# Cocon: A Type Theory for Defining Logics and Proofs

Brigitte Pientka

McGill University Montreal, Canada



What are good high-level proof languages that make it easier to mechanize metatheory? What are good high-level proof languages that make it easier to mechanize metatheory?







On paper:

- Challenging to keep track of all the details
- Easy to skip over details
- Difficult to understand interaction between different features
- Difficulties increase with size

In a proof assistant:

- A lot of overhead in building basic infrastructure
- May get lost in the technical, low-level details
- Time consuming
- Experience, experience, experience

# Mechanizing Normalization for STLC

"To those that doubted de Bruijn. I wished to prove them wrong, or discover why they were right. Now, after some years and many hundred hours of labor. I can say with some authority: they were right. De Bruijn indices are foolishly difficult for this kind of proof. [...] The full proof runs to 3500 lines, although that relies on a further library of 1900 lines of basic facts about lists and sets. [...] the cost of de Bruijn is partly reflected in the painful 1600 lines that are used to prove facts about "shifting" and "substitution"." Ezra Cooper (PhD Student)



https://github.com/ezrakilty/sn-stlc-de-bruijn-coq

# Mechanizing Normalization for STLC



https://github.com/ezrakilty/sn-stlc-de-bruijn-coq

### Abstraction, Abstraction, Abstraction

"The motivation behind the work in very-high-level languages is to ease the programming task by providing the programmer with a language containing primitives or abstractions suitable to his problem area. The programmer is then able to spend his effort in the right place; he concentrates on solving his problem, and the resulting program will be more reliable as a result. Clearly, this is a worthwhile goal." B. Liskov [1974]



# Abstraction, Abstraction, Abstraction



"To know your future you must know your past." – G. Santayana

#### Back in the 80s...

# 1987 • *R. Harper, F. Honsell, G. Plotkin:* A Framework for Defining Logics, LICS'87

# 1988 • *F. Pfenning and C. Elliott*: Higher-Order Abstract Syntax, PLDI'88

- LF = Dependently Typed Lambda Calculus (λ<sup>Π</sup>) serves as a Meta-Language for representing formal systems
- Higher-order Abstract Syntax (HOAS) : Uniformly model binding structures in Object Language with (intensional) functions in LF

### Representing Types and Terms in LF – In a Nutshell

Types  $A, B ::= nat | A \Rightarrow B$ 

Terms  $M ::= x \mid \text{lam } x:A.M \mid \text{app } M N$ 

#### Representing Types and Terms in LF – In a Nutshell

Types  $A, B ::= nat | A \Rightarrow B$  Terms M ::= x | lam x: A.M | app M N

#### **LF** Representation

obj:	type.	tm: type.		
nat:	obj.	lam: obj $\rightarrow$ (tm $\rightarrow$ tm) $\rightarrow$ tm.		
arr:	${\tt obj}   ightarrow  {\tt obj}   ightarrow  {\tt obj}  .$	$\texttt{app: tm} \to \texttt{tm} \to \texttt{tm}.$		

On Paper (Object Language)	In LF (Meta Language)				
lam x:nat.x	lam nat $\lambda x.x$				
lam x:nat. (lam x:nat $\Rightarrow$ nat.x)	lam nat $\lambda x.(lam (arr nat nat) \lambda x.x)$				
lam x:nat. (lam $f$ :nat $\Rightarrow$ nat.app $f x$ )	lam nat $\lambda x.$ (lam (arr nat nat) $\lambda f.$ app f x)				

#### Higher-order Abstract Syntax (HOAS):

- Uniformly model bindings with (intensional) functions in LF
- Inherit  $\alpha$ -renaming and single substitutions

Types A, B ::=nat  $| A \Rightarrow B |$  $\alpha | \forall \alpha. A$  Terms  $M ::= x \mid \text{lam } x:A.M \mid \text{app } M N \mid$ let x = M in  $N \mid \text{tlam } \alpha.M \mid \dots$ 

# Uniformly Model Binding Structures using LF Functions

Types 
$$A, B ::=$$
nat  $| A \Rightarrow B |$   
 $\alpha | \forall \alpha. A$ 

Terms  $M ::= x \mid \text{lam } x:A.M \mid \text{app } M N \mid$ let x = M in  $N \mid \text{tlam } \alpha.M \mid \dots$ 

#### **LF** Representation

obj:	type.
nat:	obj.
arr:	$ ext{obj}  o  ext{obj}  o  ext{obj}.$
all:	(obj $ ightarrow$ obj) $ ightarrow$ obj.

tm: type.  
lam: 
$$obj \rightarrow (tm \rightarrow tm) \rightarrow tm$$
.  
app:  $tm \rightarrow tm \rightarrow tm$ .  
let:  $tm \rightarrow (tm \rightarrow tm) \rightarrow tm$ .  
tlam:  $(obj \rightarrow tm) \rightarrow tm$ .

On Paper (Object Language)	In LF (Meta Language)
tlam $\alpha$ . (lam x: $\alpha$ .x)	tlam $\lambda$ a.(lam a $\lambda$ x.x)
$\forall \alpha. \forall \beta. \alpha \Rightarrow \beta$	all $\lambda$ a.all $\lambda$ b.arr a b

### Uniformly Model Binding Structures using LF Functions



# Sounds cool... can I do this in OCaml or Agda?

#### An Attempt in OCaml

#### **OCaml**

```
1 type tm = Lam of (tm -> tm)
2 let apply = function (Lam f) -> f
3 let omega = Lam (function x -> apply x x)
```

What happens, when we try to evaluate apply omega omega?

### An Attempt in OCaml

#### **OCaml**

```
1 type tm = Lam of (tm -> tm)
2 let apply = function (Lam f) -> f
3 let omega = Lam (function x -> apply x x)
```

What happens, when we try to evaluate apply omega omega?

It will loop.

# An Attempt in OCaml and Agda

#### **OCaml**

```
1 type tm = Lam of (tm -> tm)
2 let apply = function (Lam f) -> f
3 let omega = Lam (function x -> apply x x)
```

What happens, when we try to evaluate apply omega omega?

#### It will loop.



Violates positivity restriction

# An Attempt in OCaml and Agda



#### Violates positivity restriction

OK... so, how do we write recursive programs over with HOAS trees? We clearly want pattern matching, since a HOAS tree is a data structure.

#### An Attempt to Compute the Size of a Term

	size	(lam $\lambda {\tt x}.$ lam	$\lambda \mathtt{f}$ .	app f x)	
$\implies$	size	(lam	$\lambda \texttt{f}$ .	app f x)	+ 1
$\implies$	size		(	(app <mark>f x</mark> )	+ 1 + 1
$\implies$		size <mark>f</mark>	+	size <mark>x</mark>	+1+1+1
$\Longrightarrow$		0	+	0	+1 + 1 + 1

"the whole HOAS approach by its very nature disallows a feature that we regard of key practical importance: the ability to manipulate names of bound variables explicitly in computation and proof. " [Pitts, Gabbay'97] Back in 2008...

# In LF (Meta Lang.)

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{lam } \lambda \mathbf{x} . \\ \text{lam } \lambda \mathbf{f} . \\ \text{app f } \mathbf{x} \end{array} \\ \text{lam } \lambda \mathbf{x} . \\ \text{lam } \lambda \mathbf{f} . \\ \hline \begin{array}{c} \text{app f } \mathbf{x} \end{array} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{cccc} \Psi \Vdash & \mathsf{M} & \vdots & \mathsf{A} \\ \uparrow & \uparrow & \uparrow \\ \mathsf{LF \ Context} & \mathsf{LF \ Term} & \mathsf{LF \ Type} \end{array}$$

# In LF (Meta Lang.)

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{lam } \lambda x. \text{ lam } \lambda f. \text{app } f x \\ \text{lam } \lambda x. \text{ lam } \lambda f. \text{ app } f x \end{array}$$

x:tm 
$$\Vdash$$
 lam  $\lambda$ f.app f x : tm  
↑ ↑ ↑  
LF Context LF Term LF Type

In LF (Meta Lang.) lam  $\lambda x$ . lam  $\lambda f$ . app f x lam  $\lambda x$ . lam  $\lambda f$ . app f x

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \texttt{x:tm} & \Vdash \texttt{lam} \ \lambda \texttt{f}. \fbox{\texttt{model}} & \vdots \ \texttt{tm} \\ & \uparrow & \uparrow \\ \texttt{LF Context} & \texttt{LF Term} & \texttt{LF Type} \end{array}$$

In LF (Meta Lang.)Contextual Typelam  $\lambda x.$  lam  $\lambda f.$  app f x $[x:tm \vdash tm]$ lam  $\lambda x.$  lam  $\lambda f.$  app f x $[x:tm, f:tm \vdash tm]$ 

$$\begin{array}{cccc} x:tm & \Vdash & lam \ \lambda f. \hline & & \vdots & tm \\ \uparrow & & \uparrow & \uparrow \\ LF \ Context & LF \ Term & LF \ Type \end{array}$$
What is the type of  $\boxed{\ constant} & ? - Its \ type \ is \ [x:tm, f:tm \vdash tm] \end{array}$ 



- h is a contextual variable
- It has the contextual type  $[x:tm, f:tm \vdash tm]$
- It can be instantiated with a contextual term  $[x, f \vdash app f x]$
- Contextual types (⊢) reify LF typing derivations (⊢)



- h is a contextual variable
- It has the contextual type  $[x:tm, f:tm \vdash tm]$
- It can be instantiated with a contextual term  $[x, f \vdash app f x]$
- Contextual types (⊢) reify LF typing derivations (⊢)

WAIT! ... whatever we plug in for h may contain free LF variables?



- h is a contextual variable
- It has the contextual type  $[y:tm, g:tm \vdash tm]$
- It can be instantiated with a contextual term  $[y,g\vdash app g y]$
- Contextual types (⊢) reify LF typing derivations (⊢)

**WAIT!** ... whatever we plug in for h may contain free LF variables? and we want it to be stable under  $\alpha$ -renaming ...



- h is a contextual variable
- It has the contextual type  $[y:tm, g:tm \vdash tm]$
- It can be instantiated with a contextual term  $[y,g\vdash app g y]$
- Contextual types (⊢) reify LF typing derivations (⊢)

**WAIT!** ... whatever we plug in for h may contain free LF variables? and we want it to be stable under  $\alpha$ -renaming ...

Solution: Contextual variables are associated with LF substitutions

# Contextual Type Theory<sup>1</sup> (CTT) [Nanevski, Pfenning, Pientka'08]



<sup>1</sup>Footnote for nerds: CTT is a generalization of modal S4.

#### The Tip of the Iceberg: Beluga [POPL'08, POPL'12, ICFP'16,...]



# Revisiting the program size

	size	Γ⊢	lam $\lambda \mathbf{x}$	.lam $\lambda f$ .	app f	x
$\implies$	size		[x ⊢	$\texttt{lam} \ \lambda \texttt{f}.$	app f	x] + 1
$\implies$	size			[x,f ⊢	app <mark>f</mark>	x] + 1 + 1
$\implies$	size	[x,f ⊢	<b>f</b> ] +	size 🔤	x,f⊢ :	$\boxed{\texttt{x}} + 1 + 1 + 1$
$\implies$		0	+	C	)	+1 + 1 + 1

#### Revisiting the program size

	size	m $\lambda$ x.la	m $\lambda$ f. app f	x	
$\implies$	size	[x ⊢ la	m $\lambda$ f. app f	$ \mathbf{x}  + 1$	
$\implies$	size	Γ	x,f ⊢ app f	$ \mathbf{x}  + 1 + 1$	
$\implies$	size $[x, f \vdash f]$	+ :	size [ <mark>x,f</mark> ⊢	$\mathbf{x}\rceil + 1 + 1 + 1$	
$\implies$	0	+	0	+1 + 1 + 1	
Corres	ponding program:				
siz	e : $\Pi\gamma$ :ctx. $\lceil\gamma$	⊢ tm] —	→ int		
siz	$e \left[ \gamma \vdash \# p \right] = 0$				
size $[\gamma \vdash lam \lambda x. M] = size [\gamma, x \vdash M] + 1$					
siz	$\mathbf{e} \left[ \gamma \vdash \mathbf{app M N} \right]$	= size	$\lceil \gamma \vdash M \rceil + s$	ize $\lceil \gamma \vdash N \rceil + 1$	

- Abstract over context  $\gamma$  and introduce special variable pattern  $\mbox{\tt \#p}$
- Higher-order pattern matching [Miller'91]

# What Programs / Proofs Can We Write?

#### • Certified programs:

Type-preserving closure conversion and hoisting [CPP'13] Joint work with O. Savary-Bélanger, S. Monnier

#### • Inductive proofs:

Logical relations proofs (Kripke-style) [MSCS'18] Joint work with A. Cave

POPLMark Reloaded: Strong Normalization for STLC using Kripke-style Logical Relations Joint work with A. Abel, G. Allais, A. Hameer, A. Momigliano, S. Schäfer, K. Stark

#### • Coinductive proofs:

Bisimulation proof using Howe's Method [MSCS'18] Joint work with D. Thibodeau and A. Momigliano Sounds cool... but how can we get this into type theories (like Agda)?

#### The Essence of the Problem



The strict separation between contextual LF and computations means we cannot embed computation terms directly.



#### The Essence of the Problem and its Solution?



#### What if we did?

Rule for Embedding Computations  $\Gamma \Vdash t : [\Phi \vdash A] \quad \Gamma : \Psi \Vdash \sigma : \Phi$ 





# A Type Theory for Defining Logics and Proofs [LICS'19] Joint work with A. Abel, F. Ferreira, D. Thibodeau, R. Zucchini

- Hierarchy of universes and type-level computation
- Writing proofs about functions (such as size)



see our LICS'19 paper and the extended report for the technical development of the normalization proof.

#### STLC

tm: obj  $\rightarrow$  type tUnit: tm one. tPair: tm A  $\rightarrow$  tm B  $\rightarrow$  tm (cross A B). tFst : tm (cross A B)  $\rightarrow$  tm A. tSnd : tm (cross A B)  $\rightarrow$  tm B. tLam : (tm A  $\rightarrow$  tm B)  $\rightarrow$  tm (arrow A B). tApp : tm (arrow A B)  $\rightarrow$  tm A  $\rightarrow$  tm B.

#### Cartesian Closed Categories (CCC)



A concrete example: itm  $[ \vdash \text{tLam } \lambda x. \text{ tLam } \lambda f. \text{tApp } f x]$  $\implies^* \text{itm } [x:\text{tm } A,f:\text{tm } (\text{arrow } A B) \vdash \text{tApp } f x]$ 



A concrete example: itm  $[ \vdash \text{tLam } \lambda x. \text{ tLam } \lambda f. \text{tApp } f x]$  $\implies^* \text{itm } [x:\text{tm } A,f:\text{tm } (\text{arrow } A B) \vdash \text{tApp } f x]$ 

Translate an LF context  $\gamma$  to cross product:  $ictx:\Pi\gamma:ctx.[\vdash obj]$ Example: ictx (x<sub>1</sub>:tm A<sub>1</sub>, x<sub>2</sub>:tm A<sub>2</sub>)  $\Longrightarrow$  (cross (cross one A<sub>1</sub>) A<sub>2</sub>)



A concrete example: itm  $[ \vdash \text{tLam } \lambda x. \text{ tLam } \lambda f. \text{tApp } f x]$  $\implies^* \text{itm } [x:\text{tm } A,f:\text{tm } (\text{arrow } A B) \vdash \text{tApp } f x]$ 

Translate an LF context  $\gamma$  to cross product:  $ictx:\Pi\gamma:ctx.[\vdash obj]$ Example: ictx (x<sub>1</sub>:tm A<sub>1</sub>, x<sub>2</sub>:tm A<sub>2</sub>)  $\Longrightarrow$  (cross (cross one A<sub>1</sub>) A<sub>2</sub>)

Translate STLC to CCC  $itm:\Pi\gamma:ctx.\PiA:[\vdash obj].[\gamma\vdash tm [A]] \rightarrow [\vdash mor [ictx \gamma] [A]]$   $ictx:\Pi\gamma:ctx.[\vdash obj]$ 

 $\begin{array}{ll} \mathbf{fn} & \cdot & = \left[ \ \vdash \ \mathbf{one} \right] \\ | \ \gamma, \ \mathbf{x:tm} \ |\mathbf{A}| & = \left[ \ \vdash \ \mathbf{cross} \ | \ \mathbf{ictx} \ \gamma | \ |\mathbf{A}| \right]; \end{array}$ 

Example: ictx ( $x_1$ :tm  $A_1$ ,  $x_2$ :tm  $A_2$ )  $\implies$  (cross (cross one  $A_1$ )  $A_2$ )

 $ictx:\Pi\gamma:ctx.[\vdash obj]$ 

fn  $\cdot$  =  $[ \vdash \text{ one} ]$ |  $\gamma$ , x:tm (|A| with  $\cdot$ ) =  $[ \vdash \text{ cross } |\text{ictx } \gamma| |A|];$ 

Example: ictx ( $x_1$ :tm  $A_1$ ,  $x_2$ :tm  $A_2$ )  $\implies$  (cross (cross one  $A_1$ )  $A_2$ )

#### $\texttt{itm}: \Pi\gamma:\texttt{ctx}.\Pi\texttt{A}: [\vdash \texttt{obj}].[\gamma \vdash \texttt{tm} \ [\texttt{A}]] \rightarrow [\vdash \texttt{mor} \ [\texttt{ictx} \ \gamma] \ [\texttt{A}]]$

 $\texttt{itm}: \Pi\gamma: \texttt{ctx}. \Pi \texttt{A}: \lceil \vdash \texttt{obj} \rceil, \lceil \gamma \vdash \texttt{tm} ( [\texttt{A}] \texttt{ with} \cdot ) \rceil \rightarrow \lceil \vdash \texttt{mor} \lfloor \texttt{ictx} \gamma \rfloor \lfloor \texttt{A} \rfloor \rceil$ 

 $\texttt{itm}: \Pi\gamma:\texttt{ctx}.\Pi\texttt{A}: \lceil \vdash \texttt{obj} \rceil, \lceil \gamma \vdash \texttt{tm} ( [\texttt{A}] \texttt{ with} \cdot ) \rceil \rightarrow \lceil \vdash \texttt{mor} \lfloor \texttt{ictx} \gamma \rfloor \lfloor \texttt{A} \rfloor \rceil$ 

Idea: Write a recursive function pattern matching on m

Given a morphism between A and B, we build a term of type B with one variable of type A.

```
\begin{split} \texttt{imorph:} \Pi \ \texttt{A:} \big[ \ \vdash \ \texttt{obj} \big]. \Pi \ \texttt{B:} \big[ \ \vdash \ \texttt{obj} \big]. \\ & \left[ \ \vdash \ \texttt{mor} \ \lfloor\texttt{A} \rfloor \ \lfloor\texttt{B} \rfloor \big] \Rightarrow \big[\texttt{x:tm} \ \lfloor\texttt{A} \rfloor \ \vdash \ \texttt{tm} \ \lfloor\texttt{B} \rfloor \big] \end{split}
```

Given a morphism between A and B, we build a term of type B with one variable of type A.

```
\begin{split} \texttt{imorph:} \Pi \ \texttt{A:} \big[ \ \vdash \ \texttt{obj} \big] . \Pi \ \texttt{B:} \big[ \ \vdash \ \texttt{obj} \big] . \\ & \left[ \ \vdash \ \texttt{mor} \ \lfloor \texttt{A} \rfloor \ \lfloor \texttt{B} \rfloor \right] \Rightarrow \big[\texttt{x:tm} \ \lfloor \texttt{A} \rfloor \ \vdash \ \texttt{tm} \ (\lfloor \texttt{B} \rfloor \ \texttt{with} \cdot) \big] \end{split}
```

Given a morphism between A and B, we build a term of type B with one variable of type A.

```
\begin{split} \text{imorph:} \Pi \ A: \left[ \ \vdash \ \text{obj} \right]. \Pi \ B: \left[ \ \vdash \ \text{obj} \right]. \\ \left[ \ \vdash \ \text{mor} \ \left[ A \right] \ \left[ B \right] \right] \Rightarrow \left[ x: \text{tm} \ \left[ A \right] \vdash \ \text{tm} \ \left( \left[ B \right] \ \text{with} \cdot \right) \right] \\ \\ \hline \mathbf{fn} \ \left[ \ \vdash \ \text{id} \right] &= \left[ x: \text{tm} \ \vdash \ x \right] \\ \left[ \ \vdash \ \text{drop} \right] &= \left[ x: \text{tm} \ \vdash \ \text{tUnit} \right] \\ \left[ \ \vdash \ \text{fst} \right] &= \left[ x: \text{tm} \ \vdash \ \text{tSt} \ x \right] \\ \left[ \ \vdash \ \text{fst} \right] &= \left[ x: \text{tm} \ \vdash \ \text{tFst} \ x \right] \\ \left[ \ \vdash \ \text{snd} \right] &= \left[ x: \text{tm} \ \vdash \ \text{tSnd} \ x \right] \\ \left[ \ \vdash \ \text{pair} \ \left[ f \right] \ \left[ g \right] \right] &= \left[ x: \text{tm} \ \vdash \ \text{tPair} \ \left[ \text{imorph} \ f \right] \ \left[ \text{imorph} \ g \right] \right] \\ \left[ \ \vdash \ \text{cur} \ f f \right] &= \left[ x: \text{tm} \ \vdash \ \text{tLam} \ \lambda y. \left( \left[ \text{imorph} \ f \right] \ \text{with} \ \text{tPair} \ x \ y \right) \right] \\ \left[ \ \vdash \ f f \ 0 \ \left[ g \right] \right] &= \left[ x: \text{tm} \ \vdash \ \text{tLam} \ \lambda y. \left( \left[ \text{imorph} \ f \right] \ \text{with} \ \text{tPair} \ x \ y \right) \right] \\ \left[ \ \vdash \ \ \text{tmorph} \ g \right] &= \left[ x: \text{tm} \ \vdash \ \text{tApp} \ (\text{tFst} \ x) \ (\text{tSnd} \ x) \right]; \end{split}
```

# Bridging the Gap between LF and Martin Löf Type Theory



# What we've already done - What's Next

# Theory

- $\checkmark$  Normalization
- ✓ Decidable equality
- Categorical semantics
- . . .

#### Implementation and Case Studies

- Build an extension to Coq/Agda/Beluga
- Case studies:
  - Equivalence of STLC and CCC
  - Homotopy Type Theory (see relations to Crisp Type Theory)
- Meta-Programming (Tactics)
- Compilation

• ...

# Towards More Civilized High-Level Proof Languages

- **Lesson 1**: Contextual types provide a type-theoretic framework to think about syntax trees within a context of assumptions.
- Lesson 2: Contextual types allow us to mediate and mix between strong (computation-level) function types and weak (HOAS) function types.
- **Lesson 3**: Existing proof technique of defining a model for well-typed terms based on their semantic type scales.

**Taken Together**: This is a first step towards bridging the long-standing gap between LF and Martin Löf type theories.