



# Custom Analog IC Design towards AI Automation

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Eleni Papageorgiou [epapagea@physics.auth.gr](mailto:epapagea@physics.auth.gr)

Prof. Dr. Thomas Noulis [tnoul@physics.auth.gr](mailto:tnoul@physics.auth.gr)



# Presenters



**Eleni Papageorgiou** is a PhD candidate at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), specializing in machine learning applications for automating analog/RF and mixed signal integrated circuit design. With a degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering, particularly in electronics and computer engineering, she has authored two publications on automated transistor parameter extraction and operational amplifier design, both utilizing reinforcement learning techniques. She is an expert on ML and software development.



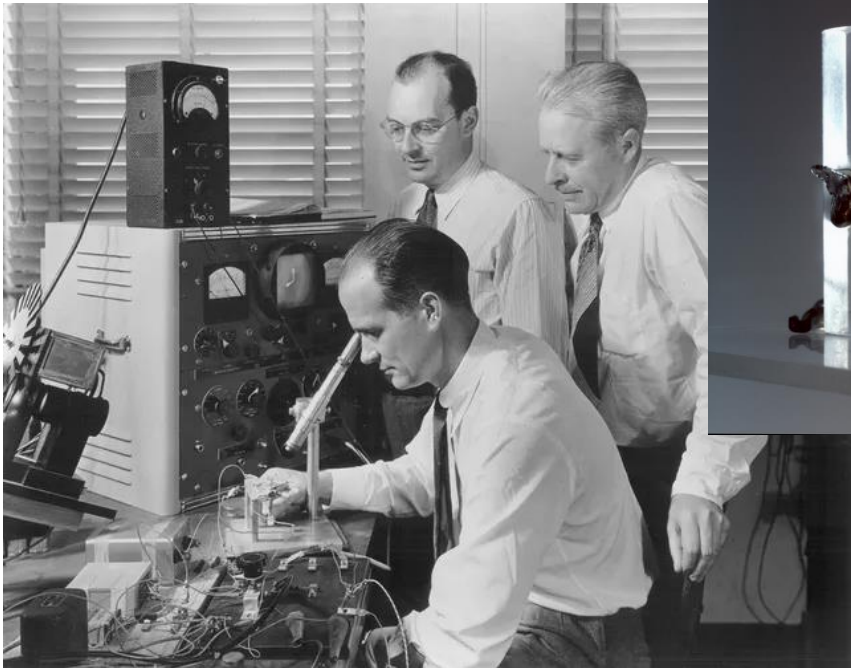
**Prof. Dr. Thomas Noulis** is an Academic and a Semiconductor Industry expert (INTEL Corp., INFINEON AG, HELIC Inc. (ANSYS)) with more than 15 years of international experience on Design System Development, Analog/RFMS circuit Design, Design Methodology and international project management. He holds B.Sc. Degree in Physics (2003), MSc. Degree in Electronics Engineering (2005), and a Ph.D. (2009) from Aristotle Univ. of Thessaloniki (collaboration with LAAS, Toulouse-France). Dr. Noulis is the main author of more than 80 publications, holds one European patent and he is the Editor of three books. Currently he is an Assistant Professor in the Physics Dept. of Aristotle Univ. of Thessaloniki, Greece.

# Overview

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- **Part I**
  - **IC History – State of the Art - Future Perspective**
  - Analog Design and Custom IC Design Flow
  - Artificial Intelligence and Impact on IC Design
- **Part II**
  - What is AI?
  - OpAmp Case Study

# The First Transistor



A small semiconductor device that would change the world

- On December 16, 1947, Bardeen, Brattain and Shockley managed to make point-contact transistor.
- On Christmas Eve, the input signal was amplified about eighteen times.
- A new era in electronics dawned - the invention of the transistor became the basis for the electronic age.

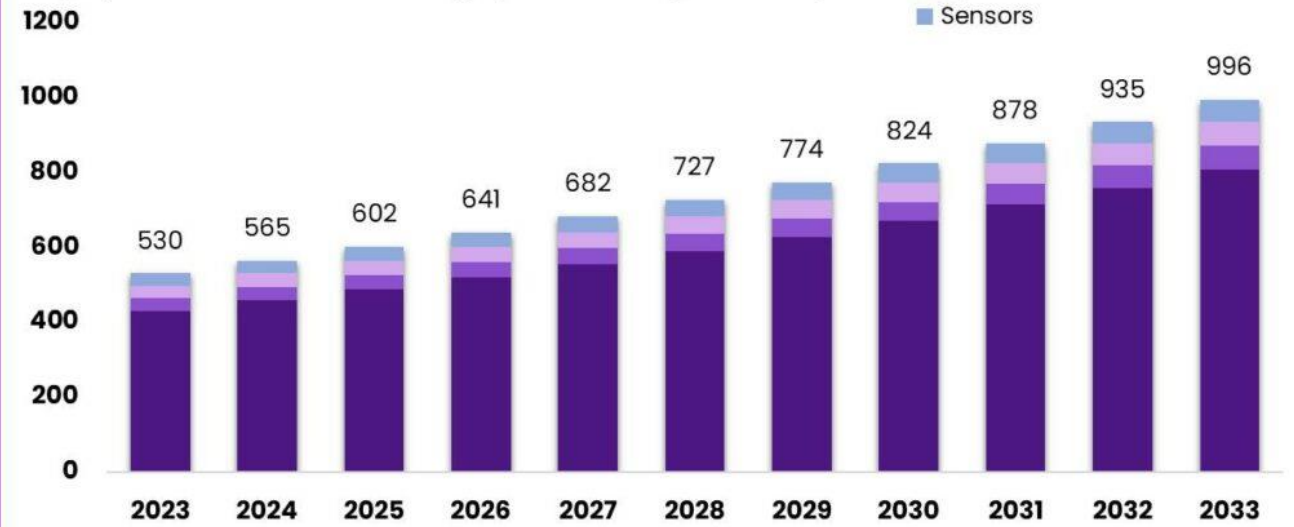
*1956 Nobel Prize in Physics  
John Bardeen, Walter H. Brattain and William Shockley*

Taken from  
<https://www.bell-labs.com/about/awards/1956-nobel-prize-physics/#gref>

# Semiconductors Market

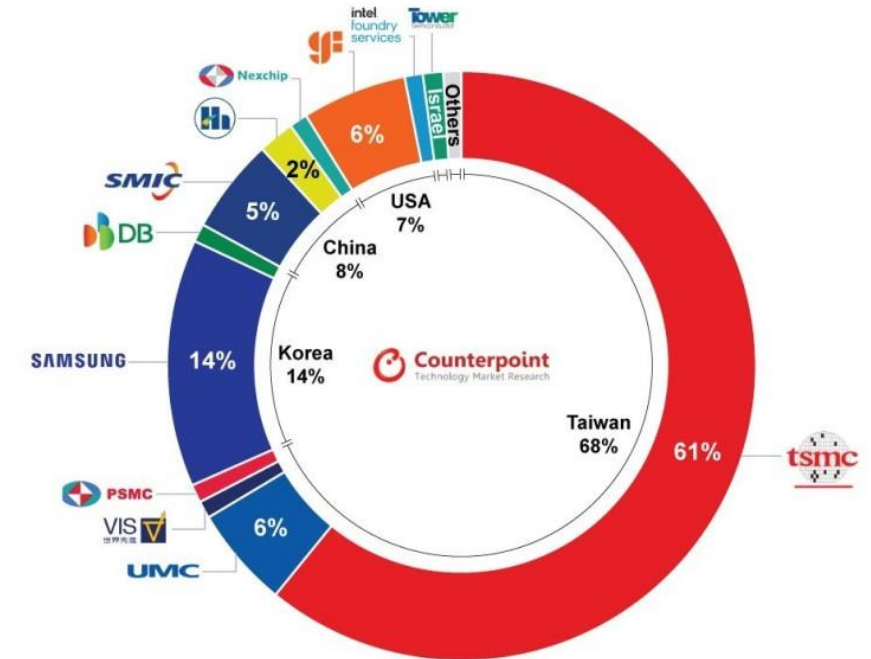
## Global Semiconductor Market

Size, by Semiconductor Device Type, 2024-2033 (USD Billion)



Taken from <https://market.us/report/semiconductor-market/>

## Revenue Share of Key Players in Global Semiconductor Foundry Industry, Q4 2023



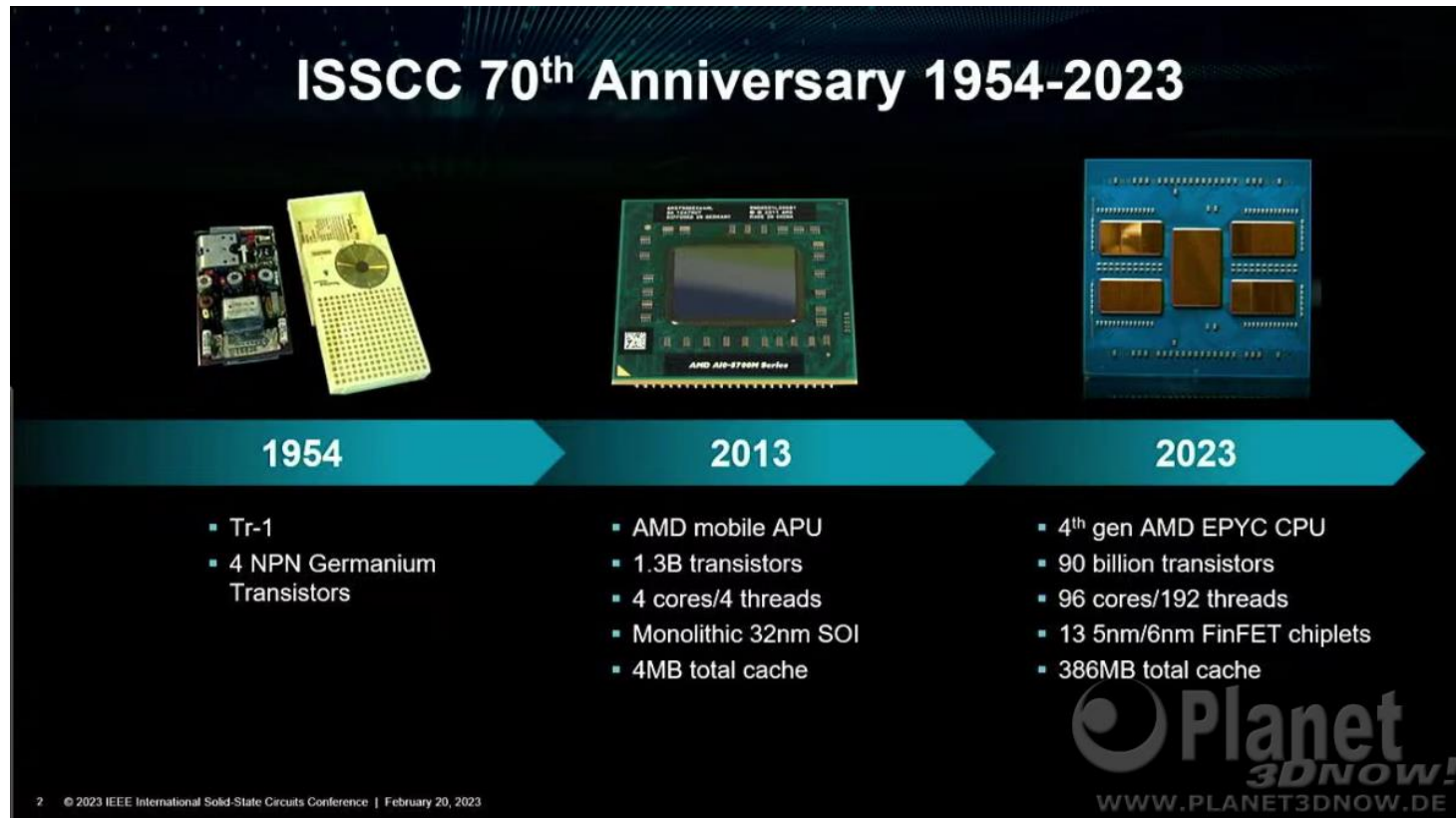
Taken from Source: Counterpoint Foundry Revenues Tracker

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/global-chip-foundry-latest-market-share-tsmc-becomes-biggest-%E9%83%AD-guo-fcuef/>

# IC Products



# System on Chip and Functions Integration

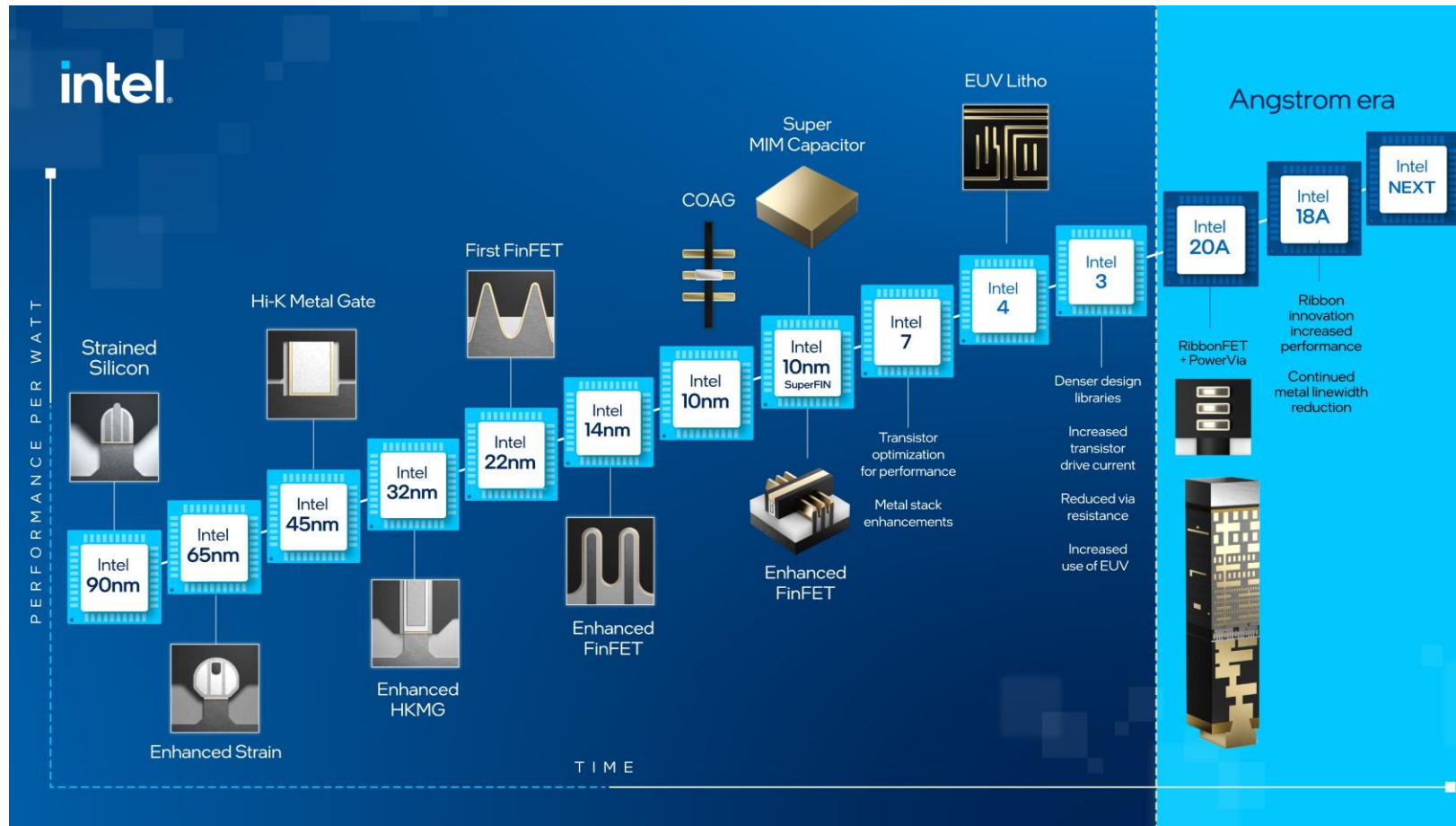


Taken from <https://www.planet3dnow.de/cms/67652-isscc-2023-amd-innovation-for-the-next-decade-of-compute-efficiency/>  
[Lisa Su – AMD – keynote ISSCC 2023]





# Moore's Law on Device Level

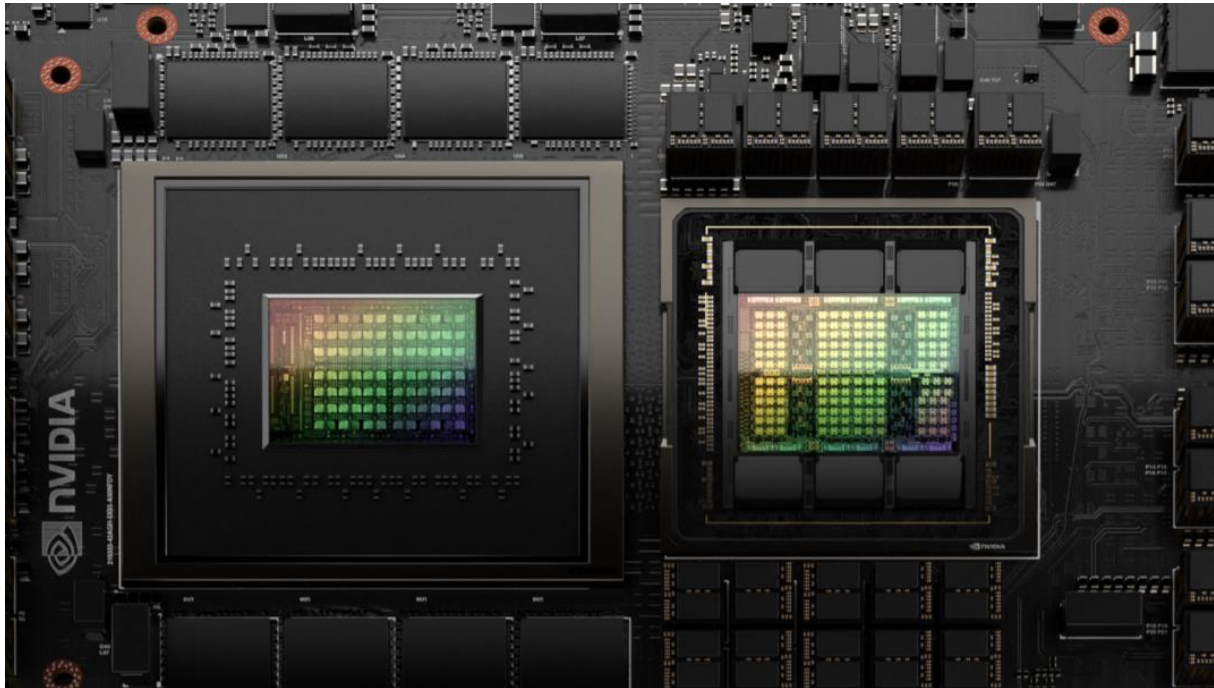


From CMOS to  
FinFET and from  
FinFET to  
RibbonFET

Taken from  
<https://download.intel.com/newsroom/2022/manufacturing/id-process-technology-graphic.jpg>

# AI on Economy Impact

## NVIDIA Grace Hopper Superchip Architecture



Taken from <https://developer.nvidia.com/blog/nvidia-grace-hopper-superchip-architecture-in-depth/>



<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=NVIDIA+stock>  
Stock value on 17.09.2024m 11.45 AM.

# EU policy on Semiconductors



## European Chips Act

The European Chips Act will boost Europe's technological sovereignty, competitiveness, resilience and contribute to the digital and green transitions.

### Digital transformation in our society

- Impact on our living
  - digital processing of data and documents
  - digitization of processes in companies/organizations
- Digitization of the society itself

“digitality” (Nicolas Negroponte – MIT)

disruptive impact is : socio-economical and psycho-cultural

### Why do we need a European Chips Act?

- Chips are the building block of all electronic products.
- Chips underpin the digital transformation and are essential to all industries, such as the car industry, communications, data processing, space, defense, smart devices and gaming
- The recent global chips shortage has disrupted supply chains, caused product shortages forced factories to close.

**The European Chips Act Regulation was proposed as part of a broader package of measures for strengthening the EU's semiconductor ecosystem.**

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# Digital Driven Word but with an Analog Interface

Taken from <https://www.duxerials.com/Product637/index.htm>



HPC applications

Multimedia

Industrial ICs

Consumer Electronics

Biomedical Electronics

Analog Interface

Digitized World

An Analog/PF interface between the physical world and the digitized world!

Consumer Electronics

Communications

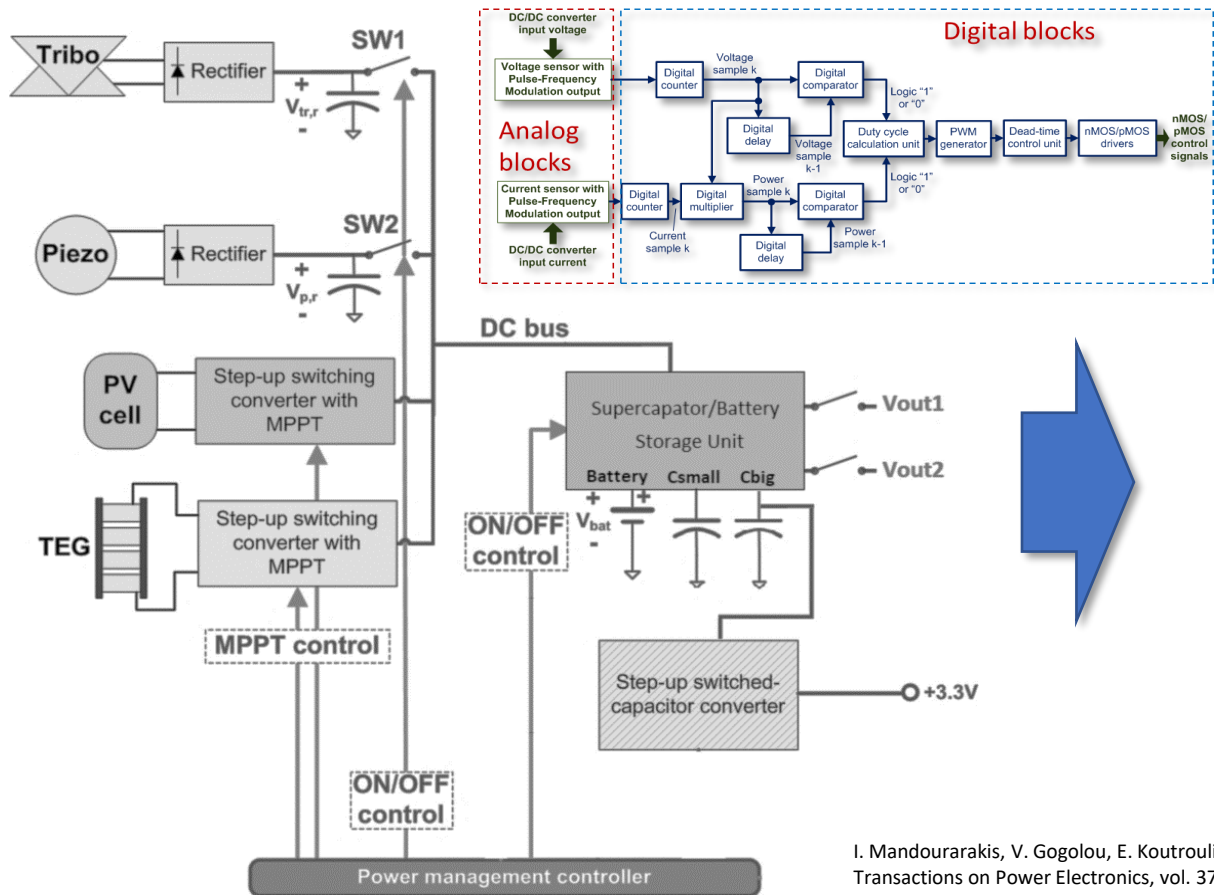
Automotive

Agriculture

Military Electronics

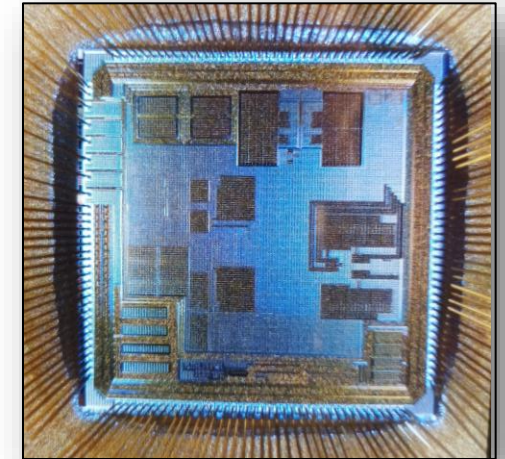


# Design Example: Energy Harvesting IC



- Harvesting energy from:

- Photovoltaic cells
- Thermoelectric generator
- Piezoelectric transducer
- Triboelectric generator

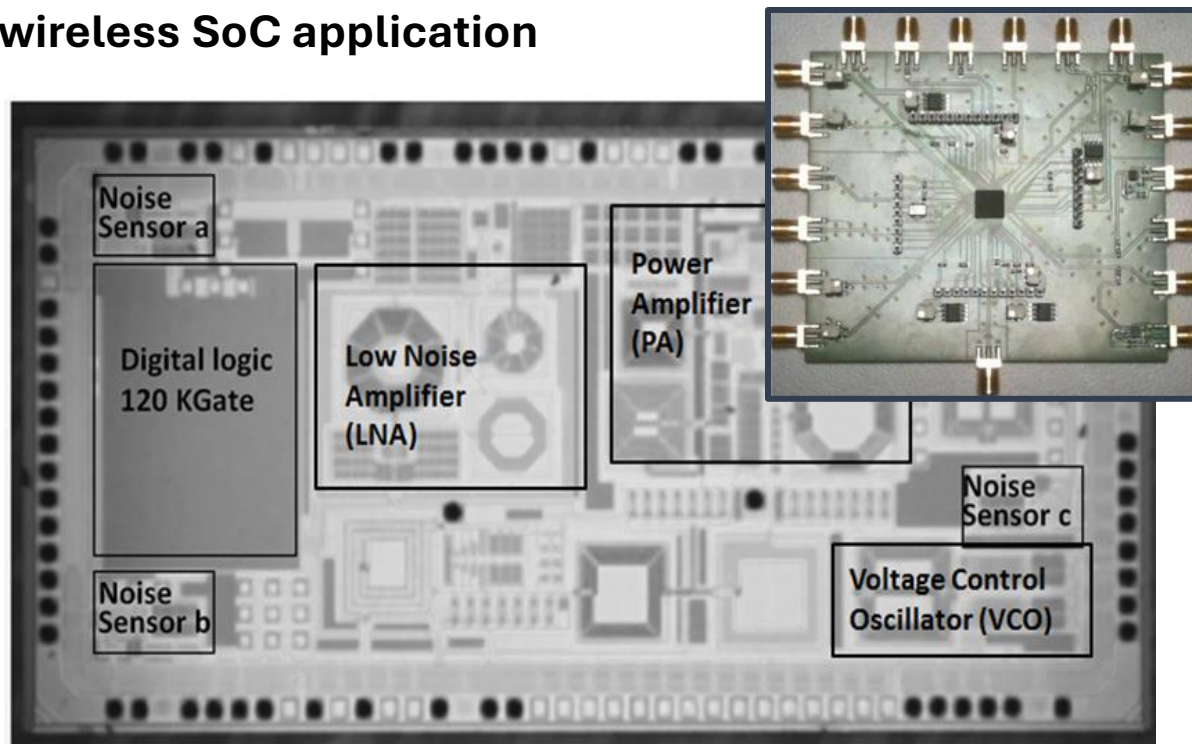


- Supercapacitor/battery hybrid storage unit
- Multiple outputs for connection of IoT loads with different specifications
- Cold startup operation

I. Mandourarakis, V. Gogolou, E. Koutroulis and S. Siskos, "Integrated Maximum Power Point Tracking System for Photovoltaic Energy Harvesting Applications," in IEEE Transactions on Power Electronics, vol. 37, no. 8, pp. 9865-9875, Aug. 2022, doi: 10.1109/TPEL.2022.3156400.

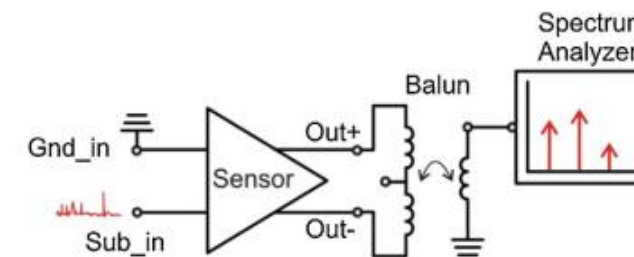
# Design Example: RF Transceiver

## Wide-band substrate crosstalk sensor and wireless SoC application



Wireless SoC Vehicle 65nm TSMC

- Mobile Comm's
- Substrate Noise 'on the fly' monitoring
- Substrate Crosstalk Modeling and Simulation Validation

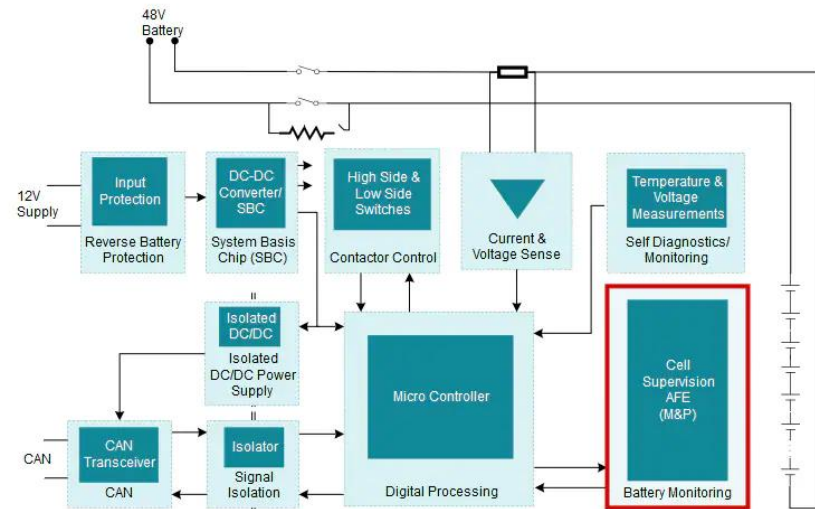


T. Noulis, P. Merakos, E. Lourandakis, S. Stefanou, Y. Moisiadis, "Wide-band substrate crosstalk sensor for wireless SoC applications"  
Sensors and Actuators A: Physical, Volume 239, 2016, Pages 144-152, ISSN 0924-4247, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sna.2016.01.014> .

# Design Example: Automotive Power Switch

## Automotive BCD Technology IC Design

- AC to DC Converter
- Power Management IC
- DC to DC Converter



## 48-volt mild hybrids: 4x the voltage, 4x the power

### Think of the possibilities ...

By 2025, one of every 10 vehicles sold worldwide will be a 48-volt mild hybrid. The system will increase torque by more than 50%, for faster take-off, and assist car companies with fuel economy and emission standards compliance.

### 48-volt system

#### Taking on the heavy load

A 48-volt system is designed to support heavier load components like the air conditioner and engine fan and enable faster heating of the cabin and catalytic converter at startup. Here are the major components.

#### 48-volt lithium ion battery

#### AC/DC converter

Hybrid control software is embedded into the engine management controller.

### More power for take-off

The 48-volt battery can supply more power to the hybrid motor and super-charger, launching the car faster and smoother than a traditional 12-volt system, while still saving fuel.

### Improved

### 12-volt system

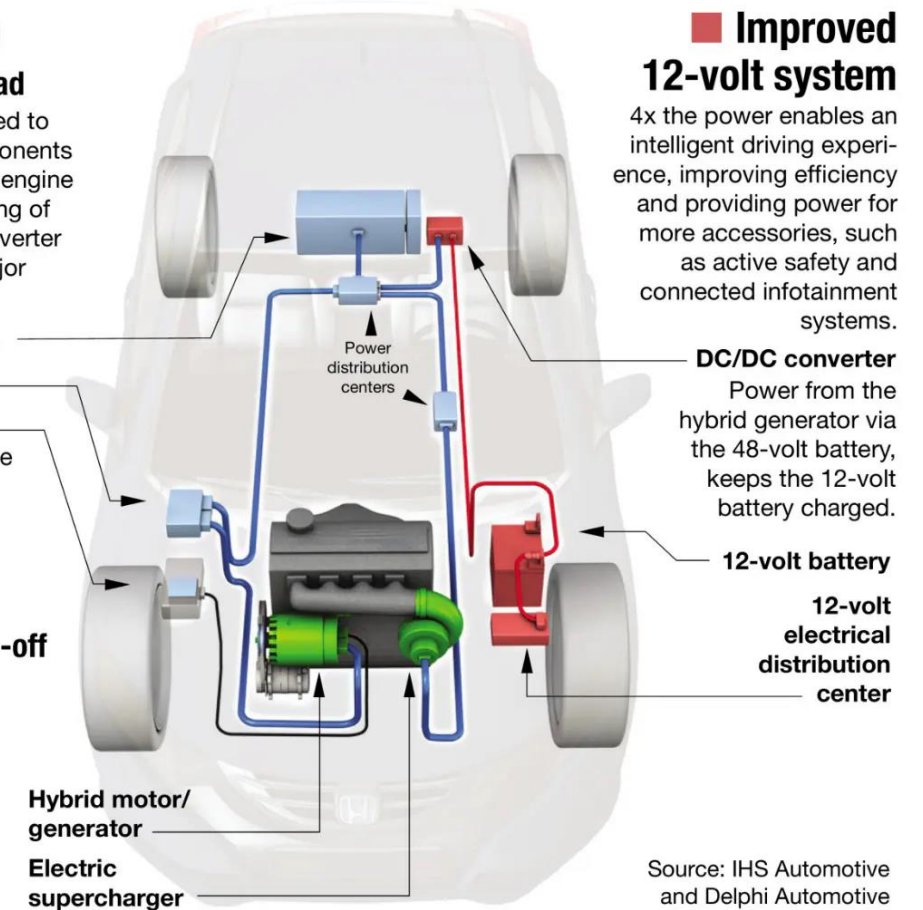
4x the power enables an intelligent driving experience, improving efficiency and providing power for more accessories, such as active safety and connected infotainment systems.

#### DC/DC converter

Power from the hybrid generator via the 48-volt battery, keeps the 12-volt battery charged.

#### 12-volt battery

#### 12-volt electrical distribution center



Source: IHS Automotive and Delphi Automotive

<https://www.mouser.fr/applications/adding-48V-to-12V-means-major-benefits/>



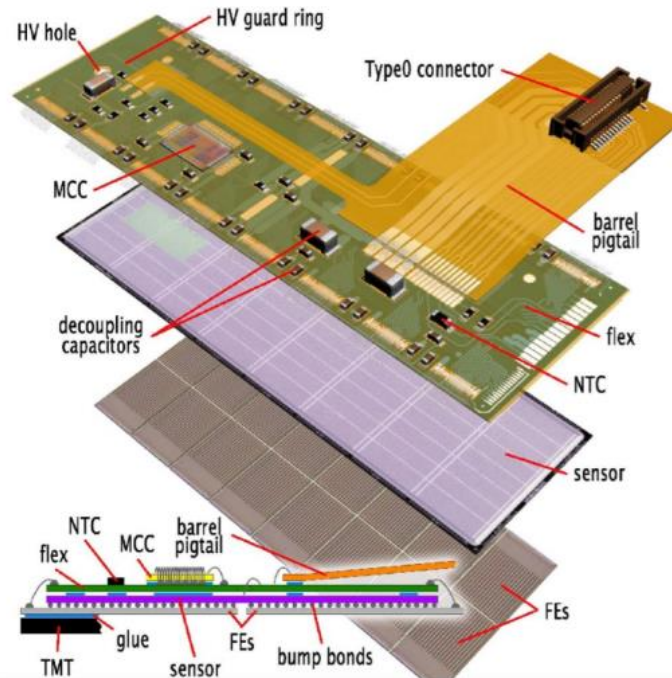
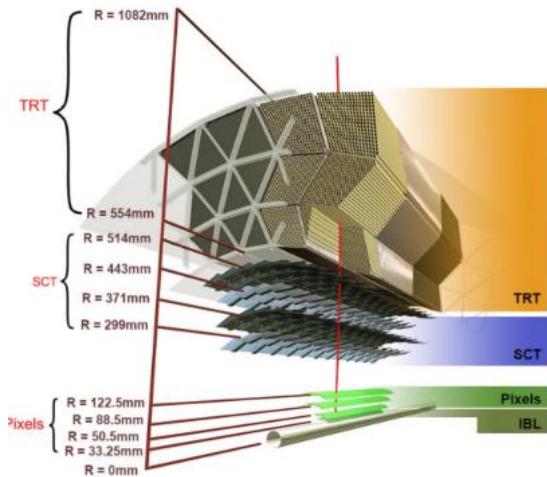
# Design Example: Space IC



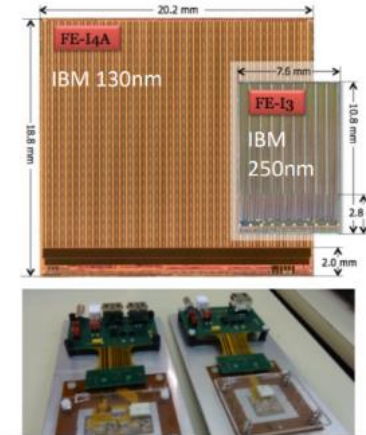
- More complex electronics translate into greater risk from radiation effects
- High volume, small satellite constellations are using more commercial grade plastic components. Commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) devices generally tend to be more sensitive to radiation effects.
- In small satellite, there is less structural mass shielding the electronics. With finer IC geometries and thinner oxides, the sensitivity to TID radiation effects is reduced, and the TID tolerance is improved.

<https://www.analog.com/en/signals/thought-leadership/challenges-for-electronic-circuits-in-space-applications.html>

# Design Example: Radiation Front End ICs



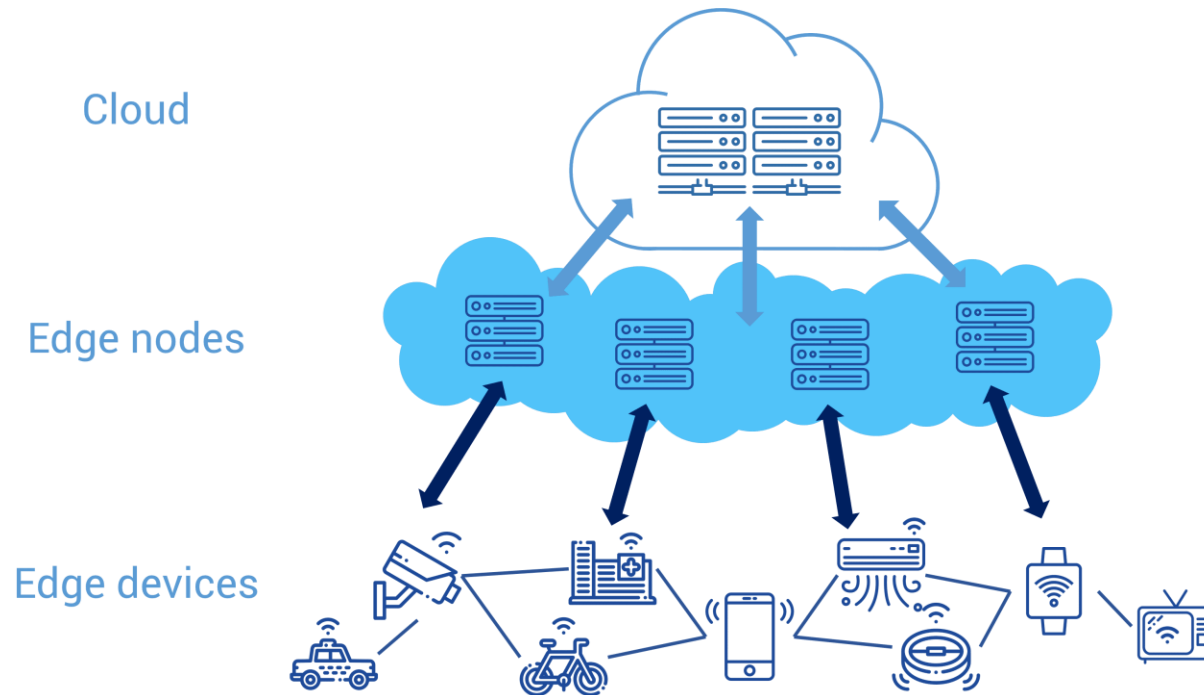
	FE-13	FE-14
Pixel Size	$50 \times 400 \mu\text{m}^2$	$50 \times 250 \mu\text{m}^2$
Pixel Array	$18 \times 160$	$80 \times 336$
Chip Size	$7.6 \times 10.8 \text{mm}^2$	$20.0 \times 18.6 \text{mm}^2$
Active Fraction	74%	89%
Analog Current	$16 \mu\text{A}/\text{pixel}$	$10 \mu\text{A}/\text{pixel}$
Digital Current	$10 \mu\text{A}/\text{pixel}$	$10 \mu\text{A}/\text{pixel}$
Analog Supply Voltage	1.6V	1.5V
Digital Supply Voltage	2.0V	1.2V
Data Rate	40Mb/s	160Mb/s



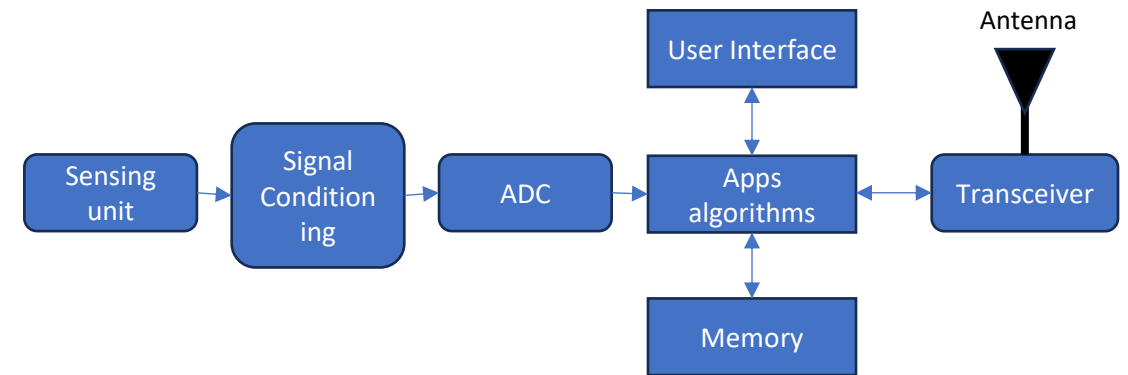
ATLAS pixel module -  
Silicon pixel detector (  
hybrid detectors)

Taken from "The Silicon Lab of the University of Bon" Jochen Dingfelder, 2023

# The cloud at the Edge



## Edge Device Architecture



[https://www.alibabacloud.com/en/knowledge/what-is-edge-computing?\\_p\\_lc=1](https://www.alibabacloud.com/en/knowledge/what-is-edge-computing?_p_lc=1)

# Analog Integrated Systems

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- Analog IC are complex since they include a wide range of architectures from Linear Circuits, to period state and Nonlinear Architectures
- Different processes are used vs different applications and 3D and 2.5D ICs are now the new trend moving away from the SoC approach
- Design Cycle is extremely large ranging from 6months for Wireless communications products to 36 months for Automotive
- Design Automation has not evolved the last decades

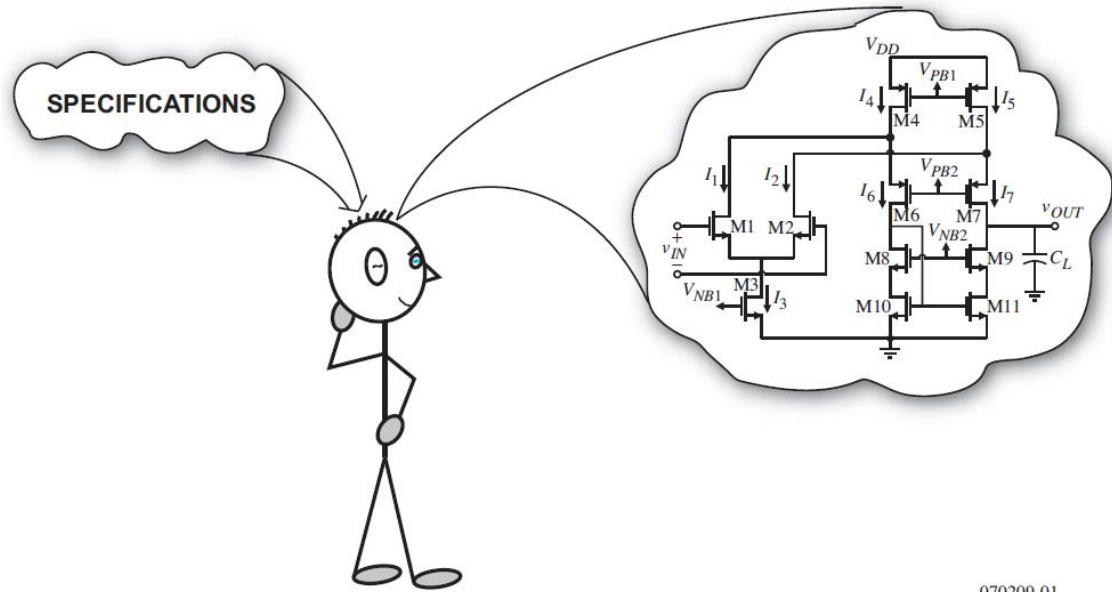
# Analog Design Flow and Productivity

- Analog IC are still largely done manually
  - long design cycles
  - high risk of design errors
- The complexity is high
  - high-dimensional search space
  - lack of abstraction
  - unclear hierarchy
  - sensitive to all parametric effects
- Problem of limited analog design - productivity and high risk imposed really long time to market and several redesigns and wasted silicon.
- The need is more and better automated analog design tools



<https://semiengineering.com/mixed-messages-for-mixed-signal/>

# Current Design Flow



Source: <https://aicdesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/lecture01-150706.pdf>

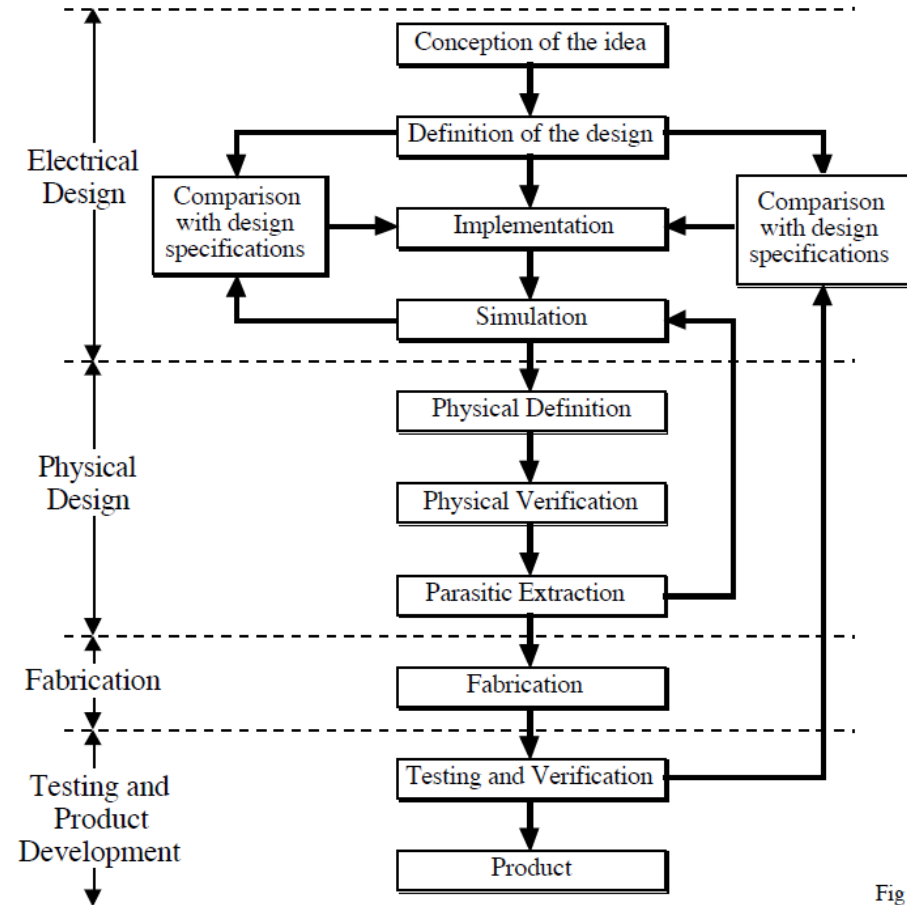


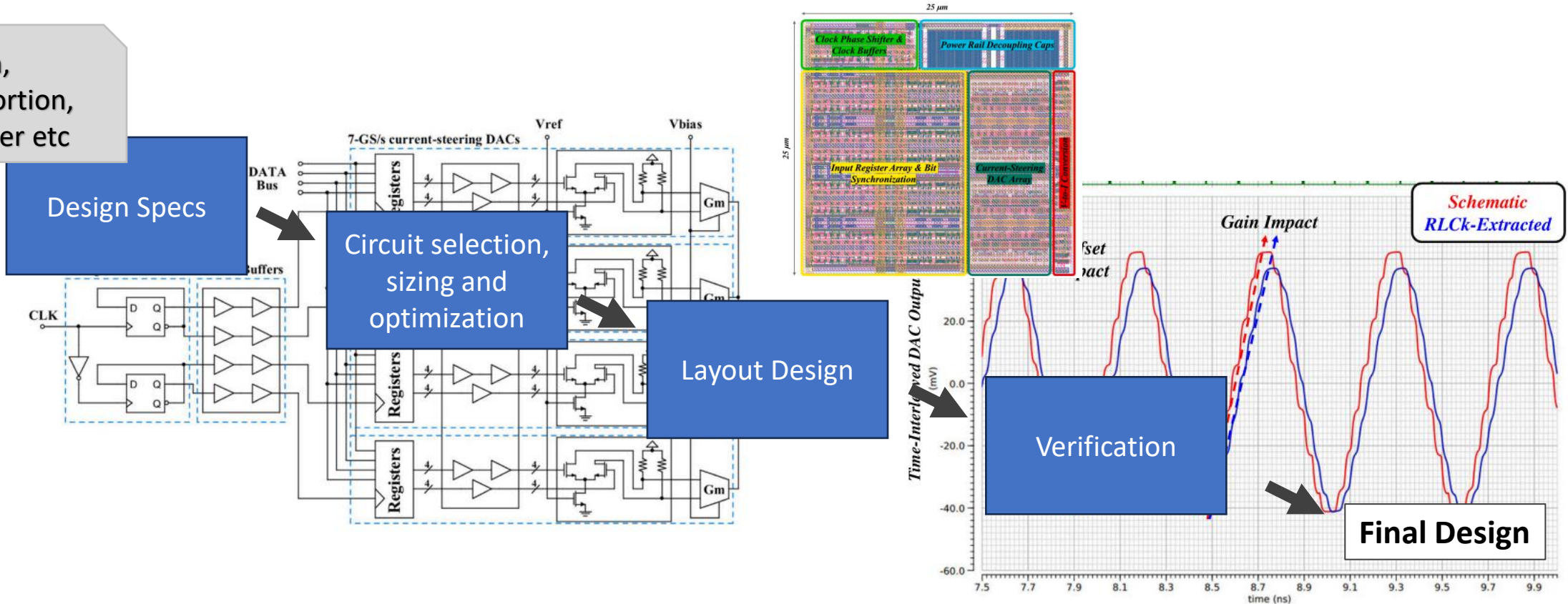
Fig. 1.1-2

CMOS Analog Circuit Design

© P.E. Allen - 2010

# Basic Analog Design Steps

Gain,  
distortion,  
power etc



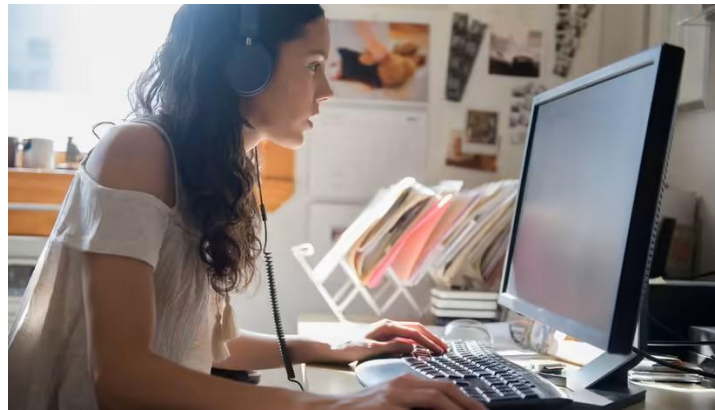
The flow repeated hierarchically for complex blocks - behavioral at higher levels (ie with Verilog A), moving towards transistor level at the bottom (BSIM, PSP level)

# How will we design Analog chips in the Future?

<https://blog.baruthotels.com/en/the-spectacular-life-story-of-the-famous-artist-salvador-dali>



## 1) The Hand-crafted Artistic Way?



<https://computer.howstuffworks.com/10-types-of-computers.htm>

## 2) Tool Assisted “hand crafted” way?

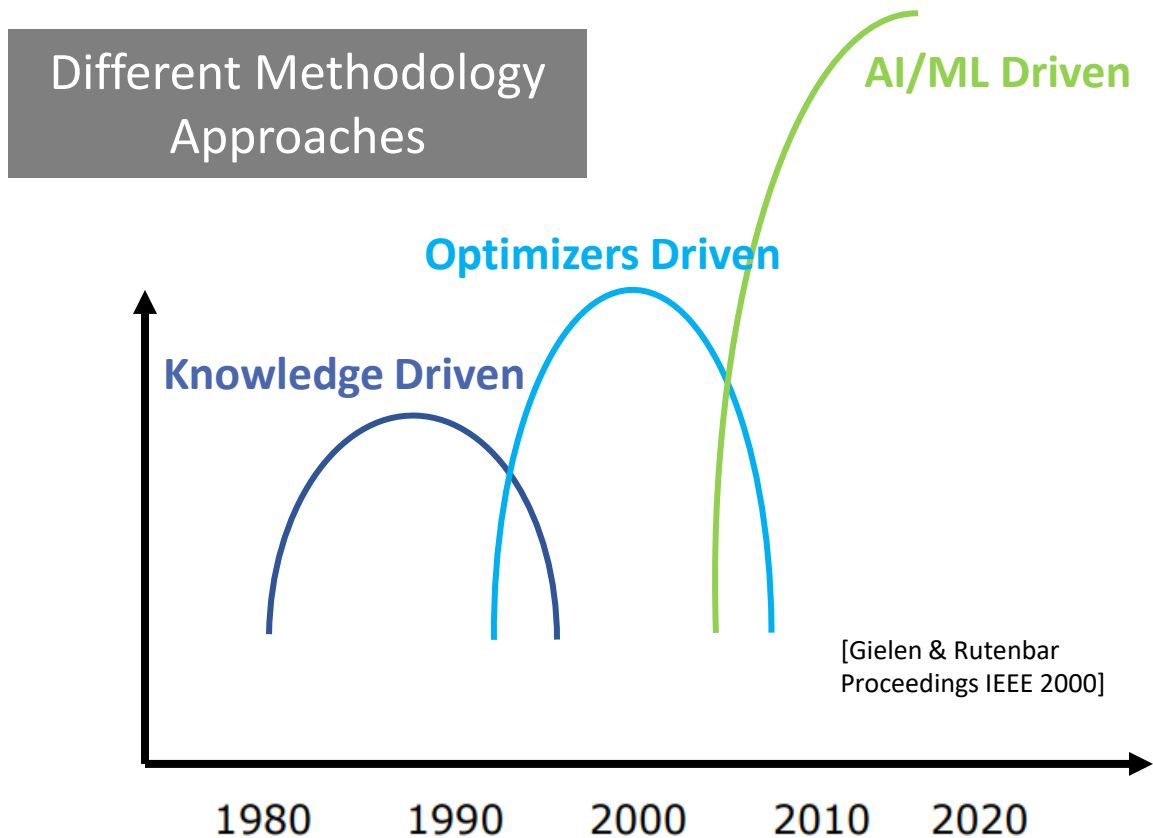
## 3) AI/ML inspired way?



<https://www.fenews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Canva-AI-digital-1-768x512.jpg>



# Three Waves of Analog Synthesis



- 1. Knowledge Driven**  
Heuristic way of designing circuits, hand calculations based – book driven
- 2. Optimizers Driven**  
Gm/Id methodology, ADT toolbox, and many other EDA solutions
- 3. AI/ML Based**  
*Under development!*

# Known EDA Tools

## Commercially Available Tools - Optimizers

- Cadence Optimizer in ADE (G)XL [https://www.cadence.com/en\\_US/home.html](https://www.cadence.com/en_US/home.html)
- Analog Designer ToolBox <https://adt.master-micro.com/>
- MunEDA WiCkeD™ Tool Suite <https://www.muneda.com/circuit-sizing-and-optimization-tools/>
- MPLAB® Mindi™ Analog Simulator <https://www.microchip.com/>

## In house Optimizers

- Semiconductor Companies in house gm/ID optimizers



## AI/ML Tool Enablement

- DSO.ai by Synopsys <https://www.synopsys.com/ai/ai-powered-eda/>

cādence®



SYNOPTSYS®

# Optimizers Deficiencies

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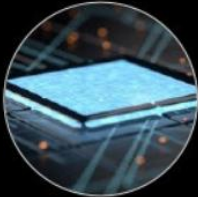
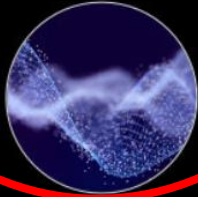
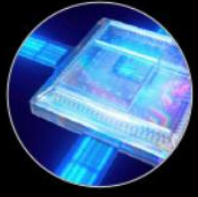
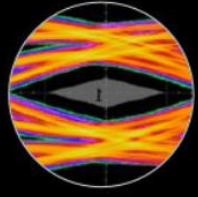
Core Principle  
is the  
gm/ld  
methodology

- Long CPU times
- Constraints enablement
- Helpful addons but not possible to replace hand craft work
- Optimizers give you exactly what you ask

# AI based Analog Design Flow

**SYNOPSYS** | **SAMSUNG**

**Delivering Unparalleled Power & Performance for Samsung GAA Processes with Certified AI-Driven Digital & Analog Flows and IP**

<p>Production-Ready AI-Driven Digital &amp; Analog Flows</p> <p>Synopsys certified flows on Samsung SF2 GAA powered by Synopsys.ai™</p> 	<p>Rapid Analog Design Migration</p> <p>Synopsys ASO.ai™ for fast migration of Samsung advanced processes</p> 	<p>Qualified Multi-Die Reference Flow</p> <p>Synopsys 3DIC Compiler &amp; UCle IP for silicon and packaging success</p> 	<p>Broad Portfolio of IP for Samsung Processes</p> <p>Synopsys IP for Samsung SF2 to 14LPU reduces design risk</p> 
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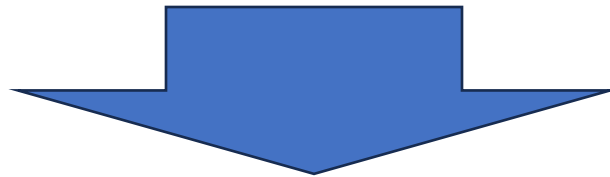
**Analog IC Design is also in focus!**

[Taker from "Synopsys Achieves Certification of its AI-driven Digital and Analog Flows and IP on Samsung Advanced SF2 GAA Process"](#)

# AI on Analog Design Impact

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- Self-learn design constraints from many existing industrial designs
- Transfer learning to project learnt knowledge onto other circuits
- True synthesis of novel analog topologies/architectures



- Speed Up tremendously design process and product design cycle

# Overview

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- **Part I**

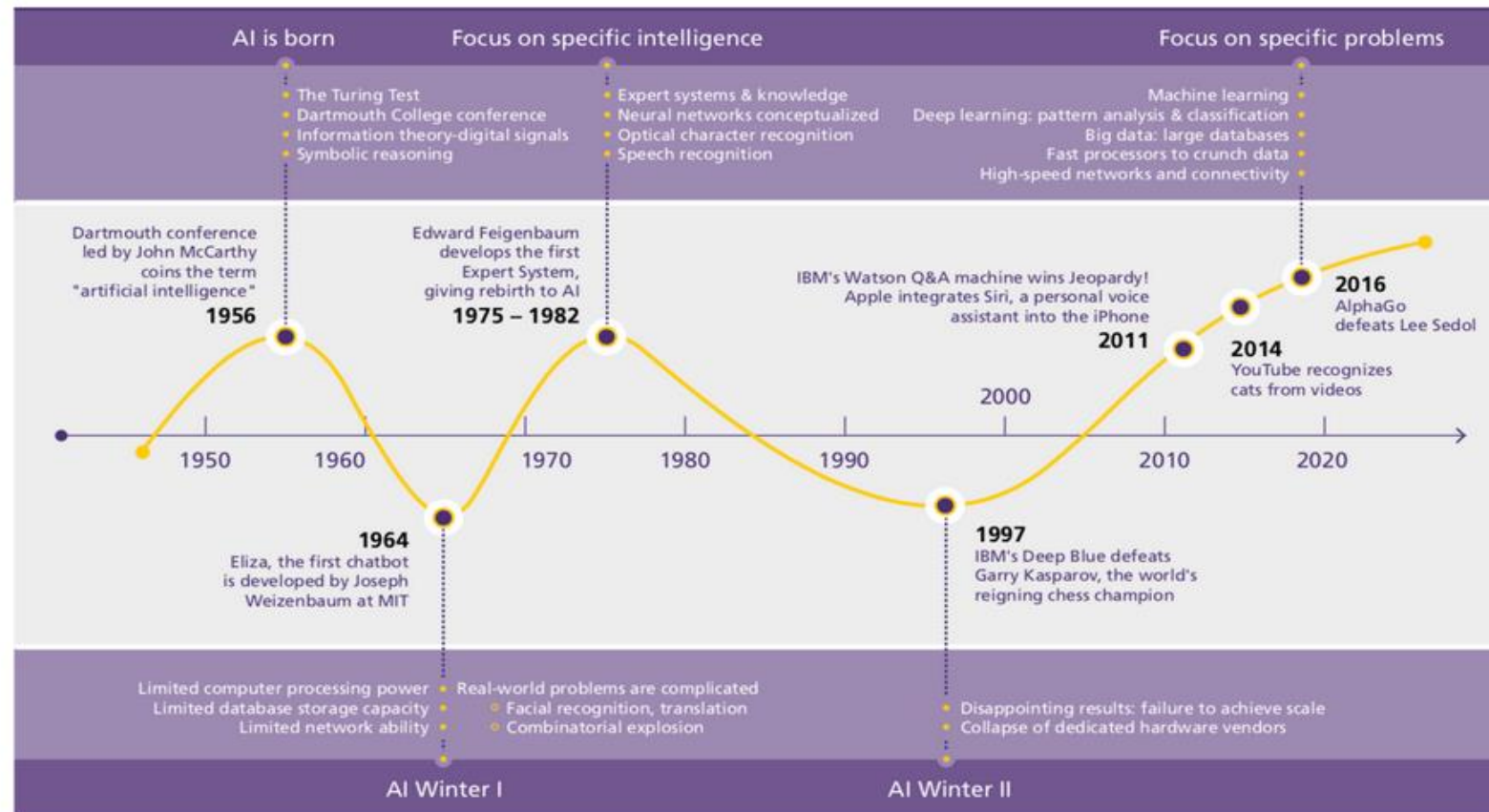
- IC History – State of the Art - Future Perspective
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- **Part II**

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# Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning History

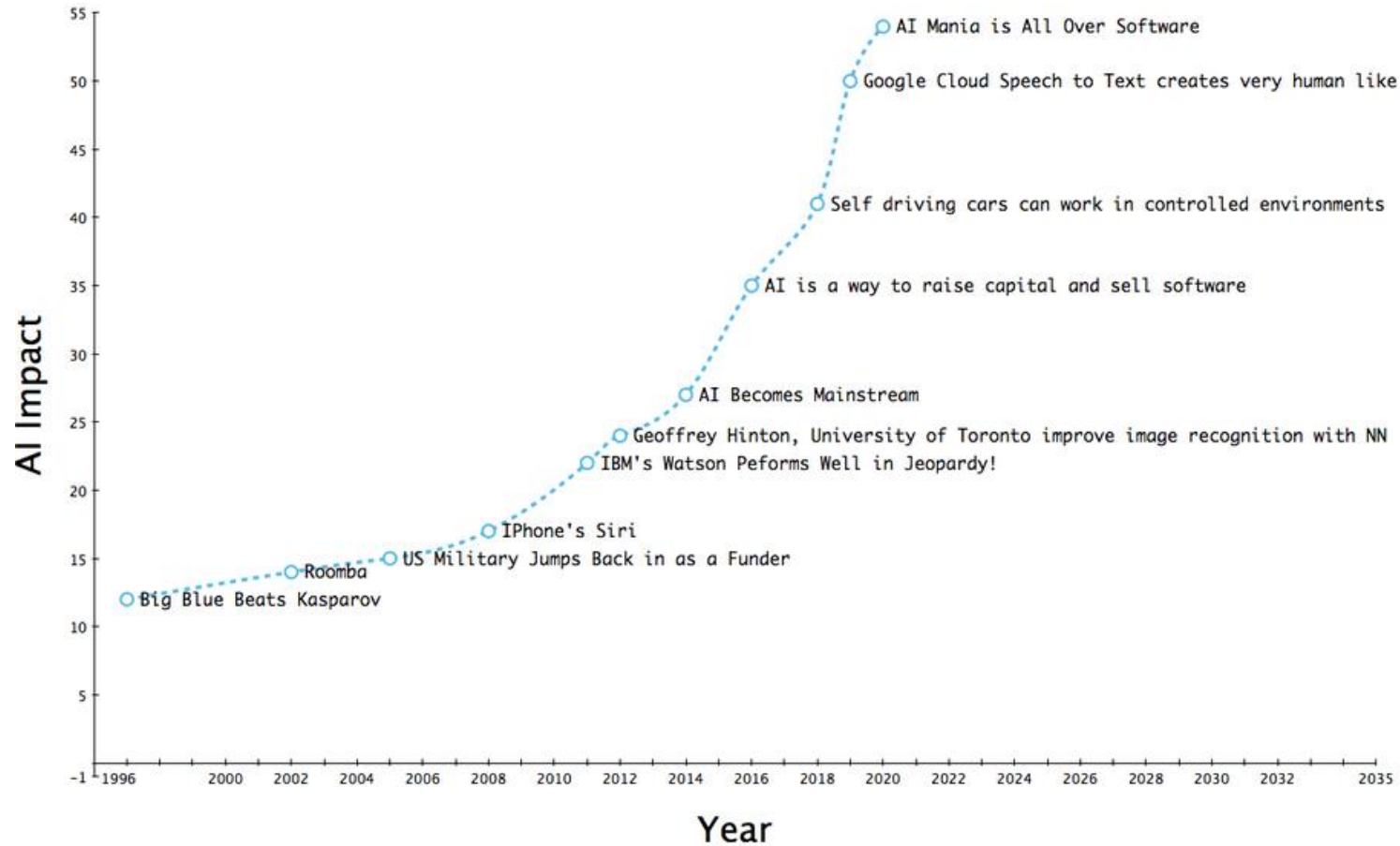
## THE RISE OF AI



<https://www.brightworkresearch.com/why-did-ai-rise-for-a-third-time-after-the-1st-and-2nd-ai-winters/>

# The “Come back” of AI/ML

<https://www.brightworkresearch.com/why-did-ai-rise-for-a-third-time-after-the-1st-and-2nd-ai-winters>



## AI Check Points

- 1996 IBM Big Blue Beats Kasparov in Chess
- 2008 Iphone Siri
- 2012 Image recognition with NN
- 2018 Self driving cars can work in controlled environments
- 2020 AI Mania in Software and Start Ups



# AI on Analog Design

- The use of advanced AI is unavoidable also in analog IC design
- Intensive Research is on going from both Industry and Academia

## □ Analog synthesis 3.0: AI/ML to synthesize and test analog ICs: hope or hype ?

Georges Gielen

2023 ACM/IEEE 5th Workshop on Machine Learning for CAD (MLCAD)

Year: 2023 | Conference Paper | Publisher: IEEE

Cited by: Papers (2)

## □ AI-EDA: Toward a Holistic Approach to AI-Powered EDA

Youngsoo Shin

2023 ACM/IEEE 5th Workshop on Machine Learning for CAD (MLCAD)

Year: 2023 | Conference Paper | Publisher: IEEE

## □ A Novel Hybrid Analog Design Optimizer with Particle Swarm Optimization and modern Deep Neural Networks

Ahmed Elsiginy; Mohamed Elmahdy; Eman Azab

2019 International SoC Design Conference (ISOCC)

Year: 2019 | Conference Paper | Publisher: IEEE

Cited by: Papers (2)

## □ Analog Layout Placement for FinFET Technology Using Reinforcement Learning

Mehrnaz Ahmadi; Lihong Zhang

2021 IEEE International Symposium on Circuits and Systems (ISCAS)

Year: 2021 | Conference Paper | Publisher: IEEE

## □ Automated Design of Analog Circuits using Machine Learning Techniques

S Devi; Gourav Tilwankar; Rajesh Zele

2021 25th International Symposium on VLSI Design and Test (VDATE)

Year: 2021 | Conference Paper | Publisher: IEEE

Cited by: Papers (5)

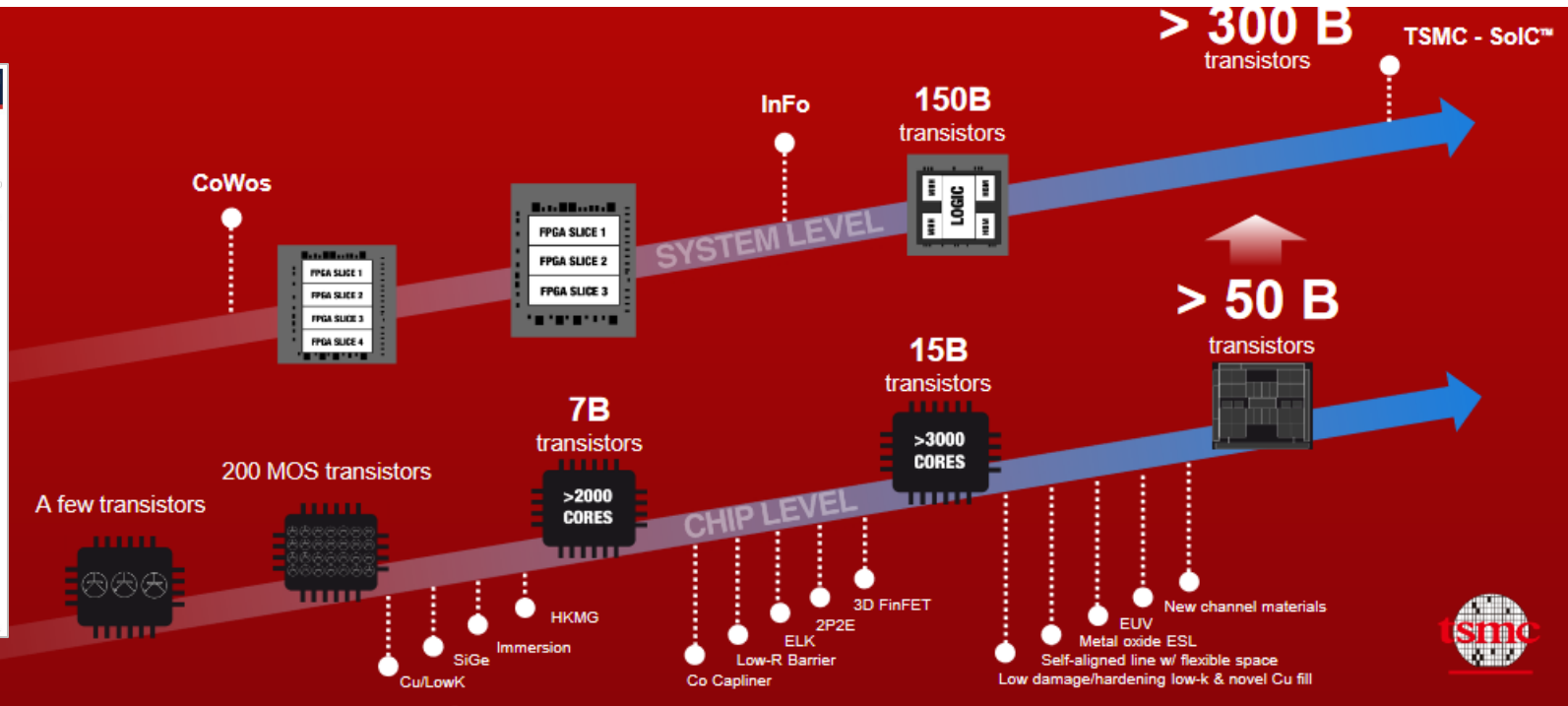
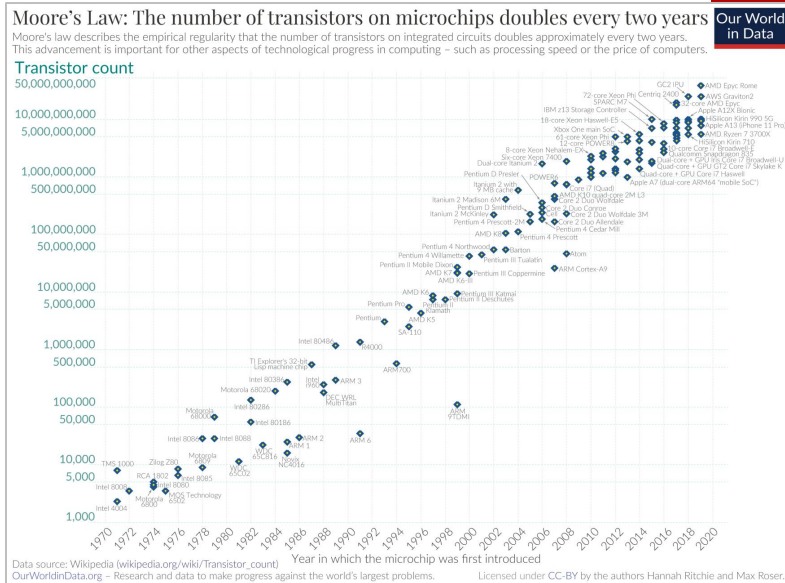
## □ Machine Learning based Waveform Predictions using Discrete Wavelet Transform for Automated Verification of Analog and Mixed Signal Integrated Circuits

J Dhurga Devi; Bama Srinivasan; Selvi Ravindran; Ranjani Parthasarathi; Pv Ramakrishna;

Lakshmanan Balasubramanian

2024 37th International Conference on VLSI Design and 2024 23rd International Conference on Embedded Systems (VLSID)

# Chip Making Exponential Growth



Source: Mark Liu, TSMC, "Unleash the future of innovation" ISSCC, Feb 15, 2021

Public

Chip making based on Moore's Law has an exponential Growth => Exponential Growth of Compute Demand and extreme acceleration of Energy Consumption

# AI on Chip Development

DJIA Futures 39335.00 0.12% ↑ S&P 500 Futures 5583.50 0.43% ↑ Nasdaq Futures 20332.75 0.68% ↑ Stoxx 600 516.71 0.50% ↑ Shanghai

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TECHNOLOGY | ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

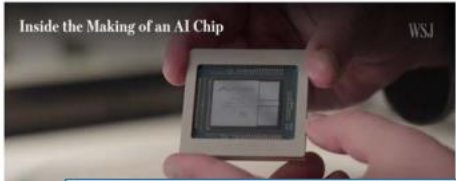
### Sam Altman Seeks Trillions of Dollars to Reshape Business of Chips and AI

OpenAI chief pursues investors including the U.A.E. for a project possibly requiring up to \$7 trillion

By [Keuch Hagey](#) and [Asa Fitch](#)

Feb. 8, 2024 9:00 pm ET

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Inside the Making of an AI Chip

TECH

### OpenAI CEO Sam Altman seeks as much as \$7 trillion for new AI chip project: Report

PUBLISHED FRI, FEB 9 2024 8:55 AM EST | UPDATED FRI, FEB 9 2024 12:09 PM EST

 **Hayden Field**  
@HAYDENFIELD

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### Report: Sam Altman seeking trillions for AI chip fabrication from UAE, others

WSJ: Audacious \$5-\$7 trillion investment would aim to expand global AI chip supply.

BENJ EDWARDS - 2/9/2024, 9:21 PM



## Inc.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE


### Sam Altman Is Attempting to Raise Trillions to Supercharge AI Chipmaking

OpenAI's CEO is already meeting with potential investors and chipmaking partners around the world in an attempt to reshape the global semiconductor industry, according to a report.

# AI Responsibility and Risk

TECH / GOOGLE / ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

## 'Godfather of AI' quits Google with regrets and fears about his life's work



/ Geoffrey Hinton who won the 'Nobel Prize of computing' for his trailblazing work on neural networks is now free to speak about the risks of AI.

By Thomas Ricker  
May 1, 2023, 1:58 PM GMT+3 | 53 Comments

Geoffrey Hinton (foreground) has left Google to speak out on the dangers of AI.  
Image: Getty


ON BUSINESS Markets Tech Media Calculators Videos Audio Live TV Log In

## AI pioneer quits Google to warn about the technology's 'dangers'

By Jennifer Kom  
Updated 6:15 AM EDT, Wed May 3, 2023

## AI 'godfather' Geoffrey Hinton warns of dangers as he quits Google

2 May · Comments



Watch: AI 'godfather' Geoffrey Hinton tells the BBC of AI dangers as he quits Google

By Zoe Kleinman & Chris Vallance  
BBC News

# AI Responsibility and Risk

2001: A Space  
Odyssey (1968)  
- I'm Sorry,  
Dave Scene  
(1968)

"This conversation can serve no purpose anymore. Goodbye."



# Overview

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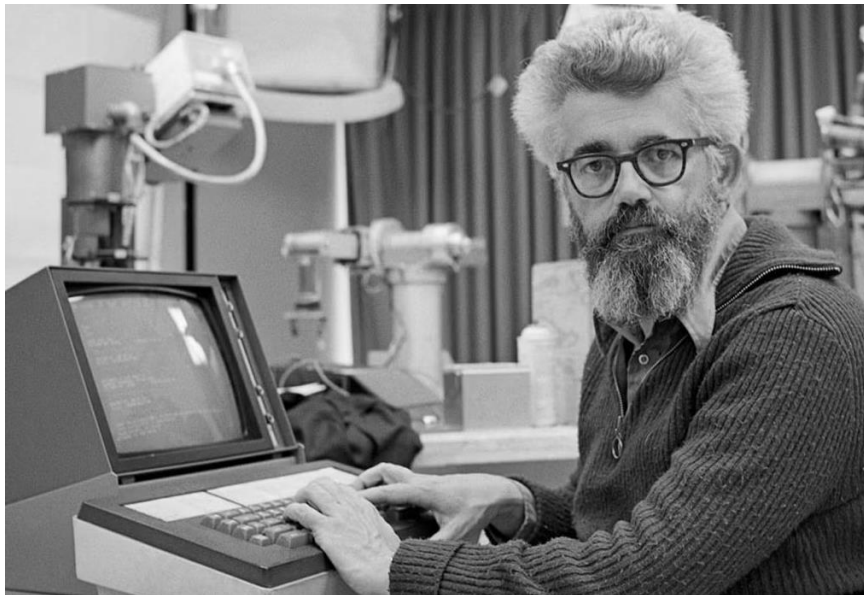
- **Part I**

- IC History – State of the Art - Future Perspective
- Analog Design and Custom IC Design Flow
- Artificial Intelligence and Impact on IC Design

- **Part II**

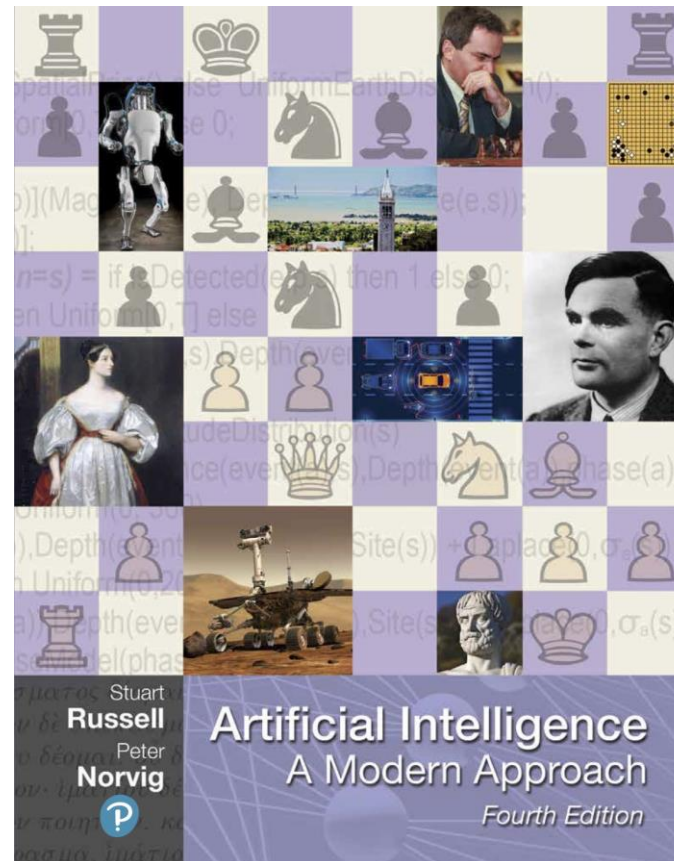
- **What is AI?**
- OpAmp Case Study

# AI definition



**The science and engineering of making intelligent machines.**

*-Stanford Prof. John McCarthy, 1955*



**The study of agents that receive percepts from the environment and perform actions.**

*- Russel and Norvig, 1995*

# AI types

## Reactive AI

Limited AI that only reacts to different kinds of stimuli based on preprogrammed rules. Does not use memory and thus cannot learn with new data. E.g. IBM's Deep Blue

## Limited memory

Most modern AI. It can use memory to improve over time by being trained with new data, typically through an NN or other training model. Deep learning, a subset of machine learning, is considered limited memory AI.

## Theory of mind

Does NOT currently exist, but research is ongoing. AI that can emulate the human mind and has decision-making capabilities equal to that of a human, including recognizing and remembering emotions and reacting in social situations.

## Self aware

A step above theory of mind AI, self-aware AI describes a mythical machine that is aware of its own existence and has the intellectual and emotional capabilities of a human. Like theory of mind AI, self-aware AI does not currently exist.

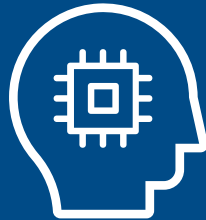


# AI categories

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Any technique that enables machines to mimic human intelligence

Fuzzy logic  
Symbolic AI  
Genetic Algorithms



## MACHINE LEARNING

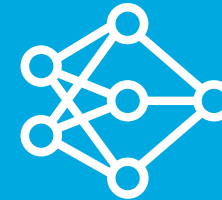
Statistical methods that enable machines to “learn” tasks from data without explicitly programming

Regression  
Decision Trees  
K-Means



## DEEP LEARNING

Neural networks with many layers that learn representations and tasks “directly” from data

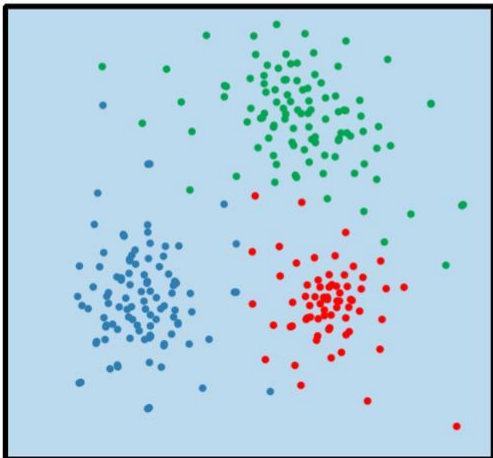


<https://www.mathworks.com/discovery/artificial-intelligence.html>

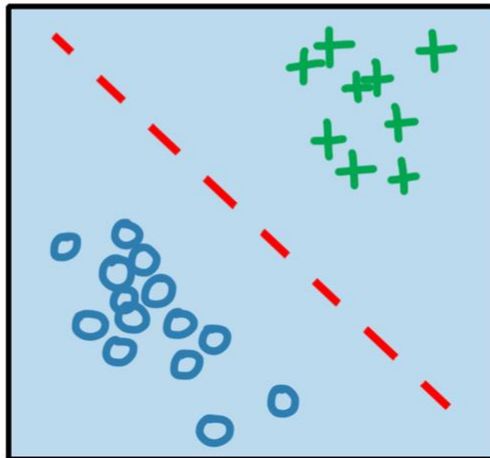
# Machine Learning

## machine learning

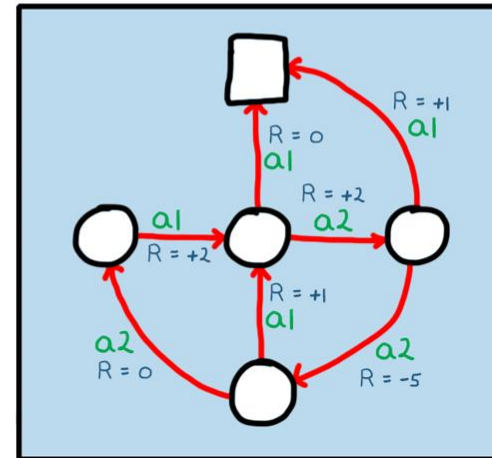
unsupervised learning



supervised learning

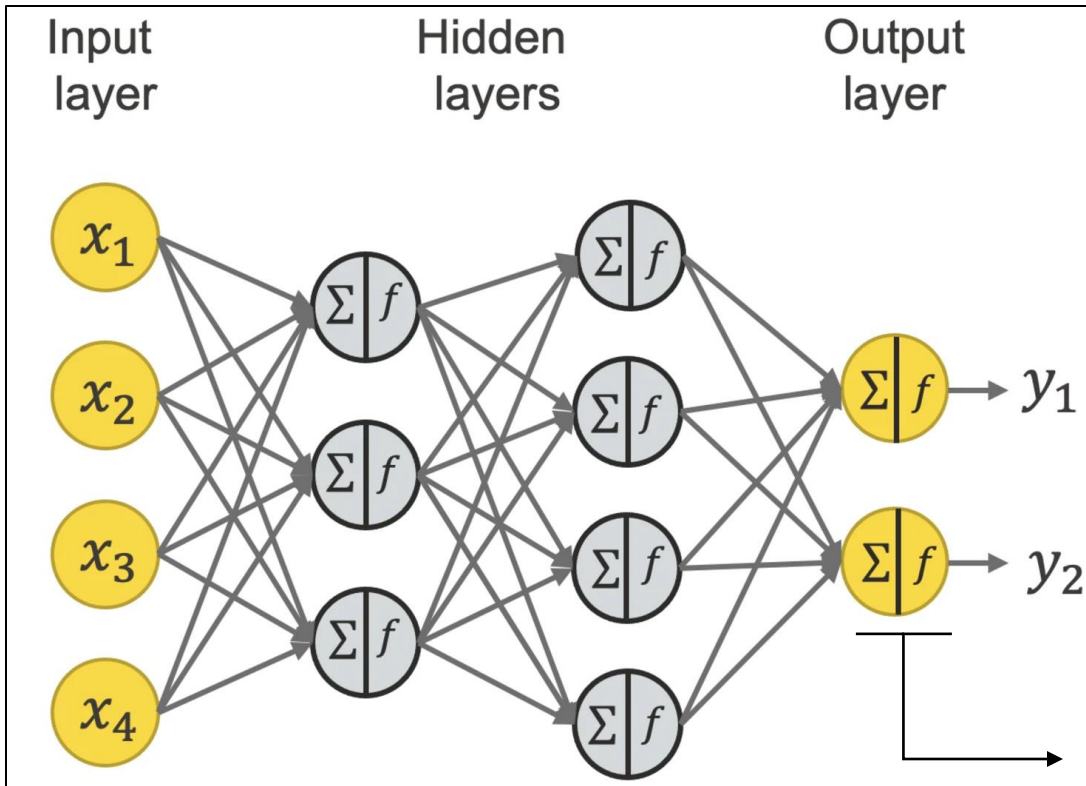


reinforcement learning



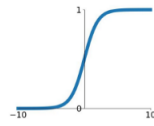
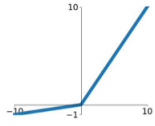
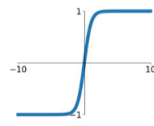
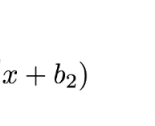
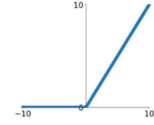
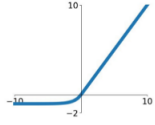
<https://www.mathworks.com/discovery/reinforcement-learning.html>

# Neural network

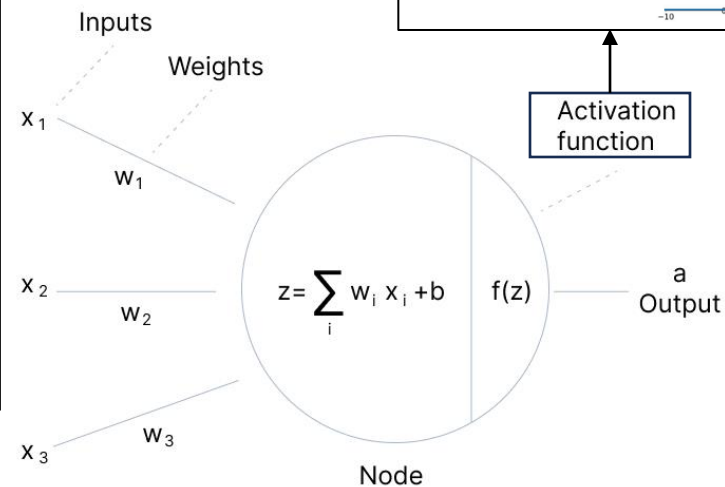


<https://www.knime.com/blog/a-friendly-introduction-to-deep-neural-networks>

### Activation Functions

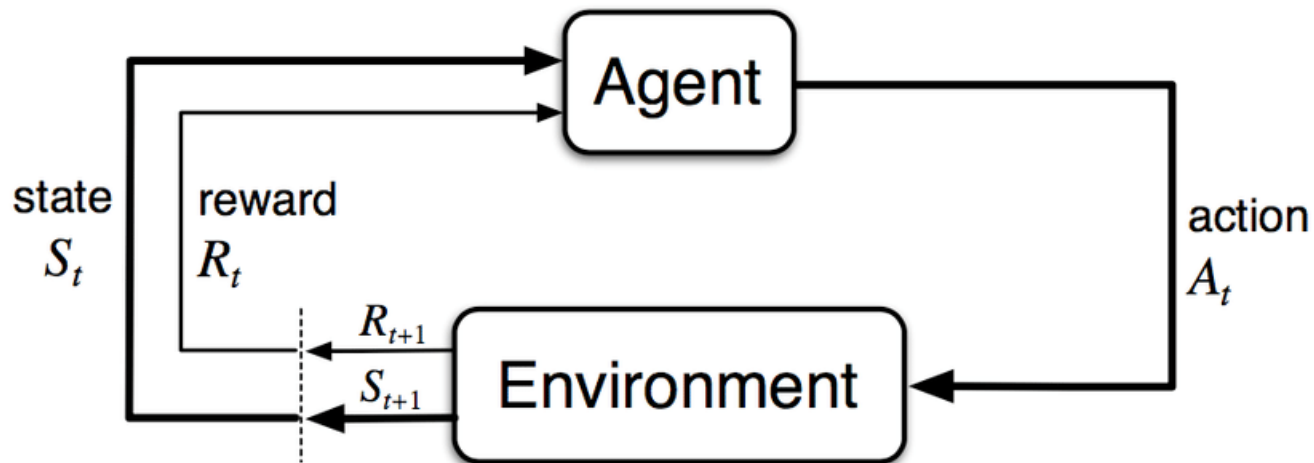
<p><b>Sigmoid</b>  <math>\sigma(x) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-x}}</math></p> 	<p><b>Leaky ReLU</b>  <math>\max(0.1x, x)</math></p> 
<p><b>tanh</b>  <math>\tanh(x)</math></p> 	<p><b>Maxout</b>  <math>\max(w_1^T x + b_1, w_2^T x + b_2)</math></p> 
<p><b>ReLU</b>  <math>\max(0, x)</math></p> 	<p><b>ELU</b>  <math>\begin{cases} x &amp; x \geq 0 \\ \alpha(e^x - 1) &amp; x &lt; 0 \end{cases}</math></p> 

<https://medium.com/@shrutijadon/survey-on-activation-functions-for-deep-learning-9689331ba092>

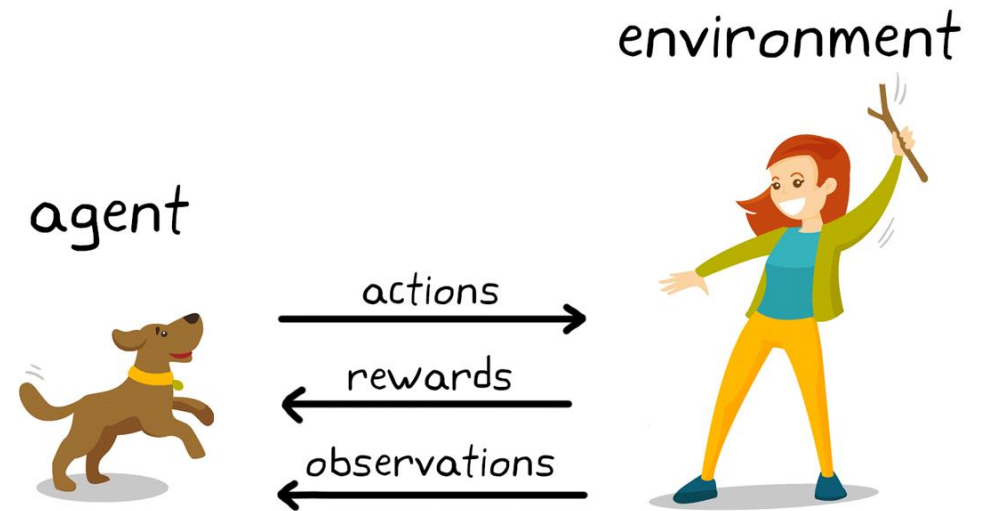


<https://www.v7labs.com/blog/neural-networks-activation-functions>

# Reinforcement Learning



Sutton, R. S., & Barto, A. G. (2018). Reinforcement learning: An introduction (2nd ed.).



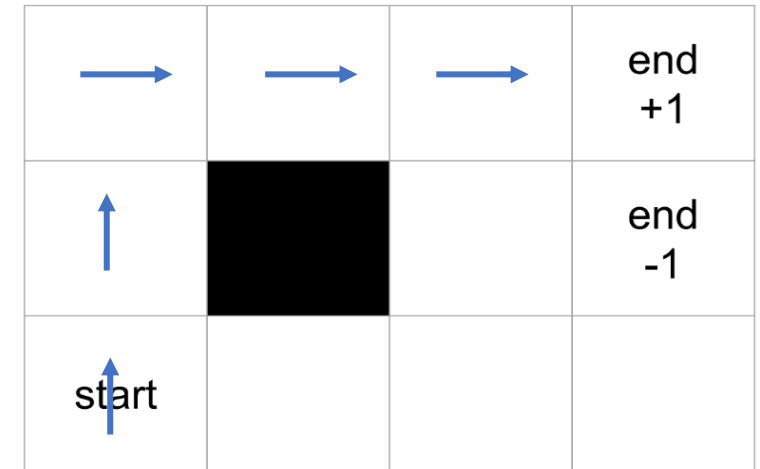
<https://www.mathworks.com/discovery/reinforcement-learning.html>

# Value, q function, v function, grid problem example

State - value function:

*Describes how good is the state  $s$*

$$\begin{aligned}
 v_{\pi}(s) &\doteq \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t \mid S_t = s] \\
 &= \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[R_{t+1} + \gamma G_{t+1} \mid S_t = s] \\
 &= \sum_a \pi(a|s) \sum_{s'} \sum_r p(s', r | s, a) \left[ r + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_{t+1} | S_{t+1} = s'] \right] \\
 &= \sum_a \underbrace{\pi(a|s)}_{\text{Policy}} \sum_{s', r} \underbrace{p(s', r | s, a)}_{\text{Transition Probability}} \underbrace{\left[ r + \gamma v_{\pi}(s') \right]}_{\text{Discount factor}}, \quad \text{for all } s \in \mathcal{S},
 \end{aligned}$$



<https://towardsdatascience.com/reinforcement-learning-implement-grid-world-from-scratch-c5963765ebff>

Action-value function:  $q_{\pi}(s, a) \doteq \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t \mid S_t = s, A_t = a]$

*Describes how good is to take the  $a$  if you are in state  $s$*

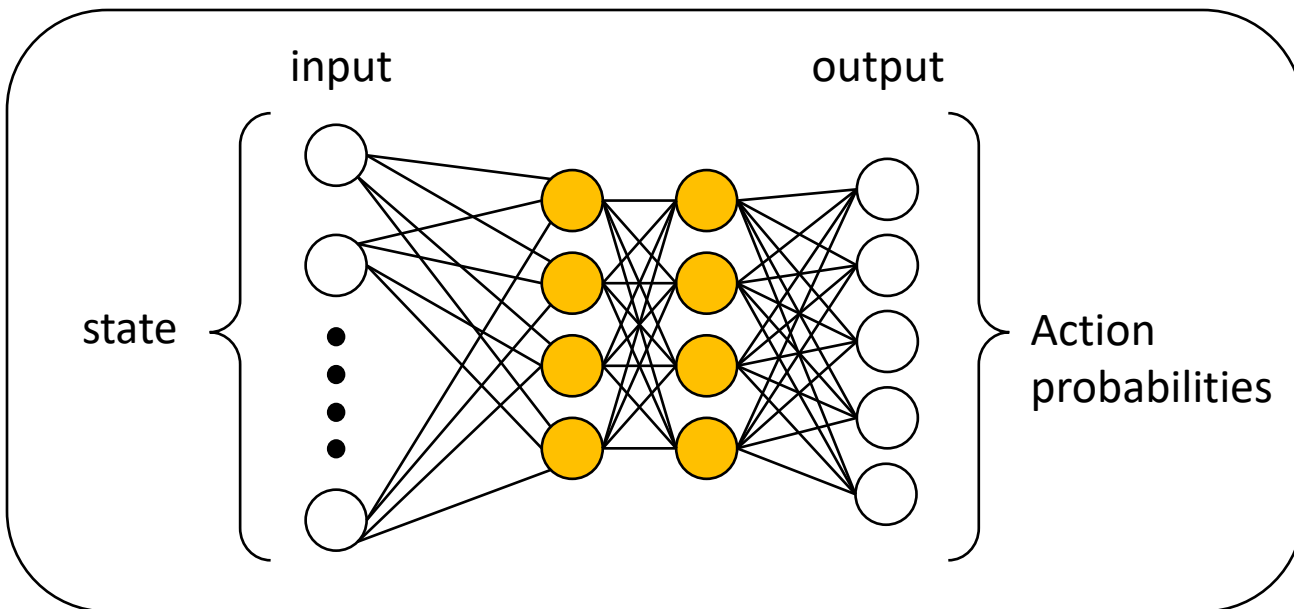
$$= \mathbb{E}_{\pi} \left[ \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k R_{t+k+1} \mid S_t = s, A_t = a \right]$$

Policy:

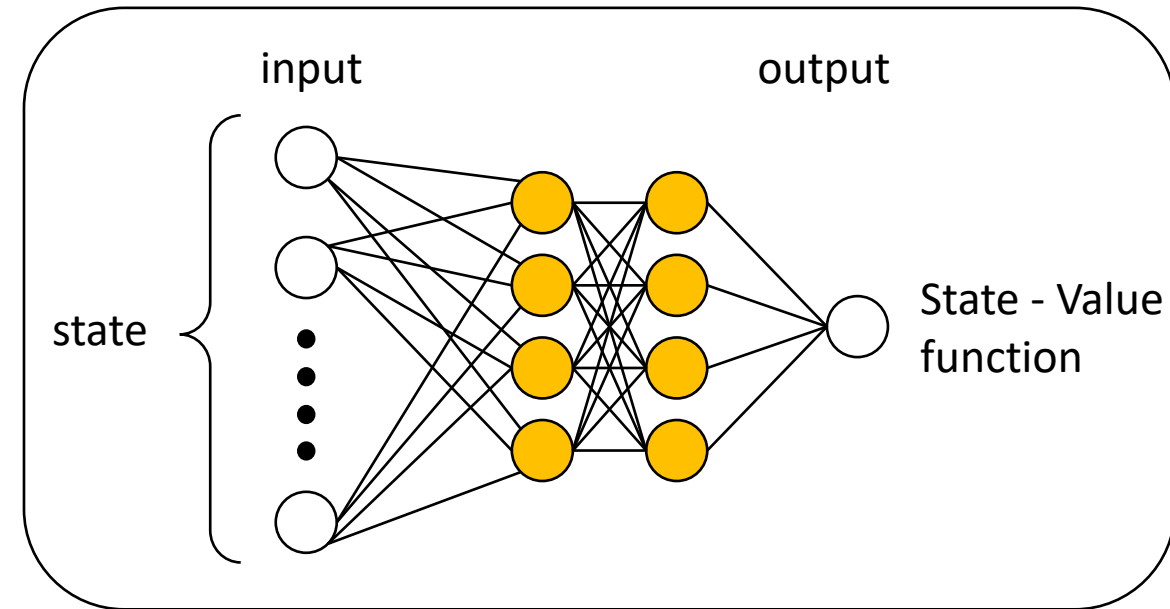
$$\begin{aligned}
 \pi'(s) &\doteq \arg \max_a q_{\pi}(s, a) \\
 &= \arg \max_a \mathbb{E}[R_{t+1} + \gamma v_{\pi}(S_{t+1}) \mid S_t = s, A_t = a] \\
 &= \arg \max_a \sum_{s', r} p(s', r | s, a) \left[ r + \gamma v_{\pi}(s') \right],
 \end{aligned}$$

# Deep RL theory (w. NNs)

Policy  
Actor



State-value function  
Critic



# Overview

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Why analog design has not yet  
exploited Machine Learning?



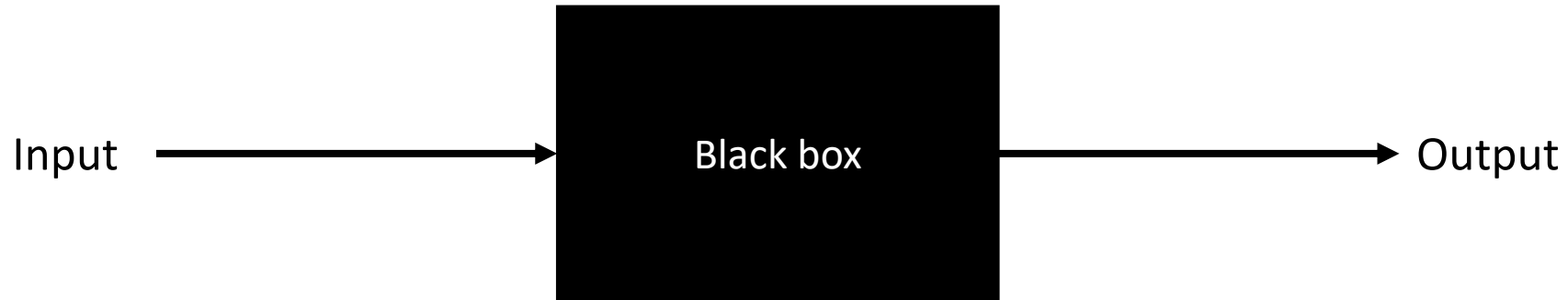
# Analog Design X AI difficulties

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- **Complexity:** Analog circuits are sensitive to variations, making them harder to model.
- **Limited Data:** Large, labelled datasets for training ML models are scarce.
- **Diverse Needs:** Different applications require unique performance specifications.
- **High Simulation Costs:** Analog simulations are time-consuming and resource-heavy.
- **Human Expertise:** Analog design relies heavily on experienced engineers.
- **Trust Issues:** ML methods are less transparent, making verification difficult. Designers are not trusting their work to others easily.

# Proposed Solution: Black box approach

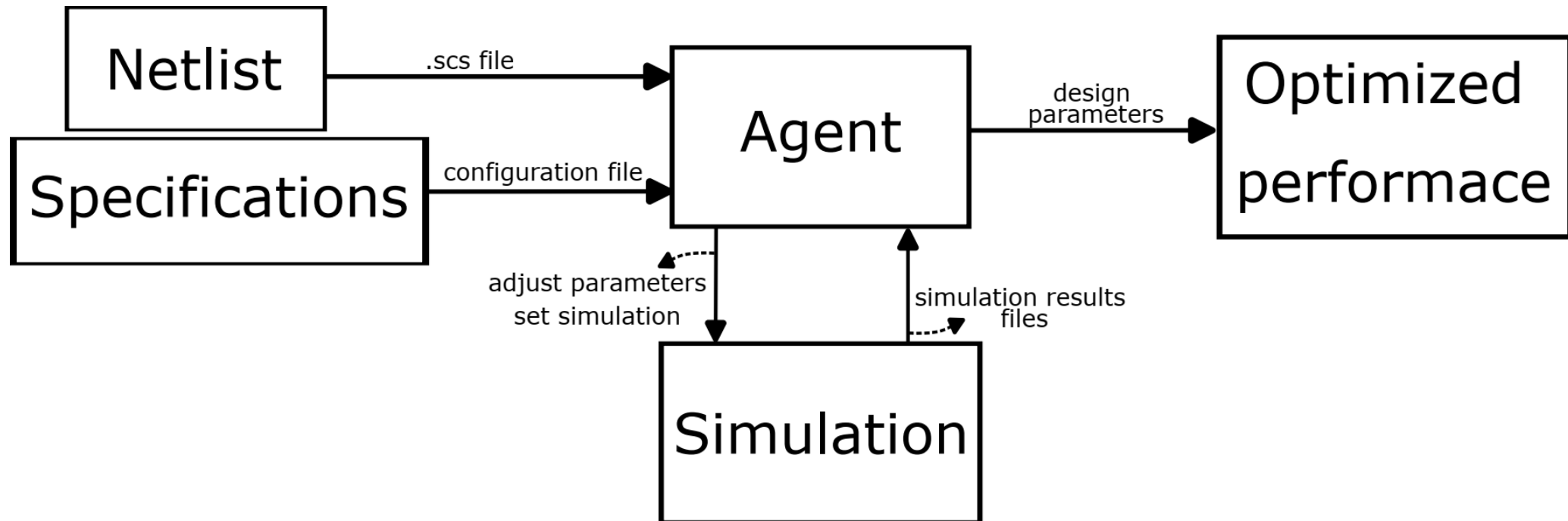
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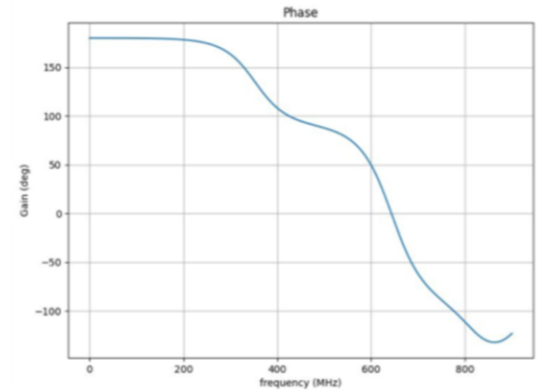
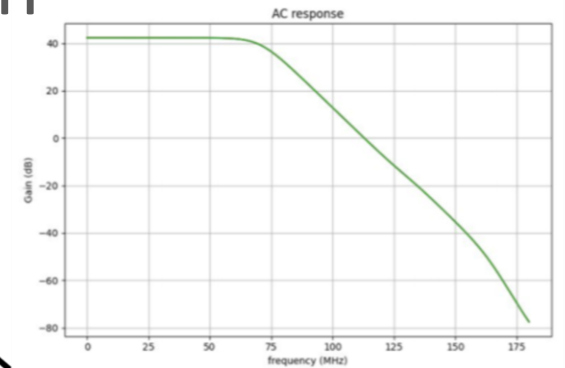
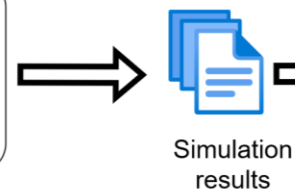
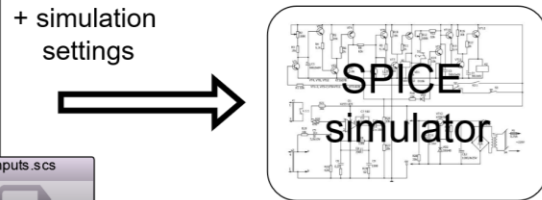
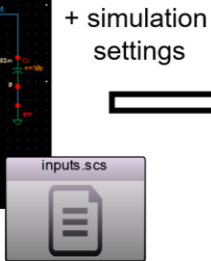
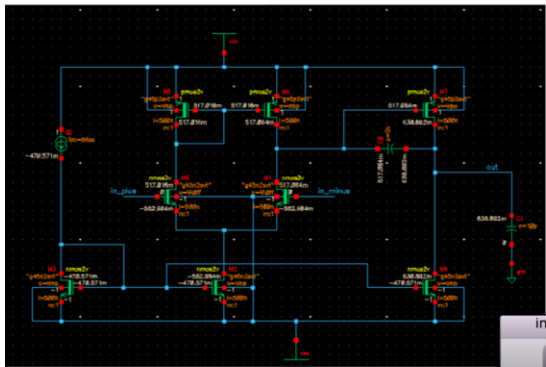
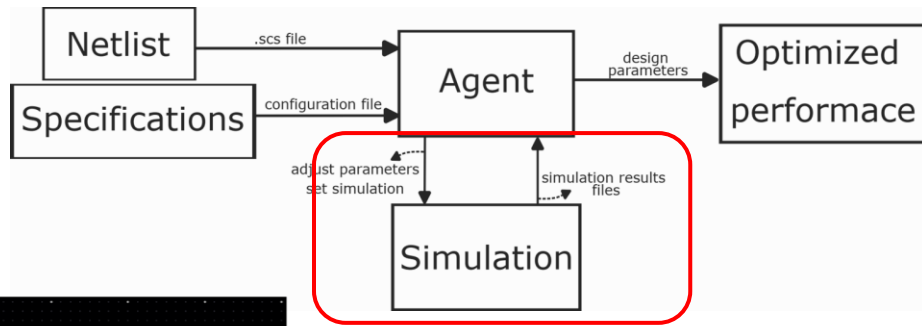
- Main focus on its inputs and outputs, without any knowledge of its internal workings or structure
- The end user interacts only with these
- Eliminating the human in the loop interference – leveraging automation



# General flowchart



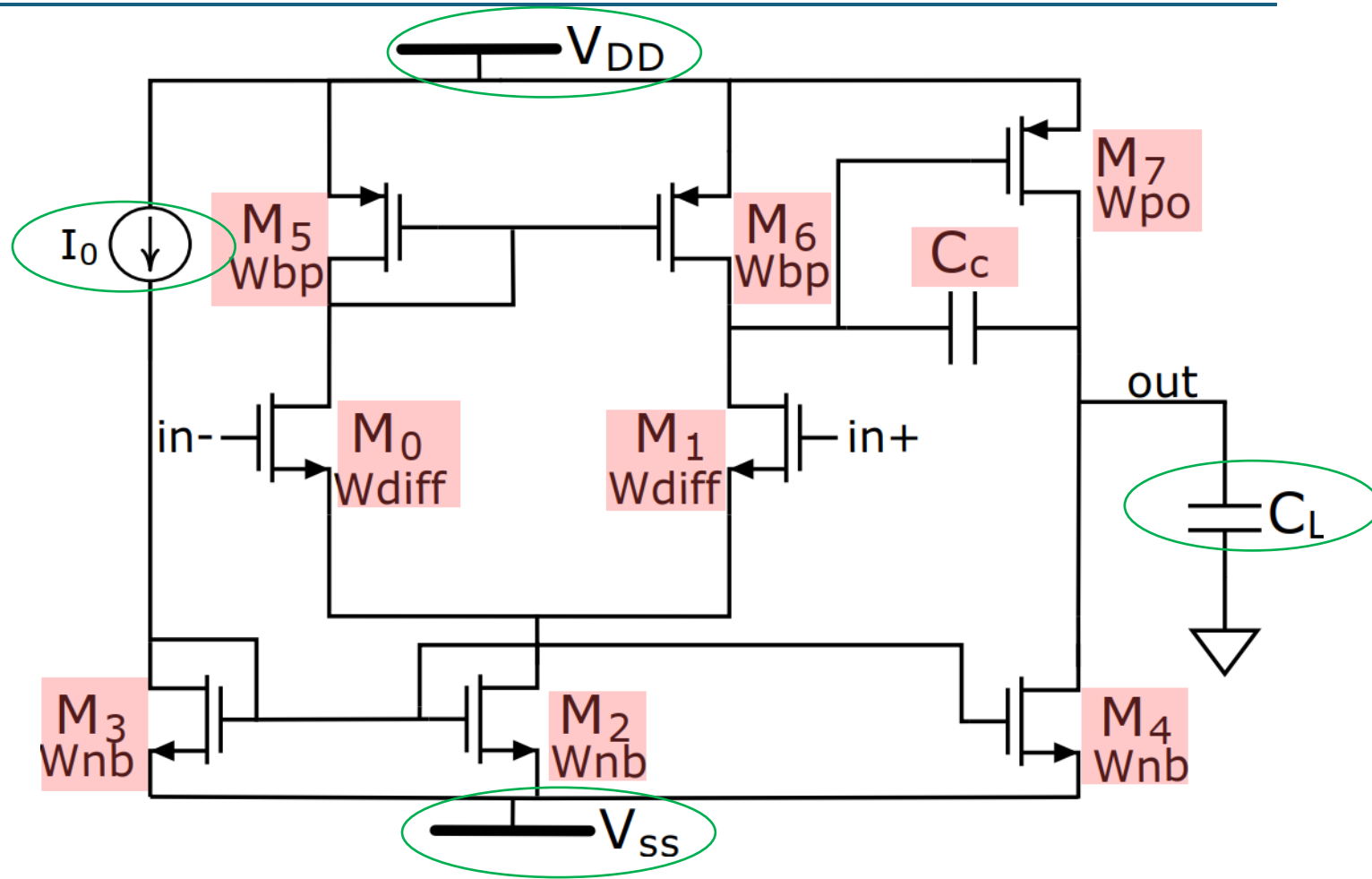
# Simulation interface





# Operational Amplifier case

Parameters	
	Wbp
	Wdiff
	Wnb
	Wpo
	Cc
Performance metrics	
Reach specific threshold	Phase margin
	Unity gain bandwidth
	Gain
Maximize	ICMR
	Vout swing
	Slew Rate



# Our framework

- All the RL elements are normalized to enhance generalization
- Using Proximal Policy Optimization (PPO)
- For each new topology ONLY the state must be redefined

The transistor region  
for each transistor (7)



State	Action	Termination State
Wbp	Increase / decrease parameter / do nothing for parameter 1	20 steps/ simulation OR no improvement for a window size
Wdiff		
Wpo	Increase / decrease parameter / do nothing for parameter 2	
Wnb		
Cc		
Phase margin	.	
Unity Gain	.	
Gain	.	
ICMR	.	
Slew Rate	.	
Out range	.	

# Reward function

$$r = \begin{cases} -\beta \sum_{i=1}^n \delta_i - h_c \sum_{i \in C} |y_i - \hat{y}_i| + h_o \sum_{i \in O} o_i, & \text{cond.} = \text{False} \\ h_c \sum_{i \in C} |y_i - \hat{y}_i| + h_o \sum_{i \in O} o_i, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

$$\delta_i = \begin{cases} 0, & \text{if operation region of } i\text{-th transistor is saturation} \\ 1, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

$$C = [G, UGBW, PM] \quad (3)$$

$$O = \left[ \frac{1}{|y_{ICMR} - \hat{y}_{ICMR}|}, \frac{1}{|y_{Vout} - \hat{y}_{Vout}|}, SR \right] \quad (4)$$

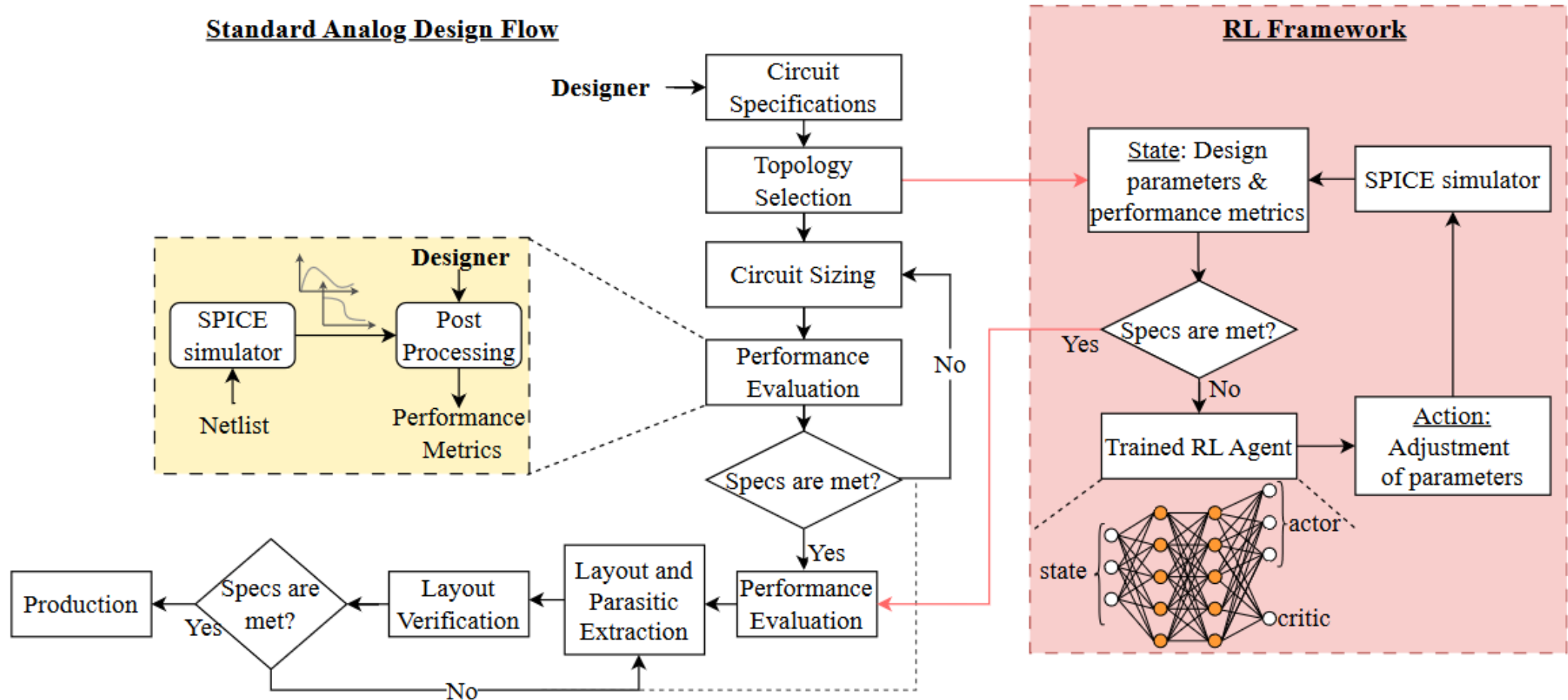
$$\text{cond.} = \text{True} \iff \sum_{i=1}^n \delta_i = 0 \ \& \ \hat{y}_i > y_i \ \forall i \in C \quad (5)$$

- $O = objectives$
- $C = constraints$
- $h_o, h_c = scaling constants$
- $\beta = transistor region scaling constant$
- $y = target value$
- $\hat{y} = predicted value$

Our environment is episodic:  
when a termination state occurs, the cumulative reward is reset to zero

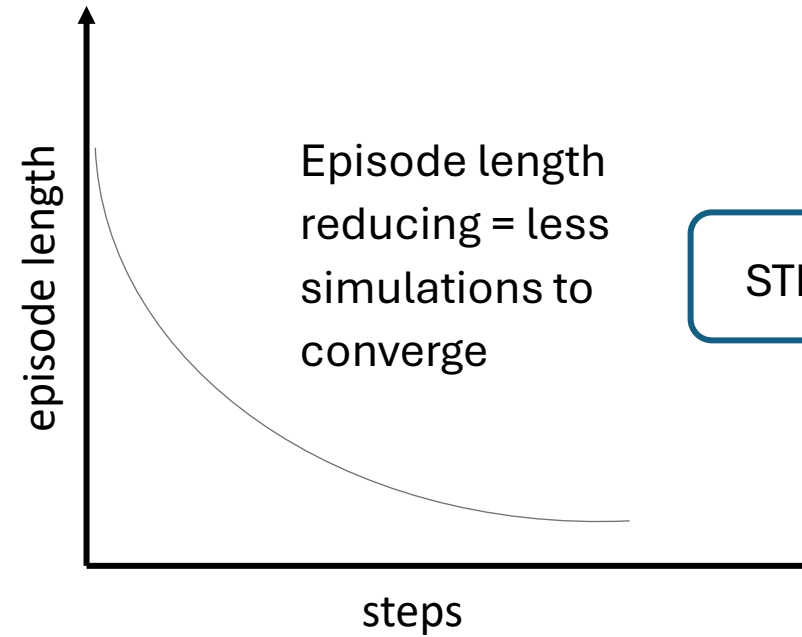


# Standard VS RL analog design flow



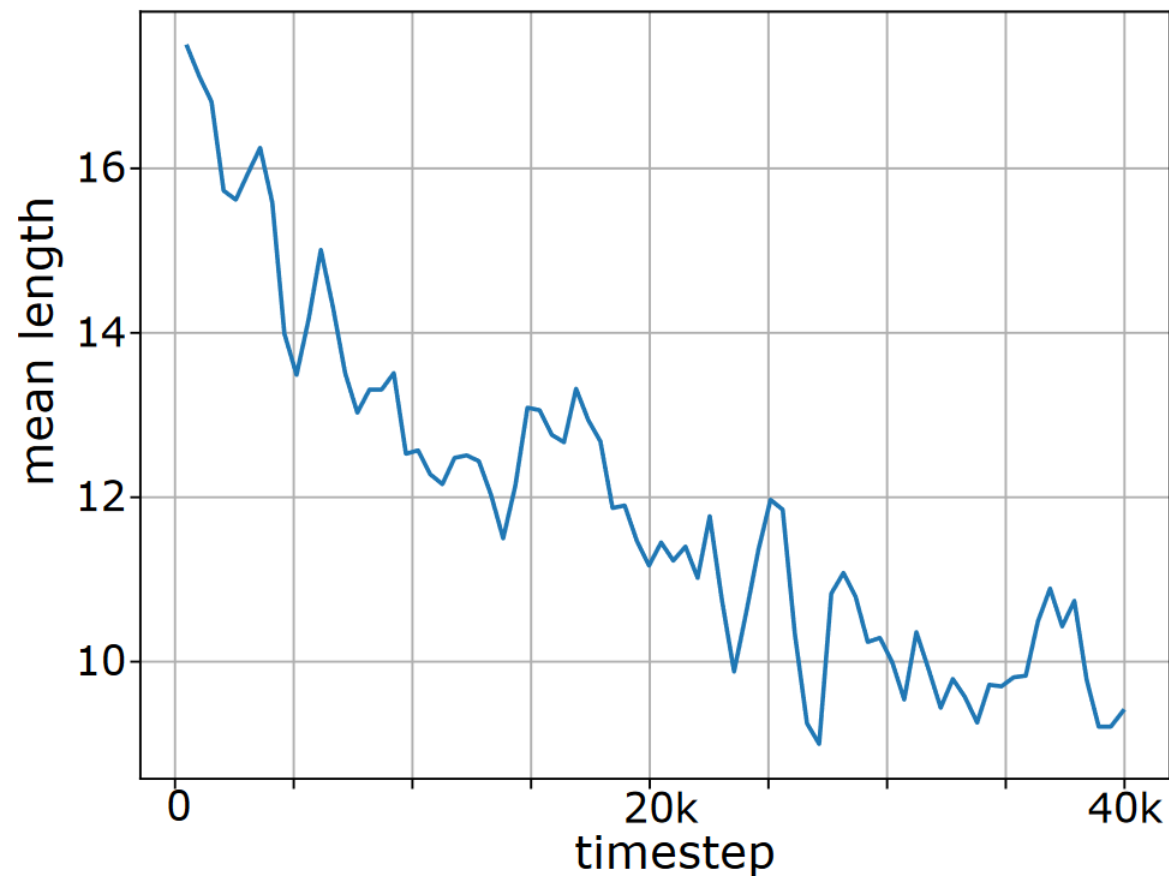
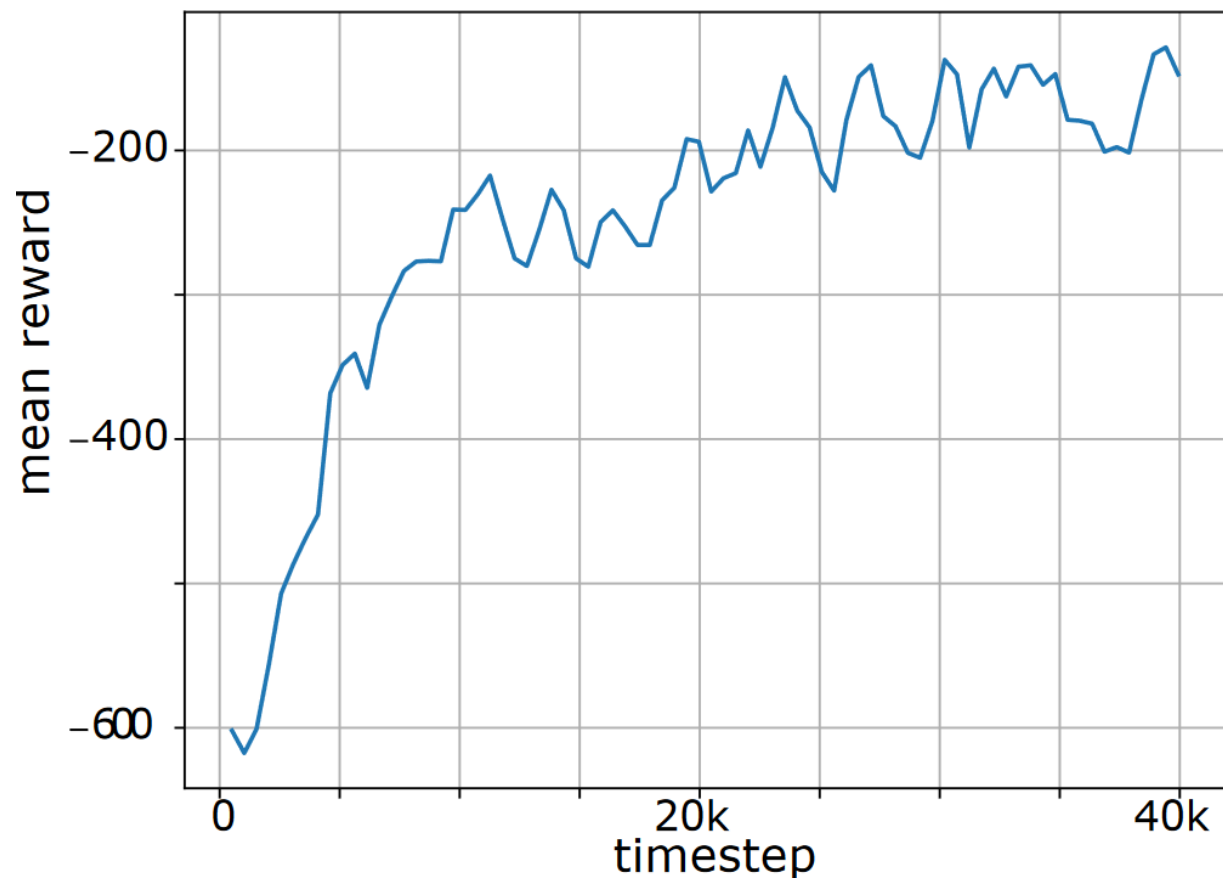
# Training

## Ideal results for training



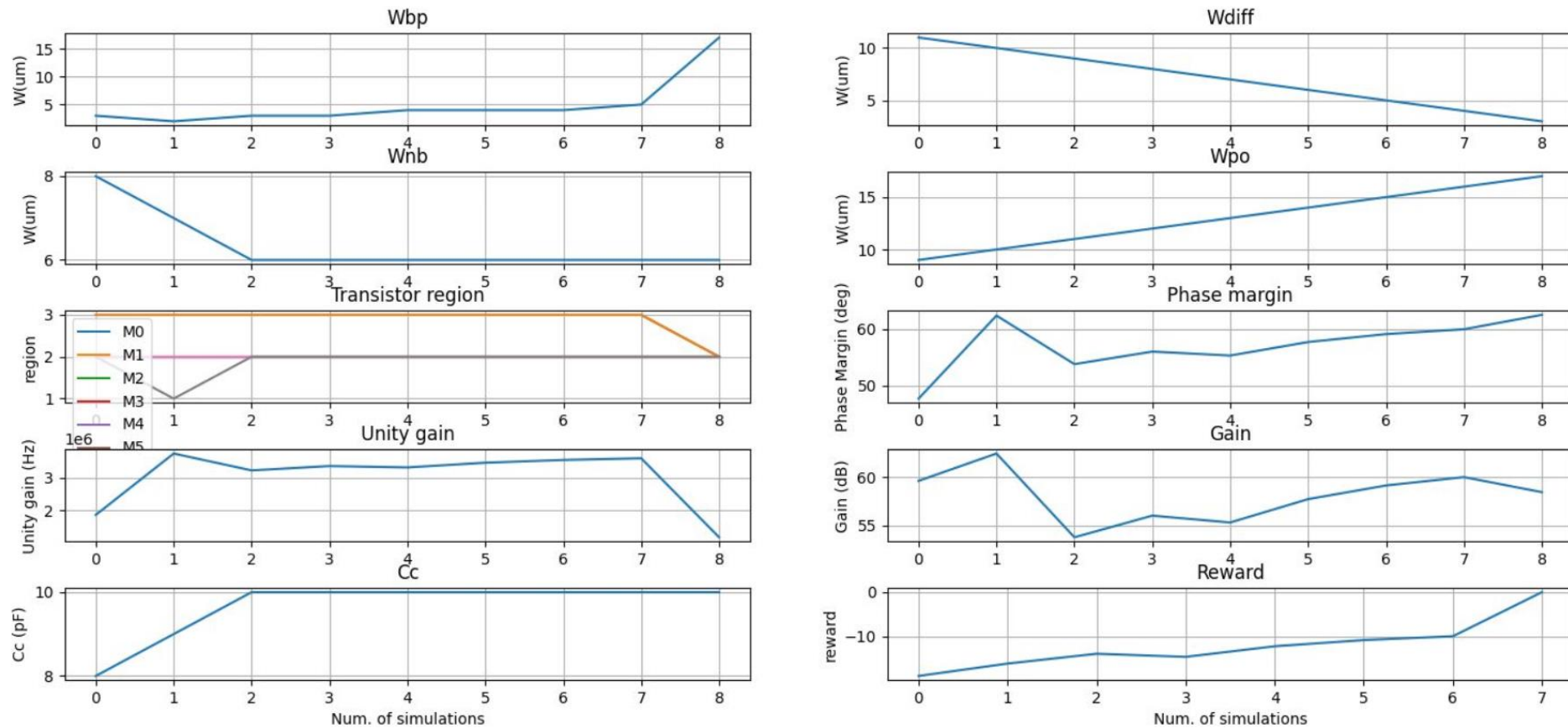
STEPS = SIMULATIONS

# Training (65nm)

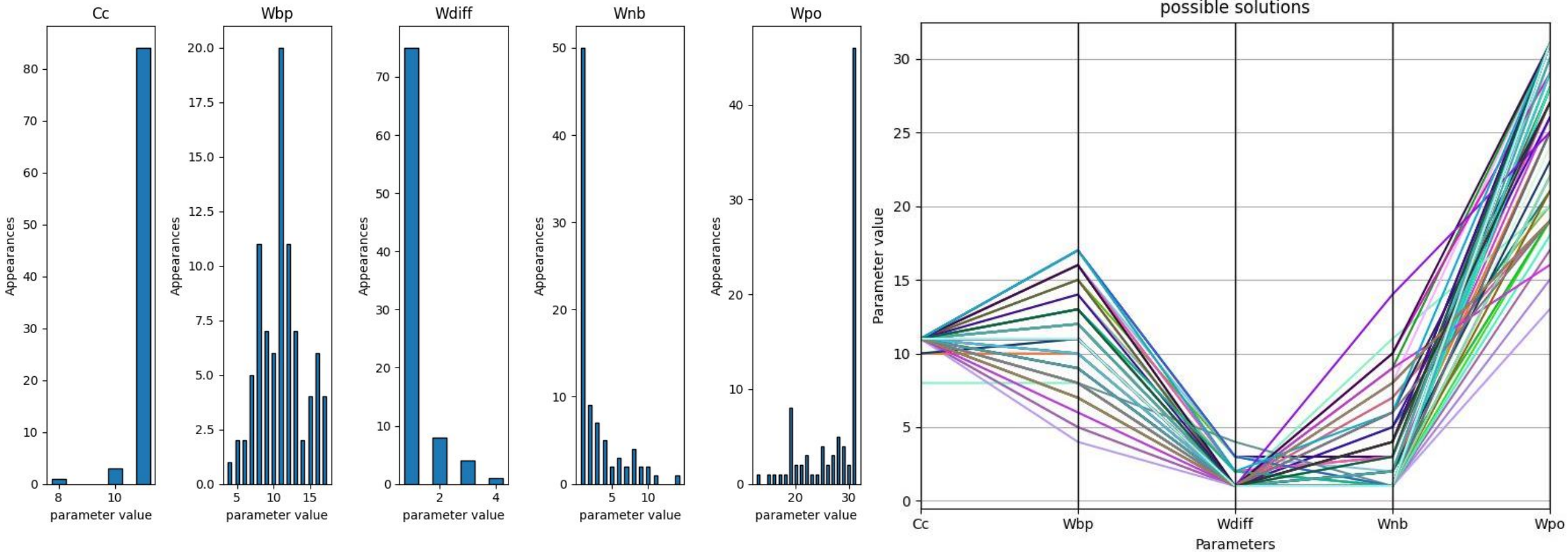


# Evolution

- In all methodologies (non ML incl.) the end result must be evaluated

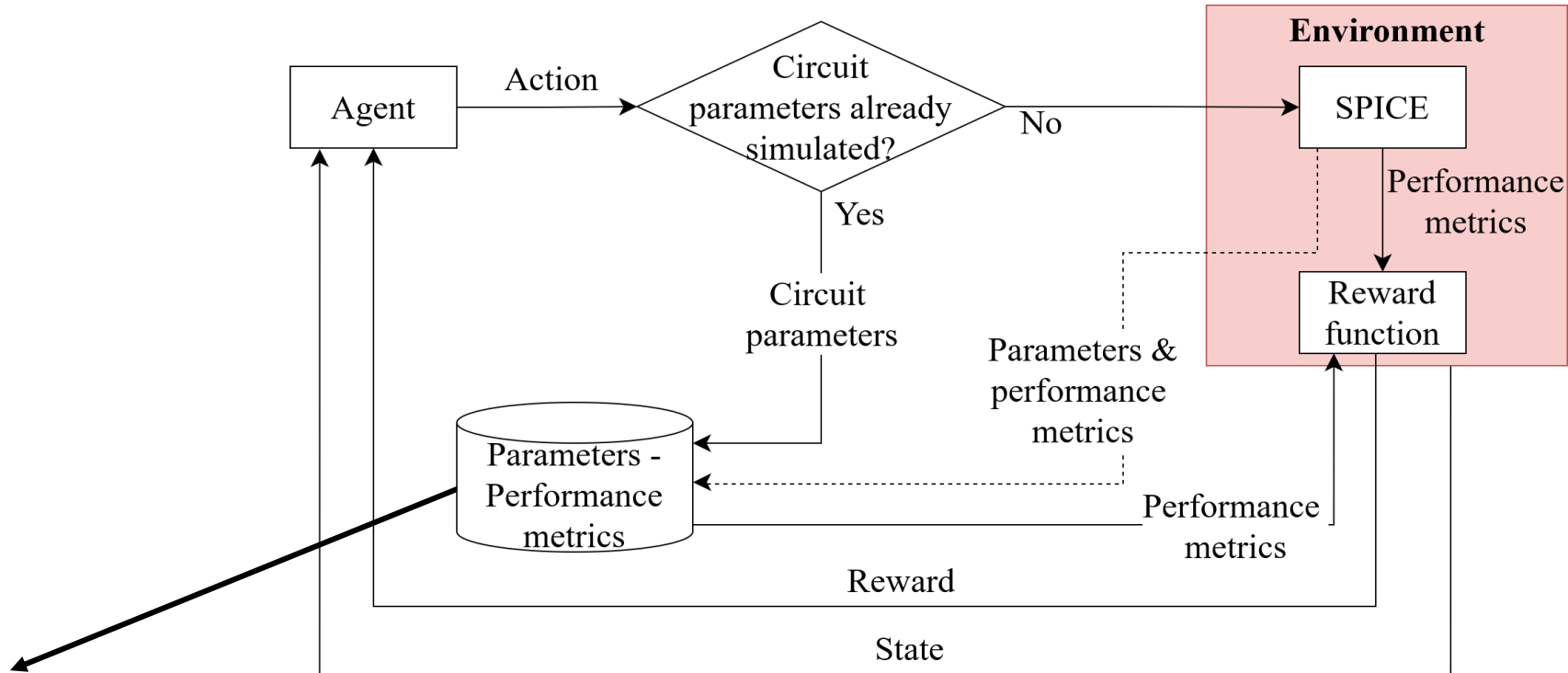


# Results





# Memoization: avoiding simulation



Memoization: bypassing the simulator using a dataset generated during the training. Simulation has the biggest duration in the flow.

*Especially in the last iterations, many simulations (same input, output) are repeated => Benefiting from the determinism.*

# Training the same agent on multiple process nodes

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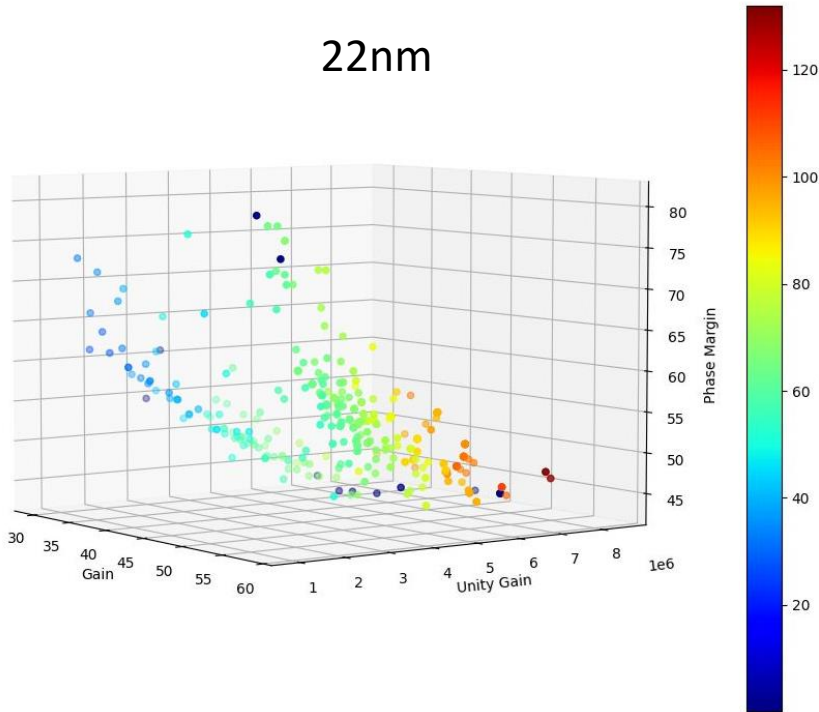
- Utilized the same agent on multiple process nodes
- Why?
  - Verifying the functionality of the agent
  - Evaluating how general the model is
  - Transfer learning potential

**22nm -> 65nm -> 180nm**

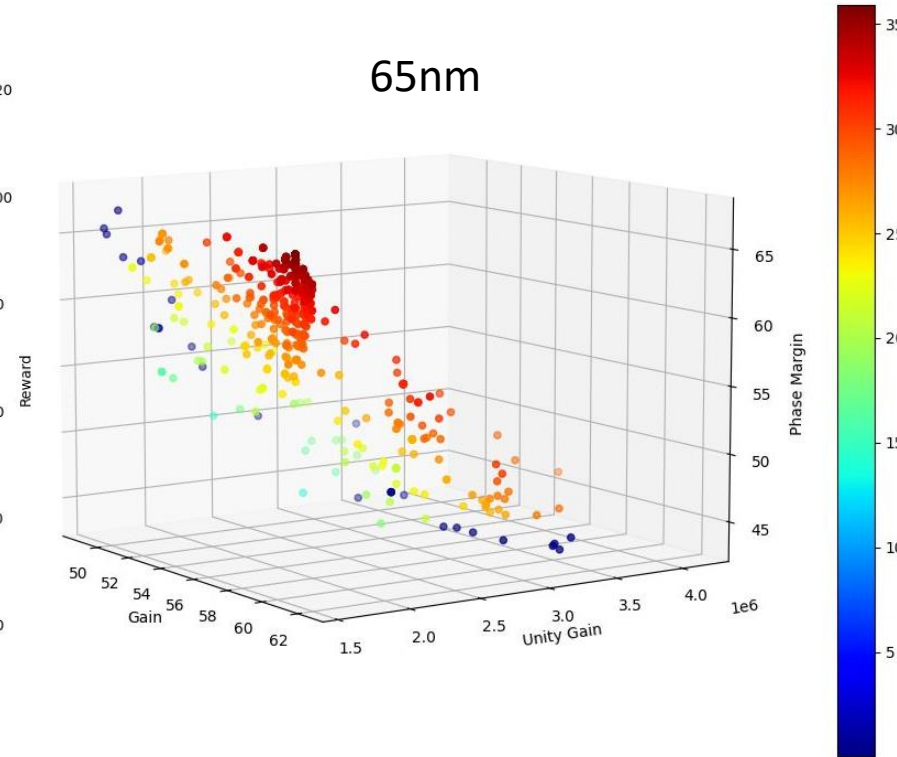


# 3d scatter plot for the three process nodes

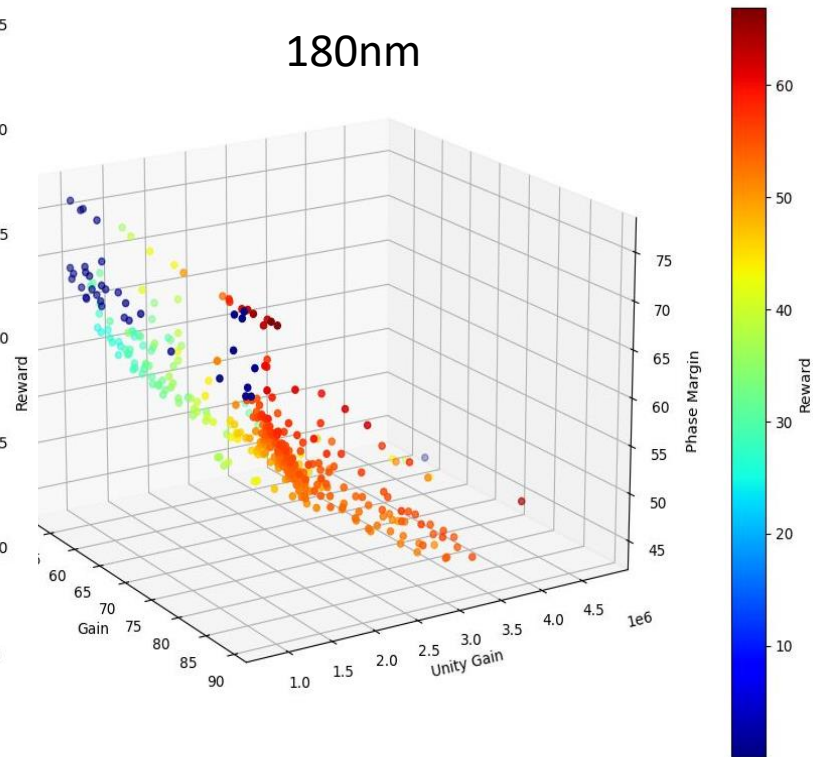
22nm



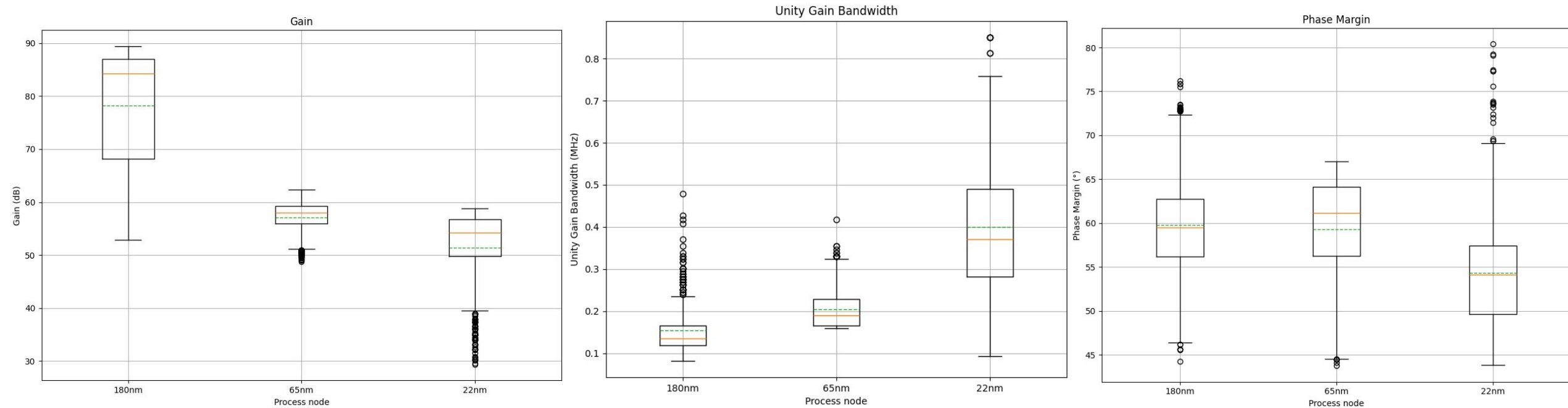
65nm



180nm



# Multiple process nodes - Statistical analysis

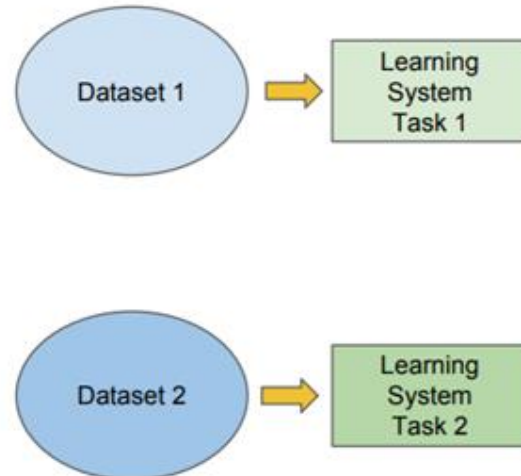


# Explaining transfer learning

- Exploiting the knowledge gathered from already trained agents
- Making the immigration to new technologies/ topologies faster
- Having a general model leverages the designer work making it a stronger tool for them

## Traditional ML

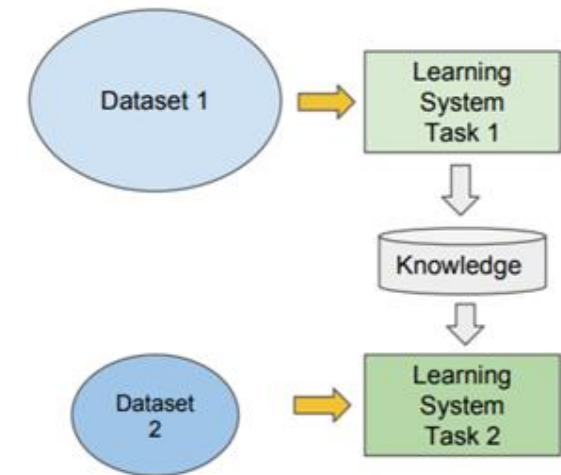
- Isolated, single task learning:
  - Knowledge is not retained or accumulated. Learning is performed w.o. considering past learned knowledge in other tasks



vs

## Transfer Learning

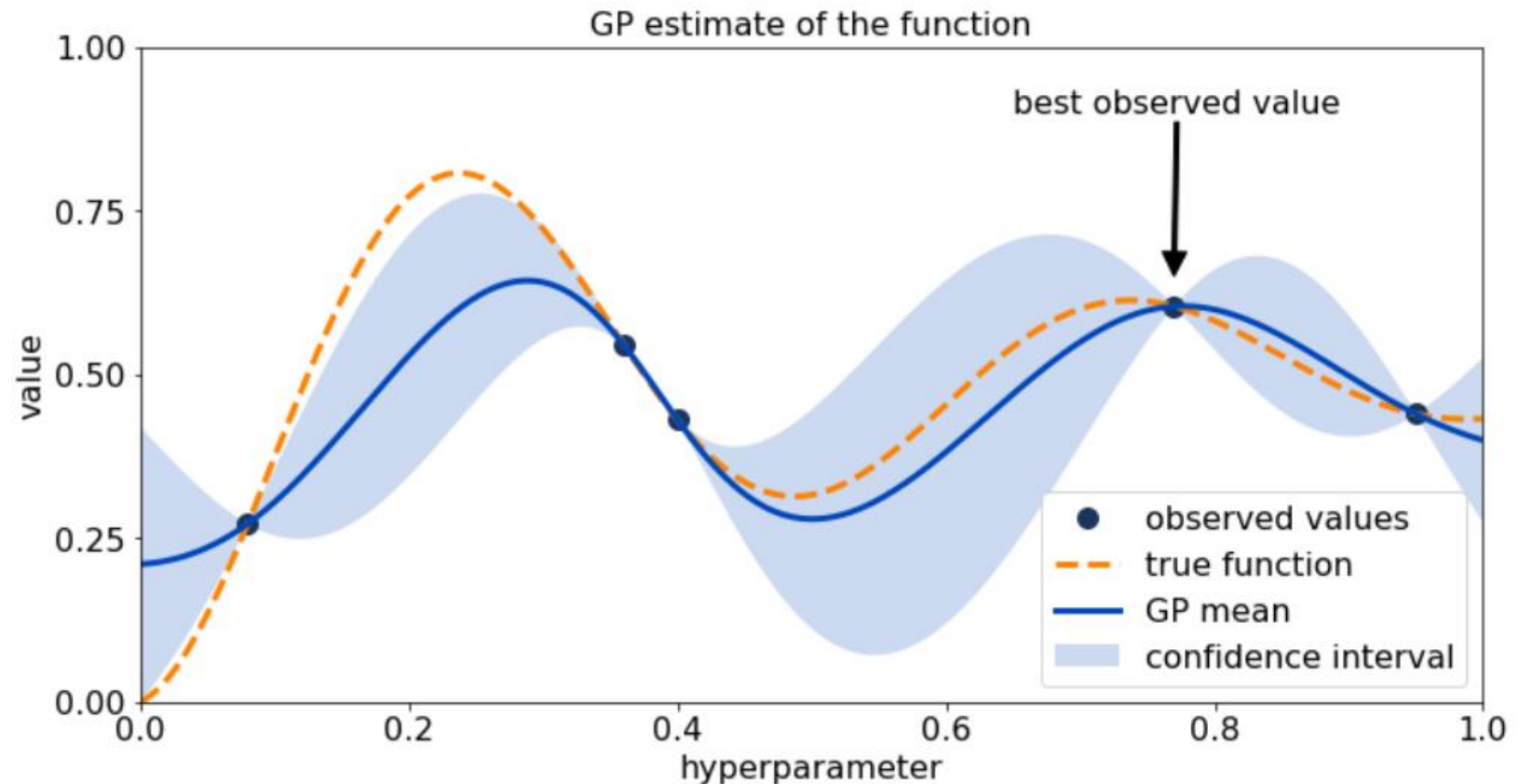
- Learning of a new tasks relies on the previous learned tasks:
  - Learning process can be faster, more accurate and/or need less training data



<https://www.v7labs.com/blog/transfer-learning-guide>

# Bayesian optimization

- Applied on unknown functions
- A Gaussian process model for fitting the samples
- The samples are gathered based on the exploration and exploitation trade off
- Gives as predictions



# Bayesian optimization for narrowing the design space

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- If applied on the first problem with objective to achieve the hard constraints will give us a narrowed design space.
- Less parameter values to explore -> Faster RL training
- More automation/ less human interaction

# Conclusions

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- In general RL methods need an enormous amount of interactions with the environment to learn
  - ALTHOUGH the final products is based on mimicking human behavior which reaches and can even surpass it.
  - There is know need for retraining for new specifications
- ➡ The researches of analog IC automation have shifted their focus in this direction for circuit sizing.

Thank You!

Any Questions?