On Deciding Admissibility in Abstract Argumentation Frameworks

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Abstract: In the context of abstract argumentation frameworks, the admissibility problem is about deciding whether a given argument (i.e., piece of knowledge) is admissible in a conflicting knowledge base. In this paper we present an enhanced backtracking-based algorithm for solving the admissibility problem. The algorithm performs successfully when applied to a wide range of benchmark abstract argumentation frameworks and when compared to the state-of-the-art algorithm.

1 INTRODUCTION

Abstract argumentation frameworks (AFs), introduced by (Dung, 1995), are a major topic within the field of knowledge representation and automated reasoning, see for example the reviews of (Modgil et al., 2013; Charwat et al., 2015; Simari and Rahwan, 2009; Atkinson et al., 2017; Baroni et al., 2011; Modgil and Caminada, 2009; Caminada and Gabby, 2009). Particularly, AFs have been demonstrated as a powerful mechanism for decision-support systems (Heras et al., 2013; Hunter and Williams, 2012; Bench-Capon et al., 2015; Tamani et al., 2015), and for handling inconsistency in knowledge bases (Martinez and Hunter, 2009; Hecham et al., 2017; Amgoud and Cayrol, 2002; Croitoru and Vesci, 2013; Amgoud and Vesci, 2010).

An abstract argumentation framework is a pair \((A, R)\) where \(A\) is a set of abstract arguments (i.e., pieces of knowledge) and \(R \subseteq A \times A\) is the attack relation (representing conflicting knowledge). We say \(x\) attacks \(y\) (or \(y\) is attacked by \(x\)) whenever \((x, y) \in R\). For a given set of arguments \(B \subseteq A\), \(B^+\) (respectively \(B^-\)) denotes the set of arguments that attack (respectively are attacked by) the arguments of \(B\). Let \(S \subseteq A\) be a set of arguments, then \(S\) is admissible if and only if \(S^- \subseteq S^+\) and \(S^- \cap S = \emptyset\). Let \(x \in A\) be an argument, then \(x\) is admissible if and only if \(x\) is contained in an admissible set.

The problem of admissibility is to decide whether an argument, in a given AF, is admissible or not. Thus, the problem can be naturally solved by finding an admissible set containing the argument in question. For example, assume we desire to decide the admissibility of argument \(b\) in the framework of figure 1, then we find \(b\) admissible due to the admissibility of \(\{b, f\}\).

It is known that the problem of admissibility is NP-complete (Dvorák and Dunne, 2017; Dunne, 2007). However, as noted in the survey of (Charwat et al., 2015), there are two approaches to the admissibility problem: direct and reduction-based. In the latter approach one might put the admissibility problem into a different form and then apply an off-the-shelf solver to decide admissibility for a given problem instance, see (Thimm and Villata, 2017) for reviews.

On the other hand, direct approaches to the admissibility problem are \textit{ad hoc} algorithms. In this paper we present a new \textit{ad hoc} algorithm for the admissibility problem. In the literature one can see a number of works that presented \textit{ad hoc} algorithms for solving the admissibility problem. The work of (Doutre and Mengin, 2001) introduced an algorithm for the admissibility problem. Subsequently, the algorithm of (Doutre and Mengin, 2001) was re-presented in the article of (Cayrol et al., 2003). In fact, the algorithm of (Doutre and Mengin, 2001) is a depth-first search procedure that looks for an admissible set containing the argument in question. Later, (Verheij, 2007) presented a breadth-first search procedure for solving the admissibility problem. Afterwards, (Thang et al., 2009) introduced a unified breadth-first search procedure for deciding admissibility as well as for solving the problem.
other decision problems related to AFs. The work of (Nofal et al., 2014) presented a new depth-first search algorithm that is likely faster than the previous algorithms of (Doutre and Mengin, 2001; Verheij, 2007; Thang et al., 2009), see (Nofal et al., 2014) for a comprehensive evaluation of the aforementioned algorithms. Recently, by a “look-ahead” mechanism the work of (Nofal et al., 2016) improved on the algorithm of (Nofal et al., 2014). Differently, (Dvořák et al., 2012) proposed a dynamic programming approach to the admissibility problem. The focus of (Dvořák et al., 2012) was to show the role of “fixed-parameter” tractable methods in the context of AFs. Lastly, we note that another line of research is more focused on building procedures for handling dynamic changes in AFs, see for example (Liao et al., 2011; Doutre and Mailly, 2018; Alfano et al., 2017).

In this paper we present new enhancements that improve over the state-of-the-art backtracking algorithm presented by (Nofal et al., 2016). Therefore, in section 2 we recall the state-of-the-art algorithm of (Nofal et al., 2016). In section 3 we present our new algorithm. Then, we verify the running-time efficiency of the new algorithm in section 4. In section 5 we present a concrete scenario where deciding admissibility being vital for argument-based legal reasoning. In section 6 we conclude the paper.

2 THE EXISTING STATE-OF-THE-ART ALGORITHM

In this section we recall the algorithm of (Nofal et al., 2016) for deciding admissibility. We note that it would be inefficient if one decided the admissibility of some argument in a given AF by generating admissible sets one after another until a set, containing the argument in question, is found. Obviously, following this approach will result in a considerable wasted time in listing irrelevant sets that do not contain the argument in question. Moreover, using this approach one might waste time in computing admissible sets that are larger than needed. Take the framework of figure 1 and the problem of deciding the admissibility of argument $b$. Focusing on two admissible sets: $\{a,k\}$ and $\{f,b,d,h\}$, we note that the former set is irrelevant because it does not contain the query argument (i.e. $b$), whereas the latter set is larger than needed because the admissible set $\{f,b\}$ is sufficient for proving the admissibility of $b$. Hence, an efficient procedure for the admissibility problem would start with a one-argument set, containing the argument in question, and then incrementally try to include in the under construction set relevant arguments that are necessary to establish the admissibility of the argument in question. In particular, we may decide the admissibility of $b$ in AF$_1$ as follows:

1. We start with $S = \{b\}$, $S^- = \{a\}$, and $S^+ = \emptyset$. Since $S^- \not\subseteq S^+$, we expand $S$ trying to satisfy this admissibility condition: $S^- \subseteq S^+$.

2. Then, we include $f$ to get $S = \{f,b\}$, $S^- = \{a,e\}$, and $S^+ = \{a,g,e\}$. Now, $S$ is admissible since $S^- \subseteq S^+$ and $S^+ \cap S = \emptyset$.

Algorithm 1: Algorithm 10 from Nofal et al (Nofal et al., 2016).

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>requires:</th>
<th>ensures:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>isAdmissible(label)</td>
<td>an AF $H = (A,R)$ and a query argument $s \in A$</td>
<td>a decision whether $s$ is admissible or not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>propagate(label);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>if label is admissible then return true;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>if label is hopeless then return false;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>label' ← label;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>select some $x \in {y \mid label(y) = mustOut}^-$ with label$(x) = blank$;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in-trans(label', $x$);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>if isAdmissible(label') = true then return true;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>und-trans(label', $x$);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>if isAdmissible(label) = true then return true</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>else return false;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Function main() |
| if $(s,s) \in R$ then report $s$ inadmissible and exit; |
| label : $A \rightarrow \{in, out, und, mustOut, blank\}$; |
| label ← $\emptyset$; |
| foreach $x \in A$ do |
| label' ← label $\cup \{(s,blank)\}$; |
| if $(s,x) \in R$ then label$(x) \leftarrow und$; |
| in-trans(label, $s$); |
| if isAdmissible(label) = true then report $s$ admissible else report $s$ inadmissible; |
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After this introduction we present algorithm 1, which is algorithm 10 (with minor changes in the presentation) from (Nofal et al., 2016) for deciding admissibility. If we run the algorithm on a given AF $H = (A,R)$ with a query argument $s$ then the algorithm decides whether $s$ is admissible or not. We now specify the actions and structures of the algorithm. Starting at line 12 in the algorithm, if the query argument $s$ is self-attacking, then we conclude with $s$ being inadmissible. At line 13 we create a total function $label$ that maps every argument in $A$ to a label in $\{in, out, und, mustOut, blank\}$ according to the following rules.

Remark 1 (Mapping Arguments). Let $(A,R)$ be an AF, $label : A \rightarrow \{in, out, mustOut, und, blank\}$ be a
total mapping, \( x \in A \) be an argument with \( \text{label}(x) = \text{blank} \) and \( S \subseteq A \) be a set of arguments, then \( x \) might be re-mapped with respect to \( S \) as follows:

- If \( x \in S \) then \( \text{label}(x) \leftarrow \text{in} \).
- If \( x \in S^+ \) then \( \text{label}(x) \leftarrow \text{out} \).
- If \( x \in S^- \setminus S^+ \) then \( \text{label}(x) \leftarrow \text{mustOut} \).
- If \( x \notin S \cup S^+ \cup S^- \) then \( \text{label}(x) \leftarrow \text{und} \).

At lines 14-17 in the algorithm, we initialize \( \text{label} \) such that all arguments are mapped to \text{blank} except self-attacking arguments, which are mapped to \text{und}.

Note that if a set of arguments, say \( S \), contains some self-attacking argument, then \( S \) will violate this admissibility condition: \( S^+ \cap S = \emptyset \).

Now, we come to the \text{in} transition routine (\text{in-trans} for short), see lines 7 & 18 in the algorithm. By applying the \text{in-trans} routine we re-map an argument to \text{in} and, subsequently re-map the neighbor arguments as described in the following definition.

**Definition 1 (In-trans).** Let \((A, R)\) be an \( AF \), \( \text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in}, \text{out}, \text{mustOut}, \text{und}, \text{blank}\} \) be a total mapping and \( x \in A \) be an argument with \( \text{label}(x) = \text{blank} \), then \( x \) might be re-mapped with respect to \( S \) as follows:

1. \( \text{label}(x) \leftarrow \text{in} \).
2. For each \( y \in \{x\}^+ \) do \( \text{label}(y) \leftarrow \text{out} \).
3. For each \( y \in \{x\}^- \) with \( \text{label}(y) \neq \text{out} \) do \( \text{label}(y) \leftarrow \text{mustOut} \).

At line 9 in the algorithm, we re-map an argument to \text{und} by an undecided transition (\text{und-trans} for short) as defined below.

**Definition 2 (Und-trans).** Let \((A, R)\) be an \( AF \), \( \text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in}, \text{out}, \text{mustOut}, \text{und}, \text{blank}\} \) be a total mapping and \( x \in A \) be an argument with \( \text{label}(x) = \text{blank} \), then \( x \) is now equal to \( \{\text{a}, \text{mustOut}\} \) if and only if \( \forall y \in \{x\}^- \text{label}(y) \in \{\text{out, mustOut}\} \).

Now, we define \( \text{propagate(label)} \), see line 2 in the algorithm. By invoking \( \text{propagate(label)} \) we apply the \text{in-trans} routine on some arguments as we described in the next definition.

**Definition 3 (Mappings Propagation).** Let \((A, R)\) be an \( AF \), \( \text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in}, \text{out}, \text{mustOut}, \text{und}, \text{blank}\} \), then \( \text{propagate(label)} \) is defined by the following actions:

1. If there is no \( x \) with \( \text{label}(x) = \text{blank} \) such that for all \( y \in \{x\}^- \) \( \text{label}(y) \in \{\text{out, mustOut}\} \) then halt.
2. Select some \( x \) with \( \text{label}(x) = \text{blank} \) such that for all \( y \in \{x\}^- \) \( \text{label}(y) \in \{\text{out, mustOut}\} \).
3. \( \text{in-trans(label}, x) \).
4. Go to step 1.

Referring to line 3 in the algorithm, we describe admissible mappings that correspond to admissible sets.

**Definition 4 (Admissible Mappings).** Let \((A, R)\) be an \( AF \), \( \text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in, out, mustOut, und, blank}\} \) be a total mapping, then \( \text{label} \) is admissible if and only if \( \forall x \in A \) \( \text{label}(x) \neq \text{mustOut} \).

On the other hand, we define hopeless mappings that correspond to inadmissible sets, see line 4 in the algorithm.

**Definition 5 (Hopeless Mappings).** Let \((A, R)\) be an \( AF \), \( \text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in, out, mustOut, und, blank}\} \) be a total mapping, then \( \text{label} \) is hopeless if and only if there is \( x \in A \) with \( \text{label}(x) = \text{mustOut} \) such that for all \( y \in \{x\}^- \text{label}(y) \in \{\text{out, mustOut, und}\} \).

At this stage, we are ready to present a progression of the algorithm in deciding the admissibility of \( b \) in the framework of figure 1:

1. at lines 15-17 in the algorithm, we initialize \( \text{label} \) with \( \{(a, \text{blank}), (b, \text{blank}), (c, \text{und}), (d, \text{blank}), (e, \text{blank}), (f, \text{blank}), (g, \text{blank}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).

2. at line 18, we apply \text{in-trans(label}, b)\), and so, \( \text{label} \) is now equal to \( \{(a, \text{mustOut}), (b, \text{in}), (c, \text{und}), (d, \text{blank}), (e, \text{blank}), (f, \text{blank}), (g, \text{blank}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).

3. at line 19, we invoke \( \text{isAdmissible(label)} \). The actions of this routine are:

3.1. at line 2, we apply \( \text{propagate(label)} \). As a result, \( \text{label} \) remains unchanged, equal to \( \{(a, \text{mustOut}), (b, \text{in}), (c, \text{und}), (d, \text{blank}), (e, \text{blank}), (f, \text{blank}), (g, \text{blank}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).

3.2. at lines 3 & 4, we note that \( \text{label} \) is not admissible nor hopeless.

3.3. at line 5, we copy \( \text{label} \) into \( \text{label'} \). Thus, \( \text{label'} \) is now equal to \( \{(a, \text{mustOut}), (b, \text{in}), (c, \text{und}), (d, \text{blank}), (e, \text{blank}), (f, \text{blank}), (g, \text{blank}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).

3.4. at line 6, we select \( g \) from \( \{g, f\} \).

3.5. at line 7, we apply \text{in-trans(label'}, g)\), and so, \( \text{label'} \) is changed to \( \{(a, \text{out}), (b, \text{in}), (c, \text{mustOut}), (d, \text{mustOut}), (e, \text{out}), (f, \text{mustOut}), (g, \text{in}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).

3.6. at line 8, we call \( \text{isAdmissible(label')} \) to take the actions:

3.6.1. at line 2, we invoke \( \text{propagate(label')} \). In effect, \( \text{label'} \) remains unchanged, equal to \( \{(a, \text{out}), (b, \text{in}), (c, \text{mustOut}), (d, \text{mustOut}), (e, \text{out}), (f, \text{mustOut}), (g, \text{in}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).
3.6.2. at line 4, we find that \( \text{label} \)' is hopeless, and so we return false.

3.7. at line 9, we apply \( \text{und-trans}(\text{label}, g) \) to get \( \text{label} = \{(a, \text{mustOut}), (b, \text{in}), (c, \text{und}), (d, \text{blank}), (e, \text{blank}), (f, \text{blank}), (g, \text{und}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).

3.8. at line 10, we call \( \text{isAdmissible}(\text{label}) \), and so the next actions are:

3.8.1. at line 2, we call \( \text{propagate}(\text{label}) \). Thus, \( \text{label} \)' remains unchanged, equal to \( \{(a, \text{mustOut}), (b, \text{in}), (c, \text{und}), (d, \text{blank}), (e, \text{blank}), (f, \text{blank}), (g, \text{und}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).

3.8.2. at line 5, we copy \( \text{label} \) into \( \text{label} \)' . Hence, \( \text{label} \)' now is equal to \( \{(a, \text{mustOut}), (b, \text{in}), (c, \text{und}), (d, \text{blank}), (e, \text{blank}), (f, \text{blank}), (g, \text{und}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).

3.8.3. at line 6, the only choice is argument \( f \).

3.8.4. at line 7, we call \( \text{in-trans}(\text{label} \)', \( f \) \). Now \( \text{label} \)' becomes equal to \( \{(a, \text{out}), (b, \text{in}), (c, \text{und}), (d, \text{blank}), (e, \text{out}), (f, \text{in}), (g, \text{out}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).

3.8.5. at line 8, we call \( \text{isAdmissible}(\text{label} \)' \) to apply the actions:

3.8.5.1. at line 2, we call \( \text{propagate}(\text{label} \)' \). Note that \( \text{label} \)' does not change and so remains equal to \( \{(a, \text{out}), (b, \text{in}), (c, \text{und}), (d, \text{blank}), (e, \text{out}), (f, \text{in}), (g, \text{out}), (h, \text{blank}), (k, \text{blank})\} \).

3.8.5.2. at line 3, we find \( \text{label} \)' admissible, and so we return true.

3.8.6. at line 8, we return true.

3.9. at line 10, we return true.

4. at line 19, we report \( b \) admissible.

Building on the old algorithm, next we develop a faster algorithm.

3 THE NEW ALGORITHM

As we did in the previous section, we introduce the new algorithm by using a top-down presentation, which means we give first the algorithm and then we specify its structures. Algorithm 2 is our new algorithm for the admissibility problem. If we run the algorithm on a given \( \mathcal{A} \mathcal{F} H = (A, R) \) with a query argument \( s \) then the algorithm decides whether \( s \) is admissible or not.

We note that the old algorithm and the new algorithm have a similar high-level organization. However, we refine a number of constructs as we elaborate throughout this section. Therefore, we will focus on the differences between the old algorithm and the new one.

At lines 14-19 in the new algorithm, we create and initialize five structures: \( \text{label}, \text{toIn}, \text{toUnd}, \text{blankAtt} \) and \( \text{undAtt} \). We illustrate all these structures next.

Observe that in the new algorithm we follow the basic mapping rules of the old algorithm, see remark 1. However, we add two additional labels: \( \text{mustIn} \) and \( \text{mustUnd} \). In particular, for a given \( \mathcal{A} \mathcal{F} (A, R) \), \( \text{label} \) is now a total function that maps every argument in \( A \) to a label in \( \{\text{in}, \text{out}, \text{mustOut}, \text{mustIn}, \text{mustUnd}, \text{und}, \text{blank}\} \).

Actually, we map an argument to \( \text{mustIn} \) for one of two reasons as described next.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Algorithm 2: The new algorithm.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>requires</strong>: an ( \mathcal{A} \mathcal{F} H = (A, R) ) and a query argument ( s \in A ).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ensures</strong>: a decision whether ( s ) is admissible or not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong> ( \text{isAdmissible}(\text{label}, \text{toIn}, \text{toUnd}, \text{undAtt}, \text{blankAtt}) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. if ( \text{propagate}(\text{label}, \text{toIn}, \text{toUnd}, \text{undAtt}, \text{blankAtt}) ) = false then return false;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. if ( \text{label} ) is admissible then return true;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ( \text{label} ← \text{label}.toIn ← \text{toIn} ), ( \text{toUnd} ← \text{toUnd} );</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ( \text{undAtt} ← \text{undAtt} ), ( \text{blankAtt} ← \text{blankAtt} );</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. select some ( x \in { y \left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. if ( \text{in-trans}(\text{label}, \text{toIn}, \text{toUnd}, \text{undAtt}, \text{blankAtt}) ) = false then go to line 9;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. if ( \text{isAdmissible}(\text{label}, \text{toIn}, \text{toUnd}, \text{undAtt}, \text{blankAtt}) ) = true then return true;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. if ( \text{und-trans}(\text{label}, \text{toIn}, \text{toUnd}, \text{undAtt}, \text{blankAtt}) ) = false then go to line 11;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. if ( \text{isAdmissible}(\text{label}, \text{toIn}, \text{toUnd}, \text{undAtt}, \text{blankAtt}) ) = true then return true;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. return false;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function main()</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. if ( (s, s) \in R ) then report ( s ) inadmissible and exit;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. ( \text{label} : A → { \text{in}, \text{out}, \text{und}, \text{mustOut}, \text{blank}, \text{mustIn}, \text{mustUnd} } );</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. ( \text{label} ← \emptyset ), ( \text{toIn} ← \emptyset ), ( \text{toUnd} ← \emptyset ), ( \text{undAtt} ← \emptyset ), ( \text{blankAtt} ← \emptyset );</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. for each ( x \in A ) do</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. ( \text{label}(x) ← \text{blank}, \text{andAtt}(x) ← 0, \text{blankAtt}(x) ←</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. if ( (x, x) \in R ) then ( \text{label}(x) ← \text{mustUnd}, \text{toUnd} ← \text{toUnd} ∪ {x} );</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. if (</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. ( \text{label}(x) ← \text{mustIn}, \text{toIn} ← \text{toIn} ∪ {x} );</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. if ( \text{isAdmissible}(\text{label}, \text{toIn}, \text{toUnd}, \text{undAtt}, \text{blankAtt}) ) = true then ( s ) is admissible;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. else ( s ) is not admissible;</td>
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</table>
Definition 6 (mustIn Arguments). Let \((A,R)\) be an AF, \(\text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in, out, mustOut, mustIn, mustUnd, und, blank}\}\) be a total mapping and \(x \in A\) be an argument with \(\text{label}(x) = \text{blank}\). Then, \(x\) will be re-mapped to mustIn (or equivalently we say \(x\) must be in) if and only if:

- For every \(y \in \{x\}^-\setminus\{x\}^+\) \(\text{label}(y) \in \{\text{out, mustOut}\}\), or
- There is \(y \in \{x\}^+\) with \(\text{label}(y) = \text{mustOut}\) such that \(|\{z \in \{y\}^- : \text{label}(z) = \text{blank}\}| = 1\).

We map an argument to mustUnd for the following reason.

Definition 7 (mustUnd Arguments). Let \((A,R)\) be an AF, \(\text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in, out, mustOut, mustIn, und, blank}\}\) be a total mapping and \(x \in A\) be an argument with \(\text{label}(x) = \text{blank}\). Then, \(x\) will be re-mapped to mustUnd (or equivalently we say \(x\) must be und) if and only if there is \(y \in \{x\}^-\) with \(\text{label}(y) \in \{\text{blank, mustUnd}\}\) such that for all \(z \in \{y\}^-\) \(\text{label}(z) \neq \text{blank}\).

Eventually, mustIn and mustUnd arguments will be re-mapped to in and und respectively, but we delay this to optimize the mapping propagation process as we elaborate shortly. At line 15 in the algorithm, we use toIn and toUnd sets, which respectively collect mustIn and mustUnd arguments to allow for an efficient access to them.

Also, at line 15 we use the total mappings: undAtt and blankAtt. For a given AF \((A,R)\) with a total mapping \(\text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in, out, mustOut, mustIn, mustUnd, und, blank}\}\), undAtt maps every argument \(x \in A\) to \(|\{y \in \{x\}^- : \text{label}(y) = \text{und}\}|\), while blankAtt maps every argument \(x \in A\) to \(|\{y \in \{x\}^- : \text{label}(y) \in \{\text{blank, mustUnd}\}\}|\). The purpose of these mappings is to speed the process of checking the conditions under which an argument is mapped to mustUnd or mustIn. Further, these mappings streamline the computations around detecting hopeless labelings.

Remark 2 (undAtt and blankAtt). Let \((A,R)\) be an AF, \(\text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in, out, mustOut, mustIn, mustUnd, und, blank}\}\) be a total mapping, \(\mathbb{N}\) the set of non-negative integers, undAtt : \(A \rightarrow \mathbb{N}\) with blankAtt : \(A \rightarrow \mathbb{N}\) be total mappings and \(x \in A\) be an argument. Then,

- Checking if \(\text{label}(x) = \text{blank}\), blankAtt(x) = 0, and undAtt(x) = 0, is equivalent to checking whether \(x\) must be in.
- Checking if \(\text{label}(x) = \text{mustOut}\), blankAtt(x) = 1 and \(\exists y \in \{x\}^-\) with \(\text{label}(y) = \text{blank}\), is equivalent to checking whether \(y\) must be in.
- Checking if \(\text{label}(x) \in \{\text{blank, mustUnd, und}\}\), blankAtt(x) = 0, and \(y \in \{x\}^+\) with \(\text{label}(y) = \text{blank}\) is equivalent to checking whether \(y\) must be und.
- Checking if \(\text{label}(x) = \text{mustOut}\) and blankAtt(x) = 0 is equivalent to checking whether label is hopeless.

Hence, remark 2 shows how we actually check if an argument has to be re-mapped to mustIn or mustUnd, or if the current mapping is hopeless.

At line 18, we map self-attacking arguments to mustUnd and then include them in toUnd. Then, at line 19 we map every \(x\) with \(|\{x\}^-| = 0\) to mustIn and then add them to toIn. Referring to line 7 in the algorithm, we redefine the in-trans routine as in the following specification.

Definition 8 (In-trans Routine). Let \((A,R)\) be an AF, \(\text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in, out, mustIn, mustOut, und, mustUnd, blank}\}\) be a total mapping, \(x \in A\) be an argument with \(\text{label}(x) \in \{\text{blank, mustIn, mustUnd}\}\), toIn \(\subseteq A\) with toUnd \(\subseteq A\) be sets of arguments, \(\mathbb{N}\) the set of non-negative integers, and undAtt : \(A \rightarrow \mathbb{N}\) with blankAtt : \(A \rightarrow \mathbb{N}\) be total mappings. Then, in-trans(x, label, toIn, toUnd, undAtt, blankAtt) is defined by the set of actions:

1. \(\text{label}(x) \leftarrow \text{in}\).
2. for each \(y \in \{x\}^+ \cup \{x\}^-\) with \(\text{label}(y) \neq \text{out}\) do:
   2.1. for each \(z \in \{y\}^-\) do:
   2.1.1. if \(\text{label}(y) = \text{und}\), then \(\text{undAtt}(z) \leftarrow \text{undAtt}(z) - 1\).
   2.1.2. if \(\text{label}(y) = \text{blank}\), then \(\text{blankAtt}(z) \leftarrow \text{blankAtt}(z) - 1\).
   2.1.3. if \(\text{label}(z) = \text{mustOut}\) and \(\text{blankAtt}(z) = 0\), then return false.
   2.1.4. if \(z\) must be in, then \(\text{toIn} \leftarrow \text{toIn} \cup \{z\}\) and \(\text{label}(z) \leftarrow \text{mustIn}\).
   2.1.5. for each \(v \in \{z\}^+\) s.t. \(v\) must be und do:
   2.1.5.1. \(\text{toUnd} \leftarrow \text{toUnd} \cup \{v\}\).
   2.1.5.2. \(\text{label}(v) \leftarrow \text{mustUnd}\).
   2.1.6. if there is \(v \in \{z\}^-\) s.t. \(v\) must be in, then:
   2.1.6.1. \(\text{toIn} \leftarrow \text{toIn} \cup \{v\}\).
   2.1.6.2. \(\text{label}(v) \leftarrow \text{mustIn}\).
   2.2. if \(y \in \{x\}^-\), then \(\text{label}(y) \leftarrow \text{mustOut}\).
   2.3. if \(y \in \{x\}^+\), then \(\text{label}(y) \leftarrow \text{out}\).
   2.4. if \(\text{label}(y) = \text{mustOut}\) and \(\text{blankAtt}(y) = 0\), then return false.
3. return true.

Referring to line 9 in the algorithm, we redefine und-trans.

Definition 9 (Und-trans Routine). Let \((A,R)\) be an AF, \(\text{label} : A \rightarrow \{\text{in, out, mustIn, mustOut, und,}\)
mustUnd, blank) be a total mapping, $x \in A$ be an argument with label($x$) $\in \{\text{blank, mustUnd}\}$, toIn $\subseteq A$ with toUnd $\subseteq A$ be sets of arguments, $\mathbb{N}$ be the set of non-negative integers, and undAtt : $A \to \mathbb{N}$ with blankAtt : $A \to \mathbb{N}$ be total mappings. Then, und-trans($x$, label, toIn, toUnd, undAtt, blankAtt) is defined by the set of actions:

1. label($x$) $\leftarrow$ und.
2. for each $y \in \{x\}^+$ do:
   1. undAtt($y$) $\leftarrow$ undAtt($y$) + 1.
   2. if label($y$) = mustOut with blankAtt($y$) = 0 then return false.
3. return true.

Referring to line 2 in the algorithm, we refine the propagate routine.

Definition 10 (Propagate Routine). Let $(A,R)$ be an $AF$, label : $A \to \{\text{in, out, mustIn, mustOut, und, mustUnd, blank}\}$ be a total mapping, toIn $\subseteq A$ with toUnd $\subseteq A$ be sets of arguments, $\mathbb{N}$ be the set of non-negative integers, and undAtt : $A \to \mathbb{N}$ with blankAtt : $A \to \mathbb{N}$ be total mappings. Then, propagate(label, toIn, toUnd, undAtt, blankAtt) is defined by the following set of actions:

1. while toIn $\neq \emptyset$ or toUnd $\neq \emptyset$ do:
   1.1. while toIn $\neq \emptyset$ do:
      1.1.1. remove an argument $x$ from toIn.
      1.1.2. if in-trans($x$, label, toIn, toUnd, undAtt, blankAtt) = false then return false.
   1.1. while toUnd $\neq \emptyset$ do:
      1.1.1. remove an argument $x$ from toUnd.
      1.1.2. if und-trans($x$, label, toIn, toUnd, undAtt, blankAtt) = false then return false.
2. return true.

We note that the speedup of the new algorithm comes mainly from refining the routines: in-trans, und-trans, and propagate; together with the structures: label, toIn, toUnd, undAtt and blankAtt.

To see how these refined constructs have led to a faster admissibility deciding, let us have a closer look at two major actions: checking hopelessness mappings, and mappings propagation. In the old algorithm, these two actions are done at a global scope, hence one needs to scan exhaustively all arguments to check hopelessness or to propagate mappings. Since these two actions are repeated enormously often at run-time, they are extremely expensive. However, not all arguments actually need to be checked (for hopelessness or propagation) because not all of them have been affected by the last re-mappings that happened during in-trans or und-trans. This is exactly what we have addressed in the new algorithm: we restrict the scope of these two major actions (i.e. hopelessness check and mappings propagation) to a relatively small subset of arguments, which roughly are the neighbors of the arguments that recently have been re-mapped.

In the next section we verify practically the running-time performance of the new algorithm.

However, before closing this section we recall two other problems that are equivalent to the admissibility problem. To elaborate on this correspondence, we define preferred and complete arguments.

Definition 11 (Preferred Arguments). Let $(A,R)$ be an $AF$ and $S \subseteq A$ be a set of arguments. Then, $S$ is a preferred extension of $AF$ if and only if $S$ is a set-inclusion-maximal admissible set. Further, we call $x \in A$ preferred if and only if $x$ is in a preferred extension.

Definition 12 (Complete Arguments). Let $(A,R)$ be an $AF$ and $S \subseteq A$ be an admissible set, then $S$ is a complete extension of $AF$ if and only if for each $x \in S$ or $\{x\} = S$. Further, we call $x \in A$ complete if and only if $x$ is in a complete extension.

Therefore, it is not hard to see that every admissible set of a given $AF$ is preferred/complete extension or it can be expanded to become one. Thus, deciding the admissibility of a given argument is equivalent to deciding if the argument is preferred or complete.

4 VERIFICATION

We verified the running-time performance of the new algorithm by using benchmark B of the second international competition on computational models of argumentation 2017 (ICCMA17). The benchmark is a set of 350 different AFs. However, for evaluating the admissibility problem 300 AFs of benchmark B have been considered in ICCMA17, where 50 AFs were excluded due to triviality. In fact, ICCMA17 duplicated the hardest 50 AFs of the benchmark by generating two different queries on every AF. Thus, in total there

1The C++ source code is available for free download at: https://sourceforge.net/projects/artools.

were 350 problem instances using only 300 AFs. To evaluate our algorithm we used a machine with Intel-core-i7 processor alongside four gigabytes of system memory. Note that the environment of ICCMA17 has a more powerful Intel-xeon processor and, four gigabytes of system memory were allocated for each problem instance. Following ICCMA17, we set a timeout of 10 minutes for each problem instance.

As this paper presents a direct approach to the admissibility problem, we compare with the three direct-based systems: ArgTools v1.0 (Nofal et al., 2015), heureka (Geilen and Thimm, 2017), and ArgEqSolver (Rodrigues, 2017). ArgTools v1.0 implements algorithm 1, and it solved 234 problem instances. The new algorithm (algorithm 2) is currently implemented within the ArgTools project, and it solved 297 problem instances. To the best of our knowledge, the specifications of admissibility checking in heureka and ArgEqSolver are not published. However, the two systems solved at best 148 problem instances. For reduction-based solvers, at best 304 problem instances were solved in ICCMA17. Lastly, note that the ICCMA17 solvers were evaluated (with respect to the admissibility problem) under the task: DC-PR (and respectively DC-CO), which stands for Decide Credulous acceptance under PRefered (respectively COMplete) semantics. Table 1 summarizes the total running times of the new algorithm compared to the systems mentioned above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>system</th>
<th>elapsed time (seconds)</th>
<th>#solved problem instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algorithm 2</td>
<td>36,833</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ArgTools v1.0</td>
<td>75,358</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heureka</td>
<td>126,156</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ArgEqSolver</td>
<td>122,604</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Experimental performance.

Figure 2: The AF associated with the legal case.

5 AN EXAMPLE WITH LEGAL REASONING

In this section we provide an application of the admissibility checking using the following hypothetical exchange of allegations (as presented in (Jakobovits and Vermeir, 1999) and which is actually adapted from (Gordon, 1993)):

The plaintiff and the defendant have both loaned money to Miller for the purchase of an oil tanker, which is the collateral for both loans. Miller has defaulted on both loans, and the practical question is which of the two lenders will first be paid from the proceeds of the sale of the ship. One subsidiary issue is whether the plaintiff perfected his security interest in the ship or not.

- Argument a by the plaintiff: My security interest in Miller’s ship was perfected. A security interest in goods may be perfected by taking possession of the collateral (UCC Article 9). I have possession of Miller’s ship.
- Argument b by defendant: Ships are not goods for the purposes of Article 9.
- Argument c by the plaintiff: Ships are movable, and movable things are goods according to UCC Article 9.
- Argument d by the defendant: According to the Ship Mortgage Act, a security interest in a ship may only be perfected by filing a financing statement.
- Argument e by the plaintiff: The Ship Mortgage Act does not apply, since the UCC is newer and therefore has precedence.
- Argument f by the defendant: The Ship Mortgage Act is federal law, which has precedence over state law such as UCC.

Figure 2 shows these arguments and the attack relation between them.

Let us now check the admissibility of the plaintiff’s claim regarding her security interest in Miller’s ship being perfected (argument a in Figure 2.) Subsequently, the question now is whether we can find an admissible set S of arguments including a. Let us start with S = {a}. Thus, S− = {b, d}. As S− ⊈ S+, we need to expand S further by an argument from (S−)−. Let e join S. Now, S = {a, c}. But still S− ⊈ S+. Therefore, include e in S. At this point, S = {a, c, e}, S− = {b, d, f} and S− ⊈ S+. As now S is admissible, the plaintiff’s claim for perfecting her security interest in the Miller’s ship is admissible.

6 CONCLUSION

We implemented an improved algorithm for the admissibility problem. Using benchmark B of the international competition ICCMA17, we evaluated the
new algorithm and practically verified that it outperforms the old algorithm. As the speed gain is due to a number of useful structures that optimize the underlying actions of the new algorithm, we plan to investigate the possibility of utilizing additional constructs that might enhance further the admissibility-deciding procedures. In particular, referring to line 6 in the new algorithm, we currently select an argument by searching in the whole set of arguments (i.e. A). An open issue is finding a cost-effective mechanism to restrict the search to a subset of candidate arguments.

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