Concurrent Systems

Nebenläufige Systeme

XII. Transactional Memory

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Agenda

Preface

Principles
  General
  Characteristic
  Operation

Utilisation
  Abstraction
  Examplification
  Discussion

Summary
Outline

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discussion on abstract concepts as to facilitation of programming of parallel processes by means of transactional regions

- explicitly versus implicitly transactional approaches
- hardware (HTM), software (STM), or hybrid (HyTM) solutions
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- begin and end for the implicit case
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- strength of transparency: extent of transactional data set, retry loop
- failure of transactions: frequency, reason, alternative measures
- type of synchronisation: unilateral, multilateral
Subject Matter

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**Universal Remedy?**

*The bigger the critical shared state is, the better TM seems to be.*
*But what about support, overhead, control, and coordination?*
Decrease of Suffering, Increase of Happiness...
abstraction paves the way for a “decrease of suffering” in the design of programs for non-blocking synchronisation of parallel processes similar to blocking synchronisation such as mutual exclusion, the secured program sections describes a seemingly sequential process but unlike that synchronisation pattern, the respective program sections may be run by non-sequential processes within those sections, on a simple load/store basis, instructions are given what data need to be kept consistent it is up to the TM (hardware/software) system functioning underneath to maintain consistency of that data set as the case may be, “increase of happiness” can be reached due to a potential relaxation in identifying a solution stressless labour, contentment, room for creativity, higher productivity physiological (physical) and psychological (emotional, cognitive) aspects in spite of everything, not run the risk of overstating sequential and understating parallel thinking...
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**pros**
- allows for the definition of customized atomic operations that apply to a group of possibly arbitrary computer words
- can be seen as a caching method for implementing data structures in a lock-free manner [2]
- technically feasible as “straightforward extensions to multiprocessor cache-coherence protocols” [10]
- offers a more convenient handling compared to, e.g., a multi-word CAS using (software-implemented CAS-based) LL/SC [14]
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cons
- may be a replacement for multilateral synchronisation (i.e., mutual exclusion using e.g. locks or binary semaphores), only
- neither facilitates nor supports, but rather hampers, unilateral (i.e., logical/conditional) synchronisation
- prone to overhead in case of mindless reuse of external functions or procedures from libraries, for instance
- tempt developers of non-sequential programs to see things through rose-coloured glasses
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**TM is a means to an end**—and is far from being a cure-all...
Levels of Abstraction

- depending on the rootedness of the implementation, divided into:
  - **HTM**  ■ **hardware** transactional memory [10]
  - **STM**  ■ **software** transactional memory [17]
  - **HyTM**  ■ **hybrid** transactional memory [5]
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**HTM**
- **hardware** transactional memory [10], typically classified into [8]:
  - *explicitly transactional* (ASF proposal [1], RTM [12])
    - memory instructions indicate each single transactional load/store
    - may also provide instructions to start and commit transactions
  - *implicitly transactional* (SLE [16], Rock [18], PPC [7], HLE [12])
    - begin/end instructions, only, specify the boundaries of a transaction
    - if applicable, options to identify *non-transactional* memory locations
- buffering capabilities limited by (L1, L2) cache size

**STM**
- hybrid transactional memory [5], STM as a fall-back solution
- heterogeneous transactions: (1) HTM-based and (2) STM-based
  (1) gets aborted if in conflict with (2), may be restarted as (2)

howsoever,**linguistic support** is desirable—but, with or without it, TM is no panacea to solve all non-sequential programming issues
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- but, not yet really common in available processors architectures:
  - IBM Blue Gene/Q (PowerPC A2 [7])
    - limited to multi-versioned L2 cache (20 MiB out of 32 MiB, [19, p. 129])
    - “watch granule” is 64 B [11, p. 509], same as cache line size
  - Intel Haswell (TSX [12])\(^1\)
    - transaction size limited to L1 cache (64 KiB), 64 B cache line

\(^1\)Mindless of the TSX bug [13, p. 47], which leaves TSX barred for normal use.
transactional memory is a **shared region** of problem-specific size
- for each memory cell therein, an **ownership** relationship is maintained
- which identifies the owning transaction comprising the particular cell
  - described by a per-process **transaction record** also held in shared memory
STM: Organisation of the Data Structures acc. [17, p.103]

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Transaction Data Set

Union of the read- and write-set.

- record attributes
  - status
  - version
  - written
  - size
  - backup[]
  - address[]

Open array of memory locations read/written (address[]).
STM: Course of a Transaction

assuming that the real/virtual machine provides LL/SC (cf. p. 31)
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1. acquire **ownership** of each location of a data-set member
   - reserve (LL) the respective location and, if still unowned:
     (a) try to establish reservation (SC), if transaction is valid anymore
     (b) retry reservation (LL), otherwise
   - otherwise, return failure including reference of failed location

2. if successful:
   2.1 readout memory corresponding to the data-set locations:
     (a) in case of a free backup location (LL),
     (b) try to save former value (SC)
   2.2 compute new values based on the values read out to backup locations
   2.3 update memory corresponding to the data-set locations:
     (a) reserve memory location (LL) and
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   2.4 release ownership of each location of a data-set member:
     (a) in the case of a still acquired location (LL),
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3. if unsuccessful:
   3.1 release existing ownerships (cf. 2.4), if any
   3.2 as the case may be, help the transaction which owns failing locations
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**additional parameter** of steps 1, 2.1, 2.3, and 2.4: needs to be checked
HyTM

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- if the HTM path fails, a run-time system decides how to retry:
  - on the HTM path, repeatedly, if contention is weak or can be contained
  - on the STM path, otherwise, possibly with more flexible contention control
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an implicitly transactional model is assumed, but not the only way

by concept, an explicitly transactional approach is feasible as well
operations for accessing memory (implicitly or explicitly):

- **load**  ■ transfers a value from shared memory to a private placeholder
  ■ add the source location to the transaction **read set**

- **store**  ■ provides a value for transfer to shared memory, but the value to be transferred becomes visible not before a successful commit
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- further operations are customary, according to circumstances
  - depending on the level of abstraction the TM system is associated with
it is assumed that contention of simultaneous processes is improbable

- a **successful commit** seems to be probable, other than abort and retry

```c
extern word_t foo, bar, foobar;
do {
    word_t foo’ = load(&foo);
    word_t bar’ = load(&bar);
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  - originated in the operating-system machine level and below:
    - traps (e.g., page faults) and interrupts (e.g., quantum expiration)
    - context switches (e.g., system calls, process dispatching)
  - originated in the non-sequential program itself:
    - avoidance or resolution of serialisation conflicts
Positive Thinking I

Explicitly Transactional

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- thus, be aware of reasons and frequency of the failure of transactions
  - if applicable, take care of region-specific **counteractive measures**
  - reflect on alternative concepts/solutions in achieving data consistency
a more advanced abstraction is to merely declare an **atomic region**

- at the expense of a loss of control of the extent of the actual data set

```c
extern word_t foo, bar, foobar;
begin(&&dropout);
    word_t foo' = foo;
    word_t bar' = bar;
    foobar = foo' + bar';
end();
```

- unless the compiler knows about **critical variables** that make up the data set, **all variables** read or written need to be tracked by the processor
- this results in unnecessarily larger data sets and increases overhead
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retry-loop concealment is not always an advantageous measure

aside from other exceptional events (p. 15), retries are due to contention

contention control depends not only on dynamic but also static data
– i.e., number of contending processes and duration of a single retry
– whereby the latter is determined by the regions’s execution path length

begin/end are unaware of expectable execution times of atomic regions
in case of STM, it is worth to consider the following refinements:

- upper-bound size of the read- and write-set in \texttt{btx}
- specification of the reason of abort in \texttt{atx}
- declaration of further modes of operation (flags) in \texttt{btx}
- additional (first) parameter indicating this transaction in each operation

However, as (most of) these depend on the program structure of the transactional region, determination should be up to the compiler.
inline void push_dos(stack_t *this, chain_t *item) {
  item->link = this->head.link;
  this->head.link = item;
}

void push_tm_it(stack_t *this, chain_t *item) {
  btx(0);
  item->link = this->head.link;
  this->head.link = item;
  etx();
}

void push_tm_et(stack_t *this, chain_t *item) {
  do
  { item->link = (chain_t*)ltx(&this->head.link);
    stx(&this->head.link, (long)item);
  }
  while(!ctx());
}
inline void push_dos(stack_t *this, chain_t *item) {
    item->link = this->head.link;
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}

item->link
Unnecessary data-set member.
inline void push_dos(stack_t *this, chain_t *item) {
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    this->head.link = item;
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}

void push_tm_et(stack_t *this, chain_t *item) {
    do {
        item->link = (chain_t *)ltx(&this->head.link);
        stx(&this->head.link, (long)item);
    } while (!ctx());
}
FIFO-List Revisited I

```c
inline void chart_dos(queue_t *this, chain_t *item) {
    item->link = 0; /* finalise chain */
    this->tail->link = item; /* append item */
    this->tail = item; /* set insertion point */
}
```

Both TM variants appear to be equivalent.
FIFO-List Revisited

1. `inline void chart_dos(queue_t *this, chain_t *item) {
   item->link = 0; /* finalise chain */
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   this->tail->link = item;
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   etx();
}

3. `void chart_tm_et(queue_t *this, chain_t *item) {
   item->link = 0;
   do
   { stx(&this->tail->link, (long)item);
     stx(&this->tail, (long)item);
   } while (!ctx());
}

4. Both TM variants appear to be equivalent.
Both TM variants appear to be equivalent.
chain_t *wear_dos(stack_t *this) {
    chain_t *node = this->head.link;
    this->head.link = 0;
    return node;
}
LIFO-List Revisited II

Take a sledgehammer to crack the nut...

```c
chain_t *wear_dos(stack_t *this) {
    chain_t *node = this->head.link;
    this->head.link = 0;
    return node;
}

chain_t *wear_tm(stack_t *this) {
    chain_t *node;
    do {
        node = ltx(&this->head.link);
        stx(&this->head.link, 0);
    } while (!ctx());
    return node;
}

chain_t *wear_wfs(stack_t *this) {
    return FAS(&this->head.link, 0);
}
```

Overshoot

Definitely, TM is no magic bullet...
LIFO-List Revisited II

Take a sledgehammer to crack the nut...

1        chain_t *wear_dos(stack_t *this) {
2          chain_t *node = this->head.link;
3          this->head.link = 0;
4          return node;
5        }

6        chain_t *wear_tm(stack_t *this) {
7          chain_t *node;
8          do {
9              node = ltx(&this->head.link);
10             stx(&this->head.link, 0);
11          } while (!ctx());
12          return node;
13        }

14       chain_t *wear_wfs(stack_t *this) {
15          return FAS(&this->head.link, 0);
16       }

Overshoot

Definitely, TM is no magic bullet...
The TM programming model itself, whether implemented in hardware or software, introduces complexities that limit the expected productivity gains, thus reducing the current incentive for migration to transactional programming and the justification at present for anything more than a small amount of hardware support. [4, p. 55]
All that Glitters is not Gold...

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- **logical/conditional synchronisation**, e.g. condition variables [6]:
  - waiting on a condition inside a transaction is difficult or impossible
    - difficult, e.g., in case of an I/O operation that cannot be rolled back
    - impossible, if the transactional process is implemented as kernel-level thread

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2 Assuming that TM applies to user-level processes, only—which is usual.
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- as a signalling transaction may abort, the stated condition never occurred
  - furthermore, signaller and signallee transactions may happen simultaneously, which is prone to lost-wakeup as the latter may complete before the former.

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Thus, TM is merely an abstraction to **multilateral synchronisation**

- most attractive semantics is its “single global lock atomicity” [3]

---

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Outline

Preface

Principles
  General
  Characteristic
  Operation

Utilisation
  Abstraction
  Examplification
  Discussion

Summary
Résumé

- TM abstractions as to the different rootedness of the implementation
  - HTM  ■ hardware, explicitly/implicitly transactional, hardly available
  - STM  ■ software, lock-less/based solutions, metadata overhead
  - HyTM ■ hybrid, try HTM first, fall back on STM in critical situations

- principle concepts of TM and functions or instructions, respectively
  ■ read set, write set, and the union thereof: data set
  ■ load, store, commit, abort, begin, end—and more...

- examination and discussion of the pros and cons of TM
  ■ especially limited hardware support still hampers wide use
  ■ independent thereof, programming introduces other types of complexities
  ■ also because it merely is an abstraction to multilateral synchronisation

- TM is a means to an end, it has a silver lining but also a demerit...

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Evaluation of Blue Gene/Q Hardware Support for Transactional Memories.
typedef struct ref {
    int *label; /* actual location in (shared) memory */
    int owner; /* reservation number: initial anything but -1 */
} ref_t;

inline int ll(ref_t *ref, int key) {
    int owner, value;
    do {
        owner = ref->owner;
        value = *(ref->label);
    } while ((ref->owner == -1) || !CAS(&ref->owner, owner, key));
    return value;
}

inline bool sc(ref_t *ref, int key, int val) {
    bool done;
    if ((done = CAS(&ref->owner, key, -1))) {
        *(ref->label) = val;
        ref->owner = 0;
    }
    return done;
}

**key**
- unique transaction number
- advanced when transaction completes
inline chain_t *pull_dos(stack_t *this) {
    chain_t *node;
    if ((node = this->head.link))
        this->head.link = node->link;
    return node;
}

chain_t *pull_tm(stack_t *this) {
    chain_t *node;
    do {
        if ((node = (chain_t *)ltx(&this->head.link)))
            stx(&this->head.link, (long)node->link);
    } while (!ctx());
    return node;
}

the implicitly transactional variant would unnecessarily include node in the transaction data set...
inline chain_t* fetch_dos(queue_t *this) {
    chain_t *node;
    if ((node = this->head.link) /* filled? */
        && !(this->head.link = node->link)) /* last item? */
        this->tail = &this->head; /* reset */
    return node;
}

chain_t* fetch_tm(queue_t *this) {
    chain_t *node;
    do {
        if ((node = (chain_t *)ltx(&this->head.link))) {
            stx(&this->head.link, (long)node->link);
            if (!node->link)
                stx(&this->tail, (long)&this->head);
        }
    } while (!ctx());
    return node;
}

the implicitly transactional variant would unnecessarily include node in the transaction data set...
inline chain_t *drain_dos(queue_t *this) {
  chain_t *head = this->head.link;
  this->head.link = 0; /* null item */
  this->tail = &this->head; /* linkage item */
  return head;
}

chain_t *drain_tm(queue_t *this) {
  chain_t *head;
  do {
    head = (chain_t *)ltx(&this->head.link);
    stx(&this->head.link, 0);
    stx(&this->tail, (long)&this->head);
  } while (!ctx());
  return head;
}

the implicitly transactional variant would unnecessarily include head in the transaction data set...