Special theme: Smart Energy Systems

Also in this issue:

Keynote
Smart Energy Systems – A European Perspective
by Ariane Sutor, Siemens AG

Joint ERCIM Actions
PaaSage – An €8.4 Million Investment for Bridging Clouds

Research and Innovation
A Projector as Mobile Visualization Device on an Assistive Robot
Contents

SPECIAL THEME

This special theme section “Smarty Energy Systems” has been coordinated by Carl Binding, IBM Research Lab, Switzerland and Han La Poutré, CWI and Utrecht University, the Netherlands

Introduction to the special theme

8 Smart Energy Systems
by Carl Binding and Han La Poutré

Invited articles

10 Development of the European Virtual Smart Grid Laboratory
by Kai Strunz and Christian Wiezorek

11 Forecasting the Conditional Dynamic Elasticity of Electricity Consumers
by Pierre Pinson and Henrik Madsen

12 Putting Neurons in the Smart Grid
by Bram Vønk, Robert de Groot and Han Slootweg

IT for smart grids

14 Smart Energy Consumption Feedback – Connecting Smartphones to Smart Meters
by Markus Weiss, Friedemann Mattern and Christian Beckel

15 Meter Data Management for Smart Monitoring Power Networks
by Agustín Yagüe, Juan Garbajosa and Mercedes López-Perea

17 Designing and Simulating Smart Grids
by Jennifer Pérez, Jessica Díaz and Eloy González

18 Smart Management of Renewable Energy for Green Transport
by Raffaele Bruno, Luca Valcarenghi, Molka Gharbaoui and Barbara Martini

20 Real-Time Visualization of MV/LV Energy Alarms on GIS Web Applications
by Christophe Joubert, Vicente Monrabal, Miguel Montesinos and Carlos Sánchez

21 Using Wireless Smart Meter Networks for Power Quality Monitoring
Joel Höglund and Stamatis Karnouskos

Supply/demand coordination

22 Smarter Energy: Opportunities and Challenges
by Olle Sundström, Fabian Müller, Carl Binding, Bernhard Jansen and Dieter Gantenbein

24 Smart Demand-Side Response at Home
by Armin Wolf, Thomas Luckenbach and Mario Schuster

25 Market Garden: A Scalable Research Environment for Heterogeneous Electricity Markets
by Felix Claessen, Nicolas Höning, Bart Liefers, Han La Poutré and Peter Bosman

27 The Power Trading Agent Competition
by Wolfgang Ketter and John Collins

KEYNOTE

3 Smart Energy Systems – A European Perspective
by Ariane Sutor

JOINT ERCIM ACTIONS

6 PaaSage – An €8.4 Million Investment for Bridging Clouds
by Pierre Guisset

6 Formal Methods for Intelligent Transportation Systems - A track at ISOLA’12
by Alessandro Fantechi, Francesco Flammini and Stefania Gnesi

7 Pawel Parys Winner of the 2012 Cor Baayen Award
28 A Model-Free Flexibility Management System at KU Leuven and VITO
by Stijn Vandael, Bert Claessens, Tom Holvoet and Geert Deconinck

29 Demand Side Management for Multiple Devices
by Albert Molderink, Vincent Bakker and Gerard J.M. Smit

31 The Gamification of Agent-Based Smart Grids
by Radu-Casian Mihaiulescu, Matteo Vaisirani and Sascha Ossowski

32 A Marketplace-Based Approach to Demand-Side Management in the Smart Grid
by Luigi Briguglio, Massimiliano Nigrelli, Frank Eichinger, Javier Lucio Ruiz-Andino and Valter Bella

34 Using an Intelligent Management System for Smart Residential Storage Systems
by Vicente Botón, Máximo Pérez, Adolfo Lozano-Tello and Enrique Romero

35 The Last One out Turns off the Light - Optimizing the Energy Efficiency of Buildings
by Lutz Ehrig and Danilo Hollosi

36 Ambient Intelligence for Energy Efficiency in a Building Complex
by Giuseppe Lo Re, Marco Ortolani and Giuseppe Anastasi

38 Secure Smart Grids or Say ‘Goodnight Vienna!’
by Florian Skopik, Paul Smith and Thomas Bleier

39 Preparing for the Smart Grids: Improving Information Security Management in the Power Industry
by Maria Bartnes Line

40 Cybersecurity in the Smart Grid
by Magnus Almgren, Davide Balzarotti, Marina Papatriantafilou and Valentin Tudor

41 CoppEnd – A Security System for Power Equipment
by Dimitrios Serpanos, Athanasios Safacas and Dimitrios Stachoulis

43 PowerAPI: A Software Library to Monitor the Energy Consumed at the Process-Level
by Aurélien Bourdon, Adel Noureddine, Romain Rouvoy and Lionel Scinturier

44 Smart Energy Management for Greener Supercomputing
by Mohammed el Mehdi Diouri, Olivier Glück and Laurent Lefèvre

45 AI4B: Accountable IT Infrastructures for Optimizing Supply Chains in Bioenergy Symbiotic Networks
by Theodore Dalamagas and Antonis Kokossis

47 Hydrodynamics-Biology Coupling for Algae Culture and Biofuel Production
by Olivier Bernard, Jacques Sainte-Marie, Bruno Sialve and...
All the data and semantic information from the APU are collected and analyzed by the building management system optimizer, which is the interface to the "classic" building management system. Based on the building’s occupancy rate, its thermal characteristics, outside weather conditions, and other parameters, the optimal settings with respect to energy efficiency and user comfort will be determined. Thermal modelling of the building is done beforehand, providing the basis for the best strategy considering the building’s energy consumption rate and the interaction of the building management and automation system with the HVAC system.

The main contributions of Fraunhofer IDMT to the project are: sound recording, audio signal processing, and acoustic event detection. In particular, audio data captured is analysed by algorithms developed by Fraunhofer IDMT, allowing the building’s occupancy rate to be determined for the purpose of integrating this data into the building energy management system.

This three-year project is funded by the European Union, and its consortium comprises research institutes and industry partners from four European countries, who have long-standing experience in building control strategies, audiovisual applications, microelectronics and mechanical components as well as in consulting and dissemination of results. The project recently finished its first year of collaborative development of a prototype system and the corresponding components. In the first quarter of 2013, field tests will start at the S4EeB demo sites, namely: Milano-Linate airport and two shopping malls in Spain, Principe Pio in Madrid and Maremagnum in Barcelona.

**Links:**
- http://www.s4eeb.org
- http://www.idmt.fraunhofer.de

**Reference:**

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**Ambient Intelligence for Energy Efficiency in a Building Complex**

by Giuseppe Lo Re, Marco Ortolani and Giuseppe Anastasi

The quest for energy efficiency currently represents one of the most stimulating challenges both for academic and industrial organizations. We address the issue of ensuring timely and ubiquitous monitoring of a potentially large building complex in order to optimize their energy consumption.

Over 50% of energy produced worldwide is consumed by the industrial sector, whilst residential and commercial buildings account for about 20%, mainly due to inappropriate use of appliances, such as heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems and artificial lighting [1]. Hence, the International Energy Agency’s (IEA) roadmap has set the goal of reducing energy consumption by HVAC systems by 30% and 17% in residential and commercial buildings respectively by the year 2030. Similarly, the goal is to reduce energy consumption by artificial lighting by 3% and 14% for residential and commercial buildings respectively [2]. Consequently, recent years have seen a growth in research on energy efficiency in residential/commercial buildings.

Studies show that providing appropriate feedback to building occupants can help reduce overall energy consumption, but in the long term this is not an effective approach [3]. Using an automated Building Management System (BMS), in addition to user cooperation, is a more viable solution, especially in the context of ambient intelligence (AmI). AmI is a new paradigm in Artificial Intelligence that relies on the assumption that the environment is permeated by a set of sensors and actuators, remotely controllable according to some policy, in order to bring the envi-
evironmental conditions closer to the user’s ideal conditions while taking into account particular global constraints.

Within the “SmartBuildings” project, we are currently designing and prototyping an AmI-based BMS targeted to a building complex (e.g., a campus or a residential complex), rather than just a single building. In our approach, the remote sensor infrastructure acts as the termination of a centralized reasoner, where sensed data are processed to extract higher-level information and perceive high-level features such as who is in a specific area or what this person is doing there (e.g., reading, talking, standing). Finally, a set of actuators modifies the environmental conditions.

Our system architecture has been conceived to guarantee the scalability of the proposed solution with respect to the number of buildings to be monitored and the number of different devices to be used. In order to efficiently organize the system modules, each corresponding to a different logical task, we chose a three-tier architecture as a model. The physical layer consists of sensors and actuators; the middleware layer defines a set of AmI components that can be composed to implement intelligent AmI functionalities; the application layer allows for applying the monitoring and controlling rules in compliance with energy constraints.

From the viewpoint of deployment, the building premises constitute the basic monitored units of our system, where the sensor and actuator networks are installed. These networks are heterogeneous both in terms of the adopted technology and of the performed monitoring/actuating tasks. Several basic monitored units are coordinated by a BuildingAgent, responsible for performing reactive control and further data aggregation. Small buildings will have a single BuildingAgent per building, while medium or large buildings could have more. In our vision, an individual building is part of a community coordinated by a central orchestra leader, the AmiBox (see Figure 1). The latter ensures coherence of the adopted energy saving strategy, besides providing high-level AmI functionalities, performing intelligent reasoning and choosing the adopted energy saving strategy. The AmiBox could also take into account externally imposed constraints, such as those arising from the connection with an energy provider’s Smart Grid infrastructure.

The project is currently in progress. We have already deployed a minimal prototypical setup, by equipping one floor of our department with commonly available sensor nodes for monitoring the typical environmental quantities (temperature, humidity, light) and with the corresponding actuators. Moreover, we are able to monitor the globally consumed energy through a remotely controllable power meter. The research group operating at the Lab of Networking and Distributed Systems (Univ. of Palermo) is currently focusing on the design of core intelligent functionalities, such as user profiling, predicting the occupancy status of the monitored premises, or detecting the activity patterns of users, that will form the basis for subsequent intelligent reasoning. For instance, we have developed a Bayesian inference system for multi-sensor data fusion in order to reliably infer the presence of users from the available sensory information. Probabilistic reasoning accounts for the partial correlation between sensory signals and states, and allows the system to cope with noisy data, while the possibility of integrating data coming from multiple sensors exploits the redundancy of such devices deployed throughout the environment. In order to reduce the costs of the overall system and limit its intrusiveness, the number of sensors should be kept as low as possible. To this end, the research group operating at the Pervasive Computing and Networking Lab (Univ. of Pisa) is investigating the use of advanced methods for extracting individual consumption estimates from aggregated measurements.

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Link: http://www.dicgim.unipa.it/~networks/ndslab/

References:

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