GeneRic Autonomic Signaling Protocol (GRASP)
A Tutorial

Brian Carpenter

<your name could go here>

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Topics

- Background
- Requirements for an autonomic signaling protocol
- GRASP basics
- GRASP "objectives"
- GRASP operations and messages
- GRASP API
- Logic flows
- Security
- Prototype implementation

Background and General Terminology

- Autonomic Network: Self-managing (self-configuring, self-protecting, self-healing, self-optimizing) with high-level guidance by a central entity (e.g. the Network Operations Center, NOC)

- Autonomic Function: A specific self-managing feature or function.

- Autonomic Service Agent (ASA): An agent that implements an autonomic function, centralized or distributed.

- Autonomic Node: A node that contains at least one ASA and employs autonomic functions

- Autonomic Control Plane (ACP): Self-configuring fully secure virtual network used for all autonomic messaging.

Reading List

- General background
  - <IPJ article goes here>
  - General background: RFC7575 and RFC8993

- Specifications
  - Autonomic security: RFC8994 and RFC8995
  - GRASP itself: RFC8990 (protocol) and RFC8991 (API)

- Use cases:
  - Integration with NOC: RFC8368
  - IP Prefix management: RFC8992

<u>Requirements</u> for Autonomic Service Agents (ASAs)

- To act autonomically, ASAs need to communicate with each other.

- Even if policy and resources come from a central origin (the NOC), ASAs need to communicate *peer-to-peer*, especially if the network partitions due to an outage.

- There are two primary forms of communication:

  - Configuration or resource data *sent in one direction* only (from one ASA to others);

  - Configuration or resource data *negotiated* between ASAs.

Why invent a new protocol?

- RFC8990 gives more detail on the ASA communication requirements.

- It also analyzes various existing protocols against these requirements.

- None of them matched up. The IETF ANIMA WG decided that a purpose-designed protocol was the way to go.

Basics of
GeneRic Autonomic Signaling Protocol (GRASP)

- GRASP will be used for signaling between ASAs
  - That includes the special-purpose ASAs that support secure bootstrap & Autonomic Control Plane (ACP) creation
  - After that, GRASP runs over the ACP to guarantee security
- GRASP provides discovery, flooding, synchronization and negotiation for the technical "objectives" supported by ASAs
  - Based on CBOR (Concise Binary Object Representation)
  - Objectives can be expressed in JSON or Python-like syntax & semantics

Why CBOR? Why not TLV?

- The earliest design used a traditional type-length-value format.

- However, switching to CBOR[1] (RFC8949) gave
  - much greater flexibility and extensibility,
  - no performance loss,
  - clear protocol definitions in CDDL[2] (RFC8610),
  - easy mapping to JSON when useful,
  - easy mapping to modern languages like rust and Python.

[1]Concise Binary Object Representation
[2]Concise Data Definition Language

GRASP Technical Objectives

- In GRASP, an *objective* is a configurable parameter:
  - a logical, numerical or string value, or a more complex data structure.
  - used in Discovery, Negotiation, Flooding and Synchronization.
  - semantics depend on the autonomic function concerned, and are built into the code of each ASA.
- Example for IP prefix management:

["PrefixManager", flags, loop_count,
　　　　　　　　[IP_version, prefix_length, prefix]]

Formal syntax of a GRASP Objective (1)

```
objective = [objective-name, objective-flags,
                loop-count, ?objective-value]
objective-name = text
objective-value = any
loop-count = 0..255
```

Formal syntax of a GRASP Objective (2)

`objective-name = text`

This is any human-readable UTF-8 string.

- Generic objectives MUST NOT include a colon (":") and MUST be registered with IANA.

- Privately defined objectives MUST include at least one colon (":"). The string preceding the last colon in the name MUST be globally unique, such as a fully-qualified DNS name.

Formal syntax of a GRASP Objective (3)

`objective-flags`

A byte containing up to 8 flag bits. Bit numbers defined so far:

> **`F_DISC: 0      ; valid for discovery`**
>
> **`F_NEG: 1       ; valid for negotiation`**
>
> **`F_SYNCH: 2     ; valid for synchronization`**
>
> **`F_NEG_DRY: 3 ; negotiation is a dry run`**

F_NEG and F_SYNCH cannot both be set to 1.

Formal syntax of a GRASP Objective (4)

`objective-value = any`

GRASP does not restrict the value field of an objective. Anything that can be expressed in CBOR can be used: for example, a single integer, a UTF-8 string, an array of floating point numbers, or any kind of JSON-like object.

In other words, whatever suits the configuration or optimization task of an ASA is OK.

The specification of a given GRASP objective must define the format of the value field, preferably using CDDL for clarity.

Formal syntax of a GRASP Objective (5)

`loop-count = 0..255`

In a discovery operation, this variable is used to limit the scope of discovery (see later).

In a negotiable objective (F_NEG = 1), this variable counts down at each step of a negotiation, and the negotiation fails if it reaches zero.

In a synchronizable objective (F_SYNCH = 1), this variable is used to limit the scope of a flooding operation (see later).

GRASP Operations and Messages

- **Discovery** is used by any ASA that needs to discover another (peer) ASA that supports a given objective. It returns zero, one or more responses.

- **Negotiation** is used between two ASAs that support a given objective. They swap values of the objective until negotiation succeeds or fails.

  - GRASP does not support multiparty negotiation; negotiation is 1-to-1.

- **Synchronization** is used between any pair of ASAs that support a given objective. One of them obtains a value of the objective from the other.

- **Flood Synchronization** is used when one ASA needs to distribute the value of a given objective to all others.

  - GRASP does not currently support selective distribution.

The next slide lists the message types that support these operations.

GRASP Message Types

Discovery (multicast)   M_DISCOVERY
Discovery Response   M_RESPONSE

Request Negotiation   M_REQ_NEG
Negotiation   M_NEGOTIATE
Confirm Waiting   M_WAIT
Negotiation End   M_END

Request Synchronization   M_REQ_SYN
Synchronization   M_SYNCH
Flood Synchronization (multicast) M_FLOOD

Invalid   M_INVALID
No operation   M_NOOP

Transport and IP Layer Usage

- Multicasts are IPv6 link-local to port 7017.
    - All modern operating systems support link-local IPv6 by default; nothing to configure.
    - When necessary, GRASP nodes relay these multicasts on other links.
- Unicast messages use a reliable transport protocol over IPv6.
    - Depending on the security environment provided by the ACP, this may be TLS.
    - Otherwise, TCP.
- In a deployment with the standard ACP, the IPv6 environment is self-creating, using Unique Local Addresses, with no operator intervention.

Formal syntax of a GRASP message (1)

```
message-structure = [MESSAGE_TYPE, session-id,
                                ?initiator,
                                *grasp-option]
MESSAGE_TYPE = 0..255
session-id = 0..4294967295 ; up to 32 bits
grasp-option = any
```

Formal syntax of a GRASP message (2)

`MESSAGE_TYPE = 0..255`

Just an integer defining the message type.

`session-id = 0..4294967295 ; up to 32 bits`

A unique pseudo-random number identifying a session (discovery, negotiation, etc.). Together with the IP address of the **`initiator`** of a session, this forms a unique handle, to distinguish simultaneous sessions.

Formal syntax of a GRASP message (3)

grasp-option = any

Defined GRASP options *include*:

objective (as above)

ipv6-locator-option = [O_IPv6_LOCATOR, ipv6-address, transport-proto, port-number]

(used in M_RESPONSE and elsewhere)

accept-option = [O_ACCEPT]

decline-option = [O_DECLINE, ?reason]

(used in M_END to finish a negotiation)

What happens during Discovery

- An ASA that needs to find a peer handling objective "A" originates an M_DISCOVER message for objective "A".
  - This goes out as a link-local UDP multicast on each of the node's interfaces to the ACP.

- Every GRASP node that receives the multicast and supports "A" or has cached the address of a node that supports "A" sends a unicast M_RESPONSE back, including an **ipv6-locator-option.**

- Any node which is also a router to other links will relay the M_DISCOVER to its other interfaces, and then relay back any M_RESPONSEs that it receives (and cache them).

- The original node will return all results received before a specified timeout to the requesting ASA (and cache them).

What happens during Flooding

- An ASA handling objective "A" originates an M_FLOOD message for objective "A", including whatever value of the objective it wants to send to all nodes. This goes out as a link-local UDP multicast on each of the node's interfaces to the ACP.

- Every GRASP node that receives the multicast caches a copy of the objective and its value for local use.

- Any node which is also a router to a different physical link will also relay the M_FLOOD to its other interfaces.

- Floods may specify an expiry timeout, after which other nodes will mark the cached value as expired.

What happens during Synchronization

- An ASA able to provide a value for objective "A" waits for any incoming M_REQ_SYN message. This also makes the ASA discoverable for "A".
    - This is server-like behavior

- An ASA needing to obtain a value for "A" first uses discovery to find all peers that support "A" and chooses one of them. It then originates a unicast M_REQ_SYN to the chosen peer.

- The peer responds with a unicast M_SYNCHRONIZE message containing the current value of "A".

What happens during Negotiation

- An ASA able to negotiate a value for objective "A" waits for any incoming M_REQ_NEG message. This also makes the ASA discoverable for "A".

    – This is server-like behavior

- An ASA needing to negotiate a value for "A" first uses discovery to find all peers that support "A" and chooses one of them. It then originates a unicast M_NEGOTIATE to the chosen peer.

- The two peers swap alternate M_NEGOTIATE messages containing a proffered value of "A" until one of them ends the negotiation with M_END (carrying O_ACCEPT or O_DECLINE).

    – Note that a failed negotiation is not a protocol error.

- Either peer can insert an M_WAIT message to delay the timeout.

Confused? Then you need an <u>API</u>.

- Although GRASP has few message types, it has quite powerful capabilities:
  - Discovery
  - Flooding
  - Client/server data synchronization
  - Peer-to-peer data negotiation
- Each of these has a clear purpose in autonomic functions.
- Each has its own complexity.
- In some cases, a subset of GRASP will be built into an application. Often, it will appear as an API. We will now discuss the ASA programmer's view of this API.

ASA programmer's view

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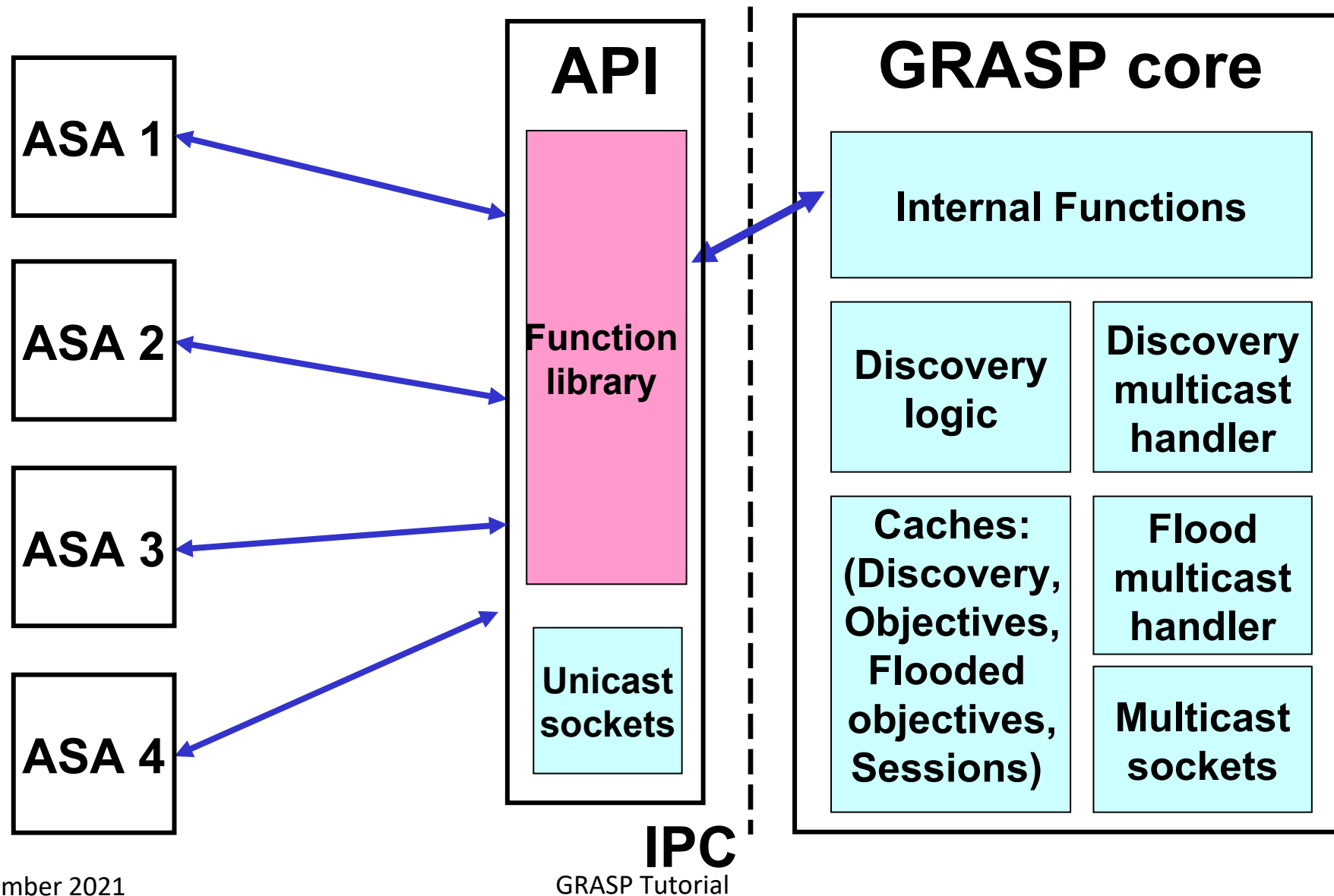
GRASP API Functions

- *Registration*. An ASA can register itself and register the GRASP Objectives it manipulates.
- *Discovery*. An ASA can discover a peer willing to respond for a particular objective.
- *Negotiation*. An ASA can act as an initiator (requester) or responder (listener) for a negotiation session. Negotiation is a symmetric process, so most functions can be used by either party.
- *Synchronization*. An ASA can act as an initiator (requester) or responder (listener and data source) for data synchronization.
- *Flooding*. An ASA can send and receive a GRASP Objective that is flooded to all nodes of the ACP.

The following slides show a simplified Python rendering of the main API functions.

Data types

class objective(name)

Attributes include **.loop_count** and **.value**

class asa_locator()

Attributes include **.locator** and **.is_ipaddress**

class tagged_objective()

Attributes **.objective** and **.locator**

Registration Functions

`register_asa(asa_name)`

Tells GRASP that a new ASA is starting.

Returns **`(zero, asa_handle)`** if successful,
        `(errorcode, None)` if failure.

The ASA must use **`asa_handle`** in every subsequent call.

`register_obj(asa_handle, objective)`

Tells GRASP that the ASA will support the given objective.

Returns **`(zero)`** if successful,
        `(errorcode)` if failure.

Discovery Function

`discover(asa_handle, objective, timeout)`

Returns **`(zero, list of asa_locator)`** if successful,
`(errorcode, [])` if failure.

Flooding Functions

`flood(asa_handle, ttl, tagged_objectives)`
Floods a list of objectives with values to all nodes in the autonomic network.
Returns **`zero`** if successful,
      `errorcode` if failure.

`get_flood(asa_handle, objective)`
Fetches flooded objectives from local cache.
Returns **`(zero, tagged_objectives)`** if successful,
      `(errorcode, None)` if failure.

Synchronization Functions

`listen_synchronize(asa_handle, objective)`
GRASP will listen for incoming synchronization requests and reply with the given objective and its value. Must be a separate thread.

`synchronize(asa_handle, objective, locator, timeout)`
Requests synchronized value of the given objective. The **locator** is an **asa_locator** as returned by **`discover()`**.

Returns **`(zero, objective)`** if successful,
       `(errorcode, None)` if failure.

Negotiation Functions (1)

`listen_negotiate(asa_handle, objective)`

Listen for incoming requests and start a negotiation session. Must be a separate thread.

Returns **`(zero, session_handle, requested_objective)`** if successful.

The **`session_handle`** must be used in subsequent calls.
The value of the **`requested_objective`** is the peer's initial offer for negotiation.

Negotiation Functions (2)

`request_negotiate(asa_handle, objective, peer, timeout)`
Requests negotiation of the given objective, starting with its current value. The **peer** is an **`asa_locator`** as returned by **`discover()`**.

There are 4 possible returns:
`(zero, None, objective, None)` The peer agreed with the offered value.

`(zero, session_handle, objective, None)`
Negotiation continues. The returned objective contains the value offered by the peer.

`(errors.declined, None, None, string)`
The peer declined further negotiation, the string gives a reason

`(errorcode, None, None, None)` Some other error.

Negotiation Functions (3)

After **request_negotiate()** various functions are used symmetrically by either side:

negotiate_step(asa_handle, session_handle,
                    objective, timeout)
Sends the next proffered value of the objective to the peer. The returns are identical to **request_negotiate()**. Used alternately by the two peers.

negotiate_wait(asa_handle, session_handle, timeout)
Extend the timeout.

end_negotiate(asa_handle, session_handle, result)
End negotiation (**result=True** for success, **False** to decline further negotiation.)

A negotiation session

Initiator   **Responder**

                                        `listen_negotiate() \ Await request`

`request_negotiate()`
`        M_REQ_NEG        ->      negotiate_step()   \ Open session,`
`                        <-      M_NEGOTIATE        / start negotiation`
`negotiate_step()`
`        M_NEGOTIATE      ->      negotiate_step()   \ Continue`
`                        <-      M_NEGOTIATE        / negotiation`
`                        ...`
`negotiate_step()`
`        M_NEGOTIATE      ->      negotiate_step()   \ Continue`
`                        <-      M_NEGOTIATE        / negotiation`
`negotiate_step()`
`        M_NEGOTIATE      ->      end_negotiate()    \ End`
`                        <-      M_END              / negotiation,`
`                                                   \ process results`

Logic flows

- The API is designed for use in asynchronous operations such as handling multiple simultaneous negotiations, or processing floods, synchronizations, and negotiations at the same time.

- This could be done using an event-loop mechanism or a threading mechanism, depending on the programming environment in use.

- In the following slides, we show logic flows for an ASA that manages some (unnamed) distributed resource

  - We assume a threaded model

  - A very general outline is followed by pseudocode

Logic flow outline – main thread

```
MAIN thread:
initialise resource pool
if origin:
    start FLOODER to broadcast parameters
start NEGOTIATOR and GARBAGE_COLLECTOR
if not origin:
    get resource parameters flooded by GRASP
    start ASSIGN thread (allocates resources)
do forever:
    if resource pool is low:
        negotiate for more resource from GRASP peer(s)
```

Logic flow outline – other threads

FLOODER thread:
periodically flood resource parameters to all GRASP nodes

NEGOTIATOR thread:
  wait for and satisfy negotiation requests from GRASP peers

GARBAGE_COLLECTOR thread:
  periodically compact the resource pool

DELEGATOR thread:
manage resource requests from non-autonomic devices & applications, assign resources from pool

Pseudocode: MAIN (1)

```
# Initialization
Create empty resource_pool
register_asa()
register_obj("EX1.Resource")
register_obj("EX1.Params")
if origin:
    Obtain initial resource_pool contents from NOC
    Obtain value of EX1.Params from NOC
    Start FLOODER thread to flood EX1.Params
    Start SYNCHRONIZER listener for EX1.Params
Start MAIN_NEGOTIATOR thread for EX1.Resource
if not origin:
    get_flood("EX1.Params")
    Start DELEGATOR thread
Start GARBAGE_COLLECTOR thread
```

Pseudocode: MAIN (2)

```
# main loop
do forever:
    if resource_pool is low:
        peers = discover("EX1.Resource")
        peer =  #any choice among peers
        request_negotiate("EX1.Resource", peer)
        #Wait for response (M_NEGOTIATE, M_END or M_WAIT)
        if OK:
            if offered amount of resource sufficient:
                end_negotiate(True)
                Add resource to pool
                good_peer = peer
        else:
            end_negotiate(False) #negotiation failed
    sleep() #sleep time depends on application scenario
```

This is a very simple use of negotiation because it doesn't loop.

(A full negotiation needs an outer loop here.)

Pseudocode: NEGOTIATOR

```
# MAIN_NEGOTIATOR thread:
do forever:
    listen_negotiate("EX1.Resource") # wait for M_REQ_NEG
    Start a separate new NEGOTIATOR thread for requested amount A

# NEGOTIATOR thread:
Request resource amount A from resource_pool
if not OK:
    while not OK and A > Amin:
        A = A-1
        Request resource amount A from resource_pool
if OK:
    negotiate_step("EX1.Resource") # Offer resource amount A
    if received M_END + O_ACCEPT:
        # negotiation succeeded
    elif received M_END + O_DECLINE or other error:
        # negotiation failed
else:
    end_negotiate(False) # negotiation failed
```

Will offer the best it can get from the resource pool.

Again, a single step negotiation

Pseudocode: DELEGATOR

```
# There are no GRASP calls. This is actual resource assignment.
do forever:
    Wait for request or release for resource amount A
    if request:
        Get resource amount A from resource_pool
        if OK:
            Delegate resource to consumer
            Record in delegated_list
        else:
            Signal failure to consumer
            Signal main thread that resource_pool is low
    else:
        Delete resource from delegated_list
        Return resource amount A to resource_pool
```

Pseudocode: other threads

```
# SYNCHRONIZER thread:
do forever:
    listen_synchronize("EX1.Params")


# FLOODER thread:
do forever:
    flood("EX1.Params")
    sleep() #sleep time depends on application scenario


# GARBAGE_COLLECTOR thread:
do forever:
    Search resource_pool for adjacent resources
    Merge adjacent resources
    sleep() #sleep time depends on application scenario
```

Security

- GRASP does not have its own security mechanism. It is used over a secure and encrypted Autonomic Control Plane.

- TLS is recommended for the unicast messages.

- GRASP includes a very restricted subset for use during bootstrapping of the ACP, known as "Discovery Unsolicited Link-Local" (DULL).

GRASP Prototype

- A Python 3 implementation of GRASP and its API as **`graspi.py`**
- About 2600 lines of code
- A test suite to exercise as many code paths as possible
- Various toy ASAs to test "real" operation across the network
  - bank/client negotiation
  - model of secure bootstrap process
  - model of IPv6 prefix management
  - bulk transfer using GRASP

https://github.com/becarpenter/graspy

Start with
https://github.com/becarpenter/graspy/blob/master/graspy.pdf

The End

- Questions and comments to xxxx@yyyy.zzz

- Join the ANIMA WG at
  https://www.ietf.org/mailman/listinfo/anima

- Want to improve the Python prototype? It's open source on
  GitHub.

- Got your own GRASP implementation? List it at
  https://brski.org/grasp-impls.html