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Overcoming the Communication Challenges in Wireless Sensor and Actuator Networks Isolated using DTN Technologies

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Abstract: Wireless Sensor and Actuator Networks (WSAN) have represented a significant advance in wireless communication environments and their convergence with the phenomenon called the Internet of Things (IoT). One of the challenges studied in the WSAN field is to propose communication mechanisms to interconnect wireless sensor networks in isolated areas. Various studies have revealed the difficulty of achieving connectivity in this type of network. In this sense, we address the challenge of interconnecting isolated WSANs, which do not have end-to-end connection, with the Internet network infrastructure. For this, we consider the following characteristics of these environments, disruptive communications, long delays; devices with limited resources, very short transfer times and in contexts of mobility. We propose an integrated architecture that allows us to offer a service management framework based on the capabilities provided by WSAN, through an infrastructure based on cloud technologies. The functionalities that characterize service architectures in telecommunication networks and the integration of WSAN with cloud-based architectures are analyzed. Architectural capabilities such as Machine-to-Machine (M2M) and Machine Type Communication (MTC) are considered. The proposed architecture allows deliver applications and services can be reachable and shared with any host connected to Internet. WSAN data, hosted at remote sites or with limited communications, can be processed, stored and analyzed in the cloud, or locally by components of the architecture. The communication with the sensor network and actuators, is iterant, because of architecture provides support for long-delayed and disruptive tolerant services.

Keywords: Remote Wsan, Mobile Service, Dtn, Internet of Things, Service Architecture, Service Delegation.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years it has been noticed the increasing interest in the design and development of Wireless Sensor and Actuator Network (ESAN). The micro-electronic technologies advances, wireless communication and the costs, have allowed large-scale WSAN low cost deployment in many areas (e.g. health, home, military, toxic waste management and others). The WSAN allow monitoring and physical environment control in remotes locations more accuracy. The multiply applications of WSAN technology has attracted the researchers' attention in academy and industry. Because of the WSAN particulars features, there exists many themes to resolve. Each sensors energy sources are limited, as a result doesn't support long distance communications, batteries replacement is not always feasible in this networks type, especially displayed in remote zones or unattended [1]. In addition, data recollection in wireless sensor and actuator network that expands in limited communications zones remains a challenge under research [2]. Sensors and actuators nodes have limited resources (e.g. storage buffer, power supply, range communication), for that reason, in isolated WSAN is necessary a periodic data collection for avoid lost. In displayed WSAN limited communications locations' specific case, where sink nodes recollect data from subnetworks and have no permanent connection with one base station which recollect data from all WSANs, exists various alternatives to put forward [3]. One of them is mobile sink, in other words, have one or more sink which move periodically or eventually inside the isolated sensor networks collecting data. Other possible approach is relate with Delay and Disruption Tolerant Network (DTN) that allows disconnections and long delays of communications [4]. In [5] come up with have mobile sink group in order to cover all wireless sensor and actuator network display area, this gives the opportunity to nodes to find one sink and deliver data. The WSAN are the most important component in IoT paradigm, because these permit more pervasiveness, obtaining environment detailed information [6]. Future Internet vision considers to Internet of Things (IoT) as a fundamental and integrative part. The IoT can be describe as the interconnection of smart objects (smart-phones, Internet TVs, sensors and actuators) to World Wide Web where the devices are intelligently linked together enabling new forms of communication between things and people, and between things themselves [7]. The WSAN imminent integration to the web, impulse by IoT paradigm, bring with it new challenges. The WSAN have been design ad-hoc attending to the environments and applications, as monolithic systems.

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There are no rules or standards that cover WSAN architecture design, for that reason, these only respond to specific objects of concrete applications and subjacent networks' capabilities. On the other hand, the sensed data volume, heterogeneous data sources and limited WSAN processing resources, it results in the data not being stored, analyzed, managed and conveniently applied, to provide services to the end-user system. Moreover, the increase in the demand for access to your data, by a growing community of Internet users [6], suggests a homogeneous, interoperable, extensible and accessible architecture for all interested parties. Nowadays one cost-effective framework and versatile more used, that provide real-time data to users, at any time and place, are web services in the cloud. The cloud consists of hardware, networks, services, storage, and interfaces that enable the delivery of computing as a service [8]. The web services are the most open form and interoperable to provide remote services, communication between applications and between the services themselves [7]. The WSAN connection with external networks, through web services, also have been suggest for researchers [9]. Cloud computing reduces the coupling between applications and resources; this allows resources' efficient management and improves the scalability and availability of applications and services. The cloud technology, can efficiently storage, process, analyze and deliver, applications and services based in WSAN data.

In this paper, we present an architecture extensible, scalable, integrative and flexible for WSAN, based on cloud web services. First, we present the scenario that drives this research; here the functional and non-functional requirements of the architecture are identified. Second, the design of the general architecture of the system is proposed, and the description of each of the layers that compose it is shown. Subsequently, an analysis is made of how the requirements are met in the proposed architecture, through the demonstration of the functional architecture. Finally, we present an analysis for the evaluation of the proposed architecture, and development of the tool developed for this purpose is detailed.

II. BACKGROUND AND RELATED WORK

This section summarizes the service architectures on telecommunication networks. Subsequently, a review of the literature related to the WSAN integration architectures to the Internet is carried out. Additionally, the state of the art of the web applications development and deployment and services based on WSAN is reviewed. There are several proposals for service architectures on telecommunication networks, these respond to the design, creation, development, deployment, execution and efficient management needs of new cloud-based services, according to market demand. The research was start as part of the evolution of the Intelligent Network (IN) to implement value-added services, integrating IN with emerging telecommunications management standards, such as the Telecommunications Management Network (TMN). This research joined up with the Telecommunications Information Networking Architecture (TINA) initiative, investigating integrated multimedia service control and management and looking at middleware issues implementing the underlying distributed processing environment. Promoting Parlay and 3GPP, Open Service Access (OSA) Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) succeeded this.

With the broader role of the Internet and the emerging notion of Voice over IP (VoIP), the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) was invented and more radical multimedia communication service implementation concepts inspired by Information Technologies (IT) and web programming, such as SIP servlets, were developed. With the increasing significance of Next Generation Networks (NGNs) and the planned evolution of fixed and mobile networks towards a single, Internet Protocol (IP) based core network, namely the 3GPP IP Multimedia Subsystem (IMS) emerged as a practical combination of SIP and VoIP protocols, for delivering IP Multimedia services to mobile user based on UMTS [10].

The IMS are based on entities standards as the 3rd generation partnership as Project (3GPP) CN, ETSI Telecommunications and Internet Converged Services and Protocols for Advanced Networking (TISPAN) CN, 3GPP2, etc. In this architecture, an independent access to the network is the main feature of this CN, which makes it suitable for implementing Machine-to-Machine (M2M) because the variety of devices with different characteristics could connect to the core. Additionally, IMS already has a well-defined set of applications by Open Mobile Alliance (OMA).

The ETSI defines a specific architecture for M2M Communication [11]. The M2M the functional architecture is design for make use of an IP capable underlying network including the IP network service provided by 3GPP, TISPAN and 3GPP2 compliant systems.

In the other hand, a IMS Core Network with Machine-to-Machine integration architecture is proposed in order to provide an application convergence framework [12], based on networks of devices (sensors) that connect to the M2M network in a directly way or through a gateway that provides services and capabilities to M2M communication. This framework allows the information exchange between the sensors and the public network provides communication mechanisms among themselves. This architecture uses the IMS-based systems concepts and functionalities, additionally provides M2M Communication services and capabilities. This makes possible to build a converged application framework.

The 3GPP, propose architecture called Machine Type Communication MTC, for data communication which involves one or more entities that do not necessarily need human interaction [13]. The end-to-end application, between the UE (MTC Devices) used for MTC and the MTC Application, uses services provided by the 3GPP system, and optionally services provided by an MTC Server. The 3GPP system provides transport and communication services (including 3GPP bearer services, IMS and SMS). The MTC Application would make use of an MTC Server, for additional value added services, provided by a third party Service Provider. The M2M and MTC, architectures have common elements, in terms of its component and further support both IMS cores. Meanwhile, WSAN integrating the World Wide Web has led to the rise of new research opportunities.

There are different works related to the development of architectures, for the integration WSAN heterogeneous with other networks based on All-IP, with accessing, collecting and sharing data objective. The sensor networks to the cloud integration, have been investigated in [14]–[17], the authors have presented Internet protocols for connecting WSN to the Internet,

however, these works are mainly focused on the feasibility of web services based on Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP), in terms of energy and bandwidth overheads, additionally no real implementations have been shown.

A three-layer architecture is proposed (sensors, gateway peer and super-peer), based on P2P integration systems. In this architecture, the WSAN's function is to collect information and simple data processing [6].

One of the pioneer architectures in the integration of the WSAN to the cloud was Sense Web [18], this allowed to share the data of the sensors through the cloud. However, its main disadvantage is that a single central point called coordinator, therefore, if the coordinator fails, the entire network fails. Similar efforts are oriented, at developing middleware to enable the mapping from target devices' resource constrained networks to IT system, or the Internet. Some of them focus on the gateways development that map the WSANs that are proprietary to the IT system, assuming that gateways are not devices with limited resources [19]-[20], however, these systems are not considered robust, because their main disadvantage is that they have a simple point of failure.

Another approach is the middleware development for the devices themselves with limited resources (sensors and actuator). In [21] they propose to use SOAP for data aggregation on each sensor, as well as in [22], a middleware is developed that allows the services deployment on devices with limited resources. This approach has the limitations of the hardware resources of the devices. The software overload does not allow them to provide all the functionalities; furthermore, it assumes always-connected devices.

All the reviewed works assume the WSAN have permanent connectivity with other networks that allow remote access to them. They analyze WSAN from the perspective of data collection mainly. However, these solutions do not consider environments where WSANs have limited communications, or with long delays. A feature of these approaches is that data analysis and decision-making are at locations remote from WSAN. Our proposal allows us to offer WSAN capabilities to send and receive messages, and incorporates close decision-making facilities for the final devices. In addition, it offers tolerant services management in a disruptive and long delayed environment, based on DTN technologies.

III. MOTIVATION SCENARIO AND REQUERIMENTS

This section describes the application scenario and the challenges that it involves. Following are the requirements that the architecture design should consider, in this context.

A. Motivation Scenario

As shown in (Fig. 1), the WSANs are located at sites far away from cable or wireless communication infrastructures; therefore, their communications with external networks are very limited. Communications with external networks are itinerant, and are based on the opportunistic network paradigm. The data collected by the coordinating devices are delivery when there is contact with the DTN Mobile Entities. These entities use the core network, as a control and transport network for end-to-end communications. In the next level, the data is collected, stored, analyzed and processed by a layer that manages them, to offer them later as services in the cloud.

B. Requirements

As result of the previous analysis, we have identified the non-functional and functional requirements that the proposed architecture must cover.

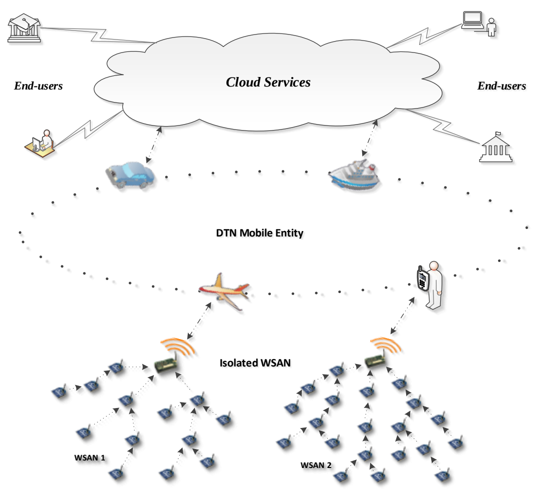

Fig. 1. Motivation Scenario.

Non-functional requirements:

- RnF1. Extensible, compatible, flexible and scalable: this should consider adding new functional components at any level. Allow the integration of multiple technologies, and must be adaptive in heterogeneous scenarios. Additionally, support scalability of devices and services, without degrading performance.
- RnF2. Horizontal approach: refers to a high-level service overlay, where all applications share infrastructure, environment and network elements, allowing vertical decoupling between applications and WSAN.
- RnF3. Global accessibility: repository of services and applications developed must always be accessible from any device with Internet access.
- RnF4. Discontinued internetworking support with WSAN: should allow small intermittent interactions at regular or non-regular intervals and with long deferrals.

Functional Requirements:

- RF1. The WSAN cluster head devices must have internetworking capabilities between the sensor-actuators and external networks, in addition to acting as a data sink for the underlying sensor network.
- RF2. Provide an away for the two-way transport of information between WSANs with limited communications and external network (Internet).
- RF3. Provision of communication mechanisms between the coordinating devices that control each WSAN.

- RF4. End-to-end communication support between coordinating devices and service application servers.
- RF5. Life cycle management (creation, personalization, publication, search, matchmaking and execution) of services that are tolerant of delays and disconnections.
- RF6. Ability to delegate the execution of service logic to entities in direct contact with sensors and actuators.
- RF7. Transparent interaction between the service management layer and the cloud infrastructure, for the publication of services that have been create considering the resources available in the WSAN.

IV. MODELING OF ARCHITECTURE

This section shows the model of the proposed architecture. First, the high-level architecture is expose, later in next subsection, the architecture is present in layers form, describing each of its levels, and finally, the components of the architecture that allow satisfying the functional requirements are defined.

A. High Level Architecture

The high-level architecture, shown in (Fig. 2), is arrange from top to bottom, starting with the application domain, which is made up of the set of applications and services, published and available to end users.

The Platform of Service Capabilities, in the service domain, supports the applications and services. This platform is made up of a common service management framework, based on the WSAN resources. It can also include M2M Services Capabilities.

At the next level below is the service provider network (Transport and Access Network), which contains the network control services and functions (session control, management, subscriber authentication, service authorization and location). This provides interconnection with IP network services (3GPP / IMS, TISPAN and 3GPP2 compliant systems).

The DTN domain offers a set of functionalities to support communications with long delays and network disconnections. It consists of one or more mobile entities that allow communications between WSAN and external networks, based on an opportunistic approach.

At the bottom is the device domain, composed by the wireless sensors and actuator network. The devices represent the respective cluster heads of each WSAN.

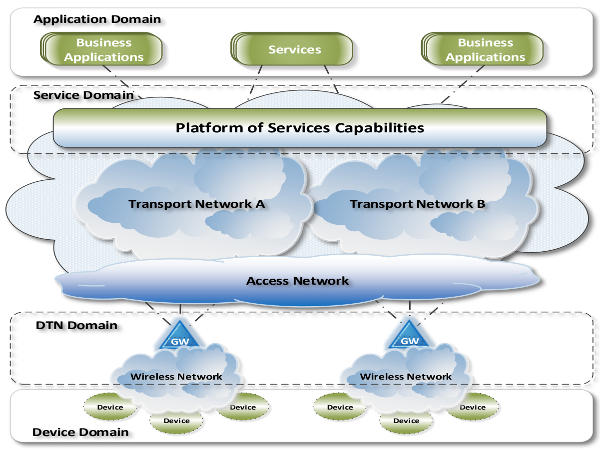

Fig. 2. Overall Architecture.

B. Architecture Layer Descriptions

Starting from the high-level architecture, we essentially define four underlying layers on which our proposal is based, as shown in (Fig. 3).

Sensor layer: It is made up of WSAN. The cluster head must have the ability to store data from the sensors on the subnet they control. Additionally, they have communication capabilities at the DTN level, for communications with DTN Mobile Entities. They also provide gateway functionality, between IP networks and 802.15.4 (ZigBee / 6LoWPAN), Bluetooth, Bluetooth Low Energy, and 802.11 (Wi-Fi) and other sensor network technologies.

DTN layer: It is composed of one or more mobile entities with DTN capabilities (DTN Mobiles Entities). To access the Service Convergence Layer, the Device Access Proxy (DAP), DTN communication capabilities are used. DTN Mobiles Entities offer a two-way transport mechanism between WSANs and the Service Network Provider (SNP) access network. They can support M2M service capabilities for communication between WSANs, and between them and the Platform of Service Capabilities. They provide support for service logic execution and decision-making.

Service convergence layer: it is use of access and transport services of the SNP, and of service management components tolerant to long delays. The Device Access Proxy is responsible for controlling the establishment of communication between the DTN Mobile Entities and the Service Convergence Layer; therefore, it must have DTN capabilities. For this, it uses the information of user profiles stored in the Device Subscriber Sever (DSS), based on that information; it allows access to the Device Information System (DIS), which controls the information of the devices (states, accesses, services, location, etc.).

Communications Brokers (CB) and Services Brokers (SB) have, as their main functionality, allow the sharing of WSAN resources, in addition to providing a transparent interface with the cloud. SBs offer the capabilities of application enablement and registration, remote device management, and security (bootstrap service, mutual authentication, key agreement, and integrity verification). Generic communication capabilities (transport session establishment, delivery assurance, error reporting), and SNP selection are provided by CBs. This layer contains all the business logic. They include the creation, distribution and execution of services in delay and disruption tolerant network. It offers services delegation and decision making capabilities to the DTN Layer.

Cloud layer: infrastructure consisting of a set of servers (web, mobility, applications, database, user management, security and others) that provide support for the publication of applications and services, enriched with the benefits of cloud computing.

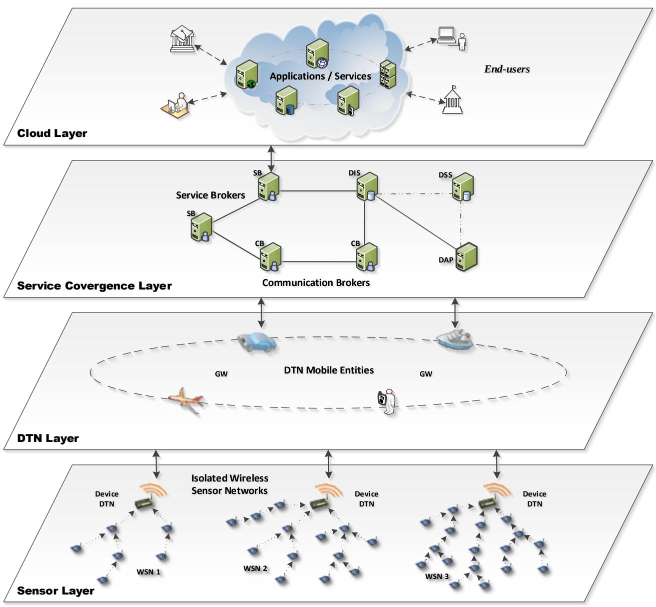

Fig. 3. Layers Architecture.

V. ANALYSIS OF FULFILL OF THE REQUIREMENTS

In this section, we describe the relationship between the components of the architecture and the functional requirements outlined above. The details of the main components of the functional architecture are show in (Fig. 5).

The Sensor Layer shows the structure of a cluster head node, which implements the proxy functions between WSAN and external networks, using the WSAN Gateway module. External networks are of the DTN type, so it additionally makes use of the DTN Capabilities module to carry out this communication. The Communication Management module provides internal (WSAN) and external communications, using a double stack of protocols as shown in (Fig 4). It uses the internal ones to collect the information from the underlying sensor network, and store them through Storage Management (RF1).

DTN mobile entities are composed of components that show in the NTD layer (Fig. 5).These entities aim to act as a means of communication between the WSAN and the Service Convergence Layer. They use an opportunistic communication approach. The Communication Opportunity module determines when there is a neighbor with whom you can communicate, identifies the Convergence Layer available in the neighbor and determines if he has it also available, then checks if he has data to send or receive.

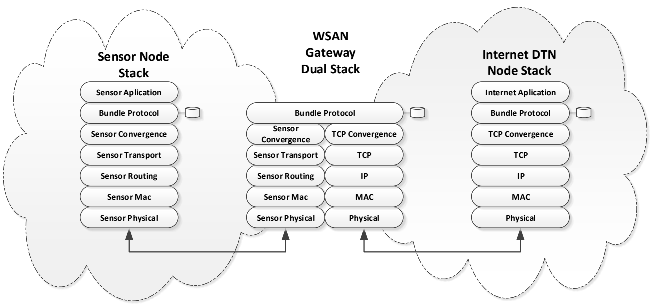

Fig. 4. Protocols Stack Architecture.

The DTN Agent is the core of the DTN Mobile Entities; it coordinates all the message flow (data and control) between the DTNs nodes. DTN Mobile Entities are used to communicate the WSAN, with the SNP network, which later allows reaching the Service Convergence Layer. The mechanism described above works in tow-way directions of communication (RF2).

The Support Services module allows the execution of delegated services in the DTN Layer (RF6). This component can offer Service Capabilities (routing, service register and other) that allow communication at the service level, between the cluster heads of the WSAN's (RF3).

The Service Convergence Layer allows the management of services, offers main functionalities such as creation, personalization, publication, search matchmaking and execution of fault-tolerant and delayed services in the network. The Service Management controls the life cycle of the services, the Control Status module stores all the information and the state of the services in storage device (SD). The Local Communicator is responsible Inter-layer communications. These allow communications with the Information Device (local information) and the External Communicator (non-local information) both integrated on the DIS. The External Communicator is in charge of communications with the Access Proxy in DAP, and with the Profile Control module located in the DSS. The Access Proxy provides DTN capabilities, so you can receive requests for communication with devices that may not currently be available, and that will be perform when the opportunity exists. This group of functionalities allows supporting fault tolerant and delaying services in the network (RF5).

The Service Brokers, through the Access Module, provide a communication API with the Service Convergence Layer. This API allows access to a service management platform (RF4), which makes it possible to share the resources of the WSAN. Additionally, it offers an interface for the publication of services in the cloud infrastructure (RF7).

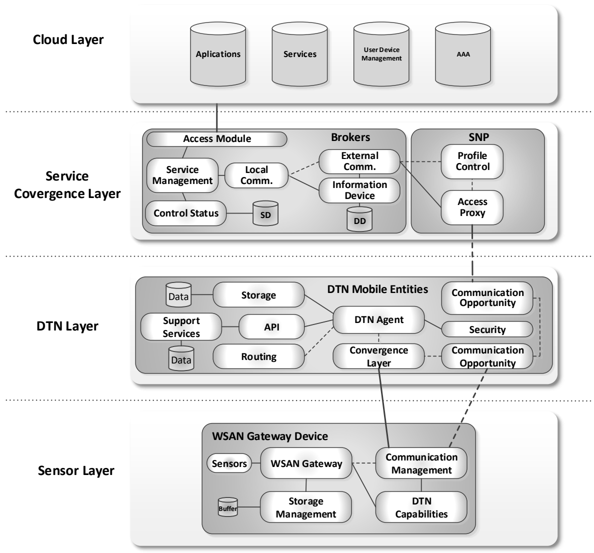

Fig. 5. Functionally Architecture.

The Cloud Layer offers Front-End services for end users, based on cloud computing. Enables the development of applications and services based on the remote WSAN capabilities associated with the proposed infrastructure.

Furthermore, offers information management of platform users, and security services based on authentication, authorization and accounting (AAA).

VI. PROOF OF CONCEPT

At this point, we should evaluate various aspects of the proposed architecture. However, in a future paper we will carry out a battery of tests, for each of the layers of the scheme presented here. This section considers a scenario remote, based a crop smart farm. The farm uses a low-cost IoT architecture for monitoring and automating the tasks in zones with artificial irrigation systems. The farm is in a geographical position that does not have a telecommunications infrastructure that offers access service with external networks (Internet). The field of crops has a network of sensors that allow measuring some properties of the environment such as temperature, soil moisture, alkalinity, pesticide saturation, etc. This information flows from the individual sensors to the head cluster of the WSAN. With this information, decisions are made, about the following tasks to be perform in order to optimize production.

One of the actions to follow may be irrigation, because exceeding the minimum water threshold in the soil. Actuators, for example a water pump installed in a river, a few kilometers away, perform this task. This pump has an integrated cluster head node that allows it to receive operating instructions; however, it does not have direct communication with the sensor sink node in the field. In both cases, the cluster head of the WSAN have dual communications stack, which allows them to communicate with sensors/actuators (Bluetooth, ZigBee, XBee, etc.) and in addition, can communicate with other nodes mobiles (buses, cars or other), through broadband wireless communication interfaces (Wi-Fi, GPRS, WiMAX, LTE, etc.).

In order to validate this scenario, we will use a simulation platform that we have developed. This tool uses the concept of paravirtualization, which allows each virtual machine (node) to behave as an independent computer, while providing all the facilities for configuring a real computer. The Ns-3 provides the network layer of the tool. This simulator allows you to recreate conditions very close to those of real networks. Additionally, it offers facilities to communicate with real nodes; this allows the simulated nodes in Ns-3 to bidirectional exchange messages with the real or physical world.

The nodes are create using standard Linux LXC libraries. In the node configuration phase, some parameters are define, such as the IP address, the mode of operation (example: physical, virtual, bridge). In general, for the scenario proposed, the communication interfaces must be defined as physical ("phys"), because this allows the virtual nodes to have the same configuration as in a real scenario, but at the same time isolated at the core level of the operating system.

A script that defines the nodes, network interfaces, connections and applications provides all the parameters of the network topologies. Even when the approach is more complex, it is more flexible than coding the entire network topology. It is necessary to define devices of the "TapBridge" type, to ensure that Ns-3 and the containers communicate with each other. In this case, we also set the corresponding physical interfaces for the respective containers. The operation mode of the "TapBridge" is "Configure Local". This mode of operation allows automatically create interfaces so that the "TapBridge" inherit the same configuration. These devices are installed on nodes Ns-3 as ghosts nodes so that they can communicate, through the same network interfaces with Ns-3, or applications that can run inside the container. Finally, at runtime the Ns-3 creates the "TapBridge", allowing the containers to communicate.

The graphical interface developed for the simulation tool, facilitates the task of setting up and deploying the scenarios, as shown in (Fig. 6).

With this simulation tool, we will evaluate components of the architecture individually and integrated, in addition, offer versatility in the topologies of the scenarios and parameterization of the simulation environment.

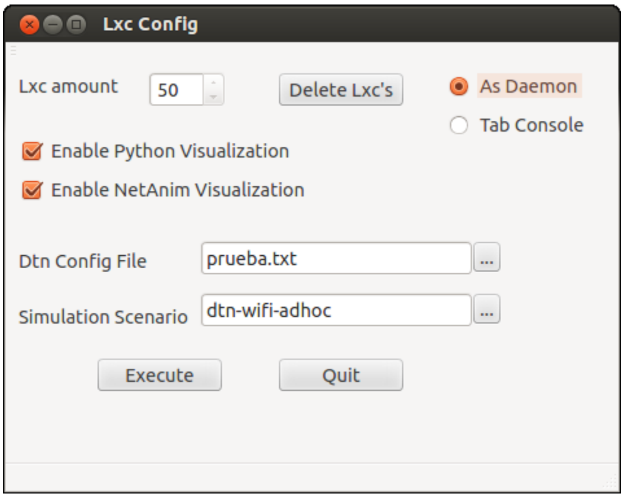

Fig. 6. Simulation Tool Graphical Interface.

There is a button to delete the used nodes. This is because the daemon DTN, has a persistent state machine, which it is recommended that each simulation are created from scratch all nodes, ensuring a clean initial state.

This interface allows you to select the way in which the nodes are display on the monitor, that is, the nodes be create in daemon mode, in which these work normally but we do not see them on the screen. The other alternative is that for each node a console window is open, this mode aims to allow the user to interact within the nodes manually.

Regarding the visualization of the nodes, the tool allows you to enable two types of animations, one based on Python (Pyviz) that is display online to the simulation. The other option is NetAnim based and is offline. The latter generates an XML file that is execute by NetAnim.

For the configuration of DTN parameters, the tool supports specification by means of a configuration script in a text file.

The network specifications are define in a C programming file, where all the instructions for simulation with Ns-3 are specified.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we propose an architecture for running distributed services over remote WSANs. This alternative consists of the integration between the services layer, the Overlay Network DTN layer, and the devices in the WSAN.

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The solution presented considers delay-tolerant service model, service delegation, remote execution of distributed mobile services and message flows management and data, required for the services framework in the cloud. This converged system allows optimizing the performance of the service execution, through delegation strategies and remote execution of the same. The characteristics of the profile of the mobile distributed services required for deployment (example: user- or machine-centric), their nature of execution (example: local or remote), or network needs (Example: resilient to failures and delays), availability of resources (example: active or inactive - lack of energy), and geolocation, will be reflected in the performance of the proposed architecture. These scenarios bring a set of challenges for the execution of distributed services in remote WSAN environments, such as a new service model, content distribution mechanisms that must be adapted, while overcoming the limitations of the teams that support active roles in execution of services in mobility environments. Some of these limitations include equipment heterogeneity, the need for dynamism and mobility, scarce hardware resources, limited communications (time, capacity, and errors), tolerance for interruptions and long delays.

For evaluation of this complex scenario, it has been developing a platform of monolithic simulation lightweight, configurable, flexible, scalable and reliable, that provides support for simulations distributed environments with limited communications, wireless, disruptive With this simulation tool, we will evaluate the following metrics, percentages of success in the discovery of capabilities in the WSAN, average capacity processing time. On the other hands, scalability of the discovery and matchmaking algorithms, probability of execution according to number of contacts, probability of failures according to time between contacts, probability of successful service execution, average service execution times in the cloud or in the DTN Mobile Entities (delegated services). In future work, our goal is to investigate the implications of different types of applications and services, and the operation of the layers that make up the proposed architecture. Besides, we will evaluate the overhead of packet flow control over the infrastructure. In addition, we will discuss the implementation of our system in other scenarios.

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