

# Project Description

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Processor designers are coming at the cross road of a new era of processor architectures. Undisputably, to improve single processor performance relying on cranking up clock frequency and exploiting instruction-level parallelism (ILP) is running out of steam due to several physical limitations including power wall, increasing design complexity and turnaround time, verification cost, the nature within single-threaded applications, and the scale of economies. At the meantime, there is no sign of slowdown for realizing Moore's law in the near future. Given the trend of feature-size scaling and process technology advancement, it is predicted that integrating 10 to 100 billion transistors on a reasonable die area will become feasible by 2015 [6]. Instead of continuing to enlarge on-die cache capacity, the entire computing industry unanimously envisions that a multi-core or many-core architecture is the de-facto standard in all future processor segments from high performance data centers all the way down to the emerging mobile internet devices. Several integration thrusts are being pursued. Most of the mainstream processor vendors have leveraged off-the-shelf processor economies of scale and provided symmetric, homogeneous multi-core solutions while other designers, e.g., in the embedded domain, integrated heterogeneous processing elements on a chip to accelerate certain classes of applications. Regardless of the target markets, the consensus is to balance the use of transistors for both the computing engines (cores) as well as the supporting structure such as storage or performance enhancement feature (uncores) to synergistically optimize performance and power. This paradigm shift not only alters the way computer hardware is designed, it also substantially impacts the product development in software industries, and profoundly changes the way we teach students who use computers to solve various engineering problems.

## 1 Motivation — “Parallel” Evolution of Computer Architecture Research

Over the last 20 years, computer architecture researchers have been developing different techniques to address different types of issues. For example, single processor people mostly concentrated on developing microarchitectural techniques to improve the performance of single-threaded programs. These approaches attempt to address the problem of instruction supply and data supply, and eventually to reduce memory latency or exploit ILP. Even though most recent performance research effort has turned the focus to memory level parallelism (MLP) [8, 21, 38, 40] or branch-mispredict level parallelism (BLP) [32], the ultimate goal is still the same — hiding latency or minimizing performance side-effect as much as they can. At the meantime, researchers of parallel architectures mainly focused on the following issues: automatic parallel compiler techniques, high-efficiency interconnection network, low-overhead coherence and memory consistency models, productive programming models, etc. As increasing the number of cores and their heterogeneity becomes the trend of future multi-core architectures, providing a more productive programming model has brought architects and programming language designers together more closely to scrutinize the interface in-between hardware and software. While these thrusts taken by ILP processor researchers and parallel architecture researchers may have similar objectives initially, i.e., improving the overall performance with innovative architectural solutions, the outcomes of the directions taken up by them are, however, quite diverged in hindsight.

More than a decade ago, the concept of speculative multithreading was first populated and advocated to exploit long-range ILP based on sequential, single-threaded program semantics. In this seminal paper, *Multiscalar processors* [54], published in ISCA-22, researchers at University of Wisconsin recognized the thread level parallelism existing across tasks and pioneered a new breed of microarchitecture employing an aggressive speculation mechanism to exploit distant parallelism. Their framework proposed to break a sequential program into ordered parallel tasks and executing each task in a simple execution engine with multiple program counters. By using dependence speculation, a sequential program running on a multiscalar processor will be able to exploit ILP across split tasks. Later on, this work triggered successive research

along the same line. A variety of forms and techniques that exploit thread level parallelism in a speculative manner were widely investigated over the last decade in both academia and industries. (**\*\*\*HHL: What are commercialized? \*\*\***)

Around the same time, the concept of transactional memory was proposed by Herlihy and Mott in ISCA-20 [25] as an alternate for designing multiprocessor architectures. Transactional memory systems aim at providing a lock-free programming model for highly concurrent systems, which has become increasingly more favorable for several reasons. First, it is evident that parallelization is the only key to unlock the massive amount of performance for applications in future systems. Secondly, a compiler capable of generating parallel codes automatically will not likely be available any time soon. Therefore, programmers are obligatory to parallelize the codes themselves on multicore processors for achieving their desirable level of performance. Thirdly, from what we have learned in programming (massively) parallel processors or supercomputers during the 90s, history will repeat itself that programming a multicore processor using conventional locks is extremely error-prone and very difficult to debug without any hardware debugging support. Fourthly, software developers are expected to maintain exactly the same productivity of writing sequential programs when they write parallel programs for multicore systems. Given all the above, we can conclude that the success of multicore processors highly depends on the following challenging assumptions: (1) the same productivity of programmers, and (2) an anticipated continuous performance improvement achieved for each multicore processor proliferation delivered. To say the least, transactional memory systems appear to address several issues described above and has emerged as one plausible solution for guaranteeing the continuing success of the entire computing industry. More encouragingly, the *Rock processor* to be released by Sun Microsystems has announced the incorporation of a transactional memory implementation, marking the first production processor with the support of hardware transactional memory [11, 34].

If one examines closely the underlying architectural support needed for supporting thread level speculation and transactional memory, it is not difficult to find the principle behind these two techniques are very similar in nature.

To address the divergence and streamline these research thrusts, this research proposes to investigate a unified multi-core architecture to put both thread level speculation and transactional memory into the same box.

The main goal of this research is to

## **2 Challenges in Many-Core Design**

### **2.1 Energy-Performance Issues in Many-Core Architecture**

**Issue 1: Power Scalability.**

**Issue 2: Efficiency of Interconnection Architecture.**

### **2.2 Modern Issues for MPPs**

**Challenge 1: On-Chip Wire Latency.**

**Challenge 2: Efficient Interaction with a Host Processor.**

**Challenge 3: Backward/Forward Binary Compatibility.**

**Challenge 4: Extensibility.**

Implementation	Category	Architecture	Operand Passing Network	Out-of-order Spawn	Lock Parallelization
Multiscalar [55]	TLS	Dedicated	Y	-	-
SVC [22]	TLS	SMP	Y	-	-
Hydra [23]	TLS	CMP	-	Y	-
PolyFlow [1]	TLS	SMT	-	Y	-
TLS4OutOrder [41, 30]	TLS	CMP	-	Y	-
Voltron [71, 28]	TLS	CMP	Y	Y	?
Unified TLS+TM Multicore	TM + TLS	CMP	-	Y	Y
TCC [24]	TM	CMP	-	-	Y
UTM [2]	TM	CMP	-	-	Y
LogTM [35, 36]	TM	CMP	-	-	Y

Table 1: Comparison of Coarse Level Parallelism-Enabling Techniques

### 3 Proposed Research: A Unified Multicore Architecture

#### 3.1 Research Focus 1:

##### 3.1.1 Task:

#### 3.2 Research Focus 2: Design for Inter-Core Communication

Due to the integration of multiple cores on the same die, the overheads of inter-core communication have been substantially reduce compared to those in the parallel machines in the good old days. Owing to this, the communication needed for enabling thread level speculation is no longer prohibitively expensive. For instance, for fine-grained thread level speculation in many proposed speculative multithreading execution model, copying and transferring register contents or even a snapshot of cache memory was a main parameter in the performance cost function that cannot be lightly ignored. In contrast, due to the tightly-coupling of cores in a multicore processor, the communication overhead for thread level speculation can be much relieved via either a dedicated channel in-between cores or using the shared cache space. In this research, we will investigate hardware mechanisms and their trade-offs for achieving efficient communication from the perspective of launching speculative threads. We will quantify the performance/cost impact by using either shared memory space or cloning register files to minimize the overheads. When designing dedicated hardware channels for cloning register files, one question to be addressed is the scalability issue. It is quite easy to have a dedicated channel for two cores. As the number of cores is increased, what will be the most area- and power-efficient structure for attaining such purposes? This communication channel, in fact, will also be useful when it comes to security monitoring, logging, and rollback. The same channel can be used for sending instructions or data for security inspection. We will discuss such application in Section 3.4.

**(\*\*\*HHL: Inherent Synchrnization in TM \*\*\*)**

#### 3.3 Research Focus 3: Thread Level Speculation with Heterogeneous Resources

Heterogeneous multiprocessing has opened up a new area of exploiting all computational capability provided by such a system. Current type of such architectures integrate a generic multicore processor with a general-purpose graphics processing unit (GPGPU) onto a die. Future systems, such as Intel’s Larrabee [43], will likely integrate more such resources onto the same die. A GPGPU or an accelerator either on the same die of a processor or on the same system, can be used to achieve higher energy efficiency for data-parallel

workloads. A middleware such as a runtime system or a specialized hardware can be designed to break up and dispatch the workloads to utilize these heterogeneous resources more efficiently. For example, the EXOCHI and CHI were developed by Intel to provide a unified programming framework that supports tightly-coupled integration of heterogeneous computing resources on a system [64]. The Merge framework intends to provide a high-level library system with the assistance of an enhanced map-reduce based programming language to better exploit the richness of the computation resources [29]. Similarly, Industry thrusts such as RapidMinds [33] or OpenCL [37] aim at defining general data parallel APIs to enable processing in the SIMD or SPMD style.

Toward this end, in this research, we would like to further extend this execution model by applying thread-level speculation to take these heterogeneous resources on a multicore system into account. There are several questions to be answered. What are the efficient communication model and recovery mechanisms when launching speculative threads on heterogeneous resources? How does this type of speculation changes the foundation of a hardware-supported transactional memory systems? How does a transactional memory help improve performance for this new thread execution model?

### **3.4 Research Focus 4: Support for Other Applications**

The checkpoint and rollback mechanisms are also often used in other areas for a long time. Two primary areas which may benefit from this research are security and reliability.

#### **3.4.1 Task: Memory Logging for Secure Architectures**

Prior works have demonstrated architectural mechanisms using backup logs to enable a revivable system [47, 7, 39]. For example, in PI’s INDRA work [47], a delta page based approach was proposed to enable high speed memory state backup and instant rollback when a security violation was detected for a network service transaction. The proposed mechanism requires hardware extension for the TLB and automatic checkpointing for updated memory pages. There are certain additional requirements for guaranteeing the integrity of the checkpointed memory pages due to security considerations. These pages should be allocated in a protected memory space, unexposed to the network. Although it is similar to the architectural support for hardware transactional memory, investigation needs to be done by taking security requirement into account.

#### **3.4.2 Task: Reliability and Fault Tolerance**

## **4 Evaluation Methodology**

### **4.1 Phase 1: Feasibility and Proof-of-Concept Studies for POD**

A cycle-level POD architecture simulator will be developed to carry out our performance study. The simulator will be general enough with configuration knobs to enable a broad range of design space exploration. We will use x86 as the substrate given its popularity and use their SSE instruction set as the SIMD instruction option for acceleration in PAL. We propose a novel methodology to perform the entire POD emulation, that is, running the x86 instructions of the substrate natively on an Intel-based workstation while translating the PAL instructions on-the-fly, checking their dependencies, and executing them in a separate cycle-level simulator via x86-based function calls. At this stage, we plan to develop a parser integrated into our simulator framework to translate the instructions to be executed on the PAL. This simulator needs to model every single feature of the SIMD PEs and memory subsystem including RRQ, external TLB and memory controller. Furthermore, on-chip and off-chip communication bandwidth will be accurately modeled. The simulator will contain well-defined, semantics-independent simulation modules so that it can be integrated into any

available architectural simulator later. This new approach will substantially reduce a re-implementation when evaluating different substrates, increasing portability of our framework.

To quantify the performance of the POD architecture, a number of data-parallel benchmark application will be ported to the POD architecture. A few examples are FFT, MPEG encoding/decoding, option pricing (finance), graphics processing, and RMS type of applications [12]. As widely known, automatic code parallelization is a difficult task, many of such techniques are still under research. At this stage, we will rely on hand-optimized acceleration codes rather than developing a full-fledged POD compiler as we will focus on understanding the potential and trade-off of POD architecture as the first priority.

In addition to the architectural performance evaluation, circuits level study will be carried out simultaneously, primarily for estimating the area and power consumption of the PAL layer. Our objective is to justify the use and the size of these heterogeneous, simpler cores on the acceleration layer for delivering the best-in-class power and area efficiency.

Toward this goal, critical paths, power analysis, and area estimation need to be full understood for not only the SIMD processing elements and the general purpose cores but also the point-to-point interconnection network and required buffers. One advantage of using 3D integration is the wire length and its implication on power consumption. We will also evaluate how much wire and clock power can be saved using POD approach. We will establish analytical models based on available technology information to quantify the power and area consumed by POD.

One main challenge of applying 3D integration is thermal dissipation and how it will further impact DRAM stacking. Note that DRAM will leak faster when operating under a high temperature condition and thus requires more frequent refresh to avoid data corruption. We plan to establish a more accurate thermal model for POD using our prior expertise in developing 3D design tools to understand the impact of thermal grading to the PAL and DRAM layers.

## **4.2 Phase 2: Evaluating Multi-POD Processing**

The most challenging yet also the most interesting part of this research is to see what is the maximum potential in performance when multiple POD processors are put into one system. Our goal is to compare such a system against a generic MIMD and other large scale systems such as IBM BlueGene/L from the perspective of performance, energy, area, and cost. First of all, there are several research and technical issues that need to be resolved before we can evaluate a Multi-POD multiprocessor system. Most of them are related to dynamic PAL hardware partitioning issue as well as runtime scheduling as described in Section ???. We will investigate viable techniques and perform performance simulation on such systems to quantify the benefit in power- and area-efficiency.

## **4.3 Phase 3: Prototyping**

The next level of our evaluation is to perform a more detailed analysis by prototyping the POD architecture to corroborate our proof-of-concepts. Prototyping, mostly a functional attestation, is always considered a more aggressive undertaking for the effort involved. It can also be achieved in many different ways. Today, several commercial FPGAs come with either built-in processor cores or synthesizable soft-cores [68], making them ideal to emulate the POD architecture from functioning standpoint. In other words, we can use the built-in processor as the substrate, while designing a configurable PAL array using the FPGA. Each PE, RRQ, and other minor logic blocks need to be designed, replicated, and synthesized to construct a complete PAL. In reality, such design replication can similarly be done, reducing the design complexity and verification time. Through physical design process, it is our belief that we will gain more insights by prototyping a POD implementation to uncover more corner-case issues which are not to be easily identified during software emulation.



## 5 Comparisons with Prior Research

## 6 Education Aspects and Outreach Activities

Given the limits posed by several technology fronts including complexity-effectiveness, verification effort, fundamental physics, and scale of economies, multi-core and future many-core processors have become the universal solution for all computing segments ranging from high-throughput data centers down to mobile internet devices. As this paradigm shift is taking place, it necessitates certain fundamental reconsideration in both our undergraduate and graduate curriculums. In other words, *Think in Parallel!* will become inevitable starting from our very first freshmen computer engineering course.

Along this line, the PI and his colleagues at Georgia Tech (Karsten Schwan, Ada Gavrilovska, and Matt Wolf, Sudhakar Yalamanchili) have been putting a lot of endeavor for a new computer engineering curriculum in both ECE and CS departments to re-align several goals of our computer system education. The ultimate goal is to fulfill the demands of a new kind of computer engineers from this fast-changing industries. The effort started in 2006 with incentive education fund and gifts donated by Intel Corporation. We gradually continue to revamp our architecture, OS, parallel architecture and basic programming classes by developing infusing parallel modules into the lectures and projects. Toward this, the PI has been developing new and value-added course materials. They include how to exploit thread-level parallelism at both the hardware and software levels, how to program multi-core processors and the relevant compilation techniques, how to provide architectural and OS support for multi-threaded execution, and how to do performance analysis and debugging in a multi-threaded execution environment. Projects designed using Intel's Thread Checker and Thread Profiler bundled in Vtune Analyzer are used to enhance students' skill set. All these materials were made open source (Our Georgia Tech CERCS Multi-Core Repository can be found at [http://pleuma.cc.gatech.edu/cercs/multicore/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://pleuma.cc.gatech.edu/cercs/multicore/index.php/Main_Page)) and have been shared by many other institutions. Together with another ECE faculty Aaron Lanterman, the PI designed a new course in multi-core and GPU programming, specifically targeting for 3D games and high-performance computing. In this course, new parallel programming models and languages such as Cg and HLSL, new development platform Direct3D/XNA/CUDA, etc., were taught. The PI designed and provided several project infrastructures using Direct3D, XNA Game Studio and Cg/HLSL for GPGPUs and IBM Cell/BE to give students challenges, provoke their thoughts, and nurture their experiences in dealing with parallel programming in a more natural manner.

More recently, the PI was awarded an NSF CCLI Phase I Exploratory grant to create a multithreaded programming course that targets general-purpose multi-core processors at the senior undergraduate level. The PI proposed a problem-based learning (PBL) approach with real-life multi-core programming problems as an experiment for educating the engineering majors about parallel programming based on current off-the-shelf tools provided by the industries. This education plan was strongly supported and endorsed by Intel's VP of Research Dr. Andrew Chien. Working together with Prof. Wei Zhang from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, the PI expects to create course materials, CDs, multithreaded programming mini-projects within two semesters (starting January, 2009) and will make their results available to other education institutes at the end of the project.

In general, multi-cores exist in several different forms among computing platforms. They can be classified into: (1) general purpose homogeneous multi-core processors offered by Intel and AMD, (2) high throughput systems such as Ultra Sparc T1/T2, IBM BlueGene/L, (3) heterogeneous multi-cores such as STI Cell processor, (4) system-on-chip implementation with discrete cores from several vendors in many embedded applications, (5) specialized acceleration engines such as Nvidia G80, Tesla or AMD/ATI's Radeon, or Aegia's Physics accelerator. Taking any of this system as a component, one can potentially construct an even larger scale parallel computing systems for special purposes. The PI will integrate these materials into their parallel computer architecture as well as his new multi-core programming class to enrich students with

industry experiences.

The PI is also in contact with Sun Microsystems to discuss the use of OpenSparc in their computer architecture courses. OpenSparc is a license-free T1 core design, consisting of complete tool chains for students to learn a reasonably simple processor design in one semester. The PI will use this as a jumpstart point to enable homogeneous multi-core designs using OpenSparc and its tools as a foundation in his architecture classes.

On the other hand, the PI has been working and sponsored by Intel Corporation on using multicore processors for accelerating 3D medical image reconstruction. The PI's research team is closely working with researchers and engineers from Intel's Embedded Medical Division and Radisys, a system provider specialized in multicore solutions for medical imaging. The PI has published their work using Intel's dual socket quad-core processors [14] and is currently porting their OpenMP codes onto Intel's latest Nehalem processor and Nvidia's Tesla C870 board using CUDA.

Georgia Tech has two NSF-sponsored programs — Facilitating Academic Careers in Engineering and Science for African American (FACES) and Summer Undergraduate Research Experience for minorities (SURE), which aim to improve engineering education for under-represented students. The PI has supervised 2 African American graduate students (Apeworkin, Hammond currently at MIT) and 1 female graduate student (Viswanathan, current full-time employee at Intel.) The PI will continue his passion and endeavor in recruiting and encouraging more under-represented students to participate in his research projects. In addition, the PI had participated in a parallel curriculum workshop as a panelist joined by visitors from schools of Historically-Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in the southeast region this summer. The parallel course modules mentioned earlier have been adopted by several faculty from these colleges.

## 7 Results from Prior NSF Support

The PI's prior research supported by NSF includes the following activities.

*ITR CCF-0326396: Collaborative Research: Morphable Software Services: Self-Modifying Programs for Distributed Embedded Systems*, 10/2003-06/2007 (finished). (Lee was listed as a senior personnel.) The project investigated low-power processing techniques for sustaining collaborative morphable services under extreme, inaccessible conditions. The PI and his team have developed several microarchitectural techniques based on compression, access properties, and semantic region partitioning that reduce energy consumption in memory hierarchy including BTB, TLB, caches, shared caches in multi-core processors, and DRAMs. The outcomes of this work were published in [3, 4, 5, 17, 18, 10, 15, 13, 19, 20, 26, 27, 66].

*ITR CNS-0325536: Toward Autonomous Computing Platforms: System-Wide Hardware/ Software Performance Monitoring and Adaptation*, 10/2003-09/2008. This project focuses on developing a flexible, FPGA-assisted infrastructure for non-intrusive hardware monitoring across the entire system. The goal of the project is to construct a self-adapting, self-aware system with the assistance of microarchitectural support and the FPGA. The project is a collaboration between Lee and Sally McKee from Cornell University. At Georgia Tech, the PI and his students investigated the types and mechanisms of security monitoring required for trustworthiness and the design of monitor capsule using Xilinx Virtex-II boards. Currently, they have been implementing monitoring capsule in the FPGA using AVnet development board (Virtex-2 Pro based) to perform architectural co-simulation and coherence traffic analysis for multiprocessors. The PI and his team used FPGAs to explore the opportunities of accelerating architectural simulations for single-core and multi-core processors. The outcomes of this work have been published in [9, 16, 31, 42, 46, 52, 45, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 72].

*CAREER CNS-0644096: Introspective Computing: A Multicore Approach to Availability, Reliability, and Security*, 06/2007-05/2012. This project investigates an introspective multi-core processor architecture that can perform fine-grained security introspection, instant low-overhead checkpoint, and fast, on-

demand rollback recovery. The goal is to provide a synergistic and holistic solution toward the challenges of achieving high availability, reliability, and security for a computing system. The outcome was published in [63, 69, 70].

*CPA CCF-0811738: Parallel-On-Demand — A Broad Purpose 3D-Integrated Performance Acceleration Layer for General Purpose Processors*, 07/2008-07/2011. This project investigates a new many-core architecture which aims at providing the optimal performance-power and performance-area ratios. It studies a SIMD PE array integrated on top of general processors using 3D die-stacking technology. The outcome of this work was published in [65, 67].



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