Energy-efficiency Enablers and Operations in Software-Defined Environments

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I. Introduction

New flexible network environments emerged in the last years, such as the Software-Defined Networks, the Network Function Virtualization and the various network slicing technologies. Their main goal is to satisfy and to flexibly cope with the changing requirements of both users and service / infrastructure providers with respect to the constraints of physical resources, the frequently changing network conditions, and with strategies that resolve performance bottlenecks by tuning the various performance trade-offs.

Such environments are usually being hosted in distributed Data Centers (DCs) with a large number of physical machines and the relevant services are being dynamically utilizing virtual resources, i.e. virtual machines (VMs) or virtual routers (VRs) - used interchangeably here. A very critical aspect in this context is the reduction of the energy consumption but without jeopardizing the performance of the deployed services. For example, the DCs in USA consumed about 91 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity in 2013 - double the energy required to power all the New York City households [1].

Here, we demonstrate that energy-aware manipulation of virtual resources can improve energy efficiency. Such capability should not only consider the energy consumption of the physical hosts but an estimation of the consumption at the VM or VR level as well. In our demo, we are using alternative VM placement algorithms, a number of linear and non-linear energy models and applications with variable loads in terms of CPU utilization, memory allocation and communication cost.

In the following section, we present our test-bed and demo runs. In section III we provide our conclusions.

II. Test-bed & Demo Description

In the last years, we implemented our own distributed platform for testing and evaluation of software-defined virtualized network and computing environments, called *Very Lightweight Software-Driven Network and Services Platform (VLSP)* [2], [3]. For this demo, we use *VLSP* as a software Data Center and show: (i) how energy consumption can be estimated from the physical machine to the virtual resource level; and (ii) the energy-efficient placement of VMs and the performance trade-offs. Our software has been released as open-source at [4].

In figure 1, we depict the main VLSP architecture. The platform consists of four main layers:

- *Application Layer:* includes generic network functions or services, implemented as software components and focusing on the global behavior of the network environment. Such an example is a high-level management application defining global performance goals for the system.
- *Orchestration Layer:* acts as a global network controller and includes: (i) the *Placement Engine* which guides the optimal placement of the virtual routers; (ii) the *Monitoring Manager* providing network state data by using probes (e.g. level of congestion in a link); and (iii) the *Service Orchestrator* organizing the deployment and operation of applications over the virtual entities.
- *Distribution Layer:* is a virtual resources abstraction layer residing between the *Infrastructure* and *Orchestration Layers*. Each physical machine has a distributed *Local Controller*, receiving requests from the *Orchestration Layer* and enforcing them in the associated virtual resources of the *Infrastucture Layer*.
- *Infrastructure Layer:* the physical and virtual network resources: namely the physical servers, the virtual machines and the virtual routers. In VLSP, we created a lightweight virtual entity from the scratch with its own runtime environment and basic network protocol functionality. Our main goal is to experiment with management facilities on top of scalable virtual resources, resembling both VRs and VMs, i.e. assuming uniform management on top of integrated SDN/NFV/Cloud environments.

For this demo, we extended the *VLSP* with a number of components, such as:

- A new *placement engine*, which is the *Energy Placement Engine (EPE)*, guiding the virtual router placement onto hosts that are consuming the least amount of energy.
- A number of *energy consumption models*, both linear and non-linear, predicting the energy consumption of the physical machines and used by the *EPE*. We focused on the expressiveness of the models over diverse hardware and in dynamic environments, having as input the level of CPU, memory, and network utilization.
- A *tailor-made monitoring system* for such environments, the *Lattice* [5], collecting network and server state information used as an input from our energy models.
- *Visualization tools* depicting (i) the virtual and physical topology (figure 2), (ii) the monitored server and virtual

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