

Doctoral Dissertation

Formal assurance of security policies in automated network orchestration (SDN/NFV)

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Outline

- ❑ Introduction
- ❑ Contributions
 - ❑ Network function modeling
 - ❑ Formally verified network function placement
 - ❑ Automatic Firewall Configuration
- ❑ Conclusion



Research questions

Networks are evolving rapidly

- need for more dynamic and automated network management
 - Software Defined Networking (SDN) and Network Function Virtualization (NFV)
 - undeniable great benefits: scalability, flexibility, efficiency ...

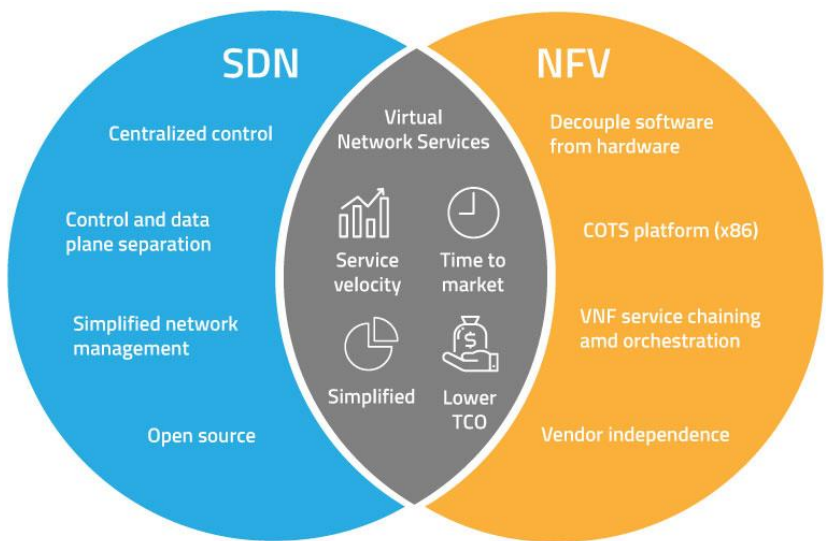
However

- misconfigurations, security flaws, underutilization

How to increase **assurance** in the correct behavior of the network?
How to reduce **underutilization** of network resources during orchestration?
How to automate optimal **configuration** of network security functions?



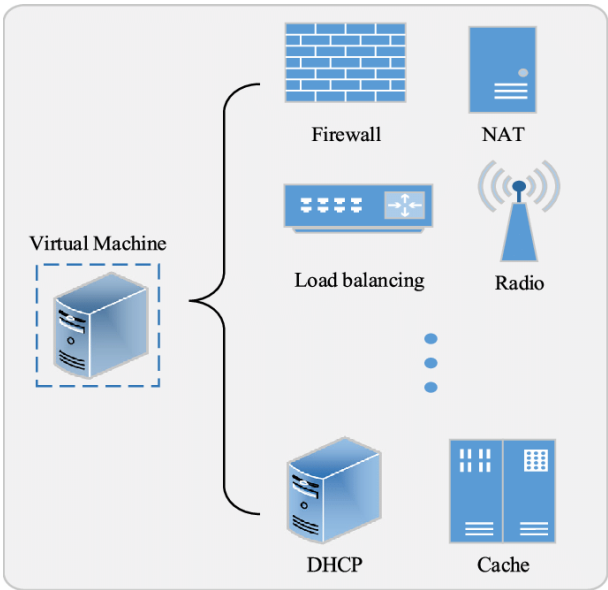
Background



NFV and SDN

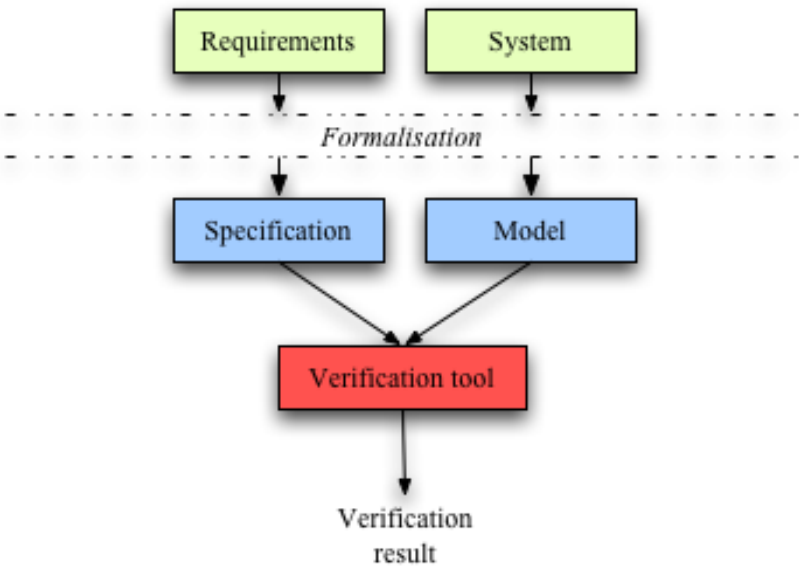
SDN is the idea of separating the control plane of a network from the data plane that forwards network traffic. NFV virtualizes network services and abstract them from dedicated hardware

Virtual Network Function (VNF) handles specific network functions that run on one or more virtual machines (VMs) or in containers



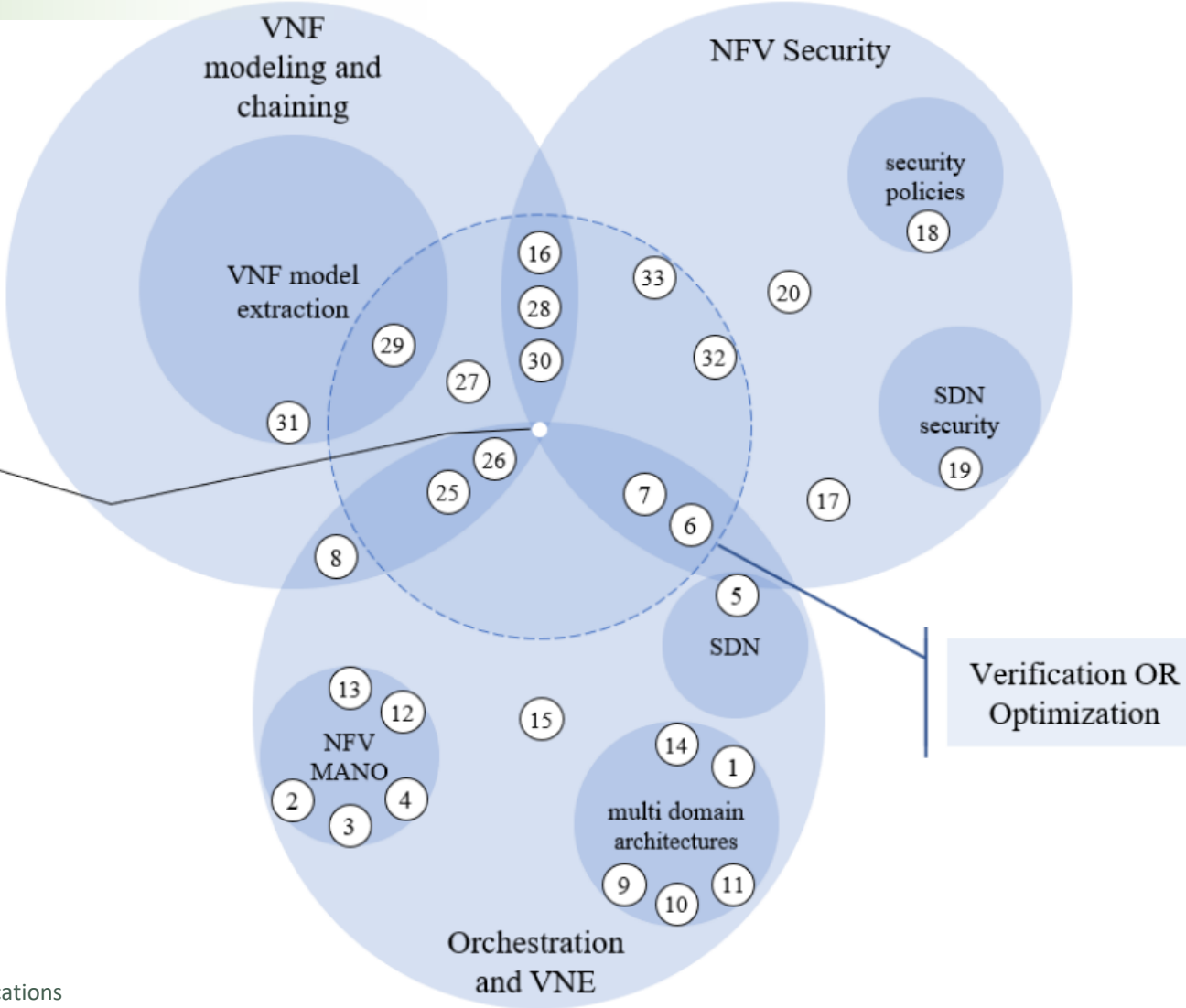
Formal verification

is the act of proving or disproving the correctness of an abstract model of the system with respect to a certain formal specification or property



State of the art

To the best of our knowledge, in NFV-based environment, the need for **orchestration and allocation of services**, giving at the same time **assurance** about a number of **safety and security-related** properties of the orchestrated virtual networks, remains an open problem to be addressed by the research community



Taxonomy of surveyed techniques with corresponding publications

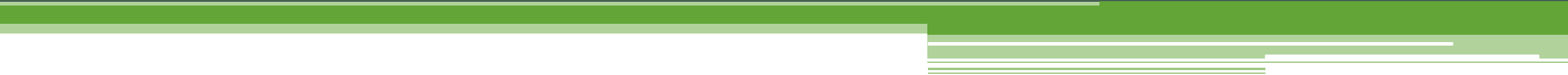


Objectives

- Simplify the definition of a network function model
 - automatically translate into an abstract formal model for verification tools
- Provide an approach for allocation and formal verification
 - network policies are never violated
 - optimization is achieved
- Automatically and optimally configure multiple firewalls



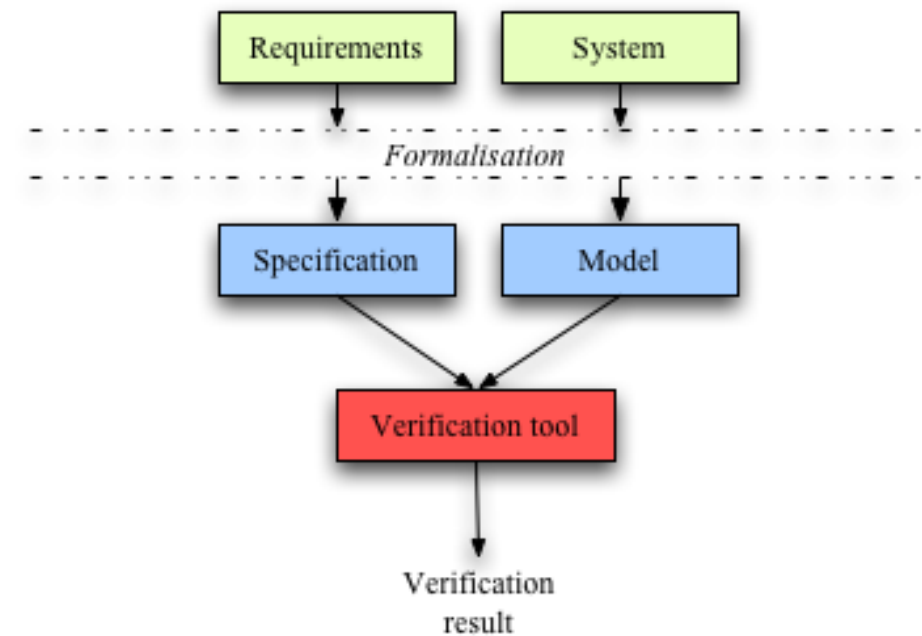
Network function modeling for verification purposes



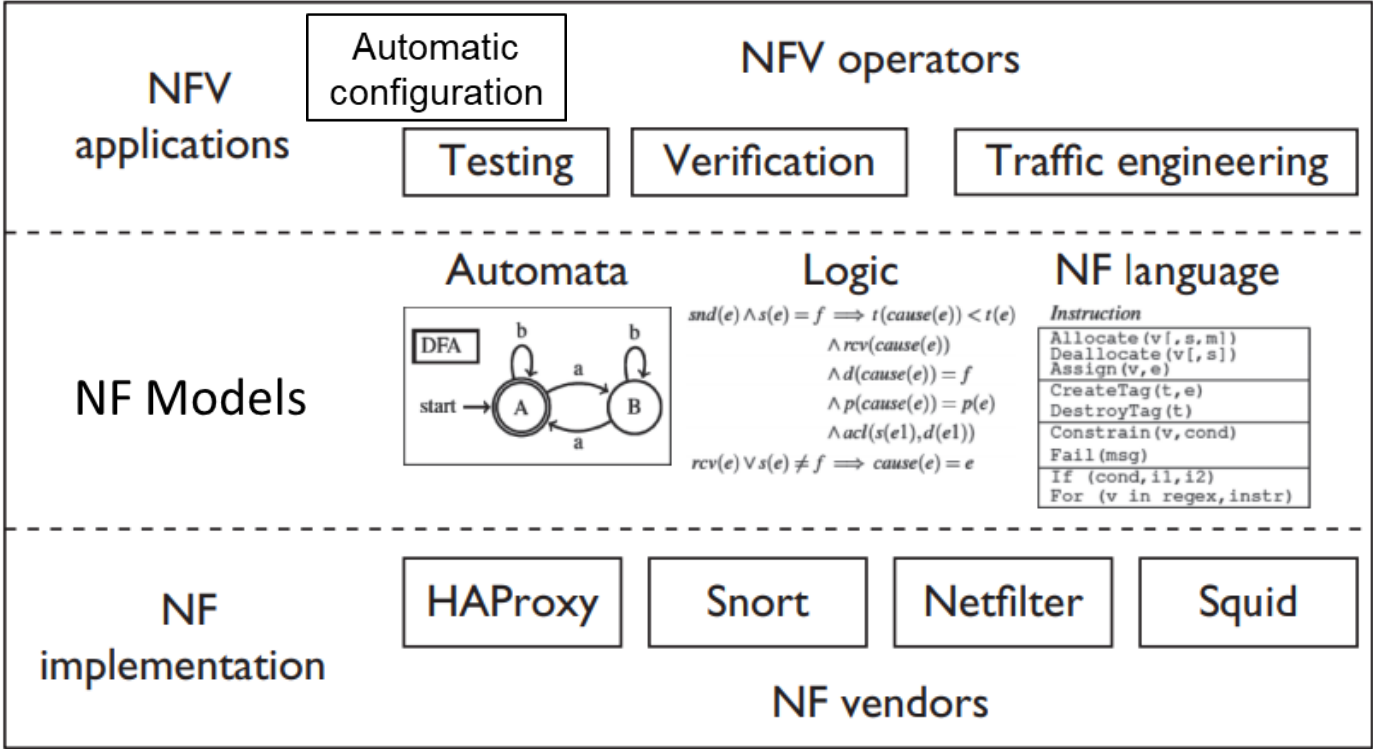
Network function modeling for verification purposes

Problem statement

- ❑ complex VNF software
- ❑ network configuration errors
- ❑ need for networks' correctness, safety, and security
- ❑ the specific input languages of the verification tools
 - ❑ error-prone, time-consuming
 - ❑ outside the VNF developers' expertise
 - ❑ lack of unified translation pattern
- ❑ no standard and structured way of writing network function code
 - ❑ lack of specific libraries



State of the art

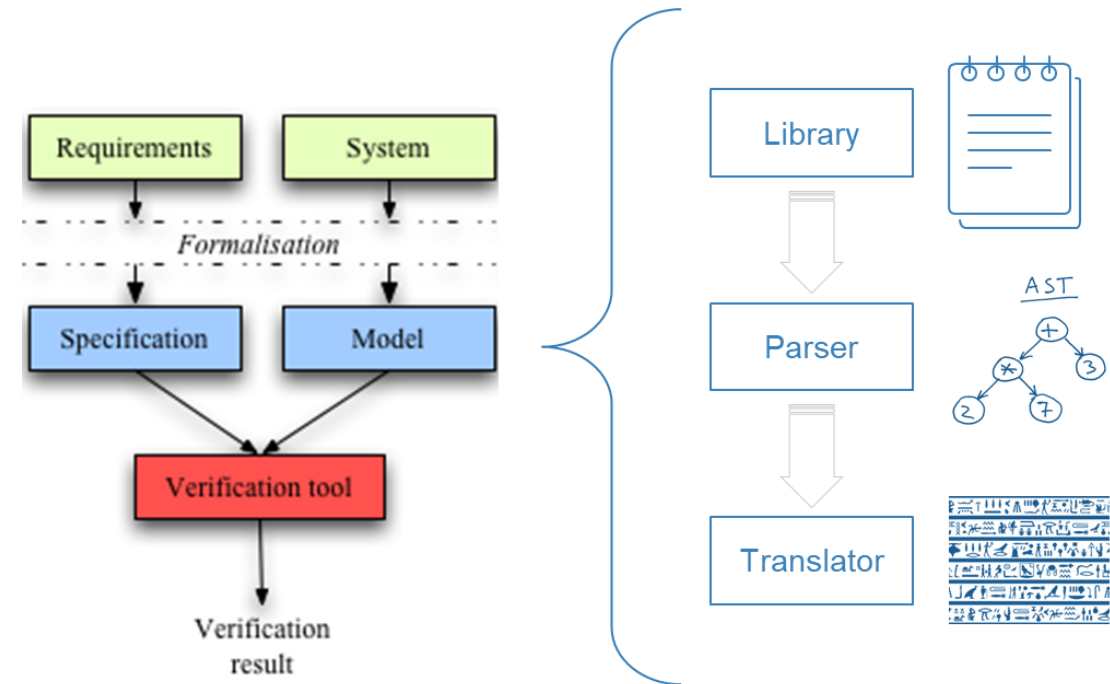


- automation tools based on formal methods accept input in specification languages
- difficult to use for people not experienced in formal methods
- error-prone, time-consuming, and often outside the VNF developers' expertise



Contribution 1

- To simplify the definition of a NF model in a well-known language
- Flexibility to define the desired behavior for all NF



1

A Framework for User-Friendly Verification-Oriented VNF Modeling, 2017

G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, M. Virgilio and J. Yusupov. 41st Annual Computer Software and Applications Conference (COMPSAC)

2

A Framework for Verification-Oriented User-Friendly Network Function Modeling, 2019

G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, F. Valenza, J. Yusupov - IEEE Access



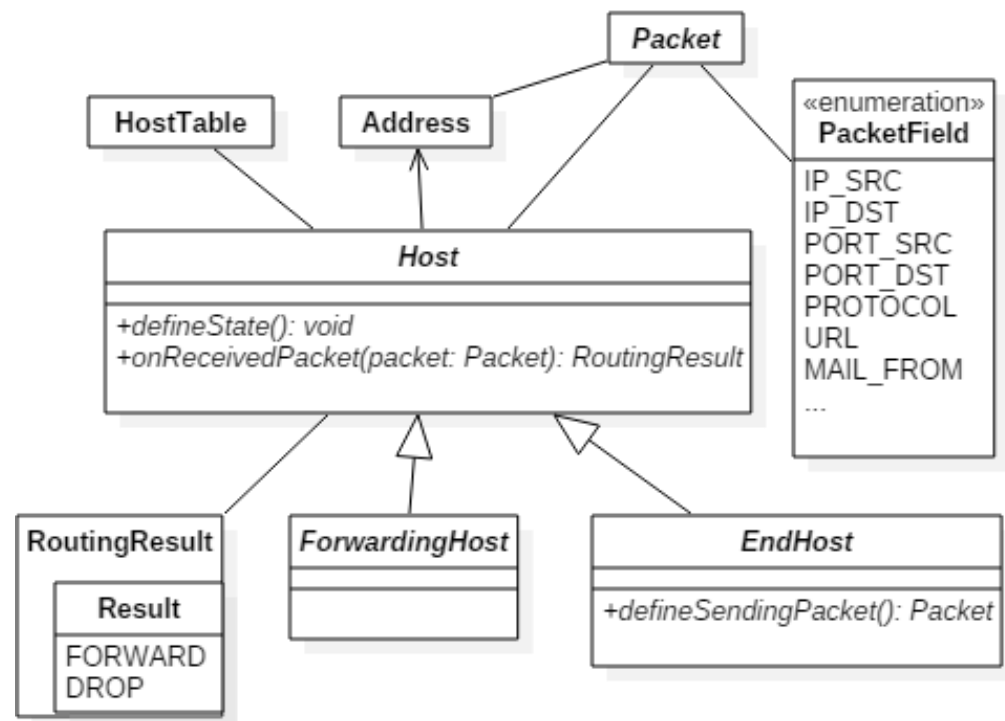
**POLITECNICO
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Library

LIST OF SUPPORTED FEATURES OF JAVA LANGUAGE

Data types: int String boolean
Boolean operators: && !
Comparison operators: == !=
Statements: return if if-else
Functions, Constructors, Constants, Variable Assignments

- set of high-level operations for describing the network function's forwarding behavior



Parser

- analyzes the Java source code and extracts an abstract formal model

Tasks

- the identification of the instructions in the Java code that lead to a packet being sent through an interface
- the identification of the conditions (IF statements)

```
1  @Override
2  public RoutingResult onReceivedPacket(Packet packet) {
3      if (Packet.match(packet.getProtocol(), Constants.POP3_REQUEST_PROTOCOL, Operator.EQUAL)) {
4          return new RoutingResult(packet, Action.FORWARD, ForwardDirection.UPSTREAM);
5      }
6      if (Packet.match(packet.getProtocol(), Constants.POP3_RESPONSE_PROTOCOL, Operator.EQUAL) &&
7          !this.state.hostTableList.get("Blacklist").contains(packet.getMailSource())) {
8          return new RoutingResult(packet, Action.FORWARD, ForwardDirection.UPSTREAM);
9      }
10     return new RoutingResult(packet, Action.DROP, ForwardDirection.UPSTREAM);
11 }
12
```

Java description of the behavior of the Antispam network function in response to a received packet



Parser

- analyzes the Java source code and extracts an abstract formal model

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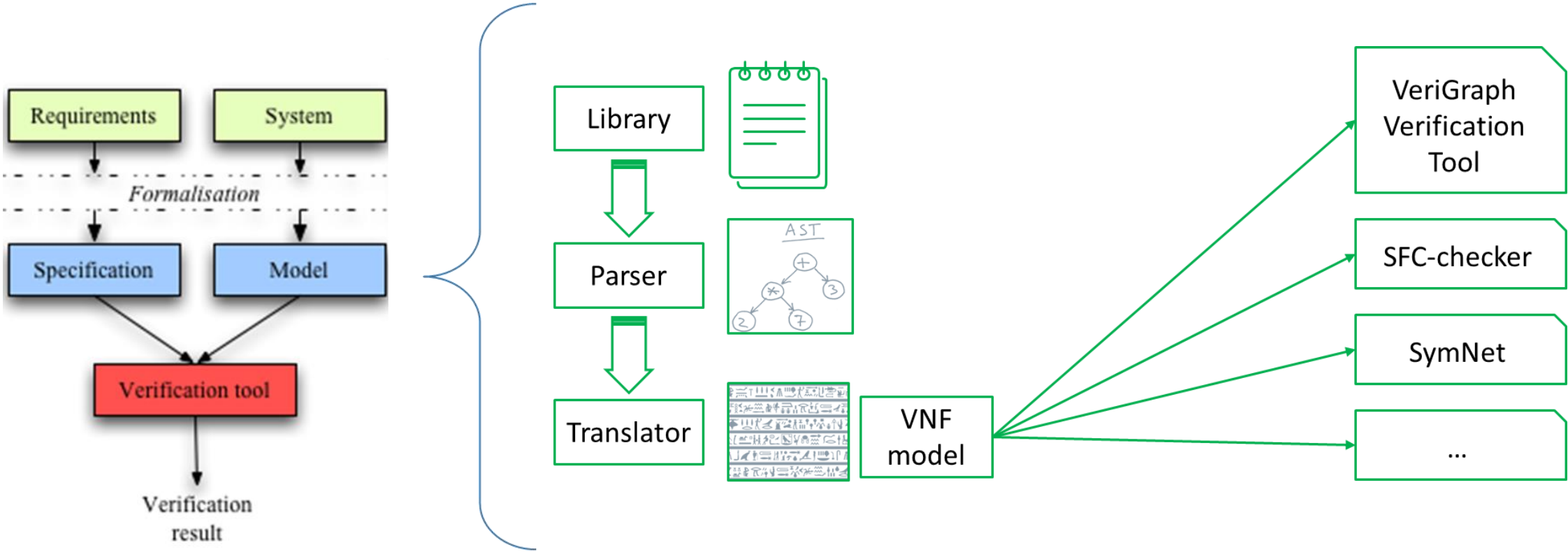
Translation pattern

- takes an input from the parser and converts them into first-order-logic (FOL) formulas - Boolean constraints

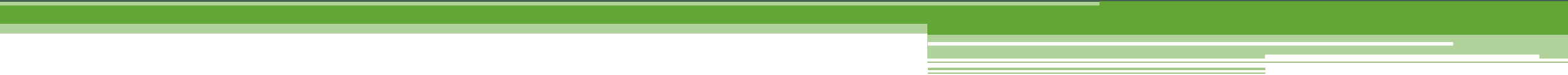
TRANSLATOR OUTPUT FORMAT FOR THE ANTISPAM VNF.

1	$\text{send}(\text{Antispam}, n_0, p, t_0) \rightarrow p.\text{proto} == \text{POP_REQ} \parallel p.\text{proto} == \text{POP_RESP}$
2	$\text{send}(\text{Antispam}, n_0, p, t_0) \rightarrow \text{nodeHasAddr}(\text{Antispam}, p.\text{src})$
3	$\text{send}(\text{Antispam}, n_0, p, t_0) \ \&\& \ p.\text{proto}(\text{POP3_RESP}) \rightarrow (\exists n_1, t_1 : (\text{recv}(n_1, \text{Antispam}, p, t_1) \ \&\& \ t_1 < t_0)) \ \&\& \ !\text{isInBlackList}(p.\text{emailFrom})$
4	$\text{send}(\text{Antispam}, n_0, p, t_0) \ \&\& \ p.\text{proto}(\text{POP3_REQ}) \rightarrow (\exists n_1, t_1 : (\text{recv}(n_1, \text{Antispam}, p, t_1) \ \&\& \ t_1 < t_0))$

Results

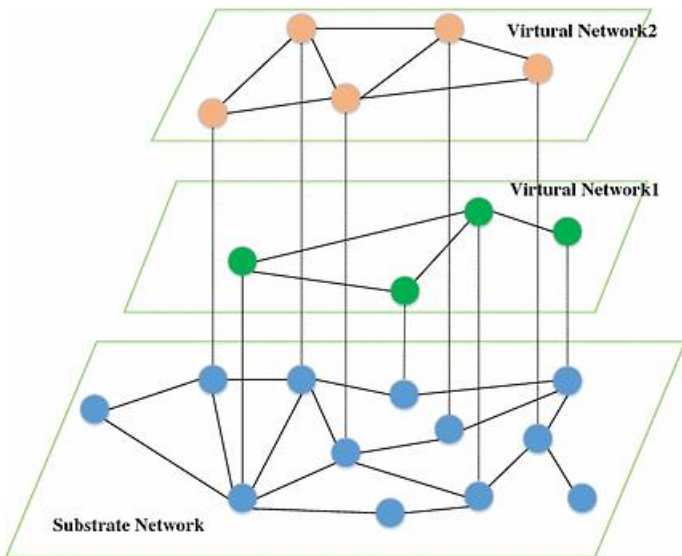


Formally verified network function placement

The slide features a dark green header with white text. Below the header, there is a decorative graphic consisting of a solid green horizontal bar, followed by a white horizontal bar, and then a series of thin, overlapping green and white horizontal lines that create a sense of depth and movement.

Formally verified network function placement Background

- **Network Function Placement or Virtual Network Embedding (VNE)** is the problem of finding an optimum mapping of virtual nodes and links onto a given physical substrate network



Boolean (SAT)isfiability Problem

Given:

- A Boolean Formula

Question:

- Is there an assignment of truth values to the Boolean variables such that the formula holds true?

$$a \vee (\neg a \wedge b)$$

SATISFIABLE
a=true, b=true

Background

Maximum Satisfiability Problem (MaxSAT)

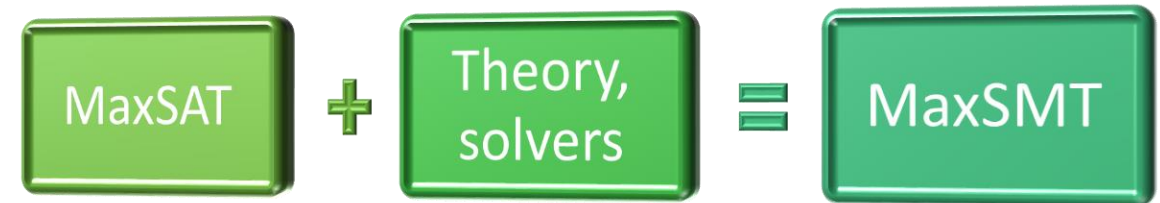
n Boolean variables $x_1, \dots, x_n$

m clauses $C_1, \dots, C_m$ with weights $w_j \geq 0$

– each clause is a disjunction of literals,

e.g. $C_1 = x_1 \vee x_2 \vee \bar{x}_3$

- Find an assignment of the Boolean variables that maximizes the total weight of the satisfied clauses or equivalently minimize the total weight of the falsified clauses



Maximum Satisfiability Modulo Theories Problem (MaxSMT)

- First Order Logic (FOL)
 - theory of arrays
 - free function symbols
 - linear integer arithmetic
 - theory of equality
 - difference logic
 - ...

IP vs MaxSMT

Problem statement:

- Formal Verified Solution
- The existing literature formulates the a problem using Integer Programming (IP) formulation
 - constraints over binary, integer, or real variables
 - restriction does not apply for the MaxSMT formulation
 - which allows us to model the problem more directly and using very **expressive constraints**: forwarding behaviors...
 - to check that network fulfill selected properties with 100% certainty and deliver **formally verified** placement plan

$$\max z = 8x_1 + 11x_2 + 6x_3 + 4x_4$$

s.t.

$$5x_1 + 7x_2 + 0x_3 + 3x_4 \leq 14$$

$$8x_1 + 0x_2 + 4x_3 + 4x_4 \leq 12$$

$$2x_1 + 10x_2 + 6x_3 + 4x_4 \leq 15$$

$$x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4 \in \{0,1\}$$

State of the art:

- Joint Optimization and Verification can be encoded to IP instance, but...
 - the combinatorial encoding turned out to be impractical³
 - in most cases and authors were often not able to generate MaxSMT encodings for many of the instances
 - model generator run out of memory when dealing with larger instances⁴
 - the huge amount of produced clauses required by this encoding



Drawbacks of the Integer Programming

Mixed Integer Quadratically Constrained Programming (MIQCP)

- Placement Constraints

$$\forall v \in V : \sum_{u \in U} m_{u,v} \cdot p(u) \leq c(v)$$

- Path Related Constraints

- latency requirements

$$\forall (a, a') \in A_{pairs} : \sum_{\substack{(v,v') \in E, x,y \in V, \\ (u,u') \in paths(a,a')}} e_{v,v',x,y,u,u'} \cdot l(v, v') \leq l_{req}(a, a')$$

- bandwidth requirements

$$\forall (v, v') \in E : \sum_{(u,u') \in U_{pairs}, \forall x,y \in V} e_{v,v',x,y,u,u'} \cdot d_{req}(u, u') \leq d(v, v')$$



*S. Spinoso, M. Virgilio, W. John, A. Manzalini, G. Marchetto, and R. Sisto,

"Formal Verification of Virtual Network Function Graphs in an SP-DevOps Context," in ESOCC 2015, Taormina, Italy, September 15-17, 2015. Proceedings, 2015, pp. 253–262.

MaxSMT Formulation

Inspired by VeriGraph*

- VeriGraph (z3): hard constraints
- VerifOO (z3Opt): hard constraints

$$\sum_{\forall j | n_j^s \in N^s} to_int(x_{ij}) = 1 \quad \Bigg| \quad y_j \implies \bigvee_i x_{ij} \quad \Bigg| \quad \left(\sum_{\forall i | n_i^v \uparrow n_j^s} storage(n_i^v) * to_int(x_{ij}) \right) \leq storage(n_j^s) * to_int(y_j)$$

- VerifOO (z3Opt): soft constraints

$$\begin{array}{l} addSoft(\neg y_1, 1) \\ addSoft(\neg y_2, 1) \end{array} \quad \Bigg| \quad addSoft((route(n_{i+1}^v, l_{jk}^s) \implies x_{ij} \wedge x_{(i+1)k}), -latency(l_{jk}^s))$$

What to verify?

Forwarding behavior

The traffic generated from the source s , must/mustn't reach the destination d

- Reachability: $\exists(n_0, p_0) \mid \text{recv}(n_0, \text{dest}, p_0) \wedge p_0.\text{origin} == \text{src}$
- Isolation: $\forall(n_0, p_0) \mid \text{recv}(n_0, \text{dest}, p_0) \implies p_0.\text{origin} \neq \text{src}$
 $\exists(n_1, p_1) \mid \text{send}(\text{src}, n_1, p_1) \wedge \text{nodeHasAddress}(\text{dest}, p_1.\text{dest})$

```
<PropertyDefinition>
  <Property graph="0" name="IsolationProperty" src="nodeA" dst="nodeB" src_port="
    ↪ 5000" dst_port="80">
    <HTTPDefinition url="polito.it" body="weapons"/>
  </Property>
  <Property graph="0" name="ReachabilityProperty" src="nodeC" dst="nodeD"
    ↪ src_port="3000" dst_port="110">
    <POP3Definition email_from="polito" body="weapons"/>
  </Property>
</PropertyDefinition>
```



Application I

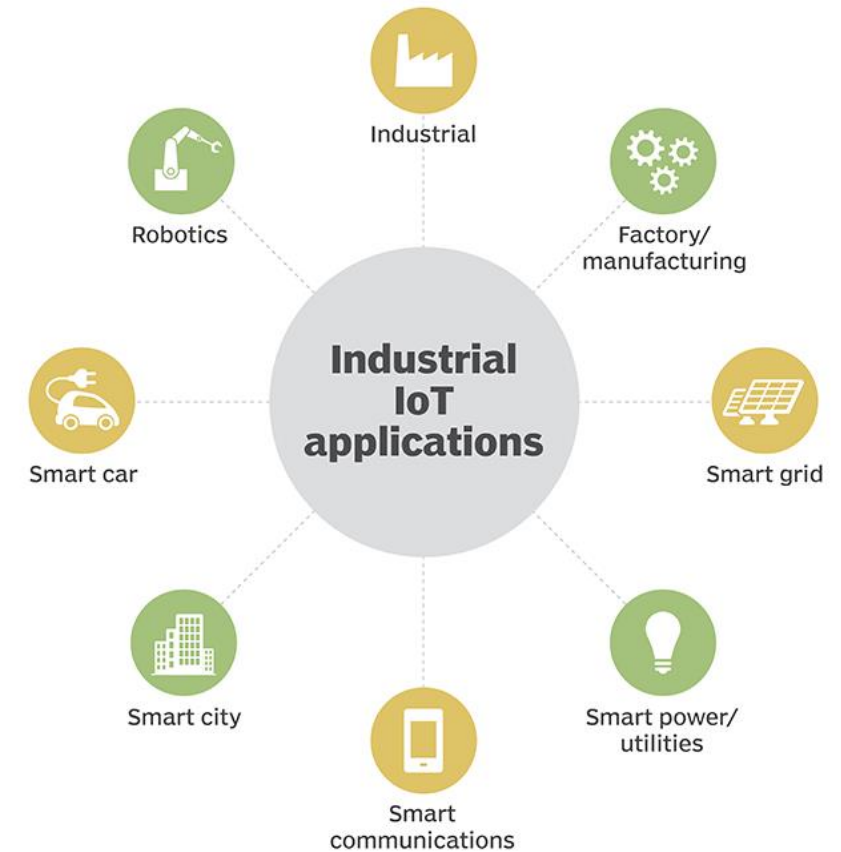
Formally Verified Latency-aware VNF Placement

IIoT (Industrial Internet of Things or Industrial IoT)

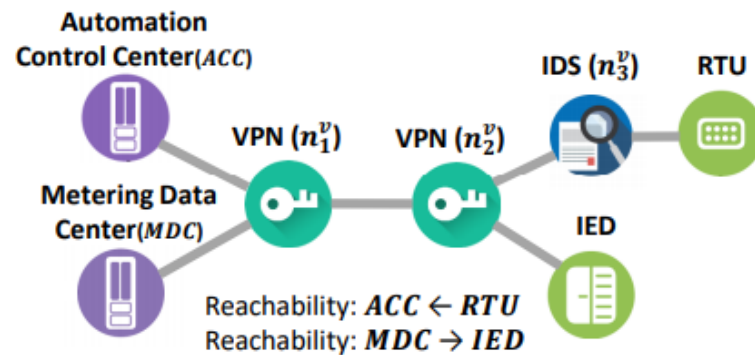
- industrial devices: interconnected sensors, instruments
 - that are now equipped with the capabilities to send data

Problem:

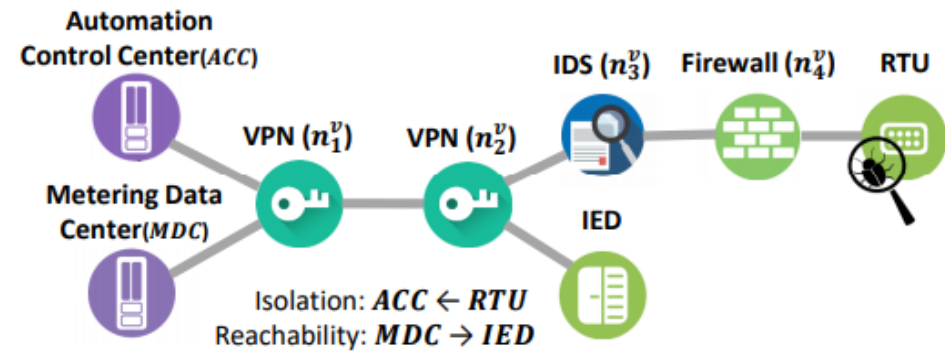
- Smart Grid is safety-critical, very complex and vulnerable to attacks or cyber threats
 - **Causes:**
 - the absence or weakness of security function
 - the misconfiguration of Virtual Network Functions (VNFs)
 - **Solutions:**
 - countermeasures dynamically placed to mitigate security threats (VNE)
 - detect misconfiguration of VNFs with simulation/testing or formal verification techniques



Smart Grid Use Case



Original Service Graph (a)

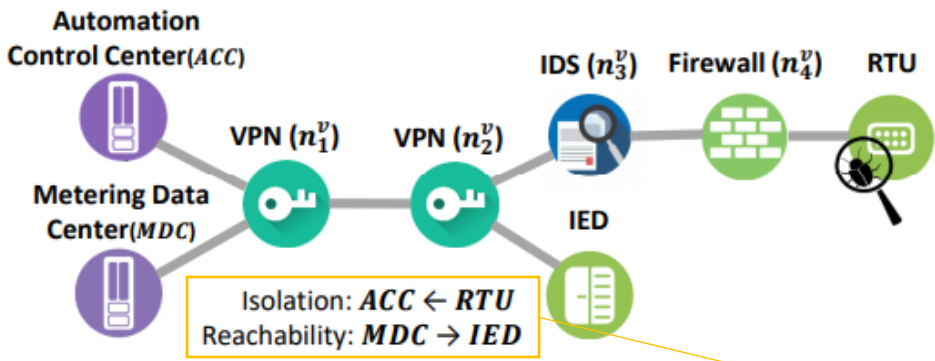
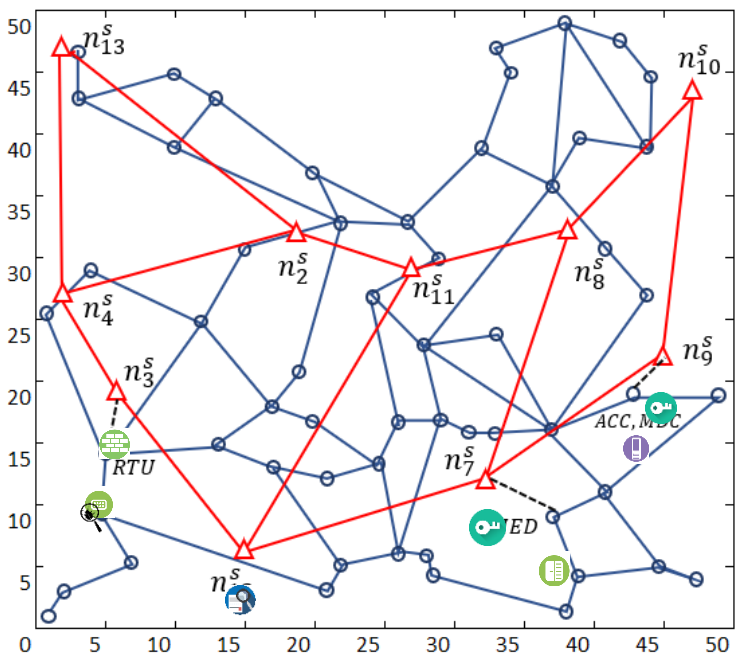


Updated Service Graph (b)

Configurations:

- VPN access n_1^v : IP address of the VPN exit n_2^v gateway
- VPN exit n_2^v : IP address of the VPN access n_1^v gateway
- IDS n_3^v : not allowed function code {43}
- Firewall n_4^v : {src:RTU dst:ACC sport:* dport:* proto:*}
- ACC: generates a packet with a function code different from {43}

Smart Grid Use Case



Updated Service Graph (b)

SAT

$x_{1,9}, x_{2,7}, x_{3,12}, x_{4,3}, y_3, y_7, y_9, y_{12}$

Configurations:

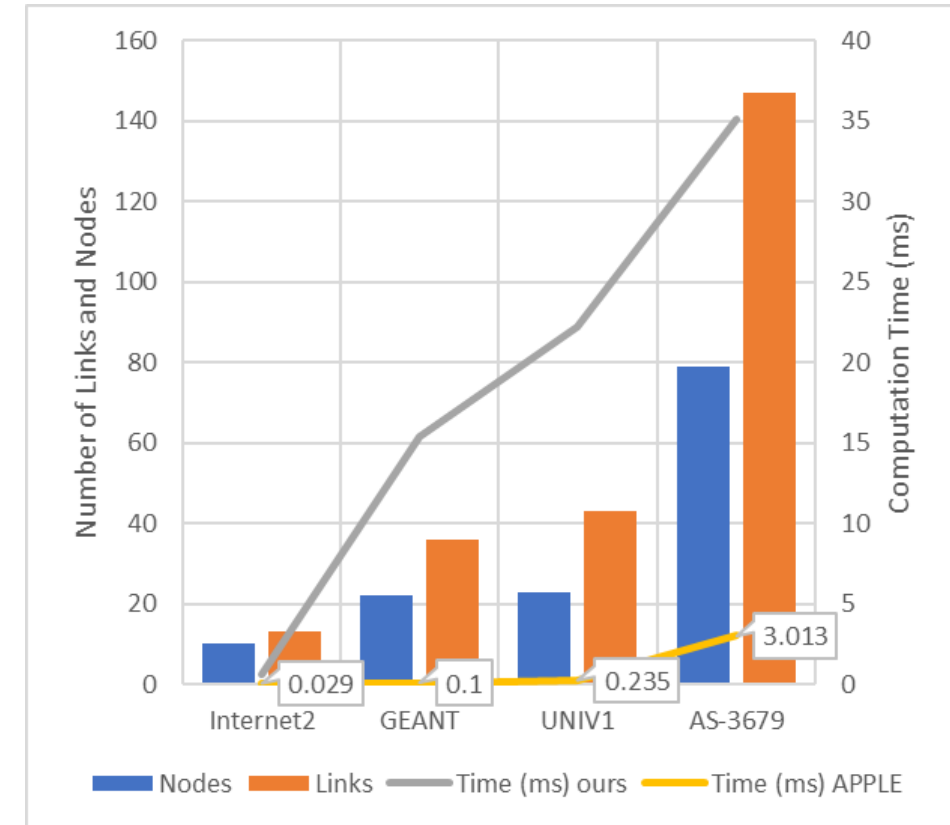
- VPN access n^1_v : IP address of the VPN exit n^2_v gateway
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- Firewall n^4_v : {src:RTU dst:ACC sport:* dport:* proto:*}
- ACC: generates a packet with a function code different from {43}



Discussion and Results

- Model implementation
 - Z3⁴ theorem prover from Microsoft Research

Topology	Nodes	Links	Time (O+V)	Time (O)[12]
Internet2[21]	10	13	0.6	0.029
GEANT[21]	22	36	15.4	0.1
UNIV1[31]	23	43	22.2	0.235
AS-3679[32]	79	147	35.1	3.013



5

Formally verified latency-aware VNF placement in industrial Internet of things

G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, J. Yusupov, A. Ksentini, 14th International Workshop on Factory Communication Systems, WFCS 2018

6

A Formal Approach to Verify Connectivity and Optimize VNF Placement in Industrial Networks.

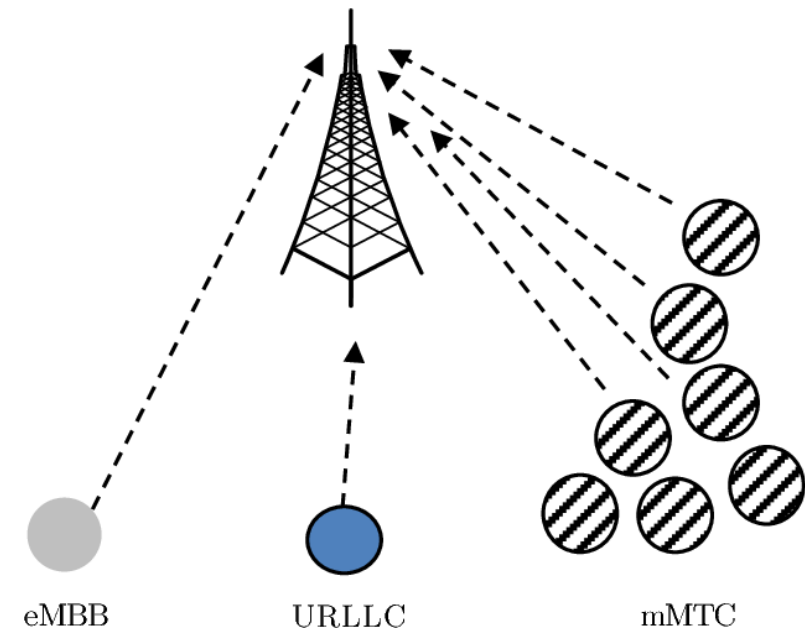
Under (third) review. IEEE Transactions on Industrial Informatics

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Application II

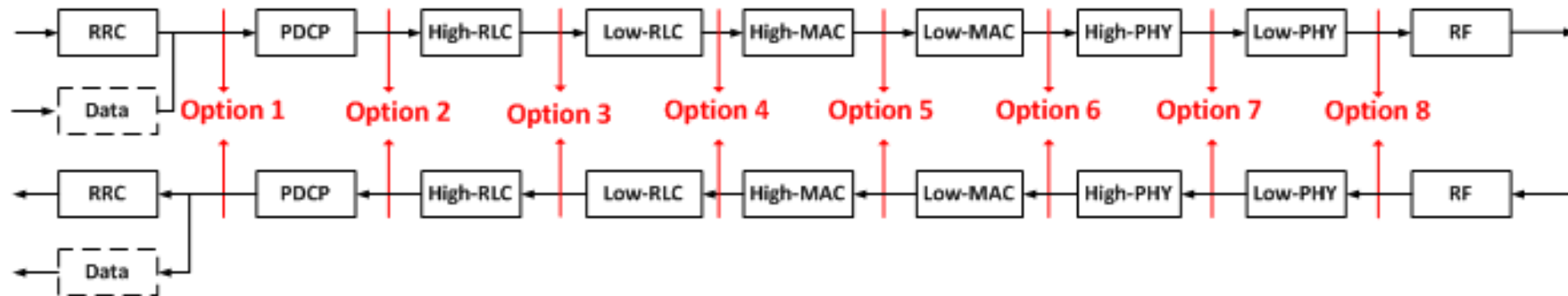
Efficient 5G RAN Functional Split Background

- Maximum latency and capacity required by emerging 5G services (slices)
- Network slicing
 - logical autonomous networks on top of a common infrastructure
 - eMBB - enhanced Mobile Broadband
 - mMTC - massive Machine Type Communications
 - URLLC - Ultra-Reliable and Low Latency Communications
- The logical architecture of next-generation RAN (3GPP)
 - **Central Unit (CU):** logical node that includes
 - Transfer of user data
 - Mobility control
 - Radio access network sharing
 - Positioning
 - ...
 - **Distributed Unit (DU):**
 - **Remote Radio Unit (RU):**
 - depends on the **functional split option**



Problem statement

- RAN functional split implications/trade-offs
 - service requirements (e.g. latency)
 - fully distributed or fully centralized
 - increased total cost of ownership
 - increased power consumption
 - capability integration
 - ...
 - they determine the placement of nodes and distance between



- Exists a need to evaluate the impact of the RAN functional decomposition

Efficient 5G RAN Functional Split

state of the art:

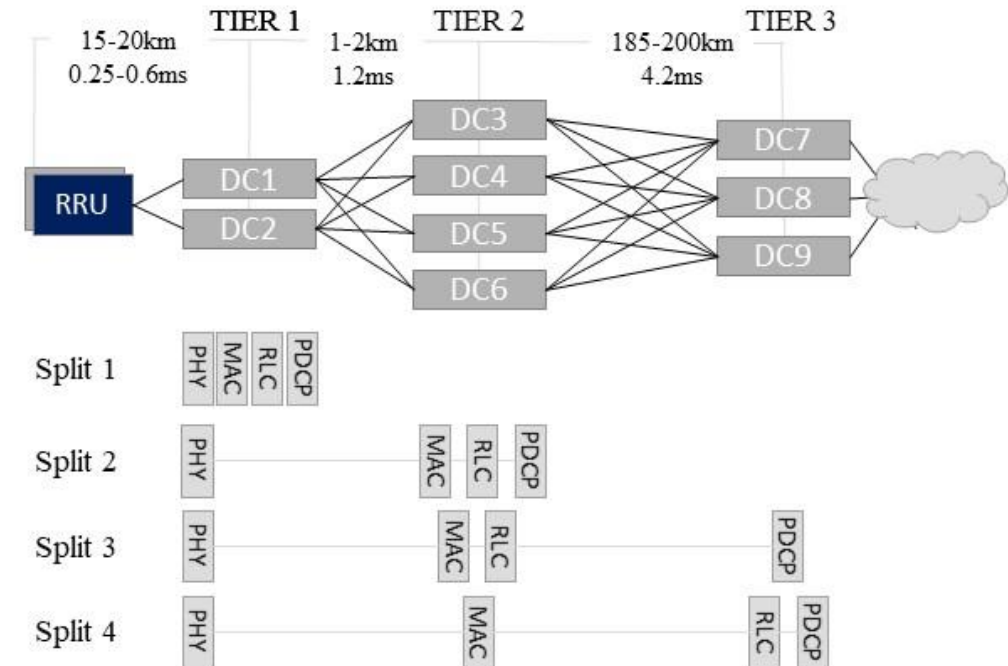
- focus on fully distributed or fully centralized baseband
- an optimal functional split depending on types of slices

objectives:

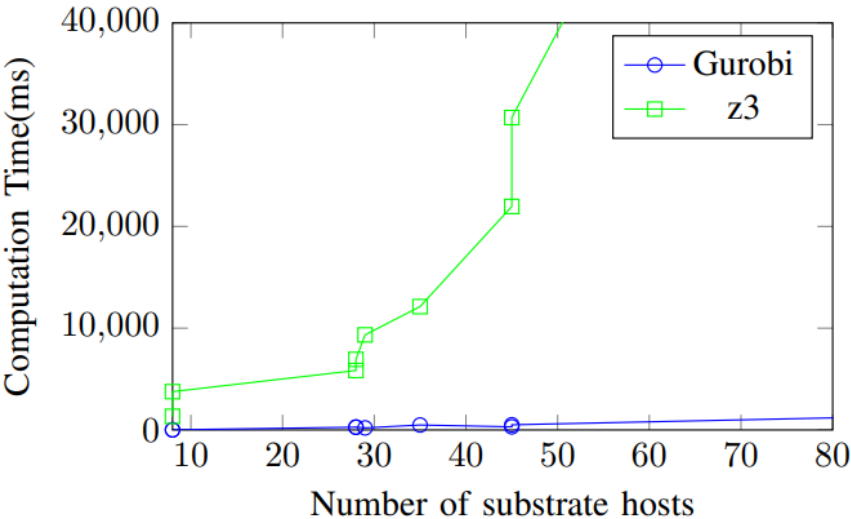
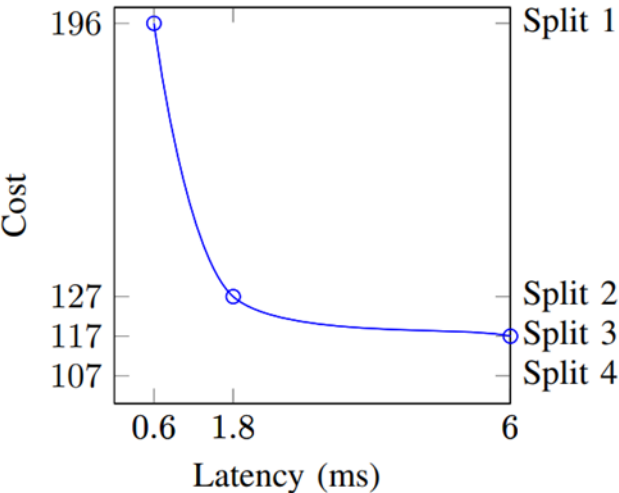
- exploiting the most suitable functional splits
- apply to different use cases and deployment scenarios
 - low-latency and high bandwidth requirements
- assurance
 - function chain correctly implements the reachability policies

contributions:

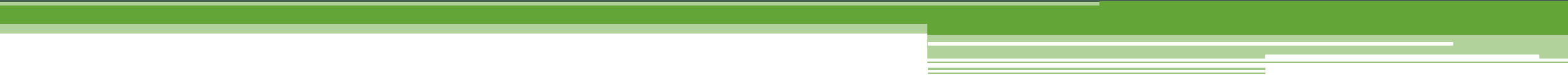
- solve VNE problem based on slice requirements
- different traffic classes targeting different objectives
 - focusing on functional split of individual radio functions



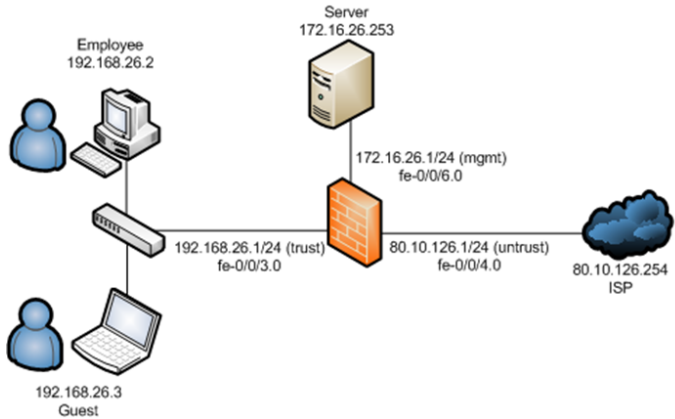
Results



Automatic Firewall Configuration



VERified REFinement and Optimized Orchestration



Allow all traffic from
Trusted zone to the
Management office

Deny traffic from untrusted
zone, allow outbound
traffic on port 80



Automatic rule generation

State	Prctl	Interface			Source address	Src. Port	Destination address	Dest. Port	Decision
		FW1	Eth1	In/out					
Response	TCP	FW1	Serial 0	out	172.16.1.14	80	Any	Any	Accept
Response	TCP	FW2	Eth1	in	172.16.1.14	80	172.16.1.14	Any	Accept
Response	UDP	FW2	Eth1	in	172.16.1.14	53	172.16.1.14	Any	Accept
Response	TCP	FW1	Serial 0	out	172.16.1.14	25	Any	Any	Accept
Response	UDP	FW1	Serial 0	out	172.16.1.14	53	Any	Any	Accept
Response	TCP	FW2	Eth1	in	172.16.1.14	20	172.16.1.14	Any	Accept
Response	TCP	FW2	Eth1	in	172.16.1.14	21	172.16.1.14	Any	Accept
Response	TCP	FW2	Eth1	in	172.16.1.14	25	172.16.1.14	Any	Accept

state of the art:

- a **verified orchestration of network services**
- related works consider service graphs consisting of firewalls only
- high level network specifications into low level network configuration
 - lack of optimality in refinement process
 - translation is manual
- problems are typically detected only at runtime

goal: full automation, optimization and formal assurance



VerifOO -> VerefOO

- VerifOO (z3Opt): hard constraints

$$\sum_{\forall j | n_j^s \in N^s} to_int(x_{ij}) = 1 \quad \Bigg| \quad y_j \implies \bigvee_i x_{ij} \quad \Bigg| \quad \left(\sum_{\forall i | n_i^v \uparrow n_j^s} storage(n_i^v) * to_int(x_{ij}) \right)$$

- VerifOO (z3Opt): soft constraints $\leq storage(n_j^s) * to_int(y_j)$

$$\begin{array}{l} addSoft(\neg y_1, 1) \\ addSoft(\neg y_2, 1) \end{array} \quad \Bigg| \quad addSoft((route(n_{i+1}^v, l_{jk}^s) \implies x_{ij} \wedge x_{(i+1)k}), -latency(l_{jk}^s))$$

- VerefOO

$\forall \{n0, n1, p0\} :$

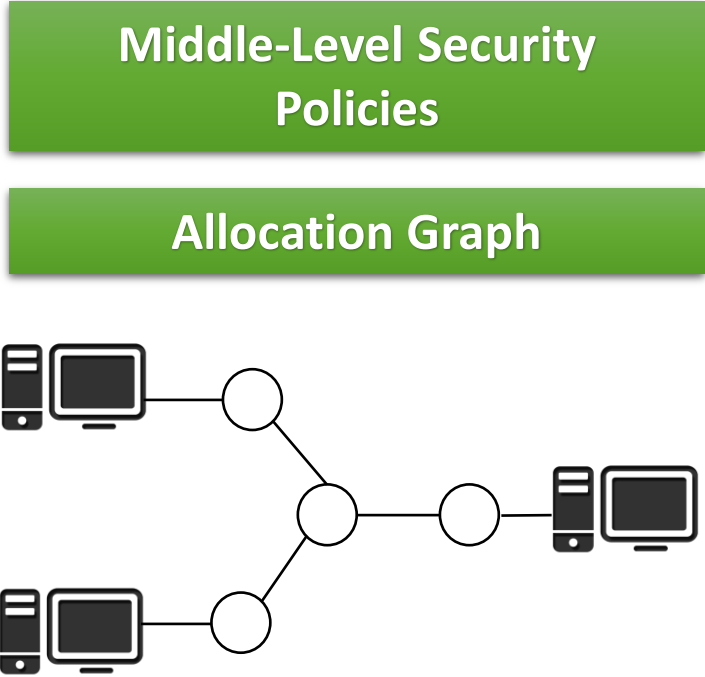
$recv(n0, n1, p0) \implies$

$p0.src_port.start > 0 \wedge p0.src_port.end < MAX_PORT$

$\wedge p0.dst_port.start > 0 \wedge p0.dst_port.end < MAX_PORT$



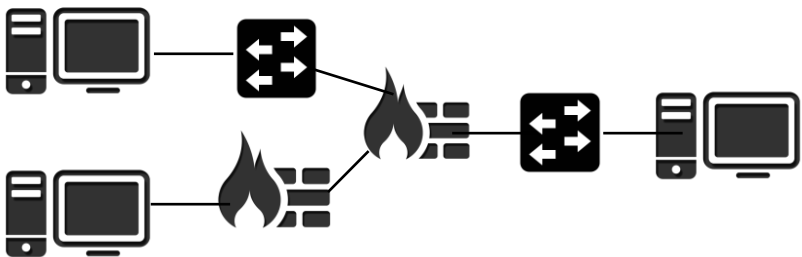
Allocation Graph



Veref00

Low-Level Security Policies

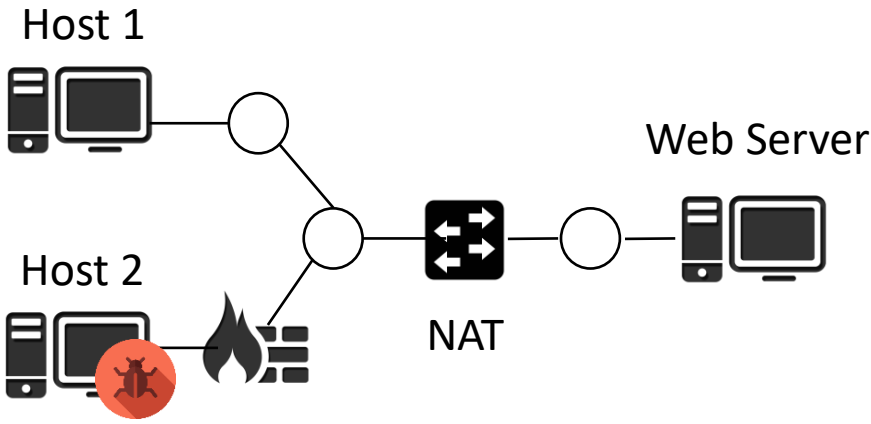
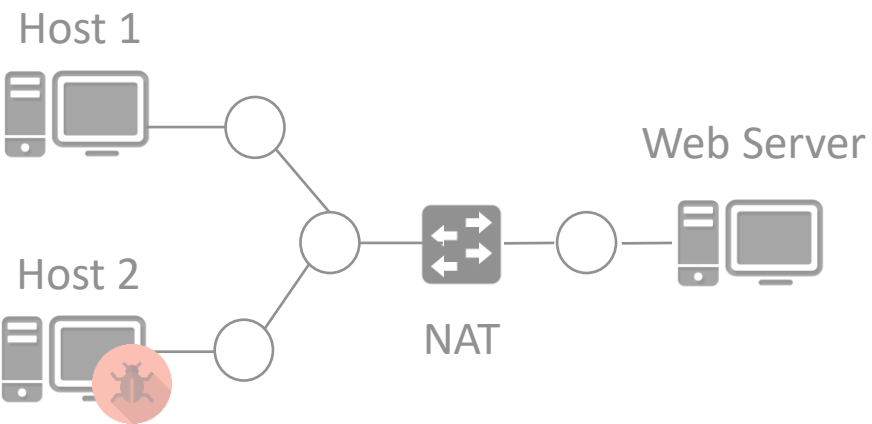
Service Graph



Non-Enforceability Report

Example. Scenario 1

Objectives: Minimize number of required Firewalls



POLICY	TYPE
HOST1 -> WEBSERVER	REACHABILITY
HOST2 -> WEBSERVER	ISOLATION

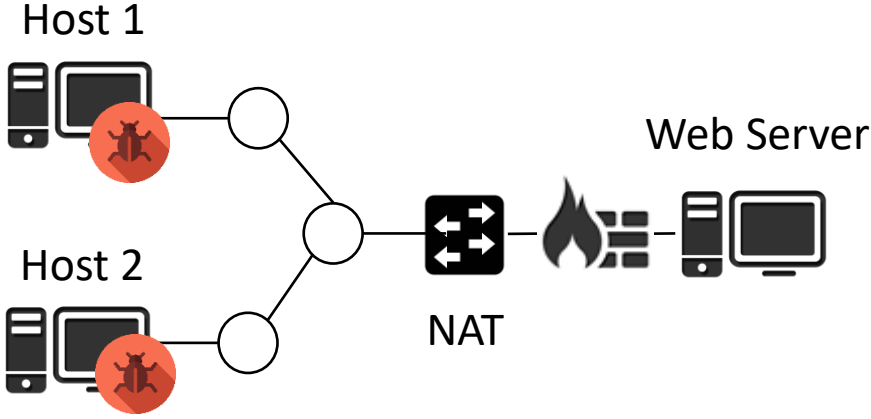
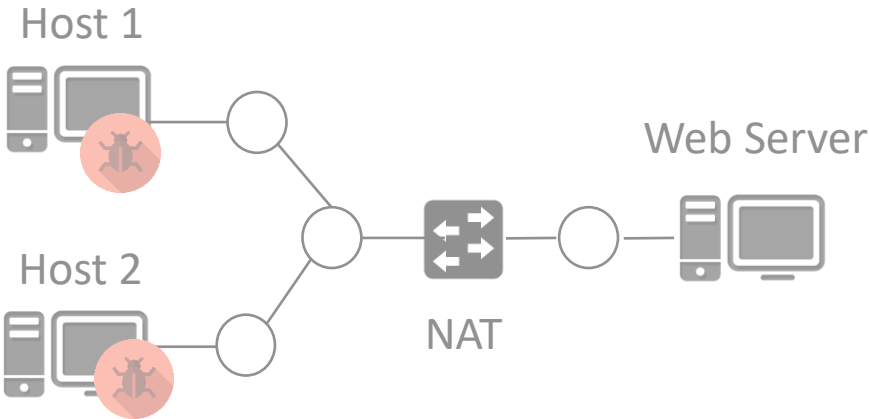
Automatic (deny) rule generation for Firewall 1

SRC IP	DST IP	SRC PORT	DST PORT	PROTOCOL
HOST2	WEBSERVER	*	*	*



Example. Scenario 2

Objectives: Minimize number of required Firewalls
Minimize number of Firewalls rules



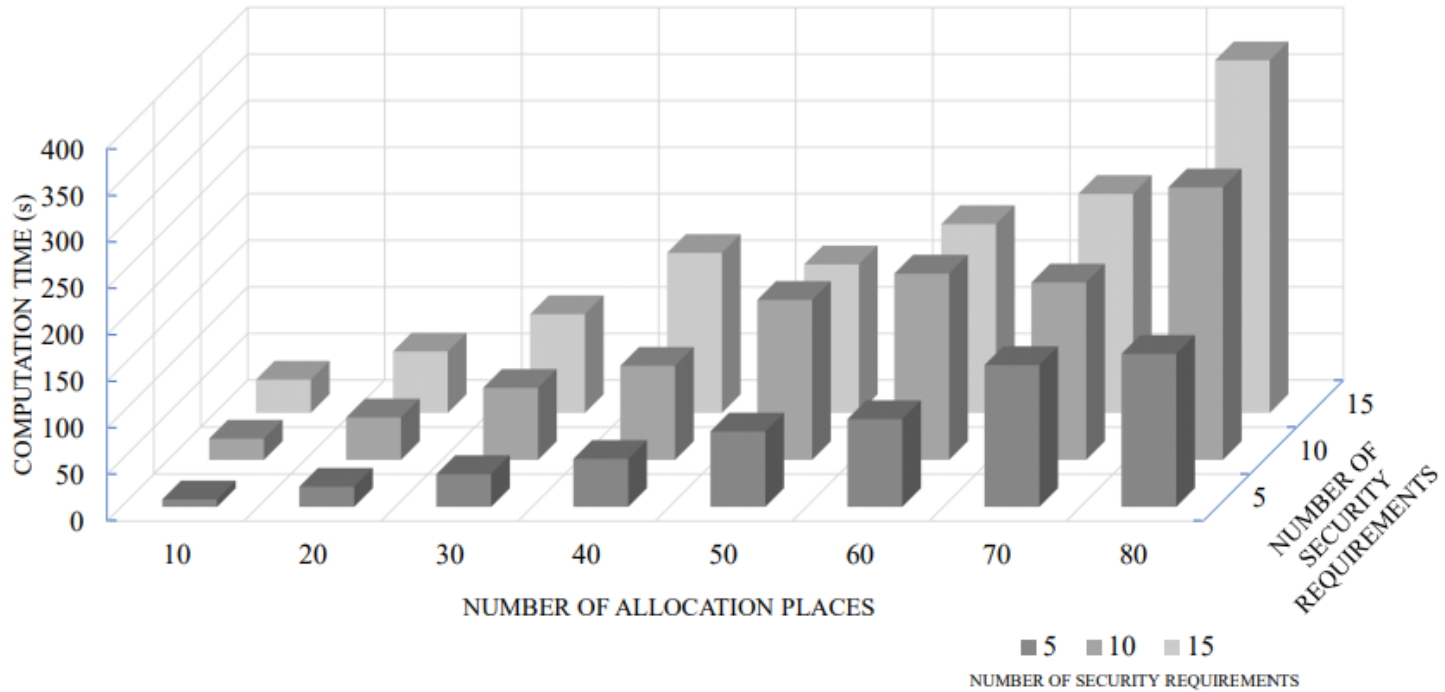
POLICY	TYPE
HOST1 -> WEBSERVER	ISOLATION
HOST2 -> WEBSERVER	ISOLATION

Automatic (deny) rule generation for Firewall 2

SRC IP	DST IP	SRC PORT	DST PORT	PROTOCOL
NAT	WEBSERVER	*	*	*



Results



Automated Security Management for Virtual Services

application of an automatic user-driven security solution operating in a real cloud orchestrator

- User policies are automatically translated and refined
- Formally enforced and deployed in an optimized form
- A well-known and widely used orchestrator has been selected (Kubernetes)
- limited to automatic firewall configuration

Developed within EU H2020 Project ASTRID

Summary

- “user-friendly” network function modeling approach
 - using formal analysis tools without requiring strong expertise in formal methods
- joint optimization and verification
 - generates a formally verified optimal placement plan
 - expressive constraints such as forwarding behavior
- automatically define the configuration of network function
 - security policies are correctly and optimally enforced
 - minimizing the number of rules inside each firewall



Future research directions

- A heuristic approach for automatic network function selection and configuration
- Formal definition of industrial critical systems for fault diagnosis
- Intrusion Detection, Network Analysis & Verification in the vehicle network traffic
- Formal validation of automobile production systems : PLC software



Publications

- **Proceeding**

- **A Framework for User-Friendly Verification-Oriented VNF Modeling, 2017**
G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, M. Virgilio and J. Yusupov. *41st Annual Computer Software and Applications Conference (COMPSAC)*
- **Formally verified latency-aware VNF placement in industrial Internet of things, 2018**
G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, J. Yusupov, A. Ksentini, *14th International Workshop on Factory Communication Systems (WFCS)*
- **Virtual Network Embedding with Formal Reachability Assurance, 2018**
G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, J. Yusupov, A. Ksentini, *14th International Conference on Network and Service Management (CNSM)*
- **Multi-Objective Function Splitting and Placement of Slices in 5G Mobile Networks, 2018**
G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, J. Yusupov, A. Ksentini, *IEEE Conference on Standards for Communications and Networking (CSCN)*
- **Towards a fully automated and optimized network security functions orchestration, 2019**
D. Brighenti, G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, F.Valenza, J. Yusupov, *Workshop on Optimization in Computing and Networking (OptiComNet)*
- **Automated Security Management for Virtual Services, 2019**
M. Repetto, A. Carrega, J. Yusupov, F. Valenza, F. Risso, G. Lamanna, *Conference on Network Function Virtualization and Software Defined Networks (NFV-SDN) - Demo Track.*
- **Automated optimal firewall orchestration and configuration in virtualized networks, 2020**
D. Brighenti, G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, F.Valenza, J. Yusupov, *Network Operations and Management Symposium (NOMS 2020)*
- **Introducing programmability and automation in the synthesis of virtual firewall rules, 2020**
D. Brighenti, G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, F.Valenza, J. Yusupov, *Workshop on Cyber-Security Threats, Trust and Privacy Management in Software-defined and Virtualized Infrastructures (SecSoft 2020)*

- **Journal**

- **A VNF Modeling Approach For Verification Purposes. 2019**
G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, M. Virgilio, J. Yusupov. *International Journal of Electrical and Computer - (IJECE, a SCOPUS indexed Journal)*
- **A Framework for Verification-Oriented User-Friendly Network Function Modeling, 2019**
G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, F. Valenza, J. Yusupov - *IEEE Access*

A Formal Approach to Verify Connectivity and Optimize VNF Placement in Industrial Networks. **Under (third) review**

Guido Marchetto, Riccardo Sisto, Fulvio Valenza, Jalolliddin Yusupov, Adlen Ksentini. *IEEE Transactions on Industrial Informatics*

Automated optimal firewall orchestration and configuration in virtualized networks, **Under submission**

D. Brighenti, G. Marchetto, R. Sisto, F.Valenza, J. Yusupov *IEEE/ACM Transactions on Networking*



THANK YOU

