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Per-User NFV Services with Mobility Support

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Abstract—This paper presents an architecture to provide end-to-end per-user services with support to client mobility, designed according to the SDN and NFV paradigms. Our service platform dynamically configures and launches service requests when the client connects to the network, which are used by a multi-domain orchestration system to arrange the required network configuration and computational resources. Service configuration is dynamically updated when a movement of the client is detected, that is, when a client device changes its access point to the network. A prototype implementing the idea has been developed and validated over JOLNET, a real, geographical, OpenFlow-based experimental network connecting several sites in Italy and operated by Telecom Italia.

I. INTRODUCTION

Network operators are introducing in carrier networks advanced techniques traditionally used in data centers, in order to execute network services (e.g., firewall and NAT) in virtualized environments running on general purpose hardware. This objective is achieved by exploiting the Software Defined Networking (SDN) and Network Function Virtualization (NFV) paradigms, which promise high flexibility in network operations, fast service creation, deployment and provisioning, optimal usage of resources in underlying infrastructures, adoption of cheap technology based on general purpose servers. This results in a great advantage for network operators, which can reduce infrastructure and operating costs while enhancing capabilities for efficient and fast/agile service deployability. In addition, the technique of Service Function Chaining (SFC) [1], enabled by the SDN paradigm, abstracts the service creation process by means of high level service chains/graphs and automates the service deployment of Virtualized Network Functions (VNFs) over the physical infrastructure.

In order to leverage the potential and the advantages brought by SDN, NFV and SFC in delivering network services, several approaches of resource orchestration and compute/network virtualization in carrier networks have been proposed and are under discussion in several standardization groups and research projects. Among the others, it is worth to mention the Service Function Chaining Working Group [2] in Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), the NFV Industry Specification Group [3] in the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), the ETSI Open Source NFV Management and Orchestration (MANO) project [4], and the EU-funded projects UNIFY [5] and 5GEx [6].

This paper presents what we call the VPN Plus Plus (VPNPP) service, which provides end-to-end per-user services to mobile clients. The proposed service is based on an open source, multi-domain architecture, which orchestrates compute and network resources both in data centers and carrier networks by means of a hierarchical orchestration framework. Particularly, in our proposal, a service platform dynamically configures and launches, at client/user access, a per-user service graph that is used by the multi-domain orchestration system to arrange the required network configuration and computational resources. The per-user service graph is dynamically updated and re-instantiated when the client moves from one access point to another.

A prototype of the VPNPP service has been implemented and validated, from a functional point of view, over JOLNET, a real, geographical, OpenFlow-based network, connecting several sites in Italy and operated by Telecom Italia.

II. THE VPNPP SERVICE

The VPNPP service aims at provisioning end-to-end per-user services that are automatically reconfigured when the use mobile terminal (MT) moves from one network site to another.

At the service bootstrap, the VPNPP service configures the network to forward all the traffic generated on the infrastructure to an authentication service, in order to allow users to authenticate themselves. After a user authentication, a VPNPP session is started, which implies to launch dedicated VNFs that operate only on the traffic belonging to that specific MT, and which have been associated (out of band) to the specific user just authenticated.

Particularly, the service request for a user specifies a connection of the MT to the Internet and/or other intranets/private networks. The service is described through a service graph that indicates the service function chain that has to process the user's traffic (i.e., the traffic generated by the MT) before it reaches the Internet/intranet.

The VPNPP service deploys the VNFs on the closest computing resources to the MT attachment point; then, when the MT changes its attachment point to the network, VNFs are potentially restarted on those computing resources that are now closer to the new location.

III. THE VPNPP ARCHITECTURE

In order to realize the VPNPP service in a complex scenario encompassing a real geographical network, we designed the

the underlying switches in order to create the paths described in the service graph. It is worth mentioning that the ODL controller is equipped with a “host tracker” module, which keeps track of the connected devices by monitoring ARP packets entering in the SDN network. This way, as described in Section III-A, it can provide the proper information to the VCF when such a module queries the controller itself.

The UN-DO receives and processes service requests coming from the upper layer orchestrator and implements requested services in the UN domain. In order to satisfy a service request, the UN-DO starts the proper VNFs either as Docker containers or virtual machines executed through the QEMU/KVM hypervisor. Then, it creates the proper paths between VNFs ports and with the physical network by configuring the forwarding tables of a virtual switch using OpenFlow 1.3 (the current implementation of the prototype supports both the standard and the DPDK-based Open vSwitch).

IV. JOLNET

JOLNET [9] is a distributed infrastructure deployed by Telecom Italia, which consists of a geographical SDN network connecting several Universal Nodes and OpenStack sites at the edge. Resources are partitioned among several tenants through the mediation of a virtualization system based on a special purpose Openflow controller with network virtualization capabilities (FlowVisor) and a cloud controller (OpenStack) for the computing resources. A network slice (i.e., an overlay network with dedicated resources) and a number of virtual machines can be assigned to each tenant.

A. The JOLNET VPNPP slice

A small slice on JOLNET (Figure 2) has been allocated to the VPNPP service. It corresponds to the SDN domain shown in Figure 1, which is controlled by a vanilla ODL controller, Hydrogen release, equipped with the Host Tracker module mentioned above. The VPNPP slice is associated with a set of VLAN tags; all traffic entering the JOLNET with one of these tags is recognized as part of the VPNPP slice. JOLNET FlowVisor automatically redirects all OpenFlow messages related to this traffic to the VPNPP ODL Controller.

As shown in Figure 2, the VPNPP slice integrates two physical Access Nodes (AN) and two Universal Nodes (UNs), which provide computing resources to the per-user service chains instantiated after the users authentication. Universal Nodes are deployed in the Turin (TO) and in the Venice (VE) sites. Mobile terminals are supposed to access the VPNPP slice by attaching to the ANs, located in two different Points of Presence (POPs), namely Trento (TN) and TO. It is worth to note that, in our validation, MTs are emulated as virtual machines on the ANs. Each VM has a virtual NIC connected either to the local network infrastructure or to a remote location by means of a bridge and tunnel arrangement, and switch between the two connections. The resulting behavior is the same of a device moving and attaching between TN and TO ANs.

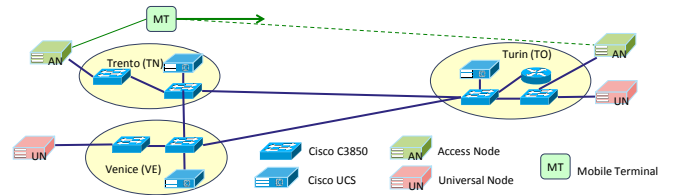


Fig. 2. Experimental setup on JOLNET for the VPNPP service.

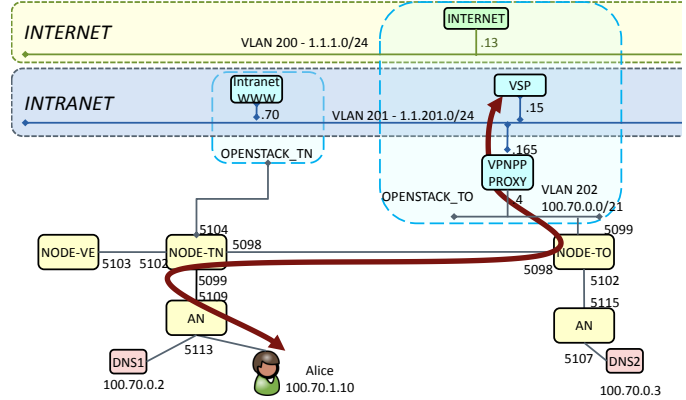


Fig. 3. Default network paths in the VPNPP slice over JOLNET.

V. VALIDATION

In order to validate the VPNPP architecture, we initially arranged the VPNPP slice as shown in Figure 3, which enforces all traffic from unregistered clients attached to the network at the TN and TO sites, to be forwarded to the VSP through a VPNPP proxy (both located in the JOLNET OpenStack cloud system). Hence, when a new MT performs an HTTP GET request, the VSP captures the message and provides a login/password challenge to the user.

During the evaluation, the VPNPP database includes the user Alice, which is associated with a user profile that guarantees only access to the Internet, but limited access to the Intranet (she can reach the authentication service, but not the Intranet WWW server). When Alice attaches to the TN site and authenticates herself, her authentication state is notified to the VCF, which is also aware of the Alice’s location thanks to the ODL controller. Therefore, the VCF is now aware that Alice is at a certain ingress port on the AN in Trento, and then it instantiates a new service graph to start the VPNPP session for Alice (Figure 4(a)). In particular, the VCF provides such a graph to the FROG orchestrator, which looks for computing (VM firewall for Alice) and networking (e.g., VLAN tags) resources, calculates paths, splits the request among the compute (UNs) and network (SDN) domains, and finally sends the subgraphs to the proper domain orchestrators.

Since the UN in Venice is the closest one to the TN site, which does not have any UN, the FROG orchestrator asks the UN-DO associated with such a domain to set up the ALICE_FW virtual machine, while the ODL-DO configures the network paths through the JOLNET VPNPP slice as

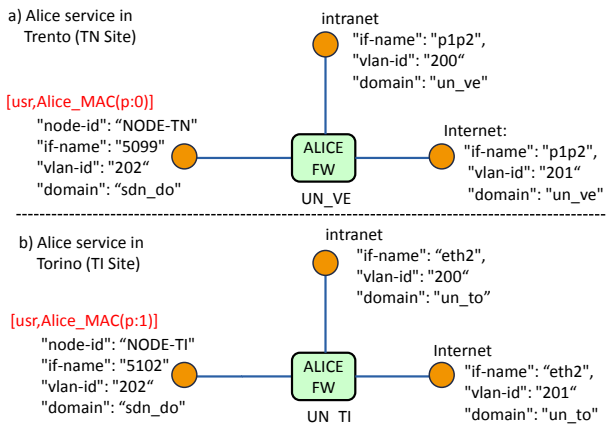


Fig. 4. Service graphs for Alice when connected to TN (a) or TO (b) sites.

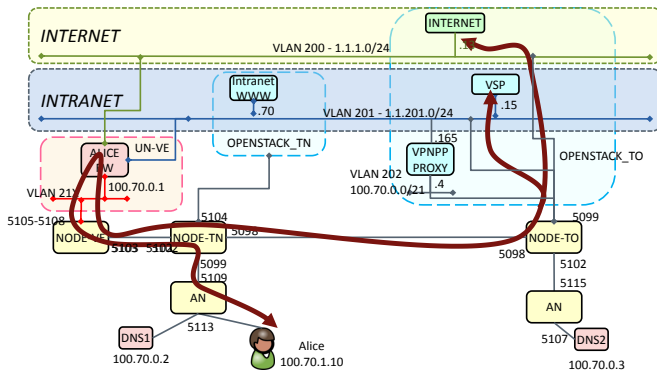


Fig. 5. Available paths for Alice after her authentication in Trento.

required. The firewall is configured according to the Alice's profile; available paths for Alice after the deployment of the service graph are shown in Fig 5.

When Alice disconnects from Trento site and moves and reconnects to Turin site, this behavior is recognized by the VCF, which updates the Alice's service graph (see Figure 4(b)) and sends it to the FROG orchestrator. At this point, the ALICE_FW instance in the UN at the TN site is terminated, a new instance is started at the UN in TO, and network paths are recalculated, resulting in the scenario of Figure 6.

Alice exits from the VPNPP service either by logging out through the authentication server, or by cutting the connection with the Access Network. The VCF is then notified (by the authentication server in the first case, or by polling the ODL controller in the latter) and sends to the FROG orchestration a request to delete the Alice's service graph. Computing and network resources used to implement such service session are then released by the proper domain orchestrator(s).

As a qualitative evaluation, the current version of the prototype launches a VPNPP service graph in 45s in average. Most of the delay is due to the boot time of the firewall VM (10-40 seconds). The remaining time is spent along the control path (VSP, VCF, FROG Orchestrator, Domain Orchestrators).

To conclude, a demonstration video showing the proposed

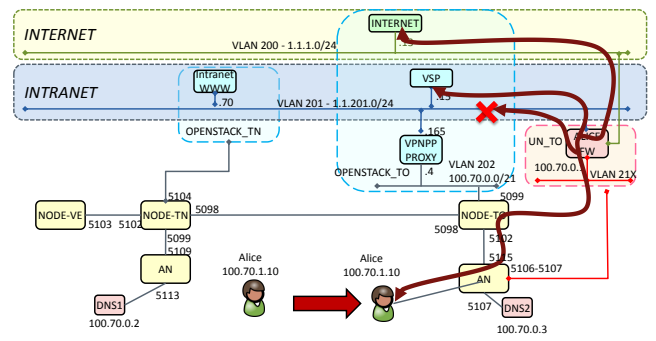


Fig. 6. Available paths for Alice when she moves to Torino.

VPNPP service at work is available at [10].

VI. CONCLUSION

The VPNPP service and architecture presented in the paper provides end-to-end per user services through a two-layers orchestration framework. The proposed idea has been validated through an open source prototype running over JOLNET, an experimental, geographical, OpenFlow-based network. The VPNPP experiment has shown hierarchical orchestration of network services over multiple technological domains and dynamic reconfiguration of per-client service function chains on a geographical setup.

As a future work, we will address performance and scalability issues related to the mobility support in the proposed framework. We will also implement the modules that compose the VPNPP service function (Figure 1) as VNFs that are part of a service graph; this would provide more flexibility since it would allow, for instance, to reuse the same slice for multiple purposes by just deploying/undeploying such a service graph.

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