

EE5902 Project

Evaluation of 2D Network-on-Chip Routing Algorithm

Group Number: 28

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Program files can be cloned from: https://github.com/majunting/EE5902_project

Project Overview

Network-on-chip (NOC) means that a silicon chip is used to carry out communication features for large-scale systems. The chips make routing decisions and forward the packets to the selected links. Messages can flow from the source module to the destination module via these links.

This project aims to evaluate the performance difference of routing algorithms for 2D network-on-chip. The performance metrics used for the evaluation includes throughput, delay and power consumption. For a user of network-on-chip systems, throughput and power consumption are the most crucial parameters to be considered. Throughput refers to the rate of packets flowing through the system, a higher throughput refers to a higher packet transmission rate. Power consumption is important if the system is to be powered on and operated for a long period of time. Power consumption includes static power consumption and dynamic power consumption. Static power consumption refers to the power consumed for the setup of the network size, including the implementation of different routing algorithm. Different routing algorithm requires the chip to perform different computation, resulting in different static power consumption. Dynamic power consumption is the power used for packet transmission. For the same period of time, a higher throughput can result in a higher dynamic power consumption. In a network-on-chip system, it is possible for deadlock to happen. Deadlock refers to a situation where a bunch of packets are waiting for the others to release the resources including the link or buffer, and none of them can pass through. This can be indicated by the delay rate as well as the maximum delay cycles. For a packet that is delayed for a significantly large number of cycles, it is reasonable to conclude that it experiences a deadlock. Therefore, a lower delay rate is generally desirable.

Overview on Routing Algorithms

Routing algorithm is used to determine the sequence of channels that a packet traverses through from the source module to the destination module. There are three types of routing algorithms for NOC systems, including deterministic routing algorithm, adaptive routing algorithm and partially adaptive routing algorithm.

Deterministic routing algorithm routes packets from one point to the other along a fixed path, without considering the condition of the network. Dimension-order-routing and XY routing are the two popular deterministic routing algorithms implemented by NOC systems. In this project, XY routing algorithm is selected as a representation of deterministic routing algorithm. XY routing algorithm does not check if the network is congested or not, and determines the forwarding direction of the packet.

Adaptive routing algorithm takes into account the topology and the condition of network traffic when deciding the path of a packet. The selected adaptive routing algorithm is Dynamic Adaptive Deterministic (DyAD) routing algorithm, which changes between adaptive and deterministic routing based on the network traffic conditions. If the network is not congested, odd-even routing algorithm, which is a partially adaptive routing algorithm, is implemented. On the other hand, if congestion is detected in the network, the routing algorithm will be modified to accommodate the congestion.

The third type of routing algorithm is partially adaptive routing algorithm, as these routing algorithms have limited adaptivity. Multiple routing algorithms are evaluated in this project, including West-First, North-Last, Negative-First and Odd-Even. The reason is that these routing algorithms are relatively popular among the real-world NOC systems, and it would be interesting to examine the difference among these algorithms in terms of their performance.

For West-First, North-Last and Negative-First routing algorithms are turn restriction routing algorithms, which means these algorithms restricts some turn directions when forwarding packets. West-First routing algorithm restricts all turns towards west direction, and any necessary west direction needs to be processed first. After processing the west direction movements, the routing algorithm works similarly as a XY routing algorithm. North-Last routing algorithm restricts turning towards any other directions if the current direction is north. North direction should be processed last in the routing. For Negative-First routing algorithm restricts turning to negative directions. In x-direction, west is considered negative, and in y-direction, south is considered negative. The necessary negative turns need to be processed first

before the other turns. Odd-Even routing algorithm has a better adaptivity compared to the other three partially adaptive turn restricting routing algorithms, as it restricts different turn directions in odd and even cycles. Odd-Even routing algorithm allows a better prevention of deadlock situations.

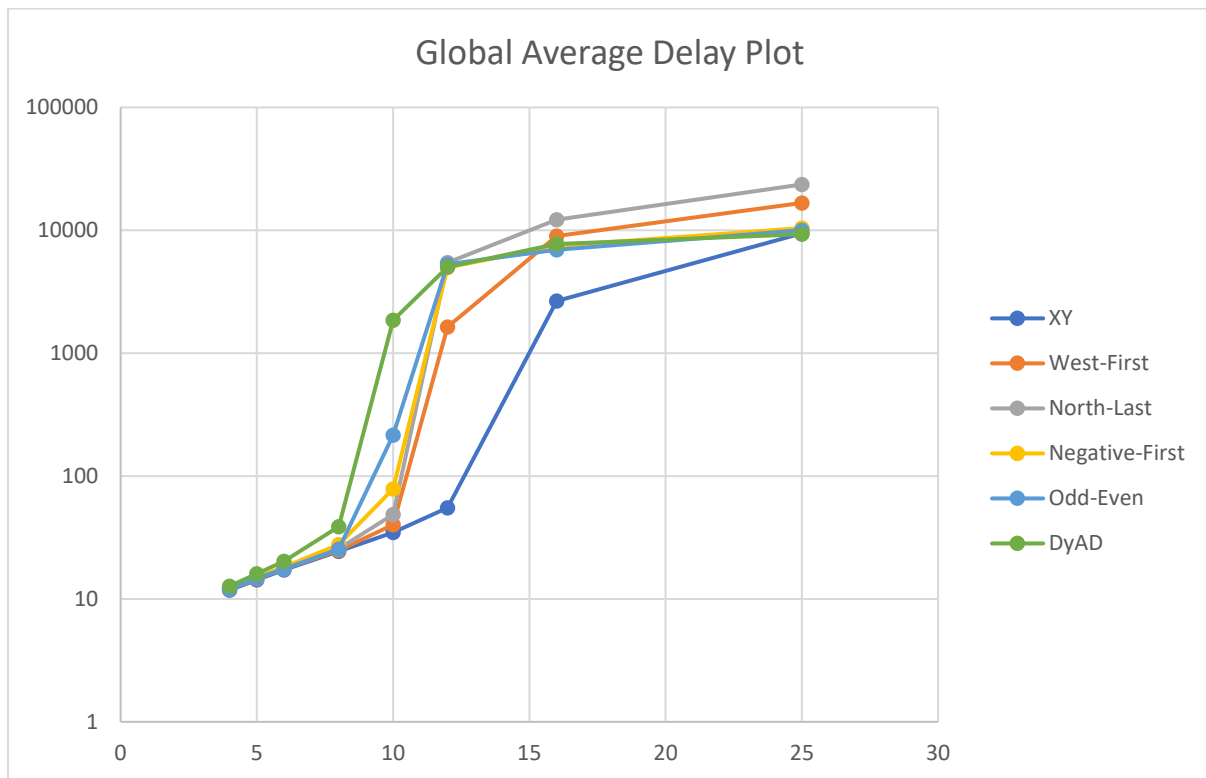
Simulation Tool and Setup

The simulation software used for this project is noxim, which is a NOC simulation software developed using SystemC, which is a system description language based on C++. Noxim has a command line interface in which the critical parameters of the NOC system can be loaded. The parameters are saved in a YAML file, and these parameters including the network size, buffer size, packet size distribution, routing algorithm and so on.

In the simulation process, due to the time constraint, the focus is in the effect of network size on the performance of routing algorithms. In Noxim, the network topology is mesh topology, which means it has 2 dimensions: x-direction and y-direction. In the simulation setup, x-dimension and y-dimension are set to be the same for ease of comparison and more obvious indication of effect of network size. The effect of different x-dimension and y-dimension is, although may be an important factor on network performance, not taken into consideration.

For each simulation, the simulation time is 100,000 cycles to ensure a more accurate simulation result. Different mesh sizes, from 4 x 4 up to 25 x 25 are carried out in order to observe the effect more obviously. For each simulation setup and each routing algorithm, multiple iterations are carried out to ensure the results obtained is less affected by any possible random errors. For mesh size 25 x 25, simulation is done once for each routing algorithm, due to the significant increased operating time. The complete result data file has been submitted together with the report.

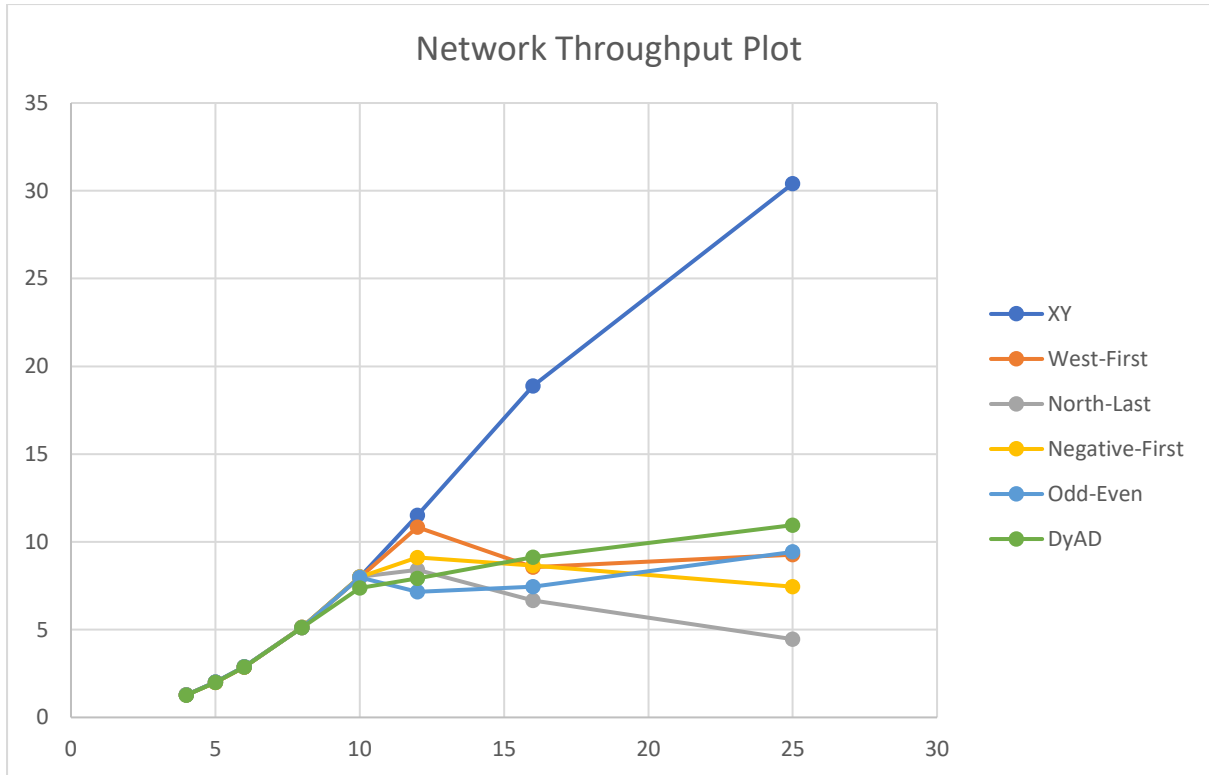
Simulation Result and Analysis



The figure above indicates the global average delay for different routing algorithm

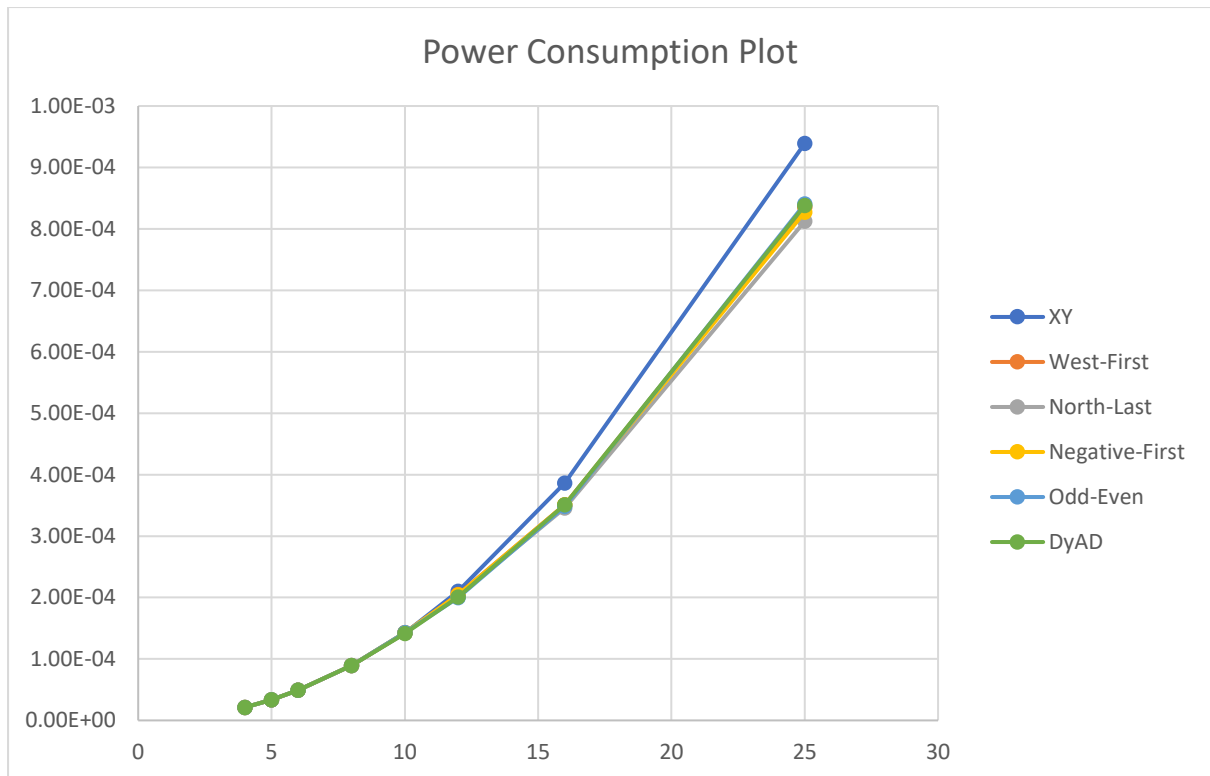
- Global delay increases significantly as the network mesh size increases. Due to the increase in network mesh size, the distance between source and destination increases, resulting in a longer time required for a packet to traverse through.
- For a very small mesh size (up to mesh size 6 x 6),
- The global average delay increases to the most extent when the mesh size is around 10 x 10. This can be seen as a threshold, after which the increase in global average delay becomes less significant.
- For DyAD which is the fully adaptive routing algorithm, the global average delay is greater than the other partially adaptive routing algorithms. This is reasonable as a more adaptive routing algorithm can lead to more computation, resulting in greater delay. When the network mesh size is greater than 10 x 10, it can be seen as a large network. DyAD routing algorithm is more advantageous by avoiding deadlocks and reduce global average delay.
- For a very large mesh size, turn restriction routing algorithms (to be more specific, North-Last and West-First) perform very badly in terms of global average delay, possibly due to the occurrence of deadlocks.

- Surprisingly XY routing algorithm has a great performance in global average delay, as it has a lower global average delay compared to all the other routing in almost all the mesh sizes.



The figure above shows the plot of network throughput against different mesh sizes

- Network throughput increases as the mesh size increases when mesh size is small. When mesh size reaches a specific value, in this case around 10 to 12, the network throughput does not have visible increase. This is possible to be because of the huge increase in global average delay around this mesh size.
- For fully adaptive DyAD routing algorithm, it performs better as the mesh size is very large compared to the other partially adaptive routing algorithms. It keeps its increasing trend in network throughput even at a very large mesh size.
- North-Last and Negative-First routing algorithms have very low network throughput when the network mesh size is very large. The poor performance of North-Last routing algorithm is reasonable from the global average delay performance. However, Negative-First routing algorithm performs okay in terms of global average delay. This indicates that global average delay does not directly relate to network throughput.
- XY routing algorithm's network throughput increases linearly as the mesh size increases. This contradicts the theoretical analysis on the performance of XY routing algorithm and the other adaptive and partially adaptive routing algorithms.



This figure shows power consumption of different routing algorithms against mesh size

- Power consumption increases with the increase in mesh size, and the network throughput, which directly relates to the number of packets transmitted, contributes to the power consumption as well, but the effect is less significant compared to mesh size.
- A more adaptive routing algorithm requires a larger static power consumption compared to a more deterministic routing algorithm.

Discussion

- North-Last, West-First and Negative-First are all turn restricting routing algorithms. Theoretically they should have a similar performance in terms of global average delay and network throughput. However, the simulation results show otherwise. This could be because of the limitation of the simulation software. It is possible that Noxim always injects the packets in the similar manner, which means they generally requires turning to the same directions, or the pattern of packet injection appears cyclically.
- XY routing algorithm performs extremely well compared to all the other routing algorithms when the mesh size is large. For example, the network throughput of XY routing algorithm is three to four times greater than that of the other routing algorithms. Similar to the previous point, this could be due to the limitation of the simulation software.
- A rectangular mesh could have effects on network throughput and global average delay as compared to a square mesh, but the effect is not simulated due to the time constraint. To further evaluate different routing algorithms, simulation on different type of mesh is necessary.

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