

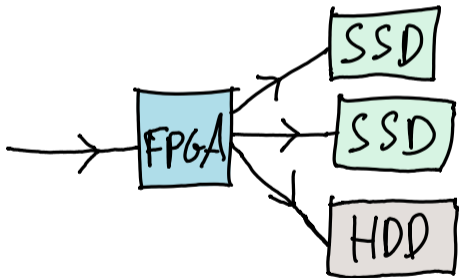
Formal Verification of High-Level Synthesis

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The Need to Design Hardware Accelerators

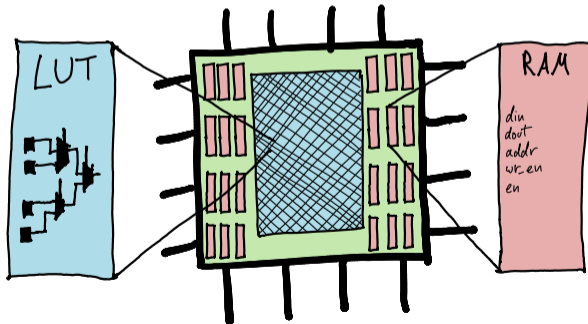
Application-specific hardware accelerators are increasingly being needed in industries.

- Using a **CPU** everywhere not always the best choice.
- **Application-specific integrated circuits (ASIC)** are the ideal choice, but very expensive to create.
- **Field-programmable gate arrays (FPGA)** act as **reprogrammable hardware**, therefore can be made application-specific.



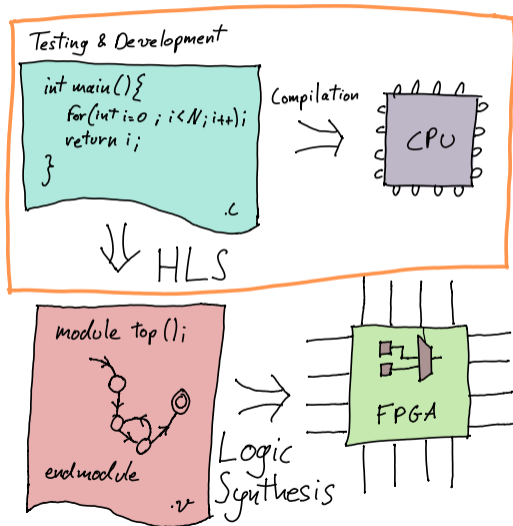
Where does the flexibility of FPGAs come from?

- FPGA's are programmable circuits with two main components.
- **Look up tables (LUTs)** provide flexible logic gates. They are connected by **configurable switches**.
- **RAMs** provide accessible storage.



So How do we Program an FPGA?

- FPGAs contain **LUTs** and programmable interconnects.
- Programmed using **hardware description languages**.
- Simulation quite slow.
- High-Level Synthesis is an alternative.
- Faster testing through execution.



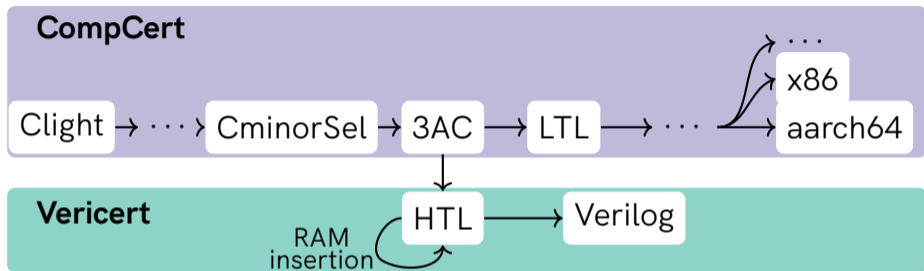
Motivation for Formal Verification

High-level synthesis is often quite unreliable:

- We fuzzed HLS tools (Herklotz et al. [2021]) and found they failed on simple random test cases.

Tool	Run-time errors
Vivado HLS	1.23%
Intel i++	0.4%
Bambu 0.9.7-dev	0.3%
LegUp 4.0	0.1%

Solution



Support for: all **control flow**, **fixedpoint**, **non-recursive functions** and **local arrays/structs/unions**.

Outline

Example

Verification

Results

Example: 3AC

- **Three address code (3AC)**
instructions are represented as a control-flow graph (CFG).
- Each instruction links to the next one.

```
main() {  
    x5 = 3  
    int32[stack(0)] = x5  
    x4 = 6  
    int32[stack(4)] = x4  
    x1 = 1  
    x3 = stack(0) (int)  
    x2 = int32[x3 + x1 * 4 + 0]  
    return x2  
}
```


HTL Overview

The representation of the **finite state-machine with datapath** is abstract and called **HTL**.

Definition datapath := $\mathbb{Z}^+ \mapsto \text{Verilog.stmnt}$

Definition controllogic := $\mathbb{Z}^+ \mapsto \text{Verilog.stmnt}$

```
Record module: Type := mkmodule {  
  mod_datapath: datapath;  
  mod_controllogic: controllogic;  
  mod_reset: reg;  
  mod_ram: ram_spec;  
  ...  
}.
```

Translation (3AC \rightarrow HTL)

Translation from **control-flow graph** into a **finite state-machine with datapath**.

- **Control-flow** is translated into a **finite state-machine**.
- Each **3AC instructions** translated into equivalent **Verilog statements**.
- Call **stack** implemented as **Verilog array**.
- Pointers for loads and stores translated to array addresses.
 - **Byte** addressed to **word** addressed.

Memory Inference Pass

- An HTL \rightarrow HTL translation removes loads and stores.
- Replaced by accesses to a proper **RAM**.

```
stack[reg_5 / 4]
```

becomes

```
u_en <= ( ~ u_en);  
wr_en <= 0;  
addr <= reg_5 / 4;
```

Translation (HTL → Verilog)

```
// Control logic
always @(posedge clk)
  if ({reset == 32'd1}) state <= 32'd8;
  else case (state)
    32'd11: state <= 32'd1;      32'd4: state <= 32'd3;
    32'd8: state <= 32'd7;      32'd3: state <= 32'd2;
    32'd7: state <= 32'd6;      32'd2: state <= 32'd11;
    32'd6: state <= 32'd5;      32'd1: ;
    32'd5: state <= 32'd4;      default: ;
  endcase
endmodule
```

- Finally, translate the FSM into Verilog.
- This includes a RAM interface.
- Data path is translated into a case statement.
- RAM loads and stores automatically turn off RAM.
- Control logic is translated into another case statement with a reset.

Outline

Example

Verification

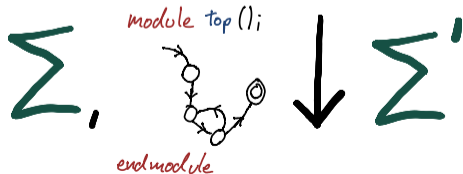
Results

Verilog Semantics (Adapted from Löow et al. (2019))

- Top-level semantics are **small-step operational semantics**.



- At each clock tick, the **whole module** is executed using **big-step semantics**.



Main Challenges in Proof

Translation of memory model

Abstract/infinite memory model translated into **concrete/finite RAM**.

Integration of Verilog Semantics

- **Verilog semantics** differs from CompCert's main assumptions of intermediate language semantics.
- Abstract values like the **program counter** now correspond to **values in registers**.

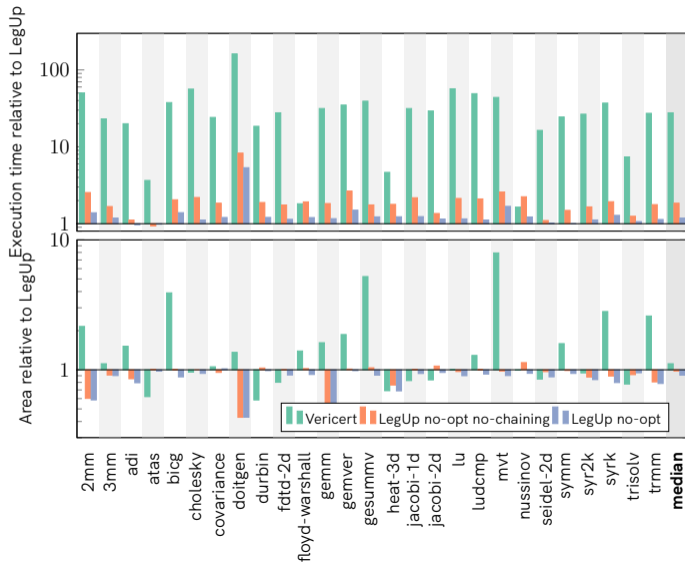
Outline

Example

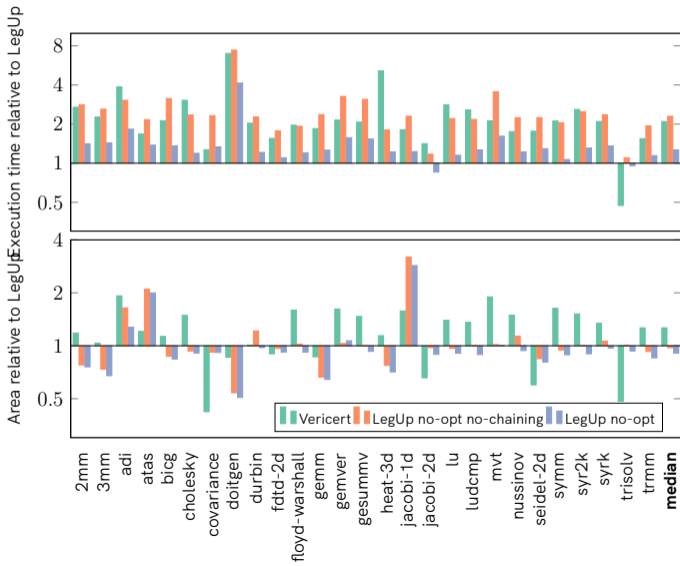
Verification

Results

The bad news: with division approximately $27\times$ slower



The better news: without division about $2\times$ slower



Fuzzing Vericert with Csmith

Fuzzed Vericert with Csmith to check correctness theorem.

Tool	Run-time errors
Vivado HLS	1.23%
Intel i++	0.4%
Bambu 0.9.7-dev	0.3%
LegUp 4.0	0.1%
Vericert	0.03% 0%

Conclusion

Written a formally verified high-level synthesis tool in **Coq** based on **CompCert**.

- HLS tool **proven correct in Coq** by proving translation of CFG into FSM.
- Small optimisations implemented such as **RAM Inference**.
- Performance without divisions comparable to LegUp without optimisations.

Future Work

Make Vericert not only **correct**, but **competitive**.

- Implement **scheduling** and **resource sharing**.
- Add **external module** support.
- Add **global variable** support.

Thank you

Documentation



<https://vericert.ymhg.org>

GitHub



<https://github.com/ymherklotz/vericert>

OOPSLA'21 Preprint



https://ymhg.org/papers/fvhls_oopsla21.pdf