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MCMT v1.1.1 - User Manual

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Abstract

This document is addressed to MCMT users: it explain from the beginning MCMT input specifications and illustrate some common settings and heuristics. Advices for the formalization of some useful classes of examples are also supplied.

This is a draft, subject to modifications and updates.

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1 Introduction

MCMT is a model checker for testing reachability in a large class of formal systems, called *array-based systems*; array-based systems, introduced in [5], comprise parametrized systems and sequential programs manipulating both arrays and arithmetical data. This document is a brief guide on how to write input files and to run MCMT.

The input language is rather low level and input files in such a language should be automatically generated from high-level user interfaces or other verification tools. However, the knowledge of the low level input language is important for advanced use and for heuristics. It should be noticed that *MCMT performances (even convergence!) might crucially depend on user defined settings* and often these settings can be worked out only by slight editing of the MCMT specification files.

Roughly, our language is composed of two sub-languages: one for describing a safety problem (all keywords of this sub-language starts with ":",) and one for describing (conjunctions of) literals to be passed to the background SMT solver, which is Yices. Some familiarity with the theoretical framework of array-based systems (see the papers [8],[6], [5], [9], [7]) could be useful (though not indispensable) when reading the rest of this document.

Remark. The MCMT specification language has evolved and has been significantly simplified since the first beta version 0.1. Now the tool can get by itself some information previously required to the user; nevertheless, old fashioned files are still compatible with the new version and some files in the distribution might still contain actually redundant information.

Warning. The parser of MCMT in its actual release should be able to catch the most frequent errors. Since running the tool on syntactically incorrect files may cause an unpredictable behavior, the reader is invited to *read carefully the instructions in Subsection 4.1* below concerning the use of MCMT parser.

2 Basic syntax

The basic MCMT syntax include types, index variables and array variables.

2.1 Types

Types that can be accepted by MCMT include `nat`, `int`, `real`, `bool`, i.e. natural, integer, real numbers and booleans. New types can be declared by the user; for instance the line

```
:smt (define-type locations (subrange 1 8))
```

declares the type `locations` consisting of $\{1, 2, \dots, 8\}$. These finite interval types are particularly useful for defining program counter locations.¹

2.2 Index variables

A specification file for MCMT defines an *array based system*: this is a formal model comprising a set of indices `INDEX` and arrays defined on this set. `INDEX` typically represents the processes of a distributed system or the cells of an array manipulated by a sequential program. Since it is natural to associate with each element of `INDEX` a natural number (which is its identifier / its address), *we identify INDEX with a subset of the natural numbers*² (typically `INDEX` is finite, however nothing prevents `INDEX` from being the whole set of natural numbers).

MCMT uses the names

`z1, z2, z3, ...`

for index variables;³ in addition there are three *special* index variables

`x, y, j`

whose use will be illustrated in the next section.

Since we identify `INDEX` with a subset of the natural numbers, we can use arithmetical operations (like `+`) and predicates (like `<`, `<=`, `0`) to write terms and literals concerning indices. These should be valid Yices expressions, hence prefix notation is required; examples of indices literals are

`(= z2 z3), (not (= (+ z1 2) z2)), (< z1 z2).`

¹When defining these finite sets of locations as finite intervals of naturals, it is better to avoid the number 0 to be in the range of the interval (this might cause MCMT to be slightly slower - but still correct - because 0 plays a special role in the heuristics of the system).

²It is possible (although rather unnatural) to define `INDEX` as a subset of another type by inserting in the input file a line like `:index <type-id>`, where `<type-id>` is any valid type.

³There is a bound to 10 for the maximum number of index variables that may occur in a syntactic expression (terms, atom, literal, and the like).

Notice that such literals concern *not the indices themselves, but their corresponding identifiers*. Thus e.g. (`< z1 z2`) means that the identifier of `z1` is strictly smaller than the identifier of `z2` (and not that `z1` is by itself smaller than `z2` - the latter would not make sense).⁴

2.3 Array variables

Arrays are the most important data in array based systems, We distinguish between local and global array variables. *Local* array variables are introduced by the declaration

```
:local <arrayvar-id> <type-id>
```

This line declares an array variable with identifier `<arrayvar-id>` whose elements are of type `<type-id>` (the domain of the array variable is the implicitly declared type `INDEX`); `<arrayvar-id>` *must* be a single character.

When an array is declared to be local, for different values of the indexes, the corresponding elements of the array may be different. On the contrary, *global* array variables stand for constant arrays and are introduced by the declaration

```
:global <arrayvar-id> <type-id>
```

Now for different values of the indexes, the corresponding elements of the array are constrained to be identical.

Examples of array declarations are:

```
:local  a locations
:local  s int
:local  w bool
:global v bool
```

Functional application in arrays is denoted by `[-]`; more precisely, if `zi` is an index variable and `a` is an array variable identifier, `a[zi]` is a valid term of the codomain type of `a`. Similarly, `a[x]`, `a[y]`, `a[j]` are valid terms too (recall that `x`, `y`, `j` are the three special index variables). These terms can be combined to form complex terms and literals according to the standard operation/relations defined on the various types (see the documentation on the Yices input language <http://yices.csl.sri.com/language.shtml> for more details).

⁴For the sake of clarity, if you like, you can explicitly introduce a local array, call it say `i`, and think of it as the array of the identifiers; in this way, you can write

```
(< i[z1] i[z2])
```

instead of (`< z1 z2`). Notice that different processes must have different identifiers, hence if you explicitly introduce the array of identifiers, you must constrain it by a system axiom (see Subsection 3.5) explicitly stating this injectivity condition.

With the above declarations, one can for instance write the following literals

```
(> s[z2] 3), (= (and w[z1] v[z4]) true), (not (= a[z1] 2)), (= s[z1] z2)
```

Other valid terms (of types `int` and `bool`, respectively) are for instance `(+ s[x] 2)` and `(or v[y], w[j])`; the subtraction symbol must be used as a *unary* function symbol, thus e.g. `(- s[x] s[y])` is illegal and `(+ s[x] (* (- 1) s[y]))` must be used instead. Expressions like `s[1]`, `s[2]`, ... are *not* valid: instead of the atom `(< s[9] 0)`, one must write the conjunction of

```
(= z1 9) (< s[z1] 0)
```

which is syntactically correct (notice that the variables `zi` are always implicitly existentially quantified, see next section).

REMARK. The limitation to one character in the array variables names is quite uncomfortable; however, if you type e.g.

```
:local      w bool
:map_back   flag
```

then MCMT will use `'flag'` instead of `'w'` in messages it displays to the user (instead of `'flag'`, any string can be used). This can be very helpful for instance in understanding the meaning of the invariants found by the tool, as well as in reading from report files the formulae representing backward reachable states (see Section 4).

3 MCMT specifications

Each line in an input specification file for MCMT must begin by a keyword preceded by a colon. For instance, a line like

```
:comment <string>
```

represents a user comment about the array-based system and the safety problem being specified. The `<string>` is ignored by MCMT. On the contrary, when reading the line

```
:smt <string>
```

MCMT passes verbatim `<string>` to the SMT solver. Indeed, `<string>` is passed to the solver with no syntactic check and hence `<string>` must be a valid Yices command. Impredictible results are to be expected if this is not the case.

We already met an example of the use of the `:smt` command in the last section, when speaking about user defined types. The `:smt` directive can be used to define function and predicate symbols (these symbols can be either free or constrained by system axioms, see below): to do that in the proper way, just respect Yices input syntax. The following line for instance

```
:smt (define S::(-> nat nat bool))
```

defines a binary predicate `S` on natural numbers. After this declarations, literals like `(S 2 z2)`, `(not (S (+ z1 z2) 3))` will be valid.

3.1 Initialization

An array-based system must be initialized. In our specification files, initialization is constrained by a universally quantified formula. This is a compound command with the following format:

```
:initial
:var <indexvar-id>
:cnj <list-of-quantifier-free-formulae>
```

There may be one or two occurrences of the keyword `:var`; `<indexvar-id>` must be the special index variable `x` or the special index variable `y`.

The string `<list-of-quantifier-free-formulae>` is a finite list of quantifier-free formulae (intended conjunctively, cf. the keyword `:cnj`), where only the variables declared by `:var` should occur (although the parser, in the current release of the system, does not check this). Such variables are implicitly *universally* quantified, so, for example, the logical reading of


```

: initial
: var      x
: cnj      (= a[x] 1) (= s[x] false) (= w[x] false)

```

is the formula (in Yices format)

```

(forall (x::INDEX)
  (and (= a[x] 1) (= s[x] false) (= w[x] false)))

```

3.2 Unsafe states

\exists^I -formulae [5] are obtained by prefixing a string $\exists z_1 \cdots \exists z_n$ of index existential quantifiers to a quantifier-free matrix ϕ (in ϕ only the variables z_1, \dots, z_n can occur free). An \exists^I -formula is primitive iff its matrix is a conjunction of literals and is *primitive differentiated* [6] iff it is primitive and the matrix contains all disequations $z_i \neq z_j$ for $i, j = 1, \dots, n$ and $i \neq j$. MCMT uses primitive differentiated formulae to represent (backward) reachable sets of states. In such formulae, the disequations $z_i \neq z_j$ are left implicit, in the sense that are always added by the tool to the formulae introduced by the user or worked out by the tool itself during its computations. Similarly, the external existential quantifiers are left as understood.

The first primitive differentiated formula that we meet in our input specification files is the formula describing the set of unsafe states, i.e. the states we desire the system not to be able to reach. Such a formula is introduced with a compound command as follows:

```

: unsafe
: var      <indexvar-id>
: cnj      <list-of-literals>

```

Here `:var` and `<list-of-literals>` is a list of literals that should obey the same constraints as for the case of the `:initial` command (see above). However, here you must declare and use the standard index variables `z1`, `z2`, `z3`, `z4` instead of the special ones.⁵ Notice that at most the first *four* index variables are allowed in the unsafe formula.

So, for example, the logical reading of

⁵ To keep compatibility with old MCMT 0.1 files, the use of `x`, `y` (but not of `j`) is tolerated. However you can *never* mix standard and special index variables in the same formula.

```

: unsafe
: var    z1
: var    z2
: cnj    (= a[z1] 7) (= a[z2] 5)

```

is the formula (in Yices format)

```

(exists (z1::INDEX z2::INDEX)
  (and (not (= z1 z2)) (= a[z1] 7) (= a[z2] 5)))

```

If the set of unsafe states can be described by an \exists^I -formula which is not primitive differentiated, it is possible to rewrite such \exists^I -formula as a disjunction of primitive differentiated ones. In such a case, there is a special syntax for the second, third, etc. disjuncts: these can all be introduced by single commands

```

:u_cnj <list-of-literals>

```

For these formulae, there is no need of previous `:var` declarations and the index variables `z1`, `z2`, `z3`, ... can be used without any numbering restriction (but remind that MCMT cannot manipulate more than 10 index variables at all). In case you use only `:u_cnj` declarations and omit the unsafe formula (i.e. if you omit the `:unsafe` declaration), MCMT works correctly: it just adds `false` as a first unsafe formula.

3.3 Transitions

Transitions describe how a system evolves: at each evolution step, one transition is non deterministically chosen and executed, if possible.⁶

In an array-based system transition are composed by a guard and an update function.⁷ The guard is an existentially quantified primitive differentiated formula: MCMT accepts guards with at most two existentially quantified variables, which can be either `x` or `y`. The update function is a case-defined function which is given in lambda-abstraction notation (the lambda-abstracted variable must be `j`).

The format for a transition declaration is the following:

⁶In order to avoid possible complaints by the MCMT parser, please insert transitions *after* all initial, unsafe, system axioms, and suggested invariants declarations.

⁷This is the format adopted in [6] and [9]; the format of [5] is more general, however examples that can be formalized in the format of [5] can usually be formalized also in the [6]-[9] format if existentially quantified variables for data are allowed (this topic will be covered in Section 5).

```

: transition
: var      x
: var      y
: var      j
: guard    <list-of-literals>
: uguard   <list-of-literals>
...
: uguard   <list-of-literals>
: numcases <pos-int>
: case     (= x j)
: val      <term1-1>
: val      <term1-2>
...
: case     <list-of-literals>
: val      <term2-1>
: val      <term2-2>
...
...

```

where

- `:var y` is optional (it is needed only for two-variables transitions), while `:var x` and `:var j` are mandatory;
- the `<list-of-literals>` following `:guard` is the lists of literals that forms the body of the guard of the transition;
- the lines starting with `:uguard` are optional and will be discussed in the next subsection;
- `<pos-int>` is a positive integer giving the number of cases of the case-definable function specifying the update of the transition;
- the `:cases` specify, through suitable conjunctions of literals, the case-partition used in the definition of the update function;

- each keyword `:val` is followed by a well-formed Yices term of appropriate type:⁸ this term gives the updated value of corresponding array in the given case; the number of `:val` keywords must be equal to the number of array declarations (thus, if e.g. 5 local or global variables have been declared at the beginning of the file, we must have 5 `:val` lines for each case of the partition).⁹

The `<list-of-literals>` following the `:case` keywords should represent all together a partition, in the sense that the disjunction of such lists should be valid and all pairwise conjunctions should be inconsistent. If the latter condition is violated, MCMT works correctly (but may do redundant work); if the former condition does not hold, MCMT implicitly adopts the stopping failures model (see below) and assumes all processes not satisfying any of the specified cases to get crashed.

The first occurrence of the `:case` keyword must be followed by the single literal `(= x j)`; in case `(= x j)` is omitted in the first `:case` declaration, the system automatically makes the correction (this means in particular that the first `:case` declaration can be followed by the empty list of literals in the specification files). Similarly, in the second, third, etc. `:case`, the system always adds implicitly the literal `(not (= x j))` to the list of literals following the `:case` keyword (in other words, the variable `j` always refers to a process different from `x`).

If the variables `x`, `y` have been declared both, the system assumes that they refers to distinct processes, so you need not write `(not (= x y))` in the guard (the guard is primitive differentiated by default). However, no specific case is reserved to the update of `y`: if you want to make a distinguished update for `y`, you must insert either `(= y j)` or `(not (= y j))` in all the `:case` distinctions (except of course in the first one, because `(not (= y x))` is assumed by default).

To summarize, let us give an example. The logical reading of

⁸In the term, only the declared variables can occur (i.e. we can have occurrences of `x`, `j` and also of `y`, in case the transition has two existentially quantified index variables).

⁹The MCMT parser checks that and gives an error message if case of a numbering mismatch. Notice that global arrays must be consistently updated in all the cases of the case-distinction: this is left to the user's responsibility (mutually inconsistent updates would make the application of the transition inconsistent, but MCMT can realize this only at runtime).

```

: transition
: var      x
: var      y
: var      j
: guard    (= a[x] 1)
: numcases 3
: case
: val      2
: val      s[j]
: val      w[j]
: case    (= s[j] 1)
: val      a[j]
: val      s[j]
: val      w[j]
: case    (not (= s[j] 1))
: val      8
: val      s[j]
: val      w[j]

```

is the following

```

(exists (x::INDEX) (and
  (= a[x] 1)
  (= (a' s' w') (lambda (j::INDEX)
    (case of
      (= x j) : (2, s[j], w[j])
      (and (not (= (x j)) (= s[j] 1)) : (a[j], s[j], w[j])
      (and (not (= (x j)) (not (= s[j] 1))) : (8, s[j], w[j])
    )))))

```

where we indicated with a' , s' , w' the updated arrays.

REMARK: Version 1.1 gives the possibility of declaring *transitions with zero variables* in the guard: this is particularly useful when formalizing time elapsing transitions in timed

systems. To specify a zero variables transition just omit the `:var x` declaration (i.e. insert only the `:var j` declaration before the guard). Notice that in a zero variable transition, the first `:case` declaration of course is not reserved anymore to `(= x j)` and universal quantifiers in the `:uguard` (see below) are not anymore relativized to `(not (= x j))`.

3.4 Universal quantifiers in guards

It is often useful to have a limited form of universal quantification in the guards. The kind of universal quantification we are considering leads to guards of the kind

$$\exists x (\phi(x) \wedge \forall j \psi(x, j)) \tag{1}$$

where ϕ, ψ are quantifier-free formulae (in ϕ only x occurs and in ψ both x and j can occur). These guards lead outside the formalism of array-based systems, but there is a well known (and good) way of circumventing the problem.

The solution is that of adopting the so-called *stopping failures* model:¹⁰ in the stopping failures model, processes can crash at any time without any warning (see [10]). Adopting this model in our setting [9], basically means to introduce an extra ‘crashed/non crashed’ flag and an extra ‘crashing’ transition (the remaining transitions are modified so that crashed processes cannot be active in the guards and can never be repaired). One can show that universal quantifiers in guards like (1) can be removed if the stopping failures model is adopted. Since all the above transformations are purely syntactic, MCMT performs them automatically, after informing the user that the stopping failures model has been adopted (for details on these transformations and their implementation in MCMT, see [3]). Notice that *a safety proof for the stopping failures model implies a safety certification for the standard model too*, because the latter has fewer runs. In case an unsafe trace is discovered, however, the trace might be spurious (and MCMT displays a further warning in this sense).

Now we show how to insert universal quantifiers in the guards of the transitions of our specification files. The formula $\psi(x, j)$ in (1) can be rewritten as a disjunction of conjunctions of literals: these conjunctions of literals can be introduced one after the other by using the keyword `:uguard`. There is an important limitation however: the present version of MCMT does not support universal guards in case of transitions with two existentially quantified index variables (otherwise said, if you declare `:var y`, then you cannot use the `:uguard` key - an error message is produced in case this limitation is violated).

As an example, if you add (just right after the `:guard` entry) to the example transition of

¹⁰ This is quite close to the *approximated model* method employed in [2], [1].

Subsection 3.3 above the two lines

```

: uguard      (= a[j] 1)
: uguard      (= s[j] 3) (= a[j] 2)

```

the Yices formula representing the transition becomes

```

(exists (x::INDEX) (and
  (= a[x] 1)
  (forall (j::INDEX) (or (= x j) (= a[j] 1) (and (= s[j] 3) (= a[j] 2))))
  (= (a' s' w') (lambda (j::INDEX)
    (case of
      (= x j) : (2, s[j], w[j])
      (and (not (= x j)) (= s[j] 1)) : (a[j], s[j], w[j])
      (and (not (= x j)) (not (= s[j] 1))) : (8, s[j], w[j])
    )))))

```

(notice that the extra disjunct `(= x j)` has been added because the tool always implicitly assumes that `x` and `j` are distinct).

3.5 System axioms

An important feature of MCMT is the capability of exploiting user suggestions in order to help or to speed up the verification process. We leave for Section 5 a thorough analysis of these MCMT functionalities and we just show here how to insert universal axioms in the specification files. The related format is

```

: system_axiom
: var          x
: var          y
: var          j
: cnj          <quantifier-free-formula>

```

The limitation to at most 3 universally quantified variables (named `x`, `y`, `j`) is strict (you can declare and use only the first one or the first two special index variables in case of system axioms comprising just one or just two variables, respectively).

System axioms can be used to specify conditions on the system topology (e.g. that processes are arranged as a partial order, as a forest, as a symmetric graph, etc.)¹¹ or to specify invariants which are already known to the user.¹² In case system axioms are not used to describe system topology or to express known invariants of the system, they represent universal condition whatsoever imposed on the whole system, i.e. invariants which are forced by the user. This way of imposing constraints on traces is however not entirely appropriate, because MCMT uses such constraints just in satisfiability tests and the formulae passing the tests are considered consistent as such: in other words, these formulae are not conjoined with the instances of the constraints used in the satisfiability tests themselves (the consequence is that spurious unsafety traces might be occasionally produced).

REMARK: in a system axiom, there is no implicit assumption that the quantified variables x , y , j represent distinct indices, so MCMT is allowed to identify them in instantiations; this is different to the policy used for the format of primitive differentiated formulae (transition guards and unsafe formulae), where the variables $z1$, $z2$, \dots are assumed to represent distinct indices.

REMARK: it is not correct to use a system axiom to put a cardinality bound the sort `INDEX`, see Subsection 5.6 for how to do this. The reason is that MCMT uses freely the index variables $z1$, $z2$, \dots and as soon as he feels he could need a new one, he permanently assert that it is different from the previous ones.¹³

¹¹ Formally, a system topology condition is a universal sentence where only symbols that are never subject to update occur.

¹²For instance, if the user knows about a crucial property of the system but does not have yet a proof of it, a good idea is to ask MCMT to check it. If MCMT (or another tool) succeeds, the property can then be used as a system axioms in future verification tasks. When doing the negation conversion from checked unsafe formulae to system axioms, keep in mind the remark below on variable differentiatedness.

¹³Technically, this means that the theory underlying the sort `INDEX` must be stably infinite. This restriction is not due to the theoretical framework underlying MCMT, it is just an implementation choice.

4 Running MCMT

The distribution of MCMT v.1.1.1 comprises two executable files (called `mcmt` and `mcmtparser`) and a script (called `mcmt_strict`). To run an MCMT specification file, type (from command line)

```
./bin/mcmt_strict [options] <filename>
```

or

```
./bin/mcmt [options] <filename>
```

The arguments `[options]` are not mandatory.

4.1 Parsing facilities

The `mcmtparser` executable (supplied by R. Bruttomesso) just checks syntactic correctness of the input specification file; the script `mcmt_strict` invokes first the `mcmtparser` and then the core executable `mcmt`. It is *strongly recommended* to run the script `mcmt_strict` on input specification files whose syntactic correctness has not been already certified (`mcmt` can behave in an unpredictable way if the input specification file is not correct). In addition to the MCMT parser, two options are supplied for debugging:

`-P` activates a (slow but rather accurate) debugging procedure: suitable formulae are generated and collected into a file named `.yices-log`; this file is submitted through system calls to the type-check Yices routine. As soon as a parsing error is found, MCMT tells the user where it is located and saves the related information into a file named `.p.error`. The option `-P` requires the installation of Yices executable in the path of your shell (Yices executable can be downloaded from Yices website <http://yices.csl.sri.com/>).

`-y` produces an executable file for Yices named `.yices-log`; if you have Yices installed, you can run

```
yices -tc .yices-log
```

to detect syntax errors from your input file that should be located in the strings to be passed to Yices.

4.2 Options

Each option has a short and an extended format, which are equivalent. We show here the short format (type `./mcmt -h` to see both formats).

`-s` disables most of the messages printed out by MCMT during the exploration of the search space of the array-based system. It only outputs the final statistics (depth, number of nodes, number of calls to the SMT solver, and number of invariants found - if any).

- b0 tells MCMT to apply a pure breadth first expansion of the tree nodes.¹⁴ According to the framework explained in [5], [9], [6], MCMT applies backward search by computing successive preimages of the unsafe configurations; in this way, it produces a search tree, whose nodes are labelled by primitive differentiated formulae. We call ‘expansion’ of a node the operation of computing its preimage, i.e. the successors of the node itself in the search tree. In the default setting, MCMT first expands nodes labelled by primitive differentiated formulae with one, then with two, then with three variables, etc. With -b0 option instead, nodes are expanded in the same order in which they are produced.
- b2 With this option, nodes with $n + 1$ variables are not only not expanded but not even produced at all before the tool has completed a full exploration of the nodes with n variables. A further option -b3 is available (-b1 gives the default setting): this is the same as the -b2 option but additional backward node subsumptions are tried.
- pN gives the reader the opportunity of setting to N the increment in fix-point tests (fix-point tests are incremental so as to reduce the size calls to Yices whenever inconsistency can be detected by analyzing just few initial nodes). The default value is 3.
- wN enables an incomplete ‘convex’ heuristics for fixpoint tests after N nodes (expert use only).
- f enables a flexible instantiation in fix-point tests (expert use only, see Section 5 for more details).
- dN stops state space exploration after N nodes (N is a positive integer, default is 50000).
- DN stops state space exploration after having examined all traces of length at most N (this is a bounded model checking option).
- e resumes previous state space exploration.
- F<filename> [to be used in combination with -dN, -DN - and subsequently with -e options] when options -dN, -DN are used, MCMT produces a log file called `status.txt`:¹⁵ this option gives the user the opportunity of giving the name <filename> to this file.
- v0 asks the tool to produce anyway the log file `status.txt` before exiting.
- vN (with $N > 1$) activates the interactive printing of node expansions.

¹⁴The syntax of the -b option has been changed in the 1.1 version: not it requires a numerical argument.

¹⁵This log file gives relevant information about the search space already explored, as well as about the invariants found and the candidate invariants to be examined. Do *not* edit this file if you plan to resume the search with the -e option.

`-SN` sets the simplification level (N=0 : none , N=1 : lazy, N=2 : eager, N=3 : eager with eager real quantifier elimination whenever needed). In the 1.1 version, a further option N=4 is available: with this option, the tool tries aggressive semantic redundancy tests in order to eliminate subsumed literals in primitive differentiated formulae.

`-r <filename>` makes MCMT produce two output-files:

- `<filename>.report.tex` containing a description (in latex format) of how the symbolic search space has been traversed to solve the safety problem. This file is ready for latex compilation.
- `<filename>.report.dot` containing a figure (in dot format)¹⁶ of the symbolic search space traversed by MCMT to solve the safety problem.

REMARK (about pictures from `.dot` file). It may be the case that the arcs connecting two distinct nodes `n1` and `n2` with a father node `n0` have the same label `L`: the meaning is that the formula labelling `n1` has been obtained by applying the same transition (on the same variable) as that applied to obtain `n1`; the only difference is that cases of the update-by-cases function have been applied in a different way.¹⁷ This situation can be disambiguated by looking at how the nodes are created in the `.report.tex` file.

Nodes in gray (that should only occur as leaves) have been deleted by the backward redundancy elimination heuristics which has been implemented in version 0.2.1 (and superior) of the tool.

4.3 Invariant search options

In this subsection, we list command line options that are related to a powerful MCMT functionality, namely invariant search. An important remark is in order here. By *invariant* we mean in this document just *trace invariant*, i.e. any property which is enjoyed by all reachable states. *Full invariants* (also called *inductive invariants* and sometimes simply 'invariants' in the literature) are properties which are enjoyed by the initial states and preserved by the system evolution. When trying to prove a trace invariant, MCMT in fact completes it to a stronger statement (which will be a full invariant) by disjoining it with further properties it finds during its computations.

¹⁶ The dot format can be read by the GraphViz tool, which is available free for many platforms at the address <http://www.graphviz.org/>. Using this tool you can export the graphs produced by MCMT in various format (e.g. pdf) so that they can be included in latex documents.

¹⁷Notice that this is well possible, because MCMT makes a backward search analysis (if read from backward, the update function is not deterministic because it is the converse of a function).

- i1 enable a minimal heuristic for invariant search. MCMT tries to find invariants consisting of one universal quantifier followed by a disjunction of literals. In particular, it tries to find invariants modelling the relationships between the values stored in the program counter and the other local variables.
- i2 same as above, but invariants with two variables are searched for.
- i3 now both invariants with one and two variables are searched for.
- c enables abstraction of numeric constants arising in backward reachability search.
- a similar to -i3, but invariant search is now more aggressive, involves quantifier elimination and abstracted indexes are projected away; this option may be combined with signature abstraction (see Section 5).
- I same as “-i3 plus -c plus -a” (the latter with dynamic signature abstraction). It is the most aggressive setting for invariant search: it gives MCMT more chances to find useful invariants but at the same time it might considerably slow down the tool.

More information about invariant search will be supplied in Section 5.

4.4 Displayed information

If not run in silent mode, MCMT displays some information about heuristics, reachable states formulae, trace invariants found, and statistics. We give here few explanations about node representation. The meaning of the displayed line

$$\text{node19} = [\text{t5}_2\text{.3}][\text{t6}_2][\text{t7}_2][\text{t6}_1][\text{t7}_1][0] \quad (2)$$

is that MCMT is considering a formula describing a set of states that can reach an unsafe state by executing transitions t5 , t6 , t7 , t6 , t7 in this order. This formula is primitive differentiated and has three quantified variables, that is it is of the kind $\exists z_1, \exists z_2 \exists z_3 \psi$ (to see the formula, you must inspect either the Yices file produce by the option `-y` or compile the Latex file produced by the option `-r`). It is possible to realize that the formula has three quantified variables by the fact that 3 is the maximum number occurring in (2) following an underscore. More precisely, to get an unsafe state from a state satisfying our formula $\exists z_1, \exists z_2 \exists z_3 \psi$ one first applies transition 5 to z_2, z_3 , then transition 6 to z_2 , etc. (when we say that transition 5 is applied to z_2, z_3 , we mean that transition 5 has two existentially quantified variables x, y in its guard and that x is mapped to z_2 whereas y is mapped to z_3). Notation (2) is rather informative, but it is slightly incomplete because it does not mention which case in the case-defined update functions applies to each variable: displaying this information

too would result in a rather cumbersome outcome, so in case of ambiguity it is necessary to consult the full information supplied by files produced by the options `-y`, `-r`.

The remaining messages displayed by MCMT should be self-explaining. We just point out that MCMT supplies warnings for the only two cases where an unsafe outcome might be spurious:¹⁸

- the stopping failure model has been adopted (because of universal quantifiers in transition guards), hence the unsafety trace can in principle be good for the stopping failures model but not good for the intended model;
- due to incomplete implementation, quantifier elimination of integer data variables occurring in the guards have been done imprecisely by overapproximating the set of backward reachable states.

In particular, if neither universally quantified index variables (see Subsection 3.4) nor existentially quantified data variables (see Subsection 5.4) occur in the guards, *unsafety traces are not spurious*.

In case an unsafe trace has been found, this means that the last displayed formula (2) is consistent with the initial formula. To get an assignment describing a state that can reach an unsafe configuration, run Yices with the option `-e` on the file `.yices-log` produced by the MCMT option `-y` and take the last assignment displayed by Yices. In case a spuriousness risk have been warned, it is possible to check spuriousness of the trace, but this can only be done manually in the present release of the tool.

¹⁸Keep in mind that there might be a third case, due to syntax errors in the strings forwarded to the SMT-solver. These can only be caused by syntax errors in the input file. To avoid this misbehaviour, use the script `mcmt_strict` (see also Subsection 4.1 for debugging facilities).

5 Advanced Settings

In this section we explain some important settings of MCMT that can be obtained by including special instructions in the input specification file (sometimes such instructions must be combined with appropriate command line options).

5.1 Interaction

MCMT allows some form of interaction. If you write in the input file

```
: suggested_negated_invariants
: var                z1
: var                z2
: cnj                <list-of-literals>
...
: cnj                <list-of-literals>
: end_of_suggested_negated_invariants
```

MCMT tries to prove the suggested invariants. In case it succeeds, it will use them later on in all consistency tests. The lists of literals can contain at most the variables `z1`, `z2`.

Notice that if you want to check the universally quantified invariant $\forall z_1 \forall z_2 C$ (where C is a clause) you must enter the literals corresponding to the negation of C . The universal closures of the negations of the formulae you enter need not be inductive invariants: MCMT will try by itself to complete them to inductive invariants (e.g. if you enter a property which refers to a precise location, MCMT will propagate it automatically to other locations, if needed). Hence the `:suggested_negated_invariant` block of instructions is particularly useful to insert code annotations in the specification files. To this aim, notice however that there is an alternative choice, namely that of using multiple unsafe states descriptions (see the `:u_cnj` keyword, Section 3): the two choices are declaratively but not procedurally equivalent. In the case of suggested negated invariants, MCMT tries to check the suggested invariants one after the other, with bounded resources: in case it does not succeed or it only partially succeed, it will nevertheless proceed to the task of verifying the unreachability of the main unsafe configuration. On the contrary, in case of multiple unsafe states descriptions, it will check unreachability of the declared unsafe configurations all together (and will report unsafety in case at least one of them is reachable).

5.2 Bounded Resources in Invariant Search

When trying to check that a candidate invariant is indeed a true (trace) invariant, MCMT has only bounded resources at its disposal. This is because invariant synthesis can be expensive and can easily fail. The user can modify these resources by specifying his preferred bounds in the input file (these user defined bounds will be used in all the command line options involving invariant search, namely `-i1`, `-i2`, `-i3`, `-c`, `-a`, `-I` as well as in the `:suggested_negated_invariant` block of instructions above). The following table summarizes the directives about resource bounds in invariant search that can be introduced in the input MCMT specification files:

<i>Directive</i>	<i>Def. Value</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
<code>: inv_search.start N</code>	[def N=0]	begin invariant search after node N
<code>: inv_search.max_index.var N</code>	[def N=5]	no more than N variables can arise in invariant search
<code>: inv_search.max_num.nodes N</code>	[def N=150]	no more than N nodes can arise in invariant search
<code>: inv_search.max_num.invariants N</code>	[def N=200]	find at most N invariants
<code>: inv_search.max_num.cand.invariants N</code>	[def N=500]	try at most N candidate invariants

Notice that if the preassigned bounds are not sufficient, search is interrupted and the candidate invariant is discarded.

The directive

`: inv_search_only_candidates`

asks MCMT to generate candidate invariants without checking (and hence without using) them. This can be useful (in combination with the command line options `-dN`, `-e`) in shell scripts running many copies of MCMT in parallel.

5.3 Signature Abstraction

Predicate abstraction is a powerful technique in model checking. The current release of MCMT implements it only in an incomplete way (we plan to have full abstract-check-refine cycles in CEGAR style in a future release). What MCMT can do actually is to project (during invariant search) the candidate invariants it finds and their preimages over a subsignature indicated by the user. This restricts the search and enhance the possibility of finding good invariants.

To specify the abstract signature, type

```

: abstract_signature
: subsignature           k
: subsignature           l
: subsignature           m
...
: end_of_abstract_signature

```

in the input file. Here `k`, `l`, `m`, ... are either 1 or 0 depending on the fact you want or you do not want the corresponding array to be abstracted away (you have one line per array, following the array variables declaration order). Writing just

```
:dynamic_signature_abstraction
```

you leave MCMT to find automatically the closest signature for abstraction when examining each candidate invariant.

Notice that all the above directives about signature abstraction are effective only when combined with the command line options `-a`, `-I`.

5.4 Quantifier elimination

To model real-time systems in the timed automata style, existentially quantified (real, integer) variables may be used in guards. You can introduce them in MCMT as follows. First, before writing any transition, you must declare such variables as

```
:eevar <char> <type-id>
```

where `<char>` is a single character (the name of the existentially quantified variable) and `<type-id>` is either `real` or `int` (in case the type specification is missed, the variable is assumed to be real).

The name of the existentially quantified (integer, real) variable is thus fixed for all the transitions; you can declare both an integer and a real variable, but they should have different names and cannot be used in the same transition together. Existentially quantified integer or real variables must occur only in atoms written in the language of linear arithmetic and they are not allowed in negative literals.¹⁹

Once the preimage of the formula representing a set of states is computed, the real variable is eliminated by using Fourier Motzkin quantifier elimination. As to the integer variable, the situation is more complex because MCMT does not support yet full integer quantifier

¹⁹This is not a real expressivity limitation, because instead of a guard containing, say `(not (= e a[x]))`, you can write two transitions containing only `<=`, `<`, `>=`, `>` in their guards.

elimination. The procedure applied instead is the following. First, integer literals like $(< \tau u)$ are replaced by $(<= (+ \tau 1) u)$. After that, Fourier Motzkin is used: the user is informed that the set of backward reachable states obtained in this way is overapproximated and, in case an unsafe trace is found, he is warned once again about the fact the trace could be spurious because of overapproximation. Notice however that in some trivial cases, Fourier Motzkin and integer quantifier elimination agree: in such cases, there is no overapproximation at all and no overapproximation warning is displayed.

Overapproximations of integer quantifier elimination are employed during invariant search too: however, no warning is displayed there because invariants are fully checked before being used (in other words, the overapproximation may cause the failure of the synthesis of some invariant, but does not affect the correctness of the final MCMT outcome).

5.5 Acceleration

MCMT supports a limited form of *acceleration* (for single transitions, not for sequences of transitions), that could be useful for instance when analyzing Petri nets reachability.²⁰

If you write

```
:accelerate_transition_n. k
```

the system tries to accelerate the k -th transition. It will succeed in case: (i) the transition has an existentially quantified guard containing only one existentially quantified index variable (that must be x , according to our conventions from Subsection 3.3); (ii) only literals of the kind $(>= a[x] N)$ and $(<= a[x] M)$, where M, N are integers and a is an array variable occur in the guard; (iii) all local array variables $a[j]$ are incremented/decremented by a constant value in the $(= x j)$ case and left unchanged in the $(\text{not } (j = x))$ cases; (iii) all global variables are similarly incremented/decremented.

In case it succeeds, the original transition will be replaced by the accelerated one and the user will be informed about the success of the operation (nothing will be said in case of failure). Writing

```
:accelerate_all_transitions_you_can
```

causes MCMT to try to accelerate all transitions (but, once again, no sequence or cycle of transitions).²¹ The directive

```
:display_accelerated_transitions
```

forces MCMT to print on the screen the accelerated transitions it finds.

²⁰The framework implemented in MCMT is roughly the same as that described in [4].

²¹To accelerate cycles, the user must manually compute the composite transition of the cycle, insert it as a further transition in the specification file, and finally ask MCMT to accelerate it.

5.6 Cardinality bounds

If a parametrized problem looks too difficult, one can try to verify it in special cases by imposing a cardinality bound on the sort `INDEX`. This cannot be done by a system axiom (by internal implementation reasons), but there is the possibility of specifying such a bound in the input file by typing

```
:max_domain_cardinality N
```

where `N` is a number like 3, 4, 5, etc. (do not use values greater or equal to 20, because the tool exits automatically when he realizes he needs more than 20 variables to solve the problem, hence a value bigger than 20 would have no practical effect).

5.7 Key search

We made little experiments on using MCMT in planning problems. It seems that there are a couple of options that could be useful in such contexts (but it is rather obvious that MCMT would need substantial enrichment to perform well on such problems). First of all, one can deactivate forward redundancy tests for formulae describing backward reachable sets of states by typing

```
:no_backward_simplification
```

in the input file. A much more useful option seems to be the possibility of classifying the formulae describing backward reachable sets of states (whenever possible) according to the value of a global variable. This can be achieved by typing

```
:key_search g
```

in the specification file (here `g` should be a previously declared global array variable). If the list of the formulae describing backward reachable sets of states is quite big, this strategy allows a more efficient access to that list during fixpoint tests.

5.8 Variable redundancy

Despite the fact that MCMT is quite optimized in this sense, it is sometimes possible that redundant existential variables are produced during backward search: such variables could be easily eliminated in case they have an explicit definition of the kind $\exists z_i (z_i = t \wedge \dots)$. MCMT can be forced to look for the possibility of such elimination by the directive

```
:variable_redundancy_test
```

Notice that this variable elimination procedure is always precise (it does not cause overapproximations), but may occasionally have undesired consequences on heuristics for invariant search, especially in presence of global array variables.

5.9 Restricted Instantiation

One of the key features of MCMT is full quantifier handling; this requires full instantiation, in the sense that quantified variables are instantiated in all possible ways during satisfiability tests (instantiations are optimized by powerful but nevertheless complete heuristics). Full instantiation prunes search space dramatically, but can be expensive. For this reason, the user is given the possibility of limiting it, especially in the final phases of the backward search computation. Typing in the input file

```
:flex_fix_point_fixed_index_var      N
:flex_fix_point_active_node_number  M
```

and using the option `-f` from the command line, the standard algorithm of MCMT is modified as follows. After node `M` has been reached, the first `N` variables are always instantiated identically in satisfiability tests for fixpoints. If values for `M`, `N` are not given in the specification file and the command line `-f` is used, MCMT employs the default values `M=2` and `N=50`.

5.10 Memory reset

For difficult problems, it empirically turns out to be useful to reset the SMT solver from time to time, in order to prevent out of memory runs. This is achieved by the following directives:

<i>Directive</i>	<i>Def. Value</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
: <code>start_reset N</code>	[def. N=375]	after N nodes the SMT solver is periodically reset ...
: <code>reset_ratio M</code>	[def. M=75]	... with ratio M
: <code>intensive_reset P</code>	[def. P=30000]	after P nodes the ratio becomes 1

6 How to deal with ...

In this section, we give a couple of suggestions for formalizing some important subclasses of problems.

6.1 Strictly sequential systems

We call strictly sequential systems the array based systems in which all array variables are global. These systems correspond for instance to programs manipulating pure arithmetical variables and no array at all. We must say that MCMT is not structurally tailored to handle such problems and is far from being optimized for them; however it can accept such specifications too. In order to relatively improve its performances on such kind of problems, it is better to avoid case distinctions at all when writing the update functions.

If all array variables are global, MCMT models runs where N identical processes execute the same updates; however if case distinctions in the update functions are abolished, MCMT models runs where actually one process is working and the other ones are all crashed (see the stopping failures model of Subsection 3.4). There is no real difference between the two models (they are trivially bisimilar because all array variables are constant), however the second model is computationally better behaved because adopting it MCMT does waste time in continuously adding the second quantified index variable and then realizing it was not needed.

In practice, we suggest the following format for transitions in case all array variables have been declared to be global:

```
: transition
: var      x
: var      j
: guard    <list-of-literals>
: numcases 1
: case
: val      <term-1>
: val      <term-2>
...

```

In addition, we suggest to keep into consideration the possibility of indicating an abstract signature and of accelerating some transitions in order to avoid trivial divergency sources.

6.2 Channels

In many distributed system specifications, communication channels arise: in these specifications, one can express for instance the fact that process p has sent an *ack* to process q by saying that *ack* is the location of the channel with source p and target q . If it is implicitly assumed that there is a communication channel between any two processes whatsoever, the most natural modeling of this setting would employ 2-dimensional arrays, but unfortunately MCMT does not support 2-dimensional arrays in the present release. We explain here the formalization we used in some examples of the distribution: this formalization produces models which are slightly more general than the intended ones, however they seem to behave properly in the applications.

The idea is that the type `INDEX` is reserved to channels; channels have a source and a target and processes are identified with channels whose source and target coincide. To get this, it is sufficient to introduce two free function symbols²²

```
:smt (define S::(-> nat nat))
:smt (define T::(-> nat nat))
```

We need to know whether an index variable refers to a process or to a channel. To this aim, we introduce a unary predicate `P` (for “being a process”) and leave the system axiom

```
:smt      (define P::(-> nat bool))
:system_axiom
:var      x
:cnj      (= (P x) (= (S x) (T x)))
```

to define it appropriately. Another system axiom says that targets and sources are processes and not channels

```
:system_axiom
:var      x
:cnj      (and ((P (S x)) (P (T x)))
```

A further system axiom might be used in case we want to ensure that channels having the same source and target are identical:

²²Alternatively, one could introduce two local arrays with values in the type `nat` and never update them in the transitions.

```
: system_axiom
: var          x
: var          y
: conj         (=> (and (= (S x) (S y)) (= (T x) (T y))) (= x y) )
```

As claimed above, this setting represents an approximation of 2-dimensional arrays which should be sufficient to address safety problems in specifications involving channels. We expect that a future direct implementation of 2-dimensional arrays will produce considerable gain both in expressivity and in efficiency.

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