Runtime Safety Analysis for Safe Reconfiguration

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Abstract—Modern technical systems are increasingly built to exhibit self-x properties as, e.g., self-healing or self-optimization. For this, they require adaptation at runtime. This is even true for embedded or mechatronic systems which often operate in safety-critical environments. There, the effects of the adaptation with respect to safety must be analyzed carefully. However, not all parameters needed for safety analyses, e.g., the concrete system architecture, are known at design time. Consequently, safety analyses need to be executed during runtime.

Current approaches of runtime safety analysis typically react to anomalies that already occurred in the system. Thus, unsafe system states cannot be excluded completely. We present a runtime safety analysis that prevents system states with an unacceptable risk that have not yet occurred. For this, we generate the reachable component structures and analyze them with respect to risk. The system is modified such that component structures with an unacceptable risk are not reachable any more and are thus prevented.

I. INTRODUCTION

The value creation in today’s technical systems is mostly driven by embedded software. Self-x techniques as an example of innovative functionality have become a major trend in engineering complex systems (cf. [1]). Self-x postulates that systems adapt autonomously to changes in the environment or the system itself, e.g., error occurrences. Self-x systems are often embedded real-time systems that interact with the real world, where they are employed in safety-critical contexts. Even in the case that the system does not contain any design errors, hazardous situations may be caused by random errors that happen, e.g., due to the wear of physical components. Consequently, these systems have to be analyzed with respect to potential hazards and risks.

Hazard analysis determines which combinations of random errors lead to hazards and the probability of the hazards’ occurrences. The system developer uses this information to implement the system and in particular its software such that the risk, i.e., the probability of the occurrence combined with the severity of a hazard, is acceptable\(^1\).

Self-x systems pose a challenge to safety analysis as they change their component structure during runtime. The structural change modifies the influence of hardware faults on the system and the occurrence probabilities of these faults. This affects the probabilities of hazardous situations. The severity that results from accidents may change as well, e.g., due to a changing amount of passengers in a car. Both parameters affect the associated risks. To guarantee safety, this analysis has to be applied to all component structures that are created in the self-x system. But not all component structures are known at design time, e.g., when the system connects to another system of which the system model is unknown at design time, e.g., the other system was made by an unknown manufacturer. Consequently, risk analysis has to be performed during runtime.

An example of Self-x systems that we consider are cars that are driving autonomously, e.g., on a highway. These cars can drive in a convoy in order to reduce air resistance and, thus, save energy. For this, they control their driving speed autonomously. The current speed of a car is measured by speed sensors. Depending on this, the embedded software determines the required de-/acceleration to ensure the vehicle’s drive speed. If at least one of the speed sensors fails, it propagates a wrong current speed to the embedded software. This results in a wrong de-/acceleration which, in turn, leads to the hazard wrong speed. A wrong speed may lead to the accident collision. The severity caused by this collision may be the injury of several people and severe property damage.

Standard development approaches for safety-critical computer systems require hazards to be identified and the associated severity to be defined in order to assess the systems risk [2]. Existing approaches of runtime analysis [3], [4], [5] focus on the detection of anomalies

\(^1\)Acceptability is the trade-off between the hazard’s probability and consequences and the costs of reducing the probability of the hazard [2].
in the executed system behavior and try to lead the system back to its intended behavior. Detection cannot be applied if we want to prevent unwanted situations, e.g., unacceptable risks, before they actually happen.

In this paper, we present an extension of our runtime risk analysis [6]. It determines the risk of future component structures at design time and prevents them from being created during runtime if their risk is unacceptable. That approach does not work for the aforementioned case when systems are connected during runtime which are not known at design time. In contrast to that previous work, we now compute hazard probabilities during runtime instead of using hazard probabilities which are pre-computed at design time.

Based on the system’s current component structure, we compute each reachable component structure for a fixed number of subsequent structural changes. We then compute the hazard probabilities of the reachable component structures and combine them with the current severity encoded in numerical values to obtain the risks. If the risk of a reachable component structure exceeds the system’s acceptable risk, the structural change that would result in this component structure is blocked.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. We first present the models that we use for modeling the component structure and structural changes in Section II. Our approach for risk analysis at design time follows in Section III. The risk analysis that is applied during runtime is presented in Section IV. Section V contains a discussion of related work. We conclude and give an outlook on future work in Section VI.

II. System Models

In this section, we present the models that specify the systems structure and behavior. The models that we use in this paper are specified in MechatronicUML [7]. We describe the specification of the system architecture and the specification of the structural changes, called reconfiguration, in Section II-A and the behavior specification in Section II-B.

A. System Architecture

In our approach, the system’s software architecture is specified by an initial software component structure over a component model and a set of graph transformation rules for the specification of the architectural reconfiguration. MechatronicUML uses a component model where components communicate via ports and the component’s behavior is specified by real-time statecharts – an extension of UML State Machines which support more powerful concepts for the specification of real-time behavior. The components are connected via their ports by connectors. We call the resulting component structure a configuration [7].

We use UML deployment diagrams extended by hardware ports to specify and analyze the influence of hardware faults to the software components. Figure 1 shows a deployment diagram of a simplified subsystem that controls the speed of an autonomous car. Software components are represented by rectangles and hardware components by boxes. Squares depict ports and arrows connectors. The orientation of the arrow specifies the direction of the communication. We will refer to this deployed component structure as vehicle1. This subsystem is a safety-critical part as a wrong speed can lead to harmful accidents like collision.

The speed control subsystem consists of the component sw1:Vehicle_SW representing the vehicle’s software and two speed sensors s11:SpeedSensor and s12:SpeedSensor. The speed sensors measure the vehicle’s speed. The software compares and combines both speed values in sca1:SpeedCalc and subsequently sets the values for the engine controller in sct1:SpeedCtrl.

For the specification of reconfiguration, we consider configurations as graphs, i.e., components and ports as nodes and connectors as edges. We then model a reconfiguration as a graph transformation rule [8], [9]. A graph transformation rule consists of a left hand side and a right hand side. The left hand side identifies the part of the configuration in which the rule can be applied, i.e., the graph contains an isomorphic image of the left hand side as a subgraph. The right hand side defines the result of the application, i.e., the changes to be made to that subgraph such that it is an isomorphic image of the right hand side. For a short hand notation, left and right hand side are depicted in one single graph using the notation «create» or «destroy» for components and connectors which are created or deleted during rule application.

Graph transformation rules change the system structure, i.e., create and delete components, ports, and connectors during runtime. They can be applied arbitrarily often. Additionally, new configuration are created by the connection of beforehand isolated systems as in our convoy example. Thus, the concrete configurations that actually exist in the system are only known at runtime.

Figure 2 shows the graph transformation rules that create a connection between two vehicles. The graph transformation rules of Figures 2(a) and 2(b) both create a port that communicates to the vehicle in front and the vehicle in the back of the respective vehicle. During the
creation of the ports, the connection between the vehicles is created as well.

(a) Create Front Port  (b) Create Rear Port

Figure 2. Graph Transformation Rules that Create a Connection between the two Vehicles

Figure 3 shows a configuration which is the result of the graph transformation rules of Figure 2 connecting two vehicles. It shows the connection between vehicle1 and vehicle2 when both vehicles drive in a convoy. Both vehicles run the same software, but they use speed sensors of different types – type SpeedSensor1 in vehicle1 and type SpeedSensor2 in vehicle2 – that have different probabilities of failing. Via this connection, vehicle2 sends reference data, e.g., reference speed to vehicle1. vehicle1 takes this data into account when calculating its target speed. Thus a failure in, e.g., s21: SpeedSensor2 of vehicle2 now also effects the hazard wrong speed of vehicle1.

Figure 3. Embedded Component Instance Configuration in Convoy Mode

B. System Behavior

We specify the real-time behavior of software components by real-time statecharts [7]. Real-time statecharts are an extension of UML State Machines which support more powerful concepts for the specification of real-time behavior. They contain clocks and constraints over these clocks. In this paper, we will use real-time statecharts without time. Reconfiguration is connected to the system behavior by attaching graph transformation rules to transitions of real-time statecharts as side effects.

Figure 4 shows an excerpt of the real-time statechart that specifies the reconfiguration behavior of the component sw1: Vehicle_SW. The real-time statechart has four states. noConvoy is the state when the vehicle is not driving in a convoy. This is the initial state. In the states convoyFront, convoyRear, and convoyInside, the vehicle is driving as first vehicle, last vehicle, and inside a convoy. When switching between any of the four states, a port is either created or deleted by a side effect of the according transition. E.g., when switching from noConvoy to convoyFront, the side effect { createRearPort } creates a port that communicates with the vehicle that is driving behind the current vehicle.

III. Risk Analysis

The risk is the combination of the probability of a hazard and the severity associated to an accident that results from the hazard. Thus, for risk analysis we first compute the probability of a hazard by hazard analysis. We then combine the probability with the severity value.

Our hazard analysis approach [10] computes hazards’ probabilities based on configurations. In this section, we describe how the hazard analysis is performed for one configuration.

We follow the terminology of Laprie [11] by associating failures – the externally visible deviation from the correct behavior – to the ports where the components interact with their environment. Errors – the manifestation of a fault in the state of a component – are restricted to the internals of the component.

For each component, we determine the errors and the failures and build a failure propagation model manually as a set of fault trees which relates failures at the ports of the components to internal errors. Internal errors are annotated with the probability of their occurrence. Failure propagation models for the connectors are automatically generated. The failure propagation of a configuration is formed by connecting the failure propagation models of all components by the connectors. Using this failure propagation model, we compute cut-sets – combinations of errors that make a hazard occur – and probabilities of hazards.

Figure 5 shows the failure propagation model of the component structure of Figure 1. In each speed sensor, an error, e.g., wrong value can occur, illustrated by the errors e1 and e2. The failure f9 at the outgoing port of the component sct1: SpeedCtrl occurs, if there occurs an
error in either of the speed sensors. This is visualized by the symbol $\geq 1$ that represents a logical or.

We define a hazard in form of a Boolean formula that combines the outgoing failures of components. In our example, we define the hazard wrong speed by $\text{wrong speed} \iff f_9$. The speed sensors $s11: \text{SpeedSensor}$ and $s12: \text{SpeedSensor}$ each fail at a probability of $5 \cdot 10^{-5}$. The probability of the hazard wrong speed is (due to the logical or) thus approx. $10^{-4}$.

The risk of an accident is computed by multiplying the probability of the hazard with numerical values associated to the severity that results from the accident related to the hazard [2]. In our example, a collision that results from a wrong speed of vehicle 1 has a severity of 1, because vehicle 1 transports neither passengers nor cargo. The risk of vehicle 1 for the accident collision is thus $1 \cdot 10^{-4} = 10^{-4}$.

IV. Safe Reconfiguration

We now show how we guarantee that configurations built during runtime do not have an unacceptable risk. For this, we extend the system architecture by components that execute the risk analysis at runtime and manage the component’s reconfiguration, i.e., block reconfigurations in case the risk would become unacceptable. To make reconfigurations blockable, we extend real-time statecharts. These two model extensions are addressed in Section IV-A. On the other hand, we need to compute the possible configurations of the system during runtime, because we can only analyze dependencies between errors correctly if we know how components are connected. This is presented in Section IV-B.

A. Model Extensions

Each autonomous component is extended by the subcomponent RiskManager. Its subcomponent Manager manages the safe reconfiguration of its autonomous component with respect to risk, i.e., it blocks reconfigurations in case the risk of the subsequent configuration would not be acceptable. One autonomous component is chosen, of which the risk manager performs the risk analysis of the system and acts as the autonomous component’s risk manager at the same time. In this case, the risk manager is extended by the subcomponent RiskAnalyzer. The risk analyzer can be deployed on any autonomous component. Leader election protocols [12] can be employed to determine at runtime which autonomous component will contain the RiskAnalyzer subcomponent. In systems where the computing hardware resources are limited, the risk analyzer may be deployed on an external unit, e.g., desktop computer.

Figure 6 shows a configuration of three vehicles driving in a convoy. v1:Vehicle coordinates the convoy, i.e., sets reference data, e.g., speed. v2:Vehicle and v3:Vehicle drive as members. v2:Vehicle performs the risk analysis.

For risk analysis, all autonomous components send their current configuration, graph transformation rules, and failure propagation models to the risk analyzer. The risk analyzer computes the reachable configurations of the system from the current configuration and the graph transformation rules (cf. Section IV-B). For each reachable configuration, it computes the risks of all system hazards as described in Section III. Subsequently, each autonomous component receives the risk values and hazard probabilities associated with any of its reachable configurations. Based on this data, the risk manager of each autonomous component checks whether the risk of the subsequent configuration is acceptable before executing a reconfiguration.

After each reconfiguration, the risk analyzer is updated about the changed configuration of the system by the risk manager of the autonomous component that has executed a reconfiguration. Every time the severity of a hazard changes, e.g., due to a changed amount of passengers, the risk managers update the risk values.
B. Runtime Risk Computation

The runtime risk computation consists of two steps. First, we compute all configurations of the system that are reachable from the current configuration by graph transformation rules. Second, for each reachable configuration we compute the probability of each hazard and combine it with the severity that is associated to this hazard. We take the highest risk value and compare it to the acceptable risk of the system in order to judge whether the configuration is safe or not.

For computing the reachable configurations, we perform a reachability analysis on the reconfiguration behavior. As described in Section II, the reconfiguration behavior consists of real-time statecharts that execute graph transformation rules as side effects of their transitions.

We compute the reachable configurations using the reachability analysis introduced in [13]. Based on the current system configuration and the set of graph transformation rules, the reachability analysis computes all possible successive configurations. The result is a labeled transition system whose states are configurations and whose transitions correspond to applications of graph transformation rules. The labels of the transitions are the names of the applied rules. Due to space limitations, we omit an example for the labeled transition system.

For each reachable configuration, we compute the risk of each hazard as described in Section III. For our example in Figure 3 which is reachable from the initial configuration of vehicle1, we assume an acceptable risk of 5 \cdot 10^{-4}. All speed sensors of vehicle1 and vehicle2 may emit failures. The difference between the speed sensors of both vehicles is their probability of failing. The speed sensors of vehicle1 fail at a probability of 5 \cdot 10^{-5} and those of vehicle2 at a probability of 5 \cdot 10^{-4}.

When the vehicles are not connected, the probability of the hazard wrong speed is 10^{-4} for vehicle1 (cf. Section III) and 10^{-3} for vehicle2. In our example, a collision of vehicle 1 has a severity of 1 and the risk of vehicle 1 for the accident collision is 10^{-4} (cf. Section III). The collision of vehicle 2 has a severity of 4 because it has loaded 4 passengers. In case of a collision there is the possibility of multiple injured persons or even fatalities. The risk of vehicle 2 for the accident collision is thus 4 \cdot 10^{-3}.

Figure 7 shows the failure propagation model of the two vehicles in convoy mode. The outgoing failure f_9 of vehicle1 now also depends on the errors of the speed sensors of vehicle2, namely e_3 and e_4. This affects the probability of the hazard wrong speed of vehicle1 which is now (1-(1-10^{-4} \cdot 10^{-3})) = 11 \cdot 10^{-3}. The risk of a collision of vehicle1 is now 4 \cdot 11 \cdot 10^{-3} = 44 \cdot 10^{-3}. We take 4 as the severity value as it is the highest severity value in the system. This risk is higher then the acceptable risk of this system as 44 \cdot 10^{-3} > 5 \cdot 10^{-4}. Consequently, the reconfiguration connecting both vehicles must be blocked.

V. Related Work

Most approaches in the field of runtime safety analyses focus on the detection of anomalies in the executed behavior of the system and try to lead the system back to its intended behavior [3], [4]. We look into the reachable future states of the system and prevent it from unsafe states with respect to risk. However, this is only possible, because we know these potential anomalies beforehand and it only works for known hazards and risks.

Typically, for each safety property, that is to be tracked, a monitor is generated at runtime [3]. In our approach, we have one monitor that keeps track of the
risk value of the system. The monitor is not generated but implemented offline. It becomes system specific by loading the system specific models at runtime.

The conditional safety certificates by Schneider et al. [14] model a relationship between required preconditions and safety guarantees in a fault tree like manner. During runtime, based on the current system properties, an evidence is given whether the safety guarantees can be fulfilled. An adaptation is carried out accordingly. In contrast to our method, the analysis can only react to the current system properties. An analysis for several system states is not possible.

VI. Conclusion

In this paper, we presented an approach for a runtime risk analysis for self-adaptive systems. In particular, we discussed the architectural extensions that are necessary to perform such runtime analysis as well as an algorithm for computing the risk. The algorithm applies a graph-based reachability analysis for computing all possible successive configurations of the system. The risks of these configurations are computed. The results of this analysis are then used to identify unsafe configurations which must be prevented.

In our future work, we will work on a concept for a compositional hazard analysis. Such an analysis eliminates the need for a central risk analyzer. Instead, each autonomous component computes its hazard probabilities by itself and the autonomous components only exchange hazard probabilities instead of behavioral models.

Further, performing a risk analysis during runtime opens up possibilities for risk management. We would like to reduce probabilities of hazard occurrences proactively by reconfiguring into a configuration with lower hazard probabilities.

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