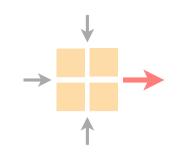
Advanced Topics in Communication Networks

Programming Network Data Planes





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Materials inspired from Jennifer Rexford, Changhoon Kim, and p4.org

Last week on Advanced Topics in Communication Networks

Networking is on the verge of a paradigm shift towards *deep* programmability

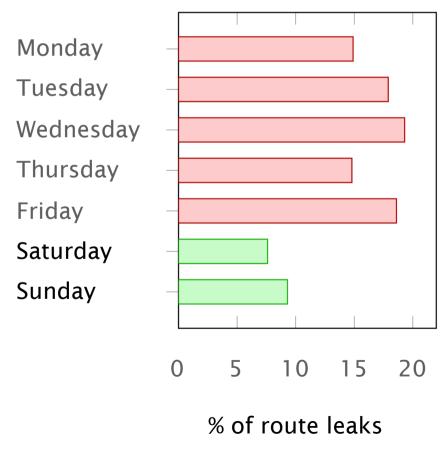
Why? It's really a story in 3 stages

Stage 1

The network management crisis

"Human factors are responsible for 50% to 80% of network outages"

Ironically, this means that data networks work better during week-ends...



source: Job Snijders (NTT)

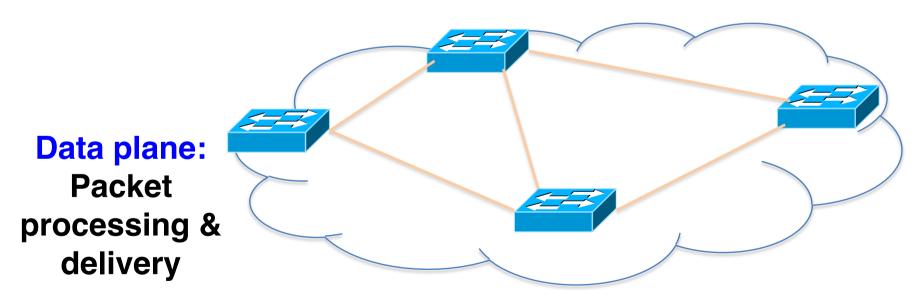
Stage 2

Software-Defined Networking

What is SDN and how does it help?

- SDN is a new approach to networking
 - Not about "architecture": IP, TCP, etc.
 - But about design of network control (routing, TE,...)
- SDN is predicated around two simple concepts
 - Separates the control-plane from the data-plane
 - Provides open API to directly access the data-plane
- While SDN doesn't do much, it enables a lot

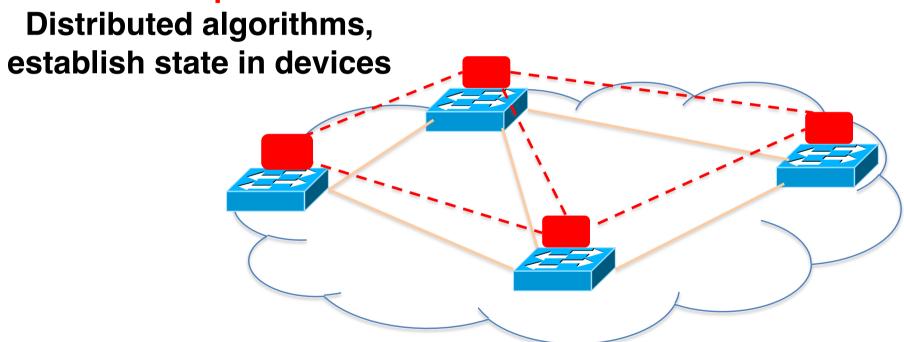
Traditional Computer Networks



Forward, filter, buffer, mark, rate-limit, and measure packets

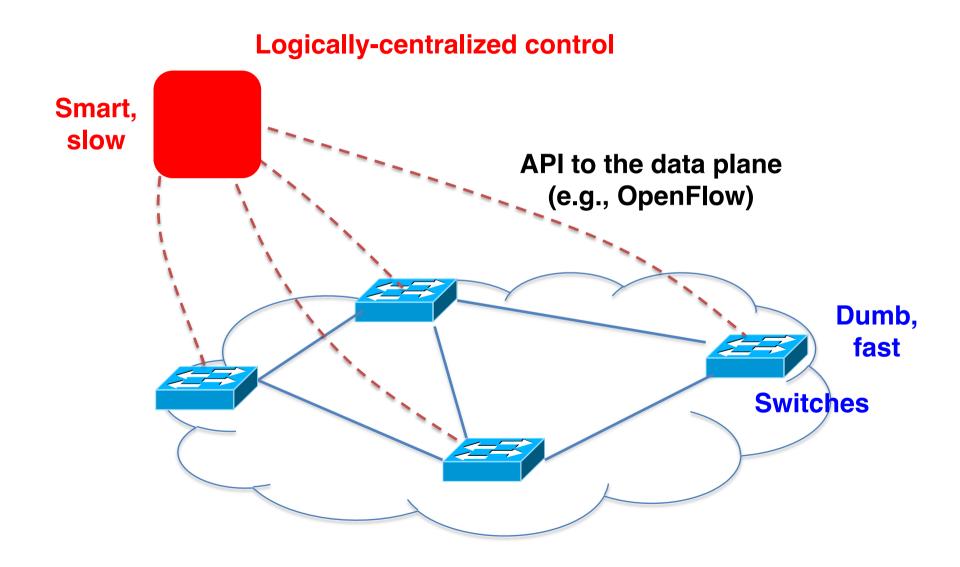
Traditional Computer Networks

Control plane:



Track topology changes, compute routes, install forwarding rules

Software Defined Networking (SDN)



OpenFlow is an API to a switch flow table

- Simple packet-handling rules
 - Pattern: match packet header bits, i.e. flowspace
 - Actions: drop, forward, modify, send to controller
 - Priority: disambiguate overlapping patterns
 - Counters: #bytes and #packets



```
10. src=1.2.*.*, dest=3.4.5.* → drop
05. src = *.*.*.*, dest=3.4.*.* → forward(2)
01. src=10.1.2.3, dest=*.*.*. → send to controller
```

Stage 3

Deep Network Programability

OpenFlow is not all roses

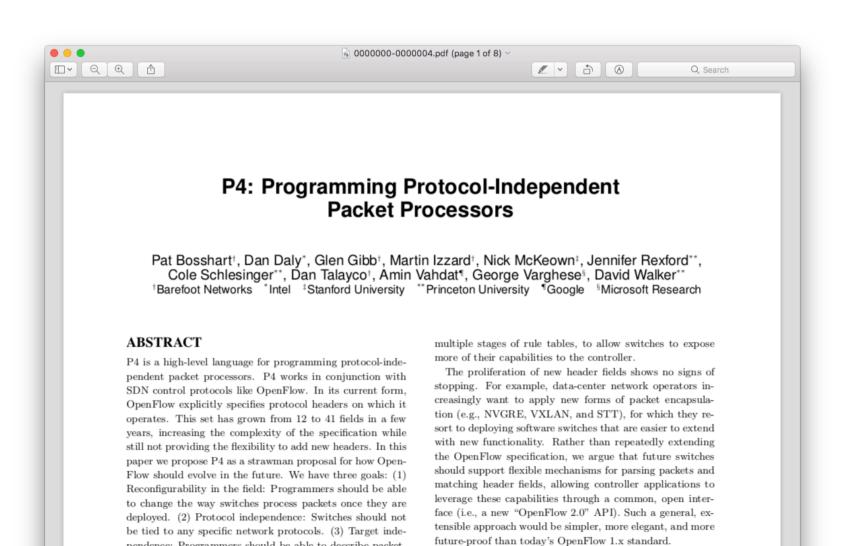
The protocol is too complex (12 fields in OF 1.0 to 41 in 1.5) switches must support complicated parsers and pipelines

The specification itself keeps getting more complex extra features make the software agent more complicated

consequences

Switches vendor end up implementing parts of the spec. which breaks the abstraction of one API to *rule-them-all*

Enters... Protocol Independent Switch Architecture and P4

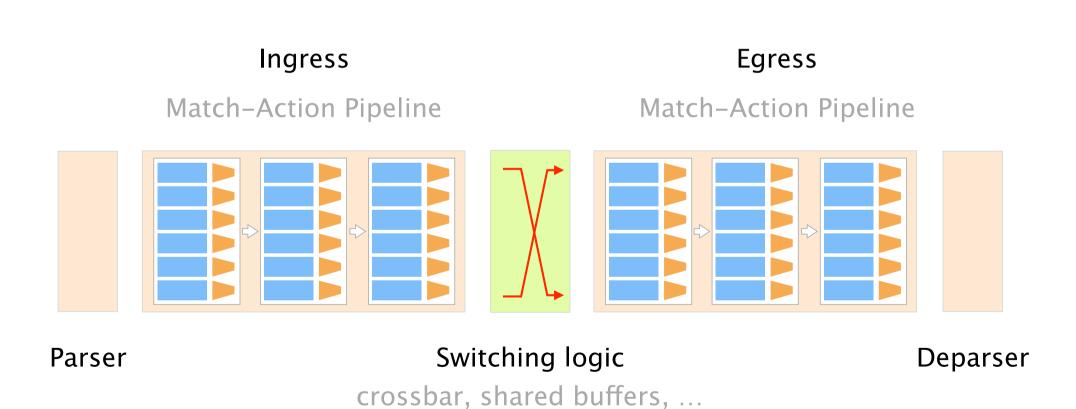


SDN Control Plane

pendence: Programmers should be able to describe packetprocessing functionality independently of the specifics of the underlying hardware. As an example, we describe how to

use P4 to configure a switch to add a new hierarchical label

P4 is a high-level language for programming protocol-independent packet processors



P4 is a high-level language for programming protocol-independent packet processors

P4 specifies packet forwarding behaviors

enables to redefine packet parsing and processing

P4 is protocol-independent

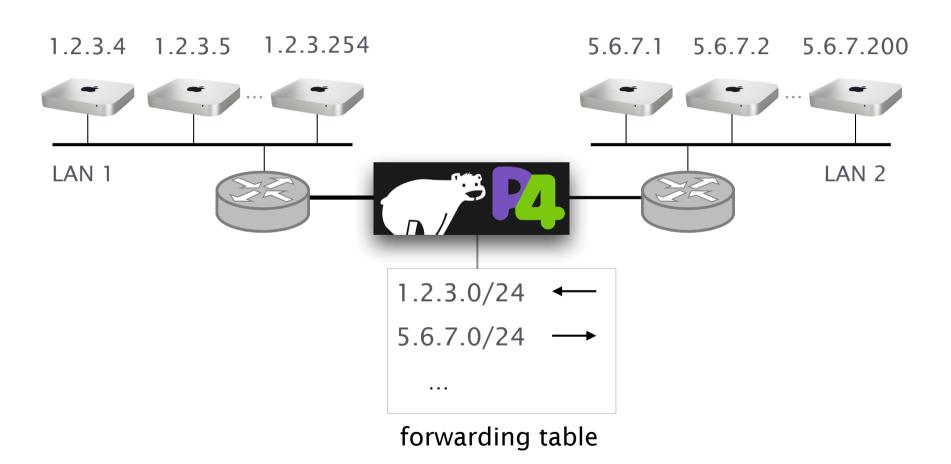
the programmer defines packet headers & processing logic

P4 is target-independent

data plane semantic and behavior can be adapted

IP forwarding

in P4?



This week on

Advanced Topics in Communication Networks

We will start diving into the P4 ecosystem and look at our first practical usage

P4 environment

P4 language P4 in practice

What is needed to program in P4?

Deeper-dive into the language constructs

in-network obfuscation

[USENIX Sec'18]

Next week: Stateful data plane programming

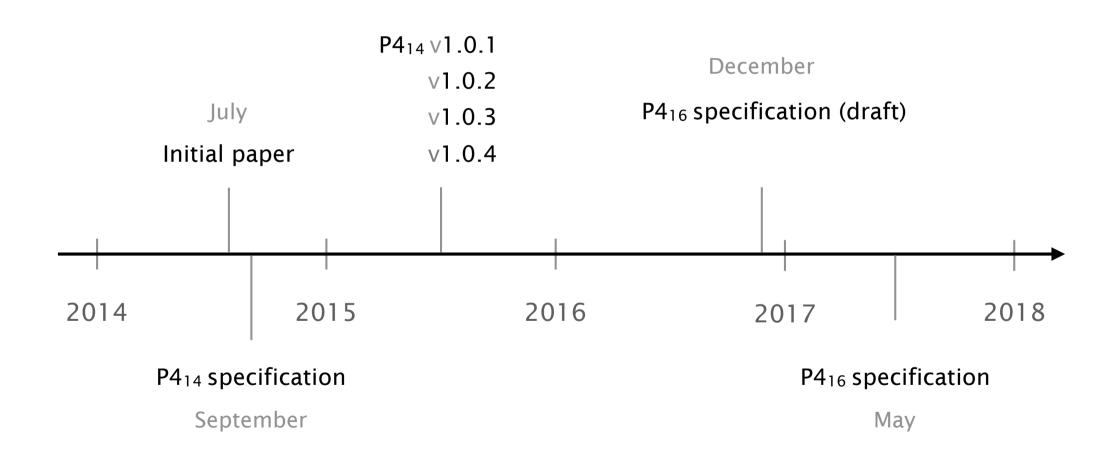
Probabilistic data structures (beginning)

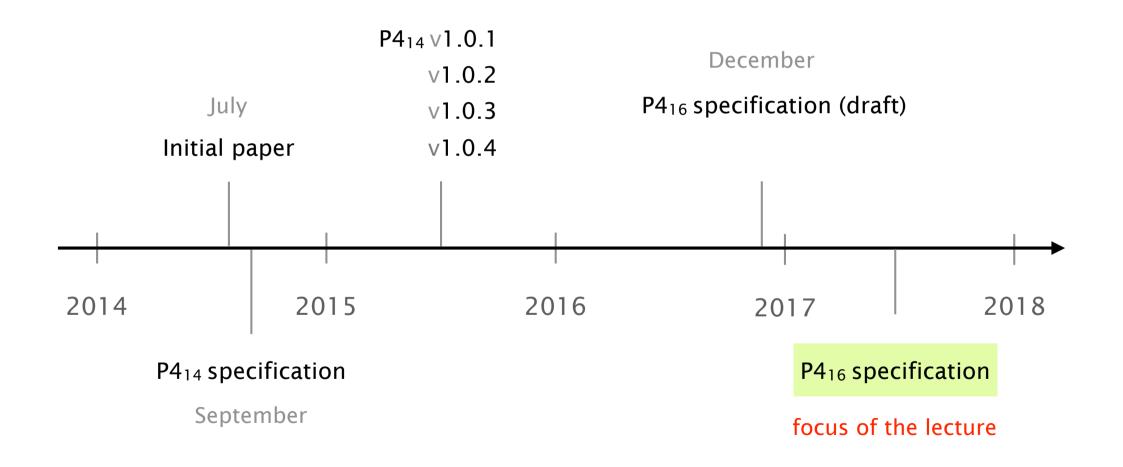
P4 environment

P4 language P4 in practice

What is needed to program in P4?

Quick historical recap





P4₁₆ introduces the concept of an *architecture*

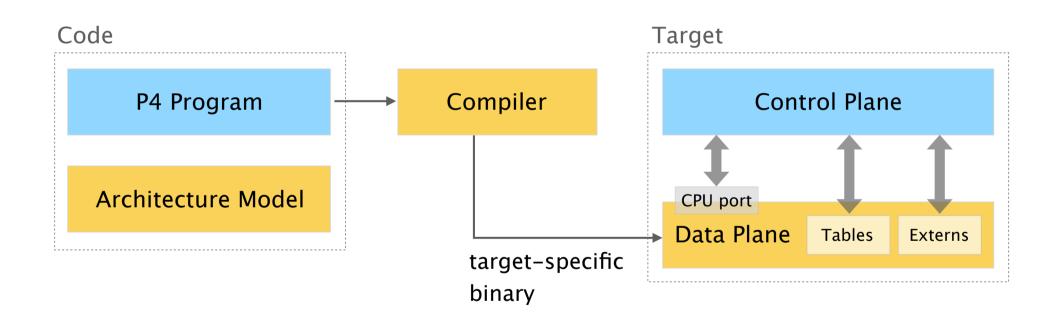
P4 Target

P4 Architecture

a model of a specific hardware implementation

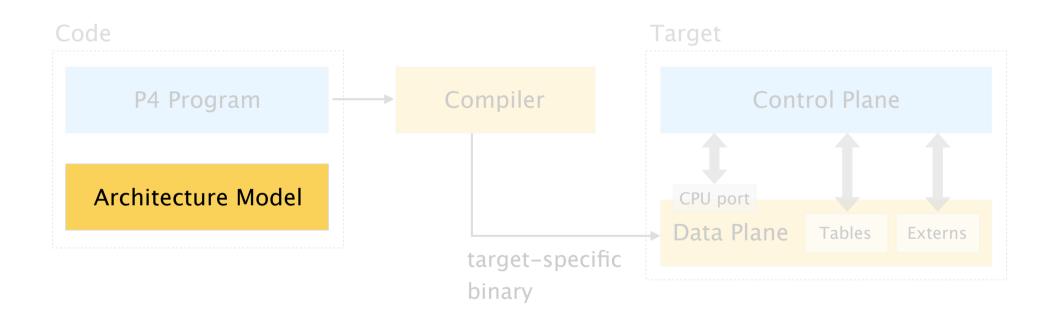
an API to program a target

Programming a P4 target involves a few key elements



User supplied

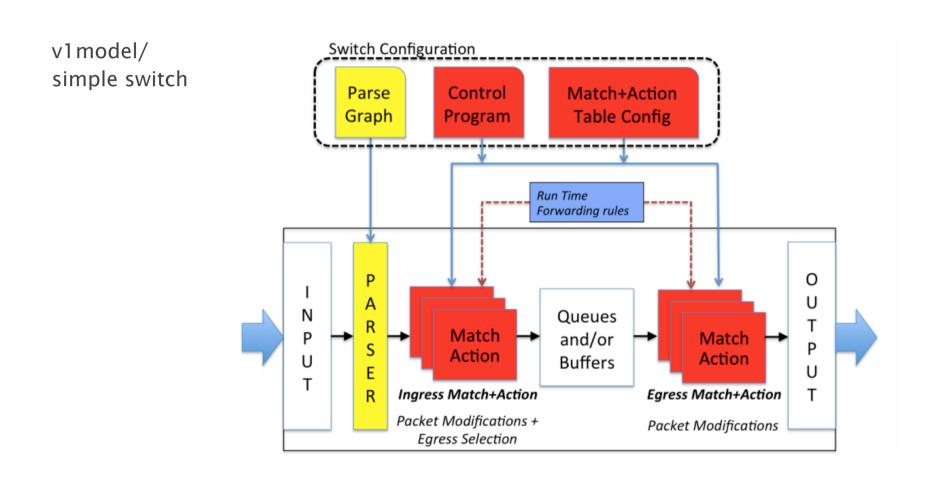
Vendor supplied



User supplied

Vendor supplied

We'll rely on a simple $P4_{16}$ switch architecture (v1model) which is roughly equivalent to "PISA"



Each architecture defines the metadata it supports, including both standard and intrinsic ones

```
struct standard_metadata_t {
v1model
            bit<9> ingress_port;
                                          bit<48> ingress_global_timestamp;
            bit<9> egress_spec;
                                          bit<48> egress_global_timestamp;
            bit<9> egress_port;
                                          bit<32> lf_field_list:
            bit<32> clone_spec;
                                          bit<16> mcast_grp;
            bit<32> instance_type;
                                          bit<32> resubmit_flag;
            bit<1> drop;
                                          bit<16> egress_rid;
            bit<16> recirculate_port;
                                          bit<1> checksum_error;
            bit<32> packet_length;
                                          bit<32> recirculate_flag;
            bit<32> enq_timestamp;
            bit<19> enq_qdepth;
            bit<32> deq_timedelta;
            bit<19> deq_qdepth;
            error parser_error;
```

Each architecture also defines a list of "externs", i.e. blackbox functions whose interface is known

Most targets contain specialized components

which cannot be expressed in P4 (e.g. complex computations)

At the same time, P4₁₆ should be target-independent In P4₁₄ almost 1/3 of the constructs were target-dependent

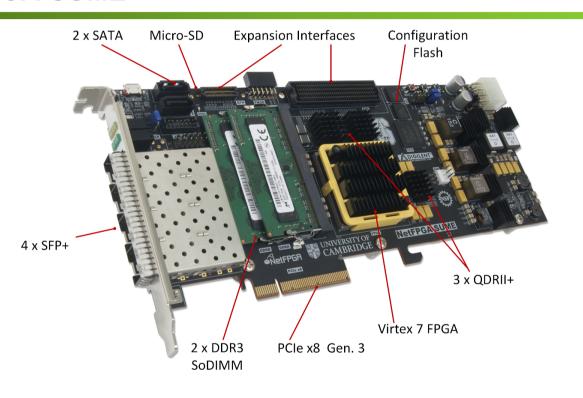
Think of externs as Java interfaces

only the signature is known, not the implementation

```
v1model
               extern register<T> {
                  register(bit<32> size);
                  void read(out T result, in bit<32> index);
                  void write(in bit<32> index, in T value);
               extern void random<T>(out T result, in T lo, in T hi);
               extern void hash<0, T, D, M>(out O result,
                 in HashAlgorithm algo, in T base, in D data, in M max);
               extern void update_checksum<T, O>(in bool condition,
                 in T data, inout O checksum, HashAlgorithm algo);
             + many others (see below)
```

≠ architectures → ≠ metadata & ≠ externs

NetFPGA-SUME

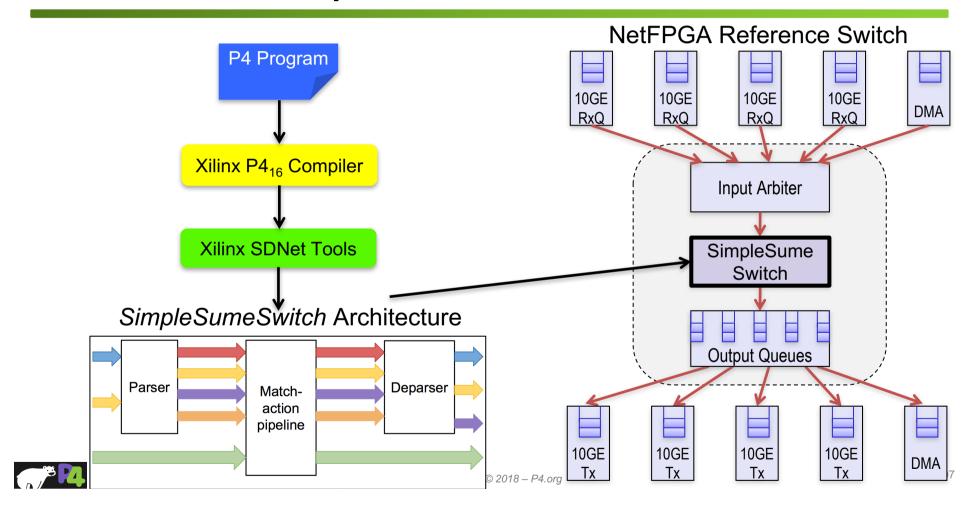


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P4→NetFPGA Compilation Overview



Standard Metadata in SimpleSumeSwitch Architecture

```
/* standard sume switch metadata */
struct sume_metadata_t {
    bit<16> dma_q_size;
    bit<16> nf3_q_size;
    bit<16> nf2_q_size;
    bit<16> nf1_q_size;
    bit<16> nf0_q_size;
    bit<8> send_dig_to_cpu; // send_digest_data_to_CPU
    bit<8> dst_port; // one-hot_encoded
    bit<8> src_port; // one-hot_encoded
    bit<16> pkt_len; // unsigned_int
}

**_q_size - size of each output queue, measured in terms of 32-byte words, when packet starts being processed by the P4 program
    *src_port/dst_port - one-hot_encoded, easy to do multicast
    *user_metadata/digest_data - structs_defined_by the user
```



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P4→NetFPGA Extern Function library

- Implement platform specific functions
 - Black box to P4 program
- Implemented in HDL
- Stateless reinitialized for each packet
- Stateful keep state between packets
- Xilinx Annotations
 - @Xilinx_MaxLatency() maximum number of clock cycles an extern function needs to complete
 - @Xilinx_ControlWidth() size in bits of the address space to allocate to an extern function



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P4 environment

P4 language P4 in practice

Deeper dive into the language constructs (*)



```
#include <core.p4>
                                                    Libraries
#include <v1model.p4>
const bit<16> TYPE IPV4 = 0x800:
typedef bit<32> ip4Addr_t;
                                                  Declarations
header ipv4_t {...}
struct headers {...}
parser MyParser(...) {
    state start {...}
                                             Parse packet headers
    state parse_ethernet {...}
    state parse_ipv4 {...}
control MyIngress(...) {
    action ipv4_forward(...) {...}
                                                  Control flow
    table ipv4_lpm {...}
                                               to modify packet
   apply {
   if (...) {...}
                                                   Assemble
control MyDeparser(...) {...}
                                                modified packet
V1Switch(
 MyParser(),
MyVerifyChecksum(),
 MyIngress(),
                                                    "main()"
 MyEgress(),
MyComputeChecksum(),
 MyDeparser()
) main;
```

But first, the basics: data types, operations, and statements

bool Boolean value

bit<W> Bit-string of width W

int<W> Signed integer of width W

varbit<W> Bit-string of dynamic length ≤W

match_kind describes ways to match table keys

error used to signal errors

void no values, used in few restricted circumstances

float not supported

sting not supported

Header

```
header Ethernet_h {
  bit<48> dstAddr;
  bit<48> srcAddr;
  bit<16> etherType;
}
Ethernet_h
  ethernetHeader;

corresponding
  declaration
```

Think of a header as a struct in C containing the different fields plus a hidden "validity" field

```
header Ethernet_h {
  bit<48> dstAddr;
  bit<48> srcAddr;
  bit<16> etherType;
}
```

Parsing a packet using extract() fills in the fields of the header from a network packet

A successful extract() sets to true the validity bit of the extracted header

Header Header stack Header union header Mpls_h { header Ethernet h { header union IP h { bit<48> dstAddr; bit<20> label: IPv4_h v4; bit<48> srcAddr; IPv6_h v6; bit<3> tc: bit<16> etherType; bit bos: bit<8> ttl: Mpls_h[10] mpls; Either IPv4 or IPv6 Array of up to 10 MPLS headers header is present

only one alternative

enum enum Priority {High, Low}

type specialization typedef bit<48> macAddr_t;

extern ...

parser ...

control ...

package ...

P4 operations are similar to C operations and vary depending on the types (unsigned/signed ints, ...)

- arithmetic operations
- logical operations
- non-standard operations

no division and modulo

- +, -, *
- ~, &, |, ^, >>, <<
- [m:1] Bit-slicing
- Bit concatenation ++
 - (can be approximated)

Constants, variable declarations and instantiations are pretty much the same as in C too

```
Variable bit<8> x = 123;

typedef bit<8> MyType;
MyType x;
x = 123;

Constant const bit<8> x = 123;

typedef bit<8> MyType;
const MyType x = 123;
```

Variables have local scope and their values is not maintained across subsequent invocations

important

variables *cannot* be used to maintain state between different network packets

instead to maintain state you can only use two stateful constructs

tables

modified by control plane

extern objects

modified by control plane & data plane

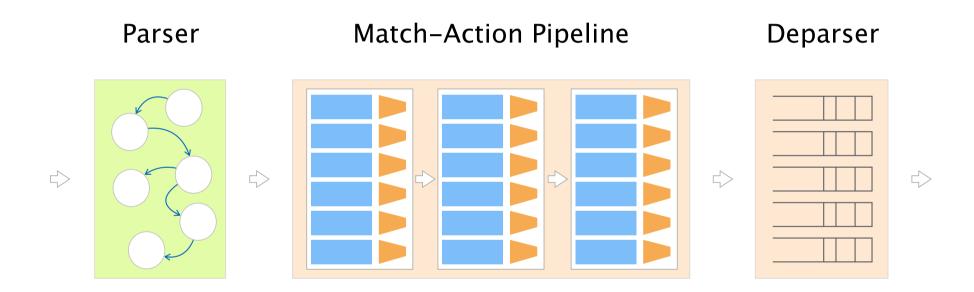
more on this next week

P4 statements are pretty classical too

Restrictions apply depending on the statement location

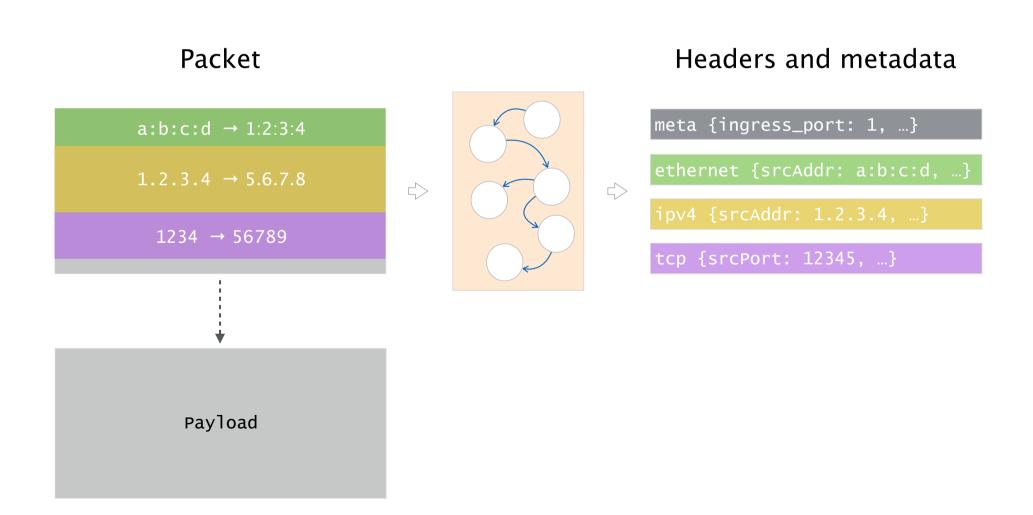
return	terminates the execution of the action or control containing it	
exit	terminates the execution of all the blocks currently executing	
Conditions	if (x==123) {} else {}	not in parsers
Switch	<pre>switch (t.apply().action_run) { action1: {} action2: {} }</pre>	only in control blocks

more info https://p4.org/p4-spec/docs/P4-16-v1.0.0-spec.html

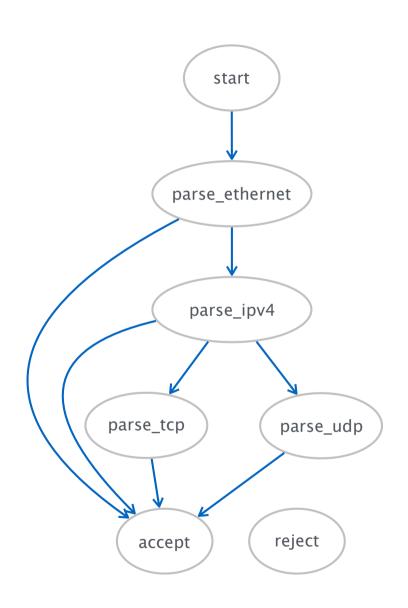




The parser uses a state machine to map packets into headers and metadata







```
parser MyParser(...) {
 state start {
 transition parse_ethernet;
 state parse_ethernet {
  packet.extract(hdr.ethernet);
  transition select(hdr.ethernet.etherType) {
    0x800: parse_ipv4;
    default: accept;
 state parse_ipv4 {
  packet.extract(hdr.ipv4);
  transition select(hdr.ipv4.protocol) {
  6: parse_tcp;
   17: parse_udp;
   default: accept;
 state parse_tcp {
  packet.extract(hdr.tcp);
   transition accept;
 state parse_udp {
  packet.extract(hdr.udp);
   transition accept;
```

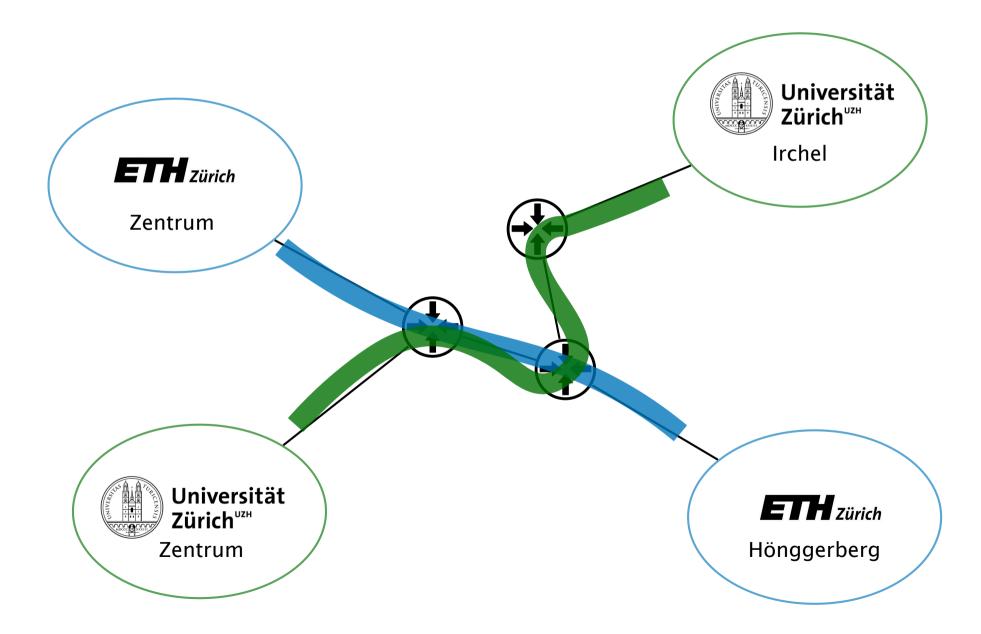
The last statement in a state is an (optional) transition, which transfers control to another state (inc. accept/reject)

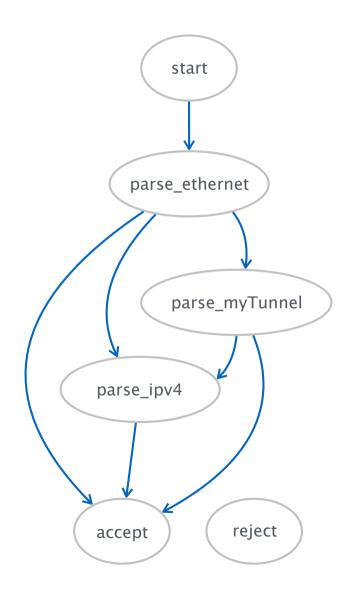
```
state start {
    transition parse_ethernet;
}

state parse_ethernet {
    packet.extract(hdr.ethernet);
    transition    select(hdr.ethernet.etherType) {
        0x800: parse_ipv4;
        default: accept;
    }
}
Next state depends on etherType
```

Defining (and parsing) custom headers allow you to implement your own protocols

A simple example for tunneling





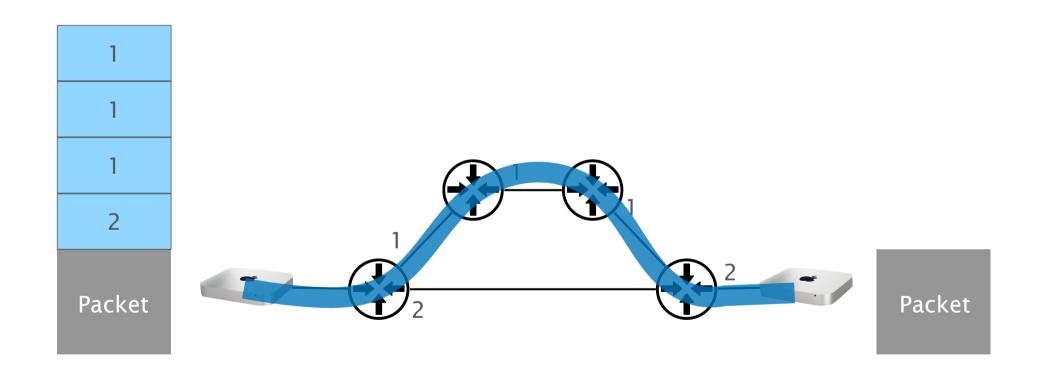
```
header myTunnel_t {
    bit<16> proto_id;
    bit<16> dst_id;
struct headers {
    ethernet_t ethernet;
    myTunnel_t myTunnel;
    ipv4_t
                 ipv4:
parser MyParser(...) {
 state start {...}
 state parse_ethernet {
  packet.extract(hdr.ethernet);
  transition select(hdr.ethernet.etherType) {
   0x1212: parse_myTunnel;
   0x800: parse_ipv4;
   default: accept;
 state parse_myTunnel {
  packet.extract(hdr.myTunnel);
  transition select(hdr.myTunnel.proto_id) {
   TYPE_IPV4: parse_ipv4;
   default: accept;
state parse_ipv4 {...}
```

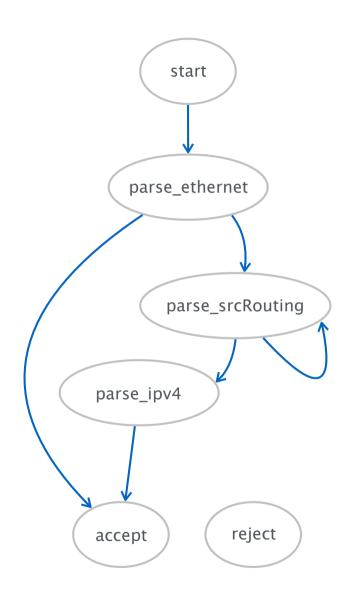
P4 parser supports both fixed and variable-width header extraction

```
header IPv4_no_options_h {
bit<32> srcAddr:
                                                        Fixed width fields
bit<32> dstAddr:
header IPv4_options_h {
                                                       Variable width field
varbit<320> options;
parser MyParser(...) {
 state parse_ipv4 {
 packet.extract(headers.ipv4);
 transition select (headers.ipv4.ihl) {
                                                     ihl determines length
   5: dispatch_on_protocol;
  default: parse_ipv4_options;
                                                         of options field
 state parse_ipv4_options {
 packet.extract(headers.ipv4options,
       (headers.ipv4.ihl - 5) << 2);
 transition dispatch_on_protocol;
```

Parsing a header stack requires the parser to loop the only "loops" that are possible in P4

Header stacks for source routing





```
header srcRoute_t {
 bit<1>
           bos:
 bit<15>
           port:
struct headers {
 ethernet t
                         ethernet;
 srcRoute_t[MAX_HOPS]
                         srcRoutes:
ipv4_t
                         ipv4;
parser MyParser(...) {
 state parse_ethernet {
  packet.extract(hdr.ethernet);
  transition select(hdr.ethernet.etherType) {
   TYPE_SRCROUTING: parse_srcRouting;
   default: accept;
 state parse_srcRouting {
  packet.extract(hdr.srcRoutes.next);
  transition select(hdr.srcRoutes.last.bos) {
   1: parse_ipv4;
   default: parse_srcRouting;
```

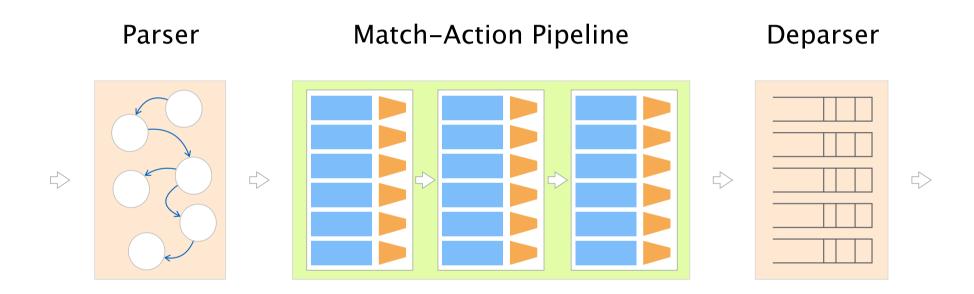
The parser contains more advanced concepts

check them out!

verify error handling in the parser

lookahead access bits that are not parsed yet

sub-parsers like subroutines





Control

Tables

match a key and return an action

Actions

similar to functions in C

Control flow

similar to C but without loops

Control

Tables

match a key and return an action

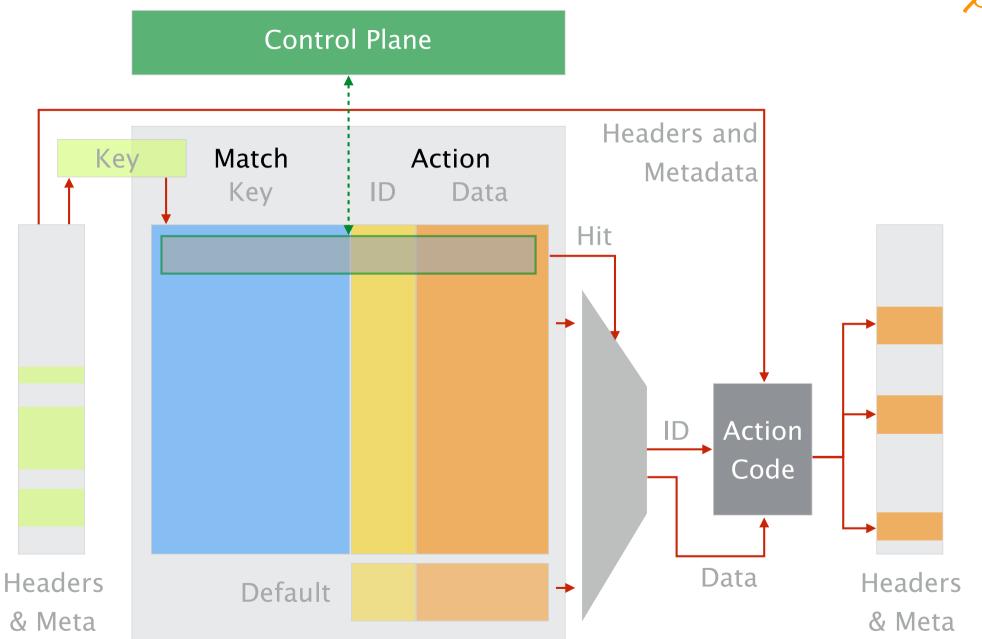
Actions

similar to functions in C

Control flow

similar to C but without loops







```
Table name
                                  Field(s) to match
table
key = {
                                     Match type
actions = {
                                   Possible actions
 }
size =
                               Max. # entries in table
default_action =
                                    Default action
```



```
Table name
                               Destination IP address
table ipv4_lpm {
key = {
 hdr.ipv4.dstAddr: lpm;
                               Longest prefix match
 actions = {
  ipv4_forward;
                                  Possible actions
 drop;
 size = 1024;
                               Max. # entries in table
default_action = drop();
                                   Default action
```

Tables can match on one or multiple keys in different ways

```
table Fwd {
    key = {
        hdr.ipv4.dstAddr : ternary;
        hdr.ipv4.version : exact;
    }
    ....
}

Fields to match

Match kind
```

Match types are specified in the P4 core library and in the architectures

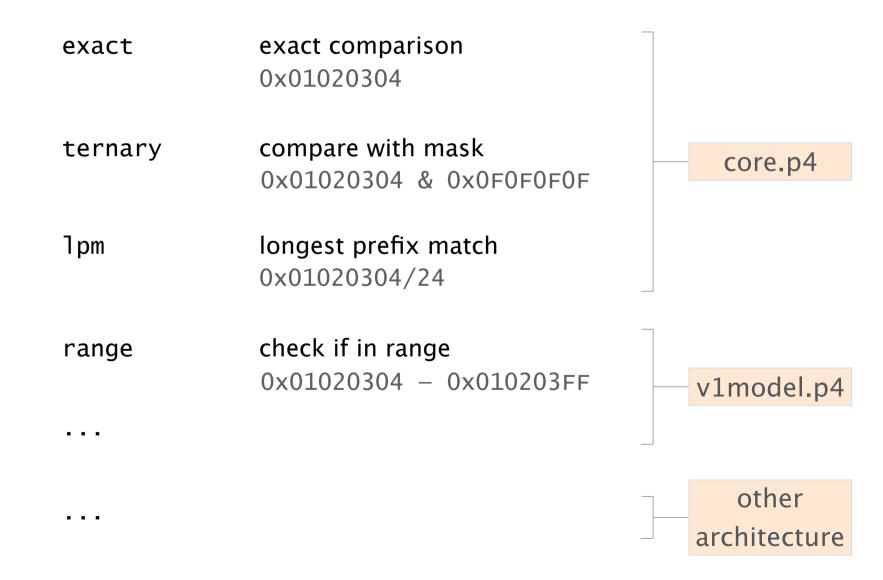
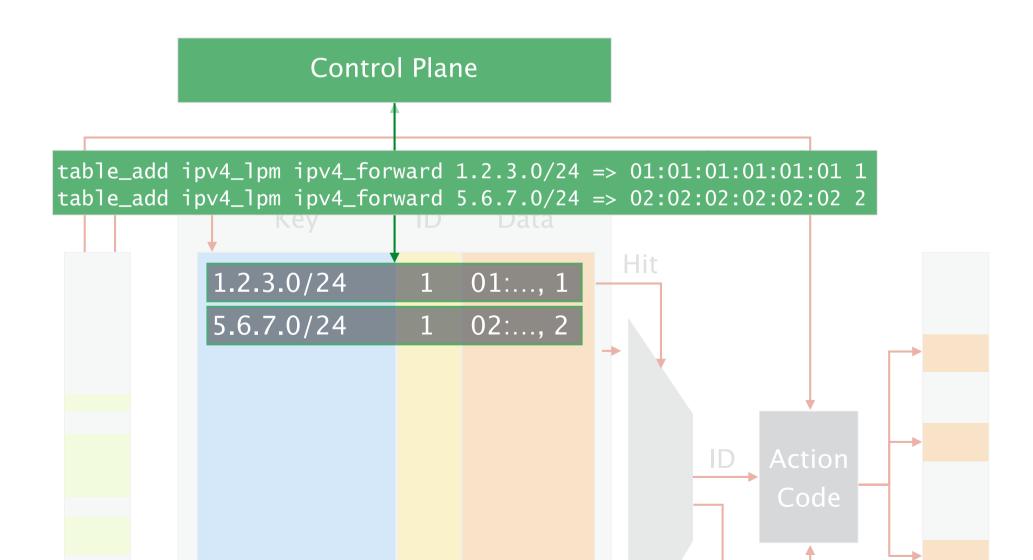


Table entries are added through the control plane



Control

Tables

match a key and return an action

Actions

similar to functions in C

Control flow

similar to C but without loops

Actions are blocks of statements that possibly modify the packets

Actions usually take directional parameters indicating how the corresponding value is treated within the block

Directions can be of three types

in read only inside the action

like parameters to a function

out uninitialized, write inside the action

like return values

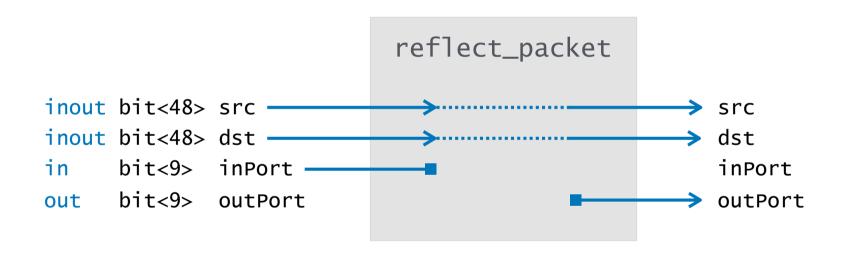
inout combination of in and out

like "call by reference"

Let's reconsider a known example

```
action reflect_packet( inout bit<48> src,
                       inout bit<48> dst,
                       in bit<9> inPort,
                       out bit<9> outPort
                     ) {
 bit<48> tmp = src;
 src = dst;
 dst = tmp;
outPort = inPort;
reflect_packet( hdr.ethernet.srcAddr,
                hdr.ethernet.dstAddr,
                standard_metadata.ingress_port,
                standard_metadata.egress_spec
               );
```

Parameter with direction



Actions parameters resulting from a table lookup do not take a direction as they come from the control plane

Control

Tables

match a key and return an action

Actions

similar to functions in C

Control flow

similar to C but without loops

Interacting with tables from the control flow

Applying a table

```
ipv4_lpm.apply()
```

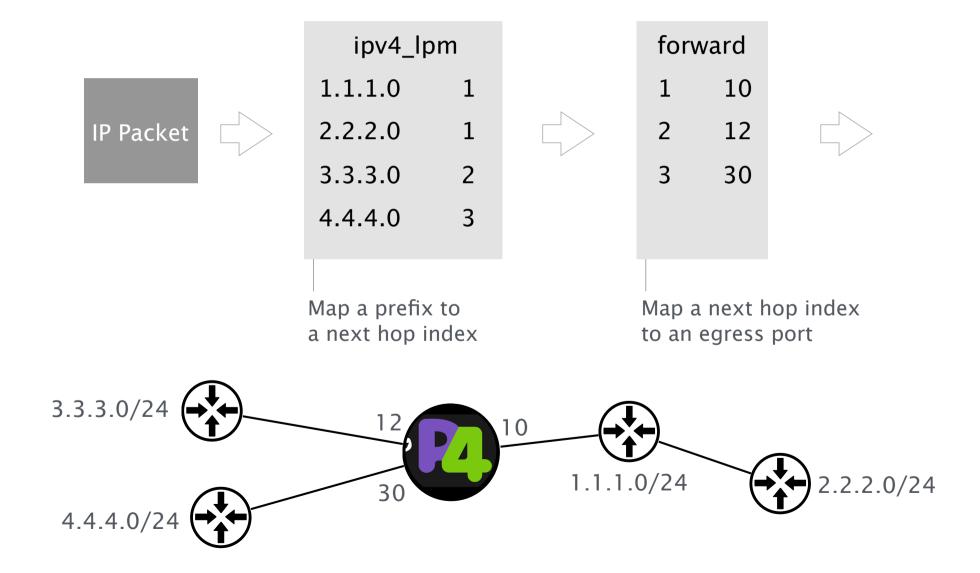
Checking if there was a hit

```
if (ipv4_lpm.apply().hit) {...}
else {...}
```

Check which action was executed

```
switch (ipv4_lpm.apply().action_run) {
    ipv4_forward: { ... }
}
```

Example: L3 forwarding with multiple tables



Example: L3 forwarding with multiple tables

```
table ipv4_lpm {
                                           table forward {
 key = {
                                            key = {
 hdr.ipv4.dstAddr: lpm;
                                             meta.nhop_index: exact;
 actions = {
                                            actions = {
                                             _forward;
 set_nhop_index;
 drop;
                                             NoAction;
 NoAction;
 size = 1024;
                                            size = 64;
default_action = NoAction();
                                            default_action = NoAction();
                                           }
```

Applying multiple tables in sequence

and checking whether there was a hit

```
control MyIngress(...) {
action drop() {...}
action set_nhop_index(...}
action _forward(...}
table ipv4_lpm {...}
table forward {...}
                                               Check if IPv4 packet
apply {
 if (hdr.ipv4.isvalid()){
                                           Apply ipv4_1pm table and
   if (ipv4_lpm.apply().hit) {
                                             check if there was a hit
   forward.apply();
                                              apply forward table
```

Validating and computing checksums

Re-computing checksums

(e.g. after modifying the IP header)

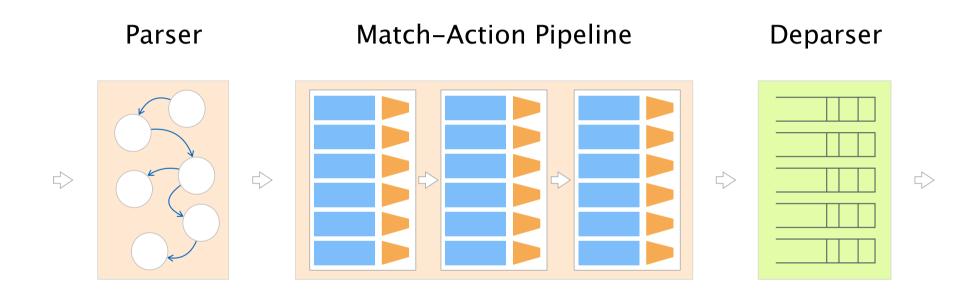
```
control MyComputeChecksum(...) {
apply {
 update_checksum(
                                               pre-condition
  hdr.ipv4.isvalid(),
   { hdr.ipv4.version,
     hdr.ipv4.ihl,
     hdr.ipv4.diffserv,
     hdr.ipv4.totalLen,
     hdr.ipv4.identification,
     hdr.ipv4.flags,
                                                 fields list
     hdr.ipv4.fragOffset,
     hdr.ipv4.ttl,
    hdr.ipv4.protocol,
     hdr.ipv4.srcAddr,
    hdr.ipv4.dstAddr },
    hdr.ipv4.hdrChecksum,
                                              checksum field
  HashAlgorithm.csum16);
                                                 algorithm
```

Control flows contain more advanced concepts check them out!

cloning packets create a clone of a packet

sending packets using dedicated Ethernet port,
 to control plane or target-specific mechanisms
 (e.g. digests)

recirculating send packet through pipeline multiple times

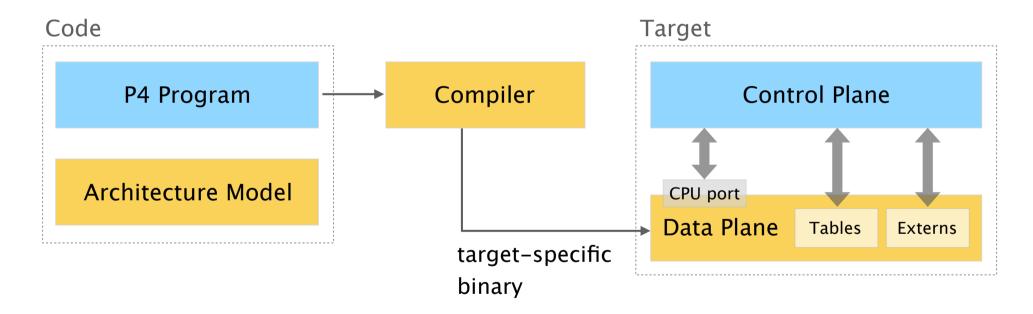




Headers **Packet** Deparser **1234** → **56789** Payload control MyDeparser(...) { apply { packet.emit(hdr.ethernet); packet.emit(hdr.ipv4); packet.emit(hdr.tcp);

}

"Full circle"



- User supplied
- Vendor supplied

P4 environment

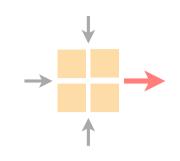
P4 language P4 in practice

in-network obfuscation

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