VPR and VPACK User's Manual (Version 3.99a)

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1 Overview

VPR (Versatile Place and Route) is an FPGA placement and routing tool. VPR has four required and many optional parameters; it is invoked by typing:

```
vpr netlist.net architecture.arch placement.p routing.r [-options]
```

Netlist.net is the netlist describing the circuit to be placed and/or routed, while architecture.arch describes the architecture of the FPGA in which the circuit is to be realized. If VPR is placing a circuit, the final placement will be written to placement.p; if VPR is routing a previously placed circuit, the placement is read from placement.p. The final routing of a circuit is written to file routing.r. The format of each of these files is described in Section 6.

VPR can be run in one of two basic modes. In its default mode, VPR places a circuit on an FPGA and then repeatedly attempts to route it in order to find the minimum number of tracks required by the specified FPGA architecture to route this circuit. If a routing is unsuccessful, VPR increases the number of tracks in each routing channel and tries again; if a routing is successful, VPR decreases the number of tracks before trying to route it again. Once the minimum number of tracks required to route the circuit is found, VPR exits. The other mode of VPR is invoked when a user specifies a specific channel width for routing. In this case, VPR places a circuit and attempts to route it only once, with the specified channel width. If the circuit will not route at the specified channel width, VPR simply report that it is unroutable.

VPR can perform either global routing or combined global and detailed routing.

VPACK is a packing program which can be used with or without VPR. It takes a technology-mapped netlist (in blif format) consisting of lookup tables (LUTs) and flip flops (FFs) and packs the LUTs and FFs together to form more coarse-grained logic blocks. The netlist it outputs is in the .net format required by VPR, and hence can be fed directly into VPR. Its usage is:

```
vpack input.blif output.net [-options]
```

Typing either VPR or VPACK with no parameters will print out a list of all the available command line parameters.

2 Compiling VPR and VPACK

If your compiler of choice is gcc and you are running a Solaris-based Sparcstation, you can compile VPR simply by typing *make* in the directory containing VPR's source code and makefile. If your compiler and/or architecture are different, however, you will have to make some small modifications to the makefile. First, change the CC = gcc line in the makefile so that CC is set to the name of your desired compiler. Secondly, change the ARCH_TYPE = SPARC line so that ARCH_TYPE is set to the name of your machine (e.g. SPARC, HP, SGI, IBM, etc.). This ARCH_TYPE flag is only needed to determine which random

number generator should be called by VPR, as not all machines have the same random number libraries. Finally, you may want to change the line FLAGS = -O2 to set FLAGS to the value that gives the highest level of optimization with your compiler, and it may be necessary to give the linker different options so it finds all the relevant libraries on your machine.

If you are using VPACK to convert SIS output to VPR's netlist format, you should make similar modifications to VPACK's makefile.

3 Typical CAD Flow

Figure 1 illustrates the CAD flow we typically use. First, the SIS [1] synthesis package is used to perform technology-independent logic optimization of each circuit. Next, each circuit is technology-mapped into 4-LUTs and flip flops by FlowMap [2]. The output of FlowMap is a .blif format netlist of LUTs and flip flops. Our VPACK program [3] then packs this netlist of 4-LUTs and flip flops into more coarse-grained logic blocks, and outputs a netlist in the .net format VPR uses. VPR [4, 5, 6] can then place the circuit and either globally route it or perform combined global and detailed routing on it. The output of VPR consists of a file describing the circuit placement, another file describing the circuit's routing, and various statistics concerning the minimum number of tracks per channel required to successfully route, the total wirelength, etc. In order to find the minimum number of tracks required for successful routing, VPR

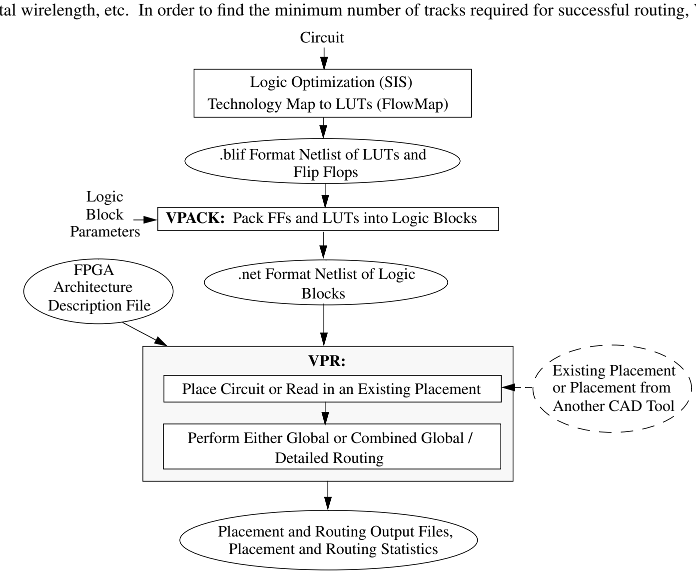

Figure 1: CAD flow.

actually attempts to route the circuit several times with different numbers of tracks allowed per channel in each attempted routing.

Of course, many variations on this CAD flow are possible. One can use different logic optimizers and technology mappers than SIS and FlowMap; just put the output netlist from your technology-mapper into .blif format and feed it into VPACK. Alternatively, if the logic block you are interested in is not supported by VPACK, your CAD flow can bypass VPACK altogether by outputting a netlist of logic blocks in .net format. VPR can place and route netlists of any type of logic block -- you simply have to create the netlist and describe the logic block in the FPGA architecture description file. Finally, if you want only to route a placement produced by another CAD tool you can create a placement file in VPR format, and have VPR route this pre-existing placement.

4 Operation of VPACK

As stated earlier, VPACK takes as input a technology-mapped netlist of lookup tables (LUTs) and flip flops in .blif format, and outputs a .net format netlist composed of more complex logic blocks. The logic block to be targeted is selected via command-line options. The simplest logic block VPACK can target consists of a LUT and a FF, in the configuration shown in Figure 2. We call this logic block a basic logic element.

To have VPACK target a logic block of this form, use the command:

```
vpack <input.blif> <output.net> -lut_size <K> -no_clustering
```

In the command above, the italicized values in angled brackets, <>, should be replaced by the file names or numbers you are using, while unitalicized words are keywords and must be typed exactly as shown.

The **-lut_size <K>** option specifies the number of inputs to a LUT (i.e. K in Figure 2). If -lut_size is not specified, a default LUT size of 4 is assumed by VPACK. The **-no_clustering** option indicates that the logic block is a single basic logic element with no local routing to route the logic block output back to the logic block inputs. By default, VPACK marks all clock nets in the input netlist as global nets which VPR should not route. Since clocks are typically routed via a dedicated network in FPGAs, this is usually the most realistic thing to do. If, however, you want clocks to be routed as using normal routing resources, you should specify **-global_clocks off** on the VPACK command line.

VPACK is capable of targeting a more complex form of logic block, which we call a cluster-based logic block [3]. Figure 3 depicts an example. A cluster-based logic block consists of N basic logic elements (i.e. N LUTs and N FFs), along with local interconnect that allows the N cluster outputs to be routed back to LUT inputs. Since the number of logic block inputs, I, can be less than the total number of LUT inputs (KN, where K is the number of inputs per LUT), the local interconnect also allows each of the I

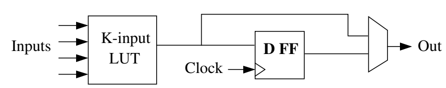

Figure 2: Basic logic element.

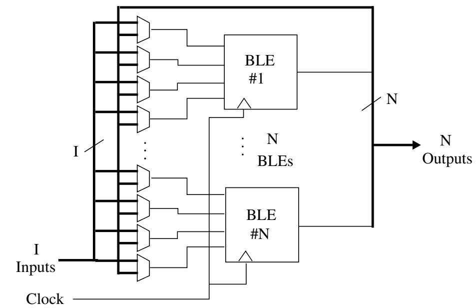

Figure 3: A cluster-based logic block.

inputs to be routed to any of the KN LUT inputs. Cluster-based logic blocks are very similar to the logic blocks used in the Altera 8K and 10K FPGAs, and to those used in the Xilinx 5200 series of FPGAs.

To target such a logic block, use a command line of the form:

```
VPACK input.blif output.net -lut_size <K> -cluster_size <N>
      -inputs_per_cluster <I> -clocks_per_cluster <C>
```

The meaning of the -inputs_per_cluster and -cluster_size parameters should be clear from Figure 3. The -clocks_per_cluster option is used to specify how many distinct clocks can be used by each logic block.

Table 1 lists all of VPACK's options. The first three options are important both when VPACK is targeting a single BLE-based logic block and when it is targeting a cluster-based logic block. The middle three options are relevant only if VPACK is targeting a cluster-based logic block. Finally, the last two options only affect the CAD algorithms employed to group BLEs into logic clusters, and are probably not of interest unless you're investigating CAD algorithms for clustering.

TABLE 1: VPACK Options.

Option	Default	Description
-lut_size <int>	4	Number of inputs per LUT (i.e. K).
-no_clustering	cluster	Specifies that no clustering is to be performed -- i.e. the logic block consists of one BLE (a LUT and a FF) with no local routing.
-global_clocks {on | off}	on	Indicates whether clocks should be marked as being routed via a special, global resource. VPR does not route global signals.
-cluster_size <int>	1	Number of BLEs in a cluster-based logic block (i.e. N).
-inputs_per_cluster <int>	4 * cluster_size	Number of distinct inputs in a logic cluster (i.e. I).
-clocks_per_cluster <int>	1	Number of distinct clocks in a logic cluster.

TABLE 1: VPACK Options.

Option	Default	Description
-hill_climbing {on | off}	on	Controls whether the algorithm used to pack BLEs into clusters allows hill climbing or is strictly greedy.
-cluster_seed {max_sharing | max_inputs}	max_inputs	Specifies the way in which the cluster packing algorithm picks the first BLE to be placed in an empty cluster. Max_sharing picks the BLE with the most signals in common with the last cluster, while max_inputs picks the BLE with the most used inputs.

5 Operation of VPR

Invoke VPR by typing:

```
vpr input.net input.arch placement.p output.routing [-options]
```

This section outlines how VPR's graphics and options work; Section 6 describes the format of each of the four files used by VPR.

5.1 Graphics

The graphics included in VPR are very easy to use. Click any mouse button on the arrow keys to pan the view, or click on the Zoom-In and Zoom-Out keys to zoom the view. Click on the Window button, then on the diagonally opposite corners of a box, to zoom in on a particular area. Selecting PostScript creates a PostScript file (in pic1.ps, pic2.ps, etc.) of the image on screen. Proceed tells VPR to continue with the next step in placing and routing the circuit, while Exit aborts the program. The menu buttons will be greyed out to show they are not selectable when VPR is working, rather than interactively displaying graphics.

The Toggle Nets button toggles the nets in the circuit visible/invisible. When a placement is being displayed, routing information is not yet known so nets are simply drawn as a "star;" that is, a straight line is drawn from the net source to each of its sinks. Click on any clb in the display, and it will be highlighted in green, while its fanin and fanout are highlighted in blue and red, respectively. Once a circuit has been routed the true path of each net will be shown. Again, you can click on Toggle Nets to make net routings visible or invisible, and clicking on a clb or pad will highlight their fanins and fanouts. Clicking on Toggle RR will switch between various views of the routing resources available in the FPGA. Wiring segments and clb pins are drawn in black, connections from wiring segments to input pins are shown in blue, connections from output pins to wiring segments are shown in red, and connections between wiring segments are shown in green. The points at which wiring segments connect to clb pins (connection box switches) are marked with an "X". Clicking on a clb or pad will overlay the routing of all nets connected to that block on top of the drawing of the FPGA routing resources, and will label each of the pins on that block with its pin number. The routing resource view can be very useful in ensuring that you have correctly described your FPGA in the architecture description file -- if you see switches where they shouldn't be or pins on the wrong side of a clb, your architecture description needs to be revised.

5.2 Command-Line Options

To get a list of all the available options type vpr with no parameters.

VPR has a lot of options. The three options most people will be interested in are **-fast, -route_chan_width, and -route_type**. In general for the other options the defaults are fine, and only people looking at how different CAD algorithms perform will try many of them. To understand what the more esoteric placer and router options actually do, download [4, 5] from the author's web page (http://www.eecg.toronto.edu/~vaughn).

In the following text, values in angle brackets, e.g. <int>, should be replaced by the appropriate filename or number. Values in curly braces separated by vertical bars, e.g. {on | off}, indicate all the permissible choices for an option.

5.2.1 General Options

-fast: Sets various placer and router parameters so that a circuit will be placed and routed more quickly, at the cost of some (~10 - 15%) degradation in quality.

-nodisp: Disables all graphics. Useful if you're not running X Windows. Default: graphics enabled.

-auto <int>: Can be 0, 1, or 2. This sets how often you must click Proceed to continue execution after viewing the graphics. The higher the number, the more infrequently the program will pause. Default: 1.

-route_only: Take an existing placement from the placement file specified on the command line and route it. Default: off.

-place_only: Place the circuit, but do not route it. Default: off.

-aspect_ratio <float>: Specifies the aspect ratio (number of columns / number of rows) of an FPGA. Default 1 (square FPGA).

-nx <int>: Number of columns in the FPGA logic array. Default: set to minimum required to fit circuit.

-ny <int>: Number of rows in the FPGA logic array. Default: set to minimum required to fit circuit.

-full_stats: Print out some extra statistics about the circuit and its routing useful for wireability analysis. Default: off.

5.2.2 Placer Options

By default, the automatic annealing schedule [6] is used. This schedule gathers statistics as the placement progresses, and uses them to determine how to update the temperature, when to exit, etc. This schedule is generally superior to any user-specified schedule. If any of init_t, exit_t or alpha_t is specified, the user schedule, with a fixed initial temperature, final temperature and temperature update factor is used.

-seed <int>: Sets the initial random seed used by the placer. Default: 1.

-inner_num <float>: The number of moves attempted at each temperature is inner_num times the total number of blocks$^{4/3}$ in the circuit. The number of blocks in a circuit is the number of pads plus the number of clbs. Changing inner_num is the best way to change the speed/quality tradeoff of the placer, as it leaves the highly-efficient automatic annealing schedule on and simply changes the number of moves per temperature. Default: 10. *Note: specifying -inner_num 1 will speed up the placer by a factor of 10 while reducing placement quality only by about 10%. Hence users more concerned with CPU time than quality may find this a more appropriate value of inner_num.*

-init_t <float>: The starting temperature of the anneal for the manual annealing schedule. Default: 100.

-exit_t <float>: The (manual) anneal will terminate when the temperature drops below the exit temperature. Default: 0.01.

-alpha_t <float>: The temperature is updated by multiplying the old temperature by alpha_t when the manual annealing schedule is enabled. Default: 0.8.

-fix_pins {random | <file.pads>}: Do not allow the placer to move the I/O locations about during the anneal. Instead, lock each I/O pad to some location at the start of the anneal. If **-fix_pins random** is specified, each I/O block is locked to a random pad location to model the effect of poor board-level I/O constraints. If any word other than random is specified after -fix_pins, that string is taken to be the name of a file listing the desired location of each I/O block in the netlist (i.e. **-fix_pins <file.pads>**). This pad location file is in the same format as a normal placement file, but only specifies the locations of I/O pads, rather than the locations of all blocks. Default: off (i.e. placer chooses pad locations).

-place_cost_type {linear | nonlinear}: Select the placement cost function. For FPGAs in which all channels have the same width the linear cost function reduces to a bounding box wirelength cost function. The nonlinear cost function, on the other hand, considers both wirelength and congestion during placement. Default: linear.

-place_cost_exp <float>: Only relevant for FPGAs in which the channel width varies from channel to channel. Sets the exponent (α) used in the linear cost function to penalize routing in narrow channels. Default: 1.

-place_chan_width <int>: Can be used with the nonlinear cost function to tell VPR how many tracks a channel of relative width 1 is expected to need to complete routing of this circuit. VPR will then place the circuit only once, and repeatedly try routing the circuit as usual. If place_chan_width is not specified and the nonlinear cost is used, VPR will replace and reroute the circuit for each channel width at which it attempts to map the circuit.

-num_regions <int>: Used only with the nonlinear cost function. VPR will compute congestion on an array of num_regions X num_regions subareas. Large values of num_regions greatly slow the placer. Default: 4.

5.2.3 Router Options

-route_type {global | detailed}: Specifies whether global routing or combined global and detailed routing should be performed. Default: detailed (i.e. combined global and detailed routing).

-route_chan_width <int>: Tells VPR to route the circuit with a certain channel width. No binary search on channel capacity will be performed to find the minimum number of tracks required for routing -- VPR simply reports whether or not the circuit will route at this channel width.

-max_router_iterations <int>: The number of iterations of a Pathfinder-based router that will be executed before a circuit is declared unrouteable (if it hasn't routed successfully yet) at a given channel width. Default: 30. *Speed-quality trade-off: reduce this number to speed up the router, at the cost of some increase in final track count. This is most effective if -initial_pres_fac is simultaneously increased.*

-initial_pres_fac <float>: Sets the starting value of the present overuse penalty factor. Default: 0.5. *Speed-quality trade-off: increase this number to speed up the router, at the cost of some increase in final track count. Values of 1000 or so are perfectly reasonable.*

-pres_fac_mult <float>: Sets the growth factor by which the present overuse penalty factor is multiplied after each router iteration. Default: 1.5.

-acc_fac <float>: Specifies the accumulated overuse factor (historical congestion cost factor). Default: 0.2.

-bb_factor <int>: Sets the distance (in channels) outside of the bounding box of its pins a route can go. Larger numbers slow the router somewhat, but allow for a more exhaustive search of possible routes. Default: 3.

-bend_cost <float>: The cost of a bend. Larger numbers will lead to routes with fewer bends, at the cost of some increase in track count. If only global routing is being performed, routes with fewer bends will be easier for a detailed router to subsequently route onto a segmented routing architecture. Default: 1 if global routing is being performed, 0 if combined global/detailed routing is being performed.

6 File Formats

In all the file format that follow, a sharp (#) character anywhere in a line indicates that the rest of the line is a comment, while a backslash (\) at the end of a line (and not in a comment) means that this line is continued on the line below.

6.1 Circuit Netlist (.net) Format

Three different circuit elements are available: input pads, output pads, and logic blocks, and are specified using the keywords .input, .output, and .clb, respectively. The format is shown below.

```
element_type_keyword  blockname
   pinlist: net_a  net_b  net_c ...
   subblock: subblock_name pin_num1 pin_num2 ..  # Only needed if a clb
```

A circuit element is created by specifying a keyword at the start of a line, followed by the name to be used to identify this block. The line immediately below this keyword line starts with the identifier *pinlist:* and then lists the names of the nets connected to each pin of the logic block or pad. Input and output pads (*.inputs* and *.outputs*) have only one pin, while logic blocks (*.clbs*) have as many pins as the architecture file used for this run of VPR specifies. The first net listed in the pinlist connects to pin 0 of a clb, and so on. If some pin of a clb is to be left unconnected, the corresponding entry in the pinlist should specify the reserved word *open* instead of a net name.

Logic blocks (.clbs) also have to specify the internal contents of the logic block with *subblock* lines. Each clb must have at least one subblock line, and can have up to N subblock lines, where N is the number of BLEs (LUTs and FFs) in each logic block, as described by the architecture file. A clb may have less than N subblock lines, since some of the BLEs in the clb may be unused. Each subblock is a BLE -- a K-input LUT (where K is set in the architecture description file) and a flip flop, as shown in Figure 2. The subblock line first gives the name of the subblock, and then gives the number of the clb pin to which each BLE pin is connected. If a BLE pin is unconnected, the corresponding pin entry should be set to the keyword open. The order of the BLE pins is: K LUT input pins, the BLE output, and the clock input (K + 2 pins total). If the subblock clock pin is "open" the BLE output is the unregistered LUT output; otherwise the BLE output is assumed to be registered.

The only other keyword is *.global*. Use .global lines to specify that a net or nets should not be considered by the placement cost function or routed. It is assumed that some global routing resources exist to route these very high fanout signals (generally clocks). The syntax of the .global statement is:

```
.global net_a net_b ...
```

An example netlist in which the logic block is a single BLE is given below.

```
#This netlist describes a small circuit with two inputs
#and one output. There is only one clb block, which is
#a 3-input BLE (LUT+FF) that has one unconnected input.
#This netlist assumes that the architecture input file defines
#a clb as a 3-input BLE with pins 0, 1, and 2 being the LUT inputs,
#pin 3 being the LUT output, and pin 4 being the BLE clock.

.input a            #Input pad.
    pinlist: a      #Blocks can have the same name as nets with no conflict.

.input bpad
    pinlist: b

.clb simple          # Logic block.
    pinlist: a b open and2 open        # 2 LUT inputs used, clock input unconnected.
    subblock: sb_one 0 1 open 3 open    # Subblock line says the same thing.

.output out_and2    #Output pad.
    pinlist: and2
```

In the netlist above the subblock line adds no new information -- since the logic block only contains one BLE, which pins are hooked to this BLE is obvious. Consider a netlist in which each logic block is a cluster-based logic block containing two clbs, however.

```
.input a
    pinlist: a

.input bpad
    pinlist: b

.input c
    pinlist: c

.input clk
    pinlist: clk

.global clk       # Typical case:  clock needn't be routed, as there's a
                  # special network for it.
```



```
# Example logic block:  4 inputs, 2 outputs, 1 clock.
# Internally, the logic block contains two BLEs,
# each of which consists of a 3-LUT and a FF.

.clb more_complex
    pinlist:  a b c open out_1 out_2 clk
    subblock: sb_one 0 1 open 4 open  # BLE inputs are a and b, output
                                     # is out_1. Output isn't registered.
    subblock: sb_two 0 1 2 5 6        # BLE inputs are a, b, and c, output
                                     # is out_2.  The output is registered.

.output opad_1
    pinlist: out_1

.output opad_2
    pinlist: out_2
```

In the netlist above, one needs the subblock statements to know what connections are made internally to the logic block by local routing. *Currently VPR does not actually make use of the subblock information* -- information about the internal structure of a logic block is needed only for timing analysis, and timing analysis has not yet been added to VPR. However, the netlist parser will complain if there are no subblock lines for a clb, so if you are generating your own netlist you must make sure each clb lists at least one subblock line. Note also that while the subblock lines describe the internal structure of a clb in terms of BLEs, the BLE structure is general enough that the timing behaviour of essentially arbitrary logic blocks can be described in terms of subblock lines.

6.2 FPGA Architecture File (.arch) Format

Each line in an architecture file consists of a keyword followed by one or more parameters. In the description below, strings between curly braces, {}, denote all the possible choices for an option. All of the following keywords must be specified in the architecture file.

io_rat <int>: Sets the number of pads (inputs or outputs) that fit into the space occupied by one clb. This is the number of pads in each row or column of the FPGA.

6.2.1 Description of Relative Channel Widths in the FPGA

The next three keywords are used to describe the relative widths of the various channels in the FPGA. If global routing is to be performed, channels in different directions and in different parts of the FPGA can be set to different relative widths. *If detailed routing is to be performed, however, all the channels in the FPGA must have the same width.*

chan_width_io <float>: Width of the channels between the pads and core relative to the widest core channel.

chan_width_x {gaussian | uniform | pulse | delta} peak <width> <xpeak> <dc> : The <> bracketed quantities are needed only for pulse, gaussian, and delta (which doesn't need width). Most values are from 0 to 1. Sets the distribution of tracks for the x-directed channels -- the channels that run horizontally.

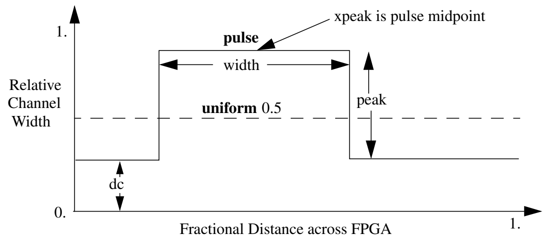

Figure 4: Specification of relative channel widths.

If uniform is specified, you simply specify one argument, peak. This value (by convention between 0 and 1) sets the width of the x-directed core channels relative to the y-directed channels and the channels between the pads and core. Figure 4 should make the specification of uniform (dashed line) and pulse (solid line) channel widths more clear. The gaussian keyword takes the same four parameters as the pulse keyword, and they are all interpreted in exactly the same manner except that in the gaussian case width is the standard deviation of the function.

The delta function is used to specify a channel width distribution in which all the channels have the same width except one. The syntax is chan_width_x delta peak xpeak dc. Peak is the extra width of the single wide channel. Xpeak is between 0 and 1 and specifies the location within the FPGA of the extra-wide channel -- it is the fractional distance across the FPGA at which this extra-wide channel lies. Finally, dc specifies the width of all the other channels. For example, the statement *chan_width_x delta 3 0.5 1* specifies that the horizontal channel in the middle of the FPGA is four times as wide as the other channels.

chan_width_y [gaussian|uniform|pulse|delta] peak <width> <xpeak> <dc>: Sets the distribution of tracks for the y-directed channels.

6.2.2 Logic Block Description

inpin class: integer [top | bottom | left | right] [top | bottom | left | right] ...: Declares an input pin, determines the class to which this pin belongs, and sets the side(s) of CLBs on which the physical output pin connection(s) is (are). All pins with the same class number are logically equivalent -- such as all the inputs of a LUT. Class numbers must start at zero and be consecutive.

outpin class: integer [top | bottom | left | right] [top | bottom | left | right] ...: All parameters have the same meanings as their counterparts in the inpin statement.

NOTE: The order in which your inpin and outpin statements appear must be the same as the order in which your netlist (.net) file lists the connections to the clbs. For example, if the first pin on each clb in the netlist file is the clock pin, your first pin statement in the architecture file must be an inpin statement defining the clock pin.

Pads are always assumed to have only one pin (either an input or an output), and this pin is accessible from the one channel bordering that pad. Hence no inpin or outpin statements are given for pads.

subblocks_per_cluster <int>: Specifies the maximum number of BLEs in each logic block. This information is needed only for timing analysis, which is not yet incorporated into VPR. Nonetheless, you must specify a value for this parameter or the parser will complain.

subblock_lut_size <int>: The number of LUT inputs to each of the subblock BLEs (i.e. K). Again, this information is only needed for timing analysis. Even if your logic block is not constructed from BLEs, it is possible to describe the timing relations between inputs and outputs in terms of BLEs, as one of the examples below illustrates.

The listing below is for an FPGA with all channels of the same width, and a clb compatible with that produced by VPACK with the -no_clustering option. This clb contains a 4-input LUT and a flip flop; the input pins are listed first, followed by the clb output pin, followed by the clock pin. Notice that the four inputs all have the same pin class, indicating that they are logically equivalent and the router may connect nets to any one of them. Notice also that pins can be physically accessible from several sides.

```
# Uniform channel architecture, 4-input LUT and a FF (one BLE) per clb.

io_rat 2                 #2 Pads per row or column.
chan_width_io 1          #Same as core channels.
chan_width_x uniform 1   #All same width
chan_width_y uniform 1

# 4-input LUT. LUT inputs first, then output, then clock.
inpin class: 0 bottom top     #Physical pins at both top and bottom of clb.
inpin class: 0 left right
inpin class: 0 bottom top
inpin class: 0 left right
outpin class: 1 top bottom
inpin class: 2 bottom top

# Class 0 is LUT inputs, class 1 is the output, class 2 is the clock
# in this case.

subblocks_per_cluster 1      # One BLE in each logic block
subblock_lut_size 4          # The LUT in a BLE has 4 inputs
```

As a second example of an architecture file, consider a logic block consisting of a cluster-based logic block, where each logic block has 5 inputs for use by its BLEs, 2 outputs and one clock input. Each logic block contains two separate BLEs, and each BLE consists of a 4-input LUT and a flip flop. If the .net file was created with VPACK, the pin ordering we need to match the .net file is: inputs for use by BLEs, outputs, clock.

```
# Uniform channel architecture, cluster-based logic block containing
# 2 BLEs.

io_rat 2                     #2 Pads per row or column.
chan_width_io 1              #Same as core channels.
chan_width_x uniform 1       #All same width
chan_width_y uniform 1

# Logic block with 2 BLEs.  5 Inputs for use by BLEs first, then two
# outputs, then the clock.
```

```
inpin class: 0 bottom
inpin class: 0 left
inpin class: 0 right
inpin class: 0 top
inpin class: 0 bottom
outpin class: 1 top bottom         #Output 1
outpin class: 1 left right         #Output 2
inpin class: 2 bottom top          #Clock

# Class 0 is LUT inputs, class 1 is the output, class 2 is the clock
# in this case.

subblocks_per_cluster 2      # Two BLEs in each logic block
subblock_lut_size 4          # The LUT in a BLE has 4 inputs
```

Notice that all the inputs are of the same class, indicating they are all logically equivalent, and all the outputs are of the same class, indicating they are also logically equivalent. This is true of all cluster-based logic blocks, as the local routing within the block provides full connectivity. However, for most logic blocks all the inputs and all the outputs are *not* logically equivalent. For example, consider the logic block in Figure 5, which consists of a 3-input and gate and a 2-input or gate. In this case, the set {in1, in2, in3} is logically equivalent, and could all be made class 0. Similarly, the set {in4, in5} is logically equivalent, and could be made class 1. Out1 and out2 are obviously not logically equivalent, so each must be a different class, say class 2 and class 3.

```
inpin class: 0  top       #in1
inpin class: 0  left      #in2
inpin class: 0  right     #in3
inpin class: 1  bottom    #in4
inpin class: 1  right     #in5
outpin class: 2  left     #out1
outpin class: 3  top      #out2
```

If we want to perform timing analysis on the logic block of Figure 5, we must describe the timing relationship between the inputs and outputs. Clearly out1 depends only on in1, in2 and in3, while out2 depends only on in4 and in5. Therefore we could model this logic block as consisting of two BLEs, with each BLE having 3 inputs.

```
subblocks_per_cluster 2
subblock_lut_size 3
```

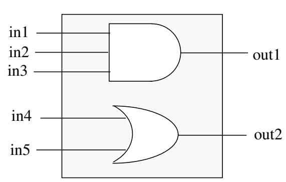

Figure 5: Example logic block where many pins are not logically equivalent.

One line of a .net file of a circuit made out of such logic blocks might therefore be:

```
.clb block_1
    pinlist:  in1 in2 in3 in4 in5  out1  out2
    subblock: and_gate 0 1 2 5 open     # out1 depends on in1, in2 and in3,
                                       # and is not registered.
    subblock: or_gate 3 4 open 6 open   # out2 depends on in4 and in5
                                       # and is not registered.
```

6.2.3 Detailed Routing Architecture Description

The following information is only required to be in the architecture description file if combined global/detailed routing is to be performed. Note that currently combined global/detailed routing is possible only when all channels have been specified to have the same width.

switch_block_type {subset | wilton | universal}: All the switch blocks [7] have $F_s = 3$. That is, whenever horizontal and vertical channels intersect, each wire segment can connect to three other wire segments. The exact topology of which wire segment connects to which can be one of three choices. The *subset* switch box is the planar or domain-based switch box used in the Xilinx 4000 FPGAs -- a wire segment in track 0 can only connect to other wire segments in track 0 and so on. The *wilton* switch box is described in [8], while the *universal* switch box is described in [9]. To see the topology of a switch box, simply hit the "Toggle RR" button when a completed routing is on screen in VPR. In general the wilton switch box is the best of these three topologies and leads to the most routable FPGAs.

Fc_type {absolute | fractional}: Indicates whether the three F_c [7] values (see below) should be interpreted as the number of tracks to which each pin connects (*absolute*), or the fraction of tracks in a channel to which each pin connects (*fractional)*.

Fc_input <float>: Sets the number of tracks to which each logic block input pin connects in each channel bordering the pin. The F_c value used is always the minimum of the specified F_c and the channel width, W, so you can set F_c to be huge if you want F_c to always be W.

Fc_output <float>: Sets the number of tracks to which each logic block output pin connects in each channel bordering the pin.

Fc_pad <float>: Sets the number of tracks to which each I/O pad connects in the channel bordering the pad.

The lines below give an example of a detailed routing description from a .arch file.

```
switch_block_type wilton   # generally the most routable switch box topology
Fc_type fractional         # Fc values below are in terms of fraction of W.
Fc_output 1.    # clb output pins connect to all W tracks in adjacent channels.
Fc_input  0.5   # clb input pins connect to half (0.5 * W) of adjacent tracks.
Fc_pad    0.7   # I/O pads connect to 70% (0.7 * W) of adjacent tracks.
```

6.3 Placement File Format:

The first line of the placement file lists the netlist (.net) and architecture (.arch) files used to create this placement. This information is used to ensure you are warned if you accidentally route this placement with a different architecture or netlist file later. The second line of the file gives the size of the logic block array used by this placement.

All the following lines have the format:

block_name x y subblock_number

The block name is the name of this block, as given in the input netlist. X and y are the row and column in which the block is placed, respectively. The subblock number is meaningful only for pads. Since we can have more than one pad in a row or column when io_rat is set to be greater than 1 in the architecture file, the subblock number specifies which of the several possible pad locations in row x and column y contains this pad. Note that the first pads occupied at some (x, y) location are always those with the lowest subblock numbers -- i.e. if only one pad at (x, y) is used, the subblock number of the I/O placed there will be zero. For clbs, the subblock number is always zero.

The placement files output by VPR also include (as a comment) a fifth field: the block number. This is the internal index used by VPR to identify a block -- it may be useful to know this index if you are modifying VPR and trying to debug something.

Figure 6 shows the coordinate system used by VPR via a small 2 x 2 clb FPGA. The number of clbs in the x and y directions are denoted by nx and ny, respectively. Clbs all go in the area with x between 1 and nx and y between 1 and ny, inclusive. All pads either have x equal to 0 or nx + 1 or y equal to 0 or ny + 1.

An example placement file is given below.

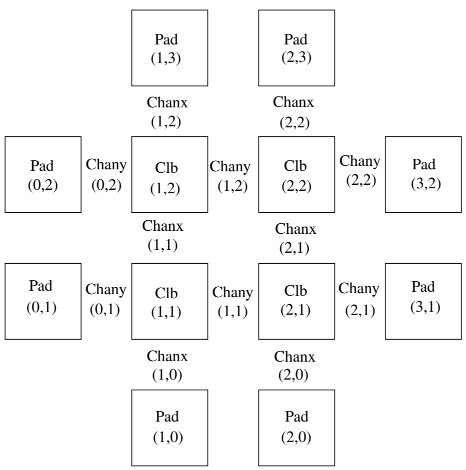

Figure 6: Coordinate system used by VPR.


```
Netlist file: xor5.net   Architecture file: sample.arch
Array size: 2 x 2 logic blocks

#block name   x      y      subblk        block number
#----------   --     --     ------        ------------
a             0      1      0             #0  -- NB: block number is a comment.
b             1      0      0             #1
c             0      2      1             #2
d             1      3      0             #3
e             1      3      1             #4
out:xor5      0      2      0             #5
xor5          1      2      0             #6
[1]           1      1      0             #7
```

Note that this new version of VPR allows the blocks in a placement file to be listed in any order, unlike the old version.

6.4 Routing File Format

The first line of the routing file gives the array size, nx x ny. The remainder of the routing file lists the global or the detailed routing for each net, one by one. Each routing begins with the word net, followed by the net index used internally by VPR to identify the net and, in brackets, the name of the net given in the netlist file. The following lines define the routing of the net. Each begins with a keyword that identifies a type of routing segment. The possible keywords are SOURCE (the source of a certain output pin class), SINK (the sink of a certain input pin class), OPIN (output pin), IPIN (input pin), CHANX (horizontal channel), and CHANY (vertical channel). Each routing begins on a SOURCE and ends on a SINK. In brackets after the keyword is the (x, y) location of this routing resource. Finally, the pad number (if the SOURCE, SINK, IPIN or OPIN was on an I/O pad), pin number (if the IPIN or OPIN was on a clb), class number (if the SOURCE or SINK was on a clb) or track number (for CHANX or CHANY) is listed -- whichever one is appropriate. The meaning of these numbers should be fairly obvious in each case. If we are attaching to a pad, the pad number given for a resource is the subblock number defining to which pad at location (x, y) we are attached. See Figure 6 for a diagram of the coordinate system used by VPR. In a horizontal channel (CHANX) track 0 is the bottommost track, while in a vertical channel (CHANY) track 0 is the leftmost track. Note that if only global routing was performed the track number for each of the CHANX and CHANY resources listed in the routing will be 0, as global routing does not assign tracks to the various nets.

For an N-pin net, we need N-1 distinct wiring "paths" to connect all the pins. The first wiring path will always go from a SOURCE to a SINK. The routing segment listed immediately after the SINK is the part of the existing routing to which the new path attaches. *It is important to realize that the first pin after a SINK is the connection into the already specified routing tree; when computing routing statistics be sure that you do not count the same segment several times by ignoring this fact.* An example routing for one net is listed below.

```
Net 5 (xor5)
```

```
SOURCE (1,2)  Class: 1        # Source for pins of class 1.
  OPIN (1,2)  Pin: 4
 CHANX (1,1)  Track: 1
 CHANX (2,1)  Track: 1
  IPIN (2,2)  Pin: 0
  SINK (2,2)  Class: 0        # Sink for pins of class 0 on a clb.
 CHANX (1,1)  Track: 1        # Note:  Connection to existing routing!
 CHANY (1,2)  Track: 1
 CHANX (2,2)  Track: 1
 CHANX (1,2)  Track: 1
  IPIN (1,3)  Pad: 1
  SINK (1,3)  Pad: 1       # This sink is an output pad at (1,3), subblock 1.
```

Nets which are specified to be global in the netlist file (generally clocks) are not routed. Instead, a list of the blocks (name and internal index) which this net must connect is printed out. The location of each block and the class of the pin to which the net must connect at each block is also printed. For clbs, the class is simply whatever class was specified for that pin in the architecture input file. For pads the pinclass is always -1; since pads do not have logically-equivalent pins, pin classes are not needed. An example listing for a global net is given below.

```
Net 146 (pclk): global net connecting:
Block pclk (#146) at (1, 0), pinclass -1.
Block pksi_17_ (#431) at (3, 26), pinclass 2.
Block pksi_185_ (#432) at (5, 48), pinclass 2.
Block n_n2879 (#433) at (49, 23), pinclass 2.
```

7 Debugging Aids

After parsing the netlist and architecture files, VPR dumps out an image of its internal data structures into net.echo and arch.echo. These files can be examined to be sure that VPR is parsing the input files as you expect. If the preprocessor flag DEBUG is defined in pr.h, some additional sanity checks are performed during a run. I normally leave DEBUG on all the time, as it only slows execution by 1 to 2%. The major sanity checks are always enabled, regardless of the state of DEBUG. Finally, if VERBOSE is set in pr.h, a great deal of intermediate data will be printed to the screen as VPR runs. If you set verbose, you may want to redirect screen output to a file.

The initial and final placement costs provide useful numbers for regression testing the netlist parsers and the placer, respectively. I generate and print out a routing serial number to allow easy regression testing of the router.

Finally, if you need to route an FPGA whose routing architecture cannot be described in VPR's architecture description file, don't despair! The router, graphics, sanity checker, and statistics routines all work only with a graph that defines all the available routing resources in the FPGA and the permissible connections between them. If you change the routines that build this graph (in rr_graph.c) so that they create a graph describing your FPGA, you should be able to route your FPGA. If you want to read a text file describing the entire routing resource graph, call the dump_rr_graph subroutine.

8 References

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[7] S. Brown, R. Francis, J. Rose, and Z. Vranesic, *Field-Programmable Gate Arrays*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992.

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[9] Y. W. Chang, D. F. Wong, and C. K. Wong, "Universal Switch Modules for FPGA Design," *ACM Trans. on Design Automation of Electronic Systems*, Jan. 1996, pp. 80 - 101.