Model checking is a very popular technique for the automatic verification of systems, widely applied by the hardware industry and already receiving considerable attention from software companies. It is based on the (possibly exhaustive) exploration of the states reached by the system along all its executions.

Model checking is very successful in finding bugs in concurrent systems. These systems are notoriously hard to design correctly, mostly because of the inherent uncertainty about the order in which components working in parallel execute actions. Since $n$ independent actions can occur in $n!$ different orders, humans easily overlook some of them, often the one causing a bug. On the contrary, model checking exhaustively examines all execution orders. Unfortunately, naive model checking techniques can only be applied to very small systems. The number of reachable states grows so quickly, that even a modern computer fails to explore them all in reasonable time.

In this book we show that concurrency theory, the study of mathematical formalisms for the description and analysis of concurrent systems, helps to solve this problem. Unfoldings are one of these formalisms, belonging to the class of so-called true concurrency models. They were introduced in the early 1980s as a mathematical model of causality. Our reason for studying them is far more pragmatic: unfoldings of highly concurrent systems are often far smaller and can be explored much faster than the state space.

Being at the crossroads of automatic verification and concurrency theory, this book is addressed to researchers and graduate students working in either of these two fields. It is self-contained, although some previous exposure to models of concurrent systems, like communicating automata or Petri nets, can help to understand the material.

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