COMPUTATIONAL MESH William Bricken October 2001

OVERVIEW

Section I (Descriptions) describes the architectural components and benefits of Comesh technology. Section II (Illustrated Tour) provides dozens of simple and intermediate examples of Comesh circuits, with emphasis on comparison of different array configurations. Section III (Implementations) provides the dnet code generated by Losp which accompanies the illustrations.

CONTENTS

Descriptions Cross-points Configurations Diagonal Cells Functional Behavior Hierarchical Subdivision Performance and Metrics Benefits Reconfiguration Design flow Microprocessors Manufacturability Layout control IP cores Summary of Advantages Illustration Tour Cross-points Diagonal Elements Registers Logical Operators Three Input Functions Combinational Functions Composition **Comparator Versions** Registers Sequential Circuits

Implementations diagonalized Pun for cm85a

Comesh

Computational mesh (Comesh) is an array-based technique for the construction of both combinational and sequential semiconductor circuitry. The specialized array is a triangular matrix of bit storage sites with inverters on the diagonal.

The mesh is an array of row and column wires which can be connected at selected intersection points (cross-points). The functionality of the target circuit is encoded in the configuration of connected cross-points. Essentially, each connected cross-point in a Comesh corresponds to a physical wire in a conventional ASIC. Row connections are fanout of a signal; column connections are wire-ORs of a collection of signals. Diagonal inverters manage the flow of computation, by inverting each column, they create a network of NOR logic. In combination, NOR logic constructed from wire-OR columns and diagonal inversions fully implements all combinational and sequential logic networks.

Comesh is not composed of logic gates in the conventional sense. Each column and inverter does implement the functionality of a NOR gate with an arbitrary number of inputs. Each row does implement the fanout of that abstract NOR gate. Input is defined by designated input rows; output is defined by designated output rows. However, Comesh cross-point configurations are explicitly structures of Iconic Logic. Rows are boundary objects, either atoms or containers. Connections in a column indicate which boundary objects share a common space. A column then is *a bounded space*. Connections in a row indicate which spaces contain the row boundary object. The diagonal inverter specifically represents the act of crossing a boundary, moving computational focus from the column space to the row container of that space.

Comesh "registers" are also rows which generate output signals; the difference between logic and registers is that register rows outputs are reentered into the array as inputs (together with external input signals) at each internal clock cycle. Thus Comesh registers are not flip-flops, and do not behave as flip-flops, rather their behavior is equivalent to that of Comesh gates. This makes timing the Comesh exceedingly simple.

A Comesh replaces both conventional wiring and conventional timing with its own internal structures. All timing is Comesh pipelined, all wiring is stored in Comesh cross-points. Comesh provides multilevel logic functionality in a PLD-like device, without the exponential explosion of flat AND-OR logic. Since timing is defined by the Comesh rather than by wiring connecting arbitrary sequences of gates, Comesh timing design is highly predictable. Since wiring is defined by the location of cross-point connections, placeand-route is equivalent to loading the mesh configuration. Performance is therefore independent of wiring complexity, and largely insensitive to the timing complexity in the original design.

Cross-points

The types of connectivity at each cross-point vary across types of desired performance, providing a wide choice of functional and manufacturing properties. Comesh cross-points are essentially bit locations, cross-point architectures mimic those available in commercial memories. Nonreconfigurable meshes have hardwired cross-points. Hardwiring can be achieved either by factory masking (Mask ROM), by write-once fuse technologies in the field (PROM), or by limited writable reconfigurable EEPROMs.

Reconfigurable meshes require dynamic cross-points. The simplest, most dense, and most familiar is DRAM, which uses one transistor per intersection. More elaborate cross-point architectures include SRAM and Flash-ROM. Some characteristics of these bit location architectures are listed below:

Mask	ROM:	non-reconfigurable factory hardwired connections	
	very	fast, high density, very low power, inexpensive,	non-volatile
Flash	RAM:	readable/writable RAM	
	inexp	pensive, high density, moderately reconfigurable,	non-volatile
SRAM:	stat	tic read/write memory	
	fast	, low density, high power, expensive, volatile	
DRAM:	dynd	amic read/write memory	
	high	density, inexpensive, low power, volatile	

Comesh is *not* a memory, it is a bit-array. No address decoding is necessary, none of the control or read/write logic of memory is relevant to the computation. All input lines are activated concurrently. All output lines become available concurrently.

Configurations

Custom software (Losp/Pun) minimizes the target circuit and maps it into a *dnet*, which is the internal format for Losp/Pun Comesh data-structures. Losp provides Boolean minimization and conversion to dnet format. Pun provides management of network connectivity such as structure sharing and fanout. Losp/Pun functionality is completely automated. Configuration choices are parameterized to achieve desired structural properties.

Although the mesh can be considered to be square, the number of rows is greater than the number of columns by the number of input literals. I.e.

rows = columns + input-literals

There is one row/column for each dnet cell in the function, and one row for each input literal (positive and negative polarity inputs).

Registers are a single Comesh row/column pair. The input of a Comesh "register" is a row which is similar to any other input row. This row is connected to a column which has no other connection points, it is the register inversion column. When this column is inverted into a new row, that row is the register input prior to the next clock cycle, the next state stored in the register. The value in the register output row is treated as any output, it is asserted as output into an output vector of conventional registers (the Output Buffer). On the following clock cycle, these register outputs are reentered into the Comesh as inputs, equivalent to any other inputs entering the mesh.

The number of dnet cells in a Comesh configuration, that is the number of rows, is roughly equivalent to the number of n-input NOR gates plus registers in an equivalent multilevel circuit. Comesh columns are insensitive to fanin, so that the gate count of an equivalent circuit should include any amount of fanin; gate counts are not determined by two-input gates. Similarly, Comesh rows are insensitive to fanout, so an appropriate comparison would be circuits with unlimited fanout. Since almost all netlists use low fanin and fanout gates, Comesh optimization improves significantly over conventional gate counts. Very roughly, one Comesh row is equivalent to about three conventional gates.

Comesh rows are coupled with their corresponding columns. However the relative position of each row is completely free. This allows Comesh rows, particularly input and output rows to be arranged to fit whatever pin locations are required from the global connectivity context.

Comesh is fully composable. Each segment can be treated as a complex logic block with inputs and outputs which compose by connection. Composition can be achieved a Comesh blocks, or if preferred, within a single Comesh block.

Flattening a circuit to two-levels (SOP format) increases both fanout and wire-OR loads of a Comesh. Unlike a PLD, these increases are in the number of cross-points, not in the number of physical wires or gates. The exponential growth associated with SOP forms is limited to growth in clauses, that is increases in the number of bounded groups of inputs, the AND gates of a conventional PLD.

Comesh is optimized for deeply nested structures, since deep multilevel nesting of gates minimizes the number of gates and thus the number of rows in an equivalent Comesh circuit. In deeply nested designs, propagation across diagonals corresponds to the critical path of a conventional multilevel design. A Comesh requires one diagonal propagation step for each conventional gate in a multilevel path. Like conventional circuits, all Comesh combinational logic is asynchronous. Unlike conventional circuits, propagation delays through a Comesh configuration are highly predictable. Diagonal Cells

Diagonal cells are inverters. Wire-ORs feeding the inverter creates NOR-logic. The entire Comesh is unclocked, except at outputs.

A possible clocking regime would be to clock each diagonal inverter. Clocking each inverter turns the entire mesh into a fine-grain clocked network. The BILD Engine implements a version of diagonal element clocking, enhancing predictability of performance at the cost of slower operation and more hardware mechanism.

A hardwired Comesh ROM-like configuration requires two transistors per row, the two transistors comprising the diagonal inverter. Thus, all Comesh gateequivalent rows require two transistors. A 10K gate circuit literally requires 20K transistors in the Comesh architecture. This makes non-volatile Comesh ROM extremely small and extremely inexpensive to manufacture.

Functional Behavior

Inputs (and their inversions) enter the Comesh concurrently. Active crosspoints in each row define the fanout of the incoming signals. Cross-points in each column define the inputs to a dnet cell. Low signals on a row have no effect on a computation, they represent disconnected elements. High signals on a row are propagated to each column that the row is connected to via a cross-point. hen a high column signal reaches the diagonal inverter, it is in effect cancelled by the inverter, creating a corresponding row with no signal. When the Comesh settles and a column has no signal, the pull-up on the inverter of that column triggers the inverter to emit a high signal to the corresponding row, in effect propagating an active signal.

Hierarchical Subdivision

Comesh area can be reduced by reclaiming unused cross-points in the sparse array of connectivity. Several techniques are possible to reduce area:

1) Compose the Comesh of several smaller meshes. A 100 row mesh might be made from tiling ten 10 row meshes, ten across the row. (Thus, the 100×100 mesh would be composed of one hundred 10×10 meshes.) Submeshes with no connections can be abstracted to a single meta-non-connect.

2) Compose larger Comesh functions from smaller Comesh functions by direct wiring.

3) Connect an array of Comesh submeshes using conventional interconnect technology. Thus, a submesh would be similar to a smaller look-up table in a CPLD architecture.

4) Compose limited mesh resources over time. A large function would be partitioned into several smaller mesh configurations, these smaller configurations would be dynamically swapped by reconfiguring the mesh connectivity.

5) Use multi-bit cross-point storage techniques to carry several different functional configurations in the same mesh.

6) Reconfigure the connectivity in Losp by changing the structural characteristics of the dnet. An example would be to triangulate the mesh (assumed standard), another would be to form a SOP dnet.

7) With an appropriate cross-point architecture, reclaimed area can be explicitly used as memory, providing a homogeneous computation/memory fabric.

Performance and Metrics

The essential advantage of a Comesh network is that it performs as a PLD without the combinational explosion encountered in all other PLD architectures. Roughly,

2^N PLD gates ==> N^2 Comesh bits

Specifically,

N = number of input literals plus registers M = number of internal gates, regardless of fanins and fanouts, plus registers

CPLD gates, worst case: 2^N Comesh rows, worst case: N+M area: (N+M)*M

Multilevel circuits originated in order to combat the exponential explosion in PLD gate count. Comesh provides the functional and manufacturing benefits of any PLD, while retaining the structural economy and performance of any multilevel ASIC.

Benefits

In a sentence: Comesh combines the best of both ASICs and PLDs, with the drawbacks of neither. In particular,

Unlike ASICs, the design, verification and layout of Comesh functions is both easy and rapid. Comesh is homogeneous, and thus has the manufacturability

characteristics of memory and of homogeneous gate arrays rather than custom ASICs. Comesh performance is slightly slower than an equivalent ASIC design.

Unlike PLDs, Comesh performs at ASIC speeds while reconfiguring at memorywrite speeds. Internally Comesh requires no physical timing or routing. Comesh performance is always better than an equivalent FPGA design, and is roughly equivalent to a PLD design. However, Comesh design sizes are determined by the number of multilevel any-fanin gates.

Comesh area (die-size) is slightly smaller than a functionally equivalent FPGA, since it does not require routing resources. This area is significantly larger than an equivalent ASIC.

Reconfiguration

Reconfiguration is accomplished in software, at memory-write speeds. Thus RAM-based and flash-RAM Comesh is extremely adaptable, providing dynamic reconfiguration combined with ease of design.

Design flow

Here is a comparison of standard and Comesh design flows:



For large designs, conventional CPLDs are too inefficient in space and wiring. Two solutions have developed, FPGAs and uPs. FPGA design-flow is very similar to CPLD design, except that the end product is slow, relatively expensive hardware. uP design is discussed below.

Microprocessors

Comesh is competitive with embedded microprocessors with a fixed variety of functions. The flexibility of software instruction sets is matched by the rapid reprogramability of Comesh. The trade-off is HDL design (for Comesh) vs. instruction set design (for a vonNeumann uP). Both are equally difficult, but designing in HDL gives immediate hardware speedup, in the range of two to three orders of magnitude.

Comparing instruction set and Comesh design:



uP compiler technology is relatively advanced, so that timing and resource allocation is fully automated. Comesh has the same automated "compiler" synthesis, but the resource allocation problem it addresses is far simpler, so simple that the designer can just set design parameters such as delay and area.

Instruction set design is complex since hardware and software characteristics interact. Software verification is at best horrible, algorithmic and formal verification of software is not yet understood. Software engineering imposes strict design regimes which again make software design difficult and highly error prone. Worse, there are few techniques know to remove bugs; it is a software industry standard that all software is shipped riddled with both known and unknown bugs. From a hardware perspective, this is intolerable. Comesh synthesis is completely formal, and fully verified at every design step.

Both software and hardware approaches make download easy, neither require place and route. The cost of using a software approach is much slower performance.

Many uPs use the flexibility of instruction set encoding to provide multiple functionality. Dynamic reconfiguration of hardware FPGA architectures is still in its infancy, it is not particularly easy to exchange functionality. Comesh is reconfigurable at the same speed of reprogramming a software-based uP. Reconfiguration design is easier than with software. Thus Comesh provides all the benefits of instruction set programming, with none of the performance disadvantages. Reconfigurable Comesh uses flash-ROM, DRAM or SRAM cell technology for bit storage, which adds a small additional cost over nonvolatile Comesh ROM which is hardwired.

Manufacturability

Comesh is dominated by bit storage cells, which have a standard known architecture. Memory (ROM, flash-ROM, DRAM, SRAM) is increasing in price/density ratio faster than ASICs (an increase of 1.6 per year rather than 1.25), thus costs of manufacturing Comesh will decrease faster than all competing ASIC and FPGA products.

Layout control

Layout control is equivalent to place and route for conventional reconfigurable hardware. However, Comesh layout is simply the identification of which cross-points in the mesh to make active, either by storing in a DRAM or flash-ROM-like cell, or by hardwiring the connection.

Pun provides parametric control of

the desired size of the array, the degree of wire fanin/out (wire-OR loading), the number of diagonal gates traversed during the computation (process time), and the contextual location of inputs and outputs.

Given that these parameters are all highly mutually interdependent, the design space is actually quite small. The dnet form can vary over these parameters, however a minimized dnet also places significant constraints on connectivity design. This means that the Pun "synthesis and placement" algorithms can be very efficient, as well as very definitive about resulting behavioral characteristics such as propagation time and power usage. Since Comesh is composable by wiring outputs to inputs, it provides maximum flexibility for extending and reusing resources. Complex functions can even be dynamically partitioned and assembled later, using a single small Comesh.

IP cores

Configuration encoding of Comesh can be treated as IP, similar to any software (instruction set) IP.

Summary of Advantages

- -- pin i/o location is flexible
- -- memory and computation can be mixed in the same fabric
- -- only the output register and the diagonals change, thus very low power and noise
- -- configurations are easily decomposed for time/space trade-offs
- -- since disconnections are propagated, very low power use
- -- inherent Iconic Logic simplicity
- -- wiring is virtual,
- -- connected cross-points define paths though i/o space, rather than paths through gates
- -- two transistors per logic function (plus cross-point architecture)
- -- all techniques are backward compatible
- -- 60% yearly growth in memory technology
- -- registers are virtual and integrated into the Comesh configuration
- -- freely partitionable for cross-mesh integration
- -- timing is predictable
- -- differentiable not incremental technology

ILLUSTRATION TOUR

Over fifty illustrations of Comesh circuits follow. They include the most simple logic gates, common smaller circuits, and examples of Comesh composition and timing.

Reference number (not page number)

Cross-points	
generic cross-point	01
ROM cross-point	01a
PROM cross-point	01b
EEPROM cross-point	01c
SRAM cross-point	01d
DRAM cross-point	01e
Diagonal Elements	
inverter	02
Registers	
single explicit register	02a
register feedback loop	02b
self-connected register	02c
generic register	02d
Logical Operators	
nor1	03
nor2	04
nor4	05
and2	06
and4	07
or2	08
or4	09
xor2	10a
xor2, alternative	10b
Three Input Functions	
2to1-multiplexer	11
2/3-majority	12
half-adder	13
2bit-tally	14
Combinational Functions	
1to4-demultiplexer	15
4to1-multiplexer	16
2to4-decoder	17
decimal-BCD-encoder	18
bcd-to-7segment-encoder	19a

bcd-to-7segment-encoder diagonalized	19b
2bit comparator	20
1bit-fulladder	21
1bit-subtractor	22
4bit-adder	23
9parity-generator	24
Composition	
fulladder-simpler	25
fulladder-simpler-tidy	26
fulladder-composed	27
fulladder-composed-tidy	28
2bit-adder-composed	29
decimal-to-7segment-encoder	30
4bit-multiplier	31

Comparator Versions

1bit-comparator-iterative	32
4bit-comparator-iterative-composed	33
4bit-comparator-parallel	34
4bit-magnitude-comparator-with-enables	35
4bit-magnitude-comparator-SOP	36
4bit-comparator-parallel-square	37

Registers

4bit-shiftregister-serialin-serialout	38
4bit-serial-shiftregister-registerbank	38a
4bit-serial-shiftregister-feedbackloop	38b
4bit-serial-shiftregister-direct	38c
4bit-shiftregister-serialin-parallelout	39
4bit-shiftregister-serial-parallel-load	40
4bit-shiftregister-parallelin-serialout	41
4bit-shiftregister-bidirectional	42
4bit-ripple-counter	43
4bit-synchronous-counter-serialEnable	44
4bit-synchronous-counter	45
4bit-johnson-counter-decode	46

Sequential Circuits

fulladder-serial	47
fulladder-composed-serial	48
2bit-comparator-serial	49
15cent-vendingFSM	50
lion	51
daio	52
s27	53
lion-square	54

Cross-points

Cross-points are indicated symbolically by an angle join of a row and a column.

Row cross-points spread a particular signal value to other rows, via column collection. Column cross-points form a logical wire-OR. In boundary terms, row cross-points identify the containers of the row output, column cross-points indicate contents of the column input.

In a void-based model, any Hi row value will dominate (Dominion) both the row and the column of a -point. Other potential inputs to row or column are irrelevant. The dominant signal will propagate through all row cross-points to all connected columns. These will propagate to the diagonal, where they will be inverted into void. Lo signals do not propagate and do not change the state the Comesh.





ROM Cross-point



SRAM Cross-point



DRAM Cross-point

Diagonal Elements

Simple inverter

Hi incoming is voided. Lo incoming is made dominant.

Clocked inverter

The diagonal element is clocked to tightly control propagation.

Registers

A single register

Shorthand notation using a feedback loop

Shorthand notation using an implicit loop. This register is connected to itself.

The representation of a generic register.

Arity is simply the opportunity for any one of several row signals to dominate a column. Once a column is dominated, it becomes irrelevant since the Hi signal is inverted into void.

AND and NOR have the same column structure; however AND rows come from inverters.

2-input OR

OR has the same structure as NOR, but its column signal is inverted twice, and thus kept active.

2-input XOR, Version I

((A B) ((A)(B)))

XOR takes two NOR columns, one with positive signals and one with inverted signals, and combines them in another column.

2-input XOR, Version II

An alternative version of XOR, slightly less efficient.

((S D1) ((S) D0))

2/3 MAJORITY

2/3 MAJORITY combines all pairs of incoming rows into another row.

A half-adder is XOR with two outputs. Here two separate networks are combined into one Comesh. They happen also to share structure, row 4 is the branch point. Row 3 also provides a branch point to both outputs, a possibility not usually incorporated in conventional half-adders.

Reading the Comesh:

Row 3 is relevant only when neither input dominates (both 0), in which case the carryout is Hi and the sum is void.

٦Ŋ

٦1

DECIMAL-TO-BCD ENCODER

22











ຊດ





Structure sharing reduces the number of rows for a full-adder.



FULL-ADDER simplified and tidy





Two half-adders are ORed together by connecting Comesh i/o pins.



The composed full-adder with i/o pins removed.





DECIMAL-TO-7SEGMENT-ENCODER composed







This illustration is too large to fit on one page; the discontinuous lower submesh is a continuation of the upper submesh.



An iterative unit for an N-bit comparator.



Composing four unit comparators to yield a 4-bit comparator.



In contrast to composition, this 4-bit comparator has been optimized by Losp.





4-bit MAGNITUDE COMPARATOR with enables



The two-level SOP form restricts all connections to the input rows and to three columns.





A more explicit illustration of the shift register, showing the register bank and the clock.



Another illustration of the shift-register, showing the loop wiring for reentering register values.

4-bit SERIAL SHIFT-REGISTER, direct wired, not inverted



Direct wiring of registers avoids the double inversion while undermining the homogeneous structure of the mesh.





58



59



60











A full-adder unit for sequential composition.



A full-adder for serial composition, itself composed of two half-adders.



A 2-bit comparator for serial composition.



LION



DAIO






APPENDIX:

Diagonalized CM85A Pun, used as MUX

((cm85a canon-renumber pun22 pun22 44-sort (stats cm85a lits 70 conn 73 dnode 36 gate 36) 0.29 (2001 9 5 22 4 50)) ((main) ((a unk)(b unk)(c unk)(d unk)(e unk)(f unk)(g unk)(h unk)(i unk)(j unk)(k unk)) ((oa ~35) (ob ~36) (oc ~34)) ((~1 (a)) (~2) (b)) (~3 (c)) (~4 (d) (~5) (e)) (~6 (f)) (~7 (g) (~8) (h) (~9 (j)) (~10 (a ~2)) (~11 (b ~1)) (~12 (c ~4)) (~13 (d ~3)) (~14 (e ~6)) (~15 (f ~5)) (~16 (g~8)) (~17 (h ~7)) (~18 (a ~2 ~13)) (~19 (b ~1 ~12)) (~20 (~12 ~18)) (~21 (~13 ~19)) (~22 (~14 ~21)) (~23 (~15 ~22)) (~24 (~15 ~20)) (~25 (~14 ~24)) (~26 (~16 ~23)) (~27 (~17~25)) (~28 (~17 ~26)) (~29 (~16 ~27)) (~30 (~9 ~28)) (~31 (~9~29)) (~32 (k ~30)) (~33 (i ~31)) (~34 (~32))

(~35 (~33)

)

(~36 (~9 ~10 ~11 ~12 ~13 ~14 ~15 ~16 ~17)))))