Predictive access control for distributed computation
We show how to use aspect-oriented programming to separate security and trust issues from the logical design of mobile, distributed systems. The main challenge is how to enforce various types of security policies, in particular predictive access control policies — policies based on the future behavior of a program. A novel feature of our approach is that we can define policies concerning secondary use of data.
Combining Static Analysis and Runtime Checking in Security Aspects for Distributed Tuple Spaces

Enforcing security policies to distributed systems is difficult, in particular, to a system containing untrusted components. We designed AspectKE*, an aspect-oriented programming language based on distributed tuple spaces to tackle this issue. One of the key features in AspectKE* is the program analysis predicates and functions that provide information on future behavior of a program. With a dual value evaluation mechanism that handles results of static analysis and runtime values at the same time, those functions and predicates enable the users to specify security policies in a uniform manner. Our two-staged implementation strategy gathers fundamental static analysis information at load-time, so as to avoid performing all analysis at runtime. We built a compiler for AspectKE*, and successfully implemented security aspects for a distributed chat system and an electronic healthcare record workflow system.

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AspectKE*: Security Aspects with Program Analysis for Distributed Systems

Enforcing security policies to distributed systems is difficult, in particular, when a system contains untrusted components. We designed AspectKE*, a distributed AOP language based on a tuple space, to tackle this issue. In AspectKE*, aspects can enforce access control policies that depend on future behavior of running processes. One of the key language features is the predicates and functions that extract results of static program analysis, which are useful for defining security aspects that have to know about future behavior of a program. AspectKE* also provides a novel variable binding mechanism for pointcuts, so that pointcuts can uniformly specify join points based on both static and dynamic information about the program. Our implementation strategy performs fundamental static analysis at load-time, so as to retain runtime overheads minimal. We implemented a compiler for AspectKE*, and demonstrate usefulness of AspectKE* through a security aspect for a distributed chat system.

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Aspects with Program Analysis for Security Policies

Enforcing security policies to IT systems, especially for a mobile distributed system, is challenging. As society becomes more IT-savvy, our expectations about security and privacy evolve. This is usually followed by changes in regulation in the form of standards and legislation. In many cases, small modification of the security requirement might lead to substantial changes in a number of modules within a large mobile distributed system. Indeed, security is a crosscutting concern which can spread to many business modules within a system, and is difficult to be integrated in a modular way. This dissertation explores the principles of adding challenging security policies to existing systems with great flexibility and modularity. The policies concerned cover both classical access control and explicit information flow policies. We built our solution by combining aspect-oriented programming techniques with static program analysis techniques. The former technique can separate security concerns out of the main logic, and thus improves system modularity. The latter can analyze the system behavior, and thus helps detect software bugs or potential malicious code. We present AspectKE, an aspect-oriented extension of the process calculus KLAIM that excels at modeling mobile, distributed systems. A novel feature of our approach is that advices are able to analyze the future use of data, which is achieved by using program analysis techniques. We also present AspectK to propose other possible aspect-oriented extensions based on KLAIM, followed by a discussion of open joinpoints that commonly exist in coordination languages such as KLAIM. Based on the idea of AspectKE, we design and implement a proof-of-concept programming language AspectKE*, which enables programmers to easily specify analysis-based security policies with the help of high-level program analysis predicates and functions. The prototype is efficiently realized by a two-stage implementation strategy and a static-dynamic dual value evaluation mechanism. We have performed two case studies to evaluate our programming model and language design. One application is based on an electronic health care workflow system. The other is a distributed chat system. We considered a number of security policies for both primary and secondary use of data, classical access control and predictive access control - control access based on the future behavior of a program. Some of the above mentioned policies can only be enforced by analysis of process continuations.

Advice for Coordination

We show how to extend a coordination language with support for aspect oriented programming. The main challenge is how to properly deal with the trapping of actions before the actual data have been bound to the formal parameters. This necessitates dealing with open joinpoints – which is more demanding than the closed joinpoints in more traditional aspect oriented languages like AspectJ. The usefulness of our approach is demonstrated by mechanisms for discretionary and mandatory access control policies, as usually expressed by reference monitors, as well as mechanisms for logging actions.

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Analyzing the Control Structure of PEPA

The Performance Evaluation Process Algebra, PEPA, is introduced by Jane Hillston as a stochastic process algebra for modelling distributed systems and especially suitable for performance evaluation. We present a static analysis that very precisely approximates the control structure of processes expressed in PEPA. The analysis technique we adopted is Data Flow Analysis. We begin the analysis by defining an appropriate transfer function, then with the classical worklist algorithm we construct a finite automaton that captures all possible interactions among processes. By annotating labels and layers to PEPA programs, the approximating result is very precise. Based on the analysis, we also develop algorithms for validating the deadlock property of PEPA programs. The techniques have been implemented in a tool which is able to analyze processes with a control structure that more than one thousand states.

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