

**Compositional Natural Semantics and Hoare Logics  
for Low-Level Languages**

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## MOTIVATION

- Reasoning about low-level code is important in the context of proof-carrying code (PCC), where proofs must be produced for compiled code to avoid the need to trust a compiler.
- This is considered to be unavoidably clumsy as low-level code is believed to be inherently non-modular: in particular, it is believed that there cannot be compositional logics for low-level languages.

## THIS TALK

- We present a **compositional** natural semantics and a matching Hoare logic for a basic low-level language.
- This is based on two ideas:
  - Pieces of low-level code have an inherent partial commutative monoidal structure given by **finite unions** of pieces of code with non-overlapping supports. Despite its ambiguity, it makes a perfect phrase structure.
  - Differently from statements of a high-level language, pieces of low-level code are **multiple-entry and multiple-exit**.
- The logic supports **compilation of proofs** alongside programs.
- Ando: An extension for a stack-based low-level language and on type systems.

## OUTLINE

- Syntax, natural semantics and Hoare logic of WHILE, a basic high-level language
- Syntax, natural semantics and Hoare logic of SGOTO, a structured version of a basic low-level language GOTO
- Compilation from WHILE to SGOTO
- Compilation from SGOTO to WHILE

## SYNTAX OF WHILE

- There is a supply of program variables  $x \in \mathbf{Var}$ .
- Arithmetic expressions  $a \in \mathbf{AExp}$ , boolean expressions  $b \in \mathbf{BExp}$  and statements  $s \in \mathbf{Stm}$  are defined by the grammar

$$a ::= x \mid n \mid a_0 + a_1 \mid \dots$$
$$b ::= a_0 = a_1 \mid \dots \mid \text{tt} \mid \text{ff} \mid \neg b \mid \dots$$
$$s ::= x := a \mid \text{skip} \mid s_0; s_1 \mid \text{if } b \text{ then } s_0 \text{ else } s_1 \mid \text{while } b \text{ do } s$$

## NATURAL SEMANTICS OF WHILE

- States  $\sigma \in \mathbf{State}$  are stores, i.e., mappings of program variables to integers:  
 $\mathbf{State} =_{\text{df}} \mathbf{Store} =_{\text{df}} \mathbf{Var} \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$ .

- Natural semantics rules:

$$\frac{}{\sigma \succ x := a \rightarrow \sigma[x \mapsto \llbracket a \rrbracket \sigma]} :=_{\text{ns}}$$

$$\frac{}{\sigma \succ \text{skip} \rightarrow \sigma} \text{skip}_{\text{ns}} \qquad \frac{\sigma \succ s_0 \rightarrow \sigma'' \quad \sigma'' \succ s_1 \rightarrow \sigma'}{\sigma \succ s_0; s_1 \rightarrow \sigma'} \text{comp}_{\text{ns}}$$

$$\frac{\sigma \models b \quad \sigma \succ s_t \rightarrow \sigma'}{\sigma \succ \text{if } b \text{ then } s_t \text{ else } s_f \rightarrow \sigma'} \text{if}_{\text{ns}}^{\text{tt}} \qquad \frac{\sigma \not\models b \quad \sigma \succ s_f \rightarrow \sigma'}{\sigma \succ \text{if } b \text{ then } s_t \text{ else } s_f \rightarrow \sigma'} \text{if}_{\text{ns}}^{\text{ff}}$$

$$\frac{\sigma \models b \quad \sigma \succ s \rightarrow \sigma'' \quad \sigma'' \succ \text{while } b \text{ do } s \rightarrow \sigma'}{\sigma \succ \text{while } b \text{ do } s \rightarrow \sigma'} \text{while}_{\text{ns}}^{\text{tt}}$$

$$\frac{\sigma \not\models b}{\sigma \succ \text{while } b \text{ do } s \rightarrow \sigma} \text{while}_{\text{ns}}^{\text{ff}}$$

## HOARE LOGIC OF WHILE

- Assertions  $P \in \text{Assn}$  are logic formulae over the signature of arithmetic extended with the program variables  $x \in \text{Var}$  as constants.
- Hoare rules:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \frac{}{\{Q[x \mapsto a]\} x := a \{Q\}} :=_{\text{hoa}} \\
 \\
 \frac{}{\{P\} \text{skip} \{P\}} \text{skip}_{\text{hoa}} \quad \frac{\{P\} s_0 \{R\} \quad \{R\} s_1 \{Q\}}{\{P\} s_0; s_1 \{Q\}} \text{comp}_{\text{hoa}} \\
 \\
 \frac{\{b \wedge P\} s_t \{Q\} \quad \{\neg b \wedge P\} s_f \{Q\}}{\{P\} \text{if } b \text{ then } s_t \text{ else } s_f \{Q\}} \text{if}_{\text{hoa}} \quad \frac{\{b \wedge P\} s \{P\}}{\{P\} \text{while } b \text{ do } s \{\neg b \wedge P\}} \text{while}_{\text{hoa}} \\
 \\
 \frac{P \models P' \quad \{P'\} s \{Q'\} \quad Q' \models Q}{\{P\} s \{Q\}} \text{conseq}_{\text{hoa}}
 \end{array}$$

- **Theorem (Soundness)** If  $\{P\} s \{Q\}$ , then, for any  $\sigma, \sigma'$  and  $\alpha$ ,  $\sigma \models_{\alpha} P$  and  $\sigma \succ_{s \rightarrow} \sigma'$  imply  $\sigma' \models_{\alpha} Q$ .
- The weakest liberal precondition of a statement:  $\text{wlp}(s, Q)$  is some assertion  $P$  such that  $\sigma \models_{\alpha} P$  for a state  $\sigma$  and valuation  $\alpha$  iff  $\sigma \succ_{s \rightarrow} \sigma'$  implies  $\sigma' \models_{\alpha} Q$  for any state  $\sigma'$ .
- **Lemma**  $\{\text{wlp}(s, Q)\} s \{Q\}$ .
- **Theorem (Completeness)** If, for any  $\sigma, \sigma'$  and  $\alpha$ ,  $\sigma \models_{\alpha} P$  and  $\sigma \succ_{s \rightarrow} \sigma'$  imply  $\sigma' \models_{\alpha} Q$ , then  $\{P\} s \{Q\}$ .



## SYNTAX OF GOTO

- Labels  $\ell \in \mathbf{Label}$  are natural numbers:  $\mathbf{Label} =_{\text{df}} \mathbb{N}$ .
- Instructions  $instr \in \mathbf{Instr}$  are defined by the grammar

$$instr ::= x := a \mid \text{goto } \ell \mid \text{ifnot } b \text{ goto } \ell$$

- Labelled instructions  $(\ell, instr) \in \mathbf{LInstr}$  are pairs of labels and instructions:  $\mathbf{LInstr} =_{\text{df}} \mathbf{Label} \times \mathbf{Instr}$ .
- A piece of code  $c \in \mathbf{Code}$  is a finite set of labelled instructions:  $\mathbf{Code} = \mathcal{P}_{\text{fin}}(\mathbf{LInstr})$ .
- The domain of a piece of code:  $\text{dom}(c) =_{\text{df}} \{\ell \mid (\ell, instr) \in c\}$ .
- Wellformedness of a piece of code:  $c$  is wellformed iff  $(\ell, instr) \in c$  and  $(\ell, instr') \in c$  imply  $instr = instr'$ .

## SEMANTICS OF GOTO

- States  $(l, \sigma) \in \mathbf{State}$  are pairs of a label (a value for the pc) and a store (values for the program variables):  $\mathbf{State} =_{\text{df}} \mathbf{Label} \times \mathbf{Store}$ .
- Single-step reduction is defined by the rules

$$\frac{(l, x := a) \in c}{c \vdash (l, \sigma) \rightarrow (l + 1, \sigma[x \mapsto \llbracket a \rrbracket \sigma])} := \frac{(l, \text{goto } m) \in c}{c \vdash (l, \sigma) \rightarrow (m, \sigma)} \text{ goto}$$
$$\frac{(l, \text{ifnot } b \text{ goto } m) \in c \quad \sigma \models b}{c \vdash (l, \sigma) \rightarrow (l + 1, \sigma)} \text{ ifngoto}^{\text{tt}} \quad \frac{(l, \text{ifnot } b \text{ goto } m) \in c \quad \sigma \not\models b}{c \vdash (l, \sigma) \rightarrow (m, \sigma)} \text{ ifngoto}^{\text{ff}}$$

Multi-step reduction is the reflexive-transitive closure.

## SYNTAX OF SGOTO

- Labels  $\ell \in \mathbf{Label}$  are natural numbers:  $\mathbf{Label} =_{\text{df}} \mathbb{N}$ .
- Instructions  $instr \in \mathbf{Instr}$  and pieces of structured code  $sc \in \mathbf{SCode}$  are defined by the grammar

$$instr ::= x := a \mid \text{goto } \ell \mid \text{ifnot } b \text{ goto } \ell$$

$$sc ::= (\ell, instr) \mid \mathbf{0} \mid sc_0 \oplus sc_1$$

- The domain of a piece of code:  $\text{dom}((\ell, instr)) = \{\ell\}$ ,  $\text{dom}(\mathbf{0}) = \emptyset$ , and  $\text{dom}(sc_0 \oplus sc_1) = \text{dom}(sc_0) \cup \text{dom}(sc_1)$ .
- Wellformedness of a piece of code:  $(\ell, instr)$  is wellformed,  $\mathbf{0}$  is wellformed, and  $sc_0 \oplus sc_1$  is wellformed iff both  $sc_0$ , and  $sc_1$  are wellformed and  $\text{dom}(sc_0) \cap \text{dom}(sc_1) = \emptyset$ .
- Forgetful function  $U \in \mathbf{SCode} \rightarrow \mathbf{Code}$ :  $U((\ell, instr)) = \{(\ell, instr)\}$ ,  $U(\mathbf{0}) = \emptyset$ ,  $U(sc_0 \oplus sc_1) = U(sc_0) \cup U(sc_1)$ .

## NATURAL SEMANTICS OF SGOTO

- States  $(l, \sigma) \in \mathbf{State}$  are pairs of a pc value and a store  
 $\mathbf{State} =_{\text{df}} \mathbf{Label} \times \mathbf{Store}$ .
- Natural semantics rules:

$$\frac{}{(l, \sigma) \succ (l, x := a) \rightarrow (l + 1, \sigma[x \mapsto \llbracket a \rrbracket \sigma])} :=_{\text{ns}}$$

$$\frac{m \neq l}{(l, \sigma) \succ (l, \text{goto } m) \rightarrow (m, \sigma)} \text{goto}_{\text{ns}}$$

$$\frac{\sigma \models b}{(l, \sigma) \succ (l, \text{ifnot } b \text{ goto } m) \rightarrow (l + 1, \sigma)} \text{ifngoto}_{\text{ns}}^{\text{tt}}$$

$$\frac{\sigma \not\models b \quad m \neq l}{(l, \sigma) \succ (l, \text{ifnot } b \text{ goto } m) \rightarrow (m, \sigma)} \text{ifngoto}_{\text{ns}}^{\text{ff}}$$

$$\frac{\ell \in \text{dom}(sc_0) \quad (\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc_0} \rightarrow (\ell', \sigma') \quad (\ell', \sigma') \succ_{sc_0 \oplus sc_1} \rightarrow (\ell'', \sigma'')}{(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc_0 \oplus sc_1} \rightarrow (\ell'', \sigma'')} \oplus_{\text{ns}}^0$$

$$\frac{\ell \in \text{dom}(sc_1) \quad (\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc_1} \rightarrow (\ell', \sigma') \quad (\ell', \sigma') \succ_{sc_0 \oplus sc_1} \rightarrow (\ell'', \sigma'')}{(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc_0 \oplus sc_1} \rightarrow (\ell'', \sigma'')} \oplus_{\text{ns}}^1$$

$$\frac{\ell \notin \text{dom}(sc)}{(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc} \rightarrow (\ell, \sigma)} \text{ood}_{\text{ns}}$$

- **Lemma (Postlabels)** If  $(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc} \rightarrow (\ell', \sigma')$ , then  $\ell' \notin \text{dom}(sc)$ .
- **Theorem (Preservation of evaluations as stuck reduction sequences)**  
If  $(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc} \rightarrow (\ell', \sigma')$ , then  $U(sc) \vdash (\ell, \sigma) \twoheadrightarrow^* (\ell', \sigma') \not\rightsquigarrow$ .
- **Theorem (Reflection of stuck reduction sequences as evaluations)**  
If  $U(sc) \vdash (\ell_0, \sigma_0) \twoheadrightarrow^k (\ell_k, \sigma_k) \not\rightsquigarrow$ , then  $(\ell_0, \sigma_0) \succ_{sc} \rightarrow (\ell_k, \sigma_k)$ .

- **Theorem (Neutrality wrt chosen phrase structure)**

If  $U(sc_0) = U(sc_1)$ , then  $sc_0 \cong sc_1$

(meaning that  $(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc_0} \rightarrow (\ell', \sigma')$  iff  $(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc_1} \rightarrow (\ell', \sigma')$  for any states  $(\ell, \sigma)$ ,  $(\ell', \sigma')$ ).

- **Corollary (Partial commutative monoidal structure)**

1.  $(sc_0 \oplus sc_1) \oplus sc_2 \cong sc_0 \oplus (sc_1 \oplus sc_2)$ ,

2.  $\mathbf{0} \oplus sc \cong sc \cong sc \oplus \mathbf{0}$ ,

3.  $sc_0 \oplus sc_1 \cong sc_1 \oplus sc_0$ .

## HOARE RULES OF SGOTO

- Assertions are logic formulae over the signature of arithmetic extended with a special symbol  $pc$  and program variables  $x \in \mathbf{Var}$  as constants.
- Hoare rules:

$$\frac{}{\{(pc = \ell \wedge Q[(pc, x) \mapsto (\ell + 1, a)]) \vee (pc \neq \ell \wedge Q)\} (\ell, x := a) \{Q\}} :=_{\text{hoa}}$$

$$\frac{}{\{(pc = \ell \wedge (Q[pc \mapsto m] \vee m = \ell)) \vee (pc \neq \ell \wedge Q)\} (\ell, \text{goto } m) \{Q\}} \text{goto}_{\text{hoa}}$$

$$\frac{}{\left\{ \begin{array}{l} (pc = \ell \wedge ((b \wedge Q[pc \mapsto \ell + 1]) \\ \vee (\neg b \wedge (Q[pc \mapsto m] \vee m = \ell)))) \\ \vee (pc \neq \ell \wedge Q) \end{array} \right\} (\ell, \text{ifnot } b \text{ goto } m) \{Q\}} \text{ifngoto}_{\text{hoa}}$$

$$\frac{}{\{P\} \mathbf{0} \{P\}} \mathbf{0}_{\text{hoa}}$$

$$\frac{\{pc \in \text{dom}(sc_0) \wedge P\} sc_0 \{P\} \quad \{pc \in \text{dom}(sc_1) \wedge P\} sc_1 \{P\}}{\{P\} sc_0 \oplus sc_1 \{pc \notin \text{dom}(sc_0) \wedge pc \notin \text{dom}(sc_1) \wedge P\}} \oplus_{\text{hoa}}$$

$$\frac{P \models P' \quad \{P'\} sc \{Q'\} \quad Q' \models Q}{\{P\} sc \{Q\}} \text{conseq}_{\text{hoa}}$$

- **Theorem (Soundness)** If  $\{P\} sc \{Q\}$ , then, for any  $\ell_0, \sigma_0, \ell', \sigma'$  and  $\alpha$ ,  $(\ell_0, \sigma_0) \models_{\alpha} P$  and  $(\ell_0, \sigma_0) \succ_{sc} \rightarrow (\ell', \sigma')$  imply  $(\ell', \sigma') \models_{\alpha} Q$ .
- The weakest liberal precondition of a piece of code:  $\text{wlp}(sc, Q)$  is some assertion  $P$  such that  $(\ell, \sigma) \models_{\alpha} P$  for a state  $(\ell, \sigma)$  and valuation  $\alpha$  iff  $(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc} \rightarrow (\ell', \sigma')$  implies  $(\ell', \sigma') \models_{\alpha} Q$  for any state  $(\ell', \sigma')$ .
- **Lemma**  $\{\text{wlp}(s, Q)\} sc \{Q\}$ .
- **Theorem (Completeness)** If, for any  $\ell_0, \sigma_0, \ell', \sigma'$  and  $\alpha$ ,  $(\ell_0, \sigma_0) \models_{\alpha} P$  and  $(\ell_0, \sigma_0) \succ_{sc} \rightarrow (\ell', \sigma')$  imply  $(\ell', \sigma') \models_{\alpha} Q$ , then  $\{P\} sc \{Q\}$ .



## COMPILATION FROM WHILE TO SGOTO

- Compilation rules:

$$\frac{}{x := a \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell+1 (\ell, x := a)}$$

$$\frac{}{\text{skip} \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell \mathbf{0}}$$

$$\frac{s_0 \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell'' SC_0 \quad s_1 \xrightarrow{\ell''} \ell' SC_1}{s_0; s_1 \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell' SC_0 \oplus SC_1}$$

$$s_t \xrightarrow{\ell+1} \ell'' SC_t \quad s_f \xrightarrow{\ell''+1} \ell' SC_f$$

$$\frac{}{\text{if } b \text{ then } s_t \text{ else } s_f \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell' (\ell, \text{ifnot } b \text{ goto } \ell' + 1) \oplus ((SC_t \oplus (\ell'', \text{goto } \ell')) \oplus SC_f)}$$

$$s \xrightarrow{\ell+1} \ell'' SC$$

$$\frac{}{\text{while } b \text{ do } s \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell''+1 (\ell, \text{ifnot } b \text{ goto } \ell'' + 1) \oplus (SC \oplus (\ell'', \text{goto } \ell))}$$

- **Lemma (Domain of compiled code)**

If  $s \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell' sc$ , then  $\text{dom}(sc) = [\ell, \ell']$ .

- **Theorem (Preservation of evaluations)**

If  $s \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell' sc$  and  $\sigma \succ_{s \rightarrow} \sigma'$ , then  $(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc \rightarrow} (\ell', \sigma')$ .

- **Theorem (Reflection of evaluations)**

If  $s \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell' sc$  and  $(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc \rightarrow} (\ell'', \sigma')$ , then  $\ell' = \ell''$  and  $\sigma \succ_{s \rightarrow} \sigma'$ .

- **Theorem (Preservation of derivable Hoare triples)**

If  $s \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell' sc$  and  $\{P\} s \{Q\}$ , then  $\{pc = \ell \wedge P\} sc \{pc = \ell' \wedge Q\}$ .

- **Theorem (Reflection of derivable Hoare triples)**

If  $s \xrightarrow{\ell} \ell' sc$  and  $\{P\} sc \{Q\}$ , then  $\{P[pc \mapsto \ell]\} s \{Q[pc \mapsto \ell']\}$ .





where

$$\begin{aligned} I_1 &=_{\text{df}} pc = 1 \wedge x = 0 \wedge s = 1 & I_3 &=_{\text{df}} pc = 3 \wedge x \leq n \wedge s * x = x! \\ I_{1'} &=_{\text{df}} pc = 1 \wedge x \leq n \wedge s = x! & I_4 &=_{\text{df}} pc = 4 \wedge x \leq n \wedge s = x! \\ I_2 &=_{\text{df}} pc = 2 \wedge x < n \wedge x \leq n \wedge s = x! & I_5 &=_{\text{df}} pc = 5 \wedge x \not\leq n \wedge x \leq n \wedge s = x! \\ I_{2'} &=_{\text{df}} pc = 2 \wedge x < n \wedge s = x! & I_{5'} &=_{\text{df}} pc = 5 \wedge x = n \wedge s = x! \\ I_{2''} &=_{\text{df}} pc = 2 \wedge x + 1 \leq n \wedge s * (x + 1) = (x + 1)! \end{aligned}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} J_{1'} &=_{\text{df}} (pc = 1 \wedge ((x < n \wedge I_{25}[pc \mapsto 2]) \vee (x \not\leq n \wedge (I_{25}[pc \mapsto 5] \vee 5 = 1)))) \vee (pc \neq 1 \wedge I_{25}) \\ J_{2''} &=_{\text{df}} (pc = 2 \wedge I_3[(pc, x) \mapsto (2, x + 1)]) \vee (pc \neq 2 \wedge I_3) \\ J_3 &=_{\text{df}} (pc = 3 \wedge I_4[(pc, s) \mapsto (3, s * x)]) \vee (pc \neq 3 \wedge I_4) \\ J_4 &=_{\text{df}} (pc = 4 \wedge (I_{1'}[pc \mapsto 4] \vee 1 = 4)) \vee (pc \neq 4 \wedge I_{1'}) \end{aligned}$$

## COMPILATION FROM SGOTO TO WHILE

- Rules of compilation from SGOTO to WHILE:

$$\frac{}{(\ell, x := a) \nearrow \text{if } x_{pc} = \ell \text{ then } x := a; x_{pc} := x_{pc} + 1 \text{ else skip}}$$

$$\frac{}{(\ell, \text{goto } m) \nearrow \text{while } x_{pc} = \ell \text{ do } x_{pc} := m}$$

$$\frac{}{(\ell, \text{ifnot } b \text{ goto } m) \nearrow \text{while } x_{pc} = \ell \text{ do (if } b \text{ then } x_{pc} := \ell + 1 \text{ else } x_{pc} := m)}$$

$$\frac{}{\mathbf{0} \nearrow \text{skip}}$$

$$\frac{sc_0 \nearrow s_0 \quad sc_1 \nearrow s_1}{sc_0 \oplus sc_1 \nearrow \begin{array}{l} \text{while } x_{pc} \in \text{dom}(sc_0) \vee x_{pc} \in \text{dom}(sc_1) \text{ do} \\ \text{(if } x_{pc} \in \text{dom}(sc_0) \text{ then } s_0 \text{ else } s_1) \end{array}}$$

- **Theorem (Preservation of evaluations)**

If  $sc \nearrow s$  and  $(\ell, \sigma) \succ_{sc} (\ell', \sigma')$ , then  $\sigma[x_{pc} \mapsto \ell] \succ_s \sigma'[x_{pc} \mapsto \ell']$ .

- **Theorem (Reflection of evaluations)**

If  $sc \nearrow s$  and  $\sigma \succ_s \sigma'$ , then  $(\sigma(x_{pc}), \sigma[x_{pc} \mapsto n]) \succ_{sc} (\sigma'(x_{pc}), \sigma'[x_{pc} \mapsto n])$ .

- **Theorem (Preservation of derivable Hoare triples)**

If  $sc \nearrow s$  and  $\{P\} sc \{Q\}$ , then  $\{P[pc \mapsto x_{pc}]\} s \{Q[pc \mapsto x_{pc}]\}$ .

- **Theorem (Reflection of derivable Hoare triples)**

If  $sc \nearrow s$  and  $\{P\} s \{Q\}$ , then  $\{P[x_{pc} \mapsto pc]\} sc \{Q[x_{pc} \mapsto pc]\}$ .

## RELATED WORK

- In early days of Hoare logic, considerable attention was paid to structured high-level languages with general or restricted jumps: conditional Hoare triples to make use of label invariants (Clint & Hoare, Kowaltowski, de Bruin), multiple-postcondition Hoare triples to reflect that statements involving `gotos` are multiple-exit (Arbib & Alagić).
- Reasoning about unstructured low-level language code has attracted interest in relation to PCC. Quigley's work is based on decompilation, Benton's logic makes use of global label invariants as the logic of de Bruin.
- Tan and Appel (2005) use finite unions and the idea that low-level code is multiple-entry, multiple-exit. But their logic is continuation-style and adopts a non-standard interpretation of Hoare triples via approximations of falsity.



## CONCLUSION

- Nothing beyond the structure given by finite unions is needed to give a low-level language a compositional natural semantics and Hoare logic with every desirable property.
- The semantic and logic descriptions so obtained are no more complicated than the standard ones for high-level languages.
- The logic description supports compilation of proofs alongside programs.
- The structure of finite unions is natural from practical point of view.