Workshop Report 2009

Workshop Number: 319

Workshop Title: Workshop on Fundamentals: Core Internet Values

Report by: Sivasubramanian Muthusamy

Workshop description and list of panelists:
What is the Internet? What makes it what it is? What are its architectural principles? What are the core values? And what is happening to the core values in the process of its evolution? What is it that needs to be preserved and what changes are inevitable? What does the Internet Community say as what can't be changed? How could changes and improvements be brought about without compromising on the core values? How would the different positions between stakeholders be reconciled to commit to the core Internet values? The workshop has been organized to answer these questions and define the core Internet values.

Panel Chair: Lynn St Amour, President and CEO of the Internet Society.

Ian Peter, Ian Peter Associates; Coordinator of the Internet Governance Caucus

Daniel Dardailler, Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C)

Rt. Hon' Alun Michael, MP., United Kingdom

Nathaniel James, OneWebDay

Markus Kummer, Executive Director of the Internet Governance Forum

Alejandro Pisanty, Member, Board of Trustees, Internet Society.

Markus Kummer, Executive Director, Internet Governance Forum

Apologies:

Jonathan Zittrain, Berkman Center

Patrick Falstrom , Internet Engineering Task Force

Ambassador Yrjo Lansipuro, Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Issac Mao, Associate of the Berkmen Center

Sivasubramanian Muthusamy, President, Internet Society India Chennai

Millton Mueller, Scientific Committee Member, Syracuse, NY, USA

The actors involved in the field; various initiatives that people can connect with, and contacts for further information:
Audio Recording:
http://isocmadras.blogspot.com/2009/12/igf-workshop-319-workshop-on.html

Contact for further Information:

Sivasubramanian Muthusamy

Isoc India Chennai
isolatedn@gmail.com

A brief substantive summary and the main issues that were identified:
Lynn St. Amour, President and CEO of the Internet Society

Internet is much more than a technology. Its origin was not a single act of invention, but very much a process of collaboration and cooperation, based on shared values, processes, practices and ideals that actually underline the Internet, in addition to the technical developments. The Internet Model is characterized by open standards, transparent governance, community-driven processes. with architectural principles governed by a common set of operating values. The model relies on processes and products that are local, bottom-up, and accessible to users around the world.

Daniel Dardailler,. W3C Associate Chair for Europe and Chair of the Official Liaison Task Force of W3C.

On a technical level, Internet is a layer and the Web is an application on top of that layer. The Web is completely independent of the Internet. On the Internet everything is extensible and independent of each other.

In comparison with other technologies such as telephone, the Internet is based on open standards, everybody is able to participate in the design process.. These are the principles that came with the development of the Internet.

We have one root and need to maintain that because multiple roots would break one of the essential principles The Web is sending data through a pipe and we don't want the data to be looked at by the careers, by the ISPs, for example. We don't want the data to be fast-laned or restrained. This principle of network neutrality is important.

Web is the user interface. It is the top of the stack over which applications reside. There are specific principles that govern the worldwide web. The web is accessible to all users, irrespective physical disabilities of the users, and irrespective of the type of devices used to access the web. On the web, content is separate from presentation. The web has a lot of principles -architectural principles that define a resource, address. Even for filtering there are principles. There should be meta data and the filtering should be done objectively.

The central principle is the principle of choice: we want users to be able to buy whatever platform, browser, etc. from different places of their choice. With the phone system, it is not like that. The Internet has been on the forefront of choice and participation

RT Hon Alun Michael MP, Labor and Cooperative Party Member of the British Parliament, Secretary of State for Wales, Minister for Rural Affairs

We need to grasp three nettles (A nettle is something that if you grasp it it leaves you alone, but if you brush against it, makes you turn out in a rash)

1) We are dealing with a future not yet conceived, so existing management techniques of the past and present are likely to prove inadequate - i.e. the management tools of the industry, management tools of the government, management tools of the International community, and management tools of legislation- they are far too slow to keep up with the developments and changes of the Internet.

2) core internet values laid out by Vint Cerf are largely technical values, but Internet is used by all of society and it affects the whole of society - even those who are on the other side of the Digital Divide. It is not just about the architecture of our online city, Cities very often don't turn out as their original architects intended, once they are populated. So, it is not just about technology, but about the behavior of the inhabitants, in this case, the Internet Users who arenow defining the Internet

3) We not only have to listen to young people, we need to hand-over to young people (we need to

give them a day on the main stage) Young people who grew up with Internet approach the Internet in a totally different way and their talents could be made use of and they could be engaged in a positive way.

IGF needs to help communicate with policy makers, who might not know what this workshop is talking about. Do legislators understand what they are doing? Most legislation is a reaction to demands, requirements and problems, rather than designed to bring about a particular outcome.

And on the other side, does the IGF community understand policy makers and legislators? the pressures on Ministers? the Media Voices that very often go for quick solutions by headlines and demand that something be done?

Are policy makers overwhelmed by the exaggerated concerns of cyber-security? All that they need to do is to listen to an average speaker from the FBI who would frighten the living daylights out of those who listen to them. It is true that there are enormous dangers.

What is required is proportionate response, which is scientific, evidence based and people based. There certainly is the danger of disproportionate responses in legislation. Are there dangers of over-regulation? Yes--it happens on nearly everything: "Laws rarely prevent what they forbid" If the Internet Community provides answers to some of the people related issues, then there is the opportunity for much better governance in the real world as well as online governance.

Proposals to fix a problem threaten the core values of the Internet, but if experts, or, those who care about the core values do not provide answers to problems, there would be crude regulation. We need to show that a cooperative approach works and that core internet values deliver a healthy community. We have to deliver solutions instead of relying on the last refuge of the policy makers.

Nathaniel James, Executive Director, One Web Day

Article 19 states that everyone has a right to freedom of opinion and expression, through any media, regardless of frontiers. Real value of Internet is in it being a human network of users. A discussion of core internet values must begin with the human value of users. Do users value the End to End principle, the Open Innovation system, a unified and secure root, the IP address system ? Most of the users do not know about these principles and values. They value the Internet as an expression of their deeper values and aspirations - expressions, collaboration, dissent, freedom, democracy, family, friendship, community, opportunity, justice and fun, of respect the deeper values of Internet.

Internet Community is a network of lawyers, experts, engineers, business and NGO leaders, but unfortunately democracy of experts is not a democracy at all, but a technocracy. Democracy requires strategies for grass root engagement.

We need to frame internet controversies over privacy, identity, security etc., in the context of deeper human values. We must begin by reaching out to other sectors – human rights, social services, health sectors and helping understand how Internet Governance has an impact in the realization of their core values.

Markus Kummer, Executive Director of the IGF:

IGF is less of a technocratic gathering than some of the specialized gatherings are - e.g. ICANN which discuss specialized matters that are arcane to the outside world. - IGF has a mix of societal and technological questions. Governments work differently than the Internet Community. Governments and the world of Inter-governmental organs and world of treaties are based on a system that came out of the Westphalia Peace Conference of 1648, on the principles of sovereignty, hierarchy, pyramids. Internet is the opposite of all that-- it is borderless, it it bottom up, it is a network of networks, it has very flat hierarchies, it is about cooperation, collaboration, not about giving orders to subordinates. IGF is an attempt to bring these two cultures together

Nation state has a very well-structured way of operation. On the Internet, networks are forming independently of formal hierarchy. This is an interesting development. Governments are struggling with this and how the Internet undermines the existing processes. It becomes difficult to combine the sovereignty of the nation state with the freedom of the borderless world. The IGF has adopted the principles of the Internet--open, collaborative, transparent and the intelligence is at the edges.

Alejandro Pisante Professor at the National University of Mexico, Member of the Board of Trustees of the Internet Society and Chair of the Internet Society Mexico and former Member of the ICANN Board

Internet was conceived as a means of communication between computers. Before Internet computers that shared the same protocol communicated within their networks, but not outside their networks. Internet got various networks to communicate with each other with a common protocol. The computers became inter-operable and this was done by merging standards. It was necessary to make the protocols extra-simple to make the computers communicate across networks.

Standards were developed without hierarchy--as the Internet network had no hierarchy. For instance the Request For Comments (RFC) which as a part of the Internet standard making process, are always provisional, always subject to improvements.

One of the principles outlined in Interesting concepts that originated in RFC760, extended in RFC 1122 was "Be liberal with what you receive and conservative with what you send» This was a technical standard at that time, but later became RFC 1855 which is netiquette translated to human behavior of not complaining about receiving what one doesn't like and not sending out unnecessary communication. This is a very fundamental principle that is built into the technology, protocol. Openness on the Internet is about your computer being open to receiving all sorts of communication which translates to the user being tolerant and open to receive communication, and the network being open to communication. 'openness' has technical and human/organizational dimensions (i.e. "layer 8" discussions such as network neutrality) and is one of the values that is under threat. This is tolerance of communication, one of the core values under threat. "layer 8" is human and organizational restrictions imposed over network communication.
.
The network operators are to treat all packets as equal. They are not to give preference to their own or favored traffic, as in the case of an ISP who owns a television company giving preference to its television content over other content on the Internet.

The Internet is distinct from the "owned network" model, such as that of phone companies who owned the cables, equipment and even the telephones. The telcos are trying to take the Internet back to the owned network model through the NGN (and sometimes 'new' is actually going back to the old, what is called 'change' is change backwards.)

To really continue this innovation in communication, allowing smaller companies and smaller civil society organizations their respective roles and not let these be crushed by constraints that are artificially built into the technology, or operated without being inbuilt.

Ian Peter of Ian Peter Associates, Coordinator of the Internet Governance Caucus and Founding Director of the Global Association for Progressive Communications.

A 1983 study looked at mass media, and came up with the idea that the purpose of all this media is the development of human kind. We can apply that to the Internet. Internet is a tool for our development.As a tool for our development it is an extraordinarily powerful one, an extraordinarily useful one.

Technologies have a way of evolving: examples include radio, telephone, internet, how TV is watched. Telephone was invented as a music device. Radio began as ham radio for people to talk to each other. Internet started as mainframe computers talking to one another, then personal computers were added and now the most dominant device is the mobile device. We don't watch television the way we used to. In Hollywood, the era of the blockbuster is finished.

The Internet community understands this: the principle of constant change is the only constant principle that should continue for the Internet The principal of constant change is the only principle that should continue for ever In the middle of this change what do we need to protect?

Interdependence of applications and permissionless innovation
Open Standards - vendor neutral - (I can use any computer)
Accessibility
Globally inclusive
User choice
Easy of use
Universality - trans boundary - (I can use it anywhere)
Freedom of expression - (I can say what I want)
The ability to change rapidly
Trustworthy and reliable

Conclusions and further comments:
The Internet model is open, transparent, and collaborative and relies on processes and products that are local, bottom-up, and accessible to users around the world. This needs to be preserved. We need to preserve the system of a single root. The principles of network neutrality and platform independence must also be preserved. We need to involve young people who grew up with the Internet and are bound to approach the Internet issues in a totally different way and their talents could be made use of and they could be engaged in a positive way.

IGF needs to help communicate with policy makers. On the other side, the IGF community needs to understand policy makers and legislators as also the pressures on Ministers

People have to become Internet-wise just as people need to become street-wise. On Security issues, what is required is proportionate response, which is scientific, evidence based and people based. "Laws rarely prevent what they forbid" We need to show that a cooperative approach works and that core internet values deliver a healthy community. The Internet Community has to deliver solutions instead of relying on the last refuge of the policy makers.

The panel proposed to continue discussing this topic by forming a dynamic coalition for the next few years

The panel commented that IGF and ICANN are complementary, and should not seek to duplicate functions.

...End of Report...