Automated Planning

E9. Merge-and-Shrink: Merge Strategies and Label Reduction

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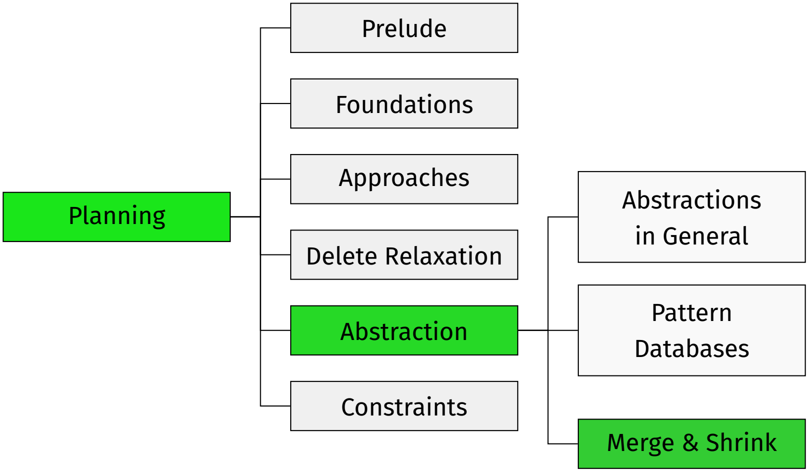
based on slides from the AI group at the University of Basel

Content of this Course



Properties of Merge-and-Shrink Heuristics

Merge-and-shrink heuristics for SAS^+ tasks are admissible, consistent, safe and goal-aware.

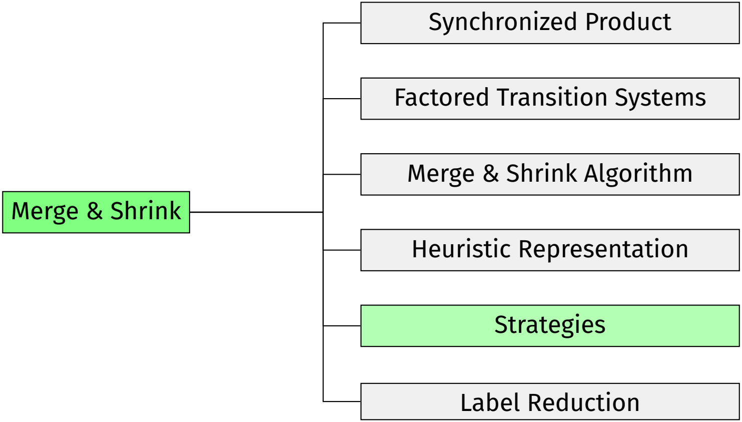
Reminder: Generic Algorithm Template

$F := F(\Pi)$
while $|F| > 1$:
  select *type* $\in$ {merge, shrink}
  if *type* = merge:
    select $\mathcal{T}_1, \mathcal{T}_2 \in F$
    $F := (F \setminus \{\mathcal{T}_1, \mathcal{T}_2\}) \cup \{\mathcal{T}_1 \otimes \mathcal{T}_2\}$
  if *type* = shrink:
    select $\mathcal{T} \in F$
    choose an abstraction mapping β on $\mathcal{T}$
    $F := (F \setminus \{\mathcal{T}\}) \cup \{\mathcal{T}^\beta\}$
return the remaining factor $\mathcal{T}^\alpha$ in F

Remaining Questions:

- Which abstractions to select for merging? $\rightsquigarrow$ merge strategy
- How to shrink an abstraction? $\rightsquigarrow$ shrink strategy

Merge-and-Shrink



Merge Strategies

Linear vs. Non-linear Merge Strategies

Linear Merge Strategy

In each iteration after the first, choose the abstraction computed in the previous iteration as $\mathcal{T}_1$.

Rationale: only maintains one "complex" abstraction at a time

- Fully defined by an ordering of atomic projections/variables.
- Each merge-and-shrink heuristic computed with a non-linear merge strategy can also be computed with a linear merge strategy.
- However, linear merging can require a super-polynomial blow-up of the final representation size.
- Recent research turned from linear to non-linear strategies, also because better label reduction techniques (later in this chapter) enabled a more efficient computation.

Classes of Merge Strategies

We can distinguish two major types of merge strategies:

- precomputed merge strategies fix a unique merge order up-front.
  One-time effort but cannot react to other transformations applied to the factors.
- stateless merge strategies only consider the current FTS and decide what factors to merge.
  Typically computing a score for each pair of factors and naturally non-linear; easy to implement but cannot capture dependencies between more than two factors.

Hybrid strategies combine ideas from precomputed and stateless strategies.

Example Linear Precomputed Merge Strategy

Idea: Use similar causal graph criteria as for growing patterns.

Example: Strategy of h_{HHH}

h_{HHH}: Ordering of atomic projections

- Start with a goal variable.
- Add variables that appear in preconditions of operators affecting previous variables.
- If that is not possible, add a goal variable.

Rationale: increases h quickly

Example Non-linear Stateless Merge Strategy

Idea: Preferrably merge transition systems that must synchronize on labels that occur close to a goal state.

Example: DFP (named after Dräger, Finkbeiner and Podelski)

DFP strategy

- $\mathit{labelrank}(\ell, \mathcal{T}) = \min\{h^*(t) \mid \langle s, \ell, t \rangle \text{ transition in } \mathcal{T}\}$
- $\mathit{score}(\mathcal{T}, \mathcal{T}') = \min\{\max\{\mathit{labelrank}(\ell, \mathcal{T}), \mathit{labelrank}(\ell, \mathcal{T}')\} \mid \ell \text{ label in } \mathcal{T} \text{ and } \mathcal{T}'\}$
- Select two transition systems with minimum score.

Rationale: abstraction fine-grained in the goal region, which is likely to be searched by A^*.

Example Hybrid Merge Strategy

Idea: first combine the variables within each strongly connected component of the causal graph.

Example: SCC framework

SCC strategy

- Compute strongly connected components of causal graph
- Secondary strategies for order in which
  - the SCCs are considered (e.g., topologic order),
  - the factors within an SCC are merged, and
  - the resulting product systems are merged.

Rationale: reflect strong interactions of variables well

State of the art: SCC+DFP

Shrink Strategies

f-preserving Shrink Strategy

f-preserving Shrink Strategy

Repeatedly combine two abstract states with
identical abstract goal distances (h values) and
identical abstract initial state distances (g values).

Rationale: preserves heuristic value and overall graph shape

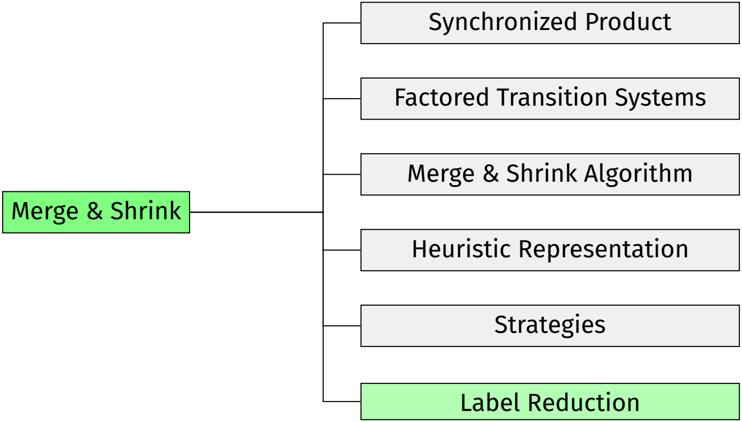
Tie-breaking Criterion

Prefer combining states where $g + h$ is high.
In case of ties, combine states where h is high.

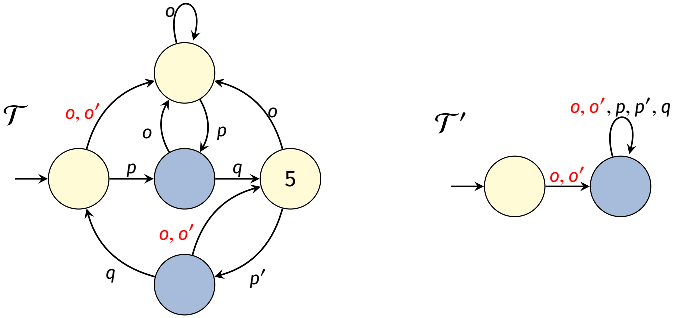
Rationale: states with high $g + h$ values are less likely to be explored by A^*, so inaccuracies there matter less

Label Reduction

Merge-and-Shrink



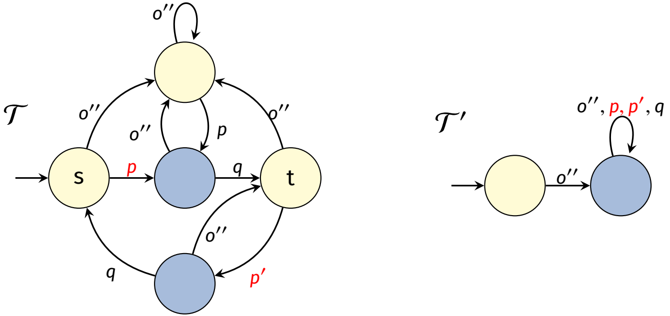
Label Reduction: Motivation (1)



Whenever there is a transition with label o' there is also a transition with label o. If o' is not cheaper than o, we can always use the transition with o.

Idea: Replace o and o' with label o'' with cost of o

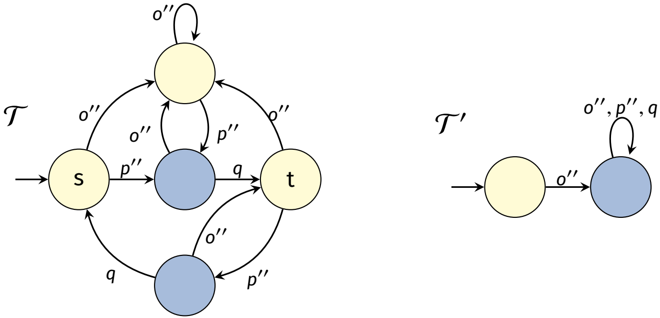
Label Reduction: Motivation (2)



In $\mathcal{T}'$ labels p and p' label the same (parallel) transitions. If p and p' have the same cost, in such a situation there is no need for distinguishing them.

Idea: Replace p and p' with label p'' with same cost.

Label Reduction: Motivation (3)



Label reductions reduce the time and memory requirement for merge and shrink steps.

Label Reduction: Definition

Definition (Label Reduction)

Let F be a factored transition system with label set L and label cost function c. A label reduction $\langle \lambda, c' \rangle$ for F is given by a function $\lambda : L \longrightarrow L'$, where L' is an arbitrary set of labels, and a label cost function c' on L' such that for all $\ell \in L$, $c'(\lambda(\ell)) \leq c(\ell)$.

For $\mathcal{T} = \langle S, L, c, T, s_0, S_\star \rangle \in F$ the label-reduced transition system is $\mathcal{T}^{\langle \lambda, c' \rangle} = \langle S, L', c', \{\langle s, \lambda(\ell), t \rangle \mid \langle s, \ell, t \rangle \in T\}, s_0, S_\star \rangle$.

The label-reduced FTS is $F^{\langle \lambda, c' \rangle} = \{\mathcal{T}^{\langle \lambda, c' \rangle} \mid \mathcal{T} \in F\}$.

$L' \cap L \neq \emptyset$ and $L' = L$ are allowed.

More Terminology

Let F be a factored transition systems with labels L. Let $\ell, \ell' \in L$ be labels and let $\mathcal{T} \in F$.

- Label ℓ is alive in F if all $\mathcal{T}' \in F$ have some transition labelled with ℓ. Otherwise, ℓ is dead.
- Label ℓ locally subsumes label ℓ' in $\mathcal{T}$ if for all transitions $\langle s, \ell', t\rangle$ of $\mathcal{T}$ there is also a transition $\langle s, \ell, t\rangle$ in $\mathcal{T}$.
- ℓ globally subsumes ℓ' if it locally subsumes ℓ' in all $\mathcal{T}' \in F$.
- ℓ and ℓ' are locally equivalent in $\mathcal{T}$ if they label the same transitions in $\mathcal{T}$, i.e., ℓ locally subsumes ℓ' in $\mathcal{T}$ and vice versa.
- ℓ and ℓ' are $\mathcal{T}$-combinable if they are locally equivalent in all transition systems $\mathcal{T}' \in F \setminus \{\mathcal{T}\}$.

Exact Label Reduction

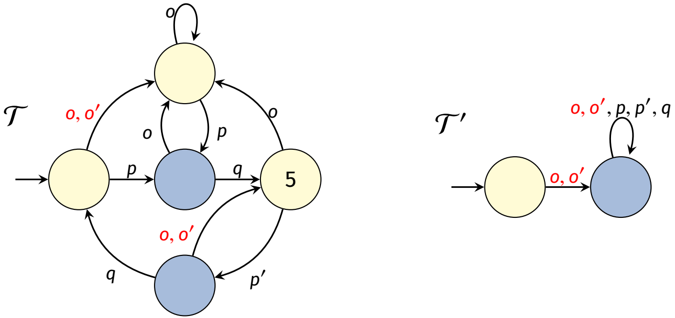
Theorem (Criteria for Exact Label Reduction)

Let F be a factored transition systems with cost function c and label set L that contains no dead labels.

Let $\langle \lambda, c' \rangle$ be a label-reduction for F such that λ combines labels ℓ_1 and ℓ_2 and leaves other labels unchanged. The transformation from F to $F^{\langle \lambda, c' \rangle}$ is exact iff $c(\ell_1) = c(\ell_2)$, $c'(\lambda(\ell)) = c(\ell)$ for all $\ell \in L$, and

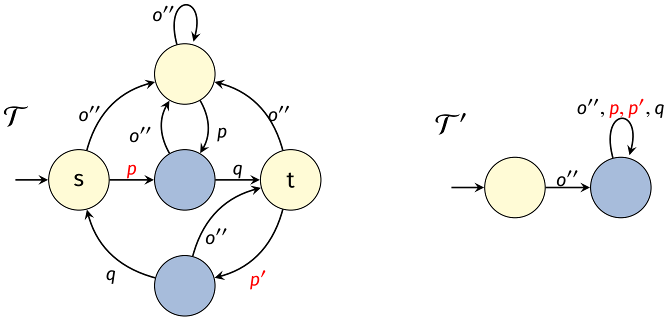
- *ℓ_1 globally subsumes ℓ_2, or*
- *ℓ_2 globally subsumes ℓ_1, or*
- *ℓ_1 and ℓ_2 are $\mathcal{T}$-combinable for some $\mathcal{T} \in F$.*

Back to Example (1)



Label o globally subsumes label o'.

Back to Example (2)



Labels p and p' are $\mathcal{T}$-combinable.

Summary

Summary

- There is a wide range of merge and shrink strategies. We only covered some important ones.
- Label reduction is crucial for the performance of the merge-and-shrink algorithm.