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Data Search & Extraction with Microservices

Supervisor

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CERTIFICATION

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Abstract

Internet of Things (IoT) is an enabling technology for numerous domains worldwide, such as smart cities, manufacturing, logistics and critical infrastructure. On top of Internet of Things, the architectural paradigm shifts from cloud-centric to Edge-centric, offloading more and more functionality from the cloud to the Edge devices. Edge computing devices are transformed from simply aggregating data to performing data processing and decision making, accelerating the decentralization of the IoT domain. Given the considerable increase of the number of IoT devices and the size of the generated data, an increase of Edge devices with augmented functionality is expected. We propose an ”Edge as a service” scheme, where Edge devices will be able to procure unused resources and run services that are requested and consumed by IoT devices that belong to different stakeholders. In this work, we outline a high-level architecture of this scheme and give a reference implementation of a narrow part of the system, boasting high modularity and the extensive use of Open Source Technologies.

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1. Design concepts

1.1 Monolithic Architecture

Before going into Microservices and the Microservice architecture, the Monolithic architecture approach must be explained first. The Monolithic architecture approach was, until recently, the preferred design option for software. In a Monolithic application, all the different components and functions of the business logic are combined into one indivisible program [1]. Generally, these components are the user interface, business rules, and data access. While individual components might be developed separately, they remain tightly coupled [2], and any change completed in any of them requires the whole program to be rebuilt and redeployed [3].

This tightly coupled nature creates a significant dependency problem. More often than not, development in one component requires functional changes in multiple others, adding to the development cost, complicating the build and testing process, and inducing delays in deployment. For example, a minor change in the user interface might necessitate updates to both the business logic and data access layers. Additionally, a single bug in any one component can potentially halt the entire application's operation and create a nightmarish situation for on-call engineers trying to figure out the root cause. This often results in multiple unrelated-to-the-issue teams joining in until root cause analysis is complete, leading to wasted resources and prolonged downtime. Such situations underscore the inherent fragility of the Monolithic approach in complex systems.

Another significant drawback of Monolithic applications is the large codebase they often entail. Over time, as the application grows, the codebase can become cumbersome to manage and increasingly difficult to understand for new developers [2]. Implementing even minor changes may require navigating through extensive, interconnected code, leading to higher development times and increased chances of introducing bugs. Maintenance becomes a challenge as technical debt accumulates, and the lack of modularity makes it harder to address specific areas without affecting the entire system.

Scalability is another major issue with Monolithic applications. Different components typically have conflicting resource requirements; for instance, one might be CPU-intensive while another is memory-intensive. Because of the unified design, all resource requirements must be handled together, making vertical scaling (increasing the power of a single server) impossible. Horizontal scaling (adding multiple copies of the application to distribute the load) remains the only option, but it is resource-intensive, inefficient, and often restricted due to the complexities of managing state across instances. This limitation can make Monolithic applications ill-suited for dynamic workloads or environments requiring rapid scaling.

Finally, Monolithic design allows for little to no flexibility when it comes to incorporating newer, state-of-the-art technologies. For instance, integrating a new database technology or a modern programming language might require a complete overhaul of the application, as its unified structure does not support gradual upgrades. Over time, this rigidity results in Monolithic applications becoming legacy systems. These systems often lag in performance and reliability compared to modern architectures and may eventually need to be completely redesigned and reconstructed, a process that is both time consuming and costly.

Despite these many drawbacks, Monolithic architecture is still favored for certain applications

due to its core benefits. The most important one is performance. In most cases, Monolithic applications outperform their modular counterparts because all components run in the same memory space and avoid the overhead of inter-process communication [2]. The simplicity of having a single executable can lead to faster runtime and lower latency, making it suitable for scenarios where performance is paramount.

Initial design and implementation are also easier with a Monolithic approach, particularly for small to medium sized applications. Individual components are usually clearly defined at later stages, reducing the upfront complexity during the design phase. This simplicity extends to the unified build and deployment process, which simplifies configuration management, testing, and monitoring.

Monolithic architecture approach is particularly well-suited for smaller applications or projects with well-defined, stable requirements. It helps to get things up and running faster, making it an ideal choice for situations where time to market is critical. Furthermore, when development complexity and deployment time come second to performance, a Monolithic application typically has the edge over a modular approach.

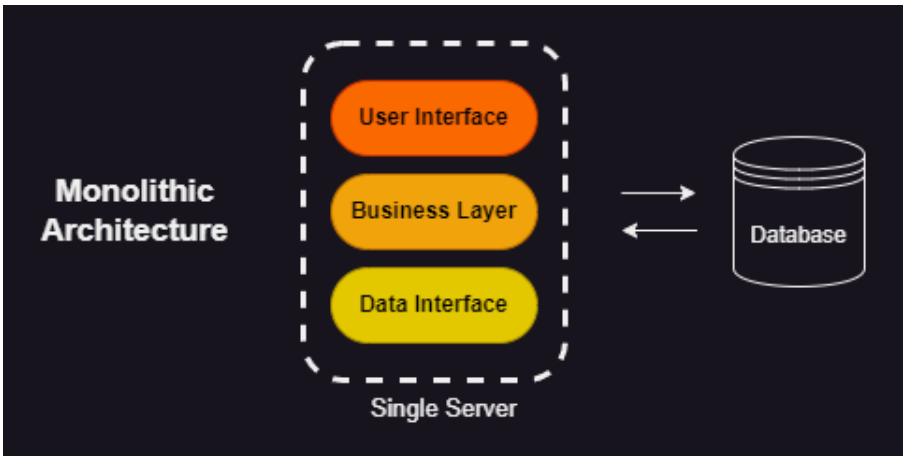

Figure 1.1: Monolithic Architecture

1.2 Microservice Architecture

Microservices and the Microservice Architecture have, in recent years, become one of the most popular design options for software applications. In the Microservice Architecture, the application is structured as a collection of independent services, called Microservices. Each Microservice corresponds to a distinct part of the business logic, executing a well-defined, unique process [1] [4]. These Microservices utilize lightweight communication mechanisms, such as API interfaces, allowing them to operate in unison and achieve the same final results as a Monolithic application but without being co-dependent. The independence of Microservices enables them to be built and tested separately, and they can be deployed and scaled independently as well. Each Microservice is designed to facilitate a single function of the application, making it focused, manageable, and easily comprehensible [5].

The advantages of this architectural approach compared to its Monolithic counterpart are significant and far-reaching. Each individual Microservice can be developed in isolation, often by different teams, without compromising or delaying the development of other parts of the application. This separation of concerns allows for parallel development, reducing bottlenecks and improving efficiency. Consequently, different components of the application can be updated and enhanced asynchronously, resulting in quicker and more frequent deployments. The build and deployment process is streamlined and resource-efficient since only the Microservice being updated needs to be redeployed, rather than the entire application.

Testing is another area where Microservice architecture shines. Since each Microservice operates independently, there is no need to build and test the entire application for changes made to one component. Instead, testing can be focused solely on the Microservice being modified. This leads to faster and more efficient testing cycles, allowing development teams to identify and resolve issues promptly. Similarly, debugging is simplified; when an error occurs, it is relatively easy to pinpoint the Microservice responsible for the failure. The responsible team can address the issue without disrupting the operation of the entire application, making the debugging process both quicker and more effective.

While these advantages are compelling, the most critical benefit of the Microservice Architecture is scalability. In the era of cloud-native applications, where the ability to scale up or down on demand is of utmost importance and operational costs are often usage-based, Microservice-based applications significantly outclass their Monolithic counterparts. Scaling in a Microservice application is versatile, as it is possible both vertically and horizontally. The entire application can be replicated if necessary, just like a Monolithic application. However, the true strength of Microservices lies in the ability to scale individual components. For example, if one Microservice experiences a spike in demand, only that specific service can be scaled up, optimizing resource usage.

Moreover, Microservice-based applications align seamlessly with cloud infrastructure. Since Microservices can be readily instantiated as needed, there is no requirement for maintaining multiple always-on instances to handle demand spikes, as is often the case with Monolithic applications. This elasticity in scaling reduces idle resource consumption and exponentially decreases operational costs.

Despite these numerous advantages, the Microservice architecture is not without its drawbacks. The initial development of Microservice applications requires careful and time-consuming planning and design. During the early stages of development, requirements and features are often not well defined, making it challenging to design Microservices effectively. Any missteps in the design can lead to significant complications later on.

Performance is another area where Microservice-based applications can fall short compared to Monolithic ones. Because Microservices rely on lightweight communication mechanisms, such as APIs, there is an inherent overhead in inter-service communication. This can result in latency, making Microservice applications less suitable for time-critical operations, such as load balancers or real-time data processing. For use cases requiring the lowest possible response times, Monolithic applications often have a performance edge.

Finally, Microservice architecture may not be the best choice for on-premises applications where customers are required to set up and manage everything manually. The complexity of configuring and maintaining multiple independent services can be overwhelming for end-users, especially those without extensive technical expertise. In such scenarios, a Monolithic application might be preferable due to its simplicity and ease of deployment [6].

1.3 Containers

Hand in hand with the Microservice Architecture came containers. Containers are a form of virtualization similar to virtual machines (VMs), but unlike traditional virtual machines, containers share the host system's kernel while running in isolated user spaces. This architecture makes them significantly more lightweight, efficient, and versatile compared to VMs. By eliminating the need for a full guest operating system, containers reduce resource overhead dramatically, enabling more efficient utilization of host hardware. This efficiency translates to faster startup times, reduced memory and processing power requirements, and greater performance from the same hardware infrastructure compared to VMs [7].

The lightweight nature of containers is particularly advantageous in scalable environments where applications need to scale up or down quickly in response to demand. In contrast, VMs require a

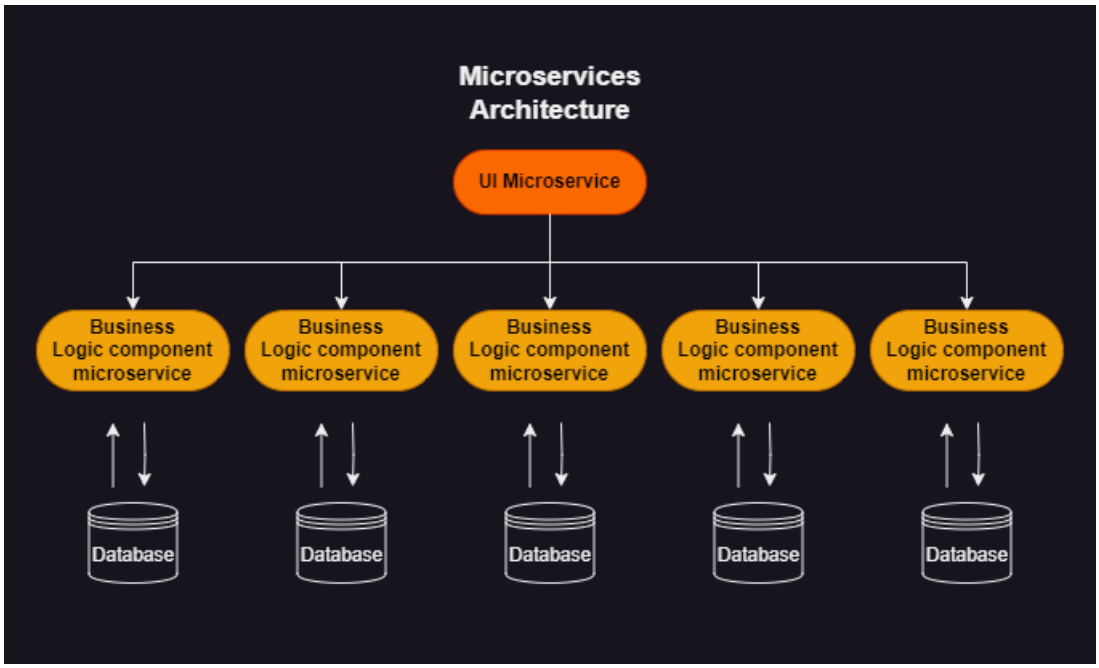

Figure 1.2: Microservice Architecture

separate guest operating system for each instance, which not only increases resource consumption but also lengthens deployment and startup times. Containers, on the other hand, are designed to spin up almost instantly, enabling rapid scaling and responsiveness.

Containers are created and deployed using container images, which are essentially templates. These images are built using ContainerFiles, which specify a base image and a sequence of instructions or steps to execute on top of it. Each step in the build process forms a new layer. Layering is a critical feature for image creation and deployment workflows, as it allows for reuse across different images. For instance, if multiple container images share common steps, such as installing a specific library, those layers need to be built only once. This reuse drastically reduces build times and conserves storage space, making containerization particularly well-suited to agile development practices where frequent builds and deployments are standard.

The distribution of container images is made straightforward through container registries, platforms where images can be stored, shared, and accessed. Docker Hub is the registry associated with the most popular container platform, Docker. The ability to easily distribute container images enhances collaboration and accelerates development cycles. Teams working in different environments can seamlessly pull images from registries, ensuring consistent runtime environments and reducing potential configuration mismatches.

One of the key strengths of containers lies in their ability to provide a consistent runtime environment. By encapsulating all dependencies and configurations within the container image, containers ensure that applications run identically across development, staging, and production environments. This consistency simplifies the testing and deployment process, minimizing release time and reducing the likelihood of environment-specific bugs.

However, as the use of containers grows, managing a large number of containers across multiple hosts becomes increasingly complex. Efficient deployment and management of containerized applications require some form of orchestration. Container orchestration platforms, such as Kubernetes, have emerged as the standard solution for automating the deployment, scaling, and management of containerized applications [8]. Such platforms ensure high availability by intelligently distributing containers across nodes, maintaining desired states even during failures, and handling incident recovery automatically.

Moreover, they provide capabilities such as load balancing and resource allocation, enabling

developers to build resilient and scalable systems with minimal manual intervention. Another major feature of these platforms are rolling updates, which ensure that new versions of an application can be deployed without downtime and handle rollback processes in case of failure. These features are only possible by taking advantage of the lightweight, lightning-fast deployment of containers and not only enhance the performance and reliability of applications but also reduce the operational burden on development teams.

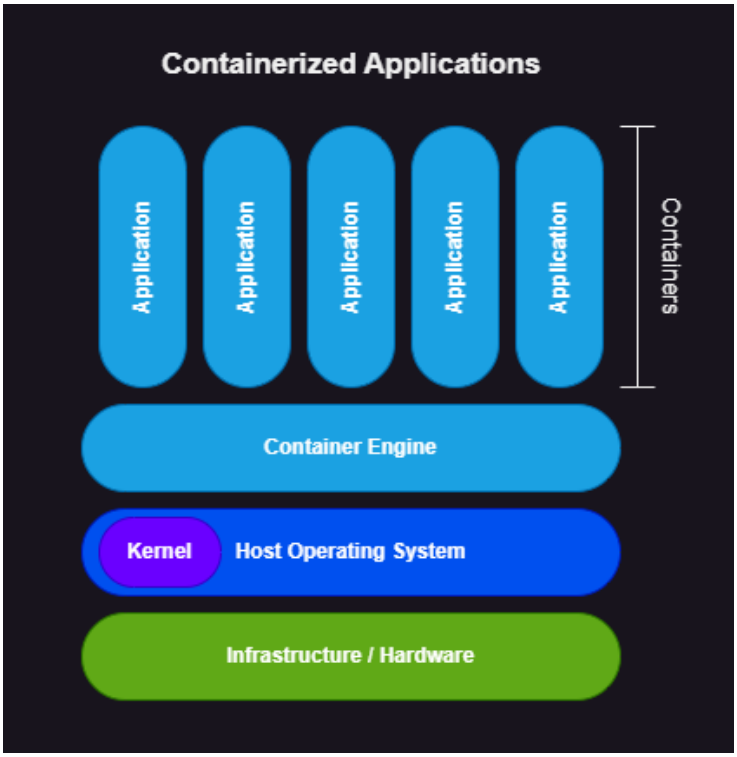

Figure 1.3: Containerized Applications

1.4 IoT device Simulators

There's little doubt that the Internet of Things (IoT) is here to stay. IoT has reshaped the way humans and machines interact with the environment, creating smarter, more connected systems that are now strongly influencing most industries. In recent years, an increasing number of everyday devices have been equipped with various sensors and internet connectivity, enabling them to gather and transmit large volumes of data. This exponential growth of IoT devices has brought about significant opportunities, but it also presents unique challenges.

The data generated by IoT devices is massive and diverse, requiring robust IoT applications to process, analyze, and utilize it effectively. These applications are designed to transform raw data into valuable insights, enhancing the functionality of devices, and promoting efficiency in operations. However, as with any software, IoT applications must undergo rigorous testing before deployment to ensure reliability, security, and optimal performance.

One approach to testing IoT applications is to create a physical IoT network composed of the actual devices and sensors specific to the application. This setup allows for real-world data generation and provides an environment for testing the application under realistic conditions. While this method has its merits, it is not hard to notice the significant challenges and limitations it poses.

First and foremost, creating an actual IoT network for testing can be prohibitively expensive. IoT ecosystems often consist of diverse and specialized devices, many of which may be costly to acquire

or replicate at scale. For large and complex ecosystems, the financial overhead of assembling and maintaining such a network can be quite substantial, making this approach impractical in most cases.

Furthermore, IoT applications, particularly in the early stages of development, are subject to frequent redesigns and changes. These iterations are part of the development process as requirements change, features are added, and feedback is provided. However, when an IoT network is used for testing, any significant change in the application may necessitate corresponding changes to the physical network. This adds to the development cost and introduces delays, as modifying or expanding an IoT network is both time-consuming and resource-intensive.

Even when an IoT network is already in place for deployment purposes, using it for application testing poses additional risks. Testing on a live network can expose sensitive data to potential security vulnerabilities.

To address these challenges, a more efficient and safer alternative is the use of synthetic data. Synthetic data simulates the behavior and output of real IoT devices, providing a realistic representation of IoT network activity without requiring a physical network. This approach allows developers to create virtual IoT environments tailored to specific applications, enabling thorough testing under controlled conditions.

By generating synthetic data, developers can replicate complex IoT ecosystems at a minimum cost compared with physical networks. These virtual environments can be easily modified to accommodate changes in the application, supporting agile development without the need for expensive hardware adjustments. Additionally, synthetic data eliminates the security risks associated with using real-world data during testing, as no actual devices or sensitive information are involved.

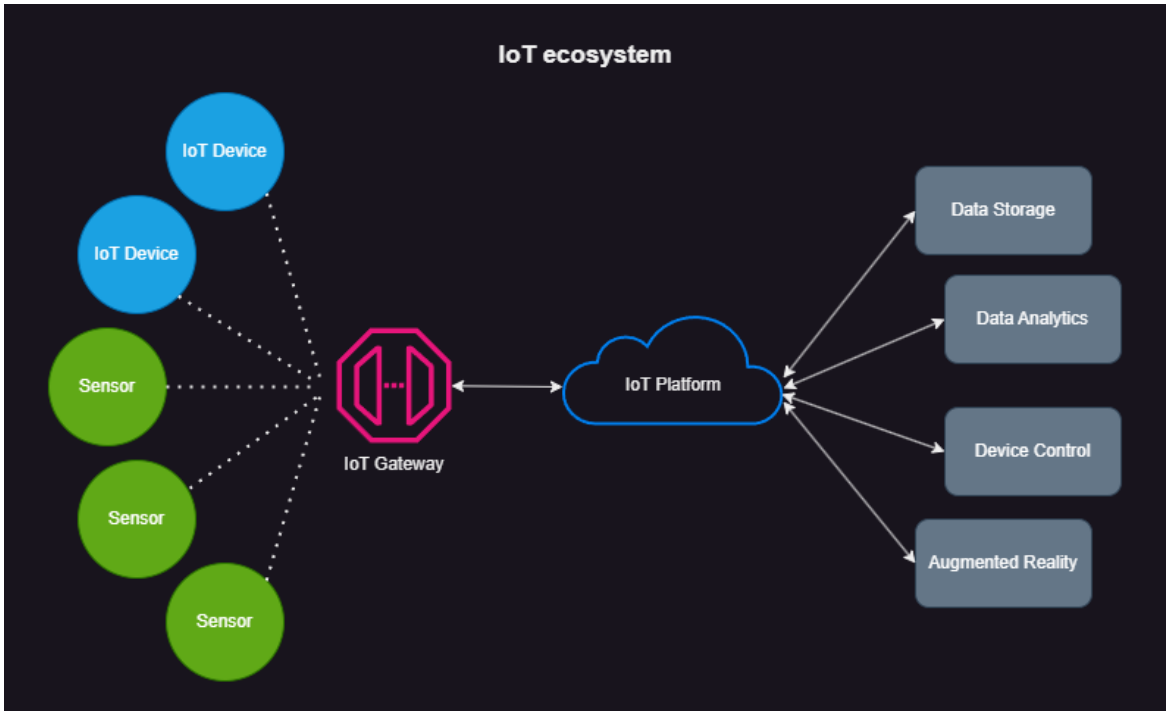

Figure 1.4: IoT ecosystem

2. Technologies

2.1 Docker

When discussing containers, Docker cannot be left out of the discussion. Docker is an open-source platform designed to automate the creation, deployment, scaling, and management of containerized applications. It is, by far, the most widely adopted tool for containerization. Docker allows the packaging of applications and their dependencies into lightweight and easily portable containers that can be deployed consistently across a wide range of environments. This portability ensures that applications behave identically, whether running on a developer's laptop, a staging environment, or a production server.

To provision containers, Docker uses images. Docker images are read-only templates used to create containers, similar to .iso files for virtual machines, but are more lightweight and versatile. Docker images bundle everything an application needs to run, including the operating system, application code, dependencies, libraries, and configuration metadata. The metadata often includes the entry point script, a set of commands executed when the container is instantiated.

An important feature of Docker images is their layered architecture. Each layer represents a distinct change, such as adding a file, installing a package, or modifying a configuration. This layered design allows developers to build images on top of existing ones, significantly reducing build times, image sizes, and data transfer requirements.

The runtime environment responsible for building, running, and managing containers is the Docker Engine, and it consists of three main components. The first is the Docker Daemon, a background service responsible for managing Docker objects, such as containers, images, volumes, and networks. Next is the Docker Command-Line Interface (CLI), which provides a way to interact with Docker through terminal commands. Finally, the REST API enables programmatic access to Docker's functionalities.

Docker images are created using Dockerfiles, which act as blueprints for the image creation process. A Dockerfile contains step-by-step instructions for building an image, including the base image, commands to configure the environment, install dependencies, and metadata such as port configurations and the entry point script. This declarative approach ensures reproducibility, as anyone with the Dockerfile can recreate the same image, ensuring consistency across teams.

Since images are meant to be portable and used over multiple environments, remote registries to store and fetch images from are crucial. Docker Hub is a free, widely used registry provided by the wider Docker ecosystem.

Hand in hand with containers, Docker enables the creation and management of other resources critical for smooth operation. Volumes are a mechanism for persisting data generated and used by containers. Unlike ephemeral container storage, volumes ensure data remains intact even after container deletion. Docker also creates networks, enabling container interconnectivity and communication between containers and the outside world.

For handling deployments of multiple containers in a programmatic way, Docker Compose can be utilized. Docker Compose is a tool that utilizes simple YAML files to manage multi-container deployments or applications by defining services, networks, and volumes required. This approach re-

duces complexity and enhances reproducibility, making it easier to manage applications with multiple interconnected components.

Finally, Docker provides a native container orchestration platform, Docker Swarm, but on a production level, it is outclassed by other, more robust and feature-rich solutions, such as bare-metal Kubernetes or cloud Kubernetes services like Amazon Elastic Kubernetes Service (EKS) and Google Kubernetes Engine (GKE) that offer seamless integration and scalability. [9]

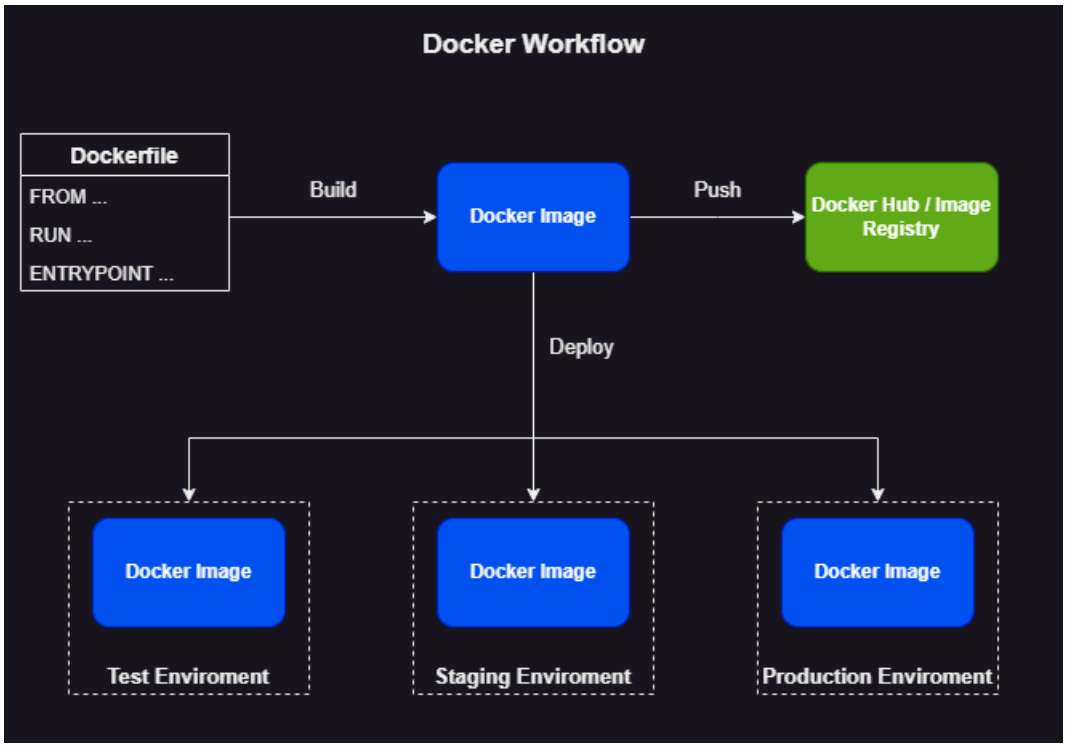

Figure 2.1: Docker Workflow

2.2 Prometheus

Prometheus is an open-source monitoring and alerting toolkit designed to provide flexible, reliable, and robust monitoring for any type of numerical data. It is considered a foundational tool for observability and a key component of modern monitoring stacks. Prometheus excels in collecting, storing, and querying time-series metrics, making it an ideal choice for monitoring infrastructure, applications, and containerized environments.

Prometheus collects and stores metrics as time-series data. Every metric is stored alongside a timestamp, allowing users to track and analyze changes over time. This feature is invaluable for identifying trends, diagnosing performance bottlenecks, and understanding long-term system behavior. Prometheus operates using a pull-based model, periodically scraping selected targets for metrics. This model ensures efficiency by fetching only the required data and enhances security by not requiring external systems to push data directly into Prometheus.

Metrics from various sources are exposed through Exporters, which transform raw data into a Prometheus-readable format. Prometheus includes a large ecosystem of pre-built exporters for common targets such as hardware systems, databases, and cloud platforms. Additionally, creating custom exporters is straightforward, making Prometheus highly adaptable to diverse use cases.

For retrieving, filtering, and manipulating time-series data, Prometheus Query Language (PromQL) is used. PromQL allows users to extract meaningful insights, create advanced visualizations, and define custom alerting rules. Prometheus also integrates seamlessly with Alertmanager, a companion

tool for managing alerts. Users can define alerting rules based on PromQL expressions to trigger notifications when specific conditions, such as threshold breaches or anomalies, are met. Alertmanager routes these alerts to appropriate channels, such as email, Slack, or webhooks.

For short-lived jobs that may terminate before Prometheus can scrape their metrics, the PushGateway provides a solution. This intermediary gateway allows these jobs to push metrics temporarily, ensuring no data loss. Prometheus also supports Service Discovery, enabling automatic detection of scrape targets in dynamic environments like Kubernetes. This eliminates the need for manual configuration, making it ideal for large-scale, constantly changing systems.

Prometheus employs a highly optimized, custom-built database for storing time-series data. This database supports fine-grained retention policies, allowing users to define which metrics to retain and for how long, thereby optimizing storage usage. Prometheus further enhances usability with its ability to label metrics using key-value pairs. These labels provide additional context and facilitate filtering and aggregation, enabling multidimensional analysis of metrics.

Although Prometheus offers basic visualization capabilities, it integrates natively with Grafana, the industry-leading visualization platform. This integration allows users to build interactive, feature-rich dashboards. While Prometheus is optimized for metrics collection, it is not suitable for other types of data, such as logs. To complement Prometheus, tools like Loki are often used to handle log data, creating a comprehensive observability stack. [10, 11]

2.3 Grafana

Usually, when utilizing Prometheus to gather metrics, Grafana is employed as the visualization tool of choice. Grafana is an open-source platform for monitoring and observability, designed to enable users to visualize, query, and analyze data from an extensive range of data sources. By transforming raw metrics into actionable insights, Grafana facilitates the creation of complex, interactive dashboards, making it an essential component of most modern monitoring and observability implementations.

These dashboards are highly customizable, combining a diverse variety of visualizations, such as line graphs, heatmaps, gauges, tables, and single-stat panels. This flexibility allows teams to represent various types of information, including historical data, real-time system statuses, and long-term trends, in a visually appealing and intuitive manner.

Grafana supports integration with a broad array of data sources, including Prometheus, Loki, PostgreSQL, MySQL, and cloud services. Its ability to query multiple sources simultaneously enables advanced, multifaceted analyses, where data from disparate systems can be combined and manipulated for deeper insights.

Grafana also has support for variable creation, which allows users to dynamically assign values from the sourced data. This capability enables the construction of dynamic dashboards with parameterized views that adapt to different environments, datasets, or conditions without requiring additional customization. Such dynamic behavior unlocks templating, where reusable dashboards can be developed, significantly enhancing efficiency and consistency across monitoring setups.

Grafana excels at centralizing observability, providing a unified view of the health and performance of systems, services, and applications. Its real-time visualizations empower teams to detect and address issues as they emerge, enabling faster response times and minimizing downtime.

At the same time, the ability to chart and analyze historical data enables the identification of recurring trends and the prediction of potential problems, thus allowing the implementation of proactive measures to mitigate risks.

Lastly, Grafana offers alerting capabilities, same as Prometheus with Alertmanager, that can push notifications on various channels when a set of conditions is met [12, 13].

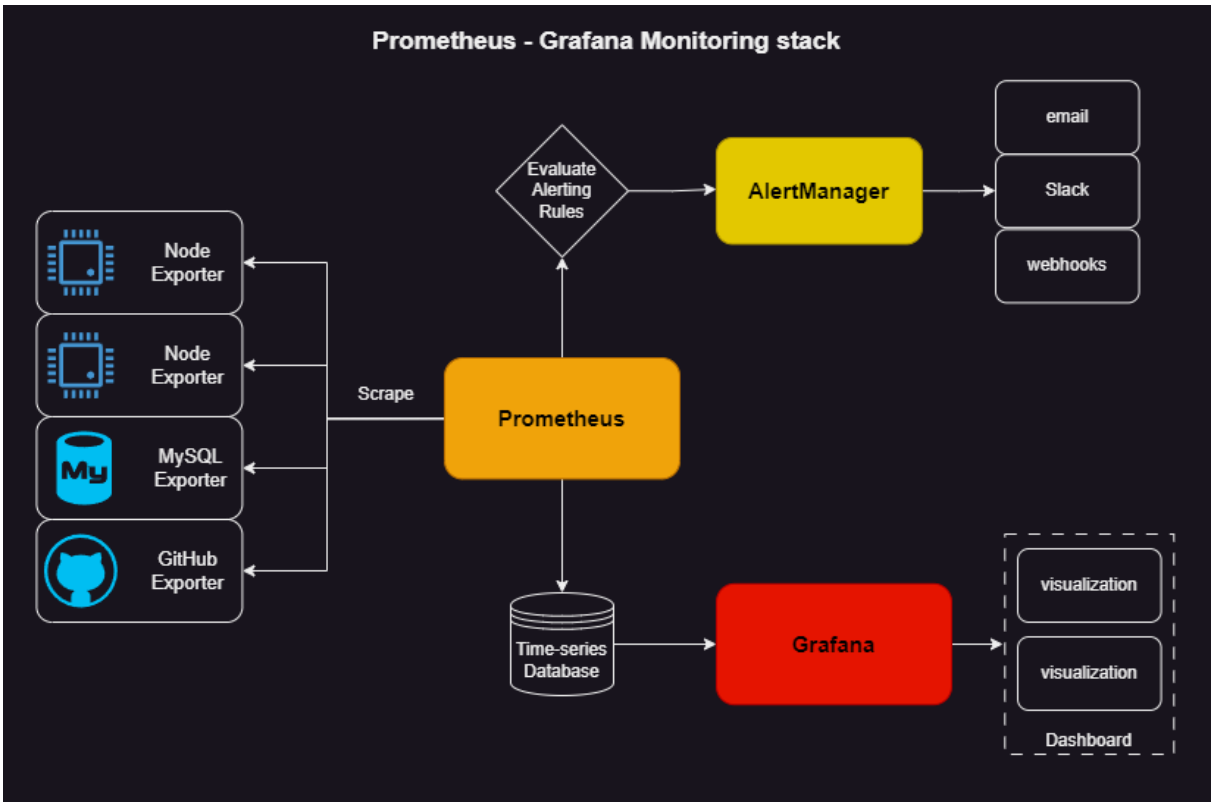

Figure 2.2: Prometheus-Grafana Monitoring stack

2.4 Message Queuing Telemetry Transport (MQTT)

Message Queuing Telemetry Transport (MQTT) is a lightweight, publish/subscribe model messaging protocol specifically designed for devices with limited computational resources and unreliable, low-bandwidth networks. Its efficiency and reliability make it a standard choice for IoT device communication and similar constrained environments.

At its core, MQTT operates using the publish/subscribe model, a decoupled communication architecture where publishers (senders) and subscribers (receivers) exchange messages through a central broker. The MQTT broker serves as the backend system responsible for managing message coordination between clients. Its key responsibilities include receiving and filtering messages, identifying clients subscribed to specific topics, and forwarding messages to those subscribers. Popular MQTT brokers are EMQX, HiveMQ and Mosquitto. Mosquitto was preferred in this implementation for it's lightweight nature, which fits well in a microservice approach.

In typical communication, MQTT clients (which can act as publishers, subscribers, or both) establish a connection with the broker using an MQTT connection. The broker confirms the connection, ensuring both entities are ready to exchange messages. MQTT requires a TCP/IP stack on both clients and brokers for communication, and clients never connect directly with each other but only with the broker. Once connected, the client can either publish messages, subscribe to specific messages, or do both. The broker filters incoming messages using topics, which are structured hierarchically, similar to folder directories in a filesystem. The broker only sends messages to subscribers from the topics they have explicitly subscribed to.

The MQTT protocol is widely regarded as a standard for IoT data transmission and for good reason. Firstly, it requires minimal hardware resources, so it can even be used by small battery-powered microcontrollers. MQTT control messages and MQTT message headers are quite small, reducing network overhead and ensuring efficient use of bandwidth. MQTT has build-in features like quick device reconnections and quality-of-service (QoS) levels, which ensure reliable message

delivery even on the unreliable, low-bandwidth and high latency cellular networks IoT devices usually operate on. The decouple nature of MQTT, combined with the low bandwidth requirements allows it to easily handle large number of clients, making it very scalable.

Despite its many strengths, MQTT does have a few limitations. The broker acts as the central node, and subsequently as a single point of failure, so any disruption or failure of the broker results in a complete communication breakdown. This risk can be mitigated through high-availability setups. Also the maximum payload is 256MB and large payloads can impact performance but in an IoT scenario. However, such large payloads are uncommon. Lastly, MQTT lacks native encryption but modern authentication protocols such as OAuth and TLS can be easily integrated [14].

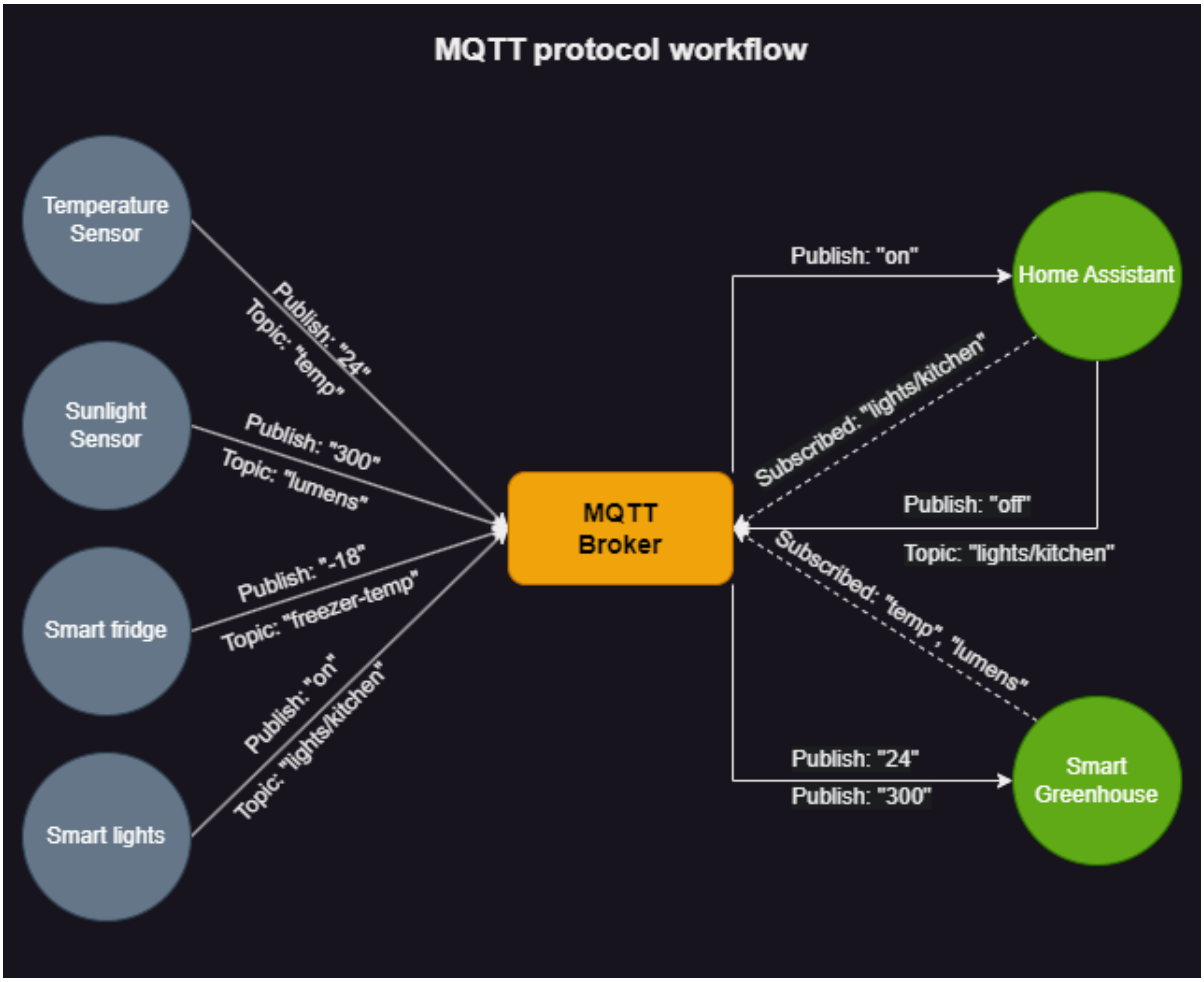

Figure 2.3: MQTT protocol workflow

3. Implementation

3.1 Design and Architecture

The design of the implementation leverages a microservices architecture to simulate real-world data collection and processing. The system was designed to emulate a sensor-driven environment, utilizing containerized services for data generation, communication, transformation, and visualization.

To simulate real sensors or microcontrollers, a python application was developed. This application processes a real dataset of air quality data and extracts the data corresponding to specific timestamps. The extracted data is then published to an MQTT broker. This python application is packaged in a Docker image to enable scalability and reusability. Multiple instances of this sensor simulation image are deployed as separate Docker containers, each simulating an independent sensor.

To enable communication using the MQTT protocol between the simulated sensors and the data-processing layer, an MQTT broker was deployed. The MQTT broker, also packaged in a Docker container, receives data from the sensor containers and forwards it to the subscribed clients.

A controller service was implemented as a Python application. This application subscribes to the MQTT topics published by the sensors, processes the incoming data, and converts it into a format compatible with Prometheus. The transformed data is then exposed through an HTTP endpoint. The controller application is also containerized and deployed as a separate Docker container.

Prometheus was deployed in a Docker container and configured to periodically scrape the data exposed by the controller service and to retain it for an appropriate amount of time.

Finally, Grafana was deployed as the visualization layer of the system, again in its own Docker container. Grafana was configured to use Prometheus as its data source. Custom dashboards were created to visualize the air quality data collected from the simulated sensors, enabling real-time monitoring and analysis.

The entire system was deployed using Docker Compose to allow for a easy orchestration and management of all the containerized services and for a straightforward, scalable and reproducible deployment.

3.2 Dataset

3.2.1 Dataset Description

The dataset used contains the responses of a gas multisensor device deployes on the field in an Italian city. Hourly responses averages are recorded along with gas concentrations references from a certified analyzer. The dataset contains 9357 instances of hourly averaged responses from an array of 5 metal oxide chemical sensors embedded in an Air Quality Chemical Multisensor Device. Ground Truth hourly averaged concentrations for CO, Non Metanic Hydrocarbons, Benzene, Total Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2) were provided by a co-located reference certified analyzer. Dataset can be found here.

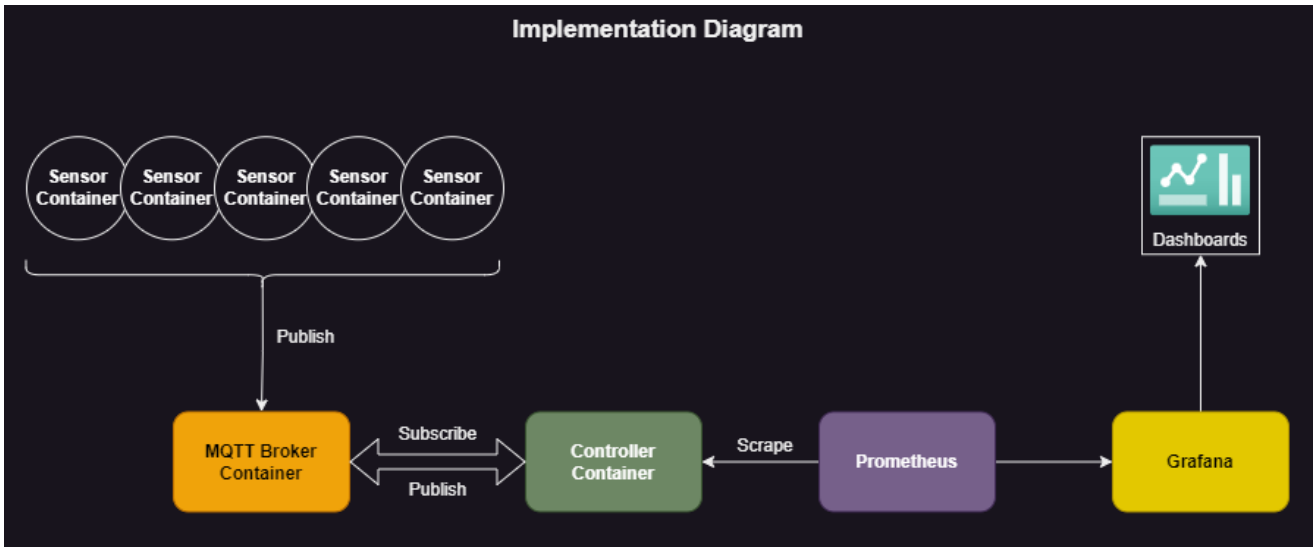

Figure 3.1: Implementation Diagram

Attribute Information	
0	Date (DD/MM/YYYY)
1	Time (HH.MM.SS)
2	True hourly averaged concentration CO in mg/m^3 (reference analyzer)
3	PT08.S1 (tin oxide) hourly averaged sensor response (nominally CO targeted)
4	True hourly averaged overall Non Metanic HydroCarbons concentration in $microg/m^3$ (reference analyzer)
5	True hourly averaged Benzene concentration in $microg/m^3$ (reference analyzer)
6	PT08.S2 (titania) hourly averaged sensor response (nominally NMHC targeted)
7	True hourly averaged NOx concentration in ppb (reference analyzer)
8	PT08.S3 (tungsten oxide) hourly averaged sensor response (nominally NOx targeted)
9	True hourly averaged NO2 concentration in $microg/m^3$ (reference analyzer)
10	PT08.S4 (tungsten oxide) hourly averaged sensor response (nominally NO2 targeted)
11	PT08.S5 (indium oxide) hourly averaged sensor response (nominally O3 targeted)
12	Temperature in °C
13	Relative Humidity (%)
14	AH Absolute Humidity

Table 3.1: Dataset Attribute Information

3.2.2 Dataset Manipulation

Dataset was originally formatted in comma-separated values (CSV) format to be easily imported in a spreadsheet. To bring the CSV formatted dataset in a programmatically friendlier json format, a python script was developed. To assist with the randomized nature of data generation by the sensor simulator, for every timestamp a json object was created, with key an incremental integer and value the collection of metrics in json object format. Also empty rows were removed.

```
import csv
import sys
import json
```

```
import os

# Creates a new csv file named 'edited_csv' that doesn't contain empty rows, or rows
↪  with empty fields
def csv_cleanup(csvfilename):
    with open(csvfilename, newline='') as csvfile:
        with open('edited_csv', 'w', newline='') as edited_csvfile:
            original = csv.reader(csvfile, delimiter=';')
            edited = csv.writer(edited_csvfile, delimiter=';')
            # fieldnames = next(original)
            # fieldnames.insert(0, "#")
            # edited.writerow(fieldnames)
            # i = 1
            for row in original:
                if row and any(row) and any(field.strip() for field in row):
                    # row.insert(0, i)
                    edited.writerow(row)
                    # i += 1

# Creates a json file from the edited csv file with an incremental integer as keys
def csv_to_json(filename):
    data_dict = {}
    with open('edited_csv', newline='') as csvfile:
        edited = csv.DictReader(csvfile, delimiter=';')
        key = 1
        for row in edited:
            data_dict[key] = row
            key += 1
    with open(filename+'.json', 'w') as jsonfile:
        jsonfile.write(json.dumps(data_dict, indent = 4))



csvfilename = sys.argv[1]
filename = csvfilename.split('/')[-1].split('.')[0]

csv_cleanup(csvfilename)
csv_to_json(filename)
os.remove('edited_csv')
```

The json re-formated dataset is structured as seen below.

```
{
    "1": {
        "Date": "10/03/2004",
        "Time": "18.00.00",
        "CO(GT)": "2,6",
        "PT08.S1(CO)": "1360",
        "NMHC(GT)": "150",
        "C6H6(GT)": "11,9",
```

```
            "PT08.S2(NMHC)": "1046",
            "NOx(GT)": "166",
            "PT08.S3(NOx)": "1056",
            "NO2(GT)": "113",
            "PT08.S4(NO2)": "1692",
            "PT08.S5(O3)": "1268",
            "T": "13,6",
            "RH": "48,9",
            "AH": "0,7578",
            "": ""
        },
        "2": {
            "Date": "10/03/2004",
            "Time": "19.00.00",
            "CO(GT)": "2",
            "PT08.S1(CO)": "1292",
            "NMHC(GT)": "112",
            "C6H6(GT)": "9,4",
            "PT08.S2(NMHC)": "955",
            "NOx(GT)": "103",
            "PT08.S3(NOx)": "1174",
            "NO2(GT)": "92",
            "PT08.S4(NO2)": "1559",
            "PT08.S5(O3)": "972",
            "T": "13,3",
            "RH": "47,7",
            "AH": "0,7255",
            "": ""
        }
    }
```


3.3 Sensor Simulator

3.3.1 Scenario

The sensors remain in a low-power idle state to conserve energy. They are subscribed to the ”collect-data” topic but are not actively collecting or publishing data. The controller node publishes a message to the MQTT topic ”collect-data”. This message is broadcast to all subscribed sensors by the MQTT broker. Upon receiving the trigger from the collect-data topic, sensors begin collecting air quality metrics. After collecting the data, each sensor publishes its metrics to its respective MQTT topic and returns to an idle state.

3.3.2 Application

As described on the scenario, first action on the application is establishing a connection to the MQTT broker, making sure to reconnect in case of disconnection, which would happen often in a real case scenario utilizing an unreliable cellular connection and subscribing to the ”collect-data” topic. Then, once a message from the topic is received the data collection and publishing script is executed.

```
    import socket
    import time
    import subprocess
    import paho.mqtt.client as mqtt_client

    port = 1883  # Default port for MQTT communication
    topic = "collect-data"  # Topic to subscribe to for data collection
    hostname = socket.gethostname()  # Get the hostname of the machine running this
    ↪  script. Machine (container) hostname is enforced later-on by docker compose
    client_id = 'subscribe-{}'.format(hostname)  # Unique client ID for MQTT connection
    # broker = 'localhost'  # Uncomment this line for local broker testing
    broker = 'host.docker.internal'  # Use when running in a Docker environment

    def connect_mqtt():
        """
        Connects to the MQTT broker and sets up event handlers for connect, disconnect,
↪   and message events.
        """

        def on_connect(client, userdata, flags, rc):
            """
            Callback triggered upon connecting to the MQTT broker.
            """
            if rc == 0:
                print("Connected to MQTT Broker!")
                client.subscribe(topic)  # Subscribe to the specified topic
            else:
                print("Failed to connect, return code %d\n", rc)

        def on_disconnect(client, userdata, rc):
            """
            Callback triggered when the MQTT client disconnects from the broker.
            Implements an exponential backoff strategy for reconnection attempts.
            """
            FIRST_RECONNECT_DELAY = 1
            RECONNECT_RATE = 2
            MAX_RECONNECT_COUNT = 12
            MAX_RECONNECT_DELAY = 60

            print("Disconnected with result code: %s", rc)
            reconnect_count, reconnect_delay = 0, FIRST_RECONNECT_DELAY
            while reconnect_count < MAX_RECONNECT_COUNT:
                print("Reconnecting in {} seconds...".format(reconnect_delay))
                time.sleep(reconnect_delay)

                try:
                    client.reconnect()
                    print("Reconnected successfully!")
                    return
                except Exception as err:
```

```
                print("{}. Reconnect failed. Retrying...".format(err))

            reconnect_delay *= RECONNECT_RATE
            reconnect_delay = min(reconnect_delay, MAX_RECONNECT_DELAY)
            reconnect_count += 1
        print("Reconnect failed after {} attempts.
        ↪ Exiting...".format(reconnect_count))

    def on_message(client, userdata, msg):
        """
        Callback triggered when a message is received on the subscribed topic.
        """
        print("Received `{}` from `{}` topic".format(msg.payload.decode(), msg.topic))
        subprocess.run(["./sensor_data"])  # Execute the sensor_data script upon
        ↪ message receipt

    # Create an MQTT client instance, assign the callback functions and connect
    client = mqtt_client.Client(client_id)
    client.on_connect = on_connect
    client.on_disconnect = on_disconnect
    client.on_message = on_message
    client.connect(broker, port)
    return client  # Return the configured client instance

def run():
    """
    Main function to connect the MQTT client and start its loop.
    """
    client = connect_mqtt()
    client.loop_forever()

if __name__ == '__main__':
    run()
```

The data collection script, again starts by establishing a connection client with the MQTT broker. Once connection is established, the data collection process starts. To simulate a real-world scenario, to add variation between the multiple sensors and a randomization element, that also prolongs the use of the dataset before going over the same data, an elaborate process was devised. To ensure the randomized data have a real-world, logical flow, the next data point is selected from the range (previous - 2, previous + 3). This ensures that the metrics collected each time are only a few hours apart instead of completely random, which would result in completely abnormal differences on metrics that wouldn't be observed on metrics taken a few minutes or an hour apart. It also ensures that the data point slowly moves forward in time, as to not overly repeat the same data. The starting point for this process is randomized using another script, to ensure results between sensors don't overlap heavily. Since the data collection process is ephemeral, the data points needs to be stored. This could have been achieved in a number of ways, like passing it back and forth between the main subscription script or using an environmental variable, but storing to a file was preferred as it could also be utilized if a recovery scenario was to be covered. Once the end of the database is reached, a new starting point is, again, randomly selected.

```
import json
import random, os
import socket
import subprocess
from dotenv import load_dotenv
import paho.mqtt.client as mqtt_client

port = 1883  # Default port for MQTT communication
hostname = socket.gethostname()  # Retrieve the hostname of the current machine.
↪  Hostname is enforced by docker compose.
topic = "sensor-data/{}".format(hostname)  # Define the unique topic for publishing
↪  sensor data
client_id = 'publish-{}'.format(hostname)  # Unique client ID for MQTT connection
# broker = 'localhost'  # Uncomment this line for local broker testing
broker = 'host.docker.internal'  # Use this broker when running in a Docker
↪  environment

def connect_mqtt():
    """
    Connects to the MQTT broker and sets up the on_connect callback.
    """

    def on_connect(client, userdata, flags, rc):
        """
        Callback triggered upon connecting to the MQTT broker.
        """
        if rc == 0:
            print("Connected to MQTT Broker!")
        else:
            print("Failed to connect, return code %d\n", rc)

    client = mqtt_client.Client(client_id)
    client.on_connect = on_connect
    client.connect(broker, port)
    return client

def data_gen():
    """
    Generates sensor data by selecting a random entry from a dataset.
    The selection point is controlled via an environment variable.
    """
    with open("dataset.json") as datafile:
        json_data = json.load(datafile)  # Load the dataset from the JSON file

        load_dotenv()  # Load environment variables from the .env file
        startpoint = int(os.getenv('STARTPOINT'))  # Get the STARTPOINT from the .env
        ↪  file
        # Randomize the data selection around the startpoint. Slowly moves forward in
        ↪  time, while keeping results semi-random and ensuring a logical history.
        randomizer = random.randint(startpoint - 2, startpoint + 3)
```

```
        while randomizer not in range(1, len(json_data)):  # Ensure the randomizer is
        ↪  valid
            subprocess.run(["./set_startpoint"])  # Run a script to reset the
            ↪  startpoint
            load_dotenv()  # Reload environment variables
            startpoint = int(os.getenv('STARTPOINT'))
            randomizer = random.randint(startpoint - 10, startpoint + 10)

        # Update the STARTPOINT in the .env file
        with open(".env", "w") as f:
            f.write("STARTPOINT={}".format(randomizer))

        randata = json_data[str(randomizer)]  # Fetch the random data entry
        return randata  # Return the selected data

def publish(client, data):
    """
    Publishes a message to the MQTT topic.
    """
    msg = str(data)  # Convert the data to a string
    result = client.publish(topic, msg)  # Publish the message to the topic
    status = result[0]  # Check the result status
    if status == 0:
        print("Sent `{}` to topic `{}`".format(msg, topic))
    else:
        print("Failed to send message to topic {}".format(topic))

if __name__ == '__main__':
    client = connect_mqtt()  # Establish the MQTT connection
    client.loop_start()  # Start the MQTT client loop in a separate thread
    randata = data_gen()  # Generate random sensor data
    publish(client, randata)  # Publish the generated data to the topic
    client.loop_stop()  # Stop the MQTT client loop
```

```
import json, random

def set_startpoint():
    """
    Sets a STARTPOINT value based on the dataset's size and writes it to an .env file.
    """
    with open("dataset.json") as datafile:
        json_data = json.load(datafile) # Load the dataset from a JSON file

        endpoint = round(len(json_data)/10) # Determine the upper limit for the
        ↪  STARTPOINT range
        startpoint = str(random.randint(1, endpoint))

        print("Setting STARTPOINT as {}".format(startpoint))
```

```
        with open(".env", "w") as f:
            f.write("STARTPOINT={}".format(startpoint)) # Write the STARTPOINT to the
            ↪  .env file

if __name__ == '__main__':
    set_startpoint()
```

Only libraries required, are ”paho-mqtt” and ”python-dotenv”.

3.3.3 Containerization

IoT sensors usually are embedded on microcontrollers with limited hardware resources. While minimal, optimized subsets of Python do exist, building the Python scripts and using the binaries directly, makes more sense. To stick with the minimal, lightweight enviroment expected in an IoT microcontroller, a minimal linux docker image as base is a good fit. The Alpine docker image was selected, as it is the industry standard for minimal, striped down Linux images, and current latest ones are only around 5MB uncompressed. To build the Python scripts PyInstaller was used, but because Alpine utilizes Musl C library, instead of the GNU C library, a third party PyInstaller-ready, Alpine-based Python image was used, that can be found here. Using this image also removes the requirement of installing PyInstaller, a great example of how docker removes environmental dependencies. The following command was used:

```
$ docker run --rm -v "${PWD}:/src" anastzampetis/pyinstaller-alpine --noconfirm
↪  --onefile --log-level DEBUG --clean <script_name>.py
```

Once the binaries were built, a simple Dockerfile was used to copy the binaries and the json formated dataset into the base Alpine image and set the binaries to be executed when running the container.

```
FROM alpine

WORKDIR /app
ADD dist/sensor_data .
ADD dist/sensor_sub .
ADD dist/set_startpoint .
ADD dataset.json .

CMD ./set_startpoint && ./sensor_sub
```

Finally to build the image, below command was executed:

```
$ docker build -t anastzampetis/sensor-emul:latest -f Dockerfile .
```

3.4 MQTT Broker

For the MQTT broker, the Eclipse Mosquitto MQTT broker was selected. Mosquitto is an open-source message broker that implements the MQTT protocol. Mosquitto is designed to be small and efficient, suitable for IoT devices with constrained resources, and fits well in a microservice enviroment. It’s also very capable of handling even large-scale deployments, making it a good fit for a scalable enviroment.

To stay true to a microservice architecture and to make deployment and management easier, the Mosquitto MQTT broker was deployed in a docker container. It is already available in an official image found here. Configuring the container was simple in the scope of this implementation, since there was no need for secutiry protocols and persisting data inside the broker container because Prometheus is utilized.

```
persistence false      # No need to persist data, since it's pushed to Prometheus
listener 1883          # The listener port that clients publish to
allow_anonymous true   # Since there is no need for security, anonymous is allowed.
```

3.5 Controller Node

The controller node serves a number of important functions. Firstly, it's responsible for publishing on the "collect-data" MQTT topic, so the sensor simulators will leave the idle state and collect the data. Then, by subscribing to the topics the sensors publish to, "sensor-data/#" (usign a wildcard topic definition also allows for scaling of sensors), the controller node will receive messages from each topic, containing the sensor data.

Once these messages are received, using the "prometheus_client" library all metrics are converted in Prometheus format and exposed to an endpoint. Every metric is assigned to a different Gauge type Prometheus metric and labeled usign the sensor unique id. A gauge is a metric that represents a single numerical value that can arbitrarily go up and down. This part of the controller's functionality is essensially a Prometheus exporter.

Usually Prometheus exporters collect data periodically, but continiously expose last collected metrics on an HTTP endpoint. In this case, thought, to make it easier to change the rate of data collection, by changing the scraping rate of Prometheus, a different design was implemented. The controller, utilizing the "fastapi" library and "gunicorn" exposes an API endpoint. When Prometheus scrapes this endpoint, the data collection process is triggered by the controller, and after a small time delay the controller respondes with the metrics.

<add scripts> <add output of controller> <add captions on the code?>

3.6 Prometheus

3.7 Grafana

3.8 Orchestration

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