

Decidability of Weak Simulation on One-counter Nets

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Abstract—One-counter nets (OCN) are Petri nets with exactly one unbounded place. They are equivalent to a subclass of one-counter automata with only a weak test for zero.

We show that weak simulation preorder is decidable for OCN and that weak simulation approximants do not converge at level ω , but only at ω^2 . In contrast, other semantic relations like weak bisimulation are undecidable for OCN [1], and so are weak (and strong) trace inclusion (Sec. VII).

Index Terms—Automata theory, One-counter machines

I. INTRODUCTION

The model. One-counter automata (OCA) are Minsky counter automata with only one counter, and they can also be seen as a subclass of pushdown automata with just one stack symbol (plus a bottom symbol). One-counter nets (OCN) are Petri nets with exactly one unbounded place, and they correspond to a subclass of OCA where the counter cannot be fully tested for zero (i.e., transitions enabled at counter value zero are also enabled at nonzero counter values). OCN are arguably the simplest model of discrete infinite-state systems, except for those that do not have a global finite control, e.g., (commutative) context-free grammars.

The state of the art. Verification problems for OCA and OCN have been extensively studied, particularly model checking problems with various temporal logics and semantic preorder/equivalence checking w.r.t. given notions of behavior. μ -calculus model checking [2], [3] and CTL model checking [4] are PSPACE-complete for OCA/OCN, while EF model checking is P^{NP} -complete [3]. There are many notions of semantic equivalences [5], but the most common ones are the following (ordered from finer to coarser): bisimulation, simulation and trace equivalence. Each of these has their standard (called strong) variant, and a weak variant that abstracts from arbitrarily long sequences of internal actions.

Strong bisimulation for OCA/OCN is PSPACE-complete [6]. However, OCA and OCN differ w.r.t. strong simulation. While strong simulation is decidable for OCN [7], [8], [9], strong simulation and trace inclusion are undecidable for OCA [10]. ((Bi)simulation checking is also undecidable for models with more than one unbounded counter/place [11].)

The situation changes when one considers weak semantic equivalences/preorders that abstract from internal actions. One can define upper-approximations of (bi)simulation up-to k by considering only k rounds in the (bi)simulation game. For strong (bi)simulation, these k -approximants converge to (bi)simulation at level $k = \omega$, provided that the systems are

finitely branching. This is not the case for weak (bi)simulation. Here the approximants are guaranteed to converge only at higher ordinals, due to the implicit infinite branching capability introduced by the abstraction. This is why it is so hard to prove semi-decidability of weak non-(bi)simulation for many classes of infinite-state transition systems.

For OCA/OCN it was shown that weak bisimulation is undecidable [1]. Moreover, weak (and strong) simulation and trace inclusion are undecidable for OCA [10], [12]. However, it was an open question whether weak simulation is decidable for OCN. Moreover, the decidability of strong and weak trace inclusion was open for OCN [13].

Our contribution. We show that weak simulation preorder is decidable for OCN. In fact, the weak simulation relation on OCN is effectively semilinear. Moreover, we show that weak simulation approximants only converge at level ω^2 on OCN. The decidability of weak simulation is in contrast to the undecidability of weak bisimulation for OCN [1]. This is surprising, because it goes against a common trend. On almost all other classes of systems, bisimulation problems are computationally easier than the corresponding simulation problems [14].

On the other hand, we show that strong and weak trace inclusion are undecidable even for OCN.

Finally, we study checking strong and weak (bi)simulation and trace inclusion between OCA/OCN and finite systems, and close some remaining complexity gaps in this area.

II. PRELIMINARIES

a) One-counter systems: We consider infinite-state labeled transition systems induced by OCA/OCN. A *labeled transition system* is described by a triple $T = (V, Act, \rightarrow)$ where V is a (possibly infinite) set of states, Act is a finite set of action labels and $\rightarrow \subseteq V \times Act \times V$ is the labeled transition relation. We write \rightarrow^* for the transitive and reflexive closure of \rightarrow and use the infix notation $s \xrightarrow{a} s'$ for a transition $(s, a, s') \in \rightarrow$, in which case we say T makes an *a-step* from s to s' . Given a finite or infinite sequence of symbols $w \in Act^*$ or $w \in Act^\omega$ resp., we write $|w| \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{\omega\}$ for the length of w . If w is finite, we denote its i -fold concatenation by w^i .

Definition 1 (One-Counter Automata / Nets): A *one-counter automaton* $A = (Q, Act, \delta, \delta_0)$ is given by a finite set of control-states Q , a finite set of action labels Act and transition relations $\delta \subseteq Q \times Act \times \{-1, 0, 1\} \times Q$ and

$\delta_0 \subseteq Q \times Act \times \{0, 1\} \times Q$. It induces an infinite-state labeled transition system over the stateset $Q \times \mathbb{N}$, whose elements will be written as pm , as follows. $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ iff

- 1) $(p, a, d, p') \in \delta$ and $m' = m + d \geq 0$ or
- 2) $(p, a, d, p') \in \delta_0$, $m = 0$ and $m' = d$.

Such an automaton is called a *one-counter net* if $\delta_0 = \emptyset$, i.e., if the automaton cannot test if the counter is equal to 0.

b) *Weak Simulation*: In a weak semantics, one needs to abstract from internal actions. Thus one assumes a dedicated action $\tau \in Act$ that is used to model internal non-observable steps and defines the *weak step* relation \Rightarrow by

$$\tau \Rightarrow = \tau \xrightarrow{*}, \text{ and for } a \neq \tau, \quad \xrightarrow{a} = \tau \xrightarrow{*} \cdot \xrightarrow{a} \cdot \tau \xrightarrow{*}$$

Simulation and weak simulation are semantic preorders in van Glabbeeks linear time – branching time spectrum [5], which are used to compare the behavior of processes. Their standard co-inductive definition is as follows. A binary relation $R \subseteq V^2$ on the states of a labeled transition system is a *simulation* if sRt implies that for all $s \xrightarrow{a} s'$ there is a t' such that $t \xrightarrow{a} t'$ and $s'Rt'$. Similarly, R is a *weak simulation* if sRt implies that for all $s \xrightarrow{a} t$ there is a t' such that $t \xrightarrow{a} t'$ and $s'Rt'$. (Weak) simulations are closed under union, so there exists a unique maximal simulation \preceq , resp. weak simulation \leq , which is a preorder on V . A (weak) bisimulation is a symmetric (weak) simulation. The maximal (weak) bisimulation is an equivalence.

Simulation preorder can also be characterized in terms of ordinal *approximant* relations \preceq_α , which are inductively defined as follows. $\preceq_0 = V^2$. For successors $\alpha + 1$ let $s \preceq_{\alpha+1} t$ iff for all $s \xrightarrow{a} s'$ there is a $t \xrightarrow{a} t'$ such that $s' \preceq_\alpha t'$. For limit ordinals λ define $\preceq_\lambda = \bigcap_{\alpha < \lambda} \preceq_\alpha$.

This inductive notion of approximants can be interpreted as an interactive game between two players Spoiler and Duplicator, where the latter tries to stepwise match the moves of the former. A *play* is a finite or infinite sequence of pairs of transition system states. For a finite play $(E_0, F_0), (E_1, F_1), \dots, (E_i, F_i)$ the next pair (E_{i+1}, F_{i+1}) is determined by a round of choices: Spoiler chooses a transition $E_i \xrightarrow{a} E_{i+1}$, then Duplicator responds by choosing an equally labeled transition $F_i \xrightarrow{a} F_{i+1}$. A pair (E, F) of states is *directly winning* for Spoiler if she can choose a transition $E \xrightarrow{a} E'$ so that her opponent cannot respond, i.e. $\neg \exists F'. F \xrightarrow{a} F'$. A play is won by Spoiler if a pair of states is reached that is directly winning for her, otherwise Duplicator wins the play. A *strategy* is a set of rules that tells the player which valid move to choose. A player plays according to a strategy if all her moves obey the rules of the strategy. A strategy is *winning* from (E, F) if every play that starts in (E, F) and which is played according to that strategy is winning.

Proposition 2: For any two states (E, F) of a transition system T , Duplicator has a winning strategy in (E, F) in the simulation game iff $E \preceq_\alpha F$ for all ordinals α iff $E \preceq F$. Weak simulation approximants \leq_α and games are defined analogously but allow Duplicator to make weak steps and characterize \leq .

c) *The Problem*: We consider the problem of deciding weak simulation preorder on one-counter nets. An instance is given by a one-counter net $N = (Q, Act, \delta)$ and configurations pm and qn , and the question is whether $pm \leq qn$ holds. Generally, we want to compute a representation of the semilinear set $W(p, q) = \{(m, n) \mid pm \leq qn\}$.

III. REDUCTION TO STRONG SIMULATION ON ω -NETS

First we reduce the weak simulation problem on one-counter nets to a strong simulation problem on a slightly generalized model that we call ω -nets. In ω -nets, there exist dedicated transitions with symbolic effect ω , which allow to arbitrarily increase the counter in a single step. Checking weak simulation between two one-counter nets can be reduced to strong simulation between a one-counter net and an ω -net.

Definition 3 (ω -Nets): An ω -net $N = (Q, Act, \delta)$ is given by a finite set of control-states Q , a finite set of actions Act and transitions $\delta \subseteq Q \times Act \times \{-1, 0, 1, \omega\} \times Q$. It induces a transition system over the stateset $Q \times \mathbb{N}$ that allows a step $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ if either $(p, a, d, p') \in \delta$ and $m' = m + d \in \mathbb{N}$ or if $(p, a, \omega, p') \in \delta$ and $m' > m$.

Every one-counter net is a ω -net without ω -transitions. Unlike one-counter nets, ω -nets can yield infinitely branching transition systems, since each ω -transition (p, a, ω, p') introduces steps $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ for any two naturals $m' > m$.

It is easily verified that ω -net (and hence also one-counter net) processes satisfy the following monotonicity property.

Proposition 4 (Monotonicity of \preceq): $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ implies $p(m+d) \xrightarrow{a} p'(m'+d)$ for all $d \in \mathbb{N}$. Moreover, $pm \preceq qn$ implies $pm' \preceq qn'$ for $m' \leq m$, $n' \geq n$.

The following theorem justifies our focus on strong simulation games where Duplicator plays on an ω -net process.

Theorem 5: Checking weak simulation between two one-counter net processes can be reduced to checking strong simulation between a one-counter net process and an ω -net process. Formally, for two one-counter nets M and N with states Q_M and Q_N resp., one can effectively construct a OCN M' with states $Q_{M'} \supseteq Q_M$ and a ω -net N' with states $Q_{N'} \supseteq Q_N$ such that for each pair $p, q \in Q_M \times Q_N$ of original control states and any ordinal α the following hold.

- 1) $pm \leq qn$ w.r.t. M, N iff $pm \preceq_\alpha qn$ w.r.t. M', N' .
- 2) If $pm \leq_\alpha qn$ w.r.t. M, N then $pm \preceq_\alpha qn$ w.r.t. M', N' .

Proof: (Sketch.) The idea of the proof is to look for counter-increasing cyclic paths via τ -labeled transitions in the control graph and to introduce ω -transitions accordingly. For any path that reads a single visible action and visits a 'generator' state that is part of a silent cycle with positive effect, we add an ω -transition. For all of the finitely many non-cyclic paths that read a single visible action we introduce direct transitions. A full proof can be found in [15]. ■

IV. APPROXIMANTS

We generalize the notion of \preceq_α simulation approximants in the case of simulation between one-counter and ω -net processes. This yields approximants that converge at a finite level for any pair of nets.

First we define approximants \preceq_α^β in two (ordinal) dimensions. From a game-theoretic perspective the subscript α indicates the number of rounds Duplicator can survive and the superscript β denotes the number of ω -steps Spoiler needs to allow. E.g., $pm \preceq_2^2 qn$ if Duplicator can guarantee that no play of the simulation game that contains < 2 ω -steps is losing for him in less than 6 rounds. If not stated otherwise we assume that $N = (Q, Act, \delta)$ is a one-counter net and $N' = (Q', Act, \delta')$ is an ω -net.

Definition 6: We define *approximants* for ordinals α and β as follows. Let $\preceq_\alpha^0 = \preceq_0^\beta = Q \times \mathbb{N} \times Q' \times \mathbb{N}$, the full relation. For successor ordinals $\alpha + 1, \beta + 1$ let $pm \preceq_{\alpha+1}^{\beta+1} qn$ iff for all $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ there is a step $qn \xrightarrow{a} q'n'$ s.t. either

- 1) $(q, a, \omega, q') \in \delta'$ (the step is due to an ω -transition) and $p'm' \preceq_\alpha^\beta q'n'$, or
- 2) $(q, a, \omega, q') \notin \delta'$, but $(q, a, (n' - n), q') \in \delta'$ (i.e., there is no ω -transition and the step is due to a normal transition) and $p'm' \preceq_{\alpha+1}^{\beta+1} q'n'$.

For limit ordinals λ we define $\preceq_\alpha^\lambda = \bigcap_{\beta < \lambda} \preceq_\alpha^\beta$ and $\preceq_\lambda^\beta = \bigcap_{\alpha < \lambda} \preceq_\alpha^\beta$. Finally,

$$\preceq^\beta = \bigcap_{\alpha \in Ord} \preceq_\alpha^\beta \quad \preceq_\alpha = \bigcap_{\beta \in Ord} \preceq_\alpha^\beta. \quad (1)$$

\preceq_α corresponds to the usual notion of simulation approximants and \preceq^β is a special notion derived from the syntactic peculiarity of ω -transitions present in the game on one-counter vs. ω -nets.

Example 7: Consider a net that consists of a single a -labeled loop in state X and the ω -net with transitions $Y \xrightarrow{a, \omega} Z \xrightarrow{a, -1} Y$ only. We see that for any $m, n \in \mathbb{N}$, $Xm \preceq_n Zn \not\preceq_{n+1} Xm$. Moreover, $Xm \preceq_\omega Yn$ but $Xm \not\preceq_{\omega+1} Yn$ and $Xm \preceq^1 Yn$ but $Xm \not\preceq_{\omega+1}^2 Yn$ and thus $Xm \not\preceq^2 Yn$.

Definition 8: An *approximant game* is played in rounds between Spoiler and Duplicator. Game positions are quadruples (pm, qn, α, β) where pm, qn are configurations of N and N' respectively, and α, β are ordinals called step- and ω -counter. In each round that starts in (pm, qn, α, β) :

- Spoiler chooses ordinals $\alpha' < \alpha$ and $\beta' < \beta$,
- Spoiler makes a step $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$,
- Duplicator responds by making a step $qn \xrightarrow{a} q'n'$ using some transition t .

If t was an ω -transition the game continues from position $(p'm', q'n', \alpha', \beta')$. Otherwise the next round starts at $(p'm', q'n', \alpha', \beta)$ (in this case Spoiler's choice of β' becomes irrelevant). If a player cannot move the other wins and if α or β becomes 0, Duplicator wins.

Lemma 9: If Duplicator wins the approximation game from (pm, qn, α, β) then he also wins the game from $(pm, qn, \alpha', \beta')$ for any $\alpha' \leq \alpha$ and $\beta' \leq \beta$.

Proof: If Duplicator has a winning strategy in the game from (pm, qn, α, β) then he can use the same strategy in the game from $(pm, qn, \alpha', \beta')$ and maintain the invariant that the pair of ordinals in the game configuration is pointwise smaller than the pair in the original game. Thus Duplicator wins from $(pm, qn, \alpha', \beta')$. ■

Lemma 10: $pm \preceq_\alpha^\beta qn$ iff Duplicator has a strategy to win the approximation game that starts in (pm, qn, α, β) .

Proof: We show both directions by well-founded induction on the pairs of ordinals (α, β) .

For the “only if” direction we assume $pm \preceq_\alpha^\beta qn$ and show that Duplicator wins the game from (pm, qn, α, β) . In the base case of $\alpha = 0$ or $\beta = 0$ Duplicator directly wins by definition. By induction hypothesis we assume that the claim is true for all pairs pointwise smaller than (α, β) . Spoiler starts a round by picking ordinals $\alpha' < \alpha$ and $\beta' < \beta$ and moves $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$. We distinguish two cases, depending on whether β is a limit or successor ordinal.

Case 1: β is a successor ordinal. By Lemma 9 we can safely assume that $\beta' = \beta - 1$. By our assumption $pm \preceq_\alpha^\beta qn$ and Def. 6, there must be a response $qn \xrightarrow{a} q'n'$ that is either due to an ω -transition and then $p'm' \preceq_{\alpha'}^{\beta'} q'n'$ or due to an ordinary transition, in which case we have $p'm' \preceq_{\alpha'}^{\beta'+1} q'n'$. In both cases, we know by the induction hypothesis that Duplicator wins from this next position and thus also from the initial position.

Case 2: β is a limit ordinal. By $pm \preceq_\alpha^\beta qn$ and Def. 6, we obtain $pm \preceq_\alpha^\gamma qn$ for all $\gamma < \beta$. If α is a successor ordinal then, by Lemma 9, we can safely assume that $\alpha' = \alpha - 1$. Otherwise, if α is a limit ordinal, then, by Def. 6, we have $pm \preceq_{\alpha'}^\gamma qn$ for all $\alpha'' < \alpha$ and in particular $pm \preceq_{\alpha'+1}^\gamma qn$. So in either case we obtain

$$pm \preceq_{\alpha'+1}^\gamma qn \text{ for all } \gamma < \beta. \quad (2)$$

If there is some ω -transition that allows a response $qn \xrightarrow{a, \omega} q'n'$ that satisfies $p'm' \preceq_{\alpha'}^{\beta'} q'n'$, then Duplicator picks this response and we can use the induction hypothesis to conclude that he wins the game from the next position. Otherwise, if no such ω -transition exists, Equation (2) implies that for every $\gamma < \beta$ there is a response to some $q'n'$ that uses a non- ω -transition $t(\gamma)$ and that satisfies $p'm' \preceq_{\alpha'}^\gamma q'n'$. Since β is a limit ordinal, there exist infinitely many $\gamma < \beta$. By the pigeonhole principle, that there must be one transition that occurs as $t(\gamma)$ for infinitely many γ . Therefore, a response that uses this transition satisfies $p'm' \preceq_{\alpha'}^\beta q'n'$. If Duplicator uses this response, the game continues from position $(p'm', q'n', \alpha', \beta)$ and he wins by induction hypothesis.

For the “if” direction we show that $pm \preceq_\alpha^\beta qn$ implies that Spoiler has a winning strategy in the approximation game from (pm, qn, α, β) . In the base case of $\alpha = 0$ or $\beta = 0$ the implication holds trivially since the premise is false. By induction hypothesis we assume that the implication is true for all pairs pointwise smaller than (α, β) . Observe that if α or β are limit ordinals then (by Def. 6) there are successors $\beta' \leq \beta$ and $\alpha' \leq \alpha$ s.t. $pm \not\preceq_{\alpha'}^{\beta'} qn$. So without loss of generality we can assume that α and β are successors. By the definition of approximants there must be a move $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ s.t.

- for every possible response $qn \xrightarrow{a, \omega} q'n'$ that uses some ω -transition we have $p'm' \not\preceq_{\alpha-1}^{\beta-1} q'n'$,
- for every possible response $qn \xrightarrow{a} q'n'$ via some normal transition it holds that $p'm' \not\preceq_{\alpha-1}^\beta q'n'$.

So if Spoiler chooses $\alpha' = \alpha - 1$, $\beta' = \beta - 1$ and moves $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ then any possible response by Duplicator will take the game to a position $(p'm', q'n', \gamma, \alpha')$ for a $\gamma \leq \beta$. By induction hypothesis Spoiler wins the game. ■

Lemma 11: For all ordinals α, β the following properties hold.

- 1) $pm \preceq_{\alpha}^{\beta} qn$ implies $pm' \preceq_{\alpha}^{\beta} qn'$ for all $m' \leq m$ and $n' \geq n$
- 2) If $\alpha' \geq \alpha$ and $\beta' \geq \beta$ then $\preceq_{\alpha'}^{\beta'} \subseteq \preceq_{\alpha}^{\beta}$.
- 3) There are ordinals CA, CB such that $\preceq_{CA} = \preceq_{CA+1}$ and $\preceq_{CB}^{\beta} = \preceq_{CB+1}^{\beta}$.
- 4) $\preceq = \bigcap_{\alpha} \preceq_{\alpha} = \bigcap_{\beta} \preceq_{\beta}^{\beta}$

The first point states that individual approximants are monotonic in the sense of Proposition 4. Points 2.-4. imply that both \preceq_{α} and \preceq_{α}^{β} yield non-increasing sequences of approximants that converge towards simulation. It is easy to see that the approximants \preceq_{α} do not converge at finite levels, and not even at ω , i.e., $CA > \omega$ in general. However, we will show that the approximants \preceq_{α}^{β} do converge at a finite level, i.e., $CB \in \mathbb{N}$ for any pair of nets.

Proof: 1) By Lemma 10 it suffices to observe that Duplicator can reuse a winning strategy in the approximant game from (pm, qn, α, β) to win the game from $(pm - d_1, qn + d_2, \alpha, \beta)$ for naturals d_1, d_2 .

2) If $pm \preceq_{\alpha'}^{\beta'} qn$ then, by Lemma 10, Duplicator wins the approximant game from position $(pm, qn, \beta', \alpha')$. By Lemma 9 he can also win the approximant game from (pm, qn, β, α) . Thus $pm \preceq_{\alpha}^{\beta} qn$ by Lemma 10.

3) By point 2) we see that with increasing ordinal index α the approximant relations \preceq_{α} form a decreasing sequence of relations, thus they stabilize for some ordinal CA . The existence of a convergence ordinal for \preceq_{CB}^{β} follows analogously.

4) First we observe that $\bigcap_{\alpha} \preceq_{\alpha} = \bigcap_{\alpha} \bigcap_{\beta} \preceq_{\alpha}^{\beta} = \bigcap_{\beta} \bigcap_{\alpha} \preceq_{\alpha}^{\beta} = \bigcap_{\beta} \preceq_{\beta}^{\beta}$. It remains to show that $\preceq = \bigcap_{\alpha} \preceq_{\alpha}$.

To show $\preceq \supseteq \bigcap_{\alpha} \preceq_{\alpha}$, we use CA from point 3) and rewrite the right side to $\bigcap_{\alpha} \preceq_{\alpha} = \preceq_{CA} = \preceq_{CA+1}$. From Definition 6 we get that $\preceq_{\alpha} = \preceq_{\alpha}^{\gamma}$ for $\gamma \geq \alpha$ and therefore $\preceq_{CA+1}^{CA+1} = \preceq_{CA+1} = \preceq_{CA} = \preceq_{CA}^{CA}$. This means $\preceq_{CA}^{CA} = \bigcap_{\alpha} \preceq_{\alpha}$ must be a simulation relation and hence a subset of \preceq .

To show $\preceq \subseteq \bigcap_{\alpha} \preceq_{\alpha}$, we prove by ordinal induction that $\preceq \subseteq \preceq_{\alpha}$ for all ordinals α . The base case $\alpha = 0$ is trivial. For the induction step we prove the equivalent property $\not\preceq_{\alpha} \subseteq \not\preceq$. There are two cases.

In the first case, $\alpha = \alpha' + 1$ is a successor ordinal. If $pm \not\preceq_{\alpha'+1} qn$ then $pm \not\preceq_{\alpha'+1}^{\alpha'+1} qn$ and therefore, by Lemma 10, Spoiler wins the approximant game from $(pm, qn, \alpha' + 1, \alpha' + 1)$. Let $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ be an optimal initial move by Spoiler. Now either there is no valid response and thus Spoiler immediately wins in the simulation game or for every Duplicator response $qn \xrightarrow{a} q'n'$ we have $p'm' \not\preceq_{\alpha'}^{\alpha'} q'n'$. Then also $p'm' \not\preceq_{\alpha'} q'n'$ and by induction hypothesis $p'm' \not\preceq q'n'$. By Proposition 2 we obtain that Spoiler wins the simulation game from $(p'm', q'n')$ and thus from (pm, qn) . Therefore $pm \not\preceq qn$, as required.

In the second case, α is a limit ordinal. Then $pm \not\preceq_{\alpha} qn$

implies $pm \not\preceq_{\alpha'} qn$ for some $\alpha' < \alpha$ and therefore $pm \not\preceq qn$ by induction hypothesis. ■

The following lemma shows a certain uniformity property of the simulation game. Beyond some fixed bound, an increased counter value of Spoiler can be neutralized by an increased counter value of Duplicator, thus enabling Duplicator to survive at least as many rounds in the game as before.

Lemma 12: For any one-counter net $N = (Q, A, \delta)$ and ω -net $N' = (Q', A', \delta')$ there is a fixed bound $c \in \mathbb{N}$ s.t. for all states $p \in Q, q \in Q'$, naturals $m' > m > c$ and ordinals α :

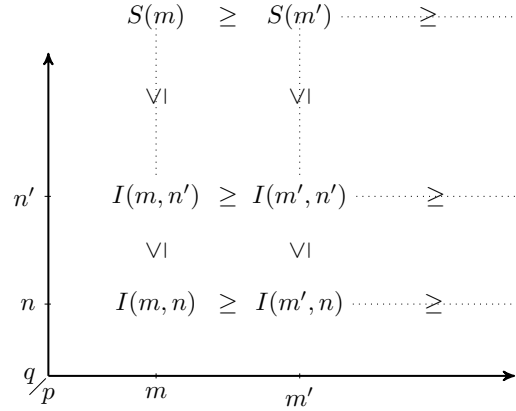
$$\forall n. (pm \preceq_{\alpha} qn \implies \exists n'. pm' \preceq_{\alpha} qn') \quad (3)$$

Proof: It suffices to show the existence of a local bound c for any given pair of states p, q that satisfies (3), since we can simply take the global c to be the maximal such bound over all finitely many pairs p, q . Consider now a fixed pair p, q of states. For $m, n \in \mathbb{N}$, we define the following (sequences of) ordinals.

$I(m, n)$ = the largest ordinal α with $pm \preceq_{\alpha} qn$ or CA
if no such α exists,

$I(m)$ = the increasing sequence of ordinals $I(m, n)_{n \geq 0}$,
 $S(m) = \sup\{I(m, n)\}$.

Observe that $I(m, n)$ can be presented as an infinite matrix where $I(m)$ is a column and $S(m)$ is the limit of the sequence of elements of column $I(m)$ looking upwards. Informally, $S(m) = \lim_{i \rightarrow \infty} I(m, i)$.



By Lemma 11 (point 1), we derive that for any $n' > n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $m' > m \in \mathbb{N}$

$$I(m, n') \geq I(m, n) \geq I(m', n) \quad (4)$$

and because of the second inequality also $S(m) \geq S(m')$. So the ordinal sequence $S(m)_{m \geq 0}$ of suprema must be non-increasing and by the well-ordering of the ordinals there is a smallest index $k \in \mathbb{N}$ at which this sequence stabilizes:

$$\forall l > k. S(l) = S(k).$$

We split the remainder of this proof into three cases depending on whether $I(k)$ and $I(l)$ for some $l > k$ have maximal

elements. In each case we show the existence of a bound c that satisfies requirement (3).

Case 1. For all $l \geq k$ and $n \in \mathbb{N}$ it holds that $I(l, n) < S(l)$, i.e., no $I(l)$ has a maximal element. In this case $c := k$ satisfies the requirement (3). To see this, take $m' > m > c = k$ and $pm \preceq_\alpha qn$. Then, by our assumption, $\alpha < S(m)$ and $S(m) = S(m') = S(k)$. Therefore $\alpha < S(m')$. Thus there must exist an $n' \in \mathbb{N}$ s.t. $pm' \preceq_\alpha qn'$, as required.

Case 2. For all $l \geq k$ there is a $n_l \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $I(l, n_l) = S(l)$, i.e., all $I(l)$ have maximal element $S(l) = S(k)$. Again $c := k$ satisfies the requirement (3). Given $m' > m > c = k$ and $pm \preceq_\alpha qn$ we let $n' := n_{m'}$ and obtain $I(m', n') = S(m') = S(k) \geq \alpha$ and thus $pm' \preceq_\alpha qn'$, as required.

Case 3. If none of the two cases above holds then there must exist some $l > k$ s.t. the sequences $I(k), \dots, I(l-1)$ each have a maximal element and for $l' > l$ the sequence $I(l')$ has no maximal element. To see this, consider sequences $I(x)$ and $I(x')$ with $x' > x \geq k$. If $I(x')$ has a maximal element then so must $I(x)$, by equation (4) and $S(x) = S(x') = S(k)$. Given this, we repeat the argument of the Case 1. with $c := l$ and again satisfy the requirement (3). ■

Lemma 13: Consider strong simulation \preceq between a one-counter net $N = (Q, A, \delta)$ and an ω -net $N' = (Q', A, \delta')$. There exists a constant $CB \in \mathbb{N}$ s.t. $\preceq = \preceq^{CB}$.

Proof: We assume the contrary and derive a contradiction. By Lemma 11(4), the inclusion $\preceq \subseteq \preceq^\beta$ always holds for every ordinal β . Thus, if $\nexists CB \in \mathbb{N}$. $\preceq = \preceq^{CB}$ then for every finite $\beta \in \mathbb{N}$ there are processes p_0m_0 and q_0n_0 s.t. $p_0m_0 \preceq^\beta q_0n_0$ but $p_0m_0 \not\preceq q_0n_0$. In particular, this holds for the special case of $\beta = |Q \times Q'|(c+1)$, where c is the constant given by Lemma 12, which we consider in the rest of this proof.

Since q_0n_0 does not simulate p_0m_0 , we can assume a winning strategy for Spoiler in the simulation game which is optimal in the sense that it guarantees that the simulation level α_i – the largest ordinal with $p_i m_i \preceq_{\alpha_i} q_i n_i$ – strictly decreases along rounds of any play. By monotonicity (Lemma 11, part 1) we can thus infer that whenever a pair of control-states repeats along a play, then Duplicator's counter must have decreased or Spoiler's counter must have increased: Along any partial play $(p_0m_0, q_0n_0)(t_0, t'_0)(p_1m_1, q_1n_1)(t_1, t'_1) \dots (p_km_k, q_kn_k)$ of length k with $p_i = p_j$ and $q_i = q_j$ for some $i < j \leq k$ we have $n_j < n_i$ or $m_j > m_i$. By a similar argument we can assume that Duplicator also plays optimally, in the sense that he uses ω -transitions to increase his counter to higher values than in previous situations with the same pair of control-states. By combining this with the previously stated property that the sequence of α_i strictly decreases we obtain the following:

$$\text{if } p_i = p_j, q_i = q_j \text{ and } t'_{i-1}, t'_{j-1} \in \delta_\omega \text{ then } m_j > m_i. \quad (5)$$

Here δ_ω denotes the set of transitions with symbolic effect ω in Duplicator's net.

Although Duplicator loses the simulation game between p_0m_0 and q_0n_0 , our assumption $p_0m_0 \preceq^\beta q_0n_0$ with $\beta = |Q \times Q'|(c+1)$ implies that Duplicator does not lose with less than β ω -transitions, regardless of Spoiler's strategy. Thus there always is a prefix of a play along which

Duplicator makes use of ω -transitions β times. Let $\pi = (p_0m_0, q_0n_0)(t_0, t'_0)(p_1m_1, q_1n_1)(t_1, t'_1) \dots (p_km_k, q_kn_k)$ be such a partial play.

Our choice of $\beta = |Q \times Q'|(c+1)$ guarantees that some pair (p, q) of control-states repeats at least $c+1$ times directly after Duplicator making an ω -step. Thus there are indices $i(1) < i(2) < \dots < i(c+1) < k$ s.t. for all $1 \leq j \leq c+1$ we have $p_{i(j)} = p, q_{i(j)} = q$ and $t'_{i(j)} \in \delta_\omega$. By observation (5) and $m_0 \geq 0$ we obtain that $m_{i(x)} \geq x$ for $0 \leq x \leq c+1$. In particular, $c \leq m_{i(c)} < m_{i(c+1)}$, i.e., both of Spoiler's counter values after the last two such repetitions must lie above c . This allows us to apply Lemma 12 to derive a contradiction.

Let α be the simulation level before this repetition: α is the largest ordinal with $pm_{i(c)} \preceq_\alpha qn_{i(c)}$. Since $m_{i(c+1)} > m_{i(c)} > c$, Lemma 12 ensures the existence of a natural n' s.t. $pm_{i(c+1)} \preceq_\alpha qn'$. Because Duplicator used an ω -transition in his last response leading to the repetition of states there must be a partial play π' in which both players make the same moves as in π except that Duplicator chooses $n_{i(c+1)}$ to be n' . Now in this play we observe that the simulation level did in fact not strictly decrease as this last repetition of control-states shows: We have $pm_{i(c)} \preceq_\alpha qn_{i(c)} \not\preceq_{\alpha+1} pm_{i(c)}$ and $pm_{i(c+1)} \preceq_\alpha qn_{i(c+1)}$, which contradicts the optimality of Spoiler's strategy. ■

V. THE MAIN RESULT

We prove the decidability of simulation between one-counter nets and ω -nets. First, we show that for each finite level $k \in \mathbb{N}$ the approximant \preceq^k is effectively semilinear, i.e., we can compute the semilinearity description of \preceq^k . This yields a decision procedure for simulation that works as follows. Iteratively compute \preceq^k for growing k and check after each round if the approximant has converged yet. The convergence test of $\preceq^k \stackrel{?}{=} \preceq^{k-1}$ can easily be done, since the approximants are semilinear sets. Termination of this procedure is guaranteed by Lemma 13, and the limit is the simulation relation by Lemma 11 (point 4).

We recall the following important result by Jančar, Kučera and Möller.

Theorem 14 ([9]): The largest strong simulation relation \preceq between processes of two given one-counter nets is effectively semilinear.

Now we construct the semilinear approximants \preceq^k .

Lemma 15: Given a one-counter net N and an ω -net N' , the approximant relations \preceq^k between them are effectively semilinear sets for all $k \in \mathbb{N}$.

Proof: Let $N = (Q, Act, \delta)$ and $N' = (Q', Act, \delta')$. We prove the effective semilinearity of \preceq^k by induction on k .

The base case $\preceq^0 = Q \times \mathbb{N} \times Q' \times \mathbb{N}$ is trivially effectively semilinear.

For the induction step we proceed as follows. By induction hypothesis \preceq^k is effectively semilinear. Using this, we reduce the problem of checking \preceq^{k+1} between N and N' to the problem of checking normal strong simulation \preceq between two derived one-counter nets N_S and N_D , and obtain the effective semilinearity of the relation from Theorem 14. More precisely,

the derived one-counter nets N_S and N_D will contain all control-states of N and N' , respectively, and we will have that $pm \preceq^{k+1} qn$ w.r.t. N, N' iff $pm \preceq qn$ w.r.t. N_S, N_D .

Before we describe N_S and N_D formally, we explain the function of a certain test gadget used in the construction.

An important observation is that after Duplicator made an ω -move in the approximation game between N and N' , the winner of the game from the resulting configuration depends only on the control-states and Spoiler's counter value, because Duplicator could choose his counter arbitrarily high. Moreover, monotonicity (Lemma 11, point 1) guarantees that there must be a minimal value for Spoiler's counter with which he can win if at all. This yields the following property.

For any pair of states $(p, q) \in Q \times Q'$ there must exist a value $M(p, q) \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{\omega\}$ s.t. for all $m \in \mathbb{N}$

$$(\forall n \in \mathbb{N}. pm \not\preceq^k qn) \iff m \geq M(p, q) \quad (6)$$

Since, by induction hypothesis, \preceq^k (and thus also its complement) is effectively semilinear, we can compute the values $M(p, q)$ for all $(p, q) \in Q \times Q'$.

The test gadgets.: Given the values $M(p, q)$, we construct test gadgets that check whether Spoiler's counter value is $\geq M(p, q)$. For each $(p, q) \in Q \times Q'$ we construct two one-counter nets $S(p, q)$ and $T(p, q)$ with initial states $s(p, q)$ and $t(p, q)$, respectively, such that the following property holds for all $m, n \in \mathbb{N}$.

$$s(p, q)m \not\preceq t(p, q)n \iff m \geq M(p, q) \quad (7)$$

The construction of $S(p, q)$ and $T(p, q)$ is very simple. Let $s(p, q)$ be the starting point of a counter-decreasing chain of e -steps of length $M(p, q) \in \mathbb{N}$ where the last state of the chain can make an f -step whereas $t(p, q)$ is a simple e -loop (where e, f are fresh actions not in Act). If $M(p, q) = \omega$, making $s(p, q)$ a deadlock suffices. Thus $S(p, q)$ and $T(p, q)$ are one-counter nets, which we denote by $S(p, q) = (Q_s(p, q), Act_s(p, q), \delta_s(p, q))$ and $T(p, q) = (Q_t(p, q), Act_t(p, q), \delta_t(p, q))$. Wlog. we assume that their state sets are disjoint from each other and from the original nets N, N' .

The construction of N_S and N_D .: Let $N_S = (Q_S, Act', \delta_S)$ and $N_D = (Q_D, Act', \delta_D)$ be one-counter nets constructed as follows. $Act' = Act \cup Q \times Q' \cup \{f, e\}$ (where e, f are the actions from the test gadgets). Spoiler's new net N_S has states

$$Q_S = Q \cup \bigcup_{p \in Q, q \in Q'} Q_s(p, q) \quad (8)$$

Duplicator's new net N_D has states

$$Q_D = Q' \cup \{W\} \cup \bigcup_{p \in Q, q \in Q'} Q_t(p, q). \quad (9)$$

where W is a new state.

Now we define the transition relations. $\delta_S = \delta \cup \bigcup_{p \in Q, q \in Q'} \delta_s(p, q)$ plus the following transitions for all $p \in Q, q \in Q'$:

$$p \xrightarrow{(p, q), 0} s(p, q) \quad (10)$$

$\delta_D = \{q \xrightarrow{a, x} q' \in \delta' \mid x \neq \omega\} \cup \bigcup_{p \in Q, q \in Q'} \delta_t(p, q)$ plus the following transitions for all $p, p' \in Q$ and $q, q' \in Q'$:

$$q \xrightarrow{a, 0} t(p, q') \quad , \quad \text{if } q \xrightarrow{a, \omega} q' \in \delta' \quad (11)$$

$$q \xrightarrow{(p', q'), 0} W \quad (12)$$

$$t(p, q) \xrightarrow{(p, q), 0} t(p, q) \quad (13)$$

$$t(p, q) \xrightarrow{(p, q'), 0} W \quad \text{for all } q \neq q' \quad (14)$$

$$t(p, q) \xrightarrow{a, 0} W \quad \text{for all } a \in Act \quad (15)$$

$$W \xrightarrow{a, 0} W \quad \text{for all } a \in Act' \quad (16)$$

Correctness proof.: We show that for any pair pm, qn of configurations of the nets N, N' we have $pm \preceq^{k+1} qn$ if and only if $pm \preceq qn$ in the newly constructed nets N_S, N_D .

To prove the 'if' direction we assume that $pm \not\preceq^{k+1} qn$ w.r.t. N, N' and derive that $pm \not\preceq qn$ w.r.t. N_S, N_D . By our assumption and Definition 6, there exists some ordinal α s.t. $pm \not\preceq_\alpha^{k+1} qn$. By Lemma 10, Spoiler has a winning strategy in the approximation game from position $(pm, qn, \alpha, k+1)$. The result then follows from the following general property.

Property P1: For all ordinals α , control-states $(p, q) \in Q \times Q'$ and naturals $m, n \in \mathbb{N}$: If Spoiler has a winning strategy in the approximation game from position $(pm, qn, \alpha, k+1)$ then he also has a winning strategy in the strong simulation game between N_S, N_D from position (pm, qn) .

Proof: To prove P1, we fix some $p \in Q, q \in Q'$ and proceed by ordinal induction on α . The base case trivially holds since Spoiler loses from a position $(pm, qn, 0, k+1)$.

For the induction step let Spoiler play the same move $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ for some $a \in Act$ in both games according to his assumed winning strategy in the approximation game. Now Duplicator makes his response move in the new game between N_S, N_D , which yields two cases. In the first case, Duplicator does not use a transition from Equation (11). Then his move induces a corresponding move in the approximation game which leads to a new configuration $(p'm', q'n', \alpha', k+1)$ where $p'm' \not\preceq_{\alpha'}^{k+1} q'n'$ for some ordinal $\alpha' < \alpha$. Thus, by Lemma 10 and the induction hypothesis, the property holds.

In the second case, Duplicator's response is via a transition from Equation (11), which leads to a new configuration $(p'm', t(p'', q')n)$ for some $p'' \in Q$. Thus in the approximation game there will exist Duplicator moves to positions $(p'm', q'n', \alpha', k)$ where $n' \in \mathbb{N}$ can be arbitrarily high. We can safely assume that Duplicator chooses $p'' = p'$, since otherwise Spoiler can win in one round by playing $p'm' \xrightarrow{(p', q')} W$. Now in the following round Spoiler can play $p'm' \xrightarrow{(p', q')} s(p', q')m'$ by Equation (10) and Duplicator's only option is to stay in his current state by Equation (13). The game thus continues from $(s(p', q')m', t(p', q')n)$. By our assumption Spoiler wins the approximation game from the position $(pm, qn, \alpha, k+1)$. Thus there is some ordinal $\alpha' < \alpha$ s.t. Spoiler also wins the approximation game from the position $(p'm', q'n', \alpha', k)$ for every $n' \in \mathbb{N}$. Thus, by Lemma 10 and Definition 6, we have $p'm' \not\preceq_{\alpha'}^k q'n'$ and

by Lemma 11 (item 2) $p'm' \not\preceq^k q'n'$ for all $n' \in \mathbb{N}$. By Equation (6) we obtain $m' \geq M(p', q')$. By the construction of the gadgets and Equation (7) we get $s(p', q')m' \not\preceq t(p', q')n$, which implies the desired property. ■

This concludes the proof of the ‘if’ direction. Now we prove the ‘only if’ direction of the correctness property. We assume that $pm \not\preceq qn$ in the newly constructed nets N_S and N_D and derive that $pm \not\preceq^{k+1} qn$ w.r.t. N, N' . To do this, we first show the following general property.

Property P2: If $pm \not\preceq qn$ with respect to nets N_S and N_D then there exists some general ordinal α' s.t. $pm \not\preceq_{\alpha'}^{k+1} qn$ with respect to nets N, N' .

Proof: Assume $pm \not\preceq qn$ with respect to nets N_S and N_D . Since both N_S, N_D are just one-counter nets, non-simulation manifests itself at some finite approximant $\alpha \in \mathbb{N}$, i.e., $pm \not\preceq_\alpha qn$. We prove property P2 by induction on α . The base case of $\alpha = 0$ is trivial. For the induction step we consider a move $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ for some $a \in Act$ by Spoiler in both games according to Spoiler’s assumed winning strategy in the game between N_S, N_D (It cannot be a Spoiler move $p \xrightarrow{(p,q),0} s(p, q)$ by Equation (10), because Duplicator would immediately win via a reply move by Equation (12)). Now we consider all (possibly infinitely many) replies by Duplicator in the approximation game between N, N' from a position $(pm, qn, \alpha', k+1)$ for some yet to be determined ordinal α' . These replies fall into two classes.

In the first class, Duplicator’s move $qn \xrightarrow{a} q'n'$ is not due to an ω -transition and thus also a possible move in the strong simulation game between N_S, N_D . From our assumption that Spoiler wins the strong simulation game from position (pm, qn) in at most α steps, it follows that Spoiler wins the strong simulation game from $(p'm', q'n')$ in at most $\alpha - 1$ steps. By induction hypothesis, there exists an ordinal α'' s.t. Spoiler has a winning strategy in the approximation game for $\preceq_{\alpha''}^{k+1}$ between N, N' from position $(p'm', q'n')$. There are only finitely many such replies. Thus let α^0 be the maximal such α'' .

In the second class, Duplicator’s move $qn \xrightarrow{a} q'n'$ uses an ω -transition which does not exist in N_D . Instead there exists a Duplicator transition $qn \xrightarrow{a,0} t(p'', q')n$ by Equation (11). From our assumption that Spoiler wins the strong simulation game from position (pm, qn) in at most α steps, it follows that Spoiler wins the strong simulation game from $(p'm', t(p'', q')n)$ in at most $\alpha - 1$ steps. If $p'' \neq p'$ then this is trivially true by a Spoiler move by Equation (10). Otherwise, if $p'' = p'$, then this can only be achieved by a Spoiler move of $p'm' \xrightarrow{(p',q'),0} s(p', q')m'$ in the next round, because for any other Spoiler move Duplicator has a winning countermove by Equations (14) or (15). In this case Duplicator can only reply with a move $t(p', q')qn \xrightarrow{(p',q'),0} t(p', q')n$ by Equation (13), and we must have that Spoiler can win in at most $\alpha - 2$ steps from position $(s(p', q')m', t(p', q')n)$. This implies, by Equation (7), that $m' \geq M(p', q')$. Then Equation (6) yields $\forall n \in \mathbb{N}. p'm' \not\preceq^k q'n$. Thus for every $n \in \mathbb{N}$ there exists some ordinal α_n s.t. $p'm' \not\preceq_{\alpha_n}^k q'n$. Let α'' be the smallest ordinal

s.t. $\forall n \in \mathbb{N}. \alpha_n \leq \alpha''$. Each of the finitely many distinct ω -transitions yields such an α'' . Let α^1 be the maximum of them.

We set $\alpha' := \max(\alpha^0, \alpha^1) + 1$. Then every reply to Spoilers move $pm \xrightarrow{a} p'm'$ in the approximation game from $(pm, qn, \alpha', k+1)$ leads to some position that is winning for Spoiler. So, Spoiler has a winning strategy in the approximation game from $(pm, qn, \alpha', k+1)$ and by Lemma 10, $pm \preceq_{\alpha'}^{k+1} qn$ w.r.t. N, N' , which concludes the proof of property P2. ■

To show the ‘only if’ direction of the correctness property, we assume that $pm \not\preceq qn$ in the newly constructed nets N_S, N_D . By property P2 we have $pm \not\preceq_{\alpha'}^{k+1} qn$ for some ordinal α' and thus $pm \not\preceq^{k+1} qn$ w.r.t. N, N' . This concludes the ‘only if’ direction.

We have constructed one-counter nets N_S, N_D s.t. $pm \preceq^{k+1} qn$ w.r.t. N, N' if and only if $pm \preceq qn$ w.r.t. N_S, N_D . By Theorem 14, \preceq^{k+1} is effectively semilinear. ■

Theorem 16: The largest weak simulation over processes of a given one-counter net is effectively semilinear and thus decidable.

Proof: By Theorem 5 it suffices to show that the largest strong simulation relation \preceq between a one-counter net N and a ω -net N' is effectively semilinear. By Lemma 15, we can iteratively compute the semilinearity description of the approximants \preceq^k for $k = 0, 1, 2, \dots$. Convergence can be detected by checking if $\preceq^k \stackrel{?}{=} \preceq^{k-1}$, which is effective because equality is decidable for semilinear sets. Termination (i.e., eventual convergence at a finite index) of this procedure is guaranteed by Lemma 13, and the reached limit is the semilinear simulation relation by Lemma 11 (item 4). ■

VI. APPROXIMANT CONVERGENCE AT ω^2

We show that the ordinary weak simulation approximants \leq_α converge at level $\alpha = \omega^2$ on OCN.

Lemma 17: When considering relations between a one-counter net and an ω -net, we have $\leq_{\omega i} \subseteq \preceq^i$ for every $i \in \mathbb{N}$.

Proof: By induction on i . The base case of $i = 0$ is trivial, since \preceq^0 is the full relation. We prove the inductive step by assuming the contrary and deriving a contradiction. Let $pm \leq_{\omega i} qn$ and $pm \not\preceq^i qn$ for some $i > 0$. Then there exists some ordinal α s.t. $pm \not\preceq_\alpha^i qn$. Without restriction let α be the least ordinal satisfying this condition. If $\alpha \leq \omega i$ then we trivially have a contradiction. Now we consider the case $\alpha > \omega i$. By $pm \not\preceq_\alpha^i qn$ and Lemma 10, Spoiler has a winning strategy in the approximant game from position (pm, qn, α, i) . Without restriction we assume that Spoiler plays optimally, i.e., wins as quickly as possible. Thus this game must reach some game position $(p'm', q'n', \alpha' + 1, i)$ where $\alpha' \geq \omega i$ is a limit ordinal, such that Spoiler can win from $(p'm', q'n', \alpha' + 1, i)$ but not from $(p'm', q'n', \alpha', i)$. I.e., $p'm' \not\preceq_{\alpha'+1}^i q'n'$, but $p'm' \preceq_{\alpha'}^i q'n'$. Consider Spoiler’s move $p'm' \xrightarrow{a} p''m''$ according to his optimal winning strategy in the game from position $(p'm', q'n', \alpha' + 1, i)$. Since $p'm' \preceq_{\alpha'}^i q'n'$ and α' is a limit ordinal, for every ordinal $\gamma_k < \alpha'$, Duplicator must have some countermove $q'n' \xrightarrow{a} q_k n_k$ s.t. $p''m'' \preceq_{\gamma_k}^j q_k n_k$.

where $j = i - 1$ if the move was due to an ω -transition and $j = i$ otherwise. In particular, $\sup_k \{\gamma_k\} = \alpha'$. However, since Spoiler's move $p'm' \xrightarrow{a} p''m''$ was according to his optimal winning strategy from position $(p'm', q'n', \alpha' + 1, i)$, we have that $p''m'' \not\leq_{\alpha'}^j q_k n_k$. Therefore, there must be infinitely many different Duplicator countermoves $q'n' \xrightarrow{a} q_k n_k$. Infinitely many of these countermoves must be due to an ω -transition, because apart from these the system is finitely branching. Thus for every ordinal $\gamma < \alpha'$ there is some Duplicator countermove $q'n' \xrightarrow{a} q_k n_k$ which is due to an ω -transition s.t. $p''m'' \leq_{\gamma_k}^{i-1} q_k n_k$ where $\gamma_k \geq \gamma$ (note the $i - 1$ index due to the ω -transition). In particular, we can choose $\gamma = \omega(i - 1)$, because $i > 0$ and $\alpha' \geq \omega i$. Then we have $p''m'' \leq_{\omega(i-1)}^{i-1} q_k n_k$, but $p''m'' \not\leq_{\alpha'}^{i-1} q_k n_k$. However, from $p''m'' \leq_{\omega(i-1)}^{i-1} q_k n_k$ and the induction hypothesis, we obtain $p''m'' \leq_{\omega(i-1)}^{i-1} q_k n_k$ and in particular $p''m'' \leq_{\alpha'}^{i-1} q_k n_k$. Contradiction. ■

Theorem 18: Weak simulation approximants on OCN converge at level ω^2 , but not earlier in general.

Proof: First we show that \leq_{ω^2} is contained in \leq for OCN. Let pm and qn be processes of OCN M and N , respectively. Let M', N' be the derived OCN and ω -net from Theorem 5. Assume $pm \leq_{\omega^2} qn$ w.r.t. M, N . Then, by point 2) of Theorem 5, $pm \leq_{\omega^2} qn$ w.r.t. M', N' . In particular we have $pm \leq_{\omega CB} qn$ w.r.t. M', N' , with the $CB \in \mathbb{N}$ from Lemma 13. From Lemma 17 we obtain $pm \leq^{CB} qn$ w.r.t. M', N' . Lemma 13 yields $pm \leq qn$ w.r.t. M', N' . Finally, by Theorem 5, we obtain $pm \leq qn$ w.r.t. M, N .

To see that ω^2 is needed in general, consider the following class of examples. Let $p \xrightarrow{a} p$ define a simple OCN (actually even a finite system). For every $i \in \mathbb{N}$ we define an OCN N_i with transitions $(q_k, a, -1, q_k)$, $(q_{k-1}, \tau, 0, q'_{k-1})$, $(q'_{k-1}, \tau, 1, q'_{k-1})$, and $(q'_{k-1}, a, 0, q_k)$ for all k with $1 \leq k \leq i$. Then, for the net N_i , we have $p \leq_{\omega i} q_0 0$, but $p \not\leq q_0 0$. Thus in general $\leq \neq \leq_{\omega i}$ for any $i \in \mathbb{N}$. ■

VII. UNDECIDABILITY OF TRACE INCLUSION AND EQUIVALENCE

For any process α we write $T(\alpha)$ for the set $\{w \in Act^* \mid \exists \beta. \alpha \xrightarrow{w} \beta\}$ of traces of α . We consider trace inclusion and equivalence checking for OCN, which was stated as an open question in [13]. We show that both problems are undecidable for OCN by a reduction from the containment problem for weighted automata [16].

Definition 19 (Weighted Automata): A weighted finite automaton (WFA) is a tuple (Q, Σ, δ, q_0) where Q is a finite set of states, Σ a finite alphabet, $q_0 \in Q$ an initial state and $\delta \subseteq Q \times \Sigma \times \mathbb{N} \times Q$ a transition relation. If $(p, a, d, p') \in \delta$ the automaton can go from p to p' reading a symbol 'a' with reward $d \in \mathbb{N}$. A run of A on a word $w = w_0 w_1 \dots w_n \in \Sigma^*$ is a sequence $(q_i, w_i, d_i, q_{i+1})_{0 \leq i < n} \in \delta^*$ of transitions. The value of such a run is $\sum_{i=0}^{n-1} d_i$; the value $L(A, w)$ of a word $w \in \Sigma^*$ is the maximal value of any run on w .

We say that the language of WFA A is contained in that of WFA B (over the same alphabet Σ), $L(A) \subseteq L(B)$, iff for all

words $w \in \Sigma^*$, $L(A, w) \leq L(B, w)$. Checking $L(A) \subseteq L(B)$ is undecidable [16] (Theorem 4). The next result is a direct consequence.

Theorem 20: Trace inclusion/equivalence between OCN-processes is undecidable.

Proof: Inclusion can trivially be reduced to equivalence for nondeterministic systems like OCN. Thus we show undecidability of inclusion by reduction from WFA containment. The idea is to encode the WFA as OCN, using the counter as accumulator. To ensure a faithful encoding of WFA containment, the OCN can at any point jump to a gadget that compares the counter values.

Given WFA $A = (Q_A, \Sigma, \delta_A, q_A)$ and $B = (Q_B, \Sigma, \delta_B, q_B)$ we construct nets A' and B' with states $Q_A \cup \{D\}$ and $Q_B \cup \{D\}$ resp., over alphabet $Act = \Sigma \cup \{d\}$ where d is a fresh symbol. We add transitions $D \xrightarrow{d, -1} D$ to both nets as well as $q \xrightarrow{d, -1} D$ for any original state. We argue that $L(A) \subseteq L(B)$ if and only if $T(q_A(0)) \subseteq T(q_B(0))$.

Assume a witness w with $L(A, w) = v > L(B, w)$. Then there is a run of A on w with a value higher than that of any run of B on w . So the word wd^v must be a valid trace from $q_A(0)$, but not from $q_B(0)$. Conversely, if $L(A, w) \leq L(B, w)$ for all $w \in \Sigma^*$, then for any run of A' there is a run of B' over the same sequence of actions which accumulates a higher or equal counter value. Thus no such word can be extended to a counterexample for trace inclusion by appending finitely many d 's. ■

VIII. COMPARING OCN/OCA AND FINITE SYSTEMS

Simulation. First we consider checking strong/weak simulation between OCN/OCA and finite systems, and vice-versa.

Theorem 21: Checking if a finite-state process weakly simulates a OCN process is in P .

Proof: By reduction to checking if a finite-state process strongly simulates a OCN process which is in P [17]. ■

For the other direction, checking if a OCN process weakly simulates a finite-state process, we show that it suffices to consider a finite version of the net where the counter is capped at a polynomially bounded level. The crucial observation is that monotonicity implies that Duplicator must be able to ensure that his counter never decreases along any partial play that repeats control-states.

Definition 22: Let $N = (Q, Act, \delta)$ be a OCN and $l \in \mathbb{N}$. The l -capped version of N is the finite system $N_l = (Q_l, \rightarrow)$ with states $Q_l = \{(\hat{q}, n) \mid q \in Q, n \leq l\}$ and transitions $(\hat{q}, n) \xrightarrow{a} (\hat{q}', \min\{n', l\})$ iff $qn \xrightarrow{a}_N q'n'$.

It is easy to see that N_l can be constructed from N in time proportional to $l \times |N|$. For $n, l \in \mathbb{N}$ we observe the following properties.

Proposition 23:

- 1) $(\hat{q}, \min\{n, l\}) \leq qn$,
- 2) $qn \leq_l (\hat{q}, \min\{n, l\})$,
- 3) $(\hat{q}, \min\{n, l\}) \leq (\hat{q}, \min\{n + 1, l\})$.

We continue to show that Duplicator can be assumed to play optimally in a sense that depends on cycles in the underlying

control graphs. Consider a simulation game between a finite process and a OCN process (or its c -capped version).

Definition 24: A partial play $\pi = (p_0, q_0 n_0)(t_0, t'_0) \dots (p_l, q_l n_l)$ is a *cycle* if $p_0 = p_l$ and $q_0 = q_l$. It is *decreasing* if $n_0 > n_l$.

Similarly, if Duplicator plays on a c -capped version of the net, the partial play $\pi = (p_0, (\hat{q}_0, \min\{n_0, c\}))(t_0, t'_0) \dots (p_l, (\hat{q}_l, \min\{n_l, c\}))$ is a cycle if $p_0 = p_l$ and $\hat{q}_0 = \hat{q}_l$ and is decreasing if the second component of Duplicator's state decreases. A cycle is called *simple* if no proper subsequence is itself a cycle. The length of simple cycles is bounded by $|S \times Q|$, where S is the set of states of the finite-state process.

Proofs of the next two lemmas can be found in [15].

Lemma 25: Suppose $p \leq qn$. Then Duplicator has a winning strategy in the weak simulation game that moreover guarantees the following properties in every play.

- 1) No round decreases the counter by more than $|Q| \cdot 2 + 1$.
- 2) Every simple cycle is non-decreasing.

The next lemma uses the previously stated optimality assumption to show that we only need to consider a polynomially capped net to determine if a OCN process weakly simulates a finite-state process.

Lemma 26: For any pair $F = (S, \rightarrow)$, $N = (Q, Act, \delta)$ of a finite-state system and OCN resp., there is a fixed polynomial bound c such that for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$:

$$p \leq qn \iff p \leq (\hat{q}, \min\{n, c\})$$

and $(\hat{q}, \min\{n, c\})$ is a state of the c -capped version N_c of N .

Theorem 27: Checking if a OCN process weakly simulates a finite-state process can be done in polynomial time.

Proof: To check if $p \leq qn$ holds we can by Lemma 26 equivalently check $p \leq (\hat{q}, \min\{n, c\})$ where $(\hat{q}, \min\{n, c\})$ is a state of a polynomially bounded finite system N_c . Checking weak simulation between two finite processes is in P . ■

Trace Inclusion. Now we consider checking strong/weak trace inclusion between finite-state systems and OCA/OCN. It is undecidable whether an OCA contains the strong/weak traces of a finite-state system [12]. However, it is decidable whether a Petri net contains the strong/weak traces of a finite-state system [18], and thus the question is decidable for OCN.

Now we consider the other direction of trace inclusion. We show that checking whether a finite-state system contains the strong/weak traces of an OCA is PSPACE complete. For this we recall some structural properties of OCA processes. We write $pm \rightarrow_k qn$ for OCA configurations pm and qn if there is a path of length k from pm to qn . A path is *positive* if at most the last visited configuration has counter value 0, i.e., no step is due to a transition in δ_0 . We write $pm \xrightarrow{+}_k qn$ if there is a positive path of length k from pm to qn .

Lemma 28 ([19], Lemma 5): Consider a OCA with state-set Q and let $p, q \in Q$. If $p1 \xrightarrow{*} q0$ then $p1 \rightarrow_k q0$ for some $k \leq |Q|^3$.

Lemma 29: Consider a OCA $(Q, Act, \delta, \delta_0)$ where $K = |Q|$ and $p, q \in Q$. If $pm \xrightarrow{*} qn$ for some $n \in \mathbb{N}$ then $pm \rightarrow_k qn'$ for some n' and $k \leq \max\{m, 1\}5K^4$.

Proof: We distinguish two cases depending on whether there is a positive minimal path from pm to qn .

Case 1: There is a positive minimal path witnessing $pm \xrightarrow{*} qn$. Consider such a path $(p_0 m_0), (p_1 m_1), \dots, (p_k m_k)$ from $pm = p_0 m_0$ to $qn = p_k m_k$. We know that there is a path from p to q in the control graph of the automaton that uses transitions in δ only. So there must be such a path in the control graph that is no longer than K . Thus, if $m \geq K$, then there is a n' such that $pm \xrightarrow{+}_k qn'$ for some $k \leq K$. Otherwise, if $m < K$, we observe that

$$\text{if } pm \xrightarrow{+}_k p'm' \text{ then } p(m+1) \xrightarrow{+}_k p'(m'+1). \quad (17)$$

After at most K steps, our minimal path will repeat some control-state $p_j = p_l$ at positions $j < l < K$. By minimality and point (17) we can assume that $m_j < m_l$. Therefore, after at most K such repetitions the counter will reach a value $\geq K$, and thus, by the first case above, the remaining path must be of length $\leq K$. This allows us to bound the length of the minimal path from pm to control-state q by $K^2 + K$.

Case 2: No minimal path witnessing $pm \xrightarrow{*} qn$ is positive. Consider a minimal path $(p_0 m_0), (p_1 m_1), \dots, (p_k m_k)$ from $pm = p_0 m_0$ to $qn = p_k m_k$ and let i_0, i_1, \dots, i_l be exactly those indices with $m_{i_j} = 0$. We split the path into phases $p_0 m_0 \xrightarrow{*} p_{i_0} m_{i_0}, p_{i_j} m_{i_j+1} \xrightarrow{*} p_{i_{j+1}} m_{i_{j+1}}$ for $0 \leq j < l$ and $p_{i_{l+1}} m_{i_{l+1}} \xrightarrow{*} p_k m_k$ and consider the first, the last and the intermediate phases separately.

First phase. The path $p_0 m_0 \xrightarrow{*} p_{i_0} m_{i_0}$ can be split into parts $q_j(m_0 - j) \xrightarrow{*} q_{j+1}(m_0 - (j+1))$ for $0 \leq j < m_0$ and $q_0 = p_0$ and $q_{m_0} = p_{i_0}$, by considering the first occasions where the counter value reaches $m_0 - j$. In particular, inside the path $q_j(m_0 - j) \xrightarrow{*} q_{j+1}(m_0 - (j+1))$ the counter value does not drop below $m_0 - j$ before the last step. By Lemma 28 and point (17) there exists a path $q_j(m_0 - j) \xrightarrow{*} q_{j+1}(m_0 - (j+1))$ of length $\leq K^3$. Thus the path $p_0 m_0 \xrightarrow{*} p_{i_0} m_{i_0}$ can be bounded by length mK^3 .

Intermediate phases. These are paths from some configuration $p_{i_j} 0$ to $p_{i_{j+1}} 0$. Such a path is either of length 1, or the first step increases the counter, i.e., $p_{i_j} 0 \rightarrow q1$ for some control-state q . In the latter case, by minimality and Lemma 28 we can bound the path from $q1$ to $p_{i_{j+1}} 0$ by K^3 . Thus we can bound the path $p_{i_j} 0$ to $p_{i_{j+1}} 0$ by $K^3 + 1$. Note that there can only be at most K such intermediate phases, because the path would otherwise repeat a configuration which would contradict its minimality.

Last phase. The last phase is a positive path. Like in Case 1) we can bound its length by $K^2 + K$.

To conclude, the length of the shortest witness for $pm \xrightarrow{*} qn$ is bounded by $mK^3 + K(K^3 + 1) + K^2 + K \leq \max\{m, 1\}5K^4$. ■

Theorem 30: Checking strong trace inclusion $T(pm) \subseteq T(q)$ or weak trace inclusion $T(pm) \subseteq T(q)$ for a OCA process pm and a finite process q is PSPACE complete.

Proof: A PSPACE lower bound holds already for strong trace inclusion of finite-state systems [20]. The weak trace inclusion problem $T(pm) \subseteq T(q)$ can trivially be reduced

TABLE I
DECIDABILITY OF PREORDERS AND EQUIVALENCES ON FINITE-STATE SYSTEMS, OCN AND OCA, RESP. NEW RESULTS IN BOLDFACE.

	FS	OCN	OCA
\sim	P-complete [21]	PSPACE-complete [22], [6]	
\approx	P-complete [21]	undecidable [1]	
\preceq	P-complete [21]	decidable [7], [9] PSPACE-hard [22]	undecidable [10]
\leq	P-complete [21]	decidable	undecidable [10]
\subseteq / \subseteq	PSPACE-compl. [20]	undecidable	undecidable [12]

TABLE II
KNOWN RESULTS ON CHECKING SIMULATION, WEAK SIMULATION AND TRACE INCLUSION BETWEEN ONE-COUNTER AND FINITE SYSTEMS.

	OCN	OCA
$\sim FS$	P-complete [23]	P-complete [23]
$\approx FS$	P^{NP} -complete [3]	P^{NP} -complete [3]
$\preceq FS$ (and $FS \preceq$)	P-complete [17]	PSPACE-complete[2], [22]
$\leq FS$ (and $FS \leq$)	P-complete	PSPACE-complete[2], [22]
$\subseteq / \subseteq FS$	PSPACE-complete	PSPACE-complete
$FS \subseteq / \subseteq$	decidable [18]	undecidable [12]

to the strong one by taking the transitive closure of the finite system w.r.t. invisible transitions. It remains to show a PSPACE upper bound for the problem $T(pm) \subseteq T(q)$. Let pm be a configuration of the OCA $A = (Q, Act, \delta, \delta_0)$ and q a state of the NFA $B = (S, Act, \delta)$ and let \bar{B} denote the powerset automaton of B .

To check if $T(pm) \not\subseteq T(q)$ holds we can equivalently test $T(pm) \cap T(q)^c \neq \emptyset$. That is, if in the product automaton $A \times \bar{B}$ some control-state (p', \emptyset) is reachable from initial configuration $(p, \{q\})m$. This can be checked by nondeterministically guessing a path stepwise. The finite control of the automaton $A \times \bar{B}$ is bounded by $K := |Q| * 2^{|S|}$. By Lemma 29 we know that the shortest path that witnesses such a control-state reachability is bounded by $B := \max\{m, 1\}5K^4$. This bounds the number of steps we need to consider until we can safely terminate and conclude that in fact trace inclusion holds. B is polynomial in m and $|Q|$ and exponential in $|S|$. However, we need only polynomial space to store a configuration of $A \times \bar{B}$ (with control-state numbers and counter values encoded in binary) and the binary coded values of the search-depth and its bound B . Thus we can check the condition in PSPACE. ■

IX. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We summarize known results about the complexity of checking the following semantic preorders/equivalences: strong bisimulation \sim , weak bisimulation \approx , strong simulation \preceq , weak simulation \leq , strong trace inclusion \subseteq and weak trace inclusion \subseteq . In Table I we consider problems where systems of the same type are compared, while in Table II we consider the problems of checking preorders/equivalences between infinite-state systems and finite-state systems.

The construction used to show PSPACE hardness of strong bisimulation in [22] uses OCN only, and moreover it can be modified to prove a PSPACE lower bound for checking strong simulation between OCA and finite systems (and vice-versa) and strong simulation for OCN; see Remark 3.8 in [22].

The proof of the undecidability of weak bisimulation between OCN [1] can be modified to work even for the subclass of normed nets with unary alphabets.

A PSPACE upper bound for strong/weak simulation between OCA and FS (and vice-versa) can be obtained by reduction to μ -calculus model checking for OCA, which is in PSPACE [2].

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