

# **Mobile Software Agents for Network Monitoring and Performance Management**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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June 2001

## ABSTRACT

The rapid developments in the area of communication and data networks require high-performance and reliable Network and Systems Management (NSM). Due to the deficiencies of the traditional manager-agent paradigm and the resulting *scalability* and *flexibility* limitations of centralisation, it is now commonly agreed that a transition to *distributed management* is required. There are many new trends in NSM that try to address this requirement. In general, these trends make use of well-established techniques from other computing fields, e.g. distributed objects, Java and Web technologies, adapted to NSM problems. In addition, management distribution aspects have also been incorporated in both the Internet and OSI-SM management architectures. However, it has been shown that distribution alone is not enough. Due to the high frequency of changes in networking environments, it is imperative that management systems are flexible, i.e. they can dynamically adapt to those changes and allow on-the-fly customisation of management services. In that context, *Management by Delegation* (MbD) paradigm has been identified as the first promising approach towards management distribution and flexibility.

*Mobile Agents* (MA) represent a relatively new computing paradigm used in several domains as a means for structuring distributed applications. The term MA refers to a software entity identified by its code, persistent and execution state, with the ability to autonomously move from host to host, acting on behalf of a user or an application. The MA paradigm is part of the generic family of *mobile code* paradigms, which provide a mechanism to extend the capabilities of services through dynamically moving the components of a distributed application among the nodes of a network. In the context of NSM, MAs represent a relatively new trend that builds on the groundwork of MbD and involves the use of mobile objects as a tool to realise scalable and flexible distributed management systems. MA-based management has been a subject of intense research in the past few years, reflected on the proliferation of MA platforms (MAP) expressly oriented to distributed NSM. However, the applicability of MAs in management applications is still subject of ongoing debates, due to concerns related to the security, performance and scalability aspects of this technology. Namely, it is still unclear which problems of distributed management can be addressed by MAs and whether their use can offer performance benefits compared to alternative solutions.

A first objective of the research work described in this thesis has, therefore, been to assess the values and weaknesses of MA technology from the management viewpoint and identify ways for the effective use of this technology in distributed management applications. Based on this assessment, we have identified a set of requirements that MAPs tailored to management applications should meet. Following that, we have implemented an NSM-oriented MA framework, satisfying these requirements. Our framework addresses the scalability, flexibility and adaptability requirements related to the management of large-scale and dynamic networks. The performance of our prototype has been quantitatively and experimentally evaluated, demonstrating its competence against centralised management and distributed objects-based approaches.

In addition, three novel applications that exploit the ability of MAs for performing decentralised operations have been developed on the top of the introduced MA-based management framework. The application areas include the fields of *network monitoring* and *performance management*. In particular, the proposed applications include semantic compression of management data, efficient retrieval of bulk monitoring data and filtering of SNMP tables according to pre-defined, arbitrarily complex filtering criteria.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude towards my academic supervisor, Prof. Mohammed Ghanbari, for his guidance and support throughout the course of this work. I also feel indebted to my second supervisor, Prof. Mike O'Mahony, for giving me the opportunity to start my PhD, his inspiring suggestions and useful advice. I am grateful to Dr. Dominic Greenwood, my 'industrial supervisor', for introducing me to the fields of mobile agents and network management, keeping me on the rails (especially in the first stages of my research) and treating me more like a friend rather than a colleague. Fujitsu Telecommunications Europe Ltd. is acknowledged for funding this work.

Also, the members of the UCD-SNMP, Aglets and mobility mailing lists have provided an invaluable service as a community of peers amongst which to discuss my research. Many of the ideas expressed in this thesis have been shaped and refined in those forums. Many thanks to Wes Hardaker, Todd Papaioannou and especially Kristen Pol that helped me to solve a Java programming problem which troubled me for over two months. Paolo Bellavista and Prof. Antonio Corradi are also acknowledged for their valuable tips and insightful ideas during the implementation of the Resources Usage Monitoring Tool described in Chapter 6.

I would also like to thank all my current and past colleagues at the research laboratory who have created an enjoyable atmosphere: Tom Cambel, Jason Neale, Noel Parnis, Alicia Calonico-Soto, Fyllon Papadopoulos, Costas Dimopoulos, Bernard Lee, Jenny He, Candies Lam, Antonio Pinheiro and Moises Ribeiro. It has been a genuine pleasure to work with them. Special thanks to Moises who has been the best officemate I could ever ask for; I have very much enjoyed our long, non-technical conversations.

I would like to acknowledge the help of all my friends: for keeping me 'mentally' healthy and most importantly for reminding me that there are more important things in life than a PhD. Many thanks to Kostas Drakos, George Spiliotopoulos, Alkistis Deligianni, Tasos Fotiou, Maria Ziouvelou, Panos Hanjiprokopiou, Antonis Blahos, Deni Alexandropoulou, Thomas Verakis, Zambia Tzouganaki, Nikos Apostolopoulos, Baggelis Katsaras, Giorgos Parargiris.

Special thanks to my dearest friends Dimitris Alexandropoulos, Tanya Politi and Ottavia Jedrkiewicz; they have all been very caring and supportive and have greatly contributed to making the last and most stressful year of my studies an adventure worthwhile to live.

Most importantly I would like to thank Katerina Proestaki, whose unswerving support and companionship have allowed me to concentrate my efforts on achieving my goals and made this long and difficult trip look like a pleasant journey. Katerina has also reviewed and provided valuable feedback on several of my research papers published over the last three years and also on Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, Giorgos, Maria, Nikos and Dimitris Gavalas for caring, supporting and always being there for me throughout my many years of study. They have probably contributed much more than me to this thesis. I hope my completion will repay to some extent their trust, support and expectations.

*Στην οικογένεια  
και τους φίλους μου*

*“Να υποφέρεις δεινά που ακόμα και η ελπίδα τα θεωρεί ατέρμονα  
Να αψηφάς την εξουσία που μοιάζει παντοδύναμη  
Να αγαπάς και να υπομένεις  
Να ελπίζεις, εώς ότου η ελπίδα μέσα από την ίδια την καταστροφή της, να πραγματώσει το  
σκοπό της  
Να μην αλλάζεις, ούτε να διστάζεις, μήτε να μετανιώνεις·  
εδώ είναι η δόξα σου Τιτάνα: καλοσύνη, μεγαλείο, ευτυχία, ομορφιά και ελευθερία...”*

*“Προμηθέας λυόμενος”  
Α. Σέλλεϋ*