

A METHOD TO MODEL GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING RAILWAY SAFETY-CRITICAL SYSTEMS WITH UML

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Abstract: There are today an abundance of standards concerned with the development and certification of railway safety-critical systems. They recommend the use of different techniques to describe system requirements and to pursue safety strategies. One problem shared by standards is that they only prescribe what should be done or use but they provide no guidance on how recommendations can be fulfilled. The purpose of this paper is to investigate a methodology to model guidelines for building certifiable UML models that cater for the needs and recommendations of railway standards. The paper will explore some of the major tasks that are typical of development guidelines and will illustrate practical steps for achieving these tasks.

1 MOTIVATIONS

The will to increase the proportion of railway transport has boosted in the recent years the modernization of both software and hardware equipments in the railway sector in Europe. Thus, old cabling based communication and control systems are being replaced with computer based software systems. These latter systems are safety-critical, since defects may have serious consequences, often loss of human lives or important economic interests. In this context, there are strong requirements to obtain:

- An evidence of safety in system requirements specifications;
- An approval of system requirements specifications by an independent supervising authority before deploying safety-critical systems.

So, the problem is that compelling evidence and assessing safety are difficult, costly and time consuming tasks.

Recently, the European Committee for Electrotech-

nical Standardisation (CENELEC) has elaborated a number of standards (CENELEC, 1999; CENELEC, 2001; CENELEC, 1994; CENELEC, 1996a; CENELEC, 1996b) (cf. Figure 1) to be fulfilled when developing railway safety-critical systems. One problem shared by these standards is that they only prescribe what should be done or use but they provide no guidance on how recommendations can be fulfilled. To build a good certifiable system specification, sound development methodologies must be used. However, the use of such methodologies for describing safety-critical requirements within a language that offers a broad scope of notations such as UML (OMG,) is not always easy or intuitive. The use of a flexible modelling technique such as UML to develop safety-critical systems may also help in reducing development cost and time to market since UML is a defacto standard used in industrial modelling. In addition, an important number of designer are trained in UML making less training necessary.

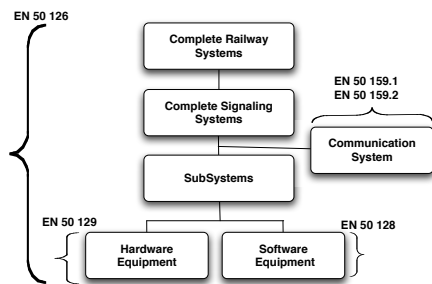


Figure 1: Scope and application areas of CENELEC Standards

The research presented in this paper is placed in the big picture of this question. It extends our prior work (Okalas Ossami et al., 2007) on the definition of a methodology to model development guidelines for building certifiable UML models that cater for the needs and recommendations of railway standards by attempting to investigate the applicability of that methodology.

As a starting point of our methodology to model guidelines for building certifiable UML models, we select a subset of UML that we judge suitable for safety development. This subset is analyzed and safety-critical oriented guidelines for describing systems with concepts of that subset are elaborated. Based on the works made on the transformation between UML and formal notations, we define a process that describes how the selected subset can be used to derive formal representations in notations like B (Abrial, 1996) and FSP (Magee and Kramer, 2006) to enable formal verification of static and dynamic properties, respectively. Finally, we define a certification methodology describing how models constructed with concepts of the selected subset can be certified. This work is carried out in the context of an inter-regional project (in France), including the French railway company (SNCF). This project started in november 2006 and hence the current paper only describes the main ideas and preliminary results.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 describes our methodology for elaborating development and certification guidelines of railway safety-critical systems with UML. Section 3 introduces the case study used to illustrate ideas presented in the paper. Section 4 illustrates the application the proposed methodology on the case study. Section 5 concludes and introduces some future works.

2 A METHOD TO MODEL GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING SAFETY-CRITICAL SYSTEMS WITH UML

Fig. 2 presents an overview of the context of our study. We advocate to perform multiple tasks aiming at producing guidelines to help both (1) designers in developing railway safety-critical systems with UML and, (2) supervising authorities in certifying these systems. The significance of envisaged tasks is summarized below.

Selecting a subset of UML. In this task, a subset of UML notation is chosen as standard for the safety-critical mainstream development. One reason for this is that not all kinds of diagrams and concepts are needed in order to describe a system or a process. Another reason is a normative one. It is strongly prohibited by standards of CENELEC to “blindly” use all the concepts of a language or a method, but only some of its concepts judged safe to describe safety-critical functions. To clarify, the selection of a subset of UML is not about selecting some UML concepts in order to extend them for particular objectives, nor is the selection of a subset of UML about redefining a particular semantics for selected concepts. The key objective of the selection of a subset of UML is precisely to isolate concepts with well-defined semantics that are suitable for developing safety-critical systems. This clearly means that any concept with ambiguous semantics are systematically removed from the selected subset.

Modelling development guidelines. The chosen subset of UML is carefully analysed to produce an appropriate formal and well-defined guidance on how and in which situations concepts can be used. The use of some UML concepts within a given real development is not always intuitive or easy. Thus, any support to aid safe systems development would be useful. In particular, it would be desirable to consider restricted and simplified concepts to keep mechanical analysis that is necessary for some of the more subtle safety requirements feasible.

Assigning a formal semantic. Since validation and verification activities are not directly accessible in UML, a formal semantic is assigned to each concept of the chosen subset notation in terms of translation rules to target formal notations with well-defined syntax and semantics. The aim is to perform consistency proofs and verify the desired safety properties as highly recommended by Standards for software

with high safety integrity level.

In the case of this study, we advocate to use several formal techniques, when performing proving. The reason for this is that no single formal notation can address all the topics cited above because different notations and supporting tools have different strengths in different areas. Another reason is that CENELEC EN 50 128 recommends the use of multiple verification techniques and tools in order to provide independent verification. In our study, we use:

- The *B method* (Abrial, 1996), one of the formal notations supported by formal analysis tools. One of the tools supporting it, *atelierB* (ClearSy, 2002) can be used, when performing the proving of static properties (invariants, pre- and post-conditions, etc.);
- The Finite State Processes (*FSPs*) (Magee and Kramer, 2006) when performing the proving of dynamic properties.

To get a B specification (resp. FSP specification) from a UML model, we need to perform a translation from UML into B (resp. FSP). For this purpose, our goal is to reuse the efforts that have been out in the production of UML to B and UML to FSP translation rules rather than to define a new ones. Note that the actual translation from UML to B and UML to FSP is not standardized. To be used in a certification framework, they must be redefined in an international recognized and standardized framework such as Model Driven Engineering (MDE).

Modelling certification guidelines. This task aims at giving some hints on how supervising authorities may attest both that the right system has been built (validation) and that the system has been built right (verification). This is a long term objective and is let out the scope of this paper. The illustration of how all these tasks is given in the next sections.

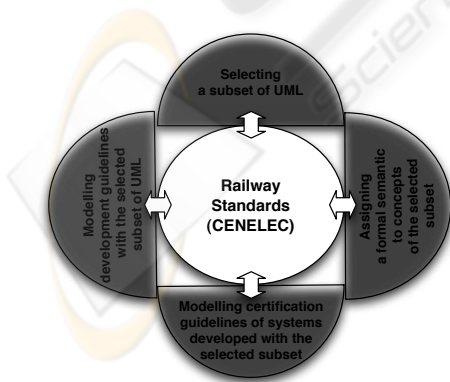


Figure 2: Tasks specific towards preparing development and certification guidelines for rail way safety-critical systems with UML

3 A SMALL CASE STUDY

For illustrating ideas developed in the paper, we consider the simplified generalized roadrail crossing (GRC) example (see Fig.3 (Jansen and Schnieder, 2000)). The general requirements are to produce a computerized system to control trains and a gate at a railroad crossing which lies in a region of interest *R*. Trains travel in one direction through *R*. Sensors indicate when a train enters or exits the region *R*. For space and clarity reasons, we restrict ourselves to elements which are relevant to illustrate our approach. More details can be found in (Jansen and Schnieder, 2000). The *Train* may be in five states: 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4 see Fig. 3. The state of the train is determined by information provided by sensors positioned on the track and by a clock. When a train leaves a region and enters another one, a signal is sent to a system controller which reacts by sending appropriate signals to the gate. The gate also react by closing and opening. The system must be safe: the gate must be down when the train reaches state *on*.

We will describe the development of the system step by step, starting with a class diagram which identifies some important entities. Note that we only focus on static aspects. Dynamic aspects such as operations, event are out of the scope of this paper.

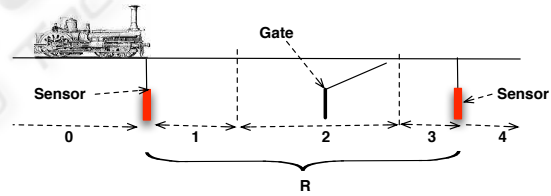


Figure 3: The generalized railroad crossing.

4 A PRACTICAL VIEW OF THE METHOD

4.1 Selecting a Subset of UML

The first task of our method is to fix a subset of UML notation to be used in safety modeling. In CENELEC EN 50 128 it is recommended to produce a precise specification of system requirements, which ideally consists of a description of system functional requirements, operational scenarios, system architecture (structure) and behavior.

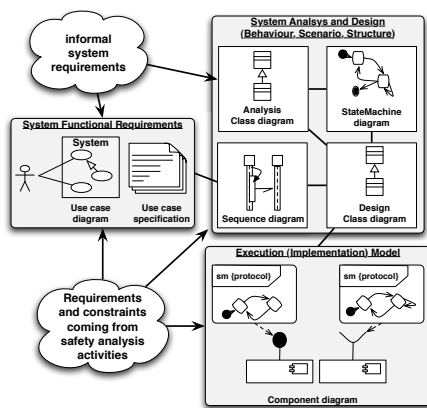


Figure 4: Our selected subset of UML

To deal with these different kinds of descriptions we advocate to use diagrams shown in Fig 4. In this figure, *Use case diagram* and widely accepted texts templates are used to capture system functions (functional requirements) and their safety requirements. Use cases are then mapped unto *Sequence diagrams* to model operational scenarios. They express interactions in form of time-ordered messages exchanged between instances of classes specified in the corresponding *Class diagram*. The *Class diagram* is constructed to model the structure of the system. A *State machine* is drawn for objects of classes having a state-dependent behavior. This corresponds to behavioral description of the system. Finally, in order to enable a qualitative analysis, responsibilities and operations identified in sequence diagrams are assigned to classes to form design classes, from which one can derive an executable model. This model gives a feedback about consequences of failures and their correlation with the risk analysis that has been constructed any where.

The executable model is generally structured by means of interacting components together with their interfaces. For each interface, a Protocol State Machines (PSMs) is drawn. It shows the permissible sequences of method calls (*the protocol*) on an object, but not how the object will react to each method call.

4.2 Modelling Development Guidelines

An essential issue in order to achieve a successful development of a safety-critical system is to assist developers more intensively in the software development process throughout the whole development life cycle. The key challenge for this task is to prepare appropriate guidelines on how chosen development techniques and methods can be best used. This section illustrates kinds of guidelines on developing an

UML model from system requirements. Due to space restrictions, we restrict ourselves on giving general guidelines for constructing use case diagrams.

General guidelines for constructing use case diagrams:

A use case diagram is a graphical representation of goal-oriented interactions between external actors and the software. Actors may be a class of users, other systems or roles users can play in order to interact with the system. They initiate use cases to achieve particular goals. A use case describes a sequence of interactions between actors and the software necessary to deliver the service that satisfies a goal. A use case combines sequences that achieve the goal, as well as alternative sequences that may achieve the goal and those that may lead to failures. Thus, a use case diagram captures "who (actor) does what (interaction) with the system under development, for what purpose (goal)". The construction of a use case diagram can be done by a development process made up of the following steps:

- Identify the set of all the different actors of the system to be constructed;
- Identify roles relevant to the system that each actor plays;
- Identify for each role, significant goals each actor has and that the system will support. That is, use cases have to be associated to goals;
- Create actors and a use case for each goal;
- Realize a precise description each use case, following adapted Jacobson's original style of Use Case description template (Jacobson, 1992). One instance of this template is given in Fig. 5;
- Review and validate the created use case diagram with respect to system requirements.

Note that in the first and second items of the proposed guidelines, the terms "role" and "goal" are informal issues and do not necessarily imply any technical definition. They are issued here to help identifying relevant use cases. The way in which they are specified depends on specifier's or user's intentions.

Use Case	request to close the bar of the gate	
Description	This use case models a request to close the bar of the gate in reaction of signals sent by sensors when a train enters the region of interest. Source General system description (section 3).	
Actors	Controller, Gate	
Precondition	1. the signal <i>enter</i> must be first sent by the Sensor 2. the bar must not be already closed	
Steps	IF the sent signal is "enter" and the bar is not already closed and THEN 1. treats the signal ; 2. send the "close" signal ; ELSE do nothing	
Postcondition	The Gate must initiate closing the bar.	
Alternative steps (optional)	1. The Controller receives the <i>enter</i> signal from Sensor. 2. The Controller notifies the train to apply the emergency brakes due to a danger situation (i.e., person or car on the crossing, gate out of service, etc.).	
Failure	Description	The gate may initiate opening instead to initiate closing the bar when receiving the <i>close</i> signal
	Cause	a). Sensors may report exiting while the train is entering b). Sensor entry signal may be wrongly processed by the Controller and decided as exit
	Postcondition	The train must be stopped before it reaches the unprotected level crossing.

Figure 5: Description of the use case "request to close the bar of the gate".

The case study:

For illustration, let's consider system requirements given in section 3. So, following guidelines enumerated above the use case diagram of Fig. 6 can be constructed. It clearly shows main actors and use cases of the GRC. Note that due to space restrictions, details about the identification of actors, roles and goal are omitted here in order to be synthetic as possible. Having specified actors and associated use cases, we can go straightforward to realize precise descriptions of use cases. One example of such description is presented in Fig. 5. It shows a so-called "precise description" of the use case "request to close the bar of the gate" according to Jacobson's like template. This use case is performed by the system controller when a train enters the crossing.

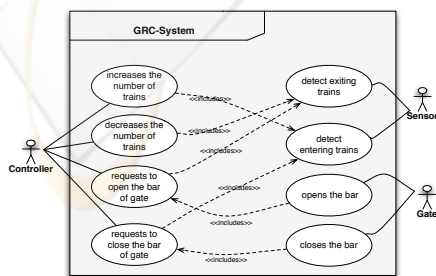


Figure 6: Use case diagram of the generalized railroad crossing.

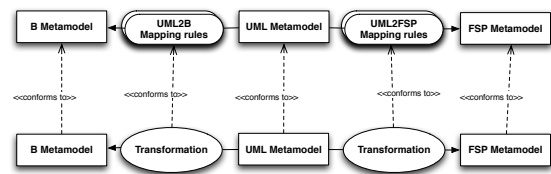


Figure 7: Concept space for instantiation of the MDE approach with UML, B and FSP formalisms.

Validation. The process includes validation checks to ensure that no requirement is missed when going from one step to the next or that no referenced requirement is introduced in the use case description. To achieve this, one must verify that the source indicated in the description of each use case effectively contains the described functionality.

4.3 Defining Rules for Translating Concepts of the Subset into a Semantic Domain

The transformation of a UML model into a semantic domain allows that properties, especially safety-properties can be analysed in a precise manner. In this study, we will investigate the use of UML to B transformation rules (Laleau and Polack, 2001; Marciano and Levy, 2002; Meyer and Souquières, 1999; Snook et al., 2003) (Resp. UML to FSP rules (Beeck, 2001; Yeung et al., 2005)) within the MDE approach. In this approach, models are seen as key concepts of the development. That is, UML models are developed and transformed into one or more specific models targeted at specific languages and environments. Thus, transformation together with models are central to MDE. One important issue of the MDE is that model transformation refers to meta-models of the source and target languages. Fig. 7 shows a concept space for instantiation of the MDE approach, showing UML, B and FSP formalisms.

4.3.1 UML to B transformation

To illustrate this point, let's assume the class diagram of Fig. 8. It shows the main entities of the GRC-system: *Controller*, *Sensor* and *Gate*. Each object of the class *Controller* is linked to one or more object of the class *Sensor*. An object of *Controller* refers to a single object of the class *Gate*. The meaning of this is that a gate is only controlled by a single controller. Note that others entities like trains, track, etc. are not taken into account here in order to keep the diagram as simple as possible.

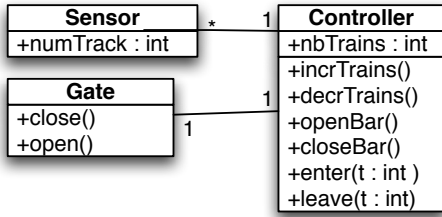


Figure 8: Class Diagram of the generalized railroad crossing.

The class *Gate* provides two methods, *open* and *close* for opening and closing the bar, respectively. The class *Controller* is characterized by the variable *nbTrains* of type integer. It stores the number of trains currently in the region of interest. The controller provides six methods:

- *incrTrains()* and *decrTrains()* to increase and decrease *nbTrains*;
- *openBar()* and *closeBar()* to request opening and closing the bar of the gate;
- *enter(t : int)* and *leave(t : int)* to process signals (from Sensors) indicating an entering and exiting train. These two methods have each an integer parameter *t* that denotes the number of the track on which the train is entering or leaving.

The controller must always know from which sensor a signal has been sent. This allows to systematically determine on which track a train is entering or leaving. To achieve this purpose, the controller refers to the variable *numTrack* of type integer defined in the class *Sensor*.

Figure 9 represents the skeletons of the B specification of the class *Controller* obtained by an automatic translation of the UML specification (cf. Fig. 8). Note that the actual translation from UML diagrams into B is not of interest for the study undertaken in this paper. Of interest are the formal concepts coming with the B language and whether and how it is applicable in our study.

```

MACHINE Types
SETS OBJECTS
CONSTANTS
..., CONTROLLER
PROPERTIES
...
CONTROLLER ⊆ OBJECTS
END
    
```

```

MACHINE Controller
SEES Types
...
VARIABLES controller, controller_sensor,
controller_gate, nbTrains
INVARIANT
controller ⊆ CONTROLLER ∧
controller_sensor ∈ controller → sensor ∧
controller_gate ∈ controller → gate ∧
nbTrains ∈ controller → NAT
INITIALISATION
controller := 0 || controller_sensor := 0 ||
controller_gate := 0 || nbTrains := 0
OPERATIONS
incrTrains(oo) = ...
PRE oo ∈ controller
THEN skip
END ;
...
END
    
```

Figure 9: Skeletons of the B specification derived from the class diagram of Fig. 8.

Interested reader can find some proposals on UML and B transformation in (Meyer and Souquières, 1999) (Resp. UML to FSP rules (Perronne et al., 2006)). However, we can summarize the general intuition of the UML to B transformation as follows:

- For each classifier with name *Class* an abstract machine having the same is constructed. The modelling of this machine includes a set *CLASS* and a variable *class* ⊆ *CLASS* denoting the set of possible and existing instances of *Class*, respectively;
- Attributes *attr*: *attrType* of *Class* and associations are modeled as functions from *class* to *attrType* or associated class instances. The type of the functions reflects the multiplicity (multi-valued or mono-valued attributes) of the attribute or the cardinalities and participation of the class for associations;
- Operations are derived as B operations mirroring the syntactical structure of the associated state diagram if such a diagram exists. Otherwise, the body of operations is modelled as *skip*. Operation parameters are typed and further constrained in the operation precondition (PRE clause). For each operation there is an additional parameter *oo* of type *class* that represents the object that executes the operation.

In addition to machines representing classes, we introduce a special machine *Types*, which declares a number of shared sets or types. The others classes are derived in a similar way.

4.3.2 UML to FSP transformation

Process Algebra like FSP is suitable for describing discrete behaviour of concurrent and communicating systems. A system is described in FSP by the parallel composition of processes (see \parallel , Fig 10). A process is an entity that executes an action and then behaves like another process (see action prefix \rightarrow); the choice ($|$) make it possible the composition of the various actions a process can execute. A process can be "instantiated" from another process (see process labeling :) and renaming make it possible the synchronization of two or more processes (see $/$). The main components of the UML notation can be described with these constructs. A class and its statechart can be transformed to processes; operations and events correspond to actions. Object and communication diagrams can be obtained using parallel composition, process labelling and renaming. Of course, these transformation rules of UML models into FSP require many constraints, as for example the suppress of hierarchy (e.g. macro states in statecharts); these restrictions are then used to identify the subset of UML that can be formalized and validated.

The case study. Fig. 10 represents the transformation of the UML model (Fig. 8) into FSP. In this example, the processes *YYY* correspond to the various states of the controller. *XXO* means, for instance, that a train is in section 1 and sections 2 and 3 are free; *tij* represents the movement of a train from section *i* to section *j* (the events *entry* and *t01*, resp. *exit* and *t34*, correspond to the operation *incTrains*, resp. *decTrains*, Fig. 8).

```

Gate = (close → open → Gate).

Controller = OOO,
OOO = (entry → XOO),
XOO = (t12 → OXO),
OXO = (t23 → OOX | t01 → XXO),
OOX = (exit → OOO | t01 → XOX),
XXO = (t23 → XOX),
XOX = (t34 → XOO | t12 → OXX),
OXX = (t01 → XXX | t24 → OXO),
XXX = (t34 → XXO).

Sys = (g : Gate || c : Controller) /
      {c.entry/g.close,c.exit/g.open}.
    
```

Figure 10: FSP transformation of the UML model (4.3.1).

Our works have shown how FSP models can be automatically generated. A. Rasse (Rasse et al., 2005) has used MetaEdit+, a tool of the MDE community, configured with an UML metamodel, a FSP metamodel and the transformation rules described below (and illustrated in Fig. 7) to validate critical systems modeled with UML (conforms to the metamodel chosen). The tool LTSA (LTS,), proposed by Magee and Kramer, makes it possible the checking of properties such as vivacity (e.g. no deadlock) or security (e.g.

the gate is kept close until a train is in section 1, 2 or 3; it is open otherwise). The model checking is done either in a systematic way by the use of model checking algorithms, either by simulation (or test case). For instance, the automata of Fig. 11 is obtained by the compilation of the FSP model and can be used to follow step by step the behavior of the whole system.

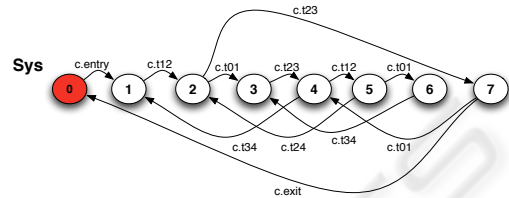


Figure 11: Behavior of the whole system Controller + Gate.

4.4 Modelling Certification Guidelines

Certification is a procedure by which a supervision Authority gives written assurance that a product, process, or service conforms to specified requirements (Standards). In the railway technology, certification mainly focuses on safety, in which the requirements are based on safety objectives of the system. In this setting, the research on UML and software certification should concentrate on providing methodological support to help supervision authorities in answering the following two questions:

- Did designers build the right UML system ?
- Did designers build the UML system right ?

The first question deals with validation issues. Since the process includes validation checks at each stage of the development, the answer to this question consists in verifying that each validation check has been performed successfully.

The second question is a more complex one. It deals with verification issues. It also involves providing means that may help supervising authorities in approving the following verifications:

- The verification that related UML diagrams of the same abstraction are consistent each with the other, provided that each diagrams is by itself consistent;
- The verification that corresponding diagrams in different abstraction levels do not model contradictory requirements;
- The verification that formal proofs of the UML specification has been performed successfully;
- The verification that the UML model and its formal counter part do not contradict each other.

The way in which supervising authorities will be helped to approve these verification is still an open issue.

5 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

UML is a flexible and powerful technique for capturing system requirements. However, like any technique, there are several challenges in modeling and scaling practical promising guidelines to assist the development and the certification of safety-critical systems that cater for the needs and recommendations of safety standards. UML is currently lacking in this question. In this extended abstract, we have sketched main tasks specific towards preparing development and certification for railway safety-critical systems with UML. This allows helping both:

- Developers in increasing the confidence in the system developments correctness while reducing the time of the development and the costs for the systems certification;
- Supervision authorities in approving both that: (1) Developers did build the right UML system and (2) Developers did build the UML system right.

The identification of main tasks to model development and certification guidelines is important but is only the first step. The careful study of key concepts of each of these tasks is a next important steps or perhaps even more so. This clearly means that for future work, we have to go one step straightforward to detail each of the tasks presented in section 3.

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