Lecture 15
Wireless Communication

CE346 – Microprocessor System Design

Branden Ghena – Spring 2021

Some slides borrowed from:
Josiah Hester (Northwestern), Prabal Dutta (UC Berkeley)

Warning on I2C sensors lab

- Something weird is going on with Magnetometers
  - They seem to be responding unreliably, even after the longer delay

- If you find this is happening:
  1. Try physically unplugging/replugging your board

  2. Try adding more delays in lsm303agr_init()

  3. Move on for now. Accelerometer is more important

Today's Goals

- Explore important issues in wireless communication
  - Physical and Data Link layers particularly

- Describe several wireless networks that are very important to modern Internet of Things devices
  - Bluetooth Low Energy
  - Thread and Zigbee (802.15.4)
  - WiFi (802.11)
  - Low-Power Wide-Area Networks

Microbit supports these! (Bluetooth Low Energy; Thread and Zigbee)

If you find this interesting…

- I also teach a special topics course!
  - CS397/497 Wireless Protocols for the Internet of Things
  - Spring quarter 2022
  - Project and Lab course, similar to this one (same build system!)

- Spend some time learning and playing around with wireless protocols. Especially
  - Bluetooth Low Energy
  - 802.15.4 (Thread and Zigbee)
  - WiFi (802.11)
  - LPWANs (LoRaWAN and others)

Outline

- **Wireless Communication Overview**

- Wireless Protocols
  - Overview
  - Bluetooth Low Energy
  - 802.15.4
  - WiFi
  - Low-Power Wide-Area Networks

Why use wireless?

- There are no wires!

- No need to install and maintain wires
  - Reduces cost
  - Simplifies deployment – place devices wherever makes sense

- Supports mobile users
  - Move around office, campus, city
  - Move devices around home

What is hard about wireless?

- There are no wires!

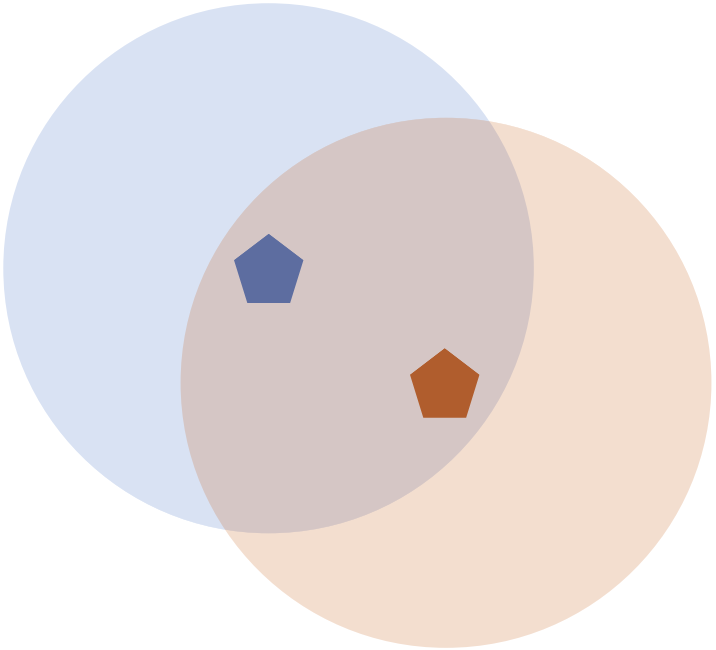
- Wired networks are constant, reliable, and physically isolated
  - Ethernet has the same throughput minute-to-minute
  - Bits sent through Ethernet or USB are (usually) received

- Wireless networks are variable, error-prone, and shared
  - WiFi throughput changes based on location and walls
  - Signals from nearby devices interfere with your signals
  - Individual bits might flip or never be heard at all

Wireless is a shared medium

- Wired communication has signals confined to a conductor
  - Copper or fiber
  - Guides energy to destination
  - Protects signal from interference

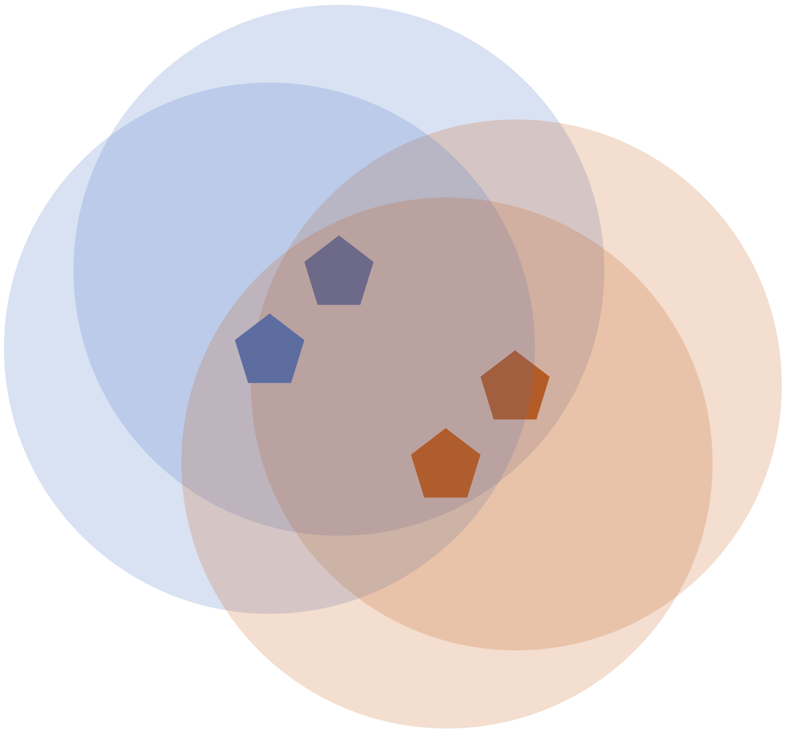
- Wireless communication is inherently broadcast
  - Energy is distributed in space
  - Signals must compete with other signals in same frequency band



Increasing network capacity is challenging

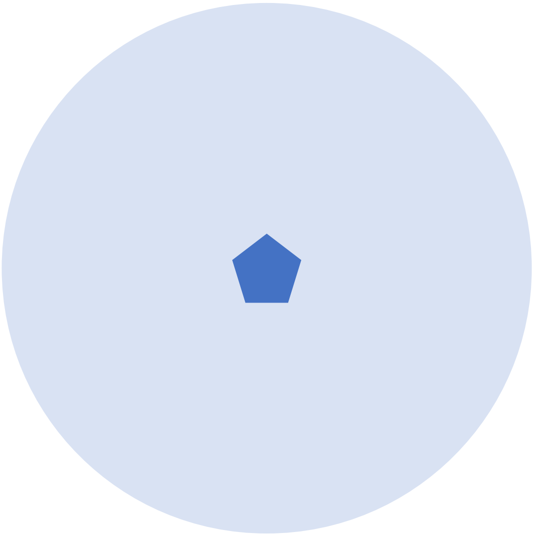
- Wired networks just add more wires
  - Buses are many signals in parallel to send more data

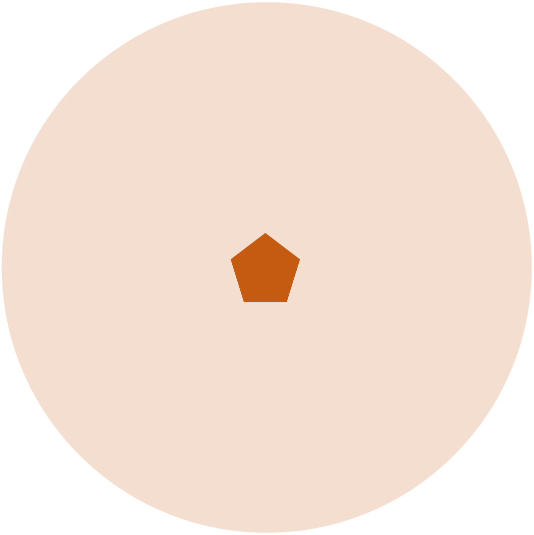
- Wireless networks are harder
  - Adding more links just increases interference
  - Need to expand to different frequencies



Model of RF communication

- Energy that radiates spherically from an antenna at a “carrier frequency”
  - Good enough for understanding communication
- Attenuation with distance
  - Density of energy reduces over time, distance
  - Signal strength reduced, errors go up
- Two key features
  - Range and data rate affect error rates
  - Spatial reuse of frequencies

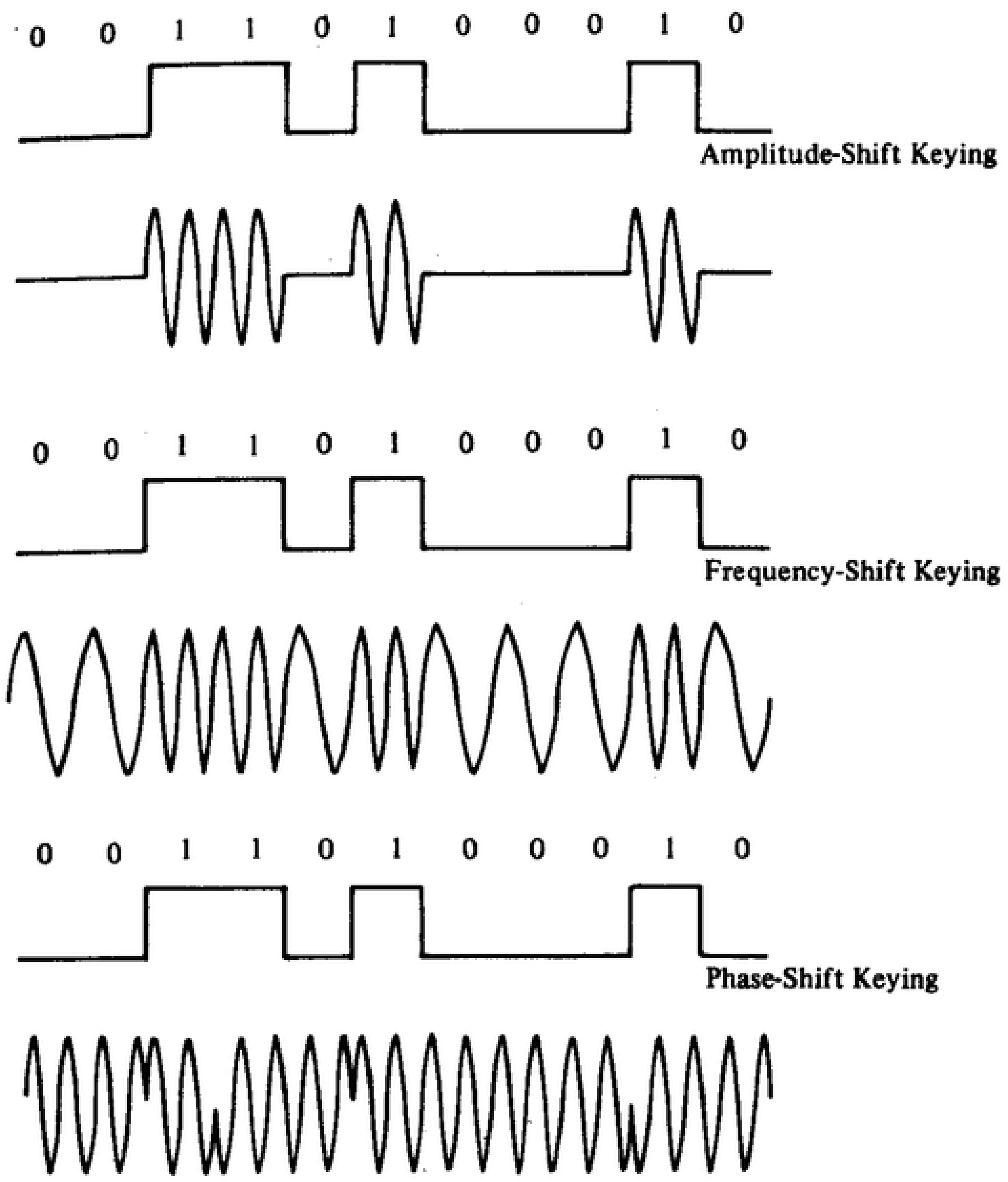




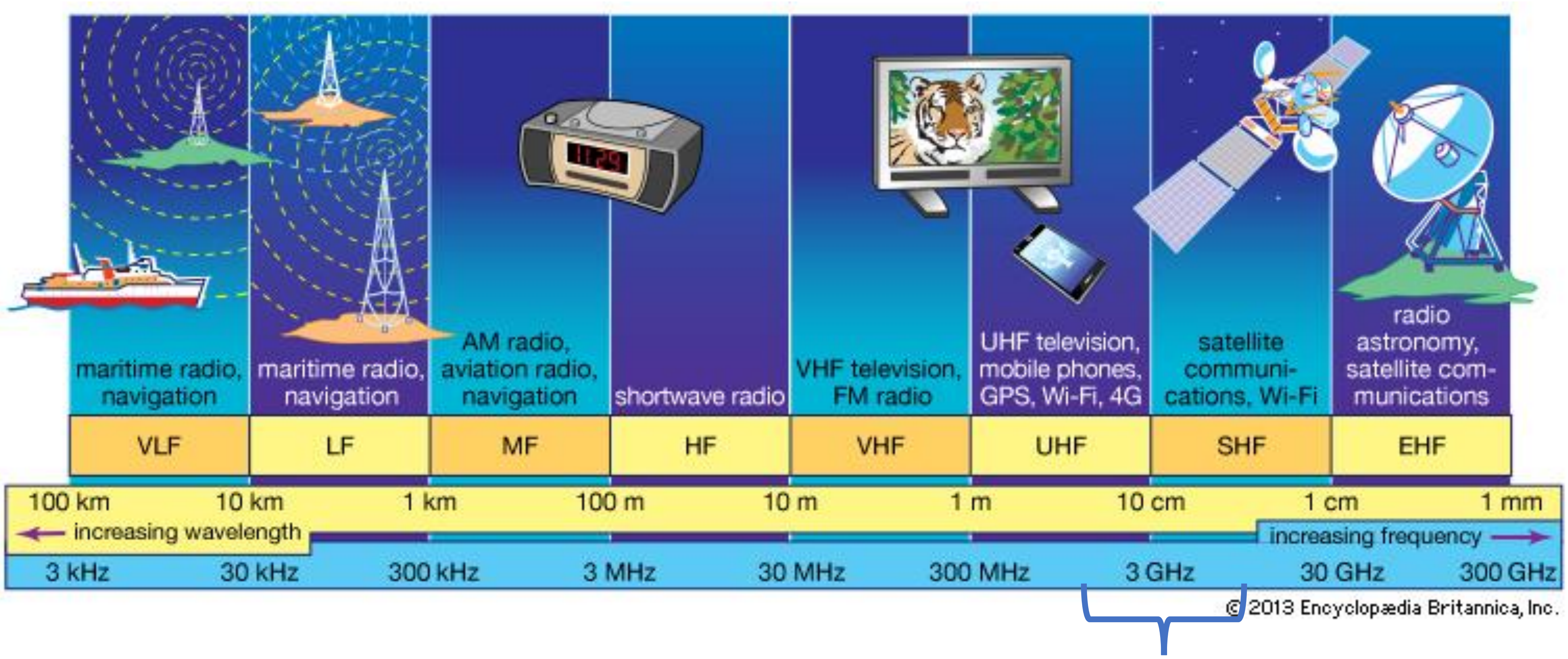
Modulation

- Encoding digital data in an analog “carrier” signal

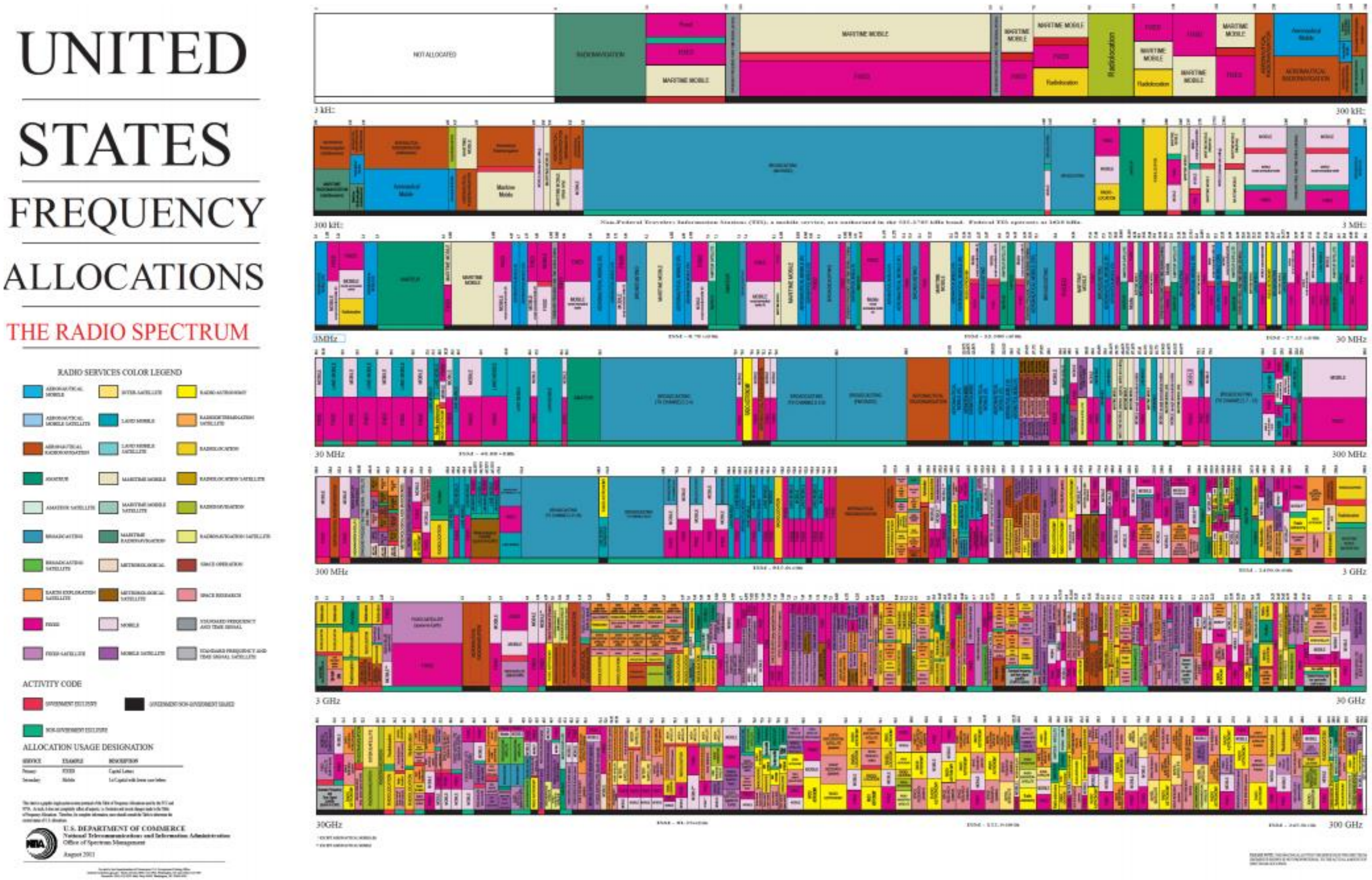
- Basic forms:
- Amplitude-shift Keying (ASK)
    - Modify amplitude of carrier signal
- Frequency-shift Keying (FSK)
    - Modify frequency of carrier signal
- Phase-shift Keying (PSK)
    - Modify phase of carrier signal



RF communication

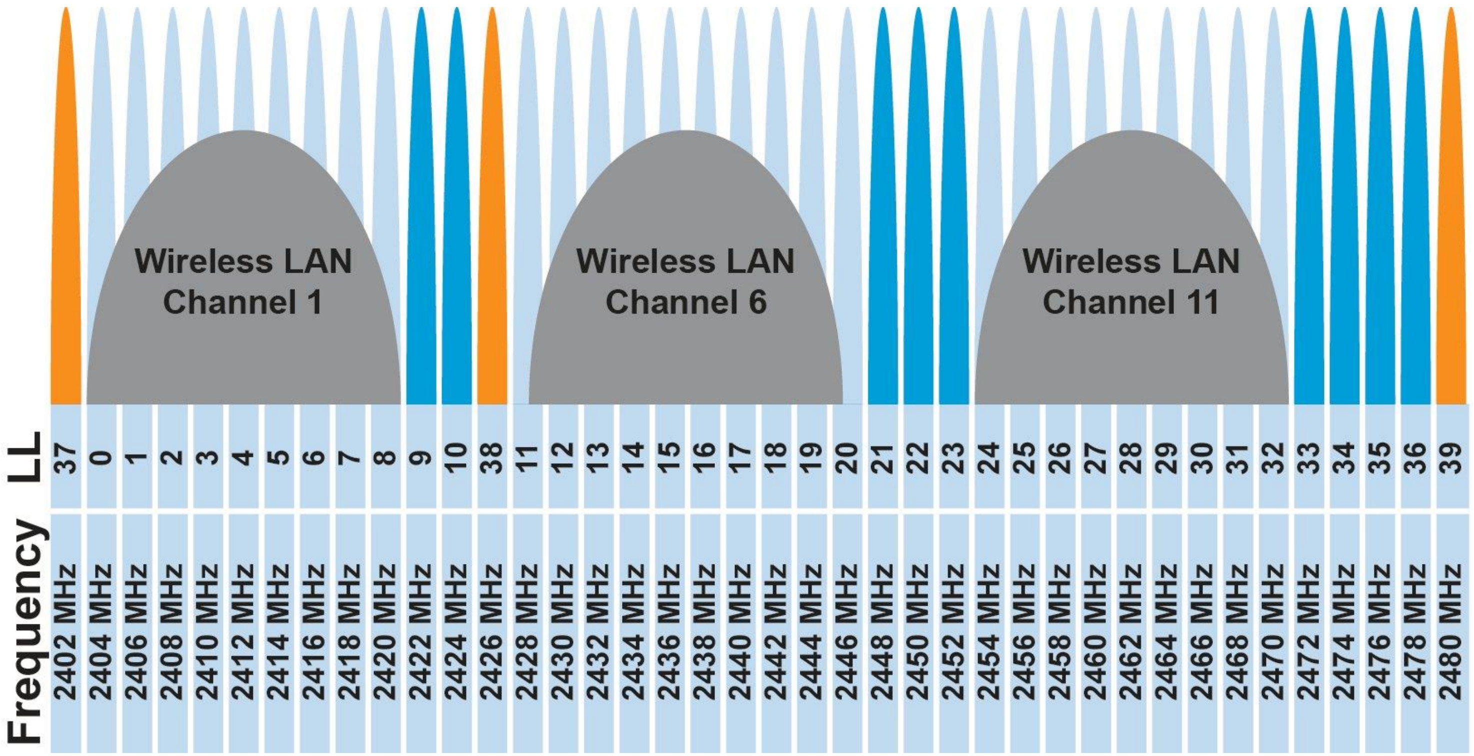


Wireless spectrum is allocated to specific uses



Unlicensed bands are where IoT thrives

- 902 MHz – 928 MHz
  - LPWANs
- 2.4 GHz to 2.5 GHz
  - WiFi, BLE, Thread
- 5 GHz
  - Faster WiFi



- Cellular uses licensed bands at great cost
  - **Why?**

Unlicensed bands are where IoT thrives

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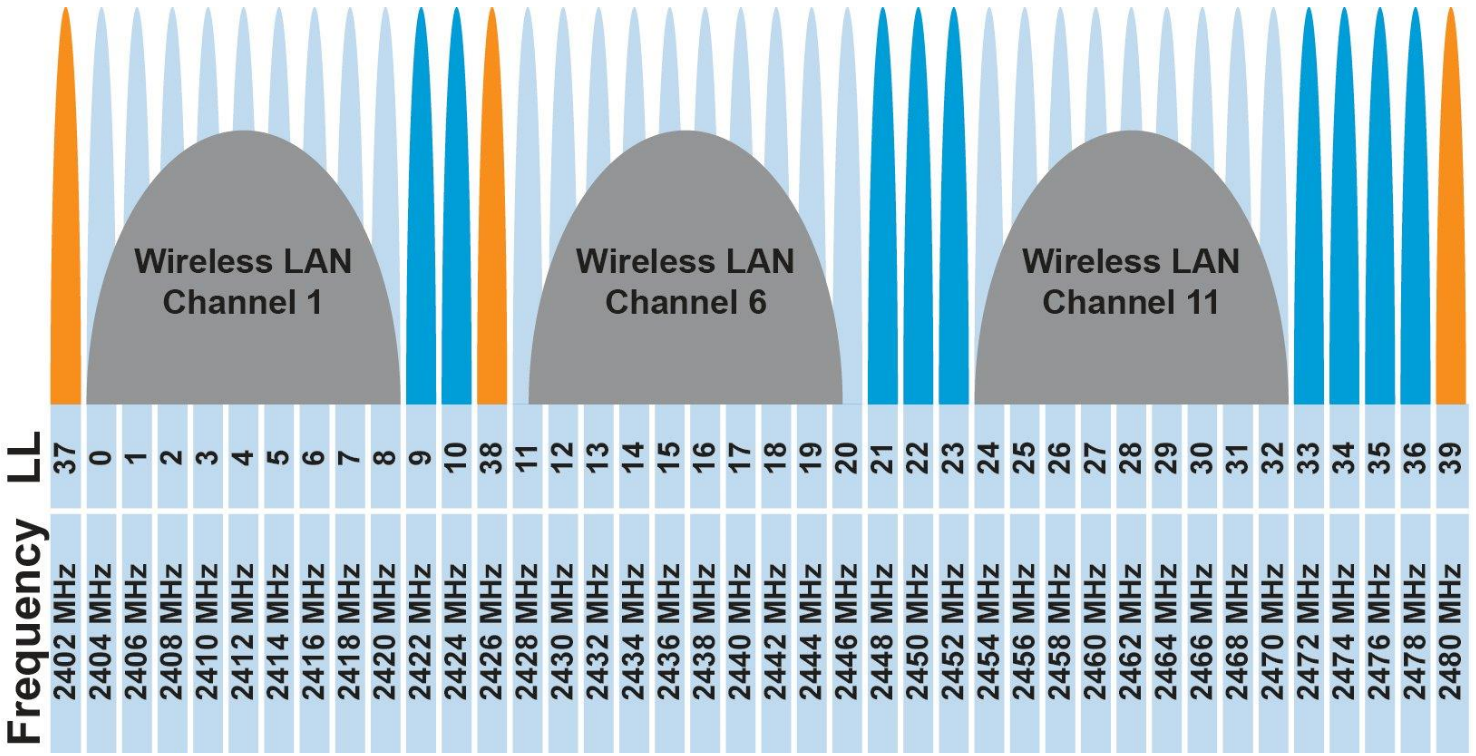

- Cellular uses licensed bands at great cost
  - **Why? No interference from other users**

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- **Wireless Protocols**
  - **Overview**
  - Bluetooth Low Energy
  - 802.15.4
  - WiFi
  - Low-Power Wide-Area Networks

What is the role of a wireless protocol?

- Multiple methods exist for sending bits wirelessly

- Protocols make choices about how to use them
  1. Select exact configurations for bit communication (Physical Layer)

  2. Determine how to send packets of data (Data Link Layer)
     - What are the fields within a packet?
     - Which device sends a packet and when can it do so?

  3. Organize communication between devices (Network Layer)
     - How are devices named?
     - How is communication directed between those devices?

Medium Access Control

- How does a network determine which transmitter gets to transmit?

- Remember: the wireless medium is inherently broadcast
  - Two simultaneous transmitters may lose both packets

Analogy: wireless medium as acoustic

- **How do we determine who gets to speak?**
  - Two simultaneous speakers also lose both “transmissions”

Analogy: wireless medium as acoustic

- **How do we determine who gets to speak?**
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- Eye contact (or raise hand) -> out-of-band communication
- Wait until it’s quiet for some time -> carrier sense multiple access
- Strict turn order -> time division multiple access
- Just speak and hope it works -> ALOHA
- Everybody sing at different tones -> frequency division multiple access (stretching the metaphor)

- Others?

ALOHA

- ALOHAnet (1971)
  - University of Hawaii – Norman Abramson
  - First demonstration of wireless packet network

- Rules
  1. If you have data to send, send it

- Two (or more) simultaneous transmissions will collide and be lost
  - Wait a duration of time for an acknowledgement
  - If transmission was lost, try sending again “later”
    - Want some kind of exponential backoff scheme here

CSMA/CA – Carrier Sense Multiple Access with Collision Avoidance

- First listen for a duration and determine if anyone is transmitting
    - If idle, you can transmit
    - If busy, wait and try again later

- "listen before send"

- More expensive than Aloha, but far more reliable
    - Higher energy and lower data rate due to time spent listening
    - Don't mess up messages that have already started
        - Collisions can only occur if there are multiple waiting devices

TDMA – Time Division Multiple Access

- Split transmissions in time
  - Devices share the same channel

- Splits time into fixed-length windows
  - Each device is assigned one or more windows
  - Can build a priority system here with uneven split among devices

- Requires synchronization between devices
  - Often devices must listen periodically to resynchronize
  - Less efficient use of slots reduce synchronization
    - Large guard windows. E.g., 1.5 second slot for a 1 second transmission

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  - **WiFi**
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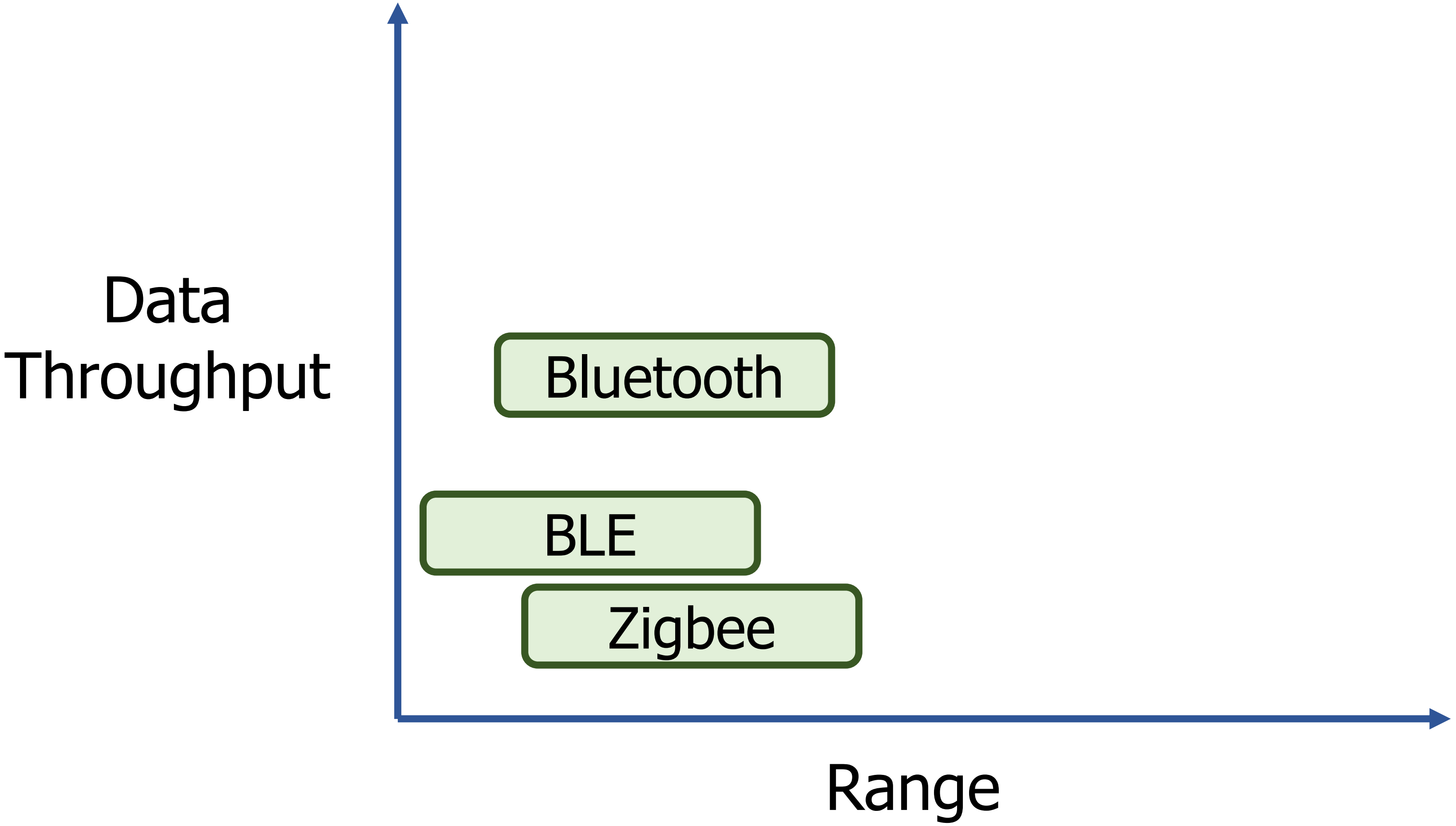
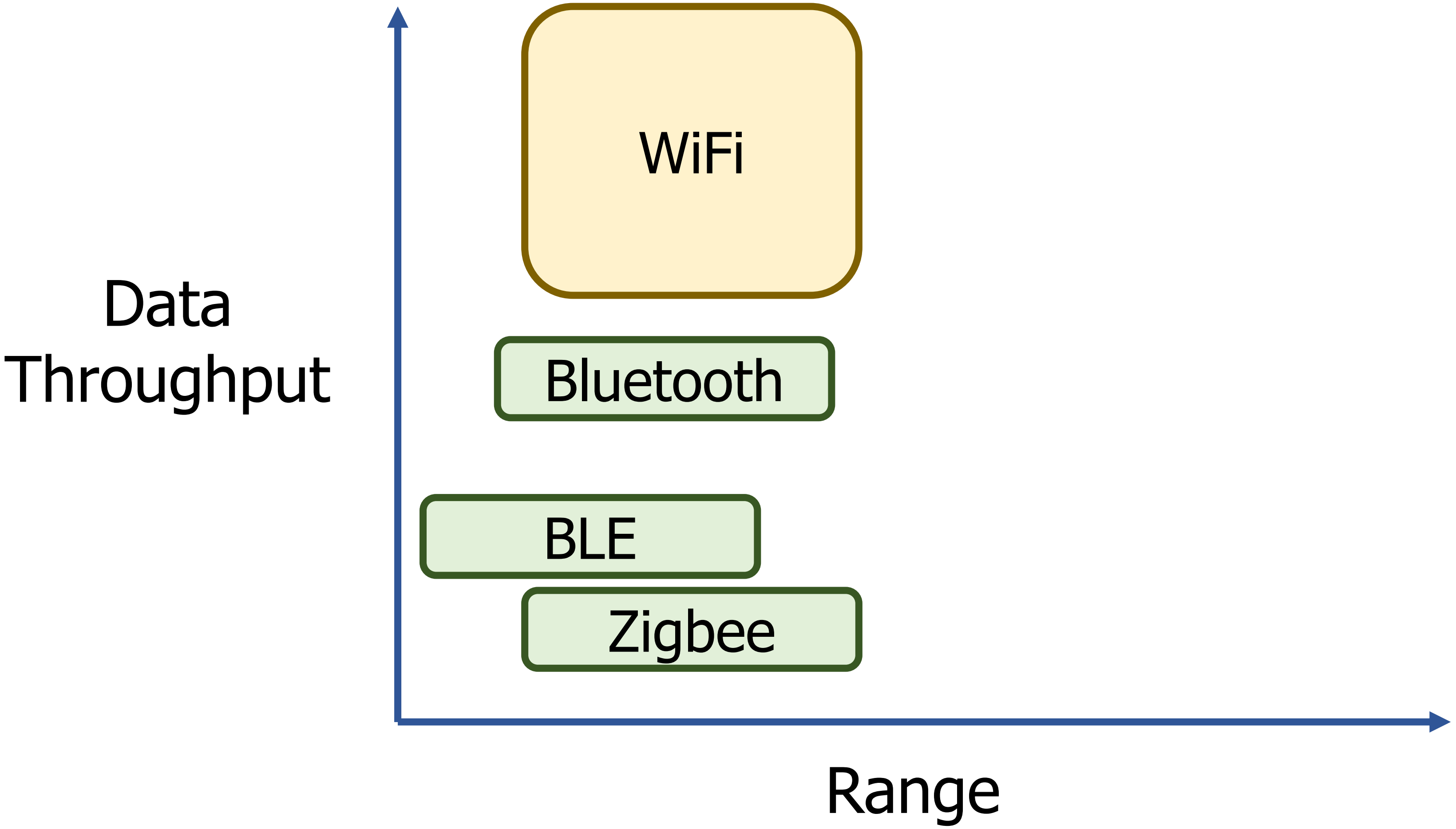
Comparison of wireless protocols



Comparison of wireless protocols



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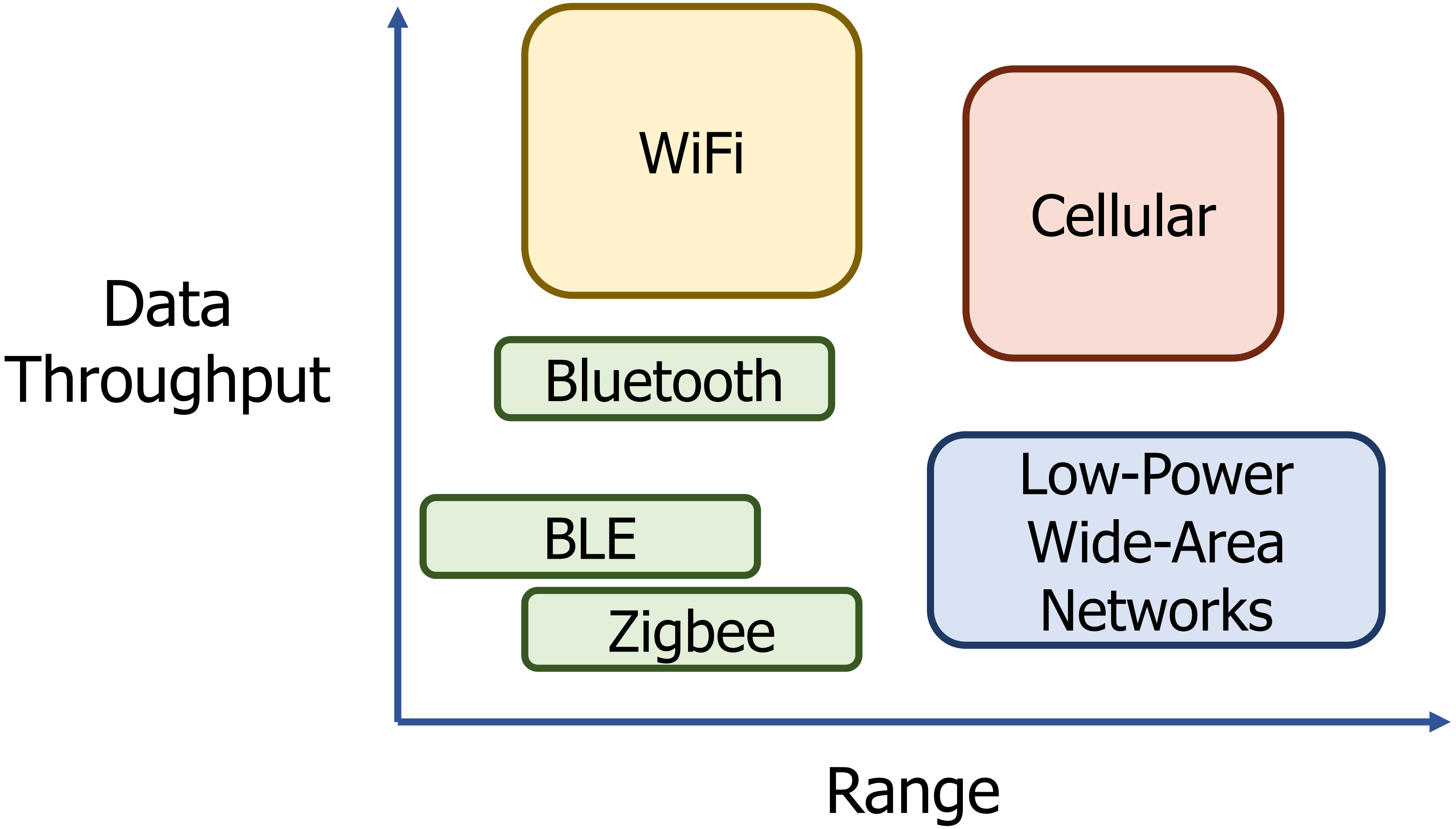

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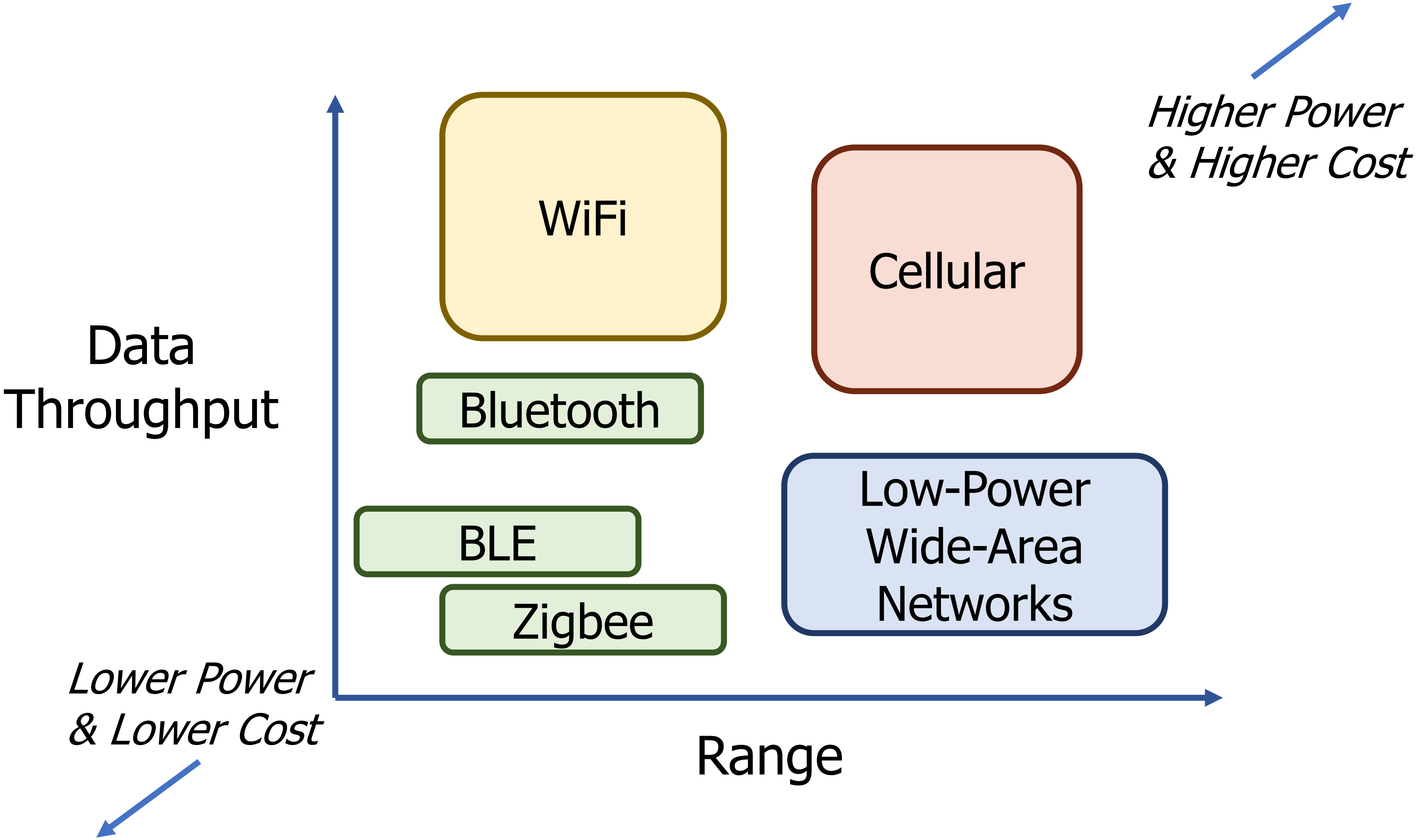


Bluetooth Low Energy

- Bluetooth Classic was good for enabling device to device communication
  - But not particularly fast discovery or low energy operation

- Bluetooth Low Energy was developed to improve this
  - Focuses on low-energy interactions
  - Much lower throughput that Bluetooth

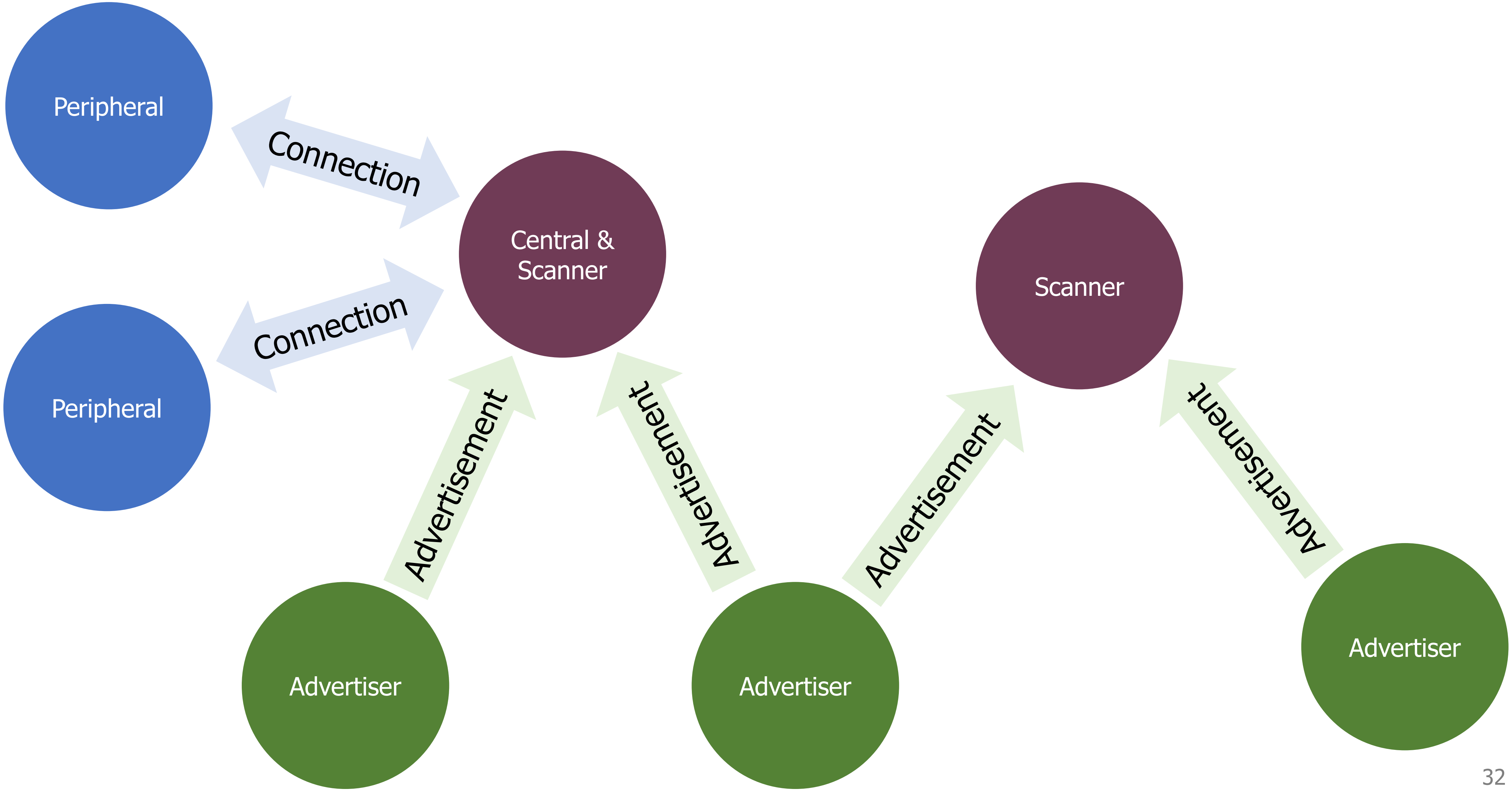
- Supported by hardware devices already in smartphones
  - Humans can interact directly with nearby devices!!

BLE mechanisms

- Advertising
  - Discovery
  - Advertisements – broadcast messages indicating device details
  - Ephemeral, uni-directional communication from Advertiser to Scanner(s)
  - ALOHA access control

- Connections
  - Interaction
  - Bi-directional communication between Peripheral and Central
  - Maintained for some duration
  - TDMA access control

BLE network topology



802.15.4 & Thread & Zigbee

- 802.15.4 is a low-energy physical layer
  - Radio chips have been widely available for 15-20 years

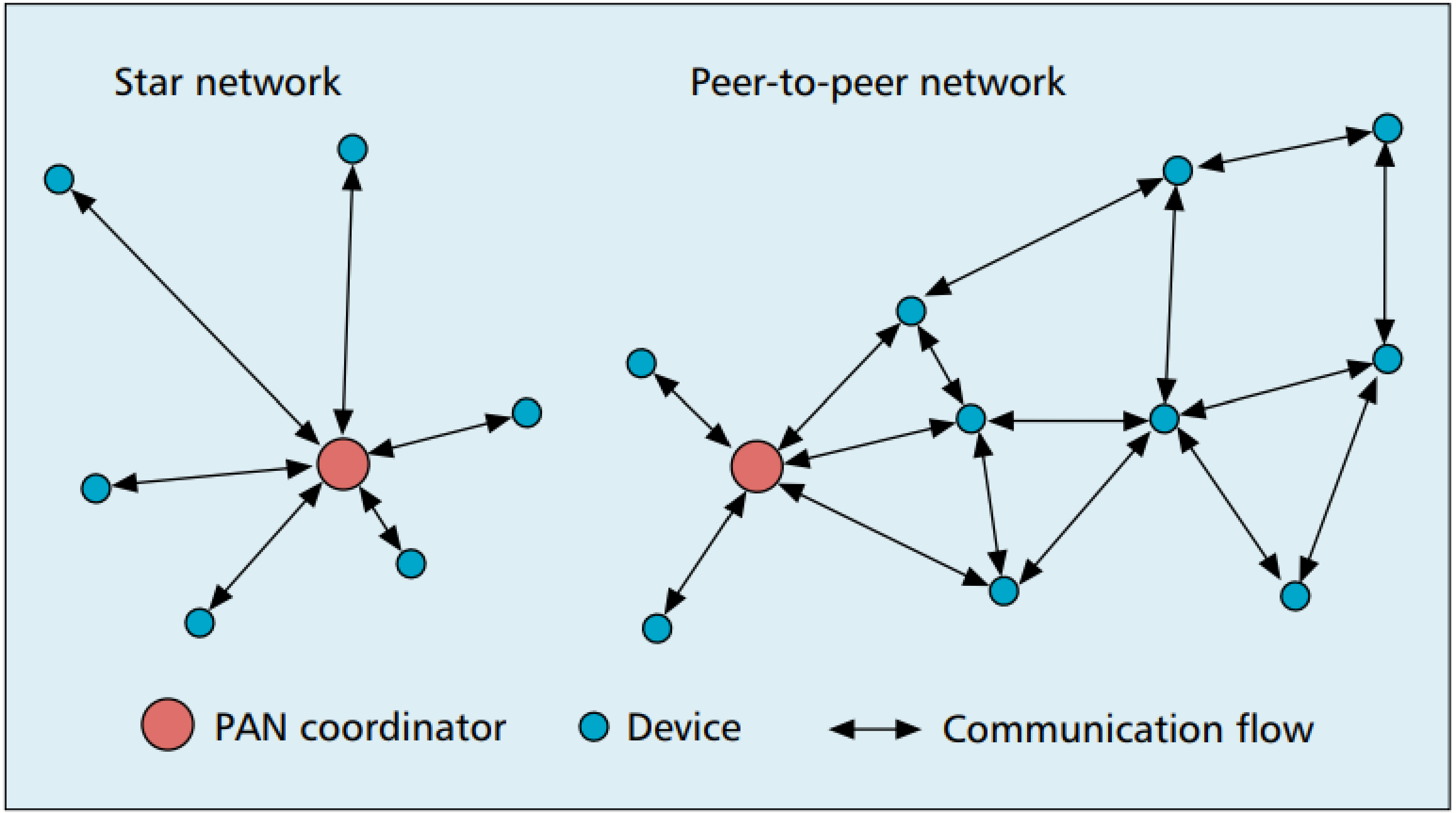
- *Significant* amounts of sensor network research have focused on building layers on top of 802.15.4
  - Access control layers (CSMA)
  - Network layers

- Thread is a selection of these possibilities to make a network
  - Uses IPv6 networking!!

- Zigbee makes slightly different selections
  - Focuses on automatic interpretation and discovery of sensors and actuators

802.15.4 topology

- Expects use cases as Star or Mesh networks



WiFi (802.11)

- Ubiquitous wireless communication
  - High energy requirements for high throughput communication
- Now accessible through relatively low power radios
  - ESP32, Electric Imp, and company
  - Still significantly more effort than BLE or Thread
- IoT devices can use the same WiFi that's already available
  - No need for additional infrastructure!!

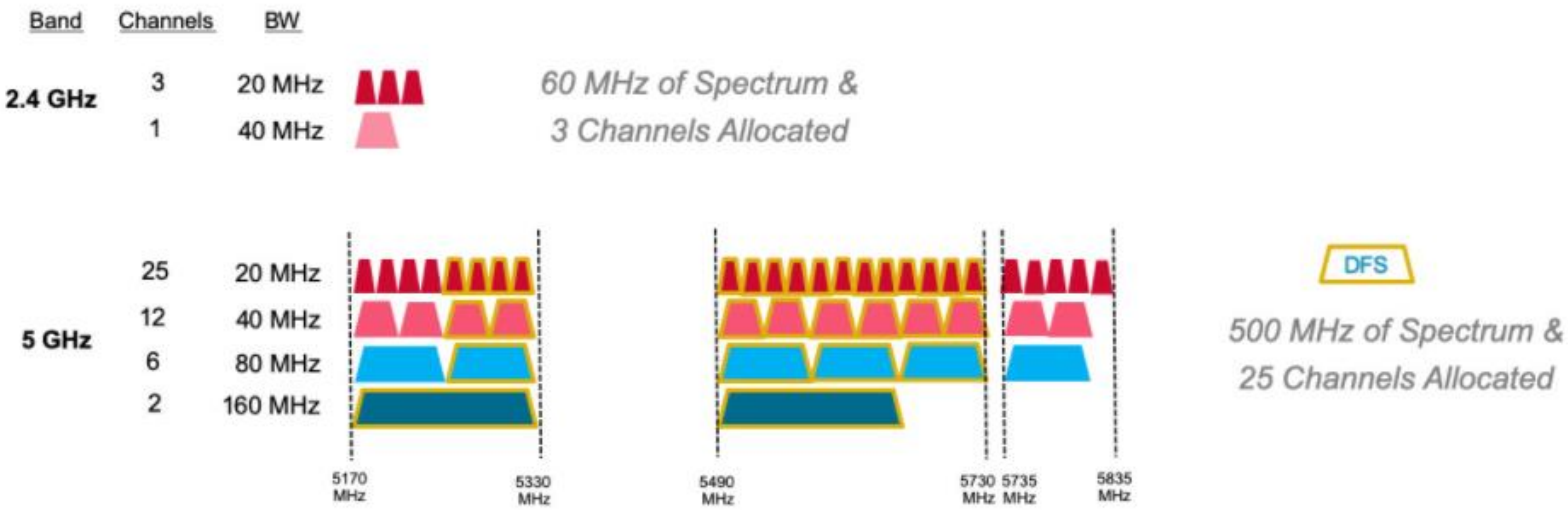
802.11 major amendments

	Protocol	Year	Frequency	PHY	Max Rate	Range
-	802.11	1997	2.4 GHz	DSSS/FHSS	2 Mbps	20 m
1	802.11b	1999	2.4 GHz	DSSS	11 Mbps	35 m
2	802.11a	1999	5 GHz	OFDM	54 Mbps	35 m
3	802.11g	2003	2.4 GHz	OFDM	54 Mbps	38 m
4	802.11n	2009	2.4/5 GHz	OFDM + MIMO	600 Mbps	70 m
5	802.11ac	2013	5 GHz	OFDM + MIMO	3.4 Gbps	35 m

- 802.11b was very popular but is now usually unsupported
- 802.11a never saw major deployment

- WiFi Alliance rebranded 802.11ac as “WiFi 5” and backported scheme

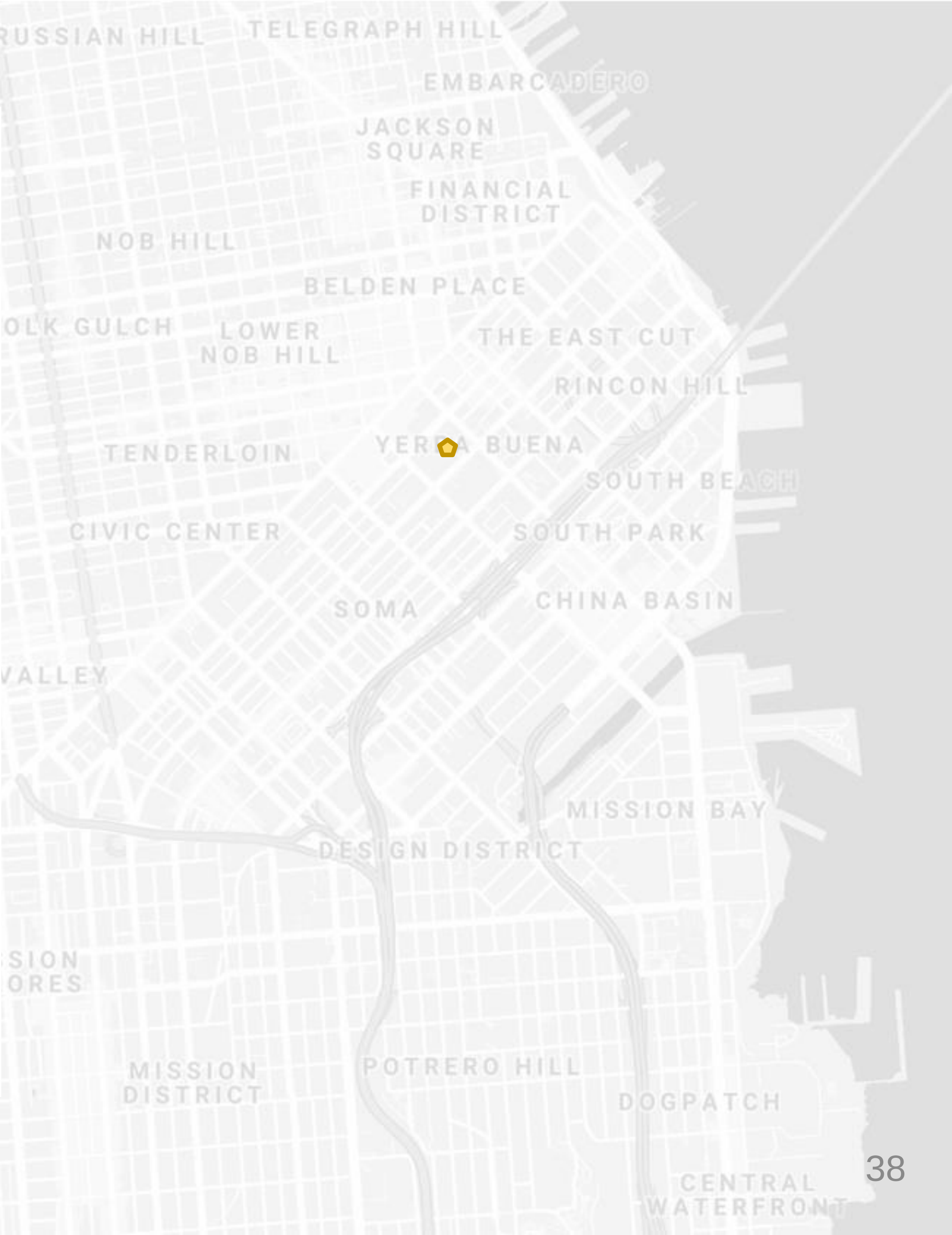
WiFi bandwidth



- More bandwidth means higher data rate (with same error rate)
- 5 GHz band allows larger bandwidth allocations for more data rate

LPWANS: How do we collect data from a sensor?

- Manually collect measurements
- Connect it to WiFi (or Ethernet)
- Pay for cellular access



LPWANS: How do we collect data from MANY sensors?

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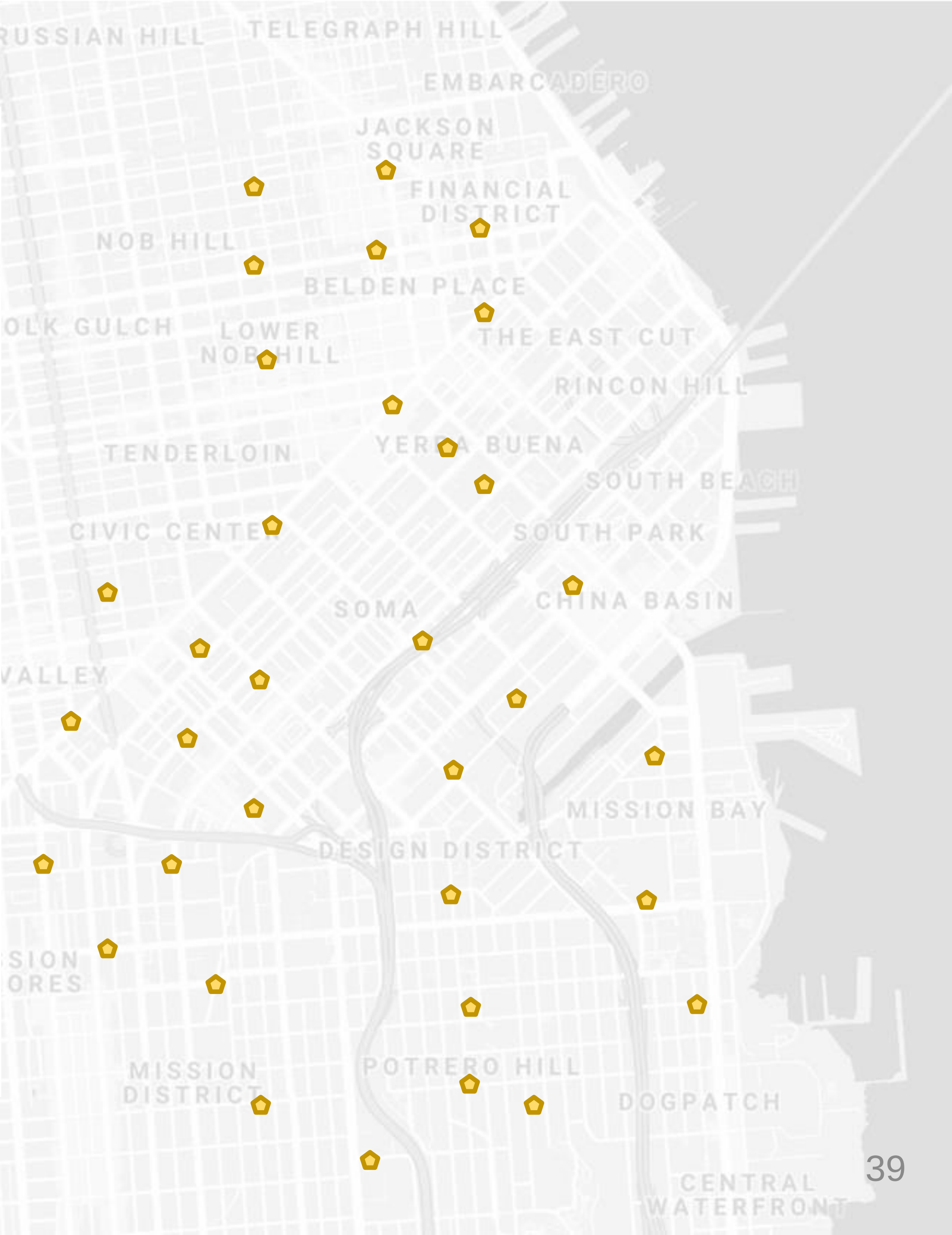

LPWANs (Low-Power Wide-Area Networks)

- How do we collect data from city-scale deployments?
  - There’s an unmet need for long-range, but low-throughput networks
  - Existing cellular technologies focus on human requirements

- Still a brand new space (relatively)
  - Unlicensed-band technologies in last 5 years: Sigfox and LoRaWAN
  - Cellular technologies in last 2 years: LTE-M and NB-IoT

- Focus on long-range, low-energy, low-throughput
  - One gateway can cover an entire city!!

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