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Networks and Distributed System

Group 1025 - 10th semester

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STUDENT REPORT

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Copies: 3**Page Numbers:** 11**Date of Completion:** March 28, 2014**Abstract:**

Nowadays networks use different kind of mechanisms in order to give priority to a certain sort of traffic to process the packets in a different way depending on their application. The most common way to achieve this is using Differentiated Service, marking the packets depending on their application (giving higher preference to those that are more important or time sensitive such as Voice over IP, or Video on Demand). However, determining resource allocation per class of service must be done with knowledge about traffic demands for the various traffic classes, keeping a fixed amount of bandwidth for each class, which results in a poor utilization of resources.

In the last years, a new networking approach called Software-Defined Networking (SDN) is emerging fast. This approach is based on the separation of data and control planes. Such approach allows the network administrator to have a more dynamic control of the network behaviour. The purpose of this project is to analyse the possibilities that SDN provides to develop a more efficient resources allocation along the network.

Preface

This is a report of a student project conducted on the 4th semester of Networks and Distributed Systems, at Aalborg University. This project serves as a Master Thesis as the requirements of the master's programme dictate. This is applied in the comparison of a designed application used for Cognitive Networks concepts over a Software-Defined Network (SDN).

In this project Floodlight is used as an SDN controller, and the network is simulated using mininet software.

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Contents

| | | |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 1 | Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 | Motivation | 1 |
| 1.2 | Quality of Service | 2 |
| 1.2.1 | Best Effort | 2 |
| 1.2.2 | Integrated Services | 3 |
| 1.2.3 | Differential Services | 3 |
| 1.2.4 | MPLS Traffic Engineering (MPLS-TE) | 3 |
| 1.3 | Software-Defined Networking | 4 |
| 1.3.1 | OpenFlow | 6 |
| 1.4 | Problem formulation | 7 |
| | Bibliography | 9 |
| A | Project proposal | 11 |

1 Introduction

This introduction chapter tries to give a general view of the existing problems in the actual networks, and how new emergent technologies can help to improve the network possibilities and capabilities in order to achieve a more flexible approach and adapt to today's needs.

1.1 Motivation

In the last 20 years networks requirements have been changing constantly, the amount of traffic has been increasing exponentially and more demanding end-to-end goals are needed. However, the networks architectures have been unchanged, increasing the complexity and hindering its configuration. In order to adapt to the new needs, new network paradigms such as Software-Defined Networking (SDN), cognitive networks or automatic networks are emerging fast due to the interests of carriers and ISPs.

The first things to analyse are the problems of the existing networks. They have become a barrier to creating new, innovative services within a single data centre, on interconnected data centres, or within enterprises, and an even larger barrier to the continued growth of the Internet.

The main problem in conventional networks (i.e. non SDN), is that each router has to be configured individually because it is the same network element (router) who has both, data and control plane. Nowadays there are hundreds of network monitoring and management tools¹, and several protocols to configure the elements such as Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS)² or NETCONF³. On the other hand, there are also a bunch of routing protocols e.g. Routing Information Protocol (RIP)⁴, Enhanced Interior Gateway Routing Protocol (EIGRP)⁵ or Shortest Path Bridging (SPB)⁶. However, with the SDN approach, having a centralised control plane, it's much easier to make a more efficient and dynamic management and control of the network since we have a global overview of the network.

¹Stanford Network Monitoring and Management Tools list.

²MPLS architecture RFC 3031

³Network Configuration Protocol (NETCONF) RFC 6241

⁴RIP Version 2 RFC 2453

⁵CISCO Enhanced Interior Gateway Routing Protocol (EIGRP)

⁶SPB IEEE Std 802.1aq

Protocols tend to be defined in isolation, however, with each solving a specific problem and without the benefit of any fundamental abstractions. This has resulted in one of the primary limitations of today's networks: complexity. For example, to add or move any device, IT must touch multiple switches, routers, firewalls, Web authentication portals, etc. and update ACLs, VLANs, Quality of Services (QoS), and other protocol-based mechanisms using device-level management tools. In addition, network topology, vendor switch model, and software version all must be taken into account. Due to this complexity, today's networks are relatively static as IT seeks to minimise the risk of service disruption.

The motivation of this Master's Thesis is to take advantage of the new centralised networking approach of SDN to dynamically allocate the appropriated resources (appropriated QoS) to each sort of service or user.

1.2 Quality of Service

Nowadays networking QoS can be divided in 3 classes, Best Effort (BE), Integrated Services (IntServ) and Differentiated Services (DiffServ). Each of this approaches have their own positive and negative things. This sections give a general overview of each in order to understand the problems and the current methods to achieve end-to-end goals, dealing with the different kind of packets.

Table 1.1 summarises the features of this three types of QoS, specifying the service, service scope, complexity and scalability of each one.

Table 1.1: QoS comparison

| | Best-Effort | IntServ | DiffServ |
|---------------|--|---|---|
| Service | Connectivity No isolation No guarantees | Per flow isolation, Per flow guarantee | Per aggregation isolation, Per aggregation guarantee |
| Service Scope | End-to-end | End-to-end | Domain |
| Complexity | No setup | Per flow setup | Long term setup |
| Scalability | Highly scalable, nodes maintain only routing state | Not scalable (each router maintains per flow state) | Scalable (edge routers maintains per aggregate state and core routers per class state) |

1.2.1 Best Effort

Best Effort is the current way the Internet is working, and is equal to do nothing with the packets, meaning that the service provided depends on the actual state of the network.

The positive points about BE is that is highly scalable, since the nodes just maintain routing state, and there is no need of any set-up. On the other hand this approach has no assurances about delivery, no control access, no isolation and no guarantees.

1.2.2 Integrated Services

Integrated Services guarantees specific resources for a specific flow, which means that can guarantee a QoS for the flow. IntServ uses the Resource Reservation Protocol (RSVP)⁷ as a signalling protocol, which is the responsible of sending specific messages to the network nodes to reserve the required resources per each data stream. RSVP declares the QoS requirements and characterise the traffic of the the flow.

IntServ allow to differentiate three kinds of services: Guaranteed (real-time applications), Controlled load (applications that can adapt to network conditions within a certain performance window) and Best effort.

Even though IntServ ensures the specific QoS required per each flow, it has large scalability problems because maintaining states by routers in high speed networks is difficult due to the very large number of flows., besides all the routers have to be RSVP compatible.

1.2.3 Differential Services

Due the limitations of IntServ (1.2.2), DiffServ appeared solving some of the problems. DiffServ consist on marking the packets with a priority stamp (Differenciated Service Code Point or DSCP) on the edge routers, and the core networks use this stamp to know the forwarding priority. Doing this labelling suppose time, but since it is done in the edge routers, where the links speed are slower, it doesn't represent a problem.

The advantage of DiffServ is that scalable, since it doesn't require the routers to maintain state information for each flow, which is a huge burden for the routers. However, it also has problems. One is that since the packets are marked just at the edge routers, it can not solve the congestion inside the domain, so it cannot provide per flow bandwidth and delay guarantees. For example, a lot of flows in the same class can be routed through the same link, thus cause congestion there.

Another weakness of DiffServ is the lack of granularity for QoS guaranteed services, which makes it difficult to cost-effectively support end-to-end QoS according to the end-to-end situation (e.g., path lengths) of applications. With the conventional packet-level QoS mechanisms for the regulated traffic, i.e., buffer admission control plus output schedulers in general, increasing service granularity may inevitably complicate implementation and/or impact scalability since sophisticated output schedulers seem necessary in this case.

1.2.4 MPLS Traffic Engineering (MPLS-TE)

In a traditional Internet Protocol (IP) network each router performs an IP lookup for each packet to determine the next-hop based on its own routing table, and forwards the packet

⁷Resource ReSerVation Protocol (RSVP) RFC 2205.

to that router. Each router makes its own independent routing decisions, until the final destination is reached. Multi-Protocol Label Switching (MPLS)⁸ does a label switching instead. That means that the first router does a routing lookup but instead of finding a next-hop, it finds the final destination router and applies a label (or "shim") based on this information. The next routers will check this label to route the packet without needing to perform any additional IP lookups. The idea was to have only the first router doing an IP lookup, then all future routes in the network could do switching matching based on a label, reducing the load on the core routers, where high-performance was the most difficult to achieve, and distribute the routing lookups across edge routers.

MPLS-TE takes advantage of the MPLS labels in order to provide an efficient way of forwarding traffic throughout the network, avoiding over-utilised links, adapting to changing bandwidth taking in account the configured bandwidth of the links.

MPLS-TE DiffServ Aware (DS-TE)

MPLS-TE Differential Services Aware (DS-TE) is a MPLS-TE able to detect the DCSP labels.

1.3 Software-Defined Networking

One of the tendencies that seems to have more power for the next generation networking is Software-Defined Networking (SDN). One of the reasons to believe that SDN will be *the one* is that some big companies, such as Google, are already using it^{9 10}.

SDN is a new network architecture that allows be programmed as if it were a computer. It provides an abstraction of the forwarding function decoupling the data plane from control plane, which gives freedom to manage different topologies, protocols without many restrictions from the physical layer.

⁸MPLS architecture RFC 3031

⁹Google's white paper: Inter-Datacenter WAN with centralised using SDN and OpenFlow.

¹⁰B4: Experience with a Globally-Deployed Software Defined WAN.

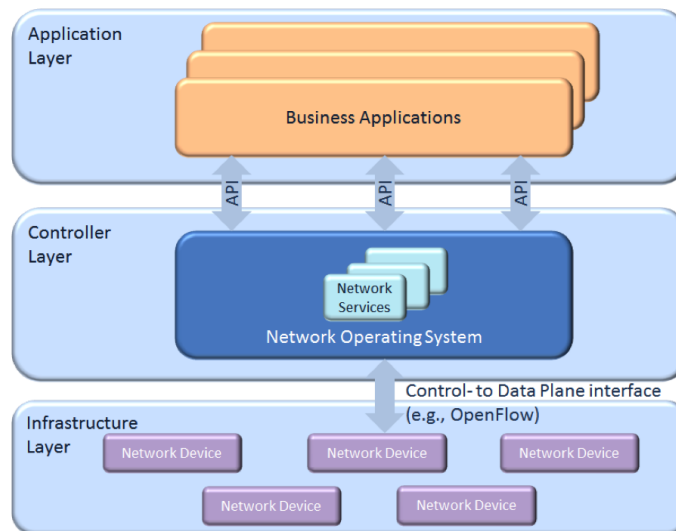


Figure 1.1: SDN architecture (image from Open Networking Foundation)

SDN advantages

As it's told in this chapter, SDN tries to improve the current networks. Bellow there is a list of the main advantages of SDN architecture.

OPEX reduction: centralised control helps to eliminate manual interaction with the hardware, improving the uptime of the network.

CAPEX reduction: separating the data plane of the control plane brings to a more simple hardware and increases the possibility of more competence between hardware manufacturers, since the devices don't depends on the proprietary software.

Agility: since the controller is connected

Flexibility:

SDN applications

To give an idea of how huge SDN is, here is a list with some of the applications

1. Appliance Virtualization

- Firewalls, Load balancers, Content distribution, Gateways

2. Service Assurance

- Content-specific traffic routing for optimal QoE, Congestion control based on network conditions, Dynamic policy-based traffic engineering

3. Service Differentiation

- Value-add service features, Bandwidth-on-demand features, BYOD across multiple networks, Service insertion/changing

4. Service Velocity

- Virtual edge, Distributed app testing environments, Application development workflows

5. 'Traditional' Control Plane

- Network discovery, Path computation, Optimisation & maintenance, Protection & restoration

6. Network Virtualization

- Virtual network control on shared infrastructure, Multi-tenant network automation & API

7. Application Enhancement

- Specific SDN application, Reserved bandwidth for application needs, Geo-distributed applications, Intelligent network responses to app needs

1.3.1 OpenFlow

OpenFlow is the protocol used to communicate the controller with all the Network Elements (NE). Is an open standard that provides a standardised hook to allow researchers to run experiments, without requiring vendors to expose the internal workings of their network devices. OpenFlow is currently being implemented by major vendors, with OpenFlow-enabled switches now commercially available.

1.4 Problem formulation

Data traffic in networks have been increasing exponentially since the beginning of networking at the same time that new kind of services and connection requirements appear. Those factors have led to a more complex networks that cannot satisfy the needs of carriers nor users.

As explained in this introduction chapter, the current networks have several limitations to adapt to end-to-end goals requirements for the different sort of services. Determining resource allocation per class of service must be done with knowledge about traffic demands for the various traffic classes, keeping a fixed amount of bandwidth for each class, which results in a poor utilisation of resources. Nowadays methodologies are static, or need specific network equipment, which leads to a non-scalable and expensive systems.

The aim of this project is to analyse the possibilities that Software-Defined Networking bring us to develop an application able to sense the state of the network and adapt its behaviour in order to achieve a better performance and better resource utilisation of the network.

Bibliography

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A Project proposal