

# A Puff of Steem: Security Analysis of Decentralized Content Curation

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## Abstract

Decentralized content curation is the process through which uploaded posts are ranked and filtered based exclusively on users' feedback. Platforms such as the blockchain-based Steemit<sup>1</sup> employ this type of curation while providing monetary incentives to promote the visibility of high quality posts according to the perception of the participants. Despite the wide adoption of the platform very little is known regarding its performance and resilience characteristics. In this work, we provide a formal model for decentralized content curation that identifies salient complexity and game-theoretic measures of performance and resilience to selfish participants. Armed with our model, we provide a first analysis of Steemit identifying the conditions under which the system can be expected to correctly converge to curation while we demonstrate its susceptibility to selfish participant behaviour. We validate our theoretical results with system simulations in various scenarios.

Security and privacy → Distributed systems security

**Keywords and phrases** blockchain, content curation, decentralized, voting

## 1 Introduction

The modern Internet contains an immense amount of data; a single user can only consume a tiny fraction in a reasonable amount of time. Therefore, any widely used platform that hosts user-generated content (UGC) must employ a content curation mechanism. Content curation can be understood as the set of mechanisms which rank, aggregate and filter relevant information. In recent years, popular news aggregation sites like Reddit<sup>2</sup> or Hacker News<sup>3</sup> have established crowdsourced curation as the primary way to filter content for their users. Crowdsourced content curation, as opposed to more traditional techniques such as expert- or algorithmic-based curation, orders and filters content based on the ratings and feedback of the users themselves, obviating the need for a central moderator by leveraging the “wisdom of the crowd” [4].

The decentralized nature of crowdsourced curation makes it a suitable solution for ranking user-generated content in blockchain-based content hosting systems. The aggregation and filtering of user-generated content emerges as a particularly challenging problem in permissionless blockchains, as any solution that requires a concrete moderator implies that there exists a privileged party, which is incompatible with a permissionless blockchain. Moreover, public blockchains are easy targets for Sybil attacks, as any user can create new accounts at any time for a marginal cost. Therefore, on-chain mechanisms to resist the effect of Sybil users are necessary for a healthy and well-functioning platform; traditional counter-Sybil mechanisms [28] are much harder to apply in the case of blockchains due to the decentralized nature of the latter. The functions performed by moderators in traditional content platforms need to be replaced by incentive mechanisms that ensure self-regulation. Having the impact of a vote depend on the number of coins the voter holds is an intuitively appealing strategy to achieve a proper alignment of incentives for users in decentralized content platforms; specifically, it can render Sybil attacks impossible.

<sup>1</sup> <https://steemit.com/> Accessed: 2024-04-04

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.reddit.com/> Accessed: 2024-04-04

<sup>3</sup> <https://news.ycombinator.com/> Accessed: 2024-04-04

42 However, the correct design of such systems is still an unsolved problem. Blockchains  
 43 have created a new economic paradigm where users are at the same time equity holders in the  
 44 system, and leveraging this property in a robust manner constitutes an interesting challenge.  
 45 A variety of projects have designed decentralized content curation systems [26, 1, 15].  
 46 Nevertheless, a deep understanding of the properties of such systems is still lacking. Among  
 47 them, Steemit has a long track record, having been in operation since 2016 and attaining a  
 48 user base of more than 1.08 M registered accounts<sup>4</sup>. Steemit is a social media platform which  
 49 lets users earn money (in the form of the STEEM cryptocurrency) by both creating and  
 50 curating content in the network. Steemit is the front-end of the social network, a graphical  
 51 web interface which allows users to see the content of the platform. On the other hand, all  
 52 the back-end information is stored on a distributed ledger, the Steem blockchain. Steem can  
 53 be understood as an “app-chain”, a blockchain with a specific application purpose: serving  
 54 as a distributed database for social media applications [1].

55 **Our Contributions.** In this work we study the foundations of decentralized content curation  
 56 from a computational perspective. We develop an abstract model of a post-voting system  
 57 which aims to sort the posts created by users in a distributed and crowdsourced manner. Our  
 58 model is constituted by a functionality which executes a protocol performed by  $N$  players.  
 59 The model includes an honest participant behaviour while it allows deviations to be modeled  
 60 for a subset of the participants. The  $N$  players contribute votes in a round-based curation  
 61 process. The impact of each vote depends on the number of coins held by the player. The  
 62 posts are arranged in a list, sorted by the value of votes received, resembling the front-page  
 63 model of Reddit or Hacker News. In the model, players vote according to their subjective  
 64 opinion on the quality of the posts and have a limited attention span.

65 Following previous related work [13, 4], we represent each player’s opinion on each post  
 66 (i.e. likability) with a numerical value  $l \in [0, 1]$ . The objective quality of a post is calculated  
 67 as the simple summation of all players’ likabilities for the post in question. To measure  
 68 the effectiveness of a post-voting system, we introduce the property of *convergence* under  
 69 honesty which is parameterised by a number of values including a metric  $t$ , that demands the  
 70 first  $t$  articles to be ordered according to the objective quality of the posts at the end of the  
 71 execution assuming all participants signal honestly to the system their personal preferences.  
 72 Armed with our post-voting system abstraction, we proceed to particularize it to model  
 73 Steemit and provide the following results.

- 74 i) We characterise the conditions under which the Steemit algorithm converges under honesty.  
 75 Our results highlight some fundamental limitations of the actual Steemit parameterization.  
 76 Specifically, for curated lists of length bigger than 70 the algorithm may *not achieve even*  
 77 *1-convergence*.
- 78 ii) We validate our results with a simulation testing different metrics based on correlation  
 79 that have been proposed in previous works [24, 34] and relating them to our notion of  
 80 convergence.
- 81 iii) We demonstrate that “selfish” deviation from honest behavior results to substantial gains  
 82 in terms of boosting the ranking of specific posts in the resulting list of the post-voting  
 83 system.

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<sup>4</sup> The number of accounts should not be understood as the number of active users, as one user can create multiple accounts.

## 2 Related Work

User-generated content (UGC) has been identified as a fundamental component of social media platforms and Web 2.0 in general [23]. The content created by users needs to be curated, and crowdsourced content curation [4] has emerged as an alternative to expert-based [35] or algorithmic-based [33] curation techniques. Motivated by the widespread adoption of crowdsourced aggregation sites such as Reddit or Digg<sup>5</sup>, several research efforts [8, 13, 2] have aimed to model the mechanics and incentives for users in UGC platforms. This surge of interest is accompanied by studies which have shown how social media users behave strategically when they publish and consume content [31]. As an example, in the case of Reddit, users try to maximize their ‘karma’ [5], the social badge of the social media platform [3].

Previous works have analyzed content curation from an incentives and game-theoretic standpoint [13, 8, 20, 31, 2]. Our formalisation is based on these models and inherits features such as the quality distribution of the articles and the users’ attention span [4, 13]. In terms of the analysis of our results, the analysis of our *t-convergence* metric is similar to the top-*k* posts in [4]. We also leverage the rank correlation coefficients Kendall’s Tau [24] and Spearman’s Rho [34] to measure content curation efficiency. Our approach describes the mechanics of post-voting systems from a computational perspective, something that departs from the approach of all previous works, drawing inspiration from the real-ideal world paradigm of cryptography [16, 29] as employed in our definition of *t-convergence*.

Post-voting systems constitute a special case of voting mechanisms, as studied within social choice theory, belonging to the subcategory of cardinal voting systems [21]. In this context, it follows from Gibbard’s theorem [14] that no decentralised non-trivial post-voting mechanism can be strategy-proof. This is consistent with our results that demonstrate how selfish behaviour is beneficial to the participants. Our system shares the property of spanning multiple voting rounds with previous work [22]. Other related literature in social choice [30, 7, 37] is centered on political elections and as a result attempts to resolve a variation of the problem with quite different constraints and assumptions. In more detail, in the case of political elections, voter communication in many rounds is costly while navigating the ballot is not subject to any constraints as voters are assumed to have plenty of time to parse all the options available to them. As a result, voters can express their preferences for any candidate, irrespective of the order in which the latter appear on the ballot paper. On the other hand, the online and interactive nature of post-voting systems make multi-round voting a natural feature to be taken advantage of. At the same time, the fairness requirements are more lax and it is acceptable (even desirable) for participants to act reactively on the outcome of each others’ evaluations. On the other hand, in the post-voting case, the “ballot” is only partially available given the high number of posts to be ranked that may very well exceed the time available to a (human) user to participate in the process. As a result a user will be unable to vote for posts that she has not viewed, for instance, because they are placed in the bottom of the list. This is captured in our model by introducing the concept of “attention span.”

Content curation is also related to the concept of online governance. The governance of online communities such as Wikipedia has been thoroughly studied in previous academic work [27, 12]. However, the financially incentivized governance processes in blockchain systems, where the voters are at the same time equity-holders, have still many open research

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<sup>5</sup> <http://digg.com/> Accessed: 2024-04-04

129 questions [6, 11]. This shared ownership property has triggered interest in building social  
 130 media platforms backed by distributed ledgers, where users are rewarded for generated content  
 131 and variants of coin-holder voting are used to decide how these rewards are distributed.  
 132 The effects of explicit financial incentives on the quality of content in Steemit has been  
 133 analyzed in [36]. Beyond the Steemit’s whitepaper [1], a series of blog posts [17, 18] effectively  
 134 extend the economic analysis of the system. In parallel with Steemit, other projects such as  
 135 Synereo [26] and Akasha<sup>6</sup> are exploring the convergence of social media and decentralized  
 136 content curation. Beyond blockchain-based social media platforms, coin-holder voting  
 137 systems are present in decentralized platforms such as DAOs [32] and in different blockchain  
 138 protocols [10, 19]. However, most of these systems use coin-holder voting processes to agree  
 139 on a value or take a consensual decision.

### 140 **3 Model**

141 We first introduce some useful notation:

- 142 ■ We denote an ordered list of elements with  $A = [e_1, \dots, e_n]$  and the  $i$ -th element of the  
 143 list with  $A[i] = e_i$ .
- 144 ■ Let  $n \in \mathbb{N}^*$ .  $[n]$  denotes  $\{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ .

#### 145 **3.1 Post list**

- 146 ► **Definition 1 (Post).** Let  $N \in \mathbb{N}^*$ . A post is defined as  $P = (m, l)$ , with  $m \in [N]$ ,  $l \in [0, 1]^N$ .
- 147 ■ **Author.** The first element of a post is the id of its creator  $m$ .
- 148 ■ **Likability.** The likability of a post is defined as  $l \in [0, 1]^N$ .

149  $N$  represents the number of voters (a.k.a. players). A post has a distinct likability in  $[0, 1]$   
 150 for each player.

- 151 ► **Definition 2 (Ideal Score of a post).** Let post  $P = (m, l)$ . We define the ideal score of  $P$  as  
 152  $\text{idealSc}(P) = \sum_{i=1}^{|l|} l_i$ .

153 The ideal score of a post is a single number that represents its overall worth to the community.  
 154 By using simple summation, we assume that the opinions of all players have the same weight.

- 155 ► **Definition 3 (Post List).** Let  $M \in \mathbb{N}^*$ . A post list  $\mathcal{P} = [P_1, \dots, P_M]$  is an ordered list  
 156 containing posts. It may be the case that two posts are identical.

157 In the case of many UGC platforms, e.g. Steemit, there exists a feed (commonly named  
 158 “Trending”) that displays the same ordered posts for all users. In such an ordered list, posts  
 159 placed closer to the top are more visible, since users typically consume content from top to  
 160 bottom. We can thus measure the quality of an ordered list of posts by comparing it with a  
 161 list that contains the same posts in decreasing order of ideal score.

- 162 ► **Definition 4 ( $t$ -Ideal Post Order).** Let  $\mathcal{P}$  a list of posts,  $t \in [M]$ . The property  $\text{IDEAL}^t(\mathcal{P})$   
 163 holds if

$$164 \quad \forall i < j \in [t], \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[i]) \geq \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[j]) \quad .$$

165 We say that  $\mathcal{P}$  has a  $t$ -ideal rank if  $\text{IDEAL}^t(\mathcal{P})$  holds and  $t$  is the maximum integer less or  
 166 equal to  $M$  with this property.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://akasha.world/> Accessed: 2024-04-04

## 3.2 Post Voting System

We now define an abstract post-voting system. Such a system is defined through two Interactive Turing Machines (ITMs),  $\mathcal{G}_{\text{Feed}}$  and  $\Pi_{\text{honest}}$ . The first controls the list of posts and aggregates votes, whereas one copy of the second ITM is instantiated for each player.  $\mathcal{G}_{\text{Feed}}$  sends the post list to one player at a time, receives her vote and reorders the post list accordingly. The process is possibly repeated for many rounds.

A measure of the quality of a post-voting system is the  $t$ -ideal rank of the post list at the end of the process.

In a more general setting, some of the honest protocol instantiations may be replaced with an arbitrary ITM. A robust post-voting system should still produce a post list of high quality.

► **Definition 5** (Post-Voting System). *Consider four PPT algorithms  $\text{INIT}$ ,  $\text{AUX}$ ,  $\text{HANDLEVOTE}$  and  $\text{VOTE}$ . The tuple  $\mathcal{S}$  consisting of the four algorithms is a Post-Voting System.  $\mathcal{S}$  parametrizes the following two ITMs:*

$\mathcal{G}_{\text{Feed}}$  is a global functionality that accepts two messages: **read**, which responds with the current list of posts and **vote**, which can take various arguments and does whatever is defined in  $\text{HANDLEVOTE}$ .

$\Pi_{\text{honest}}$  is a protocol that sends **read** and **vote** messages to  $\mathcal{G}_{\text{Feed}}$  whenever it receives (**activate**) from  $\mathcal{E}$ .

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### Algorithm 1 $\mathcal{G}_{\text{Feed}}$ ( $\text{INIT}$ , $\text{AUX}$ , $\text{HANDLEVOTE}$ ) ( $\mathcal{P}$ , $\text{initArgs}$ )

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1: Initialization:
2:    $\mathcal{U} \leftarrow \emptyset$  ▷ Set of players
3:    $\text{INIT}(\text{initArgs})$ 
4:
5: Upon receiving (read) from  $u_{\text{pid}}$ :
6:    $\mathcal{U} \leftarrow \mathcal{U} \cup \{u_{\text{pid}}\}$ 
7:    $\text{aux} \leftarrow \text{AUX}(u_{\text{pid}})$ 
8:   Send (posts,  $\mathcal{P}$ ,  $\text{aux}$ ) to  $u_{\text{pid}}$ 
9:
10: Upon receiving (vote,  $\text{ballot}$ ) from  $u_{\text{pid}}$ :
11:    $\text{HANDLEVOTE}(\text{ballot})$ 

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### Algorithm 2 $\Pi_{\text{honest}}$ ( $\text{VOTE}$ )

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1: Upon receiving (activate) from  $\mathcal{E}$ :
2:   Send (read) to  $\mathcal{G}_{\text{Feed}}$ 
3:   Wait for response (posts,  $\mathcal{P}$ ,  $\text{aux}$ )
4:    $\text{ballot} \leftarrow \text{VOTE}(\mathcal{P}, \text{aux})$ 
5:   Send (vote,  $\text{ballot}$ ) to  $\mathcal{G}_{\text{Feed}}$ 

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Players are activated by an Environment ITM that sends activation messages (Algorithm 2, line 1).

► **Definition 6** (Post-Voting System Activation Message). *We define  $\text{act}_{\text{pid}}$  as the message (**activate**,  $\text{pid}$ ), sent to  $u_{\text{pid}}$ .*

190 ► **Definition 7** (Execution Pattern). Let  $N, R \in \mathbb{N}^*, N \geq 2$ .

$$191 \quad \text{ExecPat}_{N,R} = \{(\text{act}_{\text{pid}_1}, \dots, \text{act}_{\text{pid}_{NR}}) : \\ 192 \quad \forall i \in [R], \forall k \in [N], \exists j \in [N] : \text{pid}_{(i-1)N+j} = k\} , \\ 193$$

194 i.e. activation messages are grouped in  $R$  rounds and within each round each player is  
195 **activated** exactly once. The order of activations is not fixed.

196 Let Environment  $\mathcal{E}$  that sends messages  $\text{msgs} = (\text{act}_{\text{pid}_1}, \dots, \text{act}_{\text{pid}_n})$  sequentially. We  
197 say that  $\mathcal{E}$  respects  $\text{ExecPat}_{N,R}$  if  $\text{msgs} \in \text{ExecPat}_{N,R}$ . (Note: this implies that  $n = NR$ .)

198 ► **Definition 8** ( $(N, R, M, t)$ -convergence under honesty). We say that a post-voting system  
199  $\mathcal{S} = (\text{INIT}, \text{AUX}, \text{HANDLEVOTE}, \text{VOTE})$   $(N, R, M, t)$ -converges under honesty (or  $t$ -converges  
200 under honesty for  $N$  players,  $R$  rounds and  $M$  posts) if, for every input  $\mathcal{P}$  such that  $|\mathcal{P}| = M$ ,  
201 for every  $\mathcal{E}$  that respects  $\text{ExecPat}_{N,R}$  and given that all protocols execute  $\Pi_{\text{honest}}$ , it holds that  
202 after  $\mathcal{E}$  completes its execution pattern,  $\mathcal{G}_{\text{Feed}}$  contains a post list  $\mathcal{P}'$  such that  $\text{IDEAL}^t(\mathcal{P}')$  is  
203 true.

204 Note that concrete post voting systems may or may not give information such as the total  
205 number of rounds  $R$  to the players. This is decided in algorithm **AUX**.

206 We now give a high-level description of a concrete post voting system, based on the  
207 Steemit platform. According to this mechanism, each player is assigned a number of coins  
208 known as “Steem Power” (SP) that remains constant throughout the execution and another  
209 number called “Voting Power” (VP) in  $[0, 1]$ , initialized to 1. A vote is a pair containing a  
210 post and a weight  $w \in [0, 1]$ . Upon receiving a list of posts, the honest player chooses to  
211 vote her most liked post amongst the top  $\text{attSpan}$  posts of the list. The weight is chosen  
212 to be equal to the respective likability. The functionality increases the score of the post  
213 by  $\text{SP} \cdot (a \cdot \text{VP} \cdot w + b)$  and subsequently decreases the player’s Voting Power by the same  
214 amount (but keeping it within the aforementioned bounds).

215 ► **Definition 9** (Steemit system). The Steemit system is the post voting system  $\mathcal{S}$  with  
216 parameters  $a, b, \text{regen} \in [0, 1] : a + b < 1, \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil > 1, \text{attSpan} \in \mathbb{N}^*, \mathbf{SP} \in \mathbb{R}_+^N$ . The four  
217 parametrizing procedures can be found in Appendix B.

218 ► **Remark 10**. The constraint  $a + b < 1$  ensures that a single vote of full weight cast by a  
219 player with full Voting Power does not completely deplete her Voting Power. The constraint  
220  $\left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil > 1$  excludes the degenerate case in which the regeneration of a single round is  
221 enough to fully replenish the Voting Power in all cases; in this case the purpose of Voting  
222 Power would be defeated.

223 ► **Remark 11**. The Steem blockchain protocol defines  $a = 0.02, b = 0.0001$  and  $\text{regen} =$   
224  $\frac{3}{5 \cdot 24 \cdot 60 \cdot 60} = 0.00000694$ , thus  $\left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil = 2895$ . A post can be voted for 7 days from its creation  
225 and at most one vote can be cast every 3 seconds, thus  $R = \frac{7 \cdot 24 \cdot 60 \cdot 60}{3} = 201600$ .

226 ► **Remark 12**. Note (Algorithm 6, lines 24-40) that an honest player attempts to vote for as  
227 many posts as possible and spreads her votes with the maximum distance between them.  
228 The purpose of this is to efficiently utilize the available Voting Power to “make her voice  
229 heard”. Also, efficiently using Voting Power on the Steemit website increases the voter’s  
230 curation reward [17].

231 ► **Theorem 13**.

232 1. If  $\exists i \neq j \in [N] : \text{SP}_i \neq \text{SP}_j$  (i.e. if not all players have the same Steem Power) then  
233 Steemit does not  $(N, R, M, 1)$ -converge.

234 2. If  $\forall i \neq j \in [N], \text{SP}_i = \text{SP}_j$  (i.e. if all players have the same Steem Power) and

235 a.  $R - 1 \geq (M - 1) \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil$  then Steemit  $(N, R, M, M)$ -converges.

236 b.  $R - 1 < (M - 1) \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil$  then Steemit does not  $(N, R, M, 1)$ -converge.

237 *Proof Sketch.* When **SP** is not constant, we build a post list where the most liked post is  
 238 not preferred by rich players and thus is not placed at the top. For a constant **SP**, when  
 239  $R - 1 \geq (M - 1) \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil$ , there are enough rounds to ensure full regeneration of every player's  
 240 Voting Power between two votes and thus the resulting post list reflects the true preferences  
 241 of the players. In the opposite case, we can always craft a post list that exploits the fact  
 242 that some votes are cast with reduced Voting Power in order to trick the system into placing  
 243 a wrong post in the top position. ◀

244

245 See Appendix A for proof.

246 ▶ **Corollary 14.** *The Steemit system parametrised according to Remark 11, for any number*  
 247 *of players  $N \geq 2$ , constant **SP** and  $M \leq 70$  posts  $(N, R, M, M)$ -converges. If  $M > 70$  or **SP***  
 248 *is not constant, then there exists a list of posts such that the system does not  $(N, R, M, 1)$ -*  
 249 *converge.*

## 250 4 Simulation

251 The previous outcomes are here complemented with experiments that verify our findings. We  
 252 have implemented a simulation framework that realizes the execution of Steemit's post-voting  
 253 system as defined above.

254 In particular, we consider two separate scenarios: First, we simulate the case when all  
 255 players follow the prescribed honest strategy of Steemit, investigating how the curation  
 256 quality of the system varies with the number of voting rounds. We successfully reproduce  
 257 the result of Theorem 13, which implies that the system converges perfectly when a sufficient  
 258 number of voting rounds is permitted, but otherwise the resulting list of posts may have a  
 259 0-ideal rank, i.e. the top post may not have the best ideal score. Moreover, we compare  
 260 our  $t$ -convergence metric with previously used metrics of convergence based on correlation  
 261 demonstrating that they are very closely aligned.

262 The second case measures how resilient is the curation quality of Steemit against dishonest  
 263 agents. Since a creator is financially rewarded when her content is upvoted, she has incentive  
 264 to promote her own posts. A combination of in-band methods (apart from striving to produce  
 265 posts of higher quality) can help her to that end. Voting for one's own posts, refraining  
 266 from voting posts created by others and obtaining Sybil [9] accounts that only vote for her  
 267 posts are only an indicative subset. We thus examine the quality of the resulting list when  
 268 certain users do not follow the honest protocol, but apply the aforementioned self-promoting  
 269 methods. We observe that there exists a cutoff point above which a small increase in the  
 270 number of selfish players has a detrimental effect to the  $t$ -ideal rank of the post voting system.  
 271 Furthermore, we measure the number of positions on the list that the selfish post gains with  
 272 respect to the number of selfish players.

### 273 4.1 Methodology

274 We leverage three metrics to compare the curated list with the ideal list: Kendall's Tau [24],  
 275 Spearman's Rho [34], and  $t$ -ideal rank.



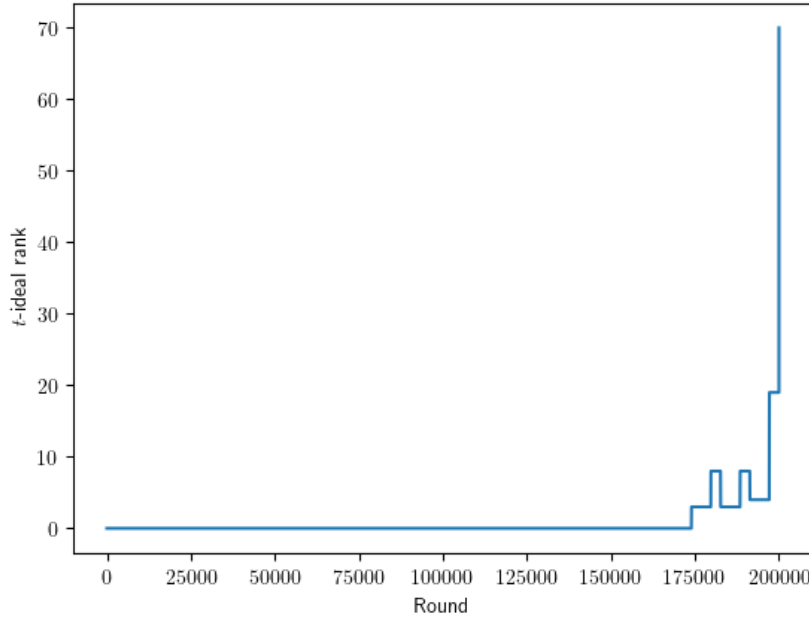
276 In addition to the  $t$ -ideal rank and the rank correlation coefficients used in the first  
 277 scenario, in the case of dishonest participants we include a metric that measures the gains  
 278 of the selfish players. In particular, the metric is defined as the difference between the real  
 279 position of the “selfish” post after the execution and its ranking according to the ideal order.  
 280 We are thus able to measure how advantageous is for users to behave selfishly. Furthermore,  
 281  $t$ -ideal rank informs us how this behavior affects the overall quality of curation of the platform.

## 282 4.2 Execution

283 In all simulations, the likabilities of all “honest” posts have been drawn from the  $[0, 1]$ -uniform  
 284 distribution and all players have Steem Power equal to 1; we leave the case of variable Steem  
 285 Power as future work.

## 286 Scenario A

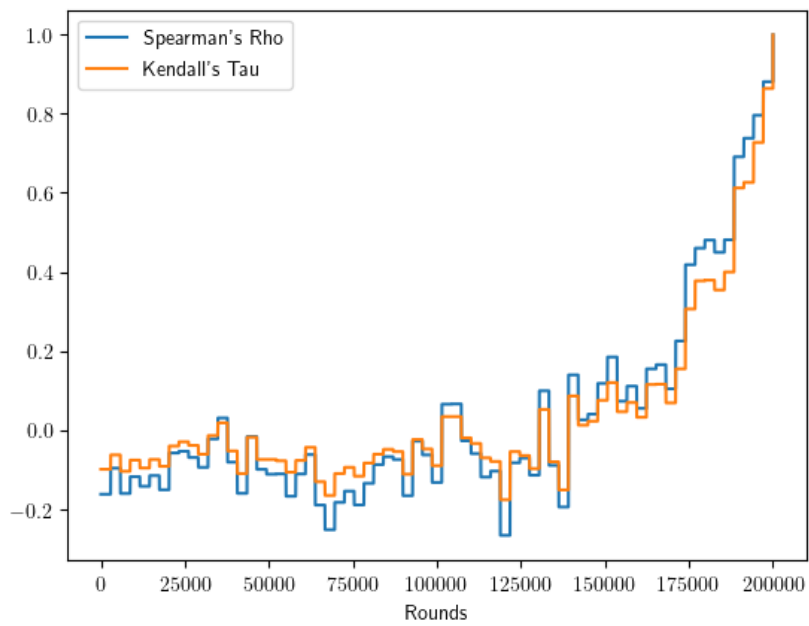
287 As already mentioned, the results closely follow Theorem 13. Figures 1 and 2 show the  
 288  $t$ -ideal rank and Kendall’s Tau coefficient respectively when the number of rounds is enough  
 289 for all votes to be cast with full Voting Power. In particular, the parameters used are  
 290  $a = \frac{1}{50}, b = 10^{-4}, \text{regen} = \frac{3}{5 \cdot 24 \cdot 60 \cdot 60}, R = 200000, \text{attSpan} = 10, N = 270$  and  $M = 70$ .  
 291 (Observe that  $R - 1 > (M - 1) \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil$ .)



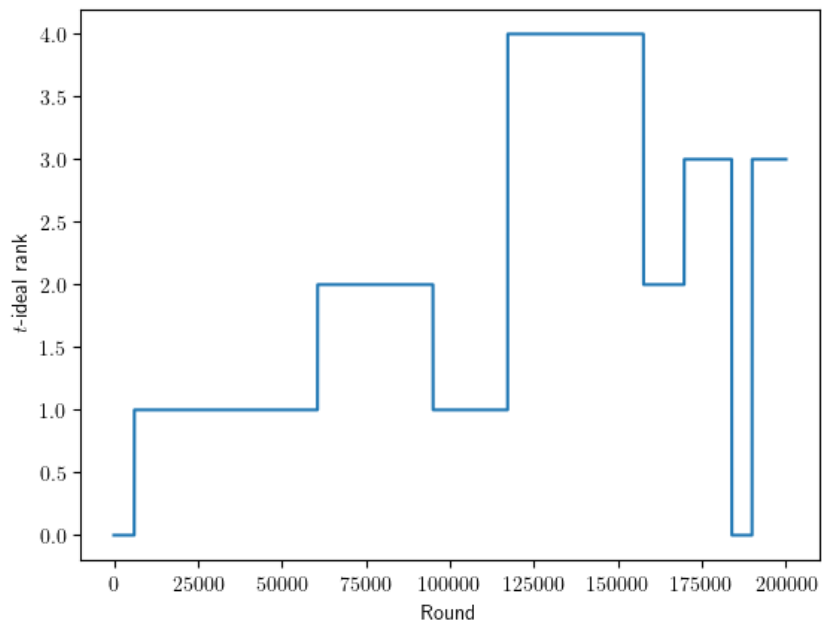
■ **Figure 1**  $t$ -ideal rank evolution with 270 honest players, 70 posts and 200.000 rounds

292 As we can see, all three measures show that the real list converges rapidly to the ideal  
 293 order at the very end of the execution; meanwhile, the quality of the list improves very slowly.  
 294 Figures 3 and 4 depict what happens when the rounds are not sufficient for all votes to be  
 295 cast with full Voting Power. In particular, the corresponding simulation was executed with the  
 296 same parameters, except for  $M = 100$  and  $N = 300$ . (Observe that  $R - 1 < (M - 1) \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil$ .)

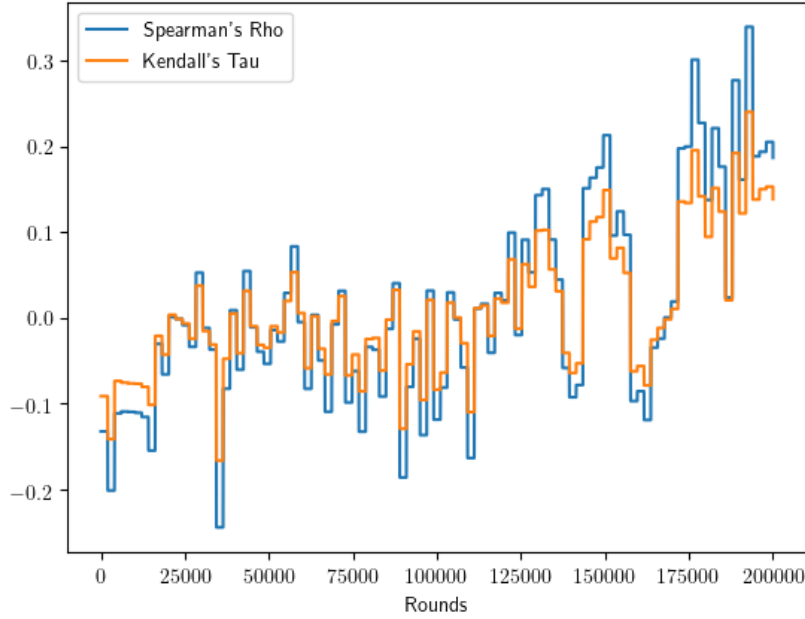




■ **Figure 2** Kendall's Tau and Spearman's Rho evolution with 270 honest players, 70 posts and 200.000 rounds



■ **Figure 3**  $t$ -ideal rank evolution with 300 honest players, 100 posts and 200.000 rounds



■ **Figure 4** Kendall's Tau and Spearman's Rho evolution with 300 honest players, 100 posts and 200.000 rounds

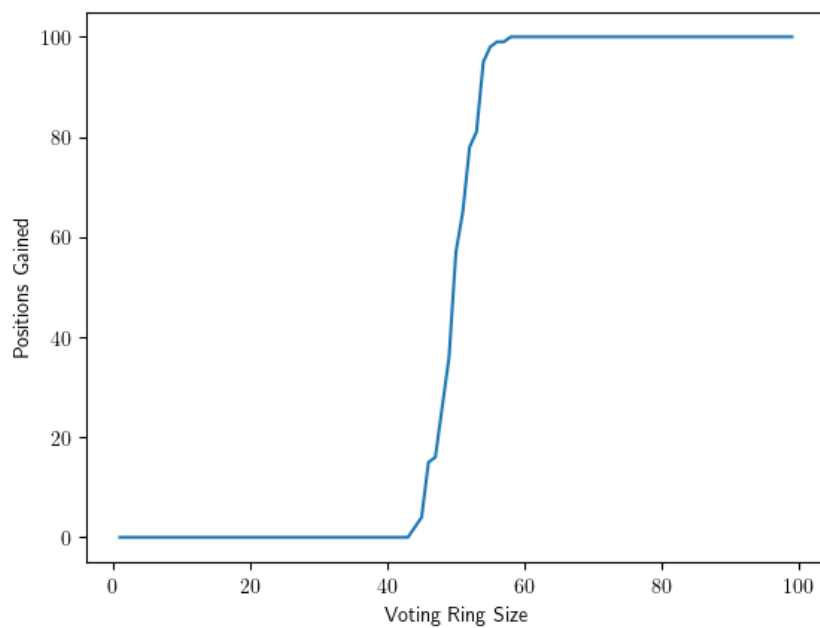
297 Here we see that at the end of the execution, only the first three posts are correctly  
 298 ordered. Regarding the rest of the list, both Kendall's Tau and Spearman's Rho coefficients  
 299 show that the order of the posts improves only slightly throughout the execution of the  
 300 simulation.

#### 301 4.2.1 Scenario B: Selfish users.

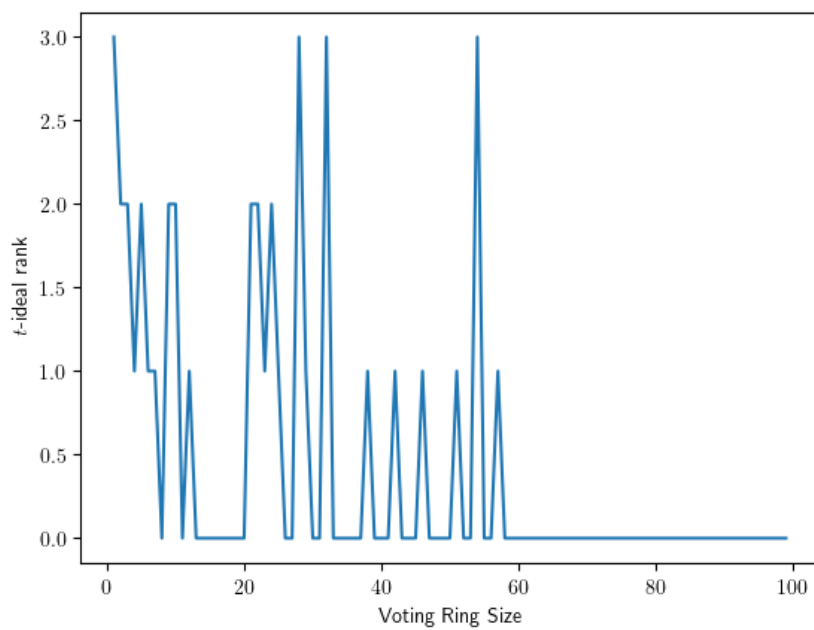
302 In order to understand how the presence of voting rings/Sybil accounts affects the curation  
 303 quality, we simulate the execution of the game for various ring sizes, where ring members  
 304 vote only for a particular “selfish” post. We fix the rest of the system parameters to  
 305 handicap the selfish post. In particular, the voting rounds are sufficient for all votes to  
 306 be cast with full Voting Power, the likability of the selfish post is 0 for all players and  
 307 it is initially placed at the bottom of the post list. Define the gain of the post of the  
 308 selfish players as its ideal position minus its final position. Figure 5 shows the gain of  
 309 the selfish post for a varying number of selfish players, from 1 to 100. Figure 6 depicts  
 310 the  $t$ -ideal rank of the resulting list at the same executions. The system parameters are  
 311  $N = 101..200, a = \frac{1}{50}, b = 10^{-4}, \text{regen} = \frac{3}{5 \cdot 24 \cdot 60}, \text{attSpan} = 10, R = 5000$ .

## 312 5 Summary and Future Work

313 We have defined an abstract post-voting system, along with a particularization inspired by the  
 314 Steemit platform. We proved the exact conditions on the Steemit system parameters under  
 315 which it successfully curates arbitrary lists of posts. We provided the results of simulations  
 316 of the execution of the voting procedure under various conditions. Both cases with only



■ **Figure 5** Positions gained by selfish post with 100 honest players, 100 posts and 1 to 100 selfish players



■ **Figure 6**  $t$ -ideal rank with 100 honest players, 100 posts and 1 to 100 selfish players

honest and mixed honest and selfish players were simulated. We conclude that the Voting Power mechanism of Steem and the fact that self-voting is a profitable strategy may hurt curation quality.

We have studied the curation properties of decentralized content curation platforms such as Steemit, obtaining new insights on the resilience of these systems. Some assumptions have been made in the presented model. Various relaxations of these assumptions constitute fertile ground for future work. First of all, the selfish strategy can be extended and refined in various ways. For example, voting rings can be allowed to create more than one posts in order to increase their rewards. Optimizing the number of posts and the vote allocation in this case would contribute towards a robust attack against the Steemit platform.

Selfish behavior is considered only in the simulation. Our analysis can be augmented with a review of games with selfish players and voting rings.

The addition of the economic factor invites the definition of utility functions and strategic behavior for the players. Its inclusion would imply the need for an expansion of our theorems and definitions to the strategic case, along with a full game-theoretic analysis. Furthermore, several possible refinements could be introduced; for example, the process of creating Sybil accounts could be associated with a monetary cost.

Last but not least, in our model, posts are created only at the beginning of the execution. A dynamic model in which posts can be created at any time and the execution continues indefinitely (as is the case in a real-world UGC system) is also interesting as a future direction.

## A Proof of Theorem 13: Steem Convergence

**Proof.** ■ Statement 1: Reorder the players such that  $SP_1 \geq SP_2 \geq \dots \geq SP_N$ . Let  $k = \min_{j \in [N-1]} \{SP_j \neq SP_{j+1}\}$ . We first cover the case when  $\text{attSpan} \geq 2$ .  
Let<sup>7</sup>

$$\begin{aligned} \text{weakPost} &= (\underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_{k-1}, \underbrace{1, 0, \dots, 0}_{N-k}) \\ \text{strongPost} &= (\underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_{k-1}, \frac{SP_k - SP_{k+1}}{2SP_k}, \underbrace{1, 0, \dots, 0}_{N-k-1}) \\ \text{nullPost} &= (\underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_N) \\ \mathcal{P} &= [\text{weakPost}, \text{strongPost}, \underbrace{\text{nullPost}, \dots, \text{nullPost}}_{M-2}] . \end{aligned}$$

We first note that  $SP_k > SP_{k+1} \geq 0 \Rightarrow 0 \leq \frac{SP_k - SP_{k+1}}{2SP_k} \leq 1$ , thus  $\text{strongPost}$  is a valid post. We then observe that

$$\begin{aligned} \forall i \in \{3, \dots, M\}, \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[i]) &= 0 < \\ &< \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[1]) = 1 < 1 + \frac{SP_k - SP_{k+1}}{2SP_k} = \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[2]) , \end{aligned}$$

thus  $\forall \mathcal{P}'$  that contain the same posts as  $\mathcal{P}$  and  $\text{IDEAL}^1(\mathcal{P}')$  holds, it is  $\mathcal{P}'[1] = \mathcal{P}[2]$ .

<sup>7</sup> We thank Heng Guo from the University of Edinburgh for this counterexample.

Since  $\text{attSpan} \geq 2$ , all players apart from  $u_{k+1}$  vote for  $\mathcal{P}[1]$  in the first round and for  $\mathcal{P}[2]$  in the second, whereas  $u_{k+1}$  votes for  $\mathcal{P}[2]$  in the first round and for  $\mathcal{P}[1]$  in the second. Thus the two first posts will have been voted by all players by the end of the second round and their score will not change until the execution completes. We have:

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{sc}_2(\mathcal{P}[1]) &= \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[1]) = \\
&\sum_{j=1}^{k-1} \text{SP}_j b + \text{SP}_k(a+b) + \text{SP}_{k+1} \min\{b, \mathbf{VPreg}_{k+1, r_2}\} + \sum_{j=k+2}^M \text{SP}_j b \text{ and} \\
\text{sc}_2(\mathcal{P}[2]) &= \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[2]) = \\
&\sum_{j=1}^{k-1} \text{SP}_j \min\{b, \mathbf{VPreg}_{j, r_2}\} + \\
&\text{SP}_k \min\left\{a \frac{\text{SP}_k - \text{SP}_{k+1}}{2\text{SP}_k} \mathbf{VPreg}_{k, r_2} + b, \mathbf{VPreg}_{k, r_2}\right\} + \text{SP}_{k+1}(a+b) + \\
&\sum_{j=k+2}^M \text{SP}_j \min\{b, \mathbf{VPreg}_{j, r_2}\} \Rightarrow
\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[2]) &\leq \\
&\sum_{j=1}^{k-1} \text{SP}_j b + \text{SP}_k \left(a \frac{\text{SP}_k - \text{SP}_{k+1}}{2\text{SP}_k} + b\right) + \text{SP}_{k+1}(a+b) + \sum_{j=k+2}^M \text{SP}_j b .
\end{aligned}$$

In the case that  $\mathbf{VPreg}_{k+1, r_2} \geq b$ , it is

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[1]) &= \sum_{j=1}^{k-1} \text{SP}_j b + \text{SP}_k(a+b) + \text{SP}_{k+1}b + \sum_{j=k+2}^M \text{SP}_j b > \\
&\sum_{j=1}^{k-1} \text{SP}_j b + \text{SP}_k \left(a \frac{\text{SP}_k - \text{SP}_{k+1}}{2\text{SP}_k} + b\right) + \text{SP}_{k+1}(a+b) + \sum_{j=k+2}^M \text{SP}_j b \geq \\
\text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[2]) &\Rightarrow \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[1]) > \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[2]) ,
\end{aligned}$$

thus  $\text{IDEAL}^1(\mathcal{P}')$  does not hold.

Since  $u_{k+1}$  does not vote in any round between  $r_1$  and  $r_2$ , and  $r_2 \geq 2$ , it is  $\mathbf{VPreg}_{k+1, r_2} \geq 1 - a - b + \text{regen}$ . Thus the case when  $\mathbf{VPreg}_{k+1, r_2} < b$  can happen only when  $b > 1 - a - b + \text{regen} \Leftrightarrow b > \frac{1-a+\text{regen}}{2}$ . We now provide a counterexample for the case when  $b > \frac{1-a+\text{regen}}{2}$ .

Once more we order the players in descending Steem Power, like in the previous case. Once again  $k = \min_{j \in [N-1]} \{\text{SP}_j \neq \text{SP}_{j+1}\}$  and we only care for the case when  $\text{attSpan} \geq 2$ .

380 Let  $0 < \gamma < 1$  and

$$\begin{aligned}
381 \quad \text{weakPost} &= (\underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_{k-1}, 1, \frac{\gamma}{2}, \underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_{N-k-1}) \\
382 \quad \text{strongPost} &= (\underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_{k-1}, \gamma, 1, \underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_{N-k-1}) \\
383 \quad \text{nullPost} &= (\underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_N) \\
384 \quad \mathcal{P} &= [\text{weakPost}, \text{strongPost}, \underbrace{\text{nullPost}, \dots, \text{nullPost}}_{M-2}] .
\end{aligned}$$

386 We observe that  $\forall i \in \{3, \dots, M\}, \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[i]) = 0 < \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[1]) = 1 + \frac{\gamma}{2} < 1 + \gamma =$   
387  $\text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[2])$ , thus  $\forall \mathcal{P}'$  that contain the same posts as  $\mathcal{P}$  and  $\text{IDEAL}^1(\mathcal{P}')$  holds, it is  
388  $\mathcal{P}'[1] = \mathcal{P}[2]$ .

389 Since  $\text{attSpan} \geq 2$ , all players apart from  $u_{k+1}$  vote for  $\mathcal{P}[1]$  in the first round and for  
390  $\mathcal{P}[2]$  in the second, whereas  $u_{k+1}$  votes for  $\mathcal{P}[2]$  in the first round and for  $\mathcal{P}[1]$  in the  
391 second. Thus the two first posts will have been voted by all players by the end of the  
392 second round and their score will not change until the execution completes. We have:

$$\begin{aligned}
393 \quad \text{sc}_2(\mathcal{P}[1]) &= \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[1]) = \\
394 \quad &\sum_{j=1}^{k-1} \text{SP}_j b + \text{SP}_k (a + b) + \text{SP}_{k+1} \mathbf{VPreg}_{k+1, r_2} + \sum_{j=k+2}^M \text{SP}_j b \text{ and} \\
395 \quad \text{sc}_2(\mathcal{P}[2]) &= \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[2]) = \\
396 \quad &\sum_{j=1}^{k-1} \text{SP}_j \min\{b, \mathbf{VPreg}_{j, r_2}\} + \text{SP}_k \mathbf{VPreg}_{k, r_2} + \text{SP}_{k+1} (a + b) + \\
397 \quad &\sum_{j=k+2}^M \text{SP}_j \min\{b, \mathbf{VPreg}_{j, r_2}\} \leq \\
398 \quad &\sum_{j=1}^{k-1} \text{SP}_j b + \text{SP}_k \mathbf{VPreg}_{k, r_2} + \text{SP}_{k+1} (a + b) + \sum_{j=k+2}^M \text{SP}_j b .
\end{aligned}$$

400 We note that  $\mathbf{VPreg}_{k, r_2} = \mathbf{VPreg}_{k+1, r_2}$  because both  $u_k$  and  $u_{k+1}$  vote with full Voting  
401 Power in the first round. Let  $\text{VP} = \mathbf{VPreg}_{k, r_2}$ . We have

$$\begin{aligned}
402 \quad &\text{SP}_k (a + b) + \text{SP}_{k+1} \text{VP} > \text{SP}_k \text{VP} + \text{SP}_{k+1} (a + b) \Leftrightarrow \\
403 \quad &\text{SP}_k (a + b) + \text{SP}_{k+1} \text{VP} - \text{SP}_k \text{VP} - \text{SP}_{k+1} (a + b) > 0 \Leftrightarrow \\
404 \quad &(a + b) (\text{SP}_k - \text{SP}_{k+1}) - \text{VP} (\text{SP}_k - \text{SP}_{k+1}) > 0 \Leftrightarrow \\
405 \quad &(\text{SP}_k - \text{SP}_{k+1}) (a + b - \text{VP}) > 0
\end{aligned}$$

407 The last expression is true because  $\text{SP}_k > \text{SP}_{k+1}$  and  $\text{VP} < b$ , thus the first expression is  
408 true as well. We can then deduce that  $\text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[1]) > \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[2])$ , thus  $\text{IDEAL}^1(\mathcal{P}')$  does  
409 not hold. Please refer to the full version [25] for the case when  $\text{attSpan} = 1$ .

410 ■ Statement 2a: Suppose that

$$411 \quad R - 1 \geq (M - 1) \left\lceil \frac{a + b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil . \tag{1}$$

Observe that

$$(1) \Rightarrow \frac{R-1}{M-1} \geq \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil \xrightarrow[\text{integer}]{\text{rhs}} \left\lfloor \frac{R-1}{M-1} \right\rfloor \geq \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil . \quad (2)$$

Let  $\text{pid} \in [N]$ . From (1) we deduce that  $R \geq M$  and according to `VOTETHISROUND` in Algorithm 6,  $u_{\text{pid}}$  votes non-null in rounds  $(r_1, \dots, r_M)$  with  $r_i = \left\lfloor (i-1) \frac{R-1}{M-1} \right\rfloor + 1$ . We define the following:

$$\begin{aligned} k &\in \mathbb{N}, w \in \mathbb{R} , \\ n &\in \mathbb{Z}, p \in [0, 1) : (k-1)w = n + p , \\ m &\in \mathbb{Z}, q \in [0, 1) : w = m + q . \end{aligned}$$

We have

$$\lfloor (k-1)w \rfloor = n , \quad (3)$$

$$\lfloor kw \rfloor = \begin{cases} n + m, & p + q < 1 \\ n + m + 1, & p + q \geq 1 \text{ (impossible if } p = 0) \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

$$\lfloor w \rfloor = m \quad (5)$$

$$\lceil w \rceil = \begin{cases} m, & p = 0 \\ m + 1, & p > 0 \end{cases} \quad (6)$$

$$(3), (4), (5), (6), p + q < 2 \Rightarrow \lfloor kw \rfloor \in \{ \lfloor (k-1)w \rfloor + \lfloor w \rfloor, \lfloor (k-1)w \rfloor + \lceil w \rceil \} \quad (7)$$

From (7) we deduce that

$$\forall i \in [M] \setminus \{1\}, r_i \in \{r_{i-1} + \left\lfloor \frac{R-1}{M-1} \right\rfloor, r_{i-1} + \left\lceil \frac{R-1}{M-1} \right\rceil\} . \quad (8)$$

From (2) and (8) we have that  $\forall i \in [M-1], r_{i+1} - r_i \geq \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil$ . We will now prove by induction that  $\forall i \in [M], \mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}, r_i} = 1$ .

- For  $i = 1, \mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}, 1} = 1$  (Algorithm 3, line 4).
- Let  $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}, r_i} = 1$ . Until  $r_{i+1}$ , a single non-null vote is cast by  $u_{\text{pid}}$ , which reduces  $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}}$  by at most  $a + b$  (Algorithm 5, line 7) and at least  $\left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil$  regenerations, each of which replenishes  $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}}$  by regen. Thus

$$\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}, r_{i+1}} \geq \min \left\{ \mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}, r_i} - a - b + \text{regen} \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil, 1 \right\} \geq 1 .$$

But  $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}}$  cannot exceed 1 (line 4), thus  $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}, r_{i+1}} = 1$ .

Since the above holds for every  $\text{pid} \in [N]$ , it holds that at the end of the execution, all votes have been cast with full Voting Power, thus  $\forall i \in [M], \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[i]) = Nb + a \sum_{\text{pid}=1}^N \mathcal{P}[i]_{\text{pid}}$  and the posts in  $\mathcal{P}_R$  are sorted by decreasing score (Algorithm 5, line 20). We observe that



443  $\forall i \neq j \in [M], \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[i]) > \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[j]) \Rightarrow$

444 
$$\sum_{\text{pid}=1}^N \mathcal{P}[i]_{\text{pid}} > \sum_{\text{pid}=1}^N \mathcal{P}[j]_{\text{pid}} \Rightarrow$$

445 
$$Nb + a \sum_{\text{pid}=1}^N \mathcal{P}[i]_{\text{pid}} > Nb + a \sum_{\text{pid}=1}^N \mathcal{P}[j]_{\text{pid}} .$$

446

447 Therefore all posts will be ordered according to their ideal scores; put otherwise,  
448  $\text{IDEALSCORE}^M(\mathcal{P}_R)$  holds.

449 ■ Statement 2b: Suppose that

450 
$$R - 1 < (M - 1) \left\lceil \frac{a + b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil . \quad (9)$$

451 Several lists of posts will be defined in the rest of the proof. Given that, when all players  
452 are honest, the creator of a post is irrelevant, we omit the creator from the definition of  
453 posts to facilitate the exposition. Thus every post will be defined as a tuple of likabilities.  
454 First, we consider the case when

455 
$$\text{attSpan} + R \leq M . \quad (10)$$

456 In this case, no player can ever vote for the last post, as we will show now. First of all,  
457 (10)  $\Rightarrow R < M$ , thus all players cast  $R$  votes in total. Let  $\text{pid} \in N, i \in [R]$  and  $v_{\text{pid},i}$  the  
458 index of the last post that has ever been in  $u_{\text{pid}}$ 's attention span until the end of round  $i$ ,  
459 according to the ordering of  $\mathcal{P}$ . It is  $v_{\text{pid},1} = \text{attSpan}$  and  $\forall i \in [R] \setminus \{1\}, v_{\text{pid},i} = v_{\text{pid},i-1} + 1$ ,  
460 since in every round  $u_{\text{pid}}$  votes for a single post and the first unvoted post of the list  
461 is added to their attention span. Note that, since this mechanism is the same for all  
462 players, the same unvoted post is added to all players' attention span at every round.

463 Thus  $\forall \text{pid} \in N, v_{\text{pid},R} = \text{attSpan} + R - 1 \stackrel{(10)}{<} M$ . We deduce that no player has ever the  
464 chance to vote for the last post. The above observation naturally leads us to the following  
465 counterexample: Let

466 
$$\text{strongPost} = (\underbrace{1, \dots, 1}_N), \text{nullPost} = (\underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_N)$$

467 
$$\mathcal{P} = [\underbrace{\text{nullPost}, \dots, \text{nullPost}}_{M-1}, \text{strongPost}]$$

468

469  $\forall i \in [M - 1]$ , it is  $\text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[M]) > \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[i])$ , thus  $\forall \mathcal{P}'$  that contain the same  
470 posts as  $\mathcal{P}$  and  $\text{IDEAL}^1(\mathcal{P}')$  holds, it is  $\mathcal{P}'[1] = \mathcal{P}[M]$ . However, since the last post  
471 is not voted by any player and the first post is voted by at least one player, it is  
472  $\text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[1]) > \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[M])$ , thus  $\text{IDEAL}^1(\mathcal{P}_R)$  does not hold.

473 We now move on to the case when  $\text{attSpan} + R > M$ . Let  $V = \min\{R, M\}$ . Each player  
474 casts exactly  $V$  votes. Consider  $\mathcal{P}^1 = 1^{M \times N}$  and  $\text{pid} \in [N]$ . Let

475 
$$i \in [V] : \left( \mathbf{VPreg}_{\text{pid}, r_i} < 1 \wedge \nexists i' < i : \mathbf{VPreg}_{\text{pid}, r_{i'}} < 1 \right) ,$$

476 i.e.  $i$  is the first round in which  $u_{\text{pid}}$  votes with less than full Voting Power. Such a round  
477 exists in every case as we will show now. Note that, since the first round is a voting  
478 round and the Voting Power of all players is full at the beginning, if  $i$  exists it is  $i \geq 2$ .

479 ■ If  $R \geq M$ , it is  $V = M$ .

480 If  $\nexists i \in [M] : \left( \mathbf{VPreg}_{\text{pid}, r_i} < 1 \wedge \nexists i' < i : \mathbf{VPreg}_{\text{pid}, r_{i'}} < 1 \right)$ , then we have that  $\forall i \in$   
 481  $[M], \mathbf{VPreg}_{\text{pid}, r_i} = 1 \Rightarrow \forall i \in [M] \setminus \{1\}, r_i \geq r_{i-1} + \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil$  to have enough rounds  
 482 to replenish the Voting Power after a full-weight, full-Voting Power vote. Thus  
 483  $r_M \geq 1 + (M-1) \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil > R$ , contradiction.

484 ■ If  $R < M$ , every player votes on all rounds, thus  $r_2 = 2$ . Note that

$$485 \quad \left\lceil \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} \right\rceil \geq 2 \Rightarrow \frac{a+b}{\text{regen}} > 1 \Rightarrow a+b > \text{regen} . \quad (11)$$

486 Thus  $\forall \text{pid} \in [N], \mathbf{VPreg}_{\text{pid}, r_2} = 1 - a - b + \text{regen} \stackrel{(11)}{<} 1$ , thus  $i = 2$ .

487 We proved that  $i$  exists. Since all players follow the same voting pattern, the Voting  
 488 Power of all players in each round is the same. Let  $\text{rVP} = \mathbf{VPreg}_{1, r_i}$ . Assume that  
 489  $\text{attSpan} < i \vee i > 2$ . Please refer to the full version [25] for the case when  $\text{attSpan} \geq$   
 490  $i \wedge i = 2$ . In case  $N$  is even, let  $0 < \gamma < 0, 0 < \epsilon < \gamma(1 - \text{rVP})$ ,

$$491 \quad \text{weakPost} = (\underbrace{1, \dots, 1}_{N/2}, \underbrace{\gamma - \epsilon, \dots, \gamma - \epsilon}_{N/2}) ,$$

$$492 \quad \text{strongPost} = (\underbrace{\gamma, \dots, \gamma}_{N/2}, \underbrace{1, \dots, 1}_{N/2}), \text{nullPost} = (\underbrace{0, \dots, 0}_N) ,$$

$$493 \quad \mathcal{P} = [\underbrace{\text{weakPost}, \dots, \text{weakPost}}_{i-1}, \text{strongPost}, \underbrace{\text{nullPost}, \dots, \text{nullPost}}_{M-i}] .$$

495 First of all, it is

$$496 \quad \forall j \in [i-1], \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[j]) = \frac{N}{2} (1 + \gamma - \epsilon) <$$

$$497 \quad < \frac{N}{2} (1 + \gamma) = \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[i])$$

499 and  $\forall j \in \{i+1, \dots, M\}, \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[j]) = 0 < \text{idealSc}(\mathcal{P}[i])$ , thus the strong post has  
 500 strictly the highest ideal score of all posts and as a result,  $\forall \mathcal{P}'$  that contains the same  
 501 posts as  $\mathcal{P}$  and  $\text{IDEAL}^1(\mathcal{P}')$  holds, it is  $\mathcal{P}'[1] = \mathcal{P}[i]$ .

502 We observe that all players like both weak and strong posts more than null posts, thus  
 503 no player will vote for a null post unless her attention span contains only null posts. This  
 504 can happen in two cases: First, if the player has not yet voted for all non-null posts, but  
 505 the first  $\text{attSpan}$  posts of the list, excluding already voted posts, are null posts. Second,  
 506 if the player has already voted for all non-null posts. For a null post to rank higher than  
 507 a non-null one, it must be true that there exists one player that has cast the first vote for  
 508 the null post. However, since the null posts are initially at the bottom of the list and it is  
 509 impossible for a post to improve its ranking before it is voted, we deduce that this first  
 510 vote can be cast only after the voter has voted for all non-null posts. We deduce that all  
 511 players vote for all non-null posts before voting for any null post.

512 We will now see that the first  $\frac{N}{2}$  players vote first for all weak posts and then for the  
 513 strong post. These players like the weak posts more than the strong post. As we saw,  
 514 they will not vote any null post before voting for all non-null ones. If  $\text{attSpan} > 1$  they  
 515 vote for the strong post only when all other posts in their attention span are null ones

516 and thus they will have voted for all weak posts already. If  $\text{attSpan} = 1$  and since no  
 517 post can increase its position before being voted, the strong post will become “visible”  
 518 for all players only once they have voted for all weak posts. Thus in both cases the first  
 519  $\frac{N}{2}$  players vote for the strong post only after they have voted for all weak posts first.  
 520 The two previous results combined prove that the first  $\frac{N}{2}$  players vote for the strong post  
 521 in round  $r_i$  exactly. We also observe that these players have experienced the exact same  
 522 Voting Power reduction and regeneration as in the case of  $\mathcal{P}^1$  since they voted only for  
 523 posts with likability 1, thus in round  $r_i$  their Voting Power after regeneration is exactly  
 524 the same as in the case of  $\mathcal{P}^1$ :  $\forall \text{pid} \in [\frac{N}{2}], \mathbf{VP}_{\text{reg}_{\text{pid}, r_i}} = \text{rVP}$ .  
 525 We observe that the first  $\frac{N}{2}$  players vote for all weak posts with full Voting Power. As for  
 526 the last  $\frac{N}{2}$  players, we observe that, if  $\text{attSpan} < i$ , they all vote for the first weak post  
 527 of the list in the first round, and thus with full Voting Power. If  $\text{attSpan} \geq i$  and  $i > 2$ ,  
 528 they vote for the strong post in the first round and for the first weak post in  $r_2$  with full  
 529 Voting Power. Thus in all cases the last  $\frac{N}{2}$  players vote for the first weak post with full  
 530 Voting Power. Therefore, the score of the first weak post at the end of the execution is  
 531  $\text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[1]) = \frac{N}{2}(a+b) + \frac{N}{2}((\gamma - \epsilon)a + b)$ .  
 532 On the other hand, at the end of the execution the strong post has been voted by the first  
 533  $\frac{N}{2}$  players with rVP Voting Power and by the last  $\frac{N}{2}$  players with at most full Voting  
 534 Power, thus its final score will be at most  $\text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[i]) \leq \frac{N}{2}(\text{rVP} \cdot \gamma a + b) + \frac{N}{2}(a + b)$ . It is

$$\begin{aligned}
 535 \quad & \epsilon < \gamma(1 - \text{rVP}) \Rightarrow \\
 536 \quad & \frac{N}{2}(\text{rVP} \cdot \gamma a + b) + \frac{N}{2}(a + b) < \frac{N}{2}(a + b) + \frac{N}{2}((\gamma - \epsilon)a + b) \Rightarrow \\
 537 \quad & \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[i]) < \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[1]) \quad .
 \end{aligned}$$

539 Thus  $\mathcal{P}_R[1] \neq \mathcal{P}[i]$  and  $\text{Ideal}^1(\mathcal{P}_R)$  does not hold.  
 540 As for the case when  $N$  is odd, let  $0 < \epsilon < \gamma \frac{N-3}{N-1}(1 - \text{rVP})$ . In this case, we assume that  
 541 the likability of the first  $i$  posts (weak and strong) for the additional player is  $\gamma$ , whereas  
 542 the likability of the last  $M - i$  posts (the null posts) is 0. This means that the additional  
 543 player votes first for the weak and strong posts and then for the null posts. The rest of  
 544 the likabilities remain as in the case when  $N$  is even. We observe that the ideal score of  
 545 the strong post is still strictly higher than the rest. Furthermore, since the additional  
 546 player votes for the first weak post within the first  $i$  voting rounds, her Voting Power  
 547 at the time of this vote will be at least rVP. We thus have the following bounds for the  
 548 scores:

$$\begin{aligned}
 549 \quad & \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[i]) \leq \frac{N-1}{2}(\text{rVP} \cdot \gamma a + b) + \frac{N-1}{2}(a + b) + \gamma a + b \quad , \\
 550 \quad & \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[1]) \geq \frac{N-1}{2}(a + b) + \frac{N-1}{2}((\gamma - \epsilon)a + b) + \text{rVP} \cdot \gamma a + b \quad .
 \end{aligned}$$

552 Given the bounds of  $\epsilon$ , it is  $\text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[i]) < \text{sc}_R(\mathcal{P}[1])$ , thus  $\text{Ideal}^1(\mathcal{P}_R)$  does not hold.

553

◀

## B

 Steem Post Voting System Procedures

---

**Algorithm 3** INIT (attSpan,  $a, b$ , regen,  $R, \mathbf{SP}$ )

---

```

1: Store input parameters as constants
2:  $r \leftarrow 1$ 
3:  $\text{lastVoted} \leftarrow (0, \dots, 0) \in (\mathbb{N}^*)^N$ 
4:  $\mathbf{VP} \leftarrow (1, \dots, 1) \in [0, 1]^N$ 
5:  $\text{scores} \leftarrow (0, \dots, 0) \in (\mathbb{R}^+)^M$ 

```

---



---

**Algorithm 4** AUX

---

```

1: return (attSpan,  $a, b, r$ , regen,  $R, \mathbf{SP}$ )

```

---



---

**Algorithm 5** HANDLEVOTE (ballot,  $u_{\text{pid}}$ )

---

```

1: if  $\text{lastVoted}_{\text{pid}} \neq r$  then                                     ▷ One vote per player per round
2:    $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid},r} \leftarrow \mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}}$                                        ▷ For proofs
3:    $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}} \leftarrow \max \{ \mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}} + \text{regen}, 1 \}$ 
4:    $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{reg}_{\text{pid},r}} \leftarrow \mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}}$                                        ▷ For proofs
5:   if ballot  $\neq$  null then
6:     Parse ballot as ( $P$ , weight)
7:      $\text{cost} \leftarrow a \cdot \mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}} \cdot \text{weight} + b$ 
8:     if  $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}} - \text{cost} \geq 0$  then
9:        $\text{score} \leftarrow \text{cost} \cdot \mathbf{SP}_{\text{pid}}$ 
10:       $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}} \leftarrow \mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}} - \text{cost}$ 
11:    else
12:       $\text{score} \leftarrow \mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}} \cdot \mathbf{SP}_{\text{pid}}$ 
13:       $\mathbf{VP}_{\text{pid}} \leftarrow 0$ 
14:    end if
15:     $\text{scores}_P \leftarrow \text{scores}_P + \text{score}$ 
16:  end if
17:   $\text{lastVoted}_{\text{pid}} \leftarrow r$ 
18: end if
19: if  $\forall i \in [N], \text{lastVoted}_i = r$  then                               ▷ round over
20:    $\mathcal{P} \leftarrow \text{ORDER}(\mathcal{P}, \text{scores})$                                ▷ order posts by votes
21:    $\mathcal{P}_r \leftarrow \mathcal{P}$                                                  ▷ For proofs
22:    $r \leftarrow r + 1$ 
23: end if

```

---

---

**Algorithm 6** VOTE( $\mathcal{P}$ , aux)

---

```
1: Store aux contents as constants
2: voteRounds  $\leftarrow$  VOTEROUNDS( $R, |\mathcal{P}|$ )
3: if VOTETHISROUND( $r, |\mathcal{P}|$ ) = yes then
4:   top  $\leftarrow$  CHOOSETOPPOSTS(attSpan,  $\mathcal{P}$ , votedPosts)
5:    $(i, l) \leftarrow \operatorname{argmax}_{(i,l) \in \text{top}} \{l_{\text{pid}}\}[1]$ 
6:   votedPosts  $\leftarrow$  votedPosts  $\cup (i, l)$ 
7:   return  $((i, l), l_{\text{pid}})$ 
8: else
9:   return null
10: end if
11:
12: function CHOOSETOPPOSTS(attSpan,  $\mathcal{P}$ , votedPosts)
13:   res  $\leftarrow \emptyset$ 
14:   idx  $\leftarrow 1$ 
15:   while |res| < attSpan & idx  $\leq |\mathcal{P}|$  do
16:     if  $\mathcal{P}[\text{idx}] \notin \text{votedPosts}$  then                                 $\triangleright$  One vote per post per player
17:       res  $\leftarrow$  res  $\cup \{\mathcal{P}[\text{idx}]\}$ 
18:     end if
19:     idx  $\leftarrow$  idx + 1
20:   end while
21:   return res
22: end function
23:
24: function VOTETHISROUND( $r, M$ )
25:   if  $R < M$  then
26:     return yes
27:   else if  $r \in \text{voteRounds}$  then
28:     return yes
29:   else
30:     return no
31:   end if
32: end function
33:
34: function VOTEROUNDS( $R, M$ )
35:   voteRounds  $\leftarrow \emptyset$ 
36:   for  $i = 1$  to  $M$  do
37:     voteRounds  $\leftarrow$  voteRounds  $\cup \left\{1 + \left\lfloor (i-1) \frac{R-1}{M-1} \right\rfloor\right\}$ 
38:   end for
39:   return voteRounds
40: end function
```

---

555

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