Measurement-based coverage function for green femtocell networks

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**A R T I C L E   I N F O**

**Article history:**
Received 5 August 2014
Received in revised form 20 January 2015
Accepted 26 February 2015
Available online 6 March 2015

**Keywords:**
LTE femtocell
Dynamic adaption
Self-optimization
Energy efficiency
Power management
Offloading

**A B S T R A C T**

In this paper, we propose a self-optimized coverage function for LTE femtocells embedded in a macrocell area. Each Femto Base Station (FBS) adapts its pilot power, and thus the coverage, to the on-site traffic demand. Under low traffic conditions the FBSs, whose presence is not essential for the proper operation of the network, reside in a low power Listen Mode. In this way a relevant energy saving on entire femtocell network can be achieved. In a high-load scenario, FBSs dynamically create high capacity zones under interference constraints. This permits to improve system capacity and offload more traffic from the nearby macrocell and, in the same time, to minimize co-channel interference in the femtocell tier.

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1. Introduction and related works

Femtocell concept has found a place in the architecture of LTE networks as a cost-effective solution designed to improve both the coverage and the user throughput indoors (where mobile users spend most of time), as well as the overall system capacity by offloading data traffic from macrocells. Femtocells were originally conceived to be installed by terminal consumers without network pre-planning in private households. At present time, it is increasing the adoption of femtocells from the enterprise segment, which is a key focus for a growing number of operators.

According to the researches of “Informa Telecoms & Media”, the 9.6 million femtocells in operation today make up 56% of all base stations (BSs) globally and they will continue to outnumber all other types of cells with an expected 86% of the total BS market in 2016 [1]. Due to the massive deployment of these additional BSs the wireless network energy consumption might be significantly increased. This problem becomes especially acute in public areas (e.g. airports, shopping malls, etc.) characterized by a large number of mobile users, which require high data rates. In these environments, the capacity of a macrocell is not enough and a very high femtocell density is expected. Let’s also note that the user number is highly variable. For this reason the use of the static pilot power configuration, in which FBSs are required to transmit pilot signals continuously and to do the related processing even when they are not serving any users, would lead to considerable energy waste for entire femtocell network under low traffic load conditions. Therefore, energy saving techniques need to be exploited by designing efficient mechanisms to enable sleep modes in FBSs.

Another significant issue arises from the fact that femtocells are typically configured to use the same licensed frequency band as macrocells with which they coexist. This is spectrally efficient, but can cause interference issues that become more challenging in dense FBS

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.comnet.2015.02.025
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deployments (e.g. in enterprise environments), where femtocells are very likely to be overlapped. The increased level of interference leads to a significant performance degradation of the overall femtocell network.

For the success of dense femtocell networks, both the issues of energy efficiency and intercell interference mitigation should be addressed together optimizing the potential conflicts while, at the same time, trying to minimize the intervention of network operator/user.

Many works in the literature (e.g. [2–6]) have dealt with the above issues separately, neglecting the impact of their simultaneous optimization. In [2–4] only the energy saving issue is addressed, while the interference between adjacent femtocells is not taken into account. These works assume a constant femtocell radius in the downlink irrespective of surrounding radio frequency (RF) environment and femtocell deployment topology, and they propose to switch off unnecessary hardware components of FBSs when not involved in an active call. In [5,6] adaptive coverage control schemes are presented, but the energy saving issue is not addressed.

Other works have proposed solutions aiming at optimizing the two objectives simultaneously. In [7], the scheme includes UE-controlled sleep mode for FBSs in order to reduce power consumption. The FBS that receives the strongest wake-up signal, broadcasted by UEs, is chosen by Femtocell Management Unit to be waken-up. Then each active FBS adapts its transmission power as a function of UEs positions. In [8] FBSs use user activity detection in order to save energy. Active FBSs adjust their pilot power levels in order to minimize co-tier interference following commands of a Femtocell Interference Unit. Both these proposals operates in a centralized fashion which envisages a local femtocell management unit. So, they exploit the advantage of the centralized knowledge of the overall state of the network to implement the optimization strategy. However this results in an increased complexity of the system, mainly due to the need of a central controller and to the information exchange between femtocells and the controller itself, which may cause signaling overhead. Moreover, centralized implementations typically suffer of low scalability and robustness, thus making them not attractive for practical use in expected large-scale femtocell deployment.

In this paper we deal with these problems by proposing a distributed self-configuration approach. It aims at addressing both energy consumption reduction and femto–femto interference issues without requiring a leader or a central control unit, neither information exchange between the base stations of the network. In the proposed algorithm (an improved version of the one presented in [9,10]) we make use of radio measurements integrating in each FBS automatic and autonomous procedures of configuration and optimization of coverage according to the detected on-site user activity. The adaptive nature of the coverage algorithm allows to increase the capacity and the Energy Efficiency (EE) of the overall network. The simulation results show the flexibility, the scalability, the robustness and the stability of our method. Furthermore, we make use of a component-based model to quantify the energy saving achieved by our algorithm taking into account a typical diurnal traffic pattern in a public area.

The paper is organized as follows: in Section 2, the network model and the problem formulation are defined; in Section 3 the detailed description of the proposed power control algorithm is given; in Section 4 the performance of our algorithm is evaluated by MATLAB simulations. Concluding remarks are given in Section 5 and are followed by the Appendix which is dedicated to the decision-making parameters for our algorithm.

2. Network model and problem formulation

In the following a two-tier heterogeneous network comprising a single macrocell embedded with a set of FBSs is considered (Fig. 1). Both FBSs and the Macro Base Station (MBS) are assumed to operate using the same OFDMA technology and to use the same licensed frequency band. We assume that the MBS ensures complete coverage, as this is the case in dense public areas where femtocells are likely to be deployed as hotspots of large capacity for the purpose of increasing the throughput and offloading traffic from macrocells. Femtocells are deployed without cell pre-planning and all BSs are equipped with omni-directional antennas. For convenient analysis, some assumptions are made and are listed below.

**Assumption 1.** There is no intra-cell interference in the downlink.

**Assumption 2.** For FBSs the open access mode is adopted, i.e. FBSs behave as regular BSs and are accessible by any UE. This access mode is considered to be used widely for enterprise deployments, in shopping malls, cafes and other public areas [11,12].

**Assumption 3.** Each UE can be served by at most one BS. Cell selection is based on a maximum downlink received power of pilot signal.

**Assumption 4.** FBSs operate in two modes: Listen Mode and Active Mode [4].

Based on “Assumptions 2 and 3”, the macro–femto interference is less acute than femto–femto interference. In fact in this scenario UEs which are causing or suffering from interference can be handed over freely between the macro and femtocells [13]. Furthermore, specific macro–femto interference mitigation approaches (e.g. [14–17]) can be additionally applied without deteriorating the performance of our power control scheme. For this reason we focus only on the problem of interference in the femtocell tier.

In regard to the femto–femto interference avoidance schemes, there are two different approaches: those that use intelligent allocation of spectral resources (Physical Resource Blocks (PRBs) in the LTE specifications) [18–20] and those that apply the femtocell pilot power calibration to minimize femtocell overlapping [21,22]. We follow the second approach, therefore we do not take into account the allocation of PRBs to single active UEs’ connections. However, the strategies of intelligent resource allocation can be used together with our pilot power control so as to improve the quality of both. In this paper we propose an algorithm that performs a self-optimization coverage
function that continuously adapts the pilot power and thus the coverage of femtocells in order to fulfill the following objectives:

1. Improve EE of the femtocell network in a low load scenario.
2. Improve the overall system capacity in high load conditions and offload more traffic from the outdoor macrocell by maximizing the femtocell coverage.
3. Reduce co-channel interference between adjacent femtocells by minimizing the coverage overlaps with the view of providing a minimum level of Quality of Service (QoS) to all femtocell users.
4. Provide a robust, flexible, scalable and stable control scheme suitable for a large-scale femtocell deployment.

To accomplish the fourth objective, we have chosen a self-organizing measurement-based control scheme without any signaling exchange between BSs. Thanks to this last feature, the delay introduced by Internet as backhaul for the FBS has no effect on the operation of our control scheme.

The stability of our algorithm was obtained considering that the femtocell size does not have significant impact on the energy consumption of the FBS [23]. So, once an active FBS has adapted its configuration to the current traffic demand, it switches to Stabilization State rather than continuously adapt its pilot power as a function of users’ positions (that may result in an increased number of computational processes and handovers).

3. Pilot power control algorithm

In this section we present the description of the algorithm in regard to a single FBS\( _k \). Fig. 2 illustrates the FBS’s State Diagram and synthesizes the whole proposed power control mechanism.

Femtocells can reside in two principal operation modes: Listen Mode and Active Mode. The FBS that resides in Listen Mode disable its pilot power and associated processing, thus it achieves a significant energy saving. In Active Mode the FBS dynamically calibrates its pilot power (and thus the coverage) as a function of local traffic demand by carrying out a two step procedure that includes Initial Power Setting and Dynamic Power Adaption. As soon as an optimal configuration is achieved, the FBS passes to Stabilization State with constant setting of the pilot power.

Operation of the proposed algorithm is based on estimation of two decision-making parameters by FBS\( _k \):

1. the noise level on the uplink frequency band \((\text{NOISE}_{ULk})\) measured by the FBS\( _k \) for detecting the presence of any active user;
2. the ratio between pilot signal and interfering pilot signals plus noise for detecting harmful interference \((\text{PSINR}_{k}, \text{Pilot Signal to Interference plus Noise Ratio})\) and minimizing the cell overlap.

The detailed description of the decision-making parameters is given in Appendix. By comparison of these estimated values with the corresponding thresholds \((\text{NOISE} _{TH} \text{ and } \text{PSINR} _{TH} \text{ respectively})\) each FBS makes a decision on its pilot power calibration. Below we provide the detailed description of the algorithm.

3.1. Listen mode

In the initial state, when the local traffic demand is low or absent, the FBS without any active call resides in a low...
power Listen Mode. Femtocell activity is controlled by a low-power sniffer integrated in the FBS, that continuously performs measurements of NOISE_ULk. When a UE, located inside the sensing range of the sniffer, connects to the MBS, the sniffer detects a rise of the received noise power and the presence of active user can be detected. To avoid an unreasonable activation of idle femtocells we have introduced a threshold value of noise level (NOISE_TH), which allows to control the sensitivity of FBSs.

3.2. Initial power setting

When the sniffer detects an adequate rise in the received noise power on the uplink frequency band, that is NOISE_ULk > NOISE_TH, the FBSk switches on its pilot transmission and the associated processing, providing cell coverage with initial radius Rini. For this purpose, the FBS sets the initial transmit power to such a value that a user located at the edge of the femtocell with radius Rini receives, on average, the same power from the FBS and from nearby MBS. Therefore, the initial femtocell pilot power, subject to the maximum limit power of the FBS $P_{f_{\text{max}}}$, can be calculated in dBM as in [24]

$$P_{k_{\text{ini}}} = \min(P_{\text{MBS}}^k + PL(R_{\text{ini}}), P_{f_{\text{max}}}).$$

(1)

where $P_{\text{MBS}}^k$ is the pilot power of MBS received by FBSk; PL(Rini) is the estimated path loss from the femtocell to a UE at the target radius Rini.

The received power $P_{\text{MBS}}^k$ is not estimated using a path-loss model, but it is measured using the built-in measurement capability of the FBS. This approach has the advantage that no information on the macrocell network is required.

Then, active UEs located within the coverage of FBSk can detect the presence of two BSs, macro and femto, and can make a handover based on “Assumption 3”. Users offloaded to the femtocell have larger peak throughputs as they are close to their serving BS. In addition, those UEs who are still connected to the MBS enjoy more resources as they are shared now with a fewer number of macrocell users.

3.3. Dynamic power adaption

The Initial Power Setting procedure described above, which provides the initial cell coverage of the FBS, is optimized by Dynamic Power Adaption scheme. Iteratively, FBSk estimates the decision-making parameters (NOISE_ULk, PSINRk), compares them with corresponding thresholds and calibrates its pilot power accordingly until finding an optimal power configuration which accomplishes the objectives 2 and 3 of Section 2. The coverage optimization process is summarized in Table 1. Below we list all the considered cases and provide some explanatory notes.

(1) **There are active UEs linked to the FBSk, i.e. $U_k \neq 0$**

(1.a) $\text{NOISE} \cdot \text{UL}_k \geq \text{NOISE} \cdot \text{TH}$ & $\text{PSINR}_k \geq \text{PSINR} \cdot \text{TH}$

If both decision-making parameters exceed corresponding thresholds, it means that there are other active UEs connected to the MBS in the sensing range of the sniffer and in the same time the minimum QoS requirement of each own active UE is ensured. In this case FBSk has to increase its cell radius, $R_k(i-1)$, of $\Delta R^+$ aiming to provide the coverage to more UEs. Accordingly, FBSk adapts its pilot power as follows

$$P_k(i) = \min(P_{\text{MBS}}^k + PL(R_k(i)), P_{f_{\text{max}}}).$$

(2)

where $i$ is the iteration number.

Then the active UEs, that detect pilot transmission of more BSs, can make a handover based on “Assumption 3”.

In the next iteration the FBS will update the decision-making parameters and will verify the fulfillment of one of the conditions (1.a, 1.b, 1.c, 2.a, 2.b). (1.b) $\text{PSINR}_k \leq \text{PSINR} \cdot \text{TH}$

A PSINRk value below its acceptable level means that the minimum QoS requirement is not satisfied for at least one currently connected user. This user is likely to be located in the overlap area between adjacent femtocells. So FBSk decreases its cell radius of $\Delta R^-$ by setting its pilot power in the following way:

$$P_k(i) = \max(P_{\text{MBS}}^k + PL(R_k(i)), P_{f_{\text{min}}}).$$

(3)

where $P_{f_{\text{min}}}$ is a minimum transmit power of the FBS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
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<td><strong>Dynamic power adaption.</strong></td>
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</table>
| **Definition:** $U_k$ is a number of active users linked to the FBSk. **Initialize:** Stabilization State = FALSE while Stabilization State = FALSE do Update NOISE_ULk and $U_k$; if $U_k \geq 1$ then Update PSINRk if NOISE_ULk > NOISE_TH & PSINRk > PSINR_TH then Increase pilot power: $R_k \leftarrow R_k + \Delta R^+ \rightarrow P_k \leftarrow \min(P_{\text{MBS}}^k + PL(R_k), P_{f_{\text{max}}});$ Update PSINRk; end if PSINRk < PSINR_TH then while PSINRk < PSINR_TH do Decrease pilot power: $R_k \leftarrow R_k - \Delta R^- \rightarrow P_k \leftarrow \frac{\text{PL}(R_k, P_{f_{\text{max}}})}{\text{PL}(R_k, P_{f_{\text{max}}})};$ Update PSINRk; end No power modification: $R_k \leftarrow R_k \rightarrow P_k \leftarrow P_k; \quad \text{Stabilization State = TRUE;}$ end if NOISE_ULk < NOISE_TH & PSINRk > PSINR_TH then No pilot power modification: $R_k \leftarrow R_k \rightarrow P_k \leftarrow P_k; \quad \text{Stabilization State = TRUE;}$ end else if NOISE_ULk > NOISE_TH then if $P_k < P_{f_{\text{max}}}$ then Increase pilot power: $R_k \leftarrow R_k + \Delta R^+ \rightarrow P_k \leftarrow \min(P_{\text{MBS}}^k + PL(R_k), P_{f_{\text{max}}});$ else Turn off pilot transmission: $R_k \leftarrow 0 \rightarrow P_k \leftarrow 0; \quad \text{Return to Listen Mode processing; break;}$ end end else Turn off pilot transmission: $R_k \leftarrow 0 \rightarrow P_k \leftarrow 0; \quad \text{Return to Listen Mode processing; break;}$ end
As a result of coverage reduction, those users who were suffering from the interference appear to be out of coverage of FBSk and they establish a new connection based on “Assumption 3”. In the next iteration the FBS updates PSINRk value and verifies the fulfillment only of condition (1.b). So FBSk continually decreases its pilot power until $\text{PSINR}_k \geq \text{PSINR}_{TH}$ (irrespectively to $\text{NOISE}_{UL_k}$ value), then switches to Stabilization State. This decision allows to eliminate continuous coverage fluctuations in order to avoid an excessive number of handover events.

(1.c) $\text{NOISE}_{UL_k} < \text{NOISE}_{TH}$ &  $\text{PSINR}_k \geq \text{PSINR}_{TH}$

FBS has achieved an optimal coverage and it switches to Stabilization State.

(2) No active UE linked to the FBSk, i.e. $U_k = 0$

If there are not currently connected active UEs, FBSk adapts its coverage according only to $\text{NOISE}_{UL_k}$ value.

(2.a) $\text{NOISE}_{UL_k} \geq \text{NOISE}_{TH}$

It means that there are active macro UEs located in the sensing range of the sniffer. If $P_k < P_{f,\text{max}}$, the FBS increases its pilot power according to (12). Due to the coverage extension some active macrocell users can handover into the femtocell based on “Assumption 3”. In the next iteration the FBS updates the decision-making parameters and verifies the fulfillment of one of the conditions (1.a, 1.b, 1.c, 2.a, 2.b), adapting its pilot power setting accordingly. If FBSk has achieved the maximum value of its pilot power ($P_k = P_{f,\text{max}}$), while macro UEs remain unattainable ($U_k = 0$), FBSk turns off its pilot power and associated processing and rests in Listen Mode for $\Delta T$ time interval. So, FBSk will reside in an energy saving state, rather than being active measuring a high $\text{NOISE}_{UL_k}$ level due to transmissions of unattainable UEs.

(2.b) $\text{NOISE}_{UL_k} < \text{NOISE}_{TH}$

The FBS turns off its pilot transmission and associated signaling and returns to the Listen Mode processing.

3.4. Stabilization state

The FBS achieves Stabilization State when its pilot power (and thus the coverage) is optimized based on the on-site traffic demand and in the same time an acceptable SINR level is guaranteed to each of its currently connected user. From Stabilization State, FBSk switches to Dynamic Power Adaption procedure in order to detect changes of the local radio environment and, if required, updates its pilot power setting. The transition to Dynamic Power Adaption is carried out: periodically with time intervals $\Delta T$ if there are active UEs currently connected to FBSk or immediately when no UE is connected to FBSk, i.e. $U_k = 0$ is verified.

4. Performance evaluation

In this section we verify the performance of the proposed scheme by simulations in MATLAB.

4.1. Simulation assumptions and performance metrics

In the simulations the system parameters were set as shown in Table 2. More specifically, some assumptions and simplifications were made: all UEs have “Power class 3” ($P_{f,\text{max}} = 23$ dBm), defined by the standard; all FBSs have the same maximum transmission power $P_{f,\text{max}}$; $P_0$ and $\alpha$ values are equal for all FBSs; UEs belong to two different traffic classes: Low-Rate users and High-Rate users uniformly distributed, or, alternatively, concentrated in the macrocell area.

Furthermore, we have defined the following metrics.

(1) Overlapping factor of femtocells ($\Theta$).

$$\Theta = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} \sum_{j=i+1}^{N} \Theta_{ij}}{\sum_{i=1}^{N} \sum_{j=1}^{N} \Theta_{ij}},$$

where $N$ is the total number of FBSs; $A_i$ is the area covered by femtocell $i$; $\Theta_{ij}$ is the overlap area between femtocell $i$ and femtocell $j$.

(2) Percentage of users present in the macrocell area served by all FBSs ($\Phi$).

$$\Phi = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} U_i \cdot 100}{N_u},$$

where $U_i$ is a number of users served by FBSs; $N_u$ is a total number of active users present in the macrocell area.

In the following for assessing the performance of our coverage function we compare it to the static pre-planned configurations, where the pilot power of each FBS is fixed and is ideally set to provide the maximum coverage with minimal femto–femto interference by excluding overlap between adjacent femtocells.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: System parameters.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial femtocell radius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum transmit power of FBS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal transmit power of FBS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transmit power of MBS</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRBs assigned to a High-Rate user</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRBs assigned to a Low-Rate user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum transmit power of UEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path loss compensation factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power to be contained in one PRB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Path loss at 1 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path loss exponent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermal noise power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall penetration loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FBSs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range modification step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta^-$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2. Determination of thresholds

The proposed algorithm requires to set thresholds’ values: PSINR\(_{TH}\) and NOISE\(_{TH}\). With regard to the first parameter, in Appendix B we show that the estimated PSINR value is the worst SINR which an active femto user could suffer. LTE specifications [25] indicate SINR = \(-4\) dB as the minimum requirement to guarantee an acceptable QoS. As our coverage control ensures in each femtocell that no UE’s PSINR falls below its threshold level, we have chosen to set PSINR\(_{TH}\) equal to \(-4\) dB for providing a minimum acceptable QoS to all femto users.

With this value of PSINR\(_{TH}\) we have carried out a series of simulations in order to determine an optimal NOISE\(_{TH}\) level. The scenario that we have used represents an enterprise environment with 5 FBS localized so as to cover most part of an area (60 × 40 m\(^2\)). We also assume that this area is covered by a MBS located at a distance of about 300 m.

Figs. 3 and 4 show diagrams of \(\Theta\) and \(\Phi\), respectively, for NOISE\(_{TH}\) varying from \(-60\) to \(-50\) dBm. The results are averaged over 50 independent simulation runs. For the static configuration \(\Theta = 0\) for different traffic load scenarios, this is because the pilot power of each FBS is constant and it is configured to avoid overlap areas between adjacent femtocells. The value of \(\Phi\), instead, is maintained around 73%. So, even such “ideal” configuration cannot guarantee the coverage to all active UEs present in the considered macrocell area. By comparative analysis of the simulation results (see Figs. 3 and 4), it can be estimated that a good trade-off between \(\Theta\) and \(\Phi\) is achieved with NOISE\(_{TH}\) set to \(-53\) dBm. In fact, this threshold value provides \(\Theta \leq 5\%\) and \(\Phi\) is about 80\% in a high load scenario.

Finally, the thresholds are set to: PSINR\(_{TH}\) = \(-4\) dB; NOISE\(_{TH}\) = \(-53\) dBm. With this values of thresholds in Fig. 5 is shown an example of the operation of our algorithm: each FBS dynamically adapts its pilot power (fine line) according to the traffic demand until Stabilization State (bold line). Here and in all following simulation results the users present in the macrocell area are indicated by dots.

4.3. Evaluation of scalability and robustness

To evaluate the scalability and robustness of our proposal, we have carried out a series of simulations varying the network topology:

**Topology 1.** 5 FBS localized so as to cover most part of an area (60 × 40 m\(^2\));

**Topology 2.** 3 FBS localized so as to cover most part of an area (60 × 40 m\(^2\));

**Topology 3.** 20 FBS randomly distributed in an area (100 × 100 m\(^2\)).

For all topologies, the MBS is assumed to be located at the distance of about 300 meters.

In Figs. 6 and 7 are shown \(\Phi\) and \(\Theta\) for each topology at various UE’s densities per unit area (\(\rho = \text{active users/m}^2\)). When the system is in low traffic conditions (\(\rho \leq 0.01\)), our algorithm provides lower \(\Phi\) values compared to the static configuration, as in this case our power control scheme places some FBSs in Listen Mode (for instance, three FBSs reside in Listen Mode in Fig. 8), thus allowing to achieve a relevant energy saving on entire femtocell network. However, in this scenario the MBS can alone handle the traffic while offering to users satisfactory throughput. When the traffic load increases (\(\rho > 0.01\)) the proposed algorithm, thanks to its adaptive nature, allows to obtain higher \(\Phi\) values compared to the static configuration (see Fig. 6), while maintaining an acceptable level of \(\Theta\) (see Fig. 7). More precisely, in Fig. 9 is shown an example of how the algorithm is able to provide the coverage to those users (indicated by triangles) who could not be covered by the static configuration, while guaranteeing the sufficient
SINR level to all connected users (minimal overlap). So, in a high load scenario our algorithm allows to offload more traffic from the MBS and therefore to increase the overall system capacity. In addition, EE of the overall cellular network also enhances, as MBS’s power consumption is strongly related to its traffic load [23]. Let’s note that numerical values vary depending on the specific arrangement of FBSs, but, regardless the network topology being considered, implementation of the proposed algorithm allows to offload up to 13% active users from the MBS. This confirms scalability of proposed power control scheme.

Lastly, for each topology, we have considered various distances of the FBSs from the MBS (300 m, 1 km, 5 km, 20 km and 30 km). The simulation results differ slightly from those previous (e.g. as shown in Fig. 10 for Topology 3) confirming flexibility and robustness of our self-coverage function.

Finally, the scalability, dynamic adaptability, and flexibility of the proposed algorithm guarantee a natural robustness to any faults or shutdown of one or more FBSs.

4.4. Multi-MBS environment

To evaluate the behavior of our control scheme in a multi-MBS environment, we assess the impact of the presence of neighboring MBS on estimation of the decision-making parameters (NOISE_UL and PSINK).
We have considered two adjacent MBSs: MBS$_i$ and MBS$_j$, which belong to the same operator and have equal maximal transmit powers $P_{MBS}^t$ (see Table 2). The MBSs are located at the distance $L_{ij}$ from each other. In the coverage area of MBS$_i$, is embedded a FBS at the distance $d_i$ from it (see Fig. 11).

$NOISE_{UL}$ represents the total noise power in the uplink frequency band measured by the FBS, therefore the transmission power of the interfering neighboring MBS can non affect directly. What may happen is that the idle FBS, located at the edge of macrocell MBS$_i$ non affect directly. What may happen is that the idle FBS, located at the edge of macrocell MBS$_i$ would switch to Active State due to the noise generated by transmissions of UEs connected to different MBSs (MBS$_i$ and MBS$_j$). However, it will not cause any negative effect on the operation of our algorithm as it does not foresee any signaling exchange with MBSs. On the contrary, at the edges of the cell, where users experience the worst conditions in terms of channel quality and bandwidth, femtocells will be switched on providing better performance to all users.

As regards the impact of adjacent MBS on the second decision-making parameter ($PSINR_{MBS}$), we have assessed the downlink interference experienced by a femtocell user due to the pilot transmissions of both MBSs ($I_{MBS_i}$ and $I_{MBS_j}$), singly and in the aggregate, for several distance values $d_i$. In particular, we have considered a worst-case, where the distance $d_i$ increases from one MBS by $\Delta d$, while the distance from the other MBS decreased by equal value ($\Delta d$) and the interfering effect becomes more severe.

In Fig. 12, for $L_{ij} = 3$ km, the simulation results show that for low $d_i$ values, that is the FBS is close to MBS$_j$, the interference power that receives a femtocell UE from neighboring MBS$_i$ ($I_{MBS_i}$) is negligible compared to those from MBS$_j$ ($I_{MBS_j}$). Obviously, the interference power, $I_{MBS_j}$, reaches its maximal value if the femtocell is located at the cell edge, $d_i = L_{ij}/2$. Here, the aggregate MBSs’ interference ($I_{MBS_i} + I_{MBS_j}$) doubles, but it is lower than the interference level that a user experiences when it is connected to a FBS located next to one of MBSs ($d_i = 100$ m in Fig. 12). Besides $L_{ij} = 3$ km we have considered also other $L_{ij}$ values ($L_{ij} = (2.5, 10)$ km) obtaining analogous results.

In conclusion, the simulation results and the above analysis show that the presence of neighboring MBS does not cause negative effects in the estimation of both decision-making parameters. We infer that the behavior of our pilot power control scheme is not deteriorated due to the presence of neighboring MBS, so we expect that it operates properly also in a multi-MBS environment.

4.5 Evaluation of stability

The performance of our algorithm, in terms of stability and responsiveness of the control, depends on the $\Delta T$ value, that is the time interval in which a FBS resides in Stabilization State before switching to Dynamic Power Adaption procedure.

We expect that with shorter $\Delta T$ duration the system is more responsive to the changes of traffic conditions due to the frequent pilot power adaption. But this could result in a significant increase in the number of handover events. To determine the appropriate $\Delta T$ value, we have considered a new scenario in which the traffic load is variable in time. More specifically, the simulations have been carried out under the following assumptions:

1. UEs are uniformly distributed in the considered macrocell area. The total number of UEs varies during the observation period of 16 h (6:00–22:00) as shown in Fig. 13.
2. The mobility of UEs is neglected, but each UE can reside in on/off state following the Poisson Distribution process of the call arrival time. The interarrival time and the call holding time are exponentially distributed with means $\lambda = 4$ min and $\mu = 3$ min respectively.

Due to the limit of space, we provide simulation results only for Topology 1, but analogous results were obtained also with others.

Fig. 14 shows the average percentage of users covered by all FBSs during the whole observation period for several $\Delta T$ values. We observe that for $\Delta T \leq 16.5$ min our algorithm responds more efficiently to the traffic fluctuations and, consequently, provide higher $\Phi$ values compared to

---

1 As the femtocell radius is very small, we approximate the distance between femto UE and the MBS, with $d_i$. 
the static configuration (dotted line). However, such $\Delta T$ values lead to a substantially increased number of handovers (see Fig. 15) due to the frequent pilot power calibration events in attempt to continuously improve the coverage. Protracted $\Delta T$ duration delays the response of FBSs to the changes of the traffic demand and, as a consequence, adversely affect the performance of our algorithm in terms of $\Phi$ (see Fig. 14 for $\Delta T > 16.5$ min). Nevertheless, in this case the number of handovers is significantly reduced (see Fig. 15).

Let’s also note that the total duration of Listen Mode intervals is not sensitive to $\Delta T$ values, as the FBS switches to Listen Mode if no UE is connected to it independently if $\Delta T$ is expired or not.

So, by comparative analysis of simulation results shown in Figs. 14 and 15 we have determined $\Delta T = 13$ min as an optimal value, that permits to achieve a trade-off between the number of handover events and $\Phi$. The subsequent analysis is made with $\Delta T = 13$ min.

### 4.6. Evaluation of energy efficiency

In the following we provide a power consumption analysis for FBS which operates in Active Mode and Listen Mode. According to [23] the power consumption is load dependent for MBSs, while there is a negligible load dependency for FBSs, so we assume static power consumption across all traffic load for FBSs and we use a static component-based power consumption evaluation model introduced in [26]. This power model is built around the split of a BS into a number of components and sub-components, as shown in Fig. 16.

A FBS consists of two transceivers (TRXs). A TRX comprises an Antenna Interface (AI), a Power Amplifier (PA), a Radio Frequency (RF) small-signal transceiver section, a digital baseband (BB) interface including a receiver and transmitter section, a DC–DC power supply, an active cooling system and an AC–DC unit (Main Supply) for connection to electrical power grid.

So, the power consumption of the FBS that resides in Active Mode can be calculated as follows

$$P_{\text{ACT}} = N_{\text{TRX}} \cdot \frac{P_{\text{PA}} + P_{\text{RX}} + P_{\text{BB}} + P_{\text{Sniff}}}{(1 - \sigma_{\text{DC}})(1 - \sigma_{\text{MS}})(1 - \sigma_{\text{Cool}})}.$$  \hspace{1cm}(6)

Table 3 summarizes the state of the art power consumption of LTE femtocells as of 2012. Applying the data reported in Table 3 to Eq. (6), we obtain $P_{\text{ACT}} = 7$ W.
By switching to Listen Mode, the FBS switches off the PA, RF transmitter and RF receiver. However, the sniffer (PSniff = 0.3 W [4]) is switched on to perform received power measurements on the uplink frequency band. So, the power consumption of the FBS that resides in Listen Mode results

$$P_{LM} = N_{TRX} \cdot \frac{P_{ill} + P_{Sniff}}{(1 - \sigma_{DC})(1 - \sigma_{MS})(1 - \sigma_{Cool})} = 3.62 \text{ W.} \quad (7)$$

As can be estimated, the addition of Listen Mode to the normal femtocell operation results in a power saving of 48.29% for each idle femtocell.

The total amount of energy consumed by FBS\(_k\) is given in the following equation:

$$E_{FBS}^k = P_{ACT,k} \cdot t_{ACT,k} + P_{LM,k} \cdot t_{LM,k}. \quad (8)$$

where \(P_{ACT,k}\) and \(P_{LM,k}\) represent the power consumption of FBS\(_k\) when it resides in Active or in Listen Mode, respectively; \(t_{ACT,k}\) and \(t_{LM,k}\) represent the time period (expressed in hours) in which the FBS\(_k\) is in Active Mode and in Listen Mode, respectively.

So, the total amount of energy consumed by entire femtocell network can be calculated as:

$$E_{FN} = \sum_{k=1}^{N} E_{FBS}^k. \quad (9)$$

To evaluate the energy saving potential of our algorithm in a realistic scenario we have taken into account a traffic profile that emulates the spatial and temporal variations during a working day in an enterprise scenario. More specifically, we consider Topology 3 (Fig. 17) provisioned of a Dining and Lounge Area, where the number of users increases substantially during the lunch break (from 13:00 to 15:00) (as shown in Fig. 18).

After a series of simulations, in Fig. 19 we report the number of active femtocells, averaged over each hour. Besides, in Fig. 20 the average number of active users connected to FBSs with our algorithm and those with the static configuration are presented. Finally, in Fig. 21 we report the energy saving gain obtained for each hour and calculated as follows

$$E_{GAIN} = \frac{E_{FN, Static} - E_{FN, Our Approach}}{E_{FN, Static}}. \quad (10)$$

where \(E_{FN, Static}\) and \(E_{FN, Our Approach}\) are calculated according to (9) and represent the total amount of energy consumed by the whole femtocell network with the static configuration and with implementation of our algorithm, respectively.

By comparing the above results, in low load conditions numerous FBSs reside in Listen Mode, that permits to achieve a significant energy gain (see Fig. 21) and in the same time does not affect seriously the user coverage. In fact, as shown in Fig. 20, the coverage provided by our power control scheme is only marginally lower than those static. Nevertheless, in these conditions the MBS alone can provide satisfactory performance to its connected users. In high load conditions, most of FBSs are active and our control scheme provides better coverage compared to the
static configuration (Fig. 20) and, consequently, more traffic is offloaded from the MBS (just when it is the most necessary).

Applying (10) to the whole observation period, we have quantified the total amount of energy consumed by entire femtocell network during a working day:

$$E_{FN, \text{Static}} = 2240.00 \text{ Wh} \quad \text{and} \quad E_{FN, \text{Our Approach}} = 1871.84 \text{ Wh}.$$ 

It can be estimated that implementation of our algorithm in this case study results in an overall energy saving gain of 16.44%. It is important to emphasize that the total power saving of the femtocell network is relevant considering the expected large-scale deployment of FBSs in urban scenarios.

4.7. Different path loss models

Path loss models are good instruments and are widely used for estimation of the overall network capacity, for testing various control schemes, etc., but they depend on multiple environmental factors and several models are proposed in the literature. So far we have used a unique path loss model between UE and MBS or FBS [27].

In the following we verify if our algorithm operates properly in other radio propagation environments using different path loss models. For example, for a suburban scenario, the path loss between indoor UE and the outdoor MBS can be modeled as follows [28]:

$$PL_{\text{NLOS}}(d_{u,MBS}) = 2.7 + 42.8 \cdot \log 10(d_{u,MBS}) + L_{OW},$$  \quad (11)$$

where NLOS denotes that there is no visual line of sight between transmitter and receiver; $d_{u,MBS}$ is a distance between UE$_u$ and the MBS; $L_{OW}$ is the penetration loss of an outdoor wall and we assume $L_{OW} = 20 \text{ dB}$.

The path loss between indoor UE$_u$ and the FBS$_j$ that are in the same building, can be calculated as

$$PL(d_{uj}) = 38.46 + 20 \cdot \log 10(d_{uj}) + 0.7 \cdot d_{2D,\text{indoor}}$$

$$+ 18.3 \cdot n^{(n+2)/(n+1) - 0.46},$$  \quad (12)$$

where $(d_{uj})$ is a distance between UE$_u$ and the FBS$_j$; $(0.7 \cdot d_{2D,\text{indoor}}$) takes account of penetration loss due to the walls inside an apartment, $d_{2D,\text{indoor}}$ is a thickness of an indoor wall and it is assumed $d_{2D,\text{indoor}} = 0.3 \text{ m}$; $n$ is the number of penetrated floors and we consider $n = 1$.

With these path loss models we have derived the suited $NOISE,TH$ value and evaluated the behavior of our algorithm for all the cases considered previously. We can compare the results in Fig. 22 with those in Fig. 6 and in Fig. 23 with those in Fig. 7. For example, for the case study of paragraph 4.6, the control algorithm obtains an energy saving of about 16% as before. Other results are not reported only due limited space but the simulation results does not differ from those already obtained, showing so that our algorithm runs well any path loss model is used to simulate the propagation environment.
5. Conclusion

Enterprise femtocell deployment will be large-scale and it will cover a wide range of environments in public areas such as enterprise buildings, airports and shopping malls. For this scenario, where the open access mode is used, we propose a self-organizing measurement-based coverage function for LTE FBSs embedded in a macrocell area that addresses both power consumption reduction and femto–femto interference issues. Our solution provides scalable, robust and stable control without any signaling overhead compared to centralized approaches.

In a low load scenario our pilot power control scheme places some FBSs in Listen Mode, that permits to reduce power consumption to up to 48.29% for each idle femtocell. In a high load scenario each FBS dynamically adapts its pilot power (and thus the coverage) to the on-site traffic demand and in these conditions our algorithm permits to offload up to 13% more active users from the MBS to FBSs compared to the static configuration scheme while providing an acceptable QoS to all connected users. Furthermore, we use a component-based model to quantify the energy saving potential of our algorithm. Simulation results show that in a case study our approach achieves an overall energy saving gain of 16.44% under a typical enterprise traffic profile.

We also address the implementation issues of our control scheme discussing in detail the estimation of two decision-making parameters. We show that some measurements are defined by LTE specifications and that the sniffing capability is already integrated without additional costs in some FBSs produced by key vendors.

The target of our further research is to extend the functionality of the proposed algorithm considering a “Hybrid access mode” for FBSs, in which the femtocell provides service to all UEs, but preferential treatment is given to its associated registered users, while other users can connect via a subset of remaining available subchannels on a best-effort basis. Furthermore, we will analyze the cost of increased number of handovers due to the femtocell pilot power calibration.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their comments and constructive criticism which greatly helped to clarify and improve the presentation of this paper.

Appendix A. Noise level on the uplink frequency band

The noise level on the uplink frequency band measured by FBS is calculated as

\[
\text{NOISE}_{UL_k} = \sum_{u=1}^{N_u} (P_u - PL(d_{u,k})),
\]

where \(N_u\) is a total number of active users in the macrocell area, \(P_u\) represents the transmit power of UE\(_u\), \(PL(d_{u,k})\) is a path loss between UE\(_u\) and FBS\(_k\).

The 3GPP specifications [25] define the setting of the UE\(_u\) transmit power by the following equation (dB scale):

\[
P_u = \min(P_{\text{max}}, 10 \cdot \lg(M_u) + P_0 + \alpha \cdot PL(d_u) + \Delta_{\text{MCS}} + f(\Delta_i)),
\]

where \(P_{\text{max}}\) is the maximum allowed transmit power that depends on the UE power class; \(M_u\) is the number of assigned Physical Resource Blocks (PRBs) to UE\(_u\); \(P_0\) is a UE specific (optionally cell specific) parameter that represents the power allocated to one PRB; \(\alpha\) is a cell specific path loss compensation factor; \(PL(d_u)\) is the downlink path loss between UE\(_u\) and its serving FBS\(_i\), calculated in the UE\(_u\); \(\Delta_{\text{MCS}}\) is a UE specific parameter depending on the Modulation and Coding Scheme (MCS); \(f(\Delta_i)\) is a function that allows relative, cumulative and absolute corrections and it is also UE specific.

Neglecting the short term variations (\(\Delta_{\text{MCS}}\) and \(f(\Delta_i)\)) in (A.2), the average transmit power level of UE\(_u\) becomes:

\[
P_u = \min(P_{\text{max}}, 10 \cdot \lg(M_u) + P_0 + \alpha \cdot PL(d_u)).
\]

The path loss (in dB) is modeled as [27]

\[
PL(d_u) = A_i + 10 \cdot n \cdot \lg(d_u) + L_w,
\]

where \(A_i\) is a path loss at 1 m; \(n\) is a path loss exponent; \(L_w\) is a wall penetration loss.

As regards the practical implementation of NOISE\(_{UL}\) estimation, each FBS must be equipped with a sniffer, that is an additional receiver that can perform correlation between signals in uplink. This receiver is as those already provided in the FBS to receive uplink traffic (operates in the same frequency band), so the duplication of an uplink receiver would bring a negligible extra cost. In fact, the sniffing capability is often already integrated into FBSs. The key vendors produce LTE FBSs equipped with a Network Listen Module (NLM) which facilitates the plug-and-play deployment of femtocells (see Table A.4). It permits to the FBS to make measurements of surrounding macrocells and femtocells in order to optimize its configuration settings. NLM can be used in our approach to perform measurements of NOISE\(_{UL}\) and since the module is already integrated into the femtocell such a solution incurs no extra cost.

### Table A.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vendor</th>
<th>Product name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ip.access Limited</td>
<td>nanoLTE Access Points family (femtocells for enterprise and public access); nanoLTE E–40, nanoLTE+ E–100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisco Systems</td>
<td>Cisco Aironet 3600 Series and Cisco Universal Small Cell 5310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcatel-Lucent</td>
<td>9760 Small Cell product family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fujitsu</td>
<td>BroadOne LS100 Series LTE femtocell (residential), BroadOne LS200 Series LTE femtocell (semi-public/enterprise)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B. Pilot signal to interference plus Noise Ratio

Our approach is to reduce the effects of femto–femto interference calibration the covering the area of FBSs in order to minimize the overlap between adjacent femtocells. As the coverage area of a BSs is defined by the strength of its pilot signals, we have introduced the PSINR parameter (Pilot Signal to Interference plus Noise Ratio). It is calculated for each active UE connected to the FBSk (PSINRk) as the ratio between the power of pilot signal received from its serving cell and interfering pilot signals received from the neighboring cells:

\[
\text{PSINR}_k^u = \frac{P_{r,u}^k}{I_u^k + N_0},
\]

(B.1)

where \(P_{r,u}^k\) is the pilot power of FBSk measured by UEi; \(I_u^k\) is the interference of other cells; \(N_0\) is a thermal noise power.

Below we provide analytic expressions for calculation of the terms in (B.1).

The FBSk pilot power measured by UEi is modeled as

\[
P_{r,u}^k = \frac{P_{t,u}^k}{A_u L_w d_{u,k}^l},
\]

(B.2)

where \(P_{t,u}^k\) is pilot power transmitted by FBSk and \(d_{u,k}^l\) is a distance between UEi and FBSk.

The interference power measured by UEi due to the pilot signals transmission of all non-serving BSs (macro and femto) can be calculated as

\[
I_u^k = \sum_{j=1}^{N-1} P_{r,u}^j,
\]

(B.3)

where \(N\) is the total number of FBSs; \(P_{r,u}^j\) is the pilot power received from interfering BSj (calculated according to (B.2)).

Note that because of “Assumption 1” of no intra-cell downlink interference, the pilot power transmitted by the serving FBS is not seen as interference by UEi.

The FBSk has to ensure that no UE’s PSINR falls below its threshold \(\text{PSINR,TH}^u\) level chosen to provide an acceptable QoS level. So, the second decision-making parameter represents the minimal value of the set (PSINRk)u:

\[
\text{PSINR}_k = \min\{\text{PSINR}_k^u\}, \quad \forall u \in U_k,
\]

(B.4)

where \(U_k\) is the number of active users connected to the FBSk.

As regards the practical implementation of PSINR estimation, let’s note that LTE specifications define the Reference Signal Received Power (RSRP) measurement made by UEs. It is a type of signal strength measurement and is indicative of the cell coverage. RSRP is defined as the linear average over the power contributions (in \(W\)) of all resource elements that carry cell-specific Reference Signals (RSs) (or pilot signals) within the operating bandwidth. It is used in LTE for cell reselection and handover and therefore is considered to be the most important measurement quantity. Each active UE estimates RSRP in the serving cell and neighboring cells. The measurement results are reported to the serving cell in order to aid in handover procedure. The measurement reporting mechanism can be configured by the serving cell and it can be periodic (the connected UE can be instructed to send RSRP measurements periodically) or event-triggered (the connected UE sends RSRP measurements when it is requested by its serving cell). With this information FBSs can anytime estimate the PSINR value needed for the proposed control mechanism [13].

Let’s note that due to the importance of cell specific RSs, they are the highest powered components within the downlink signal. So, based on how we have defined the formula for PSINR calculation (B.1), this value is equivalent to the worst SINR value that the user would experience if he is using an resource element that is simultaneously allocated and used in the neighboring cells.

References


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