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CDS-MEC: NFV/SDN-based application management for MEC in 5G Systems

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Abstract

This paper presents and evaluates the first Network Function Virtualization (NFV)/Software Defined Networking (SDN)-based architecture of the Mobile Edge Computing (MEC) platform. Our architecture solves the Mobile Edge (ME) management issues with respect to Application (App) provisioning and platform traffic management. First, the MEC applications are managed as Virtual Network Functions (VNFs) on top of the virtual environment through the Juju VNF Manager (VNFM). Second, we develop an SDN controller to manage traffic on the MEC System. Third, unlike other relevant architectures of ME platforms, we use the control plane (i.e., S1 interface) to derive appropriate states for traffic management. Finally, we evaluate our solution in two use-cases: ME caching and Information Centric (ICN)/Delay Tolerant (DTN) Public Safety communication (PS). The MEC caching framework displays improved user Quality of Experience, e.g., latency in comparison to direct communication, while the PS solution provides a residual mean of communication for rescue teams, when the network core (EPC) and a Public Data Network (PDN) are unavailable.

1. Introduction

There is an on-going effort that will change the ecosystem of future mobile networks providing intelligence at the network edge. Mobile Edge Computing (MEC) [1, 2] will be used to provide computing and storage directly at or close to an evolved Node B (eNB). Due to MEC, content, services, and applications will greatly benefit from increased responsiveness of the network edge. MEC is also foreseen in 3GPP¹ 5G networks as an important technological enabler towards new genres of applications that intelligently combine location, network condi-

tions, and radio information to provide enriched services to end-users. Therefore, MEC will widely spread in the ecosystem of future 5G networks. MEC could be implemented using older management techniques (i.e., not Network Function Virtualization (NFV)/Software Defined Networking (SDN)-based), however, the NFV/SDN will greatly improve flexibility and rapid building of services at the edge. This work presents the architecture as well as implements and evaluates the performance of the CDS-MEC System². The paper is organized in the following way. Sec. 2 discusses the related work on 3GPP networks and MEC. In Sec. 3, we describe architecture and

¹The 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) unites seven telecommunications standard development organizations (ARIB, ATIS, CCSA, ETSI, TSDSI, TTA, TTC).

²CDS refers to the Communication and Distributed Systems Group of the University of Bern.

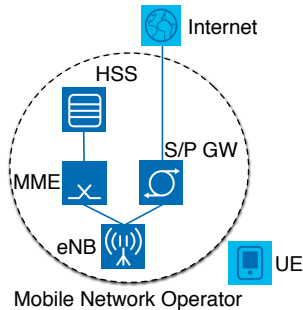


Figure 1: A simplified architecture of the LTE system.

implementation details of our MEC platform. Sec. 4 describes the architecture of the SDN controller. The performance of our architecture running selected ME Apps is illustrated in Sec. 5. Finally, we conclude in Sec. 6.

2. Related Work

2.1. Mobile Network Operator

In Fig. 1, we depict a simplified schematic of the 4G Mobile Network Operator. The LTE network is divided into the Evolved Packet Core (EPC) and the Radio Access Network (RAN). An eNB is a base station that provides a RAN towards end-users operating User Equipment (UE). The EPC contains a Home Subscriber Server (HSS), a Mobility Management Entity (MME), a Serving Gateway (SGW), and a Packet Data Network Gateway (PGW) [3]. The HSS is responsible for maintaining the user subscription information. The MME is a critical network function, which deals with the control plane. The SGW is responsible for handling user plane packets between the eNB and the PGW. The PGW is a user plane component, which forwards packets between the LTE network and packet networks (e.g., the Internet). In the remaining part of this paper, we refer to both PGW and SGW as Serving Packet Gateway (SPGW). Moreover, we will put a particular focus on the traffic management of the S1 interface between the eNB and MME in the control plane (S1-C) and the eNB and SPGW in the data plane, i.e., GPRS Tunneling Protocol (GTP-U).

2.2. SDN/NFV in Mobile Networks

In the EPC, the NFV concept solves flexibility and cost-efficiency problems through the on-demand instantiation of Virtual Network Functions (VNFs) [4], while SDN is mainly proposed for traffic optimizations [5, 6, 7, 8] in the core focusing on benefits including performance, scalability, interoperability, and flexibility.

There are several projects using the concept of NFV/SDN in Mobile Networks. Claudia³ can instantiate services in private (i.e., OpenNebula, Eucalyptus, vSphere) and public clouds (Amazon, Flexiscale, etc.). The EU FP7 T-NOVA project [9] implements an orchestration platform for the provisioning, configuration, monitoring, and optimization of Network Function-as-a-Service over virtualized infrastructures. The orchestration aspects covered by T-NOVA primarily include service chain mapping, service chaining and provisioning. In terms of service chaining, it employs SDN to install the forwarding state into the switches for traffic steering through the VNF chain. The EU H2020 SONATA project [10] also implements an orchestration and management framework, which allows both the service operator and the service developers to influence the deployment and placement of the service chains on the physical infrastructure. SONATA supports a Development and Operations (DevOps) work-flow, which allows both developers and service operators to collaborate during the orchestration to optimize the design and deployment of the service. The EU FP7 UNIFY project [11] proposes an orchestration layer, which aims to achieve optimal placement of service chains on a physical infrastructure across different domains. The orchestration layer also provides an abstract and unified view of physical resources across different infrastructure providers to a service layer, through which customers can request a service. The EU FP7 MCN project [12] provides a distributed orchestration layer consisting of a service manager (e.g., a RAN provider) and multiple service orchestrators per domain. The service manager provides an interface to the end customer to re-

³<http://occi-wg.org/tag/claudia/>

request a service from the corresponding domain. For each requested service chain, the service manager creates a service orchestrator, which configures, creates and deploys the service on the domain infrastructure through its controller. At the standardization level, the ETSI NFV Industry Specification Group (ISG) is defining concepts, architectures, and interfaces for delivery and management of VNFs and their service chains. In ETSI NFV MANagement and Orchestration (MANO) [13], the NFV Orchestrator, in combination with the VNF Manager, is in charge of deploying the network services over the physical infrastructure as well as configure and operate (scale-in/scale-out) the VNFs covering all the VNFs life-cycles. In terms of software, several open source projects are addressing platforms for NFV Infrastructures and NFV MANO tools. Virtual Infrastructure Manager (VIM) and NFV Infrastructure (NFVI) are the current focus of the OPNFV⁴ initiative, which has the goal to provide NFVI and VIM components, as well as their open Application Programming Interfaces (APIs). Other projects focus more on the management and orchestration functions of the NFV MANO architecture: OpenBaton⁵, Open-O⁶ and OpenSourceMANO (OSM) provide open source software for NFV-Orchestration and generic Virtual Network Function Managers (VNFM). OSM was demonstrated at Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2016⁷.

2.3. ME Systems

Roman et al. [14] compared MEC, fog computing, and cloudlet systems. A derivation of a conceptual architecture, spanning functionalities and interfaces for provisioning applications on MEC systems is derived in [15]. The ETSI MEC ISG provides an open standardization environment for the development of architectures for MEC Systems. Initially, ETSI defined six application use-cases [1] for mobile edge systems. The work of ETSI concentrates on the

top-down approach starting with MEC applications. The derivation of the ME Host architecture currently focuses on the management of application life-cycle through virtualization and appropriate management of the data plane [1, 2]. However, the reference points of the lowest level are not defined. A road-map for edge systems focusing on (power consumption, delay, bandwidth utilization, and scalability) with a careful study on application categorization is presented in [16]. For example, MEC services can help with MEC task offloading (e.g., the video encoding process), hence improving the power consumption in mobile devices [17]. Moreover, as a complementary functionality in current and future networks, MEC may become an enabler for real-time context-aware applications combining MEC and RAN [18]. A tree-like mobile edge organization of a multi-tier cloud architecture was proposed in [19]. It allows an aggregation of the load across different tiers of cloud servers to maximize the mobile workloads being served. The work of [20] proposes and implements a MEC framework of ETSI and 3GPP compliance and focuses on the integration of LTE/LTE-A, MEC, and SDN. SDN is emerging as a natural solution for next generation cellular networks as it enables further network function virtualization opportunities and network programmability [21, 22]. In MEC, NFV and SDN will allow extreme flexibility, when it comes to the specification of extended logics of micro-service architectures at the network edge. The MEC function chain will be managed by the VNFM responsible for the instantiation of Virtual Network Functions (VNFs) and the SDN controller (e.g., OpenDayLight⁸ with SDN-Switches) connecting elements all together [23]. Such a solution hides all the control-plane complexities of underlying resources from an end-user, requires the definition of appropriate hardware abstractions and communication protocols such as OpenFlow with OpenFlow eXtensible Match (OXM) on the south-bound interface [23], which automates rapid building of SDN/NFV-based function chains [24]. A top-level orchestrator providing an appropriate level of Quality of Service (QoS) will manage the SDN/NFV con-

⁴<https://www.opnfv.org>

⁵<https://openbaton.github.io>

⁶<https://www.open-o.org>

⁷<https://osm.etsi.org>

⁸<https://www.opendaylight.org/>

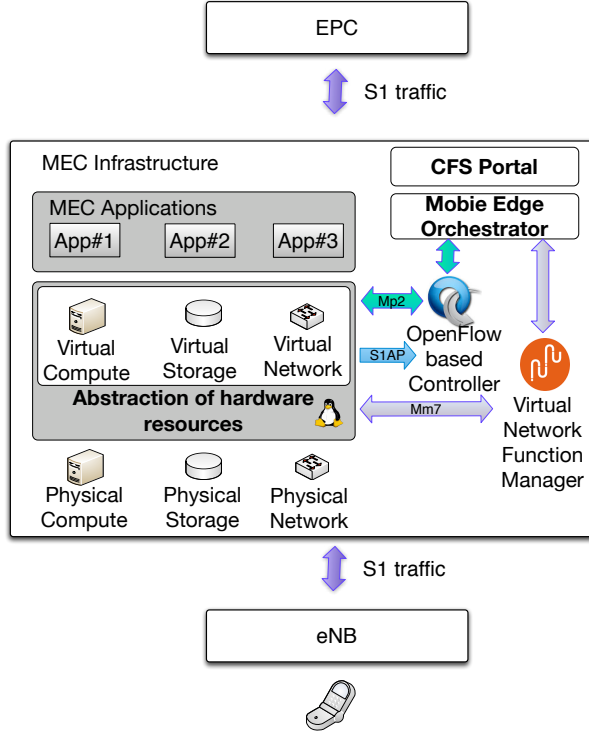


Figure 3: The architecture of the CDS-MEC system.

ETSI MEC Mm7 reference point). As the Mp2 reference point providing data plane within the virtual resources of ME Apps, we develop an OpenFlow [26]-based controller and use the Open Virtual Switch (OVS) [27]. The VNFM and controller will be managed by the CFS through a Mobile Edge Orchestrator. In this work, we did not focus on the development of the CFS and orchestrator.

3.1. Virtual Network Function Manager

The main building block of our system is Juju developed by Canonical⁹. Juju is a domain neutral mechanism, which provides a generic VNFM that can be adopted to heterogeneous environments such as Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) and Platform as a

Service (PaaS) clouds (e.g., abstracted towards Juju through Ubuntu¹⁰, OpenStack¹¹, etc.). It natively supports service provisioning and scaling functions for scale-in/scale-out scenarios therefore dynamically handling workloads by properly adjusting resources to momentary situations. Juju provisions on-demand various services provided as software. Services are described by charms, i.e., service manifests allowing for appropriate service configurations. Juju allows for “gluing” or “bundling” services all together by implementing logic allowing for automatic associations between services (i.e., service chaining). In the ETSI Management and Orchestration (MANO)¹² architecture, Juju should be classified as a VNFM of extended capabilities, helping MANO vendors to implement advanced business logic in the service orchestration part to support an enhanced Quality of Service (QoS) through contracting appropriate Service Level Agreements (SLAs). The charm store and Juju controller play the role of the VNFM, which allows us to spawn VNF bundles on the MEC infrastructure. The Juju service bundle could be connected with the help of the virtual switch [27] providing a virtual network.

In our architecture, the hardware resources are abstracted towards Juju through an Ubuntu Xenial system¹³. Juju VNFM automatically deploys ME Apps (i.e., VNFs) on the hardware infrastructure equipping VNFs with virtual compute, storage, and networking resources (implementing the ETSI MEC Mm7 reference point). As an example, Juju can automatically deploy a KVM¹⁴/LXD¹⁵-based caching service (e.g., squid¹⁶) that responds to user requests directly from the network edge (c.f., Fig. 4).

3.2. Management of the Traffic at the Network Edge

In the ME Platform, the data plane traffic management for ME function chaining should leverage

⁹<https://www.ubuntu.com/cloud/juju>

¹⁰<https://www.ubuntu.com>

¹¹<https://www.openstack.org>

¹²<http://osm.etsi.org>

¹³<http://releases.ubuntu.com/16.04>

¹⁴<https://www.linux-kvm.org>

¹⁵<https://linuxcontainers.org/lxd>

¹⁶<http://www.squid-cache.org>

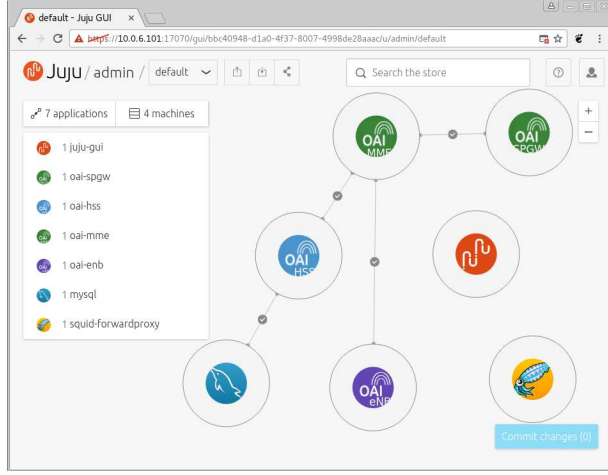


Figure 4: A screen-shot of the Juju Graphical User Interface (GUI), in which virtual elements, i.e., OpenAirInterface (OAI) [28] (LTE Network) and Squid Forward Proxy (App) are instantiated on the MEC-Cloud Infrastructure. This allows the UE attached to an OAI eNB to access the external web-server through a dynamically instantiated Squid forward proxy.

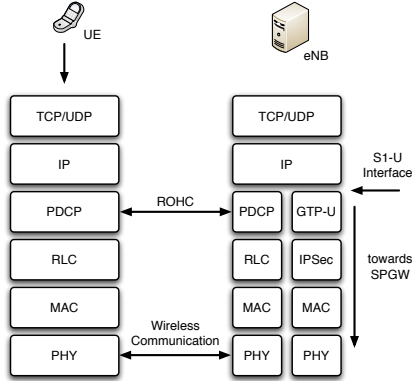


Figure 5: eNB Communication Diagram

SDN, which provides increased scalability and enhanced flexibility already demonstrated in LTE core networks. An SDN switch providing networking in ME systems will manage the data plane according to a flow table. The flow table matches traffic and uses actions to redirect packets towards necessary Apps

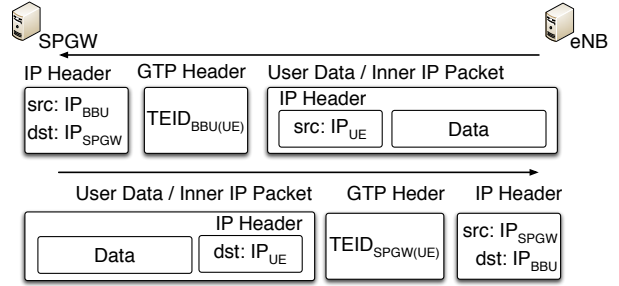


Figure 6: GTP packet description.

(i.e., VNFs). As the 1st innovation, we provide a rationale for the necessary SDN functions that have to be standardized in OpenFlow and implemented by SDN switches to allow for SDN-based traffic management in ME Systems exchanging traffic between UEs and IP-based ME Apps not supporting the LTE stack.

3.2.1. Basic eNB Operation

An eNB provides radio access for UEs using the core network (c.f., Fig. 5). When a user generates traffic, the IP messages are being forwarded through a GTP-U tunnel towards the SPGW. A GTP-U message encapsulates a 32 bit Tunnel Endpoint Identifier (TEID), (e.g., 0x00000001) so that the traffic can be appropriately recognized at the EPC on a per-user level. Please notice that the downlink packets from the EPC traverse the stack in the opposite direction. In Fig. 6, we present GTP-U messages exchanged between the eNB and the EPC. We also refer to the eNB through Base-Band-Unit (BBU), which is the signal processing entity of the eNB. The TEIDs on the upstream and downstream differ, however, are related as they belong to the same bearer with the same IP_{UE} . (c.f., Sec. 4).

3.2.2. Required SDN Actions

To redirect traffic towards Apps, the SDN switch has to be appropriately programmed by a Controller (c.f., Fig. 7). First, the flow tables have to intercept GTP-U traffic from the eNB towards EPC. The encapsulated packets (c.f., Fig. 6, Inner IP Packet)

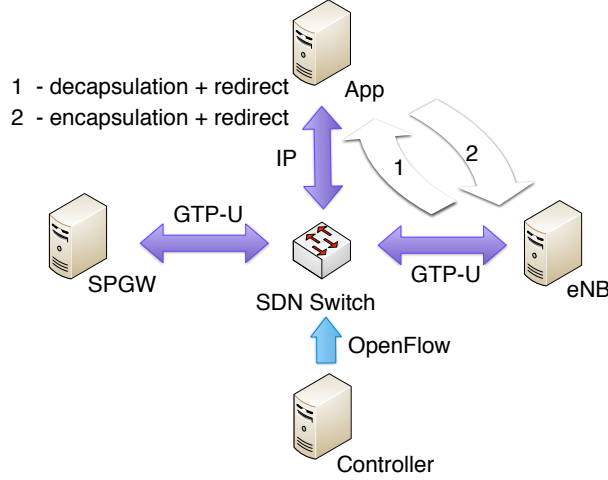


Figure 7: Basic SDN operations to redirect traffic between UEs and Apps.

should be provided towards a ME App. Second, the IP traffic from Apps towards a UEs should be provided as GTP-U traffic (with an appropriate TEIDs) towards the eNB. In order to accomplish this goal, the SDN switch has to implement the following functions (please notice that the last two actions are already standardized in OpenFlow):

- GTP decapsulation, which strips off the IP/UDP/GTP header (c.f., Fig. 6) leaving the inner IP packet,
- GTP encapsulation, which equips an IP packet with a GTP tunnel of an arbitrary TEID,
- MAC-based/IP-based packet modifications, which alter the destination addresses at the MAC and IP level,
- SDN port action, which sends the packet to a given output port.

Now, let us demonstrate the completeness of this functionality allowing for successful communication between UEs and ME Apps. Let us assume that a user is attached to an eNB. The eNB and EPC recognize the traffic of a given UE by a bearer (be it

a default or dedicated bearer) consisting of a GTP tunnel using $TEID_{SPGW(UE)}$ on the downstream and $TEID_{eNB(UE)}$ on the upstream. On every bearer, the UE receives a different IP_{UE} . The UE, eNB, and SPGW are equipped with IP addresses IP_{UE} , IP_{eNB} , and IP_{SPGW} , respectively. When the UE originates an IP packet p of source IP_{UE} , it is being encapsulated by the eNB as an inner data packet into a GTP tunnel by the eNB, i.e., packet $P_{TEID_{eNB(UE)}}(p)$ with $TEID_{eNB(UE)}$. The packet is pushed from the eNB IP_{eNB} towards the SPGW IP_{SPGW} (c.f., Fig 6, Fig 7). On the way towards the SPGW, the SDN switch captures the packet, strips the GTP header off $p = \text{GTP decapsulation}(P_{TEID_{eNB(UE)}}(p))$, and provides p using the $\text{Redirect}(p)$ function towards the ME App (c.f., Sec. 3.3.2, Sec. 4.2, Sec. 5.1, and Sec. 5.2). Note that a function redirecting packets towards an ME App. could be materialized by modifying the link layer destination (i.e., the destination MAC address) and providing the packet towards an appropriate outgoing port on the switch (i.e., the SDN port action). The ME App recognizes the network layer source of the transmission as IP_{UE} . It then issues a downstream packet p' using the received IP_{UE} as the destination (c.f., Fig. 7). The packet then goes through the SDN switch, which in turn intercepts packet p' from the ME App going towards the IP_{UE} . Such an IP packet p' cannot be delivered to the eNB directly. It has to be first tunnelled towards the eNB with an appropriate $TEID_{SPGW(UE)}$ by issuing a GTP packet $P'_{TEID_{eNB(UE)}} = \text{GTP Encapsulate}(p', IP_{eNB}, TEID_{SPGW(UE)})$. The GTP Encapsulate function is provided with the target endpoint, i.e., the eNB IP address and the SPGW TEID to appropriately encapsulate the traffic. Finally, the GTP packet arrives at the eNB, which recognizes the user using the SPGW TEID from the GTP header and delivers p' through the air interface to the UE.

3.2.3. SDN Matching

Packet matching is also an important property. Usually, SDN switches match packets based on various policies such as addresses at the various level

of the IP stack and other important fields in packets. Due to the fact that the provider has to have flexibility in terms of allocating services to UEs, the SDN switch has to allow us to match packets based on GTP-TEID. Moreover, after decapsulation, the SDN switch will allow us to inspect the fields of inner data packets to redirect various protocols towards appropriate MEC applications. As an example, a UE HTTP request (towards TCP port 80) could be redirected to the MEC HTTP cache server running squid¹⁷, while an SSH packet (towards TCP port 22) can go directly to the SPGW.

3.3. SDN Switches & SDN Switch Modifications

The SDN-switch is in the core of our architecture. As an example, OpenvSwitch (OVS) is a software-based, OpenFlow compatible switch by Nicira [27]. It allows for the on-demand establishment of virtual switches among Windows or Linux operating systems. On the north-bound interface, the switch uses OpenFlow to communicate with the controller. It supports various matching rules at different levels of the IP stack as well as many actions (e.g., modification of addresses; tunneling, encapsulation, decapsulation in GRE, VxLAN, etc.) that allow for advanced traffic engineering. OVS supports OpenFlow 1.1-1.4 protocols with OVS Extensible Flow Match (NXM) / OpenFlow eXtensible Match (OXM). We worked with OpenFlow 1.4 using OXM/NXM extensions to provide gtp matching rules (c.f., Sec. 3.2.3).

3.3.1. Necessary modifications to OVS

The 2nd innovation is the implementation of a micro-flow [27] GTP matcher¹⁸ in the user and Linux kernel spaces. The OVS optimized packet forwarding consists in general of three techniques, i.e., user space packet matching, kernel space matching, and so called kernel space mega flow [27], out of which we implement two. Moreover, we used the GTP-U tunnelling patch allowing for the GTP-U decapsulation/encapsulation¹⁹. This provides enough func-

¹⁷<http://www.squid-cache.org>

¹⁸<https://github.com/ejschiller/FLEX/tree/master/ovs>

¹⁹<https://patchwork.ozlabs.org/patch/579431/>

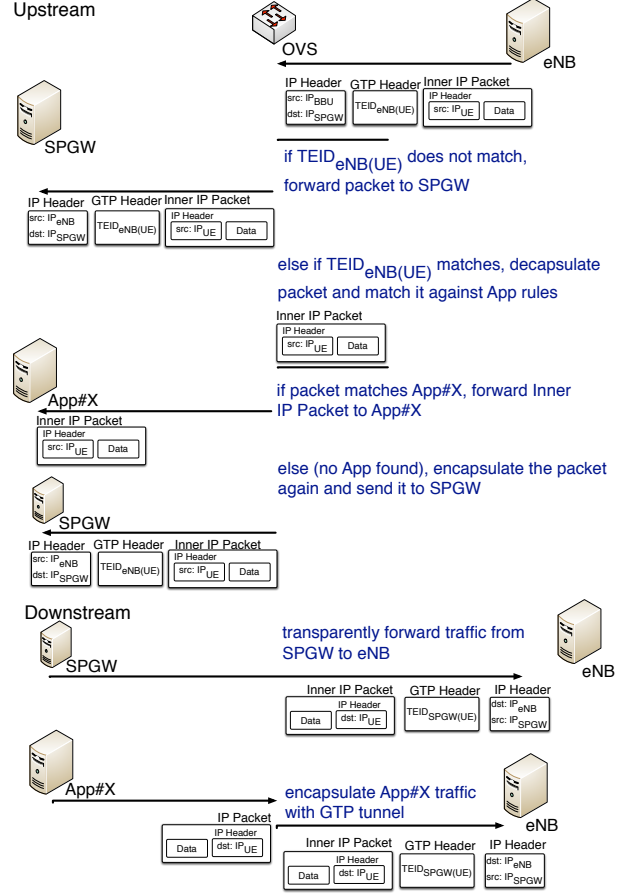


Figure 8: Processing of GTP packets by OVS.

tionality to support services running on MEC infrastructures with appropriate traffic handling as shown in Sec. 3.2.2.

3.3.2. Traffic Rules on the OVS Switch

The OVS switch distributes traffic among Apps using traffic characteristics (network protocols, transport protocols), the corresponding addresses (e.g., TCP Port 80), and flags (e.g., TCP.SYN). An example OVS rule will resemble:

- a GTP tunnel of TEID_{BBU(UE)} carrying a TCP request from IP_{UE} towards port 80 goes through App#2/IP_{App#2},

- every GTP tunnel (from all UEs) carrying a request towards port 80 goes through App#3/IP_{App#3}.

To distribute traffic among selected Apps and by default send traffic through the EPC, we have derived the following forwarding strategy (c.f., Fig. 8). On the upstream, a packet originated by a UE transparently goes to the SPGW if it does not match any of GTP rules on the OVS (e.g., TEID=0x00000001). However, when the packet TEID matches a GTP rule, the packet should target ME Apps on the ME Host. Therefore, we remove the GTP header and insert the inner packet into the switch App flow tables for processing. If the UE inner packet matches the App rule#X (e.g., IP packet, TCP destination port 80 (HTTP)), it is redirected to a given App#X (e.g., a squid forward proxy). If no App rule matches, the packet is again encapsulated with the initial upstream TEID and goes towards the SPGW. On the downstream, the SPGW packets targeting the eNB go transparently through the OVS switch. However, packets returning from Apps (targeting a given UE based on the IP address) get encapsulated with a GTP header using an appropriate downstream TEID_{SPGW(UE)}.

Currently, a limited version of service function chaining is supported, i.e., UE → App → UE and UE → EPC → UE chain types are implemented. To support more complex chains having many Apps inside the chain, the forwarding Apps will have to leave the original source IP_{UE} in the header of forwarded packets. The flow rules will use IP_{UE} as a matching condition for traffic forwarding. For example, if user traffic from IP_{UE}, has to go between App_A and App_B, a switch has to forward a packet with IP_{UE} from App_A towards the port of App_B according to flow rules matching IP_{UE} provided on the port of App_A. Such a method will allow for multi App chains. We do not study, however, multi App. chains in this paper.

4. OpenFlow-based Controller

This section describes an SDN-based controller that allows for the GTP traffic distribution among

ME Apps on both a per UE and App using a technique demonstrated in Sec. 3.3.2. The OpenFlow-based controller responds to user requirements through the CFS portal (c.f., Fig. 3). The CFS portal allows the user for the preparation of templates for traffic management. The user assigns a given App to all users attached to an eNB (provides the IP_{UE} wildcard) or only selected users based on specific IP_{UE}. The role of the controller is to derive traffic rules using appropriate TEID_{BBU(UE)} on the upstream and TEID_{SPGW(UE)} on the downstream matching the IP_{UE} of the UE. The relation is derived by the tracking module capturing the S1-C control plane between the EPC and eNB on the OVS switch. The module derives the bearer relation combining IP_{UE}, IP_{SPGW}, TEID_{eNB(UE)}, and TEID_{SPGW(UE)}. This information is eventually used for constructing SDN rules on the OVS switch (on the downstream and upstream) from templates provided by the user.

4.1. S1-C Tracking Module

The 3rd innovation is the passive monitoring of the control plane to derive the necessary parameters upon the UE attachment. We introduce a *tracker*, which is an auxiliary module of our architecture. Its role is to recognize a transmission bearer and associate the IP_{eNB}, IP_{SPGW}, upstream TEID_{eNB(UE)}, downstream TEID_{SPGW(UE)} with the IP address of the user IP_{UE} (c.f., Fig. 9). Upon the UE attachment procedure, the tracker first processes the *Initial Context Setup Request* of the S1-C protocol exchanged between the MME and the eNB. The request contains a per-user unique E-UTRAN Radio Access Bearer (E-RAB) that can serve as an information key distinguishing bearers in the database (db). The tracker retrieves, the E-RAB ID, IP_{SPGW}, IP_{eNB} (destination of the IP packet), TEID_{eNB}, and the user Packet Data Network (PDN) IP_{UE} from the message to keep in the db. Second, when the LTE *Initial Context Setup Response* arrives, the tracker can extend the cached data with the TEID_{SPGW} from the message, as the E-RAB ID from the S1-C response is equal to the E-RAB ID, which serves as the db key. The tracker receives the Initial Content Setup Request, Initial Content Setup Response to derive the user information.

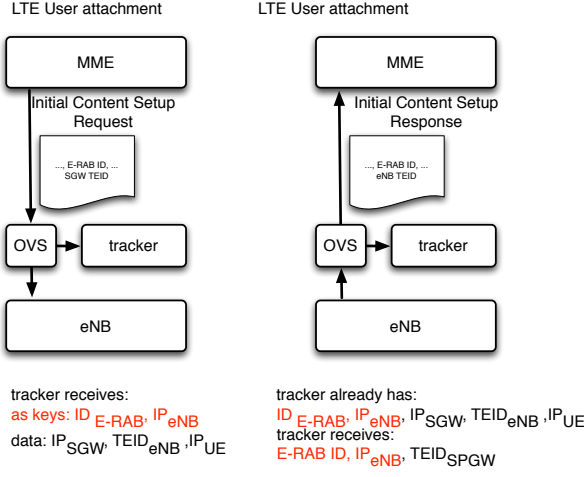


Figure 9: Tracking procedure.

We present our tracking procedure in Algorithm 1. The procedure requires two parameters on input, i.e., the port for traffic monitoring and the switch for SDN-based management. The procedure collects traffic on a given interface and fills out variables required for appropriate traffic management. When the data is ready meaning that $db[p.IP_{eNB}][p.ID_{E-RAB}]$ is fully populated (i.e., full) with IP_{eNB} , IP_{SPGW} , $TEID_{eNB}$, $TEID_{SPGW}$, IP_{UE} , the procedure executes the `install-ovs-rules` function to translate user templates into actual rules. Currently, the rule (i.e., state) is stored on the switch, until the EPC creates a bearer with the same IP. When such a new bearer appears in the system, the old rule is recycled (notice that we assume that bearers carry different IP addresses). We therefore do not observe signaling in MME or X2 handovers as this is left for future work.

This is a novel method of reusing the S1-C to manage traffic rules on the ME Platform as previous works [2] only acknowledge the distribution of the data plane among Apps, but the exact method is not discussed in the literature. The user space capturing of S1-C protocol between the MME and eNB is cheap, as it resembles an ordinary S1-C protocol handling of a typical eNB. The expensive part is the user

Algorithm 1 Tracking algorithm

```

1:  $db[ ][ ] = \emptyset$ 
2: procedure TRACKING(interface, switch)
3:   while  $p \leftarrow \text{getPkt}(\text{interface})$  do
4:     if  $p$  is Initial Context Setup Req. then
5:       delete-ovs-rules(switch,
6:          $db[p.IP_{dst}][p.ID_{E-RAB}]$ )
7:       delete  $db[p.IP_{dst}][p.ID_{E-RAB}]$ 
8:        $db[p.IP_{dst}][p.ID_{E-RAB}].IP_{eNB} \leftarrow p.IP_{dst}$ 
9:        $db[p.IP_{dst}][p.ID_{E-RAB}].IP_{SPGW} \leftarrow p.IP_{SPGW}$ 
10:       $db[p.IP_{dst}][p.ID_{E-RAB}].TEID_{eNB} \leftarrow$ 
11:       $p.TEID_{eNB}$ 
12:       $db[p.IP_{dst}][p.ID_{E-RAB}].IP_{UE} \leftarrow p.PDN.IP_{UE}$ 
13:     else if  $p$  is Initial Context Setup Resp. then
14:        $db[p.IP_{src}][p.ID_{E-RAB}].TEID_{SPGW} \leftarrow$ 
15:        $p.TEID_{SPGW}$ 
16:       if  $db[p.IP_{dst}][p.ID_{E-RAB}]$  is full then
17:         install-ovs-rules(switch,
18:            $db[p.IP_{dst}][p.ID_{E-RAB}]$ )
19:       end if
20:     else if  $p$  is a GTP-U then
21:       no operation
22:     end if
23:   end while
24: end procedure

```

space capturing of GTP-U packets going between the eNB and the EPC that can be received together with S1-C (i.e., no operation for heavy traffic) by the tracking module. We, however, do not require any GTP packets in our monitoring operation. The further optimization of the tracking procedure uses the SDN capabilities of the switch. We install appropriate rules on the switch to filter out the GTP-U communication from the traffic captured by the user space tracker. Please notice that the S1-C packet copying (i.e., to the monitoring interface) is easily implementable in SDN/OVS by the application of the *output* action providing the tracker with traffic.

We perform experiment illustrated in Fig. 10. We connect the MEC cloud to the S1-C/GTP traffic source through a 10 Gigabit Ethernet port (i.e., the Intel 10 GbE-T X540 NIC). The most significant traffic is GTP-U. First, we saturate the network from

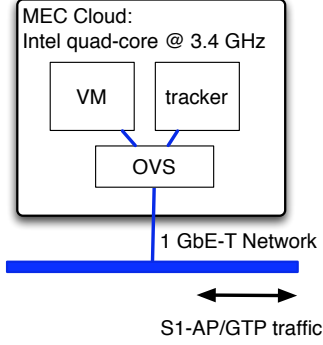


Figure 10: Traffic switching on the MEC cloud.

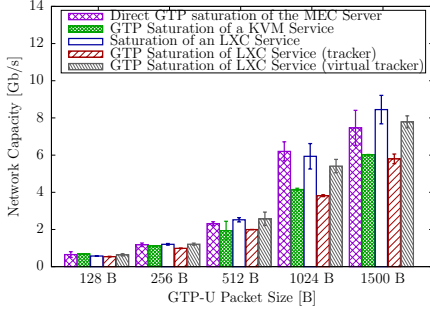


Figure 11: The performance of traffic switching on MEC clouds.

another physical machine with the GTP traffic of different size between 128 and 1500 bytes. There are 5 situations considered: i) The GTP traffic targets the IP address of the MEC Cloud directly, ii) the GTP traffic targets the IP address of the LXC-based ME Service instantiated on the MEC Cloud, iii) the GTP traffic targets the IP address of the KVM-based ME Service instantiated on the MEC Cloud, iv) the GTP traffic targets the LXC-based MEC Service and the tracker captures the whole GTP/S1-C traffic on the switch, and v) the GTP traffic targets the LXC-based MEC Service, but the (virtual) tracker is only provided with S1-C traffic due to an appropriate configuration of the OVS, i.e., the separation of the control and data plane on the MEC cloud. The S1-C traffic can be provided towards the tracker through the Out-Of-Band (OOB) or regular interfaces.

The UDP implementation on Linux is slow and does not saturate the link as easily as a regular TCP as also reported by other sources^{20,21}. TCP displays a regular throughput of 9.3 Gbps when targeting the cloud server directly, while we reach 7-9 Gbps with huge performance variations with UDP in the similar situation (c.f., Fig. 11). Moreover, we notice that LXC ME Service displays better throughput than KVM-based Services (even with multi-queue TUN/TAP interfaces) due to virtualization overhead. Performance-wise, LXC behaves nearly as good as the physical infrastructure. Moreover, a problem arises, when the tracker (implemented using the python pcap²² capture library) starts capturing an interface with both the S1-C and GTP-U traffic between the EPC and eNB. Even though, GTP-U is not required by the tracker, it can severely degrade performance as it quickly saturates the CPU thread (c.f., Fig. 11) and in consequence the forwarding capacity of the whole system. We therefore separated the control and data plane on the OVS switch, and provided the tracker with the control plane only. When the tracker does not receive GTP-U packets, the performance is not affected and the original forwarding capacity restores.

4.2. User Template Handling

In Listing 1, we provide an example Unix shell-based template to distribute traffic among the EPC and ME Apps in OVS. Please notice that the gtp.teid matcher (implemented by CDS) and GTP tunneling end-point (installed patch) are used in the script, but are not available in the default version of OVS (c.f., Sec. 3.3.1).

Listing 1: The OVS template for traffic redirections.

```
# MATCHING THE UPSTREAM PACKET OF A GIVEN UE (TEID
# BASED) AND REDIRECTING IT TO THE LOCAL GTP TUNNEL
# END-POINT USING THE mod_d1_dst MAC ADDRESS
# MODIFICATION AND output ACTIONS
ovs-ofctl add-flow OVS-SWITCH "in_port=$PORT_ENB,
ip,udp,tp_dst=2152,gtp_teid=$TEID_ENB,nw_dst=
$IP_SPGW,action=mod_d1_dst:$MACLOCAL,
mod_nw_dst=$IP_LOCAL,NORMAL"

# IMPLICIT DECAPSULATION OF THE GTP HEADER ON THE
# UPSTREAM RESUBMITTING PACKETS TO $PORT_ENB
```

²⁰<https://blog.cloudflare.com/how-to-receive-a-million-packets>

²¹<https://fasterdata.es.net/network-tuning/udp-tuning>

²²<https://pypi.python.org/pypi/pcapy>

```

ovs-ofctl add-flow OVS-SWITCH "tun_src=$IP_ENB,
tun_id=$TEID_ENB,action=mod_dl_dst:$MAC_APP,
resubmit:$PORT_ENB"

# REDIRECT A TCP PORT 80 (HTTP) PACKET TO A LOCAL CACHE
# USING THE mod_dl_dst MAC ADDRESS MODIFICATION AND
# OUTPUT ACTIONS (APP#1)
ovs-ofctl add-flow ovs-br "in_port=$PORT_ENB,ip,tcp,
tp_dst=80,nw_src=$IP_UE,action=mod_dl_dst:$MAC_APP,
output:$PORT_APP"

# SEND REMAINING PACKETS (NOT MATCHING APP#1) TO THE
# SPGW
ovs-ofctl add-flow ovs-br "in_port=$PORT_ENB,nw_src=
$IP_UE,action=load:0->NXM_OF_IN_PORT[],set_tunnel:
$TEID_ENB,set_field:$IP_SPGW->tun_dst,output:
$GTP_TUN_PORT"

# ENCAPSULATING THE DOWNSTREAM PACKET FROM CACHE
# WITH THE APPROPRIATE SPGW TEID SENDING THE
# ENCAPSULATED PACKET TO THE ENB
ovs-ofctl add-flow OVS-SWITCH "in_port=$PORT_APP,
ip,nw_dst=$IP_UE,nw_src=$IP_APP,action=set_tunnel:
$TEID_SPGW,set_field:$IP_ENB->tun_dst,
output:$GTP_TUN_PORT"

```

OVS-SWITCH is the OVS instance deployed on the ME Cloud, \$GTP_TUN_PORT is the OpenFlow Port number of the local GTP tunneling end-point, \$PORT_APP is the number of the OpenFlow Port connecting the switch with the App, \$PORT_ENB is the number of the OpenFlow Port connecting the switch with the eNB, \$TEID_ENB is the GTP tunnel endpoint identifier of the user on the eNB side, \$TEID_SPGW is the GTP tunnel endpoint identifier of the user on the SPGW side, \$IP_APP is the IP address of the App (i.e., web cache), \$IP_ENB is the IP address of the eNB, \$IP_LOCAL is the local IP address of the switch on the MEC Cloud, \$IP_UE is the IP address of the UE, \$IP_SPGW is the IP address of the SPGW, \$MAC_APP is the MAC address of the App (e.g., web cache), and \$MAC_LOCAL is the local MAC address of the switch on the MEC Cloud. Moreover, we assumed that the GTP tunnel between the eNB and SPGW is a UDP stream of source and destination port 2152.

Most of the variables are static (with respect to the UE attachment), i.e., \$GTP_TUN_PORT, \$PORT_APP, \$PORT_ENB, \$IP_APP, \$IP_ENB, \$IP_LOCAL, \$MAC_APP, \$MAC_LOCAL. As mentioned in Sec. 4.1 there are dynamic parameters established upon a UE attachment, i.e., \$TEID_ENB, \$TEID_SPGW, \$IP_UE, and \$IP_SPGW.

A user derives traffic redirection rules for App#X and fills out App related variables: \$PORT_APP, \$IP_APP, \$MAC_APP. Then the template is submitted to the CFS portal. The portal provides the template to the ME Orchestrator, which in turn fills out all the cloud-deployment related parameters \$GTP_TUN_PORT, \$PORT_ENB, \$IP_ENB, \$IP_LOCAL,

\$MAC_LOCAL and sends the template down to the controller. The controller (tracker) monitors the S1-C traffic, and for all discovered UEs attached (IP_UE matching IP_SPGW, TEID_eNB, TEID_SPGW) substitutes corresponding parameters in the template (\$IP_UE, \$IP_SPGW, \$TEID_ENB, \$TEID_SPGW) and executes the derived OVS rules on the OVS switch. When the user specifies \$IP_UE in the template, the controller will execute the rule for the specified UE only.

Current implementation integrates our tracking module (c.f., Sec. 4.1) with the shell-based controller and automatically deploys necessary rules for discovered UEs on the underlying OVS switch. We do not, however, study scaling of the shell-based controller as the number of UEs attached with a given cloud will remain at a relatively small level of up to 1000 users per cell. Moreover, as we do not implement the mega-flow optimization in OVS, we cannot currently elaborate on how the switching performance scales with the increasing number of flow-rules instantiated on the switch. Finally, we do not consider any security measures in the installation of flow rules.

5. Use-cases

In this section, we will evaluate two important use-cases.

5.1. SDN/NFV based MEC Caching

As the 4th innovation, with the help of SDN/NFV, we enrich a hierarchical network architecture of LTE with persistent caching at the network edge as shown in Fig. 12 [29]. In a typical LTE network, traffic originated by users is forwarded in a hierarchical manner through eNBs, SGWs, PGWs that provide access to an external network (e.g., the Internet). Generally, every level of the LTE network can be equipped with a cache, which stores a fraction of cached content. This enables popular content to be stored at the network edge very close to the user.

5.1.1. Caching Benefits

The hierarchical organization allows us to provide popular content directly from edge caches, while less

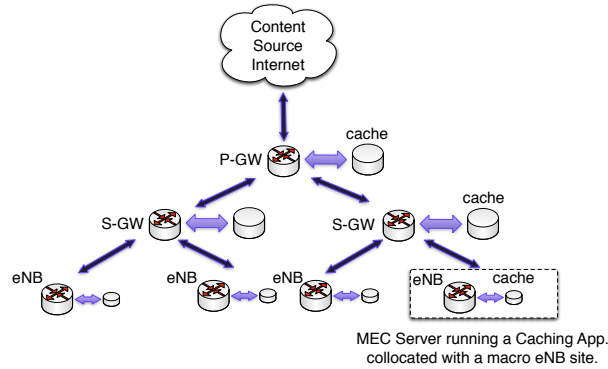


Figure 12: The LTE network architecture with caches at different levels.

popular objects shall be forwarded further to the next level (i.e., SGW cache, PGW cache) of growing capacity (however, the placement of cached content is out of the scope of this paper). When the content is unpopular (i.e., not available from the caches), it will be directly accessed from the content source. However, caching of unpopular objects does not provide significant benefits.

This caching approach brings a multitude of advantages for end users and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs). For users, the QoE significantly increases due to lower access latency (also lower fluctuations of the object access time) and increased throughput. Moreover, the backhaul traffic is significantly reduced, allowing quicker access from distant content providers. It is envisioned to reduce the Operational Expenditures (OPEX) by 36% [30] due to the lower load of the core infrastructure. In 5G networks, the deployment of caches will be managed by NFV, i.e., when a new cache is required it will be dynamically instantiated as a Virtual Machine (VM). An SDN controller shall on-demand manage traffic to make use of appropriate caching instances at every level of the LTE network.

5.1.2. Software & Hardware Architecture

The fully open-source caching solution is presented in Fig. 13. We enrich a typical LTE architecture with the cloud node residing in between the eNB and the

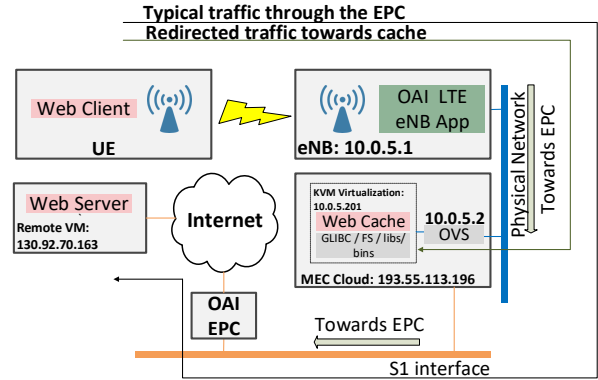


Figure 13: The implementation of the caching solution.

network core (EPC). The cloud node is controlled with the Juju VNF. Moreover, we provide the cloud node with the OVS switch equipped with the tunnelling and matching patches. The web cache is instantiated as a VNF from the Juju controller. The remaining elements of the LTE infrastructure are OAI-MME, OAI-SPGW, and OAI-ENB implemented by EURECOM [31] providing the UE with access to the Internet. The eNB is configured to use 5 MHz channels in Band7 of the LTE spectrum range in the Single Input Single Output (SISO) mode. The hardware used in the experiment is the following. The eNB is an Intel(R) Core(TM) i7-4790 CPU @ 3.60GHz quad-core, 32 GB RAM, 1 GB HDD computer equipped with a USRP B210²³ Software Defined Radio (SDR), and MEC Cloud is Intel(R) Core(TM) i7-3770 CPU @ 3.40GHz quad-core, 16 GB RAM, 200 GB SDD computer. Both computers run the Ubuntu 16.04 (Xenial) operating system. They are also equipped with Intel X540T2 10 GbE-T interfaces. The UE uses a Huawei E392 dongle²⁴.

²³<https://www.ettus.com/product/details/UB210-KIT>

²⁴<http://m.huawei.com/en/mobile/consumer20150301/press/news/hw-256115.htm>

5.1.3. Results

The results are presented in Fig. 14. First, we run the experiment in which the cache is inactive. We therefore access the remote server of address 130.92.70.163 being 15 hops away from EURECOM to directly retrieve the content from this location. Second, we activate the SDN controller, add necessary traffic templates, and actively store the content in the squid memory (i.e., we allow for cache memory hits, by allowing large objects of up to 10 MB to be stored in the memory). Since, the controller adds appropriate traffic rules for a given UE (transmission towards TCP port 80 goes through the squid App for all attached UEs), the objects can be directly retrieved from the cache. We measure the time required to download the content (from the cache and remote server), i.e., the time between issuing the HTTP request and retrieving the whole object. We then convert it into the UE experienced throughput by dividing the file size by the time required to download the object. The experiments are performed several times for every file size considered, i.e., 10 kB to 10 MB. The error bars are calculated indirectly as the file size divided by the average transmission time for a given file size squared multiplied by the standard deviation of the transmission time for that size (the following differential relation holds for the calculation of the error bar $\text{Goodput} = \frac{\text{filesize}}{t} \rightarrow |\sigma \text{Goodput}| = \frac{\text{filesize}}{t^2} \sigma t$, where t is the transmission time (c.f., Fig. 14)).

For all the file sizes, we noticed a significant improvement in the user QoE. The files are downloaded quicker when directly served from the cache. The improvement in the experienced capacity is about 30% for both big and small files (10 kB, 100 kB, 10 MB). However, sometimes due to momentary network conditions, the performance gain might not be so significant (e.g., 1MB).

We therefore clearly see the benefit of edge caches. However, other UE traffic (targeting other services) will have to go through an additional element – OVS instantiated on the MEC cloud. In Fig. 15, we measure the round trip delay of UDP packets exchanged between the eNB and the MEC Cloud for different packet sizes. We observe that OVS does not provide

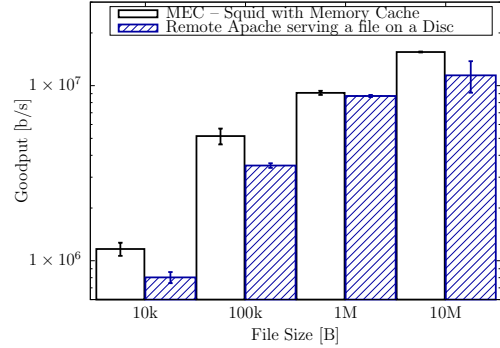


Figure 14: MEC Caching improves the QoS of content delivery in comparison to generic HTTP access.

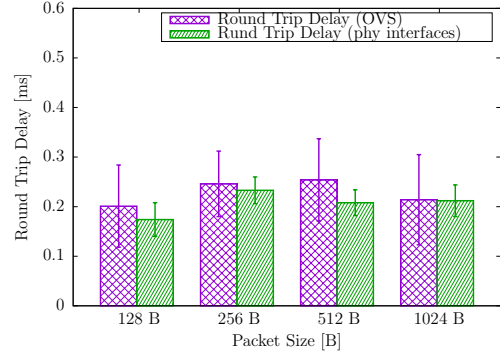


Figure 15: OVS delay for other applications.

significant overhead in terms of delay in comparison to the situation, when only physical interfaces are used. Therefore, other applications will not experience significant performance degradation due to the deployment of OVS.

5.2. SDN/ICN Public Safety Solutions

The 5th innovation is the Public Safety (PS) application for networks with a disconnected core.

5.2.1. DTN/ICN Benefits in Critical Situations

The utilization of Delay Tolerant Networks (DTNs) in disaster scenarios for Public Safety (PS) applications has been studied in literature. In [32], the authors propose a terrain discovery system using a DTN environment in a disaster scenario. Specifically, they use civilians that act as sensor nodes through their

mobile devices and collect Data. Nodes use DTN to transfer data reaching computing nodes that perform a discovery of the affected area. Moreover, in [33] the combination of DTN with the Cognitive Wireless Network (CWN) for disaster networks is proposed. Furthermore, Fajardo *et al.* [34] implemented a data collection method that uses people and their mobile phones as sensor nodes.

Tyson *et al.* [35] study the utilization of Information Centric Networks (ICNs) in disaster scenarios. The authors argue that ICN could improve connectivity resilience. This is due to the fact that in an ICN architecture, nodes can explore multiple interfaces at the same time. In addition, ICN does not have to maintain short connection timeouts as in classical networks. Finally, ICN requires no particular underlying network-layer, as it creates its own ad-hoc network. Moreover, deploying ICN in a network could improve QoS, as different requests could be treated differently. Furthermore, ICN supports the store, carry, and forward mechanism, as each node could be equipped with a cache, which is important in disaster scenarios, where connectivity may momentarily disappear. We therefore argue that the integration of DTN/ICN with LTE is an important research topic.

5.2.2. Software & Hardware Architecture

In the previous work [36], we provided an orchestration framework for PS applications. We worked out a ME architecture that provides ICN/DTN network Apps in the case, when a still functional eNB can provide a RAN towards end-users (UEs), but it does not have a valid connection to the network core. Typically, when a fully functional eNB loses its connection to the EPC, it stops providing RAN service as a result of a failed S1 or EPC.

A macro MEC-enabled eNB [1] is the main architectural element of this system. In the ordinary situation, when the network core is reachable, an eNB site runs a BBU that provides E-UTRAN and communicates with the operator network core to provide mobile access. When the core is unavailable, the ME-enabled base station can actively cooperate in the DTN/ICN information dissemination by instantiating DTN/ICN based Apps as VNFs. The primary

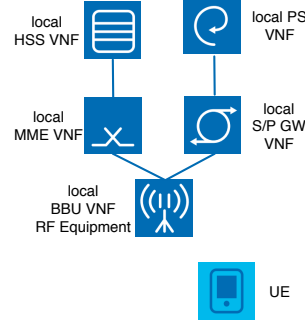


Figure 16: Service bundle for PS applications

purpose of this section is to provide an evaluation of our DTN/ICN architecture in a disaster situation, when a bundle of a micro LTE core is provided to run Radio Access Network (RAN) integrated with DTN/ICN (c.f., Fig. 16). To accomplish this goal, we integrate the PS orchestration solution with SDN traffic management derived in this paper to obtain a fully functional PS solution (i.e., with traffic). Traffic measurements were out of scope of the work presented in [36].

Whenever a local Application Management Unit on an eNB discovers that it runs disconnected from the core network, it starts the recovery procedure to provision a new communication service. Such a service is deployed as a bundle of VNFs that defines the required network services, namely eNB, local SPGW, MME, HSS, and PS. User information will be maintained either by replicating the HSS database if possible, or by provisioning the known IMSI (range) without necessary key and sequence numbers. Note that the authentication procedure can also be relaxed to accept all the attach procedures.

All the VNF functions are instantiated on the same edge cloud. The BBU has to be re-instantiated to acknowledge local copies of the MME, SPGW, HSS providing core network services. The MME, SPGW, and HSS are minimal services of a small footprint. They provide basic LTE functions and connect UEs attached with the macro eNB. Due to the basic core function, the UEs attached to the same eNB can communicate directly with the help of the PS VNF. The PS VNF is based upon DTN and/or ICN applica-

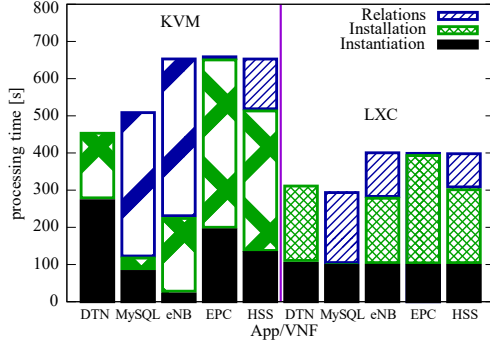


Figure 17: Provisioning time.

tions such as CCNx²⁵ or DTN2²⁶. In previous work, we implemented a DTN2 charm for Juju VNF²⁶ [36]. The PS VNF is a communication end-point and a relay between other clients instantiated on UEs. The established setup allows end users to attach to macro eNB. The rescue teams can now freely attach to the open eNB instantiated and exchange data using DTN and/or ICN relay points. If a macro eNB shares a functional X2 interface with another nearby base station, the X2 interface can be used as an interface to share data among nearby cells. Otherwise, the cell-cell communication can be based upon data mules.

5.2.3. Results

In Fig. 17, we gather instantiation times for the PS service bundle provisioned with Juju VNF²⁶ (MySQL is a supporting system for HSS) [36]. We tested two scenarios, when a DTN App (i.e., PS instance), MySQL, EPC, and HSS were instantiated on KVM and LXC respectively. We use a single host machine with Intel 3.20 GHz quad core CPU and 16 GB RAM. The services use 1 thread, 1 GB RAM; 1 thread 1 GB RAM; 4 threads 8 GB RAM; 1 thread, 2 GB RAM; 1 thread, 1 GB RAM for MySQL, HSS, eNB, EPC, and DTN resp. Therefore, the PS bundle can instantiate within around 600 sec. after the failure in the EPC was discovered.

The architecture of the developed Public Safety

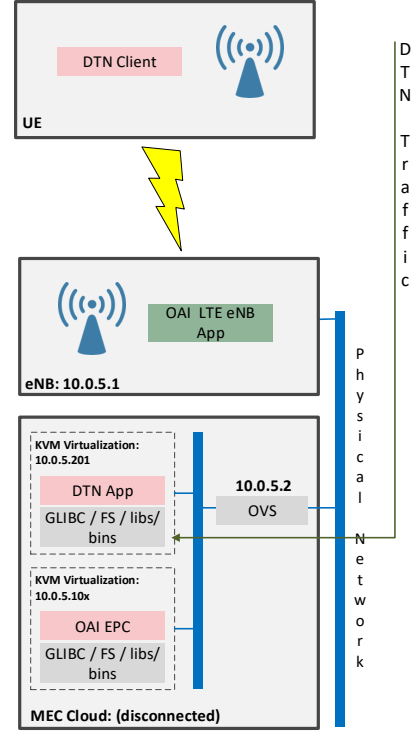


Figure 18: Architecture of the PS solution.

(PS) Solution is presented in Fig. 18. It is similar to the solution studied in 5.1, however, the EPC runs on the same ME cloud as VNFs and the protocol considered is different. The SDN traffic management scheme remains the same.

The main core network of the provider is disconnected. We therefore instantiate a complete small core on the MEC Cloud (i.e., MME, SPGW, HSS) as Virtual Network Functions (VNFs) through the Juju VNF²⁶. The eNB connects to the newly instantiated core. We use OpenAirInterface [28] from the OAI development branch as the EPC and eNB. The eNB is configured to use 5 MHz channels in Band7 of the LTE spectrum with the SISO mode. We also instantiate a DTN PS service and the SDN controller to manage traffic between the UE and the DTN App. The UE using a Huawei E392 dongle is equipped with a DTN PS client. Hence, the UE and DTN PS can

²⁵<http://blogs.parc.com/ccnx/ccnx-downloads/>

²⁶<https://sourceforge.net/projects/dtn/files/DTN2/>

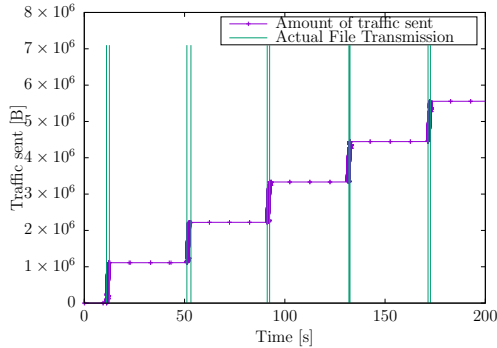


Figure 19: Six consecutive file transmissions.

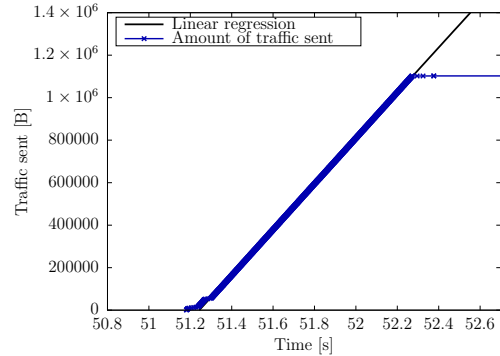


Figure 20: Single file transmissions.

directly communicate when the UE is successfully attached to the eNB.

We verified that our SDN/NFV-based PS solution works. We were able to successfully dtntping (use the dtntping function) between the UE of (dynamically assigned) IP address 172.16.0.2, eNB TEID 0x0000001, SPGW TEID 0xca6fe0dd, and DTN address ue.dtn towards the DTN App on the MEC cloud of address 10.0.5.203 and DTN address enb.dtn. The dtntping confirms connectivity in a small DTN network of UE and eNB.

It takes around 237 ± 38 ms to discover the connected eNB App (enb.dtn) from the UE. When the connectivity was successfully tested, we started sending files between the UE (ue.dtn) and ENB (enb.dtn). It is worth noting that the dtntping times are much larger than the classical ICMP ping times (20.9 ± 2.6 ms), as the DTN service has to first discover the destination (if connected). The example transmission of six 1 MB files (the time period between consecutive transmissions is 40 s) is provided in Fig. 19. The throughput of 1.06 ± 0.08 MB/s was established on average in a single transmission (c.f., Fig. 20). The figures present the amount of data sent from the UE to the eNB through a DTN2 App.

6. Conclusions

Our paper consists of five innovations in prototyping of the MEC environment. The first innovation is the organization of the traffic management at the

network edge. We show how to manage GTP-tunnels and traffic redirections to successfully exchange traffic between IP-based MEC applications and the LTE-based UE. The second innovation is the implementation of the OVS GTP matcher that together with OVS GTP tunneling service provides traffic to MEC services. The third innovation is in the domain of SDN rule management at the MEC cloud with an SDN controller equipped with an S1-C tracking module. The fourth innovation is the first fully open-source implementation of the MEC cloud based on Juju VNFM, SDN controller, OVS, and OAI. It improves the perceived throughput of a UE by 30%. Finally, our fifth innovation is the evaluation of the MEC-enabled public safety solution. It is a fully open-source solution that spawns a minimal fully operating core (EPC) in the disconnected core critical situation. As mobility is a crucial aspect of mobile systems, in future work, we will study mobility and handover in our MEC architecture.

Acknowledgement

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