PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF A FIXED RELAY CONCEPT FOR NEXT GENERATION WIRELESS SYSTEMS[1]

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Abstract - This paper presents a concept and the related performance evaluation for a wireless broadband system based on fixed relay stations acting as wireless bridges. The system is intended for dense populated areas as an overlay to cellular radio systems. A short introduction is given to the general topic of fixed relaying, the proposed extension to a MAC-frame based access protocol like IEEE802.11e, 802.15.3, 802.16a and HIPERLAN2 is outlined. A possible deployment scenario is introduced and the simulative traffic performance in a Manhattan-like dense urban environment is presented. It is established that the fixed relaying concept is well suited to substantially contribute to provide high capacity cellular broadband radio coverage in future (NG) cellular wireless broadband systems.

Keywords - Fixed Relays, Multi-Hop, Manhattan, Wireless Broadband, Cellular Radio

I. Introduction

Future broadband radio interface technologies and the related high multiplexing bit rates will dramatically increase the traffic capacity of a single Access Point (AP), so that it is deemed very unlikely that this traffic capacity will be entirely used up by the user terminals roaming in an APs service area. This observation will be stressed by the fact that future broadband radio interfaces will be characterised by a very limited range due to the very high operating frequencies (>5GHz) expected. Furthermore, future broadband radio systems will suffer from a high signal attenuation due to obstacles, leading either to an excessive amount of APs or to a high probability that substantial parts of the service area are shadowed from its AP. By means of traffic performance evaluation, this paper establishes that a system based on fixed mounted relay stations is well suited to overcome the problems mentioned. The paper is organised as follows. The introduction explains the advantages of relaying, presents fundamentals on how the proposed relaying concepts works in general and finally explains how to ”misuse” existing standards to enable relaying in the time domain for wireless broadband systems based on a periodic Medium Access Control (MAC) frame, as used in IEEE802.11e, 802.15.3, 802.16a and HIPERLAN2. The latter system is taken to exemplify a detailed solution. Section II answers the question under what circumstances a relay based 2-hop transmission should be preferred to a 1-hop transmission between Mobile Terminal (MT) and AP. Section III presents the simulation environment, important parameters and the deployment scenarios used to obtain the performance results, which are given in Section IV and Section V. Conclusions are drawn in Section VI.

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A. Characteristics of the Relaying Concept

The properties of our relay concept and the benefits that can be expected are as follows:

Radio Coverage can be improved in scenarios with high shadowing (e.g. bad urban or indoor scenarios). This allows to significantly increase the Quality of Service (QoS) of users in areas heavily shadowed from an AP.

The extension of the radio range of an AP by means of Fixed Relay Stations (FRSs) allows to operate much larger cells with broadband radio coverage than with a conventional one-hop system.

The FRS concept provides the **possibility of installing temporary coverage** in areas where permanent coverage is not needed (e.g. construction sites, conference-/meeting-rooms) or where a **fast initial network roll-out** has to be performed.

The wireless connection of the FRS to the fixed network **substantially reduces infrastructure costs**, which in most cases are the dominant part of the roll-out and operations costs. FRS only need mains supply. In cases where no mains is available, relays could rely on solar power supply.

A **standard-conformant integration of the relays into any MAC frame based system** would allow for a **stepwise enhancement of the coverage region** of an already installed system. Investments in new APs can be saved and any hardware product complying to a wireless MAC frame based standard is possible to be used without modifications.

The proposed relay concept can be recursively used to extend the radio coverage range of a single AP by multi-hop links. In this case, a FRS serves another FRS according to the needs besides serving the Mobile Terminals (MTs) roaming in its local environment. It is worth mentioning that we focus on relaying in layer 2 by means of what is called a bridge in Local Area Networks.

B. Fundamentals

In relay based systems, additional radio resources are needed on the different hops on the route between AP and MT, since multiple transmissions of the data have to take place. We have studied three concepts and present here the results of the first one.

Relaying in the Time-Domain: The same frequency channel is used on both sides of the relay. A certain part of the MAC-frame capacity is dedicated to connect MT and FRS and the rest is used to connect AP and FRS via a time-multiplexing channel. One transceiver only is needed in a FRS, which results in cheap, small and energy-efficient FRSs. The physical layers of the standard air interfaces considered do not require any modifications. Instead the FRS concept is realised throgh the MAC protocol software only.

Relaying in the Frequency-Domain: This concept uses different carrier frequencies on links a FRS is connecting.

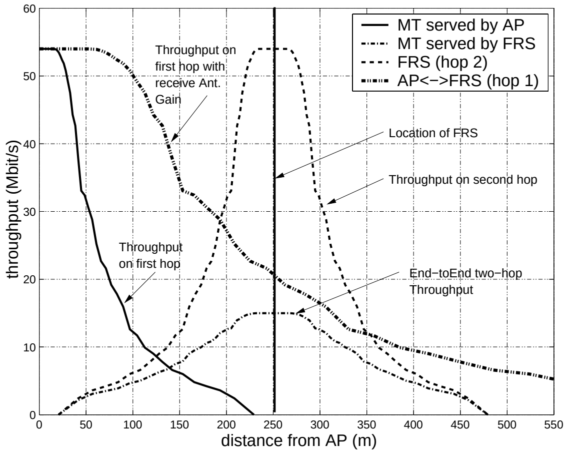


Fig. 1
Throughput for separate hops and end-to-end for MTs served by FRS ($16dBi$ FRS receive antenna gain)

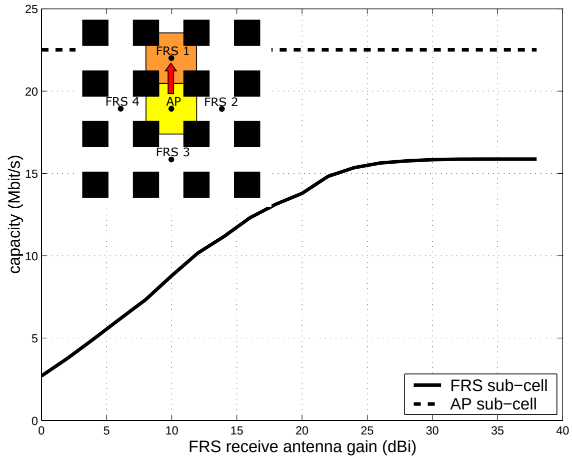


Fig. 2
Capacity of the AP in single-hop mode and capacity of a FRS

The two hops can be operated independently of each other at the cost of increased complexity of the hardware and the frequency management.

Hybrid Time-/Frequency-Domain Relaying: In the hybrid concept as investigated in [1], the FRS periodically switches between two frequencies, allowing the AP to continue using its frequency f_1 while the relay serves its terminals on frequency f_2. No additional transceiver is needed, but the hardware complexity is increased since a very fast frequency switching has to be supported.

We will focus on the time domain relaying in this paper. To illustrate the capabilities and properties of relaying in the time domain, results of a model based analysis of the throughput over distance of a MT from the AP and of the achievable capacity for the scenario shown in Fig. 7 are presented.

Based on the relation shown in Fig. 6 for an 802.11a modem and an analytical calculation of the $C/(I+N)$ expected at certain distances from the AP and/or FRS, we obtain a relation between the packet error rate (PER) and distance of the MT from the AP/FRS. Assuming an ideal SREJ-ARQ protocol, we have calculated the resulting relation between throughput and distance from the AP/FRS, see the solid curve in Fig. 1. We assume further that the FRSs have directive transmit/receive antennas to communicate with the AP and an omnidirectional antenna to communicate with MTs. Gain antennas at the FRS result in an improved throughput-distance relation between AP and FRS, as is visible from the dotted curve in Fig. 1. The throughput of a MT that is served by the FRS (dashed curve in Fig. 1) in general obeys the same throughput-distance relationship that is also valid for MTs served by the AP directly. The dash-dotted curve finally denotes the maximum achievable two-hop throughput of a MT served by the FRS. It is clearly visible that a considerable extension of the radio coverage range can be achieved through the use of the relay station with a $16dBi$ gain antenna assumed. Fig. 2 gives the capacity of the AP sub-cell (horizontal line) and compares that with the FRS sub-cell capacity for the case that the whole AP capacity of the 2-Hop-Cell is made available only to one single FRS with varying FRS receive antenna gain. "Capacity" denotes the achievable aggregate cell throughput under the assumption of uniformly distributed MTs generating a constant bitrate type load [2]. The capacity of the AP (this case is equivalent to the AP operated as a conventional BS) amounts to 22.51 Mbit/s. The capacity that can be made available at the FRS, i.e., when the whole capacity of the AP is transferred to the area that is covered by one of the FRSs, amounts, depending on the FRS receive antenna gain, to values between 2.7 Mbit/s for 0 dBi gain and 15.87 Mbit/s for 30 dBi gain. The gap between the two curves in Fig. 2 denotes the capacity that has to be invested into the extension of the coverage range by means of relaying.

C. Realisation of MAC frame based Relaying - Example: HIPERLAN2

The HIPERLAN2 (H2) system is used here as an example to explain how MAC frame based protocols as 802.11e, 802.16a (HIPERMAN) and the recently adopted 802.15.3 can be applied to realise relaying in the time domain. All the MAC and PHY functions addressed here are existent in all these wireless standards and no changes of the existent specifications are needed for relaying. However, either the Logical Link Control (LLC) or MAC layer now needs a store-and-forward function like that known from a bridge to connect LANs to each other. In the description of a H2 relay we also use the term Forwarding when referring to Relaying. H2 specifies a periodic MAC frame structure, Fig. 3. In the Forwarding Mode (FM) both signaling and user data are being forwarded by the FRS. A FRS operating in FM appears like a directly served MT to the AP. **Therefore, this does not preclude the possibility of allowing any MT to act as relay to become a Mobile Relay Station (MRS).** MTs are referred to as Remote Mobile Terminals (RMTs) if they are served by a FRS.

The capacity of the MAC frame (see Fig. 3, upper part) is assigned dynamically in a two-stage process [3]. Transmit capacity for terminals directly associated to the AP (FRSs and MTs) is allocated by the AP. A FRS appears to the AP like a MT but sets up a Sub Frame (SF) structure, which is embedded into the H2 MAC frame structure of the serving

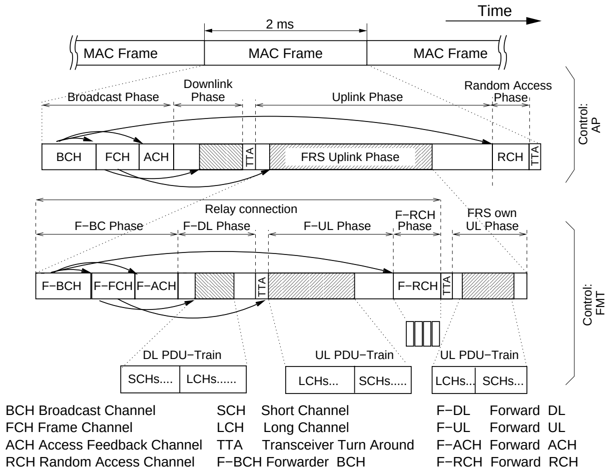


Fig. 3
Standard-conformant enhancements of the H2 MAC frame

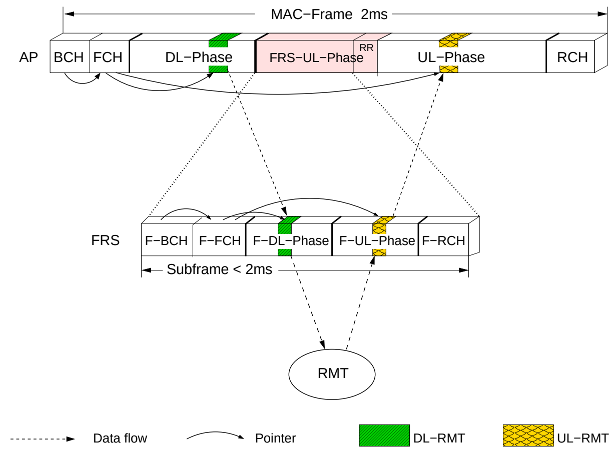


Fig. 4
Data flow using a sub-frame in 2-Hop mode

AP (see Fig. 3, bottom). The SF structure has available only the capacity assigned by the AP to the FRS. This capacity is dynamically allocated by the FRS to its RMTs according to the rules of the H2 MAC protocol. Using this scheme, the FRS needs one transceiver only.

The SF is generated and controlled by the FRS (shown in Fig. 4) and it is structured the same as the MAC frame used at the AP. It enables communication with legacy H2 terminals without any modifications. It implements the same physical channels as the standard H2 (F-BCH, F-FCH, F-ACH, F-DL, F-UL and F-RCH), which carry now the prefix “F-” to indicate that thy are set up by the FRS. A RMT may also set up a SF to recursively apply this relaying concept in order to cascade multiple relays.

Fig. 3 shows the functions introduced to the H2 MAC frame to enable relaying in the time domain. The capacity assigned in the MAC frame to the FRS to be used there to establish a SF is placed in the UL frame part of the AP. When the FRS is transmitting downlink, the data is addressed properly to its RMT and the AP will discard this data accordingly. The same applies for data transmitted from the RMT to the FRS. The capacity to exchange the data between AP and FRS has to be reserved as usual in both UL and DL directions on request by the FRS. For more details, see [3]. A very similar operation is possible by using the Hybrid Coordinator Access in IEEE802.11e.

II. ARQ-Throughput 1-Hop vs. 2-Hop

The question arises under what circumstances relaying would be beneficial, i.e. when a 2-hop communication is preferential to one hop. Fig. 5(a) shows analytical results from [4] comparing the throughput achieved with 1-hop and 2-hop transmission for the two scenarios depicted in the upper right corner of the figure under Line of Sight (LOS) radio propagation.

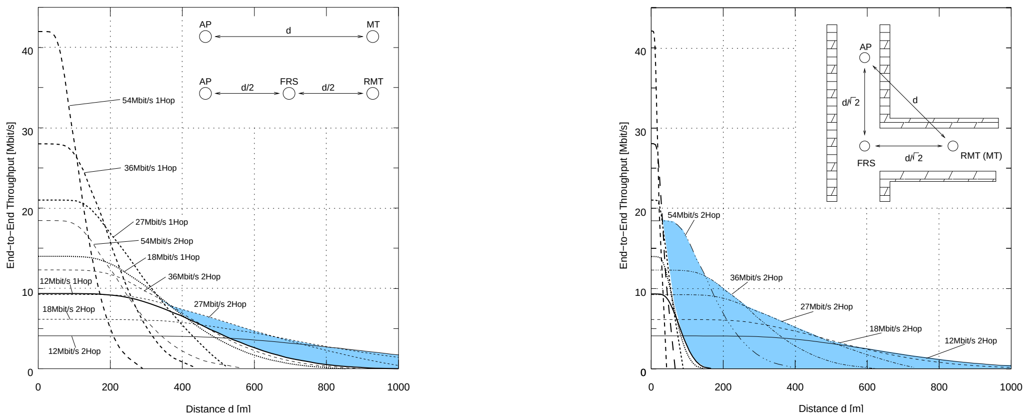
It is assumed that the FRS is placed at half the distance between the AP and the (R)MT. It turns out that from a distance of 370 m onwards, the 2-hop communication delivers a somewhat higher throughput than 1-hop, as marked by the shaded area.

Relay based 2-hop communication provides another considerable benefit already mentioned in Section I-A: it is able to eliminate the shadowing caused by buildings and other obstacles that obstruct the radio path from an AP. An example of this is given by the scenario in Fig. 5(a), together with the throughput gain (shaded) resulting from relaying. In this scenario, the AP and the (R)MT are shadowed from each other by two walls that form a rectangular corner, e.g. a street corner. The COST259 propagation model (see Section III-A) was used and the walls were assumed to have an attenuation of $11,8dB$ each. The shaded area highlights that the 2-hop communication gains over one hop, starting at a distance of 30 m only. The two examples establish that relaying is of advantage for both, increasing the throughput close to the cell border of an AP (under LOS conditions) and for bringing radio coverage (and throughput) to otherwise shadowed areas.

It has been explained by means of Fig. 2 that relaying is consuming part of the capacity of an AP, since the relayed data has to go twice over the radio channel. It will not be worked out here but has been shown in [5] that for relay based deployment concepts (like the one shown in Fig. 7) MTs served at different relays that belong to the same AP can be served at the same time, whereby the capacity loss introduced by 2-hop communications can be compensated to a great extent. This capacity loss can even be turned into a substantial gain, if directive antennas are used at FRS as is shown in Section IV. Even if there is still a capacity loss resulting from a relay based system, this concept is able to trade the capacity available at an AP against range of radio coverage [6].

The trend towards increasing transmission rates resulting from further developed radio modems tends to provide an over capacity in the cell area served by an AP, especially in the first months/years after deploying a system. Relays substantially increase the size of the service area thereby increasing the probability that the capacity of an AP will be used effectively.

The next sections present a simulation-based performance evaluation of a relay-based system in a Manhattan-type environment.



(a) LOS condition (b) Around an obstacle

Fig. 5
Comparison of the maximum achievable End-to-End Throughput over Distance for a 1- and 2-Hop Connection with ARQ

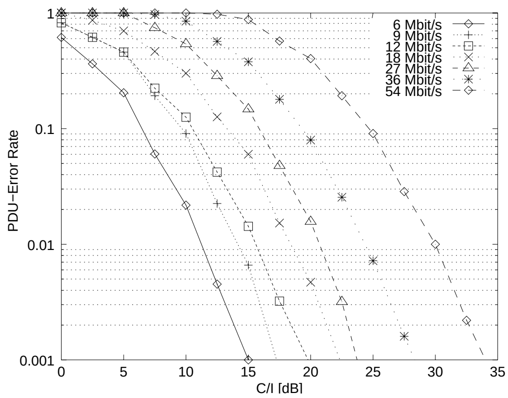


Fig. 6
PDU-Error Probability for varying $C/(I+N)$ and PHY-mode, based on [7]

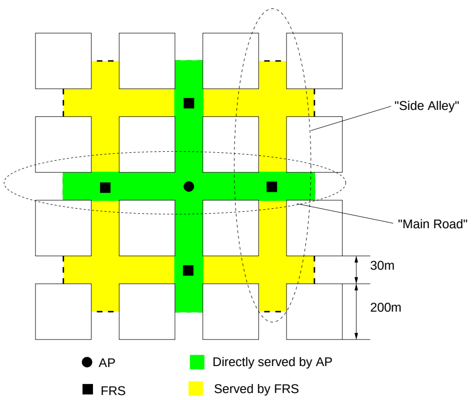


Fig. 7
Relay-based cell with four relays in the Manhattan scenario

III. Scenario and Simulation Environment

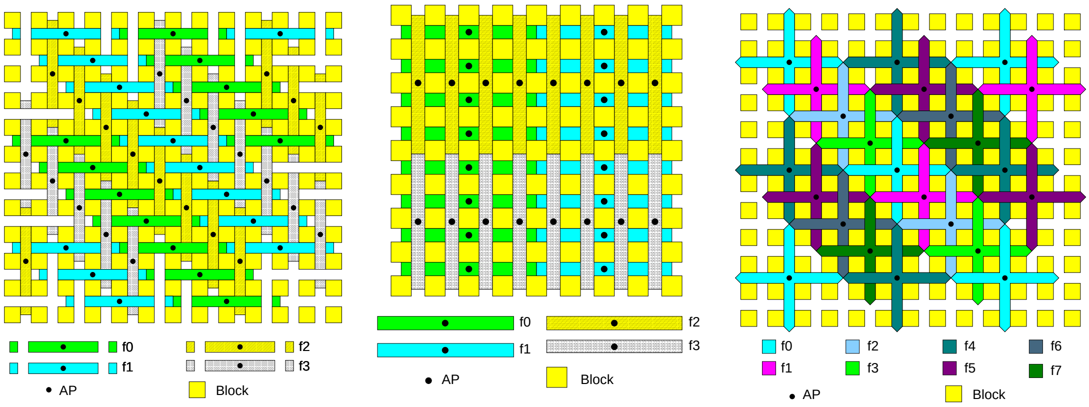
A. Scenario

The dense urban environment with a high degree of shadowing has been identified as a scenario especially suited for deploying a relay based wireless broadband network. The Manhattan grid scenario defined by [8] has been taken for the following investigations, see Fig. 7. The most important parameters of the scenario are the block size of 200m and the street width of 30m. In the deployment scenarios without relays shown in Fig. 8, each of the APs covers the range of two building blocks and one street crossing, resulting 430m range.

This cell configuration requires a minimum of 4 carrier frequencies to ensure that in each direction, the co-channel cells are separated by at least one cell with another carrier frequency, see Fig. 8(a). Based on that structure, two possible variants can be considered. The APs can be placed at equal coordinates in adjacent streets, shadowed by the buildings (Fig. 8(b)). The second variant is that APs are placed on street crossings (Fig. 8(c)), thereby covering horizontal and vertical streets. In this scenario without using relays, at least 8 frequencies are needed to ensure that co-channel cells are separated by cells using a different frequency. Fig. 8 shows the resulting placement of the co-channel cells in the regarded scenarios.

The scenarios shown in Fig. 8 require that a cellular coverage in the Manhattan scenario would have to rely on LOS, leading to a high number of APs.

Besides covering the scenario area with a single hop system, we study the impact of covering the the same area with a system based on relaying. The basic building block, which consists of an AP and 4 FRSs is shown in Fig. 7. It has the potential to cover a much larger area than one single-hop AP. Fig. 9 shows the cellular deployment of these building blocks for various cluster sizes. Owing to the high attenuation caused by the buildings, only those co-channel interferers have to be taken into account that are marked in the figure in black and the reuse distance is indicated by the black arrows.



(a) UMTS 30.03 AP deployment

(b) horizontal/vertical deployment of APs

(c) APs on crossings

Fig. 8
Possible AP deployments without relays

For the cluster sizes $N = 2/3/4$ we obtain reuse distances $D = 1380m/2070m/2760m$.

B. Air Interface

All of the MAC frame based air interfaces mentioned above will operate in the 5GHz licence-exempt bands (300MHz in the US, 550MHz in Europe, 100MHz in Japan). We assume for the following studies that the physical layer (PHY) uses an OFDM based transmission with 20MHz carrier bandwidth subdivided into orthogonal subcarriers. The modem is assumed conformant to the IEEE802.11a standard. As indicated in Section I, the 5GHz frequency range is characterised by high attenuation and very low diffraction, leading to low radio range, which is one of the key problems adressed by the proposed relaying concept.

a) Link-Level Performance: The basis for the calculation of the transmission errors is the ratio of Carrier to Interference and Noise power ($C/(I+N)$). The Link-level investigations performed in [7] provide a PDU error-probability related to the average $C/(I+N)$ during reception of the PHY-PDU. This relation is shown in Fig. 6. In our simulation model, collisions of interfering transmissions are detected and the resulting average $C/(I+N)$ is calculated for each transmitted PHY-PDU to decide on success or retransmission.

b) Propagation Model: The COST259 Multi-Wall model has been taken. This model [9] is an indoor propagation model at 5GHz, which takes into account the transmission through walls obstructing the LOS between transmitter and receiver. Unlike in the COST231 model [10], the attenuation non-linearly increase with the number of transmitted walls.

Wall attenuations have been chosen according to the suggestions in [11].

C. Other parameters of the Simulation model

To determine whether a MT should be served by the AP directly or via a FRS, the path loss between AP and MT is assessed. If it is higher than a certain threshold, the MT is associated to the closest available FRS ("closest" in terms of pathloss). The traffic load is assumed to be constant bitrate, which is a reasonable assumption when investigating the maximum achievable end-to-end throughput.

IV. Simulation Results

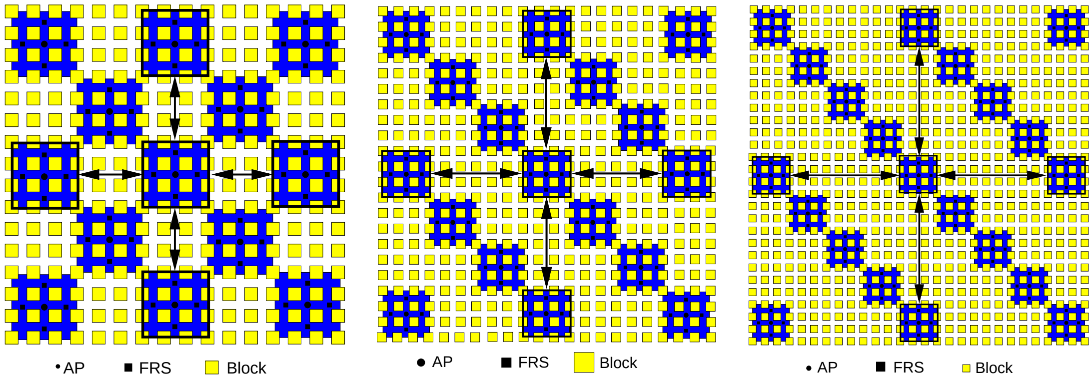
This section presents the performance evaluation results obtained by stochastic-event driven simulation. Results for the Downlink (DL) direction are presented here only, since the main effects that can be observed are quite similar in Uplink (UL) and DL directions, a result which is partly due to the Time Division Duplexing air interface studied. We have also performed a mathematical analysis of the scenarios and the results validate the simulation results as visible from the following figures. This work will be published in a separate paper, soon.

A. Reference Scenario without Relays

In Fig. 10(a) the DL $C/(I+N)$ and the related maximum End-to-End throughput are plotted over the distance of the MT from the AP when servicing the scenario by APs only according to Fig. 8. The $C/(I+N)$ values are slightly higher for the deployment variant where the APs are placed on the street crossings (cf. Fig. 8(c)) when compared to the other options. Fig. 10(b) shows the resulting Throughput (TP), again versus the distance of the MT from the AP. At distances of 115m and 345m, some additional interference on the crossings is visible for a deployment according to Fig. 8(c).

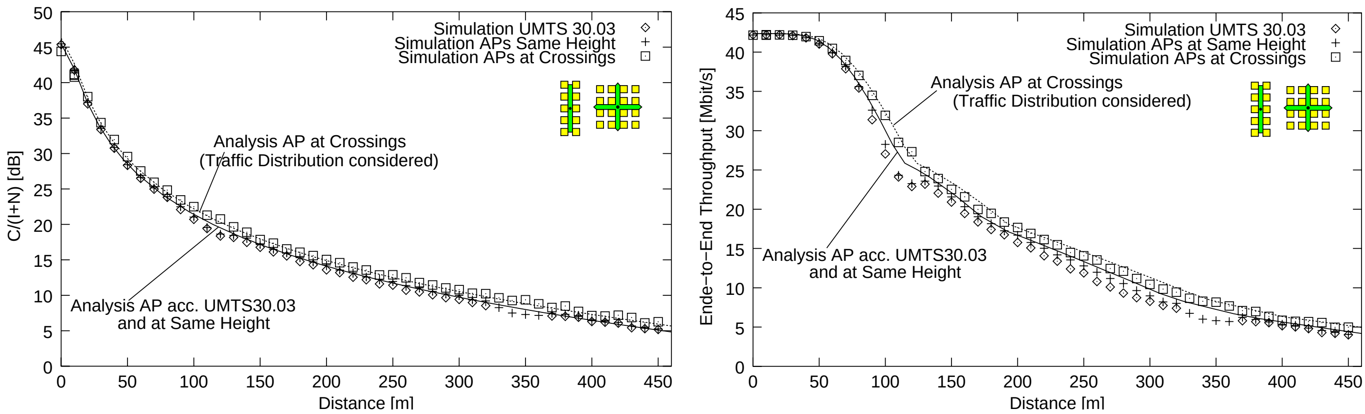
B. Simulation Results with Fixed Relay Stations

Simulations with fixed relays as introduced in Section III-A have been performed for the cluster sizes $N = 2/3/4$, cf. Fig. 9. Fig. 11(a) shows two sets of curves in one graph: The $C/(I+N)$ versus the distance of a MT from the AP (marked with 1. hop) and the $C/(I+N)$ encountered by MTs being served by a FRS (marked with 2. hop). The FRS is located at a distance of 230m from the AP on the "Main Road" (cf. the small scenario included in the figure and Fig. 7). This explains the peak of the $C/(I+N)$ curve visible at that distance.



(a) Cluster size N = 2 (b) Cluster size N = 3 (c) Cluster size N = 4

Fig. 9
City-wide coverage with relay-based cells for different cluster sizes $N = 2, 3, 4$



(a) $C/(I + N)$ Downlink (b) End-to-End-Thoughput Downlink

Fig. 10
C/(I+N) (left) and End-to-End-Throughput (right) without relays (Lines: analysis, Markers: simulation)

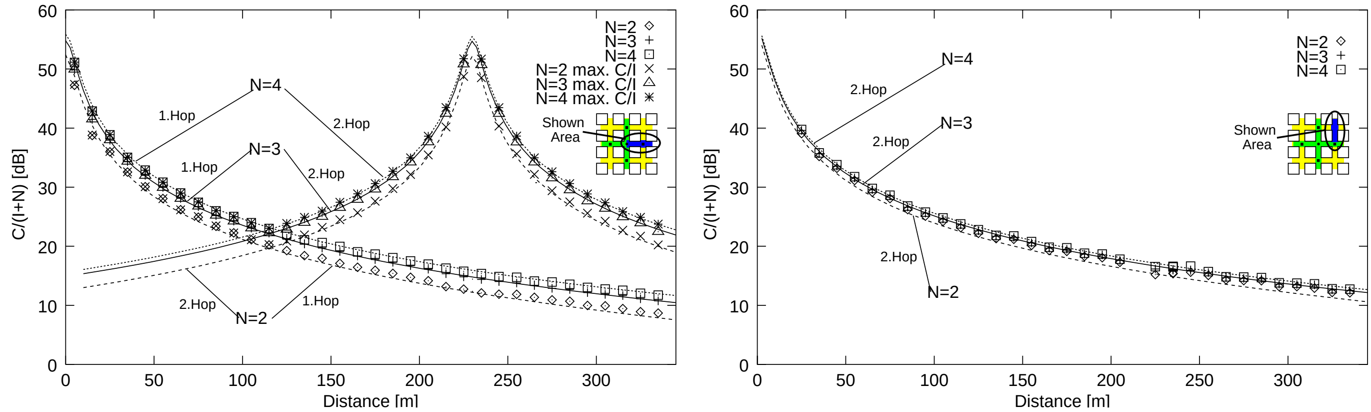
Each set of curves has the cluster size N as a parameter. As expected, the curves with $N = 2$ show the lowest $C/(I + N)$ values. Fig. 11(b) shows the $C/(I + N)$ situation in the "Side Alley" of the relay based cell. Like on the first hop, the situation for the MTs is almost similar to that of the MTs served directly by the AP in the single hop case, with the difference that the next LOS co-channel interferer is more than 780m away, leading to lower interference and thus to a $C/(I + N)$ which is approx. $4dB$ higher than in the single hop case. A max. TP of approx. 4-5,5 Mbit/s (depending on N) can be made available even at the cell border of the second hop, in an area which has no direct coverage of the first hop at all and which would require an additional AP in a single hop scenario (see Fig. 12(c)).

Figs. 12(a) and 12(c) show the resulting 2-hop TP for MTs on the "Main Road" and the "Side Alley" respectively with omnidirectional antennas used at AP, FRS and MTs. Obviously, the TP on both the first and the second hop depends on the cluster size N. The relatively flat slope of the curves for the second hop indicates that the TP is upper-bounded by the capacity available at the FRS from the AP. More capacity can be provided when using gain antennas at FRSs and omni antennas at AP and MT, with the FRS serving its MTs with an omni antenna. The improvement in TP for the outer range of the relay based cell with an $11,8dB$ gain at the FRS can be seen when comparing the left and right hand graphs in Fig. 12. As predicted in Fig. 2, the resulting higher TP on the first hop allows a FRS to have much more capacity available in its service area.

At a gain of $11,8dB$, which is an intermediate value according to Fig. 2, an increase in max. TP of up to 80% (from 8 Mbit/s to 14 Mbit/s) can be observed on the second hop, both on the "Main Road" and in the "Side Alley".

V. System Capacity and Spectral Efficiency

In addition to the end-to-end throughput studied in the previous section, the system capacity, i.e. the aggregate traffic that can be carried in a well-defined service area and a certain



(a) $C/(I+N)$ Downlink, "Main Road"

(b) $C/(I+N)$ Downlink, "Side Alley" served by FRS

Fig. 11
$C/(I+N)$ vs. Distance from (R)MT to AP respectively FRS for varying cluster sizes (2, 3, 4) using relays (Lines: analysis, Markers: simulation)

amount of used spectrum is an important measure to assess a system's performance. To optimise a system, it is very important to have a clearly defined optimisation goal. The relay concept presented in this paper aims at providing a cost-efficient broadband coverage that can rapidly be deployed in a relatively large area. Table 1 shows the average end-to-end cell throughput for the different 1- and 2-hop deployments presented so far. It also shows that the coverage area of one AP for the 1-hop scenarios is relatively small, indicating that a large number of costly backbone connections is needed to cover the whole service area. From the small cell size and the high cell throughput results a relatively high area spectral efficiency. But a minimum of 4 carrier frequencies is needed in that case to provide continuous coverage. The AP deployment variant (a) as suggested by [8] shows only small advantages over the horiz./vert. placement (b) (for both cf. Fig. 8). The placement on street crossings (c) has the advantage that a larger area is covered per AP, reducing the number of needed backbone connections by a factor of 2. At the same time, a minimum of 8 carrier frequencies is needed to enable continuous coverage. This and the larger cell size lead to a substantial reduction in spectral efficiency, while the average cell throughput changes only slightly.

Another reduction of the number of APs needed (to a total factor of 4) can be achieved by using FMTs as proposed in Fig. 7. This leads to a very cost-efficient cellular coverage of the service area. The 2-hop transmission obviously reduces the cell capacity, an effect that can be reduced through the use of higher re-use distances. A substantial increase in throughput and cell capacity is achieved through the use of directive receive antennas at the FMTs.

When using 2 carrier frequencies, the relay concept with directive antennas achieves roughly the same area spectral efficiency (2.31 $\left[bit \cdot s^{-1} \cdot Hz^{-1} \cdot m^{-2}\right]$) as the 1-hop deployment with APs on street crossings (2.37 $\left[bit \cdot s^{-1} \cdot Hz^{-1} \cdot m^{-2}\right]$), with the advantage of a lower number of APs and carrier frequencies needed.

Table 1
Average Cell Capacity and spectral efficiency for a Cell with 10 MTs and Exhaustive Round Robin (ERR) Scheduling, comparing three Single-Hop deployments with Multi-Hop deployment (with and without Receive Antenna Gain at the FRSs)

Scenario	Used # of Freq.	Cell Size $[m^2]$ $/10^3$	Cell. Cap. [Mbit/s]	Eff. $\eta/10^{-6}$ $\left[\frac{bit/s}{Hz \cdot m^2}\right]$
1-Hop (UMTS 30.03)	4	25,8	21,04	10,19
1-Hop (horiz./vert. depl.)	4	25,8	20,01	9,69
1-Hop (APs on cross.1)	8	53,4	20,24	**2,37**
2-Hop N=2	2	116	7,26	1,56
2-Hop N=3	3	116	9,03	1,3
2-Hop N=4	4	116	9,8	1,06
2-Hop N=2 $+11,8dB$	2	116	10,72	**2,31**
2-Hop N=3 $+11,8dB$	3	116	12,7	1,82
2-Hop N=4 $+11,8dB$	4	116	13,34	1,44

VI. Conclusions

Modern wireless broadband air interfaces are based on MAC frames, the only exemptions being IEEE802.11a/b/g but 802.11e uses a MAC frame, too. MAC framed air interfaces have been established in this paper to be useful for relaying in the time domain by just using the functions available from the existing standards. Deployment concepts using fixed relay stations have been shown to be of high benefit to substantially reduce the cost of interfacing APs to the fixed network (owing to a substantial reduction of APs needed). Relays have been proven to substantially extend the radio coverage of an AP, especially in highly obstructed service areas. Gain antennas at FRSs have been established to substantially contribute to increase the throughput at cell areas far away from an AP.

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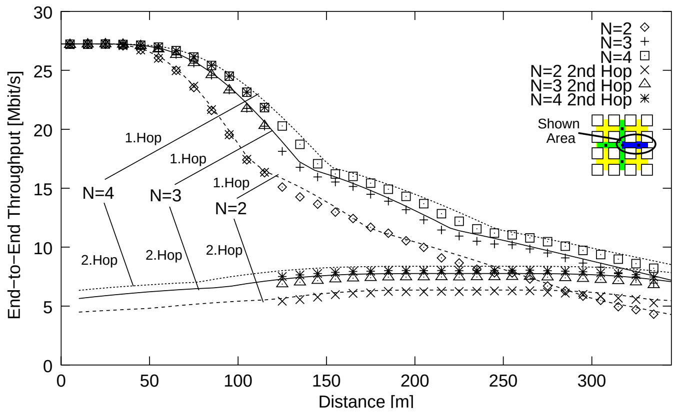
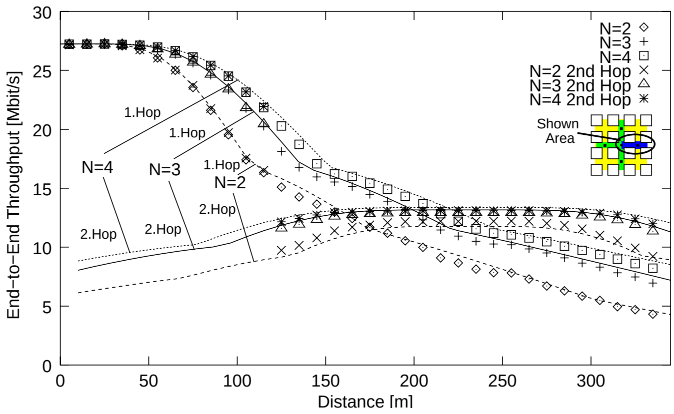
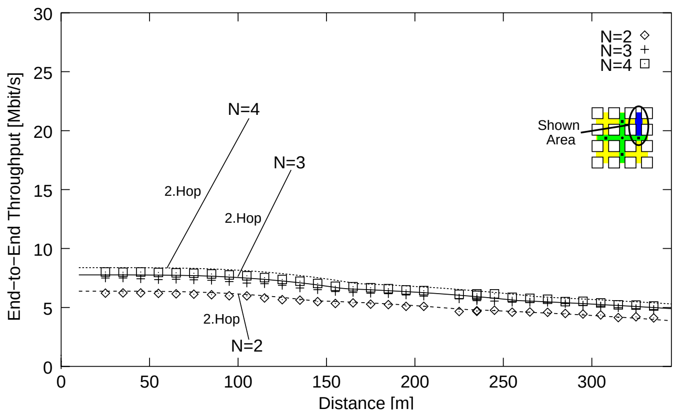


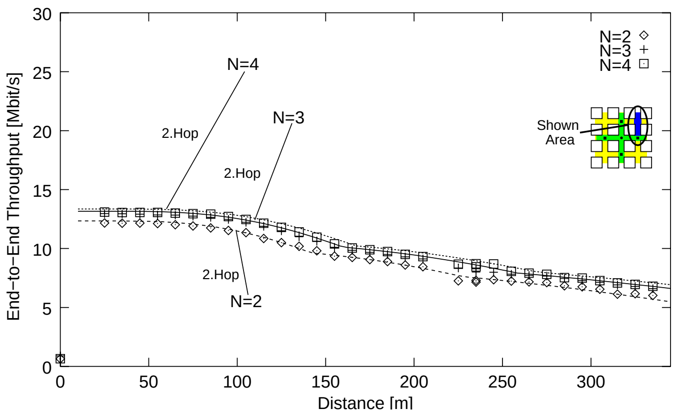
(a) Downlink, "Main Road" without gain antenna



(b) Downlink, "Main Road" with gain antenna



(c) Downlink, "Side Alley" served by FRS without gain antenna



(d) Downlink, "Side Alley" served by FRS with gain antenna

Fig. 12
DL End-to-End-Throughput vs. Distance from (R)MT to AP respectively FRS for varying cluster sizes (2, 3, 4) using relays (left: using omni antennas only, right: with $11.8dB$ receive antenna gain at the FRS (Lines: analysis, Markers: simulation)

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