



UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN



Artificial Intelligence Foundation - JC3001

Lecture 33: Hierarchical Planning - III

Prof. Aladdin Ayesh (aladdin.ayesh@abdn.ac.uk)

Dr. Binod Bhattacharai (binod.bhattacharai@abdn.ac.uk)

Dr. Gideon Ogunniye, (g.ogunniye@abdn.ac.uk)

October 2025

Course Progression

- Part 1: Introduction
 - ① Introduction to AI ✓
 - ② Agents ✓
- Part 2: Problem-solving
 - ① Search 1: Uninformed Search ✓
 - ② Search 2: Heuristic Search ✓
 - ③ Search 3: Local Search ✓
 - ④ Search 4: Adversarial Search ✓
- Part 3: Reasoning and Uncertainty
 - ① Reasoning 1: Constraint Satisfaction ✓
 - ② Reasoning 2: Logic and Inference ✓
 - ③ Probabilistic Reasoning 1: BNs ✓
 - ④ Probabilistic Reasoning 2: HMMs ✓
- Part 4: Planning
 - ① Planning 1: Intro and Formalism ✓
 - ② Planning 2: Algorithms & Heuristics ✓
 - ③ **Planning 3: Hierarchical Planning**
 - ④ Planning 4: Stochastic Planning
- Part 5: Learning
 - ① Learning 1: Intro to ML
 - ② Learning 2: Regression
 - ③ Learning 3: Neural Networks
 - ④ Learning 4: Reinforcement Learning
- Part 6: Conclusion
 - ① Ethical Issues in AI
 - ② Conclusions and Discussion



Objectives

- Control Knowledge in Planning
- Hierarchical Planning



Outline

1 Hierarchical Planning

- ▶ Hierarchical Planning
- ▶ Hierarchical Goal Networks
- ▶ Conclusion

- HTN planning is even more general
- Can have constraints associated with tasks and methods
Conditions that must be true before, during, or afterwards

Domain-Configurable Planners Compared to Classical Planners

1 Hierarchical Planning

- Disadvantage: writing a knowledge base can be more complicated than just writing classical operators
- Advantage: can encode “recipes” as collections of methods and operators
 - Express problems and knowledge that cannot be expressed in classical planning
 - Specify standard ways of solving problems
 - Otherwise, the planning system would have to derive these again and again from “first principles,” every time it solves a problem
 - Can speed up planning by many orders of magnitude (e.g., polynomial time versus exponential time)

Domain Knowledge

1 Hierarchical Planning

- Domain knowledge requires extensive domain engineering
- Domain knowledge is not always available
- It is possible to generate “unsolvable” methods
- What can you do when you do not have this domain knowledge?

¹MAGNAGUAGNO, M. C.; MENEGUZZI, F. Method Composition through Operator Pattern Identification.
KEPS@ICAPS 2017.

Domain Knowledge

1 Hierarchical Planning

- Domain knowledge requires extensive domain engineering
- Domain knowledge is not always available
- It is possible to generate “unsolvable” methods
- What can you do when you do not have this domain knowledge?
 - Use the naive conversion above
(this is bad, performance is worse than classical planning)

¹MAGNAGUAGNO, M. C.; MENEGUZZI, F. Method Composition through Operator Pattern Identification.
KEPS@ICAPS 2017.

Domain Knowledge

1 Hierarchical Planning

- Domain knowledge requires extensive domain engineering
- Domain knowledge is not always available
- It is possible to generate “unsolvable” methods
- What can you do when you do not have this domain knowledge?
 - Use the naive conversion above
(this is bad, performance is worse than classical planning)
 - Automatically create domain knowledge using regularities in the operator descriptions
(object of much research from our own group, much more efficient¹)

¹MAGNAGUAGNO, M. C.; MENEGUZZI, F. Method Composition through Operator Pattern Identification.
KEPS@ICAPS 2017.

Comparative Summary

1 Hierarchical Planning

Classical Planning

- Initial state
- Goal state
- Use actions/operators
- Optimality is search/heuristic dependent
- Anarchical/flat description
 - Easier to make/maintain
 - Harder to solve

Hierarchical Planning

- Initial state
- Task list
- Use operators and methods
- Optimality is description dependent
- Hierarchical description
 - Harder to make/maintain
 - Easier to solve



Outline

2 Hierarchical Goal Networks

- ▶ Hierarchical Planning
- ▶ Hierarchical Goal Networks
- ▶ Conclusion

- States, operators, **and goals**
The same as in classical planning
- Methods $m = (\text{head}(m), \text{pre}(m), \text{sub}(m))$
 - $\text{head}(m)$: like the head of a planning operator
 - $\text{pre}(m)$: like the precondition of a planning operator
 - $\text{sub}(m)$: $\text{sub}(m) = \langle g_1, \dots, g_k \rangle$, where each g_i is a goal formula (a set of literals)
 - $\text{post}(m)$: implicit postcondition g_k if $\text{sub}(m)$ is non-empty, $\text{pre}(m)$ otherwise



HGN Example

2 Hierarchical Goal Networks

Method for using truck ?t to move crate ?o
from location ?l1 to location ?l2 in city ?c:

Head: (move-within-city ?o ?t ?l1 ?l2 ?c)
Pre: ((obj-at ?o ?l1) (in-city ?l1 ?c)
 (in-city ?l2 ?c) (truck ?t ?c) (truck-at ?t ?l3))
Sub: ((truck-at ?t ?l1) (in-truck ?o ?t)
 (truck-at ?t ?l2) (obj-at ?o ?l2)))

Method for using airplane ?plane to move crate ?o
from airport ?a1 to airport ?a2:

Head: (move-between-airports ?o ?plane ?a1 ?a2)
Pre: ((obj-at ?o ?a1) (airport ?a1)
 (airport ?a2) (airplane ?plane))
Sub: ((airplane-at ?plane ?a1) (in-airplane ?o ?plane)
 (airplane-at ?plane ?a2) (obj-at ?o ?a2)))

Method for moving ?o from location ?l1 in city ?c1
to location ?l2 in city ?c2, via airports ?a1 and ?a2:

Head: (move-between-cities ?o ?l1 ?c1 ?l2 ?c2 ?a1 ?a2)
Pre: ((obj-at ?o ?l1) (in-city ?l1 ?c1) (in-city ?l2 ?c2)
 (different ?c1 ?c2) (airport ?a1) (airport ?a2)
 (in-city ?a1 ?c1) (in-city ?a2 ?c2))
Sub: ((obj-at ?o ?a1) (obj-at ?o ?a2) (obj-at ?o ?l2)))

Algorithm for HGN Planning

2 Hierarchical Goal Networks

- Much like the TFD algorithm
 - Process goals in network sequentially
 - Choose decompositions applicable to current state
 - Execute actions when they come up for decomposition
- Key difference, objective is to achieve goals

```

1: procedure GDP( $D, s, G\pi$ )
2:   if  $G$  is empty then return  $\pi$ 
3:    $g \leftarrow$  the first goal formula in  $G$ 
4:   if  $s \models g$  then
5:     remove  $g$  from  $G$  and return GDP( $D, s, G, \pi$ )
6:    $g \leftarrow \{$  actions and methods instances relevant
7:     for  $g$  and applicable to  $s\}$ 
8:   if  $U = \emptyset$  then return failure
9:   nondeterministically choose  $s \in U$ 
10:  if  $u$  is an action then
11:    append  $u$  to  $\pi$  and set  $s \leftarrow \gamma(s, u)$ 
12:  else
13:    insert  $sub(u)$  at the front of  $G$ 
return GDP( $D, s, G, \pi$ )

```

- GDP can be modified to use heuristics in the decomposition
 - Instead of nondeterministic search, sort decomposers
- Example heuristic
 - Modified RPG used in FF
 - $l_{PG}(p)$ is the level where p is reachable
 - Estimates de distance between: the first level in which G is true; and the first level in which s is true

$$h_{s,G}(u) = \begin{cases} 1 + \max_{p \in G} l_{PG}(p) - \max_{p \in \gamma(s,u)} l_{PG}(p), & \text{if } u \text{ is an action,} \\ \max_{p \in G \cup sub(u)} l_{PG}(p) - \max_{p \in s} l_{PG}(p), & \text{if } u \text{ is a method.} \end{cases}$$

Heuristics for HGN Planning

1: procedure GDP(D, s, G, π)

2: if G is empty **then return** π

3: $g \leftarrow$ the first goal formula in G

4: if $s \models g$ **then**

5: remove g from G and **return** GDP(D, s, G, π)

6: $g \leftarrow \{$ actions and methods instances relevant for g and applicable to $s\}$

7: if $U = \emptyset$ **then return** failure

8: sort U with $h(u), \forall u \in U$

9: for all $u \in U$ **do**

10: if u is an action **then**

11: append u to π

12: remove g from G

13: $s \leftarrow \gamma(s, u)$

14: else

15: push $sub(u)$ **into** G

16: $\pi \leftarrow$ GDP(D, s, G, π)

17: if $\pi \neq$ failure **then return** π

18: return failure

2 Hierarchical Goal Networks

HGN Planning Current Work

2 Hierarchical Goal Networks

- GoDel - mixed forward search and decomposition
- HOGL - heuristic mixed forward search and decomposition (AAAI-17)



Outline

3 Conclusion

- ▶ Hierarchical Planning
- ▶ Hierarchical Goal Networks
- ▶ Conclusion

- **SHOP2:** implementation of PFD-like algorithm + generalizations
 - Won one of the top four awards in the AIPS-2002 Planning Competition
 - Freeware, open source
 - Implementation available at: <http://www.cs.umd.edu/projects/shop>

- **SHOP3:** Latest incarnation of the SHOP software
 - Currently being maintained by Robert Goldman (SIFT)
 - Updated to latest versions of LISP
 - Freeware, open source
 - Implementation available at: <https://github.com/shop-planner/shop3>

- **PyHop:** implementation of TFD-like algorithm in Python
 - Domain is encoded as a number of Python functions representing methods and operators
 - Freeware, open source
 - Implementation available at: <https://bitbucket.org/dananau/pyhop>

PyHop's Syntax

3 Conclusion

```

def travel_by_foot(state,a,x,y):
    if state.dist[x][y] <= 4:
        return [('walk',a,x,y)]
    return False

def travel_by_taxi(state,a,x,y):
    if state.cash[a] >= 1.5 + 0.5 * state.
        dist[x][y]:
        return [('call_taxi',a,x), ('ride_taxi',a,x,y),
                ('pay_driver',a,x,y)]
    return False

declare_methods('travel', travel_by_foot,
               travel_by_taxi)

```

Travel by foot from x to y

Task: travel from x to y

Precond: agent is at x, distance to y is ≤ 4 km

Subtasks: walk from x to y

Travel by taxi from x to y

Task: travel from x to y

Precond: agent is at x, agent has money $\geq 1.5 + \frac{1}{2} \text{distance}(x,y)$

Subtasks: call taxi to x, ride taxi from x to y, pay driver

- Panda: implementation of both HTN and plan-space planners
 - Domain encoded in HDDL (a PDDL-based HTN language)
 - Easier to define partially ordered methods
 - Implementation available at:
<https://www.uni-ulm.de/en/in/ki/research/software/panda/>

Science activity planning (<https://github.com/nasa/europa/wiki/What-Is-Europa>)

- Airborne observatory SOFIA
- Remote Agent Experiment (RAX)
- Mars Exploration Rovers (MER) - 15 years of continuous operation
- Phoenix Mars Mission
- Mars Science Laboratory (MSL)

Power Systems Control of the International Space Station through the Solar Array Constraint Engine (SACE)

- HTN Planner in Ruby, partially inspired by PyHop
- Developed in my research group:
<https://github.com/pucrs-automated-planning/HyperTensioN>
- Various parsers to convert JSHOP and HDDL into the planner
- **Winner of the 2020 International Planning Competition (IPC)**
<http://gki.informatik.uni-freiburg.de/competition/results-fixed.pdf>

Hierarchical Planning Summary

3 Conclusion

- Heuristics and Control Strategies
- Domain Knowledge
- Hierarchical Task Network Planning
 - Comparison with classical planning
- Hierarchical Goal Networks



UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN



Any Questions.