

Blockchain and distributed ledgers: Will the reality live up to the hype?: Hot Topic at the 6th Heidelberg Laureate Forum (HLF)

by Manjil Saikia - Tuesday, August 07, 2018

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Will distributed ledger provide a ‘reset’ button for the internet and other networks? Many of the primary privacy risks prevalent today are due to an increasing centralization of information. A decentralized network is potentially more secure but not without its vulnerabilities. This September 25, in the Hot Topic session at the 6th Heidelberg Laureate Forum (HLF), a panel of experts will illuminate how distributed ledgers work, discuss their potential and explore how the world of finance and other application areas could be reshaped.

Cryptocurrencies and their escalating, volatile values have successfully captivated the public. However, the rise to fame has not brought a thorough understanding of the underlying technology along with it and distributed ledgers remain largely misunderstood. A better comprehension of the technology is increasingly vital due to its potential ramifications in finance and regarding privacy. Distributed ledgers could conceivably reshape finance through cryptocurrencies and smart contracts, cure data protection issues with social media and re-decentralize the internet. In short, a chance to hit the ‘reset’ button. Simultaneously, the very aspects that make distributed ledgers so promising are the same that make it vulnerable. Though replicability, immutability and being append-only are enormous strengths, they are equally large burdens when used maliciously.

The Hot Topic was coordinated and will be moderated by Eva Wolfangel, European Science Writer of the Year 2018, a science journalist with over 15 years of experience covering a range of scientific issues and technological developments and highlighting their significance for the public. In order to unravel the technology behind distributed ledgers and its potential implications, Wolfangel has enlisted the help of experts with backgrounds ranging from academia to industry. Through discussions and an open debate, the speakers aim to distinguish the implausible from the practical and distill how the distributed ledgers will further influence our lives.

Panelists:

Mihai Alisie is the co-founder of Ethereum blockchain applications and founder of Akasha, a social network based on the Ethereum-Blockchain and the InterPlanetary File System.

Demelza Hays is researching the role of cryptocurrency in asset management in the Business Economics program at the University of Liechtenstein.

Dexter Hadley's expertise is in translating big data into precision medicine and digital health at the University of California. His background is in genomics and computational biology and he has training in clinical pathology.

Donald Kossmann is the director of the Microsoft Research Lab in Redmond. The Redmond Lab does research in all core areas of computer science. In his research, he works on data management in the cloud. His goal is to make data in the cloud cheaper, more valuable, and more secure.

Roman Matzutt and Martin Henze are working as researchers in the field of security and privacy of communication and distributed systems at RWTH Aachen University. Their recent research focuses on the technical foundations and optimizations of blockchains and distributed ledger technology as well as their implications for users.

Silvio Micali is an ACM A.M. Turing Award laureate who has been on the MIT faculty since 1983, in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department, where he is Ford Professor of Engineering.

C. Mohan has been an IBM researcher for 36 years in the database and related areas. The IBM Fellow and former IBM India Chief Scientist is currently focused on Blockchain, Big Data and HTAP technologies.

(Pending) **Bettina Warburg** is a blockchain researcher, entrepreneur and educator that co-founded a venture studio business called Animal Ventures. A political scientist by training, she has a deep passion for the intersection of politics and technology.

The Hot Topic is an integral part of the Heidelberg Laureate Forum (HLF), a networking event where talented young researchers from all over the world meet the recipients of the most renowned awards in computer science and mathematics: the Abel Prize, ACM A.M. Turing Award, ACM Prize in Computing, Fields Medal and the Nevanlinna Prize. The Hot Topic will be held on September 25, at 13:30 in the New Auditorium of Heidelberg University, Grabengasse, 69117 Heidelberg. Video coverage of the Hot Topic will be made available on the HLF YouTube channel and the video archive.

Background

The Heidelberg Laureate Forum Foundation (HLFF) annually organizes the Heidelberg Laureate Forum (HLF), which is a networking event for mathematicians and computer scientists from all over the world. The 6th Heidelberg Laureate Forum will take place from September 23 to 28, 2018. The HLFF was established and is funded by the German foundation Klaus Tschira Stiftung (KTS), which promotes natural sciences, mathematics and computer science. The scientific partners of the HLFF are the Heidelberg Institute for Theoretical Studies (HITS) and Heidelberg University. The HLF is strongly supported by the award-granting institutions, the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), the International Mathematical Union (IMU), and the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters (DNVA).

(press release)

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