

# The Leisures of Blockchains: Exploratory Analysis

4<sup>th</sup> December, 2017

Usman W. Chohan, MBA

School of Business and Economics

University of New South Wales, Canberra

Discussion Paper


Discussion Paper Series: *Notes on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

**Abstract:** The public discourse on blockchains and cryptocurrencies has been influenced by a range of emotions spanning the suspicious to the euphoric, but there is a “leisured” aspect to blockchains that warrants the attention of academics and practitioners, as this aspect serves to enrich the public engagement with this emergent branch of technology. This discussion paper advances that discourse through a case study of a “leisured”, yet monetized and technologically coherent, program built on blockchain principles.

## The Leisures of Blockchains: Exploratory Analysis

Blockchain solutions such as cryptocurrencies are mostly viewed through technological (Chohan 2017e, 2017g), monetary (2017a, 2017c), legal (2017b, 2017f) or ideological (Chohan 2017d) lenses (see overarching review in Chohan 2017a). Yet there is a need for a more diverse array of lenses to be deployed in contextualizing the potential of blockchain technology in serving human needs, and not simply through functional approaches, but also through *la diversion*, including what this discussion paper refers to as the *leisured aspect* of blockchains. Leisure is a concept that *prima facie* may not seem relevant to the discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, of blockchain technology. Yet as the case study of this discussion paper demonstrates, there is a leisured aspect to blockchains that also warrants attention from academics and practitioners, not least in the sociological and psychological domains.

The sociological and psychological examinations of leisure (see seminal contributions in Argyle 1996; Ajzen and Driver 1992; Beard and Ragheb 1980, 1983; Driver et al. 1991; Dumazedier 1967; Gershuny 2003; Henry 1993; Iso-Ahola 1980; Kelly 1983; Kraus 1971; Mahoney 2000; Stebbins 1982) emphasize the importance of leisure to the human experience and the formation and preservation of society. At their core, their diverse arguments point to the centrality of leisure, and its intertwined nature vis-a-vis the non-leisured aspects of life. Leisure is an inextricable part of the psychological composition of humans (and non-human species), and are a pillar of social organization as well (see seminal contributions in Argyle 1996; Ajzen and Driver 1992; Beard and Ragheb 1980, 1983; Driver et al. 1991; Dumazedier 1967; Gershuny 2003; Henry 1993; Iso-Ahola 1980; Kelly 1983; Kraus 1971; Mahoney 2000; Stebbins 1982). With the development of



blockchain permeating more and more domains of society, and assuming an ever greater importance in social functions of the 21st century despite the various impediments it faces (see Chohan 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f, 2017g), the leisured aspect of blockchains thus invites a new ambit of exploratory research. The case study of *Cryptokitties* described in this paper provides one such interesting example, which may stimulate other cognate explorations in further research, examining not just possibilities but also the impact of such technologies in the years to come; while also considering both the challenges and limitations of such innovations.

Cryptokitties are feline blockchain-based collectible units within a “game”-orientation and that can be bred (created) and traded (bought-or-sold) on an ethereum blockchain. Launched in October, 2017 by Canadian company AxiomZen, the game has garnered more than \$10 million dollars worth of trades, with feline units of Cryptokitties amounting to \$100,000 or more in value, in the instances where the units are deemed particularly rare, which is a function of being of an older generation of cats (Gen0, Gen1, Gen2... GenN). The average sales price, however, is roughly \$100 per kitten. AxiomZen charges a 3.75% fee on trades, which implies that several hundreds of thousands were earned by the company in just a few months, indicating the lucrative nature of the game. The popularity of Cryptokitties has in fact put bandwidth pressure on the entire Ethereum network, at occasions drawing more than 10% of the network bandwidth. The creators of the game have said that they did not anticipate such high prices of Cryptokitties, and emphasize that the game was intended to inform a larger public about blockchains (in a “leisured” context). According to designed protocols, a Gen0 Kitty is released every 15 minutes and auctioned. Close to ten thousand players are actively engaged in the “market” for Cryptokitties at any one time, and Cryptokitties is at present the most popular smart contract on Ethereum. The implication of a

games-oriented blockchain movement is that it may seize share from the \$110 billion online gaming market, and serving as a competitor platform, diverting attention of gamers from other more traditional platforms as well. At the heart of this entire movement has been the leisured aspect of the blockchain, which has so far largely been relegated to a discourse that is monetary, technological, legalistic, or ideological. While detractors may argue that Cryptokitties “trivialize” the functions of the blockchain, and divert network traffic towards frivolous activity, it is import to revert to the original literature in the sociological and psychological domains to raise an appreciation for the centrality and importance of leisure in psychological and sociological life. Cryptokitties is but an early manifestation of those concepts in the emergent blockchain sphere, and are a symbol of the potential the leisured aspect of blockchain portends. As such, this leisured aspect requires the urgent attention of academics and practitioners.

## References

1. Chohan, U.W. (2017a). Cryptocurrencies: A Brief Thematic Review. SSRN.  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3024330](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3024330)
2. Chohan, U.W. (2017b). Assessing the Differences in Bitcoin & Other Cryptocurrency Legality Across National Jurisdictions. SSRN.  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3042248](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3042248)
3. Chohan, U.W. (2017c). A History of Bitcoin. SSRN.  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3047875](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3047875)
4. Chohan, U.W. (2017d). Cryptoanarchism and Cryptocurrencies. SSRN.  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3079241](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3079241)
5. Chohan, U.W. (2017e). Initial Coin Offerings (ICOs): Risks, Regulation, and Accountability. SSRN.  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3080098](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3080098)

6. Chohan, U.W. (2017f). The Cryptocurrency Tumblers: Risks, Legality and Oversight. SSRN.  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3080361](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3080361)
7. Chohan, U.W. (2017g). The Decentralized Autonomous Organization and Governance Issues. SSRN.  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3082055](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3082055)
8. Argyle, M. (1996). *The social psychology of leisure*. Penguin.
9. Ajzen, I., & Driver, B. L. (1992). Application of the theory of planned behavior to leisure choice. *Journal of leisure research*, 24(3), 207.
10. Beard, J. G., & Ragheb, M. G. (1980). Measuring leisure satisfaction. *Journal of leisure Research*, 12(1), 20.
11. Beard, J. G., & Ragheb, M. G. (1983). Measuring leisure motivation. *Journal of leisure research*, 15(3), 219.
12. Driver, B. L., Brown, P. J., & Peterson, G. L. (1991). Benefits of leisure. Venture Publishing.
13. Dumazedier, J. (1967). *Toward a society of leisure*. Free Press.
14. Gershuny, J. (2003). *Changing times: Work and leisure in postindustrial society*. Oxford University Press on Demand.
15. Henry, I. P. (1993). The Politics of Leisure and Policy. In *The Politics of Leisure Policy* (pp. 1-25). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
16. Iso-Ahola, S. E. (1980). The social psychology of leisure and recreation. WC Brown Co. Publishers.
17. Kelly, J. R. (1983). *Leisure identities and interactions*. George Allen & Unwin.
18. Kraus, R. (1971). Recreation and leisure in modern society. *Recreation and leisure in modern society*.
19. Mahoney, J. L., & Stattin, H. (2000). Leisure activities and adolescent antisocial behavior: The role of structure and social context. *Journal of adolescence*, 23(2), 113-127.
20. Stebbins, R. A. (1982). Serious leisure: A conceptual statement. *Pacific sociological review*, 25(2), 251-272.