High Level Synthesis with Catapult

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Outline

- □ High Level Synthesis (HLS)
- □ Catapult Basics
- Data Types
- Design Flow in Catapult



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High Level Synthesis (HLS)

□ Higher level of abstraction

High-level synthesis bridges hardware and software domains.

□ Generate hardware from C/C++ code or another high level language.



High Level Synthesis (HLS)

□ A common misconception:

- Synthesizing hardware from C++ provides users the freedom of describing the algorithms in any desired style of C++ coding.
- Remember that you are still describing hardware using a high level language !
 - \circ "poor" description leads to a sub-optimal hardware.



High Level Synthesis (HLS)

□ It is important to know HW concepts to get optimal results

- Successful projects require HW engineers not SW engineers
 - Hardware designers can work at a higher level of abstraction while creating high-performance hardware



High-Level Synthesis Benefits

Develop algorithms at high level, e.g. C-level

- o Reduce design time
- Reduce time for design changes
- Easy design exploration
- o Faster time to market

□Verify at the higher level

Easier and faster verification



High-Level Synthesis Benefits

Easy to explore different optimizations

 Create multiple hardware implementation alternatives from the C source code using optimization directives

Easy to maintain, easy to reuse

Create readable and portable C source code



Some Limitations

Not all algorithms are suited for hardware implementations using HLS

- o Sequential code
- o Control logic
- Large loops with function calls



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□ Catapult is a product of Mentor Graphics, which is used for high-level synthesis.

□ Catapult takes C/C++ and System C as inputs and generates register transfer level (RTL) code.

□ The target device can be FPGA and ASIC.





□The concepts that you have learned in the "DSP Design" course are used in the Catapult SW

- Folding/Unfolding
- o Re-timing/Pipelining
- o Bit-level optimization
- o and more...



Catapult





Traditional Design Flow vs. Catapult Flow



Top-level Design

□ Similar to RTL designs, the "top" level of design should be specified in HLS design flow.

 $\,\circ\,$ The highest level of the design

□ Top module specifies:

- The design interfaces with the outside world
- Port definitions, direction, bit widths, and data types

Top Module





Registered Outputs

In general, high-level synthesis builds synchronous designs by default.

□ All outputs of the top-level design are registered

 To guarantee that timing is met when connecting to another design





□ Consider the following example to introduce:

- o HLS concept
- o corresponding steps in Catapult design flow

```
void accumulate(int a, int b, int c, int d, int &dout){
    int t1,t2;
    t1 = a + b;
    t2 = t1 + c;
    dout = t2 + d;
}
```



Port Width and Direction

□ Bit widths of the top-level ports, excluding clock and reset, are implied by the data type.

□ The port direction is implied by how an interface variable is used in the C++ code.



Control Ports

□ C++ code has no concept of timing.

No clock, enable, or reset in the design source files.
 These signals are added by the synthesis tool.

Control over things like polarity, type of reset, etc., are taken care by setting design constraints.



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Data Types

□ Two important data types:

○ int, ac_int

 \circ ac_fixed

□To use these data types the following header files should be included in the design source files:

```
o "ac_int.h"
```

o "ac_fixed.h"

□It is possible to define user data types.



Data Types

Туре	Description	Numerical Range	Quantum
ac_int <w, false=""></w,>	unsigned integer	0 to $2^{W}-1$	1
ac_int <w, true=""></w,>	signed integer	-2^{W-1} to 2^{W-1} - 1	1
ac_fixed <w, false="" i,=""></w,>	unsigned fixed-point	0 to $(1 - 2^{-W}) 2^{I}$	2 ^{I-W}
ac_fixed <w, i,="" true=""></w,>	signed fixed-point	$(-0.5) 2^{I}$ to $(0.5 - 2^{-W}) 2^{I}$	2 ^{I-W}





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Outline

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Create a New Project





Create a New Project

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Create a New Design File



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Add Input Files





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Set Top Module









Design Setup

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Data Flow Graph Analysis

HLS process starts by analyzing the data dependencies between the various steps in the algorithm.

The analysis leads to a Data Flow Graph (DFG).



Design Example

```
void accumulate(int a, int b, int c, int d, int &dout){
    int t1,t2;
    t1 = a + b;
    t2 = t1 + c;
    dout = t2 + d;
}
```



Data dependencies and the order of operations are specified by the connection between nodes.







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Resource Allocation

- □ Each operation in the extracted DFG is mapped onto a hardware resource.
 - Each resource corresponds to a physical implementation of the operator in hardware.
- Some operators may have multiple hardware resource implementations
 - o Different area, delay, and latency specifications.
- Timing and area constraints will be applied to this implementation.



Resource Allocation

All resources are selected from a technology specific pre-characterized library

Library is already determined in "Design Setup" step





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Scheduling

HLS adds "time" to the design during the "scheduling" step.

- Scheduling determines that each operation in the DFG should be performed in which clock cycle.
 - So, based on a target clock frequency, registers should be added between operations.







This process is similar to technique what RTL designers would call pipelining

o Inserting registers to reduce combinational delays

□Note that this is not the same as "**loop pipelining**" which is discussed later.



Scheduling

Consider that in our design example:

- o "add" operation takes 3 ns
- o Clock period equals 5 ns

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Each add operation is scheduled in its own clock cycle C1, C2, and C3

o Registers are inserted automatically between each adder.



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Timing Constraints

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Hardware Implementation

□The corresponding hardware that is generated from the schedule varies depending on how the design is constrained in terms of:

- Resource allocation
- o The amount of loop pipelining



Loop Pipelining

□ The top-level function call has an implied loop, also known as the main loop.

 Each iteration of the implied loop corresponds to execution of the schedule

"Loop Pipelining" allows a new iteration of a loop to be started before the current iteration has finished.

- Execution of the loop iterations to be overlapped
- Increasing the design performance by running loops in parallel



Initiation Interval (II)

□The amount of overlap between the loops is determined by the "Initiation Interval (II)".

Specifies the number of pipeline stages



Case1: No Pipelining

Design is left unconstrained

- o There is only a single pipeline stage
- No overlap between execution of each iteration of main loop

Data will be written every four clock cycles

Latency of three clock cycles







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Case1: No Pipelining



- There is no overlap between any operation.
- Resulting hardware uses a single adder to accumulate a, b, c, and d.
- Reduction in the overall area.





Case 2: Pipelining with II = 1

Pipelining with an II=1 results in a new iteration started every clock cycle.

Latency of 3 clock cycles

o Throughput of 1

□Three adders are required in hardware since all three pipeline stages can be active at the same time.

• Larger area



Case 2: Pipelining with II = 1

□ Iteration one is started in C2 and iteration 2 is started in C3.



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Design Schedule

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Design Synthesis



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Design Schematic



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Design Schematic



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Result Analysis

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HDL Generation

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Test Bench

```
#include "ac int.h";
#include <iostream>
#include <fstream>
// Include the C/C++ function header
                                           • Include your design source file
#include "lab1.h"
// Include the SCVerify header

    Call your design

#include "mc testbench.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
                                           • Generate inputs to the design
  ac int \langle 8 \rangle a = 1;
                                           • Write outputs in the console
  ac int<8> b = 2;
  ac int<8> result = 0;
  // Test simuli. Five iterations.
  for (int s idx = 0; s idx < 5; s idx++) {
    result = f(a, b, s i dx);
    // Generate some output
    std::cout << "a*b*c = result: " << a.to int() << "*"</pre>
<< b.to int() << "*"<< s idx << " = " << result.to int()
<< std::endl;
return 0;
```

Design Verification

□ SCVerify flow in Catapult automatically generates the verification infrastructure.

 The functionality of the generated RTL against the users original source code will be verified.

SCVerify supports Mentor QuestaSim/ModelSim, Synopsys VCS and Cadence IUS/NCSim simulation environments.



Design Verification





Mojtaba Mahdavi

DSP Design Course, EIT Department, Lund University, Sweden

Design Verification





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DSP Design Course, EIT Department, Lund University, Sweden

Mojtaba Mahdavi

References

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□Algorthmic C[™] Datatypes, Calypto Design Systems, Inc





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