DLVEX: Dealing with Semantic Web under Answer-Set Programming

Thomas Eiter, Giovambattista Ianni, Roman Schindlauer, and Hans Tompits
Institut für Informationssysteme, Technische Universität Wien,
Favoritenstraße 9–11, A-1040 Vienna, Austria
{eiter, ianni, roman, tompits}@kr.tuwien.ac.at

Abstract

We briefly present the first implementation of HEX programs, which are nonmonotonic logic programs admitting *higher-order atoms* as well as *external atoms*, as work in progress. Higher-order features are widely acknowledged as useful for various tasks, including meta-reasoning. Furthermore, the possibility to exchange knowledge with external sources in a fully declarative framework such as Answer-Set Programming (ASP) is nowadays important, in particular in view of applications in the Semantic-Web area. Through external atoms, HEX programs can deal with external knowledge and reasoners of various nature, such as RDF datasets or description logics bases.

1 Introduction

Nonmonotonic semantics is often requested by Semantic Web designers in cases where the reasoning capabilities of the *Ontology layer* of the Semantic Web turn out to be too limiting, since they are based on monotonic logics. The widely acknowledged answer-set semantics of nonmonotonic logic programs [Gelfond and Lifschitz, 1991], which gives rise to Answer Set Programming (ASP), is a here good candidate host for giving nonmonotonic semantics to the *Rules*, *Logic*, and *Proof* layers in the Semantic Web.

However, for important issues such as *meta-reasoning* in the context of the Semantic Web, no adequate answer-set engines have been available so far. Motivated by this fact and the observation that, furthermore, interoperability with other software is an important issue (not only in this context), [Eiter *et al.*, 2005] extended the answer-set semantics to HEX *programs*, which are *higher order* logic programs (which accommodate meta-reasoning through *higher-order atoms*) with *external atoms* for software interoperability. Intuitively, a *higher-order atom* allows to quantify values over predicate names, and to freely exchange predicate symbols with constant symbols, like in the rule

$$C(X) \leftarrow subClassOf(D, C), D(X).$$

An *external atom* facilitates to determine the truth value of an atom through an external source of computation. For instance, the rule

$$t(Sub, Pred, Obj) \leftarrow \&RDF[in](Sub, Pred, Obj), uri(in).$$

computes the predicate t taking values from the predicate $\&RDF$. This latter predicates extracts RDF statements from the set of URI specified by means of in; this task is delegated to an external computational source (e.g., an external deduction system, an execution library, etc.).

External atoms allow bidirectional flow of information to and from external sources of computation such as description logics reasoners.

By means of HEX programs, powerful meta-reasoning becomes available in a decidable setting, e.g., for Semantic Web applications; for meta-interpretation in ASP itself; or for defining policy languages.

For example, advanced closed world reasoning or the definition of constructs for an extended ontology language (e.g., of RDF-Schema) is well-supported. Due to the higher-order features, the representation is succinct. An experimental prototype implementation of the language is available, based on a reduction to ordinary ASP.

Other logic-based formalisms, like TRIPLE [Sintek and Decker, 2002] or F-Logic [Kifer *et al.*, 1995], feature also higher-order predicates for meta-reasoning in Semantic Web applications. Our formalism is fully declarative and offers the possibility of non-deterministic predicate definition with higher complexity, in a decidable setting. This proved already useful for a range of applications with inherent nondeterminism, such as ontology merging, or matchmaking, and thus provides a rich basis for integrating these areas with meta-reasoning.

2 HEX Programs

HEX programs are sets of rules of the form

$$\alpha_1 \vee \cdots \vee \alpha_k \leftarrow \beta_1, \ldots, \beta_n, not\, \beta_{n+1}, \ldots, not\, \beta_m, \quad (1)$$

where $m, k \geq 0$, $\alpha_1, \ldots, \alpha_k$ are *higher order atoms*, and $\beta_1, \ldots, \beta_m$ are either *higher order atoms* or *external atoms*. The operator "not" is *negation as failure* (aka *default negation*).

An *external atom* is of the form

$$\&g[Y_1, \ldots, Y_n](X_1, \ldots, X_m), \quad (2)$$

where $Y_1, \ldots, Y_n$ and $X_1, \ldots, X_m$ are two lists of terms (called *input* and *output* lists, respectively), and $\&g$ is an *external* predicate name.

A *higher-order atom* (or *atom*) is a tuple $Y_0(Y_1, \ldots, Y_n)$, where $Y_0, \ldots, Y_n$ are terms. It is possible to specify *molecules* of atoms in frame logic-like syntax. For instance, $gi[father \rightarrow X, Z \rightarrow iu]$ is a shortcut for the conjunction $father(gi, X), Z(gi, iu)$.

The semantics of HEX program is given by generalizing the answer-set semantics [Eiter *et al.*, 2005]. Notice that answer-set semantics may yield no, one, or multiple models (i.e., answer sets) in general. Therefore, for query answering *brave* and *cautious reasoning* (truth in some resp. all models) is thus considered in practice, depending on the application.

3 Current Prototype

An experimental working prototype for evaluating HEX programs is available and accessible at the webpage `http://www.kr.tuwien.ac.at/staff/roman/dlvex`. Its further development is work in progress. A wide class of HEX programs is already enabled to be evaluated, namely, positive programs (i.e., programs without negation as failure) with both external atoms and higher order atoms, and disjunctive non-stratified programs without external atoms. The current prototype relies on the systems DLT [Calimeri *et al.*, 2004] and DLV [Leone et al., 2005]. A framework for programming a variety of external atoms is under development. Currently, it features the $\&RDF$ atom, which interfaces the RAPTOR RDF library; the $\&DL$ atom, already available in the companion system NLP-DL [Eiter *et al.*, 2005] will enable DLVEX to access the RACER reasoner [Haarslev and Möller, 2001].

4 Applications

HEX programs are well-suited as a convenient tool for a variety of tasks related to ontology languages and for Semantic-Web applications in general, since, in contrast to other approaches, they keep decidability but do not lack the possibility of exploiting nondeterminism, performing meta-reasoning, or encoding aggregates and sophisticated constructs through external atoms. An interesting application scenario where several features of HEX programs come into play is *ontology alignment*. Merging knowledge from different sources in the context of the Semantic Web is a very important task [Calvanese *et al.*, 2001].

In order to perform ontology alignment, HEX programs allow to express tasks such as the following ones:

• *Importing* external theories, such as in the following way:

$$\begin{aligned} tripleY(X,Z) &\leftarrow \&RDF[uri](X,Y,Z);\\ tripleY(X,Z) &\leftarrow \&RDF[uri2](X,Y,Z);\\ proposition(P) &\leftarrow triple(P, rdf{:}type, rdf{:}Statement). \end{aligned}$$

• *Searching* in the space of assertions, in order to choose nondeterministically which propositions have to be included in the merged theory and which not, with statements like

$$pick(P) \vee drop(P) \leftarrow proposition(P).$$

• *Translating and manipulating* reified assertions. For instance, it is possible to choose how to put RDF triples (possibly including OWL assertions) in an easier manipulable and readable format, and to make selected propositions true such as in the following way:

$$\begin{aligned} (X,Y,Z) \leftarrow pick(P), & \; triple(P, rdf{:}subject, X),\\ & \; triple(P, rdf{:}predicate, Y),\\ & \; triple(P, rdf{:}object, Z);\\ C(X) \leftarrow (X, rdf{:}type, C). & \end{aligned}$$

• *Defining* ontology semantics. The semantics of the ontology language at hand can be defined in terms of entailment rules and constraints expressed in the language itself or in terms of external knowledge, like in:

$$\begin{aligned} D(X) &\leftarrow subClassof(D,C), C(X).\\ &\leftarrow \&inconsistent[pick]. \end{aligned}$$

where the external predicate $\&inconsistent$ takes for input a set of assertions and establishes through an external reasoner whether the underlying theory is inconsistent.

• *Performing Closed World Assumption (CWA) and default reasoning* in a controlled way; Assuming that a generic external atom $\&DL[C](X)$ is available for querying the concept C in a given description logics base, the CWA principle can be stated as follows:

$$C'(X) \leftarrow not\ \&DL[C](X), concept(C), cwa(C, C')$$

where $concept(C)$ is a predicate which holds for all concepts, and $cwa(C, C')$ states that C' is the CWA of C.

Inconsistency of the CWA can be checked by pushing back inferred values to the external knowledge base:

$$\begin{aligned} set\_false(C,X) &\leftarrow cwa(C,C'), C'(X).\\ inconsistent &\leftarrow \&DL1[set\_false](b). \end{aligned}$$

where $\&DL1[N](X)$ effects a check whether a knowledge base, augmented with all negated facts $\neg c(a)$ such $N(c,a)$ holds, entails the empty concept $\perp$. (entailment of $\perp(b)$, for any constant b, is tantamount to inconsistency).

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