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**Bayesian Programming and Learn-  
ing for Multi-Player Video Games**  
Application to RTS AI

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# Remerciements



# Résumé

## TODO

Dans la première partie de cette thèse, nous détaillons les solutions actuelles aux problèmes qui se posent lors de la réalisation d'une IA de jeu multi-joueur, en donnant un aperçu des caractéristiques calculatoires et cognitives complexes des principaux types de jeux. En partant de ce constat, nous résumons les catégories transversales de problèmes, et nous introduisons comment elles peuvent être résolues par la modélisation bayésienne. Nous expliquons alors comment construire un programme bayésien en partant de connaissances et d'observations du domaine à travers un exemple simple de jeu de rôle. Dans la deuxième partie de la thèse, nous détaillons l'application de cette approche à l'IA de STR, ainsi que les modèles auxquels nous sommes parvenus. Pour le comportement réactif (micro-management), nous présentons un contrôleur multi-agent décentralisé et temps réel inspiré de la fusion sensori-motrice. Ensuite, nous accomplissons les adaptations dynamiques de nos stratégies et tactiques à celles de l'adversaire en le modélisant à l'aide de l'apprentissage artificiel (supervisé et non supervisé) depuis des traces de joueurs de haut niveau. Ces modèles probabilistes de joueurs peuvent être utilisés à la fois pour la prédiction des décisions/actions de l'adversaire, mais aussi à nous-même pour la prise de décision si on substitue les entrées par les nôtres. Enfin, nous expliquons l'architecture de notre joueur robotique de StarCraft, et nous précisons quelques détails techniques d'implémentation. Au-delà des modèles et de leurs implémentations, il y a trois contributions principales: la reconnaissance de plan et la modélisation de l'adversaire par apprentissage artificiel, en tirant partie de la structure du jeu, la prise de décision multi-échelles en présence d'informations incertaines, et l'intégration des modèles bayésiens au contrôle temps réel d'un joueur artificiel.

## TODO



# Abstract

This thesis explores the use of Bayesian models in multi-player video games AI, particularly real-time strategy (RTS) games AI. Video games are an in-between of real world robotics and total simulations, as other players are not simulated, nor do we have control over the simulation. RTS games require having strategic (technological, economical), tactical (spatial, temporal) and reactive (units control) actions and decisions on the go. We used Bayesian modeling as an alternative to (boolean valued) logic, able to cope with incompleteness of information and (thus) uncertainty. Indeed, incomplete specification of the possible behaviors in scripting, or incomplete specification of the possible states in planning/search raise the need to deal with uncertainty. Machine learning helps reducing the complexity of fully specifying such models. We show that Bayesian programming can integrate all kinds of sources of uncertainty (hidden state, intention, stochasticity), through the realization of a fully robotic StarCraft player. Probability distributions are a mean to convey the full extent of the information we have and can represent by turns: constraints, partial knowledge, state space estimation and incompleteness in the model itself.

In the first part of this thesis, we review the current solutions to problems raised by multi-player game AI, by outlining the types of computational and cognitive complexities in the main gameplay types. From here, we sum up the transversal categories of problems, introducing how Bayesian modeling can deal with all of them. We then explain how to build a Bayesian program from domain knowledge and observations through a toy role-playing game example. In the second part of the thesis, we detail our application of this approach to RTS AI, and the models that we built up. For reactive behavior (micro-management), we present a real-time multi-agent decentralized controller inspired from sensory motor fusion. We then show how to perform strategic and tactical adaptation to a dynamic opponent through opponent modeling and machine learning (both supervised and unsupervised) from highly skilled players' traces. These probabilistic player-based models can be applied both to the opponent for prediction, or to ourselves for decision-making, through different inputs. Finally, we explain our StarCraft robotic player architecture and precise some technical implementation details.

Beyond models and their implementations, our contributions are threefolds: machine learning based plan recognition/opponent modeling by using the structure of the domain knowledge, multi-scale decision-making under uncertainty, and integration of Bayesian models with a real-

time control program.

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# Notations

## Symbols

- $\leftarrow$  assignment of value to the left hand operand
- $\sim$  the right operand is the distribution of the left operand (random variable)
- $\propto$  proportionality
- $\approx$  approximation
- $\#$  cardinal of a space or dimension of a variable

## Variables

$X$ and <i>Variable</i>	random variables (or logical propositions)
$x$ and <i>value</i>	values
$\#s =  s $	cardinal of the set $s$
$\#X =  X $	shortcut for “cardinal of the set of the values of $X$ ”
$X_{1:n}$	the set of $n$ random variables $X_1 \dots X_n$
$\{x \in \Omega   Q(x)\}$	the set of elements from $\Omega$ which verify $Q$

## Probabilities

$P(X) = Distribution$	is equivalent to $X \sim Distribution$
$P(x) = P(X = x) = P([X = x])$	Probability (distribution) that $X$ takes the value $x$
$P(X, Y) = P(X \wedge Y)$	Probability (distribution) of the conjunction of $X$ and $Y$
$P(X Y)$	Probability (distribution) of $X$ knowing $Y$

## Conventions

TODO



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### 1.1 Motivations

Video games AI research is yielding new approaches to a wide range of problems, for instance in RTS: pathfinding, multiple agents coordination, collaboration, prediction, planning and (multi-scale) reasoning under uncertainty. These problems are particularly interesting in the RTS framework because the solutions have to deal with many objects, imperfect information and micro-actions while running in real-time on desktop hardware.

- Multi-player video games Adversarial decision-making. Partial information. Real-time. Massive state spaces.
- RTS games Expert human play > AI. Data. Competitions.

### 1.2 Contributions

- A new approach to game AI with:
  - first-class uncertainty.
  - a tractable hierarchical decomposition of problems.
- Integration of learning in a decision-making model.
- An autonomous agent for StarCraft (BroodwarBotQ).

Finally, with this thesis, we hope to contribute a guide for industry practitioners who would like to have new tools for solving the ever increasing complexity of game AI, and more generally “huge state space” and multi-scale AI.

### **1.3 Reading Map**

À la MacKay (Industry vs Research)

# Chapter 2

## Game AI

*It is not that the games and mathematical problems are chosen because they are clear and simple; rather it is that they give us, for the smallest initial structures, the greatest complexity, so that one can engage some really formidable situations after a relatively minimal diversion into programming.*

Marvin Minsky (Semantic Information Processing, 1968)

Is the primary goal of game AI to win the game? “Game AI” is simultaneously a research topic and an industry standard practice, for which the main metric is the fun the players are having. Its uses range from character animation, to behavior modeling, strategic play, and a true gameplay component. In this chapter, we will give our educated guess about the goals of game AI, and review what exists for a broad category of games: abstract strategy games, partial information and/or stochastic games, different genres of computer games. Let us then focus on gameplay (from a player point of view) characteristics of these games so that we can enumerate game AI needs.

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### 2.1 Goals of Game AI

#### NPC

Non-playing characters (NPC\*), also called “mobs”, represent a massive volume of game AI, as even a lot of multi-player games have NPC. They really represent players that are not conceived

to be played by humans, by opposition to “bots”, which corresponds to human-playable characters controlled by an AI. NPC are an important part of ever more immersive single player adventures (The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim), of cooperative gameplay (World of Warcraft, Left 4 Dead), or as helpers or trainers (“pets”, strategy games). NPC can be a core part of the gameplay as in Creatures or Black and White or dull “quest giving poles” as in a lot of role-playing games. They are of interest for the game industry, but also for robotics, to study human cognition and for artificial intelligence in the large. So, the first goal of game AI is perhaps just to make the artificial world seem alive: a paint is not much fun to play in.

## Win

During the last decade, the video games industry has seen the emergence of “e-sport”. It is the professionalizing of specific competitive games at the higher levels, as in sports: with spectators, leagues, sponsors, fans and broadcasts. A list of major electronic sports games includes (but is not limited to): StarCraft: Brood War, Counter-Strike, Quake III, Warcraft III, Halo, StarCraft II. The first game to have had pro-gamers\* was StarCraft: Brood War\*, in Korea, with top players earning more than Korean top soccer players. Top players earn more than \$400,000 a year but the professional average is below, around \$50-60,000 a year [Contracts, 2007], against the average South Korean salary at \$16,300 in 2010. Currently, Brood War is being slowly phased out to StarCraft II. There are TV channels broadcasting Brood War (OnGameNet, previously also MBC Game) or StarCraft II (GOM TV, streaming) and for which it constitutes a major chunk of the air time. “E-sport” is important to the subject of game AI because it ensures competitiveness of the human players. It is less challenging to write a competitive AI for game played by few and without competitions than to write an AI for Chess, Go or StarCraft. E-sport, through the distribution of “replays\*” also ensures a constant and heavy flow of human player data to mine and learn from. Finally, cognitive science researchers (like the Simon Fraser University Cognitive Science Lab) study the cognitive aspects (attention, learning) of high level RTS playing [Simon Fraser University].

Good human players, through their ability to learn and adapt, and through high-level strategic reasoning, are still undefeated. Single players are often frustrated by the NPC behaviors in non-linear (not fully scripted) games. Nowadays, video games AI can be used as part of the gameplay as a challenge to the player. This is not the case in most of the games though, in decreasing order of resolution of the problem<sup>1</sup>: fast FPS\* (first person shooters), team FPS, RPG\* (role playing games), MMORPG\* (Massively Multi-player Online RPG), RTS\* (Real-Time Strategy). These games in which artificial intelligences do not beat top human players on equal footing requires increasingly more cheats to even be a challenge (not for long as they mostly do not adapt). AI cheats encompass (but are not limited to):

- RPG NPC often have at least 10 times more hit points (health points) than their human counterparts in equal numbers,
- FPS bots can see through walls and use perfect aiming,
- RTS bots see through the “fog of war\*” and have free additional resources.

---

<sup>1</sup>Particularly considering games with possible free worlds and “non-linear” storytelling, current RPG and MMORPG are often limited *because* of the untracted “world interacting NPC” AI problem.

How do we build game robotic players (“bots”, AI, NPC) which can provide some challenge, or be helpful without being frustrating, while staying fun?

## Fun

The main purpose of gaming is entertainment. Of course, there are game genres like serious gaming, or the “gamification\*” of learning, but the majority of people playing games are having fun. Cheating AI are not fun, and so the replayability\* of single player games is very low. The vast majority of games which are still played after the single player mode are multi-player games, because humans are the most fun to play with. So how do we get game AI to be fun to play with? The answer seems to be 3-fold:

- For competitive and PvP\* (players versus players) games: improve game AI so that it can play well *on equal footing with humans*,
- for cooperative and PvE\* (players vs environment) games: optimize the AI for fun, “epic wins”: the empowerment of playing your best and just barely winning,
- give the AI all the tools to adapt the game to the players: AI directors\* (as in Left 4 Dead\* and Dark Spore\*), procedural content generation (e.g. automatic personalized Mario [Shaker et al., 2010]).

In all cases, a good AI should be able to learn from the players’ actions, recognize their behavior to deal with it in the most entertaining way. Examples for a few mainstream games: World of Warcraft instances or StarCraft II missions could be less predictable (less scripted) and always “just hard enough”, Battlefield 3 or Call of Duty opponents could have a longer life expectancy (5 seconds in some cases), Skyrim’s follower NPC could avoid blocking the player in doors, or going in front when she casts fireballs.

## Programming

How do game developers want to deal with game AI programming? We have to understand the needs of industry game AI programmers:

- computational efficiency: most games are real-time systems, 3D graphics are computationally intensive, as a result the AI CPU budget is low,
- game designers often want to remain in control of the behaviors, so game AI programmers have to provide authoring tools,
- AI code has to scale with the state spaces while being debuggable,
- AI behaviors have to scale with the possible game states (which are not all predictable due to the presence of the human player),
- re-use across games (game independent logic, at least libraries).

As a first approach, programmers can “hard code” the behaviors and their switches. For some structuring of such states and transitions, they can and do use state machines [Houlette and Fu,

2003]. This solution does not scale well (exponential increase in the number of transitions), nor do they generate autonomous behavior, and they can be cumbersome for the game designers to interact with. Hierarchical finite state machine (FSM)\* is a partial answer to these problems: they scale better due to the sharing of transitions between macro-states and are more readable for game designers who can zoom-in on macro/englobing states. They still represent way too much programming work for complex behavior and are not more autonomous than classic FSM. Bakkes et al. [2004] used an adaptive FSM mechanism inspired by evolutionary algorithms to play Quake III team games. Planning (using a search heuristic in the states space) efficiently gives autonomy to virtual characters. Planners like hierarchical task networks (HTNs)\* [Erol et al., 1994] or STRIPS [Fikes and Nilsson, 1971] generate complex behaviors in the space of the combinations of specified states, and the logic can be re-used across games. The drawbacks can be a large computational budget (for many agents and/or a complex world), the difficulty to specify reactive behavior, and less (or harder) control from the game designers. Behavior trees (Halo 2 [Isla, 2005], Spore) are a popular in-between HTN\* and hierarchical finite state machine (HFSM)\* technique providing scalability through a tree-like hierarchy, control through tree editing and some autonomy through a search heuristic. A transversal technique for ease of use is to program game AI with a script (LUA, Python) or domain specific language (DSL\*). From a programming or design point of view, it will have the drawbacks of the models it is based on. If everything is allowed (low-level inputs and outputs directly in the DSL), everything is possible at the cost of cumbersome programming, debugging and few re-use.

Even with scalable<sup>2</sup> architectures like behavior trees or the autonomy that planning provides, there are limitations (burdens on programmers/designers or CPU/GPU):

- complex worlds require either very long description of the state (in propositional logic) or high expressivity (higher order logics) to specify well-defined behaviors,
- the search space of possible actions increases exponentially with the volume and complexity of interactions with the world, thus requiring ever more efficient pruning techniques,
- once human players are in the loop (is it not the purpose of a game?), uncertainty has to be taken into account. Previous approaches can be “patched” to deal with uncertainty, at what cost?

Our thesis is that we can learn complex behaviors from exploration or observations (of human players) without the need to be explicitly programmed. Furthermore, the game designers can stay in control by choosing which demonstration to learn from and tuning parameters by hand if wanted. Le Hy et al. [2004] showed it in the case of FPS AI (Unreal Tournament), with *inverse programming* to learn reactive behaviors from human demonstration. We extend it to tactical and even strategic behaviors.

## 2.2 Single Player Games

Single player games are not the main focus of our thesis, but they present a few interesting AI characteristics. They encompass all kinds of human cognitive abilities, from reflexes to higher level thinking.

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<sup>2</sup>both computationally and in the number of lines of codes to write to produce a new behavior

## Action games

Platform games (Mario, Sonic), time attack racing games (TrackMania), solo shoot-them-up (“schmups”, Space Invaders, DodonPachi), sports games and rhythm games (Dance Dance Revolution, Guitar Hero) are games of reflexes, skill and familiarity with the environment. The main components of game AI in these genres is a quick path search heuristic, often with a dynamic environment. At the Computational Intelligence and Games conferences series, there have been Mario [Togelius et al., 2010], PacMan [Rohlfshagen and Lucas, 2011] and racing competitions [Loiacono et al., 2008]: the winners often use (clever) heuristics coupled with a search algorithm (A\* for instance). As there are no human opponents, reinforcement learning and genetic programming works well too. In action games, the artificial player most often has a big advantage on its human counterpart as reaction time is one of the key characteristics.

## Puzzles

Point and click (Monkey Island, Kyrandia, Day of the Tentacle), graphic adventure (Myst, Heavy Rain), (tile) puzzles (Minesweeper, Tetris) games are games of logical thinking and puzzle solving. The main components of game AI in these genres is an inference engine with sufficient domain knowledge (an ontology). AI research is not particularly active in the genre of puzzle games, perhaps because solving them has more to do with writing down the ontology than with using new AI techniques. A classic well-studied logic-based, combinatorial puzzle is Sudoku, which has been formulated as a SAT-solving [Lynce and Ouaknine, 2006] and constraint satisfaction problem [Simonis, 2005].

## 2.3 Abstract Strategy Games

### Tic-tac-toe, Minimax

Tic-tac-toe (noughts and crosses) is a solved game\*, meaning that it can be played optimally from each possible position. How did it came to get solved? Each and every possible positions (26,830) have been analyzed by a Minimax (or its variant Negamax) algorithm. Minimax is an algorithm which can be used to determine the optimal score a player can get for a move in a zero-sum game\*. The Minimax theorem states:

**Theorem.** *For every two-person, zero-sum game with finitely many strategies, there exists a value  $V$  and a mixed strategy for each player, such that (a) Given player 2’s strategy, the best payoff possible for player 1 is  $V$ , and (b) Given player 1’s strategy, the best payoff possible for player 2 is  $-V$ .*

Applying this theorem to Tic-tac-toe, we can say that winning is +1 point for the player and losing is -1, while draw is 0. The exhaustive search algorithm which takes this property into account is described in Algorithm 1. The result of applying this algorithm to the Tic-tac-toe situation of Fig. 2.1 is exhaustively represented in Fig. 2.2. For zero-sum games (as abstract strategy games discussed here), there is a (simpler) Minimax variant called Negamax, shown in Algorithm 7 in Appendix A.

---

**Algorithm 1** Minimax algorithm

---

```
function MINI(depth)
    if  $depth \leq 0$  then
        return  $-value()$ 
    end if
     $min \leftarrow +\infty$ 
    for all possible moves do
         $score \leftarrow maxi(depth - 1)$ 
        if  $score < min$  then
             $min \leftarrow score$ 
        end if
    end for
    return  $min$ 
end function

function MAXI(depth)
    if  $depth \leq 0$  then
        return  $value()$ 
    end if
     $max \leftarrow -\infty$ 
    for all possible moves do
         $score \leftarrow mini(depth - 1)$ 
        if  $score > max$  then
             $max \leftarrow score$ 
        end if
    end for
    return  $max$ 
end function
```

---

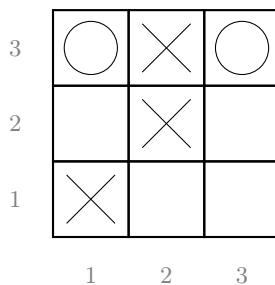


Figure 2.1: A Tic-tac-toe board position, in which it is the “circles” player’s turn to play. The labeling explains the indexing (left to right, bottom to top, starting at 1) of the grid.



Figure 2.2: Minimax tree with initial position at Fig. 2.1 state, **nodes** are states and **edges** are transitions, labeled with the move. Leafs are end-game states: 1 point for the win and -1 for the loss. Player is “circles” and plays first (first edges are player’s moves).

## Checkers, Alpha-beta

Checkers, Chess and Go are also zero sum, perfect-information\*, partisan\*, deterministic strategy game. Theoretically, they all can be solved by exhaustive Minimax. In practice though, it is often intractable: their bounded versions are at least in PSPACE and their unbounded versions are EXPTIME-hard [Hearn and Demaine, 2009]. We can see the complexity of Minimax as  $O(b^d)$  with  $b$  the average branching factor of the tree (to search) and  $d$  the average length (depth) of the game. For Checkers  $b \approx 8$ , but taking pieces is mandatory, resulting in a mean adjusted branching factor of  $\approx 4$ , while the mean game length is 70 resulting in a game tree complexity of  $\approx 10^{31}$  [Allis, 1994]. It is already too large to have been solved by Minimax alone (on current hardware). From 1989 to 2007, there were artificial intelligences competitions on Checkers, all using at least alpha-beta pruning: a technique to make efficient cuts in the Minimax search tree while not losing optimality. The state space complexity of Checkers is the smallest of the 3 above-mentioned games with  $\approx 5.10^{20}$  legal possible positions (conformations of pieces which can happen in games). As a matter of fact, Checkers have been (weakly) solved, which means it was solved for perfect perfect play on both sides (and always ends in a draw) [Schaeffer et al., 2007a]. Not all positions resulting from imperfect play have been analyzed.

Alpha-beta pruning (see Algorithm 2) is a branch-and-bound algorithm which can reduce Minimax search down to a  $O(b^{d/2}) = O(\sqrt{b^d})$  complexity if the best nodes are searched first ( $O(b^{3d/4})$  for a random ordering of nodes).  $\alpha$  is the maximum score than we (the maximizing player) are assured to get given what we already evaluated, while  $\beta$  is the minimum score than the minimizing player is assured to get. When evaluating more and more nodes, we can only get a better estimate and so  $\alpha$  can only increase while  $\beta$  can only decrease. If we find a node for which  $\beta$  becomes less than  $\alpha$ , it means that this position results from sub-optimal play. When it is because of an update of  $\beta$ , the sub-optimal play is on the side of the maximizing player (his  $\alpha$  is not high enough to be optimal and/or the minimizing player has a winning move faster in the

---

**Algorithm 2** Alpha-beta algorithm

---

```
function ALPHABETA(node,depth, $\alpha$ , $\beta$ ,player)
    if  $depth \leq 0$  then
        return value(player)
    end if
    if player == us then
        for all possible moves do
             $\alpha \leftarrow \max(\alpha, alphabeta(child, depth - 1, \alpha, \beta, opponent))$ 
            if  $\beta \leq \alpha$  then
                break
            end if
        end for
        return  $\alpha$ 
    else
        for all possible moves do
             $\beta \leftarrow \min(\beta, alphabeta(child, depth - 1, \alpha, \beta, us))$ 
            if  $\beta \leq \alpha$  then
                break
            end if
        end for
        return  $\beta$ 
    end if
end function
```

---

current sub-tree) and this situation is called an  $\alpha$  cut-off. On the contrary, when the cut results from an update of  $\alpha$ , it is called a  $\beta$  cut-off and means that the minimizing player would have to play sub-optimally to get into this sub-tree. When Starting the game,  $\alpha$  is initialized to  $-\infty$  and  $\beta$  to  $+\infty$ . A worked example is given on Figure 2.3. Alpha-beta is going to be helpful to search much deeper than Minimax in the same allowed time. The best Checkers program (since the 90s), which is also the project which solved Checkers [Schaeffer et al., 2007b], Chinook, has openings and end-game (for less than eight pieces of fewer) books, and for the mid-game (when there are more possible moves) relies on a deep search algorithm. So, apart for the beginning and the ending of the game, for which it plays by looking up a database, it used a search algorithm. As Minimax and Alpha-beta are depth first search heuristics, all programs which have to answer in a fixed limit of time use *iterative deepening*, a technique which consists in fixing limited depth which will be considered maximal and evaluating this position. As it does not rely in winning moves at the bottom, because the search space is too big in  $branching^{depth}$ , we need moves evaluation heuristics. We then iterate on growing the maximal depth for which we consider moves, but we are at least sure to have a move to play in a short time (at least the greedy depth 1 found move).

## Chess, Heuristics

With a branching factor of  $\approx 35$  and an average game length of 80 moves [Shannon, 1950], the average game-tree complexity of chess is  $35^{80} \approx 3.10^{123}$ . Shannon [1950] also estimated the number of possible (legal) positions to be of the order of  $10^{43}$ , which is called the Shannon

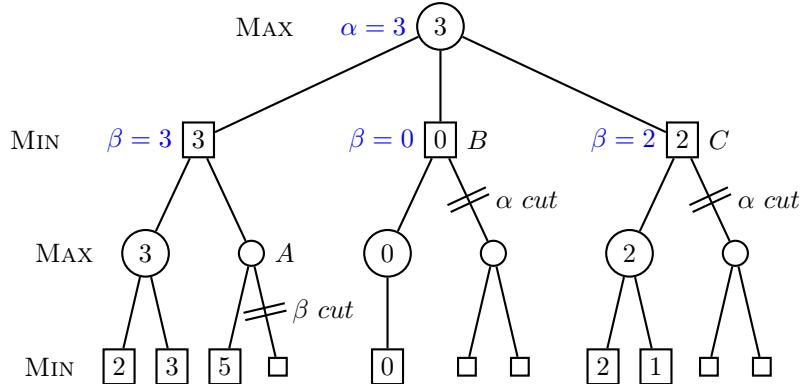


Figure 2.3: Alpha-beta cuts on a Minimax tree, **nodes** are states and **edges** are transitions, labeled with the values of positions at the bottom (max depth). Here is the trace of the algorithm:

- 1.** descend leftmost first and evaluated 2 and 3, **2.** percolate max(2,3) higher up to set  $\beta = 3$ ,
- 3.**  $\beta$ -cut in  $A$  because its value is at least 5 (which is superior to  $\beta = 3$ ), **4.** Update of  $\alpha = 3$  at the top node,
- 5.**  $\alpha$ -cut in  $B$  because it is at most 0 (which is inferior to  $\alpha = 3$ ), **6.**  $\alpha$ -cut in  $C$  because it is at most 2, **7.** conclude the best value for the top node is 3.

number. Chess AI needed a little more than just Alpha-beta to win against top human players (not that Checkers could not benefit it), particularly on 1996 hardware (first win of a computer against a reigning world champion, Deep Blue vs. Garry Kasparov). Once an AI has openings and endings books (databases to look-up for classical moves), how can we search deeper during the game, or how can we evaluate better a situation? In iterative deepening Alpha-beta (or other search algorithms like Negascout [Reinefeld, 1983] or MTD-f[Plaat, 1996]), one needs to know the value of a move at the maximal depth. If it does not correspond to the end of the game, there is a need for a evaluation heuristic. Some may be straight forward, like the resulting value of an exchange in pieces points. But some strategies sacrifice a queen in favor of a more advantageous tactical position or a checkmate, so evaluation heuristics need to take tactical positions into account. In Deep Blue, the evaluation function had 8000 cases, with 4000 positions in the openings book, all learned from 700,000 grandmaster games [Campbell et al., 2002]. Nowadays, Chess programs are better than deep blue and generally also search less positions. For instance, Pocket Fritz (HIARCS engine) beats current grandmasters [Wikipedia, Center] while evaluating 20,000 positions per second (740 MIPS on a smartphone) against Deep Blue's (11.38 GFlops) 200 millions per second.

## Go, Monte-Carlo Tree Search

With an estimated number of legal 19x19 Go positions of  $2.081681994 \times 10^{170}$  [Tromp and Farnebäck, 2006] (1.196% of possible positions), and an average branching factor above Chess for gobans\* from 9x9 and above, Go sets another limit for AI. For 19x19 gobans, the game tree complexity is up to  $10^{360}$  [Allis, 1994]. The branching factor varies greatly, from  $\approx 30$  to 300 (361 cases at first), while the mean depth (number of plies in a game) is between 150 to 200. Approaches other than systematic exploration of the game tree are required. One of them is Monte Carlo Tree Search (MCTS\*). Its principle is to randomly sample which nodes to expand and which to exploit in the search tree, instead of systematically expanding the build tree as

in Minimax. For a given *node* in the search tree, we note  $Q(\textit{node})$  the sum of the simulations rewards on all the runs through *node*, and  $N(\textit{node})$  the visits count of *node*. Algorithm 3 details the MCTS algorithm and Fig. 2.4 explains the principle.

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**Algorithm 3** Monte-Carlo Tree Search algorithm. EXPANDFROM(*node*) is the tree (growing) policy function on how to select where to search from situation *node* (exploration or exploitation?) and how to expand the game tree (deep-first, breadth-first, heuristics?) in case of untried actions. EVALUATE(*tree*) may have 2 behaviors: **1.** if *tree* is complete (terminal), it gives an evaluation according to games rules, **2.** if *tree* is incomplete, it has to give an estimation, either through simulation (for instance play at random) or an heuristic. BESTCHILD picks the action that leads to the better value/reward from *node*. MERGE(*node, tree*) changes the existing tree (with *node*) to take all the  $Q(\nu) \forall \nu \in \textit{tree}$  (new) values into account. If *tree* contains new nodes (there were some exploration), they are added to *node* at the right positions.

---

```

function MCTS(node)
    while computational time left do
        tree  $\leftarrow$  EXPANDFROM(node)
        tree.values  $\leftarrow$  EVALUATE(tree)
        MERGE(node, tree)
    end while
    return BESTCHILD(node)
end function
```

---

The MoGo team [Gelly and Wang, 2006, Gelly et al., 2006] introduced Upper Confidence Bounds for Trees (UCT\*) for MCTS\* in Go AI. MoGo became the best 9x9 and 13x13 Go program, and the first to win against a pro on 9x9. UCT specializes MCTS in that it specifies EXPANDFROM (as in Algorithm. 4) tree policy with a specific exploration-exploitation trade-off. UCB1 [Kocsis and Szepesvári, 2006] views the tree policy as a multi-armed bandit problem and so EXPANDFROM(*node*) UCB1 chooses the arms with the best upper confidence bound:

$$\arg \max_{c \in \textit{node.children}} \frac{Q(c)}{N(c)} + k \sqrt{\frac{\ln N(\textit{node})}{N(c)}}$$

in which  $k$  fixes the exploration-exploitation trade-off:  $\frac{Q(c)}{N(c)}$  is simply the average reward when going through *c* so we have exploitation only for  $k = 0$  and exploration only for  $k = \infty$ .

Kocsis and Szepesvári [2006] showed that the probability of selecting sub-optimal actions converges to zero and so that UCT MCTS converges to the minimax tree and so is optimal. Empirically, they found several convergences rates of UCT to be in  $O(b^{d/2})$ , as fast as Alpha-beta tree search, and able to deal with larger problems (with some error). For a broader survey on MCTS methods, see [Browne et al., 2012].

With Go, we see clearly that humans do not play abstract strategy games using the same approach. Top Go players can reason about their opponent's move, but they seem to be able to do it in a qualitative manner, at another scale. So, while tree search algorithms help a lot for tactical play in Go, particularly by integrating openings/ending knowledge, pattern matching algorithms are not yet at the strategical level of human players. When a MCTS algorithm learns something, it stays at the level of possible actions (even considering positional hashing\*), while the human player seems to be able to generalize, and re-use heuristics learned at another level.

---

**Algorithm 4** UCB1 EXPANDFROM

---

```
function EXPANDFROM(node)
    if node is terminal then
        return node // terminal
    end if
    if  $\exists c \in node.children$  s.t.  $N(c) = 0$  then
        return c // grow
    end if
    return EXPANDFROM( $\arg \max_{c \in node.children} \frac{Q(c)}{N(c)} + k\sqrt{\frac{\ln N(node)}{N(c)}}$ ) // select
end function
```

---

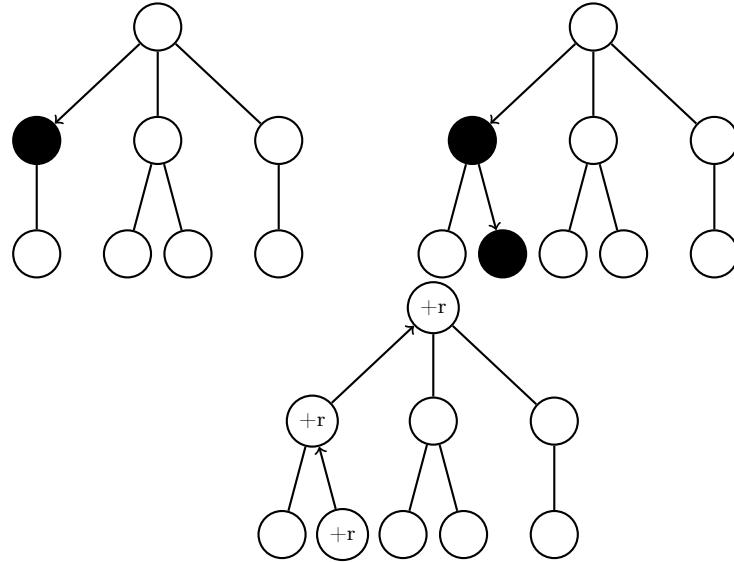


Figure 2.4: An iteration of the **while** loop in MCTS, from left to right: EXPANDFROM select, EXPANDFROM grow, EVALUATE & MERGE.

## 2.4 Games with Uncertainty

An exhaustive list of games or even games genres is beyond the scope/range of this thesis. All uncertainty boils down to incompleteness of information, being it the physics of the dice being thrown or the inability to measure what is happening in the opponent's brain. However, we will speak of 2 types (sources) of uncertainty: extensional uncertainty, which is due to incompleteness in direct, measurable information, and intentional uncertainty, which is related to randomness in the game or in (the opponent's) decisions. As extreme illustrations of this: an agent acting without sending is under full extensional uncertainty, while an agent whose acts are the results of a perfect random generator is under full intentional uncertainty. The uncertainty coming from the opponent's mind/cognition lies in between, depending on the simplicity to model the game as an optimization procedure. The harder the game is to model, the harder it is to model the trains of thoughts our opponents can follow.

## Monopoly

In Monopoly, there is few hidden information (*Chance* and *Community Chest* cards only), but there is randomness in the throwing of dice<sup>3</sup>, and a substantial influence of the player's knowledge of the game. A very basic playing strategy would be to just look at the return on investment (ROI) with regard to prices, rents and frequencies, choosing only based on the money you have and the possible actions of buying or not. A less naive way to play should evaluate the questions of buying with regard to what we already own, what others own, our cash and advancement in the game. The complete state space is huge (places for each players  $\times$  their money  $\times$  their possessions), but according to Ash and Bishop [1972], we can model the game for one player (as he has no influence on the dice rolls and decisions of others) as a Markov process on 120 ordered pairs: 40 board spaces  $\times$  possible number of doubles rolled so far in this turn (0, 1, 2). With this model, it is possible to compute more than simple ROI and derive applicable and interesting strategies. So, even in monopoly, which is not lottery playing or simple dice throwing, a simple probabilistic modeling yields a robust strategy. Additionally, Frayn [2005] used genetic algorithms to generate the most efficient strategies for portfolio management.

Monopoly is an example of a game in which we have complete direct information about the state of the game, intentional uncertainty due to the roll of the dice (randomness) can be dealt with thanks to probabilistic modeling (Markov processes here). The opponent's actions are relatively easy to model due to the fact that the goal is to maximize cash and that there are not many different efficient strategies (not many Nash equilibrium if it were a stricter game) to attain it. In general, the presence of chance does not invalidates previous (game theoretic / game trees) approaches but transforms exact computational techniques into stochastic ones: finite states machines become probabilistic Bayesian networks for instance.

## Battleship

Battleship (also called “naval combat”) is a guessing game generally played with two  $10 \times 10$  grids for each players: one is the player's ships grid, and one is to remember/infer the opponent's ships positions. The goal is to guess where the enemy ships are and sink them by firing shots (torpedoes). There is **incompleteness** of information but no randomness. Incompleteness can be dealt with with probabilistic reasoning. The classic setup of the game consist in two ships of length 3 and one ship of each lengths of 2, 4 and 5; in this setup, there are 1,925,751,392 possible arrangements for the ships. The way to take advantage of all possible information is to update the probability that there is a ship for all the squares each time we have additional information. So for the  $10 \times 10$  grid we have a  $10 \times 10$  matrix  $O_{1:10,1:10}$  with  $O_{i,j} \in \{true, false\}$  being the  $i$ th row and  $j$ th column random variable of the case being occupied. With *ships* being unsunk ships, we always have:

$$\sum_{i,j} P(O_{i,j} = true) = \frac{\sum_{k \in \text{ships}} \text{length}(k)}{10 \times 10}$$

For instance for a ship of size 3 alone at the beginning we can have prior distributions on  $O_{1:10,1:10}$  by looking at combinations of its placements (see Fig. 2.5). We can also have priors on where

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<sup>3</sup>Note that the sum of two uniform distributions is not a uniform but a Irwin-Hall,  $\forall n > 1, P([\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i \in U(0,1))] = x) \propto \frac{1}{(n-1)!} \sum_{k=0}^n (-1)^k \binom{n}{k} \max((x-k)^{n-1}, 0)$ , converging towards a Gaussian (central limit theorem).

the opponent likes to place her ships. Then each round we will either hit or miss in  $i, j$ . When we hit, we know  $P(O_{i,j} = \text{true}) = 1.0$  and will have to revise the probabilities of surrounding areas, and everywhere if we learned the size of the ship, with possible placement of ships. If we did not sink a ship, the probabilities of uncertain (not 0.0 or 1.0) positions around  $i, j$  will be highered according to the sizes of remaining ships. If we miss, we know  $P([O_{i,j} = \text{false}]) = 1.0$  and can also revise (lower) the surrounding probabilities, an example of that effect is shown in Fig. 2.5.

Battleship is a game with few intensional uncertainty (no randomness), particularly because the goal quite strongly conditions the action (sink ships as fast as possible) but a large part of extensional uncertainty (incompleteness of direct information), which goes down rather quickly once we act, if we update a probabilistic model of the map/grid. If we compare Battleship to a variant in which we could see the adversary board, playing would be straightforward (just hit ships we know the position on the board), now in real Battleship we have to model our uncertainty due to the incompleteness of information, without even beginning to take into account the psychology of the opponent in placement as a prior. The cost of solving an imperfect information game increases greatly from its perfect information variant: it seems to be easier to model stochasticity (chance, a source of randomness) than to model a hidden (complex) system for which we only observe (indirect) effects.

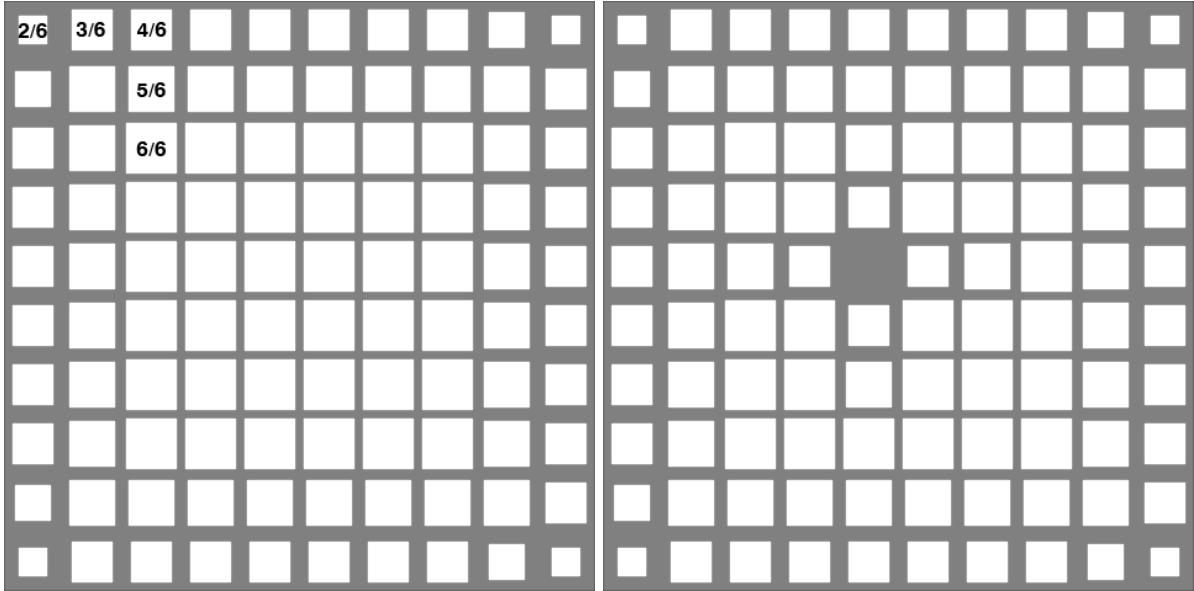


Figure 2.5: Left: visualization of probabilities for squares to contain a ship of size 3 ( $P(O_{i,j} = \text{true}) = 1.0$ ) initially, assuming uniform distribution of this type of ship. Annotations correspond to the *number of combinations* (on six, the maximum number of conformations), Right: same probability after a miss in (5, 5). The larger the white area, the higher the probability.

## Poker

Poker<sup>4</sup> is a zero-sum (without the house’s cut), imperfect information and stochastic betting game. Poker “AI” is as old as game theory [Nash, 1951], but the research effort for human-level Poker AI started in the end of the 90s. The interest for Poker AI is such that there are annual AAAI computer Poker competitions<sup>5</sup>. Billings et al. [1998] defend Poker as an interesting game for decision-making research, because the task of building a good/high level Poker AI (player) entails to take decisions with incomplete information about the state of the game, incomplete information about the opponents’ intentions, and model their thoughts process to be able to bluff efficiently. A Bayesian network can combine these uncertainties and represent the player’s hand, the opponents’ hands and their playing behavior conditioned upon the hand, as in [Korb et al., 1999]. A simple “risk evaluating” AI (folding and raising according to the outcomes of its hands) will not prevail against good human players. Bluffing, as described by Von Neumann and Morgenstern [1944] “to create uncertainty in the opponent’s mind”, is an element of Poker which needs its own modeling. Southey et al. [2005] also give a Bayesian treatment to Poker, separating the uncertainty resulting from the game (draw of cards) and from the opponents’ strategies, and focusing on bluff. From a game theoretic point of view, Poker is a Bayesian game\*. In a Bayesian game, the normal form representation requires describing the strategy spaces, type spaces, payoff and belief functions for each player. It maps to all the possible game trees along with the agents’ information state representing the probabilities of individual moves, called the extensive form. Both these forms scale very poorly (exponentially). Koller and Pfeffer [1997] used the sequence form transformation, the set of realization weights of the sequences of moves<sup>6</sup>, to search over the space of randomized strategies for Bayesian games automatically. Unfortunately, strict game theoretic optimal strategies for full-scale Poker are still not tractable this way, two players Texas Hold’em having a state space  $\approx O(10^{18})$ . Billings et al. [2003] approximated the game-theoretic optimal strategies through abstraction and are able to beat strong human players (not world-class opponents).

Poker is a game with both extensional and intentional uncertainty, from the fact that the opponents’ hands are hidden, the chance in the draw of the cards, the opponents’ model about the game state and their model about our mental state(s) (leading our decision(s)). While the iterated reasoning (“if she does A, I can do B”) is (theoretically) finite in Chess due to perfect information, it is not the case in Poker (“I think she thinks I think...”). The combination of different sources of uncertainty (as in Poker) makes it complex to deal with it (somehow, the sources of uncertainty must be separated), and we will see that both these sources of uncertainties arise (at different levels) in video games.

## 2.5 FPS

### Gameplay and AI

First person shooters gameplay\* consist in controlling an agent in first person view, centered on the weapon, a gun for instance. The firsts FPS popular enough to bring the genre its name were

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<sup>4</sup>We deal mainly with the *Limit Hold’em* variant of Poker.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.computerpokercompetition.org/>

<sup>6</sup>for a given player, a sequence is a path down the game tree isolating only moves under their control

Wolfenstein 3D and Doom, by iD Software. Other classic FPS (series) include Duke Nukem 3D, Quake, Half-Life, Team Fortress, Counter-Strike, Unreal Tournament, Tribes, Halo, Medal of Honor, Call of Duty, Battlefield, etc. The distinction between “fast FPS” (e.g. Quake series, Unreal Tournament series) and others is made on the speed at which the player moves. In “fast FPS”, the player is always jumping, running much faster and playing more in 3 dimensions than on discretely separate 2D ground planes. Game types include (but are not limited to):

- single-player missions, depending of the game design.
- capture-the-flag (CTF), in which a player has to take the flag inside the enemy camp and bring it back in her own base.
- free-for-all (FFA), in which there are no alliances.
- team deathmatch (TD), in which two (or more) teams fight on score.
- various gather and escort (including hostage or payload modes), in which one team has to find and escort something/somebody to another location.
- duel/tournament/deathmatch, 1 vs 1 matches (mainly “fast FPS”).

From these various game types, the player has to maximize its damage (or positive actions) output while staying alive. For that, she will navigate her avatar in an uncertain environment (partial information and other players intentions) and shoot (or not) at targets with specific weapons.

Some games allow for instant (or delayed, but asynchronous to other players) respawn (recreation/rebirth of a player), most likely in the “fast FPS” (Quake-like) games, while in others, the player has to wait for the end of the round to respawn. In some games, weapons, ammunitions, health, armor and items can be picked on the ground (mainly “fast FPS”), in others, they are fixed at the start or can be bought in game (with points). The map design can make the gameplay vary a lot, between indoors, outdoors, arena-like or linear maps. According to maps and gameplay styles, combat may be well-prepared with ambushes, sniping, indirect (zone damages), or close proximity (even to fist weapons). Most often, there are strong tactical positions and effective ways to attack them.

While “skill” (speed of the movements, accuracy of the shots) is easy to emulate for an AI, team-play is much harder for bots and it is always a key ability. Team-play is the combination of distributed evaluation of the situation, planning and distribution of specialized tasks. Very high skill also requires integrating over enemy’s tactical plans and positions to be able to take indirect shots (grenades for instance) or better positioning (coming from their back), which is hard for AI too. An example of that is that very good human players consistently beat the best bots (nearing 100% accuracy) in Quake III (which is an almost pure skill “fast FPS”), because they take advantage of being seen just when their weapons reload or come from their back. Finally, bots which equal the humans by a higher accuracy are less fun to play with: it is a frustrating experience to be shot across the map, by a bot which was stuck in the door because it was pushed out of its trail.

## State of the art

FPS AI consists in controlling an agent in a complex world: it can have to walk, run, crouch, jump, swim, interact with the environment and tools, and sometimes even fly. Additionally, it has to shoot at moving, coordinated and dangerous, targets. On a higher level, it may have to gather weapons, items or power-ups (health, armor, etc.), find interesting tactical locations, attack, chase, retreat...

The Quake III AI is a standard for Quake-like games [van Waveren and Rothkrantz, 2002]. It consists in a layered architecture (hierarchical) FSM\*. At the sensory-motor level, it has an Area Awareness System (AAS) which detects collisions, accessibility and computes paths. The level above provides intelligence for chat, goals (locations to go to), goals and weapons selection through fuzzy logic. Higher up, there are the behavior FSM (“seek goals”, chase, retreat, fight, stand...) and production rules (if-then-else) for squad/team AI and orders. A team of bots always behaves following the orders of one of the bots. Bots have different natures and tempers, which can be accessed/felt by human players, specified by fuzzy relations on “how much the bot wants to do, have, or use something”. A genetic algorithm was used to optimize the fuzzy logic parameters for specific purposes (like performance). This bot is fun to play against and is considered a success, however Quake-like games makes it easy to have high level bots because very good players have high accuracy (no fire spreading), so they do not feel cheated if bots have a high accuracy too. Also, the game is mainly indoors, which facilitates tactics and terrain reasoning. Finally, cooperative behaviors are not very evolved and consist in acting together towards a goal, not with specialized behaviors for each agent.

The more recent FPS games have dealt with these limitations by using combinations of STRIPS planning (F.E.A.R. [Orkin, 2006]), HTN\* (Killzone 2 [Champandard et al., 2009] and ArmA [van der Sterren, 2009]), Behavior trees (Halo 2 [Isla, 2005]). Left4Dead (a cooperative PvE FPS) uses a global supervisor of the AI to set the pace of the threat to be the most enjoyable for the player [Booth, 2009].

In research, Laird [2001] focused on learning rules for opponent modeling, planning and reactive planning (on Quake), so that the robot builds plan by anticipating the opponent’s actions. Le Hy et al. [2004], Hy [2007] used robotics inspired Bayesian models to quickly learn the parameters from human players (on Unreal Tournament). Zanetti and Rhalibi [2004] and Westra and Dignum [2009] applied evolutionary neural networks to optimize Quake III bots. Predicting opponents positions is a central task to believability and has been solved successfully using particle filters [Bererton, 2004] and other models (like Hidden Semi-Markov Models) [Hladky and Bulitko, 2008]. Multi-objective neuro-evolution [Zanetti and Rhalibi, 2004, Schrum et al., 2011] combines learning from human traces with evolutionary learning for the structure of the artificial neural network, and leads to realistic (human-like) behaviors, in the context of the BotPrize challenge (judged by humans) [Hingston, 2009].

## Challenges

Single-player FPS campaigns immersion could benefit from more realistic bots and clever squad tactics. Multi-player FPS are competitive games, and a better game AI should focus on:

- **believability** requires the AI to take decisions with the same informations than the human player (fairness) and to be able to deal with unknown situation.

- **surprise** and unpredictability is key for both performance and the long-term interest in the human player in the AI.
- **performance**, to give a challenge to human players, can be achieved through cooperative, planned and specialized behaviors.

## 2.6 (MMO)RPG

### Gameplay and AI

Inspired directly by tabletop and live action role-playing games (Dungeon & Dragons) as new tools for the game masters, it is quite natural for the RPG to have ended up on computers. The firsts digital RPG were text (Wumpus) or ASCII-art (Rogue, NetHack) based. The gameplay evolved considerably with the technique. Nowadays, what we will call a role playing game (RPG) consist in the incarnation by the human player of an avatar (or a team of avatars) with a class: warrior, wizard, rogue, priest, etc., having different skills, spells, items, health points, stamina/energy/mana (magic energy) points. Generally, the story brings the player to solve puzzles and fight. In a fight, the player has to take decisions about what to do but plays a lesser role in performing the action than in a FPS game. In a FPS, she has to move the character (egocentrically) and aim to shoot; in a RPG, she has to position itself (often way less precisely and continually) and just decide which ability to use on which target (or a little more for “action RPG”). Classic RPG include: Fallout, The Elders Scrolls (from Arena to Skyrim), Secret of Mana, Zelda, Final Fantasy, Diablo, Baldur’s Gate. A MMORPG (e.g. World of Warcraft, AION or EVE Online) consist in a role-playing game in a persistent, multi-player world. There usually are players-run factions fighting each others’ (PvP) and players versus environment (PvE) situations.

glosPvE may be a cooperative task in which human players fight together against different NPC, and in which the cooperation is at the center of the gameplay. PvP is also a cooperative task, but more policy and reactions-based than a trained and learned choreography as for PvE. We can distinguish three types (or modality) of NPC which have different game AI needs:

- world/neutral/civilian NPC: gives quests, takes part in the world’s or game’s story, talks,
- “mob”/hostile NPC that the player will fight,
- “pets”/allied NPC: acts by the players’ sides.
- persistent character AI could maintain the players’ avatars in the world when they are disconnected.

NPC acting strangely are sometimes worse for the player’s immersion than immobile and dull ones. However, it is more fun for the player to battle with hostile NPC which are not too dumb or predictable. Players really expect allied NPC to at least not hinder them, and it is even better when they adapt to what the player is doing.

## State of the art

Methods used in FPS\* are also used in RPG\*. The needs are sometimes a little different for RPG games, for instance RPG need interruptible behaviors, behaviors that can be stopped and resumed (dialogs, quests, fights...) that is. RPG also require stronger story-telling capabilities than other gameplay genres, for which they use (logical) story representations (ontologies) [Kline, 2009, Riedl et al., 2011]. Behavior multi-queues [Cutumisu and Szafron, 2009] resolve the problems of having resumable, collaborative, real-time and parallel behavior, and tested their approach on Neverwinter Nights. Basically they use prioritized behavior queues which can be inserted (for interruption and resumption) in each others. AI directors are control programs tuning the difficulty and pace of the game session in real-time from player's metrics. Kline [2011] used an AI director to adapt the difficulty of Dark Spore to the performance (interactions and score) of the player in real-time.

## Challenges

There are mainly two axes for RPG games to bring more fun: interest in the game play(s), and immersion. For both these topics, we think game AI can bring a lot:

- **believability** of the agents will come from AI approaches than can deal with new situations, being it because they were not dealt with during game development (because the “possible situations” space is too big) or because they were brought by the players’ unforeseeable actions. Scripts and strict policies approaches will be in difficulty here.
- **interest** (as opposed to boredom) for the human players in the game style of the AI will come from approaches which can generate different behaviors in a given situation. Expectable AI particularly affects replayability negatively.
- **performance** relative to the gameplay will come from AI approaches than can fully deal with cooperative behavior. One solution is to design mobs to be orders of magnitude stronger (in term of hit points and damages) than players characters, or more numerous. Another, arguably more entertaining, solution is to bring the mobs behavior to a point where they are a challenge for the team of human players.

Both believability and performance require to deal with uncertainty of the game environment. RPG AI problem spaces are not tractable for a frontal (low-level) search approach nor are there few enough situations to consider to just write a bunch of script and puppeteer artificial agents at any time.

## 2.7 RTS

As RTS are the central focus on this thesis, we will discuss specific problems and solution more in depth in their dedicated chapters, simply brushing here the underlying major research problems. Major RTS include the Command&Conquer, Warcraft, StarCraft, Age of Empires and Total Annihilation series.

## Gameplay and AI

RTS gameplay consist in gathering resources, building up an economic and military power through growth and technology, to defeat your opponent by destroying his base, army and economy. It requires dealing with strategy, tactics, and units management (often called micro-management) in real-time. Strategy consist in what will be done in the long term as well as predicting what the enemy is doing. It particularly deals with the economy/army trade-off estimation, army composition, long-term planning. The three aggregate indicators for strategy are aggression, production, and technology. The tactical aspect of the gameplay is dominated by military moves: when, where (with regard to topography and weak points), how to attack or defend. This implies dealing with *extensional* (what the invisible units under “fog of war\*” are doing) and *intentional* (what will the visible enemy units do) uncertainty. Finally, at the actions/motor level, micro-management is the art of maximizing the effectiveness of the units *i.e.* the damages given/damages received ratio. For instance: retreat and save a wounded unit so that the enemy units would have to chase it either boosts your firepower or weakens the opponent’s. Both [Laird and van Lent, 2001] and Gunn et al. [2009] propose that RTS AI is one of the most challenging genres, because all levels in the hierarchy of decisions are of importance.

More will be said about RTS in the dedicated chapter 4.

## State of the art & Challenges

Buro [2004] called for AI research in RTS games and identified the technical challenges as:

- **adversarial planning under uncertainty**, and for that abstractions have to be found both allowing to deal with partial observations and to plan in real-time.
- **learning and opponent modeling**: adaptivity plays a key role in the strength of human players.
- **spatial and temporal reasoning**: tactics using the terrain features and good timings are essential for higher level play.

To these challenges, we would like to add the difficulty of inter-connecting all special cases resolutions of these problems: both for the collaborative (economical and logistical) management of the resources, and for the sharing of uncertainty quantization in the decision-making processes. Collaborative management of the resources require arbitrage between sub-models on resources repartition. By sharing information (and its uncertainty) between sub-models, decisions can be made that account better for the whole knowledge of the AI system. This will be extended further in the next chapters as RTS are the main focus of this thesis.

## 2.8 Games Characteristics

All the types of video games that we saw before require to deal with imperfect information and sometimes with randomness, while elaborating a strategy (possibly from underlying policies). From a game theoretic point of view, these video games are close to what is called a Bayesian game\* [Osborne and Rubinstein, 1994]. However, solving Bayesian games is non-trivial, there

are no generic and efficient approaches, and so it has not been done formally for card games with more than a few cards. Billings et al. [2003] approximated a game theoretic solution for Poker through abstraction heuristics, it leads to believe than game theory can be applied at the higher (strategic) abstracted levels of video games.

We do not pretend to do a complete taxonomy of video games and AI (e.g. [Gunn et al., 2009]), but we wish to provide all the major informations to differentiate game genres (game-plays). To grasp the challenges they pose, we will provide abstract measures of complexity.

## Combinatory

“How does the state of possible actions grow?” To measure this, we used a measure from perfect information zero-sum games (as Checkers, Chess and Go): the branching factor  $b$  and the depth  $d$  of a typical game. The complexity of a game (for taking a decision) is proportional to  $b^d$ . The average branching factor for a board game is easy to compute: it is the average number of possible moves for a given player. For Poker, we set  $b = 3$  for *fold*, *check* and *raise*.  $d$  should then be defined over some time, the average number of events (decisions) per hour in Poker is between 20 to 240. For video-games, we defined  $b$  to be the average number of possible moves at each decision, so for “continuous” or “real-time” games it is some kind of function of the useful discretization of the virtual world at hand.  $d$  has to be defined as a frequency at which a player (artificial or not) has to take decisions to be competitive in the game, so we will give it in  $d/time\_unit$ . For instance, for a car (plane) racing game,  $b \approx 50 - 500$  because  $b$  is a combination of throttle ( $\ddot{x}$ ) and direction ( $\theta$ ) sampled values that are relevant for the game world, with  $d/min$  at least 60: a player needs to correct her trajectory *at least* once a second. In RTS games,  $b \approx 200$  is a lower bound (in StarCraft we may have between 50 to 400 units to control), and very good amateurs and professional players perform more than 300 actions per minute.

The sheer size of  $b$  and  $d$  in video games make it seem intractable, but humans are able to play, and to play well. To explain this phenomenon, we introduce “vertical” and “horizontal” continuities in decision making. Fig. 2.6 shows how one can view the decision-making process in a video game: at different time scales, the player has to choose between strategies to follow, that can be realized with the help of different tactics. Finally, at the action/output/motor level, these tactics have to be implemented one way or another. So, matching Fig. 2.6, we could design a Bayesian model:

- $S^{t,t-1} \in \text{Attack, Defend, Collect, Hide}$ , the strategy variable
- $T^{t,t-1} \in \text{Front, Back, Hit-and-run, Infiltrate}$ , the tactics variable
- $A^{t,t-1} \in \text{low\_level\_actions}$ , the actions variable
- $O_{1:n}^t \in \{\text{observations}\}$ , the set of observations variables

$$\begin{aligned} P(S^{t,t-1}, T^{t,t-1}, A^{t,t-1}, O_{1:n}^t) &= P(S^{t-1}).P(T^{t-1}).P(A^{t-1}) \\ &\cdot P(O_{1:n}^t).P(S^t|S^{t-1}, O_{1:n}^t).P(T^t|S^t, T^{t-1}, O_{1:n}^t).P(A^t|T^t, A^{t-1}, O_{1:n}^t) \end{aligned}$$

- $P(S^t|S^{t-1}, O_{1:n}^t)$  should be read as “the probability distribution on the strategies at time  $t$  is determined/influenced by the strategy at time  $t - 1$  and the observations at time  $t$ ”.



Figure 2.6: Abstract decision hierarchy in a video game. It is segmented in abstraction levels: at the strategical level, a decision is taken in *Attack*, *Defend*, *Collect* and *Hide*; at the tactical level, it is decided between *Front*, *Back*, *Hit – and – run*, *Infiltrate*; and at the actions level between the player’s possible interactions with the world.

- $P(T^t|S^t, T^{t-1}, O_{1:n}^t)$  should be read as “the probability distribution on the tactics at time  $t$  is determined by the strategy at time  $t$ , tactics at time  $t - 1$  and the observations at time  $t$ ”.
- $P(A^t|T^t, A^{t-1}, O_{1:n}^t)$  should be read as “the probability distribution on the actions at time  $t$  is determined by tactics at time  $t$ , the actions at time  $t - 1$  and the observations at time  $t$ ”.

### Vertical continuity

In the decision-making process, vertical continuity describes when taking a higher-level decision implies a strong conditioning on lower-level decisions. As seen on Figure 2.7: higher level abstractions have a strong conditioning on lower levels. For instance, and in non-probabilistic terms, if the choice of a strategy  $s$  (in the domain of  $S$ ) entails a strong reduction in the size of the domain of  $T$ , we consider that there is a vertical continuity between  $S$  and  $T$ . There is vertical continuity between  $S$  and  $T$  if  $\forall s \in \{S\}, \{P(T^t|[S^t = s], T^{t-1}, O_{1:n}^t) > \epsilon\}$  is sparse in  $\{P(T^t|T^{t-1}, O_{1:n}^t) > \epsilon\}$ . There can be local vertical continuity, for which the previous statement holds only for one (or a few)  $s \in \{S\}$ , which are harder to exploit. Recognizing vertical continuity allows us to explore the state space efficiently, filtering out absurd considerations with regard to the higher decision level(s).

Examples? To edit, to choose with Pierre, ideas (+ point out example “filtering out”):  
navigation: S=always go north, T -> limited  
whatever 2 player game: S=imitate, T -> limited  
RTS: S=short term win by all-in, T -> limited  
simpler examples?

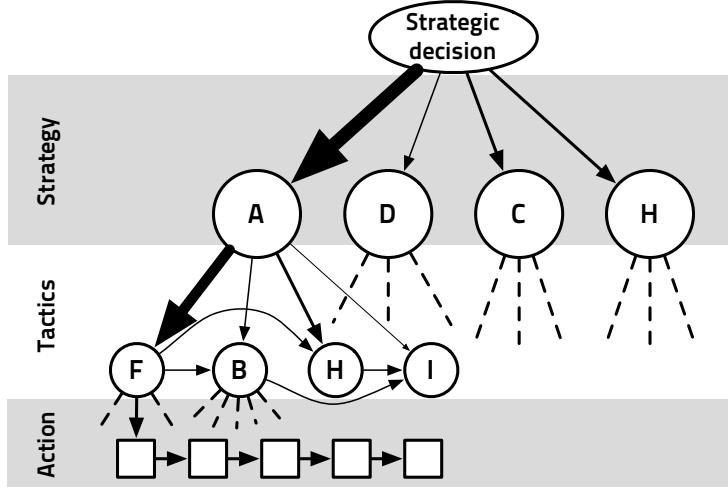


Figure 2.7: Vertical continuity in decision-making in a video game. There is a high vertical continuity between strategy and tactics as  $P([T^t = \text{Front}]|[S^t = \text{Attack}], T^{t-1}, O_{1:n}^t)$  is much higher than other values for  $P(T^t|S^t, T^{t-1}, O_{1:n}^t)$ . The thicker the arrow, the higher the transition probability.

### Horizontal continuity

Horizontal continuity also helps out cutting the search in the state space to only relevant states. At a given abstraction level, it describes when taking a decision implies a strong conditioning on the next time-step decision (for this given level). As seen on Figure 2.8: previous decisions on a given level have a strong conditioning on the next ones. For instance, and in non-probabilistic terms, if the choice of a tactic  $t$  (in the domain of  $T^t$ ) entails a strong reduction in the size of the domain of  $T^{t+1}$ , we consider that  $T$  has horizontal continuity. There is horizontal continuity between  $T^{t-1}$  and  $T^t$  if  $\forall t \in \{T\}, \{P(T^t|S^t, [T^{t-1} = t], O_{1:n}^t) > \epsilon\}$  is sparse in  $\{P(T^t|S^t, O_{1:n}^t) > \epsilon\}$ . There can be local horizontal continuity, for which the previous state holds only for one (or a few)  $t \in \{T\}$ . Recognizing horizontal continuity boils down to recognizing sequences of (frequent) actions from decisions/actions dynamics and use that to reduce the search space of subsequent decisions. Of course, at a sufficiently small time-step, most continuous games have high horizontal continuity: the size of the time-step is strongly related to the design of the abstraction levels for vertical continuity.

Examples? To edit, to choose with Pierre, ideas (+ point out example “filtering out”):  
navigation:  $T^t = \text{go round the block}$ ,  $T^{t+1} \rightarrow \text{limited by future position}$   
RTS: cannot switch between Front and Back attacks with the same army at close time-steps  
simpler examples?

### Randomness

Randomness can be inherent to the gameplay. In board games and table top role-playing, randomness often comes from throwing dice(s) to decide the outcome of actions. In decision-making theory, this induced stochasticity is dealt with in the framework of a Markov decision process (MDP)\*. A MDP is a tuple of  $(S, A, T, R)$  with:

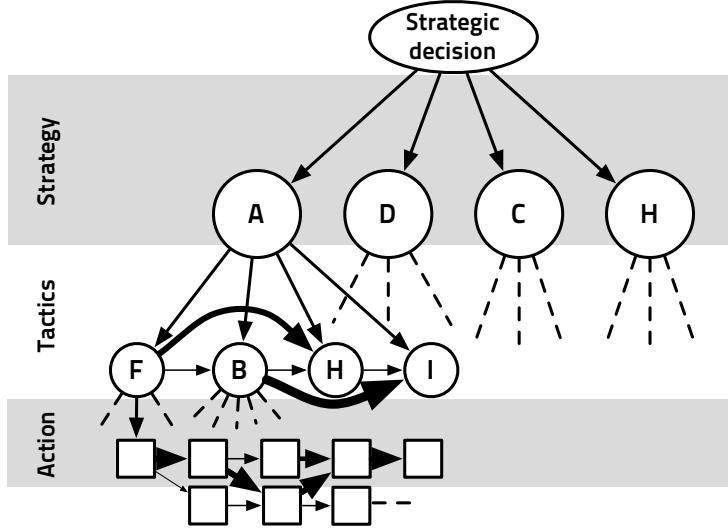


Figure 2.8: Horizontal continuity in decision-making in a video game. The thicker the arrow, the higher the transition probability.

- $S$  a finite set of states
- $A$  a finite set of actions
- $T_a(s, s') = P([S^{t+1} = s']|[S^t = s], [A^t = a])$  the probability that action  $a$  in state  $s$  at time  $t$  will lead to state  $s'$  at time  $t + 1$
- $R_a(s, s')$  the immediate reward for going from state  $s$  to state  $s'$  with action  $a$ .

MDP can be solved through dynamic programming or the Bellman value iteration algorithm [Bellman, 1957]. In video games, the sheer size of  $S$  and  $A$  make it intractable to use MDP directly on the whole AI task, but they are used (in research) either locally or at abstracted levels of decision. Randomness inherent to the process is one of the sources of intentional uncertainty, and we can consider player's intentions in this stochastic framework. Modeling this source of uncertainty is part of the challenge of writing game AI models.

## Partial observations

Partial information is another source of randomness, which is found in shi-fu-mi, poker, RTS\* and FPS\* games, to name a few. We will not go down to the fact that the throwing of the dice seemed random because we only have partial information about its physics, or of the seed of the deterministic random generator that produced its outcome. Here, partial observations refer to the part of the game state which is deliberatively hidden between players (from a gameplay point of view): hidden hands in poker or hidden units in RTS\* games due to the fog of war\*. In decision-making theory, partial observations are dealt with in the framework of a partially observable Markov decision process (POMDP)\* [Sondik, 1978]. A POMDP is a tuple  $(S, A, O, T, \Omega, R)$  with  $S, A, T, R$  as in a MDP and:

- $O$  a finite set of observations
- $\Omega$  conditional observations probabilities specifying:  $P(O^{t+1}|S^{t+1}, A^t)$

In a POMDP, one cannot know exactly which state they are in and thus must reason with a probability distribution on  $S$ .  $\Omega$  is used to update the distribution on  $S$  (the belief) upon taking the action  $a$  and observing  $o$ , we have:  $P([S^{t+1} = s']) \propto \Omega(o|s', a) \cdot \sum_{s \in S} T_a(s, s') \cdot P([S^t = s])$ . In game AI, POMDP are computationally intractable for most problems, and thus we need to model more carefully (without full  $\Omega$  and  $T$ ) the dynamics and the information value.

### Time Constant(s)

For novice to video games, we give some orders of magnitudes of the time constants involved. Indeed, we present here only real-time video games and time constants are central to comprehension of the challenges at hand. In all games, the player is taking actions continuously sampled at the minimum of the human interface device (mouse, keyboard, pad) refreshment rate and the game engine loop: at *least* 30Hz. In most racing games, there is a quite high continuity in the input which is constrained by the dynamics of movements. In other games, there are big discontinuities, even if fast FPS\* control resembles racing games a lot. RTS\* professional gamers are giving inputs at  $\approx 300$  actions per minute (APM\*).

There are also different time constants for a strategic switch to take effect. In RTS games, it may vary between the build duration of at least one building and one unit (1-2 minutes) to a lot more (5 minutes). In an RPG or a team FPS, it may even be longer (up to one full round or one game by requiring to change the composition of the team and/or the spells) or shorter by depending on the game mode. For tactical moves, we consider that the time for a decision to have effects is proportional to the mean time for a squad to go from the middle of the map (arena) to anywhere else. In RTS games, this is usually between 20 seconds to 2 minutes. Maps variability between RPG\* titles and FPS\* titles is high, but we can give an estimate of tactical moves to use between 10 seconds (fast FPS) to 5 minutes (some FPS, RPG).

### Recap

We present the main qualitative results for big classes of gameplays (with examples) in a table page 39.

## 2.9 Player Characteristics

In all these games, knowledge and learning plays a key role. Humans compensate their lack of (conscious) computational power with pattern matching, abstract thinking and efficient memory structures. Particularly, we can classify required abilities for players to perform well in different gameplays by:

- Virtuosity: the technical skill or ease of the player with given game's actions and interactions. At high level of skills, there is a strong parallel with playing a music instrument. In racing games, one has to drive precisely and react quickly. In FPS\* games, players have to aim and move, while fast FPS motions resemble driving. In RPG\* games, players have

Game	Quantization in increasing order: no, negligible, few, some, moderate, much	Combinatorial	Partial information	Randomness	Vertical continuity	Horizontal continuity
Checkers	$b \approx 4 - 8; d \approx 70$	no	no	no	few	some
Chess	$b \approx 35; d \approx 80$	no	no	no	few	few
Go	$b \approx 30 - 300; d \approx 150 - 200$	no	no	no	some	moderate
Limit Poker	$b \approx 3^a; d/hour \in [20 \dots 240]^b$	much	much	moderate	few	few
Time Racing	$b \approx 50 - 1,000^c; d/min \approx 60 +$	no	no	much	much	much
(TrackMania)						
Team FPS (Counter-Strike)	$b \approx 100 - 2,000^d; d/min \approx 100^e$	some	some	some	some	moderate
(Team Fortress 2)						
FFPS duel	$b \approx 200 - 5,000^d; d/min \approx 100^e$	some	negligible	some	some	much
(Quake III)						
MMORPG	$b \approx 50 - 100^f; d/min \approx 60^g$	few	moderate	moderate	moderate	much
(WoW, DAoC)						
RTS	$b \approx 200^h; d/min = APM \approx 300^i$	much	negligible	moderate	moderate	some
(StarCraft)						

<sup>a</sup>fold,check,raise

<sup>b</sup>number of decisions taken per hour

<sup>c</sup> $\{\dot{x} \times \theta \times \phi\}$  sampling  $\times 50Hz$

<sup>d</sup> $\{X \times Y \times Z\}$  sampling  $\times 50Hz$  + firing

<sup>e</sup>60 “continuous move actions”+ 40 (mean) fire actions per sec

<sup>f</sup>in RPGs, there are usually more abilities than in FPS games, but the player does not have to aim to hit a target, and thus positioning plays a lesser role than in FPS.

<sup>g</sup>move and use abilities/cast spells

<sup>h</sup>atomic dir/unit  $\times \#$  units + constructions + productions  
<sup>i</sup>for pro-gamers, counting group actions as only one action

to use skill timely as well as have good avatar placement. Finally, in RTS\* games, players have to control several units (in “god’s view”), from tens to hundreds and even sometimes thousands. They can use control groups, but it does not cancel the fact that they have to control both their economy and their armies.

- Deductive reasoning: the capacity to follow logical arguments, forward inference:  $[A \Rightarrow B] \wedge A \Rightarrow B$ . It is particularly important in Chess and Go to infer the outcomes of moves. It is important for FPS games to deduce where the enemy can be from what one has seen. In RPG games, players deduce quests solutions as well as skills/spells combinations effects. In RTS games, there is a lot of strategy and tactics that have to be inferred from partial information.
- Inductive reasoning: the capacity for abstraction, generalization, going from simple observations to a more general concept. A simple example of generalization is:  $[Q \text{ of the sample has attribute } A] \Rightarrow [Q \text{ of the population has attribute } A]$ . In all games, it is important to be able to induce the overall strategy of the opponent’s from action-level observations. In games which benefit from a really abstract level of reasoning (Chess, Go, RTS), it is particularly important as it allows to reduce the complexity of the problem at hand, by abstracting it and reasoning in abstractions.
- Decision-making: the capacity to take decisions, possibly under uncertainty and stress. Selecting a course of actions to follow while not being sure of their effect is a key ability in games, particularly in (very) partial information games as Poker (in which randomness even adds to the problem) and RTS games. It is important in Chess and Go too as reasoning about abstractions (as for RTS) brings some uncertainty about the effects of moves too.
- Knowledge: we distinguish two kinds of knowledge in games: knowledge of the game and knowledge of particular situations (“knowledge of the map”). The duality doesn’t exist in Chess, Go and Poker. However, for instance for racing games, knowledge of the map is most often more important than knowledge of the game (game mechanics and game rules, which are quite simple). In FPS games, this is true too as good shortcuts, ambushes and efficient movements come from good knowledge of the map, while rules are quite simple. In RPG, rules (skills and spells effects, durations, costs...) are much more complex to grasp, so knowledge of the game is perhaps more important. Finally, for RTS games, there are some map-specific strategies and tactics, but the game rules and overall strategies are also already complex to grasp. The longer are the rules of the game to explain, the higher the complexity of the game and thus the benefit from knowledge of the game itself.
- Psychology: the capacity to know the opponent’s move by knowing them, their style, and reasoning about what they think. It is particularly important in competitive games for which there are multiple possible styles, which is not really the case for Chess, Go and racing games. As players have multiple possible valid moves, reasoning about their decision-making process and effectively predicting what they will do is what differentiates good players from the best ones.

Finally, we made a quick survey among gamers and regrouped the 108 answers in table 2.9 page 42. The goal was a to get a grasp on which skills are correlated to which gameplays. The questions that we asked can be found in Appendix A.2. Answers mostly come from good to highly competitive (on a national level) amateurs. To test the “psychology” component of the gameplay, we asked players if they could predict the next moves of their opponents by knowing them personally or by knowing what the best moves (best play) was for them. As expected, Poker has the strongest psychological dimension, followed by FPS and RTS games.

Game	Virtuosity <sup>a</sup> (sensory-motor) [0-2]	Deduction <sup>b</sup> (analysis) [0-2]	Induction <sup>c</sup> (abstraction) [0-2]	Decision-Making <sup>d</sup> (taking action) [0-2]	Opponent prediction <sup>e</sup> -1: subjectivity 1: objectivity	Advantageous knowledge <sup>f</sup> -1: map 1: game
Chess (n: 35)	X	1.794	1.486	1.657	0.371	X
Go (n: 16)	X	1.688	1.625	1.625	0.562	X
Poker (n: 22)	X	1.136	1.591	1.545	-0.318	X
Racing (n: 19)	1.842	0.263	0.211	1.000	0.500	-0.316
Team FPS (n: 40)	1.700	1.026	1.075	1.256	0.150	-0.105
Fast FPS (n: 22)	2.000	1.095	1.095	1.190	0.000	0.150
MMORPG (n: 29)	1.069	1.069	1.103	1.241	0.379	0.759
RTS (n: 86)	1.791	1.849	1.687	1.814	0.221	0.453

<sup>a</sup>“skill”, dexterity of the player related to the game, as for a musician with their instrument.

<sup>b</sup>capacity for deductive reasoning; from general principle to a specific conclusion.

<sup>c</sup>capacity for inductive reasoning, abstraction, generalization; from specific examples to a general conclusion.

<sup>d</sup>capacity to select a course of actions in the presence of several alternatives, possibly under uncertainty and stress.

<sup>e</sup>what is the biggest indicator to predict the opponent’s moves: their psychology (subjective) or the rules and logic of the game (objective)?

<sup>f</sup>Is knowledge of the game in general, or of the map specifically, preferable in order to play well?

## Chapter 3

# Bayesian Modeling of Multi-player Games

*On voit, par cet Essai, que la théorie des probabilités n'est, au fond, que le bon sens réduit au calcul; elle fait apprécier avec exactitude ce que les esprits justes sentent par une sorte d'instinct, sans qu'ils puissent souvent s'en rendre compte.*

*One sees, from this Essay, that the theory of probabilities is basically just common sense reduced to calculus; it makes one appreciate with exactness that which accurate minds feel with a sort of instinct, often without being able to account for it.*

Pierre-Simon de Laplace (*Essai philosophique sur les probabilités*, 1814)

HERE, we now present the use of probability theory as an alternative to logic, transforming incompleteness into uncertainty. Bayesian models can deal with both intentional and extensional uncertainty, that is: uncertainty coming from intentions of the players or the stochasticity of the game, as well as uncertainty coming from imperfect information and the model's limits. We will first show how these problems are addressed by probabilities and how to structure a full Bayesian program. We illustrate the approach with a model evaluated on a simulated MMORPG\* situation.

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### 3.1 Problems in Game AI

#### Partial information

If the AI has perfect information, behaving realistically is the problem. Cheating bots are not fun, so either AI should just use information available to the players, or it should fake having only partial information. In probabilistic modeling, sensor models allow for the computation of the state  $S$  from observations  $O$  by asking  $P(S|O)$ . One can easily specify or learn  $P(O|S)$ : either the game designers specify it, or the bot uses perfect information to get  $S$  and learns

(counts)  $P(O|S)$ . Then infer  $P(S|O) = \frac{P(O|S).P(S)}{P(O)}$  (Bayes rule). Incompleteness of information is just uncertainty about the full state.

## Randomness

Some games have inherent stochasticity (variable random action effects) part of the gameplay. In any case, an AI can't assume optimal play from the opponent due to the complexity of video games. In the context of state estimation and control, dealing with this randomness require ad-hoc methods for scripting of boolean logic, while it is dealt with natively through probabilistic modeling. Where a program would have to test for an effect/value  $V$  to be in a given interval to decide on a given course of action  $A$ , a probabilistic models just computes the distribution on  $A$  given  $V$ :  $P(A|V) = \frac{P(V|A).P(A)}{P(V)}$ .

## Vertical continuity

Abstracting higher level cognitive functions (strategy and tactics for instance) is an efficient way to break the complexity barrier of writing game AI. Exploiting the vertical continuity, i.e. the conditioning of higher level thinking on actions, is totally possible in a hierarchical Bayesian model. With strategies as values of  $S$  and tactics as values of  $T$ ,  $P(T|S)$  gives the conditioning of  $T$  on  $S$  and thus enables us to evaluate only those  $T$  values that are possible with given  $S$  values.

## Horizontal continuity

Real-time games may use discrete time-steps (24Hz for instance for StarCraft), it does not prevent temporal continuity in strategies, tactics and, most strongly, actions. There are several Bayesian models able to deal with sequences, filter models, from which Hidden Markov Models (HMM\*) [Rabiner, 1989], Kalman filters [Kalman, 1960] and particle filters [Arulampalam et al., 2002] are specializations of. With states  $S$  and observations  $O$ , filter models under the Markov assumption represent the joint  $P(S^0).P(O^0|S^0).\prod_{t=1}^T[P(S^t|S^{t-1}).P(O^t|S^t)]$ .

## Autonomy and Programming

Autonomy is the ability to deal with new states, the challenge of autonomous characters arises from state spaces too big to be fully specified (in scripts / FSM). Again, probabilistic modeling enables one to recognize unspecified states as soft mixtures of known states. It also allows to deal with unknown state as an incomplete version of a known state which subsumes it. Autonomy can also be reached through learning, being it through online or offline learning. Offline learning is used to learn parameters that does not have to be specified by the programmers and/or game designers. One can use data or experiments with known/wanted situations (supervised learning, reinforcement learning), or explore data (unsupervised learning) or game states (evolutionary algorithms). Online learning can provide adaptivity of the AI to the player and/or its own competency playing the game.



Figure 3.1: An advisor introducing his student to Bayesian modeling, adapted from [Land of Lisp](#) with the kind permission of Barski [2010].

## 3.2 The Bayesian Programming Methodology

The reverend Thomas Bayes is the first credited to have worked on inverting probabilities: by knowing something about the probability of  $A$  given  $B$ , how can one draw conclusions on the probability of  $B$  given  $A$ ? Bayes theorem states:

$$P(A|B) = \frac{P(B|A)P(A)}{P(B)}$$

Laplace [1814] rediscovered this theorem and published the work of inductive reasoning by using probabilities. Later, by extending logic to *plausible reasoning*, Jaynes [2003] arrived at the same properties than Kolmogorov [1933] probability theory. Plausible reasoning originates from logic, whose statements have degrees of plausibility represented by real numbers. Adding consistency: a) all the possible ways to reach a conclusion leads to the same result, b) information cannot be ignored, c) two equal states of knowledge have the same plausibilities; Cox derived the “product-rule” ( $P(AB) = P(A \cap B) = P(A|B)P(B)$ ) and the “sum-rule” ( $P(A+B) = P(A)+P(B)-P(AB)$  or  $P(A \cup B) = P(A) + P(B) - P(A \cap B)$ ) of probabilities. As for rules of inferences, the links between logic and plausible reasoning are direct, with  $C = [A \Rightarrow B]$ :

- modus ponens

$$\frac{[A \Rightarrow B] \wedge [A = \text{true}]}{B = \text{true}}$$

translates to

$$P(B|AC) = \frac{P(AB|C)}{P(A|C)}$$

- modus tollens

$$\frac{[A \Rightarrow B] \wedge [B = \text{false}]}{A = \text{false}}$$

translates to

$$P(A|C \neg B) = \frac{P(A \neg B|C)}{P(\neg B|C)}$$

Also, additionally to the two strong logic syllogisms above, plausible reasoning gets two weak syllogisms, from:

$$\bullet \quad P(A|BC) = P(A|C) \frac{P(B|AC)}{P(B|C)}$$

we get

$$\frac{[A \Rightarrow B] \wedge [B = \text{true}]}{A \text{ becomes more plausible}}$$

$$\bullet \quad P(B|C\neg A) = P(B|C) \frac{P(\neg A|BC)}{P(\neg A|C)}$$

we get

$$\frac{[A \Rightarrow B] \wedge [A = \text{false}]}{B \text{ becomes less plausible}}$$

Indeed, this was proved by Cox [1946], producing Cox's theorem (also named Cox-Jayne's theorem):

**Theorem.** *A system for reasoning which satisfies:*

- *divisibility and comparability, the plausibility of a statement is a real number,*
- *common sense, in presence of total information, reasoning is isomorphic to Boolean logic,*
- *consistency, two identical mental states should have the same degrees of plausibility,*

*is isomorphic to probability theory.*

So the degrees of belief of any consistent induction mechanism, verify Kolmogorov's axioms. Finetti [1937] showed that if reasoning is made in a system which is not isomorphic to probability theory, then it is always possible to find a *Dutch book* (a set of bets which guarantees a profit regardless of the outcomes).

Inspired by plausible reasoning, we present Bayesian programming, a formalism that can be used to describe entirely any kind of Bayesian model. It subsumes Bayesian networks and Bayesian maps, as it is equivalent to probabilistic factor graphs Diard et al. [2003]. There are mainly two parts in a Bayesian program (BP)\*, the **description** of how to compute the joint distribution, and the **question(s)** that it will be asked.

The description consists in exhibiting the relevant *variables*  $\{X^1, \dots, X^n\}$  and explain their dependencies by *decomposing* the joint distribution  $P(X^1 \dots X^n | \delta, \pi)$  with existing preliminary (*prior*) knowledge  $\pi$  and data  $\delta$ . The *forms* of each term of the product specify how to compute their distributions: either parametric forms (laws or probability tables, with free parameters that can be learned from data  $\delta$ ) or recursive questions to other Bayesian programs.

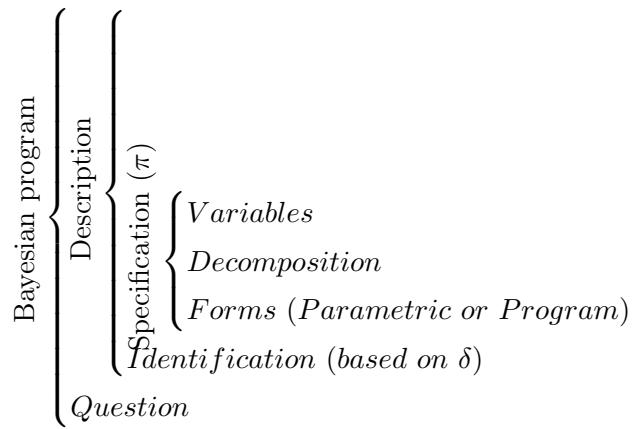
Answering a question is computing the distribution  $P(\text{Searched}|\text{Known})$ , with *Searched* and *Known* two disjoint subsets of the variables.

$$P(\text{Searched}|\text{Known}) \tag{3.1}$$

$$= \frac{\sum_{\text{Free}} P(\text{Searched}, \text{Free}, \text{Known})}{P(\text{Known})} \tag{3.2}$$

$$= \frac{1}{Z} \times \sum_{\text{Free}} P(\text{Searched}, \text{Free}, \text{Known}) \tag{3.3}$$

General Bayesian inference is practically intractable, but conditional independence hypotheses and constraints (stated in the description) often simplify the model. There are efficient ways to calculate the joint distribution like message passing and junction tree algorithms [Pearl, 1988, Aji and McEliece, 2000, Naïm et al., 2004, Mekhnacha et al., 2007, Koller and Friedman, 2009]. Also, there are different well-known approximation techniques: either by sampling with Monte-Carlo (and Monte-Carlo Markov Chains) methods [MacKay, 2003, Andrieu et al., 2003], or by solving a simpler model which approximate the full joint as with variational Bayes [Beal, 2003].



For the use of Bayesian programming in sensory-motor systems, see [Bessière et al., 2008]. For its use in cognitive modeling, see [Colas et al., 2010]. For its first use in video games (first person shooter gameplay, Unreal Tournament), see [Le Hy et al., 2004].

To sum-up, by viewing probabilities as an extension of logic, the method by which to build Bayesian models gets clearer: there is a strong parallel between writing a Bayesian program and logic or declarative programming. In order:

1. Isolate the variables of the problem: it is the first prior that the programmer puts into the system. The variables can be anything, from existing input or output values of the problem to abstract/aggregative values or parameters of the model. Discovering which variable to use for a given problem is one of the most complicated form of machine learning.
2. Suppose and describe the influences and dependencies between these variables. This is another prior that the programmer can have on the problem, and learning the structure between these variables is the second most complicated form of learning [François and Leray, 2004, Leray and François, 2005].
3. Fill the priors and conditional probabilities parameters. The programmer needs to be an expert of the problem to put relevant parameters, although this is the easiest to learn from data once variables and structure are specified. Learning the structure can be seen as learning the parameters of a fully connected model (and then removing dependencies where are the less influent parameters) but most of these kinds of model are totally untractable.

In the following, we will show this method applied to a simulated MMORPG\* fight situation.

### 3.3 Modeling of a Bayesian MMORPG player

We will now present a model of a MMORPG\* player with the Bayesian programming framework [Synnaeve and Bessière, 2010]. A role-playing game (RPG) consist in the incarnation by the human player of an avatar with a class (warrior, wizard, rogue, priest...) having different skills, spells, items, health points, stamina/energy/mana (magic energy) points. Massively Multi-Player Online Role-Playing Games (e.g. World of Warcraft, AION, EVE Online, Star Wars: The Old Republic) consist in controlling a single character, which can earn experience, as well as equip always better items to increase its health points, damage per second and other skills (heals, enhancements...). Players are immersed in a unique and persistent (thus the “massively multi-player”) world, with its history and epic battles. Players have to combat each others (PvP\*) due to the factions they belong to. They also have to team-up and battle against the environment (PvE\*) to aquire better items and level-up. This is a cooperative task in which human players fight together against different NPC.

More specifically here, we modeled the “druid” class, which is complex because it can cast spells to deal damages or other negative effects as well as to heal allies or enhance their capacities (“buff” them). The model described here deals only with a sub-task of a global AI for autonomous NPC. The problem that we try to solve is: how do we choose which skill to use and on which target in a PvE battle? Possible targets are all our allies and foes. Possible skills are all that we know, we will just try and get a distribution over target and skills and pick the most probable combination that is yet possible to achieve (enough energy/mana, no cooldown/reload time). For that, we first choose what should be the target given all surrounding variables: is an ally near death that he should be healed, which foe should we focus our attacks on? Once we have the distribution over possible targets, we search the distribution about our skills, pondered by the one on targets. However, some variables can be things that humans subconsciously interpolate from perceptions.

#### Variables

A simple set of variables is as follows:

- Target:  $T^{t-1,t} \in \{t_1 \dots t_n\}$  at  $t$  and  $t - 1$  (previous action).  $T^t$  is also abusively noted  $T$  in the rest of the model. We have the  $n$  characters as possible targets; each of them has their own properties variables (the indexing in the following variables).
- Hit Points:  $HP_1 \dots HP_n$  s.t.  $HP_i \in [0 \dots 9]$ . Health/Hit points ( $HP$ ) are discretized in 10 levels, from the lower to the higher.
- Distance:  $D_1 \dots D_n$  s.t.  $D_i \in \{Contact, Close, Far, VeryFar\}$ . Distance ( $D$ ) is discretized in 4 zones around the robot character: *contact* where it can attack with a contact weapon, *close*, *far* and (*very far*) to the further for which we have to move even for shooting the longest distance weapon/spell.
- Ally:  $A_1 \dots A_n$  s.t.  $A_i \in \{true, false\}$ . Ally ( $A$ ) is a Boolean variable mentioning if character  $i$  is allied with the robot character.

- Derivative Hit Points:  $\Delta HP_1 \dots \Delta HP_n$  s.t.  $\Delta HP_i \in \{-, 0, +\}$ . Delta hit points ( $\Delta HP$ ) is a 3-valued interpolated value from the previous few seconds of fight that informs about the  $i$ th character getting wounded or healed (or nothing).
- Imminent Death:  $ID_1 \dots ID_n$  s.t.  $ID_i \in \{true, false\}$ . Imminent death ( $ID$ ) is also an interpolated value that encodes  $HP$ ,  $\Delta HP$  and incoming attacks/attackers. This is a Boolean variable saying if the  $i$ th character is going to die anytime soon. This is an example of what we consider that an experienced human player will infer automatically from the screen and notifications.
- Class:  $C_1 \dots C_n$  s.t.  $C_i \in \{Tank, Contact, Ranged, Healer\}$ . Class ( $C$ ), simplified over 4 values, gives the type of the  $i$ th character: a Tank can take a lot of damages and taunt enemies, a Contact damager can deal huge amounts of damage with contact weapons (rogue, barbarian...), Ranged stands for the class that deals damages from far away (hunters, mages...) and Healers are classes that can heal (in considerable amounts).
- Resists:  $R_1 \dots R_n$  s.t.  $R_i \in \{Nothing, Fire, Ice, Nature, FireIce, IceNat, FireNat, All\}$ . The Resist variable is the combination of binary variables of resistance to certain types of (magical) damages into one variable. With 3 possible resistances we get ( $2^3$ ) 8 possible values. For instance “ $R_i = FireNat$ ” means that the  $i$ th character resists fire and nature-based damages. Armor (physical damages) could have been included, and the variables could have been separated.
- Skill:  $S \in \{Skill_1 \dots Skill_m\}$ . The skill variable takes here all the possible skills for the given character, and not only the available ones to cast at the moment to be able to have reusable probability tables (i.e. learnable tables).

## Decomposition

### Target selection

The joint distribution is simplified (by conditional independence of variables) as:

$$P(T, T^{t-1}, HP_{1:n}, D_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, \Delta HP_{1:n}, ID_{1:n}, C_{1:n}) = \quad (3.4)$$

$$P(T^{t-1}).P(T|T^{t-1}).\prod_{i=1}^n [P(HP_i|A_i, C_i, T).P(D_i|A_i, t).P(A_i|T)] \quad (3.5)$$

$$P(\Delta HP_i|A_i, C_i, T).P(C_i|A_i, T).P(ID_i|T)] \quad (3.6)$$

We want to compute the probability distribution on the variable Target ( $T$ ), so we have to consider the joint distribution with all variables on which Target ( $T$ ) is conditionally dependant : the previous value of Target ( $T^{t-1}$ ), and all the variables on each character (except for Resists). The probability of a given target depends on the previous one (it encodes the previous decision and so all previous states). The health (or hit) points ( $HP_i$ ) depends on the facts that the  $i$ th character is an ally ( $A_i$ ), on his class ( $C_i$ ), and if he is a target ( $T$ ). Such a conditional probability table should be learned, but we can already foresee that a targeted ally with a tanking class ( $C = tank$ ) would have a high probability of having low hit points ( $HP$ ) because taking it for target means that we intend to heal him. The distance of the unit  $i$  ( $D_i$ ) is more probably far

if unit  $i$  is an enemy ( $A_i = \text{false}$ ) and we target it ( $T = i$ ) as our kind of druid attacks with ranged spells and does not fare well in the middle of the battlefield. The probability of the  $i$ th character being an ally depends on if we target allies or foes more often: that is  $P(A_i|T)$  encodes our propensity to target allies (with heals and enhancements) or foes (with damaging or crippling abilities). The probability that the  $i$ th units is being damaged (losing hit points:  $\Delta HP_i = “-”$ ) is higher for foes ( $A_i = \text{false}$ ) with vulnerable classes ( $C_i = \text{healer}$ ) that are more susceptible to be targeted ( $T = i$ ), and also for allies ( $A_i = \text{true}$ ) whose role is to take most of the damages ( $C_i = \text{tank}$ ). As for  $A_i$ , the probability of  $ID_i$  is driven by our inclination of targeting characters near death. The probability of  $C_i$  is driven by the distribution of foes and allies population, tuned with a soft evidence of which classes our druid human player will target more frequently.

## Skill selection

For skill selection, we need additional variables. The joint distribution of the updated model is:

$$P(S, T^{t-1,t}, HP_{1:n}, D_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, \Delta HP_{1:n}, ID_{1:n}, C_{1:n}, R_{1:n}) = \quad (3.7)$$

$$P(S).P(T^t|T^{t-1}).P(T^{t-1}).\prod_{i=1}^n [P(HP_i|A_i, C_i, S, T).P(D_i|A_i, S, T).P(A_i|S, T) \quad (3.8)$$

$$P(\Delta HP_i|A_i, S, T).P(R_i|C_i, S, T).P(C_i|A_i, S, T)] \quad (3.9)$$

As previously for targets, we are interested in the conditional probabilities of each character's state variables given other state variables and given our target ( $T$ ) and the skill that we use ( $S$ ). If we target the  $i$ th unit ( $T = i$ ), happening to be an allied ( $A_i = \text{true}$ ) tank ( $C_i = \text{tank}$ ) with a "big heal" ( $S = \text{big\_heal}$ ), the probability that they will have low hit points ( $HP_i = 0$  or 1 (very low)) is very high. Some skills have optimal ranges to be used at and so  $P(D_i)$  will be affected. As we use heals  $s_h \in \{\text{heals}\}$  exclusively on allies,  $P(A_i = \text{true}|S = s_h) = 1.0$ . Conversely, as we use attacks ( $s_a \in \{\text{damage}\}$ ) exclusively on foes,  $P(A_i = \text{false}|S = s_a) = 1.0$ . The probability that the  $i$ th units is being damaged ( $\Delta HP_i = “-”$ ) will top when we use a heal ( $S = \text{heal}$ ) on an ally, as we want to maintain everyone alive. The one of the resist to "nature based effects" ( $R_i = \text{nature}$ ) for skills involving "nature" damage ( $s \in \{\text{nature\_damage}\}$ ) will be very low as it will be useless to use spells that the receiver is protected against. The probability that the  $i$ th character will die soon ( $ID_i$ ) will be high if  $i$  is targeted ( $T = i$ ) with a big heal or big instant damage ( $S = \text{big\_heal}$  or  $S = \text{big\_damage}$ , depending on whether  $i$  is an ally or not).

## Parameters

- $P(T^{t-1})$  is unknown and unspecified (uniform). In the question, we always know what was the previous target, except when there was not one.
- $P(T|T^{t-1})$  is a probability corresponding to the propensity to switch targets. It can be learned, or uniform if there is no previous target (it the prior on the target then).
- $P(S)$  is unknown and so unspecified, it could be a prior.
- $P(HP_i|A_i, C_i, S, T)$  is a  $2 \times 4 \times m \times 2$  probability table, indexed on if the  $i$ th character is an ally or not, on its class, on the skills ( $\#S = m$ ) and on where it is the target or not. It can be learned (and/or parametrized), for instance  $P(HP_i = x|a_i, c_i, s, t) = \frac{1+\text{count}(x, a_i, c_i, s, t)}{10+\text{count}(a_i, c_i, s, t)}$ .

- $P(D_i|A_i, S, T)$  is a  $4 \times 2 \times m \times 2$  (possibly learned) probability table.
- $P(A_i|S, T)$  is a  $2 \times m \times 2$  (possibly learned) probability table.
- $P(\Delta HP_i|A_i, S, T)$  is a  $3 \times 2 \times m \times 2$  (possibly learned) probability table.
- $P(R_i|C_i, S, T)$  is a  $8 \times 4 \times m \times 2$  (possibly learned) probability table.
- $P(C_i|A_i, S, T)$  is a  $4 \times 2 \times m \times 2$  (possibly learned) probability table.

## Identification

If there were only perceived variables, learning the right conditional probability tables would just be counting and averaging. However, some variables encode combinations of perceptions and passed states. We could learn such parameters through the EM algorithm but we propose something simpler for the moment as our “not directly observed variables” are not complex to compute, we compute them from perceptions as the same time as we learn. For instance we map in-game values to their discrete values for each variables online and only store the resulting state “compression”. In the following Results part however, we did not apply learning but instead manually specified the probability tables to show the effects of gamers’ *common sense* rules and how it/they can be correctly encoded in this model.

## Questions

In any case, we ask our (updated) model:

$$P(S, T|t^{t-1}, hp_{1:n}, d_{1:n}, a_{1:n}, \Delta hp_{1:n}, id_{1:n}, c_{1:n}, r_{1:n}) \quad (3.10)$$

Which means that we want to know the distribution on  $S$  and  $T$  knowing all the state variables. We then choose to do the highest scoring combination of  $S \wedge T$  that is available (skills may have cooldowns or cost more mana/energy that we have available).

As (Bayes rule)  $P(S, T) = P(S|T).P(T)$ , to decompose this question, we can ask:

$$P(T|t^{t-1}, hp_{1:n}, d_{1:n}, a_{1:n}, \Delta hp_{1:n}, id_{1:n}, c_{1:n})$$

Which means that we want to know the distribution on  $T$  knowing all the relevant state variables, followed by (with the newly computed distribution on  $T$ ):

$$P(S|T, hp_{1:n}, d_{1:n}, a_{1:n}, \Delta hp_{1:n}, id_{1:n}, c_{1:n}, r_{1:n})$$

in which we use this distribution on  $T$  to compute the distribution on  $S$  with:

$$P(S = skill_1 | \dots) = \sum_T P(S = skill_1 | T, \dots).P(T)$$

We here choose to sum over all possible values of  $T$ . Note that we did not ask:  $P(S|T = most\_probable, \dots)$  but computed instead

$$\sum_T P(S|T, hp_{1:n}, d_{1:n}, a_{1:n}, \Delta hp_{1:n}, id_{1:n}, c_{1:n}, r_{1:n})$$

In presence of several possible targets and skills, this computation may have a high complexity, so we could choose not to do the sum and use and instantiate “most probable values”, for instance of Target, but there we would make a choice earlier and so lose information. There are possibly good combinations of  $S$  and  $T$  for a value of  $T$  that is not the most probable one. This downside may be so hard that we may want to reduce the complexity of computation by simplifying our model or its computation to be able to sum. We propose a solution in the discussion.

Here is the full Bayesian program corresponding to this model:

$$\begin{aligned}
 BP \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Desc.} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Variables} \\ S, T^{t-1,t}, HP_{1:n}, D_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, \Delta HP_{1:n}, ID_{1:n}, C_{1:n}, R_{1:n} \\ \text{Decomposition} \\ \text{Spec.}(\pi) \left\{ \begin{array}{l} P(S, T^{t-1,t}, HP_{1:n}, D_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, \Delta HP_{1:n}, ID_{1:n}, C_{1:n}, R_{1:n}) = \\ P(S).P(T|T^{t-1}).P(T^{t-1}).\prod_{i=1}^n [P(HP_i|A_i, C_i, S, T).P(D_i|A_i, S, T).P(A_i|S, T) \\ P(\Delta HP_i|A_i, S, T).P(R_i|C_i, S, T).P(C_i|A_i, S, T)] \\ \text{Forms} \\ \text{probability tables parametrized on wether } i \text{ is targeted} \\ \text{Identification (using } \delta) \\ \text{learning (e.g. Laplace succession law) or manually specified} \\ \text{Question} \\ P(S, T|T^{t-1}, HP_{1:n}, D_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, \Delta HP_{1:n}, ID_{1:n}, C_{1:n}, R_{1:n}) \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right\}
 \end{aligned}$$

## Example

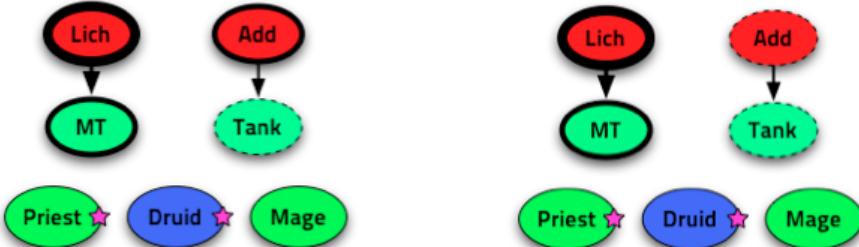


Figure 3.2: Example setup A (left) and B (right). There are 2 foes and 2 players taking damages (“MT” and “tank”). Players with stars can heal allies, players with dotted lines will soon die ( $ID = true$ ). Our model controls the blue character, green players are allies, while red characters are foes. The larger the surrounding ellipse is, the more health points the characters have.

This model has been applied to a simulated situation with 2 foes and 4 allies while our robot took the part of a “druid”, a versatile class that can cast spells to do direct damages, damages over time, buff (enhancements), debuff, crowd-control, heal and heal over time. We display a schema of this situation in Fig. 3.2 The arrows indicate foes attacks on allies. MT stands for “main tank”, Add for “additional foe”. We worked with the skills corresponding to a Druid.

HOT stands for heal over time, DOT for damage over time, “abol” for abolition and “regen” for regeneration, a “buff” is an enhancement and a “dd” is a direct damage. “Root” is a spell which disables the target to move for a short period of time, useful to flee or to put some distance between the enemy and the druid to cast attack spells. “Small” spells are usually faster to cast than “big” spells. The difference between setup A and setup B is simply to test the concurrency between healing and dealing damage and the changes in behavior if the player can lower the menace (damage dealer).

$$Skills \in \{small\_heal, big\_heal, HOT, poison\_abol, malediction\_abol, buff\_armor, regen\_mana, small\_dd, big\_dd, DOT, debuff\_armor, root\}$$

We did not do the “Identification” part, which consists in learning the probability tables from observations. To keep things simple and because we wanted to analyze the answers of the model, we worked with manually defined probability tables, which we will change to watch their effects on the full behavior of the model. In the experiments, we will try different values for the “soft evidence that a selected target will soon die”, that is  $P(ID_i|T = i)$ , and see how the behavior of the agent changes. We set the probability to target the same target as before ( $P(T^t = i|T^{t-1} = i)$ ) to 0.4 and the previous target to “Lich” so that the prior probability for all other 6 targets is 0.1 (4 times more chances to target the Lich than any other character). We set the probability to target an enemy (instead of an ally)  $P(A_i = \text{false}|T = i)$  to 0.6. This means that our robotic druid is mainly a damage dealer and just a backup healer. For the “target selection” sub-model, we can see on Fig. 3.3 (left) that the evolution from selecting the main foe “Lich” to selecting the ally “Tank” is driven by the increase of “soft evidence that a selected target will soon die” and our robot eventually moves on targeting their “Tank” ally (to heal them). We can see on Fig. 3.3 (right) that, at some point, the robotic Druid prefers to kill the dying “add” (additional foe) to save their ally Tank instead of healing them. Note that there is no variable showing the relation between “Add” and “Tank” (the first is attacking the second, who is taking damages from the first), but this could be taken into account in a more complete model.

For the “skill selection” model, we can see on Fig. 3.4 the influence of  $ID_i$  on Skill which is coherent with the Target distribution: either, in setup A (left), we evolve with the increase of  $P(ID_i = \text{true}|Target = i)$  to choose to heal our ally or, in setup B (right), to deal direct damage (and hopefully, kill) the foe attacking him. As you can see here, when we have the highest probability to attack the main enemy (“Lich”, when  $P(ID_i = \text{true}|Target = i)$  is low), who is a  $C = tank$ , we get a high probability for the Skill *debuff\_armor*. We only cast this skill if the debuff is not already present, so perhaps that we will cast *small\_dd* instead. To conclude this example, Fig. 3.5 shows the distribution on  $P(T, S|all\_status\_variables)$  with setup A and the probability to target the previous target (set to “Lich” here) only  $\approx 2$  times greater than any other character (so that we focus less on the same character), soft evidences  $P(ID_i = \text{true}|Target = i) = 0.9$  and  $P(A_i = \text{false}|Target = i) = 0.6$ . On the decision-making side of this model, a simple approach would be a greedy one: if the first couple  $(T, S)$  is already done or not available, we perform the second, and so on.

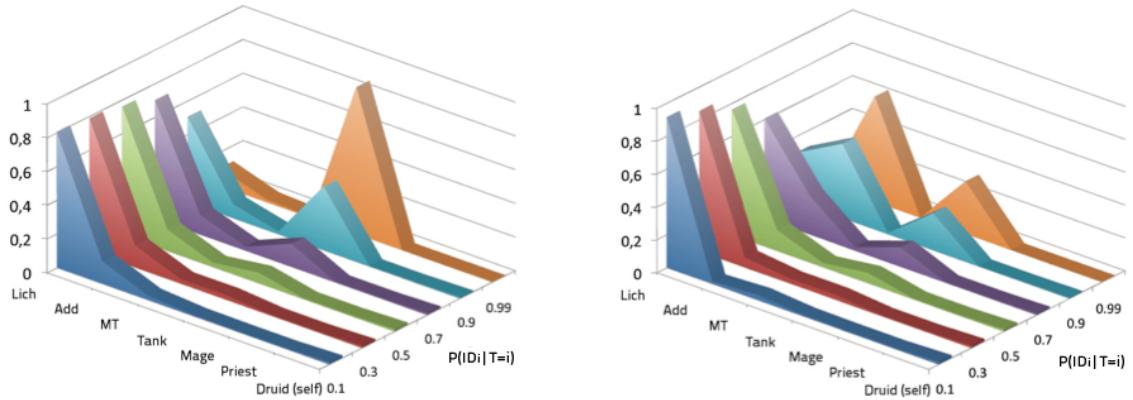


Figure 3.3: Left: probabilities of targets depending on the soft evidence that a target is dying ( $P(ID_i = \text{true} | T = i)$ ) with setup A (no ally is risking death). Right: same, with setup B (the “tank” ally is risking death).

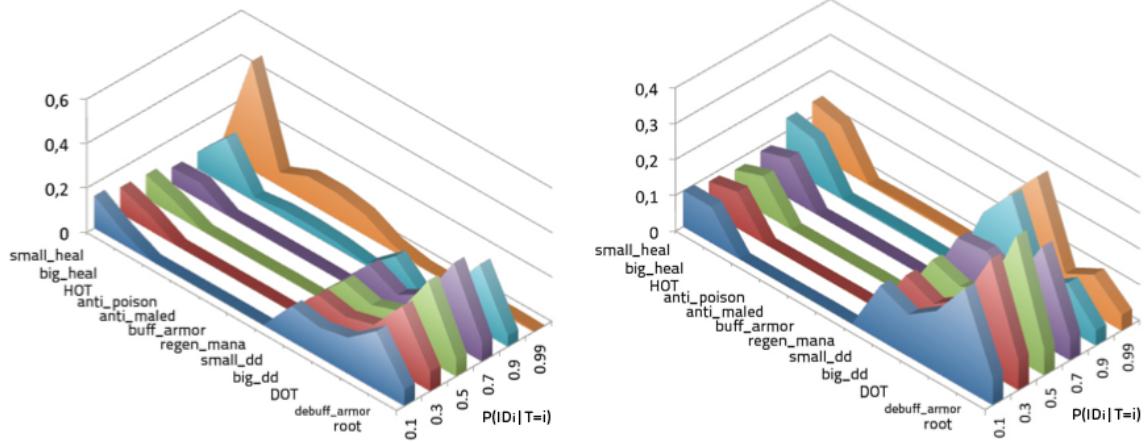


Figure 3.4: Left: Probabilities of skills depending on the soft evidence that a target is dying ( $P(ID_i = \text{true} | T = i)$ ) with setup A (no ally is risking death). Right: same, with setup B (the “tank” ally is risking death).

## Discussion

This limited model served the purpose of presenting Bayesian programming in practice. While it was used in a simulation, it showcases the approach one can take to break down the problem of autonomous control of NPC\*. The choice of the skill or ability to use and the target on which to use it puts hard constraints on every others decisions the autonomous agent has to take to perform its ability action. Thus, such a model shows that:

- cooperative behavior is not too hard to incorporate in a decision (instead of being hard-coded),
- it can be learned, either from observations of a human player or by reinforcement (explo-



Figure 3.5: Log-probabilities of Target and Skill with setup A, and  $P(ID_i = \text{true}|T = i) = 0.9, P(A_i = \text{false}|T = i) = 0.6$ . This plot corresponds to the answer to the full question on which decision-making has to be done.

ration),

- it is computationally tractable (for use in all games), the inference is just a series of “probabilistic *ifs*”,

Moreover, using this model on another agent than the one controlled by the AI can give a prediction on what it will do, resulting in human-like, adaptive, playing style.

We did not kept at the research track of Bayesian modeling MMORPG games due to the difficulty to work on these types of games: the studios have too much to lose to “farmer” bots to accept any automated access to the game. Also, there are no sharing format of data (like replays) and the invariants of the game situations are fewer than in RTS games. Finally, RTS games have international AI competitions which were a good motivation to compare our approach with other game AI researchers.



# Chapter 4

## RTS AI: *StarCraft: Broodwar*

*We think of life as a journey with a destination (success, heaven). But we missed the point. It was a musical thing, we were supposed to sing and dance while music was being played.*

Alan Watts

THIS chapter explains the basics of RTS gameplay, particularly StarCraft. We then list the (computational) challenges brought by RTS gameplay. We present a transversal decomposition of the RTS AI domain in levels of abstractions (strategy, tactics, micro-management\*), which we will use for the rest of the dissertation.

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### 4.1 How does the game work

#### RTS Gameplay

We first introduce the basic components of a real-time strategy (RTS) game. The player is usually referred as the “commander” and perceives the world in an allocentric “God’s view”, performing mouse and keyboard actions to give orders to units (or squads of units) within a circumvented area (the “map”). In a RTS, players need to gather resources to build military units and defeat their opponents. To that end, they often have *worker units* (or extraction structures) than can gather resources needed to build *workers*, *buildings*, *military units* and *research upgrades*. Workers are often also builders (as in StarCraft) and are weak in fights compared to military units. Resources may have different uses, for instance in StarCraft: minerals\* are used for everything, whereas gas\* is only required for advanced buildings or military units, and technology upgrades. Buildings and research upgrades define technology trees (directed acyclic graphs) and each state of a tech tree\* (or build tree\*) allow for different unit type production abilities and unit spells/abilities. The military units can be of different types, any combinations of ranged,

casters, contact attack, zone attacks, big, small, slow, fast, invisible, flying... In the end, a central part of the gameplay is that units can have attacks and defenses that counter each others as in a soft rock-paper-scissors. Also, from a player point of view, most RTS games are only partially observable due to the *fog of war*\* which hides units and new buildings which are not in sight range of the player's units.

In chronological order, RTS include (but are not limited to): Ancient Art of War, Herzog Zwei, Dune II, Warcraft, Command & Conquer, Warcraft II, C&C: Red Alert, Total Annihilation, Age of Empires, StarCraft, Age of Empires II, Tzar, Cossacks, Homeworld, Battle Realms, Ground Control, Spring Engine games, Warcraft III, Total War, Warhammer 40k, Sins of a Solar Empire, Supreme Commander, StarCraft II. The differences in gameplay are in the order of number, nature and gathering methods of resources; along with construction, research and production mechanics. The duration of games vary from 15 minutes for the fastest to (1-3) hours for the ones with the biggest maps and longest gameplays. We will now focus on StarCraft, on which our robotic player is implemented.

## A StarCraft Game

*StarCraft* is a science-fiction RTS game released by Blizzard Entertainment<sup>TM</sup> in March 1998. It was quickly expanded into *StarCraft: Brood War* (SC: BW) in November 1998. In the following, when referring to StarCraft, we mean StarCraft with the Brood War expansion. StarCraft is a canonical RTS game in the sense that it helped define the genre and most gameplay mechanics seen in other RTS games are present in StarCraft. It is as much based on strategy than tactics, by opposition to the Age of Empires and Total Annihilation series in which strategy is prevalent. In the following of the thesis, we will focus on duel mode, also known as 1 vs. 1 (1v1). Team-play (2v2 and higher) and “free for all” are very interesting but were not studied in the framework of this research. These game modes particularly add a layer of coordination and bluff respectively.

StarCraft sold 9.5 millions licenses worldwide, 4.5 millions in South Korea alone [Olsen, 2007], and reigned on competitive RTS tournaments for more than a decade. Numerous international competitions (World Cyber Games, Electronic Sports World Cup, BlizzCon, OnGameNet StarLeague, MBCGame StarLeague) and professional gaming (mainly in South Korea [Chee, 2005]) produced a massive amount of data of highly skilled human players. In South Korea, there are two TV channels dedicated to broadcasting competitive video games, particularly StarCraft. The average salary of a pro-gamer\* there was up to 4 times the average South Korean salary [MYM, 2007] (up to \$200,000/year on contract for NaDa). Professional gamers perform about 300 actions (mouse and keyboard clicks) per minute while following and adapting their strategies, while their hearts reach 160 beats per minute (BPM are displayed live in some tournaments). StarCraft II is currently (2012) taking over StarCraft in competitive gaming but a) there is still a strong pool of highly skilled StarCraft players and b) StarCraft II has a really similar gameplay.

StarCraft (like most RTS) has a *replay*\* mechanism, which enables to record every player's actions such that the state of the game can be deterministically re-simulated. The only piece of stochasticity comes from “attack miss rates” ( $\approx 47\%$ ) when a unit is on a lower ground than its target. These randomness generator seed is saved along with the actions in the replay. All high level players use this feature heavily either to improve their play or study opponents' styles. Observing replays allows player to see what happened under the *fog of war*\*, so that they can

understand timing of technologies and attacks, and find clues/evidences leading to infer the strategy as well as weak points.

In StarCraft, there are three factions with very different units and technology trees:

- *Terran*: humans with strong defensive capabilities and balanced, averagely priced biological and mechanical units.
- *Protoss*: advanced psionic aliens with expensive, slow to produce but resistant units.
- *Zerg*: insectoid alien race with cheap, quick to produce but weak units.

All factions use workers to gather resources, and all other characteristics are different: from military units to “tech trees\*”, gameplay styles. Races are so different that highly skilled players focus on playing with a single race (but against all three others). There are two types of resources, often located close together, minerals\* and gas\*. From minerals, one can build basic buildings and units, which opens the path to more advanced buildings, technologies and units, which will in turn all require gas to be produced. While minerals can be gathered at an increasing rate (bounded asymptotically) the more workers are put at work, the gas gathering rate is quickly limited to 3 workers per gas geyser (i.e. per base). There is another third type of “special” resource, called *supply*\*, which is the current population of a given player (or the cost in population of a given unit), and *max supply*\*, which is the current limit of population a player can control. Max supply\* can be upgraded by building special buildings (Protoss Pylon, Terran Supply Depot) or units (Zerg Overlord), giving 9 to 10 additional max supply\*, up to a hard limit of 200. Some units cost more supply than others (from 0.5 for a Zergling to 8 for a Protoss Carrier or Terran Battlecruiser). In Figure 4.1, we show the very basics of Protoss economy and buildings. Supply will sometimes be written supply/max supply (supply on max supply). For instance 4/9 is that we currently have a population of 4 (either 4 units of 1, or 2 of 2 or ...) on a current maximum of 9.

To reach a competitive amateur level, players have to study *openings*\* and hone their *build orders*\*. An opening corresponds to the first strategic moves of a game, as in other abstract strategy games (Chess, Go). They are classified/labeled with names from high level players. A build-order is a formally described and accurately timed sequence of buildings to construct in the beginning. As there is a bijection between optimal population and time (in the beginning, before any fight), build orders are indexed on the total population of the player as in the example for Protoss in table 4.1. At the highest levels of play, StarCraft games usually last between 6 (shortest games, with a successful rush from one of the player) to 30 minutes (long economically and technologically developed game).

We now present the evolution of a game (Figures 4.2 and 4.3) during which we tried to follow the build order presented in table 4.1 (“2 Gates Goon Range”<sup>1</sup>) but we had to adapt to the fact that the opponent was Zerg (possibility for a faster rush) by building a Gateway at 9 supply and building a Zealot (ground contact unit) before the first Dragoon. The first screenshot (image 1 in Figure 4.2) is at the very start of the game: 4 Probes (Protoss workers), and one Nexus (Protoss main building, producing workers and depot point for resources). At this point players have to think about what openings\* they will use. Should we be aggressive early on or opt for

---

<sup>1</sup>On Teamliquid: [http://wiki.teamliquid.net/starcraft/2\\_Gate\\_Goon\\_Range\\_\(vs.\\_Terran\)](http://wiki.teamliquid.net/starcraft/2_Gate_Goon_Range_(vs._Terran))



Figure 4.1: A StarCraft screenshot of a Protoss base, with annotations. The interface (heads up display at the bottom) shows the *mini-map*\*. The center of the interface (bottom) shows the selected unit (or group of units), here the Protoss Nexus (main economical building, producing workers and to which resources are brought) which is in the center of the screen and circled in green. The bottom right part shows the possible actions (here build a Protoss Probe or set a rally point). The top right of the screen shows the minerals\* (442), gas\* (208) and supply\* (25 total) on max supply\* (33). The dotted lines demarcate economical parts with active workers: red for minerals mining and green for gas gathering. The plain cut outs of buildings show: a Pylon (white), a Forge (orange, for upgrades and access to static defense), a Cybernetics Core (yellow, for technological upgrades and expanding the tech tree), a Gateway (pink, producing ground units), a Photon Cannon (blue, static defense).

a more defensive opening? Should we specialize our army for focused tactics, to the detriment of being able to handle situations (tactics and armies compositions) from the opponent that we did not foresee? In picture 2 in the same Figure (4.2), the first gate is being built. At this moment, players often send a worker to “scout” the enemy’s base, as they cannot have military units yet, it is a safe way to discover where they are and inquiry about what they are doing. In picture 3, the player scouts their opponent, thus gathering the first bits of information about their early tech tree. Thus, knowing to be safe from an early attack (“rush”), the player decides to go for a defensive and economical strategy for now. Picture 4 shows the player “expanding”, which is the act of making another base at a new resource location, for economical purposes. In picture 5, we can see the upgrading of the ground weapons along with 4 ranged military units, staying in defense at the expansion. This is a technological decision of losing a little of potential

Supply/Max supply (population/max)	Build or Product	Note
8/9	Pylon	
10/17	Gateway	“supply/psi/control/population” building units producing structure
12/17	Assimilator	constructed on a gas geyser, to gather gas
14/17	Cybernetics Core	technological building
16/17	Pylon	“supply/psi/control/population” building
16/17	Range	it is a research/tech
17/25	Dragoon	first military unit

Table 4.1: An example of the beginning of a “2 Gates Goon Range” Protoss build order which focus on building dragoons and their attack range upgrade quickly.

“quick military power” (from military units which could have been produced for this minerals and gas) in exchange of global upgrade for all units (alive and to be produced), for the whole game. This is an investment in both resources and time. Picture 6 showcases the production queue of a Gateway as well as workers transferring to a second expansion (third base). Being safe and having expanded his tech tree\* to a point where the army composition is well-rounded, the player opted for a strategy to win by profiting from an economical lead. Figure 4.3 shows the aggressive moves of the same player: in picture 7, we can see a flying transport with artillery and area of effect “casters” in it. The goal of such an attack is not to win the game right away but to weaken the enemy’s economy: each lost worker has to be produced, and, mainly, the missing gathering time adds up quite quickly. In picture 8, the transport in unloaded directly inside the enemy’s base, causing huge damages to their economy (killing workers, Zerg Drones). This is the use of a specialized tactics, which can change the course of a game. At the same time, it involves only few units (a flying transport and its cargo), allowing for the main army to stay in defense at base. It capitalizes on the maneuverability of the flying Protoss Shuttle, the technological advancements allowing area of effects attacks and the large zone that the opponent has to cover to defend against it. In picture 9, an invisible attacking unit (circled in white) is harassing the oblivious enemy’s army. This is an example of how technology advance on the opponent can be game changing (the opponent does not have detection in range, thus is vulnerable to cloaked units). Finally, picture 10 shows the final attack, with a full ground army marching on the enemy’s base.

## 4.2 RTS AI Challenges

In combinatorial game theory terms, competitive StarCraft (1 versus 1) is a zero sum, partial-information, deterministic<sup>2</sup> strategy game. StarCraft subsumes Wargus (Warcraft II open source clone), which has an estimated mean branching factor  $1.5 \cdot 10^3$  [Aha et al., 2005] (Chess:  $\approx 35$ , Go:  $< 360$ ): Weber [2012] finds a branching factor greater than  $1.10^6$  for StarCraft. In a given game (with maximum map size) the number of possible positions is roughly of  $10^{11500}$ , versus the Shannon number for Chess ( $10^{43}$ ) [Shannon, 1950]. Also, we believe strategies are much more

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<sup>2</sup>The only stochasticity is in attacks failures (miss rate) from lower grounds to higher grounds, which is easily averaged.



Figure 4.2: Start and economical parts of a StarCraft game. The order of the screenshots goes from left to right and from top to bottom.

balanced in StarCraft than in most other games. Otherwise, how could it be that more than a decade of professional gaming on StarCraft did not converge to a finite set of fixed (imbalanced) strategies?

Humans deal with this complexity by abstracting away strategy from low level actions: there are some highly restrictive constraints on where it is efficient (“optimal”) to place economical



Figure 4.3: Military moves from a StarCraft (PvT) game. The order of the screenshots goes from left to right and from top to bottom.

main buildings (Protoss Nexus, Terran Command Center, Zerg Hatchery/Lair/Hive) close to minerals spots and gas geysers. Low-level micro-management\* decisions have high *horizontal continuity* and humans see these tasks more like playing a musical instrument skillfully. Finally, the continuum of strategies is analyzed by players and some distinct strategies are identified as some kinds of “invariants”, or “entry points” or “principal components”. From there, strategic decisions impose some (sometimes hard) constraints on the possible tactics, and the complexity is broken by considering only the interesting state space due to this high *vertical continuity*.

Most challenges of RTS games have been identified by [Buro, 2003, 2004]. We will try to anchor them in the human reasoning that goes on while playing a StarCraft game.

- *Adversarial planning under uncertainty* (along with *resource management*): it diverges from traditional planning under uncertainty in the fact that the player also has to plan *against* the opponent’s strategy, tactics, and actions. From the human point of view, he has to plan for which buildings to build to follow a chosen opening\* and subsequent strategies, under a restricted resources (and time) budget. At a lower level, and less obvious for humans, are the plans they make to coordinate units movements.

- *Learning and opponent modeling*, Buro accurately points out that human players need very few (“a couple of”) games to spot their opponents’ weaknesses. Somehow, human opponent modeling is related to the “induction scandal”, as Russell called it: how do humans learn so much so fast? We learn from our mistakes, we learn the “play style” of our opponent’s, we are quickly able to ask ourselves: “what should I do now given what I have seen *and* the fact that I am playing against player XYZ?”. “Could they make the same attack as last time?”. To this end, we use high level representations of the states and the actions with compressed invariants, causes and effects.
- *Spatial and temporal reasoning* (along with *decision making under uncertainty*), this is related to planning under uncertainty but focuses on the special relations between what can and what cannot be done in a given time. Sadly, it was true in 2004 but is still true today: “RTS game AI [...] falls victim to simple common-sense reasoning”. Humans learn sequences of actions, and reason only about actions coherent with common sense. For AI of complex systems, this common-sense is hard to encode and to use.
- Collaboration (teamplay), which we will not deal with here: a lot has to do with efficient communication and “teammate modeling”.

As we have seen previously more generally for multi-player video games, all these challenges can be handled by Bayesian modeling. While acknowledging these challenges for RTS AI, we now propose a different task decomposition, in which different tasks will solve some parts of these problems at their respective levels.

### 4.3 Tasks decomposition and linking

We decided to decompose RTS AI in the three levels which are used by the gamers to describe the games: *strategy*, *tactics*, *micro-management*. We remind the reader that parts of the map not in the sight range of the player’s units are under *fog of war*\*, so the player has only partial information about the enemy buildings and army. The way by which we expand the tech tree, the specific units composing the army, and the general stance (aggressive or defensive) form what we call *strategy*. At the lower level, the actions performed by the player (human or not) to optimize the effectiveness of its units is called *micro-management*\*. In between lies *tactics*: where to attack, and how. A good human player takes much data in consideration when choosing: are there flaws in the defense? Which spot is more worthy to attack? How much am I vulnerable for attacking here? Is the terrain (height, chokes) to my advantage? The concept of strategy is a little more abstract: at the beginning of the game, it is closely tied to the build order and the intention of the first few moves and is called the *opening*, as in Chess. Then, the long term strategy can be partially summed up by three signals/indicators:

- aggression: how much is the player aggressive or defensive?
- initiative: how much is the player adapting to the opponent’s strategy vs. how much is the player being original?
- technology/production/economy (tech/army/eco) distribution of resources: how much is the player spending (relatively) in these three domains?

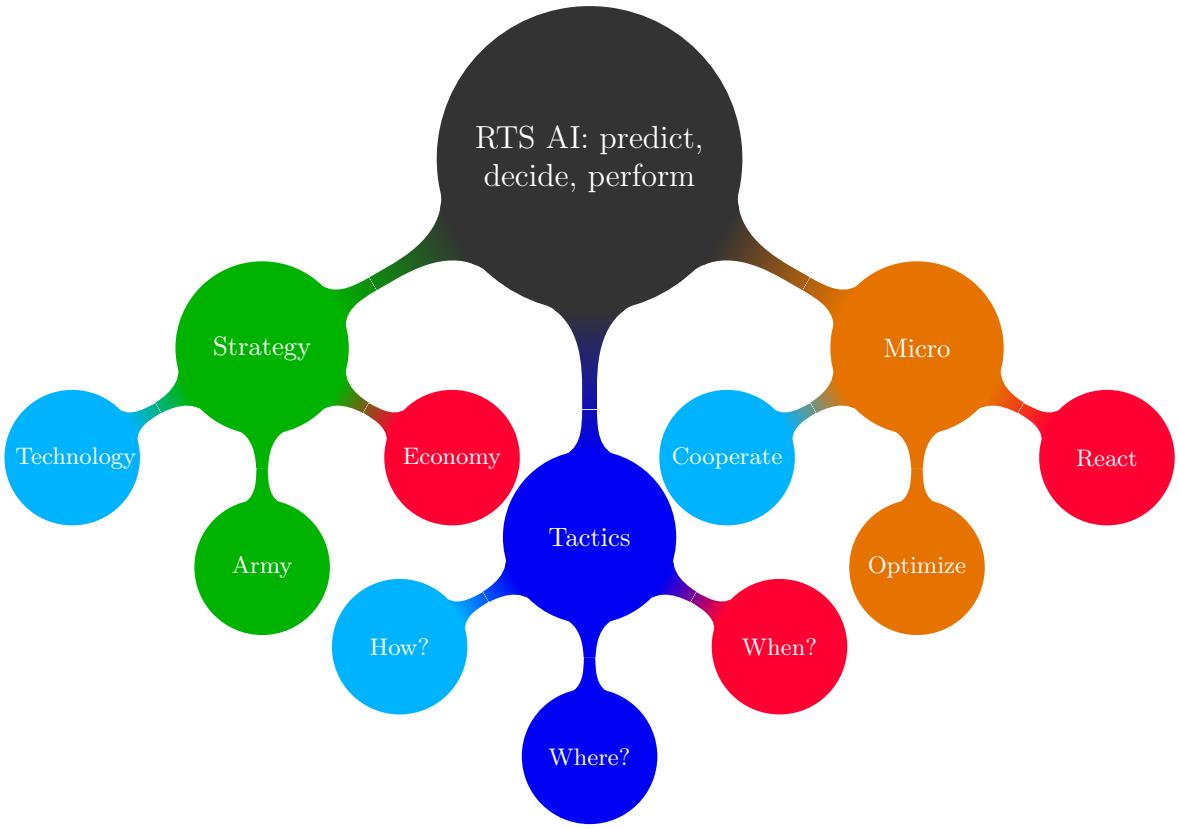


Figure 4.4: A mind-map of RTS AI. This is the tasks decomposition that we will use for the rest of the thesis.

At high levels of play, the tech/army/eco balance is putting a hard constraint on the aggression and initiative directions: if a player invested heavily in their army production, they should attack soon to leverage this investment. To the contrary, all other things being equal, when a player expands\*, they are being weak until the expansion repaid itself, so they should play defensively. Finally, there are some technologies (researches or upgrades) which unlocks an “attack timing” or “attack window”, for instance when a player unlocks an invisible technology (or unit) before that the opponent has detection technology (detectors). On the other hand, while “teching” (researching technologies or expanding the tech tree\*), particularly when there are many intermediate technological steps, the player is vulnerable because of the immediate investment they made, which did not pay off yet.

From this RTS domain tasks decomposition, we can draw the mind map given in Figure 4.4. We also characterized these levels of abstractions by:

- the conditioning that the decisions on one abstraction level have on the other, as discussed above: strategy conditions tactics which conditions low-level actions (that does not mean than there cannot be some feedback going up the hierarchy).
- the quantity of direct information that a player can hope to get on the choices of their opponent. While a player can see directly the micro-management of their enemy (movements of units on the battlefield), they cannot observe all the tactics, and a big part of

tactics gameplay is to hide or fake them well. Moreover, key technological buildings are sometimes hidden, and the player has to form beliefs about the long term strategy of the opponent (without being in their head).

- the time which is required to switch behaviors of a given level. For instance a change of strategy will require to either *a)* (technology) build at least two buildings or a building and a research/upgrade, *b)* (army) build a few units, *c)* take a new expansion (new base). A change of tactics corresponds to a large repositioning of the army(ies), while a change in micro-management is very quick (like moving units out of an area-of-effect damage zone).

This is shown in Figure 4.5. We will discuss the state of the art for the each of these subproblems (and the challenges listed above) in their respective parts.

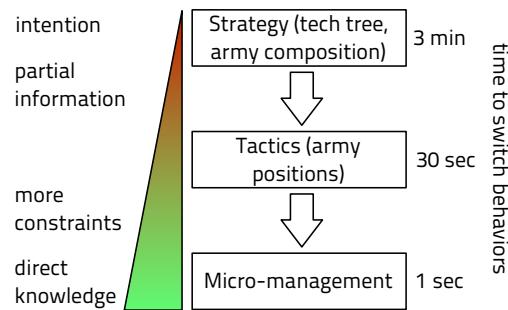


Figure 4.5: Gameplay levels of abstraction for RTS games, compared with their level of direct (and complete) information and orders of magnitudes of time to chance their policies.

To conclude, we will now present our works on these domains in separate chapters:

- Micro-management: chapter 5,
- Tactics: chapter 6,
- Strategy: chapter 7,
- Robotic player (bot): chapter 8.

In Figure 4.6, we present the flow of informations between the different inference and decision-making parts of the bot architecture. One can also view this problem as having a good model of one's strategy, one's opponent strategy, and taking decisions. The software architecture that we propose is to have services building and maintaining the model of the enemy as well as our state, and decision-making modules using all this information to give orders to actuators (filled in gray in Fig. 4.6).

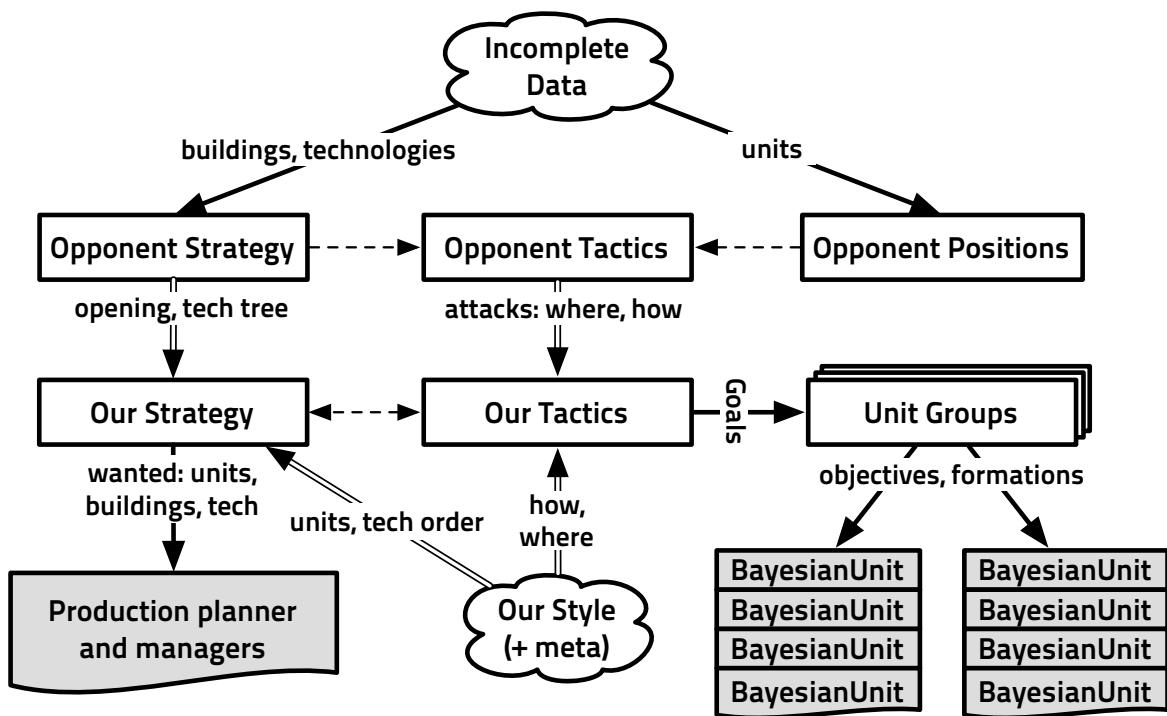


Figure 4.6: Information-centric view of the architecture of the major components of the bot. Arrows are labeled with the information or orders they convey: dotted arrows are conveying constraints, double lined arrows convey distributions, plain and simple arrows convey direct information or orders. The gray parts perform game actions (as the physical actions of the player on the keyboard and mouse).



# Chapter 5

## Micro-management

*La vie est la somme de tous vos choix.*

*Life is the sum of all your choices.*

Albert Camus

We present a Bayesian sensory-motor model for multi-agent (decentralized) units control in an adversarial setting. Orders, coming from higher up in the decision hierarchy, are integrated as another sensory input. We evaluated our model on classic StarCraft micro-management\* tasks. This work was published at Computational Intelligence in Games (CIG) 2011 in Seoul [Synnaeve and Bessière, 2011a].

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- Problem: optimal control of units in a (real-time) huge adversarial actions space (collisions, accelerations, terrain, damages, areas of effects, foes, goals...).
- Problem that we solve: efficient coordinated control of units incorporating all low level actions and inputs, plus higher level orders and representations.
- Type: it is a problem of *multi-agent control in an adversarial environment*<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Strictly, it can be modeled as a POMDP\* for each unit independently with  $S$  the states of all the other units (enemies and allied altogether) which are known through observations  $O$  by conditional observations probabilities  $\Omega$ , with  $A$  the set of actions for the given unit,  $T$  transition probabilities between states and depending on actions, and the reward function  $R$  based on goal execution, unit survivability and so on... It can also be viewed as a (gigantic) POMDP\* solving the problem for all (controlled units) at once, the advantage is that all states  $S$  for allied units is known, the disadvantage is that the combinatorics of  $T$  and  $A$  make it intractable for useful problems.

- Complexity: PSPACE-complete [Papadimitriou and Tsitsiklis, 1987, Viglietta, 2012]. Our solutions are real-time on a laptop.

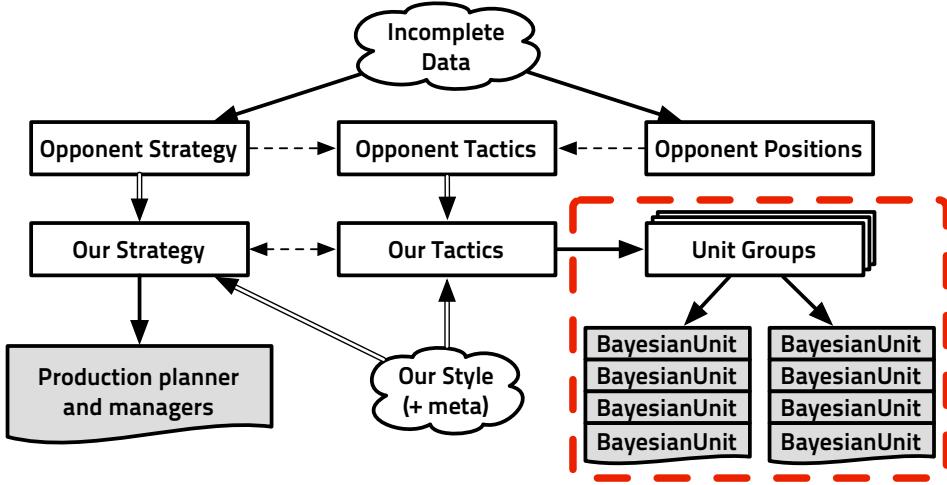


Figure 5.1: Information-centric view of the architecture of the bot, the part concerning this chapter (micro-management\*) is in the dotted rectangle

## 5.1 Units Management

### Micro-management complexity

In this part, we focus on micro-management\*, which is the lower-level in our hierarchy of decision-making levels (see Fig. 4.5) and directly affect units control/inputs. Micro-management consists in maximizing the effectiveness of the units *i.e.* the damages given/damages received ratio. These has to be performed simultaneously for units of different types, in complex battles, and possibly on heterogeneous terrain. For instance: retreat and save a wounded unit so that the enemy units would have to chase it either boosts your firepower (if you save the unit) or weakens the opponent's (if they chase).

StarCraft micro-management involves ground, flying, ranged, contact, static, moving (at different speeds), small and big units (see Figure 5.2). Units may also have splash damage, spells, and different types of damages whose amount will depend on the target size. It yields a rich states space and needs control to be very fast: human programmers can perform up to 400 “actions per minute” in intense fights. The problem for them is to know which actions are effective and the most rewarding to spend their actions efficiently. A robot does not have such physical limitations, but yet, badly chosen actions have negative influence on the issue of fights.

Let  $\mathbf{U}$  be the set of the  $m$  units to control,  $\mathbf{A} = \{\cup_i \vec{d}_i\} \cup \mathbf{S}$  be the set of possible actions (all  $n$  possible  $\vec{d}$  directions, standing ground included, and Skills, firing included), and  $\mathbf{E}$  the set of enemies. As  $|\mathbf{U}| = m$ , we have  $|\mathbf{A}|^m$  possible combinations each turn, and the enemy has  $|\mathbf{A}|^{|\mathbf{E}|}$ . The dimension of the set of possible actions each micro-turn (for instance: 1/24th of a second in StarCraft) constrains reasoning about the state of the game to be hierarchical, with

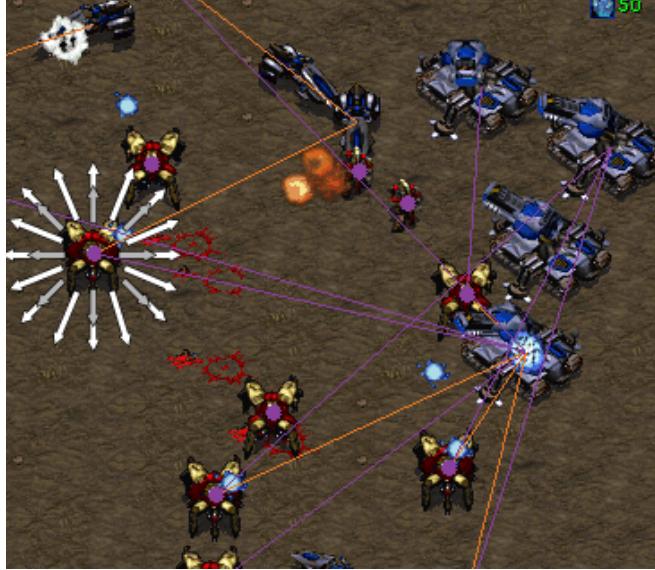


Figure 5.2: Screen capture of a fight in which our bot controls the bottom-left units in StarCraft. The 25 possible directions ( $\vec{d}_1 \dots \vec{d}_{25}$ ) are represented for a unit with white and grey arrows around it. Orange lines represent units' targets, purple lines represent units' priority targets (which are objective directions in *fightMove()* mode).

different levels of granularity. In most RTS games, a unit can go (at least) in its 24 surrounding tiles (see Figure 5.2, each arrow correspond to a  $\vec{d}_i$ ) stay where it is, attack, and sometimes cast different spells: which yields more than 26 possible actions each turn. Even if we consider only 8 possible directions, stay, and attack, with  $N$  units, there are  $10^N$  possible combinations each turn (all units make a move each turn). As large battles in StarCraft account for *at least* 20 units on each side, optimal units control hides in too big a search space to be fully explored in real-time (sub-second reaction at least) on normal hardware, even if we take only one decision per unit per second.

## Our Approach

Our full robot has separate agents types for separate tasks (strategy, tactics, economy, army, as well as enemy estimations and predictions): the part that interests us here, the unit control, is managed by Bayesian units directly. Their objectives are set by military goal-wise atomic units group, themselves spawned to achieve tactical goals (see Fig. 5.1). Units groups tune their Bayesian units modes (scout, fight, move) and give them objectives as sensory inputs. The Bayesian unit is the smallest entity and controls individual units as sensory-motor robots according to the model described above. The only inter Bayesian units communication about attack targets is handled by a structure shared at the units group level. This distributed sensory-motor model for micro-management\* is able to handle both the complexity of unit control and the need of hierarchy (see Figure 5.1). We treat the units independently, thus reducing the complexity (no communication between our “Bayesian units”), and allows to take higher-level orders into account along with local situation handling. For instance: the tactical planner may decide to retreat, or go through a choke under enemy fire, each Bayesian unit will have the

higher-level order as a sensory input, along with topography, foes and allies positions. From its perception, our Bayesian robot [Lebeltel et al., 2004] can compute the distribution over its motor control. The performances of our models are evaluated against the original StarCraft AI and a reference AI (based on our targeting heuristic): they have proved excellent in this benchmark setup.

## 5.2 Related Work

Technical solutions include finite states machines (FSM) [Rabin, 2002], genetic algorithms (GA) [Ponsen and Spronck, 2004, Bakkes et al., 2004, Preuss et al., 2010], reinforcement learning (RL) [Marthi et al., 2005, Madeira et al., 2006], case-based reasoning (CBR) [Aha et al., 2005, Sharma et al., 2007], continuous action models [Molineaux et al., 2008], reactive planning [Weber et al., 2010b], upper confidence bounds tree (UCT) [Balla and Fern, 2009], potential fields [Hagelbäck and Johansson, 2009], influence maps [Preuss et al., 2010], and cognitive human-inspired models [Winternute et al., 2007].

FSM are well-known and widely used for control tasks due to their efficiency and implementation simplicity. However, they don't allow for state sharing, which increases the number of transitions to manage, and state storing, which makes collaborative behavior hard to code [Cutumisu and Szafron, 2009]. Hierarchical FSM (HFSM) solve some of this problems (state sharing) and evolved into behavior trees (BT, hybrids HFSM) [Isla, 2005] and behavior multi-queues (resumable, better for animation) [Cutumisu and Szafron, 2009] that conserved high performances. However, adaptivity of behavior by parameters learning is not the main focus of these models, and unit control is a task that would require a huge amount of hand tuning of the behaviors to be really efficient. Also, these architectures does not allow reasoning under uncertainty, which helps dealing with local enemy and even allied units. Our agents see local enemy (and allied) units but do not know what action they are going to do. They could have perfect information about the allied units intentions, but this would need extensive communication between all the units.

Some interesting uses of reinforcement learning (RL)\* [Sutton and Barto, 1998] to RTS research are concurrent hierarchical (units Q-functions are combined higher up) RL\* [Marthi et al., 2005] to efficiently control units in a multi-effector system fashion. Madeira et al. [2006] advocate the use of prior domain knowledge to allow faster RL\* learning and applied their work on a large scale (while being not as large as StarCraft) turn-based strategy game. In real game setups, RL\* models have to deal with the fact that the state spaces to explore is enormous, so learning will be slow or shallow. It also requires the structure of the game to be described in a partial program (or often a partial Markov decision process) and a shape function [Marthi et al., 2005]. RL can be seen as a transversal technique to learn parameters of an underlying model, and this underlying behavioral model matters. Ponsen and Spronck [2004] used evolutionary learning techniques, but face the same problem of dimensionality.

Case-based reasoning (CBR) allows for learning against dynamic opponents [Aha et al., 2005] and has been applied successfully to strategic and tactical planning down to execution through behavior reasoning rules [Ontañón et al., 2007]. CBR limitations (as well as RL) include the necessary approximation of the world and the difficulty to work with multi-scale goals and plans. These problems led respectively to continuous action models [Molineaux et al., 2008] and reactive

planning [Weber et al., 2010b]. Continuous action models combine RL and CBR. Reactive planning use a decomposition similar to hierarchical task networks [Hoang et al., 2005] in that sub-plans can be changed at different granularity levels. Reactive planning allows for multi-scale (hierarchical) goals/actions integration and has been reported working on StarCraft, the main drawback is that it does not address uncertainty and so can not simply deal with hidden information (both extensional and intentional). Fully integrated FSM, BT, RL and CBR models all need vertical integration of goals, which is not very flexible (except in reactive planning).

Monte-Carlo planning [Chung et al., 2005] and upper Upper confidence bounds tree (UCT) planning (coming from Go AI) [Balla and Fern, 2009] samples through the (rigorously intractable) plans space by incrementally building the actions tree through Monte-Carlo sampling. UCT for tactical assault planning [Balla and Fern, 2009] in RTS does not require to encode human knowledge (by opposition to Monte-Carlo planning) but it is too costly, both in learning and running time, to go down to units control on RTS problems. Our model subsumes potential fields [Hagelbäck and Johansson, 2009], which are powerful and used in new generation RTS AI to handle threat, as some of our Bayesian unit sensory inputs are potential damages and tactical goodness (height for the moment) of positions. Hagelbäck and Johansson [2008] presented a multi-agent potential fields based bot able to deal with fog of war in the Tankbattle game. Avery et al. [2009] and Smith et al. [2010] co-evolved influence map trees for spatial reasoning in RTS games. Danielsiek et al. [2008] used influence maps to achieve intelligent squad movement to flank the opponent in a RTS game. A drawback for potential field-based techniques is the large number of parameters that has to be tuned in order to achieve the desired behavior. Our model provides flocking and local (subjective to the unit) influences on the pathfinding as in [Preuss et al., 2010], which uses self-organizing-maps (SOM). In their paper, Preuss *et al.* are driven by the same quest for a more natural and efficient behavior for units in RTS. We would like to note that potential fields and influence maps are reactive control techniques, and as such, they do not perform any form of lookahead. In their raw form (without specific adaptation to deal with it), they can lead units to be stuck in local optimums (potential wells).

Pathfinding is used differently in planning-based approaches and reactive approaches. Danielsiek et al. [2008] is an example of the permeable interface between pathfinding and reactive control with influence maps augmented tactical pathfinding and flocking. As we used pathfinding as the mean to get a sensory input towards the objective, we were free to use a *low resolution* and *static* pathfinding for which A\* was enough. Our approach is closer to the one of [Reynolds, 1999]: combining a simple path for the group with flocking behavior. In large problems and/or when the goal is to deal with multiple units pathfinding taking collisions (and sometimes other tactical features), more efficient, incremental and adaptable approaches are required. Even if specialized algorithms, such as D\*-Lite Koenig and Likhachev [2002] exist, it is most common to use A\* combined with a map simplification technique that generates a simpler navigation graph to be used for pathfinding. An example of such technique is Triangulation Reduction A\*, that computes polygonal triangulations on a grid-based map Demyen and Buro [2006]. In recent commercial RTS games like Starcraft 2 or Supreme Commander 2, flocking-like behaviors are inspired of continuum crowds (“flow field”) Treuille et al. [2006]. A comprehensive review about (grid-based) pathfinding was recently done by Sturtevant Sturtevant [2012].

Finally, there are some cognitive approaches to RTS AI [Winternmute et al., 2007], and we particularly agree with Winternmute *et al.* analysis of RTS AI problems. Our model has some

similarities: separate agents for different levels of abstraction/reasoning and a perception-action approach (see Figure 5.1).

### 5.3 A Pragmatic Approach to Units Control

#### Action and Perception

##### Movement

The possible actions for each unit are to move from where they are to wherever on the map, plus to attack and/or use special abilities or spells. Atomic moves (shown in Fig. 5.2 by white and gray plain arrows) correspond to move orders which will make the unit go in a straight line and *not* call the pathfinder (if the terrain is unoccupied/free). There are collisions with buildings, other units, and the terrain (cliffs, water, etc.) which denies totally some movements for ground units. Flying units do not have any collision (neither with units, nor with terrain obviously). When a *move order* is issued, if the selected position is further than atomic moves, the pathfinder function will be called to decide which path to follow. We decided to use only atomic (i.e. small and direct) moves for this reactive model, using other kinds of moves is discussed later in perspectives.

##### Attacks

To attack another unit, a given unit has to be in range (different attacks or abilities have different ranges) it has to have reloaded its weapon, which can be as quick as 4 times per second up to  $\approx 3$  seconds (75 frames) per attack. To cast a spell or use an ability also requires energy, which (re)generates slowly and can be accumulated up to a limited amount. Also, there are different kinds of attacks (normal, concussive, explosive), which modify the total amount of damages made on different types of units (small, medium, big), and different spread form and range of splash damages. Some spells/abilities absorb some damages on a given unit, others make a zone immune to all range attacks, etc. Finally, ranged attackers at a lower level (in terrain elevation) than their targets have an almost 50% miss rate. These reasons make it an already hard problem just to select what to do without even moving.

##### Perceptions: potential damage map

Perceptions are of different natures: either they are direct measurements inside the game, or they are built up from other direct measurements or even come from our AI higher level decisions. Direct measurements include the position of terrain elements (cliffs, water, space, trees). Built up measurements comes from composition of informations like the potential damage map (see Fig. 5.3). We maintain two (ground and air) damage maps which are built by summing all enemy units attack damages, normalized by their attack speed, for all positions which are in their range. These values are then discretized in levels  $\{No, Low, Medium, High\}$  relative to the hit (health) points (HP) of the unit that we are moving. For instance, a tank (with many HP) will not fear going under some fire so he may have a *Low* potential damages value for a given direction which will read as *Medium* or *High* for a light/weak unit like a marine. This will act as subjective potential fields [Hagelbäck and Johansson, 2009] in which the (repulsive)

influence of the potential damages map depends on the unit type. The discrete steps are:

$$\left\{ 0, \llbracket 0 \dots \frac{\text{unit base HP}}{2} \rrbracket, \llbracket \frac{\text{unit base HP}}{2} \dots \text{unit base HP} \rrbracket, \llbracket \text{unit base HP} \dots + \inf \rrbracket \right\}$$



Figure 5.3: Potential damage map (white squares for low potential damages, and yellow square for moderate potential damages). Left: we can see that the tank in siege mode (big blue unit with a red square on top) cannot shoot at close range and thus our units (in red) were attracted to the close safe zone. Right: the enemy units (blue, with red squares on top) are contact attack units and thus our unit (red, with a plain green square on top) is “kiting” (staying out of range): attacking and then retreating away (out of their range).

## Repulsion/atraction

For repulsion/atraction between units (allied or enemies), we could consider the instantaneous position of the units but it would lead to squeezing/expanding effects when moving large groups. Instead, we use their interpolated position at the time at which the unit that we move will be arrived in the direction we consider. In the right diagram in Figure ??, we want to move the unit in the center (U). There is an enemy (E) unit twice as fast as ours and an allied unit (A) three times as ours. When we consider moving in the direction just above us, we are on the interpolated position of unit E (we travel one case when they do two); when we consider moving in the direction directly on our right (East), we are on the interpolated position of unit A. We consider where the unit will be  $\frac{\text{dist}(\text{unit}, \vec{d}_i)}{\text{unit.speed}}$  time later, but also its size (some units produce collisions in a smaller scale than our discretization).

## Objective

The goals coming from the tactician model (see Fig. 5.1) are broken down into steps which gives objectives to each units. The way to incorporate the objective in the reactive behavior of our units is to add an attractive sensory input. This objective is a fixed direction  $\vec{o}$  and we consider the probabilities of moving our unit in  $n$  possible directions  $\vec{d}_1 \dots \vec{d}_n$  (in our StarCraft implementation:  $n = 25$  atomic directions). To decide the attractiveness of a given direction  $\vec{d}_i$  with regard to the objective  $\vec{o}$ , we consider a weight which is proportional to the dot product  $\vec{o} \cdot \vec{d}_i$ , with a threshold minimum probability, as shown in Figure 5.4.

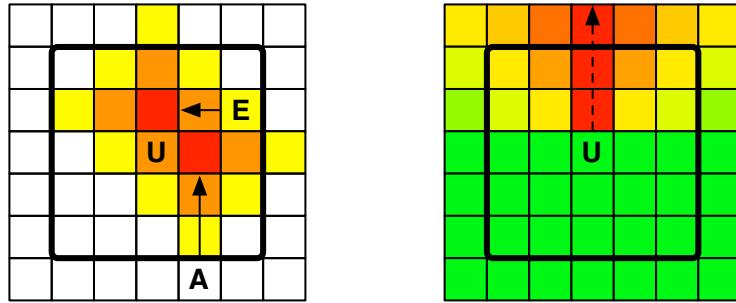


Figure 5.4: In both figures, the thick squares represents the boundaries of the 24 atomic directions (25 small squares with the current unit position) around the unit (U). Red is high probability, down to green low probability. Left: repulsion of the linear interpolation of the trajectories (here with uncertainty) of enemy unit (E) and allied unit (A), depending on their speed. Right: attraction of the objective (in direction of the dotted arrow) which is proportional to dot-product of the direction (square) considered, with a minimum threshold (in green).

## A Simple Unit

### Greedy pragmatism

Is staying alive better than killing an enemy unit? Is a large splash damage better than killing an enemy unit? Is it better to fire or move? In that event, where? Even if we could compute to the end of the fight and apply the same approach that we have for board games, how do we infer the best “set of next moves” for the enemy? For enemy units, it would require exploring the tree of possible plans (intractable) whose we could at best only draw samples from [Balla and Fern, 2009]. Even so, taking enemy minimax (to which depth?) moves for facts would assume that the enemy is also playing minimax (to the same depth) following exactly the same valuation rules as ours. Clearly, RTS micro-management\* is more inclined to reactive planning than board games reasoning. That does not exclude having higher level (strategic and tactic) goals. In our model, they are fed to the unit as sensory inputs, that will have an influence on its behavior depending on the situation/state the unit is in. We should at least have a model for higher-level decisions of the enemy and account for uncertainty of moves that could be performed in this kind of minimax approach. So, as complete search through the min/max tree is intractable, we propose a first simple solution: have a greedy target selection heuristic leading the movements of units to benchmark our Bayesian model against. In this solution, each unit can be viewed as an effector, part of a multi-body (multi-effector) agent, grouped under a units group.

### Targeting heuristic

The idea behind the heuristic used for target selection is that units need to focus fire (which leads to less incoming damages if enemy units die faster) on units that do the most damages, have the less hit points, and take the most damages from their attack type. This can be achieved by using a data structure, shared by all our units engaged in the battle, that stores the damages corresponding to future allied attacks for each enemy units. Whenever a unit will fire on a

enemy unit, it registers there the future damages on the enemy unit. As attacks are not all instantaneous and there are reload times, it helps focus firing greatly<sup>2</sup>. We also need a set of priority targets for each of our unit types that can be drawn from expert knowledge or learned (reinforcement learning) battling all unit types. A unit select its target among the most focus fired units with positive future hit point (current hit points minus registered damages), while prioritizing units from the priority set of its type. The units group can also impose its own priorities on enemy units (for instance to achieve a goal). The target selection heuristics is fully depicted in 8 in the appendices.

## Fight behavior

Based on this targeting heuristic, we design a very simple FSM\* based unit as shown in Figure 5.6 and Algorithm 5.5: when the unit is not firing, it will either flee damages if it has taken too much damages and/or if the differential of damages is too strong, or move to be better positioned in the fight (which may include staying where it is). In this simple unit, the *flee()* function just tries to move the unit in the direction of the biggest damages gradient (towards lower potential damages zones). The *fightMove()* function tries to position the units better: in range of its priority target, so that if the priority target is out of reach, the behavior will look like: “try to fire on target in range, if it cannot (reloading or no target in range), move towards priority target”. As everything is driven by the firing heuristic (that we will also use for our Bayesian unit), we call this AI the Heuristic Only AI (HOAI).

```

function MOVE(prio_t,  $\nabla \text{dmg}$ )
    if needFlee() then
        flee( $\nabla \text{dmg}$ )
    else
        fightMove(prio_t)
    end if
end function
function FIGHT
    (target, prio_target) = selectTarget()
    if reloaded then
        if inRange(prio_target) then
            attack(prio_target)
        else if inRange(target) then
            attack(target)
        else
            move(prio_target, damage_gradient)
        end if
    else
        move(prio_target, damage_gradient)
    end if
end function

```

Figure 5.5: Fight behavior FSM for micro-managing units.

---

<sup>2</sup>The only degenerated case would be if all our units register their targets at once (and all the enemy units have the same priority) and it never happens (plus, units fire rates have a randomness factor).

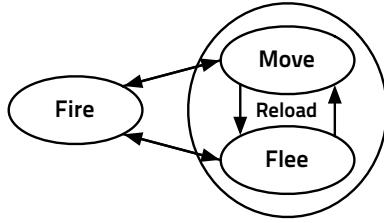


Figure 5.6: Fight FSM of a simple unit model: Heuristic Only AI (HOAI), which will serve as a baseline for benchmarks.

## Units Group

The units group (`UnitsGroup`, see Fig. 5.1) makes the shared *future damage* data structure available to all units taking part in a fight. Units control is not limited to fight. As it is adversarial, it is perhaps the hardest task, but units control problems comprehends efficient team maneuvering and other behaviors such as scouting or staying in position (formation). The units group structure helps for all that: it decides of the modes in which the unit has to be. We implemented 4 modes in our Bayesian unit (see Fig. 5.7): *fight*, *move*, *scout*, *inposition*. When given a task, also named goal, by the tactician model (see Fig. ??), the units group has to transform the task objective into sensory inputs for the units.

- In *scout* mode, the (often quick and low hit points) unit avoids danger by modifying locally its pathfinding-based, objectives oriented route to avoid damages.
- In *move* mode, the objective is extracted for the pathfinder output: it consists in key waypoints near the units. When moving by flocking, our unit moves are influenced by other near allied units that repulse or attract it depending on its distance to the interpolation of the allied unit. It allows our units to move more efficiently by not splitting around obstacles and colliding less. As it causes other problems, we do not use the flocking behavior in full competitive games.
- In the *inposition* mode, the objective is the final unit formation position. The unit can be “pushed” by other units wanting to pass through. This is useful at a tactical level to do a wall of units that our units can traverse but the opponent’s cannot. Basically, there is an attraction to the position of the unit and a stronger repulsion of the interpolation of movements of allied units.
- In *fight* mode, our unit will follow the damages gradient to smart positions, for instance close to tanks (they cannot fire too close to their position) or far from too much contact units if our unit can attack with range (something called “kiting”). Our unit moves are also influenced by its priority targets, its goal/objective (go through a choke, flee, etc.) and other units. The objective depends of the confidence of the units group in the outcome of the battle:
  - If the units group is outnumbered (in adjusted strength) and the task is not a suicidal one, the units group will “fall back” and give objectives towards retreat.

- If the fight is even or manageable, the units group will not give any objective to units, which will set their own objectives either to their priority targets in *fightMove()* or towards fleeing damages (towards highest potential damages gradient) in *flee()*.
- If the units group is very confident in winning the fight, the objectives sensory inputs of the units will be set at the task objectives waypoints (from the pathfinder).

## 5.4 A Bayesian Model for Units Control

### Bayesian Unit

We use Bayesian programming as an alternative to logic, transforming incompleteness of knowledge about the world into uncertainty. In the case of units management, we have mainly *intensional* uncertainty. Instead of asking questions like: where are other units going to be 10 frames later? Our model is based on rough estimations that are not taken as ground facts. Knowing the answer to these questions would require for our own (allied) units to communicate a lot and to stick to their plan (which does not allow for quick reaction nor adaptation).

We propose to model units as sensory-motor robots described within the Bayesian robot programming framework [Lebeltel et al., 2004]. A Bayesian model uses and reasons on distributions instead of predicates, which deals directly with uncertainty. Our Bayesian units are simple hierarchical finite states machines (states can be seen as modes) that can scout, fight and move (see Figure 5.7). Each unit type has a reload rate and attack duration, so their fight mode will be as depicted in Figure 5.6 and Algorithm 5.5. The difference between our simple HOAI presented above and Bayesian units are in *flee()* and *fightMove()* functions.

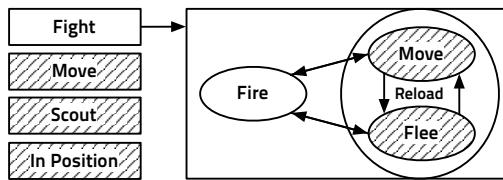


Figure 5.7: Bayesian unit modal FSM (HFSM\*), detail on the fight mode. Stripped modes are Bayesian.

The unit needs to determine where to go when fleeing and moving during a fight, with regard to its target and the attacking enemies, while avoiding collisions (which results in blocked units and time lost) as much as possible. **We now present the Bayesian program used for *flee()*, *fightMove()*, and while scouting**, which differ only by what is inputed as objective:

### Variables

- $Dir_{i \in [1..n]} \in \{True, False\}$ : at least one variable for each atomic direction the unit can go to.  $P(Dir_i = True) = 1$  means that the unit will certainly go in direction  $i$  ( $\Leftrightarrow \vec{d}_i$ ). For example, in StarCraft we use the 24 atomic directions (48 for the smallest and fast units as we use a proportional scale) plus the current unit position (stay where it is) as shown in Figure 5.2.

- $Obj_{i \in [1..n]} \in \{True, False\}$ : adequacy of direction  $i$  with the objective (given by a higher rank model). In our StarCraft AI, we use the scalar product between the direction  $i$  and the objective vector (output of the pathfinding) with a minimum value (0.3 in *move* mode for instance) so that the probability to go in a given direction is proportional to its alignment with the objective.
  - For *flee()*, the objective is set in the direction which flees the potential damage gradient (corresponding to the unit type: ground or air).
  - For *fightMove()*, the objective is set (by the units group) either to retreat, to fight freely or to march aggressively towards the goal (see 5.3).
  - For the *scout* behavior, the objective ( $\vec{o}$ ) is set to the next pathfinder waypoint.
- $Dmg_{i \in [1..n]} \in \{no, low, medium, high\}$ : potential damage value in direction  $i$ , relative to the unit base health points, in direction  $i$ . In our StarCraft AI, this is directly drawn from two constantly updated potential damage maps (air, ground).
- $A_{i \in [1..n]} \in \{free, small, big\}$ : occupation of the direction  $i$  by an allied unit. The model can effectively use many values (other than “occupied/free”) because directions may be multi-scale (for instance we indexed the scale on the size of the unit) and, in the end, small and/or fast units have a much smaller footprint, collision wise, than big and/or slow. In our AI, instead of direct positions of allied units, we used their (linear) interpolation  $\frac{\text{dist}(\text{unit}, \vec{d}_i)}{\text{unit.speed}}$  (time it takes the unit to go to  $\vec{d}_i$ ) frames later (to avoid squeezing/expansion).
- $E_{i \in [1..n]} \in \{free, small, big\}$ : occupation of the direction  $i$  by an enemy unit. As above.
- $Occ_{i \in [1..n]} \in \{free, building, staticterrain\}$ : Occupied, repulsive effect of buildings and terrain (cliffs, water, walls).

There is basically one set of (sensory) variables per perception in addition to the  $Dir_i$  values.

## Decomposition

The joint distribution ( $JD$ ) over these variables is a specific kind of fusion called inverse programming [Le Hy et al., 2004]. The sensory variables are considered conditionally independent knowing the actions, contrary to standard naive Bayesian fusion, in which the sensory variables are considered independent knowing the phenomenon.

$$P(Dir_{1:n}, Obj_{1:n}, Dmg_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, Occ_{1:n}) \quad (5.1)$$

$$= JD = \prod_{i=1}^n P(Dir_i)P(Obj_i|Dir_i) \quad (5.2)$$

$$P(Dmg_i|Dir_i)P(A_i|Dir_i) \quad (5.3)$$

$$P(E_i|Dir_i)P(Occ_i|Dir_i) \quad (5.4)$$

We assume that the  $i$  directions are independent depending on the action because dependency is already encoded in (all) sensory inputs.

## Forms

- $P(Obj_i|Dir_i)$  prior on directions, unknown, so unspecified/uniform over all  $i$ .  $P(dir_i) = 0.5$ .
- $P(Obj_i|Dir_i)$  for instance, “probability that this direction is the objective knowing that we go there”  $P(obj_i|dir_i) = threshold + (1.0 - threshold) \times \max(0, vec_0 \cdot \vec{d}_i)$ . We could have different *thresholds* depending on the mode, this was not the case in our hand-specified tables:  $threshold = 0.3$ . The right diagram on Figure 5.4 shows  $P(Obj_i|Dir_i)$  for each for the possible directions (inside the thick big square boundaries of atomic directions) with red being higher probabilities.
- $P(Dmg_i|Dir_i)$  probability of damages values in direction  $i$  knowing this is the direction that we are headed to.  $P(Dmg_i = high|Dir_i = T)$  has to be small in many cases for the unit to avoid going to positions it could be killed instantly. Probability table:

$Dmg_i$	$dir_i$	$\bar{dir}_i$
no	0.9	0.25
low	0.06	0.25
medium	0.03	0.25
high	0.01	0.25

- $P(A_i|Dir_i)$  probability that there is an ally in direction  $I$  knowing this is the unit direction. It is used to avoid collisions by not going where allied units could be in the near future. Probability table:

$A_i$	$dir_i$	$\bar{dir}_i$
free	0.9	0.333
small	0.066	0.333
big	0.033	0.333

- $P(E_i|Dir_i)$  same explanation and use as above but with enemy units, it can have different parameters as we may want to be studding enemy units, or avoid them (mostly depending on the unit type). In a repulsive setting (what we mostly want), the left diagram in Figure 5.4 can be seen as  $P(A_i, E_i|\bar{Dir}_i)$  if red corresponds to high probabilities ( $P(A_i, E_i|Dir_i)$  if red corresponds to lower probabilities). In our hand-specified implementation, for *flee()* and *fightMove()*, this is the same probability table as above (for  $P(A_i|Dir_i)$ ).
- $P(Occ_i|Dir_i)$  probability table that there is a blocking building or terrain element in some direction, knowing this is the unit direction,  $P(Occ_i = Static|Dir_i = T)$  will be very low, whereas  $P(Occ_i = Building|Dir_i = T)$  will also be very low but triggers building attack (and destruction) when there are no other issues. Probability table:

$Occ_i$	$dir_i$	$\bar{dir}_i$
free	0.999899	0.333
building	0.001	0.333
static	0.000001	0.333

## Identification

Parameters and probability tables can be learned through reinforcement learning [Sutton and Barto, 1998, Asmuth et al., 2009] by setting up different and pertinent scenarios and search for the set of parameters that maximizes a reward function (more about that in the discussion). In our current implementation, the parameters and probability table values are hand specified.

## Question

When in *fightMove()* and *flee()*, the unit asks:

$$P(Dir_{1:n}|Obj_{1:n}, Dmg_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, Occ_{1:n}) \quad (5.5)$$

From there, the unit can either go in the most probable  $Dir_i$  or sample through them. We describe the effect of this choice in the next section (and in Fig. 5.12). A simple Bayesian fusion from 3 sensory inputs is shown in Figure 5.8, in which the final distribution on  $Dir$  peaks at places avoiding damages and collisions while pointing towards the goal. Here follows the full Bayesian program of the model (5.9):

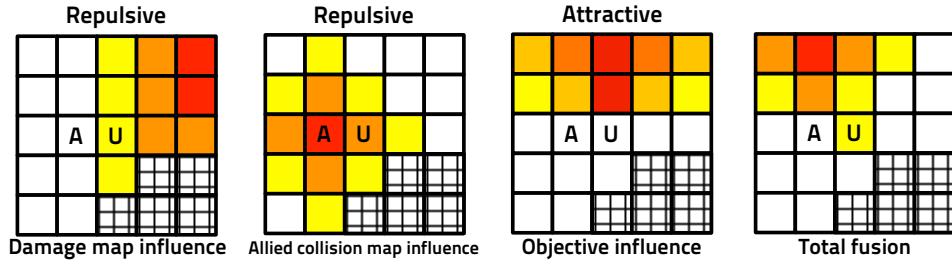


Figure 5.8: Simple example of Bayesian fusion from 3 sensory inputs (damages and collisions avoidance, goal attraction). The grid pattern represents statically occupied terrain, the unit we control is in U, an allied unit is in A. The result is displayed on the rightmost image.

There are additional variables for specific modes/behaviors, also probability tables may be different.

## Move

### *Without flocking*

When moving without flocking (trying to maintain some form of group cohesion), the model is even simpler. The objective ( $\vec{o}$ ) is set to a path waypoint. The potential damage map is dropped from the  $JD$ , the question is:

$$P(Dir_{1:n}|Obj_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, Occ_{1:n}) \quad (5.6)$$

### *With flocking*

To produce a *flocking* behavior while moving, we introduce another set of variables:  $Att_{i \in [1..n]} \in \{True, False\}$ , allied units attractions (or not) in direction  $i$ .

A flocking behavior [Reynolds, 1999] requires:

Bayesian program	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;"><b>Description</b></td><td><i>Variables</i> <math>Dir_{1:n}, Obj_{1:n}, Dmg_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, Occ_{1:n}</math></td></tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;"><i>Decomposition</i></td><td><math>P(Obj_{1:n} Dir_i)P(Dmg_i Dir_i)P(A_i Dir_i)P(E_i Dir_i)P(Occ_i Dir_i)</math></td></tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;"><i>Forms</i></td><td><math>P(Obj_i Dir_i)</math>: prior on directions (crossing policy) <math>P(XYZ_i Dir_i)</math>: probability tables</td></tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;"><i>Identification (using <math>\delta</math>)</i></td><td>reinforcement learning or hand specified (or distribs. parameters optimization)</td></tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;"><i>Question</i></td><td>fightmoving/fleeing/scouting : <math>P(Obj_{1:n} Dir_i)</math></td></tr> </table>	<b>Description</b>	<i>Variables</i> $Dir_{1:n}, Obj_{1:n}, Dmg_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, Occ_{1:n}$	<i>Decomposition</i>	$P(Obj_{1:n} Dir_i)P(Dmg_i Dir_i)P(A_i Dir_i)P(E_i Dir_i)P(Occ_i Dir_i)$	<i>Forms</i>	$P(Obj_i Dir_i)$ : prior on directions (crossing policy) $P(XYZ_i Dir_i)$ : probability tables	<i>Identification (using <math>\delta</math>)</i>	reinforcement learning or hand specified (or distribs. parameters optimization)	<i>Question</i>	fightmoving/fleeing/scouting : $P(Obj_{1:n} Dir_i)$
<b>Description</b>	<i>Variables</i> $Dir_{1:n}, Obj_{1:n}, Dmg_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, Occ_{1:n}$										
<i>Decomposition</i>	$P(Obj_{1:n} Dir_i)P(Dmg_i Dir_i)P(A_i Dir_i)P(E_i Dir_i)P(Occ_i Dir_i)$										
<i>Forms</i>	$P(Obj_i Dir_i)$ : prior on directions (crossing policy) $P(XYZ_i Dir_i)$ : probability tables										
<i>Identification (using <math>\delta</math>)</i>	reinforcement learning or hand specified (or distribs. parameters optimization)										
<i>Question</i>	fightmoving/fleeing/scouting : $P(Obj_{1:n} Dir_i)$										

Figure 5.9: Bayesian program of *flee()*, *fightMove()* and the *scouting* behaviors.

- Separation: avoid collisions, short range repulsion,
- Alignment: align direction with neighbours,
- Cohesion: steer towards average position of neighbours.

Separation is dealt with by  $P(A_i|Dir_i)$  already. As we use interpolations of units at the time at which our unit will be arrived at the  $Dir_i$  under consideration, being attracted by  $Att_i$  gives cohesion as well as some form of alignment. It is not strictly the same as having the same direction and seems to fare better in complex terrain. We remind the reader that flocking was derived from birds flocks and fish schools behaviors: in both cases there is a lot of free/empty space.

A  $\vec{a}$  vector is constructed as the weighted sum of neighbour<sup>3</sup> allied units. Then  $P(Att_i|Dir_i)$  for all  $i$  directions is constructed as for the objective influence ( $P(Obj_i|Dir_i)$ ) by taking the dot product  $\vec{a} \cdot \vec{d}_i$  with a minimum threshold (we used 0.3, so that the flocking effect is as strong as objective attraction):

$$P(Att_i|Dir_i) = threshold + (1.0 - threshold) \times \max(0, \vec{a} \cdot \vec{d}_i)$$

The  $JD$  becomes  $JD \times \prod_{i=1}^n P(Att_i|Dir_i)$ .

### In position

The *inposition* mode corresponds to when some units are at the place they should be (no new objective to reach) and not fighting. This happens when some units arrived at their formation end positions and they are waiting for other (allied) units of their group, or when units are

---

<sup>3</sup>The devil is in the details, if one considers a too small neighbourhood, there is very rarely emergence of the flocking behavior, whereas if one considers a too large neighbourhood, units can get in directions which are stucking them with terrain. A pragmatic solution is to use a large neighbourhood with a decreasing weight (for increasing distance) for each unit of the neighbourhood.

Bayesian program	<table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px; vertical-align: top;">Description</td><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px;"> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px; vertical-align: top;"><i>Specification (<math>\pi</math>)</i></td><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px;"> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px; vertical-align: top;"><i>Variables</i></td><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px;"><math>Dir_{1:n}, Obj_{1:n}, Att_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, Occ_{1:n}</math></td></tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px; vertical-align: top;"><i>Decomposition</i></td><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px;"><math>P(Dir_{1:n}, Obj_{1:n}, Att_{1:n}, A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, Occ_{1:n}) = \prod_{i=1}^n [P(Dir_i) P(Obj_i Dir_i) P(A_i Dir_i) P(E_i Dir_i) P(Occ_i Dir_i) P(Att_i Dir_i)]</math></td></tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px; 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Figure 5.10: Bayesian program of the *move* behavior without and with flocking.

sitting (in defense) at some tactical point, like in front of a base for instance. The particularity of this mode is that the objective is set to the current unit position and it will be updated to always point to this “final formation position” as long as the unit is in this mode. This is useful so that units which are arriving to the formation can go through each others and not get stuck. Figure 5.11 shows the effect of using this mode: the big unit (Archon) goes through a square formation of the other units (Dragoons) which are in *inposition* mode. What happens is an emerging phenomenon: the first (leftmost) units of the square get repulsed by the interpolated position of the dragoon, so they move themselves out of its trajectory. By moving, they repulse the second and then third line of the formation, the chain repulsion reaction makes a path for the big unit to pass through the formation. Once this unit path is no longer colliding, the attraction of units for their objective (their formation position) takes them back to their initial positions.

## 5.5 Results on StarCraft

Our implementation<sup>4</sup> (BSD licensed) uses BWAPI<sup>5</sup> to get information from and to control StarCraft.

### Experiments

We produced three different AI to run experiments with, along with the original AI (OAI) from StarCraft:

- Heuristic only AI (HOAI), as described above (5.3): this AI shares the target selection heuristic with our Bayesian AI models and will be used as a baseline reference to avoid the bias due to the target selection heuristic.

<sup>4</sup>BROODWARBOTQ, code and releases: <http://github.com/SnippyHollow/BroodwarBotQ>

<sup>5</sup>BWAPI: <http://code.google.com/p/bwapi/>

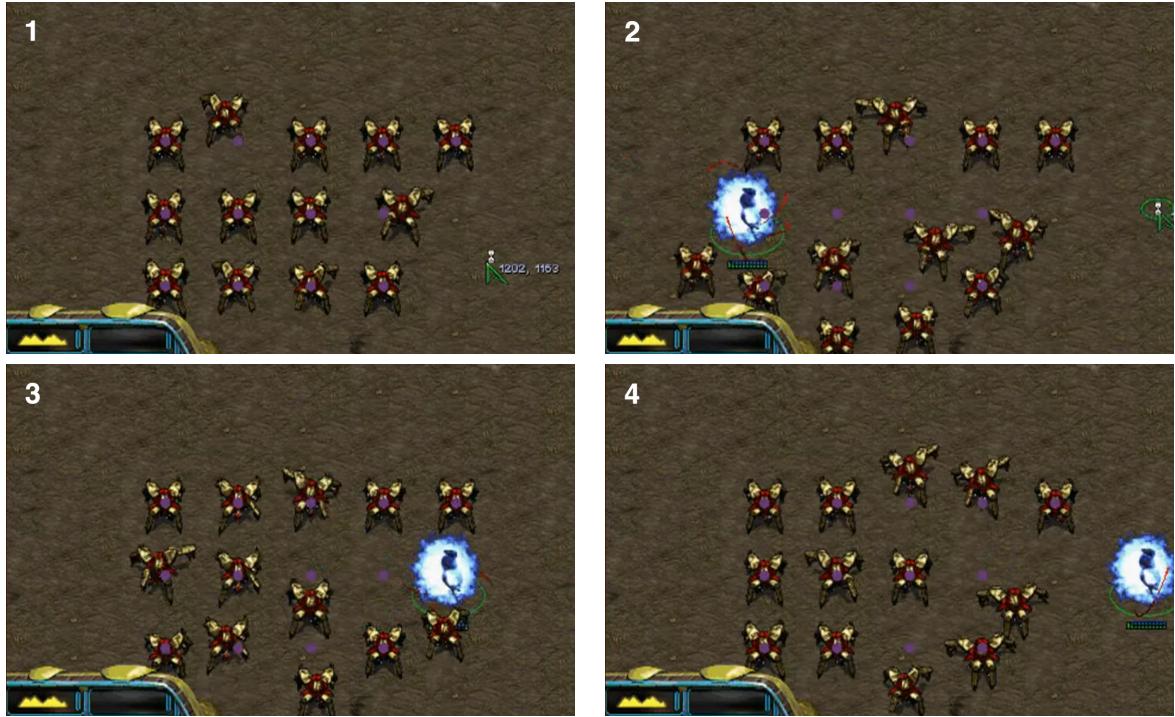


Figure 5.11: Sequence of traversal of an Archon (big blue unit which is circled in green) through a square formation of Dragoons (four legged red units) in *inposition* mode.

- Bayesian AI picking best (BAIPB): this AI follows the model of section 5.4 and selects the most probable  $Dir_i$  as movement.
- Bayesian AI sampling (BAIS): this AI follows the model of section 5.4 and samples through  $Dir_i$  according to their probability (i.e. it samples a direction in the  $Dir$  distribution).

The experiments consisted in having the AIs fight against each others on a micro-management scenario with mirror matches of 12 and 36 ranged ground units (Dragoons). In the 12 units setup, the unit movements during the battle is easier (less collision probability) than in the 36 units setup. We instantiate only the army manager (no economy in this special scenarii/maps), one units group manager and as many Bayesian units as there are units provided to us in the scenario. The results are presented in Table 5.1.

12 units	OAI	HOAI	BAIPB	BAIS	36 units	OAI	HOAI	BAIPB	BAIS
OAI	(50%)				OAI	(50%)			
HOAI	59%	(50%)			HOAI	46%	(50%)		
BAIPB	93%	97%	(50%)		BAIPB	91%	89%	(50%)	
BAIS	93%	95%	76%	(50%)	BAIS	97%	94%	97%	(50%)

Table 5.1: Win ratios over at least 200 battles of OAI, HOAI, BAIPB and BAIS in two mirror setups: 12 and 36 ranged units. Left: 12 units (12 vs 12) setup. Right: 36 units (36 vs 36) setup. Read line vs column: for instance HOAI won 59% of its matches against OAI in the 12 units setup.

These results show that our heuristic (HAOI) is comparable to the original AI (OAI), perhaps a little better, but induces more collisions as we can see its performance diminish a lot in the 36 units setup vs OAI. For Bayesian units, the “pick best” (BAIPB) direction policy is very effective when battling with few units (and few movements because of static enemy units) as proved against OAI and HOAI, but its effectiveness decreases when the number of units increases: all units are competing for the best directions (to *flee()* or *fightMove()* in) and they collide. The sampling policy (BAIS) has way better results in large armies, and significantly better results in the 12 units vs BAIPB. BAIPB may lead our units to move inside the “enemy zone” a lot more to chase priority targets (in *fightMove()*) and collide with enemy units or get kill. Sampling entails that the competition for the best directions is distributed among all the “bests to good” positions, from the units point of view. We illustrate this effect in Figure 5.12: the units (on the right of the figure) have good reasons (combinations of sensory inputs, for instance of the damage map) to flee on the left, and there may be a peak of “best position to be at”. AS they have not moved yet, they do not have interpolation of positions which will collide, so they are not repulsing each other at this position, all go together and collide. Sampling would, on average, provide a collision free solution here.

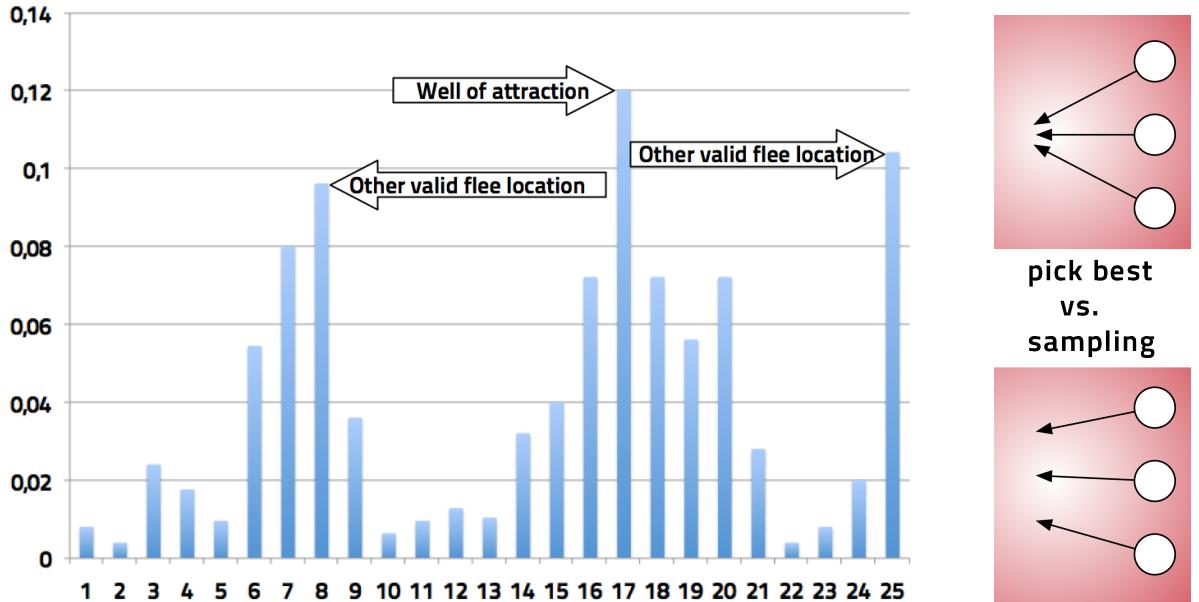


Figure 5.12: Example of  $P(Dir)$  when fleeing, showing why sampling (BAIS, bottom graphic on the right) may be a better instead of picking the best direction (BAIPB, here  $Dir = 17$  in the plot, top graphic on the right) and triggering units collisions.

We also ran tests in setups with flying units (Zerg Mutalisks) in which BAIPB fared as good as BAIS (no collision for flying units) and way better than OAI.

## Our bot

This model is currently at the core of the micro-management of our StarCraft bot. In a competitive micro-management setup, we had a tie with the winner of AIIDE 2010 StarCraft micro-management competition, winning with ranged units (Protoss Dragoons), losing with contact

units (Protoss Zealots) and having a perfect tie (the host wins thanks to a few less frames of lag) in the flying units setting (Zerg Mutalisks and Scourges).

This model can be used to specify the behavior of units in RTS games. Instead of relying on a “units push each other” physics model for handling dynamic collision of units, this model makes the units react themselves to collision in a more realistic fashion (a marine cannot push a tank, the tank will move). More than adding realism to the game, this is a necessary condition for efficient micro-management in StarCraft: Brood War, as we do not have control over the game physics engine and it does not have this “flow-like” physics for units positioning.

## 5.6 Discussion

### Perspectives

#### Adding a Sensory Input: Height Attraction

We make an example of adding a sensory input (that we sometimes use in our bot): height attraction. From a tactical point of view, it is interesting for units to always try to have the higher ground as lower ranged units have a high miss rate (almost 50%) on higher positioned units. For each of the direction tiles  $Dir_i$ , we just have to introduce a new set of sensory variables:  $H_{i \in [0..n]} \in \{normal, high, very\_high, unknown\}$  (*unknown* can be given by the game engine).  $P(H_i|Dir_i)$  is just an additional factor in the decomposition:  $JD \leftarrow JD \times \prod_{i=1}^n P(H_i|Dir_i)$ . The probability table looks like:

$H_i$	$dir_i$
normal	0.2
high	0.3
very_high	0.45
unknown	0.05

#### Even More Realistic Behaviors

The realism of units movements can also be augmented with a simple-to-set  $P(Dir^{t-1}|Dir^t)$  steering parameter, although we do not use it in the competitive setup. We introduce  $Dir_{i \in [1..n]}^{t-1} \in \{True, False\}$ : the previous selected direction,  $Dir_i^{t-1} = T$  iff the unit went to the direction  $i$ , else *False* for a steering (smooth) behavior. The  $JD$  would then be  $JD \times \prod_{i=1}^n P(Dir_i^{t-1}|Dir_i)$ , with  $P(Dir_i^{t-1}|Dir_i)$  the influence of the last direction, either a dot product (with minimal threshold) as before for the objective and flocking, or a parametrized Bell shape over all the  $i$ .

#### Reinforcement Learning

Future work could consist in using reinforcement learning [Sutton and Barto, 1998] or evolutionary algorithms [Smith et al., 2010] to learn the probability tables. It should enhance the performance of our Bayesian units in specific setups. It implies making up challenging scenarii and dealing with huge sampling spaces [Asmuth et al., 2009]. We learned the distribution of  $P(Dmg_i|Dir_i)$  through simulated annealing on a specific fight task (by running thousands of games). Instead of having 4 parameters of the probability table to learn, we further restrained

$P(Dmg_i|Dir_i)$  to be a discrete exponential distribution and we optimized the  $\lambda$  parameter. When discretized back to the probability table (for four values of  $Dmg$ ), the parameters that we learned, by optimizing the efficiency of the army in a fixed fight micro-management scenario, were even more risk adverse than the table presented with this model. The major problem with this approach is that parameters which are learned in a given scenario (map, setup) are not trivially re-usable in other setups, so that boundaries have to be found to avoid over-learning/optimization, and/or discovering in which typical scenario our units are at a given time.

### Reducing Collisions

Also, there are yet many collision cases that remain unsolved (particularly visible with contact units like Zealots and Zerglings), so we could also try adding local priority rules to solve collisions (for instance through an asymmetrical  $P(Dir_i^{t-1}|Dir_i)$ ) that would entails units crossing lines with a preferred side (some kind of “social rule”),

In collision due to concurrency for “best” positions: as seen in Figure 5.12, units may compete for a well of potential. The solution that we use is to sample in the  $Dir$  distribution, which gives better results than picking the most probable direction as soon as there are many units. Another solution, inspired by [Marthi et al., 2005], would be for the Bayesian units to communicate their  $Dir$  distribution to the units group which would give orders that optimize either the sum of probabilities, or the minimal discrepancy in dissatisfaction, or the survival of costly units (as shown in Fig. 5.13). Ideally, we could have a full Bayesian model at the UnitsGroup level, which takes the  $P(Dir)$  distributions as sensory inputs and computes orders to units. This would be a centralized model but in which the complexity of micro-management would have been broken by the lower-level model presented in this chapter.

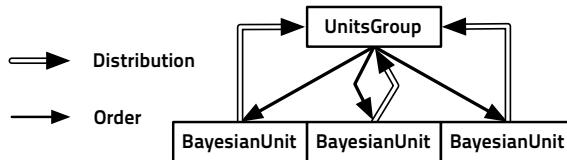


Figure 5.13: Example of the decision taken at the units group level from “compressed” information in the form of the distribution on  $Dir$  for each Bayesian unit. This can be viewed as a simple optimization problem (maximize sum of probabilities of decisions taken), or as a constraint satisfaction problem (CSP) like “no unit should be left behind/die/dissatisfied”, or even as another sensory-motor problem with higher-level inputs ( $Dir$  distributions). Related to 5.6

### Tuning Parameters

If we learn the parameters of such a model to mimic existing data (data mining) or to maximize a reward function (reinforcement learning), we can interpret the parameters that will be obtained more easily than parameters of an artificial neural network for instance. Parameters learned in one setup can be reused in another if they are understood. We claim that specifying or changing the behavior of this model is much easier than changing the behavior generated by a

FSM, and game developers can have a fine control over it. Dynamic switches of behavior (as we do between the scout/flock/inposition/fight modes) are just one probability tables switch away. In fact, probability tables for each sensory input (or group of sensory inputs) can be linked to *sliders* in a *behavior editor* and game makers can specify the behavior of their units by specifying the degree of effect for each perception (sensory input) on the behavior of the unit and see the effect in real time. This is not restricted to RTS and could be applied to RPG\* and even FPS\* gameplays\*.

### Avoiding Local Optima

Local optimum could trap and struck our reactive, small look-ahead, units: concave (strong) repulsors (static terrain, very high damage field). A pragmatic solution to that is to remember that the *Obj* sensory inputs come from the pathfinder and have its influence to grow when in difficult situations (not moved for a long time, concave shape detected...). Another solution is inspired by ants: simply release a repulsive field (a repulsive “pheromone”) behind the unit and it will be repulsed by places it already visited instead of oscillating around the local optima (see Fig. 5.14).

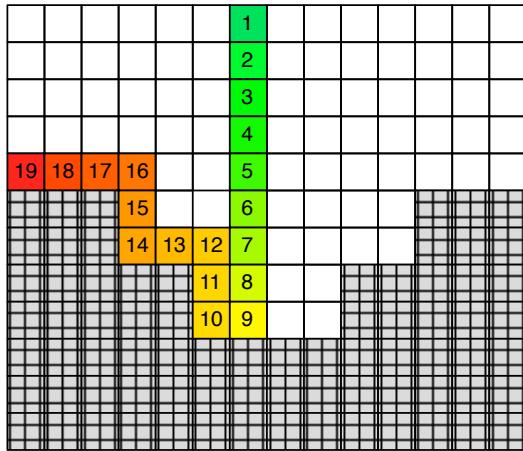


Figure 5.14: Example of trailing repulsive charges (repulsive “pheromones”) at already visited positions for Bayesian units to avoid being blocked by local optima. The trajectory is indicated by the increasing numbers (most recent unit position in 19) and the (decaying) strength of the trailing repulsion is weaker in green and stronger in red. Related to 5.6.

Another solution would be to consider more than just the atomic directions. Indeed, if one decides to cover a lot of space with directions (*i.e.* use this model for with path-planning), one needs to consider directions whose paths collide with each others: if a direction is no longer atomic, this means that there are at least two paths leading to it, from the current unit position. The added complexity of dealing with these paths (and their possible collision routes with allier units or going through potential damages) may not be very aligned with the very reactive behavior that we envisioned here, but an in-between our proposed solution and full path-planning, for which it is costly to consider several dynamic different influences leading to frequent re-computation.

## Probabilistic Modality

Finally, we could use multi-modality [Colas et al., 2010] to get rid of the remaining (small: fire-retreat-move) FSM. Instead of being in “hard” modes, the unit could be in a weighted sum of modes (summing to one) and we would have:

$$P(Dir) = w_{fightMove()} P(Dir|sensory\_inputs)_{fightMove()} + w_{flee()} P(Dir|sensory\_inputs)_{flee()} \dots$$

This could particularly help dealing with the fact that parameters learned from fixed scenarii would be too specialized. This way we could interpolate a continuous family of distributions for  $P(Dir)$  from a fixed and finite number of parameters learned from a finite number of experiments setups.

## Conclusion

We have implemented this model in StarCraft, and it outperforms the original AI as well as other bots. Our approach does not require a specific vertical integration for each different type of objectives (higher level goals), as opposed to CBR and reactive planning [Ontañón et al., 2007, Weber et al., 2010b]: it can have a completely different model above feeding sensory inputs like  $Obj_i$ . It runs in real-time on a laptop (Core 2 Duo) taking decisions for every units 24 times per second. It scales well with the number of units to control thanks to the absence of communication at the unit level, and is more robust and maintainable than a FSM. Particularly, the cost to add a new sensory input (a new effect on the units behavior) is low.

# Chapter 6

## Tactics

*Probability theory can tell us how our hypothesis fares relative to the alternatives that we have specified; it does not have the creative imagination to invent new hypotheses for us.*

E.T. Jaynes [2003]

We present a Bayesian model for tactical decision-making in real-time strategy games. The main idea is to adapt the model to inputs from (possibly) biased heuristics. We evaluated the model in prediction of the enemy tactics on professional gamers data. This work was accepted for publication at Computational Intelligence in Games (CIG) 2012 in Grenada [Synnaeve and Bessière, 2012a] and will be presented at the Computer Games Workshop of the European Conference of Artificial Intelligence (ECAI) 2012 [Synnaeve and Bessière, 2012b].

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- Problem: make the most efficient tactical decisions (attacks and defenses) in the absolute (knowing everything: armies positions, players intentions, effects of each possible actions).
- Problem that we solve: make the most efficient tactical decisions (in average) knowing what we saw from the opponent and our model of the game.
- Type: prediction is problem of *inference* or *plan recognition* from *partial observations*; adaptation given what we know is a problem of *decision-making under uncertainty*.
- Complexity: the complexity of tactical moves has not been studied particularly, as “tactics” are hard to bound. If taken form the low-level actions that units perform to produce tactics, the complexity is that of micro-management performed on the whole map and is

detailed in section 4.2. Players and AI build abstractions on top of that, which enables them to reason about enemy tactics and infer what they should do from only partial observations. For these reasons, we think that tactics, at this abstract level, can be modeled as a POMDP\* with partial observations of the opponent’s tactics (identifying them from low-level observations is already an arduous task), actions as our tactics, and transition probabilities defined by player’s skills and the game state. Our solutions are real-time on a laptop.

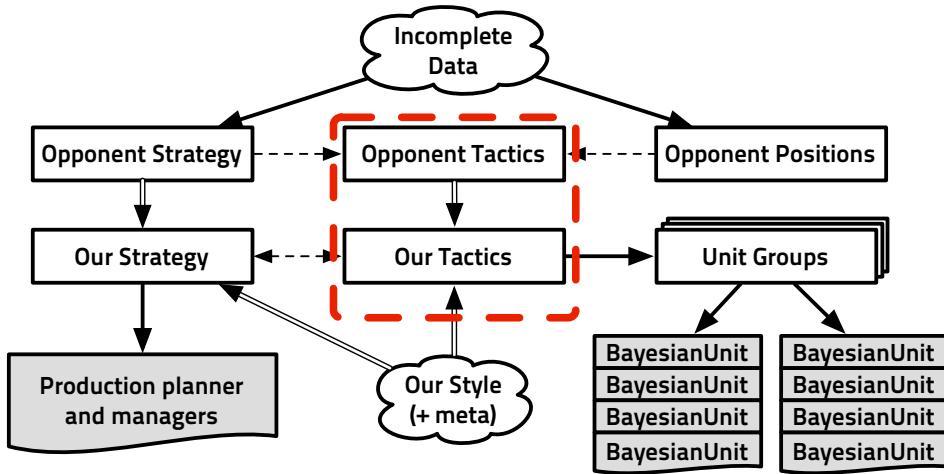


Figure 6.1: Information-centric view of the architecture of the bot, the part concerning this chapter (tactics) is in the dotted rectangle. Dotted arrows represent constraints on what is possible, plain simple arrows represent simple (real) values, either from data or decisions, and double arrows represent probability distributions on possible values. The grayed surfaces are the components actuators (passing orders to the game).

## 6.1 What are Tactics?

### A Tactical Abstraction

In their study on human like characteristics in RTS games, Hagelbäck and Johansson Hagelbäck and Johansson [2010] found out that “tactics was one of the most successful indicators of whether the player was human or not”. Tactics are in between strategy (high-level) and micro-management (lower-level), as seen in Fig. 4.5. When players talk about specific tactics, they use a specific vocabulary which represents a set of actions and compresses subgoals of a tactical goal in a sentence.

Units have different abilities, which leads to different possible tactics. Each faction has invisible (temporarily or permanently) units, flying transport units, flying attack units and ground units. Some units can only attack ground or air units, some others have splash damage attacks, immobilizing or illusion abilities. Fast and mobile units are not cost-effective in head-to-head fights against slower bulky units. We used the gamers’ vocabulary to qualify different types of tactics:

- *ground* attacks (raids or pushes) are the most normal kind of attacks, carried by basic units which cannot fly,
- *air* attacks (air raids), which use flying units' mobility to quickly deal damage to undefended spots.
- *invisible* attacks exploit the weaknesses (being them positional or technological) in detectors of the enemy to deal damage without retaliation,
- *drops* are attacks using ground units transported by air, combining flying units' mobility with cost-effectiveness of ground units, at the expense of vulnerability during transit.

This will be the only four types of tactics that we will use in this chapter: *how* did the player attack or defend? That does not mean that it is an exhaustive classification, nor that our model can not be adapted a) to other types of tactics b) to dynamically learning types of tactics.

RTS games maps, StarCraft included, consist in a closed arena in which units can evolve. It is filled with terrain features like uncrossable terrain for ground units (water, space), cliffs, ramps, walls. Particularly, each RTS game which allows production also give some economical (gathering) mechanism and so there are some resources scattered on the map, where players need to go collect. It is way more efficient to build expansion (auxiliary bases) to collect resources directly on site. So when a player decides to attack, she has to decide *where* to attack, and this decision takes into account *how* it can attack different places, due to their geographical remoteness, topological access possibilities and defense strength. Choosing *where* to attack is a complex decision to make: of course it is always wanted to attack poorly defended economic expansions of the opponent, but the player has to consider if it places its own bases in jeopardy, or if it may trap her own army. With a perfect estimator of battles outcomes (which is a hard problem due to terrain, army composition combinatorics and units control complexity), and perfect information, this would result in a game tree problem which could be solved my  $\alpha - \beta$ . Unfortunately, StarCraft is a partial observation game with complex terrain and fight mechanics.

## Our Approach

The idea is to have (most probably biased) lower-level heuristics from units observations which produce information exploitable at the tactical level, and take advantage of strategic inference too. For that, we propose a model which can either predict enemy attacks or give us a distribution on *where* and *how* we should attack the opponent. Information from the higher-level strategy [Synnaeve and Bessière, 2011, Synnaeve and Bessière, 2011b] (Chapter 7) constrains what types of attacks are possible. As shown in Fig. 6, information from units' positions (or possibly an enemy units particle filter as in [Weber et al., 2011] or Chapter 9.1) constrains where the armies can possibly be in the future. In the context of our StarCraft bot, once we have a decision: we generate a goal (attack order) passed to units groups, which set the objectives of the low-level Bayesian units control model [Synnaeve and Bessière, 2011a] (Chapter 5).

## 6.2 Related Work

On spatial reasoning, Pottinger [2000] described the *BANG* engine implemented for the game Age of Empires II (Ensemble Studios), which provides terrain analysis functionalities to the game

using influence maps and areas with connectivity information. Forbus et al. [2002] presented a tactical qualitative description of terrain for wargames through geometric and pathfinding analysis. Hale et al. [2008] presented a 2D geometric navigation mesh generation method from expanding convex regions from seeds. Perkins [2010] automatically extracted choke points and regions of StarCraft maps from a pruned Voronoi diagram, which we used for our regions representations.

Hladky and Bulitko [2008] benchmarked hidden semi-Markov models (HSMM) and particle filters in first person shooter games (FPS) units tracking. They showed that the accuracy of occupancy maps was improved using movement models (learned from the player behavior) in HSMM. Bererton [2004] used a particle filter for player position prediction in a FPS. Kabanza et al. [2010] improve the probabilistic hostile agent task tracker (PHATT [Geib and Goldman, 2009], a simulated HMM for plan recognition) by encoding strategies as HTN, used for plan and intent recognition to find tactical opportunities. Weber et al. [2011] used a particle model for hidden units' positions estimation in StaCraft.

Aha et al. [2005] used case-based reasoning (CBR) to perform dynamic tactical plan retrieval (matching) extracted from domain knowledge in Wargus. Ontañón et al. [2007] based their real-time case-based planning (CBP) system on a plan dependency graph which is learned from human demonstration in Wargus. A case based behavior generator spawn goals which are missing from the current state and plan according to the recognized state. In [Mishra et al., 2008, Manish Meta, 2010], they used a knowledge-based approach to perform situation assessment to use the right plan, performing runtime adaptation by monitoring its performance. Sharma et al. [2007] combined CBR and reinforcement learning to enable reuse of tactical plan components. Bakkes et al. [2009] used richly parametrized CBR for strategic and tactical AI in Spring (Total Annihilation open source clone). Cadena and Garrido [2011] used fuzzy CBR (fuzzy case matching) for strategic and tactical planning (including expert knowledge) in StarCraft. Chung et al. [2005] applied Monte-Carlo planning for strategic and tactical planning to a capture-the-flag mod of Open RTS. Balla and Fern [2009] applied upper confidence bounds on trees (UCT: a MCTS algorithm) to tactical assault planning in Wargus.

In Starcraft, Weber et al. [2010a,b] produced tactical goals through reactive planning and goal-driven autonomy, finding the more relevant goal(s) to follow in unforeseen situations. Wintermute et al. [2007] used a cognitive approach mimicking human attention for tactics and units control in ORTS. Ponsen et al. [2006] developed an evolutionary state-based tactics generator for Wargus. Finally, Avery et al. Avery et al. [2009] and Smith et al. Smith et al. [2010] co-evolved influence map trees for spatial (tactical) reasoning in RTS games.

### 6.3 Perception and Tactical Goals

#### Space Representation

The *maps* on which we play restrain movement and vision of ground units (flying units are not affected). As ground units are much more prevalent and more cost-efficient than flying units, being able to reason about terrain particularities is key for tactical reasoning. For that, we clustered the map in regions. We used two kinds of regions:

- BroodWar Terrain Analyser (BWTa)<sup>\*1</sup> regions and choke-dependent (choke-centered) regions (CDR). BWTa regions are obtained from a pruned Voronoi diagram on walkable terrain [Perkins, 2010] and give regions for which chokes are the boundaries. We will note this regions “Reg” or regions.
- As battles often happens at chokes, choke-dependent regions are created by doing an additional (distance limited) Voronoi tessellation spawned at chokes, its regions set is  $(regions \setminus chokes) \cup chokes$ . We will note this regions “CDR” or choke-dependent regions.

Figure 6.2 illustrate regions and choke-dependent regions (CDR). Results for choke-dependent regions are not fully detailed. Figure ?? shows a real StarCraft map and its decomposition into regions with BWTa.

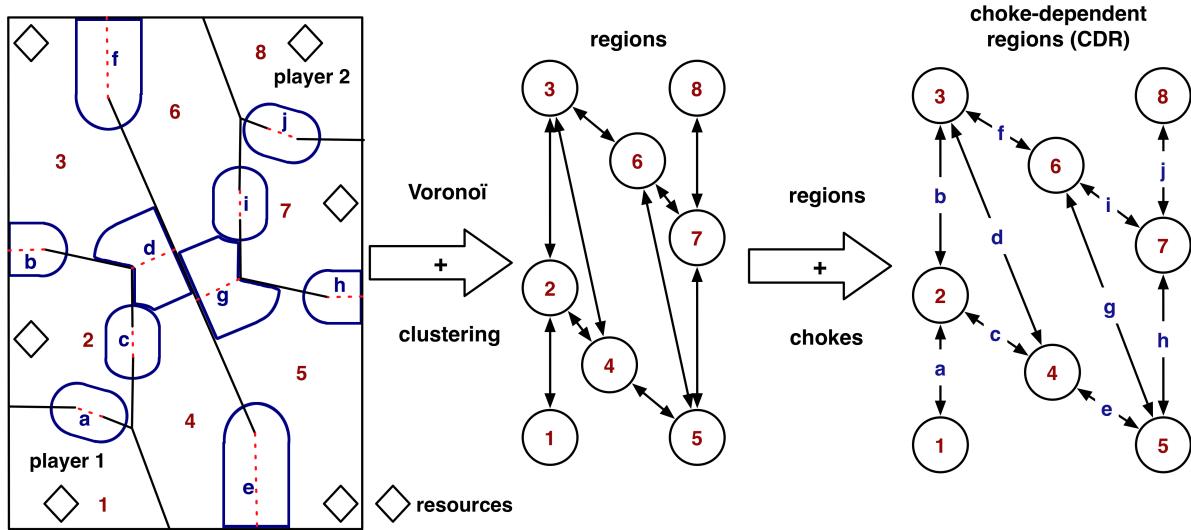


Figure 6.2: A very simple map on the left, which is transformed into regions (between chokes in dotted red lines) by Voronoi tessellation and clustering. These plain regions (numbers in red) are then augmented with choke-dependent regions (letters in blue)

## Evaluating Regions

### Partial Observations

From partial observations, one has to derive meaningful information about what may be the state of the game. For tactics, as we are between micro-management and strategy, we are interested in knowing:

- enemy units positions. In this chapter, we consider that units we have seen and that are now under the fog of war\* are at the last seen position for some time ( $\approx few\ minutes$ ), and then we have no clue where they are (uniform distribution on regions which are not visible) but we know that they exist. We could diffuse their position (respecting the terrain

<sup>1</sup><http://code.google.com/p/bwta/>

constraints for ground units) proportionally to their speed, or use a more advanced particle filter as Weber et al. [2011] did for StarCraft, or as explained in section 9.1.

- enemy buildings positions. For that, we will simply consider that buildings do not move at all (that is not completely true as some Terran buildings can move, but a good assumption nevertheless). Once we have seen a building, if we have not destroyed it, it is there, even under the fog of war\*.
- enemy strategy (aggressiveness and tech tree\* for instance). Here, we will only use the estimation of the enemy’s tech tree as it is the output of a part of our strategy estimation in chapter 7.

The units and buildings perceptions are too low-level to be exploited directly in a tactical model. We will now present importance and defense scoring heuristics.

## Scoring Heuristics

To decide *where* and *how* to attack (or defend), we need information about the particularity of above-mentioned regions. For that, we built heuristics taking low-level information about enemy units and buildings positions, and giving higher level estimator. They are mostly encoding common sense. We do not put too much care into building these heuristics because they will also be used during learning and the learned parameters of the model will have adapted it to their bias.

We note  $s_{unit \ type}^{a \ or \ d}(r)$  for the balanced score of units from attacker or defender ( $a$  or  $b$ ) of a given type in region  $r$ . The balanced score of units is just the sum on all units of each unit score ( $= minerals\_value + \frac{4}{3}gas\_value + 50supply\_value$ ). For instance the score of an army with 2 dragoons and 1 zealot is:  $s_{army} = 2(125 + \frac{4}{3}50 + 50 \times 2) + (100 + 50 \times 2)$ . The heuristics we used in our benchmarks are:

- economical score: number of workers of the defender on her total number of workers in the game.

$$economical\_score^d(r) = \frac{s_{workers}^d(r)}{\sum_{i \in regions} s_{workers}^d(i)}$$

- tactical score: weighted sum of the defender’s armies strengths in each regions, divided by the distance between the region in which each army is and the region at hand (to a power  $> 1$ ).

$$tactical\_score^d(r) = \frac{\sum_{i \in regions} s_{army}^d(i)}{dist(i, r)^{1.5}}$$

We used a power of 1.5 such that the tactical value of a region in between two halves of an army, each at distance 2, would be higher than the tactical value of a region at distance 4 of the full (same) army. For flying units,  $dist$  is the Euclidean distance, while for ground units it takes pathfinding into account.

- ground defense score: the score of the defender’s units which can attack ground units in region  $r$ , divided by the score of ground units of the attacker in region  $r$ .

$$ground\_defense^d(r) = \frac{s_{can\_attack\_ground}^d(r)}{s_{ground\_units}^a(r)}$$

- air defense score: the score of the defender's units which can attack flying units in region  $r$ , divided by the score of flying units of the attacker in region  $r$ .

$$air\_defense^d(r) = \frac{s_{can\_attack\_air}^d(r)}{s_{air\_units}^a(r)}$$

- invisible defense score: the number of the defender's detectors (units which can view otherwise invisible units) in region  $r$ .

$$invis\_defense^d(r) = number_{detectors}^d(r)$$

## Tech Tree

Our model also uses the estimation of the opponent's tech tree\* to know what types of attacks are possible from them. An introduction to the tech tree is given in section 4.1. The tech tree is the backbone of the strategy: it defines what can and what cannot be built by the player. The left diagram of Figure 6.3 shows the tech tree of the player after completion of the build order 4.1 in section 4.1. The strategic aspect of the tech tree is that it takes time (between 30 seconds to 2 minutes) to make a building, so tech trees and their evolutions through time result from a plan and reveal the intention of the player.

From partial observations, a more complete tech tree can be reconstructed: if an enemy unit which requires a specific building is seen, one can infer that the whole tech tree up to this unit's requirements is available to the opponent's. Further in section 7.3, we will show how we took advantage of probabilistic modeling and learning to infer more about the enemy build tree from partial observation. In this chapter, we will limit our use of tech trees to be an indicator of what types of attacks can and cannot be committed.

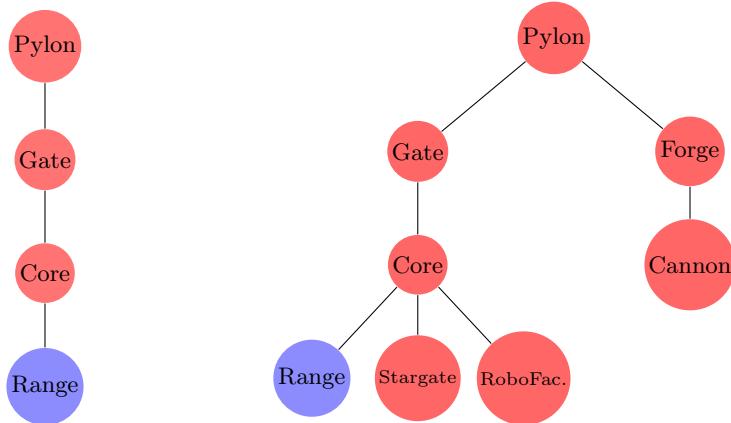


Figure 6.3: Two tech trees, the build trees subsets are the parts in red. Left: tech tree\* obtained at the end of the build order described in 4.1. Right: a more advanced tech tree.

## Tactical Goals

The decision that we want our AI system to make at this level is *where* and *how* to attack. This is reflected in the StarCraft bot as a **Goal** creation 8.1. **Goals** are interfacing high level

tactical thinking with the steps necessary to their realization. A **Goal** recruits units and binds them under a **UnitsGroup** (see section 5.3). A **Goal** is an FSM\* in which two states are simple planners (an FSM with some form of procedural autonomy), it has:

- preconditions, for instance a *drop* attack needs to specify at least a transport unit (Shuttle/Dropship/Overlord) and ground attack units.
- hard states: *waiting precondition, in progress, in cancel, achieved, canceled*, which corresponds to the **Goal** advancement..
- *and* and/or *or* logic subgoals with:
  - a realization test
  - a proposition of action to try to realize it
  - an estimation of the “distance” to realization

In the *in progress* and *in cancel* modes, the “plan” is a simple search in the achievable subgoals and their “distance” to realization.

The tactical model can specify *where* to attack by setting a localized subgoal (Formation/See/Regroup/KillSubgoal...) to the right place. It can specify *how* by setting the adequate precondition(s).

## 6.4 Dataset

### Source

We downloaded more than 8000 replays to keep 7649 uncorrupted, 1v1 replays from professional gamers leagues and international tournaments of StarCraft, from specialized websites<sup>234</sup>. We then ran them using BWAPI<sup>5</sup> and dumped units’ positions, pathfinding and regions, resources, orders, vision events, for attacks: types, positions, outcomes. Basically, every BWAPI event plus attacks was recorded, the dataset and its source code are freely available<sup>6</sup>. The implication of considering only replays of very good player allows us to use this dataset to learn the behaviors of our bot. Otherwise, particularly regarding the economy, a simple bot (AI) coupled with a planner can beat the average player, who does not have a tightly timed build order and/or not the sufficient APM\* to execute.

### Information

Table 6.1 shows some metrics about the dataset. In this chapter, we are particularly interested in the number of attacks. Note that there the numbers of attacks for a given race have to be divided by two in a given *non-mirror* match-up. So, there are 7072 Protoss attacks in PvP but there are no 70,089 attacks by Protoss in PvT but about half that.

---

<sup>2</sup><http://www.teamliquid.net>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.gosugamers.net>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.iccup.com>

<sup>5</sup><http://code.google.com/p/bwapi/>

<sup>6</sup><http://snippyhollow.github.com/bwrepdump/>

match-up	PvP	PvT	PvZ	TvT	TvZ	ZvZ
number of games	445	2408	2027	461	2107	199
number of attacks	7072	70089	40121	16446	42175	2162
mean attacks/game	15.89	29.11	19.79	35.67	20.02	10.86
mean time (frames) / game	32342	37772	39137	37717	35740	23898
mean time (minutes) / game	22.46	26.23	27.18	26.19	24.82	16.60
mean regions / game	19.59	19.88	19.69	19.83	20.21	19.31
mean CDR / game	41.58	41.61	41.57	41.44	42.10	40.70
actions issued (game engine) / game	24584	33209	31344	26998	29869	21868
mean “BWAPI APM” <sup>7</sup> (per player)	547	633	577	515	602	659
mean ground distance <sup>8</sup> region ↔ region	2569	2608	2607	2629	2604	2596
mean ground distance <sup>9</sup> CDR ↔ CDR	2397	2405	2411	2443	2396	2401

Table 6.1: Detailed numbers about our dataset. XvY means race X vs race Y matches and is an abbreviation of the match-up: PvP stands for Protoss versus Protoss.

By running the recorded games (replays\*) through StarCraft, we were able to recreate the full state of the game. Time is always expressed in game frames (24 frames per second). We recorded three types of files:

- general data (see appendix B.1): records the players’ names, the map’s name, and all information about events like *creation* (along with *morph*), *destruction*, *discovery* (for one player), *change of ownership* (special spell/ability), for each units. It also shows attack events (detected by a heuristic, see below) and dumps the current economical situation every 25 frames: minerals\*, gas\*, supply\* (count and total: max supply\*).
- order data (see appendix B.3): records all the orders which are given to the units (individually) like *move*, *harvest*, *attack unit*, their positions and their time.
- location data (see appendix ??): records positions of mobile units every 100 frames, and their position in regions and choke-dependent regions if they changed since last measurement. It also stores ground distances (pathfinding-wise) matrices between regions and choke-dependent regions in the header.

## Attacks

We trigger an attack tracking heuristic when one unit dies and there are at least two military units around. We then update this attack until it ends, recording every unit which took part in the fight. We log the position, participating units and fallen units for each player, the attack type and of course the attacker and the defender. Algorithm 5<sup>10</sup> shows how we detect attacks.

---

<sup>10</sup>adapted from <http://github.com/SnippyHolloW/bwrepdump/blob/master/BWRepDump.cpp#L1773> and <http://github.com/SnippyHolloW/bwrepdump/blob/master/BWRepDump.cpp#L1147>

---

**Algorithm 5** Simplified attack tracking heuristic for extraction from games. The heuristics to determine the attack type and the attack radius and position are not described here. They look at the proportions of units types, which units are firing and the last actions of the players.

---

```

list
function UNIT_DEATH_EVENT(unit)
    tmp ← tracked_attacks.which_contains(unit)
    if tmp ≠ ∅ then
        tmp.update(unit)                                ▷ ⇔ update(tmp, unit)
    else
        tracked_attacks.push(attack(unit))
    end if
end function

function ATTACK(unit)                               ▷ new attack constructor
    self.convex_enveloppe = propagate_default_enveloppe(unit)      ▷ self ⇔ this
    self.type ← determine_attack_type(update(self, unit))
    return self
end function

function UPDATE(attack, unit)
    attack.update_enveloppe(unit)                         ▷ takes units ranges into account
    c ← get_context(attack.convex_enveloppe)
    self.units_involved.update(c)
    self.tick = default_timeout()
    return c
end function

function TICK_UPDATE
    self.tick ← self.tick - 1
    if self.tick < 0 then
        self.destruct()
    end if
end function

```

---

## 6.5 A Bayesian Tactical Model

### Tactical Model

We preferred to discretize continuous values to enable quick complete computations. Another strategy would keep more values and use Monte Carlo sampling for computation. We think that discretization is not a concern because 1) heuristics are simple and biased already 2) we often reason about imperfect information and this uncertainty tops discretization fittings.

### Variables

With  $n$  regions, we have:

- $A_{1:n} \in \{true, false\}$ ,  $A_i$ : attack in region  $i$  or not?
- $E_{1:n} \in \{no, low, high\}$ ,  $E_i$  is the discretized economical value of the region  $i$  for the defender. We choose 3 values: *no* workers in the regions, *low*: a small amount of workers (less than half the total) and *high*: more than half the total of workers in this region  $i$ .

- $T_{1:n} \in \text{discrete levels}$ ,  $T_i$  is the tactical value of the region  $i$  for the defender, see above for an explanation of the heuristic. Basically,  $T$  is proportional to the proximity to the defender's army. In benchmarks, discretization steps are 0, 0.05, 0.1, 0.2, 0.4, 0.8 ( $\log_2$  scale).
- $TA_{1:n} \in \text{discrete levels}$ ,  $TA_i$  is the tactical value of the region  $i$  for the attacker (see above).
- $B_{1:n} \in \{\text{true}, \text{false}\}$ ,  $B_i$  tells if the region belongs (or not) to the defender.  $P(B_i = \text{true}) = 1$  if the defender has a base in region  $i$  and  $P(B_i = \text{false}) = 1$  if the attacker has one. Influence zones of the defender can be measured (with uncertainty) by  $P(B_i = \text{true}) \geq 0.5$  and vice versa.
- $H_{1:n} \in \{\text{ground}, \text{air}, \text{invisible}, \text{drop}\}$ ,  $H_i$ : in predictive mode: how we will be attacked, in decision-making: how to attack, in region  $i$ .
- $GD_{1:n} \in \{\text{no}, \text{low}, \text{med}, \text{high}\}$ : ground defense (relative to the attacker power) in region  $i$ , result from a heuristic. *no* defense if the defender's army is  $\geq 1/10$ th of the attacker's, *low* defense above that and under half the attacker's army, *medium* defense above that and under comparable sizes, *high* if the defender's army is bigger than the attacker.
- $AD_{1:n} \in \{\text{no}, \text{low}, \text{med}, \text{high}\}$ : same for air defense.
- $ID_{1:n} \in \{\text{no detector}, \text{one detector}, \text{several}\}$ : invisible defense, equating to numbers of detectors.
- $TT \in [\emptyset, building_1, building_2, building_1 \wedge building_2, techtrees, \dots]$ : all the possible technological trees for the given race. For instance  $\{\text{pylon}, \text{gate}\}$  and  $\{\text{pylon}, \text{gate}, \text{core}\}$  are two different Tech Trees, see chapter ??.
- $HP \in \{\text{ground}, \text{ground} \wedge \text{air}, \text{ground} \wedge \text{invis}, \text{ground} \wedge \text{air} \wedge \text{invis}, \text{ground} \wedge \text{drop}, \text{ground} \wedge \text{air} \wedge \text{drop}, \text{ground} \wedge \text{invis} \wedge \text{drop}, \text{ground} \wedge \text{air} \wedge \text{invis} \wedge \text{drop}\}$ : how possible types of attacks, directly mapped from  $TT$  information. In prediction, with this variable, we make use of what we can infer on the opponent's strategy Synnaeve and Bessière [2011b], Synnaeve and Bessière [2011], in decision-making, we know our own possibilities (we know our tech tree as well as the units we own).

Finally, for some variables, we take uncertainty into account with “soft evidences”: for instance for a region in which no player has a base, we have a soft evidence that it belongs more probably to the player established closer. In this case, for a given region, we introduce the soft evidence variable(s)  $B'$  and the coherence variable  $\lambda_B$  and impose  $P(\lambda_B = 1|B, B') = 1.0$  iff  $B = B'$ , else  $P(\lambda_B = 1|B, B') = 0.0$ ; while  $P(\lambda_B|B, B')P(B')$  is a new factor in the joint distribution. This allows to sum over  $P(B')$  distribution (soft evidence).

## Decomposition

The joint distribution of our model contains soft evidence variables for all input family variables  $(E, T, TA, B, GD, AD, ID, HP)$  to be as general as possible, *i.e.* to be able to cope with all possible uncertainty (from incomplete information) that may come up in a game. To avoid being

too verbose, we explain the decomposition only with the soft evidence for the family of variables  $B$ , the principle holds for all other soft evidences. For the  $n$  considered regions, we have:

$$P(A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, T_{1:n}, TA_{1:n}, B_{1:n}, B'_{1:n}, \lambda_{B,1:n}, \dots) \quad (6.1)$$

$$H_{1:n}, GD_{1:n}, AD_{1:n}, ID_{1:n}, HP, TT) \quad (6.2)$$

$$= \prod_{i=1}^n [P(A_i)P(E_i, T_i, TA_i, B_i | A_i) \dots] \quad (6.3)$$

$$P(\lambda_{B,i} | B_{1:n}, B'_{1:n})P(B'_{1:n}) \quad (6.4)$$

$$P(AD_i, GD_i, ID_i | H_i)P(H_i | HP)] P(HP | TT)P(TT) \quad (6.5)$$

## Forms and Learning

We will explain the forms for a given/fixed  $i$  region number:

- $P(A)$  is the prior on the fact that the player attacks in this region, in our evaluation we set it to  $n_{battles}/(n_{battles} + n_{not\ battles})$ . In a given match it should be initialized to uniform and progressively learn the preferred attack regions of the opponent for predictions, learn the regions in which our attacks fail or succeed for decision-making.
- $P(E, T, TA, B | A)$  is a covariance table of the economical, tactical (both for the defender and the attacker), belonging scores where an attacks happen. We just use Laplace succession law (“add one” smoothing) Jaynes [2003] and count the co-occurrences, thus almost performing maximum likelihood learning of the table.
- $P(\lambda_B | B, B') = 1.0$  iff  $B = B'$  is just a coherence constraint.
- $P(AD, GD, ID | H)$  is a covariance table of the air, ground, invisible defense values depending on how the attack happens. As for  $P(E, T, TA, B | A)$ , we use a Laplace’s law of succession to learn it.
- $P(H | HP)$  is the distribution on how the attack happens depending on what is possible. Trivially  $P(H = ground | HP = ground) = 1.0$ , for more complex possibilities we have different maximum likelihood multinomial distributions on  $H$  values depending on  $HP$ .
- $P(HP | TT)$  is the direct mapping of what the tech tree allows as possible attack types:  $P(HP = hp | TT) = 1$  is a function of  $TT$  (all  $P(HP \neq hp | TT) = 0$ ).
- $P(TT)$ : if we are sure of the tech tree (prediction without fog of war, or in decision-making mode),  $P(TT = k) = 1$  and  $P(TT \neq k) = 0$ ; otherwise, it allows us to take uncertainty about the opponent’s tech tree and balance  $P(HP | TT)$ . We obtain a distribution on what is possible ( $P(HP)$ ) for the opponent’s attack types.

There are two approaches to fill up these probability tables, either by observing games (supervised learning), as we did in the evaluation section, or by acting (reinforcement learning). In match situation against a given opponent, for inputs that we can unequivocally attribute to their intention (style and general strategy), we also refine these probability tables (with Laplace’s rule of succession). To keep things simple, we just refine  $\sum_{E,T,TA} P(E, T, TA, B | A)$  corresponding to their aggressiveness (aggro) or our successes and failures, and equivalently for  $P(H | HP)$ .

Indeed, if we sum over  $E$ ,  $T$  and  $TA$ , we consider the inclination of our opponent to venture into enemy territory or the interest that we have to do so by counting our successes with aggressive or defensive parameters. In  $P(H|HP)$ , we are learning the opponent's inclination for particular types of tactics according to what is available to their, or for us the effectiveness of our attack types choices.

The model is highly modular, and some parts are more important than others. We can separate three main parts:  $P(E, T, TA, B|A)$ ,  $P(AD, GD, ID|H)$  and  $P(H|HP)$ . In prediction,  $P(E, T, TA, B|A)$  uses the inferred (uncertain) economic ( $E$ ), tactical ( $T$ ) and belonging ( $B$ ) scores of the opponent while knowing our own tactical position fully ( $TA$ ). In decision-making, we know  $E, T, B$  (for us) and estimate  $TA$ . In our prediction benchmarks,  $P(AD, GD, ID|H)$  has the lesser impact on the results of the three main parts, either because the uncertainty from the attacker on  $AD, GD, ID$  is too high or because our heuristics are too simple, though it still contributes positively to the score. In decision-making, it allows for reinforcement learning to have pivoting tuple values for  $AD, GD, ID$  at which to switch attack types. In prediction,  $P(H|HP)$  is used to take  $P(TT)$  (coming from strategy prediction Synnaeve and Bessière [2011], chapter 7) into account and constraints  $H$  to what is possible. For the use of  $P(H|HP)P(HP|TT)P(TT)$  in decision-making, see the Results sections.

## Questions

For a given region  $i$ , we can ask the probability to attack here,

$$P(A_i = a_i | e_i, t_i, ta_i, \lambda_{B,i} = 1) \quad (6.6)$$

$$= \frac{\sum_{B_i, B'_i} P(e_i, t_i, ta_i, B_i | a_i) P(a_i) P(B'_i) P(\lambda_{B,i} | B_i, B'_i)}{\sum_{A_i, B_i, B'_i} P(e_i, t_i, ta_i, B_i | A_i) P(A_i) P(B'_i) P(\lambda_{B,i} | B_i, B'_i)} \quad (6.7)$$

$$\propto \sum_{B_i, B'_i} P(e_i, t_i, ta_i, B_i | a_i) P(a_i) P(B'_i) P(\lambda_{B,i} | B_i, B'_i) \quad (6.8)$$

and the mean by which we should attack,

$$P(H_i = h_i | ad_i, gd_i, id_i) \quad (6.9)$$

$$\propto \sum_{TT, P} [P(ad_i, gd_i, id_i | h_i) P(h_i | HP) P(HP|TT) P(TT)] \quad (6.10)$$

For clarity, we omitted some variables couples on which we have to sum (to take uncertainty into account) as for  $B$  (and  $B'$ ) above. We always sum over estimated, inferred variables, while we know the one we observe fully. In prediction mode, we sum over  $TA, B, TT, P$ ; in decision-making, we sum over  $E, T, B, AD, GD, ID$ . The complete question that we ask our model is  $P(A, H|FullyObserved)$ . The maximum of  $P(A, H)$  may not be the same as the maximum of  $P(A)$  or  $P(H)$ , for instance think of a very important economic zone that is very well defended, it may be the maximum of  $P(A)$ , but not once we take  $P(H)$  into account. Inversely, some regions are not defended against anything at all but present little or no interest. Our joint distribution 6.3 can be rewritten:  $P(Searched, FullyObserved, Estimated)$ , so we ask:

$$P(A_{1:n}, H_{1:n} | FullyObserved) \quad (6.11)$$

$$\propto \sum_{Estimated} P(A_{1:n}, H_{1:n}, Estimated, FullyObserved) \quad (6.12)$$

The full Bayesian program of the model is as follows (6.13):

Description	$Variables$ $A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, T_{1:n}, TA_{1:n}, B_{1:n}, B'_{1:n}, \lambda_{B,1:n},$ $H_{1:n}, GD_{1:n}, AD_{1:n}, ID_{1:n}, HP, TT$ $Decomposition$ $P(A_{1:n}, E_{1:n}, T_{1:n}, TA_{1:n}, B_{1:n}, B'_{1:n}, \lambda_{B,1:n},$ $H_{1:n}, GD_{1:n}, AD_{1:n}, ID_{1:n}, HP, TT)$ $= \prod_{i=1}^n [P(A_i)P(E_i, T_i, TA_i, B_i   A_i)$ $P(\lambda_{B,i}   B_{1:n}, B'_{1:n})P(B'_{1:n})$ $P(AD_i, GD_i, ID_i   H_i)P(H_i   HP)] P(HP   TT)P(TT)$ $Forms$ $P(A_r)$ prior on attack in region $i$ $P(E, T, TA, B   A)$ covariance/probability table $P(\lambda_B   B, B') = 1.0$ iff $B = B'$ , else $P(\lambda_B   B, B') = 0.0$ ( <i>functional Dirac</i> ) $P(AD, GD, ID   H)$ covariance/probability table $P(H   HP) = Categorical(4, HP)$ $P(HP = hp   TT) = 1.0$ iff $TT \rightarrow hp$ , else $P(HP   TT) = 0.0$ $P(TT)$ comes from a strategic model $Identification (using \delta)$ $P(A_r = true) = \frac{n_{battles}}{n_{battles} + n_{not\ battles}} = \frac{\mu_{battles/game}}{\mu_{regions/map}}$ (probability to attack a region) it could be learned online (preference of the opponent) : $P(A_r = true) = \frac{1 + n_{battles}(r)}{2 + \sum_{i \in regions} n_{battles}(i)}$ (online for each game) $P(E = e, T = t, TA = ta, B = b   A = True) = \frac{1 + n_{battles}(e, t, ta, b)}{ E  \times  T  \times  TA  \times  B  + \sum_{E, T, TA, B} n_{battles}(E, T, TA, B)}$ $P(AD = ad, GD = gd, ID = id   H = h) = \frac{1 + n_{battles}(ad, gd, id, h)}{ AD  \times  GD  \times  ID  + \sum_{AD, GD, ID} n_{battles}(AD, GD, ID, h)}$ $P(H = h   HP = hp) = \frac{1 + n_{battles}(h, hp)}{ H  + \sum_H n_{battles}(H, hp)}$ $Questions$ $\forall i \in regions P(A_i   e_i, t_i, ta_i, \lambda_{B,i} = 1)$ $\forall i \in regions P(H_i   ad_i, gd_i, id_i)$ $P(A, H   FullyObserved)$
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## 6.6 Results on StarCraft

### Learning

To measure fairly the prediction performance of such a model, we applied “leave-100-out” cross-validation from our dataset: as we had many games (see Table 6.2), we set aside 100 games of each match-up for testing (with more than 1 battle per match: rather  $\approx 15$  battles/match) and train our model on the rest. We write match-ups XvY with X and Y the first letters of the factions

involved (Protoss, Terran, Zerg). Note that mirror match-ups (PvP, TvT, ZvZ) have fewer games but twice as many attacks from a given faction. Learning was performed as explained in III.B.3: for each battle in  $r$  we had one observation for:  $P(e_r, t_r, ta_r, b_r | A = \text{true})$ , and  $\#\text{regions} - 1$  observations for the  $i$  regions which were not attacked:  $P(e_{i \neq r}, t_{i \neq r}, ta_{i \neq r}, b_{i \neq r} | A = \text{false})$ . For each battle of type  $t$  we had one observation for  $P(ad, gd, id | H = t)$  and  $P(H = t | p)$ . By learning with a Laplace’s law of succession Jaynes [2003], we allow for unseen event to have a non-zero probability.

An exhaustive presentation of the learned tables is out of the scope of this chapter, but we displayed interesting cases in which the learned probability tables meet concur with human expertise in Figures 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6. In Fig. 6.4, we see that air raids/attacks are quite risk averse and it is two times more likely to attack a region with less than 1/10th of the flying force in anti-aircraft warfare than to attack a region with up to one half of our force. We can also notice than drops are to be preferred either when it is safe to land (no anti-aircraft defense) or when there is a large defense (harassment tactics). In Fig. 6.5 we can see that, in general, there are as many ground attacks at the sum of other types. The two top graphs show cases in which the tech of the attacker was very specialized, and, in such cases, the specificity seems to be used. In particular, the top right graphic may be corresponding to a “fast Dark Templars rush”. Finally, Fig. 6.6 shows the transition between two types of encounters: tactics aimed at engaging the enemy army (a higher  $T$  value entails a higher  $P(A)$ ) and tactics aimed at damaging the enemy economy (at high  $E$ , we look for opportunities to attack with a small army where  $T$  is lower).

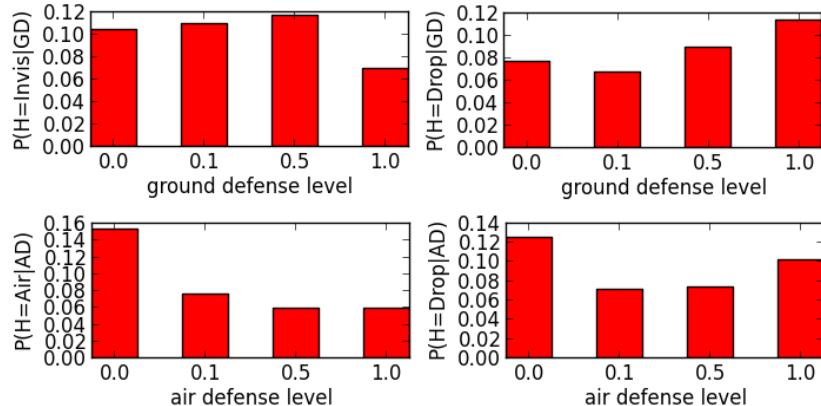


Figure 6.4: (top)  $P(H = \text{invis})$  and  $P(H = \text{drop})$  for varying values of  $GD$  (summed on other variables); (bottom)  $P(H = \text{air})$  and  $P(H = \text{drop})$  for varying values of  $AD$  (summed on other variables), for Terran in TvP. We can see that it is far more likely that invisible (“sneaky”) attacks happen where there is low ground presence (top left plot). For drops, we understand that the high value for  $P(H = \text{drop}|GD = 1.0)$  is caused by the fact that drop armies are small and this value corresponds to drops which are being expected by the defender. Drops at lower values of  $GD$  correspond to unexpected (surprise) drops. As ground units are more cost efficient than flying units in a static battle, we see that both  $P(H = \text{invis}|AD = 0.0)$  and  $P(H = \text{drop}|AD = 0.0)$  are much more probable than situations with air defenses.

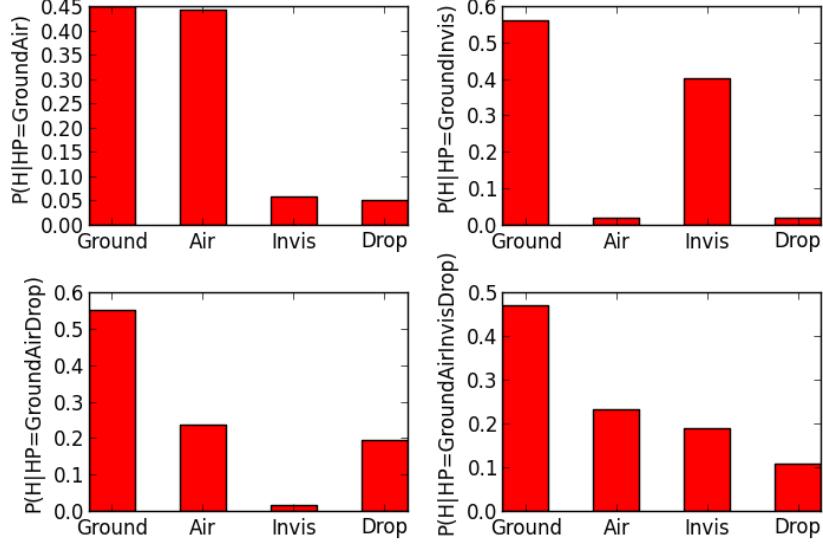


Figure 6.5:  $P(H|HP)$  for varying values of  $H$  and for different values of  $P$  (derived from inferred  $TT$ ), for Protoss in PvT. Conditioning on what is possible given the *tech tree* gives a lot of information about what attack types are possible or not. More interestingly, it clusters the game phases in different tech levels and allows for learning the relative distributions of attack types with regard to each phase. For instance, the last (bottom right) plot shows the distribution on attack types at the end of a technologically complete game.

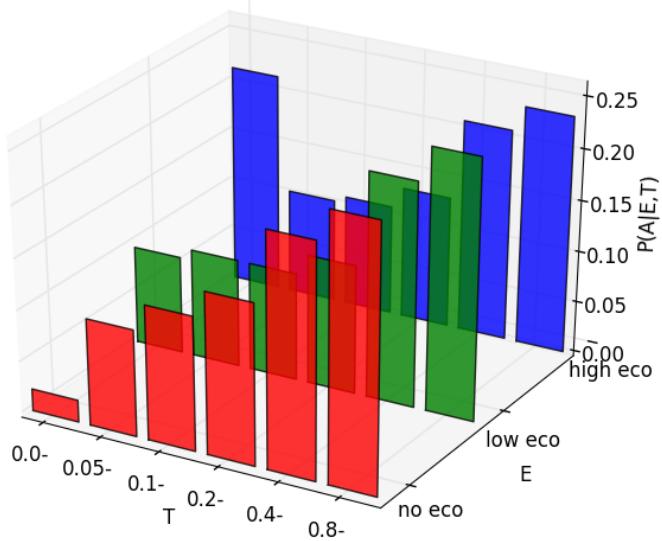


Figure 6.6:  $P(A)$  for varying values of  $E$  and  $T$ , summed on the other variables, for Terran in TvT. Higher economical values is strongly correlated with surprise attacks with small tactical squads and no defenses, which almost never happens in open fields (“no eco”) as this would lead to very unbalanced battles (in terms of army sizes): it would not benefit the smaller party, which can flee and avoid confrontation, as opposed to when defending their base.

## Prediction Performance

We learned and tested one model for each race and each match-up. As we want to predict *where* ( $P(A_{1:n})$ ) and *how* ( $P(H_{battle})$ ) the next attack will happen to us, we used inferred enemy  $TT$

(to produce  $P$ ) and  $TA$ , our scores being fully known:  $E$ ,  $T$ ,  $B$ ,  $ID$ . We consider  $GD$ ,  $AD$  to be fully known even though they depend on the attacker force, we should have some uncertainty on them, but we tested that they accounted (being known instead of fully unknown) for 1 to 2% of  $P(H)$  accuracy (in prediction) once  $P$  was known. We should point that pro-gamers scout very well and so it allows for a highly accurate  $TT$  estimation with Synnaeve and Bessière [2011]. Training requires to recreate battle states (all units' positions) and count parameters for 5,000 to 30,000 battles. Once that is done, inference is very quick: a look-up in a probability table for known values and  $\#F$  look-ups for free variables  $F$  on which we sum. We chose to try and predict the next battle 30 seconds before it happens, 30 seconds being an approximation of the time needed to go from the middle of a map (where the entropy on “next battle position” is maximum as the army’s average distance to all other regions is minimal) to any region by ground, so that the prediction is useful for the defender (they can position their army).

The model code<sup>11</sup> (for learning and testing) as well as the datasets (see above) are freely available. Raw results of predictions of positions and types of attacks 30 seconds before they happen are presented in Table. 6.2: for instance the bold number (38.0) corresponds to the percentage of good positions (regions) predictions (30 sec before event) which were ranked 1st in the probabilities on  $A_{1:n}$  for Protoss attacks against Terran (PvT). The measures on *where* corresponds to the percentage of good prediction and the mean probability for given ranks in  $P(A_{1:n})$  (to give a sense of the shape of the distribution). As the most probable The measures on *how* corresponds to the percentage of good predictions for the most probable  $P(H_{battle})$  and the number of such battles seen in the test set for given attack types. We particularly predict well ground attacks (trivial in the early game, less in the end game) and, interestingly, Terran and Zerg drop attacks. The *where & how* row corresponds to the percentage of good predictions for the maximal probability in the joint  $P(A_{1:n}, H_{1:n})$ : considering only the most probable attack (more information is in the rest of the distribution, as shown for *where!*) according to our model, we can predict *where and how* an attack will occur in the next 30 seconds  $\approx 1/4$ th of the time.

Finally, note that scores are still good 60 seconds before the attack (obviously,  $TT$ , and thus  $P$ , are not so different, nor are  $B$  and  $E$ ): PvT *where* top 4 ranks are 35.6, 8.5, 7.7, 7.0% good versus 38.0, 16.3, 8.9, 6.7% 30 seconds before; *how* total precision 60 seconds before is 70.0% vs. 72.4%, *where & how* maximum probability precision is 19.9% vs. 23%. This gives even more time for the player to adapt their tactics.

When we are mistaken, the mean ground distance (pathfinding wise) of the most probable predicted region to the good one (where the attack happens) is 1223 pixels (38 build tiles, or 2 screens in StarCraft’s resolution), while the mean max distance on the map is 5506 (172 build tiles). Also, the mean number of regions by map is 19, so a random *where* (attack destination) picking policy would have a correctness of 1/19 (5.23%). For choke-centered regions, the numbers of good *where* predictions are lower (between 24% and 32% correct for the most probable) but the mean number of regions by map is 42. For *where & how*, a random policy would have a precision of 1/(19\*4), and even a random policy taking the high frequency of ground attacks into account would at most be  $\approx 1/(19*2)$  correct. For the location only (*where* question), we also counted the mean number of different regions which were attacked in a given game (between 3.97 and 4.86 for regions, depending on the match-up, and between 5.13 and 6.23 for choke-dependent regions). The ratio over these means would give the best prediction rate we

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<sup>11</sup><https://github.com/SnippyHolloW/AnalyzeBWData>

could expect from a *baseline heuristic* based solely on the location data. These are attacks that actually happened, so the number of regions a player have to be worried about is at least this one (or more, for regions which were not attacked during a game but were potential targets). This *baseline heuristic* would yield (depending on the match-up) prediction rates between 20.5 and 25.2% for regions, versus our 32.8 to 40.9%, and between 16.1% and 19.5% for choke-dependent regions, versus our 24% to 32%. Note that our current model consider a uniform prior on regions (no bias towards past battlefields) and that we do not incorporate any derivative of the armies' movements. There is no player modeling at all: learning and fitting the mean player's tactics is not optimal, so we should specialize the probability tables for each player. Also, we use all types of battles in our training and testing. Short experiments showed that if we used only attacks on bases, the probability of good *where* predictions for the maximum of  $P(A_{1:n})$  goes above 50% (which is not a surprise, there are far less bases than regions in which attacks happen). To conclude on tactics positions prediction: if we sum the 2 most probable regions for the attack, we are right at least half the time; if we sum the 4 most probable (for our robotic player, it means it prepares against attacks in 4 regions as opposed to 19), we are right  $\approx 70\%$  of the time.

Mistakes on the type of the attack are high for invisible attacks: while these tactics can definitely win a game, the counter is strategic (it is to have detectors technology deployed) more than positional. Also, if the maximum of  $P(H_{battle})$  is wrong, it doesn't mean than  $P(H_{battle} = \text{good}) = 0.0$  at all! The result needing improvements the most is for air tactics, because countering them really is positional, see our discussion in the conclusion.

## In Game Decision-Making

In a StarCraft game, our bot has to make decisions about where and how to attack or defend, it does so by reasoning about opponent's tactics, bases, its priors, and under strategic constraints (Fig. ??). Once a decision is taken, the output of the tactical model is an offensive or defensive goal. There are different military goal types (base defense, ground attacks, air attacks, drops...), and each type of goal has pre-requisites (for instance: a drop goal needs to have the control of a dropship and military units to become active). The spawned goal then autonomously sets objectives for Bayesian units Synnaeve and Bessière [2011a], sometimes procedurally creating intermediate objectives or canceling itself in the worst cases.

The destinations of goals are from  $P(A)$ , while the type of the goal comes from  $P(H)$ . In input, we fully know tactical scores of the regions according to our military units placement  $TA$  (we are the attacker), what is possible for us to do  $P$  (according to units available) and we estimate  $E, T, B, ID, GD, AD$  from past (partial) observations. Estimating  $T$  is the most tricky of all because it may be changing fast, for that we use a units filter which just decays probability mass of seen units. An improvement would be to use a particle filter Weber et al. [2011], with a learned motion model. From the joint 6.11  $P(A_{1:n}, H_{1:n}|ta, p, tt)$  may arise a couple  $i, H_i$  more probable than the most probables  $P(A_i)$  and  $P(H_j)$  taken separately (the case of an heavily defended main base and a small unprotected expand for instance). Fig. 6.7 displays the mean  $P(A, H)$  for Terran (in TvZ) attacks decision-making for the most 32 probable type/region tactical couples. It is in this kind of landscape (though more steep because Fig. 6.7 is a mean) that we sample (or pick the most probable couple) to take a decision. Also, we may spawn defensive goals countering the attacks that we predict from the opponent.

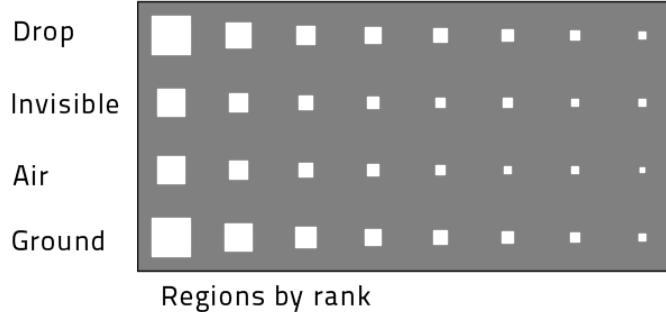


Figure 6.7: Mean  $P(A, H)$  for all  $H$  values and the top 8  $P(A_i, H_i)$  values, for Terran in TvZ. The larger the white square area, the higher  $P(A_i, H_i)$ . A simple way of taking a tactical decision according to this model, and the learned parameters, is by sampling in this distribution.

Finally, we can steer our technological growth towards the opponent’s weaknesses. A question that we can ask our model (at time  $t$ ) is  $P(TT)$ , or, in two parts: we first find  $i, h_i$  which maximize  $P(A, H)$  at time  $t + 1$ , and then ask a more directive:

$$P(TT|h_i) \propto \sum_P P(h_i|HP)P(HP|TT)P(TT)$$

so that it gives us a distribution on the tech trees ( $TT$ ) needed to be able to perform the wanted attack type. To take a decision on our technology direction, we can consider the distances between our current  $tt^t$  and all the probable values of  $TT^{t+1}$ .

## 6.7 Discussion

There are three main research directions for possible improvements:

- improving the underlying heuristics: the heuristics presented here are quite simple but they may be changed, and even removed or added, for another RTS or FPS, or for more performance. In particular, our “defense against invisible” heuristic could take detector positioning/coverage into account. Our heuristic on tactical values can also be reworked to take terrain tactical values into account (chokes and elevation in StarCraft). For the estimated position of enemy units, we could use a particle filter Weber et al. [2011] with a motion model (at least one for ground units and one for flying units).
- improving the dynamic of the model: there is room to improve the dynamics of the model: considering the prior probabilities to attack in regions given past attacks and/or considering evolutions of the  $T, TA, B, E$  values (derivatives) in time. The discretizations that we used may show their limits, though if we want to use continuous values, we need to setup a more complicated learning and inference process (MCMC sampling).
- improving the model itself: finally, one of the strongest assumptions (which is a draw-back particularly for prediction) of our model is that the attacking player is always considered to attack in this most probable regions. While this would be true if the model was complete (with finer army positions inputs and a model of what the player

thinks), we believe such an assumption of completeness is far fetched. Instead we should express that incompleteness in the model itself and have a “player decision” variable  $D \sim \text{Multinomial}(\mathbf{P}(A_{1:n}, H_{1:n}), \text{player})$ .

We have presented a Bayesian tactical model for RTS AI, which allows both for opposing tactics prediction and autonomous tactical decision-making. Being a probabilistic model, it deals with uncertainty easily, and its design allows easy integration into multi-granularity (multi-scale) AI systems as needed in RTS AI. Without any temporal dynamics, the position prediction is above a baseline heuristic ([32.8-40.9%] vs [20.5-25.2%]). Moreover, its exact prediction rate of the joint position and tactical type is in [23-32.8%] (depending on the match-up), and considering the 4 most probable regions it goes up to  $\approx 70\%$ . More importantly, it allows for tactical decision-making under (technological) constraints and (state) uncertainty. It can be used in production thanks to its low CPU and memory footprint. The dataset, its documentation<sup>12</sup>, as well as our model implementation<sup>13</sup> (and other data-exploration tools) are free software and can be found online. We plan to use this model in our StarCraft AI competition entry bot as it gives our bot tactical autonomy and a way to adapt to our opponent.

The advantages are that 1) learning will adapt the model output to its biased heuristic inputs 2) the model is agnostic to where input variables’ values come from 3) the updating process is the same for offline and online (in-game) learning.

Our approach (and bot architecture, depicted in Fig. 6) can be seen as goal-driven autonomy Weber et al. [2010a] dealing with multi-level reasoning by passing distributions (without any assumption about how they were obtained) on the module input. Using distributions as messages between specialized modules makes dealing with uncertainty first class, this way a given model do not care if the uncertainty comes from incompleteness in the data, a complex and biased heuristic, or another probabilistic model. We then take a decision by sampling or taking the most probable value in the output distribution. Another particularity of our model is that it allows for prediction of the enemy tactics using the same model with different inputs. Finally, our approach is not exclusive to most of the techniques presented above, and it could be interesting to combine it with UCT [Balla and Fern, 2009] and more complex/precise tactics generated through planning [Chung et al., 2005]

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<sup>12</sup><http://snippyhollow.github.com/bwrepdump/>

<sup>13</sup><https://github.com/SnippyHolloW/AnalyzeBWData>

Table 6.2: Results summary for multiple metrics at 30 seconds before attack. The number in bold (38.0) is read as “38% of the time, the region  $i$  with probability of rank 1 in  $P(A_i)$  is the one in which the attack happened 30 seconds later”.

%: good predictions Pr: mean probability		Protoss				Terran				Zerg			
		P		T		Z		P		T		Z	
total # games	rank	%	Pr	%	Pr	%	Pr	%	Pr	%	Pr	%	Pr
where	1	40.9	.334	<b>38.0</b>	.329	34.5	.304	35.3	.299	34.4	.295	39.0	.358
	2	14.6	.157	16.3	.149	13.0	.152	14.3	.148	14.7	.0147	17.8	.174
where	3	7.8	.089	8.9	.085	6.9	.092	9.8	.09	8.4	.087	10.0	.096
	4	7.6	.062	6.7	.059	7.9	.064	8.6	.071	6.9	.063	7.0	.062
measure	type	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
G		97.5	1016	98.1	1458	98.4	568	100	691	99.9	3218	76.7	695
A		44.4	81	34.5	415	46.8	190	40	5	13.3	444	47.1	402
I		22.7	225	49.6	337	12.9	132	NA	NA	NA	NA	36.8	326
D		55.9	340	42.2	464	45.2	93	93.5	107	86	1183	62.8	739
total		76.3	1662	72.4	2674	71.9	983	98.4	806	88.5	4850	60.4	2162
where & how (%)		32.8		23		23.8		27.1		23.6		30.2	
												23.3	
												30.9	
													26.4



# Chapter 7

## Strategy

*Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.*

*All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.*

Sun Tzu (The Art of War, 476-221 BC)

### We<sup>NTRO</sup>

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- Problem: take the winning strategy in the absolute (knowing everything: complete observations, players intentions, effects of each possible actions).
- Problem that we solve: take the winning strategy (in average) knowing what we saw from the opponent and our model of the game.
- Type: prediction is problem of *inference* or *plan recognition* from *incomplete informations*; adaptation given what we know is a problem of *planning under constraints*.
- Complexity: simple StarCraft decision problems are NP-hard [Viglietta, 2012], basic StarCraft strategy with full information (remember that StarCraft is partially observable) is mappable to the Generalized Geography problem and thus is PSPACE-hard [Lichtenstein and Sipser, 1978], Chess [Fraenkel and Lichtenstein, 1981] and Go (with Japanese ko rules) are EXPTIME-complete [Robson, 1983]. Our solutions are real-time on a laptop.

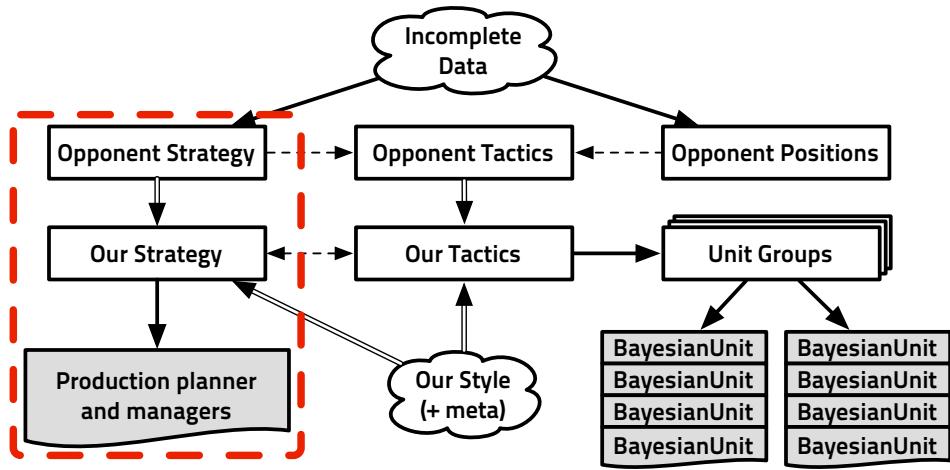


Figure 7.1: Information-centric view of the architecture of the bot, the part concerning this chapter is in the dotted rectangle

## 7.1 What is a Strategy?

From last chapter (section 6.3), we recall the *tech tree*\* is a directed acyclic graph which contains the whole technological (buildings and upgrades) development of a player. Also, each unit and building has a *sight range* that provides the player with a view of the map. Parts of the map not in the sight range of the player's units are under *fog of war* and the player ignores what is and happens there. In RTS games jargon, an *opening*\* denotes the same thing than in Chess: an early game plan for which the player has to make choices. In Chess because one can not move many pieces at once (each turn), in RTS games because during the development phase, one is economically limited and has to choose between economic and military priorities and can only open so many tech paths at once. The *opening*\* corresponds to the first military (tactical) moves that will be performed and, in StarCraft, it corresponds to the 5 (early rushes) to 15 minutes (advanced technology / late push) timespan.

Players have to find out what opening their opponents are doing to be able to effectively deal with the strategy (army composition) and tactics (military moves: where and when) thrown at them. For that, players scout each other and reason about the incomplete information they can bring together about army and buildings composition. This paper presents a probabilistic model able to predict the *opening*\* of the enemy that is used in a StarCraft AI competition entry bot (see Figure ??). Instead of hard-coding strategies or even considering plans as a whole, we consider the long term evolution of our *tech tree*\* and the evolution of our army composition separately (but steering and constraining each others), as shown in Fig. ???. With this model, our bot asks “what units should I produce?” (assessing the whole situation), being able to revise and adapt its production plans.

Later in the game, as the possibilities of strategies “diverge” (as in Chess), there are no longer fixed foundations that we can speak of as for openings. Instead, what is interesting is to know the technologies available to the enemy as well as have a sense of the composition of their army. The players have to adapt to each other technologies and armies compositions

either to be able to defend or to attack. Some units are more cost-efficient than others against particular compositions. Some combinations of units play well with each others (for instance biological units with “medics” or a good ratio of strong contact units backed with fragile ranged or artillery units). Finally, some units can be game changing by themselves like cloaking units, detectors, massive area of effects units...

## 7.2 Related Work

[Weber and Ontañón, 2010]

There are related works in the domains of opponent modeling [Hsieh and Sun, 2008, Schadd et al., 2007, ?]. The main methods used to these ends are case-based reasoning (CBR) and planning or plan recognition [Aha et al., 2005, ?, ?, Hoang et al., 2005, Ramírez and Geffner, 2009]. There are precedent works of Bayesian plan recognition [Charniak and Goldman, 1993], even in games with Albrecht *et al.* [Albrecht et al., 1998] using dynamic Bayesian networks to recognize a user’s plan in a multi-player dungeon adventure.

Aha *et al.* [Aha et al., 2005] used CBR to perform dynamic plan retrieval extracted from domain knowledge in Wargus (Warcraft II clone). Ontañón *et al.* [?] base their real-time case-based planning (CBP) system on a plan dependency graph which is learned from human demonstration. In [??], they use CBR and expert demonstrations on Wargus. They improve the speed of CPB by using a decision tree to select relevant features. Hsieh and Sun [Hsieh and Sun, 2008] based their work on Aha *et al.*’s CBR [Aha et al., 2005] and used StarCraft replays to construct states and building sequences. Strategies are choices of building construction order in their model.

Schadd *et al.* [Schadd et al., 2007] describe opponent modeling through hierarchically structured models of the opponent behaviour and they applied their work to the Spring RTS (Total Annihilation clone). Hoang *et al.* [Hoang et al., 2005] use hierarchical task networks (HTN) to model strategies in a first person shooter with the goal to use HTN planners. Kabanza *et al.* [?] improve the probabilistic hostile agent task tracker (PHATT [Geib and Goldman, 2009], a simulated HMM for plan recognition) by encoding strategies as HTN.

Dereszynski *et al.* [Dereszynski et al., 2011] used an HMM which states are extracted from (unsupervised) maximum likelihood on the dataset. The HMM parameters are learned from unit counts (both buildings and military units) every 30 seconds and Viterbi inference is used to predict the most likely next states from partial observations.

The work described in this section can be classified as probabilistic plan recognition. Strictly speaking, we present model-based machine learning used for prediction of plans, while our model is not limited to prediction. It performs two levels of plan recognition, both are learned from the replays: tech tree prediction (unsupervised) and opening prediction (semi-supervised or supervised depending on the labeling method).

## 7.3 Strategy prediction

*What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy.*

Sun Tzu

## Measures, Abstractions

meta-game\*

### Replays Labeling

We used Weber and Mateas [Weber and Mateas, 2009] dataset of labeled replays. It is composed of 9316 StarCraft: Broodwar game logs, between  $\approx 500$  and 1300 per *match-up*. A match-up is a set of the two opponents races, Protoss versus Terran (PvT) is a match-up, PvZ is another one. They are distinguished because strategies distribution are very different across match-ups (see Table 7.2). Weber and Mateas used logic rules on building sequences to put their labels, concerning only tier 2 strategies (no tier 1 rushes).

Openings are closely related to *build orders* (BO) but different BO can lead to the same opening and some BO are shared by different openings. Particularly, if we do not take the time at which the buildings are constructed, we may be wrong too often. For that reason, we tried to label replays with the statistical appearance of key features with a semi-supervised method (see Figure 7.2). Indeed, the purpose of our opening prediction model is to help our StarCraft playing bot to deal with rushes and special tactics. This was not the main focus of Weber and Mateas' labels, which follow more the development of the tech tree. We used the key components of openings that we want to be aware of as features for our labeling algorithm as show in Table 7.1.

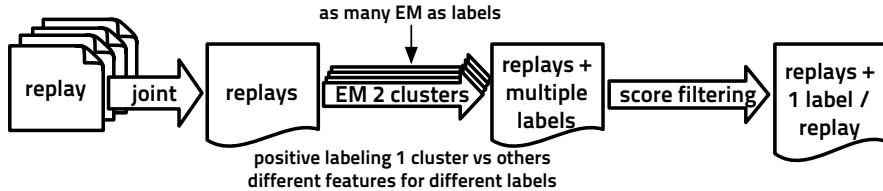


Figure 7.2: Data centric view of our semi-supervised labeling of replays

The selection of the features along with the opening labels is the supervised part of our labeling method. The knowledge of the features and openings comes from expert play and the StarCraft liquipedia<sup>1</sup>. They are all presented in Table 7.1. For instance, if we want to find out which replays correspond to the “fast Dark Templar” (DT, Protoss invisible unit) opening, we put the time at which the first Dark Templar is constructed as a feature and perform clustering on replays with it. This is what is needed for our playing bot: to be able to know when he has to fear “fast DT” opening and build a detector unit quickly to be able to deal with invisibility.

For the clustering part, we tried k-means, expectation-maximization (EM) with equal shape (bivariate normal distribution with proportional covariances matrices) and EM with the normal distribution shapes and volumes chosen with a Bayesian information criterion (BIC). Best BIC models were almost always the most agreeing with expert knowledge (15/17 labels). We used the R package Mclust [Fraley and Raftery, 2002, 2006] to perform full EM clustering. We produce “2 bins clustering” for each set of features (corresponding to each opening), and label the replays belonging to the cluster with the lower norm of features’ appearances (that is exactly the purpose of our features). Figures 7.5 and 7.6 show the clusters out of EM with the features of

<sup>1</sup><http://wiki.teamliquid.net/starcraft/>

the corresponding openings. We thought of clustering because there are two cases in which you build a specific military unit or research a specific upgrade: either it is part of your opening, or it is part of your longer term game plan or even in reaction to the opponent. So the distribution over the time at which a feature appears is bimodal, with one (sharp) mode corresponding to “opening with it” and the other for the rest of the games, as can be seen in Figure 7.3.

Table 7.1: Opening/Strategies labels of the replays (Weber’s and ours are not always corresponding)

Race	Weber’s labels	Our labels	Features	Note (what we fear)
Protoss	FastLegs	speedzeal	Legs, GroundWeapons+1	quick speed+upgrade attack
	FastDT	fast_dt	DarkTemplar	invisible units
	FastObs	nony	Goon, Range	quick long ranged attack
	ReaverDrop	reaver_drop	Reaver, Shuttle	tactical attack zone damages
	Carrier	corsair	Corsair	flying units
	FastExpand	templar	Storm, Templar	powerful zone attack
	Unknown	two_gates	2ndGateway, Gateway, Zealot	aggressive rush
Terran	bio	bio	(no clear label)	aggressive rush
	TwoFactory	two_facto	3rdBarracks, 2ndBarracks, Barracks	strong push (long range)
	VultureHarass	vultures	2ndFactory	aggressive harass, invisible
	SiegeExpand	fast_exp	Mines, Vulture	economical advantage
	Standard		Expansion, Barracks	
	FastDropship	drop	DropShip	tactical attack
	Unknown	unknown	(no clear label)	
Zerg	TwoHatchMuta	fast_mutas	Mutalisk, Gas	early air raid
	ThreeHatchMuta	mutas	3rdHatch, Mutalisk	massive air raid
	HydraRush	hydras	Hydra, HydraSpeed, HydraRange	quick ranged attack
	Standard	(speedlings)	(ZerglingSpeed, Zergling)	(removed, quick attacks/mobility)
	HydraMass			
	Lurker	lurkers	Lurker	invisible and zone damages
	Unknown	unknown	(no clear label)	

Table 7.2: Openings distributions for Terran in all the match-ups

Opening	vs Protoss		vs Terran		vs Zerg	
	Nb	Percentage	Nb	Percentage	Nb	Percentage
bio	62	6.2	25	4.4	197	22.6
fast_exp	438	43.5	377	65.4	392	44.9
two_facto	240	23.8	127	22.0	116	13.3
vultures	122	12.1	3	0.6	3	0.3
drop	52	5.2	10	1.7	121	13.9
unknown	93	9.3	34	5.9	43	5.0

Finally, some replays are labeled two or three times with different labels (due to the different time of effect of different openings), so we apply a filtering to transform multiple label replays into unique label ones (see Figure 7.2). For that we choose the openings labels that were happening the earliest (as they are a closer threat to the bot in a game setup) if and only if they were also the most probable or at 10% of probability of the most probable label (to exclude transition boundaries of clusters) for this replay. We find the earliest by comparing the norms

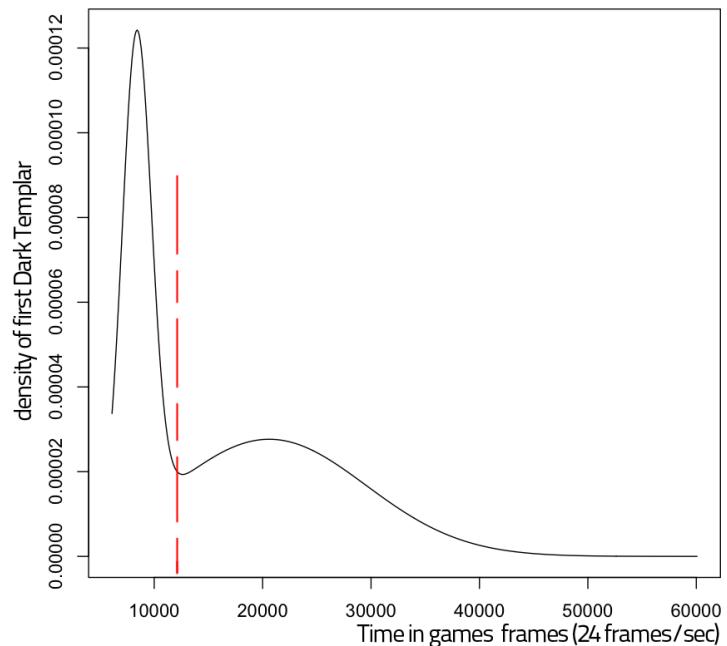


Figure 7.3: Protoss vs Terran distribution of first appearance of Dark Templars (Protoss invisible unit).

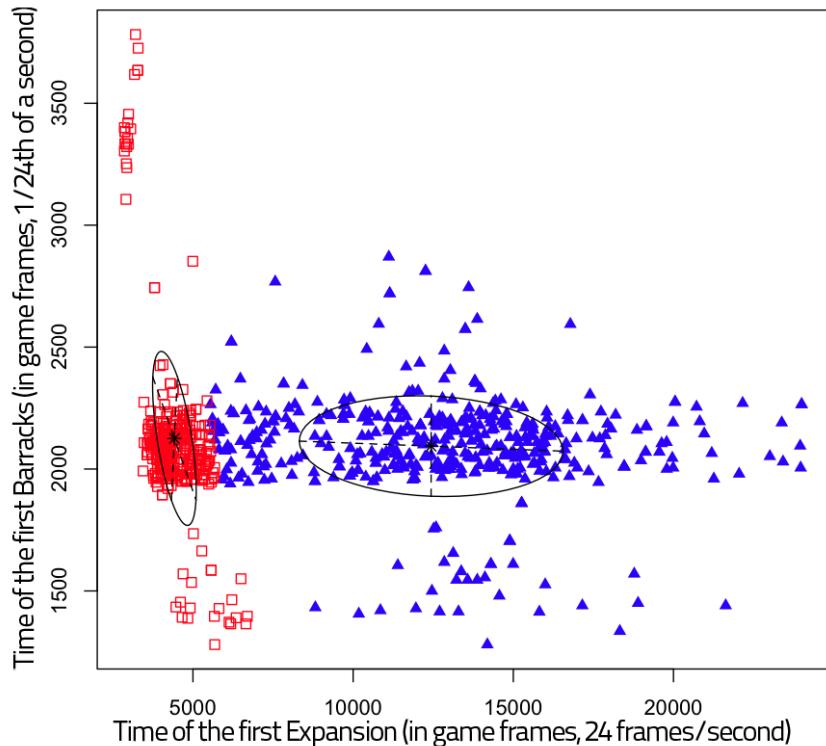


Figure 7.4: Terran vs Zerg Barracks and first Expansion timings (Terran). The bottom left cluster (squares) is the one labeled as *fast\_exp*.

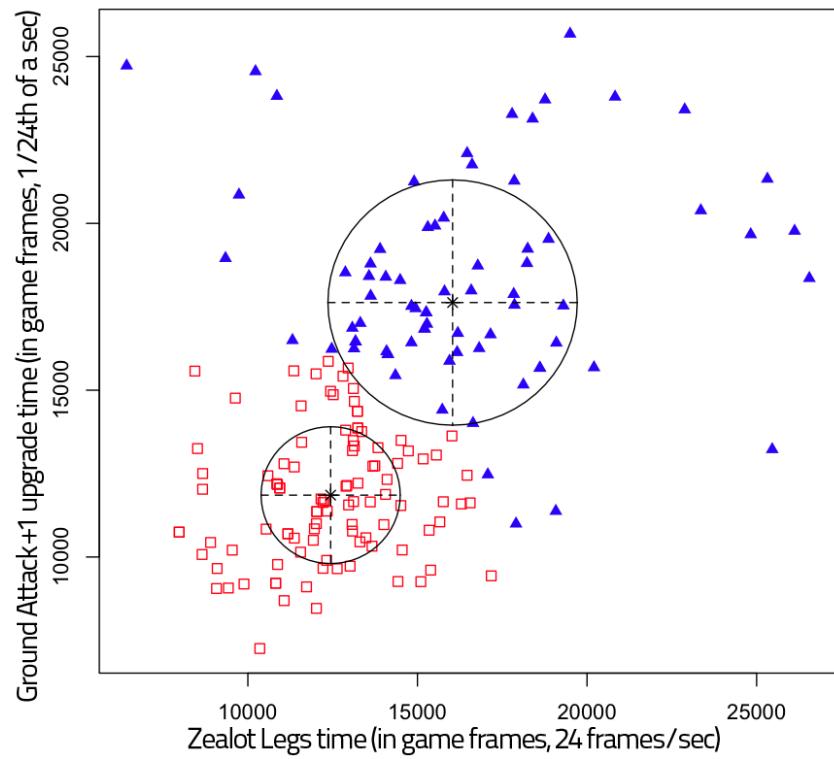


Figure 7.5: Protoss vs Protoss Ground Attack +1 and Zealot Legs upgrades timings. The bottom left cluster (squares) is the one labeled as *speedzeal*.

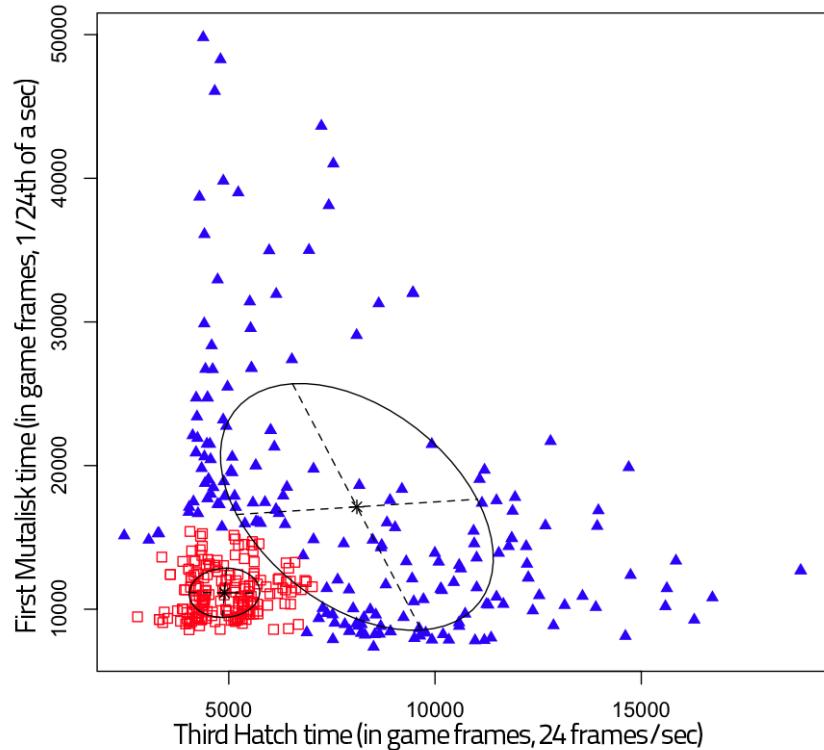


Figure 7.6: Zerg vs Protoss time of the third Hatch and first appearance of Mutalisks. The bottom left cluster (squares) is the one labeled as *mutas*.

of the clusters means in competition. All replays without a label or with multiple labels (*i.e.* which did not have a unique solution in filtering) after the filtering were labeled as *unknown*. We then used this labeled dataset as well as Weber and Mateas' labels in the testing of our Bayesian model for opening prediction.

## Opening Prediction Model

Our predictive model is a Bayesian program, it can be seen as the “Bayesian network” represented in Figure 7.7. It is a generative model and this is of great help to deal with the parts of the observations’ space where we do not have too much data (RTS games tend to diverge from one another as the number of possible actions grow exponentially). Indeed, we can model our uncertainty by putting a large standard deviation on too rare observations and generative models tend to converge with fewer observations than discriminative ones [Ng and Jordan, 2001]. Here is the description of our Bayesian program:

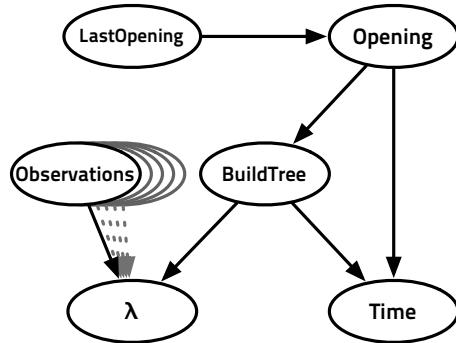


Figure 7.7: Graph representation of the opening (and tech tree) prediction model

## Variables

- $\text{BuildTree} \in [\emptyset, building_1, building_2, building_1 \wedge building_2, techtrees, \dots]$ : all the possible building trees for the given race. For instance  $\{pylon, gate\}$  and  $\{pylon, gate, core\}$  are two different *BuildTrees*.
  - $N$  *Observations*:  $O_{i \in [1 \dots N]} \in \{0, 1\}$ ,  $O_k$  is 1 (*true*) if we have seen (observed) the  $k$ th building (it can have been destroyed, it will stay “seen”).
  - *Opening*:  $Op^t \in [opening_1 \dots opening_M]$  take the various opening values (depending on the race).
  - *LastOpening*:  $Op^{t-1} \in [opening_1 \dots opening_M]$ , Opening value of the previous time step (allows filtering, taking previous inference into account).
  - $\lambda \in \{0, 1\}$ : coherence variable (restraining *BuildTree* to possible values with regard to  $O_{[1 \dots N]}$ )
  - *Time*:  $T \in [1 \dots P]$ , time in the game (1 second resolution).

At first, we generated all the possible (according to the game rules) *BuildTree* values (between  $\approx 500$  and  $1600$  depending on the race). We observed that a lot of possible *BuildTree* values are too absurd to be performed in a competitive match and were never seen during the learning. So, we restricted *BuildTree* to have its value in all the build trees encountered in our replays dataset. There are 810 build trees for Terran, 346 for Protoss and 261 for Zerg ( $\approx 3000$  replays/race), all learned from the (unlabeled) replays.

## Decomposition

The joint distribution of our model is the following:

$$P(T, \text{BuildTree}, O_1 \dots O_N, Op^t, Op^{t-1}, \lambda) \quad (7.1)$$

$$= P(Op^t | Op^{t-1}) \quad (7.2)$$

$$P(Op^{t-1}) \quad (7.3)$$

$$P(\text{BuildTree} | Op^t) \quad (7.4)$$

$$P(O_{[1\dots N]}) \quad (7.5)$$

$$P(\lambda | \text{BuildTree}, O_{[1\dots N]}) \quad (7.6)$$

$$P(T | \text{BuildTree}, Op^t) \quad (7.7)$$

This can also be see as Figure 7.7.

## Forms

- $P(Op^t | Op^{t-1})$  is optional, we use it as a filter so that the previous inference impacts the current one. We use a functional Dirac:

$$\begin{aligned} & P(Op^t | Op^{t-1}) \quad (\text{Dirac}) \\ &= 1 \text{ if } Op^t = Op^{t-1} \\ &= 0 \text{ else} \end{aligned}$$

This does not prevent our model to switch predictions, it just uses previous inference posterior  $P(Op^{t-1})$  to average  $P(Op^t)$ .

- $P(Op^{t-1})$  copied from one inference to another (mutated from  $P(Op^t)$ ). The first  $P(Op^{t-1})$  is bootstrapped with the uniform distribution, we could also use a prior on openings in the given match-up.
- $P(\text{BuildTree} | Op^t)$  is learned from the labeled replays.  $P(\text{BuildTree} | Op^t)$  are  $\text{card}(\{\text{openings}\})$  different histogram over the values of *BuildTree*.
- $P(O_{[1\dots N]})$  is unspecified, we put the uniform distribution.
- $P(\lambda | \text{BuildTree}, O_{[1\dots N]})$  is a functional Dirac that restricts *BuildTree* values to the ones than can co-exist with the observations.

$$\begin{aligned} & P(\lambda = 1 | \text{BuildTree}, O_{[1\dots N]}) \\ &= 1 \text{ if } \text{BuildTree} \text{ can exist with } O_{[1\dots N]} \\ &= 0 \text{ else} \end{aligned}$$

A *BuildTree* value ( $buildTree$ ) is compatible with the observations if it covers them fully. For instance,  $BuildTree = \{pylon, gate, core\}$  is compatible with  $o_{\#core} = 1$  but it is not compatible with  $o_{\#forge} = 1$ . In other words,  $buildTree$  is incompatible with  $o_{[1\dots N]}$  iff  $\{o_{[1\dots N]} \setminus \{o_{[1\dots N]} \wedge buildTree\}\} \neq \emptyset$ .

- $P(T|BuildTree, Op^t)$  are “bell shape” distributions (discretized normal distributions). There is one bell shape per couple (*opening*, *buildTree*). The parameters of these discrete Gaussian distributions are learned from the labeled replays.

### Identification (learning)

The learning of the  $P(BuildTree|Op^t)$  histogram is straight forward counting of occurrences from the labeled replays with “add-one smoothing” (Laplace’s law of succession [Jaynes, 2003]). The learning of the  $P(T|BuildTree, Op^t)$  bell shapes parameters takes into account the uncertainty of the couples (*buildTree*, *opening*) for which we have few observations. Indeed, the normal distribution  $P(T|buildTree, opening)$  begins with a high  $\sigma^2$ , and **not** a Dirac with  $\mu$  on the seen  $T$  value and *sigma* = 0. This accounts for the fact that the first observation may have been an outlier. This learning process is independent on the order of the stream of examples, seeing point A and then B or B and then A in the learning phase produces the same result.

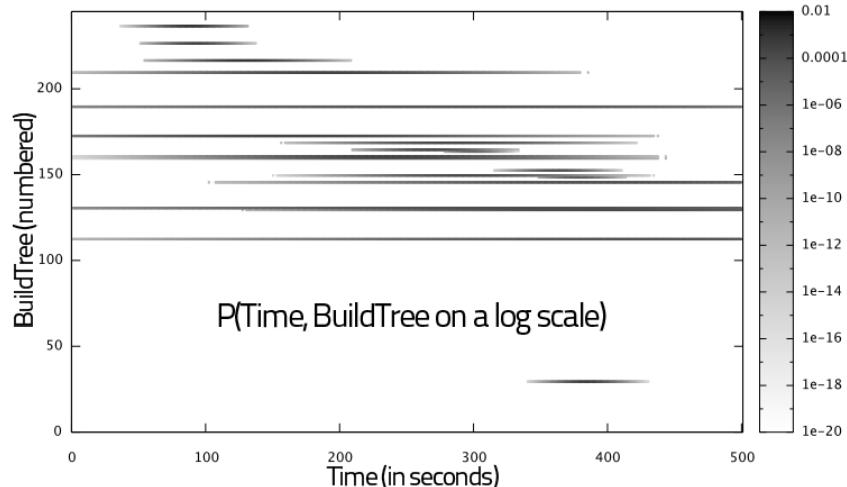


Figure 7.8:  $P(Time, BuildTree|Opening^t = ReaverDrop)$

### Questions

The question that we will ask in all the benchmarks is:

$$P(Op|T = t, O_{[1\dots N]} = o_{[1\dots N]}, \lambda = 1) \quad (7.8)$$

$$\propto P(Op).P(o_{[1\dots N]}) \quad (7.9)$$

$$\times \sum_{BuildTree} P(\lambda|BuildTree, o_{[1\dots N]}) \quad (7.10)$$

$$. P(BuildTree|Op).P(t|BuildTree, Op) \quad (7.11)$$

Note that if we see  $P(BuildTree, Time)$  as a plan, asking  $P(BuildTree|Opening, Time)$  boils down to use our “plan recognition” mode as a planning algorithm, which could provide good

approximations of the optimal goal set [Ramírez and Geffner, 2009]. This gives us a distribution on the build trees to follow (build orders) to achieve a given opening.

To sum-up, the full Bayesian program is:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Bayesian program} \\ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Description} \\ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Specification } (\pi) \\ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Variables} \\ T, \text{BuildTree}, O_1 \dots O_N, Op^t, Op^{t-1}, \lambda \\ \text{Decomposition} \\ P(T, \text{BuildTree}, O_1 \dots O_N, Op^t, Op^{t-1}, \lambda) \\ = P(Op^t | Op^{t-1})P(Op^{t-1})P(\text{BuildTree} | Op^t) \\ P(O_{[1\dots N]})P(\lambda | \text{BuildTree}, O_{[1\dots N]})P(T | \text{BuildTree}, Op^t) \\ \text{Forms} \\ P(Op^t | Op^{t-1}) = \text{functional Dirac (filtering)} \\ P(\text{BuildTree} | Op^t) = \text{Categorical}(\theta) \\ P(\lambda | \text{BuildTree}, O_{[1\dots N]}) = \text{functional Dirac (coherence)} \\ P(T | \text{BuildTree} = bt, Op^t = op) = \text{DiscreteN}(\mu_{bt,op}, \sigma_{bt,op}^2) \\ \text{Identification} \\ P(\text{BuildTree} = bt | Op^t = op) = \theta_{bt,op} = \frac{1 + \text{count}(bt, op)}{\#\text{BuildTree} + \text{count}(op)} \\ (\mu_{bt,op}, \sigma_{bt,op})_{\text{ML}} = \arg \max_{\mu, \sigma} P(T | \text{BuildTree} = bt, Op^t = op; \mu, \sigma) \\ \text{Question} \\ P(Op | T = t, O_{[1\dots N]} = o_{[1\dots N]}, \lambda = 1) \end{array} \right. \end{array} \right. \end{array} \right. \end{array} \right.$$

## Tech Tree Prediction Model

### Results on StarCraft

#### Prediction

For each match-up, we ran cross-validation testing with 9/10th of the dataset used for learning and the remaining 1/10th of the dataset used for testing. We ran tests finishing at 5, 10 and 15 minutes to capture all kinds of openings (early to late ones). To measure the predictive capability of our model, we used 3 metrics:

- the *final* prediction, which is the opening that is predicted at the end of the test,
- the *online twice* (OT), which counts the openings that have emerged as most probable twice a test (so that their predominance is not due to noise),
- the *online once > 3* (OO3), which counts the openings that have emerged as most probable openings after 3 minutes (so that these predictions are based on really meaningful information).

After 3 minutes, a Terran player will have or be building his first supply depot, barracks, refinery (gas), and at least factory or expansion. A Zerg player would have his first overlord, zergling pool, extractor (gas) and most of the time his expansion and lair tech. A Protoss player would

have his first pylon, gateway, assimilator (gas), cybernetics core, and sometimes his robotics center, or forge and expansion.

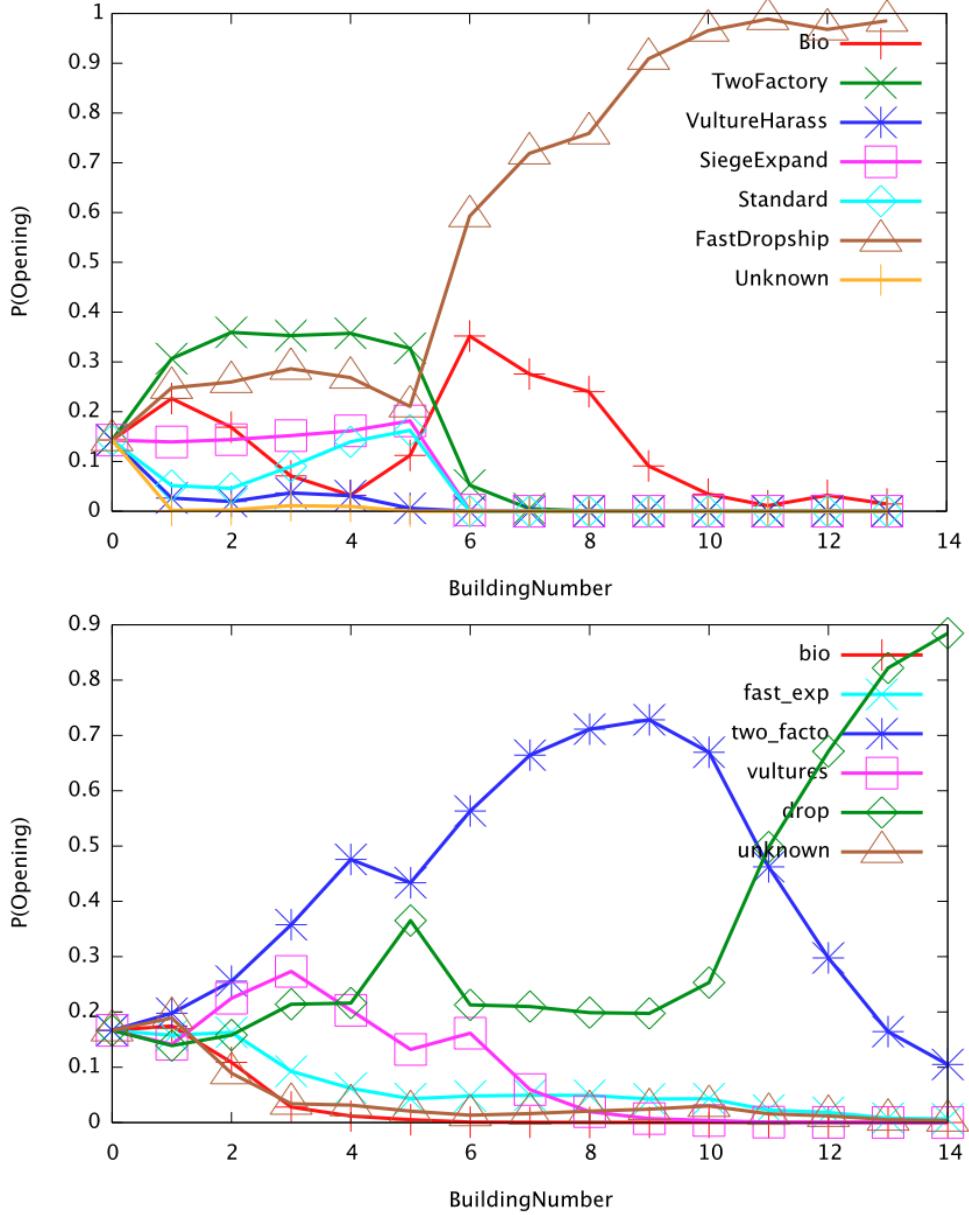


Figure 7.9: Evolution of  $P(\text{Opening})$  with increasing observations in a TvP match-up, with Weber’s labeling on top, our labeling on the bottom. The x-axis corresponds to the construction of buildings.

Table 7.6 sums up all the prediction probabilities (scores) of our model in all the matchups with both labeling of the game logs. Please note that when an opening is mispredicted, the distribution on openings is often not  $P(\text{badopening}) = 1, P(\text{others}) = 0$  and that we can extract some value out of these distributions. Also, we observed that  $P(\text{Opening} = \text{unknown}) > P(\text{others})$  is often a case of misprediction: our bot would use the next prediction in this case. Figure 7.9 shows the evolution of the distribution  $P(\text{Opening})$  during a replay for Weber’s and our labelings. Figure 7.10 shows the resistance of our model to noise. We randomly removed

some observations (buildings, attributes), from 1 to 15, knowing that for Protoss and Terran we use 16 buildings observations and 17 for Zerg. We think that our model copes well with noise because it backtracks unseen observations: for instance if we have only the *core* observation, it will work with build trees containing *core* that will passively infer unseen *pylon* and *gate*. Also, uncertainty is handled natively.

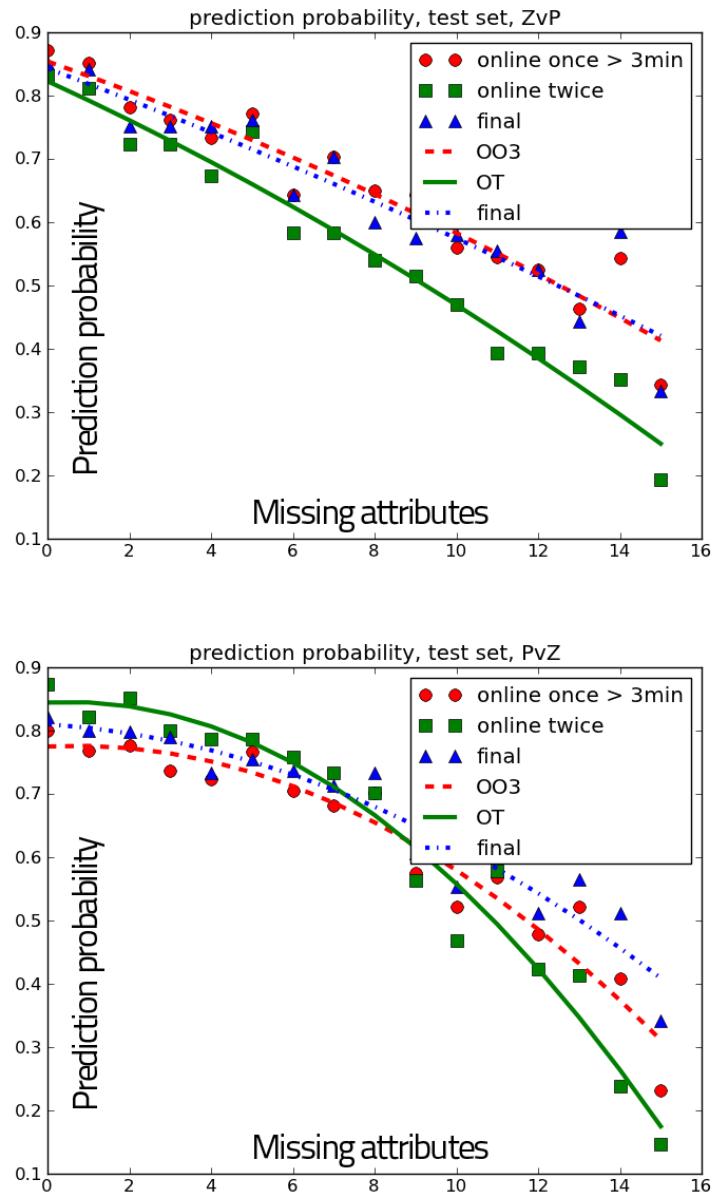


Figure 7.10: Two extreme evolutions of the 3 probabilities of opening recognition with increasing noise (15 missing attributes/observations/buildings correspond to 93.75% missing information for Protoss and Terran openings prediction and 88.23% of missing attributes for Zerg openings prediction). Zerg opening probability on top, Protoss bottom.

## Performances

The first iteration of this model was not making use of the structure imposed by the game in the form of “possible build trees” and was at best very slow, at worst intractable without sampling. With the model presented here, the performances are ready for production as shown in Table 7.4. The memory footprint is around 3.5Mb on a 64bits machine. Learning computation time is linear in the number of games logs events ( $O(N)$  with  $N$  observations), which are bounded, so it is linear in the number of game logs. It can be serialized and done only once when the dataset changes. The prediction computation corresponds to the sum in the question (III.B.5) and so its computational complexity is in  $O(N \cdot M)$  with  $N$  build trees and  $M$  possible observations, as  $M \ll N$ , we can consider it linear in the number of build trees (values of *BuildTree*).

## Openings strengths and weaknesses

### Discussion

#### Possible Uses

Developing beforehand a RTS game AI that specifically deals with whatever strategies the players will come up is very hard. And even if game developers were willing to patch their AI afterwards, it would require a really modular design and a lot of work to treat each strategy. With our model, the AI can adapt to the evolutions in play by learning its parameters from the replay, and it can dynamically adapt during the games by using the reverse question  $P(BuildTree|Opening, Time)$ , or even  $P(TechTree|Opening, Time)$  if we use a *TechTree* variable encoding buildings and technology upgrades. This question would give the distribution over technology trees knowing the opening we want to perform at which time. This would allow for the bot to dynamically choose/change build orders.

We could also use this model in a commentary assistant AI. In the StarCraft and StarCraft 2 communities, there are a lot of pro-gamers\* tournaments that are commented and we could provide a tool for commentators to estimate the probabilities of different openings or technology paths. As in commented poker matches, where the probabilities of different hands are drawn on screen for the spectators, we could display the probabilities of openings. In such a setup we could use more features as the observers and commentators can see everything that happens (upgrades, units) and we limited ourselves to “key” buildings in the work presented in this paper.

### Improvements

First, our prediction model can be upgraded to have a higher recognition rate: we could reason about  $t + 1$  explicitly before computing the distribution over possible openings at  $t$  and thus compute the distribution over technology trees at  $t + 1$ . Perhaps it would increase the results of  $P(Opening|Observations)$ , but it almost surely would increase  $P(BuildTree^{t+1}|Observations)$  which is important for late game predictions. We could also make use of more features as we currently only use at most 20 features (only buildings), and never all at once. Perhaps also that incorporating priors per match-up would lead to better results.

Then, we could feed it with *more* replays during the learning by scrapping more progamers level replays websites. Also, we could learn from replays of bot vs bot matches. For the learning part, the labeling of replays is very important, and our labeling methods can be improved. We

could explore auto-supervised learning [Dangauthier et al., 2005]. Clearly, some match-ups are handled better, either in the replays labeling part and/or in the prediction part. Replays could be labeled by humans and we would do supervised learning then. Or they could be labeled by a combination of rules (as in [Weber and Mateas, 2009]) and statistical analysis (as the method presented here). Finally, the replays could be labeled by match-up dependent openings (instead of race dependent openings currently) and could contain either the two parts of the opening or the game time at which the label is the most relevant, as openings are often bimodal (“fast expand into mutas”, “corsairs into reaver”, etc.).

Finally, a hard problem is detecting the “fake” builds of very highly skilled players. Indeed, some progamers have build orders which purpose are to fool the opponent into thinking that they are performing opening A while they are doing B. For instance, they could leadthe opponent to think they are going to *tech* and perform an early rush instead. We think that this can be handled by our model by changing  $P(Opening|LastOpening)$  by  $P(Opening|LastOpening, LastObservations)$  and adapting the influence of the last prediction with regard to the last observations (i.e., we think we can learn some “fake” label on replays).

## 7.4 Adaptation

### Army Adaptation Model

We downloaded more than 9000 replays to keep 7708 uncorrupted, 1v1 replays of very high level StarCraft games (pro-gamers leagues and international tournaments) from specialized websites<sup>2</sup>. Then, we ran them using BWAPI<sup>3</sup> and dumped units positions, pathfinding and regions, resources, orders, vision events, and for attacks (we trigger a robust attack tracking heuristic when a unit dies and there are at least two military units around): types, positions, units engaged on each side, and outcomes. Basically, every BWAPI event was recorded, the dataset, its source code, and this model implementation are freely available<sup>4</sup>.

In this model, we assume that we have some incomplete knowledge of the opponent’s tech tree and a quite complete knowledge of his army composition. We want to know what units we should build now, to adapt our army to their, while staying coherent with our own tech tree and tactics constraints. To that end, we reduce armies to clusters (or mixtures of clusters) that could have generated a given composition. In this lower dimension (usually between 5 to 15 mixture components), we can reason on which mixture of clusters the opponent is probably going to have, according to his current mixture and his tech tree. As we learned how to pair compositions strengths and weaknesses, we can adapt to this “future mixture”. This Bayesian program can be seen as the Bayesian network represented in Figure 7.11.

### Variables

- $TT^t, ETT^t$  are two *TechTree* variables, one for us ( $TT$ ) and one for the enemy ( $ETT$ ), at time  $t$ .  $TechTree \in \{\emptyset, \{building_1\}, \{building_2\}, \{building_1 \wedge building_2\}, \dots\}$ : all the possible building trees for the given race (strictly speaking, we here only use build trees).

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.teamliquid.net>, <http://www.gosugamers.net>, <http://www.iccup.com>

<sup>3</sup><http://code.google.com/p/bwapi/>

<sup>4</sup><http://snippyhollow.github.com/bwrepdump/>

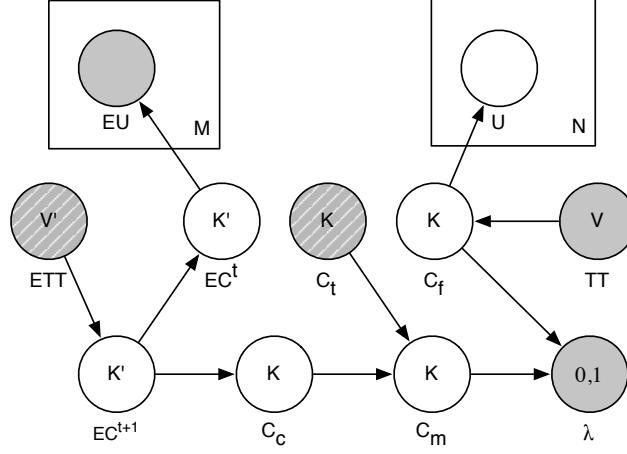


Figure 7.11: Graphical (plate notation) representation of the army composition Bayesian model, gray variables are known while gray hatched variables are given by distributions on their values.  $C_t$  can also be known (if a decision was taken on a subsequent model).

For instance  $\{pylon, gate\}$  and  $\{pylon, gate, core\}$  are two different *TechTrees*.  $TT$  has  $V$  possible values and  $ETT$  has  $V'$  possible values (depending on the faction).

- $C_{t,c,m,f}^{t+1}, EC^{t,t+1} \in \{clusters\}$  (see further), our army cluster ( $C$ ), both wanted ( $C_t$  for *tactics*,  $C_c$  for *counter*,  $C_m$  for *merge*) and decided ( $C_f$  for *final*) at  $t + 1$ , and the enemy's cluster ( $EC$ ) estimated at  $t$  from their units that we saw, and estimated at  $t + 1$  from their (estimated distribution on) tech trees and previous  $EC^t$ .  $C_t, C_c, C_m, C_f$  have  $K$  values ( $K$  units clusters for us) and  $EC^t, EC^{t+1}$  have  $K'$  values.  $C_t$  is a distribution of the clusters we want for tactics (another model) or just a value (for instance we just need a *dropship/shuttle*).  $C_c$  is the counter to what we infer the enemy army will be ( $EC^{t+1}$ ).  $C_m$  merge our tactics desiderata with our adaptivity, while  $C_f$  take the tech tree constraints into account. This can seem tedious but these variables are all to be seen as different states of the two variables  $C$  and  $EC$ , representing army compositions, respectively for us and for the enemy.
- $U_{1:N}^{t+1}, EU_{1:M}^t \in [0 \dots 1]$ , our  $N$  unit types ( $U$ ) proportions (indice on type) at time  $t + 1$ , and the  $M$  enemy units types ( $EU$ ) at time  $t$ . For instance, an army with equal numbers of *zealots* and *dragoons* (and nothing else) is represented as  $\{U_{zealot} = 0.5, U_{dragoon} = 0.5, \forall u \neq zealot|dragoon U_{ut} = 0.0\}$ .
- $\lambda \in \{0, 1\}$  is a coherence variable unifying  $C_m^{t+1}$  and  $C_f^{t+1}$  to possible values with regard to  $TT^t$ .

For tech trees ( $TT$  and  $ETT$ ) values, it would be absurd to generate all the possible combinations (for instance no player is going to build four barracks before building the first supply depot), we used all the values that were encountered in our games (replays) dataset. The bases of these trees were buildings, with some types being counted for repetition, for instance a tech tree of  $\{pylon, gateway\}$  is not the same as  $\{pylon, gateway, gateway\}$ : we effectively count the gateway twice. This way, we counted 273 probable tech tree values for Protoss, 211 for Zerg, and

517 for Terran (the ordering of add-on buildings is multiplying tech trees for Terran). Should it happen, we can deal with unseen tech tree either by using the closest one (in set distance) or using an additional value of no knowledge.

## Decomposition

The joint distribution of our model is the following:

$$P(TT^t, C_t^{t+1}, C_c^{t+1}, C_m^{t+1}, C_f^{t+1}, \dots) \quad (7.12)$$

$$EU_{1:M}^t, EC^t, EC^{t+1}, U_{1:N}^{t+1}, EU_{1:M}^t) \quad (7.13)$$

$$= P(EU_{1:M}^t | EC^t) P(EC^t | EC^{t+1}) \quad (7.14)$$

$$\times P(EC^{t+1} | ETT^t) P(ETT^t) \quad (7.15)$$

$$\times P(C_c^{t+1} | EC^{t+1}) P(C_t^{t+1}) P(TT^t) P(C_f^{t+1} | TT^t) \quad (7.16)$$

$$\times P(\lambda | C_f^{t+1}, C_m^{t+1}) P(C_m^{t+1} | C_t^{t+1}, C_c^{t+1}) \quad (7.17)$$

$$\times P(U_{1:N}^{t+1} | C_f^{t+1}) \quad (7.18)$$

This can also be seen as Figure 7.11.

## Forms

- Both  $P(U_{1:N}^{t+1} | C_f^{t+1})$  and  $P(EU_{1:M}^t | EC^t)$  are results of the clustering of armies compositions ( $U_{1:N}$ ,  $EU_{1:M}$ ) into  $EC$  and  $C$ , and so depend from the clustering model. They are both learned from the data through expectation maximization. In the best model that we tried, they come from a Gaussian mixtures model (GMM) and so are from  $\mathcal{N}(\mu_{z_i}, \sigma_{z_i}^2)$  with  $z_i \sim \text{Categorical}(K)$ , respectively  $\text{Categorical}(K')$  ?.
- $P(EC^t | EC^{t+1})$  is a probability table of dimensions  $K' \times K'$  resulting of the temporal dynamic between clusters, that is learned from the dataset with a Laplace succession law (“add one” smoothing) Jaynes [2003].
- $P(ETT^t)$  is a categorical distribution on  $V'$  values, i.e. an histogram distribution on the enemy’s tech trees. It comes from the strategy prediction model explained in Synnaeve and Bessière [2011]. For us,  $TT \sim \text{Categorical}(V)$  too, and we know our own tech tree ( $TT$ ) exactly.
- $P(EC^{t+1} | ETT^t)$  is a probability table of dimensions  $K' \times V'$  resulting of the inter-dependency between some tech trees and clusters/mixtures. It is learned from the dataset with a Laplace succession law.
- $P(C_c^{t+1} | EC^{t+1})$  is a probability table of dimensions  $K \times K'$ , which is learned from battles with a Laplace succession law on victories:  $P(c_c | ec) = \frac{n_{victories}(c_c, ec) + 1}{n_{battles}(c_c, ec) + K}$ .
- $P(C_t^{t+1})$  is a  $\text{Categorical}(K)$  (histogram on the  $K$  clusters values) coming from a tactical sub-model. Note that it can be degenerate:  $P(C_t^{t+1} = \text{shuttle}) = 1.0$ , it serves the purpose of merging tactical needs with strategic ones.

- $P(C_f^{t+1}|TT)$  is either a table, as for  $P(EC^{t+1}|ETT^t)$ , or a functional Dirac distribution which tells which  $C_f$  values ( $c_f$ ) are compatible with the current tech tree  $TT = tt$ . It is compatible if this tech tree ( $tt$ ) allows for building all units present in  $c_m$ . For instance,  $tt = \{pylon, gate, core\}$  is compatible with a  $c_m = \{\mu_{U_{zealot}} = 0.5, \mu_{U_{dragoon}} = 0.5, \forall ut \neq zealot|dragoon \mu_{U_{ut}} = 0.0\}$ , but it is not compatible with  $c'_m = \{\mu_{U_{arbiter}} = 0.1, \dots\}$ .
- $P(\lambda|C_f^{t+1}, C_m^{t+1})$  is a functional Dirac that restricts  $C_m$  values to the ones that can co-exist with our tech tree ( $C_f$ ).

$$\begin{aligned} & P(\lambda = 1|C_f, c_m) \\ &= 1 \text{ if } P(C_f = c_m) \neq 0 \\ &= 0 \text{ else} \end{aligned}$$

This can be (and was) simply implemented as a function. This is not strictly necessary (as one could have  $P(C_f|TT, C_m)$  which would do the same for  $P(C_f) = 0.0$ ) but it allows us to have the same table form for  $P(C_f|TT)$  than for  $P(EC|ETT)$ , should we wish to use the learned co-occurrences tables (with respect to the good race).

### Identification (learning)

The first approach to clustering units was a simple fusion  $P(U_{1:N}, C) \propto \prod_i P(U_i|C)$  with rectangular  $P(U_i|C)$  distributions above thresholds for basic and special (casters) units, and their compositions. So we fixed  $\approx 8 + 4 + 4 * 8 = 44$  clusters (for each race) and set their parameters. The problem with this approach is that it requires a high game strategy expertise and understanding of the multiple influences of parameters, while it cannot take into account singular combinations of 3 (or more) unit types. We alternatively learned Gaussian mixture models (GMM) with the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm on 5 to 15 mixtures with spherical, tied, diagonal and full co-variance matrices Pedregosa et al. [2011]. We kept the best scoring models according to the Bayesian information criterion Schwarz [1978]:  $-2 \ln \max Likelihood + k \ln(n)$ , with  $k$  the number of parameters and  $n$  the number of observations.

For the categorical probability tables, we used Laplace rule of succession (“add-one smoothing”) Jaynes [2003]:  $P(A = a|B = b) = \frac{n(a,b)+1}{n(a,b)+n(\neg a,b)+|A|}$ .

### Questions

The question that we ask to know which units to produce is:

$$P(U_{1:N}^{t+1}|eu_{1:M}^t, tt^t, \lambda = 1) \quad (7.19)$$

$$\propto \sum_{ETT^t, EC^t, EC^{t+1}} [P(EC^{t+1}|ETT^t)P(ETT^t)] \quad (7.20)$$

$$\times P(eu_{1:M}^t|EC^t) \quad (7.21)$$

$$\times \sum_{C_f^{t+1}, C_m^{t+1}, C_c^{t+1}, C_t^{t+1}} [P(C_c^{t+1}|EC^{t+1})] \quad (7.22)$$

$$\times P(C_t^{t+1})P(C_f^{t+1}|tt^t) \quad (7.23)$$

$$\times P(\lambda|C_f^{t+1}, C_m^{t+1}) \quad (7.24)$$

$$\times P(U_{1:N}^{t+1}|C_f^{t+1}))]] \quad (7.25)$$

or we can sample  $U_{1:N}^{t+1}$  from  $P(C_f^{t+1})$  or even from  $c_f^{t+1}$  (a realization of  $C_f^{t=1}$ ) if we ask  $P(C_f^{t+1}|eu_{1:M}^t, tt^t, \lambda = 1)$ . Note that here we do not know fully neither the value of  $ETT$  nor of  $C_t$  so we take the most information that we have into account. The evaluation of the question is proportional to  $|ETT| \times |EC|^2 \times |C|^4 = V' \times K'^2 \times K^4$ . But we do not have to sum on the 4 types of  $C$  in practice:  $P(C_m|C_t, C_c)$  is a simple linear combination of vectors and  $P(\lambda = 1|C_f, C_m)$  is a linear filter function, so we just have to sum on  $C_c$  and practical complexity is proportional to  $V' \times K'^2 \times K$ . As we have most often  $\approx 10$  Gaussian components in our GMM,  $K$  or  $K'$  are in the order of 10 (5 to 12 in practice), while  $V$  and  $V'$  are between 211 and 517 as noted above.

To benchmark our clustering, we use a slightly different model in which  $P(EC^{t+1}) = P(EC^t)$  (we want to know which army counters the other in a given battle). The question that we will ask is  $P(C_c^{t+1}|eu_{1:M}^t)$ .

All the results presented in this section represent the nine match-ups (races combinations) in 1 versus 1 (duel) of StarCraft. We worked with a data-set of 7708 replays of highly skilled human players. For each match-up, we set aside 100 test matches, and use the remaining of the dataset for learning. Performance wise, for the biggest dataset (PvT) the learning part takes around 100 second on a 2.8 Ghz Core 2 Duo CPU (and it is easily serializable) for 2408 games (57 seconds to fit and select the GMM, and 42 seconds to fill the probability tables). We preferred robustness to precision and thus we did not remove outliers: better scores can easily be achieved by considering only stereotypical armies/battles, or more amateur players (which styles are less pronounced).

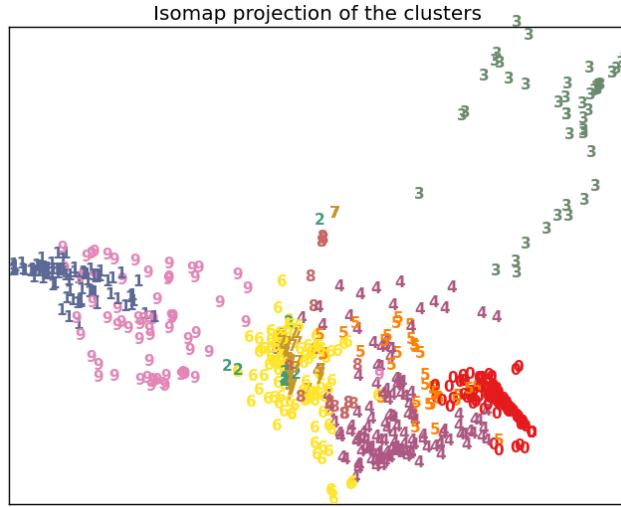


Figure 7.12: 2 dimensional Isomap projection of a small dataset of battles for Zerg (vs Protoss) with most probable Gaussian mixture model components as labels.

To benchmark our clustering methods (home-made, K-means, GMM), we reduced battle observations to clusters for both parties and used the learned  $P(C_c|EC)$  to estimate the outcome of the battle. For that, we used battles with *disparities* (the maximum strength ratio of one army over the other) of 1.1 to 1.5. There is an average of 5 battles per game at a 1.3 disparity threshold (more above). A summary of the main metrics is shown in Table 7.6: we can see that predicting battle outcomes (even with a high disparity) with “just probabilities” of  $P(C_c|EC)$  (without

taking the forces into account) gives relevant results. Note that this is a very high level (abstract) view of a battle, we do not consider tactical positions, nor players' attention, actions, etc. We can somehow view the "just prob." results as the military efficiency improvement we can (at least) expect from having the right army composition. Also, without explicitly labeling clusters, one can apply thresholding to special units (observers, arbiters, science vessels...) to generate more specific clusters: we did not include these results here but they sometimes drastically increase prediction scores.

We also plotted the generated clusters in all kind of way, Figure 7.4 shows a 2D Isomap projection of the battles on a small dataset. Figure 7.13 simply lays out the concept of *army composition* and expert gamers recognized the clusters clearly identified by the clustering (GMM). Figure 7.14 showcases the dynamics of clusters components:  $P(EC^t|EC^{t+1}$ , for Zerg (vs Protoss) for  $\Delta t$  of 2 minutes. As shown in Figure ??, this model is part of the strategy module of our next AIIDE competition bot.

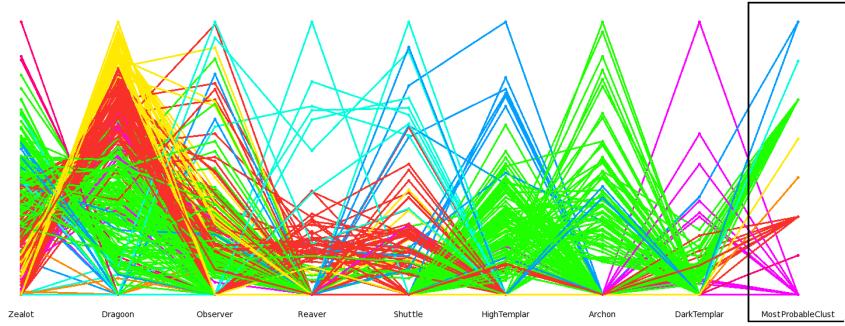


Figure 7.13: Parallel plot of a small dataset of Protoss (vs Protoss, i.e. in the PvP match-up) army clusters on most important unit types (for the match-up). Each normalized vertical axis represents the percentage of the units of the given unit type in the army composition (we didn't remove outliers, so most top (tip) vertices represent 100%), except for the rightmost (framed) which links to the most probable GMM component. Note that several traces can (and do) go through the same edge.

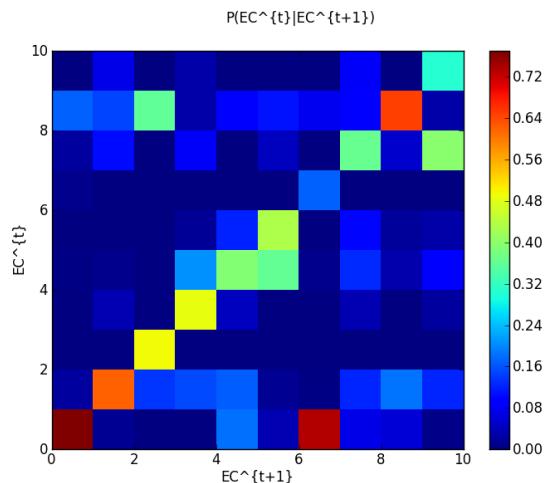


Figure 7.14: Dynamics of clusters:  $P(EC^t|EC^{t+1})$  for Zerg

Here, we focused on asking  $P(U_{1:N}^{t+1}|eu1 : M^t, tt^t, \lambda = 1)$ , and evaluated (in the absence of ground truth for full armies compositions) the two key components that are  $P(U_{1:N}|C)$  (or  $P(EC_{1:M}|EC)$ ) and  $P(C_c|EC)$ . Many other questions can be asked:  $P(TT^t|eu_{1:M}^t)$  can help us adapt our tech tree development to the opponent’s army. If we know the opponent’s army composition only partially, we can benefit of knowledge about *ETT* to know what is possible, but also probable, by asking  $P(EC^t|Observations)$ .

We presented a probabilistic model inferring the best army composition given what was previously seen (from replays, or previous games), integrating adaptation to the opponent with other constraints (tactics). One of the main advantages of this approach is to be able to deal natively with incomplete information, due to player’s intentions, and to the fog of war in RTS. The army composition dimensionality reduction (clustering: unsupervised) can be applied to any game and coupled with other techniques, for instance for situation assessment in case-based planning. The results in battle outcome prediction (from few information) shows its situation assessment potential. Finally, we will use this model in our StarCraft AI competition entry bot as it facilitates adaptive decision-making on the production plan. The main research direction is now to find a way to evaluate the full model integrated to a bot, both for performance of the bot and for the fun of a human player.

## Results on StarCraft

*However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.* Winston Churchill

## Discussion

### 7.5 Discussion

Table 7.3: Prediction probabilities for all the match-ups

match-up	Weber and Mateas' labels									Our labels								
	5 minutes			10 minutes			15 minutes			5 minutes			10 minutes			15 minutes		
	final	OT	OO3	final	OT	OO3	final	OT	OO3	final	OT	OO3	final	OT	OO3	final	OT	OO3
PvP	0.65	0.53	0.59	0.69	0.69	0.71	0.65	0.67	0.73	0.78	0.74	0.68	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.85	0.83	0.83
PvT	0.75	0.64	0.71	0.78	0.86	0.83	0.81	0.88	0.84	0.62	0.69	0.69	0.62	0.73	0.72	0.6	0.79	0.76
PvZ	0.73	0.71	0.66	0.8	0.86	0.8	0.82	0.87	0.8	0.61	0.6	0.62	0.66	0.66	0.69	0.61	0.62	0.62
TvP	0.69	0.63	0.76	0.6	0.75	0.77	0.55	0.73	0.75	0.50	0.47	0.54	0.5	0.6	0.69	0.42	0.62	0.65
TvT	0.57	0.55	0.65	0.5	0.55	0.62	0.4	0.52	0.58	0.72	0.75	0.77	0.68	0.89	0.84	0.7	0.88	0.8
TvZ	0.84	0.82	0.81	0.88	0.91	0.93	0.89	0.91	0.93	0.71	0.78	0.77	0.72	0.88	0.86	0.68	0.82	0.81
ZvP	0.63	0.59	0.64	0.87	0.82	0.89	0.85	0.83	0.87	0.39	0.56	0.52	0.35	0.6	0.57	0.41	0.61	0.62
ZvT	0.59	0.51	0.59	0.68	0.69	0.72	0.57	0.68	0.7	0.54	0.63	0.61	0.52	0.67	0.62	0.55	0.73	0.66
ZvZ	0.69	0.64	0.67	0.73	0.74	0.77	0.7	0.73	0.73	0.83	0.85	0.85	0.81	0.89	0.94	0.81	0.88	0.94
overall	0.68	0.62	0.68	0.73	0.76	0.78	0.69	0.76	0.77	0.63	0.67	0.67	0.63	0.75	0.75	0.63	0.75	0.74

Table 7.4: Extremes of computation time values (in seconds, Core 2 Duo 2.8Ghz)

Race	Nb Games	Learning time	Inference $\mu$	Inference $\sigma^2$
T (max)	1036	0.197844	0.0360234	0.00892601
T (Terran)	567	0.110019	0.030129	0.00738386
P (Protoss)	1021	0.13513	0.0164457	0.00370478
P (Protoss)	542	0.056275	0.00940027	0.00188217
Z (Zerg)	1028	0.143851	0.0150968	0.00334057
Z (Zerg)	896	0.089014	0.00796715	0.00123551

Zerg   Protoss	two gates	fast dt	reaver drop	corsair	nomy
speedlings	0.417	0.75	NED	NED	0.5
lurkers	NED	0.493	NED	0.445	0.533
fast mutas	NED	0.506	0.5	0.526	0.532

Terran   Protoss	fast dt	reaver drop	corsair	nomy
two facto	0.552	0.477	NED	0.578
rax fe	0.579	0.478	0.364	0.584

Table 7.5: Opening/Strategies labels counted for victories against each others for the PvZ (top, on 1408 games) and PvT (bottom, on 1657 games) match-ups. NED stands for Not Enough Data to conclude a preference/discrepancy towards one opening. The results should be read as win rates of columns openings vs lines openings.

Table 7.6: Summary of the clustering evaluation (for GMM), main metrics

forces disparity	scores in %	PvP		PvT		PvZ		TvT		TvZ		ZvZ	
		m	ws										
1.1	heuristic	<b>63</b>	63	58	58	58	58	<b>65</b>	<b>65</b>	70	70	56	56
	<b>just prob.</b>	54	58	68	72	60	61	55	56	69	69	62	63
	prob×heuristic	61	<b>63</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>61</b>	62	64	<b>70</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>69</b>
1.3	heuristic	<b>73</b>	73	66	66	<b>69</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>75</b>	72	72	<b>72</b>	70	70
	<b>just prob.</b>	56	57	65	66	54	55	56	57	62	61	63	61
	prob×heuristic	72	<b>73</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	66	66	71	<b>72</b>	<b>72</b>	70	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>
1.5	heuristic	75	75	73	73	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>	78	<b>80</b>	<b>76</b>	76	75	75
	<b>just prob.</b>	52	55	61	61	54	54	55	56	61	63	56	60
	prob×heuristic	<b>75</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>75</b>	72	72	<b>78</b>	78	73	<b>76</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>80</b>

Table 7.7: Winner prediction scores (in %) for 3 main metrics. For the left columns (“m”), we considered only military units. For the right columns (“ws”) we also considered static defense and workers. The “heuristic” metric is a baseline heuristic for battle winner prediction for comparison using army values, while “just prob.” only considers  $P(C_c|EC)$  to predict the winner, and “prob×heuristic” balances the heuristic’s predictions with  $\sum_{C_c, EC} P(C_c|EC)P(EC)$ .



# Chapter 8

## BroodwarBotQ

*Dealing with failure is easy: Work hard to improve. Success is also easy to handle: You've solved the wrong problem. Work hard to improve.*

Alan J. Perlis (1982)

In this chapter, we present some of the engineering that went in the robotic player's (bot) implementation. We will also present the different flows of informations and how decisions are made during a game. Finally we will present the results of the full robotic player to various bots competitions.

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### 8.1 Code Architecture

mapping schéma code <-> schéma info-flow.

### 8.2 A Game Walkthrough

The tree of decisions.

### 8.3 Results

AIIDE 2010,2011, Ladder.

#	Bot	Race	ELO rating	Total games	Wins	Losses	Draws	Crashes	Wins w/o crashed games	Losses w/o crashed games	BWAPI rev	Description	Status
1	Skynet_v2_0_1	β	2156	1493	1300 (87.07%)	189	4	0 (0%)	1175 (85.89%)	189	4025	-	enabled
2	UAlbertaBot_bwapi_4025	β	2130	153	135 (88.24%)	17	1	1 (0.65%)	129 (88.36%)	16	4025	-	enabled
3	UAlbertaBot_aiide_2011	β	2105	1890	1434 (75.87%)	404	52	109 (5.77%)	1402 (80.16%)	295	3769	-	disabledNewerVersion
4	Skynet_aiide_2011	β	2005	844	690 (81.75%)	132	22	20 (2.37%)	603 (81.82%)	112	3769	-	disabledNewerVersion
5	Aiur_bwapi_4000	β	1944	1389	939 (67.6%)	409	41	9 (0.65%)	886 (66.77%)	400	4025	-	enabled
6	Aiur_aiide_2011	β	1931	1912	1337 (69.93%)	512	63	11 (0.58%)	1242 (68.77%)	501	3769	-	enabled
7	ItayUndermind_aiide_2011	¶	1895	1742	1056 (60.62%)	671	15	0 (0%)	968 (58.52%)	671	3769	-	enabled
8	krasi0_2_15	τ	1881	873	588 (67.35%)	272	13	0 (0%)	502 (63.79%)	272	4025	-	enabled
9	Machine_0_11	β	1863	990	646 (65.25%)	306	38	36 (3.64%)	605 (66.27%)	270	4025	-	enabled
10	krasi0_2_14	τ	1841	831	589 (70.88%)	214	28	1 (0.12%)	483 (66.71%)	213	4025	-	disabledNewerVersion
11	Overmind_aiide_2010	¶	1796	1295	872 (67.34%)	386	37	1 (0.08%)	839 (66.53%)	385	2423	-	enabled
12	BroodwarBotQ_bwapi_4000	β	1777	1569	790 (50.35%)	639	140	31 (1.98%)	726 (49.25%)	608	4025	-	enabled
13	Machine_0_1	β	1767	90	58 (64.44%)	31	1	6 (6.67%)	55 (67.9%)	25	4025	-	disabledNewerVersion
14	EISBot_aiide_2011	β	1745	1774	960 (54.11%)	750	64	0 (0%)	907 (52.7%)	750	3769	-	enabled
15	Undermind_aiide_2011	τ	1705	1605	826 (51.46%)	633	146	0 (0%)	685 (46.79%)	633	3769	-	enabled
16	SPAR_aiide_2011	β	1602	1780	731 (41.07%)	1003	46	397 (22.3%)	687 (51.31%)	606	3769	-	enabled
17	Nova_aiide_2011	τ	1599	1840	705 (38.32%)	1029	106	101 (5.49%)	658 (38.89%)	928	3769	-	enabled
18	BroodwarBotQ_aiide_2011	β	1528	1475	484 (32.81%)	811	180	11 (0.75%)	445 (31.23%)	800	3769	-	disabledNewerVersion
19	BTHAI_Zerg_2_7	¶	1424	117	25 (21.37%)	90	2	2 (1.71%)	25 (21.74%)	88	4025	-	disabledTemporarily
20	Dreadbot_bwapi_4000	β	1338	1359	391 (28.77%)	921	47	230 (16.92%)	316 (29.98%)	691	4025	-	enabled
21	Cromulent_aiide_2011	τ	1331	1887	480 (25.44%)	1311	96	14 (0.74%)	441 (24.05%)	1297	3769	-	enabled
22	Nevermind_2011_sscai	¶	1278	108	21 (19.44%)	85	2	0 (0%)	16 (15.53%)	85	4025	-	disabledTemporarily
23	BTHAI_aiide_2011	¶	1235	1092	251 (22.99%)	805	36	178 (16.3%)	197 (22.91%)	627	3769	-	disabledNewerVersion
24	BTHAI_ProtoSS_aiide_2011	β	1223	104	13 (12.5%)	88	3	19 (18.27%)	5 (4.69%)	69	3769	-	disabledNewerVersion
25	bigbrother_aiide_2011	¶	1173	1975	416 (21.06%)	1467	92	156 (7.9%)	299 (17.57%)	1311	3769	-	enabled
26	BTHAI_Terran_aiide_2011	τ	1141	93	9 (9.68%)	82	2	17 (18.28%)	6 (8.22%)	65	3769	-	disabledNewerVersion
27	BTHAI_Terran_2_7	τ	1117	802	158 (19.7%)	631	13	114 (14.21%)	120 (18.46%)	517	4025	-	enabled
28	BTHAI_ProtoSS_2_7	β	1059	835	143 (17.13%)	679	13	9 (1.08%)	90 (11.64%)	670	4025	-	enabled
29	Quorum_aiide_2011	τ	886	1851	139 (7.51%)	1619	93	116 (6.27%)	85 (5.06%)	1503	3769	-	enabled

Figure 8.1: Bots ladder on February 12th, 2012. With BROODWARBOTQ using a Bayesian model for opponent's strategy prediction as well as for micro-management\*.

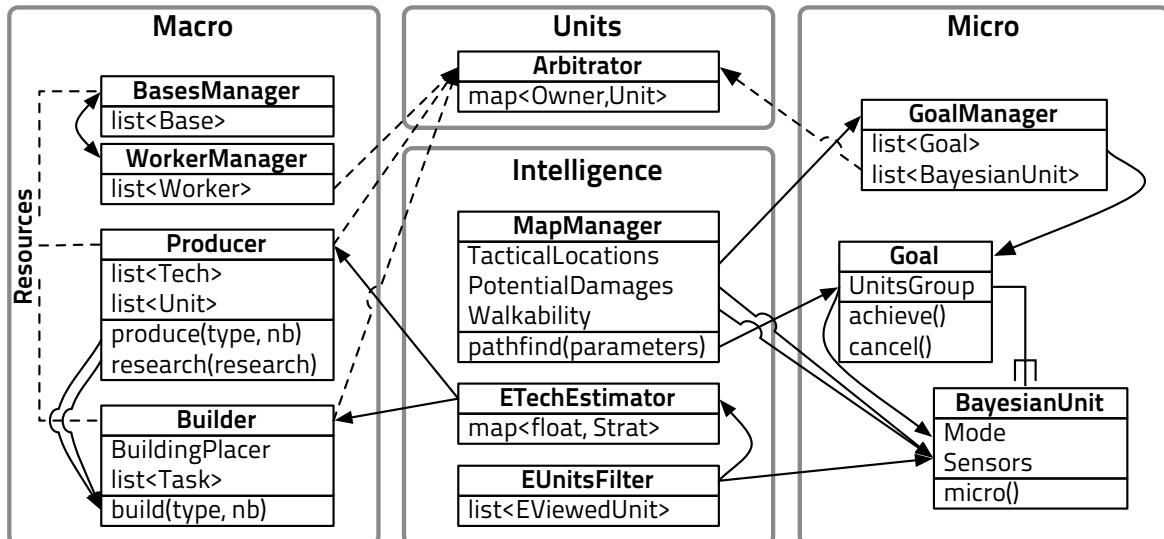


Figure 8.2: Simple view of the code architecture of BROODWARBOTQ, the most important interactions are shown: every piece which has responsibility for the control of units refer to the Arbitrator, all macro components compete for resources, all other arrows represent orders or information

# Chapter 9

## Conclusion

*Man's last mind paused before fusion, looking over a space that included nothing but the dregs of one last dark star and nothing besides but incredibly thin matter, agitated randomly by the tag ends of heat wearing out, asymptotically, to the absolute zero.*

*Man said, "AC, is this the end? Can this chaos not be reversed into the Universe once more? Can that not be done?"*

*AC said, "THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."*

Isaac Asimov (*The Last Question*, 1956)

## I NTRO

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### 9.1 Perspectives

#### Micro

Reinforcement learning, [Marthi et al., 2005]

Evolving control policies, [Miles et al., 2007]

#### Tactics

Two important research directions for tactics would be:

- Tactical assault generation, so that we do not have to hard-code the tactical goals behaviors. Previous works, which would be compatible with StarCraft, in this direction include [Chung et al., 2005, Ponsen et al., 2006, Balla and Fern, 2009].

- Improve tactical state estimation, so that both our tactical decision-making and tactical prediction benefit it. A first step would be to use a (dynamic) filtering on enemy units, either with a particle filter [Thrun, 2002, Weber et al., 2011] or with hidden semi-Markov models [Hladky and Bulitko, 2008]. We propose here a simple units filtering model based on the decomposition of the map in regions.

## Enemy Units Filtering

We consider a simple model, without speed nor steering nor *See* variable for each position/unit. The fact that we see positions where the enemy units are is taken into account during the update. The idea is to have (learn) a multiple influences transition matrix on a Markov chain on top the regions discretization (see chapter 6), which can be seen as one Markov chain for each combination of motion-influencing factors.

The **perception** of such a model would be for each unit if it is in a given region, as the bottom diagram in Figure B.5. From there, we can consider either map-dependent regions, regions uniquely identified as they are in given maps that is; or we can consider regions labeled by their utility. We prefer (and will explain) this second approach as it allows our model to be applied on unknown (never seen) maps directly and allows us to incorporate more training data. The regions get a number in the order in which they appear after the main base of the player (e.g. see region numbering in Fig. 6.2 and 9.1).

### Variables

The full filter works on  $n$  units, each of the units having a mass in the each of the  $m$  regions.

- $Agg \in \{true, false\}$ , the player's aggressiveness (is he attacking or defending?), which can comes from other models but can also be an output here.
- $UT_{i \in \llbracket 1 \dots n \rrbracket} \in \{\text{unit types}\}$  the type of the  $i$ th tracked unit.
- $X_{i \in \llbracket 1 \dots n \rrbracket}^{t-1} \in \llbracket r_1 \dots r_p \rrbracket$ , the  $i$ th unit at time  $t - 1$ .
- $X_{i \in \llbracket 1 \dots n \rrbracket}^t \in \llbracket r_1 \dots r_p \rrbracket$ , the  $i$ th unit at time  $t$ .

### Joint Distribution

We consider all units conditionally independent give learned parameters. (This may be too strong an assumption.)

$$P(Agg, UT_{1:m}, X_{1:m, 1:n}^{t-1, t}) \quad (9.1)$$

$$= P(Agg) \prod_{i=1}^n [P(UT_i)P(X_i^{t-1})P(X_i^t | X_i^{t-1}, UT_i, Agg)] \quad (9.2)$$

### Forms

- $P(Agg)$  is a binomial distribution.

- $P(UT_i)$  is categorical distribution (on unit types).
- $P(X_i^{t-1})$  is a categorical distribution (on regions).
- $P(X_i^t | X_i^{t-1}, UT_i, Agg)$  are  $\#\{units\_types\} \times |Agg|$  different  $m \times m$  matrices of transitions from regions to other regions depending on the type of unit  $i$  and of the aggressiveness of the player. (We just have  $\#\{units\_types\} \times |Agg| \approx 15 \times 2$  different matrices for each race.)

### *Identification (learning)*

$P(X_i^t | X_i^{t-1}, UT_i, Agg)$  is learned with a Laplace rule of succession from previous games. Against a given player and/or on a given map, one can use  $P(X_i^t | X_i^{t-1}, UT_i, Agg, Player, Map)$  and use the learned transitions matrices as priors. When a player attacks in the dataset, we can infer she was aggressive at the beginning of the movements of the army which attacked. When a player gets attacked, we can infer she was defensive at the beginning of the movements of the army which defended. At other times,  $P(Agg = true) = P(Agg = false) = 0.5$ .

$$\begin{aligned} & PP(X_i^t = r | X_i^{t-1} = r', UT_i = ut, Agg = agg) \\ & \propto \frac{1 + n_{transitions}(r' \rightarrow r, ut, agg)P(agg)}{\#\{entries\_to\_r\} + \sum_{j=1}^m n_{transitions}(r' \rightarrow r_j, ut, agg)P(agg)} \end{aligned}$$

### *Update (filtering)*

- When a unit  $i$  becomes hidden, which was seen in region  $r$  just before, we have:

$$\begin{cases} P(X_i^t = r) = 1.0 \\ P(X_i^t = j) = 0.0 \text{ iff } j \neq r \end{cases}$$

- For all regions  $r$  that we see “totally” (above a threshold of a percentage of the total area), we set  $P(X_i^t = r) = 0.0$  and redistribute their probability mass to hidden (or still partially hidden) regions (algorithm 6):

---

**Algorithm 6** Culling/updating algorithm for filtering visible regions

---

```

for all  $i \in \{enemy\_units\}$  do
     $s \leftarrow 0.0$ 
    for all  $r \in \{visible\_regions\}$  do
         $s \leftarrow s + P(X_i^{t-1} = r)$ 
         $P(X_i^{t-1} = r) = 0.0$ 
    end for
     $total \leftarrow \sum_{j=1}^m P(X_i^{t-1} = r_j)$ 
    for all  $r \in \{\neg visible\_regions\}$  do
         $P(X_i^t = r) \leftarrow P(X_i^t = r) + \frac{s}{total} \times P(X_i^{t-1} = r)$ 
    end for
end for

```

---

- For all the other cases, we have:

$$P(X_i^t = r) = \sum_{j=1}^m m P(X_i^{t-1} = r') P(X_i^t = r | X_i^{t-1} = r', UT_i, Agg)$$

### *Questions*

- When we want to infer where the  $n$  enemy units are, we ask:

$$\begin{aligned} & P(X_{1:n}^t | UT_{1:n} = ut_{1:n}) \\ & \propto \sum_{Agg} P(Agg) \prod_{i=1}^n P(ut_i) \sum_{X_i^{t-1}} P(X_i^t | X_i^{t-1}, ut_i, Agg) \\ & \propto \sum_{agg=false}^{true} P(Agg) \prod_{i=1}^n P(UT_i = ut_i) \sum_{r=1}^m P(X_i^t | X_i^{t-1} = r, ut_i, Agg = agg) \end{aligned}$$

- When we want to infer the aggressiveness of the enemy (from the troupes' movements that we have seen), we ask:

$$\begin{aligned} & P(Agg | UT_{1:n} = ut_{1:n}) \\ & \propto P(Agg) \prod_{i=1}^n P(ut_i) \sum_{X_i^t} P(X_i^{t-1}) \sum_{X_i^{t-1}} P(X_i^t | X_i^{t-1}, ut_i, Agg) \end{aligned}$$

### *Conclusion*

Offline learning of matrices (as shown in Fig. 9.1) of aggressive and defensive probable region transitions (for a given unit type). With online learning (taking previous offline learned parameters as priors), we could learn preferences of a given opponent.

By considering a particle filter, we could consider a finer model in which we deal with positions of units (in pixels or walk tiles or build tiles) directly, but there are some drawbacks:

- The data to learn (offline or online) is sparse as there are several versions of the same map and the combinatorics of start positions (2 occupied start positions on 4 possible most of the time). This would need any form of spatial abstraction anyway, like distance to most walked traces.
- Computation cost to track  $\approx 40$  units makes it so that the particle sampling numbers should be low to stay real-time. Or that one should abandon the motion model for a Kalman filter [Kalman, 1960].

The advantages are not so strong:

- (hopefully) more precision in units position estimation,
- possibilities to have more complex motion models (updates/culling of the filter),
- differentiation between trajectories of ground and flying units,
- differentiation between different trajectories of attacks inside large regions.

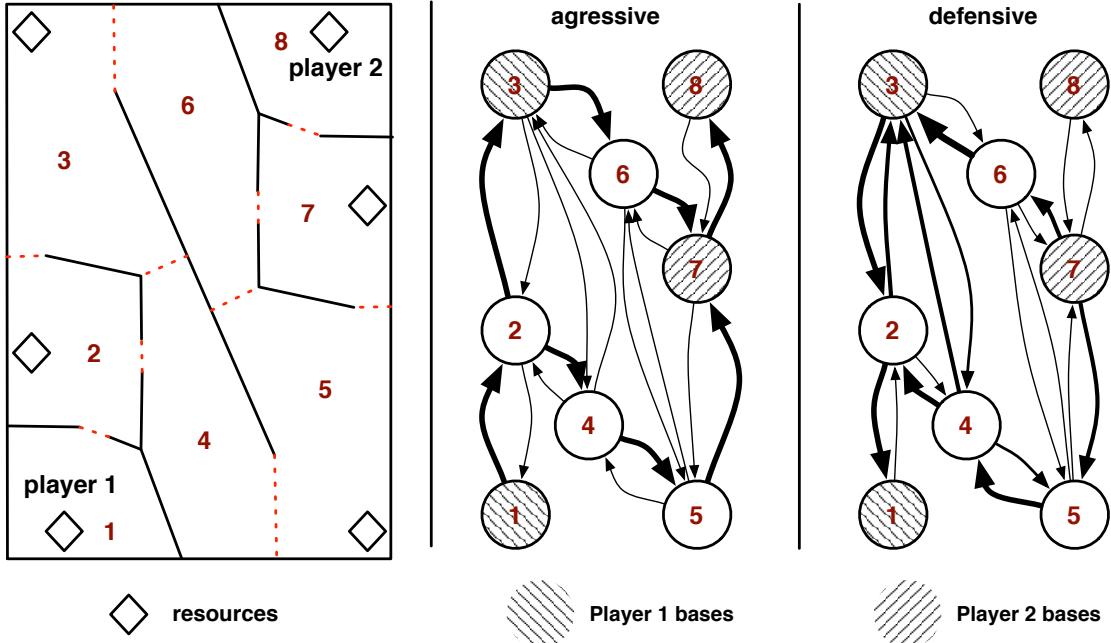


Figure 9.1: Example of the units filter transition matrices on a simple map (same as in Fig. 6.2) for aggressive and defensive sets of parameters for a given unit type. The thickness of the arrows is proportional to the transition probability between regions.

## Strategy

Bandits (contextual bands)

Planning [Wolfe and Russell, 2011]

Probabilistic planning?

## Inter-game Adaptation (Meta-game)

Other cases of learning not dealt with in previous chapters: [Manish Meta, 2010] Laplace smoothing  $P(ETT = ett | Player = p) = \frac{1 + nb games(ett, p)}{\#ETT + nb games(p)}$ . Same for EClusters and ETactics.

The full (reinforcement) learning of the bot can be seen as learning degrees of liberty one by one with a hierarchy from strategies to actions by tactics. C.f R-IAC Baranes & Oudeyer 2009 and 2012; PI<sup>2</sup>-CMA (ES).

meta question I think that he thinks that I think that...

## 9.2 Contrib

Résumer les contributions

## Approaches

- A tractable decomposition of game AI in a hierarchy of predictions, decisions and actions.
- Integration of learning in a decision-making model.
- An autonomous agent for StarCraft (BroodwarBotQ).

## Results

Recall what works, what should be extended.

### 9.3 Perspectives: Not a solved problem yet

Computers don't beat good (experts) humans (higher level strategic thinking: common sense, plus vision/interpolation for efficient micro). They are not so fun (do not adapt that much, our bot is the most adaptive ATM). Competition results. Tout ce qui peut se faire en recherche et ce qui est directement applicable par l'industrie.

# Glossary

**AI directors** system that overlooks the behavior of the players to manage the intensity, difficulty and fun. 17, 145

**APM** action per minute, an input speed frequency in competitive gaming. 38, 98, 99, 145

**Bayesian game** a game in which information about knowledge about payoffs is incomplete. 28, 33, 145

**BP** Bayesian program. 46, 145

**build order** a formal specification of timings (most often indexed on total population count) at which to perform build actions in the early game.. 59, 145

**build tree** abbrev. for “buildings tree”, state of the buildings (and thus production) unlocked by a player. 57, 145

**BWTA** BroodWar Terrain Analyser. 95, 145, 169

**control supply\*** for Zerg.. 145

**Dark Spore** a fast-paced, sci-fi action-RPG, with PvP and cooperative (vs AI) modes. 17, 145

**DSL** Domain Specific Language. 18, 145

**expand** either placement of a new base or the action to take a new base (to collect more resources).. 65, 145

**fog of war** hiding of some of the features (most often units and new buildings) for places where a player does not have units in range of sight.. 16, 33, 37, 58, 64, 95, 96, 145

**FPS** First Person Shooter: egocentric shooter game, strong sub-genres are fast FPS, also called “Quake-likes”, e.g. Quake III; and team/tactical FPS, e.g. Counter-Strike, Team Fortress 2. 16, 32, 37, 38, 89, 145

**FSM** finite state machine. 18, 30, 77, 98, 145

**gameplay** describes the interactive aspects of game design, which constraints the players possible behaviors and the players’ goals in a given game. 28, 89, 145

**gamification** the use of game mechanics and game design to enhance non-game contexts. 17, 145

**gas** also called vespene, short for vespene gas. Advanced resource in StarCraft, use for all advanced units, technological buildings, upgrades and researches. It can be harvested only once an assimilator/refinery/extractor has been built on the gas geyser and maximally fast with 3 workers only at the closest (standard) distance to the resource depot.. 57, 59, 60, 99, 145

**goban** board used for the game of Go. 23, 145

**HFSM** hierarchical finite state machine. 18, 79, 145

**HMM** Hidden Markov Model, a dynamic Bayesian network estimating hidden states following a Markov process from observations. 44, 145

**HTN** hierarchical task network. 18, 30, 145

**Left 4 Dead** a teamplay (cooperative vs AI) survival horror FPS in which players have to fight and escape zombie hordes. 17, 145

**max supply** also total supply, maximum number of units that a player can control at a given time, can be increased up to a hard limit (200 in StarCraft).. 59, 60, 99, 145

**MCTS** Monte-Carlo Tree Search. 23, 24, 145

**MDP** Markov decision process. 36, 37, 145

**meta-game** preparation and maneuvering before (and between) games to exploit: current trends, opponent's style and weaknesses, map's specificities (safe zones, back doors, timings), and psychological "mind games".. 116, 145

**micro-management** gameplay actions that are manually addressed by the player; the way of maximizing one's army efficiency by using the units to the maximum of their potential.. 57, 63, 64, 69–71, 76, 138, 145

**mineral** basic resource in StarCraft, used for everything. It can be harvested increasingly faster with the number of workers (up to an asymptote).. 57, 59, 60, 99, 145

**mini-map** radar view of the full game area, shown in the bottom corner of the interface in StarCraft.. 60, 145

**MMORPG** Massively Multi-player Online Role Playing Game, distinct of RPG by the scale of cooperation sometimes needed to achieve a common goal, e.g. Dark Age of Camelot, World of Warcraft. 16, 43, 47, 48, 145

**NPC** non-playing characters: game AI controlled third party characters, which were not conceived to be played by humans by opposition to "bots". 15–17, 54, 145

**opening** in Chess as in RTS games: the first strategic moves of the game, the strategy of the early game. 59, 63, 114, 145

**partisan** (game) which is not impartial, in which a player can do actions another can not do (move a faction while the other player(s) cannot). 21, 145

**perfect-information** (game) in which all the players have complete knowledge of the (board) state of the game. 21, 145

**POMDP** partially observable Markov decision process. 37, 38, 69, 92, 145

**population** c.f. supply\*. 145

**positional hashing** a method for determining similarities in (board) positions using hash functions. 24, 145

**pro-gamer** professional gamer, full-time job. 16, 58, 126, 145

**psi** supply\* for Protoss.. 145

**PvE** Players vs Environment. 17, 48, 145

**PvP** Players versus Players. 17, 48, 145

**replay** the record of all players' actions during a game, allowing the game engine to recreate the game state deterministically. 16, 58, 99, 145

**replayability** replay value, entertainment value of playing the game more than once. 17, 145

**RL** reinforcement learning. 72, 145

**RPG** Role Playing Game, e.g. Dungeons & Dragons based Baldur's Gate. 16, 32, 38, 89, 145

**RTS** Real-Time Strategy games are (mainly) allocentric economic and military simulations from an operational tactical/strategist commander viewpoint, e.g. Command & Conquer, Age of Empires, StarCraft, Total Annihilation. 16, 37, 38, 40, 145

**solved game** a game whose outcome can be correctly predicted from any position when each side plays optimally. 19, 145

**StarCraft: Brood War** a science fiction real-time strategy (RTS) game released in 1998 by Blizzard Entertainment. 16, 145

**supply** cost in population (or supply) of a given unit, or current population count of a player. Originally, the Terran name for population/psi/control.. 59, 60, 99, 145, 147

**tech tree** abbreviation for “technological tree”, state of the technology (buildings, researches, upgrades) which are unlocked/available to a given player.. 57, 59, 61, 65, 96, 97, 114, 145

**UCT** Upper Confidence Bounds for Trees. 24, 145

**zero-sum game** a game in which the total score of each players, from one player's point-of-view, for every possible strategies, adds up to zero; *i.e.* "a player benefits only at the expense of others". 19, 145

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# Appendix A

## Game AI

### A.1 Algorithms

---

**Algorithm 7** Negamax algorithm

---

```
function NEGAMAX(depth)
    if depth ≤ 0 then
        return value()
    end if
    α = −∞
    for all possible moves do
        α = max(α, −negamax(depth − 1))
    end for
    return α
end function
```

---

### A.2 “Gamers’ survey” in section 2.9 page 42

#### Questions

How good are you?

- Very good
- Good

How important is the virtuosity? (to win the game) reflexes, accuracy, speed, "mechanics"

- 0 (not at all, or irrelevant)
- 1 (counts, can be game changing for people on equal level at other answers)
- 2 (counts a lot, can make a player win even if he is a little worse on lower importance gameplay features)

How important is deductive thinking? (to win the game) "If I do A he can do B but not C" or "I see E so he has done D", also called analysis, forward inference."

- 0 (not at all, or irrelevant)
- 1 (counts, can be game changing for people on equal level at other answers)
- 2 (counts a lot, can make a player win even if he is a little worse on lower importance gameplay features)

How important is inductive thinking? (to win the game) "He does A so he may be thinking B" or "I see D and E so (in general) he should be going for F (learned)", also called generalization, "abstraction".

- 0 (not at all, or irrelevant)
- 1 (counts, can be game changing for people on equal level at other answers)
- 2 (counts a lot, can make a player win even if he is a little worse on lower importance gameplay features)

How hard is decision-making? (to win the game) "I have options A, B and C, with regard to everything I know about this game, I will play B (to win)", selection of a course of actions.

- 0 (not at all, or irrelevant)
- 1 (counts, can be game changing for people on equal level at other answers)
- 2 (counts a lot, can make a player win even if he is a little worse on lower importance gameplay features)

You can predict the next move of your opponent: (is knowledge of the game or of the opponent more important)

- 1 by knowing what the best moves are / the best play for him?
- -1 by knowing him personally (psychology)?
- 0 both equal

What is more important:

- 1 knowledge of the game (general strategies, tactics, timings)
- -1 knowledge of the map (specific strategies, tactics, timings)
- 0 both equal

## Results

Game	Virtuosity (sensory-motor) [0-2]			Deduction (analysis) [0-2]			Induction (abstraction) [0-2]			Decision-Making (acting) [0-2]			Opponent -1: subjectivity 1: objectivity top rest n			Knowledge -1: map 1: game top rest n		
	top	rest	n	top	rest	n	top	rest	n	top	rest	n	top	rest	n	top	rest	n
Chess	X	X		1.714	1.815	34	1.714	1.429	35	1.714	1.643	35	0.714	0.286	35	X	X	X
Go	X	X		2.000	1.667	16	2.000	1.600	16	2.000	1.600	16	1.000	0.533	16	X	X	X
Poker	X	X		1.667	0.938	22	1.667	1.562	22	1.333	1.625	22	-0.167	-0.375	22	X	X	X
Racing	2.000	1.750	19	0.286	0.250	19	0.571	0.000	19	1.286	0.833	19	0.571	0.455	18	-0.286	-0.333	19
TeamFPS	1.917	1.607	40	1.083	1.000	39	1.417	0.929	40	1.417	1.185	39	0.000	0.214	40	-0.083	-0.115	38
FFPS	2.000	2.000	22	1.250	1.000	21	1.125	1.077	21	1.125	1.231	21	0.250	-0.154	21	0.250	0.083	20
MMORPG	1.118	1.000	29	1.235	0.833	29	1.176	1.000	29	1.235	1.250	29	0.471	0.250	29	0.706	0.833	29
RTS	1.941	1.692	86	1.912	1.808	86	1.706	1.673	83	1.882	1.769	86	0.118	0.288	86	0.412	0.481	86

Table A.1: Results of the survey (means) for “top” players and the “rest” of answers, along with the total number of answers (n).



# Appendix B

## StarCraft AI

### B.1 Datasets

### B.2 Algorithms

---

**Algorithm 8** (Simplified) Target selection heuristic, efficiently implemented with a enemy units  
↔ damages bidirectional map:  $bimap : u, d \rightarrow (left : u \rightarrow d, right : d \rightarrow u)$

---

```
function ON_DEATH(unit)
    remove_incoming_damages(unit.target, damages(unit, unit.target))
end function

function REGISTER_TARGET(unit, target)
    add_incoming_damages(target, damages(unit, target))
    unit.target ← target
end function

function SELECT_TARGET(unit)
    for all eunit ∈ focus_fire_order(enemy_units) do
        if eunit.type ∈ priority_targets(unit.type) then
            if in_range(unit, eunit) then
                register_target(unit, eunit)
            else if unit.prio_target == NULL then
                unit.prio_target ← eunit
            end if
        end if
    end for
    if unit.target == NULL then
        for all eunit ∈ focus_fire_order(enemy_units) do
            if in_range(unit, eunit) then
                register_target(unit, eunit)
            end if
        end for
    end if
    if unit.target == NULL and unit.prio_target == NULL then unit.prio_target ←
closer(unit, enemy_units)
    end if
end function
```

---

---

**Algorithm 9** Flow algorithm making sure there are no convex closures

---

```
function INIT(region)
    { $dir_{i,j} \leftarrow list() | (i,j) \in region\}$ 
     $updated \leftarrow \{(i,j) | (i,j) \in entrance(region)\}$ 
    { $dir_{i,j} \leftarrow dir\_towards(region) | (i,j) \in updated\}$ 
    while  $\exists dir_{i,j} == list()$  do
        ( $sources, new\_updated \leftarrow neighbours\_couples(updated)$ )
        for all  $((x,y), (i,j)) \in (sources, new\_updated)$  do
            if  $(x - i, y - j) \notin dir_{x,y}$  then
                 $dir_{i,j}.append((i - x, j - y))$ 
            end if
        end for
         $updated \leftarrow new\_updated$ 
    end while
end function

function BUILD( $i, j$ )
     $refill \leftarrow list()$ 
    for all  $(x, y) \in neighbours(i, j)$  do                                ▷ cut the flow arround
         $dir_{x,y}.remove((x - i, y - j))$ 
        if  $dir_{x,y}.empty()$  then
             $refill.append((x, y))$ 
            build( $x, y$ )                                              ▷ Recursively cut the flow
        end if
    end for
    while  $\neg fixed\_point$  do                                         ▷ refill as in the initialization...
        current  $\leftarrow dir$ 
        for all  $(x, y) \in refill$  do
            if  $\exists (i, j) \in neighbours(x, y)$  such that  $current_{i,j} \neq list()$  then  ▷ non empty flow
                 $dir_{x,y}.append((x - i, y - j))$ 
            end if
        end for
    end while
end function

function IS_ISOLATED?( $i, j$ )
    if  $dir_{i,j}.empty()$  then
        return True
    else
        return False
    end if
end function
```

---

### B.3 Figures

```

[Replay Start]
RepPath: $(PATH/TO/REP)
MapName: $MAPNAME
NumStartPositions: $N
The following players are in this replay:
<list of
$PLAYER_ID, $PLAYER_NAME, $START_LOC
separated by newlines>
Begin replay data:
<list of
$FRAME_NUMBER,$PLAYER_ID,$ACTION,[ACTION_DEP_ARGS]
separated by newlines>
[EndGame]
```

Figure B.1: Template of an RGD (replay general data) file from the dataset (see section 6.4)

```

<list of
$FRAME,$UNIT_ID,$ORDER,TargetOrPosition,$POS_X,$POS_Y
separated by newlines>
```

Figure B.2: Template of an ROD (replay order data) file from the dataset (see section 6.4)

```

Regions,$REGIONS_IDS_COMMASEPARATED
$REGION_ID, $DIST, $DIST, ...
$REGION_ID, $DIST, $DIST, ...
.
.
.
ChokeDepReg,$REGIONS_IDS_COMMASEPARATED
$REGION_ID, $DIST, $DIST, ...
$REGION_ID, $DIST, $DIST, ...
.
.
.
[Replay Start]
<list of
$FRAME,$UNIT_ID,$POS_X,$POS_Y
$FRAME,$UNIT_ID,Reg,$REGION_ID
$FRAME,$UNIT_ID,CDR,$CDR_ID
separated by newlines>
```

Figure B.3: Template of an RLD (replay location data) file from the dataset (see section 6.4)

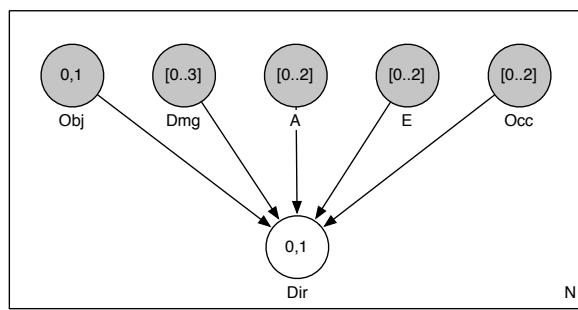


Figure B.4: Plate diagram of a Bayesian unit with  $N$  possible directions.

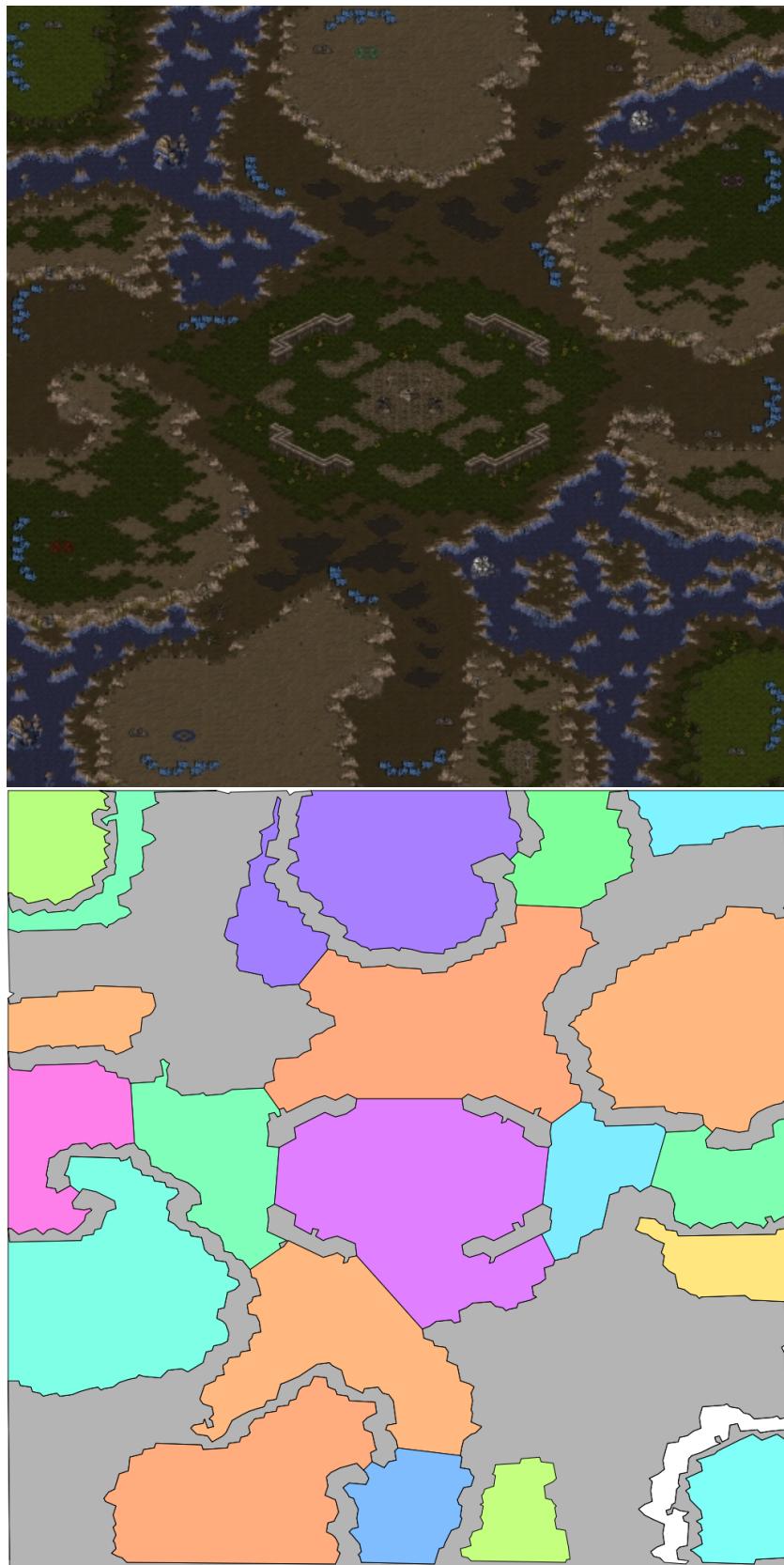


Figure B.5: Top: StarCraft’s Lost Temple map (one of the most famous maps with Python). We can see features like cliffs, ramps, walls, waters and resources (minerals and gas). Bottom: output of BWTA\* with the *regions* slicing. We can see regions with one or several chokes, but also isolated regions as gray is non walkable terrain (crossable by flying units only).

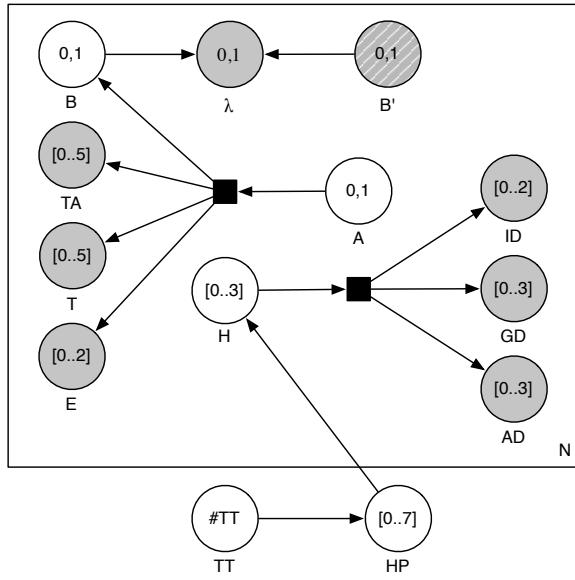


Figure B.6: Plate diagram of the Bayesian tactical model in prediction (we know  $ID, AD, GD$ )

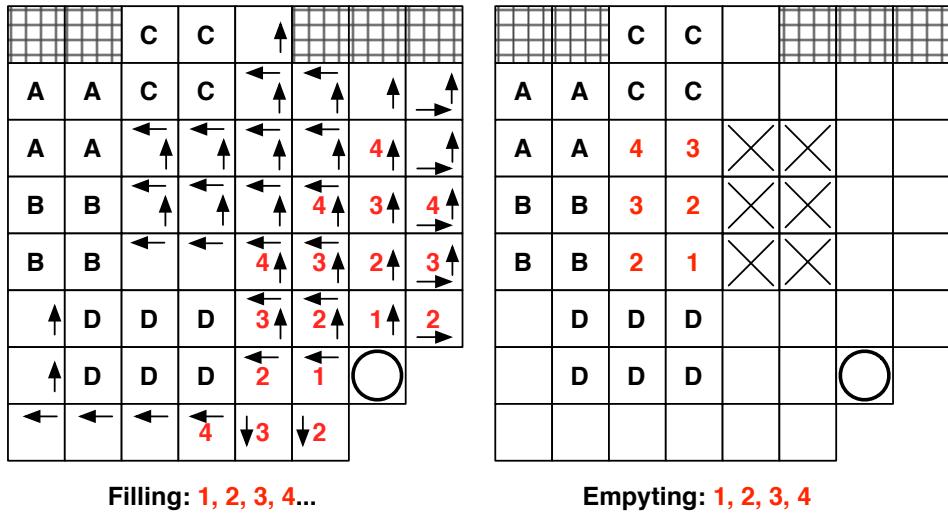


Figure B.7: Example of the algorithm 9 in a case in which there are buildings A, B, C, D and building in the new cross spots would close the paths to the interior and trap units. Left: flood filling of the region with the source at the choke (bottom right). The arrows show the  $dir$  vectors for each tile. Right: recursive calls to `build` which drain the interior zone. Refilling will not be able to refill the middle.

