Qsys and IP Core Integration

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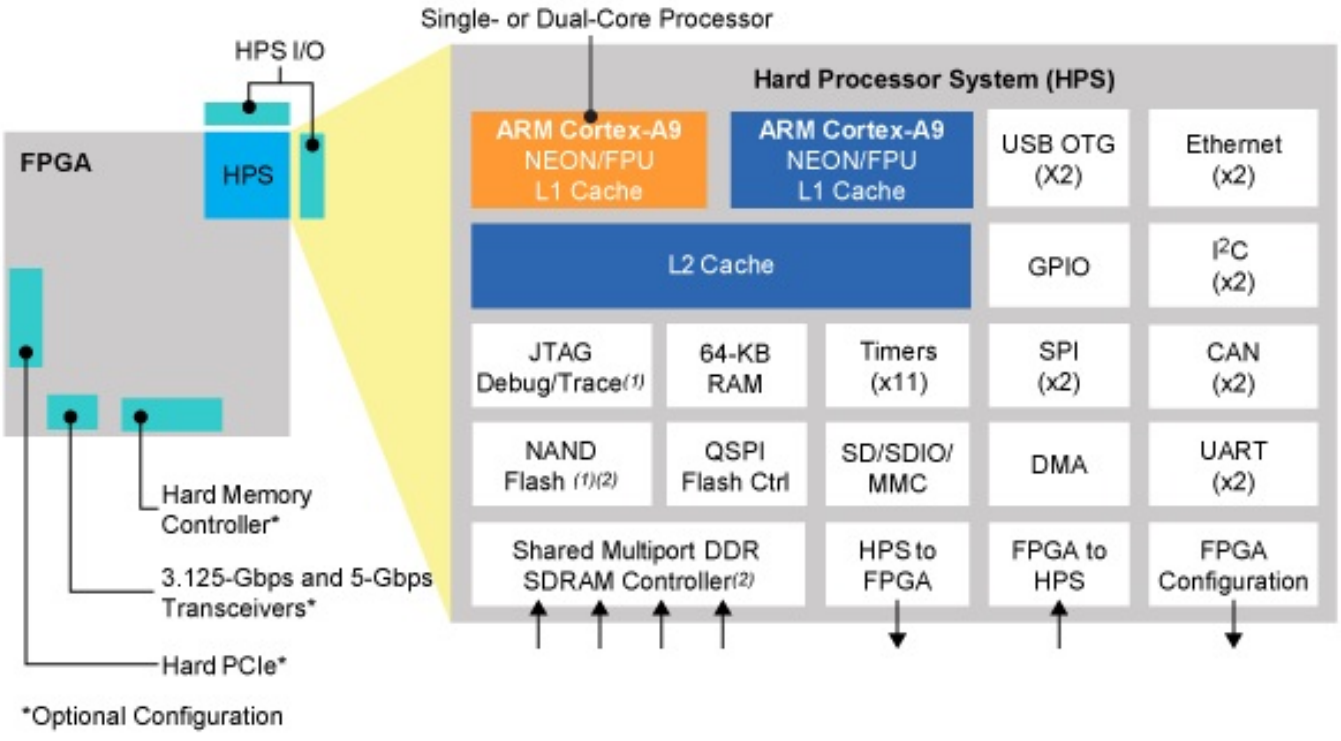
Spring 2014

Overview

What are IP Cores?
Altera Design Tools for using and integrating IP Cores
Overview of various IP Core Interconnect Fabrics

Cyclone V SoC - Mix of Hard and Soft IP Cores



Source: Altera

IP Core

"In electronic design a semiconductor intellectual property core, IP core, or IP block is a reusable unit of logic, cell, or chip layout design that is the intellectual property of one party... The term is derived from the licensing of the patent and/or source code copyright that exist in the design. IP cores can be used as building blocks within ASIC chip designs or FPGA logic designs."

Source: Wikipedia: Semiconductor Intellectual Property Core

IP Core Types - Hard vs. Soft

"Hard" IP: Dedicated ASIC blocks within the FPGA targeting specific functionality

"Soft" IP: Implemented using the general purpose configurable fabric of the FPGA

Example IP Cores

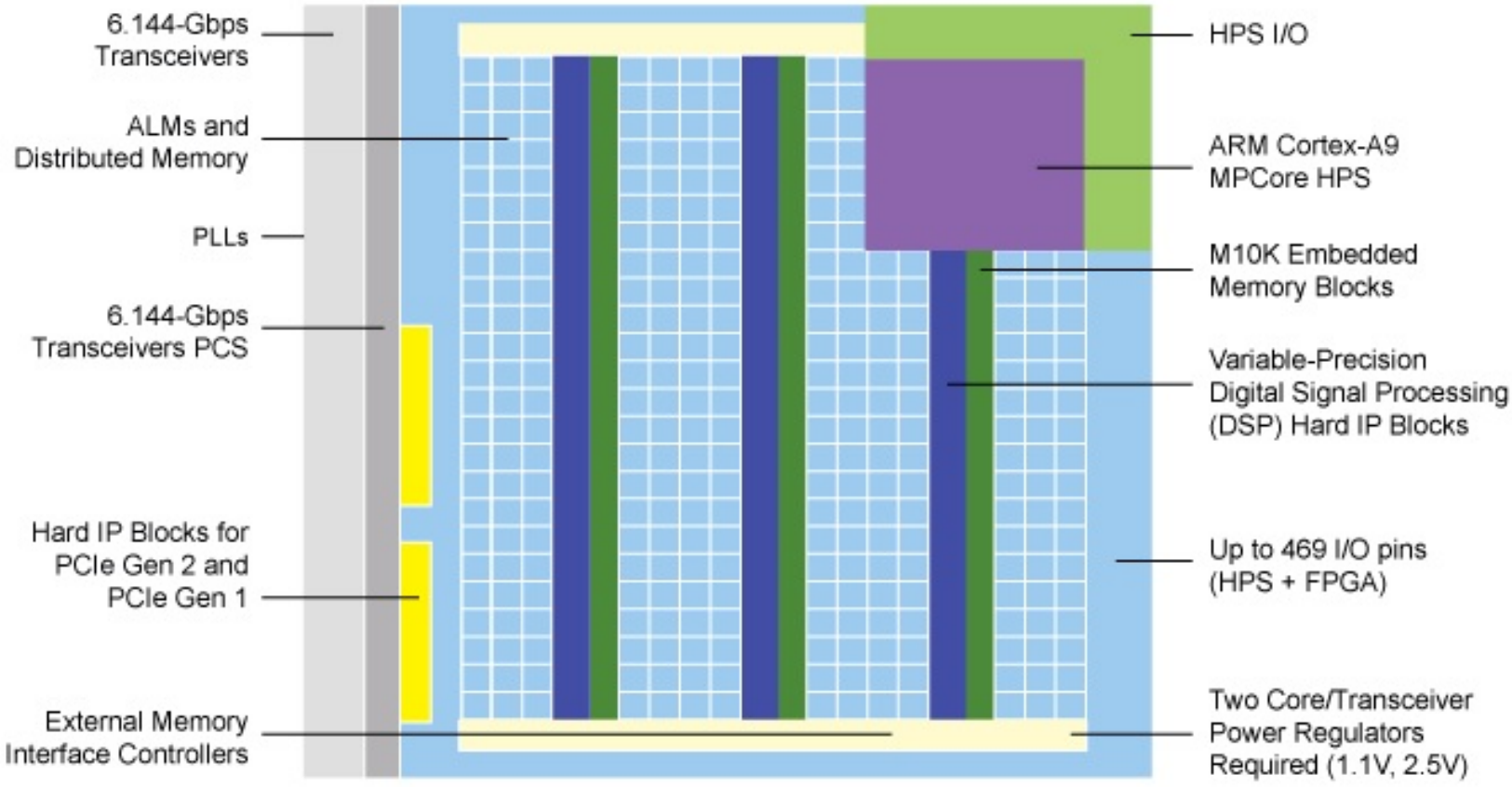
CPUs: either hard (ARM SoC) or soft-core (Nios II)

Highspeed I/O: Hard IP Blocks for High Speed Transceivers (PCI Express, 10Gb Ethernet, etc)

Memory Controllers: (onboard SRAMs, external DDR3, etc)

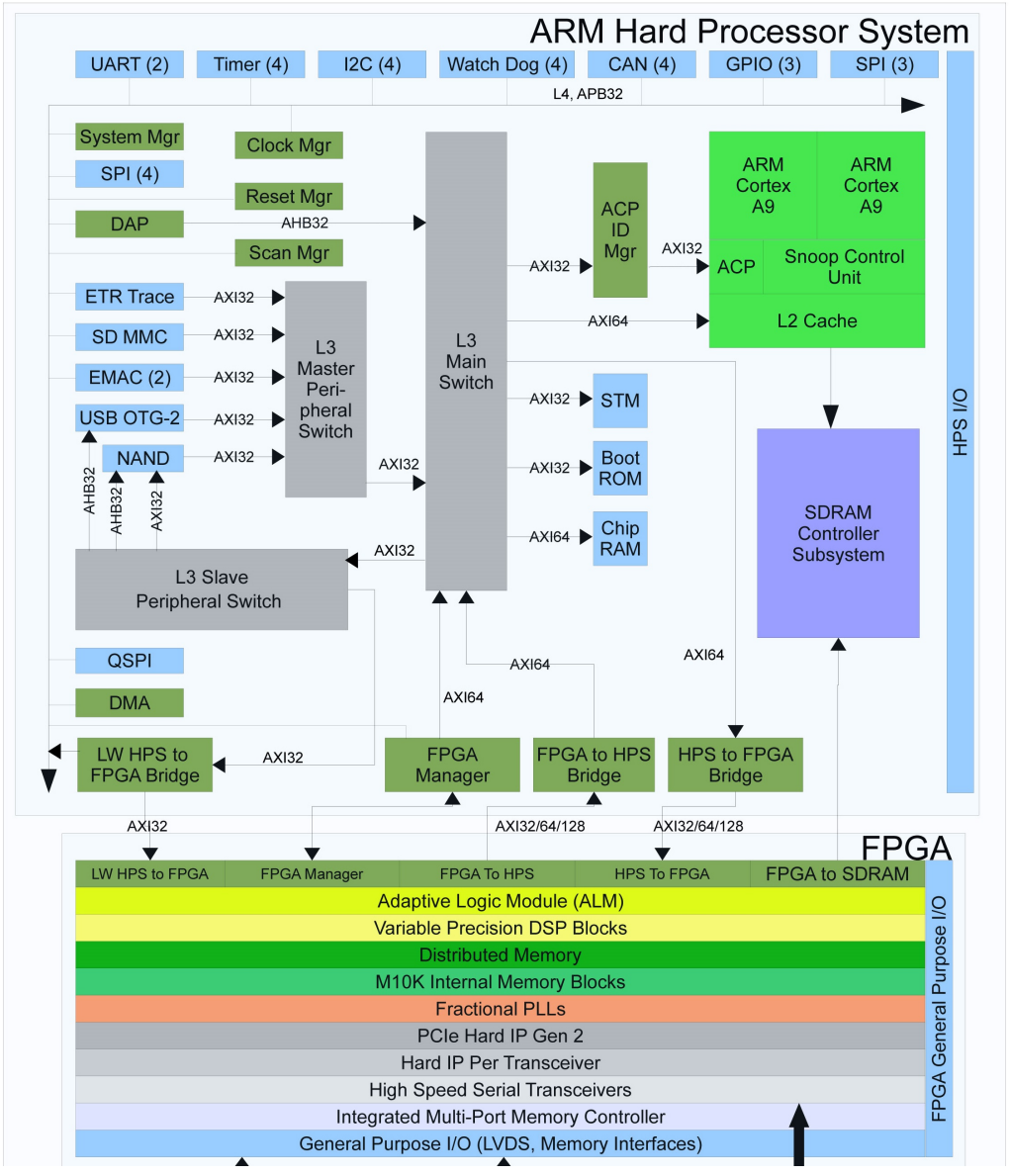
Clock and Reset signal generation: (PLLs)

Cyclone V SoC - FPGA layout



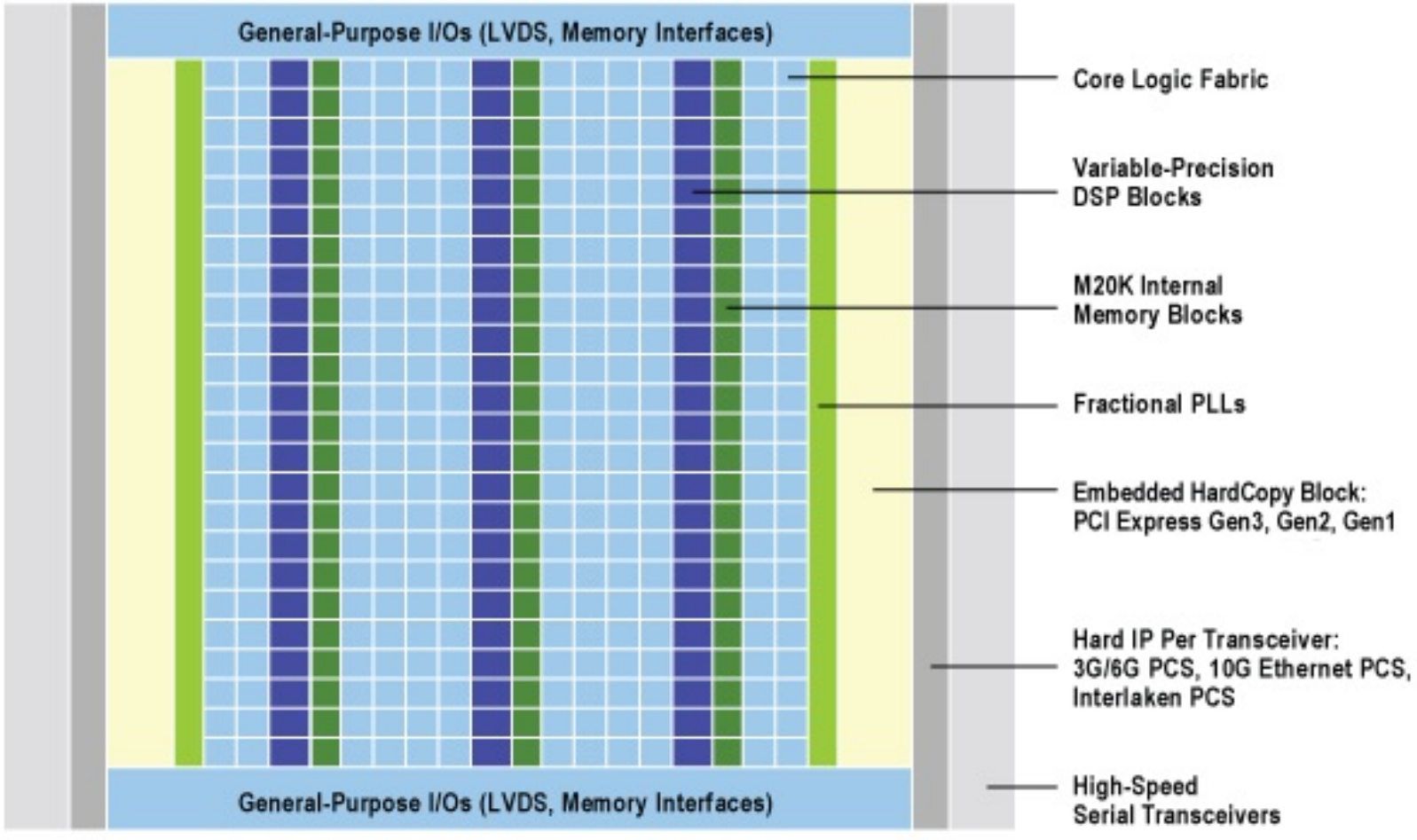
Source: Altera

Cyclone V SoC - HPS Layout



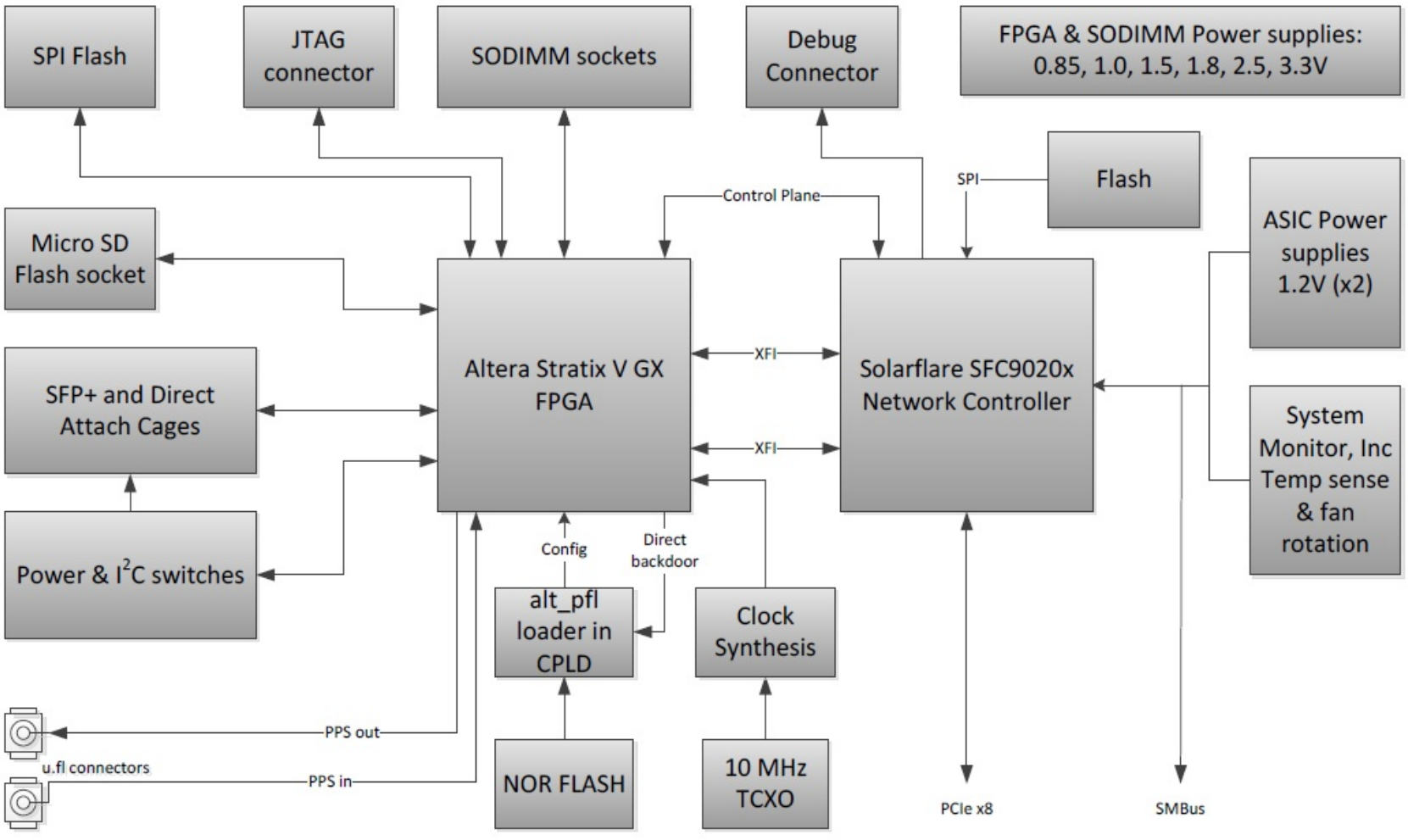
Source: NARD, LLC.

Stratix V - FPGA Layout



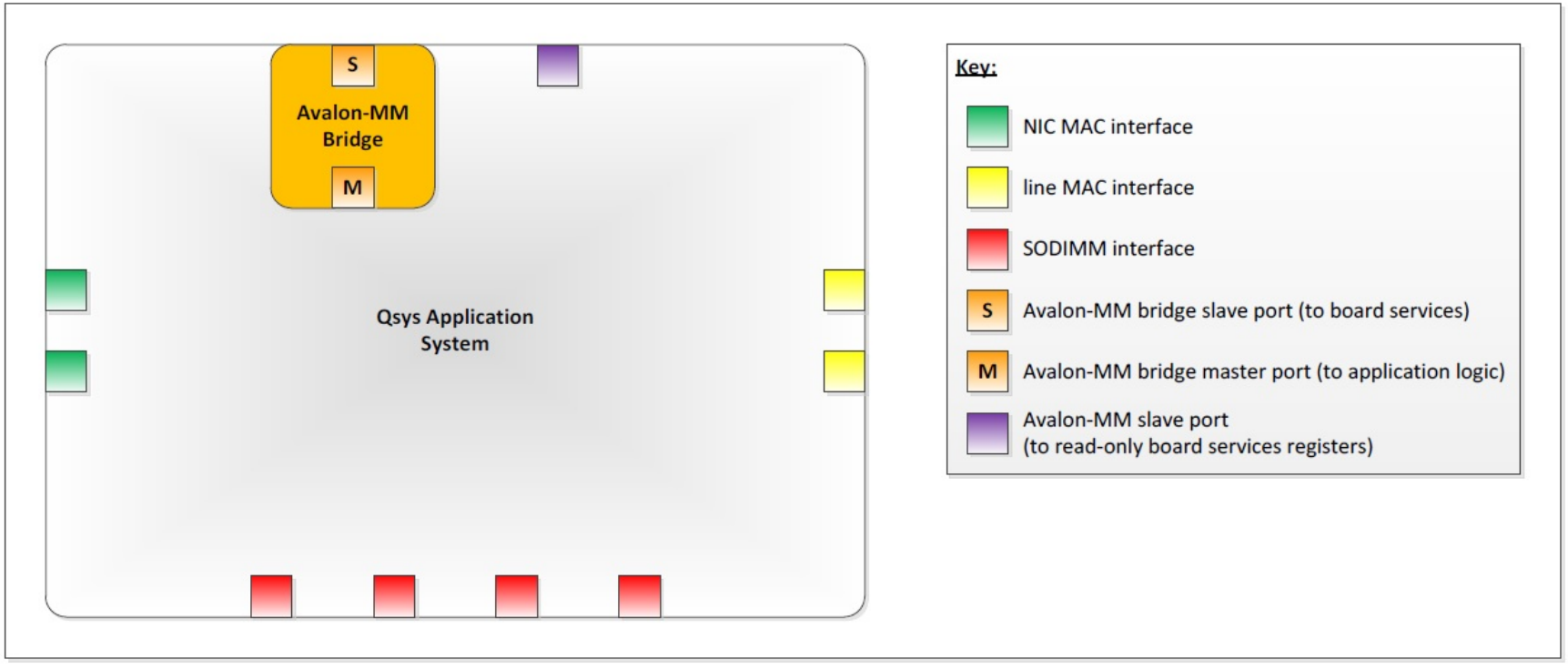
Source: Altera

Stratix V - Solarflare AoE PCB Layout



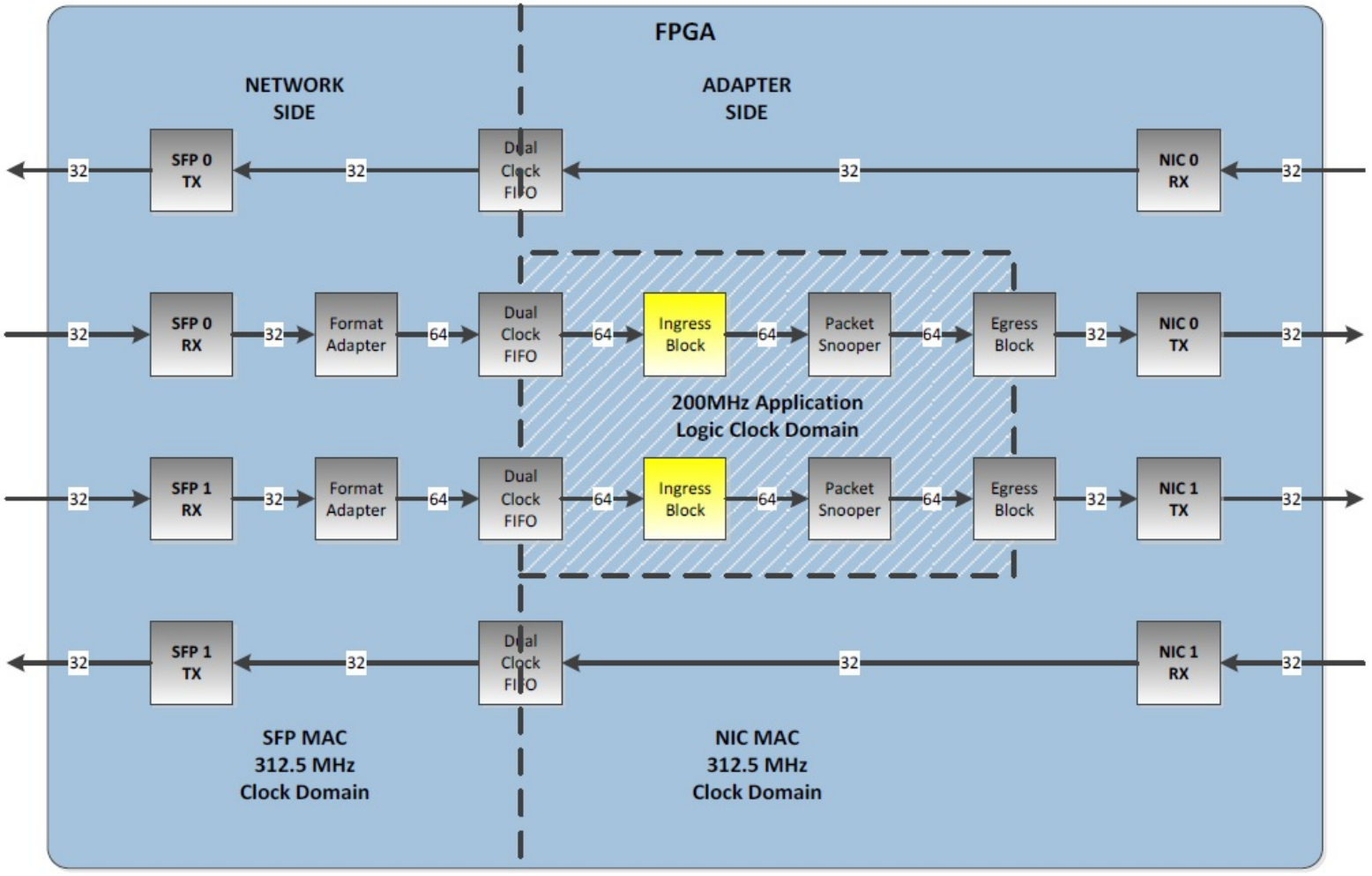
Source: Solarflare FDK

Stratix V - Solarflare AoE Qsys Layout



Source: Solarflare FDK

Stratix V - Solarflare AoE Qsys Example



Source: Solarflare FDK

Bridges

Purpose: modify how data is transported between components.

Allows for: different clock domains, protocol conversion (AXI <–> Avalon), pipelining, bus width adaptation, etc

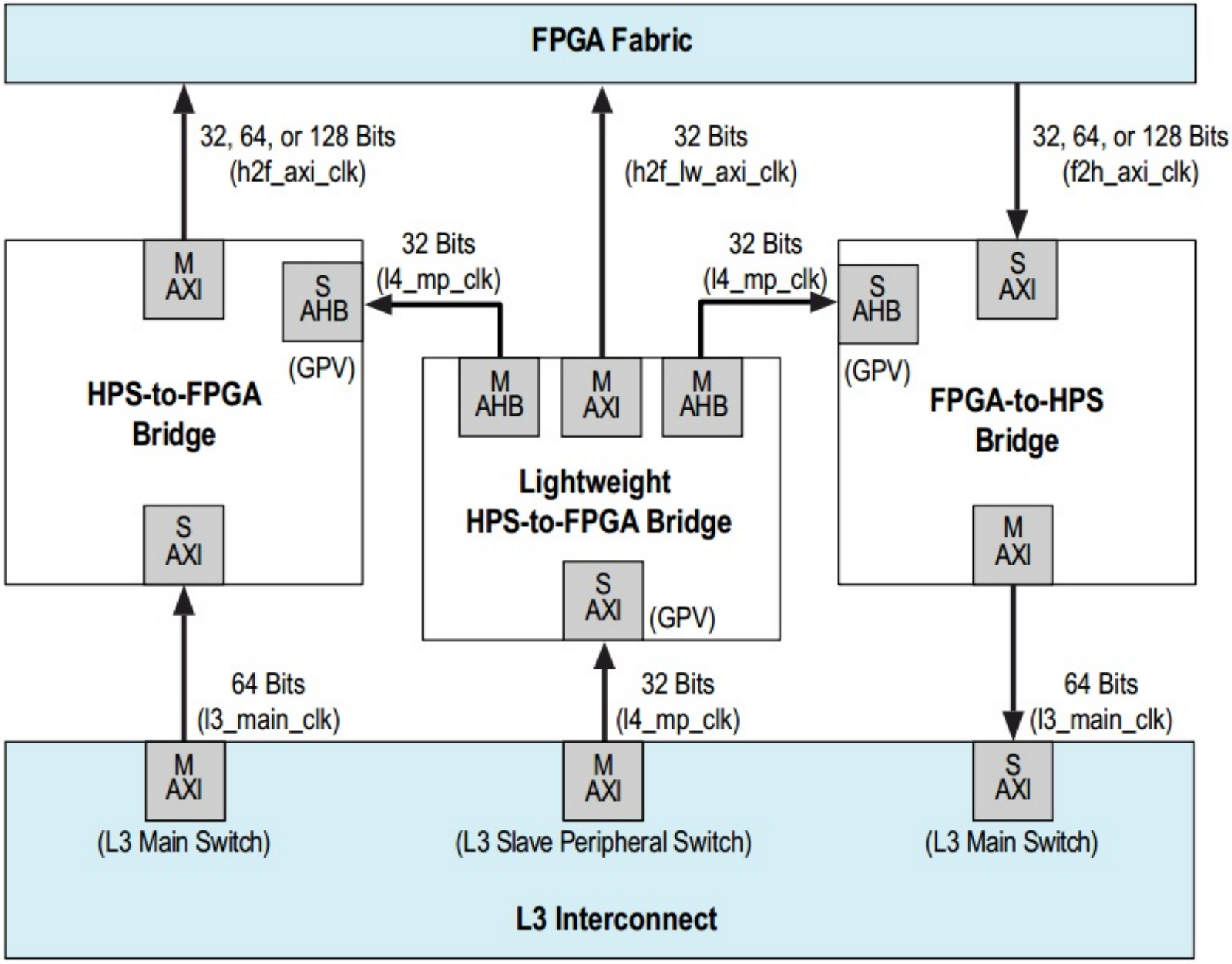
Bridge Types:

SOC HPS <–> FPGA Bridge

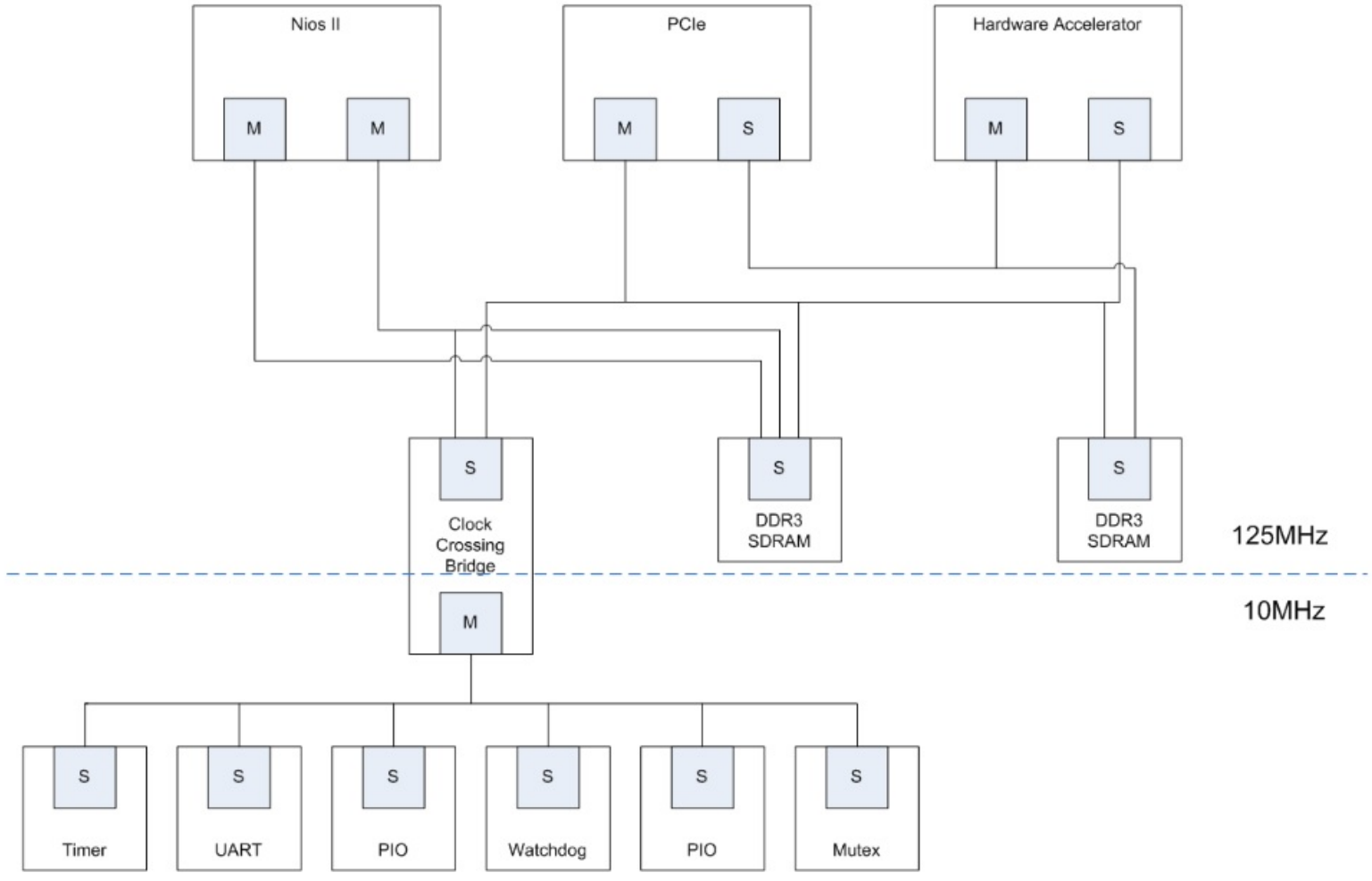
Avalon MM Clock Crossing Bridge

Avalon MM Pipeline Bridge

Cyclone V SoC: FPGA <–> HPS Bridge

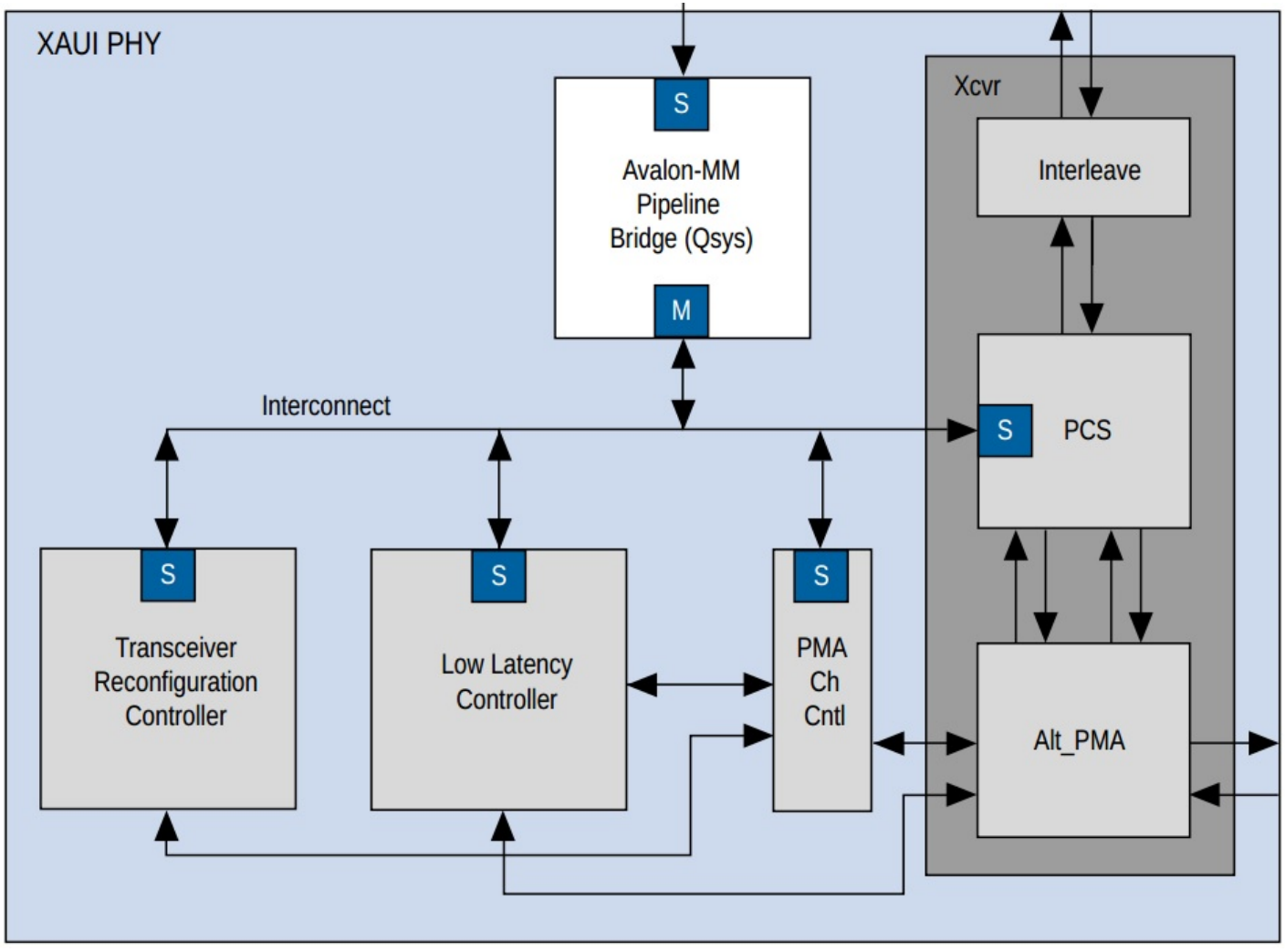


Clock Crossing Bridge Example



Source: Altera

Pipeline Bridge Example



Source: Altera

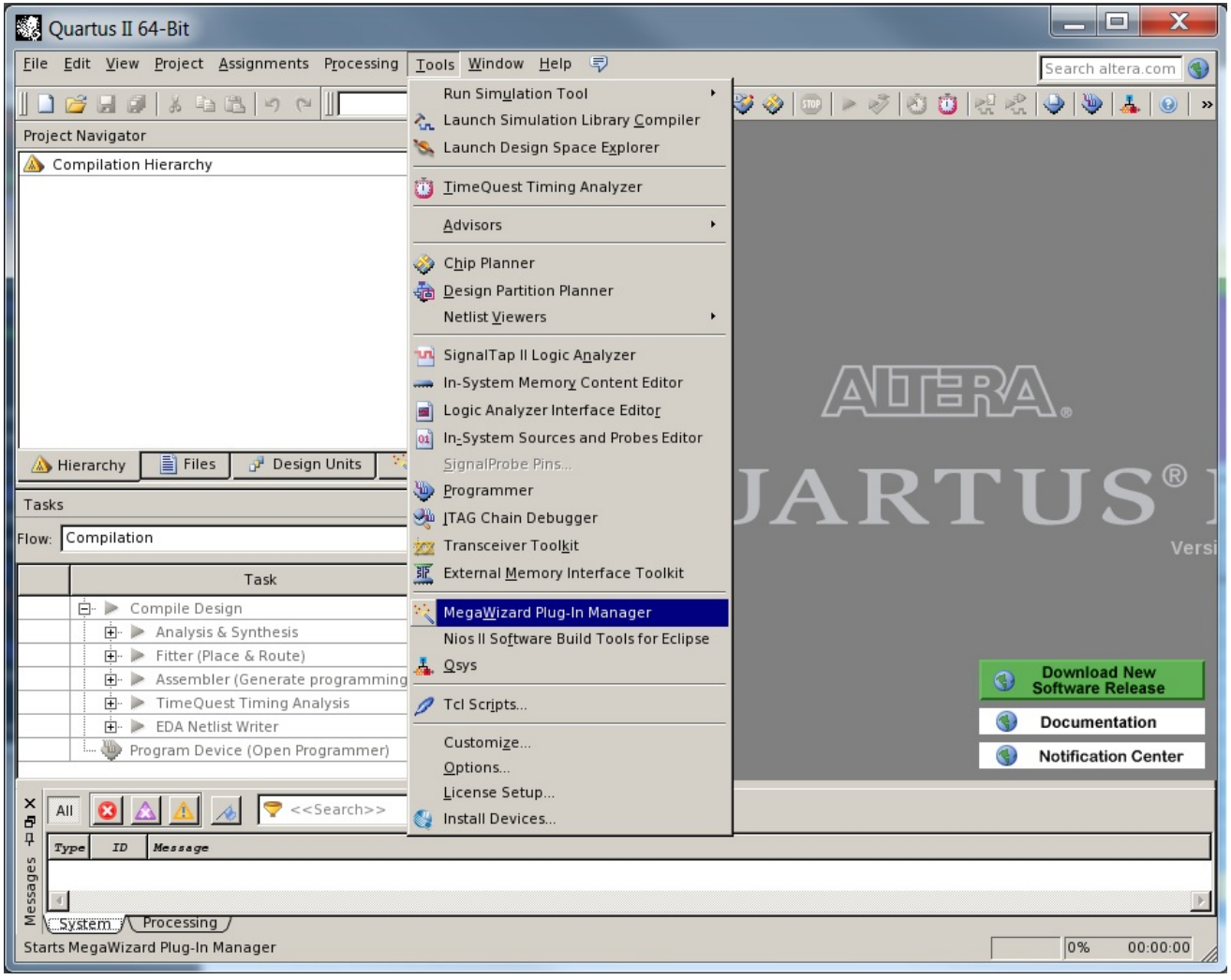
Altera Tools for IP Cores

Megawizard

SOPC Builder: System-on-Chip (SoC); old, replaced by Qsys

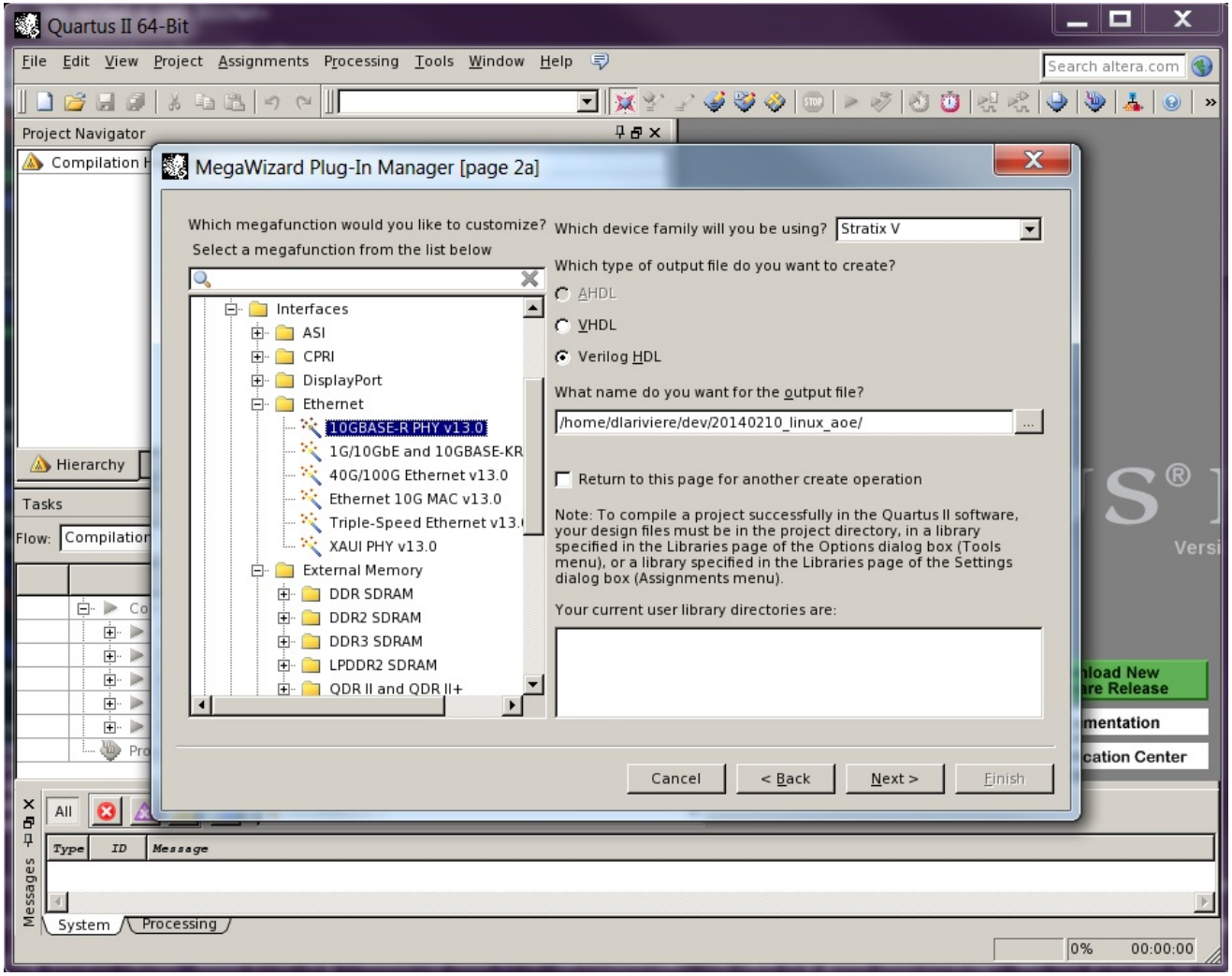
Qsys: Network-on-Chip (NoC).

Megawizard



Source: Altera

Megawizard - Example 10Gb Ethernet PHY



Source: Altera

Megawizard IP Cores

Arithmetic: Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, Division, Multiply-(add|accumulate), ECC

Floating Point:

Gate Functions: Shift Registers, Decoders, Multiplexers

I/O Functions: PLL, temp sensor, remote update, various high speed transceiver related

Memory: (Single|Dual)-port RAM or ROMs, (Single|Dual)-clock FIFOs, (RAM) Shift registers

DSP: FFT, ECC, FIR, etc (large suite specifically for graphics as well)

Note: availability of specific megafunctions is FPGA specific (may only be available on Stratix V but no Cyclone V SoC, etc)

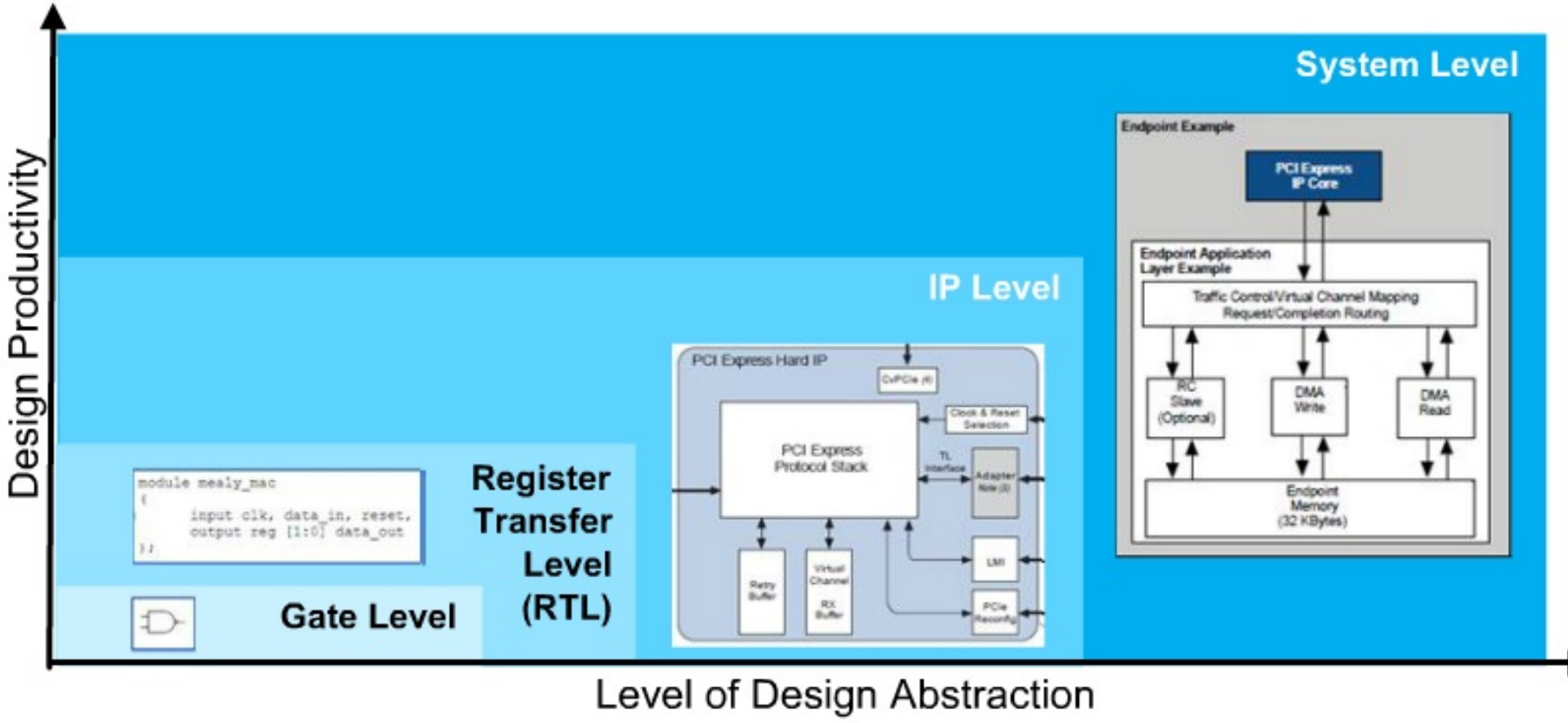
Qsys

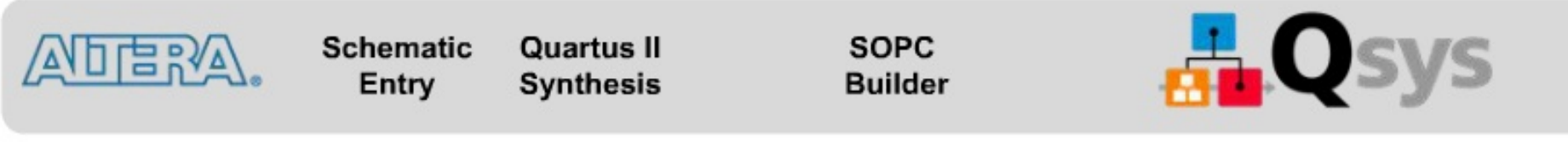
Qsys is Altera's system integration tool for building Network-on-Chip (NoC) designs connecting multiple IP cores.

It replaces SOPC Builder (previous version of the tool).

You utilize Qsys to construct a system of IP components (and even system of systems), and Qsys will automatically generate the interconnect, add required adaptation, warn on misconfigurations, etc.

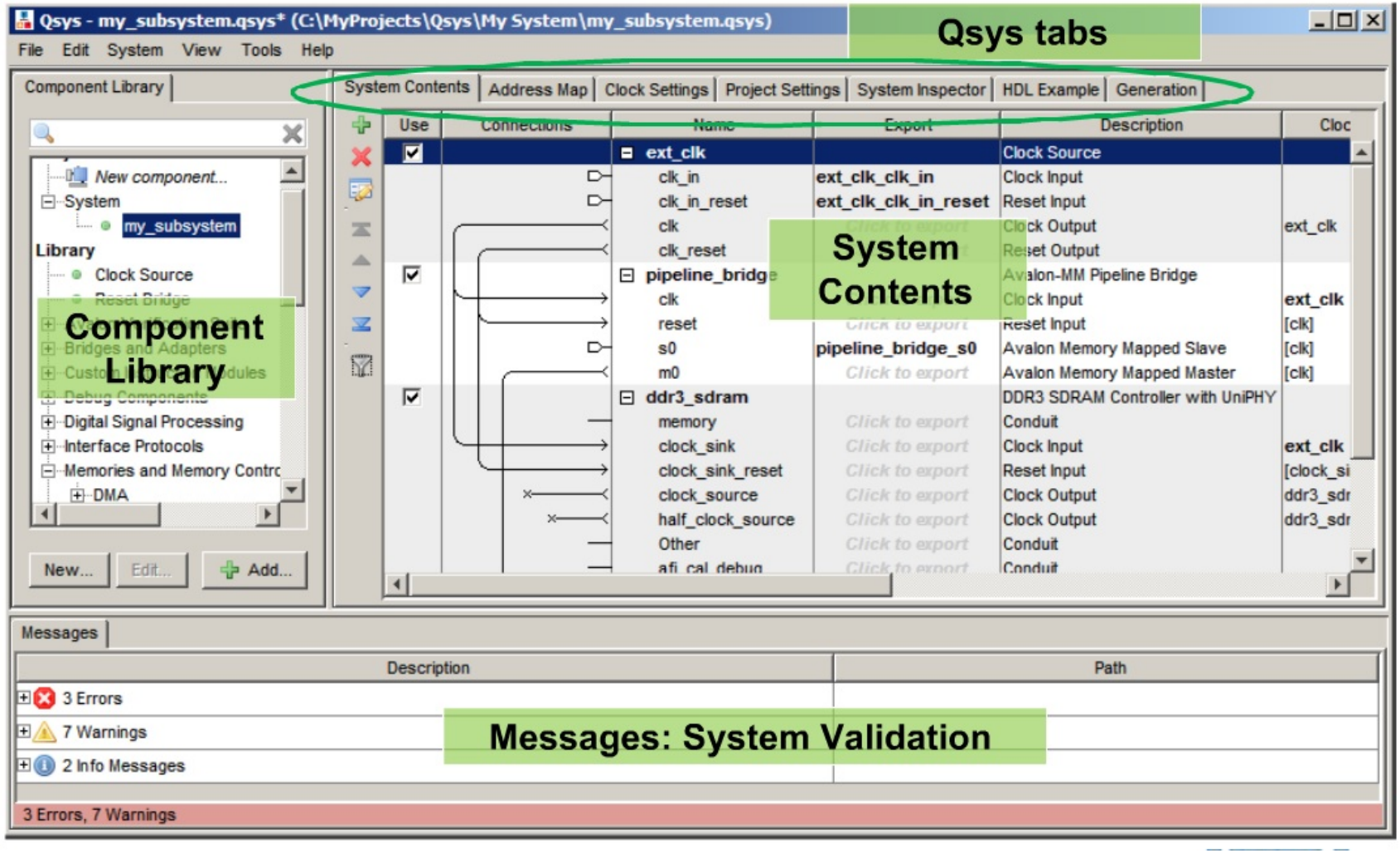
Qsys - Raising Level of Abstraction





Source: Altera

Qsys UI



Source: Altera

System Level Design - Why use Qsys

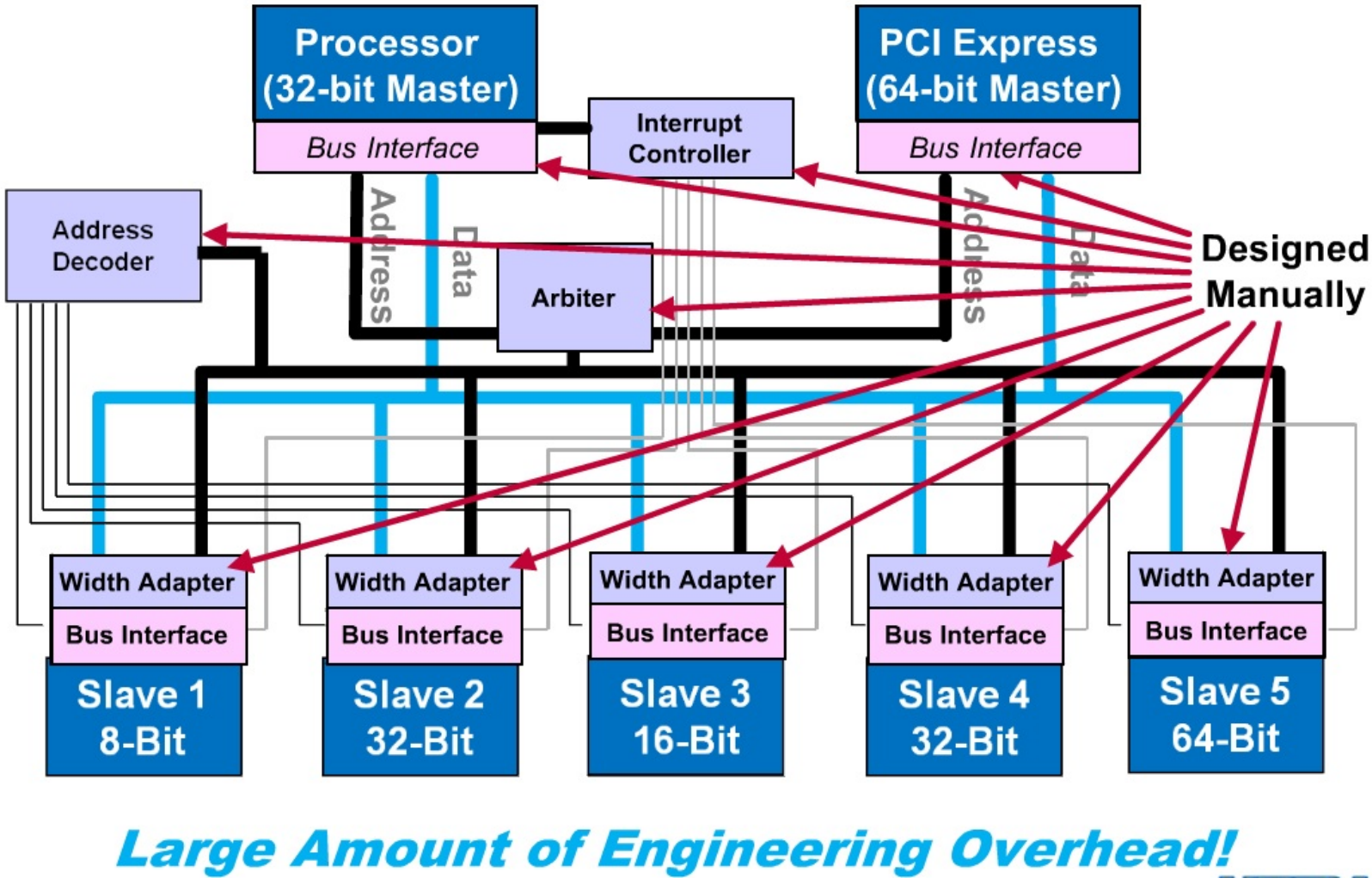
Avoids manually developing custom interconnect fabrics and signaling.

Instead of cycle-to-cycle coordination between every individual IP core, focus on ‘transaction’ level designs.

Design IP without knowing exactly when data will transfer and instead only focus on how (once it does).

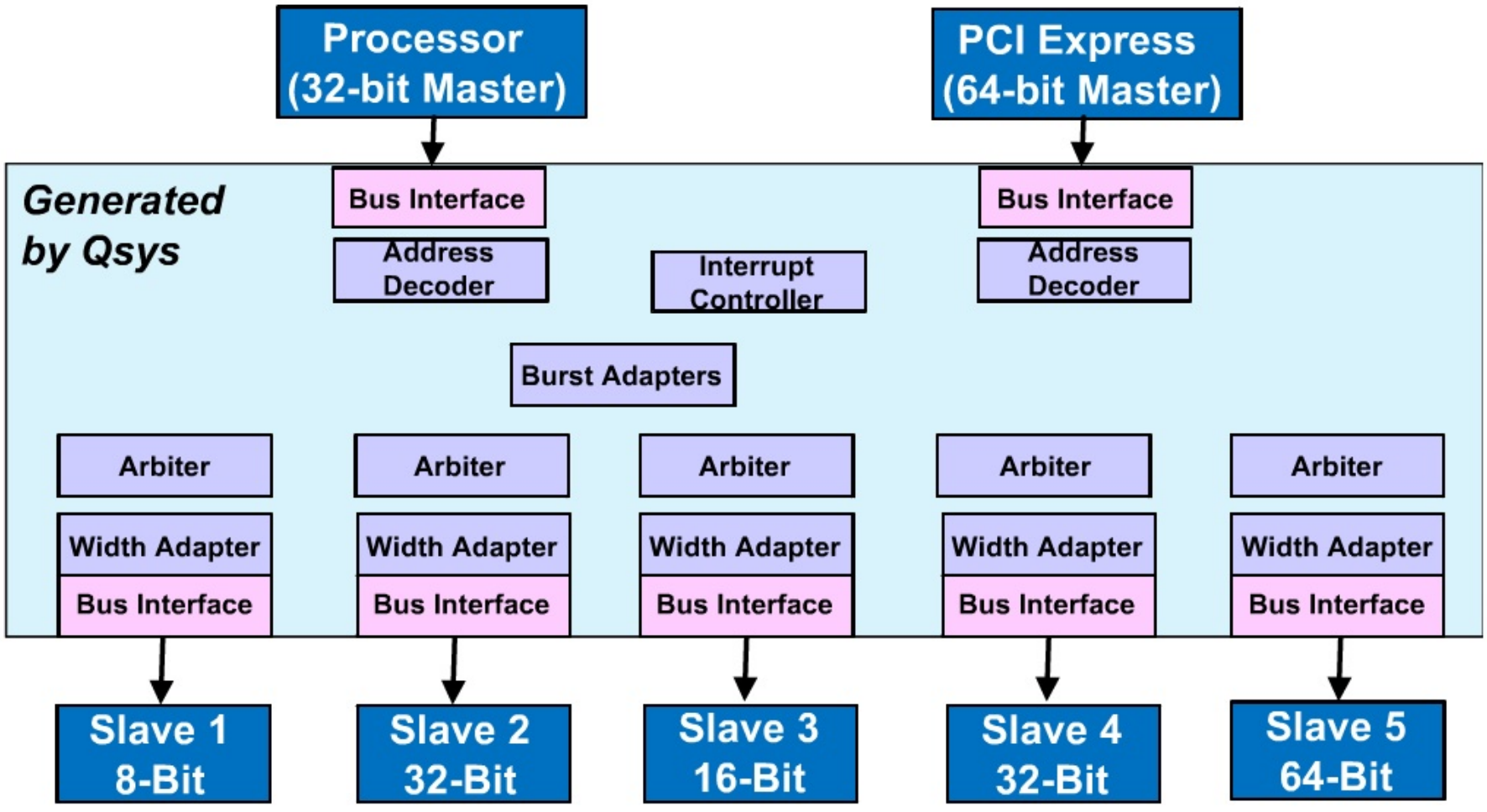
(Only valid if you design your individual components to one of the standardized interfaces)

Old (Manual) Method of Design



Source: Altera

Qsys-based Method of Design



Source: Altera

Interface Types

Memory-mapped Interfaces:
Avalon MM (Altera)
AXI (ARM, supported by Qsys now for SoC)

Streaming Interfaces: Avalon ST:

Avalon ST source port: outputs streaming data

Avalon ST sink port: receives incoming streaming data

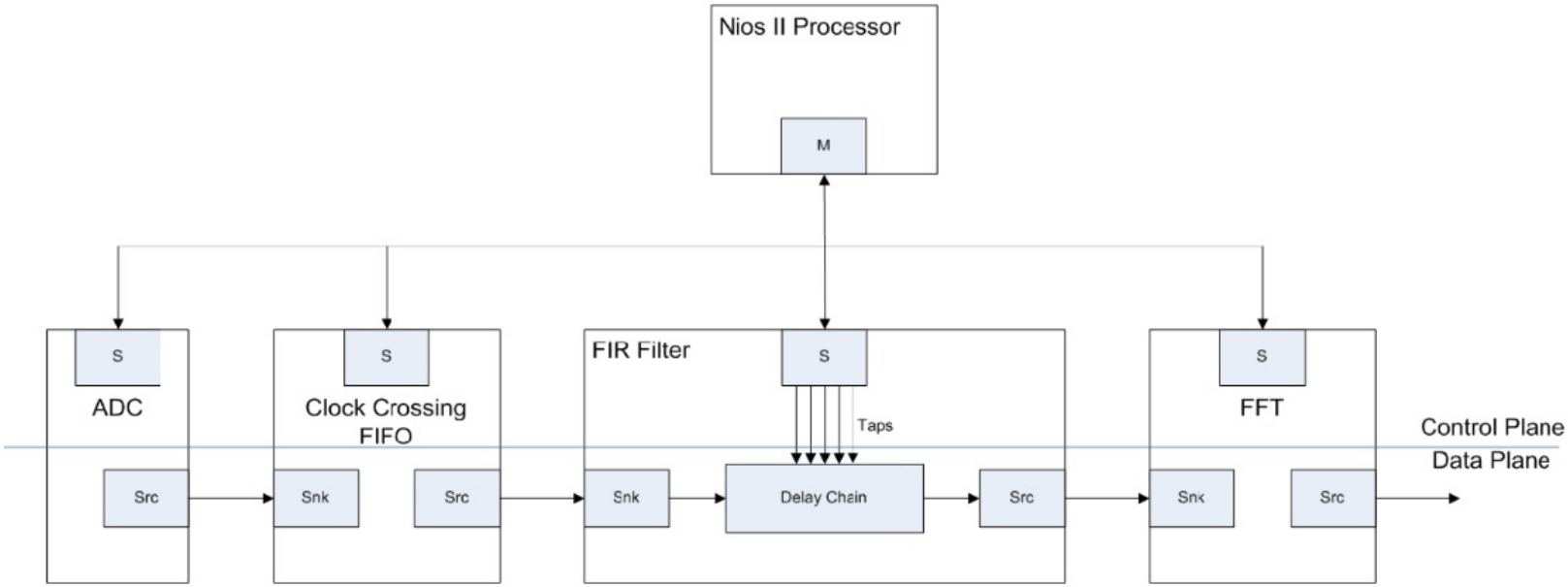
"Control" vs. "Data" Planes

Control Plane: Memory mapped registers typically used for configuring devices, querying status, initiating transactions, etc (low bandwidth)

Data Plane: Streaming directed graphs for actually moving and processing large amounts of data (audio/video, network packets, etc); high bandwidth

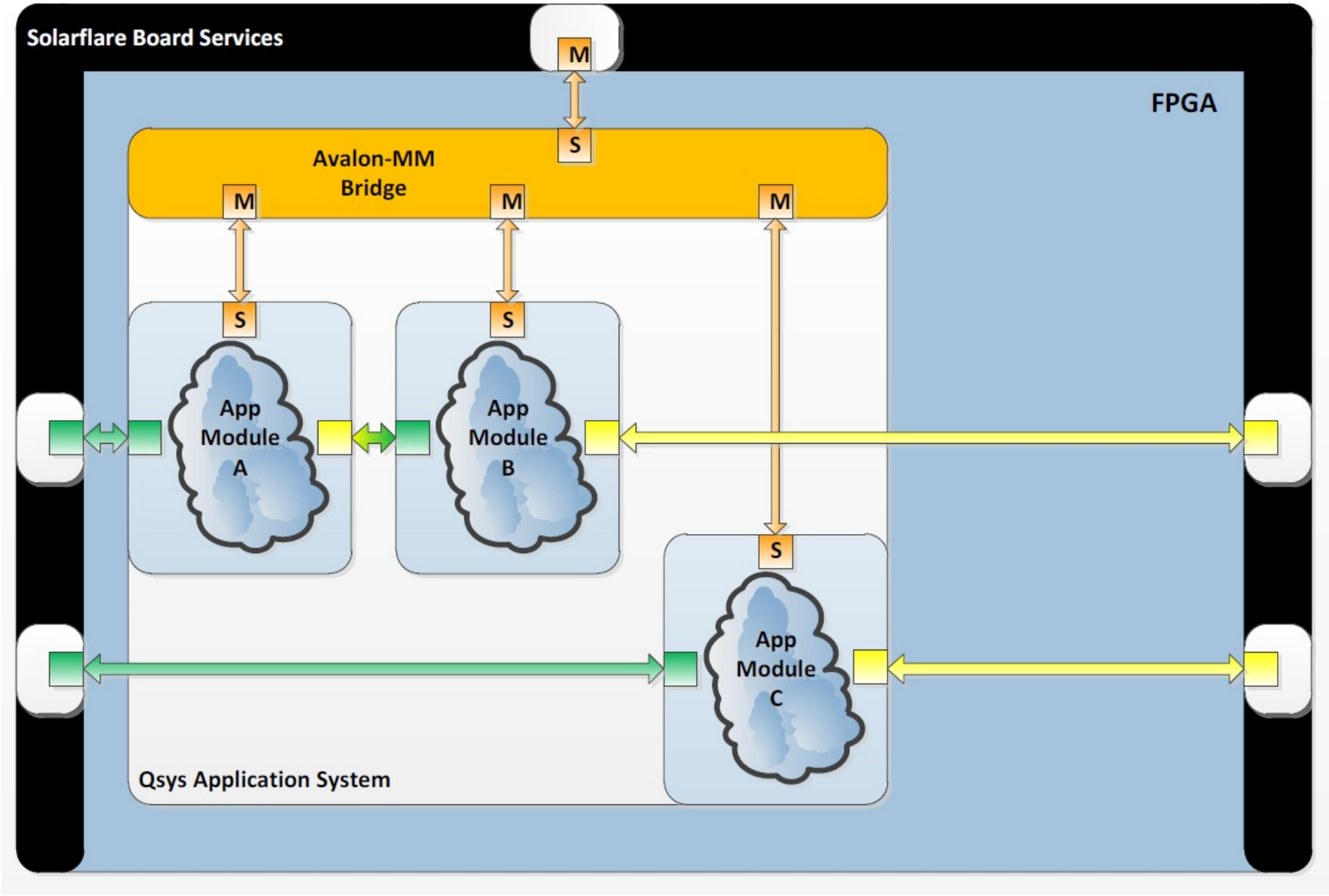
A single IP core can have both MM and ST interfaces (including multiple of each).

Control and Data Planes Example



Source: Altera

Control and Data Planes Example - Solarflare AoE



Source: Altera

Qsys signal types

Clock

Reset

Interrupt

Avalon MM signals

Avalon ST signals

Tristate

Conduit (avoid unless truly not one of the above)

Why explicitly label signal types?

...vs. simply making everything a wire/conduit

Allows Qsys to protect you from yourself!

Ensure matching between signal types ("clock out" –> "clock in", etc)

Detect and automatically insert dual clock crossing domains (only if it knows which clock domains IPs are in)

Automatically convert data widths, formats, error flags (convert 32 bit master into four 8-bit slave reads, etc)

Automatically synchronize and OR-gate multiple resets

Automatically insert pipeline stages to improve fmax

Avalon MM Master Signals

Signal type	Width	Direction	Required	Description
address	1-64	Output	Y	Byte address corresponding to slave for transfer request *(discussed later)*
waitrequest waitrequest_n	1	Input	Y	Forces master to stall transfer until deasserted; other Avalon-MM interface signals must be held constant
read read_n	1	Output	N	Indicates master issuing read request
readdata	8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024	Input	N	Data returned from read request
write write_n	1	Output	N	Indicates master issuing write request
writedata	8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024	Output	N	Data to be sent for write request
byteenable byteenable_n	2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128	Output	N	Specifies valid byte lane(s) for readdata or writedata (width = data width / 8)
lock lock_n	1	Output	N	Once master is granted access to shared slave, locks arbiter to master until deasserted

Source: Altera

Avalon MM Slave Signals

Signal type	Width	Direction	Required	Description
address	1-64	Input	N	Word address of slave for transfer request *(discussed later)*
waitrequest waitrequest_n	1	Output	N	Allows slave to stall transfer until deasserted (other Avalon-MM interface signals must be held constant)
read read_n	1	Input	N	Indicates slave should respond to read request
readdata	8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024	Output	N	Data provided to Qsys interconnect in response to read request
write write_n	1	Input	N	Indicates slave should respond to write request
writedata	8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024	Input	N	Data from the Qsys interconnect for a write request
byteenable byteenable_n	2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128	Input	N	Specifies valid byte lane for readdata or writedata (width = data width / 8)
begintransfer begintransfer_n	1	Input	N	Asserts at the beginning (first cycle) of any transfer

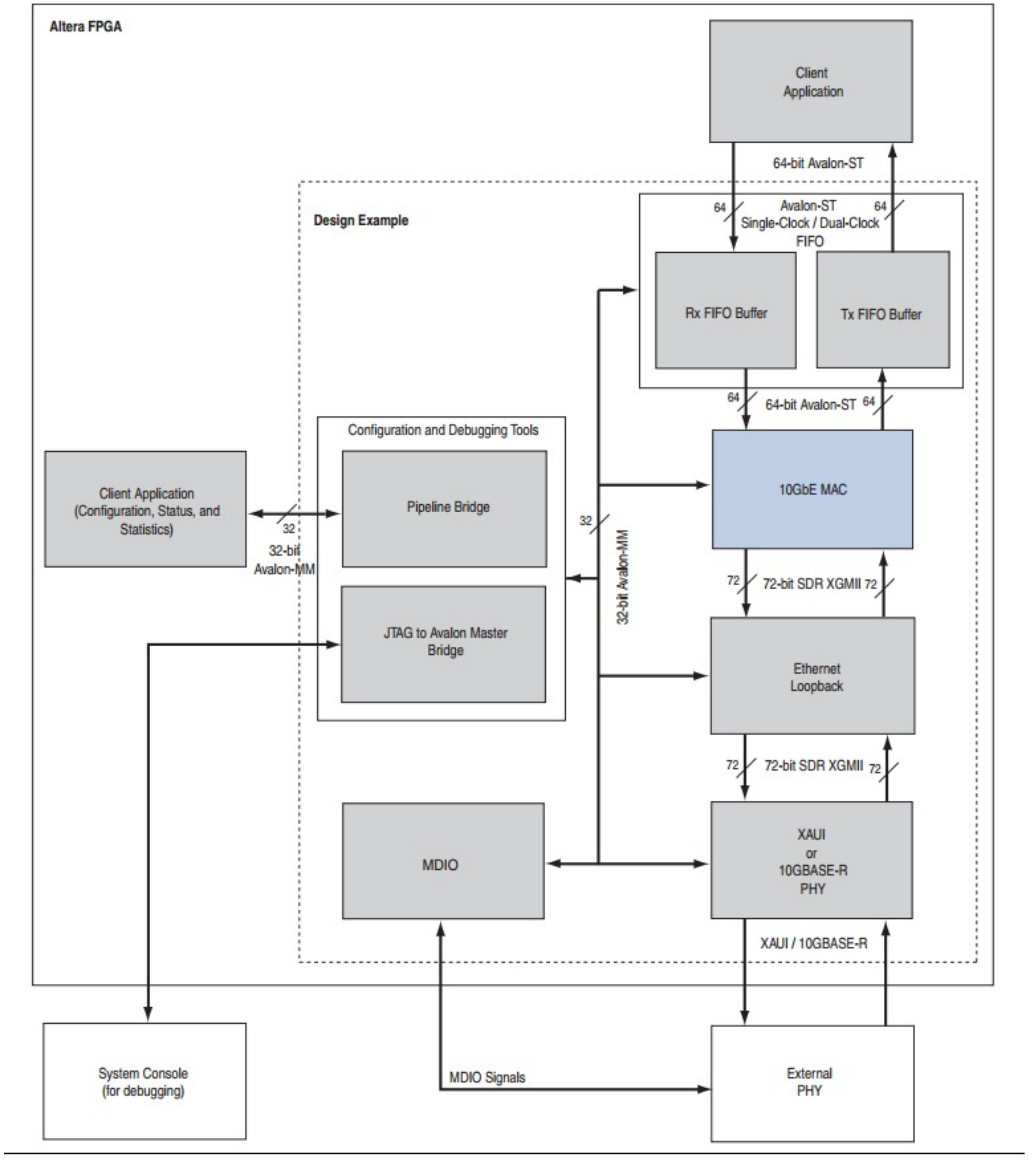
Source: Altera

Avalon ST Signals

Signal type	Width	Direction	Description
Fundamental signals			
ready	1	Sink → Source	Indicates the sink can accept data
valid	1	Source → Sink	Qualifies all source to sink signals
data	1-4096	Source → Sink	Payload of the information being transmitted
channel	1-128	Source → Sink	Channel number for data being transferred (if multiple channels supported)
error	1-255	Source → Sink	Bit mask marks errors affecting the data being transferred
Packet transfer signals			
startofpacket	1	Source → Sink	Marks the beginning of the packet
endofpacket	1	Source → Sink	Marks the end of the packet
empty	1-8	Source → Sink	Indicates the number of symbols that are empty during cycles that contain the end of a packet

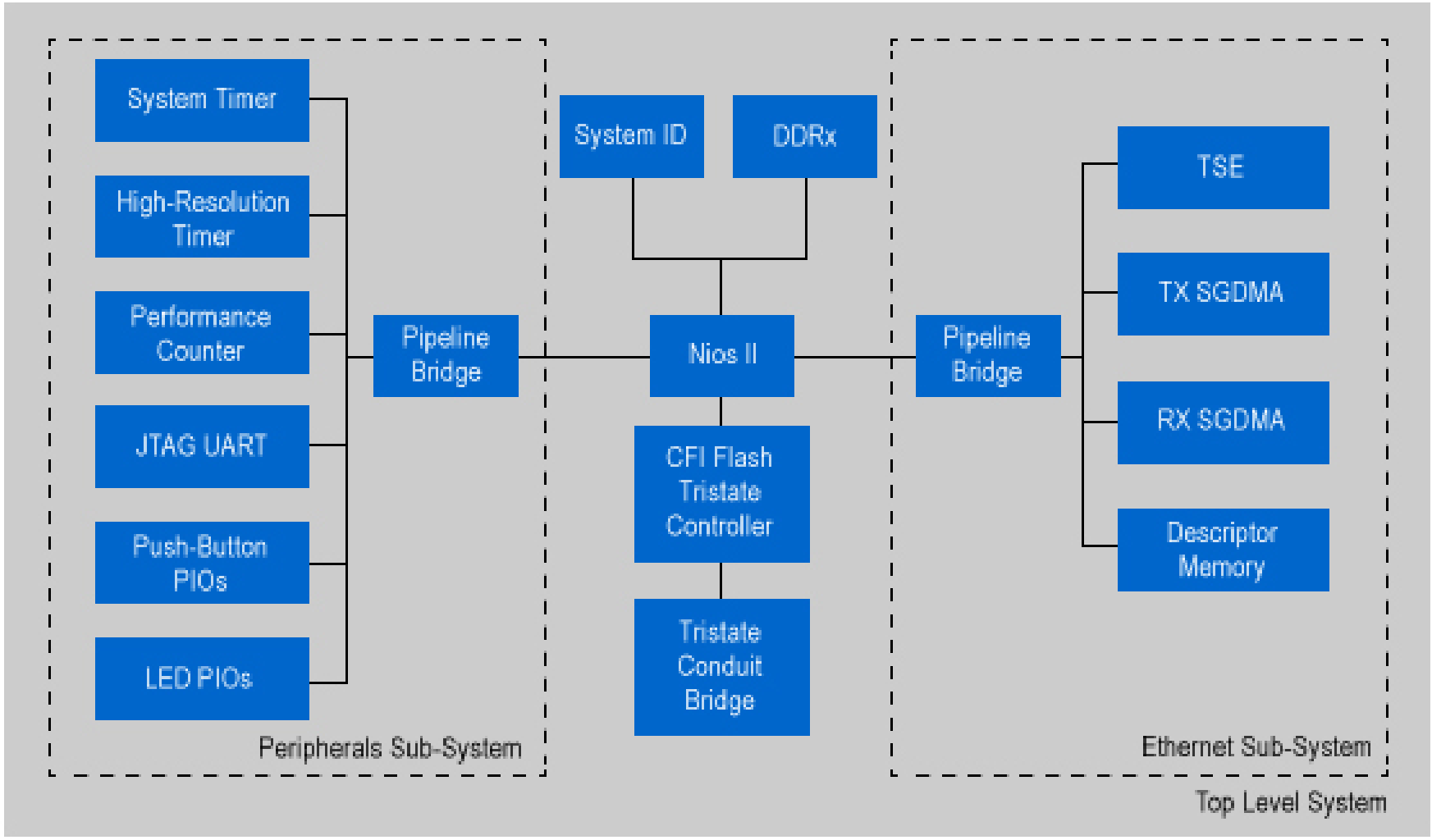
Source: Altera

Example Qsys Layout - 10Gb Reference Design



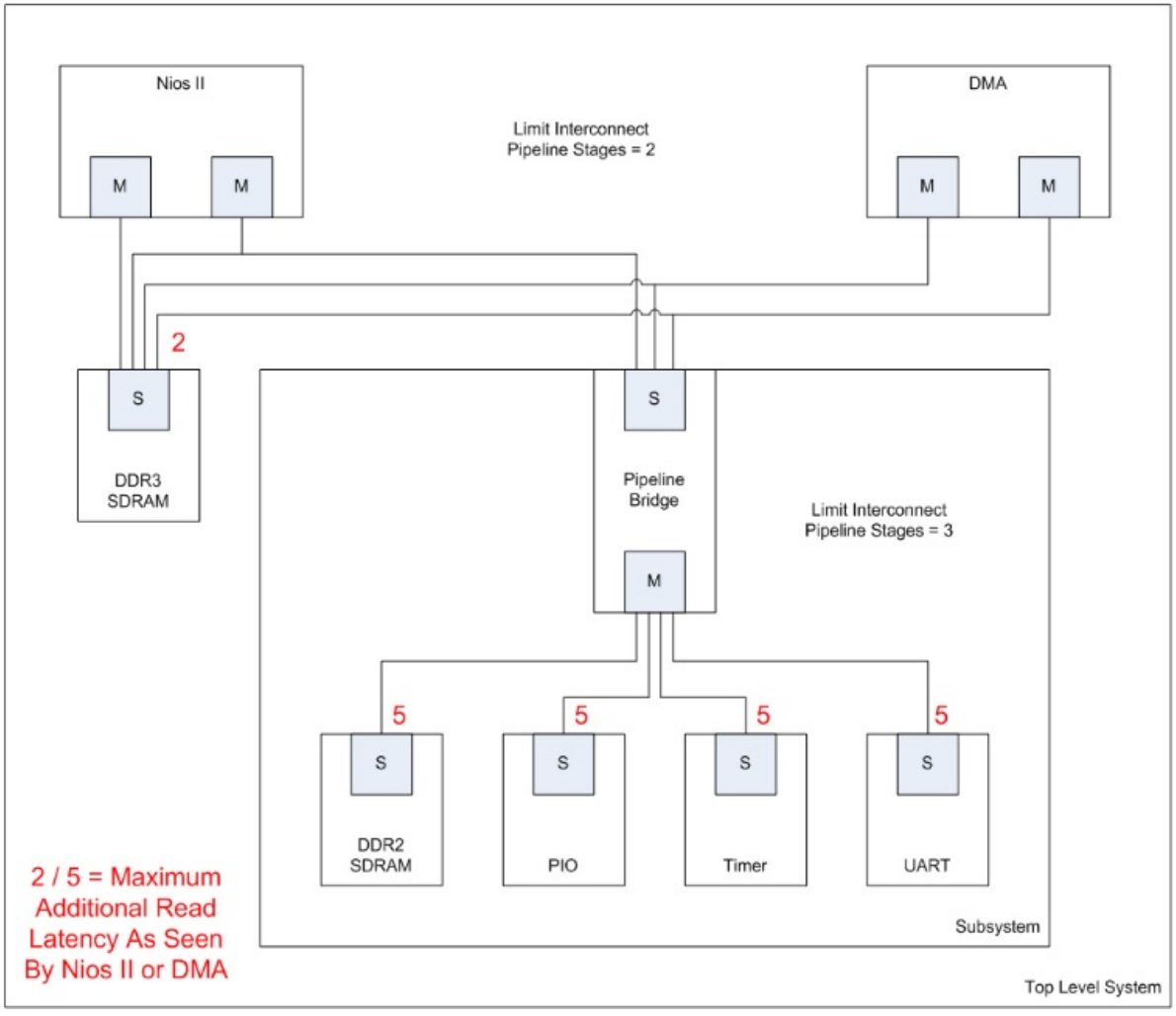
Source: Altera

Advanced - Qsys Hierarchical Designs



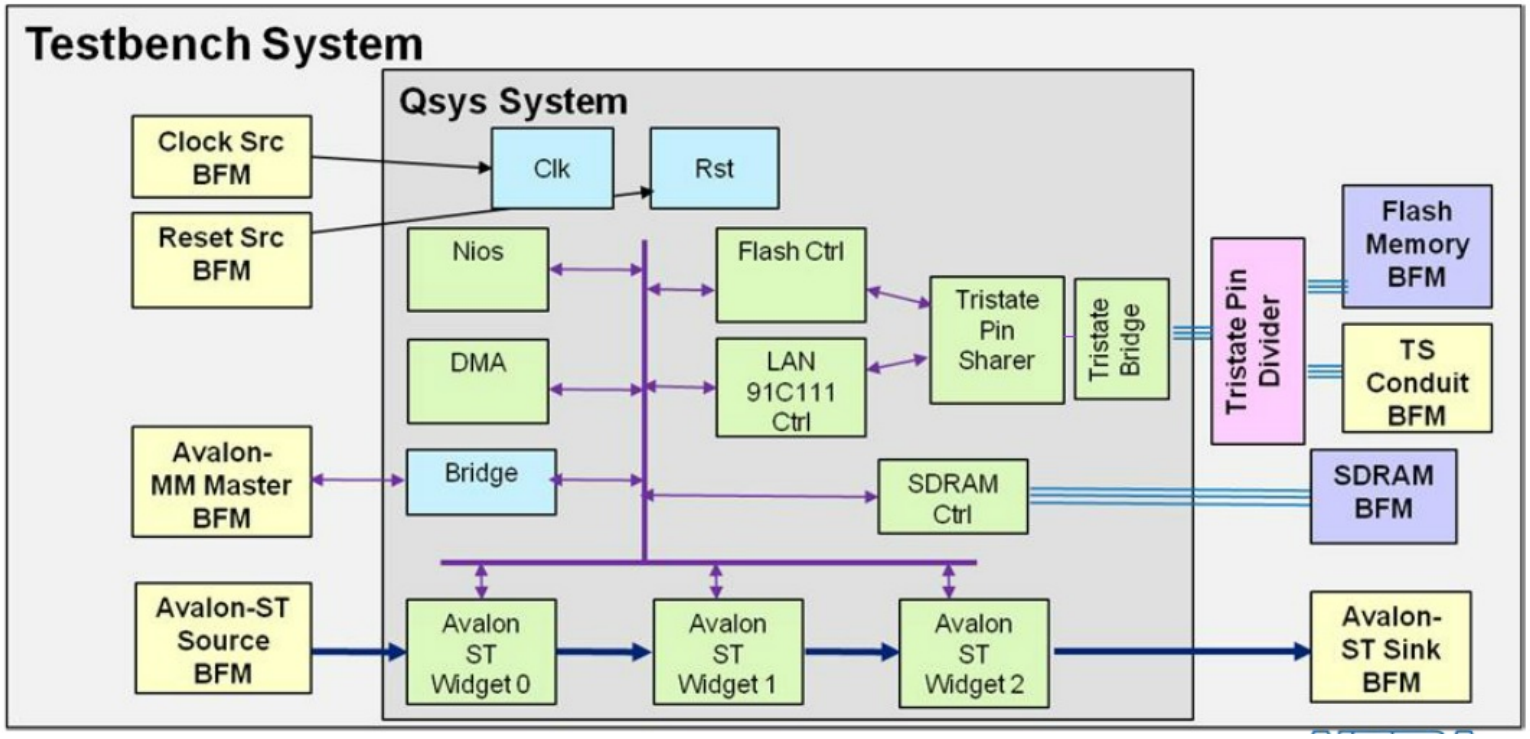
Source: Altera

Advanced - Qsys Automatic Pipelining



Source: Altera

Advanced - Qsys Testbench Generation



Source: Altera

Additional References

Altera online training lectures: (HIGHLY recommended; many of these slides are taken directly from them)

http://www.altera.com/education/training/curriculum/trn-curriculum.html

Introduction to Qsys

Advanced System Design Using Qsys

Custom IP Development Using Avalon and AXI Interfaces