S. 38.042 Seminar on Networking Business, Fall 2004
Timo Ali-Vehmas Commenting Klaus Nieminen's paper and slides to be presented 17.11.2004
VoIP Regulation

Relevance

The paper and presentation is very relevant today because of the fast growth in IP based communication, including real time services such as Voice over IP. The paper also addresses various kinds of VoIP scenarios, including PoC and Skype, not only the traditional PSTN substitution. The regulation is currently either emerging or going through drastic reformulation in all regions and especially in the USA in the EU. The role of developing countries is elaborated a bit but it is not clear whether the driving force is in the OECD or in the newly industrialized countries, such as China.

Form

The paper and slides are very clear and well balanced between the top-level overview and detailed issues, which obviously are many. The guiding directives and their substance is pointed out very nicely. This is a useful crystallization also for the future. I liked especially the author's own comments and views at the end of most of the issues described first as they obviously are debated in regulators' and policy makers' meetings. The most critical issues are quite clearly pointed out.

Substance

It is very clear that the author has exceptional insight to the substance. The technical and political aspects and opinions reflect the aspirations of progressive regulators such as Ficora. The traditional issues, emergency call, number portability and privacy and security are discussed and their potential role in VoIP regulation is pointed out. Somehow it is not clear to me how important at the end of the day the full service capability of IP networks really is. It is also possible that fundamental telecommunication systems such as circuit switched voice telephony will stay "forever". If this is the case, it may well be that regulators and policy makers are building a construct, which is not needed at all. Now in this presentation it is taken as given that IP networks will substitute in long run the old systems. May be so, maybe not.

For me the separation of peer-to-peer (self provided VoIP) and corporate use from the actual regulative debate, like PSTN substitution and interworking is important clarification. This is also the climax of the technology, business and political discontinuity that IP is now building up. This is like hearing and noting the roar of tsunami but still arguing whether the mooring ropes of the boat should be fasten to buoy or to quay. I wish there would have been one additional chapter to cover the implications of real radical but still potential changes driven by any communication, including voice over IP (noting that the paper would then exceed the given 5 pages).

Anyway, Great Job!