International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Science & Technology (IJARCST)

| ISSN: 2347-8446 | www.ijarcst.org | editor@ijarcst.org |A Bimonthly, Peer Reviewed & Scholarly Journal|

||Volume 7, Issue 5, September–October 2024||

DOI:10.15662/IJARCST.2024.0705002

Edge Computing for Real-Time IoT Applications: Architectures and CaseStudies

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ABSTRACT: Edge computing has emerged as a transformative approach for **real-time Internet of Things (IoT)** applications by overcoming limitations of centralized cloud processing—namely latency, bandwidth constraints, and privacy issues. In 2023, studies have advanced both architectural frameworks and practical implementations across domains. For example, a survey analyzing over 30 edge-based streaming video analytics systems—spanning surveillance and distributed inference—highlighted how edge deployment reduces latency, enhances privacy, and lowers bandwidth demand MDPI. Agricultural IoT case studies demonstrated that multi-tier edge-cloud architectures yield over **30% water savings** and up to **80% nutrient uptake improvements** in greenhouse environments ar5iv. On the methodology front, a **Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL)**-based scheduler (DRLIS) deployed within FogBus2 effectively minimized response time, balanced server load, and cut IoT task cost by up to 50% arXiv. Another study showed that lightweight container orchestration using **k3s and FogBus2** improved real-time IoT application response times by around 29% with minimal node overhead arXiv. These findings guide the design of hierarchical edge architectures—spanning device-edge, micro-edge (e.g., gateways), and regional edge layers—to meet stringent requirements of latency, privacy, and resource efficiency. We propose a unified evaluation framework based on real-time streaming analytics, intelligent scheduling, and scalable orchestration in heterogeneous environments. Results from comparative analysis underscore the merits of adaptive scheduling and lightweight container orchestration in improving responsiveness and resource utilization. We conclude with recommendations for future deployments leveraging DRL-driven scheduling and micro-service orchestration, along with opportunities in expanding application domains such as smart agriculture and edge-based video streaming.

KEYWORDS: Edge computing; real-time IoT; streaming video analytics; DRL scheduling; container orchestration; FogBus2; edge architecture; greenhouse IoT; resource efficiency

I. INTRODUCTION

As IoT pervades domains like surveillance, agriculture, healthcare, and smart cities, the demand for **real-time processing** of sensor-generated data has surged. Traditional cloud-centric models fall short due to **latency**, **bandwidth overhead**, and **privacy vulnerabilities**. In response, **edge computing**—processing data close to its source—has emerged as a viable paradigm to meet IoT applications' stringent timing and privacy requirements.

In 2023, a comprehensive study of **edge streaming video analytics** (IE-SVA) assessed over 30 systems, demonstrating that local edge inference reduces data transfer, alleviates latency, and keeps sensitive data within privacy perimeters MDPI. Similarly, an **agricultural IoT** implementation in greenhouses leveraged a multi-tier edge-cloud architecture to deliver real-time hydroponic control, achieving **30% water savings** and up to **80% improvement in nutrient management** ar5iv. On the operational level, a **deep reinforcement learning-based scheduler (DRLIS)** was employed within FogBus2 for edge-fog orchestration, achieving **50% improvement in weighted cost**, alongside better load balancing and response times arXiv. Lightweight container orchestration via **k3s** in FogBus2 clusters was shown to cut response times by **~29%** while maintaining low overhead—crucial for resource-constrained edge environments arXiv.

Despite these advances, there remains a need for holistic frameworks combining **architectural clarity**, **intelligent scheduling**, and **scalable orchestration** to support varied real-time IoT use cases. This paper aims to synthesize 2023's contributions into a cohesive comparative analysis. We will detail architectural layers (device-edge, micro-edge, regional edge), evaluate scheduling mechanisms like DRL, and assess orchestration strategies including container-based lightweight clusters. Our objective is to propose actionable design guidelines and evaluation metrics guiding deployment of real-time IoT applications across diverse sectors.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **Edge-based Streaming Video Analytics (IE-SVA)**
   Ravindran (2023) conducted a thorough review of over 30 edge-based video analytics systems, examining them across 17 dimensions such as latency, privacy, bandwidth, and deployment architecture. The study underscores that edge computing significantly outperforms cloud-only models in reducing latency and bandwidth use, while better preserving privacy MDPI.

2. **Agricultural IoT in Greenhouses**
   A multi-tier edge-cloud architecture deployed in real-world greenhouses optimized hydroponic control through virtualization and local edge controllers. The system achieved **over 30% water savings** and up to **80% improvement in key nutrient delivery**, validating the architecture's effectiveness in resource-critical farming environments ar5iv.
3. **DRL-based Scheduling (DRLIS)**
   Wang et al. (2023) introduced **DRLIS**, a deep reinforcement learning scheduler implemented within the FogBus2 serverless function-as-a-service framework. DRLIS improved IoT workload scheduling in edge-fog environments by delivering up to **55% better load balancing**, **37% faster response time**, and **50% lower weighted cost** over competing methods arXiv.
4. **Lightweight Container Orchestration with k3s**
   Wang et al. also proposed lightweight orchestration for real-time IoT by extending FogBus2 with **k3s**, a streamlined Kubernetes version. This approach enhanced response times by approximately **29%**, supporting scalable edge clusters with acceptable resource overhead arXiv.
   These works collectively demonstrate that architectural layering, intelligent scheduling, and lightweight orchestration are key pillars enabling efficient real-time IoT processing. However, comprehensive comparative frameworks evaluating their interplay remain scarce.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Architectural Taxonomy Development

- Construct a layered taxonomy for real-time IoT edge computing:
  - **Device Edge**: Local processing on sensors or embedded modules.
  - **Micro Edge**: Local gateways handling aggregated data.
  - **Regional Edge**: Small-scale datacenter nodes providing broader compute.
- This taxonomy synthesizes definitions from both academic and industry literature nalandatechnology.services.

Selection of Case-Study Implementations

- Based on 2023 literature, we examine:
  - IE-SVA systems (video analytics) MDPI.
  - Agricultural IoT greenhouse deployment ar5iv.
  - DRL scheduling (DRLIS) within FogBus2 arXiv.
  - Lightweight container orchestration via k3s in FogBus2 clusters arXiv.

Comparative Evaluation Framework

- Define metrics for:
  - **Latency / Response Time**
  - **Resource Utilization**
  - **Load Balancing**
  - **Energy / Cost Efficiency**
  - **Deployment Complexity**
  - **Scalability**

Scenario-Based Analysis

- Apply each metric within relevant real-world scenarios:
  - Urban surveillance (video stream behavior)
  - Agricultural greenhouse management
  - High-frequency IoT workloads requiring compute balancing

Synthesis of Design Principles

- Derive practical guidelines emphasizing:

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  - Architecture layering for optimal latency and resource use
  - Use of reinforcement learning for dynamic scheduling
  - Adoption of lightweight orchestration for scalability in constrained environments
- This methodology integrates both qualitative insights and quantitative performance results to inform best practices for real-time edge IoT systems.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Latency & Real-Time Performance

Edge-based video analytics systems (IE-SVA) exhibit substantially lower latency compared to cloud-only models. Local inference reduces network transit times and supports real-time responsiveness MDPI. Similarly, greenhouse IoT architectures add real-time control loops enabling timely hydroponic adjustments ar5iv.

Resource and Cost Efficiency

The agricultural deployment led to significant resource savings—**30% less water usage and 80% nutrient efficiency**—highlighting edge architectures' suitability for resource-limited domains ar5iv. DRLIS improved weighted task costs by up to **50%**, optimizing workloads across edge and fog layers arXiv.

Load Balancing & Scheduling Adaptability

DRLIS's intelligence enables adaptive scheduling in dynamic environments, achieving **55% better load distribution** and **37% faster response** than traditional methods arXiv.

Scalable Orchestration

Lightweight container orchestration with **k3s** improved response by **29%**, making it viable for edge clusters where full Kubernetes stacks are too heavy arXiv.

Deployment Complexity & Scalability Trade-offs

While advanced orchestration and RL scheduling improve performance, they add system complexity—necessitating expertise in container management and DRL frameworks.

Integrated Design Recommendations

- **Layered architecture** allows low-latency local processing while supporting aggregation and compute scaling.
- **DRL scheduling** is effective for dynamic, heterogeneous workloads.
- **Lightweight orchestration** balances scalability and resource constraints.
- Edge systems designed with these principles yield improved responsiveness, reliability, and resource utilization.

V. CONCLUSION

In 2023, advancements in **edge computing architectures**, **reinforcement-learning-based scheduling**, and **lightweight container orchestration** have meaningfully improved real-time IoT applications across domains. Video analytics systems demonstrate superior latency and privacy, greenhouse IoT applications deliver resource savings, and DRL-driven orchestrators and k3s-based clusters enhance responsiveness and load distribution. Together, these components form a robust design framework to achieve real-time performance, efficiency, and scalability in edge-centric IoT deployments.

VI. FUTURE WORK

1. **Cross-Domain Benchmarking**: Standardize performance tests across use cases like smart cities, healthcare monitoring, and agriculture to validate generalizability.
2. **Energy-Efficient Hardware Integration**: Explore low-power accelerators like neuromorphic chips or RISC-V microcontrollers for ultra-low-latency edge tasks.
3. **Federated Edge Learning**: Incorporate federated learning at the edge to enhance analytical capabilities without central data aggregation.
4. **5G-Enabled Edge Collaboration**: Evaluate how 5G and network slicing could further reduce latency among distributed micro-edge nodes.
5. **Developer-Friendly Orchestration Tooling**: Develop simplified orchestration layers tailored for small-scale developers to mitigate deployment complexity.

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