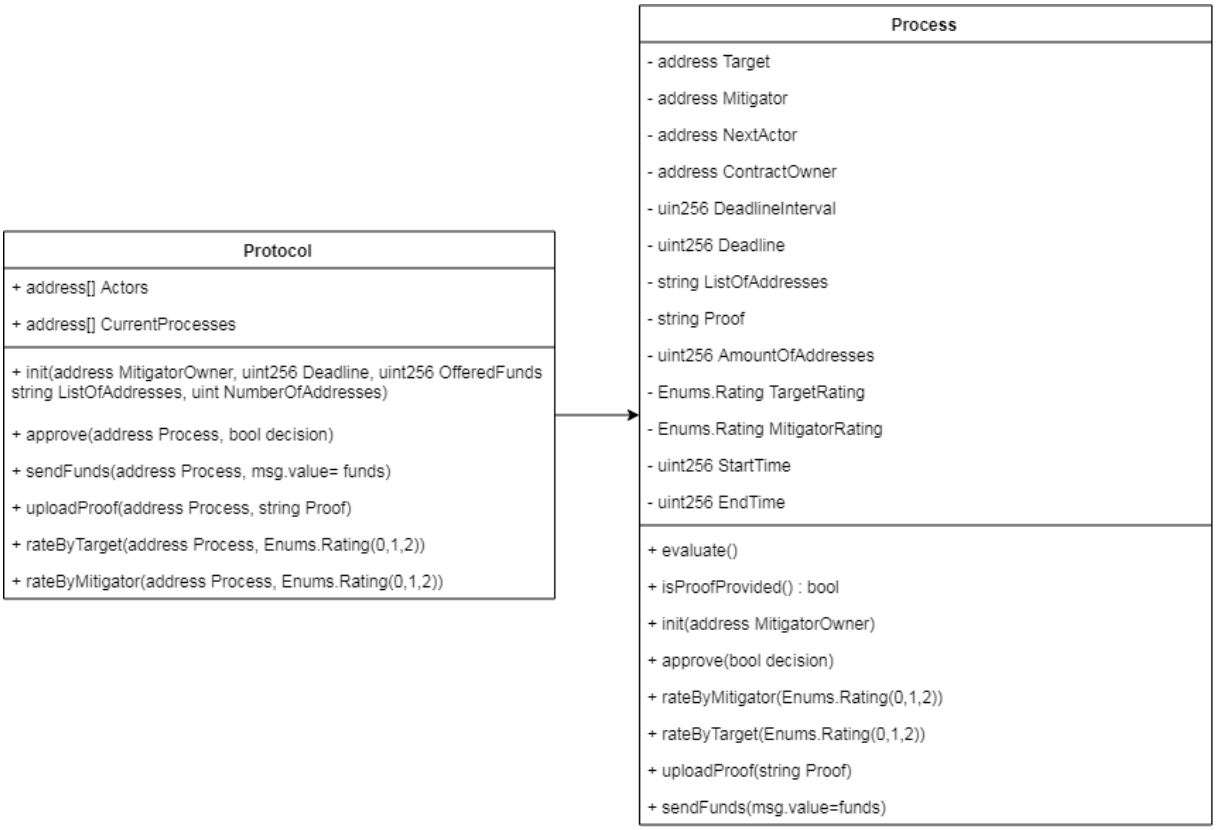

Figure 4.1: Architecture of the first prototype

was extended by the desired features and continued parallel to the development of the model with the State Pattern. It is further described in section 4.3. The writer believes that this will enable him to draw conclusions about whether it is even suitable to integrate a more complex architecture into a Smart Contract.

4.2 Implementation With State Pattern

Due to the existence of individual states, at first glance the state pattern (combined with a factory) appeared to be suitable in cooperation with strategy pattern for evaluation. The planned design is shown in Fig 4.2. In this approach, a user first has to register as an actor and tell what price he charges per address and what his network is called. The user can then trigger actions via the interface provided by Protocol.sol. An account can only be registered once as an actor and must first be deleted and recreated if necessary. However, this is only possible if the Actor is not involved in an active process. If an authorized user now submits a request, it is forwarded to the corresponding state object, which interprets the call differently according to the state action. If everything goes according to plan, the process will finally fall into the Evaluation State at the end of a path, from where it will calculate who will receive a reward and what final status will be set, and from there into the Abort, Complete or Escalate states. The design consists of the following elements:

- **Protocol** Is the interface for the clients. It handles the registration of actors and manages the progress of the process. It serves as a facade for the underlying structure
- **Process** Contains the address of the current state and the address of the data object. It is concerned with calling the execution function on state objects and the instantiation of new ones.
- **Actor** Contains user related data like the price per unit or networkname. It as well contains the owners address.
- **StateFactory** Is used to create new state objects, has a crucial role, which is explained in the next chapter.
- **IState** Is the interface of the States, provides four different execute methods because Solidity does not yet have generics.
- **Init** Example of a concrete implementation of a state, contains all the logic of a state.
- **EvaluationFactory** Is used to create new evaluation objects, has a crucial role, which is explained in the next chapter.
- **IEvaluation** Is the interface for evaluation strategies
- **EvaluationWithProof** Example of a concrete implementation of a strategy, returns the address to be payed and the new state that has to be set.

4.3 Refined First Prototype

This approach was based on a lean architecture without forgetting the problems of the first prototype. Therefore it was decided to use a factory for the evaluation algorithm in combination with the strategy pattern (guarantees a certain degree of flexibility). In addition, as with the state pattern approach, an actor contract was used to set the price per unit and the network name. However, since the state pattern is not used in this approach, the individual states were handled using Enumerations. This has the consequence that adaptations become somewhat more cumbersome and complicated. The design as pictured in fig. 4.3 consists of the following elements:

- **Protocol** Is the interface for the clients. It handles the registration of actors and manages the progress of the process. Is is also able to skip a state, when the deadline is exceeded.
- **Process** Contains the actual state and data of a process that has been started by the protocol. In all methods it is assured that only the owning contract (protocol) can set new values. This was introduced to prevent a user from instantiating an existing process and change values without using the provided interface.

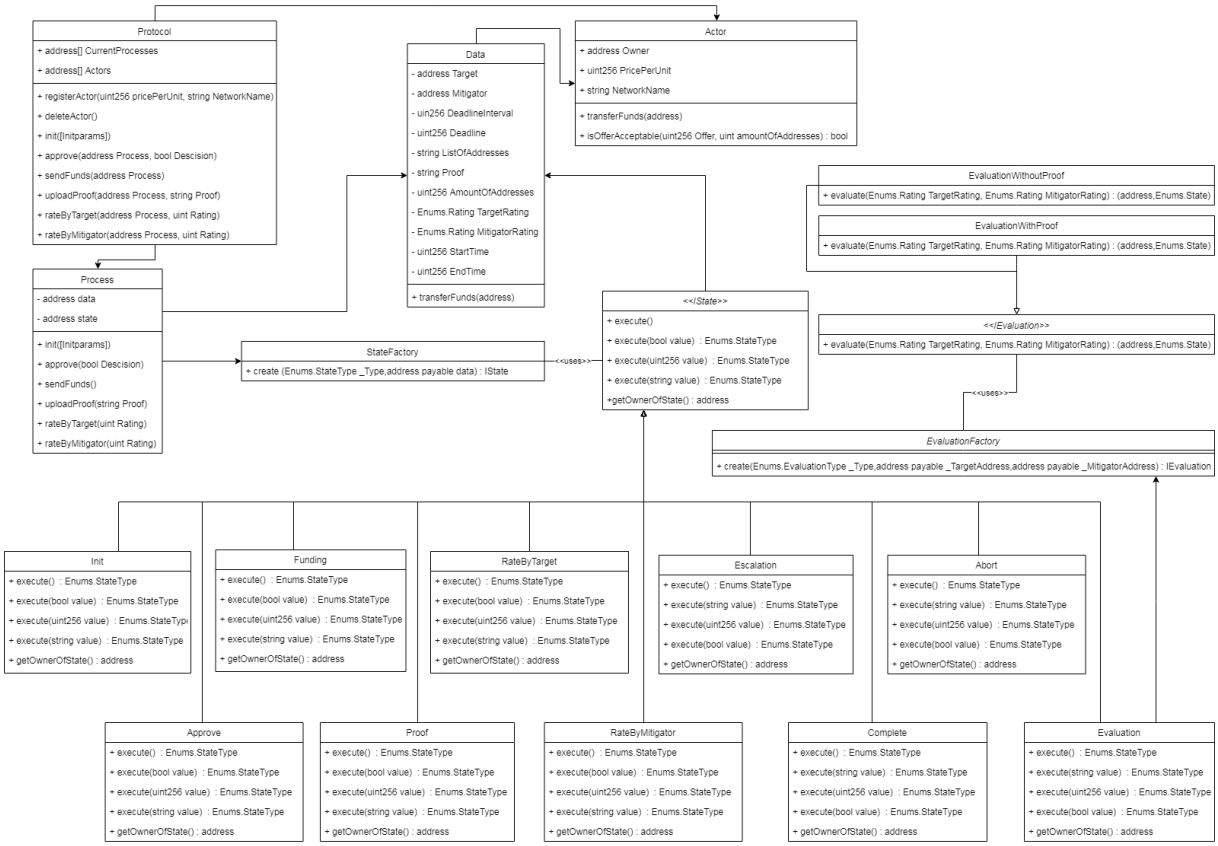

Figure 4.2: Architecture of the implementation with State Pattern

- **Actor** Contains user related data like the price per unit or networkname. It as well contains the owners address.
- **EvaluationFactory** Is responsible for creating concrete evaluation objects.
- **IEvaluation** Is the interface for evaluation strategies.
- **EvaluationWithProof** Example of a concrete strategy, returns the address to be payed and the new state that has to be set.

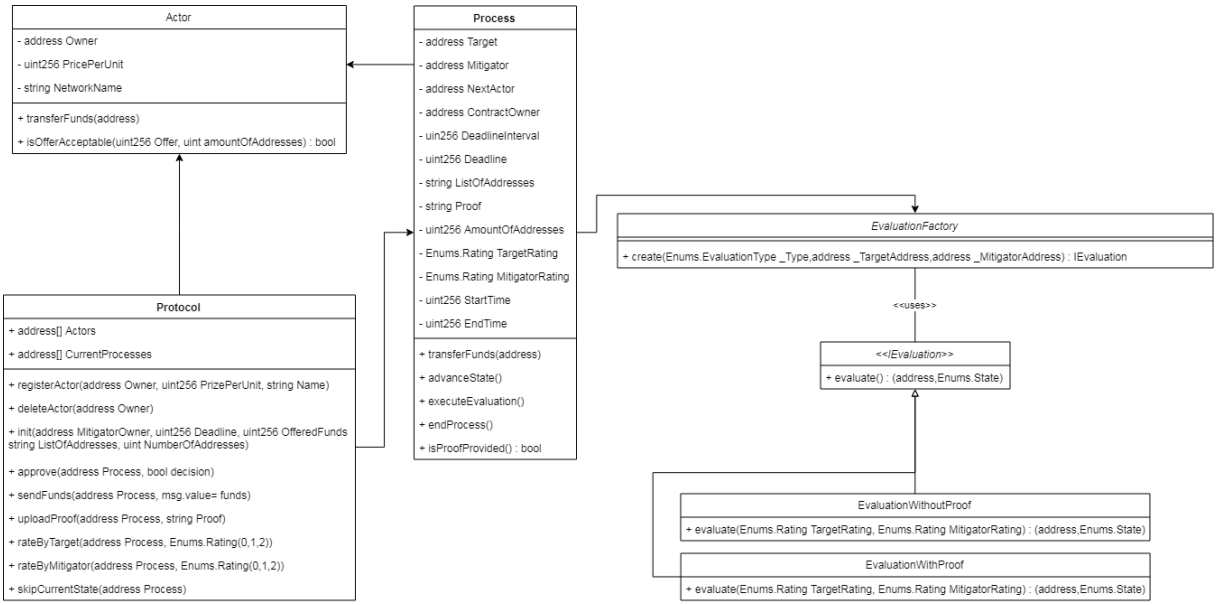

Figure 4.3: Architecture of the *simple* approach

Chapter 5

Implementation

The implementation of the Cooperative Signaling Protocol prototype in this paper can basically be divided into four steps that led to the current final state. These are explained in more detail in the following sub-sections and it is explained how each step has made an important contribution to the overall understanding of the problem.

5.1 First Prototype - Basic Understanding

The first and most important step was certainly to understand the basic functioning of Solidity and Smart Contracts. In our own experience, a certain level of knowledge is reached after a short time in order to be able to make the first steps with Solidity.

Nevertheless the beginning with Truffle turned out to be a bit difficult, because the official examples published on the internet did not work on various machines and operating systems due to a missing library [5]. Therefore it was decided to use the online IDE Remix [6] for the first time and to test the first prototype there. This worked pretty well in the beginning and the first prototype could be created in a relatively short time. The architecture was as simple as described in section 4.1. This meant that the individual states were handled as enumerations and all operations that changed the state were handled in the process contract itself. This had the consequence that the structure looked extremely simple from the outside, but was internally complicated and not comprehensible, since each method could make any changes to variables and thus side effects could occur. Furthermore, the evaluation of the final state was not externalized but also stored in the process contract, which in turn inflated the contract considerably and made it illegible. Not to mention the difficulties of possible changes to the algorithm. After a first consultation with the supervisor Bruno Rodrigues, some shortcomings of the approach turned out and the writer went back to the planning phase to work out a second approach.

5.2 State Pattern Sounds Very Reasonable

The second approach aimed at ensuring an expandable structure. The existence of different stages in which the process can be located meant that a state pattern was already implicit. Furthermore, care was taken to separate the individual evaluation algorithms (with and without proof) and to load them by a strategy pattern. The first implementation with the state pattern was unfortunately not successful, since the byte code always exceeded the maximum size of 24 Kb due to the Inheritance used with the states. The individual states should inherit from an abstract contract, which already offered them a basic implementation of the execute methods and the execution permission. In addition, the instance variables and the constructors were already predefined. This is illustrated in fig 5.1. Consequently, the process had to embed all states via import, which in turn meant that the bytecode of the process contract was always extended by the byte code of the states (which inherited from the abstract state). In the end, this resulted in a byte code that was too long for the entire contract, which ended in an OutOfGas exception. In addition, the evaluation algorithms were also defined as abstract contracts, which represented the same problem and inflated the bytecode of the process contract again. But what exactly is this bytecode and why is it so crucial? To run Smart Contracts you need the Ethereum Virtual Machine, which is a runtime environment. This virtual machine does not work directly with the solidity code, but with the compiled bytecode. The bytecode itself is a set of instructions for the virtual machine based on a strict technical specification.

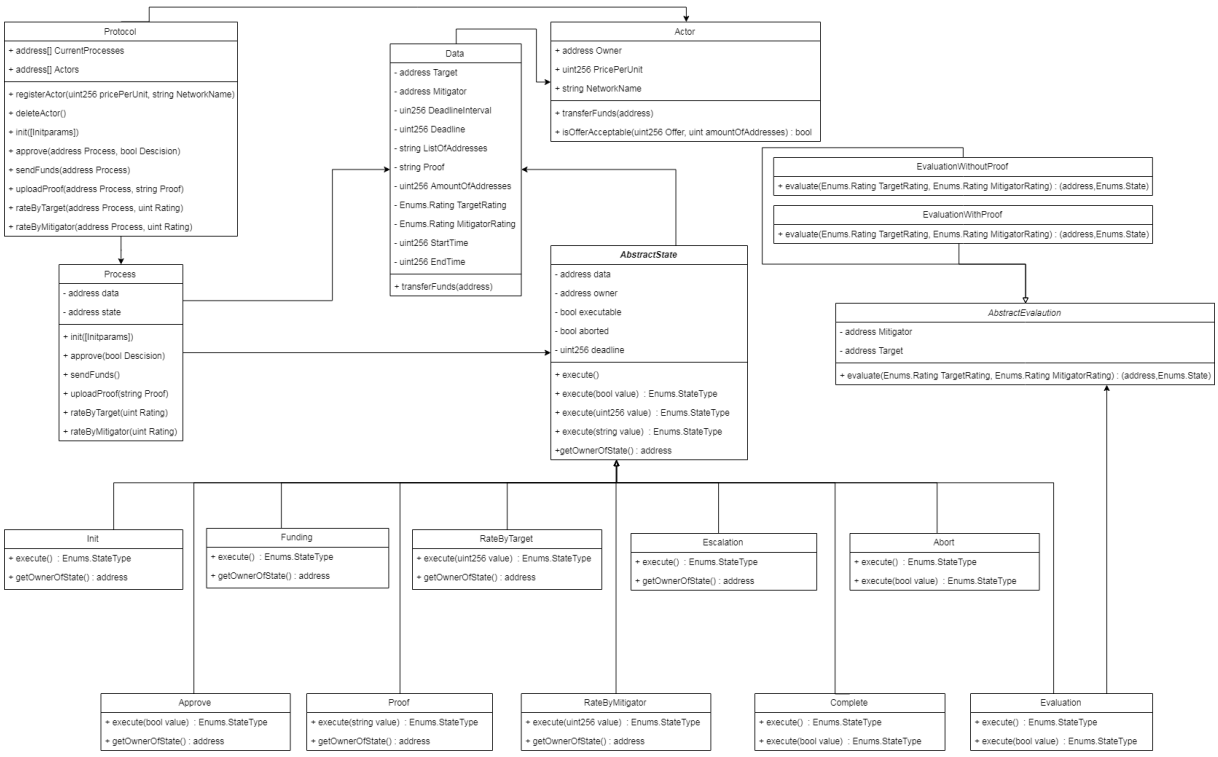

Figure 5.1: Architecture of the first try with a state pattern

After some time and pondering, the writer decided to further develop the first prototype

and to continue with it, because the state pattern approach, with its complexity and the understanding of the matter of the writer at that time, did not allow for any progress. The next development steps with the first, simpler prototype are explained in more detail in the following section.

5.3 Simplicity is Key

The continuation of the old approach first required a takeover of the implementation of the Actor contract and the associated adjustment of the entire chain of dependencies, which until then had only been carried out via the account address. Subsequently, the evaluation was extracted from the process and stored in separate contracts. To guarantee a certain level of flexibility, the strategy pattern was used again, that allows for dynamic exchange of algorithms at runtime. Still the strategies were implemented as contracts, and the Evaluation was still an abstract contract, which again bloated up the bytecode unnecessarily. Still, the byte code of the contract could be reduced in size overall, making it deployable compared to the initial state pattern approach. In spite of all these changes, the whole construct remained a bit messy, since almost all logic (except for the evaluation) was still represented in the process itself. Together with the single getters and setters this led to a big and confusing contract.

5.4 Surrendering is Not an Option

After reading some posts in forums and blogs, the writer found the article [4], which described various opportunities to reduce the bytecode size with some techniques. New hope arose that the elaborated solution is still feasible.

Probably the most important one mentioned is the externalization of code in libraries. This is especially helpful for factories as it allows the instantiation of contracts to be outsourced. Libraries have the advantage that they are deployed only once on the blockchain and thus represent a kind of singleton. As a limited factor it can be mentioned that libraries cannot receive ethers and do not have their own storage. But in our case this does not matter for the factories.

Furthermore the implementation of interfaces was recommended, especially in combination with libraries and the factories. So an object with the interface type can be returned from the factory, which decouples the single components even more from each other. Or as it was written [4] :"An Interface is a special type of contract, limited to what the Contract Application Binary Interface (ABI) can represent." This means that it is only possible to describe the function signature in the interface, but no implementation. This enhances the readability of the code, and the return value can still be guaranteed. The ABI can basically be defined as how to communicate with a smart contract. It defines how to call its functions and how to get data back.

Finally, the protocol was set up as described in section 4.2. The following sections show the implementation of the StateFactory, as well as a state, and how they interact. What finally happens in the process is illustrated in Listing 5.1. A simple call to the function is enough to get the new status and generate the new state with it. To shorten the code sections a bit, the entire listing of contracts in the StateFactory was omitted and only the Proof and Target Rating State was listed instead. The state code has also been shortened a bit. This means that e.g. the instance variables and the constructor have been omitted. The constructor simply sets the owner, the data object and the next deadline.

```
function uploadProof(string memory value) public{
    require(currentState==Enums.StateType.PROOF,"State is not correct");
    currentState = State.execute(value);
  State =StateFactory.create(currentState,address(Data));
}
```

Listing 5.1: ProcessCallState

```
import "./Enums.sol";
import "./IState.sol";
import "./StateProof.sol";
import "./StateRatingByTarget.sol";


library StateFactory{

    function create(Enums.StateType _Type,address payable data)
    public
  returns (IState){

    if(_Type == Enums.StateType.PROOF){
      return new StateProof(data);
    }else if(_Type == Enums.StateType.RATE_T){
      return new StateRatingByTarget(data);
    }else{
      revert("Type not in StateFactory");
    }
  }
}
```

Listing 5.2: StateFactory

```
contract StateProof is IState{

  function execute(bool /*value*/) external returns(Enums.StateType) {
     revert("Not implemented");}
  function execute(uint256 /*value*/) external returns(Enums.StateType)
     {revert("Not implemented");}

  function execute() external returns(Enums.StateType) {
    require(executable,"Process not executable");
    if(canBeSkipped()){
      executable=false;
      return Enums.StateType.RATE_T;
    }else{
      require(owner == tx.origin,"Error owner != tx.origin");
    }
    executable=false;
    return Enums.StateType.RATE_T;
  }

  function execute(string calldata value) external returns(Enums.
     StateType){
        require(executable,"Process not executable");
    if(canBeSkipped()){
      executable=false;
      return Enums.StateType.RATE_T;
    }else{
      require(owner == tx.origin,"Error owner != tx.origin");
    }
        IData(data).setProof(value);
        executable=false;
        return Enums.StateType.RATE_T;
    }

  function canBeSkipped() private view returns(bool){
    if(now>deadline){return true;}
    return false;
  }

  function abort() public returns(Enums.StateType){
    require(owner == tx.origin,"Error owner != tx.origin");
    aborted=true;
    executable = false;
        return Enums.StateType.RATE_T;
    }

    function getOwnerOfState() external view returns(address payable){
        return owner;
    }

    function getStateType() external view returns(Enums.StateType){
        return Enums.StateType.PROOF;
    }
}
```

Listing 5.3: ConcreteState

5.5 Disillusionment spreads

After the implementation of the contract with the state pattern according to all rules of object-oriented programming, the writer realized that this approach is probably not intended for the Blockchain and that the key to success might be simplicity. This sudden realization came from the fact that deployment was very expensive and therefore probably unsuitable for possible requests. Although it provided a very high maintainability it seemed that this is not the keypoint of this contract. So a new contract was designed that really only provides the minimal functions and doesn't outsource anything. In this case, all actions are now controlled by a single contract, which is recreated for each request. The architecture of the contract is shown in fig. 5.2. This contract is an even more simplified version of the first prototype, which attempts to handle all operations through a single contract.

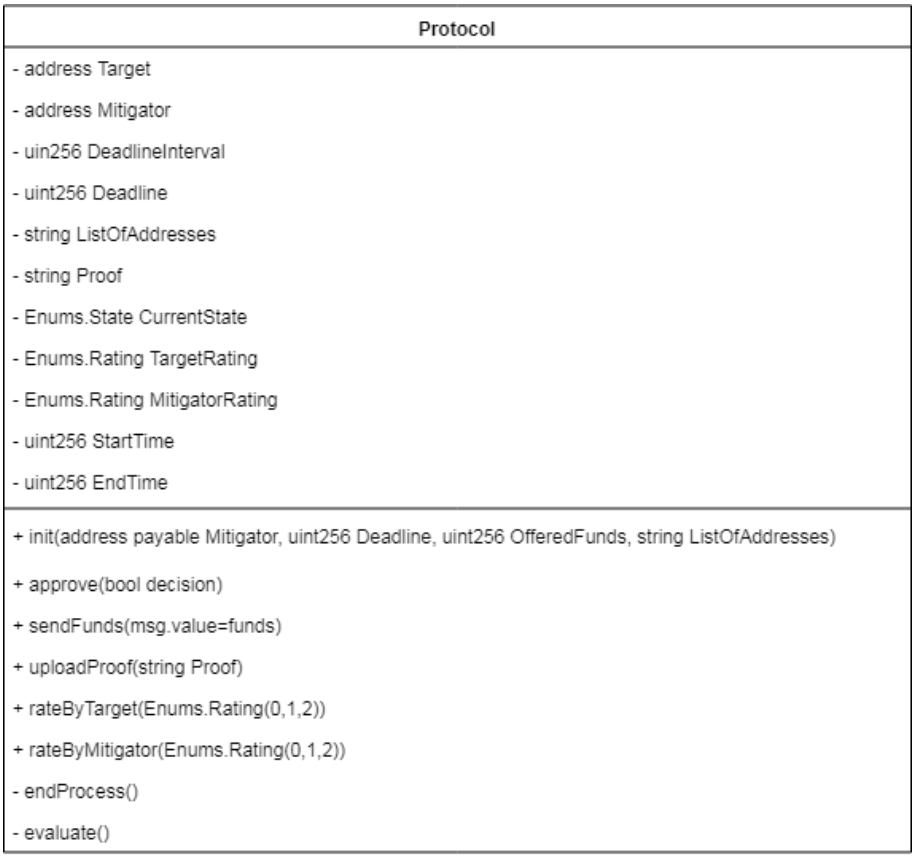

Figure 5.2: Slim Approach

Last but not least it was of course impossible to test all implementation of the contract extensively. This will be explained in more detail in the next chapter, the evaluation. In addition, the performance and efficiency of the contract will be examined in more detail.

Chapter 6

Evaluation

The main purpose of the evaluation was to check the correctness, performance and efficiency of the contracts. In order to achieve these goals, detailed test cases were first written and then the speed of execution and the cost of deploying the contract were examined.

6.1 Testing

As with the implementation, testing turned out to be an incremental learning process. As already mentioned, the development environment was originally switched from Truffle to Remix, since an error occurs on various machines and operating systems during the initial testing of the Truffle sample application itself. The first steps with smart contracts were then taken in Remix and first experiences were gained. With the increasing size of the contracts and the possibility of auto compilation, the browser became more and more slow and it was only possible to work if this option and some syntax checks were disabled in the settings. When it went to testing for the first time, a first damper occurred. Since the contract is supposed to represent the interaction of two actors, there must of course also be the possibility to simulate the sending of requests from different accounts in the tests. This is however not possible with pure Solidity code, but needs Javascripts.

Since Truffle provides a quite pleasant possibility to write tests for Smart Contracts with the Mocha Framework, the writer decided to give Truffle another chance.

In listing. 6.1 is an example of such a test. Since Truffle has no way of finding out which contracts need to interact in the test, a usable contract abstraction must be requested using the artifacts.require(") function. A speciality of the truffle tests compared to the normal Mocha is the contract() function, because it has a clean room feature, i.e. the contract is always deployed anew during execution. Then the test starts, the addresses are assigned to the mitigator and the target and the protocol is instantiated together with the initialization of the process. Finally, the actual tests can be carried out via assert statements.

```
var Protocol = artifacts.require("./Protocol.sol");
let catchRevert = require("./exceptions.js").catchRevert;

contract("Full Run Test", async function(accounts) {

    var TargetOwner = accounts[0];
  var MitigatorOwner = accounts[1];
  var ListOfAddresses = "Network1,Network2";
  var instance;

  it("Instantiation", async function() {

    instance = await Protocol.new();

    await instance.init(MitigatorOwner,120,await web3.utils.toWei('2.0',
        "ether"),ListOfAddresses, {from: TargetOwner});

    assert.equal(await instance.getCurrentState(), 1, "State is wrong");
    assert.equal(await instance.getListOfAddresses(), ListOfAddresses, "
       List of addresses is wrong");
    });
});
```

Listing 6.1: Test With Mocha

Since the function can be reverted in Solidity, if certain conditions are not fulfilled, this must also be validated in tests. However, since the tests normally fail if they are reverted, a remedy had to be found. An entry in the Ethereum forum of Stackexchange [8] helped by sharing a script that captures the errors and, depending on whether they are expected or not, no longer throws any errors. This very useful script is shown in listing 6.2. You can choose between different error messages that are expected (e.g. a captured revert, an OutOfGas exception or a wrong sender).

```
const PREFIX = "Returned error: VM Exception while processing
   transaction: ";

async function tryCatch(promise, message) {
    try {
        await promise;
        throw null;
    }
    catch (error) {
        assert(error, "Expected an error but did not get one");
        assert(error.message.startsWith(PREFIX + message), "Expected an
           error starting with '" + PREFIX + message + "' but got '" +
           error.message + "' instead");
    }
};
module.exports = {
    catchRevert            : async function(promise) {await tryCatch(
       promise, "revert"             );},
    catchOutOfGas          : async function(promise) {await tryCatch(
       promise, "out of gas"         );},
  senderAccountNotRecognized : async function(promise) {await tryCatch(
     promise, "sender account not recognized");},
```

```
17 };
```

Listing 6.2: Catch a revert, based on various causes

6.2 Performance and Efficiency

First the Gas usage and the effective Ether needed to create the contracts were considered. Of course, it was clear that the more complex contracts would require more funding for deployment. However, the writer did not expect this to be so severe as shown in figure 6.1. Just splitting the contracts into different state objects (state pattern approach) increases the required amount of gas almost eight times and costs about seven times as much to create. The differences to the creation in the simple variant are approximately in the middle and need only about four times as much gas as the slim contract. The total costs in Ether are about 4.5 times as high. Nevertheless it has to be said that with the state pattern and the simple approach the libraries only have to be deployed once each time and so there might be a saving over a longer period of time.

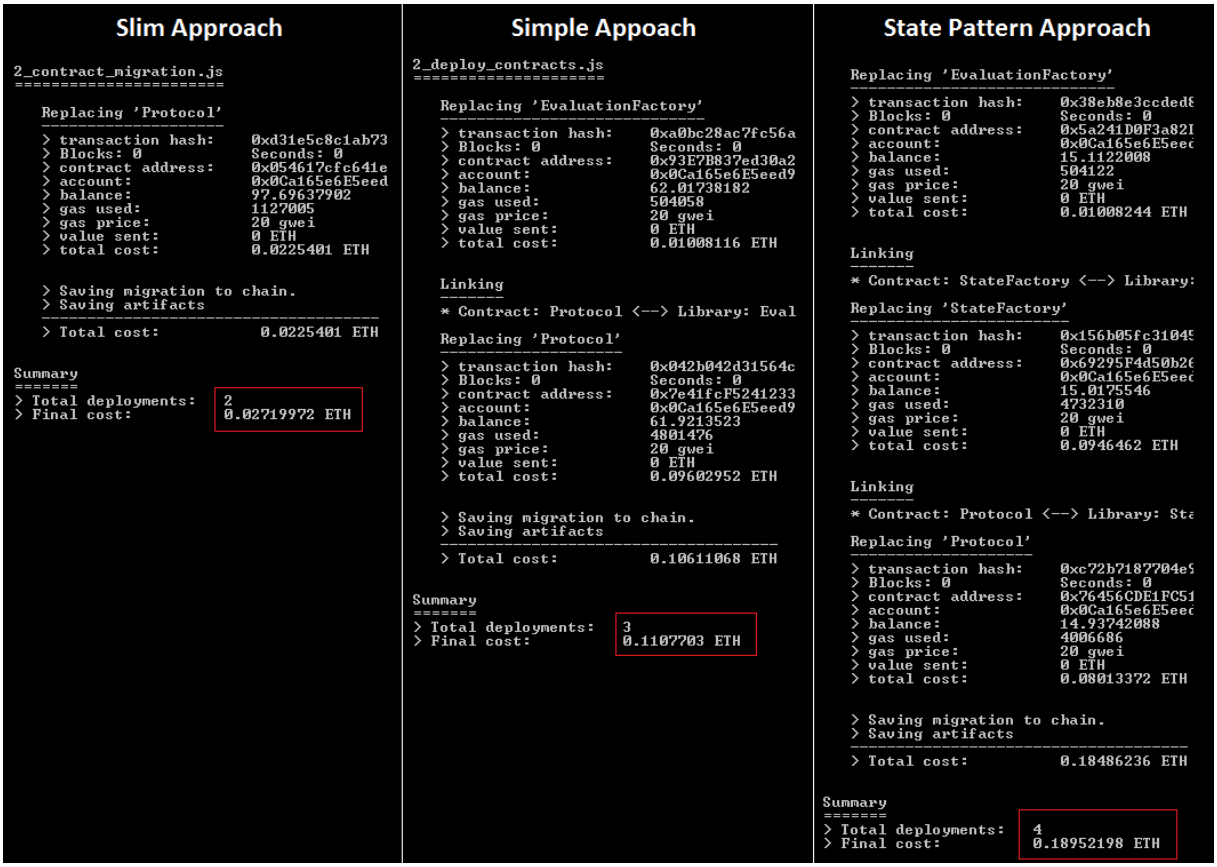

Figure 6.1: Overview of the costs and gas used to deploy the contract

Second, the effective duration needed to end the contract was looked at. The times of the test execution and the time it takes from the beginning of the process to the end were taken into account. The timestamps gathered are depicted in fig. 6.2.

The State Pattern and the Simple approach took about the same amount of time, but the first one ran a bit more efficiently. Again, the slim approach, which due to its simplicity had the least effort with the requests, was the fastest one.

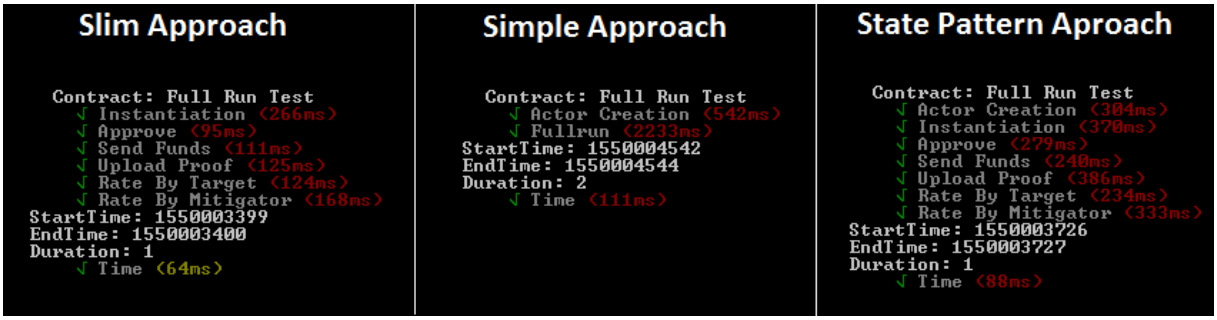

Figure 6.2: Overview of the time it took in each full run to complete

Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusions

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In all respects, it must be noted that from a cost perspective the slim approach is certainly the most promising option, as the others are relatively resource-intensive and may not be the best choice for the Blockchain. Nevertheless, the other options with the object-oriented approach certainly offer a certain advantage when it comes to maintenance issues, but it remains to be seen whether this additional effort will be worth it and whether the system becomes so complex that it really pays off.

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Abbreviations

ABI	Application Binary Interface

Glossary

ABI Application Binary Interface

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