



# Wireless Sensor Networks: Architecture, Protocols, Simulator Tool

Neha Singh  
Department of ECE  
JNU, Jaipur

Prof. Rajeshwar Lal Dua  
Department of ECE  
JNU, Jaipur

Vinita Mathur  
Department of ECE  
JECRC Jaipur  
[vinitamathur12@gmail.com](mailto:vinitamathur12@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** Wireless Sensor Networks (WSN) is an interconnection of a large number of nodes deployed for monitoring the system by means of measurement of its parameters. Recent research in wireless sensor networks has led to various new protocols which are particularly designed for sensor networks. To design these networks, the factors needed to be considered are the coverage area, mobility, power consumption, communication capabilities etc. In this paper a survey is given regarding the architecture design issues, classification of protocols, and also an overview on one of its simulator tool i.e. ns-2. The paper explores with research issues for the realization of networks.

**Keywords:** Wireless Sensor networks, Ad hoc networks, Applications, Design Issues, Routing protocols, Simulator tool.

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## I. Introduction:

A sensor network is defined as a composition of a large number of low cost, low power multi functional sensor nodes which are highly distributed either inside the system or very close to it. These nodes which are very small in size consist of sensing, data processing and communicating components. The position of these tiny nodes need not be absolute; this not only gives random placement but also means that protocols of sensor networks and its algorithms must possess self organizing abilities in inaccessible areas. However nodes are constrained in energy supply and bandwidth, one of the most important constraints on sensor nodes are the low power consumption requirements. These constraints combined with a specific deployment of large number of nodes have posed various challenges to the design and management of networks. These challenges necessitate energy awareness at all layers of networking protocol stack. The issues related to physical and link layers are generally common for all kind of sensor applications, therefore the research on these areas has been focused on system level power awareness such as dynamic voltage scaling, radio communication hardware, low duty cycle issues, system partitioning, and energy aware MAC protocols. At the network layer, the main aim is to find ways for energy-efficient route setup and reliable relaying of data from the sensor nodes to the sink so that the lifetime of the network is maximized.

Sensor nodes not only carry limited but usually carry irreplaceable power sources and thus the main focus of sensor network protocol is primarily on power conservation. At the cost of lower throughput or higher transmission delay

they must possess inbuilt trade-off mechanism that gives the end user the option of prolonging network lifetime.

Realization of these and other sensor network applications require wireless ad hoc networking techniques. Although many protocols and algorithms have been proposed for traditional wireless ad hoc networks, they are not well suited for the unique features and application requirements of sensor networks. To illustrate this point, the differences between sensor networks and ad-hoc networks are as follows

- Sensor nodes mainly use broadcast communication whereas ad-hoc network uses point to point communication.
- The topology of a sensor network changes very frequently.
- Sensor nodes may not have global identification because of the large amount of overhead and large number of sensors.
- The number of sensor nodes in a sensor network can be several orders of magnitude higher than the nodes in ad-hoc network.

In this paper, we present a survey of protocols, design issues and outline the use of certain tools to meet the design objectives. [1] The paper is organized as follows. In the first section we specify some of the sensor network applications, second section summarizes the system architecture design issues for sensor networks and their implications on data routing. In section three, classification and comparison of

protocols have been discussed. Finally last section discusses about the one of the network simulator tool i.e. ns2.

## II. Sensor Networks Applications

Sensor networks may consist of many different types of sensors such as seismic, low sampling rate magnetic, visual, thermal, infra-red, acoustic and radar, which are able to monitor a wide variety of ambient conditions. Sensor nodes can be used for continuous sensing, event detection, event ID, and local control of actuators. The concept of micro sensing and wireless connection of these nodes promise many new application areas. We categorize the applications into military, environmental, health, home, and other commercial areas.

*A. Military Applications:* Wireless sensor networks can be an integral part of military command, control, communication, computing, intelligence, surveillance and targeting (C4ISRT) systems. The rapid deployment, fault tolerance and self organization characteristics of sensor networks make them a very promising sensing technique for military (C4ISRT). Since sensor networks are based on dense deployment of disposable and low cost sensor nodes, destruction of some nodes by hostile actions does not affect military applications as much as the destruction of traditional sensor, which makes sensor networks concept a better approach for battlefield. Various military applications of sensor networks are monitoring friendly forces, equipments and ammunition; biological and chemical (NBC) attack detection and reconnaissance.

*B. Environmental Applications:* Some environmental applications of sensor network include tracking the movement of birds, small animals and insects; monitoring environmental conditions that affect crops and livestock; irrigation; macro instruments for large scale earth monitoring and planetary exploration; chemical/biological detection; precision agriculture; biological, Earth and environmental monitoring in marine, soil and atmospheric contexts; forest fire detection and meteorological and geo physical research; flood detection; bio complexity mapping of the environment and pollution study.

*C. Health Application:* Some of the applications are providing interfaces for the disabled; integrated patient monitoring; diagnostics; drug administration in hospital; monitoring the movements and internal process of insects or other small animals; telemonitoring of human physiological data; and tracking and monitoring doctors and patients inside a hospital.

*D. Home Applications:* Home automation; as technology advances, smart sensor nodes and actuators can be buried appliances, such as vacuum cleaners, microwave ovens, refrigerators and VCRs. These sensor nodes inside the domestic devices can interact with each other and with an external network via the internet or satellite. They allow end users to manage home devices locally and remotely more easily.

*E. Other Commercial applications:* Some of the commercial applications are monitoring material fatigue; building virtual

keyboards; managing inventory; monitoring product quality; constructing smart office spaces; environmental control in office buildings; robot control and guidance in automatic manufacturing environment; interactive toys; interactive museums; factory process control and automation; monitoring disaster area; smart structures with sensor nodes embedded inside; machine diagnosis; transportation; factory instrumentation; local control of actuators; detecting and monitoring car thefts; vehicle detection and tracking; and instrumentation of semiconductor processing chambers, rotating machinery, wind tunnels and anechoic chambers. [2]

## III. Sensor Architecture Design

Sensor nodes are usually distributed in a sensor field as shown in figure1. Each of these distributed nodes has the capabilities to collect data and route data back to the sink and the end users. Data are routed back to the end user by a multi-hop infrastructure less architecture through the sink.

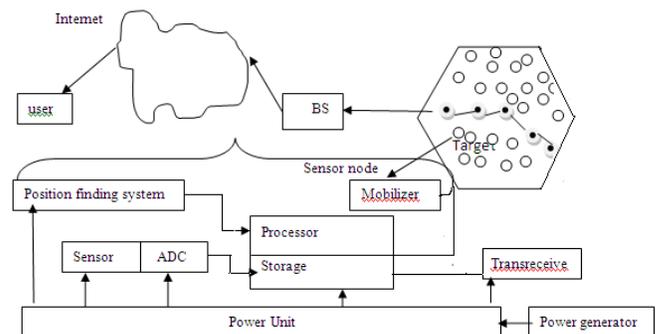


Figure 1. Sensor nodes scattered in a sensor field and components of a sensor node

The protocol stack combines power and routing awareness, integrates data with networking protocols, and communicates power efficiently through the wireless medium. The protocol stack consists of the application, transport, network, data link, physical layer, power management plane, mobility management plane and task management plane. Depending on the sensing task, different types of applications software can be built and use on the application layer. The transport layer helps to maintain the flow of data if the sensor networks application requires it. The network layer takes care of routing the data supplied by the transport layer. Since the environment is noisy and sensor nodes can be mobile, the MAC protocol must be power aware and able to minimize collision with neighbors broadcast. The physical layer addresses the needs of the simple but robust modulation, transmission and receiving techniques. In addition, the power, mobility and task management planes monitor the power, movement and task distribution among the sensor nodes. These planes help the sensor nodes coordinate the sensing task and lower the overall power consumption. [3]

*Design Issues*

Since the performance of a routing protocol is closely related to the architectural model, in this section we strive to capture architectural issues and highlight their implications.

1) *Network dynamics*: There are three main components in a sensor network. These are the sensor nodes, sink and monitored events. Aside from the very few setups that utilize mobile sensors, most of the network architecture assumes that sensor nodes are stationary. On the other hand supporting the mobility of sink or cluster heads (gateways) is sometimes deemed necessary.

2) *Node Deployment*: Another consideration is the topological deployment of the nodes which is application dependent and affects the performance of the routing protocol. The deployment is either deterministic or self organizing. In deterministic situations, the sensors are manually placed and data is routed through pre determined paths. However in self organizing system the sensor nodes are scattered randomly creates an infrastructure in an ad-hoc manner.

3) *Energy Consideration*: During the creation of an infrastructure, the processes of setting up the routes are greatly influenced by energy considerations. Since the transmission power of a wireless radio is proportional to the distance squared or even higher order in the presence of obstacles, multi hop routing will consume less energy than direct communication. However, multi hop routing introduces significant overhead topology management and medium access control. Direct routing would perform well inform if all the nodes are very close to the sink. Most of the time sensors are scattered randomly over an area of interest and multi hop routing becomes unavoidable.

4) *Data Delivery Models*: Depending on the application of the sensor network, the data delivery model to the sink can be continuous, event- driven, query-driven and hybrid. In continuous delivery model, each sensor sends data periodically. In event driven and query driven models, the transmission of data is triggered when an event occurs or a query is generated by the sink. Some network applies a hybrid network using a combination of continuous, event driven and query driven data delivery. The routing protocol is highly influenced by data delivery model, especially with regard to the minimization of energy consumption and route stability. [4]

#### IV. Routing Protocols

Following is the classification of routing protocols according to their design characteristics.

- FBR: Flat Based Routing
- HR: Hierarchical Routing
- LBR: Location Based Routing
- NB: Negotiation Based
- MBR: Multipath Based Routing
- QBR: Query Based Routing
- QOSBR: QOS Based Routing
- CBR: Coherent Based Routing
- SPIN: Sensor Protocols for Information via Negotiation
- DD: Directed Diffusion

- RR: Rumor Routing
- GBR: Gradient Based Routing
- CADR: Constrained Anisotropic Diffusion Routing
- COUGAR
- ACQUIRE: Active Query forwarding in sensor networks
- LEACH: Low Energy Adaptive Clustering Hierarchy
- TEEN & APTEEN: [Adaptive] Threshold sensitive Energy efficient sensor network
- PEGASIS: Power efficient gathering in sensor information systems
- VGA: Virtual Grid Architecture Routing
- SOP: Self organizing protocol
- GAF: Geographic Adaptive Fidelity
- SPAN
- GEAR: Geographical and Energy Aware Routing
- SAR: Sequential Assignment Routing
- SPEED: A real time routing protocol
- ReBR; Reactive Based Routing
- PrBR: Proactive Based Routing
- HBR: Hybrid Based Routing

Data routing in sensor networks is classified according to the three main categories as shown in figure2, namely flat, hierarchical and location-based.

- A. *Flat Routing*: SPIN, DD, RR, MCFA, GBR, IDSQ, CADR, COUGAR, ACQUIRE, EAR,
- B. *Hierarchical Routing*: LEACH, PEGASIS, TEEN & APTEEN, MECN, SOP, TTDD, HPAR, and VGA.
- C. *Location Based Routing*: GAF, GEAR, MFR, DIR, GEDIR, and GOAFR.

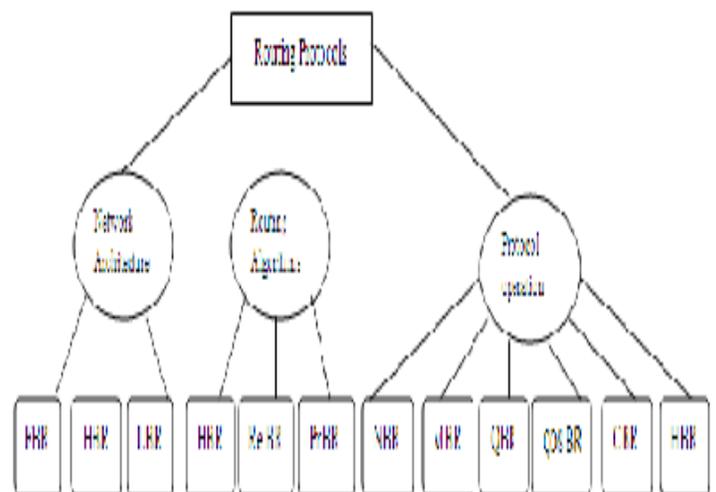


Figure2 Classification of routing protocols in wireless sensor networks

Table 1 represents classification and comparison of various routing protocols in WSNs. [5, 6]

Table1: Classification and Comparison of routing protocols in WSNs.

Routing Protocols	Power Usage	Scalability	Query Based	Over head	Data Delivery Model	QoS
SPIN	Ltd.	Ltd	Yes	Low	Event Driven	No
DD	Ltd	Ltd	Yes	Low	Demand Driven	No
RR	Low	Good	Yes	Low	Demand Driven	No
GBR	Low	Ltd	Yes	Low	Hybrid	No
CADR	Ltd	Ltd	Yes	Low	Continuously	No
COUGAR	Ltd	Ltd	Yes	High	Query Driven	No
ACQUIRE	Low	Ltd	Yes	Low	Complex query	No
LEACH	High	Good	No	High	Cluster-Based	No
TEEN&APTEEN	High	Good	No	High	Active threshold	No
PEGASIS	Max	Good	No	Low	Chains Based	No
VGA	Low	Good	No	High	Good	No
SOP	Low	Good	No	High	Continuously	No
GAF	Ltd	Good	No	Mod	Virtual grid	No
SPAN	Ltd	Ltd	No	High	Continuously	No
GEAR	Ltd	Ltd	No	Mod	Demand Driven	No
SAR	High	Ltd	Yes	High	Continuously	Yes
SPEED	Low	Ltd	Yes	Less	Geographic	Yes

**V. Simulator Tool for WSN**

Simulation tool for wireless sensor networks are increasingly been used to study sensor webs and to test new applications and protocols in this evolving research field. However, it requires a suitable model based on solid assumptions and an appropriate framework to ease implementation. In addition, simulation results rely on the particular scenario under study (environment), hardware and physical layer assumptions, which are usually not accurate enough to capture the real behavior of a WSN, thus, jeopardizing the credibility of results.

Usually, the key properties to select suitable simulation environment are:

- 1) Reusability and availability.
- 2) Performance and scalability.
- 3) Support for rich-semantics scripting languages to define experiments and process results.
- 4) Graphical, debug and trace support.

However there are various challenges associated with the available WSN simulators. For instance some simulator lack

of available protocol models, which causes the increase of developing time, some simulators limit the scalability, etc. Additionally modeling problems arise when considering the new environment and the energy components as shown in figure 3. They also comprise scalability and accuracy. [7]

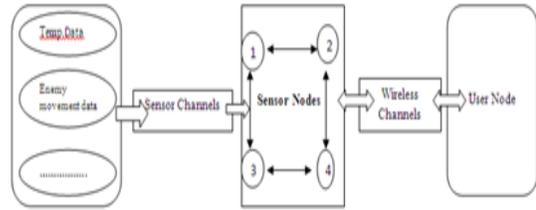


Figure3 Network Simulator

**Introduction to NS2**

It is one of the network simulator tools for wireless sensor network. It is a discrete event simulator developed in C++ as shown in figure 4. NS-2 is one of the most popular non-specific network simulators, and supports a wide range of protocols in all layers. It uses OTcl as configuration and script interface as shown in figure 5. NS-2 is the paradigm of reusability. Following are the steps for writing a script in ns-2.

- Create a new simulator object.
- Turn on tracing [Open your own trace files].
- Create network (physical layer).
- Create link and queue (data-link layer).
- Define routing protocol.
- Create transport connection (transport layer).
- Create traffic (application layer).
- Insert errors.

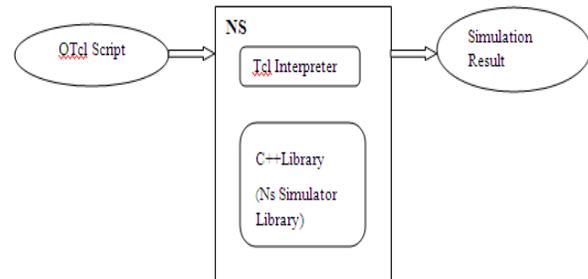


Figure4 ns2 script

It provides the most complete support of communication protocols models, among non-commercial packages. Regarding WSN, NS-2 includes ad-hoc and WSN specific protocols such as directed diffusion or SMAC. Also, several projects intend to provide WSN support to NS-2 such as Sensor Sim and NRL as shown in figure 5. Both are extensions of NS-2 to support WSN modeling. NS-2 can comfortably model wired network topologies up to 1,000 nodes or above with some optimizations. This experiment size can be kept for wireless topologies using some new optimizations. A disadvantage of NS-2 is that it provides poor graphical support, via NAM. This application just reproduces a NS-2 trace. [8]

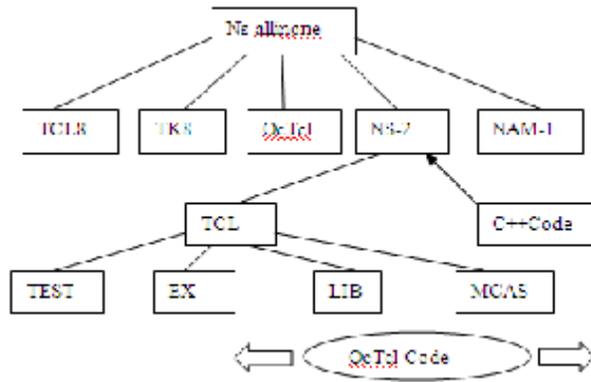


Figure5 ns-2 packages

## VI Conclusion and Open issues

In the future, this wide range of application areas will make sensor networks an integral part of our lives. However, realization of sensor networks needs to satisfy the constraints introduced by factors such as fault tolerance, scalability, cost, hardware, topology change, environment and power consumption. Since these constraints are highly stringent and specific for sensor networks, new wireless ad-hoc networking techniques are required. Routing in sensor networks has attracted lot of attention in the recent years and introduced unique challenges compared to traditional data routing in wired networks.

An interesting issue for routing protocols is the consideration of node mobility. Most of the current protocols assume that the sensor nodes and the sink are stationary. However, there might be situations such as battle environments where the sink and possibly the sensor need to be mobile. New routing algorithms such as TTDD (Two – Tier Data Dissemination Model for Large-scale Wireless Sensor Networks) are needed in order to handle the overhead of mobility and topology changes in such energy constrained environment.

Although many routing protocols have been proposed in WSNs, many issues still exist and there are still many challenges that need to be solved in the sensor networks. The following parts describe some of those issues and challenges:

- How to effectively utilize the bandwidth and energy for energy application.
- To make sensor nodes self-organizing and self-reconfigurable.
- To make routing protocols secure in WSNs.
- To satisfy dense sensor networks with a large number of nodes.

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