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Towards Unified Tag Data Translation for the Internet of Things

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Abstract—Following the “Internet of Things” concept, each object will be associated with a unique identifier which will allow to retrieve information about it in large databases. In the process of retrieving information, this identifier (ID) may have to be translated into different formats (e.g. domain name style format for object name service query, binary, legacy,...). The Tag Data Translation (TDT) is responsible for the translation of IDs into these different formats.

We propose a general TDT system which extends the standards of EPCglobal which only targets Electronic Product Code (EPC). We integrate other RFID and smart cards standards (such as ISO 14443 and 15693) and GS1 standards which are more general as they also deal with bar code (EAN/UPC).

I. INTRODUCTION

The “Internet of Things” aims at creating a large wireless network in which all objects would have a unique identifier. This concept is attributed to the MIT Auto-ID Center, founded in 1999 [11].

This concept goes along with Radio Frequency IDentification technology (RFID). A RFID tag can be placed on all objects, offering a way to question them and know their identity. Using this ID, an efficient object name service (ONS) and shared databases, we retrieve information at anytime. The Auto-ID Center defines, with partners, several standards for the Internet of things. These standards can be found under the name of EPCglobal Network [1]. The Auto-ID Center is now known under the name of Auto-ID Labs.

In such a network architecture, we have to ask different components to retrieve information on an ID, from the tag to the application and vice versa. For this, the ID of an object must be translated into different representations, like defined in the EPC tag data translation [4][5]. In the EPC global architecture, the tag data translation process (TDT) converts one representation of an Electronic Product Code (EPC) into another representation, which can be used for ONS or EPCIS query, *etc.*

EPCglobal and Auto-ID Labs have defined the TDT for EPC RFID tags only, leaving aside other standards in RFID or smart cards [8][9] and other technologies such as GS1 bar-code standards (EAN/UPC) which are currently the predominant technology for identifying items [10]. In the current economic context where most of items are identified by a GS1 bar code and where RFID appears to be the new standard in

such applications, the needs of an architecture which deals with both RFID and bar code technologies seems necessary. Furthermore, identify and authentify people with smart cards is also widely spreaded (credit cards, discount cards, SIM cards, *etc*) and encompass such a technology with RFID and bar codes seems important in order to define a general unified architecture.

In this paper, we propose a way of integrating all these technologies in a more general TDT.

In Section II, we briefly present the EPCglobal Network architecture, and the goal of the EPC TDT. Section III gives an overview of other standards (ISO 14443, ISO 15693 or GS1 system). The way these new standards are added in our TDT is shown in Section IV and evaluated in Section V. Finally, we conclude with future works.

II. CONTEXT

This section describes the EPCglobal architecture [2] and the EPC Tag Data Translation (TDT).

A. RFID systems : EPC global example

The MIT Auto-ID Center was created to develop a global unified item identification system based on RFID to replace the UPC bar code. This center has been replaced by two organizations, the Auto-ID Labs and EPCglobal. The first one is responsible for the development of EPC technology while the second one manages of the EPC Network.

The EPC Network defines standards going from tag data to Application Level Event (ALE) in its architecture framework. This framework is depicted on Figure 1. This ALE is used by clients to obtain EPC data from sources.

At the lowest level is the Tag Data Standard (TDS) defined by EPCglobal. This data is retrieved thanks to a low-level reader protocol (LLRP [3]) which communicates with tags using the Tag Protocol. A standard for reader management is also defined. All these standards aim to unify the way of identifying uniquely items and manage compatible readers.

EPCglobal defines an interface for EPC Information Service (EPCIS [6]) in order to share EPC-related data in and between enterprises. This standard includes EPCIS Data Specification providing definitions for all types of EPCIS data, and EPCIS

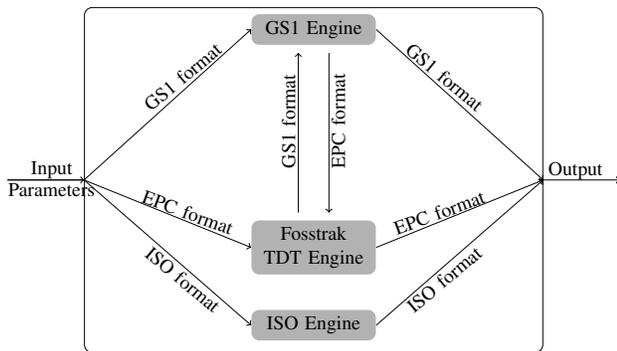


Fig. 10. TDT Engine

V. RESULTS

Starting from the Fosstrak implementation of the TDT, which has for contributors some people from Auto-ID Lab and ETH Zurich, we have added the previous standards. We can now compare initialisation and execution time without and with our “add-on”.

At initialisation, the Fosstrak TDT is ready to translate EPC in 1454ms (average from 100 measures) while our TDT takes 1751ms. This is due to the loading of the two XML files needed for the GS1 bar codes translation.

But at run time, performance in translating EPC are very similar (translation of 10000 EPC) : 564ms for Fosstrak TDT against 624ms for our TDT (this average has been calculated from 100 times 10000 conversions)

Even if we cannot compare it with Fosstrak, it is interesting to know translating time for GS1 and ISO added codes. The GS1 bar code take 10ms to be translated from “GS1_AI_ENCODING” to “LEGACY” 10000 times. Our TDT translate 10000 EPC in 1168ms from “BINARY” to “GS1_AI_ENCODING”. ISO 14443 and 15693 have similar performance in translating (161ms for 10000 translations).

VI. CONCLUSION

In the scope of the Internet of Things, where all objects is carrying an unique identifier, standards have to be defined in order to retrieve informations about objects all over the world. Auto-ID Labs and EPCglobal Inc. defines standards for such kind of infrastructure. They define a way to encode ID in RFID, to query database for informations or to query object name service (ONS) to retrieve useful database, *etc* by translating ID into differents representation matching the needs of each component of the architecture. This is the EPC tag data translation (TDT). The problem here is that these standards use only EPC tag data standard as the unique ID definition, but there are a lot of other standards. The GS1 bar-code system (with well-known EAN/UPC) is actually the most used standard in items identification applications. There are also ISO standards which define a way to encode an unique ID.

We have shown how we increase TDT process to encompass EPCs, GS1 bar-codes and some ISO standards in order to

create an unified TDT. The performance of this unified TDT is lightly under the Fosstrak implementation of the EPC TDT. Future work would be to add more existing standards (ISO 15963, other bar-code, *etc*). This TDT would offer a way to an unified architecture of a RFID middleware encompassing all useful standards.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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The unified Tag Data Translation is under LGPL 2.1 license and the source code can be downloaded at “svn checkout –username anonymous <https://forge.lifl.fr/schmidt/svn/tdt>” (password : anonymous).

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