



# **Introduction to Blockchain and Smart Contracts**

## **A Technical Perspective**

*presented by*

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# About Me

- A Brief History
  - 2007: B.Comp. (hons) in Computer Science, NUS, Singapore
  - 2011: M.Sc. & Ph.D. in Computer Science, University of Toronto, Canada
  - 2018: School of Computer Science and Engineering, NTU, Singapore
- Research Interests
  - Program analysis, automated reasoning
  - Software verification
  - Software reuse
  - Software security



# Today's Agenda

- Bitcoin Revolution
- Blockchain Primer
- How does blockchain work?
- Blockchain 2.0: decentralized applications



# The Bitcoin Revolution



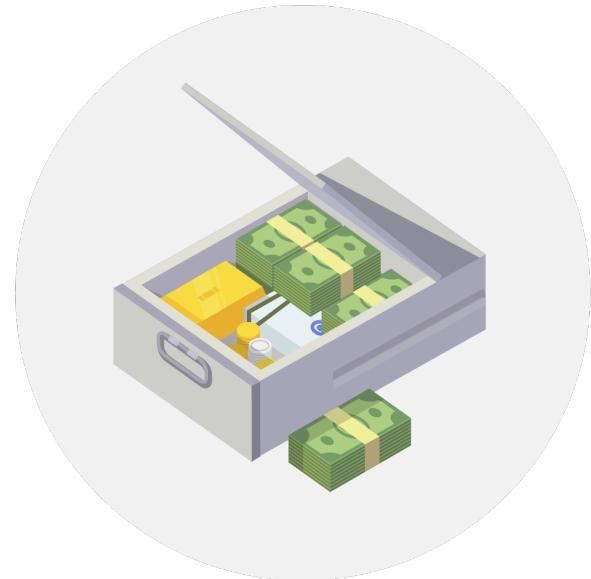
# What is Money?



**A medium of exchange**  
for buying things



**A unit of account**  
for pricing



**A store of value**  
for saving

**MONEY = VALUE = TRUST**

# Fiat Money

(Latin *fiat* - 'let it be done' or 'so it be')

- **Fiat money**

- The dollars, or euros, or any other currency for that matter have value because the government orders it to.

- **Drawbacks**

- It is centralised.
- It is not limited in quantity (e.g., unlimited QE).

Beigel, O. (2022, January 13). *What is bitcoin? A complete beginner's guide.* 99Bitcoins.  
Retrieved July 20, 2022 from <https://99bitcoins.com/bitcoin/#centralization>



# Digital Money and “Double-Spending” Problem

- Digital money is a type of currency available in digital form in contrast to physical, such as banknotes and coins.
  - Allow for instantaneous transactions and borderless transfer-of-ownership
- **Double-spending:** A potential flaw in a digital cash scheme in which the same single digital token can be spent more than once.
- This is possible because a digital token consists of a digital file that can be **duplicated or falsified**.
- Banks' solution:
  - Keep a computer ledger to keep track of who owns what  
→ **Centralised computer system**



# Hello Bitcoin! (Oct 2008)

Proposed by Satoshi Nakamoto

- A **peer-to-peer (P2P)** electronic cash system
- This system claimed to create **digital money** that solves the **double-spending problem** without the **need for a central authority**.



Satoshi Nakamoto  
[satoshin@gmx.com](mailto:satoshin@gmx.com)  
[www.bitcoin.org](http://www.bitcoin.org)

## Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System

Satoshi Nakamoto  
[satoshin@gmx.com](mailto:satoshin@gmx.com)  
[www.bitcoin.org](http://www.bitcoin.org)

**Abstract.** A purely peer-to-peer version of electronic cash would allow online payments to be sent directly from one party to another without going through a financial institution. Digital signatures provide part of the solution, but the main benefits are lost if a trusted third party is still required to prevent double-spending. We propose a solution to the double-spending problem using a peer-to-peer network. The network timestamps transactions by hashing them into an ongoing chain of hash-based proof-of-work, forming a record that cannot be changed without redoing the proof-of-work. The longest chain not only serves as proof of the sequence of events witnessed, but proof that it came from the largest pool of CPU power. As long as a majority of CPU power is controlled by nodes that are not cooperating to attack the network, they'll generate the longest chain and outpace attackers. The network itself requires minimal structure. Messages are broadcast on a best effort basis, and nodes can leave and rejoin the network at will, accepting the longest proof-of-work chain as proof of what happened while they were gone.

# Bitcoin Quick Facts

- Bitcoin is a Digital currency (**Cryptocurrency**) in which **encryption** techniques are used to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central Bank.
- Bitcoin is the first **decentralized** digital currency.
- Bitcoins are **digital** coins you can send over the Internet
- Bitcoins are stored in a **digital wallet (address)**
- Transactions are **permanently** and **anonymously** stored over the network



# Bitcoin vs. Bank



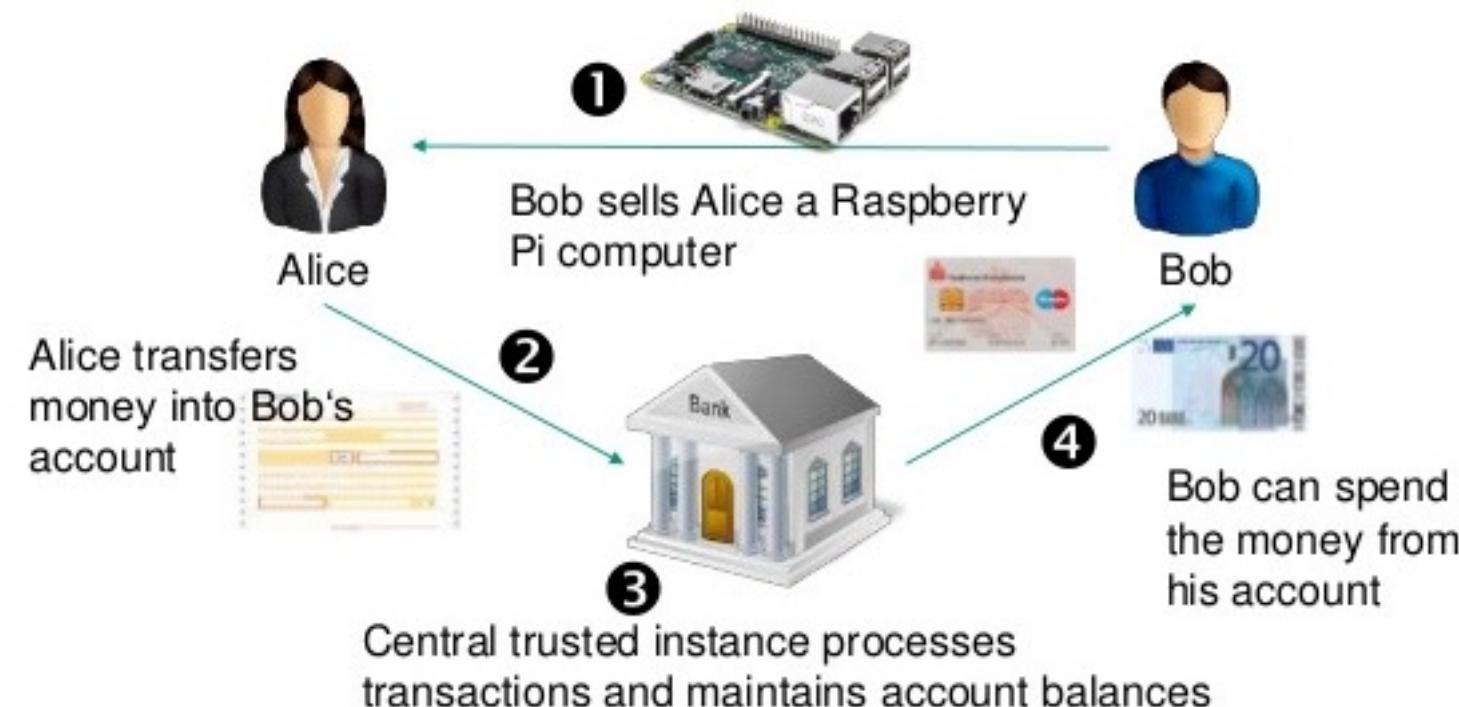
Transparent vs. Non-transparent  
Decentralized vs. Centralized

# Centralized Ledger

- Record each transaction in a **Ledger**
- Bookkeeper needed

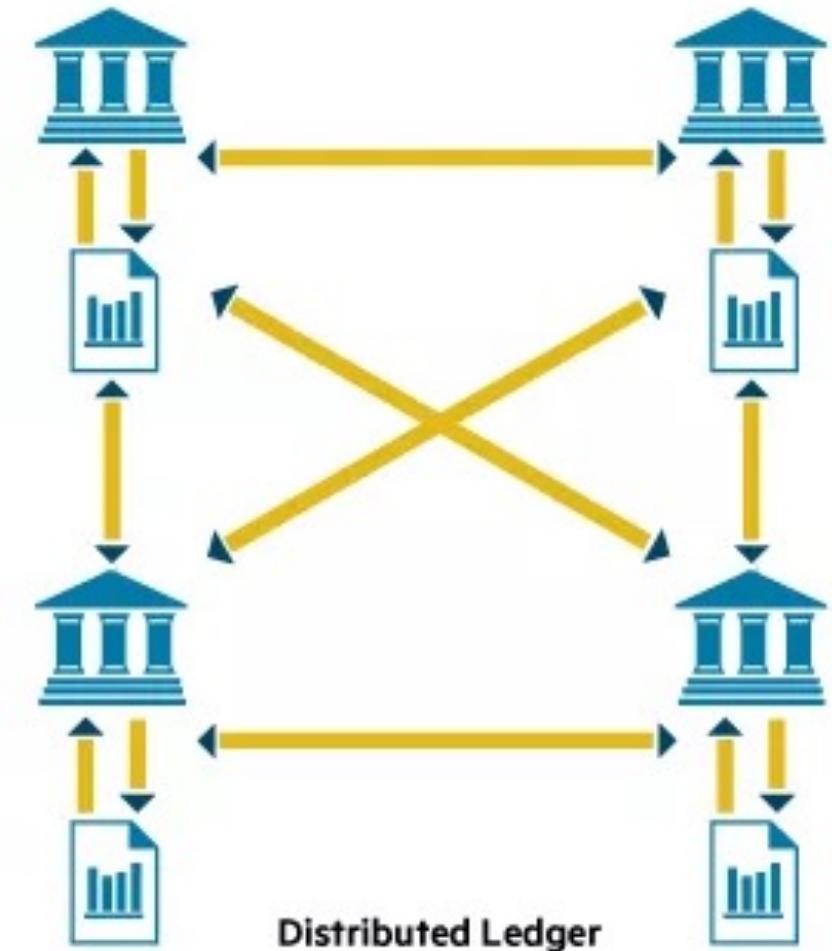


# Centralized Transaction

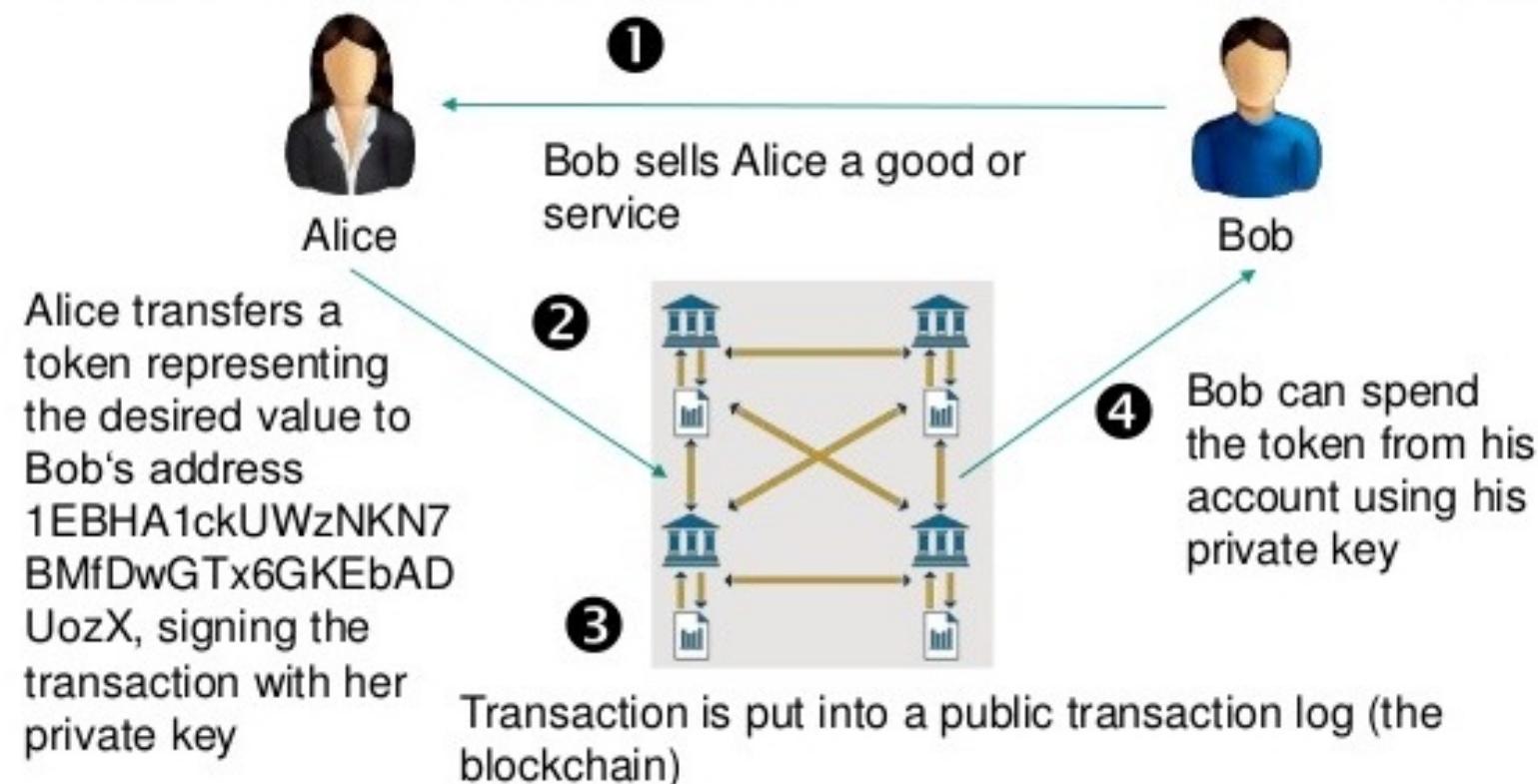


# Decentralized Ledger

- A new way of handling transactions
- Every individual maintains its own copy of the ledger



# Decentralized Transaction



# Problems of a centralized monetary system

Corruption

Mismanagement

Control

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## Wells Fargo uncovers up to 1.4 million more fake accounts

by Matt Egan @MattEganCNN August 31, 2017: 12:34 PM ET

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Business

## India Abolishes 500 and 1,000 Rupee Notes to Fight Corruption

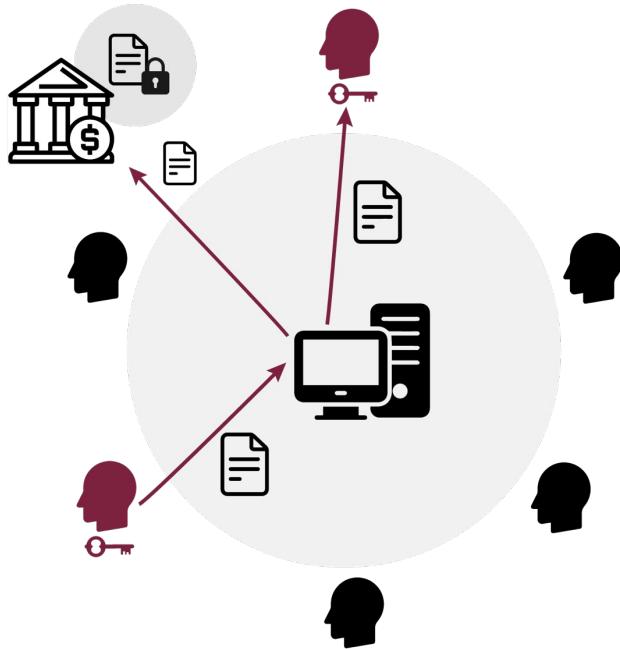
By Rajesh Kumar Singh and Iain Marlow

November 8, 2016, 10:59 PM GMT+8 Updated on November 9, 2016, 1:49 PM GMT+8

# Centralised or Decentralised

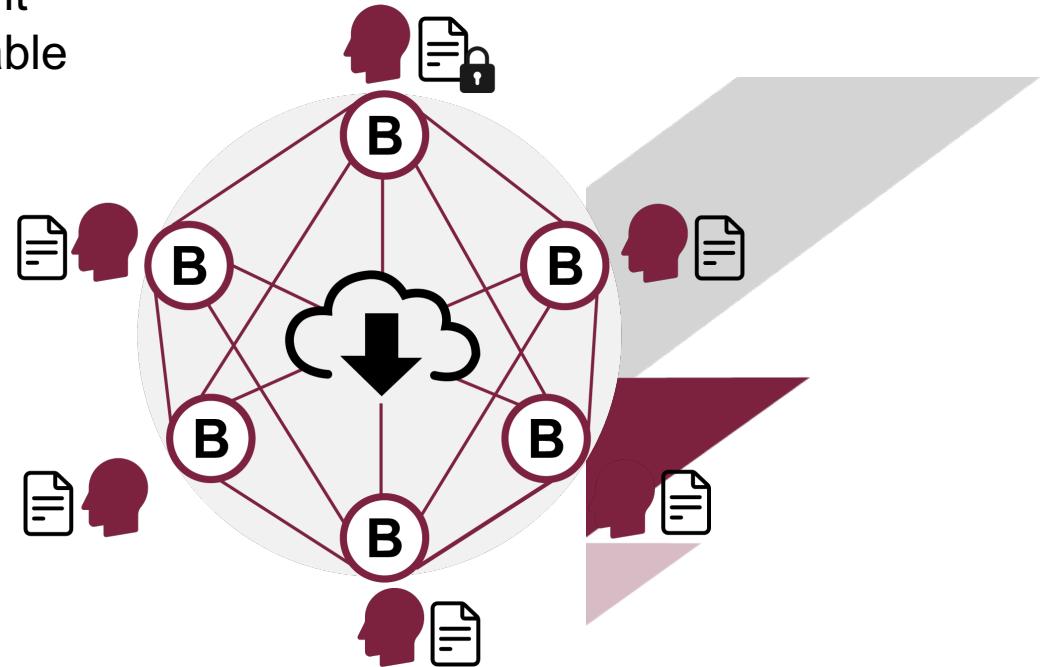
## Centralised system:

- Bookkeeper fee
- Availability
- Power corruption
- Single point of failure
- Non-resilient



## Decentralised system:

- Trusted
- Transparent
- Shared
- Resilient
- Immutable



# Why is Bitcoin a Big Thing?



**Internet is the  
information superhighway**

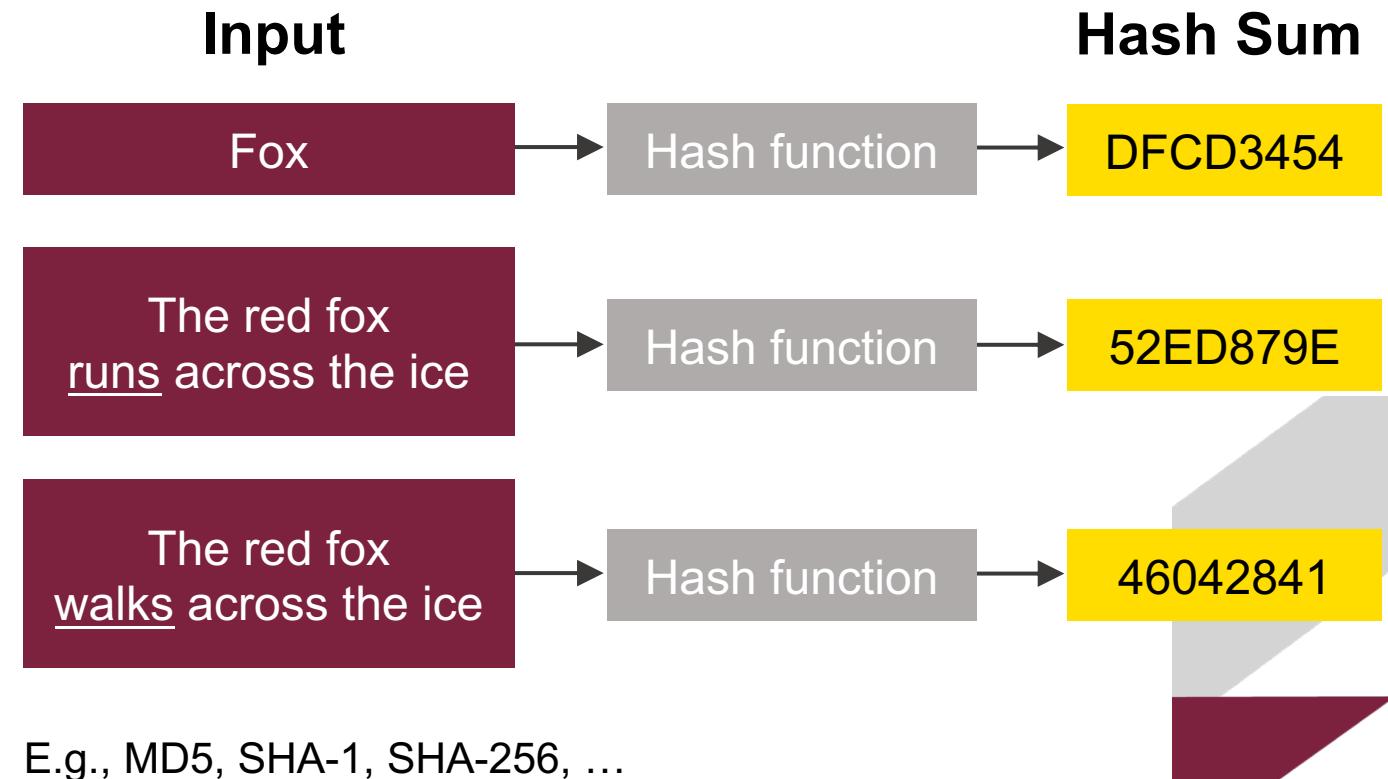


**is the Internet of  
Value (Trust)**

# Blockchain Primer

# Hash Function

- A **hash function** is a mathematical function that converts a variable-length string of characters into a **fixed-size** numerical value
- **Cryptographic hash function:** one-way function – easy to compute, hard to invert



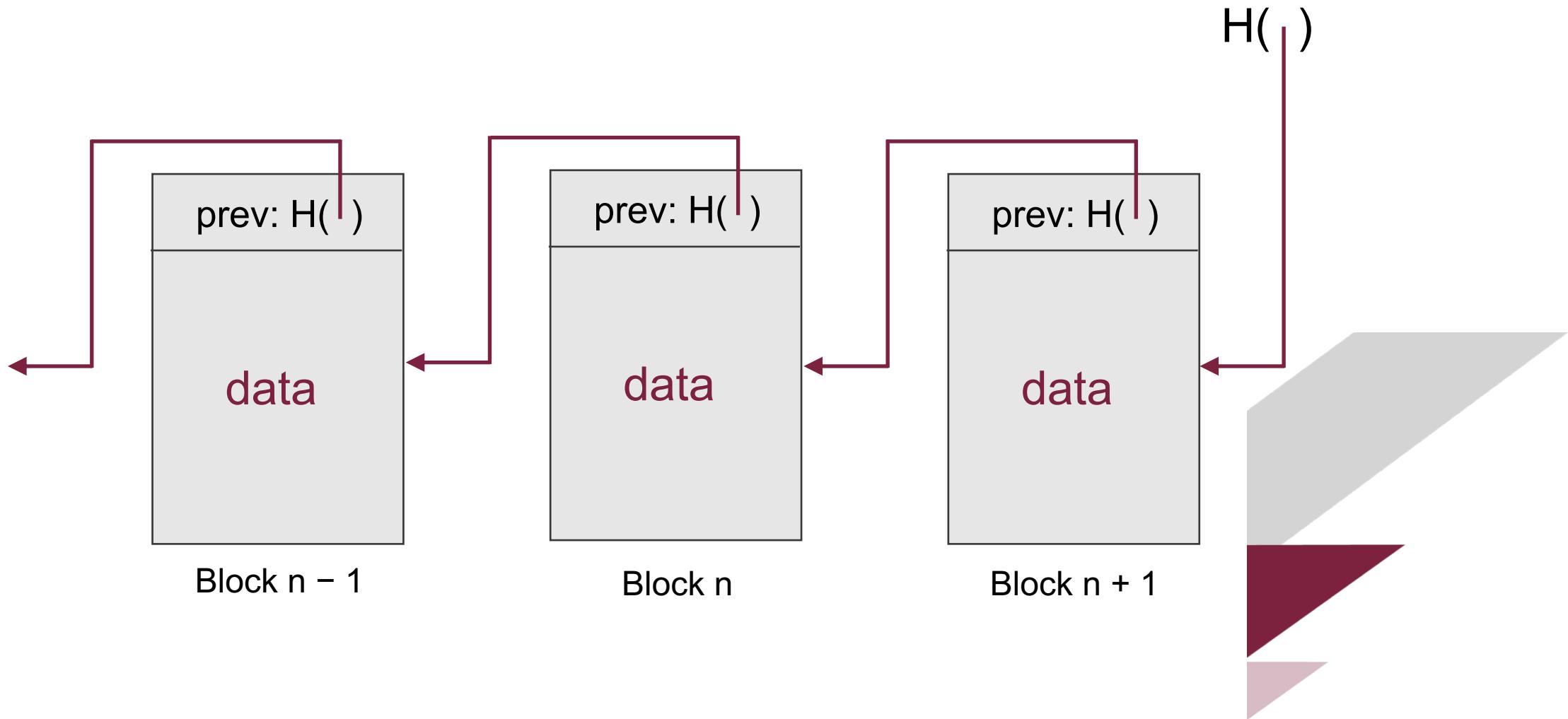
Lowery, J. M. (2020). *MD5 vs SHA-1 vs SHA-2 - Which is the most secure encryption hash and how to check them.* freeCodeCamp. <https://www.freecodecamp.org/news/md5-vs-sha-1-vs-sha-2-which-is-the-most-secure-encryption-hash-and-how-to-check-them/>

# Hash Pointer

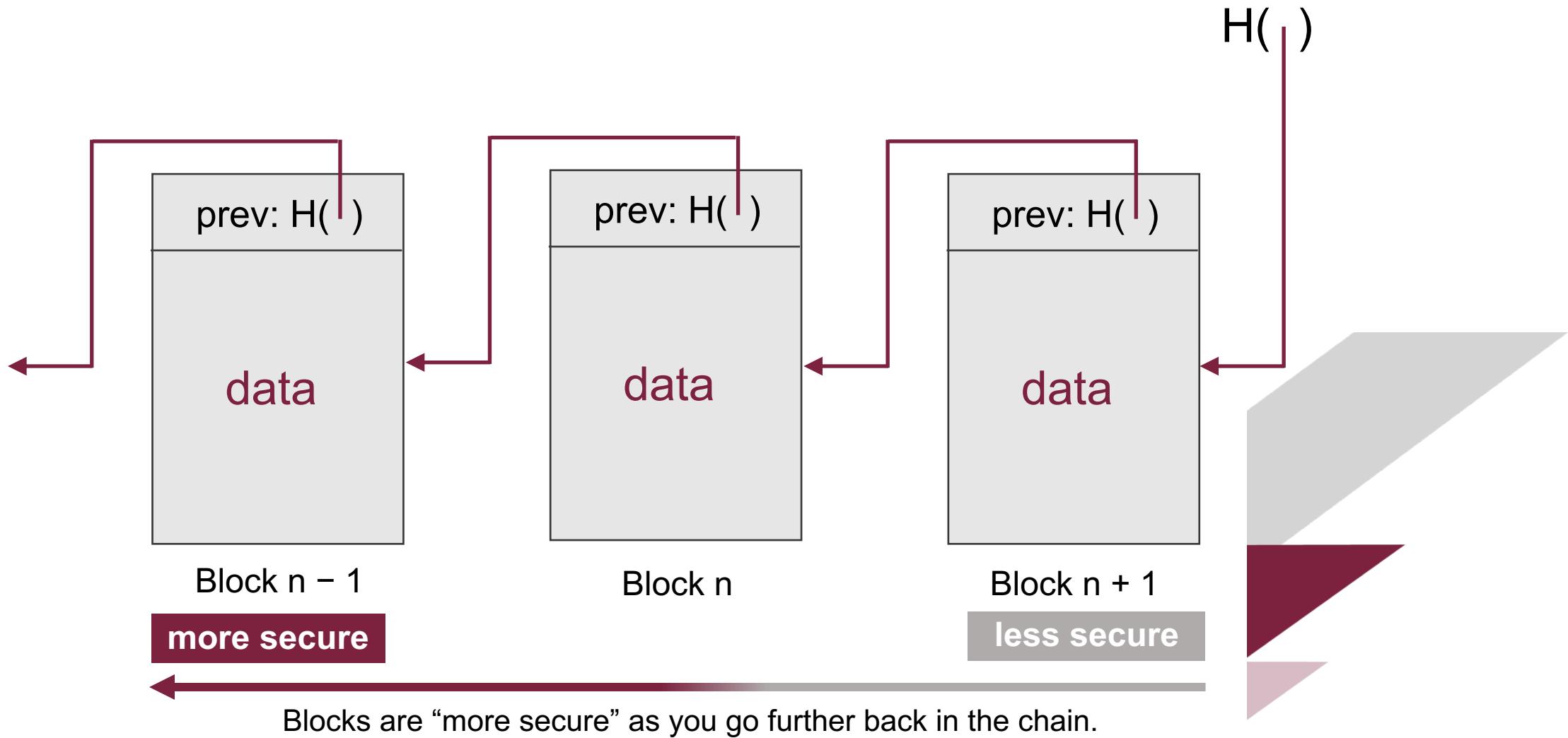
- A pointer to where data is stored together with a cryptographic hash of the value of that data at some fixed point in time
- Difference from a regular pointer:  
This also gives you a way to **verify that the information hasn't been changed.**



# Blockchain



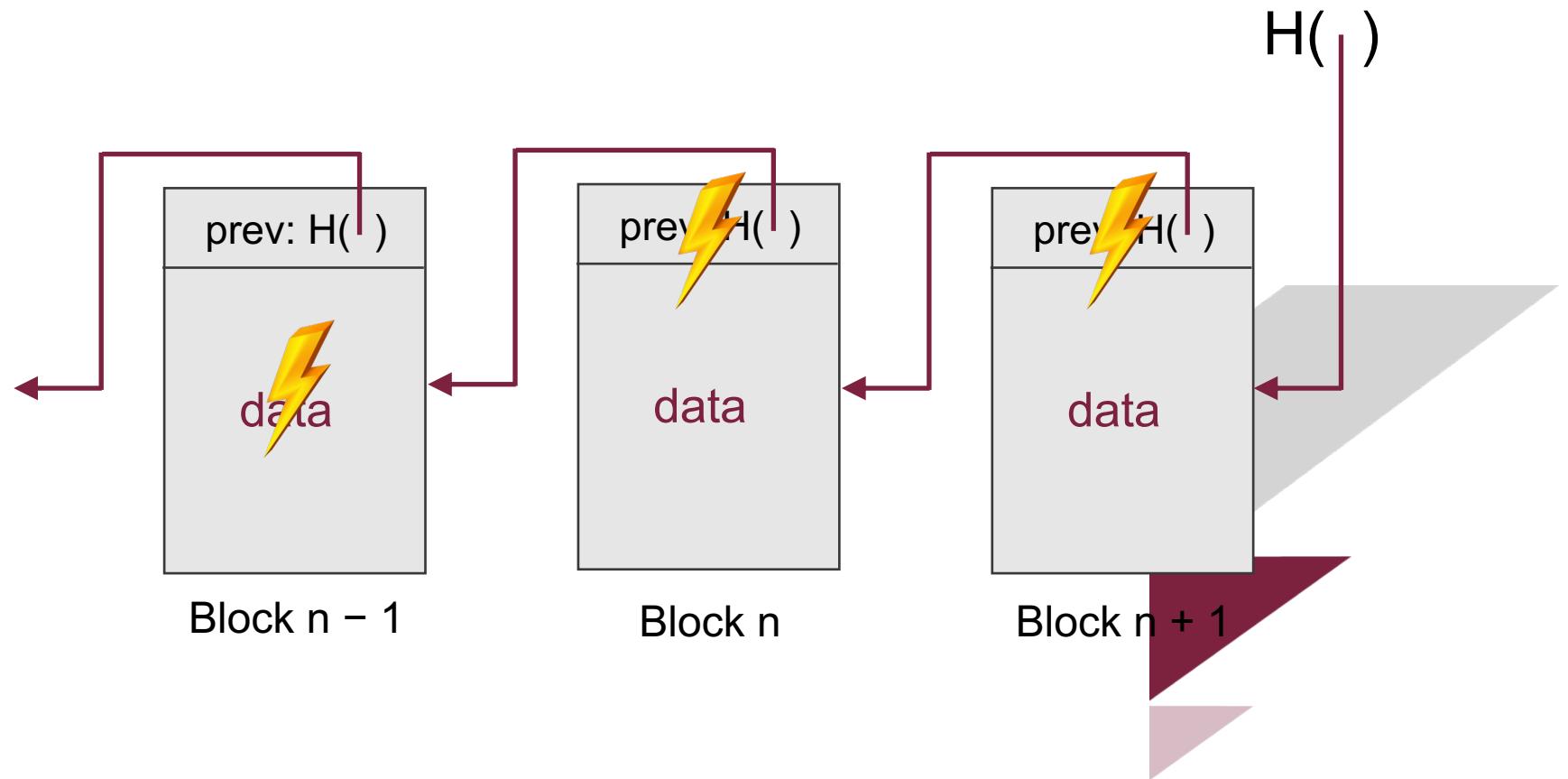
# Blockchain



# Blockchain as a Tamper-Evident Log

If an adversary modifies data in block  $n - 1$ :

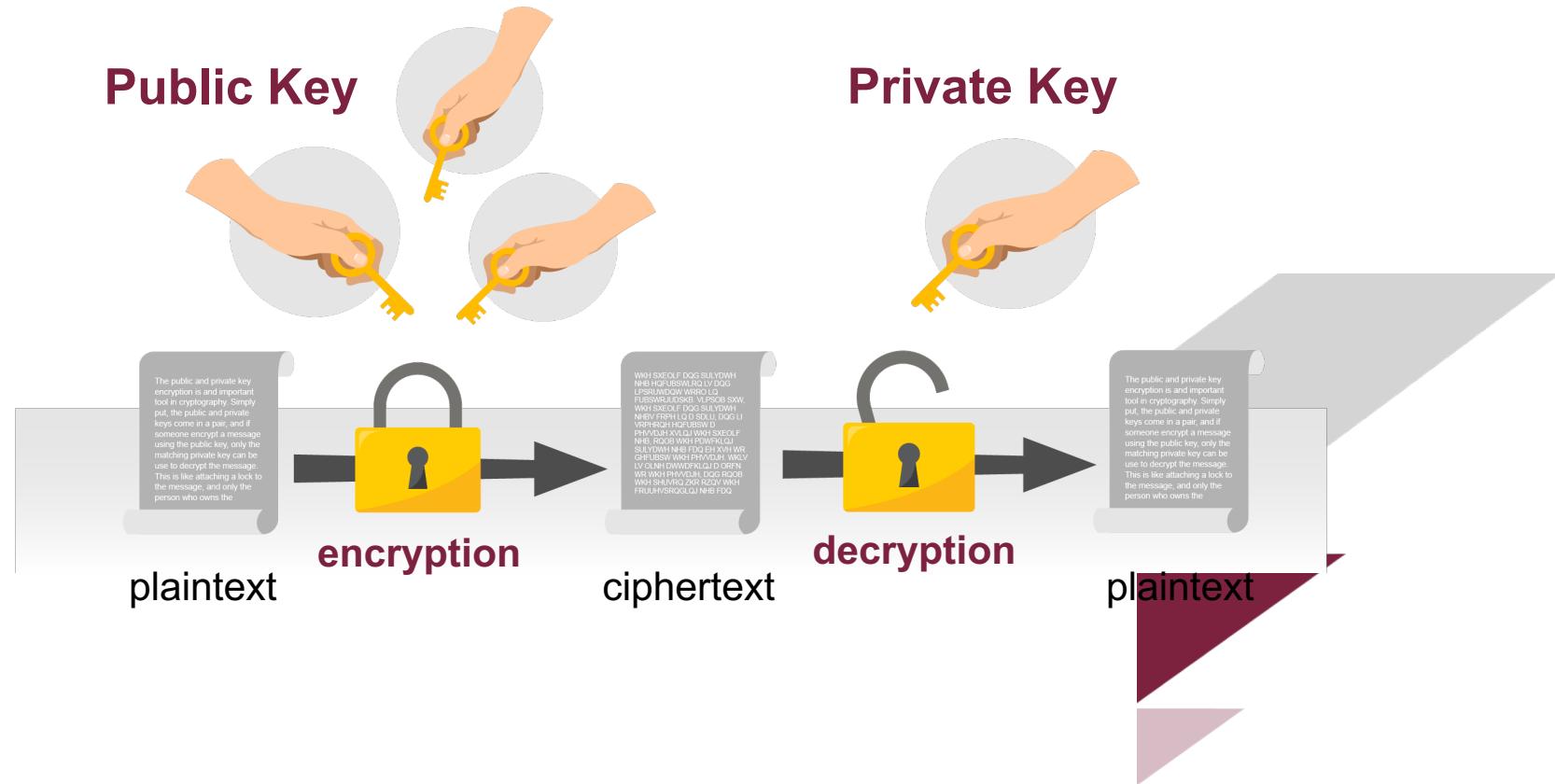
- The hash in block  $n$ , which is a hash of the entire block  $n - 1$ , is not going to match up.
- We will detect the **inconsistency**.



# Public and Private Keys

In cryptography:

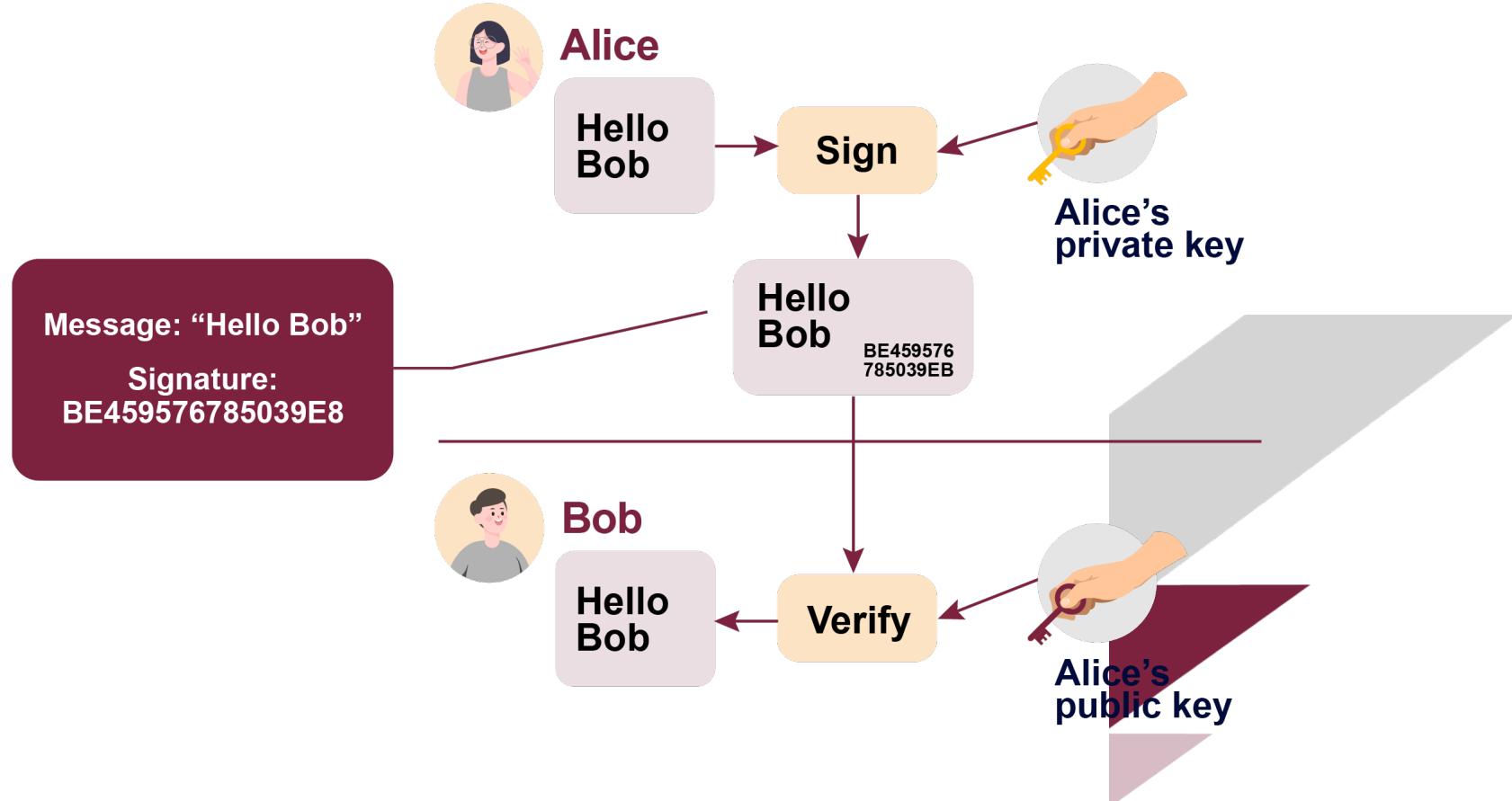
- The public key is used to encrypt, and the private key is used to decrypt.
- It is computationally infeasible to compute the private key based on the public key.



GlobalSign. (n.d.). *What is public-key cryptography?* Retrieved July 20, 2022 from <https://www.globalsign.com/en/ssl-information-center/what-is-public-key-cryptography>

# Digital Signatures

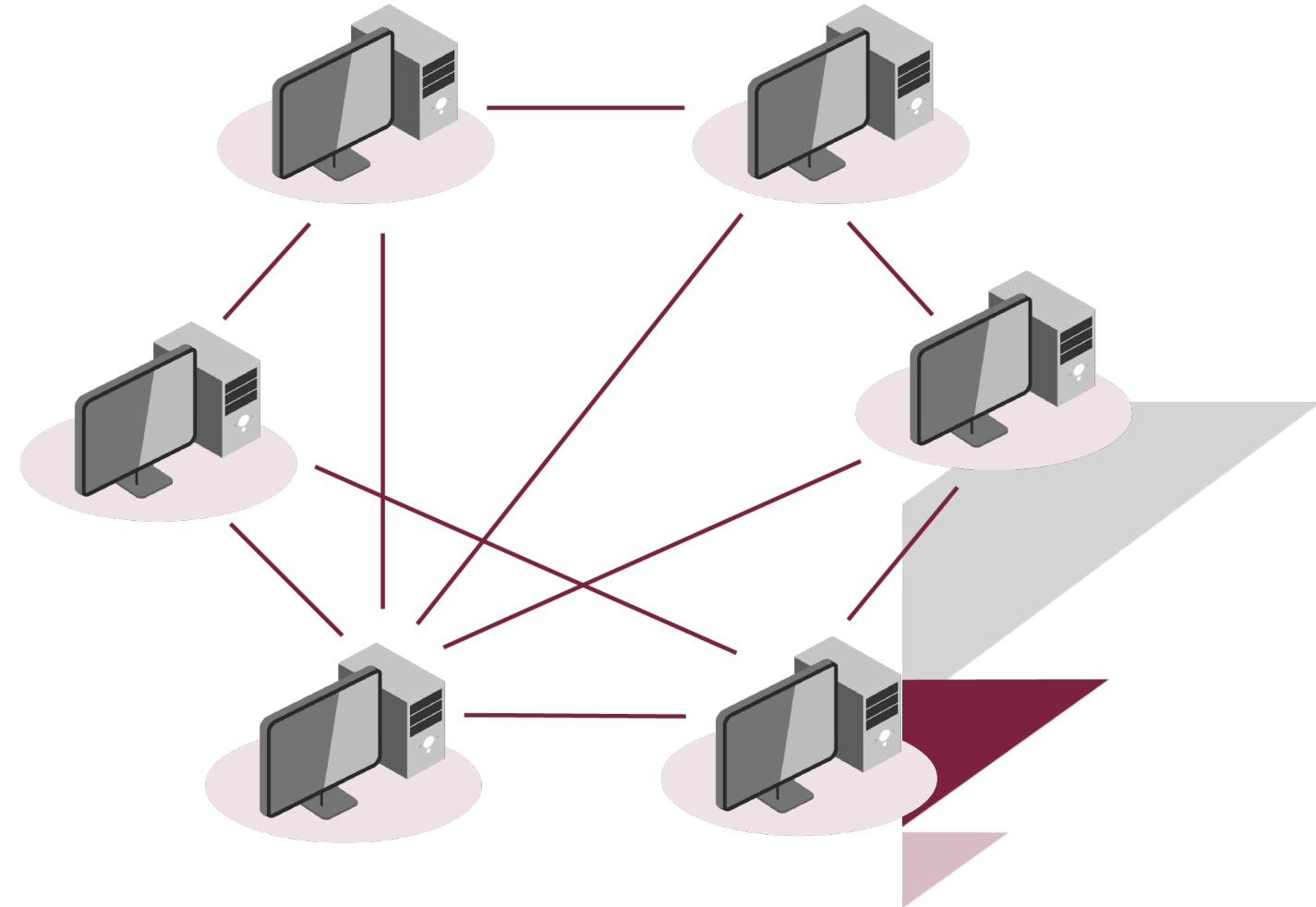
- The digital analog to a handwritten signature on paper.
- **Properties:**
  - Only you can make your signature, but anyone who sees it can verify that it's valid.
  - The signature is tied to a particular document.



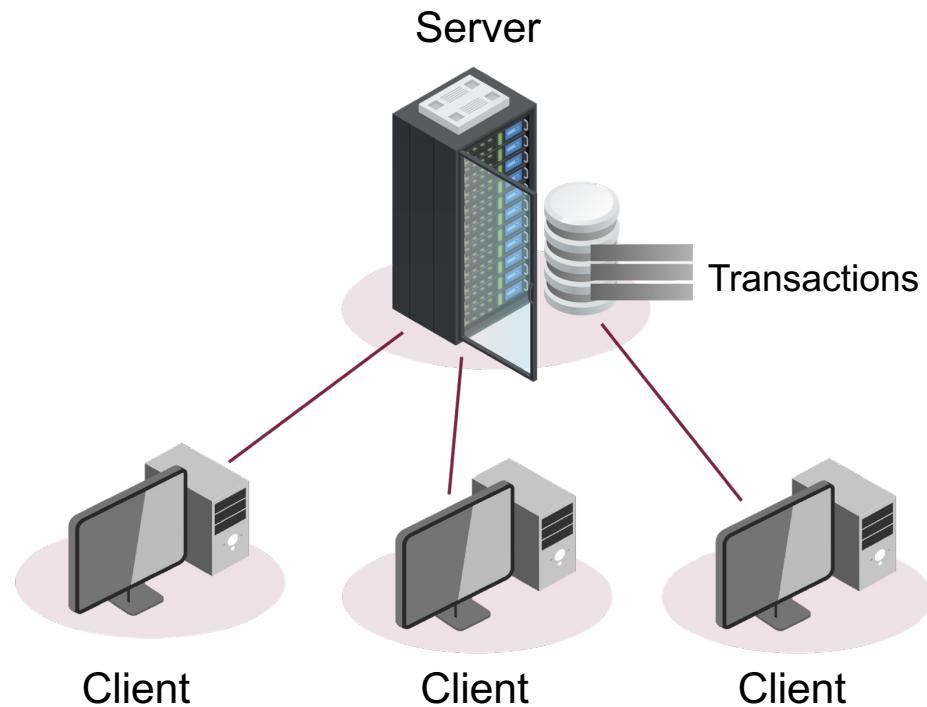
Adapted from FlippyFlink. (2019). *Example showing digital signing [Illustration]*. Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Private\\_key\\_signing.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Private_key_signing.svg). CC BY-SA 4.0.

# Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Network

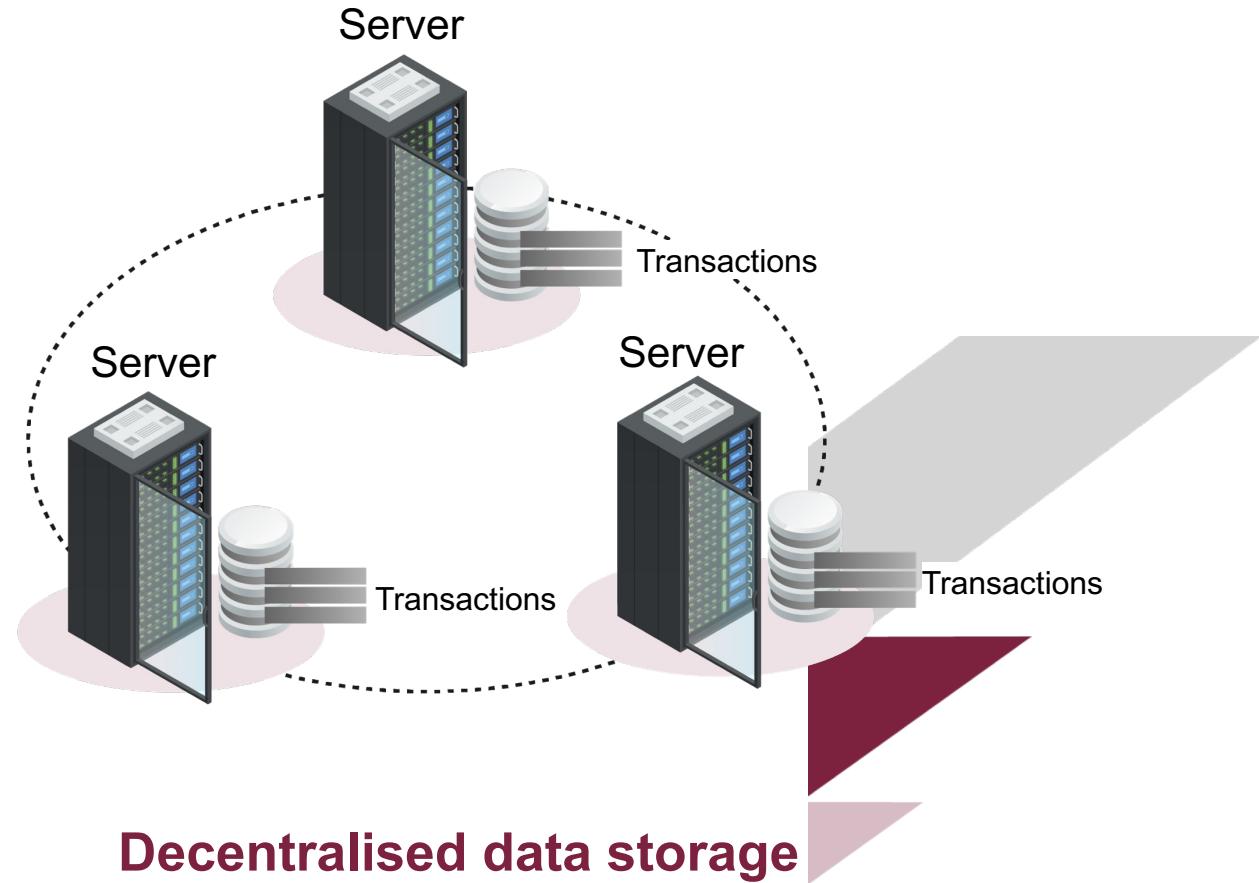
- Identical information in each server/node
- Allow the participants of the market to trade directly with each other without any trusted third party to process all trades
- Offer high resistance to transaction censorship
- Cheap to use; private and secure, at least when realized properly



# Centralised vs. Decentralised Data Storage

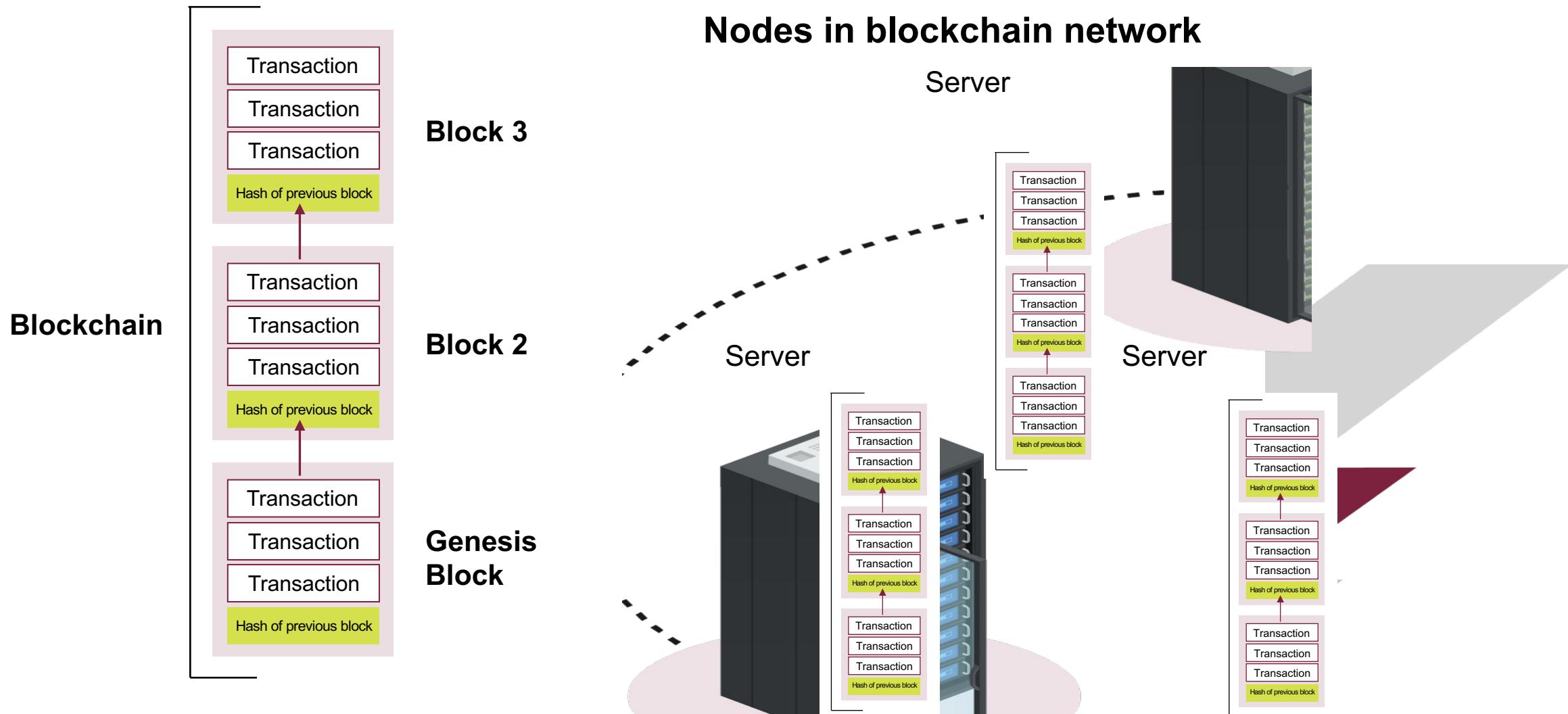


**Centralised data storage**



**Decentralised data storage**

# Linking Blocks to Form a Blockchain



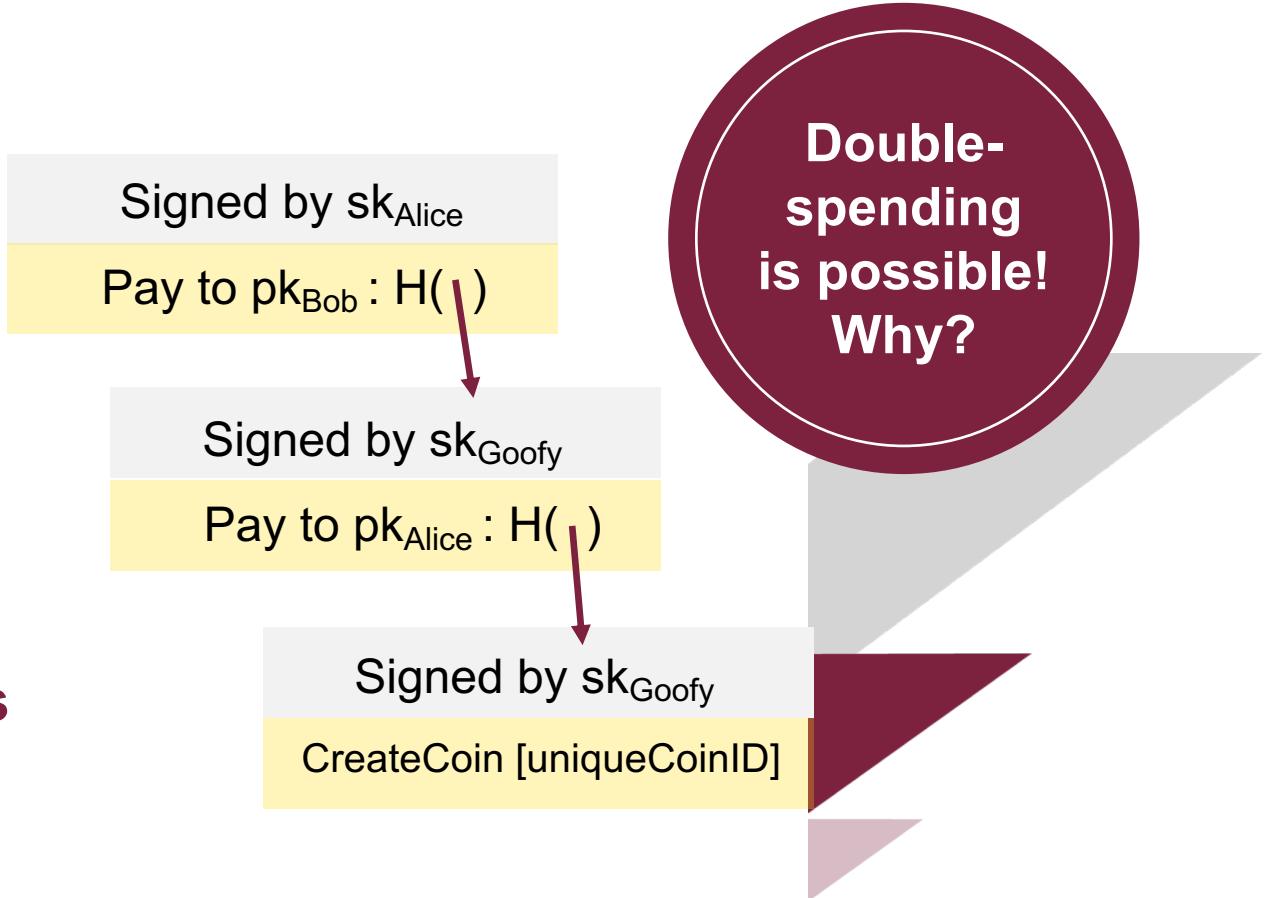
# How Does Blockchain Work?



# A Simple Cryptocurrency: GoofyCoin

## GoofyCoin Rules:

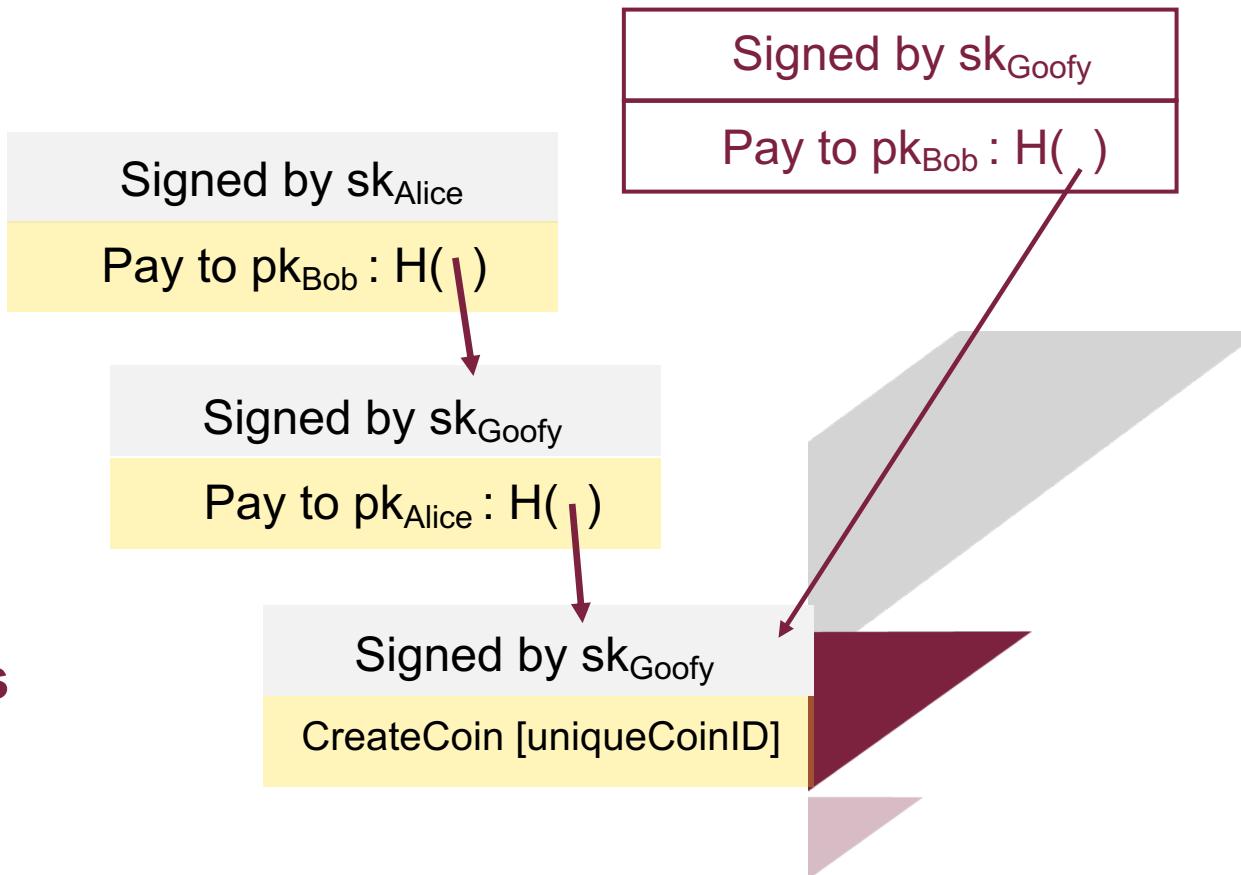
1. Goofy can create new coins:  
**“CreateCoin[uniqueCoinID]”**
2. Whoever owns a coin can pass it on to someone else by signing a statement that saying, **“Pass on this coin to X”** (where X is specified as a public key)
3. Anyone can **verify the validity of a coin by following the chain of hash pointers** back to its creation by Goofy, verifying all signatures along the way



# A Simple Cryptocurrency: GoofyCoin

## GoofyCoin Rules:

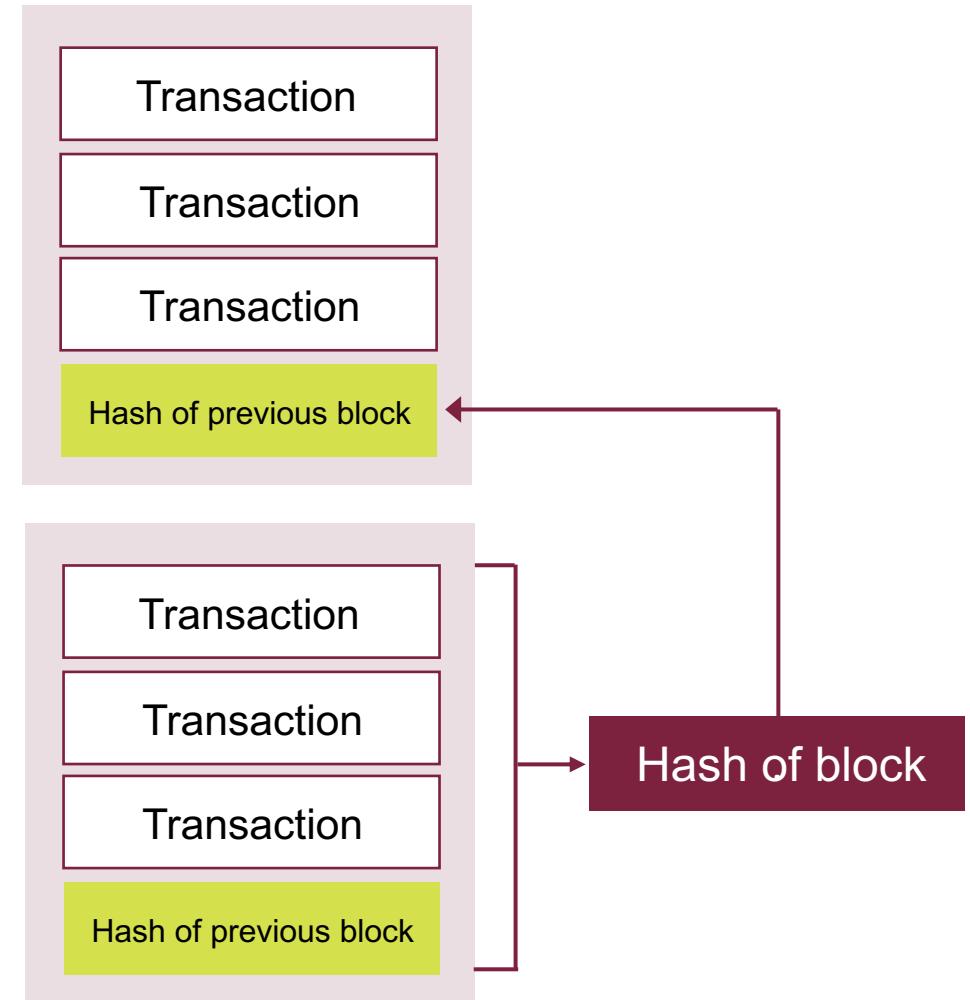
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# Solving the “Double-Spending” Problem

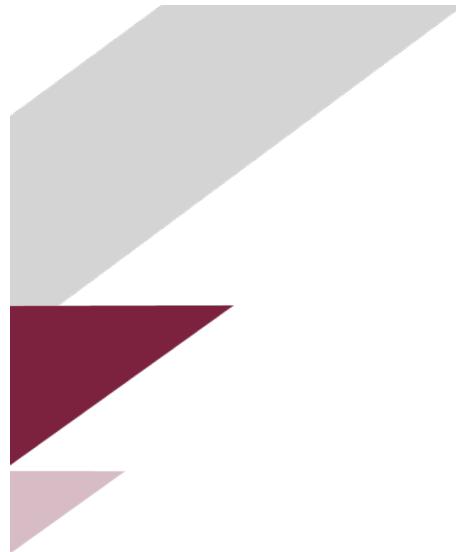
- Who gets to add the next block?
- Some nodes are known as **miners**.  
Miners add blocks to the blockchain.
- In order to add a block to the blockchain, a miner needs to do the following:
  - Take the transactions in the previous block and combine it with the hash of the previous block to derive its hash.
  - Store the derived hash into the current block.

**Block n + 1**  
(to be added to the blockchain)



# Proof of Work (PoW)

- A mechanism to help reach consensus on the state of the blockchain.
- PoW requires the nodes to demonstrate they have burned CPU in order to win the right to create the next block.
  - A piece of data which was difficult (costly, time-consuming) to produce so as to satisfy certain requirements.
  - It must be trivial to check whether data satisfies said requirements.
  - Hashcash (SHA-256) is the PoW function used to solve difficult mathematics problems.
  - **Mining** is usually the process in which this proof occurs.



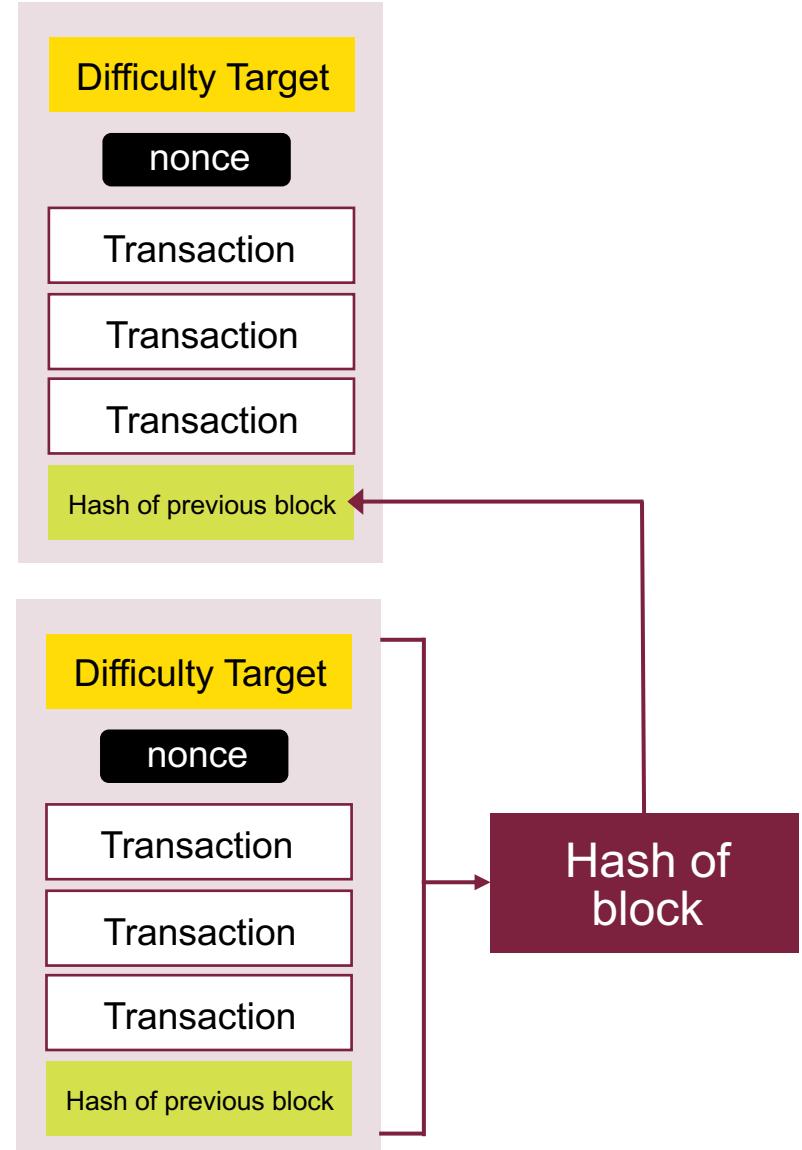
# Proof of Work (PoW)

- Miners work hard to find the value of **nonce**.
  - Once the nonce is found, the entire block and the nonce is broadcasted to other nodes.
  - The block has been mined and ready to be added to the blockchain.
  - Other miners can now verify that the nonce does indeed satisfy the difficult target.
  - The miner earns the mining fees and transaction fees.

SHA-256  
=000018b6e...

**Block n+1**  
(to be added to the blockchain)

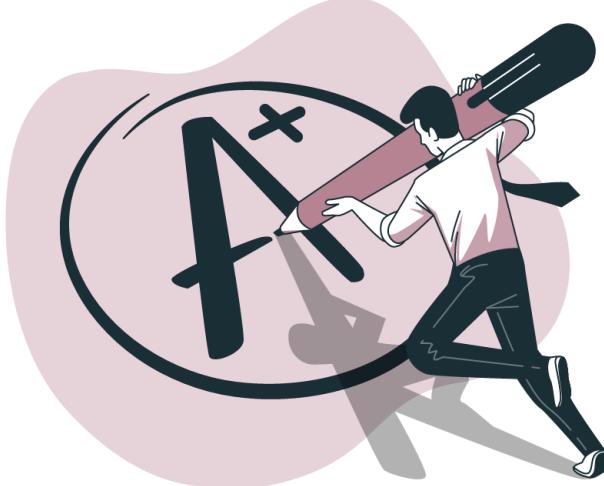
**Block n**



# Building a Blockchain for Students' Grades

## Students

- Student identities are concealed.
- Each student has a public key that matches a private key that only the student knows.



	Public Key	Private Key
Student 1	ad59da	c8fc47b6fe
Student 2	bd9ebc	4382af3398
Student 3	c67445	56164d905c

## Faculties

- Miners
- Other participating nodes
- Miners mine blocks, all nodes verify and vote

# Pool of Grade Records

## Block 1

Course: Parks 320  
Student: ad59da  
Grade: F

## Block 2

Course: Engineering 300  
Student: bd9ebc  
Grade: B

## Block 3

Course: Business 200  
Student: c67445  
Grade: C



# Go Miners, Go

**Hash = Nonce + a + b + c – Value of last two digits of previous hash**

a = Value of the first letter of the course

b = Value of the first letter of the  
student's public key

c = Value of the grade

Nonce = Value between 1 and 3 that you will  
adjust to calculate a hash that can  
be evenly divisible by 3

Table

A	65	N	78
B	66	O	79
C	67	P	80
D	68	Q	81
E	69	R	82
F	70	S	83
G	71	T	84
H	72	U	85
I	73	V	86
J	74	W	87
K	75	X	88
L	76	Y	89
M	77	Z	90

# Our First Block

Hash: 212

Genesis Block	
Course:	-
Student:	-
Grade:	-



Block 1	
Course:	Parks 320
Student:	ad59da
Grade:	F

Block	Course	Student	Grade	Nonce (1-3)	Prev Hash	a	b	c	Hash
									212
1	Parks 320	ad59da	F		12	80	65	70	

Hash = Nonce + a + b + c – Value of last two digits of previous hash

# Finishing the Block: Hashing

Hash: 212

Genesis Block	
Course:	-
Student:	-
Grade:	-



Hash: 204

Block 1	
Course:	Parks 320
Student:	ad59da
Grade:	F

Block	Course	Student	Grade	Nonce (1-3)	Prev Hash	a	b	c	Hash
									212
1	Parks 320	ad59da	F		12	80	65	70	204

Hash = Nonce + a + b + c – Value of last two digits of previous hash

# Finishing the Block: Verifying and Voting

Hash: 212

Genesis Block	
Course:	-
Student:	-
Grade:	-



Hash: 204

Block 1	
Course:	Parks 320
Student:	ad59da
Grade:	F

Calculation  
is correct!



Received  
a reward!

Block	Course	Student	Grade	Nonce (1-3)	Prev Hash	a	b	c	Hash
									212
1	Parks 320	ad59da	F	I	12	80	65	70	204

Hash = Nonce + a + b + c – Value of last two digits of previous hash

# Second Block

Hash: 212

Genesis Block	
Course:	-
Student:	-
Grade:	-



Hash: 204

Block 1	
Course:	Parks 320
Student:	ad59da
Grade:	F



Hash: 198

Block 2	
Course:	Engineering 300
Student:	bd9ebc
Grade:	B



...

Block	Course	Student	Grade	Nonce (1-3)	Prev Hash	a	b	c	Hash
									212
1	Parks 320	ad59da	F	I	12	80	65	70	204
2	Engineering 300	bd9ebc	B	I	4	69	66	66	198

Hash = Nonce + a + b + c – Value of last two digits of previous hash

# Discussion

- What if "Student 1" loses his/her private key?
- What if a student pays off a node to change the score stored in "Block 1"?

Block	Course	Student	Grade	Nonce (1-3)	Prev Hash	a	b	c	Hash
									212
1	Parks 320	ad59da	F ⚡	I	12	80	65	70	204
2	Engineering 300	bd9ebc	B	I	4 ⚡	69	66	66	198 ⚡

# Discussion

- Is it a good idea to store student grades on a blockchain? Why?
- Come up with an example which you think is a suitable application of blockchain

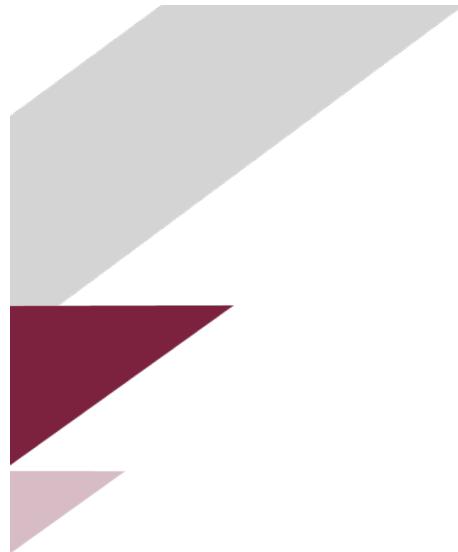
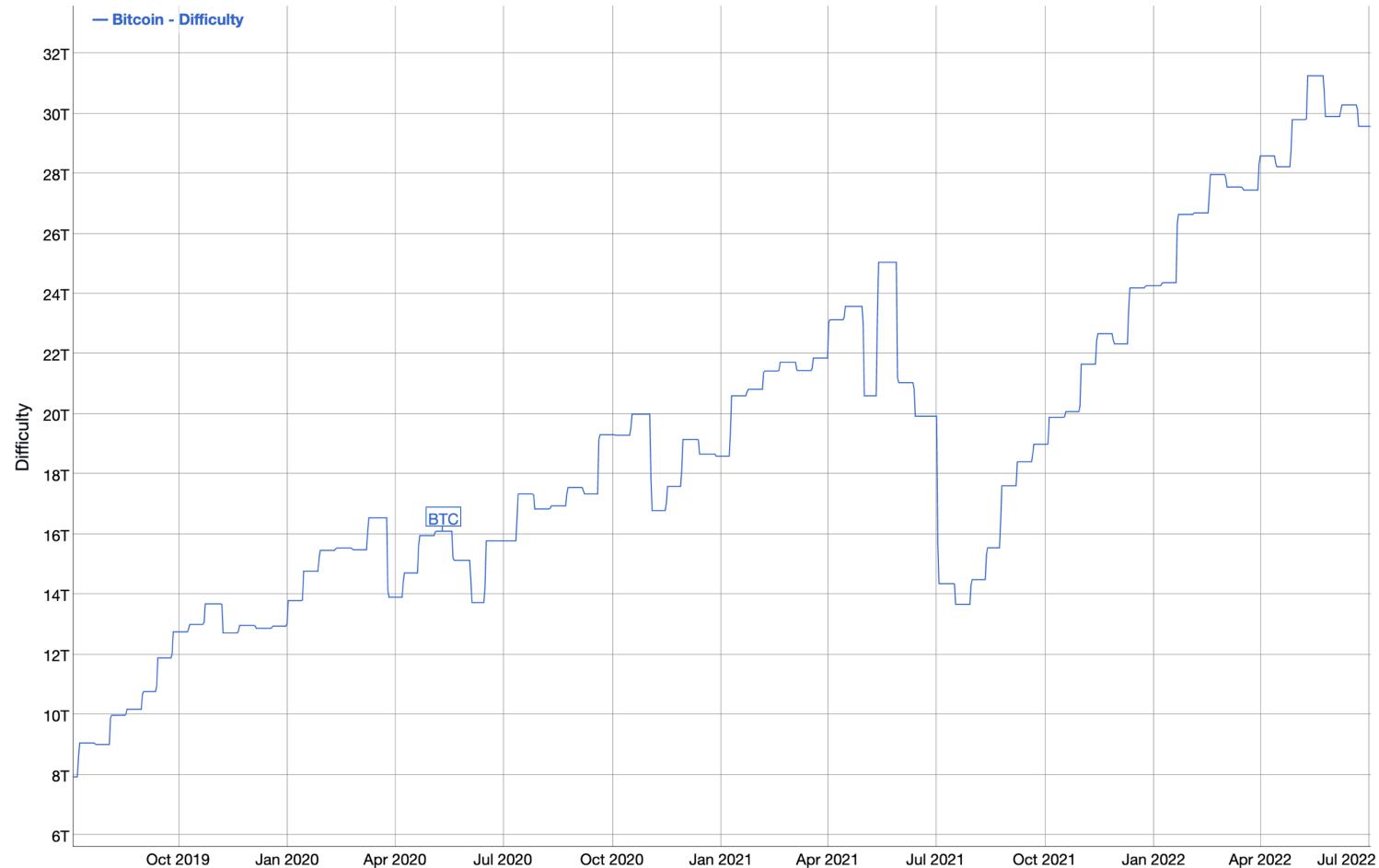


# Mining Difficulty

- Satoshi Nakamoto: “The more mining power the network has, the harder it is to guess the answer to the mining math problem”
- **Self-adjusting** to the accumulated mining power the network possesses.
- Why did Satoshi do this?
  - **On average**, a new block will be added every **10 minutes** (i.e., the nonce will be guessed every 10 minutes on average).
  - A sort of “arms race” to get the most efficient and powerful miners.



# Mining Difficulty



# Mining Revolution



CPU mining



GPU mining



FPGA mining



ASIC mining

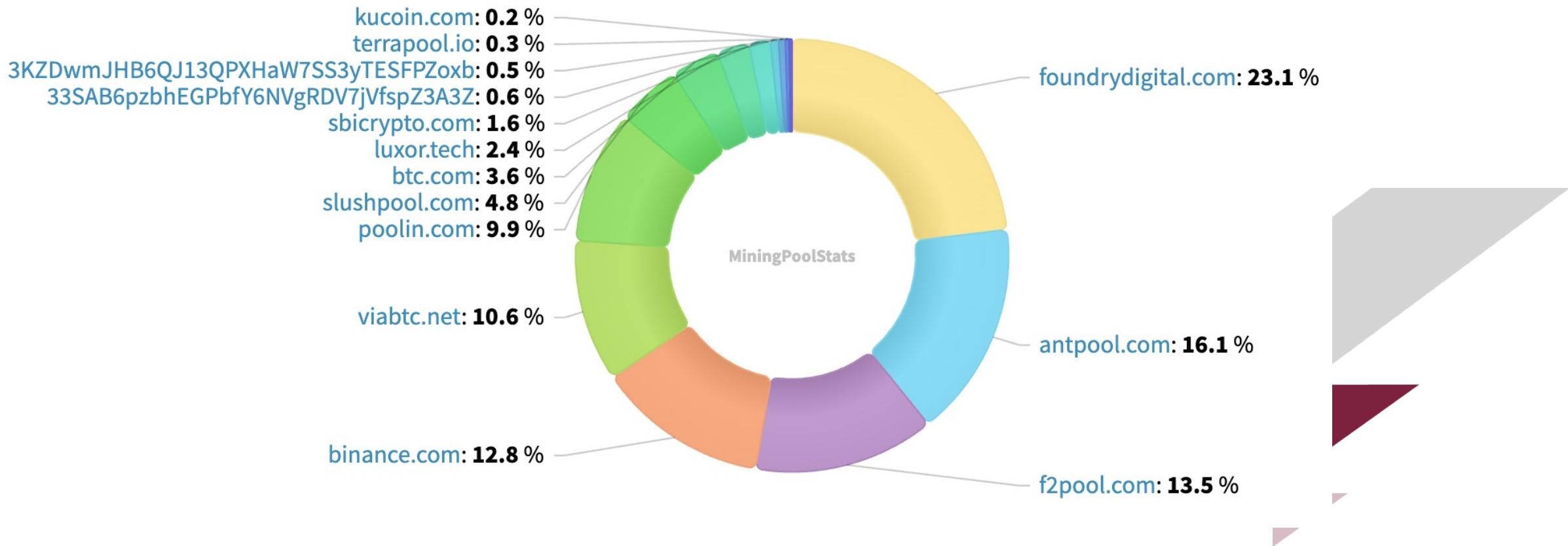


# Mining Pools

- **Idea:** Miners group together to form a “pool” (i.e., combine their mining power to compete more effectively).
- Once the pool wins, the reward is divided among the pool members based on their contributed mining power.
  - **Pros:** Reduce the variance of mining rewards; easy to upgrade the network
  - **Cons:** Pool manager must be trusted; centralised



# Mining Pool Distribution



# Is Bitcoin mining profitable?

- Things should be taken into consideration
  - Bitcoin reward per block: 50 BTC in 2009, now is 6.25
  - Mining difficulty
  - Electricity cost (going up ...)
  - Power consumption
  - Pool fees
  - Bitcoin's price
  - Difficulty increase per year
  - Regulations

The Bitcoin block mining reward halves every 210,000 BLOCKs (~4 years). The most recent coin reward has decreased from 6.25 to 3.125 coins in 2024.

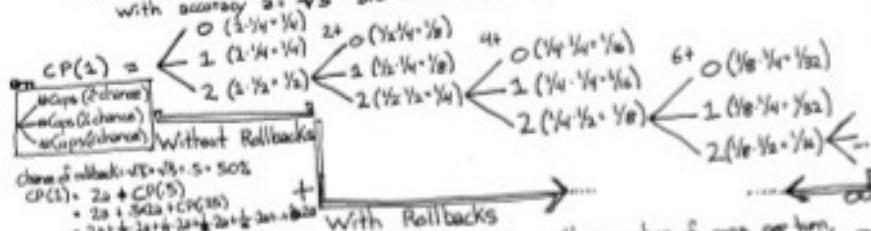
# PoW

Disregarding the notion that games consist of a finite number of caps.

A Rollback is defined as both balls being made during a turn sequence.

Assuming 2 shots per side, and average team accuracy  $a = 0.5 \pm 0.2$

Cups per turn =  $CP(T)$  for any number of turns  $T$   
with accuracy  $a = \sqrt{5}$  and rollbacks resulting in 2 more shots for another turn sequence.



It is evident the introduction of resources increases the number of cups per turn, 2a, by a probability factor weighted by  $a^2$ , recursively applied to turn probability  $T$ .

$CP(T) = 2a \cdot T + C(Ta^2)$   
 $= 2a \cdot T + 2a \cdot Ta^2 + C(Ta^4 \cdot a^2)$   
 $= 2a \cdot T + 2a \cdot Ta^2 + 2a \cdot Ta^4 + C(Ta^8 \cdot a^2) \dots$

$CP(1) = 2a + 2a^2 + 2a^3 + 2a^7 + \dots + 2a^{22}$

The recurrence equation above then leads us to the summation equation

$2a(1 + a^2 + a^4 + a^6 + a^8 + \dots) = 2a \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a^{2n} = 2a \frac{1}{1-a^2}$

Since we know the converging infinite geometric series states:

$\sum_{k=0}^{\infty} r^k = \frac{r}{1-r^2} \text{ for } |r| < 1$

This in turn leads us to the closed sum formula:

$2a \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a^{2n} = 2a \cdot \frac{1}{1-a^2} = \frac{2a}{1-a^2}$

Proof by induction:  $2a \cdot T + C(Ta^2) = T \cdot \frac{2a}{1-a^2}$

Inductive Hypothesis:  $CP(1) = 1 \cdot \frac{2a}{1-a^2} \quad \forall i < K$

Inductive Step:  $\frac{C(K)}{2a} = K \cdot \frac{2a}{1-a^2}$   
 $2aK + C(K^2) = K \cdot \frac{2a}{1-a^2}$   
 $2aK \cdot \frac{2a}{1-a^2} + K^2 \cdot \frac{2a}{1-a^2} = K \cdot \frac{2a}{1-a^2}$   
 $2aK - K^2 \cdot \frac{2a}{1-a^2} = K \cdot \frac{2a}{1-a^2}$   
 $2aK = K \cdot \frac{2a}{1-a^2}$

A clever observation, by ~~MIT~~ NYU, brings points out that rollbacks introduce an additional "luck or teamwork" factor into the game. Thus, while rollbacks greatly enhance the winning differential for better teams, it allows for lesser accurate teams to always "hit together" to win in spite of their accuracy. Without rollbacks, this is not possible.

- Effort is investment
- Uses computer cycle time to validate transactions
- Costly – hardware, energy wastage

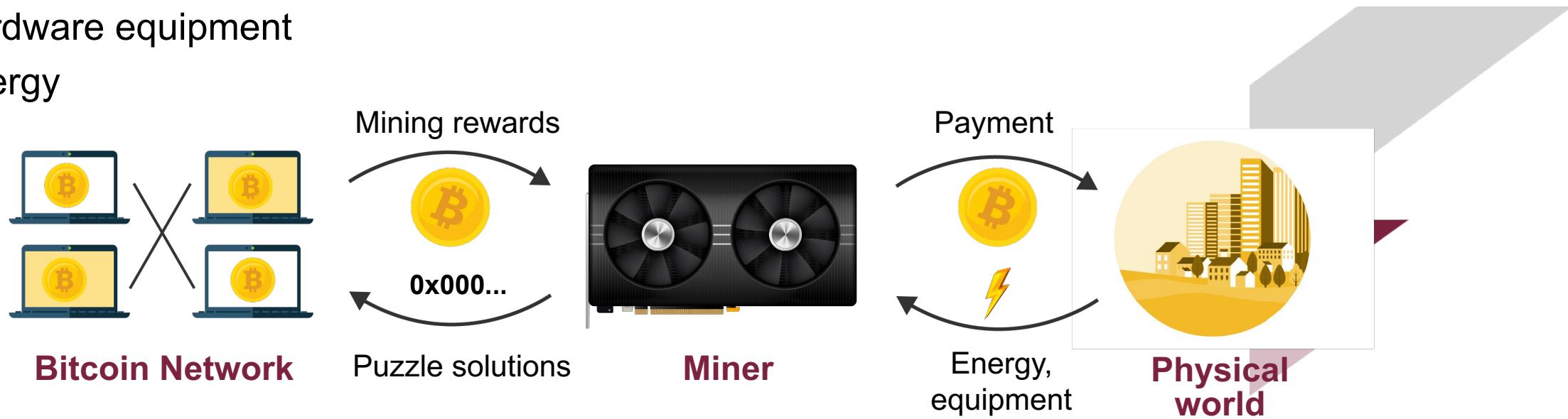
## PoW Problems?

# Alternatives to “PoW”

- Proof of Stake: the creator of a new block depends on his wealth in a deterministic way, also defined as stake
- Proof of Space: computation is replaced by storage
- Measure of Trust: most trustworthy miner wins
- Minimum Block Hash: (rather than faster) miner wins → More random
- ...

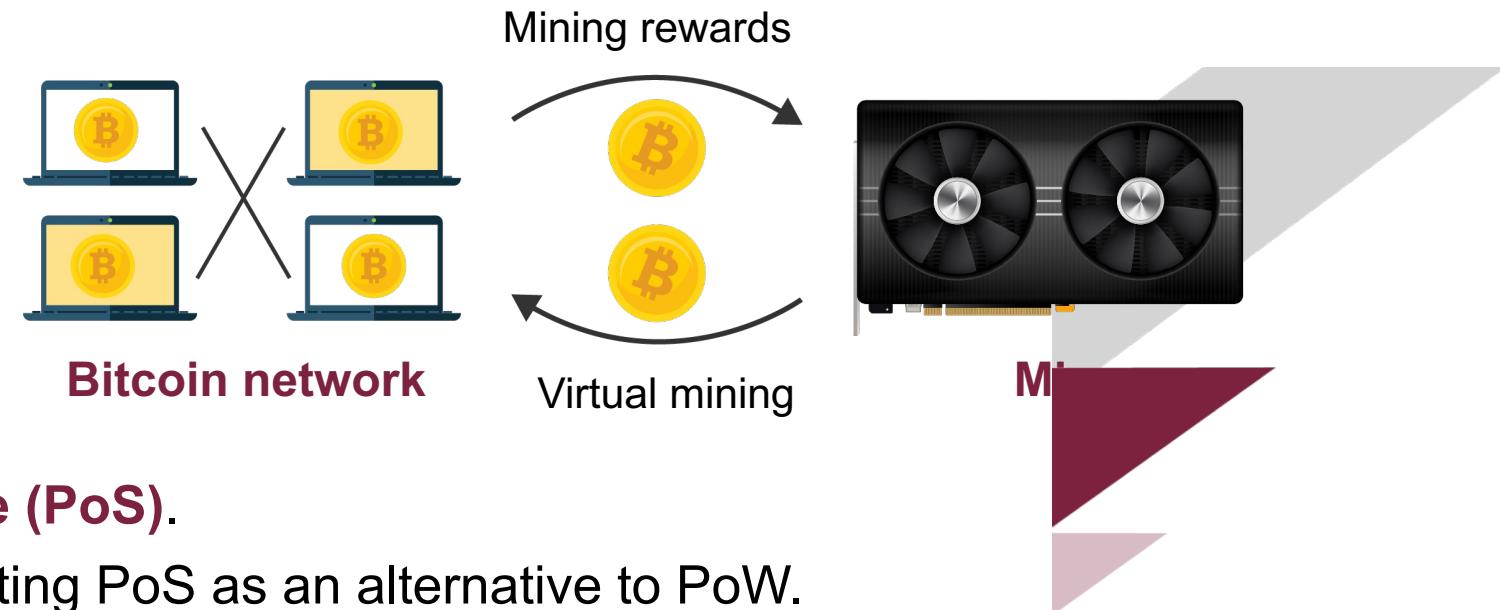
# Proof-of-Stake and Virtual Mining

- Goal of mining is to enable a form of voting on the state of the blockchain
  - Miners invest in computer cycles
  - Computing power is translated to votes
- Mining in PoW is costly
  - Hardware equipment
  - Energy



# Proof-of-Stake and Virtual Mining

- Can we remove the step of spending money on energy and equipment?
  - After all, this is only to prove who has invested more in mining.
  - Votes come directly from the proportion of the currency they hold.
- Advantages of virtual mining
  - It reduces the environmental footprint of PoW.
  - Large shareholders have an incentive to do things that would benefit the system as a whole.
  - This is essentially **Proof-of-Stake (PoS)**.
  - Ethereum and Algorand are adopting PoS as an alternative to PoW.



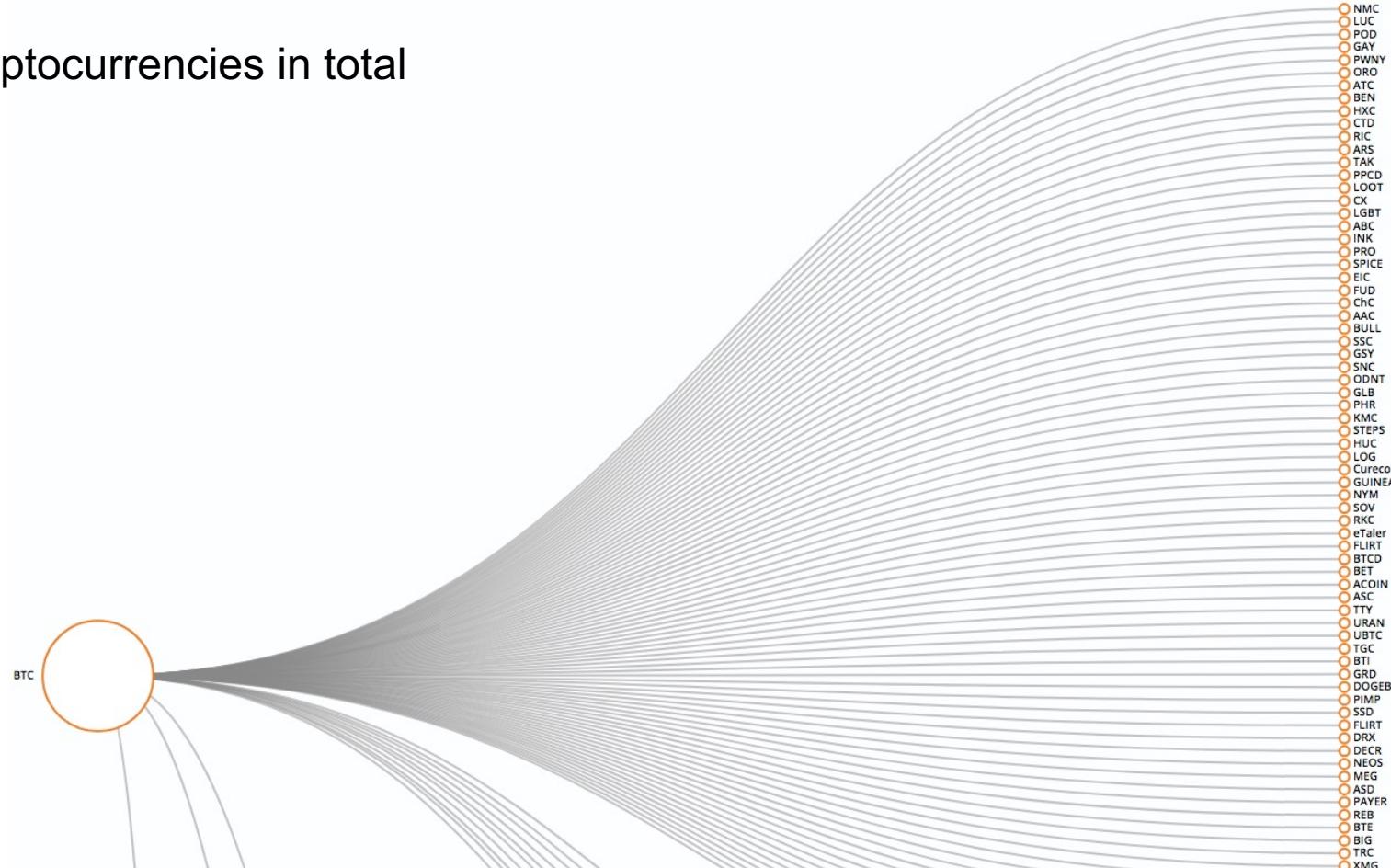
# Alt Coins

- Follow same design as Bitcoin, but with **separate blockchain** and network
  - Hundreds alt coins, most of them are not very successful
  - Different proof of work or consensus mechanism
  - Specific features, such as strong anonymity
- 2011.08: IXCoin is Bitcoin with increased reward 
- 2011.09: Tenebrix changed proof of work algorithm to **Scrypt** 
- 2011.10: LiteCoin uses **Scrypt** as proof of work and faster block generation 



# Alt Coins Today: 1000+ currencies derived from Bitcoin

2000+ cryptocurrencies in total



NTU I&E x HackQuest MOOC: Ideating and Building in  
Web3  
Source: <http://mapofcoins.com/bitcoin>

#	Name	Market Cap	Price	Volume (24h)	Circulating Supply	Change (24h)	Price Graph (7d)
1	Bitcoin	\$91,001,625,910	\$5,161.05	\$17,730,330,208	17,632,400 BTC	3.11%	
2	Ethereum	\$17,794,858,793	\$168.58	\$7,586,734,884	105,558,231 ETH	3.31%	
3	XRP	\$15,149,467,799	\$0.362916	\$1,530,695,312	41,743,765,071 XRP *	2.42%	
4	Litecoin	\$5,725,718,989	\$93.51	\$4,069,048,904	61,233,211 LTC	7.49%	
5	Bitcoin Cash	\$5,702,732,934	\$321.91	\$2,574,053,158	17,715,238 BCH	11.98%	
6	EOS	\$4,939,315,216	\$5.45	\$3,100,759,496	906,245,118 EOS *	3.50%	
7	Binance Coin	\$2,710,322,050	\$19.20	\$156,786,655	141,175,490 BNB *	-0.45%	
8	Stellar	\$2,470,233,594	\$0.128193	\$339,059,198	19,269,667,026 XLM *	3.40%	
9	Cardano	\$2,352,205,947	\$0.090724	\$114,789,274	25,927,070,538 ADA	2.32%	
10	Tether	\$2,089,389,879	\$1.00	\$18,361,678,180	2,079,324,324 USDT *	-0.11%	

NTU I&E x HackQuest MOOC: Ideating and Building in

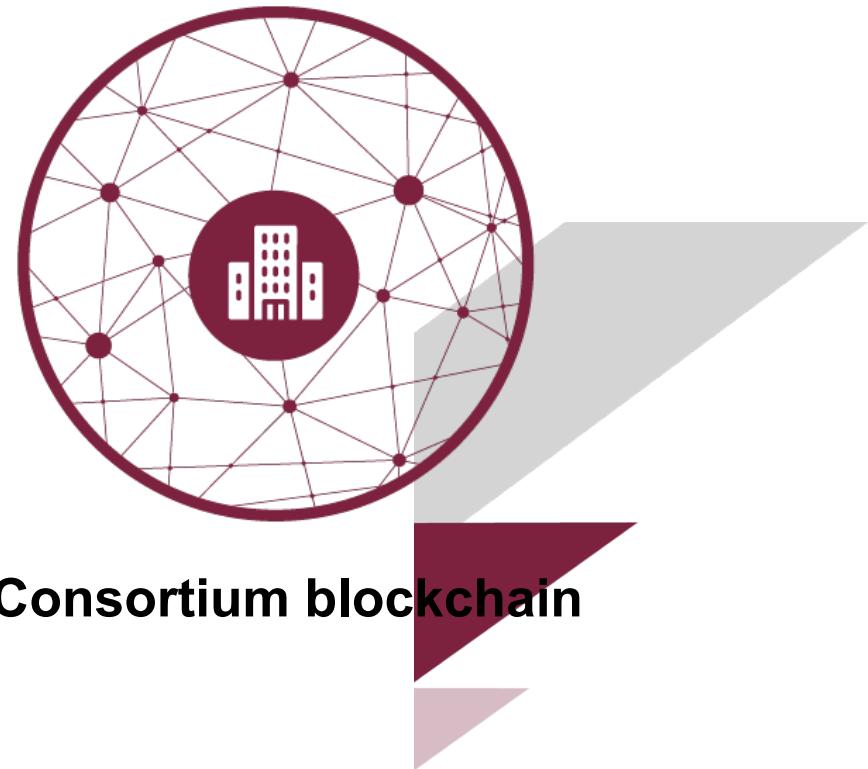
# Types of Blockchain



**Public blockchain**



**Private blockchain**



**Consortium blockchain**

# Public Blockchain

- Anyone can run the public code, start mining, make a transaction, explore and validate the blockchain.
- Each transaction is verified by every node before it is written to the system.
- **Examples: Bitcoin, Ethereum, Algorand**



# Private Blockchain

- R/W permissions are kept centralised by one organisation.
- **Examples: Ripple, Multichain, Corda**



# Consortium Blockchain

**Also known as  
federated blockchain**

- Controlled by a set of pre-selected nodes, members of the consortium can run code, start mining and make transactions.
- **Examples: R3,  
HyperLedger Fabric**



# Blockchain 2.0: Decentralized Applications



# Decentralised Applications (DApps)

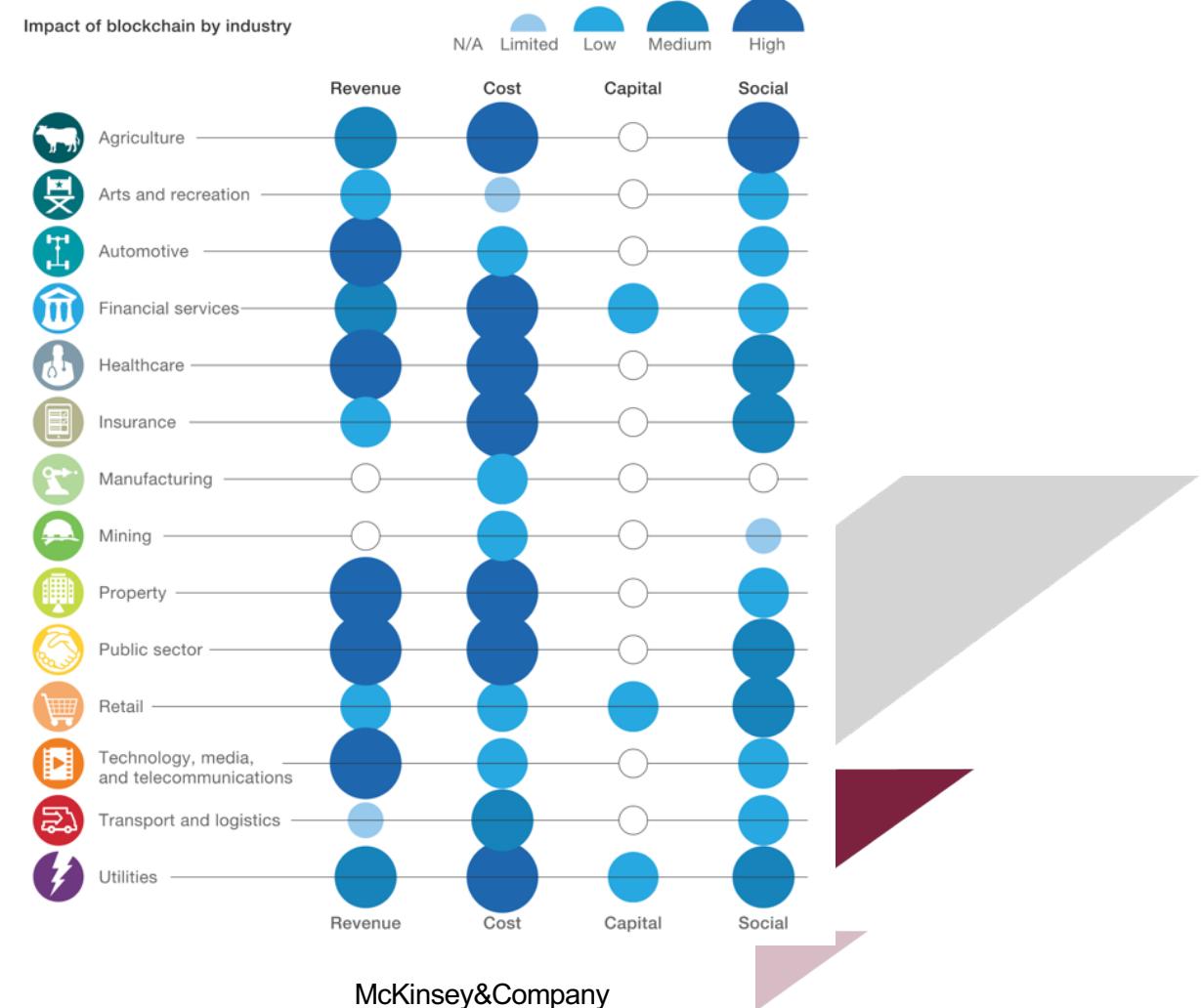
- The Do-It-Yourself platform for decentralised programs is also known as **Decentralised Applications**
- The infrastructure for running DApps worldwide
- First proposed in 2013 and then brought to life in 2014 by Vitalik Buterin, the co-founder of Bitcoin Magazine
- Goal: Ro truly decentralise the internet



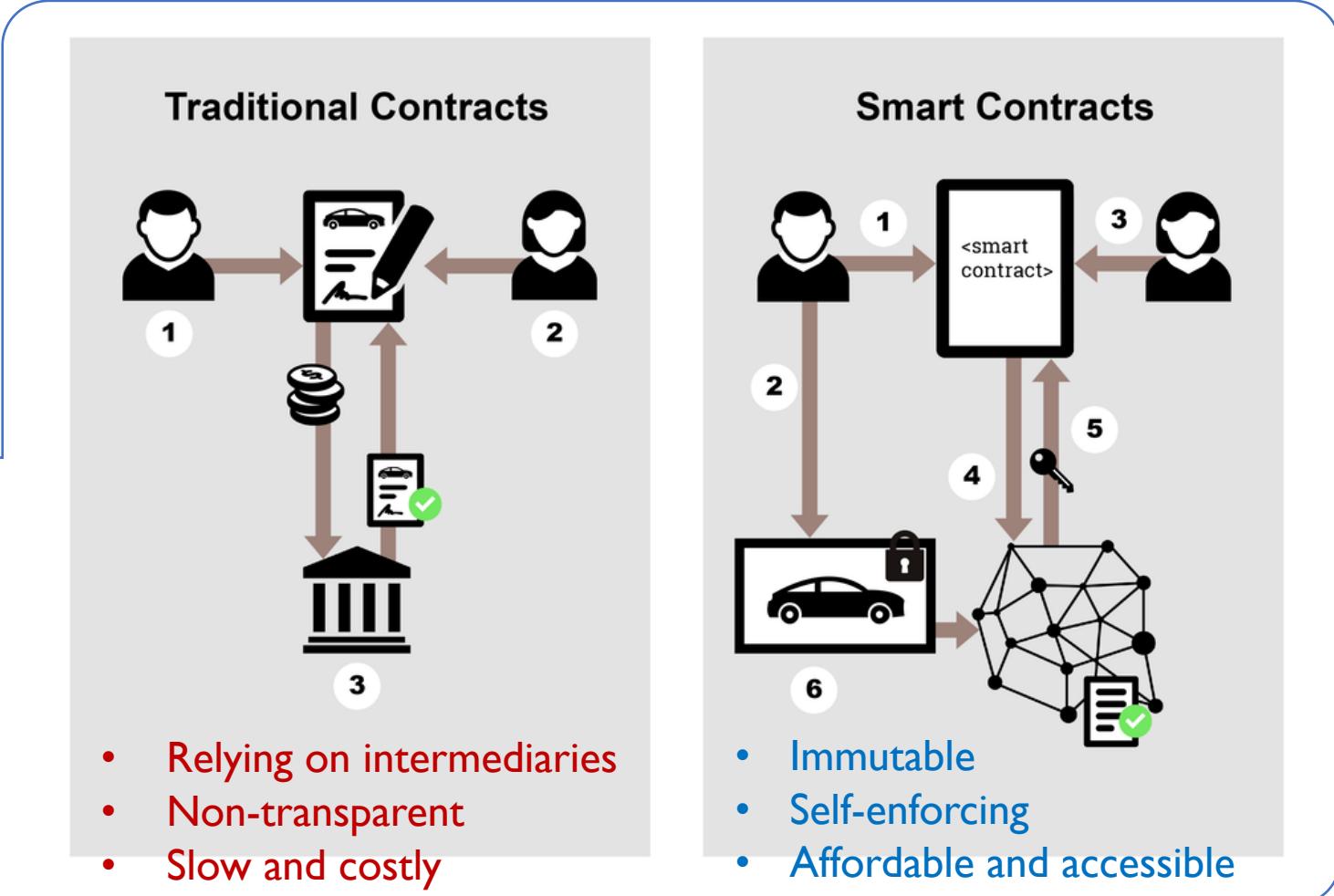
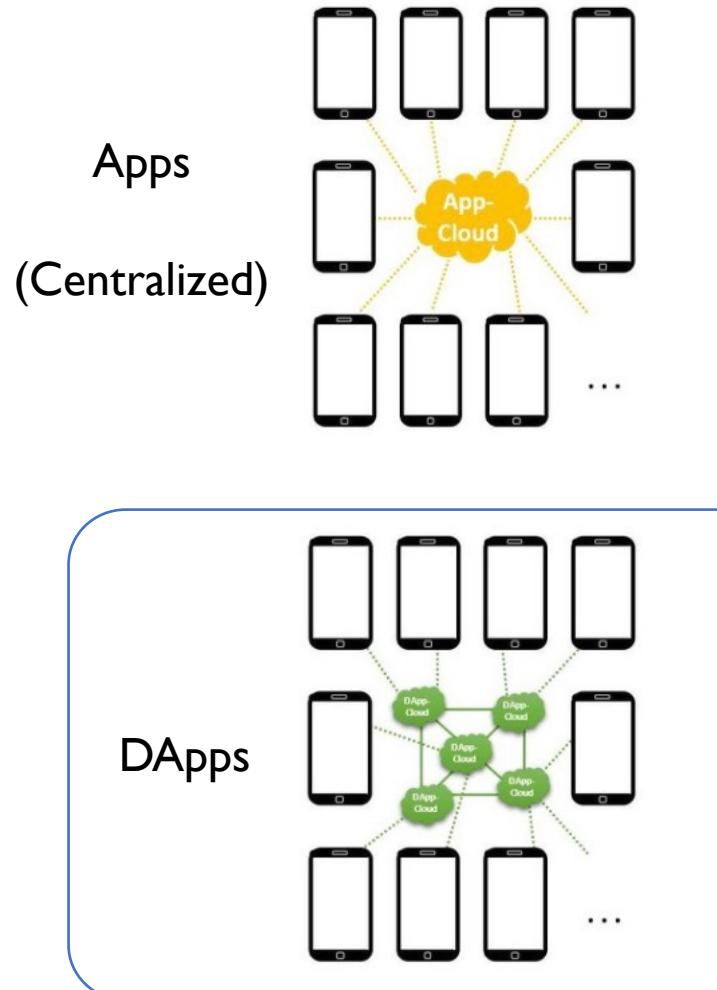
- **Ethereum** in 2022:
  - **48 million** smart contracts
  - **2,970** DApps deployed
  - **49.38K** active users/day
  - **102.18K** transactions/day

# Smart Contracts

- User-defined self-executing computer programs running on top of blockchain
- Managing exchange of digital assets
- Applications across many different sectors



# Decentralized Applications and Smart Contracts



# Buying a House on Ethereum

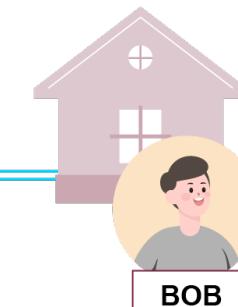
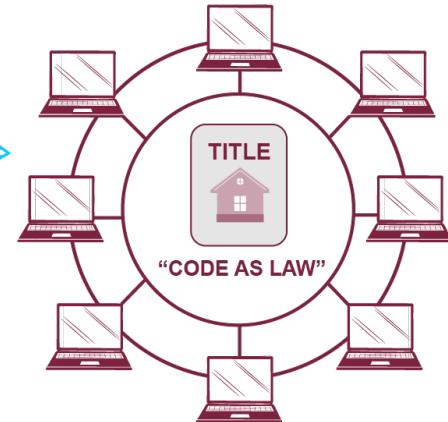
NOW

How do I validate the ownership of the house and trust the seller in transferring it?



How do I trust the buyer on making the agreed payment in time?

SMART CONTRACTS



# Why is DApp a big thing?



Decentralized finance

- Banking, insurance, decentralized exchange, ...
- Nearly **\$30 billion** locked inside
- **4.4 million** wallets

- Direct peer-to-peer exchange of surplus electricity
- Reduce transaction costs



Energy trading



Supply chain management

- Better visibility and traceability
- Improve financing, contracting, and international transactions

Internet is the information superhighway, blockchain is the Internet of value

# Blockchain/Bitcoin/Ethereum

