Distributed Token Circulation in Mobile Ad Hoc Networks

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Abstract

This paper presents several distributed algorithms that cause a token to continually circulate through all the nodes of a mobile ad hoc network. An important application of such algorithms is to ensure total order [5] of message delivery in a group communication service. Some of the proposed algorithms are aware of, and adapt to changes in, the ad hoc network topology. When using a token circulation algorithm, a *round* is said to complete when every node has been visited at least once. Criteria for comparing the algorithms include the average time required to complete a round, number of bytes sent per round, and number of nodes visited per round. Comparison between the proposed algorithms is performed using simulation results obtained from a detailed simulation model (with ns-2 simulator).

1 Introduction

This paper presents several distributed algorithms that cause a token to continually circulate through all the nodes of a mobile ad hoc network. An important application of such algorithms is to ensure total order of message delivery in a group communication service.

Mobile ad hoc networks are formed by a collection of, potentially mobile, wireless nodes; communication links form and disappear as nodes come into and go out of each other's communication range, as shown in Figure 1. Such networks have many practical applications, including home networking, personal area networking, search-and-rescue, and military operations. Wireless networking has received a boost from the development of standards such as IEEE 802.11 and BlueTooth. These wireless technologies can potentially be utilized to implement wireless ad hoc networks.

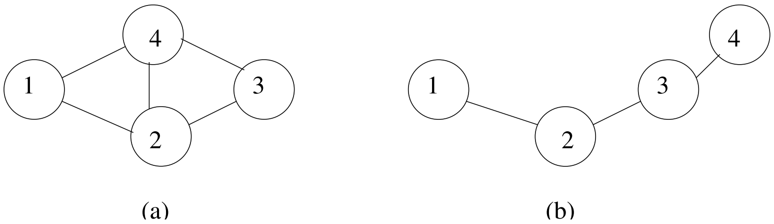

Figure 1: Effect of mobility on communication links in an ad hoc network: (a) initial network topology, and (b) network topology after movement by node 4

Mobile ad hoc networking has been an active research area. Much of this activity has focussed on the design of routing and medium access control protocols, since efficiency of these protocols can have a significant impact on performance. However, there has been very little work on the development of distributed services for mobile ad hoc networks, such as group communication.

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Group communication service forms an important building block for applications in dynamic distributed systems and is useful in many applications that involve collaborations among a group of people (e.g., a white-board application). A group communication service can be used by an application designer as a high-level service, and it allows the application to remain oblivious to details of the dynamic network environment. The key features of a *group communication* service are:

- Maintaining information regarding group membership (who is in a group and who is not), and
- Letting nodes within a group communicate with each other in an *ordered* manner – many types of orders are useful, including *total* order (wherein all nodes in a group receive all messages in an identical order) [5].

Group communication problem becomes especially difficult in a mobile ad hoc environment wherein links can repeatedly fail and recover. There has been significant research activity on group communication in traditional wired networks (see Section 2). The vast body of this research is an indicator of the significance of the group communication service paradigm. Group communication services have been successfully used in the past as building blocks and abstractions for implementing distributed tasks. Past work on total ordering has yielded several approaches which use a *token* to implement the total order. These algorithms have two flavors:

- As exemplified by the algorithms in [25, 3], totally ordered message delivery is achieved by continually circulating a *token* through all the nodes of the network in a *virtual ring*. The token circulates around the virtual ring carrying a sequence number. When a node receives the token, it assigns sequence numbers (carried with the the token) to its messages, and then multicasts the messages to the group members. Sequence number carried in the token is incremented once for each message sent by the node holding the token. Since the messages are assigned globally unique sequence numbers, total order can be achieved. (Additional mechanisms are needed depending on the desired level of reliability.)
- In the above approach, each message is multicast by the sender node, tagged with a sequence number obtained from the token. An alternative approach [14, 10] is to store the messages in the token itself – since the token visits all nodes in a virtual ring, the messages will eventually reach all the nodes, the order in which messages are added to the token determining the order in which they are delivered to the nodes. Clearly, this approach would result in large tokens (since messages are carried in the token itself).

Both these approaches depend on the existence of a virtual ring in the network. But the prior work has not sufficiently addressed the issue of determining efficient embeddings of rings (around which a token may be circulated) in networks with dynamically changing topology. Past theoretical work on ring embeddings assumes specific target topologies (e.g., [27]); we are not aware of any work on embedding rings in arbitrary dynamic topologies.

In this paper, we will consider mechanisms for finding approximations to a virtual ring that change dynamically as the topology changes and that are efficient according to certain metrics. Since token circulation around a virtual ring is an useful component of many existing group communication mechanisms for wired networks, we will consider ways of improving performance of such mechanisms in mobile ad hoc networks.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 summarizes the related work, Section 3 describes the performance measures that we study, the algorithms are presented in Section 4, the simulation results appear in Section 5, and Section 6 concludes the paper.

2 Related Work

As mentioned earlier, the majority of the past research in the area of ad hoc and packet radio networks has focused on routing and medium access control protocols.

Group communication has been well-studied for static, wired networks, with results ranging from commercial systems to theoretical impossibility proofs. (Due to space constraints, our references are representative rather than exhaustive.) Originally, group communication services were designed for local area networks (e.g., Isis [5]). In considering how to extend such services to large-scale distributed systems, the key new issue is how to handle partitions, which are now much more likely to occur due to failures of links and nodes [2]. Many papers have presented algorithms to deliver messages in various consistent orders within groups, either on top of a layer that deals with membership and view issues, or intertwined with them (e.g., [3, 12, 15, 9, 21]).

Baldi and Ofek [4] compare sending multicast messages over a tree versus a ring embedded in a network for real-time systems. They do not discuss how to find the embeddings. For their comparisons, the ring is obtained by going twice around a spanning tree of the network and ignoring repeated nodes. Their results show that the ring is actually better than the tree in some situations. Their results indicate it is worth investigating ring embeddings in ad hoc networks.

A few papers have looked at the problems involved in group communication for mobile cellular environments, which have mobile hosts and mobile support station infrastructure. Cho and Birman [8] describes enhancements to the ISIS group communication system to handle mobile clients. An algorithm to ensure message delivery in causal order is described by Prakash et al. [24]. El-Gendy et al. [13] present a model based on the two-tiered approach for providing group communication. The multicast problem for mobile hosts has been studied in [29, 1].

We are unaware of any work on token passing in mobile ad hoc networks. However, Prakash and Baldoni [23] describe a multi-level architecture for use in various types of mobile environment, including ad hoc networks, and show how a three-round group membership protocol can be used to construct groups, i.e., for group membership. Their paper does not address how to achieve totally ordered message delivery.

3 Performance Measures

Before presenting our performance measures, we define some terminology used later in the paper. When we say that a token *visits* a node, it implies that the token is received by the group communication service running on that node. On the other hand, when we say a token is *routed* by a node, it simply means that the network layer at that node forwarded the token to another node. A token may be *routed* by a node without *visiting* that node. For instance, in Figure 2, if the group communication service on node 1 sends the token to the service on node 3, it would be *routed* by node 2, and then visit node 3, however, it would not *visit* node 2 on way to node 3.

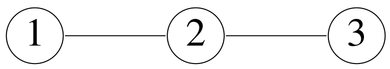

Figure 2: A simple ad hoc network

We define a *round* to be a minimal length execution sequence in which each node is visited at least once. For instance, Figure 3 shows three rounds for an ad hoc network consisting of nodes 1, 2, 3 and 4 (the network topology is not shown here). In Figure 3, the nodes are listed in the order they are visited by the token.

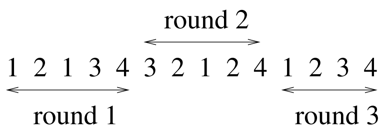

Figure 3: Example to illustrate the concept of rounds

The following are the performance measures that we will apply to our algorithms.

- **Round length:** The *length* of a round is the number of node visits made by the token in one round. Note that, in general, a given node may be visited multiple times in a round. (Of course, by the definition of a round, there must be at least one node that is visited exactly once within a round.)
- **Message Overhead** measured as *number of bytes sent per round:* This overhead measures the overhead due to all packets transmitted to complete one round. If the packet takes multiple hops to reach a destination, the bytes required to transmit the packet on each hop are counted. If any packet is lost and needs to be retransmitted, the retransmissions are counted as well. Similarly, the overhead of sending control packets in the medium access control protocol is also included in the message overhead (in our simulations, we use the IEEE 802.11 wireless medium access protocol).
- **Time Overhead** measured as *time required to complete a round*: The time required to complete a round is the duration of time from when the last node in the previous round is visited until when the last node in the current round is visited.

4 Token Circulation Algorithms

Let us first consider what would happen if the token circulation algorithm were to ignore the network topology and choose an arbitrary order to visit the nodes. For instance, in Figure 4, if the nodes are visited in the order $1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, ...$, then between any two consecutive visits, the token takes several hops – in this case, although the length of the round is 6 (which is optimal), message overhead is large (since each node visit requires the token to take several hops). On the other hand, visiting the nodes in the order 1,3,5,2,6,4,1,3,5,2,6,4... still results in the optimal length, but lower message overhead. Thus, the latter visit order should be preferred. However, if the visit order is chosen without taking the topology into account, in general, the algorithm will not typically choose the best possible order of visits.

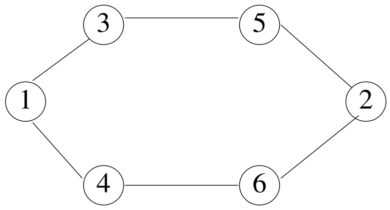

Figure 4: An ad hoc network with 6 nodes

The above example suggests that it is useful to utilize network topology information in determining the order in which nodes are visited. However, knowledge of the network topology, particularly in mobile environments, is expensive to achieve. Therefore, in this paper, we explore token circulation algorithms which use only local neighborhood information, and also consider an algorithm that does not use any topology information.

One simple approach for keeping track of neighbors is by means of "hello" messages [7] – each node periodically broadcasts a hello message, the period being referred to as the *hello interval*. Each node i assumes that a node j is its neighbor if node i has recently received a hello message from j. On the other hand, if node i does not receive a hello from node k for a "hello threshold" number of consecutive hello intervals, then i assumes that k is not its neighbor. The hello mechanism may be implemented as a part of the group communication service, or alternatively, this information may be obtained by the network layer and made available to the group communication service via a system call.

The algorithms that we have explored are characterized by the following parameters, which control how the node holding the token determines the next node to be visited by the token – the letters in the parentheses in each item below will be used to form the abbreviated names of proposed algorithms, as described later:

- *Local (L) versus Global (G):* In *local* algorithms, the next node to send token to is chosen from amongst the nodes that are believed to be neighbors of the node possessing token. A *global* algorithm may direct the token towards any node in the network.

- *Recency (R) versus Frequency (F):* In case of *recency* algorithms, the decision on next recipient of the token is based on how *recently* the nodes have had the token. In case of *frequency* algorithms, the decision is based on how *frequently* the nodes have had the token.

- *Visiting "next" node on route to a desired destination (N):* This variation is only relevant for *global* algorithms. Once a desired destination has been determined by a global algorithm, there are two possibilities: (a) the token is sent directly to the chosen destination – other nodes on the route to this destination will route the token, but the token will not *visit* these intermediate nodes. (b) Alternatively, the current token-holder may send the token to the next node on the route to the chosen destination – effectively, the token will visit all nodes on the route to the chosen destination. In order to implement the second mechanism, the network layer must be able to provide to the application layer the identity of the next node on the route to the desired destination.

Figure 5 shows six algorithms that are obtained using the above variations. We will describe each algorithm later in the paper. All six algorithms follow the same framework: The token carries with it some "count"

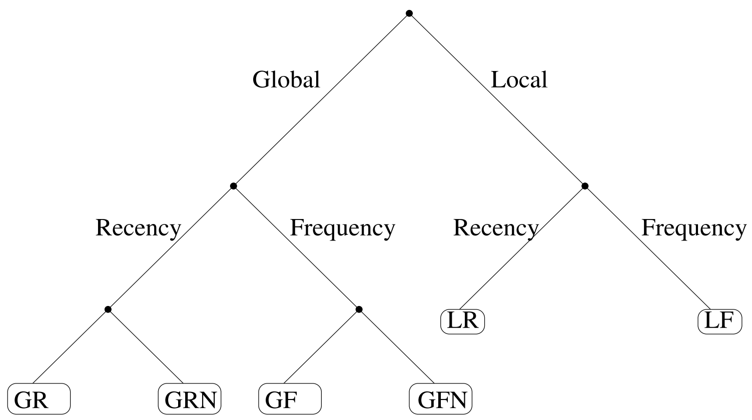

Figure 5: Decision tree with algorithms at the leaves

information for each node in the system. When a node receives the token, it chooses the next recipient of the token using this count information, updates its own count information in the token, and sends the token to the chosen next recipient. The criteria for choosing the next token recipient and updating the count depend on the particular algorithm. We first summarize the possibilities for these two procedures, followed by a more detailed discussion of each algorithm evaluated in the paper.

- *Updating the counts:* For *recency* algorithms, the count for node i (as stored in the token) represents the last "time" when node i was visited. "Time" in this case is a variable, initialized to 0, that is incremented by 1 each time the token visits a node – the time variable is also carried in the token. For *frequency* algorithms, the count for node i is the number of times the token has visited node i.

- *Choosing the next token recipient:* For choosing the next recipient, local algorithms are only allowed to consider nodes that are currently believed to be the token-holder's neighbors, whereas global algorithms are allowed to consider all nodes. In most of our algorithms, the next recipient is the node, among those allowed to be considered, with the smallest count value, ties being broken either arbitrarily or by using some other criteria (specified later). The exception to this rule is the global algorithm that visits intermediate nodes, in which case the next destination is actually the *neighbor* of the current token-holder that is on the path to the node with the smallest count.

Now we discuss each proposed algorithm individually.

4.1 Algorithm Local-Frequency (LF)

The Local-Frequency (LF) algorithm keeps track of how many times each node has been visited, and sends the token to the least-frequently visited neighbor of the token-holder. To implement this algorithm, the *count* for each node, as stored in the token, contains the number of past token visits to that node.

Note that, since the token-holder may not have a precise knowledge of its neighbors, occasionally, the chosen node may no longer be its neighbor. To protect against the potential loss of token in such cases, we use a TCP connection to deliver the token. The TCP protocol, running on top of a unicast routing protocol for ad hoc networks, will eventually deliver the token to the intended recipient (provided that the recipient is not partitioned away). This approach is used for all our algorithms. (In our simulations, the Dynamic Source Routing [20] protocol is used for routing in ad hoc networks.)

The following argument proves that if there is no mobility and the topology is connected, then the LF algorithm ensures that every node is visited infinitely often, i.e., there is no starvation. Suppose in contradiction that there is starvation in some execution. Let S be the set of starved nodes and F be the set of non-starved nodes (those that get the token infinitely often). Note that F cannot be empty; if it were, S would contain all the nodes and the token would have nowhere to be. Consider the situation after the last time than any node in S gets the token. Since the topology graph is connected, there exists a node x that has at least one node in S as a neighbor. Eventually when x gets the token, it sees one of its neighbors, y, in S as its least-frequently visited neighbor and sends the token to y, a contradiction.

However, the LF algorithm has the unfortunate property that the round length can increase without bound in certain network topologies, even if there is no mobility. For example, consider the network shown in Figure 6. Suppose that, initially, the token resides at node 1. Assume that the LF algorithm breaks ties in favor of the node with the smaller identifier. In this case, it is easy to verify that length of a round will grow unboundedly with time, when using the LF algorithm.

4.2 Algorithm Local-Recency (LR)

The Local-Recency (LR) algorithm is similar to LF, except that the least *recently* visited neighbor of the token-holder is chosen as the next recipient of the token. To implement this algorithm, the *count* for each node, as stored in the token, contains the "time" (as defined earlier) when the node was last visited by the token.

A similar argument to that for LF shows that there is no starvation in the case of static connected topologies. In fact, the behavior of LF is much better than that of LR on the static graph in Figure 6 – it ensures a round length that is never more than seven.

In any static connected graph, a round length of at most $2n$ can be achieved. The reason is that the nodes can always be visited according to a spanning tree of the graph, backtracking where necessary. The LR algorithm attempts to improve on this round length by taking advantage of cycles to avoid the backtracking.

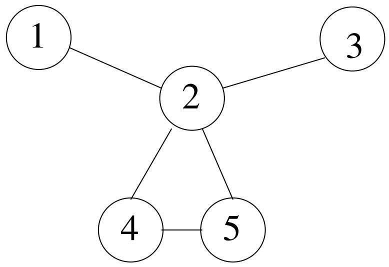

Figure 6: Potentially unbounded rounds when using LF

4.3 Algorithms Global-Recency (GR) and Global-Frequency (GF)

In these algorithms, the token is sent to the node that has been visited the least recently (in algorithm GR) or least frequently (in algorithm GF) among *all* the nodes in the system, not just among the token-holder's neighbors.

When using the GR algorithm, ties will occur only during the first round, and subsequently, the count values for the different nodes will always be distinct. However, ties may potentially occur at any time when using the GF algorithm. If ties are broken arbitrarily when using GF as well, then GF and GR would perform similar to each other. To explore algorithm behavior further, in our simulation of GF, when breaking such ties, we favor nodes that are the token-holder's neighbors. Thus, this tie-breaker procedure for GF would need the hello mechanism to maintain neighborhood information.

When using both GR and GF algorithms, number of nodes visited in each round (i.e., round length) is equal to the number of nodes in the network. It is easy to see that, with the GR algorithm, the token visits nodes in the same order in each round. On the other hand, this may not necessarily be true for GF algorithm. For instance, consider nodes A, B and C that are fully-connected. In this case, when using algorithm GF, the token may visit the nodes in the order ABCBACABCBAC... – here, in some rounds the token visits the nodes in order ABC while in other rounds, the order is BAC.

4.4 Algorithms Global-Recency-NextHop (GRN) and Global-Frequency-NextHop (GFN)

These algorithms first determine the node with smallest count value from among all nodes in the network. Recall that the counts are included in the token. Then, the token is sent to the the neighbor of the token-holder on the route to the node with the smallest count – this algorithm requires the ability to query the network layer to determine the neighbor on the route to a given destination. We present simulation results only for GRN, since GFN behaves similar to GRN.

5 Simulation Results

In this section, we present performance evaluation results for the algorithms discussed above. Of these six algorithms, the GFN algorithm was not simulated, since its behavior is similar to GRN.

The performance evaluation is done with the ns-2 simulator [28] with CMU extensions [7]. We consider a system consisting of 20 nodes. To model mobility of the nodes, we used the *random waypoint* mobility model from [7]. In each mobility scenario generated using this model, the 20 nodes are initially placed in randomly chosen positions in a 1000m $\times$ 300m box. Then, the nodes follow randomly chosen paths. For our experiments, we used node speeds of 6, 12, 18 and 24 m/s.

Each algorithm runs as an application on top of TCP and the Distance Source Routing (DSR) protocol [20]. By using TCP as the transport protocol, we ensure that the token does not get lost due to route failures or transmission errors. To facilitate implementation of the GRN algorithm, we augmented DSR such that the token circulation algorithm can obtain the next node on the route to any given destination (the GRN algorithm does *not* need to make use of hello messages for this purpose).

We implemented the "hello" protocol to maintain neighborhood information – this protocol is used for LF, LR and GF algorithms, but not for GR and GRN algorithms. The hello threshold of 3 was used in all simulations. The hello interval was varied as explained later.

In our performance evaluation, we measured average values of the metrics discussed in Section 3. Specifically, the metrics are the average time in seconds per round, the average number of bytes transmitted per round (including any hello packets, TCP packets, and medium access control packets), and the average number of nodes visited per round. Results reported here are averaged over many scenarios. The following parameters were varied:

- **Hello interval:** In our simulations, hello interval values of 0.1, 0.3, 0.5 and 0.7 second are used. As described earlier, some of our algorithms find it useful to know the neighbors of the node that holds

Table 1: Results for static topologies

	LF	LR	GF	GR	GRN
Time (sec) per round	0.144	0.102	0.183	1.155	0.213
Bytes per round	28299	20151	23540	54579	27361
Number of nodes visited per round	29.49	21.00	20.00	20.00	27.24

the token. Of course, since the nodes are mobile, it is not possible to maintain perfect knowledge of the neighborhood. The accuracy of this information may affect the overhead of the token circulation mechanisms.

An issue of interest to us is the frequency with which the hello messages are transmitted. Greater frequency results in greater accuracy in the neighborhood information, but also greater overhead of the hello messages. The issue of hello frequency has been previously studied in the context of unicast routing in ad hoc networks [7], however, here we consider the impact of hello frequency (or hello interval) on the overhead of token circulation algorithms.

- **Speed:** The speed at which the nodes move in a random mobility pattern.

In the following, we first present simulation results in the case when the topologies are connected and there is no mobility. The reason to consider static scenarios is to obtain some intuition about the behavior of the algorithms in the simpler case. Then, we consider the simulation results when there is mobility and discuss how mobility affects the behavior of the algorithms.

5.1 Static topologies

In this case, we generated many connected random graph topologies for the 20 nodes and simulated the various algorithms. Since the topology is static, the routes, once determined using DSR, do not break during the simulation.

Table 1 shows the results we obtained. From this, we see that the LR algorithm performs the best among the five algorithms, and the GR algorithm gives the poorest measure in terms of the time per round and the bytes per round. In terms of the number of nodes visited per round, the GF and the GR algorithms perform the best; this is of course by definition, since we are only counting the number of visited nodes.

Among the global algorithms, the GF algorithm performs the best, since ties in this algorithm are broken by preferring the neighboring node. Thus, this global algorithm benefits by also making use of local neighborhood information. The GRN algorithm's performance is also comparable to the local algorithms and the GF algorithm due to the fact that the intermediate nodes are visited.

The conclusion of the performance evaluation with static scenarios is that the Local-Recency (LR) algorithm performs the best overall. The reason for its good performance are (a) use of topological information, and (b) use of timestamps to determine the "locally least recently visited" node.

5.2 Dynamic topologies

For the simulation of dynamic topologies we have two sets of plots:

1. First, we vary the speed of the nodes (6, 12, 18, and 24 m/sec) and find the average amount of time, average number of bytes and the average number of nodes visited per round for all the scenarios with the different speeds.

2. Second, we vary the hello intervals (0.1, 0.3, 0.5, and 0.7 seconds) and find the average amount of time, average number of bytes and the average number of nodes visited per round for all the scenarios with the different hello intervals.

In both cases, the number of scenarios simulated is 20. The duration of the simulation was varied inversely with the speed, with the duration for the slowest speed (6 m/s) being 50 seconds.

When we simulated mobility, the LR algorithm continues to perform well in in all situations, similar to the static topology cases. However, we found that the behavior of the other algorithms, with respect to most of the metrics, became somewhat random – the simulation results are presented in Figures 7 through 12, and discussed later. We attribute the seemingly random nature of the results to three factors:

1. The effect of uncertainty in the topology knowledge due to the hello protocol: Since hello packets are sent at finite intervals, and the hello threshold must necessarily be non-zero, there is a delay before a node learns that a new link has been formed, or an existing link is broken. In addition, since hello messages are sent unreliably, the loss of several hello messages consecutively can lead a node to believe that a link is broken, when it really is not broken.

2. The effect of the TCP timeout intervals when partitions occur: This phenomenon is similar to what has been observed in previous studies of TCP on ad hoc networks [16]. In some of our mobility patterns, partitions occasionally occur, and last for non-negligible intervals of time. Since the global algorithms may choose any node in the network as the destination, the token-holder may choose an unreachable node as the destination – the TCP connection attempting to send the token to this node will timeout, backoff the timeout interval, and retry. Multiple timeouts and retries may occur if the partition lasts for a long interval. Now when eventually the partitions do merge, the TCP timeout intervals may have become very large, and it takes a while for the TCP connection to send the token again, resulting in a loss of time. Even in case of local schemes, this situation can occur, because the local topology information is not accurate at all instants of time – specifically, it takes some time for a node to determine that its link with another node is broken. Thus, a node may attempt to send a packet to a node that is actually partitioned away, even when a local scheme is used. However, the likelihood of these events when using local schemes is much lower than when using the global schemes.

3. The chaotic nature of the algorithms themselves. This chaotic nature is easy to see in case of algorithm LF, which relies on information about how *frequently* the neighboring nodes have been visited by the token. In case of LF, small changes in the topology have big effects on the round length. For instance, in Figure 6, we saw that the round length using algorithm LF grows without bound. However, if an edge is added between nodes 1 and 3, then the round length quickly stabilizes to five, which is optimal. As the topology changes with node movement, the system could be switching back and forth between topologies with bounded and unbounded round lengths with respect to LF.

Effect of speed: Figure 7 shows the plot of the average time per round versus speed for all the algorithms. As in the static case, the LR algorithm performs the best and the GR algorithm gives the poorest performance. Some of the algorithms vary a lot with change in speed, probably because the topology of the network changes rapidly and the performance of these algorithms depends on the behavior of TCP, which would constantly time out in the presense of partions being formed.

Figure 8 is the plot of the average number of bytes per round versus speed. Here, barring the LR algorithm, the rest of the agorithms again show a lot of variation and reason for such variations is the same as described above.

As seen in Figure 9, when number of nodes per round is considered, LR algorithm gives the best performance amongst LR, LF and GRN. GR and GF algorithms, of course, perform the optimal number of visits per round, by definition (the curves for GR and GF overlap, so it is difficult to see them both in the figure). However, it is worth noting that this metric alone is not adequate to measure the algorithm behavior. As seen

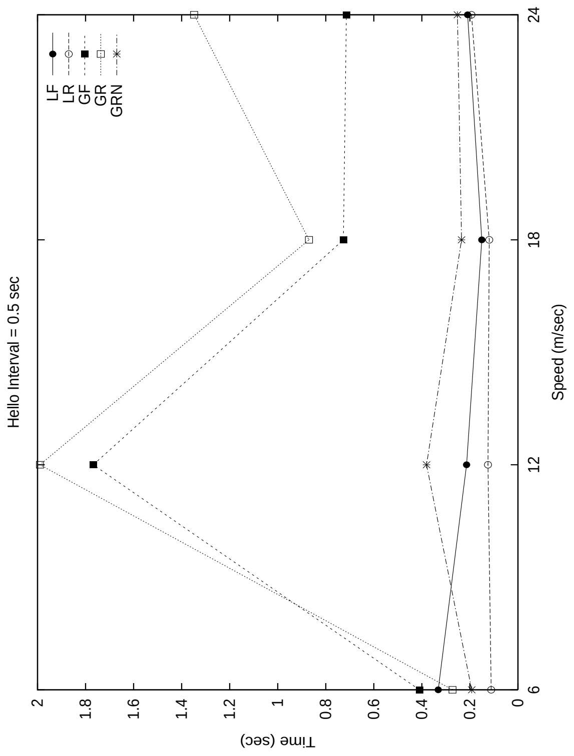

Figure 7: Average time per round vs. speed

before, GR and GF have higher message overheads. LR algorithm, on the other hand, has low overhead and yet visits near-optimal number of nodes per round.

Effect of hello interval length: Figure 10 shows the plot of the average time per round vs hello interval for all the algorithms. For all plots with varying hello intervals, the GR and GRN algorithms will have a constant value since we do not use the hello protocols for these algorithms.

Figure 11 is a plot of the average bytes per round vs hello interval and Figure 12 shows the plot of the number of nodes visited per round. In Figure 11, the number of bytes for the LR and GF algorithms decreases with the increase in hello interval value. But for the LF algorithm there is a slight rise in the average byte value at hello interval 0.3. This is due to the fact that in Figure 12, the average number of nodes visited per round for this algorithm also increases and thus the total messages passed increases. This increases the average bytes per round even though the number of hello messages decreases.

In general, the larger the hello interval, the fewer the number of bytes that will be sent for hello messages. However, a larger hello interval means that the neighbor information can be more out-of-date, thus possibly incurring more bytes on behalf of the algorithms. This complex interaction causes the non-monotonic behavior observed in our simulations.

These results indicate that the LR algorithm gives the best performance. It can also be observed that the LR algorithm performs the best at hello interval = 0.3.

6 Conclusions

We have studied the problem of circulating a token throughout all the nodes of a mobile ad hoc network, a problem of interest for implementing totally ordered message delivery in a group communication service. We have described several distributed algorithms for this problem and compared them by simulation. The overall best algorithm, according to the metrics that we measured, was the LR (Local-Recency) algorithm,

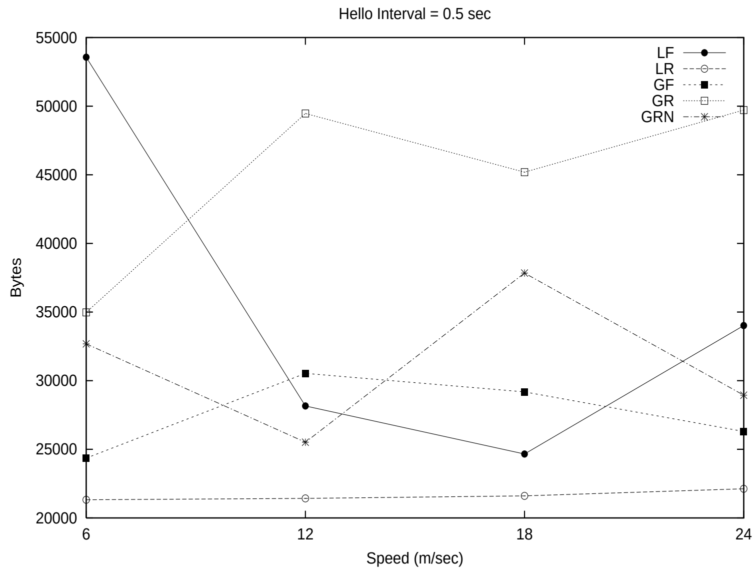

Figure 8: Average number of bytes per round vs. speed

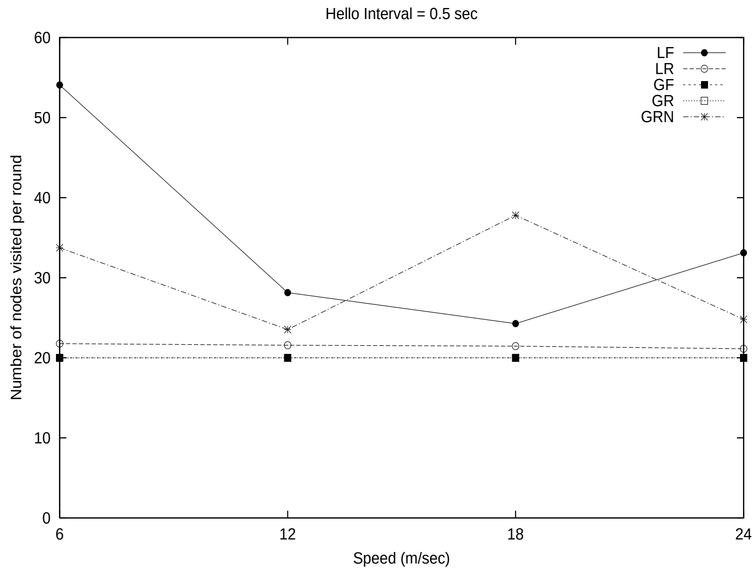

Figure 9: Average round length vs. speed

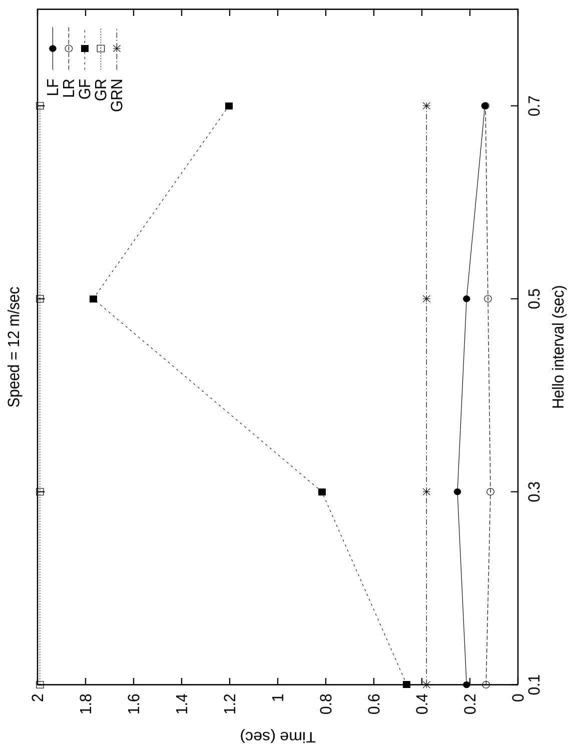

Figure 10: Average time per round vs. hello interval length

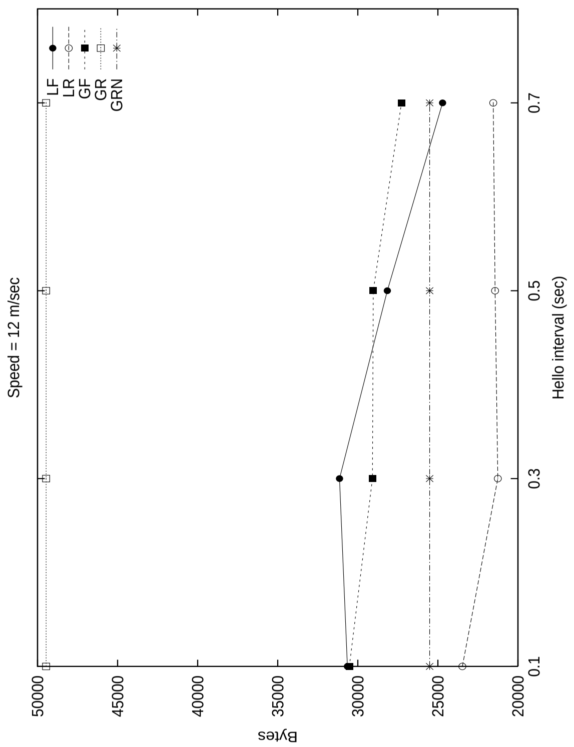

Figure 11: Average bytes per round vs. hello interval length

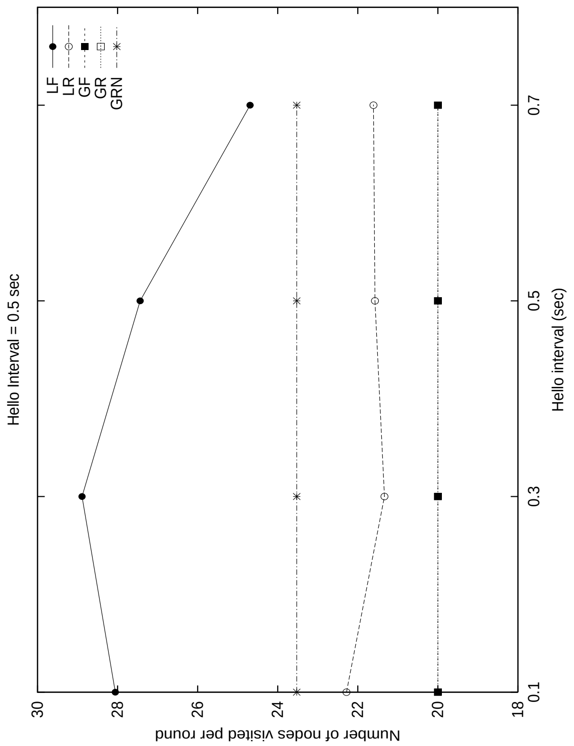

Figure 12: Average round length vs. hello interval length

in which the token visits next the *neighboring* node that was visited least *recently*.

Additional work is needed to integrate token circulation as described here with the mechanisms of a complete group communication service. On the theoretical side, if upper bounds on the overhead of these algorithms and/or lower bounds on the achievable overhead could be obtained, they could be compared with simulated performance of the proposed approaches.

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