

Towards Reversible Computation in Erlang

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*26th International Symposium on
Logic-Based Program Synthesis and Transformation*

September 8, 2016

Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Reversible Computation

A computation principle is **reversible** if any forward computation can be undone by a finite sequence of backward steps

Applications

- debugging
- enforcing fault-tolerance
- quantum computing
- ...

Landauer's embedding

An **irreversible computation** can be turned into a **reversible one** if we store the *history* of the computation.

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Motivation

We have recently introduced a **reversible term rewriting** principle.

We want to consider a real programming language: **Erlang**

Why Erlang?

- Introduces concurrency, a challenge for reversibility
- Used in large-scale distributed systems
- **Reversible Computation can contribute** to its reliability (debugging, safe sessions, etc.)

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Erlang

Erlang's features

Main features of Erlang:

- integration of **functional** and **concurrent** features
- concurrency model based on asynchronous message-passing
- dynamic typing
- hot code loading

These features make it appropriate for **distributed, fault-tolerant** applications (Facebook, WhatsApp)

Erlang syntax

We consider a **subset of Erlang** with this syntax:

```

Module ::= module Atom = fun1, ..., funn
  fun   ::= fname = fun (X1, ..., Xn) → expr
  fname ::= Atom/Integer
  lit    ::= Atom | Integer | Float | []
  expr   ::= Var | lit | fname | [expr1|expr2] | {expr1, ..., exprn}
          | call expr (expr1, ..., exprn) | apply expr (expr1, ..., exprn)
          | case expr of clause1; ...; clausem end
          | let Var = expr1 in expr2 | receive clause1; ...; clausen end
          | spawn(expr, [expr1, ..., exprn]) | expr1 ! expr2 | self()
  clause ::= pat when expr1 → expr2
  pat    ::= Var | lit | [pat1|pat2] | {pat1, ..., patn}

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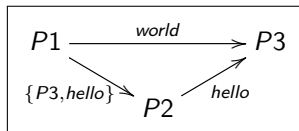
```

Example

```
main/0 = fun () → let P2 = spawn(echo/0, [])
                  in let P3 = spawn(target/0, [])
                  in let _ = P3 ! world
                  in let P2 ! {P3, hello}
```

```
target/0 = fun () → receive
                A → receive
                    B → {A, B}
                end
            end
```

```
echo/0 = fun () → receive
                {P, M} → P ! M
            end
```

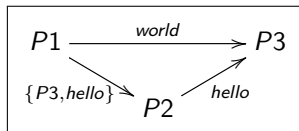


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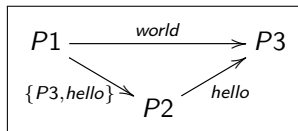


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```
target/0 = fun () → receive
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```
    A → receive
```

```
        B → {A, B}
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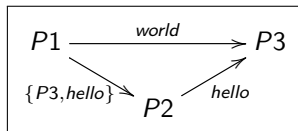
```
    end
```

```
end
```

```
echo/0 = fun () → receive
```

```
    {P, M} → P ! M
```

```
end
```



Semantics

Previous definitions

Definition (process)

A process is a triple $\langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle$ where

- p is the pid of the process
- (θ, e) is the control of the state
- q is the process' mailbox

Definition (system)

A system is denoted by $\Gamma; II$, where

- II is a pool of processes
- Γ is the global mailbox of the system

We often use $\Gamma; \langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& II$

Semantics of expressions: sequential actions

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{(Var)} \frac{}{\theta, X \xrightarrow{\tau} \theta, \theta(X)} \quad \text{(Tuple)} \frac{\theta, e_i \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', e'_i \quad i \in \{1, \dots, n\}}{\theta, \{e_1, \dots, e_n\} \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', \{\overline{e_{1,i-1}}, e'_i, \overline{e_{i+1,n}}\}} \\
 \\
 \text{(List1)} \frac{\theta, e_1 \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', e'_1}{\theta, [e_1|e_2] \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', [e'_1|e_2]} \quad \text{(List2)} \frac{\theta, e_2 \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', e'_2}{\theta, [e_1|e_2] \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', [e_1|e'_2]} \\
 \\
 \text{(Let1)} \frac{\theta, e_1 \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', e'_1}{\theta, \text{let } X = e_1 \text{ in } e_2 \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', \text{let } X = e'_1 \text{ in } e_2} \quad \text{(Let2)} \frac{}{\theta, \text{let } X = v \text{ in } e \xrightarrow{\tau} \theta[X \mapsto v], e} \\
 \\
 \text{(Case1)} \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', e'}{\theta, \text{case } e \text{ of } c_1; \dots; c_n \text{ end} \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', \text{case } e' \text{ of } c_1; \dots; c_n \text{ end}} \quad \text{(Case2)} \frac{\text{match}(v, c_1, \dots, c_n) = \langle \theta_i, e_i \rangle}{\theta, \text{case } v \text{ of } c_1; \dots; c_n \text{ end} \xrightarrow{\tau} \theta \theta_i, e_i} \\
 \\
 \text{(Apply1)} \frac{\theta, e_i \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', e'_i \quad i \in \{1, \dots, n\}}{\theta, \text{apply } a/n (\overline{e_n}) \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', \text{apply } a/n (\overline{e_{1,i-1}}, e'_i, \overline{e_{i+1,n}})} \\
 \\
 \text{(Apply2)} \frac{\mu(a/n) = \text{fun } (X_1, \dots, X_n) \rightarrow e}{\theta, \text{apply } a/n (v_1, \dots, v_n) \xrightarrow{\tau} \{X_1 \mapsto v_1, \dots, X_n \mapsto v_n\}, e}
 \end{array}$$

Semantics of expressions: concurrent actions

$$(Send1) \frac{\theta, e_1 \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', e'_1}{\theta, e_1 ! e_2 \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', e'_1 ! e_2} \quad \frac{\theta, e_2 \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', e'_2}{\theta, e_1 ! e_2 \xrightarrow{\ell} \theta', e_1 ! e'_2}$$

$$(Send2) \frac{}{\theta, v_1 ! v_2 \xrightarrow{\text{send}(v_1, v_2)} \theta, v_2}$$

$$(Receive) \frac{}{\theta, \text{receive } c_1; \dots; c_n \text{ end} \xrightarrow{\text{rec}(y, \overline{c}_n)} \theta, y}$$

$$(Spawn) \frac{}{\theta, \text{spawn}(a/n, [e_1, \dots, e_n]) \xrightarrow{\text{spawn}(y, a/n, [\overline{e}_n])} \theta, y}$$

$$(Self) \frac{}{\theta, \text{self}() \xrightarrow{\text{self}(y)} \theta, y}$$

System semantics

$$\begin{array}{l}
\text{(Exp)} \quad \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\tau} \theta', e'}{\Gamma; \langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \mapsto \Gamma; \langle p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \& \Pi} \\
\text{(Send)} \quad \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\text{send}(p'', v)} \theta', e'}{\Gamma; \langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \mapsto \Gamma \cup (p, p'', v); \langle p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \& \Pi} \\
\text{(Receive)} \quad \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\text{rec}(y, \overline{c}_n)} \theta', e' \quad \text{matchrec}(\overline{c}_n, q) = (\theta_i, e_i, q')}{\Gamma; \langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \mapsto \Gamma; \langle p, (\theta' \theta_i, e' \{y \mapsto e_i\}), q' \rangle \& \Pi} \\
\text{(Spawn)} \quad \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\text{spawn}(y, a/n, [\overline{e}_n])} \theta', e' \quad p' \text{ is a fresh pid}}{\Gamma; \langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \mapsto \Gamma; \langle p, (\theta', e' \{y \mapsto p'\}) \rangle \& \langle p', (\theta', \text{apply } a/n (e_1, \dots, e_n)), [] \rangle} \\
\text{(Self)} \quad \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\text{self}(y)} \theta', e'}{\Gamma; \langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \mapsto \Gamma; \langle p, (\theta', e' \{y \mapsto p\}) \rangle \& \Pi} \\
\text{(Sched)} \quad \frac{\alpha(\Gamma) = (p', p) \quad \Pi = \langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi'}{\Gamma; \Pi \mapsto \Gamma \setminus \{(p', p, v)\}; \langle p, (\theta, e), v : q \rangle \& \Pi'}
\end{array}$$

System semantics

$$(Exp) \quad \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\tau} \theta', e'}{\Gamma; \langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \mapsto \Gamma; \langle p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \& \Pi}$$

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System semantics

- (Exp)
$$\frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\tau} \theta', e'}{\Gamma; \langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \mapsto \Gamma; \langle p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \& \Pi}$$
- (Send)
$$\frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\text{send}(p'', v)} \theta', e'}{\Gamma; \langle p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \mapsto \Gamma \cup (p, p'', v); \langle p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \& \Pi}$$
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Reversible Semantics

Landauer's embedding

Checkpoints

We use **checkpoints** to stop backward computation: $\#_k^t$

- k is a label (identifying the kind of checkpoint)
- t is a unique identifier

there are **three kinds** of checkpoints:

- **introduced by the programmer**: $\#_{ch}$

let $_ = \text{check}$ in $expr$

- **internal**: $\#_\alpha$ (message dispatching) and $\#_{sp}$ (spawning a process)

Forward (reversible) semantics

$$(Internal) \quad \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\tau} \theta', e'}{\Gamma; \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \rightarrow \Gamma; \langle \tau(\theta, e) : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \& \Pi}$$

$$(Check) \quad \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\text{check}(y)} \theta', e' \quad \text{and } t \text{ is fresh}}{\Gamma; \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \rightarrow \Gamma; \langle \text{check}(\theta, e) : \#_{ch}^t : \pi, p, (\theta', e' \{y \mapsto t\}), q \rangle \& \Pi}$$

$$(Self) \quad \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\text{self}(y)} \theta', e'}{\Gamma; \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \rightarrow \Gamma; \langle \text{self}(\theta, e) : \pi, p, (\theta', e' \{y \mapsto p\}), q \rangle \& \Pi}$$

Forward (reversible) semantics (cont.)

$$(Spawn) \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\text{spawn}(y, a/n, [e_1, \dots, e_n])} \theta', e' \quad p' \text{ is a fresh pid} \quad \text{and } t \text{ is fresh}}{\Gamma; \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \rightarrow \Gamma; \langle \text{spawn}(\theta, e, p') : \pi, p, (\theta', e' \{y \mapsto p'\}), q \rangle \& ([], p', (\theta, (\text{apply } a/n (e_1, \dots, e_n)), [])) \& \Pi}$$

$$(Send) \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\text{send}(p'', v)} \theta', e' \quad \text{and } t \text{ is fresh}}{\Gamma; \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \rightarrow \Gamma \cup (p, p'', \{t, v\}); \langle \text{send}(p'', \theta, e, t) : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \& \Pi}$$

$$(Receive) \frac{\theta, e \xrightarrow{\text{rec}(y, \overline{c}l_n)} \theta', e' \quad \text{matchrec}(\overline{c}l_n, q) = (\theta_i, e_i, q', t)}{\Gamma; \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \rightarrow \Gamma; \langle \text{rec}(\theta, e, q) : \pi, p, (\theta' \theta_i, e' \{y \mapsto e_i\}), q' \rangle \& \Pi}$$

$$(Sched) \frac{\alpha(\Gamma) = (p', p) \quad \Pi = \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi'}{\Gamma; \Pi \rightarrow \Gamma \setminus (p', p, \{t, v\}); \langle \alpha(p', p, \{t, v\}) : \pi, p, (\theta, e), \{t, v\} : q \rangle \& \Pi'}$$

Backward semantics

Causal consistency

An action cannot be undone until all the actions that depend on it have been already undone

E.g., if a process spawns another process, we cannot undo this process spawning until all the actions performed by the new process are undone

Backward semantics (1)

We follow a rollback fashion:

$$(Undo1) \quad \Gamma; \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \lfloor \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\#_{ch}^t} \& \Pi$$

$$(Undo2) \quad \Gamma; \lfloor \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\Psi} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \lfloor \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\Psi \cup \#_{ch}^t} \& \Pi$$

where Ψ is the set of *pending checkpoints*

Backward semantics (2)

Then, we apply the backward semantics (system rules)

- Sending a message: propagates the rollback to the receiver
- Spawning a process: propagates the rollback to the new process

(*Send2*)

$$\begin{aligned} & \Gamma; [\langle \text{send}(p'', \theta, e, t) : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle]_{\Psi} \& \langle \pi'', p'', (\theta'', e''), q'' \rangle \& \Pi \\ & \quad \leftarrow \Gamma; [\langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle]_{\Psi} \& [\langle \pi'', p'', (\theta'', e''), q'' \rangle]_{\#_{\alpha}^t} \& \Pi \\ & \quad \text{if } (p, p'', \{t, v\}) \text{ does not occur in } \Gamma \end{aligned}$$

(*Spawn*)

$$\begin{aligned} & \Gamma; [\langle \text{spawn}(\theta, e, p'') : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle]_{\Psi} \& \langle \pi'', p'', (\theta'', e''), q'' \rangle \& \Pi \\ & \quad \leftarrow \Gamma; [\langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle]_{\Psi} \& [\langle \pi'', p'', (\theta'', e''), q'' \rangle]_{\#_{sp}^{p''}} \& \Pi \end{aligned}$$

Backward semantics (3)

The rollback terminates when all checkpoints are reached
(and forward computation is resumed)

$$(Check) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \#_{ch}^t : \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi \cup \#_{ch}^t} \& \Pi \longleftarrow \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi$$

$$(Stop1) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\emptyset} \& \Pi \longleftarrow \Gamma; \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi$$

Conclusions

Conclusions and future work

We have defined a **reversible semantics for a subset of Erlang**

Ongoing work:

- **correctness:**
 - every forward step can be reversed
 - every system reached with the backward semantics, could have been reached with forward semantics from the initial system
- introduce a notion of safe session
- implementation

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Thanks for your attention!

Backward semantics: checkpoints

Ψ is the set of *pending checkpoints*

$$(Undo1) \quad \Gamma; \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \lfloor \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\#_{ch}^t} \& \Pi$$

$$(Undo2) \quad \Gamma; \lfloor \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\Psi} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \lfloor \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\Psi \cup \#_{ch}^t} \& \Pi$$

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$$(Stop2) \quad \Gamma; \lfloor \langle [], p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\{\#_{sp}^t\}} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \Pi$$

$$(Check) \quad \Gamma; \lfloor \langle \#_{ch}^t : \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\Psi \cup \#_{ch}^t} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \lfloor \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\Psi} \& \Pi$$

$$(Discard) \quad \Gamma; \lfloor \langle \#_{ch}^t : \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\Psi} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \lfloor \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rfloor_{\Psi} \& \Pi \quad \text{if } \#_{ch}^t \notin \Psi$$

Backward semantics: system rules

$$(Internal) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \tau(\theta, e) : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi$$

$$(Check) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \text{check}(\theta, e) : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi$$

$$(Self) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \text{self}(\theta, e) : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi$$

$$(Spawn) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \text{spawn}(\theta, e, p'') : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \langle \pi'', p'', (\theta'', e''), q'' \rangle \& \Pi \\ \leftarrow \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \llbracket \langle \pi'', p'', (\theta'', e''), q'' \rangle \rrbracket_{\#_{sp} p''} \& \Pi$$

Backward semantics: system rules (cont.)

$$(Receive) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \text{rec}(\theta, e, q) : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q' \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi$$

$$(Send1) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \text{send}(p'', \theta, e, t) : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma'; \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi$$

if $(p, p'', \{t, v\})$ occurs in Γ , with $\Gamma' = \Gamma \setminus \setminus (p, p'', v, t)$

$$(Send2) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \text{send}(p'', \theta, e, t) : \pi, p, (\theta', e'), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \langle \pi'', p'', (\theta'', e''), q'' \rangle \& \Pi$$

$$\leftarrow \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \llbracket \langle \pi'', p'', (\theta'', e''), q'' \rangle \rrbracket_{\#_{\alpha}^t} \& \Pi$$

if $(p, p'', \{t, v\})$ does not occur in Γ

$$(Sched1) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \alpha(p'', p, \{t, v\}) : \pi, p, (\theta, e), \{t, v\} : q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi \cup \#_{\alpha}^t} \& \Pi \leftarrow \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi$$

$$(Sched2) \quad \Gamma; \llbracket \langle \alpha(p'', p, \{t, v\}) : \pi, p, (\theta, e), \{t, v\} : q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi$$

$$\leftarrow \Gamma \sqcup (p'', p, \{t, v\}); \llbracket \langle \pi, p, (\theta, e), q \rangle \rrbracket_{\Psi} \& \Pi \quad \text{if } \#_{\alpha}^t \notin \Psi$$