

# Forward Proof Search for Intuitionistic Multimodal K Logics

Niels Voorneveld,  
`niels.voorneveld@cyber.ee`

TABLEAUX 2025, Reykjavik, September 27, 2025

This research has been supported by Estonian Research Council, grant No. PRG1780.

# Motivation

Formalisation of systems with distributed knowledge and claims.

Modalities can be used to give more context to pieces of knowledge.

- When and where a statement is given
- Who said or hears or believes the statement
- How a statement is communicated.

Intuitionistic logics are inherently constructive and adaptable to computer formalisation following the proofs as types paradigm.

# Decidability and Beyond

In practise, good to decide whether a property is provable:

- Tools for completing proofs for logical arguments.
- Checking consequences of assumptions, and dependencies of conclusions.

# Decidability and Beyond

In practise, good to decide whether a property is provable:

- Tools for completing proofs for logical arguments.
- Checking consequences of assumptions, and dependencies of conclusions.

There is a difference between decidable and runnable.

- Standard arguments for decidability have exponential blow-up.
- Organizing data structures to facilitate quick proof step searches has many benefits.

# Overview

Decidability of multimodal K logics  
by adapting Pfennings Cut elimination proof

Forward search technique  
using analytic cuts

# Multimodal K

# Axiom K and Necessity

Suppose given a set of formulas  $\mathbb{F}$  closed under a set of unary operations called modalities  $\mathbb{M}$ .

We write  $A_1, \dots, A_n \vdash B$  to mean: given a sequence of assumptions  $A_1, \dots, A_n$ , we can prove the conclusion  $B$ .

General rule for modalities satisfying Axiom K and N:

$$\frac{A_1, \dots, A_n \vdash B}{\mathcal{M}A_1, \dots, \mathcal{M}A_n \vdash \mathcal{M}B}$$

- Axiom K is the  $n \geq 2$  case.
- Necessity is the  $n = 0$  case.

# Additional Modal Axioms

Axiom types:

- $\forall A \in \mathbb{F}. \mathcal{M}A \vdash A$ , ( $\mathcal{M}$  is a domain of true knowledge).
- $\forall A \in \mathbb{F}. \mathcal{M}A \vdash \mathcal{N}A$ , ( $\mathcal{N}$  inherits information from  $\mathcal{M}$ )
- $\forall A \in \mathbb{F}. \mathcal{M}A \vdash \mathcal{N}\mathcal{R}A$ , ( $\mathcal{N}$  perceives  $\mathcal{M}$  as  $\mathcal{R}$ )

$\Rightarrow$  between  $\mathbb{M}$  and  $\mathbb{M}^*$  (lists over  $\mathbb{M}$ ), where  $\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \mathcal{N}_1 \dots \mathcal{N}_n$  asserts the axiom  $\forall A \in \mathbb{F}. \mathcal{M}A \vdash \mathcal{N}_1 \dots \mathcal{N}_n A$ .



# Properties

Unrestrictive properties of  $\Rightarrow$ :

- $\Rightarrow$  is *reflexive* if for any  $\mathcal{M}$ ,  $\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \mathcal{M}$ .
- $\Rightarrow$  is *transitive* if  $\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \alpha\mathcal{N}\beta$  and  $\mathcal{N} \Rightarrow \gamma$  implies  $\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \alpha\gamma\beta$ .

# Properties

Unrestrictive properties of  $\Rightarrow$ :

- $\Rightarrow$  is *reflexive* if for any  $\mathcal{M}$ ,  $\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \mathcal{M}$ .
- $\Rightarrow$  is *transitive* if  $\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \alpha\mathcal{N}\beta$  and  $\mathcal{N} \Rightarrow \gamma$  implies  $\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \alpha\gamma\beta$ .

Restrictive properties of  $\Rightarrow$  to accommodate decidability:

- $\Rightarrow$  is *decomposable* if  $\forall \mathcal{M}, \mathcal{N} \in \mathbb{M}$  there is a finite set  $(\mathcal{M} \ominus \mathcal{N}) \subseteq \mathbb{M}$  s.t.:
  - For any  $\mathcal{R} \in (\mathcal{M} \ominus \mathcal{N})$ ,  $\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \mathcal{N}\mathcal{R}$ .
  - For any non-empty  $\alpha \in \mathbb{M}^*$  s.t.  $\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \mathcal{N}\alpha$ ,  $\exists \mathcal{R} \in \mathcal{M} \ominus \mathcal{N}$  such that  $\mathcal{R} \Rightarrow \alpha$ .
- Decomposition is *terminating* if there is a preorder on modalities  $\preceq$  s.t.:
  - For any  $\mathcal{M}$  the set  $\{\mathcal{N} \mid \mathcal{N} \preceq \mathcal{M}\}$  is finite.
  - For any  $\mathcal{M}$  and  $\mathcal{N}$ , and  $\mathcal{R} \in (\mathcal{M} \ominus \mathcal{N})$ , then  $\mathcal{R} \preceq \mathcal{M}$ .

## Example: $\Box$

The  $\Box$  modality for *necessarily* true facts:

- $\Box A \vdash A$ ,
- $\Box A \vdash \Box \Box A$ ,

$\Rightarrow$  is the total relation between  $\{\Box\}$  and  $\{\Box\}^*$ .

$$(\Box \ominus \Box) = \{\Box\}.$$

Adding other modalities  $\mathbb{M}$ :

- $\Box A \vdash \mathcal{M} \Box A$

$$(\Box \ominus \mathcal{M}) = \{\Box\}, \text{ and } (\mathcal{M} \ominus \mathcal{N}) = \emptyset \text{ for any } \mathcal{M}, \mathcal{N} \in \mathbb{M}$$

## Example: Awareness

We equip  $\mathbb{M}$  with a reflexive and transitive relation  $\triangleleft$  expressing *awareness*.

The statement  $\mathcal{M} \triangleleft \mathcal{N}$  means  $\mathcal{M}$  is aware of all knowledge in  $\mathcal{N}$ , which is asserted with the axiom  $\mathcal{N}A \vdash \mathcal{M}\mathcal{N}A$ .

$\mathcal{N} \Rightarrow \alpha\mathcal{N}$  holds when each modality in  $\alpha\mathcal{N}$  is aware of the next one.

Note that this is reflexive and transitive.

We define  $(\mathcal{M} \ominus \mathcal{N}) = \{\mathcal{M}\}$  if  $\mathcal{N} \triangleleft \mathcal{M}$ , and otherwise  $(\mathcal{M} \ominus \mathcal{N}) = \emptyset$ .

# Decidability

# Modal Weakening

Suppose contexts  $\Gamma$  and  $\Delta$  are given by sets of formulas.

We write  $\Gamma \sqsubseteq \Delta$  if for any formula  $A \in \Gamma$ :

- $A \in \Delta$ , or
- $A = \mathcal{M}B$ , and  $\mathcal{N}B \in \Delta$  for some  $\mathcal{N}$  such that  $\mathcal{N} \Rightarrow \mathcal{M}$ .

The resulting calculus should admit a structural weakening property:

If  $\Gamma \sqsubseteq \Delta$  then any proof of  $\Gamma \vdash A$  gives a proof of  $\Delta \vdash A$  of the same shape.

# Modal Shift

Given context  $\Gamma$  and modality  $\mathcal{M}$ , we define the modal shift of  $\Gamma$  by  $\mathcal{M}$  as the context:

$$\mathcal{M}^{-1}(\Gamma) = \{A \mid \mathcal{N}A \in \Gamma, \mathcal{N} \Rightarrow \mathcal{M}\} \cup \{\mathcal{R}A \mid \mathcal{N}A \in \Gamma, \mathcal{R} \in (\mathcal{N} \ominus \mathcal{M})\}$$

- If  $\Gamma \sqsubseteq \Delta$ , then  $\mathcal{M}^{-1}\Gamma \sqsubseteq \mathcal{M}^{-1}\Delta$ .
- If  $\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \mathcal{N}$  then  $\mathcal{M}^{-1}\Gamma \sqsubseteq \mathcal{N}^{-1}\Gamma$ .
- Suppose  $\mathcal{T} \in \mathcal{M} \ominus \mathcal{N}$ , then  $\mathcal{M}^{-1}\Gamma \sqsubseteq \mathcal{T}^{-1}(\mathcal{N}^{-1}\Gamma)$

# Intuitionistic Modal Logic

Formulas of the logic are inductively generated according to the following rules, with  $a$  ranging over some set of basic formulas.

$$A, B := a \mid A \wedge B \mid A \vee B \mid A \Rightarrow B \mid \mathcal{M}A \mid \top \mid \perp$$

Provability follows standard intuitionistic derivation rules for sequents, plus:

$$\frac{A_1, \dots, A_n \vdash B}{\mathcal{M}A_1, \dots, \mathcal{M}A_n \vdash \mathcal{M}B} \quad \frac{\mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \mathcal{N}_1 \dots \mathcal{N}_n}{\mathcal{M}A \vdash \mathcal{N}_1 \dots \mathcal{N}_n A}$$



# Gentzen's sequent calculus adaptation

Standard (note, contraction and commutativity are structural):

$$\begin{array}{c} \frac{}{\Gamma, a \vdash a} (\text{Var}) \quad \frac{}{\Gamma \vdash \top} (\top R) \quad \frac{}{\Gamma, \perp \vdash A} (\perp L) \\[10pt] \frac{\Gamma \vdash A \quad \Gamma \vdash B}{\Gamma \vdash A \wedge B} (\wedge R) \quad \frac{\Gamma, A \wedge B, A, B \vdash C}{\Gamma, A \wedge B \vdash C} (\wedge L) \\[10pt] \frac{\Gamma \vdash A}{\Gamma \vdash A \vee B} (\vee R1) \quad \frac{\Gamma \vdash B}{\Gamma \vdash A \vee B} (\vee R2) \quad \frac{\Gamma, A \vee B, A \vdash C \quad \Gamma, A \vee B, B \vdash C}{\Gamma, A \vee B \vdash C} (\vee L) \\[10pt] \frac{\Gamma, A \vdash B}{\Gamma \vdash A \Rightarrow B} (\Rightarrow R) \quad \frac{\Gamma, A \Rightarrow B \vdash A \quad \Gamma, A \Rightarrow B, B \vdash C}{\Gamma, A \Rightarrow B \vdash C} (\Rightarrow L) \end{array}$$

Additions:

$$\frac{\Gamma, \mathcal{M}A, A \vdash B}{\Gamma, \mathcal{M}A \vdash B} \mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \cdot (\text{ModL}) \quad \frac{\mathcal{M}^{-1}\Gamma \vdash A}{\Gamma \vdash \mathcal{M}A} (\text{Mod})$$

# Properties Overview

Identity theorem: For every  $A \in \mathbb{F}$ , and  $\Gamma$  we can prove  $\Gamma, A \vdash A$ .

Extending the subformula relation with  $\preceq$ , creating  $\preceq$  on formulas.

- Subformula property: Any formula used in a proof of a sequent  $s$  is a subformula of a formula in  $s$ ,
- hence the sequent calculus is decidable.

The sequent calculus admits cuts, so provability is equivalent to provability in the aforementioned intuitionistic multimodal K logic.

# Cut Elimination

Adapting Pfenning's cut elimination proof [1]: Suppose  $D = \frac{D_1 \dots D_n}{\Gamma \vdash A}$  and  $E = \frac{E_1 \dots E_m}{\Gamma, A \vdash B}$ , we construct a proof  $F = \frac{F_1 \dots F_k}{\Gamma \vdash B}$ , by mutual induction on  $A$ ,  $D$  and  $E$ .

Example, New case 3: By example, supposing  $\mathcal{N}^{-1}(\mathcal{M}A) = \mathcal{R}A, A$

$$\begin{array}{c}
 D = \frac{\frac{D_1}{\mathcal{M}^{-1}\Gamma \vdash A} \text{ (d1)}}{\Gamma \vdash \mathcal{M}A} \text{ (Mod)} \qquad E = \frac{\frac{E_1}{\mathcal{N}^{-1}(\Gamma, \mathcal{M}A) \vdash B} \text{ (e1)}}{\Gamma, \mathcal{M}A \vdash \mathcal{N}B} \text{ (Mod)} \\
 \\
 \frac{\frac{D''_1}{\mathcal{N}^{-1}\Gamma \vdash A} \text{ (d1)} \quad \frac{\frac{\frac{D'_1}{\mathcal{R}^{-1}(\mathcal{N}^{-1}\Gamma) \vdash A} \text{ (d1)}}{\mathcal{N}^{-1}\Gamma \vdash \mathcal{R}A} \text{ (Mod)} \quad \frac{\frac{E_1}{\mathcal{N}^{-1}\Gamma, \mathcal{R}A, A \vdash B} \text{ (e1)}}{\mathcal{N}^{-1}\Gamma, \mathcal{R}A, A \vdash B} \text{ (IH-E)}}{\mathcal{N}^{-1}\Gamma, A \vdash B} \text{ (IH-A)}}{\mathcal{N}^{-1}\Gamma \vdash B}
 \end{array}$$

---

# Forward Proof Search

# Proof Search Bottlenecks

There is a large practical gap between *decidable* and *runnable*.

In what order should we unfold formulas in the context?

$$\frac{\Gamma, A \vee B, A \vdash C \quad \Gamma, A \vee B, B \vdash C}{\Gamma, A \vee B \vdash C} (\vee L) \quad \frac{\Gamma, A \Rightarrow B \vdash A \quad \Gamma, A \Rightarrow B, B \vdash C}{\Gamma, A \Rightarrow B \vdash C} (\Rightarrow L) \quad \frac{\mathcal{M}^{-1} \Gamma \vdash A}{\Gamma \vdash \mathcal{M} A} (\text{Mod})$$

- We change to a top-down approach, *accumulating* relevant true sequents.
- The *inverse method* can be applied to the sequent calculus.
- We attempt further optimization by changing the calculus to deal with computationally cumbersome derivation rules, like  $\vee L$  and Mod.

# Forward Proof Search

We start with two sets of formulas:

- A set of *questions* or *goals*  $?A$  we are interested in proving.
- A set of *answers* or *assumptions*  $!A$  we can use.

The forward proof search proceeds in two phases:

- Initiation phase: We recursively generate basic sequents for proving goals, and using assumptions, whilst adding more subformulas to  $?A$  and  $!A$ .
- Accumulation phase: We use further derivation techniques to find more provable sequents, centered around the analytic cut rule.

# Modal Sequents

Modal multi-consequent sequents:

$$|_{id} \Gamma \Vdash \Delta \quad \text{and} \quad \Phi \mid_{\mathcal{M}} \Gamma \Vdash \Delta,$$

the latter representing  $\bigwedge \Phi \Rightarrow \mathcal{M}(\bigwedge \Gamma \Rightarrow \bigvee \Delta)$

# Modal Sequents

Modal multi-consequent sequents:

$$|_{id} \Gamma \Vdash \Delta \quad \text{and} \quad \Phi |_{\mathcal{M}} \Gamma \Vdash \Delta,$$

the latter representing  $\bigwedge \Phi \Rightarrow \mathcal{M} (\bigwedge \Gamma \Rightarrow \bigvee \Delta)$

Suppose  $\nabla : (\mathbb{M} \cup \{id\}) \times (\mathbb{M} \cup \{id\}) \rightarrow \mathcal{P}_{\text{fin}}(\mathbb{M} \cup \{id\})$  s.t.  $\mathcal{M} \nabla \mathcal{N}$  forms a (terminating) basis of modalities  $\{\mathcal{R} \mid \mathcal{M} \Rightarrow \mathcal{R}, \mathcal{N} \Rightarrow \mathcal{R}\}$ . The cut-rule is then:

$$\frac{\Phi |_{\mathcal{M}} \Gamma, A \Vdash \Delta \quad \Phi' |_{\mathcal{N}} \Gamma' \Vdash \Delta', A \quad \mathcal{R} \in \mathcal{M} \nabla \mathcal{N}}{\Phi, \Phi' |_{\mathcal{R}} \Gamma \cup \Gamma' \Vdash \Delta \cup \Delta'}$$



# Forward Search Rules

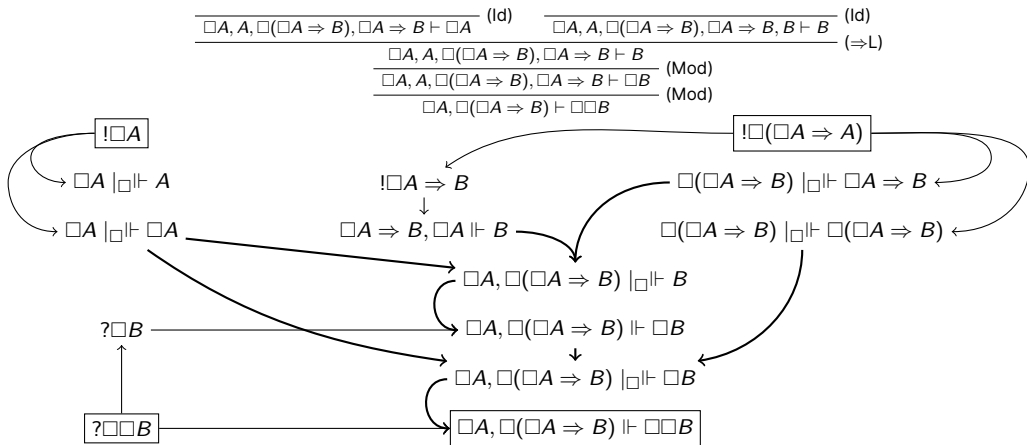
Initiation:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \frac{}{\vdash \top} \quad \frac{! \perp \quad ?A}{\perp \vdash A} \\
 \\
 \frac{!(A \wedge B)}{A \wedge B \vdash A \quad A \wedge B \vdash B} \quad \frac{?(A \wedge B)}{A, B \vdash A \wedge B \quad ?A \quad ?B} \\
 \\
 \frac{!(A \vee B)}{A \vee B \vdash A, B \quad !A \quad !B} \quad \frac{?(A \vee B)}{A \vdash A \vee B \quad B \vdash A \vee B \quad ?A \quad ?B} \\
 \\
 \frac{!(A \Rightarrow B)}{A, A \Rightarrow B \vdash B \quad ?A \quad !B} \quad \frac{?(A \Rightarrow B)}{B \vdash A \Rightarrow B \quad !A \quad ?B}
 \end{array}$$

Accumulation:

$$\frac{\Phi \mid_{\mathcal{M}} \Gamma, A \vdash \Delta \quad \Phi' \mid_{\mathcal{N}} \Gamma' \vdash \Delta', A \quad \mathcal{R} \in \mathcal{M} \nabla \mathcal{N}}{\Phi \cup \Phi' \mid_{\mathcal{R}} \Gamma \cup \Gamma' \vdash \Delta \cup \Delta'} \\
 \frac{\Phi \mid_{\mathcal{M}} \Gamma, A \vdash A \Rightarrow B}{\Phi \mid_{\mathcal{M}} \Gamma \vdash A \Rightarrow B} \quad \frac{\Phi \mid_{\mathcal{N}} \cdot \vdash A \quad ?\mathcal{M}A \quad \mathcal{N} \Rightarrow \mathcal{M} \text{ or } \mathcal{N} = id}{\Phi \vdash \mathcal{M}A}$$

# Example Search



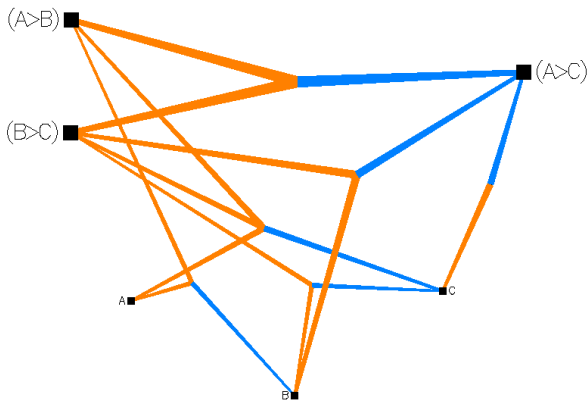
# Final Remarks

# Haskell Implementation

```
-----from-----
! B{a}((<b>=><c>))
! B{a}((B{a}(<c>)=><d>))
-----we can derive-----
? (B{a}(<b>)=>B{a}(<d>))

Lambda B{a}(<b>)
| Lock B{a}
| >| Apply
| >| | Key [B{a}]
| >| | <| Use B{a}((B{a}(<c>)=><d>))
| >| | Lock B{a}
| >| | >| Apply
| >| | >| | Key [B{a},B{a}]
| >| | >| | <<| Use B{a}((<b>=><c>))
| >| | >| | Key [B{a},B{a}]
| >| | >| | <<| Use B{a}(<b>)
```

# Visualization Attempt



# Logic Extensions

Add *Consistency axioms*  $\mathcal{M}\perp \Rightarrow \perp$ :

1. For decidability, include the rule:  $\frac{\mathcal{M}^{-1}\Gamma \vdash \perp}{\Gamma \vdash A}$
2. For forward proof search, assert  $?\mathcal{M}\perp$ ,  $?\perp$ , and  $\mathcal{M}\perp \Vdash \perp$ .

Add *Unitality axioms* of the form  $X \Rightarrow \mathcal{M}X$ :

1. For decidability, add  $\Gamma$  to  $\mathcal{M}^{-1}\Gamma$ .
2. For forward proof search, let  $A \Vdash \mathcal{M}A$  whenever  $?\mathcal{M}A$ .

## Further Work

To create countermodels via formulating Kripke worlds based on sets of assumptions. See [2] for countermodels in related multimodal logics.

To export generated proofs to modal dependent type theory [3].

## Selected References I

- [1] Frank Pfenning. “Structural Cut Elimination: I. Intuitionistic and Classical Logic”. In: *Information and Computation* 157.1 (2000), pp. 84–141. ISSN: 0890-5401. DOI: 10.1006/inco.1999.2832.
- [2] Deepak Garg, Valerio Genovese, and Sara Negri. “Countermodels from Sequent Calculi in Multi-Modal Logics”. In: *2012 27th Annual IEEE Symposium on Logic in Computer Science*. 2012, pp. 315–324. DOI: 10.1109/LICS.2012.42.
- [3] Lars Birkedal et al. “Modal dependent type theory and dependent right adjoints”. In: *Mathematical Structures in Computer Science* 30 (2018), pp. 118 –138. DOI: 10.1017/S0960129519000197.



# The End

Time for questions