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A ProCoS-WG Working Group Final Report: ESPRIT Working Group 8694

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Abstract

An overview of the activities of the European collaborative ESPRIT ProCoS-WG Working Group (no. 8694) on "Provably Correct Systems" which ran from 1993 to 1997 is presented. This was a follow-on to the ESPRIT BRA ProCoS I project (no. 3104, 1989-1991) and ProCoS II project (no. 7071, 1992-1995), overlapping with the latter. A selected bibliography of publications, especially those involving the original project sites and collaboration between member sites, is included.

1 Introduction

The ESPRIT ProCoS-WG Working Group (no. 8694, 1993-1997) was formed as part of the activities of the ProCoS II Project (no. 7071, 1992-1995) [20] on "Provably Correct Systems", which itself was reformed after the original ProCoS I project (1989-1991). Its aim was to aid dissemination of the project's results. ProCoS-WG aimed to focus around rigorous techniques to improve dependability, reduce time-scales and cut development costs of construction for embedded systems, particularly in real-time and safety-critical applications. Its members used and developed the results of basic research into fundamental properties of interactive systems. Its interests included the development of embedded systems, ensuring correctness of all stages in the

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to focus on

process

development, from elicitation and analysis of requirements through design and implementation of programs down to compilation and execution on verified hardware.

The long term objective of the Working Group was to contribute to radical improvement in standards of professional practice in the design and implementation of information technology products, involving both hardware and software. The first target for improvement was in the area of safety-critical application; but we believe that much of the same technology will eventually spin off to improve quality and reduce life cycle costs of other products in widespread use.

Topics of interest to members of the Working Group include theories and methodology to handle the following levels of abstraction in the development of computer-based systems: (1) Requirements capture and analysis; (2) System specification and design; (3) Programming language processing and compilation; (4) Machine hardware, including hardware/software co-design; (5) Implementation in hardware down to gate level, especially using hardware compilation techniques.

2 Activities

Joint workshops with the ESPRIT ProCoS II project were held during the lifetime of that project (which ended in 1995) approximately every 6 months at project sites in Denmark, Germany and the UK.

A ProCoS II project meeting before the Working Group start was held in 1993 in Germany. Many prospective Working Group partners attended and gave presentations.

The official 1st Working Group meeting was held at Gentoft, Denmark in 18–20 January 1994, organized by Anders Ravn *et al.* of the Danish Technical University (DTU). The majority of Working Group members attended. In addition, a number of invited guests attended at their own expense. All Working Group members gave an overview of their activities relevant to ProCoS, and a number gave technical presentations as well. In addition, an overview of the ProCoS II project, and detailed technical talks on aspects of the project's research were presented by project members.

The major open event for the Working Group was a School and Symposium organized jointly with the existing Formal Techniques in Real-Time and Fault-Tolerant Systems series, held 19–23 September 1994 at Lübeck, Germany. A published proceedings is available [37]. Kiel were involved in the organization of the meeting and Prof. Hans Langmaack was a co-editor of the proceedings. A substantial ProCoS tutorial was presented.

The 2nd ProCoS meeting (for ProCoS-WG participants and invited guests only) was held on 10–12 January 1995 in Oxford, UK. An agenda including summaries of the talks is available on-line. Subjects included compilation/proof of correctness, temporal compositionality, a logical framework for concurrent Objects, a modular codegenerator proof, digital abstraction of switching circuitry, the Sequential Calculus, refinement calculus with window inference, provably correct hardware/software partitioning, layering of real-time distributed processes, model checking and appropriate use of formal methods.

The 3rd ProCoS-WG meeting was held 21–23 August 1995 at the Hotel Marina, Vedbaek, near Copenhagen, Denmark. The local organizers were DTU. The theme for the workshop was "Linking Theories", ~~There are many~~ theories which can assist in the reliable design of real-time embedded computer systems. This workshop emphasized the interfaces between these theories as an important topic for theoretical research since it is always the combination of technologies that causes the most serious engineering problems.

The 4th ProCoS-WG meeting, was held 11–13 March 1996, in Oldenburg, Germany, organized by Prof. E.-R. Olderog. The main topics of the meeting were real-time and hybrid systems, linking different formal methods, and mechanical support of these methods. The highlight was a presentation of three German projects on formal methods for correct systems, namely the

ESPRESSO, KORSYS and UNIFORM projects.

An associated ProCoS-US Hardware Synthesis and Verification Workshop was held at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA, 14–16 August 1996. Members of the Working Group ~~will~~ ^{with} an interest in provably correct hardware compilation attended and gave presentations. An informal proceedings was produced and issued to all participants.

The last major meeting was the 5th ProCoS-WG meeting, 7–9 April 1997, organized by Jonathan Bowen at the University of Reading, UK, in conjunction with ZUM'97 (see below). This was the final funded meeting of the Working Group. An academic day of more technical and research-oriented talks was held on the first day. A highlight was a presentation on *Unifying Theories for Parallel Systems* by Prof. Tony Hoare of Oxford University. On the second day some of the talks were more industrially and educationally oriented. The final day was an academic and business-oriented day in which plans for a follow-on Working Group were discussed.

The Working Group also supported the Z User Meeting series of conferences. The 8th Z User Meeting (ZUM'94) was held on 29–30 June 1994 at the University of Cambridge, UK [10]. The 9th International Conference of Z Users (ZUM'95) was held 7–9 September 1995 at the University of Limerick, Ireland [15]. The last meeting was ZUM'97 which was held at the University of Reading, UK, 3–4 April 1997 in conjunction with the final Working Group meeting [18]. All these meetings included contributions by ProCoS-WG members.

Further information on all these meetings is available on-line, linked from the Working Group's Web page (see end of report for URL).

3 Selected reports from ProCoS-WG sites

An integral part of the original ProCoS II project research plan was the formation of this Working Group. This section includes short reports from each of the original members of the ProCoS II project. Sample reports from a ProCoS-WG member and an affiliate are also included. Reports from all 25 members sites, and other individual affiliates, are not included due to lack of space. However this section is intended to give a flavour of the activities which the Working Group has helped foster at the various sites involved, both with other ProCoS-WG members and externally to the Working Group.

Oxford were the original proposers and coordinators for the Working Group. During the lifetime of the Working Group, Jonathan Bowen moved from a UK EPSRC funded project on *Provably Correct Hardware/Software Co-design* at Oxford, including explicit mention of European ProCoS-WG collaboration, to take up an appointment as a lecturer at the University of Reading, where more recent coordination of the group has been undertaken.

3.1 Oxford University, UK

For the last two years Prof. Tony Hoare and Prof. He Jifeng have been working on a UK EPSRC funded project for *Linking theories in Computer Science*. ~~The results have exceeded all our original hopes and expectation.~~ We have investigated a wide variety of computational paradigms, procedural and declarative, sequential and parallel, centralized and distributed, synchronized and asynchronous, even hardware and software. This work has fully confirmed a widely held conjecture that all paradigms can be embedded in the single mathematical theory of relations: and a number of projections have been discovered that maps the general theory to its more particular instances.

This means that a single model-based specification language like Z or VDM will serve at the highest level of abstraction to specify all systems, without concern for the technology or mixture of technologies in which they will be implemented. The notations of each programming language are definable as extensions to the schema calculus of Z, and powerful algebraic laws are provided

It is hoped that a unified family of theories may play a role similar to that planned for the unsuccessful Universal Model of the ProCoS project to assist in subsequent design. As a result, all paradigms are susceptible of the same design methodology, with proofs based on familiar techniques of calculational refinement, assertion and weakest precondition.

These ideas have been highly influenced by experience of collaboration with ProCoS partners. In turn, it is hoped that the concepts ^{may} also have future influence on ProCoS members through the regular ProCoS-WG meetings we have attended, and further afield through existing and planned publications [29, 35, 36].

3.2 Christian-Albrechts-Universität Kiel, Germany

After completion of the ProCoS projects, the Kiel group (headed by Prof. Hans Langmaack [42]) continued research on the broad scope of topics that the ProCoS projects had sparked. These topics, involving algebraic models of reactive systems [2, 3, 56, 57, 58, 59], real-time model-checking and controller synthesis [23, 24, 25], and compiler design and verification [26, 50], may seem diverse, yet they are closely linked within the ProCoS approach.

Setting up a consistent set of formalisms and methods for the variety of abstraction levels that arise during embedded system design requires a firm grasp of all of them. However, the scientific subjects involved are nevertheless diverse, and no single research group would be able to substantially further all of them without being linked to other, particularly more specialized, groups. Being broader in scope than the scientific contacts that a single site can set up, the ProCoS Working Group proved to be an excellent basis for the required kind of scientific exchange. Its meetings provided an indispensable forum for presenting and discussing the work in various stages, and finally became an important means for teaching the newly developed techniques to other personnel.

It is just now that it becomes apparent how successful these information dissemination activities were: The compiler verification activities of the ProCoS project led to a German compiler verification project called Verifix (Verifizierte Compiler, verified compilers) [28, 41, 43] that builds upon the ProCoS techniques [49]. The project is supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). The other project partners – Prof. Goos at the University of Karlsruhe, Germany, and Prof. v. Henke at the University of Ulm, Germany – were a member and an affiliate member of the ProCoS Working Group respectively.

Furthermore, ProCoS researchers from Kiel have been hired by other universities: Markus Müller-Olm, whose extensive case study of applying the ProCoS compiling verification techniques onto the translation of a prototypic hard-real time programming language to an actual processor (the Inmos Transputer) is documented in the PhD thesis [48] that appeared recently as a monograph in the LNCS series of Springer-Verlag [50], moved to the University of Dortmund, Germany. Martin Fränze, who has been concerned with real-time model-checking and hardware synthesis from temporal logic [24, 25, 23], is now at the University of Oldenburg, Germany – another ProCoS Working Group site – responsible for synthesis of VHDL designs from temporal logic specifications. Bettina Buth is now employed at the University of Bremen, Germany.

3.3 Universität Oldenburg, Germany

ProCoS-WG has enabled us to maintain contacts and collaboration between DTU, Denmark and Oldenburg on the use of Duration Calculus and programming specification language SL developed during the ProCoS project. This is documented by two case studies [51, 55].

It has also enabled exchange of ideas between the University of Twente, The Netherlands (J. Zwiers) and Oldenburg on specification formalisms mixing communication and state transition aspects. A separate two day meeting took place in Autumn 1996.


Personnel exchange between Oxford University, UK and Oldenburg, Germany took place by

Michael Schenke from Oldenburg visiting Oxford for one year (1996/97) and applying ideas from ProCoS in a UK EPSRC funded project [54].

3.4 Danish Technical University, Denmark

The ProCoS-WG Working Group has enabled us to stay in touch with ProCoS partners and associates; in particular, collaborative research with the University of Oldenburg, Germany has been undertaken, as documented in the joint papers [51, 55]. Another direct outcome has been the collaboration with Siemens Research resulting in [52]. Furthermore, we have a new collaboration with Turku, Finland [53] and have discussed functional programming with the University of Reading, UK.


3.5 Report from a ProCoS-WG member site

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 The Intellectics Laboratory of the Department of Computer Science at the Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany has profited in substantial ways from the interaction with other members in the ProCoS-WG. Our approach to provably correct systems, briefly spoken, consists in extracting programs, or systems, from interactively obtained proofs of their specifications (considered as theorems in some theory formalized in some constructive logic).

The interaction with the ProCoS-WG has kept us focusing on the reality of software engineering and remaining on firm practical grounds. We attended three ProCoS meetings (Gentofte 1994, Lübeck 1994, Vedbaek 1995), usually with two members from our laboratory, and presented talks at two of them. In addition we stayed in contact with individual members of the Working Group. Our group played also a linking role between ProCoS and a German national project on automated deduction which is coordinated by the laboratory's leader (W. Bibel).

Although there is no joint paper with one of these individual members completed, the ProCoS influence can be recognized in many of our own papers. In fact, the ProCoS-related research in our lab (which has several other interests beyond ProCoS such as pure theorem proving, knowledge representation, stochastic search etc.) has been extremely successful during the period of the last three years as can be seen from the selected list of publications [5, 38, 39, 40]. This work has brought theorem proving techniques closer to system development practice and altogether resulted in the system MAPS [4] meant to be useful exactly for this purpose.

4 ProCoS affiliates

During the course of the Working Group, it was noticed that a number of participants not included in the original proposal were keen to participate at many of the meetings. These people were invited to become "ProCoS affiliates" and were subsequently invited to attend ProCoS meetings, but at their own expense. As a result, a significant amount of the European collaboration fostered by the Working Group was with European sites not directly funded by ProCoS-WG. Many of the ProCoS-WG affiliates are involved in the proposal follow-on Working Group. Feedback from two ProCoS affiliates is included below. 

Sample reports

Prof. Egon Börger of the University of Pisa, Italy, has participated at many ProCoS-WG meetings, largely at his own expense. He was an invited speaker at ZUM'97 [7] and organized, with Prof. Hans Langmaack of the University of Kiel, an important set of case studies formalizing a Steam Boiler problem in a variety of notations [1], including a number of contributions by ProCoS-WG members. He reports:

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The ProCoS meetings have been for me a very useful occasion for fruitful exchange of ideas and methods related to the application of formal methods. In particular I appreciate the occasion I had to present my work on the correctness theorem for a general compilation scheme for compiling Occam programs to Transputer code. This work appeared in [6].

Furthermore I appreciated the chance to present the Abstract State Machine (ASM) method to ProCoS-WG members.

Dr. Ben Moszkowski of the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, University of Newcastle; Newcastle upon Tyne, UK has also participated in an unfunded affiliate capacity since the initial meeting. He has been working on Interval Temporal Logic (ITL) and compositionality [22, 46, 47, 45], and writes:

I have found the ProCoS Working Group to be very beneficial as a framework for relatively informal meetings with others in both academia and industry who have a serious interest in formal methods. The five ProCoS-related meetings I have been to since 1994 have always had stimulating exchanges of ideas. Besides learning about other groups' ongoing activities, I have had an opportunity to get comments on my own work and to discuss research grant proposals. Jonathan Bowen's maintenance of the Formal Methods Web pages is an invaluable part of ProCoS-WG's mission of disseminating information about formal methods. My own participation in the ProCoS-WG even lead indirectly to a very successful international symposium on compositionality entitled COMPOS'97. In closing, I hope that ProCoS-WG continues to serve its useful role.

5 Dissemination

A major open conference was held in conjunction with an existing related conference series, *Formal Techniques in Real-Time and Fault-Tolerance Systems (FTRTFT)* [44]. Many ProCoS-WG Working Group members attended. An extended ProCoS tutorial was presented [19, 30]. A ProCoS tutorial [31] was also presented at FME'96 in Oxford [27].

Related EC "Keep In Touch" (KIT) initiatives with Augusto Sampaio in Brazil and Zhou Chaochen in Macau have allowed continuing contact with former project members. An associated ESPRIT/NSF initiative allows reciprocal funding of visits between Cornell University in the US and ProCoS partners in the area of provably correct hardware compilation. A workshop was held in August 1996 at Cornell University, USA.

Contact with the Z User Group has been maintained by supporting attendance at Z User Meetings [10, 15, 18] using ProCoS-WG Working Group funds when appropriate. A journal special issue on Z has been produced [14] and a Z bibliography maintained [8, 21].

A book of industrial applications of formal methods has been produced [32]. This includes a number of chapters contributed by members of the Working Group. Two associated articles have been produced as guides to industrial users of formal methods [12, 13] with the aim of facilitating the technology transfer of formal methods. These have been translated into Dutch (*Management [Select]*, December 1996) and Russian (*PC World Russia*, September/October 1997) respectively for further dissemination. Material has been published specifically for technology transfer especially with respect to standards and safety-critical systems [9, 11, 16, 17]. Further books are in the course of preparation [33, 34].

Information on all ProCoS activities, including the Working Group, has been maintained on-line, together with an associated repository of formal methods and safety-critical systems information (see locations at the end of the report). These resources have been remarkably

successful and attract several hundred users each day. An electronic mailing list for messages relating to ProCoS activities, especially notices of meetings, has also been maintained. This has included personnel at all Working Group sites with email access, ProCoS affiliates, and anyone with an interest in ProCoS on request to procoss-list-request@comlab.ox.ac.uk.

Bibliographies of relevant publications by ProCoS members have been created and maintained on-line for easy accessibility and convenient searching. This report includes a selection of ProCoS-WG-related publications, especial those where collaboration between Working Group sites has been involved.

6 Lessons learned

The Working Group has been extremely successful as a mechanism to ensure contact between academic members. Meetings have been well attended, although some sites have participated considerably more than others. ProCoS-WG has been less successful in maintaining direct contact with industrial sites. However, it has been inspirational in generating technology transfer information in the form of articles, books and on-line Web-based information.

Members with good network access have benefited most from the Working Group as far as direct information dissemination is concerned. Essential information, especially concerning meetings, has been sent by fax or post to the (small number of) members who were not contactable via electronic mail. However these members have in general participated less at meetings; they are also the more industrially oriented sites.

Sites where existing ties have been in place have participated most in the Working Group. Generating new ties through the Working Group has not been completely successful; much more success has been found when building on and continuing existing ties.

These lessons have been taken on board for a proposed follow-on Working Group. All the proposed new members have existing links with at least one other member, and/or have expressed proactive interest in joining the group. This was not necessarily the case for all partners in the initial Working Group reported here.

7 Conclusion

Overall, the Working Group is deemed to have been a success. The original core of ProCoS II project sites have maintained a high degree of *esprit de corps*, and this has engendered enthusiasm in other participants at Working Group meetings. We have also gained from having a variety of ideas and approaches presented at meetings. Certainly there is enough continued enthusiasm from the majority of the original ProCoS-WG members to form a consortium for a follow-on proposal, together with a number of new members, mainly due to personnel moves between sites together with the inclusion of previous ProCoS affiliates and collaborators.

On-line information

Much fuller on-line information on the activities and achievements of the ProCoS-WG Working Group is available under the following URL (Universal Resource Locator):

<http://www.comlab.ox.ac.uk/archive/procoss/procoss-wg.html>

This information will be available and maintained for the foreseeable future. An associated Virtual Library repository comprising a directory of on-line information for guidance concerning formal methods, and also safety-critical systems, has been particularly successful, attracting around 300 virtual "visitors" each day. See under:

<http://www.comlab.ox.ac.uk/archive/formal-methods.html>

Newer and related ProCoS activities will be installed and maintained under the following location:

<http://www.cs.reading.ac.uk/procos/>

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