



# Set Theory vs. Topology

*Foundations of Arithmetic & non-Archimedean Geometry*

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# What this talk is about

What is a **space**? The classical answer is given by point-set topology, and this has had a foundational influence on how we formulate key ideas in many areas of maths.

This talk will introduce some unique perspectives from point-free topology, and illustrate its differences with point-set topology by drawing upon two examples from recent work, partially joint w/ Steve Vickers: one relating to **Berkovich geometry**, the other relating to **arithmetic geometry**.

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This talk will introduce some unique perspectives from point-free topology, and illustrate its differences with point-set topology by drawing upon two examples from recent work, partially joint w/ Steve Vickers: one relating to **Berkovich geometry**, the other relating to **arithmetic geometry**.

Both results are surprising in different ways, but they highlight subtle interactions between topology & algebra that were previously obscured by the underlying set theory.

# Foundations in Berkovich Geometry

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Let  $(K, |\cdot|)$  be a complete valued field, and  $K[T]$  be the polynomial ring.

## Multiplicative Seminorm

A **multiplicative seminorm** on  $D$  extending the norm of  $K$  is a map

$$|\cdot|_x: K[T] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}$$

satisfying the following:

- $|f + g|_x \leq |f|_x + |g|_x \quad \forall f, g \in K[T]$
- $|fg|_x = |f|_x |g|_x \quad \forall f, g \in K[T]$
- $|a|_x = |a| \quad \forall a \in K$

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## Berkovich Affine Line

The **Berkovich Affine Line**  $\mathbb{A}_{\text{Berk}}^1$  is a space defined as follows:

- *Underlying set of  $\mathbb{A}_{\text{Berk}}^1$*  = set of multiplicative seminorms on  $K[T]$ .
- *Topology of  $\mathbb{A}_{\text{Berk}}^1$*  = the Gel'fand topology, i.e. weakest topology such that all maps of the form

$$\begin{aligned}\psi_f: \mathbb{A}_{\text{Berk}}^1 &\longrightarrow \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0} \\ |\cdot|_x &\longmapsto |f|_x\end{aligned}$$

are continuous, for any  $f \in K[T]$ .

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## Classifying Points of Berkovich spaces

Let  $(K, |\cdot|)$  be a complete non-Archimedean valued field that is algebraically closed. A rigid disc is a subset  $D_r(k) \subset K$  of the form

$$D_r(k) := \{b \in K \mid |b - k| \leq r\}.$$



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## Berkovich's Classification Theorem

Suppose  $K$  is non-trivially valued. Then every point  $|\cdot|_x \in \mathbb{A}_{\text{Berk}}^1$  corresponds to a nested descending sequence of discs

$$D_{r_1}(k_1) \supseteq D_{r_2}(k_2) \supseteq \dots \quad (1)$$

in the sense that

$$|\cdot|_x = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} |\cdot|_{D_{r_i}(k_i)} \quad (2)$$

where  $|\cdot|_{D_r(k)}$  is the multiplicative seminorm canonically associated to  $D_r(k)$ .

# Classifying Points of Berkovich spaces

The same construction and result holds for other rings as well. Here's another important example:

- Let  $(K, |\cdot|)$  be a complete non-Arch. field that is algebraically closed.
- Denote  $\mathcal{A} := K\{R^{-1}T\}$  to be ring of power series converging in radius  $R$ .
- Denote  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{A})$  to be the analogous space of multiplicative seminorms on  $\mathcal{A}$ .

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## Berkovich's Classification Theorem

Suppose  $K$  is non-trivially valued. Then, every point  $|\cdot|_x \in \mathcal{M}(\mathcal{A})$  is approximated by a nested descending sequence of discs

$$D_{r_1}(k_1) \supseteq D_{r_2}(k_2) \supseteq \dots \quad (3)$$

in the same sense as before.

## On the hypothesis of “non-trivially valued”

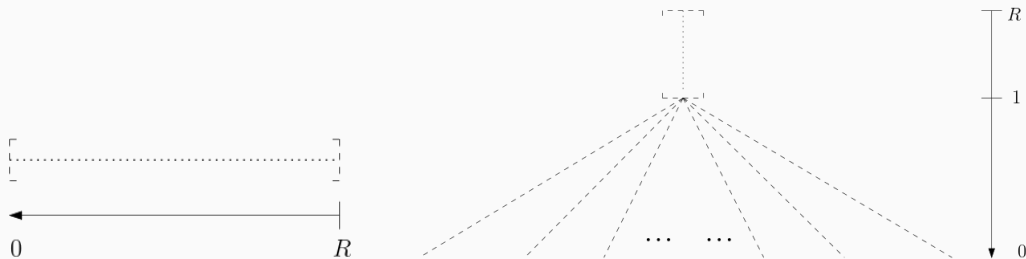
The space of multiplicative seminorms is still well-defined even when  $K$  is trivially valued.<sup>1</sup>

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## On the hypothesis of “non-trivially valued”

The space of multiplicative seminorms is still well-defined even when  $K$  is trivially valued.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Berkovich [Ber90] gives an explicit description of these spaces, depending on whether the radius of convergence  $R < 1$  or  $R \geq 1$ .



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” *The second assumption [that  $K$  is non-trivially valued] is necessary [...] if the norm on  $K$  is trivial, then there are too few discs.*

— Jonsson [Jon15]

# Perspective from Point-free Topology

Let us redefine the notion of rigid discs:

## Formal Ball

Denote:

- $K_R := \{k \in K \mid |k| \leq R\}$  for some positive real  $R > 0$
- $Q_+$  to be the set of positive rationals.

A **formal ball** is an element  $(k, q) \in K_R \times Q_+$ . We shall represent this more suggestively as  $B_q(k)$ . In particular, we write:

$$B_{q'}(k') \subseteq B_q(k) \text{ just in case } |k - k'| < q \wedge q' \leq q.$$



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**Key Observation #1:** Unlike rigid discs, the radius of formal balls are well-defined, i.e.

$B_{q'}(k) = B_q(k)$  implies  $q' = q$ .

Also, instead of working with nested sequences of rigid discs, let us consider:

### **$R$ -good Filter**

A **filter**  $\mathcal{F}$  of formal balls is an inhabited subset of  $K_R \times Q_+$  that is:

- Upward closed w.r.t  $\subseteq$
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We call  $\mathcal{F}$  an ***R-good* filter** if it also satisfies:

- For any  $k \in K_R$ , and  $q \in Q_+$  such that  $R < q$ ,  $B_q(k) \in \mathcal{F}$ .
- If  $B_q(k) \in \mathcal{F}$ , there exists  $B_{q'}(k') \in \mathcal{F}$  such that  $q' < q$ .

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**Key Observation #2:** Given an  $R$ -good filter  $\mathcal{F}$ , define  $\text{rad}_{\mathcal{F}} := \inf\{q \mid B_q(k) \in \mathcal{F}\}$  to be its *radius*. Notice  $0 \leq \text{rad}_{\mathcal{F}} \leq R$ .

## Theorem (N.)

Setup:

- $(K, |\cdot|)$  is a complete non-Arch field that is algebraically closed – in particular, we allow  $K$  to be trivially-valued.
- $\mathcal{A} := K\{R^{-1}T\}$  is the ring of power series converging on radius  $R$ , and  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{A})$  is the associated space of multiplicative seminorms.

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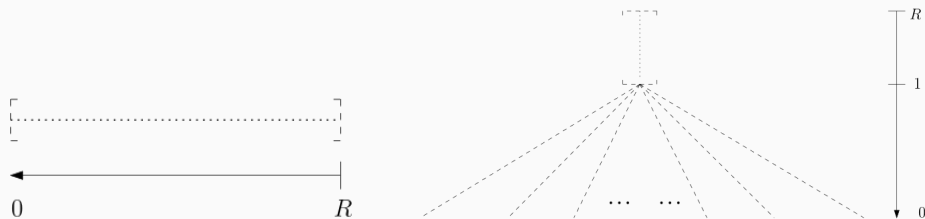
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Then, the space of  $R$ -good filters is (classically) equivalent to  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{A})$ .

**Slogan:** The algebraic hypothesis of being non-trivially valued is in fact a point-set hypothesis.

# New Methods & Old Friends

We can now give new (and shorter) proofs of familiar characterisations of Berkovich spectra:



**Figure 1:** LHS:  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{A})$  when  $R < 1$ ,      RHS:  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{A})$  when  $R \geq 1$ .

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- A topos can be regarded as a generalised space whose points are models of a geometric theory.

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The reason seems to be that the result belongs to the point-free perspective in an essential way:

- The language of formal balls reflect the localic perspective that it is the **opens** that are the basic units for defining a space, not the underlying **set** of points.
- A topos can be regarded as a generalised space whose points are models of a geometric theory. In particular, if the theory of multiplicative seminorms is *essentially propositional*, then we know the models also correspond to **completely prime filters**.

# The View from Topos Theory

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” *Model theory rarely deals directly with topology; the great exception is the theory of o-minimal structures, where the topology arises naturally from an ordered structure.*

— E. Hrushovski and F. Loeser [HL16]

” *While geometric logic can be treated as just another logic, it is an unusual one. [...] To put it another way, the geometric mathematics has an intrinsic continuity.*

— S. Vickers [Vic14]

# What is a space?

## Point-set Topology

- Point = An element of a set
- Space = A set of points, along with a collection of opens satisfying specific properties (“topology”).

## Point-free Topology

- Point = A model of a geometric theory
- Space = The ‘World’ in which all models of the theory live ( $\approx$  a topos)

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Let  $\Sigma$  be a (many-sorted) first-order signature (or vocabulary).



# Geometric Logic

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- **Formula:** Let  $\vec{x}$  be a finite vector of variables, each with a given sort. A *geometric formula* in context  $\vec{x}$  is a formula built up using symbols from  $\Sigma$  via the following logical connectives:  $=$ ,  $\top$  (true),  $\wedge$  (**finite** conjunction),  $\vee$  (**arbitrary** disjunction),  $\exists$ .

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- **Theory:** A *geometric theory* over  $\Sigma$  is a set of axioms of the form

$$\forall \vec{x}. (\phi \rightarrow \psi),$$

where  $\phi$  and  $\psi$  are geometric formulae.

## Differences with classical logic

- Absence of negation  $\neg$
- Allows for arbitrary (possibly infinite) disjunction

### Special case: Propositional Theory

Suppose  $\Sigma$  is just a set of propositional symbols (in particular, no sorts).

- Geometric formulae are constructed from these symbols using  $\top$ ,  $\wedge$ ,  $\vee$ .
- A geometric theory over  $\Sigma$  is a set of axioms of the form  $\phi \rightarrow \psi$ .

### Localic Space

Recall the following perspective from point-free topology.

- Point = A model of a geometric theory
- Space = The 'World' in which all models of the theory live

If the geometric theory is propositional, we call the corresponding space a **localic space**.

## Example: Localic Reals

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**Classical (finitary) logic:** Dedekind cuts arise as *types* over the rationals  $(\mathbb{Q}, <)$  considered as a dense linear order.

**Geometric logic:** Dedekind reals arise as *models* of a geometric theory.

# Geometric Theory of Reals

The propositional theory  $T_{\mathbb{R}}$  with propositional symbols  $P_{q,r}$  (with  $q, r \in \mathbb{Q}$ , the rationals) and the axioms:

- $P_{q,r} \wedge P_{q',r'} \longleftrightarrow \bigvee \{P_{s,t} \mid \max(q, q') < s < t < \min(r, r')\}$
- $\top \longrightarrow \bigvee \{P_{q-\epsilon, q+\epsilon} \mid q \in \mathbb{Q}\}$  for any  $0 < \epsilon \in \mathbb{Q}$ .

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### Filter

For  $I$  an infinite set,  $\mathcal{F} \subset \mathcal{P}(I)$  is a **filter** on  $I$  when:

- (i)  $A \subseteq B \subseteq I$  and  $A \in \mathcal{F}$  implies  $B \in \mathcal{F}$ .
- (ii)  $A, B \in \mathcal{F}$  implies  $A \cap B \in \mathcal{F}$
- (iii)  $I \in \mathcal{F}$ .

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**Type:** A partial type  $p$  over a model  $M$  corresponds to a filter on  $M$  for the *Boolean algebra* of  $M$ -definable subsets of  $M$ . If  $p$  is an **ultrafilter**, then we call  $p$  a (complete) type.

**Model of (Geometric) Propositional Theory:** A propositional theory  $\mathbb{T}$  can be associated to its *lattice*  $L_{\mathbb{T}}$  of propositional formulae (modulo provable equality). The models of  $\mathbb{T}$  are the **completely prime filters** of  $L_{\mathbb{T}}$ .

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## Theory of Upper Reals

Consider a subset  $R \subset \mathbb{Q}$ . For suggestiveness, write “ $R < r$ ” whenever  $r \in R$ . Suppose  $R$  is subject to the axiom:

$$\forall r \in \mathbb{Q}. (R < r \longleftrightarrow \exists r' \in \mathbb{Q}. (R < r') \wedge (r' < r))$$

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**Remark:** Morally speaking, an upper real  $R$  corresponds to the right Dedekind section of a real. More precisely, upper reals are *classically* equivalent to the usual Dedekind reals<sup>2</sup>, but *intuitionistically* they are different.

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<sup>2</sup>At least, once we ignore the infinities.

## The Abstract vs. The Concrete

” Category Theory is directed at the removal of the importance of a concrete construction. It provides a language to compare different concrete constructions and in addition **provides a very new way to construct objects** [...] On the other hand, Model theory is concentrated on the gap between an abstract definition and a concrete construction.

— David Kazhdan [Kaz06]



## The Abstract vs. The Concrete

Point-free space = The 'World' in which all models of the theory live ( $\approx$  a topos)

Given a theory  $\mathbb{T}$  over signature  $\Sigma$ , what are its models really?

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**Model Theory.** A **set**  $M$ , equipped with interpretations of symbols in  $\Sigma$ . E.g. for an  $n$ -ary relation  $R \in \Sigma$ , the model defines a **subset**

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**Topos Theory.** An **object** in a category (with formal properties similar to  $\mathbf{Set}$ )<sup>3</sup>, also equipped with interpretations of  $\Sigma$ .

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<sup>3</sup>More precisely, a category satisfying Giraud’s axioms, i.e. a topos.

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**Topos Theory.** An **object** in a category (with formal properties similar to  $\mathbf{Set}$ ), also equipped with interpretations of  $\Sigma$ . E.g. for an  $n$ -ary relation  $R$  on sorts  $A_1 \times \cdots \times A_m$ , a model defines a **subobject**

$$[[R]]_M \rightarrowtail [[A_1]]_M \times \cdots \times [[A_m]]_M$$

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**Model Theory.** Models come from sets.

**Topos Theory.** Models come from the category  $\mathbf{Set}$ , but also other categories capable of interpreting logic ... necessary to consider a wider range of models, because geometric logic is incomplete (unlike classical logic).

In topos theory, we have access to a  $\mathbb{T}$ -model that generally does not live in  $\mathbf{Set}$ :

## Key Theorem

Given any geometric theory  $\mathbb{T}$ , there exists a **generic model**  $G_{\mathbb{T}}$  from which all other  $\mathbb{T}$ -models can be obtained. It is generic in that it has no other properties other than the logical consequences of its being a model.

# The Generic Model

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## Key Theorem

Given any geometric theory  $\mathbb{T}$ , there exists a **generic model**  $G_{\mathbb{T}}$  from which all other  $\mathbb{T}$ -models can be obtained. In particular:

- $G_{\mathbb{T}}$  is *conservative*, i.e. for any geometric sequent  $\sigma$

$$\forall \vec{x}. (\phi \longrightarrow \psi),$$

$\sigma$  holds for  $G_{\mathbb{T}}$  iff  $\sigma$  holds for any  $\mathbb{T}$ -model.

- Any geometric construction (= built out of **arbitrary** colimits and **finite** limits) can be carried out for any specific  $\mathbb{T}$ -model.



# Continuous Maps in Point-free Topology

Here's how we can use the generic model:

- Let  $\mathbb{T}$  and  $\mathbb{T}'$  be two geometric theories. Denote  $[\mathbb{T}]$  and  $[\mathbb{T}']$  to be their corresponding spaces of models.

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- Suppose we are able to transform  $G_{\mathbb{T}}$  into a model of  $\mathbb{T}'$  geometrically (= using finite limits & arbitrary colimits), which we denote  $f(G_{\mathbb{T}})$ . Notice: if  $f(G_{\mathbb{T}})$  is a  $\mathbb{T}'$  model, then  $f(G_{\mathbb{T}}) \in [\mathbb{T}']$ .

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- The same construction  $f(-)$  extends to all other  $\mathbb{T}$ -models, and so what we have done is define a map

$$\begin{aligned} f: [\mathbb{T}] &\longrightarrow [\mathbb{T}'] \\ G_{\mathbb{T}} &\longmapsto f(G_{\mathbb{T}}) \end{aligned}$$

where  $G_{\mathbb{T}}$  plays the role of the formal parameter.

# Continuous Maps in Point-free Topology

Here's how we can use the generic model:

## Example

Let  $\mathbb{T}_{\mathbb{R}}$  be the theory of Dedekind reals, and denote  $\mathbb{R}$  to be the space of reals, and  $x \in \mathbb{R}$  to be the generic real. We can define:

$$\begin{aligned} f: \mathbb{R} &\longrightarrow \mathbb{R} \\ x &\longmapsto x^2 \end{aligned}$$

**Notice:** No explicit continuity proof of this map is required – as long as we adhere to geometric constraints, we forgo the ability to define discontinuous maps. For a more detailed discussion, see [Vic22].

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	Point-Set Topology	Point-free Topology
Point	Element of a set	Model of a theory $\mathbb{T}$
Space	Set + Topology	Universe of all $\mathbb{T}$ -models
Continuous Maps	$f: X \rightarrow Y$ s.t. $f^{-1}(U)$ open, for all open $U$	Geom. transformation of generic model $G_{\mathbb{T}}$

# Adelic Geometry via Topos Theory

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- **Observation #2:** Real and  $p$ -adic solutions are easier to deal with than just integer/rational solutions.
- **New Question:** Given a polynomial with  $\mathbb{Q}$ -coefficients, when does knowledge about its  $\mathbb{Q}_p$  and  $\mathbb{R}$ -solutions give us info about its  $\mathbb{Q}$ -solutions?

# Hasse's Local-Global Principle

## Local-Global Principle for $\mathbb{Q}$

Some property  $P$  is true for  $\mathbb{Q}$  iff  $P$  is true for all the completions of  $\mathbb{Q}$ .

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**Hasse-Minkowski Theorem:** Quadratic forms<sup>3</sup> have  $\mathbb{Q}$ -solutions iff they have solutions over all completions of  $\mathbb{Q}$ .

**Counter-Examples:**

- Lind-Reichardt:  $2Y^2 = X^4 - 17Z^4$
- Selmer:  $3X^3 + 4Y^3 + 5Z^3 = 0$

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Still, it would be helpful to find a way of reasoning about properties that hold for all completions of  $\mathbb{Q}$ .

**Classical Number Theory:** Reason about completions via the adèle ring

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**Point-Free Topology:** Does there exist a geometric theory of completions of  $\mathbb{Q}$ ? If yes, then there exists a generic completion which we can reason with.

## Yet more foundational issues ...

When we say a property holds for all completions of  $\mathbb{Q}$ , we really mean true for all (non-trivial) completions of  $\mathbb{Q}$  up to topological equivalence.

### Places

A **place** is an equivalence class of absolute values whereby  $|\cdot|_1 \sim |\cdot|_2$  if there exists some  $\alpha \in (0, 1]$  such that  $|\cdot|_1 = |\cdot|_2^\alpha$  or  $|\cdot|_2 = |\cdot|_1^\alpha$ .

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In particular, if  $|\cdot|_1, |\cdot|_2$  belong to the same place, then their respective completions of  $\mathbb{Q}$  are equivalent.

## Yet more foundational issues ...

**Question:** How should we think of the space of places of  $\mathbb{Q}$ ?

### **Ostrowski's Theorem for $\mathbb{Q}$**

Every absolute value of  $\mathbb{Q}$  is equivalent to a (non-Archimedean)  $p$ -adic absolute value  $|\cdot|_p$  (for some prime  $p$ ), or the Archimedean absolute value  $|\cdot|_\infty$ .

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# The Point-free Perspective

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As long as we are careful to work geometrically, then our point-free spaces will maintain a tight connection with the more category-theoretic aspects from topos theory. This puts at our disposal a deep collection of structure theorems, such as descent, that allows us to extract topological information from our logical setup.

# The Space of Places of $\mathbb{Q}$

Intuitively, what should this space look like?

Its points should correspond to equivalence classes of absolute values, such that:

$$1. \quad |\cdot|^\alpha \sim |\cdot|$$

for any absolute value  $|\cdot|$ , and  $\alpha \in (0, 1]$ .

Phrased more categorically, we can define the space of places as the coequaliser of the diagram

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- $[av]$  is the space of absolute values of  $\mathbb{Q}$
- $\pi$  is the projection map sending  $(|\cdot|, \alpha) \mapsto |\cdot|$
- $ex$  is the exponentiation map sending  $(|\cdot|, \alpha) \mapsto |\cdot|^\alpha$

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In essence, we would like to ‘quotient’ the topos  $[\mathcal{A}V]$  by an algebraic action – two questions:

- Is the notion of (real) exponentiation geometric? Ng-Vickers [NV22]
- What does it mean to quotient a (point-free) space by an algebraic action?

## Non-Archimedean Place of $\mathbb{Q}$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \xrightarrow{\pi} & \\ [av_{NA}] \times (0, \infty) & \xleftarrow{s} [av_{NA}] & \dashrightarrow \mathcal{D} \\ & \xrightarrow{ex} & \end{array}$$

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- What is  $\mathcal{D}$ ?

## Theorem (N.-Vickers)

$$\mathcal{D} \simeq \{*\}$$

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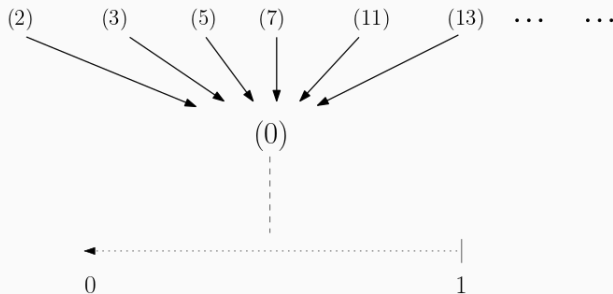
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- So what is  $\mathcal{D}'$ ?

### Theorem (N.-Vickers)

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## Discussion: Beauty & Danger of Analogies

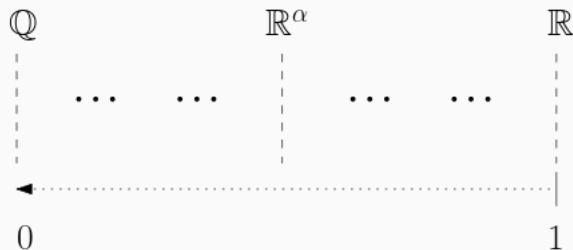
*“One weakness in the analogy between the collection of  $\{K_s\}_{s \in S}$  for a compact Riemann surface  $S$  and the collection  $\{\mathbb{Q}_p$ , for prime numbers  $p$ , and  $\mathbb{R}\}$  is that [...] no manner of squinting seems to be able to make  $\mathbb{R}$  the least bit mistakeable for any of the  $p$ -adic fields, nor are the  $p$ -adic fields  $\mathbb{Q}_p$  isomorphic for distinct  $p$ .*

*A major theme in the development of Number Theory has been to try to bring  $\mathbb{R}$  somewhat more into line with the  $p$ -adic fields; a major mystery is why  $\mathbb{R}$  resists this attempt so strenuously.”*

— Barry Mazur [Maz93]



## Discussion: Connected & Disconnected



### Reorienting our perspective

The issue of how to unite the Archimedean and the non-Archimedean settings is not (just) an algebraic question, but a topological one: how should the connected and the disconnected interact?

## Proof of Theorem

**Lax Descent Construction.** Consider a 2-truncated simplicial topos  $\mathcal{E}_\bullet$ :

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} & \hat{d}_0 & & d_0 & \\ & \curvearrowright & & \curvearrowright & \\ \mathcal{E}_2 & \xrightarrow{\quad} & \mathcal{E}_1 & \xleftarrow{s_0} & \mathcal{E}_0 \\ & \hat{d}_1 & & d_1 & \\ & \curvearrowleft & & \curvearrowleft & \\ & \hat{d}_2 & & & \end{array}$$

We can obtain a category  $\mathbf{LDesc}(\mathcal{E}_\bullet)$  as the coinserter for the diagram (subject to the usual descent conditions). Its objects are pairs  $(F, \theta)$ , where:

- $F$  is a sheaf of  $\mathcal{E}_0$
- $\theta : d_0^* F \rightarrow d_1^* F$  is a morphism in  $\mathcal{E}_1$  satisfying the unit and cocycle conditions.

Important: Unlike the standard descent topos, **no requirement** that  $\theta$  is **isomorphism**!

### Methodological challenge

The descent construction very much regards the topos as a category of objects, rather than a generalised space of models. To reformulate this in the point-free language, we decided to regard the sheaves as étale bundles, which keeps the connection with the point-free perspective.

## Proof of Theorem

To prove the theorem, the basic plan of attack is to construct two functors

$$\mathfrak{J}: \mathcal{D}' \rightleftarrows \mathcal{S}[0,1]: \mathfrak{K}$$

where  $\mathcal{D}'$  is the lax descent topos, and prove that they are inverse. The mathematical devil lies in the details.

- $\mathfrak{K}$  is induced by the fact that there exists a natural map from Dedekinds to upper reals defined by forgetting the left Dedekind section.
- $\mathfrak{J}$  is trickier, and involved constructing a technical lifting lemma, and showing that sheaves over  $(0,1]$  restricted to the rationals  $\mathbb{Q}_{(0,1]}$  (that obey the lax descent conditions) also satisfy the conditions of the lemma.

## By way of conclusion

The main thread guiding us was a foundational question on the role of set theory in topology, and its broader effects on the foundations on other areas of mathematics.

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In different ways, we used the point-free perspective to pull these problems away from the underlying set theory. Both results indicate a particular loss of information within the classical setting, while also revealing a deep nerve connecting topology & algebra that had previously been obscured.

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