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Bringing existential variables in answer set programming and bringing non-monotony in existential rules: two sides of the same coin

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Abstract This article deals with the combination of ontologies and rules by means of existential rules and answer set programming. Existential rules have been proposed for representing ontological knowledge, specifically in the context of Ontology- Based Data Access. Furthermore Answer Set Programming (ASP) is an appropriate formalism to represent various problems issued from Artificial Intelligence and arising when available information is incomplete. The combination of the two formalisms requires to extend existential rules with nonmonotonic negation and to extend ASP with existential variables. In this article, we present the syntax and semantics of Existential Non Monotonic Rules (ENM-rules) using skolemization which join together the two frameworks. We formalize its links with standard ASP. Moreover, since entailment with existential rules is undecidable, we present conditions that ensure the termination of a breadth-first forward chaining algorithm known as the chase and we discuss extension of these results in the nonmonotonic case.

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22 **1 Introduction**

23 When dealing with information issued from the web, it is interesting to have a system able
24 to represent ontologies and to reason under them. For many years, several works have been
25 proposed to deal with either of these two aspects but it is now important to join these features
26 in one formalism. The work presented here deals with existential nonmonotonic rules.¹ It
27 presents the two sides of a work. On one hand, it enriches the ASP framework by taking into
28 account existential variables. On the other hand, it consists in introducing nonmonotony in
29 existential rules. The proposed work aims at describing knowledge in a single framework
30 which can lead to useful implementation. The interest of focusing on ASP is that it is a
31 powerful framework for knowledge representation and reasoning, and provides efficient
32 solvers. Moreover, existential rules are suitable to deal with ontological knowledge.

33 Existential rules (also called Datalog+/-) have been proposed for representing ontolog-
34 ical knowledge, specifically in the context of Ontology-Based Data Access, that aims to
35 exploit ontological knowledge when accessing data [10, 14]. These rules allow to assert the
36 existence of unknown individuals, a feature recognized as crucial for representing knowl-
37 edge in an open domain perspective. Existential rules generalize lightweight description
38 logics, such as DL-Lite and EL [3, 17] and overcome some of their limitations by allowing
39 any predicate arity as well as cyclic structures. Alternatively, those existential variables can
40 be seen as functional terms obtained by skolemization. Existential rules are thus a subset of
41 rules with function symbols for which specific decidability results have been obtained (for
42 instance [8] for saturation-based mechanisms).

43 Answer Set Programming (ASP) is a very convenient paradigm to represent knowledge
44 in Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially when information is incomplete [11]. It has its
45 roots in nonmonotonic reasoning and logic programming and has led to a lot of works since
46 the seminal paper [26]. Beyond its ability to formalize various problems from AI, ASP
47 provides also an interesting way to practically solve such problems since some efficient
48 solvers are available.

49 This work presents a way for the treatment of ontologies in Answer Set Programming
50 (ASP). We are interested in using ASP technologies for querying large scale multisource
51 heterogeneous web information. ASP is considered to handle, by using default negation,
52 inconsistencies emerging by the fusion of the sources expressed by scalable description
53 logics. Moreover, ASP can enrich the language of ontologies by allowing the expression of
54 default information (for instance, when expressing the inclusion with exceptions of concepts
55 in the TBox). The problem for ASP is the presence of existential variables in ontologies.

56 Then the present work has two sides. On the one side, it proposes a definition of ASP
57 with existential variables. The treatment of these variables is done in terms of skolemization.
58 On the other side, it can be seen as the extension of existential rules with nonmonotonic
59 negation under stable model semantics. Note that the restriction of function symbols to those
60 that encode existential variables allow to benefit from all termination properties obtained
61 for the saturation using existential rules.

¹The work of this paper is a revised and extended version of the papers [9] and [25].

If we consider the intended semantics of $\exists X p(X)$ in ASP, there are two main approaches: (1) one can enumerate all possible values for X , that is $\exists X p(X)$ is interpreted as $p(a_1) \vee p(a_2) \vee \dots$ for all a_i belonging to the considered universe, or (2) one can only say that there is some anonymous individual x_0 such that $p(x_0)$ holds: this corresponds to skolemization. In the first approach, the considered universe is the Herbrand universe, eventually extended with other individuals in the case of open domains. In practice this approach generates a lot of answer sets. If we are only interested by the fact that there exists some individual that verifies property p , but not with which one, skolemization is a good solution: it represents exactly the information of existence of some individual. Coupled with the Unique Name Assumption, the skolemization encounters a problem: Skolem terms can not be identified with some other named individual if necessary. For instance, if skolemized, the following program $\{\exists X p(X), p(a), \leftarrow p(X), p(Y), X \neq Y.\}$ has no answer set while one can expect $\{p(a)\}$. Nevertheless skolemization enables to verify that there exists exactly one individual satisfying some property p : $\{\leftarrow \text{not } p(X), \leftarrow p(X), p(Y), X \neq Y.\}$

Entailment with existential rules is known to be undecidable [12, 18]. Many sufficient conditions for decidability, obtained by syntactic restrictions, have been exhibited in knowledge representation and database theory (see e.g., the overview in [43]). We focus in this paper on conditions that ensure the termination of a breadth-first forward chaining algorithm, known as the chase in the database literature. Given a knowledge base composed of data and existential rules, the chase saturates the data by application of the rules. When it is ensured to terminate, the information deduced by the rules can be added to the data, which can then be queried like a classical database, thus allowing to benefit from any database optimizations technique. Several variants of the chase have been proposed, which differ in the way they deal with redundant information [20, 22, 41]. It follows that they do not behave in the same way with respect to termination. In the following, when we write the chase, we mean one of these variants. Various acyclicity notions have been proposed to ensure the halting of some chase variants. We propose some extensions of these acyclicity notions, while keeping good complexity properties. We discuss the relevance of the chase variants for nonmonotonic existential rules and further extend acyclicity results obtained for existential rules without negation.

The study of the combination of ontologies and rules is not new [19, 21, 24, 34, 40, 42, 45]. In most of these models, the knowledge base is viewed as an hybrid knowledge base composed of two parts $(\mathcal{T}, \mathcal{P})$: \mathcal{T} is a knowledge base describing the ontological information expressed with a fragment of first-order logic, for instance in description logic, and \mathcal{P} describes the rules in terms of a logic program.

The integration of the two formalisms can be separated into three classes [21, 34].

In the first class (like in [21]), the two formalisms are handled separately. \mathcal{T} is seen as an external source of information which can be used by the logic program through special predicates querying the DL base. The two bases are then independent with their own semantics and the link between the two bases is made using these special predicates.

The second case (like in [42, 45]) corresponds to an hybrid formalism which integrates DLs and rules in a coherent semantic framework. Predicates of \mathcal{T} can be used in the rules of the program. In [45], the representation of information is separated in two parts, a *DL* knowledge base and a *Datalog*^{- \vee} program, but there are no rules combining both existential variables and negations: existential variables occur in the *DL* knowledge base and the negations occur in the program. But default negations are not allowed in the *DL* part and existential variables are not allowed in the program. Moreover, there are some additional restrictions: for instance, predicates of \mathcal{T} can not be used in the negative body of a rule. A variant of this model, based on guarded rules, is proposed in [31].

111 The last case integrates DLs and rules in a unique formalism. For instance, de Bruijn et al.
112 [19] uses quantified equilibrium logic (QEL). In this work, several hybrid knowledge bases
113 are defined (with *safe restriction*, *safe restriction without unique name assumption* or with
114 *guarded restriction*) and it is proved that each category and their models can be expressed
115 in terms of QEL.

116 A large part of these works concerns the questions of complexity and decidability. In
117 these frameworks, existential variables are allowed in the part of the description logic
118 information but are not allowed in the head of the rules.

119 Next to these models, Ferraris et al. [24] proposes a model allowing to cover both stable
120 models semantics and first-order logic by means of a second-order formula issued from the
121 initial information. Its links with the previously cited works have been established in [34].

122 In ASP, the closed domain assumption presumes that all relevant domain elements are
123 present in the program. Open ASP (OASP for short) [31] extends the Herbrand universe with
124 a (finite or infinite) set of new constants. But OASP does not deal explicitly with existential
125 variables: $\exists X p(X)$ can be represented by $\{existsp \leftarrow p(X)., \leftarrow not\ existsp. p(X) \vee$
126 $not\ p(X).\}$; this program instantiated with individuals of an open domain, can "generate"
127 all answer sets of the form $\{p(a)\}$ where a belongs to the open universe. Then [31] is
128 concerned by restricting the syntax to regain decidability. They define extended forest logic
129 programs (EFOLPs) where one part of the program can use open domain but is stratified,
130 and the other part is only instantiated with the constants of the program.

131 Nonmonotonic extensions to existential rules were recently considered in [15] with strat-
132 ified negation, [28] with well-founded semantics and [40] with stable model semantics.
133 In this latter work, the knowledge base is a single one allowing existential variables and
134 default negation in a same rule. It deals with skolemized existential rules and focuses on
135 cases where a finite unique model exists. This work studies some conditions of acyclic-
136 ity and stratification that must be verified by the base ensuring the existence of a unique
137 finite stable model. The base then belongs to a particular category of stratified programs.
138 The work is both theoretical and practical but it is concerned with a limited extension of
139 ASP.

140 Some very recent works deals with kinds of non-monotonic rules with existential vari-
141 ables by translating the initial base into tractable bases (for instance, Alviano et al. [2] uses
142 a second-order translation and [1] uses *Datalog* with non-monotonic atoms) but they do
143 not really focus on a computational solution that can be used in practice. As far as we know,
144 the only works leading to an implementation are those of [32], based on [21], and of [40]
145 which has been applied to information about biochemistry. The systems Shy [37] and Nyaya
146 [28] support skolemized existential variables but not default negation. In [47], some query
147 answering is done on skolemized existential R-acyclic rules using ASP solver `CLASP`.

148 Section 2 gives the background about First Order Logic (FOL), existential rules and
149 ASP useful for the paper. Then, in Section 3, we define existential nonmonotonic rules,
150 an ASP variant allowing existential variables or, equivalently, a nonmonotonic extension
151 of existential rules and answer sets on this kind of programs are defined. Section 4 gives
152 the links between existential nonmonotonic rules and standard ASP with a method to trans-
153 late a program expressed with existential nonmonotonic rules into a program expressed in
154 (standard) ASP. Proofs about the transformation are also provided. In Section 5, some prop-
155 erties of different chases are discussed. In Section 6, we propose a tool that allows to extend
156 existing acyclicity conditions ensuring chase termination, while keeping good complexity
157 properties. In Section 7, we discuss the relevance of the chase variants for existential non-
158 monotonic rules and further extend acyclicity results obtained in the case of rules without
159 default negation.

2 Background 160

2.1 First order logic background 161

2.1.1 Syntax 162

A *vocabulary* \mathcal{L} is a triplet $(\mathcal{CS}, \mathcal{FS}, \mathcal{PS})$ where \mathcal{CS} , \mathcal{FS} and \mathcal{PS} are pairwise disjoint sets, respectively of *constant symbols*, *function symbols* and *predicate symbols* (or *predicate symbols*). We also consider an infinite countable set \mathcal{V} of *variables*, disjoint with the previous ones. A function ar from \mathcal{PS} to \mathbb{N} and from \mathcal{FS} to \mathbb{N}^* associates to each predicate name and function symbol its arity. 163-166

Let \mathcal{X} be a set. A *functional term* built from \mathcal{X} is defined inductively as either an element of \mathcal{X} , or an object of the form $f(x_1, \dots, x_k)$ where $f \in \mathcal{FS}$ is a function symbol of arity k and the x_i are functional terms built from \mathcal{X} . 168-170

The set of *terms* $\mathbf{T}(\mathcal{L})$ denotes the set of all functional terms built from the set $\mathcal{CS} \cup \mathcal{V}$ of constants and variables. The set of *ground terms* $\mathbf{GT}(\mathcal{L})$ denotes the set of all functional terms built from the set \mathcal{CS} of constants. 171-173

The set $\mathbf{A}(\mathcal{L})$ denotes the set of *atoms* of a vocabulary, which are of form $p(t_1, \dots, t_k)$ where $p \in \mathcal{PS}$ is a predicate name of arity k and $t_i \in \mathbf{T}(\mathcal{L})$. An atom is said to be *ground* when all its terms are ground, and it is said to be *function-free* when none of its terms contains a function symbol. 174-177

An *atomset* on \mathcal{L} is a (possibly infinite) set of atoms on \mathcal{L} . It is said to be *ground* when all its atoms are ground, and *function-free* when all its atoms are function-free. 178-179

2.1.2 Semantics 180

An *interpretation* of a vocabulary \mathcal{L} is a pair $I = (\Delta_I, \cdot^I)$ where Δ_I is the *interpretation domain*, $\Delta_I \neq \emptyset$, and the *interpretation function* \cdot^I maps: 181-182

- each constant symbol $c \in \mathcal{CS}$ to an element of the domain $c^I \in \Delta_I$; 183
- each function symbol $f \in \mathcal{FS}$ of arity k to a function $f^I : \Delta_I^k \rightarrow \Delta_I$; 184
- each predicate name $p \in \mathcal{PS}$ of arity k to a subset p^I of Δ_I^k . 185

Let \mathcal{A} be an atomset and σ be a mapping from $vars(\mathcal{A})$ (the variables appearing in \mathcal{A}) to Δ_I . For every term t appearing in \mathcal{A} , we define inductively t_σ^I by: 186-187

- if $t \in \mathcal{V}$ is a variable, then $t_\sigma^I = \sigma(t)$; 188
- if $t \in \mathcal{CS}$ is a constant, then $t_\sigma^I = t^I$; 189
- otherwise, $t = f(t_1, \dots, t_k)$ where $f \in \mathcal{FS}$ is a function symbol of arity k , and $t_\sigma^I = f^I((t_1)_\sigma^I, \dots, (t_k)_\sigma^I)$. 190-191

We say that an interpretation (Δ_I, \cdot^I) is a *model* of an atomset \mathcal{A} and note $(\Delta_I, \cdot^I) \models \mathcal{A}$ when there exists a mapping σ from $vars(\mathcal{A})$ to Δ_I such that, for every atom $p(t_1, \dots, t_k) \in \mathcal{A}$, $((t_1)_\sigma^I, \dots, (t_k)_\sigma^I) \in p^I$. Such a mapping is called a *proof* that (Δ_I, \cdot^I) is a model of \mathcal{A} . Note that an atomset \mathcal{A} has exactly the same models as the First Order Logic (FOL) formula obtained from the existential closure of the formula $\phi(\mathcal{A})$, where $\phi(\mathcal{A})$ is the conjunction of atoms in \mathcal{A} . 192-197

An atomset is *satisfiable* when it admits a model (*unsatisfiable* otherwise), *valid* when all its interpretations are models (*invalid* otherwise), and we say that \mathcal{A}_1 *entails* \mathcal{A}_2 (or that \mathcal{A}_2 is a *semantic consequence* of \mathcal{A}_1) and note $\mathcal{A}_1 \models \mathcal{A}_2$ when all models of \mathcal{A}_1 are also models of \mathcal{A}_2 . 198-201

202 Finally, let us point out that any atomset is satisfiable (it admits an isomorphic model),
 203 and that the only valid atomset is the empty one \emptyset .

204 2.1.3 Substitutions

205 Let $\mathcal{X} \subseteq \mathcal{V}$ be a set of variables, and \mathcal{T} be a set of terms. A *substitution function* s is
 206 a mapping from \mathcal{X} to \mathcal{T} . If t is a term, we define inductively as follows the *substitution*,
 207 denoted $\sigma(t)$, as the extension of the substitution function to the terms:

- 208 – if $t \in \mathcal{X}$, then $\sigma(t) = s(t)$;
- 209 – if $t \in \mathcal{V} \setminus \mathcal{X}$ is a variable that is not in \mathcal{X} , then $\sigma(t) = t$;
- 210 – if $t \in \mathcal{CS}$ is a constant, then $\sigma(t) = t$;
- 211 – otherwise, $t = f(t_1, \dots, t_k)$ where $f \in \mathcal{FS}$ is a function symbol of arity k , and $\sigma(t) =$
 212 $f(\sigma(t_1), \dots, \sigma(t_k))$.

213 By extension, if $a = p(t_1, \dots, t_k)$ is an atom, we note $\sigma(a) = p(\sigma(t_1), \dots, \sigma(t_k))$, and
 214 if $\mathcal{A} = \{a_1, \dots, a_p\}$ is an atomset, we note $\sigma(\mathcal{A}) = \{\sigma(a_1), \dots, \sigma(a_p)\}$.

215 We say that a substitution σ is *ground* when it maps \mathcal{X} to ground terms of $\mathbf{GT}(\mathcal{L})$. Let
 216 t be a term (resp. a an atom) and σ a ground substitution, $\sigma(t)$ (resp. $\sigma(a)$) is a *ground*
 217 *instance* of t (resp. a).

218 A *partial ground substitution* for a set of variables \mathcal{V} over a vocabulary \mathcal{L} is a mapping
 219 from \mathcal{V} to the set of ground terms $\mathbf{GT}(\mathcal{L})$. Let t be a term (resp. a an atom) and σ a partial
 220 ground substitution for a set of variables \mathcal{V} , $\sigma(t)$ (resp. $\sigma(a)$) is a *partial ground instance*
 221 of t (resp. a) w.r.t. the set of variables \mathcal{V} .

222 2.1.4 Homomorphisms

223 **Definition 1 (Homomorphism)** Let F and Q be two atomsets. An *homomorphism* from
 224 F to Q is a substitution σ from the variables of F to the terms of Q such that $\sigma(Q) \subseteq F$.

225 **Theorem 1** Let F be an atomset, and Q be a finite atomset. Then $F \models Q$ iff there exists
 226 an homomorphism from Q to F .

227 HOMOMORPHISM

228 **Data:** Two finite atomsets F and Q .

229 **Result:** TRUE if there is an homomorphism from Q to F , FALSE otherwise.

230 The problem is NP-complete in combined complexity. It becomes polynomial when Q has
 231 no variable, or when it has a tree-like structure. The problem is in AC^0 in data complexity.

232 2.2 Existential rules

233 2.2.1 Syntax

234 An *existential rule* is a pair of finite sets of atoms noted $H \leftarrow B$ where H is called the
 235 *head* of the rule and B is called its *body*. We call *body variables* of the rules the vari-
 236 ables that appear in B , *frontier variables* of the rule the variables that appear both in B
 237 and H , and *existential variables* of the rule those appearing only in H . These rules have
 238 been studied in the litterature under different names: conceptual graphs rules [46] or
 239 Datalog+/- [14]. They have the same form as tuple generating dependencies studied in
 240 database theory.

2.2.2 *Semantics* 241

We say that an interpretation (Δ^I, \cdot^I) is a model of an existential rule $H \leftarrow B$ when every proof that (Δ^I, \cdot^I) is a model of B can be extended to a proof that (Δ^I, \cdot^I) is a model of $B \cup H$. Note that the existential rule $H \leftarrow B$ has exactly the same models as the FOL formula $\forall \mathbf{x}(\phi(B) \rightarrow (\exists \mathbf{y}\phi(H)))$ where \mathbf{x} are the body variables of the rule, \mathbf{y} its existential variables, and ϕ maps a set of atoms to their conjunction.

2.2.3 *Derivations* 247

Let F be an atomset and $H \leftarrow B$ be an existential rule. We say that $H \leftarrow B$ is *applicable* to F if there exists an homomorphism σ from B to F . In that case, the application of $H \leftarrow B$ on F according to σ produces an atomset $\alpha(F, H \leftarrow B, \sigma) = F \cup \sigma(\text{fresh}(H))$ where *fresh* is a bijective substitution from the existential variables of H to a set of fresh variables (i.e., new freshly generated variables that appear nowhere else).

Let \mathcal{R} be a set of existential rules and F be an atomset. An \mathcal{R} -*derivation* from F is a (possibly infinite) sequence $F = F_0, F_1, \dots, F_k, \dots$ of atomsets such that, for $i \geq 1$, there exists some rule $H \leftarrow B \in \mathcal{R}$ and an homomorphism σ from B to F_{i-1} such that $F_i = \alpha(F_{i-1}, H \leftarrow B, \sigma)$. We say that this derivation is from F to F' when $F' = \bigcup_{i=0}^{\infty} F_i$.

Theorem 2 *Let F and Q be two finite atomsets, and \mathcal{R} be a finite set of existential rules. Then $F, \mathcal{R} \models Q$ iff there exists a finite \mathcal{R} -derivation from F to F' such that $F' \models Q$.*

DEDUCTION 259

Data: Two finite atomsets F and Q , a finite set of existential rules \mathcal{R} . 260

Result: TRUE if $F, \mathcal{R} \models Q$, FALSE otherwise. 261

The problem is semi-decidable in the general case. For decidable subclasses of function-free existential rules, see for instance [4]. We discuss a particular family of decidable classes in Section 6. 264

2.3 **Answer set programming** 265

In this section, we give the main background of the ASP framework. 266

2.3.1 *Program* 267

In ASP, a problem is described in term of a logic program with default negation. 268

A *normal logic program* (or simply *program*) is a set of *rules* like 269

$$(c \leftarrow a_1, \dots, a_n, \text{not } b_1, \dots, \text{not } b_m.) \quad n \geq 0, m \geq 0 \tag{1}$$

where $c, a_1, \dots, a_n, b_1, \dots, b_m$ are atoms. 270

For a rule r (or by extension for a set of rules), we define: 271

- $\text{head}(r) = c$ its *head*, 272
- $\text{body}^+(r) = \{a_1, \dots, a_n\}$ its *positive body* 273
- $\text{body}^-(r) = \{b_1, \dots, b_m\}$ its *negative body* and 274
- $\mathcal{V}(r)$ the set of its variables. 275

The intuitive meaning of such a rule is: "if all the a_i 's are true and it may be assumed that all the b_j 's are false then one can conclude that c is true". Symbol *not* denotes the *default* 277

278 *negation*. A rule with no default negation is a *definite rule* otherwise it is a *nonmonotonic*
 279 *rule*. A program with only definite rules is a *definite logic program*. A program is a *propo-*
 280 *sitional program* if all the predicate symbols are of arity 0. The rules of the program must
 281 be *safe*; that is all variables that appear in a rule also appear in the positive part of its
 282 body. All the variables are considered to be universally quantified. In the sequel, universally
 283 quantified variables will be called *universal variables*.

284 For each program P , we consider that the set \mathcal{CS} (resp. \mathcal{FS} and \mathcal{PS}) consists of all
 285 constant (resp. function and predicate) symbols appearing in P .

286 Let r be a rule and θ a ground substitution over the vocabulary of the program, a rule
 287 $\theta(r)$ is a *ground instance* of r . The program P (with variables) can be seen as an intensional
 288 version of the program $ground(P)$ defined as follows: given a rule r , $ground(r)$ is the set of
 289 all ground instances of r and then, $ground(P) = \bigcup_{r \in P} ground(r)$. Program $ground(P)$
 290 may be considered as a propositional program.

291 *Example 1* The program

$$P_{1a} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} n(1), n(2), \\ a(X) \leftarrow n(X), not\ b(X), \\ b(X) \leftarrow n(X), not\ a(X). \end{array} \right\}$$

292 can be seen as a shorthand for the program

$$ground(P_{1a}) = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} n(1), n(2), \\ a(1) \leftarrow n(1), not\ b(1), \\ b(1) \leftarrow n(1), not\ a(1), \\ a(2) \leftarrow n(2), not\ b(2), \\ b(2) \leftarrow n(2), not\ a(2). \end{array} \right\}$$

293 The program

$$P_{1b} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} p(a), \\ l(a), \\ phdS(X, f(X)) \leftarrow p(X), not(l(X), gC(X, Y)). \end{array} \right\}$$

294 can be seen as a shorthand for the (infinite) program

$$ground(P_{1b}) = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} p(a), \\ l(a), \\ phdS(a, f(a)) \leftarrow p(a), not(l(a), gC(a, a)), \\ phdS(f(a), f(f(a))) \leftarrow p(f(a)), not(l(f(a)), gC(f(a), a)), \\ \dots \end{array} \right\}$$

295 The following program says that every man X has a father $f(X)$ who is himself a man.

$$P_{1c} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} man(a), \\ father(X, f(X)) \leftarrow man(X), \\ man(f(X)) \leftarrow man(X). \end{array} \right\}$$

It can be seen as a shorthand for the (infinite) program

296

$$ground(P_{1c}) = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} man(a), \\ father(a, f(a)) \leftarrow man(a), \\ man(f(a)) \leftarrow man(a), \\ father(f(a), f(f(a))) \leftarrow man(f(a)), \\ man(f(f(a))) \leftarrow man(f(a)), \\ \dots \end{array} \right\}$$

The immediate consequence operator for a definite logic program P is $T_P : 2^{\mathcal{A}} \rightarrow 2^{\mathcal{A}}$ 297
 such that $T_P(X) = \{\sigma(head(r)) \mid r \in P, \exists \sigma \text{ a ground substitution s.t. } \sigma(body^+(r)) \subseteq X\}$. 298
 The *least Herbrand model* of P is the smallest set of atoms closed under P (denoted 299
 $Cn(P)$), i.e., the smallest set X such that $T_P(X) \subseteq X$. It can be computed as the least fixed 300
 point of the consequence operator T_P . 301

2.3.2 Answer set 302

The solutions of the problem encoded by a program are the answers of the program and are 303
 called answer sets. 304

The *reduct* P^X of a normal logic program P w.r.t. an atomset $X \subseteq \mathcal{A}$ is the definite logic 305
 program defined by: 306

$$P^X = \{\sigma(head(r)) \leftarrow \sigma(body^+(r)). \mid r \in P, \exists \sigma \text{ a ground substitution over } \mathcal{V}(r) \text{ s.t.} \\ \sigma(body^-(r)) \cap X = \emptyset\}$$

and it is the core of the definition of an *answer set*. 307

Definition 2 (Answer Set) [26] Let P be a normal logic program and X an atomset. X is 308
 an answer set of P if $X = Cn(P^X)$. 309

For instance, the propositional program $\{a \leftarrow not\ b.,\ b \leftarrow not\ a.\}$ has two answer sets 310
 $\{a\}$ and $\{b\}$. 311

Example 2 Taking again the program P_{1a} , $ground(P_{1a})$ has four answer sets: 312

$$\{a(1), a(2), n(1), n(2)\}, \{a(1), b(2), n(1), n(2)\}, \\ \{a(2), b(1), n(1), n(2)\}, \{b(1), b(2), n(1), n(2)\}$$

that are thus the answer sets of P_{1a} . 313

There is another definition of an answer set for a normal logic program based on the 314
 notion of *generating rules* which are the rules participating to the construction of the answer 315
 set. These rules are important in our approach because they are exactly the rules fired in the 316
 ASPeRiX computation presented in the next section. 317

Definition 3 (Generating Rules) Let P be a normal logic program and X be an atom- 318
 set. $GR_P(X)$, the set of *generating rules* of P , is defined as $GR_P(X) = \{\sigma(r) \mid r \in P, \sigma \text{ is a ground substitution over } \mathcal{V}(r) \text{ s.t. } \sigma(body^+(r)) \subseteq X \text{ and } \sigma(body^-(r)) \cap X = \emptyset\}$. 319
 320

Definition 4 (Founded) A set of ground rules R is *founded* if there exists an enumeration 321
 (r_1, \dots, r_i, \dots) of the rules of R such that $\forall i \geq 1, body^+(r_i) \subseteq head\{r_j \mid j < i\}$. 322

323 **Theorem 3** [36] *Let P be a normal logic program and X be an atomset. Then, X is an*
324 *answer set of P if and only if $X = \text{head}(GR_P(X))$ and $GR_P(X)$ is founded.*

325 2.3.3 Special rules

326 In addition to standard rules, ASP can handle special rules to represent constraints and
327 classical negation. Special headless rules, called *constraints*, are admitted and considered
328 equivalent to rules like ($\text{bug} \leftarrow \dots, \text{not bug}.$) where *bug* is a new symbol appearing
329 nowhere else. For instance, the program $\{a \leftarrow \text{not } b., b \leftarrow \text{not } a., \leftarrow a.\}$ has one, and
330 only one, answer set $\{b\}$ because constraint ($\leftarrow a.$) prevents a to be in an answer set.

331 When dealing with default negation, we call a *literal* an atom, a , or the negation of
332 an atom, $\text{not } a$. A literal a is said to be *positive*, and $\text{not } a$ is said to be *negative*. The
333 corresponding atom a of a literal l is denoted by $at(l)$. For a literal l where $at(l) = a$, let us
334 denote $\text{pred}(l)$ the function such that $\text{pred}(\text{not } a) = \text{pred}(a) = p$ with p the predicate
335 symbol of the atom a .

336 For purposes of knowledge representation, one may have to use conjointly strong nega-
337 tion (like $\neg a$) and default negation (like $\text{not } a$) inside a same program. This is possible in
338 ASP by means of an *extended logic program* [27] in which rules are built with *classical* lit-
339 erals (i.e. an atom a or its strong negation $\neg a$) instead of atoms only. Semantics of extended
340 logic programs distinguishes inconsistent answer sets from absence of answer set. But, if we
341 are not interested in inconsistent answer sets, the semantics associated to an extended logic
342 program is reducible to answer set semantics for a normal logic program using constraints
343 by taking into account the following conventions:

- 344 – every classical literal $\neg x$ is encoded by the atom nx ,
- 345 – for every atom x , the constraint ($\leftarrow x, nx.$) is added.

346 By this way, only consistent answer sets are kept. In this article, we do not focus on strong
347 negation and literal will never stand for classical literal.

348 Let us note that one can also use some particular atoms for (in)equalities and simple
349 arithmetic calculus on (positive and negative) integers. Arithmetic operations are treated as
350 a functional arithmetic and comparison relations are treated as built-in predicates.

351 2.3.4 Computation

352 In this section, a constructive characterization of answer sets for first-order normal logic
353 programs, based on a concept of *ASPeRiX computation* [35, 36], is presented. This concept
354 is itself based on an abstract notion of *computation* for ground programs proposed in [39].
355 This computation fundamentally uses a forward chaining of rules. It builds incrementally
356 the answer set of the program and does not require the whole set of ground atoms from
357 the beginning of the process. So, it is well suited to deal directly with first order rules by
358 instantiating them during the computation.

359 The only syntactic restriction required by this methodology is that every rule of a pro-
360 gram must be *safe*. That is, all variables occurring in the head or in the negative body of a
361 rule must occur also in its positive body. Note that this condition is already required by all
362 standard evaluation procedures. Moreover, every constraint (i.e. headless rule) is considered
363 given with the particular head \perp and is also safe.

364 An *ASPeRiX computation* is defined as a process on a computation state based on a
365 *partial interpretation* which is defined as follows.

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Definition 5 (Partial Interpretation) A *partial interpretation* for a program P is a pair $\langle IN, OUT \rangle$ of disjoint atomsets included in the Herbrand base of P . 366
367

Intuitively, all atoms in IN belong to a search answer set and all atoms in OUT do not. 368
The notion of partial interpretation defines different status for rules. 369

Definition 6 (Rule Status) Let r be a rule, σ be a ground substitution over $\mathcal{V}(r)$ and $I = \langle IN, OUT \rangle$ be a partial interpretation. 370
371

- $\sigma(r)$ is *supported* w.r.t. I when $body^+(\sigma(r)) \subseteq IN$, 372
- $\sigma(r)$ is *blocked* w.r.t. I when $body^-(\sigma(r)) \cap IN \neq \emptyset$, 373
- $\sigma(r)$ is *unblocked* w.r.t. I when $body^-(\sigma(r)) \subseteq OUT$, 374
- r is *applicable* with σ w.r.t. I when $\sigma(r)$ is supported and not blocked.² 375

An ASPeRiX computation is a forward chaining process that instantiates and fires one unique rule at each iteration according to two kinds of inference: a monotonic step of *propagation* and a nonmonotonic step of *choice*. Firing a rule means adding the head of the rule to the set IN . 376
377
378
379

Definition 7 (Δ_{pro} and Δ_{cho}) Let P be a set of first order rules, I be a partial interpretation and R be a set of ground rules. 380
381

- $\Delta_{pro}(P, I, R) = \{ (r, \sigma) \mid r \in P, \sigma \text{ is a ground substitution over } \mathcal{V}(r) \text{ s.t. } \sigma(r) \text{ is supported and unblocked, and } \sigma(r) \notin R \}$. 382
383
- $\Delta_{cho}(P, I, R) = \{ (r, \sigma) \mid r \in P, \sigma \text{ is a ground substitution over } \mathcal{V}(r) \text{ s.t. } \sigma(r) \text{ is applicable and } \sigma(r) \notin R \}$. 384
385

It is important to notice that the two sets defined above, like the set $ground(P)$, do not need to be explicitly computed. It is in accordance with the fact that we want to avoid their extensive construction. When necessary, a first-order rule r of P can be selected and grounded with propositional atoms occurring in IN and OUT in order to define a new (not already occurring in R) fully ground rule $\sigma(r)$ member of Δ_{pro} or Δ_{cho} . Because of the safety constraint on rules this full grounding is always possible. The sets Δ_{pro} and Δ_{cho} are used in the following definition of an ASPeRiX computation. The specific case of constraints (rules with \perp as head) is treated by adding \perp into OUT set. By this way, if a constraint is fired (violated), \perp should be added into IN and thus, $\langle IN, OUT \rangle$ would not be a partial interpretation. 386
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Definition 8 (ASPeRiX Computation) Let P be a first order normal logic program. An ASPeRiX computation for P is a sequence $\langle R_i, I_i \rangle_{i=0}^\infty$ of ground rule sets R_i and partial interpretations $I_i = \langle IN_i, OUT_i \rangle$ that satisfies the following conditions: 396
397
398

- $R_0 = \emptyset$ and $I_0 = \langle \emptyset, \{\perp\} \rangle$, 399
- (Revision) 400

(Propagation) $R_i = R_{i-1} \cup \{r_i\}$ with $r_i = \sigma(r)$ for $(r, \sigma) \in \Delta_{pro}(P, I_{i-1}, R_{i-1})$ and $I_i = \langle IN_{i-1} \cup \{head(r_i)\}, OUT_{i-1} \rangle$ 401
402

²The negation of blocked, *not blocked*, is different from *unblocked*.

- 403 or (Rule choice) $\Delta_{pro}(P, I_{i-1}, R_{i-1}) = \emptyset, R_i = R_{i-1} \cup \{r_i\}$ with $r_i = \sigma(r)$ for
 404 $(r, \sigma) \in \Delta_{cho}(P, I_{i-1}, R_{i-1})$ and $I_i = \langle IN_{i-1} \cup \{head(\sigma_i(r_i))\}, OUT_{i-1} \cup$
 405 $body^-(\sigma_i(r_i))\rangle$
 406 or (Stability) $R_i = R_{i-1}$ and $I_i = I_{i-1},$
 407 – (Convergence) $IN_\infty = \bigcup_{i=0}^\infty IN_i = T'_p(IN_\infty)^3$
 408 where $T'_p(X) = \{a \mid \exists r \in ground(P), head(r) = a, body^+(r) \subseteq X, body^-(r) \cap X = \emptyset\}.$
 409 The computation is said to converge to the set $IN_\infty.$

410 *Example 3* Let P_3 be the following program:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} R_1 : n(1). \\ R_2 : n(X + 1) \leftarrow n(X), (X + 1) \leq 2. \\ R_3 : a(X) \leftarrow n(X), not\ b(X), not\ b(X + 1). \\ R_4 : b(X) \leftarrow n(X), not\ a(X). \\ R_5 : c(X) \leftarrow n(X), not\ b(X + 1). \end{array} \right\}$$

411 The following sequence is an ASPeRiX computation for P_3 :

$$I_0 = \{\emptyset, \{\perp\}\}$$

$$r_1 = n(1). \text{ with } (R_1, \emptyset) \in \Delta_{pro}(P_3, I_0, \emptyset)$$

$$I_1 = \{\{n(1)\}, \{\perp\}\}$$

$$r_2 = n(2) \leftarrow n(1). \text{ with } (R_2, \{X \leftarrow 1\}) \in \Delta_{pro}(P_3, I_1, \{r_1\})$$

$$I_2 = \{\{n(1), n(2)\}, \{\perp\}\}$$

$$\Delta_{pro}(P_3, I_2, \{r_1, r_2\}) = \emptyset$$

$$r_3 = a(1) \leftarrow n(1), not\ b(1), not\ b(2). \text{ with } (\{R_3, X \leftarrow 1\}) \in \Delta_{cho}(P_3, I_2, \{r_1, r_2\})$$

$$I_3 = \{\{n(1), n(2), a(1)\}, \{\perp, b(1), b(2)\}\}$$

$$r_4 = c(1) \leftarrow n(1), not\ b(2). \text{ with } (\{R_5, X \leftarrow 1\}) \in \Delta_{pro}(P_3, I_3, \{r_1, r_2, r_3\})$$

$$I_4 = \{\{n(1), n(2), a(1), c(1)\}, \{\perp, b(1), b(2)\}\}$$

$$\Delta_{pro}(P_3, I_4, \{r_1, r_2, r_3, r_4\}) = \emptyset$$

$$r_5 = a(2) \leftarrow n(2), not\ b(2), not\ b(3). \text{ with } (\{R_3, X \leftarrow 2\}) \in \Delta_{cho}(P_3, I_4, \{r_1, r_2, r_3, r_4\})$$

$$I_5 = \{\{n(1), n(2), a(1), c(1), a(2)\}, \{\perp, b(1), b(2), b(3)\}\}$$

$$r_6 = c(2) \leftarrow n(2), not\ b(3). \text{ with } (\{R_5, X \leftarrow 2\}) \in \Delta_{pro}(P_3, I_5, \{r_1, r_2, r_3, r_4, r_5\})$$

$$I_6 = \{\{n(1), n(2), a(1), c(1), a(2), c(2)\}, \{\perp, b(1), b(2), b(3)\}\}$$

$$\Delta_{pro}(P_3, I_6, \{r_1, r_2, r_3, r_4, r_5, r_6\}) = \emptyset$$

$$\Delta_{cho}(P_3, I_6, \{r_1, r_2, r_3, r_4, r_5, r_6\}) = \emptyset$$

$$I_7 = I_6$$

$$IN_\infty = \{n(1), n(2), a(1), c(1), a(2), c(2)\} = T'_p(IN_\infty)$$

412

³ In [36], convergence is only guaranteed for finite ground programs and is expressed by: $\exists i \geq 0, \Delta_{cho}(P, I_i, R_i) = \emptyset.$ The condition $IN_\infty = T'_p(IN_\infty)$ enables to deal with infinite cases.

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The previous ASPeRiX computation converges to the set $\{n(1), n(2), a(1), c(1), a(2), c(2)\}$ which is an answer set for P_3 . 413
414

The following theorem establishes a connection between the results of any ASPeRiX 415
computation and the answer sets of a normal logic program. 416

Theorem 4 [36] *Let P be a normal logic program and X be an atomset. Then, X is 417
an answer set of P if and only if there is an ASPeRiX computation $\langle R_i, I_i \rangle_{i=0}^\infty$, $I_i = 418$
 $\langle IN_i, OUT_i \rangle$, for P such that $IN_\infty = X$. 419*

Let us note that the use of function symbols leads to an infinite Herbrand universe and, 420
besides, leads to an infinite ground program. Without functions symbols, there is an exact 421
correspondence between computations that halts and answer sets. But, when functions sym- 422
bols are introduced, some computations do not necessarily halt. For instance, a computation 423
can clearly not halt if the computed answer set is infinite. It is the case for the Program P_{1c} 424
from Example 1. On the other hand, Program P_{1b} from Example 1 has an infinite grounding 425
but computations halt without problem. 426

2.4 Limits of existential rules and ASP 427

When dealing with ontologies expressed in description logic, the use of ASP can enrich the 428
model by allowing to represent information with exceptions through the default negation. 429
However, ASP does not cover the whole features of description logic. For instance, even 430
in the most restricted version of description logic like DL-Lite, some concepts called *exist-* 431
tential concepts require the use of existential variables. These variables lead to release the 432
safety constraint of the rules. When dealing with such an information, a rule can contain 433
existential variables which do not appear in the positive body of the rule. 434

On the other hand, existential rules which are suitable to deal with *existential concepts* 435
cannot handle default reasoning since they can be seen as definite rules. The scope of 436
representation is then smaller than the one offered by ASP. 437

The standard ASP formalism as the existential rules formalism must then be enriched: 438
ASP by allowing non-safe rules to cover existential rules and existential rules by allowing 439
default negation to cover non monotonicity. 440

3 Syntax and semantics of existential non-monotonic rules 441

To improve the capacity of representation, we define a new formalism allowing to represent 442
both existential rules and rules of ASP in the same framework. Such new rules are called 443
existential non-monotonic rules (ENM-rules or ENMR, for short) since they 444
contain both existential variables in the head of the rule and default negation in its body. 445

These ENM-rules are of the form: 446

$$h_1, \dots, h_n \leftarrow b_1, \dots, b_m, \text{not } (n_1^1, \dots, n_{u_1}^1), \dots, \text{not } (n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s).$$

where $h_1, \dots, h_n, b_1, \dots, b_m, n_1^1, \dots, n_{u_1}^1, \dots, n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s$ are atoms. 447

We can note that ENM-rules extend existential rules by allowing the use of default 448
negation in the body. 449

Moreover, ENM-rules extend classical safe rules of ASP. Let us recall that safety imposes 450
that all variables that appear in a rule also appear in the positive part of its body. In a safe 451

452 rule, all variables are interpreted as universally quantified. These classical ASP rules are
 453 extended in two ways. First, the safety condition is relaxed by allowing atoms from the head
 454 and the negative body of a rule to contain variables that do not appear in the positive part of
 455 the rule. These variables are interpreted as existential ones. Second, the head of the rule is
 456 replaced by a conjunction of atoms and each negated atom is also replaced by a conjunction
 457 of atoms. These conjunctions allow multiple atoms to refer to the same existential variable.

458 For example, in the ENM-rule $(p(X, Y) \leftarrow q(X), \text{not } r(X, Z).)$, variable X is interpreted
 459 as universal, and Y and Z are interpreted as existential. The rule can be read as: “for all X ,
 460 if $q(X)$ is true and there does not exist Z such that $r(X, Z)$ is true, then one can conclude
 461 that there exists Y such that $p(X, Y)$ is true”.

462 **Definition 9 (ENM-rule and ENM-program)** An ENM-program P of vocabulary $\mathcal{L} =$
 463 $(\mathcal{CS}, \mathcal{FS}, \mathcal{PS})$ is a set of ENM-rules r defined as follows $(m, s \geq 0, n, u_1, \dots, u_s \geq 1)$:

$$h_1, \dots, h_n \leftarrow b_1, \dots, b_m, \text{not } (n_1^1, \dots, n_{u_1}^1), \dots, \text{not } (n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s).$$

464 with $h_1, \dots, h_n, b_1, \dots, b_m, n_1^1, \dots, n_{u_1}^1, \dots, n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s \in \mathbf{A}(\mathcal{L})$.

465 We use the following notations:

- 466 – $head(r) = \{h_1, \dots, h_n\}$.
- 467 – $body^+(r) = \{b_1, \dots, b_m\}$.
- 468 – $body^-(r) = \{\{n_1^1, \dots, n_{u_1}^1\}, \dots, \{n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s\}\}$.
- 469 – $\mathcal{V}(r)$ the variables,
- 470 – $\mathcal{V}_{H\exists}(r)$ the variables which are in h_1, \dots, h_n but which are not in b_1, \dots, b_m (i.e.
 471 existential variables of the head of r),
- 472 – $\mathcal{V}_{\exists}(r)(n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i)$ variables which are in $n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i$ but not in b_1, \dots, b_m , $1 \leq i \leq s$
 473 (i.e. existential variables of $n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i$).
- 474 – $\mathcal{V}_{N\exists}(r) = \bigcup_{1 \leq i \leq s} \mathcal{V}_{\exists}(r)(n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i)$,
- 475 – $\overline{\mathcal{V}_{N\exists}}(r) = \mathcal{V}(r) \setminus \mathcal{V}_{N\exists}(r)$,
- 476 – $\mathcal{V}_{\exists}(r) = \mathcal{V}_{H\exists}(r) \cup \mathcal{V}_{N\exists}(r)$
- 477 – $\mathcal{V}_{H\forall}(r)$ the variables which are at least in h_1, \dots, h_n and in b_1, \dots, b_m (i.e. universal
 478 variables of the head of r , the frontier variables).
- 479 – $\mathcal{V}_{\forall}(r)(n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i)$ the variables which are at least in $n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i$ and in b_1, \dots, b_m
 480 (i.e. universal variables of $n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i$).

481 Moreover, the sets $\mathcal{V}_{\exists}(r)(n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i)$ for every $1 \leq i \leq s$ must be disjoint and the sets
 482 $\mathcal{V}_{H\exists}(r)$ and $\mathcal{V}_{N\exists}(r)$ must also be disjoint. (If a variable appears in several of the $n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i$
 483 or if it appears in h_1, \dots, h_n and in one of the $n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i$, $1 \leq i \leq s$, then it must appear
 484 in b_1, \dots, b_m and it is a universal variable.)

485 For all rules r of a program P , $\mathcal{V}_{\exists}(r)$ must be disjoint (i.e. all the names of the existential
 486 variables of the program are different).

487 A rule r is a *definite rule* if $body^-(r) = \emptyset$ and a program is a *definite program* if all the
 488 rules are definite.

489 Let us note that in such a rule r , several atoms are allowed in $head(r)$ and in each set of
 490 $body^-(r)$. In this case, a list of atoms must be seen as the conjunction of each atom of the
 491 list.

492 Concerning the variables involved in the rule, they can be quantified universally or existentially.
 493 The quantifiers are not explicitly expressed in the rule but they depend on the

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position in the rule: the variables appearing in $body^+(r)$ are universally quantified while the ones not appearing in $body^+(r)$ are existentially quantified. Let us note that the existential variables, in the head or in each negative part of the body, are locally quantified.

Example 4 Let P_U be an ENM-program of vocabulary $\mathcal{L}_U = (\{a\}, \emptyset, \{p, phdS, d, l, gC\})$ with $ar(p) = ar(d) = ar(l) = 1$ and $ar(phdS) = ar(gC) = 2$. p stands for person, $phdS$ for phDStudent, d for director, l for lecturer and gC for givesCourses.

$$P_U = \{ r_0 : p(a), \\ r_1 : l(a), \\ r_2 : phdS(X, D), d(D) \leftarrow p(X), not(l(X), gC(X, Y)). \}$$

The rule r_2 means that for a person X there exists a director D and X is a phD student of D , unless X is a lecturer and it exists a course given by X .

We have $\mathcal{V}_{H\forall}(r) = \{X\}$, $\mathcal{V}_{H\exists}(r) = \{D\}$, $\mathcal{V}_\exists(r)(l(X), gC(X, Y)) = \{Y\}$, $\overline{\mathcal{V}_{N\exists}(r)} = \{X, D\}$.

For each program P , we consider that its vocabulary $\mathcal{L}_P = (CS, \mathcal{FS}, \mathcal{PS})$ consists of exactly the constant symbols, function symbols and predicate symbols appearing in P .

The semantics of ENM-programs uses skolemization of existential variables appearing in the heads of the rules. We now define this skolemization.

Definition 10 (Skolem symbols) Let r be an ENM-rule, n the cardinality of $\mathcal{V}_{H\forall}(r)$ and $Y \in \mathcal{V}_{H\exists}(r)$ an existential variable of r then sk_Y^n is a Skolem function symbol of arity n (if $n = 0$ then sk_Y is a Skolem constant symbol).

Example 5 (Example 4 continued) Symbol sk_D^1 is a Skolem function symbol of arity 1 for the existential variable D of the head of the rule r_2 .

Definition 11 (Skolem Program) Let P be an ENM-program of vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P .

Let s be an ordered sequence of the variables $\mathcal{V}_{H\forall}(r)$ of an ENM-rule r of P . $sk(r)$ denotes a Skolem rule obtained from r as follows: every existential variable $v \in \mathcal{V}_{H\exists}(r)$ is substituted by the term $sk_v^n(s)$ with sk_v^n the Skolem function (constant) symbol associated to v and $n = ar(sk_v^n)$ the size of s (zero if $\mathcal{V}_{H\forall}(r) = \emptyset$). The Skolem program $sk(P)$ of an \exists -program P is defined by $sk(P) = \{sk(r) \mid r \in P\}$.

Example 6 (Example 4 continued) The Skolem rule of r_2 is the rule:

$$sk(r_2) = (phdS(X, sk_D^1(X)), d(sk_D^1(X)) \leftarrow p(X), not(l(X), gC(X, Y)).) \\ \text{Hence } sk(P_U) = \{r_0, r_1, sk(r_2)\} \text{ and } \mathcal{L}_{sk(P_U)} = (\{a\}, \{sk_D^1\}, \{p, phdS, d, l, gC\}).$$

Skolem rules are still not safe: existential variables remain in the negative bodies. The grounding of such a rule is a partial grounding restricted to the universal variables of the rule, the existential ones remaining not ground. Indeed, a non-ground rule $(p(X) \leftarrow q(X), not r(X, Z).)$ could be fired for some constant a if $q(a)$ is true and, for all z , $r(a, z)$ is not true. Let us suppose that we have only two constants a and b . Then $(p(a) \leftarrow q(a), not r(a, a).)$ and $(p(a) \leftarrow q(a), not r(a, b).)$ are not equivalent to the non-ground rule for $X = a$ because the first instance could be fired if $r(a, b)$ is true (but not $r(a, a)$) and the second could be fired if $r(a, a)$ is true (but not $r(a, b)$). Yet neither $r(a, b)$ nor $r(a, a)$

530 should be true for the initial rule to be fired. We thus define a partial grounding, only con-
 531 cerning universal variables. For instance, a partial ground instance of the above non-ground
 532 rule would be: $(p(a) \leftarrow q(a), \text{not } r(a, Z)).$

533 **Definition 12 (Partial Ground Program)** Set $\mathbf{PG}(r)$ for a rule r of an ENM-program P
 534 of vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P denotes the set of all partial ground instances of r over the vocabulary
 535 \mathcal{L}_P for $\overline{\forall N \exists}(r)$. The partial ground program $\mathbf{PG}(P)$ of an ENM-program P is defined by
 536 $\mathbf{PG}(P) = \bigcup_{r \in P} \mathbf{PG}(r).$

537 *Example 7 (Example 4 continued)* The vocabulary of the Skolem program $sk(P_U)$ con-
 538 tains only one constant, a , and only one function symbol, sk_D^1 . The set of ground terms is
 539 infinite and the partial grounding leads then to the following infinite program:

$$\mathbf{PG}(sk(P_U)) = \{ \\
 p(a)., \\
 l(a)., \\
 phdS(a, sk_D^1(a)), d(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow p(a), \text{not } (l(a), gC(a, Y))., \\
 phdS(sk_D^1(a), sk_D^1(sk_D^1(a))), d(sk_D^1(sk_D^1(a))) \leftarrow \\
 p(sk_D^1(a)), \text{not } (l(sk_D^1(a)), gC(sk_D^1(a), Y))., \\
 \dots \}$$

540 **Definition 13 (Reduct)** Let P be an \exists -program with vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P and $X \subseteq \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)}).$
 541 The reduct of the partial ground program $\mathbf{PG}(sk(P))$ w.r.t. X is the definite partial ground
 542 program

$$\mathbf{PG}(sk(P))^X = \\
 \{ \text{head}(r) \leftarrow \text{body}^+(r). \mid r \in \mathbf{PG}(sk(P)), \\
 \text{for all } N \in \text{body}^-(r) \text{ and} \\
 \text{for all ground substitution } \sigma \text{ over } \mathcal{L}_{sk(P)}, \sigma(N) \not\subseteq X \}$$

543 *Example 8 (Example 4 continued)* Let

$$X_1 = \{p(a), l(a), phdS(a, sk_D^1(a)), d(sk_D^1(a))\}.$$

544 Then, for the rule

$$phdS(a, sk_D^1(a)), d(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow p(a), \text{not } (l(a), gC(a, Y)).$$

545 there is no ground instance of $l(a), gC(a, Y)$ that is included in X_1 (since X_1 does not
 546 contain any atom with gC) and the positive part of the rule is kept. The other rules are kept
 547 for the same reason. The resulting program is then:

$$\mathbf{PG}(sk(P_U))^{X_1} = \{ \\
 p(a)., \\
 l(a)., \\
 phdS(a, sk_D^1(a)), d(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow p(a)., \\
 phdS(sk_D^1(a), sk_D^1(sk_D^1(a))), d(sk_D^1(sk_D^1(a))) \leftarrow p(sk_D^1(a))., \\
 \dots \}$$

548 Now, let $X_2 = X_1 \cup \{gC(a, m)\}$ and the augmented program $P_U \cup \{gC(a, m).\}.$

549 Here, $l(a), gC(a, m)$ is a ground instance of the negative body of the rule

$$phdS(a, sk_D^1(a)), d(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow p(a), \text{not } (l(a), gC(a, Y)).$$

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that is included in X_2 . Thus, the rule is excluded from the reduct. Other rules are kept. The obtained program is then: 550
551

$$\mathbf{PG}(sk(P_U \cup \{gC(a, m).\})^{X_1 \cup \{gC(a, m)\}}) = \{ \\ gC(a, m)., \\ p(a)., \\ l(a)., \\ phdS(sk_D^1(a), sk_D^1(sk_D^1(a))), d(sk_D^1(sk_D^1(a))) \leftarrow p(sk_D^1(a))., \\ \dots \}$$

Note that the reduct of a program that is skolemized and partially grounded is a definite ground program: it no longer contains variables. The consequence operator can then be defined as usual, the only difference is that rules can have a conjunction of atoms as head. 552
553
554

Definition 14 (T_P consequence operator and C_n its closure) Let P be a definite partial ground program of an ENM-program of vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P . The operator $T_P : 2^{\mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_P)} \rightarrow 2^{\mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_P)}$ is defined by 555
556
557

$$T_P(X) = \{a \mid r \in P, a \in head(r), body^+(r) \subseteq X\}.$$

$C_n(P) = \bigcup_{n=0}^{+\infty} T_P^n(\emptyset)$ is the least fixed point of the consequence operator T_P . 558

Example 9 (Example 4 continued) $C_n(\mathbf{PG}(sk(P_U))^{X_1}) = X_1$ but $C_n(\mathbf{PG}(sk(P_U \cup \{gC(a, m).\})^{X_1 \cup \{gC(a, m)\}})) = \{p(a), l(a), gC(a, m)\}$. 559
560

Definition 15 (\exists -answer set) Let P be an ENM-program of vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P and $X \subseteq \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$. X is an \exists -answer set of P if $X = C_n(\mathbf{PG}(sk(P))^{X})$. 561
562

Example 10 (Example 4 continued) X_1 is an \exists -answer set of P_U and $\{p(a), l(a), gC(a, m)\}$ is an \exists -answer set of $P_U \cup \{gC(a, m).\}$. 563
564

The two following propositions establish that ENM-programs are extensions of ASP programs and existential rules. They are direct consequences of Definitions 9 and 12. 565
566

Proposition 1 Any (first-order classical) ASP program is an ENM-program. And any set of existential rules is an ENM-program. 567
568

Proposition 2 The partial ground program of an ENM-program without conjunction of atoms in the head nor on a default negation, and without existential variable is a ground (classical) ASP program; and it is also a set of ground existential rules. 569
570
571

Proposition 3 Let P be a (classical) ASP program with vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P and $X \subseteq \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_P)$. X is an answer set of P if and only if X is an \exists -answer set of P considered as an ENM-program. 572
573
574

Proof Since P is a classical ASP program, $sk(P) = P$ and its (classical) ground ASP program corresponds exactly to $\mathbf{PG}(P) = \mathbf{PG}(sk(P))$. Hence $X \subseteq \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_P) = \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$ is an answer set of ground P , by Definition 15, if and only if it is an \exists -answer set of P considered as an ENM-program. 575
576
577
578 \square

579 **4 Translation to ASP**

580 In this section, we give the translation of an ENM-program into a standard ASP program and
 581 we show that the \exists -answer sets of the initial program correspond to the answer sets of the
 582 new program. The translation operates in 3 main stages: first, the rules are normalized in
 583 order to remove multiple atoms and existential variables from their negative bodies; second,
 584 rules are skolemized in order to remove existential variables from their heads; third, rules
 585 are expanded in order to remove multiple atoms from their heads.

586 The first step of the translation is the normalization whose goal is twofold: to remove the
 587 conjunctions of atoms from negative parts of the rules and to remove existential variables
 588 from these negative parts. The obtained program is equivalent in terms of answer sets.

589 **Definition 16 (Normalization)** Let P be an ENM-program of vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P . Let r be an
 590 ENM-rule of P ($m, s \geq 0, n, u_1, \dots, u_s \geq 1$):

$$h_1, \dots, h_n \leftarrow b_1, \dots, b_m, \text{not } (n_1^1, \dots, n_{u_1}^1), \dots, \text{not } (n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s).$$

591 with $h_1, \dots, h_n, b_1, \dots, b_m, n_1^1, \dots, n_{u_1}^1, \dots, n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s \in \mathbf{A}(\mathcal{L}_P)$. Let \mathcal{N} be a set of new
 592 predicate symbols (i.e. $\mathcal{N} \cap \mathcal{PS} = \emptyset$).

593 The *normalization* of such an ENM-rule is the set of ENM-rules

$$\mathbf{N}(r) = \{ h_1, \dots, h_n \leftarrow b_1, \dots, b_m, \text{not } n_1, \dots, \text{not } n_s, \\ n_1 \leftarrow n_1^1, \dots, n_{u_1}^1, \\ \dots \\ n_s \leftarrow n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s \}$$

594 with n_i the new atom $p^{n_i}(X_1, \dots, X_v)$, $p^{n_i} \in \mathcal{N}$ a new predicate symbol for every n_i and
 595 $\mathcal{V}(r)(n_1^i, \dots, n_{u_i}^i) = \{X_1, \dots, X_v\}$.

596 The normalization of P is defined as $\mathbf{N}(P) = \bigcup_{r \in P} \mathbf{N}(r)$.

597 The set $\mathbf{GAN}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$ is the set of Skolem ground atoms for the new predicate symbols
 598 defined as follows:

- 599 • if $a \in \mathcal{N}$ with $ar(a) = 0$ then $a \in \mathbf{GAN}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$,
- 600 • if $p \in \mathcal{N}$ with $ar(p) > 0$ and $t_1, \dots, t_n \in \mathbf{GT}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$ then $p(t_1, \dots, t_n) \in$
 601 $\mathbf{GAN}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$.

602 *Example 11 (Example 4 continued)* Let p^n be a new predicate symbol. The negative part
 603 of the rule r_2 : $\text{not } (l(X), gC(X, Y))$ has only one universal variable, X . It is replaced by
 604 $\text{not } p^n(X)$ (rule r_2^\dagger). And a new rule r_2^\ddagger is added where Y that was an existential variable in
 605 r_2 becomes a universal one in r_2^\ddagger .

$$\mathbf{N}(r_2) = \{ r_2^\dagger : \text{phdS}(X, D), d(D) \leftarrow p(X), \text{not } p^n(X). \\ r_2^\ddagger : p^n(X) \leftarrow l(X), gC(X, Y). \}$$

606 and $\mathbf{N}(P_U) = \{r_0, r_1, r_2^\dagger, r_2^\ddagger\}$.

607 The following proposition shows that the normalization preserves answer sets of an ENM-
 608 program: it only adds some atoms formed with the new predicate symbols from \mathcal{N} .

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Proposition 4 Let P be an ENM-program of vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P and $X \subseteq \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$. If X is an \exists -answer set of P then there exists some $Y \subseteq \mathbf{GAN}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$ such that $X \cup Y$ is an \exists -answer set of $\mathbf{N}(P)$. If X is an \exists -answer set of $\mathbf{N}(P)$ then $X \setminus \mathbf{GAN}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$ is an \exists -answer set of P .

The lemma used in the following proof shows that if the normalization is applied on only one rule r and only one part of the negative body of this rule, then the answer sets of the original program are preserved up to the added atom. If r has the following form:

$$h_1, \dots, h_n \leftarrow b_1, \dots, b_m, \text{not } (n_1^1, \dots, n_{u_1}^1), \dots, \text{not } (n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s).$$

then the "partial normalization" of r for $(n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s)$ leads to the rules

$$\begin{aligned} r^\dagger &= h_1, \dots, h_n \leftarrow b_1, \dots, b_m, \text{not } (n_1^1, \dots, n_{u_1}^1), \dots, \text{not } (n_1^{s-1}, \dots, n_{u_{s-1}}^{s-1}), \text{not } n_s. \\ r^\ddagger &= n_s \leftarrow n_1^s, \dots, n_{u_s}^s. \end{aligned}$$

A program P with the rule r and the program P where the rule r is replaced by the rules r^\dagger and r^\ddagger have the same answer sets except for n_s . The proof is done by induction: by applying the lemma to each part of the negative body of r and, then, to each rule of the program.

Proof The proof is by induction on the following lemma:

(*) Let P be an ENM-program of vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P , $r = (H \leftarrow C, \text{not } (n_1, \dots, n_u)) \in \mathbf{PG}(sk(P))$, $P' = \mathbf{PG}(sk(P)) \setminus \{r\}$, $R^\ddagger = \mathbf{PG}(n \leftarrow n_1, \dots, n_u) \subseteq \mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P)))$, $r^\dagger = (H \leftarrow C, \text{not } n.)$ and $X \subseteq \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$.

If there exists a substitution θ such that $\{\theta(n_1), \dots, \theta(n_u)\} \subseteq X$ then $Cn((P' \cup \{r\})^X) = X$ if and only if $Cn((P' \cup \{r^\dagger\} \cup R^\ddagger)^{X \cup \{n\}}) = X \cup \{n\}$. If for all substitutions θ , $\{\theta(n_1), \dots, \theta(n_u)\} \not\subseteq X$ then $Cn((P' \cup \{r\})^X) = X$ if and only if $Cn((P' \cup \{r^\dagger\} \cup R^\ddagger)^X) = X$.

Proof of Lemma (*): Let us remark that $n \notin Cn(P'^X) \cup X$.

- If there exists a substitution θ such that $\{\theta(n_1), \dots, \theta(n_u)\} \subseteq X$ then $(P' \cup \{r\})^X = P'^X = (P' \cup \{r^\dagger\})^{X \cup \{n\}}$ then $Cn((P' \cup \{r\})^X) = Cn(P'^X)$ and $Cn((P' \cup \{r^\dagger\} \cup R^\ddagger)^{X \cup \{n\}}) = Cn(P'^X) \cup \{n\}$. Then $Cn((P' \cup \{r\})^X) = X$ iff $Cn(P'^X) = X$ iff $Cn(P'^X) \cup \{n\} = X \cup \{n\}$ iff $Cn((P' \cup \{r^\dagger\} \cup R^\ddagger)^{X \cup \{n\}}) = X \cup \{n\}$.
- If for all substitutions θ , $\{\theta(n_1), \dots, \theta(n_u)\} \not\subseteq X$ then $(P' \cup \{r\})^X = (P' \cup \{H \leftarrow C.\})^X$ and $(P' \cup \{r^\dagger\} \cup R^\ddagger)^X = (P' \cup \{H \leftarrow C.\})^X \cup R^\ddagger$. Then $Cn((P' \cup \{r\})^X) = Cn((P' \cup \{H \leftarrow C.\})^X) = Cn((P' \cup \{H \leftarrow C.\})^X \cup R^\ddagger) = Cn((P' \cup \{r^\dagger\} \cup R^\ddagger)^X)$. Then $Cn((P' \cup \{r\})^X) = X$ iff $Cn((P' \cup \{r^\dagger\} \cup R^\ddagger)^X) = X$.

The proof is completed by successively applying the lemma (*) to each part of the negative body of each rule of the program: it shows that \exists -answer sets of P and $\mathbf{N}(P)$ are the same except for the new predicates from $\mathbf{GAN}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$. \square

After normalization, the second step of the translation consists in skolemizing the program. After normalization and skolemization, the program no longer contains existential variables. It can then be grounded and therefore no longer contains any variable.

644 *Example 12 (Example 4 continued)* Program P_U , after normalization, is skolemized and
 645 grounded.

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P_U))) = \{ & \\ & p(a), \\ & l(a), \\ & phdS(a, sk_D^1(a)), d(sk_D^1(a) \leftarrow p(a), not\ p^N(a)). \\ & p^N(a) \leftarrow l(a), gC(a, a), \\ & p^N(a) \leftarrow l(a), gC(a, sk_D^1(a)), \\ & \dots, \\ & phdS(sk_D^1(a), sk_D^1(sk_D^1(a))), d(sk_D^1(sk_D^1(a))) \leftarrow p(sk_D^1(a)), not\ p^N(sk_D^1(a)), \\ & p^N(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow l(sk_D^1(a)), gC(sk_D^1(a), a), \\ & p^N(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow l(sk_D^1(a)), gC(sk_D^1(a), sk_D^1(a)), \\ & \dots \} \end{aligned}$$

646 The following proposition shows that skolemization and grounding preserve answer sets
 647 of a normalized ENM-program.

648 **Proposition 5** *parLet* P be a normalized ENM-program of vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P and $X \subseteq$
 649 $\mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$. X is an \exists -answer set of P if and only if X is an \exists -answer set of $\mathbf{PG}(sk(P))$.

650 *Proof* Since for all $r \in \mathbf{PG}(sk(P))$, $\mathcal{V}_{N\exists}(r) = \emptyset$ (since r is normalized), $\overline{\mathcal{V}_{N\exists}(r)} =$
 651 $\mathcal{V}(r)$ and $\mathcal{V}_{H\exists}(r) = \emptyset$ (since r is skolemized) then $\mathbf{PG}(sk(P)) = sk(\mathbf{PG}(sk(P))) =$
 652 $\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{PG}(sk(P))))$.

653 By Definition 15, X is an \exists -answer set of P iff $X = Cn(\mathbf{PG}(sk(P)))^X$ iff $X =$
 654 $Cn(\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{PG}(sk(P))))^X$ iff X is an \exists -answer set of $\mathbf{PG}(sk(P))$. \square

655 Once an ENM-program is normalized and skolemized, the only non-standard parts that
 656 remain are the conjunctions of atoms in rule heads. The last step of the translation is the
 657 expansion where we remove the sets of atoms in each head while keeping the link between
 658 the existential variables. It simply consists in the duplication of a rule as many time as the
 659 rule contains atoms in its head, each new rule having only one of these atoms in its head.
 660 Preceding skolemization allows to preserve the links between the existential variables of the
 661 head. The resulting program is equivalent in terms of answer sets.

662 **Definition 17 (Expansion)** Let P be a ground skolemized normalized program and $r \in P$
 663 ($m, s \geq 0, n > 0$):

$$h_1, \dots, h_n \leftarrow b_1, \dots, b_m, not\ n_1, \dots, not\ n_s.$$

664 with $h_1, \dots, h_n, b_1, \dots, b_m, n_1, \dots, n_s \in \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_P)$.

665 The *expansion* of such a rule is the set defined by:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{Exp}(r) = \{ & h_1 \leftarrow b_1, \dots, b_m, not\ n_1, \dots, not\ n_s, \\ & \dots \\ & h_n \leftarrow b_1, \dots, b_m, not\ n_1, \dots, not\ n_s. \} \end{aligned}$$

666 The expansion of P is defined as $\mathbf{Exp}(P) = \bigcup_{r \in P} \mathbf{Exp}(r)$.

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Example 13 (Example 4 continued) The following rule of the program from Example 12: 667
 $(phdS(a, sk_D^1(a)), d(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow p(a), not p^N(a).)$ is split into the two rules: 668
 $(phdS(a, sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow p(a), not p^N(a).)$ and 669
 $(d(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow p(a), not p^N(a).)$ 670
 The same treatment is applied to the other rules with both predicates $phdS$ and d in the head. 671
 The following program is obtained: 672

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{Exp}(\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P_U)))) = \{ \\ & p(a)., \\ & l(a)., \\ & phdS(a, sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow p(a), not p^N(a)., \\ & d(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow p(a), not p^N(a)., \\ & p^N(a) \leftarrow l(a), gC(a, a)., \\ & p^N(a) \leftarrow l(a), gC(a, sk_D^1(a))., \\ & \dots, \\ & phdS(sk_D^1(a), sk_D^1(sk_D^1(a))) \leftarrow p(sk_D^1(a)), not p^N(sk_D^1(a))., \\ & d(sk_D^1(sk_D^1(a))) \leftarrow p(sk_D^1(a)), not p^N(sk_D^1(a))., \\ & p^N(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow l(sk_D^1(a)), gC(sk_D^1(a), a)., \\ & p^N(sk_D^1(a)) \leftarrow l(sk_D^1(a)), gC(sk_D^1(a), sk(a))., \\ & \dots \} \end{aligned}$$

Proposition 6 Let P be a ground skolemized normalized ENM-program of vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P 673
 and $X \subseteq \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_P)$. X is an \exists -answer set of P if and only if X is an \exists -answer set of $\mathbf{Exp}(P)$. 674

Proof The only difference is on the computation of the fixed point of the classical T_P 675
 operator and the new T_P operator defined in Definition 14 but it is clear that fixed points 676
 are identical since P is ground. \square 677

Proposition 7 Let P be an ENM-program. $\mathbf{Exp}(\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P))))$ is an (ground classical) 678
 ASP program. 679

Proof This proposition is a direct consequence of Definitions 11, 12, 16, 17 and Proposition 2. 680
 \square 681

The last proposition establishes equivalence, up to new atoms introduced by normaliza- 682
 tion, between \exists -answer sets of an ENM-program and classical answer sets of the program 683
 after normalization, skolemization and expansion. 684

Proposition 8 Let P be an ENM-program of vocabulary \mathcal{L}_P and $X \subseteq \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$. If 685
 X is an \exists -answer set of P then there exists some $Y \subseteq \mathbf{GAN}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$ such that $X \cup Y$ 686
 is a (classical) answer set of $\mathbf{Exp}(\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P))))$. If X is a (classical) answer set of 687
 $\mathbf{Exp}(\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P))))$, then $X \setminus \mathbf{GAN}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$ is an \exists -answer set of P . 688

Proof Let P be an ENM-program and $X \subseteq \mathbf{GA}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$. 689

– if X is an \exists -answer set of P then, by Proposition 4, there exists $Y \subseteq \mathbf{GAN}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$ 690
 such that $X \cup Y$ is an \exists -answer set of $\mathbf{N}(P)$. By Proposition 5, $X \cup Y$ is an \exists -answer set 691

692 of $\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P)))$. By Proposition 6, $X \cup Y$ is an \exists -answer set of $\mathbf{Exp}(\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P))))$.
 693 By Propositions 3 and 7, $X \cup Y$ is an answer set of $\mathbf{Exp}(\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P))))$.
 694 – If X is a (classical) answer set of $\mathbf{Exp}(\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P))))$ then, by Propositions 3 and 7,
 695 X is an \exists -answer set of $\mathbf{Exp}(\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P))))$. By Proposition 6, X is an \exists -answer set
 696 of $\mathbf{PG}(sk(\mathbf{N}(P)))$. By Proposition 5, X is an \exists -answer set of $\mathbf{N}(P)$. By Proposition 4,
 697 $X \setminus \mathbf{GAN}(\mathcal{L}_{sk(P)})$ is an \exists -answer set of P .

698 □

699 In the next sections, we go back to the existential rules side. We present variants of a
 700 breadth-first forward chaining algorithm known as the chase. Since entailment with exist-
 701 tential rules is undecidable, we present conditions that ensure the termination of the chase
 702 and we discuss extension of these results for the ENM-rules.

703 5 Discussion of the chase procedures

704 Let us now consider a derivation from F as defined in Section 2.2.3. Rule applications may
 705 add *redundancy*. For instance, if $F = \{p(a)\}$ and $R = \{q(Y) \leftarrow p(X).\}$, we can obtain a
 706 derivation $F = F_0, F_1 = \{p(a), q(Y_0)\}, F_2 = \{p(a), q(Y_0), q(Y_1)\}$. Since F_1 and F_2 are
 707 semantically equivalent, any atomset that can be obtained by a derivation from F_2 will be
 708 equivalent to an atomset that can be obtained by a derivation from F_1 .

709 An algorithm that computes an \mathcal{R} -derivation by exploring all possible rule applications
 710 in a breadth-first manner is called a *chase*. In the following, we will also call chase the
 711 derivation it computes. Different kinds of chase can be defined by using different properties
 712 to compute $F'_i = \sigma_i(F_i)$ in the derivation (hereafter we write F'_i for $\sigma_i(F_i)$ when there is no
 713 ambiguity). All these algorithms are sound and complete w.r.t. the ENTAILMENT problem
 714 in the sense that $(F, \mathcal{R}) \models Q$ iff they provide in finite (but unbounded) time a finite \mathcal{R} -
 715 derivation from F to F_k such that $F_k \models Q$.

716 5.1 Different kinds of chase

717 In the *oblivious chase* (also called naive chase), e.g., [13], a rule R is applied according to
 718 an homomorphism π only if it has not already been applied according to the same homo-
 719 morphism. Let $F_i = \alpha(F'_{i-1}, R, \pi)$, then $F'_i = F'_{i-1}$ if R was previously applied according
 720 to π , otherwise $F'_i = F_i$. This can be slightly improved. Two applications π and π' of the
 721 same rule add the same atoms if they map frontier variables identically (for any frontier
 722 variable x of R , $\pi(x) = \pi'(x)$); we say that they are frontier-equal. In the *frontier chase*,
 723 let $F_i = \alpha(F'_{i-1}, R, \pi)$. We take $F'_i = F'_{i-1}$ if R was previously applied according to some
 724 π' frontier-equal to π , otherwise $F'_i = F_i$.

725 The *Skolem chase* [41] relies on a skolemisation of the rules: a rule R is transformed into
 726 a rule $skolem(R)$ by replacing each occurrence of an existential variable Y with a functional
 727 term $f_Y^R(\vec{X})$, where \vec{X} are the frontier variables of R . Then the oblivious chase is run on
 728 skolemized rules. This is the derivation we have considered in this paper. It can easily be
 729 checked that frontier chase and Skolem chase yield isomorphic results, in the sense that
 730 they generate exactly the same atomsets, up to a bijective renaming of variables by Skolem
 731 terms.

Bringing existential variables in answer set programming...

The *restricted chase* (also called standard chase) [22] detects a kind of local redundancy. Let $F_i = \alpha(F'_{i-1}, R, \pi)$, then $F'_i = F_i$ if π is useful,⁴ otherwise $F'_i = F'_{i-1}$. A slight improvement would be the *piece-restricted chase*. Let $F_i = \alpha(F'_{i-1}, H \leftarrow B., \pi)$. Let P be the maximal subset of H such that $\alpha(F'_{i-1}, P \leftarrow B., \pi)$ is not useful. Then we take $F'_i = \alpha(F'_{i-1}, (H \setminus P) \leftarrow B., \pi)$.

The *core chase* [20] considers the strongest possible form of redundancy: for any F_i, F'_i is the core of F_i .⁵

A chase is said to be *local* if $\forall i \leq j, F'_i \subseteq F'_j$. All chase variants presented above are local, *except for the core chase*. This property will be critical for nonmonotonic existential rules.

5.2 Chase termination

Since ENTAILMENT is undecidable, the chase may not halt. We call *C-chase* a chase relying on some criterion C to generate $\sigma(F_i) = F'_i$. So C can be oblivious, skolem, restricted, core or any other criterion that ensures the equivalence between F_i and F'_i . A C -chase generates a possibly infinite \mathcal{R} -derivation $\sigma_0(F), \sigma_1(F_1), \dots, \sigma_k(F_k), \dots$.

We say that this derivation *produces* the (possibly infinite) atomset $(F, \mathcal{R})^C = \bigcup_{0 \leq i \leq \infty} \sigma_i(F_i) \cup \bigcup_{0 \leq i \leq \infty} (\sigma_i(F_i))$, where $(\sigma_i(F_i)) = F_i \setminus \sigma(F_i)$. Note that this produced atomset is usually defined as the infinite union of the $\sigma_i(F_i)$. Both definitions are equivalent when the criterion C is *local*. But the usual definition would produce too big an atomset with a non-local chase such as the core chase: an atom generated at step i and removed at step j would still be present in the infinite union. We say that a (possibly infinite) derivation obtained by the C -chase is *complete* when any further rule application on that derivation would produce the same atomset. A complete derivation obtained by any C -chase produces a *universal model* (i.e., most general) of (F, \mathcal{R}) : for any atomset Q , we have $F, \mathcal{R} \models Q$ iff $(F, \mathcal{R})^C \models Q$.

We say that the C -chase *halts* on (F, \mathcal{R}) when the C -chase generates a finite complete \mathcal{R} -derivation from F to F_k . Then $(F, \mathcal{R})^C = \sigma_k(F_k)$ is a finite universal model. We say that \mathcal{R} is *universally C-terminating* when the C -chase halts on (F, \mathcal{R}) for any atomset F . If a set of rules is universally C -terminating, we say it is *C-finite*, and we also call C -finite, by extension, the class of C -finite sets of rules. It is well known that the chase variants do not behave in the same way w.r.t. termination. The following examples highlight these different behaviors.

Example 14 (Oblivious / Skolem chase) Let $R = p(X, Z) \leftarrow p(X, Y)$. and $F = \{p(a, b)\}$. The oblivious chase does not halt: it adds $p(a, Z_0), p(a, Z_1)$, etc. The frontier chase adds $p(a, Z_0)$ then stops. The skolem chase considers the rule $p(X, f_Z^R(X)) \leftarrow p(X, Y)$; it adds $p(a, f_Z^R(a))$ then halts.

Example 15 (Skolem / Restricted chase) Let $R : r(X, Y), r(Y, Y), p(Y) \leftarrow p(X)$. and $F = \{p(a)\}$. The skolem chase does not halt: at Step 1, it maps X to a and adds

⁴Given a rule $R = H \leftarrow B.$, a homomorphism π from B to F is said to be *useful* if it cannot be extended to a homomorphism from $B \cup H$ to F

⁵An atomset F is a *core* if there is no homomorphism from F to one of its strict subsets. Among all atomsets equivalent to an atomset F , there exists a unique core (up to isomorphism). We call this atomset *the core* of F .

769 $r(a, f_Y^R(a)), r(f_Y^R(a), f_Y^R(a))$ and $p(f_Y^R(a))$; at step 2, it maps X to $f_Y^R(a)$ and adds
 770 $r(f_Y^R(a), f_Y^R(f_Y^R(a)))$, etc. The restricted chase performs a single rule application, which
 771 adds $r(a, Y_0), r(Y_0, Y_0)$ and $p(Y_0)$; indeed, the rule application that maps X to Y_0 yields
 772 only redundant atoms w.r.t. $r(Y_0, Y_0)$ and $p(Y_0)$.

773 **Example 16 (Restricted / Core chase)** Let $F = \{s(a)\}$, $R_1 =$
 774 $p(X, X_1), p(X, X_2), r(X_2, X_2) \leftarrow s(X)$., $R_2 = q(Y) \leftarrow p(X, Y)$. and
 775 $R_3 = r(X, Y), q(Y) \leftarrow q(X)$.. Note that R_1 creates redundancy and R_3 could be applied
 776 indefinitely if it were the only rule. R_1 is the first applied rule, which creates new variables,
 777 called X_1 and X_2 for simplicity. The restricted chase does not halt: R_3 is not applied on X_2
 778 because it is already satisfied at this point, but it is applied on X_1 , which creates an infinite
 779 chain. The core chase applies R_1 , computes the core of the result, which removes $p(a, X_1)$,
 780 then halts.

781 It is natural to consider the oblivious chase as the weakest form of chase (without the
 782 oblivious criterion, any rule having an existential variable would generate an infinite number
 783 of instantiations of that variable), and necessary to consider the core chase as the strongest
 784 form of chase (since the core is the minimal representative of its equivalence class). We say
 785 that a criterion C is *stronger* than C' and write $C \geq C'$ when C' -finite $\subseteq C$ -finite. We say
 786 that C is *strictly stronger* than C' (and write $C > C'$) when $C \geq C'$ and $C' \not\geq C$.

787 Consider a breadth-first derivation $D = (F_0, F_1, \dots, F_k, \dots)$ that relies upon the weaker
 788 oblivious chase. Then consider two chase criterions X and Y . We can thus consider the
 789 derivations $D^X = (F_0^X, F_1^X, \dots, F_k^X, \dots)$ and $D^Y = (F_0^Y, F_1^Y, \dots, F_k^Y, \dots)$ where, $\forall i \leq$
 790 $i, F_i^X = \sigma_i^X(F_i)$ and $F_i^Y = \sigma_i^Y(F_i)$ are obtained by the simplification mechanisms of X
 791 and Y . We say that X is stronger than Y on D if $\forall i \leq i, F_i^X \subseteq F_i^Y$. We say that X is
 792 stronger than Y (and write $X \geq Y$) when, for any such D , X is stronger than Y on D . The
 793 following property is immediate.

794 *Property 1* If $X \geq Y$, then Y -finite $\subseteq X$ -finite.

795 We say that X is *strictly stronger* than Y (and note $X > Y$) when $X \geq Y$ and $Y \not\geq X$. We
 796 would like to obtain a property of the form “if $X > Y$, then Y -finite is a strict subclass of
 797 X -finite”. This property does not hold in the general case. Let us consider for instance a k -
 798 *lazy-core-chase* that only computes cores every k derivation steps. It is immediate to check
 799 that core $\geq k$ -lazy-core. However, core-finite and k -lazy-core-finite are the same class.

800 The next property expresses that if a chase relies upon a stronger way to simplify
 801 atomsets, then it halts on more instances.

802 *Property 2* If X and Y are two local chases such that $X > Y$, then Y -finite $\subset X$ -finite.

803 It is well-known that core $>$ restricted $>$ skolem $>$ oblivious (see for instance [9]). More-
 804 over, the frontier chase and the skolem chase halt on the same instances: π maps the frontier
 805 of R in a new way and produces a new atom in the frontier chase iff $\alpha(F, skolem(R), \pi)$
 806 contains a new atom. Thus skolem = frontier.

807 One can easily check that core $>$ piece-restricted $>$ restricted. It is immediate to check
 808 that core \geq piece-restricted \geq restricted. These comparisons are strict since (1) the piece-
 809 restricted chase is local and the core chase is not, and (2) the restricted chase does not halt
 810 on $(\{p(a, b)\}, \{p(Z, X), r(X, Y) \leftarrow p(X, Y)\})$, but the piece-restricted chase does (it can
 811 fold $p(Z, X)$ even if $r(X, Y)$ cannot).

Note that the frontier chase does not fit nicely into this framework: when we consider than X is stronger than Y , we consider the same set of rules \mathcal{R} , whereas the frontier-chase considers a skolemization of \mathcal{R} . However, we can easily check that the frontier chase and the skolem chase produce isomorphic results: π maps the frontier of R in a new way if and only if $\alpha(F, skolem(R), \pi)$ contains a new atom. Then frontier-finite and skolem-finite are the same class.

An immediate remark is that core-finite corresponds to *finite expansion sets (fes)* defined in [5]. In turn, *fes* correspond to rules enjoying the *bounded derivation depth property (BDDP)* introduced in [14] (see [6] for a proof). To sum up, the following inclusions hold between C -finite classes: oblivious-finite \subset skolem-finite = frontier-finite \subset restricted-finite \subset core-finite = fes.

6 Decidability

Ensuring chase termination has been widely studied, in particular various “acyclicity” notions have been defined ensuring finiteness of the chase. We first give an overview of known acyclicity notions. They can be divided into two main families, each of them relying on a different graph: a “position-based” approach, which intuitively relies on a graph encoding variable sharing between positions in predicates; and a “rule dependency approach” which relies on a graph encoding dependencies between rules, i.e., the fact that a rule may lead to trigger another (or itself).

Position-based approach In the first approach, cycles identified as dangerous are those passing through positions that may contain existential variables; such a cycle meaning that the creation of an existential variable in a given position may lead to create another existential variable in the same position, hence a possibly infinite number of existential variables. In the Skolem chase this may lead to an infinitely deep functional symbol. Acyclicity is then defined by the absence of dangerous cycles. The simplest notion of acyclicity in this family is that of weak-acyclicity (wa) [22, 23], which has been widely used in databases. It relies on a directed graph whose nodes are the positions in predicates (we denote by (p, i) the position i in predicate p). Then for each rule $R : H \leftarrow B$, and each variable X in B occurring in position (p, i) , edges with origin (p, i) are built as follows: if X is a frontier variable, there is an edge from (p, i) to each position of X in H ; furthermore for each existential variable Y in H occurring in position (q, j) , there is a *special* edge from (p, i) to (q, j) . A set of rules is weakly acyclic if its associated graph has no cycle passing through a special edge.

This notion has been generalised, mainly by shifting the focus from positions to existential variables (joint-acyclicity (ja) [33]), or to positions in atoms instead of predicates (super-weak-acyclicity (swa) [41]). Other related notions can be imported from logic programming, e.g., finite domain (fd) [16], and argument-restricted (ar) [38].

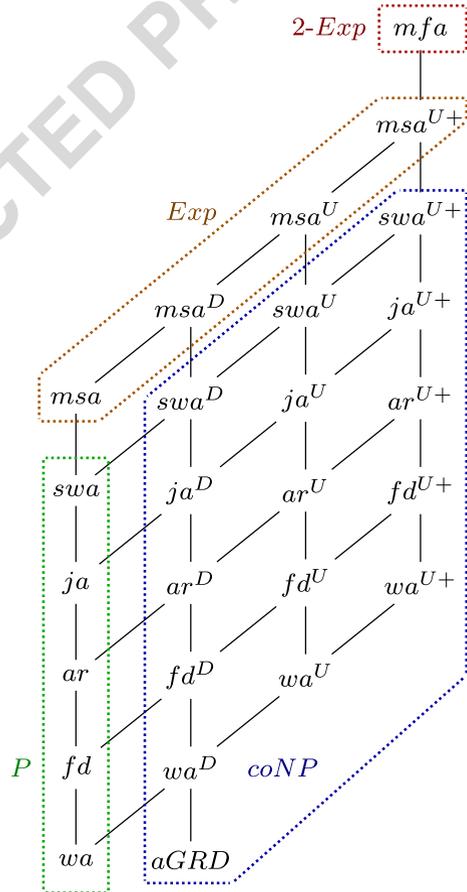
Rule dependency approach In the second approach, the aim is to avoid cyclic triggering of rules [7, 20, 29]. We say that a rule R_j *depends* on a rule R_i if there exists an atomset F such that R_i is applicable to F according to a homomorphism π and R_j is applicable to $F' = \alpha(F, R_i, \pi)$ according to a new useful homomorphism. This abstract dependency relation can be computed with a unification operation known as piece-unifier [10]. Piece-unification takes existential variables into account, hence is more complex than the usual unification between atoms. A piece-unifier of a rule body B_j with a rule head H_i is a

856 substitution μ of $vars(B'_j) \cup vars(H'_i)$, where $B'_j \subseteq B_j$, $H'_i \subseteq H_i$, such that: $\mu(B'_j) =$
 857 $\mu(H'_i)$ and existential variables in H'_i are not unified with separating variables of B'_j , i.e.,
 858 variables that occur both in B'_j and in $B_j \setminus B'_j$; in other words, if a variable X in B'_j is unified
 859 with an existential variable Y in H'_i , then all atoms in which X occurs also belong to B'_j .
 860 It holds that R_j depends on R_i iff there is a piece-unifier of B_j with H_i satisfying easy to
 861 check additional conditions (atom erasing [4], and usefulness [30]).

862 The *graph of rule dependencies* of set of rules \mathcal{R} , denoted by $GRD(\mathcal{R})$, is the
 863 directed graph with set of nodes \mathcal{R} and an edge (R_i, R_j) if R_j depends on R_i . When the
 864 GRD is acyclic (aGRD [7]), any derivation sequence is necessarily finite. This notion is
 Q3865 incomparable with those based on positions (Fig. 1).

866 **Toward a more general point of view** Both approaches have their weaknesses: there
 867 may be a dangerous cycle on positions but no cycle w.r.t. rule dependencies, and there may
 868 be a cycle w.r.t. rule dependencies whereas rules contain no existential variables. Attempts

Fig. 1 Relations between rule classes



to combine both notions only succeeded to combine them in a “modular way”: if the rules in each strongly connected component (s.c.c.) of the GRD belong to a class ensuring finiteness of the chase, then the chase will halt on any fact given this set of rules. In the following, we propose an “integrated” way to combining both approaches, which relies on a single graph.

We first define the notion of basic position graph, that encodes precisely how variables in a given position in the body can be propagated to another position of the head by the application of a single rule. Let us consider the graph composed of the basic position graphs for all rules in a given ruleset. We must now add edges to this graph, encoding how variables added by a given rule may be used by another one (*i.e.*, edges from head positions of rules to body positions of other rules). The graph obtained must be correct: if there exists a variable that propagates in a given derivation, then it corresponds to an edge that must be present in our graph (a precise definition is given below, it considers more correct graphs since it only requires cyclic propagations to be encoded by a cycle in the graph). The goal is now to obtain a correct graph having as few edges as possible (the less edges we consider, the more chances we have to obtain a circuit-free graph and thus to conclude on termination).

We define here three position graphs with increasing expressivity, *i.e.*, allowing to check termination for increasingly larger classes of rules. All these graphs rely upon the notion of position in an atom, and we denote by $[a, i]$ the i^{th} position of atom a .

Definition 18 (Position Graph (\mathcal{PG})) The position graph of an ENM-Rule $R : H \leftarrow B$ is the directed graph $\mathcal{PG}(R)$ defined as follows:

- there is a node for each $[a, i]$ in B or in H ;
- for all frontier positions $[b, i]$ in B , and all $[h, j]$ in H , there is an edge from $[b, i]$ to $[h, j]$ if $term([b, i]) = term([h, j])$ or if $term([h, j])$ is an existential variable.

In other words, there is an edge from a position in the body to a position in the head when they share a frontier variable, and an edge from each position in the body containing a frontier variable to each position in the head containing an existential variable.

Given a set of ENM rules \mathcal{R} , the basic position graph of \mathcal{R} denoted by $\mathcal{PG}(\mathcal{R})$ is the disjoint union of $\mathcal{PG}(R_i)$ for all $R_i \in \mathcal{R}$.

We say that a position $[a, i]$ is *infinite* if $term([a, i])$ is an existential variable, and there is an atomset F such that running the chase on F produces an unbounded number of instantiations of $term([a, i])$. To detect infinite positions, we encode how variables may be propagated between rules by adding edges to $\mathcal{PG}(\mathcal{R})$, called *transition edges*, which go from positions in rule heads to position in rule bodies. The set of transition edges has to be *correct*: if a position $[a, i]$ is infinite, there must be a cycle going through $[a, i]$ in the graph. Though the existence of a transition edge does not necessarily mean that there exists a derivation that will propagate a variable through that edge, its absence in a correct graph means that no possible derivation will ever propagate a variable in such a way.

We then define three position graphs by adding transition edges to $\mathcal{PG}(\mathcal{R})$, namely $\mathcal{PG}^F(\mathcal{R})$, $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$, $\mathcal{PG}^U(\mathcal{R})$. All have correct sets of transition edges. Intuitively $\mathcal{PG}^F(\mathcal{R})$ corresponds to the case where all rules are supposed to depend on all rules; $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$ encodes actual paths or rule dependencies; and finally, $\mathcal{PG}^U(\mathcal{R})$ adds information about the piece-unifier themselves, providing an accurate encoding of variable propagation from an atom position to another.

913 **Definition 19** (\mathcal{PG}^X) Let \mathcal{R} be a set of rules. The three following position graphs are
 914 obtained from $\mathcal{PG}(\mathcal{R})$ by adding a (transition) edge from each position $[h, k]$ in a rule head
 915 H_i to each position $[b, k]$ in a rule body B_j , with the same predicate, provided that some
 916 condition is satisfied:

- 917 – full PG, denoted by $\mathcal{PG}^F(\mathcal{R})$: no additional condition;
- 918 – dependency PG, denoted by $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$: if R_j depends directly or indirectly on R_i , i.e.,
 919 if there is a path from R_i to R_j in $GRD(\mathcal{R})$;
- 920 – PG with unifiers, denoted by $\mathcal{PG}^U(\mathcal{R})$: if there is a piece-unifier μ of B_j with the
 921 head of an agglomerated rule (see Definition 20) R_i^j such that $\mu(term([b, k])) =$
 922 $\mu(term([h, k]))$.

923 **Example 17** (\mathcal{PG}^F and \mathcal{PG}^D) Let $\mathcal{R} = \{R_1, R_2\}$ with $R_1 = p(X, Y) \leftarrow h(X)$ and
 924 $R_2 = h(V) \leftarrow p(U, V), q(V)$. Figure 2 pictures $\mathcal{PG}^F(\mathcal{R})$ and $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$. The dashed
 925 edges belong to $\mathcal{PG}^F(\mathcal{R})$ but not to $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$. Indeed, R_2 does not depend on R_1 . $\mathcal{PG}^F(\mathcal{R})$
 926 has a cycle while $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$ has not.

927 **Example 18** (\mathcal{PG}^D and \mathcal{PG}^U) Let $\mathcal{R} = \{R_1, R_2\}$, with $R_1 = p(Z, Y), q(Y) \leftarrow t(X, Y)$
 928 and $R_2 = t(V, W) \leftarrow p(U, V), q(U)$. In Fig. 3, the dashed edges belong to $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$ but
 929 not to $\mathcal{PG}^U(\mathcal{R})$. Indeed, the only piece-unifier of B_2 with H_1 unifies U and Y . Hence, the
 930 cycle in $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$ disappears in $\mathcal{PG}^U(\mathcal{R})$.

931 **Definition 20** (**Agglomerated Rule**) Given R_i and R_j rules from \mathcal{R} , an agglomerated rule
 932 associated with (R_i, R_j) has the following form:

$$R_i^k = H_i \leftarrow B_i \bigcup_{t \in T \subseteq terms(H_i)} fr(t)$$

933 where fr is a new unary predicate that does not appear in \mathcal{R} , and the atoms $fr(t)$ are
 934 built as follows. Let \mathcal{P} be a non-empty set of paths from R_i to direct predecessors of R_j in
 935 $GRD(\mathcal{R})$. Let $P = (R_1, \dots, R_n)$ be a path in \mathcal{P} . One can associate a rule R^P with P by
 936 building a sequence $R_1 = R_1^P, \dots, R_n^P$ such that $\forall 1 \leq l \leq n$, there is a piece-unifier μ_l
 937 of B_{l+1} with the head of R_l^P , where the body of R_{l+1}^P is $B_{l+1}^P \cup \{fr(t) \mid t \text{ is a term of } H_l^P$
 938 unified in $\mu_l\}$, and the head of R_{l+1}^P is H_{l+1} . Note that for all $l, H_l^P = H_1$, however, for $l \neq 1$,

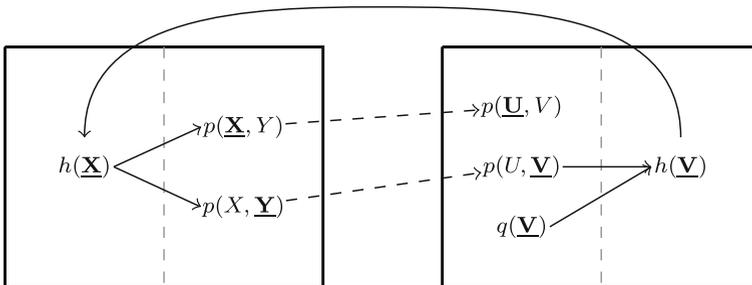


Fig. 2 $\mathcal{PG}^F(\mathcal{R})$ and $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$ from Example 17. Position $[a, i]$ is represented by underlining the i -th term in a . Dashed edges do not belong to $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$

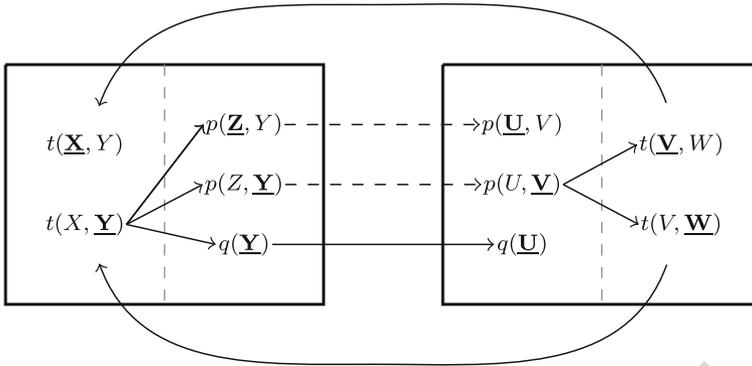


Fig. 3 $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R})$ and $\mathcal{PG}^U(\mathcal{R})$ from Example 18. Dashed edges do not belong to $\mathcal{PG}^U(\mathcal{R})$

R_i^P may have less existential variables than R_i due to the added atoms. The agglomerated 939
 rule R_i^j built from $\{R^P \mid P \in \mathcal{P}\}$ is $R_i^j = \bigcup_{P \in \mathcal{P}} R^P$. 940

Proposition 9 (Inclusions between \mathcal{PG}^X) Let \mathcal{R} be a set of rules. $\mathcal{PG}^U(\mathcal{R}) \subseteq$ 941
 $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R}) \subseteq \mathcal{PG}^F(\mathcal{R})$. Furthermore, $\mathcal{PG}^D(\mathcal{R}) = \mathcal{PG}^F(\mathcal{R})$ if the transitive closure of 942
 $GRD(\mathcal{R})$ is a complete graph. 943

We now study how acyclicity properties can be expressed on position graphs. The idea 944
 is to associate, with an acyclicity property, a function that assigns to each position a subset 945
 of positions reachable from this position, according to some propagation constraints; then, 946
 the property is fulfilled if no existential position can be reached from itself. More precisely, 947
 a marking function Y assigns to each node $[a, i]$ in a position graph \mathcal{PG}^X , a subset of its 948
 (direct or indirect) successors, called its marking. A marked cycle for $[a, i]$ (w.r.t. X and 949
 Y) is a cycle C in \mathcal{PG}^X such that $[a, i] \in C$ and for all $[a', i'] \in C$, $[a', i']$ belongs to 950
 the marking of $[a, i]$. Obviously, the less situations there are in which the marking may 951
 “propagate” in a position graph, the stronger the acyclicity property is (in the sense that this 952
 property will detect more terminating instances). 953

Definition 21 (Acyclicity property) Let Y be a marking function and $\mathcal{PG}^X(\mathcal{R})$ be a posi- 954
 tion graph for a set of rules \mathcal{R} . The acyclicity property associated with Y in $\mathcal{PG}^X(\mathcal{R})$, 955
 denoted by Y^X , is satisfied by \mathcal{R} if there is no marked cycle for any existential position in 956
 $\mathcal{PG}^X(\mathcal{R})$. If Y^X is satisfied, we also say that $\mathcal{PG}^X(\mathcal{R})$ satisfies Y . 957

When there is no ambiguity on the set of rules \mathcal{R} considered, we may note \mathcal{PG}^X instead 958
 of $\mathcal{PG}^X(\mathcal{R})$. Note also that in the following, we denote in the same way the property Y^X 959
 and the class Y^X of instances that satisfy Y^X (thus conflating the property with the set of 960
 instances satisfying the property). It allows us to write, for instance, $Y^X \subseteq Y^Z$ when all 961
 instances satisfying Y^X also satisfy Y^Z . 962

Note that all known rule classes between wa and swa can be expressed as marking 963
 functions on the position graph. 964

The next propositions rely on the following lemma, that makes the link between \mathcal{PG}^D 965
 and the GRD of a set of rules. 966

967 **Lemma 1** Let \mathcal{R} be a set of rules, and Y be an acyclicity property. \mathcal{R} satisfies Y^D if and
 968 only if each strongly connected components (S.C.C.) of $GRD(\mathcal{R})$, except those composed
 969 of a single rule and no loop, satisfies Y .

970 *Proof* Let \mathcal{R} be a set of rules and Y be an acyclicity property. To ease the reading we
 971 use the notation from [30]: given an acyclicity property Y , a set of rules \mathcal{R} satisfies Y^\prec if
 972 all strongly connected components of $GRD(\mathcal{R})$ satisfy Y , except for those composed of
 973 a single rule and no loop. It should appear obvious that the lemma can be reformulated as
 974 $Y^D = Y^\prec$.

975 We first show that if \mathcal{R} is not Y^D then it is not Y^\prec . Suppose that \mathcal{R} does not satisfy
 976 Y^D . We then have an existential position $[a, i]$ in $PG^D(\mathcal{R})$ such that $[a, i] \in M([a, i])$,
 977 where M is the marking associated with Y . Specifically, this means that there is a cycle
 978 going through $[a, i]$ in $PG^D(\mathcal{R})$. Then all rules from this cycle belong to the same strongly
 979 connected component of $GRD(\mathcal{R})$. Consider the restriction of \mathcal{R} to the set of rules \mathcal{R}' that
 980 correspond to the S.C.C. in which the rules from this cycle appear. If we build $PG^F(\mathcal{R})$, we
 981 see that \mathcal{R}' does not satisfy Y^F , hence Y . We have then exhibited a S.C.C. of the $GRD(\mathcal{R})$
 982 that does not satisfy Y , hence \mathcal{R} is not Y^\prec .

983 Now we show that if \mathcal{R} is not Y^\prec , then it is not Y^D . Assume that \mathcal{R} does not satisfy Y^\prec .
 984 Since it does not satisfy Y^\prec there is at least one S.C.C. that does not satisfy Y . Call it \mathcal{R}' .
 985 Hence $PG^F(\mathcal{R}')$ contains an existential position $[a, i]$ belonging to a cycle. Since \mathcal{R} (hence
 986 \mathcal{R}') is Y^D , this cycle does not occur anymore in $PG^D(\mathcal{R}')$. However, the only edges we
 987 are allowed to remove in $PG^D(\mathcal{R}')$ are edges between rules R_i and R_j for which there is
 988 no path from R_i to R_j in $GRD(\mathcal{R})$. Thus, we cannot remove any edge (from the definition
 989 of a S.C.C.). Hence, \mathcal{R}' is not Y^D . □

990 **Proposition 10** Let Y_1, Y_2 be two acyclicity properties. If $Y_1 \subseteq Y_2$, then $Y_1^D \subseteq Y_2^D$.

991 *Proof* Consider a set of rules \mathcal{R} that satisfies Y_1^D . From Lemma 1, each strongly connected
 992 component of $(^D\mathcal{R})$ satisfies Y_1 . Since $Y_1 \subseteq Y_2$, each S.C.C. of $GRD(\mathcal{R})$ also satisfies Y_2 ,
 993 therefore \mathcal{R} satisfies Y_2^D . □

994 **Proposition 11** Let Y be an acyclicity property. If $aGRD \not\subseteq Y$ then $Y \subset Y^D$.

995 *Proof* Let \mathcal{R} be a set of rules that does not satisfy Y but satisfies $aGRD$. From the definition
 996 of $aGRD$, $GRD(\mathcal{R})$ is composed of $|\mathcal{R}|$ strongly connected components with no loop.
 997 Thanks to Lemma 1, \mathcal{R} trivially satisfies Y^D . Therefore, \mathcal{R} is a set of rules satisfying Y^D
 998 but not Y . □

999 **Proposition 12** Let Y_1, Y_2 be two acyclicity properties such that $Y_1 \subset Y_2$, $wa \subseteq Y_1$ and
 1000 $Y_2 \not\subseteq Y_1^D$. Then $Y_1^D \subset Y_2^D$.

1001 *Proof* Let \mathcal{R} be a set of rules such that \mathcal{R} satisfies Y_2 and neither Y_1 nor $aGRD$. \mathcal{R}
 1002 can be rewritten into \mathcal{R}' by replacing each rule $R_i = H_i \leftarrow B_i \in \mathcal{R}$ with a new rule
 1003 $R'_i = H_i \cup \{p(x)\} \leftarrow B_i \cup \{p(x)\}$ where p is a fresh predicate and x a fresh variable.
 1004 Each rule can now be unified with each rule, but the only created cycles are those which

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contain only atoms $p(x)$, hence none of those cycles go through existential positions. Since $wa \subseteq Y_1$ (and so $wa \subseteq Y_2$), the added cycles do not change the behavior of \mathcal{R} w.r.t. Y_1 and Y_2 . Hence, \mathcal{R}' is a set of rules satisfying Y_2 and not Y_1 , and since $GRD(\mathcal{R})$ is a complete graph, $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^D(\mathcal{R}') = \mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^F(\mathcal{R}')$. We can conclude that \mathcal{R}' satisfies Y_2^D but not Y_1^D . \square

Theorem 5 *Let Y be an acyclicity property. If $Y \subset Y^D$, then $Y^D \subset Y^U$. Furthermore, there is an injective mapping from the sets of rules satisfying Y^D but not Y , to the sets of rules satisfying Y^U but not Y^D .*

Proof Assume $Y \subset Y^D$ and \mathcal{R} satisfies Y^D but not Y . \mathcal{R} can be rewritten into \mathcal{R}' by applying the following steps. First, for each rule $R_i = H_i[\vec{y}, \vec{z}] \leftarrow B_i[\vec{x}, \vec{y}] \in \mathcal{R}$, let $R_{i,1} = p_i(\vec{x}, \vec{y}) \leftarrow B_i[\vec{x}, \vec{y}]$, where p_i is a fresh predicate; and $R_{i,2} = H_i[\vec{y}, \vec{z}] \leftarrow p_i(\vec{x}, \vec{y})$. Then, for each rule $R_{i,1}$, let $R'_{i,1}$ be the rule $H_{i,1} \leftarrow B'_{i,1}$, with $B'_{i,1} = B_{i,1} \cup \{p'_{j,i}(x_{j,i}) : \forall R_j \in \mathcal{R}\}$, where $p'_{j,i}$ are fresh predicates and $x_{j,i}$ fresh variables. Now, for each rule $R_{i,2}$ let $R'_{i,2}$ be the rule $(B_{i,2} \leftarrow H'_{i,2})$ with $H'_{i,2} = H_{i,2} \cup \{p'_{i,j}(z_{i,j}) : \forall R_j \in \mathcal{R}\}$, where $z_{i,j}$ are fresh existential variables. Let $\mathcal{R}' = \bigcup_{R_i \in \mathcal{R}} \{R'_{i,1}, R'_{i,2}\}$. This construction ensures that each $R'_{i,2}$ depends on $R'_{i,1}$, and each $R'_{i,1}$ depends on each $R'_{j,2}$, thus, there is a transition edge from each $R'_{i,1}$ to $R'_{i,2}$ and from each $R'_{j,2}$ to each $R'_{i,1}$. Hence, $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^D(\mathcal{R}')$ contains exactly one cycle for each cycle in $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^F(\mathcal{R})$. Furthermore, $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^D(\mathcal{R}')$ contains at least one marked cycle w.r.t. Y , and then \mathcal{R}' is not Y^D . Now, each cycle in $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^U(\mathcal{R}')$ is also a cycle in $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^D(\mathcal{R})$, and since $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^D(\mathcal{R})$ satisfies Y , $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^U(\mathcal{R}')$ also does. Hence, \mathcal{R}' does not belong to Y^D but to Y^U . \square

Theorem 6 *Let Y_1 and Y_2 be two acyclicity properties. If $Y_1^D \subset Y_2^D$ then $Y_1^U \subset Y_2^U$.*

Proof Let \mathcal{R} be a set of rules such that \mathcal{R} satisfies Y_2^D but does not satisfy Y_1^D . We rewrite \mathcal{R} into \mathcal{R}' by applying the following steps. For each pair of rules $R_i, R_j \in \mathcal{R}$ such that R_j depends on R_i , for each variable x in the frontier of R_j and each variable Y in the head of R_i , if x and Y occur both in a given predicate position, we add to the body of R_j a new atom $p_{i,j,x,Y}(X)$ and to the head of R_i a new atom $p_{i,j,x,Y}(Y)$, where $p_{i,j,x,Y}$ denotes a fresh predicate. This construction will allow each term from the head of R_i to propagate to each term from the body of R_j , if they shared some predicate position in \mathcal{R} . Thus, any cycle in $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^D(\mathcal{R})$ is also in $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^U(\mathcal{R}')$, without modifying behavior w.r.t. the acyclicity properties. Hence, \mathcal{R}' satisfies Y_2^U but does not satisfy Y_1^U . \square

Definition 22 (Compatible unifier) Let R_1 and R_2 be two rules. A unifier μ of B_2 with H_1 is compatible if, for each position $[a, i]$ in B'_2 (where B'_2 is the unified subset of B_2 , see “dependency approach in Section 6) such that $\mu(term([a, i]))$ is an existential variable Z in H'_1 , $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{G}^U(\mathcal{R})$ contains a path, from a position in which Z occurs, to $[a, i]$, that does not go through another existential position. Otherwise μ is incompatible.

Proposition 13 *Let R_1 and R_2 be two rules, and let μ be a unifier of B_2 with H_1 . If μ is incompatible, then no application of R_2 can use an atom in $\mu(H_1)$. More formally, no*

1043 application π' of R_2 can map an atom $a \in B_2$ to an atom b produced by an application
 1044 (R_1, π) such that $b = \pi(b')$, where π and π' are more specific than μ .

1045 *Proof* Consider the application of R_1 to a set of facts F according to a homomorphism π'
 1046 such that for an atom $a \in B_2$, $\pi'(a) = b = \pi(b')$, where both π and π' are more specific
 1047 than μ . Note that this implies that $\mu(a) = \mu(b')$. Assume that b contains a fresh variable
 1048 z_i produced from an existential variable z in H_1 . Let z' be the variable from a such that
 1049 $\pi'(z') = z_i$. Since the domain of π' is the variables of B_2 , all atoms from B_2 in which z'
 1050 occurs at a given position $[p, j]$ are also mapped by π' to atom containing z_i in the same
 1051 position $[p, j]$. Since z_i is a fresh variable, these atoms have been produced by sequences
 1052 of rule applications starting from (R_1, π) . Such a sequence of rule applications exists only
 1053 if there is a path in PG^U from a position of z in H_1 to $[p, j]$; moreover, this path cannot go
 1054 through an existential position, otherwise z_i cannot be propagated. Hence μ is necessarily
 1055 compatible. \square

1056 **Definition 23** – Let R_1 and R_2 be rules such that there is a compatible unifier μ of B_2 with
 1057 H_1 . The associated unified rule $R_\mu = R_1 \diamond_\mu R_2$ is defined by $H_\mu = \mu(H_1) \cup \mu(H_2)$,
 1058 and $B_\mu = \mu(B_1) \cup (\mu(B_2) \setminus \mu(H_1))$.

1059 – Let (R_1, \dots, R_{k+1}) be a sequence of rules. A sequence $s = (R_1\mu_1R_2 \dots \mu_kR_{k+1})$,
 1060 where for $1 \leq i \leq k$, μ_i is a unifier of B_{i+1} with H_i , is a compatible sequence of
 1061 unifiers if :

- 1062 – μ_1 is a compatible unifier of B_2 with H_1 ;
- 1063 – if $k > 0$, the sequence obtained from s by replacing $(R_1\mu_1R_2)$ with $R_1 \diamond_{\mu_1} R_2$
 1064 is a compatible sequence of unifiers.

1065 **Definition 24 (Compatible cycles)** Let Y be an acyclicity property, and PG^U be a position
 1066 graph with unifiers. The compatible cycles for $[a, i]$ in PG^U are all marked cycles C for
 1067 $[a, i]$ w.r.t. Y , such that there is a compatible sequence of unifiers induced by C . Property
 1068 Y^{U+} is satisfied if, for each existential position $[a, i]$, there is no compatible cycle for $[a, i]$
 1069 in PG^U .

1070 **Proposition 14** Let Y be an acyclicity property. Then, $Y^U \subseteq Y^{U+}$. Moreover, if $Y^D \subset Y^U$
 1071 then $Y^U \subset Y^{U+}$.

1072 *Proof* Inclusion follows immediately from the definitions.

1073 We now show that this inclusion is strict. Let \mathcal{R} be a set of rules satisfying Y^U but
 1074 not Y^D . We build a set of rules \mathcal{R}' that satisfies Y^{U+} but not Y^U . To this aim, we first
 1075 increase the arity of each predicate of \mathcal{R} by two, and in each rule body and head, we put
 1076 two fresh variables t_1 and t_2 in those positions. E.g., a rule $s(x, y) \rightarrow t(y, z)$ would become
 1077 $s(x, y, t_1, t_2) \rightarrow t(y, z, t_1, t_2)$. Then, for each rule $R = (B, H)$, we create four fresh pred-
 1078 icates p, q_1, q_2, r whose arity is respectively $|var(H)|, 2, 2$ and 2 , and five fresh variables
 1079 z_1, z_2, z_3, z_4 and z_5 . Then we “split” R into four rules (where \vec{x} is a list of all variables from
 1080 H):

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- $R_1 = B \rightarrow p(\vec{x}, z_1, z_2)$, 1081
- $R_2 = p(\vec{x}, z_1, z_2) \rightarrow q_1(z_1, z_3)$, 1082
- $R_3 = q_1(z_1, z_3) \rightarrow s(z_3, z_5)$, 1083
- $R_4 = p(\vec{x}, z_1, z_2) \wedge q_1(z_1, z_3) \wedge q_2(z_1, z_4) \wedge s(z_3, z_5) \wedge s(z_4, z_5) \rightarrow H$. 1084

The graph of rule dependencies of those four rules contains the following edges: (R_1, R_2) , (R_2, R_3) , (R_3, R_4) . It can be observed that in particular, in $PG^U(\mathcal{R}')$ there is a transition edge going from the last position of the atom $p(\vec{x}, z_1, z_2)$ in rule R_1 to the last position of the “same” atom in rule R_4 . The same holds for the penultimate position of these atoms. However, it can be seen that given any set of facts, rule R_4 can never be applied. But the definition of PG^U does not take this “complicated” interactions into account. Specifically, the set of rules is not Y^U anymore. 1085-1091

Let us now consider Y^{U+} . There is no compatible cycle in PG^U since the existential variable z_1 in rule R_1 has to go through new existential positions before reaching the position of z_1 in rule R_4 . Thus, \mathcal{R}' is Y^{U+} . □ 1092-1094

Proposition 15 *Let Y_1 and Y_2 be two acyclicity properties. If $Y_1^D \subset Y_2^D$, and $Y_2^D \subset Y_2^{U+}$, then $Y_1^{U+} \subset Y_2^{U+}$.* 1095-1096

Proof Observe that the transformation we used in the proof of Theorem 6 actually guarantees that all cycles which are present are compatible cycles. Thus, for the obtained set of rules \mathcal{R}' and any acyclicity property Y , \mathcal{R}' satisfies Y^U if and only if \mathcal{R}' satisfies Y^{U+} . □ 1097-1100

Theorem 7 *Let Y be an acyclicity property ensuring the halting the chase. Then, the chase halts for any set of rules \mathcal{R} that satisfies Y^{U+} (hence Y^U and Y^D).* 1101-1102

Proof (sketch) The complete proof is technically involved, and the reader is referred to [44] for more details. The idea is that if the chase does not halt, then there exists some existential position which is infinitely often populated by new individuals. Such a position must occur in some cycle in PG^U , as our construction only “removes” edges that do not correspond to “real” rule applications. Furthermore, Proposition 13 ensures that the cycle cannot be ignored by Y^{U+} . □ 1103-1108

Theorem 8 (Complexity of Recognition) *Let Y be an acyclicity property, and \mathcal{R} be a set of rules. If checking that \mathcal{R} satisfies Y is in $coNP$, then, checking that \mathcal{R} satisfies Y^D , Y^U or Y^{U+} is $coNP$ -complete.* 1109-1111

Proof One can guess a cycle in $PG^D(\mathcal{R})$ (or $PG^U(\mathcal{R})$, or $PG^{U+}(\mathcal{R})$) such that the property Y is not satisfied by this cycle. Each edge of the cycle has a polynomial certificate, since checking if a given substitution is a piece-unifier can be done in polynomial time. Since Y is in $coNP$, we have a polynomial certificate that this cycle does not satisfy Y . Membership in $coNP$ follows. 1112-1116

The completeness part is proved by a simple reduction from the co-problem of rule dependency checking (which is thus a $coNP$ -complete problem). Rule dependency checking 1117-1118

1119 is equivalent to finding an atom-erasing unifier (see “the dependency approach” in Sec-
 1120 tion 6). Let R_1 and R_2 be two rules. We first define two fresh predicates p and s of arity
 1121 $|var(B_1)|$ and two fresh predicates q and r of arity $|var(H_2)|$. We build $R_0 = p(\vec{x}) \rightarrow$
 1122 $s(\vec{x})$ where \vec{x} is a list of all variables in B_1 , and $R_3 = r(\vec{x}) \rightarrow p(\vec{z}) \wedge q(\vec{x})$, where
 1123 $\vec{z} = (z, z, \dots, z)$, where z is a variable which does not appear in H_2 . We rewrite R_1 into
 1124 $R'_1 = B_1 \wedge s(\vec{x}) \rightarrow H_1$ and R_2 into $R'_2 = B_2 \rightarrow H_2 \wedge r(\vec{x})$, where \vec{x} is a list of all
 1125 variables in H_2 . One can check that $\mathcal{R} = \{R_0, R'_1, R'_2, R_3\}$ contains a cycle going through
 1126 an existential variable (thus, it is not wa^D) iff R_2 depends on R_1 . \square

1127 **7 Termination of ASPeRiX computations**

1128 Consider P an ENM-program. In Section 3, we have defined the semantics of this program
 1129 as the semantics of the partial grounding of its skolemization. In an ASPeRiX computation
 1130 of this program, the IN fields generated thus correspond to a skolem-derivation using the
 1131 rules in $pos(P)$ (i.e., the existential rules obtained by removing negative bodies from all
 1132 rules in P). It is easy to check that:

1133 **Proposition 16** *Let P be an ENM-program. If the Skolem chase halts on $pos(P)$ then, the*
 1134 *ASPeRiX computation halts on P .*

1135 This proposition allows us to use all decidability results presented in Section 6, since all
 1136 those decidable classes halt with the Skolem chase.

1137 We have seen in Section 5 that some chases were stronger than the Skolem chase, and
 1138 could halt where the Skolem chase couldn't. An immediate question is “what happens if we
 1139 replace the Skolem chase used in the ASPeRiX computation by some other C -chase, thus
 1140 defining an ASPeRiX C -computation?”

1141 We first show that those different algorithms produce different results, and thus imple-
 1142 ment different semantics. These semantics are discussed in Section 7.1. Then we show in
 1143 Section 7.2 that Proposition 16 does not extend easily to other computations. Finally, in
 1144 Section 7.3, we provide a sufficient condition on negative bodies ensuring termination of
 1145 ASPeRiX computations.

1146 **7.1 Semantics of ASPeRiX C -computations**

1147 In the positive case, all chase variants produce equivalent universal models (up to skolemiza-
 1148 tion). Moreover, running a chase on equivalent knowledge bases produce equivalent results.
 1149 Do these semantic properties still hold with nonmonotonic existential rules? The answer is
 1150 no in general.

1151 The next example shows that the chase variants presented in this paper, core chase
 1152 excepted, may produce non-equivalent results from equivalent knowledge bases.

1153 *Example 19* Let $F = \{p(a, Y), t(Y)\}$ and $F' = \{p(a, Y'), p(a, Y), t(Y)\}$ be two equiv-
 1154 alent atomsets. Let $R : r(U) \leftarrow p(U, V), not t(V)$. For any ASPeRiX C -computation
 1155 other than core chase, there is a single result for $(F, \{R\})$ which is F (or $sk(F)$) and a single
 1156 result for $(F', \{R\})$ which is $F' \cup \{r(a)\}$ (or $sk(F') \cup \{r(a)\}$). These sets are not equivalent.

1157 Of course, if we consider that the initial knowledge base is already skolemized (including
 1158 F seen as a rule), this trouble does not occur with the Skolem-chase since there are no

redundancies in facts and no redundancy can be created by a rule application. This problem does not arise with core chase either. Thus the only two candidates for processing ENM-rules are the core chase and the Skolem chase (if we assume *a priori* skolemisation, which is already a semantic shift).

On the one hand, the core chase is more expensive (since at each step of the breadth-first forward chaining there is a redundancy check possibly accompanied by the computation of a core, which can be done with a number of homomorphism checks linear in the number of facts). On the other hand, the core chase allows to keep the original knowledge base and terminates more often than the Skolem chase.

The choice between both mechanisms is important since, as shown by the next example, they may produce different results even when they both produce a *unique* result. It follows that skolemizing existential rules is not an innocuous transformation in presence of nonmonotonic negation.

Example 20 We consider $F = i(a)$, $R_1 = p(X, Y) \leftarrow i(X)$, $R_2 = q(X, Y) \leftarrow i(X)$, $R_3 = p(X, Y), t(Y) \leftarrow q(X, Y)$. and $R_4 = r(U) \leftarrow p(U, V), \text{not } t(V)$. The core chase produces at first step $p(a, Y_0)$ and $q(a, Y_1)$, then $p(a, Y_1)$ and $t(Y_1)$ and removes the redundant atom $p(a, Y_0)$, hence R_4 is not applicable. The unique result of the ASPeRiX core-computation is $\{i(a), q(a, Y_1), p(a, Y_1), t(Y_1)\}$. With the Skolem chase, the produced atoms are $p(a, f^{R_1}(a))$ and $q(a, f^{R_2}(a))$, then $p(a, f^{R_2}(a))$ and $t(f^{R_2}(a))$. R_4 is applied with $p(U, V)$ mapped to $p(a, f^{R_1}(a))$, which produces $r(a)$. These atoms yield a unique ASPeRiX Skolem-computation result. These results are not equivalent.

The relationships between both kinds of chase applied to nonmonotonic existential rules can be specified as follows: (1) For result S of the ASPeRiX core-computation, there is a result S' of the ASPeRiX Skolem-computation with an homomorphism from S to S' ; (2) the ASPeRiX Skolem-computation may produce strictly more results than the ASPeRiX core-computation, even infinitely many more.

7.2 Termination of ASPeRiX C-computations

We say that the ASPeRiX C -halts on (F, \mathcal{R}) when there exists a finite ASPeRiX C -computation of (F, \mathcal{R}) (in that case, a breadth-first strategy for the rule applications will generate it). We can thus define C -ENM-finite as the class of sets of nonmonotonic existential rules \mathcal{R} for which ASPeRiX C -halts on any (F, \mathcal{R}) . Our first intuition was to assert “if $\text{pos}(\mathcal{R}) \in C$ -finite, then $\mathcal{R} \in C$ -ENM-finite”. However, this property is not true in general, as shown by the following example:

Example 21 Let $\mathcal{R} = \{R_1, R_2\}$ where $R_1 = p(X, Y), h(Y) \leftarrow h(X)$. and $R_2 = p(X, X) \leftarrow p(X, Y), \text{not } h(X)$. See that $\text{pos}(\mathcal{R}) \in \text{core-finite}$ (as soon as R_1 is applied, R_2 is also applied and the loop $p(X, X)$ makes any other rule application redundant); however the only result of an ASPeRiX core-computation of $(\{h(a)\}, \mathcal{R})$ is infinite (because all applications of R_2 are blocked).

The following property shows that the desired property is true for *local* chases.

Proposition 17 *Let \mathcal{R} be a set of ENM-rules and C be a local chase. If $\text{pos}(\mathcal{R}) \in C$ -finite, then $\mathcal{R} \in C$ -ENM-finite.*

1201 We have previously argued that the only two interesting chase variants w.r.t. the desired
 1202 semantic properties are Skolem and core. However, the core-finiteness of the positive part
 1203 of a set of ENM-rules does not ensure the core-stable-finiteness of these rules. We should
 1204 point out now that if $C \geq C'$, then C' -ENM-finiteness implies C -ENM-finiteness. We can
 1205 thus ensure core-ENM-finiteness when C -finiteness of the positive part of rules is ensured
 1206 for a local C -chase.

1207 **Proposition 18** *Let \mathcal{R} be a set of ENM-rules and C be a local chase. If $\text{pos}(\mathcal{R}) \in C$ -finite,*
 1208 *then $\mathcal{R} \in \text{core-ENM-finite}$.*

1209 We can thus rely upon all acyclicity results in this paper (for which the Skolem chase
 1210 halts) to ensure that the ASPeRiX core-computation also halts.

1211 7.3 Using negative bodies to ensure termination

1212 We now explain how negation can be exploited to enhance all previous acyclicity notions.
 1213 We first define the notion of *self-blocking rule*, which is a rule that will never be applied in
 1214 any derivation.

1215 **Definition 25 (Self-blocking rule)** Let $R : H \leftarrow B^+, B_1^-, \dots, B_k^-$ be an ENM-rule. R is
 1216 self-blocking if there is a negative body B_i^- such that $B_i^- \subseteq B^+ \cup H$.

1217 Such a rule will never be applied in a sound way, so will never produce any atom. It
 1218 follows that:

1219 **Proposition 19** *Let \mathcal{R}' be the non-self-blocking rules of \mathcal{R} . If $\text{pos}(\mathcal{R}') \in C$ -finite and C is*
 1220 *local, then $\mathcal{R} \in C$ -ENM-finite.*

1221 This idea can be further extended. We have seen for existential rules that if $R' : H' \leftarrow B'$
 1222 depends on $R : H \leftarrow B$, then there is a unifier μ of B' with H , and we can build a rule
 1223 $R'' = R \diamond_\mu R'$ that captures the sequence of applications encoded by the unifier. We extend
 1224 Definition 23 to take into account negative bodies: if B^- is a negative body of R or R' , then
 1225 $\mu(B^-)$ is a negative body of R'' . We also extend the notion of dependency in a natural way,
 1226 and say that a unifier μ of B' with H is self-blocking when $R \diamond_\mu R'$ is self-blocking, and
 1227 R' depends on R when there exists a unifier of B' with H that is not self-blocking. This
 1228 extended notion of dependency exactly corresponds to the *positive reliance* in [40].

1229 *Example 22* Let $R = r(X, Y) \leftarrow q(X), \text{not } p(X)$. and $R' = p(X), q(Y) \leftarrow r(X, Y)$..
 1230 Their associated positive rules are not core-finite. There is a single unifier μ of R' with
 1231 R , and $R \diamond_\mu R' : r(X, Y), p(X), q(Y) \leftarrow q(X), \text{not } p(X)$. is self-blocking. Then the
 1232 Skolem-chase-tree halts on $(F, \{R, R'\})$ for any F .

1233 Results obtained from positive rules can thus be generalized by considering this extended
 1234 notion of dependency (for \mathcal{PG}^U we only encode non self-blocking unifiers). Note that it
 1235 does not change the complexity of the acyclicity tests.

1236 We can further generalize this and check if a unifier sequence is self-blocking, thus
 1237 extend the Y^{U+} classes to take into account negative bodies. Let us consider a compati-
 1238 ble cycle C going through $[a, i]$ that has not been proven safe. Let C_μ be the set of all
 1239 compatible unifier sequences induced by C . We say that a sequence $\mu_1 \dots \mu_k \in C_\mu$ is

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self-blocking when the rule $R_1 \diamond_{\mu_1} R_2 \dots R_k \diamond_{\mu_k} R_{k+1}$ obtained by combining these uni- 1240
 fiers is self-blocking. When all sequences in C_μ are self-blocking, we say that C is also 1241
 self-blocking. This test comes again at no additional computational cost. 1242

Example 23 Let $R_1 = r(X_1, Y_1) \leftarrow q(X_1), not\ p(X_1).$, $R_2 = s(X_2, Y_2) \leftarrow$ 1243
 $r(X_2, Y_2).$, $R_3 = p(X_3), q(Y_3) \leftarrow s(X_3, Y_3).$. $PG^{U+}(\{R_1, R_2, R_3\})$ has a unique 1244
 cycle, with a unique induced compatible unifier sequence. The rule $R_1 \diamond R_2 \diamond R_3 =$ 1245
 $r(X_1, Y_1), s(X_1, Y_1), p(X_1), q(Y_1) \leftarrow q(X_1), not\ p(X_1).$ is self-blocking, hence $R_1 \diamond R_2 \diamond$ 1246
 $R_3 \diamond R_1$ also is. Thus, there is no “dangerous” cycle. 1247

Proposition 20 *Let \mathcal{R} be a set of ENM-rules. If, for each existential position $[a, i]$ in a rule* 1248
in \mathcal{R} , all compatible cycles for $[a, i]$ in PG^U are self-blocking, then 1249
the ASPeRiX Skolem-computation halts on \mathcal{R} . 1250

8 Conclusion 1251

This paper has presented a new formalism called *existential non-monotonic rules (ENM-* 1252
rules) which integrates ontologies and rules in a unique formalism and offers a computa- 1253
 tional study of this formalism. On one hand, it expands the standard ASP formalism by 1254
 allowing the use of existential variables. On the other hand, it expands the standard existen- 1255
 tial rules formalism by allowing the use of default negation. From a practical point of view, 1256
 the proposed translation from ENM-rules to ASP allows us to use any solvers. But let us note 1257
 that we have implemented this translation as a front-end of the solver ASPeRiX which uses 1258
 on-the-fly grounding [36]. This should help, in the future, for dealing with variables in a 1259
 more efficient way. 1260

Compared to other approaches, the present work has the following advantages: it uses a 1261
 unique formalism and a unique semantics for ontologies and rules; it does not suffer from 1262
 the important restrictions sometimes imposed, such as stratified negation; and it is actually 1263
 implemented. 1264

Moreover, we have revisited chase termination for existential rules with several results. 1265
 First, we have presented a new tool that allows to unify and extend most existing acyclic- 1266
 ity conditions, while keeping good computational properties. Second, we have discussed 1267
 a chase-like mechanism for ENM-rules, and the extension of acyclicity conditions to take 1268
 negation into account. 1269

The main ongoing work consists in dealing efficiently with queries in this framework. 1270
 This is not obvious due to the nonmonotonic aspect of ASP and the potential inconsistency 1271
 of an ASP program. It seems that very little work has been done on these aspects but it is a 1272
 promising way when dealing with ontological information issued from the web. 1273

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