Decentralized Composite Access Control

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Abstract. Formal foundations for access control policies with both authority delegation and policy composition operators are partial and limited. Correctness guarantees cannot therefore be formally stated and verified for decentralized composite access control systems, such as those based on XACML 3. To address this problem we develop a formal policy language BelLog that can express both delegation and composition operators. We illustrate, through examples, how BelLog can be used to specify practical policies. Moreover, we present an analysis framework for reasoning about BelLog policies and we give decidability and complexity results for policy entailment and policy containment in BelLog.

1 Introduction

We present the first formal language for specifying and reasoning about decentralized composite access control policies, which are policies that require both authority delegation and policy compositions. Below, we illustrate these concepts, and motivate the need for their formal study.

Consider a simple grid system. The grid owner allows privileged clients to issue access control policies for the grid’s storage space by delegating the authority over the storage resources to them. Privileged clients issue policies, and may also further delegate this authority. To decide who can access storage resources, the grid owner composes the collected policies using different composition operators, such as permit-override (permit if at least one client grants access), majority voting (permit if most clients grant access), etc. This example demonstrates how modern access control systems require both authority delegation and policy composition features, hence going beyond composition-only systems, e.g. those based on XACML 2, and delegation-only systems, such as KeyNote 2 [1]. Real-world examples include grid resource sharing systems [2], electronic health record management [3] and highly distributed Web services [4]. To cater for such decentralized composite access control systems, the industry has recently released the XACML 3 standard.

The need for a formal foundation is evident: Without it, one cannot precisely define how existing and future decentralized composite access control systems should behave (e.g. the ones built upon XACML 3 implementations). Furthermore, formal guarantees about the correctness of decentralized composite policies, e.g. by answering policy entailment and containment questions, cannot be derived. The existing formal access control languages fall short in this regard.
They either express authority delegation or policy composition, but not both together; see the related work.

**Contributions.** We are the first to address the problem of formally specifying and reasoning about decentralized composite policies. We develop a novel logic programming language, dubbed **BelLog**, for constructing decentralized composite policy languages. **BelLog** is an extension of Datalog [5], where the truth values come from Belnap’s four-valued logic [6]. All delegation languages based on Datalog can therefore be mapped to **BelLog**. Furthermore, **BelLog** is more expressive than the existing multi-valued policy algebras, such as PBel [7] and PTaCL [8].

Through examples, we illustrate how decentralized composite policies can be encoded in **BelLog**. We also present syntactic extensions of **BelLog** that ease the specification of common policy composition and authority delegation idioms, for instance: permit-override, only-one-applicable, agreement, hand-off trust application, transitive delegation, etc.

We present a policy analysis framework for verifying policies written in **BelLog**, and demonstrate how different policy analysis questions are used to reason about a policy’s behavior in some or all system configurations. We show that verifying **BelLog** policies for a given system configuration is in PTIME, and verification for all possible system configurations of a finite domain of subjects and objects is in co-NP-complete. We furthermore identify a useful fragment of **BelLog** where verification for all possible system configurations for infinitely many subjects and objects belongs to co-NEXP.

Finally, **BelLog** can be used as a four-valued logic programming language for reasoning with inconsistent and incomplete knowledge. **BelLog** and its decision procedures are therefore of independent interest.

**Related Work.** The closest related works to **BelLog** are policy algebras, formal delegation languages, and XACML 3, which is an informal policy language.

Policy algebras—such as PBel [7], PTaCL [8], and D-Algebra [9]—are languages for composing a set of policies. A composite policy is a tree, where the internal nodes are composition operators, and the leaf nodes are core policies. Existing policy algebras cannot express arbitrarily long delegation chains and therefore cannot be used for decentralized composite access control. Moreover, they lack operators for composing intensionally defined policy sets, i.e. policy sets that are not fixed at the policy specification time; see §4.

Delegation languages—such as KeyNote2 [1], DKAL [10], SecPAL [11], RT [12], GP [13], and DCC [14]—allow a policy writer to delegate to other principals authority over attributes and policy decisions. In contrast to **BelLog**, these languages support only the permit-override operator for composing policies. Although the permit-override operator is sufficient in their access control setup, this is not the case for decentralized composite policies. Most existing delegation languages are founded on logic programming. We remark that although many-valued extensions for logic programming exist [15–17], they also cannot express
all composition operators found in policy algebras, e.g. the only-one-applicable operator; that is, they are functionally incomplete.

XACML 3 is currently the only access control language supporting decentralized composite access control. Similarly to BelLOG, XACML 3 has four policy decisions and operators for encoding delegation and policy composition. In contrast to BelLOG, XACML is informal and some aspects are underspecified; for example, loop handling in delegation chains is left to implementations. Moreover, XACML 3 has a fixed set of composition operators and new operators cannot be added as syntactic extensions. Kolovski et al. [18] give a formalization of XACML 3 which focuses on delegations and supports only three composition operators. BelLOG, in contrast, supports all finitary composition operators.

Finally, we remark that BelLOG is not meant to be an all-encompassing policy specification language. For example, the constraint-based conditions of [11] are not expressible in BelLOG.

Organization. In §2, we introduce our system model. In §3, we define our logic programming language BelLOG and define the main decision problems for BelLOG programs. In §4, we illustrate the specification of decentralized composite policies in BelLOG. In §5, we present our policy analysis framework. We conclude the paper in §6. Note that proofs and technical details are in the appendices.

2 System Model and the Running Example

A Policy Decision Point (PDP) maps access requests to policy decisions and a Policy Enforcement Point (PEP) enforces the policy decisions made by the PDP. We consider an open distributed system, as illustrated in Figure 1, where there are multiple principals that may issue policies and attributes and store them at the PDP. One principal is designated as the PDP’s administrator. The administrator writes the policy against which all requests are evaluated.

Subject and object attributes are issued and signed by principals. Authority over attributes can be delegated to other principals. An attribute issued by a principal is either stored at the PDP, or given to the subject, who may provide it to the PDP together with a request. Attributes that are not explicitly communicated to the PDP are assumed not to have been issued, as is the case in other decentralized systems [1]. A policy domain database contains the identifiers of objects such as roles, file names, etc. Both the administrator and authorized principals can extend this database.
To illustrate our system model, consider a grid system that stores files for multiple research projects. Each project has one or more project leaders. The grid system has one PDP that decides access for all files. The PDP’s policy, inspired by policies in the Swedish Grid Initiative (SweGrid) system [2], is:

R1: A project leader controls access to the project’s files and folders, and can delegate these rights.

R2: If there is a conflicting decision among the project leaders for a given request, then grant access only to requests made by the project leaders.

R3: If no policy applies to a given request, then grant the request if its target is a public project folder, otherwise deny it.

R4: Access rights are recursively extended to sub-folders.

This policy exemplifies the tight coupling between the use of delegation and composition in decentralized composite policies. The PDP must first compute the delegations for each folder according to R1, then compose the access rights for each folder according to R2 and R3, and finally extend the policy decisions to sub-folders according to R4. Note that R4 can be encoded as delegation from a parent folder to its children. Such couplings of delegation and composition idioms prevent the decentralized composite policies from being split into and evaluated as two independent, delegation and composition, parts.

3 BelLog

In this section, we define the syntax and semantics of BelLog and study the time complexity of its decision problems. BelLog builds upon the syntax and semantics of stratified Datalog [5], and extends it over a four-valued truth space. We see BelLog as a foundation for constructing high-level access control languages, and we therefore present BelLog as a generic many-valued logic programming language. In §4, we illustrate how BelLog can be used to specify practical access control policies.

Syntax. We fix a finite set \( \mathcal{P} \) of predicate symbols, where \( \mathcal{D}_4 = \{ t_4, \perp_4, \top_4, t_4 \} \subseteq \mathcal{P} \), along with a countably infinite set \( \mathcal{C} \) of constants, and a countably infinite set \( \mathcal{V} \) of variables. The sets \( \mathcal{P} \), \( \mathcal{C} \), and \( \mathcal{V} \) are pairwise disjoint. Each predicate symbol \( p \in \mathcal{P} \) is associated with an arity and we may write \( p^n \) to emphasize that \( p \)'s arity is \( n \). The predicate symbols in \( \mathcal{D}_4 \) have zero arity. As a convention, we write \( \mathcal{P} \) to denote a BelLog program and use the remaining uppercase letters to denote variables. Predicate and constant symbols are written using lowercase italic and sans font respectively.

A domain \( \Sigma \) is a nonempty finite set of constants. We associate a domain \( \Sigma \) with a set of atoms \( \mathcal{A}_{\Sigma(\mathcal{V})} = \{ p^n(t_1, \ldots, t_n) \mid p^n \in \mathcal{P}, \{ t_1, \ldots, t_n \} \subseteq \Sigma \cup \mathcal{V} \} \). A literal is either \( \neg a \), \( a \), or \( \neg \neg a \), for \( a \in \mathcal{A}_{\Sigma(\mathcal{V})} \), and \( \mathcal{L}_{\Sigma(\mathcal{V})} \) denotes the set of literals over \( \Sigma \). We refer to \( \neg a \) as negative literals and to \( a \) and \( \neg \neg a \) as non-negative literals. The function \( \text{vars} : \mathcal{A}_{\Sigma(\mathcal{V})} \mapsto 2^\mathcal{V} \) maps atoms to the set of variables appearing in them. An atom \( a \) is ground iff \( \text{vars}(a) = \emptyset \), and \( \mathcal{A}_{\Sigma(\emptyset)} \) denotes the set of ground atoms. We extend \( \text{vars} \) to literals in the standard way.
A BelLog program, defined over the domain \( \Sigma \), is a finite set of rules of the form:

\[ p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n, \]

where \( n > 0, p \in \mathcal{A}_{\Sigma(V)}, \{q_1, \ldots, q_n\} \subseteq \mathcal{L}_{\Sigma(V)}, \) and \( \text{vars}(p) \subseteq \bigcup_{1 \leq i \leq n} \text{vars}(q_i) \). We refer to \( p \) as the rule’s head and to \( q_1, \ldots, q_n \) as the rule’s body.

The predicate symbols in a BelLog program \( P \) are partitioned into inter-

sectionally defined predicates, denoted \( \text{idb}_P \), and extensionally defined predicates, denoted \( \text{edb}_P \). The set \( \text{idb}_P \) contains all predicate symbols that appear in the heads of \( P \)’s rules, and the set \( \text{edb}_P \) contains the remaining predicate symbols. We write \( \mathcal{A}^{\text{idb}_P}_{\Sigma(V)}(\mathcal{L}^{\text{edb}_P}_{\Sigma(V)}) \) and \( \mathcal{A}^{\text{edb}_P}_{\Sigma(V)}(\mathcal{L}^{\text{idb}_P}_{\Sigma(V)}) \) to denote the sets of atoms (literals) constructed from predicate symbols in \( \text{edb}_P \) and \( \text{idb}_P \) respectively.

A rule \( p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n \) is ground if all the literals in its body are ground. The grounding of a BelLog program \( P \) is the finite set of ground rules, denoted by \( P^k \), obtained by substituting all variables in \( P \)’s rules with constants from \( \Sigma \) in all possible ways.

A BelLog program \( P \) is stratified iff the rules in \( P \) can be partitioned into sets \( P_0, \ldots, P_n \) called strata, such that: (1) for every predicate symbol \( p \), all rules with \( p \) in their heads are in one stratum \( P_i \); (2) if a predicate symbol \( p \) occurs as a non-negative literal in a rule of \( P_i \), then all rules with \( p \) in their heads are in a stratum \( P_j \) with \( j \leq i \); (3) if a predicate symbol \( p \) occurs as a negative literal in a rule’s body in \( P_i \), then all rules with \( p \) in their heads are in a stratum \( P_j \) with \( j < i \). The given definition of stratified BelLog extends with non-negative literals that of stratified Datalog [19].

**Semantics.** The truth space of BelLog is the lattice \((\mathcal{D}, \preceq, \land, \lor)\), where \( \mathcal{D} = \{f, \perp, \top, t\} \), \( \preceq \) is the partial truth ordering on \( \mathcal{D} \), and \( \land \) and \( \lor \) are the meet and join operators. Figure 2 shows the lattice’s Hasse diagram, where \( \preceq \) is depicted upwards. We adopt the meaning of the non-classical truth values \( \perp \) and \( \top \) from Belnap’s four-valued logic [6]: \( \perp \) denotes conflicting information and \( \top \) denotes conflicting information. We define the partial knowledge ordering on \( \mathcal{D} \), denoted with \( \preceq_k \), and depict it in Figure 2 rightwards. We denote the meet and join operators on the lattice \((\mathcal{D}, \preceq_k)\) by \( \otimes \) and \( \oplus \), respectively. The truth tables of the unary operators \( \neg \) and \( \sim \) are given in Figure 3, where we also depict the truth tables for the operators \( \land \) and \( \lor \) for convenience.

An interpretation \( I \), over a domain \( \Sigma \), is a function \( I : \mathcal{A}_{\Sigma(0)} \to \mathcal{D} \), mapping ground atoms to truth values, where \( I(f_4) = f \), \( I(\perp_4) = \perp \), \( I(\top_4) = \top \), and \( I(t_4) = t \). Fix a domain \( \Sigma \), and let \( \mathcal{I} \) be the set of all interpretations over \( \Sigma \).
We define a partial ordering \( \sqsubseteq \) on interpretations: given \( I_1, I_2 \in \mathcal{I} \), \( I_1 \sqsubseteq I_2 \) iff 
\[ \forall a \in A_{\Sigma(\emptyset)}, \ I_1(a) \preceq I_2(a). \] 
We define the meet \( \sqcap \) and join \( \sqcup \) operators on \( \mathcal{I} \) as: 
\[ I_1 \sqcap I_2 = \lambda a. \ I_1(a) \land I_2(a) \] 
and 
\[ I_1 \sqcup I_2 = \lambda a. \ I_1(a) \lor I_2(a). \] 
The structure \((\mathcal{I}, \sqsubseteq, \sqcap, \sqcup, \bot, \top)\) is a complete lattice where \( \bot = \lambda a. \top \) is the least element and \( \top = \lambda a. \bot \) is the greatest element. Given a continuous function \( \Phi : \mathcal{I} \to \mathcal{I} \), we write \([\Phi]\) for the least fixed point of \( \Phi \). The interpretation \([\Phi]\) is calculated, using the Kleene fixed point theorem, as \( M^0 = I_t \), and \( M^{i+1} = \Phi(M^i) \) for \( i \geq 0 \).

We extend interpretations over the operators \( \neg \) and \( \sim \) as \( I(\neg a) = \neg I(a) \) and \( I(\sim a) = \sim I(a) \) respectively, where \( a \in A_{\Sigma(\emptyset)} \). We also extend interpretations over vectors of literals as \( I(l) = I(l_1) \land \cdots \land I(l_n) \) where \( l = l_1, \ldots , l_n \) and \( \{l_1, \ldots , l_n\} \subseteq L_{\Sigma(\emptyset)} \). We write \( \bigvee \{v_1, \ldots , v_n\} \) for \( v_1 \lor \cdots \lor v_n \). For the empty set we put \( \bigvee \{\} = \top \).

An interpretation \( I \) is a model of a given program \( P \) iff \( \forall (a \leftarrow l) \in P^\downarrow \). \( I(a) \geq I(l) \). A model therefore, for every rule, assigns to the head a truth value no smaller, in \( \leq \), than the truth value assigned to the body. A model \( I \) is supported iff \( \forall a \in A_{\Sigma(\emptyset)}, \ I(a) = \bigvee \{I(l) \mid (a \leftarrow l) \in P^\downarrow \} \). Note that the definition of supported models for BELLOG programs extends that of stratified Datalog. Intuitively, a model \( I \) is supported if it does not over-assign truth values to head atoms. In contrast to stratified Datalog, BELLOG’s truth values are not totally ordered; therefore, a supported model \( I \) of a BELLOG program \( P \) does not guarantee that for an atom \( a \) there is a rule \( (a \leftarrow l) \in P^\downarrow \) such that \( I(a) = I(l) \). For example, for the program \( P = \{a \leftarrow \top_4, a \leftarrow \bot_4\} \) the interpretation \( I = \{a \mapsto \top\} \) is a supported model; note that \( \{a \mapsto \bot\} \) and \( \{a \mapsto \top\} \) are not models of \( P \).

We associate a BELLOG program \( P \) with the operator \( T_P : \mathcal{I} \to \mathcal{I} \):

\[
T_P(J)(a) = \bigvee \{J(l) \mid (a \leftarrow l) \in P^\downarrow \}
\]

**Lemma 1.** Given a BELLOG program \( P \), an interpretation \( I \) is a supported model iff \( T_P(I) = I \).

The proof follows immediately from the definition of \( T_P \).

In general, a program \( P \) may have multiple supported models. For instance, any interpretation is a supported model for the program \( \{p \leftarrow p\} \). For BELLOG’s semantics we choose a minimal supported model: a supported model \( I \) is minimal iff there does not exist another supported model \( I' \) such that \( I' \sqsubseteq I \). For a program \( P \) where only non-negative literals are in its rules, \( T_P \) is monotone (see Appendix B.1), hence continuous due to the finiteness of \( \mathcal{I} \), and has a unique minimal supported model. In contrast, if a program \( P \) contains negative literals in its rules, then the operator \( T_P \) is not monotone, and there could be multiple minimal supported models. For example, the program \( P = \{a \leftarrow \neg b\} \) has more than one minimal supported models, e.g. \( \{a \mapsto f, b \mapsto t\} \) and \( \{a \mapsto t, b \mapsto f\} \).

For a stratified BELLOG program \( P \), we construct one minimal supported model by computing, for each strata of \( P \), the minimal supported model that contains the model of the previous stratum. This construction is analogous to that of stratified Datalog given in [20]. To define the model construction, we introduce the following notation. We write \((P^\downarrow) \circ I \) for the program obtained by
replacing all literals in $P^i$ constructed with $\text{edb}_P$ predicate symbols with their truth values according to $I$. Formally,

$$(P^i) \triangleleft I = \{ p \leftarrow q_1', \ldots, q_n' \mid (p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n) \in P^i, $$

$$ q_i' = I(q_i) \text{ if } q_i \in L_{\Sigma(0)}, \text{ otherwise } q_i' = q_i \} .$$

Note that all negative literals in a stratum $P_i$ of a stratified $\text{BELLOG}$ program are constructed with predicate symbols in $\text{edb}_P$. Given an interpretation $I$, the program $P^i_0 \triangleleft I$ therefore contains only non-negative literals, and the operator $T_{P^i_0 \triangleleft}$ is monotone.

We now define the model semantics of a stratified $\text{BELLOG}$ program:

**Definition 1.** Given a stratified $\text{BELLOG}$ program $P$, with strata $P_0, \ldots, P_n$, the model of $P$, denoted $[P]$, is the interpretation $M_n$, where $M_{-1} = I_T$, and $M_i = \{ T_{P^i_0 \triangleleft M_{i-1}} \} \sqcup M_{i-1}$ for $0 \leq i \leq n$.

Each $M_i$, for $0 \leq i \leq n$, is well-defined because the operators $T_{P^i_0 \triangleleft M_{i-1}}$ are monotone, and therefore continuous because the lattice $(\mathcal{I}, \sqsubseteq, \sqcap, \sqcup)$ is finite.

**Theorem 1.** Given a stratified $\text{BELLOG}$ program $P$, $[P]$ is a minimal supported model.

For the previous example $P = \{ a \leftarrow \neg b \}$, the given construction results in $\llbracket P \rrbracket = \{ a \mapsto t, b \mapsto f \}$. We justify our choice of semantics in Appendix A.

We remark that a $\text{BELLOG}$ program $P$ that does not use the predicates $\top_4$, $\bot_4$, and the operator $\sim$ in its rules is a syntactically valid stratified Datalog program. In Appendix B.2 we show that stratified $\text{BELLOG}$ subsumes stratified Datalog. In particular, this means that $\text{BELLOG}$ can express all policy languages based on stratified Datalog.

The input to a $\text{BELLOG}$ program $P$ is an interpretation $I \in \mathcal{I}$, where all atoms from $\mathcal{A}_{\Sigma(0)}$ are mapped to $f$. For a program $P$ and the input $I$, we write $\llbracket P \rrbracket_I$ as a shorthand for $[P \cup P']$, where $P' = \{ a \leftarrow v_1 \mid I(a) = v \}$ and $v \in \mathcal{D}$.

From the definition of stratification, it is immediate that given a stratified program $P$ with strata $P_0, \ldots, P_n$, and an input $I$, the program $P \cup P'$ can be stratified into strata $P', P_0, \ldots, P_n$.

We finally remark that the semantics of a $\text{BELLOG}$ program is independent of the given stratification. We state and prove this theorem in Appendix B.3.

**Decision Problems.** We define $\text{BELLOG}$’s decision problems. In §5, we reduce the decision problems within our policy analysis framework to $\text{BELLOG}$’s decision problems.

Let $P$ be a stratified $\text{BELLOG}$ program, $\Sigma$ be a domain of constants, and $q$ be a ground atom. For a given input $I$, the *query entailment* decision problem, denoted $P \models_{\Sigma} q$, asks whether $[P]_I(q) = t$. The general case of $[P]_I(q) = v$, with $v \in \mathcal{D}$, is immediately reducible to the query entailment problem. The *query validity* decision problem, denoted $P \models_{\Sigma} q$, asks whether for all inputs $I$ defined over $\Sigma$, $P \models_{\Sigma} q$. Similarly to the *data complexity* of Datalog [21], we study the complexity of the given decision problems when the maximum arity of
predicates in $P$ and the set of variables that appear in $P$ are fixed. The input size for BelLog’s decision problems is thus determined by the number of predicate symbols in $P$, the number of rules in $P$, and the number of constants in the domain $\Sigma$.

**Theorem 2.** The query entailment problem and the query validity problem belong, respectively, to the complexity classes PTIME and co-NP-complete.

We next consider a generalization of the query validity problem. Let $\Sigma_P$ denote the set of constants that appear in $P$. The all-domains query validity decision problem, denoted $P \models q$, asks whether $P \models_{\Sigma'} q$ for all domains $\Sigma' \subseteq C$ that contain $\Sigma_P$ and the constants in $q$; recall that $C$ is the infinite set of constants. The problem of all-domains query validity is in general undecidable for BelLog programs, because the problem of query validity in Datalog, which is undecidable [22], can be reduced to this problem. We show, however, that all-domains query validity is decidable for any stratified BelLog program $P$ that has only unary predicate symbols in $\text{edb} P$. We call those unary-edb programs.

We show in §5 that the unary-edb BelLog programs capture a useful class of policies. Namely, those policies where the set of principals is finite.

**Theorem 3.** The all-domains query validity problem for a unary-edb BelLog program belongs to the complexity class co-NEXP.

Note that the input for the all-domains query validity problem is determined only by the number of predicate symbols in $P$ and the number of rules in the program $P$.

**Syntactic Extensions.** We now present a set of syntactic extension to BelLog to ease the specification of complex rules. In §4, we use them for writing decentralized composite policies.

We extend the syntax for writing policy rules to

$$
\text{rule ::= } p \leftarrow \text{body}
$$

$$
\text{body ::= } q_1, \ldots, q_n \mid \neg \text{body} \mid \neg \text{body} \land \text{body} ,
$$

where $n > 0$, $p \in \mathcal{A}_{\Sigma(V)}$, and $\{q_1, \ldots, q_n\} \subseteq L_{\Sigma(V)}$. We call the rules of the form $p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n$ basic rules and the remaining rules composite rules. Similarly to basic rules, we require that for any composite rule $p \leftarrow \text{body}$, $\text{vars}(p) \subseteq \text{vars(body)}$.

We define the translation function $T$ that maps a basic rule $r$ to the set $\{r\}$:

$$
T(p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n) = \{p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n\}
$$

and maps a composite rule $p \leftarrow \text{body}$ to a set of basic rules:

$$
T(p \leftarrow \neg \text{body}) = \{p \leftarrow \neg \text{p fresh}(X)\} \cup T(\text{p fresh}(X) \leftarrow \text{body})
$$

$$
T(p \leftarrow \neg \text{body}) = \{p \leftarrow \neg \text{p fresh}(X)\} \cup T(\text{p fresh}(X) \leftarrow \text{body})
$$

$$
T(p \leftarrow \text{body}_1 \land \text{body}_2) = \{p \leftarrow \text{p fresh}_1(X_1), \text{p fresh}_2(X_2)\}
$$

$$
\cup T(\text{p fresh}_1(X_1) \leftarrow \text{body}_1) \cup T(\text{p fresh}_2(X_2) \leftarrow \text{body}_2)
$$


\begin{align*}
p \lor q & := \neg(p \land \neg q) & p \otimes q & := (p \land \bot) \lor (q \land \bot) \lor (p \land q) \\
p \oplus q & := (p \land \top) \lor (q \land \top) \lor (p \land q) & p = t & := p \land \neg p \\
p = f & := \neg(p \land \neg p) & p = \bot & := (p \neq f) \land (p \neq t) \land ((p \lor \top) = t) \\
p = \top & := (p \neq f) \land (p \neq t) \land ((p \lor \bot) = t) & p \neq v & := \neg(p = v)
\end{align*}

Fig. 4: Derived connectives for combining composite rule bodies. Here \( p, q, \) and \( c \) denote rule bodies and \( v \in \mathcal{D} \).

In these rules \( p_{\text{fresh}}, p_{\text{fresh1}}, p_{\text{fresh2}} \) are predicate symbols that do not appear in \( \mathcal{P} \), \( X = \text{vars(body)} \) and \( X_i = \text{vars(body}_i) \) for \( i \in \{1, 2\} \). Note that the recursive function \( T \) terminates for any composite rule and yields a set of basic rules; see Appendix B.4. The size of the set is linear in the number of nested bodies in the composite rule.

The meaning of a \textsc{BelLog} program \( P \) with composite rules is that of the \textsc{BelLog} program \( P' = \bigcup_{r \in P} (T(r)) \). For example, consider the composite rule:

\[ p(X) \leftarrow \neg q(X, Y) \, . \]

The function \( T \) translates this composite rule into a set of basic rules:

\[ \{ p(X) \leftarrow \neg p_{\text{fresh}}(X, Y), p_{\text{fresh}}(X, Y) \leftarrow q(X, Y) \} \, . \]

A \textsc{BelLog} program \( P \) with composite rules is \textit{well-formed} iff its rules can be partitioned into sets \( P_0, \cdots, P_n \) such that: (1) for every predicate symbol \( p \), all rules with \( p \) in their heads are in one stratum \( P_i \); (2) if a predicate symbol \( p \) occurs as a non-negative literal in a basic body in \( P_i \), then all rules with \( p \) in their heads are in a stratum \( P_j \) with \( j \leq i \); and (3) if a predicate symbol \( p \) occurs in the body of a composite rule in \( P_i \) or as a negative literal in a basic rule in \( P_j \), then all rules with \( p \) in their heads are in a stratum \( P_j \) with \( j < i \). Note that well-formed \textsc{BelLog} extends stratified \textsc{BelLog} with the condition that if a predicate symbol \( p \) occurs in the body of a composite rule in \( P_i \), then all rules with \( p \) in their heads are in a stratum \( P_j \) with \( j < i \). This is a sufficient but not necessary condition that any composite rule of a well-formed program is translated into a stratified set of basic rules.

**Theorem 4.** The translation of a well-formed \textsc{BelLog} program with composite rules is a stratified \textsc{BelLog} program.

In Figure 4, we derive additional connectives using syntactic combinations of \( \neg, \sim, \) and \( \land \). The binary connective \( \_ \lor \_ \) corresponds to the join operator on the lattice \( (\mathcal{D}, \preceq) \), and the binary connectives \( \_ \otimes \_ \) and \( \_ \oplus \_ \) correspond to the meet and join operators on the lattice \( (\mathcal{D}, \preceq_k) \), respectively; for details see [6]. The unary connective \( \_ = v \), where \( v \in \mathcal{D} \), indicates whether the truth value assigned to the atom is \( v \). The result of \( p = v \) is \( t \) if \( p \)'s result is \( v \), and \( f \) otherwise. The composition \( p \neq v \) returns \( t \) only if \( p \)'s result is not \( v \), otherwise it returns \( f \). Furthermore, we formally establish that \textsc{BelLog} can represent any \( n \)-ary operator \( D^n \rightarrow D \):
Theorem 5. Given an operator $g : D^n \to D$ and a list of $n$ rule bodies $q_1, \ldots, q_n$, there exists a body expression $\phi$ for a BelLog composite rule $p \leftarrow \phi$ such that

$$[[P]]I(p) = g([[P]]I(q_1), \ldots, [P]I(q_n)),$$

for all inputs $I$, and programs $P$ where $\{p \leftarrow \phi\} \subseteq P$ and $p$ is not the head of any other rule.

4 Decentralized Composite Policies in BelLog

We first introduce the basic building blocks, namely attributes and delegations, and then we demonstrate how to encode decentralized composite policies in BelLog, including the grid policy from §2. We conclude with a discussion of BelLog’s more intricate features for policy specifications.

We assume that the PDP’s domain database contains all constants that appear in the policies, attributes, and access requests, as well as any other additional constants which may denote roles, file names, etc.

Attributes and Delegations. We represent attributes with $\text{attribute\_name}(\cdot)$ predicate symbols. We take the first argument of an attribute as the issuing principal’s identifier. For example, $hr(\text{ann}, \text{fred})$ denotes that, according to Ann, Fred works in the Human Resources department. To highlight the attribute’s issuer, we may write $hr(\text{fred})@\text{ann}$ instead of $hr(\text{ann}, \text{fred})$.

The truth value of an attribute $a$ is $t$ if it is either stored at the PDP or provided by the subject; otherwise it is $f$. In short, the attributes are by default assumed not to exist if they are not present. For some policies it may however be more appropriate to assume that a given attribute (e.g. an attribute that is provided by the subject) is missing ($\bot$) rather than non-existent ($f$). BelLog can accommodate for such policies too. For example, given an attribute $a$, we can define its assume-missing counterpart $a_\bot$ with the rule $a_\bot \leftarrow a \lor \bot$.

Attribute delegations are specified with BelLog rules where the rule’s head is the delegated attribute and the rule body is the delegation condition. For example, with the rule

$$\text{researcher}(S)@\text{ann} \leftarrow hr(S')@\text{ann}, \text{labcard}(S)@S'',$$

Ann asserts that a subject $S$ is a researcher if a subject $S'$ with the attribute $hr$ asserts that $S$ is a researcher. That is, Ann delegates the attribute researcher to subjects that have the attribute hr. For example, if Fred has the attribute hr and issues $\text{labcard}(\text{dave})@\text{fred}$, then the PDP derives $\text{researcher}(\text{dave})@\text{ann}$.

Delegations may require non-monotonic operators. Imagine that Ann stores at the PDP a list of revoked subjects, and she will not accept delegations of the attribute researcher for revoked subjects. We extend her delegation rule as

$$\text{researcher}(S)@\text{ann} \leftarrow hr(S')@\text{ann}, \text{labcard}(S)@S', \neg \text{revoked}(S)@\text{ann}.$$
issue and show how one can verify whether a policy is monotone with respect to the attributes provided by the subject.

**BelLog**’s composite rules can be used to express more complex delegation conditions. In our grid example, the administrator may for instance require two project leaders—Ann and Fred—to agree on the pub file attribute, denoting that a file is public. This is written as

\[
pub\_\text{agree}(F)@\text{admin} \leftarrow pub(F)@\text{ann} \oplus pub(F)@\text{fred},
\]

where \(\oplus\) is the maximal agreement operator. Note that the administrator derives a conflict if the principals disagree whether a file is public, because \(f \oplus t = \top\).

As illustrated, BELLOG can specify standard attribute delegations, as well as non-monotonic delegation idioms which cannot be captured in existing Datalog-based languages. There are other delegation idioms that BELLOG can express, but we omit their presentation due to space constraints. For example, the hand-off idiom [14], where a principal delegates authority over all attributes, can be expressed in BELLOG by representing attributes with a predicate says where one of the arguments denotes an attribute name.

**Policy Decisions.** We take the \(t, f, \bot,\) and \(\top\) elements as, respectively, grant, deny, gap, and conflict policy decisions. The gap decision indicates that a policy neither grants nor denies a request, and conflict indicates that a policy can both grant and deny a request. The partial ordering \(\preceq\) in Figure 2 defines the permissiveness of policy decisions. The meet \(\land\) and join \(\lor\) operators on the lattice \((D, \preceq)\) correspond to the standard deny-override and permit-override operators for composing policy decisions. The meet \(\otimes\) and join \(\oplus\) operators on the lattice \((D, \preceq_k)\) correspond to the maximal agreement and minimal agreement composition operators; see [15].

**Policies.** A principal can issue multiple policies for different subjects and resources; we insist however that each principal has one designated root policy. A root policy combines all of the principal’s sub-policies and possibly other principals’ policies. In our grid scenario, we use the atom \(\text{pol}\_\text{name}(\text{Sub, File})@\text{Prin}\) to denote the decision of the policy name, issued by \(\text{Prin}\), for \(\text{Sub}\) accessing \(\text{File}\). We fix the atom \(\text{pol}(\text{Sub, File})@\text{Prin}\) to denote \(\text{Prin}\)’s root policy. For example, when the PDP derives \(t\) for the atom \(\text{pol}(\text{fred, foo.txt})@\text{piet}\), the PDP interprets this as “Piet’s root policy grants Fred access to the file foo.txt”. Principals may choose any other predicate symbols to denote decisions of their sub-policies.

Policies are encoded as BELLOG rules where the head of a policy rule is a policy name atom. For example, the project leader Piet may issue the policy

\[
\text{pol}(S, F)@\text{piet} \leftarrow \text{researcher}(S)@\text{piet}, \text{prj}\_\text{file}(F)@\text{piet},
\]

which grants his researchers \(S\) access to any project files \(F\). Similarly, Ann, who is a project leader, may issue the policy

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{pol}(\text{ann}, F)@\text{ann} & \leftarrow \text{prj}\_\text{file}(F)@\text{ann} \\
\text{pol}(S, F)@\text{ann} & \leftarrow \text{pol}(S', F)@\text{ann}, \text{give}\_\text{access}(S, F)@S',
\end{align*}
\]
where the first rule grants Ann access to any project file $F$, and the second rule states that any subject $S'$ with access to $F$ may delegate this access to any subject $S$ by issuing a \texttt{give\_access} attribute. Then, Ann may provide access to Fred by issuing \texttt{give\_access(fred, foo.txt)@ann}; Fred too may issue \texttt{give\_access(dave, foo.txt)@fred} to further delegate to Dave access to \texttt{foo.txt}.

A policy can also combine the decisions of a set of sub-policies; we call these composite policies. A composite policy encoded with a basic \texttt{BelLog} rule, for example, implicitly combines the sub-policies’ decisions using the deny-override operator. Composite policies that combine their sub-policies’ decisions with more complex composition operators, such as the gap- and conflict-override operators, are encoded with \texttt{BelLog} composite rules.

In addition to $\land$, \texttt{BelLog}’s operators $\neg$, $\sim$, $\lor$, $\otimes$, $\oplus$ can also be employed as composition operators. To complement these operators, in Figure 5 we define further conditional and override operators for composing policies. The ternary operator $\_\triangleleft c \triangleright \_q$ is the \texttt{if-then-else} operator. The result of the composition $p\triangleleft c\triangleright q$ is $p$’s decision only if $c$’s result is $t$, otherwise $q$’s decision is taken.

The binary operator $\_\triangleleft v \mapsto \_q$ represents the \texttt{v-override} operator, where $v \in D$. The result of the composition $p\triangleleft v \mapsto q$ is $q$ if $p$’s decision is $v$, otherwise it results in $p$’s decision. The operators $\triangleleft$ and $\mapsto$ correspond to the \texttt{gap-override} and \texttt{conflict-override} operators, respectively. Given a list of policies $p_1, \ldots, p_n$, we encode the operator \texttt{first-applicable} as $p_1 \mapsto (p_2 \mapsto ( \ldots \mapsto p_n))$, i.e. the composition takes the decision of the first policy in the list whose decision is not $\bot$.

The binary operator $\_\triangleright q$ is the \texttt{only-one-applicable} operator, i.e. the composition $p\triangleright q$ results in $\bot$ if both policy decisions are not $\bot$ or both decisions are $\bot$, otherwise the result is the policy decision that is not $\bot$.

The binary operator $\_\triangleright p$ is the \texttt{on-permit-apply-second} operator. The composition $p\triangleright q$ returns $q$ only if the decision of $p$ is $t$, otherwise it returns $\bot$. The operator $\triangleright$ is useful for specifying policies that either (1) grant or provide no decision, or (2) deny or provide no decision. For example, the policy \texttt{researcher(Sub)\triangleright t} grants access only if the subject \texttt{Sub} is a researcher; otherwise, the policy returns $\bot$. In contrast, the policy \texttt{revoked(Sub)\triangleright f} denies access if the subject \texttt{Sub} is revoked, and provides no decision otherwise. We also use the operator $\triangleright$ for specifying policies with policy targets, which define the requests that are applicable to a policy. Given a policy $p$ and its target $p_{target}$, $p_{target}\triangleright p$ results in $\bot$ if $p_{target}$ does not evaluate to $t$, otherwise it results in $p$’s decision.

\footnote{The on-permit-apply-second operator has been recently proposed as an additional operator for the XACML 3 standard. See [23] for full description.}

\begin{equation}
\begin{aligned}
p \triangleleft c \triangleright q &:= ((c = t) \land p) \lor ((c \neq t) \land q) \\
p \mapsto v \triangleright q &:= q \triangleleft (p = v) \triangleright p \\
p \triangleright q &:= p \triangleleft (q = \bot) \triangleright (q \triangleleft (p = \bot) \triangleright \bot) \\
p \triangleright q &:= q \triangleleft (p = t) \triangleright \bot
\end{aligned}
\end{equation}
We finally remark that BelLog can express any four-valued policy composition language, such as PBel [7]. This is a corollary of Theorem 5.

Grid Policy. We now exercise these operators in our grid scenario. The administrator may compose the policies issued by the project leaders Piet and Ann with the maximal agreement operator:

\[
pol_{\text{leaders}}(S,F)_{\text{admin}} \leftarrow pol(S,F)_{\text{piet}} \oplus pol(S,F)_{\text{ann}}.
\]

For brevity, we have not specified the policies of Piet and Ann. The composition of their policies may result in conflicts and gaps. According to requirements R2 and R3 (see §2), the administrator must resolve conflicts by granting requests made by project leaders, and resolve gaps by granting access only to public folders. The \( pol_{\text{root}} \) policy encodes these requirements:

\[
pol_{\text{root}}(S,F)_{\text{admin}} \leftarrow (pol_{\text{leaders}}(S,F)_{\text{admin}} \uparrow \text{prj}\_\text{leader}(S)_{\text{admin}}) \downarrow \text{pub}(F)_{\text{admin}}.
\]

The composite policy \( pol_{\text{leaders}} \) considers the decisions of Piet’s and Ann’s policies for all requests. The administrator may, however, want to consider the decisions of Piet’s policy only for the files contained in the folder \( \text{prj1} \). This can be encoded by defining a policy with an explicit policy target:

\[
pol_{\text{piet}}(S,F)_{\text{admin}} \leftarrow \text{contains}(\text{prj1}, F)_{\text{admin}} \uparrow \text{pol}(S,F)_{\text{piet}},
\]

where the attribute \( \text{contains}(F_1, F_2)_{\text{admin}} \) indicates that the folder \( F_1 \) contains \( F_2 \). The attribute is transitively assigned to sub-folders:

\[
\text{contains}(F_1, F_2)_{\text{admin}} \leftarrow \text{subfolder}(F_1, F_2)_{\text{fs}},
\]

\[
\text{contains}(F_1, F_3)_{\text{admin}} \leftarrow \text{contains}(F_1, F_2)_{\text{admin}}, \text{contains}(F_2, F_3)_{\text{admin}},
\]

where the attribute \( \text{subfolder}(F_1, F_2)_{\text{fs}} \) is provided by the file system \( \text{fs} \) and indicates that \( F_1 \) is directly contained in \( F_2 \). Note that the policy \( pol_{\text{piet}} \) results in \( \bot \) for any request to a file not contained in the folder \( \text{prj1} \).

The administrator must also encode the requirement R4, which states that any access right to a folder is transitively extended to sub-folders. Namely

\[
pol_{\text{root}}(S,F)_{\text{admin}} \leftarrow \text{contains}(F', F)_{\text{admin}}, pol_{\text{root}}(S,F')_{\text{admin}}.
\]

Note that the policy decision for a folder is extended to sub-folders with the permit-override operator. This is because instantiating the variable \( F' \) results in multiple rules with the same head atom, which are combined with the operator \( \lor \) according to BelLog’s semantics. To illustrate this, consider the folder \( f_3 \), where \( f_3 \) is contained in \( f_2 \), which in turn is contained in \( f_1 \). Instantiating the variable \( F' \) and simplifying the instantiated rules result in the following rule:

\[
pol_{\text{root}}(S,f_3)_{\text{admin}} \leftarrow \text{pol}_{\text{root}}(S,f_1)_{\text{admin}} \lor \text{pol}_{\text{root}}(S,f_2)_{\text{admin}}.
\]

Alternatively, the administrator may want to combine the instantiated rule bodies with deny-override, maximal agreement, or minimal agreement. We show how this can be done with BelLog’s intensional operators, defined below.
**Intensional Compositions.** So far, we have presented extensional policy composition operators that compose a fixed, explicitly given list of sub-policies. For example, we used

\[ \text{pol}_{\text{leaders}}(S,F)@\text{admin} \leftarrow \text{pol}(S,F)@\text{piet} \oplus \text{pol}(S,F)@\text{ann} \]

to combine policies of two project leaders, one from Piet and one from Ann, with the maximal agreement operator. Such extensional encodings are tediously “static”, because if new project leaders are added to or removed from the PDP, then the administrator must explicitly change the policy rule. Alternatively, the administrator may write a rule that composes the policies that are issued by any principal who is a project leader. One attempt to do this is:

\[ \text{pol}_{\text{leaders}}(S,F)@\text{admin} \leftarrow \text{pol}(S,F)@P, \text{prj}_{\text{leader}}(P)@\text{admin} , \]

where the set of composed policies is intensionally defined as those issued by project leaders. This attempt however fails because the project leaders’ policies are implicitly combined with the permit-override operator, instead of the maximal agreement operator \( \oplus \). This is because BELLOG’s semantics, much like other logic programs, uses the join operator \( \lor \) when combining rule bodies with the same head atom.

We extend BELLOG’s syntax with additional operators to account for intensional compositions:

\[ \text{rule} ::= p \leftarrow [ \lor | \land | \oplus | \otimes ] \text{body} , \]

where \( p \in A_{\Sigma(V)} \), \( \text{body} \) is a composite rule body, as defined in §3, and \( \text{vars}(p) \subseteq \text{vars}(\text{body}) \). We refer to the operators written in front of \( \text{body} \) as intensional composition operators. Intuitively, the intensional operator \( \oplus \) combines all grounded bodies of rules with the same head atom with the \( \oplus \) operator. For example, grounding the simple rule \( p(a) \leftarrow \oplus q(X) \) over the domain \( \Sigma = \{a, b\} \) results in two grounded bodies, \( q(a) \) and \( q(b) \), with the same head atom \( p(a) \). The grounded bodies are combined with \( \oplus \); the meaning of \( p(a) \leftarrow \oplus q(X) \) is therefore \( p(a) \leftarrow q(a) \oplus q(b) \). Other operators behave similarly with respect to their syntactic counterparts. We give the formal translation of intensional operators to BELLOG’s core syntax in Appendix C. We remark that the intensional operators \( \land, \oplus, \) and \( \otimes \) cannot have the head atom appear in the rule body because their encoding uses composite rules.

We can now encode the intensional composition of the project leaders’ policies with the maximal agreement operator as

\[ \text{pol}_{\text{leaders}}(S,F)@\text{admin} \leftarrow \bigoplus(\text{pol}(S,F)@P \triangleleft \text{prj}_{\text{leader}}(P)@\text{admin} \triangleright \bot) . \]

Note that the policies that are not issued by a project leader are replaced with \( \bot \), and the composition “ignores” such policies, because \( v \oplus \bot = v \) for any \( v \in D \).

Intensional compositions are also useful for specifying policies that propagate policy decisions over hierarchically structured data, such as file systems, role hierarchies, etc. To illustrate, we extend our grid example with Piet’s policy that by default permits a subject \( S \) to access a folder \( F \), unless Piet issues the attribute \( \text{deny}(S,F) \). In contrast to the requirement R4, he uses the deny-
override operator to propagate deny decisions over the sub-folders:

\[
pol\_fold(S, F)@\text{piet} \leftarrow \neg\text{deny}(S, F)@\text{piet}
\]

\[
pol(S, F)@\text{piet} \leftarrow \bigwedge (pol\_fold(S, F')@\text{piet} \land \text{contains}(F', F)@\text{admin} \triangleright t)
\]

The last rule replaces the policy decisions for folders \(F'\) that do not contain \(F\) with \(t\), since for any \(v \in \mathcal{D}\) we have \(v \land t = v\).

We summarize the key difference between intensional and extensional operators as follows. The intensional operators reflect changes in the domain (e.g. addition and removal of principals, files, etc.) through changes in the policy input. The extensional operators require explicit modification of the policy rules to reflect such changes.

## 5 Analysis

Writing a correct policy, i.e. one that grants and denies requests as intended by the policy writer, is often challenging in practice. This is both because policies are often initially given informally and imprecisely and because the policy writer can err in their formalization. In particular, a policy writer must foresee all possible policy inputs, understand how the delegation rules, the sub-policies, and their compositions influence the policy’s behavior, and verify that the policy does not exhibit any unintended decisions. As a first step towards verifying the policy’s behavior, the policy writer specifies the high-level requirements as formal policy analysis questions. Second, a decision procedure is used to check, in an automated manner, whether the analysis questions are answered positively, or not.

Below we present our framework for analyzing policies written in BelLog. A policy set is a set of delegations and policies, which are encoded as BelLog rules and collectively define a BelLog program. Every policy set has a designated root policy. The decision of a policy set for a given request is the decision of the policy set’s root policy. We fix the predicate \(\text{pol}(\text{Subject}, \text{Object})\) to denote a root policy’s decisions. For brevity, we omit writing the issuer of policies and attributes. We use the terms input and (policy) context interchangeably.

**Policy Entailment.** Policy entailment answers whether a policy set entails a given permission in a given policy context.

**Definition 2.** (Policy Entailment) Given a policy set \(P\) and a policy context \(I\), \(P\) entails the request \(\text{pol}(S, O)\) iff \(P \models \text{pol}(S, O)\).

Policy entailment analysis is akin to software testing in that the policy writer checks the policy set for unintended grants and denies in specific policy contexts (i.e. test scenarios). Although limited in its scope, since the policy writer must give a specific context, determining policy entailment scales with the size of the domain, unlike the policy containment problem which we define shortly. Note that policy entailment can also be used for constructing PDPs.

To illustrate policy entailment, consider the following policy set \(P\):

\[
\{ \text{pol}(S, O) \leftarrow (\text{pol\_leaders}(S, O) \overset{\top}{\rightarrow} \text{proj\_leader}(S)) \overset{\downarrow}{\rightarrow} \text{pub}(O) \}.
\]
For simplicity we do not specify the policy pol_leaders. One requirement for \( P \), which is derived from the requirement R2 given in §2, may be to deny access to subjects who are not project leaders whenever the policy pol_leaders returns a conflict. To check this property, we may ask whether the policy set entails the permission \( pol(fred,foo.txt) \) in the context:

\[
I = \{ \text{pol leaders}(fred,foo.txt) \mapsto \top, \text{prj leader}(fred) \mapsto f \},
\]

where the remaining atoms are mapped to \( f \). For this context the policy set does not entail the permission, as expected.

Because the guarantees provided by entailment analysis are limited to the context provided by the policy writer, the requirement may not hold for other policy contexts. For example, the given policy set \( P \) violates its requirement for \( I' = \{ \text{pol leaders}(fred,foo.txt) \mapsto \top, \text{prj leader}(fred) \mapsto \bot, \text{pub}(foo.txt) \mapsto t \} \), because the policy set entails \( pol(fred,foo.txt) \), although \( pol leaders \) results in a conflict and the PDP does not know whether Fred is a project leader.

Deciding policy entailment is reducible to query entailment; see §3. Policy entailment can be therefore decided in time polynomial in the size of the context.

**Policy Containment.** Policy containment thoroughly analyzes a policy set against all policy contexts. It can be used to answer questions such as: “Do all requests in all policy contexts evaluate to a conclusive policy decision, i.e. grant or deny?” Containment analysis is done either for a particular policy domain or for all possible policy domains. In more detail, the domain policy containment answers whether a policy set \( P_1 \) is more permissive than another policy set \( P_2 \) for all policy contexts for a given domain. The all-domains policy containment answers whether a policy set \( P_1 \) is more permissive than another policy set \( P_2 \) for all policy contexts for all possible domains. Even though all-domains evaluations imply those for one domain, checking for all domains is decidable only for a fragment of BelLog, as we later show.

Many analysis questions require that only specific subsets of policy contexts and requests are considered for comparisons. For example, to verify that the policy set \( P \) correctly encodes our requirement derived from R2, the policy writer may ask whether \( P \) denies all requests made by subjects who are not project leaders, for all contexts where the policy \( pol leaders \) results in a conflict. We encode such analysis questions with a condition that constraints the contexts and requests where the policy sets are compared. Formally, the syntax for writing containment questions is

\[
cond \Rightarrow P_1 \preceq P_2.
\]

The symbols \( P_1 \) and \( P_2 \) are policy sets and \( cond \) is inductively defined as

\[
cond ::= \forall X. cond \mid attr \preceq v \mid v \preceq attr \mid \neg cond \mid cond \land cond \mid t
\]

\[
v ::= \bot \mid \top,
\]

where \( X \in V, attr \in A_{\Sigma(V)}^{\text{indp}}, \) i.e. \( attr \) is an input attribute. Note that the attributes in a condition may contain variables. We write \( fv(cond) \) for the set of variables in \( cond \) that are not in the scope of \( \forall \). We fix the variables \( S \) and \( O \) to
As a shorthand, in the following we write \( \in \{ \perp, v, q \} \) as \( q \). Given two conditions that satisfy 
\((\text{Domain Policy Containment}) \) Given a question \( q \) for all requests and for all policy contexts. 

We define the satisfaction relation \( \models_\Sigma \) between a policy context \( I \), a condition \( \text{cond} \) of a well-formed policy containment question, and a policy domain \( \Sigma \):

\[
\begin{align*}
I \models_\Sigma t & \quad \text{if} \quad I(q) \leq v \\
I \models_\Sigma q \leq v & \quad \text{if} \quad v \leq I(q) \\
I \models_\Sigma \neg \text{cond} & \quad \text{if} \quad I \not\models_\Sigma \text{cond} \\
I \models_\Sigma \text{cond}_1 \land \text{cond}_2 & \quad \text{if} \quad I \models_\Sigma \text{cond}_1 \land I \models_\Sigma \text{cond}_2 \\
I \models_\Sigma \forall X. \text{cond}(X) & \quad \text{if} \quad \forall X \in \Sigma. I \models_\Sigma \text{cond}(X)
\end{align*}
\]

As a shorthand, in the following we write \( q = v \) for \( (q \leq v) \land (v \leq q) \) where \( v \in \{ \perp, \top \} \), \( q = f \) for \( (q \leq \perp) \land (q \leq \top) \), and \( q = t \) for \( \neg(q \leq \perp) \land \neg(q \leq \top) \).

Given two conditions \( c_1 \) and \( c_2 \) we define their disjunction \( c_1 \lor c_2 \) in the standard way as \( \neg(c_1 \land \neg c_2) \). To compare the truth values of any two attributes \( p \) and \( q \), we write \( p = q \) as a shorthand for \( (p = f \land q = f) \lor (p = \perp \land q = \perp) \lor (p = \top \land q = \top) \lor (p = t \land q = t) \).

**Definition 3.** (Domain Policy Containment) Given a question \( \text{cond} \Rightarrow P_1 \preceq P_2 \), and a domain \( \Sigma \), then \( P_1 \) is contained in \( P_2 \) for all policy contexts over \( \Sigma \) that satisfy \( \text{cond} \), denoted by \( \models_\Sigma \text{cond} \Rightarrow P_1 \preceq P_2 \), iff

\[
\forall I \in \mathcal{I}, \forall S, O \in \Sigma. (I \models_\Sigma \text{cond}) \Rightarrow ([P_1]_I(\text{pol}(S,O)) \preceq [P_2]_I(\text{pol}(S,O))) ,
\]

where \( \mathcal{I} \) is the set of all policy contexts defined over the domain \( \Sigma \).

Note that we overload the relation \( \models_\Sigma \).

In practice, the policy domain may change over time, e.g. subjects and objects are added to and removed from the system. After changes to \( \Sigma \), domain policy containment may no longer hold. As mentioned, a stronger policy containment guarantee is thus to verify that \( P_1 \) is contained in \( P_2 \) for all domains \( \Sigma' \).

**Definition 4.** (All-domains Policy Containment) Given a question \( \text{cond} \Rightarrow P_1 \preceq P_2 \), \( P_1 \) is contained in \( P_2 \) for all policy contexts in all policy domains, denoted \( \upmodels \text{cond} \Rightarrow P_1 \preceq P_2 \), iff \( \models_\Sigma \text{cond} \Rightarrow P_1 \preceq P_2 \) holds for all domains \( \Sigma \).

To illustrate how containment questions are specified and used, we start with the previously given question: “Do all requests in all policy contexts evaluate to a conclusive policy decision”. To encode this question for the policy set \( P \), we construct a policy set \( P' \) by first renaming the predicate symbol \( \text{pol} \) in \( P \) to \( \text{pol}' \) and then adding the rule

\[
\text{pol}(S,O) \leftarrow (\text{pol}'(S,O) \models f) \models f .
\]

By construction, the policy set \( P' \) denies all requests that are evaluated to gap or conflict by the policy set \( P \). Therefore, \( \models_\Sigma t \Rightarrow P \preceq P' \) holds iff the policy set \( P \) is conclusive. We set the condition to \( t \) because we must check containment for all requests and for all policy contexts.

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As a second example, we use policy containment to encode the requirement that the policy set $P$ denies access to subjects who are not project leaders whenever the policy $pol_{leaders}$ results in a conflict:

$$(pol_{leaders}(S,O) = \top) \land \neg(prj\_leader(S) = t) \Rightarrow P \preceq P_l,$$

where $P_l$ is the policy set that denies all requests. This asks whether $P$ denies $pol(S,O)$ in all contexts where the policy $pol_{leaders}$ results in a conflict for the request $pol(S,O)$ ($pol_{leaders}(S,O) = \top$) and the subject $S$ is not a project leader ($\neg(prj\_leader(S) = t)$). Both domain and all-domains containment evaluations give negative answers; see the counterexample above. The policy set, however, satisfies the requirement if the attribute $prj\_leader$ is either $t$ or $f$. We can easily encode this assumption as

$$(pol_{leaders}(S,O) = \top) \land (prj\_leader(S) = f) \Rightarrow P \preceq P_l.$$

Domain and all-domains containment evaluations answer this question positively.

Policy containment is also useful for comparing a policy set’s behavior in one context to its behavior in a different policy context. Consider a scenario where a subject can push some attributes to the PDP. An important property for the policy set is that a subject cannot influence the policy set to grant a request by withholding attributes. We refer to such policy sets as push-monotonic: whenever a subject provides fewer attributes to the PDP, the policy set results in a less permissive decision. Consider the policy set $P$:

$$\{ \begin{array}{l}
pol(S,O) \leftarrow researcher(S), prj\_file(O) \\
researcher(S) \leftarrow hr(S'), labcard(S',S), \neg revoked(S)
\end{array} \}$$

The policy writer may formulate the question: “Is the policy set more restrictive when the subject provides fewer (pushed) attributes?” To answer this question, one must compare the policy set to itself in all policy contexts that are identical except for the attributes pushed by the subject. To encode this question, we first construct a policy set $P'$ by renaming every predicate symbol $p$ that appears in $edb_P$ to $p'$, where $edb_P = \{ revoked(\cdot), labcard(\cdot,\cdot), hr(\cdot), revoked(\cdot), prj\_file(\cdot) \}$. Suppose the attribute $revoked$ is locally stored at the PDP and the remaining attributes are pushed by the subject. The analysis question is encoded as

$$\forall X. (revoked(X) = revoked'(X)) \land \forall X, Y. (labcard(X,Y) \preceq labcard'(X,Y)) \land \forall X. (hr(X) \preceq hr'(X)) \land \forall X. (prj\_file(X) \preceq prj\_file'(X)) \Rightarrow P \preceq P'.$$

This analysis problem asks whether $P$ is less permissive than $P'$ in all policy contexts that are identical for the stored attribute and all pushed attributes to $P$ are also pushed to $P'$. The question indeed holds for the policy set $P$.

The problems of deciding domain and all-domains policy containment are reducible to domain and all-domains query validity, respectively.

**Theorem 6.** Policy containment is polynomially reducible to query validity.

**Corollary 1.** The problem of domain policy containment belongs to the complexity class $\text{co-NP-Complete}$. The problem of all-domains policy containment for unary-edb policy sets belongs to the complexity class $\text{co-NEXP}$. 

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### Table 1: Complexity of BelLOG’s policy analysis problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis problem</th>
<th>Entailment</th>
<th>Domain containment</th>
<th>All-domains containment</th>
<th>All-domains containment*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>PTIME</td>
<td>CO-NP-COMPLETE</td>
<td>UNDECIDABLE</td>
<td>CO-NEXP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For policies that belong to the unary-edb BelLOG fragment.

If a policy set has attributes associated to a single user, group, resource, etc. and there are finitely many principals, then the policy set can be written in the unary-edb BelLOG fragment. This is because all attributes have the form `attr_name(Issuer, Object)` can be re-encoded as `attr_name_Issuer(Object)` since there are finitely many principals.

### 6 Conclusions

In this paper we present BelLOG, a formal language for specifying access control policies that require both authority delegation and policy composition. This sets BelLOG apart from the existing formal access control languages, which support either authority delegation or policy composition. BelLOG can therefore specify decentralized composite policies, which thus far have lacked formal semantics; examples include policies based on the XACML 3 standard [24] and policies for large-scale distributed systems, such as [2–4,25]. We present an analysis framework for reasoning about BelLOG policies and give complexity bounds for deciding policy entailment and policy containment in BelLOG, summarized in Table 1.

We see BelLOG as a foundation for constructing high-level policy languages for decentralized composite access control, much like Datalog is the foundation for delegation languages such as RT [12] and SecPAL [11]. We plan to build implementations of BelLOG and apply them in practice. In particular we will focus on algorithms for fast evaluation of practically-relevant policies, and sound approximation techniques for deciding the policy analysis problems efficiently.

### References

3. Axiomatics: Policy Decision Points (September 2013)
We choose a minimal supported model for BelLog semantics because it does not over-assign truth values to head atoms and it assumes the least amount...
of truth for the atoms which are not explicitly assigned a truth value. If there are multiple minimal supported models, we select the one constructed with the iterative fixed point construction; see §3. In the following we justify, in terms of access control decisions, our choice of minimal supported model through a simple example. Consider the BELLOG program $P$:

$$\{ \text{permit}(\text{Sub})@\text{admin} \leftarrow \neg \text{blist}(\text{Sub})@\text{piet}, \right.$$  
$$\text{blist}(\text{Sub})@\text{piet} \leftarrow \text{blist}(\text{Sub})@\text{ann},$$  
$$\text{blist}(\text{Sub})@\text{ann} \leftarrow \text{blist}(\text{Sub})@\text{piet} \}$$

The program $P$ specifies a blacklist policy $\text{blist}$, which grants access to subjects that have not been blacklisted. Piet delegates to Ann the attribute $\text{blist}$, and vice versa.

Consider the domain $\Sigma = \{\text{bob}, \text{admin}, \text{ann}, \text{piet}\}$. The program $P$ has the following minimal supported models:

- $M_1 = \{\text{permit}(\text{bob})@\text{admin} \mapsto t, \text{blist}(\text{bob})@\text{piet} \mapsto f, \text{blist}(\text{bob})@\text{ann} \mapsto f\}$
- $M_2 = \{\text{permit}(\text{bob})@\text{admin} \mapsto f, \text{blist}(\text{bob})@\text{piet} \mapsto t, \text{blist}(\text{bob})@\text{ann} \mapsto t\}$
- $M_3 = \{\text{permit}(\text{bob})@\text{admin} \mapsto \bot, \text{blist}(\text{bob})@\text{piet} \mapsto \bot, \text{blist}(\text{bob})@\text{ann} \mapsto \bot\}$
- $M_4 = \{\text{permit}(\text{bob})@\text{admin} \mapsto \top, \text{blist}(\text{bob})@\text{piet} \mapsto \top, \text{blist}(\text{bob})@\text{ann} \mapsto \top\}$

In these models we only show the attributes for the subject Bob. Our construction results in the model $M_1$, which grants access to Bob because there is no evidence that he has been revoked. That is, the attribute $\text{blist}(\text{bob})$ is assigned $f$, which is in line with our system model: a statement is false if there is no evidence for the statement. In contrast, the remaining minimal supported models do not grant access to Bob while there is no evidence supporting such a decision. The model $M_2$ assumes that Bob is blacklisted, $M_3$ that it is unknown whether Bob is blacklisted, and $M_4$ that there is conflicting evidence concerning Bob being blacklisted.

B Proofs

B.1 $T_P$ Operator

**Theorem 7.** For a BELLOG program $P$, defined over a domain $\Sigma$, where $P$ has only non-negative literals in its rules, the operator $T_P$ is monotone.

**Proof.** Let $I_1 \sqsubseteq I_2$ for some $I_1, I_2 \in \mathcal{I}$, where $\mathcal{I}$ is the set of all interpretations defined over the domain $\Sigma$. We show that $T_P(I_1) \sqsubseteq T_P(I_2)$.

To prove the claim we need to show that for an arbitrary atom $a \in \mathcal{A}_{\Sigma(\emptyset)}$, $T_P(I_1)(a) \leq T_P(I_2)(a)$. By definition of the $T_P$ operator,

$$T_P(I_i)(a) = \bigvee \{I_i(l) \mid (a \leftarrow l) \in P^i\},$$

for $i \in \{1, 2\}$. 

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If the sets \( \{I_i(l) \mid (a \leftarrow I) \in P^i\} \) are the empty set, then \( T_P(I_1)(a) = T_P(I_2)(a) = \bigvee \{\} = \top \).

Otherwise, there is at least one rule in \( P^i \) with \( a \) in its head. Note that the operator \( \sim \) is monotone, because for any \( v_1, v_2 \in \mathcal{D} \), if \( v_1 \leq v_2 \) then \( \sim v_1 \leq \sim v_2 \). Furthermore, \( P \)'s rules have only non-negative literals and the operator \( \wedge \) is monotone. Therefore for any rule body \( I \) we have \( I_1(l) \leq I_2(l) \), simply because \( I_1 \subseteq I_2 \). By definition of \( T_P \), all rule bodies with \( a \) in their heads are combined with the \( \lor \) operator. Since \( \lor \) is monotone it follows that \( T_P(I_1)(a) \leq T_P(I_2)(a) \).

This concludes our proof.

We proceed with three lemmas, pertaining to the \( T_P \) operator, which we use throughout the remaining proofs in this section. For a program \( P \) defined over a domain \( \Sigma \), we say that an atom \( q \) is an edb atom of \( P \) if \( q \in \mathcal{A}^{\text{edbp}}_{\Sigma(\emptyset)} \). Similarly we say that an atom \( q \) is an idb atom of \( P \) if \( q \in \mathcal{A}^{\text{idbp}}_{\Sigma(\emptyset)} \). When the program \( P \) is clear from the context, we may write edb atom instead of edb atom of \( P \). We refer to the set of atoms that appear in the bodies of \( P \)'s rules as the body atoms of \( P \).

**Lemma 2.** Given two programs \( P \) and \( P' \) and an interpretation \( I \), \( T_{P \cup P'}(I) = T_P(I) \cup T_{P'}(I) \).

**Proof.** By definition \( T_P \) computes each rule independently and then combines their result using the meet \( \lor \) operator. As the operator \( \lor \) is associative and symmetric, we get \( T_{P \cup P'}(I) = T_P(I) \cup T_{P'}(I) \).

**Lemma 3.** Given a program \( P \), and interpretations \( I_1, I_2 \), if \( I_1(q) \leq I_2(q) \) for any body atom \( q \) of \( P \), then \( T_P(I_1 \cup I_2) = T_P(I_2) \).

**Proof.** Since for any body atom \( q \) we have \( I_1(q) \leq I_2(q) \), \( T_P(I_1 \cup I_2) \) computes the body atoms' truth values according to \( I_2 \) because \( (I_1 \cup I_2)(q) = I_2(q) \). Therefore \( T_P(I_1 \cup I_2) = T_P(I_2) \).

**Lemma 4.** Given a program \( P \), and interpretations \( I_1, I_2 \), if for any edb atom \( q \) it holds that \( I_1(q) \leq I_2(q) \) and for any idb atom it holds that \( I_2(q) \leq I_1(q) \), then \( T_P(I_1 \cup I_2) = T_{P \cup I_2}(I_1) \).

**Proof.** By definition of \( T_P \) we have \( T_P(I_1 \cup I_2) = T_{P \cup I_2}(I_1 \cup I_2) \).

Recall that \( P^i \cup I_2 \) replaces the edb atoms in \( P \)'s rules by their truth values according to \( I_2 \). Since for any edb atom \( q \) we have \( I_1(q) \leq I_2(q) \), it follows that \( (I_1 \cup I_2)(q) = I_2(q) \). Therefore the computation of \( T_{P \cup I_2}(I_1 \cup I_2) \) always computes the edb atoms' truth values according to \( I_2 \), and therefore \( T_{P \cup I_2}(I_1 \cup I_2) = T_{P \cup I_2}(I_1 \cup I_2) \).

Finally, note that the body atoms of \( P^i \cup I_2 \) are the idb atoms of \( P \). Because for any idb atom \( q \) of \( P \), we have \( I_2(q) \leq I_1(q) \), for any body atom \( q \) of \( P^i \cup I_2 \) we have \( I_2(q) \leq I_1(q) \). By Lemma 3 it follows that \( T_{P \cup I_2}(I_1 \cup I_2) = T_{P \cup I_2}(I_1) \).

This completes our proof.

\( \square \)
Recall that \([P] = M_n\) where \(M_{-1} = I_t\) and \(M_i = [T_{P_i \sqsubseteq M_{i-1}}] \cup M_{i-1}\) for \(0 \leq i \leq n\). Here, \(P_i\) are the strata of \(P\), with \(0 \leq i \leq n\). Note that the fixed points \([T_{P_i \sqsubseteq M_{i-1}}]\) are well-defined due to Theorem 7.

**Lemma 5.** Given a stratified BelLog program \(P\), the interpretation \([P]\) is a supported model of \(P\).

**Proof.** By Lemma 1, the interpretation \([P]\) is a supported model of \(P\) iff \([P]\) is a fixed point of \(T_P\).

To show that \([P]\) is a fixed point of \(T_P\), we use induction to prove that 
\[ T_P(M_0) = [T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup I_t \]
\[ = T_P([T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup I_t) = T_P([T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}]) = [T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \]
for all \(M_0 = [T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup I_t\). By Lemma 4, it follows that 
\[ T_P(M_0) = T_P([T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup I_t) = T_P([T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}]) = [T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \]
(1)

Since \(M_0 = [T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup I_t = [T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}]\), we conclude that \(T_P(M_0) = M_0\).

By induction hypothesis, for a given \(0 \leq k < n\), \(T_P(M_k) = M_k\). We prove that \(T_P(M_{k+1}) = M_{k+1}\). By Lemma 2, we can now rewrite \(T_P(M_{k+1})\) to
\[ T_P(M_{k+1}) = T_{P_{k+1}}([T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup M_k) = T_{P_{k+1}}([T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup M_k) = T_{P_{k+1}}([T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup M_k) = [T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \]
(2)

Recall that \(M_{k+1} = [T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup M_k\). We first simplify \(T_{P_{k+1}}(M_{k+1})\). Since no \(\text{idb}\) atom of \(P_{k+1}\) is the head of a rule in \(P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq M_k\), any \(\text{idb}\) atom \(a\) of \(P_{k+1}\) is mapped to \(f\) in \([T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}]\), and thus \([T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}](a) \subseteq M_k(a)\). Also, for any \(\text{db}\) atom \(q\) of \(P_0\), \(I_t(a) \subseteq [T_{P_0 \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}](a)\).

By Lemma 4, it follows that
\[ T_{P_{k+1}}(M_{k+1}) = T_{P_{k+1}}([T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup M_k) = [T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \]
(3)

We second simplify \(T_{P_{k+1} \cup \cdots \cup P_0}(M_{k+1})\). Due to stratification, any body atom \(a\) of \(P_k \cup \cdots \cup P_0\) is not the head of a rule in \(P_{k+1}\) and therefore \(a\) is mapped to \(f\) in \([T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}]\); thus \([T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}](a) \subseteq M_k(a)\) for any body atom \(a\) of \(P_k \cup \cdots \cup P_0\).

Now, by Lemma 3, and the induction hypothesis, we get:
\[ T_{P_k \cup \cdots \cup P_0}(M_{k+1}) = T_{P_k \cup \cdots \cup P_0}([T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq \text{idb}}] \cup M_k) = T_{P_k \cup \cdots \cup P_0}(M_k) = M_k \]
(4)

From (2), (3), and (4) it follows that 
\[ T_{P_{k+1} \cup \cdots \cup P_0}(M_{k+1}) = [T_{P_{k+1} \sqsubseteq M_k}] \cup M_k, \]
and therefore \(T_{P_{k+1} \cup \cdots \cup P_0}(M_{k+1}) = M_{k+1}\).

**Theorem 1.** Given a stratified BelLog program \(P\), \([P]\) is a minimal supported model of \(P\).
Proof. \([P]\) is a supported model of \(P\) by Lemma 5. We claim that \([P]\) is minimal. We use induction to show that for any interpretation \(I\), if \(I \subseteq M_k\) and \(T_{P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_k}(I) = I\) then \(I = M_k\) for \(0 \leq k \leq n\). Note that the case \(k = n\) proves the claim.

For the base case, assume that \(I \subseteq M_0\) and \(T_{P_0}(I) = I\) for some interpretation \(I\). We prove that \(I = M_0\). Since no \(ed\) atom of \(P_0\) appears in the head of a rule in \(P_0\), for any \(ed\) atom \(q\) of \(P_0\) we have \(I(q) = T_{P_0}(I)(q) = f\). That is, \(I(q) = f \preceq I_{t}(q)\) for any \(ed\) atom \(q\) of \(P_0\). For any \(id\) atom \(q\) of \(P_0\) we have \(I_{t}(q) = f \preceq I(q)\). Now, by Lemma 4 we get \(T_{P_0}(I) = T_{P_0}(I \cup I_t) = T_{P_0 \cup I_{t}}(I) = I\). Hence, \(I\) is a fixed point of \(T_{P_0 \cup I_{t}}\). From \(M_0 = [T_{P_0 \cup I_{t}}]\cup I_t = [T_{P_0 \cup I_{t}}]\), it follows that \(M_0\) is the least fixed point of \(T_{P_0 \cup I_{t}}\). Thus, \(M_0 \subseteq I\). From the assumption \(I \subseteq M_0\), it then follows that \(I = M_0\).

By induction hypothesis, for a given \(0 \leq k < n\) and any interpretation \(J\), if \(J \subseteq M_k\) and \(T_{P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_k}(J) = J\), then \(J = M_k\). We prove that \(I = M_{k+1}\) for any interpretation \(I\) where \(I \subseteq M_{k+1}\) and \(T_{P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_{k+1}}(I) = I\).

It is immediate that \(I\) can be uniquely decomposed into \(I = I_k \cup I_{k+1}\) such that \(I_k\) maps all \(id\) atoms of \(P_{k+1}\) to \(f\) and \(I_{k+1}\) maps all \(ed\) atoms of \(P_{k+1}\) to \(f\). By Lemma 2:

\[
T_{P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_k}(I_k \cup I_{k+1}) \sqcup T_{P_{k+1}}(I_k \sqcup I_{k+1}) = I_k \sqcup I_{k+1}
\]

(5)

Note that \(T_{P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_k}(I_k \cup I_{k+1})\) maps all \(id\) atoms of \(P_{k+1}\) to \(f\) and \(T_{P_{k+1}}(I_k \sqcup I_{k+1})\) maps all \(ed\) atoms of \(P_{k+1}\) to \(f\). Therefore, \(T_{P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_k}(I_k \sqcup I_{k+1}) = I_k\) and \(T_{P_{k+1}}(I_k \sqcup I_{k+1}) = I_{k+1}\), by the uniqueness of the decomposition.

In the following, we show that (a) \(I_k = M_k\) and (b) \(I_{k+1} = [T_{P_{k+1} \sqcup M_k}]\).

These two entail \(I = M_{k+1}\), thus completing the proof.

**Part (a).** For any \(ed\) atom \(q\) of \(P_{k+1}\) we have \(I_{k+1}(q) = f \preceq I_k(q)\), simply because only \(ed\) atoms of \(P_{k+1}\) can appear in the rule bodies of \(P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_k\). Now by Lemma 3 we get \(T_{P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_k}(I_k \cup I_{k+1}) = T_{P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_k}(I_k)\). That is, \(I_k\) is a fixed point of \(T_{P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_k}\):

\[
T_{P_0 \cup \ldots \cup P_k}(I_k) = I_k
\]

(6)

Recall that \(I = I_k \cup I_{k+1} \subseteq M_{k+1} = M_k \sqcup [T_{P_{k+1} \sqcup M_k}]\), by the assumption. If \(q\) is an \(ed\) atom of \(P_{k+1}\), then \((I_k \sqcup I_{k+1})(q) = I_k(q) \preceq (M_k \cup [T_{P_{k+1} \sqcup M_k}](q) = M_k(q); otherwise \(q\) is an \(id\) atom of \(P_{k+1}\) and we have \(I_k(q) = M_k(q) = f\). Therefore, \(I_k \subseteq M_k\).

(7)

From 6, 7, and the induction hypothesis, it follows that \(I_k = M_k\).

**Part (b).** With an argument similar to Part (a), it follows that \(I_{k+1} \subseteq [T_{P_{k+1} \sqcup M_k}]\). Then, by replacing \(I_k\) with \(M_k\) in \(T_{P_{k+1}}(I_k \cup I_{k+1}) = I_{k+1}\) we get \(T_{P_{k+1}}(M_k \sqcup I_{k+1}) = I_{k+1}\). For any \(ed\) atom \(q\) of \(P_{k+1}\) we have \(I_{k+1}(q) = f \preceq M_k(q)\), and \(M_k(r) = f \preceq I_{k+1}(r)\) for any \(id\) atom \(r\) of \(P_{k+1}\). Applying Lemma 4 we get \(T_{P_{k+1}}(M_k \sqcup I_{k+1}) = T_{P_{k+1} \sqcup M_k}(I_{k+1}) = I_{k+1}\). That is, \(I_{k+1}\) is a fixed
point of $T_{P_{k+1} \cup M_k}$. Since $[T_{P_{k+1} \cup M_k}]$ is the least fixed point of $T_{P_{k+1} \cup M_k}$ and $I_{k+1} \sqsubseteq [T_{P_{k+1} \cup M_k}]$, we have $I_{k+1} = [T_{P_{k+1} \cup M_k}]$.

\[ \square \]

\section*{B.2 Semantic Link between Datalog and BelLOG}

We first define Datalog’s syntax and semantics before proceeding with the proof of the theorem.

**Syntax of Stratified Datalog.** We define the syntax of stratified Datalog as a syntactic restriction of BelLOG: A stratified Datalog program is any stratified BelLOG program $P$ where the predicates $\bot$, $\top$, and the operator $\sim$ do not appear in $P$’s rules.

In the following we fix a stratified Datalog program $P$, with strata $P_0, \cdots, P_n$, defined over a domain $\Sigma$.

**Semantics of Stratified Datalog.** We adopt the semantics of stratified Datalog programs from [19]. Let $\mathcal{I}^D = 2^{A_\Sigma(\emptyset)}$. The structure $(\mathcal{I}^D, \subseteq, \cup, \cap, \emptyset, A_\Sigma(\emptyset))$ is a complete lattice. Define $T_P^D : \mathcal{I}^D \mapsto \mathcal{I}^D$ as

\[ T_P^D(I) = \{a \in A_\Sigma(V) \mid \exists (a \leftarrow l_1, \cdots, l_n) \in P^I, \forall l \in \{l_1, \cdots, l_n\}. I \models D l_i \} \]

where $I \models D l$ iff (1) $l$ is an atom $a$ and $a \in I$, or (2) $l$ is a negative literal $\neg a$ and $a \notin I$. The powers of the operator $T_P^D$ are defined as:

\[ T_P^D \uparrow^0 (I) = I \]

\[ T_P^D \uparrow^{i+1} (I) = T_P^D (T_P^D \uparrow^i (I)) \cup T_P^D \uparrow^i (I), \quad \text{for } i > 0 \]

The model of $P$, denoted with $[P]^D$ is $M_n^D$, where $M_{-1}^D = \emptyset$ and $M_0^D = T_P^D \uparrow^\omega (M_{-1}^D)$, for $0 \leq i \leq n$.

We link Datalog’s models to BelLOG’s models with the function $\alpha : \mathcal{I}^D \mapsto \mathcal{I}$, defined as $\alpha([P]^D)(a) = t$ if $a \in I^D$, and $\alpha([P]^D)(a) = \bar{t}$ otherwise.

**Theorem 8.** Given a stratified Datalog program $P$, $\alpha([P]^D) = [P]$.

**Proof.** We prove using induction that $\alpha(M_k^D) = M_k$ for $-1 \leq k \leq n$.

For the base case, we have $\alpha(M_{-1}^D) = \alpha(\emptyset) = \emptyset = M_{-1}$.

By induction hypothesis assume that $\alpha(M_k^D) = M_k$, for some $k$ where $0 \leq k < n$. The definition of the operators $\lor$, $\land$, and $\sim$, if the predicates $\bot$, $\top$, and the operator $\sim$ do not appear in $P_{k+1}$’s rules then the truth values $\bot$ and $\top$ do not appear in $T_{P_{k+1}}(I)$ for any interpretation $I$. Therefore to show that $\alpha(M_{k+1}^D) = M_{k+1}$, it is sufficient to prove that $a \in M_{k+1}^D$ iff $M_{k+1}^D(a) = t$, for any atom $a$.

We proceed by case distinction on atoms.

- Assume that $a$ is an edb atom of $P_{k+1}$. Then, for any set of atoms from Datalog’s domain $J \in \mathcal{I}^D$, $a \notin T_{P_{k+1}}^D(J)$ because $a$ does not appear in the head of any rule in $P_{k+1}$. Therefore $a \in M_{k+1}^D$ iff $a \in M_k^D$. Similarly, for any interpretation $J \in \mathcal{I}$, $T_{P_{k+1}(M_k)}(J)(a) = \bar{t}$, and therefore $M_{k+1}^D(a) = t$ iff
$M_k(a) = t$. From the induction hypothesis, we conclude that $a \in M_{k+1}^D$ iff $M_{k+1}(a) = t$.

- Assume that $a$ is an idb atom of $P_{k+1}$. For any idb atom $a$, $a \notin M_k^D$ and $M_k(a) = f$. Therefore, $a \in M_{k+1}^D$ iff $a$ is derived in some iteration of $T_{P_{k+1}}^D$ (equation 1). Similarly, $M_{k+1}(a) = t$ iff $[T_{P_{k+1}^D \cup M_k}^D](a) = t$. By the definition of the operators $T_{P_{k+1}}^D$ and $T_{P_{k+1}^D \cup M_k}^D$, $a \in T_{P_{k+1}^D}^D(I)$ iff $T_{P_{k+1}^D \cup M_k}(\alpha(I))(a) = t$, for any $I \in \mathcal{T}^D$. From the induction hypothesis $M_k = \alpha(M_k^D)$, and because at every iteration the operators $T_{P_{k+1}^D}$ and $T_{P_{k+1}^D \cup M_k}^D$ derive the same idb atoms, we conclude that $a \in M_{k+1}^D$ iff $M_{k+1}(a) = t$.

This concludes our proof. □

### B.3 Independence of Stratification

We prove that given two different stratifications of a program $P$, the iterative fixed point construction defined in §3 results in the same minimal supported model for $P$.

Given a stratification $P_0, \ldots, P_n$ of a program $P$, we write $M_{P_i}$ for the model of $P_0 \cup \cdots \cup P_i$ obtained using the iterative fixed point construction; see §3. A predicate symbol $p$ is defined in $P_i$ if all rules with $p$ in their heads are in $P_i$. Given a program $P$, a predicate symbol $p$ refers-to $q$ iff there is a rule $r$ in $P$ such that $p$ appears in $r$’s head and $q$ appears in $r$’s body. Let $p$ depends-on $q$ be the transitive closure of the refers-to relation. A stratum $P_i$ is minimal iff for any two predicate symbols $p, q \in \mathcal{P}$ defined in $P_i$, $p$ depends-on $q$ iff $q$ depends-on $p$.

A stratification $P_0, \ldots, P_n$ is refined iff all $P_i$ are minimal, with $0 \leq i \leq n$. It is straightforward to see that given two different refined stratifications $P_0, \ldots, P_n$ and $P_0', \ldots, P_m'$, $n = m$ and for any stratum $P_i$, there is a stratum $P_j'$ such that $P_i = P_j'$, for $0 \leq i \leq n$ and $0 \leq j \leq m$, and vice versa.

The proof proceeds as follows. We will show that any stratification $P_0, \ldots, P_n$ can be transformed into a refined stratification $P_0', \ldots, P_m'$ such that $M_{P_n} = M_{P_n'}$. Then we will prove that for any two refined stratifications the iterative fixed point construction results in the same model. These two points establish that the computed model for $P$ is independent to how the rules are partitioned into strata. We start with the following lemma which allows us to partition the set of rules of a non-minimal stratum:

#### Lemma 6. Given a program $P$ where all negative literals in $P$ are constructed from predicate symbols in $\text{edbb}_P$, an input $I$, and a stratification $P_1, P_2$ of $P$, we have $M = M_2$ where $M = [T_{P_1 \cup I}^D] \sqcup I$, $M_1 = [T_{P_1^D \cup I}^D] \sqcup I$, $M_2 = [T_{P_2^D \cup M_1}^D] \sqcup M_1$.

**Proof.** We proceed by case distinction on the atoms $a$.

- Case $a$ is an edb atom of $P$. Because $M(a) = I(a)$, and $M_2(a) = M_1(a) = I(a)$, it is immediate that $M(a) = M_2(a)$.
– Case a is an \text{idb} atom of \( P_1 \). Due to the stratification requirements, all rules with \( a \) in their heads are contained in \( P_1 \). It follows that \( M_2(a) = M_1(a) = \left[ \top_{P_1} \right](a) \). Since no atoms defined in \( P_2 \) appear in the rule bodies in \( P_1 \), we get \( M(a) = \left[ \top_{P_1} \right](a) = \left[ \top_{P_1} \right](a) \). Therefore \( M(a) = M_2(a) \).

– Case a is an \text{idb} atom of \( P_2 \). For \( M(a) \) we have \( M(a) = \left[ \top_{P_1} \right](a) \), and for \( M_2(a) \) we have \( M_2(a) = \left[ \top_{P_2} \right](a) \). Any \text{idb} atom of \( P_1 \) has the same truth value in \( M_1 \) and \( \left[ \top_{P_2} \right](a) \); see previous case. We can thus subtract the rules of \( P_1 \) from \( P \) and replace the truth values of \text{idb} atoms of \( P_1 \) according to \( M_1 \), i.e., we get \( \left[ \top_{P_1} \right](a) = \left[ \top_{P_2} \right](a) \).

This concludes our proof. \( \square \)

We now prove that any two refined stratifications result in the same model for \( P \).

**Lemma 7.** Given two refined stratifications \( P_0, \cdots, P_n \) and \( P'_0, \cdots, P'_n \), \( M_{P_n} = M'_{P'_n} \).

**Proof.** We use induction to prove that for any atom \( a \), if \( a \) is defined in \( P_0 \cup \cdots \cup P_i \) and \( P'_0 \cup \cdots \cup P'_i \) then \( M_{P_i}(a) = M'_{P'_i}(a) \), for \( 0 \leq i \leq n \) and \( 0 \leq j \leq n \). Note that the case for \( i = j = n \) completes our proof.

For the base case, let \( a \) is defined in \( P_0 \) and \( P'_0 \); otherwise the claim obviously holds. It is immediate that \( M_{P_0}(a) = M'_{P'_0}(a) \) because \( P_0 = P'_0 \).

By induction hypothesis, for a given \( 0 \leq i < n \) and \( 0 \leq j < n \), if \( a \) is defined in \( P_0 \cup \cdots \cup P_i \) and \( P'_0 \cup \cdots \cup P'_j \) then \( M_{P_i}(a) = M'_{P'_j}(a) \). We claim that for any atom \( a \), if \( a \) is defined in \( P_0 \cup \cdots \cup P_{i+1} \) and \( P'_0 \cup \cdots \cup P'_j \), then \( M_{P_{i+1}}(a) = M'_{P'_j}(a) \). The inductive step for \( j + 1 \) is symmetric.

Consider an atom \( a \). Let \( a \) be defined in \( P'_0 \cup \cdots \cup P'_j \). Note that otherwise the claim obviously holds.

Assume \( a \) is defined in \( P_0 \cup \cdots \cup P_i \), then \( M_{P_{i+1}}(a) = M_{P'_i}(a) \) because no rules with \( a \) in the head appear in \( P_{i+1} \). The claim holds by the induction hypothesis.

Assume \( a \) is not defined in \( P_0 \cup \cdots \cup P_i \). Let \( a \) be defined in \( P_0 \cup \cdots \cup P_{i+1} \). Note that otherwise the claim obviously holds. By the stratification requirements, \( a \) is defined in exactly one stratum. Let \( P'_k \), with \( 0 \leq k \leq j \), be the stratum where \( a \) is defined in \( P'_0 \cup \cdots \cup P'_j \). Since the stratifications are refined, it follows that \( P_{i+1} = P'_k \). Due to the stratification requirements, all \text{idb} atoms of \( P_{i+1} \) and \( P'_k \) are defined in previous strata, and by the induction hypothesis they are mapped to the same truth values according to \( M_{P_i} \) and \( M'_{P'_k} \). Therefore \( M_{P_{i+1}}(a) = M'_{P'_k}(a) \).

We show that any stratification can be transformed into a refined stratification. Take a stratification \( P_0, \cdots, P_n \) and a stratum \( P_i \) that is not-minimal, with \( 0 \leq i \leq n \). Let \( P_i = P^1_i \cup P^2_i \) such that \( P^1_i, P^2_i \) is a stratification of \( P_i \). The iterative fixed point construction applied on \( P_0, \cdots, P_{i-1}, P^1_i, P^2_i, P_{i+1}, \cdots, P_n \) results in the same model for \( P \), because \( M_{P^2_i} = M_{P_i} \) due to Lemma 6. We successively partition the non-minimal strata to obtain a refined stratification with the same model as \( M_{P_n} \).
It follows that any stratification can be transformed into a refined one. Now, by Lemma 7 the following theorem is immediate.

**Theorem 9.** Given two stratifications $P_0, \cdots, P_n$ and $P'_0, \cdots, P'_m$, of a stratified program $P$, $M_{P_n} = M_{P'_m}$.

### B.4 **BELLOG Extensions**

We associate a **BELLOG** rule $r$ with the measure $\mu(r)$, where $\mu$ is inductively defined as:

$$
\begin{align*}
\mu(p \leftarrow \text{body}) &= \mu(\text{body}) \\
\mu(q_1, \cdots, q_n) &= 1 \\
\mu(\neg \text{body}) &= 1 + \mu(\text{body}) \\
\mu(\neg \text{body}) &= 1 + \mu(\text{body}) \\
\mu(\text{body}_1 \wedge \text{body}_2) &= 1 + \mu(\text{body}_1) + \mu(\text{body}_2)
\end{align*}
$$

Recall that given a **BELLOG** program $P$ with composite rules, the program $P$ is translated into a program $P' = \bigcup_{r \in P} T(r)$ with basic rules, where $T$ is the recursive function that maps rules to sets of basic rules. To show that this translation terminates, we state and prove the following Lemma.

**Lemma 8.** Given a rule $r$, the recursive function $T(r)$ terminates.

**Proof.** The proof proceeds by showing that given a rule $r$, $\forall r' \in T(r). \ (\mu(r) = \mu(r') = 1 \lor (\mu(r') < \mu(r))$. By definition of $\mu$, for any rule $r$, $\mu(r) \geq 1$.

Assume $\mu(r) = 1$. By definition of $\mu$, $r$ must be a basic rule $p \leftarrow q_1, \cdots, q_n$. $T(r)$ terminates simply because $T(p \leftarrow q_1, \cdots, q_n) = \{p \leftarrow q_1, \cdots, q_n\}$.

Assume $\mu(r) > 1$. By definition of $\mu$, $r$ must be a composite rule. By definition of $T$, the intermediate step of $T(r)$ is a set of rules that contains one basic rule and one or two fresh rules, and then $T$ is recursively applied on the fresh rules. We show that $\mu(r') < \mu(r)$, where $r'$ is a fresh rule generated by $T$. We proceed by case distinction on $r$:

- Case $r = p \leftarrow \neg \text{body}$. $T$ generates one fresh rule $r' = p_{\text{fresh}} \leftarrow \text{body}$. By definition of $\mu$ we have $\mu(r) = 1 + \mu(\text{body})$ and $\mu(r' = \mu(\text{body})$, thus $\mu(r') < \mu(r)$.

- Case $r = p \leftarrow \neg \text{body}$. Similarly to the case $r = p \leftarrow \neg \text{body}$, $T$ generates one fresh rule $r' = p_{\text{fresh}} \leftarrow \text{body}$, and we get $\mu(r') < \mu(r)$.

- Case $r = p \leftarrow \text{body}_1 \wedge \text{body}_2$. $T$ generates two fresh rules $r_1 = p_{\text{fresh}_1} \leftarrow \text{body}_1$ and $r_2 = p_{\text{fresh}_2} \leftarrow \text{body}_2$. Because $\mu(r) = 1 + \mu(\text{body}_1) + \mu(\text{body}_2)$, $\mu(r_1) = \mu(\text{body}_1)$, and $\mu(r_2) = \mu(\text{body}_2)$, we get $\mu(r_1) < \mu(r)$ and $\mu(r_2) < \mu(r)$.

This completes our proof. $\square$

**Theorem 4.** Given a well-formed **BELLOG** program $P$ with composite rules, the translated program $P' = \bigcup_{r \in P} T(r)$ is stratified.
Proof. The definition of a well-formed program extends the conditions of a stratified program. Therefore, any well-formed program $P$ that contains only basic rules is stratified.

Let $r \in P$ be a rule of a well-formed program $P$, and $P_0, \ldots, P_n$ are the partitions that satisfy the conditions of a well-formed program. Assume $r \in P_i$ for some $0 \leq i \leq n$. By definition of $T$, the intermediate result of applying $T$ on $r$ is a set of rules $R$ containing one basic rule and one or two fresh rules. We claim that $(P \setminus \{r\} \cup R$ is well-formed. Since $T$ is applied on $P$’s rules to obtain a program $P'$ with basic rules, the claim implies that $P'$ is well-formed, thus stratified, which completes our proof.

We prove that $(P \setminus \{r\} \cup R$ is well-formed by case distinction on the rule $r$.

- Case $r = p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n$. $R = \{p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n\}$, and clearly the partitions $P_0, \ldots, P_{i-1}, (P_i \setminus \{r\}) \cup \{p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n\}, P_{i+1}, \ldots, P_n$ satisfy the conditions of a well-formed program, because $P_i = (P_i \setminus \{r\}) \cup \{p \leftarrow q_1, \ldots, q_n\}$.

- Case $r = p \leftarrow \neg body$. $R = \{p \leftarrow \neg p_{fresh}, p_{fresh} \leftarrow body\}$, and the partitions $P_0, \ldots, P_{i-1}, \{p_{fresh} \leftarrow body\}, (P_i \setminus \{r\}) \cup \{p \leftarrow \neg p_{fresh}\}, P_{i+1}, \ldots, P_n$ satisfy the conditions of a well-formed program, because all rules with $p$’s predicate symbol in the heads are contained in $(P_i \setminus \{r\}) \cup \{p \leftarrow \neg p_{fresh}\}$, and all predicate symbols that appear in $body$ can only appear in the heads of the rules contained in $P_0 \cup \cdots \cup P_{i-1}$.

- Case $r = p \leftarrow \neg body$. This case is analogous to the case $r = p \leftarrow \neg body$.

- Case $r = p \leftarrow body_1 \land body_2$. $R = \{(p \leftarrow p_{fresh_1}, p_{fresh_2}), (p_{fresh_1} \leftarrow body_1), (p_{fresh_2} \leftarrow body_2)\}$. The partitions $P_0, \cdots, P_{i-1}, \{p_{fresh_1} \leftarrow body_1\}, \{p_{fresh_2} \leftarrow body_2\}, (P_i \setminus \{r\}) \cup \{p \leftarrow p_{fresh_1}, p_{fresh_2}\}, P_{i+1}, \ldots, P_n$ satisfy the conditions of a well-formed program, because all rules with $p$’s predicate symbol in the heads are contained in $(P_i \setminus \{r\}) \cup \{p \leftarrow p_{fresh_1}, p_{fresh_2}\}$, and all predicate symbols that appear in $body_1$ and $body_2$ can only appear in the heads of the rules contained in $P_0 \cup \cdots \cup P_{i-1}$.

\[ \square \]

Theorem 5. Given an operator $g : D^n \to D$ and a list of $n$ rule bodies $q_1, \ldots, q_n$, there exists a body expression $\phi$ for a BelLog composite rule $p \leftarrow \phi$ such that

\[ \models \llbracket P \rrbracket_I(p) = g(\llbracket P \rrbracket_I(q_1), \ldots, \llbracket P \rrbracket_I(q_n)) \]

for all inputs $I$, and programs $P$ where $\{p \leftarrow \phi\} \subseteq P$ and $p$ is not the head of any other rule.

Proof. Fix an arbitrary $g : D^n \to D$, for some $n > 0$, and let $q_1, \ldots, q_n$ be the list of rule bodies.

For each $(d_1, \ldots, d_n) \in D^n$, we construct the composite body

\[ \phi_{d_1, \ldots, d_n} := (p_1 = d_1 \land \cdots \land p_n = d_n) \models g(d_1, \ldots, d_n) \]
Let the body $\phi$ of the rule $q \leftarrow \phi$ be the disjunction of composite bodies $\phi_{d_1}, \ldots, d_n$ for all possible $(d_1, \ldots, d_n) \in \mathcal{D}^n$. That is,

$$
\phi = \bigvee \{ \phi_{d_1}, \ldots, d_n \mid (d_1, \ldots, d_n) \in \mathcal{D}^n \}
$$

By construction, given an input $I$, exactly one $\phi_{d_1}, \ldots, d_n$, namely the one where $\llbracket P \rrbracket_I(p_i) = d_i$ for $1 \leq i \leq n$, evaluates to $t$; all others evaluate to $f$. The body $\phi$ thus evaluates to $g(d_1, \ldots, d_n)$.

Finally, we remark that for any well-formed program $P$ where $q$ does not appear in the head of any rule in $P$, the program $P \cup \{ q \leftarrow \phi \}$ is well-formed.

\[\square\]

### B.5 Complexities of Decision Problems

In this section we show the complexities of BelLog’s decision problems. Given a program $P$, the maximum arity of predicates in $P$ and the set of variables that appear in $P$ are fixed. The input size for BelLog’s decision problems is thus determined by the number of predicate symbols in $P$, the number of rules in the program $P$, and the number of constants in the domain $\Sigma$.

**Lemma 9.** Given a set $P$ of ground rules with non-negative literals, the complexity of computing the least fixed point of $T_P$ belongs to the complexity class $\text{ptime}$.

**Proof.** Following Kleene’s fixed point theorem, we can compute the least fixed point $\llbracket T_P \rrbracket$ as $T^\omega$ where $T_0 = I_f$ and $T^{i+1} = T_P(T^i)$ for $i \geq 0$; recall that $T_P$ is monotone by Theorem 7, and due to the finiteness of the lattice of interpretations monotonicity of $T_P$ entails its continuity.

We claim that the operator $T_P$ needs to be iteratively applied to $I_f$ at most $3 \times |A_{\Sigma}(\emptyset)|$ times (to compute the least fixed point $\llbracket T_P \rrbracket$). This is because in each application of $T_P$ at least one ground atom changes its truth value to a value strictly higher in the lattice $(\mathcal{D}, \preceq)$; otherwise, a fixed point has been reached. Since the height of the lattice $(\mathcal{D}, \preceq)$ is 3, the number of iterated applications of $T_P$ is bound by $3 \times$ the number of ground atoms in $A_{\Sigma}(\emptyset)$. This proves the aforementioned claim.

The number of ground atoms in $A_{\Sigma}(\emptyset)$ is at most $|P| \times |\Sigma|^c$, where $c$ is the fixed maximum arity of the predicate symbols in $P$. We conclude that the number of iterated applications of $T_P$ is at most $3 \times |P| \times |\Sigma|^c$.

Finally, the number of steps taken when computing $T_P(I)$, for any interpretation $I$, is linear in the number of (ground) rules in $P$. Consequently, the complexity of computing the least fixed point $\llbracket T_P \rrbracket$ (under the assumption that the maximum arity of the predicates in $P$ is fixed) is polynomial in the number of predicate symbols in $P$, the number of constants in $\Sigma$, and the number of rules in $P$.

\[\square\]

**Lemma 10.** The query entailment problem for stratified BelLog programs belongs to the complexity class $\text{ptime}$.
Proof. The query entailment problem $P \models^I q$ can be decided by constructing $P$’s model $[P]$ and then checking whether, or not, $[P](q) = t$ holds.

To compute the model $[P]$ of $P$, we must compute the interpretation $M_i$ associated to each stratum $P_i$. Consider a stratum $P_i$. To compute $M_i = [T_{P_i \downarrow M_{i-1}}] igcup M_{i-1}$, we need to compute the least fixed point of $T_{P_i \downarrow M_{i-1}}$; recall that this operator is continuous.

The number of rules in $P_i \downarrow M_{i-1}$ is bounded by $|P_i| \times |\Sigma|^k$, where $|P_i|$ is the number of (non-ground) rules in $P_i$, and $k$ is the fixed number of variables that appear in $P_i$’s rules. By Lemma 9, $M_i$ can be computed in $\text{ptime}$. Since the number of strata of $P$ is no larger than the number of rules in $P$, we conclude that the complexity of computing the model $[P]$, and in turn the complexity of deciding query entailment, is in $\text{ptime}$. $\square$

Lemma 11. The query validity problem for stratified BelLog programs belongs to $\text{co-np-complete}$.

Proof. First, we show that the query validity problem is in $\text{co-np}$. The complement of $P \models_{\Sigma} q$, namely $P \not\models_{\Sigma} q$, can be decided by non-deterministically choosing an input $I$ such that $P \models_I q$. By Lemma 10, the complexity of deciding $P \models_{\Sigma} q$ belongs to $\text{ptime}$, and therefore the complexity of deciding $P \not\models_{\Sigma} q$ belongs to the complexity class $\text{np}$. Therefore, the complexity of deciding $P \models_{\Sigma} q$ belongs to $\text{co-np}$. $\square$

Second, we reduce the proposition validity decision problem, which belongs to $\text{co-np-complete}$, to query validity. Take an instance of propositional validity $\phi$, where $\phi$ is a propositional formula constructed with propositions, $\land$, and $\lor$. Let $P = \{ q \leftarrow \phi \}$ be a BelLog program, where $q$ does not appear in $\phi$. Clearly $P$ is well-formed. It is immediate that $P \models_{\Sigma} q$ iff $\phi$ is valid in any interpretation. $\square$

The following theorem immediately follows from Lemma 10 and Lemma 11.

Theorem 2. The query entailment problem and the query validity problem for stratified BelLog programs belong, respectively, to the complexity classes $\text{ptime}$ and $\text{co-np-complete}$.

Deciding all-domains query validity. In the following we prove that the all-domains query validity decision problem is decidable for unary-edb BelLog programs.

We fix a stratified program $P$ with strata $P_0, \cdots, P_n$, and with unary predicate symbols in $\text{edb}_P$. We also fix a query $q$. In the following, we assume, without loss of generality, that the constants appearing in the query $q$ also appear in $P$. Let $\Sigma_P$ be the set of constants that appear in $P$. A domain $\Sigma \subseteq \mathcal{C}$ is suitable for $P$ iff $\Sigma_P \subseteq \Sigma$, where $\mathcal{C}$ is the infinite countable set of constant symbols. Let $\mathcal{I}$ be the set of all interpretations over all suitable domains for $P$. Each interpretation $I \in \mathcal{I}$ is associated with a domain $\Sigma$ over which $I$ is defined. We write $\text{dom}(I)$ to denote $I$’s domain.
We define a constant type as a four-way partitioning \((t_I, t_\bot, t_\top, t_e)\) of the predicate symbols in \(\text{edb}_P\). Let \(T\) be the finite set of all possible constant types. Given an interpretation \(I \in \mathcal{I}\) with \(\text{dom}(I) = \Sigma\), a constant \(c \in \Sigma\) is of type \((t_I, t_\bot, t_\top, t_e)\) if \(\forall v \in \mathcal{D}, \forall p \in t_v, I(p(c)) = v\). We write \(\tau(c, I)\) to denote the type of the constant \(c\) according to \(I\). For \(c, c' \in \text{dom}(I)\), write \(c \equiv c'\) if \(\tau(c, I) = \tau(c', I)\). It is straightforward that the equivalence \(\equiv\) is a congruence, \(c \equiv c' \implies T_P(I)p(c, \cdots, c', \cdots) = T_P(I)p(c, \cdots, c', \cdots)\), for any \(p \in P\) and any input \(I\).

Let \(I \in \mathcal{I}\) and define \(\Sigma_I = \Sigma_P \cup \{[c]_\equiv \mid c \in \text{dom}(I) \setminus \Sigma_P\}\). Now, for any interpretation \(J\) defined over \(\Sigma_I\), we say \(I\) and \(J\) agree iff \(\forall c \in \Sigma_P. \tau(c, I) = \tau(c, J)\) and \(\forall c \notin \Sigma_P. \tau(c, I) = \tau([c]_\equiv, J)\). We claim \([P]_I(q) = [P]_J(q)\).

**Lemma 12.** \([P]_I(q) = [P]_J(q)\).

**Proof.** The proof is immediate by induction on the minimal fixed points of the strata of \(P\). The only non-trivial observation pertains to that any \(c \in \text{dom}(I) \setminus \Sigma_P\) and the corresponding \([c]_\equiv \in \Sigma_I\) (recall that \(\text{dom}(J) = \Sigma_I\)) have the same constant types.

Note that for any \(I \in \mathcal{I}\), the set \(\Sigma_I\) can have finitely many elements. This is because \(\Sigma_P\) is finite and there are finitely many constant types. Therefore, there are finitely many interpretations \(J\) that agree with the infinitely many interpretations of \(\mathcal{I}\). The proof of decidability therefore is immediate now: one needs to answer finitely many problems of the form \(P \models_{\text{edb}_P} q\) to answer \(P \models q\). These problems are decidable, due to Lemma 10. The proof of the following theorem is now immediate.

**Theorem 10.** The all-domains query validity problem for unary-edb BelLog programs is decidable.

**Theorem 3.** The all-domains query validity problem for unary-edb BelLog programs belongs to co-NEXP.

**Proof.** The complement of \(P \models q\) can be decided by non-deterministically choosing an input \(I\) such that \(P \not\models^I_{\text{dom}(I)} q\). Due to Lemma 12, instead of checking \(P \not\models^I_{\text{dom}(I)} q\) we can check \(P \not\models^J_{\Sigma_I} q\) for some \(J\) where \(I\) and \(J\) agree. The size of \(\Sigma_I\) is bounded \(4^{|\Sigma_P|} + |\Sigma_P|\), because there are at most \(4^{|\Sigma_P|}\) constant types. Therefore, by Lemma 10, the complexity \(P \not\models q\) is in NEXP. The complexity of \(P \models q\) is thus co-NEXP.

**Reducing Policy Containment to Query Validity.**

**Theorem 6.** Policy containment is polynomially reducible to query validity.

**Proof.** Fix a domain \(\Sigma\) and two programs \(P_1\) and \(P_2\) defined over \(\Sigma\) such that \(\text{idb}_{P_1} = \text{idb}_{P_2}\). We reduce the problem of deciding \(\models_\Sigma \text{cond} \Rightarrow P_1 \preceq P_2\) to the problem of query validity \(P \models_\Sigma \phi\), where \(P\) and \(\phi\) are constructed as follows.
Let $P = \emptyset$. For all rules in $P_1$ we rename every predicate symbol $p$ in $\text{idb}_{P_1}$ to $p_1$. Similarly, we rename every predicate symbol $p$ from $\text{idb}_{P_2}$ in $P_2$’s rules to $p_2$. The renamed rules are added to $P$.

We then encode the condition $\text{cond}$ using the recursive function $\mathcal{T}$:

$$\mathcal{T}(p, \forall X. \text{cond}) := \{ p(Y) \leftarrow \lnot \text{p$_{\text{fresh}}$(}Y), p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$(}Y) \leftarrow \lnot p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$(}\{X\} \cup Y) \}$$

$$\lnot \text{cond}, \text{where } Y = \text{vars}(\text{cond}) \setminus \{X\}$$

$$\mathcal{T}(p, \text{attr} \leq v) := \{ p(X) \leftarrow \text{attr}(X) \leq v \}, \text{where } X = \text{vars}(\text{attr})$$

$$\mathcal{T}(p, v \leq \text{attr}) := \{ p(X) \leftarrow v \leq \text{attr}(X) \}, \text{where } X = \text{vars}(\text{attr})$$

$$\mathcal{T}(p, \neg \text{cond}) := \{ p(X) \leftarrow \neg p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$(}X) \} \cup \mathcal{T}(p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$, cond}), \text{where } X = \text{vars}(\text{cond})$$

$$\mathcal{T}(p, \text{cond} \land \text{cond} _{2}) := \{ p(X) \leftarrow p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$(}X_{1} \land p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$(}X_{2}) \} \cup \mathcal{T}(p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$, cond} _{1})$$

$$\cup \mathcal{T}(p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$, cond} _{2}), \text{where } X_{1} = \text{vars}(\text{cond} _{1}),$$

$$X_{2} = \text{vars}(\text{cond} _{2}), X = X_{1} \cup X_{2}$$

$$\mathcal{T}(p, t) := \{ p \leftarrow t \}$$

The operator $\leq$ which appears in the generated rule bodies is defined as $p \leq q = \mathsf{t}$ iff $p \preceq q$, otherwise $p \preceq q = \mathsf{f}$. Note that by Theorem 5 this operator can be expressed in $\text{BELLOG}$. The rules generated by $\mathcal{T}(p\text{$_{\text{cond}}$, cond})$, where $\text{cond}$ is the containment condition in $\models_{\Sigma} \text{cond} \Rightarrow P_{1} \preceq P_{2}$, are added to $P$.

Finally, we define the operator $p \rightarrow q$ in the standard way $\neg p \lor q$, and add the following rule to $P$:

$$\phi \leftarrow (p\text{$_{\text{cond}}$(}S,O) \rightarrow (\text{pol} _{1}(}S,O) \leq \text{pol} _{2}(}S,O))$$

By construction we get $P \models_{\Sigma} \phi$ if $\models_{\Sigma} \text{cond} \Rightarrow P_{1} \preceq P_{2}$.

C Intensional Operators

We define the semantics of the intensional operators $\lor$, $\land$, $\bigoplus$, and $\bigotimes$, as their translation into $\text{BELLOG}$ using the function $\mathcal{T}$:

$$\mathcal{T}(p(X) \leftarrow \lor b(X \cup Y)) = \{ p(X) \leftarrow b(X \cup Y) \}$$

$$\mathcal{T}(p(X) \leftarrow \land b(X \cup Y)) = \{ p(X) \leftarrow \lnot p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$(}X), p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$(}X) \leftarrow \lnot b(X \cup Y) \}$$

$$\mathcal{T}(p(X) \leftarrow \bigoplus b(X \cup Y)) = \{ p(X) \leftarrow b(X \cup Y) \land \top, p(X) \leftarrow \lnot p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$(}X), \text{p$_{\text{fresh}}$(}X) \leftarrow \lnot b(X \cup Y) \}$$

$$\mathcal{T}(p(X) \leftarrow \bigotimes b(X \cup Y)) = \{ p(X) \leftarrow b(X \cup Y) \land \bot, p(X) \leftarrow \lnot p\text{$_{\text{fresh}}$(}X), \text{p$_{\text{fresh}}$(}X) \leftarrow \lnot b(X \cup Y) \}$$

where $X = \text{vars}(p), Y = \text{vars}(b) \setminus X$.

As an example we illustrate the operator $\bigoplus$. Consider the simple policy rule $p(X) \leftarrow \bigoplus q(X,Y)$. We have $X = \{X\}$, and $Y = \{Y\}$. According to the translation function $\mathcal{T}$, this policy rule is translated into the following set of
rules:

\[ p(X) \leftarrow q(X,Y) \land \top \quad (r_1) \]
\[ p(X) \leftarrow \neg\text{fresh}(X) \quad (r_2) \]
\[ \text{fresh}(X) \leftarrow \neg q(X,Y) \quad (r_3) \]

where \( \text{fresh} \) is a fresh predicate symbol. For the policy domain \( \Sigma = \{a, b\} \), grounding the variable \( Y \) in rule \( r_3 \) results in two rules, which are (by default) combined with \( \lor \)

\[ \text{fresh}(X) \leftarrow \neg q(X,a) \lor \neg q(X,b) \]

We rewrite \( r_2 \) by replacing \( \text{fresh}(X) \) with \( \neg q(X,a) \lor \neg q(X,b) \) and get

\[ p(X) \leftarrow \neg(\neg q(X,a) \lor \neg q(X,b)) \quad (r_4) \]

We simplify \( r_4 \) to \( p(X) \leftarrow q(X,a) \land q(X,b) \). Finally, we ground the variable \( Y \) in \( r_1 \) and combine the result with the simplified rule \( r_4 \):

\[ p(X) \leftarrow (q(X,a) \land \top) \lor (q(X,b) \land \top) \lor (q(X,a) \land q(X,b)) \]

which can be simplified, according to the derived operators in §3, to

\[ p(X) \leftarrow q(X,a) \oplus q(X,b) \].