

# Formalizing Rust's Type System

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# Date of the exam

The date of the exam is March 8th, 2023 (09:00).

If you cannot be available (another exam...), speak **now**!

# Abstract from last weeks

During the last three weeks, we had an introduction to Rust programming

- Type system enforces: “mutation XOR aliasing”,
- Traits: an abstraction mechanism, sometimes at zero-cost.
- Unsafe blocks/functions: workaround strong static type-checking constraints,
- Encapsulation: clients can safely use libraries written with unsafe code.
- Interior mutability (the ability to mutate through shared borrows): a typical example of well-encapsulated unsafe code.
- Rust is a good fit for multithreading.
  - Protects against data races (with `Send` and `Sync`).
  - Provides abstractions for multithreading.

I keep telling you Rust is type-safe.  
How can I be so sure?

I.e., is this something one can prove formally?

## Introduction

Syntactic type  
system

$\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$

Type system

## 1 Introduction

## 2 Syntactic type system

- $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$
- Type system

# The problem we are trying to solve

“Well-typed Rust programs do not go wrong.”

Really?

# The problem we are trying to solve

“Well-typed Rust programs **not using** `unsafe` do not go wrong.”

Is that all?

# The problem we are trying to solve

“Well-typed Rust programs **not using** `unsafe` do not go wrong.”

A vast majority of real-life Rust programs (directly or indirectly) use unsafe code.  
Example: `Vec`, interior mutability (e.g., `Cell`), low-level optimizations, ...

We want an **extensible** theorem to prove those programs safe too.

- Safe pieces of code are safe thanks to **syntactic typing rules**.
- Unsafe pieces are safe thanks to a **specialized proof**.

Both kinds of proofs will be linked together thanks to a **logical relation**.



# Logical relations for type safety

## The general approach

A type system is defined from:

- One (or several) **typing judgment(s)**  $\dots \vdash \dots$
- Syntactic **typing rules**.

Ex. for lambda-calculus: 
$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash e_1 : \tau_1 \rightarrow \tau_2 \quad \Gamma \vdash e_2 : \tau_1}{\Gamma \vdash e_1 e_2 : \tau_2}$$

The logical relation approach to type soundness (i.e., semantic type soundness):

- 1 Define a **semantic typing judgment**  $\dots \models \dots$  from the operational semantics.
- 2 Prove the **fundamental theorem**: “ $\dots \vdash \dots \Rightarrow \dots \models \dots$ ”
- 3 Prove **adequacy** for the logical relation: “ $\dots \models \dots \Rightarrow \text{safety}$ ”.
  - “**Semantically** well-typed programs do not go wrong.”
  - Usually easy from the definition of  $\dots \models \dots$ .

Why is this approach more extensible than subject reduction+progress?

# Extending semantic type safety

The fundamental theorem: by induction over the typing tree using **semantic typing rules**:

$$\frac{\begin{array}{c} \dots \vdash \dots \\ \hline \dots \vdash \dots \\ \vdots \\ \dots \vdash \dots \end{array} \quad \dots \vdash \dots}{\dots \vdash \dots} \quad \dots \vdash \dots \Rightarrow \frac{\begin{array}{c} \dots \models \dots \\ \hline \dots \models \dots \\ \vdots \\ \dots \models \dots \end{array} \quad \dots \models \dots}{\dots \models \dots} \quad \dots \models \dots$$

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To prove  $\dots \models \dots$  for the whole program, we don't need  $\dots \vdash \dots$  everywhere.  
We can fill some “holes” using custom proofs of  $\dots \models \dots$ .

# Extending semantic type safety

`Cell` is not syntactically well-typed in safe Rust: “ $\dots \not\vdash \text{Cell}::\text{get} : \dots$ ”.

But we can **prove** “ $\dots \models \text{Cell}::\text{get} : \dots$ ”.

Combining with an otherwise syntactically well-typed program:

$$\frac{\begin{array}{c} \dots \vdash \dots \\ \hline \dots \vdash \dots \\ \vdots \\ \dots \models \text{Cell}::\text{get} : \dots \end{array}}{\dots \models \dots} \quad \dots \vdash \dots$$
$$\frac{\dots \models \dots}{\dots \models \dots}$$

And we can conclude safety thanks to adequacy!

# What's left to be done...

- Define formally the language and its syntactic type system.
- Define the logical relation and prove adequacy+fundamental theorem.
- Extend the logical relation for types like `Ce11`...

That's a lot of work.

We will only see a [sketch here](#).

The details are in a paper, and the accompanying Coq development:

*RustBelt: Securing the foundations of the Rust programming language. In POPL'18.*

To make sure nothing is wrong, this is [formalized with Coq](#). Particularly [useful](#) to design and maintain the proof.

## 1 Introduction

## 2 Syntactic type system

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- Type system

# The language: $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$

Rust is **way too complex** to be formalized as-is.

Should we formalize MIR (recall: the language behind the borrow checker)?  
It still has a lot of technicalities unrelated to the type system, refers to traits...

Instead, we formalize a **core language**.

It has most of the features of MIR relevant for type soundness, but **idealized** to make the theory simpler.

# The language: $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$

Paths, elementary values

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Val} \ni v &::= \text{false} \mid \text{true} \mid z \mid \ell \mid \text{funrec } f(\bar{x}) \text{ ret } k := F \\ \text{Path} \ni p &::= x \mid p.n \end{aligned}$$

Elementary values that can be stored in local registers  $x, \dots$

Complex values (e.g., `struct`) are stored in memory, and accessed through pointers.

Note: function values take a continuation in parameter (language in CFG, see later).



# The language: $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$

Paths, elementary values

$$\text{Val} \ni v ::= \text{false} \mid \text{true} \mid z \mid \ell \mid \text{funrec } f(\bar{x}) \text{ ret } k := F$$
$$\text{Path} \ni p ::= x \mid p.n$$

Pointers to fields of complex values can be created with **paths**.

$p.n$ : pointer to field at offset  $n$  of **struct** pointed to by  $p$ .

Operationally: just a pointer offset (i.e., an addition).

# The language: $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$

## Instructions

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Instr} \ni I ::= & v \mid p \mid p_1 + p_2 \mid p_1 - p_2 \mid p_1 \leq p_2 \mid p_1 == p_2 \\ & \mid \text{new}(n) \mid \text{delete}(n, p) \mid *p \mid p_1 := p_2 \mid p_1 :=_n *p_2 \\ & \mid \dots \end{aligned}$$

Instructions are the elementary operations of  $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$ .

They take **paths** as operands.

# The language: $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$

## Instructions

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Instr} \ni I ::= & v \mid p \mid p_1 + p_2 \mid p_1 - p_2 \mid p_1 \leq p_2 \mid p_1 == p_2 \\ & \mid \text{new}(n) \mid \text{delete}(n, p) \mid *p \mid p_1 := p_2 \mid p_1 :=_n *p_2 \\ & \mid \dots \end{aligned}$$

$\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$ 's instructions include values, paths, arithmetic operations...

# The language: $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$

## Instructions

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Instr} \ni I ::= & v \mid p \mid p_1 + p_2 \mid p_1 - p_2 \mid p_1 \leq p_2 \mid p_1 == p_2 \\ & \mid \text{new}(n) \mid \text{delete}(n, p) \mid *p \mid p_1 := p_2 \mid p_1 :=_n *p_2 \\ & \mid \dots \end{aligned}$$

... and instruction to allocate/free memory, and read/write it.

Read/write one word from/to a register:  $*p, p_1 := p_2$ .

■ Operational semantics defined so that races  $\Rightarrow$  undefined behavior.

Copy a complex value (several words) from one memory location to another:  $p_1 :=_n *p_2$ .

# The language: $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$

## Function bodies

$$\begin{aligned} \text{FuncBody} \ni F ::= & \text{letcont } k(\bar{x}) := F_1 \text{ in } F_2 \mid \text{jump } k(\bar{x}) \\ & \mid \text{let } x = l \text{ in } F \mid \text{if } p \text{ then } F_1 \text{ else } F_2 \\ & \mid \text{call } f(\bar{x}) \text{ ret } k \\ & \mid \text{newlft}; F \mid \text{endlft}; F \\ & \mid \dots \end{aligned}$$

**Function bodies** combine instructions to build functions.

Code is written in CPS: a way to model code written as a CFG.

We can declare a new continuation (i.e., label in the CFG), and jump to it.

# The language: $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$

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Basic function bodies:

- An instruction (+ binding the result to a variable).
- If-then-else.
- Calling a function (passing a continuation).

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**Ghost instructions** for creating/ending a lifetime.

# The language: $\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$

## Handling sum types

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Instr} \ni I &::= \dots \\ &\quad | p \stackrel{\text{inj } i}{=} () \mid p_1 \stackrel{\text{inj } i}{=} p_2 \mid p_1 \stackrel{\text{inj } i}{=}_n * p_2 \\ &\quad | \dots \\ \text{FuncBody} \ni F &::= \dots \\ &\quad | \text{case } *p \text{ of } \bar{F} \end{aligned}$$

$\lambda_{\text{Rust}}$  has a notion of sum types, stored in memory, with a tag in the first word.

There are special instructions to write such values together with the tag.

And a case statement for “pattern matching” the in-memory tag.



$$\begin{aligned} \text{Type} \ni \tau ::= & \text{bool} \mid \text{int} \mid \text{own } \tau \mid \&_{\text{mut}}^{\kappa} \tau \mid \&_{\text{shr}}^{\kappa} \tau \mid \downarrow_n \\ & \mid \Pi \bar{\tau} \mid \Sigma \bar{\tau} \mid \forall \bar{\alpha}. \text{fn}(\text{f} : \text{E}; \bar{\tau}) \rightarrow \tau \mid T \mid \mu T. \tau \\ & \mid \dots \end{aligned}$$

Types for integer and Booleans.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Type} \ni \tau ::= & \mathbf{bool} \mid \mathbf{int} \mid \mathbf{own} \tau \mid \&_{\mathbf{mut}}^{\kappa} \tau \mid \&_{\mathbf{shr}}^{\kappa} \tau \mid \downarrow n \\ & \mid \Pi \bar{\tau} \mid \Sigma \bar{\tau} \mid \forall \bar{\alpha}. \mathbf{fn}(\mathbf{f} : \mathbf{E}; \bar{\tau}) \rightarrow \tau \mid T \mid \mu T. \tau \\ & \mid \dots \end{aligned}$$

Types for pointers: `Box` is written `own  $\tau$` .

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Type} \ni \tau ::= & \mathbf{bool} \mid \mathbf{int} \mid \mathbf{own} \tau \mid \&_{\mathbf{mut}}^{\kappa} \tau \mid \&_{\mathbf{shr}}^{\kappa} \tau \mid \textcolor{brown}{\downarrow}_n \\ & \mid \Pi \bar{\tau} \mid \Sigma \bar{\tau} \mid \forall \bar{\alpha}. \mathbf{fn}(\mathbf{f} : \mathbf{E}; \bar{\tau}) \rightarrow \tau \mid T \mid \mu T. \tau \\ & \mid \dots \end{aligned}$$

Type of “uninitialized memory”.

- When memory is just uninitialized, or when non-**Copy** values are moved.
- Used to replace the “initializedness” analysis of the borrow checker.

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Complex types: sum, products.

Used to model `struct`, `enum` and tuples.

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Type of function pointers, guarded equirecursive types...

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Extensible for types providing safe abstraction over **unsafe**!

# Typing judgments

There are two main typing judgments:

- One for instructions:  $E; L \mid T_1 \vdash I \dashv x. T_2$
- One for function bodies:  $E; L \mid K; T \vdash F$

They depend on **four different kinds of contexts**:

- $T$  is the **typing context**. Elements:
  - $p \triangleleft \tau$ : path  $p$  contains an elementary value of type  $\tau$ .
  - $p \triangleleft^{\dagger \kappa} \tau$ : same, but **frozen** until lifetime  $\kappa$  ends.
  - **Substructural**: elements cannot be duplicated (ownership tracking!).
- $E$  and  $L$  are **lifetime contexts**. They contain:
  - information on **lifetime inclusion**, and
  - information on **local lifetimes**: which are they, and when they can be ended.
- $K$  is the **continuation context**.
  - Describes the continuations we can jump to, and the required contexts.
  - Elements:  $k \triangleleft \text{cont}(L; \bar{x}. T)$ .  
 “We can jump to  $k$ , passing parameters  $\bar{x}$ , if the contexts contain  $L$  and  $T$ .”

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# Typing judgments

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- One for function bodies:  $E; L \mid K; T \vdash F$

The typing context for instructions has two typing contexts an input typing context  $T_1$  and an output typing context  $T_2$ .

The instruction  $I$  consumes  $T_1$  and produces  $T_2$ .

$x.T_2$  binds a special variable  $x$ : to give a type to the result of the instruction.

Function bodies never return (CPS). They only consume  $T$ .

# Typing rules

## Typing instructions

Selected rules:

$$E; L \mid \emptyset \vdash z \dashv x. x \triangleleft \mathbf{int}$$

$$E; L \mid p_1 \triangleleft \mathbf{int}, p_2 \triangleleft \mathbf{int} \vdash p_1 \leq p_2 \dashv x. x \triangleleft \mathbf{bool}$$

$$E; L \mid \emptyset \vdash \mathbf{new}(n) \dashv x. x \triangleleft \mathbf{own} \not\triangleleft n$$

$$\frac{n = \text{size}(\tau)}{E; L \mid p \triangleleft \mathbf{own} \tau \vdash \mathbf{delete}(n, p) \dashv \emptyset}$$

$$\frac{\tau \text{ copy} \quad \text{size}(\tau) = 1}{E; L \mid p \triangleleft \mathbf{own} \tau \vdash *p \dashv x. p \triangleleft \mathbf{own} \tau, x \triangleleft \tau}$$

$$\frac{\text{size}(\tau) = 1}{E; L \mid p \triangleleft \mathbf{own} \tau \vdash *p \dashv x. p \triangleleft \mathbf{own} \not\triangleleft 1, x \triangleleft \tau}$$

$$\frac{E; L \vdash \kappa \text{ alive}}{E; L \mid p_1 \triangleleft \&_{\text{mut}}^{\kappa} \tau, p_2 \triangleleft \tau \vdash p_1 := p_2 \dashv p_1 \triangleleft \&_{\text{mut}}^{\kappa} \tau}$$

# Typing rules

## Typing function bodies

Selected rules:

$$\frac{E; L \mid T_1 \vdash I \dashv x. T_2 \quad E; L \mid K; T_2, T \vdash F}{E; L \mid K; T_1, T \vdash \text{let } x = I \text{ in } F}$$

$$\frac{k \triangleleft \mathbf{cont}(L; \bar{x}. T) \in K}{E; L \mid K; T[\bar{y}/\bar{x}] \vdash \text{jump } k(\bar{y})}$$

$$\frac{E; L \vdash T \rightleftharpoons T' \quad E; L \mid K; T' \vdash F}{E; L \mid K; T \vdash F}$$

Helper judgment for transforming a typing context:  $E; L \vdash T \rightleftharpoons T'$ .

# Typing rules

## Transforming typing environments

Some transformations can happen on environments before typing a piece of code:

$$\frac{\tau \text{ copy}}{E; L \vdash p \triangleleft \tau \xrightarrow{\text{ctx}} p \triangleleft \tau, p \triangleleft \tau}$$

$$E; L \vdash p \triangleleft \&_{\mu}^{\kappa} (\tau_1 \times \tau_2) \xrightarrow{\text{ctx}} p.0 \triangleleft \&_{\mu}^{\kappa} \tau_1, p.\text{size}(\tau_1) \triangleleft \&_{\mu}^{\kappa} \tau_2$$

$$\frac{E; L \vdash \kappa \text{ alive}}{E; L \vdash p \triangleleft \&_{\text{mut}}^{\kappa} \tau \xrightarrow{\text{ctx}} p \triangleleft \&_{\text{shr}}^{\kappa} \tau}$$

$$E; L \vdash p \triangleleft \text{own}_n \tau \xrightarrow{\text{ctx}} p \triangleleft \&_{\text{mut}}^{\kappa} \tau, p \triangleleft^{\dagger \kappa} \text{own}_n \tau$$

$$\frac{E; L \vdash \kappa' \sqsubseteq \kappa}{E; L \vdash p \triangleleft \&_{\text{mut}}^{\kappa} \tau \xrightarrow{\text{ctx}} p \triangleleft \&_{\text{mut}}^{\kappa'} \tau, p \triangleleft^{\dagger \kappa'} \&_{\text{mut}}^{\kappa} \tau}$$