Fundamentals of Substructural Type Systems

Frank Pfenning

Computer Science Department Carnegie Mellon University

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Apologies for impressionistic style and lack of references Some of the more recent ideas joint with Sophia Roshal, Junyoung Jang, Brigitte Pientka

Why Substructural Types?

- Memory management (Rust)
- Race-free concurrency (Oxidized OCaml)
- Session types for communication (many libraries)
- Effect handlers (Koka, Effekt)
- Efficient program reasoning (Verus, linear Dafny)
- Implicit computational complexity
- Quantum computing
- Sharpening general benefits of static type systems
 - Modularity and compositionality
 - Static error detection
 - Verifiable documentation

- Substructural types are part of a larger family of modal types
- Comonadic types
 - Quotation and metaprogramming
 - Phase distinction
- Monadic types
 - Explicating or isolating effects
 - Advanced program structure

- Too difficult to understand or use effectively
- Infectious in programs
- Too many ad hoc designs
- Insufficient benefits
- The PL community is making progress on all of these!

- Focus on fundamental principles of substructural type systems
- Avoid specializing to particular applications
- A step towards mitigating their shortcomings?



- Linear types (what are they?)
- Fundamental properties and algorithms
 - Statics (type checking)
 - Dynamics (computation)
- Other substructural types (wait, there are more?)
- Integrating type systems (how?)
- Modal types (where do they fit?)
- Principal modes

Positive Linear Types

Negative types: observe behavior of values by interaction

 $A \multimap B$ (linear) functions $A \otimes B$ (lazy) pairs

Positive types: directly observe structure of values

$$A \otimes B$$
(eager) pairs (v, w) 1 unit value() $\oplus_{\ell \in L} \{\ell : A_\ell\}$ injections $k(v)$

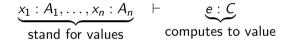
• Rules for judgment v : A (closed values = observables)

$$\frac{v:A \quad w:B}{(v,w):A\otimes B} \qquad \qquad \frac{(k \in L) \quad v:A_k}{():1}$$

Examples of Types and Values



- Expressions e, organized by type
- Typing judgment (linear natural deduction)



- Dynamics
 - Properties of substructural types should be evident
 - Otherwise as high level as possible
 - Use global environment

Introduction rule

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash e_1 : A \quad \Delta \vdash e_2 : B}{\Gamma ; \Delta \vdash (e_1, e_2) : A \otimes B} \otimes I$$

• Context join Γ ; Δ (often written as Γ, Δ)

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\Gamma, x : A) & ; & \Delta & = & (\Gamma ; \Delta), x : A & (x \notin \Delta) \\ \Gamma & ; & (\Delta, x : A) & = & (\Gamma ; \Delta), x : A & (x \notin \Gamma) \\ (\cdot) & ; & (\cdot) & = & (\cdot) \\ \end{array}$$
error otherwise

Bottom-up: distribute variables between premises

Elimination rule

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash e : A \otimes B \quad \Delta, x : A, y : B \vdash e' : C}{\Gamma ; \Delta \vdash \mathsf{match} \ e \ ((x, y) \Rightarrow e') : C} \otimes E$$

Substitution-based reduction obscures linearity

match
$$(v, w)$$
 $((x, y) \Rightarrow e'(x, y)) \longrightarrow e'(v, w)$

Substructural Operational Semantics (SSOS)

- Configuration of semantic objects
 - eval e (evaluate e)
 - retn v (return value v)
 - susp f (wait on value to be returned)
 - bind x v (bind x to v)
- Reduction matches the left-hand side of a rule and replaces it by the right-hand side. For example:

$$\mathsf{bind} \ x \ v \cdot \mathsf{eval} \ x \quad \longrightarrow \quad \mathsf{retn} \ v$$

- Binding of x to v is deallocated!
- Configuration is ordered (for sequential computation), except for bindings
- Theorem: eval e →* retn v iff e evaluates to v (e.g., under substitution-based semantics)
- Significant: no bindings in the final configuration

. .

eval (match
$$e((x, y) \Rightarrow e')$$
)
 \longrightarrow eval $e \cdot \text{susp}$ (match _ $((x, y) \Rightarrow e')$)
retn $(v, w) \cdot \text{susp}$ (match _ $((x, y) \Rightarrow e')$)
 \longrightarrow bind $x v \cdot \text{bind } y w \cdot \text{eval } e'$ $(x, y \text{ "fresh"})$

...

Injections

Statics

$$\frac{(k \in L) \quad \Gamma \vdash e : A_k}{\Gamma \vdash k(e) : \oplus_{\ell \in L} \{\ell : A_\ell\}} \oplus I$$
$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash e : \oplus_{\ell \in L} \{\ell : A_\ell\} \quad (\Delta, x_\ell : A_\ell \vdash e_\ell : C) \quad (\forall \ell \in L)}{\Gamma ; \Delta \vdash \text{match } e \ \{\ell(x_\ell) \Rightarrow e_\ell\}_{\ell \in L} : C} \oplus E$$

Dynamics (selected)

$$egin{aligned} ext{eval} & (extsf{match} \ e \ (\ell(x_\ell) \Rightarrow e_\ell)_{\ell \in L}) \ & \longrightarrow ext{eval} \ e \cdot ext{susp} \ (extsf{match} \ _ \ (\ell(x_\ell) \Rightarrow e_\ell)_{\ell \in L}) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{array}{l} \operatorname{retn} k(v) \cdot \operatorname{susp} \left(\operatorname{\textbf{match}}_{-} (\ell(x_{\ell}) \Rightarrow e_{\ell})_{\ell \in L} \right) \\ \longrightarrow \operatorname{bind} x_{\ell} v \cdot \operatorname{\textbf{eval}} e_{k} \quad (x_{\ell} \text{ "fresh"}) \end{array}$$

Intuitionistic Linear Logic

• Coheres with (intuitionistic) linear logic

$$\overline{A \vdash A} \text{ hyp}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash A \quad \Delta \vdash B}{\Gamma; \ \Delta \vdash A \otimes B} \otimes I \qquad \frac{\Gamma \vdash A \otimes B \quad \Delta, A, B \vdash C}{\Gamma; \ \Delta \vdash C} \otimes E$$

$$\overline{-+1} \quad 1I \qquad \frac{\Gamma \vdash 1 \quad \Delta \vdash C}{\Gamma; \ \Delta \vdash C} \quad 1E$$

$$\frac{(k \in L) \quad \Gamma \vdash A_k}{\Gamma \vdash \oplus_{\ell \in L} \{\ell : A_\ell\}} \oplus I \qquad \frac{\Gamma \vdash \oplus_{\ell \in L} \{\ell : A_\ell\} \quad (\Delta, A_\ell \vdash C) \quad (\forall \ell \in L)}{\Gamma; \ \Delta \vdash C} \oplus E$$

- But: types may be recursive, though contractive
- Exponential !A to be discussed later

Top-Level Recursive Definitions

- Support mutually recursive top-level definitions
 decl F (x₁ : A₁) ... (x_n : A_n) : C
 defn F x₁ ... x_n = e
 e ::= ... | F e₁ ... e_n
- (Partially) internalize the typing judgment
- Technically: Linear Contextual Modal Type Theory

$$\begin{array}{l} F :: (\Delta \vdash C) \\ F = (\overline{x}. e) \\ e ::= \dots \mid F[\eta] \quad (\text{for a substitution } \eta : \Delta) \end{array}$$

- F closed, so may be reused even in a linear type theory
- First-order linear programs = positive types + metavariables
- Examples

- No garbage (= bind semantic objects) [Girard & Lafont'87]
 - eval $e \longrightarrow^*$ retn v (or diverges)
 - Proof is not difficult
- Drop and copy can be defined for any positive type
- Weakening and contraction are logically admissible
- Mostly, sharing is better than copying



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Typechecking

- Two principal ideas
- Bidirectional typing

$$\Gamma \vdash e : A \quad \rightsquigarrow \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{cc} \Gamma \vdash e \Leftarrow A & e \text{ checks against } A \\ \Gamma \vdash e \Rightarrow A & e \text{ synthesizes } A \end{array} \right.$$

Γ ⊢ e ⇐ A assumes Γ, e, and A are given
 Γ ⊢ e ⇒ A assume Γ, e are given, A synthesized

Context generation ("additive resource management")

$$\Gamma \vdash e \Leftrightarrow A \quad \rightsquigarrow \quad \Gamma \vdash e \Leftrightarrow A / \Delta$$

 $\mathsf{In}\;\Gamma\vdash e\Leftrightarrow A\;/\;\Delta$

- Γ contains all variables lexically in scope
- \blacksquare Δ picks out the variables actually used in e
- $\Gamma \vdash e : A / \Delta$ implies $\Gamma \supseteq \Delta$ and $\Delta \vdash e : A$

Some Interesting Rules

$$\frac{x: A \in \Gamma}{\Gamma \vdash x \Rightarrow A / (x:A)} \text{ var } \qquad \frac{\Gamma \vdash x \Rightarrow A' / \Delta \quad A' = A}{\Gamma \vdash x \Leftarrow A / \Delta} \Rightarrow \not \leftarrow \\ \frac{\Gamma \vdash e_1 \Leftarrow A / \Delta_1 \quad \Gamma \vdash e_2 \Leftarrow B / \Delta_2}{\Gamma \vdash (e_1, e_2) \Leftarrow A \otimes B / \Delta_1; \Delta_2} \otimes I \\ \frac{\Gamma \vdash e \Rightarrow A \otimes B / \Delta_1 \quad \Gamma, x: A, y: B \vdash e' \Leftarrow C / \Delta_2}{\Gamma \vdash \text{match } e ((x, y) \Rightarrow e') \Leftarrow C / \Delta_1; (\Delta_2 \setminus x \setminus y)} \otimes E$$

- $\Delta \setminus x$ checks that x is in Δ and removes it
- Ensure variables are actually used

$$(\Delta, x : A) \setminus x = \Delta$$

 $(\Delta, y : B) \setminus x = (\Delta \setminus x), y : B \quad (x \neq y)$
 $(\cdot) \setminus x = \text{error}$

$$\frac{(k \in L) \quad \Gamma \vdash e \Leftarrow A_k \ / \ \Delta}{\Gamma \vdash k(e) \Leftarrow \bigoplus_{\ell \in L} \{\ell : A_\ell\} \ / \ \Delta} \ \oplus I$$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash e \Rightarrow \oplus_{\ell \in L} \{\ell : A_{\ell}\} \ / \ \Delta \quad (\Gamma, x_{\ell} : A_{\ell} \vdash e_{\ell} \leftarrow C \ / \ \Delta_{\ell} \ \Delta_{\ell} \setminus x_{\ell} = \Delta') \quad (\forall \ell \in L)}{\Gamma \vdash \mathsf{match} \ e \ \{\ell(x_{\ell}) \Rightarrow e_{\ell}\}_{\ell \in L} \leftarrow C \ / \ \Delta; \ \Delta'} \oplus E$$

- Δ' must be the same in all branches
- $L \neq \{\}$ is significant in $\oplus E$ so Δ' is defined

- Positive linear types + metavariables
- Variables must be used exactly once
- Algorithmic type-checking
 - Bidirectional typing
 - Context generation
 - Join Δ_1 ; Δ_2 and removal $\Delta \setminus x$ operations
- Evaluation with global environment
 - Bindings are deallocated when read
 - No "garbage" (semantic objects bind *x v*)
 - Related version with global heap has related property



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- Rust is based on affine types
- Variables can be used at most once
- Ideas carry over surprisingly easily
- The expressions of the language do not change at all!

Join remains the same

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\Gamma, x : A) & ; & \Delta & = & (\Gamma ; \Delta), x : A & (x \notin \Delta) \\ \Gamma & ; & (\Delta, x : A) & = & (\Gamma ; \Delta), x : A & (x \notin \Gamma) \\ (\cdot) & ; & (\cdot) & = & (\cdot) \\ \end{array}$$
error otherwise

Remove allows variables not to be used

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\Delta, x : A) \setminus x &=& \Delta \\ (\Delta, y : B) \setminus x &=& (\Delta \setminus x), y : B & (x \neq y) \\ (\cdot) \setminus x &=& (\cdot) & \text{no longer error} \end{array}$$

Least Upper Bounds for Branches

Variables may be used in some branches but not others

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash e \Rightarrow \oplus_{\ell \in L} \{\ell : A_\ell\} \ / \ \Delta \quad (\Gamma, x_\ell : A_\ell \vdash e_\ell \leftarrow C \ / \ \Delta_\ell \ \Delta_\ell \setminus x_\ell = \Delta_\ell') \quad (\forall \ell \in L)}{\Gamma \vdash \mathsf{match} \ e \ \{\ell(x_\ell) \Rightarrow e_\ell\}_{\ell \in L} \leftarrow C \ / \ \Delta \ ; \ (\bigsqcup_{\ell \in L} \Delta_\ell')} \oplus E$$

Variable is used if used in at least one branch

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\Gamma, x : A) & \sqcup & (\Delta, x : A) & = & (\Gamma \sqcup \Delta), x : A \\ (\Gamma, x : A) & \sqcup & \Delta & = & (\Gamma \sqcup \Delta), x : A & (x \notin \Delta) \\ & & & & & \\ \Gamma & \sqcup & (\Delta, x : A) & = & (\Gamma \sqcup \Delta), x : A & (x \notin \Gamma) \\ & & & & (\cdot) & & = & (\cdot) \end{array}$$

error otherwise

Examples

- All bindings are introduced as semantic objects [bind x v] which need not be used
- Variable rule

 $[\mathsf{bind} \ x \ v], \mathsf{eval} \ x \quad \longrightarrow \quad \mathsf{retn} \ v$

Theorem

eval $e \longrightarrow^* [\overline{\text{bind } x_i \ w_i}] \cdot \text{retn } v \text{ iff } e \text{ evaluates to } v$

- We can map affine to linear types and explicitly deallocate
 - At the end of scopes where variables are unused $(\Delta \setminus x)$
 - At the end of branches where variables are unused $(\bigsqcup_{\ell \in L} \Delta_{\ell})$

- The Haskell compiler performs strictness analysis (for efficiency)
- Annoying warnings about unused variables in ML
- A variable is strict if it is used at least once
 - Dynamically, when the program runs
- Again, ideas carry over surprisingly easily
- The language of expressions does not change at all

Join and Remove Revisited

Only need to reconsider join, remove, least upper boundJoin changes:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\Gamma, x : A) & ; & (\Delta, x : A) & = & (\Gamma ; \Delta), x : A & new! \\ (\Gamma, x : A) & ; & \Delta & = & (\Gamma ; \Delta), x : A & (x \notin \Delta) \\ \Gamma & ; & (\Delta, x : A) & = & (\Gamma ; \Delta), x : A & (x \notin \Gamma) \\ (\cdot) & ; & (\cdot) & = & (\cdot) \end{array}$$

Remove reverts: variables must be used

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\Delta, x : A) \setminus x &=& \Delta \\ (\Delta, y : B) \setminus x &=& (\Delta \setminus x), y : B & (x \neq y) \\ (\cdot) \setminus x & & \text{error} \end{array}$$

Least upper bound no longer allows weakening

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\Gamma, x : A) & \sqcup & (\Delta, x : A) & = & (\Gamma \sqcup \Delta), x : A \\ (\Gamma, x : A) & \sqcup & \Delta & & \text{error for } x \notin \Delta \\ & \Gamma & \sqcup & (\Delta, x : A) & & \text{error for } x \notin \Gamma \\ & (\cdot) & \sqcup & (\cdot) & & = & (\cdot) \end{array}$$

Examples



Bindings are introduced as required. For example

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \operatorname{retn} (v,w) \cdot \operatorname{susp} (\operatorname{\textbf{match}}_{-} ((x,y) \Rightarrow e')) \\ \longrightarrow & \operatorname{bind} x \ v \cdot \operatorname{bind} y \ w \cdot \operatorname{\textbf{eval}} e' & (x,y \ \text{``fresh''}) \end{array}$$

Become provisional, once read

bind
$$x v \cdot \text{eval } x \longrightarrow [\text{bind } x v] \cdot \text{retn } x$$

Theorem

eval $e \longrightarrow^* [\overline{\text{bind } x_i w_i}] \cdot \text{retn } v \text{ iff } e \text{ evaluates to } v$

Implies each variable is read at least once



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- Linear logic [Girard'87]
 - Embed by translation $A \rightarrow B \triangleq !A \multimap B$
 - Elegant theoretically, but difficult to work with
- LNL [Benton'94]
 - Linear and nonliner logics combined by adjoint operators
 - We can *natively* program in linear or nonlinear modes
 - And switch between them
- Generalize LNL to a set of related modes
- Adjoint types [Reed'09] [Pruiksma et al.'18] [Jang et al.'24]

- Assume a set of modes and a preorder $n \ge m$ between them
- Each mode has an intrinsic set of structural properties $\sigma(m)$
 - W $\in \sigma(m)$ means weakening (variables need not be used)
 - $C \in \sigma(m)$ means contraction (variable may be reused)
 - Exchange is always assumed (variable order is irrelevant)
- $n \ge m$ implies $\sigma(n) \supseteq \sigma(m)$
 - Necessary so structural rules don't sneak in through the back door

Shifts

- Each type has an intrinsic mode A_m
- Shifts $\uparrow_k^m A_k$ and $\downarrow_m^n A_n$ transition between modes
- Typical example U, A, L with

with

$$\mathsf{U} > \mathsf{A} > \mathsf{L}$$

Syntax defaults back to a more generic notation

Positive types $A_m ::= A_m \times B_m | \mathbf{1} | +_{\ell \in L} \{\ell : A_m^\ell\} | \downarrow_m^m A_n$ Negative types $A_m ::= A_m \to B_m | \otimes_{\ell \in L} \{\ell : A_m^\ell\} | \uparrow_k^m A_k$

- Typing changes subtly, but fundamentally
- Account for $m \ge k$
- Define $\Delta \ge m$ if $n \ge m$ for all $y : B_n$ in Δ
- Independence principle
 - $\Delta \vdash e : A_m$ presupposes $\Delta \ge m$
 - Maintain that for $\Gamma \vdash e \Leftrightarrow A_m \ / \ \Delta$ we have $\Delta \geq m$

- New construct for $\downarrow A$ (positive) and $\uparrow A$ (negative)
- $\downarrow A$ is observable, a "pointer" (address) $\langle v \rangle$

$$\frac{v:A_{n}}{\langle v \rangle: \downarrow_{m}^{n}A_{n}} \downarrow I \qquad \frac{\Gamma \vdash e \Leftarrow A_{n} / \Delta}{\Gamma \vdash \langle e \rangle \Leftarrow \downarrow_{m}^{n}A_{n} / \Delta} \downarrow I$$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash e \Rightarrow \downarrow_{m}^{n}A_{n} / \Delta \quad (m \ge r) \quad \Gamma, x:A_{n} \vdash e' \Leftarrow C_{r} / \Delta'}{\Gamma \vdash \mathsf{match} \ e \ (\langle x \rangle \Rightarrow e') \Leftarrow C_{r} / \Delta \ ; \ (\Delta' \setminus x_{n})} \downarrow E$$

- $\uparrow A$ represents a suspension
 - Expressions suspend **susp** *e* and force *e*.force

In each elimination, we need to enforce independence

For example

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash e_{1} \Leftarrow A_{m} / \Delta_{1} \quad \Gamma \vdash e_{2} \Leftarrow B_{m} / \Delta_{2}}{\Gamma \vdash (e_{1}, e_{2}) \Leftarrow A_{m} \times B_{m} / \Delta_{1} ; \Delta_{2}} \times I$$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash e \Rightarrow A_{m} \times B_{m} / \Delta_{1} \quad (m \ge r) \quad \Gamma, x : A_{m}, y : B_{m} \vdash e' \Leftarrow C_{r} / \Delta_{2}}{\Gamma \vdash \mathsf{match} \ e \ ((x, y) \Rightarrow e') \Leftarrow C_{r} / \Delta_{1} ; (\Delta_{2} \setminus x_{m} \setminus y_{m})} \times E$$

Context Operators Discriminate on Modes

Join

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\Gamma, x : A_m) & ; & (\Delta, x : A_m) & = & (\Gamma ; \Delta), x : A_m & \text{provided } C \in \sigma(m) \\ (\Gamma, x : A_m) & ; & \Delta & = & (\Gamma ; \Delta), x : A_m & (x \notin \Delta) \\ & & & \Gamma & ; & (\Delta, x : A_m) & = & (\Gamma ; \Delta), x : A_m & (x \notin \Gamma) \\ & & & (\cdot) & ; & (\cdot) & = & (\cdot) \end{array}$$

Removal

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\Delta, x : A_m) \setminus x_m &=& \Delta \\ (\Delta, y : B_k) \setminus x_m &=& (\Delta \setminus x_m), y : B_k & (x \neq y) \\ (\cdot) \setminus x_m &=& (\cdot) & \text{provided } W \in \sigma(m) \end{array}$$

Least upper bound

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\Gamma, x : A_m) & \sqcup & (\Delta, x : A_m) & = & (\Gamma \sqcup \Delta), x : A_m \\ (\Gamma, x : A_m) & \sqcup & \Delta & & \text{for } x \notin \Delta \text{ provided } W \in \sigma(m) \\ & \Gamma & \sqcup & (\Delta, x : A_m) & & \text{for } x \notin \Gamma \text{ provided } W \in \sigma(m) \\ & (\cdot) & \sqcup & (\cdot) & = & (\cdot) \end{array}$$

- Bindings based on modes
- Provisional if allowing weakening
- Kept if allowing contraction
- Theorem (as before)

eval $e \longrightarrow^* [\overline{bind x_i w_i}] \cdot \operatorname{retn} v$ iff e evaluates to v

- A given expression may have multiple types and modes
- Allow overloading
- Different instance may be compiled to different code
- Live code

- Adjoint type system with linear, affine, strict, unrestricted modes
- Subject to monotonic preorder and independence principle
- We have a full (identical) language of expressions at each mode
- Elegant, mutually conservative integration
- See [Jang,Roshal,Pf.,Pientka'24] for negatives and empty sums lazy products



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- A special cases where a layer is impoverished
- Define $!A_L = \downarrow_L^{U} \uparrow_L^{U} A_L$ the exponential of linear logic
 - U contains only $\uparrow_{L}^{U} A_{L}$
- Define V > U with $\sigma(V) = \sigma(U) = \{W, C\}$
- Define □A_u = ↓^v_U↑^v_UA_u the necessity of intuitionistic S4
 V contains only ↑^v_UA_u
- Additional metaprogramming patterns can be expressed

- Define U > X with $\sigma(U) = \sigma(X) = \{W, C\}$
- Define ○A_U = ↑^U_x↓^U_xA_U the strong monad of lax logic
 X contains only ↓^U_yA_x



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- Expressions do not mention types
- Rules are uniform
 - Types are given, but not modes
 - Collect constraints $W \in \sigma(m)$, $C \in \sigma(m)$, $m \ge k$, m = k
 - Solve constraints for most general solution
 - Any instance is a valid typing and vice versa
 - Recursion requires a fixed point iteration
- Recent, unpublished work [Roshal & Pf.'24]

Examples

Summary

Substructural types from very few principles

- Modes with intrinsic structural properties
- Monotonic preorder with independence principle
- Shifts to go between them
- Uniform set of typing rules
- Uniform set of computation rules
- Extends to (some) modal types
- Implemented in the Snax compiler
 - See OPLSS'24 lectures
 - Other optimizations like static memory reuse