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ABOVE AND BEYOND: THE IMPACT OF 3D UAV DEPLOYMENT ON IOT MOBILE SENSOR NETWORKS

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Abstract: Aiming at the problem of low coverage caused by the difficulty of obtaining the optimal deployment position in existing commonly used distributed deployment algorithms, this paper proposes a three-dimensional (3D) deployment algorithm for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) based on potential game. Firstly, a local mutually beneficial game model is designed, and proved the existence of exact potential games and Nash equilibrium in this game model, and the Nash equilibrium solution corresponds to the maximum coverage. Secondly, inspired by the idea of exploration, a solution method based on exploration-based automatic learning machine was designed, and the maximum utility function value of multiple step sizes in the exploration direction is used to update the action selection probability, ensuring the optimal deployment position in each decision cycle. Simulation results show that the proposed distributed deployment algorithm has higher coverage than existing commonly used methods.

Keywords: Data collection, UAV, Three-dimensional deployment, Motion planning

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The flexibility and mobility of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) have been widely concerned and studied for future communication system ^{[1]–[3]}. It can be used as an auxiliary means to expand and supplement the ground communication network. Data collection over wireless sensor networks (WSNs) is considered one of the crucial applications for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and has been extensively studied by researchers ^[4]. In conventional approaches, wireless sensor nodes (SNs) positioned in various regions transmit their sensing data to a fusion center using different power levels based on their respective distances from the fusion center. Consequently, this variation in energy consumption rates among the sensor nodes can significantly limit the lifetime of wireless sensor networks (WSNs) ^{[5], [6]}. To address the limited lifetime issue in WSNs caused by the

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disparate energy consumption rates, alternative strategies have been explored. One approach involves employing adaptive power control algorithms that dynamically adjust the transmit power of SNs based on their distance to the fusion center. By optimizing the power levels, this technique aims to achieve a more balanced energy distribution among the sensor nodes^{[7], [8]}. Another solution is to implement energy-efficient routing protocols that consider both the energy levels of SNs and their proximity to the fusion center when selecting paths for data transmission. This way, nodes with higher energy reserves can be strategically utilized to relay data from distant SNs, thereby reducing overall energy consumption and extending network lifetime^{[9], [10]}. Furthermore, advancements in harvesting ambient energy sources such as solar or wind power can be leveraged to recharge sensor nodes. Integrating energy harvesting mechanisms into WSNs allows for prolonged operation without relying solely on limited onboard battery capacities^{[11], [12]}. By adopting these approaches and exploring novel techniques, researchers aim to mitigate the energy imbalance issue in WSNs and enhance their longevity for efficient data collection applications using UAVs^{[13], [14]}.

1.2. Prior Work

The previous research of UAV mainly focused on the level of control theory and methods. The three-dimensional deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) addresses a crucial challenge in UAV communication. By enabling adjustable flight altitudes and mobility, it offers additional degrees of freedom for effective deployment^{[15]–[17]}. However, this type of deployment also presents challenges related to the deployment environment, user location and distribution, and the characteristics of the UAV communication channel. These factors need to be carefully considered to achieve optimal deployment in the three-dimensional space for UAVs^[18]. With the rapid development of UAV communication technology, there are more and more researches on the communication control combine with flight control^[19]. Compared with the traditional fixed node communication on the ground, the mobility and flexibility of UAV can effectively improve the performance of UAV communication system. Although the flexible deployment of UAVs, natural line-of-sight channels and controllable trajectories have brought huge gains to the UAV communication network. However, for the data collection task of ground mobile sensor nodes, the offline deployment algorithm cannot guarantee the coverage and data collection volume of the UAV^[20] to the ground sensor nodes in real time. Once the ground sensor nodes leave the effective communication coverage area of the UAV, the correctly demodulated data cannot be collected. Reference^[21] proposes that the deployment based on the Grey Wolf algorithm can effectively maximize the average throughput rate of ground users. Reference^[22] uses particle swarm optimization to optimize coverage and user communication and rate respectively. However, the traditional centralized optimization algorithm used in these studies is not only computationally intensive, but also does not consider the real-time mobile ground sensor scene.

1.3. Contributions and Organization

This paper constructs a game theory model based on distribution, and proposes an automatic learning algorithm based on exploration to solve the equilibrium solution. The main contents and contributions are as follows:

- (1) According to the characteristics of UAV communication channel. Take the signal-to-noise ratio threshold and the maximum number of users served by the UAV as the conditions for the ground sensor node to access the UAV.

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(2) The dynamic game model of UAV as a participant is designed and the game is decomposed into sub-games at each time. At the same time, we designed the multi-dimensional discrete action space and the utility function of each player. The utility function takes the number of users accessed by the UAV itself and the number of users accessed by the neighbor UAV into account.

(3) In each sub-game stage, in order to solve the limitations of actions in the discrete action space, we designed the expected actions based on exploration.

2. System Model and Problem Formulation

Considering that low-power sensor equipment is randomly scattered in the mission area, when the UAV group flies to the mission area, the control signal is sent to the ground low-power sensor equipment to access the UAV network for data reporting. It is specified that each low-power sensor device can only be connected to one UAV and needs to meet the channel quality requirements at the same time.

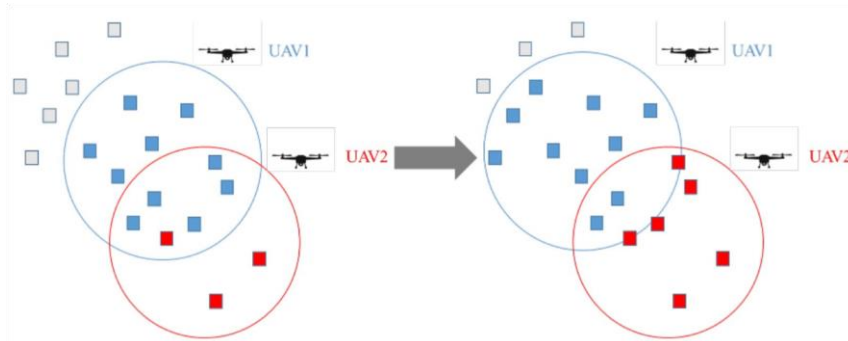


Figure 1: Changes in access sensors during local mutual benefit games.

2.1. Unmanned Data Acquisition Channel Model

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UAV data collection channels are ground-air channels, which can be generally divided into LOS, NLOS and multipath fading channels [23], [24]. Although there are many in-depth studies on UAV communication channels, for example, considering the reflection of ground obstacles and roadside obstacles. Reference [25] designed a three-dimensional channel model based on geometric methods. In the deployment coverage scenario of data collection UAV studied in this paper, the LOS channel is mainly considered, and the power gain within the coverage radius is defined as

$$\beta^0$$

$$h(d) = \frac{H^2}{H^2 + d^2} \quad (1)$$

Where

$\beta\beta_0$ is the power gain of per meter, H is the flight altitude of the UAV, d is the distance from the UAV projection position to the ground sensor node, $0 \leq d \leq d_{\max}$, d_{\max} is the maximum coverage radius of the UAV. The maximum coverage radius is calculated based on the pitch angle and flight altitude of the UAV:

$$d_{\max} = H \tan \theta \quad (2)$$

Let the set of UAV groups defined as $U = \{1, 2, \dots, UU\}$, the set of ground sensors defined as

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$S=\{1,2 \cdots , SS\}$, and the mission area be set as a cube model $\Omega = \mathbf{pp} = (xx, yy, zz) \mathbf{pp}_{ddddd} < \mathbf{pp} < \mathbf{pp}_{uuu}$, where \mathbf{pp}_{ddddd} is the lower boundary of the area and \mathbf{pp}_{uuu} is the upper boundary .We can set the position of the UAV $\mathbf{pp}_{uuuu} \in \Omega$ the position of the ground sensor $\mathbf{pp}_{ssss} \in \Omega$. According to the number of UAVs that meet the coverage requirements, set the rate rr_{mmmmdd} to meet the minimum communication needs of users. The available communication bandwidth for the UAV is B , and the bandwidth utilization efficiency is η . Therefore, we can calculate the number of users that each UAV can serve as $UU_{ccddccccc} = \lceil \eta BB / rr_{\min} \rceil$, where $\lceil \cdot \rceil$ indicates rounding up. The approximate number of UAVs required $UU = \lceil SS / UU_{ccddccccc} \rceil$, based on the total number of ground sensors can be determined at the same time. A sensor successfully access a UAV requires meeting communication quality requirements $rr \geq rr_{\min}$, where r is the communication rate of data reported by the sensor.

$$\begin{aligned} & psh(ds, u) \\ & rs,u = \eta B_s \log_2 \left(1 + \frac{p_{ss} h_{dd_{ss,u}}}{\sigma^2} \right) \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

$$\sigma^2$$

Where $BB_{ss} = \lceil BB / UU_{ccddccccc} \rceil$ is the maximum bandwidth that the sensor s -th can use, pp_{ss} is the transmission power of the s -th sensor, $h_{dd_{ss,u}}$ is the channel gain between the s -th sensor and the u -th UAV, $dd_{ss,u}$ is the distance between the s -th sensor and the u -th UAV, $rr_{ss,u}$ is the instantaneous communication rate between the s -th sensor and the u -th UAV, and σ^2 is the power of additive Gaussian white noise.

2.2. Deployment Problem Customization

As a three-dimensional deployment of UAV assisted data collection, we take the total number of sensors successfully connected to the UAV as the optimization goal, which can be expressed as:

$$\begin{aligned} (P1): \quad & \max \sum_{u=1}^U \sum_{s=1}^S \text{Access}_{U \times S} \\ \text{st. } & \mathbf{p}_1 \leq \mathbf{p}_U \quad u=1 \dots U \\ & , u \in U \\ & \sum_{u=1}^U \sum_{s=1}^S \text{Access}_{U \times S} \leq U_{\text{cover}} \\ & \sum_{s=1}^S \text{Access}_{U \times S} \leq 1 \\ & \mathbf{1}, ru,s \geq r_{\min} \\ & \text{Access}(u,s) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } u \text{ is connected to } s \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \\ & \mathbf{p}_u \in \Omega, u \in U \quad U, s \in S \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

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The variable $\mathbf{pp}_1, \dots, \mathbf{pp}_{uu}$ is the three-dimensional coordinate position of the UAV, and the indicator matrix $\text{Access}_{uu \times ss}$ representing the u -th row and s -th column sensors accessed to the UAV in the optimization target, hereinafter referred to as the access matrix. The first constraint is the initial position constraint of the UAV. The second constraint indicates that the number of sensors successfully accessed to UAV needs to be less than or equal to the maximum number of service users $UU_{covcccc}$. The third constraint indicates that each sensor can only access one UAV at most and cannot repeatedly access other UAV. The fourth constraint is a communication requirement to ensure the quality of sensor data transmission. The last constraint is a boundary constraint, and the UAV must be within the mission area.

3. Three-Dimensional Deployment Algorithm

3.1. Game Model

Game theory can be divided into two categories, namely cooperative games and non cooperative games according to whether participants have reached a binding cooperation agreement. In general, the information interaction cost of cooperative games is much greater than that of non cooperative games. The key issue in non cooperative game research is how participants choose strategies and make choices that maximize their own benefits when their interests or returns interact. The three elements of the game model are as follows:

$$\square = \square_{\square} U, \{\mathbf{p}_u\}_{u \in U}, \{f_u\}_{u \in U} \square \quad (5)$$

- (1) Participant: $U = \{1, 2, \dots, UU\}$ represents a collection of all UAVs that perform data collection tasks.
- (2) Strategy space: $A = \{aa_1, aa_2, \dots, aa_{uu}\}$ represents the action space selected by the display UAV. For any $uu \in U$, aa_{uu} represents the selected action of the u -th UAV, and for $aa_{uu} \in A$, where A is a set of actions.
- (3) Utility function: In the UAV assisted data collection and deployment problem, the goal of each UAV is to maximize its own utility function.

3.2. Utility Function Design

In traditional game models, game participants always make decisions based on their own interests, that means participants only considering the maximum individual's utility function. However, in the optimization problem P1, the number of sensors that each UAV can access is limited. When UAVs only consider maximizing their own utility function, their decision-making will fall into a dead cycle, making it difficult to ensure global optimization. In order to improve the performance of game models and be inspired by local mutually beneficial behavior in nature, this chapter proposes a local mutually beneficial game based UAV deployment. The local mutually beneficial behavior in nature refers to the fact that biological individuals consider other individuals of their neighbors when making decisions ^[26]. Therefore, the utility function in a locally mutually beneficial game is defined as follows:

$$f_u(a_u, a_{Ju}) = g_u(a_u, a_{Ju}) + \sum_{u' \in J_u} g_{u'}(a_{u'}, a_{Ju'}) \quad (6)$$

$u' \in J_u$

Where J_{uu} is the neighbor UAV set of u -th UAVs, which defines the one hop reachable node in the UAV network as the neighbor node. $gg_{uu} \diamond aa_{uu}, aa_{J_{uu}} \diamond$ is the number of sensors accessed by the u -th UAV, with a maximum value of $UU_{cddcccc}$, and its expression is as

$$\square U_{cover}, \sum_s \text{Access}(u, s) > U_{cover}$$

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If any UAV changes its action selection from aa_{uu} to aa_{uu}' , the amount of change in the user's utility function is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & \varphi(aa_{uu}, a-u) - \varphi(aa_{uu}', a-u) \\ &= \sum_u f_u(aa_{uu}, aJu) - \sum_u f_u(aa_{uu}', aJu) \\ &= f_u(aa_{uu}, aJu) - \sum_{u' \in Ju} f_u'(aa_{uu}', aJu) \\ & \quad - f_u(aa_{uu}', aJu) - \sum_{u' \in Ju} f_u'(aa_{uu}', aJu) \\ &= f_u(aa_{uu}, aJu) - f_u(aa_{uu}', aJu) - \\ &= f_u(aa_{uu}, a-u) - f_u(aa_{uu}', a-u) \end{aligned} \quad (11)$$

Based on the above analysis, it can be seen that a unilateral change by any user results in an equal change in the utility function and potential energy function of the UAV. Therefore we can make a conclusion that a local mutual benefit game is an accurate potential energy game, and its potential energy function is the global number of user accesses.

Accurate potential energy games have many unique properties as follows [27]:

- (1) Any precise potential energy game has at least one pure strategic Nash equilibrium;
- (2) The global or local optimal solution of the potential energy function is a Nash equilibrium.

3.4. Exploratory Based Stochastic Learning Automata

Firstly, we need to expand the game model from pure strategy to mixed strategy. Note that the mixed strategy distribution vector of the u -th UAV during the i -th iteration is $\mathbf{q}(ii) = \langle \mathbf{q}_{u1}(ii), \dots, \mathbf{q}_{uM}(ii) \rangle$.

Where $\mathbf{q}_{uu}(ii) \in \Delta(A_{uu})$, $\Delta(A_{uu})$ represents the probability distribution set of the u -th UAV in the strategy space AAA_{uu} , where $\mathbf{q}_{uu}(ii) = (q_{uu1}, \dots, q_{uum})$ is the probability vector for the u -th UAV to select actions, and M is the number of actions in the action space. q_{uum} means the probability that the u -th UAV selects the m -th action. Note $h_{uum}(\mathbf{q})$ the average utility function that the u -th UAV can obtain when it selects m -th channel ($aa_{uu} = A(mm)$) and other UAVs use a hybrid strategy,

$$h(\mathbf{q}) = f(a, A(m), a, a) q_{um} \sum_{u=1}^U \sum_{k \neq u}^K 1 \quad (12)$$

Inspired by a distributed learning algorithm based on Stochastic Learning Automata (SLA) [28], [29], which is applied to study the random stability of social networks. In sparse data assisted data collection scenarios, the range of sensor distribution is relatively wide, and limited by the maximum flight capacity of UAV, the maximum movement distance in a decision cycle may not have any change in sensor coverage. Therefore, in this sparse scenario, it is difficult for traditional algorithms to solve the Nash equilibrium solution. We redesigned the action space of the game model, set a fixed length movement value Δ to indicate the movement direction of the UAV, and set the maximum movement distance of the UAV dd_{\max} in a decision-making cycle. Based on the above theorem, after the UAV selects an action based on the action selection probability as the direction of movement of the UAV on this side. In this direction, start exploring from the current position of the UAV, and set the maximum exploration range

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d_{\max}^e . Therefore, we can search on a line segment $l_u = (1 - \lambda)\mathbf{p}_u + \lambda A(a_u)d_{\max}^e$, where λ is the search accuracy. We calculate the utility function value at each discrete point on the line segment and take the coordinates at the maximum position \mathbf{pp}_{uu}^{\max} . The distance d between \mathbf{pp}_{uu}^{\max} and \mathbf{pp}_{uu} is calculated as the UAV will move in the direction during the next decision cycle. If $dd \geq dd_{\max}$ then we set $dd = dd_{\max}$.

Algorithm 1	Exploratory Based Stochastic Learning Automata (SLA)
1:	Initialization: Set the iteration number $k=0$ so that the initial action selection probability vector for all UAVs is $q_{um}(i) = \frac{1}{M}, \forall u \in M, m = \{1, \dots, M\}$. Have each UAV $uu \in U$ randomly select a channel $aa_{uu}(0)$ from its optional action set $qq(ii)$ with equal probability
2:	while $\forall qq_{uumm}(ii) < 0.99$ do
3:	All UAVs broadcast their own status information through the WIFI module, including position, speed, yaw angle, etc
4:	Take other UAVs that can receive information as neighbor UAVs and record them in the neighbor node set JJ_{uu}
5:	Each UAV selects actions based on channel selection probability
6:	Search on the line segment $l_u = (1 - \lambda)\mathbf{p}_u + \lambda A(a_u)d_{\max}^e$ and record the maximum local mutually beneficial utility function $f_u^{\max}(a_u, a_{J_u})$ and the movement of the UAV $dd_{uu}A \diamond aa_{uu}(ii) \diamond$ in the next decision cycle
7:	All UAVs update the action selection probability according to the following rules:
8:	$qq_{uumm}(ii + 1) = qq_{uumm}(ii) + bbff \diamond_{uu}(ii)[1 - qq_{uumm}(ii)], A(mm) = aa_{uu}(ii)$
9:	$qq_{uumm}(ii + 1) = qq_{uumm}(ii) - bbff \diamond_{uu}(ii)qq_{uumm}(ii), A(mm) \neq aa_{uu}(ii)A$
10:	$f_u(i) = \frac{f_u(i)}{U_{covccc} + \sum_{u \in J_u} U_{covccc}}$
11:	end while

3.5. Dynamic Deployment Algorithm

Based on the precise potential energy game for each decision cycle described above, we further design a UAV deployment algorithm in a dynamic environment. The specific algorithm is as algorithm 2:

Algorithm 2	Dynamic deployment algorithm
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1:	Initialization: Set the deployment area Ω and initial location of the UAV $\mathbf{p}^{mddmmii}$, and set the decision time t .
2:	while $\eta \leq 0.9$ do
3:	Call algorithm 2 to obtain the current optimal movement strategy of the UAV $d_{uu}A \diamond a_u(tt) \diamond$ and update the location of each UAV.
4:	$\mathbf{p}_{uu}(tt + 1) = \mathbf{p}_{uu}(tt) + d_{uu}A \diamond a_{uu}(tt) \diamond$
5:	Calculate global coverage:
6:	$\sum_{uu} \sum_{ss} \text{Access}UU \times SS$ $\eta = \frac{\sum_{uu} \sum_{ss} \text{Access}UU \times SS}{SS}$
7:	end while

4. Numerical Simulations

4.1. Simulation Environments

In this section, we provide numerical simulation results to evaluate the effectiveness of proposed algorithms. The simulation parameter settings are shown in the Table 1.

Table 1: UAV deployment simulation parameters.

Symbol	Parameter	Value
U	Number of drones	6
U_{cover}	Number of drone connected users	17
Φ	Pitch angle	$\pi\pi/3$
S	Number of sensors	100
pp_{ss}	Sensor transmission power	2000 mW
B	Communication channel bandwidth	11 MHz
nn_0	Noise power spectral density	-165 dBm/Hz
α	Path loss exponent	2
b	Algorithm learning rate	0.9
d_{\max}^e	Maximum exploration distance	250 m

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4.2. Simulation Results

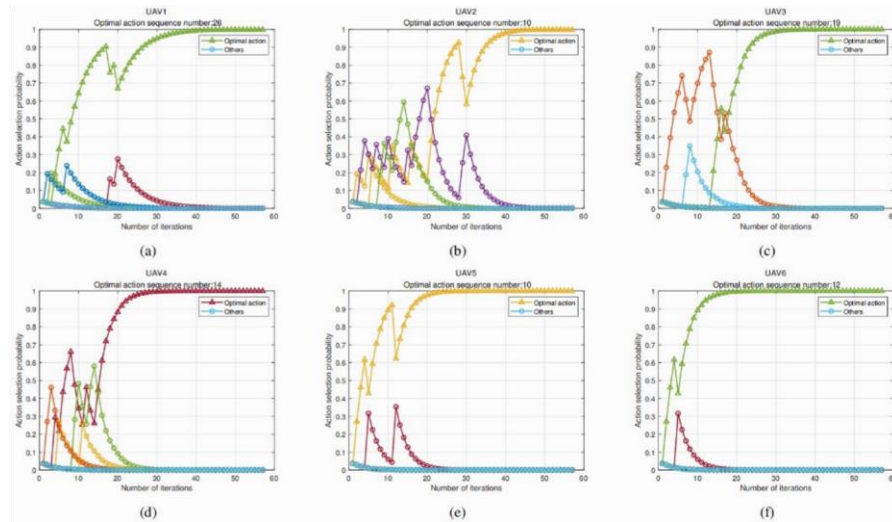
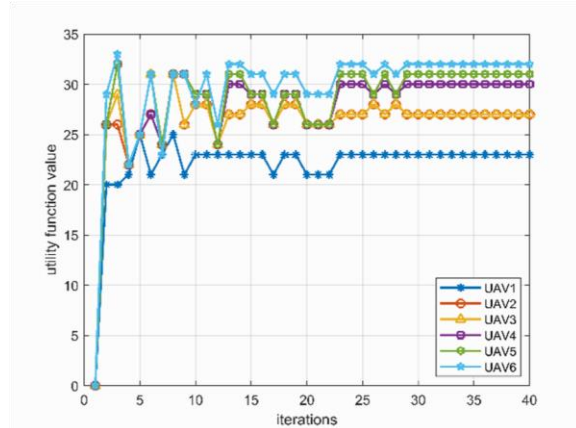


Figure 2: Convergence graph of hybrid strategy iteration.

The following figure shows the convergence of the action selection probabilities of six UAVs in their respective action sets. As can be seen from Figure 2, after approximately 40 iterations, the optimal action probability for all UAV hybrid strategy sets converges to 1. At the same time, the action probability curve in the figure also covers the expectation of the automatic learning machine algorithm with the increase of the number of iterations. When the utility brought by a certain action increases, the probability of its selection increases.

Fig. 3 shows the utility function values of UAVs in a decision cycle. The utility function value is the sum of the number of users of the UAV and the number of neighbors. It can be seen from the figure that when the utility values converge to about 25 iterations, this corresponds to the convergence of mixed strategy probabilities, that is, the proposed game model reaches Nash equilibrium. It should be noted that the Nash equilibrium solution obtained by the exploration-based automatic learning machine is the action direction, and the actual deployment position of the autonomous navigation UAV needs to be updated under the constraint of the motion principle and the maximum motion capacity in each deployment decision cycle.



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Figure 3: Iterative Convergence Graph of Utility Function Values.

Fig. 4 shows a schematic diagram of the coverage of the real-time deployment of UAVs on a twodimensional plan. It can be intuitively seen that UAVs are almost evenly distributed in the task area and the users covered are within their maximum number of service users. If the position of the ground sensor changes, the autonomous navigation UAV will also adjust the optimal deployment position based on the real-time perception of the ground sensor information.

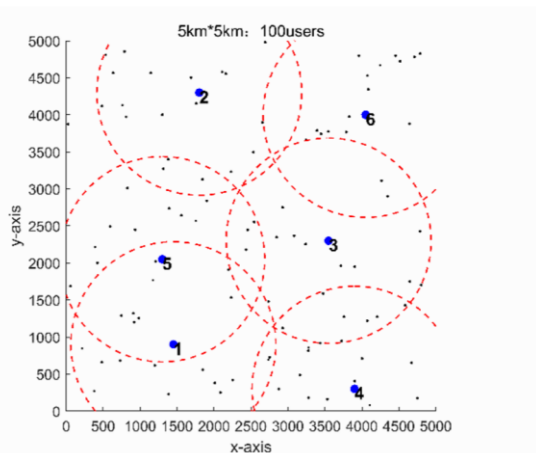


Figure 4: Schematic diagram of drone 2D deployment coverage.

Fig. 5 shows a three-dimensional diagram of the moving waypoints of the real-time deployment of UAVs within each decision cycle. It can be intuitively seen that the UAV is initially placed in the central position of the mission area, obtains the motion direction through the exploration-based automatic learning machine within each deployment decision cycle, and gradually moves to 6 spatially equal directions according to the actual motion ability, which are determined by the Nash equilibrium solution within each deployment cycle. Because the path point selection in each decision space is obtained according to the Nash equilibrium solution of the potential energy game, even if the sensor is moving in real time, the deployment algorithm can still find the Nash equilibrium solution in each decision cycle. Through continuous iteration, as long as the moving ability of the sensor is weaker than that of the UAV, a stable coverage rate can be achieved. As can be seen from Fig. 5, after several deployment cycles, the autonomous navigation UAV moves to a position that meets the coverage requirements.

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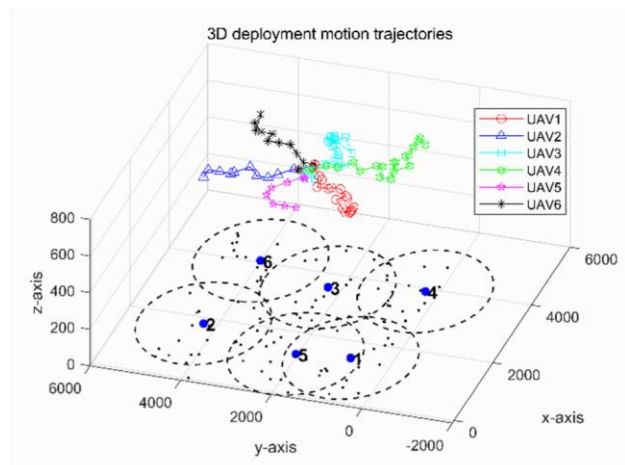


Figure 5: Schematic diagram of drone 3D deployment coverage.

The comparison diagram between the algorithm proposed in this paper and the other algorithm is shown in Fig. 6. After 70 decision cycles, the method proposed in this chapter using the exploratory SLA algorithm and local mutually beneficial utility function can cover more than 90 users, while non exploratory SLA and particle swarm optimization algorithms can cover less than 90 users, while non cooperative SLA algorithms can cover less than 80 users. Through comparison, it can be seen that the proposed 3D deployment algorithm in this paper has better performance.

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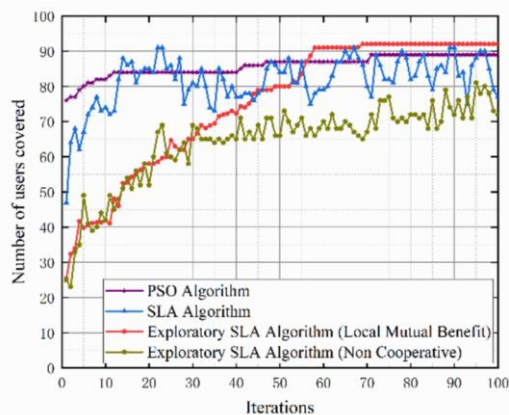


Figure 6: Coverage comparison of different algorithm.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we proposed a three-dimensional self-organized deployment method for UAVs based on dynamic game models to maximize the service capabilities of UAVs, and we also designed a utility function satisfying

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potential game conditions. Inspired by SLA, a three-dimensional deployment algorithm for UAVs based on SLA is designed to solve Nash equilibrium. However, we used six UAVs in this simulation, and the ground user was static. If we want to cover dynamic users, how to solve the Nash equilibrium in unknown dynamic environments can be the main difficulties.

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