

The Category of Iterative Sets in Cubical Agda

Stockholm–Gothenburg Type Theory Meeting

Fabian Lukas Grubmüller

Wednesday, 22 April 2026

1. Motivation
 2. Iterative Sets
 3. Iterative Sets as a model of Dependent Type Theory
 4. Formalization
- Bibliography

1. Motivation

Previous article by Gratzer, Gylterud, Mörtberg, Stenholm [1]

Previous article by Gratzer, Gylterud, Mörtberg, Stenholm [1]

- developing iterative sets

Previous article by Gratzer, Gylterud, Mörtberg, Stenholm [1]

- developing iterative sets
- formalization in Agda Unimath

Previous article by Gratzer, Gylterud, Mörtberg, Stenholm [1]

- developing iterative sets
- formalization in Agda Unimath
- problems with defining additional structures on CwF

Previous article by Gratzer, Gylterud, Mörtberg, Stenholm [1]

- developing iterative sets
- formalization in Agda Unimath
- problems with defining additional structures on CwF

[...] even though the naturality requires complex path algebra to state properly, in the specific CwF on V all these paths are given by reflexivity.

Previous article by Gratzer, Gylterud, Mörtberg, Stenholm [1]

- developing iterative sets
- formalization in Agda Unimath
- problems with defining additional structures on CwF

[...] even though the naturality requires complex path algebra to state properly, in the specific CwF on V all these paths are given by reflexivity.

Idea: Easier to formalize in cubical setting

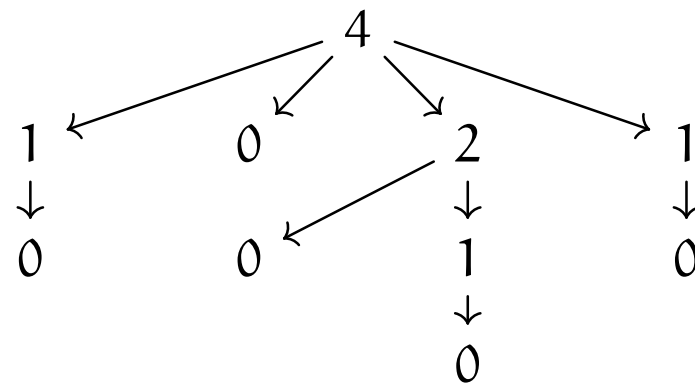
2. Iterative Sets

Idea: Viewing **sets** as **trees**:

Iterative Multisets

Idea: Viewing **sets** as **trees**:

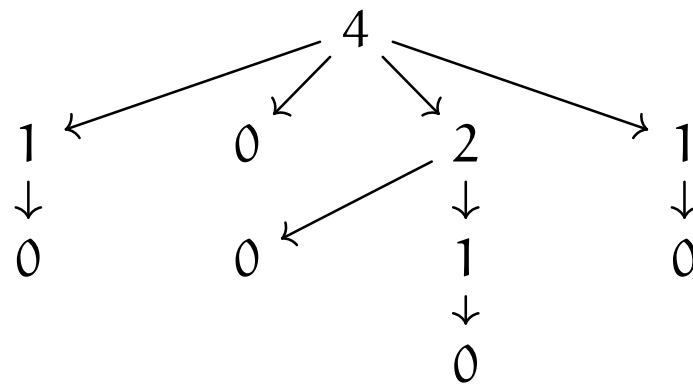
$\{\{\emptyset\}, \emptyset, \{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}\}, \{\emptyset\}\}$



Iterative Multisets

Idea: Viewing **sets** as **trees**:

$\{\{\emptyset\}, \emptyset, \{\emptyset, \{\emptyset}\}, \{\emptyset\}\}$

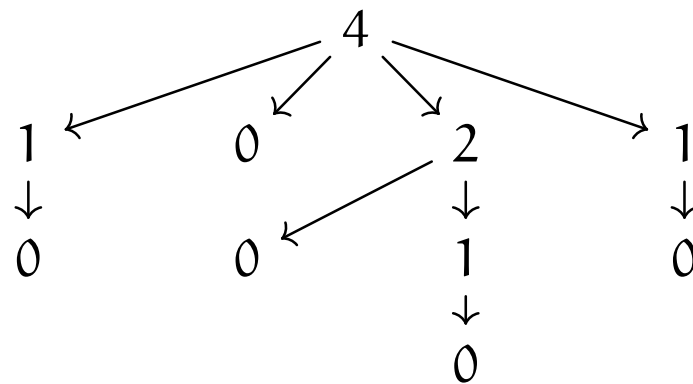


Data: some **type** A and some **function** $f : A \rightarrow \dots$

Iterative Multisets

Idea: Viewing **sets** as **trees**:

$\{\{\emptyset\}, \emptyset, \{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}\}, \{\emptyset\}\}$



Data: some **type** A and some **function** $f : A \rightarrow \dots$

Definition W-types: $W_{x:A} B(x)$ with $A : \text{Type}$ and $B : A \rightarrow \text{Type}$ has elements

$\text{sup}(a, f)$ **with** $a : A, f : B(a) \rightarrow W_{x:A} B(x)$

Definition W-types: $W_{x:A} B(x)$ with $A : \text{Type}$ and $B : A \rightarrow \text{Type}$ has elements

$\text{sup}(a, f)$ **with** $a : A, f : B(a) \rightarrow W_{x:A} B(x)$

Definition W-types: $W_{x:A} B(x)$ with $A : \text{Type}$ and $B : A \rightarrow \text{Type}$ has elements

$\text{sup}(a, f)$ **with** $a : A, f : B(a) \rightarrow W_{x:A} B(x)$

Definition $V^\infty := W_{A:\text{Type}} A$ has elements

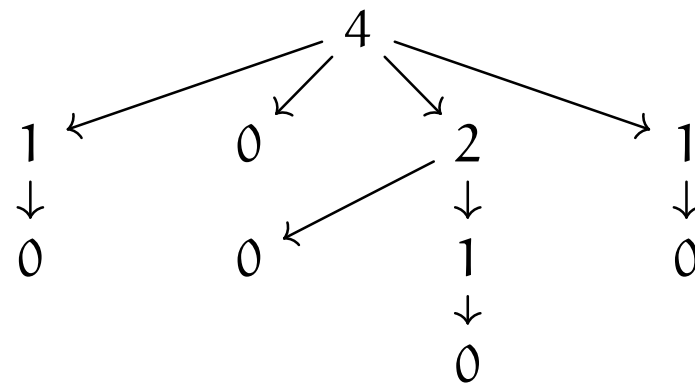
$\text{sup}(A, f)$ **with** $A : \text{Type}, f : A \rightarrow V^\infty$

Iterative Multisets

Definition $V^\infty := W_{A: \text{Type}} A$ has elements

$\text{sup}(A, f)$ **with** $A : \text{Type}, f : A \rightarrow V^\infty$

$\{\{\emptyset\}, \emptyset, \{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}\}, \{\emptyset\}\}$

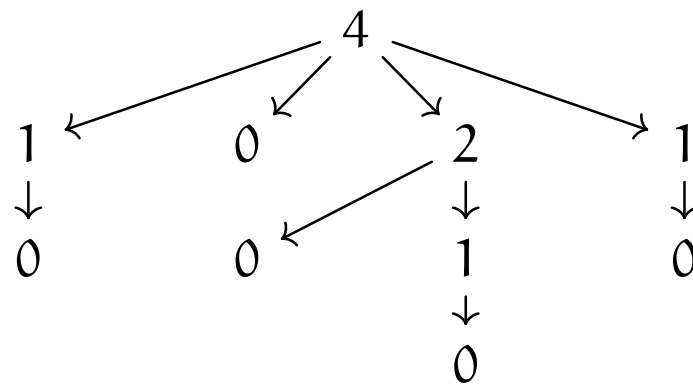


Iterative Multisets

Definition $V^\infty := W_{A: \text{Type}} A$ has elements

$\text{sup}(A, f)$ **with** $A : \text{Type}, f : A \rightarrow V^\infty$

$\{\{\emptyset\}, \emptyset, \{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}\}, \{\emptyset\}\}$



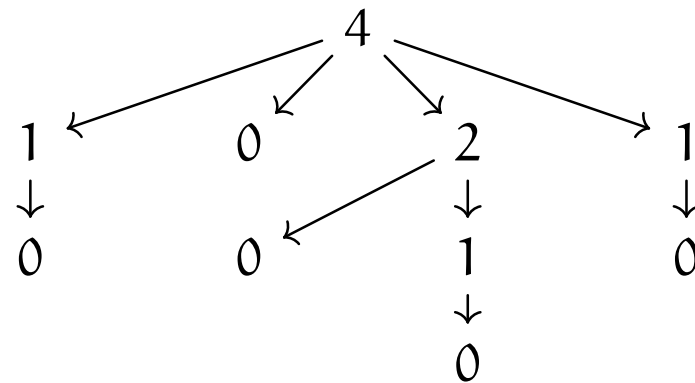
- **multisets** with **multiplicities** $(x \in^\infty (\text{sup}(B, g)) := \text{fiber}_g(x) := \sum_{b:B} g(b) \equiv_{V^\infty} x$

Iterative Multisets

Definition $V^\infty := W_{A: \text{Type}} A$ has elements

$\text{sup}(A, f)$ **with** $A : \text{Type}, f : A \rightarrow V^\infty$

$\{\{\emptyset\}, \emptyset, \{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}\}, \{\emptyset\}\}$



- **multisets with multiplicities** $(x \in^\infty (\text{sup}(B, g)) := \text{fiber}_g(x) := \sum_{b:B} g(b) \equiv_{V^\infty} x$
- **decoding:** $\text{El}(\text{sup}(A, f)) := A$

Idea: for sets, multiplicities should be propositional (\rightsquigarrow embedding)

Idea: for sets, multiplicities should be propositional (\rightsquigarrow embedding)

Definition (Hereditarily) iterative sets:

$$\text{isIterativeSet}(\text{sup}(A, f)) := \text{isEmbedding}(f) \times \prod_{x:A} \text{isIterativeSet}(f(x))$$

Idea: for sets, multiplicities should be propositional (\rightsquigarrow embedding)

Definition (Hereditarily) iterative sets:

$$\text{isIterativeSet}(\text{sup}(A, f)) := \text{isEmbedding}(f) \times \prod_{x:A} \text{isIterativeSet}(f(x))$$

Definition Type of iterative sets: $V^0 := \sum_{x:V^\infty} \text{isIterativeSet}(x)$

Idea: for sets, multiplicities should be propositional (\rightsquigarrow embedding)

Definition (Hereditarily) iterative sets:

$$\text{isIterativeSet}(\text{sup}(A, f)) := \text{isEmbedding}(f) \times \prod_{x:A} \text{isIterativeSet}(f(x))$$

Definition Type of iterative sets: $V^0 := \sum_{x:V^\infty} \text{isIterativeSet}(x)$

- NB: hierarchy of truncated multisets V^n [2]

Idea: for sets, multiplicities should be propositional (\rightsquigarrow embedding)

Definition (Hereditarily) iterative sets:

$$\text{isIterativeSet}(\text{sup}(A, f)) := \text{isEmbedding}(f) \times \prod_{x:A} \text{isIterativeSet}(f(x))$$

Definition Type of iterative sets: $V^0 := \sum_{x:V^\infty} \text{isIterativeSet}(x)$

- NB: hierarchy of truncated multisets V^n [2]
- **decodings** similar: $\text{El}(\text{sup}(A, f), P) := A,$

Idea: for sets, multiplicities should be propositional (\rightsquigarrow embedding)

Definition (Hereditarily) iterative sets:

$$\text{isIterativeSet}(\text{sup}(A, f)) := \text{isEmbedding}(f) \times \prod_{x:A} \text{isIterativeSet}(f(x))$$

Definition Type of iterative sets: $V^0 := \sum_{x:V^\infty} \text{isIterativeSet}(x)$

- NB: hierarchy of truncated multisets V^n [2]
- **decodings** similar: $\text{El}(\text{sup}(A, f), P) := A$, **multiplicities** $x \in^0 y$ **propositional**

- **Fibration Identity Principle** (\sim Extensionality)

$$(x \equiv_{V^0} y) \simeq \prod_{z:V^0} (z \in^0 x) \simeq (z \in^0 y)$$

- **Fibration Identity Principle** (\sim Extensionality)

$$(x \equiv_{V^0} y) \simeq \prod_{z:V^0} (z \in^0 x) \simeq (z \in^0 y)$$

- V^0 is a **set** \rightsquigarrow all **decodings** are **sets**

- **Fibration Identity Principle** (\sim Extensionality)

$$(x \equiv_{V^0} y) \simeq \prod_{z:V^0} (z \in^0 x) \simeq (z \in^0 y)$$

- V^0 is a **set** \rightsquigarrow all **decodings** are **sets** (**not univalent**)
- Universe **closed** under many standard **type formers**

- **Fibration Identity Principle** (\sim Extensionality)

$$(x \equiv_{V^0} y) \simeq \prod_{z:V^0} (z \in^0 x) \simeq (z \in^0 y)$$

- V^0 is a **set** \rightsquigarrow all **decodings** are **sets (not univalent)**
- Universe **closed** under many standard **type formers**
 - empty set, singleton sets, (un-) ordered pairs, natural numbers

- **Fibration Identity Principle** (\sim Extensionality)

$$(x \equiv_{V^0} y) \simeq \prod_{z:V^0} (z \in^0 x) \simeq (z \in^0 y)$$

- V^0 is a **set** \rightsquigarrow all **decodings** are **sets (not univalent)**
- Universe **closed** under many standard **type formers**
 - empty set, singleton sets, (un-) ordered pairs, natural numbers
 - identity types, Π -types, Σ -types, quotients, universe codes

- **Fibration Identity Principle** (\sim Extensionality)

$$(x \equiv_{V^0} y) \simeq \prod_{z:V^0} (z \in^0 x) \simeq (z \in^0 y)$$

- V^0 is a **set** \rightsquigarrow all **decodings** are **sets (not univalent)**
- Universe **closed** under many standard **type formers**
 - empty set, singleton sets, (un-) ordered pairs, natural numbers
 - identity types, Π -types, Σ -types, quotients, universe codes

3. Iterative Sets as a model of Dependent Type Theory

Definition A category with families (**CwF**) consists of:

Definition A category with families (**CwF**) consists of:

- a **category** \mathcal{C} with a **terminal object**

Definition A category with families (**CwF**) consists of:

- a **category** \mathcal{C} with a **terminal object**
- a **presheaf** $\mathsf{T}_y : \mathcal{C}^{\text{op}} \rightarrow \mathbf{hSets}$

Definition A category with families (**CwF**) consists of:

- a **category** \mathcal{C} with a **terminal object**
- a **presheaf** $T_y : \mathcal{C}^{\text{op}} \rightarrow \mathbf{hSets}$
- a **presheaf** $T_m : (\int T_y)^{\text{op}} \rightarrow \mathbf{hSets}$

Definition A category with families (**CwF**) consists of:

- a **category** \mathcal{C} with a **terminal object**
- a **presheaf** $\mathsf{T}_y : \mathcal{C}^{\text{op}} \rightarrow \mathbf{hSets}$
- a **presheaf** $\mathsf{T}_m : (\int \mathsf{T}_y)^{\text{op}} \rightarrow \mathbf{hSets}$
- a **functor** $- . - : \int \mathsf{T}_y \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$

Definition A category with families (**CwF**) consists of:

- a **category** \mathcal{C} with a **terminal object**
- a **presheaf** $\mathsf{T}_y : \mathcal{C}^{\text{op}} \rightarrow \mathbf{hSets}$
- a **presheaf** $\mathsf{T}_m : (\int \mathsf{T}_y)^{\text{op}} \rightarrow \mathbf{hSets}$
- a **functor** $- . - : \int \mathsf{T}_y \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$
- for each $(\Gamma, A) : \int \mathsf{T}_y$ a **natural equivalence** in $\Delta : \mathcal{C}$:

$$\mathcal{C}(\Delta, \Gamma . A) \simeq \sum_{\gamma : \mathcal{C}(\Delta, \Gamma)} \mathsf{T}_m(\Delta, \gamma^* A)$$

Definition A Σ -Structure on a CwF \mathcal{C} consists of

- Definition** A Σ -Structure on a CwF \mathcal{C} consists of
- An operation $S : (\Gamma : \mathcal{C})(A : \text{Ty } \Gamma) \rightarrow \text{Ty}(\Gamma . A) \rightarrow \text{Ty } \Gamma$

- Definition** A Σ -Structure on a CwF \mathcal{C} consists of
- An operation $S : (\Gamma : \mathcal{C})(A : \text{Ty } \Gamma) \rightarrow \text{Ty}(\Gamma . A) \rightarrow \text{Ty } \Gamma$
 - For $\Gamma : \mathcal{C}$, $A : \text{Ty } \Gamma$, $B : \text{Ty}(\Gamma . A)$ a natural (in Γ) iso

Definition A Σ -Structure on a CwF \mathcal{C} consists of

- An operation $S : (\Gamma : \mathcal{C})(A : \text{Ty } \Gamma) \rightarrow \text{Ty}(\Gamma . A) \rightarrow \text{Ty } \Gamma$
- For $\Gamma : \mathcal{C}$, $A : \text{Ty } \Gamma$, $B : \text{Ty}(\Gamma . A)$ a natural (in Γ) iso

$$\text{Tm}(\Gamma, S_{\Gamma}(A, B)) \simeq \sum_{a: \text{Tm}(\Gamma, A)} \text{Tm}(\Gamma, \langle 1_{\Gamma}, a \rangle^* B)$$

- **objects:** V^0

- **objects:** V^0
- **arrows:** $\mathcal{V}(\Gamma, \Delta) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \text{El}(\Delta)$

- **objects:** V^0
- **arrows:** $\mathcal{V}(\Gamma, \Delta) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \text{El}(\Delta)$
- **types:** $\text{Ty}(\Gamma) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow V^0$

- **objects:** V^0
- **arrows:** $\mathcal{V}(\Gamma, \Delta) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \text{El}(\Delta)$
- **types:** $\text{Ty}(\Gamma) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow V^0$
- **terms:** $\text{Tm}(\Gamma, A) := \prod_{y: \text{El}(\Gamma)} \text{El}(A(y))$

- **objects:** \mathcal{V}^0
- **arrows:** $\mathcal{V}(\Gamma, \Delta) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \text{El}(\Delta)$
- **types:** $\text{Ty}(\Gamma) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \mathcal{V}^0$
- **terms:** $\text{Tm}(\Gamma, \mathcal{A}) := \prod_{y: \text{El}(\Gamma)} \text{El}(\mathcal{A}(y))$
- **context extension:** $\Gamma . \mathcal{A} := \Sigma^0(\Gamma, \mathcal{A})$

- **objects:** \mathcal{V}^0
- **arrows:** $\mathcal{V}(\Gamma, \Delta) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \text{El}(\Delta)$
- **types:** $\text{Ty}(\Gamma) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \mathcal{V}^0$
- **terms:** $\text{Tm}(\Gamma, A) := \prod_{y: \text{El}(\Gamma)} \text{El}(A(y))$
- **context extension:** $\Gamma . A := \Sigma^0(\Gamma, A)$
- **Σ -structure:** $S_\Gamma(A, B) := \lambda x : \text{El}(\Gamma). \Sigma^0(A(x), \lambda a. B(x, a))$

4. Formalization

Part 1

- Iterative **multisets**
- Iterative **sets**
- ... as **universe**
- ... as **category**

Formalization Steps

Part 1

- Iterative **multisets**
- Iterative **sets**
- ... as **universe**
- ... as **category**

Part 2

- **CwF** and **Σ -structure** (general)

Part 1

- Iterative **multisets**
- Iterative **sets**
- ... as **universe**
- ... as **category**

Part 2

- **CwF** and Σ -**structure** (general)
- **Instantiation** for iterative sets

Formalization Steps

Part 1

- Iterative **multisets**
- Iterative **sets**
- ... as **universe**
- ... as **category**

Part 2

- **CwF** and **Σ -structure** (general)
- **Instantiation** for iterative sets (3 phases)
 1. Naive
 2. "Cubical"
 3. Ad-hoc functions

Formalization Steps

Part 1

- Iterative **multisets**
- Iterative **sets**
- ... as **universe**
- ... as **category**

Part 2

- **CwF** and **Σ -structure** (general)
- **Instantiation** for iterative sets (3 phases)
 1. Naive
 2. "Cubical"
 3. Ad-hoc functions
- **General statement** for all Tarski set-universes of sets

- **empty set:** $\emptyset^0 := (0, \lambda())$

- **empty set:** $\emptyset^0 := (0, \lambda())$
- **singleton:** $\{x\}^0 := (1, \text{const}(x))$

- **empty set:** $\emptyset^0 := (0, \lambda())$
- **singleton:** $\{x\}^0 := (1, \text{const}(x))$
- **unordered pairs:** $\{x, y\}^0 := (\text{Bool}, f)$ where $f(\text{false}) = x$, $f(\text{true}) = y$

- **empty set:** $\emptyset^0 := (0, \lambda())$
- **singleton:** $\{x\}^0 := (1, \text{const}(x))$
- **unordered pairs:** $\{x, y\}^0 := (\text{Bool}, f)$ where $f(\text{false}) = x$, $f(\text{true}) = y$
- **ordered pairs:**

$$\langle x, y \rangle^0 := \left\{ \left\{ \{x\}^0, \emptyset^0 \right\}^0, \left\{ \{y\}^0 \right\}^0 \right\}^0$$

- **empty set:** $\emptyset^0 := (0, \lambda())$
- **singleton:** $\{x\}^0 := (1, \text{const}(x))$
- **unordered pairs:** $\{x, y\}^0 := (\text{Bool}, f)$ where $f(\text{false}) = x$, $f(\text{true}) = y$
- **ordered pairs:**

$$\langle x, y \rangle^0 := \left\{ \left\{ \{x\}^0, \emptyset^0 \right\}^0, \left\{ \{y\}^0 \right\}^0 \right\}^0$$

- \rightsquigarrow **Π / Σ types**

- **objects:** \mathcal{V}^0
- **arrows:** $\mathcal{V}(\Gamma, \Delta) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \text{El}(\Delta)$
- **types:** $\text{Ty}(\Gamma) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \mathcal{V}^0$
- **terms:** $\text{Tm}(\Gamma, A) := \prod_{y: \text{El}(\Gamma)} \text{El}(A(y))$
- **context extension:** $\Gamma . A := \Sigma^0(\Gamma, A)$
- **Σ -structure:** $S_\Gamma(A, B) := \lambda x : \text{El}(\Gamma). \Sigma^0(A(x), \lambda a. B(x, a))$

(\mathcal{U}, El) as a CwF \mathcal{U}

- **objects:** \mathcal{U}
- **arrows:** $\mathcal{U}(\Gamma, \Delta) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \text{El}(\Delta)$
- **types:** $\text{Ty}(\Gamma) := \text{El}(\Gamma) \rightarrow \mathcal{U}$
- **terms:** $\text{Tm}(\Gamma, A) := \prod_{y: \text{El}(\Gamma)} \text{El}(A(y))$
- **context extension:** $\Gamma . A := \Sigma(\Gamma, A)$
- **Σ -structure:** $S_\Gamma(A, B) := \lambda x : \text{El}(\Gamma). \Sigma(A(x), \lambda a. B(x, a))$

Naturality of Context Extension

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \Delta & & \\
 \uparrow & & \\
 \mathcal{C}(\Delta, \Gamma . A) & \xrightarrow{\cong} & \sum_{\tau: \mathcal{C}(\Delta, \Gamma)} \text{Tm}(\Delta, (\tau^* A)) \\
 \downarrow \sigma^* & & \downarrow (\text{id}, -[\sigma]) \\
 \mathcal{C}(\Delta', \Gamma . A) & \xrightarrow{\cong} & \sum_{\tau: \mathcal{C}(\Delta, \Gamma)} \text{Tm}(\Delta', (\sigma^*(\tau^* A))) \\
 & & \parallel (\text{id}, \text{transport}_p(-)) \\
 & & \sum_{\tau: \mathcal{C}(\Delta, \Gamma)} \text{Tm}(\Delta', ((\tau \circ \sigma)^* A)) \\
 & & \downarrow (\sigma^*, \text{id}) \\
 \Delta' & & \sum_{\tau: \mathcal{C}(\Delta', \Gamma)} \text{Tm}(\Delta', (\tau^* A))
 \end{array}$$

Naturality of Σ -structure

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \Gamma & & \\
 \uparrow & & \\
 f & & \\
 \Delta & & \\
 \parallel & & \\
 \Delta & &
 \end{array}
 \quad
 \begin{array}{ccc}
 \text{Tm}(\Gamma, S_\Gamma(A, B)) & \xrightarrow{\cong} & \sum_{a': \text{Tm}(\Gamma, A)} \text{Tm}(\Gamma, \langle 1_\Gamma, a' \rangle^* B) \\
 \downarrow -[f] & & \downarrow (\text{id}, -[f]) \\
 \text{Tm}(\Delta, f^* S_\Gamma(A, B)) & & \sum_{a': \text{Tm}(\Gamma, A)} \text{Tm}(\Delta, f^* \langle 1_\Gamma, a' \rangle^* B) \\
 \downarrow \text{subst}_p^{\text{Tm}(\Delta, -)}(-) & & \downarrow (\text{id}, \text{subst}_q^{\text{Tm}(\Delta, -)}(-)) \\
 \text{Tm}(\Delta, S_\Delta(f^* A, \langle f, A \rangle^* B)) & \xrightarrow{\cong} & \sum_{a': \text{Tm}(\Gamma, A)} \text{Tm}(\Delta, \langle 1_\Delta, a'[f] \rangle^* \langle f, A \rangle^* B) \\
 & & \downarrow (-[f], \text{id}) \\
 & & \sum_{a: \text{Tm}(\Delta, f^* A)} \text{Tm}(\Delta, \langle 1_\Delta, a \rangle^* \langle f, A \rangle^* B)
 \end{array}$$

Challenges

Mathematical

Mathematical

- using **“more cubical”** techniques

Mathematical

- using **“more cubical”** techniques
- **non-definitional** behaviour of **transport** for refl

Mathematical

- using **“more cubical”** techniques
- **non-definitional** behaviour of **transport** for refl
- lack of implicit J-rule

Mathematical

- using **“more cubical”** techniques
- **non-definitional** behaviour of **transport** for refl
- lack of implicit J-rule

Meta-Level

Challenges

Mathematical

- using **“more cubical”** techniques
- **non-definitional** behaviour of **transport** for refl
- lack of implicit J-rule

Meta-Level

- documentation/discoverability

Challenges

Mathematical

- using **“more cubical”** techniques
- **non-definitional** behaviour of **transport** for refl
- lack of implicit J-rule

Meta-Level

- documentation/discoverability
- confusing goals/normalization

Mathematical

- using **“more cubical”** techniques
- **non-definitional** behaviour of **transport** for refl
- lack of implicit J-rule

Meta-Level

- documentation/discoverability
- confusing goals/normalization
- confusing error messages

Mathematical

- using **“more cubical”** techniques
- **non-definitional** behaviour of **transport** for refl
- lack of implicit J-rule

Meta-Level

- documentation/discoverability
- confusing goals/normalization
- confusing error messages
- termination?

Outlook

Mathematical

- using **“more cubical”** techniques
- **non-definitional** behaviour of **transport** for refl
- lack of implicit J-rule

Meta-Level

- documentation/discoverability
- confusing goals/normalization
- confusing error messages
- termination?

Outlook

- complete formalization

Mathematical

- using **“more cubical”** techniques
- **non-definitional** behaviour of **transport** for refl
- lack of implicit J-rule

Meta-Level

- documentation/discoverability
- confusing goals/normalization
- confusing error messages
- termination?

Outlook

- complete formalization

Bibliography

- [1] Daniel Gratzer, Håkon Robbestad Gylterud, Anders Mörtberg, and Elisabeth Stenholm, "The category of iterative sets in homotopy type theory and univalent foundations," *Mathematical Structures in Computer Science*, 2024, doi: 10.1017/S0960129524000288.
- [2] Håkon Robbestad Gylterud and Elisabeth Stenholm, "Univalent material set theory," 2024. doi: 10.48550/arXiv.2312.13024.
- [3] F. L. Grubmüller and Various Upstream Contributors, *My agda-cubical Fork*. [Online]. Available: <https://github.com/flgrubm/cubical>