

KLayout-PEX Documentation

Martin Köhler

2025-01-22

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1 Introduction

[KLayout](#) is an open source VLSI layout viewer and editor.

KLayout-PEX (short **KPEX**) is a parasitic extraction (PEX) tool, well integrated with KLayout by using its API.

There are multiple PEX engines supported, currently:

- [FasterCap](#) integration (field solver engine)
- [MAGIC](#) integration (wrapper calling `magic`)
- Analytical 2.5D engine (parasitic concepts and formulas of MAGIC, implemented using KLayout methods)

Tip

KPEX *tool* source code itself is made publicly available on GitHub ([follow this link](#)) and shared under the GPL-3.0 license.

KPEX *documentation* source code is made publicly available on GitHub ([follow this link](#)) and shared under the Apache-2.0 license.

Please feel free to create issues and/or submit pull requests on GitHub to fix errors and omissions!

The production of the tool and this document would be impossible without these (and many more) great open-source software products: KLayout, FasterCap, MAGIC, protobuf, Quarto, Python, ngspice, Numpy, Scipy, Matplotlib, Git, Docker, Ubuntu, Linux...

Caution

Currently, KPEX is developed as a Python prototype, using the [KLayout Python API](#). This allows for a faster development cycle during the current prototyping phase. Eventually, critical parts will be re-implemented (in C++, and parallelized), to improve performance. As we're already using the KLayout API (which is pretty similar between Python, Ruby and C++), this will be relatively straight-forward.

1.1 Installation

Generally, KPEX is deployed using PyPi (Python Package Index), install via:

```
pip3 install --upgrade klayout-pex
```

```
kpex --version    # check the installed version
```

```
kpex --help      # this will help with command line arguments
```

As for the dependencies, there are multiple options available.

1.1.1 Option 1: Using IIC-OSIC-TOOLS Docker Image

We provide a comprehensive, low entry barrier Docker image that comes pre-installed with most relevant open source ASIC tools, as well as the open PDKs. This is a pre-compiled Docker image which allows to do circuit design on a virtual machine on virtually any type of computing equipment (personal PC, Raspberry Pi, cloud server) on various operating systems (Windows, macOS, Linux).

For further information please look at the [Docker Hub page](#) and for detailed instructions at the [IIC-OSIC-TOOLS GitHub page](#).

Linux

In this document, we assume that users have a basic knowledge of Linux and how to operate it using the terminal (shell). If you are not yet familiar with Linux (which is basically a must when doing integrated circuit design as many tools are only available on Linux), then please check out a Linux introductory course or tutorial online, there are many resources available.

A summary of important Linux shell commands is provided in [IIC-JKU Linux Cheat-sheet](#).

1.1.2 Option 2: Standalone Installation

- [KLayout](#) layout tool:
 - is mandatory for all engines (besides the MAGIC-wrapper)
 - [get the latest pre-built package version](#)
 - or [follow the build instructions](#)
- [FasterCap](#) engine:
 - optional, required to run the FasterCap engine
 - either compile your own version from the [GitHub repository](#)
 - or use precompiled versions available at <https://github.com/martinjankoehler/FasterCap/releases>
- [MAGIC-wrapper](#) engine:
 - optional, required to run the MAGIC-wrapper engine
 - Follow the [installation instructions](#) at the [GitHub repository](#)
- [Skywater sky130A](#) PDK:
 - optional, for now, KPEX technology specific files are deployed within the `klayout-pex` Python package
 - `pip3 install --upgrade volare` (install PDK package manager)
 - `volare ls-remote` (retrieve available PDK releases
 - * for example `PRE-RELEASE 0c1df35fd535299ea1ef74d1e9e15dedaeb34c32 (2024.12.11)`
 - `volare enable 0c1df35fd535299ea1ef74d1e9e15dedaeb34c32` (install a PDK version)
 - PDK files now have been installed under `$HOME/.volare/sky130A`
- [IHP SG13G2](#) PDK:
 - optional, for now, KPEX technology specific files are deployed within the `klayout-pex` Python package
 - `git clone https://github.com/IHP-GmbH/IHP-Open-PDK` (install PDK package manager)

1.1.3 Useful tools: meshlab

For previewing generated 3D geometries, representing the input to FasterCap, we recommend installing [MeshLab](#).

MeshLab can open the STL-files generated in the `output` directory under `output/<design>/Geometries/*.stl`.

2 First Steps

- The command line tool `kpex` is used to trigger the parasitic extraction flow from the terminal.
- Get help calling `kpex --help`.

2.1 Examples

Example layouts are included in the `testdata/designs` subdirectory of the KLayout-PEX source code:

```
git clone https://github.com/martinjankoehler/klayout-pex.git

# for sky130A
find testdata/designs/sky130A -name "*.gds.gz"

# for IHP SG13G2
find testdata/designs/ihp_sg13g2 -name "*.gds.gz"
```

2.1.1 Running FasterCap

Preconditions:

- `klayout-pex` was installed, see Section [1.1](#)
- `FasterCap` was installed, see Section [1.1](#)

i Note

Normally, devices with SPICE simulation models (e.g. like MOM-capacitors¹ in the sky130A PDK) are ignored (“blackboxed”) during parasitic extraction. `kpex` has an option `--blacklist n` to allow extraction of those devices (whiteboxing), which can be useful during development (during the prototype phase, whiteboxing is actually the default setting, so please use `--blacklist y` to explicitly configure blackboxing).

¹Metal-Oxide-Metal capacitors

Let's try the following:

```
kpex --pdk sky130A --blackbox n --gds testdata/designs/sky130A/cap_vpp_04p4x04p6_11m1m2_no
```

Note

This will report an error that we have not activated one or more engines, and list the available engines:

Argument	Description
<code>--fastercap y</code>	Run kpex/FasterCap engine
<code>--2.5D y</code>	Run kpex/2.5D engine
<code>--magic y</code>	Run MAGIC engine

Now, to run the FasterCap engine (might take a couple of minutes):

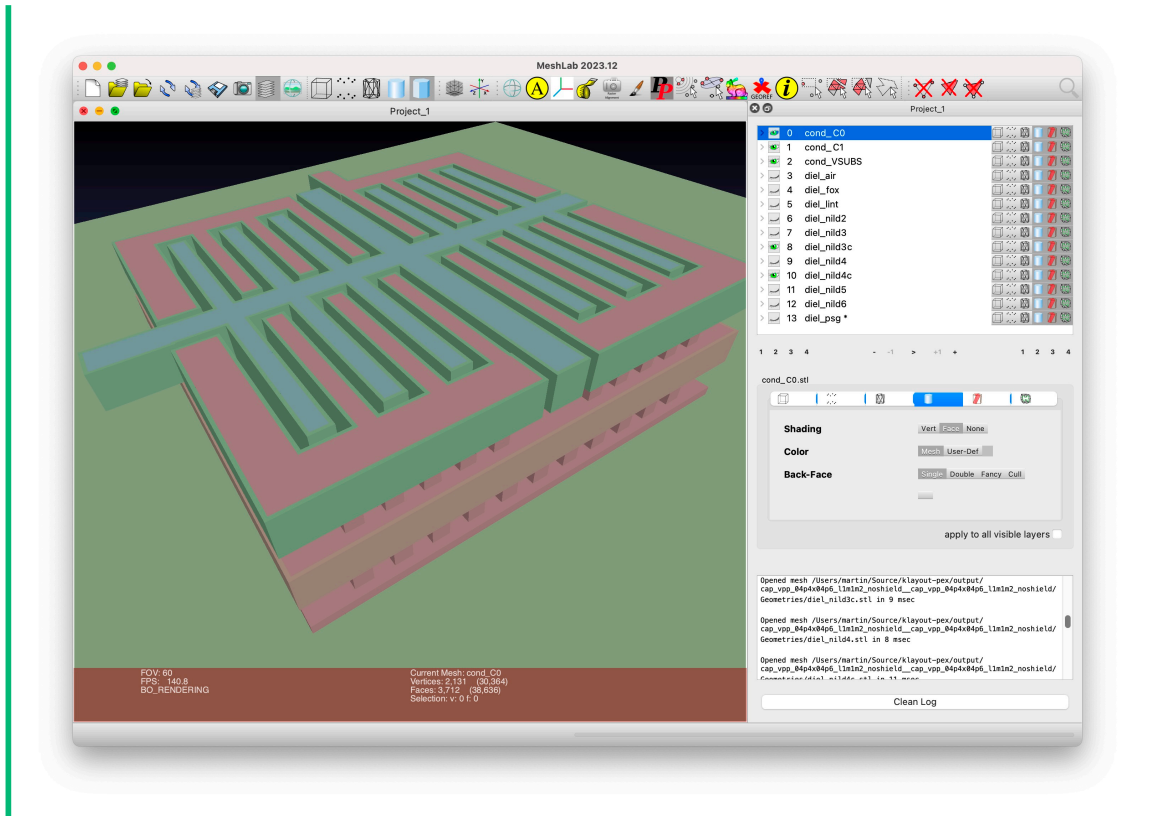
```
kpex --pdk sky130A --blackbox n --fastercap y --gds testdata/designs/sky130A/cap_vpp_04p4x
```

The default output directory is `output`, in there we see a directory `Geometries`, containing STL-files. Those STL files provide a preview of the FasterCap input files. Use MeshLab (see Section 1.1.3) to open and preview those files:

```
ls -d output/cap_vpp_04p4x04p6_11m1m2_noshield__cap_vpp_04p4x04p6_11m1m2_noshield/Geometri
```

Tip

- Open the STL files in MeshLab
- Use the eye buttons to hide and show each file/mesh
- Use the align tool (“A” in the toolbar) to assign different colors
- Start by showing only on the conductors (files named `cond_*.stl`)
- Then try showing different dielectrics (files named `diel_*.stl`), to see how they surround the conductors.



In the log file, we see the output of FasterCap including the Maxwell capacitance matrix:

Capacitance matrix is:

Dimension 3 x 3

```
g1_VSUBS  5.2959e-09 -4.46971e-10 -1.67304e-09
g2_C1     -5.56106e-10 1.5383e-08 -1.47213e-08
g3_C0     -1.69838e-09 -1.48846e-08 1.64502e-08
```

KPEX interprets this matrix and logs a CSV netlist, which can be pasted into a spreadsheet application:

```
Device;Net1;Net2;Capacitance [fF]
Cext_0_1;VSUBS;C1;0.5
Cext_0_2;VSUBS;C0;1.69
Cext_1_2;C1;C0;14.8
Cext_1_1;C1;VSUBS;0.08
```

In addition, a SPICE netlist is generated.

3 Supporting new PDKs

For every supported PDK, a KPEX technology definition is required, as well as customized PEX-“LVS” scripts.

3.1 Technology Definition Files

The KPEX technology definition format uses [Google Protocol Buffers](#), so there is:

- formal schema files, defining the structure and data types involved
 - [protos/tech.proto](#): main schema / entry point, includes the others
 - [protos/process_stack.proto](#): describes details of the process stack, such as dielectrics and heights of layers
 - [protos/process_parasitics.proto](#): parasitic tables, used to parametrize the 2.5D engine
- multiple concrete instantiations, that adhere to this schema (called *messages* in the *protobuf* lingo)
 - in the form of JSON files
 - Skywater 130A: `klayout_pex_protobuf/sky130A_tech.pb.json`
 - IHP SG13G2: `klayout_pex_protobuf/ihp_sg13g2_tech.pb.json`

i Note

The built-in JSON tech files are programmatically generated during the build process². Therefore they are not part of the repository source code, but of course part of the deployed Python wheels. To review those, look into your Python `site-packages`³/`klayout_pex_protobuf`.

3.2 Customized PEX-“LVS” scripts

KLayout has built-in support for Layout-Versus-Schematic (LVS) scripts, based on its Ruby API. Customized “LVS” scripts are (“ab”)used in KPEX, not with the intent of comparing Layout-Versus-Schematic, but rather to extract the connectivity/net information for all polygons across multiple layers.

These customized “LVS” scripts are stored in:

- Skywater sky130A: [pdk/sky130A/libs.tech/kpex/sky130.lvs](#)
- IHP SG13G2: [pdk/ihp_sg13gs/libs.tech/kpex/sg13g2.lvs](#)

What’s specific about this customization:

²C++ generator scripts the built-in tech files are located in `cxx/gen_tech_pb/pdk/*.cpp`.

³To find the `site-packages` directory for the `klayout-pex` package, call `pip3 show klayout-pex`.

- Layers names must be assigned, using [KLayout's \(name\(layer, name\)\) function](#)
- MOM⁴ capacitors, MIM⁵ capacitors and resistors should be extracted to separate layers, to enable blackboxing / whiteboxing.

The layer names in the script must correspond with the names configured in the tech JSON file.

⁴Metal-Oxide-Metal capacitors

⁵Metal-Insulator-Metal capacitors