

Hardware Modeling [VU] (191.011)

– WS25 –

Latches and combinational loops

Florian Huemer & Sebastian Wiedemann & Dylan Baumann

WS 2025/26

Undesired Latches

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Latches &
Loops

Latches

Comb. Loops

Summary

- When should you use a latch or a flip-flop?

Undesired Latches

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- When should you use a latch or a flip-flop?
- In this course latches are **always** undesired

Undesired Latches

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- When should you use a latch or a flip-flop?
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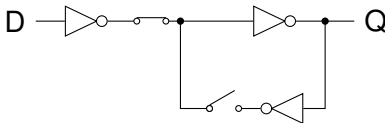
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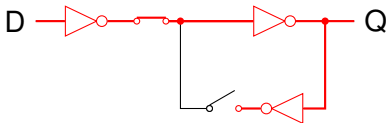


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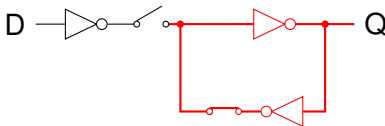


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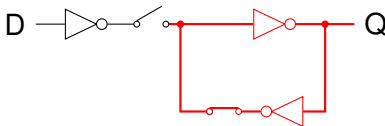


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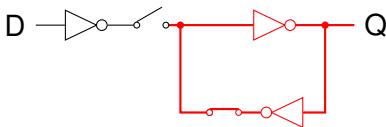


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- Often not available as primitive building blocks
 - Built from combinational elements instead
 - Delay of feedback path can become high
 - Feedback path can lead to oscillation



Pitfalls - Latch Errors (cont'd)

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- How do latches *happen*?

Pitfalls - Latch Errors (cont'd)

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■ How do latches *happen*?

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1 entity cmp is
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- How do latches *happen*?
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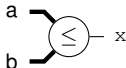
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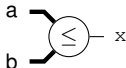
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- Always cover all paths/cases!



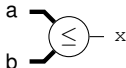
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 - Default assignment or *others*



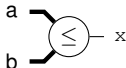
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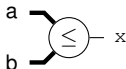
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- How do latches *happen*?
 - Not all paths write to signal
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- Always cover all paths/cases!
 - Default assignment or *others*
- Detected during synthesis
 - **Never** ignore warnings!



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Pitfalls - Combinational Loops

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- Feedback loops not exclusive to latches

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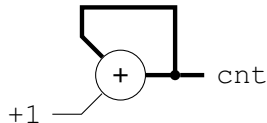
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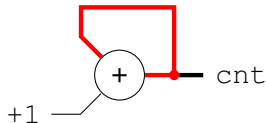
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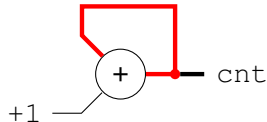
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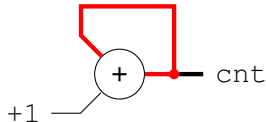
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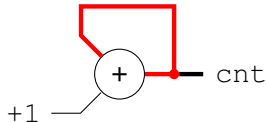
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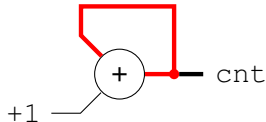
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- Comb. process must never read **and** write to same signal
 - Hard to spot at interfaces
 - Feedback paths must contain flip-flops
- Also reported during synthesis

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Pitfalls - Combinational Loops (cnt'd)

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6       cnt <= (others => '0');
7     elsif rising_edge(clk) then
8       cnt <= cnt_next;
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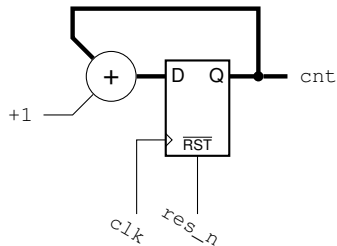
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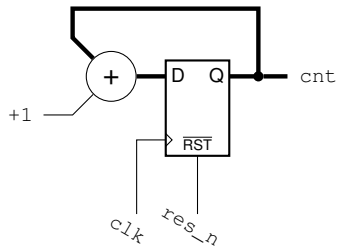
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- Latches
 - Often due to missing default values
- Comb. loops
 - Never read **and** write same signal
- Never ignore tool warnings!

10631 VHDL Process Statement warning at top_arch.vhd(13): inferring latch(es) for signal or variable "abc", which holds its previous value in one or more paths through the process

332125 Found combinational loop of 2 nodes

Lecture Complete!