Microkernel Construction

Capabilities

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Outline

- Introduction
  - Global Names
  - ACL
- Capabilities in General
- Capabilities in NOVA

Motivation

- How do you find/access resources?
- How do you restrict access to resources?

Global Names

- One global namespace for (one type of) resources
- Example: semaphores, processes, devices, . . . on UNIX

Pros & Cons

+ Simple
− Name clashes: people need to agree on names.
− What if a malicious process registers a name first?
− All resources are visible: just try to access them

Access Control Lists

- Attach a list of permissions (subjects) to each object
- Permission depends on who you are, not what you have

Pros & Cons

+ No need to give permissions explicitly
+ Makes it easy to restrict access to specific objects
− Makes it hard to restrict specific subjects
− POLA is more difficult to achieve
− Requires global names
− Confused deputy problem

Confused Deputy Problem

- Compiler service: `compile <source> <object>`
- Service stores billing information in file “bill”
- Client executes: `compile foo bill`
- Service has access to bill file, client does not
- Problem: service is acting on behalf of the client, but opens files with *its own* permissions
- One solution: the client opens files and passes file descriptors (capabilities) to service

Outline

- Introduction
- Capabilities in General
    - Overview
    - Operations
- Capabilities in NOVA

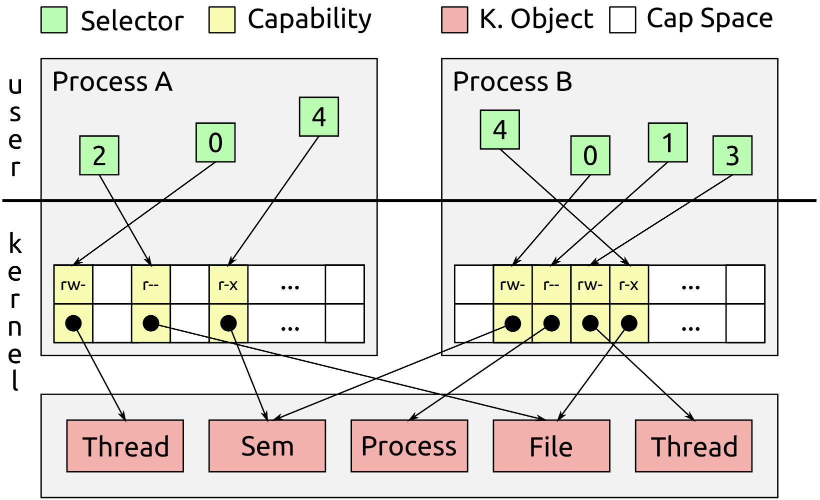
Capabilities

- Give each subject a local namespace
- Operations to exchange objects between namespaces
- Permission depends on what you have

Pros & Cons

+ Makes it easy to restrict specific subjects
+ Separation of subsystems, composable, independent
+ POLA is easy to achieve
– Need to give permissions explicitly
– Exchanging, especially revoking, capabilities is difficult

Overview

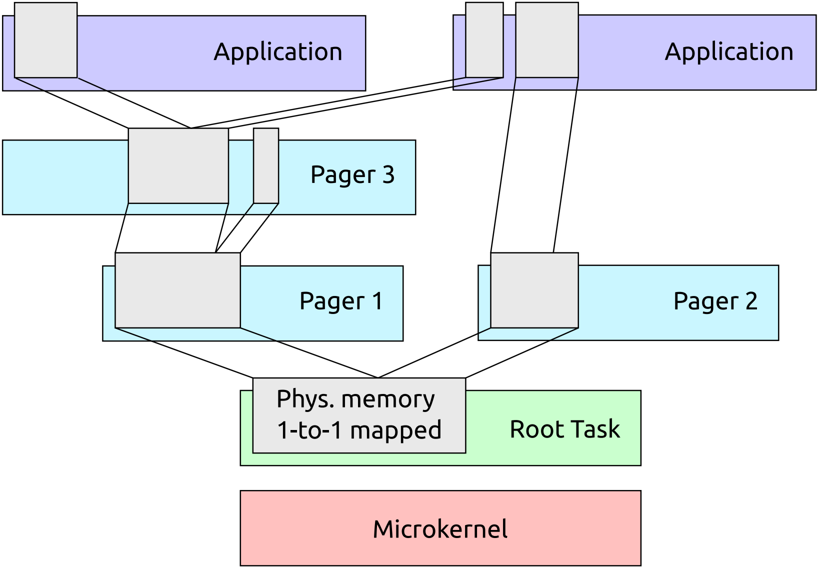


Selector
Capability
K. Object
Cap Space
user
kernel
Process A
2
0
4
rw-
r--
r-x
...
...
Process B
4
0
1
3
rw-
r--
rw-
r-x
...
...
Thread
Sem
Process
File
Thread

Operations

- Map/delegate:
  - Copy capability from one Cap Space to the other
- Grant:
  - Move capability from one Cap Space to the other
- Revoke:
  - Remove capability, recursively
- Lookup:
  - Search capability by selector and return its permissions
- Translate:
  - Translate selector from one Cap Space to the other

Hierarchical Organization



Outline

- Introduction
- Capabilities in General
- Capabilities in NOVA
    - Capability Spaces
    - Mapping Database
    - Delegate, Translate and Revoke
    - Data Types
    - Receive Windows

Capability Spaces

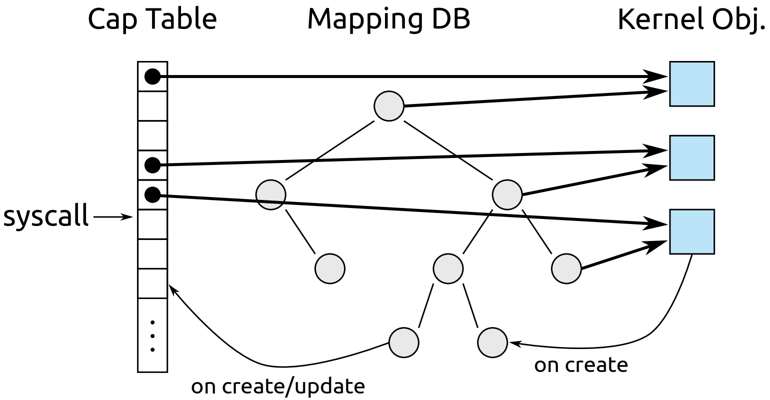
Each protection domain (Pd) has

- `Space_obj`: object capabilities
- `Space_mem`: memory capabilities (pages)
- `Space_pio`: I/O port capabilities

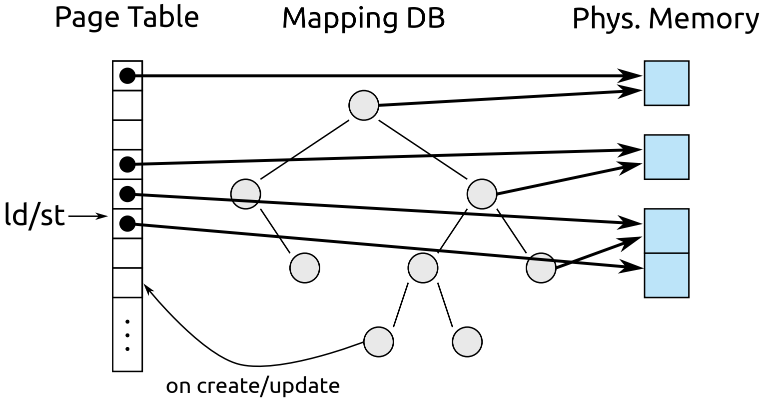
Similarities and differences

- Shared: capability delegation, revocation, ...
- Differences:
  - Object caps are created and used via system calls
  - Port and memory caps are referring to existing resources
  - Passed to root task, distributed in the system via delegation
  - Memory capabilities lead to page table entries
  - Port capabilities lead to bits set in the I/O bitmap

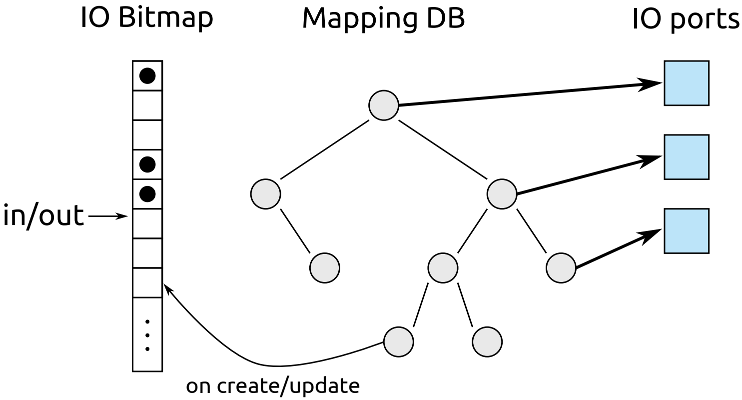
Object Capability Space



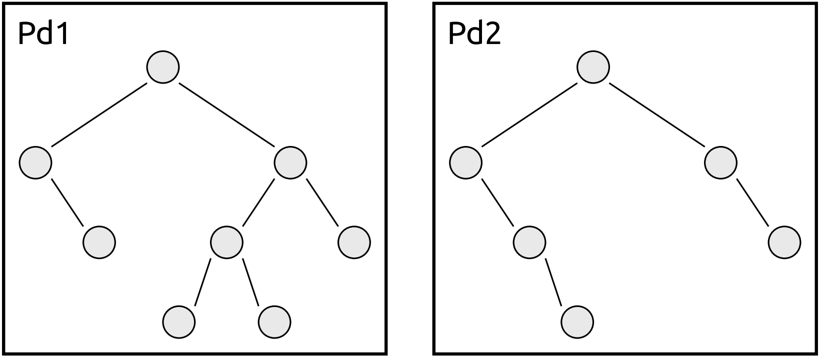
Memory Capability Space



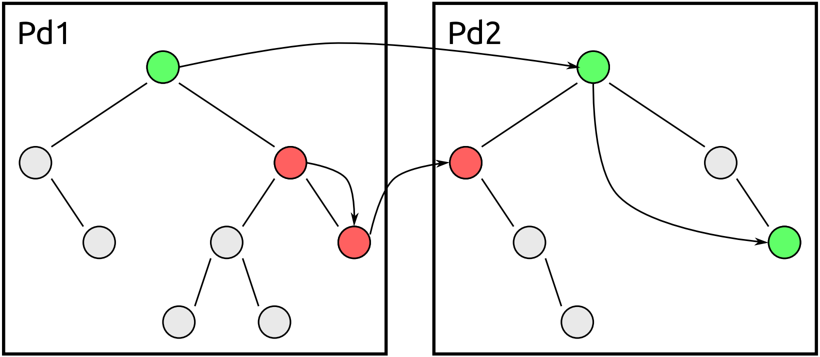
I/O Capability Space



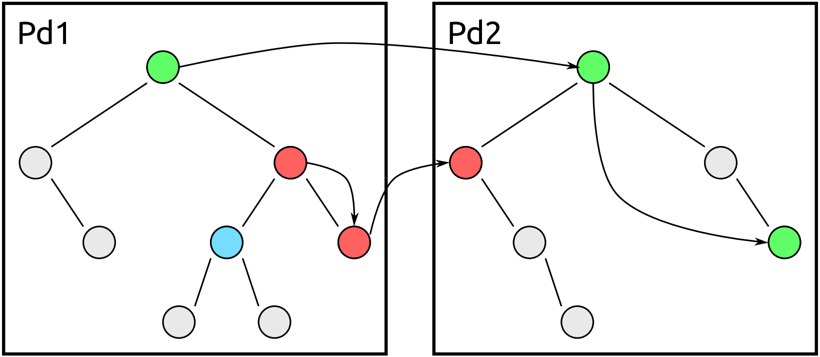
Mapping Database



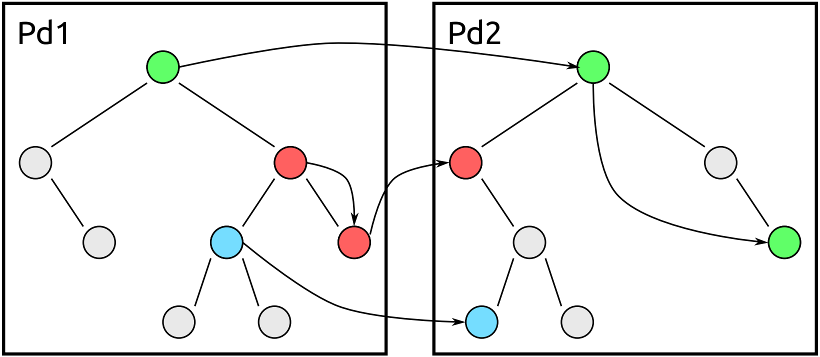
Mapping Database



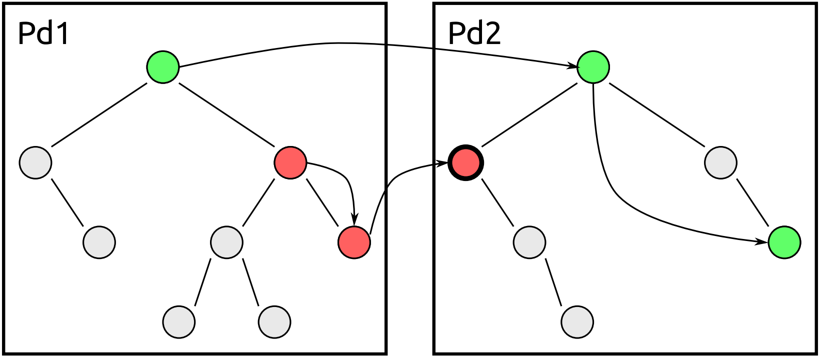
Mapping Database – Delegate



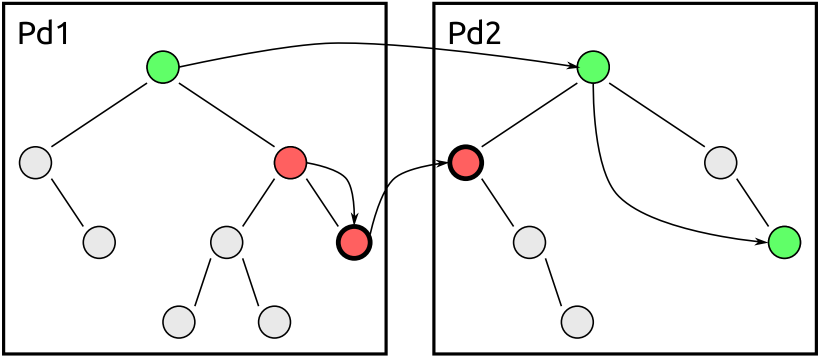
Mapping Database – Delegate



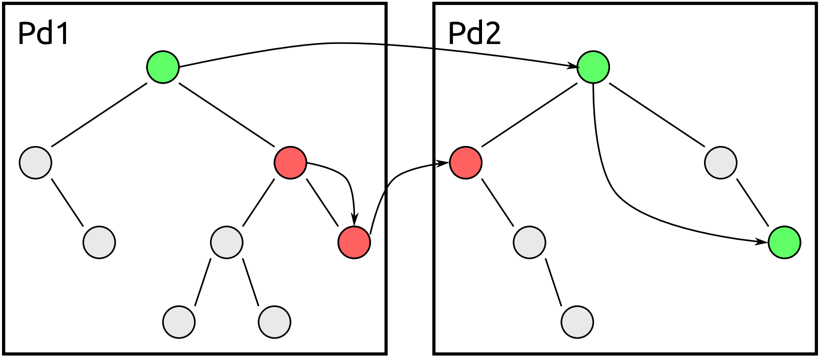
Mapping Database – Translate



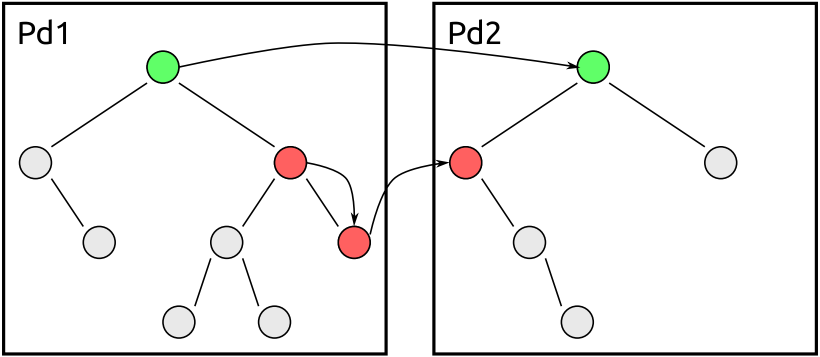
Mapping Database – Translate



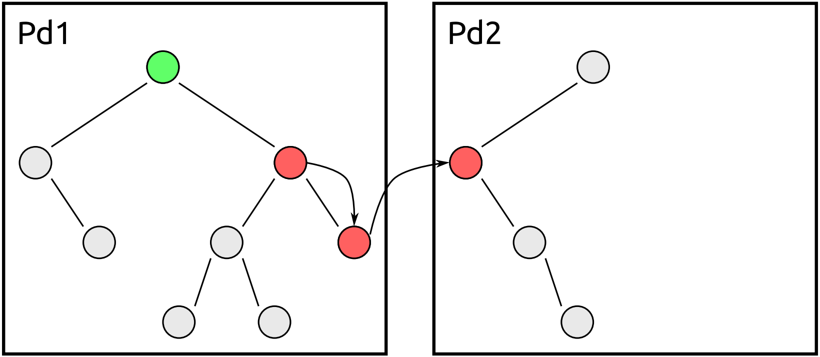
Mapping Database – Revoke



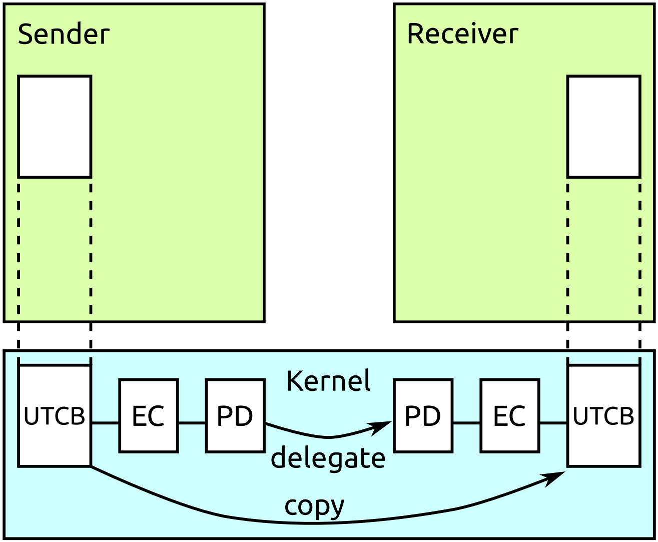
Mapping Database – Revoke



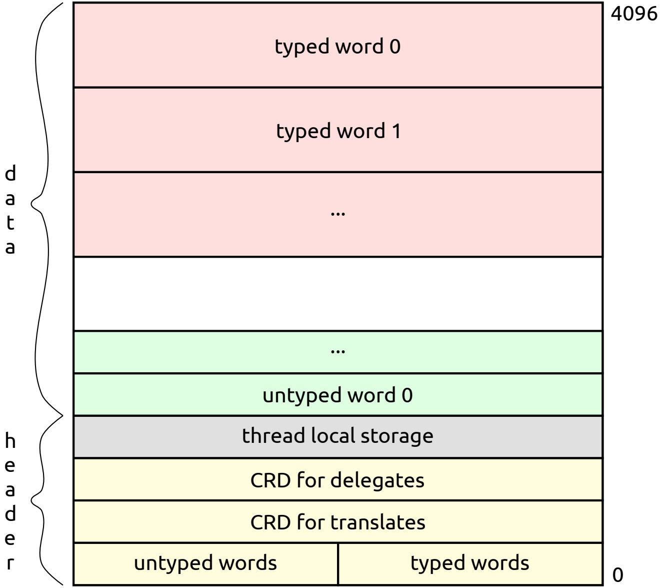
Mapping Database – Revoke



IPC with Delegate

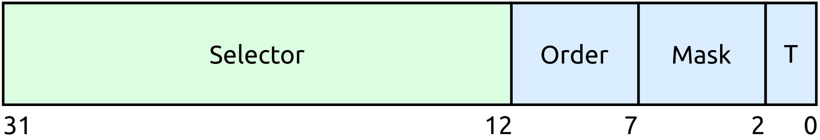


UTCB Layout



4096
typed word 0
typed word 1
...
...
untyped word 0
thread local storage
CRD for delegates
CRD for translates
untyped words
typed words
0
data
header

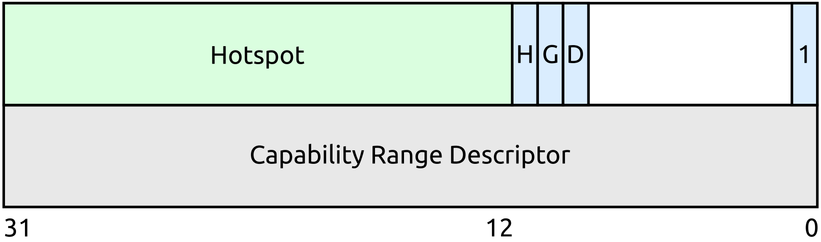
Capability Range Descriptor



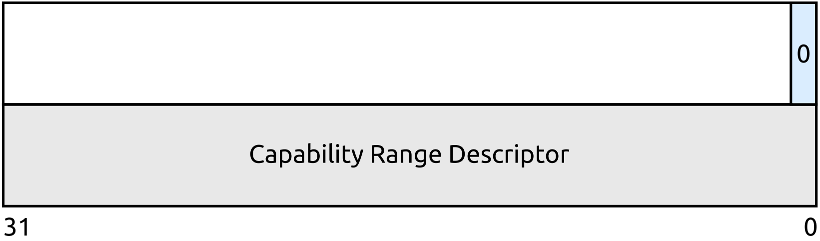
- Order specifies the number of capabilities (2^{order})
- Selector specifies the first capability
- Selector has to be size aligned, i.e., a multiple of 2^{order}
- **wrong**: order=2, selector=6, okay: order=2, selector=8
- Mask allows to reduce permissions
- T specifies capability space (objects, memory, I/O)

Typed Words

Delegate:



Translate:



Capability Delegation: Order of Events

- Receiver sets up receive window (writes CRD into UTCB)
- Receivers waits for IPC
- Sender puts typed item into UTCB
- Sender calls portal
- Kernel delegates typed item
- Kernel puts typed item into UTCB, telling receiver about caps
- Kernel switches to receiver
- But: what if receive window and sent caps don't match?

Matching Send and Receive Window (1)

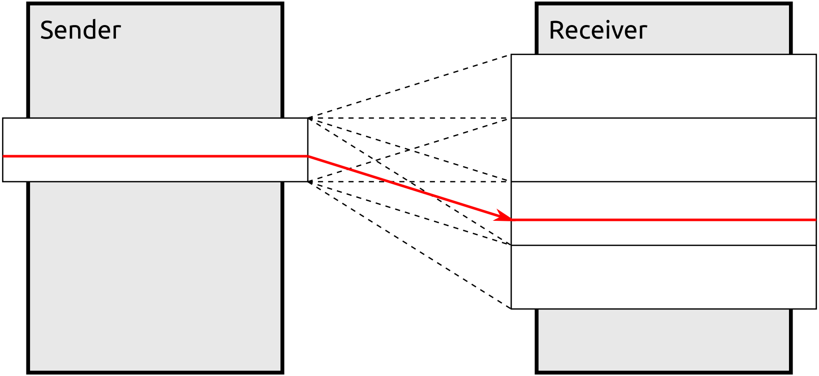


Figure: Send window is smaller than receive window

Matching Send and Receive Window (2)

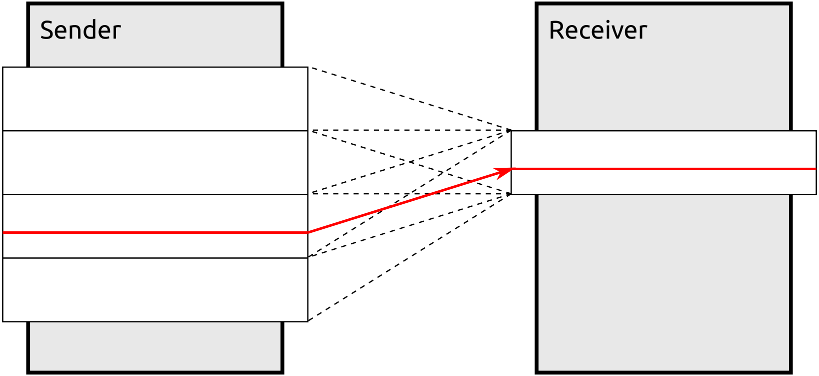


Figure: Send window is larger than receive window

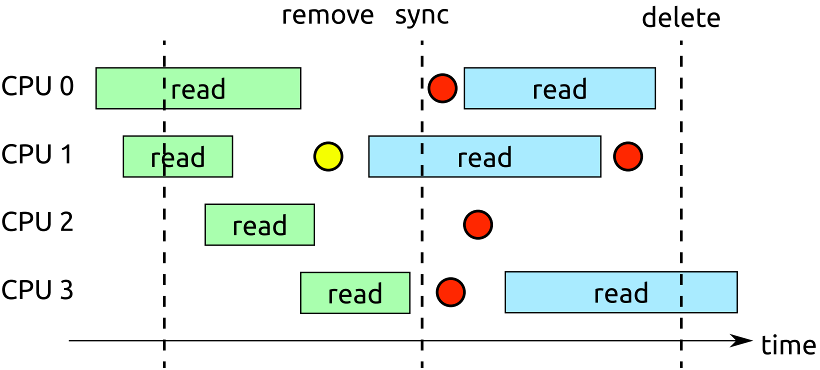
Deleting Mapping DB Nodes and Kernel Objects

- When revoking, kernel objects should be destructed
- But what if somebody accesses them at the same time?
- We could lock them during each access
- But this is expensive
- We don't care that much when exactly they are destructed
- Can't we destruct them if nobody accesses them anymore?

Read-Copy-Update

- Basically: copy-on-write with lazy delete
- Don't change objects, but copy them and change the copy
- Don't delete objects immediately, but when readers are done
- In case of NOVA: no copy-on-write, but only lazy delete
- On revoke, object is removed first
- Then, the object is registered for deletion
- Timer IRQ is used to delete only if all readers are gone

RCU Grace Period



Next Weeks

- 28th June: L4Re
- 5th July: M3
- 12th July: Escape