

Semantics of the Phase Model of Production: Formalization

Jürgen Ebert and Martin Schulze, University of Koblenz, Germany

Corresponding Author: M. Schulze

Universität Koblenz-Landau, Campus Koblenz, Institut für Softwaretechnik

Postfach 201602, D-56016 Koblenz, Germany

+49-261-287 -2722 (J. Ebert) / -2703 (M. Schulze) / -2721 (Fax)

{`ebert, schulze`}@uni-koblenz.de

`http://www.uni-koblenz.de/ist/`

Abstract

Syntax and semantics of most visual languages are not formally defined. But to build tools like editors or to use diagrams as input for a simulation algorithm, a formalization of the syntax and semantics is necessary to define which diagrams are valid and what is their meaning.

In this paper a method, developed in software engineering to formalize the semantics of visual languages, is applied to a visual language in process control engineering, namely the “Phase Model of Production”. In this approach class diagrams and constraints in a \mathcal{Z} -like formal notation (EER/GRAL) are used as conceptual models to define the syntax of visual languages. Then, the semantics is defined operationally by abstract automata defined in \mathcal{Z} , that make use of the syntax description. Two different semantics, for discrete processes and for continuous processes, are presented.

1 Introduction

1.1 Visual Languages

Visual languages are a means of communication often used in process control engineering, software engineering, as well as in other disciplines. Diagrams are used to describe models of parts of reality. They are used as a means for discussions between experts and laymen. They can be used to document existing systems or to specify planned systems. On the one hand diagrams are *easy to understand*, on the other hand they serve as a *formal specification of a system*. Examples for commonly used visual languages in the fields of process control engineering and software engineering are flowsheets [4], Petri nets [2], and the sublanguages of the Unified Modeling Language UML [3].

Many visual languages do not have a formal specification and are used *unprecisely*. This is not a problem per se, since for drafts one does not want to be plagued by strictness and one likes to sketch one’s ideas without restrictions. But if diagrams are used in a contract or in an instruction, one has to know exactly what is meant by them. Furthermore, to work efficiently with diagrams, one needs *software tool support*. To implement tools for visual languages, a precise formalization is needed, too. To build a visual editor a software engineer has to know exactly the *syntax* of the diagrams: which elements are used, how they may be connected, which further constraints must hold. For example, in Petri nets there are places, transitions, tokens and connections. Tokens may only be put on places but not on transitions, and the graph of places and transitions with their connections must be bipartite. To simulate the behaviour of a modeled system one must also know the exact meaning, the *semantics* of the diagrams. For example, to simulate a system by means of a Petri net, one has to know, under which conditions the transitions fire and how the tokens are moved between places thereby.

In this paper, we demonstrate a method to formalize the semantics of visual languages to put them onto a mathematical foundation [5]. The method has been used successfully to formalize the semantics of object-oriented languages in the field of software engineering [10]. We apply this method to a visual language often used in process control engineering, the “Phase Model of Production”.

1.2 Phase Model of Production

The *Phase Model of Production* (PMP) [8], [1] is a visual language to specify production processes and other processes. It was developed from flowsheet diagrams by adding markers for products between the processes.

Figure 1 gives a very simple example, a process HeatingUp consuming two products WaterA and WaterB and producing a product WaterC. The symbols used in Phase Model diagrams, their application areas, advantages, and disadvantages are discussed in [7] in detail.

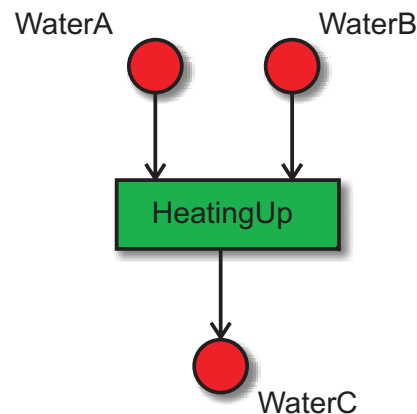


Figure 1: Simple Example of a Phase Model of Production

A formal semantics for the Phase Model of Production does not exist yet. In fact, the diagrams are used for different scenarios that are not distinguished in the syntax. For instance, the flow of products between the processes can either be *discrete* or *continuous*. Furthermore, a diagram can be seen either as a kind of *dataflow diagram* or as a kind of *state transition diagram*. In a cooperation between the Lehrstuhl für Prozessleittechnik (RWTH Aachen, Germany) and the Institut für Softwaretechnik (University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany) several variants of the semantics have been discussed and formally defined. In this paper we will introduce two different semantics to give an impression of the spectrum covered by this approach.

1.3 Contents

The paper is organized as follows: In chapter 2 *conceptual modeling* with class diagrams and a constraint language is introduced as a method to define the *syntax* of visual languages, and this method is applied to the Phase Model of Production. In chapter 3 *abstract automata* are introduced as a method to define the *semantics* of visual languages. The method is applied to formalize two semantics, one dataflow like semantics and one state transition like semantics. In chapter 4 we draw a *conclusion* and explain what has to be done yet.

2 Formalization of Syntax

2.1 Conceptual Modeling

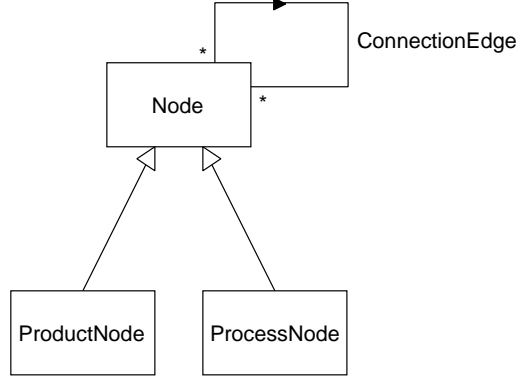
Our approach to formalize the syntax of (visual) languages is to use class diagrams as meta-models of the abstract syntax of the language [6]. We do not need to define the shapes of the symbols and their spatial arrangement. *Classes* define the constituents of the diagrams. *Associations* define the allowed relations between these constituents. *Attributes* of classes and associations define the possible properties of the constituents and their relations. Further *constraints* are expressed as multiplicities of associations and by additional clauses in a language called GRAL.

Formally, a class diagram defines a set of graphs. Any correct diagram of the modeled visual language can be represented as a graph that is a member of that set. In our approach to define the semantics of a visual language we use these conceptual models as a *basis for the semantics formalism*.

2.2 Application to Phase Model Diagrams

The conceptual model of Phase Model diagrams is shown in figure 2. Phase Model diagrams consist of nodes (Node) which represent either processes (ProcessNode) or products (ProductNode). They are connected by flows (ConnectionEdge). The class diagram is extended by three GRAL-constraints: There must not be

any flow connections between the same kind of nodes ($p1$), no product may be consumed by more than one process ($p2$), and every process consumes at least one product and produces at least one product ($p3$).



for G in PMP assert

$p_1: \forall e : E_{ConnectionEdge} \bullet type(\alpha(e)) \neq type(\omega(e)) ;$

$p_2: \forall pdn : V_{ProductNode} \bullet \delta_{\rightarrow}(pdn) \leq 1 ;$

$p_3: \forall pcn : V_{ProcessNode} \bullet \delta_{\rightarrow}(pcn) > 0 \wedge \delta_{\leftarrow}(pcn) > 0$

end.

Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Phase Model Diagrams

3 Formalization of Semantics

3.1 Abstract Automata

Our approach to formalize the semantics of (visual) languages is to map diagrams to abstract automata. The abstract automata serve as an operational semantics for the visual language [5]. We define these abstract automata using the specification language \mathcal{Z}^1 [9]. A definition of an abstract automaton has four parts.

- *Global definitions* are the basis for the other parts. They define the *level of abstraction* of the semantics definition.
- The *Configuration* schema defines the *state space* of the automaton.
- The *Delta* schema defines the *transitions* from one state to the next.
- The *Init* schema defines the set of *start states* of the automaton.

All parts can have references to the abstract syntax description by using properties of the syntax graph.

3.2 Application to Phase Model Diagrams of Discrete Processes

Phase Model diagrams can be used to describe systems, in which *discrete individual products* flow from one process to another. The processes may consume, change, and produce the products and are activated *step by step*. See [7] for an example.

¹We assume some basic knowledge about \mathcal{Z} . A very short summary of the used \mathcal{Z} -concepts is given in the appendix.

Global Definitions (1)

We assume the existence of a universe $PRODUCT$, the set of all possible products.

$[PRODUCT]$

Values of product attributes express properties of products. The concrete attributes depend on the kind of product, but here we ignore this fact. We assume the existence of a universe $ATTRIBUTE$ of all possible attribute identifiers and of a universe $VALUE$ of all possible values.

$[ATTRIBUTE, VALUE]$

A mapping $PRODUCT_STATE$ from attribute identifiers to values characterizes the state of a product.

$PRODUCT_STATE == ATTRIBUTE \mapsto VALUE$

An example for a $PRODUCT_STATE$ is given in figure 3.

ATTRIBUTE	VALUE
temperature	313 K
specific heat capacity	4177 J/(kgK)
mass	15 kg

Figure 3: A $PRODUCT_STATE$

Configuration

A state of a system described by a Phase Model diagram is characterized by the products in the system, their allocation to product nodes and their current properties expressed by the values of their attributes.

$$\begin{array}{l}
 \text{--- } Config_{PMP_Discrete} \text{ ---} \\
 \text{products} : \mathbb{F} PRODUCT \\
 \text{allocation} : V_{ProductNode} \mapsto PRODUCT \\
 \text{currentProperties} : PRODUCT \mapsto PRODUCT_STATE \\
 \text{---} \\
 \text{ran allocation} = \text{dom currentProperties} = \text{products}
 \end{array}$$

$products$ is the set of all products existing in a Phase Model diagram at the given state. $allocation$ describes which product lies on which product node. On every product node there may be one product at most, and every existing product must lie on a product node. $currentProperties$ maps a product state (in terms of attribute value pairs) to each product.

Figure 4 sketches a state of the example diagram depicted in figure 1.

Global Definitions (2)

The knowledge about the processes that are performed on a process node is not specified in a Phase Model diagram. To describe the semantics one needs to supply the transformation function for each process node which defines the behaviour of the respective processes.

$$\begin{array}{l}
 \text{transform} : V_{ProcessNode} \rightarrow \\
 \quad ((E_{ConnectionEdge} \mapsto PRODUCT \times PRODUCT_STATE) \\
 \quad \rightarrow (E_{ConnectionEdge} \mapsto PRODUCT \times PRODUCT_STATE)) \\
 \text{---} \\
 \forall pcn : V_{ProcessNode} \bullet \\
 \quad \text{first}(\text{dom transform}(pcn)) \subseteq \Lambda^-(pcn) \wedge \\
 \quad \text{first}(\text{ran transform}(pcn)) \subseteq \Lambda^+(pcn)
 \end{array}$$

$transform$ is a function that provides to every process node the transformation function of the processes that are performed on it. The transformation function describes which products in which state lie on the output product nodes of the process node after executing the process, depending on the states of the products on the input product nodes. To perform a simulation of a system, concrete transformation functions for all process nodes have to be provided. Figure 5 sketches an extract of an exemplary transformation function.

ATTRIBUTE	VALUE
temperature	313 K
specific heat capacity	4177 J/(kgK)
mass	15 kg

ATTRIBUTE	VALUE
temperature	293 K
specific heat capacity	4177 J/(kgK)
mass	10 kg

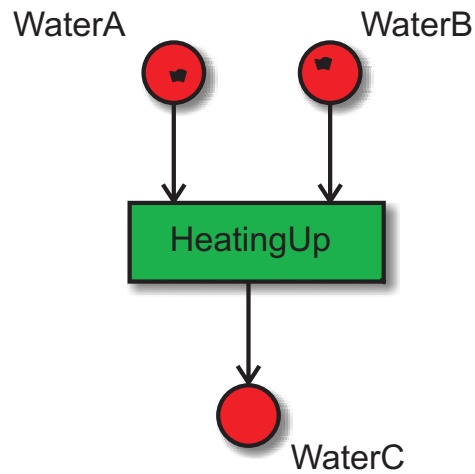


Figure 4: A State of the Example Phase Model of Production

HeatingUp	$out1: \text{temperature} = \frac{mass_{in1} \cdot \text{temperature}_{in1} + mass_{in2} \cdot \text{temperature}_{in2}}{mass_{in1} + mass_{in2}} + \frac{8000W \cdot 100s}{(mass_{in1} + mass_{in2}) \cdot c_{in1}}$ $mass = mass_{in1} + mass_{in2}$ $c = c_{in1}$
ProcessX	$out1: \dots$ $out2: \dots$
...	...

Figure 5: Extract of a *transform* function

Delta

In the discrete case a state change of the system means executing one process on a process node, thereby consuming the products on its input product nodes, and producing products on its output product nodes according to the transformation function.

$\Delta Config_{PMP_Discrete}$ $pcn : V_{ProcessNode}$
LET $output(pcn) ==$ $transform$ (pcn) $(\{e : \Lambda^-(pcn) \bullet (e \mapsto (allocation(\alpha(e)), currentProperties(allocation(\alpha(e))))\})\})$
IN $products' =$ $(products \setminus allocation(\Gamma^-(pcn))) \cup first(output(pcn)(\Lambda^+(pcn)))$ $allocation' =$ $(\Gamma^-(pcn) \triangleleft allocation) \cup (\{e : \Lambda^+(pcn) \bullet (\omega(e), first(output(pcn)(e)))\})$ $currentProperties' =$ $products' \triangleleft (currentProperties \oplus \{e : \Lambda^+(pcn) \bullet output(pcn)(e)\})$
END

Executing a process pcn changes $products$, $allocation$, and $currentProperties$ in a straightforward manner. $products'$, the set of products in the system after execution, is the old set $products$ without the consumed products and extended by the produced products of pcn . $allocation$ and $currentProperties$ are changed accordingly to reflect the change.

Init

A system defined by a Phase Model diagram may be started in any valid state.

$Init_{PMP_Discrete}$ $Config_{PMP_Discrete}$
--

3.3 Application to Phase Model Diagrams of Continuous Processes

An alternative view on systems is given if Phase Model diagrams are interpreted as state transition descriptions. These kinds of descriptions occur for instance if a *continuous flow* through the system is modeled and processes are executed *simultaneously*. See [7] for an example.

Global Definitions

Because in the continuous case the products do not have an identity, they need not be modeled explicitly. The universe $PRODUCT$ is not needed anymore and $transform$ has a simpler signature.

$transform : V_{ProcessNode}$ $\rightarrow (E_{ConnectionEdge} \mapsto PRODUCT_STATE)$ $\rightarrow (E_{ConnectionEdge} \mapsto PRODUCT_STATE)$
$\forall pcn : V_{ProcessNode} \bullet$ $dom(\text{dom } transform(pcn)) = \{\Lambda^-(pcn)\}$ $\wedge dom(\text{ran } transform(pcn)) = \{\Lambda^+(pcn)\}$

Configuration

Due to the elimination of $PRODUCT$, the state of a system is now characterized by $currentProperties$ alone. $products$ and $allocation$ are not needed anymore.

$Config_{PMP_Continuous}$ $currentProperties : V_{ProductNode} \rightarrow PRODUCT_STATE$
--

Delta

To define the transformation process of the continuous case a clock pulse is still needed. But because there are no products to be removed or created, it only has to be modeled how the states of the output product nodes *currentProperties'* of all processes depend via *transform* on the states of the input product nodes *currentProperties* one time step before.

$$\frac{\Delta Config_{PMP_Continuous}}{\Delta Config_{PMP_Continuous}} \frac{Delta_{PMP_Continuous}}{\Delta Config_{PMP_Continuous}}$$
$$\forall pcn : V_{ProcessNode} \bullet$$
$$\{e : \Lambda^+(pcn) \bullet e \mapsto currentProperties'(\omega(e))\}$$
$$= transform(\{e : \Lambda^-(pcn) \bullet e \mapsto currentProperties(\alpha(e))\})$$

Init

Like in the discrete case, a system may be started in any valid state.

$$\frac{Init_PMP_Continuous}{Config_{PMP_Continuous}}$$

4 Conclusion

A method to formalize the semantics of visual languages by abstract automata on the basis of a conceptual model was presented and used to define two different kinds of semantics for the Phase Model of Production. The presented semantics have a similar structure, so it is easy to see their differences. All semantics postulate the existence of a transformation function for the processes. If a concrete transformation function for a modeled system is given, it would be possible to generate a simulation tool for the system.

The presented semantics are only a part of a broad spectrum of possible semantics. Many more have been discussed in the cooperation between the project partners.

E.g: the presented semantics for continuous processes assumes that all processes have the *same dead time*, i.e. the attribute values at the output product nodes of all processes only depend on the attribute values at the input product nodes exactly one time step before. This is not realistic, so a more sophisticated semantics was developed, that is not presented here. This semantics allows *different dead times* for each combination of input and output product nodes of all processes and it even allows dependencies to more than one time step in the *history* of an input process node. The idea is to assign to each product node his history as a sequence of product states and to expand *transform* such that it takes into account all states of this history.

Another variant of the presented semantics was developed for *stationary systems*. In this case the dead time is 0 and the attribute values of the output product nodes depend on the values of the input product nodes at the same time. Such a system never does change its state.

Further work is being done to formalize a semantics of systems that consist of discrete and continuous processes simultaneously. Therefore *buffers* and transitions between both kinds of processes have to be modeled.

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Summary of \mathcal{Z}

$\mathcal{Z}[9]$ is a concise mathematical notation based on predicate calculus and set theory.

Structured data may be defined using schemas. A schema consists of some declarations describing the components of a composite structure and some predicates.

$$\frac{S}{\langle declarations \rangle}$$
$$\langle predicates \rangle$$

By the declarations variables are bound to elements of sets. The predicates add constraints, that the variables should fulfill. An axiomatic definition introduces some global constants in an analogous manner.

$$\left| \begin{array}{l} < \text{declaration} > \\ \hline < \text{predicates} > \end{array} \right.$$

Sets may be introduced as given sets as in $[X]$ or they may be built by expressions such as $\mathbb{P} X$ ($\mathbb{F} X$) as powersets (finite powersets). For two sets X and Y , $X \rightarrow Y$ ($X \rightarrowtail Y$, $X \twoheadrightarrow Y$, $X \hookrightarrow Y$) denotes the set of all total (partial, finite partial, injective) functions from X to Y . $\text{dom} f$ ($\text{ran} f$) delivers the domain (range) of function f . $X \triangleleft f$ ($X \triangleleft f$) returns the function derived from f by restricting its domain to (reducing its domain by) X . $f \oplus g$ overrides f on the domain of g by g . Functions may be applied on sets by using $(\lfloor$ and $\rfloor)$ as parentheses.

Using $i == e$ any \mathcal{Z} -expression e may be bound to an identifier i . Using **LET** $i == e$ **IN** e' **END** such an abbreviation definition may be made local to another expression e' .

A schema may be used to describe the states of a system. If a schema defines transitions between states, the components of the new states are primed by a dash symbol. ΔS introduces the components of S in an unprimed and a primed version.

In GRAL [6] \mathcal{Z} is used to describe graph properties. Here V (E) denotes vertex (edge) sets. For a given vertex v , $\Gamma(v)$ describes its adjacent vertices, and $\Lambda(v)$ its incident edges. $\delta(v)$ returns its degree. For an edge e , $\alpha(e)$ ($\omega(e)$) stands for its start (end) vertex.

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