

Executable Transitive Closures*

René Thiemann

February 6, 2026

Abstract

We provide a generic work-list algorithm to compute the (reflexive-)transitive closure of relations where only successors of newly detected states are generated. In contrast to our previous work [2], the relations do not have to be finite, but each element must only have finitely many (indirect) successors. Moreover, a subsumption relation can be used instead of pure equality. An executable variant of the algorithm is available where the generic operations are instantiated with list operations.

This formalization was performed as part of the `IsaFoR/CeTA` project¹ [3], and it has been used to certify size-change termination proofs where large transitive closures have to be computed.

Contents

| | | |
|----------|--|----------|
| 1 | A work-list algorithm for reflexive-transitive closures | 1 |
| 1.1 | The generic case | 2 |
| 1.2 | Instantiation using list operations | 4 |

1 A work-list algorithm for reflexive-transitive closures

```
theory RTrancl
imports Regular-Sets.Regexp-Method
begin
```

In previous work [2] we described a generic work-list algorithm to compute reflexive-transitive closures for *finite* relations: given a finite relation r , it computed r^* .

In the following, we develop a similar, though different work-list algorithm for reflexive-transitive closures, it computes r^* “*init*” for a given relation r and finite set *init*. The main differences are that

*Supported by FWF (Austrian Science Fund) project P22767-N13.

¹<http://cl-informatik.uibk.ac.at/software/ceta>

- The relation r does not have to be finite, only $\{b. (a, b) \in r^*\}$ has to be finite for each a . Moreover, it is no longer required that r is given explicitly as a list of pairs. Instead r must be provided in the form of a function which computes for each element the set of one-step successors.
- One can use a subsumption relation to indicate which elements no longer have to be explored.

These new features have been essential to certify size-change termination proofs [1] where the transitive closure of all size-change graphs has to be computed. Here, the relation is size-change graph composition.

- Given an initial set of size-change graphs with n arguments, there are roughly $N := 3^{n^2}$ many potential size-change graphs that have to be considered as left-hand sides of the composition relation. Since the composition relation is even larger than N , an explicit representation of the composition relation would have been too expensive. However, using the new algorithm the number of generated graphs is usually far below the theoretical upper bound.
- Subsumption was useful to generate even fewer elements.

1.1 The generic case

Let r be some finite relation.

We present a standard work-list algorithm to compute all elements that are reachable from some initial set. The algorithm is generic in the sense that the underlying data structure can freely be chosen, you just have to provide certain operations like union, selection of an element.

In contrast to [2], the algorithm does not demand that r is finite and that r is explicitly provided (e.g., as a list of pairs). Instead, it suffices that for every element, only finitely many elements can be reached via r , and r can be provided as a function which computes for every element a all one-step successors w.r.t. r . Hence, r can in particular be any well-founded and finitely branching relation.

The algorithm can further be parametrized by a subsumption relation which allows for early pruning.

In the following locales, r is a relation of type $'a \Rightarrow 'a$, the successors of an element are represented by some collection type $'b$ which size can be measured using the *size* function. The selection function *sel* is used to mean to split a non-empty collection into one element and a remaining collection. The union on $'b$ is given by *un*.

locale *subsumption* =

```

fixes  $r :: 'a \Rightarrow 'b$ 
and  $subsumes :: 'a \Rightarrow 'a \Rightarrow bool$ 
and  $set-of :: 'b \Rightarrow 'a\ set$ 
assumes
   $subsumes-refl: \bigwedge a. subsumes\ a\ a$ 
and  $subsumes-trans: \bigwedge a\ b\ c. subsumes\ a\ b \implies subsumes\ b\ c \implies subsumes\ a\ c$ 
and  $subsumes-step: \bigwedge a\ b\ c. subsumes\ a\ b \implies c \in set-of\ (r\ b) \implies \exists d \in set-of$ 
 $(r\ a). subsumes\ d\ c$ 
begin
abbreviation  $R\ where\ R \equiv \{ (a,b). b \in set-of\ (r\ a) \}$ 
end

```

```

locale  $subsumption-impl = subsumption\ r\ subsumes\ set-of$ 
for  $r :: 'a \Rightarrow 'b$ 
and  $subsumes :: 'a \Rightarrow 'a \Rightarrow bool$ 
and  $set-of :: 'b \Rightarrow 'a\ set +$ 
fixes
   $sel :: 'b \Rightarrow 'a \times 'b$ 
and  $un :: 'b \Rightarrow 'b \Rightarrow 'b$ 
and  $size :: 'b \Rightarrow nat$ 
assumes  $set-of-fin: \bigwedge b. finite\ (set-of\ b)$ 
and  $sel: \bigwedge b\ a\ c. set-of\ b \neq \{\} \implies sel\ b = (a,c) \implies set-of\ b = insert\ a\ (set-of$ 
 $c) \wedge size\ b > size\ c$ 
and  $un: set-of\ (un\ a\ b) = set-of\ a \cup set-of\ b$ 

```

```

locale  $relation-subsumption-impl = subsumption-impl\ r\ subsumes\ set-of\ sel\ un\ size$ 
for  $r\ subsumes\ set-of\ sel\ un\ size +$ 
assumes  $rtrancl-fin: \bigwedge a. finite\ \{b. (a,b) \in \{(a,b) . b \in set-of\ (r\ a)\}^{\wedge *}\}$ 
begin

```

```

lemma  $finite-Rs: assumes\ init: finite\ init$ 
shows  $finite\ (R^{\wedge *}\ \text{“}\ init)$ 
 $\langle proof \rangle$ 

```

a standard work-list algorithm with subsumption

```

function  $mk-rtrancl-main\ where$ 
 $mk-rtrancl-main\ todo\ fin = (if\ set-of\ todo = \{\} then\ fin$ 
   $else\ (let\ (a,tod) = sel\ todo$ 
     $in\ (if\ (\exists\ b \in fin. subsumes\ b\ a) then\ mk-rtrancl-main\ tod\ fin$ 
     $else\ mk-rtrancl-main\ (un\ (r\ a)\ tod)\ (insert\ a\ fin))))$ 
 $\langle proof \rangle$ 

```

```

termination  $mk-rtrancl-main$ 
 $\langle proof \rangle$ 

```

```

declare  $mk-rtrancl-main.simps[simp\ del]$ 

```

lemma *mk-rtrancl-main-sound*: $set-of\ todo \cup fin \subseteq R^{\widehat{*}} \text{ `` } init \implies mk-rtrancl-main\ todo\ fin \subseteq R^{\widehat{*}} \text{ `` } init$
 <proof>

lemma *mk-rtrancl-main-complete*:

$\llbracket \bigwedge a. a \in init \implies \exists b. b \in set-of\ todo \cup fin \wedge subsumes\ b\ a \rrbracket$
 $\implies \llbracket \bigwedge a\ b. a \in fin \implies b \in set-of\ (r\ a) \implies \exists c. c \in set-of\ todo \cup fin \wedge subsumes\ c\ b \rrbracket$
 $\implies c \in R^{\widehat{*}} \text{ `` } init$
 $\implies \exists b. b \in mk-rtrancl-main\ todo\ fin \wedge subsumes\ b\ c$
 <proof>

definition *mk-rtrancl* **where** $mk-rtrancl\ init \equiv mk-rtrancl-main\ init\ \{\}$

lemma *mk-rtrancl-sound*: $mk-rtrancl\ init \subseteq R^{\widehat{*}} \text{ `` } set-of\ init$
 <proof>

lemma *mk-rtrancl-complete*: **assumes** $a \in R^{\widehat{*}} \text{ `` } set-of\ init$
shows $\exists b. b \in mk-rtrancl\ init \wedge subsumes\ b\ a$
 <proof>

lemma *mk-rtrancl-no-subsumption*: **assumes** $subsumes = (=)$
shows $mk-rtrancl\ init = R^{\widehat{*}} \text{ `` } set-of\ init$
 <proof>
 end

1.2 Instantiation using list operations

It follows an implementation based on lists. Here, the working list algorithm is implemented outside the locale so that it can be used for code generation. In general, it is not terminating, therefore we use `partial_function` instead of function.

partial-function(*tailrec*) *mk-rtrancl-list-main* **where**
 [code]: $mk-rtrancl-list-main\ subsumes\ r\ todo\ fin = (case\ todo\ of\ [] \Rightarrow fin$
 $\quad | Cons\ a\ tod \Rightarrow$
 $\quad\quad (if\ (\exists\ b \in set\ fin. subsumes\ b\ a) then\ mk-rtrancl-list-main\ subsumes\ r$
 $\quad\quad\quad tod\ fin$
 $\quad\quad\quad else\ mk-rtrancl-list-main\ subsumes\ r\ (r\ a\ @\ tod)\ (a\ \# \ fin))$

definition *mk-rtrancl-list* **where**

$mk-rtrancl-list\ subsumes\ r\ init \equiv mk-rtrancl-list-main\ subsumes\ r\ init\ []$

locale *subsumption-list* = *subsumption* $r\ subsumes\ set$
for $r :: 'a \Rightarrow 'a\ list$ **and** $subsumes :: 'a \Rightarrow 'a \Rightarrow bool$

locale *relation-subsumption-list* = *subsumption-list* $r\ subsumes$ **for** $r\ subsumes +$
assumes $rtrancl-fin: \bigwedge a. finite\ \{b. (a,b) \in \{(a,b) . b \in set\ (r\ a)\}^{\widehat{*}}\}$

abbreviation(*input*) *sel-list* **where** $sel-list\ x \equiv case\ x\ of\ Cons\ h\ t \Rightarrow (h,t)$

sublocale *subsumption-list* \subseteq *subsumption-impl* *r* *subsumes* *set* *sel-list* *append* *length*

<proof>

sublocale *relation-subsumption-list* \subseteq *relation-subsumption-impl* *r* *subsumes* *set* *sel-list* *append* *length*

<proof>

context *relation-subsumption-list*

begin

The main equivalence proof between the generic work list algorithm and the one operating on lists

lemma *mk-rtrancl-list-main*: *fin* = *set finl* \implies *set (mk-rtrancl-list-main subsumes r todo finl)* = *mk-rtrancl-main todo fin*

<proof>

lemma *mk-rtrancl-list*: *set (mk-rtrancl-list subsumes r init)* = *mk-rtrancl init*

<proof>

end

end

References

- [1] C. S. Lee, N. D. Jones, and A. M. Ben-Amram. The size-change principle for program termination. In *Proc. POPL '01*, pages 81–92. ACM Press, 2001.
- [2] C. Sternagel and R. Thiemann. Executable Transitive Closures of Finite Relations. In *Archive of Formal Proofs*. <http://isa-afp.org/entries/Transitive-Closure.shtml>, Mar. 2011. Formalization.
- [3] R. Thiemann and C. Sternagel. Certification of termination proofs using CeTA. In *Proc. TPHOLs'09*, volume 5674 of *LNCS*, pages 452–468, 2009.