

THE FUTURE OF
THE INTERNET
AND HOW TO STOP IT

JONATHAN ZITTRAIN

THE GENERATIVE PATTERN

- 1. An idea originates in a backwater.
- 2. It is ambitious but incomplete. It is partially implemented and released anyway, embracing the ethos of the procrastination principle.
- 3. Contribution is welcomed from all corners, resulting in an influx of usage.
- 4. Success is achieved beyond any expectation, and a higher profile draws even more usage.
- 5. Success is cut short: “There goes the neighborhood” as newer users are not conversant with the idea of experimentation and contribution, and other users are prepared to exploit the openness of the system to undesirable ends.
- 6. There is movement toward enclosure to prevent the problems that arise from the system’s very popularity.

THE GENERATIVE DILEMMA

- Generativity has been essential for the advances in internet (and pc) technology
- But generativity (and the procrastination principle) also creates the potential of serious problems: Security, privacy etc
(If linux was OS no. 1, it would have viruses as well...)

HOW TO AVOID LOCKDOWN



Image from radicaltrust.ca (CC)

- “verkeersbordvrij”: No traffic rules
- How to improve safety without excessive regulations?

LEARNING FROM WIKIPEDIA

- Wikipedia's three distinguishing features:
 - verkeersbordvrij: few rules
 - discussion pages: consensus-based development
 - a core of editors with a shared ethos
- Challenges (vandalism, political controversies, advertising, defamation) are met by adapting the rules through consensus-building debate.
Zittrain: Messy, but it works! (And: It mirrors the works of the IETF).
- Wikipedia has taken generativity on to the content layer of the internet.
- Ethos, rather than law

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONTENT GENERATIVITY AND TECHNICAL GENERATIVITY

- Content production is a social activity, something in which mainstream users take pleasure in participating. Technical security-fixing may not be the same.
- Content-layer enterprises (web 2.0) have developed technical solutions to support participation. The security field lacks these.

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

- Maintain data portability
-to help people pass between generative and non-generative applications/ environments
- Protect network neutrality through API neutrality
- Privacy: Data stored on servers must be regarded as belonging to the users, not ISPs
- Code thicklets - prevent “sleeping” on patent and copyright-infringements
- Maintaining regulator’s tolerance: Sender ID
- Counter-censorship technologies: Blossom

PRIVACY 2.0

- Web 2.0: “Databases” are distributed, information can be gathered from everywhere - old privacy regulation is inadequate.
- Code-backed norms: robots.txt, Creative Commons
- Data genealogy: People could signal how (and whether) they want to be associated with certain data
- Reputation bankruptcy
- More, not less information: Providing contextual information