

Performance Analysis of Stealth DHT with Mobile Nodes

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Abstract

The advances in wireless networking and the consequent emergence of new applications that wireless networks increasingly support inevitably leads to low capability mobile nodes connecting to peer-to-peer networks. However, the characteristics of mobile nodes and limitations of access point coverage often cause mobile nodes to lose connectivity, which can cause many mobile nodes to simultaneously rejoin the network. Continuous departures and joins due to the mobility of nodes leads to mobility churn, which can often degrade the performance of the underlying peer-to-peer network significantly. In this paper, we use simulations to demonstrate that the Stealth Distributed Hash Table (Stealth DHT) algorithm is ideally suited for networks with mobile nodes. By avoiding storing state in unreliable nodes, a Stealth DHT prevents mobile nodes from being used by other nodes to provide services. Consequently, Stealth DHTs eliminate the mobility churn effect and significantly reduce the amount of overhead as compared to a generic DHT. This paper demonstrates this using simulation results that compare the performance of Stealth DHTs to a generic DHT, Pastry.

1. Introduction

Previously proposed Distributed Hash Table (DHT) algorithms [10][12][14] have commonly assumed connecting an overlay of *autonomous* and *homogeneous* nodes together. The autonomy arises in the sense that nodes may join or leave the network at any time, as well as send and receive data as they wish. The homogeneity arises from the fact that devices on the network are assumed to have similar capabilities in terms of processing power, storage space and network access.

Mobile devices, however, are likely to be heterogeneous. They are also often battery powered and prone to moving in and out of signal range, both of which commonly cause loss of network connectivity. In a DHT, it is often the case that

a mobile node migrating between access points has to re-join, as both its own state about other nodes and their state about it may have been invalidated. This causes what is termed *mobility churn* [3]. Mobility churn, just like normal churn [11], is caused when nodes in a peer-to-peer network continually join and leave in an unpredictable fashion. This results in more traffic on the DHT due to both nodes repeating the join procedure, and stale state information having to be detected and discarded by existing nodes. Unfortunately, this degrades routing efficiency and increases end to end delay. Many DHT systems have been shown to simply break down under high levels of churn [6][11]. To make matters worse, it has been shown that severe levels of churn are likely for peer-to-peer networks with mobile nodes [3][9].

Mobile devices are also likely to have slow network connections relative to stationary devices. The GSM standard, for example, is limited to only 14.4 kbps data transfer. GPRS offers some improvement, averaging at around 40 kbps [7]. Even with newer third generation (3G) devices, transfer rates are still likely to be far lower than many wired devices. In the case of such low bandwidth networks, there is the danger of DHT signalling consuming all the available bandwidth, thus blocking user traffic.

We believe that the Stealth DHT algorithm proposed in [1] is an elegant solution which adapts existing DHT algorithms themselves to help resolve these problems.

A Stealth DHT is a distributed hash table that addresses the problem of heterogeneous capabilities by maintaining two distinct sets of nodes on the network. One set, referred to as *stealth nodes*, are made effectively “invisible” to all routing operations, meaning that they will never receive any queries, be requested to forward messages, or asked to store keys. Consequently, they cannot intercept nor reply to any messages on the DHT. Ideally, less capable nodes on the network should be designated as stealth nodes, as their lack of responsibilities means they have little effect upon overall routing performance. The remaining set of nodes on a Stealth DHT are called *service nodes*, which can execute all the operations supported in a generic DHT. For optimal performance, service nodes should be highly stable and ca-

pable machines that can be relied upon for supporting the network.

The Stealth DHT algorithm was initially proposed with the aim of returning control of the peer-to-peer network to its operator, circumventing the numerous security problems and Digital Rights Management issues commonly associated with such overlays. Service nodes are therefore assumed to be owned by a service provider, which, in addition to their high capabilities, should mean that they are also trustworthy. Conversely, stealth nodes would be autonomous devices owned by end-users, who request service(s) from the provider. In this paper, we examine the case of a service provider offering service to wireless users only, some of whom are mobile, while others are stationary.

The Stealth DHT algorithm purposefully breaks the pure peer-to-peer paradigm of treating all nodes as equal. We believe that it is this assumption that causes generic DHTs to perform poorly in a mobile environment, further hindering the development of DHT-based mobile applications. By excluding less capable nodes from routing decisions via the stealth node concept and designating highly capable nodes as service nodes, Stealth DHTs help to eliminate the performance problems associated with mobility and DHTs. Since state information regarding the mobile nodes in Stealth DHTs is never recorded, they will not have any responsibility in the network. Thus, they may join, leave, and request services at will with relatively little impact on the performance of the underlying DHT. Better still, if a service provider owns and manages the service nodes, they will have a complete control over the provided service. We therefore argue that a Stealth DHT in mobile environments combines the scalability, resilience and self-organization of existing DHT based networks with the greater performance and control of a content distribution network (CDN).

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we discuss a brief overview of the Stealth DHT algorithm. We then consider Stealth DHTs with mobile nodes in section 3. We present simulation results and analyze the performance of a Stealth DHT in comparison with Pastry in section 4. Finally section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Overview of Stealth DHT

As discussed in [1], there are two types of nodes in a Stealth DHT, namely *service nodes* and *stealth nodes*. Service nodes can execute all operations supported by generic DHTs, whereas stealth nodes are prevented from storing keys and forwarding messages. While it is recommended that the stealth node population be comprised of less capable nodes, the assignment of role (service or stealth) to nodes is application dependent and in no way prescribed or constrained by the Stealth DHT itself.

It is important to note that the routing tables of all nodes

in a Stealth DHT consist exclusively of entries for service nodes. Consequently, a given node of any type may only send a message to a service node, which will forward it via other service nodes to its destination (also a service node). This means that stealth nodes are incapable of communicating directly with one another, and that service nodes may only communicate with stealth nodes to reply to a direct request. Accordingly, stealth nodes cannot normally detect one another, and when “quiet”, their presence is invisible to even the service nodes.

In order to achieve the distinction between a service and a stealth node, stealth nodes employ a lightweight join mechanism. Unlike service nodes, they do not complete the classical DHT join procedure by sending announcement messages, thus keeping them from appearing in other nodes’ routing tables. Correspondingly, when a stealth node joins the network, no updates are required to routing state, nor does any state become stale upon such a node leaving the network.

A side effect of this procedure is that stealth nodes do not receive routing updates, as no other node knows to update them. Over time, a stealth node therefore has an increasingly stale routing table. To counteract this problem, a stealth node may attempt to obtain additional state periodically from the network, either in an active or passive fashion.

An evaluation of Stealth DHTs for wired networks revealed that regardless of churn, Stealth DHTs outperform Pastry in many standard DHT measurements such as the average hop count, relative delay penalty (often referred to as stretch), join overhead and efficiency of load balancing [1]. We also found that in a Stealth DHT increasing the number of stealth nodes had no significant impact on these metrics. This paper extends the investigation of Stealth DHT performance to mobile environments.

3. Stealth DHTs with mobile nodes

In this paper we propose using a Stealth DHT in environments where fixed network infrastructure and mobile nodes are interconnected. We assume that a mobile node can simply connect to the system via a nearby wireless access point or base station. When mobile nodes move they may receive a new network address upon connection to a new access point, or they may use an available Mobile IP [8] infrastructure to retain their existing IP address. In the former case, a node would have to inform the DHT of its address change, thus inducing mobility churn. In the latter case a node may temporarily lose connectivity, but references to its IP address in the DHT will not require updating. A node that retains its IP address may, however, find that the proximity data it stores locally has been rendered incorrect. We also assume that a node does not have any prior knowledge of its

mobility pattern, and thus cannot inform other DHT nodes of any movement or loss of connectivity in advance.

We focus on the case of a peer-to-peer network that offers service to wireless end-users only. The assumption is made that the provider’s network consists of a number of servers which form the service node infrastructure for the Stealth DHT overlay. These service nodes may be installed at strategic locations such as within close proximity of an existing mobile provider’s base station, or they may be located arbitrarily. On the other hand, the stealth nodes are made up of end-users’ wireless devices, such as mobile telephones, PDAs, laptops and so on.

We believe that Stealth DHTs offer an elegant solution to the performance problems caused by mobile nodes in a twofold manner; by ensuring mobile nodes are not used as routing intermediaries, and by removing the need for service nodes to maintain state information about mobile nodes. We show in the next section that Stealth DHTs help in preventing stale state information in the peer-to-peer network due to the mobility of nodes, reducing signalling overhead, and improving routing efficiency.

4. Performance Evaluation

We extended the support for both Pastry and our Stealth DHT in our own discrete-event packet-level simulator [1] to cater for wireless networks. The underlying network upon which the simulations were run consisted of 1,000 routers in a transit-stub configuration with 4% transit nodes, generated with GT-ITM [2]. Each stub/edge router was also designated as a wireless access point. Nodes were attached to the physical network in a random fashion, with wireless nodes being attached to the edge routers via a 1 Mbps shared wireless links, while wired nodes were connected via their own 1 Mbps link. The wireless nodes had a average latency of 200 ms while wired nodes had only 5 ms.

Randomly selected nodes performed *put* operations for a set of 1,000,000 keys before the simulation. Once the simulation started 10 *get* operations were performed by each node at exponentially distributed intervals with a mean of six minutes. Keys are requested following a Zipf distribution with an α parameter of 1.2, thus providing a realistic access and popularity function as commonly observed in peer-to-peer networks [13].

We used a mobility model known as the random waypoint model [4] with “thinking times” provided by an exponential distribution around a 60 minute mean (as observed in [5]) to model mobility patterns of mobile nodes. We are aware of existing infrastructure that allow mobile nodes to preserve their IP addresses when their mobility leads them to change access points. This, however, does not lead to mobility churn nor does it lead to stale state information on the network (assuming they do not move out of signal range en-

tirely). Our interest lies in demonstrating the benefits that a Stealth DHT will have under mobility churn in comparison with Pastry. Thus, we simulate Stealth and Pastry DHTs and compare their performances for the case when, upon changing their access points, mobile nodes also change their IP addresses. This scenario is perhaps more realistic due to the relative lack of deployment of mechanisms such as Mobile IP.

We consider a peer-to-peer network with a fixed number of 1,000 nodes. For the Stealth DHT simulations, we designate 99% of the nodes as stealth nodes and the remaining 1% are designated as service nodes. To show the impact of mobility on the performance of the DHTs, the number of mobile nodes in the network is increased from zero, where all stealth nodes on the network are stationary, to 990 nodes where all stealth nodes are mobile. Service nodes retain wired connectivity in all of these simulations. For Pastry, 1% of nodes correspondingly remain wired and the remaining 99% of wireless nodes are changed from all stationary towards all mobile.

Throughout this section we refer to *moving* and *static* DHTs, which are distinguished by the fact that in the former case, wireless nodes are in fact mobile, whereas in the latter, wireless nodes remain stationary. Stationary wireless nodes do not change access points and thus they do not lose connectivity as with mobile nodes. Yet, they suffer from high latency links which they have to share, unlike wired nodes.

4.1. Total number of messages

We first present the results pertaining to the overhead incurred as a result of node mobility. Figure 1 shows the mean total number of exchanged messages on the DHT, inclusive of *put*, *get*, *getreply* and routing state update messages. The results are displayed for both moving and static Pastry and Stealth DHTs as a function of the increase in the fraction of mobile nodes. We observe that the total number of messages in the Stealth DHT is constant at 21,000 messages, which indicates that mobility does not lead to DHT overhead on the network. The figure indicates the same for both static and moving Stealth DHTs, as well as static Pastry. This is to be expected, as in these three cases the nodes which are maintaining state about one another are stationary, meaning they do not change IP address and thus do not need to update one another.

In contrast, mobility has a severe impact on Pastry. Figure 1 shows that the total number of messages under moving Pastry is very high and increases with the number of mobile nodes. The figure illustrates how mobility can lead to many more messages on the network due to maintenance overhead, as one might expect.

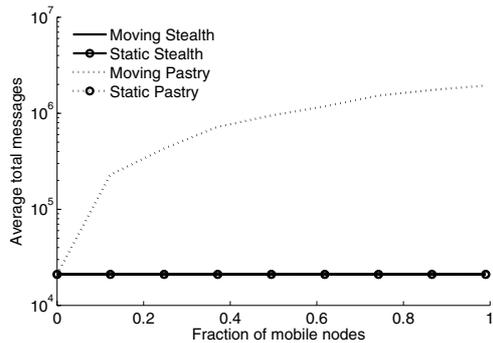


Figure 1. Average total no. of messages

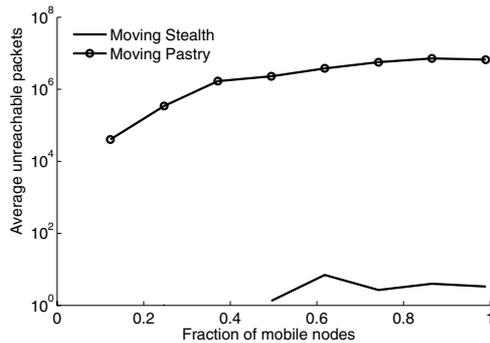


Figure 3. Average number of packets sent to unreachable hosts

4.2. Resent messages

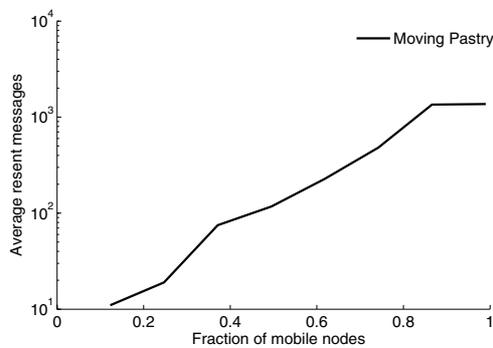


Figure 2. Average no. of resent messages

Figure 2 shows the average number of resent DHT messages as a function of the increase in the fraction of mobile nodes in the network. The figure shows the results for moving Pastry only, as no messages were ever resent under static Pastry or Stealth DHTs. We observe from the figure the number of resent messages on the moving Pastry increases rapidly with an increase in mobile nodes.

The existence of resent messages due to node mobility on a DHT reflects the unavailability of numerous nodes throughout the simulation. Thus, resent messages lead to reduced performance in terms of lookup latency, which we discuss in a later section.

4.3. Packets to unreachable hosts

When a node sends a *get* message over the DHT, the recipient will customarily reply directly to them via the source IP address contained within the request. While this avoids burdening the DHT overlay with unnecessary traffic, it also means that *getreply* messages are not counted in Figure 2, which refers solely to messages sent over the DHT.

Figure 3, however, shows a count of the number of times a network packet was sent to a node which had since become unreachable due to a change of address. Again, as stationary nodes do not change IP address at any point, the points for the static DHTs and also the first few for the moving DHTs (where the number of wired nodes is high) are zero and thus not shown. It is important to note that the figure shows results for all types of packet, including those which are never resent (e.g. state messages, nodes ping-pong one another and so on); this accounts for the discrepancy between the number of unreachable destinations and the number of resent messages. Unlike Figure 2, results for the moving Stealth DHT are displayed here; the reason for this is that while service nodes are fixed, the stealth nodes making the requests of them are not. As a result, a service node may attempt to reply via IP to a stealth node, only to find that it is no longer reachable. It is clear from this figure, however, that this situation occurs far more often with Pastry than it does in a Stealth DHT; the Stealth DHT does not even register any unreachable nodes until 50% of its stealth nodes are mobile.

4.4. Average lookup latency

Figure 4 shows the average *lookup latency* (defined as the time elapsed between a node sending a *get* request into the DHT until the receipt of the corresponding *getreply* message) as a function of the fraction of mobile nodes for moving and static Stealth and Pastry DHTs. The figure shows that static and moving Stealth DHTs have similar end-to-end performance, which is less than 1,300 ms for all considered networks. This shows that Stealth DHTs maintain efficient routing performance independent of the number of mobile nodes on the network. The figure also shows longer average latency for Pastry than for Stealth DHTs, as well as the discrepancy increasing with the number of mobile nodes. We also observe that moving Pastry suffers

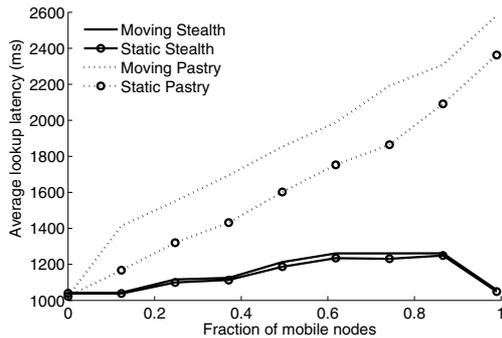


Figure 4. Average lookup latency

from longer average latency than static Pastry. The figure shows that the maximum average latency under Pastry is about twice the maximum value for Stealth DHTs. This is to be expected, as the number of nodes performing forwarding operations is lower in the Stealth DHT (1% service nodes), resulting in fewer hops on average.

In general, the figure shows quite high average delays even for Stealth DHTs (around 1.2 seconds). This is primarily due to the high propagation delays of their access links (approximately 200ms each).

5. Conclusion

Peer-to-peer networking may increasingly have to cater for intrinsically underpowered and unreliable mobile clients. In the case of a generic DHT, its routing infrastructure may consist of a large number of mobile nodes, leaving it susceptible to the detrimental effects of mobility churn. Stealth DHTs offer a solution to this problem by allowing for the isolation of mobile nodes connected to it in order to deny the ability to execute any operations that involve relaying and forwarding messages on the DHT. Mobile nodes on the Stealth DHT are stealth nodes, and those remaining are classed as service nodes. To accomplish the goals of the Stealth DHT concept, service nodes do not keep any state information about stealth nodes in their routing state tables and a stealth node does not keep any state information about other stealth nodes on the networks in its tables.

Using simulations, we have studied the effect of mobility churn on Stealth DHTs and compared the results to Pastry. The results show that the Stealth DHT algorithm is comparatively much more efficient in reducing overhead on the network, and that it also offers significantly higher routing efficiency. As expected, the simulation results show that the performance of Stealth DHTs are not affected by an increase in the number of mobile nodes on the network. For Pastry, the results show that its performance degrades dramatically as the ratio of mobile nodes to stationary nodes

on the network increases.

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