FIGI Security Clinic

Tracking Crypto Ponzi scams

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Organized by

Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructures









FIGI > FINANCIAL INCLUSION GLOBAL INITIATIVE

- Husband, father (+2), geek 8-)
- Security researcher for the last 18 years
 - Specialize in telecom and blockchain
- CEO @Naboo (blockchain AML)
- A member of ITU-T Study Group 11
- Handles:
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 - @AssafKlinger
 - https://www.linkedin.com/in/assaf-klinger-8a0b7159/



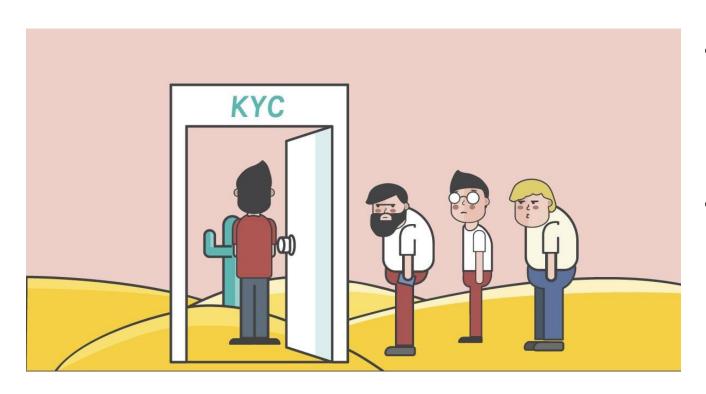


What is cryptocurrency?

- Cryptocurrency (or crypto for short) is a digital asset designed to work as a medium of exchange using mathematical cryptography models to secure the transaction and control the creation of units of the currency
- Public cryptocurrencies are in almost all decentralized, e.g. not owned or governed by a single entity, essentially crypto has no governing body thus is not regulated
- The engine that drives crypto is DLT (Distributed Ledger Technology) a subset of DLTs that drives the most popular cryptocurrencies today is called the Blockchain





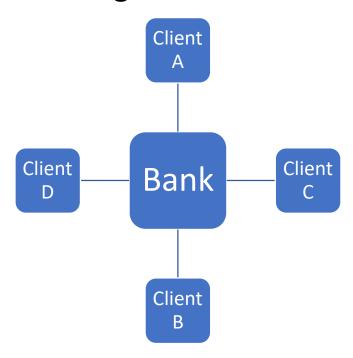


- Cryptocurrencies are an alternative to the centralized, regulated financial systems
- Using cryptocurrencies fraudsters enjoy the freedom to move money around without regulation or monitoring



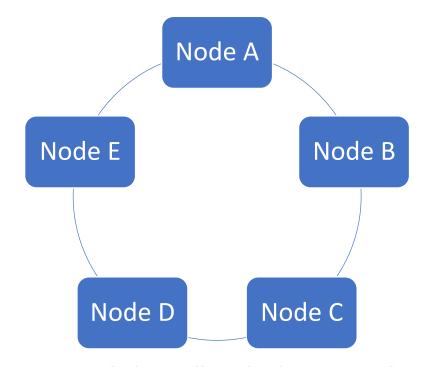
What is a distributed ledger?

Centralized ledger



- There are multiple ledgers, but Bank holds the "golden record"
- Client B must reconcile its own ledger against that of Bank, and must convince Bank of the "true state" of the Bank ledger if discrepancies arise

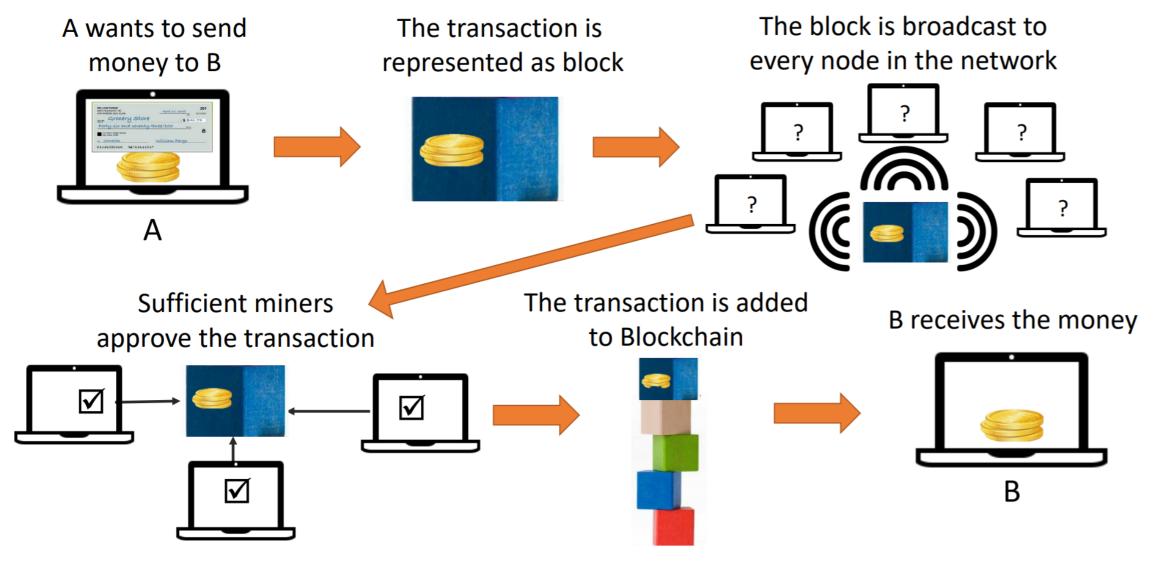
Distributed ledger



- There is one ledger. All Nodes have some level of access to that ledger.
- All Nodes agree to a protocol that determines the "true state" of the ledger at any point in time. The application of this protocol is sometimes called "achieving consensus."



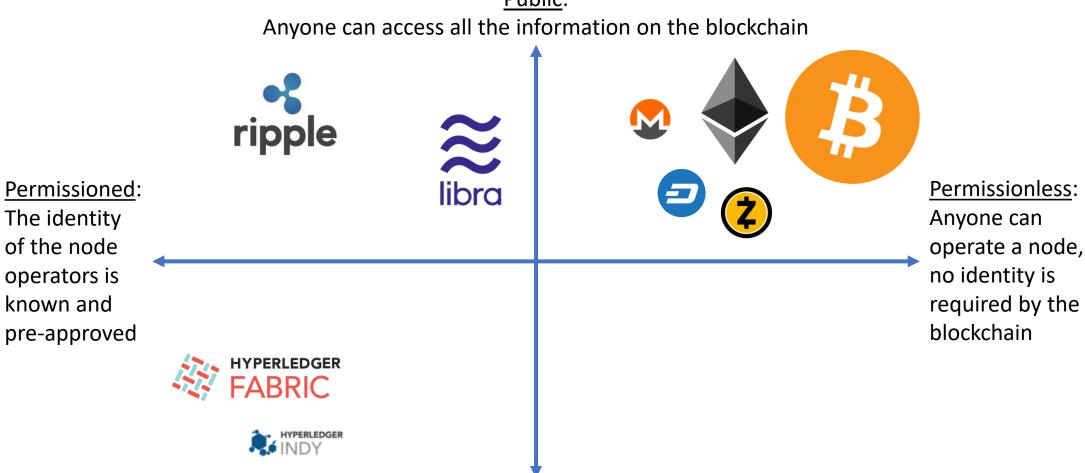
How blockchain works?





There are several types of blockchains

Public:



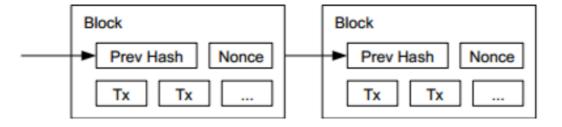
Private:

Only approved parties can access all the information on the blockchain





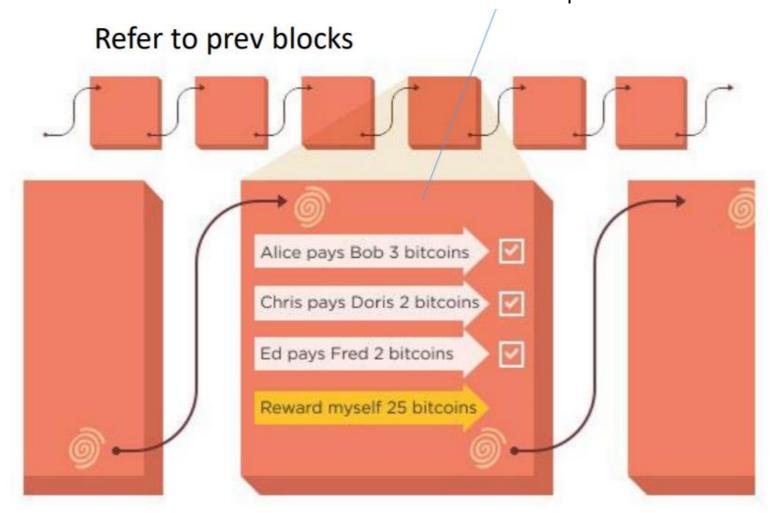
- The first realization of blockchain (started in 2009)
- A protocol that supports decentralized anonymous peer-to-peer digital currency
- Every viable transaction is stored in a public ledger
- Transactions are placed in blocks, which are linked by SHA256 hashes
- A reward driven system for achieving consensus (mining) based on
 - "Longest chain for consensus"
 - "Proofs of Work" for helping to secure the network







The header of the block contains unique hash



Ethereum





- A decentralized platform that runs smart contracts
- Released in 2015
- Each block is a turning complete virtual machine (smart contract) that runs code, the code is validated by the nodes as "true" in the consensus process, signed and added to the chain.
- Supports the creation of additional currencies / tokens on the same infrastructure (using ERC-20)
- Smart contracts offer more powerful transactions:
 - Exchange, Auction, Games, Bets, Legal agreements,...



Privacy blockchains (Monero & Zcash)

- Released in 2014 (Monero) and 2016 (Zcash)
- A new type of blockchain that obfuscates some of the public ledger data to increase the end-user's privacy.
- These are public-permissionless blockchains, but the address data in each transaction is encrypted in order to block outside observers view on the transaction data.
- This feature negates the outside observer's capability to track transactions between wallets and to asses the balance of each wallet.





Must know blockchain terms

- **Bitcoin**: Bitcoin is the first cryptocurrency that came into existence in 2009 by Satoshi Nakamoto. It is a digital currency that doesn't require a centralized authority to work or function.
- Altcoin: Altcoin is any cryptocurrency other than Bitcoin.
- Fiat: Fiat is the government-controlled currency and is declared as legal tender.
- Address: the location of funds, the key used to store value on the blockchain
- Wallet: An address or group of addresses (depending on the blockchain) associated with a blockchain user.
- ERC-20: ERC-20 is a technical standard for issuing tokens on Ethereum blockchain.
- Ether: Ether is the fuel that powers distributed Ethereum network.
- Mainnet: Mainnet is a working blockchain product that also provides the ability to transfer digital currencies between users in a blockchain environment.



Questions so far?





Coffee break





Tracking Crypto







- All public-permissionless blockchains have block explorers
- Block explorers are the tools used to track crypto
- Privacy blockchains have block explorers too, but they require the view key in order to track
- Block explorers are usually:
 - Free
 - Maintained by the non-profit that runs the blockchain
 - Open source
 - Have machine APIs

Tools used in this clinic





https://naboo.io/
https://www.walletexplorer.com/



https://bloxy.info/
https://naboo.io/





- Input: address / wallet / hash / transaction id
- Output: the value and history (if any) of the searched item

- For example, we will use this BTC address:
 - 1HWeepQYBEYV8ZRnpRzZs1homLW3tqfXhD
- Now let's look at the Ethereum explorer:
 - 0x2b5634c42055806a59e9107ed44d43c426e58258



Crypto scams

- Crypto scams are build like trees (simple) or graphs (complex)
- The leafs are the "public facing wallets" i.e. the wallets that are publicly shared in order to collect the funds from the victims.
- The "public facing wallets" appear in the ponzi websites and IM groups (Telegram, WhatsApp, etc...)
- Funds from the "public facing wallets" are then funneled through a series of "funneling" wallets in order to hide the tracks of the money gotten from the illegal activity.
- From the "funneling wallets" the funds are collected in "root wallets" from where the money is laundered via exchanges or token swaps

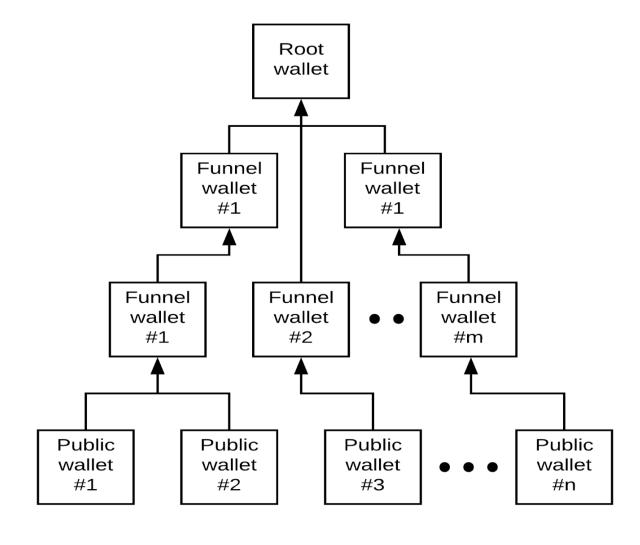




- Scan the web, IM groups (WhatsApp, Telegram) and dark web
- Use aggregator databases if possible, for example:
 - https://etherscamdb.info/scams
 - https://www.bitcoinabuse.com/reports
- These sites are far from complete, they are community generated...









Complications to the simple tree

- Exchange pools
 - Centralized exchanges work with inbound and outbound pool, with a private internal database for keeping each user's funds separate.
- Coin Mixers
 - In BTC there is a possibility to perform many-2-many transactions, with multiple inputs and multiple outputs, which complicates tracking
- Token Swaps (atomic swaps)
 - An atomic swap is two users exchanging coins via four private wallets, two in the source coin / token and two in the target coin / token. An atomic swap is comprised of two supposedly unrelated transactions on two different blockchains



End point of the tracking process

- We've reached a "root" wallet with positive balance and no outgoing transactions
- We've reached an exchange pool and it's safe to assume the funds we're converted to fiat



Use case – MMM leaf wallet

- From intelligence we discover a leaf wallet, for example:
- 1BQZA4AGhAqpGhfKTnPk99n4pBNRjmvmwX

Wallet [4f95d462dc] (show wallet addresses)

Page 1 / 1 (total train	nsactions: 6)				<u>Download as C</u>	<u>5V</u>
date		received/sent		balance	transaction	
2015-12-26 05:19:00		-4.80956873 (-0.0001)	Huobi.com-2 fee	0.	48243a995726b2d4cc84	
2015-12-24 17:33:51	[ffd33e64e5]	+2.98171217		4.80966873	f29525168a80309ccfe5	
2015-12-24 09:36:51	[93105fb3b3]	+1.56815973		1.82795656	0d01c033e09d37e0db16	
2015-12-18 13:27:20		-19.79588246 (-0.0001)	[2072460766] fee	0.25979683	a066cf94649af8f75edb	
2015-12-17 02:47:28		-2.14712071 (-0.0001)	[00001cc410] fee	20.05577929	3efb1701d2d7d44bc149	
2015-12-16 09:25:58	Huobi.com-2	+22.203		22.203	ebbca839a6eed2c7cb88	

Page 1 / 1 (total transactions: 6) Download as CSV



Use case – MMM leaf wallet

 We see that this wallet received funds from an exchange and two other private wallets

Wallet [4f95d462dc] (show wallet addresses)

Page 1 / 1 (total transactions: 6)

Download as CSV

date received/sent balance transaction

date		received/sent		balance	transaction
2015-12-26 05:19:00		-4.80956873 (-0.0001)	Huobi.com-2 fee	0.	48243a995726b2d4cc84
2015-12-24 17:33:51	[ffd33e64e5]	+2.98171217		4.80966873	f29525168a80309ccfe5
2015-12-24 09:36:51	[93105fb3b3]	+1.56815973		1.82795656	0d01c033e09d37e0db16
2015-12-18 13:27:20		-19.79588246 (-0.0001)	[2072460766] fee	0.25979683	a066cf94649af8f75edb
2015-12-17 02:47:28		-2.14712071 (-0.0001)	[00001cc410] fee	20.05577929	3efb1701d2d7d44bc149
2015-12-16 09:25:58	Huobi.com-2	+22.203		22.203	ebbca839a6eed2c7cb88

Page 1 / 1 (total transactions: 6) <u>Download as CSV</u>



Use case – MMM leaf wallet

Wallet [4f95d462dc]

• The first deposit was funneled (22 BTC), and the 2nd deposit was directly converted in an exchange (Huobi is a Chinese exchange)

(show wallet addresses)

date		received/sent	balance	transaction
015-12-26 05:19:00		-4.80956873 <u>Huobi.com-2</u> (-0.0001) fee	0.	48243a995726b2d4cc84.
015-12-24 17:33:51	[ffd33e64e5]	+2.98171217	4.80966873	f29525168a80309ccfe5.
015-12-24 09:36:51	[93105fb3b3]	+1.56815973	1.82795656	0d01c033e09d37e0db16.
015-12-18 13:27:20		-19.79588246 [2072460766] (-0.0001) fee	0.25979683	a066cf94649af8f75edb.
015-12-17 02:47:28		-2.14712071 [00001cc410] (-0.0001) fee	20.05577929	3efb1701d2d7d44bc149.
015-12-16 09:25:58	Huobi.com-2	+22.203	22.203	ebbca839a6eed2c7cb88.



Use case – funneling the funds

- Let's look at the funneling wallet: 1egFemyAdNgXzdq9E2UDnejYYtvYNUghc
- A funneling wallet main property is a zero balance with plenty of traffic

2015-12-25 04:25:21		-2.24310805 (-0.0001)	[00001cc410] fee	0.01060077	599ad99df033e2908de0
2015-12-25 03:18:58	[<u>9877f5d228]</u>	+2.25		2.25380882	25f73cc2155f907a0828
2015-12-24 20:09:10		-2.24310805 (-0.0001)	[00001cc410] fee	0.00380882	492607522dd42a20bed5
2015-12-24 20:09:10		-2.24310805 (-0.0001)	[00001cc410] fee	2.24701687	868a3c701c675caec646
2015-12-24 19:59:23		-15.30991645 (-0.0001)	[00007d59f2] fee	4.49022492	db0e68100c4c3e4aa4ca
2015-12-24 17:49:56	[<u>9877f5d228]</u>	+19.8		19.80024137	6394b16f57cdcff89c4b
2015-12-20 07:03:46		-36.82 (-0.0001)	[<u>bd89cc0791</u>] fee	0.00024137	95c4622edde309afb00e
2015-12-19 14:50:46	[ffa9b9e2f7]	+17.02445891		36.82034137	c70344d43c1e71758813
2015-12-18 13:27:20	[4f95d462dc]	+19.79588246		19.79588246	a066cf94649af8f75edb



Use case – funneling the funds

Let's dive into the 1st funneling cycle:
 1NGpnazTZR6pE5uprbGfQGaGMV4GmYMDtq

2015-12-19 10:41:46

[8efa0eb0fe]

 This is another funneling wallet, since we see cycles for inputs and outputs with zero balance

[bd89cc0791] Wallet (show wallet addresses) Download as CSV Page 1 / 1 (total transactions: 71) received/sent balance date transaction -73.6699 [9877f5d228] 2015-12-21 09:34:34 0. 0c2ba1a9ba169714aab1... (-0.0001)73.67 2015-12-20 07:03:46 [2072460766] +36.82 95c4622edde309afb00e... 2015-12-20 06:39:17 [c0dc68ffe2] +36.85 36.85 1fa4b751035249f8d916... -268.43155781 [9877f5d228] 0. 2015-12-19 17:15:15 bd0566aa1045ff5cfe26... (-0.0003)fee 2015-12-19 13:53:40 [de9c7c16a4] +31.32 268.43185781 d58c58e932eec13b0b6a... 2015-12-19 13:53:40 [9c15e5dc70] +34.08 237.11185781 ed383880a590d04fb14d... 2015-12-19 13:42:28 [c1d0c3796b] +35.748 203.03185781 3cd58643e6e31ba71e29... 2015-12-19 13:42:28 [c192b2721c] +34.67 167.28385781 eba2b82c7806185f738f...

132.61385781

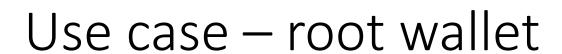
5705ac4fb9e5c81c8ac1...

+33.027



Use case – funneling the funds

- Let's dive into the 1st funneling cycle: 1NGpnazTZR6pE5uprbGfQGaGMV4GmYMDtq
- This is another funneling wallet, since we see cycles for inputs and outputs with zero balance
- Looking at this wallet we see additional funneling and some transactions to exchanges for fiat exfiltration
 - 11 BTC to HaoBTC
 - 18 BTC to BTCC
- And the majority of the funds were funneled to: 1LVXa7xrFn27qV89WAxW2h9pcHPzkcW7F6





- Let's look at the root wallet:
 1LVXa7xrFn27qV89WAxW2h9pcHPzkcW7F6
- This wallet transacted over 7500 BTC (\$54M) from May 2015 until about a week ago
- This is probably a hot wallet working in tandem with a cold wallet: https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/0000375430188cff
- The (probably) cold wallet <u>currently holds 438.28 BTC (\$3.1M)</u> and is comprised of 284,307 different addresses, generated to hide the wallet from tracking



What's next?

- This campaign can be further mapped, to find additional funnels and leaves
- Law enforcement can contact the regulated exchanges the scammer traded with and ask for the KYC data of the person who owns the root wallet

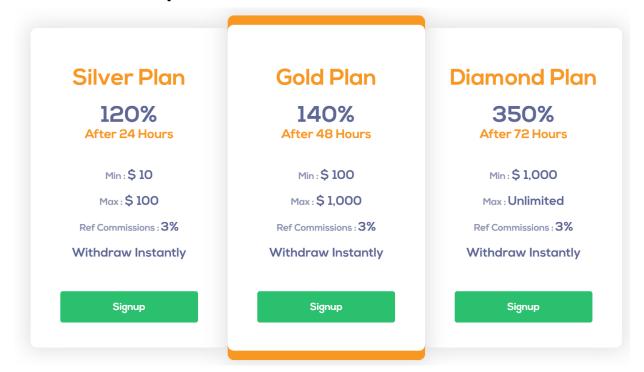




Let's pull a scam from the EtherScamDB

	Investments	▲ Active	bit-donor.com
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• This looks like an active ponzi ©:







1Fr2VJ2pgMsAktcLonHUqBnZbu7H1zZLpH

Wallet [89dfe7747d]

(show wallet addresses)

Page 1 / 5 Next... Last (total transactions: 465)

Download as CSV

date	received/sent	balance	transaction
2019-11-22 20:58:44	-0.0032601 [13c] (-0.00012112) fee	<u>3c3935d]</u> 0.00783349	2c75169c03509e2b98a0
2019-11-21 11:47:57	[1e8c4515b5] +0.00126514	0.01121471	95071e5245ed7ff56205
2019-10-31 15:40:38	[<u>0961215f90</u>] +0.00420394	0.00994957	d32ec25761ec5af933c3
2019-10-31 11:05:04	-0.00166639 [096] [096] (-0.0000748) fee	1215f90] 0.00574563	<u>040fd5d87d60dc3439e7</u>
2019-10-27 17:13:47	[05ce2fb190] +0.00209474	0.00748682	5d6ded87d8c386f0e445
2019-10-26 13:23:28	-0.00130492 [1a9] (-0.00013334) fee	89000a6] 0.00539208	2edfa7090c7e93193213
2019-10-25 11:34:20	[05ce2fb190] +0.00263958	0.00683034	6fea8e4b617524b08383
2019-10-25 08:08:54	[<u>1a989000a6</u>] +0.00133744	0.00419076	b1e8198982de02da6398
2019-10-21 14:10:59	-0.00339296 <u>Coin</u> (-0.0000052) fee	Payments.net 0.00285332	a8e1afe00b228e02130d
2019-10-18 16:06:26	[8045f562a3] +0.00252122	0.00625148	71bc8d8f44d03c4dca77
2019-10-09 20:58:30	[85821394ed] +0.00116224	0.00373026	48ec87c4e310777fcb79





- 1Fr2VJ2pgMsAktcLonHUqBnZbu7H1zZLpH
- Busy wallet, active from Mar. 2019, transacted ~2 BTC (~\$14K)
- Direct exfiltration of 600\$ from deposits made by victims (14 txs) to:
 - https://www.luno.com
 - https://www.coinpayments.net
- ~75% of the funds were funneled to:
 1DKYRgUVvQhFb3rb1DjejRxyDGkC211xU9



Funneling wallet – bit-donor.com

Let's look at the funneling wallet:
 1DKYRgUVvQhFb3rb1DjejRxyDGkC211xU9

Wallet 🔣	[97742e2c02]	(show wallet addres	ses)		
Page 1 / 1 (total tra	nsactions: 46)				Download as CS
date		received/sent		balance	transaction
2019-09-16 03:06:26	[89dfe7747d]	+0.00964091		0.01002401	b88a71ed5b51f6105808
2019-08-18 16:04:25		-0.03862224 (-0.00014212) fe	[<u>35ef9bfe3e]</u> e	0.0003831	43bfd59c57f54ab1c6d6
2019-08-18 08:23:12		-0.00147688 (-0.00000452) fe	[<u>22709c48fc]</u> e	0.03914746	17c7ffd6d9aaa89da240
2019-08-15 15:47:07	[89dfe7747d]	+0.03970846		0.04062886	eb30406b92d59eafb5b1
2019-08-14 16:08:21		-0.00379916 (-0.00001044) fe	[<u>89dfe7747d]</u> e	0.0009204	8acaa5cf33bfcff66b8c
2019-08-11 15:27:08		-0.00123097 (-0.00000226) fe	[<u>b56fea8dca]</u> e	0.00473	dS0ff096b808f37a4348
2019-08-11 14:37:34		-0.04429288 (-0.00001496) fe	[<u>35ef9bfe3e]</u> e	0.00596323	c1bf2fb0e265cdbdff63
2019-08-08 20:06:23	[89dfe7747d]	+0.04305134		0.05027107	95b562e9d641b955929f
2019-08-06 21:18:20		-0.25733424 (-0.00001044) fe	[<u>00cedcb2e5]</u> e	0.00721973	0f7fccf14b160f74495c
2019-08-06 12:00:51	[89dfe7747d]	+0.19509646		0.26456441	752c4244d161c48df9f5
2019-08-05 19:10:48	[89dfe7747d]	+0.02376351		0.06946795	86f3c1f5fd0c24ee81a9
2019-08-05 12:58:53	[89dfe7747d]	+0.04250565		0.04570444	60e05cd5d8d7aafec3b5
2019-08-04 16:35:26		-0.12787501 (-0.0001474) fe	[<u>004bd96c19]</u> e	0.00319879	e4cd54f1bcc7139df15c
2019-08-04 09:53:58	[89dfe7747d]	+0.01400997		0.1312212	8593e2dcbf0223b26baa
2019-08-03 14:19:11	[89dfe7747d]	+0.02790269		0.11721123	<u>0455d4b32097fa97d7b2</u>
2019-07-30 08:57:23	[89dfe7747d]	+0.08413091		0.08930854	19e1f503e9e7d82d47c5



Funneling wallet – bit-donor.com

- Let's look at the funneling wallet:
 1DKYRgUVvQhFb3rb1DjejRxyDGkC211xU9
 - 46 transactions
 - 12 funneling cycles
- The large amounts we're funneled to:
 - https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/00cedcb2e5d97202 → this is a root wallet, from here funds are exfiltrated to fiat
 - https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/004bd96c19bf9f13 → another funneling wallet
 - https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/04eb430860b8a3d5 → another funneling wallet that also exfiltrates funds to fiat



Root wallet – bit-donor.com

- Let's look at the root wallet: https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/00cedcb2e5d97202
- This is a hot wallet that exfiltrates funds via https://www.huobi.com
- This wallet probably works in tandem with several other wallets, the major one being:
 - https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/0010b7a31eb4bfd5 (hot) which currently holds ~15 BTC (over \$100K)
- From https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/0010b7a31eb4bfd5 we can get to the jackpot wallet which is:
 - <u>https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/00b078bc1fe43cca</u> this wallet currently holds <u>~19K BTC (over \$138M)</u> → this is the one to go after





- This campaign can be further mapped, to find additional funnels and leaves, starting with the jackpot wallet and going down from there
- These wallets interact directly with regulated exchanges:
 - https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/00cedcb2e5d97202
 - https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/0010b7a31eb4bfd5
 - https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/04eb430860b8a3d5
 - https://www.walletexplorer.com/wallet/89dfe7747d589779
- Law enforcement can retrieve KYC data and investigate the owners of these wallets.



Questions so far?





Coffee break





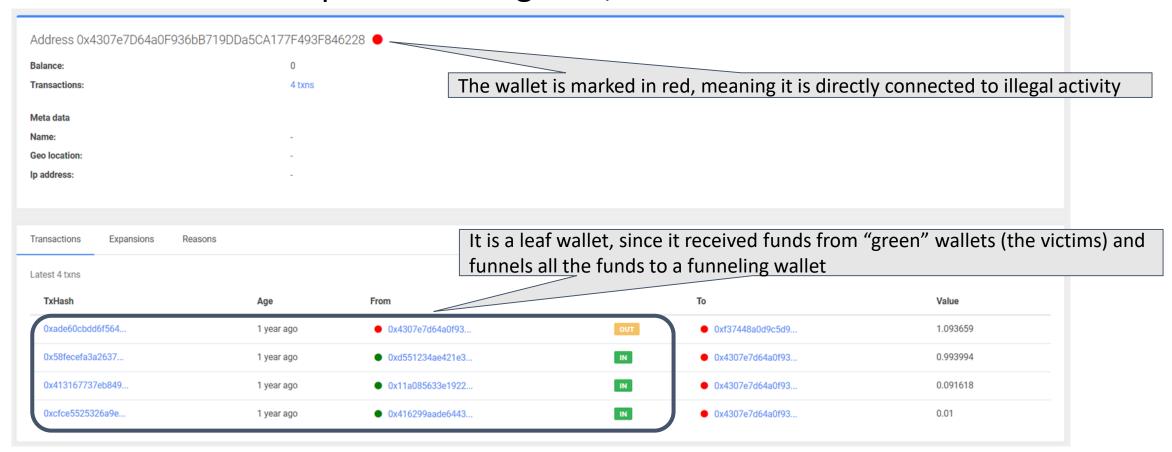
Excessive – investigate a scam yourself

- Intelligence:
 - Ethereum wallet: 0x4307e7d64a0f936bb719dda5ca177f493f846228
- Tool: https://dev.naboo.io
- Credentials:
 - Username: guest@inspectolabs.com
 - Password: QWERTY13



Use Case - Leaf wallet

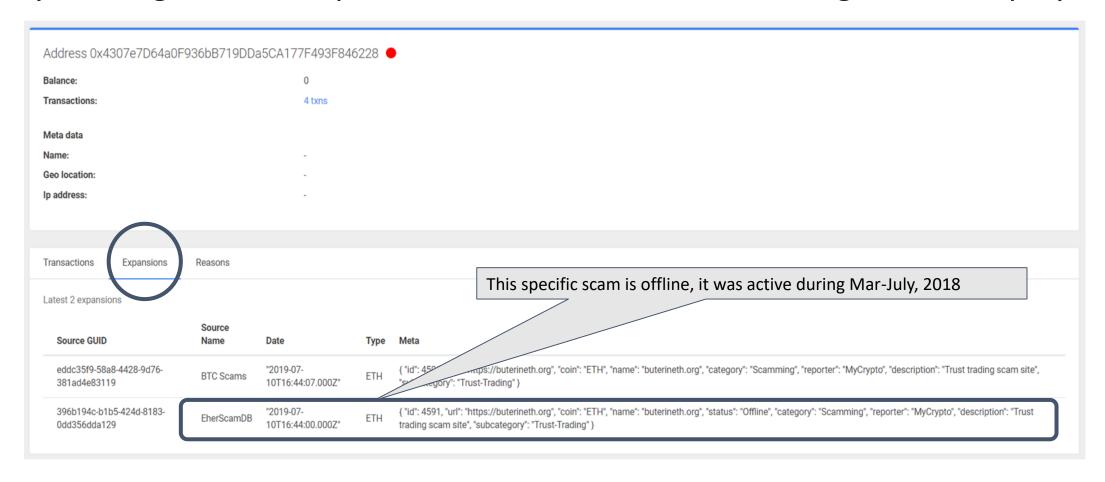
• Leaf wallets come up from Intelligence, in this case it's a Ponzi scam



Use Case - Leaf wallet



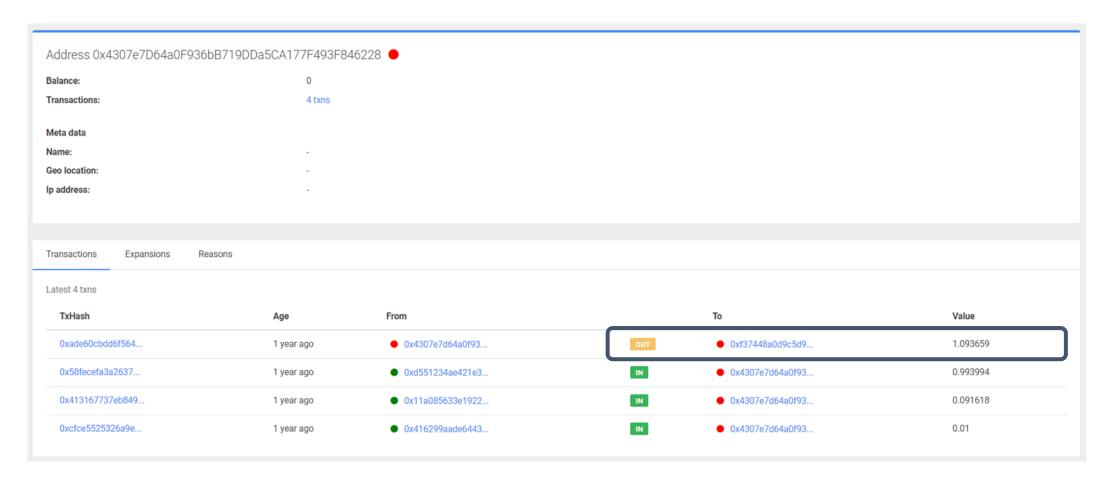
By clicking on the "Expansions" tab, the relevant intelligence is displayed



Use Case - Follow the money



From the leaf's transactions we see the funds funneled to one wallet





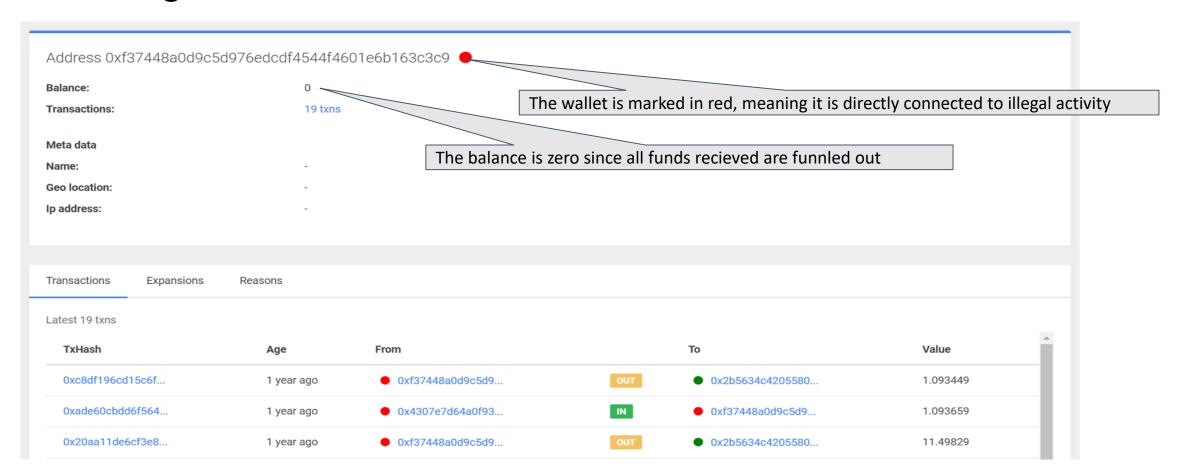
Start tracking...



Use Case - Funneling wallet



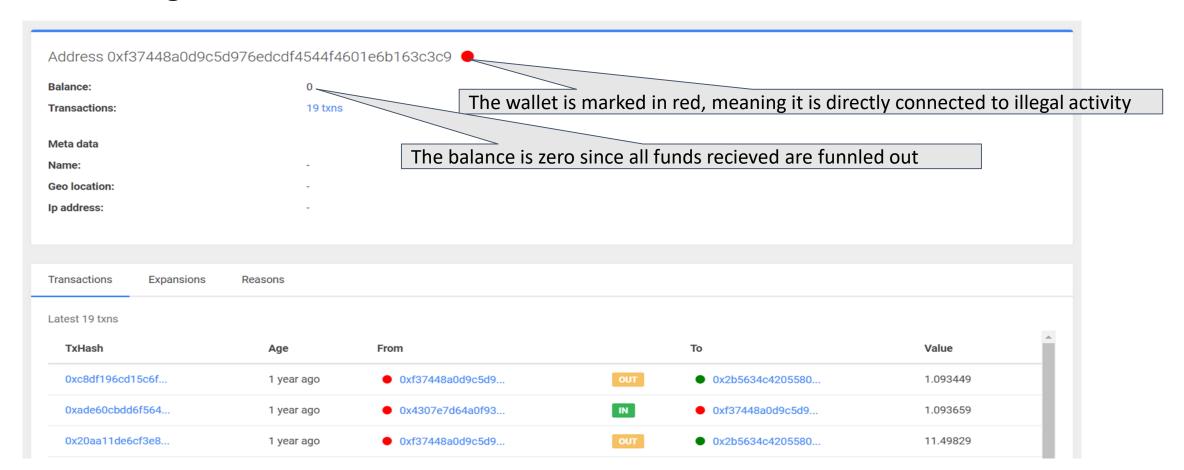
A funneling wallet main function is to funnel out funds it receives



Use Case - Funneling wallet



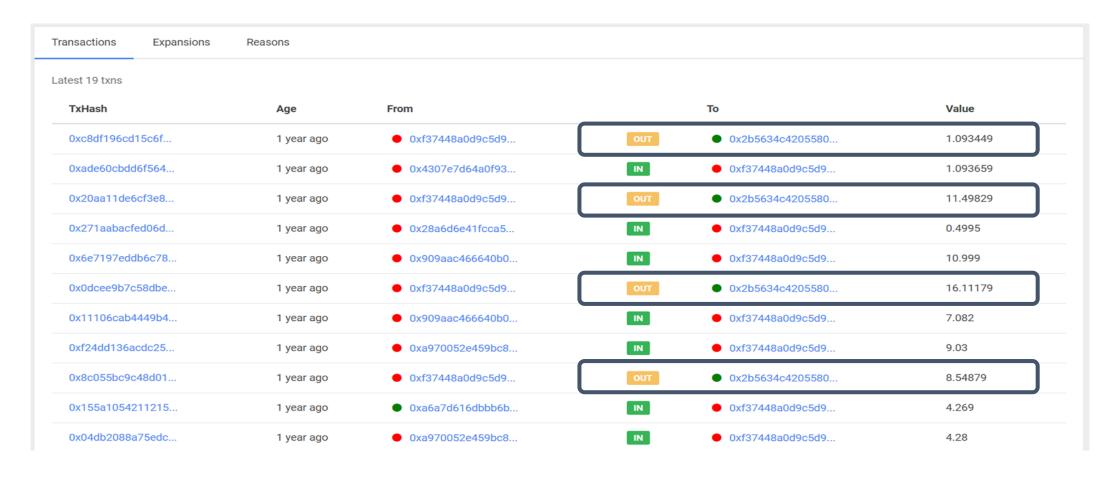
A funneling wallet main function is to funnel out funds it receives



Use Case - Going up the tree



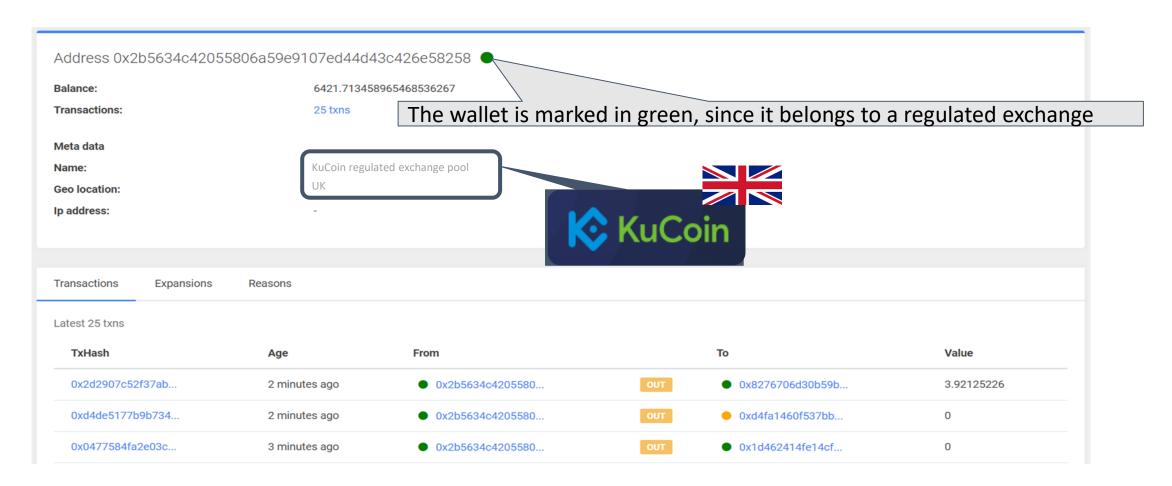
Looking through the transactions we see the next wallet



Use Case - Root wallet



This is a KuCoin exchange pool, in here the ETH is exfiltrated to cash



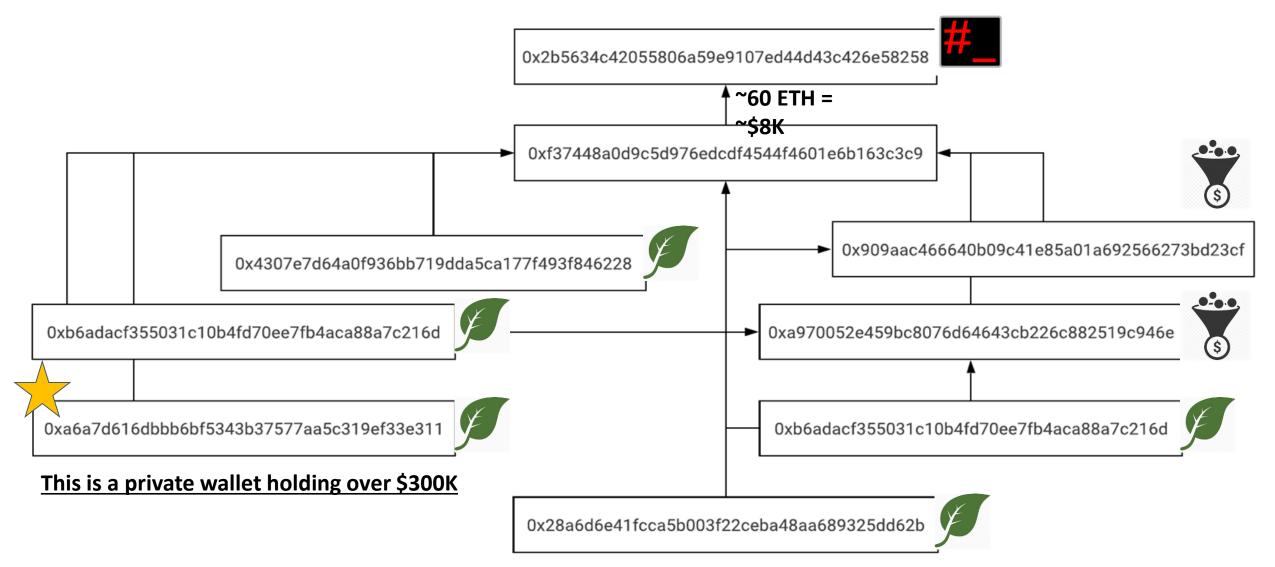
What's next?



- This campaign can be further mapped, to find additional funnels and leaves, for example:
 - 2nd Funneling wallet: 0x909aac466640b09c41e85a01a692566273bd23cf
 - 2nd Leaf wallet: 0x28a6d6e41fcca5b003f22ceba48aa689325dd62b
- After the complete mapping (see next slide) we can estimate the total funds laundered by the campaign, this specific example its ~\$8K.
- Law enforcement can contact KuCoin and ask for the KYC data of the person who owns the root wallet

Mapping of the campaign







Questions so far?

