

# Research statement

October 9, 2017

All my current research interests revolve around the theory of factorization systems in  $(\infty, 1)$ -category theory.

The present research statement builds on my previous work in higher algebra, and in particular on the topic of “ $t$ -structures as normal torsion theories” initiated in a series of papers [FL16, FL15a, FL15b] with my advisor D. Fiorenza (La Sapienza, Rome). This constitutes the backbone of my PhD thesis [Lor16] on the topic of  $t$ -structures in stable  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories.

The results proved so far inspire both practical and abstract questions, related to the general theory of higher-categorical factorization systems, as well as several “concrete” applications of this formalism to (derived) algebraic geometry, stable homotopy theory and noncommutative geometry (an example of this is the quest for a “convenient stable  $\infty$ -category of  $C^*$ -algebras”, following [Øst10] and the  $\infty$ -operadic approach outlined in [Mah15]).

My current objective is to pursue this stream of research, expanding the range of application of these techniques. In the following sections I will outline a few ideas, carried on in mutual communication to let the theory and the applications motivate each other. The results obtained so far in the three papers [FL16, FL15a, FL15b], and subsumed by my thesis [Lor16] are briefly sketched in a preliminary “section zero”.

## An overview.

### Result 1

In the setting of stable  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories the theory of  $t$ -structures is subordinated to a flexible and expressive calculus of factorization systems.

This is the central result of [FL16]: in the setting of stable  $\infty$ -categories a  $t$ -structure on (the homotopy category of an  $\infty$ -category)  $\mathbf{C}$  is completely determined by a  $\infty$ -categorical factorization system  $(\mathcal{E}, \mathcal{M})$  on  $\mathbf{C}$  such that

1. the 3-for-2 property holds for both classes  $\mathcal{E}, \mathcal{M}$ ; this entails that the subcategories of “cofibrants”  $\{X \in \mathbf{C} \mid \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ \downarrow \\ X \end{bmatrix} \in \mathcal{E}\}$  and “fibrants”  $\{Y \in \mathbf{C} \mid \begin{bmatrix} Y \\ \downarrow \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \in \mathcal{M}\}$  are respectively a coreflective and a reflective subcategory of  $\mathbf{C}$ , forming the *aisle*  $\mathbf{C}_{\geq}$  and *coaisle*  $\mathbf{C}_{<}$  of a  $t$ -structure.
2. The reflection  $X \rightarrow RX$  is the cofiber of the coreflection  $SX \rightarrow X$  (and the coreflection is the fiber of the reflection), in a pullback-pushout diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} SX & \longrightarrow & X \\ \downarrow & \lrcorner & \downarrow \\ 0 & \longrightarrow & RX. \end{array}$$

Such factorization systems are called *normal torsion theories* building on the previous work of [CHK85, RT07], where the authors point out (see [RT07, Remark 4.11.(2)]) that the definition of torsion theory “[...] applies, for example, to a triangulated category  $\mathbf{C}$ .

Such a category has only weak kernels and weak cokernels and our definition precisely corresponds to torsion theories considered there as pairs  $\mathcal{F}$  and  $\mathcal{T}$  of colocalizing and localizing subcategories (see [HPS97]).

### Result 2

All the classical theory (abelianity of the *heart*  $\mathbf{C}_{\geq} \cap \mathbf{C}_{<}[1]$  of a  $t$ -structures, the theory of *semiorthogonal decompositions* on derived categories, Postnikov towers in the stable homotopy category. . . ) can be expressed in the language of factorization system, giving also elegant new insights.

Our second work [FL15a], which is the natural continuation of [FL16], outlines some basic consequences of a canonical structure of  $\mathbb{Z}$ -poset (that is a set endowed with a monotone action of the group of integers; the algebra of these objects is quite rich of subtleties: see [Bly05]) on the set  $\text{ts}(\mathbf{C})$  of  $t$ -structures on  $\mathbf{C}$ . A  $t$ -structure  $\mathfrak{t}$  is sent by the generator of  $\mathbb{Z}$  to  $\mathfrak{t}[1] = (\mathcal{E}[1], \mathcal{M}[1])$  by the *suspension* functor.

Under the “torsio-centric” perspective two apparently disconnected constructions, *Postnikov towers* (induced by the heart of a  $t$ -structure) and *semiorthogonal decompositions*, acquire an intrinsic description as, respectively, orbits and fixed points of the  $\mathbb{Z}$ -action; it all boils down to specialize to these two extremal particular cases the construction [FL15a, Def. 2.7] of the “tower”  $\mathbb{T}(f)$  of a morphism  $f: X \rightarrow Y$  with respect to a  $\mathbb{Z}$ -equivariant family of  $t$ -structures  $\mathfrak{t}: J \rightarrow \text{ts}(\mathbf{C})$ .

### Result 3

The “Grothendieck six functors” formalism becomes clearer in the setting of stable  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories; the theory of *recollections* becomes more symmetric and the construction of the  $t$ -structure induced by a recollement becomes much more insightful.

The results exposed in our third paper [FL15b] do not constitute a continuation of [FL15a], but rather concentrate on a separate problem: given a “recollement” of stable  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories, like

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \mathbf{D}^0 & \xleftarrow{i_R} & \mathbf{D} & \xleftarrow{q_R} & \mathbf{D}^1 \\ & \xleftarrow{i} & \mathbf{D} & \xleftarrow{q} & \\ & \xleftarrow{i_L} & & \xleftarrow{q_L} & \end{array}$$

where  $i_L \dashv i \dashv i_R$  and  $q_L \dashv q \dashv q_R$  and suitable “exactness” properties hold (see [FL15b, Def. 3.1]), it is possible to *glue* two  $t$ -structures  $\mathfrak{t}_0, \mathfrak{t}_1$ , respectively on the categories  $\mathbf{D}^0, \mathbf{D}^1$  to a  $t$ -structure  $\mathfrak{t}_0 \mathbin{\forall} \mathfrak{t}_1$  on  $\mathbf{D}$ ; this formalism, introduced in [BBD82] is of capital importance in algebraic geometry and in the theory of perverse sheaves, having also applications in intersection homology [Pf01, GM80, GM83] and representation theory [PS88, KW01].

These results shed a new light on classical material and constitute a new viewpoint on it, since until now the literature somewhat neglected an extensive treatment of the algebraic properties of  $\mathbin{\forall}: \text{ts}(\mathbf{D}^0) \times \text{ts}(\mathbf{D}^1) \rightarrow \text{ts}(\mathbf{D})$ ; on the other hand the flexibility and naturality of the stable setting permit such a study:

- It gives a clear “torsio-centric” translation of the construction for  $\mathfrak{t}_0 \mathbin{\forall} \mathfrak{t}_1$  given in [BBD82]; the normal torsion theory corresponding to  $\mathfrak{t}_0 \mathbin{\forall} \mathfrak{t}_1$  can be characterized as

$(\mathcal{E}_{01}, \mathcal{M}_{01})$  where

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{E}_{01} &= \{f \in \text{hom}(\mathbf{D}) \mid q(f) \in \mathcal{E}_1; i_L(f) \in \mathcal{E}_0\} \\ \mathcal{M}_{01} &= \{f \in \text{hom}(\mathbf{D}) \mid q(f) \in \mathcal{M}_1; i_R(f) \in \mathcal{M}_0\}\end{aligned}$$

- It gives a clear explanation of the associativity properties of  $\mathbb{Y}$ : why such a property holds for a stratified space  $X$  (see [Pfl01, Ban07, Wei94]), and how to generalize some “associativity data” valid in this case to the general situation of a family of gluing data and recollements (see [FL15b, Def. 5.7]), arranged in a diagram such that each square satisfies (a suitable  $(\infty, 2)$ -categorical counterpart of) the Beck-Chevalley condition in algebraic geometry.

## Plans for future research.

A complete axiomatization of the theory of higher-categorical factorization systems is an urgent objective, since apart from being a topic of independent interest for the category theory of  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories, it would clarify certain “natural” constructions on  $t$ -structures (restrictions, extensions, meets and joins as exposed in [Bon13], tensoring under the Deligne product of stable  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories [Gro10, §5.3]. . . ).

Moreover, given that there are several notions of factorization system adapted to various models for higher category theory, this will eventually yield a unified, model-independent description of  $t$ -structures arising in stable homotopy theory, homological algebra, algebraic geometry etc.: a  $t$ -structure in a DG-category is, for example, the exact counterpart of a normal torsion theory in the world of *enriched* factorization systems (see [Day74, LW14]), whereas a  $t$ -structure in a stable model category is a normal torsion theory in the setting of *homotopy* factorization systems (see [Bou77, Joy08]).

This plan looks particularly promising especially because in a recent (May 2017) joint work [LV17] with S. Virili (Murcia) we managed to apply the torsio-centric approach to the setting of *stable derivators*, thus showing a similar “Rosetta stone” theorem in this framework, and completing the nontrivial part of the model-independency statement. Here, we define factorization systems in the 2-category **Der** exploiting their formal description as algebras for a suitable strict 2-monad (a result of independent interest for the theory of this specific 2-category), and prove that when the derivator is stable, a suitable subclass of “coherent” normal torsion theories (the *derivator-normal torsion theories*) correspond bijectively with  $t$ -structures on the underlying category of the derivator, and under relatively mild assumptions induce  $t$ -structure on *each* category  $\mathbf{D}(J)$  and  $t$ -exact functors thereof.

With this result in hand, it is clearly visible a deeper pattern: in particular, we formulate the following

### Task 1

Is it possible to find a general, model-independent theory of factorization systems in  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories, to be applied to the theory of  $t$ -structures (or elsewhere)?

A first step in this respect is to describe precisely the relationship between the existing notions of factorization system in different models of  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories.

The initial step is a systematic treatment of “comparison results” between models conjectured (or hinted at) in the literature —several insights are interspersed in Joyal’s notes on quasicategories [Joy08].

A possible general framework for this unification program should be a nice framework to do higher category theory in a model independent way: in light of this remark, it seems feasible to adopt Riehl-Verity’s language of  $\infty$ -cosmoi ([RV15a, RV13, RV14, RV15b, RV15c]) heavily relying on the powerful language of enriched category theory.

This could also provide instances of factorization systems in models for  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories still lacking an internal definition of a factorization systems (like Segal spaces and Segal categories), in the same vein we are doing with derivators: in this respect, it is remarkable that Riehl-Verity’s theory can handle even some models for  $(\infty, n)$ -categories with  $n \geq 2$ , such as  $\Theta_n$ -spaces.

We hence seek to isolate the properties of  $\infty$ -cosmoi whose objects allow a *calculus of factorization*, expanding the characterization of these objects as *normal pseudoalgebras* for [a suitable analogue of] the squaring monad [KT93] already exploited in [LV17]. These properties should hold for a sufficiently big class of “naturally arising”  $\infty$ -cosmoi, and we plan to investigate the consequences of imposing this stricter definition.

Such a systematic survey will also fill some awkward gaps in the literature; indeed, despite the fact that there is already some literature on factorization systems in  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories, there are aspects of the theory that remain somewhat unexplored. As an example, the parts of the theory which rely on the monadic description of Grandis and Tholen’s *algebraic* factorization systems (such as Garner’s algebraic reformulation of the small object argument) are still missing in the  $(\infty, 1)$ -categorical setting (even though a flexible and elegant theory of  $(\infty, 1)$ -monads already exists in [Lur11]).

A possible objective in this sense is to revisit (and possibly improve, in the sense of aligning it to the canon of model independence) the definition of a *cofibrantly generated model*  $(\infty, 1)$ -category, which has been given in [MG14] (with a view towards applications to Goerss-Hopkins obstruction theory).

A good test bench for a general theory of higher factorization systems in undoubtedly a higher theory of homotopical algebra; a realistic goal is to obtain counterparts of the basic theory and a  $(\infty, 1)$ -categorical version of the small object argument, pursuing the questions which are likely to arise along the way. This paves the way to the following

## Task 2

Is it possible to find substantial applications for the theory outlined in **Task 1**, to algebraic and noncommutative geometry, and algebraic topology?

This track of research has already been explored to some extent, in a series of works by W. Chachólski [Cha96, Cha97] and Farjoun [Far95], in a way that resembles a theory of “unstable  $t$ -structures”, and a substantial progress in this direction has been exposed in [ABFJ17] with a proof of a Blakers-Massey theorem in the setting of  $\infty$ -categories. We plan to apply the machinery of “ $t$ -structures as factorizations”, integrating more and more examples from classical homological algebra, representation theory of algebras, and noncommutative geometry. This would provide a unified point of view on the use of  $t$ -structures in stable contexts, thereby facilitating cross-fertilization across disciplines, and will provide an immediate test for the theory outlined in the above section.

A promising field of application involves non-commutative geometry and stable  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories, since there have been several exchanges between the two disciplines: [Øst10] outlined a zoology of interesting model structures on categories of cubical  $C^*$ -algebras, whereas [Mah15] sheds light on some interesting connections between dendroidal sets (a model for  $\infty$ -operads) and higher-dimensional categories of  $C^*$ -algebras, and [Del04] gives a proof of the existence on  $C^*\text{-Cat}$  ( $C^*$ -categories and  $*$ -functors) of a cofibrantly generated simplicial symmetric monoidal model structure that is analogous to the “folk” model structure on  $\mathbf{Cat}$ , whose weak equivalences are the equivalences of categories. All these approaches visibly fit in a complicated web of Quillen equivalences giving “the” theory of  $(\infty, 1)$ -noncommutative spaces whose theory of  $(\infty, 1)$ -factorization systems and geometry are deeply intertwined.

Relevant applications for the theory of factorization systems can also be found in algebraic geometry and differential topology: this observation stems from the fact that we exploit the power of the stability axiom for a  $(\infty, 1)$ -category only when we want to prove our “Rosetta stone” theorem. There is, however, still a great deal of information in his unstable version, since the formalism of “towers” described in our [FL15a], adapted to unstable  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories, could describe critical values of Morse functions as *pure values* of  $\mathbb{R}$ -families of factorization systems (a generalization of the *A-weaves* of [FL15a, Prop. 5]).

Some of these ideas can be regarded as the naïve counterpart of the approach that [ABFJ17] follow to modernise [Cha97]’s calculus of *closed classes*, because they all gravitate around the compatibility of a sequence of factorization systems  $(\mathcal{E}_i, \mathcal{M}_i)_{i \in I}$  with suitable operations on the set  $I$  of indices.

As an additional remark, we note that natural factorization systems on categories of low-dimensional cobordisms have already been studied by J. Abadi, and we believe that our point of view can show that these examples all fit into a general theory of factorization systems on the compact  $(\infty, n)$ -categories<sup>1</sup>  $\mathbf{Cob}(n)$ . A survey about  $(\infty, n)$ -categories of cobordisms and functorial field theories recently appeared in [CS15]; I plan to profit from the experience of prof. Fiorenza in the field (see [FSV15, FV15]) to understand these topics.

## Miscellaneous interests in other fields

- I have recently started thinking about the rôle of concreteness in higher category theory. In a joint work with I. di Liberti (Masaryk University, Brno) [LL17] I propose a fairly general method to show that under certain assumptions on a model category  $\mathcal{M}$ , its homotopy category  $\mathrm{ho}(\mathcal{M})$  cannot be concrete with respect to the universe where it is assumed to be locally small. This result will hopefully be the first step towards a theory of ‘ $\infty$ -concrete’  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories. Moving to the theory of  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories, the notion of concreteness ‘splits’ into a countable spectrum of stronger and stronger  $n$ -concreteness conditions, in such a way that being  $\infty$ -concrete is the strongest way in which a  $(\infty, 1)$ -category can stray from being concrete.

A rather technical but conceptually deep result proved in [Isb64] is that the notion of concreteness for a category  $\mathbf{C}$  is tightly related with a set-theoretical condition of the

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<sup>1</sup>Lurie’s proof of the cobordism hypothesis suggests that a natural setting for these categories  $\mathbf{Cob}(n)$  is the world of Segal-like  $(\infty, n)$ -categories: in light of this, it is obvious why we are interested in exploiting a full-fledged theory of factorizations in generic  $(\infty, n)$ -categories.

class of ‘generalized subobjects’ of objects of  $\mathbf{C}$ ; under relatively mild assumptions, this is a condition on monomorphisms of  $\mathbf{C}$ , and this is the starting point to build an analogy between the (classical, 1-categorical) notion of monic in a 1-category and the fact that this notion breaks into a similar countable spectrum of *n-monic arrow* in a  $(\infty, 1)$ -category.

- I have recently started a joint work [GL] with F. Genovese (UHasselt) that tries to clarify the rôle of co/end calculus in enriched homotopy theory and  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories. A flexible theory to manipulate co/ends is still absent from the currently booming field of higher category theory (even though there have been some –highly model-dependent– attempts like [GHN15]); this is somewhat an unforgivable absence, given the undeniable expressive power of this calculus (of which my [Lor15] has been a rather successful survey).

A large amount of material is scattered in the literature about enriched category theory [Shu06, CP97, CP90, Gra80], tackling a sound theory of *homotopy weighted limits*; this paves the way to the definition of “coherent co/ends” as the derived counterparts of the hom-weighted co/limits  $\int^A T \cong \text{hom} \otimes T$  and  $\int_A T \cong \{\text{hom}, T\}$ . These different approaches can be synthesized, and after this one gets

- a reasonably model-independent approach to the definition and basic properties of coherent coends (working for quasicategories, simplicial categories, model categories and derivators);
- an homotopy coherent and formal-categorical approach to Isbell duality, the theory of Isbell envelopes, and Cauchy completeness of  $(\infty, 1)$ -categories (embedded in a suitable bicategory of profunctors);
- a sketch of the theory the *model bicategory of profunctors*, which is a toy example of a *model 2-category*: a bicategory all whose hom-categories carry “compatible” model structures.

Our approach blends a completely formal-categorical language with the expressive power of homotopical-algebraic techniques. The final aim is to build a compact definition of coend in a  $\infty$ -cosmos, echoing [RV15d]: if  $\mathcal{K}$  is such a  $\infty$ -cosmos and  $A \in \mathcal{K}$  is an object, we consider the 2-cell

$$\begin{array}{ccc} A/a & \xrightarrow{\quad} & A \\ \downarrow & \swarrow & \downarrow 1 \\ * & \xrightarrow{\quad a \quad} & A \end{array}$$

This gives a diagram  $A \rightarrow \mathcal{K}: a \mapsto A/a$ , whose universal lax cocone is  $A/a \rightarrow \text{tw}(A)^{\text{op}}$ , and gives rise to a bifibration  $\text{tw}(A) \rightarrow A^{\text{op}} \times A$  that mimicks the twisted arrow category of  $A \in \mathbf{Cat}$  and serves to define coends as suitable (higher) colimits.

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