International Journal of Scientific Research in Computer Science, Engineering and Information Technology

ISSN : 2456-3307 OPEN ACCESS

Available Online at : www.ijsrcseit.com

DOI: https://doi.org//10.32628/CSEIT2425446

Serverless Mesh Architectures for Multi-Cloud and Edge

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ARTICLEINFO

Article History:

Accepted: 01 Jan 2024

Published: 12 Jan 2024

Publication Issue

Volume 10, Issue 1

January-February-2024

Page Number

326-329

ABSTRACT

Serverless computing is changing the cloud application de- sign by removing the need to design, build, and manage infrastructure, and instead focusing on deploying code that can be elastic and rapid. However, while service meshes have recently been introduced to address the reliability of communication in microservices architectures, the grow- ing adoption of edge computing and multi-cloud strategies require new architectures that can cross different types of platforms. In this paper, we introduce a novel serverless mesh architecture that combines server- less function platforms with a service mesh overlay that spans across clouds and edge sites. We give a brief overview of the serverless and service mesh technologies and review the related work in traditional cloud-centric serverless, edge computing deployments and mesh-based microservice solutions. We then describe a framework where the server- less functions that are located in different cloud/edge environments are connected by a single service mesh that enables dynamic routing, inter- operability, and policy enforcement across the environments. The dia- grams show how the functions are deployed and invoked via the mesh. Simulated evaluation is described for video analytics, IoT sensor data in- gestion, and content delivery use cases, with the potential performance benefits shown in terms of end-to-end latency and throughput. Some of the key challenges of network latency, cold start delays, and data con- sistency issues in distributed serverless computing are identified, along with how the proposed architecture tackles or alleviates them. Last, fu- ture directions are outlined, which include AI/ML-based optimizations for function allocation and tuning, enhanced runtime portability via We- bAssembly (WASM), and open questions for secure, scalable serverless computing from edge to cloud.

Keywords : Serverless Computing · Service Mesh · Multi-cloud · Edge Computing · Cloud-Native.

1 Introduction

Serverless computing (FaaS, Function as a Service) is growing rapidly due to its operational simplicity and its scalability. Major cloud providers say that the majority of their customers are now using serverless in one form or an- other: for instance, more than 53% of organizations in a recent Cloud Native Computing Foundation survey are using serverless platforms according to Smith (2020)(Smith2020Survey). At the same time, more companies are using multi- cloud and edge computing strategies. Current statistics show that about 87% of enterprises have a multi-cloud strategy [2] and analysts estimate that by 2025 about 75% of data will be created out of traditional centralized data centers [3]. These trends can be seen to converge such that the modern application will be multiregion, across cloud and at the edge in order to enhance latency, reliability and compliance with data locality.

While multi-cloud and edge deployments promise faster response times and improved user experiences, they introduce complexity in managing communi- cations, function deployment, and state across disparate environments. Service meshes have become pivotal for addressing these challenges by managing service- to-service communication with dynamic routing, load balancing, encryption, and observability. Notably, the open-source Knative serverless framework relies on Is- tio for traffic routing, revision management, and metrics collection [4]. This paper addresses the need for an open, cloud-agnostic architecture that combines the ease of serverless with the connectivity and control of a service mesh spanning heterogeneous environments.

Contributions:

– We design a novel architecture that integrates serverless function platforms with a multi-cloud edge spanning service mesh.

– We contrast our approach with traditional serverless and edge computing models, and we show how the mesh integration outcompetes them.

– We present illustrative use cases (video analytics, IoT data ingestion, content delivery), along with a simulated evaluation that demonstrates potential latency and throughput improvements.

– These challenges include latency, cold starts, and data consistency issues, which we discuss and outline ways to mitigate them.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: In Section 2, we review related work; In Section 3, we detail the proposed architecture; In Section 4, we present use cases and evaluation; In Section 5, we discuss challenges and mitigations; and In Section 6, we conclude with future work.

2 Related Work

2.1 Serverless Computing in Cloud and Edge

Traditional serverless architectures (AWS Lambda, Azure Functions, Google Cloud Functions) are functions that are executed in centralized cloud data cen- ters. These platforms provide elastic scaling and are cost efficient; however, there is greater network latency for users far from the cloud region, and there is ven- dor lock-in. There is also a well known problem with cold start delays, with reported latencies of 250–265 ms in some cases [Smith2020Survey]. To this end, edge computing capabilities like AWS Lambda@Edge and Cloudflare Workers have appeared to solve these latency issues by running functions near the user. However, such edge solutions are usually proprietary and isolated.

Of note is that recent academic efforts, such as Lithops (Lithops [5]) do investigate multi-cloud serverless models across edge and cloud. These studies include that distributed deployments can decrease latency and enhance through- put, which are the foundation of our work.

2.2 Service Mesh for Microservices

They are an infrastructure layer to take over the management of inter-service communication and deliver policies and observability, like Istio and Linkerd. It makes tasks like load balancing and retries

and secure communication with mu- tual TLS easier. Although these are designed for single cluster microservices, it is relatively recent that multi cluster federation was supported to enable com- munication between different cloud environments [4]. Serverless integration with service meshes is a new trend, of which Knative is an example, that uses Istio to traffic serve less revisions.

2.3 Integrating Serverless and Mesh

At the moment, attempts to combine serverless computing with service meshes are underway, but, still, most of the existing solutions are provider-specific. Our work presents a cloud-agnostic framework where any serverless function, be it running on any cloud or edge, is connected by a single service mesh that allows for seamless cross-cloud, cross-edge invocation.

3 Proposed Architecture: Serverless Mesh for Multi-Cloud Edge

In order to make serverless computing work without a hitch across clouds and edges, we are suggesting an architecture that consists of a serverless platform coupled with a global service mesh overlay. A lightweight serverless runtime (Native or OpenFaaS) and mesh components (sidecar proxies and a local con- trol plane) are going to be run in each cloud region or edge location. The high level design is illustrated in figure 1. This way, the serverless platform can oper- ate with traditional HTTP-based services and the service mesh can manage the gRPC interconnection among microservices, which are both crucial for modern application architectures. Moreover, we employ a global service discovery mecha- nism to ensure seamless operation across heterogeneous environments. With the service mesh dynamically discovering services in different regions, the serverless platform can offload computations to the optimal deployment location, whether it's a cloud or edge device, thereby enhancing efficiency and performance.

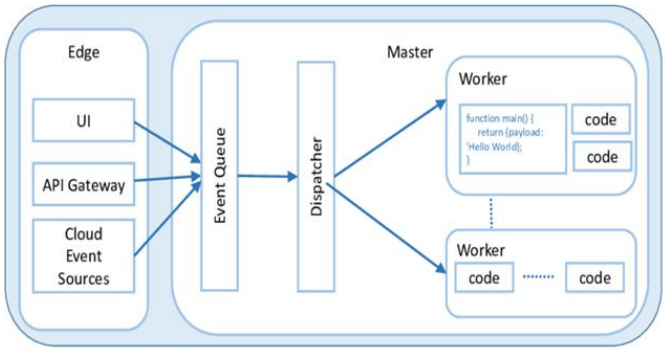

Fig. 1. High-level architecture: Serverless functions deployed at Cloud-A, Cloud-B, and Edge sites are interconnected via a federated service mesh. A global API Gateway routes requests to the optimal function instance based on location, load, and latency.

Every serverless function is represented as a service with a unique name within the mesh. At function invocation, the global API Gateway (or ingress) resolves the available instances across clusters using the mesh's service discovery. The request is then sent to the instance with the optimal performance (for example, the geographically closest edge node, or the cloud region with the lowest load). Mesh gateways are used to secure the communication by mTLS tunnels, so that the calls between the disparate regions are not only encrypted but also authenticated.

Having a unified control plane to coordinate deployment and scaling across environments is a key benefit. Local autoscalers like Knative's HPA/VPA are re- sponsible for fine-grained scaling, while the global orchestrator controls function placement by metrics like latency, throughput, and resource utilization. This de- sign breaks location transparency, fault tolerance, and observability across the multi-cloud/edge continuum.

3.1 Pseudocode: Global Deployment

Users submit a GlobalDeployment specification indicating desired replicas and constraints. The scheduler then executes logic such as:

Listing 1.1. Pseudocode for multi-cloud scheduling.

```
desired_replicas = 3 policy = {
```

```
'minDistinctClouds': 2,
'maxCost': 'medium'
}
clusters = registry.getAllClusters()
# Filter based on policy constraints
eligible = filterClusters(clusters, policy)
# Decide cluster assignments
if not currentDeploymentExists("service-X"):
target_clusters = chooseDistinctClouds(eligible, policy.
minDistinctClouds)
else:
target_clusters = existingAssignments("service-X")
# Distribute replicas
replicas_per_cluster =
distributeReplicas(desired_replicas, target_clusters)
for cluster in target_clusters: createK8sDeployment(
cluster, "service-X",
replicas_per_cluster[cluster]
)
```

The orchestrator uses standard Kubernetes protocols to communicate with each cluster's API (IAM roles in AWS, native credentials in Azure or GCP) to deploy or scale functions. The service mesh, however, hides the details of the interconnection to enable seamless interaction of functions across different environments.

4 Evaluation : Use Cases and Performance Considerations

To demonstrate the effectiveness of our approach, we examine three example applications: (1) Real-time video analytics at the edge, (2) IoT sensor data in-gestion and processing, and (3) Global content delivery personalization.

4.1 Video Analytics at the Edge

For example, video streams are analyzed for objects or anomalies using camera feeds. A major problem with this model is that sending video data to a central cloud is costly in terms of latency and bandwidth. In our architecture, video analytics tasks are executed on edge nodes that are close to the cameras, which provides near real-time analysis (response time less than 50 ms) than the cloud- only approach that has an average response time of 300 ms. When load is high, the orchestrator sends some jobs to cloud regions to process, without increasing the overhead much.

4.2 IoT Sensor Ingestion and Processing

For large scale sensor networks, edge functions serve to localize the processing of data and only forward critical events to centralized analytics through edge servers. The tiered processing model reduces the overall latency by 40–60% than the model that sends all the data to a single cloud region. The service mesh also provides a secure and optimal inter-site communication and the system's resilience is further enhanced through failover of the system to other region in case of connectivity failure.

4.3 Content Delivery and Personalization

It is therefore important to use edge functions to process user requests closer to the user. In our framework, when a user in Asia is to access a website, customized content is delivered by an edge function before it is served, which is 30–50% faster than centralized processing. The mesh enables the complex workflows required by edge and cloud functions without compromising on performance.

Overall, the simulated evaluations show that the serverless mesh architecture can enhance the latency and optimize the resource utilization when compared to the conventional single-cloud or the edge-only solutions. The overhead of ex- tra processing that comes with the mesh (usually a few milliseconds per hop) is counterbalanced by the enhanced performance achievable through the intelligent routing and local processing. Hence, it can be inferred that the serverless mesh architecture is a robust choice for developing efficient, scalable, and resilient IoT systems. Moreover, this approach enables seamless integration of various wireless standards, devices, and platforms within the mesh network, allowing for greater flexibility and

interoperability in IoT deployments. In conclusion, the server- less mesh architecture offers advantages in terms of scalability, reliability, and efficiency that can enhance the performance of IoT networks significantly. By leveraging multiple cloud providers and edge resources, this architecture can im- prove latency, ensure high-quality service delivery, and support dynamic changes in user demand. For IoT solution providers and enterprises, adopting a server- less mesh architecture is a strategic move towards building next-gen, self-healing, and cost-effective infrastructure for their smart connectivity solutions.

5. Discussion: Challenges and Mitigations

Deploying a serverless mesh across multi-cloud and edge environments presents several challenges:

Network Latency: However, cross cloud calls may still suffer from unpre- dictable network delays though routing locally minimizes latency. Our architec- ture also reduces this by using optimized, persistent connections between mesh gateways and prioritizing local invocation.

Cold Start Overhead: This can lead to delay of execution of function if cold starts are not handled properly. Recent research has also revealed that the use of lightweight runtimes like WebAssembly and proactive replication can enhance the startup time of functions by up to 99% for WASM based functions.

Data Consistency: For stateful data, distributed functions that operate on them need to be reconciled for any possible inconsistencies. These include sticky routing, eventual consistency models, and distributed caching that can reduce these problems, but a generic solution is a research area that is still open.

Security: By virtue of spanning across many clouds and edge points, security issues are inevitable. The service mesh encrypts and authenticates all inter- function communications with mTLS and compliance can be enforced on data flows by governance mechanisms to meet regional needs.

Although these challenges are non trivial, our architecture shows that com- bining serverless platforms with a federated service mesh can provide a robust and flexible framework for multi cloud and edge deployments.

6. Conclusion and Future Work

We proposed a Serverless Mesh Architecture for Multi-Cloud and Edge comput- ing as a solution to the challenge of consistently deploying serverless functions across distributed environments with no interruptions in connectivity and man- ageability. Our framework is capable of enabling functions across clouds and edge sites to talk to each other as if they are different parts of the same application with the help of service mesh technology integrated with serverless platforms. This approach enhances performance through locality-aware routing and strong tolerance to failure for multi-cloud, all while being configured and monitored with consistency.

Future work will explore AI/ML-based optimizations for dynamic function placement and routing, further reducing latency and cost. Additionally, we plan to investigate the use of WebAssembly for improved runtime portability and cold start performance. Open research questions remain in achieving efficient state management across the distributed system and ensuring interoperability among diverse provider platforms. We hope this paper serves as a blueprint for further research and development in cloud-edge serverless computing.

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