

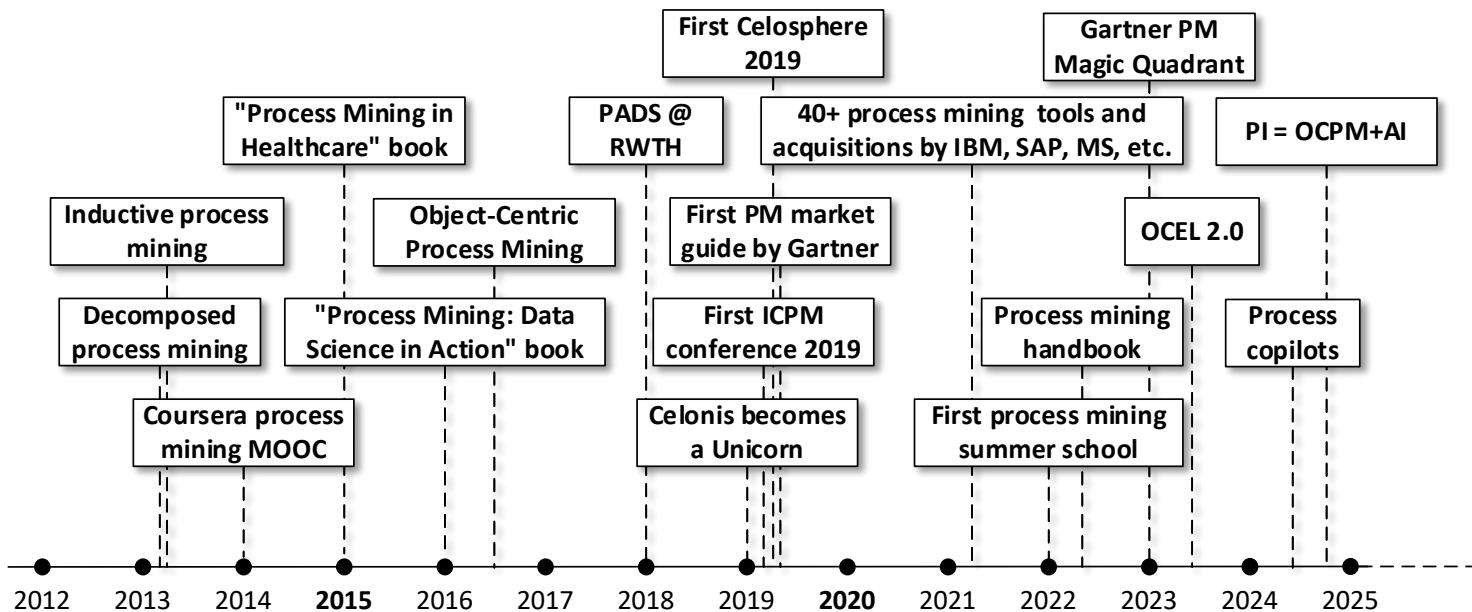
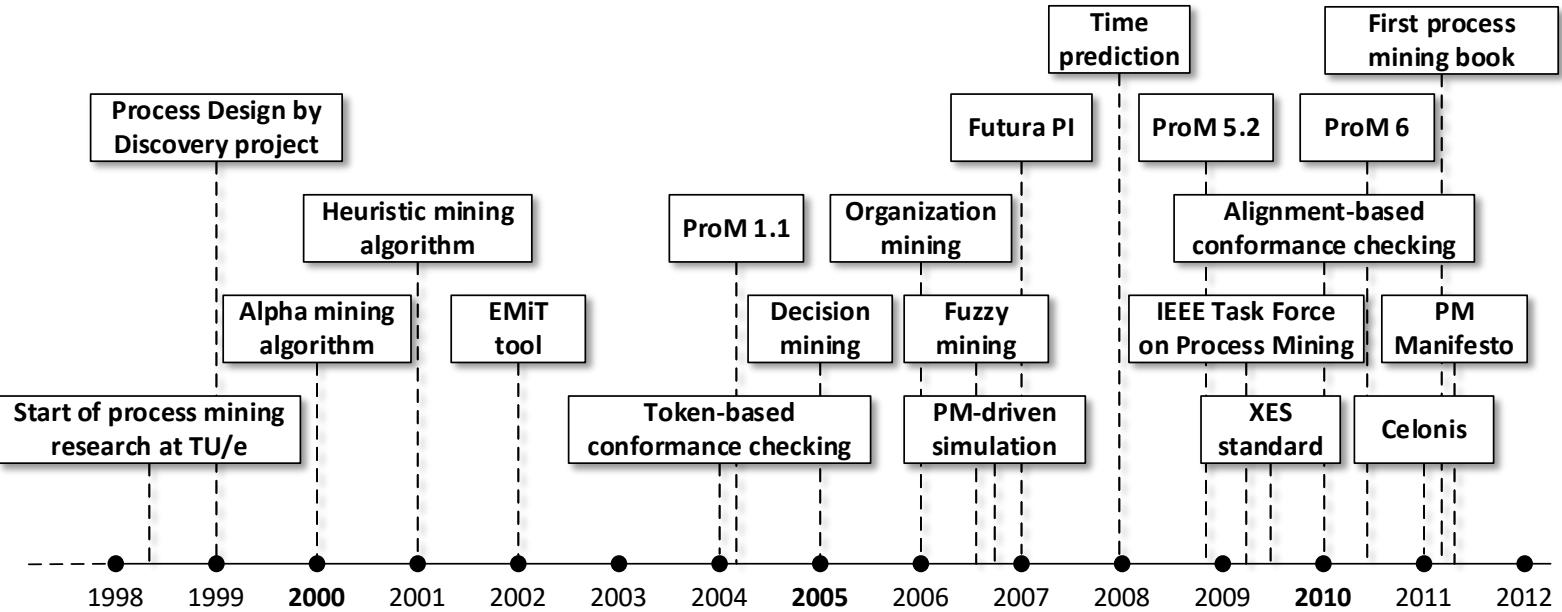
Process Mining Demystified

How Does it Really Work?

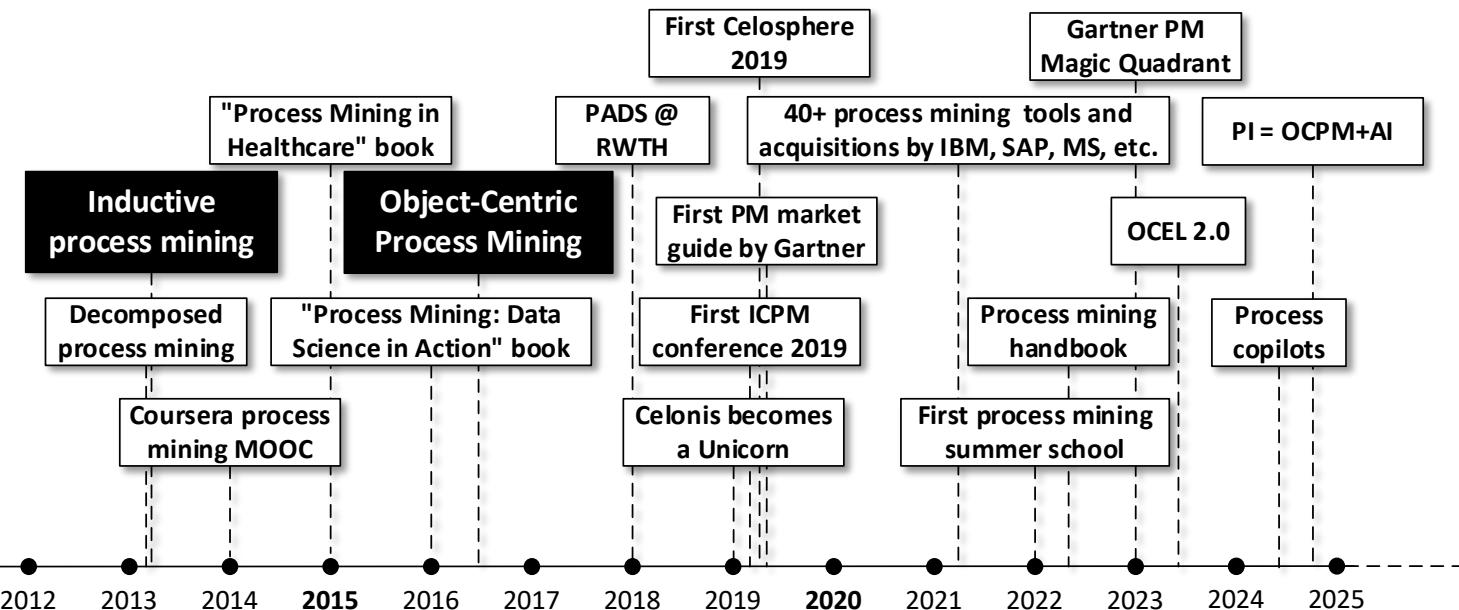
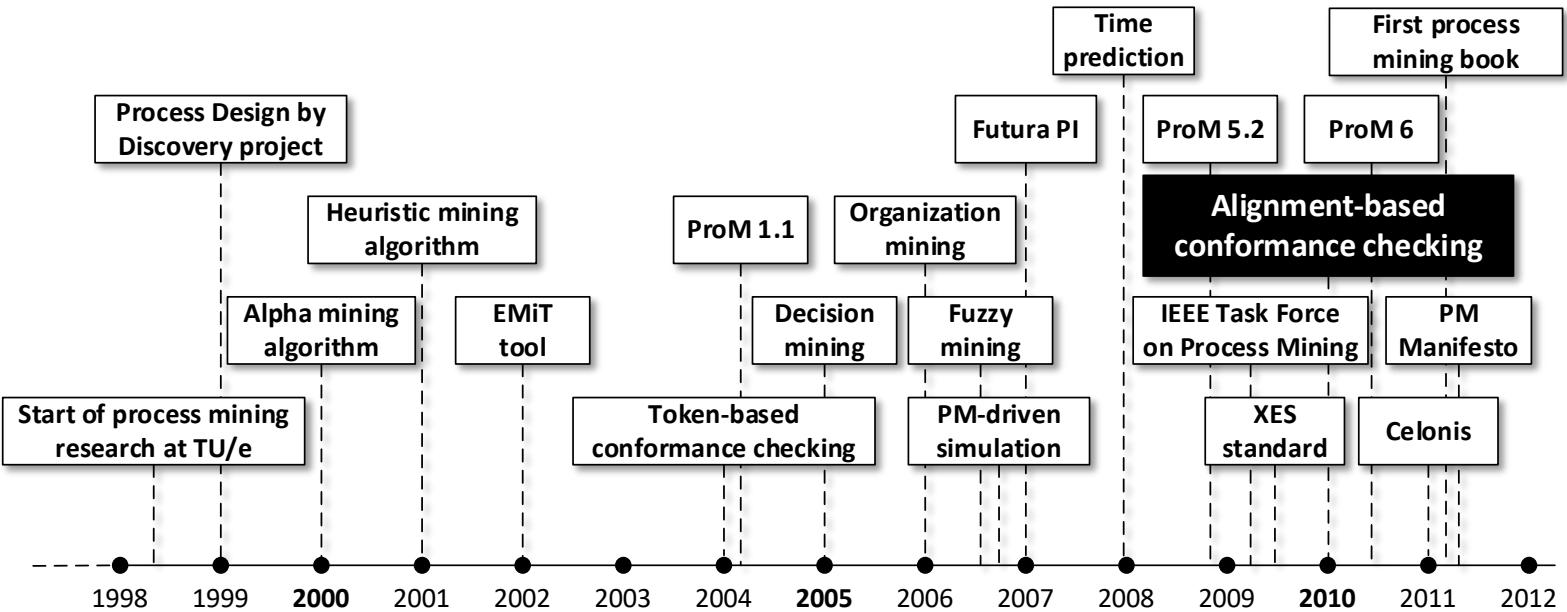
prof.dr.ir. Wil van der Aalst

Chief scientist Celonis & professor RWTH Aachen University

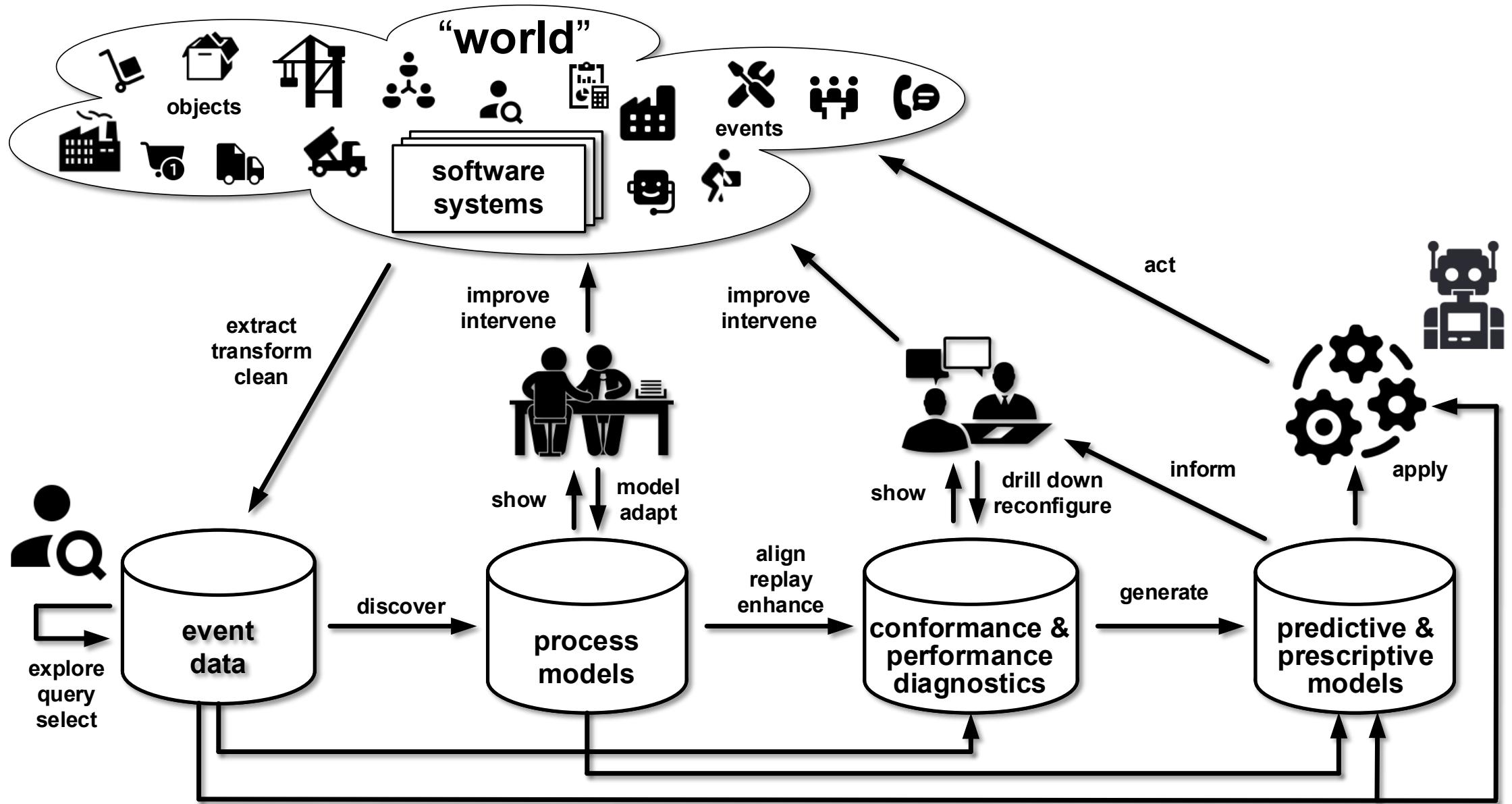
Timeline



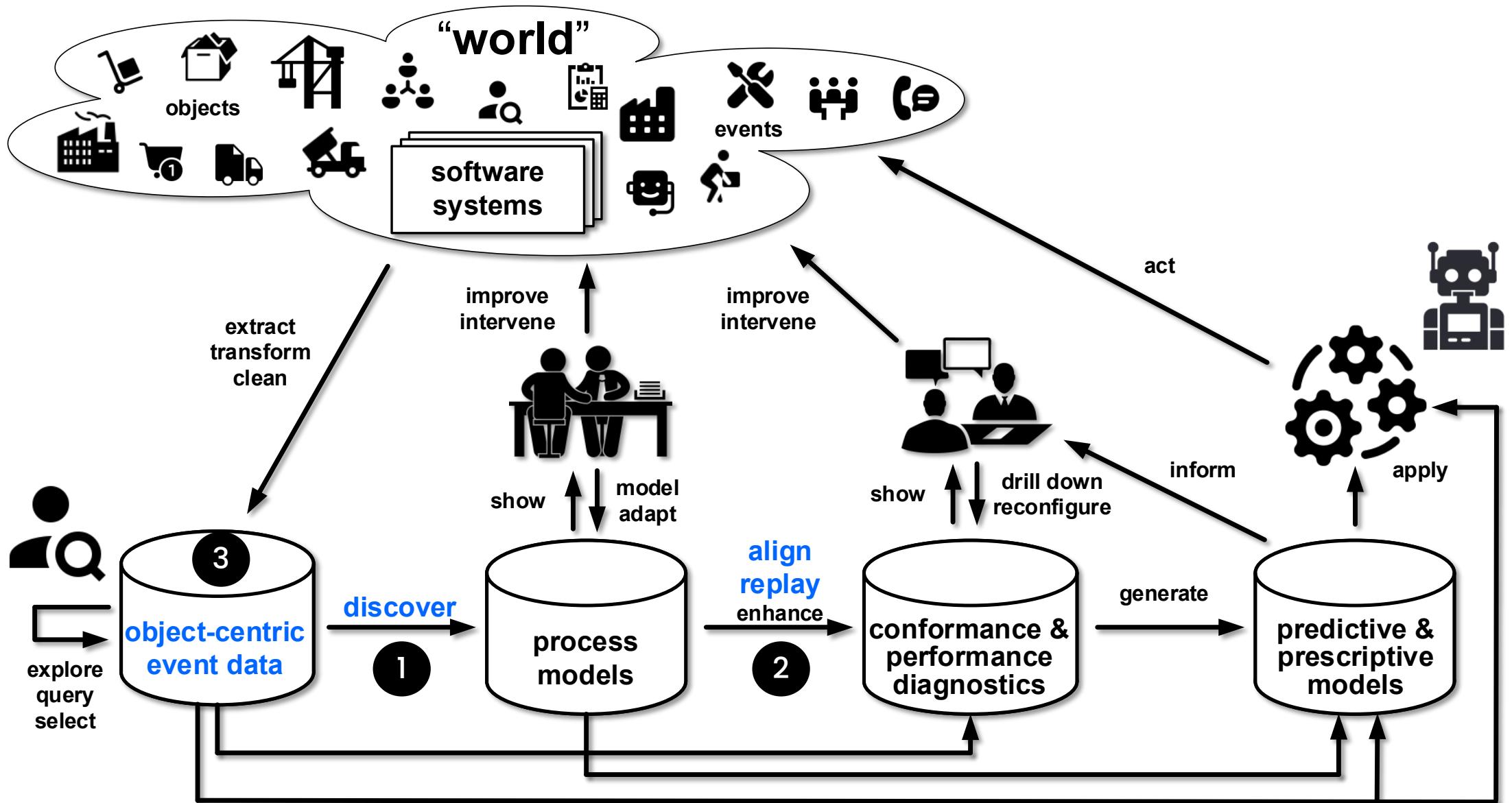
Timeline



Overview



Focus of today





Example Event Data (Case-Centric)

Case	Activity	Time
1	take order	2025-11-04 14:21
1	create base	2025-11-04 14:32
1	add tomato	2025-11-04 14:34
1	add salami	2025-11-04 14:34
1	add cheese	2025-11-04 14:35
1	bake in oven	2025-11-04 14:36
1	eat pizza	2025-11-04 14:40
1	clean kitchen	2025-11-04 14:48
2	take order	2025-11-04 19:07
2	create base	2025-11-04 19:18
2	add tomato	2025-11-04 19:19
2	add mushrooms	2025-11-04 19:19
2	add cheese	2025-11-04 19:19
2	bake in oven	2025-11-04 19:21
2	clean kitchen	2025-11-04 19:25
3	take order	2025-11-04 21:01
3	create base	2025-11-04 21:11
3	add cheese	2025-11-04 21:13
3	add mushrooms	2025-11-04 21:13
3	add tomato	2025-11-04 21:14
3	bake in oven	2025-11-04 21:16
3	eat pizza	2025-11-04 21:19
3	clean kitchen	2025-11-04 21:35
4	take order	2025-11-05 13:30
4	create base	2025-11-05 13:36
4	add cheese	2025-11-05 13:36
4	add tomato	2025-11-05 13:36
4	add salami	2025-11-05 13:37

...

Case	Activity	Time
1,275	add cheese	2026-08-15 20:39
1,275	bake in oven	2026-08-15 20:41
1,275	clean kitchen	2026-08-15 20:55
1,276	take order	2026-08-15 20:39
1,276	create base	2026-08-15 20:48
1,276	add mushrooms	2026-08-15 20:49
1,276	add cheese	2026-08-15 20:51
1,276	add tomato	2026-08-15 20:52
1,276	bake in oven	2026-08-15 20:55
1,276	eat pizza	2026-08-15 22:02
1,276	clean kitchen	2026-08-15 22:29
1,277	take order	2026-08-15 21:40
1,277	create base	2026-08-15 21:47
1,277	add salami	2026-08-15 21:49
1,277	add cheese	2026-08-15 21:49
1,277	add tomato	2026-08-15 21:51
1,277	bake in oven	2026-08-15 21:54
1,277	eat pizza	2026-08-15 23:01
1,277	clean kitchen	2026-08-15 23:13
1,278	take order	2026-08-15 23:38
1,278	create base	2026-08-15 23:56
1,278	add cheese	2026-08-15 23:57
1,278	add cheese	2026-08-15 23:58
1,278	add mushrooms	2026-08-15 23:58
1,278	add tomato	2026-08-16 00:56
1,278	bake in oven	2026-08-16 00:59
1,278	eat pizza	2026-08-16 02:04
1,278	clean kitchen	2026-08-16 08:13

1278
cases

10,404
events

9
activities

134
variants

Example Event Data (Case-Centric)

Case	Activity	Time
1	take order	2025-11-04 14:21
1	create base	2025-11-04 14:32
1	add tomato	2025-11-04 14:34
1	add salami	2025-11-04 14:34
1	add cheese	2025-11-04 14:35
1	bake in oven	2025-11-04 14:36
1	eat pizza	2025-11-04 14:40
1	clean kitchen	2025-11-04 14:48
2	take order	2025-11-04 19:07
2	create base	2025-11-04 19:18
2	add tomato	2025-11-04 19:19
2	add mushrooms	2025-11-04 19:19
2	add cheese	2025-11-04 19:19
2	bake in oven	2025-11-04 19:21

...

Case	Activity	Time
1,275	add cheese	2026-08-15 20:39
1,275	bake in oven	2026-08-15 20:41
1,275	clean kitchen	2026-08-15 20:55
1,276	take order	2026-08-15 20:39
1,276	create base	2026-08-15 20:48
1,276	add mushrooms	2026-08-15 20:49
1,276	add cheese	2026-08-15 20:51
1,276	add tomato	2026-08-15 20:52
1,276	bake in oven	2026-08-15 20:55
1,276	eat pizza	2026-08-15 22:02
1,276	clean kitchen	2026-08-15 22:29
1,277	take order	2026-08-15 21:40
1,277	create base	2026-08-15 21:47
1,277	add salami	2026-08-15 21:49

Event = Case + Activity + Timestamp + ...

3	add cheese	2025-11-04 21:13
3	add mushrooms	2025-11-04 21:13
3	add tomato	2025-11-04 21:14
3	bake in oven	2025-11-04 21:16
3	eat pizza	2025-11-04 21:19
3	clean kitchen	2025-11-04 21:35
4	take order	2025-11-05 13:30
4	create base	2025-11-05 13:36
4	add cheese	2025-11-05 13:36
4	add tomato	2025-11-05 13:36
4	add salami	2025-11-05 13:37

1,277	eat pizza	2026-08-15 20:39
1,277	clean kitchen	2026-08-15 23:13
1,278	take order	2026-08-15 23:38
1,278	create base	2026-08-15 23:56
1,278	add cheese	2026-08-15 23:57
1,278	add cheese	2026-08-15 23:58
1,278	add mushrooms	2026-08-15 23:58
1,278	add tomato	2026-08-16 00:56
1,278	bake in oven	2026-08-16 00:59
1,278	eat pizza	2026-08-16 02:04
1,278	clean kitchen	2026-08-16 08:13

Example Event Data (Case-Centric)

Case Id	# of Activities	Throughput Time	First Activity	First Activity Timestamp 	Last Activity	Last Activity Timestamp	⋮	Case details: 1	← →
1	8	27 min	take order	11/04/25 14:21:34	clean kitchen	11/04/25 14:48:27			
2	7	19 min	take order	11/04/25 19:07:09	clean kitchen	11/04/25 19:25:48			
3	8	34 min	take order	11/04/25 21:01:05	clean kitchen	11/04/25 21:35:02			
4	7	11 min	take order	11/05/25 13:30:25	clean kitchen	11/05/25 13:41:11			
5	8	1 h	take order	11/05/25 18:35:38	clean kitchen	11/05/25 19:50:34			
6	9	3 h	take order	11/05/25 20:58:03	clean kitchen	11/06/25 00:08:20			
7	8	21 min	take order	11/06/25 14:03:57	clean kitchen	11/06/25 14:24:52			
8	8	24 min	take order	11/06/25 18:05:07	clean kitchen	11/06/25 18:29:00			
9	8	28 min	take order	11/06/25 19:21:25	clean kitchen	11/06/25 19:48:58			
10	7	1 h	take order	11/06/25 20:54:02	clean kitchen	11/06/25 22:06:13			
11	7	14 min	take order	11/07/25 13:16:53	clean kitchen	11/07/25 13:31:00			
12	8	1 h	take order	11/07/25 14:37:26	clean kitchen	11/07/25 16:05:09			
13	9	21 min	take order	11/07/25 18:37:33	clean kitchen	11/07/25 18:58:57			
14	8	28 min	take order	11/07/25 20:08:29	clean kitchen	11/07/25 20:36:52			
15	8	18 min	take order	11/07/25 21:12:15	clean kitchen	11/07/25 21:30:01			
16	9	25 min	take order	11/08/25 12:14:16	clean kitchen	11/08/25 12:39:10			
17	9	1 h	take order	11/08/25 12:56:59	clean kitchen	11/08/25 14:11:16			
18	8	10 min	take order	11/08/25 14:16:50	clean kitchen	11/08/25 14:27:01			
19	10	2 h	take order	11/08/25 14:59:33	clean kitchen	11/08/25 16:56:56			
20	8	19 min	take order	11/08/25 18:17:49	clean kitchen	11/08/25 18:36:30			
21	8	19 min	take order	11/08/25 18:39:10	clean kitchen	11/08/25 18:58:26			
22	8	18 min	take order	11/08/25 19:39:42	clean kitchen	11/08/25 19:57:18			
23	8	18 min	take order	11/08/25 20:40:45	clean kitchen	11/08/25 20:58:25			

Case details: 1

Search 

Activities

8 Items

take order
11/04/25 14:21:34

create base
11/04/25 14:32:37

add tomato
11/04/25 14:34:02

add salami
11/04/25 14:34:36

add cheese
11/04/25 14:35:01

bake in oven
11/04/25 14:36:41

eat pizza
11/04/25 14:40:08

clean kitchen
11/04/25 14:48:27

Three example cases

Case details: 1090

← → Case details: 1262

Search



Activities

7 Items

take order
7/09/26 19:29:11

create base
7/09/26 19:42:11

add tomato
7/09/26 19:43:51

add cheese
7/09/26 19:43:55

add salami
7/09/26 19:43:58

bake in oven
7/09/26 19:46:26

clean kitchen
7/09/26 19:52:06

← → Case details: 1262

Search

← →



Activities

8 Items

take order
8/14/26 13:02:42

create base
8/14/26 13:09:36

add tomato
8/14/26 13:11:18

add cheese
8/14/26 13:11:57

add mushrooms
8/14/26 13:12:37

bake in oven
8/14/26 13:15:24

eat pizza
8/14/26 13:25:49

clean kitchen
8/14/26 13:36:07

Case details: 1278

← →

Search



Activities

9 Items

take order
8/15/26 23:38:26

create base
8/15/26 23:56:24

add cheese
8/15/26 23:57:34

add cheese
8/15/26 23:58:42

add mushrooms
8/15/26 23:58:48

add tomato
8/16/26 00:56:48

bake in oven
8/16/26 00:59:46

eat pizza
8/16/26 02:04:50

clean kitchen
8/16/26 02:04:50

A case corresponds to a sequence of activities (trace)

Case details: 1272	
<input type="button" value="←"/> <input type="button" value="→"/>	
Search <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="🔍"/>	
Activities	8 Items
take order	
8/15/26 18:15:33	
create base	+7m
8/15/26 18:22:40	
add cheese	+8m
8/15/26 18:23:45	
add tomato	+10m
8/15/26 18:25:13	
add salami	+12m
8/15/26 18:27:05	
bake in oven	+13m
8/15/26 18:28:44	
eat pizza	+22m
8/15/26 18:37:42	
clean kitchen	+1h
8/15/26 19:44:15	

to > cb > ac > at > as > bo > ep > ck

Activities: take order (to), create base (cb), add cheese (ac), add tomato (at), add salami (as), add mushrooms (am), bake in oven (bo), eat pizza (ep), and clean kitchen (ck).

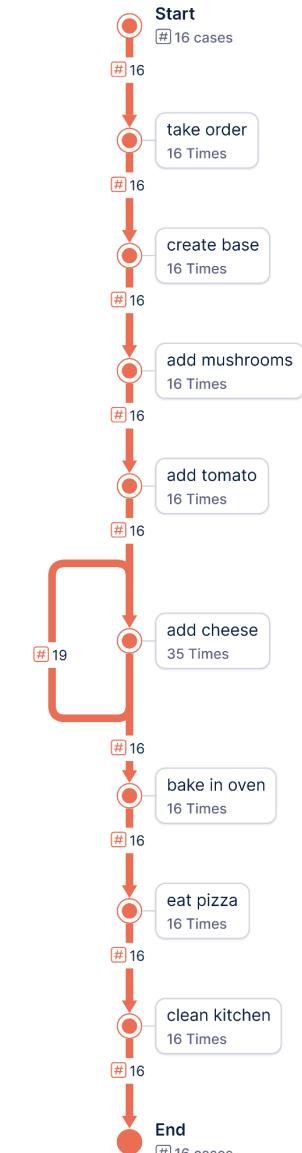
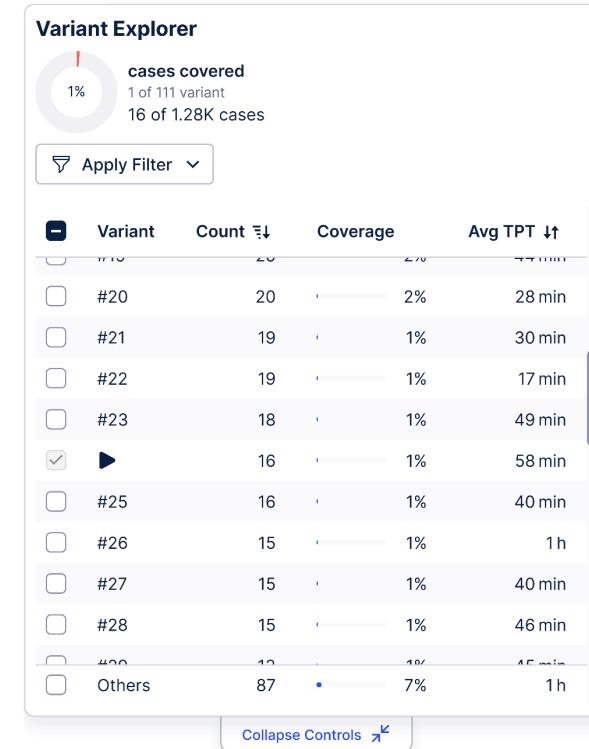
to > cb > ac > at > as > bo > ep > ck

Some of the 134 unique variants

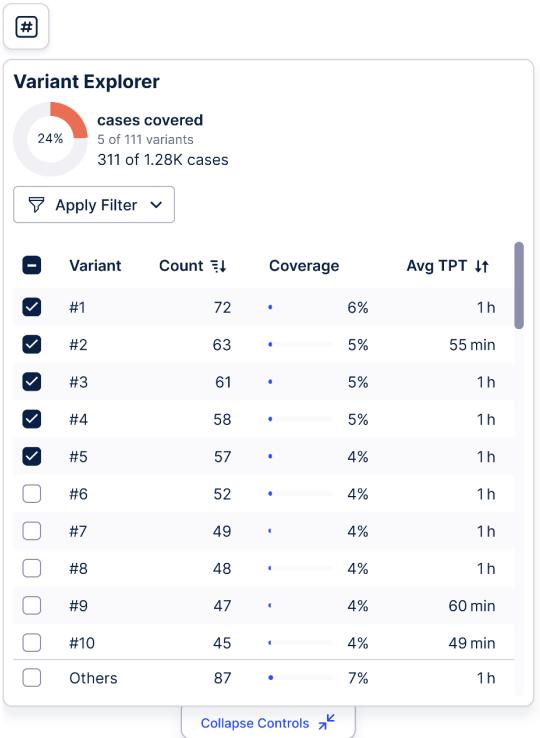


Activities: take order (to), create base (cb), add cheese (ac), add tomato (at), add salami (as), add mushrooms (am), bake in oven (bo), eat pizza (ep), and clean kitchen (ck).

Variant explorer only shows 111 variants



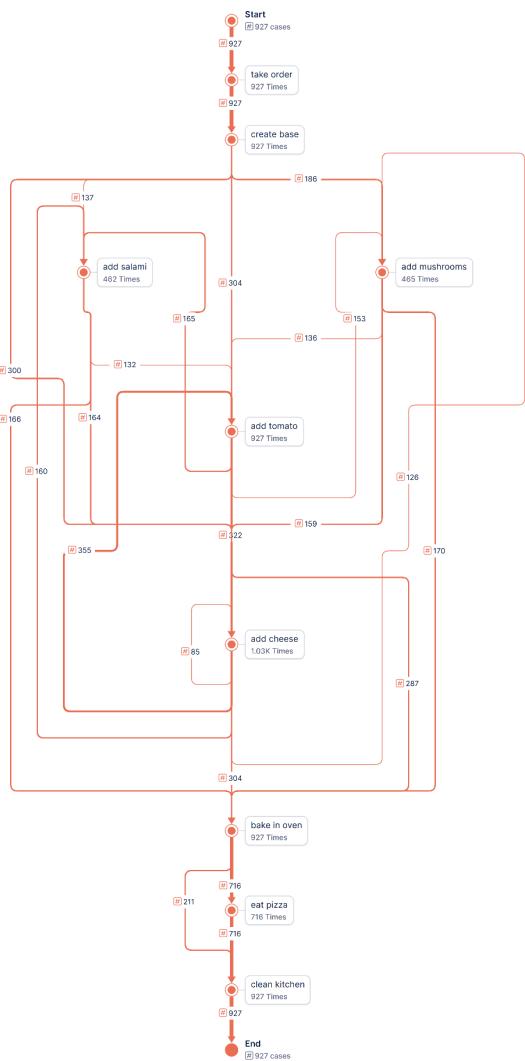
Visualizing multiple variants



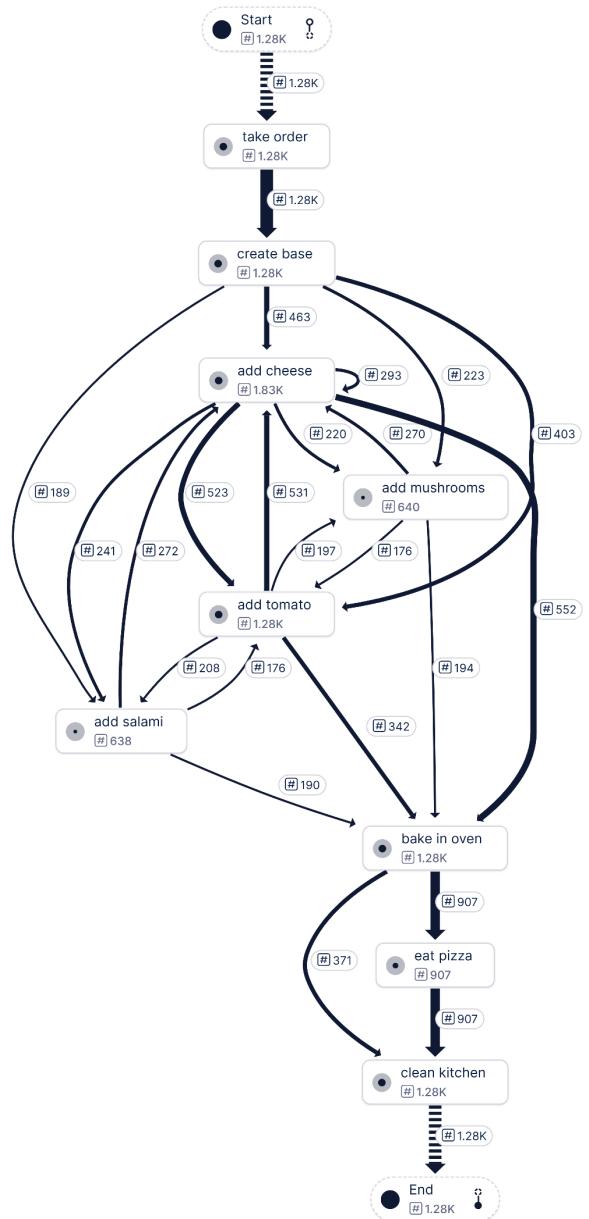
top 5 variants



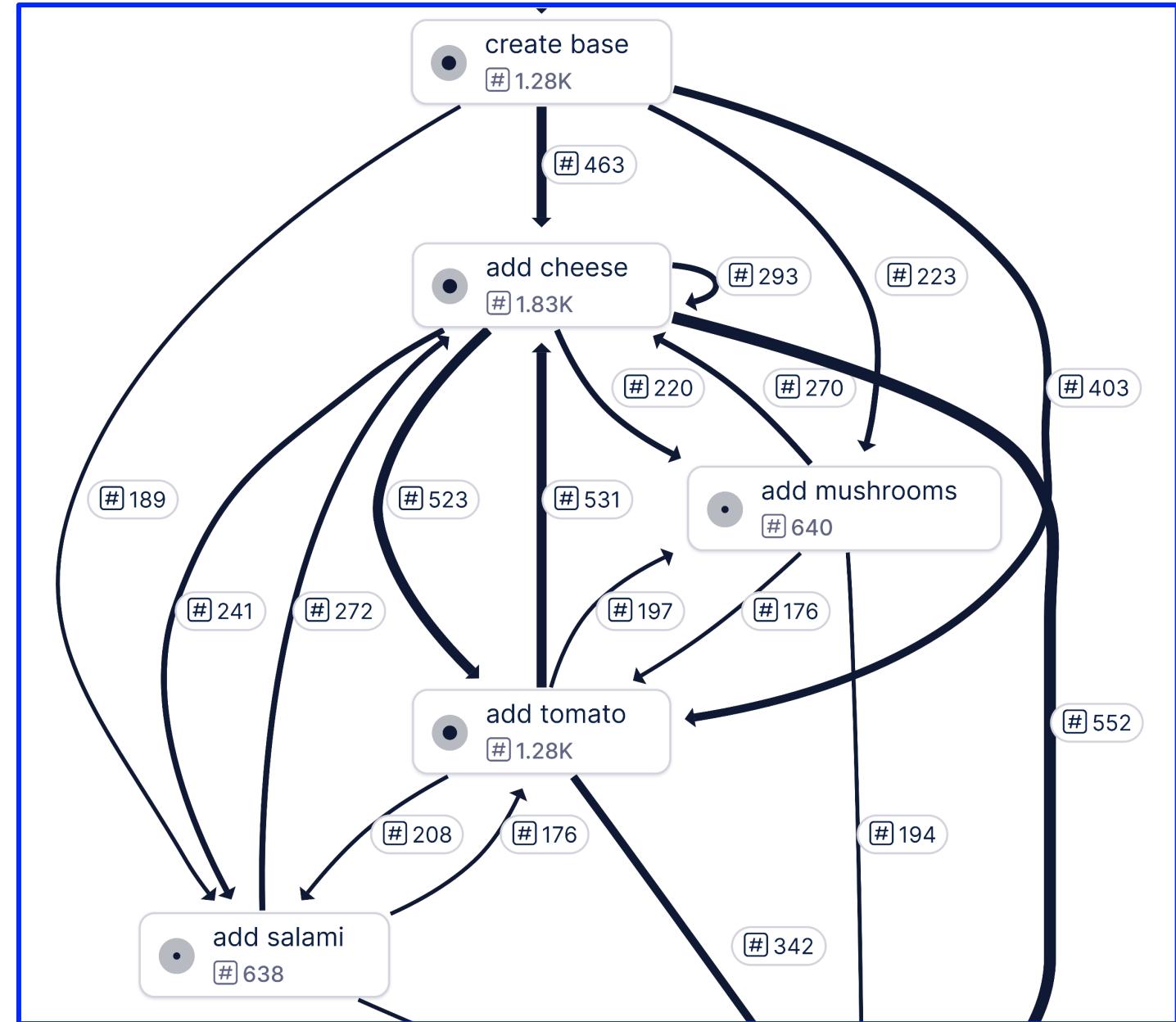
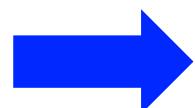
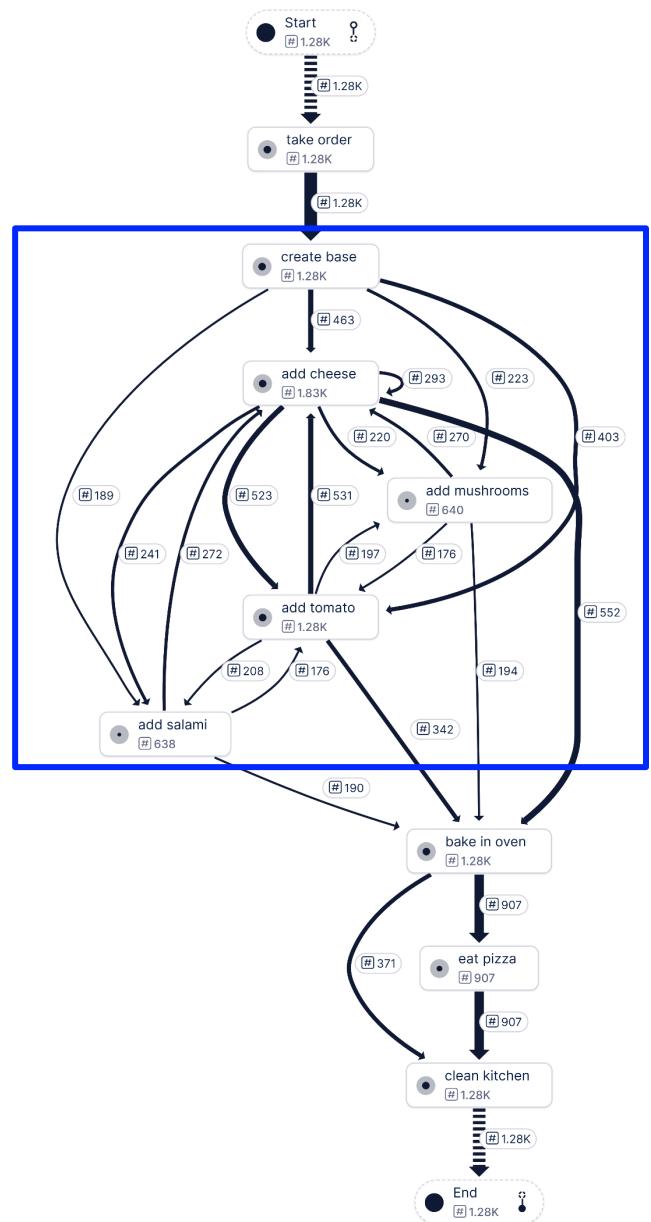
top 25 variants



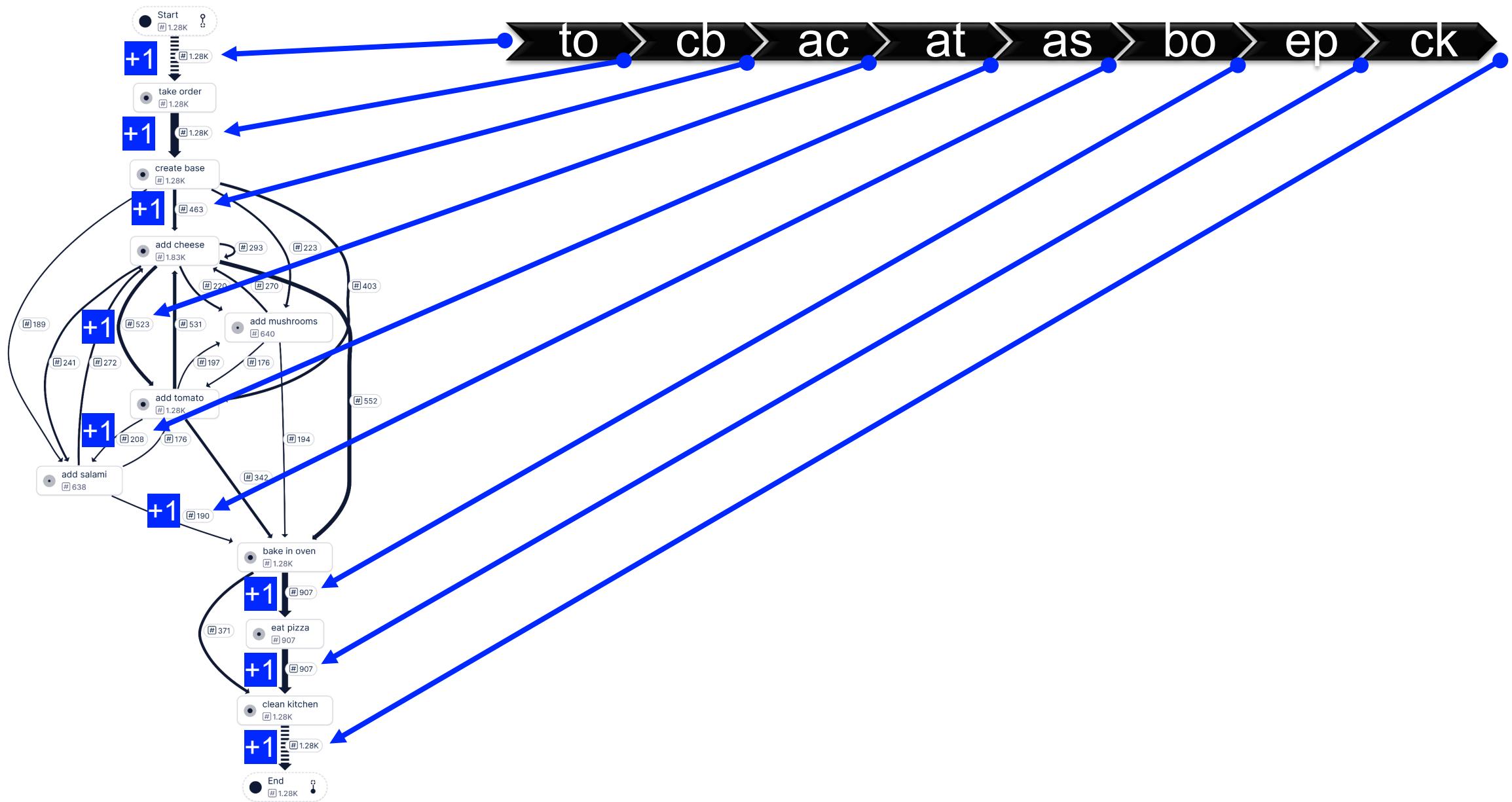
The corresponding Directly-Follows Graph (DFG)



The corresponding Directly-Follows Graph (DFG)

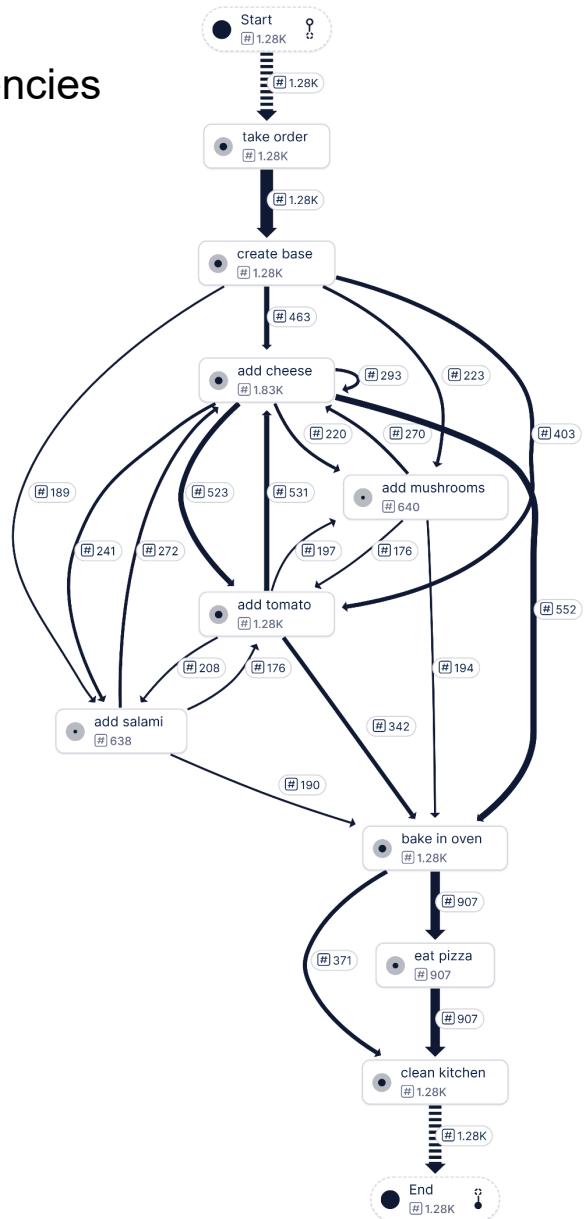


The corresponding Directly-Follows Graph (DFG)

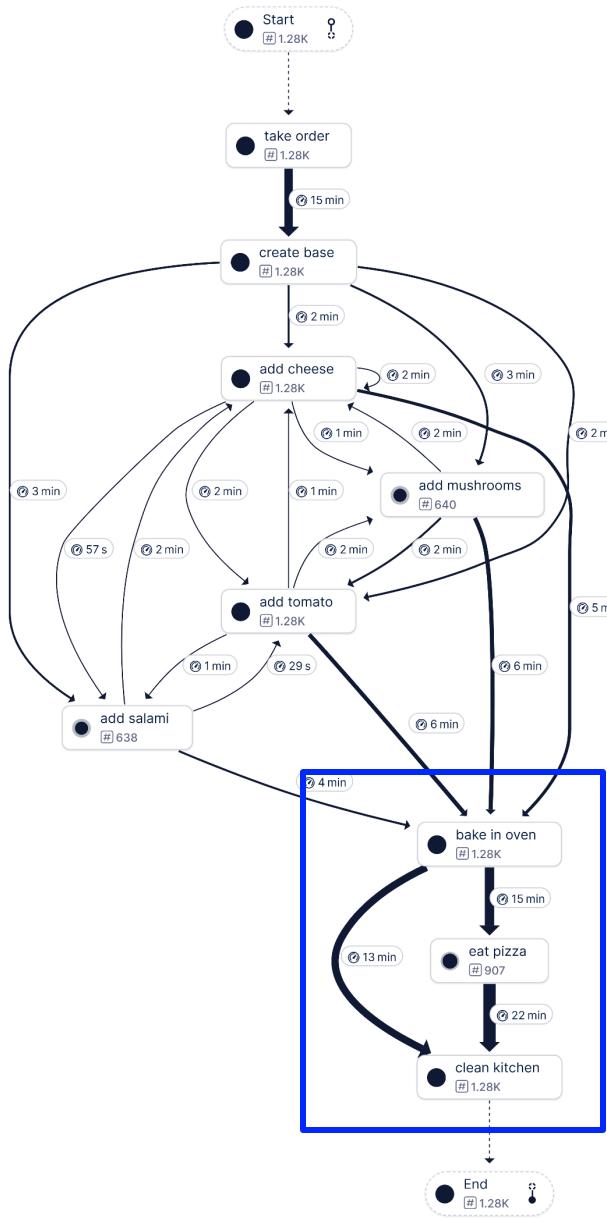


The corresponding Directly-Follows Graph (DFG)

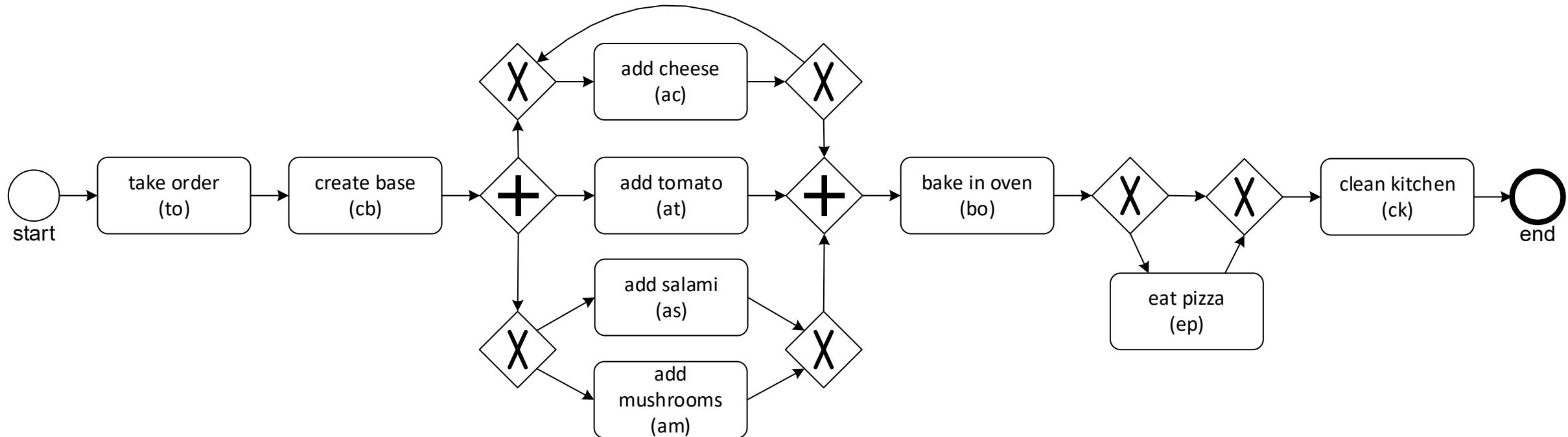
freqencies



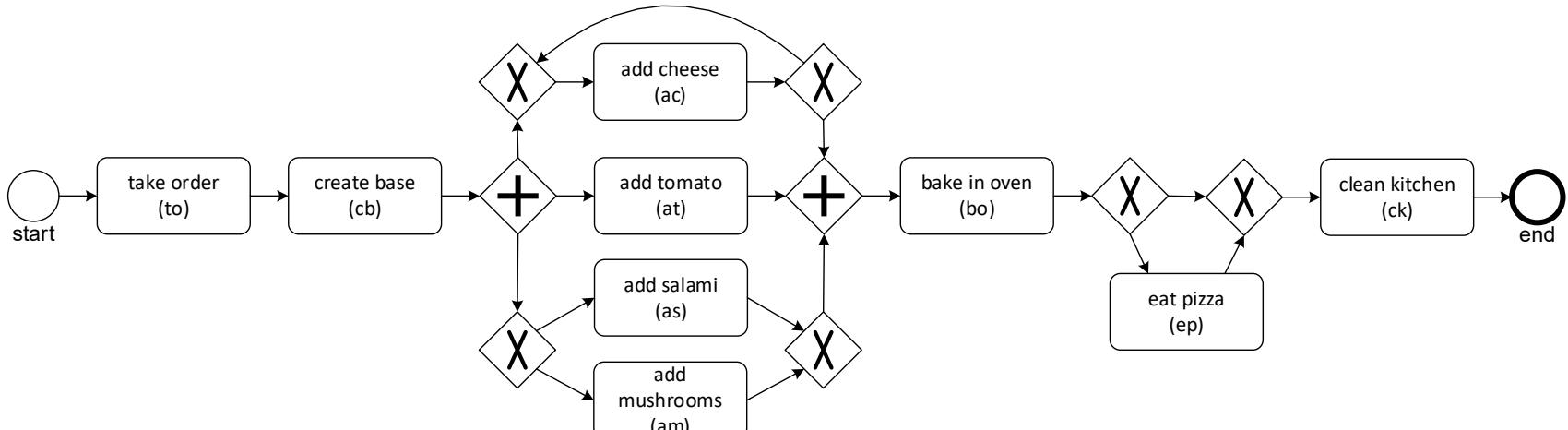
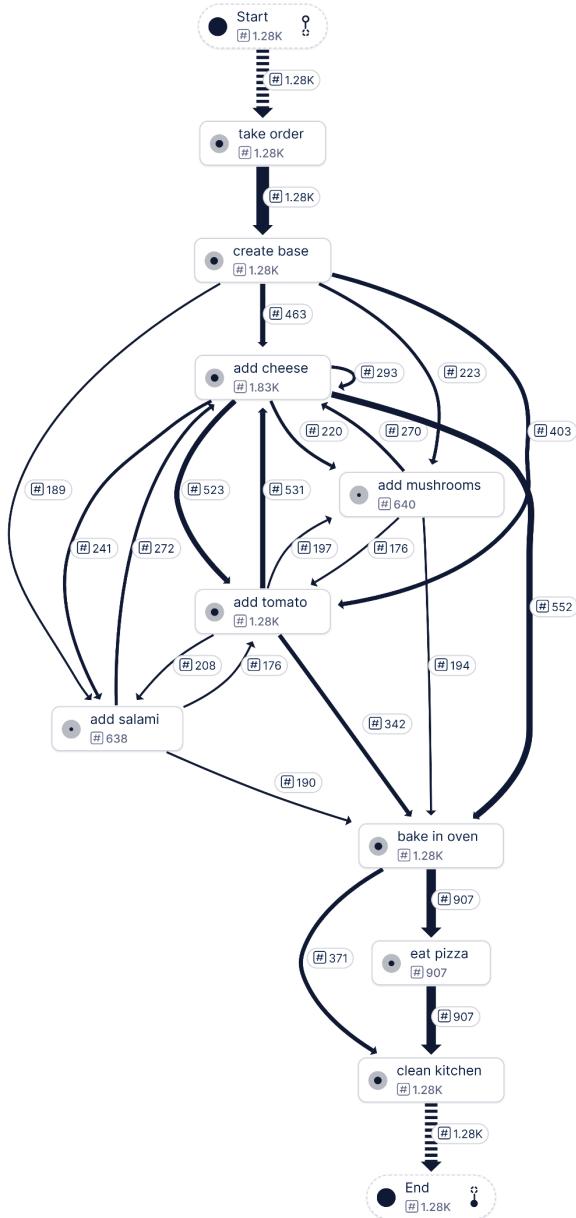
time



Using Inductive Mining (IM) we can automatically discover this BPMN model !



The BPMN model is easier to understand and more precise!



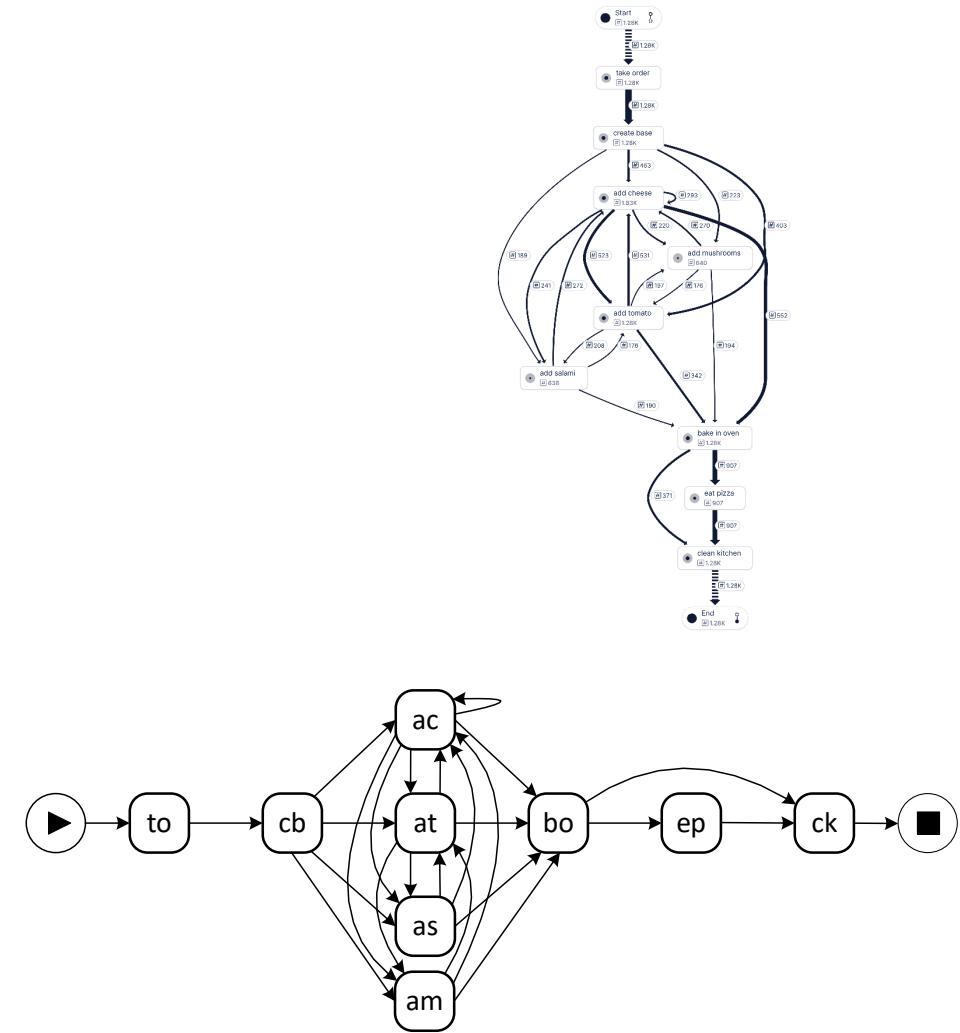
- There was no pizza with both salami and mushrooms.
- There was no pizza with multiple portions of tomato, salami, or mushrooms.
- There was no pizza without tomato.
- Etc.

How does it work? Start with the event data.



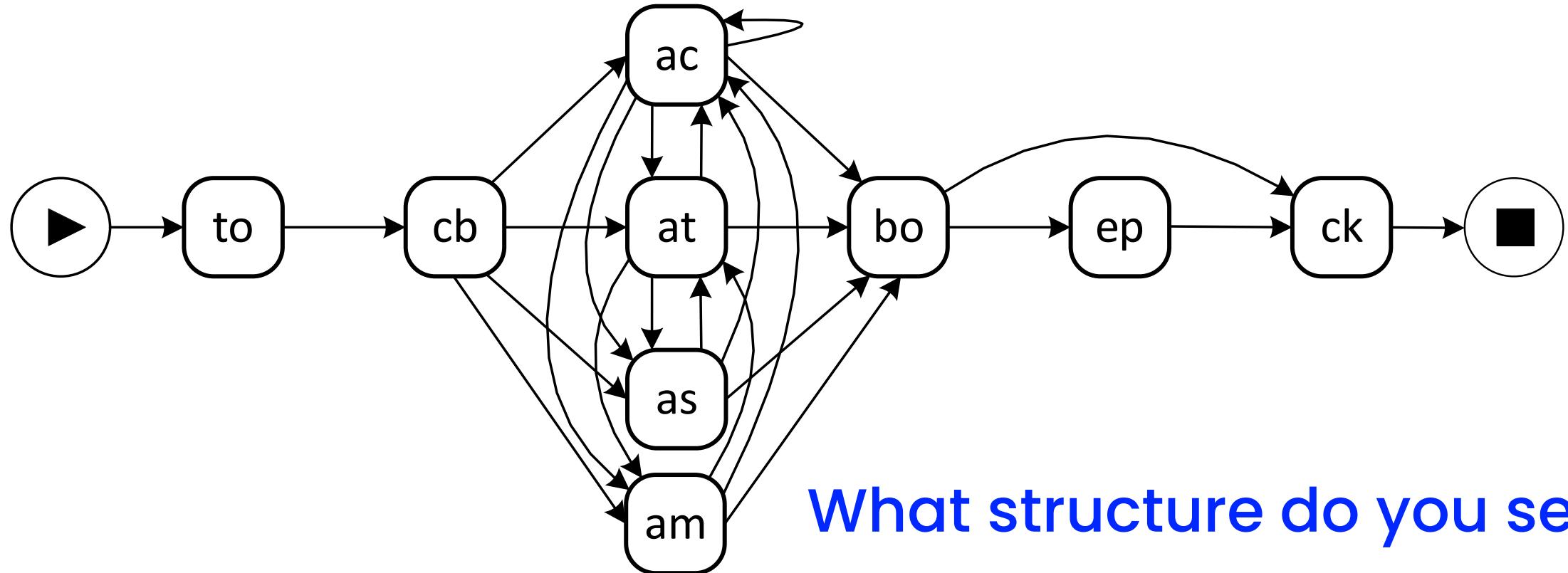
Activities: take order (to), create base (cb), add cheese (ac), add tomato (at), add salami (as), add mushrooms (am), bake in oven (bo), eat pizza (ep), and clean kitchen (ck).

Create the DFG



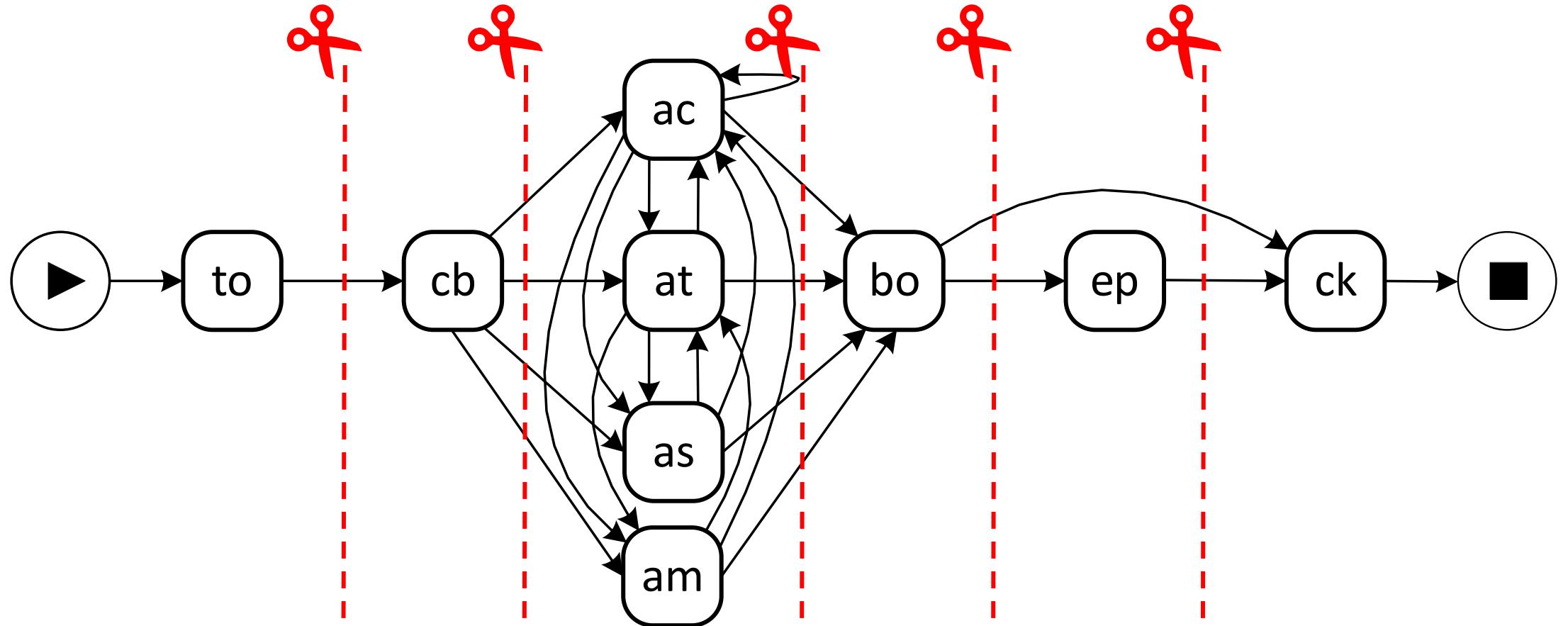
freqencies omitted and layout improved for readability

We want to use a divide-and-conquer strategy.



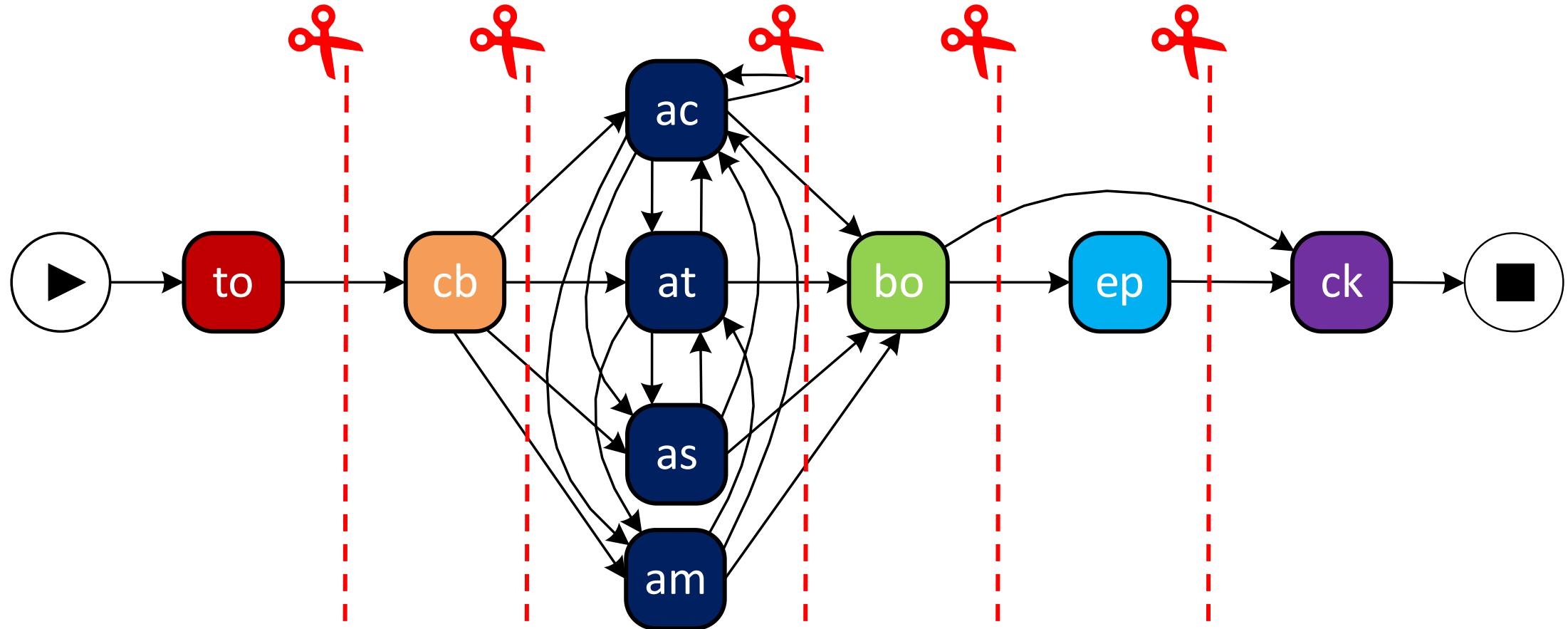
What structure do you see?

Apply a sequence cut

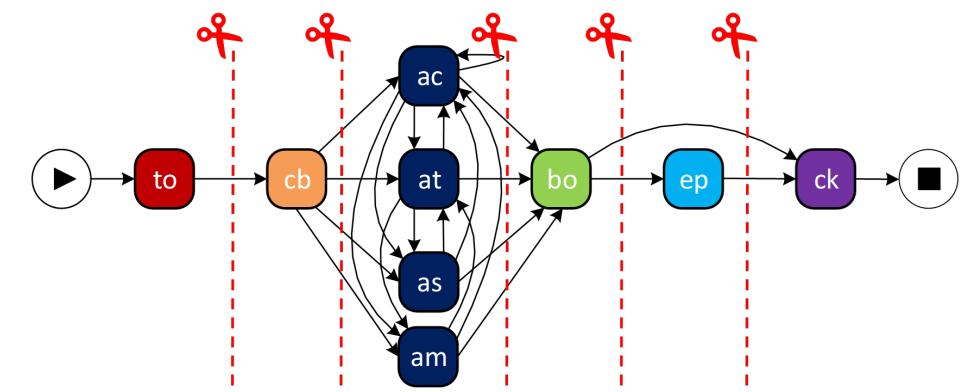
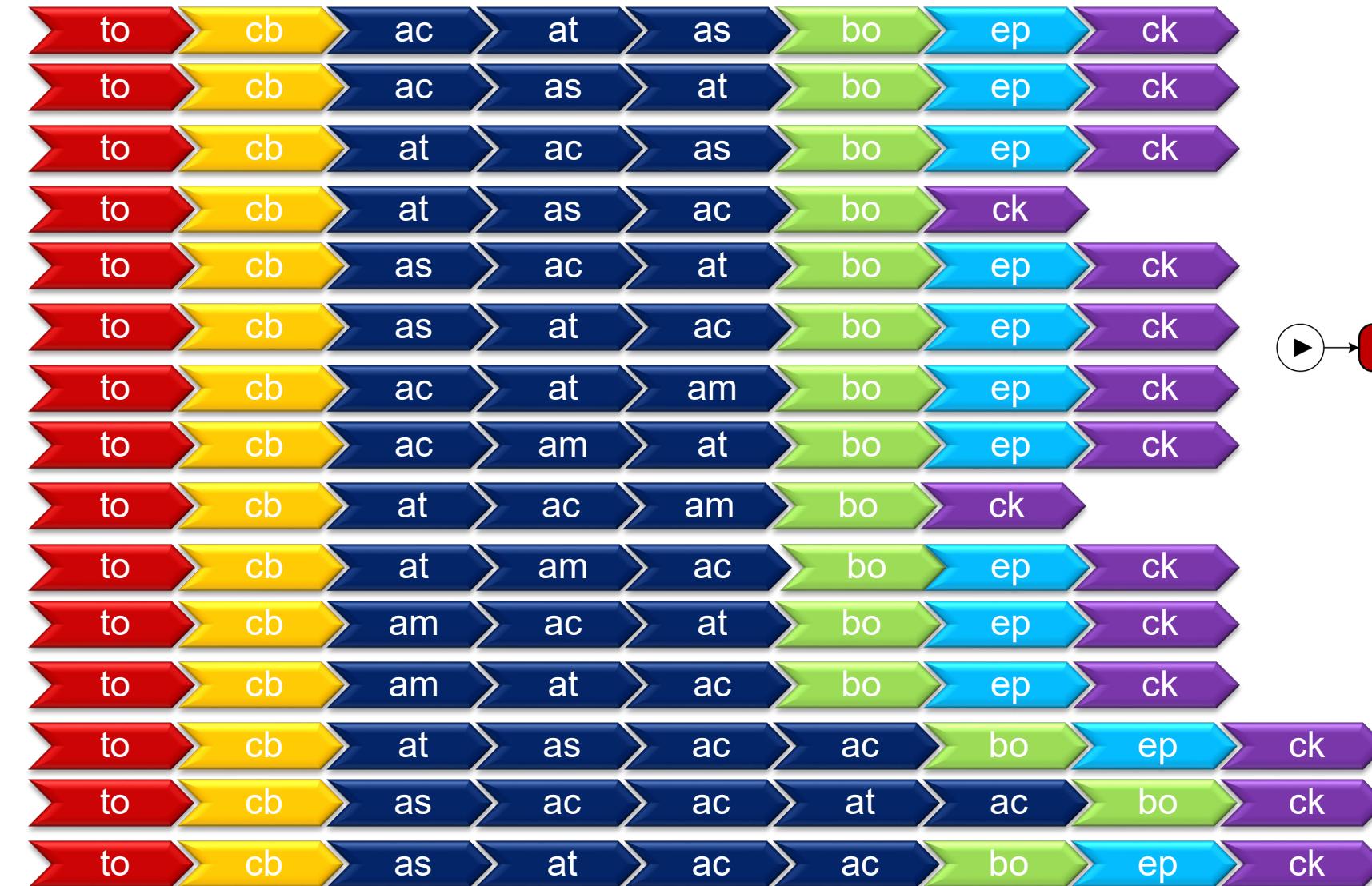


There is a sequence cut when the DFG can be split into sequential parts where only “forward connections” are possible. Note that we need to use the non-reflexive transitive closure.

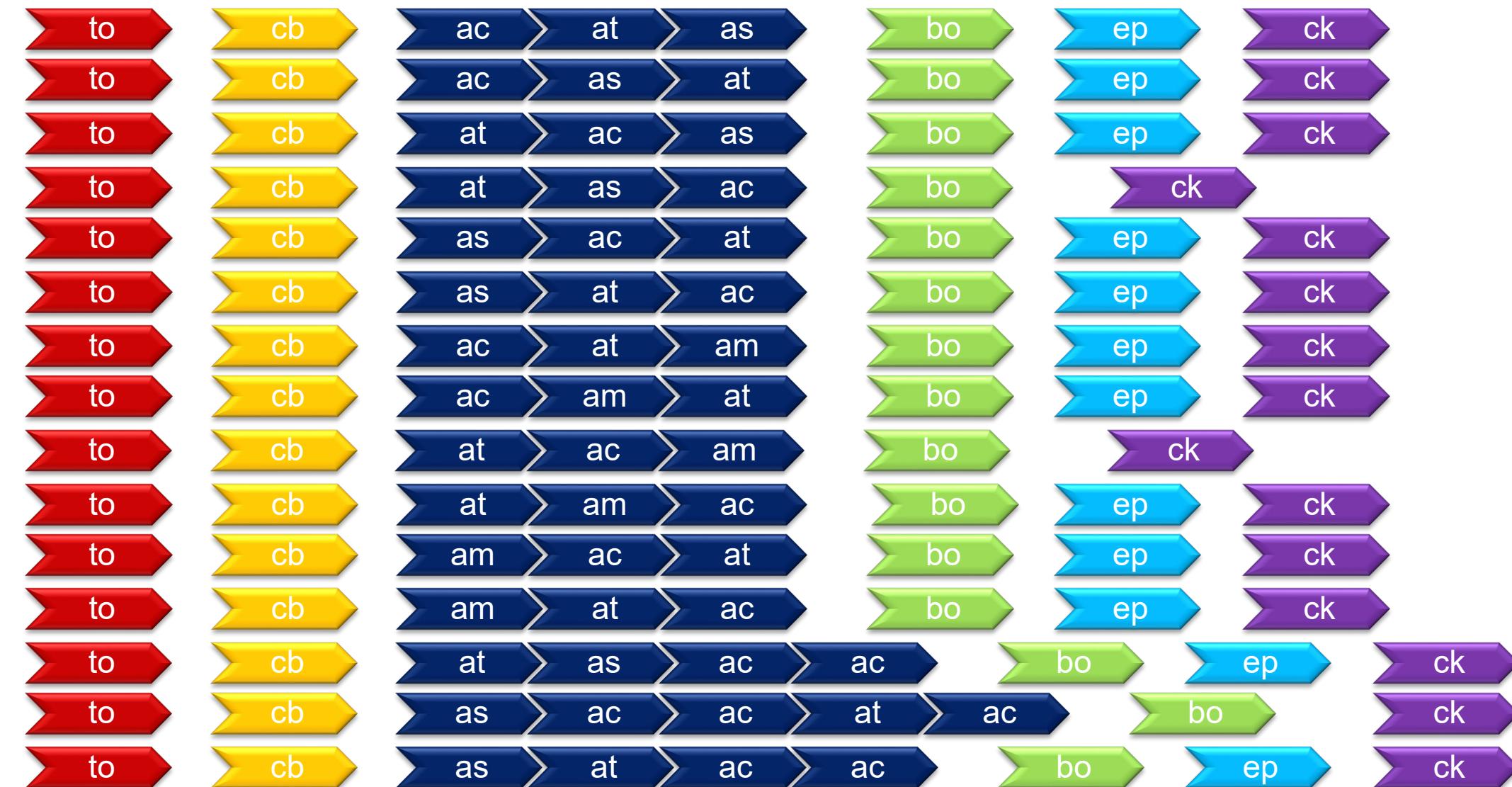
Sequence cut partitions activities in six subsets



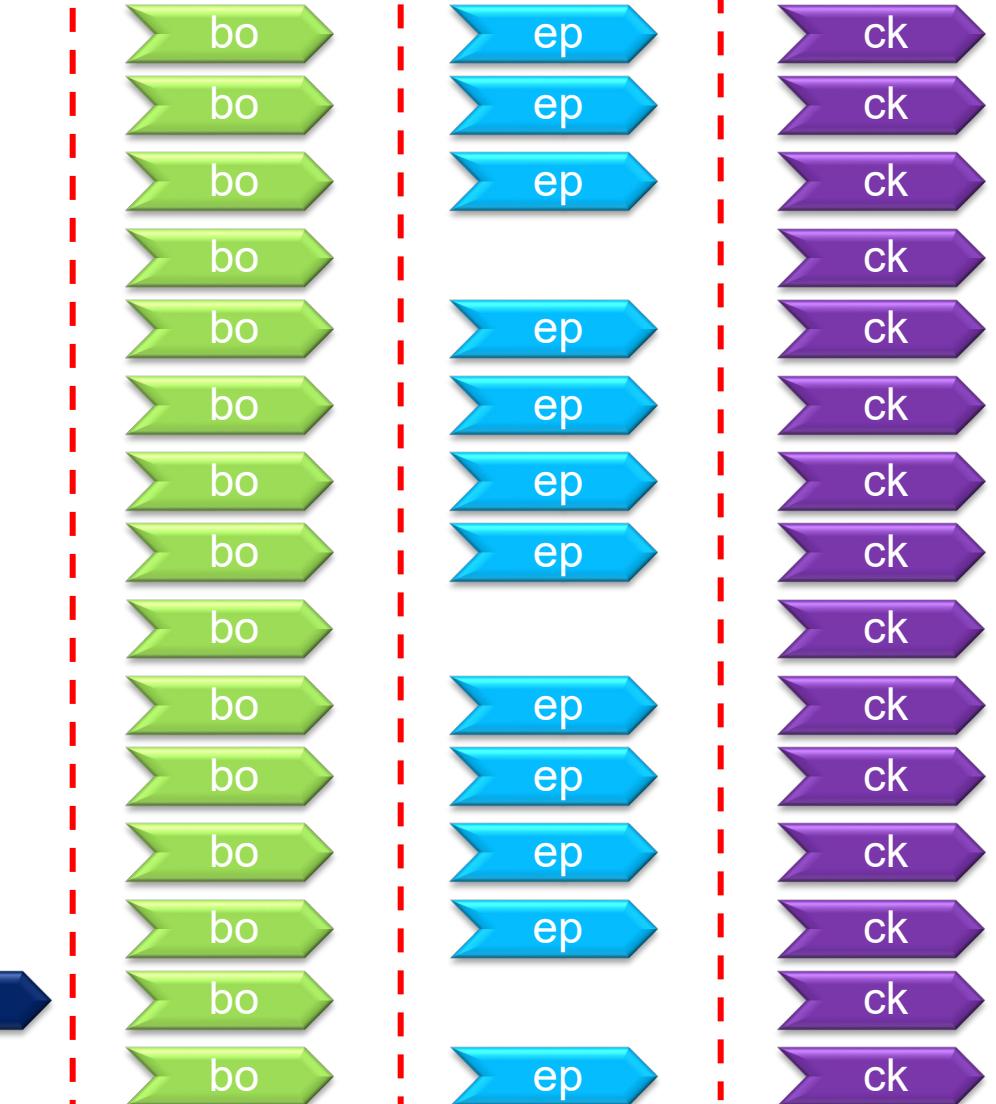
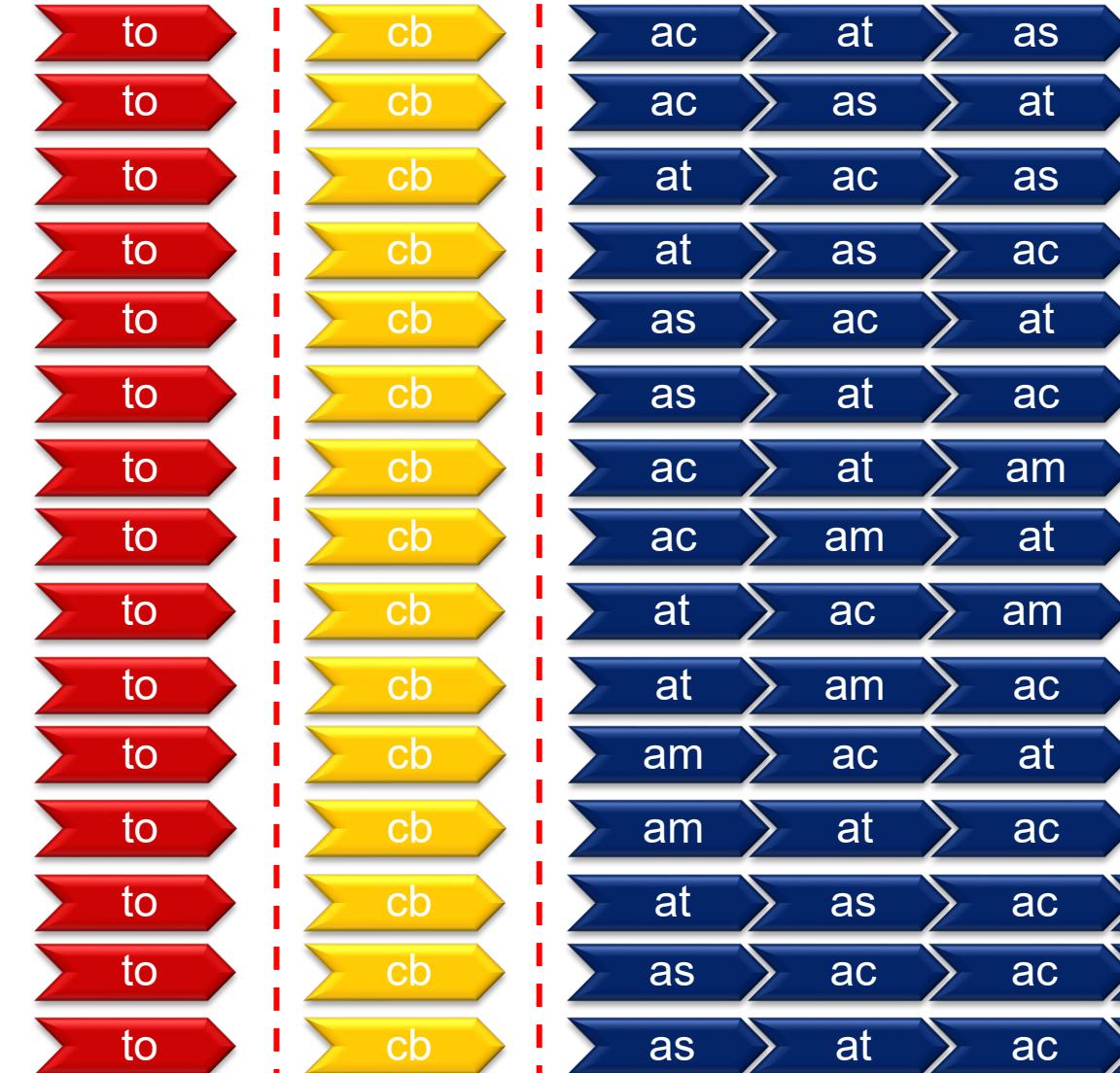
Color the events based on the partitioning



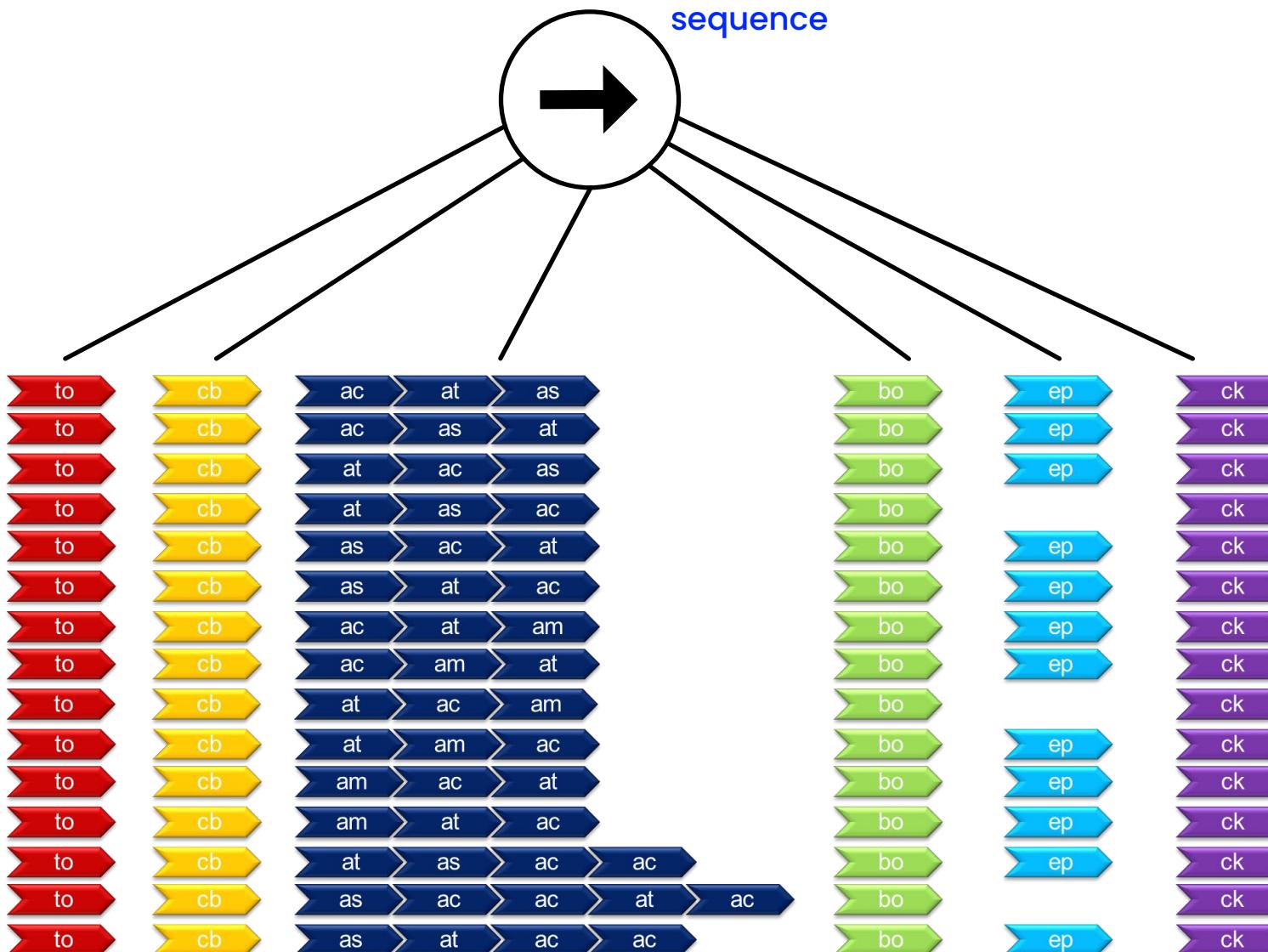
Split the events based on the coloring



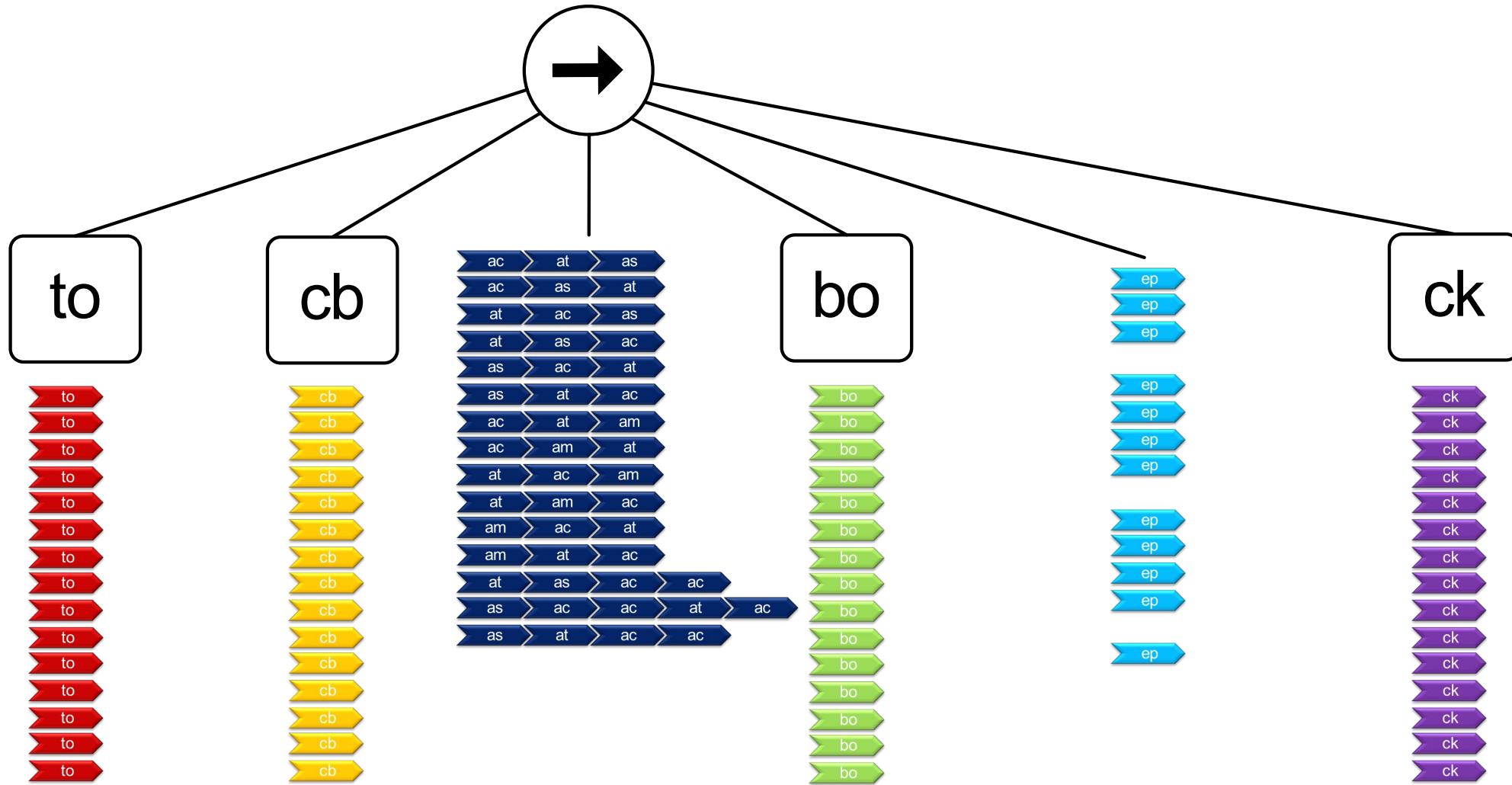
Create six new event logs



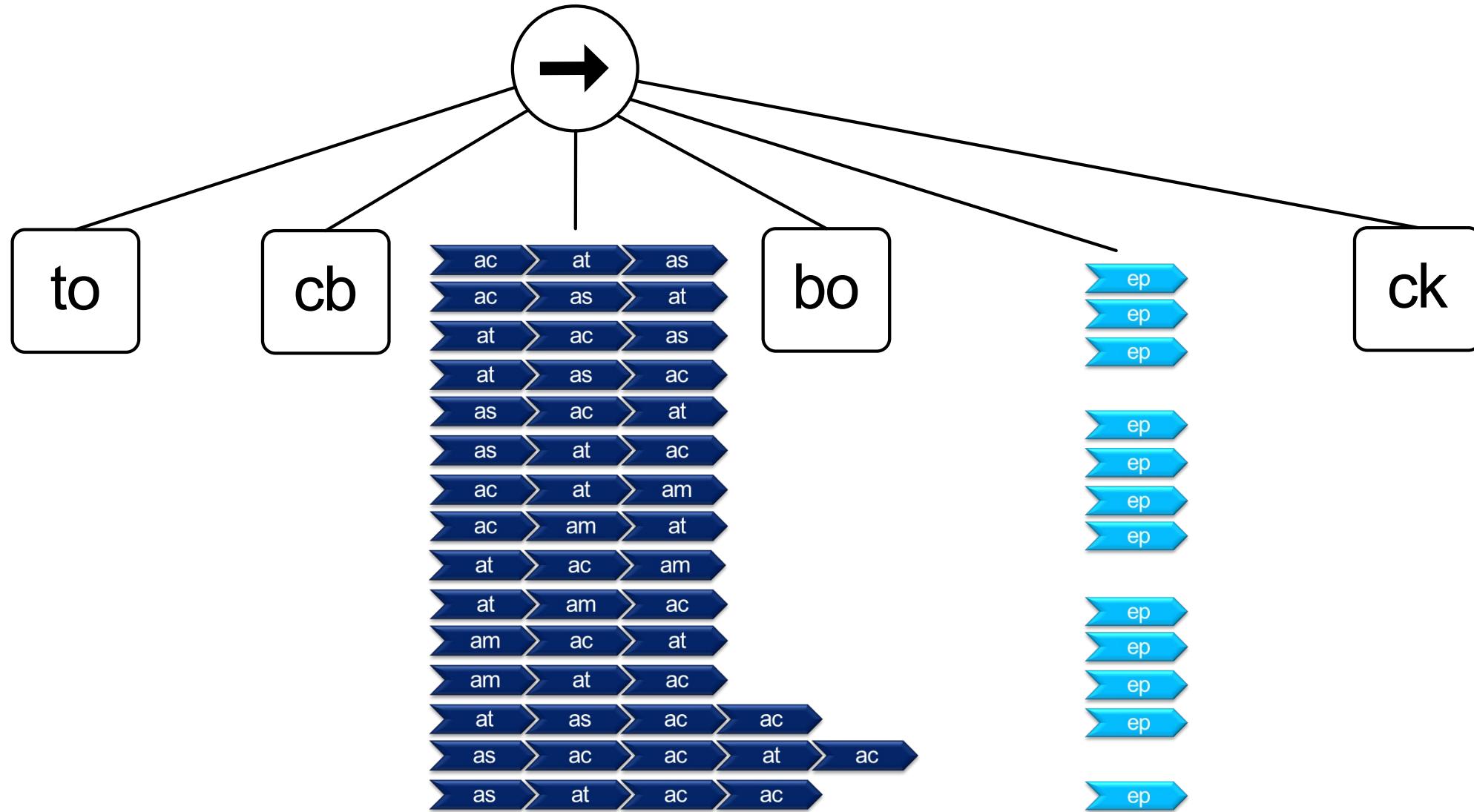
Connect the subprocesses using a process tree starting with a sequence node



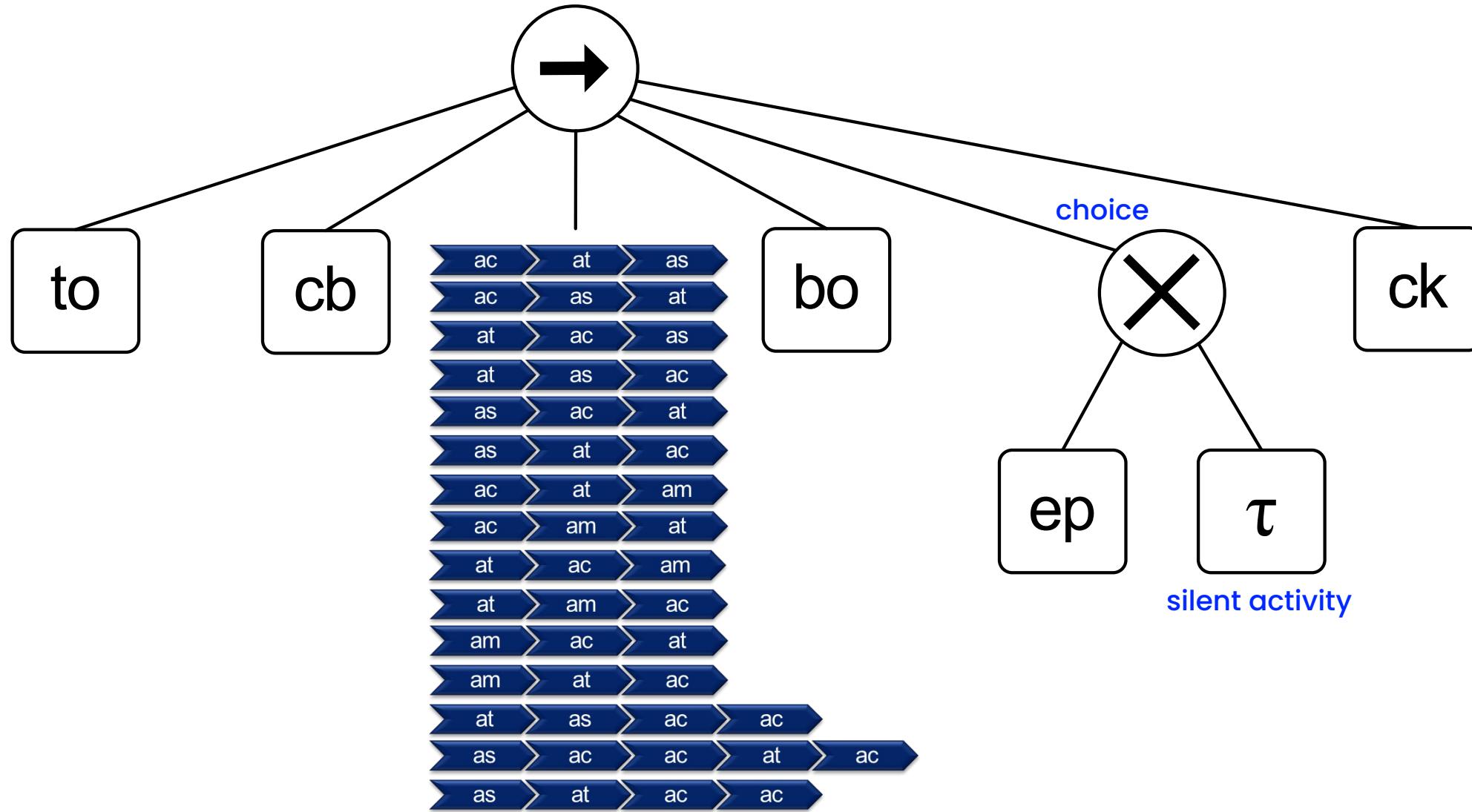
First, handle the event logs where one activity happens precisely once



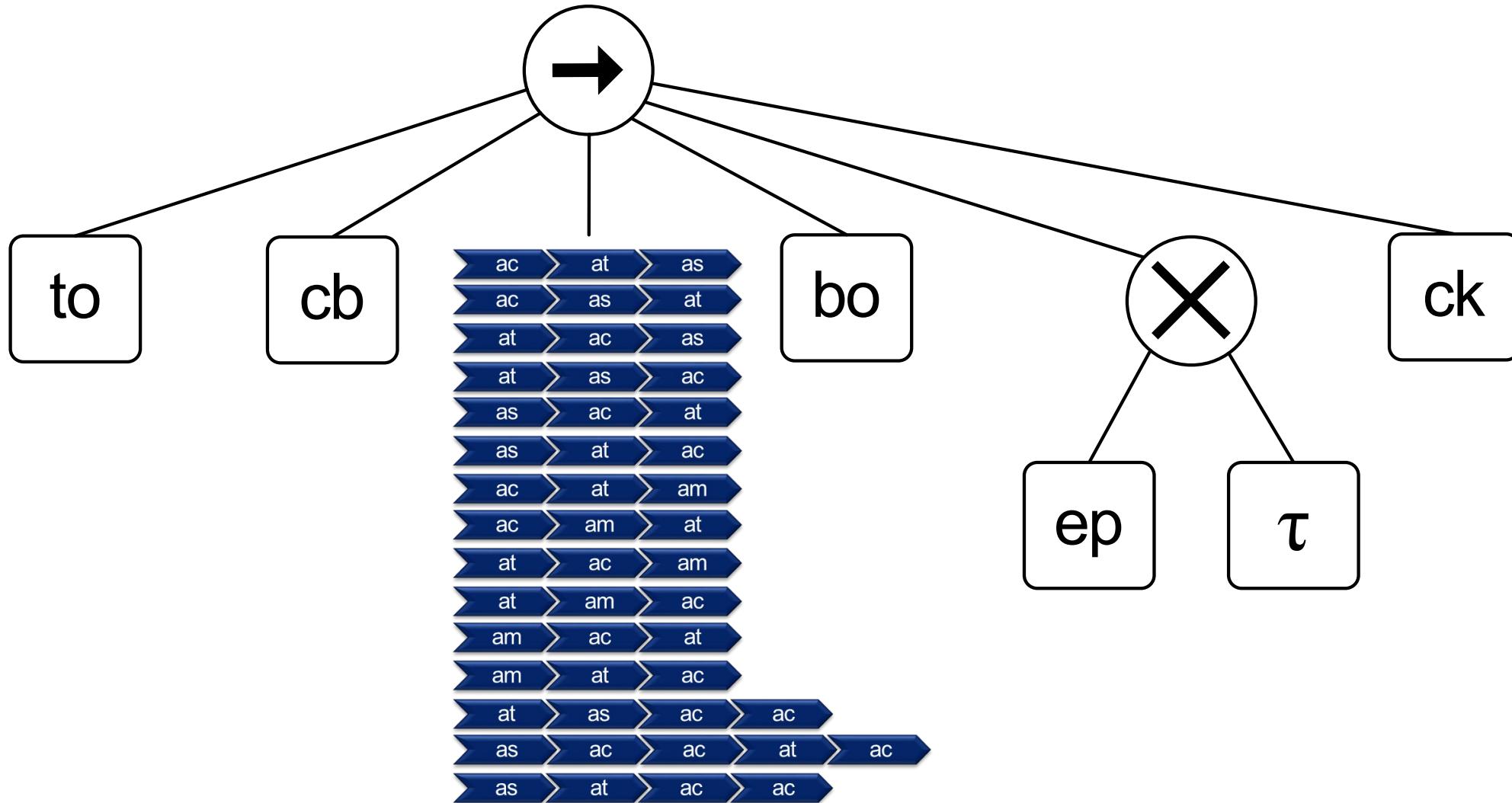
Two sub logs remain. Any log with just one unique activity can be handled easily.



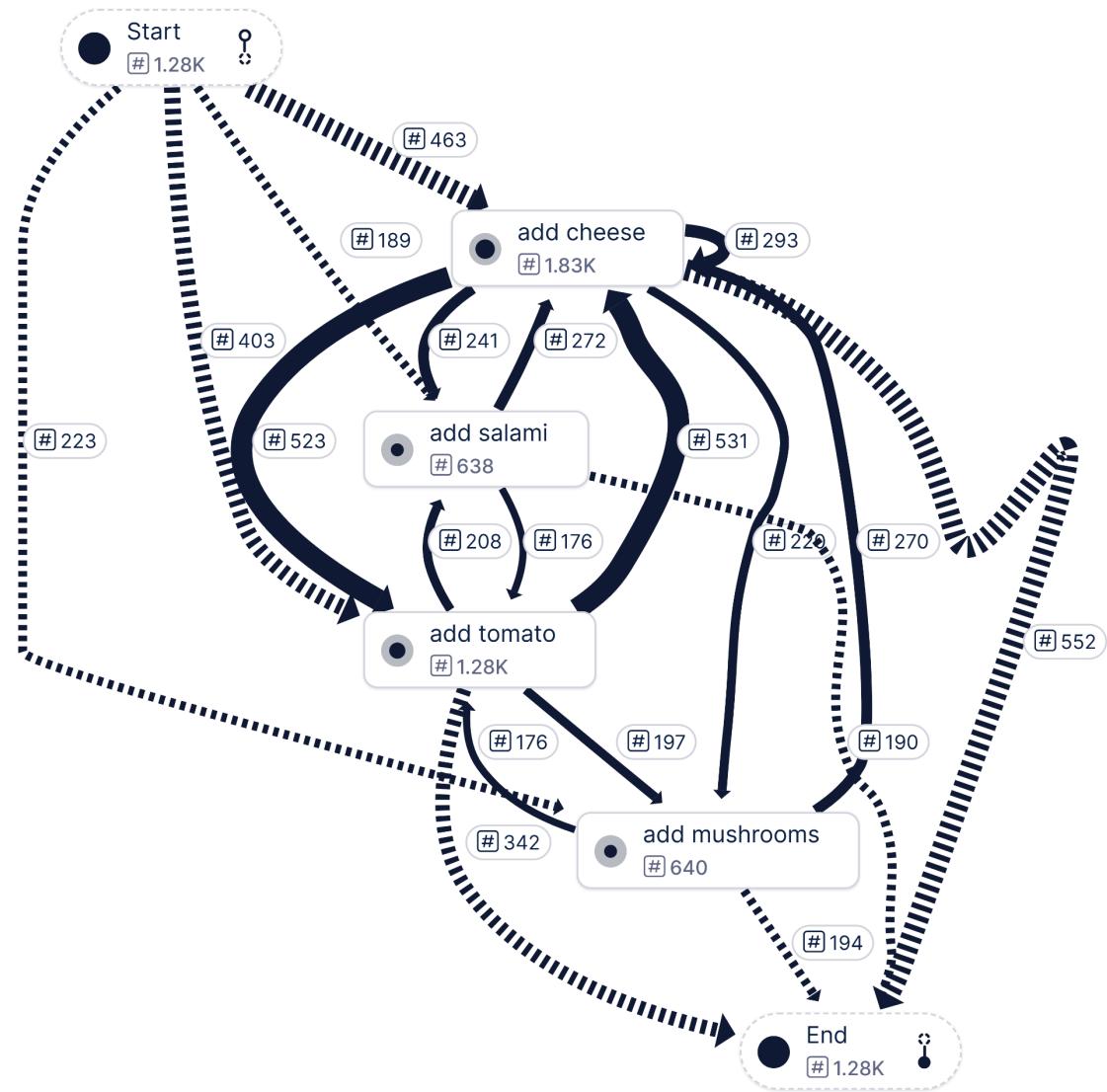
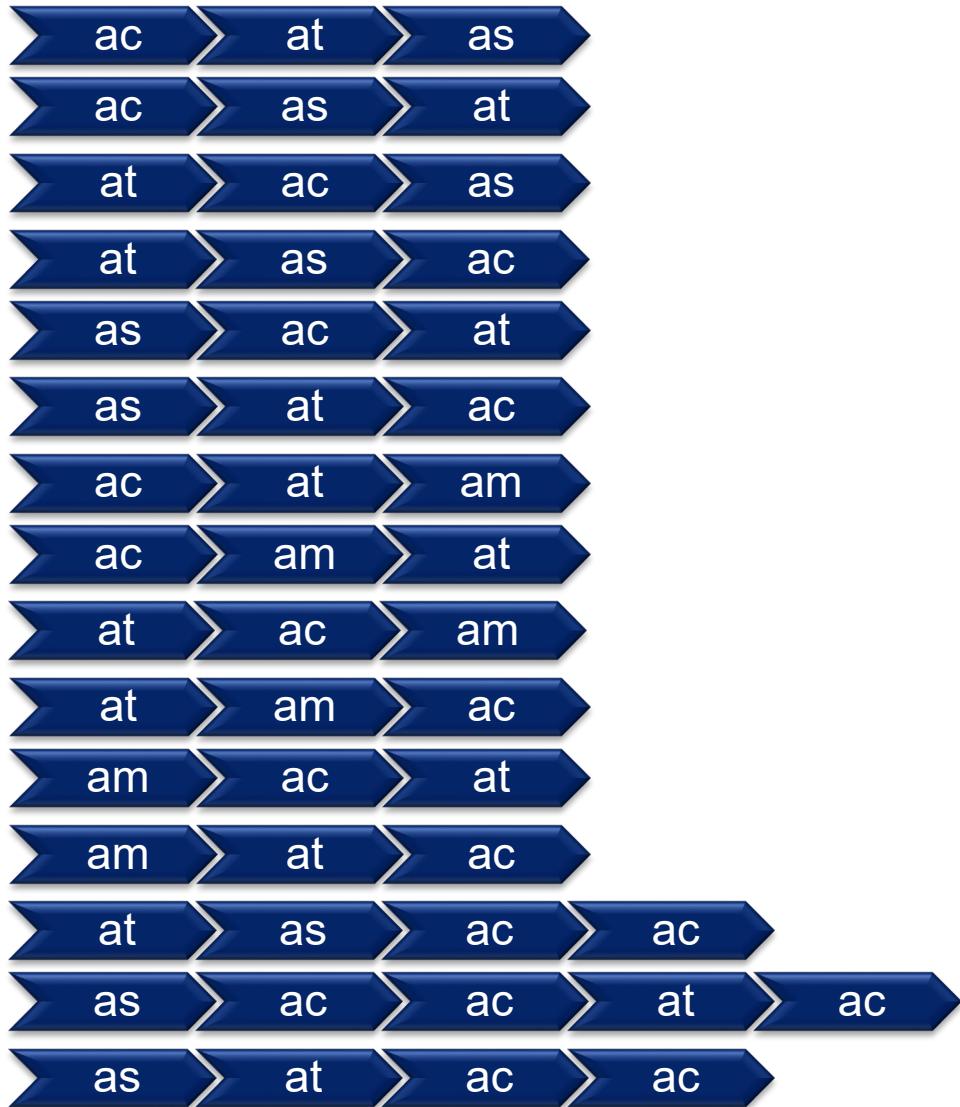
Eat pizza (ep) can be skipped: Use choice node and “silent activity”



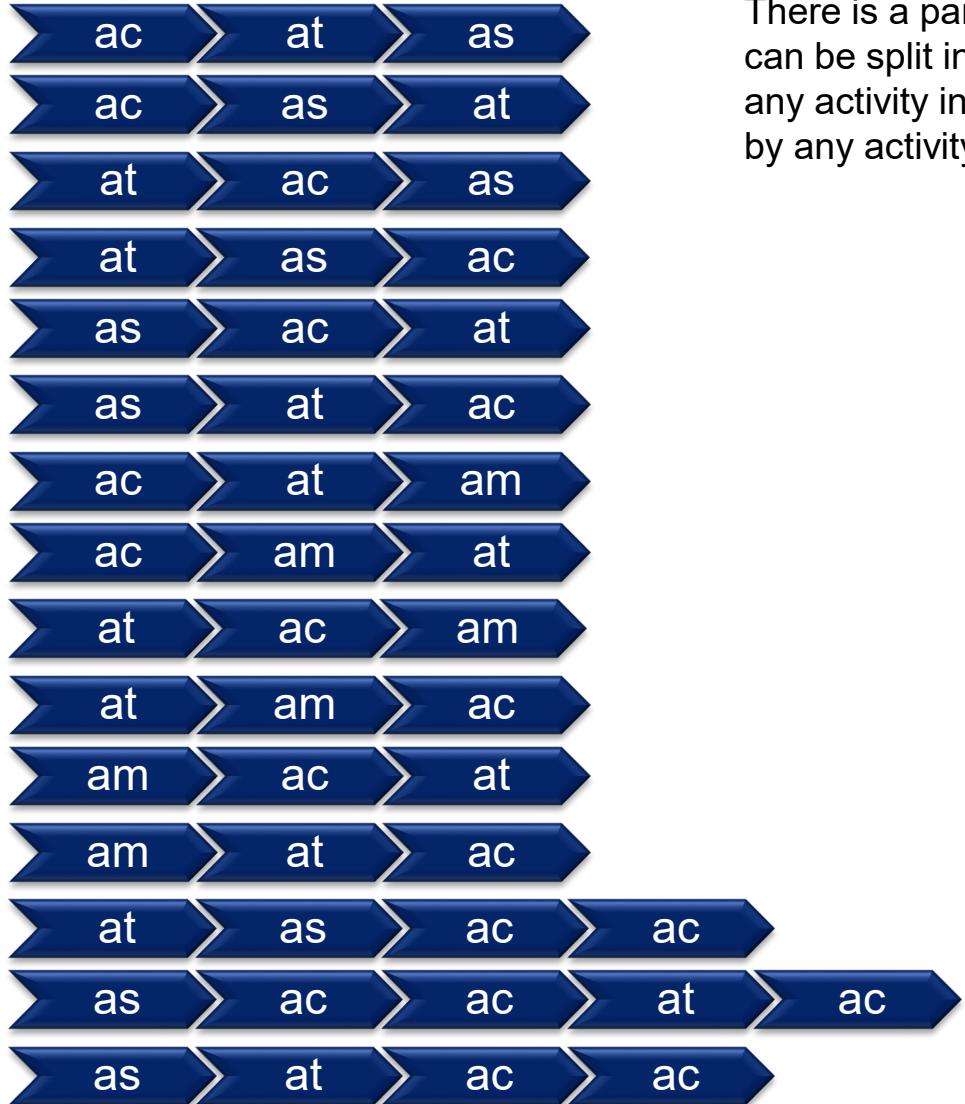
Only the blue event log remains



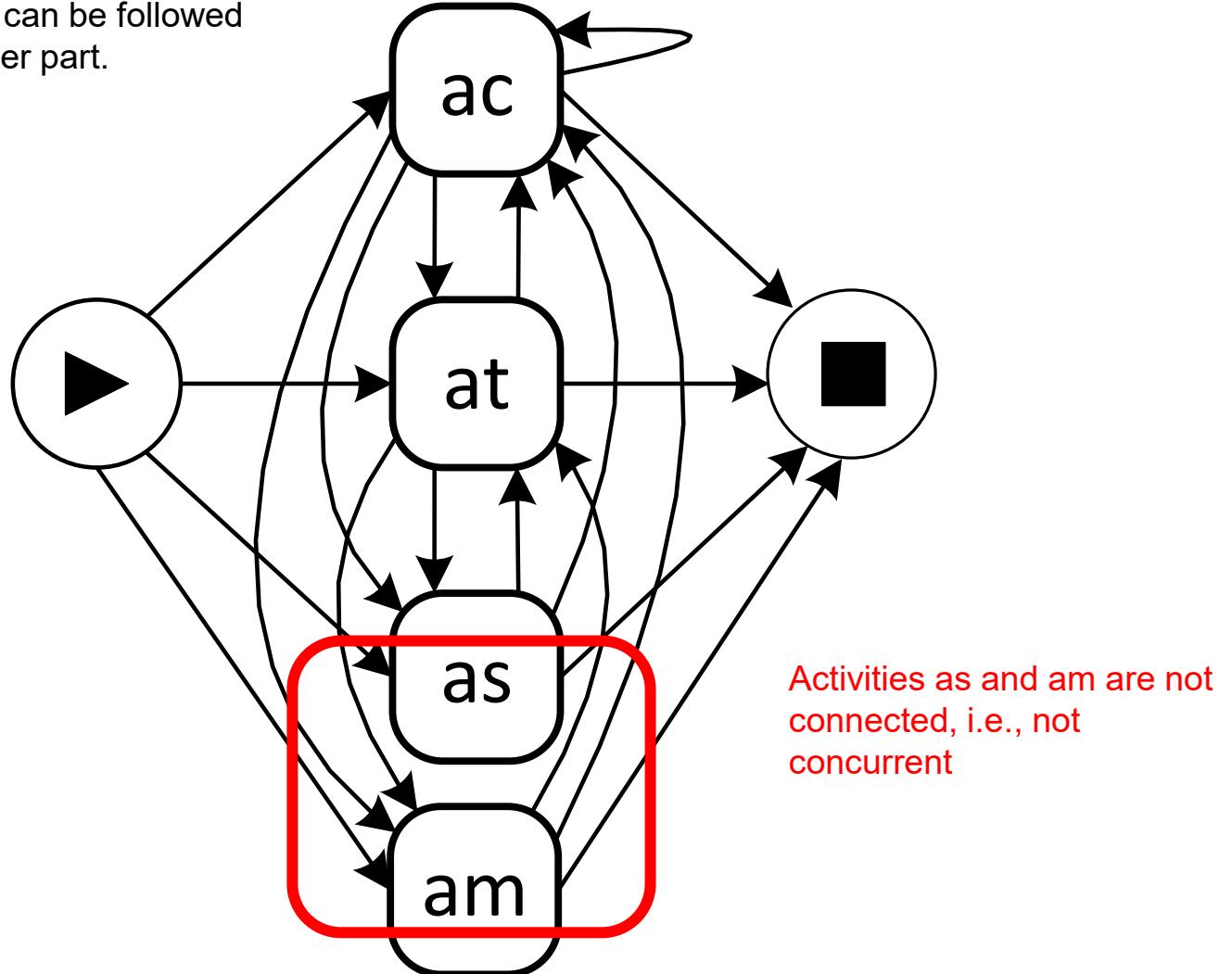
Continue with the blue event log: Repeat the process and create a DFG



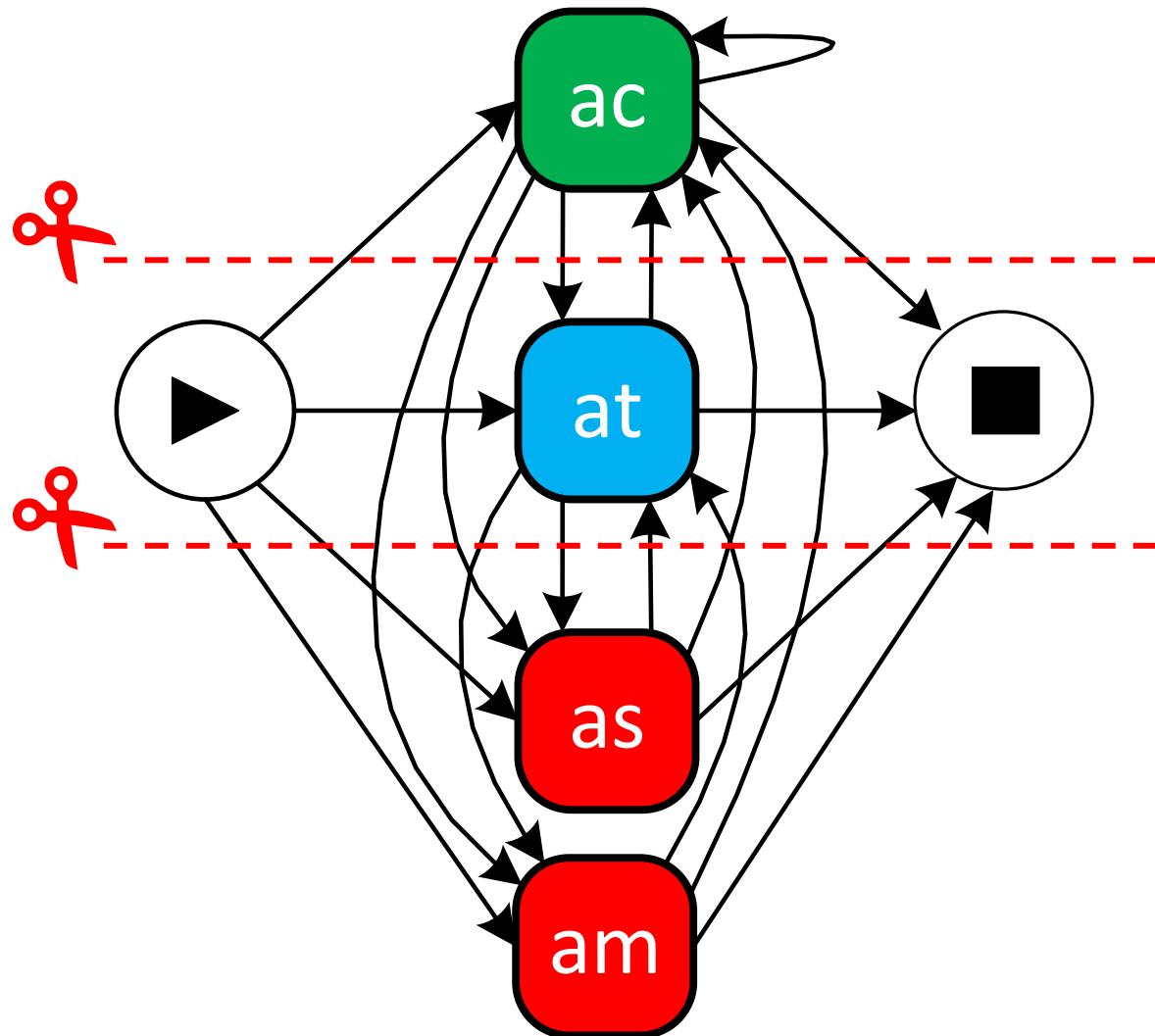
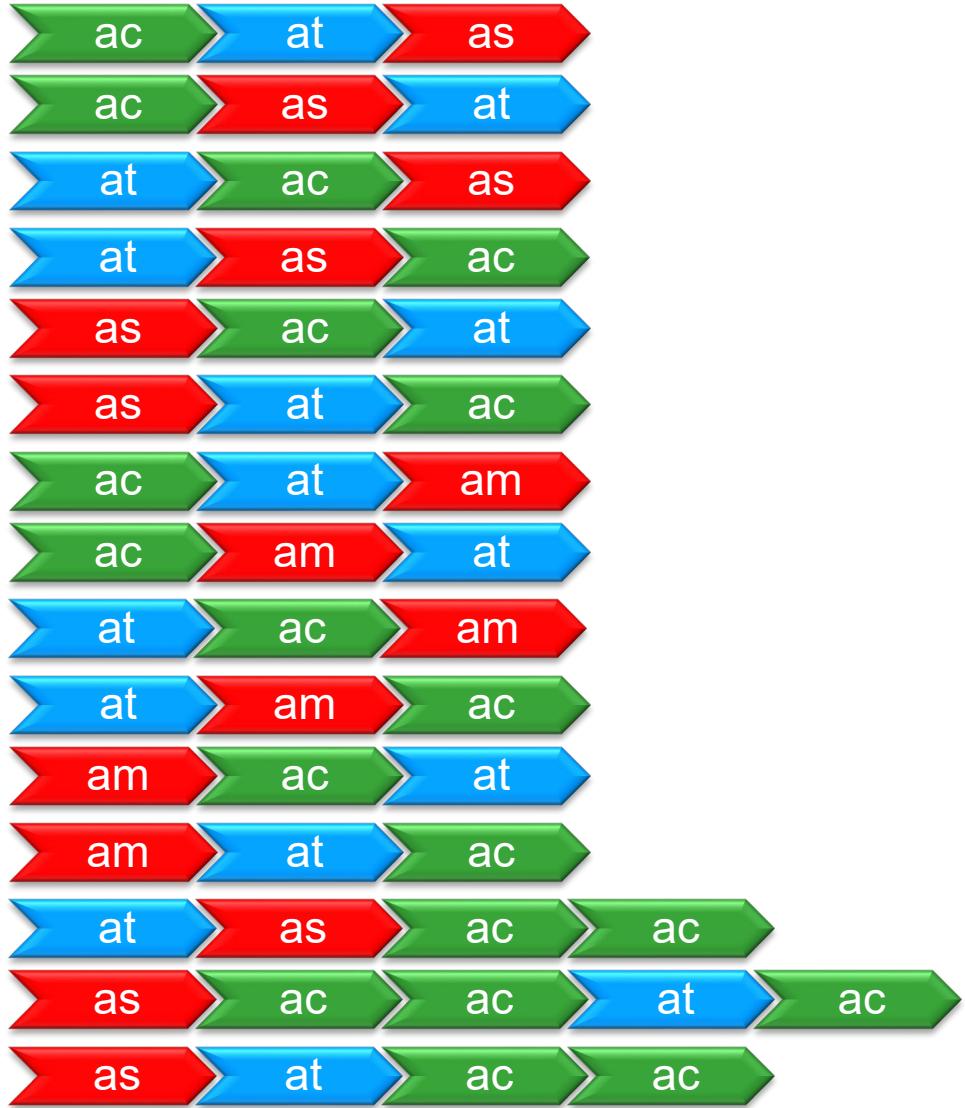
Continue with the blue event log: Repeat the process



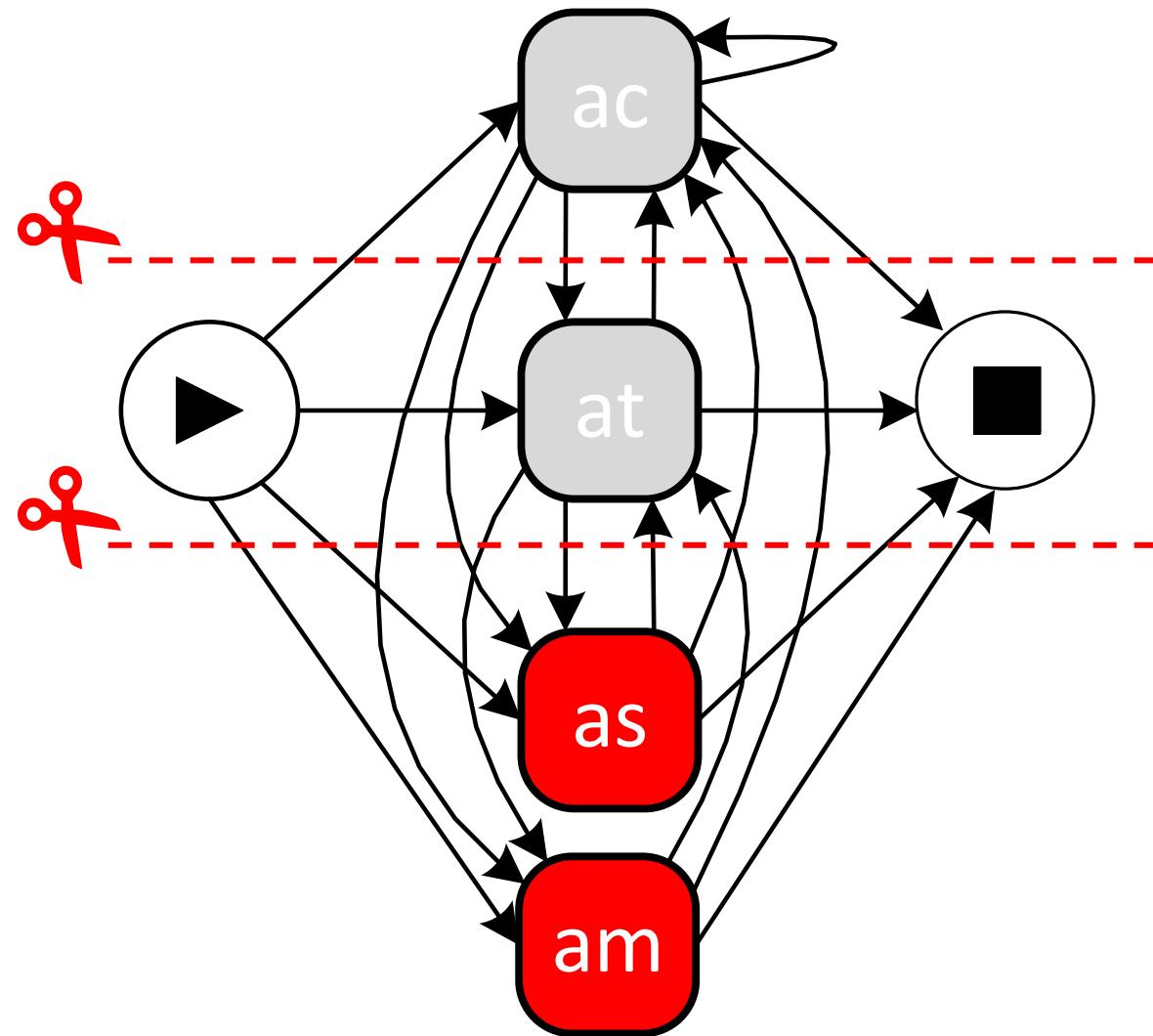
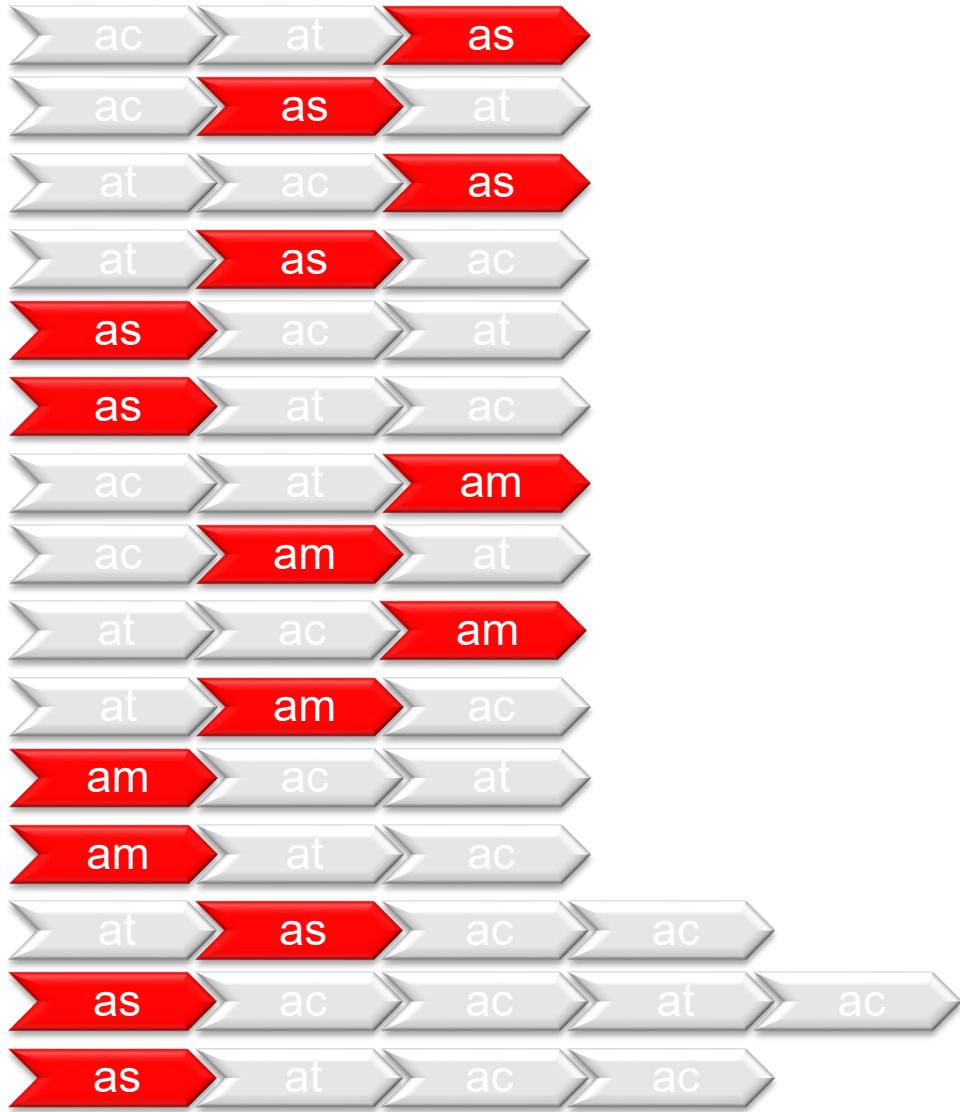
There is a parallel cut when the DFG can be split into concurrent parts where any activity in one part can be followed by any activity in another part.



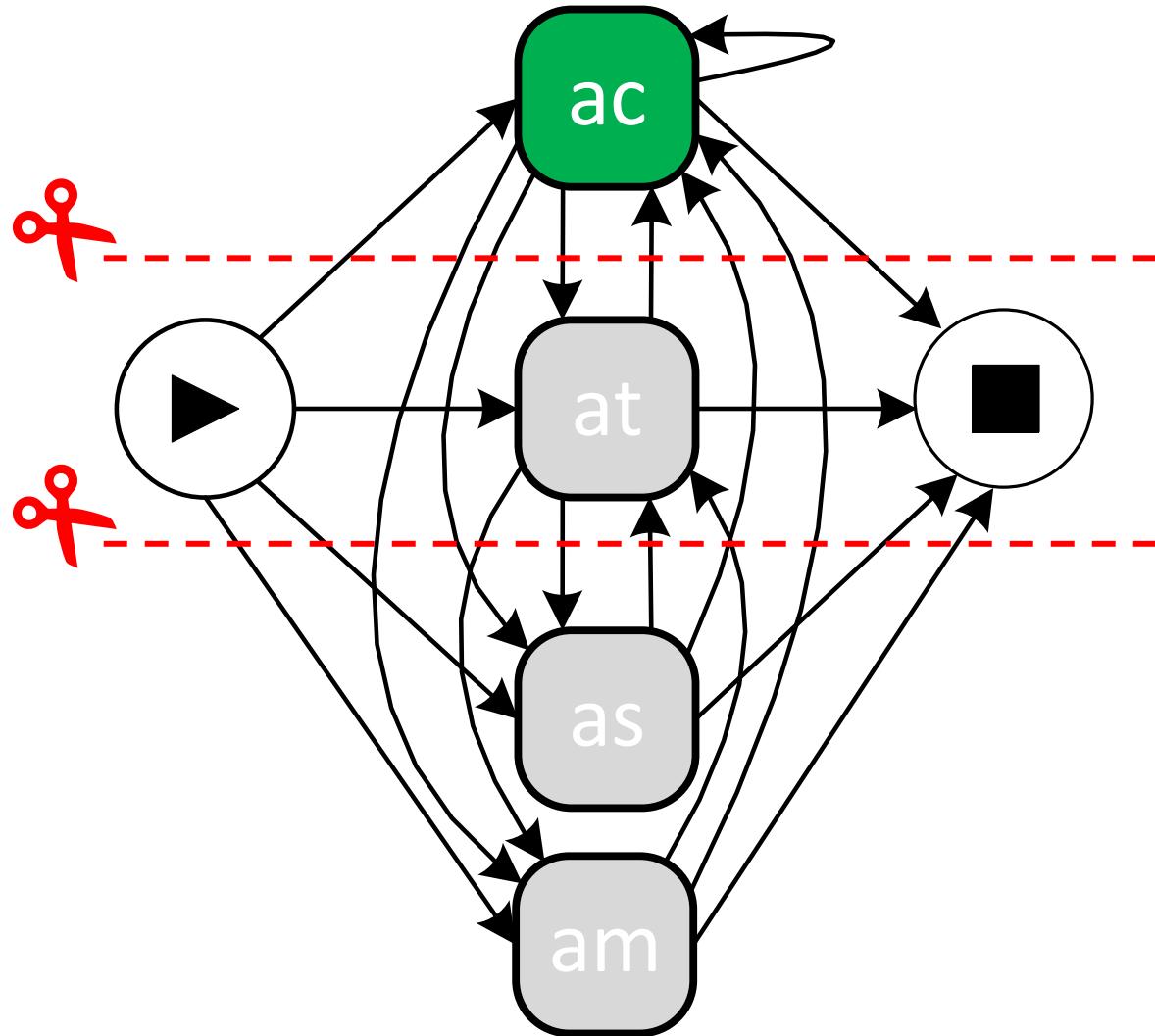
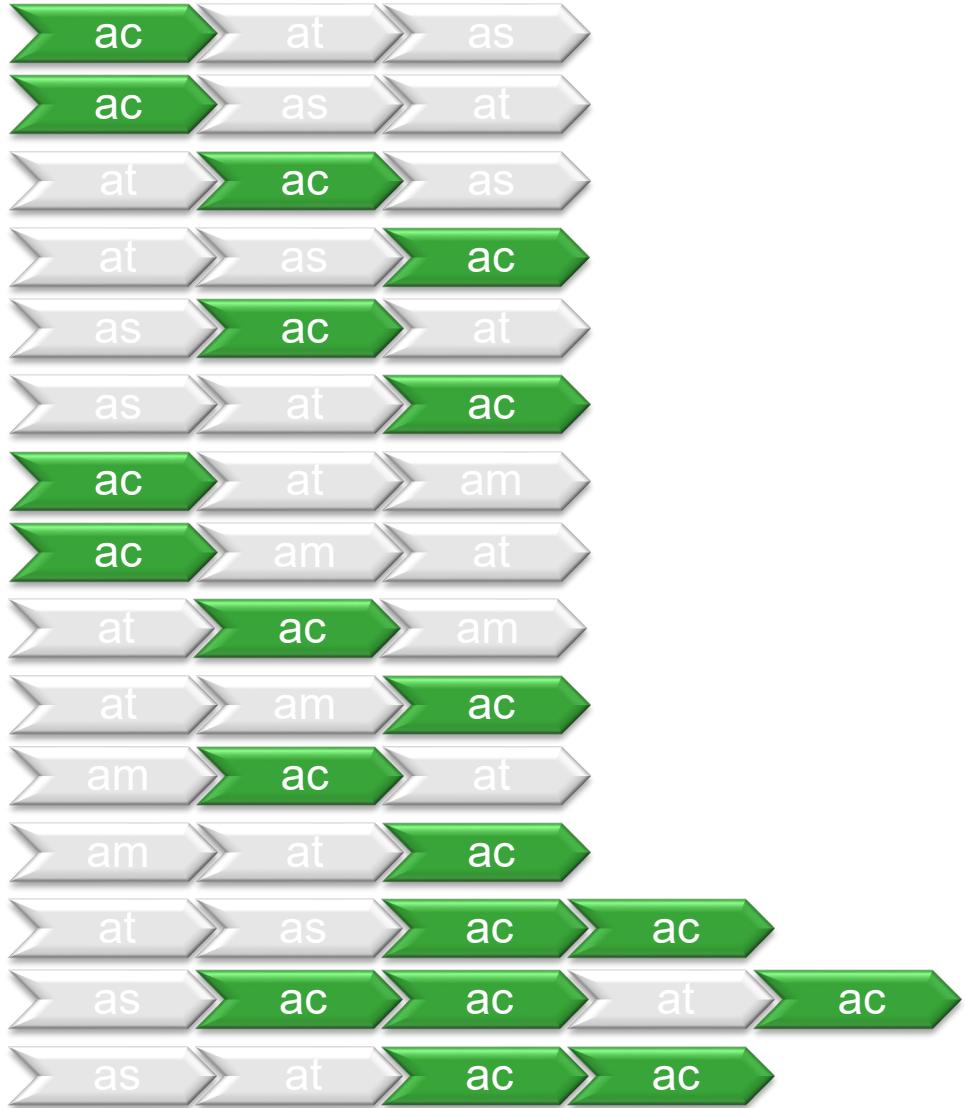
Apply a parallel cut resulting in three activity groups



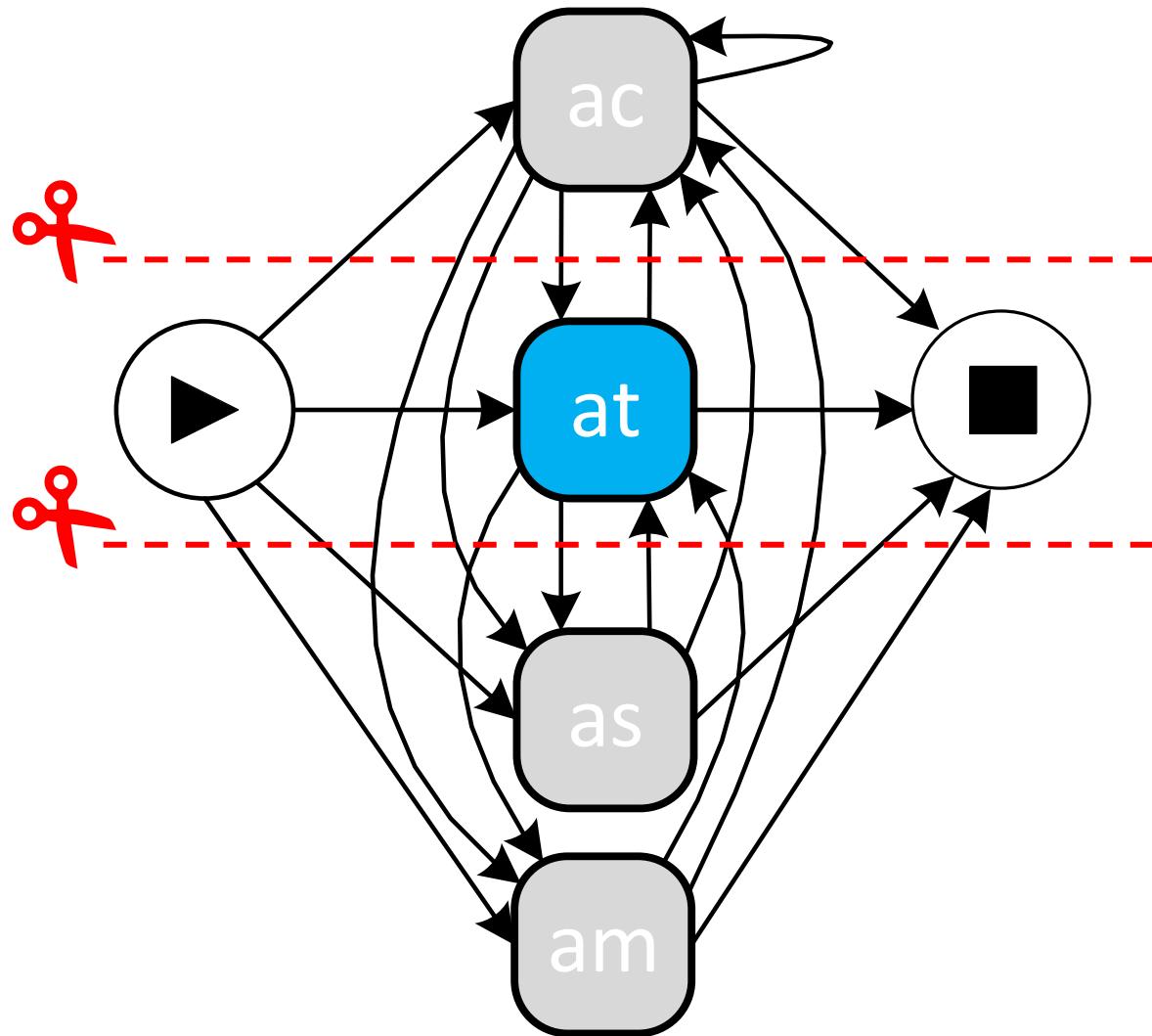
Create three new event logs (1/3)



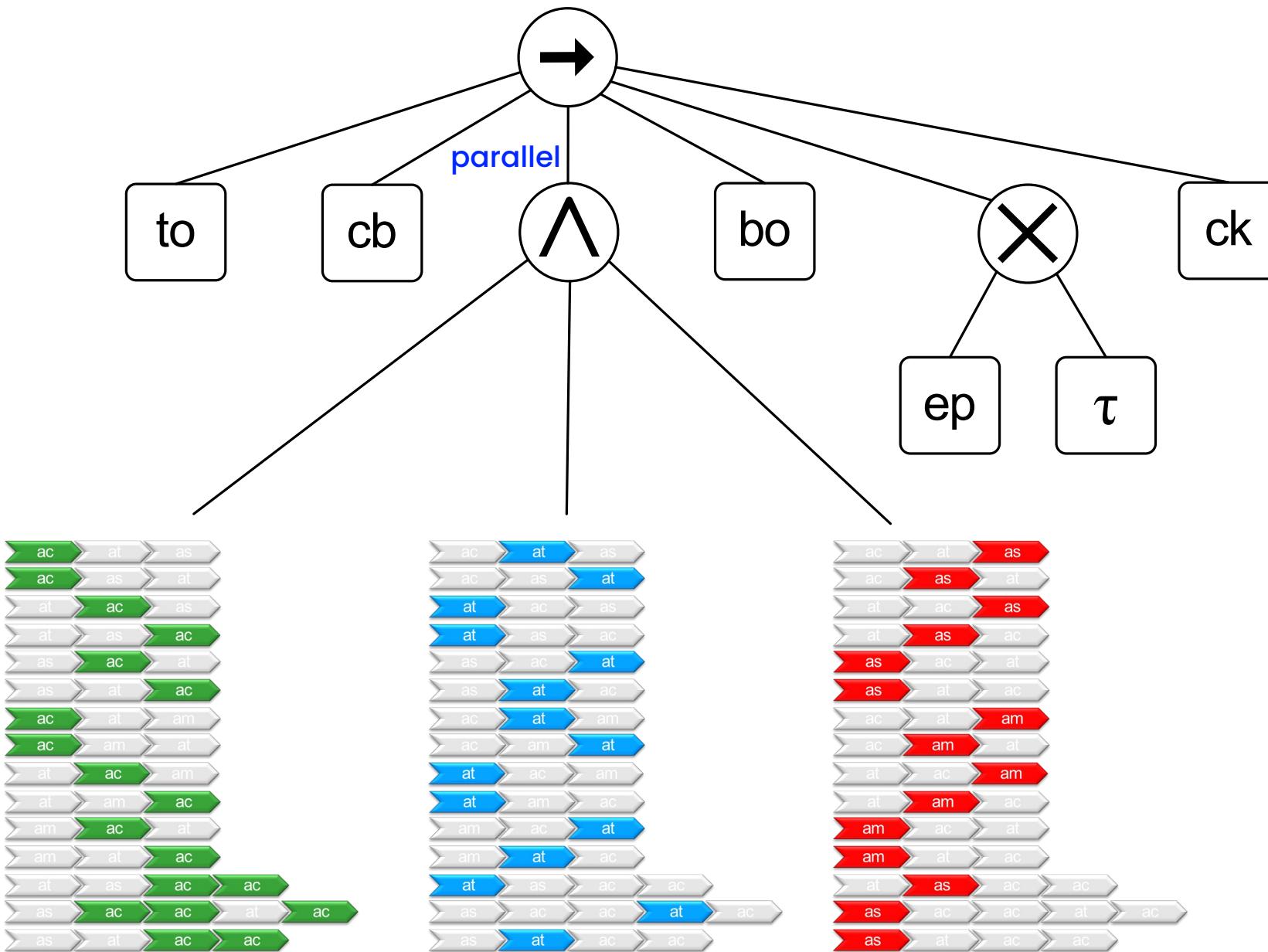
Create three new event logs (2/3)



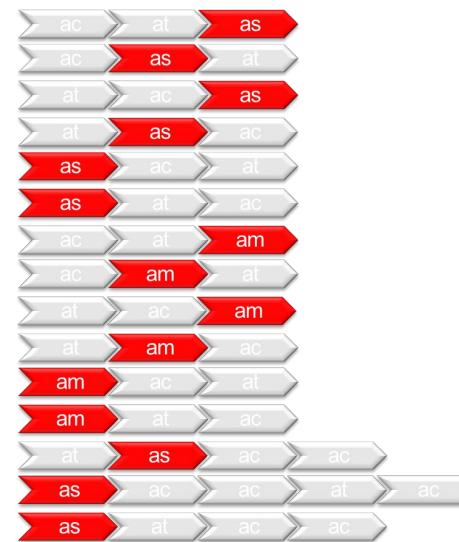
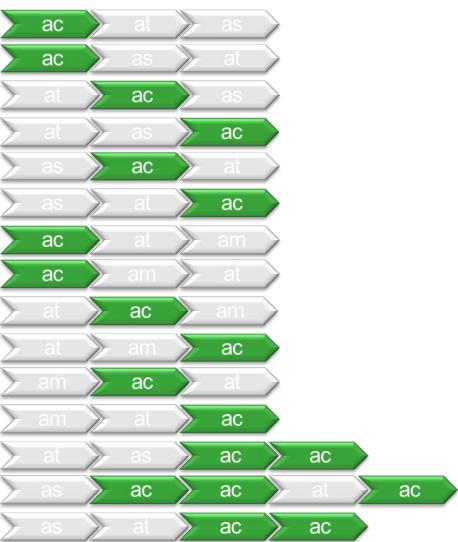
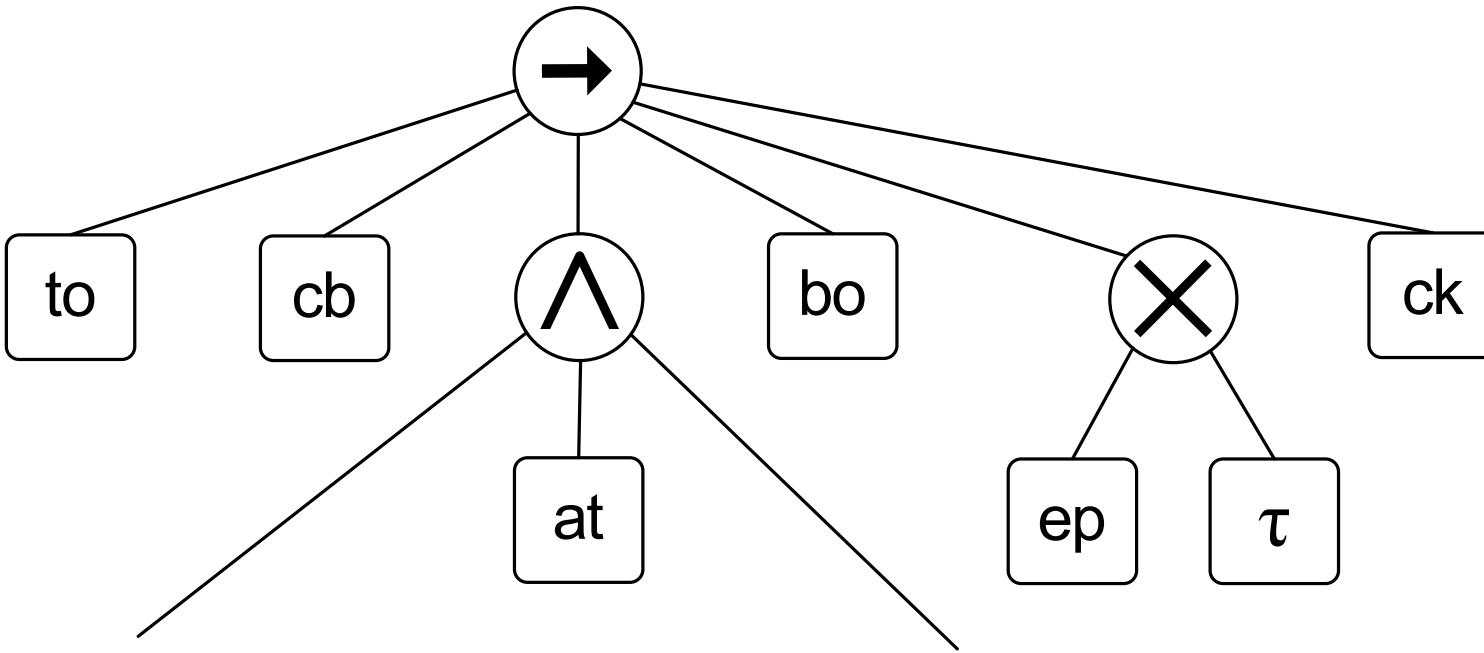
Create three new event logs (3/3)



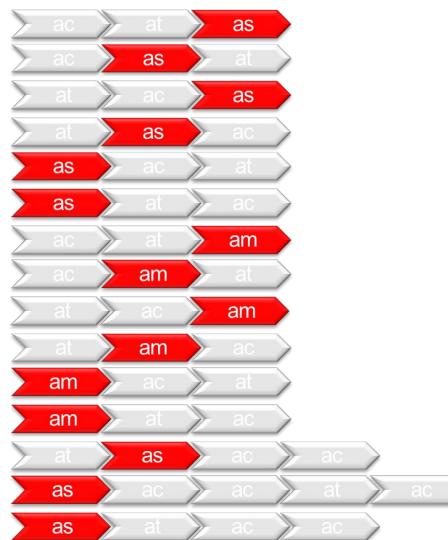
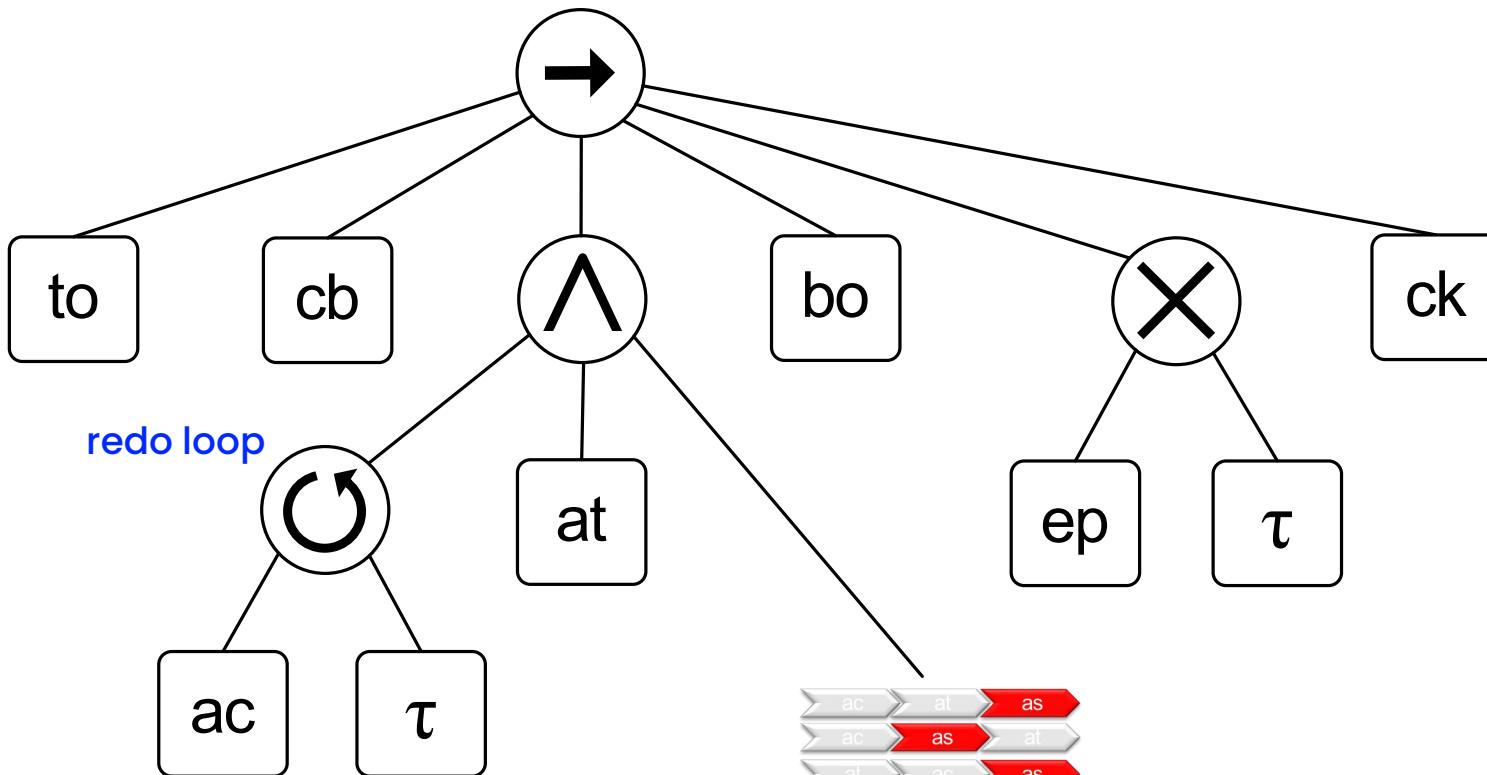
Add the parallel node and continue with the three event logs



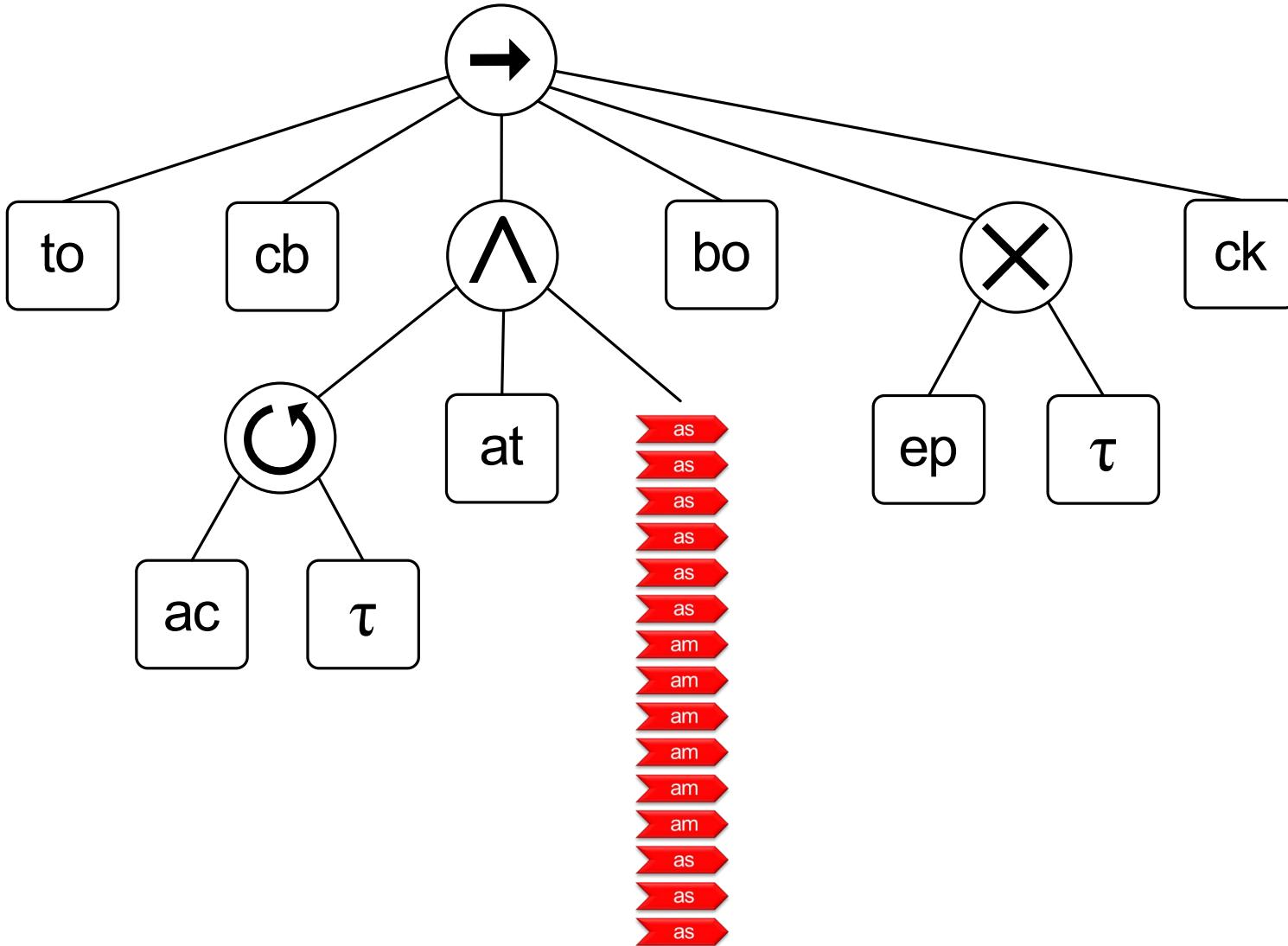
Add tomato (at) happens precisely once



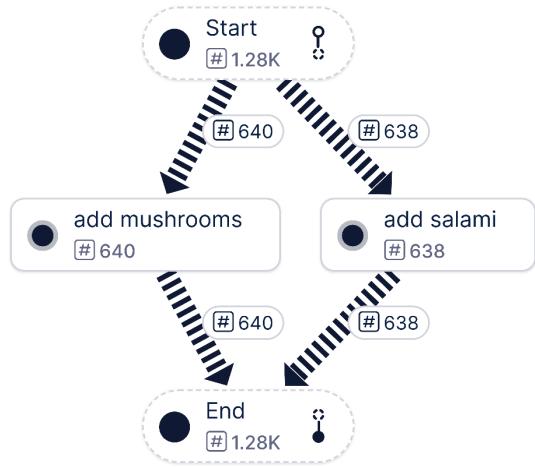
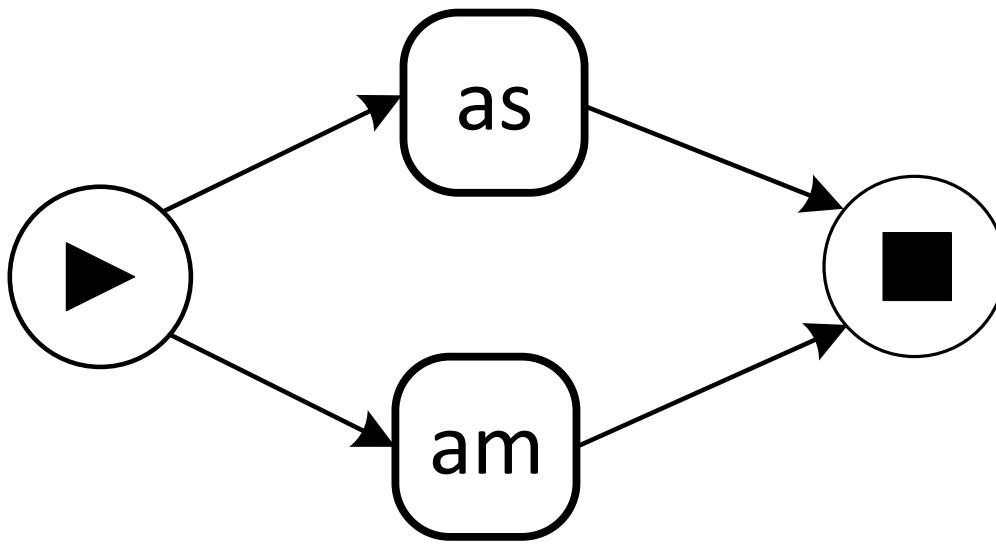
Add cheese (ac) happens at least one time



Only the red event log remains



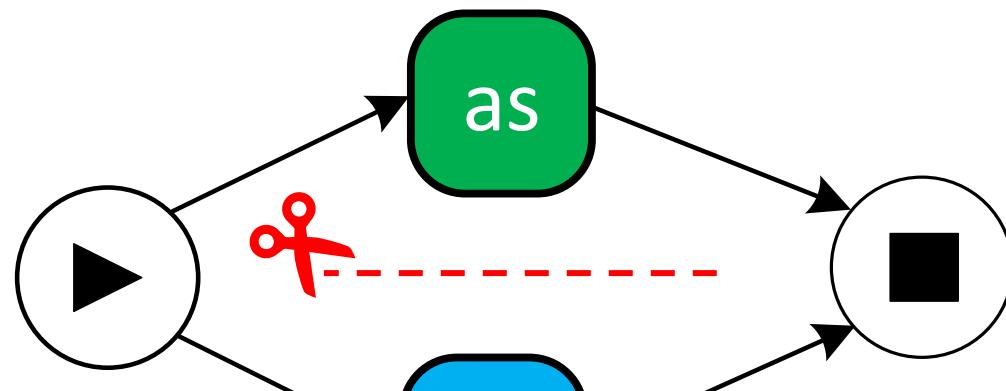
Repeat the process and create a DFG



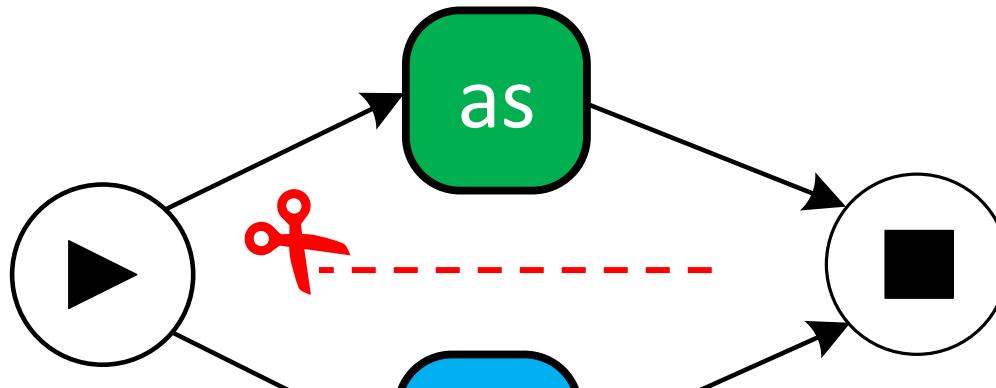
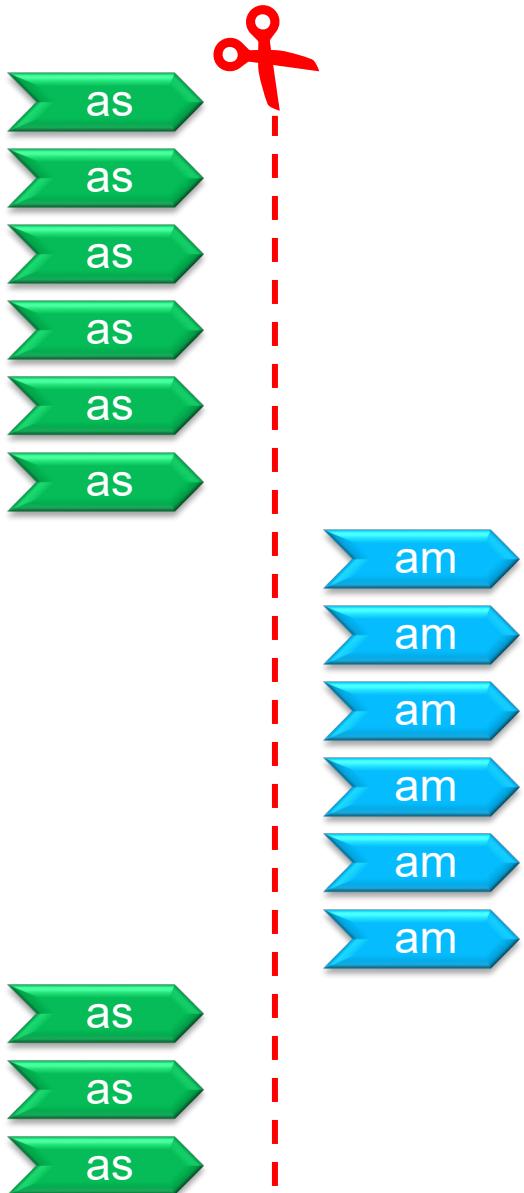
We find an exclusive-choice cut



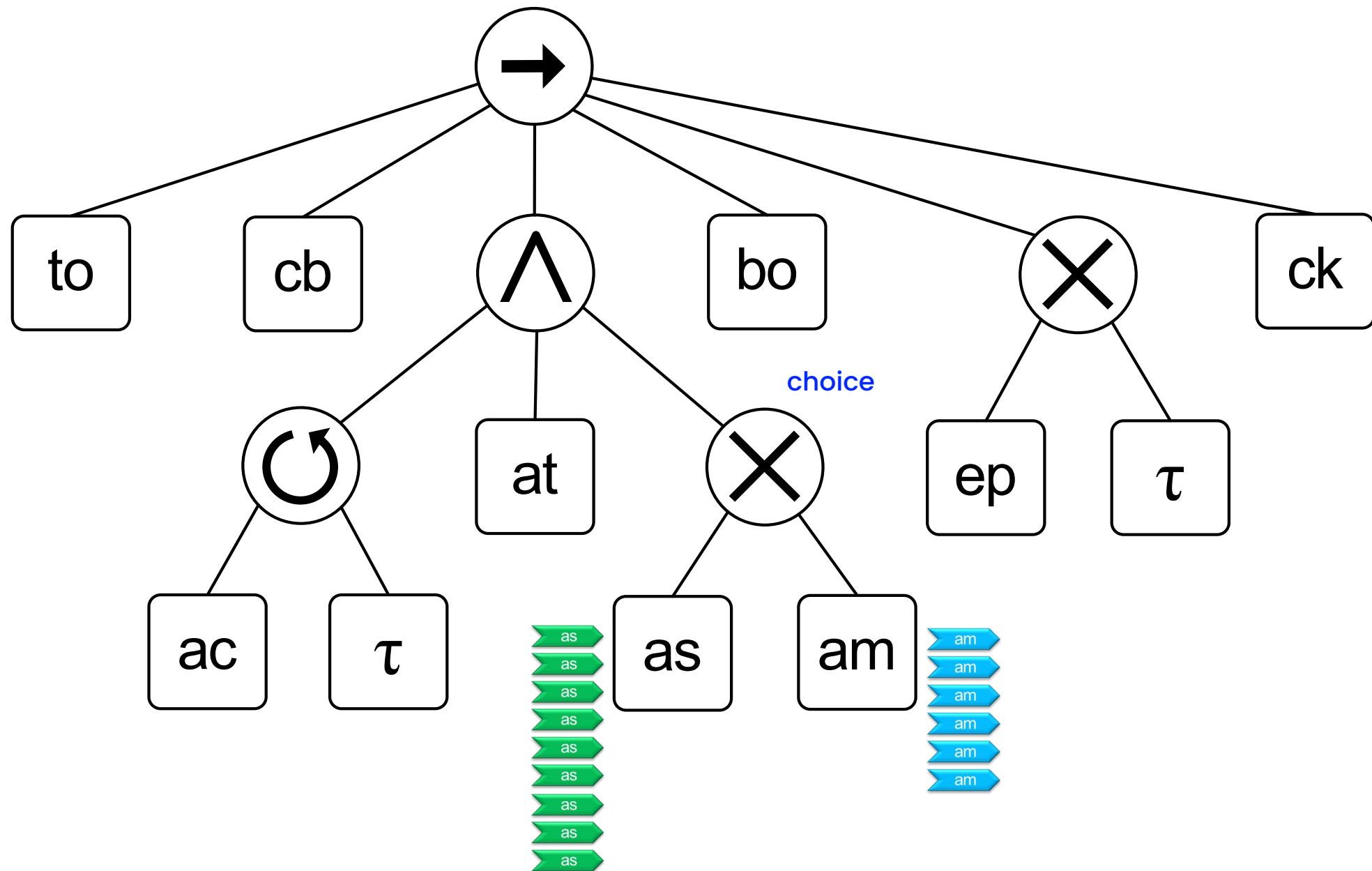
There is an exclusive-choice cut when the DFG can be split into disconnected parts after leaving out the artificial start and end.



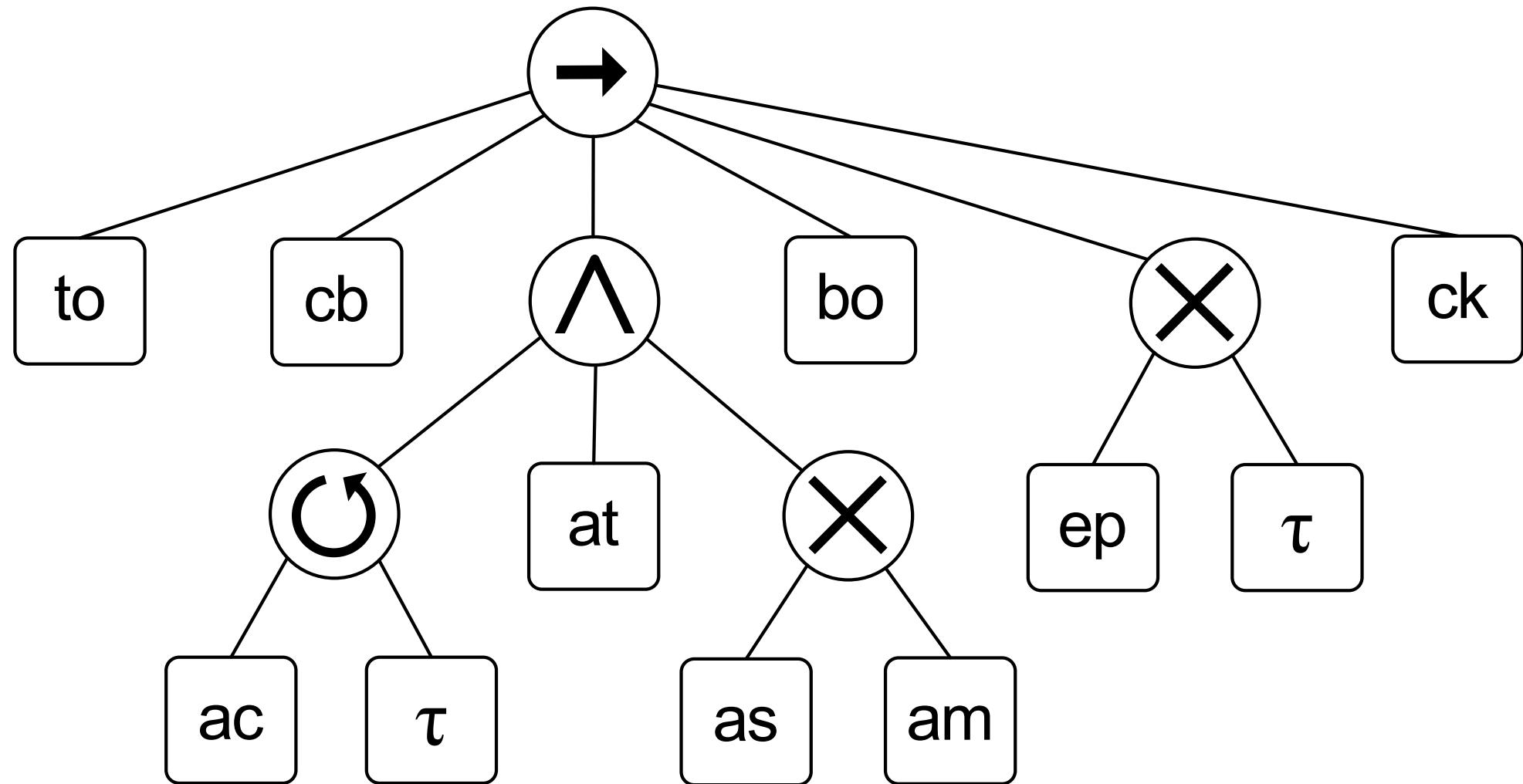
Create two new event logs



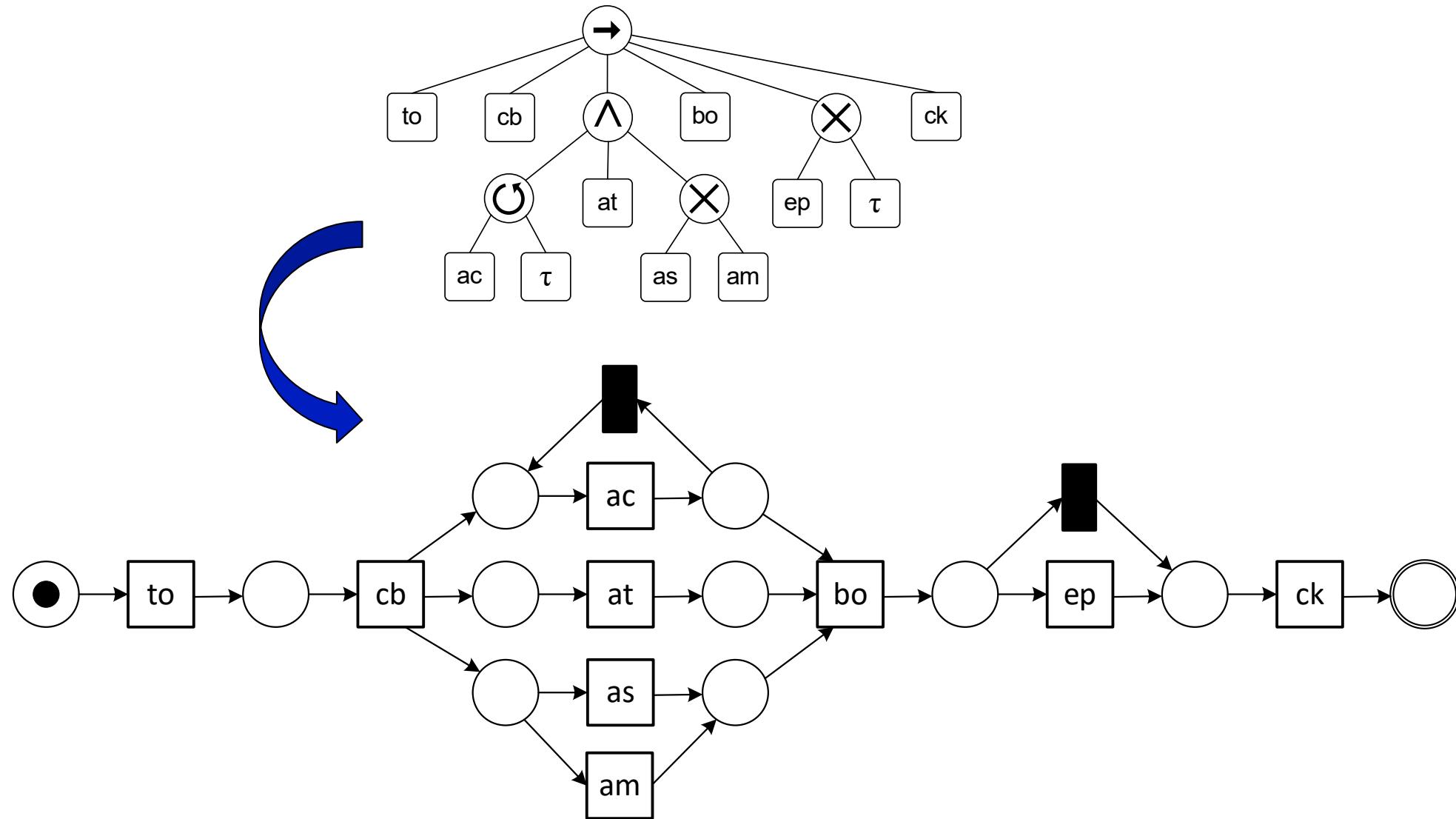
Add the choice node to choose between add salami and add mushroom



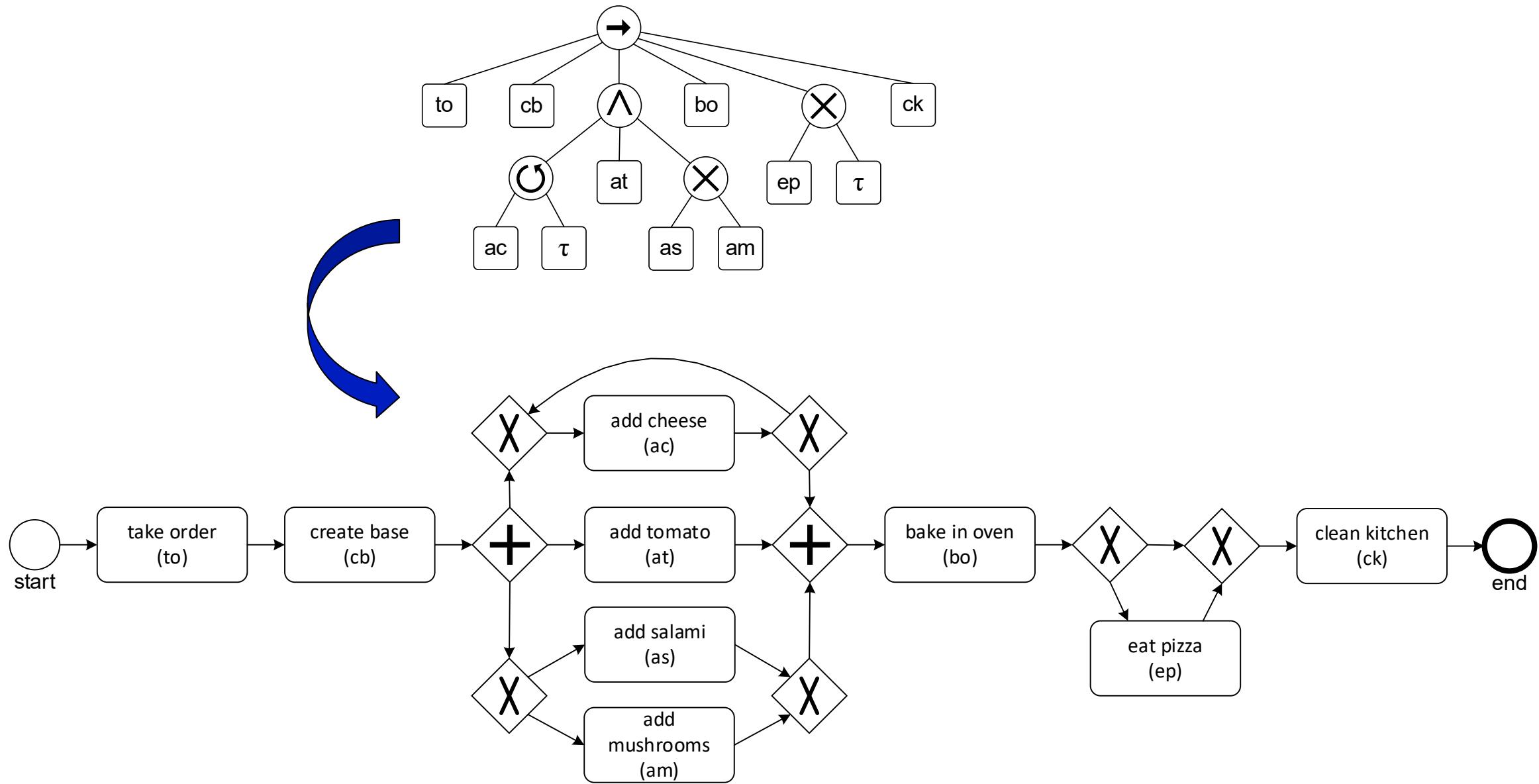
The process tree returned by the Inductive Mining algorithm



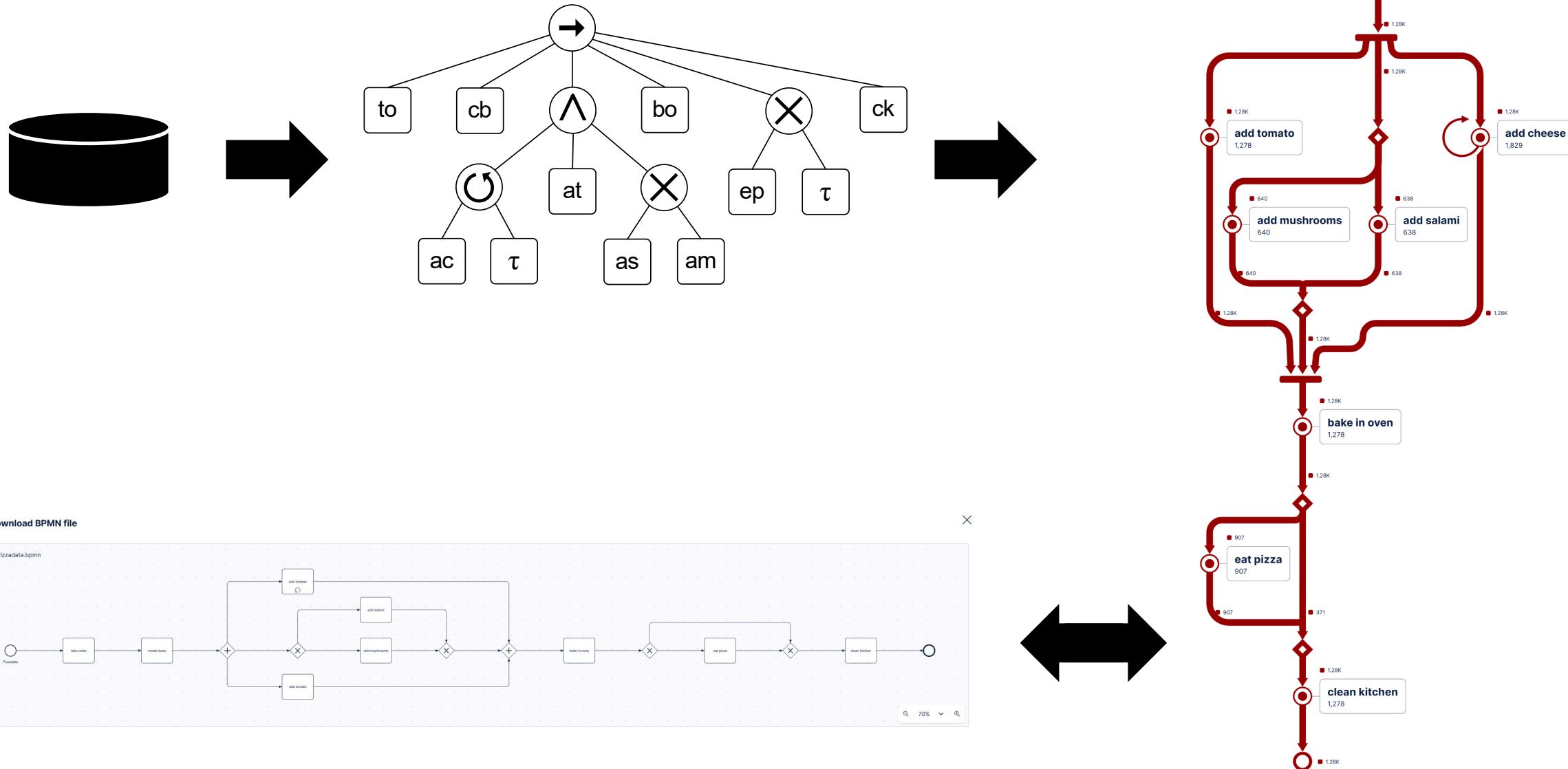
Can be visualized as a Petri net



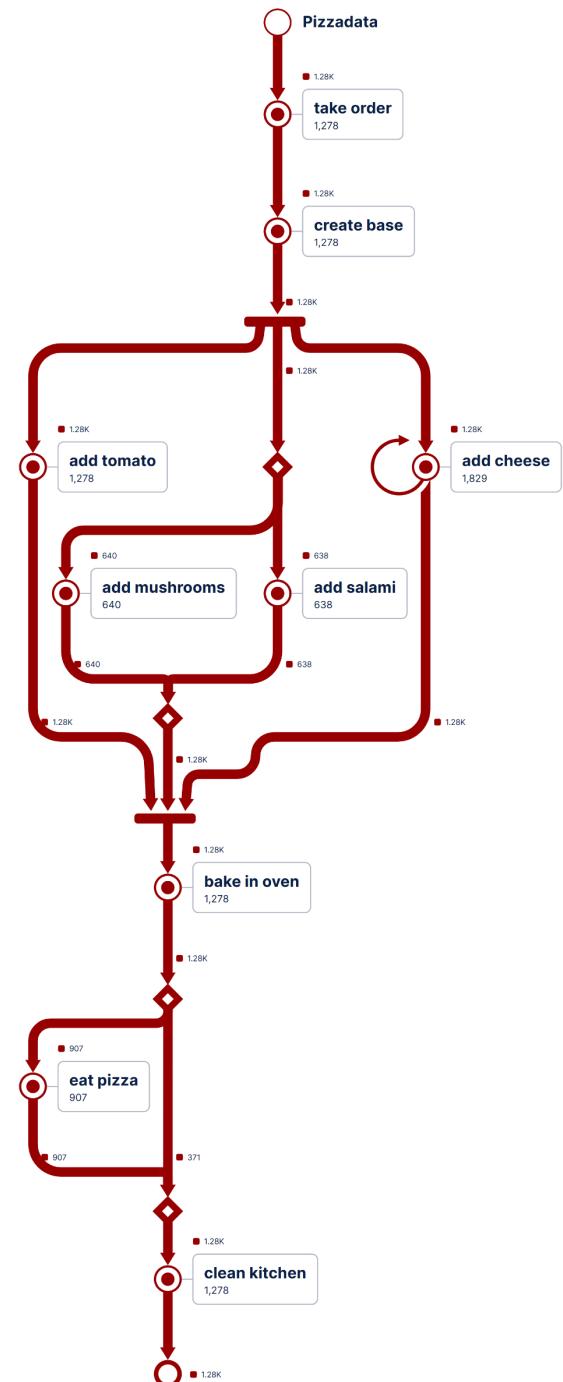
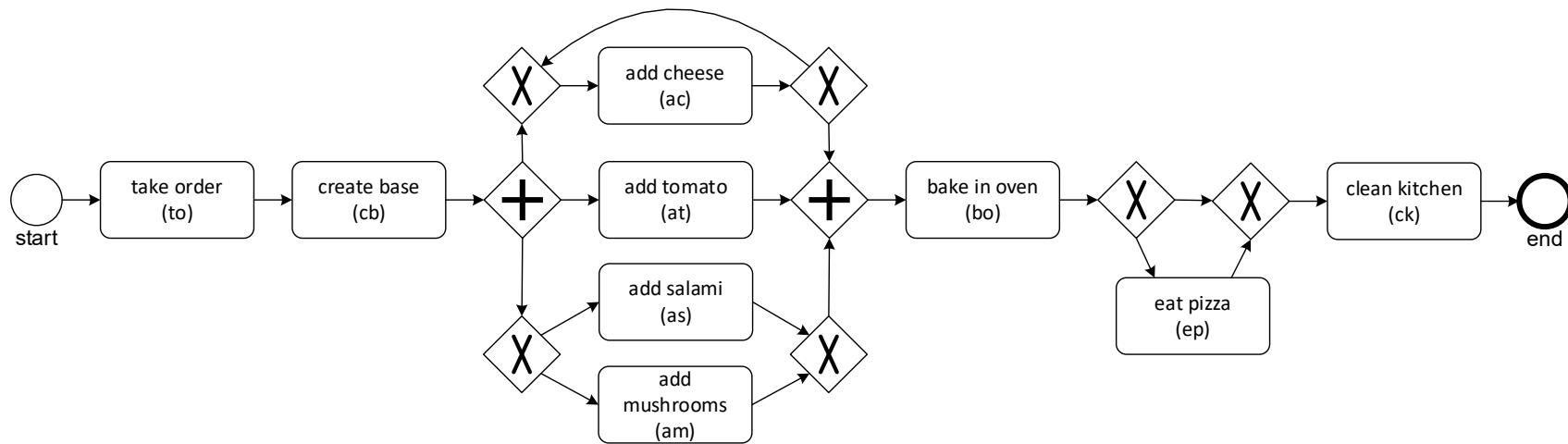
Can be visualized as a BPMN model



Supported by the Celonis Process Adherence Manager

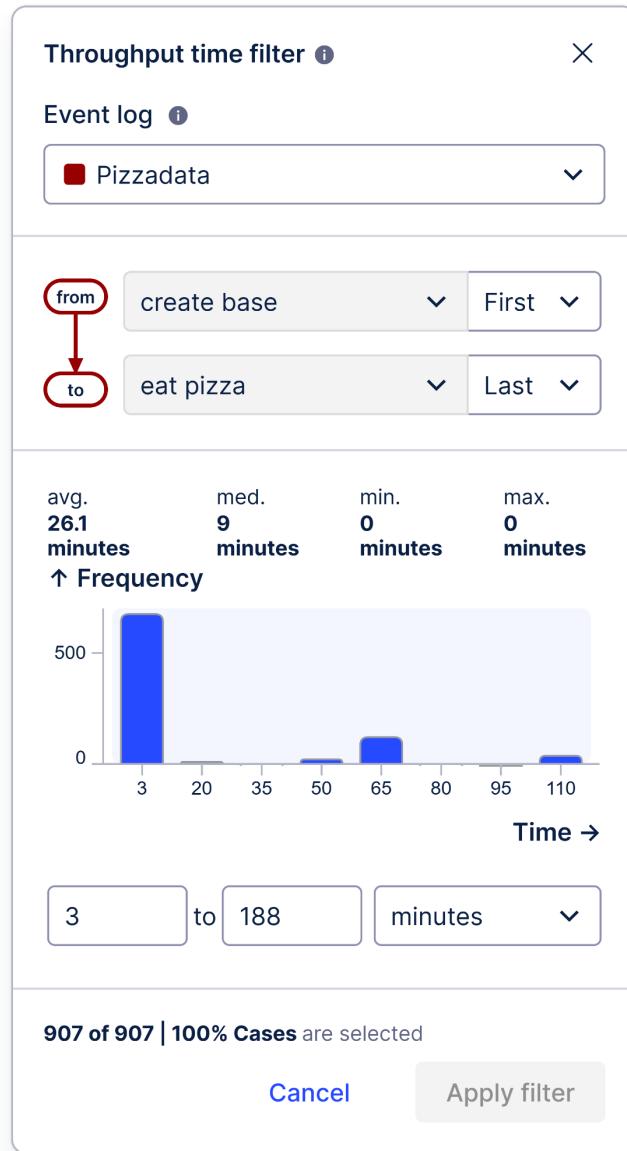


Comes with strong guarantees



The (BPMN) model is sound and can replay the whole event log. Also, the model is much more precise than the DFG.

Performance analysis using the Celonis Process Adherence Manager



907 of 1278 pizzas (71%) are eaten.
The time between create base and start eating is between 3 and 188 minutes (26.1 minutes on average)

Conformance checking using the Celonis Process Adherence Manager

Studio > Celosphere25 > Pizza Process >

Search CTRL / | 1 | Publish

Pizza Process PAM Edit Mode

Explore deviations

Conformance rate
Pizzadata 33.88%

Deviations (3)

- Unexpected event: add mushrooms (640, 50.08% Pizzadata | +4 minutes TPT)
- Missing event: add salami (640, 50.08% Pizzadata | +4 minutes TPT)
- Occurred too often: add cheese (389, 30.44% Pizzadata | +4 minutes TPT)

Target Model

Preset filters
Select the data you want to compare to the target model.

+ Add a filter

Data & Coverage Info
Pizzadata 100%

Pizzadata

Note that I have changed the normative model:

- Only salami, no mushrooms allowed.
- Just a single serving of cheese.

Legend | 40% |

Conformance checking using the Celonis Process Adherence Manager

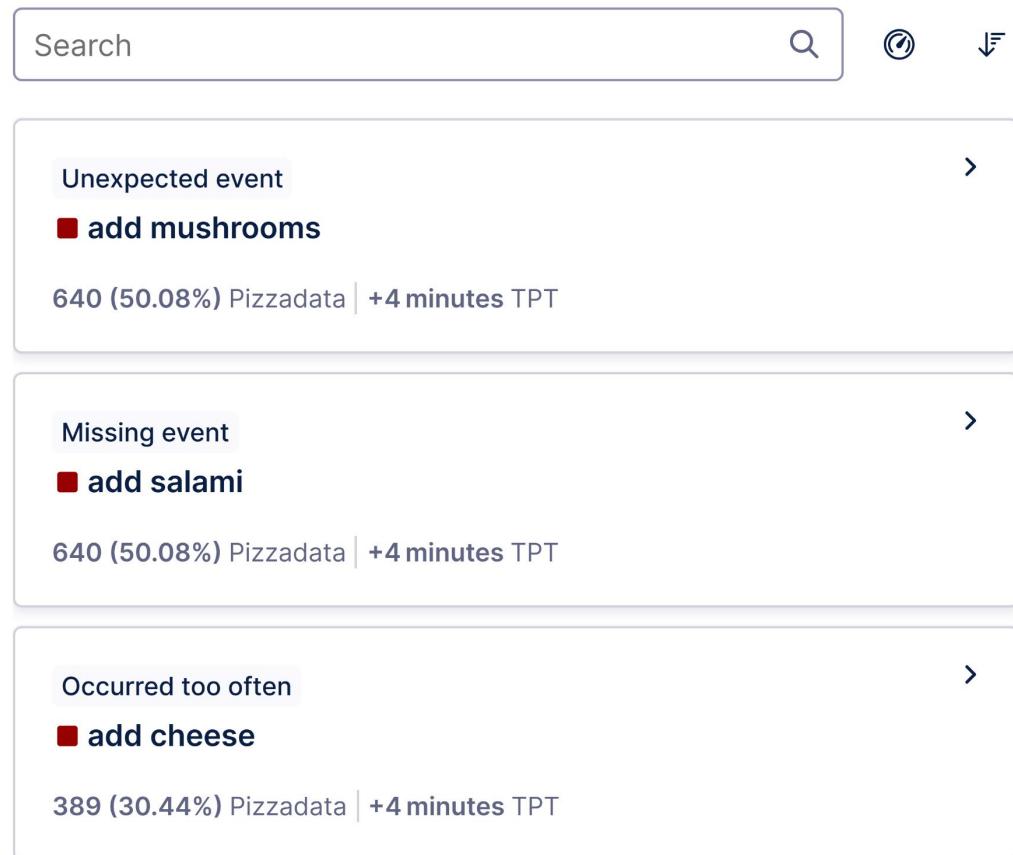
Conformance rate

Pizzadata

33.88%

⋮

Deviations (3)



There were 640 pizzas with mushrooms instead of salami (50.08%) and 389 pizzas with multiple servings of cheese (30.44%).



Pizza Process PAM

Explore deviations

Conformance rate
Pizzadata 0%

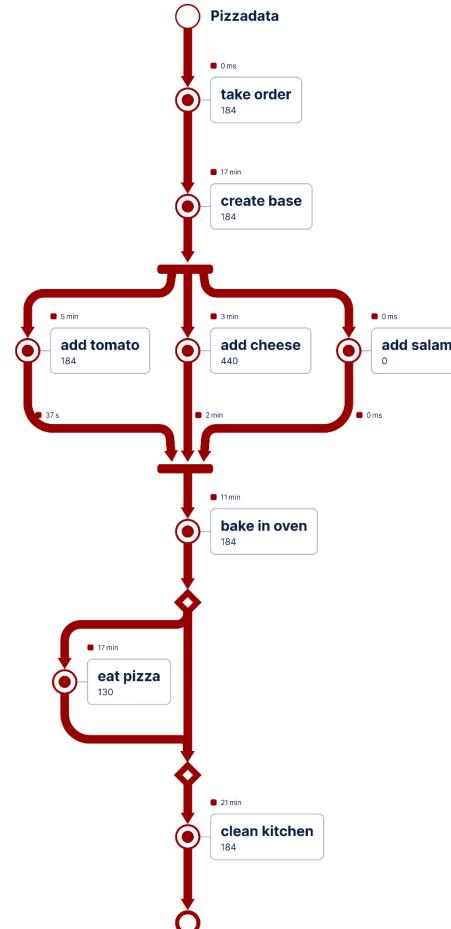
Deviations (3)

Search

- Occurred too often**
■ add cheese
184 (100%) Pizzadata | 0 milliseconds TPT
- Unexpected event**
■ add mushrooms
184 (100%) Pizzadata | 0 milliseconds TPT
- Missing event**
■ add salami
184 (100%) Pizzadata | 0 milliseconds TPT



**184 cases (14.4%)
have all three
deviations**

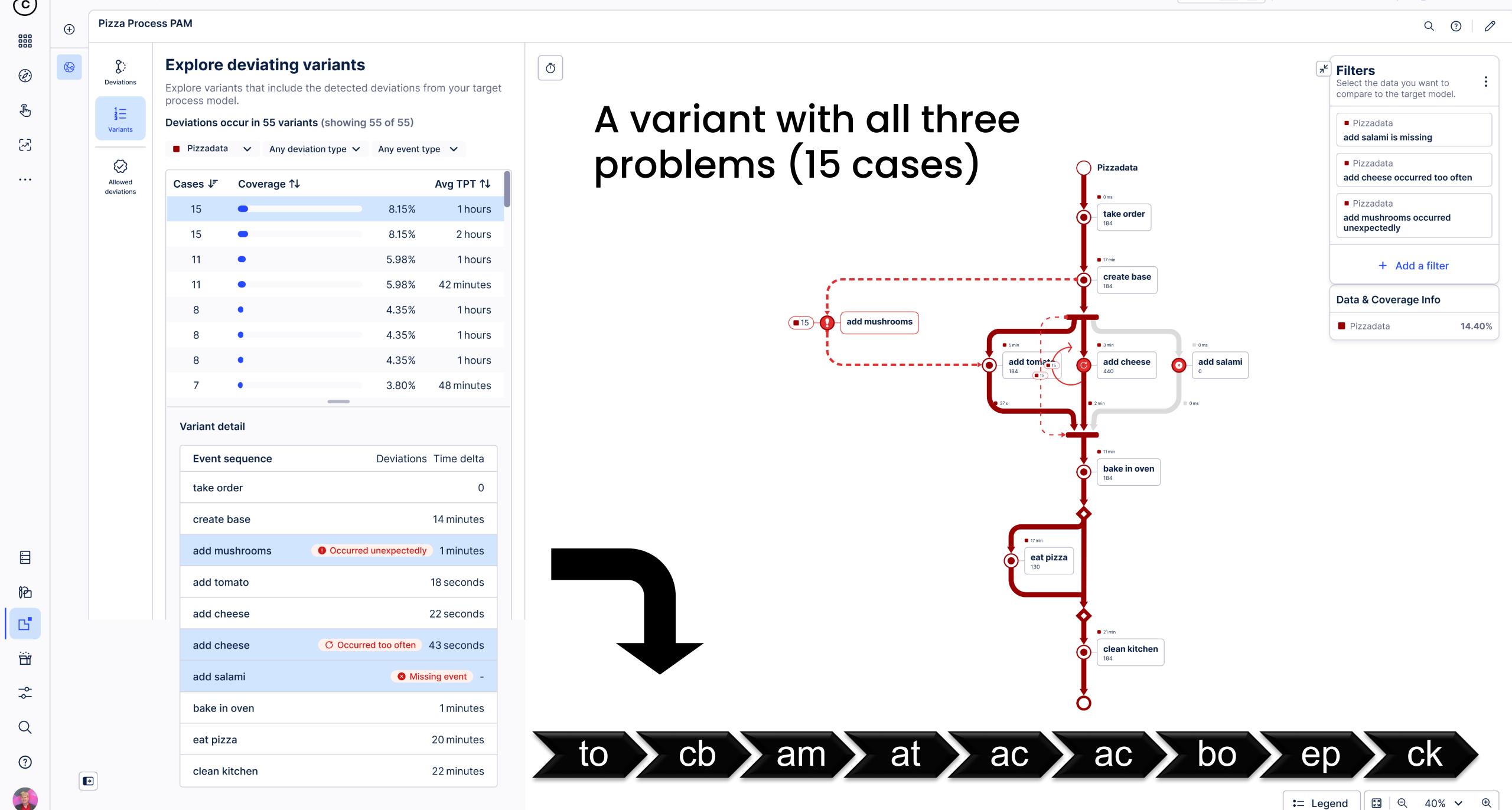


Filters
Select the data you want to compare to the target model.

- Pizzadata
add salami is missing
- Pizzadata
add cheese occurred too often
- Pizzadata
add mushrooms occurred unexpectedly

+ Add a filter

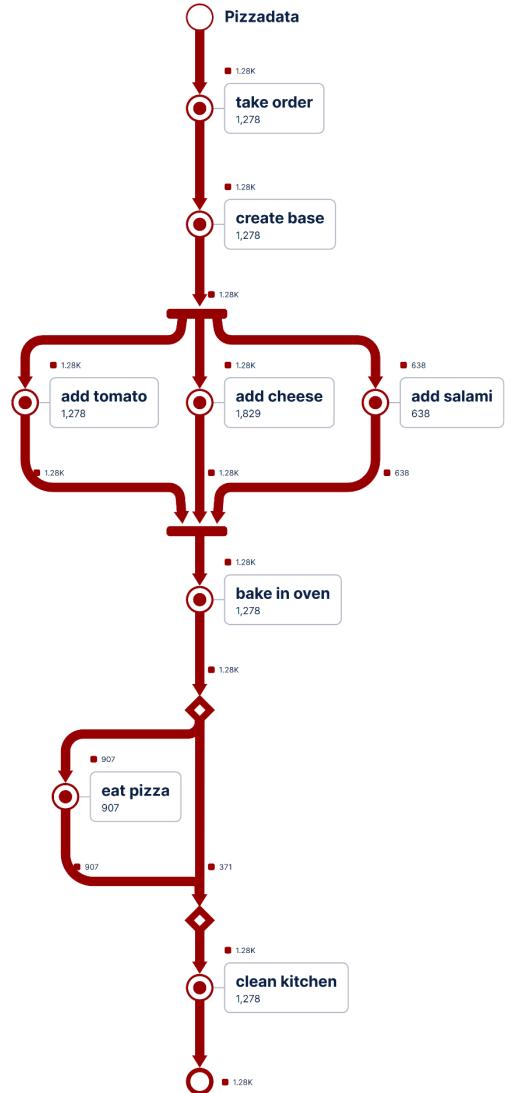
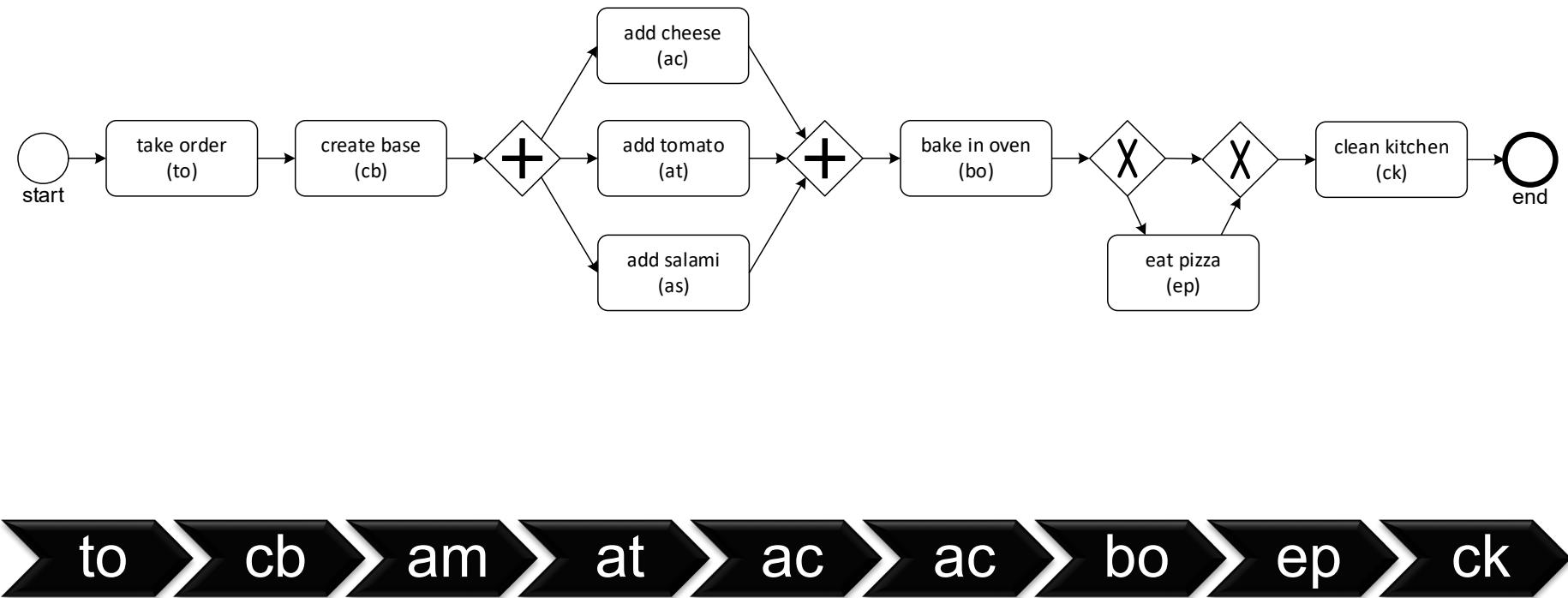
Data & Coverage Info
Pizzadata 14.40%



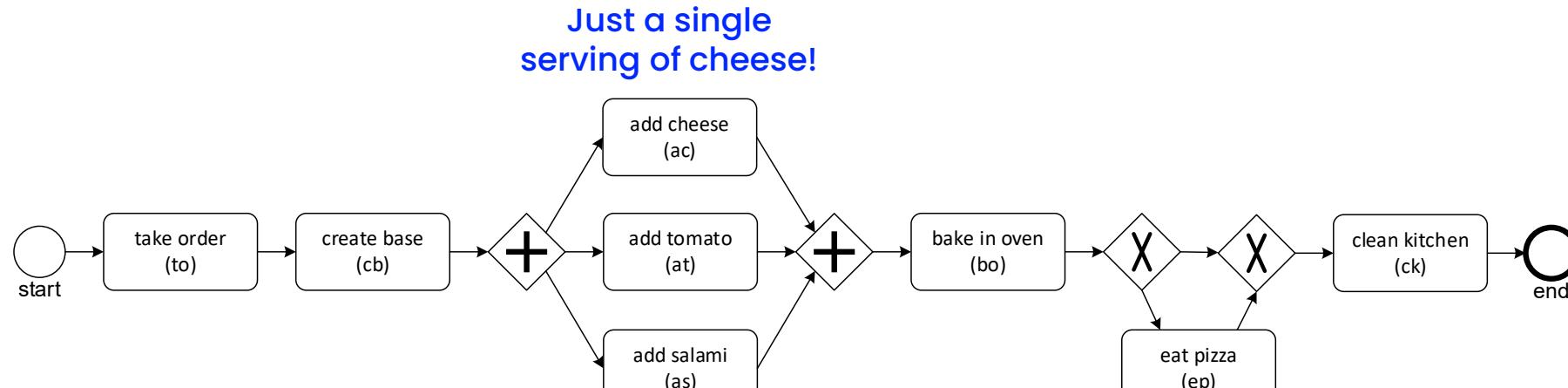
How does this work?

Alignments!

For conformance checking we need a process model and event data

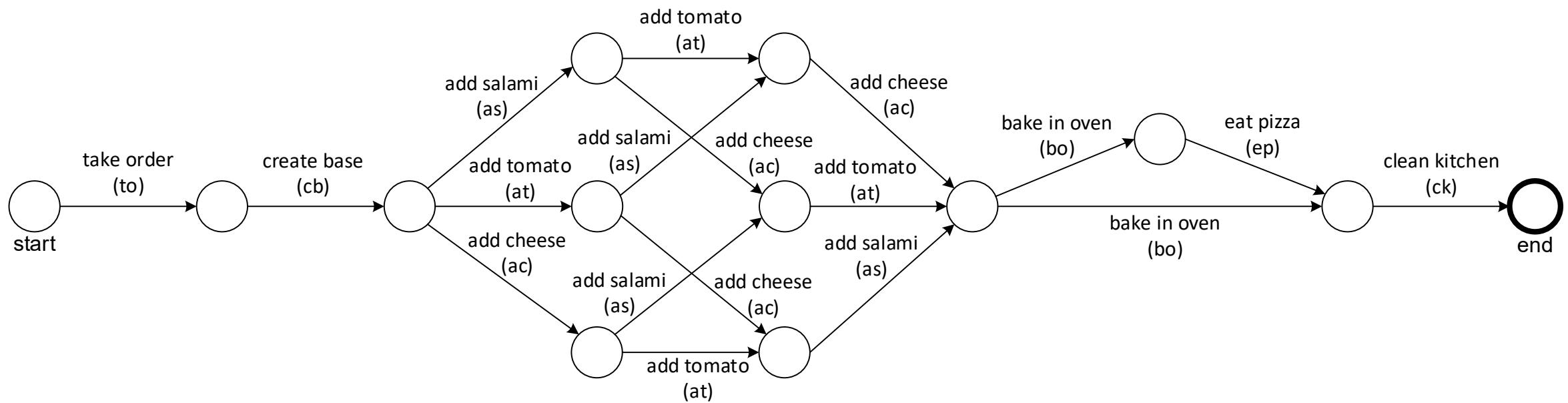
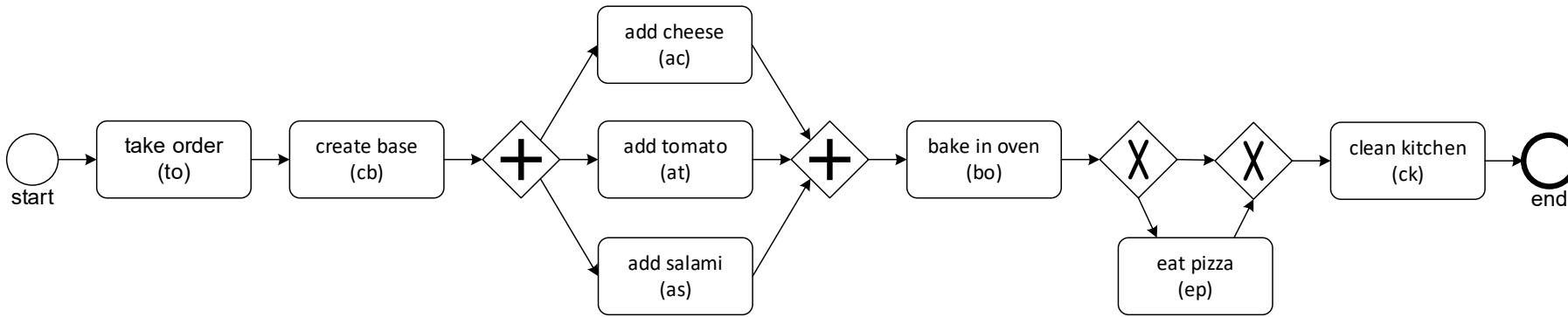


For conformance checking we need a process model and event data

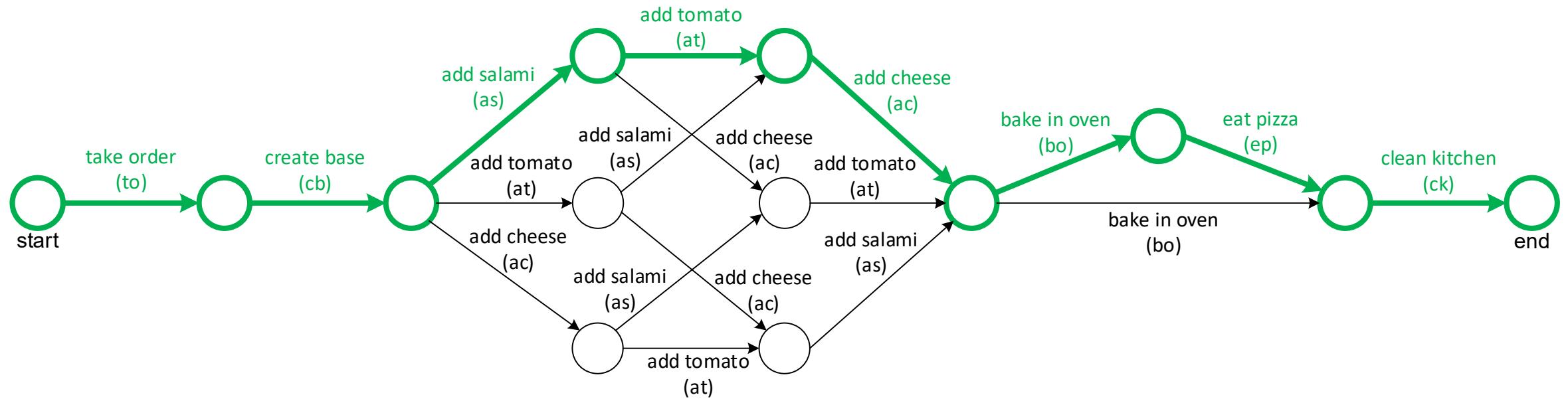


A variant appearing 15 times in the original event data.

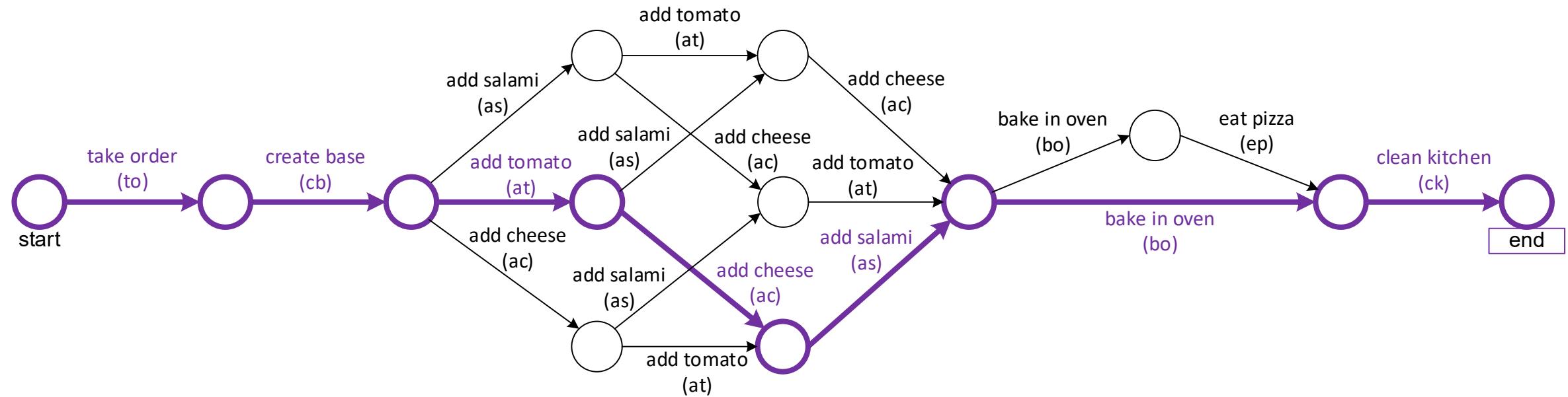
The state space of the BPMN model (normally much larger and with loops)



Behavior of BPMN model is any path from start to end

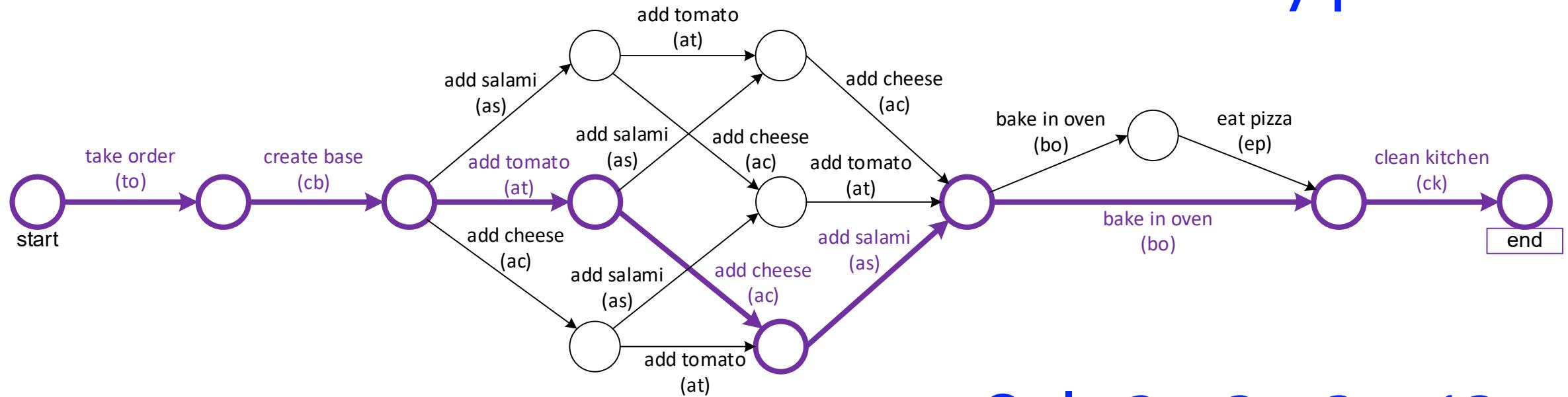


Another path



Another path

How many paths?



Only $3 \times 2 \times 2 = 12$

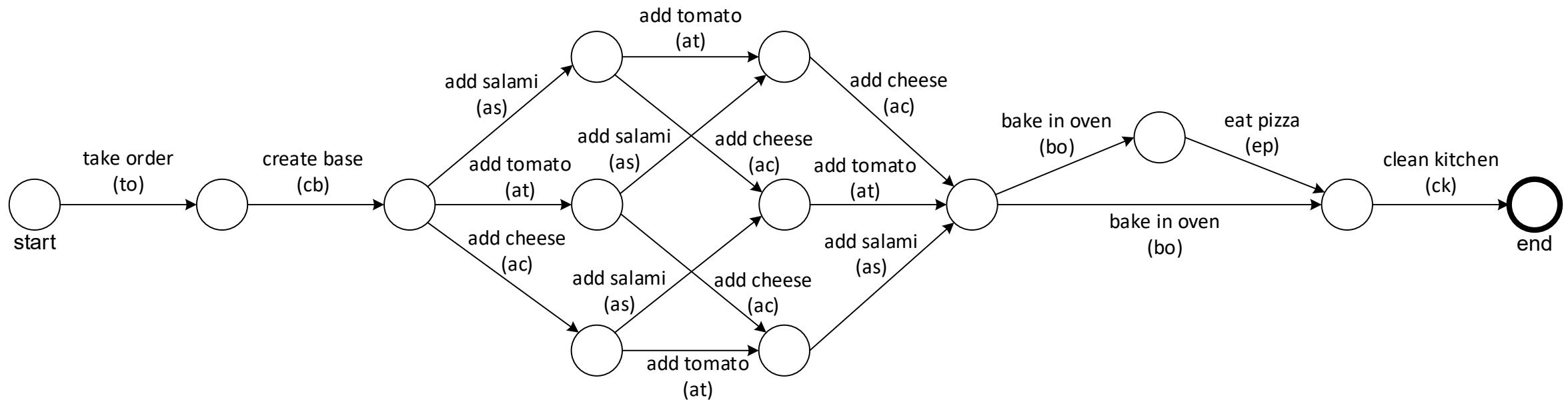


Find a path closest to the observed sequence

to > cb > am > at > ac > ac > bo > ep > ck

observed behavior

?

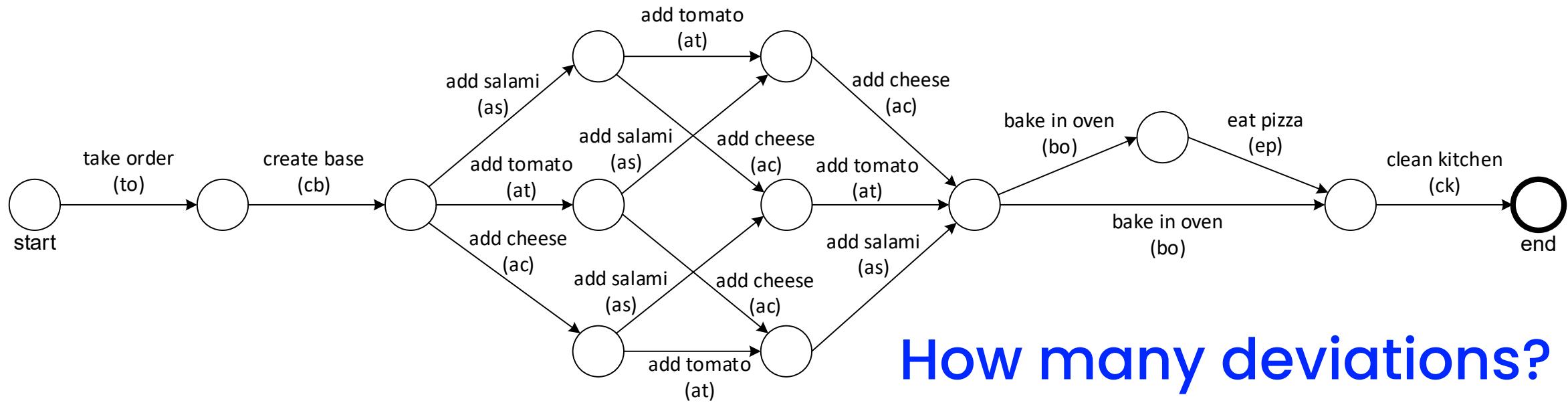


Find a path closest to the observed sequence



?

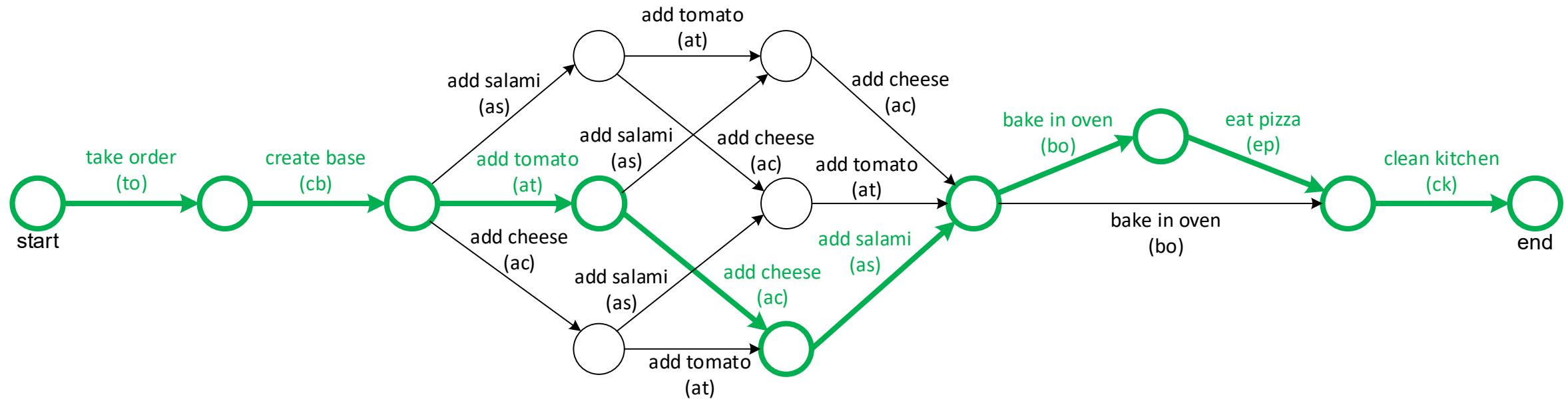
What is the path closest to the observed sequence?



Find a path closest to the observed sequence

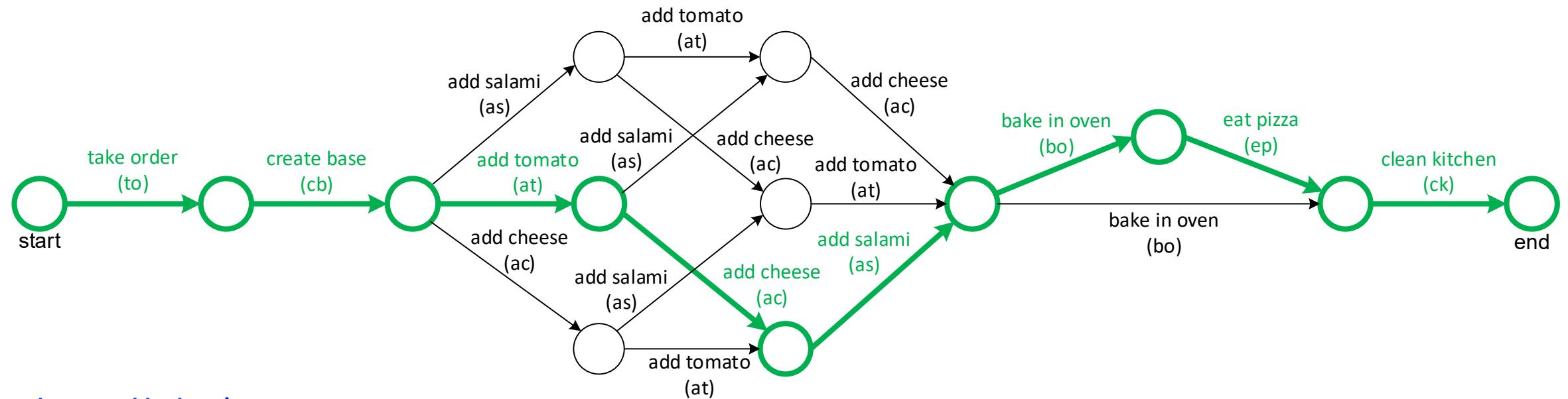


observed behavior



modeled behavior

This is a path closest to the observed sequence (three deviations)



observed behavior

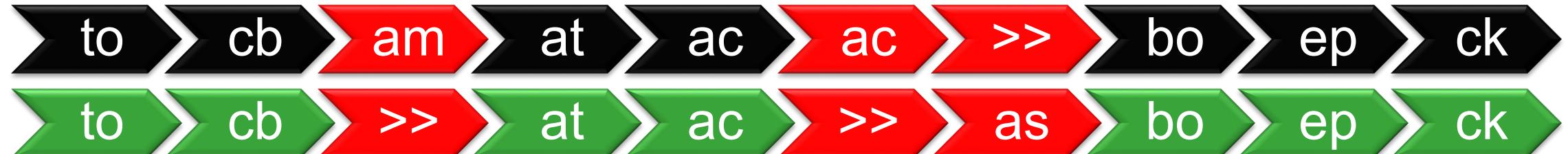


modeled behavior

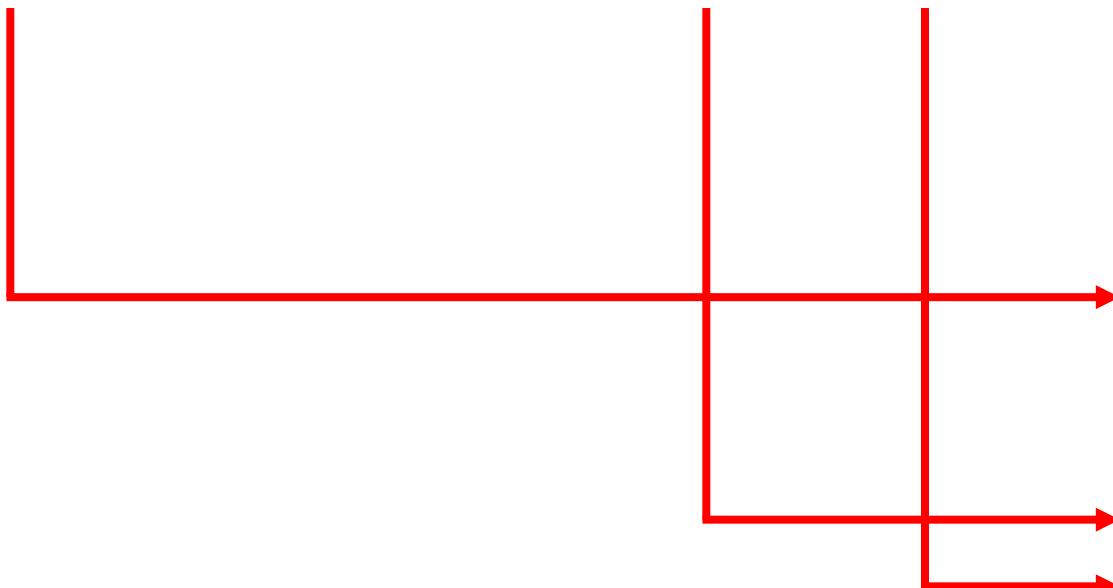


Three deviations!

observed behavior (15 cases)



modeled behavior



Variant detail

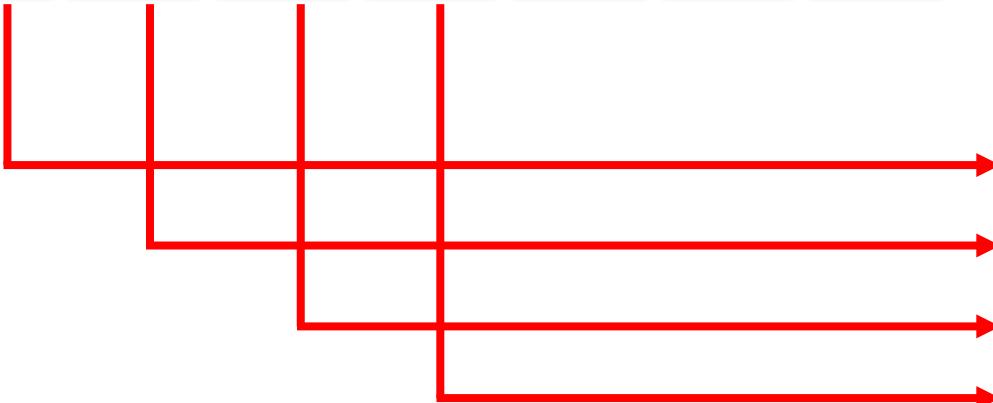
Event sequence	Deviations	Time delta
take order		0
create base		14 minutes
add mushrooms	! Occurred unexpectedly	1 minutes
add tomato		18 seconds
add cheese		22 seconds
add cheese	! Occurred too often	43 seconds
add salami	! Missing event	-
bake in oven		1 minutes
eat pizza		20 minutes
clean kitchen		22 minutes

Another example with four deviations

observed behavior (one case)



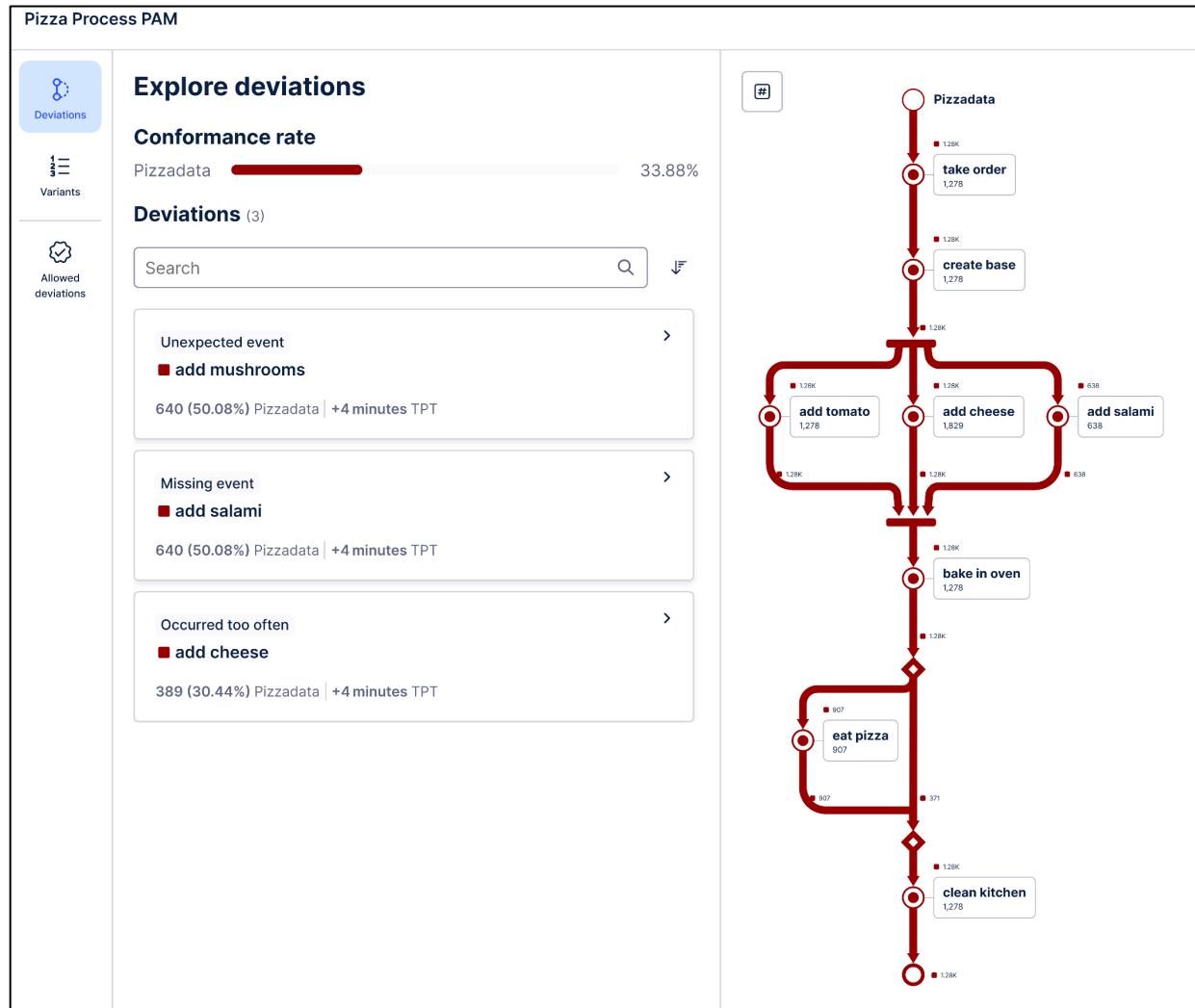
modeled behavior



Variant detail

Event sequence	Deviations	Time delta
take order		0
create base		8 minutes
add tomato		1 hours
add cheese		21 seconds
add mushrooms	! Occurred unexpectedly	15 seconds
add cheese	C Occurred too often	26 seconds
add cheese	C Occurred too often	38 seconds
add salami	✗ Missing event	-
bake in oven		2 minutes
eat pizza		7 minutes
clean kitchen		8 minutes

Notoriously difficult problem: Requires state-of-the-art techniques



- Alignments are the “gold standard” in conformance checking.
- Requires solving an optimization problem for each case.
- Also needed for performance analysis.
- Made scalable using state-of-the-art techniques.

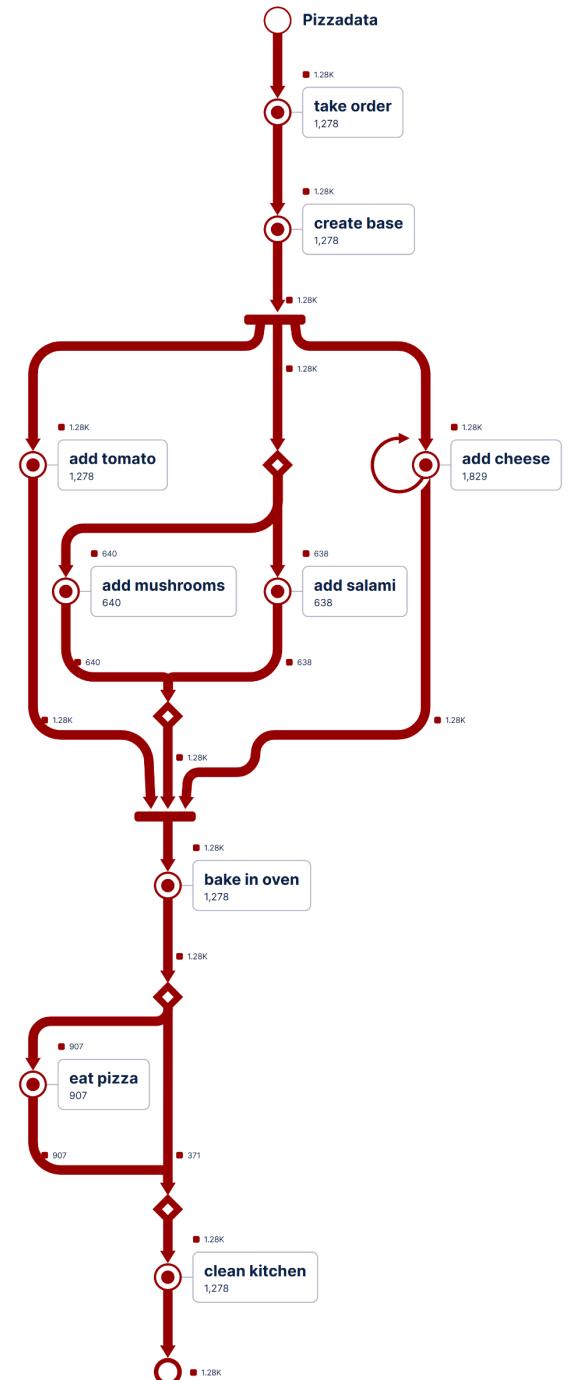
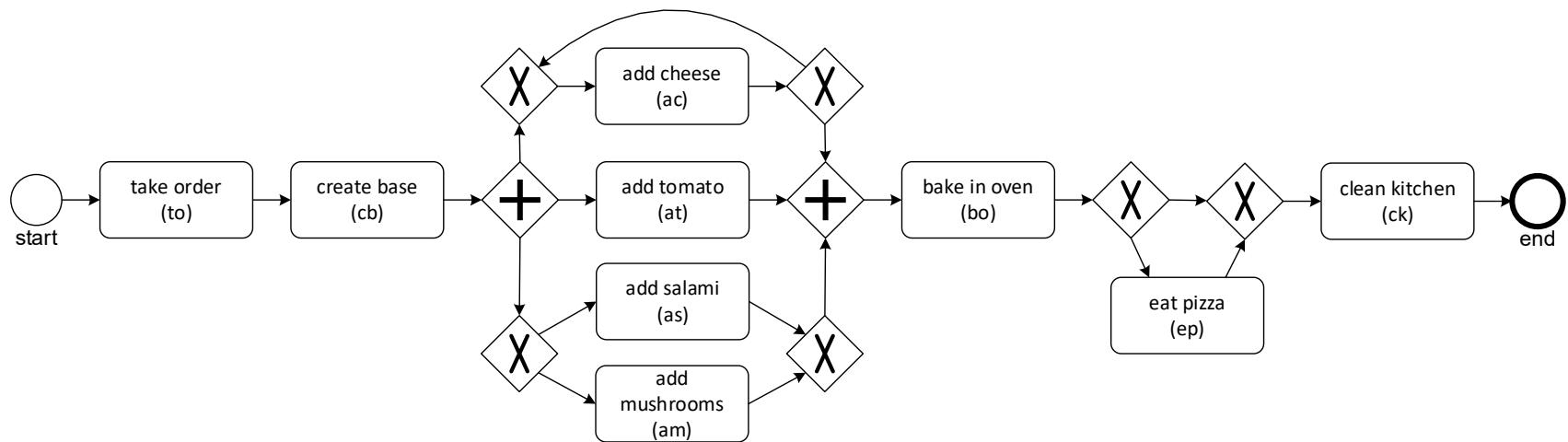
Real world Spaghetti is colored

Object-Centric Process Mining



- Variability
- Intra-object concurrency
- Inter-object concurrency

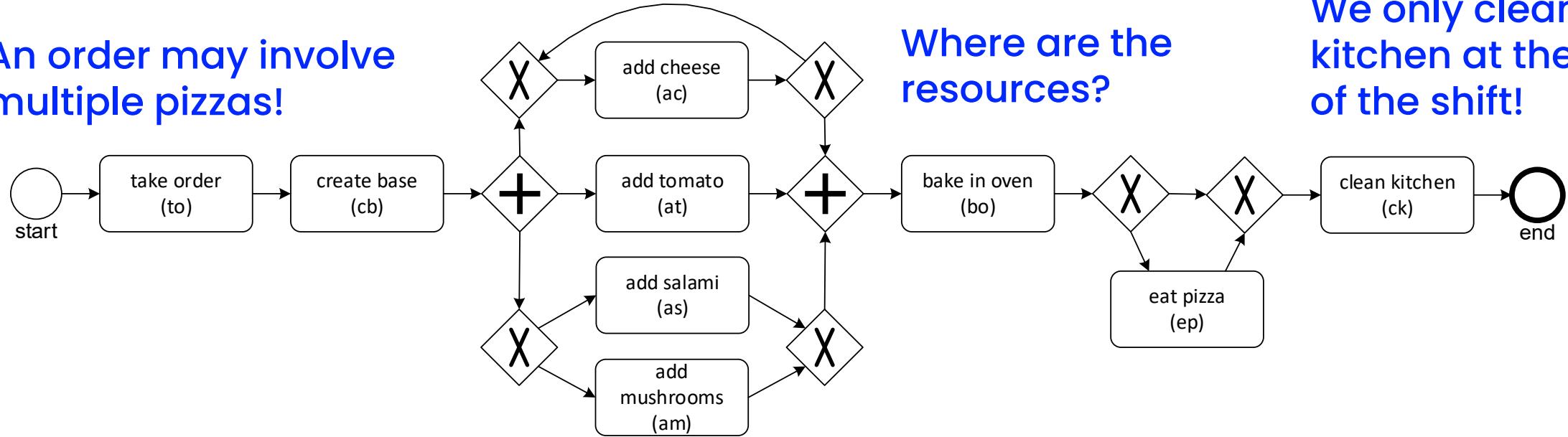
Taking a step back.



The model correctly describes the case-centric event data used as input, but what would the actual process look like?

Taking a step back.

An order may involve multiple pizzas!



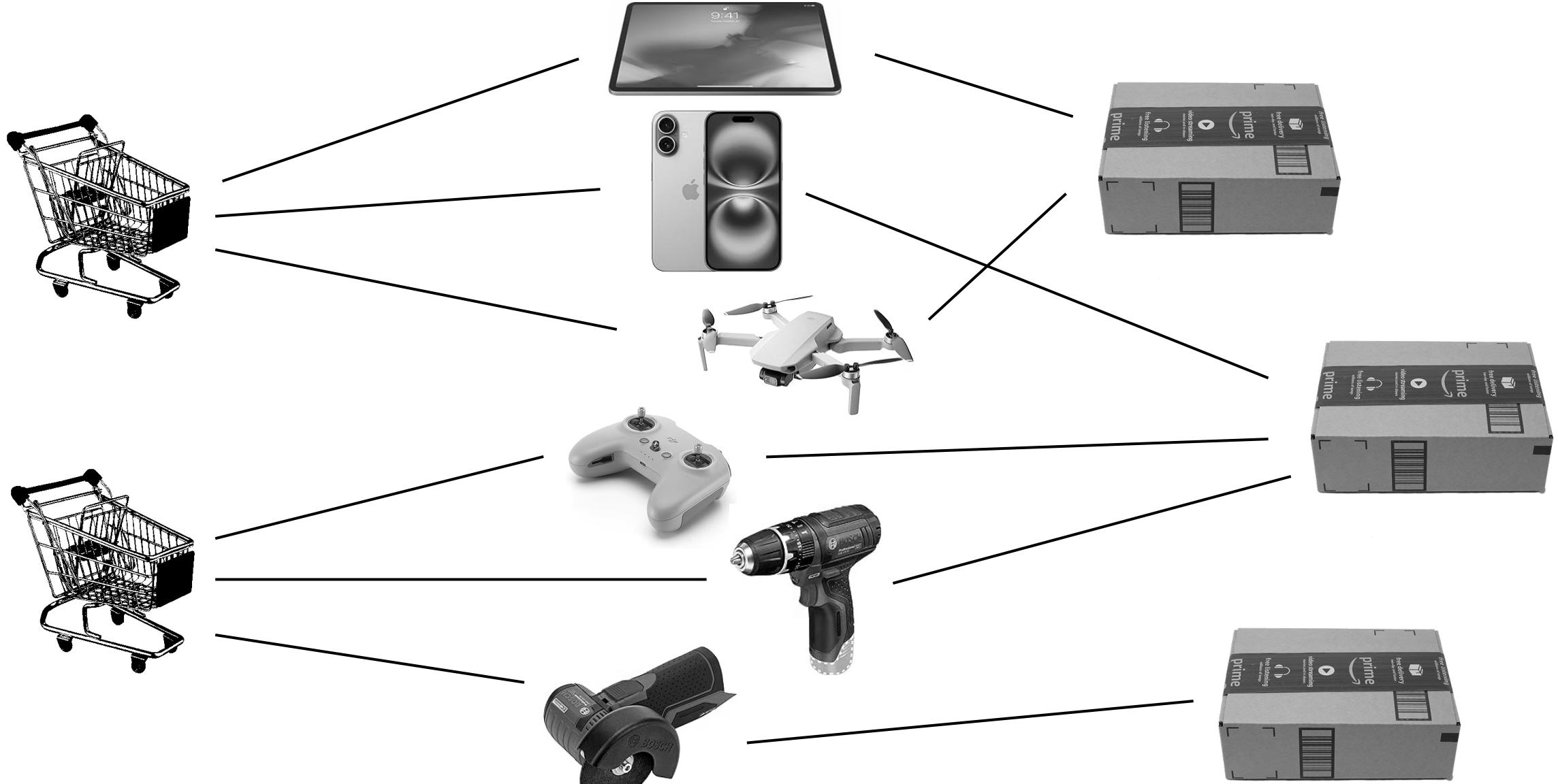
Where are the resources?

We only clean the kitchen at the end of the shift!

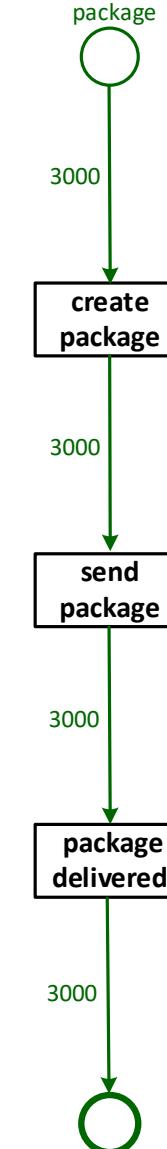
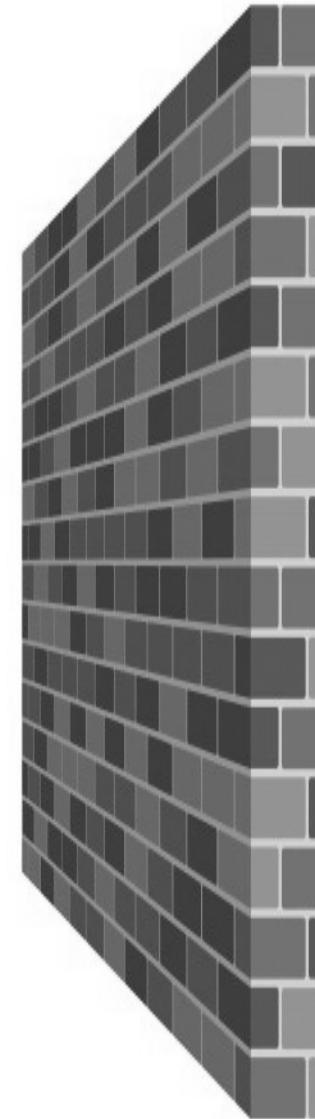
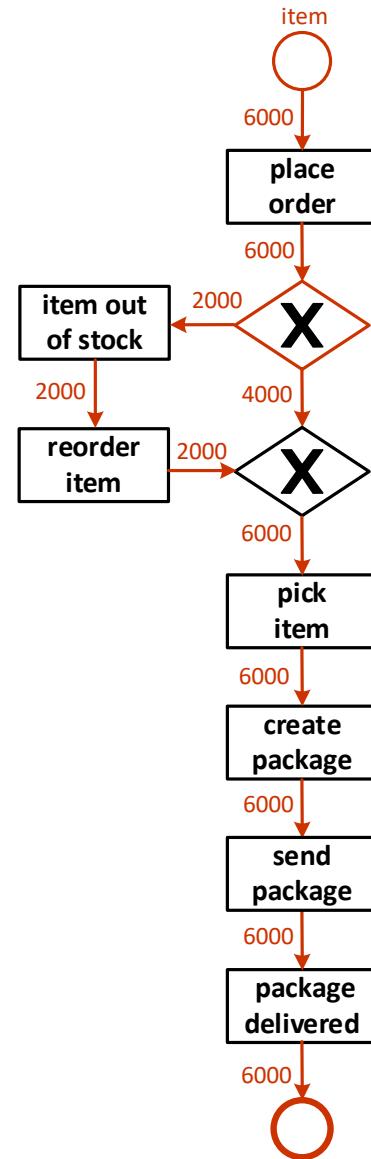
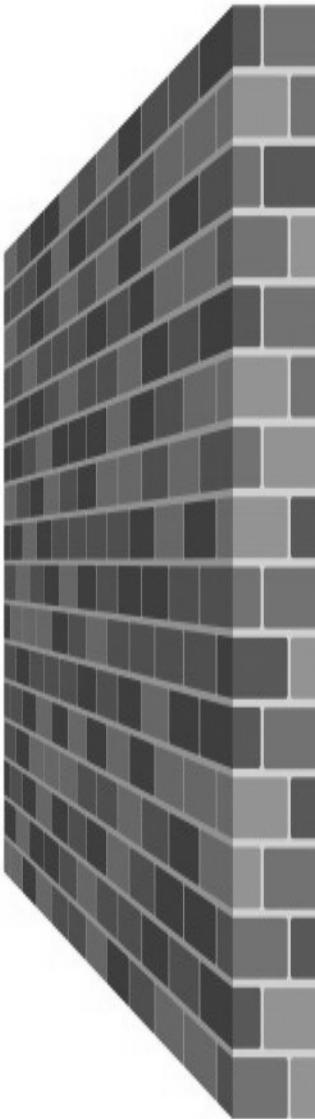
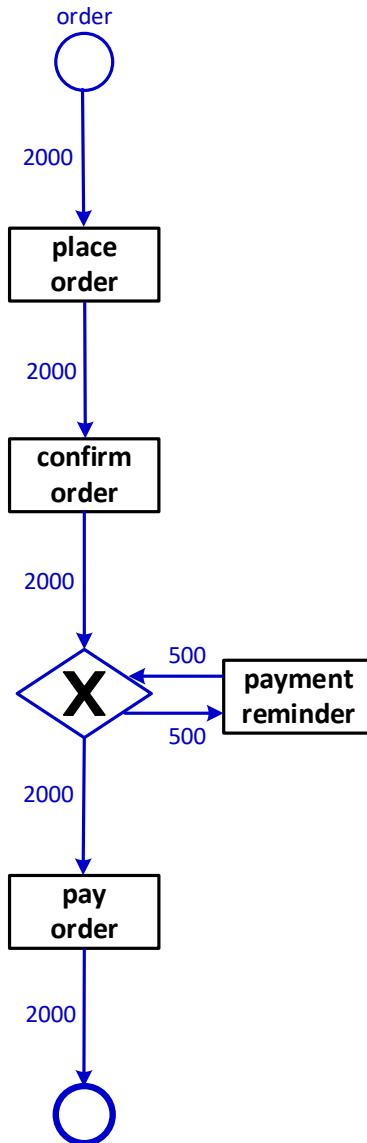
We need to buy the ingredients before!

Shortages influence the process.

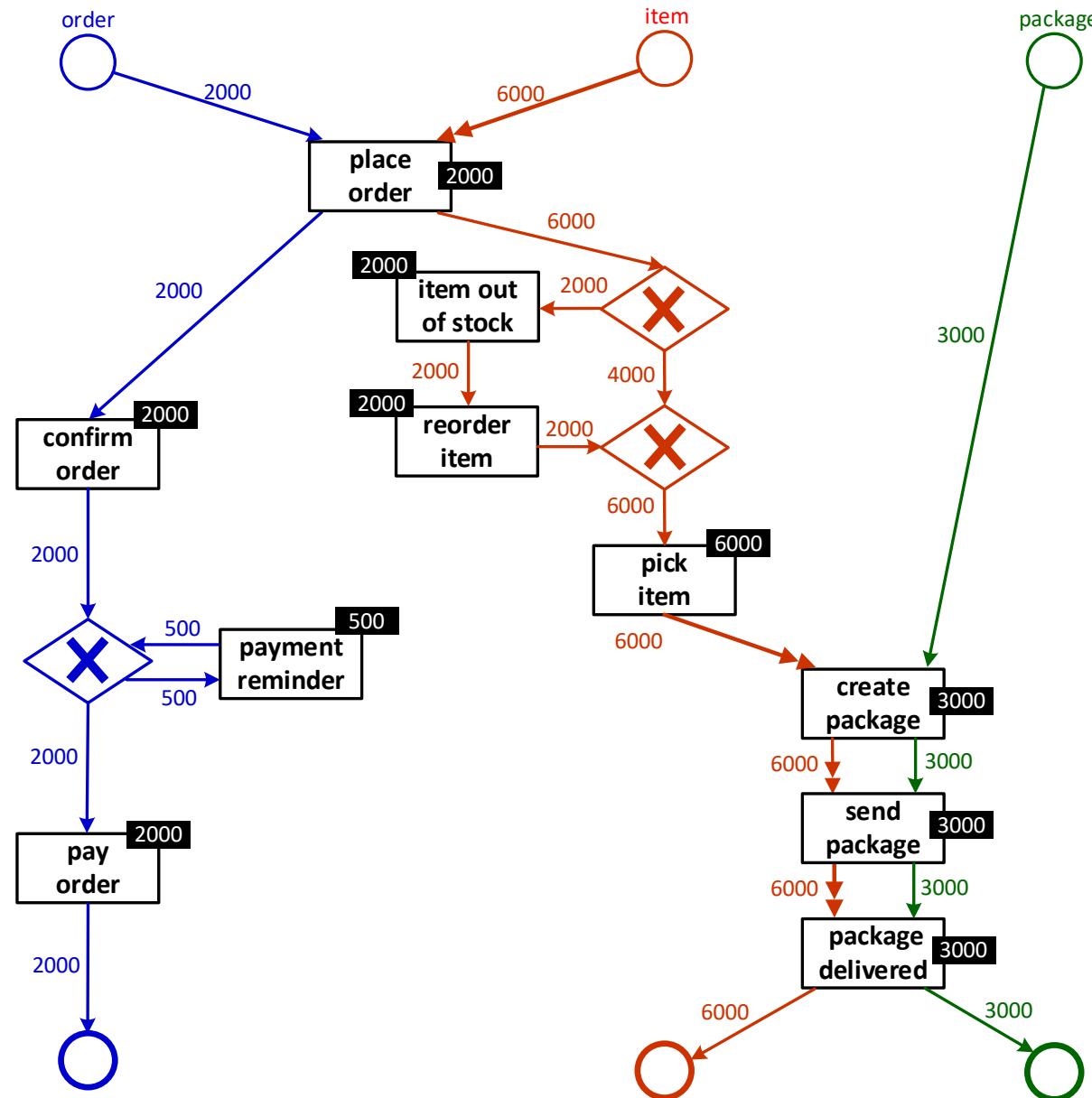
Minimal example with three types of objects: orders, items, and packages



We cannot see the process by looking at disconnected object types



Discovered Object-Centric Process Model



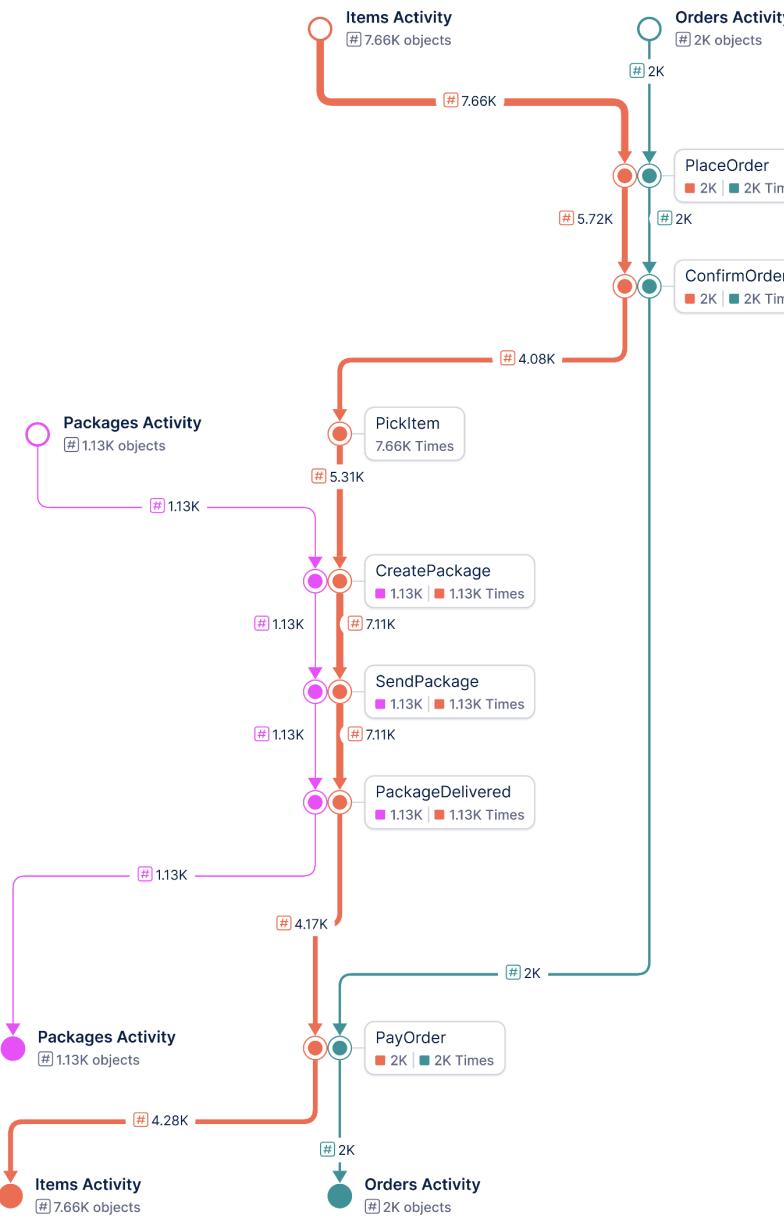
Order Management View

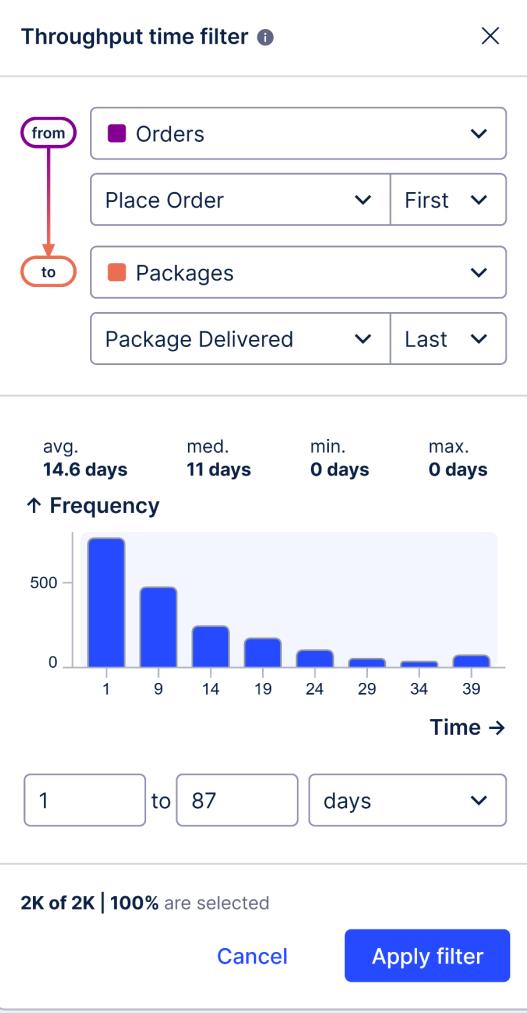
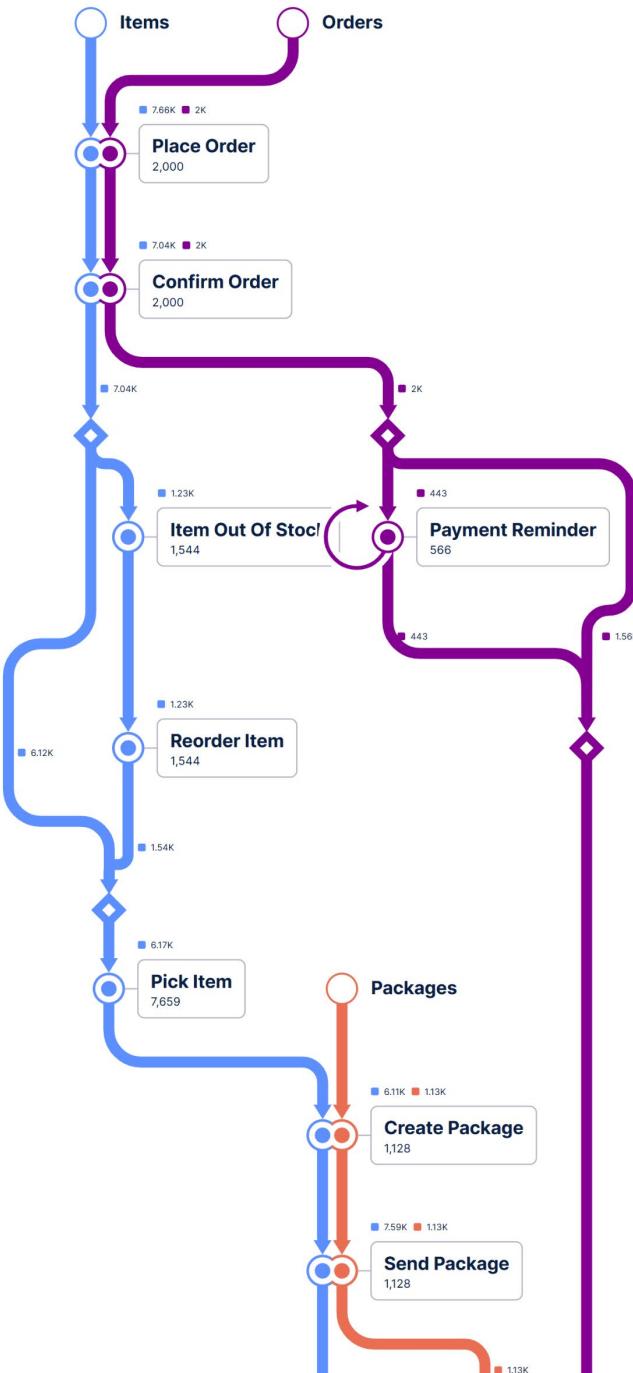


Events 7 of 11

Process Explorer

(based on a more realistic event data)



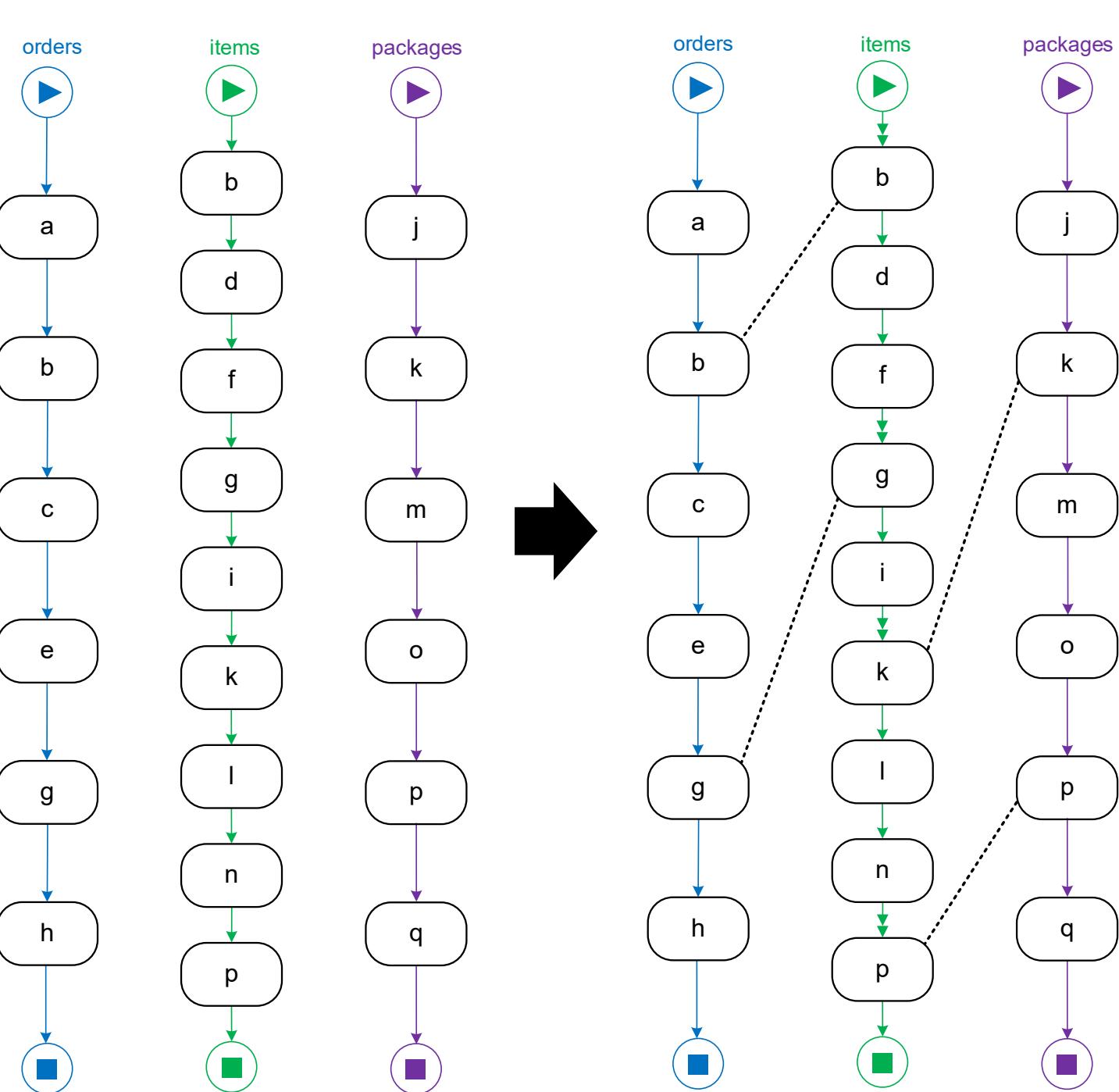
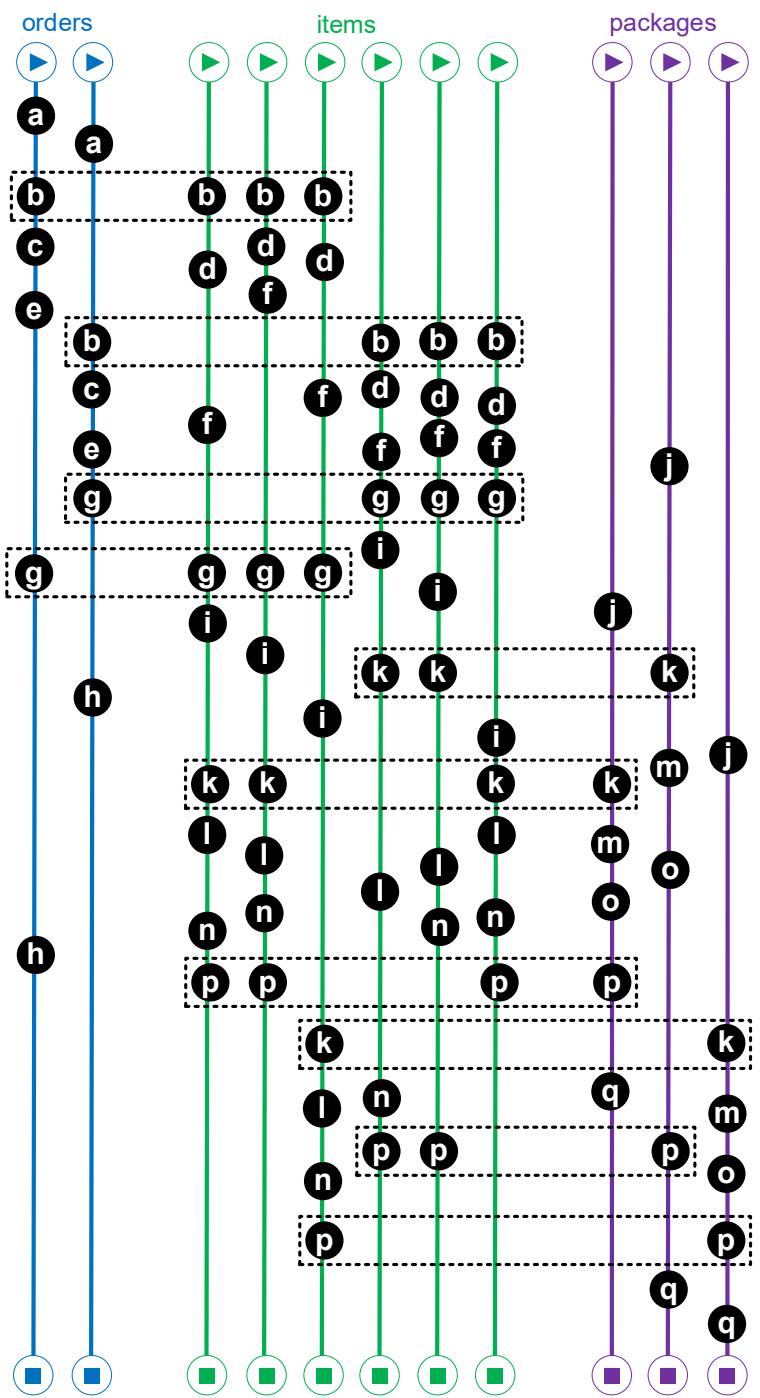


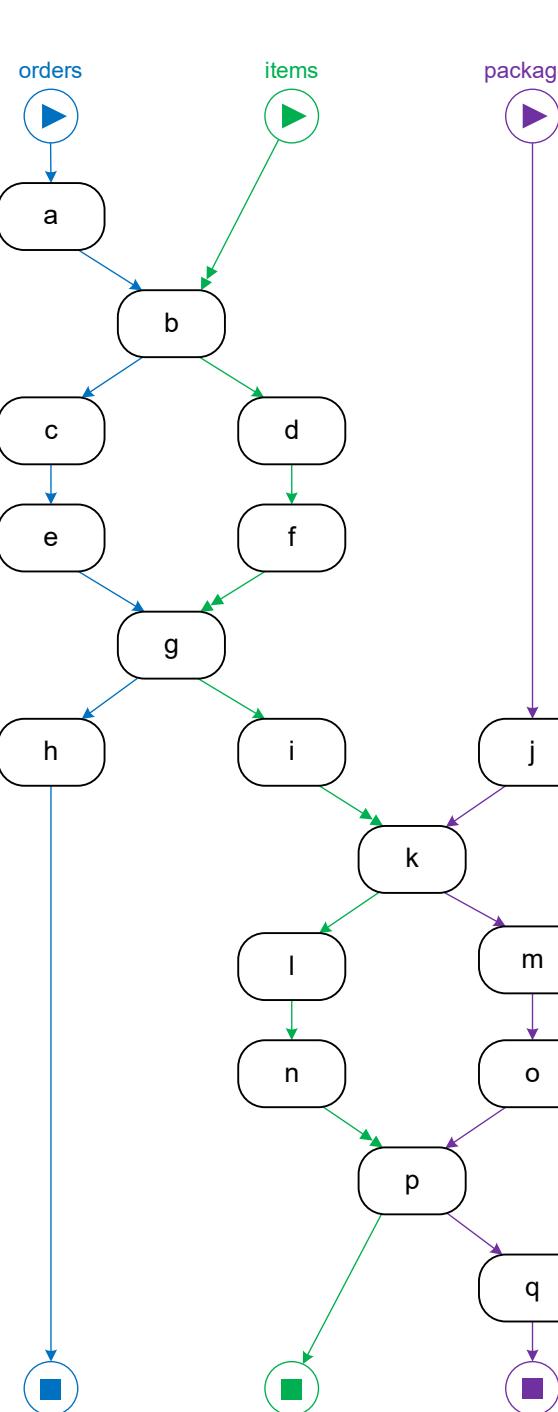
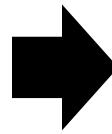
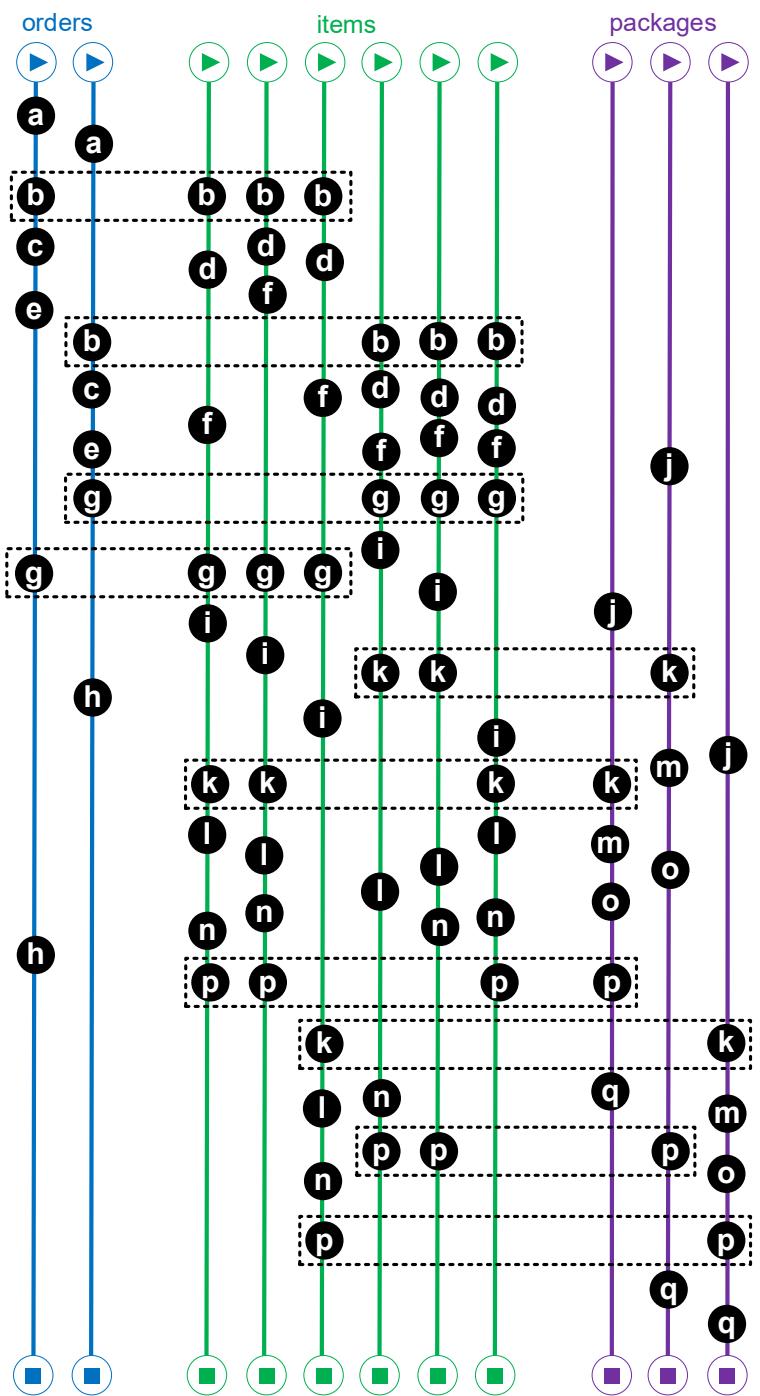
Process Adherence Manager

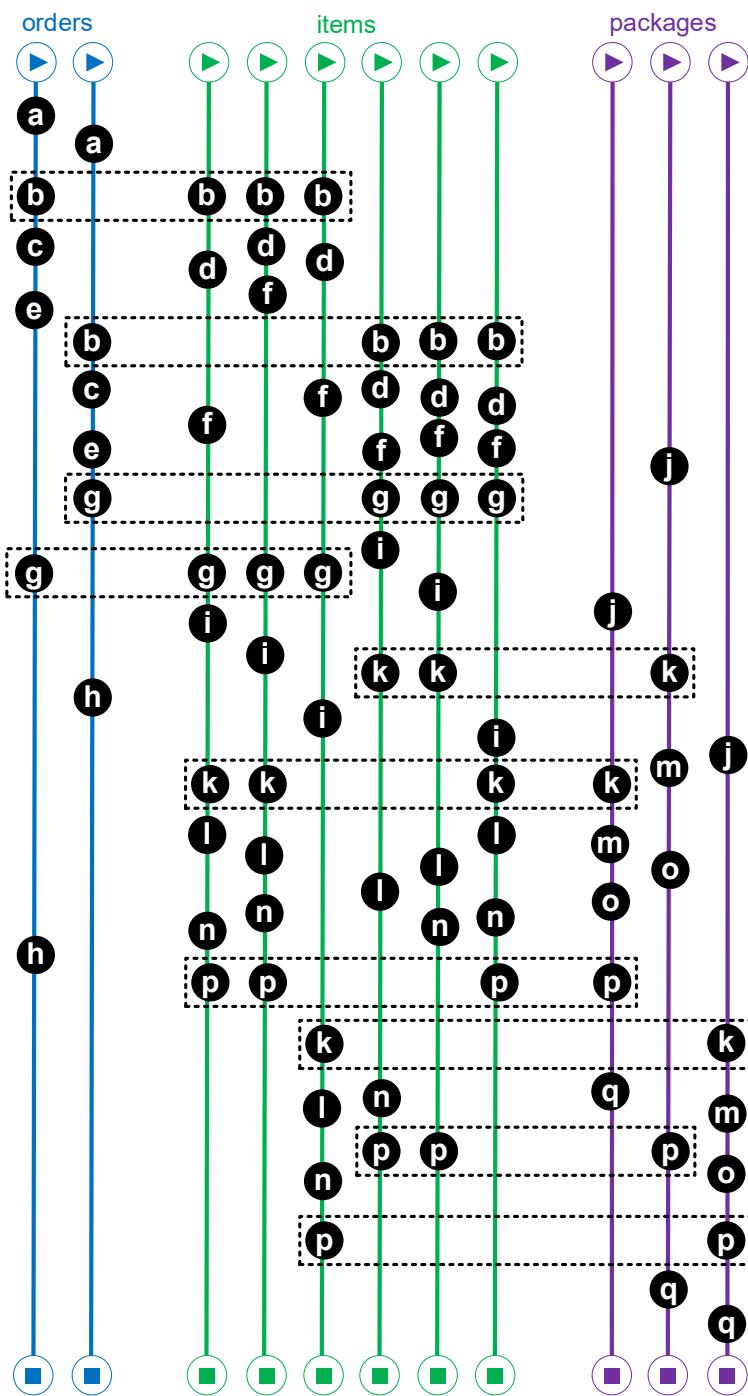
If it gets too complicated, you are probably doing something wrong ...

Drop your case-centric bias!

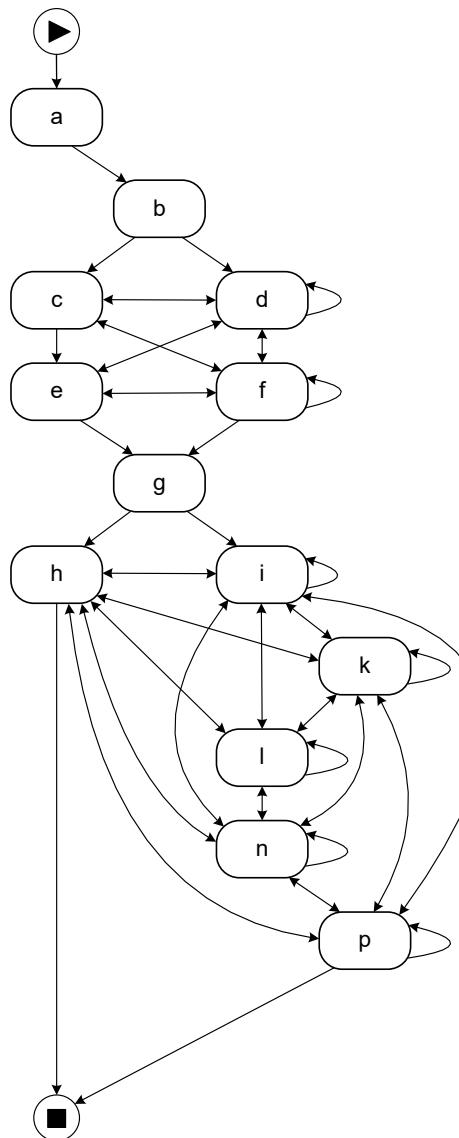
Exhibit #1



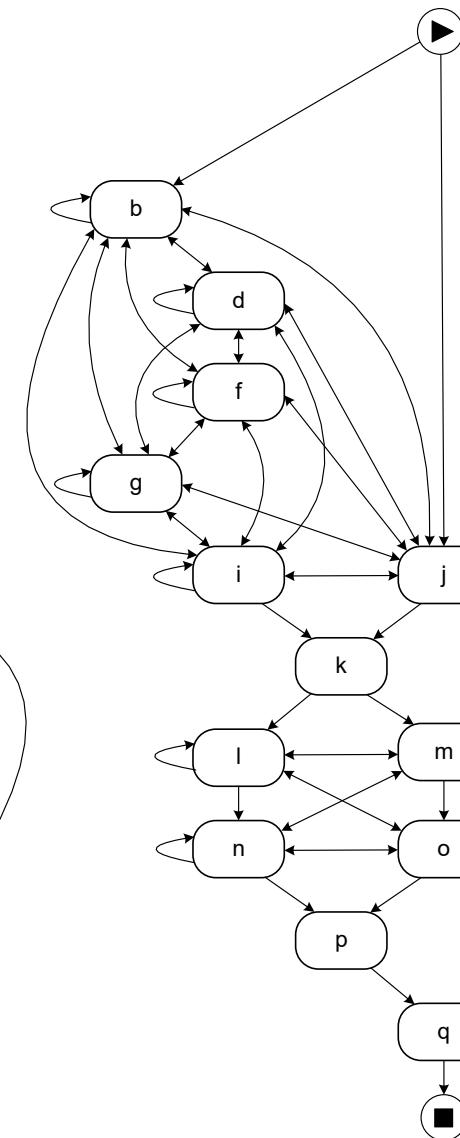




orders+items



packages+items



items+orders+packages

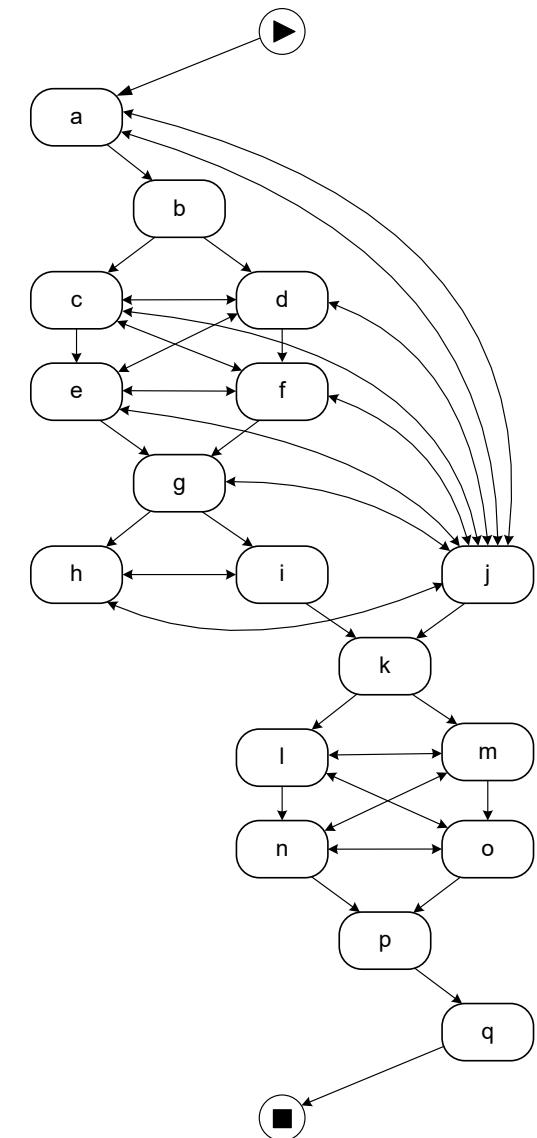
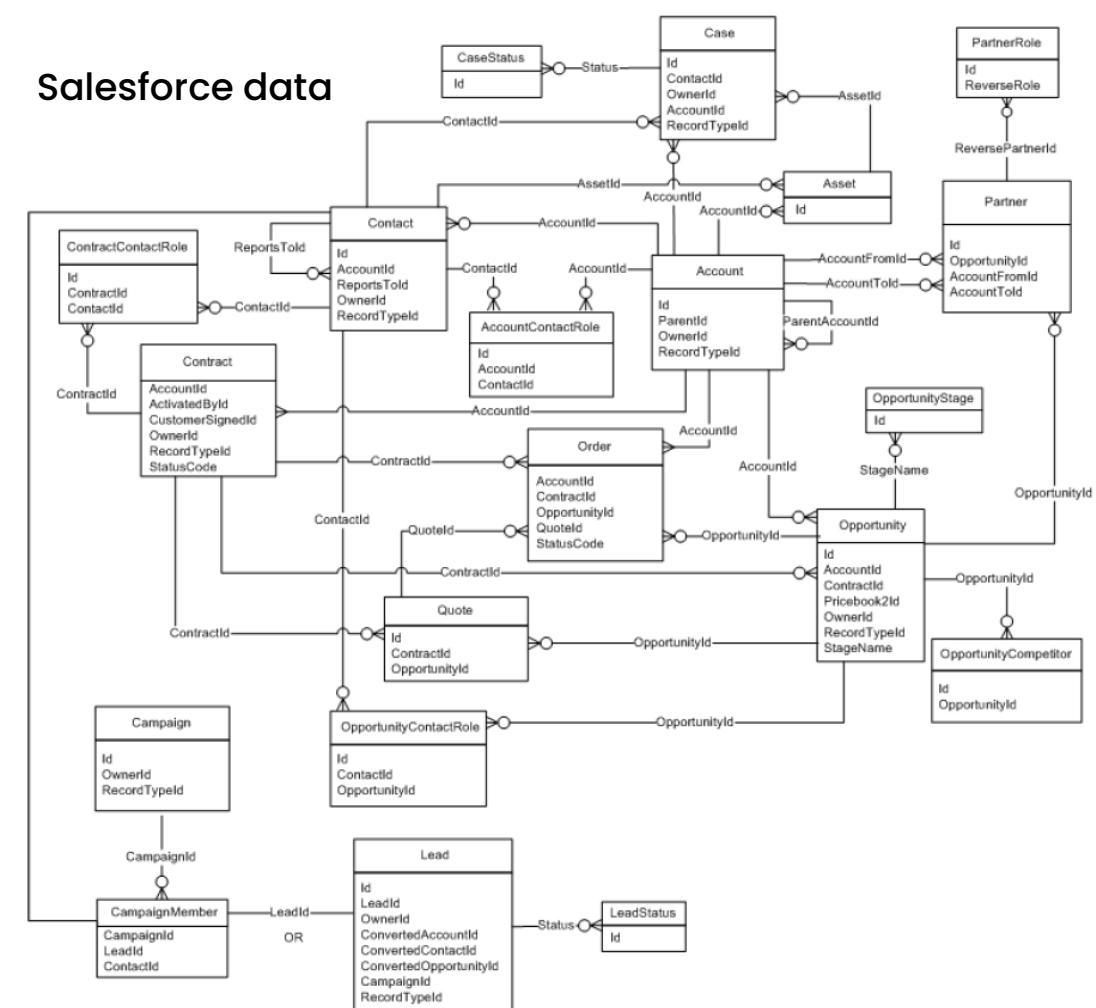


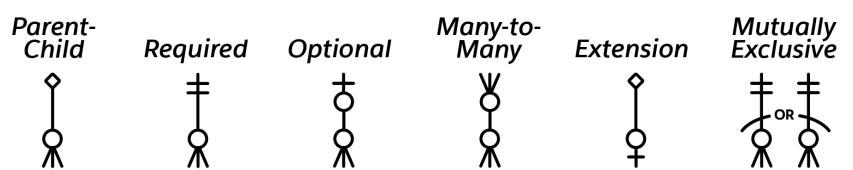
Exhibit #2



Salesforce data



Rarely one-to-one



Main benefits of using Object-Centric Process Mining

01

Avoid repeatedly going back to your source systems

- Offers a single system-agnostic source of truth
- Saves time and helps to capture real-live events and objects

02

Avoid distortions due to the single-case assumption

- Squeezing reality into simple event logs creates distortions
- This includes the unintentional replication of events (convergence) and loss of causal relations (divergence)

03

See and understand the interactions between different object types

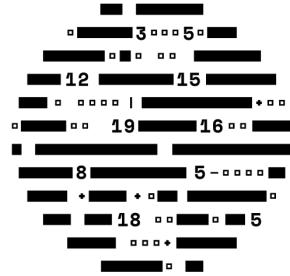
- Problems live at the intersections of processes and organizational entities
- E.g. low On-Time-In-Full (OTIF) scores may be caused by sales, production, procurement, logistics, etc.

To conclude

Process Mining Demystified: How Does it Really Work?

The Celonis logo, featuring the word "celonis" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter "o" is stylized with a circular outline and a wavy line through it, resembling a process flow or a signal.

Process Discovery: Inductive Miner
Conformance Checking: Alignments
Object-Centric Process Mining



Celosphere 25

Thank you

prof.dr.ir. Wil van der Aalst
www.celonis.com/celosphere