

## Exercise 5

**Problem 1.** A *binary consensus* shared object has a single operation *propose* that takes a value  $v$  equal to 0 or 1 as an argument, and returns 0 or 1. When a process  $p_i$  invokes *propose*( $v$ ), we say that  $p_i$  proposes value  $v$ . When  $p_i$  has returned value  $v'$  from *propose*( $v$ ), we say that  $p_i$  decides value  $v'$  (notice that  $v'$  does not have to be equal to  $v$ ). A binary consensus object satisfies the following properties:

**Agreement** No two processes decide different values.

**Validity** The value decided is one of the values proposed.

A *write-once register* is a shared object with the following sequential specification. Assume  $x$  is initially equal to  $\perp$  and  $v$  is always different than  $\perp$ .

```
upon write(v)
  if x =  $\perp$  then x := v
  return ok
```

```
upon read
  return x
```

Your tasks are:

1. To implement a binary consensus object using any number of write- once registers;
2. Explain why your algorithms satisfy the **Agreement** and **Validity** properties.

**Problem 2.** Consider the *binary consensus* problem from the previous exercise. Recall that this abstraction satisfies the following properties:

**Agreement** No two processes decide different values.

**Validity** The value decided is one of the values proposed.

Recall that processes might in fact *crash*, i.e. stop taking steps, at any point during the execution of an algorithm. We add an extra condition on progress:

**Termination** Every process that does not crash will eventually decide.

Assume the following theorem is true:

**Theorem 1 (FLP)** *Binary consensus is impossible among  $N$  processes, if one of them might fail by crashing, in an asynchronous system that disposes of binary SRSW safe registers<sup>1</sup>.*

<sup>1</sup>In fact, this is one of the major results in distributed computing, first stated by Fisher, Lynch and Patterson, in their paper “Impossibility of Distributed Consensus with One Faulty Process” in 1985. For details, see the presentation in the Encyclopedia of Algorithms (available on Google Books), or the original paper, which is quite readable.

Using what you already know about registers, prove the following result. (Hint: you may use existing results given in the lecture.)

**Theorem 2 (Students' FLP)** *Binary consensus is impossible among  $N$  processes, if one of them might fail by crashing, in an asynchronous system that disposes of MRMW atomic registers.*

**Problem 3.** Assuming the results in Problem 2, prove or disprove the following statement:

**Theorem 3 (Write-Once Registers)** *There is no implementation of a write-once register from MWMR atomic registers.*