

Framework for a Context-Switching Run-Time Reconfigurable System

David I. Lehn

dlehn@vt.edu

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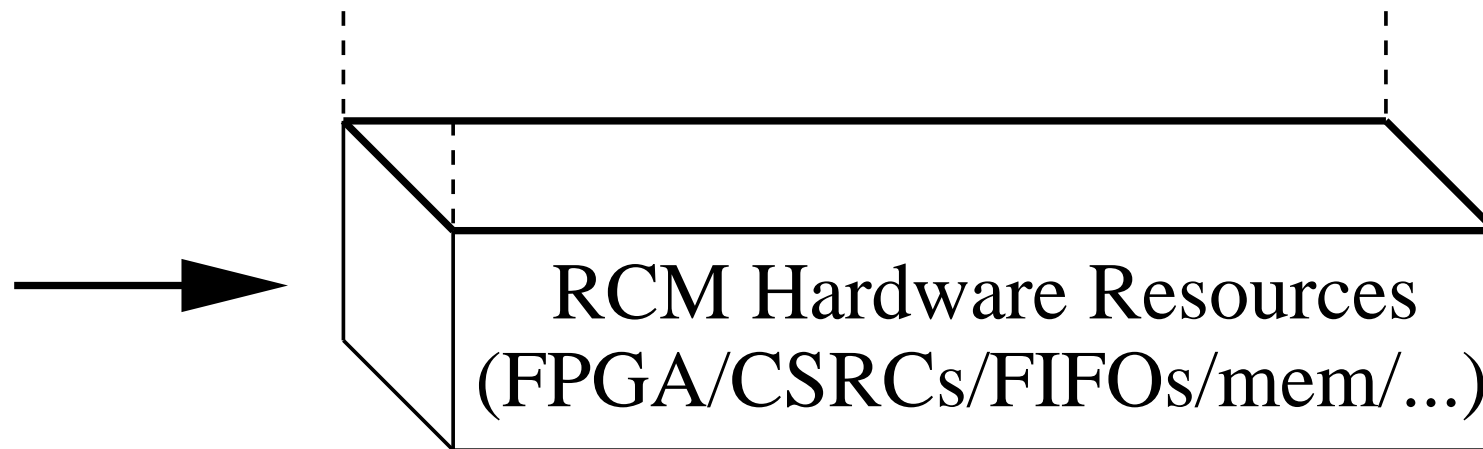
The Plan

- Goals
- Hardware
- Middleware
- Software
- Applications
- Results & Conclusions
- Q & A

Goals

- Have complex research hardware
- Want to support various applications
- Need:
 - Completeness
 - Testability
 - Usability
 - Performance

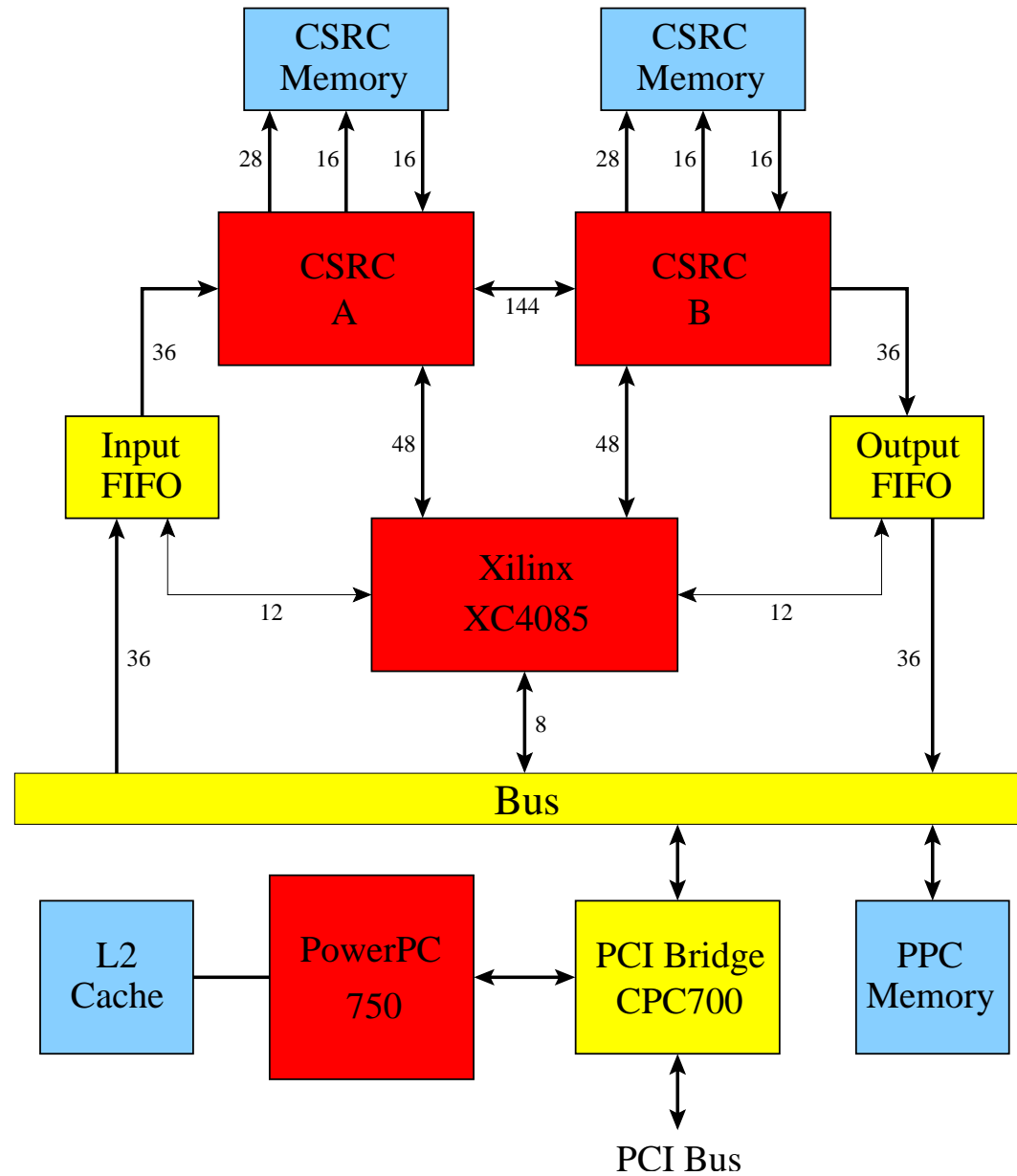
Hardware Layer



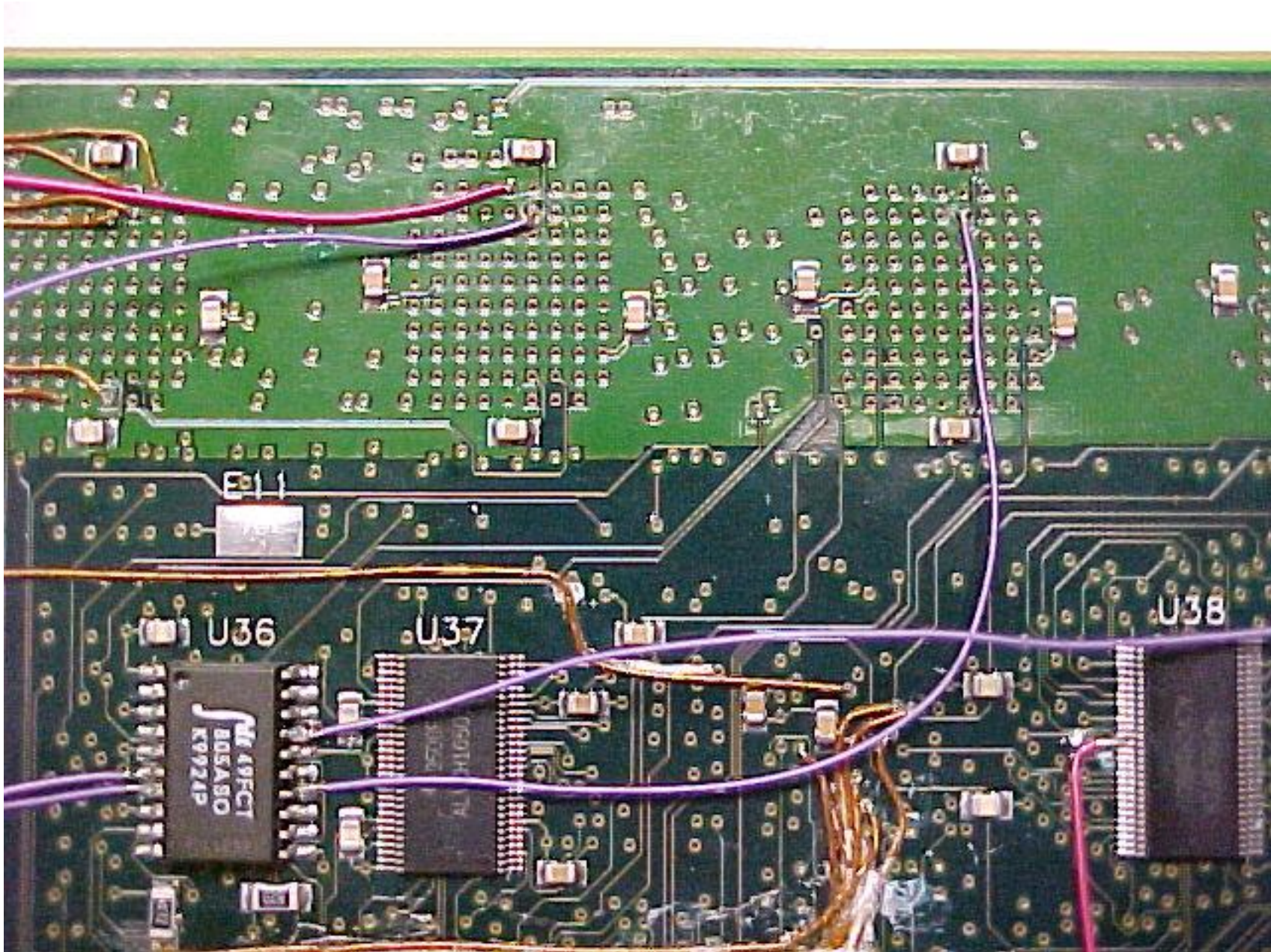
CSRC

- Context Switching Reconfigurable Computer
- Structure similar to a traditional FPGA
- Multiple configurations (contexts)
- One active executing context
- Shared state between contexts
- Contexts switch *very* fast
- Configurable in the background

RCM Platform



Kiran fixing the CSRC memory



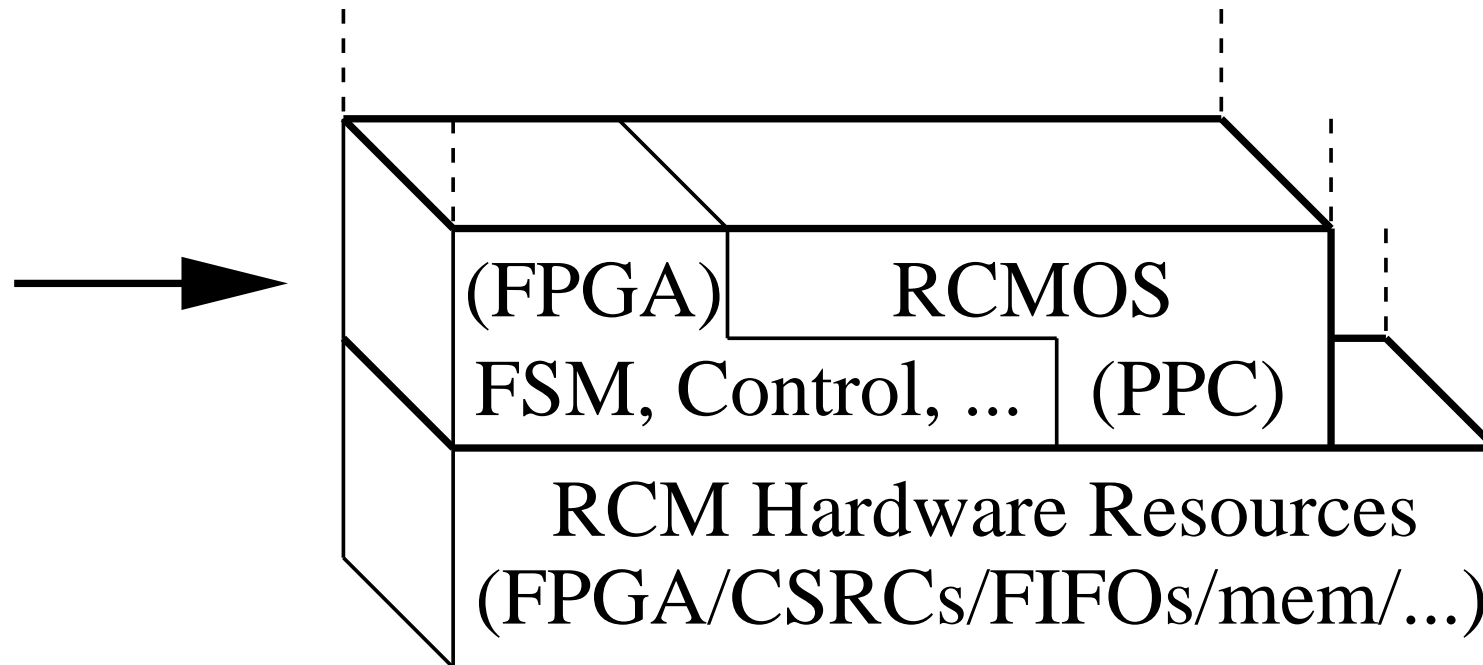
How to use the hardware?

- A few problems...
 - Hardware “features”
 - Place & route tools
- Hardware + Tool problems = not good
- Had its benefits...

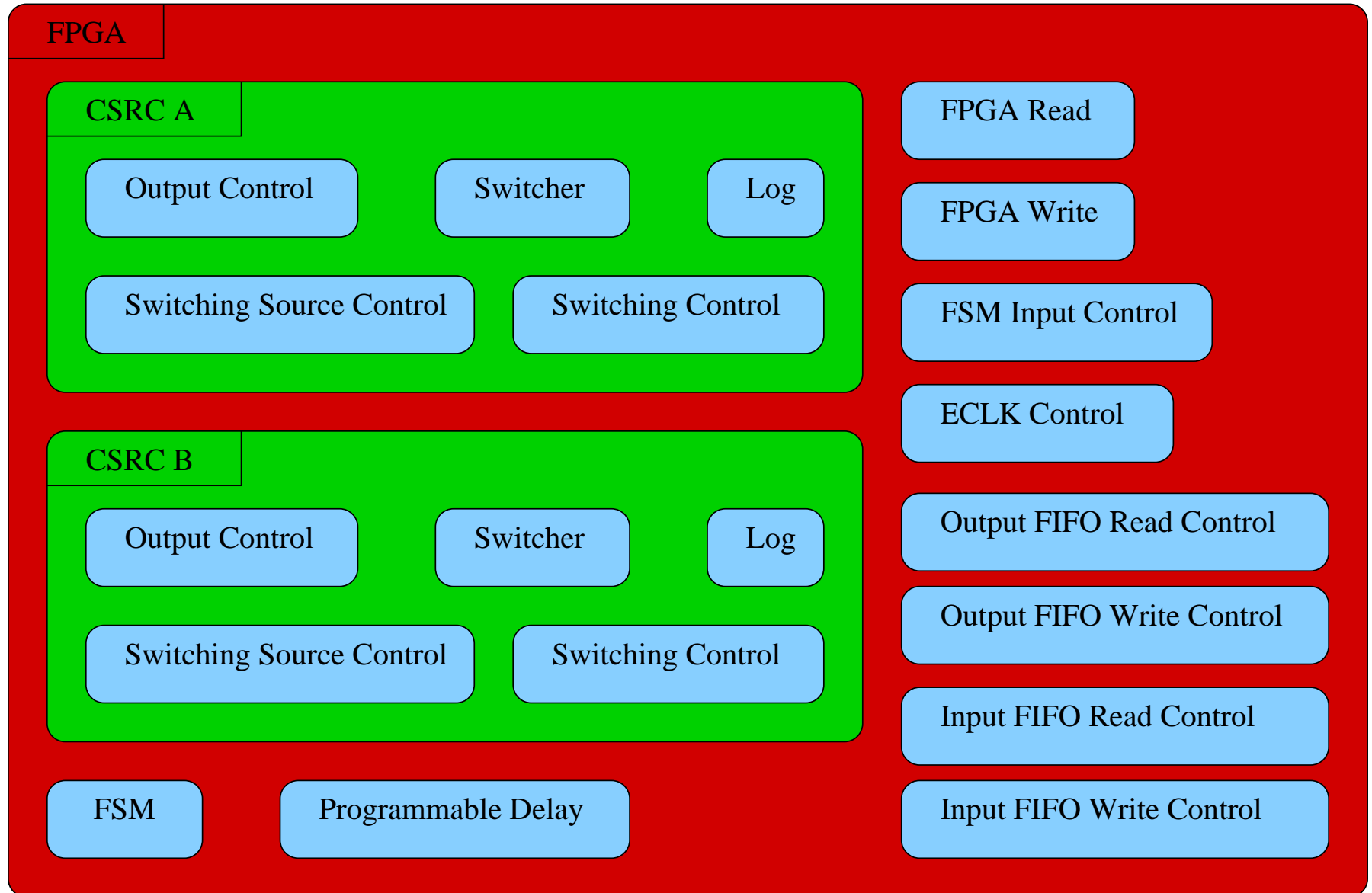
Testing

- *Lots* of hardware/software tests
- Writing tests good for API improvement
- *Proof* the hardware works
- Easy to check differences between prototype boards
- All done through scripting language: Python

Middleware Layer

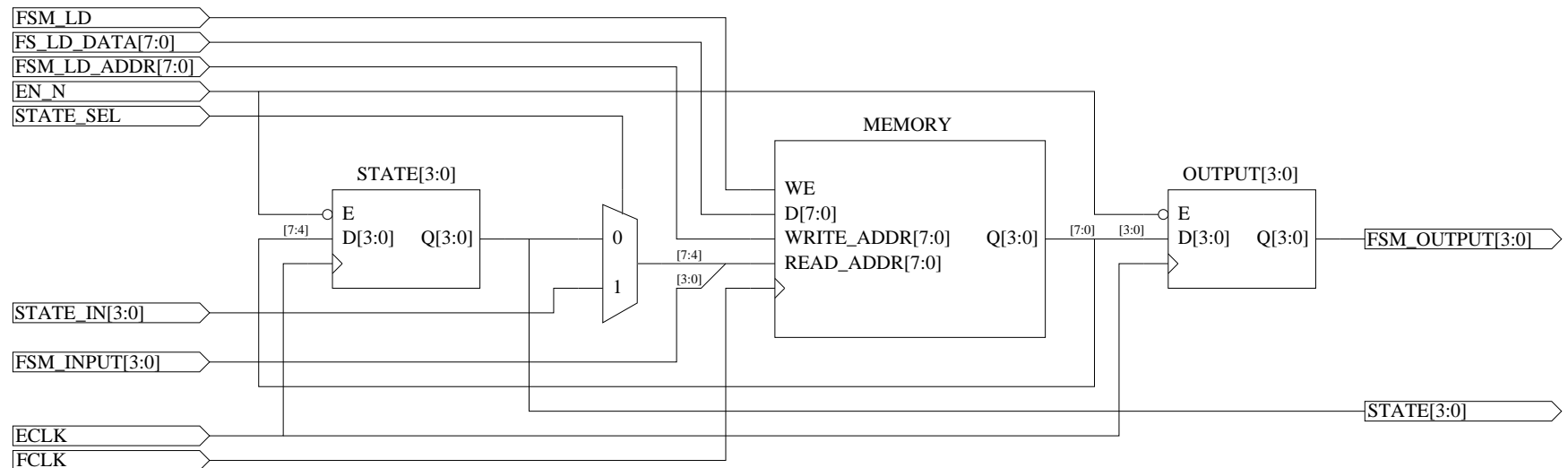


FPGA Configuration

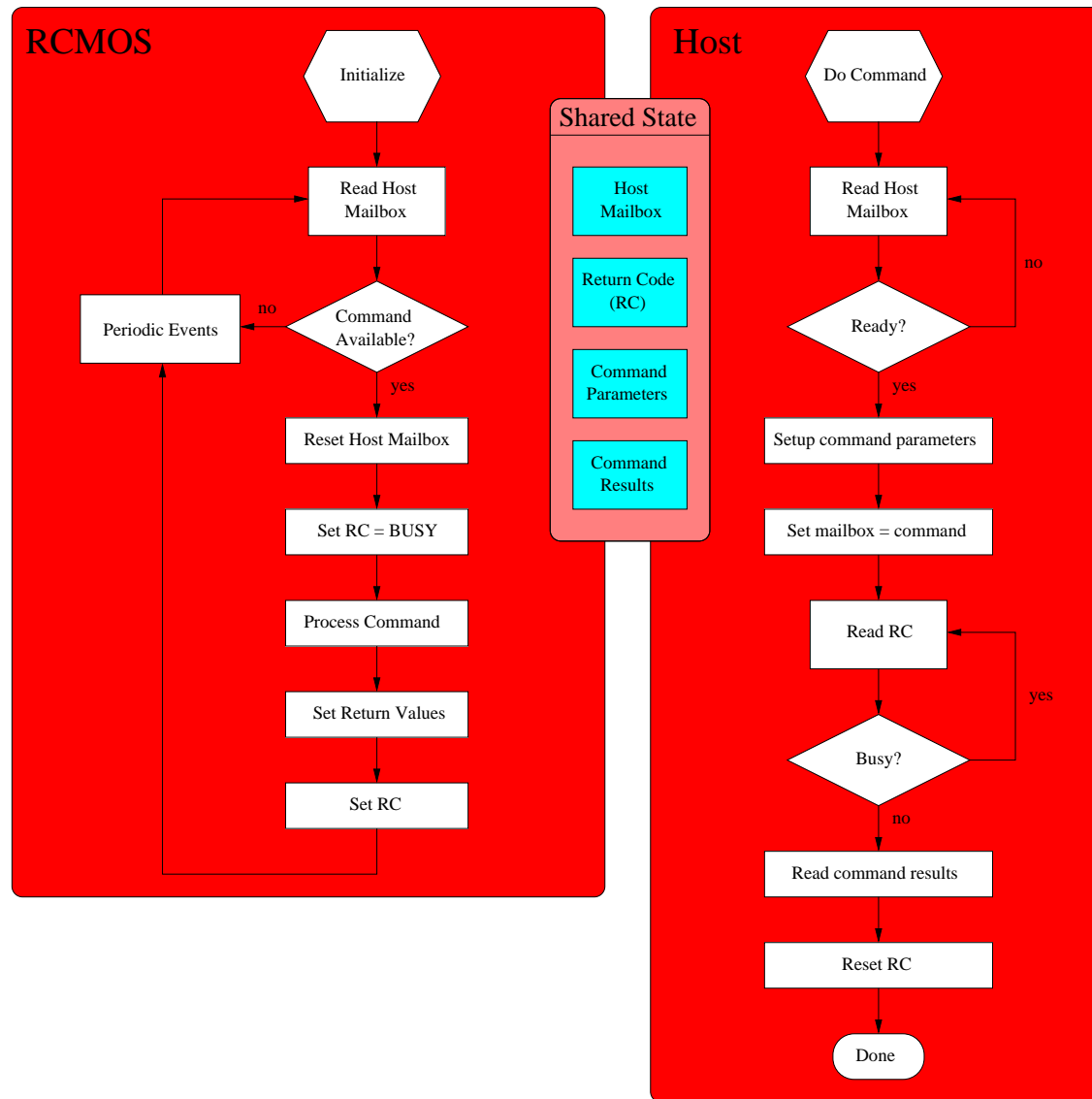


FSM

- Memory based Finite State Machine
- Uses Xilinx primitives
- Convenience software to simplify programming
- Flexible input and output signal routing

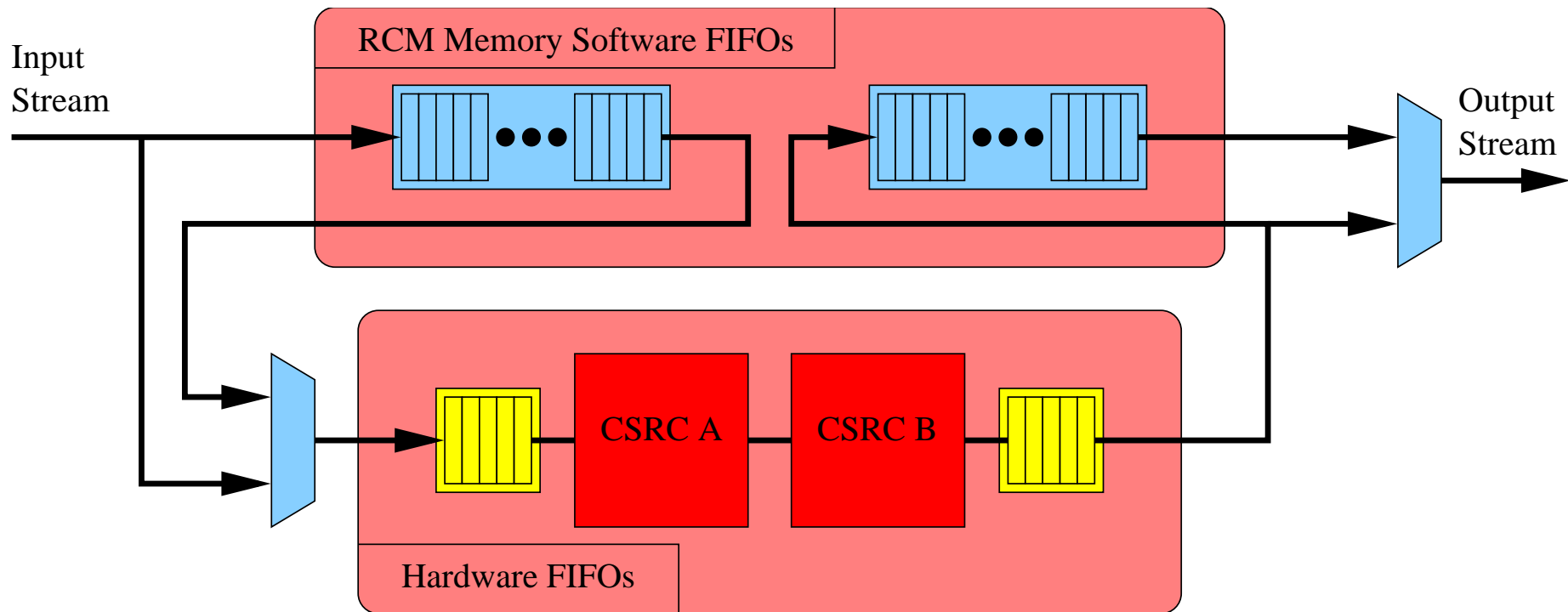


RCMOS

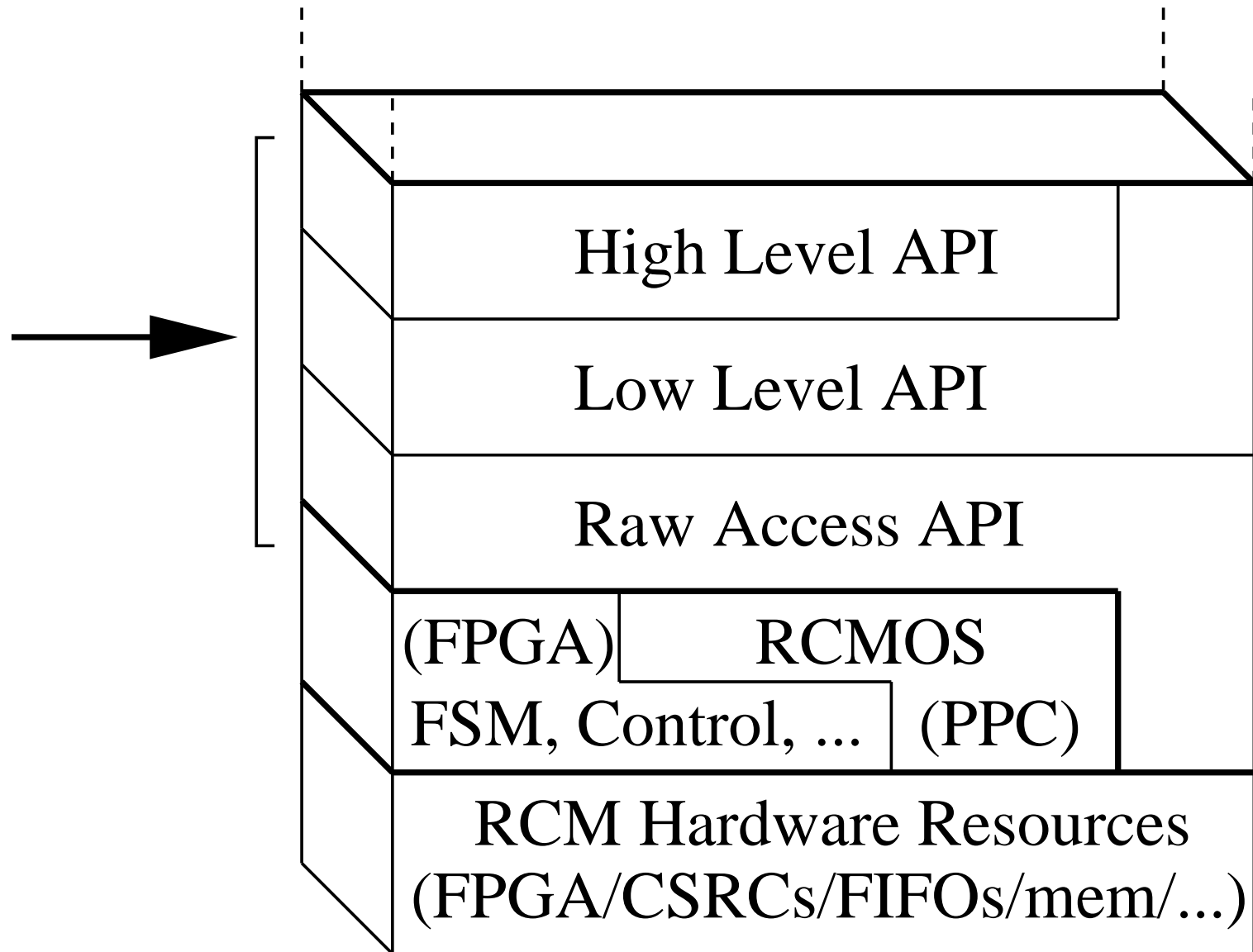


Software FIFOs

- Hardware FIFOs are 16k by 36-bit
- Software FIFOs can be *much* larger or disabled
- Latency and control issues

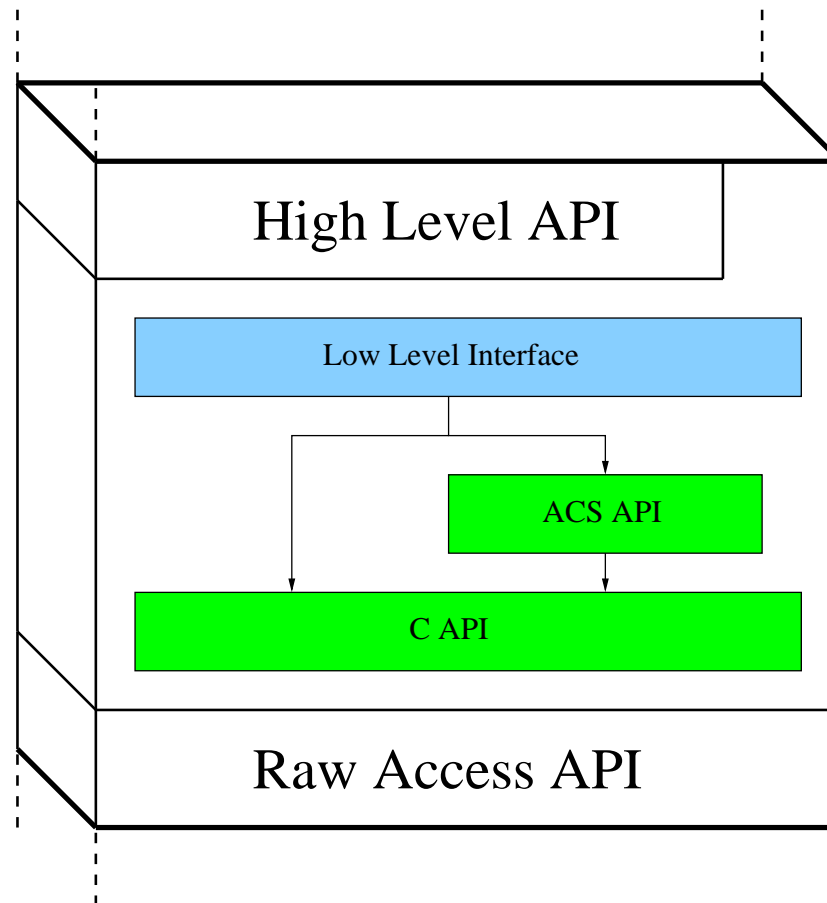


Software Layer



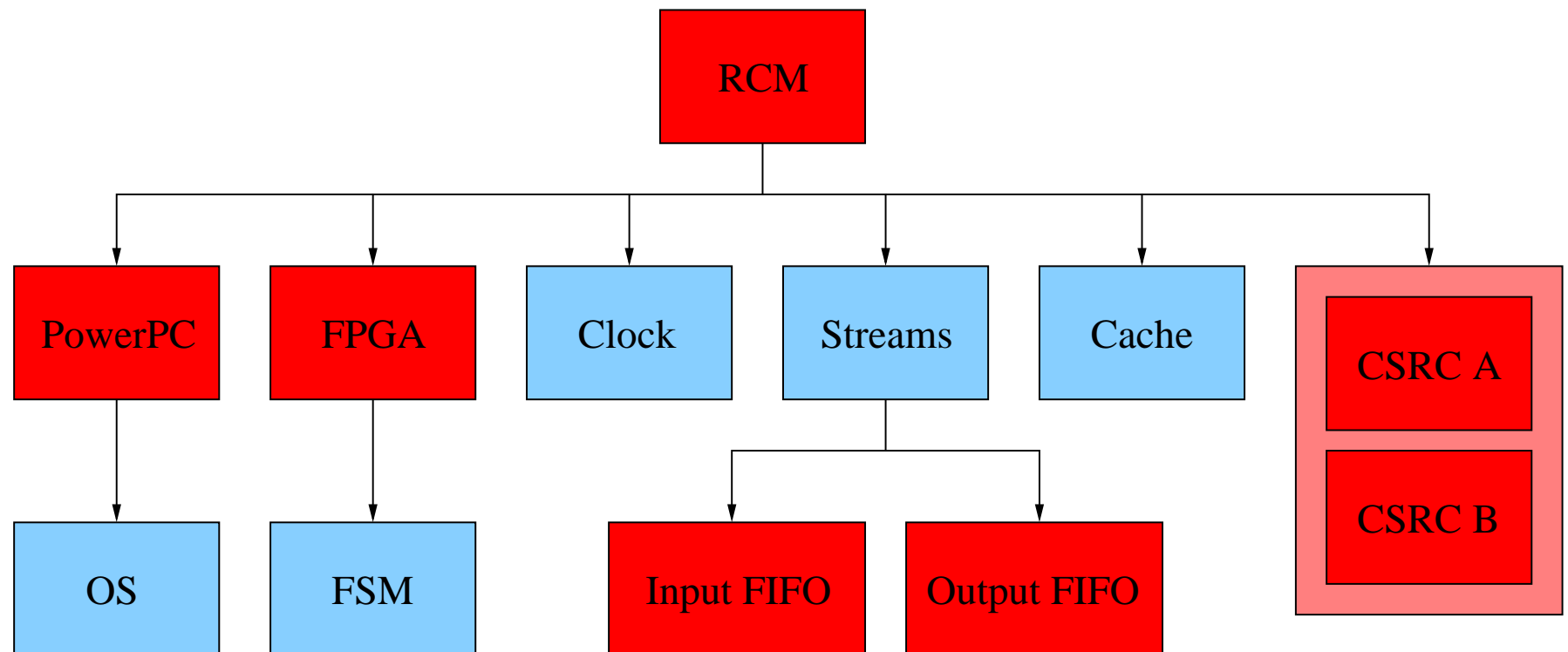
Low Level Options

- C API for fast direct access
- ACS API for network transparent access and common interface

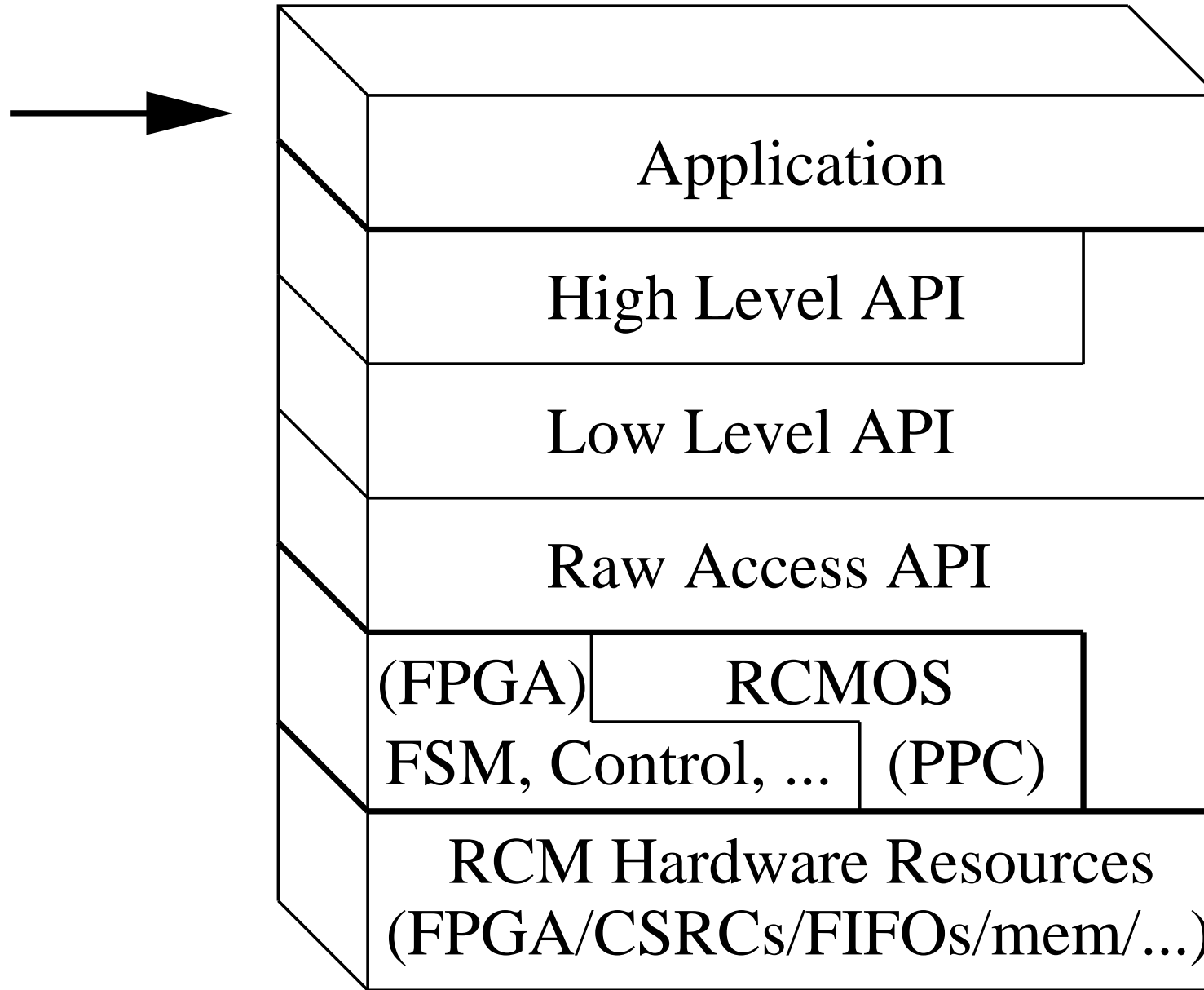


Object Oriented High Level

- Both physical and virtual components
- Hides bit flipping and direct register access
- Simplified abstract interface

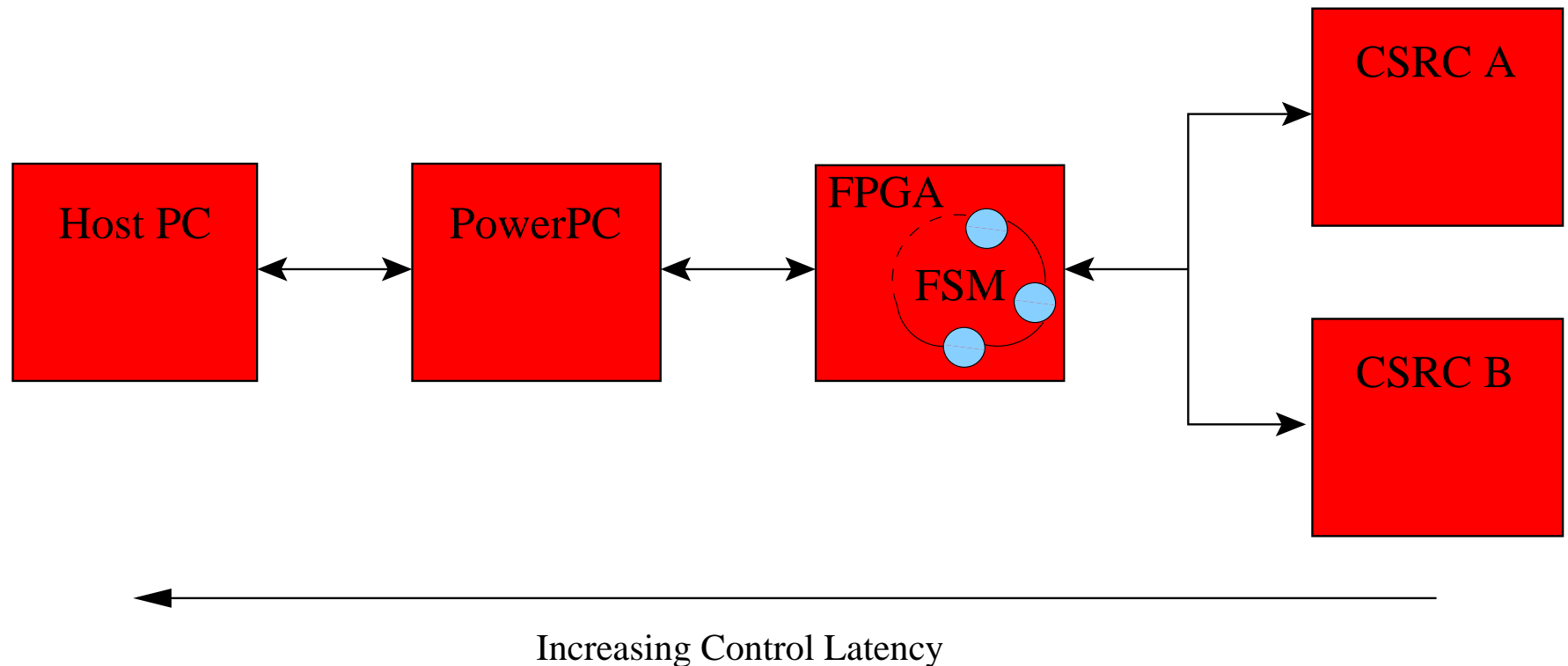


Application Layer



Context Switching Control

- Move logic towards CSRCs for high speed apps
- Can move logic towards host for debugging

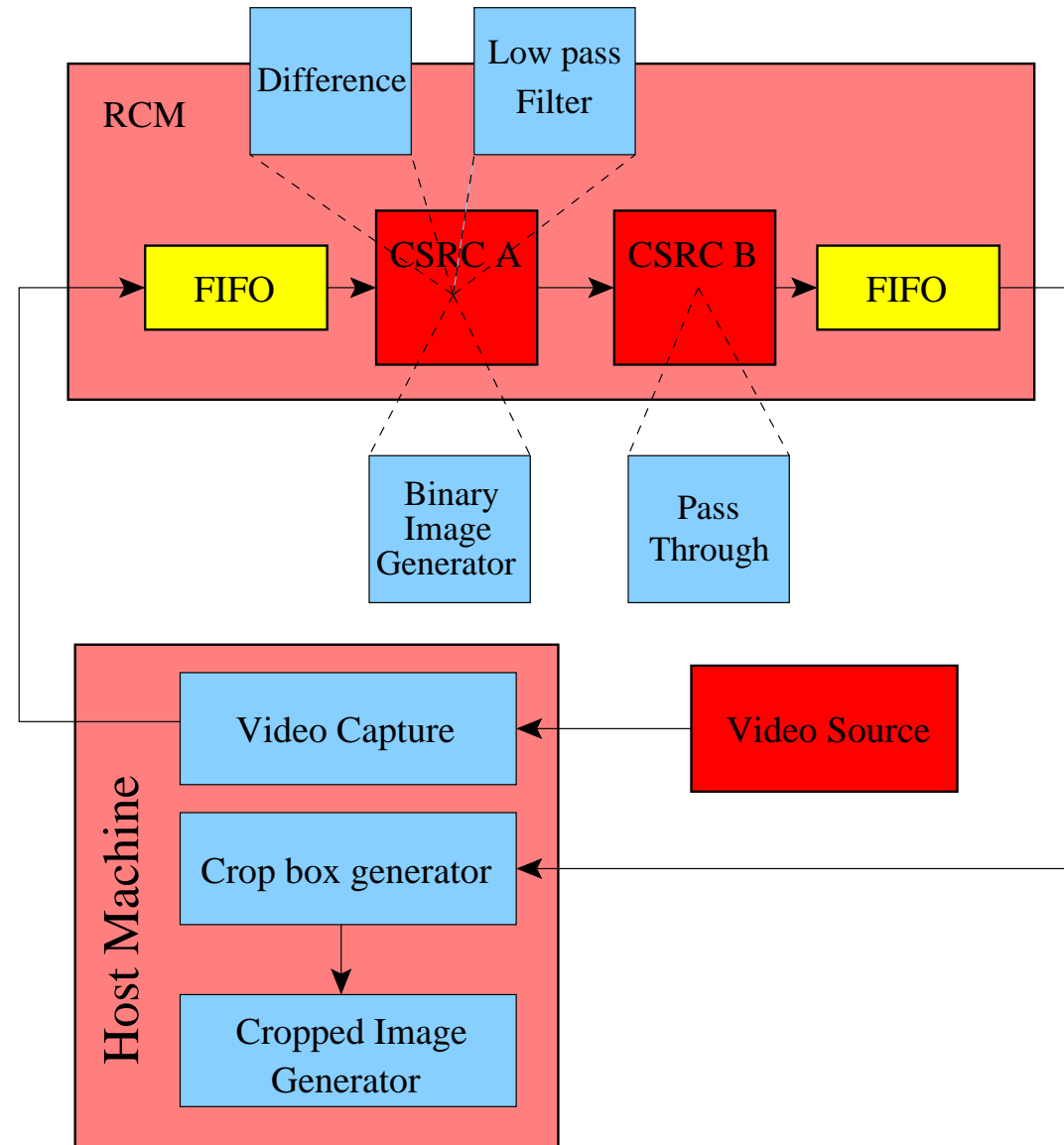


Video (Host-Driven)

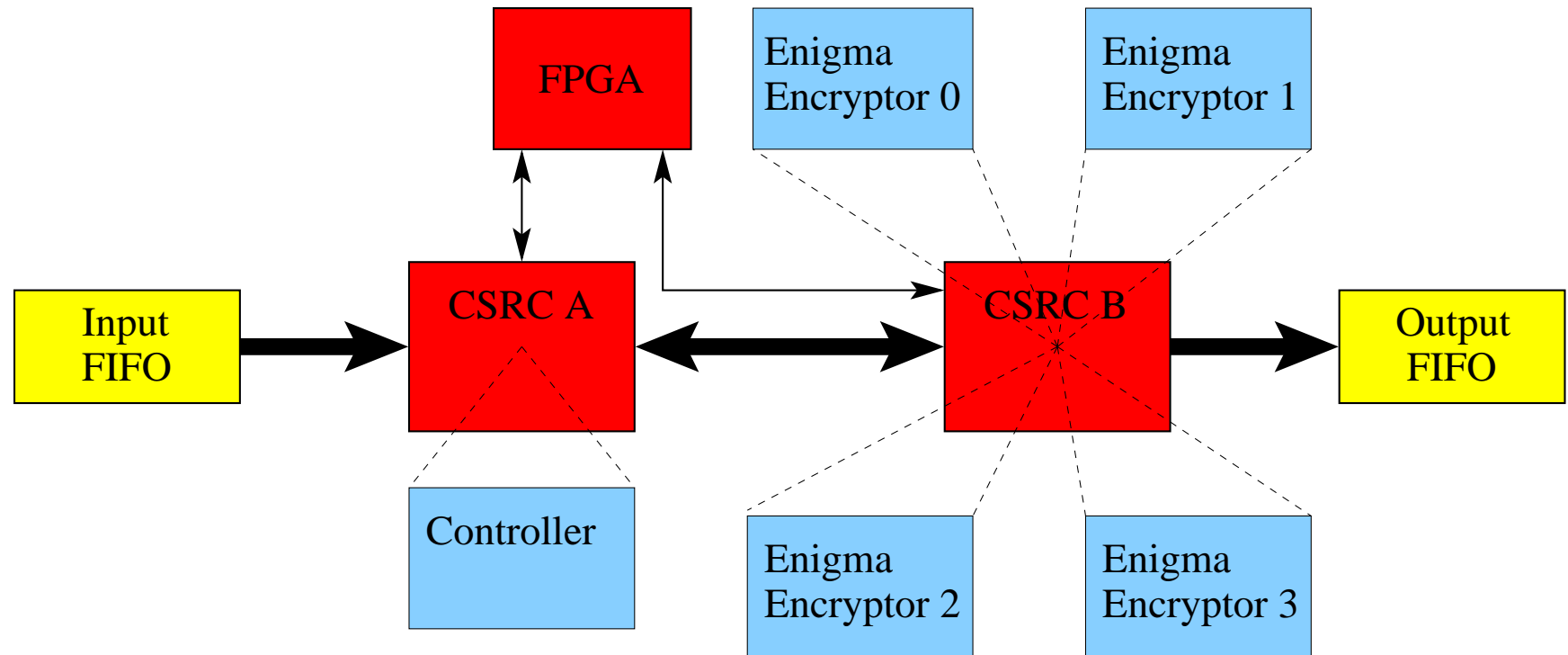
- Host/user controls video processing algorithm
- Each algorithm in its own context
- Single cycle switch (at end of a frame)



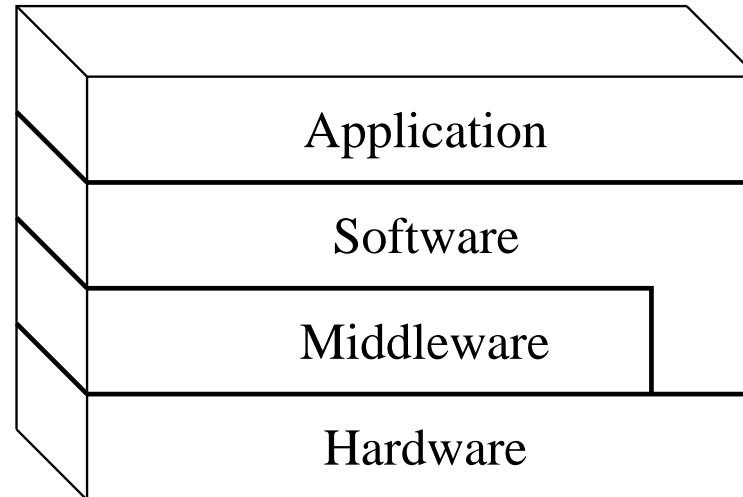
CA μ S (Control-Driven)



Enigma (Data-Driven)



Results 1/2

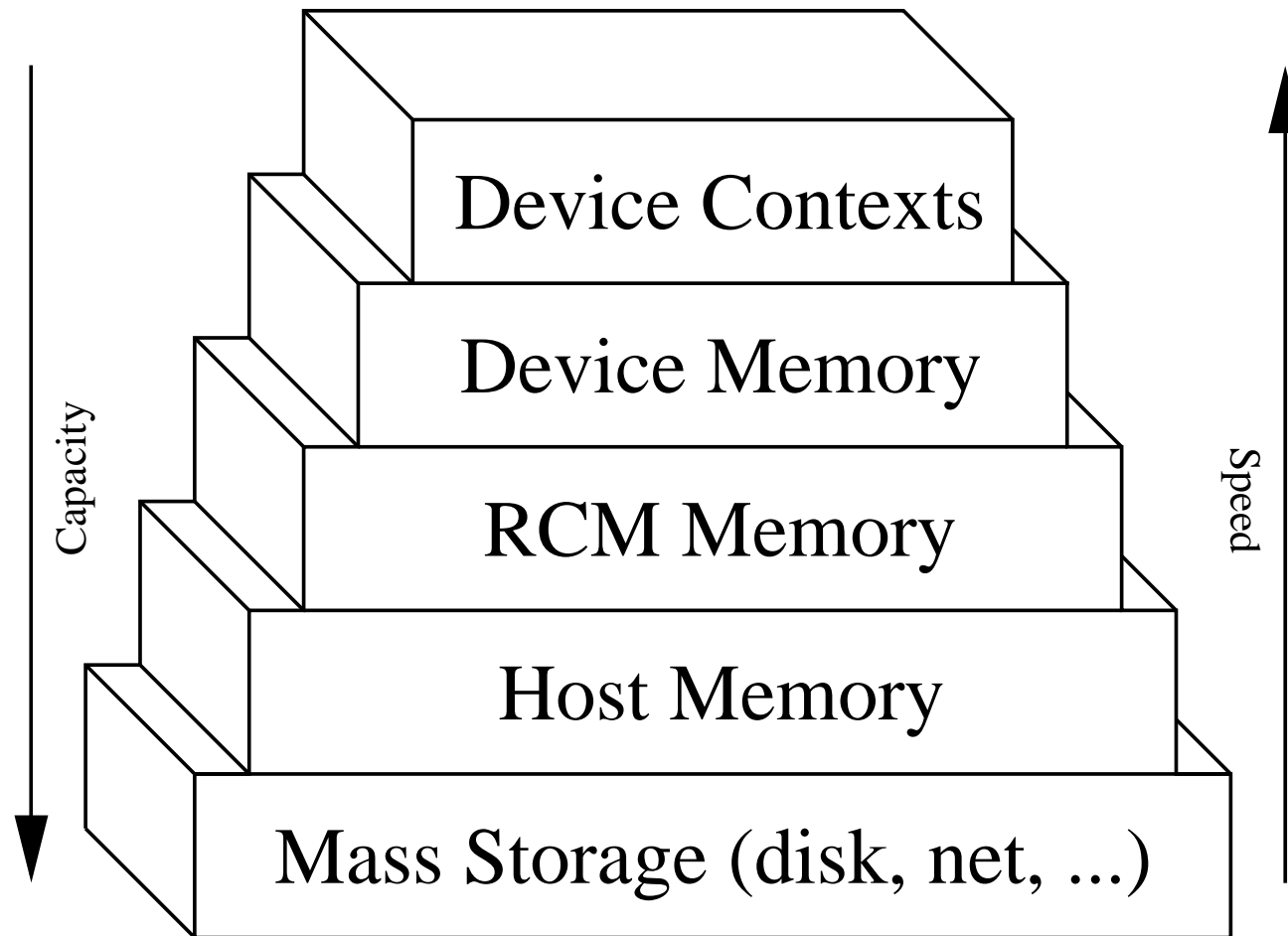


- Layered APIs
- Tests Good
- Scripting Good & works even for applications

Results 2/2

- Met the goals:
 - Supported various context-switching applications
 - Coverage of RCM features
 - Test suite for hardware
 - Framework hides some complexity from applications
 - Performance... maybe next hardware generation
- Switching & Caching...

Cache Hierarchy



Switching Time

$$t_{\text{avg}} = \begin{cases} t_s & \text{if } 1 < n \leq k \\ p_s t_s + p_c t_p & \text{if } n > k \end{cases}$$

t_{avg} average switching time

t_s context switch time

t_p context program time

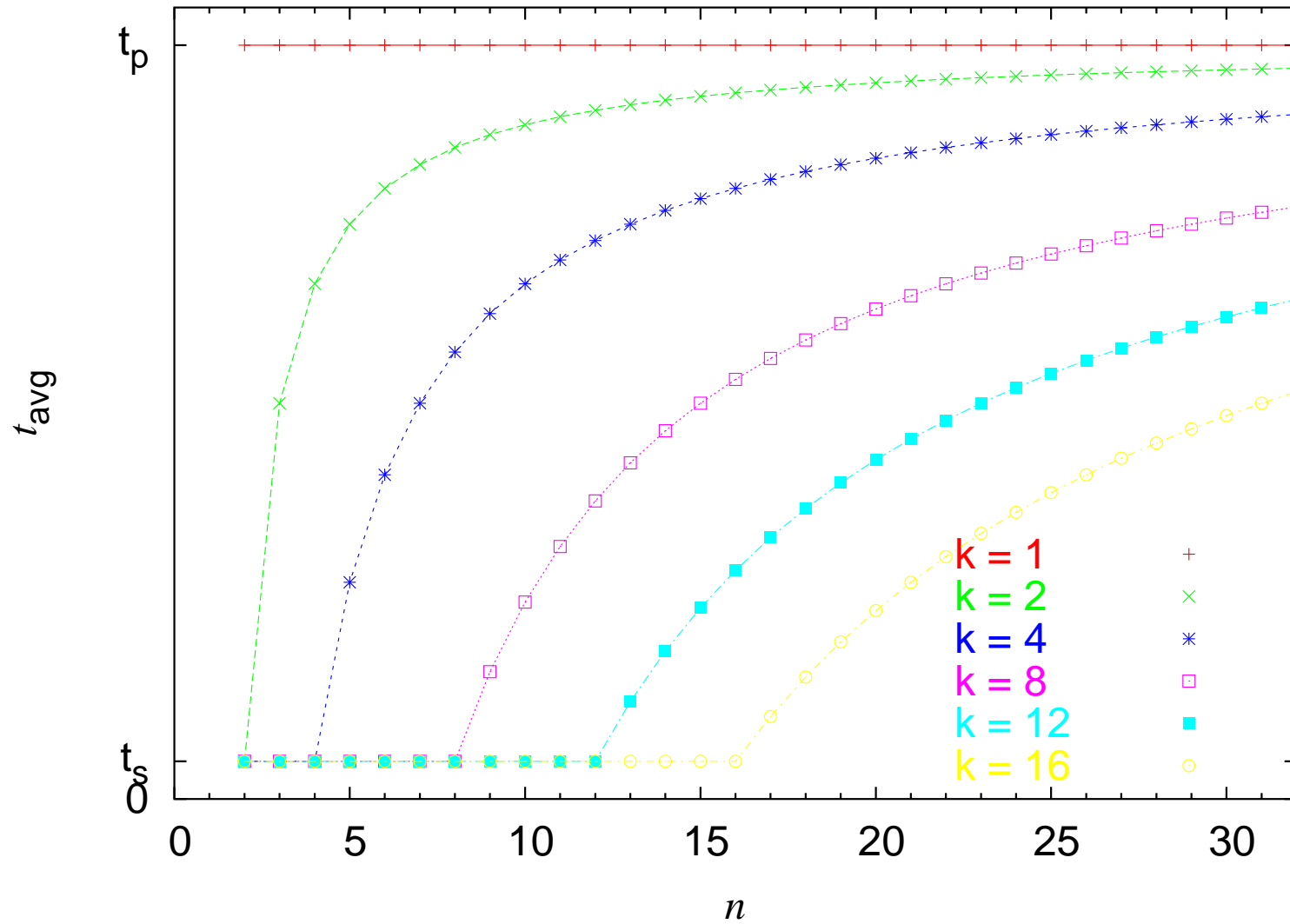
k number of device contexts

n number of application contexts

p_s probability that context is on the device, $\frac{k-1}{n-1}$

p_c probability of a reconfigure, $1 - \frac{k-1}{n-1}$

Switching Time Plot



Conclusions

- Complexities of context-switching hardware can be simplified
- Layered APIs work well towards this goal
- Applications can be written in scripting languages
- Test suite *very good* thing to have
- Move logic & data close to hardware

Q & A

