Business Processes Modelling

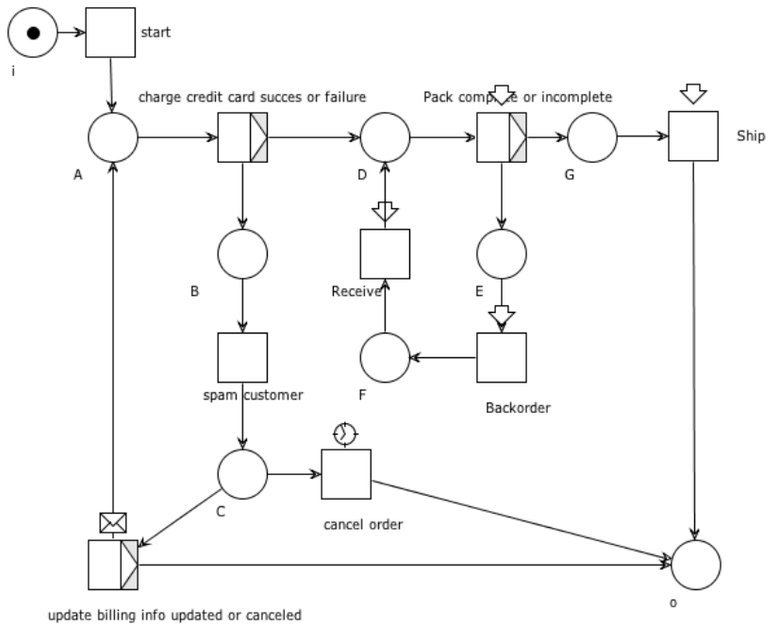
MPB (6 cfu, 295AA)

Roberto Bruni

http://www.di.unipi.it/~bruni

13 - Workflow nets

Object



We study some special kind of Petri nets, that are suitable models of workflows

Ch.4.4 of Business Process Management: Concepts, Languages, Architectures

There are many, many variants of Petri nets

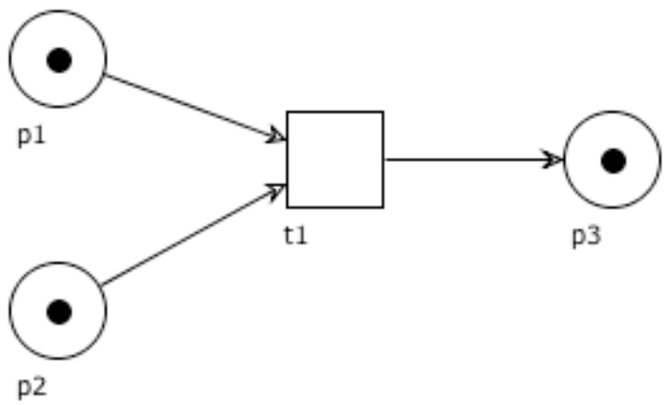
Condition / Event Systems

A **C/E system** is a Petri net whose places have all capacity equal to 1
(i.e., each place can contain one token at most)

Markings are just subsets of P (not multisets)

Firing rule is more restrictive:
t is enabled at M if •t ⊆ M **and t• ∩ M = ∅**

Is t_1 enabled?



Condition / Event Systems

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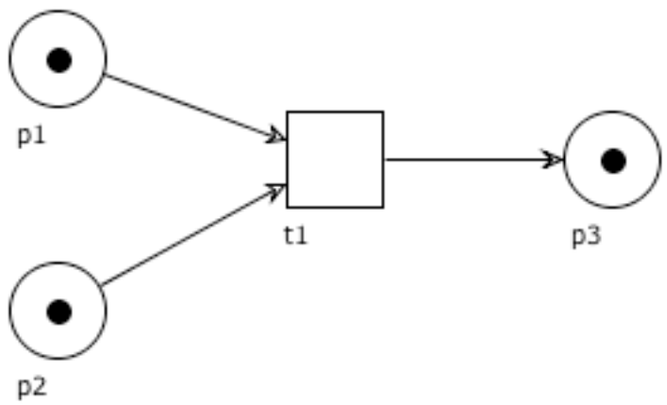


No,
a token is already in p_3

Place / Transition Petri nets

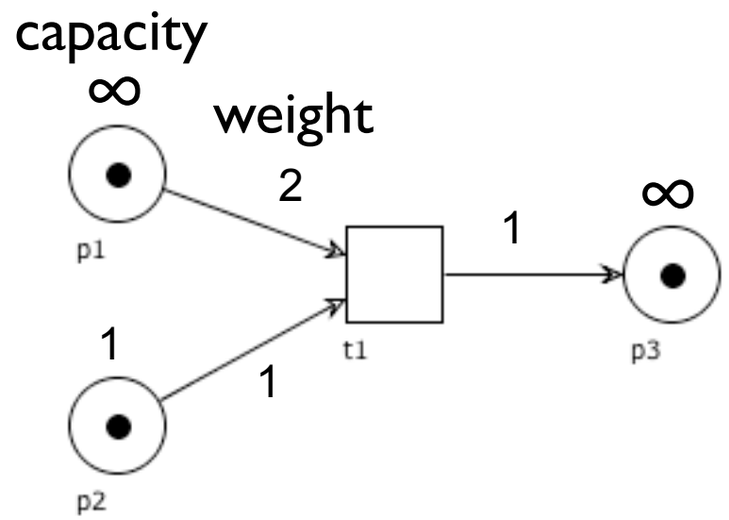
A **P/T net** is a Petri net (P,T,F) together with a weight function w : F → Nat

Firings consume and produce tokens according to the weight function

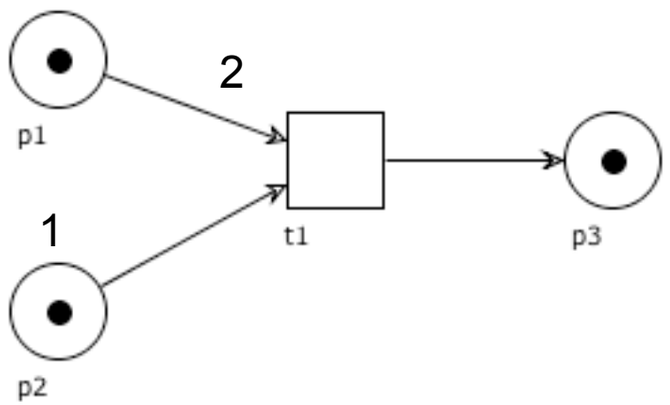
Sometimes a place capacity function c : P → Nat ∪ {∞} is also considered

Firings cannot lead to markings where the capacity of a place is exceeded

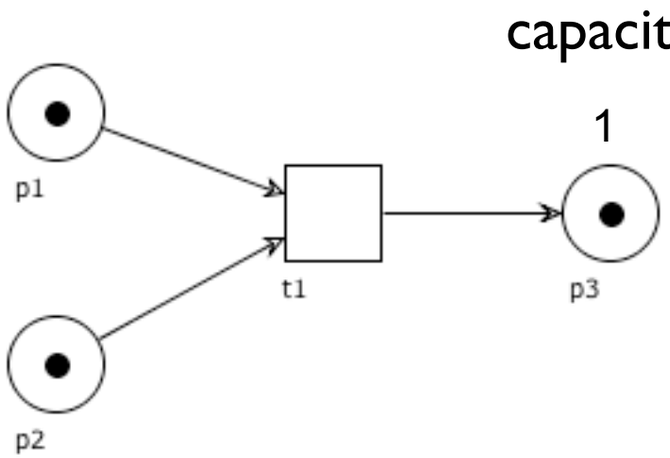
P/T net: examples

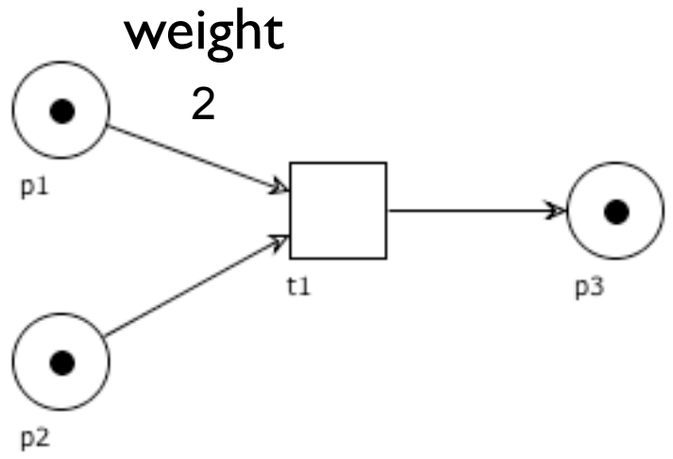


Capacity ∞ is omitted from places
Weight 1 is omitted from arcs

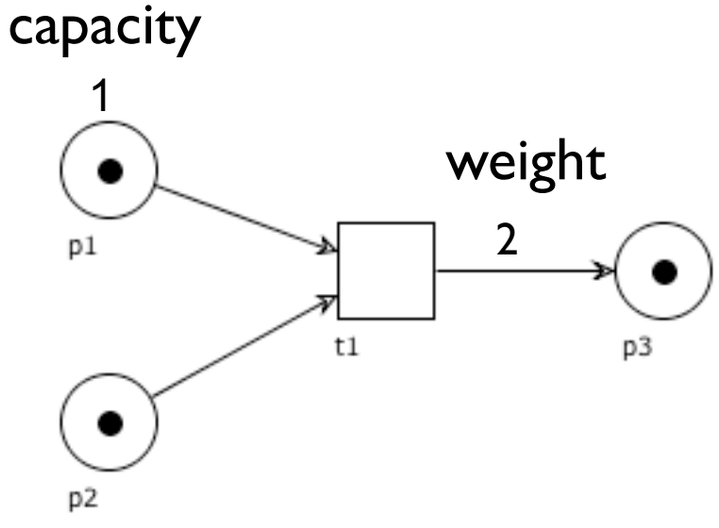


P/T net: examples

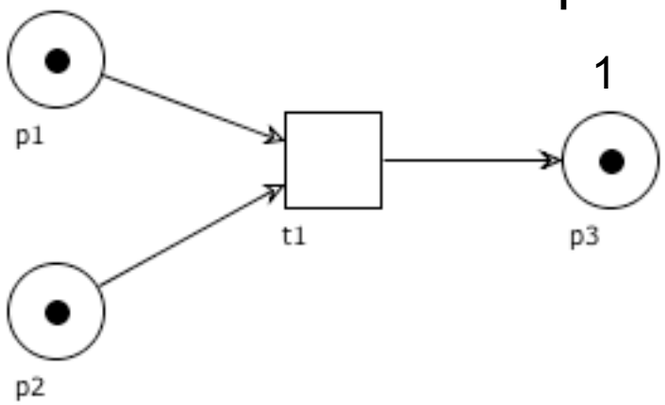




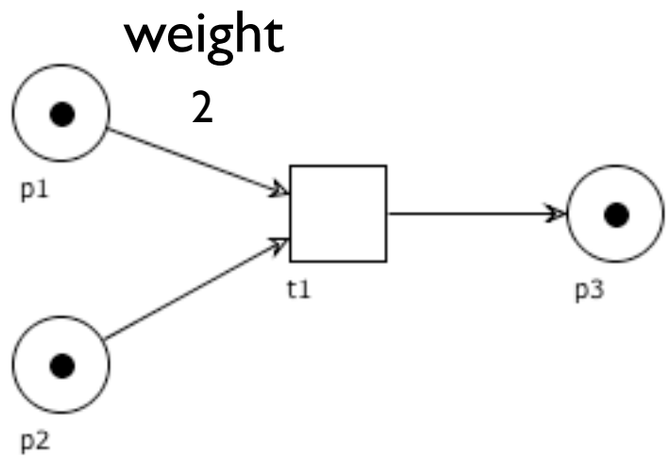
Is t_1 enabled?



P/T net: examples

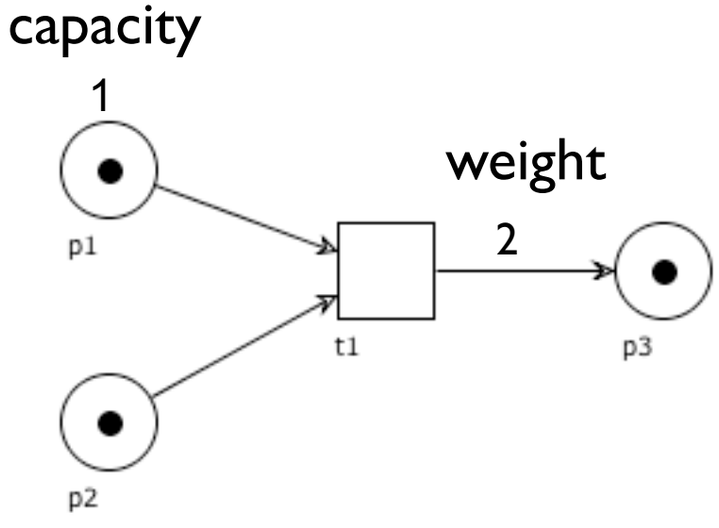


No,
p_3 can contain one token at most



No,
two tokens are needed from p_1

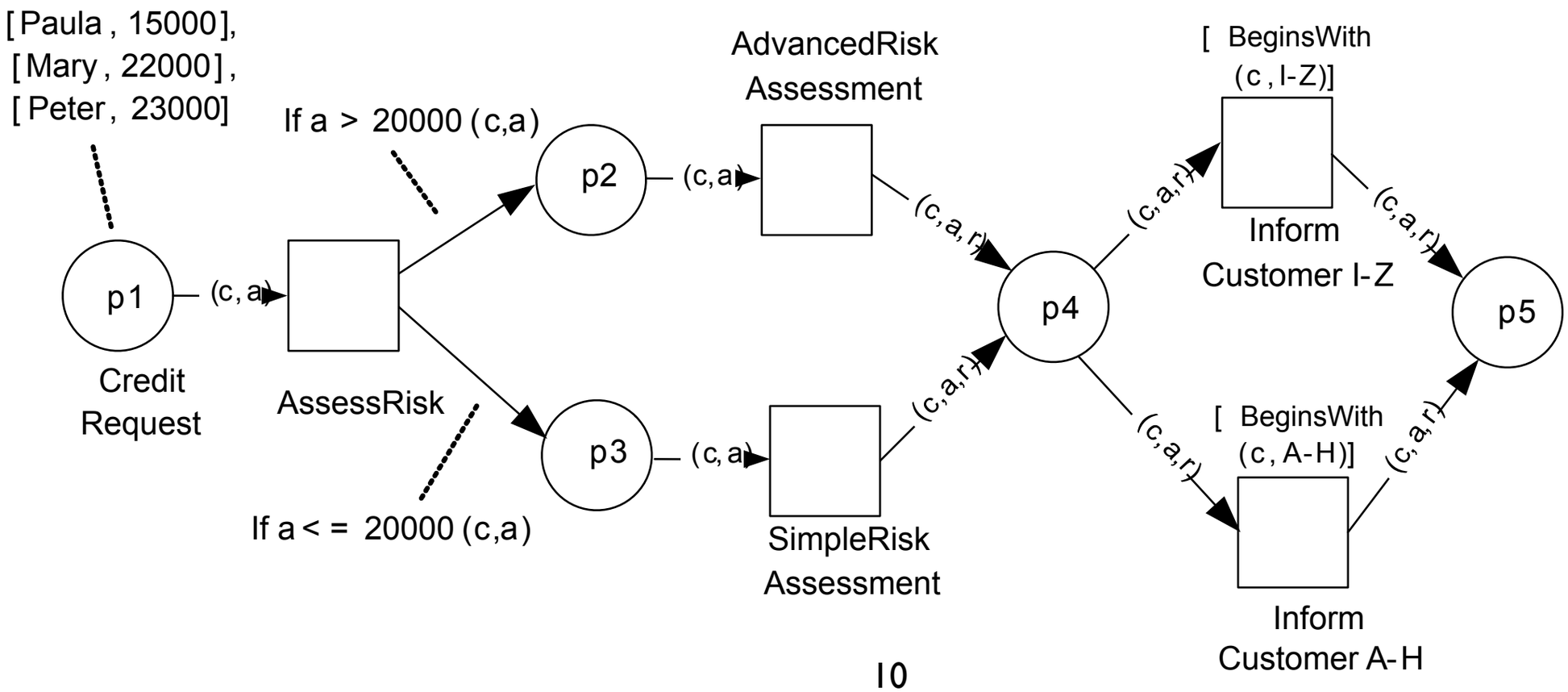
Is t_1 enabled?



Yes,
the firing leads to $3p_3$

Coloured nets (also called High-Level)

A **coloured net** is a Petri net whose
tokens can carry data and
whose transitions can check data
(see exact definition in Weske's book)



M. Weske: Business Process Management,
© Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2007

Workflow nets

Workflow nets features

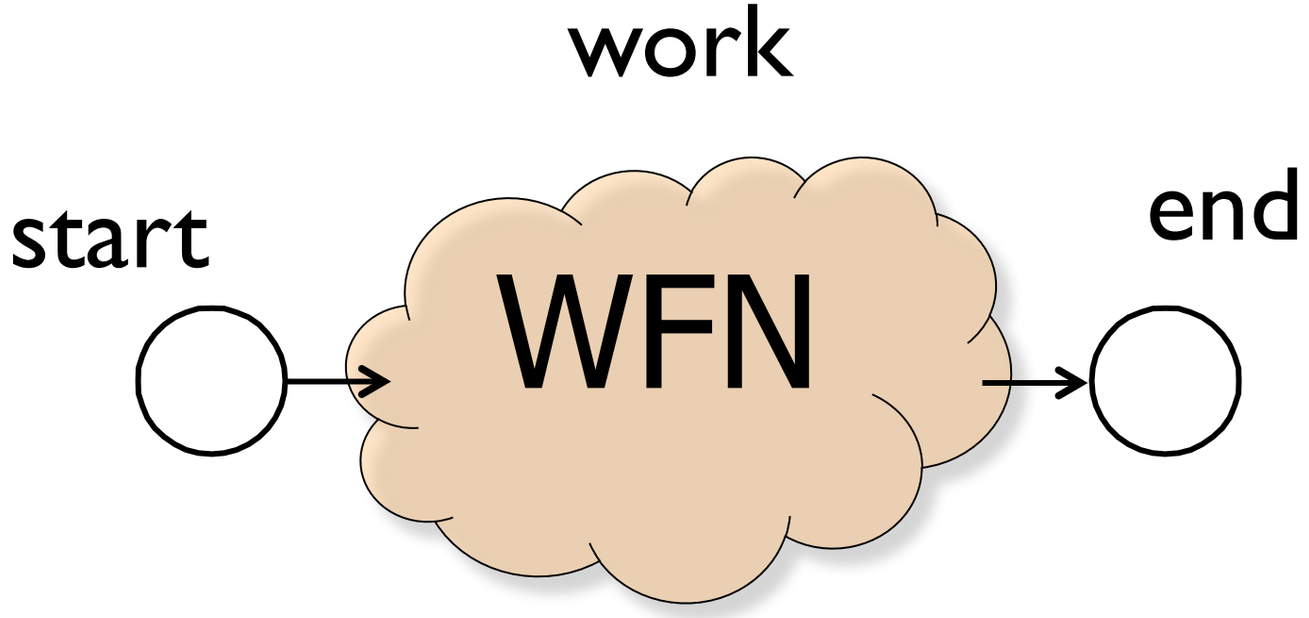
Tailored to the representation of business processes

Formal (unambiguous) semantics

Structural restrictions

Decorated graphical representation

Workflow net: idea



Workflow net

Definition:
A Petri net (P, T, F) is called **workflow net** if:

1. there is a distinguished *initial place* $i \in P$ with $\bullet i = \emptyset$
2. there is a distinguished *final place* $o \in P$ with $o\bullet = \emptyset$
3. every other place and transition belongs to a path from i to o

Workflow net: Rationale

1. a token in i represents a process instance not yet started
2. a token in o represents a finished case
3. each place and each transition can participate in a case

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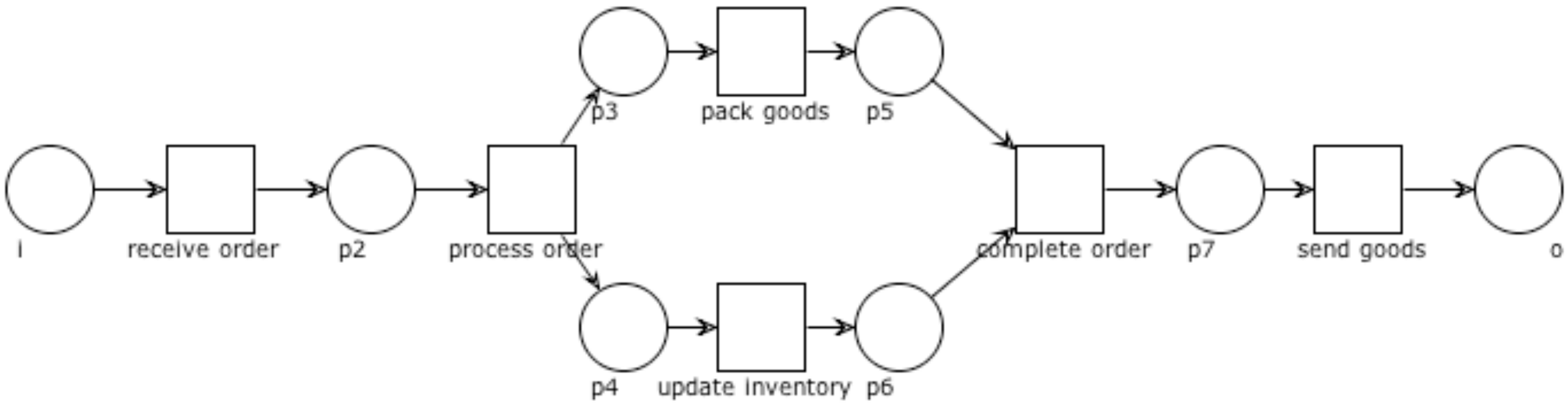
2. there is a distinguished *final place* $o \in P$ with $o\bullet = \emptyset$
3. every other place and transition belongs to a path from i to o

WF net: Example



Basic properties

Lemma: In a workflow net there is a **unique** node with no incoming arc

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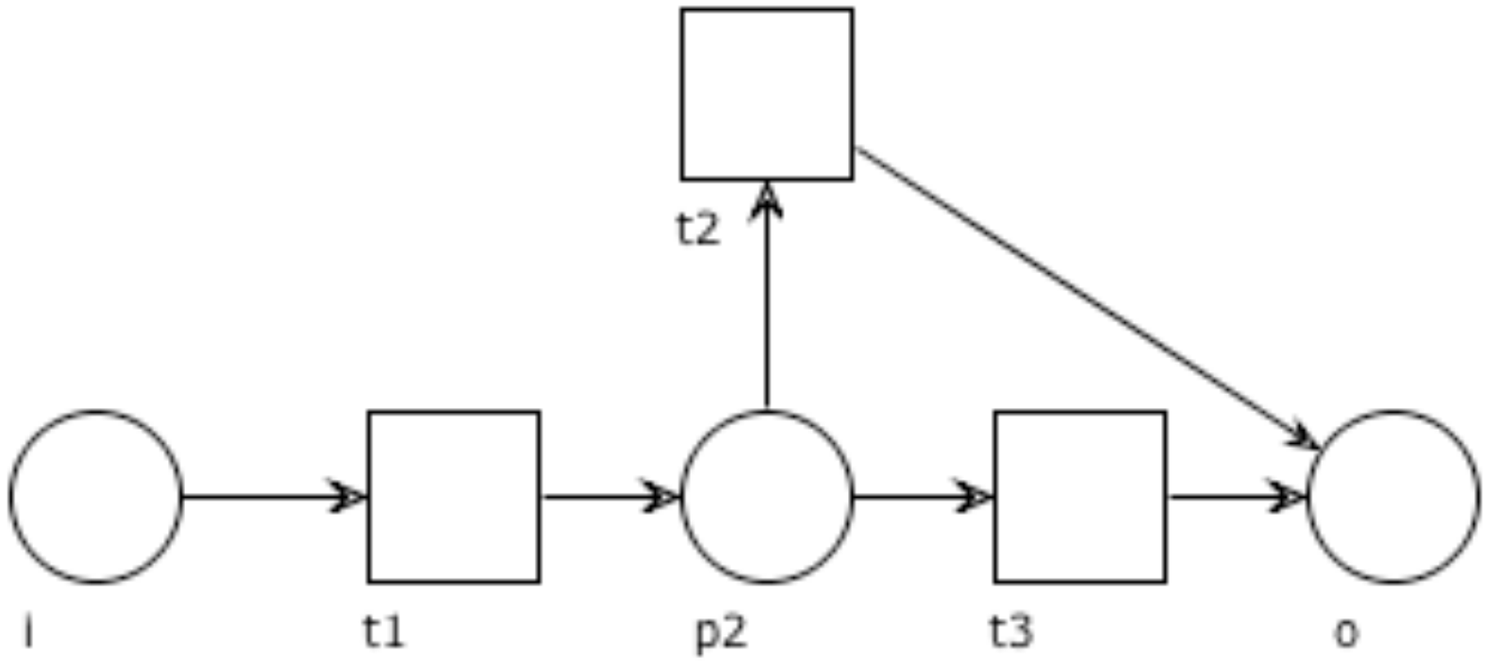
Exercise: Guess which nodes are those

Exercise: Prove the above lemmas
(hint: suppose the nodes are not unique, reach a contradiction)

Question time: WF net?



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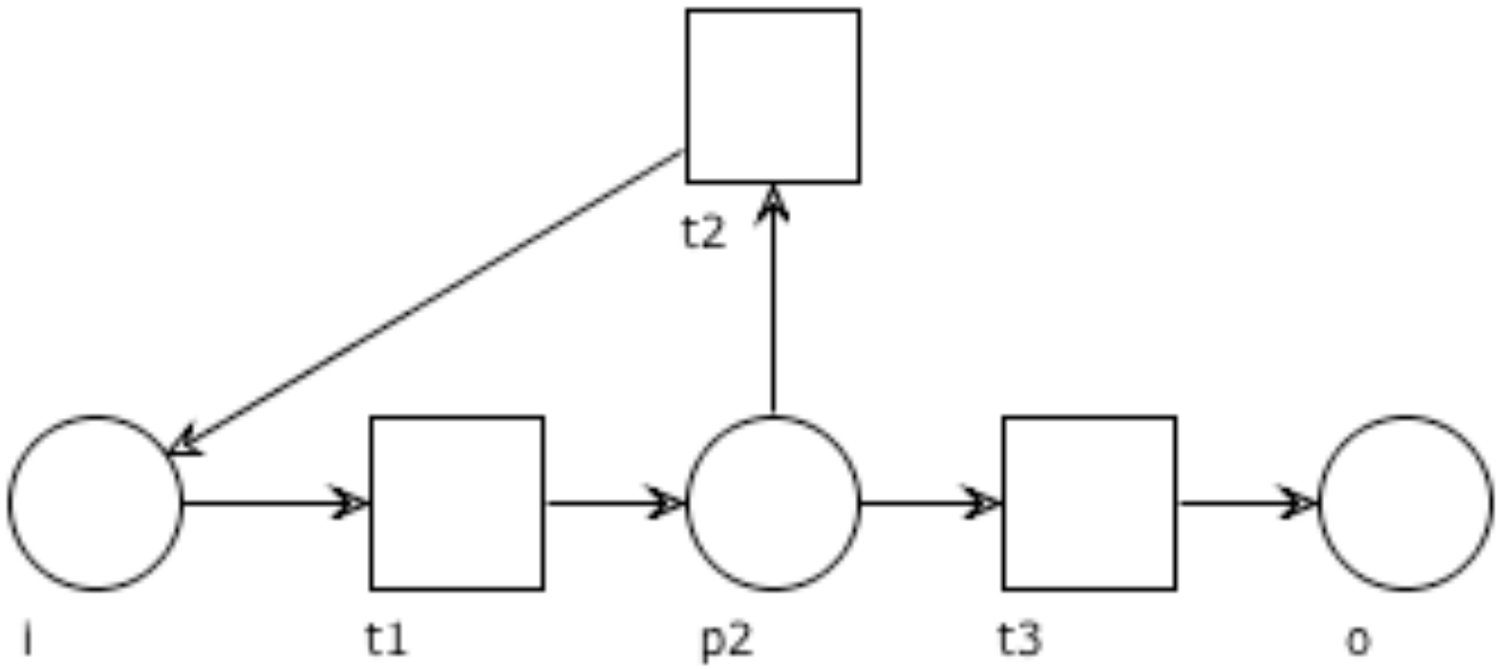

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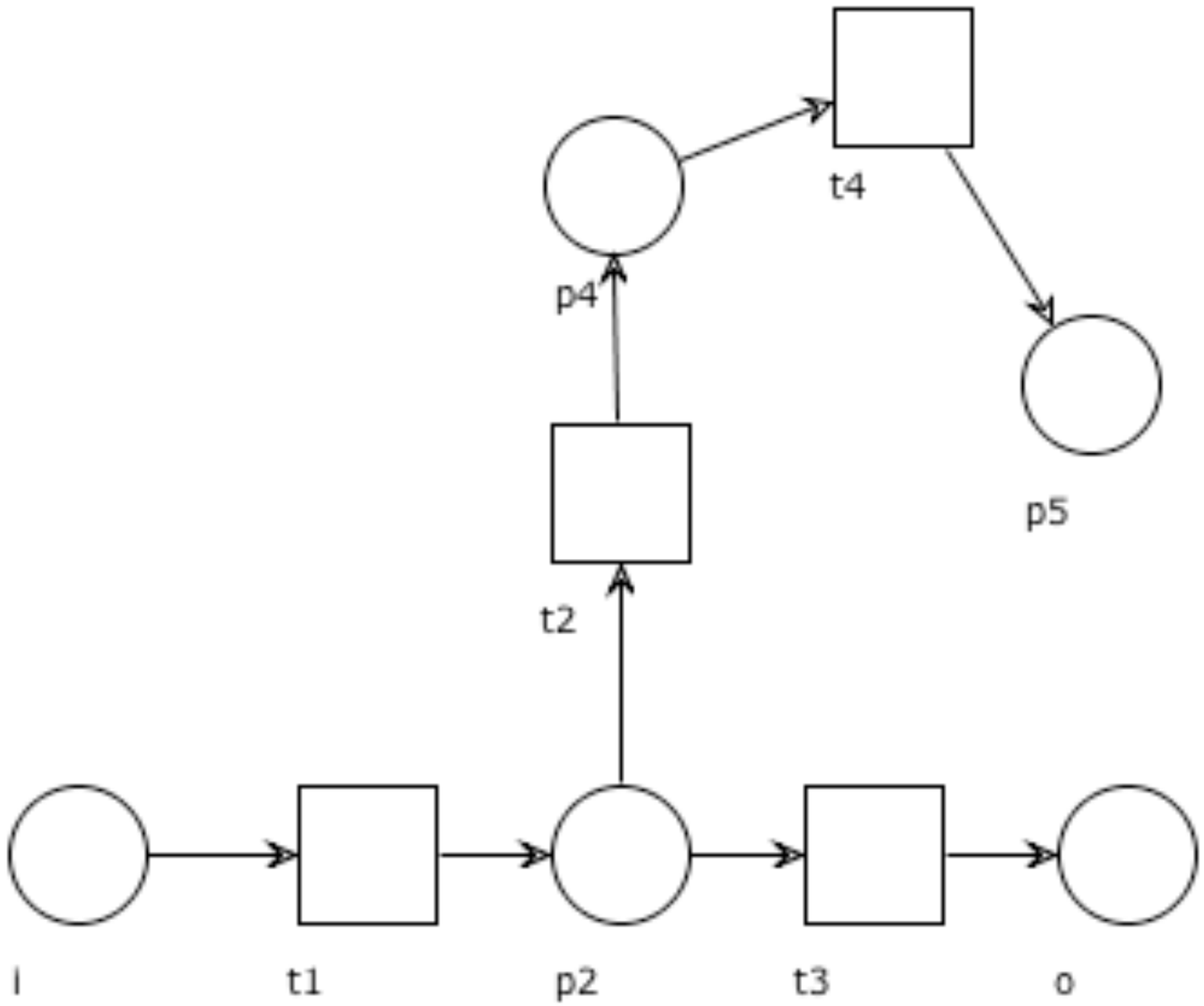

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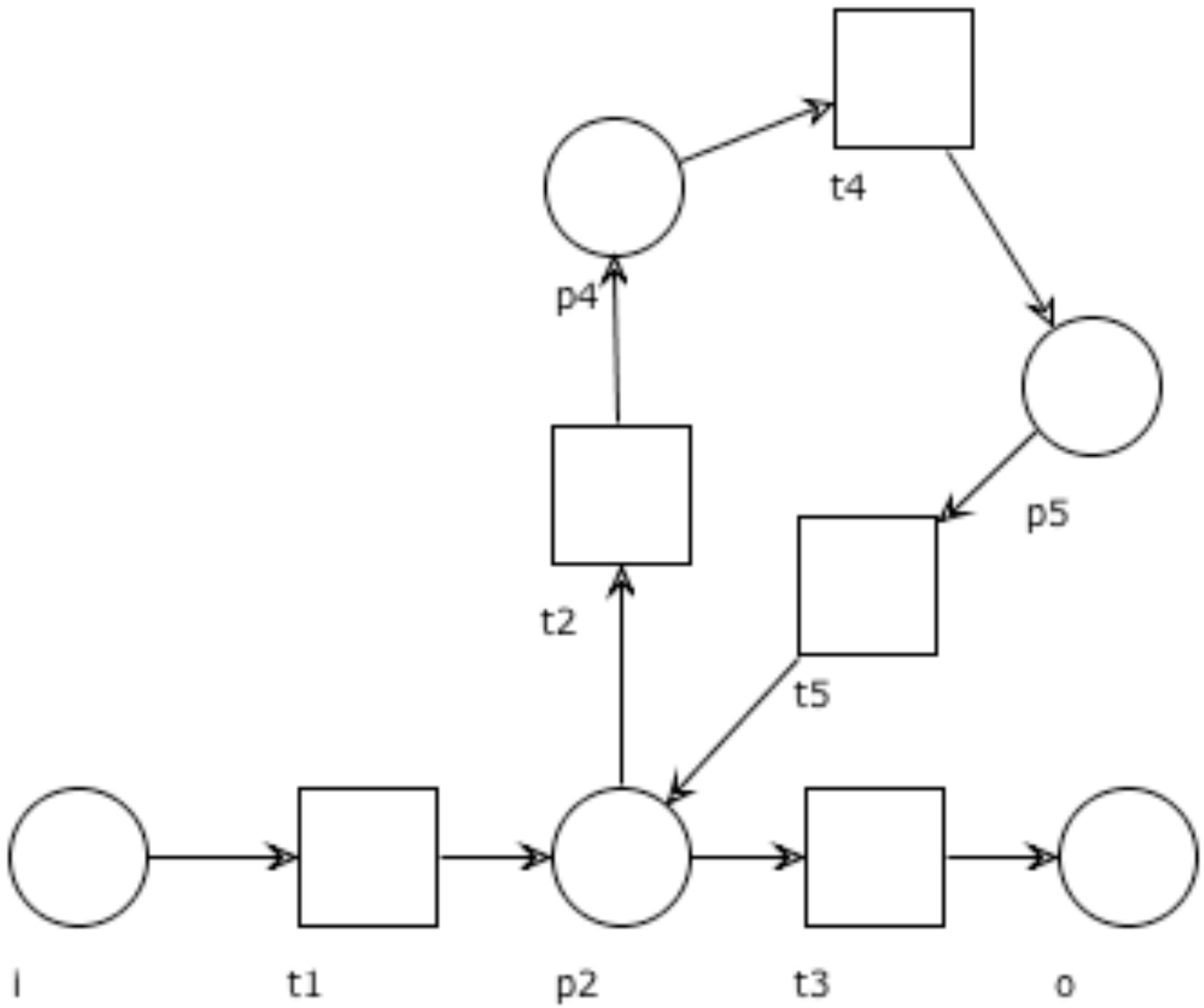

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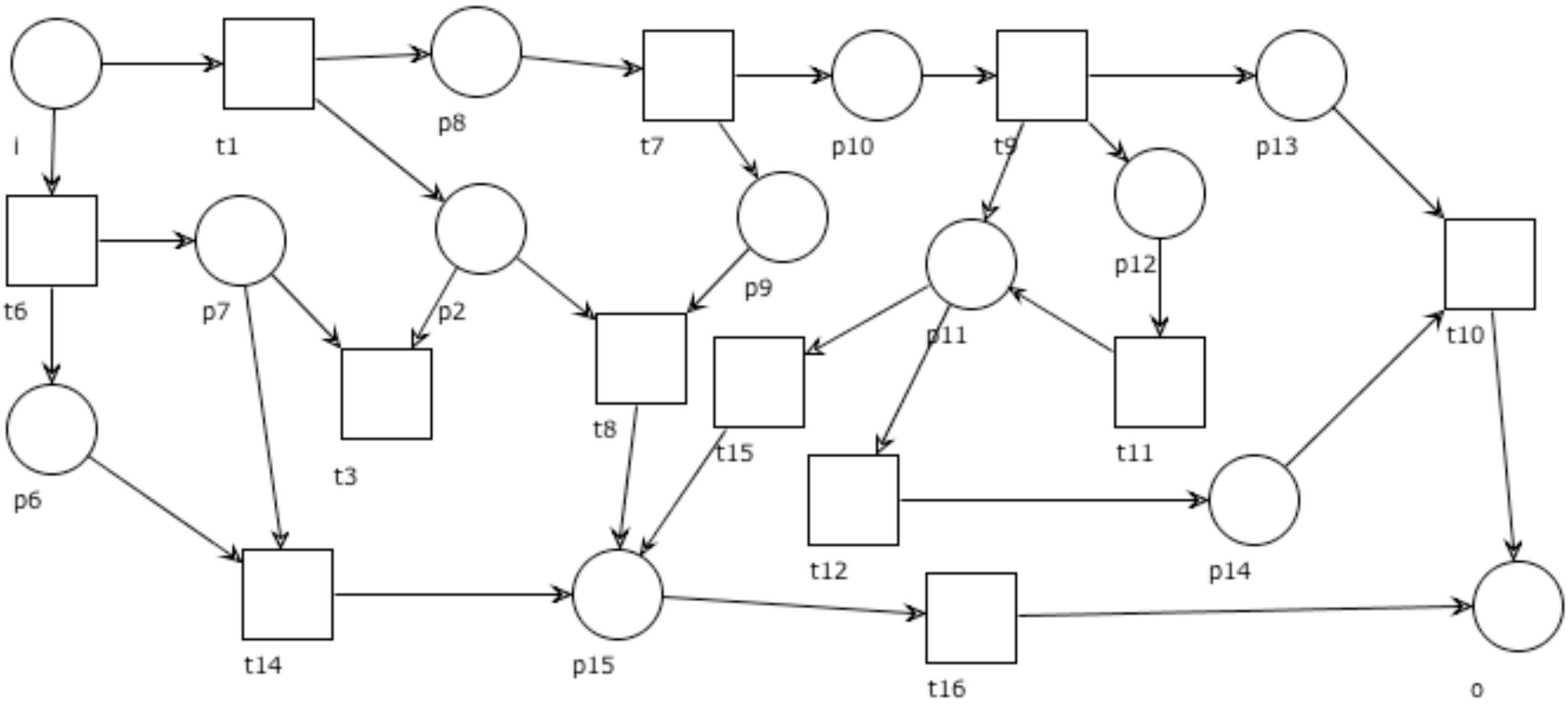

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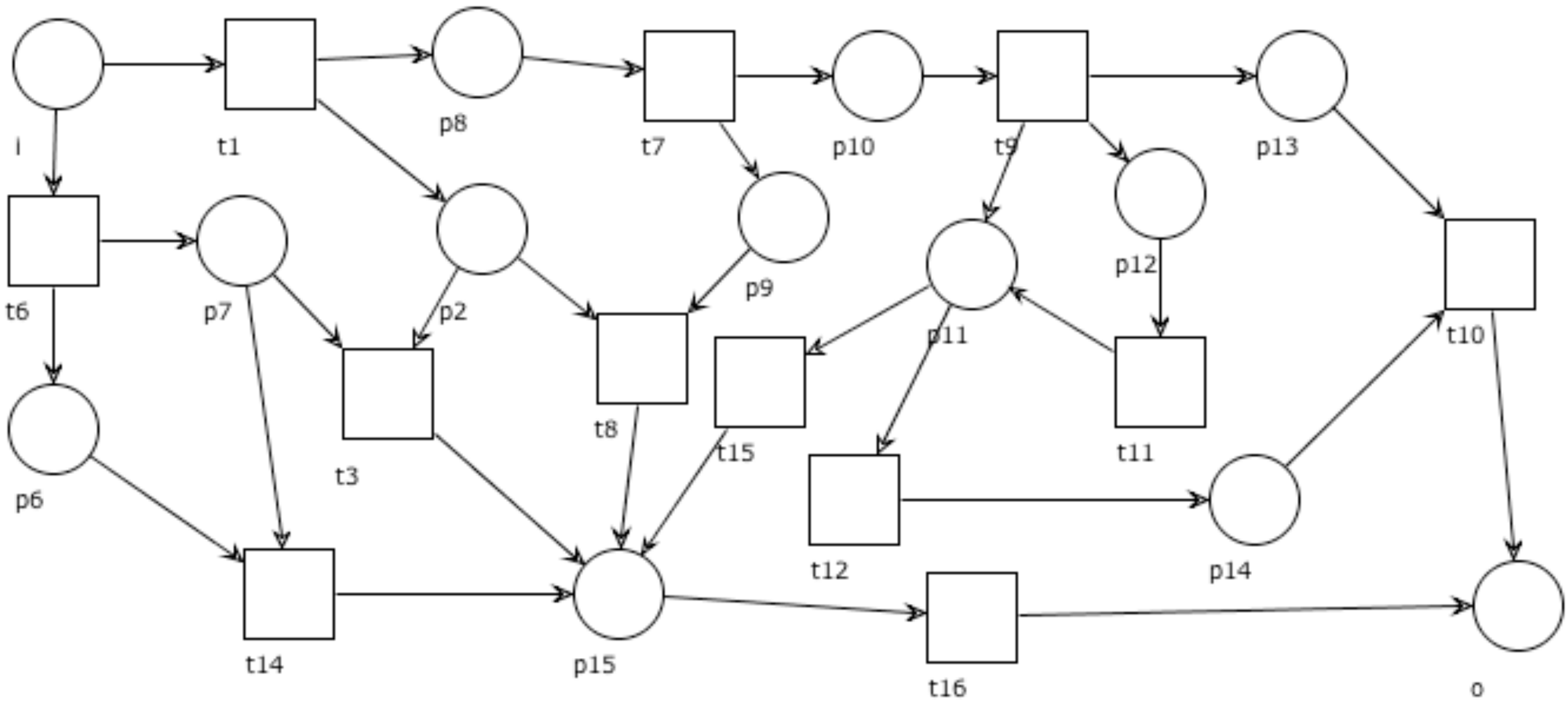
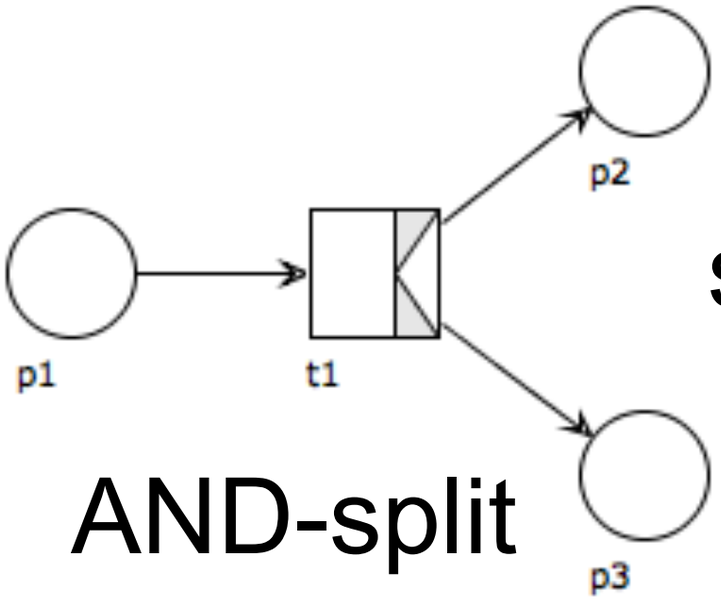
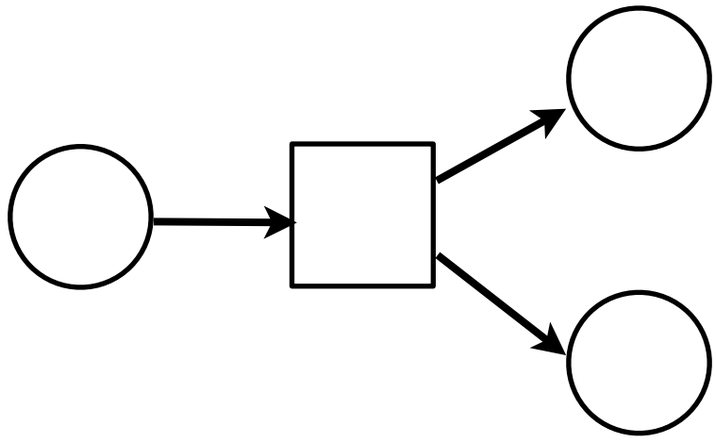


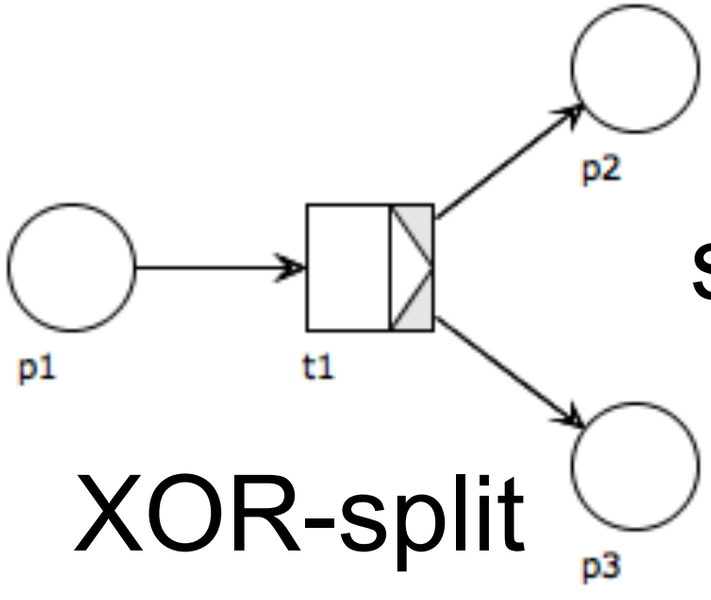
Syntax sugar: split



AND-split

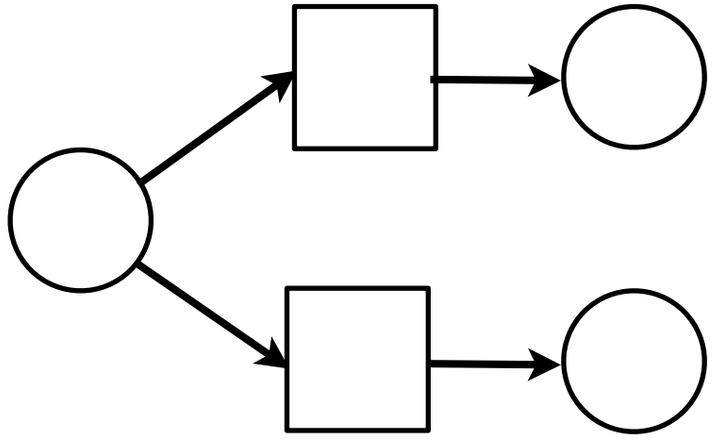
stands for



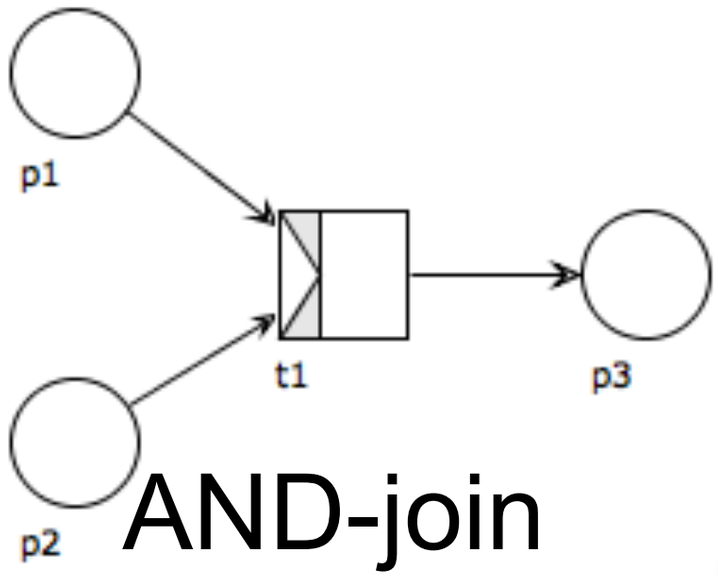


XOR-split

stands for

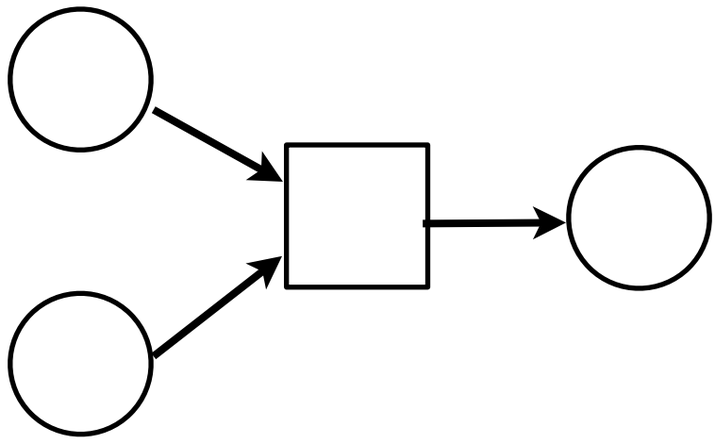


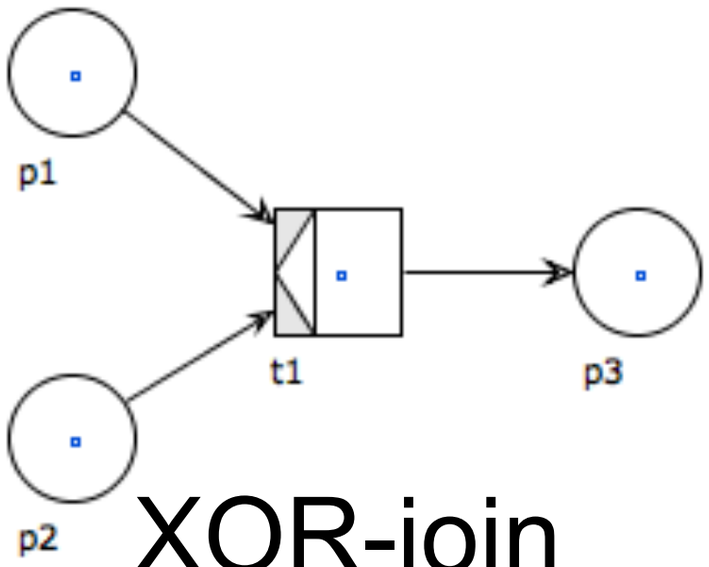
Syntax sugar: join



AND-join

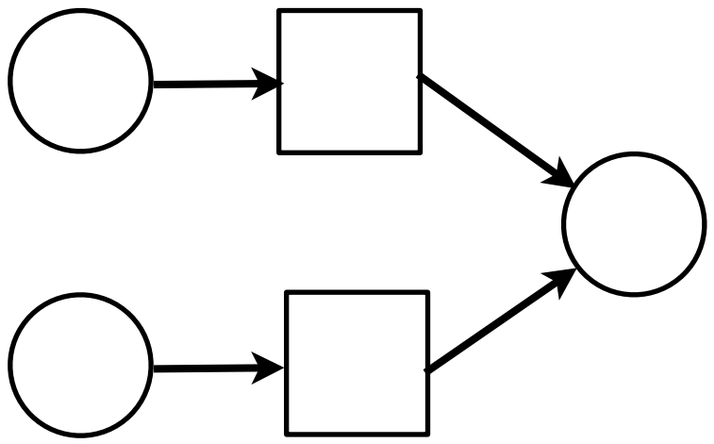
stands for





XOR-join

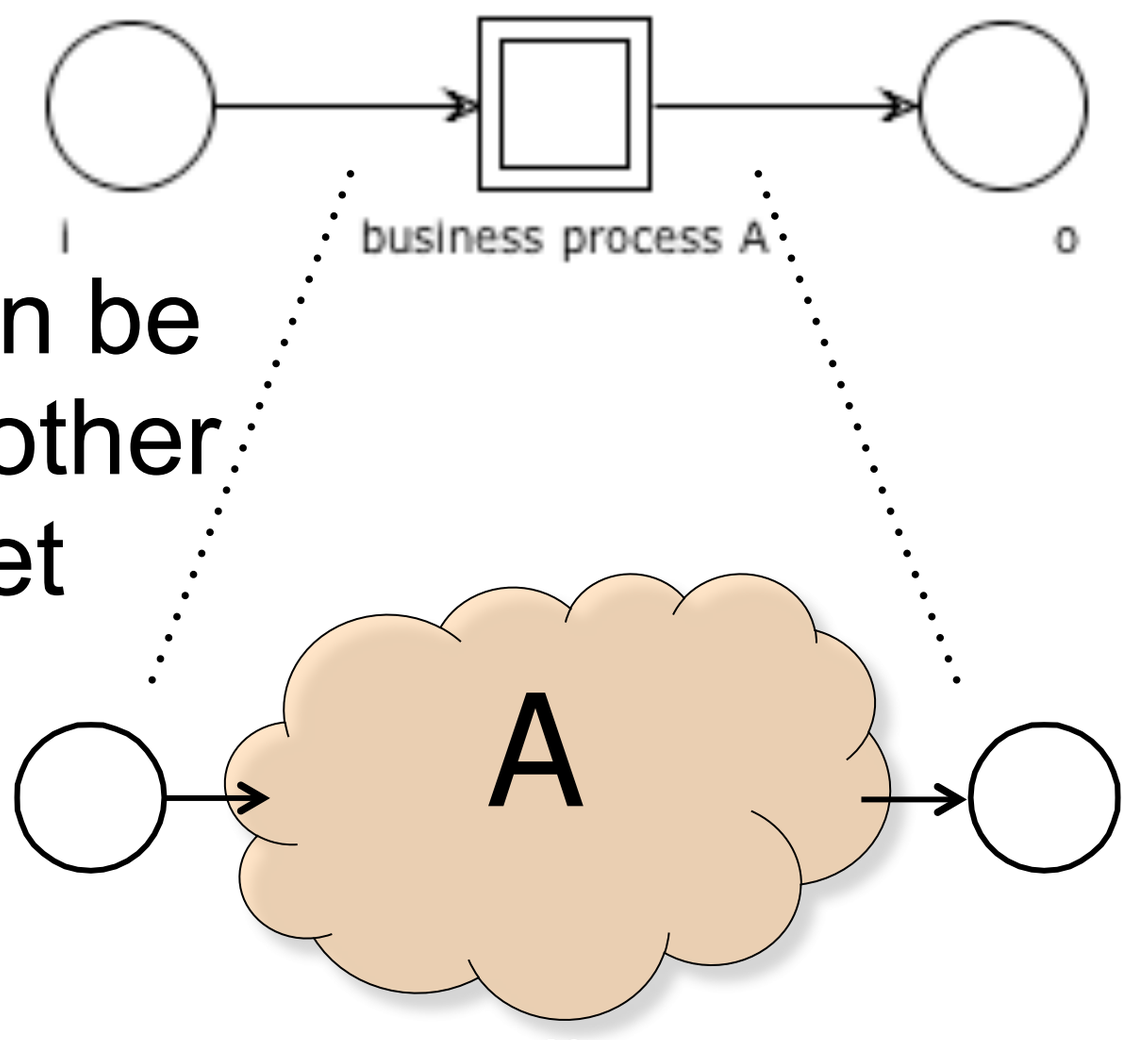
stands for



Hierarchical structuring

Uniqueness of entry / exit point facilitate the hierarchical structuring of WF nets

a transition can be realized by another workflow net

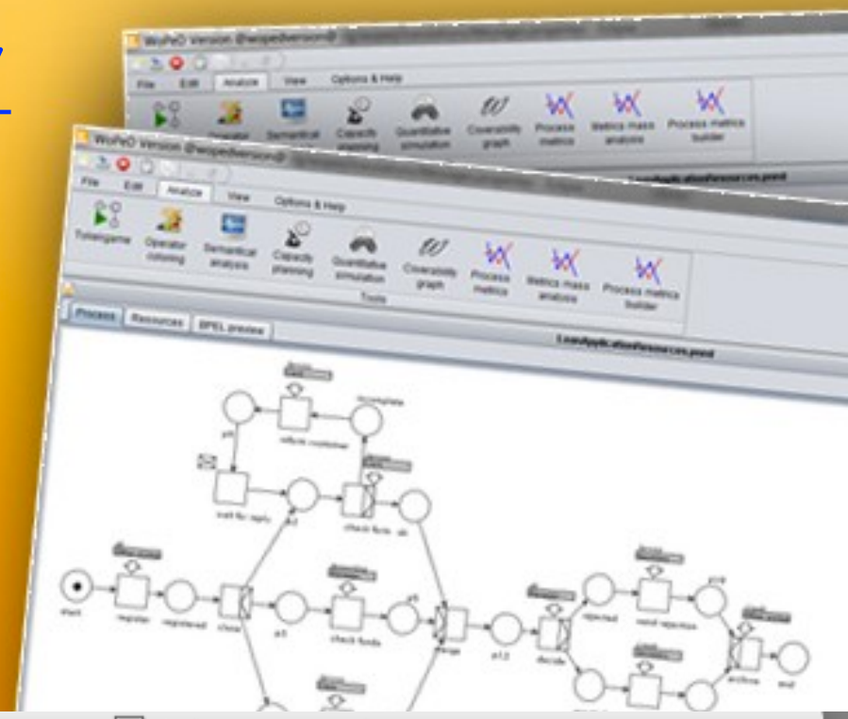


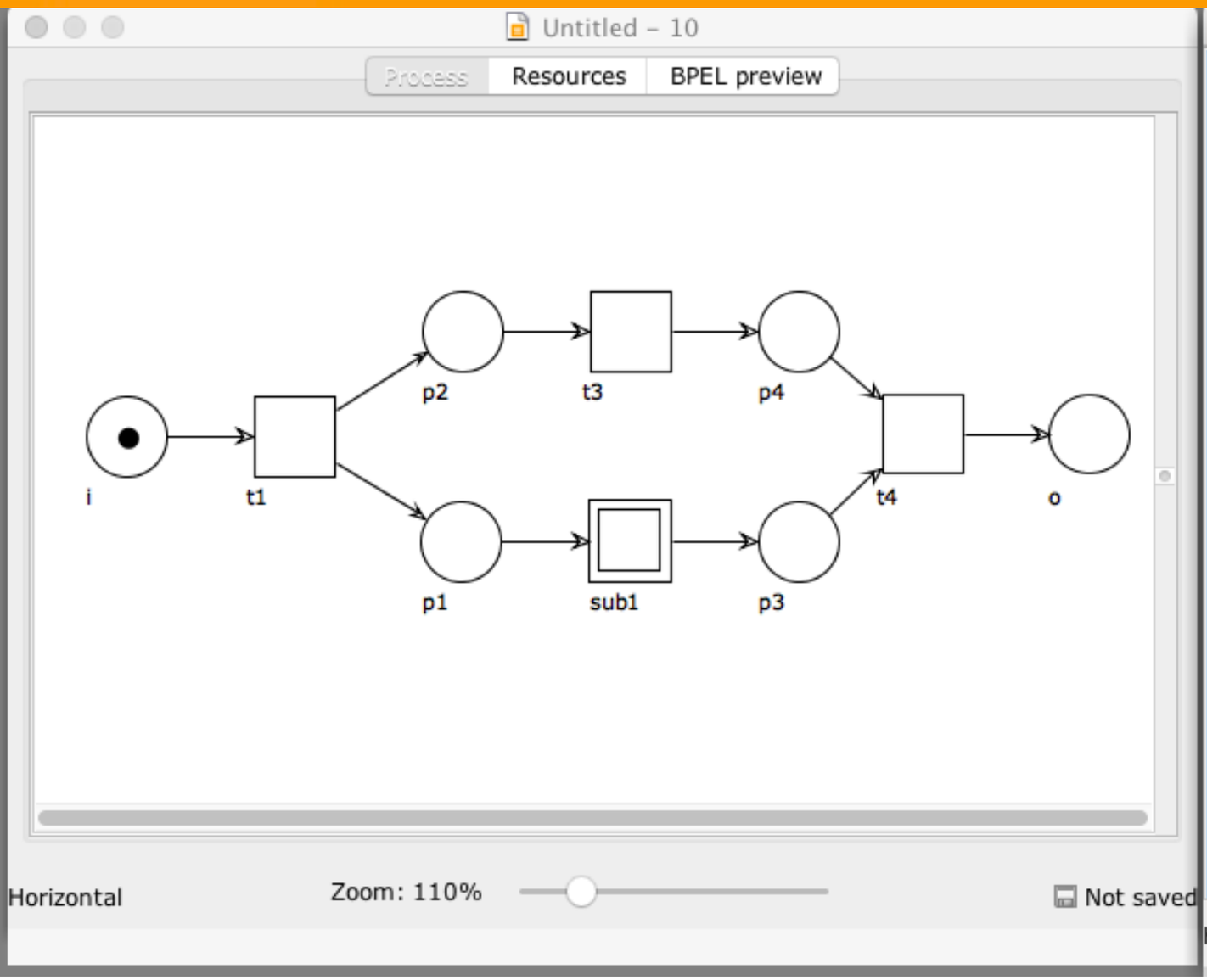
http://woped.dhbw-karlsruhe.de/woped/

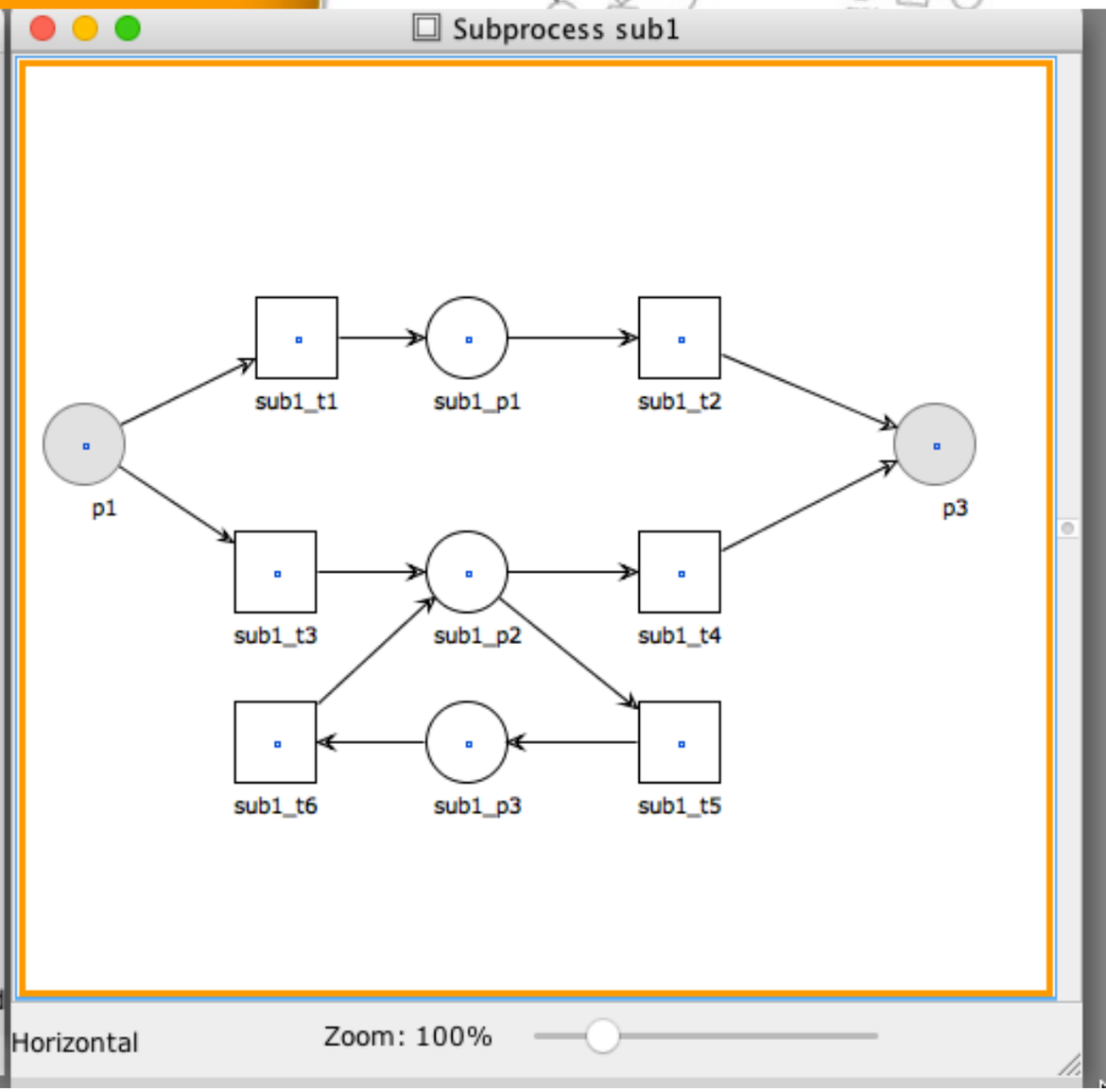
WoPeD (3.7.1)

Workflow Petri Net Designer

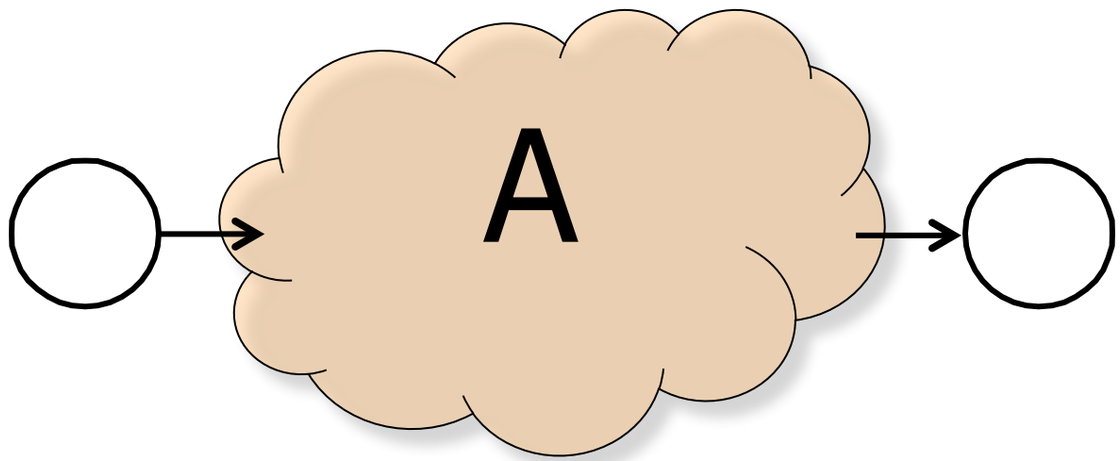
Download WoPeD at sourceforge!







Language of a workflow net



The language of a workflow net is the set of firing sequences that go from i to o

$$L(N) = \{\sigma \mid i \xrightarrow{\sigma} o\}$$

L(N) defines the admissible traces of the workflow

Typical control flow aspects

Sequencing

Parallelism (AND-split + AND-join)

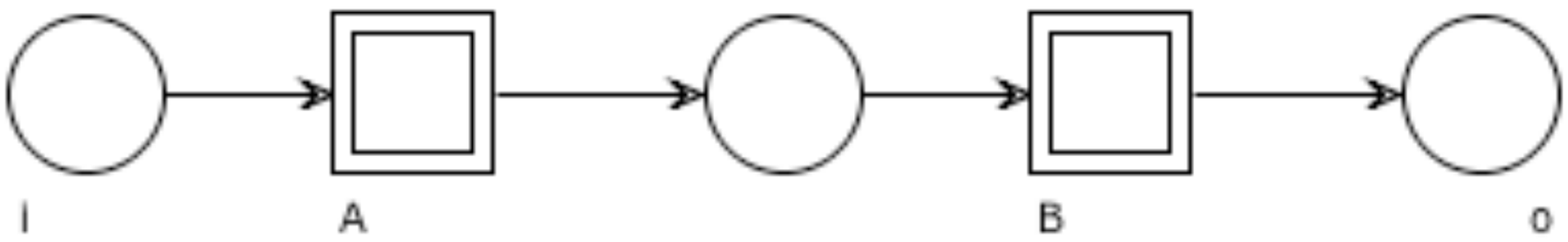
Selection (XOR-split + XOR-join)

Iteration (XOR-join + XOR-split)

Capacity constraints:
Feedback loop
Mutual exclusion
Alternating

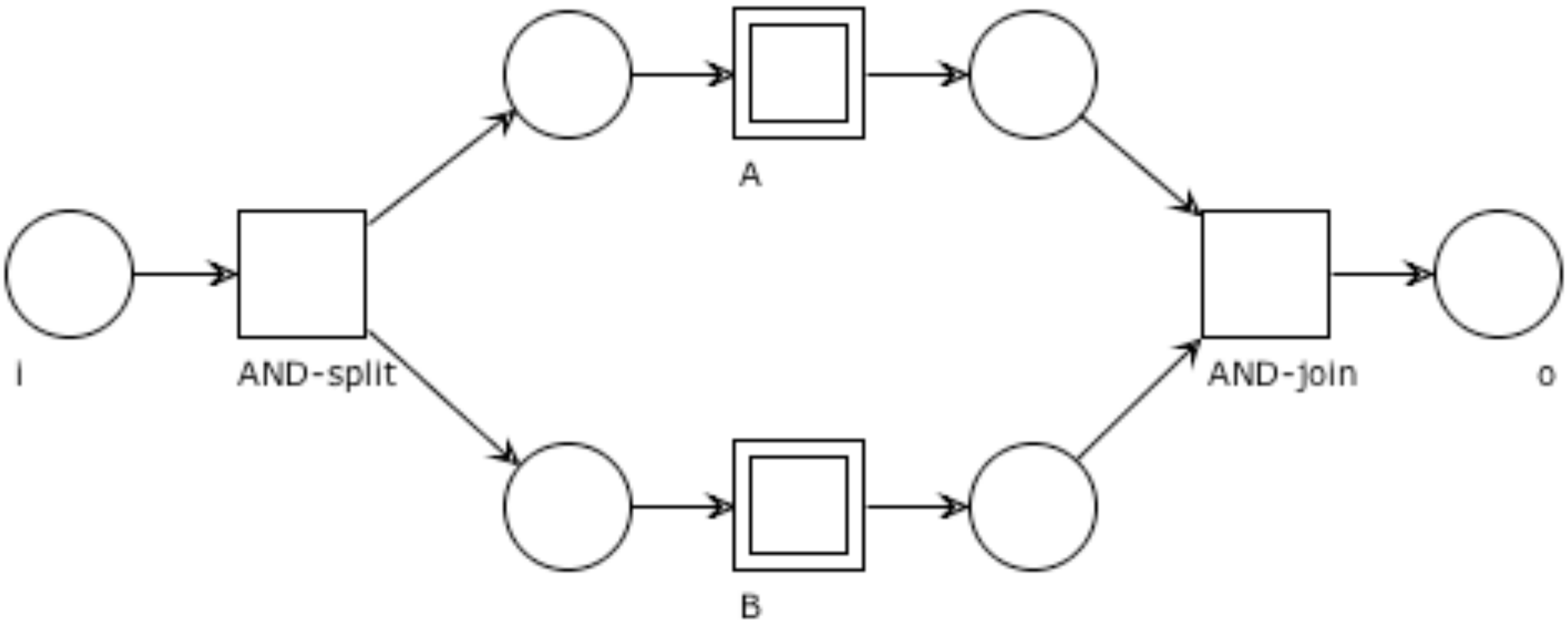
Sequencing

B is executed after A



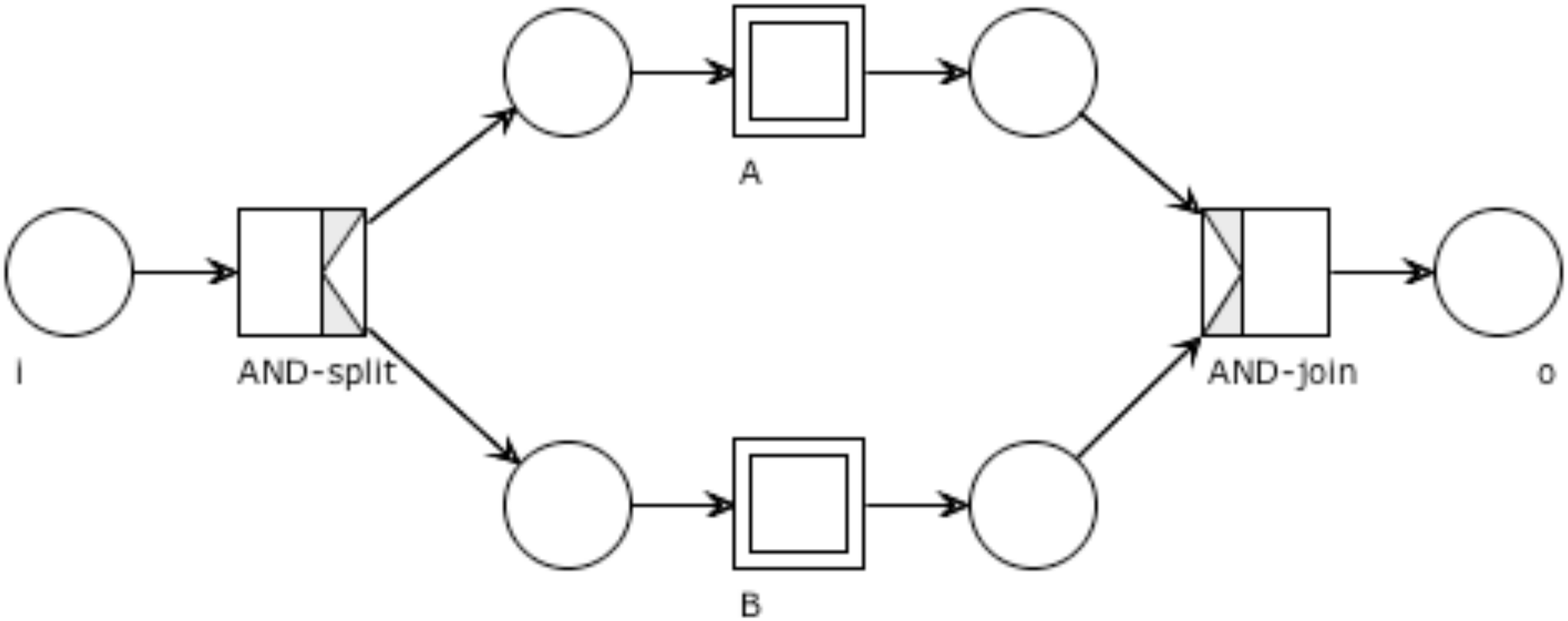
Parallelism (AND-split + AND-join)

A and B are both executed in no particular order



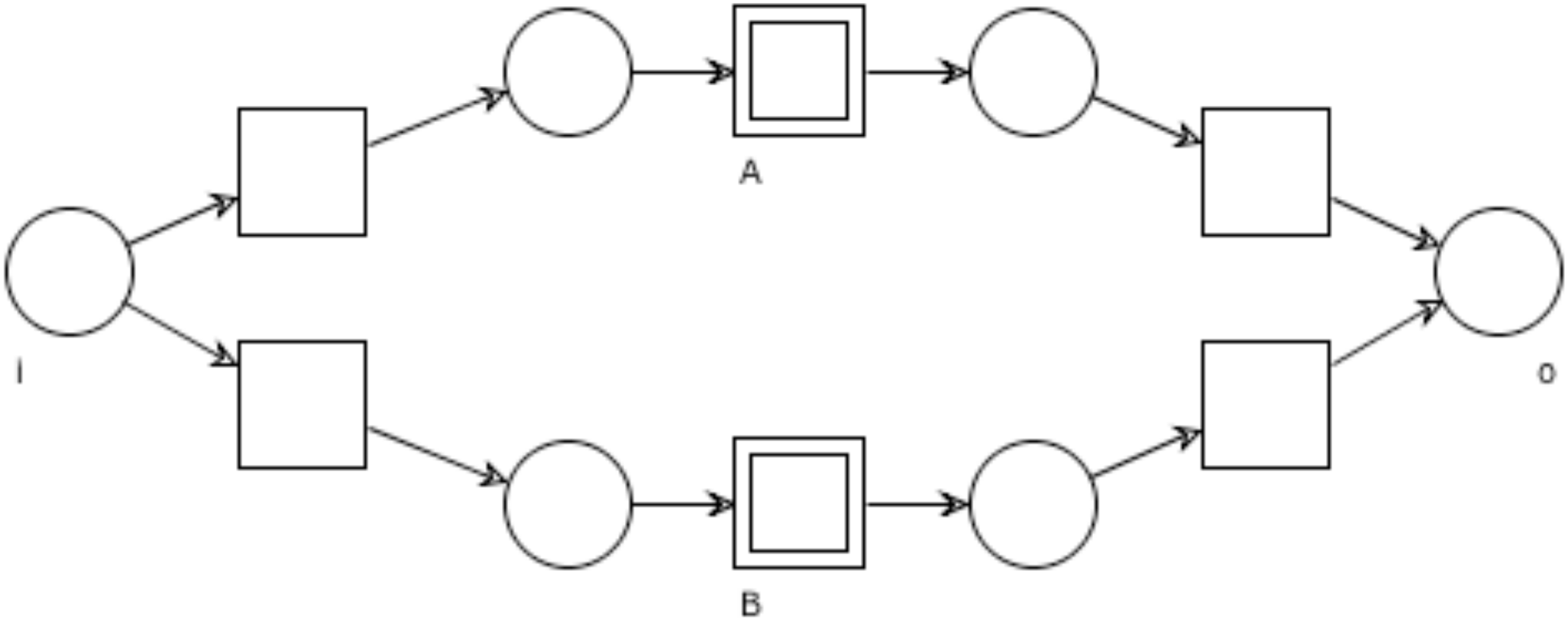
Parallelism
("sugared" version)

Decorated version for business process stakeholders



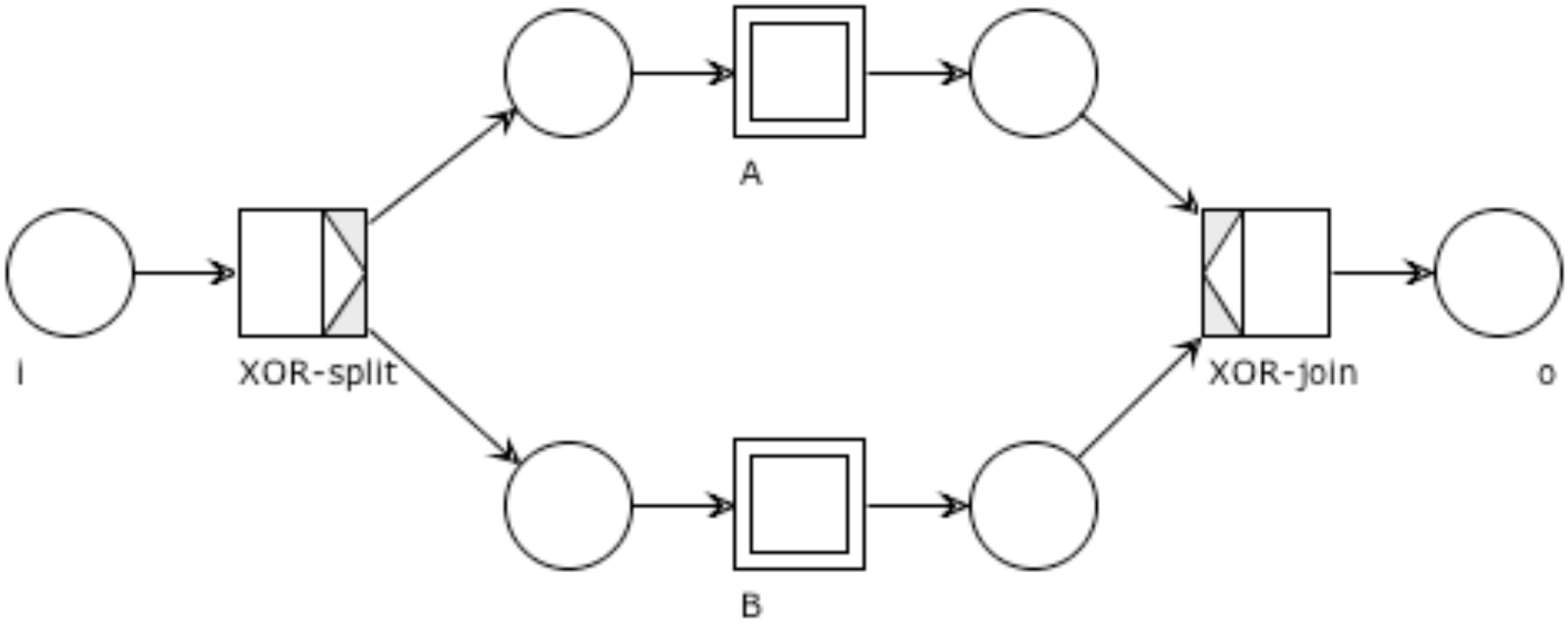
Explicit choice (XOR-split + XOR-join)

Either A or B is executed (choice is **explicit**)



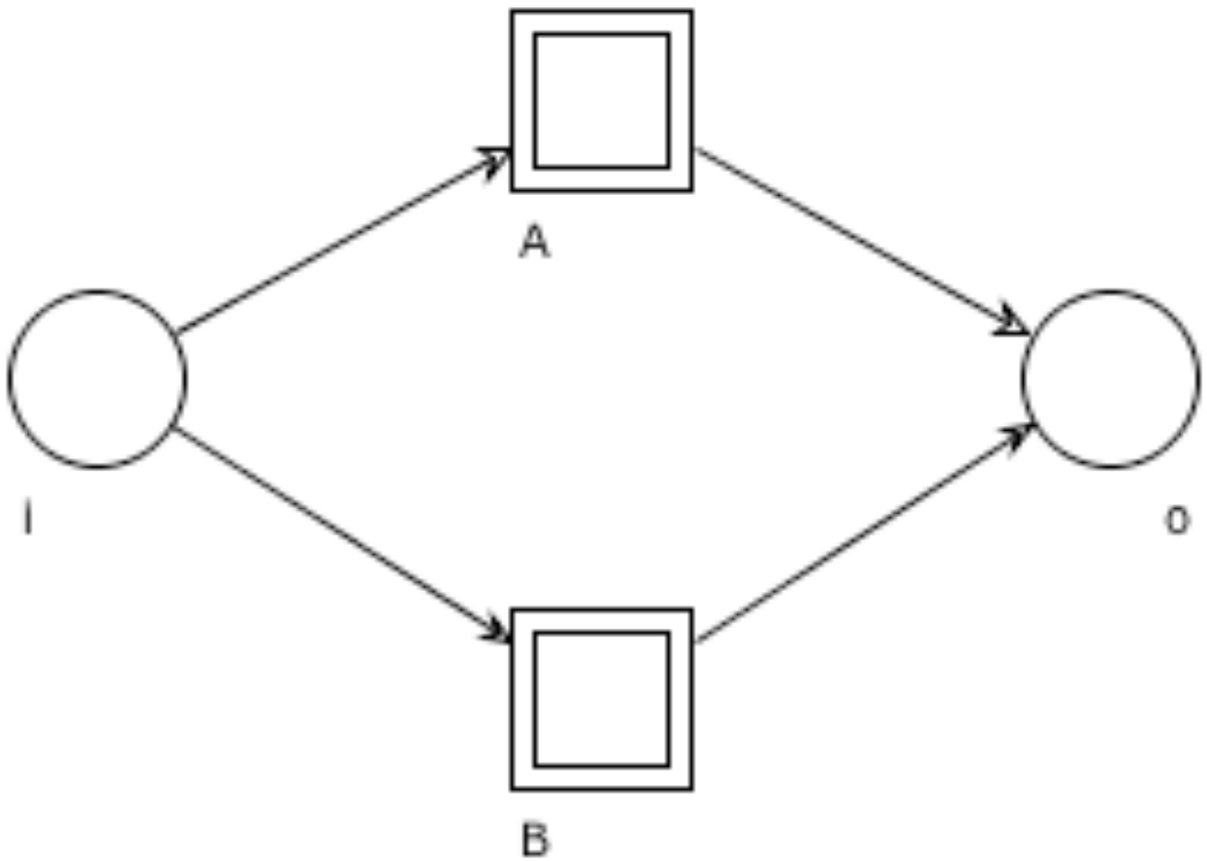
Explicit choice ("sugared" version)

Decorated version for business process stakeholders



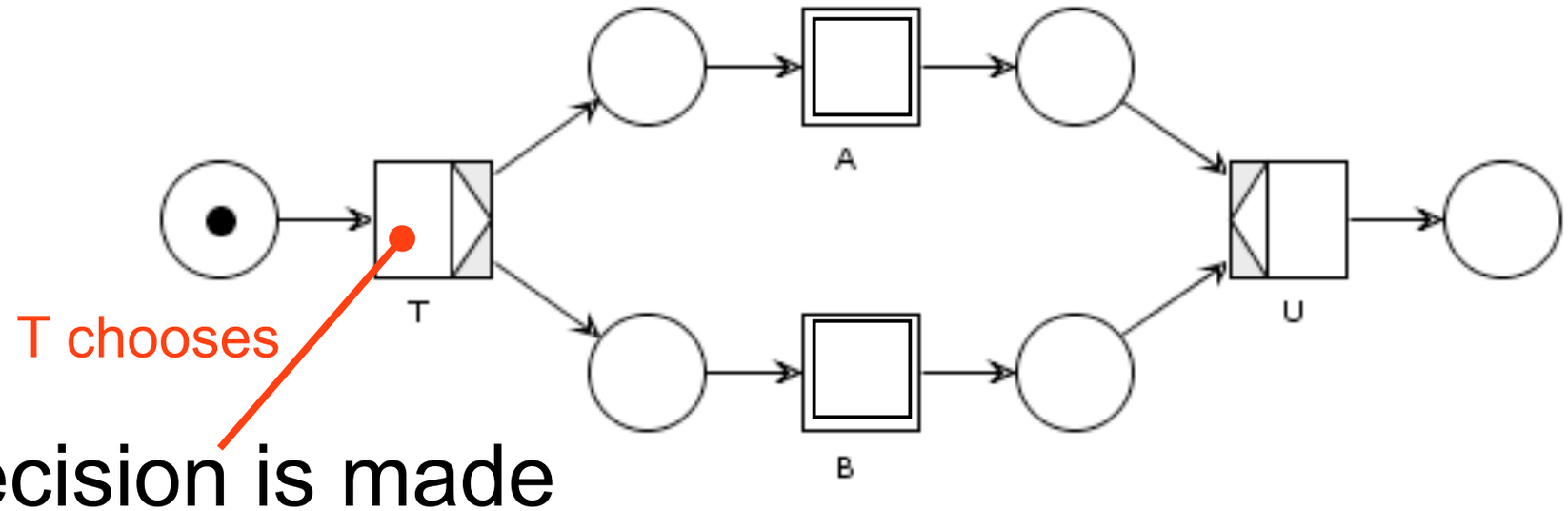
Deferred choice

Either A or B is executed (choice is **implicit**)

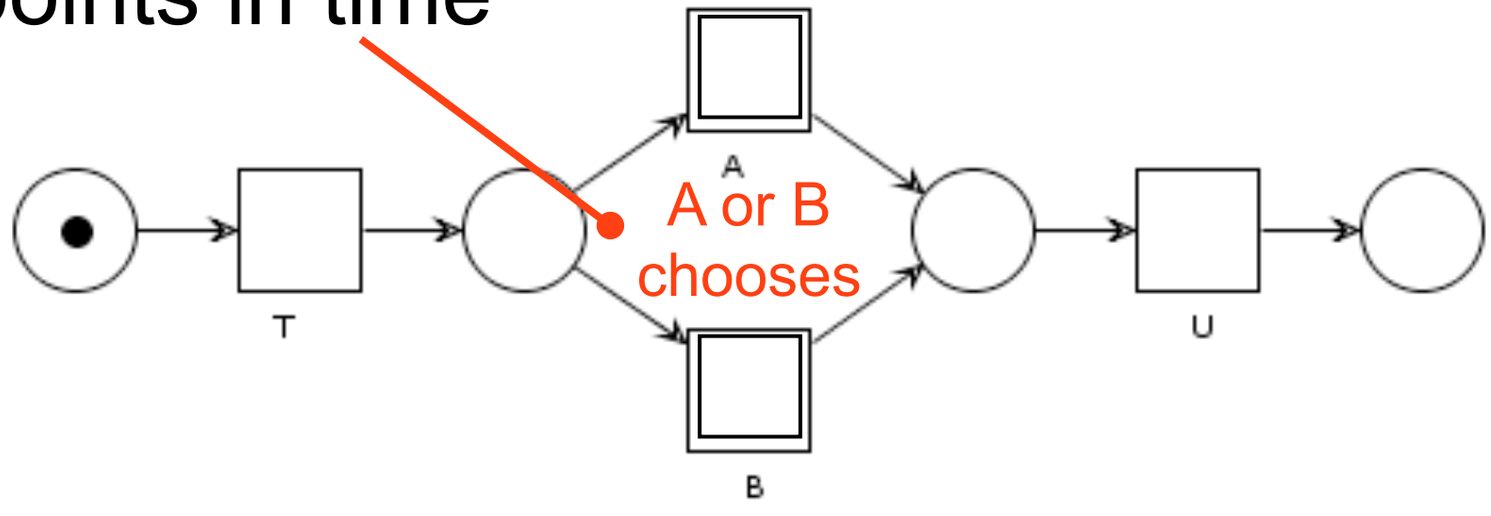


Remember

Explicit choice ≠ Implicit choice

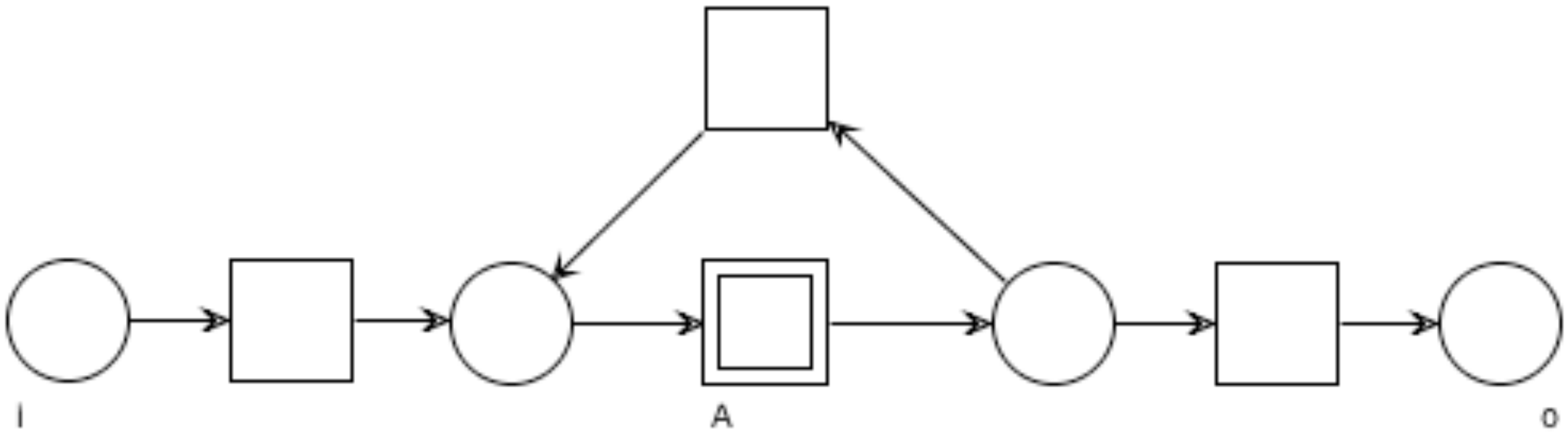


The decision is made at different points in time



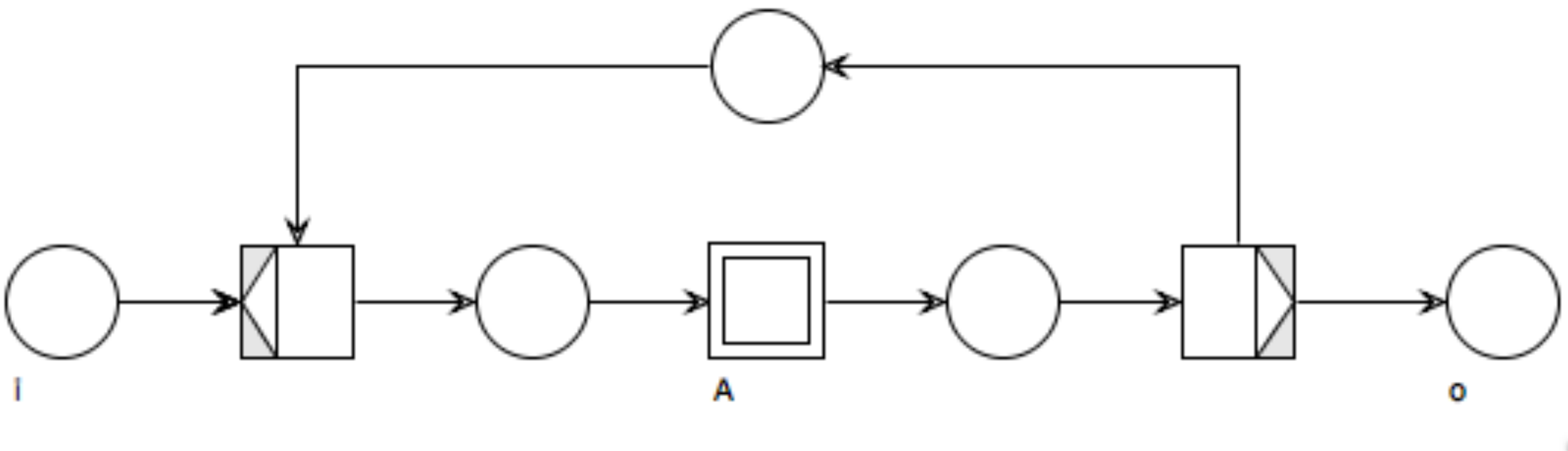
Iteration
(one or more times)

A is executed 1 or more times



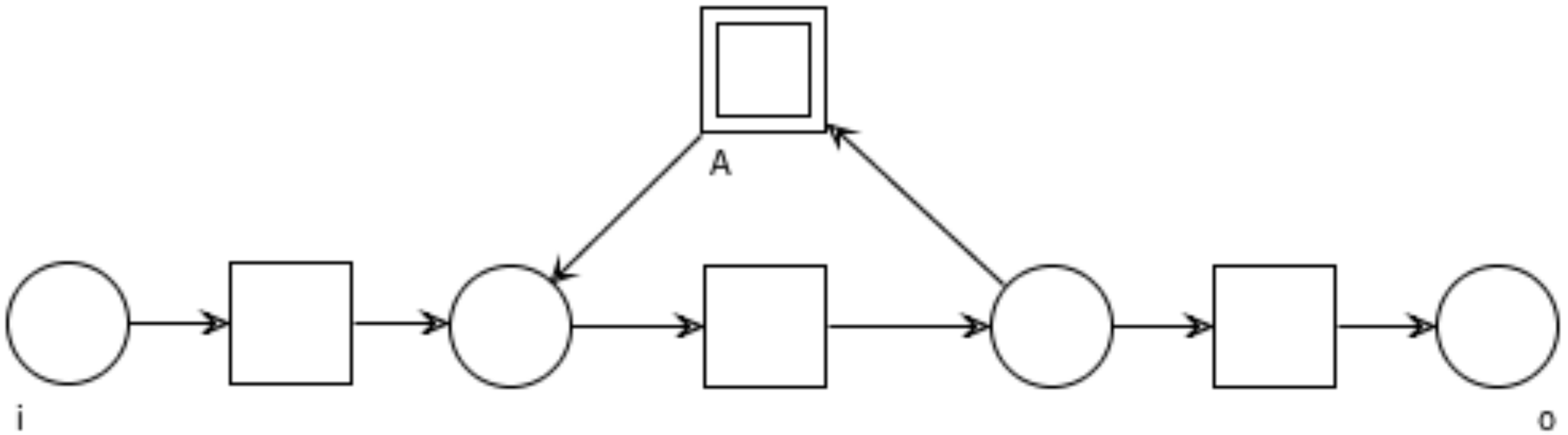
One-or-more iteration ("sugared" version)

Decorated version for business process stakeholders



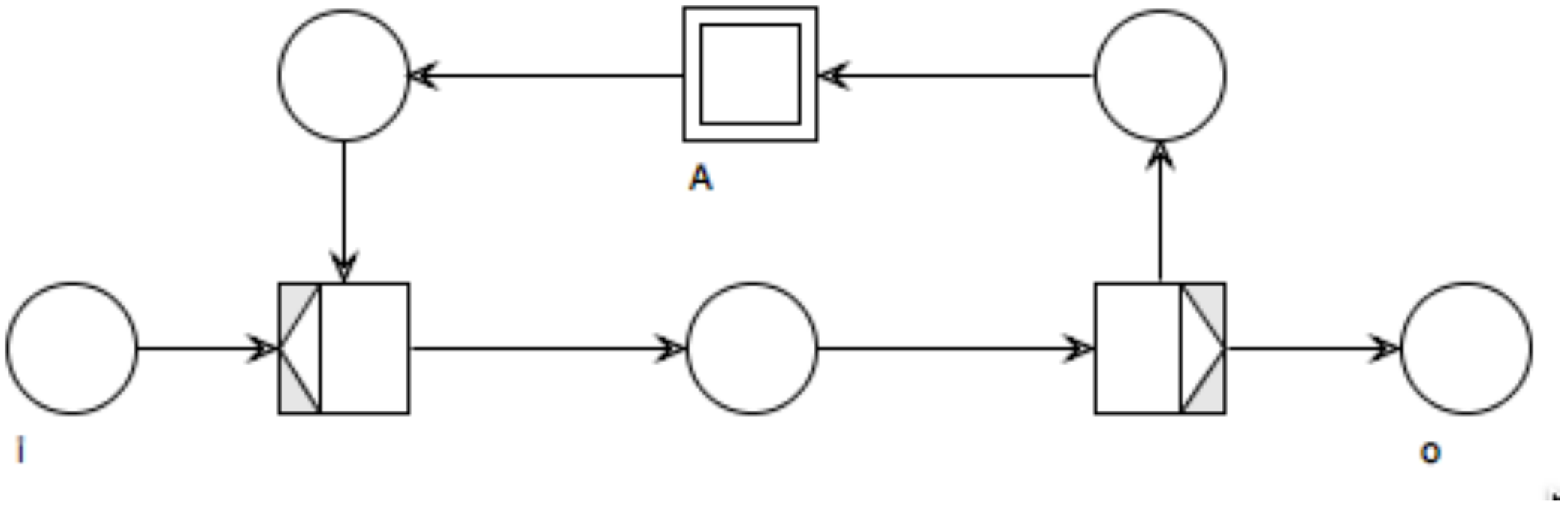
Iteration
(zero or more times)

A is executed 0 or more times



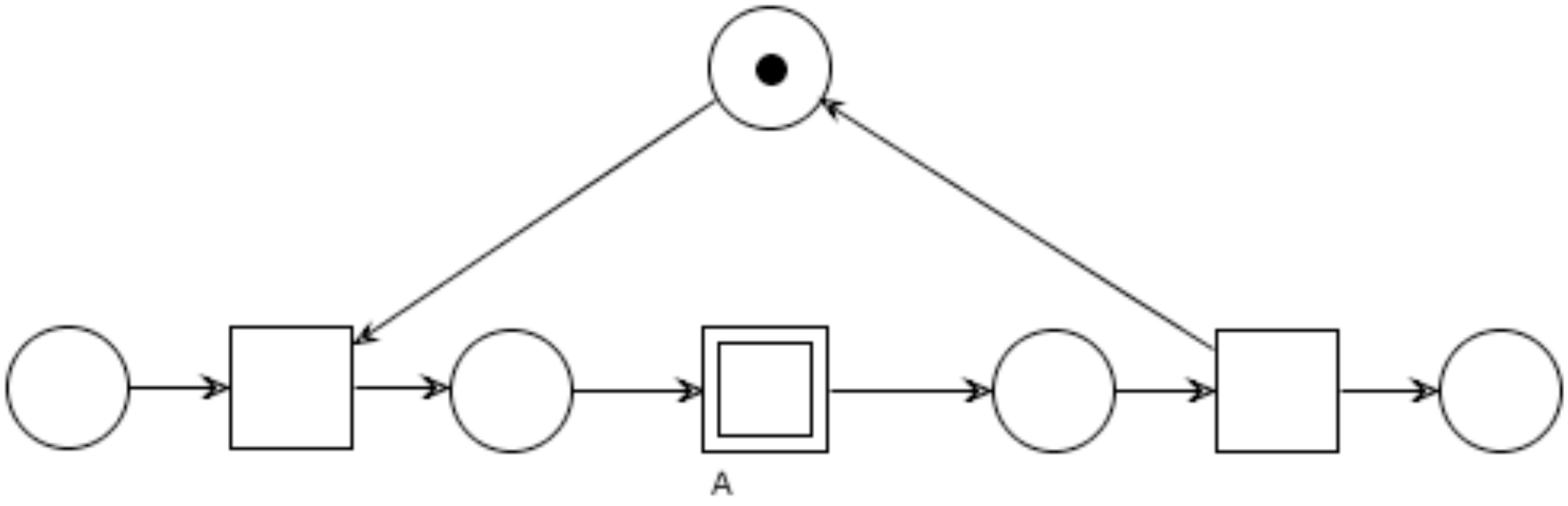
Zero-or-more iteration ("sugared" version)

Decorated version for business process stakeholders



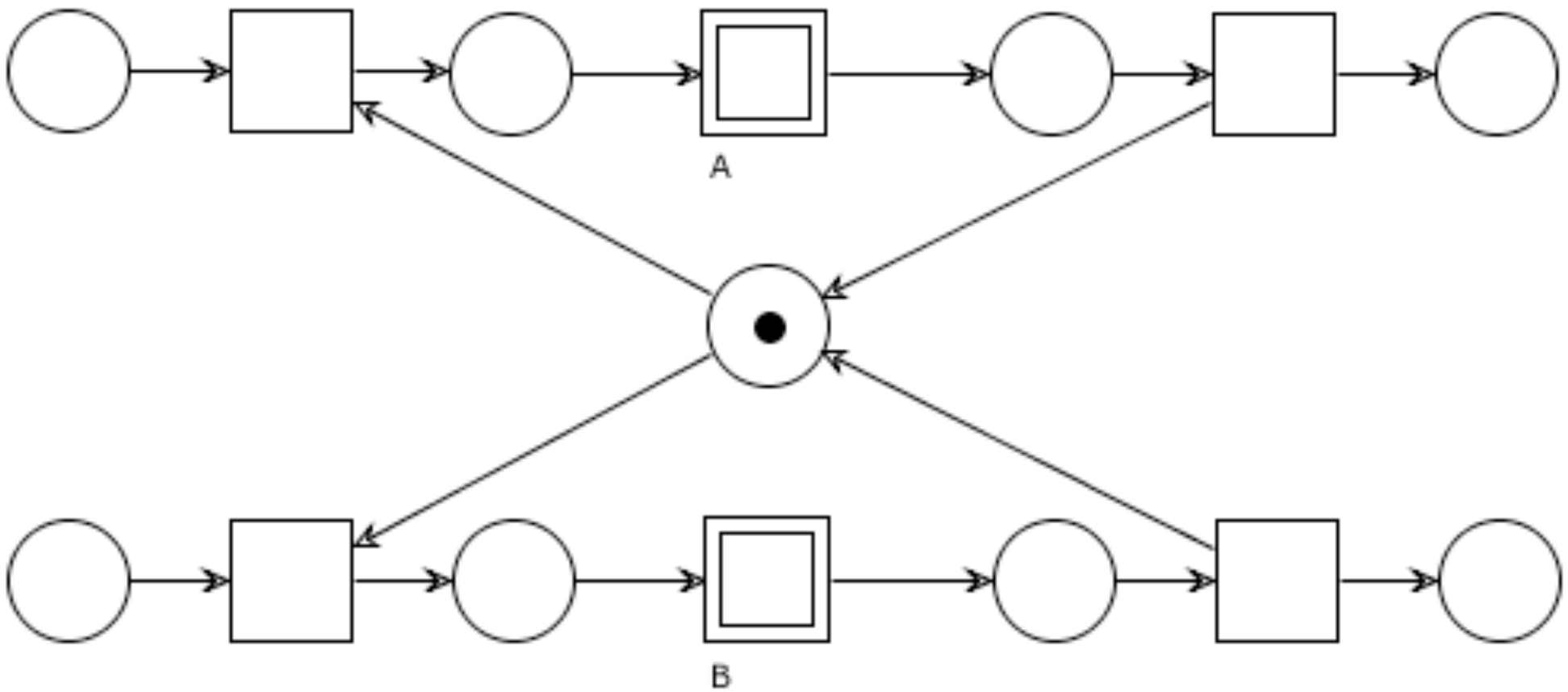
One serve per time

Multiple activations are handled one by one



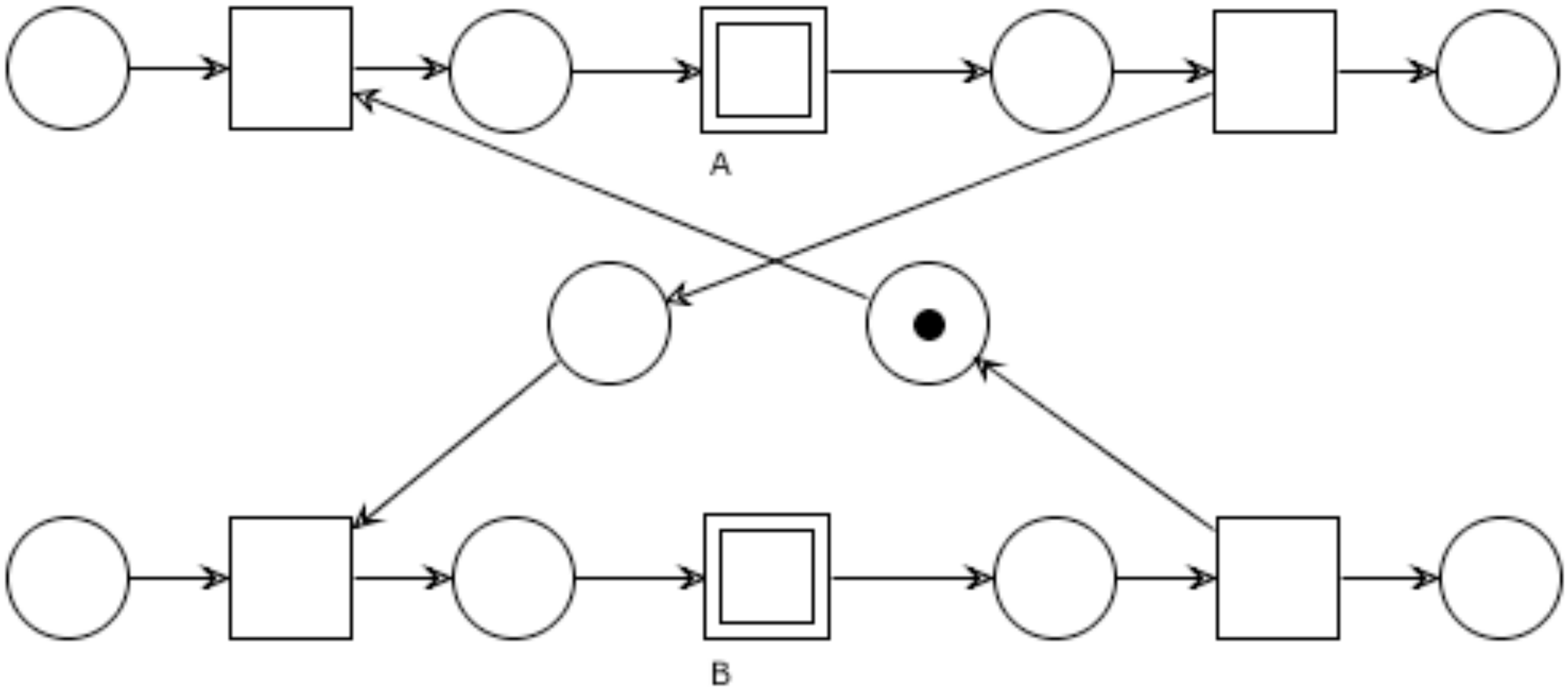
Mutual exclusion

A and B cannot execute concurrently



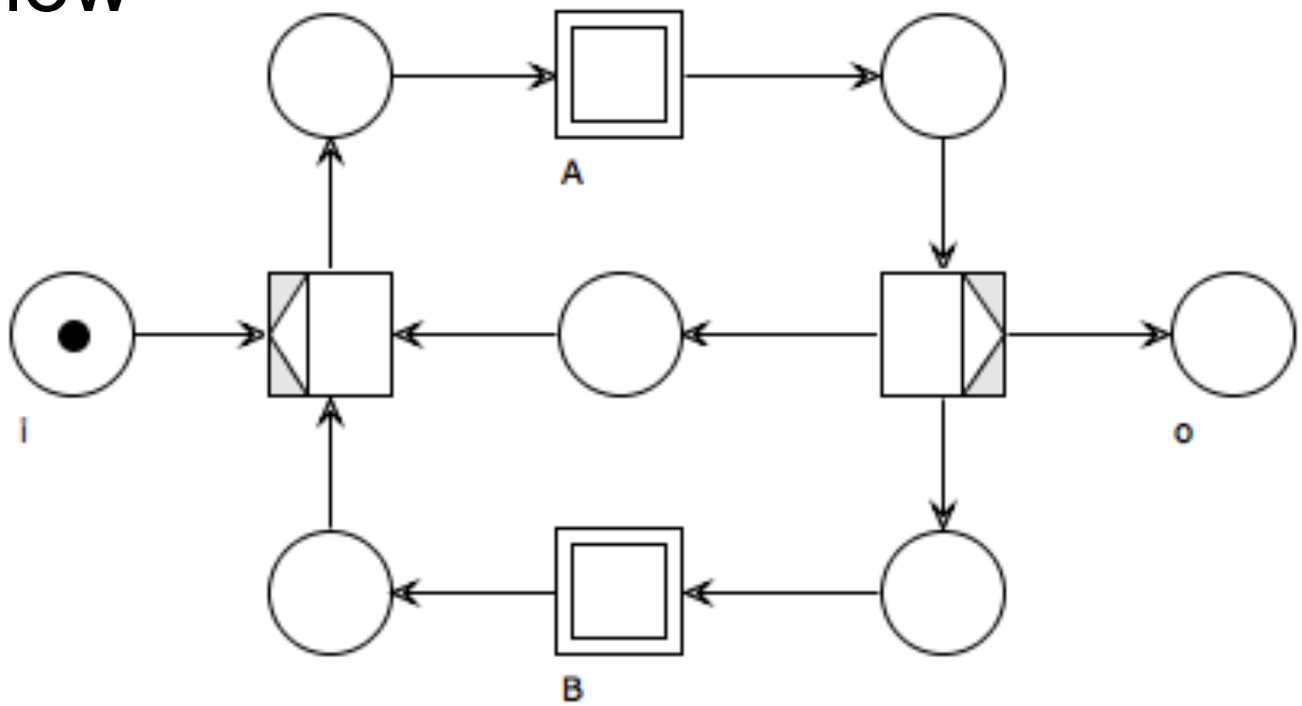
Alternation

A and B execute one time each (A first)



Question time

Consider the workflow net below



How many times can A be executed?

How many times can B executed?

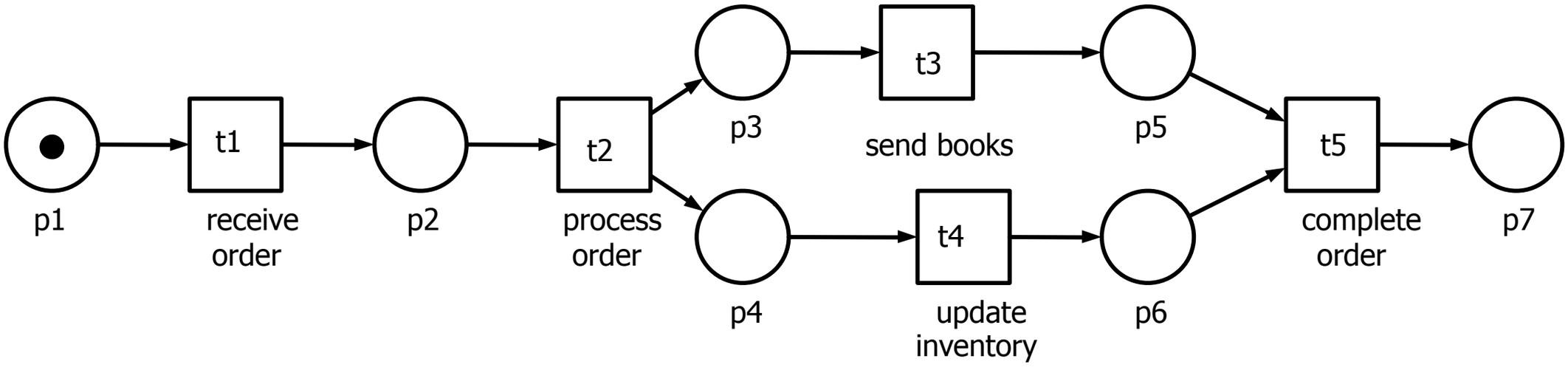
Can a firing sequence contain two As in a row?

Can a firing sequence contain two Bs in a row?

Can a firing sequence contain more Bs than As?

Exercises

- Which "patterns" can be found in the workflow net below?
- "Sugarize" the net
- Draw the corresponding Reachability Graph
- What is its language?



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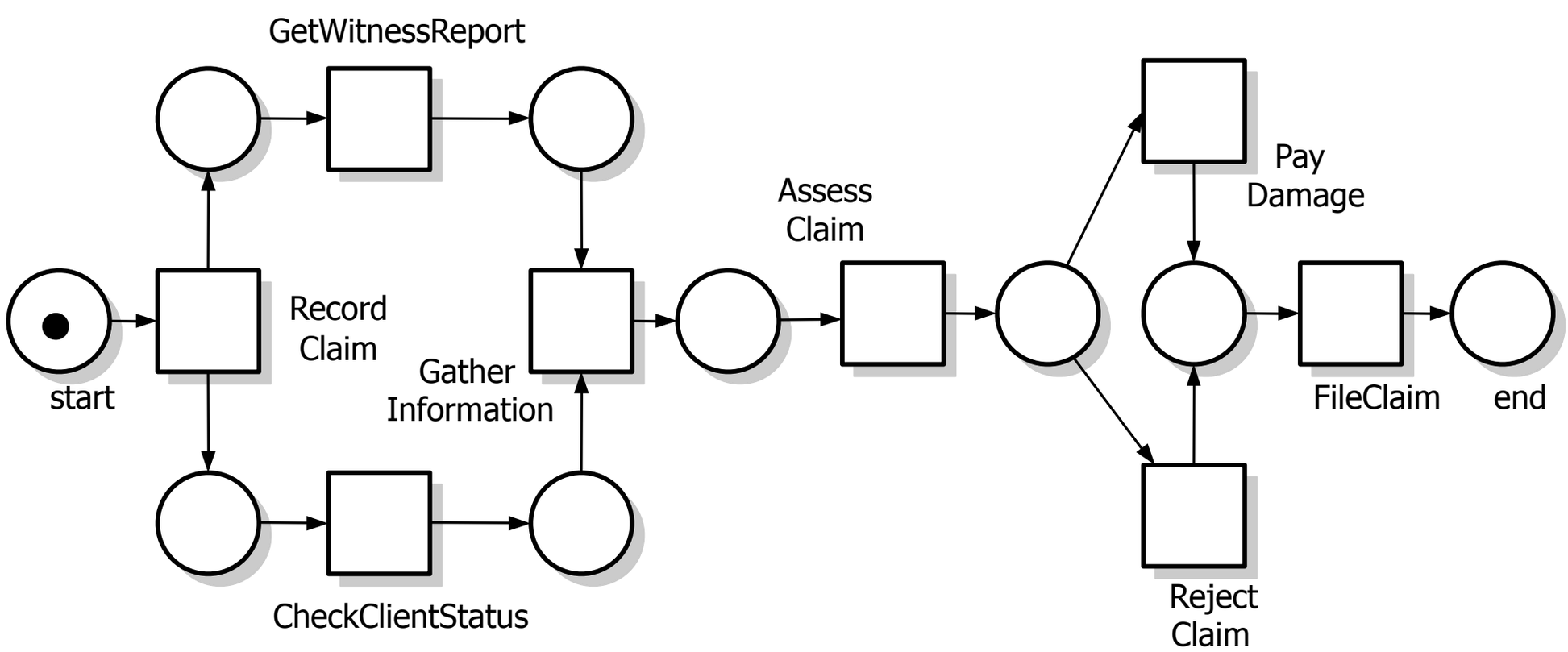
Exercises

- Which "patterns" can be found in the workflow net below?
- "Sugarize" the net (where it makes sense)
- Name all places and draw the Reachability Graph
- What is its language?



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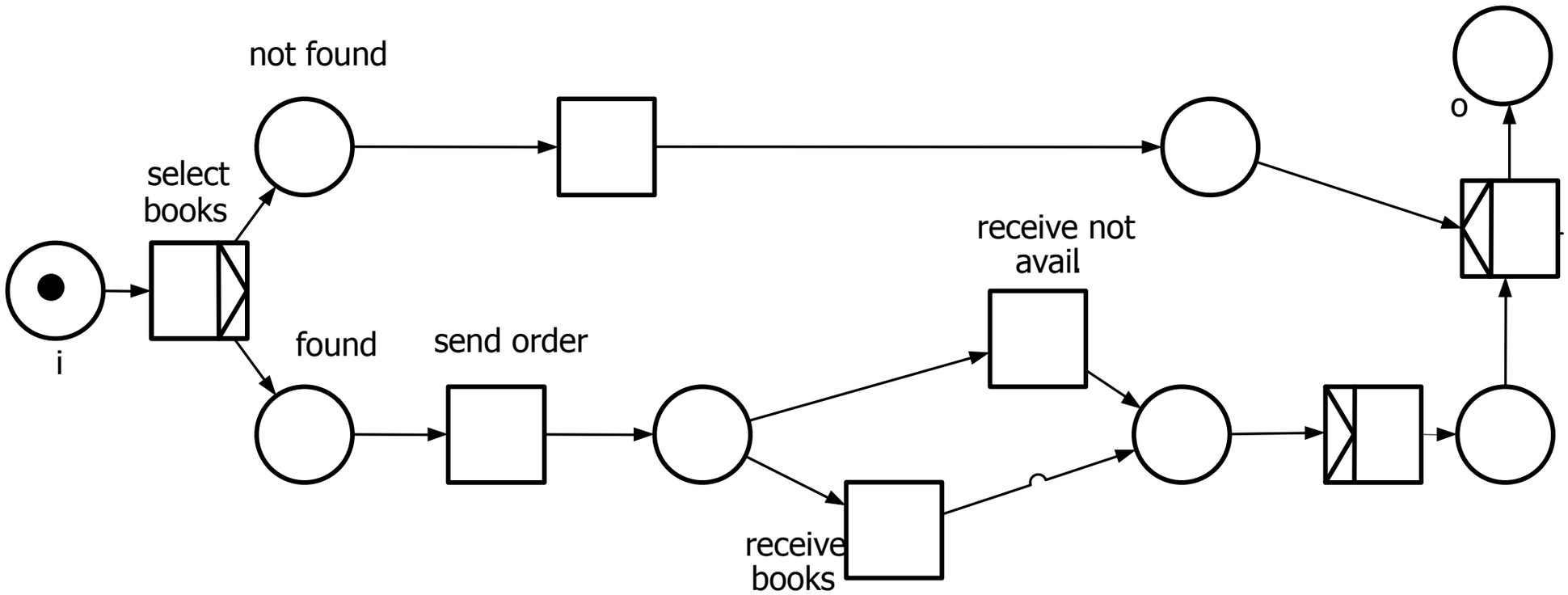
Exercises

- "Desugarize" the workflow net below
- Name all nodes and draw the Reachability Graph
- What is its language?



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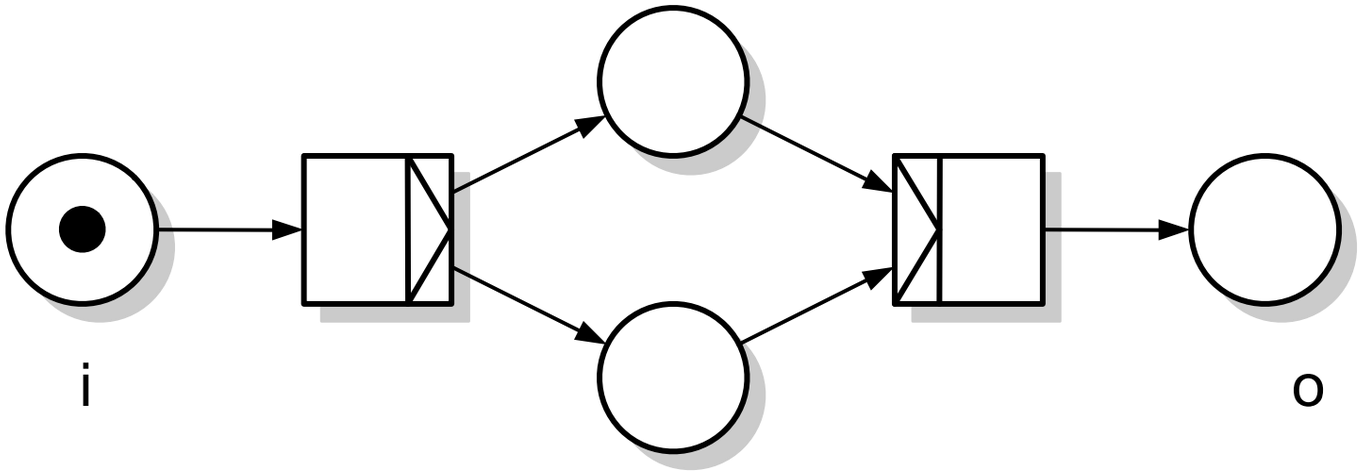
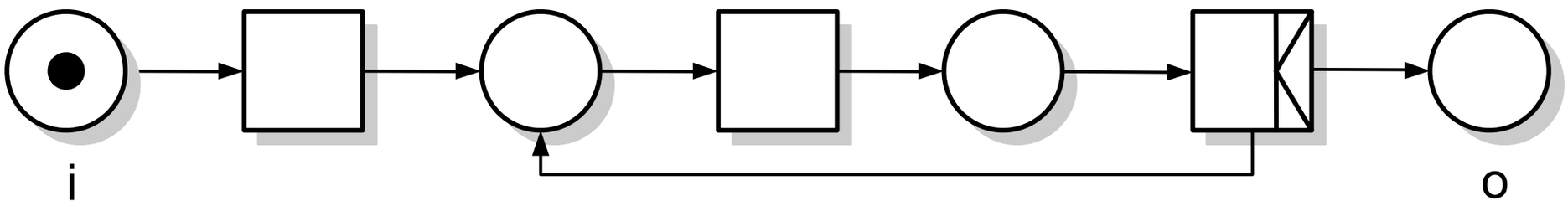
Exercises

- "Desugarize" the workflow nets below
- Name all nodes and draw the Reachability Graphs
- What are their languages?





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Triggers

Execution constraints can depend on the environment in which processes are enacted.

In workflow nets, transitions can be decorated with the information on who (or what) is responsible for the "firing" of that task.

Such annotations are called **triggers**

Triggers

Triggers can be:

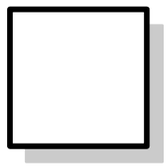
a human interaction

the receipt of a message

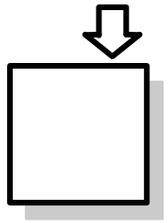
the expiration of a time-out

Transitions with no trigger can fire automatically

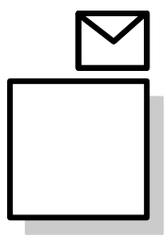
Symbols for triggers



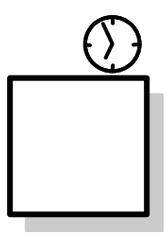
Automatic Trigger: Task enacted automatically



User Trigger: A human user takes initiative and starts activity



External Trigger: External event required to start activity



Time Trigger: Activity started when timer elapses

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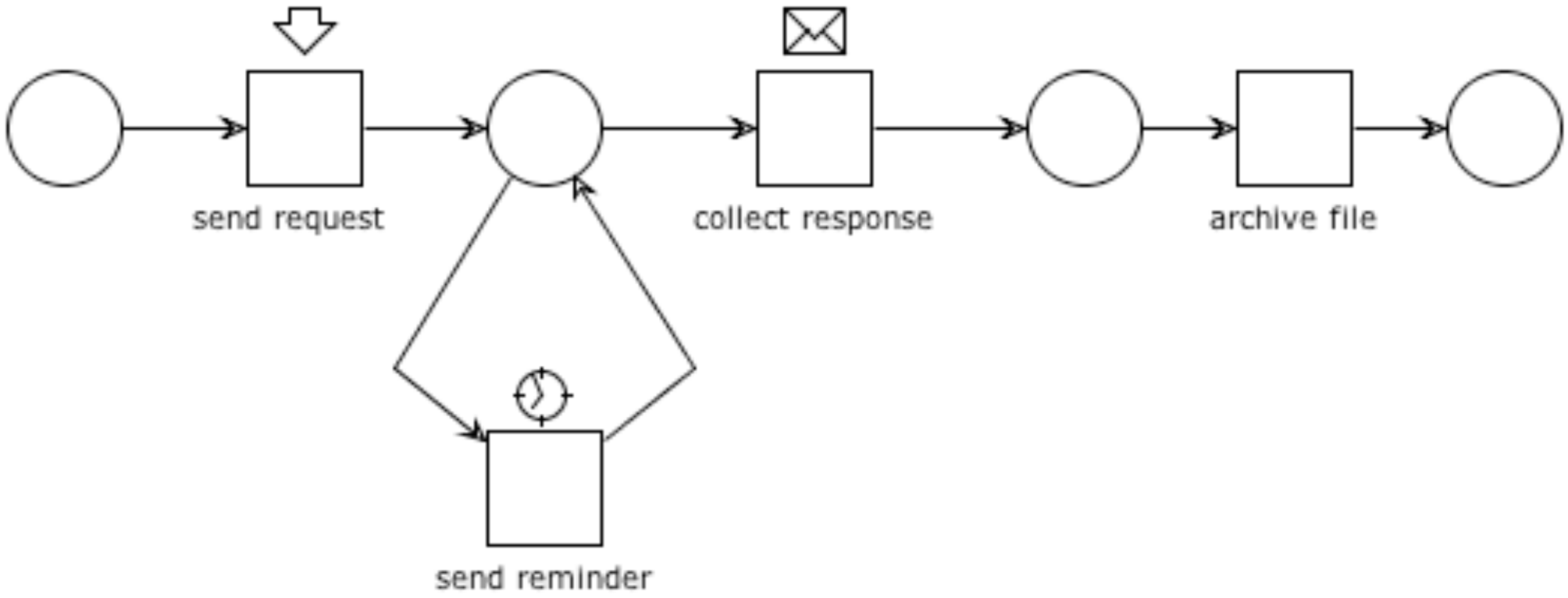
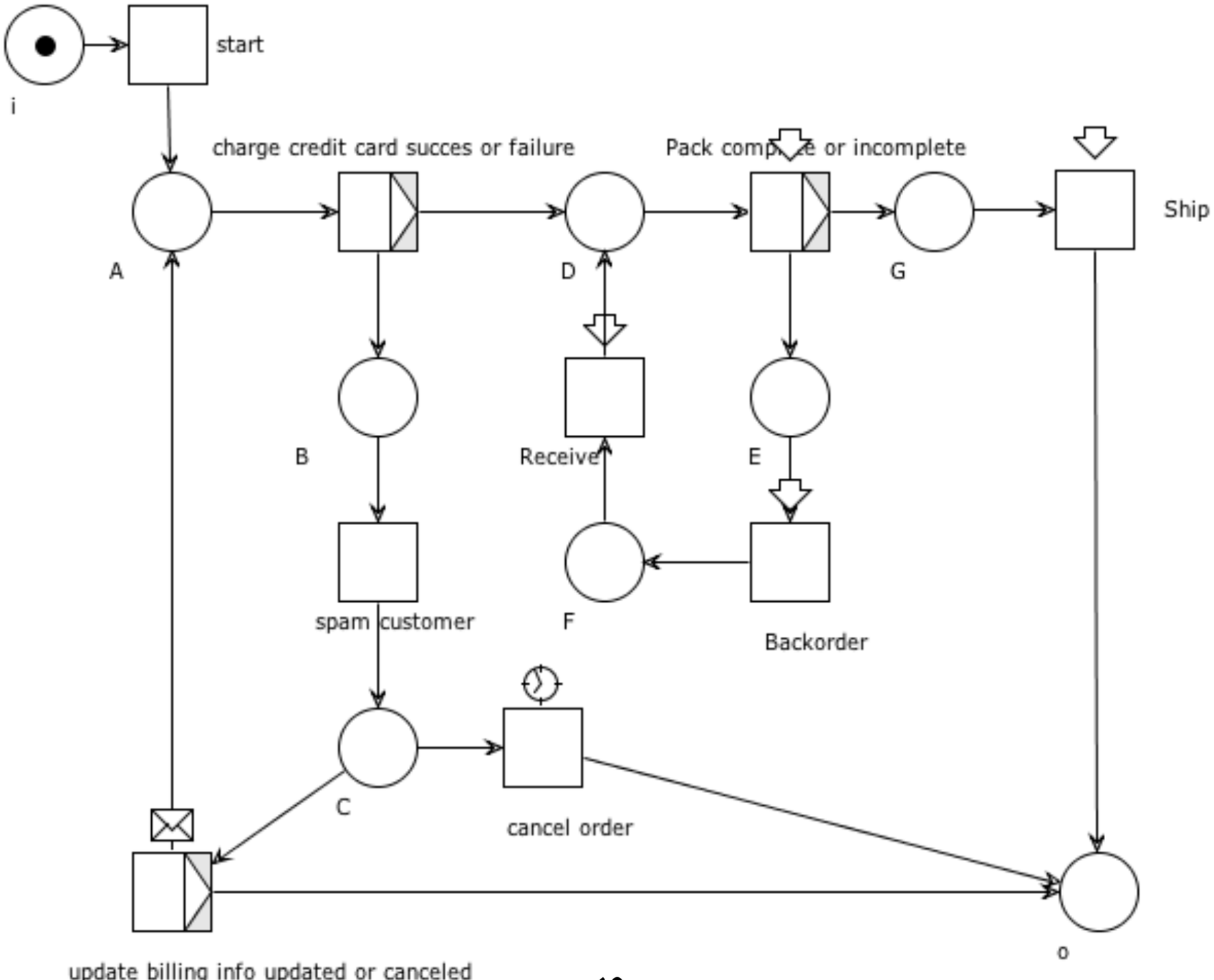
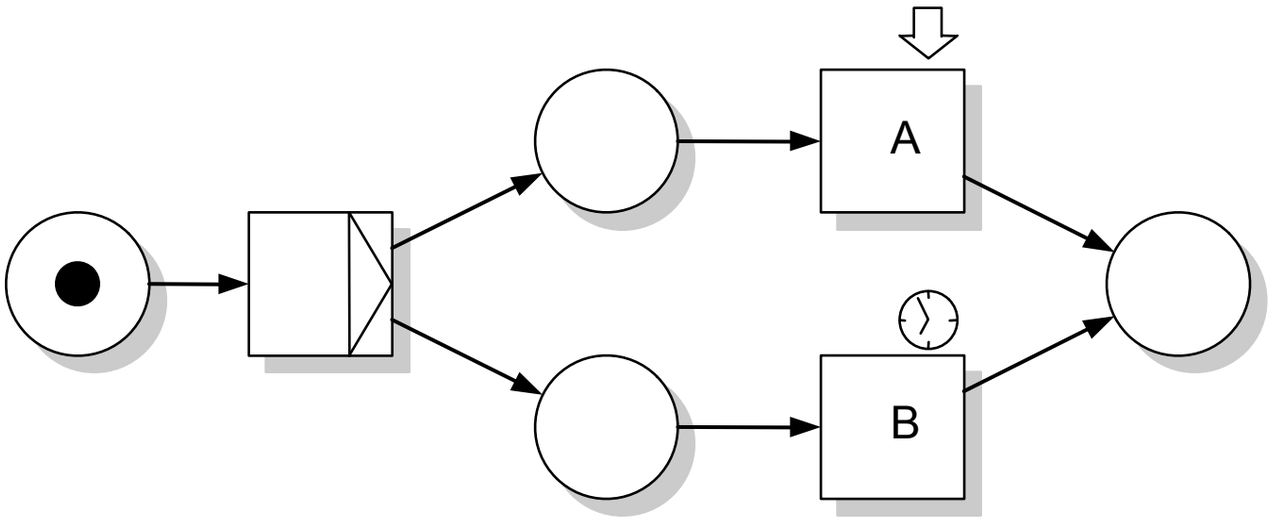
Triggers: example



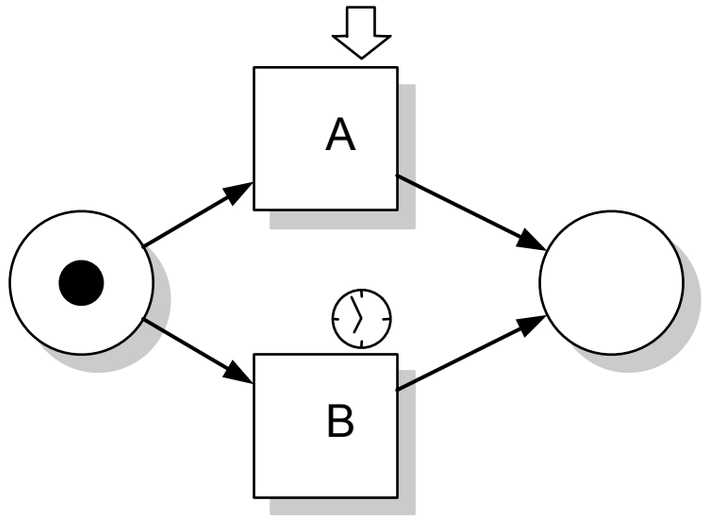
Triggers: example



Explicit vs Implicit XOR-split



(a) *Explicit xor split* does not enable A and B concurrently



(b) *Implicit xor split* enables A and B concurrently

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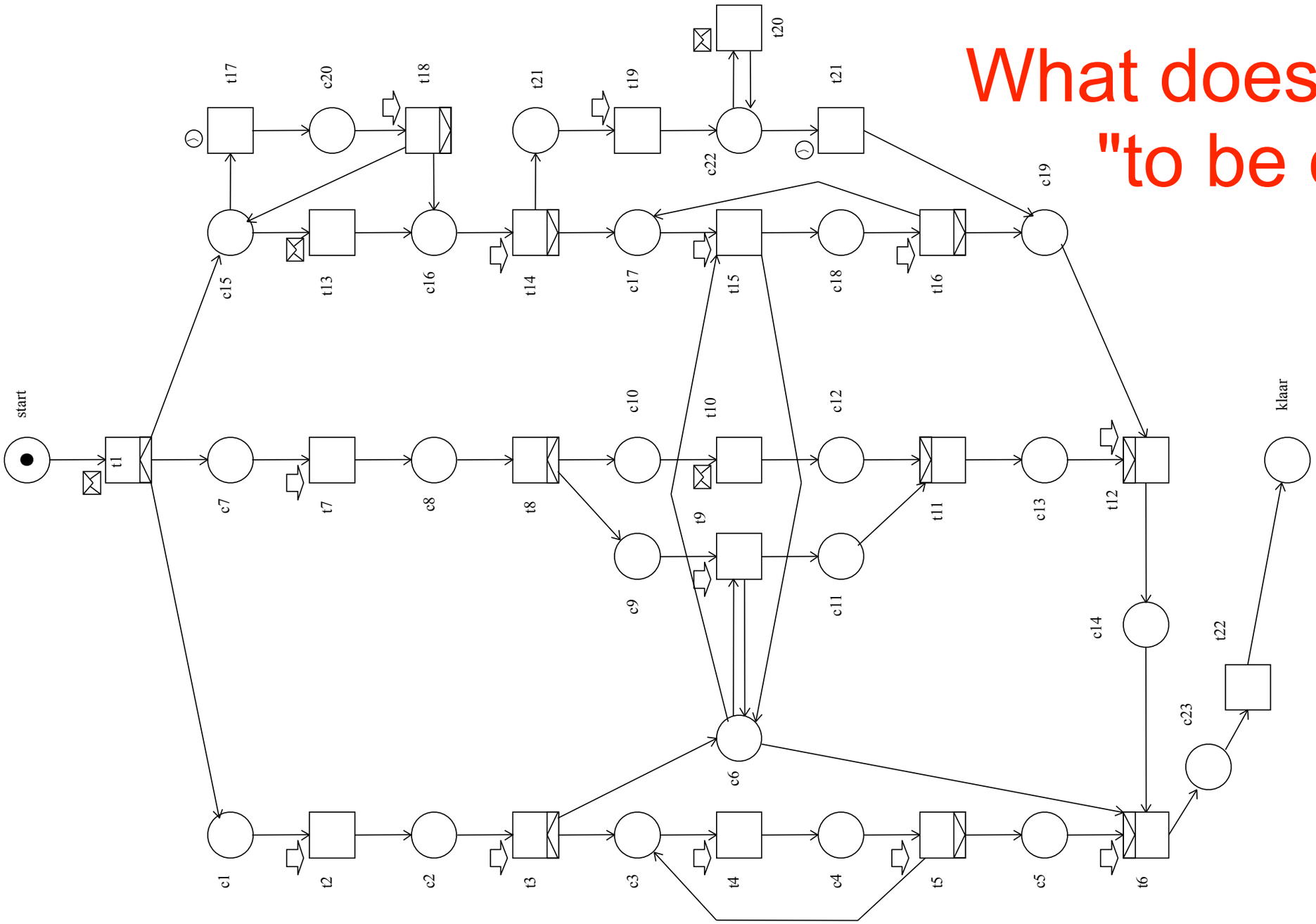
Motivation for the analysis

L(N) shows the correct ways to run the process
if it is empty there is clearly some problem

Are we guaranteed that nothing can go wrong?
Are we guaranteed that once a case is started
it will reach an end?

BPs are large, with increasing complexity
flawed situations are frequent

Is this WF net ok?



What does it mean "to be ok"?