Implementing NB-IoT in Software - Experiences Using the srsLTE Library

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Outline

• Introduction

• Narrowband Internet of Things (NB-IoT)
  – Overview
  – srsLTE extension
  – Evaluation
  – Exploring commercial deployments

• Summary
Company At a Glance

- Irish startup
- Founded at Trinity College Dublin in 2012
- Offices in Cork (Ireland) and Barcelona (Spain)
- High-performance software for wireless systems
  - Software Defined Radio
  - 3GPP LTE/LTE-Advanced
  - Satellite systems (DVB-S2/RCS2)
  - Internet of Things
- Commercial and research projects
Recent Public-Funded Projects
What is a Software Radio?
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Narrowband Internet of Things

• Low-Power Wide Area (LPWA)
  – Internet of Things (IoT) / Machine to Machine (M2M)
  – Characterization:
    • Low device costs and energy consumption
    • Better coverage and lower bandwidth requirements
  – Market currently dominated by technology in unlicensed spectrum (e.g., sigfox, LoRa, etc.)

• Make LTE ready for the Internet of Things (IoT)
  – Provide LPWA solution based on cellular technology
  – First final version available with 3GPP Release 13 (June 2016)

• SRS with compliant implementation after <6m
Technical Overview

• Transmission scheme based on LTE, i.e., OFDM with 15kHz SC spacing
• System bandwidth reduced to 1 resource block (180kHz)
• LTE frame structure: 10ms frames, 1ms sub-frames, 500us slots
• In-band, guard-band and standalone deployment
• Narrowband alternatives for all LTE channels (multiplexed in time)
  — E.g., Narrowband Physical Broadcast Channel (NPBCH)
Approach

• 10x Years Battery Life
  – Better Power Saving Mode (PSM) & sleep cycles (eDRX)
  – Avoid unnecessary receiver wakeups

• Extended Coverage
  – Up to +20dB compared to GSM
  – Repetitive transmissions and new control channels

• Module Cost Reduction
  – Reduced complexity, functionality and capability
  – E.g., half-duplex operation, single antenna, reduced memory requirements

Sources: Ericsson, Vodafone
srsLTE: One Library for many Things

- Modular and portable, high-performance LTE library
- LTE Release 8 compliant
- All LTE bandwidths up to 20 MHz
- Transmission mode 1 (single antenna) and 2 (transmit diversity)
- All uplink and downlink channels
- Cell search and sync procedures
- Highly optimized Turbo decoder for Intel SSE4.1/AVX (+100Mbps)
- NB-IoT support (R13)
srsLTE: NB-IoT Extensions
Evaluation - Overview

- Downlink acknowledged (AM) vs. unacknowledged (UM)
- Tx flow: Grant → Guard → Data ( → Guard → Ack )

- “Peak rate”
  - 3 SF data, i.e. 680 bit / 3ms = 226 kbit/s
- UM peak rate:
  - 1 SF grant + 4 SF guards + 3 SF data = 8 SF
  - 680 bit / 8ms = 85 kbit/s
- AM peak rate:
  - 1 SF grant + 4 SF guards + 3 SF data +12 SF guard + 1 SF ACK
  - 680 bit / 21ms = 32.38 kbit/s
Evaluation – Theoretical Analysis

Unacknowledged Mode

 Acknowledged Mode

Graph showing the rate (kbit/s) against the number of subframes for different TBS values in both unacknowledged and acknowledged modes.
Evaluation – Experiments

• Practical considerations:
  – Anchor vs. non-anchor carrier transmissions
  – Multi-user scheduling constraints
  – ...

• Example allocation:
  – In every DL frame:
    • Grant in SF 1
    • Data in SF 6-8
  – Rate: 680 bit / 10ms = 68 kbit/s
Exploring Commercial Deployments

- Vodafone Spain started roll-out in Q1/2017
- Inband deployment in 800 MHz band
- Single PRB with guard PRB mostly
Live demonstration at MWC’17
Summary and Outlook

• NB-IoT as new cellular standard for mMTC
• srsLTE extension with PHY layer
  – All DL and UL channels and signals
• Analysis and experiments show max. DL rate between 33-85 kbit/s
• srsUE extension for NB-IoT with upper layers
Thanks!
Backup
airScope: The LTE Analyzer

- LTE air interface analyzer
- Capture and decode entire downlink control traffic of arbitrary LTE cells in real-time
- Per-user and cell-wide measurements, e.g.,
  - Active users, UL and DL traffic
  - Channel quality
  - Congestion patterns
  - Scheduling performance
- Web-based graphical interface
- Standalone or distributed deployment
srsUE: Open-source LTE UE

- Builds upon srsLTE
- First open-source LTE UE (AGPLv3)
- Full-speed UL and DL (75 Mbps)

- Detailed logging interface with per layer output and hex dumps
- Command line trace interface
- Wireshark support