

# Bisimulation and Logics for Knowledge and Information

Martin Otto, Padova, 2023

bisimulation

structures

information

**bisimulation**  
— the quintessential  
back&forth

model theory, not just in classical settings

**logics accessing information**  
— in structural representations

with relevant semantics “up to what?”

## two main parts

### (I) basics: bisimulation and back&forth games

- bisimulation as modal Ehrenfeucht–Fraïssé
- bisimulation as the mother of back&forth
- model theory of modal logics

### (II) survey: variations, generalisations & challenges

- bisimilar coverings for graphs and hypergraphs
- classically beyond FO to MSO
- essentially modal variations within FO
- non-classical modal steps beyond FO:  
team semantic & inquisitive scenarios,  
modal common knowledge

## part I: bisimulation as quintessential back&forth

### on graph-like structures

Kripke structures (possible worlds/accessibility),  
transition systems (states/transitions),  
game graphs (positions/moves)

### capture informational/behavioural/positional equivalence

that may not be respected in concrete structural representation (!)

### core idea: dynamic back&forth probing of possibilities

→ exploration of what is meant to be represented  
in these structures & eliminating overhead in  
concrete structural representations (!)

## games in logic: the bigger picture

two distinct model-theoretic traditions:

### (1) semantic evaluation games (model checking games):

game protocol to test satisfaction relation:

given structure  $\mathcal{A}$  and formula  $\varphi \in L$

determine whether  $\mathcal{A} \models \varphi$

### (2) comparison, equivalence games (back&forth games):

game protocol to test L-equivalence/similarity:

given structures  $\mathcal{A}$  and  $\mathcal{B}$

determine to which extent  $\mathcal{A} \equiv_L \mathcal{B}$

with bisimulation notions we focus on the second kind (2)  
but key results link it to the first kind (1)  
**and there is a systematic connection!**

## bisimulation game & bisimulation relations

**the game:** two players: **I** (challenger), **II** (defender)

play over two Kripke structures  
or transition systems  $\begin{cases} \mathcal{A} = (A, R^{\mathcal{A}}, P^{\mathcal{A}}) \\ \mathcal{B} = (B, R^{\mathcal{B}}, P^{\mathcal{B}}) \end{cases}$

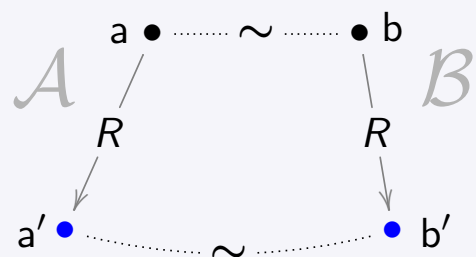
**positions:** pairs  $(a, b)$ , correspondences between pebbled worlds

**single round, challenge/response:**

**I** shifts pebble in  $\mathcal{A}$  or  $\mathcal{B}$  along  $R$ -edge

**II** must do likewise on opposite side

**effect:**  $(a, b) \rightsquigarrow (a', b')$



**II** loses in position  $(a, b)$  unless  $P^{\mathcal{A}} \upharpoonright a \simeq P^{\mathcal{B}} \upharpoonright b$  (atom equivalence)  
either player loses when stuck

## bisimulation game & bisimulation relations

winning regions for **II** define bisimulation equivalences:

$A, a \sim^\ell B, b$       **II** has a winning strategy  
for  $\ell$  rounds from  $(a, b)$

$A, a \sim B, b$       **II** has a winning strategy  
for infinite game from  $(a, b)$

intermediate limit  $\sim^\omega := (\sim^\ell \text{ for all } \ell \in \mathbb{N})$

winning strategies in relational formalisation:

$\sim^\ell : (Z_m \subseteq A \times B)_{m \leq \ell}$

$\sim^\omega : (Z_m \subseteq A \times B)_{m \in \mathbb{N}}$       stratified b&f systems, or

$\sim : Z \subseteq A \times B$       single bisimulation relation

## bisimulation game & bisimulation relations

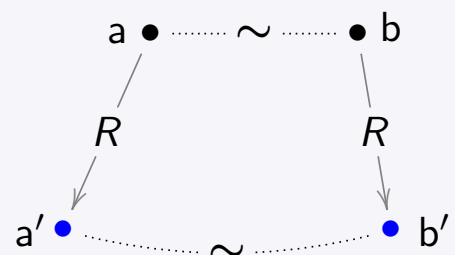
a single bisimulation relation  $Z \subseteq A \times B$  for  $\sim$

with characteristic b&f requirements

(back) for  $(a, b) \in Z$  and  $(b, b') \in R^B$  there is  
 $a' \in A$  s.t.  $(a, a') \in R^A$  and  $(a', b') \in Z$

(forth) for  $(a, b) \in Z$  and  $(a, a') \in R^A$  there is  
 $b' \in B$  s.t.  $(b, b') \in R^B$  and  $(a', b') \in Z$

witnesses winning strategy for **II** in  
infinite game from any  $(a, b) \in Z$



## classical motif: Ehrenfeucht–Fraïssé

### pebble games for FO and FO<sub>∞</sub>

I and II over relational structures  $\mathcal{A} = (A, \mathbf{R}^{\mathcal{A}})$  and  $\mathcal{B} = (B, \mathbf{R}^{\mathcal{B}})$

**positions:** local isomorphisms  $p: \mathbf{a} \mapsto \mathbf{b}$ ,  $p: \mathcal{A} \upharpoonright \mathbf{a} \simeq \mathcal{B} \upharpoonright \mathbf{b}$

**single round:** challenge/response for  
extension by one new pebble pair  
 $(p: \mathbf{a} \mapsto \mathbf{b}) \rightsquigarrow (p': \mathbf{a}\mathbf{a}' \mapsto \mathbf{b}\mathbf{b}')$

**winning regions:**  $\begin{cases} \mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a} \simeq^{\ell} \mathcal{B}, \mathbf{b} & \ell \text{ rounds} \\ \mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a} \simeq^{\infty} \mathcal{B}, \mathbf{b} & \text{infinite game} \end{cases}$

**b&f equivalences**

$\simeq^{\infty}$  classically known as partial isomorphy,  
intermediate level  $\simeq^{\omega}$  as finite isomorphy

## Ehrenfeucht–Fraïssé

linking game equivalence to equivalence w.r.t. FO and FO<sub>∞</sub>

### Ehrenfeucht–Fraïssé/Karp thms

$\mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a} \simeq^{\ell} \mathcal{B}, \mathbf{b} \Leftrightarrow \mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a} \equiv_{\text{FO}}^{\ell} \mathcal{B}, \mathbf{b}^*$  FO-equiv. to qfr-depth  $\ell$

$\mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a} \simeq^{\infty} \mathcal{B}, \mathbf{b} \Leftrightarrow \mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a} \equiv_{\text{FO}}^{\infty} \mathcal{B}, \mathbf{b}$  FO<sub>∞</sub>-equiv.

\* for finite relational vocabularies  
where  $\simeq^{\ell}$  has finite index

### proof ingredients:

- $(Z_m := \{(p: \mathbf{a} \mapsto \mathbf{b}): \mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a} \equiv_{\text{FO}}^m \mathcal{B}, \mathbf{b}\})_{m \in \mathbb{N}}$   
satisfies stratified b&f conditions
- I wins according to  $\mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a} \not\equiv_{\text{FO}}^m \mathcal{B}, \mathbf{b} \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a}\mathbf{a}' \not\equiv_{\text{FO}}^{m-1} \mathcal{B}, \mathbf{b}\mathbf{b}'$
- equivalence classes  $[\mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a}] / \simeq^m$  are FO-definable at qfr-depth  $m$

## recall: the bigger picture w.r.t. games & logic

### (1) semantic evaluation game (model checking game):

checking  $\mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a} \models \varphi$   
in dialogue game between verifier & refuter

### (2) equivalence game (back&forth game):

checking whether  $(\mathcal{A}, \mathbf{a} \models \varphi \Leftrightarrow \mathcal{B}, \mathbf{b} \models \varphi)$  for all  $\varphi \in L_\ell$   
in back&forth game

for many logics like guarded fragment GF,  $k$ -variable fragments  $FO^k, \dots$

can typically relate levels  $\equiv_L^\ell$  of L-equivalence in (2)  
to  $\sim^\ell$  between the game graphs  
of the L-evaluation game (1)

## back to bisimulation & basic modal logic ML

### on graph-like structures

with binary accessibility relations  $\mathbf{R} = (R_1, \dots)$   $\rightsquigarrow$  modalities  $\diamond_i / \square_i$   
and unary predicates  $\mathbf{P} = (P_1, \dots)$   $\rightsquigarrow$  basic propositions  $p_i$

atomic formulae:  $\perp, \top$  and  $p_i$

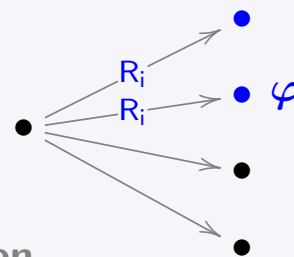
booleans connectives:  $\wedge, \vee, \neg$

modal quantification:

$$\diamond_i \varphi \equiv \exists y (R_i xy \wedge \varphi(y))$$

$$\square_i \varphi \equiv \forall y (R_i xy \rightarrow \varphi(y))$$

relativised FO quantification



### observation

- 0-bisimulation condition  $\sim^0$  matches atomic equiv.  $\equiv_{ML}^0$
- bisimulation b&f matches modal quantification pattern

### modal Ehrenfeucht–Fraïssé/Karp thms

$\mathcal{A}, a \sim^\ell \mathcal{B}, b \Leftrightarrow \mathcal{A}, a \equiv_{\text{ML}}^\ell \mathcal{B}, b^*$  ML-equiv. to depth  $\ell$

$\mathcal{A}, a \sim^\infty \mathcal{B}, b \Leftrightarrow \mathcal{A}, a \equiv_{\text{ML}}^\infty \mathcal{B}, b$   $\text{ML}_\infty$ -equiv.

in full analogy with classical picture:

$\mathcal{A}, a \simeq^\ell \mathcal{B}, b \Leftrightarrow \mathcal{A}, a \equiv_{\text{FO}}^\ell \mathcal{B}, b^*$  FO-equiv. to qfr-depth  $\ell$

$\mathcal{A}, a \simeq^\infty \mathcal{B}, b \Leftrightarrow \mathcal{A}, a \equiv_{\text{FO}}^\infty \mathcal{B}, b$   $\text{FO}_\infty$ -equiv.

### corollary

- the semantics of  $\text{ML} \subseteq \text{ML}_\infty$  is invariant under bisimulation
- the semantics of ML-formulae of depth  $\ell$  is invariant under  $\sim^\ell$

where  $\simeq^\ell$  has finite index

## variations & the quintessential nature of bisimulation

- **bisimulation in game graphs for other logics**

states: admissible assignments

transitions: quantification patterns

“all Ehrenfeucht–Fraïssé games are bisimulation games”

close to original (basic modal) bisimulation:

- **two-way and global bisimulation  $\approx$**   
with extended challenge/response options  
(backward moves & jumps) for corresponding modalities

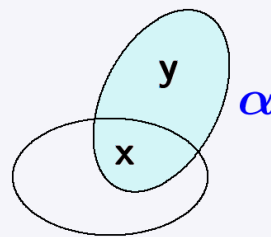
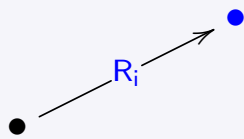
qualitatively different:

- **guarded bisimulation**  
from graphs to hypergraphs, with moves respecting overlaps

## guarded bisimulation: ... hypergraph of visible patches

as an example of the systematic variability  
and relationship between games (1) & (2)

access to (singleton) worlds	$\iff$	access to guarded patches
propositional information	$\iff$	local isomorphism type
modalities in ML	$\iff$	guarded quantification in GF
$\forall y(R;xy \rightarrow \varphi(y))$		$\forall \mathbf{y}(\alpha(\mathbf{y}) \rightarrow \varphi(\mathbf{y}))$
moves along accessibility edges	$\iff$	moves between patches that respect overlaps



## bisimulation — modal Ehrenfeucht–Fraïssé

**typical example** of a bisimulation issue and its FO counterpart:

**when does  $\equiv_{ML} (\sim^\omega)$  coincide with full bisimulation  $\sim$  ?**

**when does  $\equiv_{FO} (\simeq^\omega)$  coincide with partial isomorphy  $\simeq^\infty$  ?**

### Hennessy–Milner thm (the modal answer)

over suitably saturated models,  $\sim^\omega (\equiv_{ML})$  coincides with  $\sim (\equiv_{ML}^\infty)$

- **finitely branching**
- **modally or  $\omega$ -saturated** ( $\omega$ -saturation is good also for  $\simeq^\omega / \simeq^\infty$ )
- **recursively saturated pairs** (also good for  $\simeq^\omega / \simeq^\infty$ )

crucial in classical model-theoretic arguments for modal logics



## model theory of modal logics

**thesis:** information-theoretically, Kripke structures are meant to represent bisimulation types just as transition systems stand for possible system behaviours

**modal model theory = bisimulation invariant model theory**

here briefly look at:

- tree unfoldings
- tree model property & finite model property
- **expressive completeness (classical and fmt)**

## tree unfoldings (cf. game trees)

**tree unfolding:** unfolding  $\mathcal{A}$  into  $\mathcal{A}_a^*$

based on the set of labelled directed paths  $\sigma$  rooted at  $a$  in  $\mathcal{A}$  with natural projection to endpoints as a homomorphism

$$\begin{array}{lcl} \pi: \mathcal{A}_a^* & \longrightarrow & \mathcal{A} \\ \sigma & \longmapsto & \pi(\sigma) \end{array}$$

that induces a bisimulation  $\mathcal{A}_a^*, a \sim \mathcal{A}, a$

$\pi: \mathcal{A}_a^* \longrightarrow \mathcal{A}$  is an example of a bisimilar covering:

- $\pi$  is a homomorphism: the forth-property
  - $\pi$  has lifting property: the back-property
- for its graph  $\{(\sigma, \pi(\sigma)) : \sigma \in \mathcal{A}_a^*\}$ :  
a bisimulation relation

## tree unfoldings and tree model property

bisimilar unfoldings into tree structures }  
preservation under bisimulation }  $\Rightarrow$  tree model property

### **tree model property:**

---

for all  $\sim$ -invariant logics  $ML, \dots, L_\mu, \dots, ML_\infty$ :  
every satisfiable formula has a tree model

**important:** can employ good model-theoretic and algorithmic properties of trees, MSO on trees, tree automata, ...  
for robust decidability and complexity results for modal logics

## finite (tree) model property

for basic modal logic ML (and some close relatives)  
even get finite tree models, hence the

### **finite model property:**

---

every satisfiable formula of ML has a finite (tree) model

**ad-hoc method:** for  $\varphi \in ML$  of depth  $\ell$ ,  
truncate tree model at depth  $\ell$  (preserving  $\sim^\ell$ )  
and prune  $\sim^\ell$ -equivalent siblings (finite index)

**more generic method:** passage to  $\sim^\ell$ -quotient of any model yields a finite model (usually not a tree model)

generalises to some extensions  
but not, in this simple form, e.g. to GF ( $\rightarrow$  Grädel, 1999)

## expressive completeness of modal logics

... relative to FO, consider

$\mathbf{FO}/\sim := \begin{cases} \text{the classes of } \sim\text{-invariant FO-properties of} \\ \text{(just finite, or all) ptd Kripke structures} \end{cases}$

**remark:**

**semantic classes** corresponding to undecidable conditions like  $\sim$ -invariance are at the heart of classical 'preservation theorems', which really concern the quest for **syntactic representation**

in this case, the positive answer underpins the role of ML, twice:

$\mathbf{FO}/\sim \equiv \mathbf{ML}$  **classically, van Benthem (1983)**

$\mathbf{FO}/\sim \equiv \mathbf{ML}$  **in fnt, Rosen (1997)**

## expressive completeness: $\mathbf{FO}/\sim \equiv \mathbf{ML}$

it suffices to show that for  $\varphi(x) \in \mathbf{FO}$

$\sim$ -invariance implies  $\sim^\ell$ -invariance for some finite level  $\ell \in \mathbb{N}$

a non-classical compactness property (!)

then  $\varphi \equiv \varphi' \in \mathbf{ML}$  by Ehrenfeucht–Fraïssé:

ML-definability of  $\sim^\ell$ -classes & finite index

**NB: two, a priori independent, readings: classical & fnt**

## expressive completeness: generic classical approach

$$\sim\text{-invariance} \Rightarrow \sim^\ell\text{-invariance for some } \ell \quad (*)$$

classical compactness argument with upgrading along  $\equiv_{FO}$ -axis through Hennessy–Milner property for  $\omega$ -saturated structures

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{A}, a & \xrightarrow{\equiv_{ML}} & \mathcal{B}, b \\ \downarrow \wr & & \downarrow \wr \\ \hat{\mathcal{A}}, a & \xrightarrow{\sim} & \hat{\mathcal{B}}, b \end{array} \quad \omega\text{-saturated extns}$$

elegant and smooth, but no information regarding target  $\ell$   
and not an option for fmt version

## expressive completeness: a constructive approach

$$\sim\text{-invariance} \Rightarrow \sim^\ell\text{-invariance for some } \ell$$

upgrading along  $\sim$ -axis of  $\sim^{\ell(q)}$  ( $\equiv_{ML}^\ell$ ) to  $\simeq^q$  ( $\equiv_{FO}^q$ ) through  $\sim$ -preserving model transformations

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{A}, a & \xrightarrow{\sim^{\ell(q)}} & \mathcal{B}, b \\ \downarrow \wr & & \downarrow \wr \\ \hat{\mathcal{A}}, \hat{a} & \xrightarrow{\equiv_{FO}^q} & \hat{\mathcal{B}}, \hat{b} \end{array} \quad \text{bisimilar companions}$$

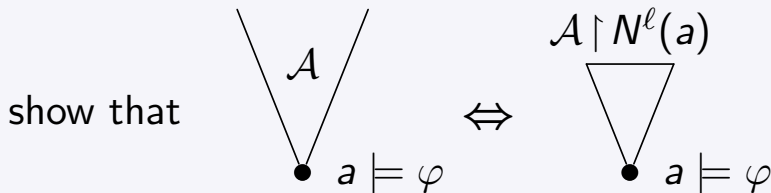
more constructive, potentially suitable for fmt,  
also yielding information regarding  $\ell(q)$

## expressive completeness: $\text{FO}/\sim \equiv \text{ML}$

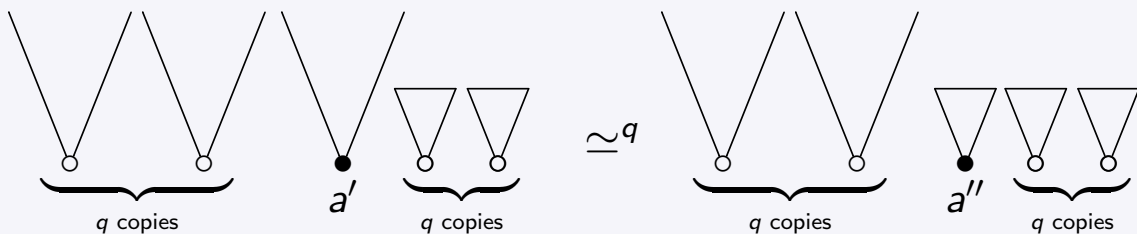
a simple argument (good classically & fnt)  
using the locality of  $\text{FO}/\sim$  & Ehrenfeucht–Fraïssé

$$\sim\text{-invariance} \Rightarrow \sim^\ell\text{-invariance for } \ell = 2^q - 1$$

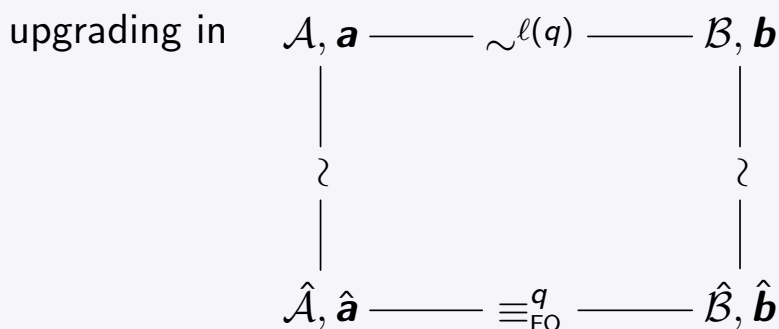
(optimal)



in  $q$ -round FO game on:



## a more generic constructive approach



requires (finite) model transformations  $\mathcal{A}/\mathcal{B} \mapsto \hat{\mathcal{A}}/\hat{\mathcal{B}}$  that are

- compatible with bisimulation:  
**ideally want  $\approx$  coverings** (for symmetry & homogeneity)
- suitable to eliminate all obstacles for  $\simeq^q$  ( $\equiv_{\text{FO}}^q$ )  
that are *not controlled* by any level of  $\sim^\ell$ :

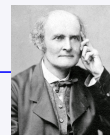
**need to avoid short cycles & small multiplicities**

## part II: variations, generalisations & challenges

in this part (survey style):

- **technical variations: finite bisimilar coverings**  
avoiding short cycles in graph & hypergraph coverings  
in products with finite Cayley graphs  
... for dealing with global and guarded bisimulation
- **classically beyond FO to MSO:** Janin–Walukiewicz  
... and a big ? in finite model theory
- **essentially modal variations, within & beyond FO:**  
... team & inquisitive semantics, common knowledge

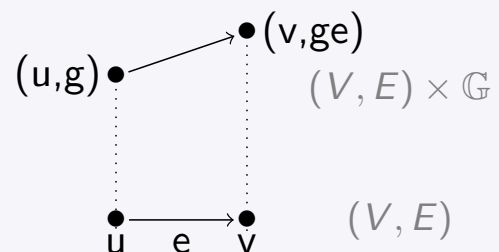
### combinatorics of finite coverings



for local acyclicity in bisimilar coverings

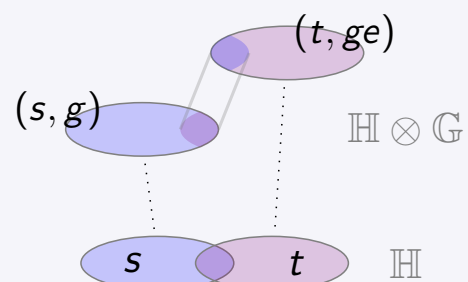
of **Kripke frames** (=graphs):

in products with Cayley graphs of groups w/o short generator cycles



of **guarded frames** (=hypergraphs):

in products with Cayley graphs of groups w/o short coset cycles  
much trickier – why?



... and the construction of finite groups (better still: groupoids) that avoid certain patterns (equalities, relations) is a non-trivial algebraic-combinatorial challenge (with further applications)

## from FO to MSO

---

**theorem** (Janin–Walukiewicz, 1996)

---

$$\text{MSO}/\sim \equiv L_\mu$$

modal  $\mu$ -calculus  $L_\mu$  is expressively complete for the class of all  $\sim$ -invariant MSO-definable properties of pointed Kripke structures

**proof** based on

- (1) tree model property (for any  $\sim$ -invariant phenomenon!)
- (2) analysis of MSO model-checking by tree automata

**OPEN:** status in finite model theory

where neither (1) nor (2) applies, so that known finite coverings do not seem to help

## from MSO to GSO

---

joint work with Achim Blumensath & Erich Grädel

via analysis of game trees for guarded bisimulation, guarded tree unfoldings, and reduction to Janin–Walukiewicz get

$$\rightsquigarrow \boxed{\text{GSO}/\sim_g \equiv \mu\text{GF}}$$

over the class of all guarded structures

**again: classical setting only!**

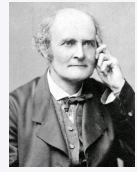
## essentially modal variations within FO (1)

joint work with Anuj Dawar

- global finite coverings allow for local acyclicity (and finitely boosted branching) throughout

$$\rightsquigarrow \boxed{\text{FO}/\approx \equiv \text{ML}[\forall, -]}$$

for classical & fmt analogue of van Benthem–Rosen

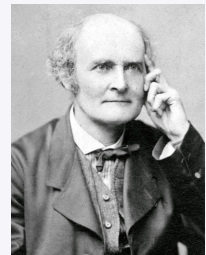


- restrictions to several relevant classes of (finite) frames: reflexive, irreflexive, symmetric ... as you would expect

- quite different: bisimilar hypergraph coverings based on coset-acyclicity in Cayley graphs

$$\rightsquigarrow \boxed{\text{FO}/\sim_g \equiv \text{GF}} \quad (\text{O}_{2003})$$

for classical & fmt analogue of van Benthem–Rosen



## essentially modal variations within FO (2)

joint work with Anuj Dawar

- over rooted transitive frames (which defeat locality):

$$\rightsquigarrow \boxed{\text{FO}/\sim \equiv \text{ML}[*] \equiv \text{MSO}/\sim}$$

over finite or wellfounded rooted transitive frames

(finite) Löb and Grzegorzczuk frames also motivated by information & proof theory

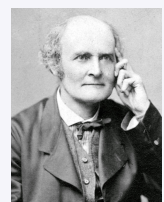
- through global finite coverings for multi-agent S5-frames:

equivalence classes (information states)  $\leftrightarrow$   
hyperedges with pre-processed simple overlaps

$$\rightsquigarrow \boxed{\text{FO}/\sim \equiv \text{ML}}$$

over (finite) multi-agent epistemic S5 models

motivated by knowledge representation





## non-classically beyond FO (1): team semantic ML

treat sets  $X$  of worlds in Kripke structures as information states arbitrary rather than relationally encoded subsets  $X$

- bisimulation  $\rightsquigarrow$  team bisimulation (element-wise match of sets)
- basic team ML (with team disjunction & just nnf negation) is “flat” with standard translations  $\forall x(x \in X \rightarrow \varphi(x))$ , hence too weak to cover all  $\sim$ -invariant team properties that are FO-definable in the form  $\psi(X)$  (FO<sup>T</sup>-definable)
- augmented by strict negation, get ML[non] with

$$\rightsquigarrow \boxed{\text{FO}^T / \sim \equiv \text{ML}[\text{non}]}$$

full team-semantic analogue of van Benthem–Rosen with ‘constructive’ proof lifted to (scattered) teams

## non-classically beyond FO (2): inquisitive ML

joint work with Ivano

inquisitive Kripke frames give worlds access to sets of information states rather than sets of worlds

$\rightsquigarrow$  one level up & akin with team semantic concepts

- inquisitive modal logic INQML extends basic (team) ML and defines persistent state properties that are (obviously!) invariant under the inquisitive variant of bisimulation
- natural 2-sorted relational encodings of models give FO access to some MSO-features, and in this context

$$\rightsquigarrow \boxed{\text{FO}^\downarrow / \sim \equiv \text{INQML}}$$

over (finite) relational inquisitive models

full inquisitive analogue of van Benthem–Rosen over non-elementary classes of relational structures, on FO/MSO borderline esp. in the epistemic S5 version (!)

## non-classically beyond FO (3): common knowledge

joint work with Felix Canavoi

### common knowledge logic ML[CK]:

multi-modal S5 with 'common knowledge' modalities

$\Box_\alpha$  for sets  $\alpha$  of agents

intuition: "among  $\alpha$ , everybody knows that everybody knows that everybody knows that ..." (ad infinitum)

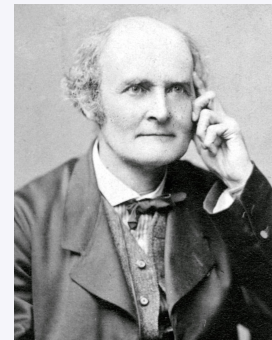
- the new  $\Box_\alpha$  is the box modality for  $R_\alpha = \mathbf{TC}(\bigcup_{i \in \alpha} R_i)$   
beyond FO due to non-elementary nature of TC (!)  
but with the usual standard translation into FO over the richer non-elementary class of CK-frames with the new  $R_\alpha$

## non-classically beyond FO (3): ML over CK-frames

ML[CK] is just ML over CK-frames:  
S5-frames with induced equivalences  $R_\alpha$

which really seem to defeat locality!

where once more  
Cayley helps a lot



- need tractable forms of local acyclicity, simultaneously at all levels  $\alpha$  (at nested levels of granularity)
- using finite bisimilar coverings in products with Cayley graphs of finite groups w/o short coset cycles, can show:

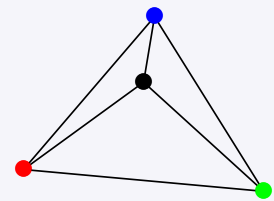
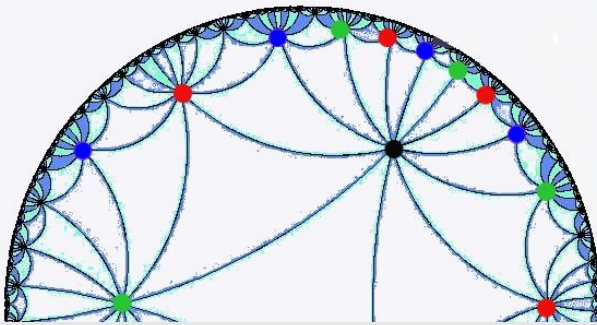
$$\rightsquigarrow \boxed{\text{FO}/\sim \equiv \text{ML} \equiv \text{ML}[\text{CK}]}$$

over the class of all (finite) CK-models

full analogue of van Benthem–Rosen  
in a very non-classical setting

## kind of a summary

- forms of bisimulation reflect what matters (up to what?)
- bisimulation (generic E–F) as the back&forth (how similar?)
- variations on modal accessibility (access to what?)
- semantic characterisations (what up to what?)
- bisimilar coverings & model transformations (combinatorics!)



## some pointers

## my hobby horses

- V. Goranko and M. Otto: Model theory of modal logics.  
In: Handbook of Modal Logic, 2006
- M. Otto: Elementary proof of the van Benthem–Rosen characterisation theorem, TUD preprint, 2004
- M. Otto: Bisimulation invariance and finite structures.  
In: LNL, Logic Colloquium 02, 2006
- M. Otto: Modal and guarded characterisation theorems over finite transition systems, Annals of Pure and Applied Logic, 2004
- A. Dawar and M. Otto: Modal characterisation theorems over special classes of frames, Annals of Pure and Applied Logic, 2009
- E. Grädel and M. Otto: The freedoms of (guarded) bisimulation.  
In: Johan van Benthem on Logic and Information Dynamics, 2014
- I. Ciardelli and M. Otto: Inquisitive bisimulation, J. Symbolic Logic, 2021
- M. Otto: Highly acyclic groups, hypergraph covers and the guarded fragment, Journal of the ACM, 2012
- M. Otto: Acyclicity in finite groups and groupoids, arXiv, 2022