

Embedded Systems

Hardware Technologies

ESD_Cap10 + Other

Overview

- Hardware Technologies
 - Introduction
 - (AS)IC Technologies
 - Full custom
 - Standard cell
 - Gate array
 - Programmable (Configurable) Technologies
 - From ROM to CPLD
 - FPGA

Hardware Technologies

Introduction

Introduction

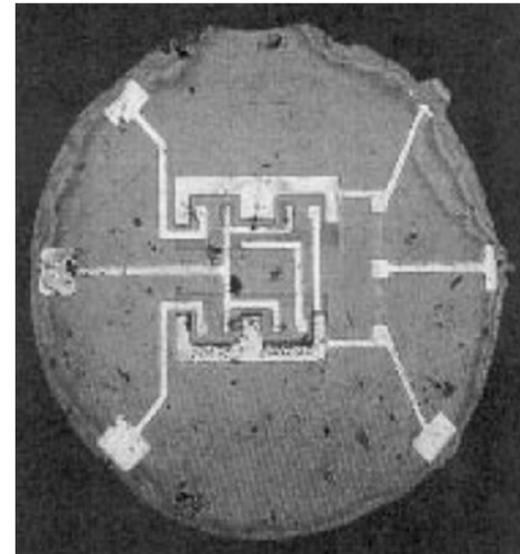
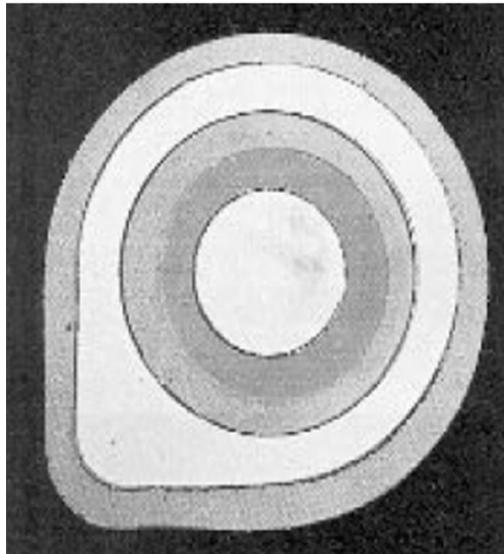
- HW technologies are the basic ones for the realization of all the physical components of an embedded systems
- At a first glance there exists a unique HW technology, i.e. the *integrated technology*
 - In fact, almost all the physical components are *Integrated Circuits*
- At the end of '50 the invention of the *planar process* has radically changed the electronic world
 - It has made possible the concurrent realization of million of elementary components on ever small silicon areas

Hardware Technologies

(AS)IC Technologies

(AS)IC Technologies

- ASIC technology has born in 1958 with the invention of the *planar process*
 - This technology has opened new frontiers in the electronic field and it is considered as the event that has started the *digital era*
 - First transistor and first integrated circuit



(AS)IC Technologies

- Basic concepts related to the planar process
 - The planar process is based on the exploitation of a semiconductor (Ge, Si, GaAs) which physical (and so electromagnetic) characteristics are changed in different phases and in controlled areas
 - All the fundamental electronic component (transistors, diodes, resistors, capacitors) can be realized by means of such a semiconductor properly treated
 - The interconnections between the different components are instead realized by means of metals (Al or Cu)

(AS)IC Technologies

- Basic elements related to the planar process (Si-based)
 - n Silicon
 - Silicon doped in order to augment the number of base band electrons
 - Diffusion or ionic implantation
 - p Silicon
 - Silicon doped in order to decrease the number of base band electrons
 - Insulation
 - Silicon oxide (SiO_2) obtained by means of exposition to oxygen
 - Conductor
 - Deposition of Al or Cu

(AS)IC Technologies

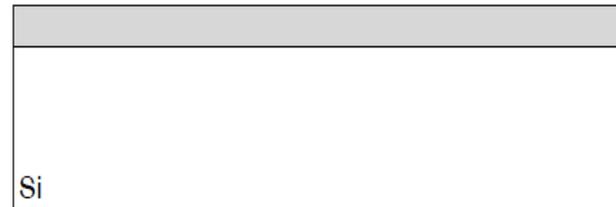
- Each one of these elements is realized during a step of the planar process
 - Big advantage: all the zones of the same kind are realized concurrently on the whole silicon wafer
 - For each step is needed a sequence of similar phases, called **maskings**
 - The goal of such phases is to prepare the silicon so that the specific process (diffusion, implantation, oxidation, etc.) would happen only in selected zones

(AS)IC Technologies

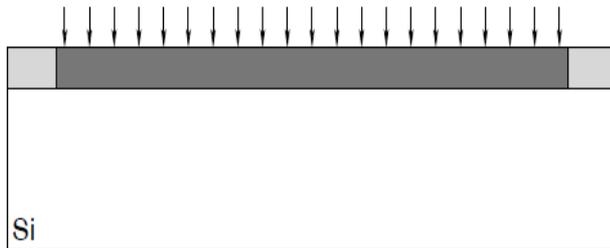
- Planar process: main phases (1)



a. Wafer



b. Photoresist



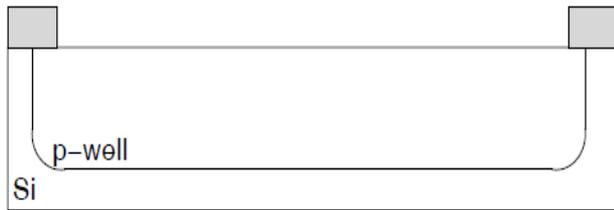
c. Masking



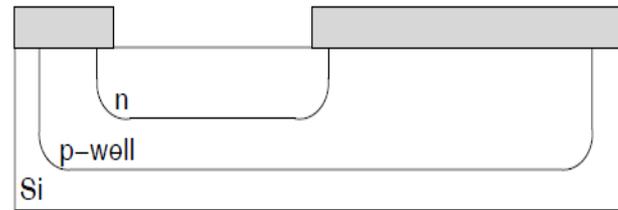
d. Etching/Washing

(AS)IC Technologies

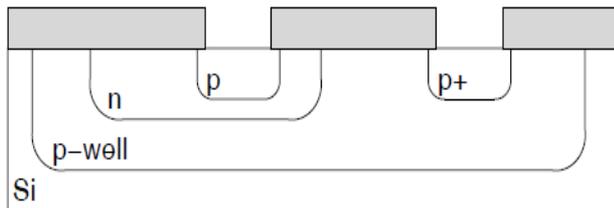
- Planar process: main phases (2)



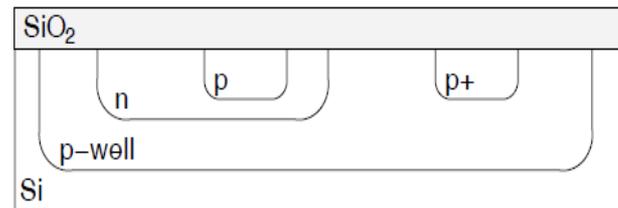
e. P-well



f. Base



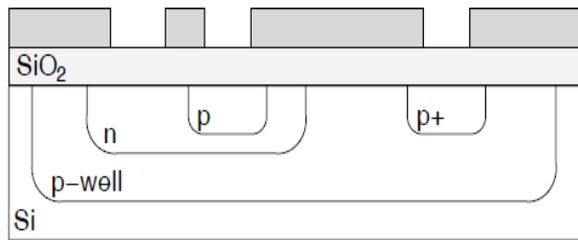
g. Collector and Emitter



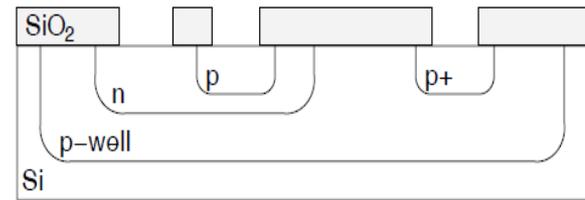
h. Oxidation

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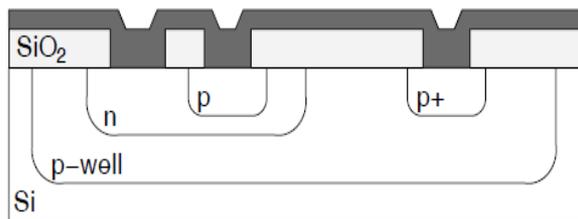
- Planar process: main phases (3)



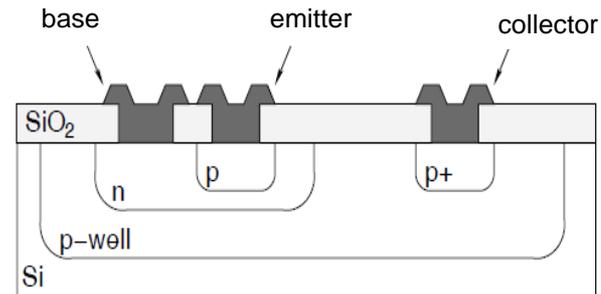
i. Masking



l. Etching/Washing



m. Conductor



n. pnp Transistor (BJT)

(AS)IC Technologies

- Then the interconnections are realized
 - Since it is not possible to isolate the single lines (net), there is the need for different layers separated by insulating layers
 - *Metal layers*
- The described process is related to BJT transistors replaced by CMOS
 - Different steps but similar techniques

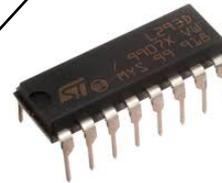
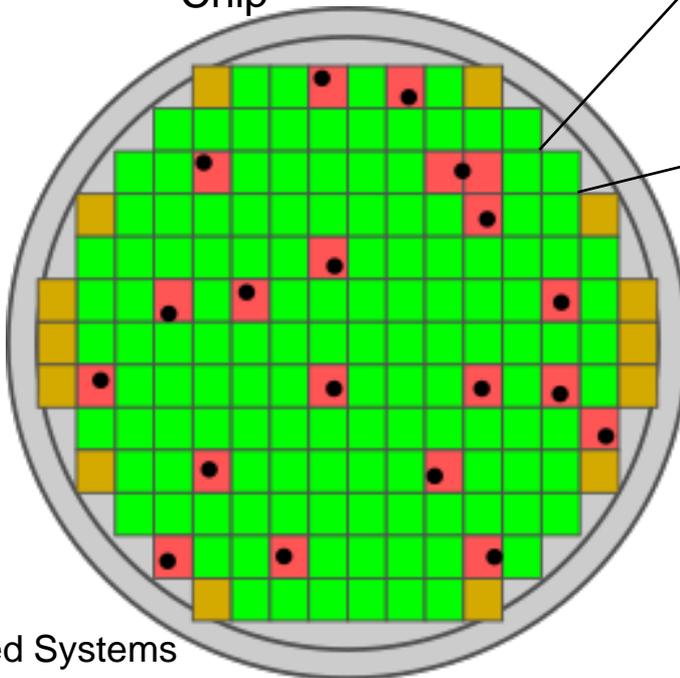
(AS)IC Technologies

- Remember the big advantage: all the zones of the same kind are realized concurrently on the whole silicon wafer

- Wafer

- Die

- Chip



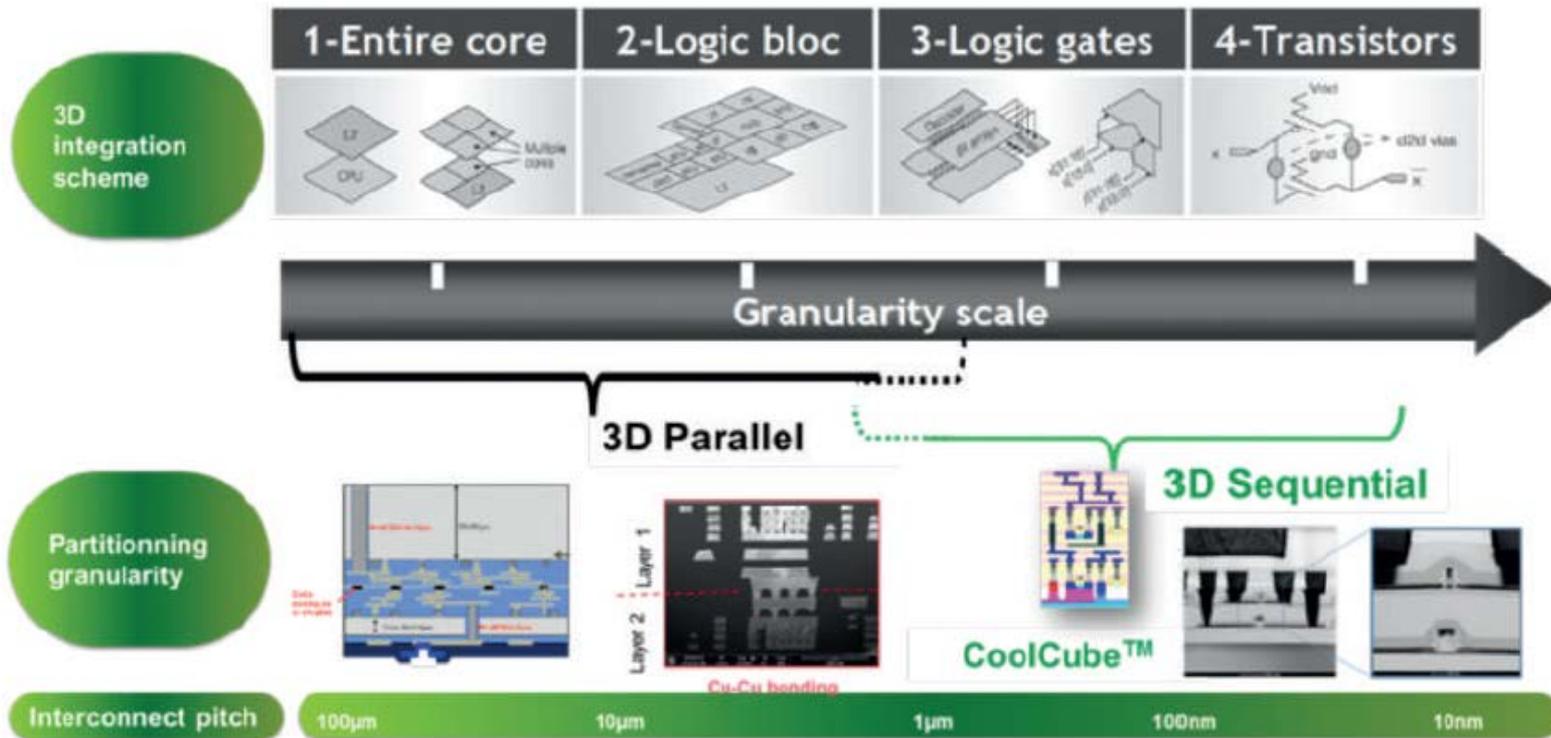
- - defect
- - defective die
- - good die
- - partial edge die

	Nvidia A100
Size	826 mm ²
Transistors	54.2 billion
Cores	7,344
On-chip memory	40 megabytes
Memory bandwidth	155 GB/s
Fabric bandwidth	600 gigabytes/s
Fabrication process	7 nm

<https://spectrum.ieee.org/cerebr-ras-giant-ai-chip-now-has-a-trillions-more-transistors>

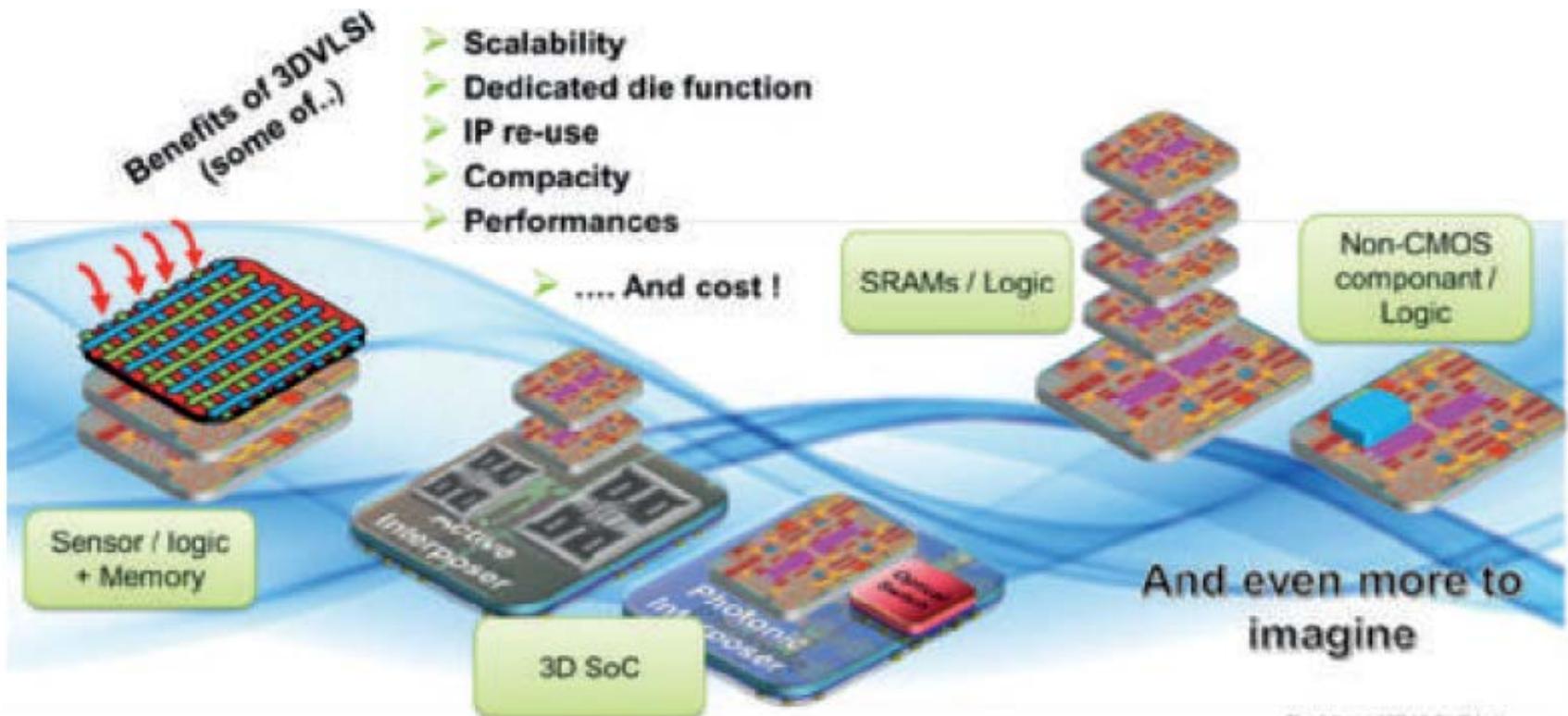
(AS)IC Technologies

- Moreover...
 - The planar process is going to be 3D!



(AS)IC Technologies

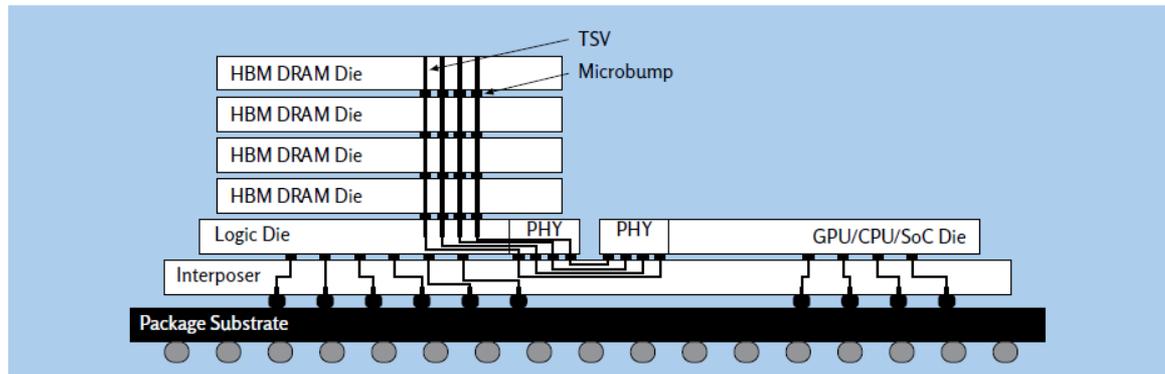
- Moreover...
 - The planar process is going to be 3D!



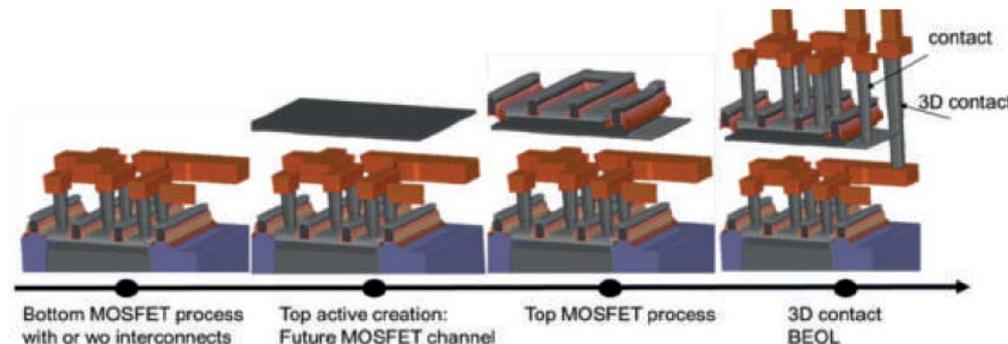
(AS)IC Technologies

- Moreover...
 - The planar process is going to be 3D!

Core-level



Transistor-level



More info:

<https://www.hipeac.net/vision/2019/>

<https://www.eurolab4hpc.eu/media/public/vision/D2-2--final-vision.pdf>

(AS)IC Technologies

- With the CMOS planar process it is possible to realize generic circuitual structures with respect to transistors dimension, position, shape and so on...
 - In the design of small analog/digital circuits all this flexibility and freedom in the organization of basic components over the silicon is a feature very useful
 - This is called **full custom** design

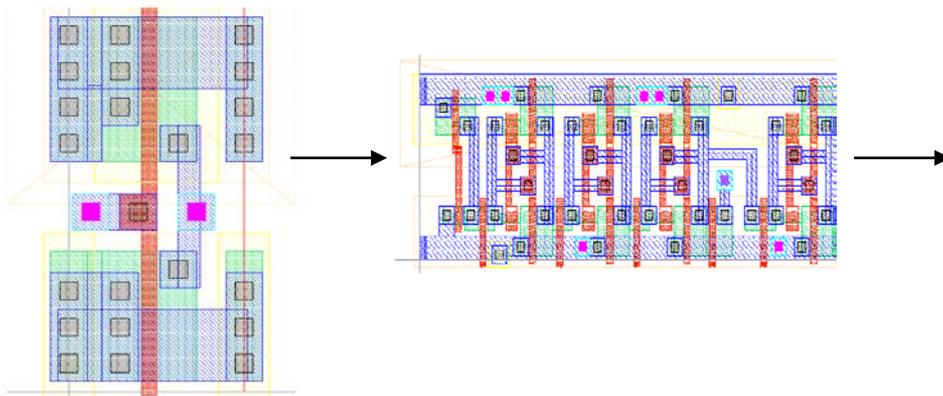
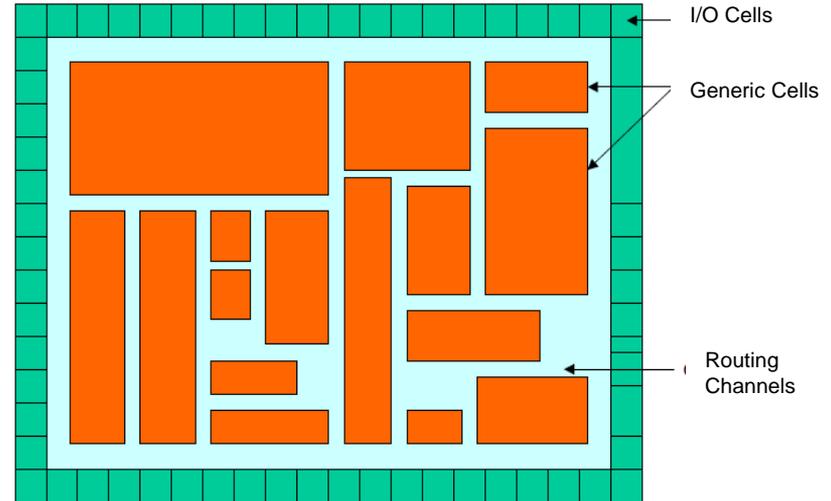
(AS)IC Technologies

- However, when the design is oriented to medium-big digital circuits, it is too complex to exploit such a feature
 - There is the need to reduce the degrees of freedom by using more regular and less flexible structures
 - This is called ***standard cells design***
- Finally, it is also possible to realize generic digital circuits by using very regular structures
 - This is called ***gate array*** or ***sea of gates design***
 - By following this approach all the transistors are pre-fabricated in fixed places while leaving their terminals disconnected
 - The designer has to “only” to connect them by means of the final phases of the planar process (metallization)

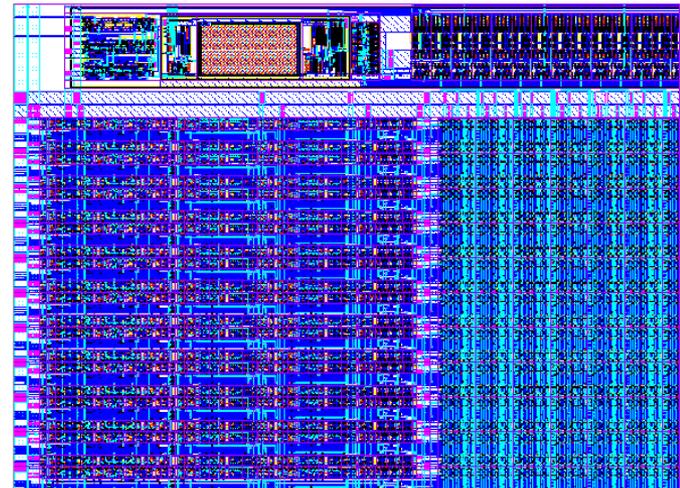
(AS)IC Technologies

- *Full Custom*

- Hand-made geometry
- Digital and analogic circuits
- Transistor-level simulation
- High density
- High performance
- Very long design time



Embedded Systems



(AS)IC Technologies

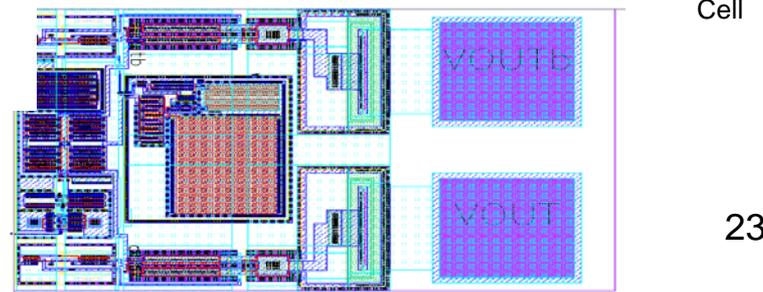
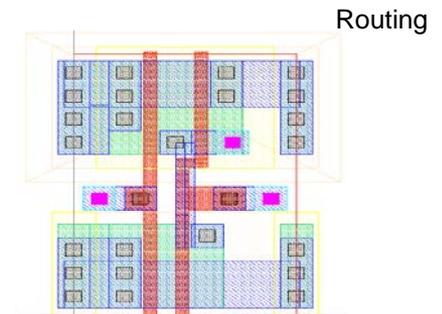
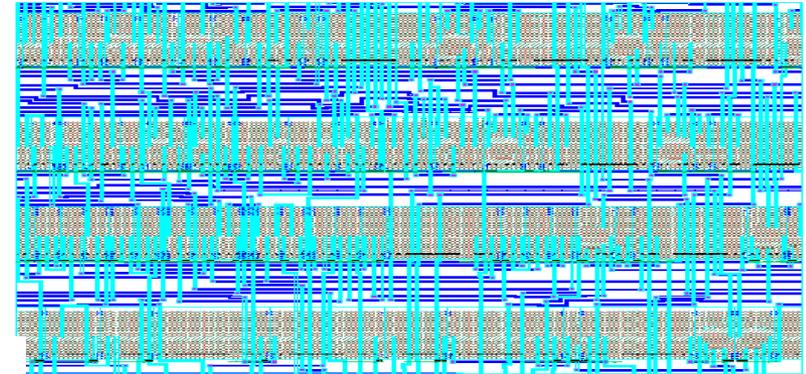
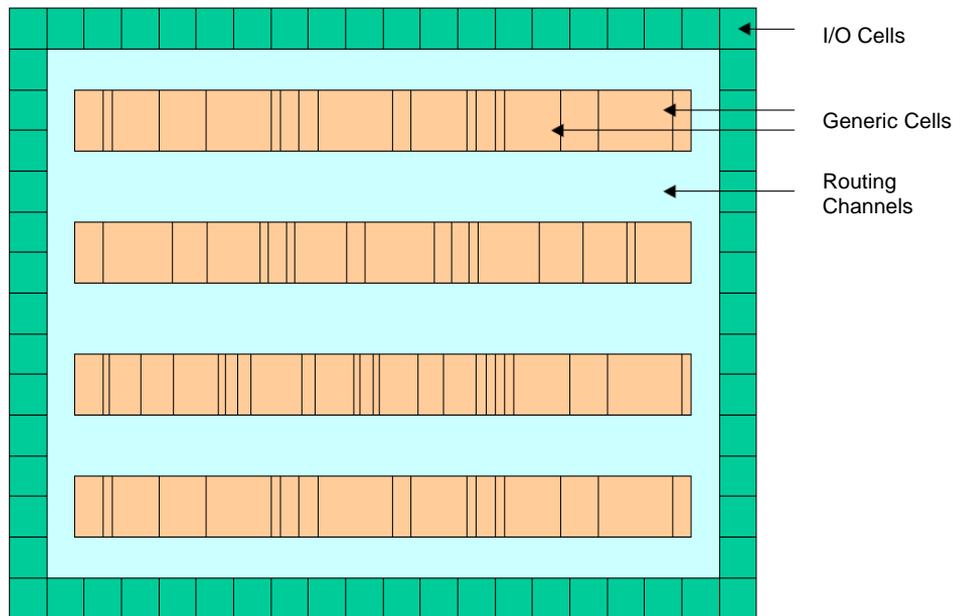
- *Standard Cells*
 - Higher level of abstraction (i.e. less details and DoF)
 - A cell is a small complete and optimized digital circuit that the designer can use ignoring a lot of internal details
 - Custom technology libraries form different *silicon vendors*
 - » 500-2000 kinds of cells that realize a wide set of functions: basic and complex combinatorial circuits, common sequential circuits, memories
 - Since all the cells have the same height, placement and routing are extremely simplified by binding the cell to pre-defined positions
 - Routing is normally based on a grid of nets
 - *Manhattan geometry*

(AS)IC Technologies

- *Standard Cells*
 - From the point of view of the designer, a cell is characterized by several informations
 - Logic name or reference to identify it
 - Functional model
 - Non functional properties
 - Number, name and pin positions
 - Symmetry axes (*flip*)
 - Rotation angles (*orientation*)
 - Thanks to such information, it is possible to perform all the phases needed for final realization

(AS)IC Technologies

- *Standard Cells*

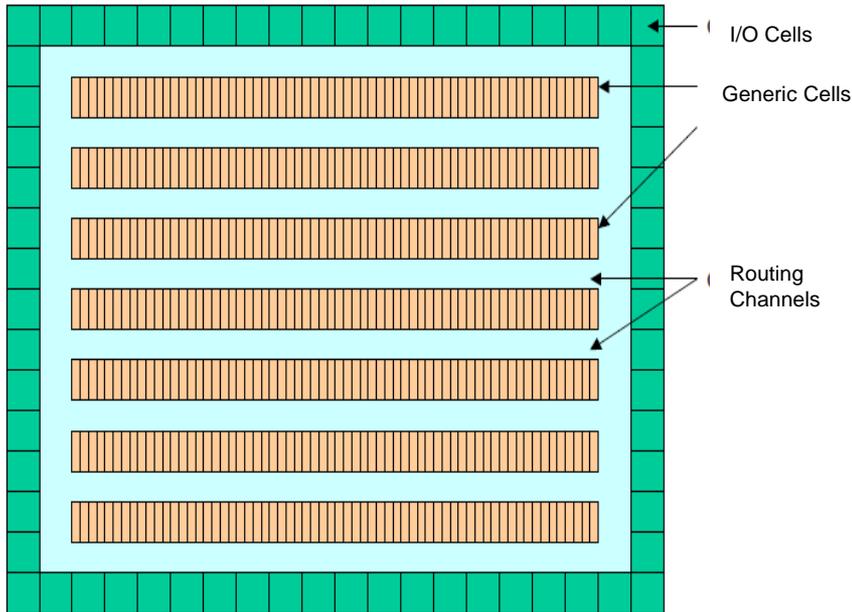


(AS)IC Technologies

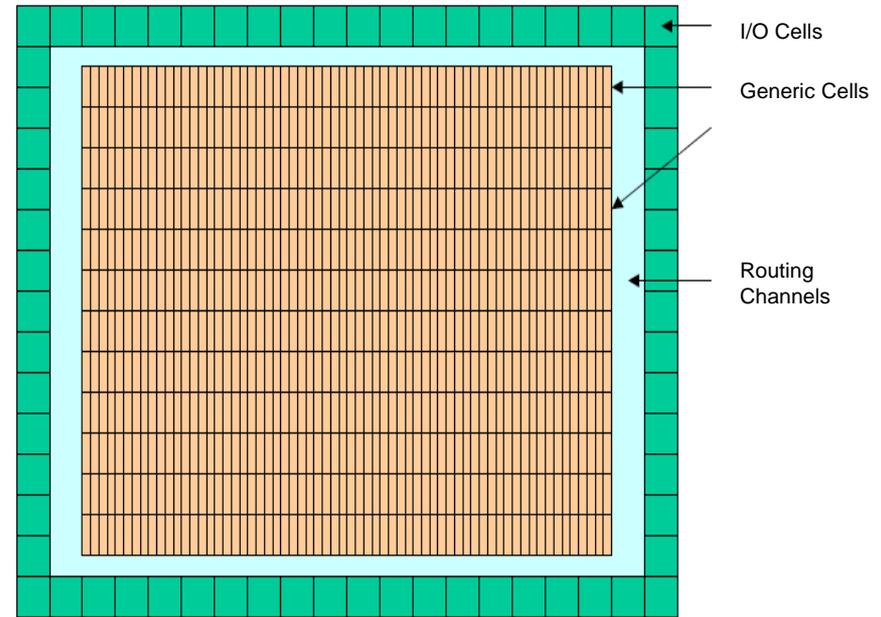
- *Gate Array (o Sea of Gate)*
 - It is another cell-based approach
 - The cells are transistors or NAND ports
 - They are already deployed on the device
 - Their position is completely fixed
 - A new design needs only the masks useful to connect cells in the desired way
 - Also called *Mask Programmable Gate Array (MPGA)*

(AS)IC Technologies

- *Gate Array (o Sea of Gate)*



Channel based



Sea of gates

Considerations

- *Have you noted that...*
 - There is always the need of some masking: we need a foundry!
 - Don't worry, we are not going to realize (AS)ICs! ☺
 - The design activity seems to be completely “structural”
 - A designer has to identify the basic components needed to implement a functionality, place (if not fixed) and connect them
 - The goal is to build a structure that implements the system behaviour
 - Unfortunately, when the system behaviour tends to be more and more complex such an approach tends to be no more feasible
 - We need even more complex components or...
 - The designer should be able to express directly the **system behaviour** and to rely on some SW tools that, on the base of a set of available components, are able to generate the proper **system structure**
 - » This process is called *Synthesis*

Hardware Technologies

**Programmable (Configurable)
Technologies**

Programmable Technologies

- They are HW devices that provide more or less complex components that could be connected as needed
 - “Logic” Components
 - Logic gates, Flip-flop, Buffers...
 - Connections (Nets)
- There are different kinds of “programmable” devices
 - ROM, PLA, PAL
 - GAL, CPLD
 - FPGA

Programmable Technologies

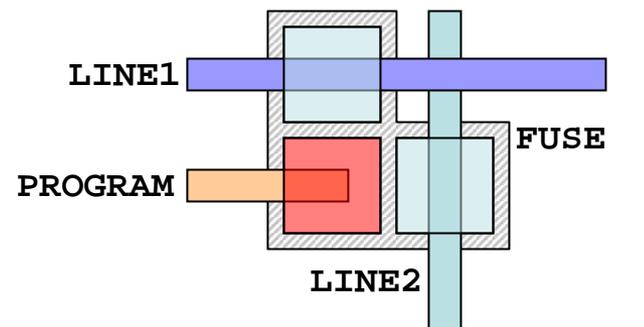
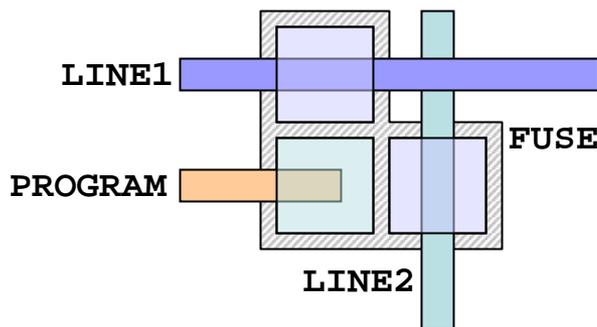
- Such devices can be classified on the base of 2 aspects
 - *“Programming” Modes*
 - *One-Time Programmable (OTP)*
 - Fuse, Antifuse
 - *Reprogrammable*
 - E²PROM, SRAM, Flash
 - *Reprogrammable & Reconfigurable*
 - SRAM, Flash
 - *Connections*
 - Globals (i.e. long)
 - Locals (i.e. short) and distributed

Programmable Technologies

- Programming Modes

- Fuse (*OTP*)

- Nets are realized to be always connected
 - Programming means to burn some connections in order to keep only the needed ones
 - The programming is performed by means of a voltage higher than the operative one

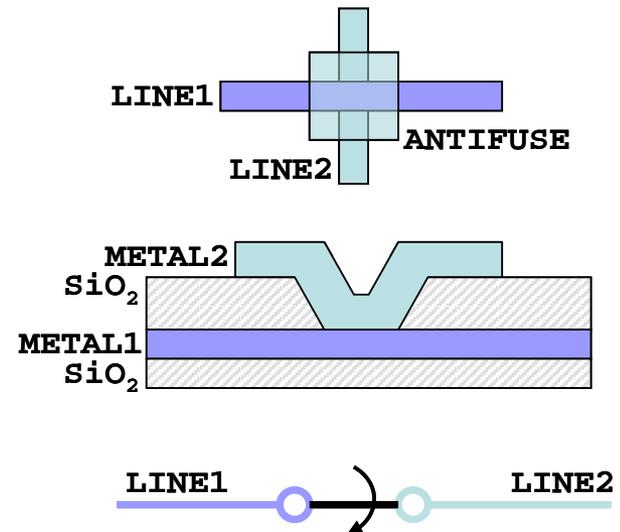
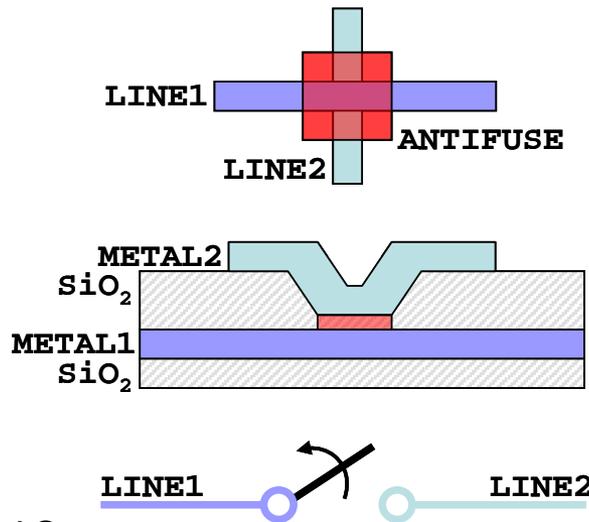


Programmable Technologies

- Programming Modes

- Antifuse (*OTP*)

- Nets are realized to be always disconnected
 - Programming means to create the needed connections
 - The programming is performed by means of a voltage higher than the operative one



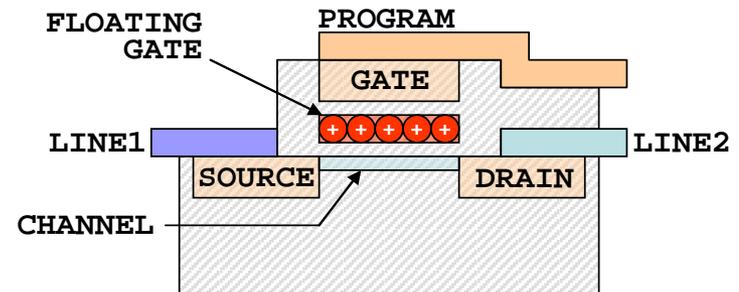
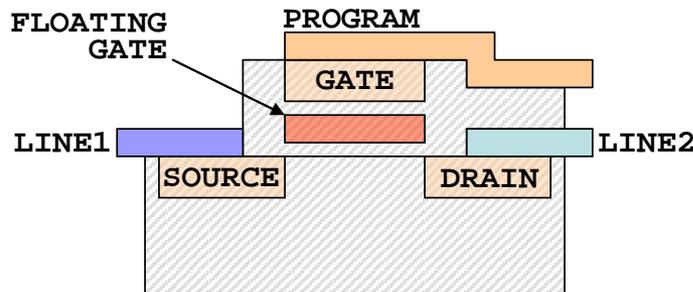
Programmable Technologies

- Programming Modes

- E²PROM (*Reprogrammable*)

- Connections are not active at start-up. They can be electrically activated/deactivated in a non destructive way when the device is **not operative**

- The programming is performed by means of a voltage higher than the operative one in order to deposit a charge on the *floating gate* to keep it in conductive mode

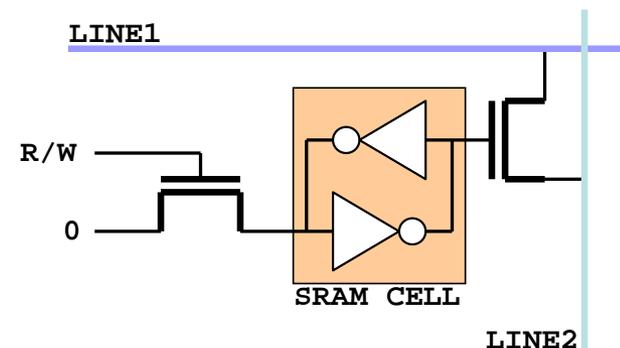
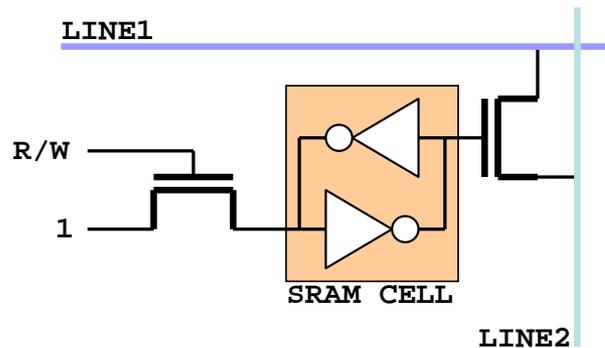


Programmable Technologies

- Programming Modes

- SRAM (*Reprogrammable & Reconfigurable*)

- Connections are not active at start-up. They can be electrically activated/deactivated in a non destructive way
 - The programming is performed by writing a 0/1 value in a SRAM cell. Depending on the adopted technology this could be done
 - » when the device is not operative (*Reprogrammable*)
 - » when the device is operative (*Reconfigurable*)



Programmable Technologies

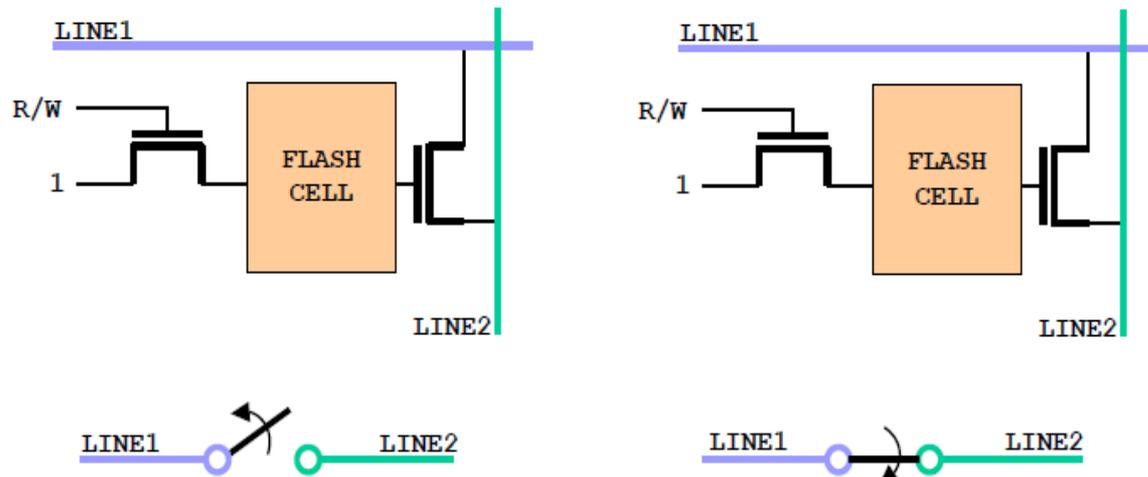
- Programming Modes

- Flash (*Reprogrammable & Reconfigurable*)

- Connections are not active at start-up. They can be electrically activated/deactivated in a non destructive way

- The programming is performed by writing a 0/1 value in a Flash memory cell (during operativity or not)

- » Not volatile

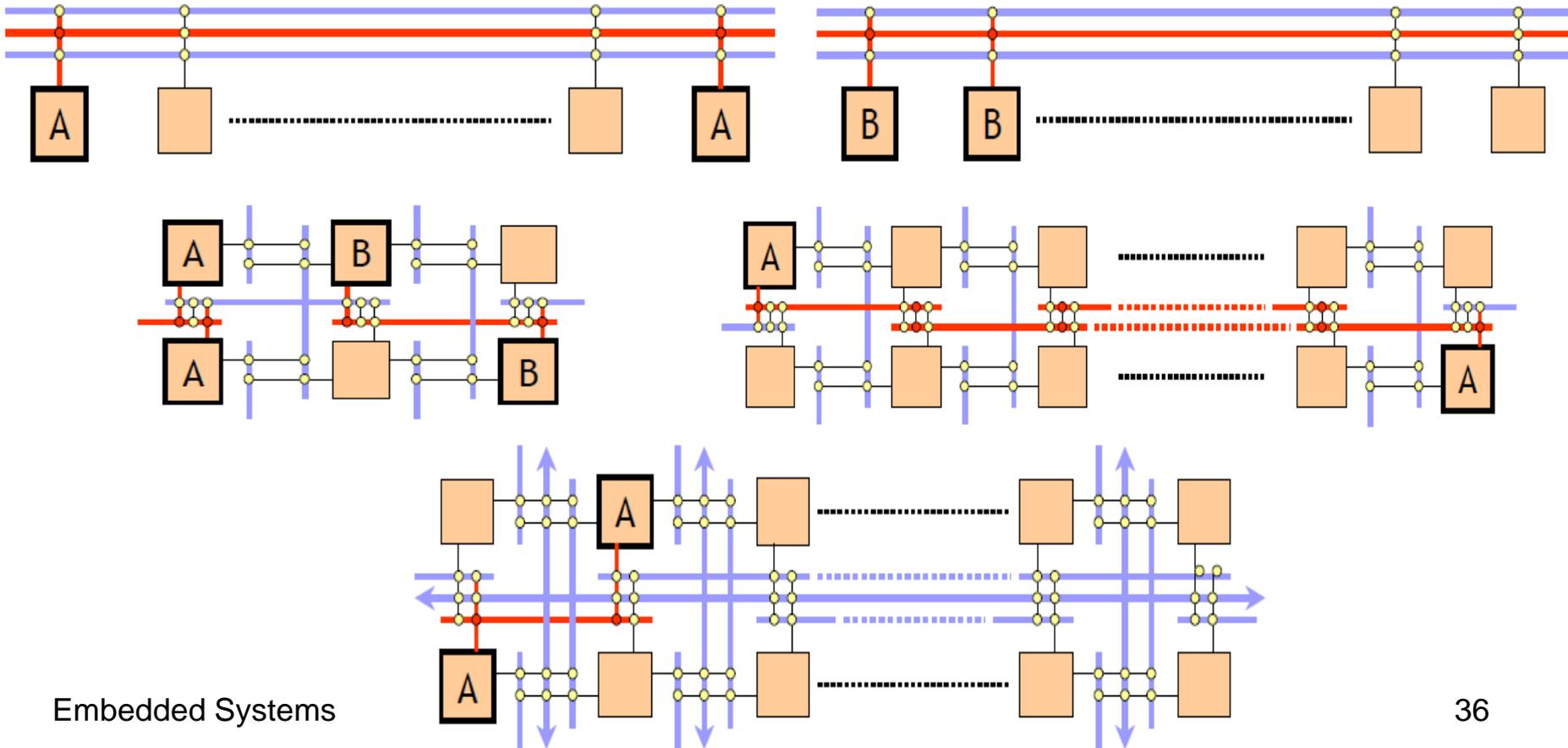


Programmable Technologies

- Connections
 - Global connections
 - They are nets that cross almost all the device and that are shared by a lot of logic components
 - High delays
 - They can be used as output by **only one** device: limited flexibility
 - Local connections
 - They are nets that cross only a reduced part of the device and that are shared by few logic components
 - Low delays
 - In the same device it is possible to have several local nets with different lengths
 - » High flexibility but high routing complexity
 - Hierarchical connections

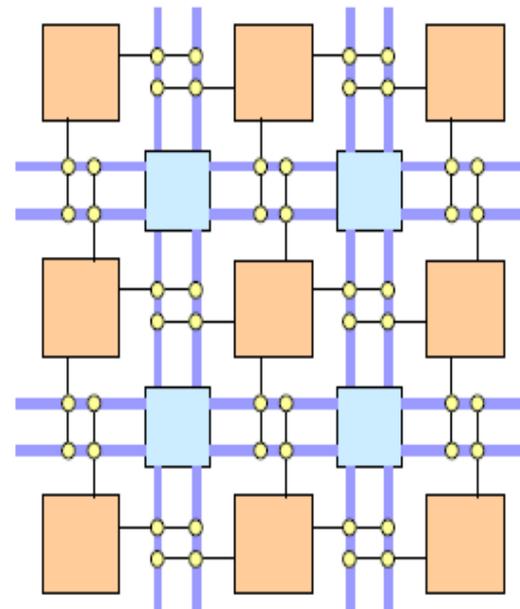
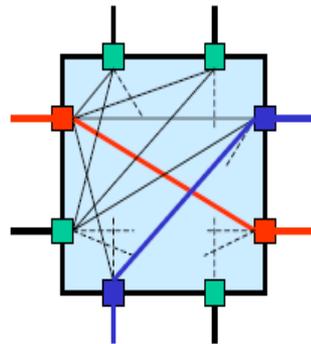
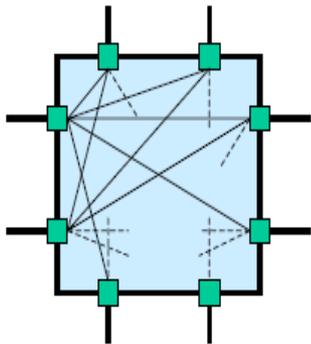
Programmable Technologies

- Connections



Programmable Technologies

- Connections
 - Other kinds
 - *Programmable Switch Matrix*



Programmable Technologies

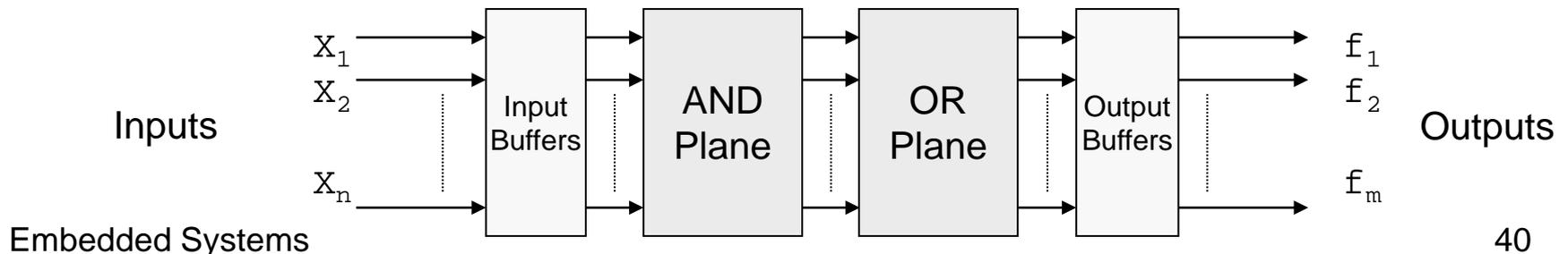
- Connections
 - Global connections
 - 2-Levels Programmable Logic Devices
 - Read-Only Memory (ROM/PROM)
 - Programmable Logic Array (PAL)
 - Programmable Array Logic (PLA)
 - Advanced PAL and PLA
 - Generic Array Logic (GAL)
 - Complex Programmable Logic Devices (CPLD)
 - Local and hierarchical (i.e. short/long) distributed connections
 - Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA)

Programmable Technologies

2-Levels Programmable Logic Devices

2-Levels PLD

- Used to realize generic combinatorial functions with n inputs and m outputs
 - $f_i = f_i(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)$ con $i = \{1, 2, \dots, m\}$
 - It is possible to realize multi-level functions or sequential functions by means of feedback loops and storage elements
 - They have
 - A fixed number of inputs
 - A fixed number of outputs
 - An AND plane to build min-terms
 - An OR plane to sum min-terms
 - I/O buffers

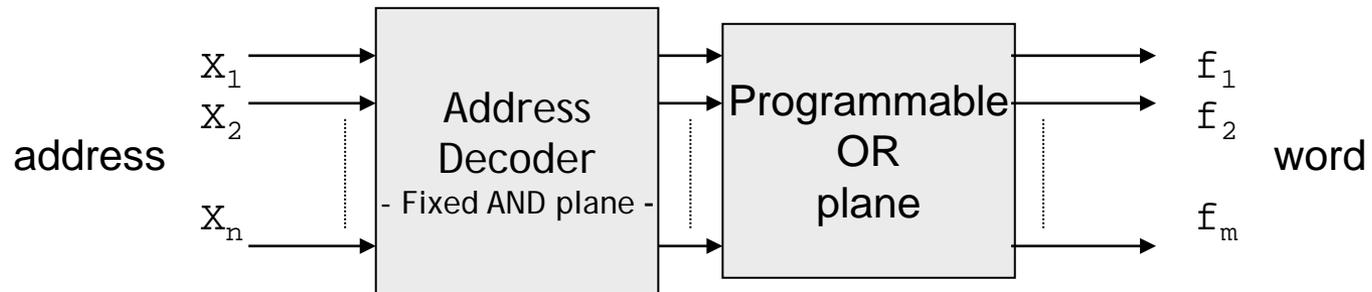


2-Levels PLD

- The main kinds of 2L-PLD
 - *Read-Only Memory (ROM/PROM)*
 - Fixed AND plane
 - Realizes all the possible min-terms (decoder)
 - Programmable OR plane
 - *Programmable Logic Array (PLA)*
 - Programmable AND plane
 - Realizes only the needed min-terms
 - Programmable OR plane
 - *Programmable Array Logic (PAL)*
 - Programmable AND plane
 - Realizes only the needed min-terms
 - Fixed OR plane
 - Imposes a constraint to the product terms

2-Levels PLD

- Read-Only Memory (ROM/PROM)
 - Implements the *sum of products* (SOP)
 - Any input configuration (*address*) is related to an output configuration (*word*)

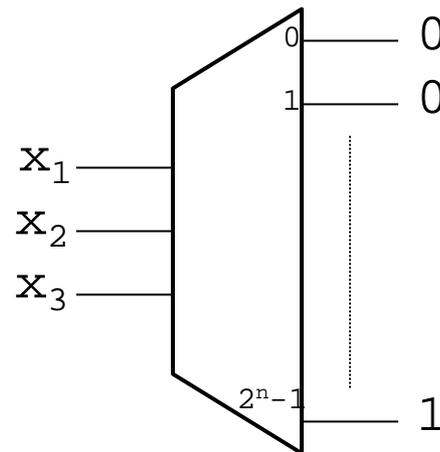


2-Levels PLD

- Read-Only Memory (ROM/PROM)
 - Address decoder
 - The ROM address decoder realizes all the 2^n min-terms
 - n input variables x_i
 - One output active at a time
 - Outputs correspond to the min-terms built by means of the inputs

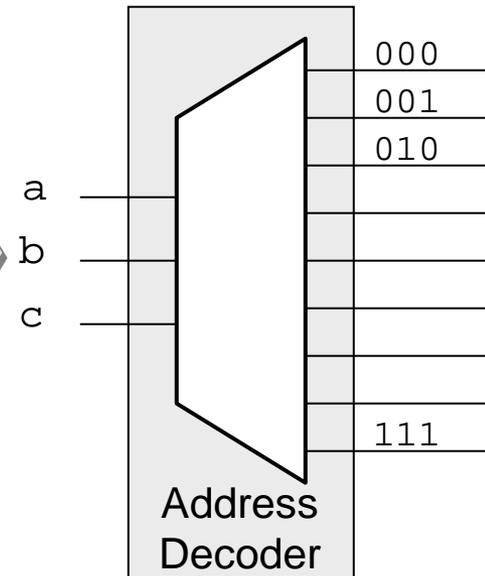
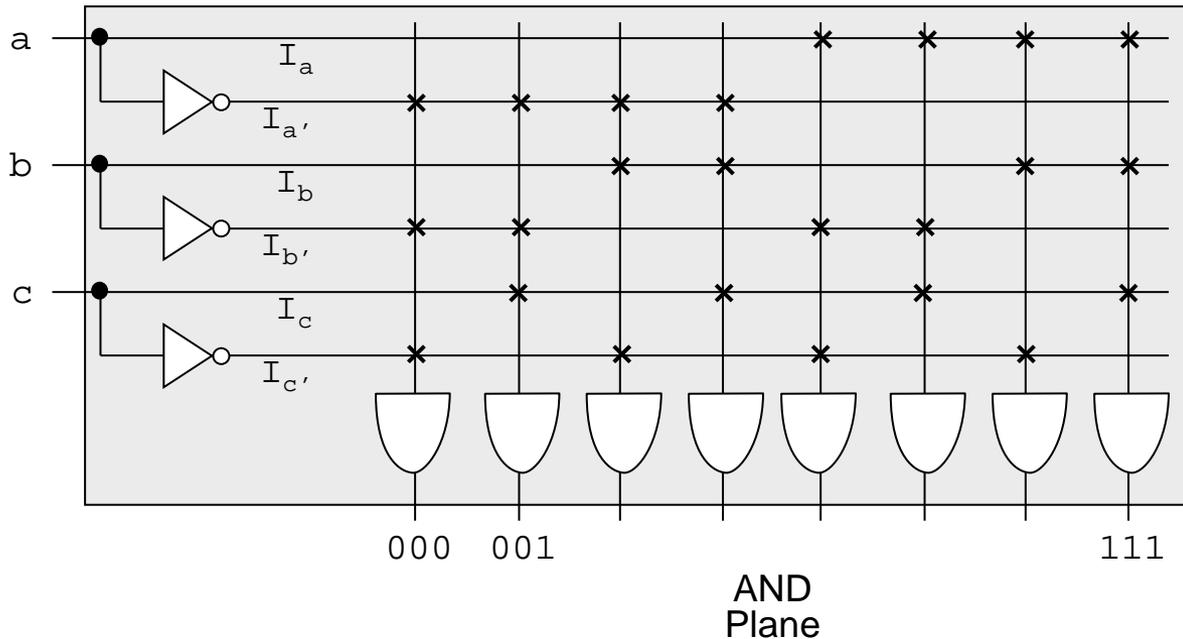
Example:

$$x_1 x_2 x_3 = 111$$



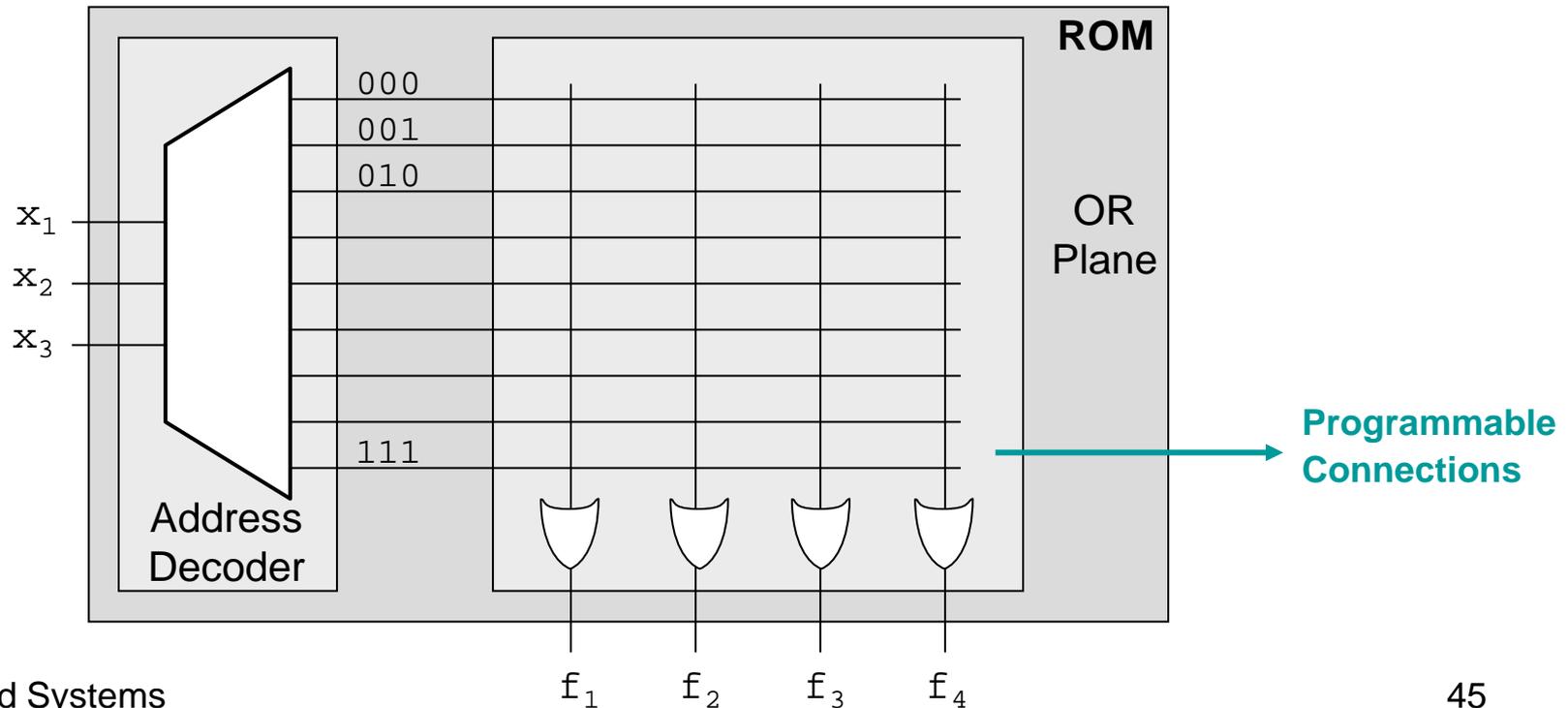
2-Levels PLD

- Read-Only Memory (ROM/PROM)
 - AND plane logic schematic (*Address Decoder*)
 - For simplicity it is used the *decoder* representation
 - 1-hot code outputs



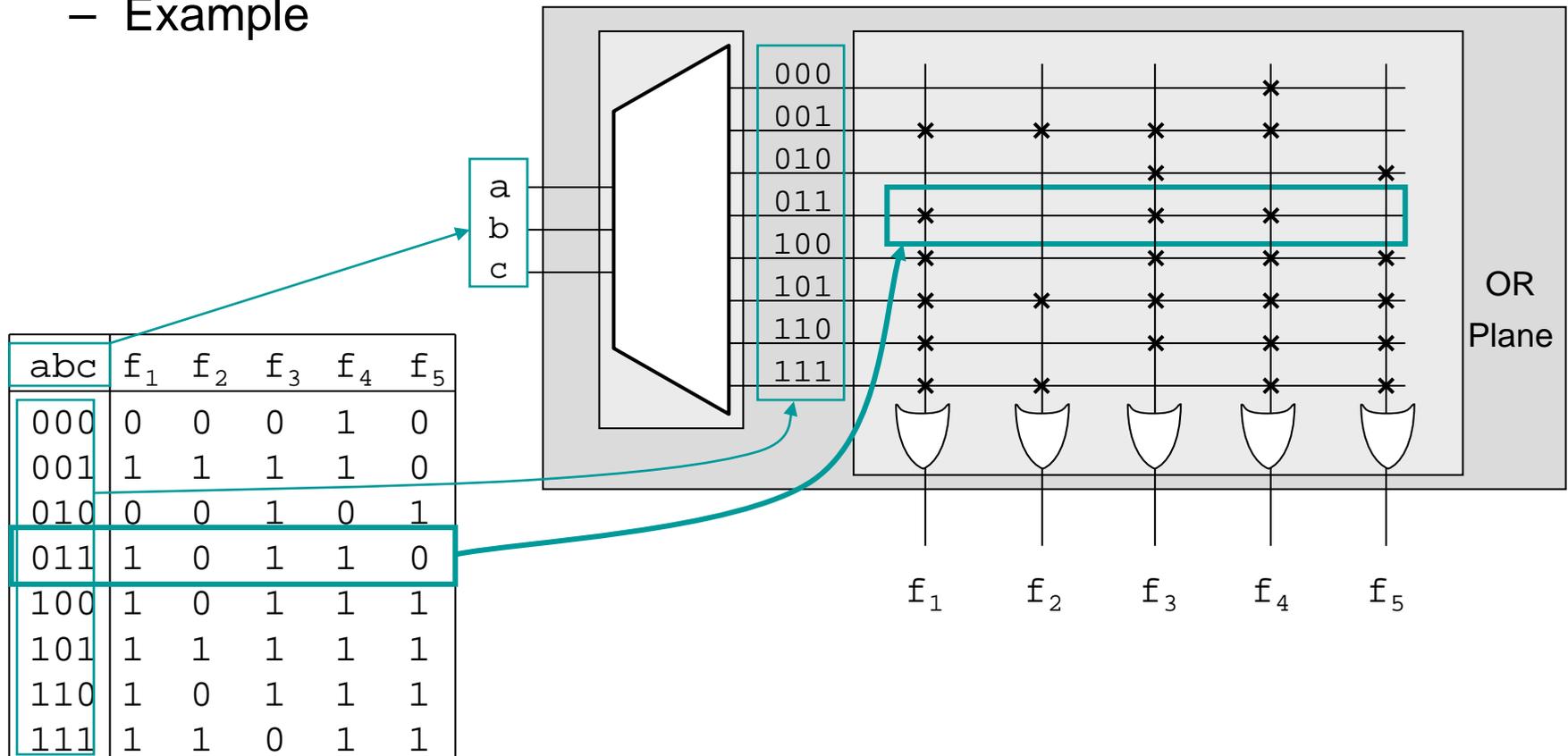
2-Levels PLD

- Read-Only Memory (ROM/PROM)
 - ROM logic schematic
 - Example: 3-inputs 4-outputs ROM (not programmed)



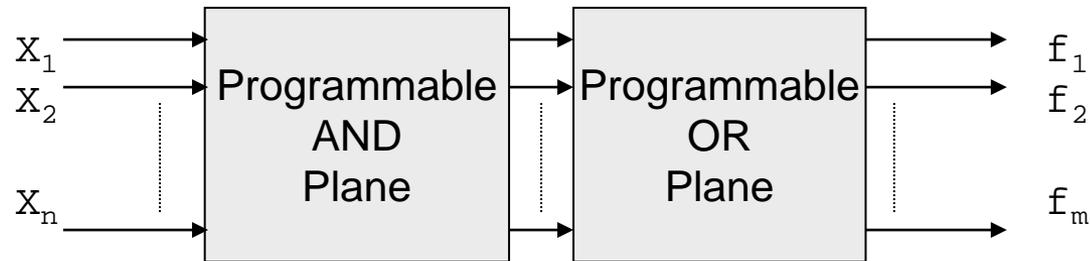
2-Levels PLD

- Read-Only Memory (ROM/PROM)
 - Example



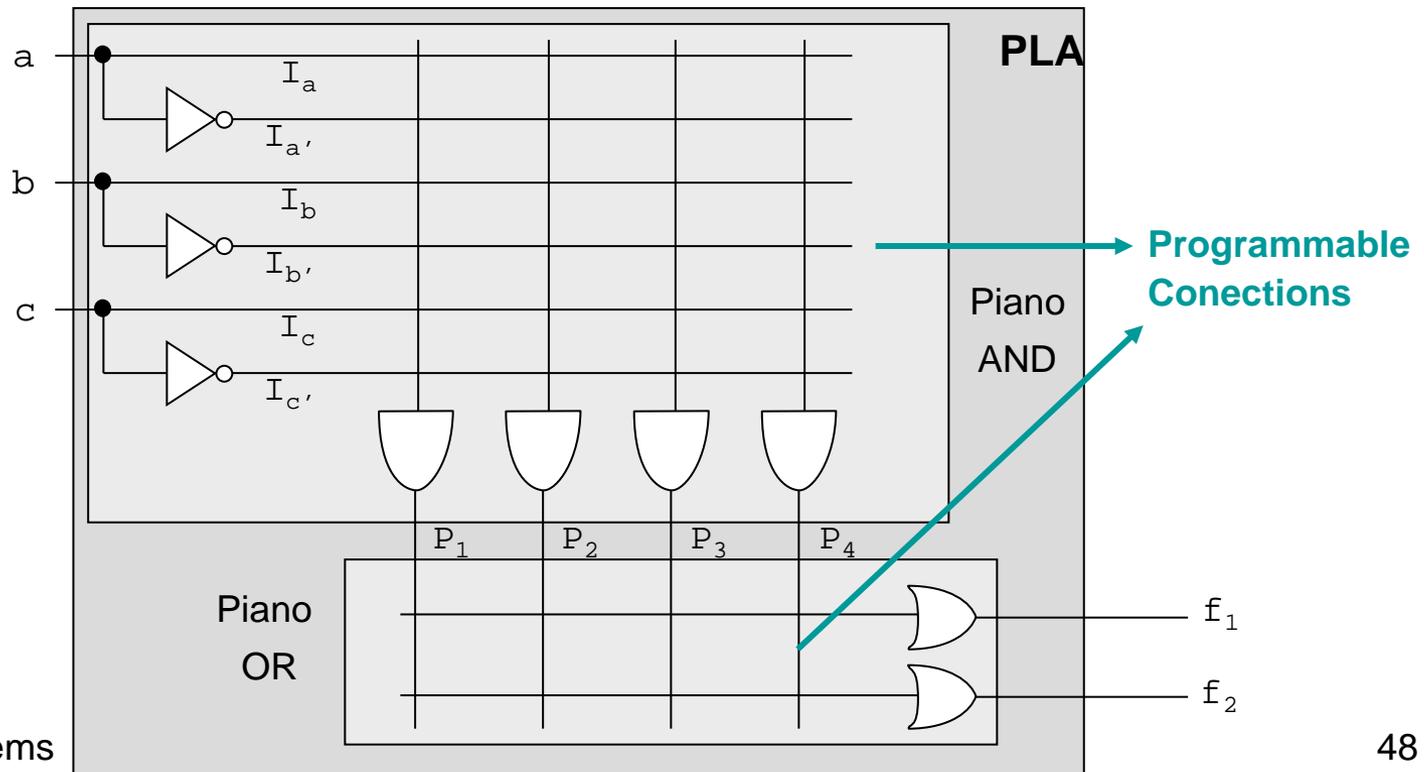
2-Levels PLD

- Programmable Logic Array (PLA)
 - A PLA can implement a sum of products



2-Levels PLD

- Programmable Logic Array (PLA)
 - PLA schematic
 - 3-inputs 2-outputs PLA (not programmed)



2-Levels PLD

- Programmable Logic Array (PLA)

- Example (1/2)

- Functions to be realized

- $f1 = ab + ac' + a'b'c$

- $f2 = ab + ac + a'b'c$

- Products

- $P1 = ab$

- $P2 = ac$

- $P3 = ac'$

- $P4 = a'b'c$

- Sums

- $f1 = P1 + P3 + P4$

- $f2 = P1 + P2 + P4$



PLA programming

11- 10

1-0 10

001 10

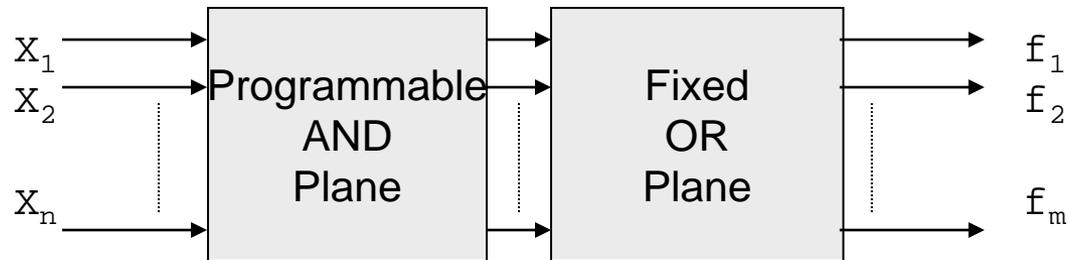
11- 01

1-1 01

001 01

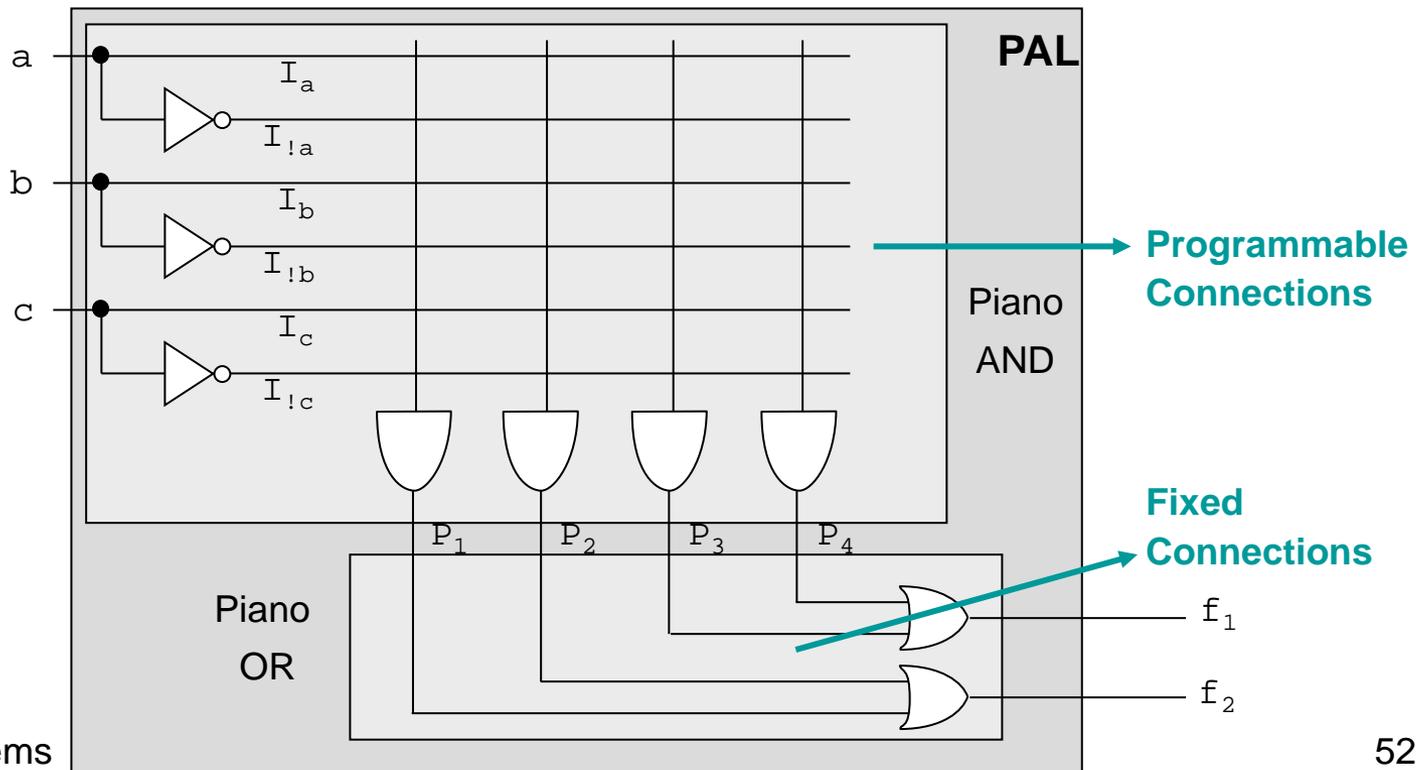
2-Levels PLD

- Programmable Array Logic (PAL)
 - A PAL can implement a sum of products
 - The same as PLA but with more limitations



2-Levels PLD

- Programmable Array Logic (PAL)
 - PAL schematic
 - Example: 3-inputs 2-outputs PAL (not programmed)



Programmable Technologies

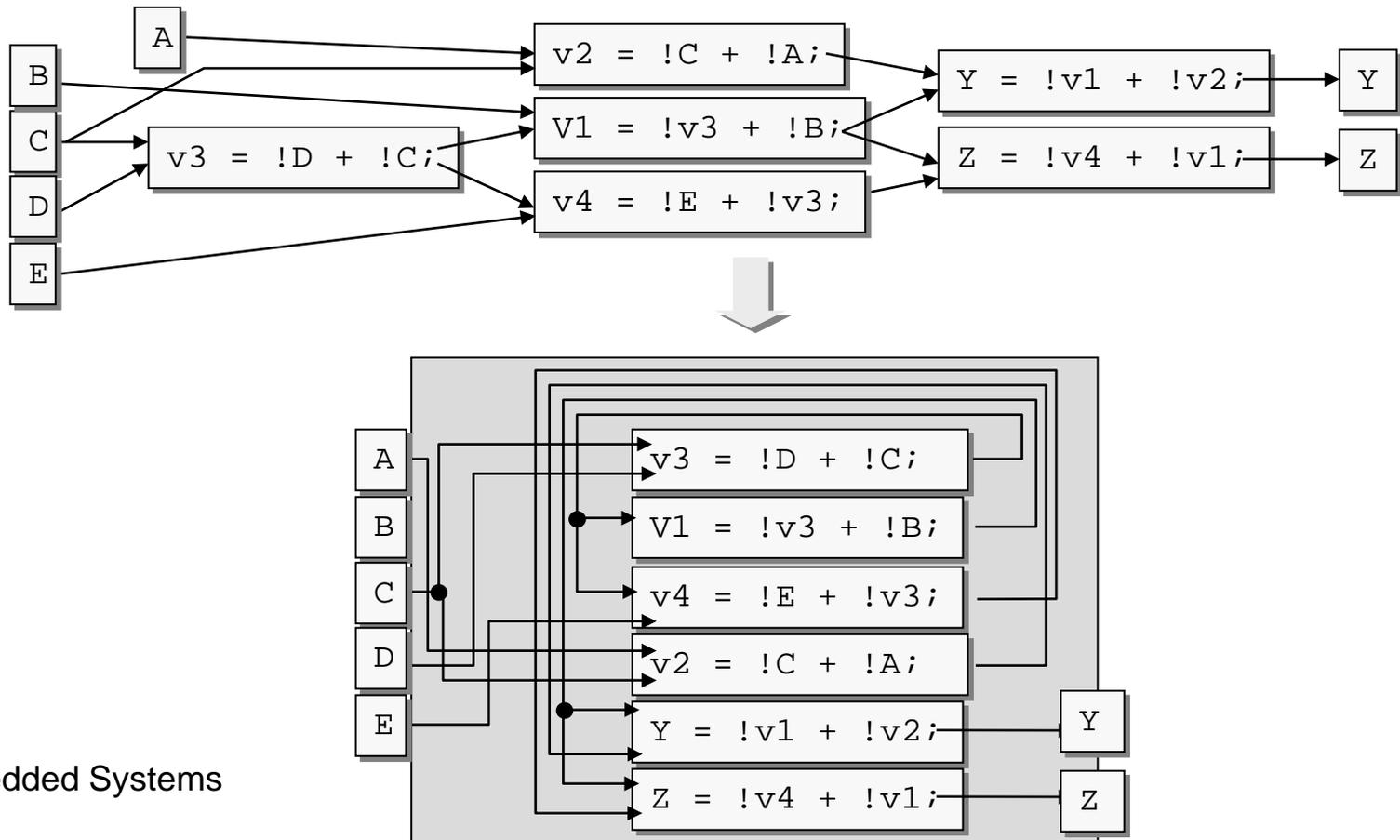
Multi-level Programmable Logic Devices

Multi-level PLD

- Advanced PLA/PAL
 - As seen, basic PLA/PAL allow to realize only 2-levels combinatorial circuits
 - How is it possible to overcome such a limit?
 1. By introducing feedback loops
 - Multi-level multi-outputs combinatorial circuits
 2. By introducing storage elements (*flip-flop*)
 - Synchronous sequential circuits where the combinatorial part is a multi-level multi-outputs combinatorial circuit

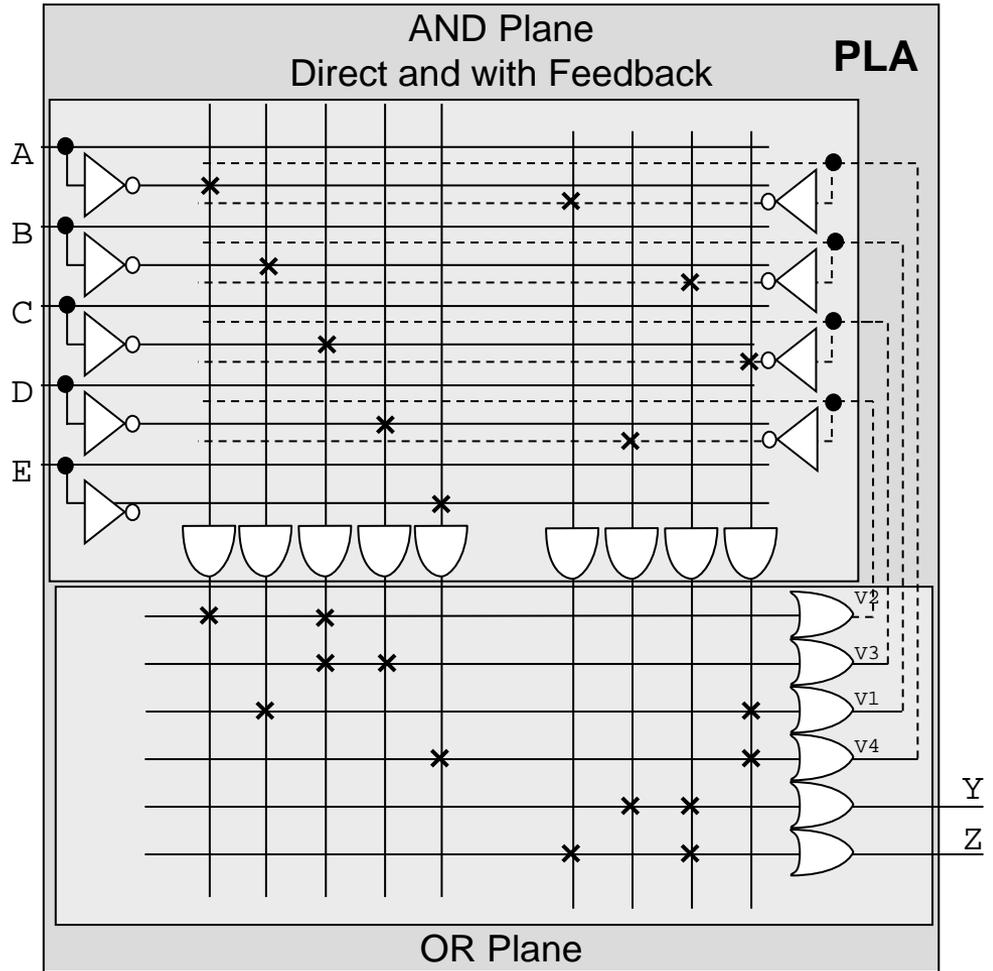
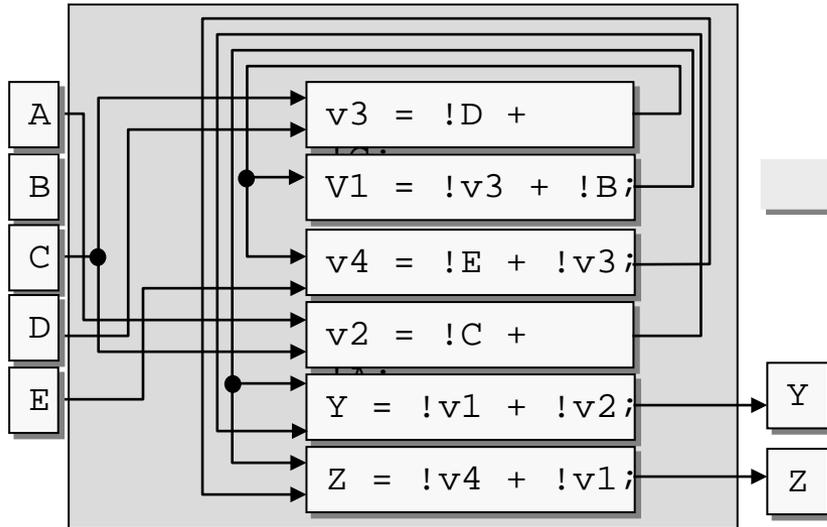
Multi-level PLD

- Advanced PLA/PAL
 - Example: multi-level multi-outputs combinatorial circuit (1/2)



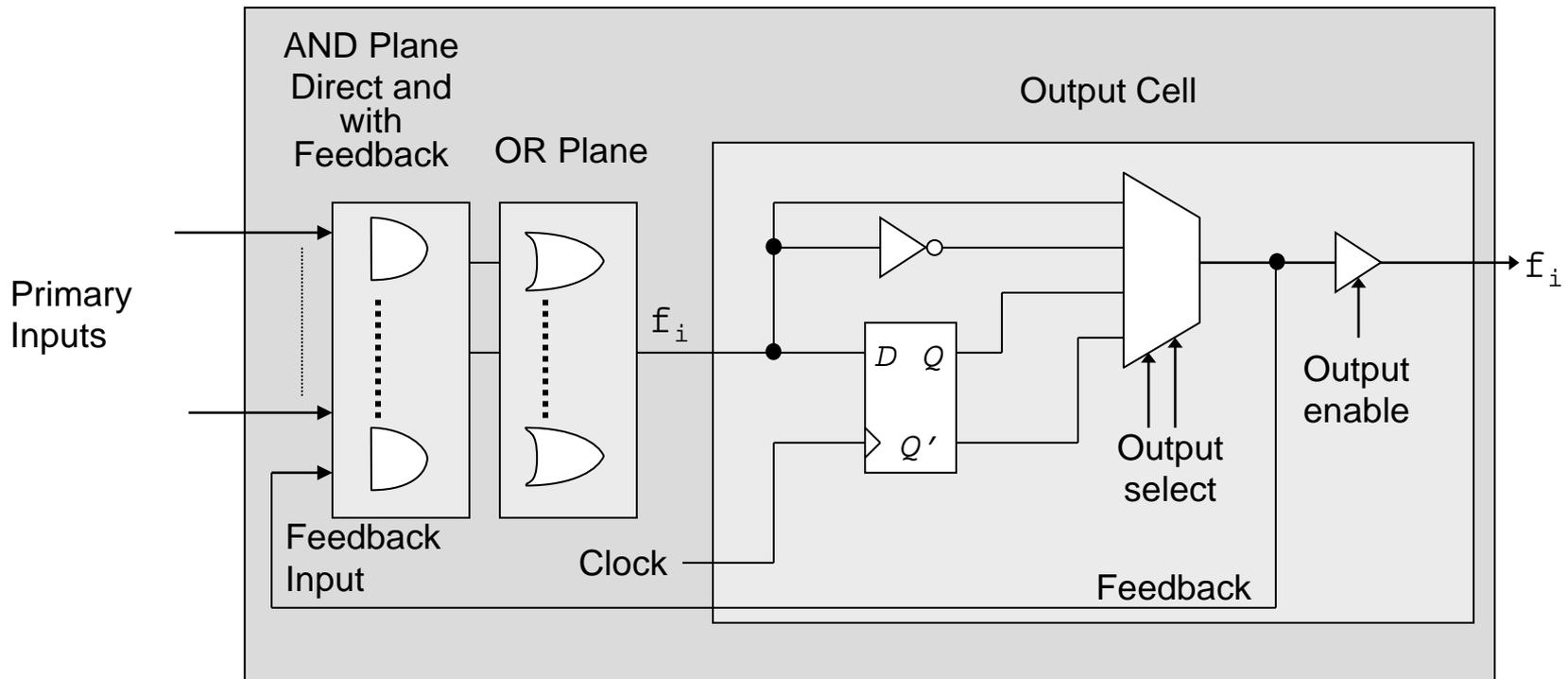
Multi-level PLD

- Advanced PLA/PAL
 - Example (2/2)



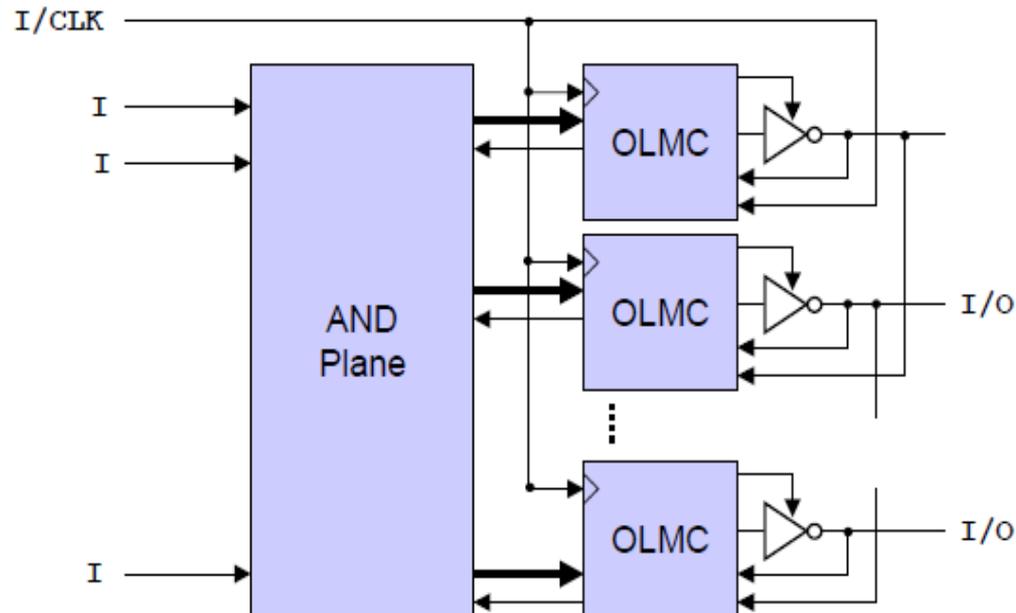
Multi-level PLD

- Advanced PLA/PAL
 - Generic schematic



Multi-level PLD

- Generic Array Logic (GAL)
 - GAL are a further enhancement of PAL/PLA
 - The output cells OLMC (*Output Logic Macro Cell*) make this kind of device very flexible

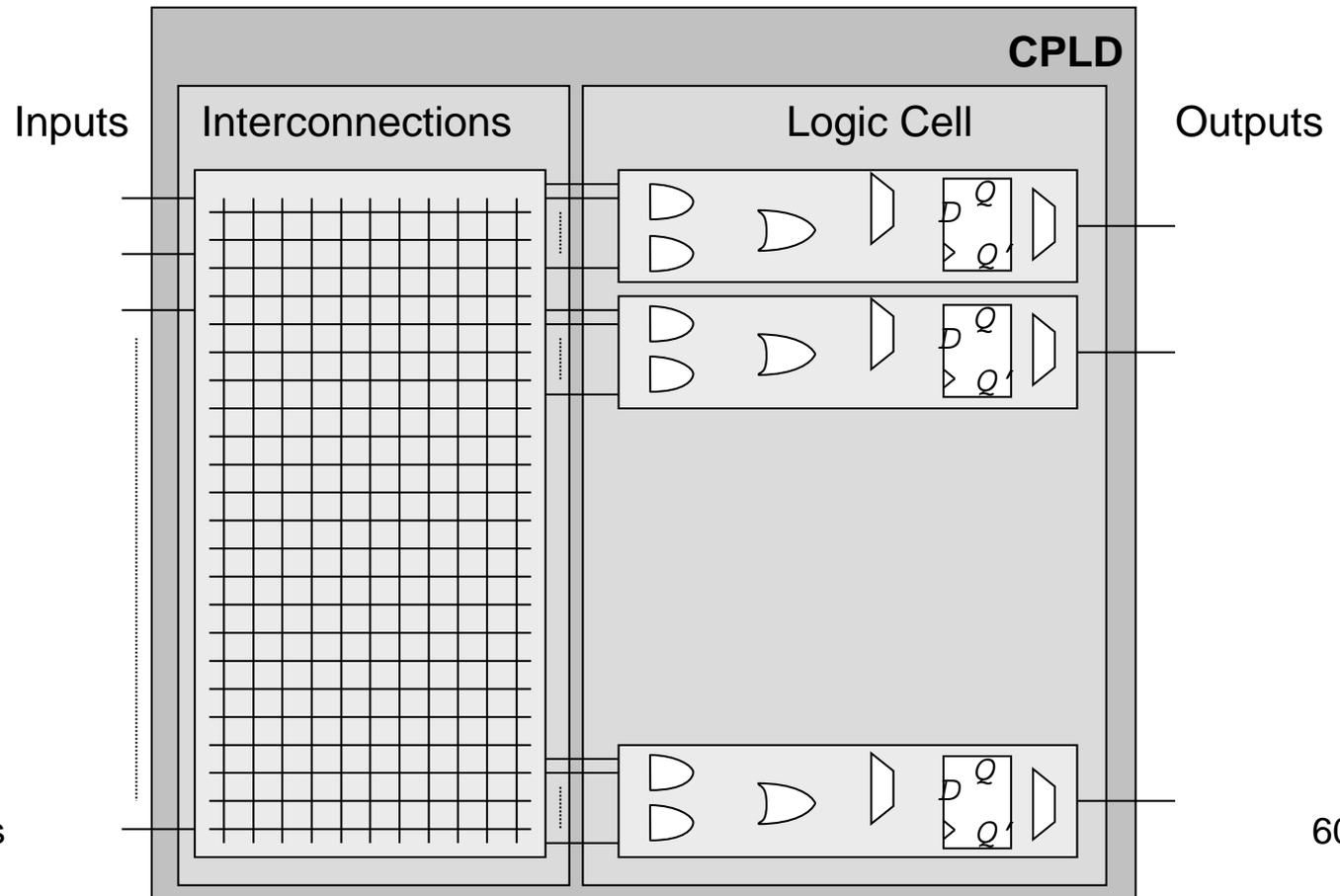


Multi-level PLD

- Complex Programmable Logic Devices
 - The last evolution of PLA/PAL/GAL
 - They are characterized by
 - Global connections
 - Concentrated logic
 - With respect to PAL/PLA/GAL
 - Greater integration
 - More complex cells
 - Higher performances
 - More regular structure
 - » Easier to program!

Multi-level PLD

- Complex Programmable Logic Devices
 - Generic architecture



Considerations

- *Would you be able to manually (i.e. by placing **x** on a grid) program a CPLD?*

Programmable Technologies

FPGA

(Field Programmable Gate Arrays)

FPGA

- FPGA are *programmable* devices composed of an array of logic components that could be connected as needed
 - They provides
 - *Logic components* that offer different kinds of functionality (that could be used also partially)
 - Very complex
 - » They allow to localize a complex functionality to improve performance and reduce connectivity needs (maybe reducing degree of exploitation)
 - Little complex
 - » They allow a greater degree of exploitation (i.e. flexibility) but requires a lot of connectivity

FPGA

- FPGA are *programmable* devices composed of an array of logic components that could be connected as needed
 - They provide
 - *Local and distributed connections*
 - Nets that cross a limited part of the device and that are shared by few logic components
 - » Limited delays and power consumption
 - In the same device can coexist local nets of different lengths
 - » Greater flexibility but complex programmability

FPGA

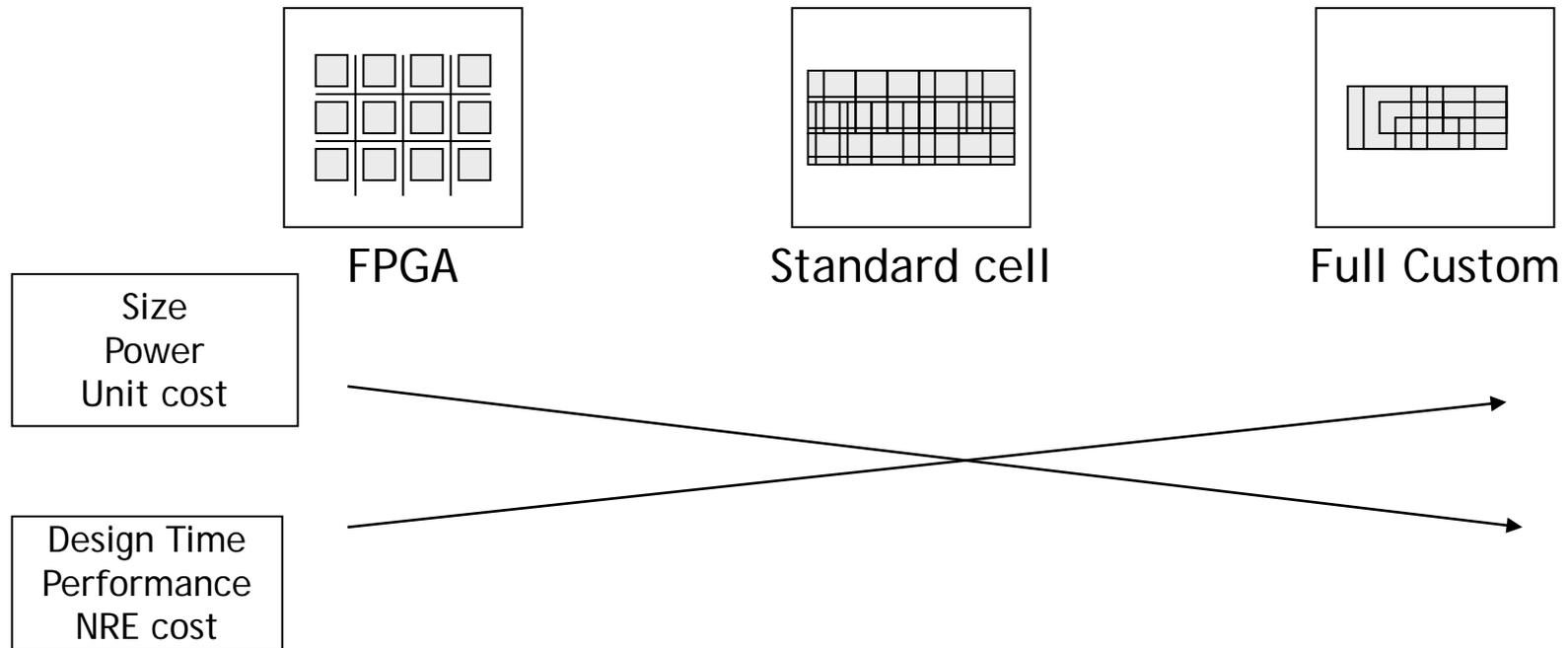
- Relevant issues
 - A good compromise between **performance** and **flexibility**
 - $PLD \Rightarrow FPGA \Leftarrow MPGA$
 - A good compromise between **performance** and **cost**
 - FPGA vs. ASIC
 - They are very useful for a fast verification of HW designs
 - *Fast prototyping*
 - A good compromise between **specialization** and **generality**
 - $SW \Rightarrow FPGA \Leftarrow (AS)IC$

FPGA

- Relevant issues
 - They allow to be programmed, in several and different times, with configurations that describe different systems or parts of a system
 - Multi-modal platforms (*off-line*)
 - The configurations are stored in a non volatile memory and copied in RAM at start-up time
 - Reconfigurables platforms (*on-line*)
 - The configurations (related to the whole system or a single part of it) are written in RAM (overwriting other ones) at run-time

FPGA

- Comparison of technologies



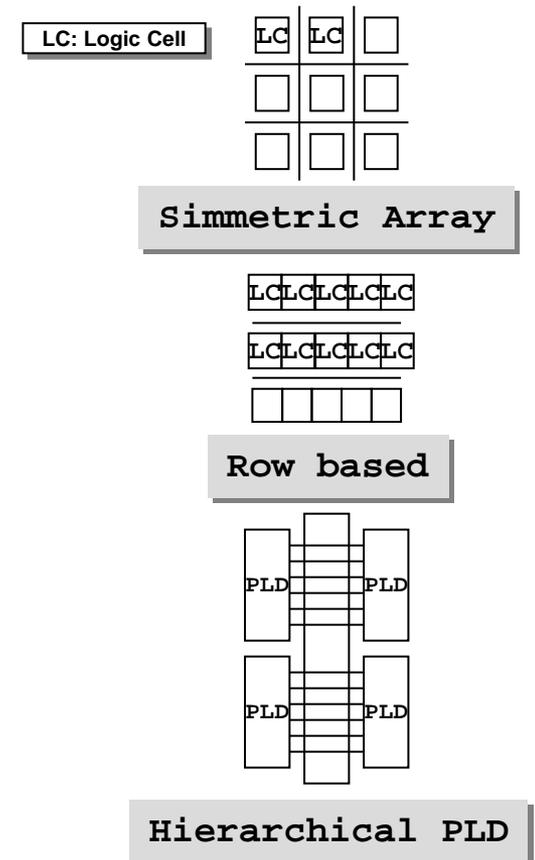
FPGA

- Comparison of technologies

	FPGA	Gate array	Standard Cell	Full Custom
Density	L	M	M	H
Flexibility	L (H)	L	M	H
Analog	No	No	No	Yes
Performance	L	M	H	VH
Design Time	L	M	M	H
Design Cost	L	M	M	H
Tools	Simple	Complex	Complex	Very complex
Volume	L	M	H	H

FPGA

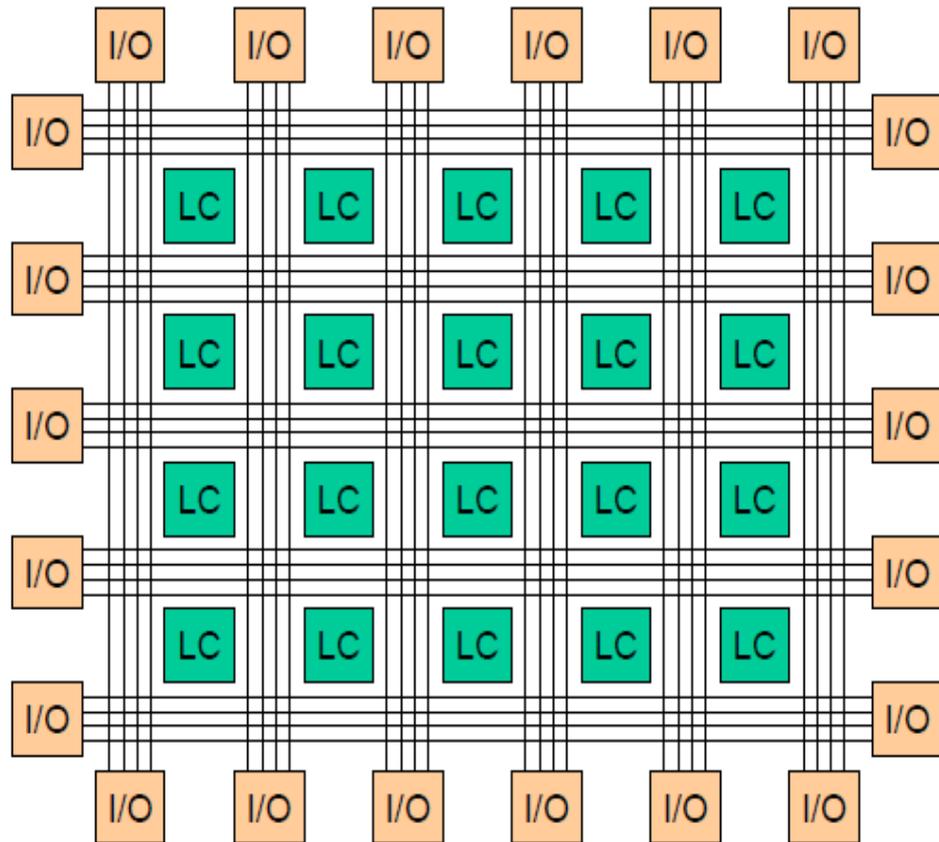
- FPGA families are characterized by 3 main features
 - General architectures
 - Simmetric array (e.g. *Xilinx*)
 - Row based (e.g. *Actel/Microsemi*)
 - Hierarchical PLD (e.g. *Altera/Intel*)
 - Logic blocks
 - Look-up Table based (e.g. *Xilinx*)
 - Multiplexer based (e.g. *Actel/Microsemi*)
 - PLD blocks (e.g. *Altera/Intel*)
 - Programming technologies
 - Static RAM (e.g. *Xilinx*)
 - EPROM/E²PROM (e.g. *Altera/Intel*)
 - Anti-Fuse (e.g. *Actel/Microsemi*)



FPGA

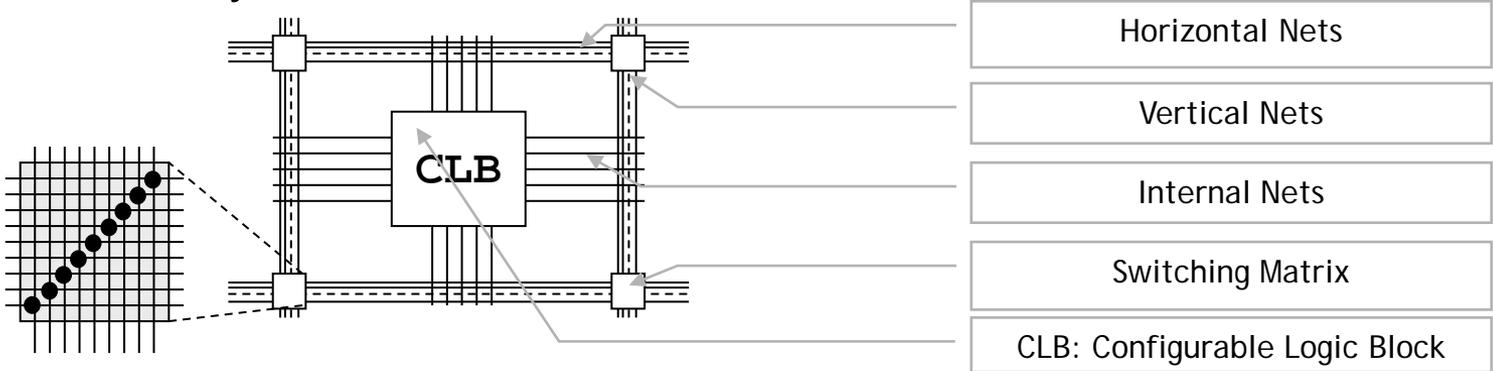
- General Architecture
 - Simmetric Array

LC: Logic Cell

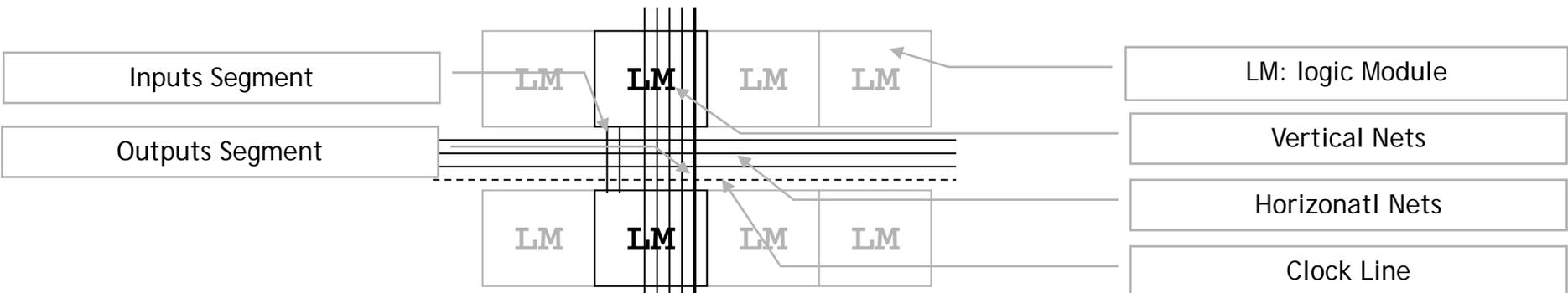


FPGA

- General Architecture
 - Simmetric Array



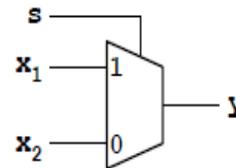
- Row based



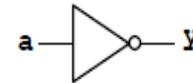
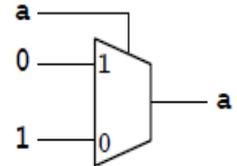
FPGA

- Logic Blocks
 - Basic elements
 - Multiplexer

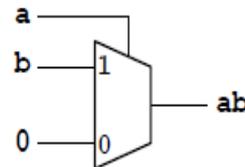
$$y = x_1s + x_2s'$$



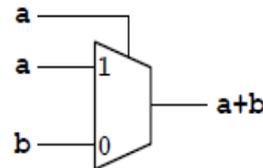
$$\begin{aligned} s &= a \\ x_1 &= 0 \\ x_2 &= 1 \\ y &= (0)a + (1)a' = a' \end{aligned}$$



$$\begin{aligned} s &= a \\ x_1 &= b \\ x_2 &= 0 \\ y &= ba + (0)a' = ab \end{aligned}$$

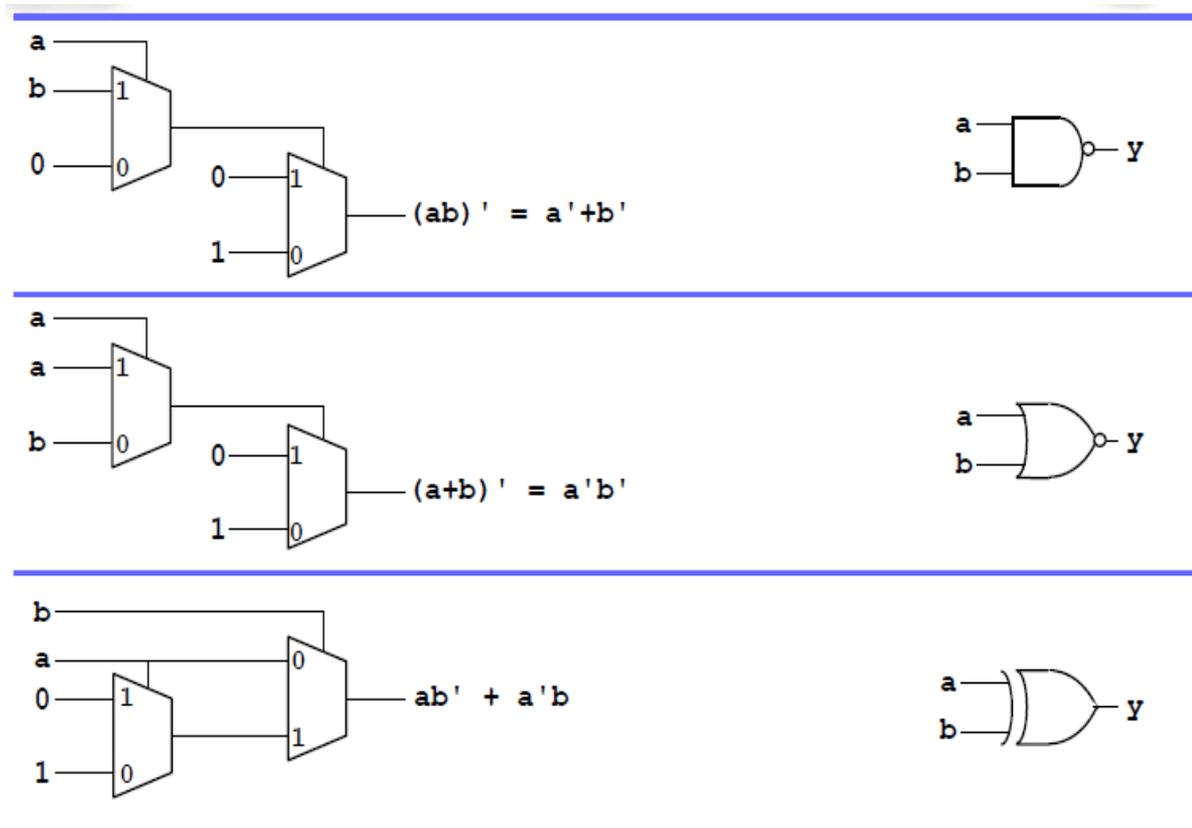


$$\begin{aligned} s &= a \\ x_1 &= a \\ x_2 &= b \\ y &= aa + ba' = a + a'b \\ &= a + b \end{aligned}$$



FPGA

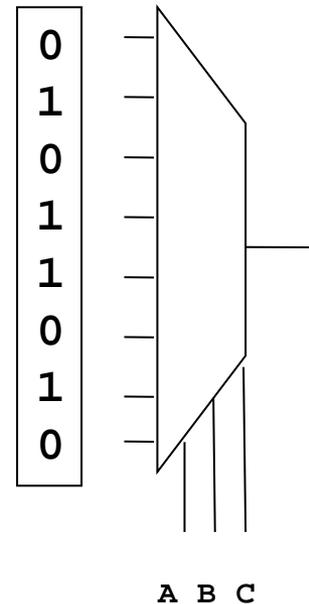
- Logic Blocks
 - Basic elements
 - Multiplexer



FPGA

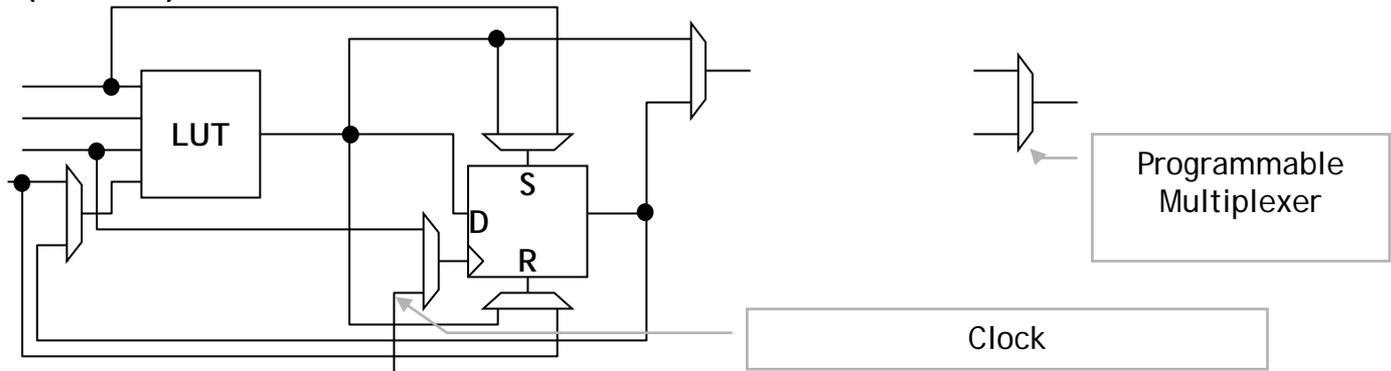
- Logic Blocks
 - Basic elements
 - 2^n inputs multiplexer: n variables combinatorial function
 - *Look-up table*

A	B	C	f
0	0	0	0
0	0	1	1
0	1	0	0
0	1	1	1
1	0	0	1
1	0	1	0
1	1	0	1
1	1	1	0

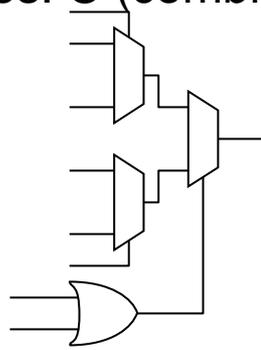


FPGA

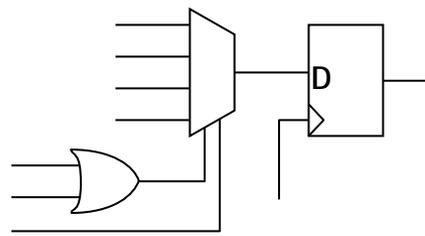
- Logic Blocks
 - Simplified (Xilinx) CLB schematic



- Simplified (Altera/Intel) LM schematic
 - 2 modules: C (combinatorial) and S (sequential)



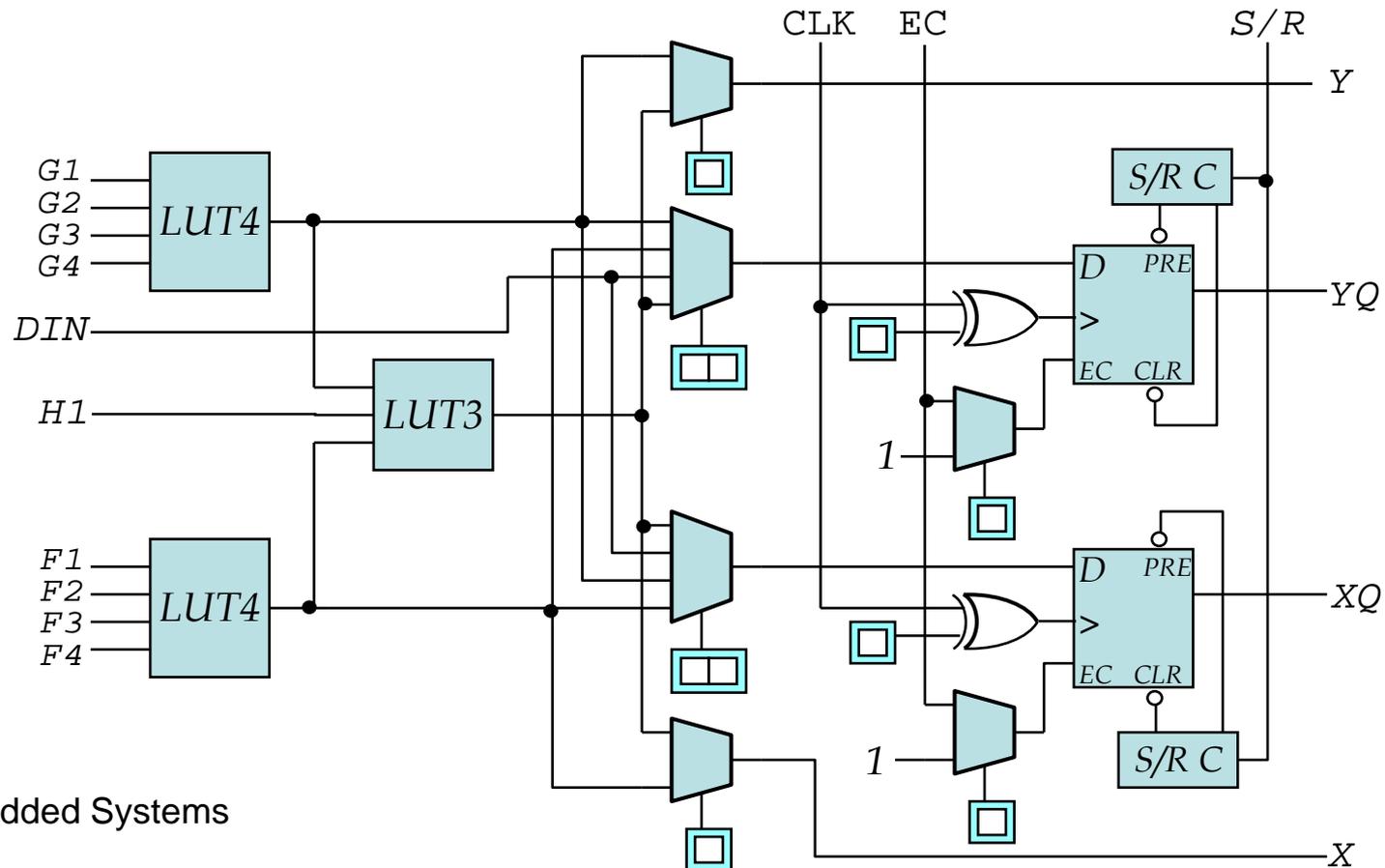
C Module



S Module

FPGA

- Logic Blocks
 - Less simplified CLB schematic



Considerations

- *Would you be able to manually (i.e. by placing x on a grid) program a FPGA?*
 - A design activity able to consider the FPGA details is not manageable without a proper *Design Methodology* providing:
 - The possibility to model at an higher abstraction level the desired system behaviour and/or system structure
 - *Hardware Description Languages*
 - » But also more abstract languages (UML/MARTE, Simulink, SysML, etc.)
 - SW tools to verify/validate the model and to support/automate FPGA configuration in order to obtain the modeled system
 - *Simulation/Synthesis/Mapping Tools*
 - » But also formal verification
 - A *Design Flow* that the designer can follow/adopt in order to be driven from the model to the implementation

FPGA

- *Typical FPGA Design Flow*

