On the Use of Models for Real-time Reconfigurations of Embedded Systems

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Abstract: The development of Multi-Processor System-on-Chip (MPSoC) for high-performance embedded applications has become a major challenge for designers due to a number of crucial constraints to meet, such as functional correctness and temporal performance. This paper presents a new process intended to support and facilitate the co-design and scheduling analysis of high-performance applications on MPSoCs. The contribution of this process is that it is designed to i) model the system functionality, execution architectures and allocation of software and hardware parts using a high-level modeling language ii) verify scheduling analysis of the system using a simulation tool and iii) offer a reconfiguration technique in order to meet constraints and preserve the system non-functional properties (NFPs). As a proof of concepts, we present a case study consisting of a JPEG encoder, with very promising results.

1 INTRODUCTION

The performance of materials, the explosion of functionality in embedded systems and the emergence of new architectures that is characterized by software flexibility have introduced a new dimension to the design problem by expanding all possible configurations. Thus, it is difficult for the designer to solve the problem of assigning tasks to the different available execution resources while respecting non-functional properties (such as time constraints).

To effectively address the design challenges of multi-processors systems on chip MPSoC, multiple ingredients need to be considered: 1) Performance estimation from the early stages of design would verify compliance with non-functional constraints and validate the chosen run-time configuration as a quality of service, and 2) the use of the models transformation via the Model Driven Engineering (MDE)(Schmidt, 2006) in the development of such systems, offers complexity abstraction.

There are two types of reconfiguration; static reconfiguration (Angelov et al., 2005) and dynamic reconfiguration (Khalgui and Hanisch, 2011).

Our previous work (Naija et al., 2016) regards reconfiguration as any change in the structure, behavior, or architecture of the system to adapt an external or internal change in its operating environment or context.

The reconfiguration can be software or hardware (Khalgui and Hanisch, 2011). Software reconfiguration is defined by the settings of the update task at runtime. However, the hardware reconfiguration is a process that adjusts the processor frequency and/or migrates tasks originally scheduled for the software to one or more hardware components. The reconfiguration techniques implemented for RTES (Real-Time Embedded Systems) can affect several models of these: i) The functional model when there is a change in the behavior of the system, ii) the platform model in the case of a hardware resource performance adjustment or iii) the implementation model when there is a task migration between resources.

To address the reconfiguration of the system, our design process proposes new techniques to model, simulate and improve the behavior of such systems. In short, we use the UML/MARTE profile (Modeling and Analysis Real-Time Embedded systems) (OMG, 2011) and the Y-Chart approach (Combemale, 2008) to specify applications and architectures and to associate them while considering another technique to stop the choice of design at an early stage of the development cycle. This technique consists of simulating the behavior of the system by examining the worst execution scenario. For this, we have the tool to address the reconfiguration of the system to meet performance constraints related to the execution time.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 summarizes the state of the art.

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Section 3 gives a formal presentation of the Y-Chart approach and the UML/MARTE concepts used. Section 4 details our proposed methodology with the reconfiguration solutions for MPSoC. Section 5 provides our case study. Finally, section 6 concludes the paper and sketches some future work.

2 RELATED WORKS

Several approaches have been proposed in the literature for the design and verification of RTES. In this work, we focus on approaches and design flows that particularly deal with high-level design and verification of reconfigurable systems.

In (Gueye et al., 2017), the authors describe an autonomous control architecture for DPR (Dynamic Partial Reconfiguration) based on behavioral models. This work proposes a framework defining several control layers and their interactions, as well as a method for systematic modeling of the reconfiguration and configuration space of the target system class. The scheduling layer executes the sequences of reconfigurations by generating a table encoding the scheduling process based on the tasks implementations to run. Nevertheless, there is no automated support for the scheduling test which is an ad-hoc test.

In the same vein (Borde et al., 2009) propose a methodology providing solutions to design and analyze critical and reconfigurable embedded systems by leaning on both AADL and Lightweight CCM standards. Unlike this contribution, we aim to propose a process for designing complex systems which are independent of any specific standard.

In (Krichen et al., 2012) authors propose a framework to describe the software concepts of reconfigurable RTES using the UML/MARTE profile. This solution makes designers able to design all the system features and verify NFP properties. However, the proposed approach does not address improving system performance when time constraints are not met.

Other efforts have been specifically tailored to reconfigurable multi-agent architectures. In (Khalgui et al., 2011) (Zhang et al., 2015) the coordination between agents has been treated in the design to manage reconfiguration. Unlike those approaches that only consider hardware reconfiguration, our approach supports software and hardware reconfiguration.

3 BACKGROUND

In this section, we offer some background about Y-Chart approach and UML/MARTE profile.

3.1 The Y-Chart Approach

The Y-Chart Approach is a methodology to provide designers with quantitative data obtained by analyzing the performance of architectures for a given set of applications (Kienhuis et al., 2001). In this approach, an application model describes the functional behavior of an application regardless of time and architecture. A platform defines the architecture resources and catches their performance constraints. Mapping is made by linking structure and system behavior to suitable elements of the architecture. To explore design alternatives and optimize results, its mandatory to perform transformations. As part of the quantitative performance analysis, the performance of each application/architecture combination can be evaluated. In order to improve the architecture and adapt the application(s), the designer can explore the resulting performance numbers and try different functional and platform customizations. This approach brings less refinement, decreases development time, and increases the production volume.

3.2 MARTE Concepts

Among 15 concepts proposed by MARTE profile, we work with 3 of them that are useful in our context.

We are interested in the Schedulability Analysis Model (SAM) sub-profile to express the functional task model. It's designed to analyze the scheduling of real-time systems. An early analysis of a design model can detect real-time architectures not realizable, errors related to the temporal aspect and assess the impact of migration to another platform. In SAM model, the graphic description of all tasks allows expressing the access to data and at the same time data dependencies, so the executions order of tasks.

Then, to specify all instances of the architecture, we use the Hardware Resource Modeling (HRM) package that allows you to model the hardware resources. Another feature of this Sub-profile is support for most hardware concepts thanks to a big range of stereotypes and once more its layered architecture. If no specific stereotype corresponds to a particular hardware component, a generic stereotype may match. This is also appropriate to support new hardware concepts of new technologies (OMG, 2011).

Also, we employ the Alloc package to specify how the application will be placed on the platform running. The main concept is represented by the *Allocated* stereotype, which is used to specify associations between the model elements of the application and elements of architecture model.

4 OUR PROPOSAL

This section details the proposed design and reconfiguration solution used to reestablish the MPSoC feasibility. Our process is performed in a hierarchical order as depicted in Figure 1. In this current research, our goal is to assist in the design and reconfiguration of real-time embedded systems on MPSoC. This process presents a solution with three different reconfiguration techniques: i) The first step consists of system co-modeling that describe the application, the architecture, and the association between them, ii) In the second part of our process (Estimated performance and Simulation), we estimate the performance of the configuration from the association step to move to the simulation, and iii) Finally, after verifying the compliance of the early synchronization constraints imposed on the system, the current configuration will be validated if it ensures compliance with the non-functional constraints. Otherwise, the designer must reconfigure his system to achieve the expected performance. In this context, we propose three reconfiguration techniques of real-time embedded systems.

The following subsections give details of the intermediate steps produced by our methodology and the different proposed reconfiguration techniques.

4.1 System Co-modeling

We start our proposed approach by separately modeling the different tasks of the chosen application ((1) Model tasks), the hardware architecture ((2) Model hardware architecture) and the association between them (Model the association between (1) & (2)). This modeling is based on the MARTE profile and the well-known method in Y. At this design level, the features and modeling architecture can be viewed as a collection of components connected via ports. The association refers to the connection of the application elements on the hardware platform. This allows moving from a high-level description to a description of the executable model.

4.1.1 Modeling Tasks

To model the behavioral scenario of a real-time system, we chose the SAM sub-profile of UML/MARTE with standard annotations. This sub-profile helps us to detect errors related to the temporal aspect and the feasibility of architectures in real time. In this level, we specify a periodic stream of the functional part of the application that we stereotype *saEndtoEndFlow*. Then we employ the *SaStep* stereotype to specify the instantiated steps of the system while respecting the functional constraints imposed at

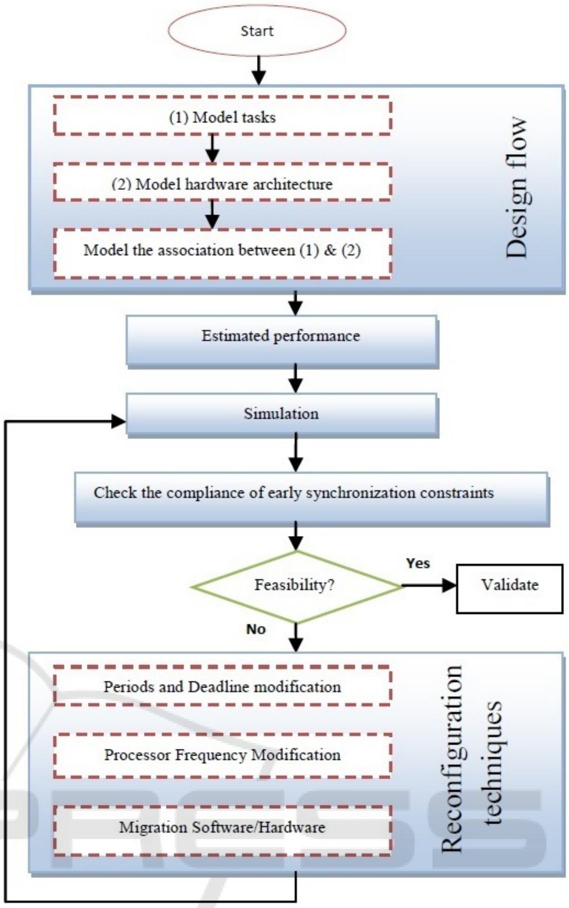

Figure 1: Flowchart of our process.

this stage of the application. For each step, the deadline property is used to model the execution date of each task.

4.1.2 Modeling Hardware Architecture

For this purpose, an abstract view of the resources of the execution platform is assumed to have an estimate of the execution time for the steps.

We specify, using HRM sub-profile, an abstract view of the execution platform stereotyped *hwResource* which defines the resources of the latter, the connections between them and the means of communication. Thus, resources can be computational units such as processors that are stereotyped *hwProcessor* and programmable FPGA processing that is stereotyped *hwPLD*. To be executed, a software resource must obviously be mapped to computational units or buses. The shared resources involved must also be described.

4.1.3 Association Modeling

In order to be executed, a software resource must obviously be allocated on processors or busses. The concept of allocation allows the designer to establish a link between a MARTE application and platform execution using the stereotype *Allocated* of the Alloc package of UML/MARTE. Indeed, we must specify how the application will be placed on the platform running. This placement (Glitia and Boulet, 2008) is both spatially and temporally. The spatial placement is the placement of tasks on resources running. The time is defined by the placement of a series of scheduling tasks allocated to the same execution resource.

4.2 Estimated Performance and Simulation

During the design phase, it's crucial to have some predictability and to ensure that the physical resources, allocated to the implementation of an application's tasks, can check the deadlines properties. This requires a full knowledge of system time constraints and algorithmic assignment of priorities. In our approach, the validation is performed off-line by system simulation on Cheddar tool (Singhoff et al., 2004) for a sufficient period of time called period simulation.

In a MARTE model, the design of functional behavior corresponds to a flow from start to finish. It consists of a set of tasks related to each other through their input and output ports via a link precedence. This creates an additional cost due to the communication between tasks. In addition, the type and characteristics of each physical resource associated with a hardware implementation must be defined. For example, in a processor-based architecture model that MARTE profile characterized by a speed factor and a bus is characterized by a bit rate of data transfer by the *wordWidth* attribute. From this, it's necessary to have an estimated time related to a high level of abstraction, to ensure consistency of the transition from a purely modeling in MARTE to the Cheddar tool simulation model. A good estimation of the execution time in the worst case noted WCET, that is obtained before the encoding and based on an analytical model.

To calculate the WCET of a task, we propose an analytical algorithm (Algorithm 1).

4.3 Reconfiguration Techniques

Once the scheduling test is done, the next stage is to reconfigure the system when time constraints are not met.

Algorithm 1: Calculate the WCET of a task.

Variables :
int DataSize //The amount of data
int wW //The transfer rate on the bus provided by the wordWidth attribute MARTE
int A1, A2, B,B1, B2 //Tasks
int T1, T2,T3, T4 , TB// The execution time of each task
int WCET // The worst-case execution time
Require: $TC = DataSize/wW$ //Transfer time
1.
if (A1 and A2 are connected by the relation of precedence sequential) **then**
  if (both marks are assigned to the same computing resource) **then**
    $WCET \leftarrow T1 + T2$
  else {include the communication time}
    $WCET \leftarrow T1 + T2 + TC$
  end if
else if (A1 and A2 converge at B: Relationship precedence Merge OR and Join) **then**
  if (both marks are assigned to the same computing resource) **then**
    $WCET \leftarrow max(T1, T2) + TB$
  else {include the communication time}
    $WCET \leftarrow max(T1 + TC, T2 + TC) + TB$
  end if
else if (A1 diverges to B1 and B2 Relationship precedence Decision OR and Fork) **then**
  if (both marks are assigned to the same computing resource) **then**
    $WCET \leftarrow T1 + max(T3, T4)$
  else {include the communication time}
    $WCET \leftarrow T1 + TC + max(T3, T4)$
  end if
end if

We propose three reconfiguration techniques to meet performances of the system. There are software and hardware solutions able to reduce processor utilization by changing the period in order to increase it and therefore increasing the deadline. That is, to have a performance behavior of a system before missing delays, better processor frequency values must be provided. For that, the adjustment of the frequency is suggested and the software/hardware migration of tasks by transforming some of the application tasks in hardware to improve its performance.

4.3.1 Periods and Deadline Modification

The first proposed technique is to modify the task periods to minimize CPU utilization, overloaded upper U-1 to U before reconfiguration (less than or equal to 1) according to the reconfiguration scheduling policy.

In our case, we opt for the EDF scheduling algorithm. The application of the feasibility test guaranteed both respects for property CPU usage and deadlines. This condition from (Liu and Layland, 1973) is necessary and sufficient for the feasibility of scheduling.

Indeed, to minimize CPU usage, we calculate the minimum period T' arrival flow from end to end Flow end-to-endFlow noted in MARTE in the following formalism:

$$U' = \sum_{i=1}^{n} C_i/T' \leq 1 \quad (1)$$

So,

$$T' \leq \sum_{i=1}^{n} C_i \quad (2)$$

This solution aims to increase the period and therefore the deadline (we work with due tasks on request). This increase will allow the overloaded processor to complete the execution of the workflow that is assigned to him before receiving another. After reconfiguration action, period T is replaced by the new period T' that minimizes the use of computing resources and ensures schedulability of the task system.

4.3.2 Processor Frequency Modification

We hope to assume that this technique expedites the processing of functional behavior of the application. For this, we propose to adjust the execution frequency of the processors involved in the execution. By increasing or decreasing the frequency of a processor, the execution time of a given task will increase or decrease respectively. The designer will have to opt for a change of choice hardware upgrade.

At this early stage of the design, any change at the architectural level is still possible as long as it can meet the time constraints. However, the best values of frequencies of processors are those that provide the performance behavior of a system before missing deadlines. This requires computing the optimal value of the performance of the processor frequency. This optimal frequency, denoted f, is the one that handles its workload W before maturity exceeding T.

$$f \leftarrow W/T \quad (3)$$

Note that frequency change affects energy consumption.

4.3.3 Migration Software/Hardware

We seek through this technique reconfiguration, the migration of some originally planned features in software to one or more hardware components. It is a way to improve application performance by transforming some of its tasks (those that are greedy in terms of execution time) in hardware. The choice of candidate task for the migration is based on the percentage occupancy noted processor(R_name, Occ%) with R_name is the name of the resource calculation, and Occ is a real belonging to the interval [0..100]. If two tasks have the same percentage of processor occupancy, we choose the one with a low exchange rate to reduce the impact of communication. We calculate the ideal number of tasks that must be migrated from a processor to a hardware compute unit based on CPU utilization factor U. As long as this later is greater than 1, we increment the number of tasks to migrate. The following algorithm (Algorithm 2) presents more details on this technique.

Algorithm 2: Migration Software/Hardware.

```
  Variables :
  string R_name // Name of the resource calculation,
  int CT // Candidate task.
  int nb // Number of tasks to migrate.
  real RE //Rate of exchange
  real Occ ∈ [0..100] .
  real OccMax //the maximum percentage occupancy
  nb ← 0
Require: U = ∑_{i=1}^{n} C_i/T
  i ← 1
  OccMax← (processor(R_name, Occ%) of T_1
  CT ← T_1
  while (U ≥ 1) do
    for (i = 2, i ≤ n, i++) do
      if (processor(R_name, Occ%) of T_i > OccMax
      ) then
        OccMax←(processor(R_name, Occ%) of T_i
        CT ← T_i
      else if (processor(R_name, Occ%) of T_i =
      OccMax) then
        if (RE_{T_i} < RE_{CT} ) then
          CT ← T_i
        end if
      end if
    end for
    nb ← nb + 1.
  end while
```

5 CASE STUDY

To illustrate the design of an MPSoC according to our approach, we opt a multimedia application and a multiprocessors architecture to implement the application. This methodology, based on Y-chart and MARTE profile, is designed for performance analysis and feasibility of scheduling via reconfiguration. So, we choose the JPEG image compression standard as a case study, where it works on large amounts of data by making calls to process high-performance computing.

5.1 Co-modeling

5.1.1 Modeling Features of JPEG

The JPEG compression process (Wallace, 1992), illustrated in Figure 2, accepts as input a raw image from an input device (camera). The first stage of compression is to cut the image into blocks (8 * 8) or 64 pixels. Each block of pixels is applied to a processing luminance and chrominance color. After that, a DCT transform is applied to each block of pixels in order to express the image information in terms of frequency and amplitude. The stream passes through the compression result by the quantization step which is the basis of the compression. Finally, the application of the coding to the resulting Huffman matrix quantization step leads to a compressed image.

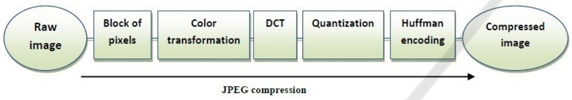

Figure 2: JPEG compression flow.

Our design methodology that specifies various parts of a system (application, architecture, and association), is done in the Eclipse environment that benefits from the integrability of the Papyrus editor. This editor uses UML as modeling language and allows the addition of profiles to enrich the model with specific details in a design field. Thus, we present the modeling, as a high level of abstraction, of the characteristics of the JPEG algorithm using the SAM package.

In this context, we specify (see Figure 3) periodic flow from end to end application level (or functional), stereotyped *saEndtoEndFlow* called JPEG. Indeed, the five instances of steps: *rgb, dct, qu, hu* and *re* are stereotyped *SaStep* and are executed sequentially (each elementary behavior depends on that which precedes it). For example, the first instance of *dct* of component *DisCoST* can be activated before the first instance *rgb* of component *RGB2YUV* is processed. Similarly, the other instances (*qu, hu, re*) are activated. This allows us to infer functional constraints imposed at the application level. These constraints represent an execution order of tasks. For each step, the date for execution is indicated by the deadline property. In addition, we use the MARTE profile to add details of the specification, including the input port with the direction in (raw image) and the output port with the out direction (compressed image).

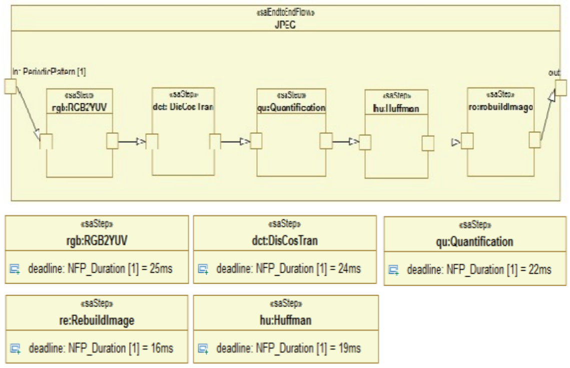

Figure 3: Modeling features of JPEG in MARTE.

We want to have a rate of compression of 15 frames per second in JPEG image size (256 x 256) pixels encoding, i.e., the maximum time to encode an image is 0066 seconds.

5.1.2 Architecture Modeling

In order to implement the algorithm described above, we consider a hardware architecture consisting of two processors and a programmable processing unit FPGA, which communicate with each other through a shared memory via a bus located between the execution and memory units. The three computational units, with rights writing and reading memory competitors, are defined to address the different functional components of the JPEG application. The cpu_1 bodies and cpu_2 are stereotyped *hwProcessor* and the programmable FPGA processing is stereotyped *hwPLD*. The memory model instantiated by the *hwMemory* stereotype is defined as a shared storage resource and recovery of data and program instructions. The role of the transmitter (the instance of Camera component) and the receiver (the instance of Screen component) is to produce and consume pixels. They are respectively stereotyped *hwSensor* and *hwActuator*. The communication between different physical resources requires the stereotype *hwBus* of component Bus. All instances of the architecture components are specified with concepts in HRM MARTE profile. Figure 4 illustrates, in a high level of abstraction, the architecture model of the JPEG application.

5.1.3 Modeling Association

The concept of allocation allows the designer to establish a link between a MARTE application and platform execution. In MARTE, this concept of allocation is expressed by the *Allocate* stereotype. Figure 5 shows an example of an association of JPEG application on different execution resources through ste-

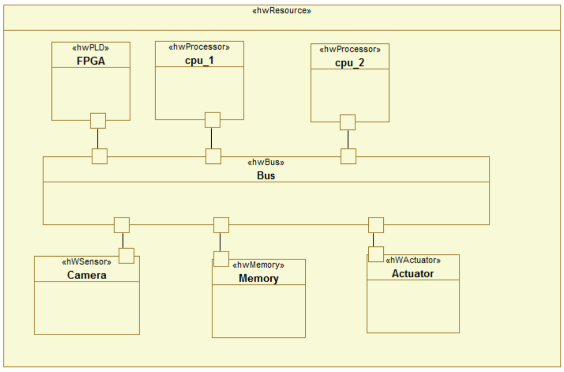

Figure 4: Architecture modeling in MARTE.

reotyped connectors *Allocated*: rgb first step is assigned to the programmable FPGA computing, dct and qu steps that are associated with cpu_1 processor, hu and re steps are assigned to cpu_2 processor. A good combination of software and hardware can significantly reduce the execution time of the application features and respect the constraints dependencies to ensure the proper functioning of the system. Thus, for MPSoC architecture, several choices of association can be considered. In this part of the process of modeling the designer's experience plays a key role in the consistency of spatial and temporal placement.

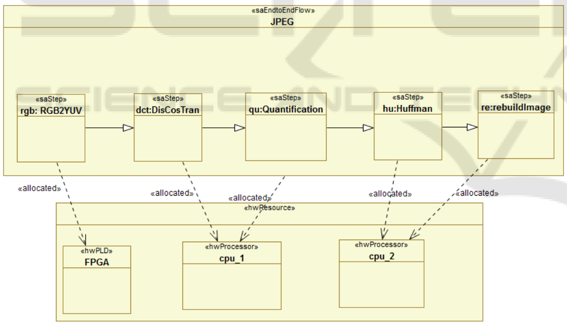

Figure 5: Modeling association.

5.2 Estimated Performance

We estimate time-related perforations in this case study using the steps of the performance estimation algorithm (Algorithm 1). As a configuration, we chose to combine all cpu_1 functional tasks. This choice is motivated by the lack of parallelism with task performance and reduced overhead costs due to the communication between CPUs. Table 1 shows an estimate of tasks number times in clock cycles.

Table 1: Estimations of tasks in cycles.

Step	Duration (cycle)
rgb	7714816
dct	7387136
qu	7086080
hu	5636096
re	4704256

5.3 Simulation and Reconfiguration

We consider this section to analyze the system behavior on the Cheddar tool dedicated to the check of properties deadlines. Figure 6 offers a simulation result for checking the configuration from the association step.

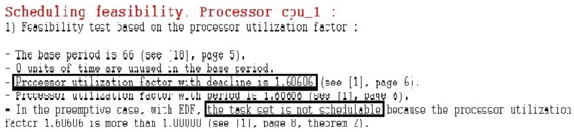

Figure 6: First Cheddar simulation.

We can see that the system does not meet these time requirements and therefore it's not schedulable. One way to improve the performance of an on-board MPSoC system is to reconfigure it in order to adapt to its environment without any perturbation. We propose in this context 3 reconfiguration techniques which are already detailed in Subsection 4.3. There are able to reduce the CPU utilization noted U factor, given by the following formula $\sum_1^n C_i/T_i$, with C_i the cost of task i and T is her period. When U is greater than 1, said the processor is overloaded. We carry our testing early in the design phase, and therefore any change in the application settings or architectures is allowed.

In this case study, we opt for a frequency modification of cpu_1 execution to reconfigure our system. We seek the frequency that ensures the implementation of all tasks durations total clock cycles 32528384 processor in a period of 0.066s. The optimal frequency is 493MHZ instead of 300MHZ. This requires recalculation of the new task durations. We also recalculate the temporal parameters of tasks, such as the date of revival and maturity, to consider all the precedence constraints. Table 2 summarizes the new temporal parameters of tasks. A new simulation shows that the studied system is now schedulable (Figure 7).

6 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have proposed a new process for designing complex embedded systems with hard real-time constraints. Our solution is integrated into the

Table 2: Estimated times of new tasks.

Step	WCET(ms)	ri	Di
Rgb	16	0	66
Dct	15	16	50
Qu	14	31	35
Hu	11	45	21
Re	10	56	10

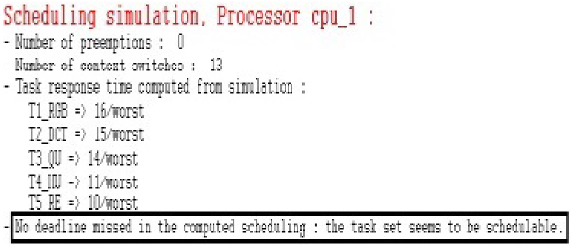

Figure 7: Second simulation time constraints with the Cheddar tool.

software life-cycle since the very beginning that automates the transition from functional model to design model. It's based on modeling the system functionality, execution architectures and allocation of both parts using the MARTE profile. After the calculation of the execution time through a proposed algorithm, the scheduling test is performed using the Cheddar tool. In addition, we developed 3 reconfiguration techniques in order to preserve system NFPs at a high abstraction level. Such approach provides a guideline for the designer to find an implementable concurrency model describing a real-time application. We showed the effectiveness of our approach through a case study of high-performance applications on MPSoCs.

Now, to extend the current research, we are implementing the proposed solution in a practical system based on a multi-agent architecture. Also, we will address the placement issue, during the reconfiguration step, considering the uncertainty of the execution time of each task and the availability of resources.

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