ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER ON
REASONING ABOUT ACTIONS AND CHANGE

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Today

Today: referees' reports on the article submitted by Graham White; no decision yet; a policy question has arisen concerning to what extent ETAI articles ought to be self-contained.

ETAI Publications

Discussion about received articles

Simulation, Ramification, and Linear Logic

by **Graham White**

Comment from: **Anonymous Referee 1**

The following are my answers to the refereeing questions.

> *1. Are the results of the article, as specified in the summary, of significant interest for researchers in our area?*

No. The main objective of the paper is to propose a solution to the Frame Problem which satisfies certain properties, which are convincingly argued for. My only but serious concern is that existing solutions seem to satisfy all of the requirements and that the author fails to argue for merits of his approach in comparison. In particular Reiter's theory [1] of generating successor state axioms from simple effect axioms fits perfectly the author's desiderata. And yet this work, which is among today's most cited papers in the area of Reasoning About Actions And Change, the author does not even mention, let alone compare it to his own method.

[1] Ray Reiter, "The frame problem in the situation calculus: A simple solution (sometimes) and a completeness result for goal regression," in: Artificial Intelligence and Mathematical Theory of Computation, Academic Press, 1991.

> *2. does the full text substantiate the claims made in the summary?*

Yes.

> *3. is the text intelligible and concise?*

Yes.

> *4. do you know of any previous publication of the same result?*

No. (But see my answer to Question 1.)

> *5. are there any other considerations that may affect the decision?*

No.

Comment from: **Anonymous Referee 2**

My recommendation as regards the acceptance of this paper for ETAI is no. Accordingly, I have perhaps to explain that.

Roughly speaking, my answer is no, because there is a very little difference between the submitted and revised versions of the paper. On the other hand, the remarks, especially those made by Andreas Herzig, were quite important, and so they should be seriously taken into account in the final version. I am not going to be very detailed, but one example should illustrate this.

Andreas writes:

> *I guess this relates to my main criticism: in order to identify actions in proofs, you must group together sequences of rules related to the same action.*

Answer of Graham:

> *No, not necessarily; if you look at the examples in 'Actions, Ramification and Linear Modalities', you can see that you don't need to group rule applications together like this.*

The problem is that I would like to know certain important things not necessarily studying various tech reports, even if they are achievable by Internet. In preparing conference papers, we are usually short of space. But this is a journal paper and there is no reason to make it shorter than necessary. What is worse, many points mentioned in the open discussion have been completely ignored in the final version.

I do not claim that the author cannot do certain things mentioned in the open disscussion phase. But his task is to convince me that he can. Since I am not convinced, my answer as regards the acceptance of the paper is no.

Comment from: **Area Editor**

Before I draw the conclusions from these two referee's reports, first some observations on procedure, and in particular on the room for debate in the context of referee's reports.

Referee reports may fall into three categories: *content*, *criteria*, and *policy*, where criteria commentary consists of questions to our standard questions to referees; content commentary concern the material in the article as such, and policy comments concern or touch on the meta level as to what requirements we ought to have for ETAI accepted articles.

In the simplest case, the referees only return comment according to the criteria, and in this case the area editor has no reason to add anything. Comments on content are treated as part of the open review discussion, and may be responded to by the author(s) and by others in the usual way. Comments on procedure, finally, will be interpreted in the context of what has been stated by the ETAI policy committee and the area editorial committee for our area. As area editor I may relate referee's policy comments to our established policy. If it is not clear about the issue under consideration, then the question will be referred to either of the mentioned committees, for their decision. However the readership is welcome to contribute to the meta level discussion as well: the ETAI is still formative, and comments by readers will be very useful for the policy and editorial committees in their consideration.

In the present case, Anonymous Referee 1 returned criteria comments, but jers answer to question 1 also goes into questions of content. I will therefore give the author and others an opportunity to respond before the decision is made.

Anonymous Referee 2 refers to the lack of consideration of issues that have been brought up by Andreas Herzig in the review discussion; please note by the way that referee 2 is *not* identical to Andeas and does not work with him. The referee refers to the fact that the article relies on a technical report, and suggests that it ought to be self-contained instead.

In fact, the ease of access to articles over the Internet has raised the question whether we ought to relax the habit that articles be self-contained, and instead encourage inclusion of material by explicit linking. This was up for debate a year ago, and the answer was inconclusive: different readers have different preferences. The invitation for reference articles in our ETAI area represents one distinct step in the direction of reducing self-containment. That case is a bit different however: reference articles are supposed to be logically included in their entirety, whereas the present author refers to an unspecified but local position in a long technical report.

In the present case we agree with Referee 2 that Herzig's questions would have motivated a more extensive coverage in the article itself, in particular because of the length of the referenced technical report. The broader policy issue of self-containedness in articles will be referred to the policy committee and our area editorial committee.

We will be back with the decision about the article after the author has had an opportunity to respond.

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