



USENIX
ATC '25

SpaceExit: Enabling Efficient Adaptive Computing in Space with Early Exits



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Xiaofeng Hou, Chao Li

USENIX ATC '25, Boston, MA, USA



上海交通大学

SHANGHAI JIAO TONG UNIVERSITY

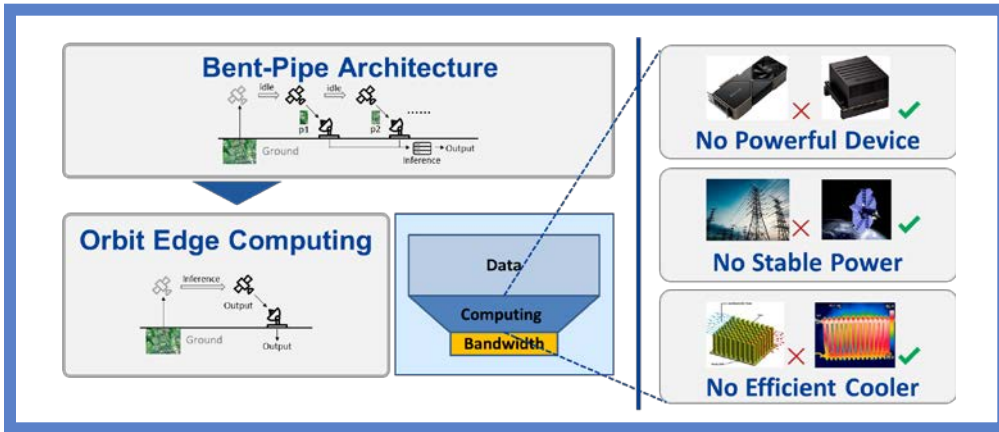




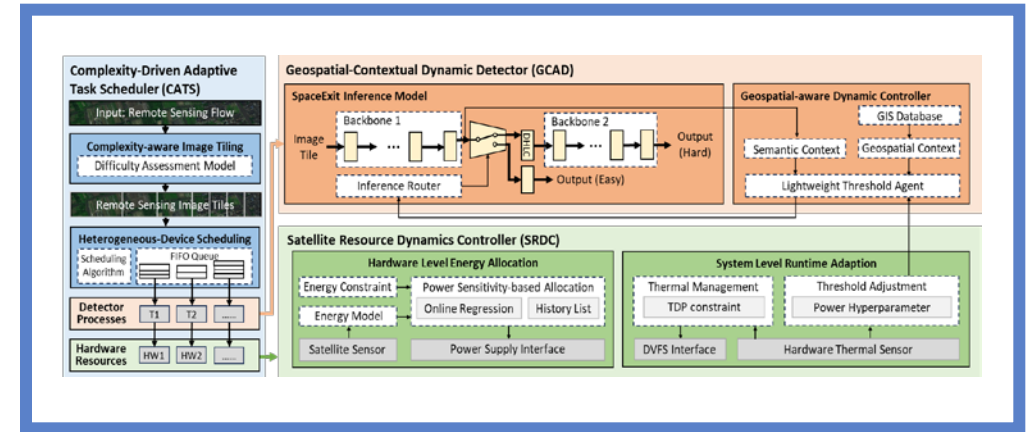
Content



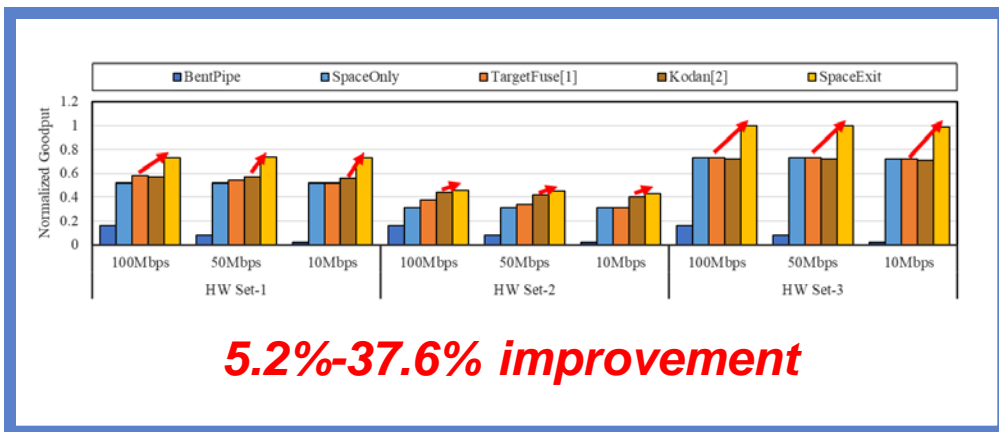
1. Background & Motivation



2. System Design



3. Workflow & Evaluation



4. Conclusion

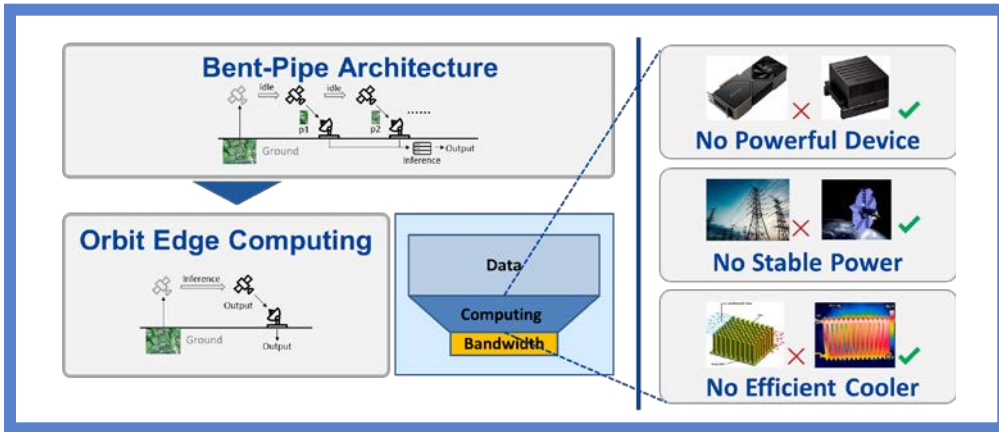
- We embrace OEC (Orbit Edge Computing),** which is emerging as a solution to imbalanced data-bandwidth growth.
- SpaceExit is an integrated system that enables efficient **adaptive Earth observation** on satellites via algorithm-system co-design.
- SpaceExit **tackles OEC challenges:** multi-scale geospatial adaptation, cross-device scheduling & dynamic onboard constraints.
- SpaceExit enhances Earth observation constellations' data delivery capacity, strengthening their role as **platforms for diverse applications.**



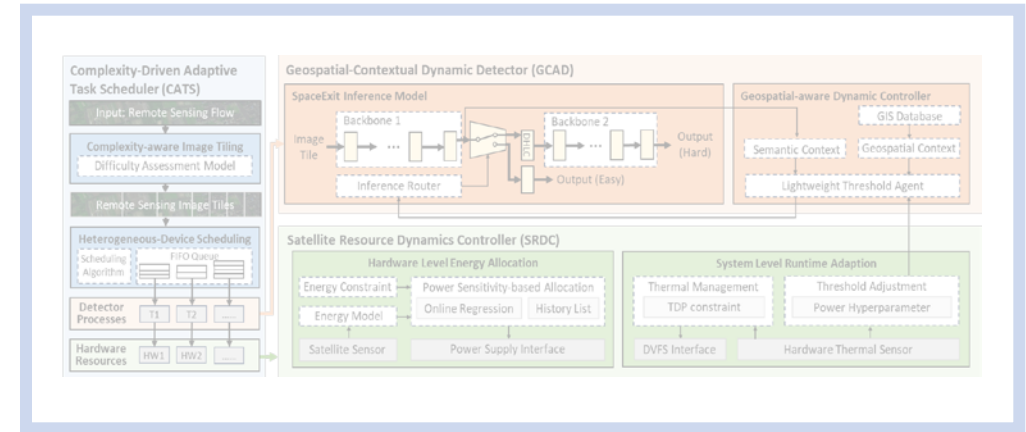
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Earth observation constellations serve as platforms for applications



Precision Agriculture



Disaster Response



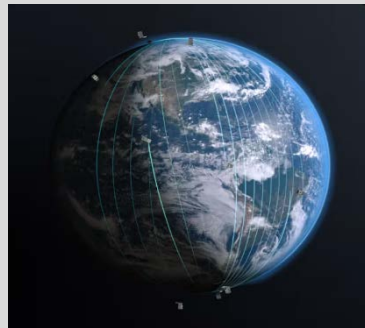
Environment Monitoring



Transportation Optimization

Support

 *Iteration of
Nanosatellite* →



**Earth Observation
Constellation**

← *Progress of
Rocket Launch* 

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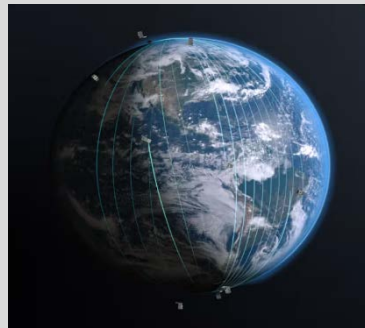
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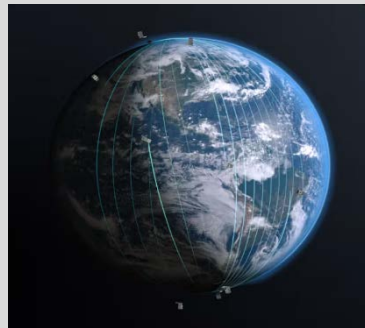
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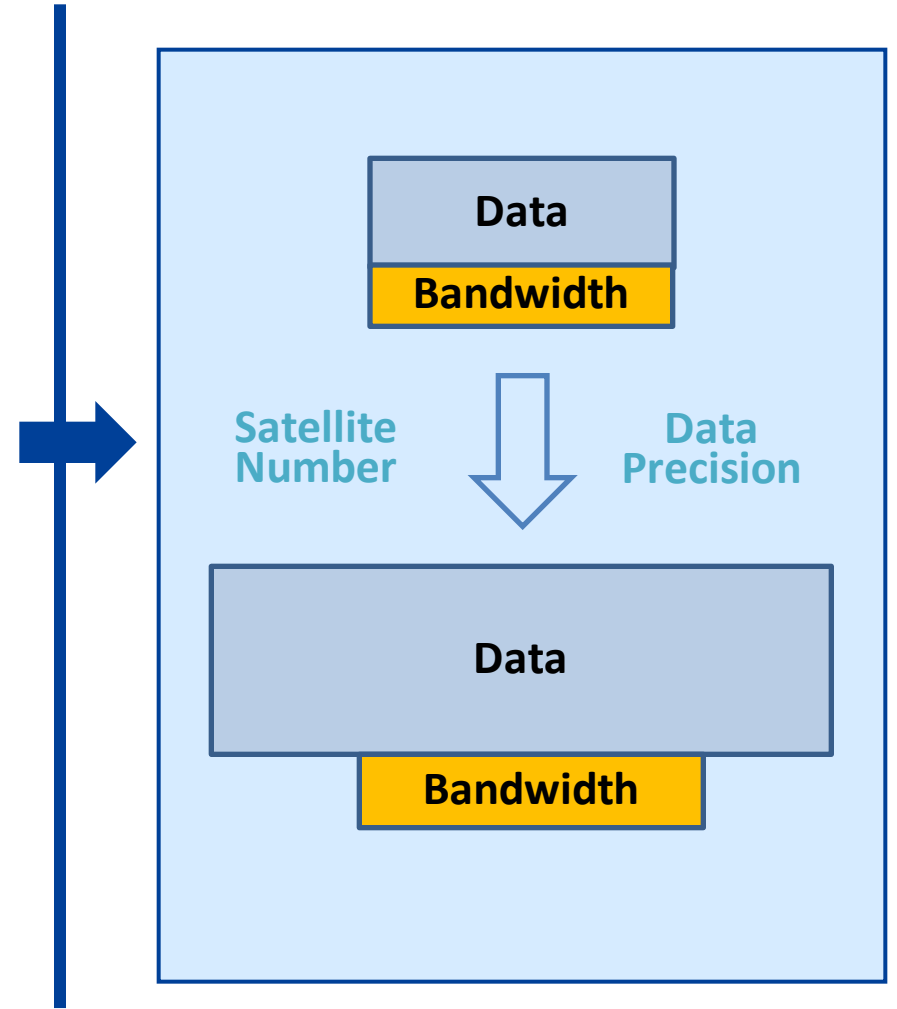
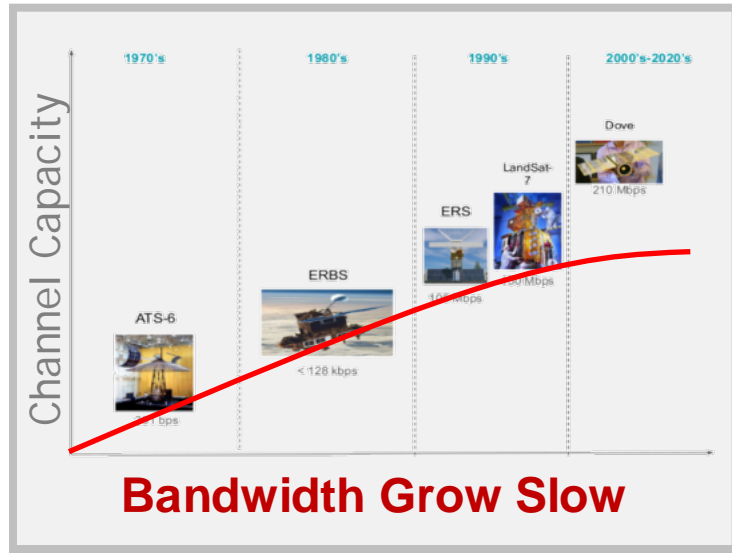
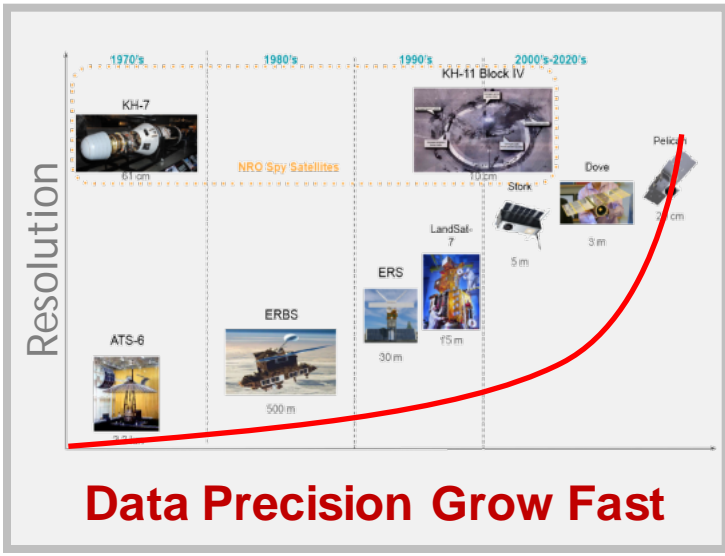
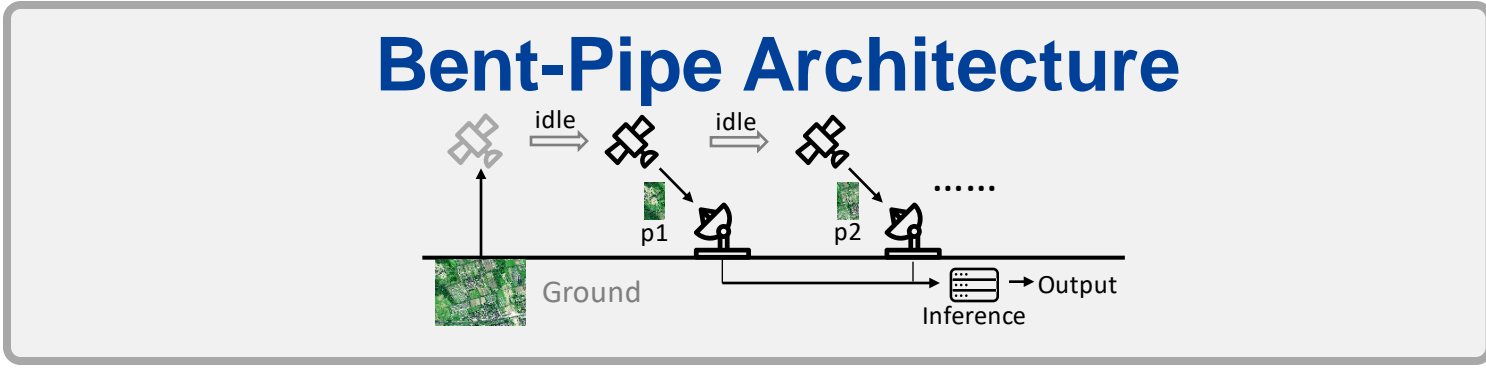
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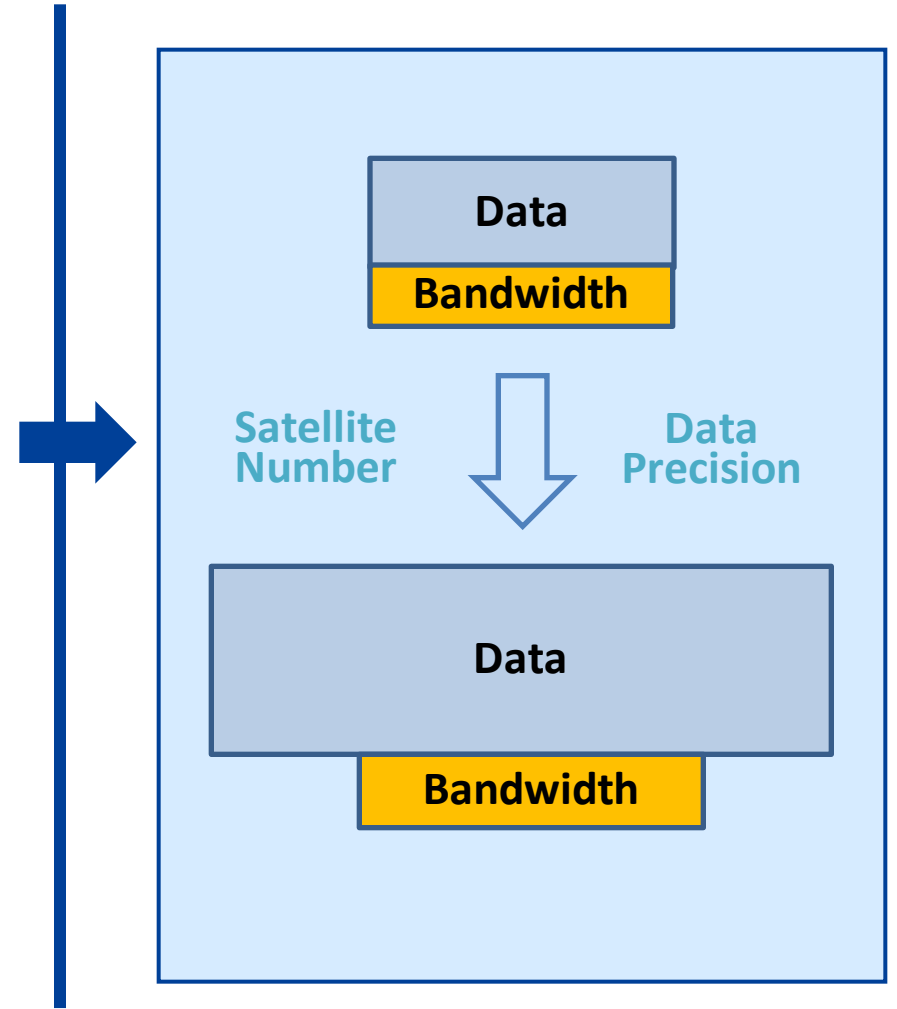
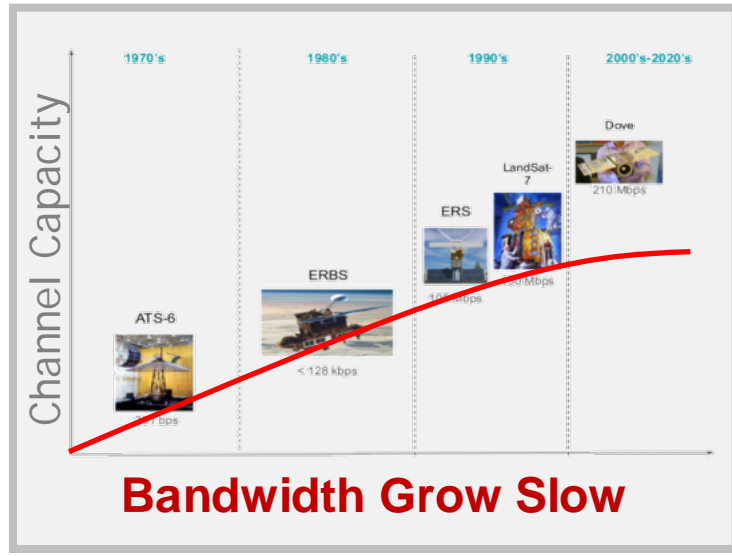
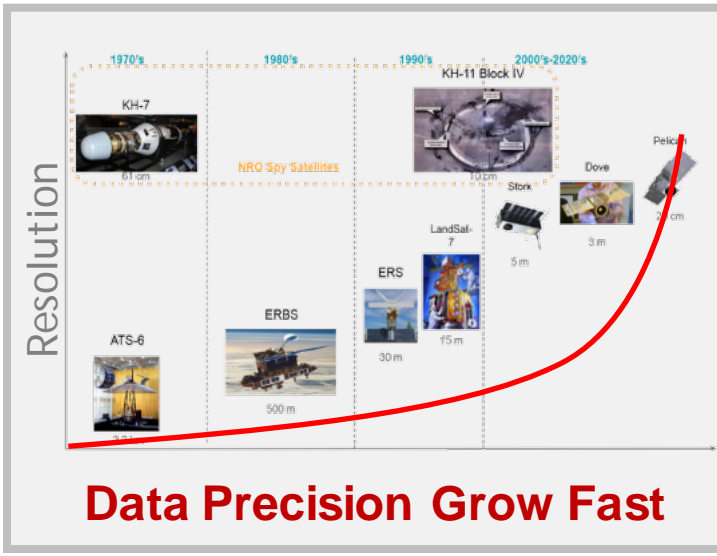
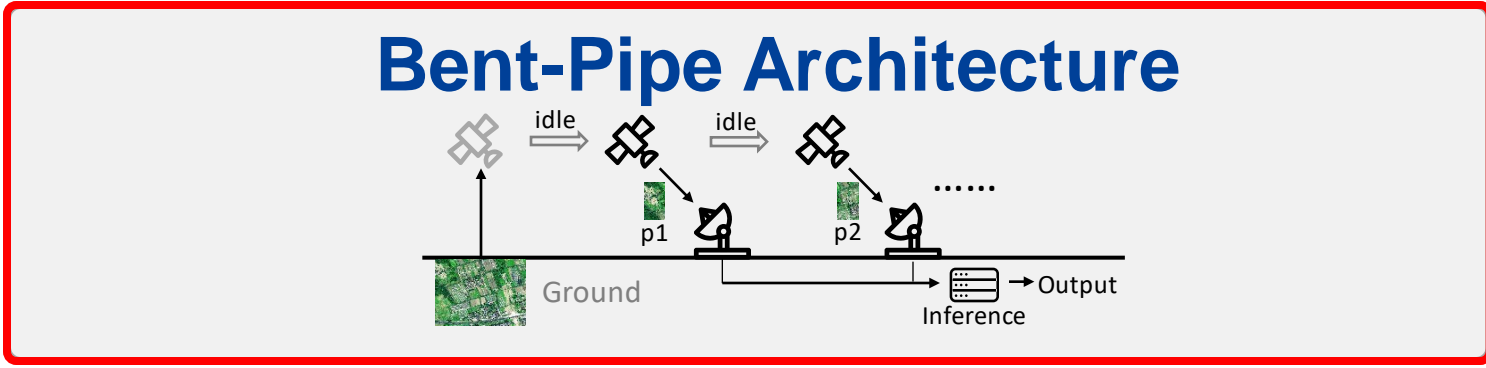


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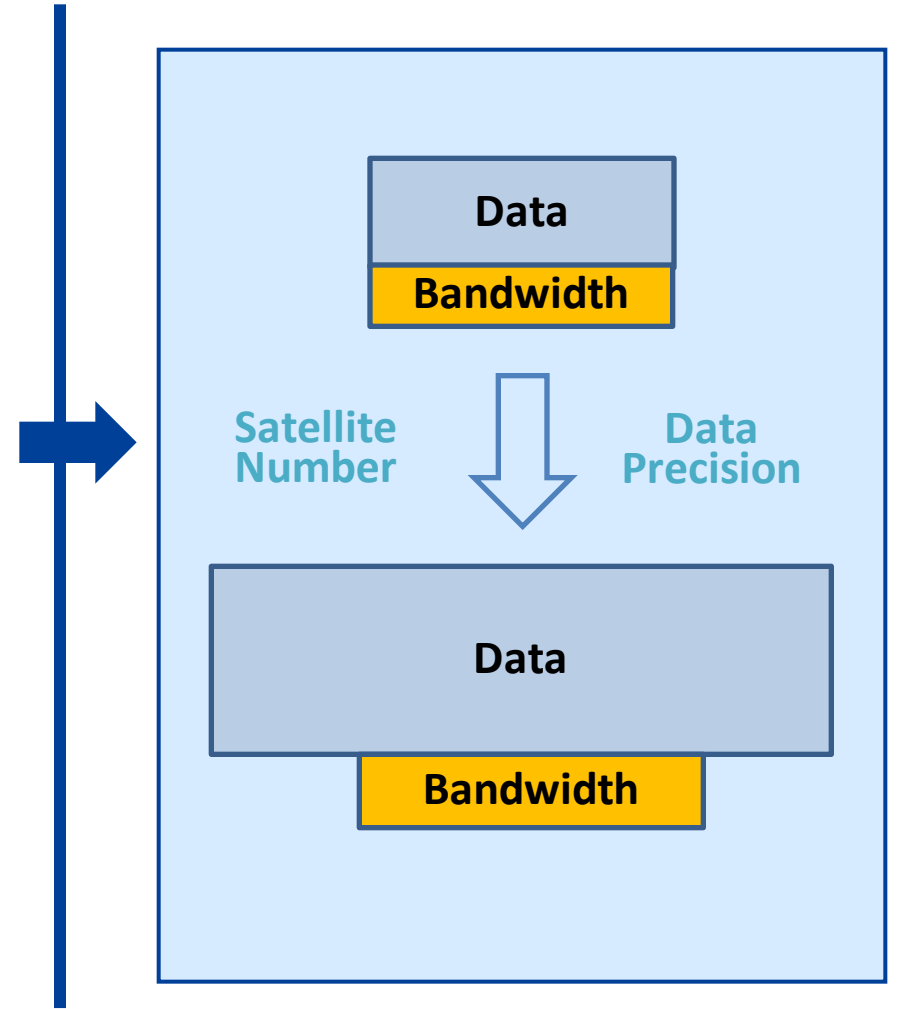
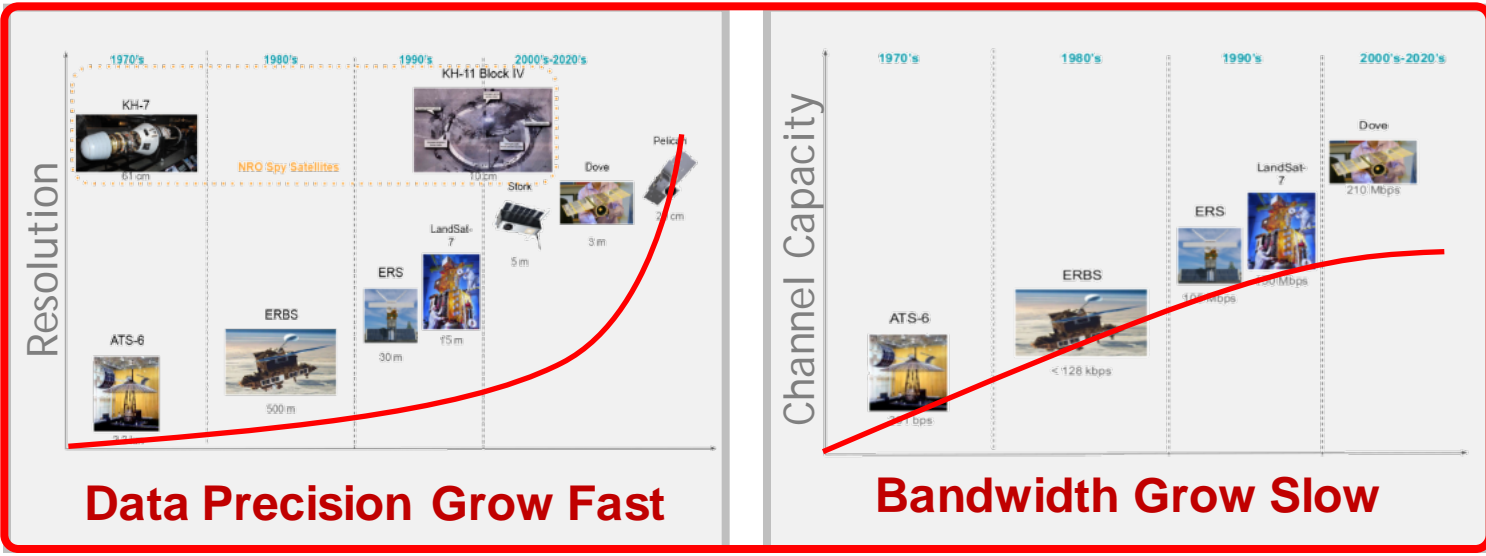
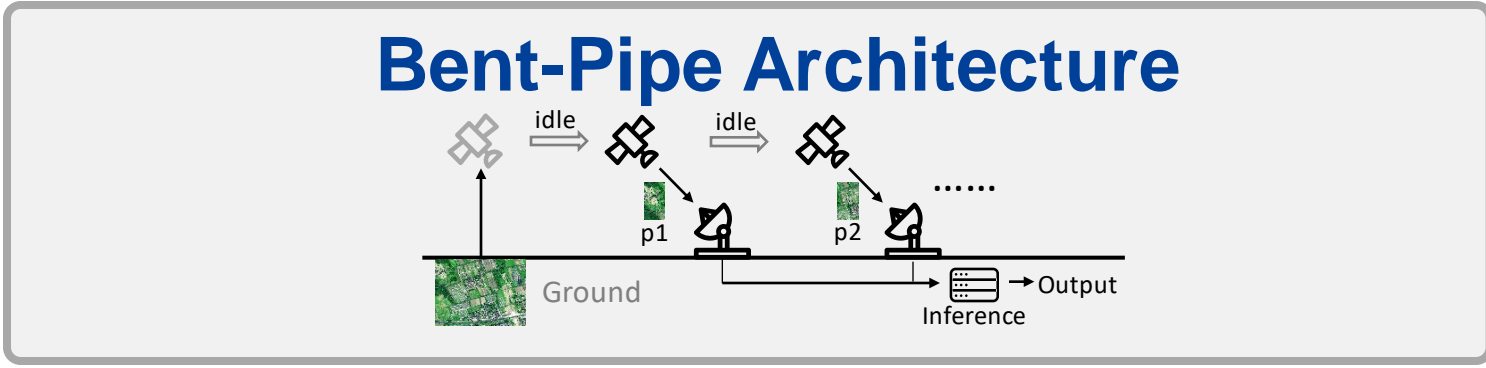
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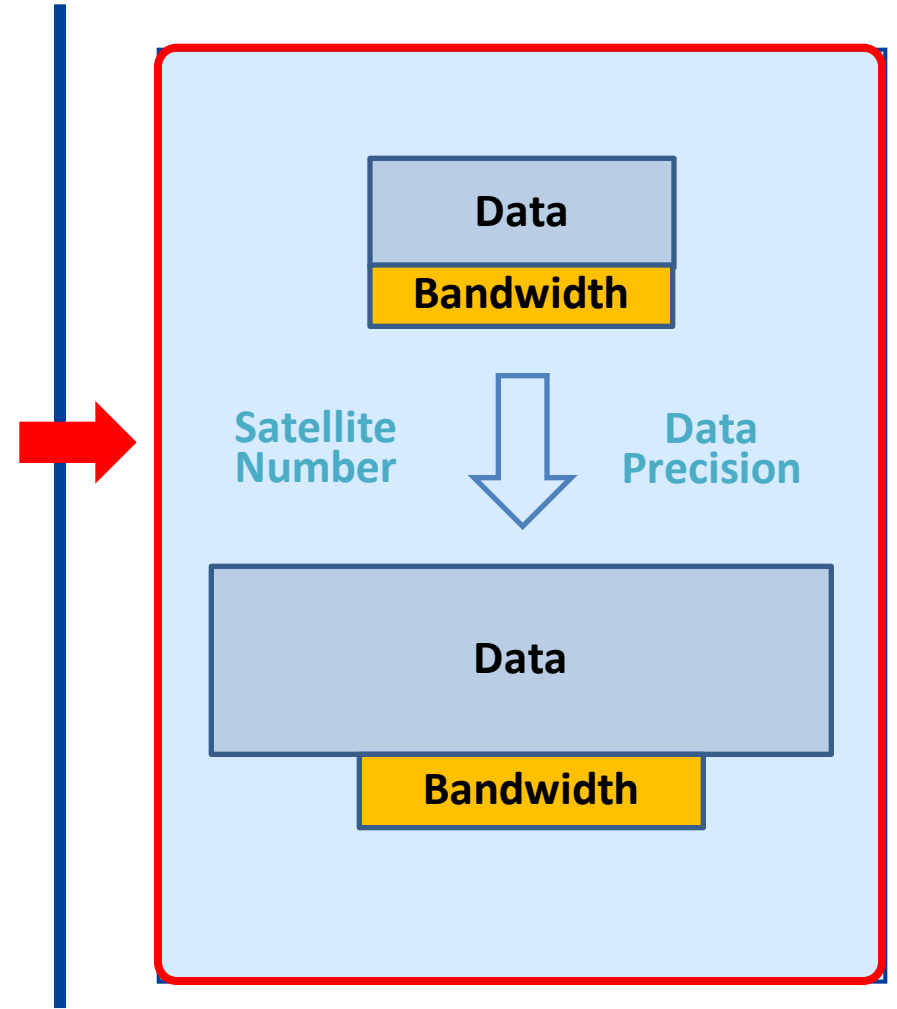
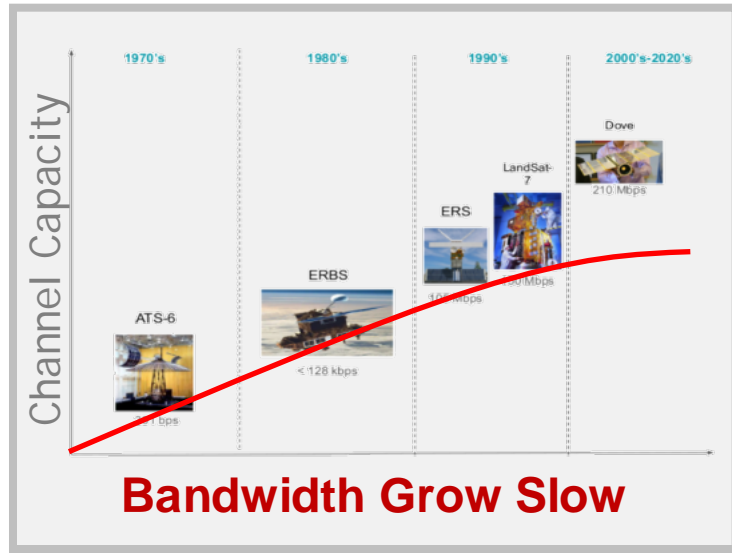
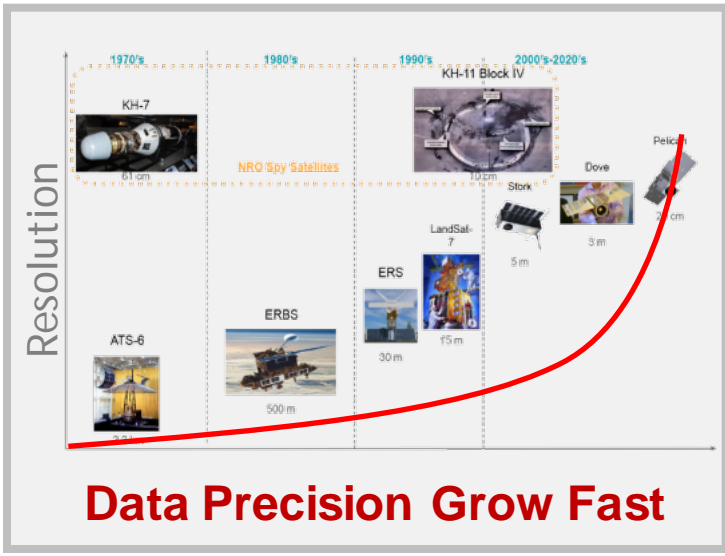
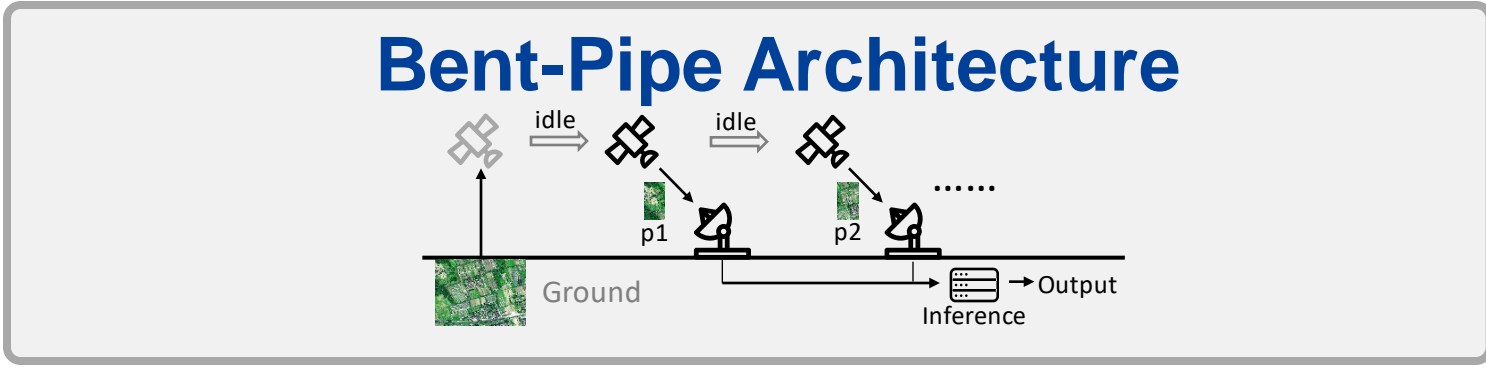
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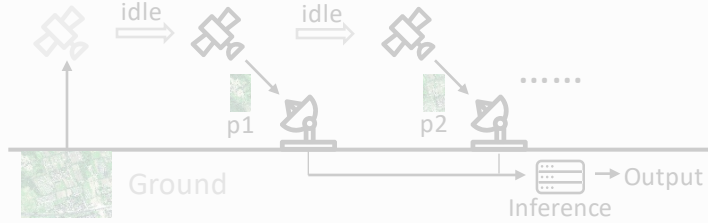


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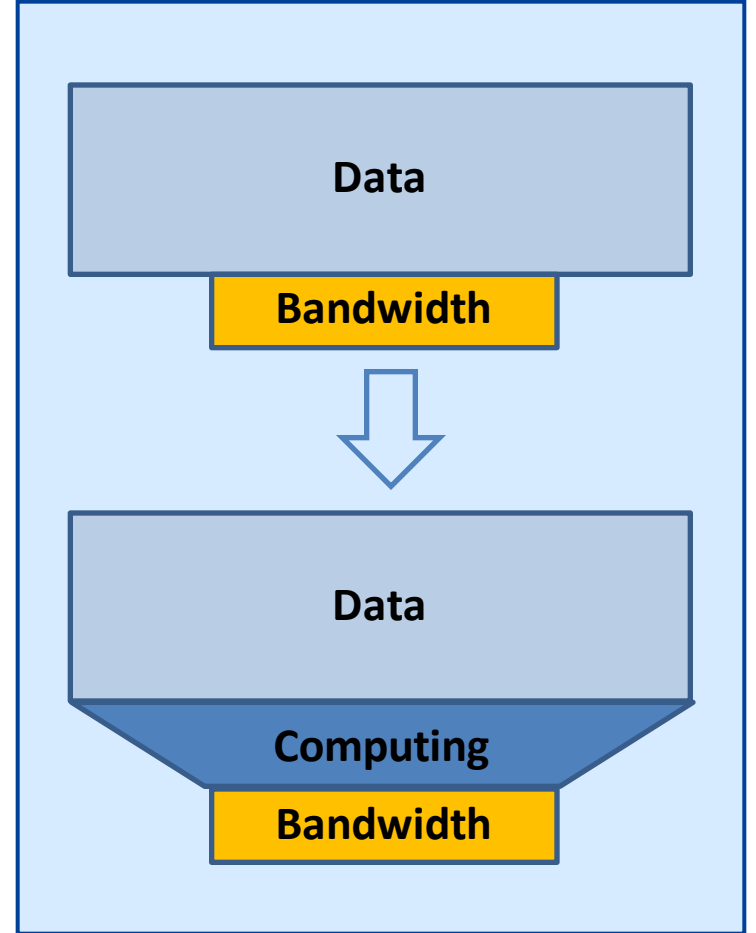
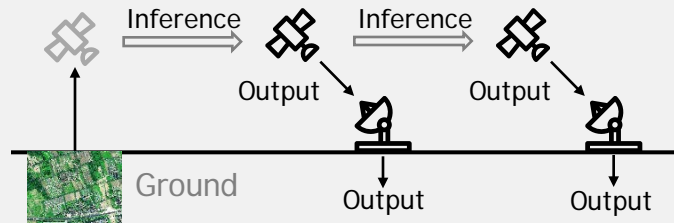


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Bent-Pipe Architecture

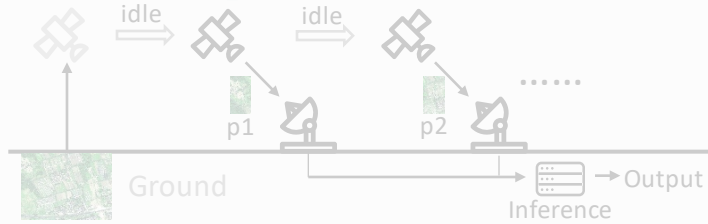


Orbital Edge Computing

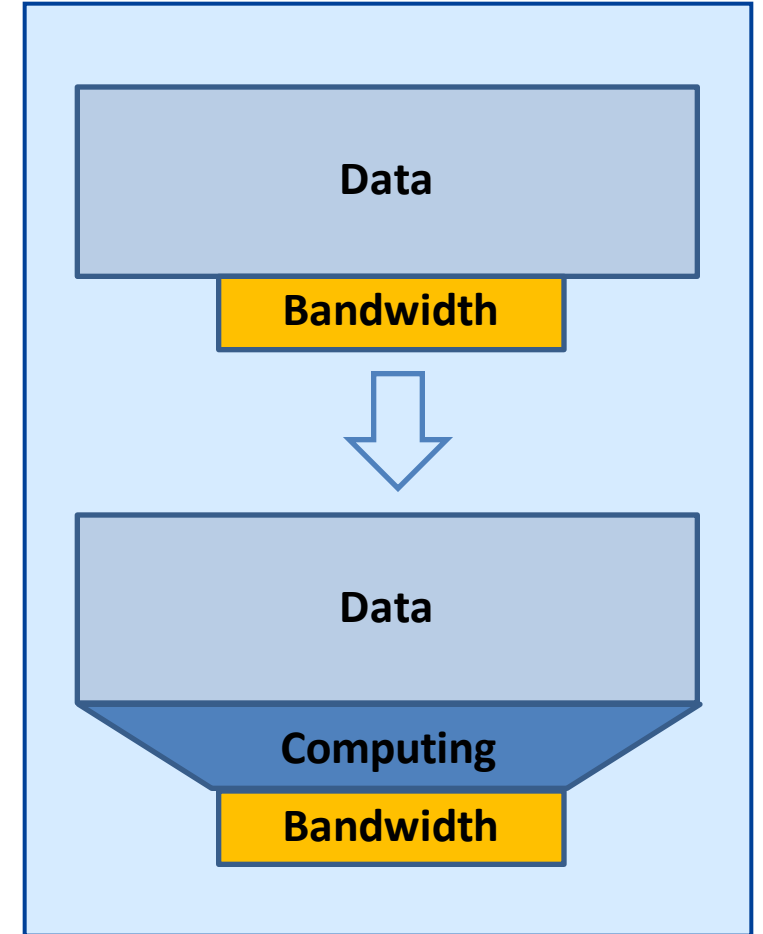
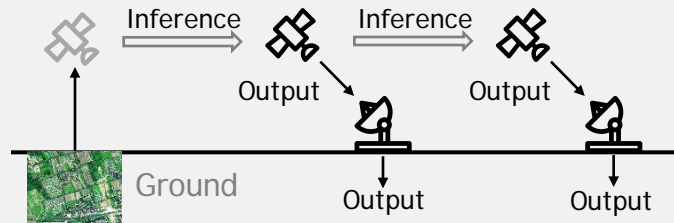


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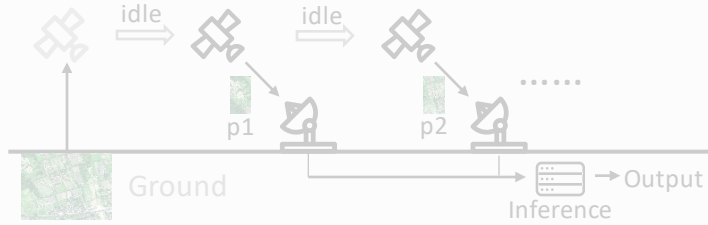


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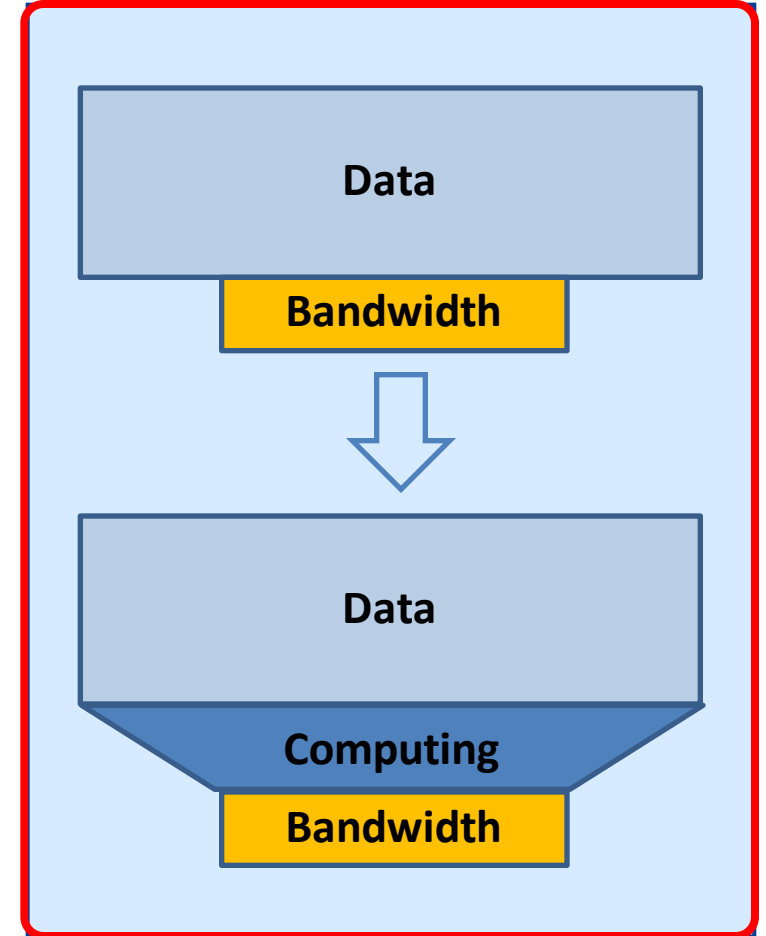
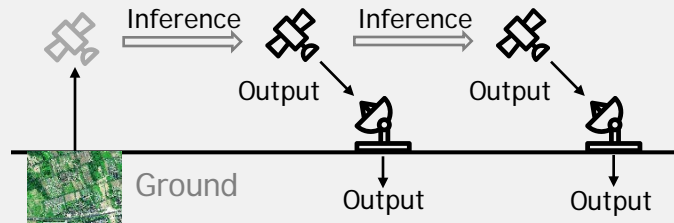


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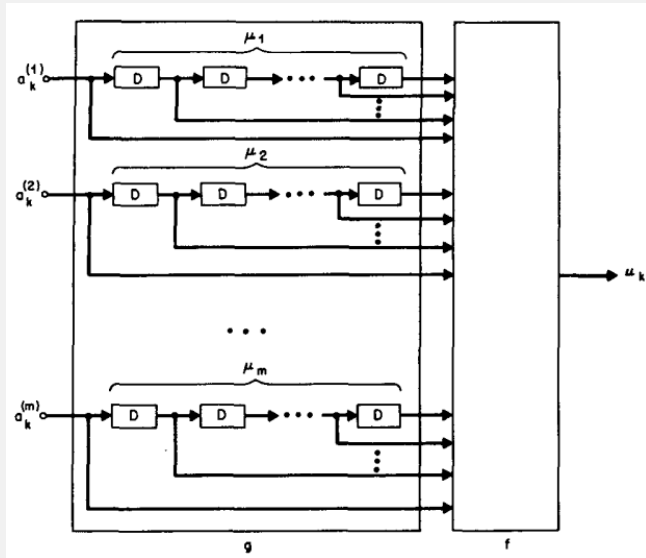


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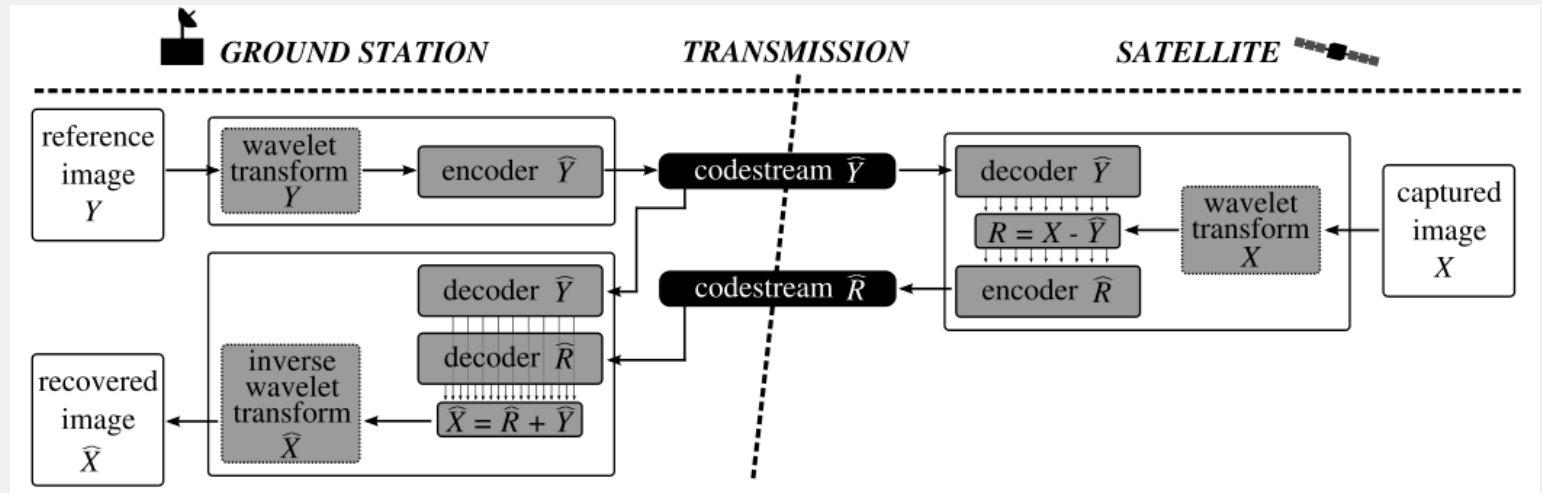


Bent-Pipe Struggle with Imbalanced Data-Bandwidth Growth

Researchers Pursued Diverse Approaches in Related Fields



Coding for Nonlinear Satellite Channels^[1]



Dual Link Image Coding^[2]

Transmission Coding

Image Compression

Orbital Edge Computing

[1] Biglieri E. TCOM, 1984.

[2] Francesc Aulí-Llinàs, et al. TRGS, 2018

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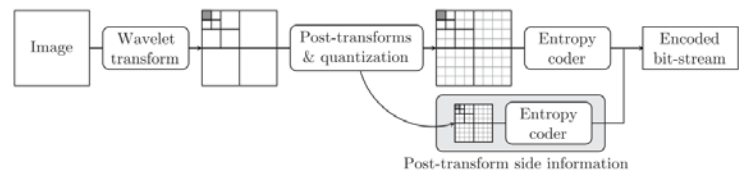


Fig. 2. Post-transform compression scheme.

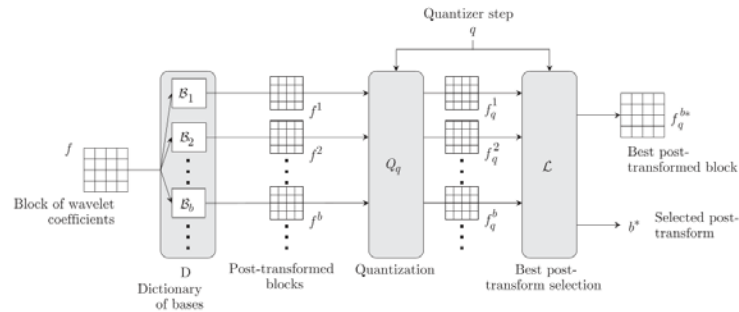
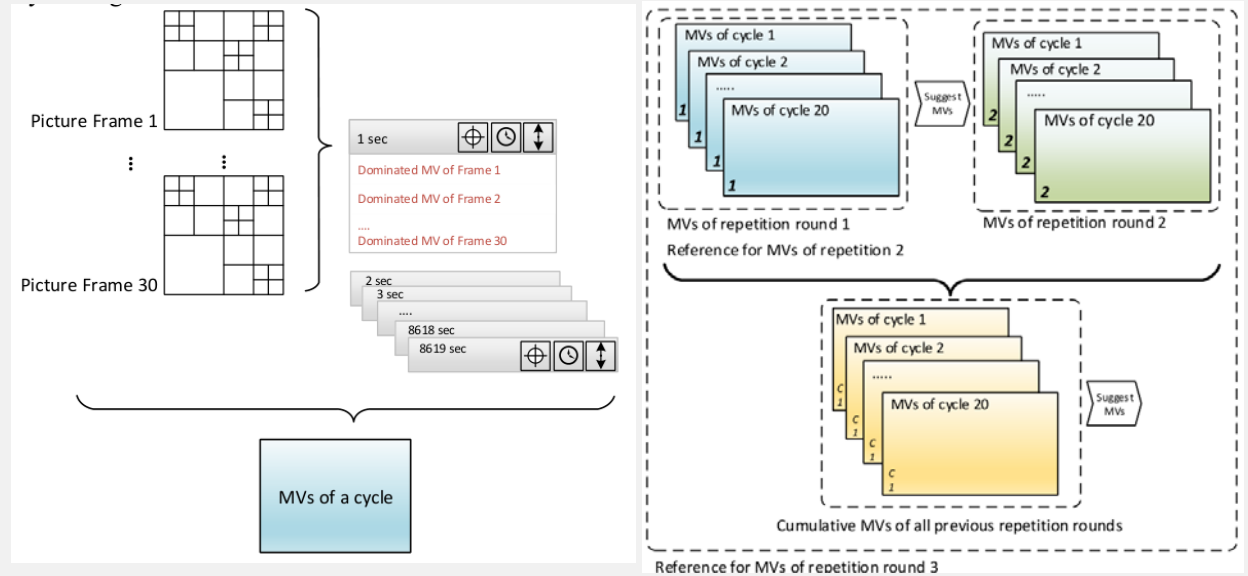


Fig. 3. Post-transform of one block of wavelet coefficients.



Compression by Post-Transforms^[1]

Video Compression by Motion Estimation^[2]

Transmission Coding

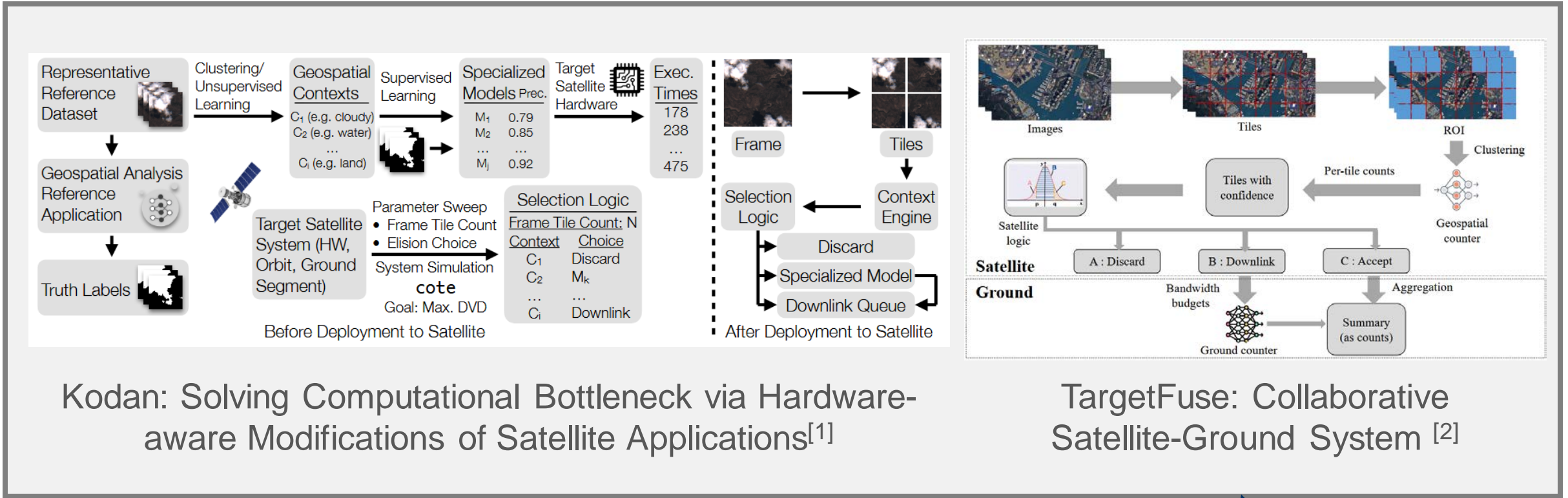
Image Compression

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[1] X. Delaunay, et al. Signal Processing, 2010.

[2] Mohammadreza Bayat, et al. AeroConf, 2020.

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[1] Bradley Denby, et al. ASPLOS, 2023.

[2] Qiyang Zhang, et al. INFOCOM, 2024.

Satellites Encounter Dynamic Scene Complexity

Satellite-Specific Environment



Severe Thermal Conditions
e.g. -22°C to $+77^{\circ}\text{C}$ ^[1]



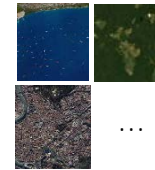
Dynamic Communication Bandwidth
e.g. 0 to 220 Mbps^[2]



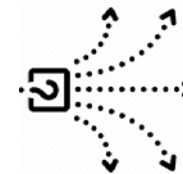
Varying Complexity Workload
e.g. ocean to urban scenes^[3]

Multi-model System

Input
Images



Model
Selector



Ocean



Forest



Urban

Select Appropriate Models
Based on Geospatial Context^[4]

Static multi-model system handles dynamic scenes.

[1] Casper Versteeg, et al. 2018.
[3] Changhao Wu, et al. arXiv, 2023

[2] Starlink specifications – starlink [Online].
[4] Denby Bradley, et al. ASPLOS, 2023

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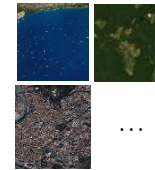
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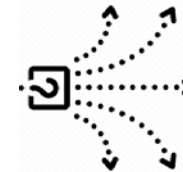
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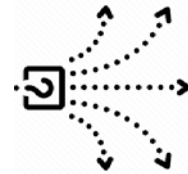
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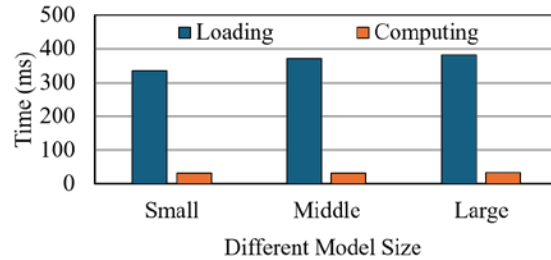
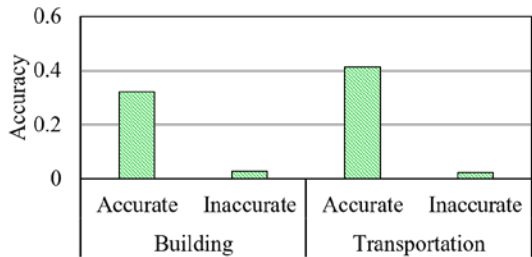
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Static Methods may Falter with Complex Scene

Drawbacks of Static Method

Use Static Multi-model System



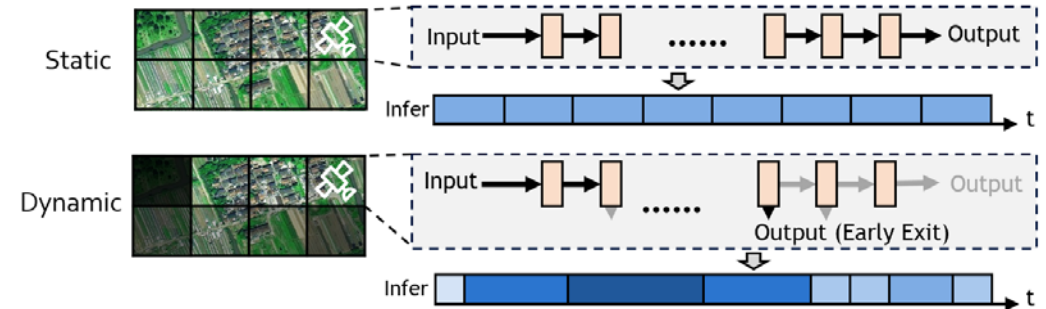
Vulnerability of reliance on prior knowledge

Long loading time

How Adaptive Method Work

Performing Early Exit for Simple Images

Full Processing for Complex Images

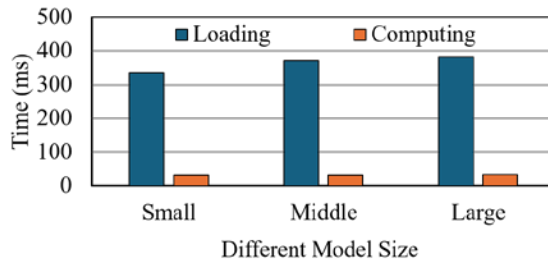
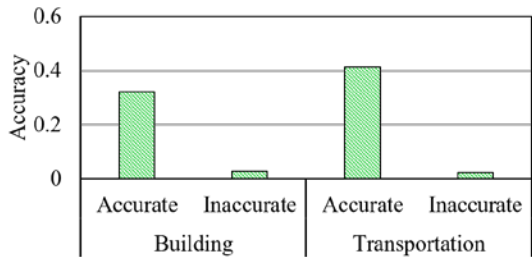


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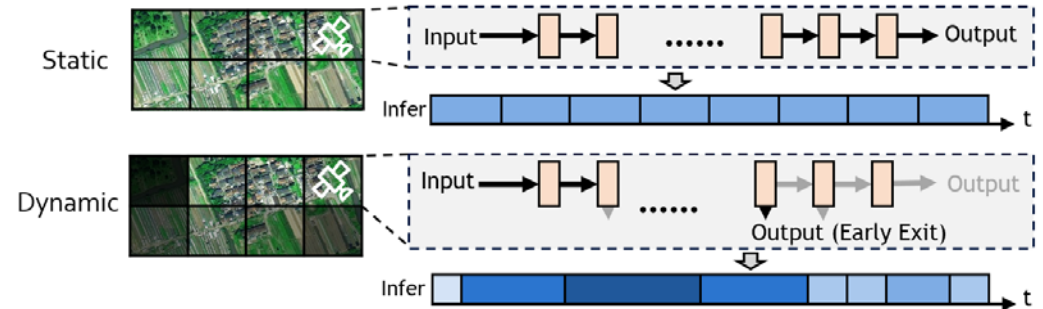
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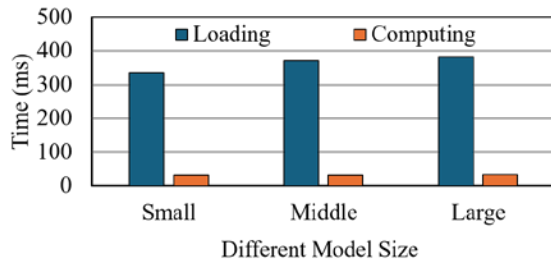
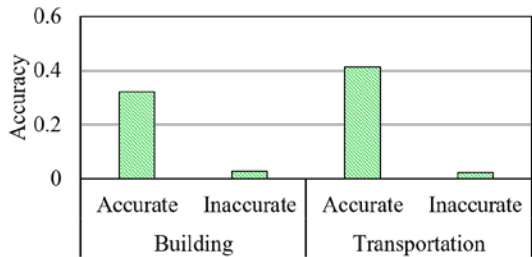


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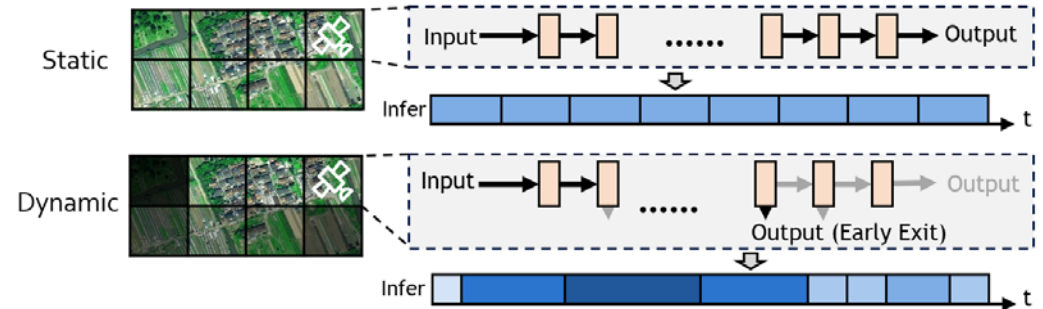
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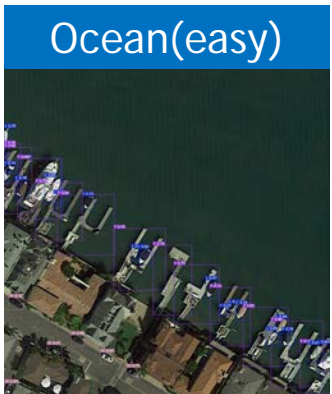
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Algorithm and System Challenges in Adaptive Implementation

Multi-scale info. & Geo. context



Visual and geospatial context influence complexity.

Hetero. devices

Jetson Nano



Jetson Xavier NX

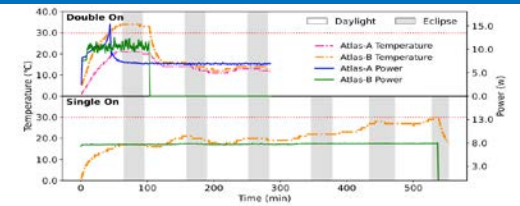


472GFLOPS/10W 21TFLOPS/20W

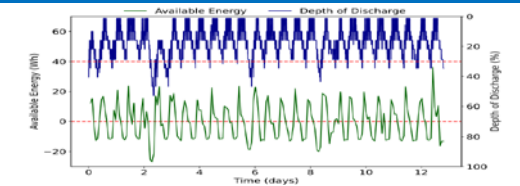
Task scheduling is crucial in heterogeneous system.

Runtime resource

Sensitive Thermal Condition



Limited Power Budget

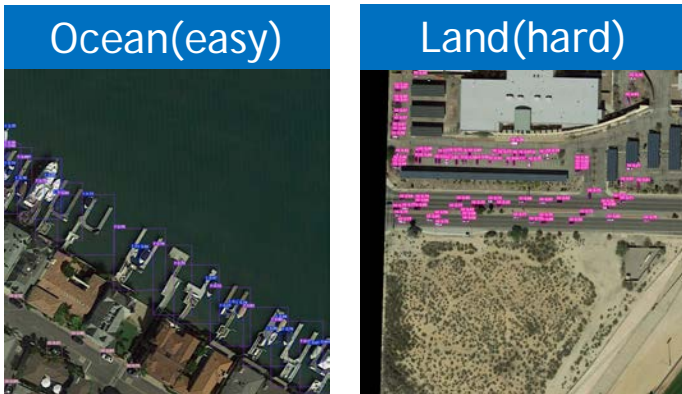


Power and thermal budget impact processing system.^[1]

We need an algorithm-system co-design to tackle challenges.

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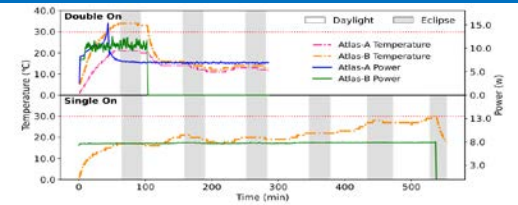


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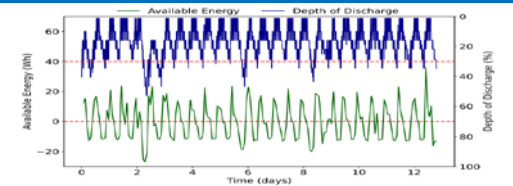
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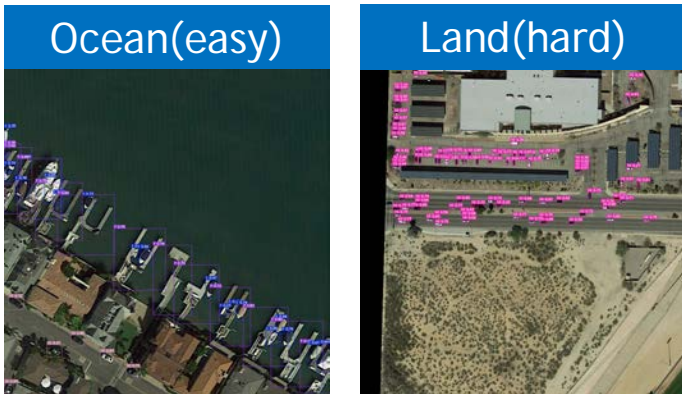


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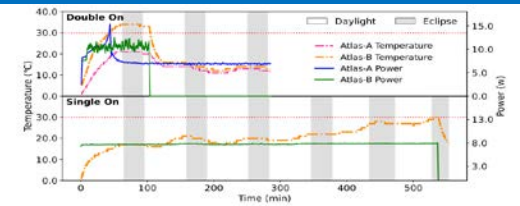


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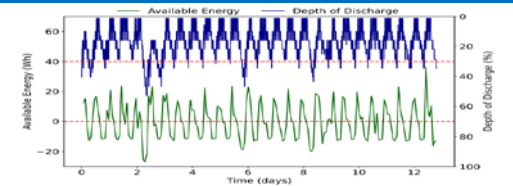
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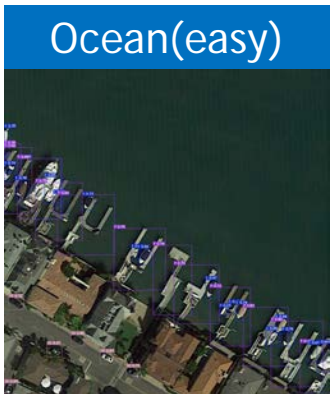


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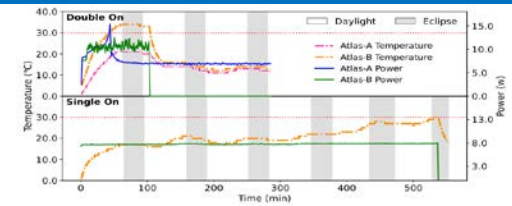


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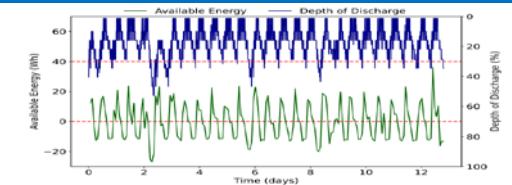
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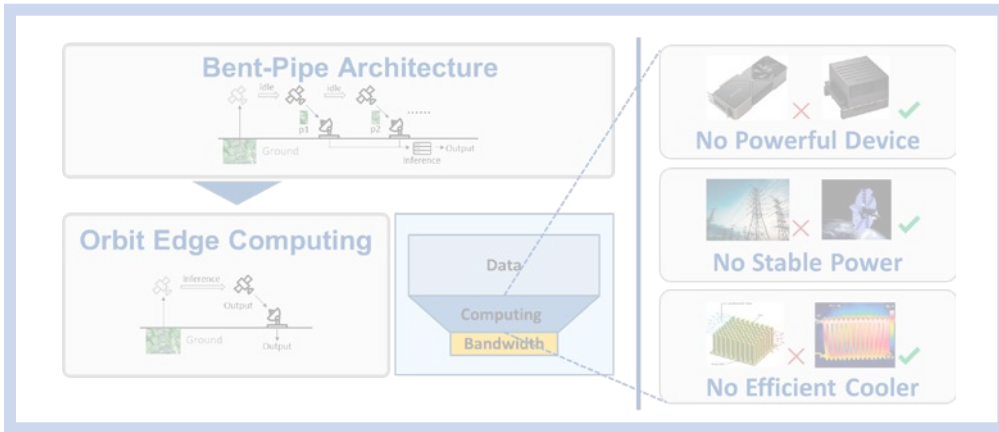
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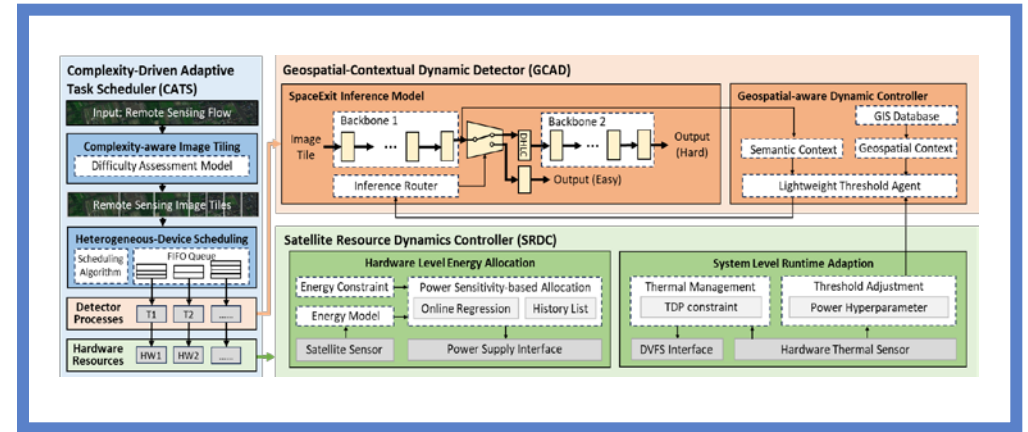
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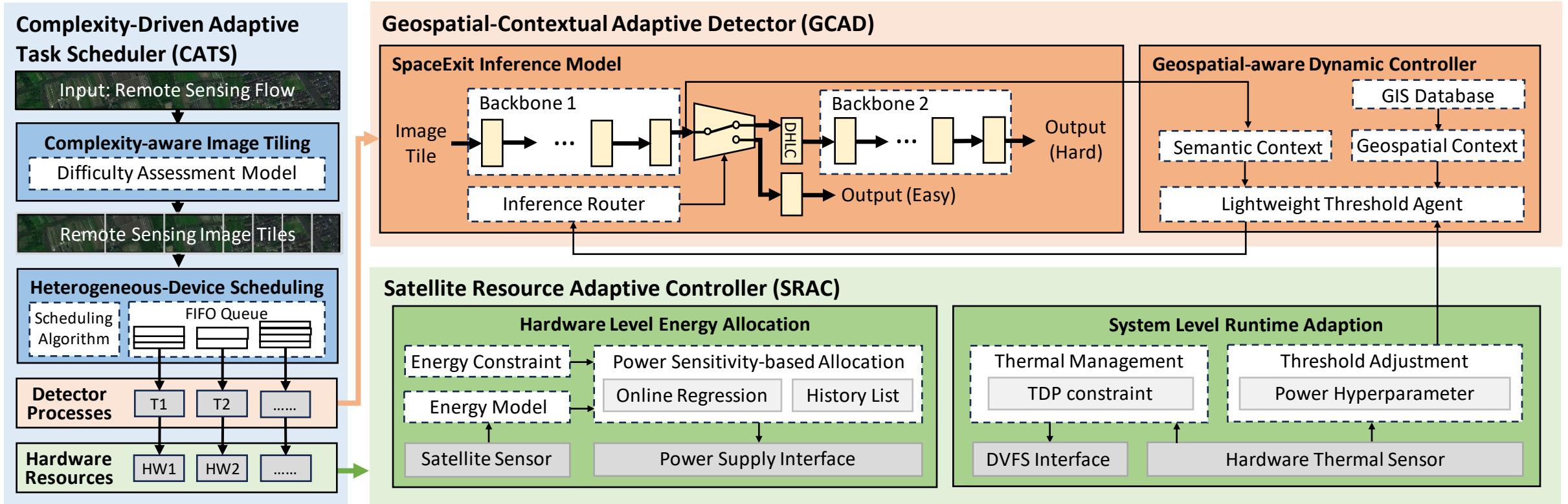


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- We embrace OEC (Orbit Edge Computing), which is emerging as a solution to imbalanced data-bandwidth growth.
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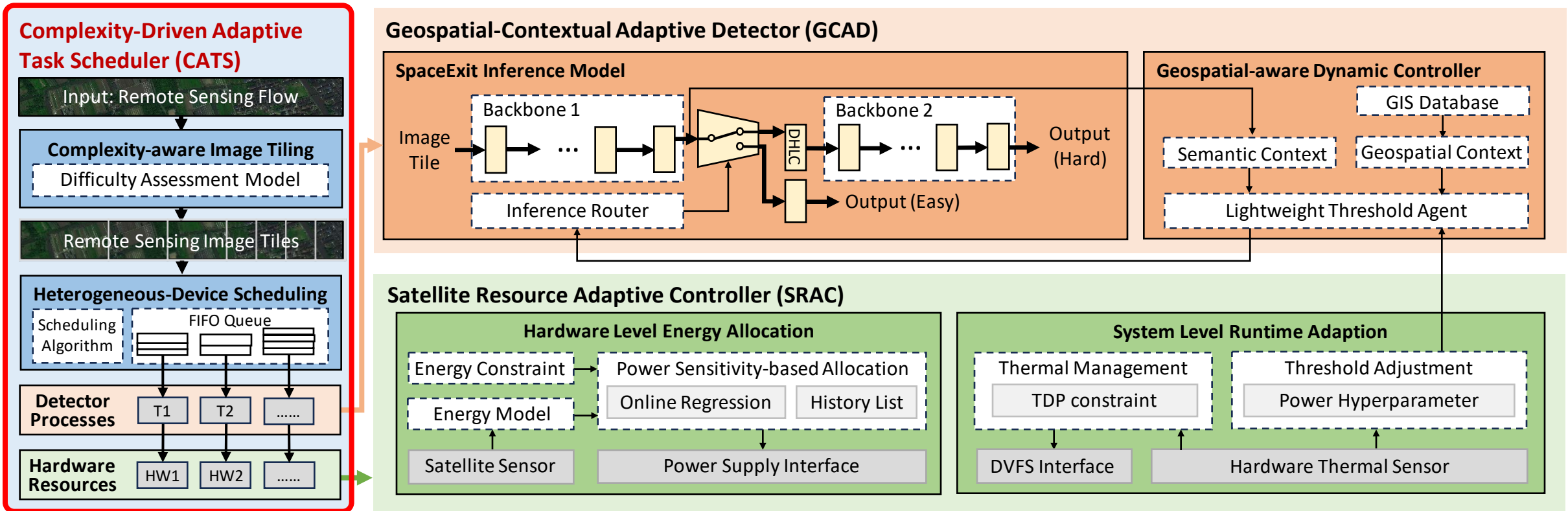
SpaceExit Overview



SpaceExit Optimize Detection Pipeline via Algo-System Co-design



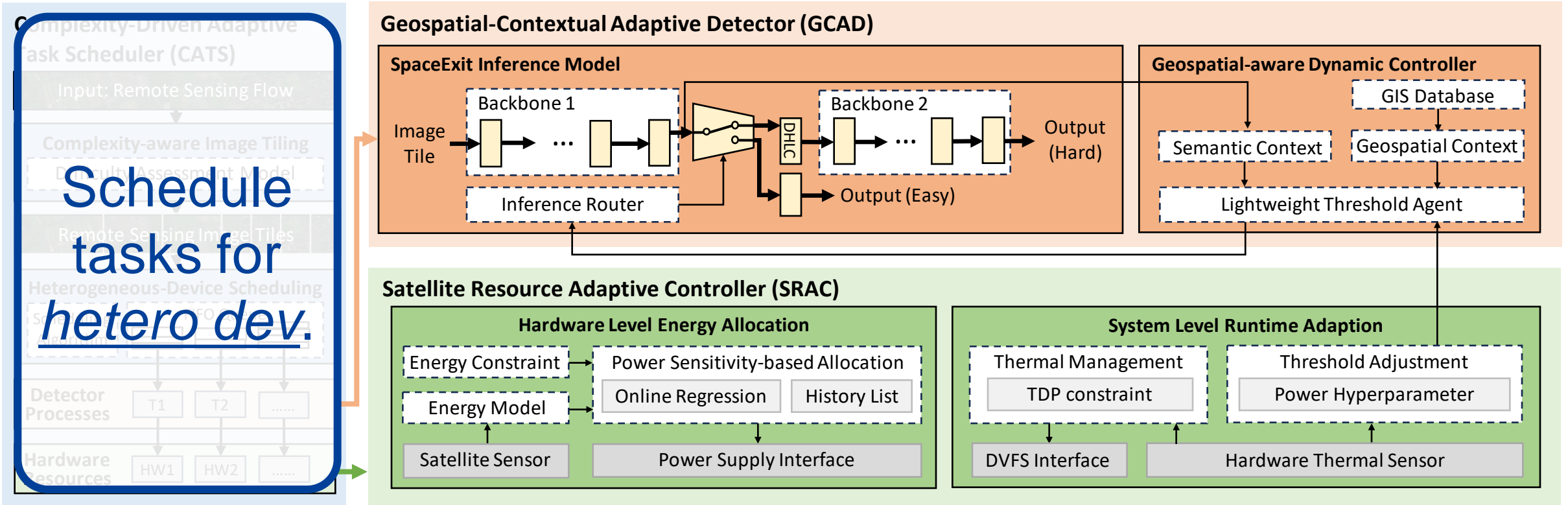
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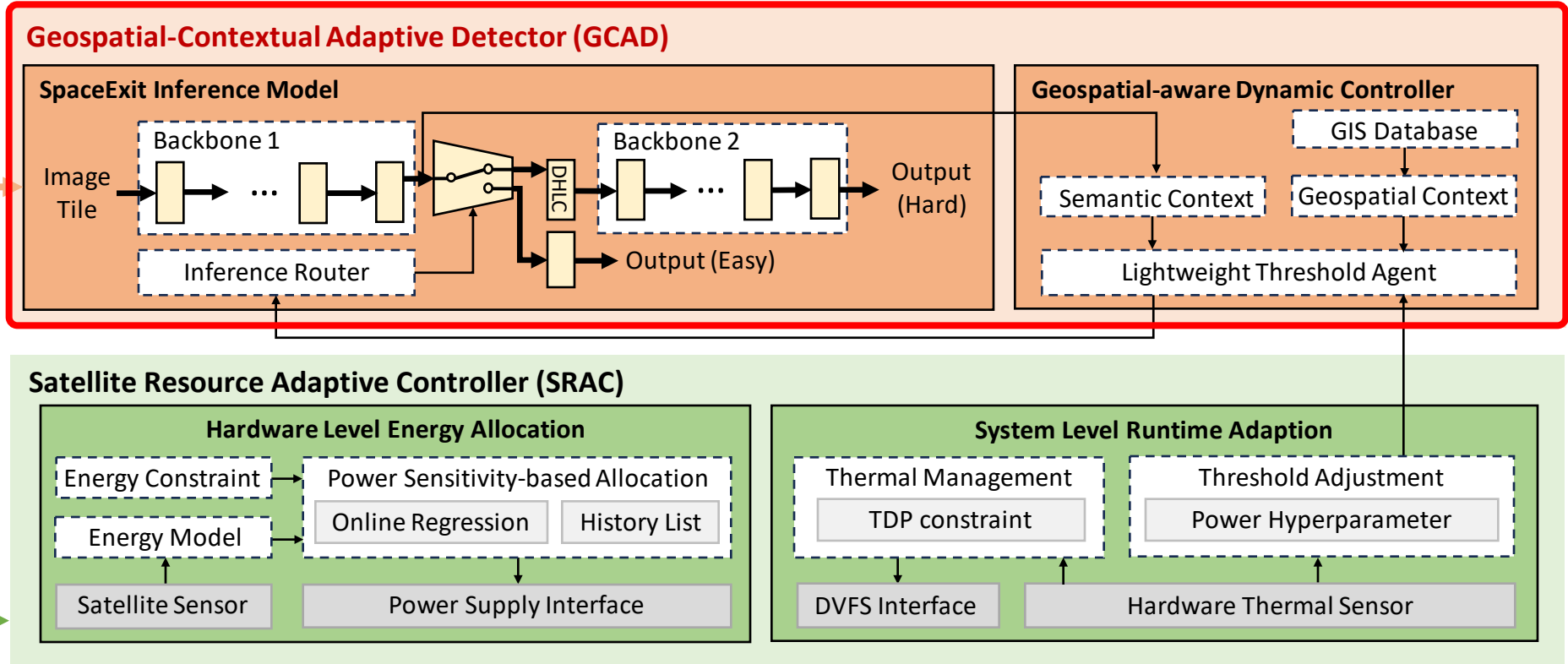
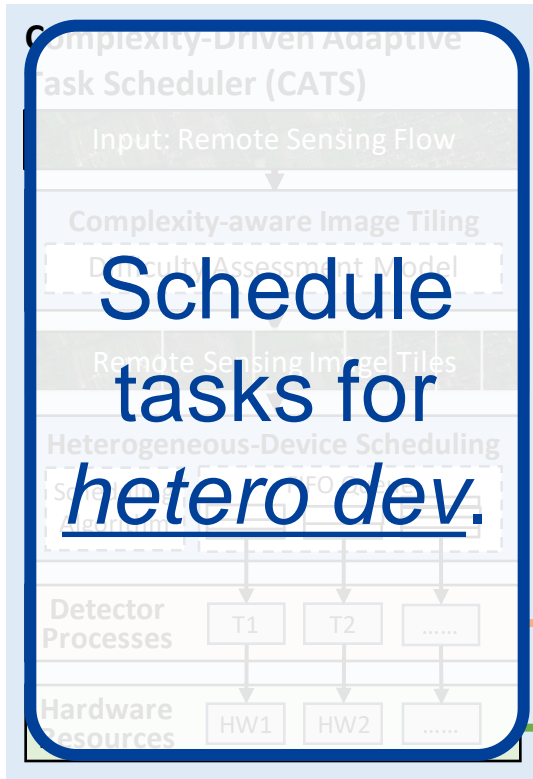
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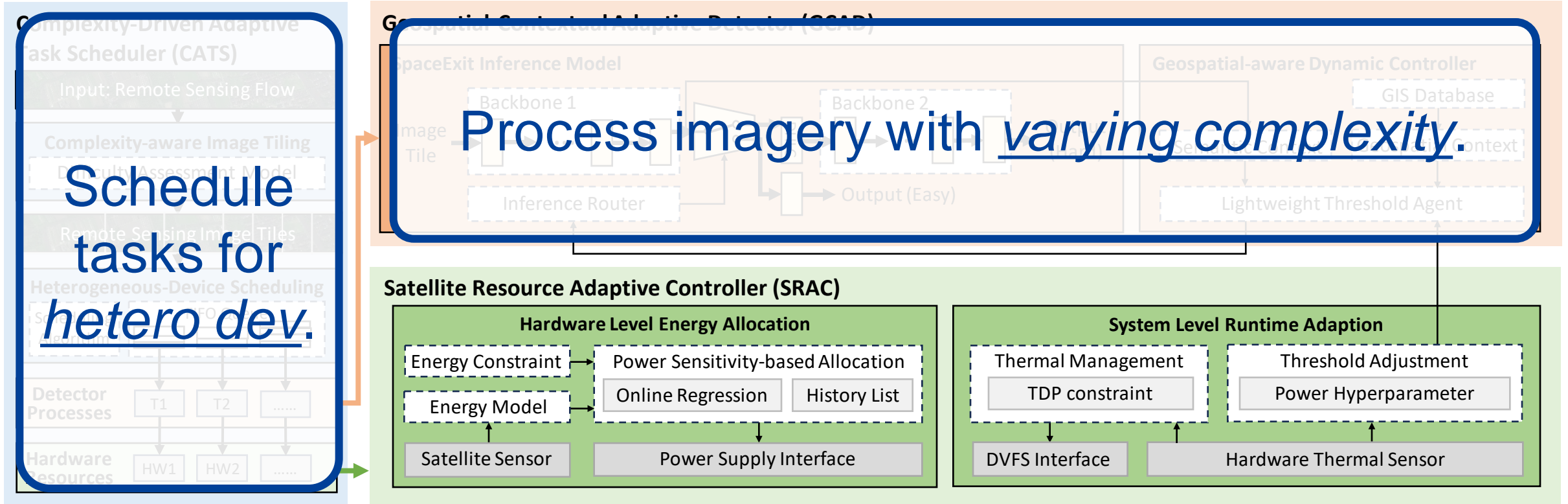
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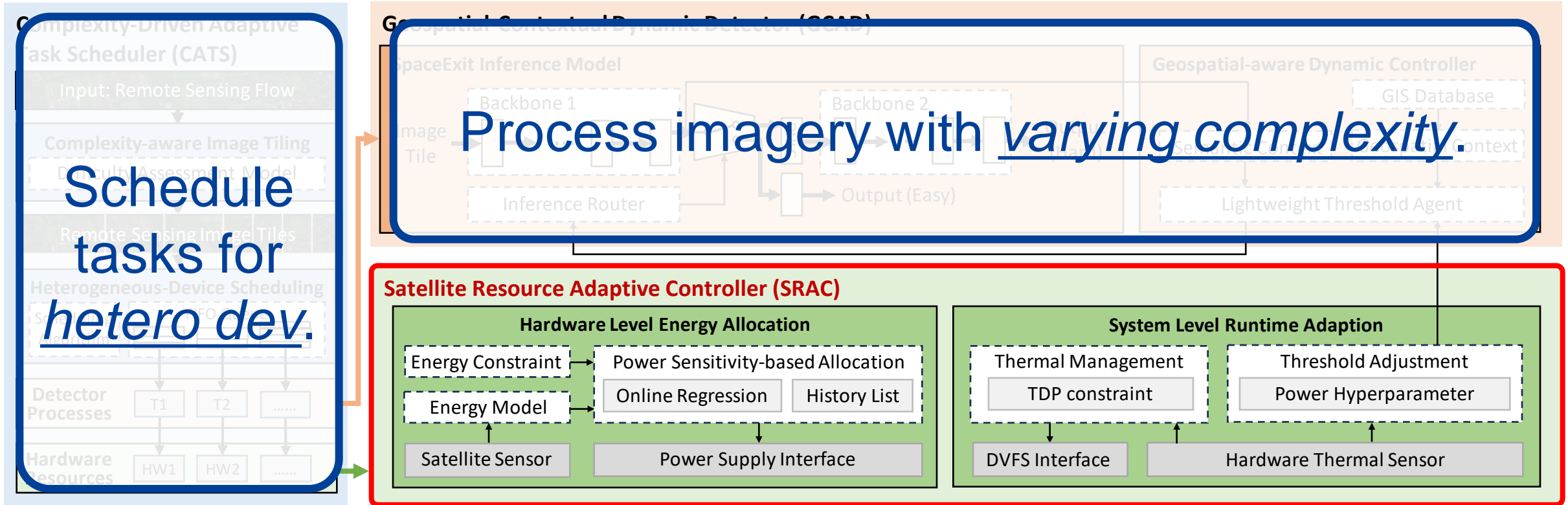
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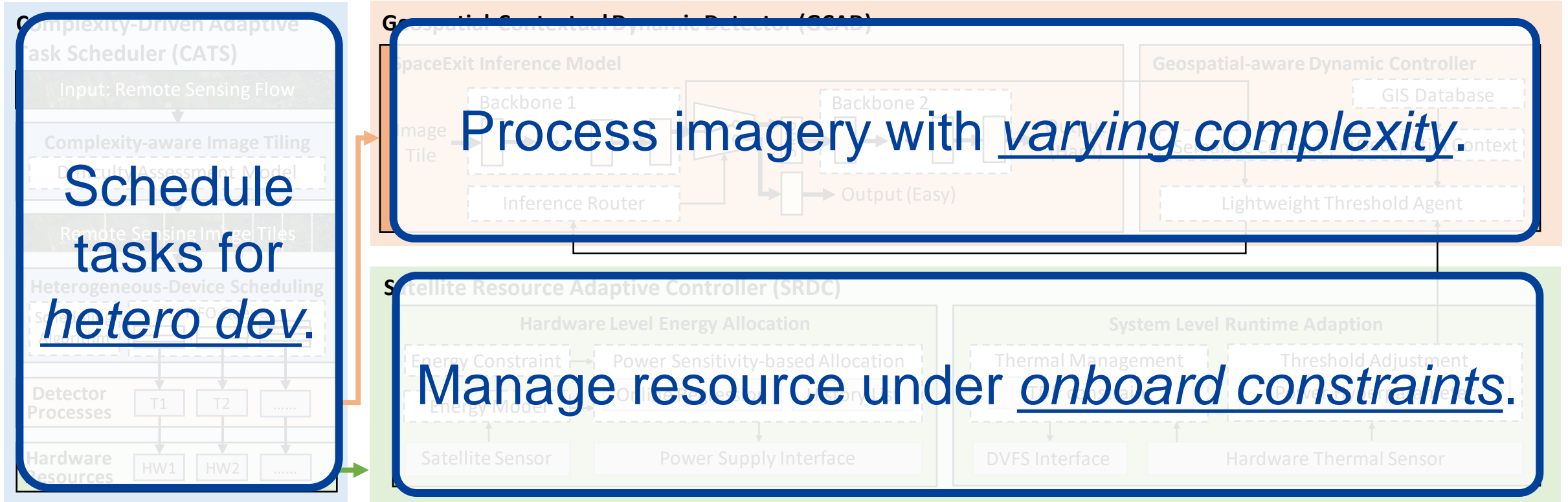
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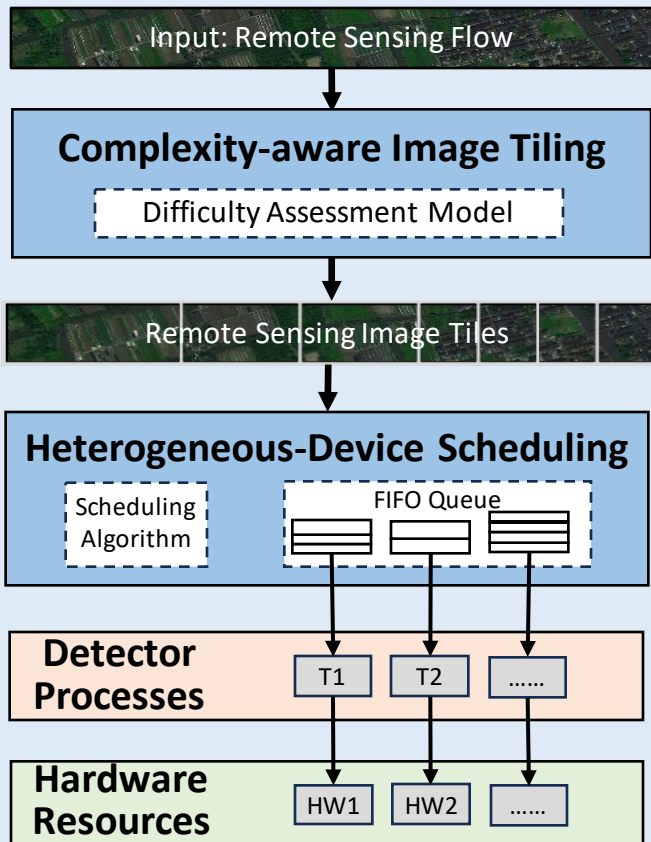
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Schedule tasks for heterogeneous devices: CATS

Complexity-Driven Adaptive Task Scheduler (CATS)



Simple Network to Assess Difficulty

Input image  difficulty d_t

Complexity-aware Image Tiling Module Output Tiles

$$w_t = h_t = \frac{w_{base}}{\sqrt{d_t}}$$

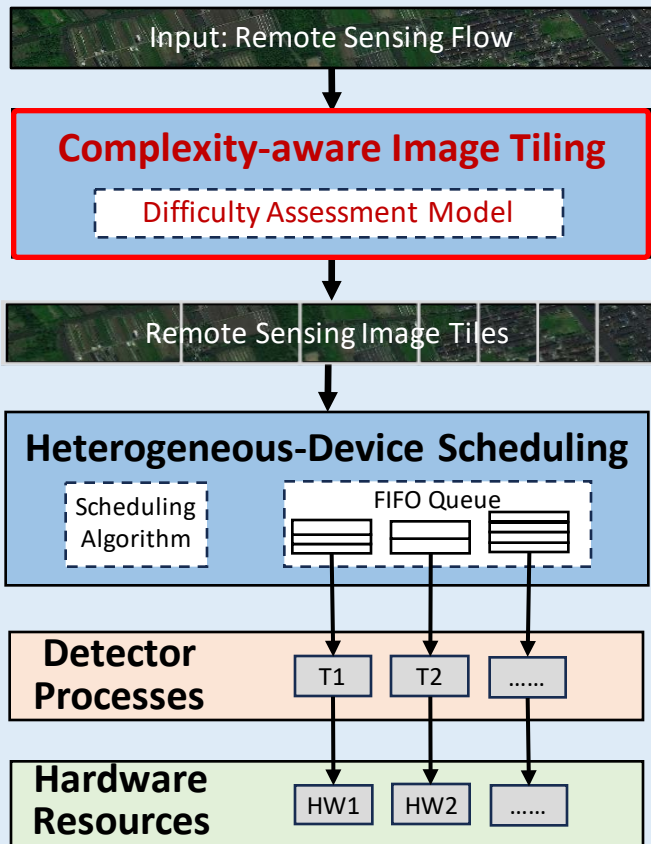
Scheduling Module Assign Tiles to Hetero Devices

$$Q_{\sigma(i)} = Q_{\sigma(i)} \cup \{r\}$$

$$\sigma(i) = \arg \min_j \left\{ \frac{n_j}{v_j} \mid j \in [1, N], |Q_j| < K_j \right\}$$

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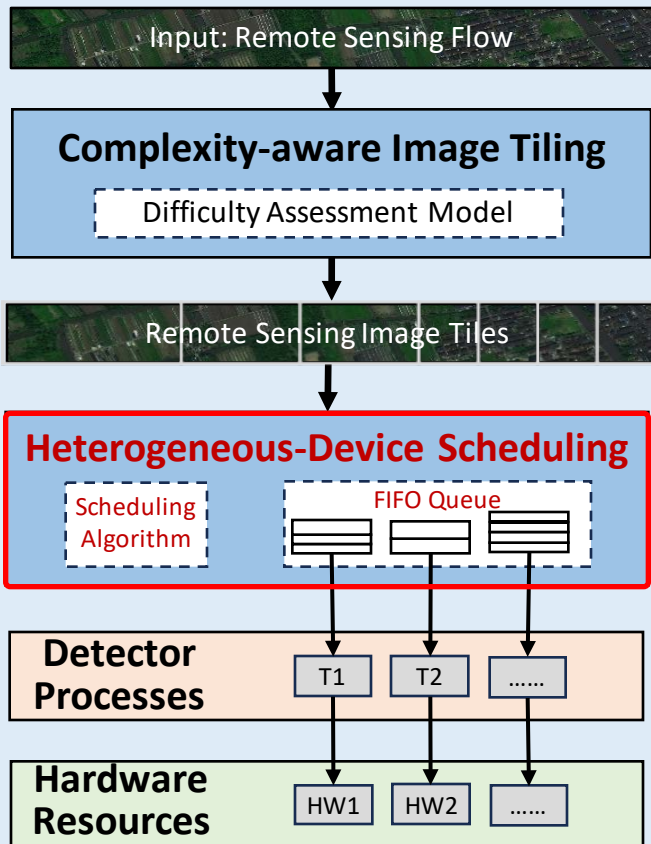
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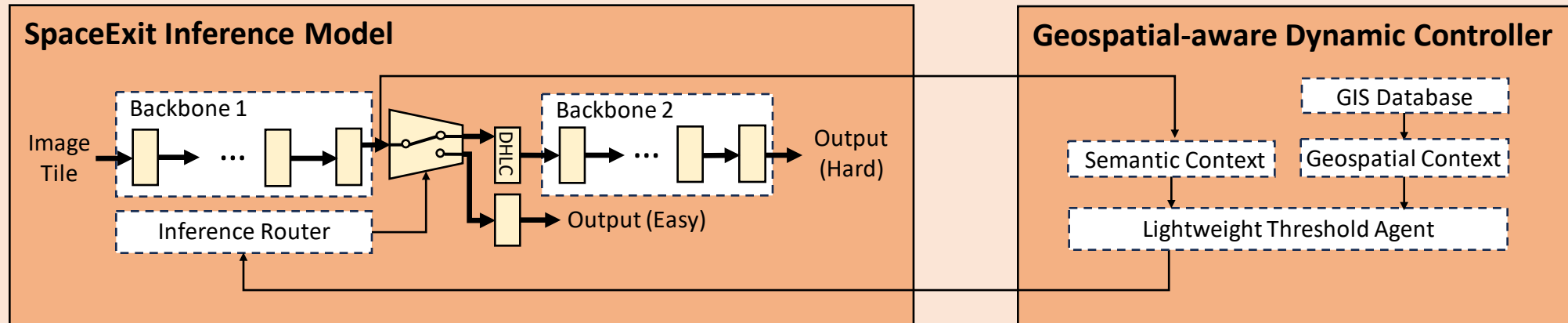
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Process imagery with varying complexity: GCAD

Geospatial-Contextual Adaptive Detector (GCAD)



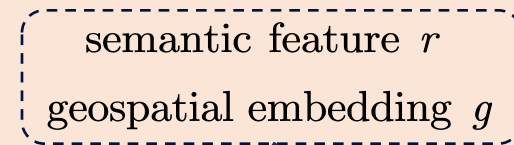
Multiscale Backbone to Capture Features

$$f_{\mathbf{x}}^L = \mathcal{F}_L(\dots \mathcal{F}_2(\mathcal{F}_1(\mathbf{x}))) \quad \tilde{F} = \parallel_{i=1}^L \mathcal{P}(f^i)$$

Inference Router to Decide Whether to Exit

$$u = \sigma\left(W_2\left(\delta\left(W_1 \tilde{F} + b_1\right)\right) + b_2\right) \sim \tau_{val}$$

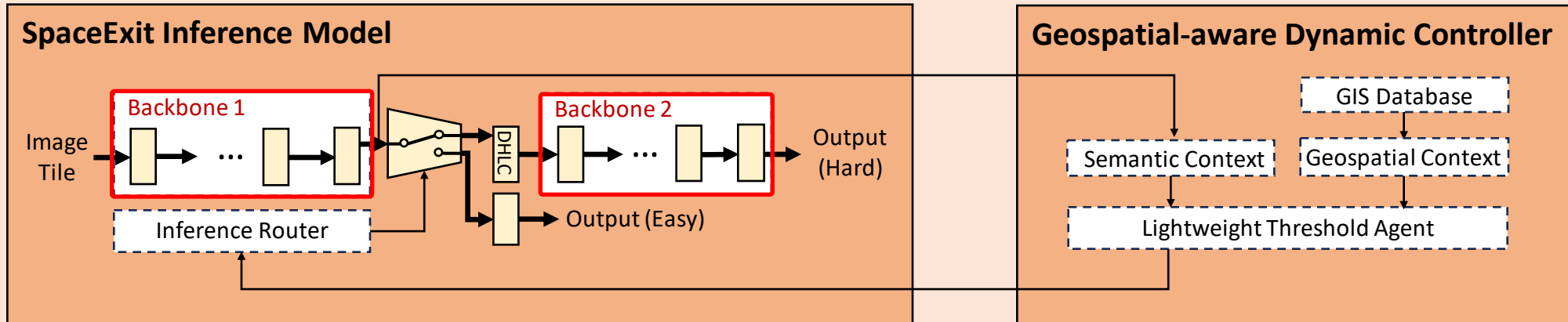
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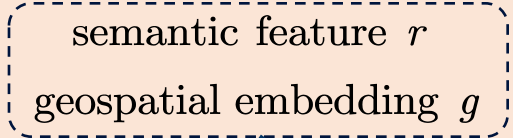
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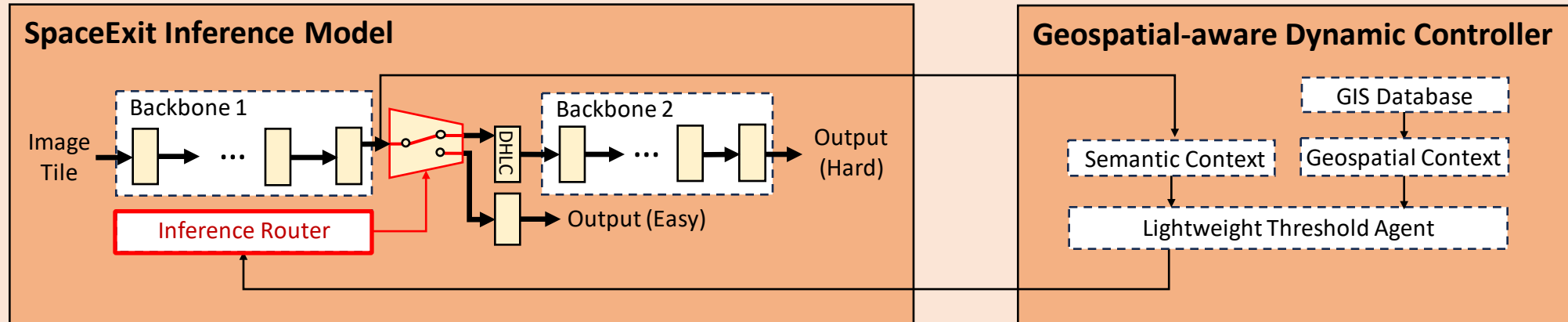
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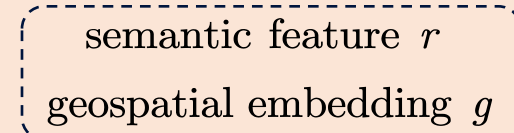
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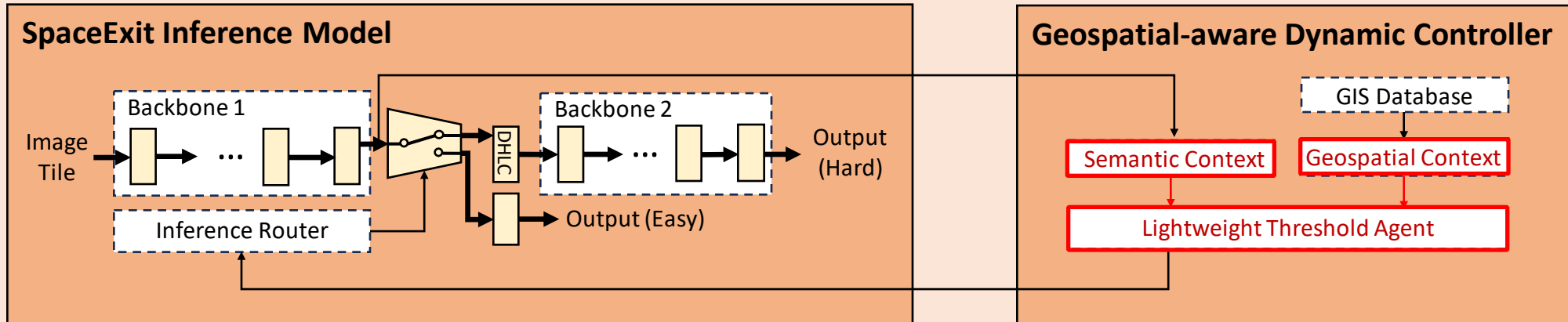
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semantic feature r
geospatial embedding g

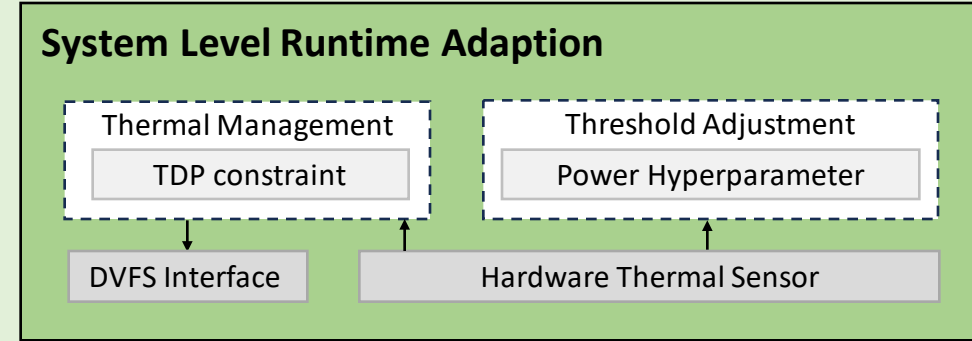
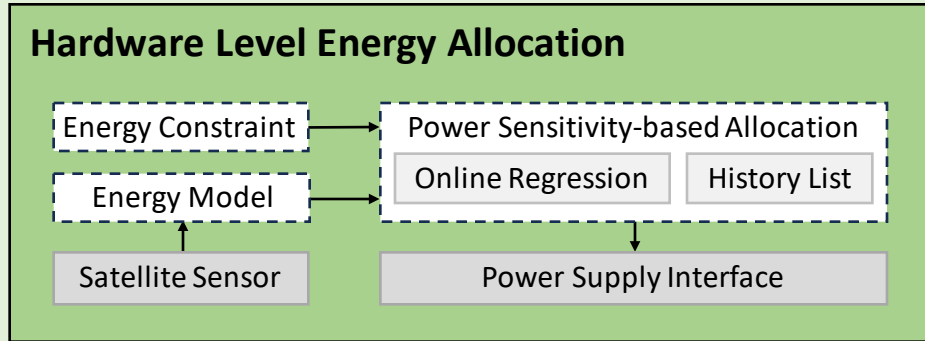


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Manage resource under onboard constraints: SRAC

Satellite Resource Adaptive Controller (SRAC)



Energy Constraint for Allocation

$$\sum_{i=1}^N P_i(t) \leq I(t)$$

Power Sensitivity-based Allocation

$$P_i(t) = P_{base,i} + (I(t) - P_{base}) \cdot \frac{\partial X_i / \partial P_i}{\sum_{j=1}^N \partial X_j / \partial P_j}$$

Thermal Management under TDP Constraint

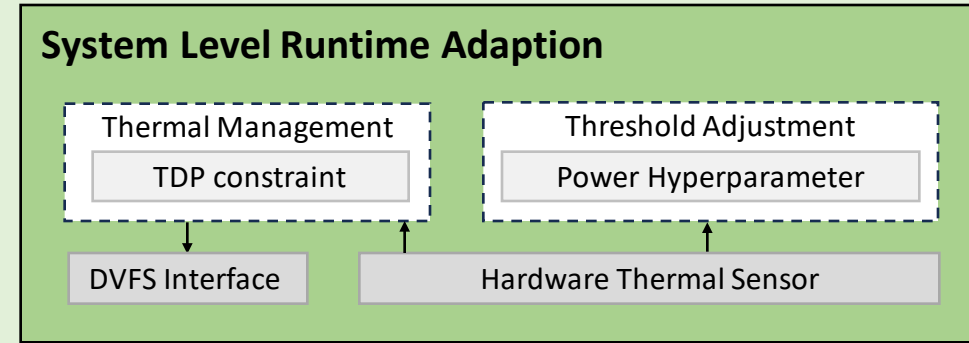
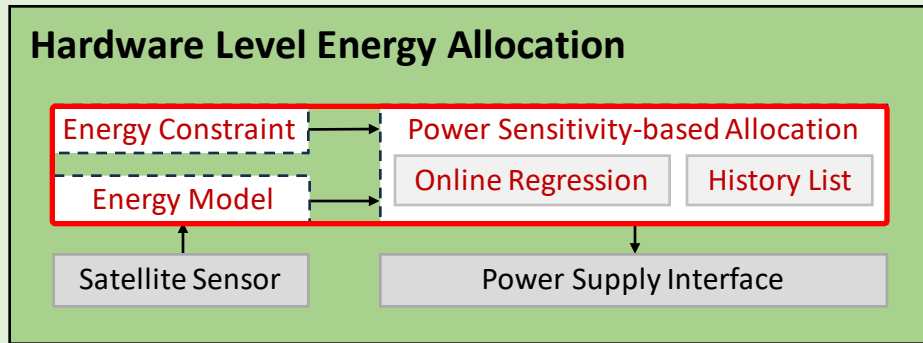
$$\Delta P = \frac{1}{\alpha} [T_{max} - T_i(t)] - [P_i(t) - \beta(T_i^4(t) - T_{amb}^4)]$$

Threshold Adjustment for GCAD module

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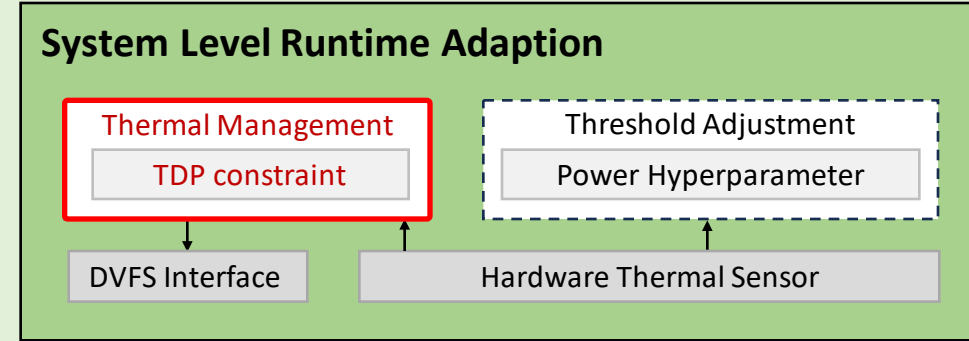
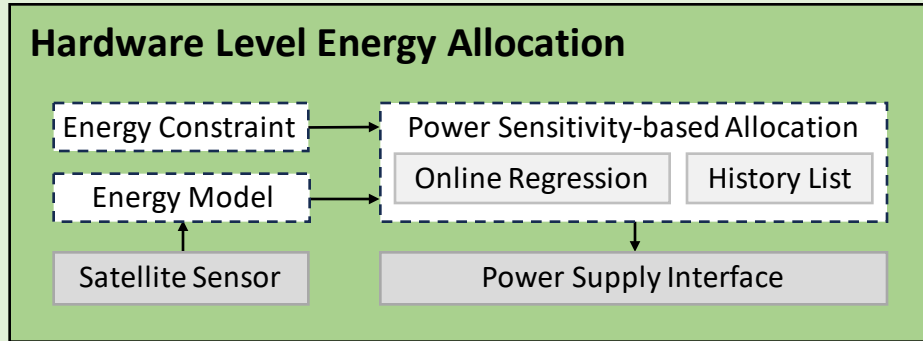
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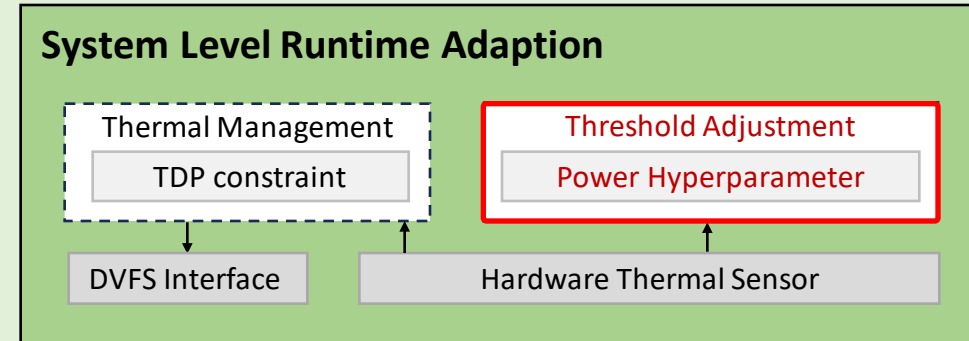
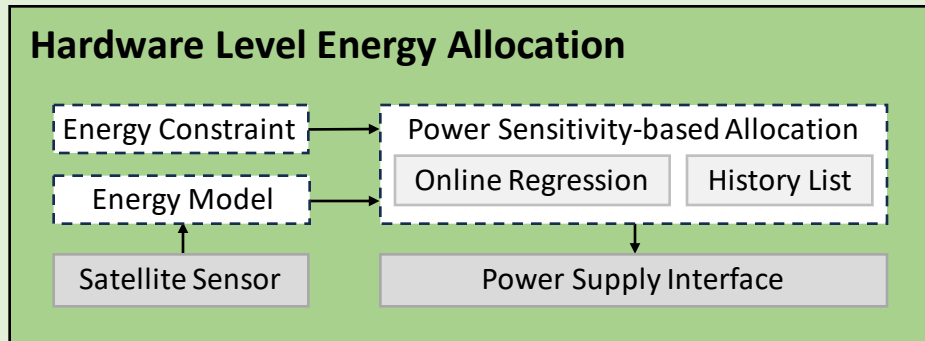
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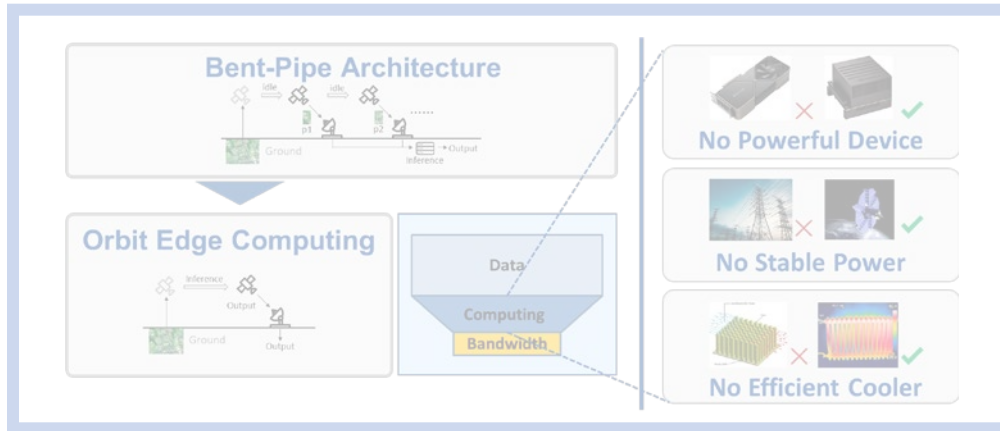
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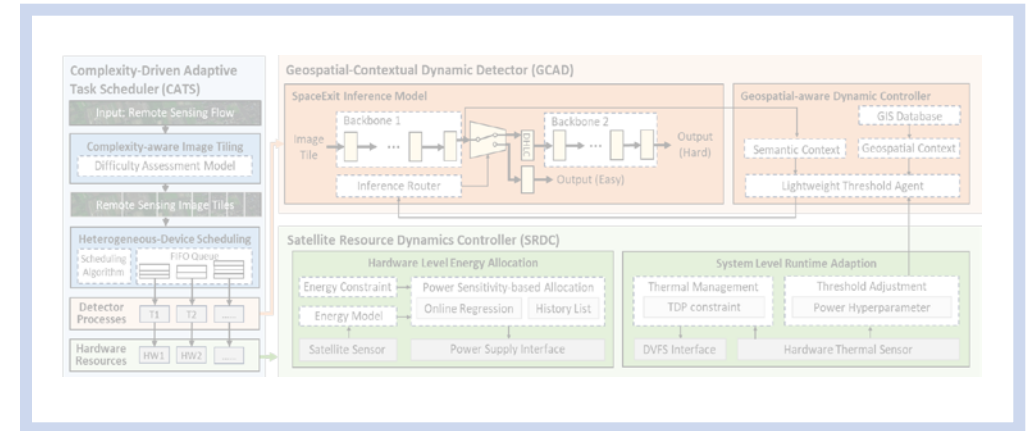
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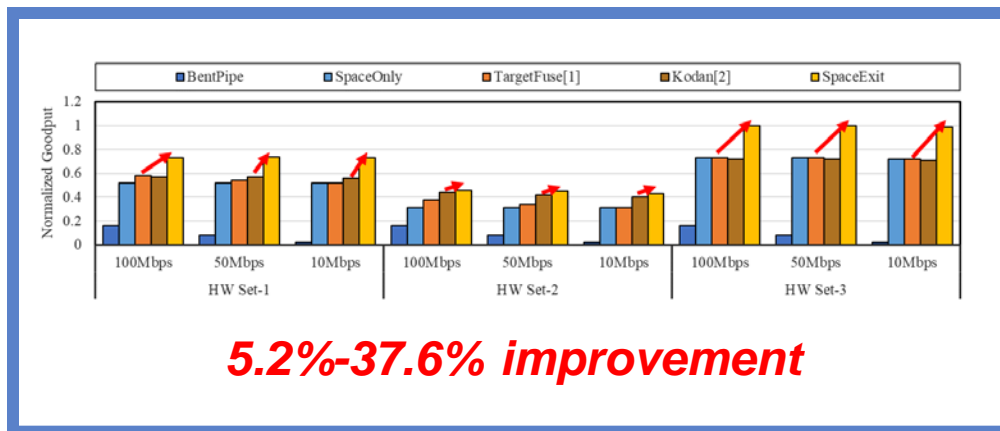
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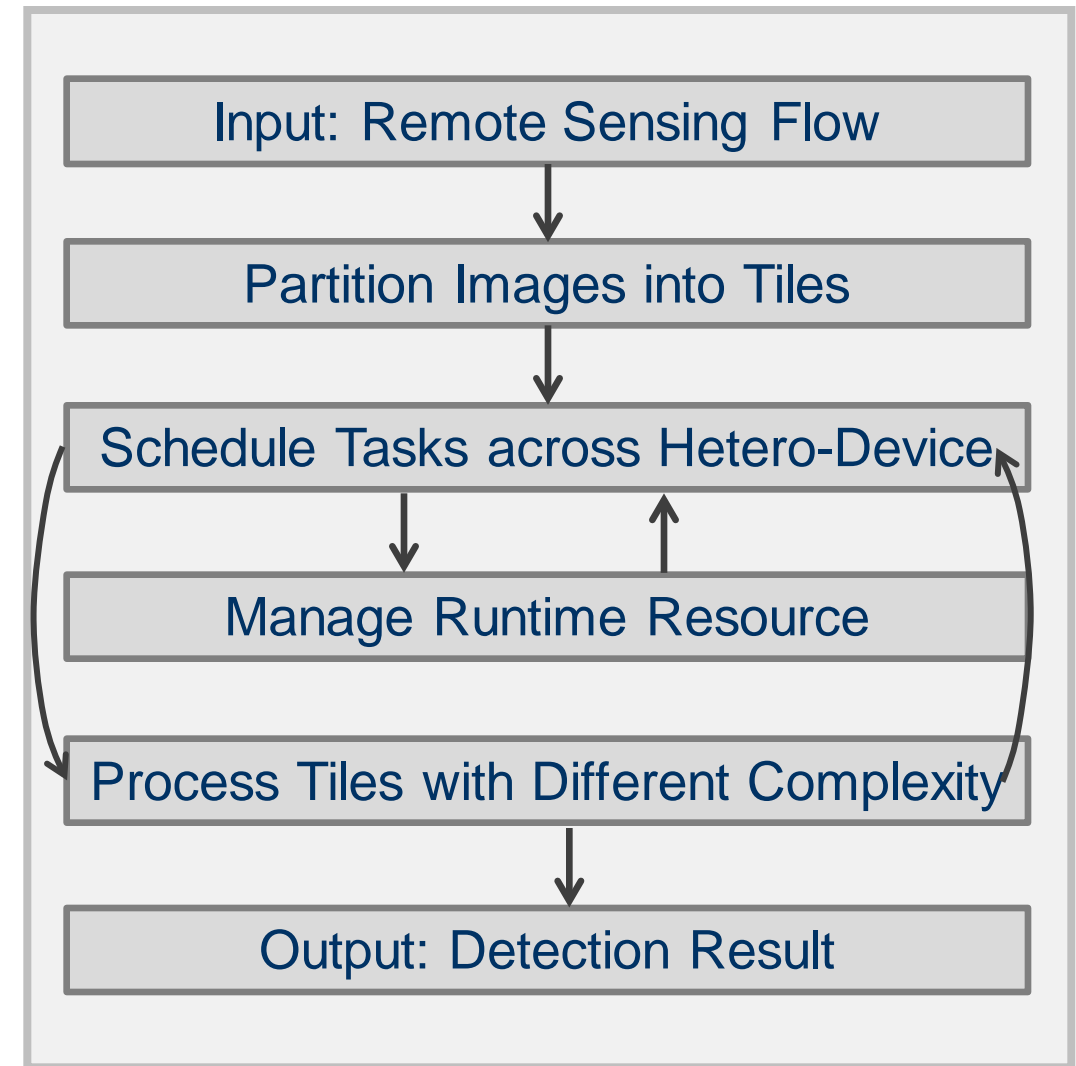
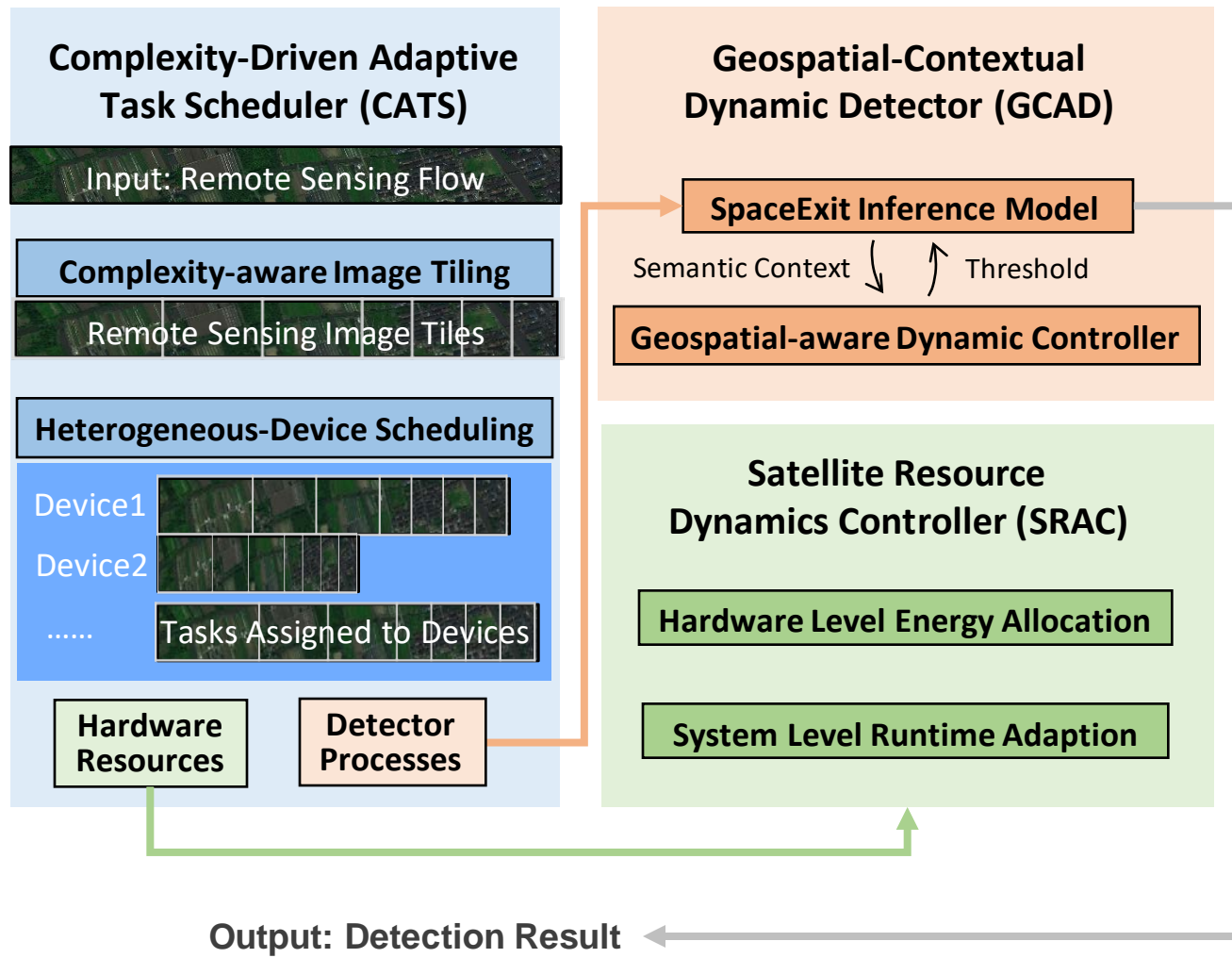


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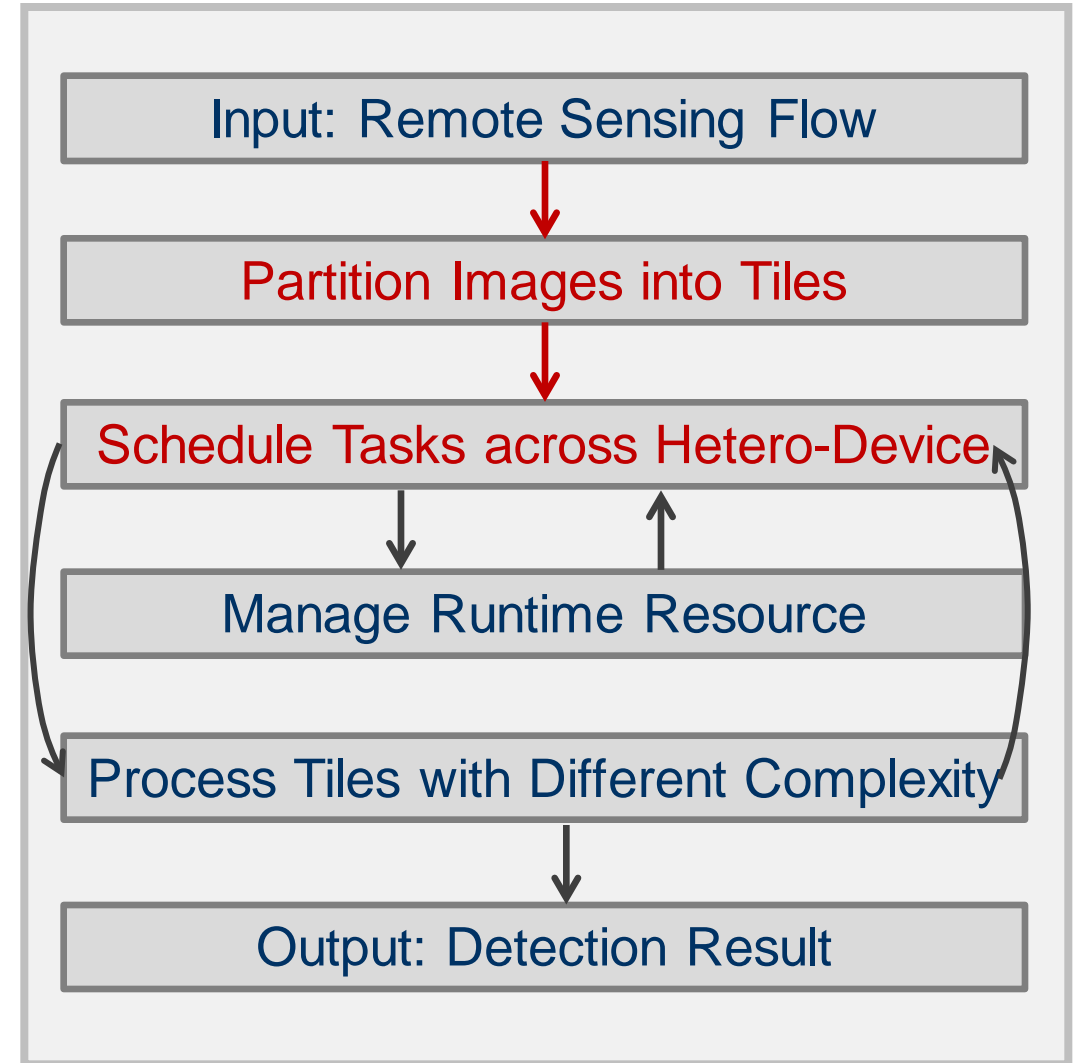
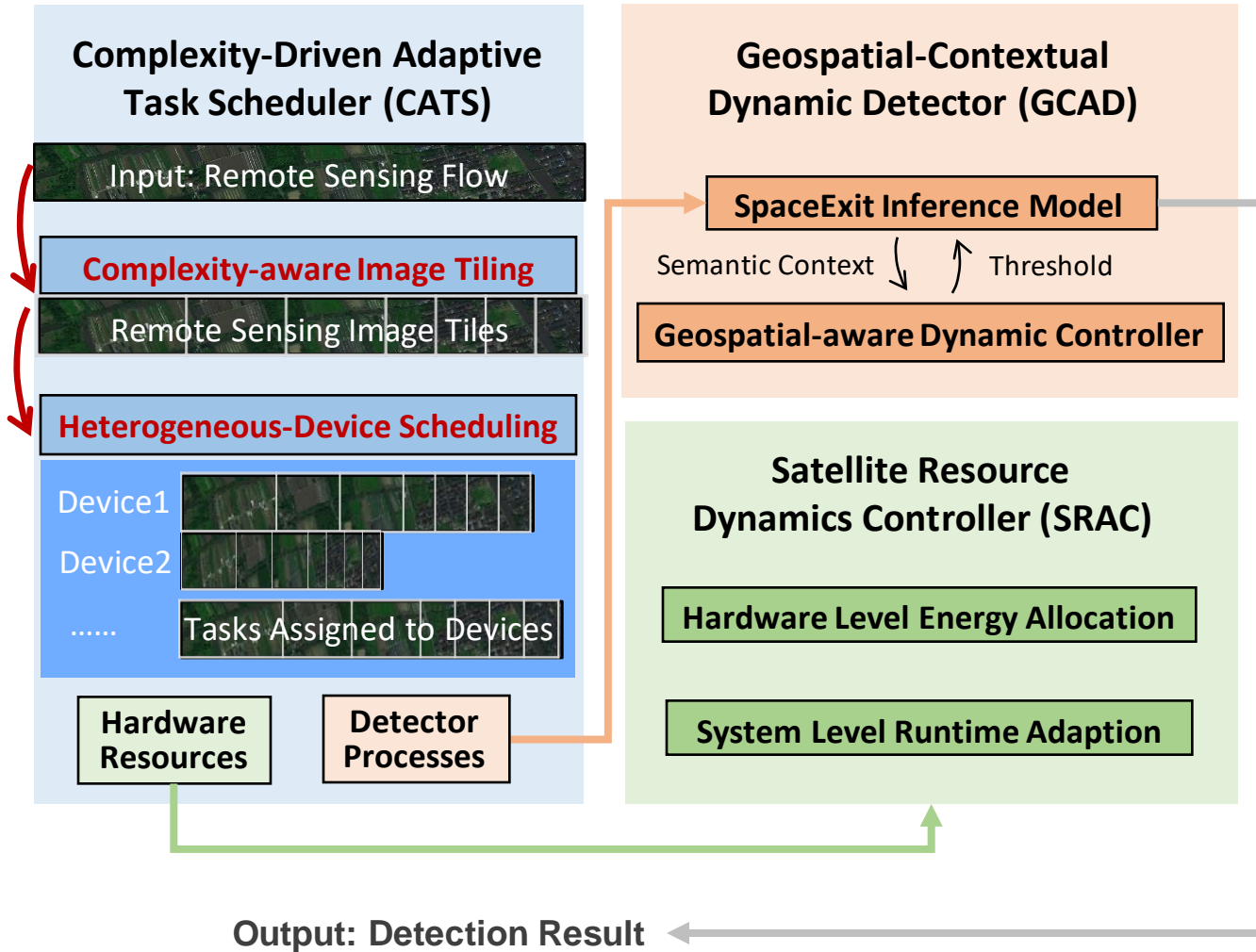


SpaceExit: Detailed Working Steps



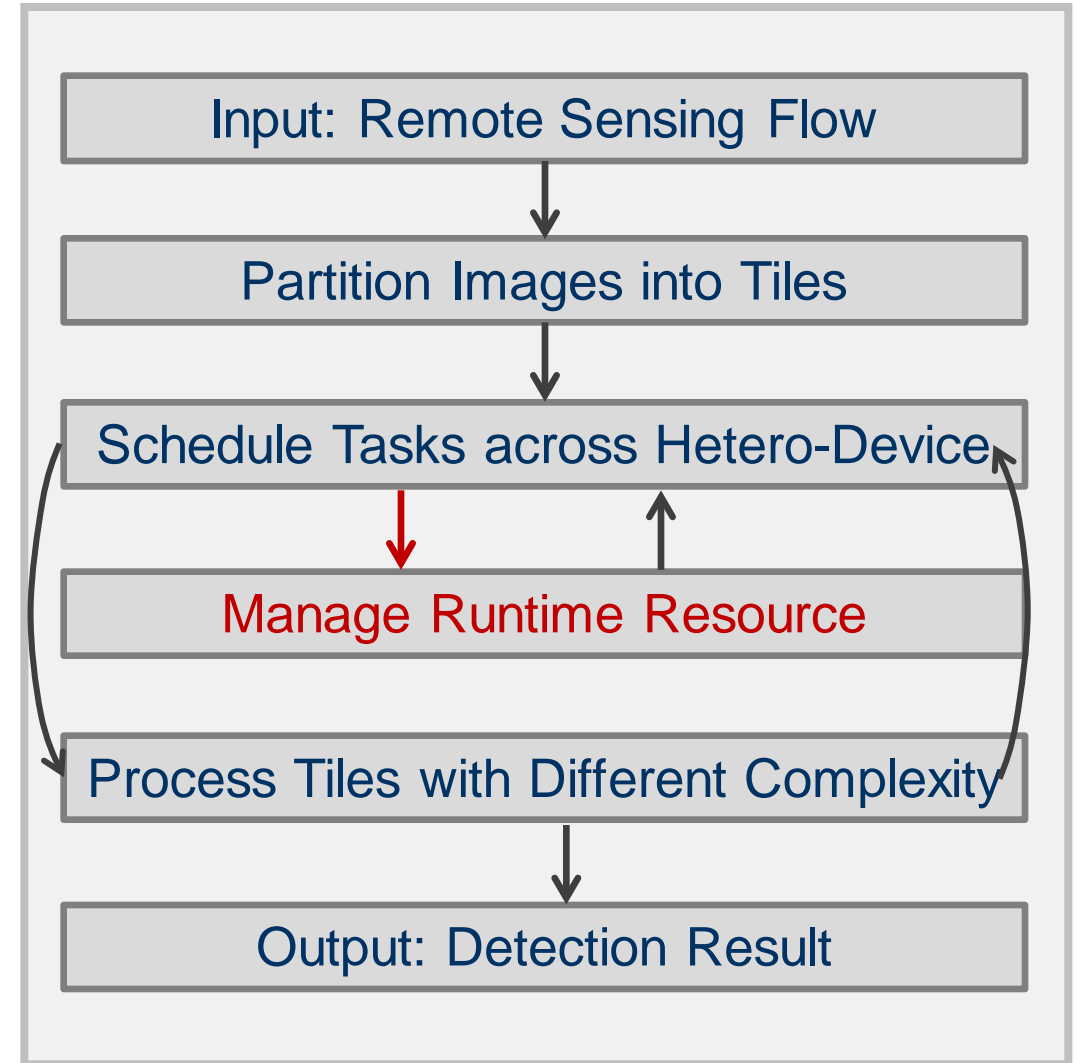
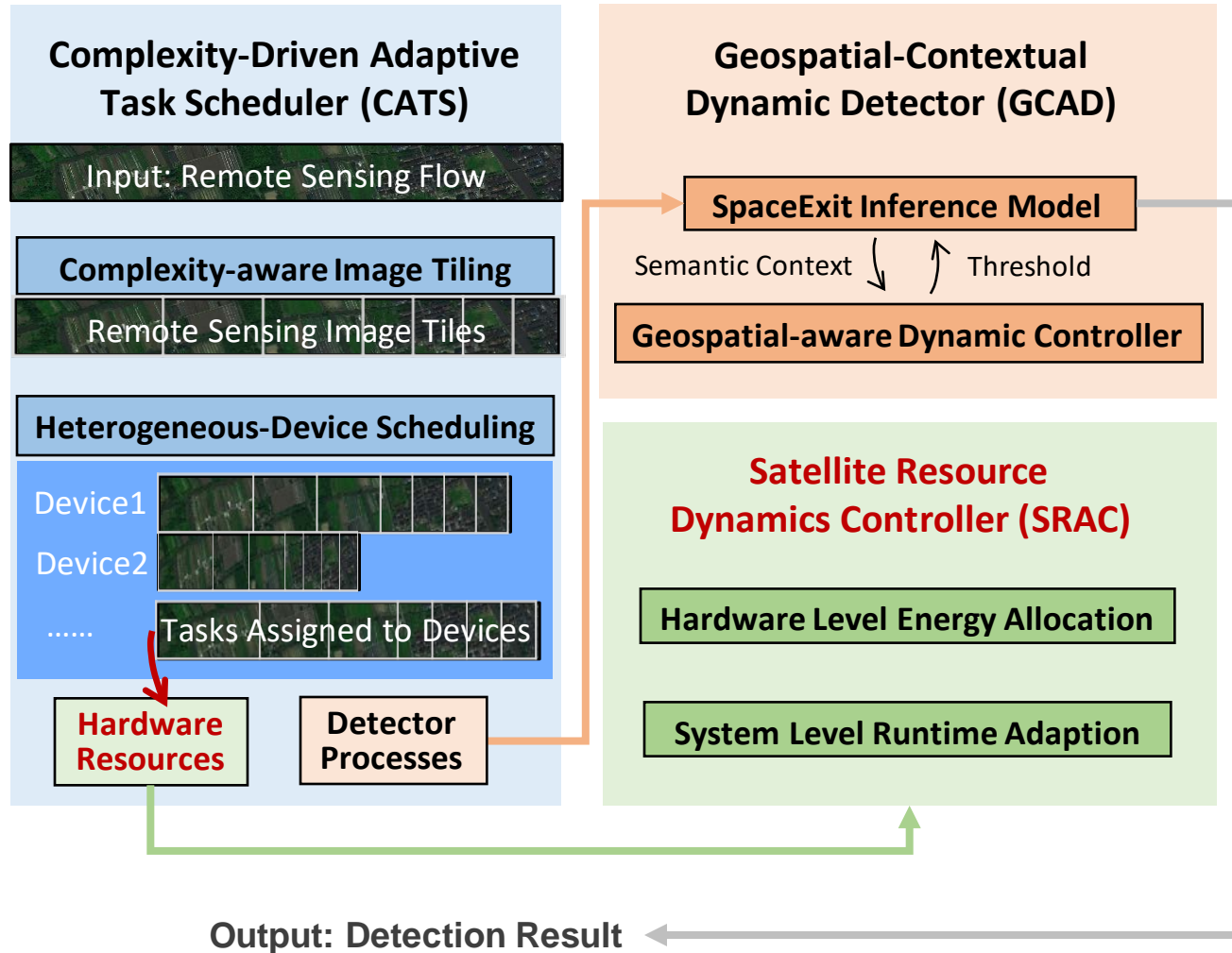


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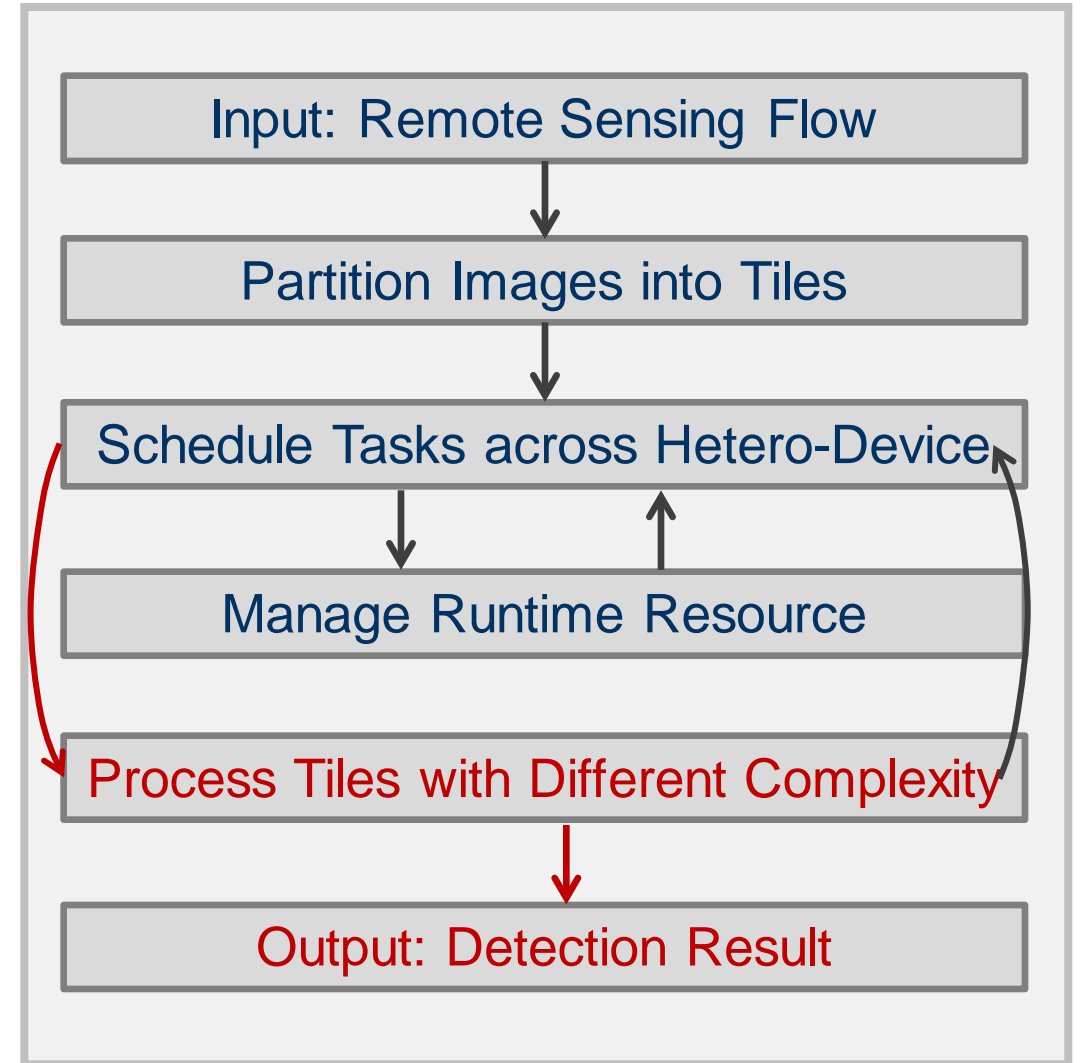
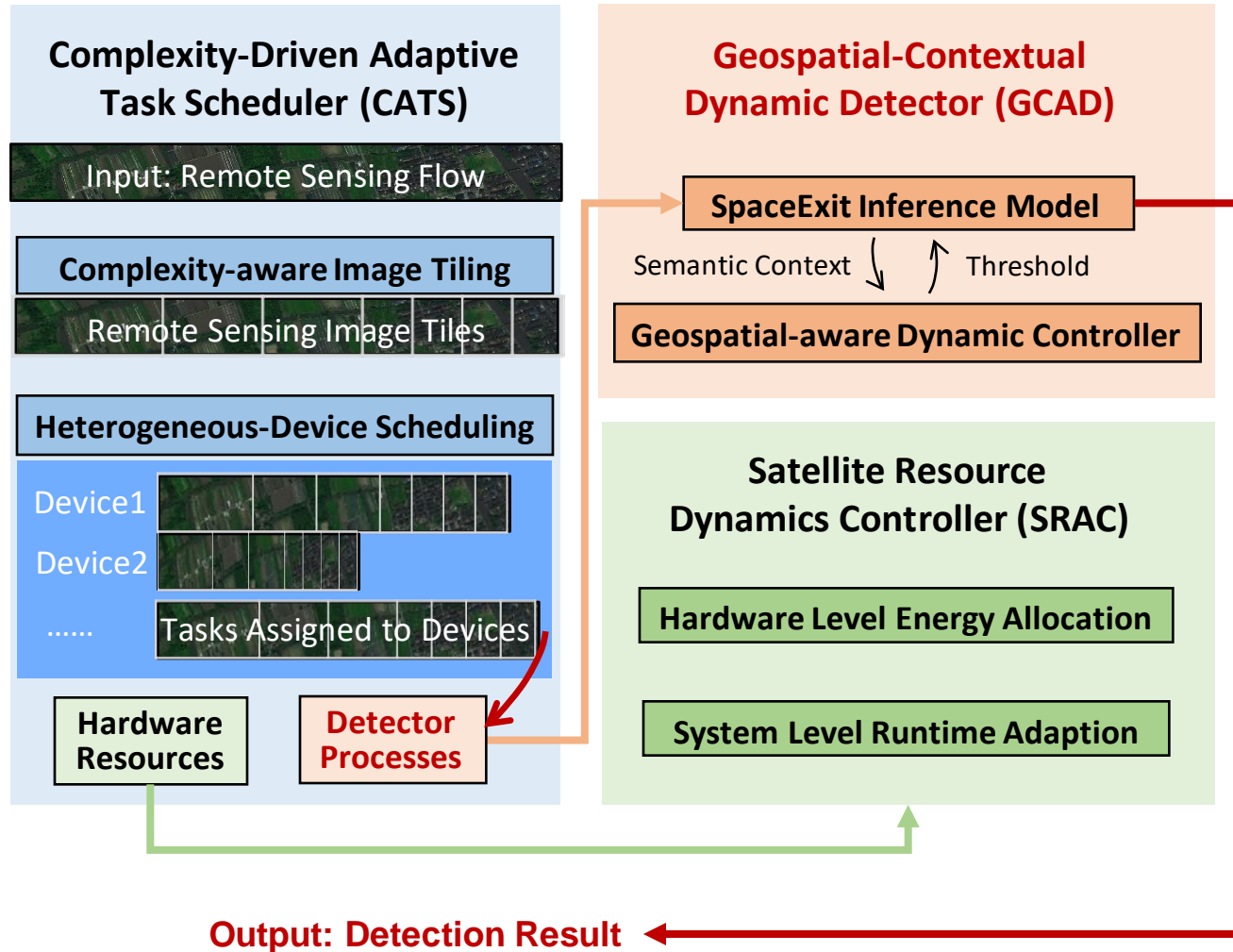


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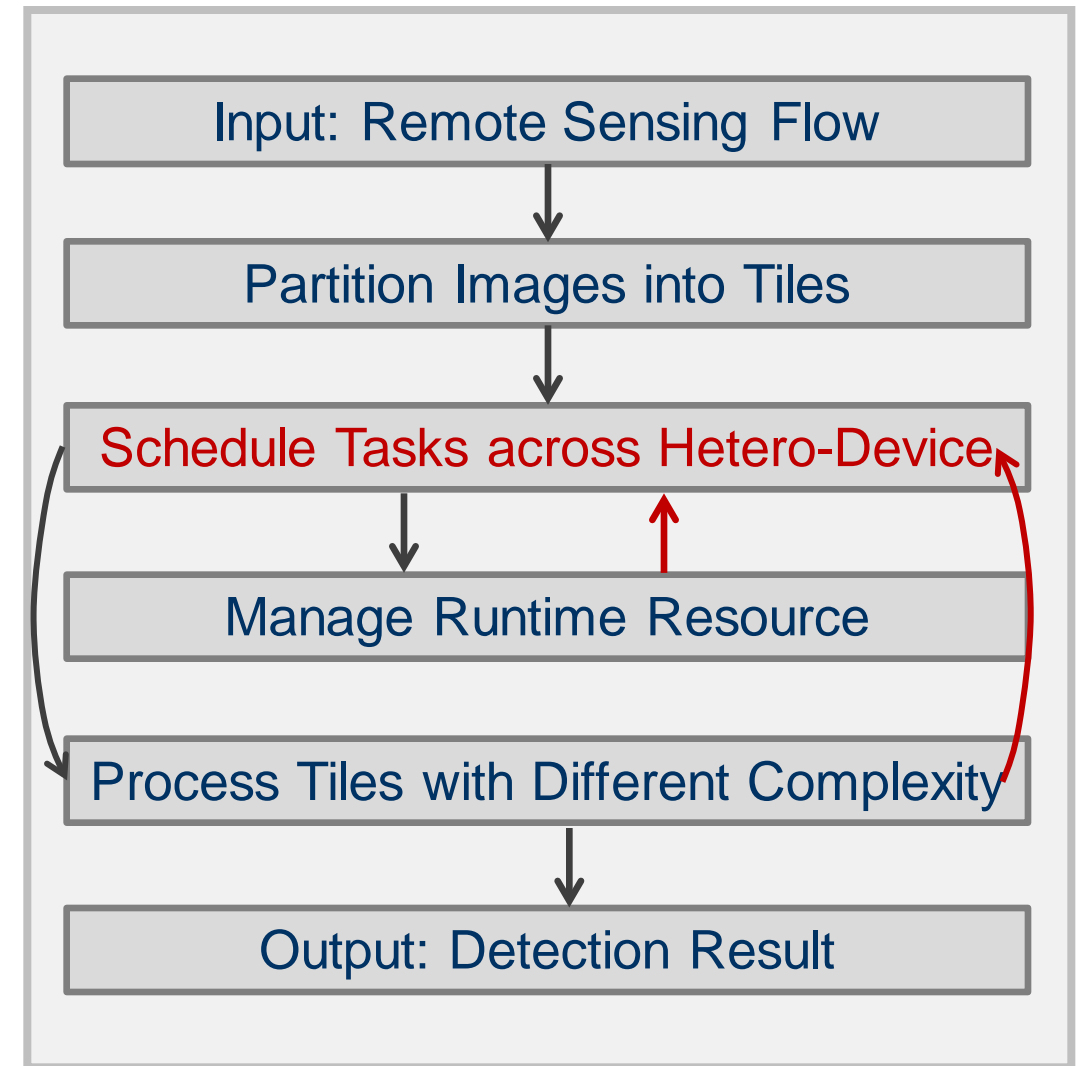
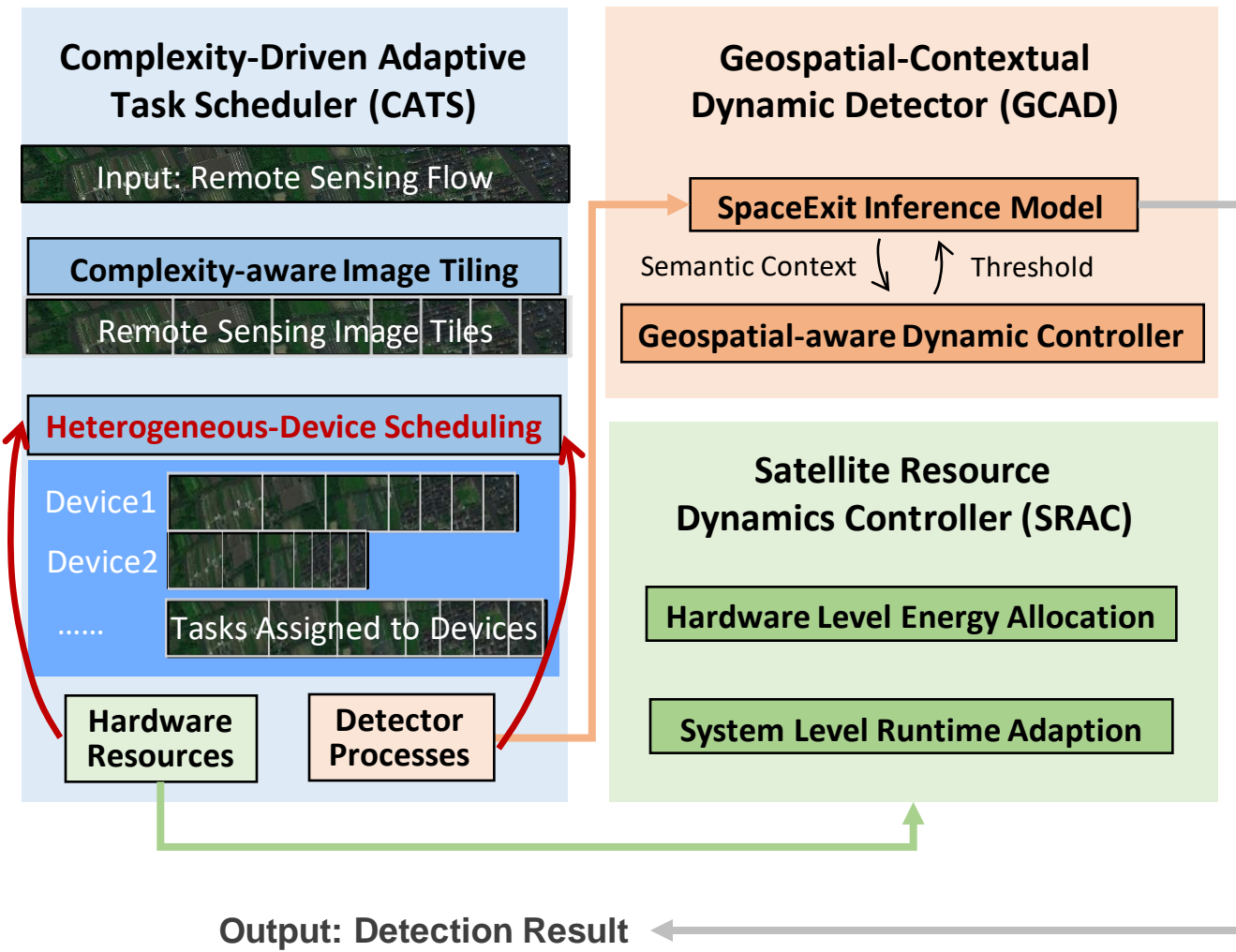


SpaceExit: Detailed Working Steps





SpaceExit: Detailed Working Steps





Dataset, Baseline and Configurations in Experiment

Dataset	Description
DOTA	Satellite dataset for object detection

Baseline	Description
BentPipe ^[1]	Traditional ground-centric approach
SpaceOnly ^[1]	Performs all computations onboard
Kodan ^[2]	Leverages specialized models selected based on prior knowledge
TargetFuse ^[3]	Combines adaptive tiling, object clustering, and bandwidth scheduling

Config	Hardware Set	Bandwidth
Config1	Jetson Xavier NX+ Jetson Nano	100Mbps
Config2	Jetson Xavier NX×2	100Mbps
Config3	Jetson Nano×2	100Mbps
Config4	Jetson Xavier NX+ Jetson Nano	10Mbps
Config5	Jetson Xavier NX×2	10Mbps
Config6	Jetson Nano×2	10Mbps

SpaceExit is Evaluated in Various Configurations

[1] Bradley Denby et al. ASPLOS, 2020

[2] Bradley Denby et al. ASPLOS, 2023.

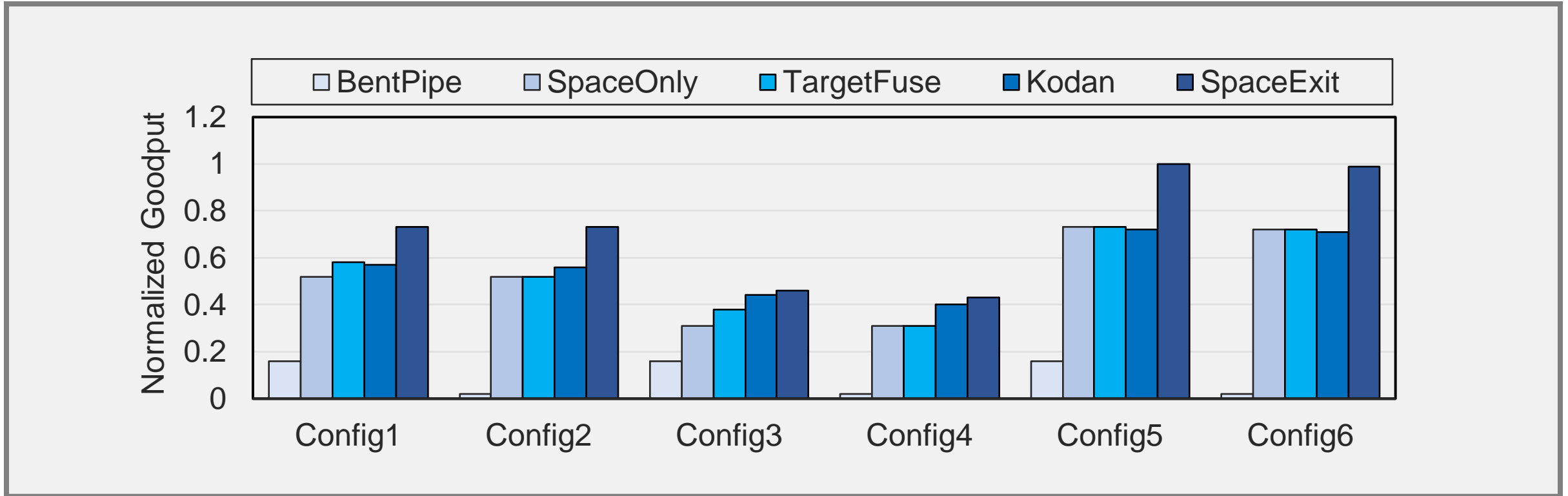
[3] Qiyang Zhang et al. INFOCOM, 2024.



Experiment: Goodput Evaluation



Comparative Evaluation of Goodput: SpaceExit and Baselines



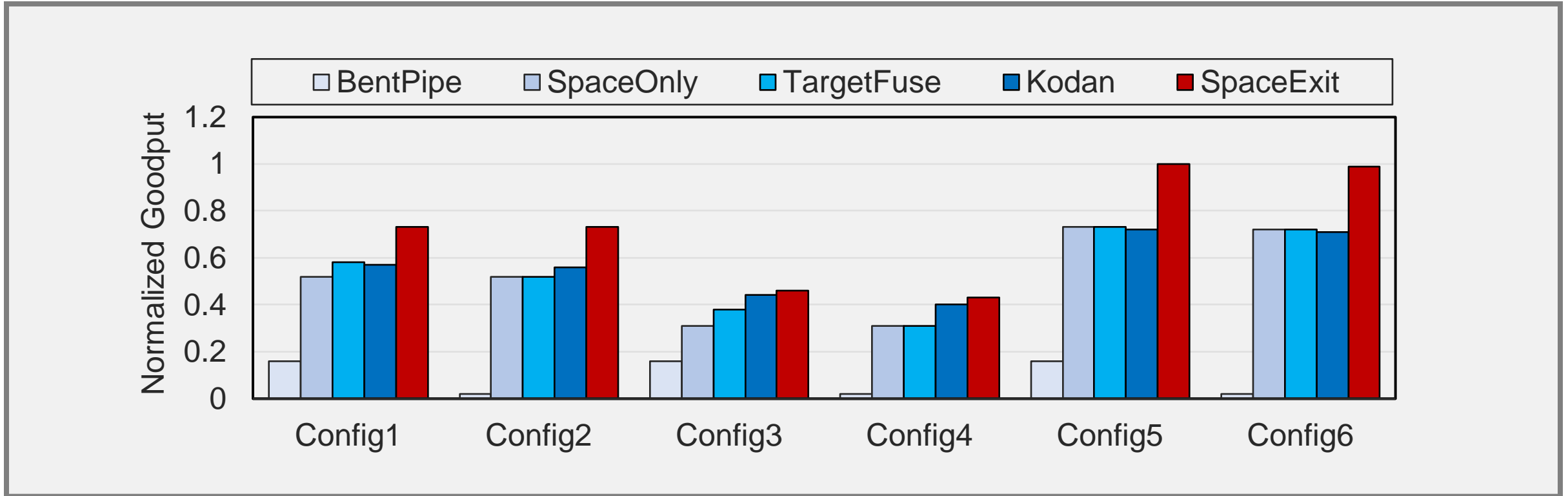
SpaceExit Improves Goodput(5.2%~37.6%) in All Configuration



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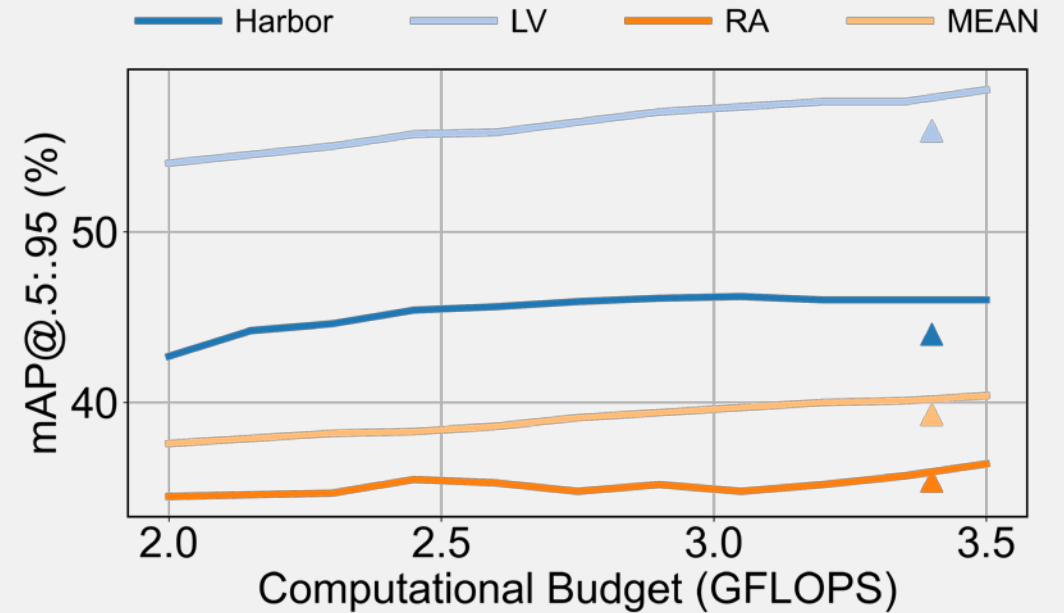


Experiment: mAP Evaluation



mAP Comparison: Static Methods vs. GCAD

Class	Static		GCAD	
	mAP@.5	mAP@.5:.95	mAP@.5	mAP@.5:.95
Plane	0.911	0.643	0.918	0.666
Ship	0.866	0.577	0.872	0.598
ST	0.732	0.427	0.764	0.464
Harbor	0.815	0.440	0.836	0.460
LV	0.800	0.559	0.814	0.583
...
MEAN	0.635	0.394	0.640	0.404



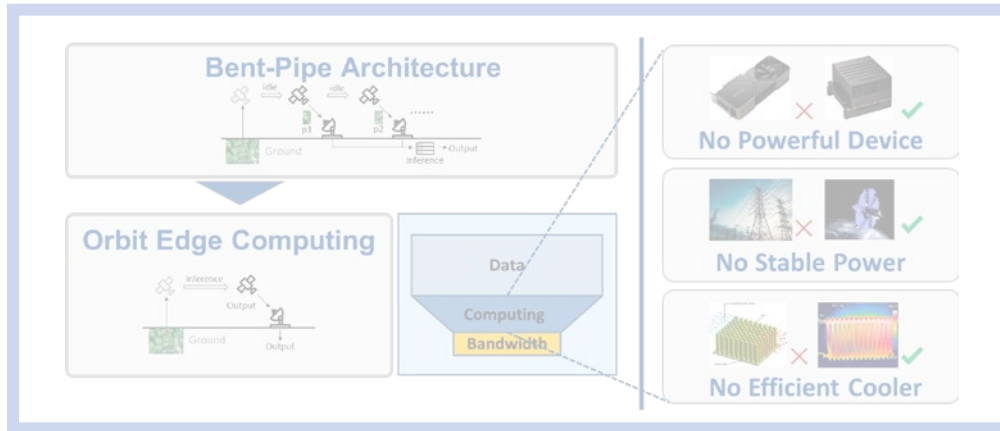
GCAD Outperforms Static Methods & Supports Flexible Compute



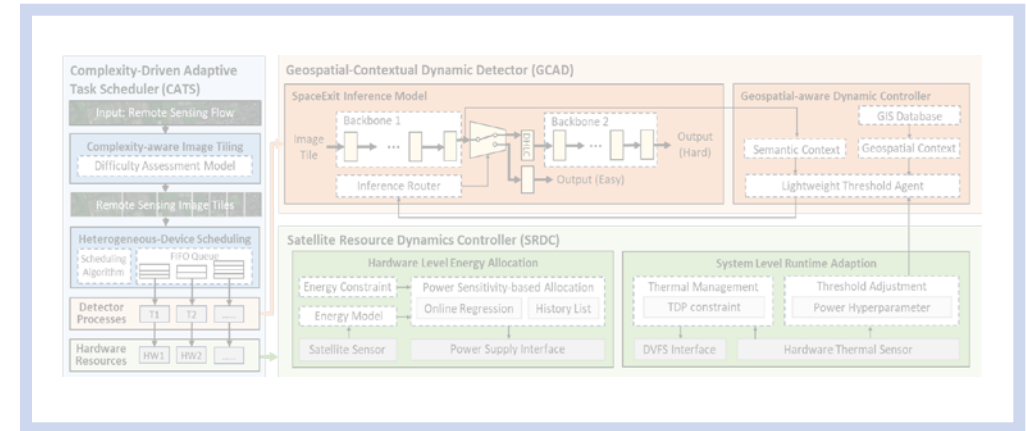
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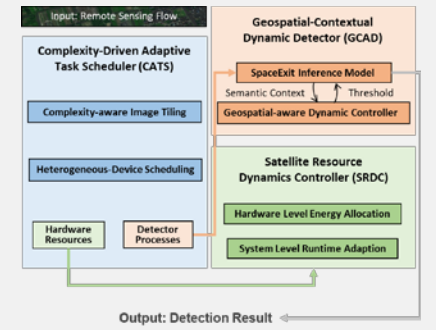
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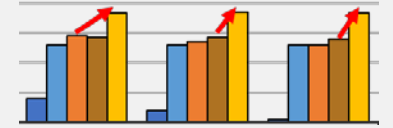
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- Our evaluations across diverse satellite settings demonstrate that SpaceExit significantly **outperforms existing methods**.



- SpaceExit enhances Earth observation constellations' data delivery capacity, strengthening their role as **platforms for diverse applications**.



Available on Github: <https://github.com/zhuxz0299/ATC-artifact-submission>

Thank You! Q & A

SpaceExit: Enabling Efficient Adaptive Computing in Space with Early Exits

Discussion: Dr. Jiacheng Liu, liujiacheng@ieee.org

Xiaozhi Zhu (presenter), zhuxiaozhi@sjtu.edu.cn

Dr. Xiaofeng Hou, hou-xf@cs.sjtu.edu.cn



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