



# Introduction to Field Programmable Gate Arrays

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Trigger and Data Acquisition  
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# What is a **Field Programmable Gate Array** ?

## .. a quick answer for the impatient

- An FPGA is an integrated circuit
  - Mostly digital electronics
- An FPGA is programmable in the in the field (=outside the factory), hence the name “field programmable”
  - Design is specified by schematics or with a hardware description language
  - Tools compute a programming file for the FPGA
  - The FPGA is configured with the design (gateware / firmware)
  - Your electronic circuit is ready to use

With an FPGA you can build electronic circuits ...  
... without using a bread board or soldering iron  
... without plugging together NIM modules  
... without having a chip produced at a factory



# Outline

- Quick look at digital electronics
- Short history of programmable logic devices
- FPGAs and their features
- Programming techniques
- Design flow
- Example Applications in the Trigger and DAQ domain

# Acknowledgement

- Parts of this lecture are based on material by Clive Maxfield, author of several books on FPGAs. Many thanks for his kind permission to use his material!

## Re-use

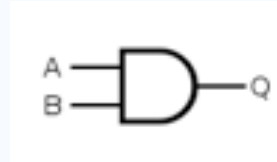
- Re-use of the material is permitted only with the written authorization of both Hannes Sakulin ([Hannes.Sakulin@cern.ch](mailto:Hannes.Sakulin@cern.ch)) and Clive Maxfield.



# Digital electronics

# The building blocks: logic gates

AND gate



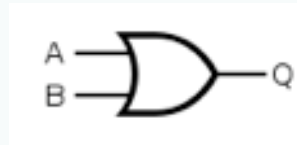
Truth table

INPUT		OUTPUT
A	B	A AND B
0	0	0
0	1	0
1	0	0
1	1	1

C equivalent

`q = a && b;`

OR gate



INPUT		OUTPUT
A	B	A + B
0	0	0
0	1	1
1	0	1
1	1	1

`q = a || b;`

Exclusive OR gate  
XOR gate

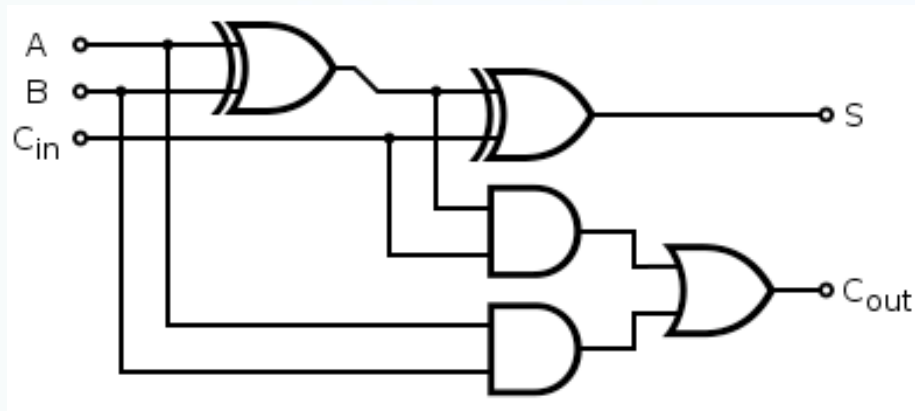


INPUT		OUTPUT
A	B	A XOR B
0	0	0
0	1	1
1	0	1
1	1	0

`q = a != b;`

⋮

# Combinatorial logic (asynchronous)



Outputs are determined by Inputs, only

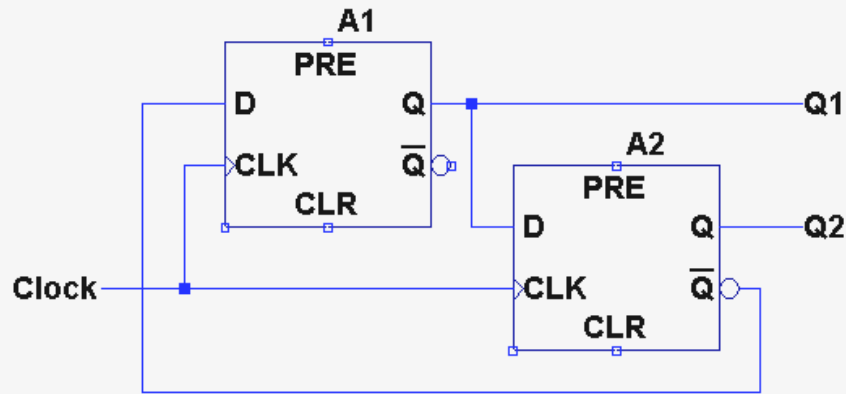
Example: Full adder with carry-in, carry-out

A	B	C <sub>in</sub>	S	C <sub>out</sub>
0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	1	0
0	1	0	1	0
1	1	0	0	1
0	0	1	1	0
1	0	1	0	1
0	1	1	0	1
1	1	1	1	1

Combinatorial logic may be implemented using Look-Up Tables (LUTs)

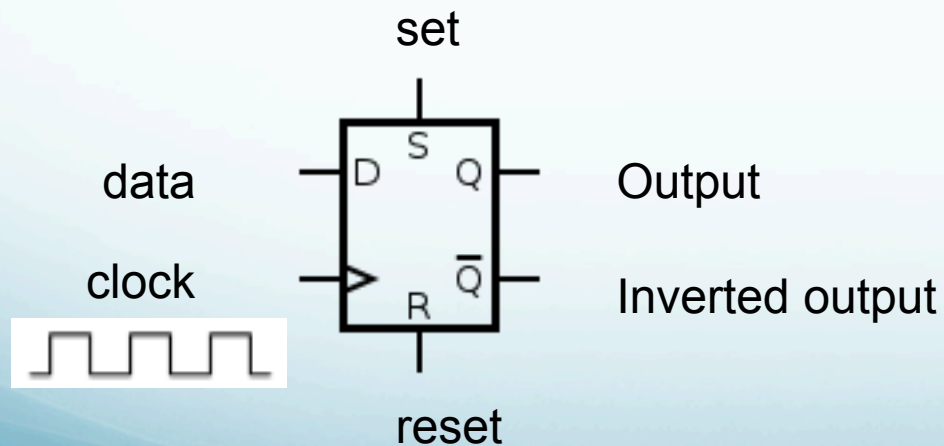
LUT = small memory

# (Synchronous) sequential logic



2-bit binary counter

Outputs are determined by Inputs and their History (Sequence)  
The logic has an internal state



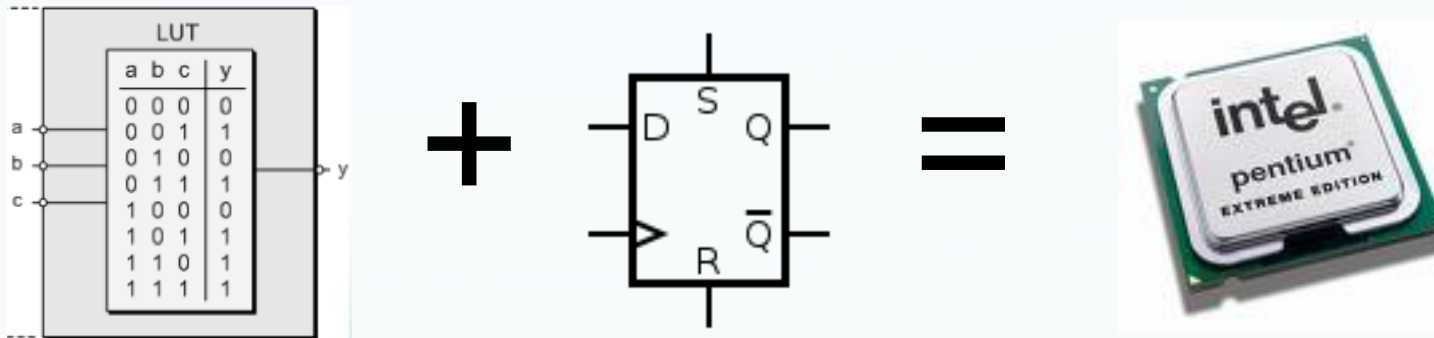
## D Flip-flop:

samples the data at the rising (or falling) edge of the clock

The output will be equal to the last sampled input until the next rising (or falling) clock edge


D Flip-flop (D=data, delay)

# Synchronous sequential logic



Using Look-Up-Tables and Flip-Flops  
any kind of digital electronics may be implemented

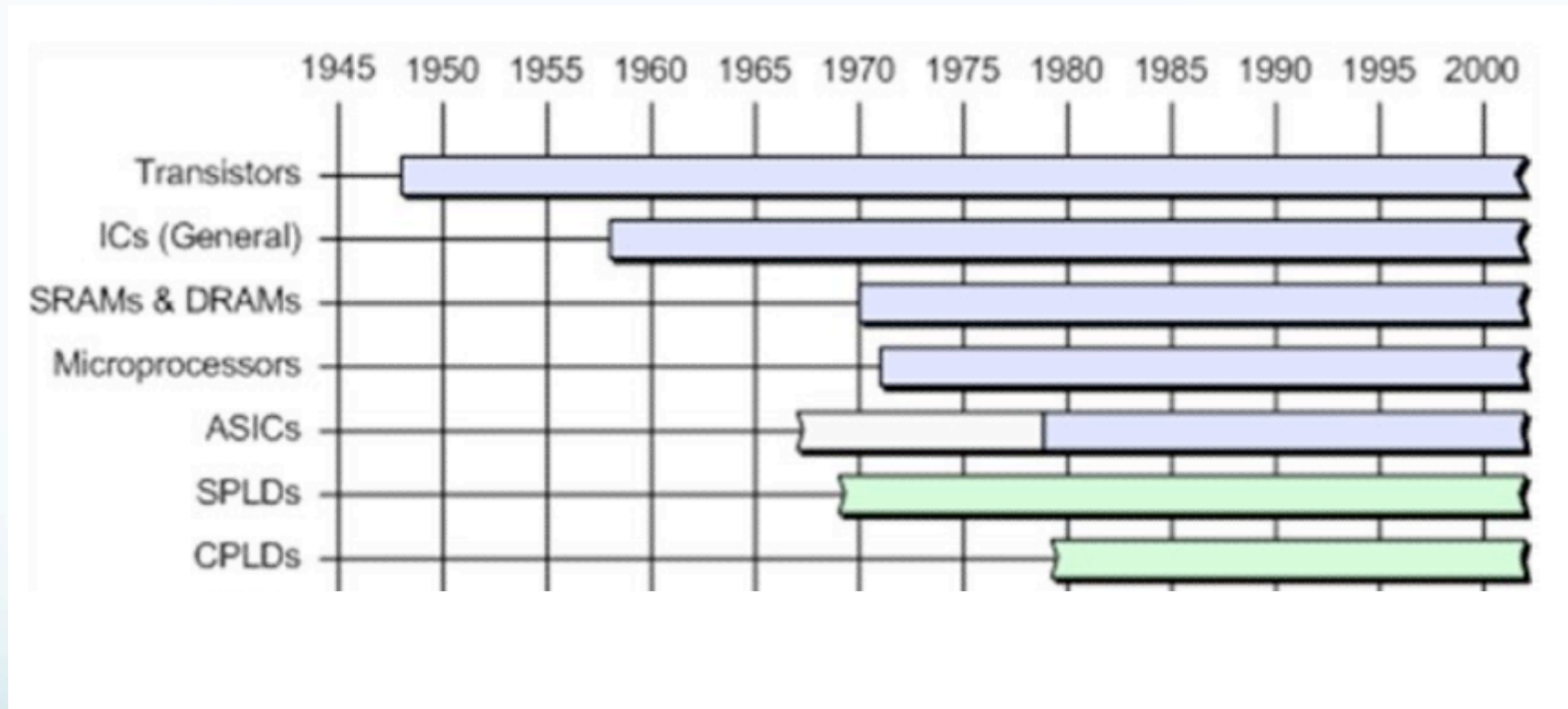
Of course there are some details  
to be learnt about electronics design ...

The background of the slide features a series of overlapping, wavy, horizontal bands in various shades of blue and white, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors transition from a light, almost white blue at the top to a deeper, more saturated blue at the bottom.

# **Programmable digital electronics**

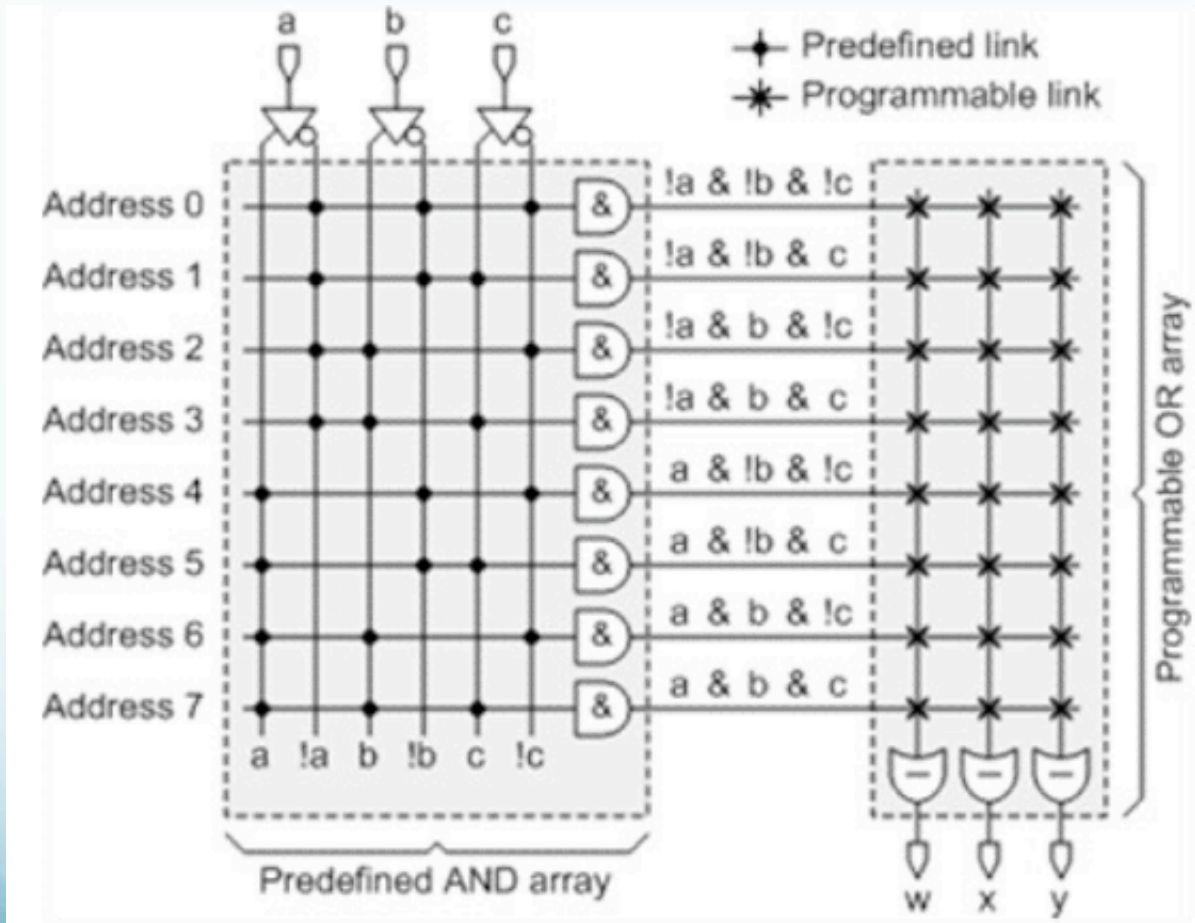


# Long long time ago ...



# Simple Programmable Logic Devices (sPLDs)

## a) Programmable Read Only Memory (PROMs)

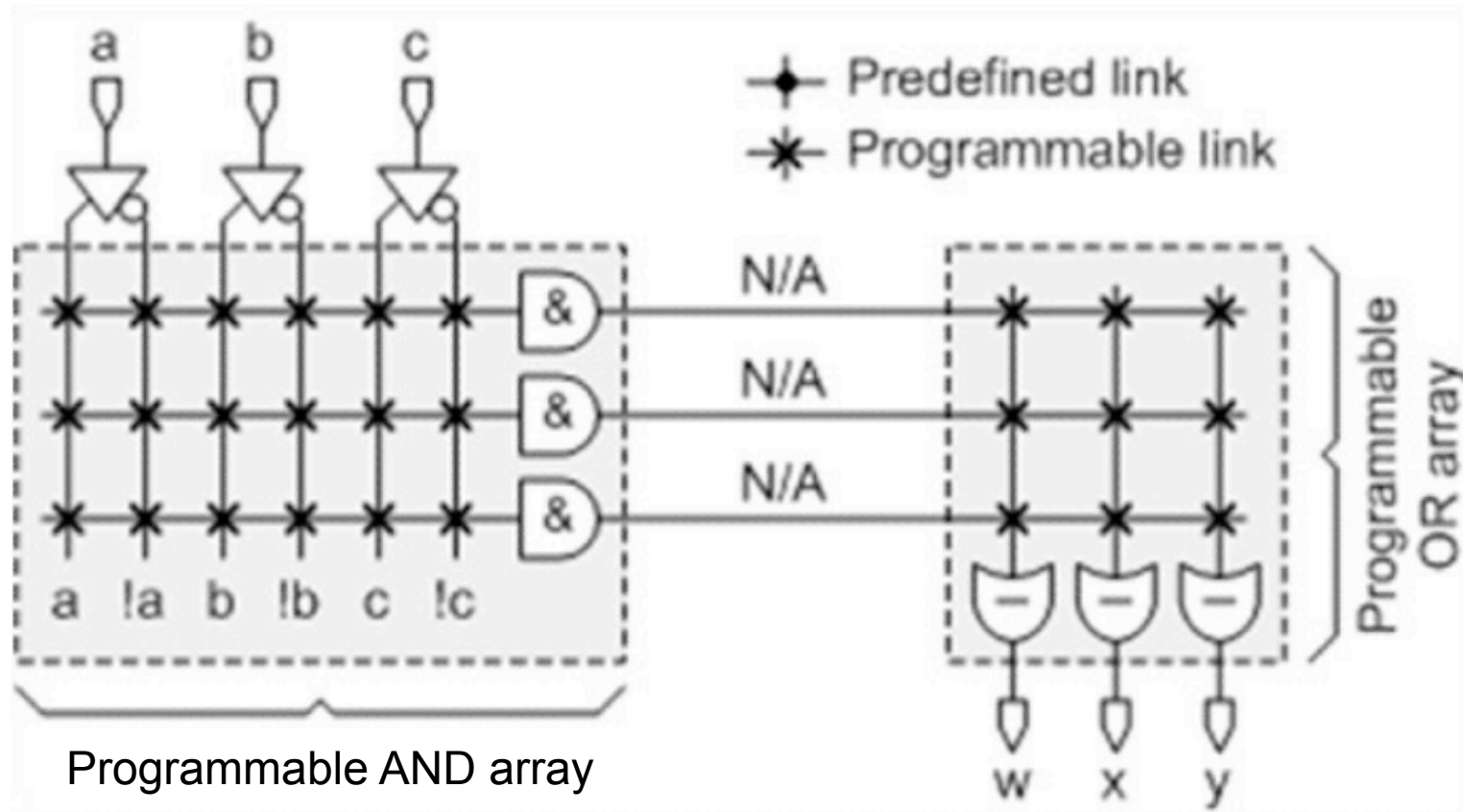


Late 60's

**Unprogrammed PROM (Fixed AND Array, Programmable OR Array)**

# Simple Programmable Logic Devices (sPLDs)

## b) Programmable Logic Arrays (PLAs)



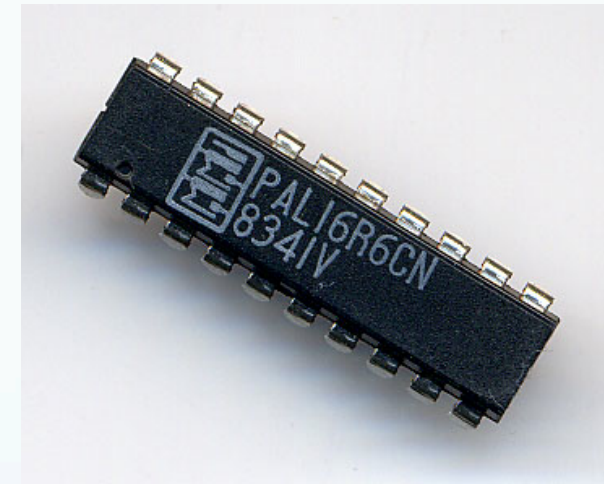
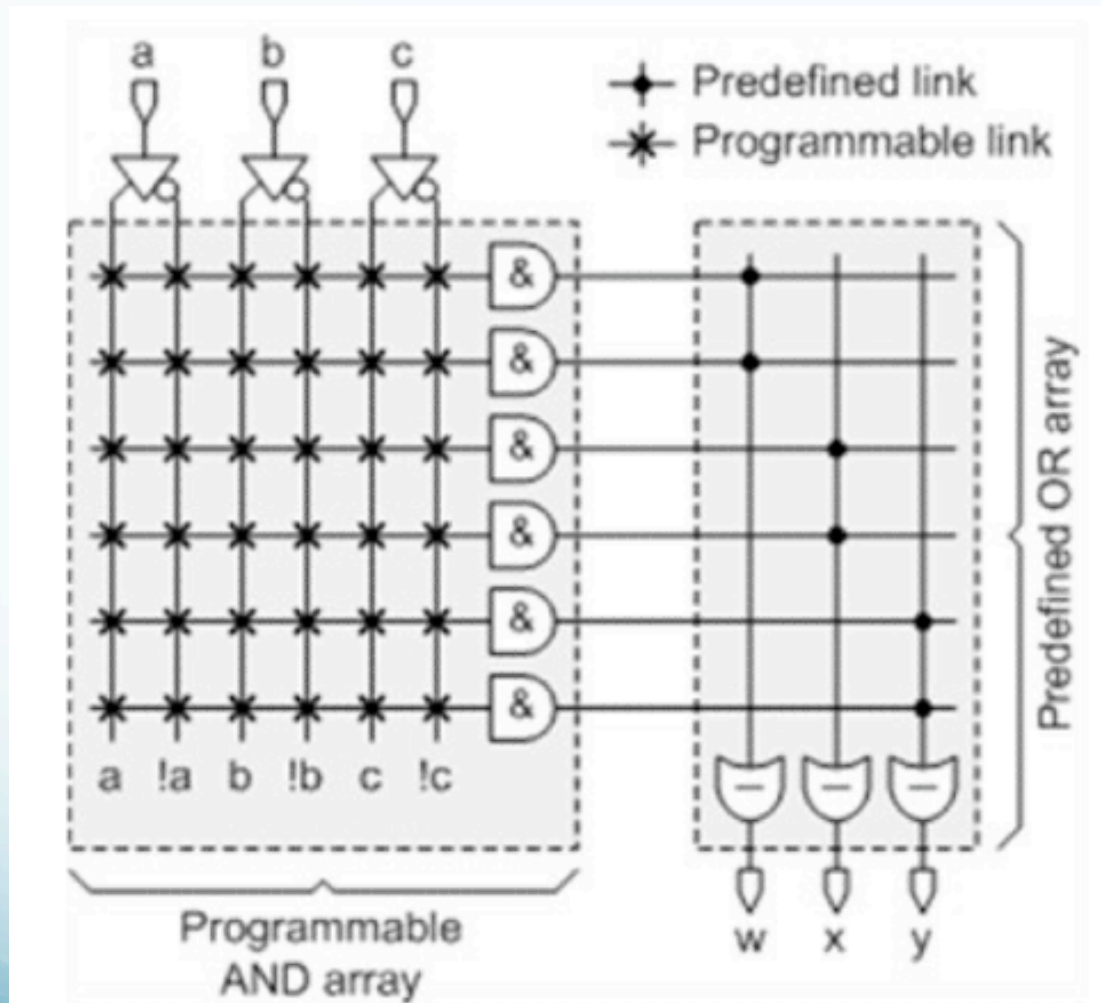
### Unprogrammed PLA (Programmable AND and OR Arrays)

Most flexible  
but slower

1975

# Simple Programmable Logic Devices (sPLDs)

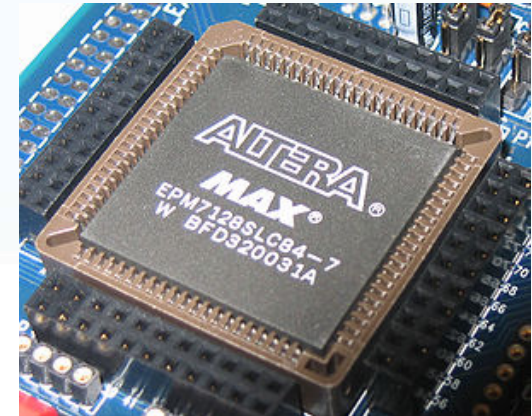
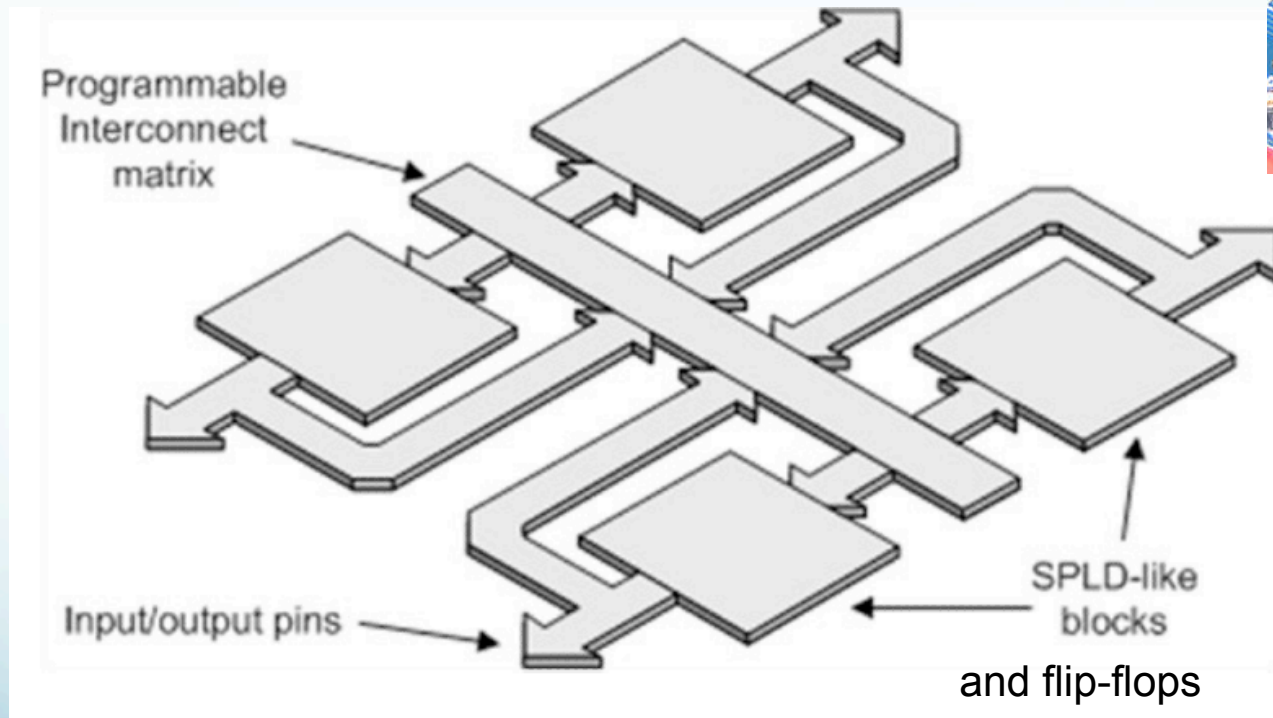
## c) Programmable Array Logic (PAL)



**Unprogrammed PAL (Programmable AND Array, Fixed OR Array)**

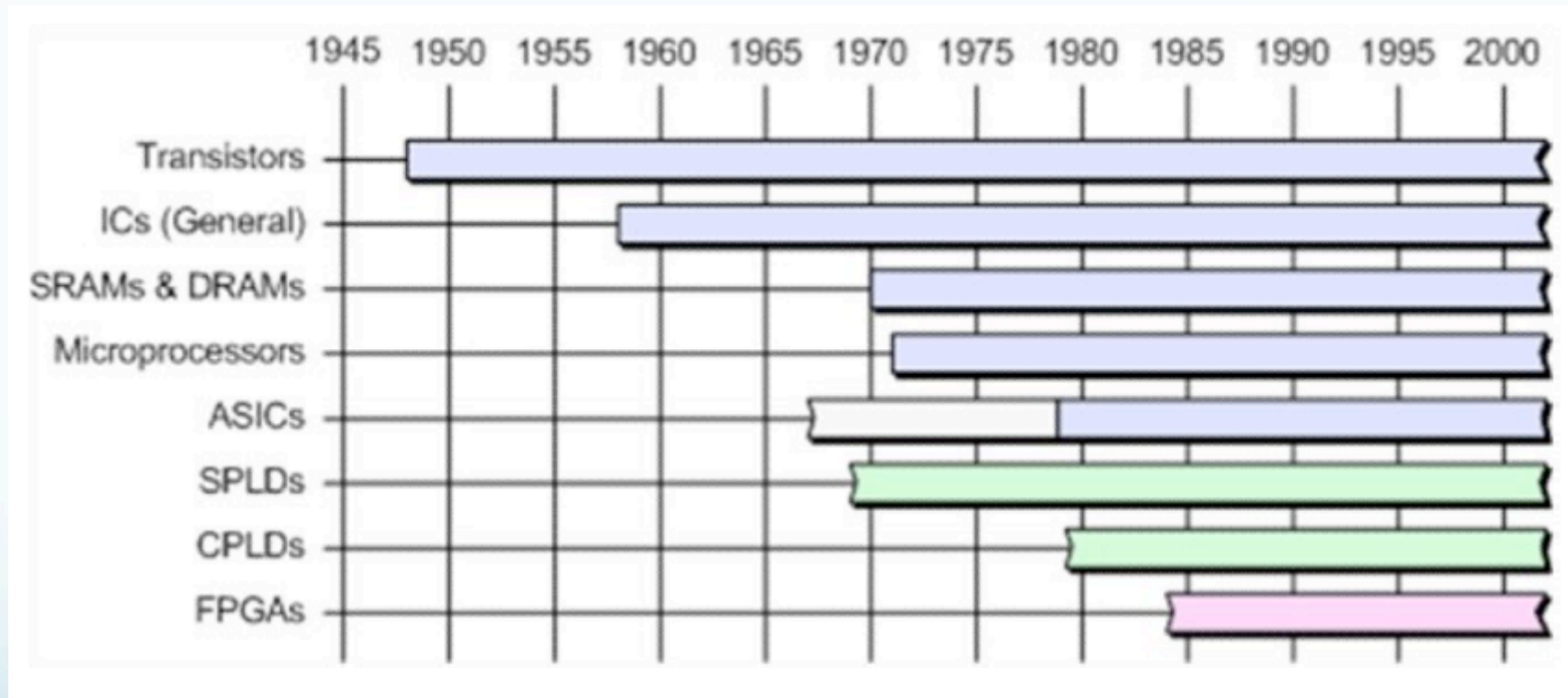


# Complex PLDs (CPLDs)



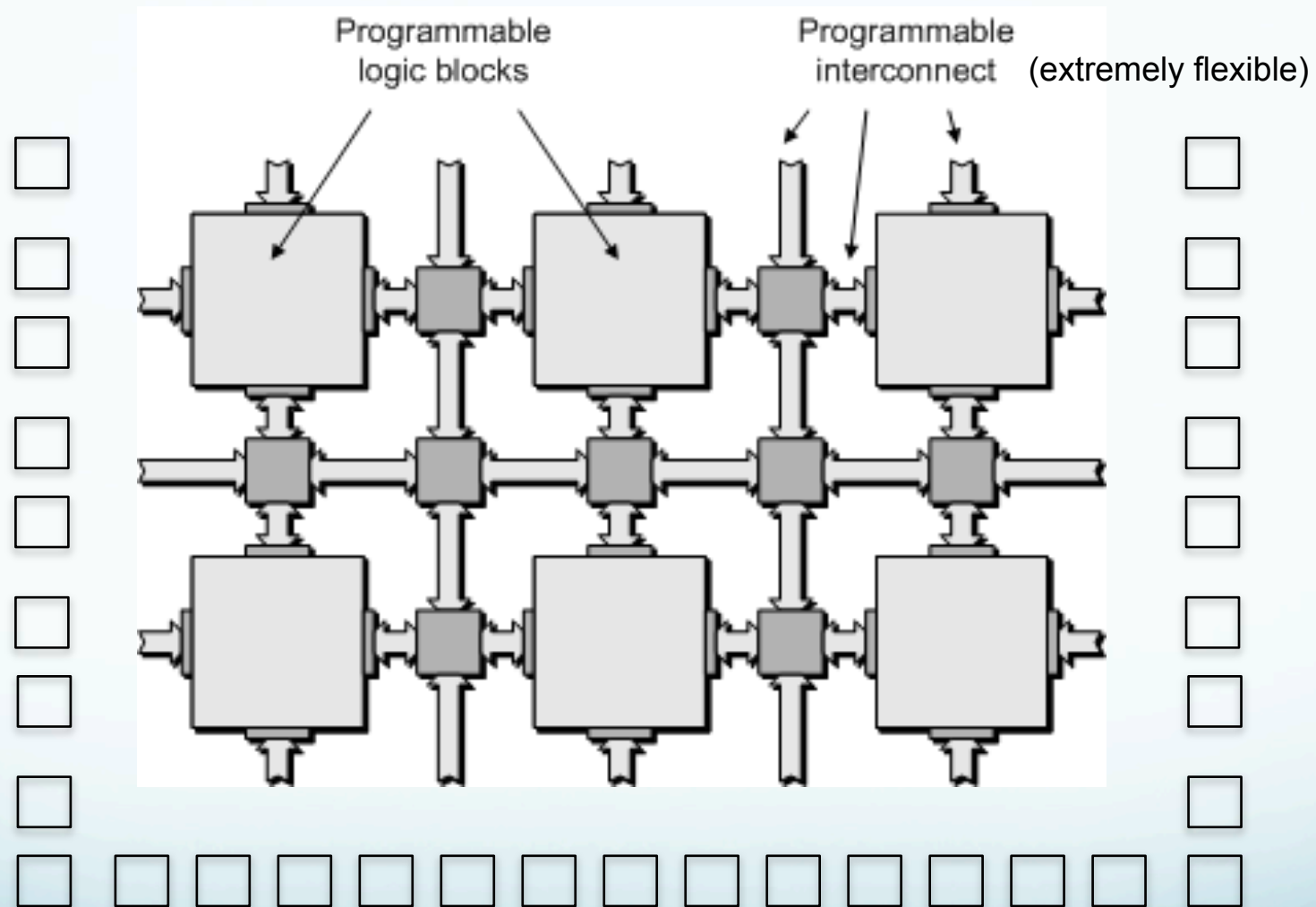
Coarse grained  
100's of blocks, restrictive structure  
(EE)PROM based

# FPGAs ...





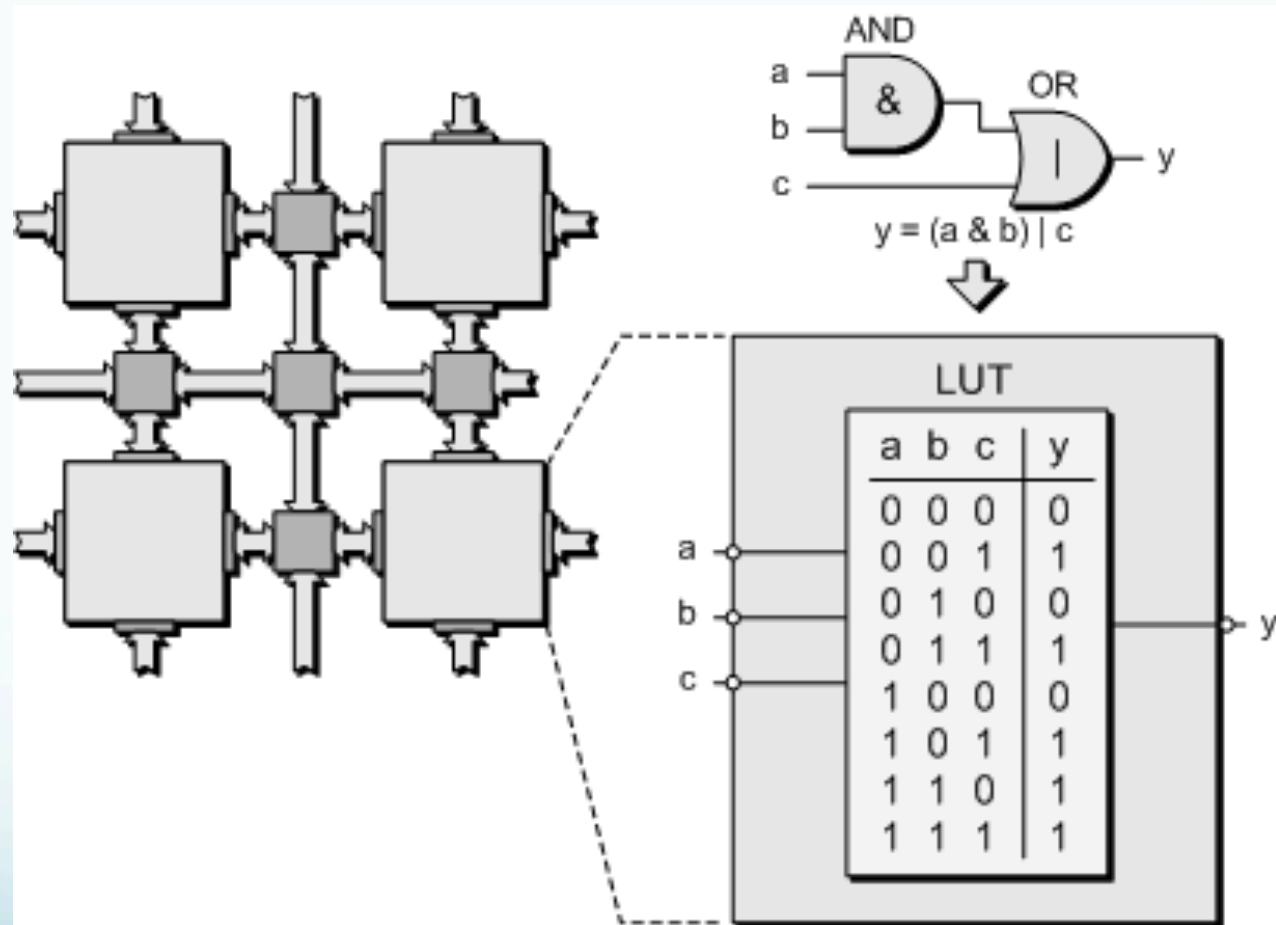
# FPGAs



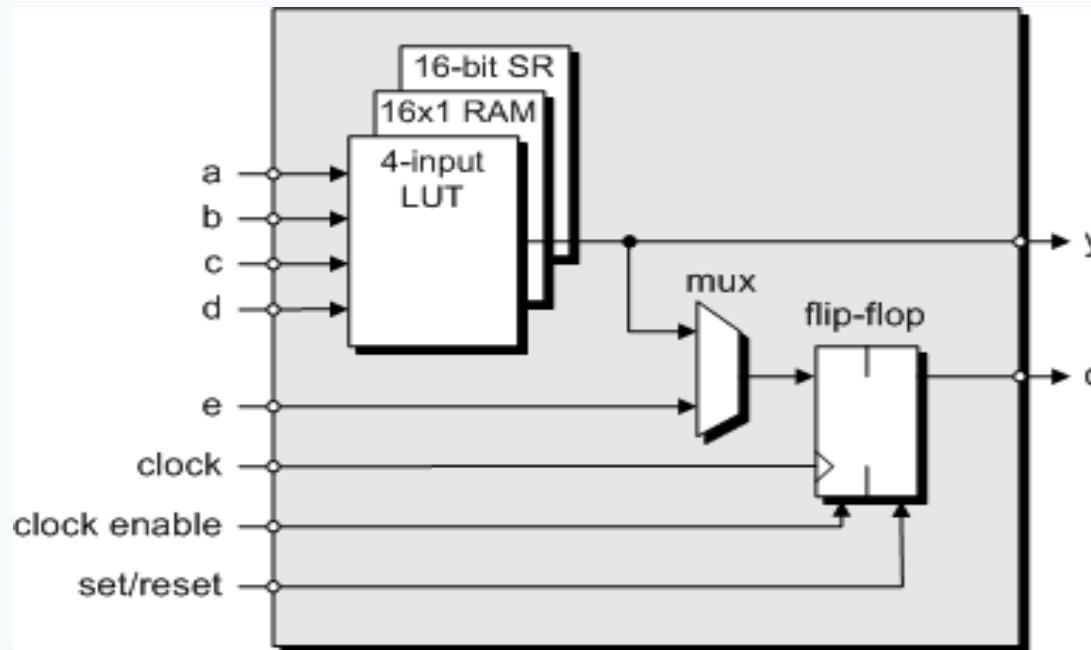
Fine-grained: 100.000's of blocks  
today: up to 5 million logic blocks

Programmable Input / Output pins

# LUT-based Fabrics



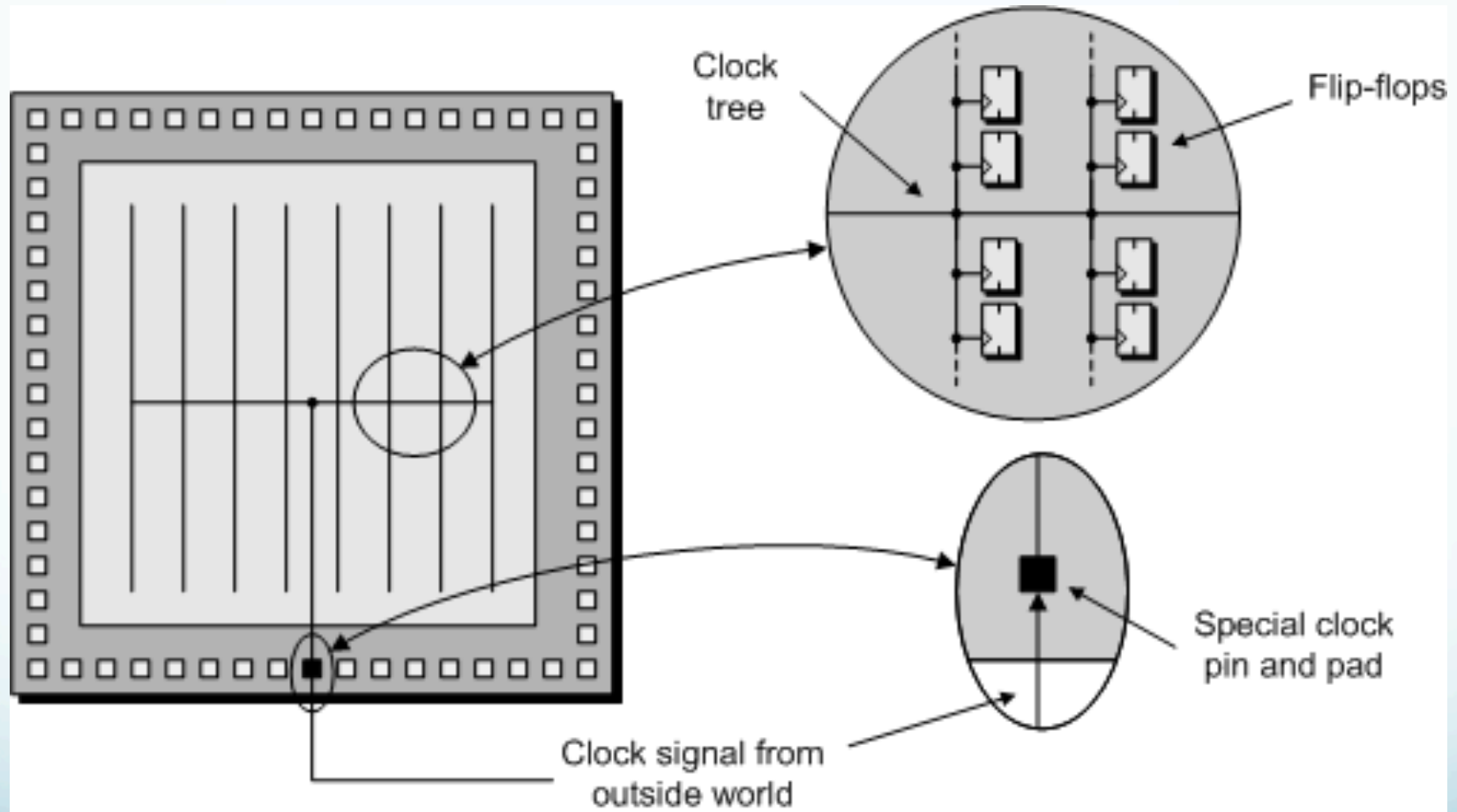
# Typical LUT-based Logic Cell



Xilinx: logic cell,  
Altera: logic element

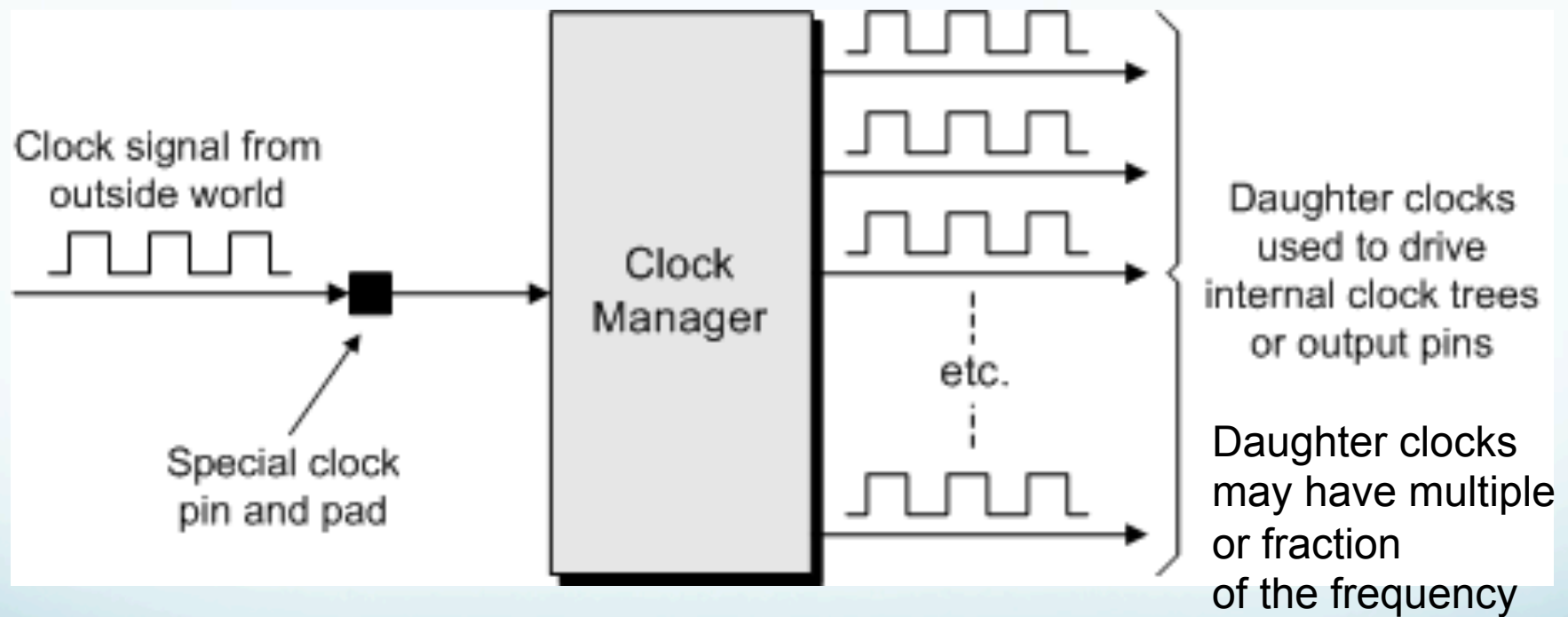
- LUT may implement any function of the inputs
- Flip-Flop registers the LUT output
- May use only the LUT or only the Flip-flop
- LUT may alternatively be configured a shift register
- Additional elements (not shown): fast carry logic

# Clock Trees

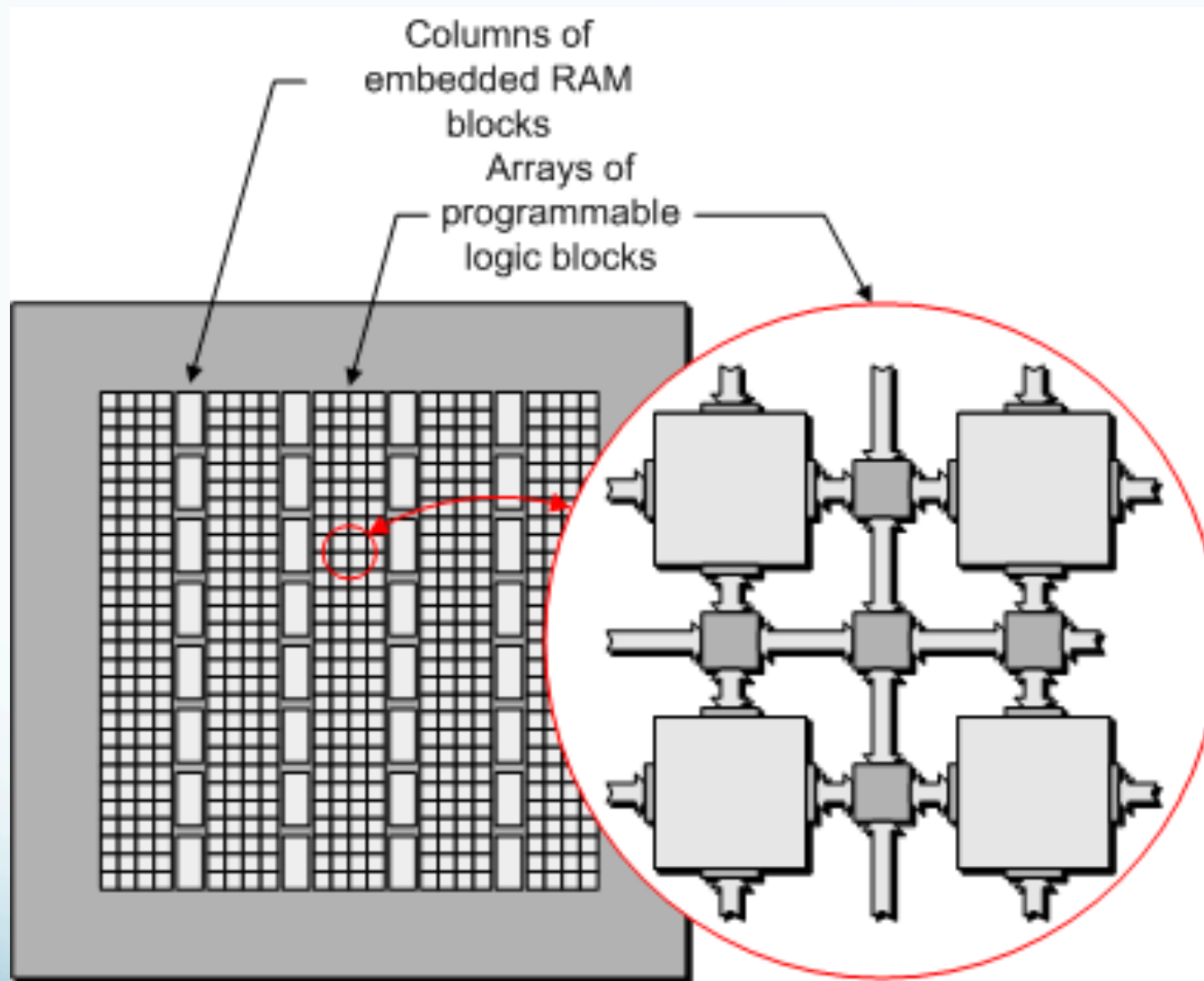


Clock trees guarantee that the clock arrives at the same time at all flip-flops

# Clock Managers



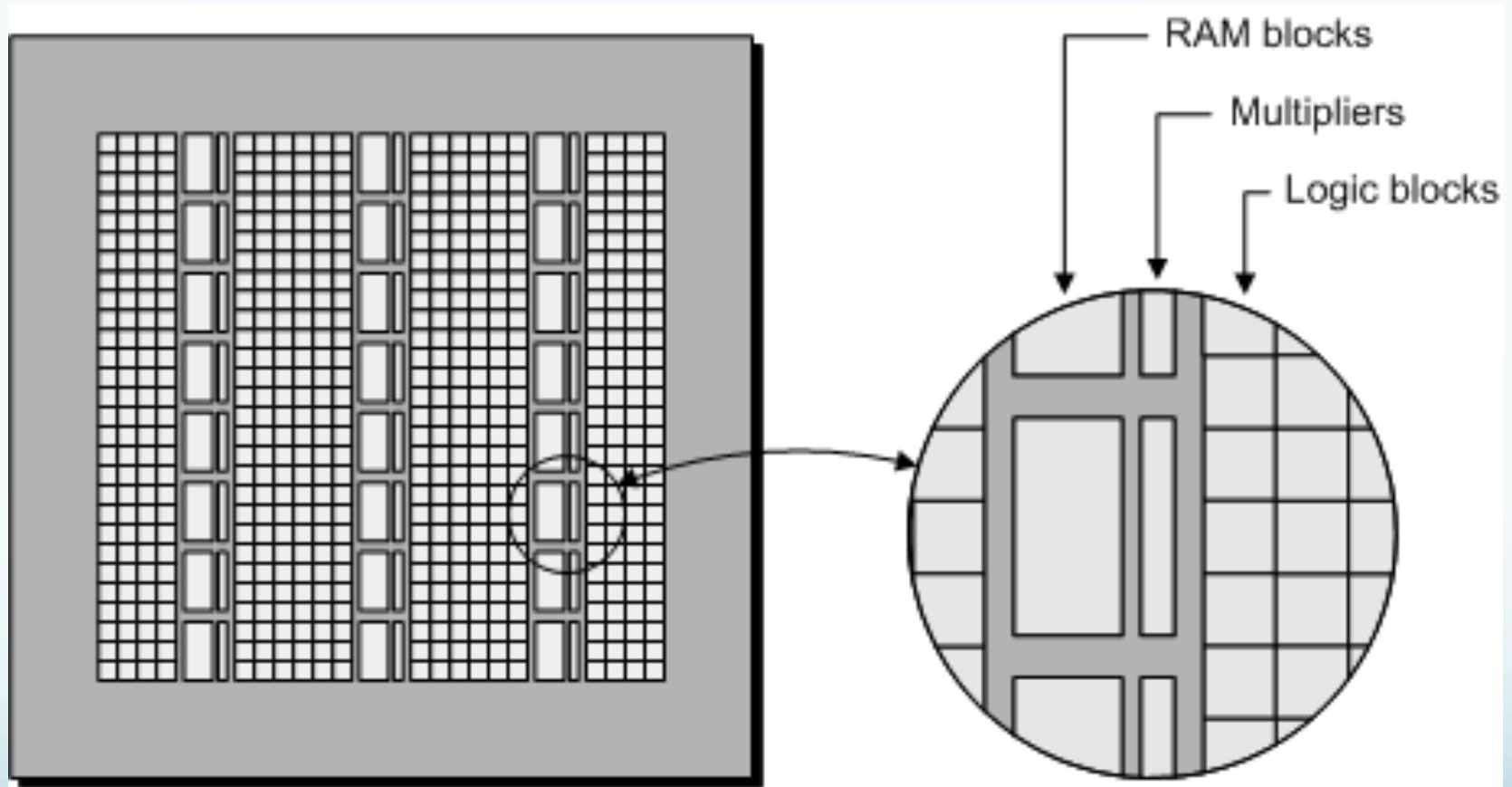
# Embedded RAM blocks



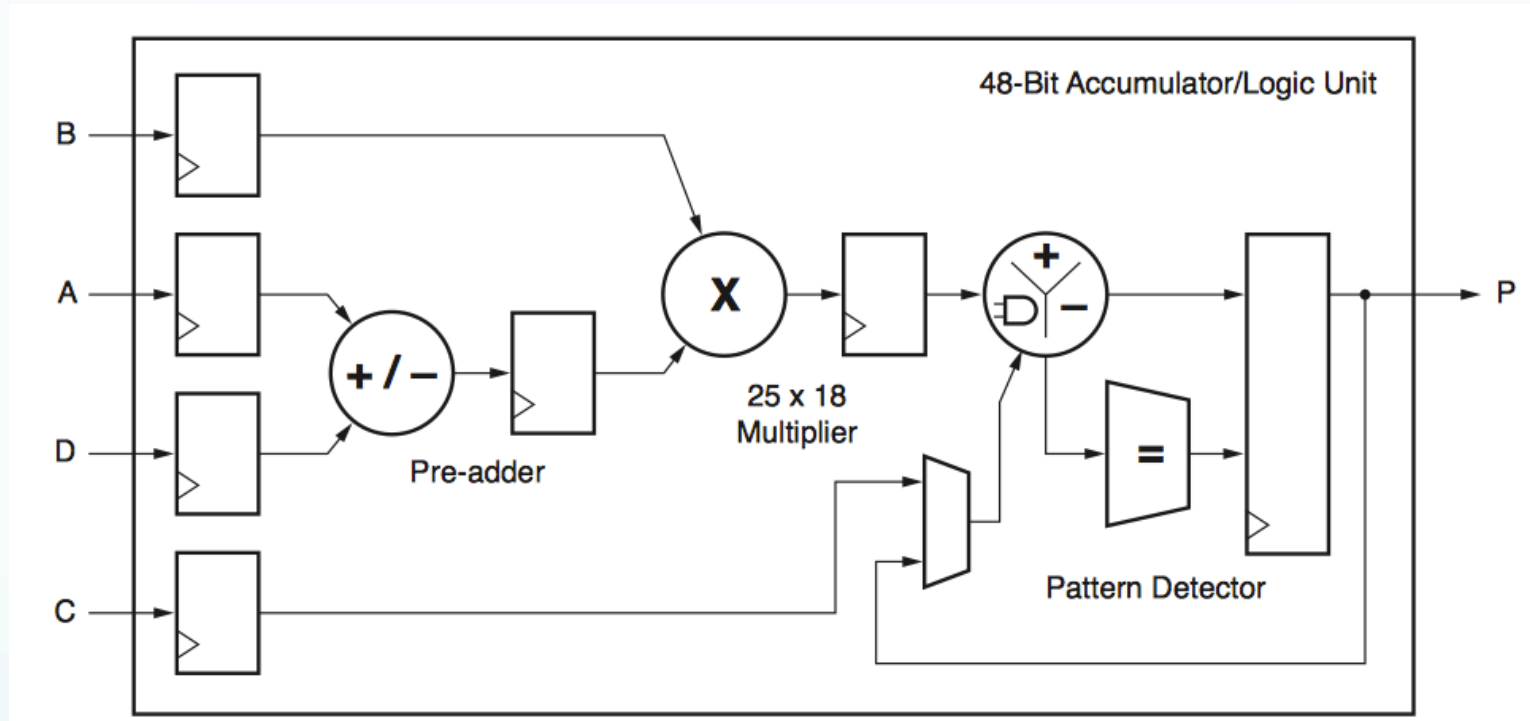
Today: Up to ~500 Mbit of RAM



# Embedded Multipliers & DSPs



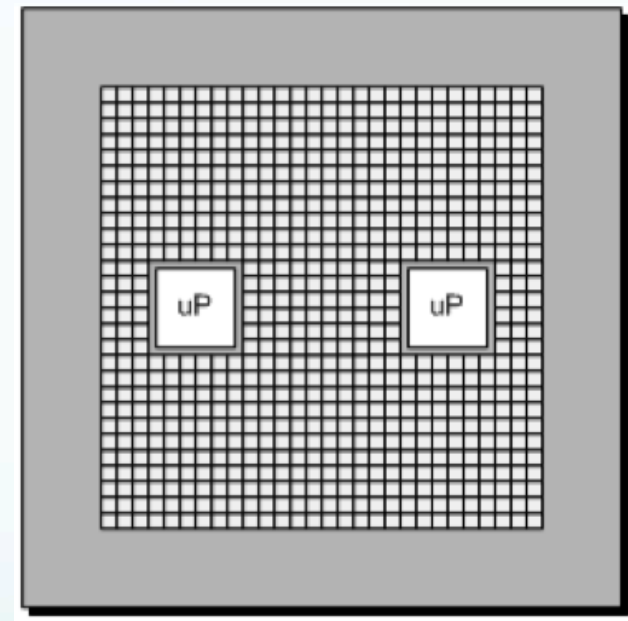
# Digital Signal Processor (DSP)



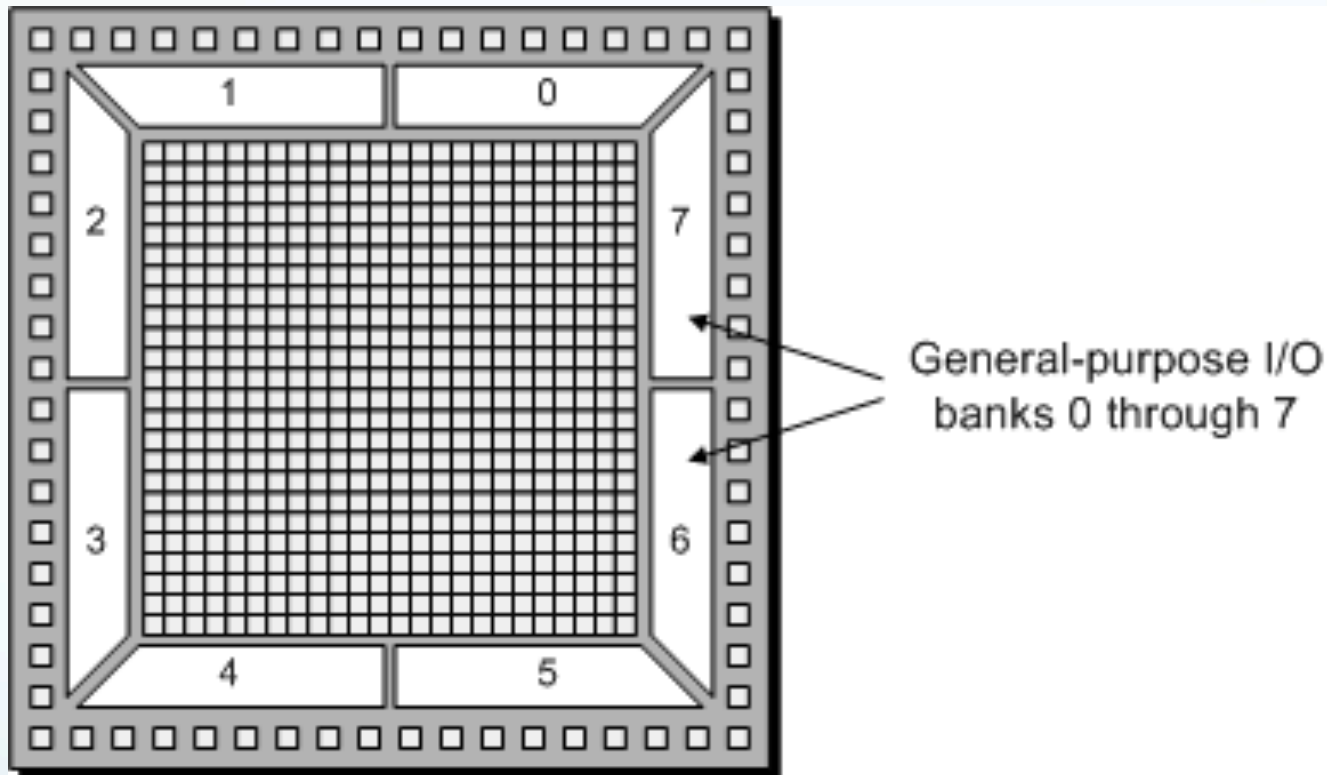
DSP block (Xilinx 7-series)  
Up to several 1000 per chip

# Soft and Hard Processor Cores

- Soft core
  - Design implemented with the programmable resources (logic cells) in the chip
- Hard core
  - Processor core that is available in addition to the programmable resources
  - E.g.: Power PC, ARM



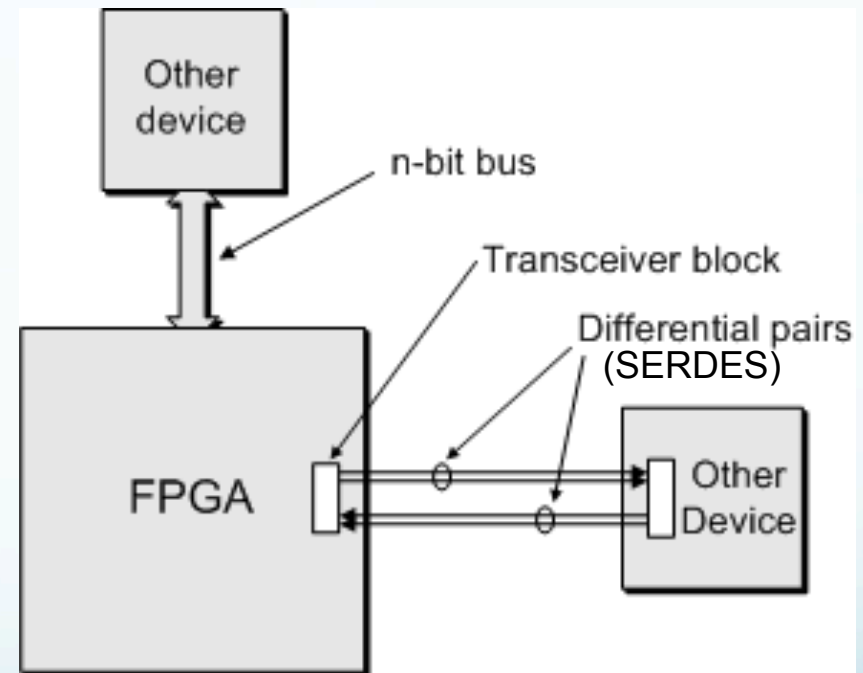
# General-Purpose Input/Output (GPIO)



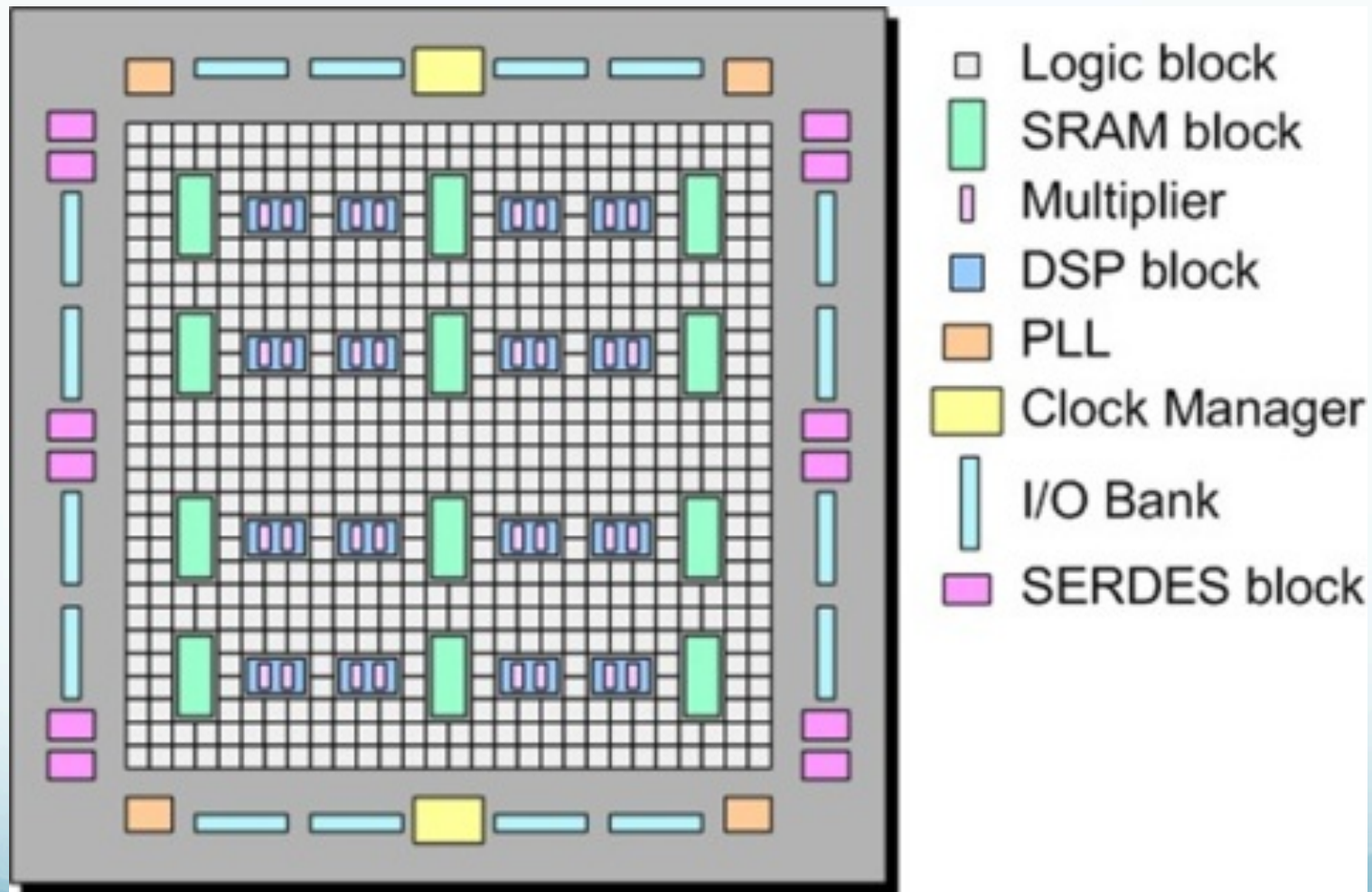
Today: Up to 1200 user I/O pins  
Input and / or output  
Voltages from (1.0), 1.2 .. 3.3 V  
Many IO standards  
Single-ended: LVTTL, LVCMOS, ...  
Differential pairs: LVDS, ...

# High-Speed Serial Interconnect

- Using differential pairs
- Standard I/O pins limited to about 1 Gbit/s
- Latest serial transceivers:
  - typically 10 Gb/s, 13.1 Gb/s,
  - up to 32.75 Gb/s
  - up to 56 Gb/s with Pulse Amplitude Modulation (PAM)
- FPGAs with multi-Tbit/s IO bandwidth



# Components in a modern FPGA

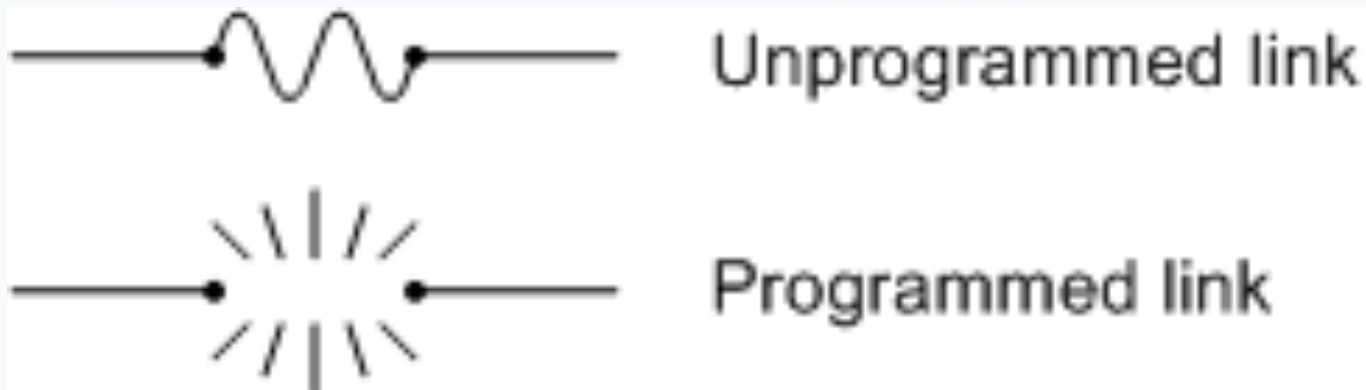




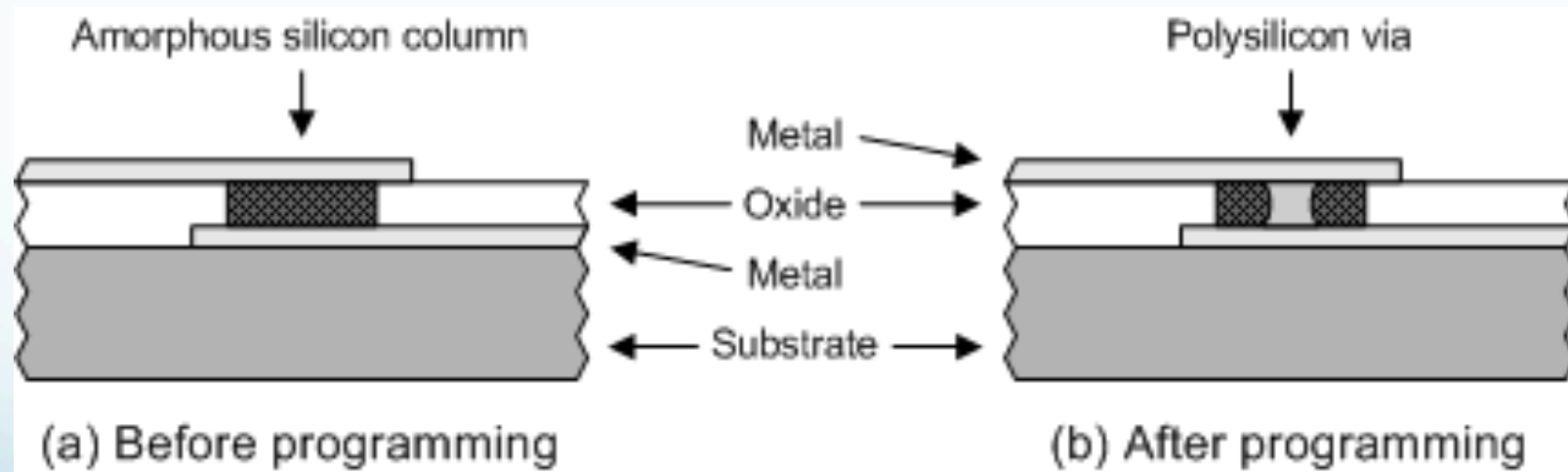
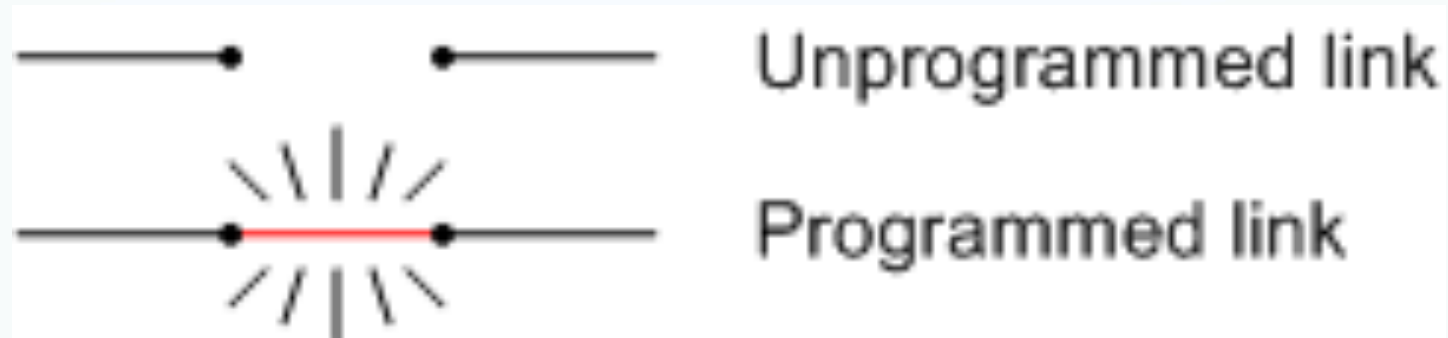
The background of the slide features a series of overlapping, wavy, horizontal bands in various shades of blue and white, creating a sense of depth and movement, similar to a stylized landscape or water ripples.

# **Programming techniques**

# Fusible Links (not used in FPGAs)

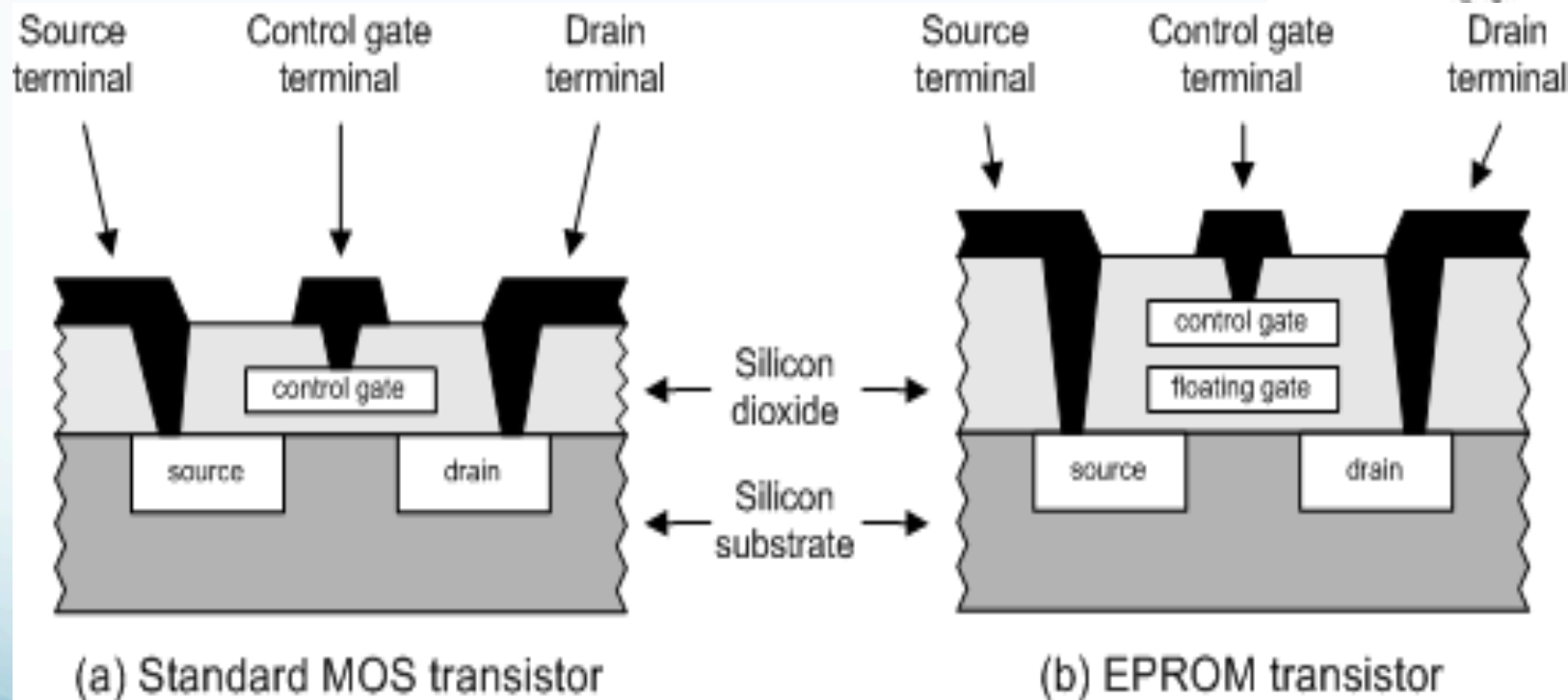
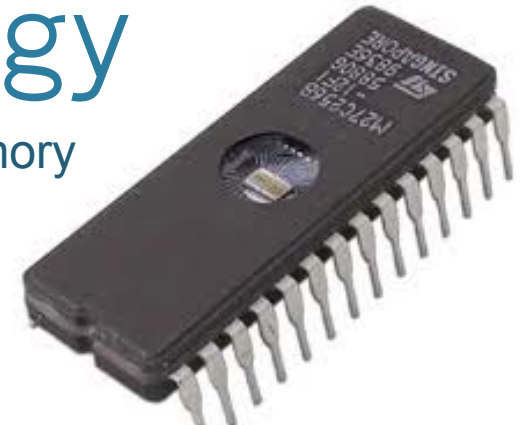


# Antifuse Technology



# EPROM Technology

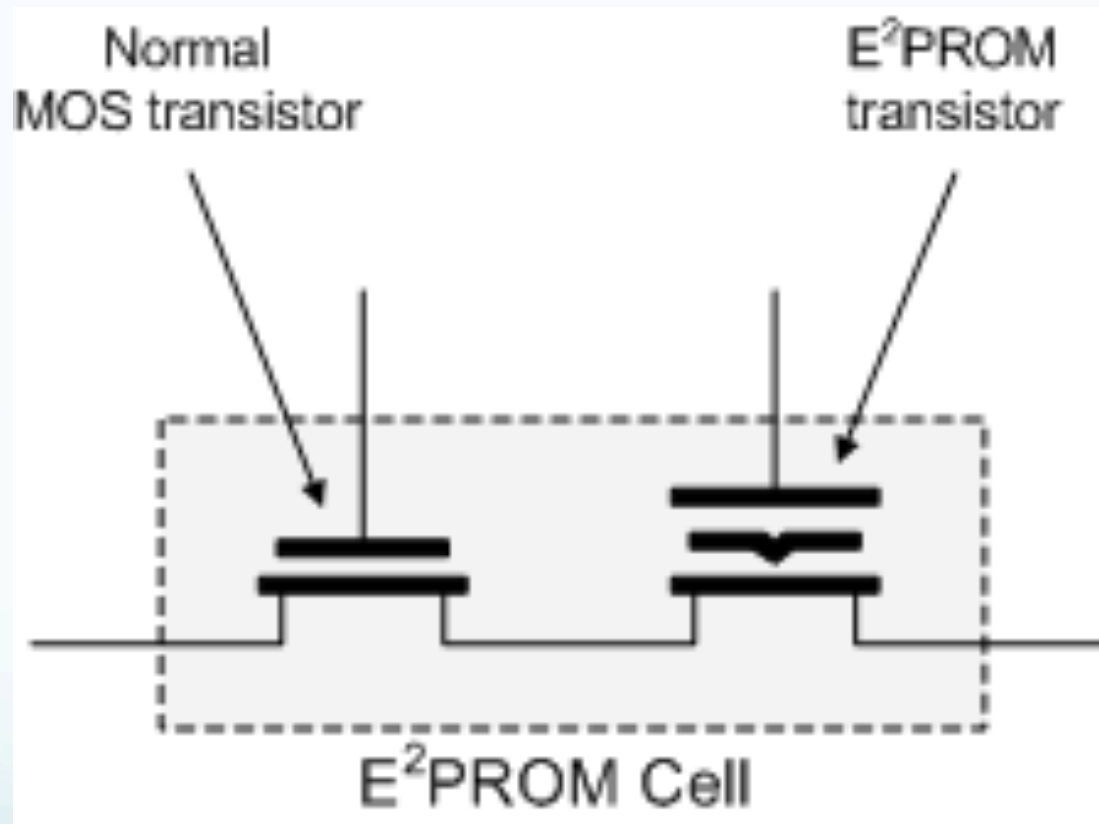
Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory



Intel, 1971

# EEPROM and FLASH Technology

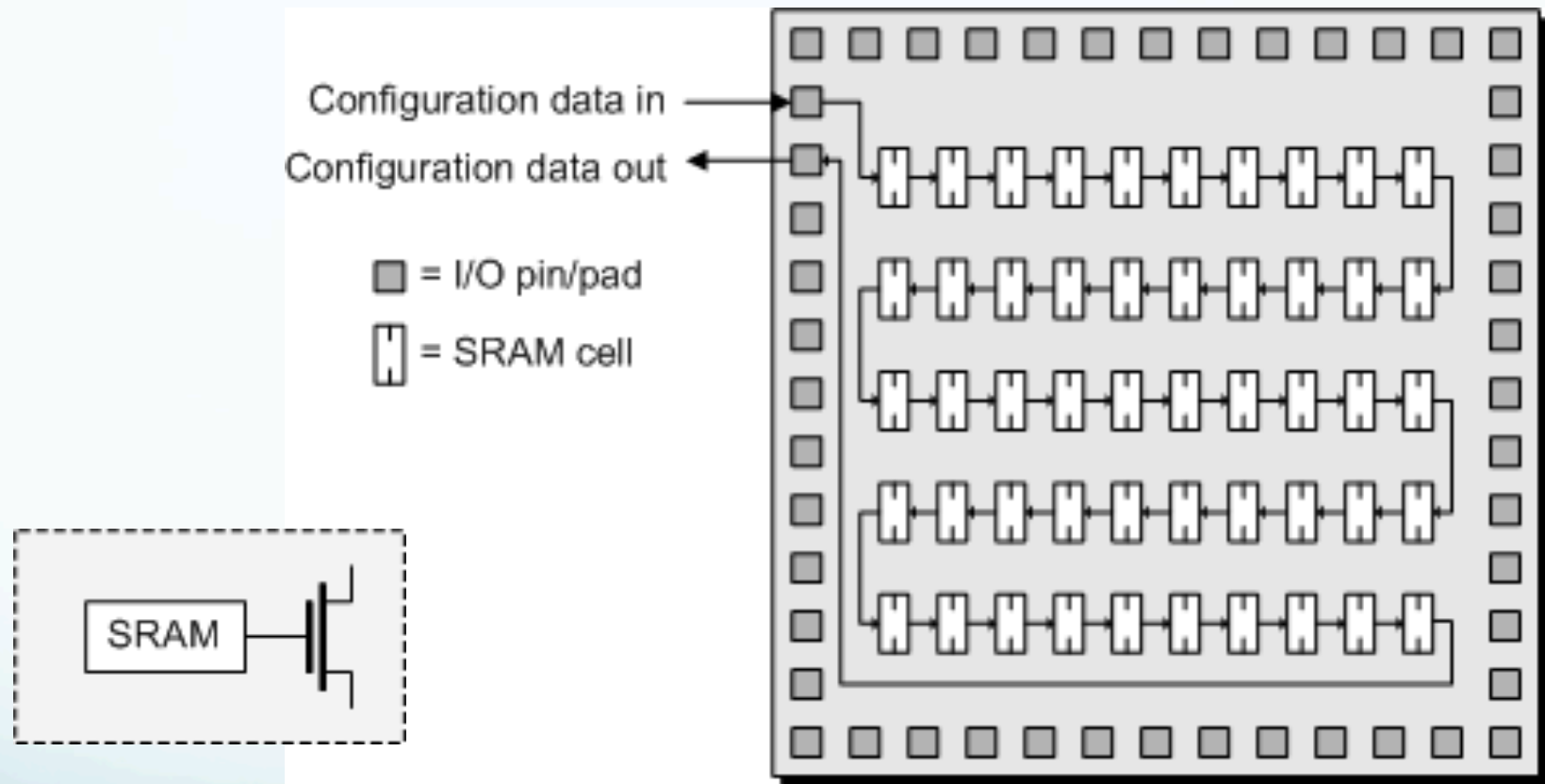
Electrically Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory



EEPROM: erasable word by word

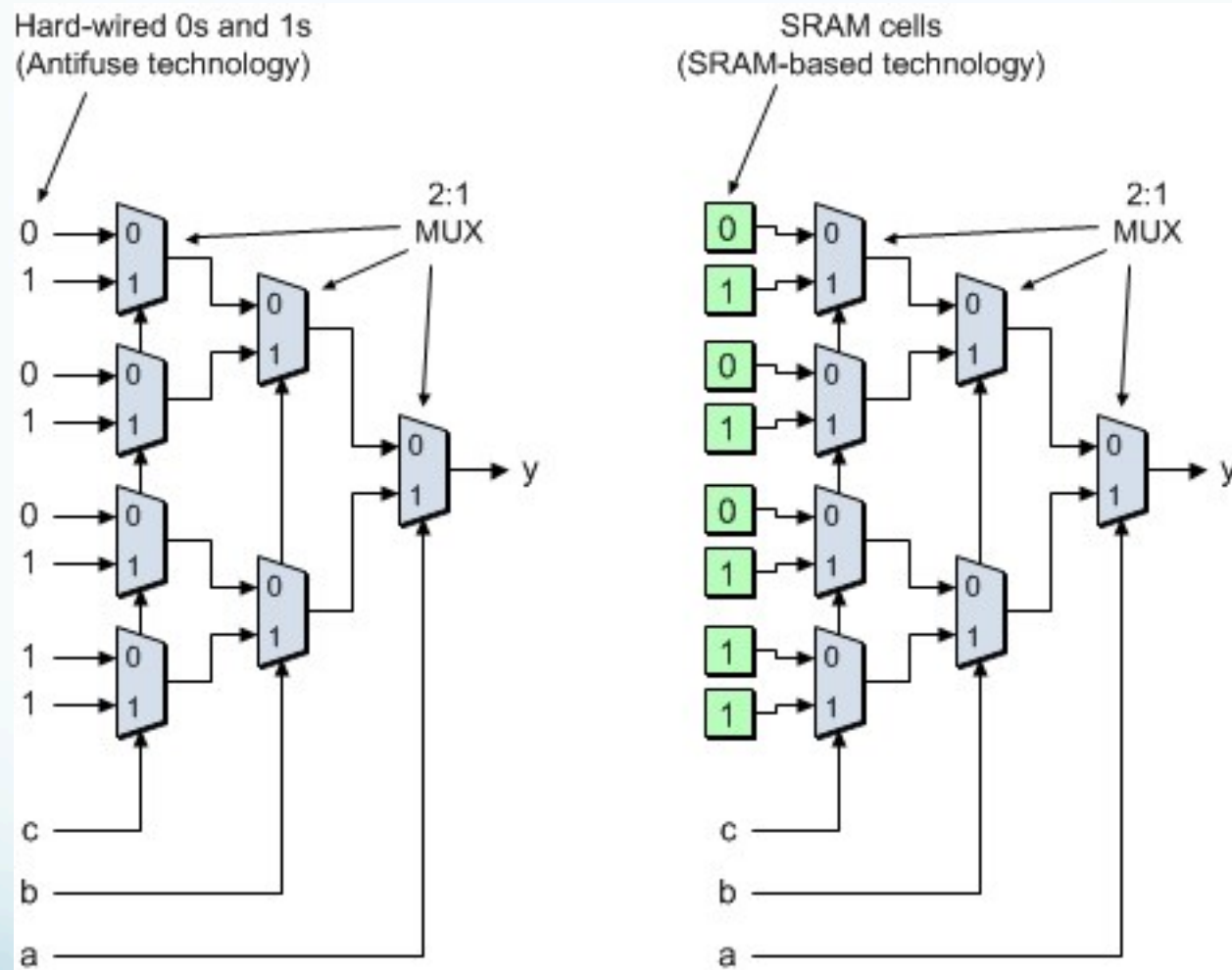
FLASH: erasable by block or by device

# SRAM-Based Devices

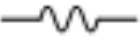






Multi-transistor SRAM cell

# Programming a 3-bit wide LUT



# Summary of Technologies

Technology	Symbol	Predominantly associated with ...
Fusible-link		SPLDs
Antifuse		FPGAs
EPROM		SPLDs and CPLDs
E <sup>2</sup> PROM/ FLASH		SPLDs, CPLDs, and FPGAs
SRAM		FPGAs (some CPLDs)



Rad-tolerant  
secure



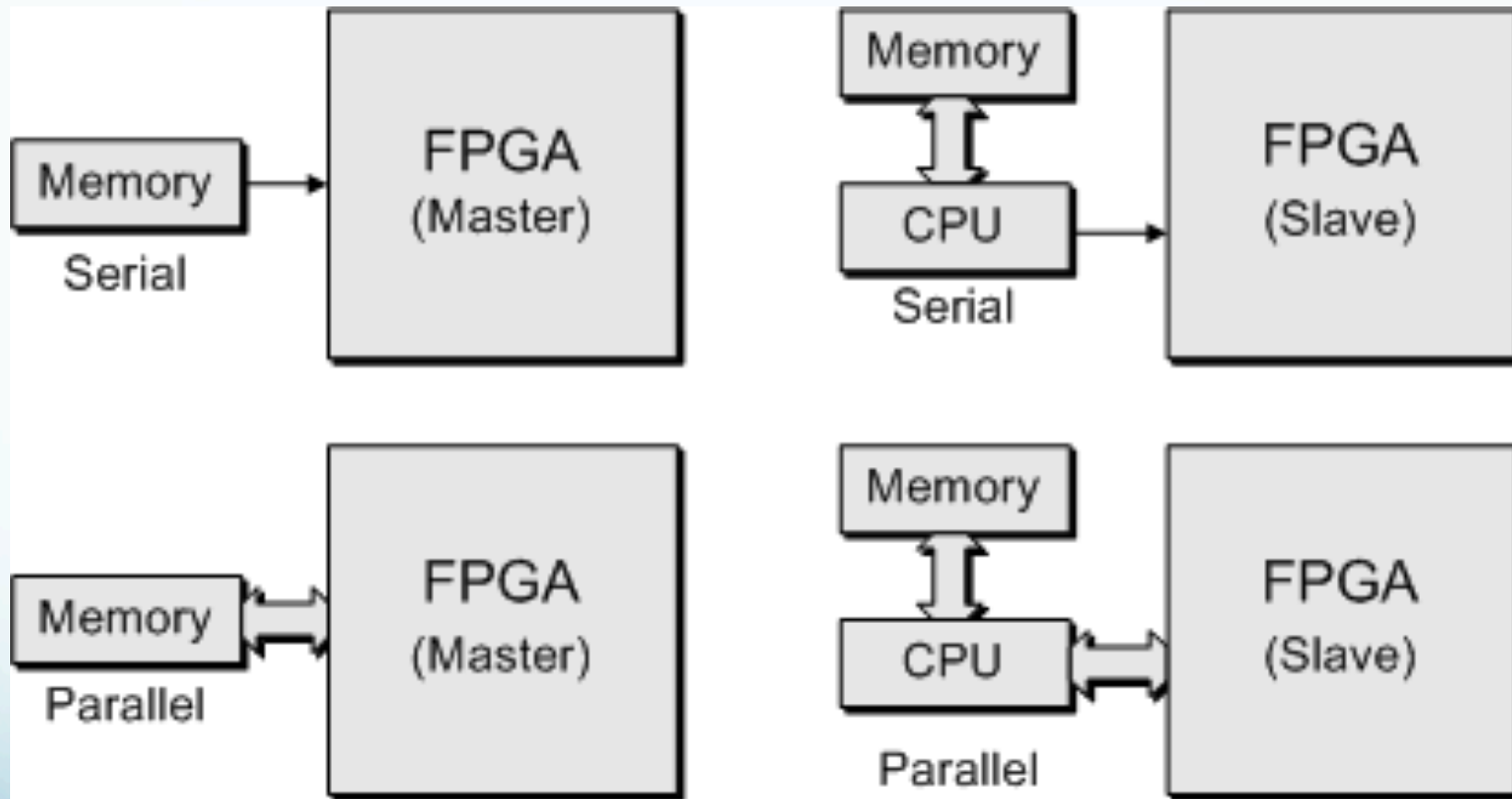
Rad-tolerant  
(e.g. Alice)



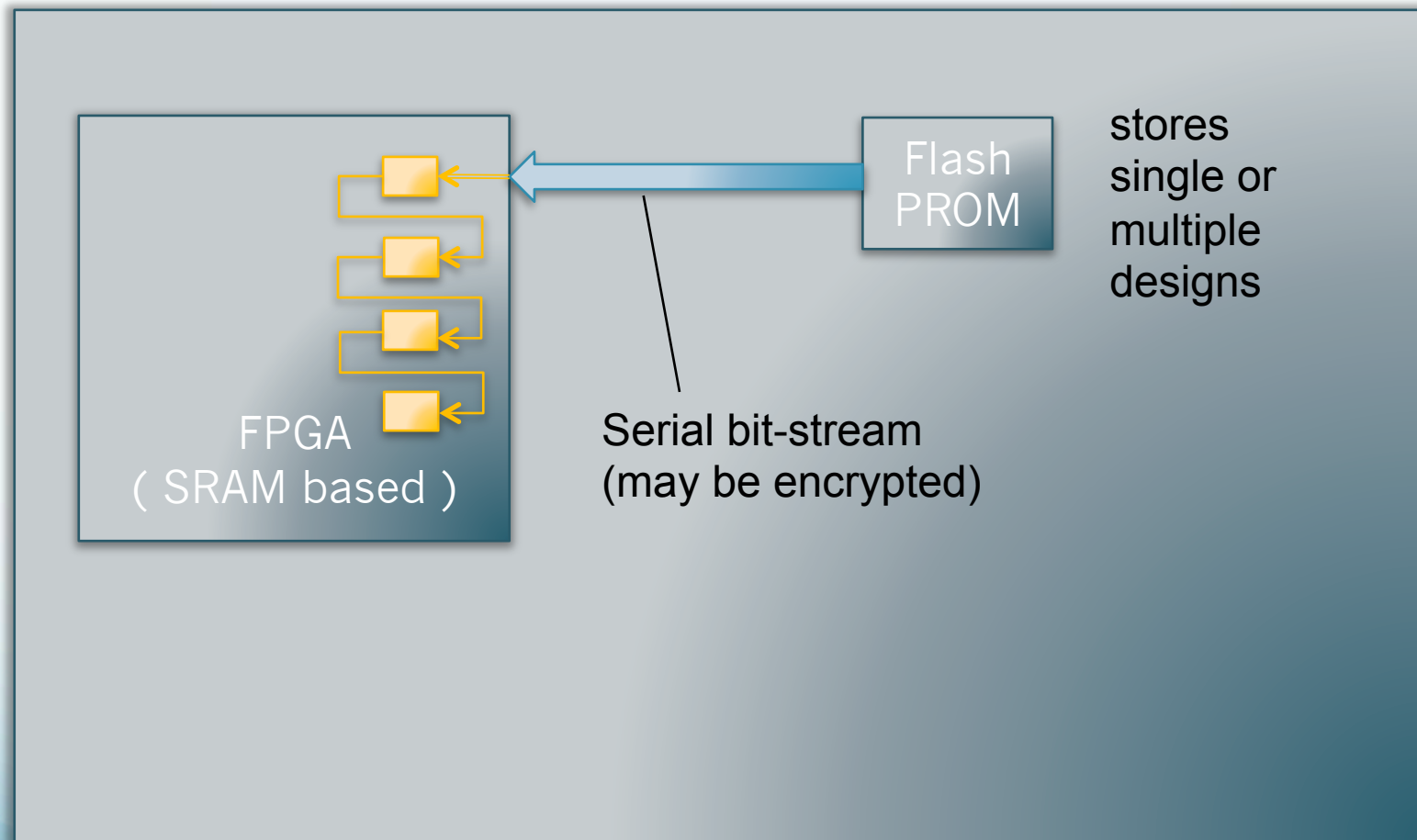
Used in most  
FPGAs



# Design Considerations (SRAM Config.)



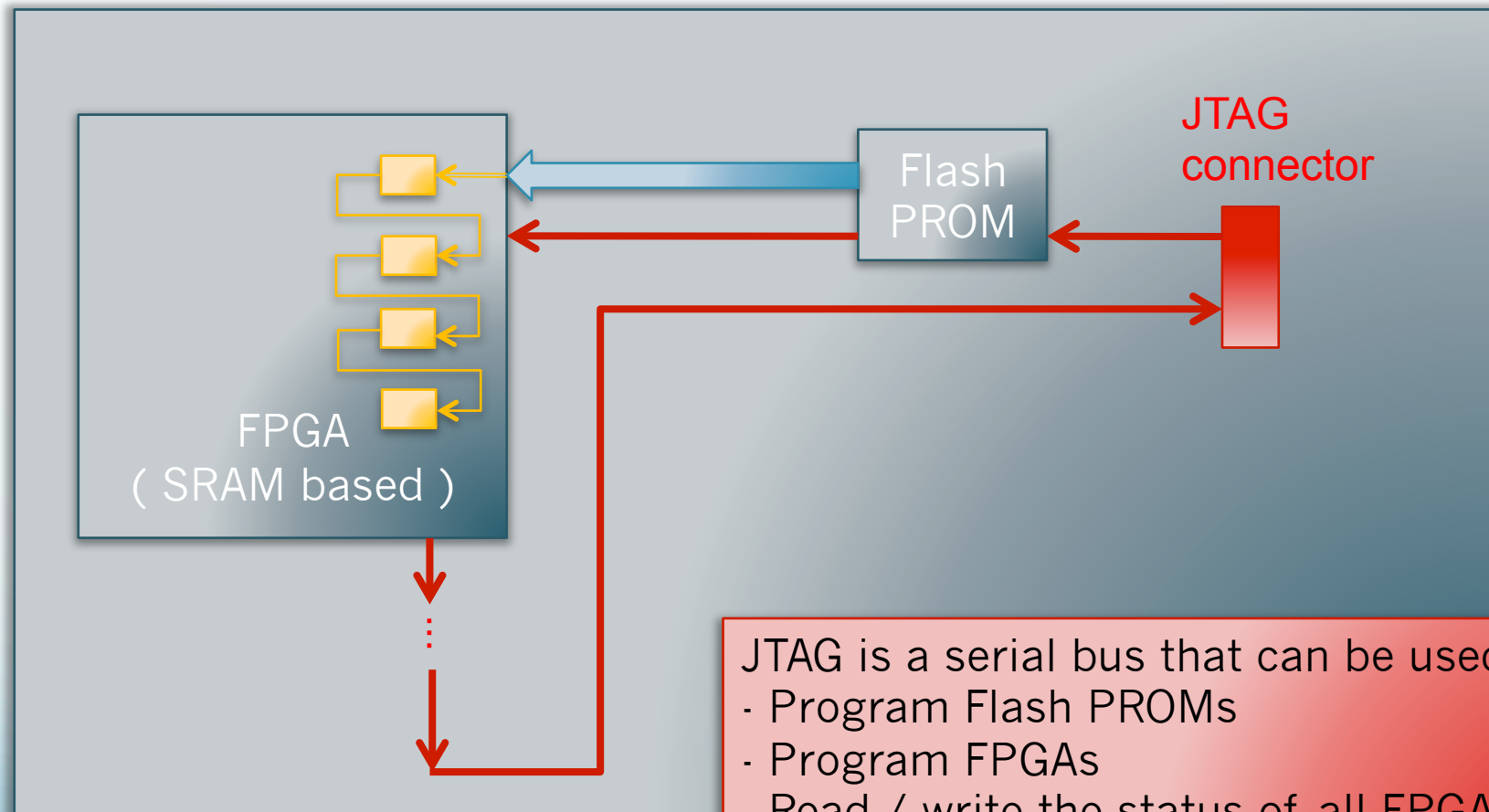
# Configuration at power-up



Typical FPGA configuration time: milliseconds

# Programming via JTAG

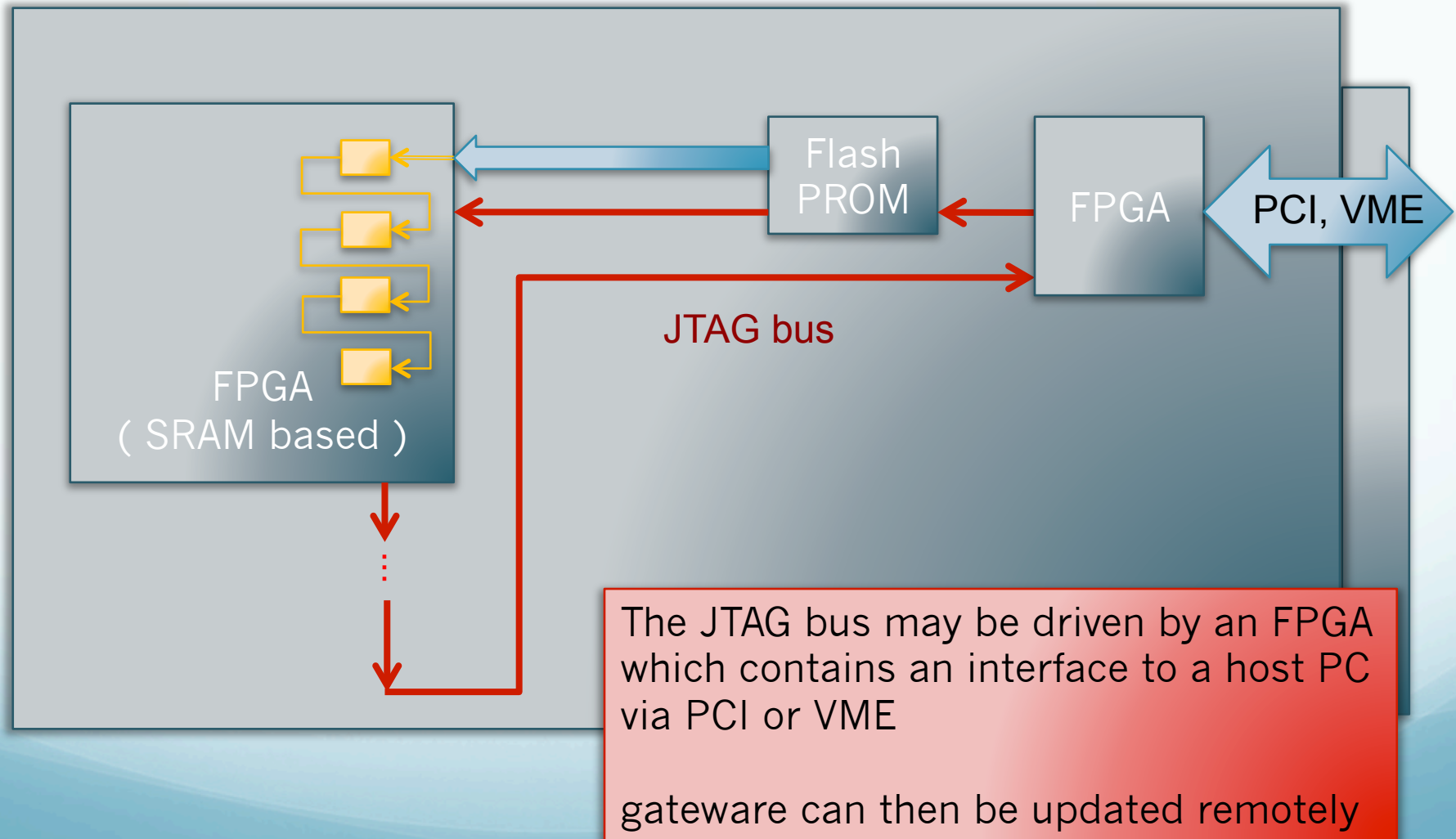
Joint Test Action Group



JTAG is a serial bus that can be used to

- Program Flash PROMs
- Program FPGAs
- Read / write the status of all FPGA I/Os  
( = Boundary scan )

# Remote programming



# Major Manufacturers

- Xilinx
  - First company to produce FPGAs in 1985
  - About 55% market share, today
  - SRAM based CMOS devices



- Intel FPGA (formerly Altera)
  - About 35% market share
  - SRAM based CMOS devices



- Microsemi (Actel)
  - Anti-fuse FPGAs
  - Flash based FPGAs
  - Mixed Signal



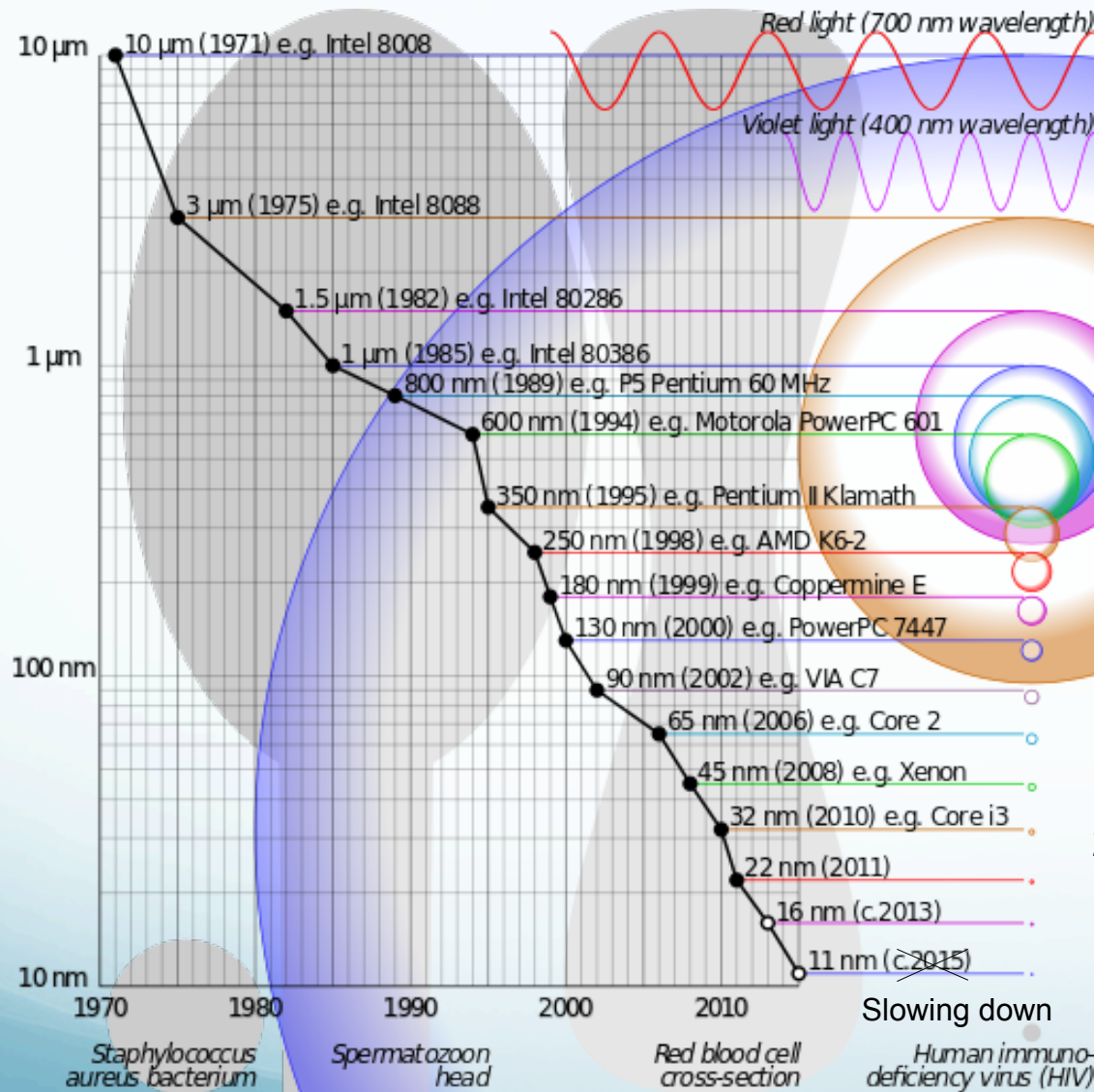
- Lattice Semiconductor
  - SRAM based with integrated Flash PROM
  - low power





# Trends

# Ever-decreasing feature size



- Higher capacity
- Higher speed
- Lower power consumption

130 nm  
Xilinx Virtex-2

28 nm Xilinx Virtex-7 / Altera Stratix V

16 nm Xilinx UltraScale +

14 nm Intel Stratix 10

5.5 million logic cells

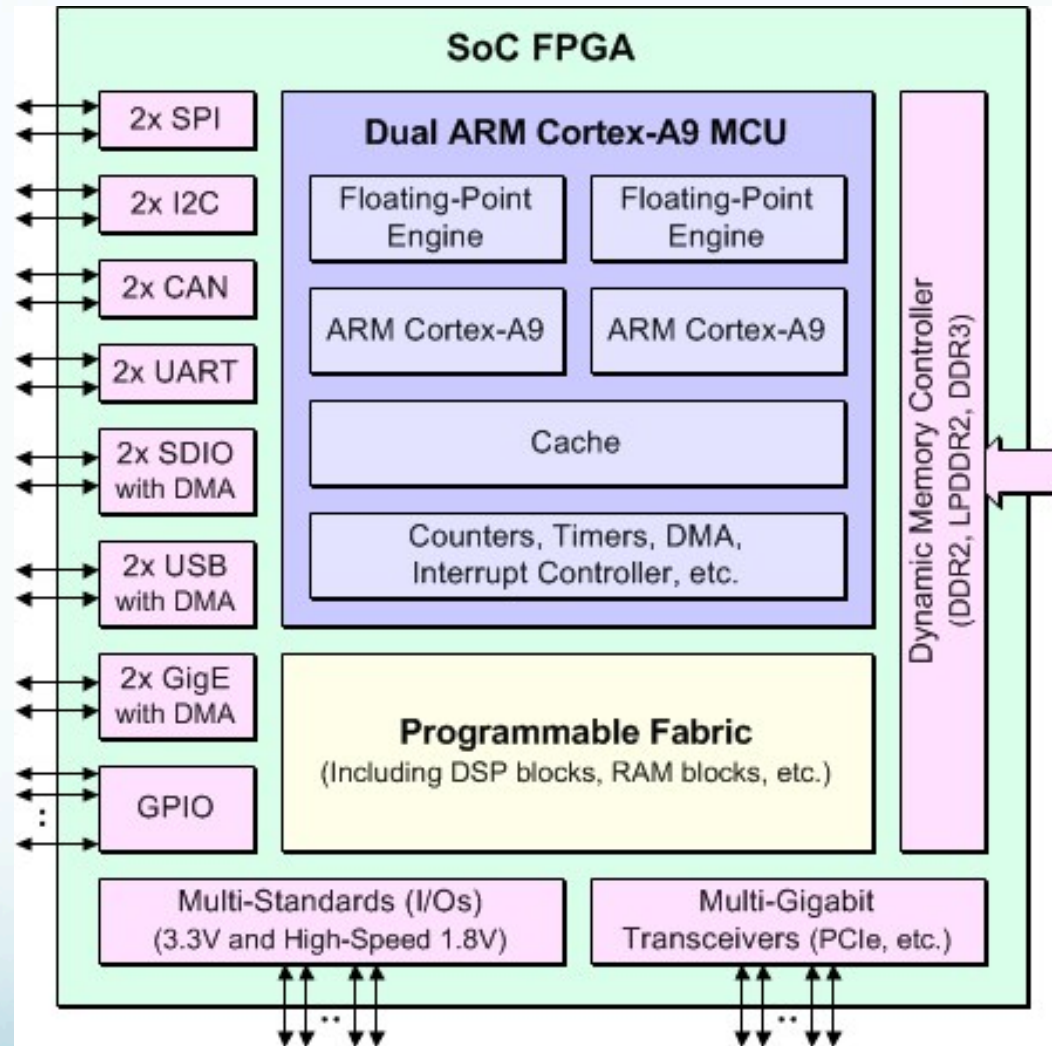
4 million logic cells

# Trends

- Speed of logic increasing
- Look-up-tables with more inputs (5 or 6)
- Speed of serial links increasing (multiple Gb/s)
- Integrated High Bandwidth Memory (HBM) in-package
- Additional Flip Flops in routing resources
- More and more hard macro cores on the FPGA
  - PCI Express
    - Gen2: 5 Gb/s per lane
    - Gen3: 8 Gb/s per lane up to 8 lanes / FPGA
    - Gen4: 16 Gb/s per lane
  - 10 Gb/s, 40 Gb/s, 100 Gb/s Ethernet
- Sophisticated soft macros
  - CPUs
  - Gb/s MACs
  - Memory interfaces (DDR2/3/4)
- Processor-centric architectures – see next slides



# System-On-a-Chip (SoC) FPGAs



Xilinx Zynq

Altera Stratix 10

CPU(s) + Peripherals + FPGA in one package

# FPGAs in Server Processors and the Cloud

- Since 2016: Intel Xeon Server Processor with FPGA in socket
  - Intel acquired Altera in 2015



- FPGAs in the cloud
  - Amazon Elastic Cloud F1 instances
    - 8 CPUs / 1 Xilinx UltraScale+ FPGA
    - 64 CPUs / 8 Xilinx UltraScale+ FPGA

# FPGA – ASIC comparison

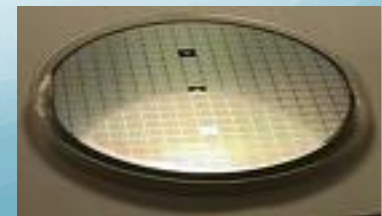
## FPGA

- Rapid development cycle (minutes / hours)
- May be reprogrammed in the field (gateway upgrade)
  - New features
  - Bug fixes
- Low development cost
  - You can get started with a development board (< \$100) and free software



## ASIC

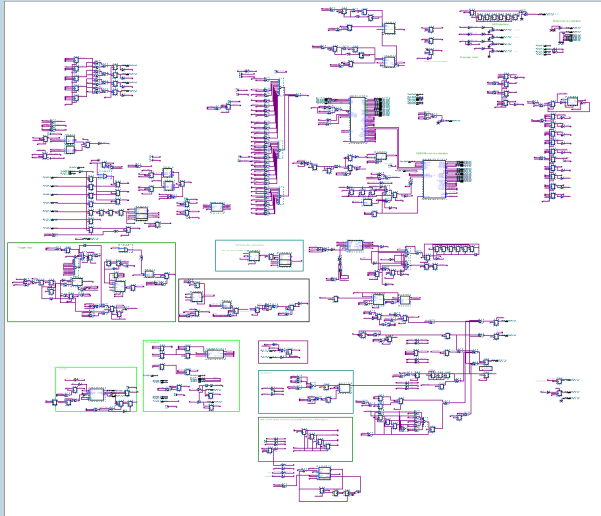
- Higher performance
- Analog designs possible
- Better radiation hardness
- Long development cycle (weeks / months)
- Design cannot be changed once it is produced
- Extremely high development cost
  - ASICs are produced at a semiconductor fabrication facility ("fab") according to your design
- Lower cost per device compared to FPGA, when large quantities are needed



# FPGA development

# Design entry

## Schematics



- Graphical overview
- Can draw entire design
- Use pre-defined blocks

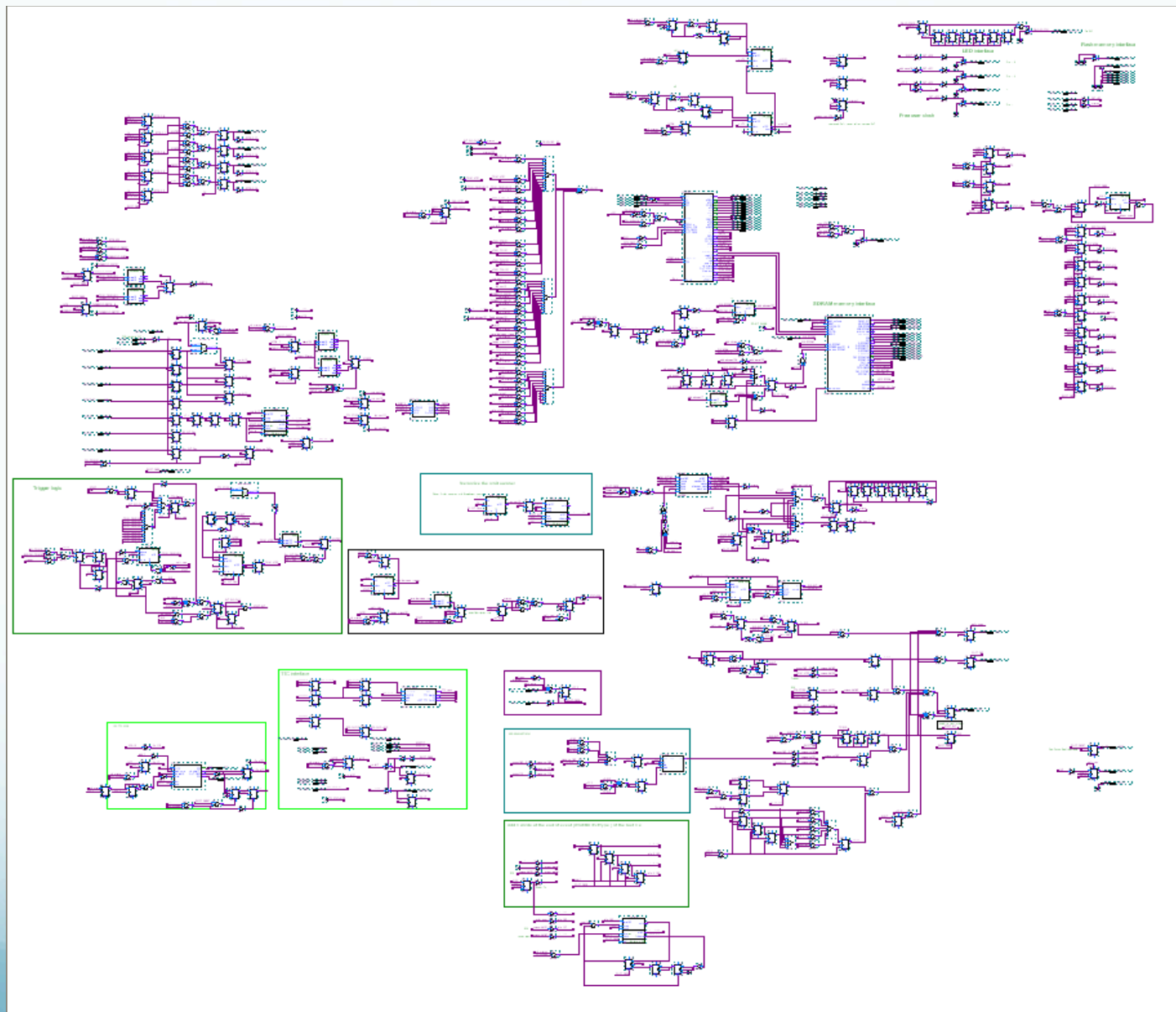
## Hardware description language VHDL, Verilog

```
entity DelayLine is  
  
    generic (  
        n_halfcycles : integer := 2;  
    )  
  
    port (  
        x          : in std_logic_vector;  
        x_delayed  : out std_logic_vector;  
        clk        : in std_logic);  
  
end entity DelayLine;
```

- Can generate blocks using loops
- Can synthesize algorithms
- Independent of design tool
- May use tools used in SW development (SVN, git ...)

**Mostly a personal choice depending on previous experience**

# Schematics





# Hardware Description Language

- Looks similar to a programming language
  - BUT be aware of the difference
    - Programming Language => translated into machine instructions that are executed by a CPU
    - HDL => translated into gateware (logic gates & flip-flops)
- Common HDLs
  - VHDL
  - Verilog
  - AHDL ( Altera specific )
- Newer trends
  - C-like languages (handle-C, System C)
  - Labview



# Example: VHDL

architecture behavioral of VMEReg is

```
signal vme_en_i    : std_logic;
signal Q : std_logic_vector(15 downto 0);
```

begin -- behavioral

```
vme_addr_decode : process (vme_addr, vme_en) is
    variable my_addr_vec : std_logic_vector(vme_addr'high downto 0);
    variable selected    : boolean;
begin -- process vme_addr_decode
    my_addr_vec := std_logic_vector( TO_UNSIGNED ( my_vme_base_address, vme_addr'high+1 ) );
    selected    := my_addr_vec(vme_addr'high downto 1) = vme_addr(vme_addr'high downto 1);
    vme_en_i <= '0' ;
    if selected then
        vme_en_i <= vme_en;
    end if;
end process vme_addr_decode;
```

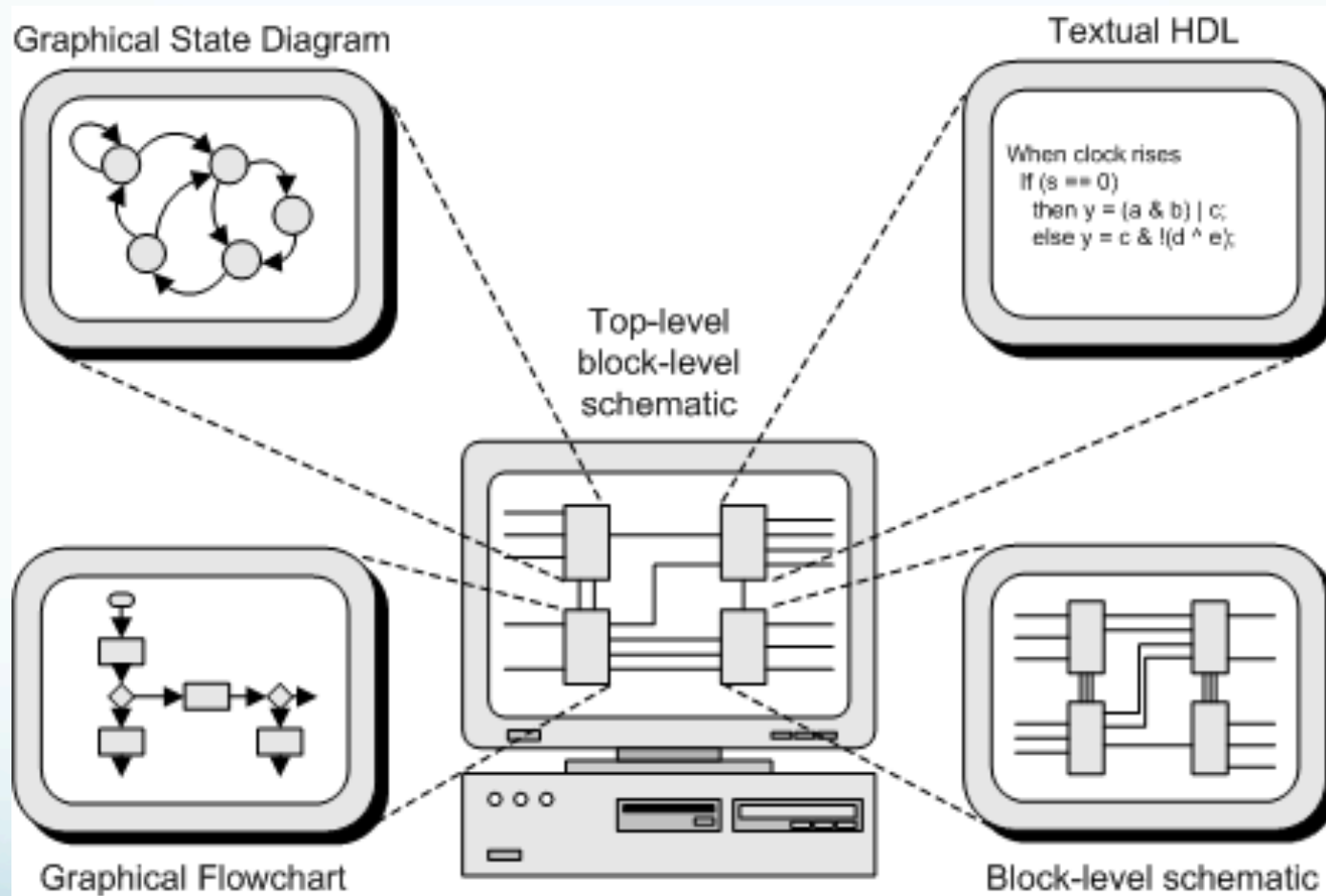
```
reg: process (vme_clk, reset) is
begin -- process reg
    if reset = '1' then                -- asynchronous reset
        Q <= init_val;
        vme_en_out <= '0';
    elsif vme_clk'event and vme_clk = '1' then -- rising clock edge
        vme_en_out <= vme_en_i;
        if vme_en_i = '1' and vme_wr = '1' then
            Q <= vme_data;
        end if;
    end if;
end process reg;
```

```
data <= Q;
vme_data_out <= Q;
```

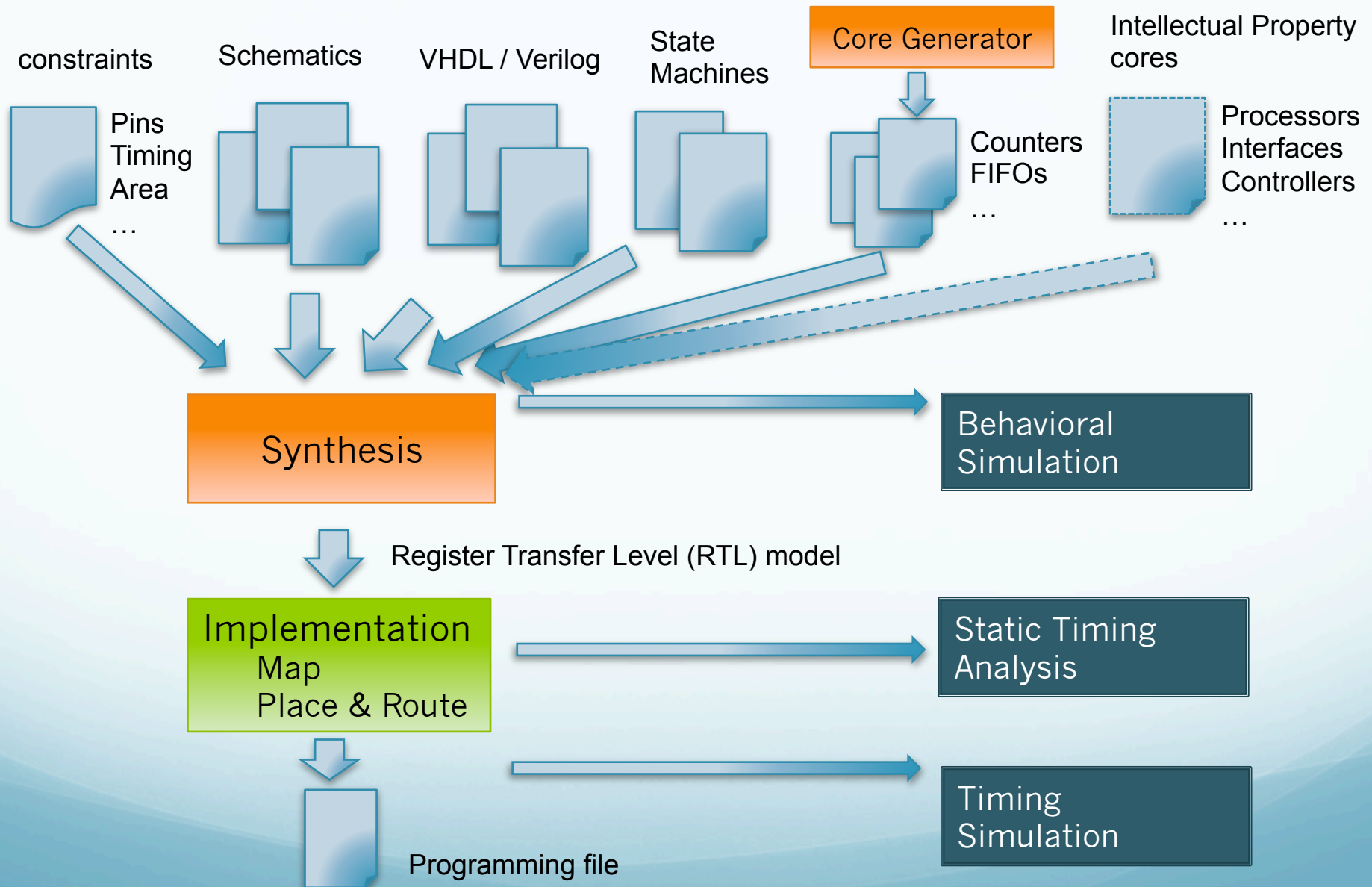
end behavioral;

- Looks like a programming language
- All statements executed in parallel, except inside processes

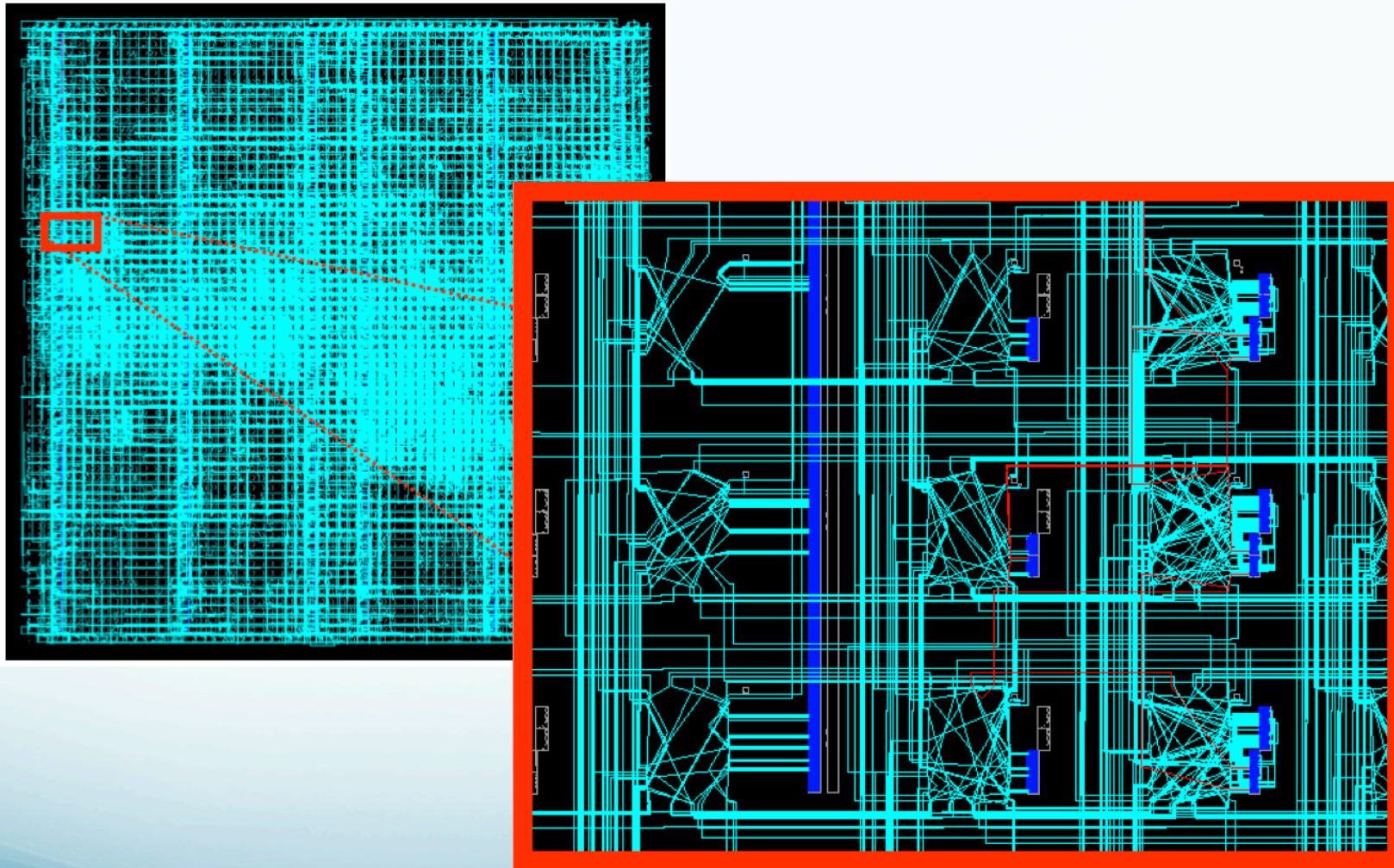
# Schematics & HDL combined



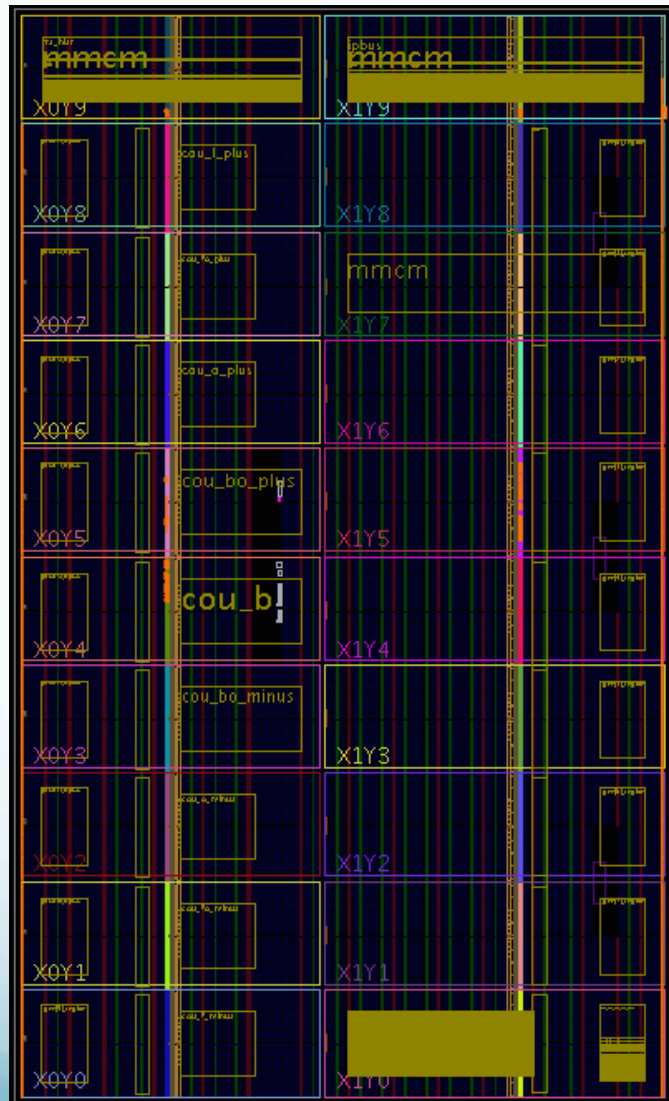
# Design flow



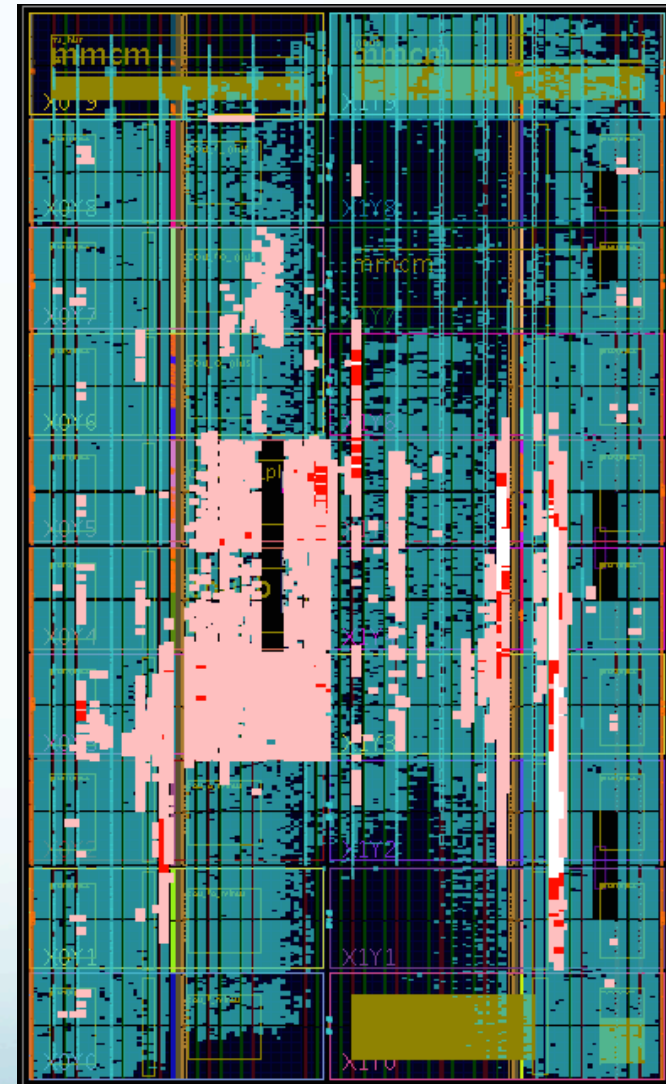
# Floorplan (Xilinx Virtex 2)



# Manual Floor planning



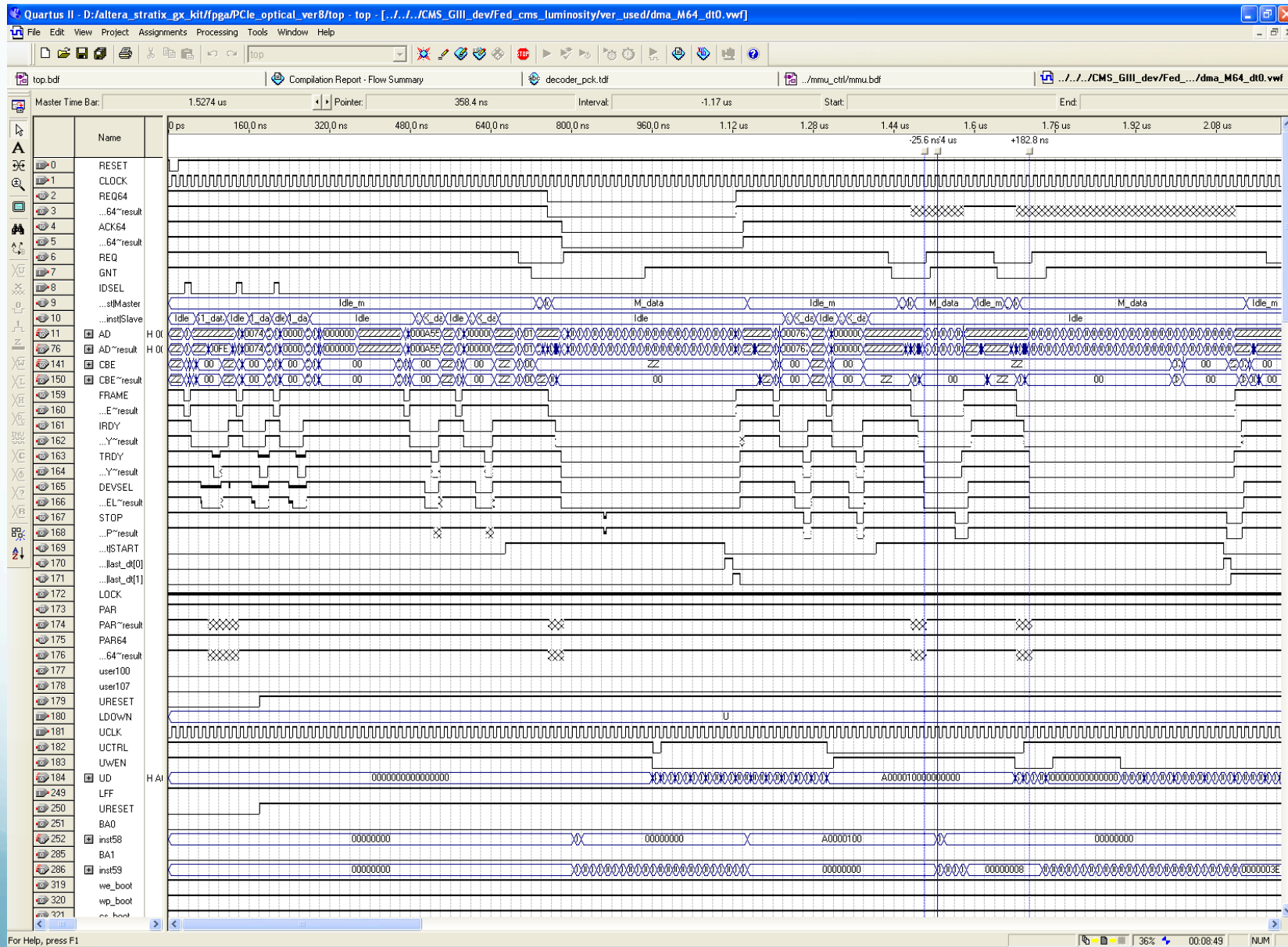
- For large designs, manual floor planning may be necessary



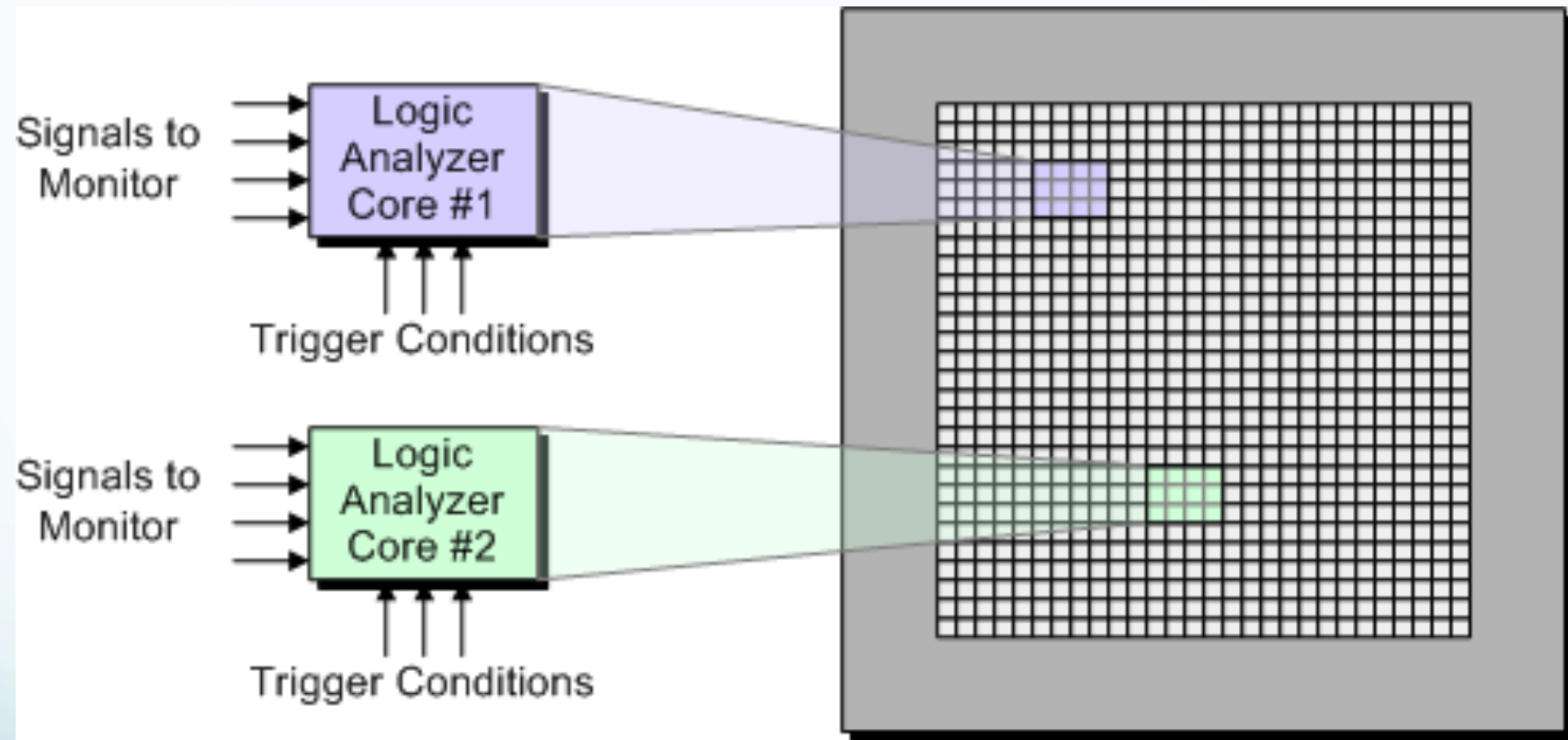
Routing congestion  
Xilinx Virtex 7 (Vivado)



# Simulation



# Embedded Logic Analyzers







# **FPGA applications in the Trigger & DAQ domain**

# First-Level Trigger at Collider



Timing: beam crossings

LHC: 25 ns

detector

Coarse grain data

Full data  
(fine grain)

Delay  
FIFO

First Level Trigger

Pipelined  
Logic

Fixed Latency  
(= processing time  
of the first  
level trigger)

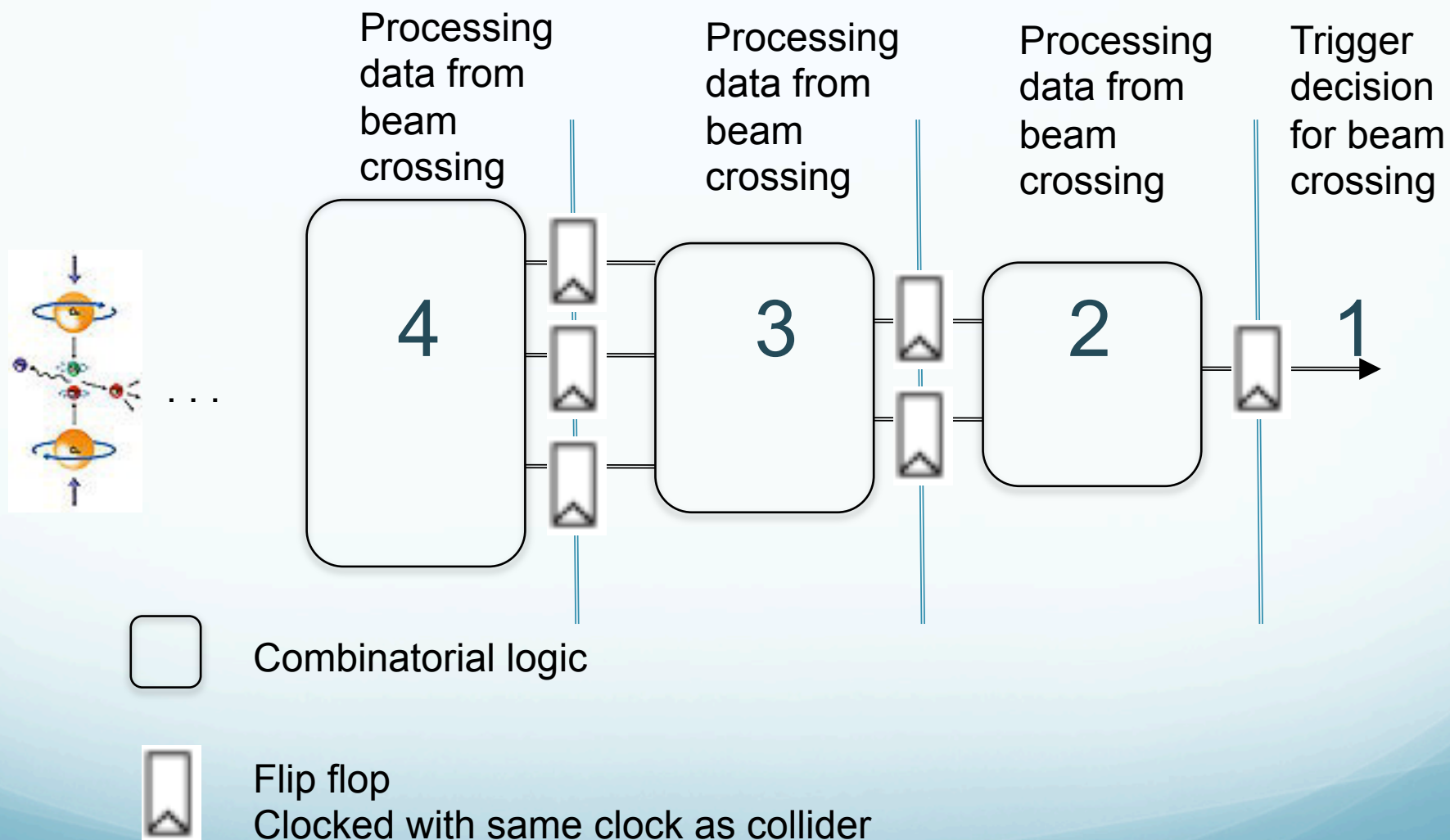
N beam crossings

Trigger decision YES / NO  
(for every beam crossing )

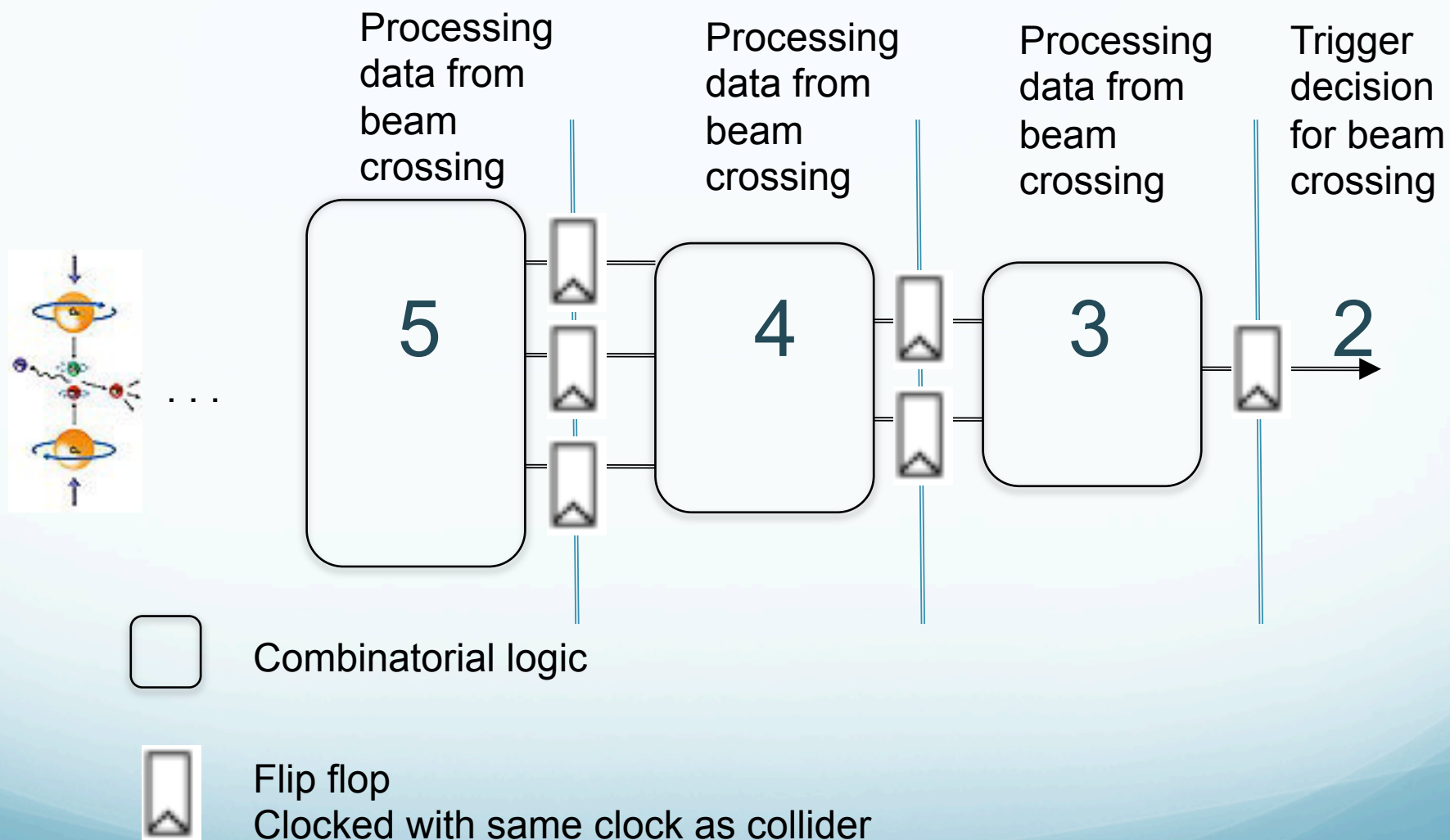
De-  
randomizer  
FIFO

Latency should be short  
In order to limit the length  
of the delay FIFOs

# Pipelined Logic



# Pipelined Logic – a clock cycle later



# Why are FPGAs ideal for First-Level Triggers ?

- They are fast
  - Much faster than discrete electronics (shorter connections)
- Many inputs
  - Data from many parts of the detector has to be combined
- All operations are performed in parallel
  - Can build pipelined logic
- They can be re-programmed
  - Trigger algorithms can be optimized



Low latency

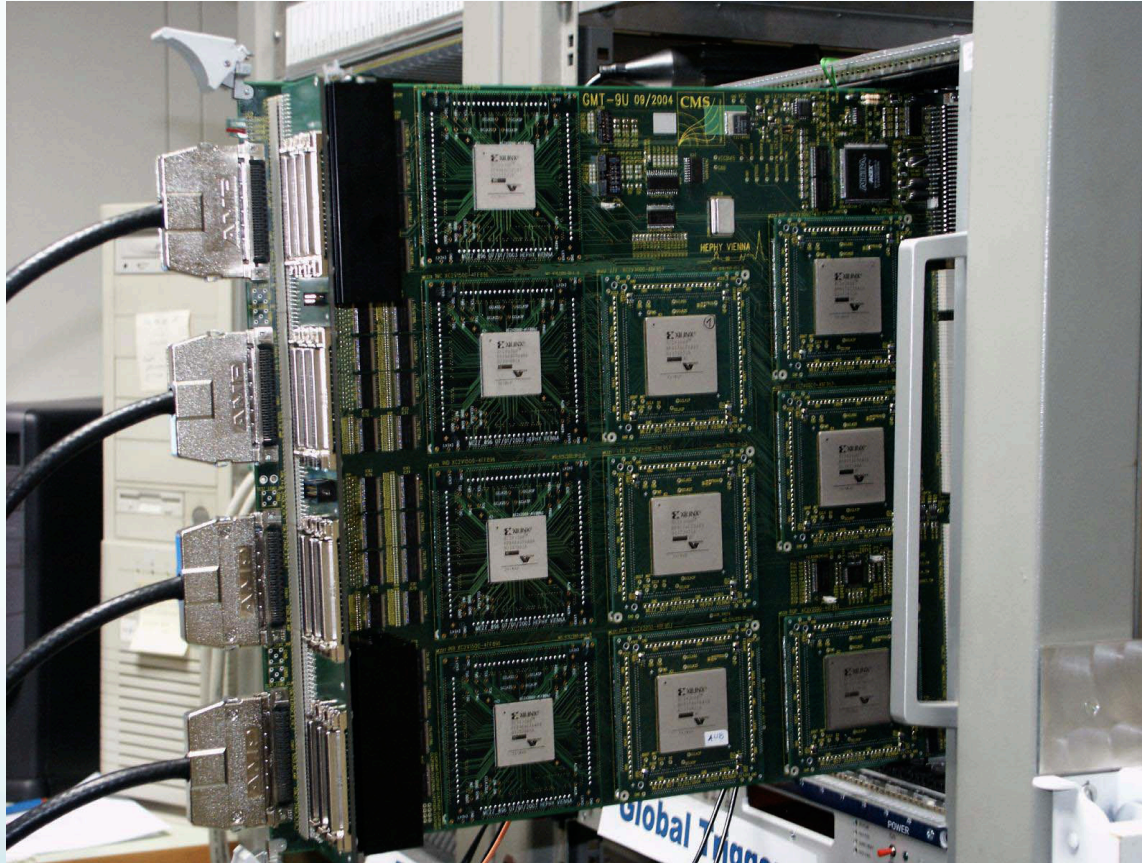
High performance

# Trigger algorithms implemented in FPGAs

- Peak finding
- Pattern Recognition
- Track Finding
- Energy summing
- Sorting
- Topological Algorithms (invariant mass)
- Trigger Control system
- Fast signal merging
- Many more ...

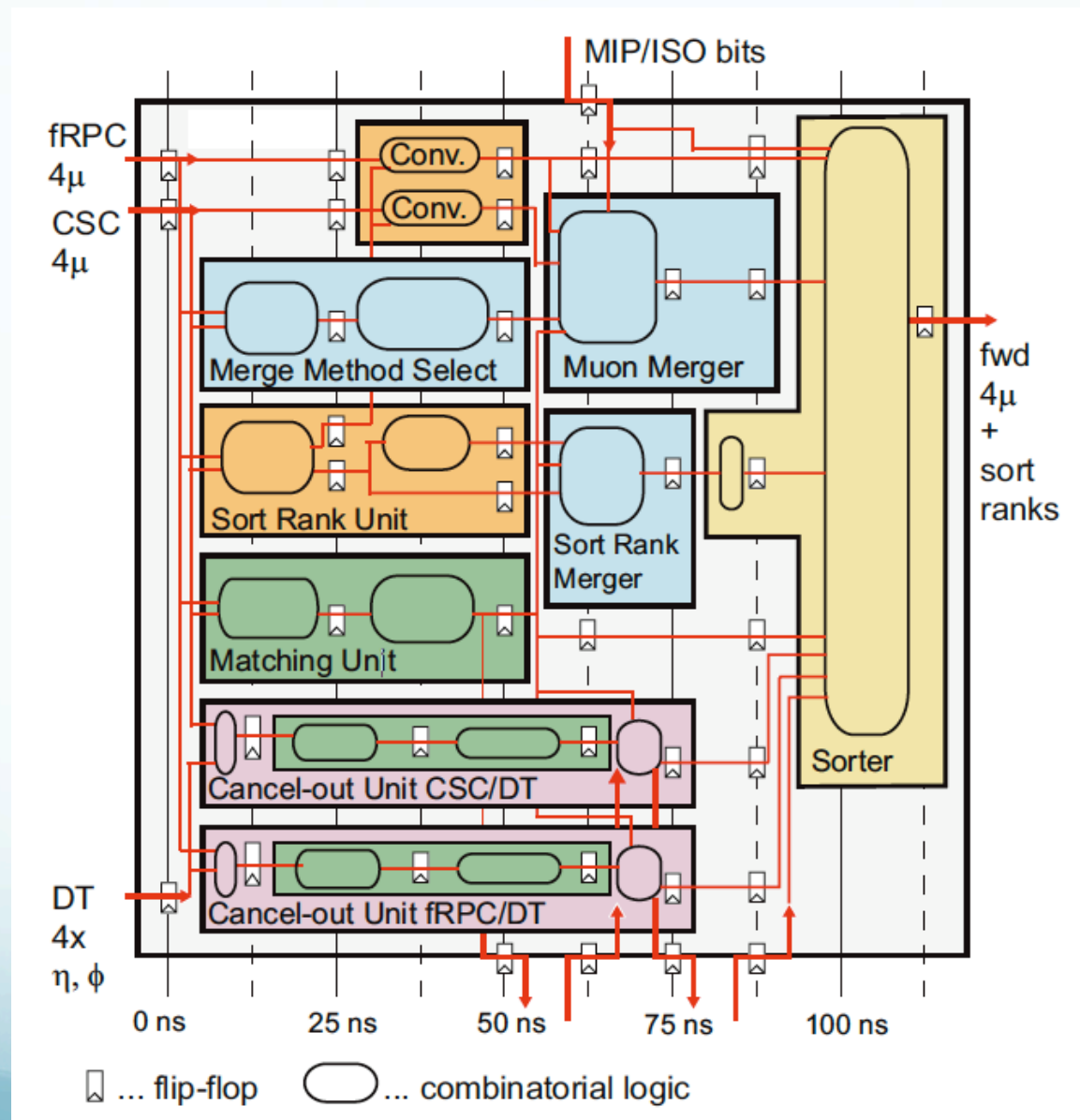


# Example 1: CMS Global Muon Trigger



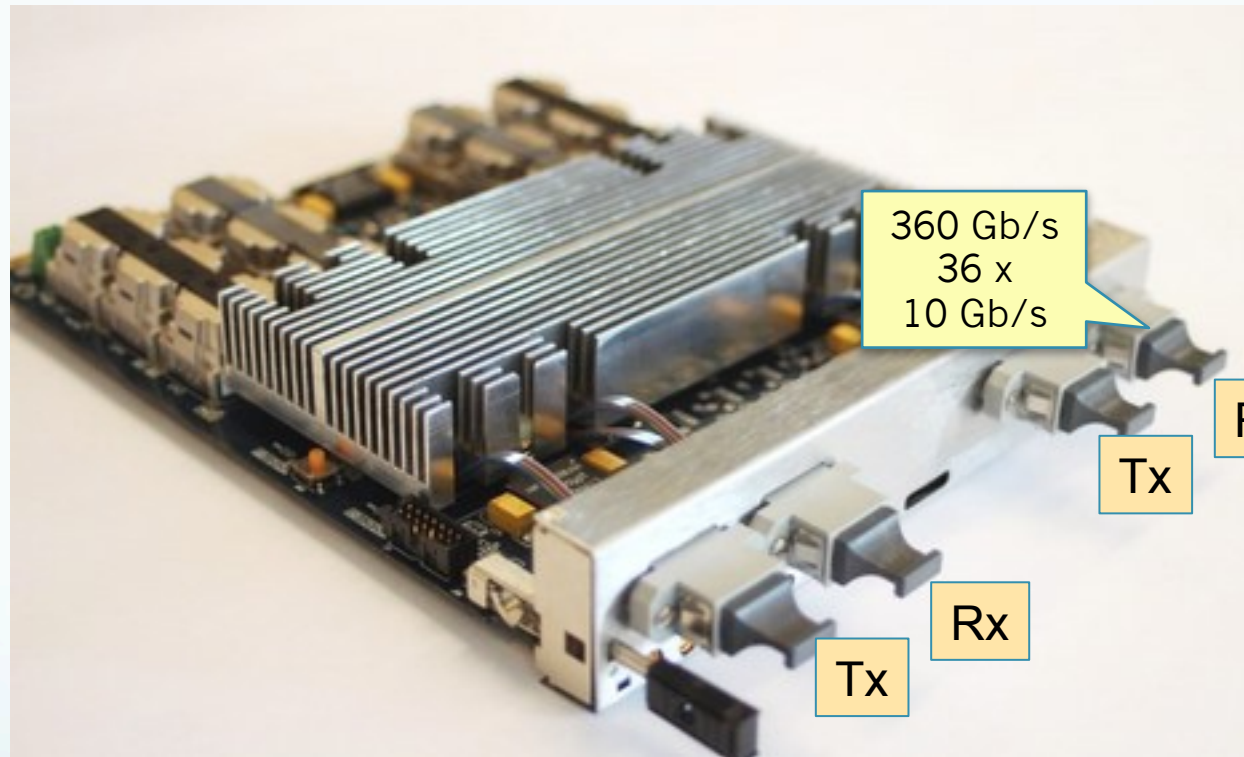
- Input: ~1000 bits @ 40 and 80 MHz
  - Output: ~50 bits @ 80MHz
  - Processing time: 250 ns
  - Pipelined logic one new result every 25 ns
  - 10 Xilinx Virtex-II FPGAs
  - up to 500 user I/Os per chip
  - Up to 25000 LUTs per chip used
  - Up to 96 x 18kbit RAM used
  - In use in the CMS trigger 2008-2015
- The CMS Global Muon trigger received 16 muon candidates from the three muon systems of CMS
  - It merged different measurements for the same muon and found the best 4 over-all muon candidates

# CMS Global Muon Trigger main FPGA





## Example 2: New $\mu$ TCA board for CMS trigger upgrade based on Virtex 7



MP7, Imperial College

Virtex 7 with 690k logic cells  
80 x 10 Gb/s transceivers bi-directional  
72 of them as optical links on front panel  
0.75 + 0.75 Tb/s  
Being used in the CMS trigger since 2015

Input/output:  
up to 14k bits per 40 MHz clock

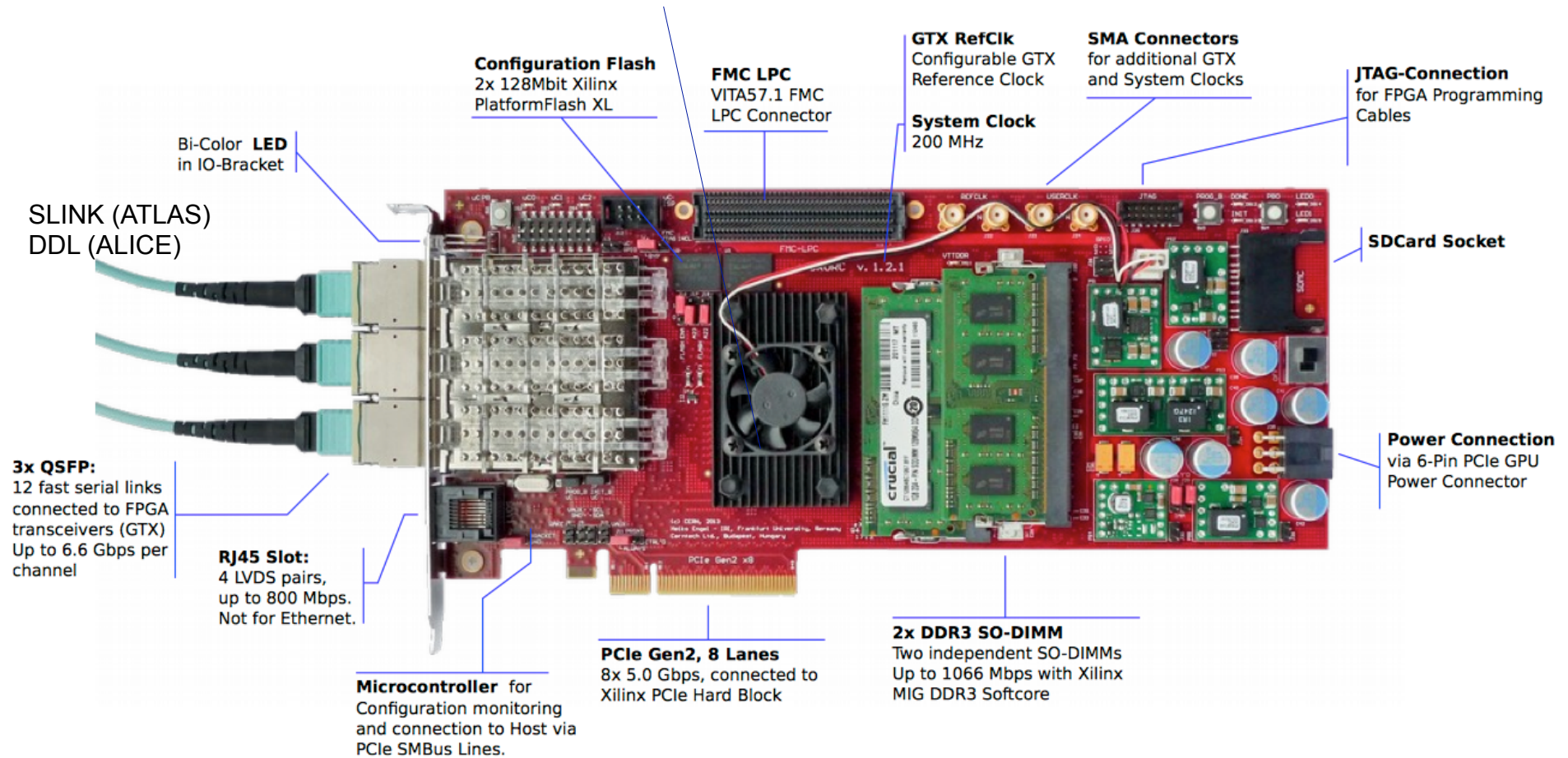
Same board used for different functions  
(different gateway)  
Separation of framework + algorithm fw

# FPGAs in Data Acquisition

- Frontend Electronics
  - Pedestal subtraction
  - Zero suppression
  - Compression
  - ...
- Custom data links
  - E.g. SLINK-64 over copper
    - Several serial LVDS links in parallel
    - Up to 400 MB/s
  - SLINK/SLINK-express over optical
- Interface from custom hardware to commercial electronics
  - PCI/PCIe, VME bus, Myrinet, 10/40/100 Gb/s Ethernet etc.

# C-RORC (Alice) / Robin NP (ATLAS) for Run-2

## Xilinx Virtex-6 FPGA



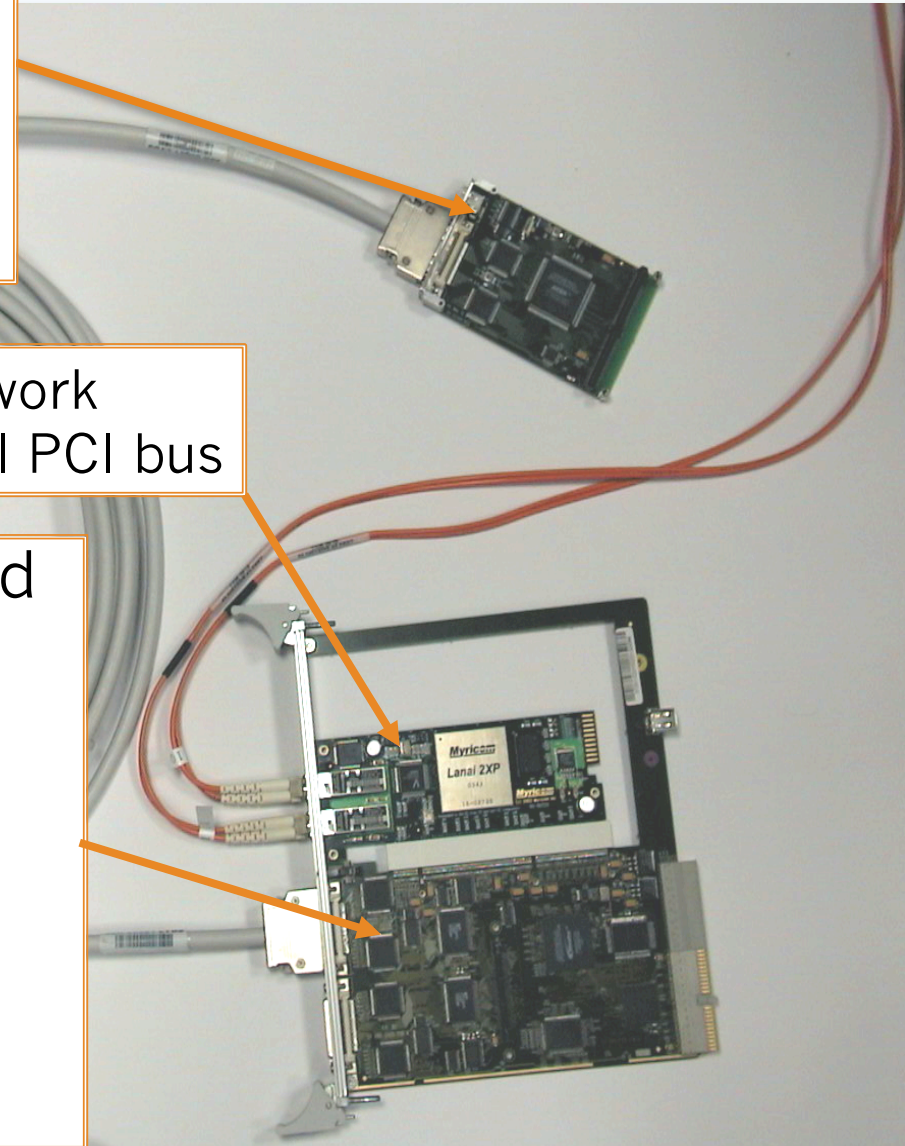


## Example 3: CMS Front-end Readout Link (Run-1)

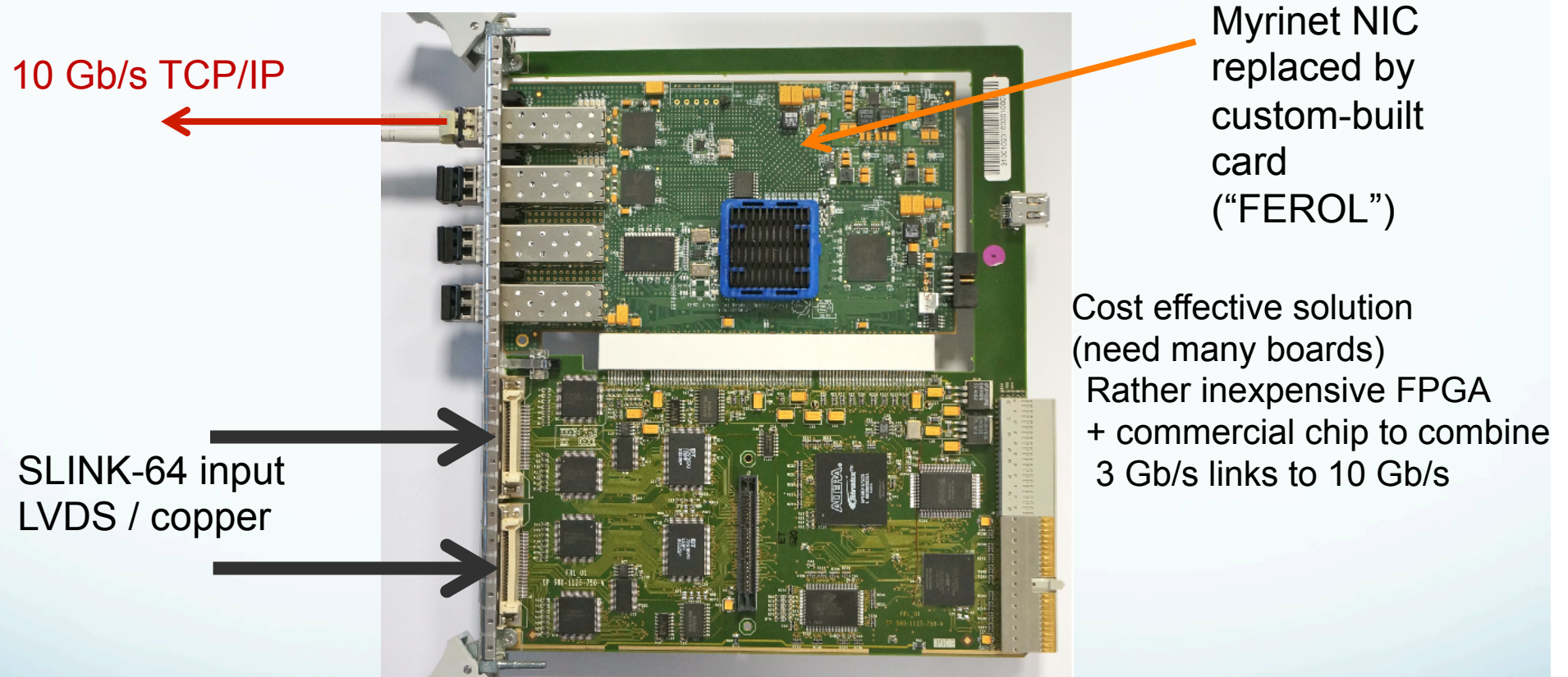
- SLINK Sender Mezzanine Card: 400 MB / s
  - 1 FPGA (Altera)
  - CRC check
  - Automatic link test

Commercial Myrinet Network Interface Card on internal PCI bus

- Front-end Readout Link Card
  - 1 main FPGA (Altera)
  - 1 FPGA as PCI interface
  - Custom Compact PCI card
  - Receives 1 or 2 SLINK64
  - 2nd CRC check
  - Monitoring, Histogramming
  - Event spy



## Example 4: CMS Readout Link for Run-2 in use since 2015



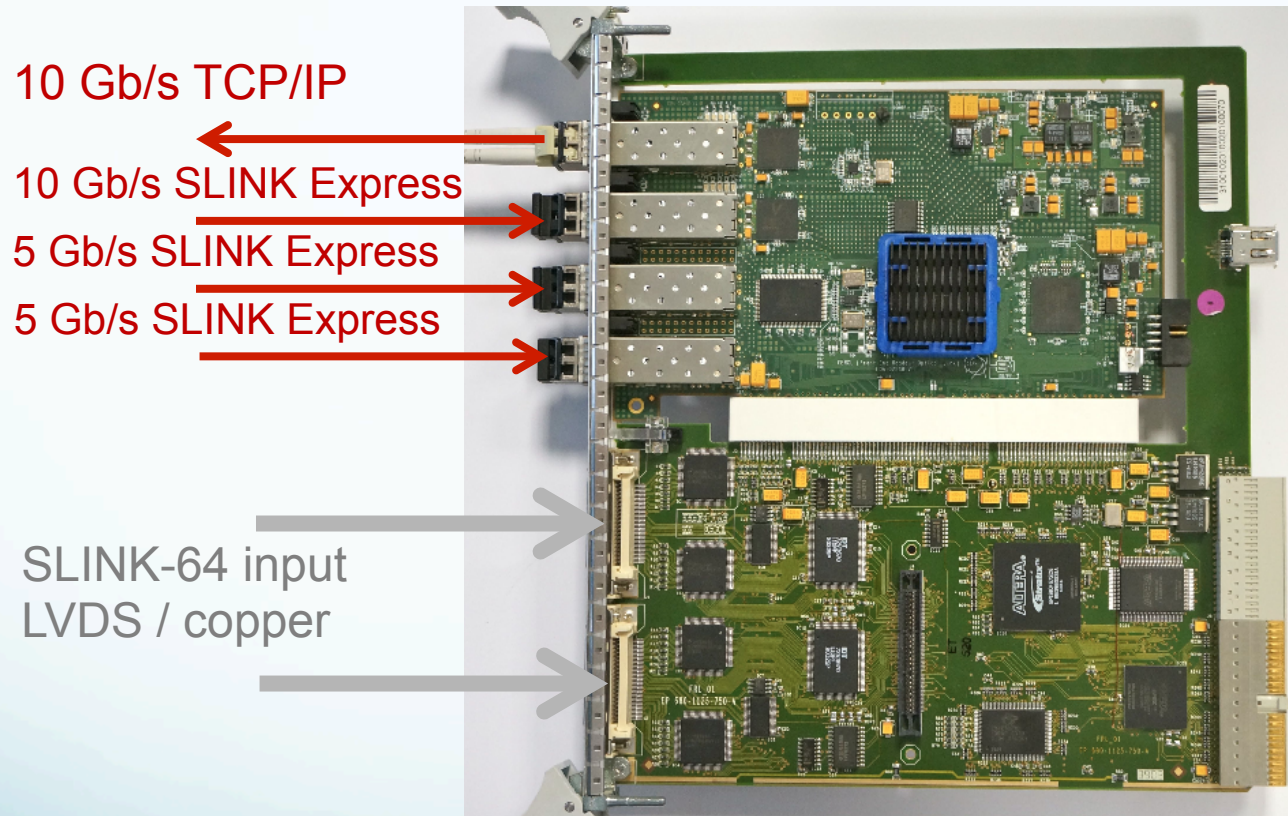
### **FEROL (Front End Readout Optical Link)**

Input: 1x or 2x SLINK (copper)  
1x or 2x 5Gb/s optical  
1x 10Gb/s optical

Output: 10 Gb/s Ethernet optical  
TCP/IP sender in FPGA



# Example 4: CMS Readout Link for Run-2



## **FEROL (Front End Readout Optical Link)**

Input: 1x or 2x SLINK (copper)  
1x or 2x 5Gb/s optical  
1x 10Gb/s optical

Output: 10 Gb/s Ethernet optical  
TCP/IP sender in FPGA

# FPGAs in other domains

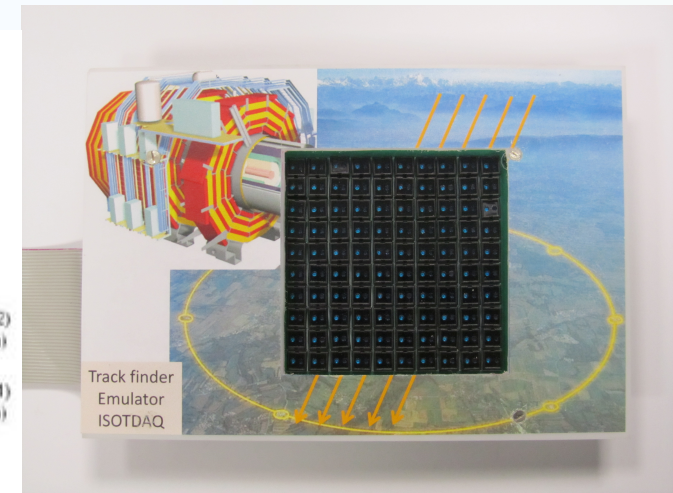
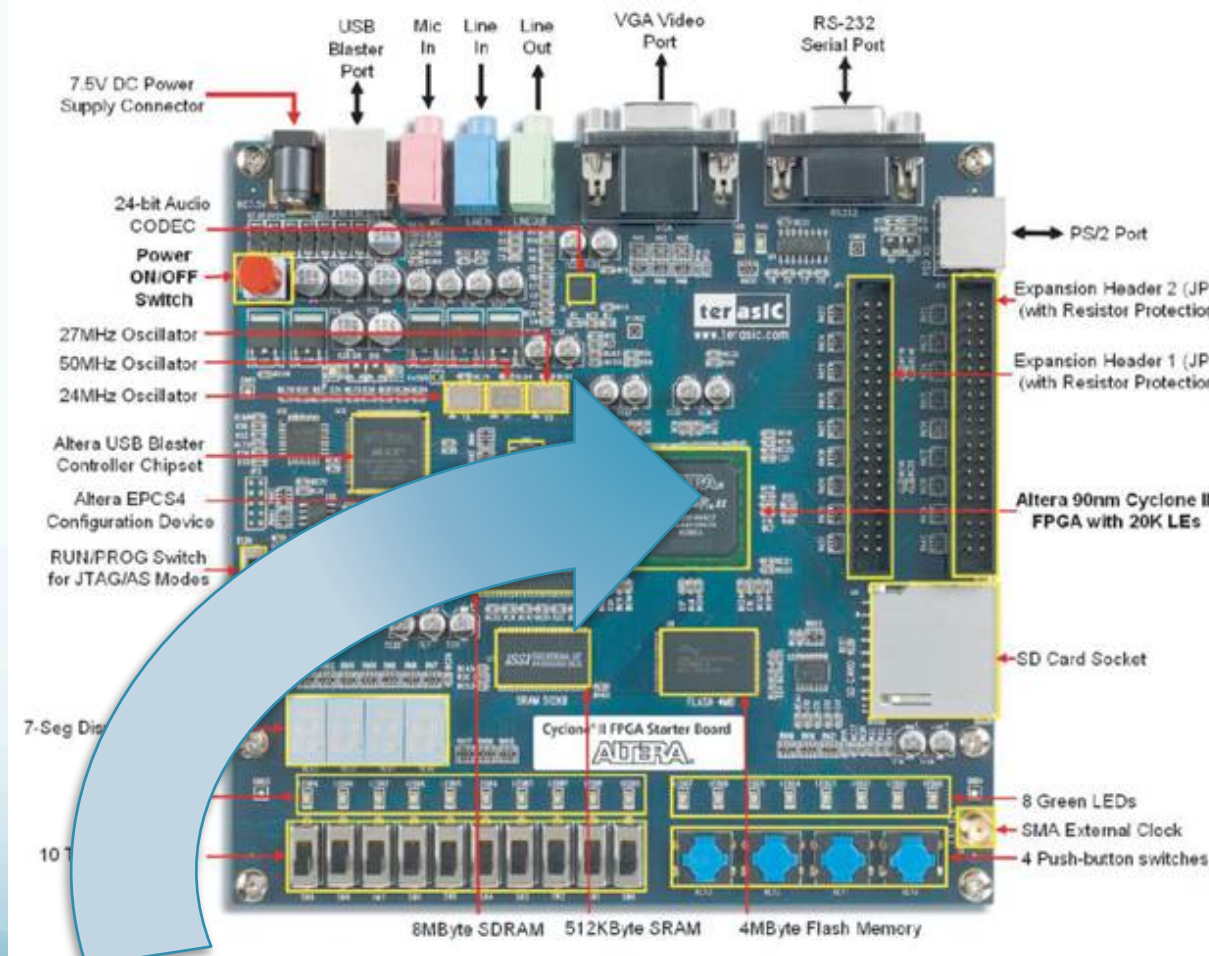
- Medical imaging
- Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (Image Processing)
- Speech recognition
- Cryptography
- Bioinformatics
- Aerospace / Defense
- Bitcoin mining

- ASIC Prototyping
- High performance computing
  - Accelerator cards



- Server processors w. FPGA

# Lab Session 5: Programming an FPGA



**You are going to design the digital electronics inside this FPGA !**



# Lab Session 13: System-on-a-chip FPGA



Z-turn board  
Zynq w. dual-core ARM

**Design the digital electronics and software in this SoC FPGA!**