An Adaptive Algorithm for Sensor Activation in Renewable Energy based Sensor Systems

Sandeep Reddy Meredy, Neeraj Jaggi and Ravi Pendse

Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260 USA.
{sxmereddy, neeraj.jaggi, ravi.pendse}@wichita.edu

Abstract—Future sensor networks would comprise of sensing devices with energy harvesting capabilities from renewable energy sources such as solar power. A key research question in such sensor systems is to maximize the asymptotic event detection probability achieved in the system, in the presence of energy constraints and uncertainties. This paper focuses on the design of adaptive algorithms for sensor activation in the presence of uncertainty in the event phenomena. We borrow ideas from increase/decrease algorithms used in TCP congestion avoidance, and design an online and adaptive activation algorithm, that varies the subsequent sleep interval according to additive increase and multiplicative decrease based upon the sensor’s current energy level. In addition, the proposed algorithm does not depend on global system parameters, or on the degree of event correlations, and hence can easily be deployed in practical scenarios. Through extensive simulations, we demonstrate that the proposed algorithm not only achieves near-optimal performance, but also exhibits more stability with respect to sensor’s energy level and sleep interval variations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sensor networks have profound implications towards environmental surveillance and monitoring, health-care and defense. For long term monitoring of the targeted environments, sensors are envisioned to be deployed with rechargeable batteries, which are capable of harnessing energy from renewable sources in the environment. For instance, Heliomote [1], [2], a solar energy-harvesting platform, demonstrates the self-sustaining capability of a sensing device. These devices are extremely constrained in resources, particularly energy and computational power. In addition, they operate in the presence of uncertainties, and under dynamically changing and hostile environmental conditions. These factors necessitate the design of adaptive and distributed algorithms for efficient operations and management of sensor networks.

The performance achieved in a renewable energy based sensor system is measured using the quality of event detection and reporting attained in the system. The goal of this paper is to design a sensor activation algorithm which can provide performance guarantees in the presence of resource constraints and varying environmental conditions. Particularly, the algorithm should be implementable through low computational overhead, and in an online manner requiring only information currently available to the sensor node. In other words, the algorithm should not depend on global system parameters and should be robust to the variations of those parameters and other operational conditions.

Typically sensors are tiny, energy-constrained devices, with low recharge rates (dependent upon energy harvesting) and may have to spend a significant fraction of their time in inactive (sleep) state. The application specific events, which the sensor system is required to detect (and report), would occur randomly in the region of interest and could potentially exhibit temporal correlations across their occurrences. The overall objective is to maximize the time-average event detection probability achieved in the system. The discharge of an active sensor depends on the activation algorithm as well as on the event occurrence process, while the recharge is based upon harnessing renewable energy sources. We address the following important question in a renewable energy based sensor system – How should a sensor be activated (deactivated) so as to maximize the overall event detection probability ?

In this paper, we use the sensor energy model first proposed in [3] to model renewable energy based sensor system. [3] also discusses various sensor activation algorithms in the presence of temporal correlations in the event phenomena. Particularly, it shows that a correlation-dependent wakeup policy, which employs a constant sleep interval derived appropriately using system parameters, achieves near-optimal performance. However, this activation algorithm depends on all global system parameters, which in practice, the sensor may not have knowledge about, and may not be able to estimate with sufficient ease and accuracy. Also these parameters could change over time, due to the variability in environmental conditions. Hence, there is a need to design efficient algorithms for sensor operations which could easily be deployed in practice.

In this paper, we design an activation algorithm, which does not depend on global system parameters, and is still able to achieve performance close to optimal. We borrow insights from TCP congestion avoidance algorithms which allow the end host to vary the congestion window size dynamically, probing the level of uncertainty (network congestion) in the process. It has been shown [4] that additive increase and multiplicative decrease (AIMD) of congestion window size at the end hosts leads to the best performance amongst the linear increase-decrease algorithms, in terms of throughput as well as fairness. In wired networks, the feedback or signal to trigger window increase or decrease could be the binary

\footnote{Note that a dynamic algorithm is desired as predetermined scheduling is not feasible due to the randomness in the system.}
feedback from the network or the packet losses or the queue backlogs at the individual nodes. Similarly, in a renewable energy based sensor system, the sensor’s current energy level is a strong indicator of whether the sensor should act aggressively (by decreasing) or conservatively by increasing its subsequent sleep interval. We design an algorithm which varies its sleep interval dynamically based upon the sensor’s current energy level, and show that the proposed algorithm performs close to optimal. Since the algorithm does not rely on global systems parameters, and its decisions are based solely upon the sensor’s current energy level, it can easily be implemented in practice.

The main contributions of this paper include:

- Designing adaptive algorithms for sensor activation to maximize the event detection probability in the presence of temporally correlated event phenomena.
- Comparing various linear increase/decrease schemes employed to vary the sensor’s subsequent sleep interval, and
- Studying the performance of proposed algorithm through extensive simulations to demonstrate its near-optimality, stability and feasibility towards practical deployment.

This paper is organized as follows. Section II discusses related work in activation algorithms in renewable energy based sensor systems, and in increase/decrease algorithms for congestion avoidance. Section III describes sensor system components and their modeling, and also formulates the problem in terms of event detection probability. Section IV discusses the design of adaptive algorithms for sensor activation. We evaluate the performance of proposed algorithms through extensive simulations in Section V, and summarize the conclusions and future research goals in Section VI.

II. RELATED WORK

[5], [6], [7] have considered the dynamic activation question in the context of energy harvesting sensor systems. [5] considers the single sensor, and modeling it as a closed three-queue system, obtains Norton’s equivalent of the system to evaluate the structure of the optimal rate control policy. [6] considers the sensor activation problem under a sensor energy model similar to [8], and demonstrates the optimality of threshold based policies for a broad class of utility functions and state dynamics. [7] considers the resource allocation problem in presence of rechargeable nodes, proposes a policy which decouples admission control and power allocation decisions, and shows that it achieves asymptotically optimal performance for sufficiently large battery capacity to maximum power ratio.

Sensor node activation algorithms for rechargeable sensor systems in the presence of temporally correlated event phenomena have been previously considered in [3]. Particularly, [3] proposes a correlation-dependent wakeup policy, wherein the sensor employs a constant, deterministic sleep interval which is derived using energy balance during a renewal interval of sensor operation. The proposed algorithm is shown to achieve performance close to optimal. However, this activation algorithm depends explicitly on global system parameters, which in practice, the sensor may not have accurate knowledge about. Moreover, these parameters may not be easy to estimate in practice, particularly because they are susceptible to sudden changes due to the variability in environmental conditions. Therefore, in this paper we focus on the design of algorithms which only rely on the available information such as sensor’s current energy level in making activation decisions.

[4] considered different linear increase and decrease algorithms for congestion avoidance in computer networks, and showed that additive increase with multiplicative decrease (AIMD) of congestion window converges to an efficient and fair state regardless of the starting state of the network. AIMD based approach has been previously applied in sensor networks for power control [9], for achieving fair wake-up rates among equivalent nodes [10], and for low power listening [11]. In this paper, however, we design an algorithm for a single sensor node, wherein the sensor varies its subsequent sleep interval according to additive increase and multiplicative decrease, depending upon the sensor’s current energy level.

III. SENSOR SYSTEM AND COMPONENTS

We model the renewable energy based sensor system as described below. The energy bucket of a sensor stores energy in units of a quantum. A discrete time model is assumed such that in each time slot, a recharge event occurs with a probability $q$ and charges the sensor with a charge of $c$ quanta. The size of the sensor energy bucket is denoted by $K$.

The discharge process at the sensor depends upon its (activation) state, as well as on the state of the event phenomena. The sensor having non-zero energy level is said to be in active (sleep) state if it has been activated (deactivated) in the current time slot. The sensor discharges energy only when in active state. The sensor expends a charge amount of $\delta_1$ quanta (operational cost) during each time slot it is active. In addition, if an event occurs and is detected by the active sensor, the sensor expends an additional charge amount of $\delta_2$ quanta (detection and transmission cost). We assume that if the sensor is active and an event occurs, the event is detected with probability $1$. We also assume that the sensor is available for activation as long as it has sufficient energy to operate for at least one time slot, i.e., its energy level is at least $\delta_1 + \delta_2$.

We model the event phenomena, which the sensor system is required to detect and report, as a correlated stochastic process in order to characterize the inherent randomness and
temporally correlated event occurrence. The extent of temporal correlations is specified using correlation probabilities \( p_{c}^{on} \) and \( p_{c}^{off} \), such that \( \frac{1}{2} \leq p_{c}^{on}, p_{c}^{off} \leq 1 \). If an event occurs during time slot \( t \), then in the next time slot \( (t + 1) \) a similar event occurs with probability \( p_{c}^{on} \), while no such event occurs with probability \( 1 - p_{c}^{on} \). Similarly, if no event occurred during the current time slot, no such event occurs in the next time slot with probability \( p_{c}^{off} \). The event occurrence process used to model the event phenomena comprises of an alternating sequence of periods where events occur (On period) and do not occur (Off period). In practice, events of interest occur rarely, therefore the Off periods are expected to be significantly larger than the On periods (i.e., \( p_{c}^{eff} \geq p_{c}^{on} \)). Figure 1 depicts the energy discharge-recharge model of a typical sensor, where the recharge rate depends on \( q \), \( c \) and the discharge rate depends on \( \delta_{1}, \delta_{2} \), the state of event process and the activation algorithm.

The objective is to maximize the asymptotic event detection probability achieved in the system. Let \( E_{a}(T) \) denote the total number of events that occur in the region during time interval \([0 \ldots T]\). Let \( E_{d}(T) \) denote the total number of event detected during this interval by sensor operating under the activation algorithm II. The asymptotic event detection probability, \( U(II) \), is the time-average fraction of events detected, i.e.,

\[
U(II) = \lim_{T \to \infty} \frac{E_{d}(T)}{E_{a}(T)}.
\]

The decision problem is that of finding the activation algorithm \( \Pi \) such that \( \Pi = \arg \max U(II) \). In this paper, we design an algorithm for a single sensor node, which takes dynamic decisions (when to stay active, and when to sleep, and for how long), which are independent of global system parameters including the temporal correlation probabilities, and is able to achieve near optimal performance.

IV. DESIGN OF ADAPTIVE ALGORITHMS

We first describe the intuition behind the design of a class of adaptive algorithms for sensor activation in a renewable energy based sensor system. Later, we compare the performance of the algorithms in this class with that of the Energy Balancing Correlation-dependent Wakeup (EB-CW) policy, which has been shown to perform near-optimally [3]. The CW algorithm satisfies the following criteria -

- Active sensor with sufficient energy remains active if an event occurred during the previous time slot,
- Active sensor goes to sleep (for an appropriately derived sleep interval) if no event occurred during the previous time slot, and
- The sensor activates itself at the end of the sleep interval, if it has sufficient energy \((\geq \delta_{1} + \delta_{2})\).

For the sensor to employ EB-CW algorithm, it must have the knowledge of all global system parameters. For EB-CW, the sleep interval is derived using energy balance during a renewal interval of sensor operation [3], and is given by,

\[
SI_{EB-CW} \approx \frac{\delta_{1}}{qc} + \frac{(1 - p_{c}^{eff}) (\delta_{1} + \delta_{2} - qc)}{qc (2 - p_{c}^{on} - p_{c}^{eff}) (1 - p_{c}^{on})} - 1. \tag{2}
\]

In practice, it may not be possible for the sensor to know or estimate the value of these system parameters. We propose a class of adaptive and online algorithms, which do not depend on the knowledge of these system parameters, and are able to dynamically converge to the behavior of EB-CW algorithm, thus achieving near-optimal performance.

**Input:** \(SI_{prev}, L, K\)

**Output:** \(SI_{next}\)

if \( L < \frac{K}{2} \) then

\(SI_{next} = SI_{prev} + 1;\)

else

\(SI_{next} = \frac{SI_{prev}}{2};\)

end if

Algorithm 1: Adaptive Sleep Interval Computation for the AIMD Algorithm

This class of activation algorithms, denoted \( \Pi (c_{1}, c_{2}) \), satisfies all of the criteria described above for the CW policy. However, each time the sensor goes to sleep, it calculates its new sleep interval based upon the sleep interval previously used, and upon its current energy level. If the sensor’s current energy level is \( < \frac{K}{4} \), it acts conservatively by choosing its subsequent sleep interval to be larger than its previously employed sleep interval. Otherwise, the sensor acts aggressively by choosing its subsequent sleep interval to be smaller than its previously employed sleep interval. We consider only linear (additive or multiplicative) increase and decrease algorithms for subsequent sleep interval computation.

Let \( SI_{prev} \) denote the sleep interval last employed by the sensor. And let \( SI_{next} \) denote the sleep interval to be employed the next time sensor decides to go to sleep. If the sensor’s current energy level \( L < \frac{K}{4} \), it increases its sleep interval as -

- **Additive Increase:** \( SI_{next} = SI_{prev} + c_{1}, \) or
- **Multiplicative Increase:** \( SI_{next} = SI_{prev} \cdot c_{1}. \)

If \( L \geq \frac{K}{4} \), the sensor decreases its sleep interval as -

- **Additive Decrease:** \( SI_{next} = SI_{prev} - c_{2}, \) or
- **Multiplicative Decrease:** \( SI_{next} = SI_{prev} \cdot \frac{1}{c_{2}}. \)

Considering all possible combinations of the increase and decrease functions results in the following algorithms -

- **Additive Increase Multiplicative Decrease (AIMD)\(^1\)**
- **Additive Increase Additive Decrease (AIAD)\(^2\)**
- **Multiplicative Increase Multiplicative Decrease (MIMD)**
- **Multiplicative Increase Additive Decrease (MIAD)**

The additive parameter could take any value \( > 0 \), while the multiplicative parameter could take any value \( > 1 \). Other hybrid algorithms are also feasible, such as Multiplicative Additive Increase Multiplicative Decrease (MAIMD), wherein the increase of sleep interval is multiplicative if sensor’s current energy level \( < \frac{K}{4} \) (say), and is additive if sensor’s current energy level lies in \( [\frac{K}{4} \ldots K]\). Similarly, MAIMAD employs multiplicative as well as additive increase and decrease functionalities, with multiplicative decrease employed if the sensor’s current energy level lies in \( [\frac{K}{4} \ldots K]\).

\(^1\)The choice of \( \frac{K}{4} \) is arbitrary, and other similar choices are also possible.
Next, we study the performance of the various activation algorithms outlined above using extensive simulations. For comparison, we also consider AW (Aggressive Wakeup) algorithm [3], which tries to activate the sensor whenever possible, i.e., as long as the sensor’s energy level \( \geq \delta_1 + \delta_2 \). Also \( U_{CW} \) denotes the upper bound on achievable performance of any CW algorithm, as derived in [3]. We observe that the AIMD algorithm with \( c_1 = 1 \) and \( c_2 = 2 \) achieves the best performance among all the algorithms in the class \( \Pi \) (\( c_1, c_2 \)). Algorithm 1 describes this AIMD activation algorithm. Since the sensor is expected to know the values required as input to the algorithm \((S, I_{pre}, L, K)\), this algorithm is easily deployable in practice.

V. SIMULATION RESULTS

We study the performance of different activation algorithms using discrete event simulation [12] of the sensor system, where the system performance is computed using (1). The parameters used are \( q = 0.5 \), \( c = 1 \), \( \delta_1 = 1 \), \( \delta_2 = 6 \), and \( K = 3000 \). The initial energy level of the sensor is assumed to be zero. In all the experiments, the values of increase/decrease parameters are chosen such that the additive parameter equals 1 and the multiplicative parameter equals 2, and the correlation probabilities are given by \( p_{en}^c = 0.7 \), and \( p_{en}^d = 0.9 \), unless stated otherwise. We observe similar performance trends with other choices of system parameters as well.

Figure 2 plots the steady-state performance of the four types of algorithms outlined in Section IV, with \( p_{en}^d = 0.9 \). As \( p_{en}^c \) increases from 0.5 to 0.9, more events occur during the interval \([0 \ldots T]\), and since the recharge system parameters are kept constant, the performance in terms of fraction of events detected decreases for all the algorithms. We observe that the AIMD algorithm achieves the best performance among these algorithms, closely followed by AIAD and MIMD, whereas MIAD achieves the worst performance.\(^3\)

Figure 3 compares the performance of some of the hybrid algorithms with that of AIMD, with \( p_{en}^d = 0.9 \). \( U_{CW} \), and the performance of EB-CW and AW algorithms are also plotted for comparison. We observe that the AIMD algorithm performs very well compared to AW, and performs quite close to EB-CW. From the above figures, AIMD, AIAD, MIMD, MAIMD and MAIMAD perform very close to each other, when \( p_{en}^c = 0.9 \).

Figure 4 depicts the performance of AIMD algorithm for various values of increase and decrease parameters, \( c_1 \) and \( c_2 \). The performance is observed for values of \( c_1 \in [1 \ldots 10] \), and \( c_2 = 2^i \forall i \in [1 \ldots 10] \). We observe that \( c_1 = 1 \), and \( c_2 = 2 \) achieves the best performance among all AIMD algorithms. We observe similar performance trends with respect to \( c_1 \) and \( c_2 \) for other adaptive algorithms as well. Particularly, additive (increase or decrease) parameter of 1, and multiplicative parameter of 2 achieve the best performance, except for algorithms with additive decrease (where \( c_2 = 1 \) is not the best choice). Additionally, the AIMD algorithm with \( c_1 = 1 \) and \( c_2 = 2 \) is observed to achieve the best performance among all the algorithms in the class \( \Pi \) (\( c_1, c_2 \)).

Note that MIAD algorithm performance is much lower than that of the other algorithms. Since the initial energy level of the sensor is zero, and it takes a while for it to reach above \( \frac{K}{9} \), the sensor operating under the MIAD algorithm increases its sleep
interval to a very large value using a multiplicative increase of two each time. Even when the energy level becomes greater than the above threshold, the sleep interval is decremented slowly (additively by one each time). Therefore, the sensor spends most of its time in the sleep state, and detects a lower fraction of events. On the other hand, AIMD is able to perform better since the sleep interval of the sensor operating under AIMD converges to that of EB-CW faster, as we show next.

Figures 5 and 6 plot the sensor’s sleep interval over time operating under various activation algorithms. $SI_{EB-CW}$ (computed using (2)) is around 11 for the chosen set of system parameters. Figure 5 shows that the sleep interval values under various adaptive algorithms oscillate around (and try to converge to) $SI_{EB-CW}$, except for MIAD, where the sleep interval diverges to a very large value. Among these, the AIMD exhibits the fastest and more stable convergence. The sleep interval employed by the sensor operating under the AIMD activation algorithm oscillates around $SI_{EB-CW}$ in steady-state, as shown in Figure 6. Note that the AIMD algorithm is able to estimate the value of $SI_{EB-CW}$ automatically, by dynamically adapting the sleep interval in such a way so as to keep the sensor’s energy level close to $\frac{K}{2}$. As a result, sensor’s behavior operating under the AIMD algorithm approaches the behavior under EB-CW, resulting in near-optimal performance achieved by the AIMD algorithm.

Figure 7 plots the energy level of the sensor operating under various activation algorithms. The energy level of the sensor under AIMD algorithm converges to around half of energy bucket size, i.e., in steady-state $L_{AIMD} \rightarrow \frac{K}{2}$. Energy level of the sensor operating under algorithms AIAD and MIMD also converge close to $\frac{K}{2}$, albeit after a longer time and with larger oscillations. This behavior is a direct consequence of the fact that all the adaptive algorithms increase the sensor’s sleep interval when $L < \frac{K}{2}$, and decrease it when $L \geq \frac{K}{2}$. Since the sensor’s energy level stabilizes close to $\frac{K}{2}$ quite rapidly operating under the AIMD algorithm, the use of hybrid algorithms like MAIMD and MAIMAD does not provide additional performance improvement over that of AIMD (as the sensor’s energy level never reaches close to 0 or $K$).

Figure 8 depicts the sensor’s energy level in steady-state for AIMD and EB-CW activation algorithms. Recall that $SI_{EB-CW} = 11$. We observe the energy level of the sensor for two different CW algorithms, one with $SI = 11$ (EB-CW), and another with $SI = 12$ (denoted CW$^1$). The sensor operating under AIMD activation algorithm maintains its energy level close to $\frac{K}{2}$, whereas under the CW algorithms the energy level of the sensor either stays close to full or close to empty, and also exhibits larger variations. This suggests that AIMD algorithm is able to stabilize the sensor’s energy level more than the CW algorithm.  

Figure 9 depicts the stability of the sensor’s behavior, and the performance achieved, operating under AIMD activation algorithm, in comparison with the CW activation algorithm. The performance of CW algorithm is shown for different values of sleep intervals. The performance achieved by the AIMD algorithm is quite close to the performance of the best CW algorithm. The figure also depicts the steady-state energy levels (denoted $L^{ss}$) of the sensor under the AIMD and CW

\[4\] Note that a probabilistic scheme could be used with CW algorithm to choose the sleep interval 11 w.p. $p$, and 12 w.p. $1-p$, so as to stabilize the sensor’s energy level. However, such a scheme would still exhibit larger variations in energy level, and would also depend heavily on global system parameters.
algorithms. We observe that the energy level of the sensor under AIMD algorithm converges close to \( \frac{K}{T} \), whereas under CW algorithms the energy level of the sensor is either close to \( K \) or close to 0.

A. Comparison of EB-CW and AIMD Algorithms

AIMD algorithm performs well because it tries to quickly estimate and converge the sensor’s behavior to that under the EB-CW algorithm. Thereafter, the AIMD algorithm maintains the sensor’s sleep interval value oscillating around \( S_{EB-CW} \), and its energy level close to \( \frac{K}{T} \). Moreover, the AIMD algorithm is more adaptive to dynamic changes in the environment. For instance, if one of the system parameters changes, AIMD algorithm would automatically converge to the new high performance and stability region, whereas the sensor operating under the EB-CW algorithm would need to estimate the new value of the changed system parameter, and recompute \( S_{EB-CW} \) in order to achieve good performance. In addition, the AIMD algorithm does not depend on the system parameters (unlike EB-CW), and thus can easily be deployed in practice. The sensor’s behavior (with respect to energy level and sleep interval variations) operating under the AIMD algorithm is also more stable compared to the EB-CW and other adaptive algorithms.

VI. Conclusion

We have designed a class of online and adaptive activation algorithms for sensor operation in a renewable energy based sensor system. The performance of the sensor is measured in terms of asymptotic event detection probability achieved, in the presence of temporally correlated event phenomena. We have shown that an algorithm which increases sensor’s sleep interval conservatively (Additive Increase), and decreases the sleep interval aggressively (Multiplicative Decrease) performs close to optimal. In particular, our proposed AIMD algorithm not only achieves near-optimal performance, but also maintains a stable energy level for the sensor with finite energy bucket size. Since the AIMD algorithm does not rely on global system parameters, it is more adaptive to changes in these parameters, and is also more suitable for deployment.

In future, it might be interesting to mathematically study the properties of the equilibrium achieved by AIMD, and other adaptive algorithms. Another direction of future research includes distributed implementation of these algorithms in multi-sensor systems.

REFERENCES