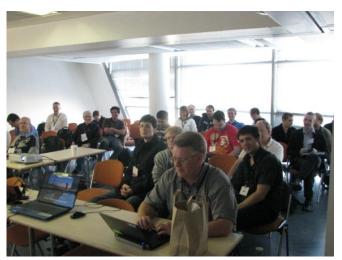# The online games tutorial in Paris

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IETF 83 in Paris was my first IETF meeting. As a University researcher I had attended a number of conferences, so I thought this was going to be just one more. I had to present a draft on Tuesday, so my first idea was to take a plane back on Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning. Fortunately, I asked Gonzalo Camarillo about it, and he told me to stay, since IETF meetings are a very good place for knowing interesting people. So finally I decided to go back on Thursday evening, taking into account that there was a strike in Spain that day, and another strike in France on Friday.

The first impression of IETF was good: the Newcomer's orientation with Scott Bradner was surprising. What he told us about the open microphones and interrupting another's presentations if you had a question is not something you may normally find in research conferences. After that, I attended the Newcomer's meet and greet, in which I met a lot of interesting people. I just could not believe this could exist: such number of interesting people in the same room!

Other surprising thing was the mailing list: people asking where they could go running, or how far was the Louvre from the hotel, gave me the idea: why not asking if somebody was interested on a tutorial about online games traffic. This is an application everyone knows, but sometimes they do not know how the traffic is. So on Monday I sent this e-mail to the list:

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(…)after my session of tomorrow, if somebody is interested, we could do a very
informal tutorial or get-together about the traffic of online games. We can go
to the café of somewhere else. Some of the issues are:

What is a First Person Shooter? And an MMORPG, and a Real-Time-Strategy?

Which kind of traffic do they generate? RTP? TCP? UDP? Are the packets big or
small?

Is it true that 10 million people play (and pay) World of Warcraft?

How can I defeat my son playing "Call of Duty"?. Well, this question may be
too difficult...
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Surprisingly, during the day I received the response from eight interested people. One of them, Pierpaolo Giacomin, suggested me to ask IETF secretaries for a room.

That night, while I was talking to my pillow, I thought: why not? IETF is an open place, you can do (or try) whatever you want, so let's try. Next morning, my session (tsvwg) was from 9.00 to 11.30. And I had announced the tutorial to be at 11.30. So I had to do something quickly.

I took the metro at 8.10 and arrived at Porte Maillot at 8.40.

I asked for a room at 8.45 at the desk.

I was told to ask for permission of the Area Director.

At 8.55 I sat at the first row in room 253 for tsvwg session

I asked for permission from the area director by e-mail at 8.57.

The area director (Wes Eddy) answered me "ok" at 9.16.

I re-sent this e-mail to IETF staff at 9.25.

For preparing the tutorial, I checked that the online games I had in my laptop worked properly. Since I was in the first row, a lot of people were able to see the display of my computer. What did they think? I prefer not guessing.

At 9.53 I received a message from Wanda Lo saying "Please put in your request through this link: …"

At 10.00 I noticed that the servers of one of the games *(Runes of Magic)* that I was going to use at the tutorial were "stopped for maintenance".

The room 212/213 was finally reserved and assigned at 10.32.

At 10.47 I sent an email to the list announcing the hour and the place.

At 11.10 the servers of *Runes of Magic* were activated again.

At 11.15 I did the presentation of my draft. I was interrupted for two questions, but I managed to finish it (I hope it was good).

At 11.30 the session finished.

And at 11.35 I arrived to Room 212/213 and there were about 25 people, as you can see in the photo. I asked them: you aren't here for the online games traffic tutorial, are you? And they told me: "Of course".

I just couldn't believe it, but I had to carry on with the tutorial. So I connected my laptop to the projector, and we had the session. It was more a get-together than a formal session, so I also learnt a lot of things from people's comments. I showed three different games: first, *Counter Strike* as an example of a *First Person Shooter* (FPS). Next, *Runes of Magic* (it worked properly), as an example of *Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game* (MMORPG) and finally *0 Anno Domini*, as an example of a *Real Time Strategy* (RTS) game. I also showed some presentations

of the traffic optimizations (tunneling, header compressing and multiplexing) we have studied and are now trying to standardize. We also used *Wireshark* to capture the traffic and saw the different options that game developers use for each genre: UDP for FPS and RTS, and TCP for MMORPG. This is a little weird, since TCP was not designed for real-time services. Well, it may be weird but it works: this game has 10 million people that play and pay every month!.

The tutorial lasted 50 minutes, since people had to go for lunch. Network traffic is interesting but, as Hobbes said: "*Primum vivere, deinde philosophari".* After that stressful morning, I took my laptop and went somewhere to have lunch. I think I deserved it.

That evening and the next two days I received more messages asking for "individualized" tutorials from people who had not been able to attend the first one. Of course, it was also interesting for talking and learning from their questions and comments.

All in all, I was surprised by the high speed in which things happen in IETF meetings. You can organize a session in 3 hours, whereas in a normal conference everything has to be planned a month before!. The most surprising thing for a newcomer may be the "humming consensus method". Leaving it apart, you may find weird the fact that everybody is using the laptop during the sessions. After this experience, I really understand it. And my plane had no problems with the strike!