A Context-Aware Entity Recognition Scheme for Pervasive Computing

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Abstract: In the future world filled with pervasive computing, almost all entities can be mobile, which means not only service requesters but also service providers are always dynamic and unpredictable. This raises two security problems. For service providers, how can they keep their security capability when they move here and there? And for service requesters, how can they be trusted by various service providers that may have different security requirements? Unfortunately, available security mechanisms, including traditional authentication and authorization approaches and exotic trust management proposals, cannot solve the both two problems very well. In this paper, we propose a context-aware entity recognition scheme, which enables service providers to use their current trust infrastructures to determine whether requesters are trustworthy or not, and also enables service requesters to be recognized through exchanging different information with service providers according to different services they request and different security level service providers require. We argue for the notion of "Trust Infrastructure", which is an abstract of all available trusted entities that can help an entity to recognize strangers in pervasive environments and can be dynamically built when entities move about. We also argue for an attribute-based recognition information exchange scheme, which makes it possible for service requesters to be checked in terms of trustworthiness in various scenarios. Finally, we give an algorithm to compute a service requester's trust value based on the trust infrastructure of the service provider entity..

1 Introduction

"The most profound technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it." [5]

Almost 10 years ago, Weiser drew for us an alluring vision of our everyday lives with ubiquitous computing, which is also called pervasive computing today. It envisages a world where the environment reacts automatically to one's needs; the technology is invisible and 'calming', where information is instantly available anywhere in the world, but only information relevant to one's immediate needs is delivered. The technology frees people to concentrate on what is important to them [9].

However, it will never become true unless critical securities problems are solved to some extent. Since in the pervasive computing world, not only service requester entities but also service provider entities are mobile, e.g. in Ad hoc networks, how can entities as service providers keep their security capability as strong as possible will be a problem. As we know that mobile entities are always limited in their computation and storage capability, so it is impossible for them to employ complete and strong security mechanisms locally to authenticate any entities they meet. Besides, for service providers, they may never be able to predetermine who will request services next, so unknown users should be served if only they can meet some requirements, e.g. they have enough electronic money. We argue that not only pervasive services should be smart, but the security mechanism should also be smart.

Unfortunately, traditional security approaches are not adequate for such requirements described above. Traditionally, stand-along computer and small networks always rely on authentication and access control to achieve security. For available traditional approaches ([11],[12],[13],etc.), there are some common features, such as centralized management, users pre-known and security management in hands of one or two persons, etc. Since these approaches are not suitable for pervasive computing, new security approaches should be developed. And indeed, many efforts ([3], [8], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], etc.) have been made, and the proposed solutions may be helpful in some cases, but they all have their own limitations, and they cannot be deployed widely. Therefore a new question is raised, which is incompatibility. Since different pervasive computing environments may employ different security mechanisms, which are incompatible with one another, users cannot use various pervasive services in these environments because they cannot be recognized or trusted. We argue that this considerably violates the motivations of pervasive computing.

Hence, we think it is necessary to build a new entity recognition scheme, which enables service providers and requesters to be able to interact with each other securely in various cases, no matter whether users are known to service providers or not, no matter whether service providers have an authority center or not, and no matter what security requirements service providers claim. With this scheme, we hope that, if an entity wants to consume a service, it just needs to know what information it should provide, and the service provider checks whether the requester entity can be trusted or not according to the security utilities it can use at present, and then accepts or rejects the requester entity's request.

Therefore, we propose a context-aware entity recognition scheme in this paper. With the term context-aware, we mean that not only service requester entities can be recognized in different environments, but also service providers can employ different approaches to recognize requesters.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 will describe some scenarios that inspire us to design such scheme. Then we will introduce a key notion of our scheme, namely Trust Infrastructure, in Section 3. And Section 4 will describe context-aware entity recognition scheme in detail. And we will give related work on our research in Section 5. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn in Section 6, in which our future work will also be depicted.

2 MOTIVATION SCENARIOS

Since pervasive computing systems may be built by different enterprises, we may meet some troubles because of their incompatibility. For example, when I am at office, I use my PDA to use smart office service, which is developed by a company and is helpful to increase my work efficiency greatly, e.g. it can prepare my presentation document in the projector before I enter the meeting room to take my presentation. Unfortunately, when I am off duty and go home, my PDA cannot be recognized by my smart home system, which is another pervasive computing service provided by another company. If I want to bring my PDA outdoors, I may also find my PDA cannot get some public service, e.g. location tracking service, just in that I have not registered my PDA to the third company that supplies such service. We argue that such a world is far from a true pervasive computing world, even if so-called pervasive computing services are everywhere.

Now let's take a look at the life of John one day, which may be our dream for the pervasive computing world.

• Scenario 1 - In the morning, John goes to office and his PDA gets to know the arrival of his new emails and wants to download them (according to John's configuration specified before). When John's PDA requests the emails, a valid certificate is required by the email server. Receiving John's certificate, the email server consults the authority center whether it is John. With positive answer, the email server sends the emails to John's PDA. Then John is noticed to read the new emails when he is seated.

• Scenario 2 - At noon, John goes to the cafe near his company to have a rest. Since this café provides free Internet surfing service with its WLAN to its guests, John wants to browse latest news with his PDA during enjoying coffee. Since the café's network access server (NAS) finds John is a guest in the shop, it permits John's PDA to access Internet.

• Scenario 3 - In the afternoon, John goes to a branch of his company, where he wants to print a document. However, his PDA cannot be recognized by the printer. Fortunately, John's PDA finds that it can be trusted by the PDA of the manager, say Tom. So John's PDA asks Tom's PDA for help. The latter then delivers a temporary delegation to John's PDA, and with this delegation, John's PDA is successful to use the printer. In this case, Tom is usually disconnected from the printer to ask for any recommendations.

• Scenario 4 - At night, John goes to the birthday party of Mary, one of his friends. At the party, John meets a new friend, say Alice. After exchanging each other's email addresses, Alice's PDA further wants John's home address. Before sending out this sensitive information, John's PDA finds it has nothing about Alice's trustworthiness, so it decides to consult the friends John trusts, e.g. Harry, Jerry, etc., and based on the answers, John's PDA finds out Alice's reputation is quite good and decides to tell her John's home address.

From the scenarios we can see that, in different pervasive computing environments, different trust information may needed. For example, in Scenarios 1 3 4, John's identity or credential may be needed, however, in Scenario 2, this is not essential and some context information, e.g. location information is needed. So recognition information is dependent upon concrete contexts. Furthermore, for entities as service providers, they also cannot always rely on a certain security server. When they move, the security server may be unavailable, so their security mechanisms should also be context-aware.

3 Trust Infrastructure

Before we discuss the context-aware entity recognition scheme, we will describe a novel notion, namely Trust Infrastructure. To understand Trust Infrastructure better, we firstly introduce two concepts, *Requester* and *Recognizer*.

Requester is an entity that request services from other entities. *Recognizer* is an entity that is responsible to determine *Requesters*' trustworthiness, which is also the very entity that provides services.

With the term "entity recognition", we mean the action that *Recognizer* determines *Requester* as a trustworthy peer or not.

In the context-aware entity recognition scheme, Trust Infrastructure is a set of entities and trust relationships between *Recognizer* and these entities. Every *Recognizer* has its own trust infrastructure to help it to determine a *Requester's* trustworthiness. No matter anywhere an entity moves to, it will build its own trust infrastructure as a *Recognizer*.

3.1 Trust Relationships

A trust infrastructure is made up of entities that have trust relationships with *Recognizer*. Trust relationships indicate how much an entity is trusted by another entity under certain context.

A trust relationship can be denoted as follows.

$$tr_{e1} = (e_2, tval, ctxt, p) \tag{1}$$

Which means entity e_2 is trusted by e_1 under the context of *ctxt* with the trust

value *tval* that indicates to how much degree e_2 is trusted. In formula (1), $p \in [0,1]$ is privilege of this trust relationship, which is used to compute a stranger's trust value. With privilege value *p*, *Recognizer* can decide how trust relationships will be used to determine a stranger's trustworthiness. We denote the set of values of *p* as P.

Note that the term *context* here is not the same as the *Context* we use in the title of this paper. The latter refers to environments of both service provider entities and service requester entities. On the contrary, the *context* in trust relationships just refers to service requester entities' environments. Since this difference is easy to be distinguished, we will not point it out in the rest of this paper.

Up to now, we abstract four types of trust relationships, with which we can build the most of trust infrastructures in various pervasive environments. The four relationships are described in detail bellow.

• Direct Trust Relationship (DTR) - If entity A trusts entity B directly and no other entities are needed to help A to determine the trustworthiness of B, this relationship is a direct trust relationship.

For instance, in Scenario 3, Tom has a direct trust relationship with John.

• Bound Trust Relationship (BTR) – If whether entity A can trust another entity is completely dependent upon entity B's trust knowledge in such context, we can say entity A has a bound trust relationship to entity B. Therefore with bound trust relationships, an entity can hand over its trust management to other entities, which will be useful in many scenarios.

For example, in Scenario 1, the email server has a bound trust relationship with the backend security server.

• Recommended Trust Relationship (RTR) - Supposing entity A trusts entity B, but does not trust entity C. At the same time, B trusts C, then A can ask B for the trustworthiness of C. Receiving the trust value of C from B, as well as the trustworthiness of B to A, A can decide to how much degree C can be trusted. In this case, we can say the trust relationship established from A to C is a recommended trust relationships are useful to decide strangers' trustworthiness

For instance, in Scenario 4, since John cannot trust Alice at first look, he will request recommendations from other friends. With recommendations, John creates a recommended trust relationship with Alice.

Delegated Trust Relationship (LTR) - If entity A has a trust relationship to entity B and entity C cannot be trusted by A, then B can delegate his trustworthiness to C, so that A can trust C as it trusts B. In such case, we can say A has a delegated trust relationship to C. A delegated trust relationship is usually used when A is disconnected from B at present, therefore A cannot get any recommendations from B.

Taking Scenario 3 as an example, in order to enable John to be trusted by the printer, John has to send delegation request to Tom, and on receiving delegation from Tom, John hands it to the printer, then the printer will establish a delegated trust relationship with John and permit him to print files.

Table 1 is an example of privilege values of these four types of trust relationships.

Trust Relationship Type	Privilege Value	
BTR	1	
DTR	0.5	
RTR	0.3	
LTR	0.1	

Table.1 an example P

With the privilege values in Table.2, when a stranger needs to be recognized, *Recognizer* will rely on advices of trust relationships following the order BTR>DTR>RDT>LDT.

3.2 Trust Infrastructure Definition

Since Trust Infrastructure is used by *Recognizer* to determine *Requester*'s trustworthiness, it should provide knowledge to *Recognizer* that which entities can be replied upon in a certain context. Therefore, we define Trust Infrastructure as a set of maps from contexts to trust relationships.

Formally, we define Trust Infrastructure as

 $TI = \{(ctxt \rightarrow TRS)\}$

where *ctxt* is the context, and $TRS = \{(e, tval, p)\}$, where *e*, *tval* and *p* are all defined in the part A of section 3.

(1)

For example, we can describe an example trust infrastructure of Scenario 4 as follows.

$$TI_{John} = \{ (Ctxt1 \rightarrow \{(Harry, 1, 0.5), (Jerry, 0.5, 0.3)\} \}, (Ctxt2 \rightarrow \{(Harry, 0.5, 0.3)\}, (Ctxt2 \rightarrow \{(Jerry, 0.2, 0.3)\} \}, \dots, \}$$

3.3 Building Trust Infrastructure

In the pervasive computing world, entities are mobile not only as service requesters but also as service providers. When an entity moves to a new place, it is necessary for it to build its trust infrastructure so as to be able to determine whether a stranger can be trusted.

In order to build such trust infrastructure, *Recognizer* should maintain a trust repository. In trust repositories, all trust relationships are recorded. Table.2 shows a trust repository example.

Lubicia a sumple d'ast repository				
Entity	Туре	Context	Trust Value	
e0	BTR	Ctxt0	1	
e1	DTR	Ctxt1	0.3	
e2	LTR	Ctx1	0.7	
e3	DTR	Ctxt2	1	
e4	RTR	Ctxt3	0.4	

Table.2 a sample trust repository

When an entity moves to a new environment, it will refresh its trust infrastructure based on the trust repository it maintains.

Supposing an entity, say *Recognizer*, has a trust repository as described in Table.2, and it moves to a new place as described in Fig..1.



Fig. 1. Entities Connected with Recognizer

In Fig.1, only e_5 is a stranger to *Recognizer*. Therefore, we can build the corresponding trust infrastructure in Table.3 according to Table 1 and Table.2. **Table 3** An Trust Infrastructure

Table.5 All Hust Illiasu ucture	
$Ctxt0->\{(e0,1,1),$	
Ctxt1->{(e1,0.3,0.5),(e2,0.7,0.1)}	
Ctxt3->{(e4,0.5,0.1)}	

4 The Context-Aware Entity Recognition Scheme

In this section, we will describe our proposed context-aware entity recognition scheme in detail.

4.1 Context of Pervasive Computing

As we mentioned before, context of pervasive computing environments should play an important role in entity recognition. In different context, provider entities will use different recognition mechanisms to decide whether requester entities are trustworthy or not. Although there are a lot of context factors in pervasive computing environments, from the aspect of entity recognition, we use two context factors.

• Trust Infrastructure: this context factor is for service provider entities. With different trust infrastructures, service provider entities will take different approaches to recognize requester entities.

• Service Provided: With different services, different recognition information and security level will be required by provider entities.

The context environment in pervasive computing can be illustrated in Fig..2.



Fig..2 Context of Entities in pervasive computing

So we can see that, not only context of service requester entities is considered, but also service provider entities' context is taken into account.

4.2 The Context-Aware Entity Recognition Process

Entity Recognition process can be divided into three phases.

• **Initiation Phase:** The service requester entity (*Requester*) requests service from the service provider entity (*Recognizer*);

• **Recognition Information Exchange Phase:** *Recognizer* decides which information is needed from *Requester* according to what service is requested and sends the recognition information request to *Requester*; *Requester* estimates whether it should reply the needed information, if so, it send the information back to *Recognizer*;

• **Trust Evaluation Phase:** *Recognizer* evaluates *Requester*'s trustworthiness and decides whether to permit its request, if so, sends permission to *Requester*.

4.3 Entity Recognition Initiation

An Entity recognition session is initiated by *Requester* with an Access Request to *Recognizer*. In Access Request, *Requester* specifies what service it is interested in. As for how to describe desired service, it is more relevant with research on service discovery, which is quite out of our scope here. For more information about service discovery, SLP[20], UpnP[21], Jini[22], RDF[25], etc. can be referred to.

In this paper, for the purpose of simpleness, we just denote Access Request as follows,

$$reg = (ServNo, ServDesc)$$
(2)

where *ServNo* and *ServDesc* indicate the number and description of the requested service respectively.

4.4 Recognition Information Exchange

In our proposed scheme, Entity information exchange is a negotiation process. Firstly, *Recognizer* tells *Requester* which information is needed in order to prove its trustworthiness, according to what trust infrastructure the *Requester* can reply on and which concrete service *Requester* is requesting for. Then, the two entities will continue to exchange information until *Recognizer* gets enough information to evaluate *Requester*'s trustworthiness.

In order to describe recognition information, we use attribute vectors, which we borrow from Shankar [23].

Therefore, we can depict recognition information specification from *Recognizer* as follows.

$$cie_spec = \{r_1, r_2, ..., r_n\}_{pric}$$
 (3)

where $r_1, r_2, ..., r_n$ are attributes specified as needed recognition information, and *pric* means encrypt attribute vector with *Recognizer*'s private key.

On receiving recognition information specification, *Requester* decrypts it with *Recognizer*'s public key and gets to know which information is needed. Due to privacy protection, *Requester* will not always answer *Recognizer* with all information needed by it. That means *Requester* may reply with just part of the information

specified, accompanied with attributes that cannot be answered. Hence, *Requester*'s answer can be denoted as follows.

$$cie_reply = \{a_1, a_2, ..., a_k, r_{k+1}, r_{k+2}, ..., r_n\}_{prir}$$
 (4)

where $a_1, a_2, ..., a_k$ are information needed by *Recognizer*, r_{k+1} , $r_{k+2}, ..., r_n$ are attributes cannot be told to *Recognizer*, and *prir* is the private key of *Requester*.

When *Recognizer* receives *Requester*'s reply, it will check whether all recognition information is answered, if so, it will begin to evaluate *Requester*'s trustworthiness on the service it requests. Otherwise, *Recognizer* can take one of actions described bellow, according to user's configuration.

• To deny *Requester*'s request directly;

• To send alternative attributes required as recognition information to *Requester* and determine *Requester*'s trustworthiness later;

• To accept *Requester*'s reply, but decrease the privilege assigned to *Requester*.

If alternative attributes should be sent to *Requester*, *Requester* will also check them in terms of privacy. So the recognition information exchange may be a multitrip negotiation. process

4.5 Computing Trust Value Based On Trust Infrastructure

As long as *Recognizer* collects all necessary attributes values, it will compute the trust value from the collected information. This does not mean that these attributes values are all numeric. Instead, *Recognizer* can find maps from these attributes values to trust values relying on its trust infrastructure and compute *Requester*'s trust value based on these trust values and structure of its infrastructure.

Trust Values

A trust value shows to how much degree an entity is trusted by another entity in a certain context. In our scheme, a trust value is a real number and it can be denoted as: $T = \{t \mid t \in R \land t \ge 0 \land t \le 1\}$ (5)

The bigger t is, the more an entity is trusted. When t = 0, the entity is absolutely disbelieved. And when t = 1, the entity is absolutely believed in.

Trust Values from Trust Infrastructure

After recognitions information is exchanged, the trust infrastructure of *Recognizer* will give a set of trust values about *Requester*. How many trust values will be returned depends upon how many entities in the trust infrastructure that know *Requester*.

Supposing an entity e_i (*i*=1,2,...,*n*) in the trust infrastructure returns trust value t_i and the corresponding trust relationship in the trust infrastructure is ($e_i, tval_i, p_k$), where $p_k \in P$ (k=1,2,...,4). In order to computing final trust value of *Requester*, we group such involved trust relationships according to value of p_k as follows (for simple of brief, context is omitted).

 $p_1: (e_1, tval_1, p_1), (e_2, tval_2, p_1), \dots, (e_u, tval_u, p_1)$ $p_2: (e_{u+1}, tval_{u+1}, p_1), (e_{u+2}, tval_{u+2}, p_2), \dots, (e_{u+v}, tval_{u+v}, p_2)$ $\begin{array}{c} p_{3}: \quad (e_{u+\nu+1}, \quad tval_{u+\nu+1}, \quad p_{3}), \quad (e_{u+\nu+2}, \quad tval_{u+\nu+2}, \quad p_{3}), \dots, \\ (e_{u+\nu+s}, tval_{u+\nu+s}, p_{3}) \\ p_{4}: \quad (e_{u+\nu+s+1}, \quad tval_{u+\nu+s+1}, \quad p_{4}), \quad (e_{u+\nu+s+2}, \quad tval_{u+\nu+s+2}, \quad p_{4}), \dots, \quad (e_{n}, \quad tval_{n}, \quad p_{4}) \end{array}$

Therefore we can compute the contribute of each type of trust relationships to finial trust value of *Requester* as follows.

$$tv_{1} = \left(\frac{p_{1}}{u}\sum_{i=1}^{u}(tval_{i} \times t_{i})\right)$$

$$tv_{2} = \left(\frac{p_{2}}{v}\sum_{i=u+1}^{u+v}(tval_{i} \times t_{i})\right)$$

$$tv_{3} = \left(\frac{p_{3}}{s}\sum_{i=u+v+1}^{u+v+s}(tval_{i} \times t_{i})\right)$$

$$tv_{4} = \left(\frac{p_{4}}{n-u-v-s}\sum_{i=u+v+s+1}^{n}(tval_{i} \times t_{i})\right)$$
(6)

(7)

Then we can get the trust value of *Requester* according to formula (7).

$$val_{final} = \min(\sum_{k=1}^{4} tv_k, 1)$$

4.6 Evaluating Trustworthiness

t

Since trust values are not answers about yes or no, *Recognizer* has to translate trust values into such decision. In our current proposed scheme, we use a simple threshold based mechanism to make decision. Threshold values are set in a configuration file. When a decision should be made, the following formula will be used.

$$permission = \begin{cases} yes(tval_{final} \ge threshold) \\ no(tval_{final} < threshold) \end{cases}$$
(8)

where *tval* is the trust value and *threshold* is the threshold value set by users.

It should be point out that we use this rule just to describe our idea. In practice, more complex evaluation rules can be employed in the context-aware entity recognizer scheme.

4.7 Applied to Example Scenario

In this section, we will apply our scheme to Scenario 4. Supposing the trust infrastructure of John's PDA is what is described in the part B of section 3, and the service that Alice requests is Ctxt1, there are two trust relationships in its trust infrastructure can be used, which are described as follows.

(Harry, Ctxt1, 1, 0.5),

(Jerry, Ctxt1, 0.5, 0.3)

Supposing the trust values of Alice returned by Harry and Jerry are 0.8, 0.6 respectively, we can compute final trust value of Alice as follows according to formula (6) and formula (7).

$$tval_{Alice} = \min(\frac{0.5}{1} \times 1 \times 0.8 + \frac{0.3}{1} \times 0.5 \times 0.6, 1) = 0.49$$

If the threshold value is set as 0.5, since $tval_{Alice} < 0.5$, John will not send his home address to Alice according to formula (8).

5. Related Work

Seigneur et al. [1] [2] put forward the notion of entity recognition and they also proposed a pluggable entity recognition scheme to enable end-to-end trust. However, their scheme is just a "proof-of-concept" and was described simply in terms of cryptographics. We can say that it is not a complete entity recognition scheme.

More efforts were made on trust management. Blaze et al. [4] proposed a disturbed trust management solution, namely PolicyMaker, which is probably one of the first efforts on distributed trust. PolicyMaker is able to interpret policies and answer questions about access rights. Unfortunately, it is difficult for non-programmer to develop policies. PGP [8] is another distributed trust management scheme, but just for sending secure emails. Shand et al. [24] proposed a trust infrastructure, as well as a trust computation algorithm. It provides a solution to trust each other and work collaboratively in certain scenarios. Shankar [23] tried to propose a unified model for representing trust relationships between entities in pervasive computing environments, but he did not provide any more details about how to employ and implement their model. Even so, we get the idea of use an attribute sector modeling trust evidence from Shankar's work. Ninghui Li, et al [19] proposed a role-based trust-management framework, namely RT, which is a family of Role-based Trustmanagement languages for representing policies and credentials in distributed authorization. RT unifies RBAC (Role-Based Access Control) and trust-management concepts; it thus differs from previous trust management systems in that it uses roles as a central notion. These trust models may be sufficient in some cases, but none of them is suitable to fulfill trust requirements in various pervasive computing environments.

6. Conclusion and Future Work

In this paper, we propose a context-aware entity recognition scheme. This scheme is aimed to enable an entity to be able to recognize other entities in various scenarios. This has two meanings. On the one hand, an entity as the service provider can recognize other entities securely and adaptively. We argue that its security capability should be enhanced by or adaptive to its different environments. Therefore, we propose a notion of "Trust Infrastructure" that helps *Recognizer* to be able determine *Requester*'s trustworthiness. Since *Recognizer* may be movable, its trust infrastructure can be built dynamically in different environments. On the other hand, an entity as service requester may be trusted in various scenarios no matter which service it is requesting and no matter what security level *Recognizer* requires. To obtain such goal, an attribute-based recognition information exchange approach is employed,

which enables *Requester* to be able to be recognized by different service provider entities in different cases. As an essential part of the entire entity recognition scheme, we propose an algorithm to computer the trust value of *Requester* based on *Recognizer*'s trust infrastructure, so that *Recognizer* can decide whether it can permit *Requester*'s request or not according to a threshold based decision mechanism.

For future work, we will research more on trust infrastructures, especially dynamically and securely building trust infrastructure. Besides, entities in a trust infrastructure also have their own trust infrastructure, then how to use these indirect trust infrastructures will also be researched. Moreover, attribute-based recognition information exchange will also researched in detail, including designing a protocol to support such exchange and enable *Requester* to protect its privacy. Finally, we hope that entities can update their knowledge on strangers' trustworthiness and hence their trust infrastructures can also be refreshed based on their experiences.

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