Network Emulation as a Basis for Performance Analysis of Groupware

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1. Motivation

2. Network characteristics and effects

3. State of the art
   - Network simulation
   - Network emulation
   - Hybrid approach

4. NESSEE Emulation platform
   - General architecture
   - Network testing with NESSEE
   - Demonstration

5. Conclusion
1. Motivation

Why do we need to reproduce network characteristics?

- Performing experiments in real test networks is only feasible in small scenarios (high coordination effort)
  → Need for **reproducible** and **controllable large-scale** experiments

- **Domains:**
  - Network protocol development
  - **Network application development**
  - Mobile app development

- **Use cases:**
  - Testing and validation
  - **Performance analysis**

**Focus of this talk**
Scenario: **Video conferencing system** with collaboration features
Motivation: Video Conferencing Scenario

offered as *Software as a Service* →

DSL 6MBit/s
Delay: 15ms
Loss: 0.2%

Leased Line 100MBit/s
Delay: 20ms
Loss: 0.3%

LTE 16MBit/s
Delay: 50ms
Loss: 0.6%

Motivation:

Video Conferencing Scenario offered as Software as a Service.
Possible testing goals:

- Does the video conference software properly reconnect after a disconnect?
- Does the ISP failback mechanism work?
- How many clients does the video server support?
- How is the end user experience (video quality) under bad network conditions?
What are relevant characteristics and effects for reproducing network behavior?

- Network topologies
- Data rate
- Packet delay and its variation (jitter)
- Packet-level effects: loss, reordering, duplication
- Connection-level effects: disconnection, handover
Network Topologies

- Communication via multi hop connections with possible network impairments on every link / node

- Consideration of the cumulated effects on one path
Data rate

- Specifies how much data can be transferred in a given time unit
- Often called (network / data / digital) **bandwidth**, because of its proportionality to the analog bandwidth of the physical channel (in Hz)

- Common metrics:
  - **Capacity** $C_P$
    Maximum data rate of a given network path $P$

  - **Available bandwidth** $A$
    time-dependent, specified by the current utilizations ($0 \leq u \leq 1$) and capacities of the corresponding links

  \[
  A_P = \min_{i=1,\ldots,H} (C_i(1-u_i))
  \]

- **Bulk TCP Throughput** $BTT$
  specifies how much payload data can be transferred in a given amount of time using TCP
Packet Delay

- Time between sending and receiving a message

- Common metrics:
  - **One Way Delay** (OWD) – only one communication direction
  - **Round Trip Delay** (RTD) – time between sending a message and receiving the corresponding answer

- **Overall delay**:
  - routing delay $D_R$ – processing and queueing inside the router
  - transmission delay $D_T$ – placing the packet onto the link
  - propagation delay $D_P$ – passing the packet from one end of the link to the other

\[
OWD_P = \sum_{i=1}^{H} OWD_i = \sum_{i=1}^{H} (D_{R,i} + D_{T,i} + D_{P,i})
\]
Variability of Packet Delay - Jitter

- In real networks packet delay is usually not constant.

**Packet Jitter** $\Delta OWD$
- Variability of packet inter-arrival times
- Calculation is based on packet delay definition of two subsequent packets ($j$ and $j-1$)

$$\Delta OW D^j = OW D^j - OW D^{j-1} = (D_R^j - D_R^{j-1}) + (D_T^j - D_T^{j-1}) + (D_P^j - D_P^{j-1})$$

- If packets $j$ and $j-1$ have the same size and are sent over the same path, the transmission and propagation delays equalize.

$$\Delta OWD$$ mainly depends on varying load and queue sizes of the routers due to parallel traffic
Packet Loss

- **Causes**
  - **Packet content is corrupted** during transmission → Error is recognized (check sum), but cannot be corrected → Packet is dropped
  - **Congestion** in network nodes: queues of a router are full → Packets are dropped

- **Metric**
  - **One Way Loss Ratio** OWLR:
    \[
    OWLR = 1 - \frac{P_{\text{rec}}}{P_{\text{sent}}}
    \]
  - Cumulated Packet Loss rate:
    \[
    OWLR_P = 1 - \prod_{i=1}^{H} (1 - OWLR_i)
    \]

- **Variables**:
  - \(P_{\text{sent}}\): Number of sent packets
  - \(P_{\text{rec}}\): Number of received packets
  - \(P\): Path of length \(H\)
Further network effects

- **Packet reordering**
  - Causes: parallel processing, load balancing on multiple paths, path changes
  - Metric: Packet Reordering Rate (PRR)
    \[ P_R R_P \leq 1 - \prod_{i=1}^{H} (1 - P_R R_i) \]

- **Packet duplication**
  - Causes: defective router
  - Metric: Duplication Rate (DR)
    \[ D_R P = -1 + \prod_{i=1}^{H} (1 + D_R i) \]

- **Disconnection**
  - Causes: defective hardware, power outage, insufficient signal strength in wireless technologies, firewalls

- **Handover** in wireless technologies
  - Cause: user mobility
  - *Intra- and inter-technology* handover
  - *Hard* and *soft* handover
What are current means to reproduce network behavior?

- **Network simulation**

- **Network emulation**
  - Using software
  - Using hardware
  - Emulation environments
• **Synthetic approach** to reproduce network conditions

• **Simulation model**
  - Network topology and characteristics are transformed into a software model
  - Quality of the model affects quality of the results
  - Large scenarios and complex models \(\rightarrow\) high computation effort

• **Advantages**
  - Reproducibility
  - Controllability

• **Disadvantages**
  - Huge scenarios cannot be simulated on one machine
  - Limited to simulation of the network – not suitable for testing applications
Example: Network Simulator **ns-2**

- Discrete event simulator targeted at networking research
- Supports simulation of TCP, routing, and multicast protocols over wired and wireless (local and satellite) networks
- Available for Linux, BSD, OS X and Windows (Cygwin)
- Visualization with Network Animator:

![Network Animator Image](http://www.isi.edu/nsnam/nam/)
Create six nodes

Create links between the nodes

Setup a TCP connection

Setup a FTP over TCP connection

Source: [AJ03]
• Characteristics of real network traffic are modified according to a given configuration (traffic shaping)
• Can take place on different levels of the network stack – **IP level emulation** is most established

**Categories:**
- Hardware-based
- Software-based
- Emulation environment
Hardware-based Network Emulation

- Shape traffic between two or more network ports
- Mostly web-based user interfaces

**Advantages**
- Dedicated hardware → high performance and precision

**Disadvantages**
- Expensive
- Missing flexibility (fixed configuration)

**Example:** Linktropy 7500 PRO (*Computer Networks Group*)
Software-based Network Emulation

- Packet interception in the network stack of the operating system
- Manipulation of incoming and outgoing traffic (based on rules)

**Advantages**
- Flexibility due to dynamic configuration
- Many different implementations for various use cases

**Disadvantages**
- Performance and accuracy depend on concrete implementation and underlying hardware

**Examples:**
- Linux: NISTNet [CS03], **NetEm** [Hem05], WANEm [KN11]
- FreeBSD: **Dummynet** [CR10], ModelNet [VYW+02], KauNet [GHB08]
## Software-based Network Emulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emulator</th>
<th>OS</th>
<th>Further devel.</th>
<th>Data rate</th>
<th>delay</th>
<th>jitter</th>
<th>loss</th>
<th>corruption</th>
<th>duplication</th>
<th>reordering</th>
<th>hand over</th>
<th>disconnect</th>
<th>topologies</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NISTNet</td>
<td>Linux</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>GUI available, detailed filters</td>
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<tr>
<td>NetEm</td>
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<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>Part of Linux kernel, GUI available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANEm</td>
<td>Linux</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Good usability, Live CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummynet</td>
<td>FreeBSD, Linux,</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Part of FreeBSD kernel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>Distributed emulation</td>
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<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>High precision / performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Network Emulation Environments

- Test networks with many distributed nodes
- Mostly based on federation of multiple universities / research institutes that share their infrastructure with each other

- **Advantages**
  - Possibility to perform large experiments

- **Disadvantages**
  - Resources must be reserved before the experiment
  - Limited flexibility (mostly fixed network emulation configuration)

- Examples:
### Network Emulation Environments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PlanetLab</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Large, distributed testbed</td>
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<tr>
<td>EmuLab</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>(√)</td>
<td>Testbed &amp; open source software</td>
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<tr>
<td>OneLab</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Contains multiple specialized testbeds</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORBIT</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Grid of 400 wireless nodes in laboratory environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINI</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Based on PlanetLab; adds better controllability and realistic emul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhyNet</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Wireless network emulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Common focus:** *Network protocol development*, instead of testing and experimenting with network applications
What are means to reproduce network behavior for large-scale experiments with distributed systems?

**Simulation**
- Too abstract, because software under test must be part of simulation model

**Emulation**
- Using Hardware
  - High performance / accuracy
  - Missing flexibility, because of fixed configuration
- Using Software
  - Highly flexible, extensible, adaptable
- Emulation environments
  - Limited flexibility (mostly fixed configuration)
  - Often: Cannot be used until adding machines to the federated testbeds

Used as a basis of our own emulation platform
How to facilitate network tests and experiments for large-scale distributed systems?

- Research project in cooperation with Citrix Systems, Online Services Division

- **Network Endpoint Server Scenario Emulation Environment**
NESSEE Features

• Emulation platform that facilitates the setup and coordination of different kinds of testing

• Main features
  • **Network testing**: fine-grained configuration of all relevant network characteristics
  • **Scalability testing**: control and coordinate large numbers of software under test (SUT) instances (experiments with >6000)
  • **Functional testing**: monitor the SUT, log file evaluation
  • **Test Description Language** (TDL) and scriptable test cases to achieve flexibility and reusability (GUI for test case authoring)
  • **Continuous Integration** (CI): run NESSEE tests from within the development workflow using common build and CI tools
  • **Platform independence**: SUT on different operating systems supported (tested with Linux and Windows)
  • Convenient **web front end** to manage the whole platform
- **Manage the whole platform**: administrative tasks (test systems, configuration), test case management, test execution & monitoring
- Handle **real-time updates** from the NESSEE Server with WebSockets or long polling – signalR framework
- Implemented in JavaScript / HTML5 – dojo framework
Test Description Language (TDL)

- **XML-based** generic description language for test cases
- As **simple** as possible to allow manual editing
- Support for **authoring environment** (NESSEE Editor)
- **Modular design** with independent components
Network testing with NESSEE

**TDL Example** (Network Topology)

```xml
<ClientComponents>
  <NetworkNode NetworkCapabilitiesId="DSL2000">
    <NetworkEndpointType id="ds12000endpoint"/>
  </NetworkNode>
  <NetworkNode NetworkCapabilitiesId="WiFiNRouter">
    <NetworkEndpointType id="wifiendpoint" NetworkCapabilitiesId="OldWiFiEndpoint"/>
  </NetworkNode>
  ...
</ClientComponents>

<ServerComponents>
  <Datacenter id="datacenter_asia">
    <ISP id="isp03" NetworkCapabilitiesId="cap03"/>
    <ISP id="isp04" NetworkCapabilitiesId="cap04"/>
    <ISP id="isp05" NetworkCapabilitiesId="cap05"/>
    <VideoCluster id="vidCluster03" ISPId="isp03"/>
  </Datacenter>
</ServerComponents>
```

---

**CLIENT-SIDE NETWORK TOPOLOGY**

- Internet
- Router
- User PC (type='wifiendpoint')
  - user1@S05-1 (not logged in)
- User PC (type='wifiendpoint')
  - user2@S05-1 (not logged in)
- Router 'CorporateNetwork01'
- User PC (type='Corp01EndpointB')
  - user0@S05-1 (not logged in)

**SERVER-SIDE NETWORK TOPOLOGY**

- Internet
- DataCenter (id='datacenter_asia')
  - ISP connection (id='isp03')
  - ISP connection (id='isp04')
  - ISP connection (id='isp05')
  - VideoCluster (id='vidCluster03')
Network testing with NESSEE

- Network emulator: extended version of **KauNet** for FreeBSD (based on **DummyNet**)
- Based on pipes and rules
  - **Pipe**: configured with certain network characteristics (delay, loss, bandwidth, ...)
  - **Rule**: Defines which packets have to pass which pipes (like firewall rules)
Network testing with NESSEE - DEMO
• NESSEE fulfills all requirements of an emulation platform for automated functional, load and network tests of distributed systems

• Non-functional requirement: **Scalability**

  • **Scalability and accuracy of the network emulation**
    ▪ Deviations of configured and measured values in large and complex scenarios
    ▪ Results (relative deviations):
      - Data rate: ±3.50%
      - Packet Delay: ±0.20%
      - Packet loss: ±0.10%
      - Packet Reordering: ±0.13%
      - Packet duplication: ±0.00%
• **Scalability of the script engine approach**
  - Comparison with other script engines in multiple scenarios
  → Sufficient results (not always the best)
  - Example scenario: Calls from script to native code
• Scalability of the IPC approach for controlling the SUT
  - Maximum number of SUT instances per test system
  - Dependence on underlying hardware
    → 500 instances can be started in about 80s
    → Active video conferences: 200...250 instances / test system
5. Conclusion

- **Reproduction of network conditions** is essential in tests and evaluation of network applications and distributed systems.

- All **relevant characteristics** should be covered: **data rate, delay, jitter, loss, reordering, duplication, hand over, disconnect**.

- **Network Simulation**: synthetic approach; uses simulation model.

- **Network Emulation**: practical approach; shapes real traffic.

- **NESSEE Emulation Platform** facilitates the setup and coordination of large-scale network, load and functional tests.
Literature:

- TANENBAUM, Andrew; WETHERALL, David: *Computer Networks*. Prentice Hall International, July 2013

References:

- [AJ03]: ALTMAN, Eitan; JIMÉNEZ, Tania: *NS Simulator for beginners*, Lecture Notes, Univ. de Los Andes, Mérida, Venezuela and ESSI, Sophia-Antipolis, France
- [Hem05]: HEMMINGER, Stephen: *Network Emulation with NetEm*. In: linux.conf.au. Canberra, Australia, April 2005