IGF 2016 Workshop Report Template

Session Title	Workshop: 96 Free Expression & Extremism: An Internet Governance Challenge
Date	7th December 2016
Time	9am (CST)
Session Organizer	Jim Prendergast
Chair/Moderator	Larry Magid
Rapporteur/Notetaker	Jim Prendergast
List of Speakers and their institutional affiliations	Carl Miller, Research Director, Centre for the Analysis of Social Media, Demos Jonathan Russell, Head of Policy, Quilliam Larry Magid, CEO connectsafely.org and Technology Analyst, CBS News and BBC World Service.
Key Issues raised (1 sentence per issue):	Overall, what is the appropriate ways to counter extremism online? What is extremism? The definitions of both extremism and terrorism are contested and, to an extent, controversial. What definition can be applied globally that has a broad basis of support and multi-stakeholder buy-in? Does censorship, and more coercive content-based controls have a legitimate place in countering extremism online? What is the role of citizen-led initiatives in countering extremism online, including counter-speech and online counter-extremist communications and activism?

If there were presentations during the session, please provide a 1-paragraph summary for each Presentation	Carl Miller presented on the drivers of online extremism that have been identified in research on this topic. This included the role of 'echo chambers', especially present on social media networks, that reinforce the basic world-view of the user, and can lead to a hardening of belief and a deterioration of civil disagreement. It also included online disinhibition effect; whereby people are more likely to act in aggressive, rude and disinhibited ways online due to the absence of cues that their interlocutor is another human. 'Reciprocal' radicalisation was also identified as a driver; due to the ease and quickness whereby people can identify and contact people on social media whom they profoundly and passionately disagree with. Last, Carl pointed to the absence of 'digital citizenship' - a body of norms and rules that could help people be responsible members of the online community and treat other members in a civil, polite, and decent way. Jonathan Russell discussed Quilliam's research into online radicalisation and extremist communications online including 'Jihad Trending' and 'Virtual Caliphate', and recommended taking a full spectrum approach to CVE comparable to offline strategies. Jonathan focused on communications approaches to countering violent extremism online, considering the centrality of narrative to the radicalisation process and to the effectiveness of extremist groups, and the preference for non-kinetic approaches given the uncertainty over definitions of extremism. Jonathan presented the value of capacity building efforts to create appropriate 'messengers' in civil society to lead these communications approaches, and suggested they meet the 3 P's - proximity, prestige, and passion – in order to influence the target audience and create the desired attitudinal and behavioural change.
Please describe the Discussions that took place during the workshop session: (3 paragraphs)	Carl's breakout group focussed on the discussion of whether censorship had a legitimate place on the Internet in order to counter-extremism. There was a very wide array of different opinions present in the discussion, ranging from the belief that censorship had no legitimate place, in any context online, to the belief that there was a 'right' of censorship held, especially, by internet and online service providers. The group also discussed the most legitimate actor to conduct censorship (assuming it were to take place); here most discussants favoured the internet service providers and technology companies over national Governments in deciding what content was, and was not, permissible within their online services. The greatest consensus was around the process whereby censoring or content take-down should happen: all speakers agreed the process should be transparent, have mechanisms for remedy, should be subject to oversight, contain protection for journalists and at-risk members of online communities, and should seek to establish common ground over the kinds of content that would be subject to take-down or blocking.

	Jonathan's breakout group considered the opportunities and challenges of counterspeech, hearing from a diverse range of government, private sector and civil society representatives. Challenges included breaking out of one's echo chamber, ensuring that online and offline approaches are joined-up and include action, and evaluating the impact of such work. Conclusions included the need to localise counterspeech to ensure that it had the desired impact with the target audience, and to focus much more on dissemination strategies in order to reach the target audience rather than simply message or content creation. The group recommended learning from neighbouring sectors including from those in marketing, defence and other social change areas, as well as from extremists themselves. Moreover, recommendations came to pursue education to improve critical thinking to make extremist communications less effective, at the same time as more positive counterspeech approaches. Criticism came for governments who have been slow to adopt counterspeech as a response and for those in the mainstream media whose powerful influence on narratives often undermines counterspeech.
Please describe any Participant suggestions regarding the way forward/ potential next steps /key takeaways: (3 paragraphs)	Due to the wide variety of opinions over the legitimacy of censorship, take-down and blocking, there were no consensual take-aways offered by the group. A clear, widely-supported definition of extremism online will be key, clearly, in future policy in this area, and vital in establishing take-down policies that have broad support from civic society and industry as well as law enforcement and government. Jonathan's group recommended implementing multistakeholder partnerships at every level of online counter-extremism and putting pressure on public and private sector to empower civil society to lead on counterspeech approaches, but to invest resources in evaluation and iterative learning processes too.