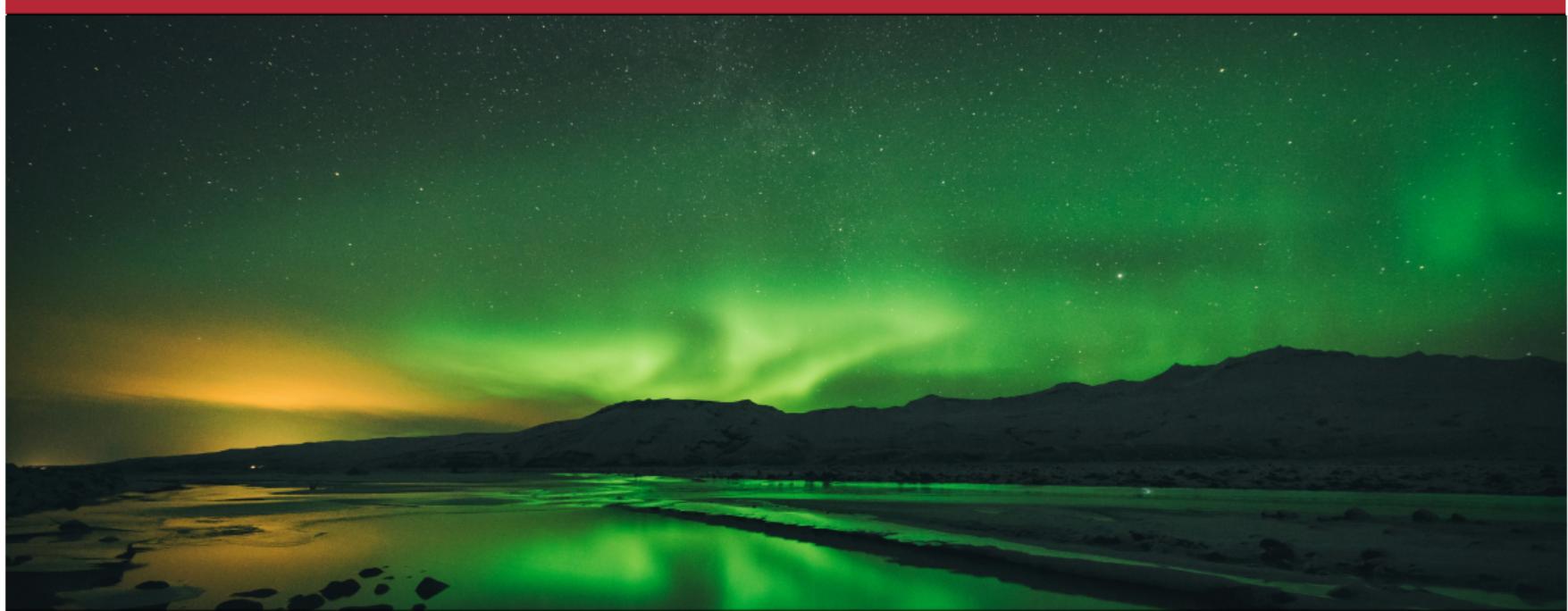


A Sequent Calculus For Trace Formula Implication

Niklas Heidler

Joint Work with Reiner Hähnle



- **Trace formulas** are a novel logic that
 - specifies **whole sets of program traces**
 - can even specify recursive traces using **fixpoint operations**
 - allows the specification of
 - precisely all traces of simple imperative programs
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 - precisely all traces of simple imperative programs
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- Verification if a program **satisfies** a trace formula requires trace formula **weakening**
- **Main Contribution:** Calculus for Trace Formula Implication

Connection Between Programs and Formulas

by Gurov & Hähnle, FSCD, 2025



For every Rec program P , there exists a **strongest trace formula** that specifies **precisely** the traces generated by P .



A **Rec Program** is a tuple (S, T) using **global variables only**, where

- S is a statement generated by

$$S ::= \text{skip} \mid x := a \mid S; S \mid \text{if } b \text{ then } S \text{ else } S \mid m()$$

- T is a sequence of parameter-less methods $m\{S\}$ consisting of name m and body S

Example

$$S_d := \text{down}() \text{ with } T_d := \text{down} \{ \text{if } x = 0 \text{ then skip else } x := x - 1; \text{down}() \}$$



Trace Formulas are a finite trace specification logic generated by

$$\Phi ::= p$$

- A **unary predicate p** semantically maps to all finite traces which satisfy p in its initial state:

$$[p]_{\mathbb{V}} = \{s \cdot \sigma \mid s \models p \wedge \sigma \in \text{State}^*\}$$

Example

$x = 0$ specifies all traces satisfying $x = 0$ in its first state.

Trace Formulas are a finite trace specification logic generated by

$$\Phi ::= p \mid R$$

- A **binary relation** R semantically maps to all binary traces included in R :

$$[R]_{\mathbb{V}} = \{s \cdot s' \mid R(s, s')\}$$

Common Relations

Id (Identity) and **Sb_x^a** (Update) are common relations:

$$(s, s') \in \mathbf{Id} \iff s = s' \quad (s, s') \in \mathbf{Sb}_x^a \iff s' = s[x \mapsto \text{eval}_s(a)]$$

Trace Formulas are a finite trace specification logic generated by

$$\Phi ::= p \mid R \mid \Phi \wedge \Phi \mid \Phi \vee \Phi$$

- **Conjunctions/Disjunctions** map to the intersection/union of the composite specified traces:

$$[\![\Phi_1 \wedge \Phi_2]\!]_{\mathbb{V}} = [\![\Phi_1]\!]_{\mathbb{V}} \cap [\![\Phi_2]\!]_{\mathbb{V}}$$

$$[\![\Phi_1 \vee \Phi_2]\!]_{\mathbb{V}} = [\![\Phi_1]\!]_{\mathbb{V}} \cup [\![\Phi_2]\!]_{\mathbb{V}}$$

Example

x = 0 \wedge **Id** is a trace formula specifying all traces of length 2 with **x = 0** in both states.

Trace Formulas

Chops



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Trace Formulas are a finite trace specification logic generated by

$$\Phi ::= p \mid R \mid \Phi \wedge \Phi \mid \Phi \vee \Phi \mid \Phi \frown \Phi$$

- The **chop** joins the traces of two trace formulas sequentially:

$$[\![\Phi_1 \frown \Phi_2]\!]_{\mathbb{V}} = \{\sigma_1 \cdot s \cdot \sigma_2 \in P(\text{State}^+) \mid \sigma_1 \cdot s \in [\![\Phi_1]\!]_{\mathbb{V}} \wedge s \cdot \sigma_2 \in [\![\Phi_2]\!]_{\mathbb{V}}\}$$

- Originates from Temporal Interval Logic

Example

Id \frown **Id** is a trace formula specifying all unchanging traces of length 3.

Trace Formulas are a finite trace specification logic generated by

$$\Phi ::= p \mid R \mid \Phi \wedge \Phi \mid \Phi \vee \Phi \mid \Phi \cap \Phi \mid X \mid \mu X. \Phi$$

- The **free recursive variable X** maps according to valuation $\mathbb{V} : RVar \rightarrow P(State^+)$
- The **fixpoint operator** maps to the least fixpoint of Φ , i.e. its minimal recursive traces:

$$[\![\mu X. \Phi]\!]_{\mathbb{V}} = \bigcap \{\gamma \subseteq State^+ \mid [\![\Phi]\!]_{\mathbb{V}[X \mapsto \gamma]} \subseteq \gamma\}$$

Example

$\mu X. (R \vee R \cap X)$ is a trace formula modeling the transitive closure of relation R .

Trace Formulas

Fixpoint Operator: Demonstration



$$[\![\mu X.\Phi]\!]_{\mathbb{V}} = \bigcap \{\gamma \subseteq \text{State}^+ \mid [\![\Phi]\!]_{\mathbb{V}[x \mapsto \gamma]} \subseteq \gamma\}$$

$[\![\mu X.(\mathbf{Sb}_y^{y+1} \vee \mathbf{Sb}_y^{y+1} \frown X)]!]_{\mathbb{V}}$ specifies the following traces:

- $([y \mapsto 5], [y \mapsto 6])$
- $([y \mapsto 4], [y \mapsto 5], [y \mapsto 6])$
- $([y \mapsto 3], [y \mapsto 4], [y \mapsto 5], [y \mapsto 6])$
- $([y \mapsto 0], [y \mapsto 1], \dots, [y \mapsto 2024], [y \mapsto 2025])$
- and many more...



Note that \mathbb{V} is irrelevant, as the formula is closed.

Unique Characteristics of Trace Formulas



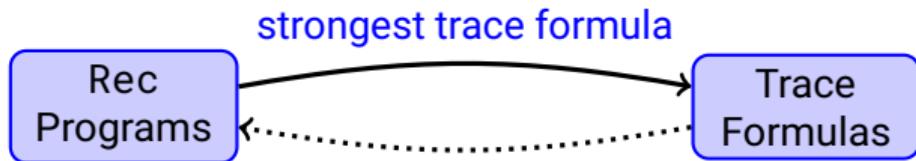
The most important characteristics of trace formulas are the support of

1. the **chop-operator** $\Phi_1 \frown \Phi_2$
⇒ difference to μ -calculus
2. the **fixpoint-operator** $\mu X. \Phi$
⇒ modeling of recursive traces using fixpoints



Related logics typically go either

- without the chop, or
- without the fixpoint



Example

The **strongest trace formula** of S_{down} is $stf(S_{down})$:

$S_{down} := \text{down}() \text{ with } \text{down } \{ \text{ if } x = 0 \text{ then skip else } x := x - 1; \text{down}() \}$

$stf(S_{down}) := \text{Id} \cap \mu X_{down}. ((x = 0 \wedge \text{Id} \cap \text{Id}) \vee (x \neq 0 \wedge \text{Id} \cap Sb_x^{x-1} \cap \text{Id} \cap X_{down}))$

Strongest Trace Formulas: Main Theorem

by Gurov & Hähnle, FSCD, 2025



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A program S **satisfies** a closed trace formula Φ iff $\text{traces}(S) \subseteq \llbracket \Phi \rrbracket$.

$$\text{traces}(S) \subseteq \llbracket \Phi \rrbracket$$

iff

$$\text{stf}(S) \models \Phi$$

S **satisfies** (abstract) property Φ

$\text{stf}(S)$ **implies** (abstract) property Φ

!

Reduction to **Trace Formula Implication Problem**.

Main Contribution: Calculus for Trace Formula Implication

Sequents

First Idea of a Sequent Definition



- Shape of a **sequent**:

$$\Gamma \vdash \Delta$$

Γ and Δ sets of *arbitrary trace formulas*

- A sequent $\Gamma \vdash \Delta$ is called **valid** iff

$$\bigwedge \Gamma \vDash \bigvee \Delta$$

i.e. $[\![\bigwedge \Gamma]\!]_V \subseteq [\![\bigvee \Delta]\!]_V$ for any arbitrary valuation V



! Sequents are interpreted relative to current state.

- Current state information of antecedent Γ :

$$P_\Gamma := \{p \in \Gamma \mid p \in \text{Pred}\}$$

- The **predicate rule** infers additional information about the current state and adds it to the antecedent:

$$\text{PRED } \frac{\Gamma, \mathbf{q} \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta} \wedge P_\Gamma \rightarrow \mathbf{q}$$

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Example

$$\text{PRED } \frac{x > 0, x < 0, \mathbf{false} \vdash \Delta}{x > 0, x < 0 \vdash \Delta} \quad x > 0 \wedge x < 0 \rightarrow \mathbf{false}$$

Calculus Rules

Chop Rules: Identity (Simplified Variant)



- In the case of *Id*, the current state information P_Γ is **preserved**.

$$\text{CH-ID} \quad \frac{P_\Gamma, \textcolor{blue}{Id} \vdash \Psi \quad P_\Gamma, \Phi \vdash \Psi'}{\Gamma, \textcolor{blue}{Id} \widehat{\cap} \Phi \vdash \Psi \widehat{\cap} \Psi', \Delta}$$

- Information about Γ and Δ is lost in simplified variant.

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- Information about Γ and Δ is lost in simplified variant.

Example

$$\text{CH-ID} \frac{x = 0, \text{Id} \vdash \text{Id} \quad x = 0, \text{Id} \vdash \text{Id}}{x = 0, \text{Id}^\frown \text{Id} \vdash \text{Id}^\frown \text{Id}}$$

Calculus Rules

Chop Rules: Update (Simplified Variant)



- In case of Sb_x^a , the current state information P_Γ is modified to the **strongest postcondition**.

$$\text{CH-UPD} \frac{P_\Gamma, Sb_x^a \vdash \Psi \quad spc_{x:=a}(P_\Gamma), \Phi \vdash \Psi'}{\Gamma, Sb_x^a \cap \Phi \vdash \Psi \cap \Psi', \Delta}$$

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- Information about Γ and Δ is lost in simplified variant.

Example

$$\text{CH-UPD} \frac{x = 0, Sb_x^1 \vdash Sb_x^1 \quad x = 1, Id \vdash Id}{x = 0, Sb_x^1 \cap Id \vdash Sb_x^1 \cap Id}$$

Calculus Rules

Unfolding Rules



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- We can **unfold** fixpoint operators $\mu X. \Phi$ into the semantically equivalent formula $\Phi[\mu X. \Phi / X]$.
- **Unfolding rules** can unfold fixpoint formulas in the antecedent and succedent:

$$\text{UNFL} \quad \frac{\Gamma, \Phi[\mu X. \Phi / X] \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, \mu X. \Phi \vdash \Delta}$$

$$\text{UNFR} \quad \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Psi[\mu X. \Psi / X], \Delta}{\Gamma \vdash \mu X. \Psi, \Delta}$$

Calculus Rules

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Example

$$\text{UNFR} \quad \frac{\Gamma \vdash R \vee R \curvearrowright \mu X. (R \vee R \curvearrowright X)}{\Gamma \vdash \mu X. (R \vee R \curvearrowright X)}$$

The Problem with Unfoldings



Let us assume a sequent of the shape $\mu X_1. \Phi \vdash \mu X_2. \Psi$.

- Unfolding strategy of $\mu X_1. \Phi$ **not always applicable**, as the amount of needed unfolding steps can be very large or may even be unbounded.

Example (down cont.)

$$Sb_x^{10} \cap Id \cap \mu X_{down}. ((x = 0 \wedge Id \cap Id) \vee (x \neq 0 \wedge Id \cap Sb_x^{x-1} \cap Id \cap X_{down})) \vdash \Delta$$

\Rightarrow Unfolding strategy *possible*

$$Id \cap \mu X_{down}. ((x = 0 \wedge Id \cap Id) \vee (x \neq 0 \wedge Id \cap Sb_x^{x-1} \cap Id \cap X_{down})) \vdash \Delta$$

\Rightarrow Unfolding strategy *impossible*

Sequents

Adapted Sequent Definition



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■ **Objective:** Show $\mu X_1. \Phi \vdash \mu X_2. \Psi$

⇒ **Solution:** Create a **connection between the recursive variables** of both fixpoints.

Sequents

Adapted Sequent Definition



- **Objective:** Show $\mu X_1. \Phi \vdash \mu X_2. \Psi$

⇒ **Solution:** Create a **connection between the recursive variables** of both fixpoints.

- A **recursive variable assumption set** ξ is a set of tuples of the shape $(X_1|_{\text{Inv}}, X_2)$.
It is called **valid** in \mathbb{V} iff for all its tuples $(X_1|_{\text{Inv}}, X_2)$, it holds that

$$[X_1 \wedge \text{Inv}]_{\mathbb{V}} \subseteq [X_2]_{\mathbb{V}}$$

Sequents

Adapted Sequent Definition



- **Objective:** Show $\mu X_1. \Phi \vdash \mu X_2. \Psi$

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- Adapted shape of a **sequent**:

$$\xi \diamond \Gamma \vdash \Delta$$

Sequents

Adapted Sequent Definition



- **Objective:** Show $\mu X_1. \Phi \vdash \mu X_2. \Psi$
 \implies **Solution:** Create a **connection between the recursive variables** of both fixpoints.
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- Adapted shape of a **sequent**:

$$\xi \diamond \Gamma \vdash \Delta$$

- A sequent $\xi \diamond \Gamma \vdash \Delta$ is called **valid** iff

$$[\bigwedge \Gamma]_{\mathbb{V}} \subseteq [\bigvee \Delta]_{\mathbb{V}} \text{ for any arbitrary valuation } \mathbb{V} \text{ that is valid for } \xi$$

Calculus Rules

Fixpoint Induction Rule



- The **fixpoint induction rule** first establishes that the **invariant** holds in current state P_Γ and then shows that the **invariant** is preserved to all recursive calls:

$$\text{FPI} \quad \frac{P_\Gamma \vdash \text{Inv} \quad \xi, (X_1|_{\text{Inv}}, X_2) \diamond \text{Inv}, \Phi \vdash \Psi}{\xi \diamond \Gamma, \mu X_1. \Phi \vdash \mu X_2. \Psi, \Delta}$$

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Example

$$\text{FPI} \frac{x = 10 \vdash x > 0 \quad (X_1|_{x>0}, X_2) \diamond x > 0, Sb_x^{x+1} \vee Sb_x^{x+1} \cap X_1 \vdash R_{pos} \vee R_{pos} \cap X_2}{x = 10, \mu X_1. (Sb_x^{x+1} \vee Sb_x^{x+1} \cap X_1) \vdash \mu X_2. (R_{pos} \vee R_{pos} \cap X_2)}$$

Calculus Rules

Recursive Variable Rule



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- We then infer the trace inclusion between recursive variables based on ξ :

$$\text{RVAR } \frac{P_\Gamma \vdash \text{Inv}}{\xi, (\mathbf{X}_1|_{\text{Inv}}, \mathbf{X}_2) \diamond \Gamma, \mathbf{X}_1 \vdash \mathbf{X}_2, \Delta}$$

Calculus Rules

Recursive Variable Rule



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Example

$$\text{CH-UPD} \quad \frac{\vdots}{x > 0, Sb_x^{x+1} \vdash R_{pos}} \quad \text{RVAR} \quad \frac{x > 1 \vdash x > 0}{(\mathbf{X}_1|_{x>0}, \mathbf{X}_2) \diamond x > 1, \mathbf{X}_1 \vdash \mathbf{X}_2}$$
$$(\mathbf{X}_1|_{x>0}, \mathbf{X}_2) \diamond x > 0, Sb_x^{x+1} \cap \mathbf{X}_1 \vdash R_{pos} \cap \mathbf{X}_2$$

Incompleteness of the Calculus

Method Contracts



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So far, we can only handle **tail recursive** occurrences of recursive variables or fixpoint operations. We lack rules otherwise:

$$x = 10, X_1 \cap \Phi \vdash X_2 \cap \Psi$$

Incompleteness of the Calculus

Method Contracts

So far, we can only handle **tail recursive** occurrences of recursive variables or fixpoint operations. We lack rules otherwise:

$$x = \textcolor{red}{10}, X_1 \cap \Phi \vdash X_2 \cap \Psi$$

Solution: Method Contracts

- Employment of a rule that **proves** and a rule that **applies** a method contract.
- A method contract (**pre**, **post**) is *valid* for Φ in \mathbb{V} iff

$$\llbracket \bigwedge v_{\text{old}}^i = v^i \wedge \text{pre} \wedge \Phi \cap \text{true} \rrbracket_{\mathbb{V}} \subseteq \llbracket \Phi \cap \text{post} \rrbracket_{\mathbb{V}}$$

Incompleteness of the Calculus

Synchronization



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There are no rules that can perform fixpoint induction on a **mismatched shape** of recursive variables inside fixpoint formulas:

$$\mu X_1. (R \vee R \frown X_1) \vdash \mu X_2. (R \vee X_2 \frown R)$$

Incompleteness of the Calculus

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$$\mu X_1. (R \vee R^{\frown} X_1) \vdash \mu X_2. (R \vee X_2^{\frown} R)$$

Solution: Synchronization

- Employment of a rule for **synchronization** between recursive variables:

$$\mu X_2. (R \vee X_2^{\frown} R) \rightsquigarrow \mu X_2. (R \vee R^{\frown} X_2)$$

- **Chop formulas** are a subclass of trace formulas for fixed relation R and fixed recursive variable X generated by the following grammar:

$$\Phi ::= \Psi \mid \Psi \vee \Phi \text{ with } \Psi ::= R \mid X \mid \Psi \cap \Psi$$

- Each chop formula can be mapped onto a **context-free grammar**.

Example

$Id \cap Id \vee Id \cap X \cap Id$ is a chop formula with CFG production rule $X \rightarrow Id \, Id \mid Id \, X \, Id$

- The language specified by the context-free grammar must be **regular** (*Parikh's lemma*).
- Fixpoint (chop) formulas can be **reshaped** depending on their language:

$$\text{SYNC } \frac{\xi \diamond \Gamma \vdash \mu X. \Psi', \Delta}{\xi \diamond \Gamma \vdash \mu X. \Psi, \Delta} L(Gr(\Psi')) \subseteq L(Gr(\Psi))$$

Example

$$\text{SYNC } \frac{\mu X_1. (R \vee R^\frown X_1) \vdash \mu X_2. (R \vee R^\frown X_2)}{\mu X_1. (R \vee R^\frown X_1) \vdash \mu X_2. (R \vee X_2^\frown R)}$$

- **Trace formulas** can be used to
 - specify programs **precisely**
 - specify **abstract** trace properties
- The **sequent calculus** for trace formula implication proves that $stf(S) \models \Phi$ with
 - **fixpoint inductions** for symbolic derivations (formalized in **Isabelle**)
 - **method contracts** for state updates over calls
 - **synchronization** for synchronizing recursive variables for fixpoint inductions
- **Soundness** of the calculus
- Future Work: Resolve **Incompleteness** of the calculus

- Formalization of the calculus achieved in theorem prover Isabelle/HOL.
- Properties can be inferred by **manual** rule application or **semi-automatic** rule application.
⇒ Invariants for fixpoint formulas need to be **manually** provided.

```
lemma "[stf S_down] ⊢ [μ ``dec''. ((Rel R_x_dec) ∪ Rel R_x_dec ∩ RVar ``dec'')]"
  unfolding S_down_def
  apply simp
  apply tfi_auto
  apply lenr_prep_fpi
  apply (rule FPI; auto)
  apply tfi_auto .
```

Figure: Assume R_{x_dec} is a relation specifying that x **does not** increase.

Appendix: Calculus Rules

Relation Rules: Axiom



- Let relation R restricted on P_Γ be

$$R|_{P_\Gamma} := \{s \cdot s' \mid R(s, s') \wedge s \models \bigwedge P_\Gamma\}$$

- The **relation rule axiom** determines if the relation of the antecedent is included in the relation of the succedent:

$$\text{REL } \frac{}{\Gamma, R \vdash R', \Delta} R|_{P_\Gamma} \subseteq R'$$

Example

$$\text{REL } \frac{x > 0, Sb_x^{x+1} \vdash R_{\text{pos}}}{Sb_x^{x+1}|_{x>0} \subseteq R_{\text{pos}}}$$

Appendix: Calculus Rules

Lengthening Rules

- Let us define **repetitions** of a formula containing recursive variables:

$$\text{repeat}_0(\Phi) := \Phi \text{ and } \text{repeat}_i(\Phi) := \Phi[\text{repeat}_{i-1}(\Phi)/X] \text{ for } i \geq 1,$$

- We can use **lengthening rules** to *internally lengthen* the fixpoint formulas:

$$\text{LENL} \quad \frac{\Gamma, \mu X. \text{repeat}_i(\Phi) \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, \mu X. \Phi \vdash \Delta} \quad i \geq 1$$

$$\text{LENR} \quad \frac{\Gamma \vdash \mu X. \text{repeat}_i(\Psi), \Delta}{\Gamma \vdash \mu X. \Psi, \Delta} \quad i \geq 1$$

Example

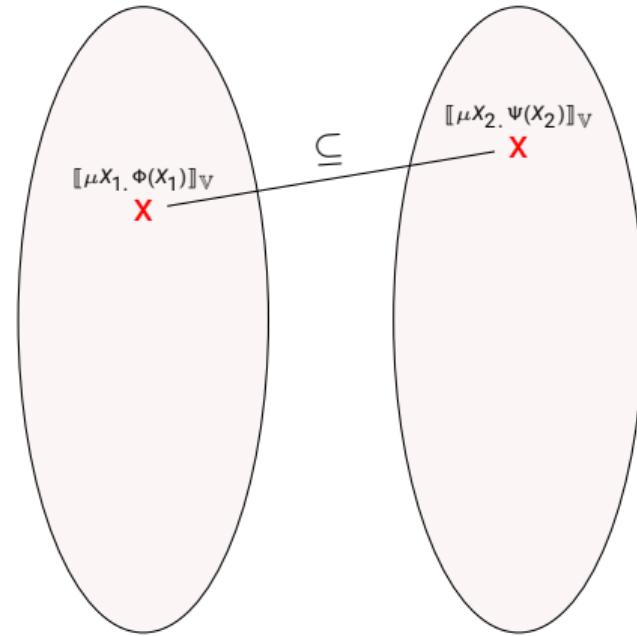
$$\text{LENR} \quad \frac{\Gamma \vdash \mu X. (R \vee R^{\frown} (\textcolor{purple}{R \vee R^{\frown} X}))}{\Gamma \vdash \mu X. (R \vee R^{\frown} X)} \quad 1 \geq 1$$

Appendix: Fixpoint Induction

Proof Objective

- We aim to **inductively** deduce the \subseteq -inclusion of both least fixpoints.
- Based on **powerset lattice of finite traces** $P(\text{State}^+)$.

How to infer the proof objective?



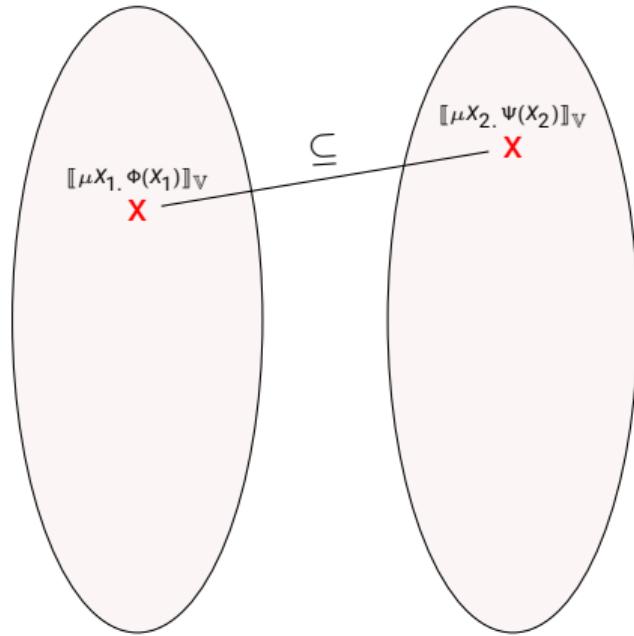
Appendix: Fixpoint Induction

Induction Principle

Assumption:

For any set of finite traces $\gamma_1, \gamma_2 \in P(\text{State}^+)$ with $\gamma_1 \subseteq \gamma_2$, it holds that

$$[\![\Phi(X_1)]\!]_{V[X_1 \mapsto \gamma_1]} \subseteq [\![\Psi(X_2)]\!]_{V[X_2 \mapsto \gamma_2]}$$



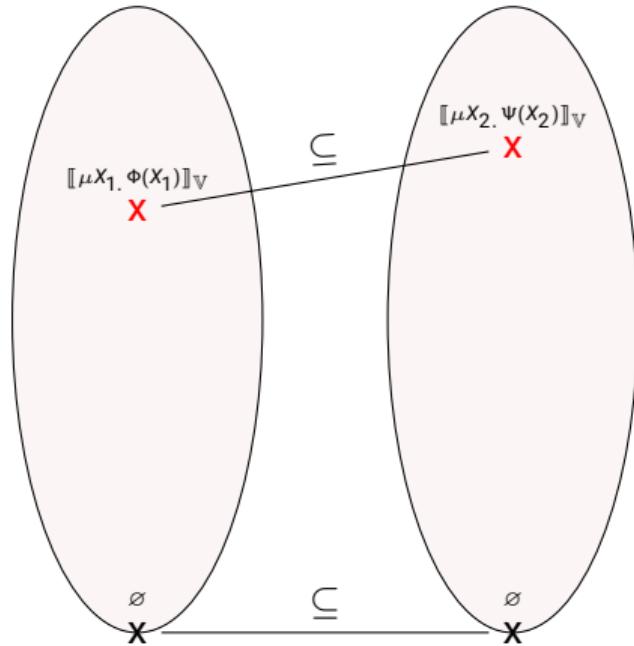
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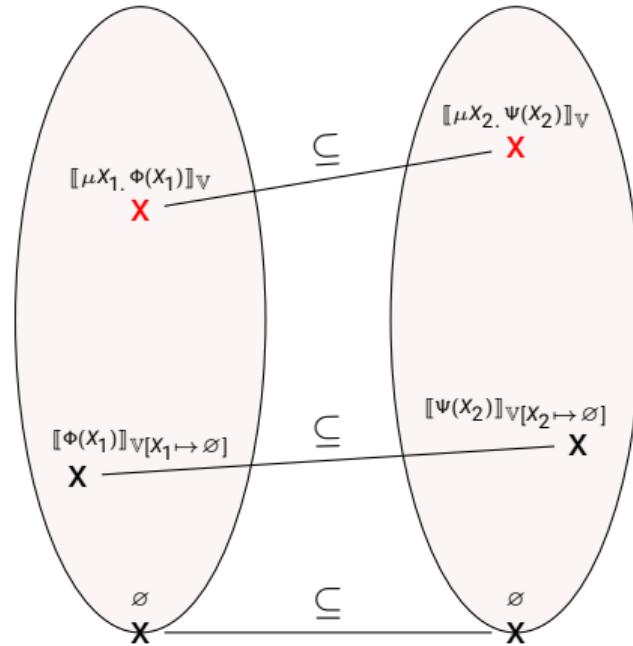
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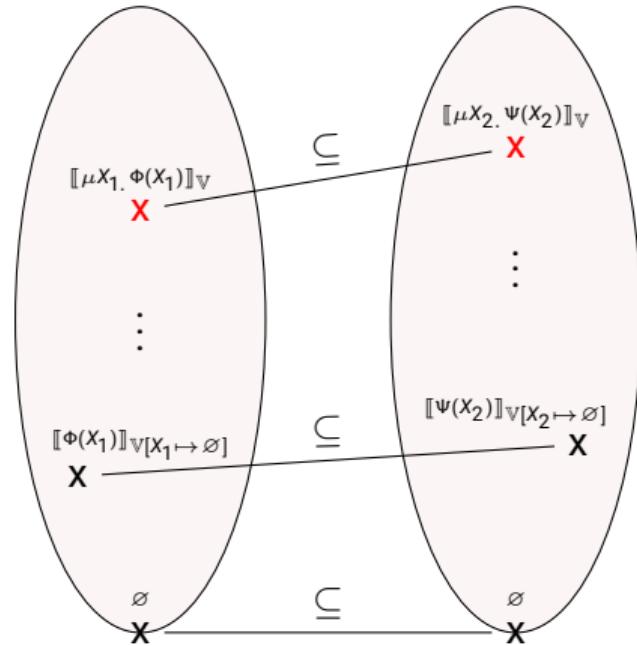
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$$[\![\Phi(X_1)]\!]_{V[X_1 \mapsto \gamma_1]} \subseteq [\![\Psi(X_2)]\!]_{V[X_2 \mapsto \gamma_2]}$$



Appendix: Fixpoint Induction

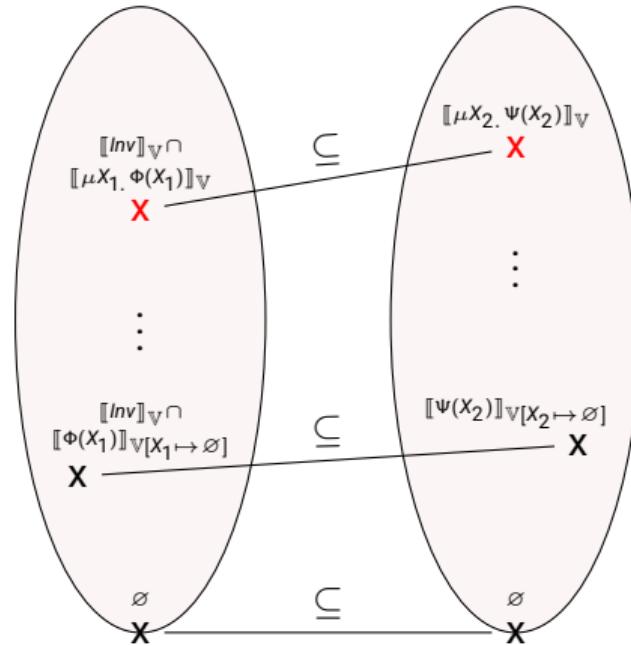
Induction Principle with Invariants



Assumption:

For any set of finite traces $\gamma_1, \gamma_2 \in P(\text{State}^+)$ with $\llbracket \text{Inv} \rrbracket_V \cap \gamma_1 \subseteq \gamma_2$, it holds that

$$\llbracket \text{Inv} \rrbracket_V \cap \llbracket \Phi(X_1) \rrbracket_{V[X_1 \mapsto \gamma_1]} \subseteq \llbracket \Psi(X_2) \rrbracket_{V[X_2 \mapsto \gamma_2]}$$



Appendix: Calculus Rules

Method Contract Rules

$$\text{MC} \frac{v_{old}^i \in \text{fresh}(\text{Var}) \quad \mathbb{C}' = \mathbb{C}[m \mapsto (\text{pre}, \text{post})]}{\xi \diamond \langle \text{pre}(\Phi) \rangle \vdash_{\mathbb{C}'} \langle \text{post}(\Phi) \rangle \quad \xi \diamond \Gamma, \mu X_m. \Phi \vdash_{\mathbb{C}'} \Delta} \xi \diamond \Gamma, \mu X_m. \Phi \vdash_{\mathbb{C}} \Delta$$

$$\text{CH-RVAR} \frac{\mathbb{C}(m) = (\text{pre}, \text{post}) \quad P_{\Gamma} \vdash_{\mathbb{C}} p \wedge \text{pre} \quad \xi \diamond P_{\Gamma}[v_{old}^i/v^i], \text{post}, \Phi \vdash_{\mathbb{C}} \Psi}{\xi, (X_m|_p, X) \diamond \Gamma, X_m \cap \Phi \vdash_{\mathbb{C}} X \cap \Psi, \Delta}$$

$$\text{CH-FPI} \frac{\mathbb{C}(m) = (\text{pre}, \text{post}) \quad P_{\Gamma} \vdash_{\mathbb{C}} I \wedge \text{pre} \quad \xi, (X_m|_I, X) \diamond I, \Phi_1 \vdash_{\mathbb{C}} \Psi_1 \quad \xi \diamond P_{\Gamma}[v_{old}^i/v^i], \text{post}, \Phi_2 \vdash_{\mathbb{C}} \Psi_2}{\xi \diamond \Gamma, (\mu X_m. \Phi_1) \cap \Phi_2 \vdash_{\mathbb{C}} (\mu X. \Psi_1) \cap \Psi_2, \Delta}$$