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# *Not so random RLC AL-FEC codes*

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IETF88, NWCRG meeting  
Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Vancouver

## **Note well**

- **we, authors, didn't try to patent** any of the material included in this presentation
- if you believe some aspects may infringe IPR you are aware of, then fill in an IPR disclosure and please, let us know

<http://irtf.org/ipr>

# Motivations and goals

# Motivations

- RLC are naturally random
  - encoding vectors on a given Finite Field (FF) are random
  - it's easy, efficient, and enables coding *inside the net*
- but there are incentives to have “structured” codes
  - sparse codes are **faster** to encode/decode
    - an order of magnitude difference, because:
      - fewer XOR and/or FF symbol operations
      - fast Iterative (IT) decoding works better
  - certain **structures** are extremely **efficient**
    - e.g., LDPC-Staircase [RFC5170] [WiMob13]
    - e.g., irregular LDPC codes perform the best with IT decoding

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[WiMob13] V. Roca, M. Cunche, C. Thienot, J. Detchart, J. Lacan, “**RS + LDPC-Staircase Codes for the Erasure Channel: Standards, Usage and Performance**”, IEEE 9th Int. Conf. on Wireless and Mobile Computing, Networking and Communications (WiMob), October 2013.

<http://hal.inria.fr/hal-00850118/en/>

# Goals of this work

- design codes that:
  - can be used as **sliding/elastic encoding window** (A.K.A. convolutional) and **block** codes
    - there are use-cases for each approach
  - can be used with encoding window/block sizes in **2-10,000s symbols** range
    - very large sizes are beneficial to bulk file transfers while small values are useful for real-time contents
  - can be used as **small-rate** codes
    - can generate a large number of repair symbols
      - even if it's rarely useful (e.g. it was not a selection criteria for 3GPP-MBMS [WiMob13]), it also simplifies performance evaluations 😊

## Goals of this work... (cont')

- have excellent erasure recovery **performance**
  - often a **complexity versus performance tradeoff**
  - it's good to be able to adjust it on a per use-case basis
- enable **fast** encoding and decoding
  - sender and/or receiver can be an embedded device
- enable **compact and robust signaling**
  - transmitting the full encoding vector does not scale
  - prefer the use of a function that, as a function of a key lists the symbols that are considered
    - can be a PRNG + seed
    - can be a table + index
    - the function is known to both ends and the (e.g., 32-bit) key is carried in the packet header

## Goals of this work... (cont')

- focus **only** on use-cases that require **end-to-end encoding**
  - “end” means either “host” or “middlebox”, it’s the same
    - there’s a single point for **AL-FEC encoding/decoding**
  - because it simplifies signaling and code design
    - **intermediate node re-encoding requires having the symbols encoding vectors which does not scale**
  - sure, it’s a subset of NWCRG candidate use-cases
    - e.g., it’s well suited to Tetrys
      - <http://www.ietf.org/proceedings/86/slides/slides-86-nwcrg-1.pdf>
    - but also to **FLUTE/ALC, FCAST/ALC, FCAST/NORM, FECFRAME** protocols



# Our proposal

# Experimental results of this presentation...

- ...use our <http://openfec.org> open-source project
  - Uses a mixture of [CeCILL\(-C\)](#) (GPL and LGPL like), “BSD like” licenses

OpenFEC.org

because open, free AL-FEC codes and codecs matter

- for the moment we've integrated Kodo RLC lib...
  - ...but we'll get rid of it ASAP
    - because STEINWURF research license is not compatible with our goal of free, reusable software in any context, commercial or not
- all measurements are made in **block mode**
  - because it's the way our <http://openfec.org> tools work...
    - ... but we'll update it

# Idea 1: mix binary and non-binary

- mix binary and non binary
  - most equations are **sparse** and coefficients **binary**
  - a limited number of columns are **heavy**
    - dense binary columns ← not considered in the remaining
    - dense non-binary columns (e.g., with coeff. on  $\text{GF}(2^8)$ )
- there are good reasons for that:
  - sparseness is a key for high encoding/decoding speeds
  - density/non binary are good for recovery performances
  - gathering dense coefficients in columns (i.e. to certain symbols) is a key for high speed decoding [WiMob13]

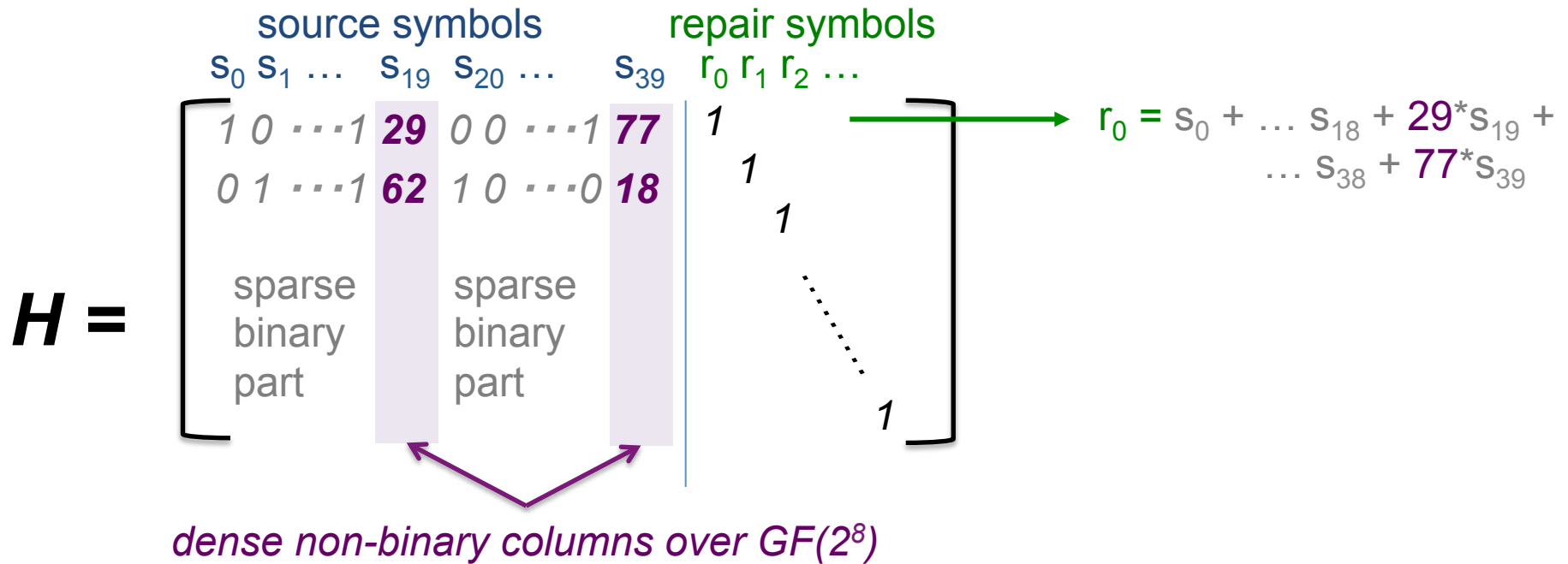
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[WiMob13] V. Roca, M. Cunche, C. Thienot, J. Detchart, J. Lacan, “**RS + LDPC-Staircase Codes for the Erasure Channel: Standards, Usage and Performance**”, IEEE 9th Int. Conf. on Wireless and Mobile Computing, Networking and Communications (WiMob), October 2013.

<http://hal.inria.fr/hal-00850118/en/>

# Idea 1: mix bin and non-bin... (cont')

- block code example
  - (sparse + non-bin. columns) only



# Idea 1: mix bin and non-bin... (cont')

- convolutional code example

- (sparse + non-bin. columns) only

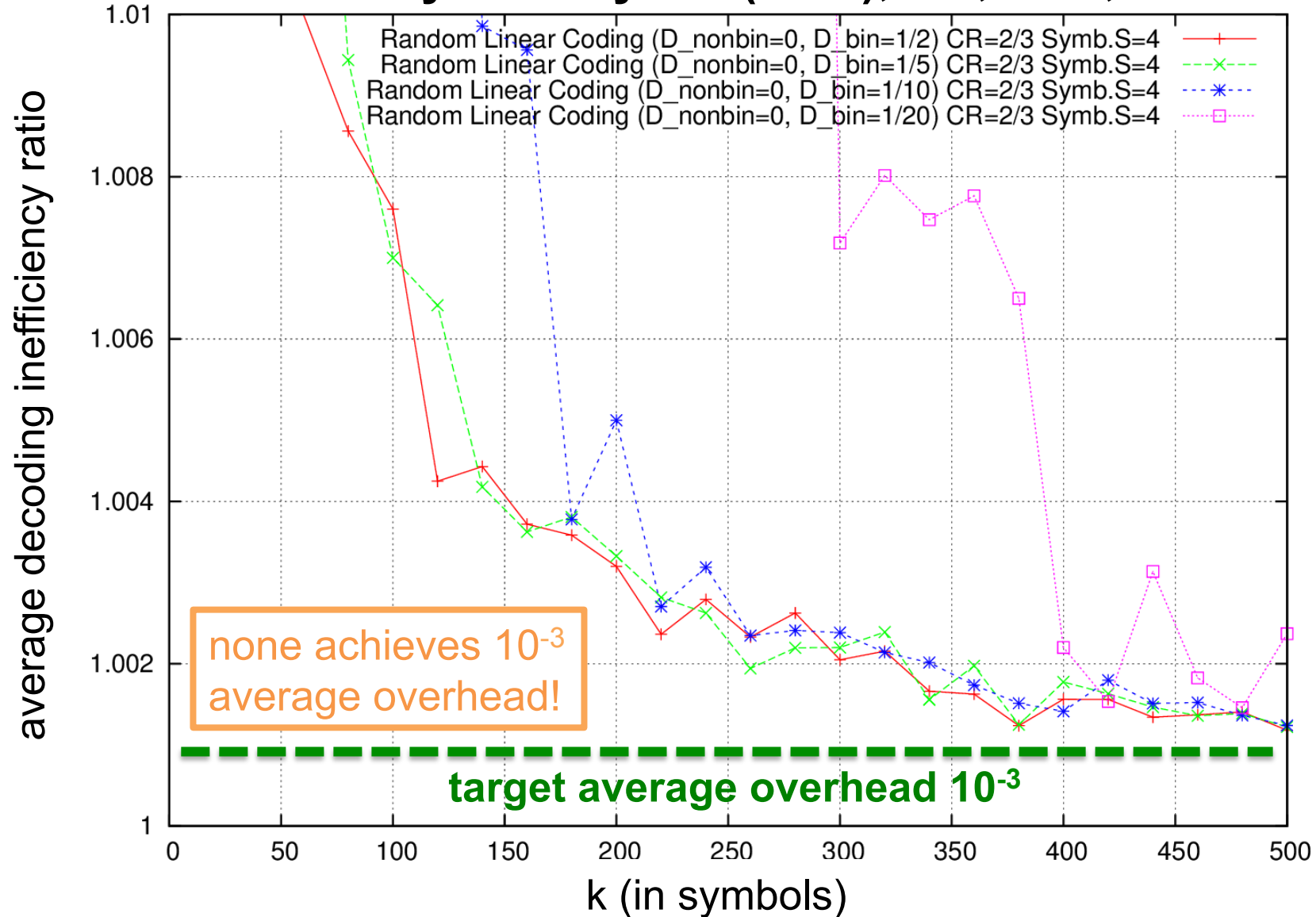
```
/* r points to repair symbol to build */
memset(r, 0, pkt_sz);
for (each source symbol s in current encoding window)
    if (s identifier % (1/D_nonbin) == 0)
        /* non binary column */
        choose a non-bin coefficient, c;
        r ^= c * s;
    else
        /* binary part */
        do r ^= s with probability D_bin
```

- NB:

- it's the same except that the encoding windows moves over the source symbol flow (convolutional mode) instead of being fixed (block mode)

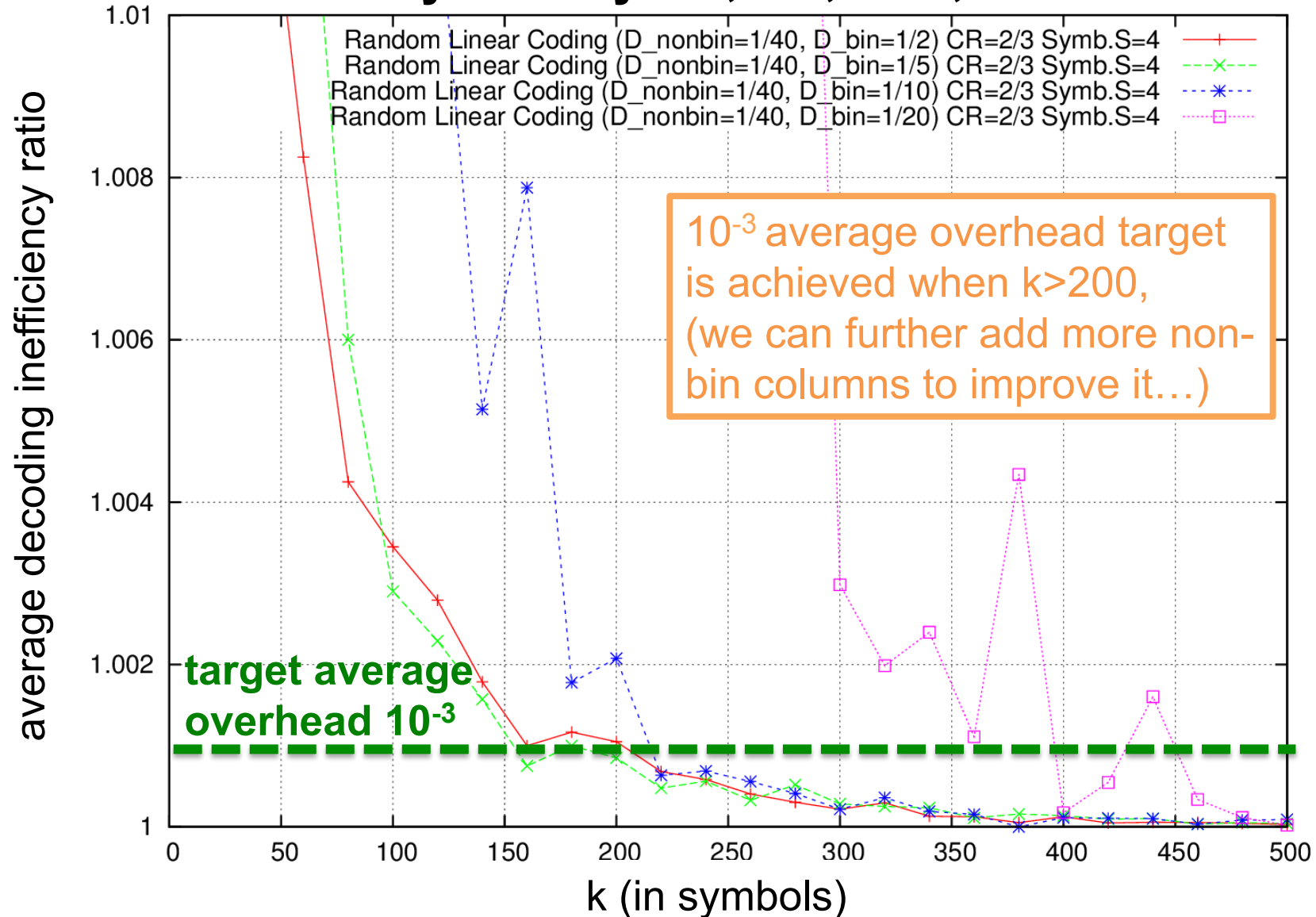
# On the usefulness of non-bin columns

Test 1: **no** dense non-binary column  
binary density 1/2 (RLC), 1/5, 1/10, 1/20



# On the usefulness of non-bin cols... (cont')

Test 2: **with** dense non-binary column (1 every 40 cols)  
binary density 1/2, 1/5, 1/10, 1/20







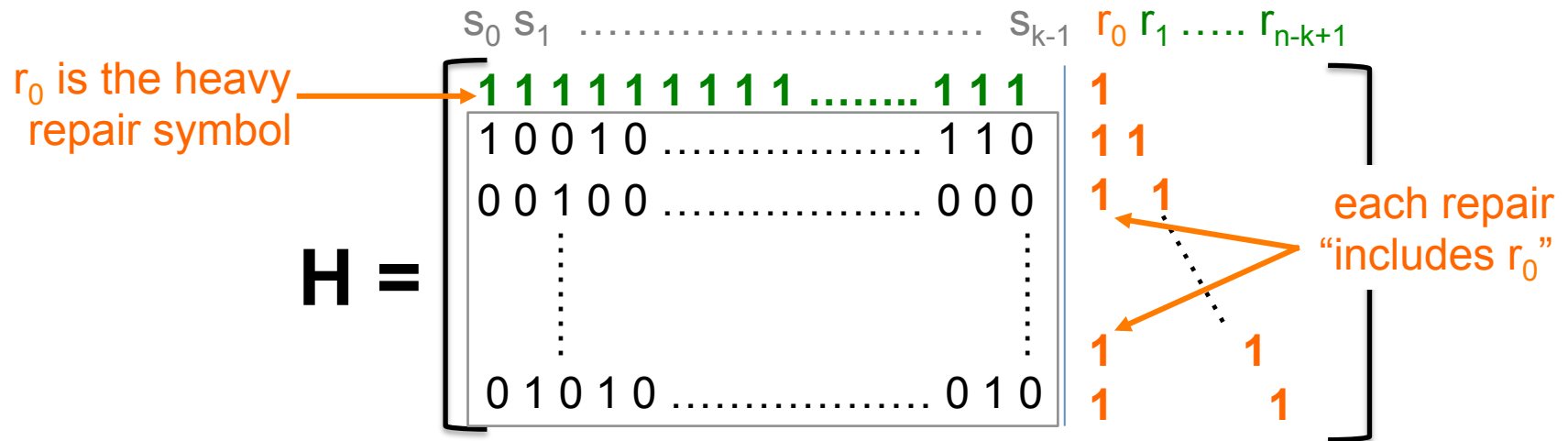
## Idea 2: add a structure... (cont')

○ so we add a **single heavy row** and make **all repair symbols depend on it**

○ it's now quite simple, even when used in convolutional mode

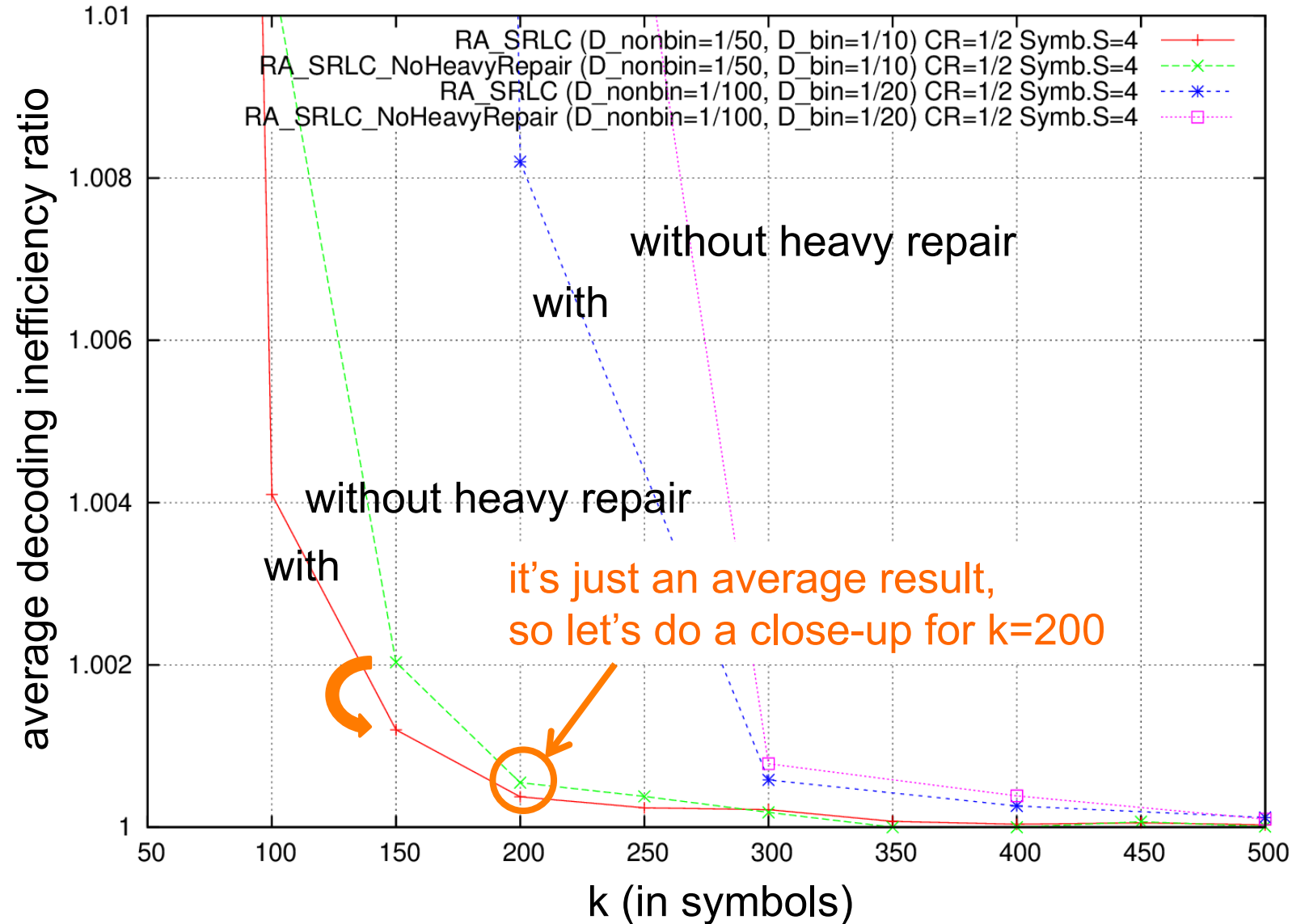
- several sums will be transmitted (e.g., periodically), and it is sufficient to identify the last symbol of the sum in the signaling header

○ it's efficient (see later), at the price of extra XOR operations



○ NB: other ways to define heavy rows are feasible (e.g., with random coefficients over  $GF(2^8)$ )...

# On the usefulness of heavy repair symbols



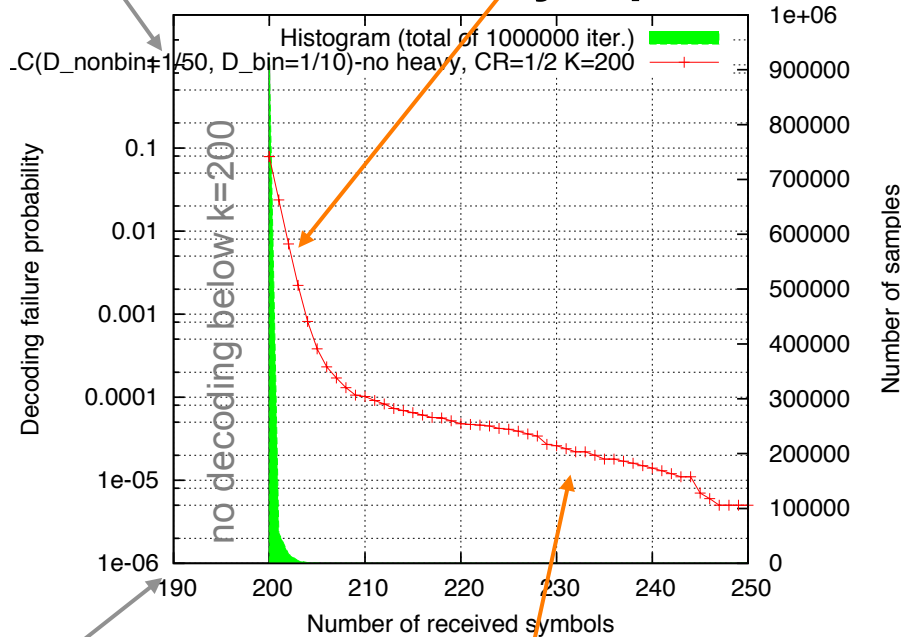
# On the usefulness of heavy repair... (cont')

- decoding failure probability =  $f(\# \text{ symbols received})$ 
  - enables in-depth analysis, catching rare events

similar behaviors for very low overheads

1  $\Rightarrow$  no decoding

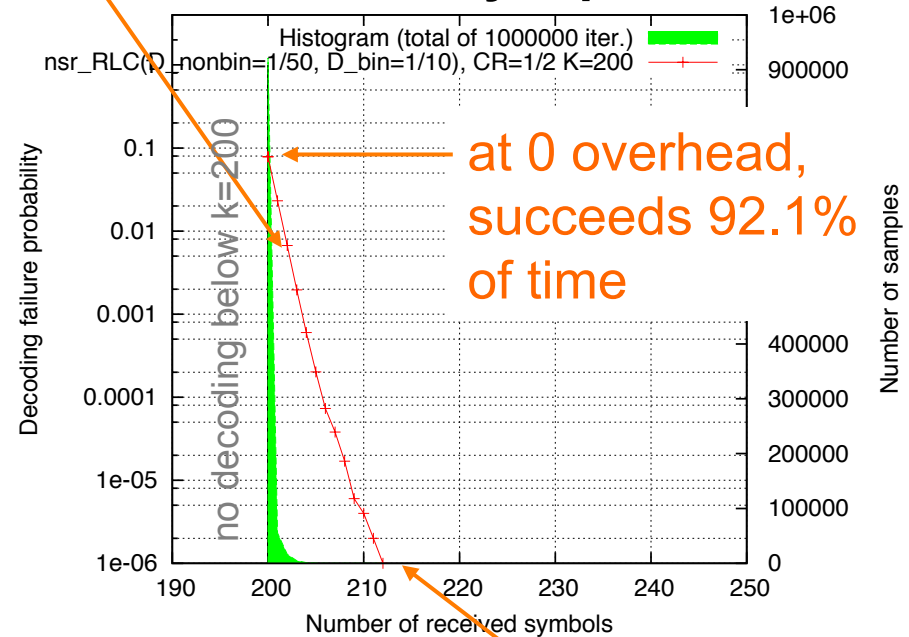
without heavy repair



small failure prob.

but significant number of tests fail for higher overheads ☹️

with heavy repair



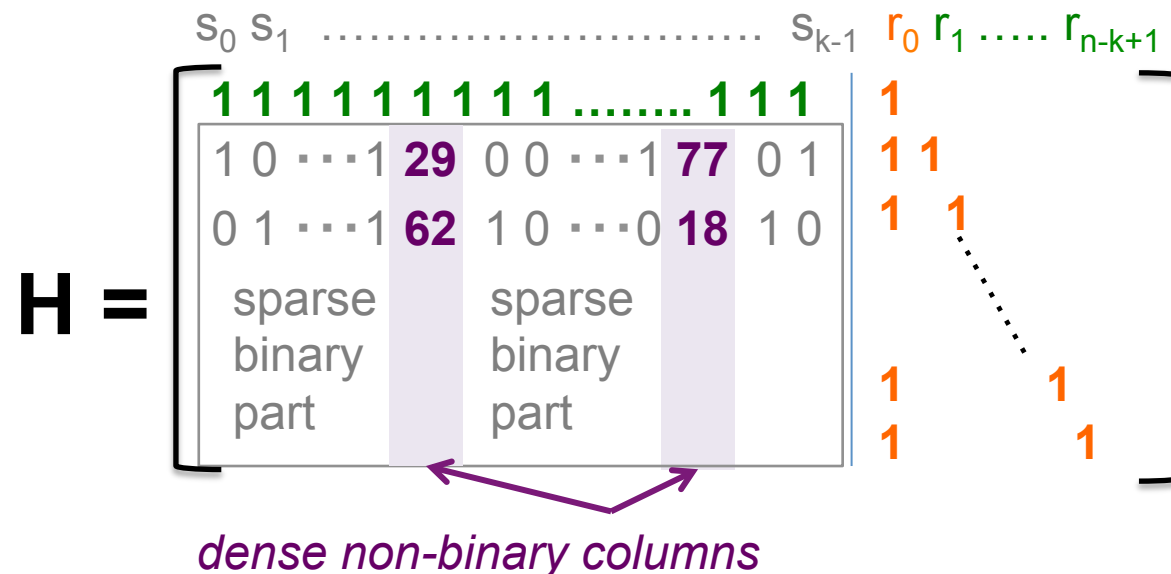
at 0 overhead, succeeds 92.1% of time

with a heavy repair symbol, there's no such behavior 😊

# Let's put ideas 1 and 2 together

- 3 key parameters

- $k$ : source block or current encoding window size
- $D_{\text{nonbin}}$ : controls number of heavy non-binary columns
  - $D_{\text{nonbin}} = \text{nb\_non-binary\_coeffs} / k$
- $D_{\text{bin}}$ : controls the density of the sparse sub-matrices
  - $D_{\text{bin}} = \text{nb\_1\_coeffs} / \text{total\_nb\_coeffs\_in\_binary\_submatrix}$
- $\{D_{\text{nonbin}}, D_{\text{bin}}\}$  depend on  $k$  and target max. overhead



## Finding the right ( $D_{\text{nonbin}}$ , $D_{\text{bin}}$ ) values

- set a target average overhead (e.g.,  $10^{-3}$ )
- then:

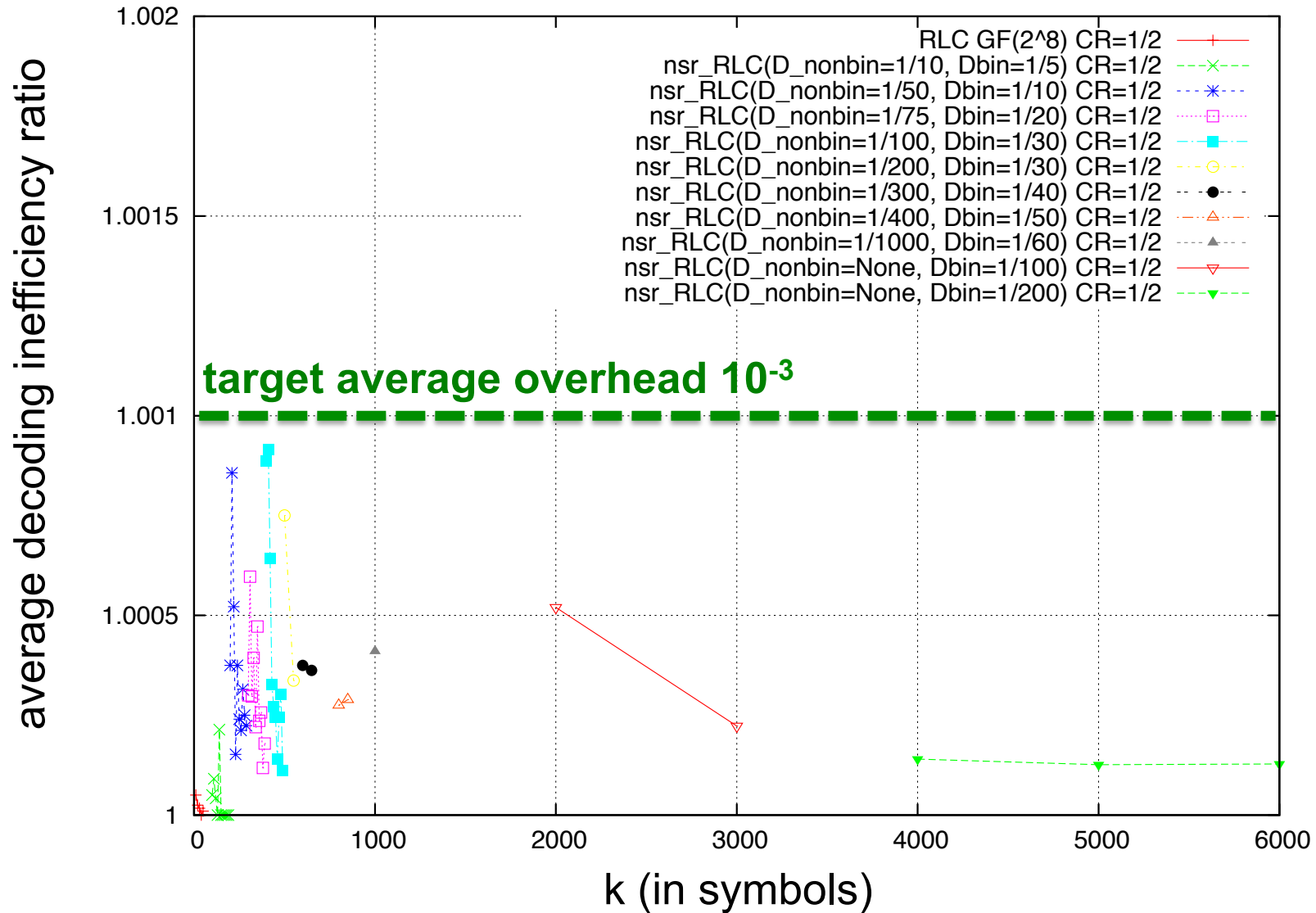
```
for (k in [2, 10 000])  
  carry out experiments with fixed  $D_{\text{bin}}=1/2$ ,  
  increasing  $D_{\text{nonbin}}$  until we achieve an average  
  overhead below  $\alpha \cdot 10^{-3}$ , where  $\alpha < 1$  is a  
  "security margin";  
  for this  $D_{\text{nonbin}}$ , carry out experiments by  
  reducing  $D_{\text{bin}}$  as much as possible while  
  remaining below target overhead  $10^{-3}$ 
```

- store all results in a table

- basically:

- Only non-bin columns for very small  $k$
- Only bin columns for very high  $k$
- A mixture of both in between...

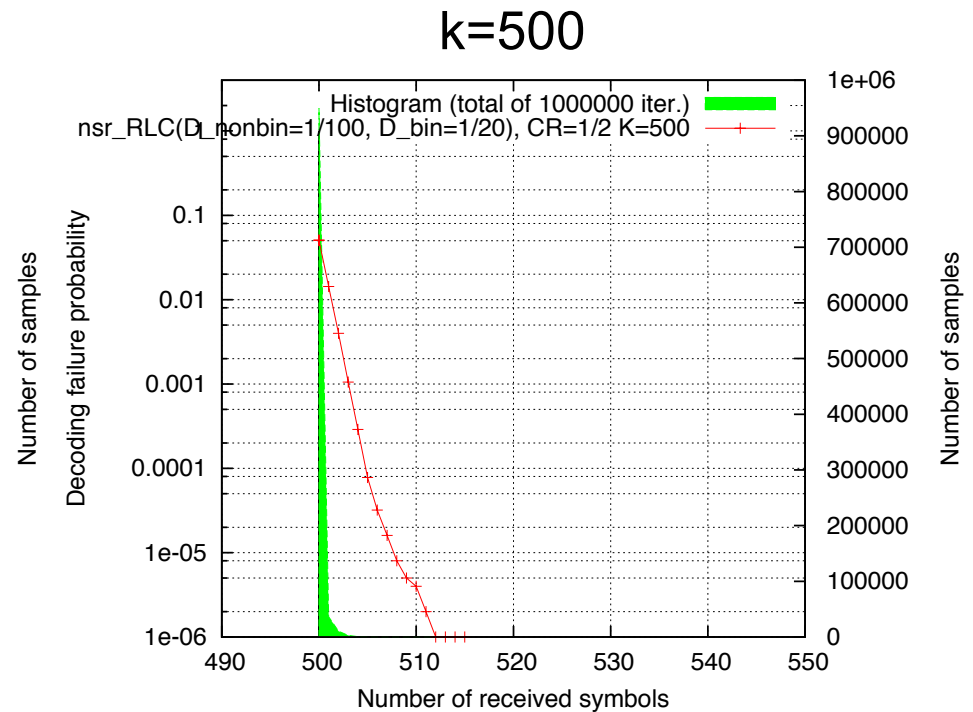
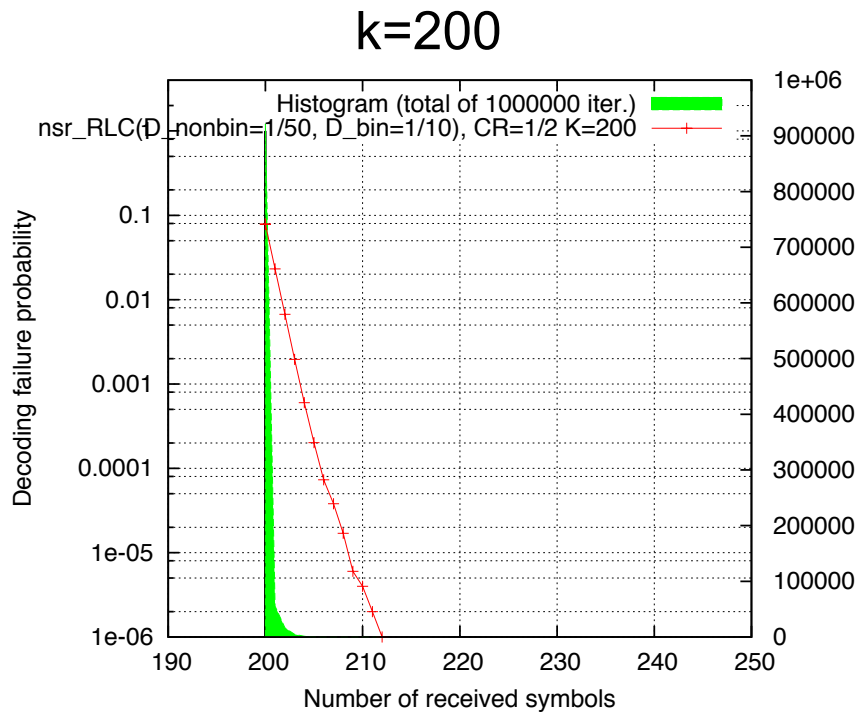
# Preliminary results



NB: results are presented here as the concatenation of small curves...  
 In practice it will be a single curve for a single code

# Two close-ups

- decoding failure probability curves for  $k=200, 500$ 
  - no visible error floor at  $10^{-6}$  failure probability, which is excellent 😊



# Conclusions and Future Works



# Conclusions

- our proposal tries to take the best of RLC
  - **Use the right technique (bin vs. non-bin) at the right time, in the right way**
    - find balance between erasure recovery perf. and complexity
- our proposal tries to fill in the gap between sliding/elastic encoding window and block codes
  - **Side question: what about ALC and FECFRAME versions capable of using convolutional codes**
    - instead of being stuck to block AL-FEC?
- our proposal has a more limited scope than RLC
  - **but it is suited to concrete use-cases**
    - in IRTF/NWCRG (e.g., Tetrys)
    - in IETF/RMT and FECFRAME

# Conclusions... (cont')

- many key questions remain
  - what are the **performances** when used in sliding or elastic encoding window?
    - e.g. with Tetrys
  - how **fast** is it?
    - e.g., compared to our optimized LDPC-Staircase/RS codecs
  - how does it **scale** with  $k$ ?
    - e.g., compared to our optimized LDPC-Staircase codec
  - define **signaling** aspects
    - FEC Payload ID (in each packet sent)
    - FEC Object Transmission Information (per object/session)