

# Contracts, Simulations, and Sessions

Formal Verification of Compilers, Smart Contracts, and  
Protocols

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May 1, 2026

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This work was partially supported by a grant from IO Global (IOG)  
and matching funds from the State of Wyoming.

# Motivation

- Smart contracts move real money. Bugs lead to large losses.
- The programming languages and tools need to work as expected.
- Formal methods can be used to give confidence across the whole development pipeline.
  - Target Semantics
  - Compiler
  - Transformations
  - Protocols

# Contributions

1. Marlowe: A small-step operational semantics and proof of correctness with respect to the preexisting evaluator.
2. Faustus: A smart contract programming language with parameterized abstractions, expressions for guarded commands based on CCS (the Calculus of Communicating Systems), a type checker, and verified compilation to Marlowe.
3. Transformation verification: Formal proof of observational equivalence between original and transformed contracts via weak bisimulation.
4. STILL: A standalone interactive tactic-based theorem prover for dependent session types with process extraction.
5. Verified protocols: The axiom of choice, natural numbers using polymorphic session types, a bit counter with changing network topology, and an English auction protocol.

Marlowe / Faustus / Transformation Verification Overview

STILL Design

Protocol Verifications

Conclusion

Marlowe / Faustus /  
Transformation Verification  
Overview

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- A domain-specific language (DSL) for financial contracts<sup>1</sup>.
- Runs on the Cardano blockchain.
- Contracts always terminate and release funds within a bounded amount of time (deadlock safety and liquidity).
- The evaluator has reference implementations in Isabelle/HOL and Haskell.

## Goal

Define a proof-friendly small-step semantics and prove it agrees with the existing evaluator.

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<sup>1</sup>Lamela Seijas and Thompson 2018.

# Key Evaluator Functions

- Internal reductions: `reduceContractStep`
- Input matching at a when contract: `applyCases`
- Time interval update and trimming: `fixInterval`

## Proof Strategy

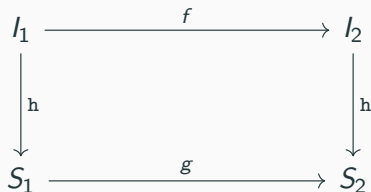
Proved three simulation diagrams:

1. Internal  $\tau$  steps
2. Input processing
3. Timeout behavior

Formalized in a 1,738 line Isabelle/HOL theory file.

## Verification Using Simulation

$f, g, h$  are functions (more generally, relations).  $l_1$  and  $l_2$  are states in the implementation.  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  are states in the specification.



Correctness:  $\forall l_1, l_2, S_1. f l_1 = l_2 \wedge h l_1 = S_1 \Rightarrow$   
 $\exists S_2. h l_2 = S_2 \wedge g S_1 = S_2$

Adequacy:  $\forall l_1, S_1, S_2. h l_1 = S_1 \wedge g S_1 = S_2 \Rightarrow$   
 $\exists l_2. f l_1 = l_2 \wedge h^{-1} S_2 = l_2$

**More simply**

Correctness:  $h \circ f = g \circ h$

Adequacy:  $f \circ h^{-1} = h^{-1} \circ g$

# Marlowe Timeout Behavior Diagram

The diagram showing the correctness of the timeout behavior is given below. To prove correctness we show that the diagram commutes.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} I_1 & \xrightarrow{\uparrow \text{fixInterval } \Delta \gg= \uparrow \text{reduceContractStep}} & I_2 \\ \downarrow \text{Id} & & \downarrow \text{Id} \\ S_1 & \xrightarrow{(\tau, \Delta) \rightarrow_m} & S_2 \end{array}$$

```
lemma marloweSmallStepTimeoutImpliesReduceStep:
  assumes "(When cases t c, state1, env, warnings, payments
    ) →m λ(None, lower, upper) (newCont, newState,
    newTimeEnv1, warnings, payments)) ∧
    fixInterval (lower, upper) state1 = IntervalTrimmed
      newTimeEnv1 newTimeState1"
  shows "reduceContractStep newTimeEnv1 newTimeState1 (When
    cases t c) = Reduced ReduceNoWarning ReduceNoPayment
    newState newCont"
```

- Marlowe has no abstractions or looping control operators, i.e., there are no functions; all Marlowe code is inline. Contracts are huge and massively repetitive.
- Faustus extends Marlowe with parameterized abstractions and guarded commands together with CCS<sup>2</sup> inspired operators for:  
-> Sequencing, <+> Choice, and <\*> Interleaving
- Faustus is statically type-checked and ensures all identifiers and their types are declared before use, and all uses are well-typed.
- The verified compilation to Marlowe maintains liquidity and deadlock safety guarantees.
- Formalized in 10,957 lines across six Isabelle/HOL files.

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<sup>2</sup>Milner 1980.

# Faustus Multi-Signature Example

This Faustus contract compiles to 138,253 lines of Marlowe.

```
when {
  "alice" deposits 1000 "" into @"carol" -> {
    var votes = 0;
    when {
      (("voter1" chooses "agree" -> votes := votes + 1 <+> "voter1" chooses not "agree") <*>
      ("voter2" chooses "agree" -> votes := votes + 1 <+> "voter2" chooses not "agree") <*>
      ("voter3" chooses "agree" -> votes := votes + 1 <+> "voter3" chooses not "agree") <*>
      ("voter4" chooses "agree" -> votes := votes + 1 <+> "voter4" chooses not "agree") <*>
      ("voter5" chooses "agree" -> votes := votes + 1 <+> "voter5" chooses not "agree"))
      -> { if votes >= 3
          then @"carol" pays !"bob" (1000, ""); close
          else @"carol" pays !"alice" (1000, ""); close }
    } after 100 -> { if votes >= 3
        then @"carol" pays !"bob" (1000, ""); close
        else @"carol" pays !"alice" (1000, ""); close }
  }
} after 90 -> { close }
```

Using  $r$  as the number of votes received timing out, the number of expanded traces is:

$$\sum_{r=0}^5 \frac{5!}{(5-r)!} 2^r = 6331$$

# Faustus Compilation

$\mathcal{M}_1, \mathcal{M}_2 \in$  Marlowe states

$\mathcal{I}_1, \mathcal{I}_2 \in$  Intermediate Faustus states

$\mathcal{F}_1, \mathcal{F}_2 \in$  Faustus states

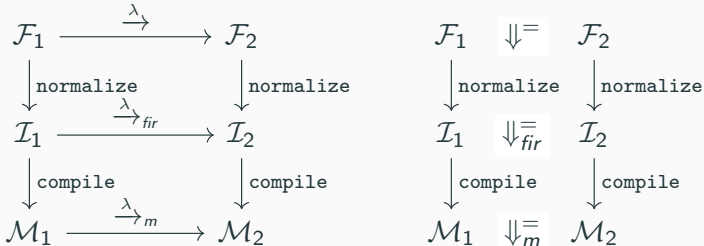
$\xrightarrow{\lambda}_m, \xrightarrow{\lambda}_{fir}, \xrightarrow{\lambda}$  are input processing steps.

$\Downarrow^=, \Downarrow^=_{fir}, \Downarrow^=_m$  zero or all internal reductions.

normalize – expands guard expressions

compile – expands abstractions

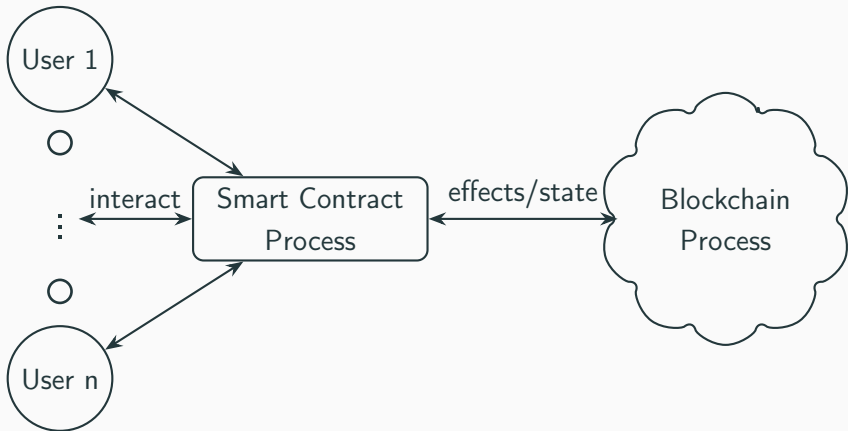
*Correctness of input processing.    Correctness of internal reductions.*



# Smart Contracts as Processes

## High-level idea:

*Users and contracts* modeled as processes that interact with the *blockchain*. We have not modeled the blockchain as  $\pi$ -calculus process, but interact with it through a limited interface.



## Faustus Processes and LTS

- Define Faustus programs as concurrent processes with *observable* ( $\lambda$ ) and *unobservable* ( $\tau$ ) transitions.
- Use a restriction set to hide observable transitions. We write  $F/\mathcal{A}$  to denote the process  $F$  with  $\mathcal{A}$  actions hidden.
- **Proc** is the set of all Faustus configurations.
- **Label** is the set of all actions.
- Define the Faustus *labeled transition system* (LTS) as  $\langle \mathbf{Proc}, \mathbf{Label}, \rightarrow \rangle$ .
- Define an *experiment* as a sequence of observable transitions, with zero or more unobservable transitions between each observable transition.  $s = \lambda_1 \cdots \lambda_n \in \mathbf{Label}^*$ .
- Faustus processes are *observationally equivalent*, written  $\approx$ , when there exists a *weak bisimulation* relation  $\mathbb{R}$  over **Proc** that holds when applying the same experiment  $s$ .

# Verified Transformation

- Motivation: avoid out-of-gas errors that can occur when evaluating long lists of guarded commands.
- Transform a long list of guarded commands into cascading `whens` using a *fresh* choice name.
- Requires disjoint guards to avoid uncovering previously unreachable code.
- Defined using the  $\text{SG}_c$  relation between Faustus processes where  $c$  is the fresh choice name.
- Verified<sup>3</sup>  $F/\mathcal{A} \approx \text{split}(F, c)/\mathcal{A} \cup \{\alpha_c\}$ .
- 3,356 lines across two Isabelle/HOL files.

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<sup>3</sup>Verifying Smart Contract Transformations Using Bisimulations. McIlwaine and Caldwell. FMBC 2025.

## Summary and Next Step

- Simulations described so far verify the stages of development in blue:
  - Target Semantics
  - Compiler
  - Transformations
  - Protocols
- Verifications preserve whatever bugs are present.
- We want correctness at the specification level.

# STILL Design

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- Protocols specified as session types.
- Session types inhabited by  $\pi$ -calculus processes.
- Curry–Howard isomorphism with linear logic<sup>4</sup>.
  - Linear logic propositions are session types.
  - Proofs are  $\pi$ -calculus processes.
- A proof of a protocol (session type) verifies that it is inhabited by a process ( $\pi$ -calculus term) of that type.
- The process term is extracted from the proof object.

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<sup>4</sup>Caires and Pfenning 2010; Wadler 2012.

## Operators in Session Types / Linear Logic

Multiplicatives (tensor and linear implication):

$A \otimes B$  send a channel/value of type  $A$ , then continue as  $B$ .

$A \multimap B$  receive a channel/value of type  $A$ , then continue as  $B$ .

Additives (with and plus):

$A \& B$  offer a choice to continue as  $A$  or  $B$ .

$A \oplus B$  select a choice to continue as  $A$  or  $B$ .

Exponential (bang):

$!A$  offer a server using protocol  $A$  with no resource constraints. Use  $A$  zero or more times.

First-order quantifiers (for all and exists):

$\forall x : t. A$  receive data  $x : t$ , then continue as  $A[x]$ .

$\exists x : t. A$  send a witness  $N : t$ , then continue as  $A[N/x]$ .

## Sequents

Session type sequents have the following form:

$$\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta \vdash P :: z : A$$

Process  $P$  contains channel  $z$  that follows protocol  $A$  under the assumptions in the contexts  $\Omega$ ,  $\Psi$ ,  $\Gamma$ , and  $\Delta$ .

## Session Type Contexts

A *context* is a map from channel names (variables) to session types.

The order of entries in the contexts (except for  $\Psi$ ) does not matter.

The names in  $\Omega$ ,  $\Psi$ ,  $\Gamma$ , and  $\Delta$  are pairwise disjoint.

We write  $C_1, C_2$  to denote the context formed by the union of  $C_1$  and  $C_2$  under the constraint that the channel names are disjoint.

$\Omega$  is a second-order session type context with variables that represent protocols.

$\Psi$  is a functional context with variables mapped to types in the Extended Calculus of Constructions.

$\Gamma$  is an unrestricted context with channel protocols that can be used zero or more times. Linear assumptions of the form  $!A$  can be placed here.

$\Delta$  is a linear context with channel protocols that must be consumed and that cannot be replicated.

## Session Type Proof Rules

Id: The identity rule is an axiom, it has no premises.

$$\frac{}{\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; a : A \vdash [a \leftrightarrow z] :: z : A} \text{Id}$$

Note that the linear context  $a : A$  for the Id rule has exactly one entry.

$\otimes$ R: The tensor right rule has two premises and partitions the linear context.

$$\frac{\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_1 \vdash P :: x : A \quad \Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_2 \vdash Q :: z : B}{\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_1, \Delta_2 \vdash (\nu x)z[x].(P|Q) :: z : A \otimes B} \otimes\text{R}$$

Note that in the linear context  $(\Delta_1, \Delta_2)$ ,  $\Delta_1$  and  $\Delta_2$  are disjoint.

STILL stands for “Session Types and Intuitionistic Linear Logic”.

- Standalone interactive tactic-based theorem prover for dependent session types
- Two-layer system:
  - Functional layer: Extended Calculus of Constructions<sup>5</sup> (ECC).
  - Session layer: intuitionistic linear logic with dependency<sup>6</sup>, polymorphism<sup>7</sup>, and coinduction<sup>8</sup>.
- Delays linear context partitioning without modifying the underlying logical system.
- Extracts  $\pi$ -calculus terms from completed proofs.

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<sup>5</sup>Luo 1990.

<sup>6</sup>Toninho, Caires, and Pfenning 2011.

<sup>7</sup>Caires, Pérez, et al. 2013.

<sup>8</sup>Toninho, Caires, and Pfenning 2014.

# Dependency

- Session types in STILL quantify over terms in the functional layer.
- Enables protocols where behavior depends on properties of the data being communicated.
- E.g. send a bid amount and then require a proof that the new bid is valid.

Recall:

$\forall x : t. A$  receive data  $x : t$ , then continue as  $A[x]$ .

$\exists x : t. A$  send a witness  $N : t$ , then continue as  $A[N/x]$ .

# Polymorphism and Coinduction

- **Polymorphic session types**<sup>9</sup>: quantify over session types.  
 $\forall X : \text{stype}. A$  receive protocol  $X$ , then continue as  $A[X]$ .  
 $\exists X : \text{stype}. A$  send a protocol  $P$ , then continue as  $A[P/X]$ .
- **(Co)inductive session types**<sup>10</sup>: allow for nonterminating processes.
  - $\nu X. A$  begin a corecursive process that behaves as  $A[X]$ .
  - $\mu X. A$  Inductive processes are defined by consuming coinductive channels.  $\mu$  notation is not part of the session type syntax.

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<sup>9</sup>Caires, Pérez, et al. 2013.

<sup>10</sup>Toninho, Caires, and Pfenning 2014.

# How To Create A Tactic

- Tactics are created by following rules bottom-up.

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash A \quad \Gamma \vdash B}{\Gamma \vdash A \wedge B} \wedge R$$

- Tactics are functions that have the type<sup>11</sup>:  
tactic = goal -> ([goal], justification)  
justification = [theorem] -> theorem
- Tacticals allow the composition of tactics:  
tactical = tactic -> tactic -> tactic
- Tactics provide goal-directed theorem proving.

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<sup>11</sup>Gordon, Milner, and Wadsworth 1979.

## Tactics In Linear Logic

$$\frac{\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_1 \vdash A \quad \Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_2 \vdash B}{\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_1, \Delta_2 \vdash A \otimes B} \otimes R$$

- Linear logic complicates tactical theorem proving because the partition  $\Delta_1, \Delta_2 = \Delta$  cannot be determined at the point of tactic (rule) application.
- Previous approaches:
  - User must explicitly provide the partition  $\Delta = \Delta_1, \Delta_2$ .
  - Modify the inference rules with constraints or leftovers. This requires revalidating the metatheory of the logical system.
- In the STILL prover we have introduced a novel representation of nondeterministic linear contexts and have redefined tactics.
- Tactics that consume entries in the linear context incrementally eliminate nondeterministic entries in the linear context, eventually making the partition concrete.
- Avoids modifications that require revalidating the metatheory.

## Delaying Linear Context Partitioning

$$\frac{\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_1 \vdash A \quad \Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_2 \vdash B}{\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta \vdash A \otimes B} \otimes R (\Delta_1, \Delta_2 = \Delta)$$

- STILL represents the partition  $\Delta_1, \Delta_2$  nondeterministically by using a shared global state:
  - A STILL proof is a tree of rules where each leaf of the tree is an axiom rule **and** nondeterministic partitions are completely determined, *i.e.* at the proof node where a split occurs  $\Delta_1 \cap \Delta_2 = \emptyset$ .
  - Initially,  $\Delta_1$  and  $\Delta_2$  appear to contain all resources in  $\Delta$ . As proofs are constructed for the subgoal using  $\Delta_1$  ( $\Delta_2$ ), when a channel, say  $x$ , is used, the tactic engine eliminates  $x$  from the nondeterministic context  $\Delta_2$  ( $\Delta_1$ ). As a proof is constructed and resources are consumed, the paired nondeterministic contexts  $\Delta_1, \Delta_2$  get “closer” to  $\Delta$ .

# STILL Demo

TestingFiles > ≡ TensorCommutative.still

```
1  module TensorCommutative begin
2
3  theorem tensorCommutative: "(A * B) -o (B * A)"
```

TERMINAL

PROBLEMS

OUTPUT

DEBUG CONSOLE

PORTS

STILL

State:

New theorem started

\*?a>>

Ω: ;

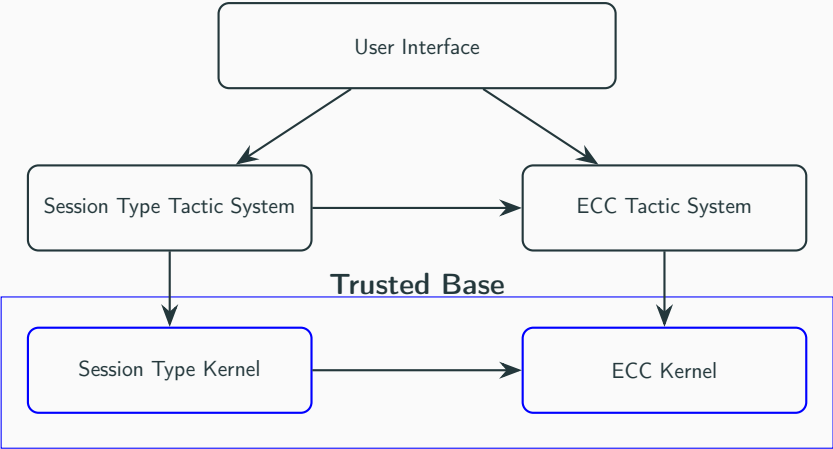
Ψ: ;

Γ: ;

Δ:

| - z:A ⊗ B → B ⊗ A

# STILL Architecture



# Process Extraction

- Proof object corresponds to a well-typed  $\pi$ -calculus process.
- Extraction follows the type-checking rules.

$$\frac{}{\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; a : A \vdash [a \leftrightarrow z] :: z : A} \text{Id}$$
$$\frac{\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_1 \vdash P :: x : A \quad \Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_2 \vdash Q :: z : B}{\Omega; \Psi; \Gamma; \Delta_1, \Delta_2 \vdash (\nu x)z[x].(P|Q) :: z : A \otimes B} \otimes R$$

- The  $\pi$ -calculus term (process) is correct-by-construction with respect to the protocol type.

## STILL Contributions Summary

- STILL is a standalone interactive tactic-based theorem prover for dependent, polymorphic, and coinductive session types.
- STILL delays context partitioning without changing the underlying proof rules.
- STILL provides a layer for session types that communicates with an ECC layer.
- STILL extracts  $\pi$ -calculus terms from proof objects.
- The implementation consists of 5,926 lines of Haskell across 9 files.

# Protocol Verifications

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**Axiom of choice.** Demonstrates power of  $\Sigma$ -types in ECC.

**Natural numbers.** Encoding inductive types using polymorphism.

**Bit counter.** Long-running protocol with changing topology.

**English auction.** A familiar protocol that uses all of the features.

# Axiom of Choice

Intuition:

- Given  $\Pi x : A. \Sigma y : B. P(x, y)$  in ECC.
- Produce  $f : (A \rightarrow B)$  such that  $\forall x : A. P(x, f(x))$ .
- Protocol: send  $f$  first, later send proof  $P(x, f(x))$ .

```
theorem AC: "forall A:Type 1.  
  forall B:Type 1.  
  forall P:(Pi x:A. Pi y:B. Type 1).  
  $(Pi x:A. Sigma y:B. P x y) -o  
  exists f:(Pi v:A. B).  
  forall x:A.  
  $(P x (f x))"
```

# Natural Numbers

- System F<sup>12</sup> encoding of inductive types<sup>13</sup>:

$$\mu X.F(X) = \forall X.(F(X) \rightarrow X) \rightarrow X$$

- Polymorphic session encoding of inductive types<sup>14</sup>:

$$\mu X.F(X) = \forall X.!(F(X) \multimap X) \multimap X$$

- Extracts of zero, succ, one, and two are given in the STILL source code.

```
stype nat = "forall X : stype. !((1 + X) -o X) -o X"  
  
theorem zero: "nat"  
  
theorem succ: "nat -o nat"  
  
theorem one: "nat"  
  
theorem two: "nat"
```

<sup>12</sup>Girard 1972.

<sup>13</sup>Wraith 1989.

<sup>14</sup>Toninho and Yoshida 2019.

# Bit Counter

- Each Node process stores a single bit.
- The ripple carry counter is a network of Node processes that spawns a new Node when overflow occurs.
- The counter supports increment, query, and halt operations.
- Verification demonstrates coinductive session types and dynamic topology.

```
-- CImpl = nu X. &{val: int => int /\ X, inc: + {carry:X,  
  done:X}, halt:1}  
theorem epsilon: "epsilonT"  
  
-- CImpl -o CImpl  
theorem Node: "NodeT"  
  
-- Counter nu X. {val:int /\ X, inc:X, halt:1}  
theorem Counter: "CounterT"
```

# English Auction

- Seller provides the item.
- Bidders provide bids and a channel that can receive refunds or the item.
- A higher bid refunds the previous bidder.
- Sends item to the winner and funds to the seller at the end.
- This is all guaranteed by the protocol.

```
stype englishSession = "forall ItemType:stype.  
  forall bid:Type 1.  
  forall zeroB:bid.  
  forall validNewB:(Pi b1:bid. Pi b2:bid. Type 1).  
  forall currency:(Pi b:bid.Type 1).  
  ItemType -o  
  (forall b:bid. $currency b -o 1) -o  
  forall firstB:bid.  
  forall firstValid:validNewB zeroB firstB.  
  $currency firstB -o  
  (ItemType + $currency firstB -o 1) -o  
  nu Y. (forall newB:bid.  
    forall nextValid:validNewB firstB newB.  
    $currency newB -o  
    (ItemType + $currency newB -o 1) -o Y) & 1"
```

## Conclusion

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# Summary

- A new small-step semantics for Marlowe that is correct with respect to the existing evaluator.
- Faustus: a statically typed smart contract programming language with guarded commands and parameterized abstractions.
- Verified compilation from Faustus to Marlowe.
- Verified transformations using weak bisimulation.
- STILL: a standalone tactic-based theorem prover for dependent session types that extracts  $\pi$ -calculus processes from completed proofs.
- Verified protocols for the axiom of choice, natural numbers, a bit counter, and an English auction.

## Limitations and Possible Future Work

- Formalize the STILL kernels, resource-hiding in the tactic system, and make extracted processes executable.
- Close the Isabelle and Haskell evaluator gap using extraction from Isabelle or porting the formalization to a system that supports extraction as a first-class feature.
- Verify a transformation that makes guarded command lists disjoint. This likely requires fixing the Faustus and Marlowe deposit processing semantics to disallow negative deposits.
- Extend Faustus with more abstractions.

## References

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## Questions?

**Email:** `contact@kegan.dev`

**Artifacts:**

**Faustus** `https://gitlab.com/UWyo-SSC/public/wabl/  
faustus-v2`

**STILL** `https://github.com/STILL-prover`

## More Information

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# Full Marlowe Semantics Simulation Diagrams

$$\begin{array}{ccc} M_1 & \xrightarrow{\uparrow \text{reduceContractStep}} & M_2 \\ ID & & ID \\ S_1 & \xrightarrow{\tau \rightarrow_m} & S_2 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} M_1 & \xrightarrow{\uparrow \text{fixInterval } \Delta \gg= \uparrow \text{applyCases } \lambda} & M_2 \\ ID & & ID \\ S_1 & \xrightarrow{(\lambda, \Delta) \rightarrow_m} & S_2 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} M_1 & \xrightarrow{\uparrow \text{fixInterval } \Delta \gg= \uparrow \text{reduceContractStep}} & M_2 \\ ID & & ID \\ S_1 & \xrightarrow{(\tau, \Delta) \rightarrow_m} & S_2 \end{array}$$

# Full Faustus Compiler Simulation Diagrams

