CSSE7014 Distributed Computing
Assignment 2
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Contents

1 Introduction

Fog computing is a new, exciting computing paradigm [1].

The introduction is clear with several definitions of the computing paradigm under study for comparison. The structure of the report is presented.

2 Architectures and Models

Compare and contrast different architectures and models with examples to back the arguments.

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3 Common Issues

Though still an emerging field, previous research, such as Yi et al.'s "survey on fog computing" [2], has been able to identify multiple potential issues related to fog computing. In this section, we summarise their main findings, and provide additional discussion and research related to them whenever possible.

To improve clarity, we organise issues around 5 main areas: networking, optimal use of resources, fault tolerance, application development, and security and privacy. Note that we focus purely on technical issues. Business-related aspects, such as implementation of a viable business model, and billing mechanisms, are not covered.

3.1 Networking

In order for the fog to function properly, the network has to provide nodes with connectivity, and additional network services, such as routing. The particular nature of the fog, though, makes the implementation of these functions difficult.

For example, the network has to be highly scalable, providing support for a large number of potential nodes. In addition, it should account for constant topology changes due to node mobility. Ensuring that the system is fully distributed is also an important aspect [2].

Using virtualisation mechanisms, such as SDN, has been deemed as viable solution to these issues [2]. In their proposal of a general architecture for the fog, Bonomi et al. [3] state that the fog should use virtualisation for "key resources", including networking. Providing an implementation of SDN for the fog, however, is still an open issue [2]. Partly, this appears to be the case because SDN itself does not put "a high emphasis" on distribution [4].

3.2 Optimal resource use

As stated before, the fog is highly heterogeneous. This heterogeneity is greatly reflected by different degrees of resource availability throughout the system. Important resources are storage, computation power and bandwidth. For example, in parts of the system, available bandwidth might be high due to the presence of more powerful network links, while in others, it can be a scare resource.

Naturally, these resources should be "optimally" used. However, the actual optimisation goal is highly dependent on the use case: for example, in a real-time application, the main objective is to ensure a small delay. Using more bandwidth or computation power to meet this goal is a valid trade-off. For a computation-heavy application running on a mobile device, in contrast, reducing the amount of computation performed locally on the device might be most important.

In their paper, Yi et al. [2] present several strategies that might be used to optimise resource use under different circumstances. Firstly, they suggest that the adequate placement of data can help optimising bandwidth use. In the previously given example of a real-time application, storing data on nodes that are well-connected to the consumer could significantly reduce delay. As second method, they discuss computation offloading. With this strategy, parts of a computation can be delegated to a different node in the network. In the aforementioned example of the computation-heavy application, for instance, a

more powerful node could perform most of the computation-intense work. Lastly, they present different methods based on the concept of adjusting the network topology. For example, effectively choosing the relay nodes for one or multiple endpoints could help reducing delay, while increasing throughput.

3.3   Fault tolerance

As describe before, the fog mainly uses unreliable wireless network links. In addition, nodes are highly mobile. Being able to ensure availability of services, and provide reliability in general are therefore important aspects.

To improve service availability, Yi et al. [2] suggest to adjust the network topology (see section 3.2). For instance, they present the idea of dividing a network into several clusters, with each cluster centred around a "rich-resource" node.

Traditionally, reliability in a distributed system can be provided by the means of techniques such as checkpointing or rescheduling (see [5]). According to Yi et al. [2], though, most of these techniques are unfit for the fog, as they introduce too much delay. They conclude that replication might work, but they expect it to be difficult to implement due to the distributed nature of the system. Additional research on the topic does not seem to exist. Madsen et al. [6] claim to provide such, but fail to give any actual fog computing-related insights.

3.4   Application Development

As stated in section XX, the fog is dynamic in regards to network topology, and resource availability. In addition, fog nodes might run on different platforms and system architectures [2]. Developing applications that are able to run in this environment, and provide high compatibility, can be expected to be difficult.

To ease development, Bonomi et al. [3] propose a "fog abstraction layer" that hides the underlying heterogeneity, and provides developers with a "uniform and programmable interface". Yi et al. make a similar suggestion by calling for a "unified interfacing and programming model" [2].

Due to issues mentioned in the beginning, though, we expect that the implementation of such a layer is challenging. Moreover, providing compatibility between nodes from different vendors might be hard, as the field is still emerging, and there is no industry-wide standard yet.

3.5   Security and Privacy

Many applications that have been proposed for fog computing are safety-critical, and/or process sensitive data. For example, in vehicle-to-vehicle communication, an insecure system that allows attackers to remotely control the car could have disastrous consequences. In home automation, users might be worried that unwanted parties could learn about their daily routine.

Stojmenovic and Wen [7] find that providing authentication throughout the system is one of the "main security issues" for fog computing . As an example, they describe a smart meter that is modified by a user, and reports then, due to a lack of authentication, false readings. As a possible solution, they suggest encryption at node-level. For this, the meter would encrypt its data, and another node would decrypt it before further forwarding the data.

Encryption could also be used to protect the user's privacy.

4   Applications

Various examples (across different disciplines) provided with clear arguments why they are relevant.

5 References

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