

On Kock's (and Sattler's) fat Delta

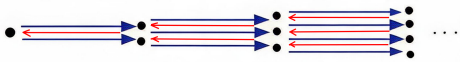
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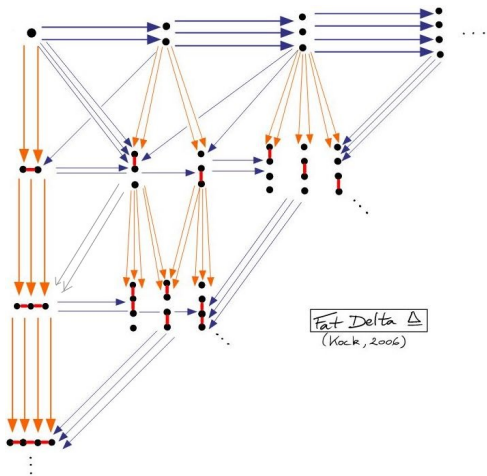
(based on joint work with Tom de Jong and Stiéphen Pradal)

Formalizing Higher Categories at the Institut Mittag-Leffler

11 June 2026



simplex category Δ
(positive finite ordinals)



Joachim Kock's^a *fat Delta* $\underline{\Delta}$,
a direct replacement^b of Δ

A variation (“Sattler’s fat Delta”) was introduced with a different motivation.^c

^aKock, *Weak identity arrows in higher categories*, 2006.

^bSattler, *Kock’s fat Δ is a direct replacement of Δ* , 2017.

^cKraus and Sattler, *Space-valued diagrams, type-theoretically*, 2017.

Joachim Kock, *Weak identity arrows in higher categories*, 2006.

- 1 1-categories: strict units, strict associativity

$$f \circ \text{id} = f = \text{id} \circ f \quad \text{and} \quad (h \circ g) \circ f = h \circ (g \circ f)$$

- 2 higher categories: strict/weak units, strict/weak composition structure

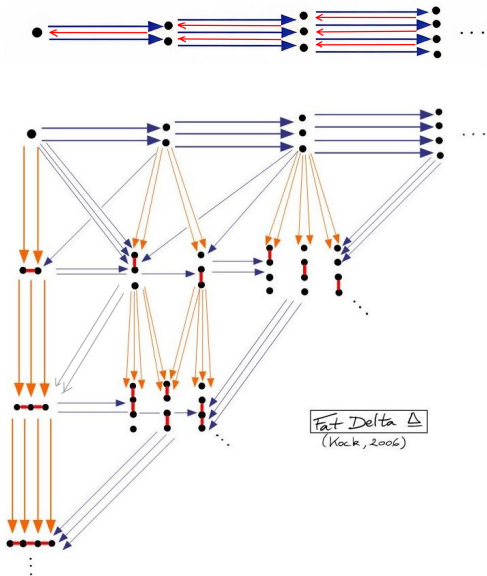
- 3 Kock's weak higher categories (based on $\underline{\Delta}$): weak units, strict associativity

$$f \circ \text{id} \simeq f \simeq \text{id} \circ f \quad \text{and} \quad (h \circ g) \circ f = h \circ (g \circ f)$$

Simpson's conjecture: (weak units, weak composition) \simeq
(weak units, strict composition)

Carlos Simpson, *Homotopy types of strict 3-groupoids*, 1998.

Kock's motivation for fat Delta (II)



Model for "weak units, weak associativity":
Presheaves with horn lifting condition

Model for "weak units, strict associativity":
Presheaves that send orange maps to equivalences, with strict Segal condition

The type theory motivation for fat Delta

Type theorists like *indexed* presentations (rather than *fibered*):

- ☺ A graph is a set V , a set E , and maps $s, t : E \rightarrow V$.
- ☺ A graph is a set V and a family $E : V \rightarrow V \rightarrow \text{Set}$.

Reason: Avoids equalities.

Type theorists consider types, and types \sim spaces.¹ Everything up to homotopy
 \Rightarrow there's (in general) no type of 1-functors from a given category \mathcal{C} to the
category of types.



¹Your mileage may vary.

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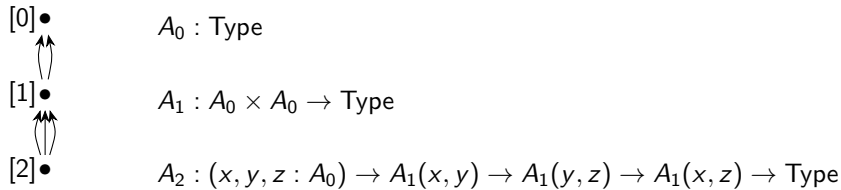
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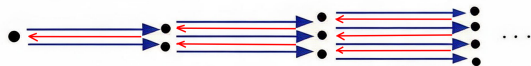
General approach: interpret arrows as type dependencies. Another example is Δ_+^{op} ("semisimplicial types") restricted to objects $[0]$, $[1]$, $[2]$:



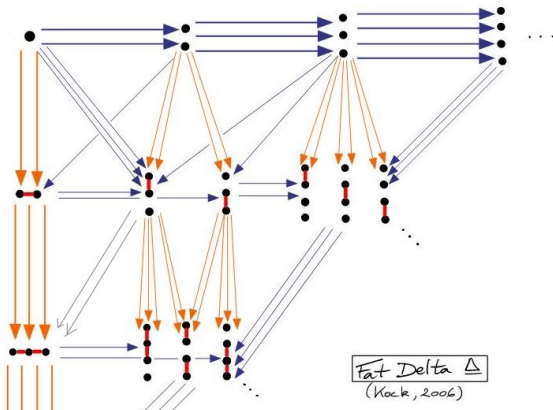
¹Your mileage may vary.

The type theory motivation for fat Delta (II)

- This representation only works for inverse categories (maps only “go downwards,” i.e. no cyclic dependencies).
- It only captures Reedy fibrant diagrams, but we work “up to homotopy” anyway.



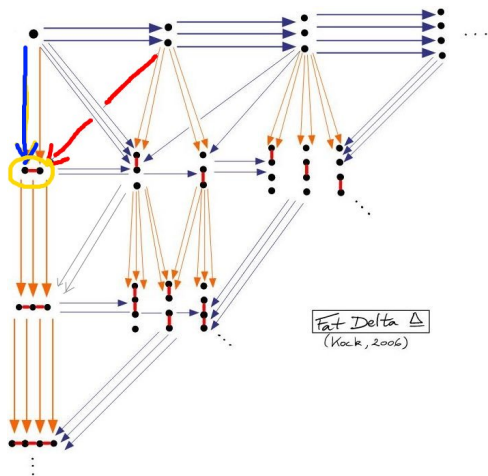
“cyclic dependencies”



no “cyclic dependencies”

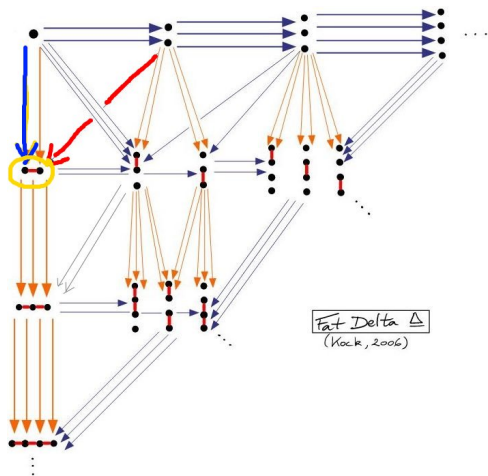
(It’s a direct category, i.e. its opposite is inverse)

The type theory motivation for fat Delta (III)



Extend prev. example from Δ_+^{op} to $\underline{\Delta}^{\text{op}}$:
 $A_{\bullet-\bullet}(x, y, p)$ means “ p is equivalence”;
blue arrow being an equivalence means
“exactly one outgoing equivalence”;
and so on.

The type theory motivation for fat Delta (III)



Extend prev. example from Δ_+^{op} to $\underline{\Delta}^{\text{op}}$:
 $A_{\bullet-\bullet}(x, y, p)$ means “ p is equivalence”;
blue arrow being an equivalence means
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and so on.

forthcoming PhD thesis of Stiéphen Pradal:

model structure on $[\underline{\Delta}^{\text{op}}, \text{Spaces}]$

\simeq (Quillen equivalent)

Harpaz’s model structure

(and thus also to Rezk’s model structure
on $[\Delta^{\text{op}}, \text{Spaces}]$)

Definition (Kock's fat Delta)

The category $\underline{\Delta}$ is defined as $(\Delta_{\rightarrow})_{\text{Mono}}$, where Δ_{\rightarrow} is the restriction of the simplex category to its epimorphisms. Thus

objects: epimorphisms $\eta : [m] \twoheadrightarrow [n]$ in Δ

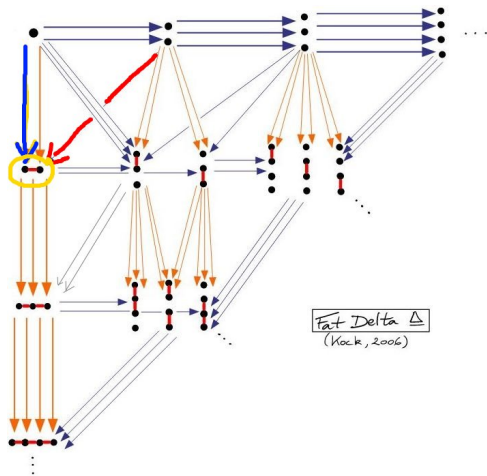
morphisms: $f : \eta_0 \rightarrow \eta_1$ is a commutative squares in Δ

$$\begin{array}{ccc} [m_0] & \xrightarrow{\bar{f}} & [m_1] \\ \eta_0 \downarrow & & \downarrow \eta_1 \\ [n_0] & \xrightarrow{\underline{f}} & [n_1] \end{array}$$

whose horizontal top arrow is a monomorphism.

Sattler's fat Delta: The same, but the top arrow merely *exists*.

Kock's vs Sattler's fat Delta



Kock's fat Delta:

$A_{\bullet \rightarrow \bullet}(x, y, p)$ means “ p is equivalence”;
blue arrow being an equivalence means
“exactly one outgoing equivalence”;
and so on.

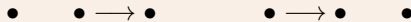
Sattler's fat Delta:

identify vertical arrows that are “equal up
to connected components”

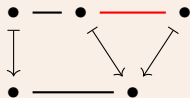
$A_{\bullet \rightarrow \bullet}(x, p)$ means “ p is an identity”;
blue arrow being an equivalence means
“one identity per object”;
and so on.

- A semi-ordinal is a semi-category associated with a total strict order relation.
- A relative semi-ordinal is a semi-ordinal equipped with a wide sub-semi-category.
- Kock defined $\underline{\Delta}$ as the category of finite non-empty relative semi-ordinal and marking-preserving functors.
- Full and faithful functor $rso : \underline{\Delta} \hookrightarrow \text{RelSemiCat}$ where RelSemiCat denotes relative semi-categories and marking-preserving functors.

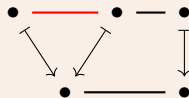
The relative semi-ordinals



correspond to the epimorphisms



and



Horizontal and vertical inclusions

- The horizontal inclusion

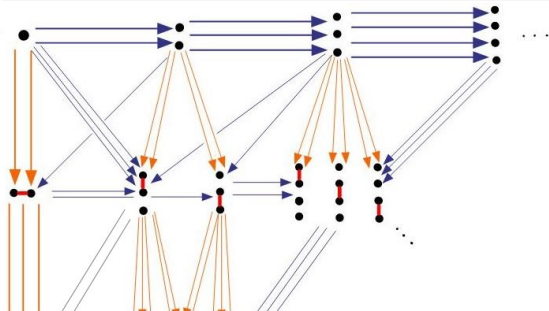
$$(-)^b : \Delta_+ \hookrightarrow \underline{\Delta},$$

maps $[n]$ to $\text{id}_{[n]}$. The image of the horizontal inclusion corresponds to relative semi-ordinals with nothing marked.

- The vertical inclusion

$$(-)^\sharp : \Delta_+ \hookrightarrow \underline{\Delta}$$

maps a semi-ordinal $[n]$ to $[n] \twoheadrightarrow [0]$. The objects in the image of $(-)^{\sharp}$ correspond to the relative semi-ordinals with everything marked.



Over to Simona.

- The theory of monads with arities, originated in the work of Berger, Melliès, and Weber, was applied to a number of categories that proved fundamental in higher category theory.
- They include Δ , Joyal's disk category Θ_n , the dendroidal category etc.
- Applying the theory of monad with arities to fat Delta, we will
 - prove a nerve theorem for relative semicategories;
 - show that fat Delta is a hypermoment category.

- A functor $R : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{F}$ is said to be a *local right adjoint* if the induced functor $R_X : \mathcal{E}/X \rightarrow \mathcal{F}/RX$ has a left adjoint L_X , for each object X .
- A morphism $g : A \rightarrow RX$ is said to be *R-generic* if, given α, β and γ making the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} A & \xrightarrow{\alpha} & RX' \\ g \downarrow & \overset{\gamma}{\dashrightarrow} R\delta & \downarrow R\gamma \\ RX & \xrightarrow{R\beta} & RY \end{array}$$

there is a unique $\delta : X \rightarrow X'$ such that $R\delta g = \alpha$ and $\beta = \gamma\delta$.

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Proposition

For a functor $R : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{F}$ where \mathcal{E} has a terminal object, the following are equivalent:

- R is a local right adjoint.
- the functor $R_1 : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{F}/R1$ has a left adjoint;
- each $f : A \rightarrow R1$ factors as $A \xrightarrow{g} RX \xrightarrow{R!_X} R1$, where g is *R-generic*.

- Let \mathcal{E} be a category. A full subcategory \mathcal{A} and the inclusion functor $i_{\mathcal{A}} : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}$ are called *dense* if \mathcal{A} is small and the associated *nerve functor*

$$\mathcal{N}_{\mathcal{A}} : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \widehat{\mathcal{A}}, \quad x \mapsto \mathcal{E}(i_{\mathcal{A}}, x)$$

is fully faithful. The dense subcategory \mathcal{A} is also called a *dense generator*.

- Density is equivalent to requiring that any object X in \mathcal{E} is the colimit over the comma category \mathcal{A}/X given by the composition $i_{\mathcal{A}}\pi_X$, where $\pi_X : \mathcal{A}/X \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ is the domain projection.
- Let us call such colimits *canonical \mathcal{A} -colimits*.

- A monad (T, μ, ν) on a category \mathcal{E} with a dense generator $i_{\mathcal{A}} : \mathcal{A} \hookrightarrow \mathcal{E}$ is called a *monad with arities* if the composition $\mathcal{N}_{\mathcal{A}}T$ preserves canonical \mathcal{A} -colimits.
- Denote by $EM(T)$ the Eilenberg-Moore category consisting of T -algebras (X, α) , $\alpha : TX \rightarrow X$ with $\alpha T(\alpha) = \alpha\mu_X$, $\alpha\nu_X = \text{Id}_X$ and morphisms commuting with the T -algebra structure.
- Let Θ_T be obtained by factoring

$$F^T i_{\mathcal{A}} : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow EM(T)$$

into bijective on objects followed by fully faithful $\mathcal{A} \xrightarrow{j_T} \Theta_T \xrightarrow{i_T} EM(T)$, so Θ_T is the full subcategory spanned by the free T -algebras over \mathcal{A}

Theorem (Berger, Melliès, Weber 2012)

Let T be a monad with arities \mathcal{A} . The nerve functor $\mathcal{N}_T : EM(T) \rightarrow \hat{\Theta}_T$ associated to $i_T : \Theta_T \rightarrow EM(T)$ is fully faithful and its essential image is spanned by the presheaves whose restriction along $j_T : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \Theta_T$ belongs to the essential image of $\mathcal{N}_{\mathcal{A}} : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \hat{\mathcal{A}}$.

- A monad is *strongly cartesian* if it is cartesian and a local right adjoint.
- Let T be a strongly cartesian monad on a finitely complete category \mathcal{E} with a dense generator $i_{\mathcal{A}} : \mathcal{A} \hookrightarrow \mathcal{E}$. The **category of canonical arities** $Ar_{\mathcal{A}}(T)$ is the essential image of the composition

$$\mathcal{A}/T1 \xrightarrow{i_{\mathcal{A}}/T1} \mathcal{E}/T1 \xrightarrow{L_1} \mathcal{E}$$

where $L_1 : \mathcal{E}/T1 \rightarrow \mathcal{E}$ is left adjoint to $T_1 : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}/T1$.

- A dense generator \mathcal{A} of \mathcal{E} is **T -generically closed** if for any T -generic morphism $A \rightarrow TB$ with A in \mathcal{A} , there is an object isomorphic to B which belongs to \mathcal{A} .

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Theorem (Berger, Melliès, Weber 2012)

Suppose T is a strongly cartesian monad on \mathcal{E} with a dense generator \mathcal{A} . Then the category of canonical arities $Ar_{\mathcal{A}}(T)$ is T -generically closed and provides T with arities $Ar_{\mathcal{A}}(T)$.

- $T : \text{Gph} \rightarrow \text{Gph}$ free category monad on graphs.
- Arities: Δ_0 (subcategory of distance-preserving maps)
- $\Theta_T : \Delta$.
- Nerve functor $\mathcal{N} : \text{Cat} \rightarrow \hat{\Delta}$ is fully faithful.
- Essential image: simplicial sets satisfying Segal condition.

- There is a free-forgetful adjunction

$$F : \mathbf{Gph} \rightleftarrows \mathbf{seCat} : U$$

between graphs and semi-categories. FX is the path semi-category of X .

- The corresponding monad $\mathfrak{f} : \mathbf{Gph} \rightarrow \mathbf{Gph}$ is the free relative semi-category monad.

Proposition

The monad $\mathfrak{f} : \mathbf{Gph} \rightarrow \mathbf{Gph}$ is strongly cartesian.

- There is a free-forgetful adjunction

$$F^r : \text{Gph}^r \rightleftarrows \text{seCat}^r : U^r$$

where Gph^r is the category of relative graphs.

- The corresponding monad $\mathfrak{f}^r : \text{Gph}^r \rightarrow \text{Gph}^r$ is the free relative semi-category monad.

Proposition

The monad $\mathfrak{f}^r : \text{Gph}^r \rightarrow \text{Gph}^r$ is strongly cartesian.

- We can provide arities to the free relative semi-category monad \mathfrak{f}^r by fixing a dense generator of \mathbf{Gph}^r .
- If we take the smallest dense generator, generated by $[0], [1]^b, [1]^\sharp$, the canonical arities correspond to the full subcategory of linearly ordered graphs that are fully marked or unmarked.
- To capture the whole of $\underline{\Delta}$ we refine the dense generator to include the partially marked objects.

- Let \mathcal{A} be the full subcategory of linearly ordered graphs with no two adjacent edges of the same markings; for instance:

$$\langle \bullet \xrightarrow{\text{red}} \bullet \longrightarrow \bullet \xrightarrow{\text{red}} \bullet \longrightarrow \bullet \rangle,$$

$$\langle \bullet \longrightarrow \bullet \xrightarrow{\text{red}} \bullet \longrightarrow \bullet \xrightarrow{\text{red}} \bullet \rangle$$

- The category of canonical arities $Ar_{\mathcal{A}}(\mathfrak{f}^r)$ is the full subcategory of partially marked linear graphs.

Theorem (De Jong, K., P., Pradal)

The nerve functor $\mathcal{N} : \text{seCat}^r \rightarrow \hat{\Delta}$ is fully faithful. Its essential image is spanned by the presheaves whose restriction along $j : \underline{\Delta}_0 \rightarrow \underline{\Delta}$ belong to the essential image of $\mathcal{N}_0 : \text{Gph}^r \rightarrow \hat{\Delta}_0$.

- Hypermoment categories are a general setting to study operadic structures.
- Given a hypermoment category \mathbb{C} , there are notions of \mathbb{C} -operads and \mathbb{C}_∞ -monoids,
- Examples
 - $\mathbb{C} = \Gamma$, symmetric operads, E_∞ -spaces.
 - $\mathbb{C} = \Delta$, non-symmetric operads, A_∞ -spaces.
 - $\mathbb{C} = \Theta_n$, n -operads, E_n -spaces.

Definition (Berger)

A **hypermoment category** \mathbb{C} is a category equipped with an orthogonal factorization system (called active-inert) and a map $\gamma_{\mathbb{C}} : \mathbb{C} \rightarrow \Gamma$ such that

- i) γ preserves active (resp. inert) morphisms.
- ii) For each object A of \mathbb{C} and each morphism $\{0\} \rightarrow \gamma_{\mathbb{C}}(A)$ there is an essential unique inert lift $U \rightarrow A$ in \mathbb{C} where U is such each active morphism with target U has one and only one inert section.

Theorem (De Jong, K., P., Pradal)

The category $\underline{\Delta}$ is a hypermoment category which is strongly unital and extensional.

- Here, strong unitality allows to have a notion of $\underline{\Delta}$ -operads.
- Extensionality is a property that could led to a notion of $\underline{\Delta}$ -decomposition space.

The classes $\underline{\Delta}_a$ and $\underline{\Delta}_0$ of **active** and **inert** maps in $\underline{\Delta}$ are given by

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 [m] \xrightarrow[\text{active}]{\subset} [m'] & & [m] \xrightarrow[\text{inert}]{\subset} [m'] \\
 \downarrow & \lrcorner & \downarrow \\
 [n] \longrightarrow [n'] & & [n] \longrightarrow [n']
 \end{array}$$

where an active map m in Δ is end-point preserving and inert map m in Δ is distance preserving.

- T. de Jong, N. Kraus, S. Paoli, S. Pradal, A study of Kock's fat delta, arXiv.2503.10963v1
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- N. Kraus, C. Sattler. Space-valued diagrams, type-theoretically (extended abstract). 2017. DOI:10.48550/arXiv.1704.04543
- S. Paoli, Weakly globular double categories and weak units, arXiv:2008.11180v4, *Higher Structures* 9(1), 269-328 (2025)
- C. Sattler. Kock's fat Δ is a direct replacement of Δ . 2017.