CO503: Practical 1 - System-on-Chip (SoC) Design

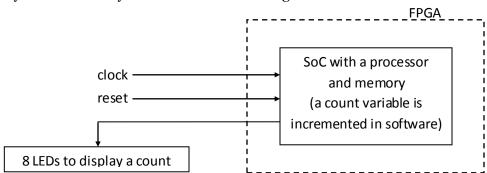
In this practical, you will use FPGA design tools to create your first System-on-Chip. The practical consists of two parts. In Part 1, you will learn how to create hardware and software for a simple SoC to control an LED counter. In Part 2 of the practical, you should build a SoC for JPEG image compression.

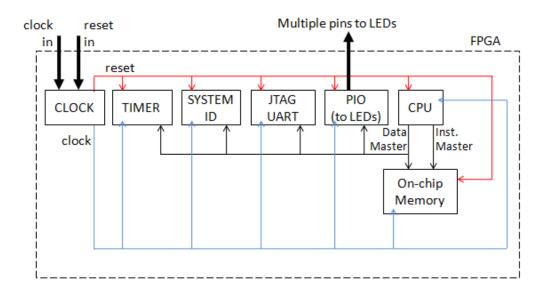
Learning Objectives:

- Designing and synthesizing System-on-Chip hardware.
- Co-design and development of embedded hardware and software.
- Hands on experience with FPGA-based design tools.

Part 1: First SoC - LED Counter

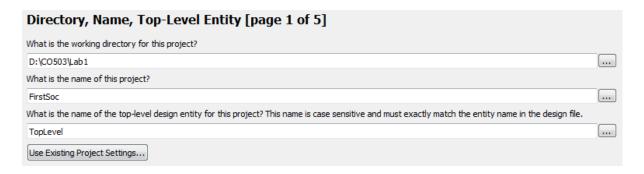
Your task is to create a simple SoC which can display an increasing count on a set of LEDs. An overview of your hardware system is shown in the diagrams below.



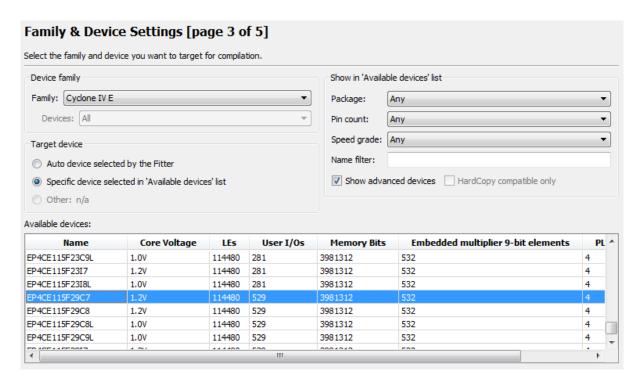


The following steps will guide you to build your first SoC on FPGA.

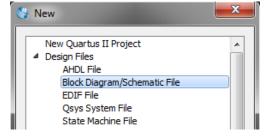
1. Launch "Quartus II 12.1 (32.bit)" software. Click on "New Project Wizard". At the Introduction dialog, select "Next". At page 1, name your project as FirstSoC and create a working directory for the project as shown below. Name the top-level entity as TopLevel. Do not use spaces in the directory or file names.



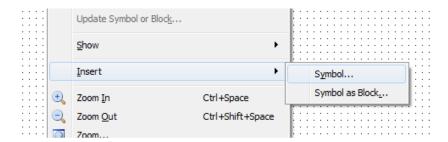
Skip to page 3. Select the device family "Cyclone IV E" and pick the device "EP4CE115F29C7N".



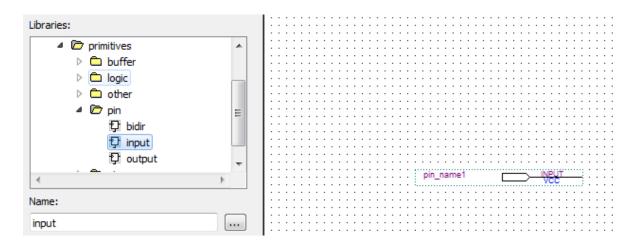
2. We're about to create the top-level design file for this project. Design files can be made in one of many ways like VHDL, Verilog, schematic, state machine, etc.. We will use a schematic (or block diagram). Create a new Block Diagram File (BDF) from the File menu (*File->New->BDF*).



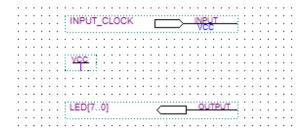
Next, we should add some I/O pins to help connect our SoC to components outside the FPGA (such as the LEDs). Right click on the dotted area in the BDF and select *Insert->Symbol*.



Under *Libraries->primitives->pin*, find the input pin symbol and click OK. Left-click to place the symbol on the BDF. Right click on the newly added *pin* symbol to open the Properties dialog. Rename the pin as *INPUT_CLOCK*.

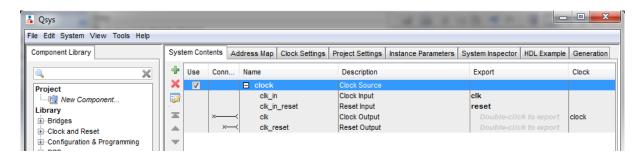


Next, add a *Vcc* symbol (*Libraries->primitives->other*). Add an output pin (*Libraries->primitives->pin*) and name it *LED[7..0]*. Note that this last symbol now represents a set of eight individual pins.



Save your BDF as TopLevel.bdf.

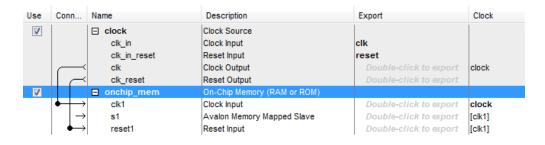
3. Now we're going to create the main component of our project, the System-on-Chip. For this, we will use the Qsys tool (*Tools->Qsys*). In the starting window of Qsys, you will see a Clock Source component called "clk_o". Right click on this and rename it as clock.



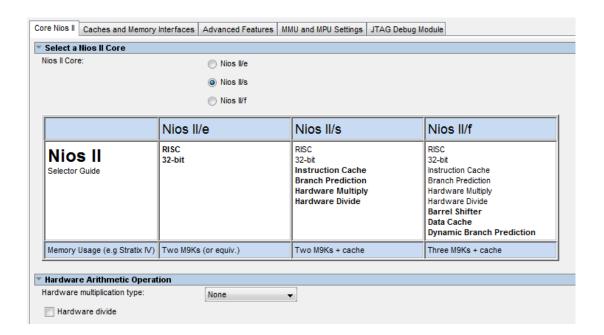
We need a memory for our SoC. We can either use standard memory controllers (like DDR3) to interface external SDRAM chips on the board, or implement memories on the FPGA itself (On-Chip Memory). Our system needs only a small amount of memory, so we will use an on-chip memory component.

Select the On-Chip Memory from the component library (*Library->Memories->On-Chip*), and click "*Add*". Set the total memory size as *256KB* (*262144B*), and click "*Finish*". Rename the newly added memory component as *onchip_mem*. You will see some errors displayed in the *Messages* section at the bottom, don't worry, ignore them for the moment.

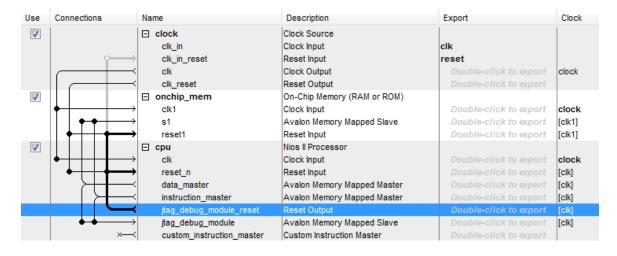
Next we should supply the *clock* and *reset* input signals to the memory. Connect both signals by clicking on the empty circles in front of *clk1* and *reset1* inputs of the memory component. Clicking will fill the circle (in black colour) to indicate the connection between the *clock* component and *onchip_mem* component has been made.



As the CPU in our SoC, we are going to use a *Nios II* RISC processor (*Library->Embedded Processors*). When you click "*Add*", you will be taken to the processor configuration dialog shown below. The *Nios II* processor has three variants (*e*, *s* and *f*), study the differences between them. Select *Nios II/s* variant, set the *Hardware multiplication type* to "*None*" and click "*Finish*".



Rename the new processor as *cpu*. Supply the clock and reset signals from the *clock* component to *cpu*. Connect both *data_master* and *instruction_master* ports of *cpu* to the *st* port of *onchip_mem*. Make sure the *instruction_master* port of *cpu* is connected to the *jtag_debug_module* port. Then supply the *jtag_debug_module_reset* signal from *cpu* to *reset* inputs of both *onchip_mem* and *cpu*.



Now our processor and memory are coupled. We still need to tell the *cpu* where exactly in the memory it needs to look for program code, when starting execution (reset) or when interrupts/exceptions occur. To do this, double click on *cpu* to bring up the configuration dialog again. Select "onchip_mem.s1" for both Reset vector memory and Exception vector memory.

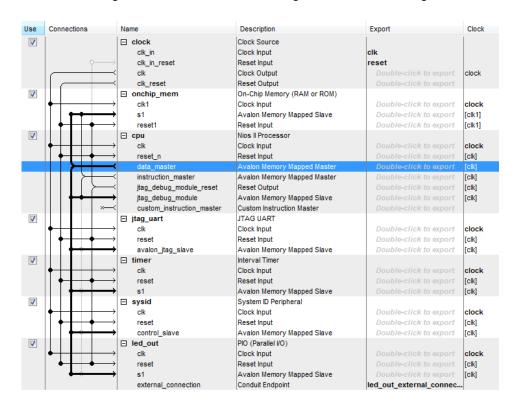


The JTAG UART provides a convenient way to communicate with our CPU through the USB-Blaster cable. Add a JTAG UART from the component library (Library->Interface Protocols->Serial). Click "Finish" to keep the default settings. Rename the new device as jtag_uart. Supply the clock and reset signals from the clock component, and the jtag_debug_module_reset signal from cpu to jtag_uart. Connect the data_master port of cpu to the avalon_jtag_slave port of jtag_uart.

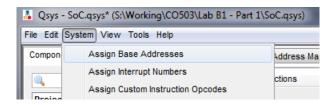
Our SoC needs a timer device for precise time calculations (this is required when preparing software applications). Add an *Interval Timer* from the library (*Library->Peripherals->Microcontroller Peripherals*). Select "Full Featured" from the Presets list and click "Finish". Rename the new device as *timer*. Supply the clock and reset signals from the *clock* component, and the <code>jtag_debug_module_reset</code> signal from <code>cpu</code> to <code>timer</code>. Connect the <code>data_master</code> port of <code>cpu</code> to the <code>si</code> port of <code>timer</code>.

To prevent accidentally downloading software compiled for a different SoC, we will add a System ID peripheral from the library (Library->Peripherals->Debug and Performance). Leave the 32-bit System ID as "oxoooooooo" and click "Finish" (In real systems, a unique ID could be provided). Rename the new device as sysid. Supply the clock and reset signals from the clock component, and the jtag_debug_module_reset signal from cpu to sysid. Connect the data_master port of cpu to the control_slave port of sysid.

Driving the 8 LED pins we created earlier (in the top level file) requires a parallel I/O interface for the *cpu*. Go to *Library->Peripherals->Microcontroller Peripherals* and add a *PIO* device. Select the *Width* as "8" bits and the *Direction* as "Output", then click "Finish". Rename the new *PIO* as <code>led_out</code>. Supply the clock and reset signals from the <code>clock</code> component, and the <code>jtag_debug_module_reset</code> signal from <code>cpu</code> to <code>led_out</code>. Connect the <code>data_master</code> port of <code>cpu</code> to the <code>si</code> port of <code>led_out</code>. In the <code>external_connection</code> row, double-click on the <code>Export</code> column to export <code>led_out</code> pins to outside.



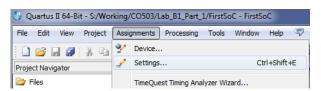
At this point, you may see a number of error messages. Most of the errors are due to overlapping address ranges. Nios II processors access peripheral devices through memory mapped IO, hence use unique address ranges for each attached peripheral device. To ensure that each device in our system uses a unique address range, select *Assign Base Addresses* from the *System* menu. You will see that the *Base* and *End* address on most devices in your system are now changed, so that no overlap occurs. **Note the new base address** of the led_out PIO device: $0 \times _$ you will need to use this value later on.

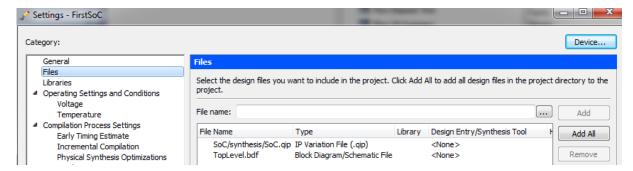


The *timer* and *jtag_uart* in our system send interrupt requests (IRQs) to the *cpu*. We must assign priorities to these interrupts. In the *IRQ* column, click on the empty circles in the rows of each device and assign a number (lower number means higher priority). Assign "1" for the *timer* and "16" for the *jtag_uart*. Qsys also provides an *Assign Interrupt Numbers* command which automatically connects *IRQ* signal. However, assigning IRQs effectively requires an understanding of how software responds to them. Because Qsys does not know the software behaviour, it cannot make educated guesses about the best IRQ assignment.

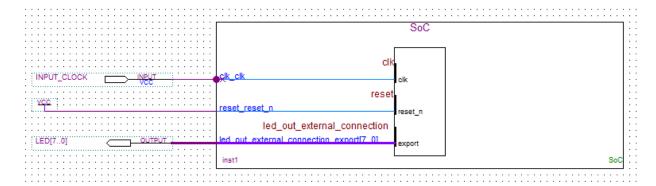
Now we're ready to generate our SoC. First, save the system under the name *SoC*. Then go to the *Clock Settings* tab and make sure the clock frequency matches the oscillator on the board, and go to the *Project Settings* tab and make sure the FPGA device ID is correct. Go to the *Generation* tab. Leave the simulation models as "None", as we are going to deploy the SoC in actual FPGA hardware. Click on the "Generate" button. Close Qsys and return to Quartus II.

4. In order for Quartus to link the newly created *SoC* with our project *FirstSoC*, we must add the Quartus IP file of our *SoC* to the project. On the *Assignments* menu, click *Settings*. The Settings dialog will appear. Under *Category*, select *Files*. Next to *File name*, click the browse (...) button. In the *Files of type* list, select *Script Files* (*.tcl, *.sdc, *.qip). Browse to locate "project directory>/SoC/synthesis/SoC.qip" and click *Open* to select the file. Click "*Add*" to include *SoC.qip* file in the project. Click "*OK*" to close the Settings dialog box.





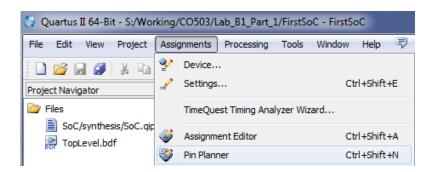
5. We should now add the symbol for the SoC we created in to our top level diagram. Open the *TopLevel.bdf* file, right click on the dotted area and select *Insert->Symbol*. You should see a new library called *Project*. Select *SoC* block from the *Project* library and place it on the top level diagram. Next, we connect the previously added pins to the new SoC block. Connect the *INPUT_CLOCK* pin to the clock input of the SoC, and the *VCC* pin to the reset signal of the SoC. Finally, connect the set of pins *LED[7..0]* to *led_out_external_connection_export[7..0]*.



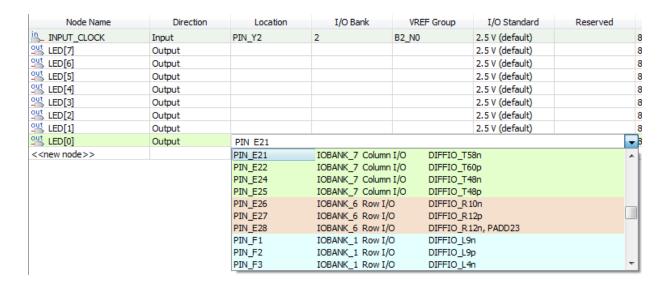
Save the *TopLevel.bdf* file.

- 6. Now that our hardware design is complete, we should ask Quartus to perform a preliminary analysis on it and identify any errors. Start the analysis and elaboration process (*Processing-Start-Start Analysis and Elaboration*). This may take a few minutes to finish.
- 7. After an error-free analysis, the next step is to map the inputs/outputs of our hardware design to the outside world (external components on the board, outside the FPGA). Since we use an evaluation board, the FPGA device's pins are already hardwired to these external components. So, all we have to do is map the inputs/outputs of our design to specific pins of the FPGA device.

In the Assignments menu, click on the Pin Planner. This will bring up a vivid diagram, with the top view pin layout of our FPGA device.



At the bottom, you will see a list of I/O pins in our design (clock input and LED outputs). At each row, double click on the *Location* column to select an appropriate pin from the list. Lists of various pin numbers and their corresponding hardwired components can be found in the user manual of the Lab Board (available in the course web page).

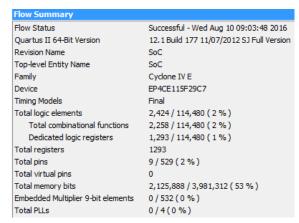


Select pins for all inputs and outputs in the list. Close the *Pin Planner* window when done. On the *Assignments* menu, click *Device*. The Device dialog will appear. Click "*Device and Pin Options*" button. In the *Unused Pins* page, set *Reserve all unused pins* as "input tri-stated with weak pull-up". With this setting, all unused I/O pins on the FPGA enter a high-impedance state after power-up.



Click "OK" to close the Device and Pin Options dialog. Click "OK" to close the Device dialog.

8. It's time to compile our hardware design. The compiler will perform the number of tasks: 1) analysing the design; 2) synthesizing; 3) fitting (placing and routing); 4) generating assembler; and 5) analysing the timing. Select *Processing->Start Compilation* or click the button to start the compilation. At the end, you should see a summary report like below.



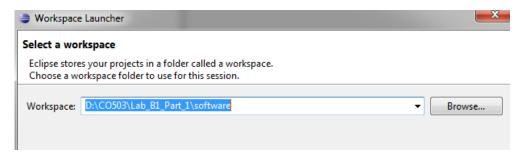
The report shows various resource usages for our hardware design, from the available FPGA resources.

9

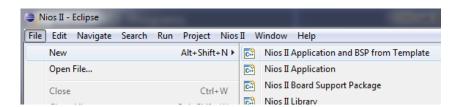
9. Expand *TimeQuest Timing Analyzer* and click on "Multicorner Timing Analysis Summary" from the table of contents. This shows the timing performances of the clock signals. Any negative slack values indicate the paths for the clock are too slow. Prior to compilation, you can manually set design constraints through an SDC file, which will force the fitting algorithm to try alternate options to satisfy the constraints.



- 10. Finally, we are about to download our design on to the FPGA device. Make sure your DE2-115 board is powered and its USB Blaster port is connected to the computer. Start the Programmer (*Tools->Programmer*). The programmer should automatically detect the FPGA device and the bitstream (.sof file) to be downloaded. Click "Start" to begin downloading.
- 11. Now we're about to create a software application for our SoC. Open *Nios II Software Build Tools*. As the workspace folder, create a new folder names *software* inside your project directory.



Create a new software project (File->New->Nios II Application and BSP from Template).

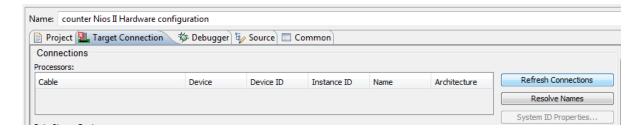


Select the target hardware by browsing for "SoC.sopcinfo" file in the project directory. Choose cpu as the CPU name from the dropdown list. Name the project as counter. Select "Blank Project" as the template and click "Finish". You will see two new projects are created: counter is the application program; counter_bsp is the auto generated board support package (a tiny OS). Right click on the counter_bsp project, go to Nios II->BSP Editor. Select timestamp_timer from the list and set the value to "timer". Click "Generate" button and close the window. Save the files if prompted. Right click on the counter_bsp project again and go to Nios II->Generate BSP.

Now we will prepare the application program. Right click on the *counter* project and import the *counter.c* file provided on the course web page (*Right Click->Import->General->File System->Browse for the file*). Study the imported code. Insert the base address of the *led_out PIO* device (which you noted earlier), at the correct place in the code. Save the file, right click on the *counter* project again and build it.

What do you think the statement IOWR 8DIRECT(LED BASE, OFFSET, count); does?

12. Finally, it's time to run the app. Right click the *counter* project, go to *Run As->Nios II Hardware*. A *Run Configurations* window may pop up. Go to *Target Connections* tab and click the "*Refresh Connections*" button, then "*Finish*".



The application should now be downloaded onto the FPGA, and you should see the count value change on LEDs. Try changing the code. Any "printf" statements should write the output to the JTAG interface in our SoC (jtag_uart is stdout), which will then be displayed in the host console (these settings may be changed in the BSP)

If you encounter any errors when trying to run the software

- Verify that you haven't missed anything at previous steps. Common mistakes are: incorrect connections in the SoC; wiring in the schematic diagram not properly connected; pin mapping not complete.
- If everything is in order, you may need to reduce the clock speed of the SoC using a PLL. Ask an instructor for help on this.

Part 2: JPEG Encoder

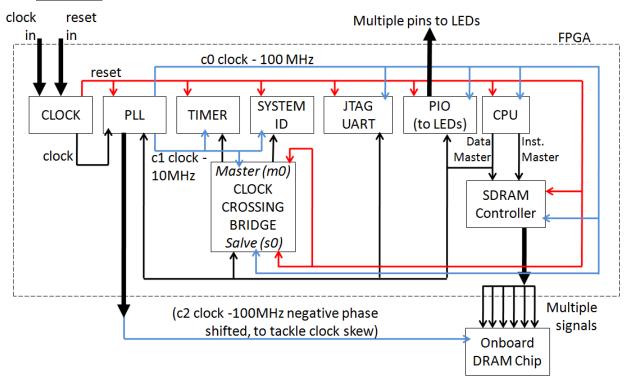
Now you should create a new SoC for JPEG image encoding, using onboard SDRAM as the main memory (instead of on-chip memory). Input and output files are accessed from the host computer through the JTAG USB cable. LEDs on the board should indicate the processing status in a suitable way (*encoding*, *finished*, *waiting*, *etc.*).

Create a new *Quartus II* project called *JSoC*. Name the top-level BDF as *TopLevel.BDF*, and name the QSYS system as *SoC*. **Do not use spaces** in the directory/file names.

For this system, you should use a 10MHz clock for *timer* and *sysid*, 100MHz clock for the other SoC components and 100MHz clock with a -65 degree phase shift for the on-board DRAM chip. You can use a Phase-Locked-Loop (PLL) to generate these clocks. To facilitate communication between SoC components using different clocks, a *CLOCK CROSSING BRIDGE* should be used on the *data master* bus.

Following are some important information you will need:

1. <u>Hardware</u>:



a) New hardware components to be used: SDRAM Controller, Avalon ALTPLL.

b) Parameters for *SDRAM Controller*: Preset = *Custom*

Chip select = 1

Banks = 4

Row = 13

Column = 10

Access time (t ac) = 6ns

Base Address = oxoooo oooo

c) Parameters for Avalon ALT*PLL*: Input frequency (inclko) = 50MHz

No asynchronous reset input or locked output

Output clock co: Requested Frequency = 100MHz

Requested Phase shift = o degrees

Output clock c1: Requested Frequency = 10MHz

Requested Phase shift = *o degrees*

Output clock c2: Requested Frequency = 100MHz

Requested Phase shift = -65 degrees

d) Connect the *jtag_debug_module_reset* signal from *cpu* to all reset inputs of all components **except** the *clock* component.

e) Pins in BDF to interface DRAM: SDR

SDRAM_ADDR[12..0] - output

SDRAM_BA[1..0] - output

SDRAM_CAS_N - output

SDRAM_CKE - output

SDRAM_CS_N - output

SDRAM_DQ[31..0] - bidirectional

SDRAM_DQM[3..0] - output

SDRAM_RAS_N - output

SDRAM_RAS_N - output SDRAM_WE_N - output SDRAM_CLK - output

(Map these pins to appropriate hardwired pins, using the information in the user manual)

2. <u>Software</u>:

Create a new *Nios II* application and BSP project called *JPEG_Encoder*, using a blank template and *SoC.sopcinfo* file as the target hardware. Import the provided code and sample input files into the application project. Modify the code in *jpeg_encoder.c* file to display the processing status on the LEDs.

a) Parameters for the BSP: timestamp timer = timer (from the QSYS system)

Enable altera_hostfs software package.

hostfs_name = /mnt/host

b) When launching the application, use **Debug As Nios II Hardware**, instead of Run As.