

This topic arose out of a discussion I had with Tor on a high-level outlook on the Enigma Network from a potential Black Swan event. The discussion began with a question of mine on how to sustain the integrity of the network outside of strictly economic forces.

Although, it is evident that in a DLT economy profitability is a driving factor behind an agent's behavior, are profitability and monetary rewards/incentives the ONLY factor influencing node behavior? Is there any other source of utility present among node runners and network peers?

This idea is especially relevant in a potential Black Swan event, wherein the present state it appears nearly all active node network deployments immediately collapse in the absence of a monetary reward, as there is no other motivating factor underpinning node-runner behavior (lacks "anti-fragility", as forking is only a resiliency mechanism).

In the following discussion, Tor pointed out the necessity to create a robust and sustainable network by taking into consideration all factors - from economics to storytelling to contingencies. Yet, I remained skeptical that any underlying community cohesiveness from the broader Enigma community would warrant altruistic behavior on behalf of node-runners operating at a loss. As I believe that due to barriers to entry, the broader Enigma community acts as a separate entity to that of node-runners.

In response, Tor agreed with my sentiments but rather claimed a sustainable decentralized network (due to the state of tech at this stage) wouldn't be one where everything is strictly reduced to economics drawing from such examples as Tor, BitTorrent etc. He also mentioned that greater diversity of node runners (identities, locations, motivations) could create a more sustainable network. Although he and I agreed that node-runners won't derive utility from the vision behind Enigma to a greater extent than the economics. But, such corresponding utility is important (to even a marginal extent).

Tor brought up the example of a competing network launching with better short-term economics despite it being completely unsustainable as an "attack" of sorts. In his opinion, something has to be present beyond economics to help strengthen the network in such a circumstance. Therefore, he and I have brought up a couple questions we'd be interested to see other community members thoughts on:

1. How do you weigh the long-term sustainability/viability of a network vs its short-term incentives for participation?
2. How could the Enigma network attempt to align node-runner incentives in an unprofitable or volatile environment?
3. What other factors outside of monetary incentives could node-runners derive value or meaning from? I.e Individuals running a Tor exit node despite being pestered by authorities with letters etc. out of a passion for privacy