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Timeliness Issues of Duty-Cycled MAC Protocols: Toward Energy and Timely Constrained Data Delivery in Wireless Sensor Networks

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Abstract

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Nowadays it has become possible to build tiny, wireless communication enabled, hardware devices, for monitoring and measuring miscellaneous parameters of the environment. This yields Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs); a special class of wireless networks where nodes are low cost, resource constrained, and generally battery powered devices. Energy-efficiency is the main concern in most wireless sensor network applications. When in idle mode, current radios consume as much energy as when transmitting or receiving data, thus only by putting the radio into sleep mode that the energy consumption is reduced considerably, and allowing 99% of data delivery with duty cycles below 1%. This remarkable energy conservation is thus achieved at the MAC layer using duty-cycling of the radio (i.e, switching between active/sleep modes). In active mode, a node can receive and transmit packets. While in the sleep mode, it completely turns off its radio to save energy. In this situation, a node needs to be aware of its neighbors' wakeup time, since packets cannot be exchanged unless both the transmitter and the receiver are awake. This has a direct impact on the forwarding delay of sensed data. Ensuring low-latency in large scale WSN is challenging, due to sensor nodes' limitations in energy supply, communication capabilities and unstable wireless links. The end-to-end (e2e) delay is the most critical factor in time-constrained monitoring applications, where a high priority data needs to be reported to a sink in time so that the appropriate action can be taken immediately. This thesis deals with timeliness issues in energy constrained WSN in the case of low data rate applications.

This thesis begins with an overview on the delay performance in the context of energy-limited WSN, where energy is considered as a constraint for MAC protocols that inevitably duty-cycle the radio. In this part of the thesis, we provide a comprehensive review and taxonomy of state-of-the-art *synchronous* and *asynchronous* contention-based low duty-cycle MAC protocols which are typically implemented in many WSN applications. The main objective is to study and classify these protocols from the delay efficiency perspective. In synchronous schemes, protocols can be divided into five categories: static grouped schedule, adaptive grouped schedule, adaptive repeated schedule, staggered schedule, and reservation schedule. While asynchronous

protocols can be also divided into five categories: static preamble sampling, adaptive preamble sampling, collaborative schedule setting, beacon-based, and anticipation-based protocols. Several state-of-the-art protocols are described following the proposed classification, with comprehensive discussions and comparisons with respect to their latency.

In the second part, we propose a novel asynchronous cascading wakeup MAC protocol for heterogeneous traffic gathering. It jointly considers energy/delay optimization and switches between low duty-cycle (LDC) and high duty cycle (HDC) modes, according to the traffic type and delay requirements. The proposed protocol, named DuoMAC, has the following features: it adjusts the wake-up of a node according to (i) its parent's wake-up time and, (ii) its estimated load. It incorporates a service differentiation through an improved contention window adaptation to meet delay requirements. The protocol is analyzed and compared with some state-of-the-art energy-delay efficient MAC protocols. Dynamic parameter adaptation mechanism has been integrated to DuoMAC to balance the delay and energy objectives at runtime. DuoMAC has been implemented on real motes using MicaZ and experiments reveal that the runtime parameter adaptation provides additional reduction of the latency while further decreasing the energy cost.

Besides the design of efficient communication protocols, optimizing energy consumption and end-to-end delay in energy-constrained WSNs is a conflicting multi-objective problem. In the third part of the thesis, the energy-delay tradeoff is investigated from the game theory perspective, where an optimization framework based on Nash Bargaining and Kalai-Smorodinsky Bargaining models, provides the optimal energy-delay balancing solution given the application requirements and allows to set tunable system parameters to reach a fair equilibrium point which dually minimizes the system latency and energy-consumption. For illustration, this formulation is applied to our proposed MAC, DuoMAC, as well as to five state-of-the-art WSN MAC protocols; B-MAC, X-MAC, RI-MAC, SMAC, and LMAC. Further, we have carried out an extensive set of simulations to validate the optimization results where the energy consumption and the average e2e delay were measured and compared to the analytical results. We found that when tuning protocols with optimal parameters, they map the obtained trade-off performances and confirm the effectiveness of the proposed framework.

Contents

Dedication of Authorship	i
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	viii
List of Tables	xi
Abbreviations	xii
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Wireless Sensor Networks: An overview	2
1.1.1 Resource Limitations	2
1.1.2 Motivating Applications	4
1.1.3 Challenges in Monitoring Applications	4
1.2 Addressing Timeliness in WSNs	5
1.3 Medium Access in Low Duty-Cycle WSNs	5
1.4 MAC Protocols Design: Constraints and Requirements	6
1.4.1 Energy Efficiency	6
1.4.2 Major Causes for Energy Depletion	6
1.4.3 Communication Delay	7
1.4.4 Factors Affecting Delay	7
1.4.5 Decreasing Delay vs. Saving Energy	8
1.5 Outline and Contributions	9
2 State-Of-The-Art: Latency Issue Of Low Duty-Cycle MAC Protocols	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 MAC Protocols: Overview and Taxonomy	12
2.2.1 Existing Taxonomies and Standards	12
2.2.2 Synchronous vs. Asynchronous MAC Protocols	14
2.3 Latency Issue of Synchronous MAC Protocols	15
2.3.1 Static Grouped Schedule Protocols	15
2.3.2 Adaptive Grouped Schedule Protocols	16
2.3.3 Adaptive Repeated Schedule Protocols	17
2.3.4 Adaptive Staggered Schedule Protocols	17
2.3.5 Adaptive Reservation Protocols	19

2.4	Latency Issue of Asynchronous MAC Protocols	19
2.4.1	Static Preamble Sampling Protocols	20
2.4.2	Adaptive Preamble Sampling Protocols	22
2.4.3	Collaborative Schedule Setting Protocols	24
2.4.4	Beacon-Based Protocols	26
2.4.5	Anticipating Protocols	27
2.5	Review Summary and Discussions	29
2.5.1	Synchronous MAC	29
2.5.2	Asynchronous MAC	31
2.6	Conclusion	32
3	Delay-Efficient MAC with Traffic Differentiation for Energy Constrained WSNs	33
3.1	Introduction	33
3.1.1	Illustrative System Scenario	34
3.1.2	Problem Statement and Contribution	34
3.2	DuoMAC Protocol Description	35
3.2.1	LDC and HDC Operation Modes	36
3.2.2	Cascading Wakeup Schedule	38
3.2.3	Estimating the Traffic Load	39
3.2.4	Adjusting the Wake-up Time	40
3.2.5	Service Differentiation and CW Adaptation	40
3.3	Comparative Analysis	41
3.3.1	Network and Traffic Model	42
3.3.2	Energy and Delay Model	45
3.3.3	DMAC Protocol	45
3.3.4	LL-MAC Protocol	47
3.3.5	Diff-MAC Protocol	48
3.3.6	DuoMAC Protocol	49
3.3.7	Analytical Results	50
3.3.7.1	The Wake-up Period	51
3.3.7.2	The Network Depth	52
3.3.7.3	RT Traffic Frequency	53
3.3.7.4	NRT Traffic Frequency	53
3.3.7.5	Delay vs. Energy Gain	54
3.4	Parameters Adaptation	55
3.4.1	Optimization Problem	55
3.4.2	Collection and Dissemination	56
3.5	Experimental Performance Evaluation	57
3.5.1	Optimal Parameters	57
3.5.2	The e2e Delay	58
3.5.3	The Duty Cycle	60
3.6	Conclusion	61
4	Game Theory Framework for MAC Parameter Optimization to Energy-Delay Tradeoff in Sensor Networks	63
4.1	Introduction	63

4.1.1	Problem Statement and Contribution	64
4.1.2	Background on Performance Optimization	65
4.2	Game Theory Framework	67
4.2.1	Network and Traffic Model	68
4.2.2	Radio and MAC Model	69
4.2.3	System Energy and Delay Model	70
4.2.4	The Optimization Framework	72
4.2.5	The Nash Bargaining Solution (<i>NBS</i>) for Duty-Cycled MAC	73
4.2.6	Kalai-Smorodinsky Bargaining Solution (<i>KSBS</i>) for Duty-Cycled MAC	75
4.3	Application to a Set of WSN MAC Protocols	77
4.3.1	Protocols Description	78
4.3.1.1	Preamble-based MAC	78
4.3.1.2	Beacon-based MAC	80
4.3.1.3	Slotted Contention-based MAC	82
4.3.1.4	Frame-based MAC	84
4.3.2	Framework Application	85
4.3.2.1	Energy Optimization	86
4.3.2.2	Delay Optimization	89
4.3.2.3	Energy-Delay Trade-off: <i>NBS</i> model	91
4.3.2.4	Energy-Delay Trade-off: <i>KSBS</i> model	92
4.3.2.5	<i>NBS</i> and <i>KSBS</i> gains	96
4.3.3	<i>KSBS</i> optimal points vs. Sampling Rate (F_s)	99
4.3.4	Scalability of the Solution	101
4.4	Results Validation	101
4.4.1	Average e2e Delay vs. Max Delay Bound (L_{\max})	102
4.4.2	Energy vs. Max Delay Bound (L_{\max})	103
4.4.3	Average e2e Delay vs. Max Energy Budget (E_{budget})	104
4.4.4	Energy vs. Max Energy Budget (E_{budget})	106
4.5	Conclusion	106
5	Conclusion	107
5.1	Summary and Findings	107
5.2	Future Research and Perspectives	109
	Appendix	110
A	Energy-Delay Analysis of MAC Protocols	111
A.1	DMAC Protocol	111
A.2	LL-MAC Protocol	112
A.3	Diff-MAC Protocol	112
A.4	DuoMAC Protocol	113
B	Game Theory Application	116
B.1	B-MAC Protocol	116
B.2	DuoMAC Protocol	118
B.3	Framework Application	120

B.3.1	Energy Optimization	120
B.3.2	Delay Optimization	121
B.3.3	Energy-Delay Trade-off	122
Publications		123
Bibliography		125