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Dependent Types for Extensive Games

Pierre Lescanne

University of Lyon, École normale supérieure de Lyon, CNRS (LIP),
46 allée d'Italie, 69364 Lyon, France

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Abstract

Extensive games are tools largely used in economics to describe decision processes of a community of agents. In this paper we propose a formal presentation based on the proof assistant `Coq` which focuses mostly on infinite extensive games and their characteristics. `Coq` proposes a features called “dependent types”, which means that the type of an object may depend on the type of its components. For instance, the set of choices of an agent may depend on the agent herself. Using dependent types, we describe formally a very general class of games and strategy profiles, which corresponds to what game theorists are used to. We also discuss the notions of infiniteness in game theory and how this can be precisely described.

Keywords: extensive game, infinite game, sequential game, coinduction, `Coq`, proof assistant.

1 Introduction

Extensive games are used in formalization of economics and in decision processes. An adequate description of the decision process requires the framework to be infinite. Indeed there is no reason to assume that the process is a priori finite, since if we do so we put strong constraints on the model which prevents some features, like for instance the escalation. Beware we do not say that the world or the model of the world is infinite, but we say that the agents believe that the world is infinite. Saying that the model is finite precludes the phenomenon of escalation, and proving that escalation cannot exist is begging the question. In this paper, by using dependent types, we revise previous works by the author [12, 9, 11]. Thus we allow considering formal presentations of very general classes of games, for instance, games with very general sets of choices depending on agents. For instance, an agent may have an infinity of choices and another may have only one choice, or two, whereas utilities are just ordered

sets, even completely trivial ones in some counterexamples, which shows their generality. By very small changes in the formalism, we may easily describe multistage games, that are games in which agents move simultaneously at each stage.

All the formalism has been developed in Coq [1]. Scripts can be found on GitHub [20] and are available at <https://github.com/PierreLescanne/DependentTypesForExtensiveGames>.

The paper has 8 sections. The second section presents games and strategy profiles. Section 3, Section 4 and Section 5 talk about concepts connected with finiteness whereas Section 6 is about multistage games. Section 7 considers the way infiniteness is addressed in books on game theory. Section 8 is the conclusion.

2 Games and Strategy Profiles

This presentation of extensive games differs from this of [12, 9, 11] in the use of dependant types. Indeed, for simplicity, in those papers, only binary games were considered, that is that only two choices were offered to the agents. In this paper, using dependent types, we can propose a more general framework. Associated with a game, a strategy profile is a description of the choices taken by the agents. The formal definitions of games and strategy profiles relies on three entities, a set of agents written **Agent**, a set of choices depending on an agent **a** written **Choice a** and a set of utilities written **Utility**. Moreover there is a preorder on **Utility**. In particular, unlike most of the presentations of games, utilities need not be natural numbers, but can be any ordered set. The sets of infinite games and of infinite strategy profiles are defined coinductively and are written respectively **Game** and **StratProf**.

Game.

A game which does not correspond to a terminal position and which we call a node is written $\langle | \mathbf{a}, \mathbf{next} | \rangle$ and has two arguments:

- an *agent* \mathbf{a} , the agent whom the node belongs to,
- a function \mathbf{next} of type $\mathbf{Choice} \ \mathbf{a} \rightarrow \mathbf{Game}$.

We call *leaf* a terminal position. A leaf consists in a function $\mathbf{f}: \mathbf{Agent} \rightarrow \mathbf{Utility}$ which is the utility assignment at the end of the game and which is written $\langle | \mathbf{f} | \rangle$. A node game is made of an agent and of a function which returns a game given a choice. Assume the agent is \mathbf{a} and the function is \mathbf{next} , then a node game is written $\langle | \mathbf{a}, \mathbf{next} | \rangle$. The formal definition of a game is given in Coq by:

```
CoInductive Game : Set :=
| gLeaf : (Agent -> Utility) -> Game
| gNode : forall (a:Agent), (Choice a -> Game) -> Game.
```

Strategy profile.

A strategy profile which corresponds to a non terminal position and which we call a node is written $\ll a, c, next \gg$ and has three components:

- an *agent* a , the agent whom the node belongs to,
- a *choice* c , which is the choice taken by agent on this specific node,
- a function $next$ of type $Choice\ a \rightarrow StratProf$.

A strategy profile which is a terminal position is a function $f : Agent \rightarrow Utility$ like for games. Indeed there is no choice. It is written $\ll f \gg$. The inductive definition in Coq of a strategy profile is:

```
CoInductive StratProf : Set :=
| sLeaf : (Agent -> Utility) -> StratProf
| sNode : forall (a:Agent),
           Choice a -> (Choice a -> StratProf) -> StratProf.
```

The main difference with the approach of [12, 9, 11] lies in the fact that the set of choices is not fixed (the same for all agents, namely a pair) but depends on the agent (dependent type). This way we can describe a larger class of games. For instance, as we will see in Section 4 the sets of choices can easily be infinite. Since the built-in Coq equality is not adequate, we define coinductively an equality on games,

```
CoInductive gEqual: Game -> Game -> Prop :=
| gEqualLeaf: forall f, gEqual (<| f |>) (<| f |>)
| gEqualNode: forall (a:Agent)(next next':Choice a->Game),
  (forall (c:Choice a), gEqual (next c) (next' c)) ->
  gEqual (<| a,next |>) (<| a,next' |>).
```

further written $==$.

Utility assignment.

Since Coq accepts only terminating function we define the utility assignment as a relation:

```
Inductive Uassign : StratProf -> Agent -> Utility -> Prop :=
| UassignLeaf: forall a f, Uassign (<<f>>) a (f a)
| UassignNode: forall (a a':Agent)(c:Choice a')
  (u:Utility)
  (next:Choice a' -> StratProf),
  Uassign (next c) a u -> Uassign (<<a',c,next>>) a u.
```

We prove that $Uassign$ is a functional relation, namely that

$forall\ s\ a\ u\ v,\ Uassign\ s\ a\ u \rightarrow Uassign\ s\ a\ v \rightarrow u=v$.

Notice that for proving this property we need an inversion tactic which is some-

what subtle when dealing with dependent types [3, 13].¹ Moreover for all convergent strategy profiles (i.e., for all strategy profiles of interest, see next section) we can prove that the function is total, i.e., that there exists always a utility assignment associated with this convergent strategy profile.

3 Several notions associated with finiteness

On infinite games and strategy profiles there are several predicates capturing some notions of finiteness.

Finite Games.

A game is finite if it has a finite number of positions. It is naturally an inductive². Clearly a leaf is finite. A game which is a node is finite if for all choices, the next games are finite. This is made precise by the following definition.

```
Inductive Finite : Game -> Set :=
| finGLeaf: forall f, Finite <|f|>
| finGNode: forall (a:Agent)(c:Choice a)(next: Choice a -> Game),
    forall c':Choice a, Finite (next c') ->
    Finite <|a,next|>.
```

Finite strategy profiles would be defined likewise.

```
Inductive FiniteStratProf : StratProf -> Set :=
| finSLeaf: forall f, FiniteStratProf <<f>>
| finSNode: forall (a:Agent)(c:Choice a)
    (next: Choice a -> StratProf),
    forall c':Choice a, FiniteStratProf (next c') ->
    FiniteStratProf <<a,c,next>>.
```

Games with only finitely many strategy profiles.

Osborne and Rubinstein [15] call “finite”, a game with only finitely many strategy profiles³. In order not to interfere with the previous definition, we prefer to say that *the game is finitely broad*.⁴ This is translated by the fact that for a game g to have only finitely many strategy profiles, there shall exist a list that collects all the strategy profiles that have this game g as underlying game. Since in Coq lists are finite this yields the desired property:

```
Definition FinitelyBroad (g:Game): Prop :=
exists (l: list StratProf), forall (s:StratProf),
    game s == g <-> In s l.
```

¹We thank Adam Chlipala and Jean-François Monin for their help on this specific example.

²Roughly speaking, an inductive (definition) is a well-founded definition with basic cases and constructors

³Actually they use the concept of “history” (path), instead of strategy profiles, but this is not essential.

⁴Denoted by the predicate `FinitelyBroad` on `Game` in Coq

Games with only finite histories.

A game has only finite histories if it has only finitely many paths (histories) from the root to the leaves. This can be described as follows:

```
Inductive FiniteHistoryGame : Game -> Prop :=
| finHorGLeaf: forall f, FiniteHistoryGame <|f|>
| finHorGNode: forall (a:Agent)(next: Choice a -> Game),
    (forall c':Choice a, FiniteHistoryGame (next c')) ->
    FiniteHistoryGame <|a,next|>.
```

Those games should not be confused with games with finite horizon. Notice that Osborne and Rubinstein [15] require a game with a finite horizon to have only finitely many strategy profiles (p. 90: “[Given a finite game] if the longest history is finite then the game has finite horizon”), whereas Osborne [14] does not require the set of strategy profiles associated to the game to be finite (see Section 7). For strategy profiles we have:

```
Inductive FiniteHistoryStratProf : StratProf -> Prop :=
| finHorSLeaf: forall f, FiniteHistoryStratProf <<f>>
| finHorSNode: forall (a:Agent) (c:Choice a)
    (next: Choice a -> StratProf),
    (forall c':Choice a, FiniteHistoryStratProf (next c')) ->
    FiniteHistoryStratProf <<a,c,next>>.
```

Convergent strategy profiles.

Convergence can be seen as an extension to strategy profiles of the finiteness of histories. The finiteness does not apply to all paths (histories) leading to leaves, but applies only to paths corresponding to the choices of the agents. *Mutatis mutandi*, the expression

$$(\text{forall } c':\text{Choice } a, \text{FiniteHistoryStratProf } (\text{next } c'))$$

is replaced by just

$$\text{Convergent } (\text{next } c)$$

hence without the

$$\text{forall } c':\text{Choice } a$$

Related to induction reasoning, this convergence of strategy profiles captures continuity. Like for the predicate `FiniteHistoryGame` a leaf is convergent. A strategy profile which is a node is convergent if the strategy subprofile for the

choice made by the agent a (i.e., `next c`) is convergent.

```

Inductive Convergent: StratProf -> Prop :=
| ConvLeaf: forall f, Convergent <<f>>
| ConvNode: forall (a:Agent) (c:Choice a)
              (next: Choice a -> StratProf),
              Convergent (next c) ->
              Convergent <<a,c,next>>.

```

The reader may notice the similarity of that definition with this of finite histories for games. We are not able to prove a theorem on the totality of `Uassign`:

```

Lemma ExistenceUassign:
forall (s:StratProf)(a:Agent),
  (Convergent s) -> exists (u:Utility), Uassign s a u.

```

Convergence is extended to all the strategy subprofiles by a modality `Always`, abbreviated \square , when used in expressions. `Always P s` means that P is fulfilled by all subprofiles of s .

```

CoInductive Always (P:StratProf -> Prop) : StratProf -> Prop :=
| AlwaysLeaf : forall f, Always P (<<f>>)
| AlwaysNode : forall (a:Agent)(c:Choice a)
                  (next:Choice a->StratProf),
                  P (<<a,c,next>>) -> (forall c', Always P (next c')) ->
                  Always P (<<a,c,next>>).

```

The predicate `Always Convergent` is shortened in \Downarrow . $\Downarrow s$ means that s is convergent and also all subprofiles are convergent. It plays a main role in the definition of the other concepts related to strategy profiles, namely equilibria and escalation. Always convergent strategy profiles are the right objects, that game theorists are interested in. “Always Convergence” captures the notion of continuity in the spirit of Brouwer [2]⁵

4 A game with only finite histories and no longest history

In this section we show how `Coq` can be used to prove formally properties about games. Specifically we give an example of a game with only finite histories and no longest history as a counterexample to Osborne (see [14] p. 157) definition of finite horizon. The game has two agents whom we call `Alice` and `Bob` and its definition uses a feature of dependent types, namely that the choices may depend on the agent. In this case, `Alice` has infinitely many choices, namely

⁵I like to thank Jules Hedges for pointing me this fact and the connection with Brouwer bar recursion [7].

the set `nat` of natural numbers and `Bob` has one choice, namely the set `unit`. The *utility* of `Bob` is meaningless since it is a singleton, namely the Coq built-in `unit` which contains the only element `tt`. In Coq we have:

```
Definition Choice : (AliceBob -> Set) :=
  fun a:AliceBob => match a with Alice => nat | Bob => unit end.
```

Notice that `Choice` is a function which takes an agent and returns a set. Said otherwise, the set of choices is the result of the function `Choice` applied to agents. If the agent is `Alice`, the set of choices is `nat`. If the agent is `Bob` the set of choices is `unit` (a singleton). In other words, the set of choices depends on the agents. The game has infinitely many threadlike subgames of length n :

```
Fixpoint ThreadlikeGame (n:nat): (Game AliceBob Choice unit) :=
  match n with
  | 0 => <|fun (a:AliceBob) => match a with | Alice => tt
                                             | Bob => tt end|>
  | (S n) => <|Bob,fun c:Choice Bob
              => match c with tt=>ThreadlikeGame n end|>
  end.
```

The game we are interested in is called `GameWFH` and is defined as a node with agent `Alice` and with next games `ThreadlikeGame n` for Alice's choice n :

```
Definition GameWFH:(Game AliceBob Choice unit) :=
  <| Alice, fun n:Choice Alice => ThreadlikeGame n |>.
```

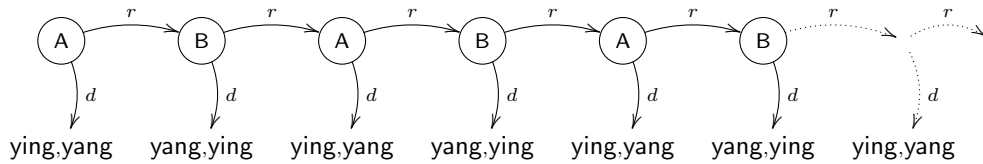
Let us call `triv` the utility assignment `Alice => tt, Bob => tt`. We can picture `GameWFH` like in Figure 1. One can prove that `ThreadlikeGame n` has only finite histories:

```
Proposition FiniteHistoryGameWFH:
  FiniteHistoryGame AliceBob Choice unit GameWFH.
```

Clearly `GameWFH` has no longest history.

5 The simplest escalation

We discussed already the rationality of escalation in infinite games [12, 11]. For dependent choice games escalation is a somewhat simple concept and consists in adjusting the types. The simplest escalation is probably as follows. It may occur in a game in which there are two agents `Alice` and `Bob`, where each agent has two choices `down` and `right` and in which there are two non ordered utilities `ying` and `yang`. We use `ying` and `yang` to insist on the fact that there is no need for numbers and no need for an actual order among the utility values.



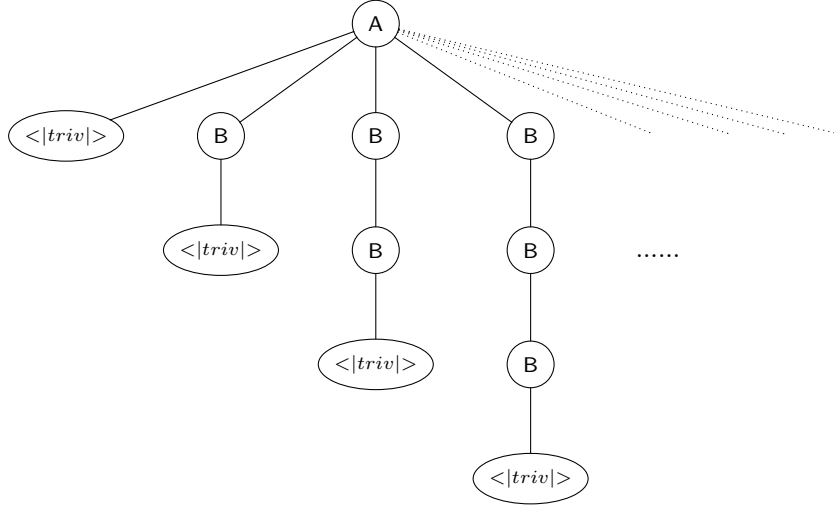


Figure 1: Picture of game with finite histories and no longest history

This is basically the game studied in [11], with the difference that the preference in $\text{Utility} = \{\text{ying}, \text{yang}\}$ is just the equality. In other words, agents do not need to prefer one item over the other, just a trivial preference may lead to an escalation. The agents are like Buridan's ass [19], they may not know what to choose and therefore go forever. This may look strange, but as shown by the Coq script, the proof is based on exactly the same technique of the proof of the rationality of the escalation of the dollar auction [18] as shown by the two following Coq statements and proofs⁶, namely the proof of the escalation for the *dollar auction*:

```
Lemma AlwaysGoodAndDivergentInDollar :
  exists (s:StratProf dollar.AliceBob nat dollar.Choice),
    AlwaysGood dollar.AliceBob nat dollar.Choice ge s &
    Divergent s.
```

```
Proof.
  exists (dollarAcBc 0).
  split.
  apply AlwaysGoodDolAcBc.
  apply DivergenceDolAcBc.
```

Qed.

and the proof of the escalation for the *YingYang game*:

```
Lemma AlwaysGoodAndDivergentInYingYang :
  exists (s:StratProf yingYang.AliceBob YingYang yingYang.Choice),
    AlwaysGood yingYang.AliceBob YingYang yingYang.Choice eq s &
    Divergent s.
```

```
Proof.
  exists yingYangAcBc.
  split.
  apply AlwaysGoodYyAcBc.
  apply DivergenceYyAcBc.
```

Qed.

⁶Notice that the parameters of `StratProf` are explicit!

6 Multistage games

In [5], Drew Fudenberg and Jean Tirole present multistage games. They are games in which all the agents move simultaneously at each stage. Yet this can be easily formalized using dependant types and products, more precisely, the type:

```
forall a: Agent, Choice a
```

which represents the product of choices for all agents and which is written sometime:

$$\prod_{a \in \text{Agent}} \text{Choice } a.$$

The function `next` applies on a uple of choices and its type is `next: $\prod_{a \in \text{Agent}} \rightarrow \text{MSGame}$` . The definition of the type `MSGame` of multistage games is coinductive:

```
CoInductive MSGame :=
| msgLeaf: (Agent -> Utility) -> MSGame
| msgNode: ((forall a: Agent, Choice a) -> MSGame) -> MSGame.
```

A node has one component namely, `next: forall a: Agent, Choice a` and is written `< next >` in order to distinguish it from `<| f |>` which is the notation for leaf similar to this of games defined in Section 2. Let us compare the types of `next`. In extensive games (Section 2) `next` has type `Choice a -> Game`. In multistage games, as we said, `next` has type `(forall a: Agent, Choice a) -> MSGame`. Multistage strategy profiles are defined as follows:

```
CoInductive MSStratProf :=
| mssLeaf: (Agent -> Utility) -> MSStratProf
| mssNode: (forall a: Agent, Choice a) ->
  ((forall a: Agent, Choice a) -> MSStratProf) ->
  MSStratProf.
```

Multistage strategy profiles are written respectively `<<<f>>>` and `<<<c,next>>>`. The utility assignment for a multistage strategy profile is defined like for extensive games:

```
Inductive Uassign : MSStratProf -> Agent -> Utility -> Prop :=
| UassignLeaf: forall a f, Uassign (<<<f>>>) a (f a)
| UassignNode: forall (a:Agent)(c: forall a', Choice a')
  (u:Utility)
  (next:(forall a', Choice a') -> MSStratProf),
  Uassign (next c) a u -> Uassign (<<<c,next>>>) a u.
```

7 Infinite and infinite

In this section, we look at the way infiniteness is dealt with in textbooks on game theory.

Two views of infiniteness

The view of infiniteness is discussed by Poincaré in his book *Science et méthode* [16], where he distinguishes *mathematical infinite* which we would call today *potential infinite*, and *actual infinite*. Poincaré did not believe in such an actual infinite, but today we do accept such a concept which is the basis of the theory of coinduction and infinite games. Let us discuss these two concepts in the case of words on the alphabet $\{a, b\}$. $\{a, b\}^+$ represents all the (finite) words made with the letters a and b , like $a, b, aa, ab, ba, bb, aaa, aab, aba, abb, baa, bab, bba, bbb, etc.$ One can also write:

$$\{a, b\}^+ = \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} \{a, b\}^n. \quad (1)$$

There are infinitely many such words. This is a first kind of infinite, indeed we can build words of all finite lengths. $\{a, b\}^\omega$ is the set of infinite words. Each infinite word can be seen as a function $\mathbb{N} \rightarrow \{a, b\}$. An infinite word represents another kind of infinite. For instance the infinite word $ababab\dots$ or $(ab)^\omega$ corresponds to the function *if even(n) then a else b* and is a typical example of actual infinite. In $\{a, b\}^+$ there is no infinite objects, but only approximations, whereas in $\{a, b\}^\omega$ there are only infinite objects.

Figure 2 represents the two notions of infiniteness. On the left, the vault ceiling of Nasir ol Molk Mosque in Shiraz⁷ pictures potential infiniteness. On the right, a drawing⁸ inspired by M.C. Escher Waterfall pictures actual infiniteness.

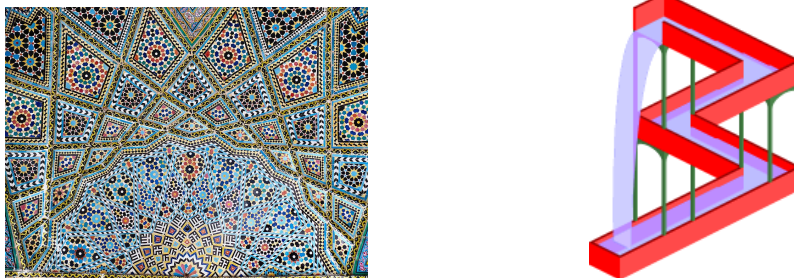


Figure 2: Two pictures of infinite

Common Knowledge.

Common Knowledge is a central concept in game theory, it relies on the concept of knowledge of an agent, which is a modality i.e., an operator of modal logic.⁹

⁷From Wikimedia, due to User:Pentocelo.

⁸From Wikimedia.

⁹We follow the presentation of [8, 10], which took its origin from [4].

Modality K_a (knowledge of agent a) follows the laws of modal logic S_5 . For this and the group G of agents, we create a modality E_G (shared knowledge):

$$E_G(\varphi) = \bigwedge_{a \in G} K_a(\varphi).$$

The common knowledge modality is

$$C_G(\varphi) = \bigwedge_{n=0}^{\infty} E_G^n(\varphi). \quad (2)$$

Usually there is no ambiguity on the group of agents, thus instead C_G and E_G one write just C and E . Clearly C has the flavor of $+$ as shown by the analogy between the equation (1) and the equation (2) and their fixpoint definitions.

Infinite and fixpoint.

Infinite objects are associated with fixpoints. For instance, $\{a, b\}^+$ is the least fixpoint of the equation:

$$X = \{a, b\} \cup \{a, b\}X$$

whereas $C(\varphi)$ is the least fixpoint of

$$\varphi \Leftrightarrow \varphi \wedge E(\varphi).$$

Infinite in textbooks.

In general in textbooks on game theory “infinite” is a vague notion which is not defined precisely and words like “ad infinitum” ([5] p. 542, [6] p. 27) or “infinite regress” ([5] p. 543) or three dots are used. It is often said that infinite games resemble repeated games, but this is not true, since repeated games are typically potential infinite presentations of infinite games, i.e., approximation – only sequences of games are considered, not their limit – whereas infinite games are defined by coinduction.

Two main mistakes are worth noticing.

- In [6], Hargreaves and Varoufakis define common knowledge as follows:
 - (a) each person is instrumentally rational
 - (b) each person knows (a)
 - (c) each person knows (b)
 - (d) each person knows (c)
 ... and so on *ad infinitum*.

but they add “The idea reminds one of what happens when a camera is pointing to a television screen that conveys the image recorded by the very same camera : *an infinite self-reflection*”, showing that they clearly mixed up the two kinds of notions. Indeed clearly the infinite self-reflection illustrates an actual infinite, a little like the infinite word $(ab)^\omega$ or the Escher waterfall, whereas, as we said, common knowledge is a potential infinite. An expression like *ad libitum* should have been preferred and the image of a swing going further and further or a tessellation, like this of Figure 2 should have been more appropriate.

- In [14], Osborne uses the “length of longest terminal history” to define finite horizon, without checking whether this longest history actually exists. A counterexample is shown in Section 4. We gather that he means the “least upper bound on $\overline{\mathbb{N}}$ of the lengths of the histories”.

8 Conclusion

If, when reaching this point, the reader has the feeling that there is no proof, this means that she (he) did not read the Coq files of the GitHub site, as indicated in the introduction. In those files, there is nothing but proofs.

Infinite extensive games and its formalization in Coq is only at an early stage. Among possible tracks to develop, there is the connection between multistage games and extensive games, that is between games where players move simultaneously and games where players play in alternation, using moves “do nothing” (see [5] p. 70).

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