

Maintaining Ad-Hoc Communication Network in Area Protection Scenarios with Adversarial Agents

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Abstract

We address a problem of area protection in graph-based scenarios with multiple mobile agents where connectivity is maintained among agents to ensure they can communicate. The problem consists of two adversarial teams of agents that move in an undirected graph shared by both teams. Agents are placed in vertices of the graph; at most one agent can occupy a vertex; and they can move into adjacent vertices in a conflict free way. Teams have asymmetric goals: the aim of one team - *attackers* - is to invade into given area while the aim of the opponent team - *defenders* - is to protect the area from being entered by attackers by occupying selected vertices. The team of defenders need to maintain connectivity of vertices occupied by its own agents in a visibility graph. The visibility graph models possibility of communication between pairs of vertices.

We study strategies for allocating vertices to be occupied by the team of defenders to block attacking agents where connectivity is maintained at the same time. To do this we reserve a subset of defending agents that do not try to block the attackers but instead are placed to support connectivity of the team. The performance of strategies is tested in multiple benchmarks. The success of a strategy is heavily dependent on the type of the instance, and so one of the contributions of this work is that we identify suitable strategies for diverse instance types.

INTRODUCTION

In this work we study a generalization of *Area Protection Problem* (APP) with connectivity maintenance (APPC). APP is already a computationally hard problem (Ivanova, Surynek, and Hirayama 2018) (namely PSPACE-hard). In addition to APP, where two teams of mobile agents move in an undirected graph in a conflict free way, a possibility of communication among agents is required in APPC. APP itself can be regarded as a modification of known problem of *Adversarial Cooperative Path Finding* (ACPF) (Ivanová and Surynek 2014) where two teams of agents compete in reaching their target positions. Unlike ACPF, where the goals of teams of agents are symmetric - agents of each team try to reach their targets as first, the adversarial teams in APP have different objectives. The first team of *attackers* contains

agents whose goal is to reach a pre-defined target location in the area being protected by the second team of *defenders*. Each attacker has a unique target in the protected area, and each target is assigned to exactly one attacker. The opponent team of defenders tries to prevent the attackers from reaching their targets by occupying selected locations, referred to as *destinations*, so that they cannot be passed by attackers. Specially in APPC, we require that vertices occupied by the defender team always form a connected subgraph with respect to the visibility graph. We assume that both teams use the same *cooperative path-finding* (CPF) algorithm for reaching temporarily selected locations.

Another distinction between ACPF and APP is a definition of victory of a team. A team in ACPF wins if all its agents reach their targets and agents of no other team manage to do so earlier. In APP, the team of defenders wins if all attackers are kept out of their targets. Our effort is to design destination allocation strategies for the defending team. A hard constraint that can never be violated will be that defending agents always form a connected component. Success of the strategy is measured from the defenders' perspective via an objective function which plays a role of soft constraint (area protection may not be perfect). The following objective functions can be pursued:

1. maximize the number of target locations that are not captured by the corresponding attacker
2. maximize the number of targets that are not captured by the corresponding attacker within a given time limit
3. maximize the sum of distances between the attackers and their corresponding targets
4. minimize the time spent at captured targets

The common feature of APP, APPC and other related problems is that once a location is occupied by an agent it cannot be entered by another agent until it is first vacated by the agent which occupies it (opposing agent cannot push it out). This property represents a key tool for the defenders to protect the area.

APPC has many real-life motivations from the domains of access denial operations, robotics with adversarial teams of robots or other type of penetrators (Agmon, Kaminka, and Kraus 2011), and computer games. In most practical applications, agents of given team need to communicate with

each other while individual robots can communicate at short visual range only as it has been already done in contemporary multi-robot systems. Hence it needs to be ensured that the communication reaches every agent of the team. Such property can be modeled as connectivity over the visibility graph whose edges represent possibility of communication between pairs of vertices.

Our contribution consists in suggesting several on-line solving strategies for defenders that determine suitable vertices to be occupied by defenders so that attacker agents cannot pass into the protected area, and connectivity in the defender team is maintained. We conduct an experimental evaluation of the proposed strategies and assess their suitability for diverse types of APPC instances.

Communication Maintenance

APPC requires, in addition to APP, that any two defenders are able to communicate with each other at any time during their movement. The communication within the team of defenders is modeled by a connectivity of subgraph of the visibility graph induced by the set of occupied vertices. The visibility graph is derived from the graph in which agents move; it has the same set of vertices, but the set of edges is different in general. This assumption allows us to model the inability to communicate of two agents, if there is an obstacle between them.

In various practical applications of APP, the possibility of sending messages among the agents is often demanded. Agents may be equipped by an omnidirectional antenna or visual communication device (such as LEDs and IR sensors (Rubenstein et al. 2014)), and hence a message reaches all nodes within the communication range of its sender. This feature is often referred to as wireless advantage (Wieselthier, Nguyen, and Ephremides 2002). We assume that the agents have equal and constant communication range, and that they can also work as transceivers, which means that they have the ability to both transmit and receive a signal.

Related Work

APPC, APP, as well as ACPF share the way how movement of agents is treated with the basic variant of *cooperative path-finding problem - CPF (multi-agent path-finding - MAPF)* (Silver 2005; Ryan 2008; Wang and Botea 2011). In CPF, the task is to plan the movement of agents so that each agent reaches its unique target in a conflict free manner. Movements of agents in APPC at the low reactive level are assumed to be planned by some CPF algorithm where agents of own team cooperate while the opposing agents are considered as obstacles.

There exist multiple CPF algorithms both complete and incomplete as well as optimal and sub-optimal under various objective functions. A good compromise between quality of solutions and the speed of solving is represented by suboptimal/incomplete search based methods which are derived from the standard A^* algorithm. These methods include LRA^* , CA^* , HCA^* , and $WHCA^*$ (Silver 2005). They provide solutions where individual paths of agents tend to be close to respective shortest paths connecting agents' locations and their targets. Conflict avoidance among agents

is implemented via a so called reservation table in case of CA^* , HCA^* , and $WHCA^*$. Another approach is LRA^* which plans path for individual agents independently using A^* , and relies on replanning whenever a conflict occurs. Since our setting in APPC is inherently suitable for a replanning algorithm, LRA^* is a candidate for the underlying CPF algorithm for APPC. Moreover LRA^* is scalable for large number of agents which is expected to happen in APPC.

Aside from CPF algorithms, systems with mobile agents that act in the adversarial manner represent another related area. These studies often focus on patrolling strategies that are robust with respect to various attackers trying to penetrate through the patrol path (Elmaliach, Agmon, and Kaminka 2009). Theoretical works related to APP also include studies on *pursuit evasion* (Vidal et al. 2002) or *predator-prey* (Haynes and Sen 1995) problems. The major difference between these works and the concept of APP/APPC is that we consider a relatively higher number of agents and our agents are more limited in their abilities.

DEFINITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The environment in APPC is modeled by an undirected unweighted graph $G = (V, E)$. In this work we restrict the instances to 4-connected grid graphs with possible missing vertices indicating obstacles. Agents are not considered as obstacles. The team of attackers and defenders is denoted by $A = \{a_1, \dots, a_m\}$ and $D = \{d_1, \dots, d_n\}$, respectively. Continuous time is divided into discrete time steps. At each time step agents are placed in vertices of the graph so that at most one agent is placed in each vertex. Let $\alpha_t : A \cup D \rightarrow V$ be a uniquely invertible mapping denoting configuration of agents at time step t . Agents can wait or move instantaneously into adjacent vertex between successive time steps to form the next configuration α_{t+1} . Abiding by the following movement rules ensures preventing conflicts:

- An agent can move to an adjacent vertex only if the vertex is empty, or is being vacated at the same time step by another agent
- No two agents enter the same vertex at the same time
- A pair of agents cannot swap across an edge

We do not assume any specific order in which agents perform their conflict free actions at each time step. However, our experimental implementation moves all attacking agents prior to moving all defender agents at each time step. The mapping $\delta^A : A \rightarrow V$ assigns a unique target to each attacker. The task in APP is to move defender agents so that area specified by δ^A is protected. This task can be equivalently specified as a search for strategy of destination assignments for the defender team. That is, we are trying to find an injective mapping $\delta_t^D : D \rightarrow V$ which specifies where defender agents should proceed at time step t as a response to previous attackers movements. The superscripts A and D are sometimes dropped when there is no danger of confusion.

From APP to APPC

APPC generalizes APP by considering connectivity constraints. As we assume that G is always a grid graph we can introduce connectivity constraints in the following way.

Consider an embedding of G in a plane such that all edges have length 1 and each vertex $v \in V$ has coordinates (x_v, y_v) . The physical location l_v represented by v is the unit square area centered at $C_v = (x_v, y_v)$. Furthermore, let O denote the set of square locations representing obstacles.

Let r be the visibility range, i.e. the maximum distance between two locations such that two agents located at them can communicate together. The locations l_u and l_v can communicate with each other if the line segment $C_u C_v$ does not intersect any obstacle and the length of the shortest path p_{uv} from u to v is at most r ; shortly we say that l_u is visible from l_v and vice-versa. The visibility graph $G_r = (V, E_r)$ for a visibility range r contains edges between every two vertices that are mutually visible, formally: $(u, v) \in E_r \Leftrightarrow C_u C_v \cap O = \emptyset \wedge |p_{uv}| \leq r$. For any $S \subseteq V$ we use $G_r[S]$ in order to denote a subgraph of G_r induced by S . Finally, let S_t be the set of vertices occupied by defenders in time step t . Formally, $S_t = \{\delta_t^D(d) : d \in D\}$.

APPC is stated as a decision problem as follows:

Definition 1. *The decision APPC problem: Given an instance $\Sigma = (G, A, D, \alpha_0, \delta^A, r)$ of APPC, is there a strategy of destination allocations $\delta_t^D : D \rightarrow V$ such that $G_r[S_t]$ is connected for each $t = 0, 1, 2, \dots$, and such that the team D of defenders is able to prevent all attackers from reaching their targets by moving defending agents according to δ_t^D .*

Typically it is not possible to protect all targets. We are therefore also interested in the optimization variant:

Definition 2. *The optimization APPC problem: Given an instance $\Sigma = (G, A, D, \alpha_0, \delta^A, r)$ of APPC, the task is to find a strategy of destination allocations $\delta_t^D : D \rightarrow V$ such that $G_r[S_t]$ is connected for each $t = 0, 1, 2, \dots$, and such that the team D of defenders minimizes the number of attackers that reach their target by moving defenders according to δ_t^D .*

DESTINATION ALLOCATION

Since solving APPC in practice is a challenging problem due to its high computational complexity, designed methods are inexact and heuristic. Owing to the large search space we do not consider game-theoretic approaches even though the problem can be regarded as a two-player game. Our solving approaches are based on a technique called *destination allocation*. The basic idea is to assign a destination vertex to each defender and subsequently use some CPF algorithm adapted for the environment with adversaries, and to lead each defender to its destination while satisfying the connectivity constraint. A defender may be allocated to any vertex, including the attackers' targets. Solving approaches can be divided into two basic categories: *single-stage* and *multi-stage*. In single stage methods, targets are assigned to defenders only once at the beginning, as opposed to multi-stage methods, where the destinations can be reassigned any time during the agents' course. In our implementation, once all defenders are allocated to some destinations, they try to get to the desired locations using adapted LRA* algorithm. This work focuses merely on the single-stage methods. In all the studied strategies, every agent is allocated to exactly one location and every location is assigned to at most one defender. Attackers react on defenders by replanning within

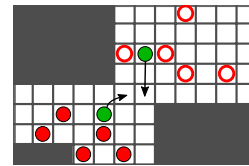


Figure 1: An example of bottleneck blocking. The defenders (green circles) may protect all the targets (empty red circles) from attackers (red circles) if they move to locations marked by the two arrows.

LRA* if they find that their original path is blocked. Let us recall several destinations allocation strategies and discuss their properties (Ivanova, Surynek, and Hirayama 2018).

Random Allocation

For the sake of comparison, we consider a strategy, where each defender is allocated to a random target of an attacker. Neither the agent location nor the underlying grid graph structure is exploited.

Greedy Allocation

A greedy strategy is slightly improved approach. It takes the defenders one by one in a random order and allocates them to their closest target of an attacker. The greedy as well as the random strategy do not consider initial locations of attackers and do not exploit the structure of underlying graph in any way. These two methods always allocate defenders to given targets of attackers. The advantage of this approach is that if a defender manages to reach its assigned target, it will never be captured by the attacker aiming for that target. This can be useful in scenarios where the number of defenders is similar to the number of attackers. Unfortunately, such a strategy would not be very successful in instances where attackers significantly outnumber defenders.

Bottleneck Simulation Allocation

The idea behind the bottleneck simulation strategy is to gain some information from the map structure and the positions of attackers and assign defenders to vertices that would divert attackers from the protected area as much as possible. The aim is to successfully defend the targets even with a small number of defenders, as illustrated in Fig. 1.

We attempt to identify strategic bottlenecks and block them by defenders. In order to discover bottlenecks of general shape, we develop the following simulation strategy exploiting the underlying grid graph. The basic idea is that as attackers move towards the targets, they are expected to pass through vertices close to a bottleneck more often than through other vertices. This observation suggests to simulate the movement of the attackers and find frequently visited vertices. As defenders do not share the knowledge about paths being followed by attackers, frequently visited vertices are determined by a simulation in which paths of attackers are estimated.

After obtaining such a frequently visited vertex, we then explore its vicinity up to a given distance. If we find out

that there is indeed a bottleneck, its vertices are assigned to some defenders as their new destinations. Under the assumption that the bottleneck is blocked by defenders, the paths of attackers may substantially change. For that reason we estimate the paths again and find the next frequent vertex of which vicinity is searched for bottlenecks. The whole process is repeated until all available defenders are allocated to a destination, or until no more bottlenecks are found. Alg. 1 describes this procedure more formally.

```

Data:  $G = (V, E), D, A$ 
Result: Destination allocation  $\delta^D$ 
 $D_{\text{available}} = D;$  // Defenders to be allocated
 $F = \emptyset;$  // Set of forbidden locations
 $\delta'_A = \text{Random guess of } \delta_A;$ 
while  $D_{\text{available}} \neq \emptyset$  do
  for  $a \in A$  do
    /* find the shortest path in  $G$  between an
       attacker  $a$  and its estimated target,
       that avoids passing through the
       forbidden locations in  $F$  */
     $p_a = \text{shortestPath}(\alpha_0(a), \delta'_A(a), G, F);$ 
  end
   $f(v) = |\{p_a : a \in A \wedge v \in p_a\}|;$  // Frequency of  $v$ 
   $w \in \arg \max_{v \in V} f(v);$ 
   $B = \text{exploreVicinity}(w);$  // Search a bottleneck
  if  $B \neq \emptyset$  then
     $D' \subseteq D_{\text{available}}, |D'| = |B|;$ 
     $\text{assignToDefenders}(B, D');$ 
     $D_{\text{available}} = D_{\text{available}} \setminus D';$ 
     $F = F \cup B$ 
  else
    /* If no new bottleneck is found, assume
       all have been already discovered */
    break ;
  end
end
/* If there are some defenders without a
   destination left, they will be allocated
   randomly */
 $\text{assignToRandomTargets}(D_{\text{available}});$ 

```

Algorithm 1: Bottleneck simulation procedure

Another approach for bottleneck detection could be based on finding cut-set in a graph. However, our bottleneck simulation prefers bottlenecks frequently used by attackers.

CONNECTIVITY MAINTENANCE

The requirement of preserving the possibility of communication is modeled by a connectivity maintenance of subgraph of the *visibility graph* induced by the defenders' locations. The first task is therefore to create the visibility graph, which depends on the positions of obstacles in the map and a predetermined visibility range. The agents move using an adaptation of the LRA* algorithm that keeps the visibility subgraph connected. Paths are planned such that the first

step of a defender must lead to a position which induces a connected visibility subgraph. Defenders follow paths computed by LRA* and whenever an agent is about to enter an occupied location, or if the next move would disconnect the communication subgraph, its path is recalculated.

The movement determined by such an approach will surely maintain the connectivity, however, in many instances, some defenders will not be able to reach the destination locations assigned to them. Our effort is to modify the allocation strategies so that the number of defenders that are not able to reach their assigned destinations is minimized.

Intuitively, defenders should be allocated to their destinations so that in the most optimistic case, when they all reach their desired locations, the connectivity is preserved. This constraint is not guaranteed to be satisfied in general. We propose the following approach to tackle this issue.

Initially, the defenders are partitioned into two sub-sets, *communicators* D_c and *occupiers* D_o , with a selected ratio $|D_c| : |D_o|$. The occupiers are allocated to attackers' targets according to one of the allocation strategies described above. In the best scenario, all defenders manage to reach their destinations. It is easy to check, for example by using BFS or DFS on the induced subgraph, whether the ideal final position of defenders maintains connectivity. If the connectivity is violated, the defenders reserved as communicators are allocated to targets so that the subgraph of the visibility graph induced by the defenders' target locations has as few connected components as possible. Fig. 2 depicts a situation where the three occupiers reached the attackers' targets assigned to them, but they alone are not able to communicate. Nevertheless, a suitable placement of two communicators ensures that the communication can take place. In fact, the

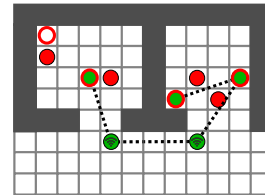


Figure 2: Three occupiers managed to reach the targets, but due to the wall they are not able to communicate. The presence of two communicators enables the communication via links marked by the dashed lines.

question whether it is possible to allocate destinations for D_c so that the desired position allows a communication among all defenders is already difficult.

Proposition 1. *Let Σ be an APPC instance with the set of defenders $D = D_c \cup D_o$, and let $\delta^{D_o}(d)$ for each occupier $d \in D_o$ be already determined. The decision problem whether there exists a destination allocation $\delta^{D_c} : D_c \rightarrow V$ to communicators in D_c such that all defenders maintain connectivity of the visibility graph at their final positions is NP-complete.*

Sketch of proof. The problem is obviously NP, because checking a connectivity can be done in polynomial time. In order to prove the NP-hardness, we reduce the known NP-

complete problem of *Vertex Cover (VC)* to our problem. Let $H = (V_H, E_H)$ be an instance of VC. For each $e \in E_H$ we create $v_e \in V$ such that V_e is a destination assigned to some occupier $d \in D_o$. For each $u \in V_H$ we construct $v_u \in V$ such that for all $e \in E_H$ incident with u we create $\{v_u, v_e\} \in E$. Vertices v_u s. t. $u \in V_H$ form a complete subgraph of G . Finally, we set $|D_c| = k$. Now H has a vertex cover of size at most k if and only if it is possible to assign destinations to communicators so that the connectivity of G_r is maintained in the desired position given by δ^{D_o} . \square

Let T_o and T_c be the set of targets allocated to occupiers and communicators, respectively. If the induced subgraph $G_r[T_o]$ has several connected components, the used modification of LRA* algorithm could not lead all of them to their targets, because it would cause a loss of communication ability. At this point the set of communicators comes into play. The aim is to find target locations for communicators so that the graph $G_r[T_o \cup T_c]$ is connected. First, the connected components of $G_r[T_o]$ are identified. We then iterate while there are available communicators and connected components to be covered by them. In every iteration, a location l from which a communicator can cover a set of connected components that contains maximum number of targets allocated to occupiers is selected together with the set of covered connected components. The location l is subsequently assigned to the closest unallocated communicator. For a more formal explanation see Alg. 2.

```

Data:  $G_r = (V, E_r), D_o, D_c, T_o$ 
Result: Destination allocation  $\delta^{D_c}$ 
 $T_c = \emptyset$ ; // Destinations assigned to communicators
while  $D_c \neq \emptyset$  do
     $\mathcal{C}$  = connected components of  $G_r[T_o \cup T_c]$ ;
    while  $\mathcal{C} \neq \emptyset$  do
        /* A pair of a location  $l$  and a subset  $\mathcal{C}'$ 
           of connected components covered by  $l$ 
           that minimizes the number of vertices
           in  $\mathcal{C}'$  */
         $(l, \mathcal{C}') = \arg \max_{\mathcal{C}' \in \mathcal{C}, l \in V} \{ \sum_{C \in \mathcal{C}'} |C| : \exists v \in C : (v, l) \in E_r \}$ ;
        /* An available agent closest to  $l$  */
         $a = \arg \min_{a \in D_c} \{ |p_{a_0(a), l}| \}$ ;
         $\delta^{D_c}(a) = l$ ; // assign destination to agent
         $T_c = T_c \cup \{l\}$ ;
         $\mathcal{C} = \mathcal{C} \setminus \mathcal{C}'$ ;
         $D_c = D_c \setminus \{a\}$ ;
        if  $D_c = \emptyset$  then
            break ;
        end
    end
end

```

Algorithm 2: Destination allocation to communicators

PRELIMINARY EXPERIMENTS

The aim of experimental evaluation is to compare individual strategies described above with their counterparts adapted

to connectivity maintenance. We would like to find out whether the adaptation improves the success rate of a strategy and also how instance types affect its performance.

Our hypothesis is that when there is a sufficient number of defenders, the adaptation has little or no effect. We predict that in instances, where defenders are outnumbered by attackers, the adaptation increases the success rate of the corresponding strategy. Furthermore, it is likely that the simulation strategy is worse when the connectivity maintenance is required, because the identified bottlenecks may be far from each other, which makes it difficult to preserve communication among them.

We implemented all suggested strategies in Java as an experimental prototype. In our testing scenarios we use maps of different structure with various initial configurations of attackers and defenders. Our choice of testing scenarios is focused on comparing performance of the strategies and discovering what factors have impact on their success.

Different strategies are successful in different types of instances. It is therefore important to design the instances with a sufficient diversity, in order to capture strengths and weaknesses of individual strategies.

Instance generation and types

The instances used in the practical experiments are generated using a pseudo random generator, but in a controlled manner. An instance is defined by its map, the ratio $|A| : |D|$ and locations of individual defenders, attackers and their targets. These three entries form an input of the instance generation procedure. Further, we select rectangular areas inside which agents of both teams and the attackers' targets are placed randomly. The experiments are conducted on 3 different maps that vary in their structure (see Fig. 3).



Figure 3: Three different maps used in the evaluation

Each map is populated with agents of 3 different $|D| : |A|$ ratios, namely 1 : 1, 1 : 2 and 1 : 5, with fixed number of attackers $|A| = 50$. The maximum number of moves of the agents is set to 150 for each team. Note that the individual instances are never completely fair to both teams. It is therefore impossible to make a conclusion about a success rate of a strategy by comparing its performance on different maps. The comparison should always be made by inspecting the performance in one type of instance, where we can see the relative strength of the studied algorithms.

Experimental results

The following set of experiments compares random, greedy, simulation strategy and their communication counterparts in different instance settings. Each of the following tables contains results associated with one map.

Each entry in the tables shows an average number of attackers that reached their targets at the end of the time limit. The average value is calculated for 10 runs in each settings, always with a different random seed. Random and greedy strategies have very similar results in all positions and team ratios. It is apparent and not surprising that with decreasing $|D| : |A|$ ratio, the strength of defensive strategies decreases.

Table 1: Average number of agents that eventually reached their target in the map Orthogonal rooms

$ D : A $	RND	RND-C	GRD	GRD-C	SIM	SIM-C
1:1	26.0	29.0	25.5	29.1	20.8	28.3
1:2	41.0	39.6	39.4	40.5	29.3	31.7
1:5	48.1	45.7	46.1	46.8	46.9	46.8

We focused on evaluation of the effect of using communicating agents in implemented target allocation strategies. For each target allocation strategy we compare the standard version and the version with communicating agents.

Tab. 1 shows results for Orthogonal rooms map. It can be observed that using communicators is beneficial in case of random strategy where defenders tend to be outnumbered by attackers. On the other hand, communicators cause no improvement in Ruins map (Tab. 2). Small improvement of

Table 2: Average number of agents that eventually reached their target in the map Ruins.

$ D : A $	RND	RND-C	GRD	GRD-C	SIM	SIM-C
1:1	21.5	21.1	24.8	24.7	18.3	18.6
1:2	42.1	40.2	39.0	40.3	37.1	36.9
1:5	47.1	47.1	46.0	46.2	44.3	43.8

the bottleneck simulation strategy can be observed in Waterfront map (Tab. 3) again in cases when defenders are outnumbered. Both types of maps where communicators turned out to be beneficial appear to have the structure of large open spaces separated by narrow bottlenecks.

Table 3: Average number of agents that eventually reached their target in the map Waterfront

$ D : A $	RND	RND-C	GRD	GRD-C	SIM	SIM-C
1:1	20.7	21.6	18.9	18.5	20.8	21.9
1:2	35.2	31.2	30.7	31.4	35.8	33.5
1:5	41.6	41.4	40.7	40.7	42.3	41.3

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

We have designed several practical algorithms for APPC. We extended previous algorithms for APP with a technique of connectivity maintenance. This is done by dividing defending agents into two groups - occupiers and communicators. The role of occupiers is to protect the area while communicators are placed so that they cover as largest part

of the protected area as possible in order to support connectivity among occupiers. Performed experimental evaluation indicates that the effect of using dedicated agents as communicators is much smaller than expected but there is some in maps having the structure of large open spaces separated by bottlenecks. One possible explanation of this behavior is that several defenders are not able to reach their targets because the ability of communication would be lost during their movement and this is not significantly affected by the target allocation. Hence, for the future work we plan to design and evaluate algorithms with more sophisticated mechanism for connectivity maintenance. A more promising direction seems to be an adaptation of LRA* rather than modifications of the allocation strategies.

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