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Functionality and Speciation in Boolean Networks

Boolean Networks have been used to model Genetic Regulatory Networks since Stuart Kauffmann proposed them as a model in the 1960s. Early work focused on how the topology of a network influenced its dynamics. We investigate the inverse problem asking which network topologies satisfy a specified dynamic. In earlier work by A. Wagner a biological function or cell process was specified by an initial condition v(0) and an end point v1 in the expression state space. By so specifying a biological function one can then ask which networks perform this function. Our view is that in many cases a more appropriate means for defining a biological function would be by specifying the entire path v(0), v(1), ..., v(T). We will report on how these two contrasting definitions of biological functionality lead to divergent results for their respective functional topologies, particularly regarding the implications for neutral evolution, multi-functionality and speciation.