

Crypto Currencies Bitcoin vs. Money



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- University College London, UK





UCL Bitcoin Seminar

UCL crypto currency seminar and special interest group

every Thur starting 16h00 maybe 17h00 maybe 18h00 - room and exact hour varies

public web page: <u>blog.bettercrypto.com</u> / SEMINAR





Our Works on Bitcoin

- blog.bettercrypto.com
- -Nicolas Courtois, Marek Grajek, Rahul Naik: The Unreasonable Fundamental Incertitudes Behind Bitcoin Mining, http://arxiv.org/abs/1310.7935
- Nicolas Courtois, Marek Grajek, Rahul Naik: Optimizing SHA256 in Bitcoin Mining, CSS 2014.
- -Nicolas Courtois, Lear Bahack: On Subversive Miner Strategies and Block Withholding Attack
- in Bitcoin Digital Currency http://arxiv.org/abs/1402.1718
- -Nicolas Courtois: On The Longest Chain Rule and Programmed Self-Destruction of Crypto Currencies http://arxiv.org/abs/1405.0534
- -Nicolas T. Courtois, Pinar Emirdag and Daniel A. Nagy: Could Bitcoin Transactions Be 100x Faster? In proceedings of SECRYPT 2014, 28-30 August 2014, Vienna, Austria.
- -Poster:

http://www.nicolascourtois.com/bitcoin/POSTER_100x_Secrypt2014_v1.0.pdf





Introducing Bitcoin







Bitcoin In A Nutshell

- bitocoins are cryptographic tokens
 - stored by people on their PCs or mobile phones
- ownership is achieved through digital signatures:
 - you have a certain cryptographic key, you have the money.
 - publicly verifiable, only one entity can sign



- but I will not claim it is decentralized, this is simply not true!
- a major innovation is that financial transactions CAN be executed and policed without trusted authorities. Bitcoin is a sort of financial cooperative or a distributed business.
- based on self-interest:
 - a group of some 100 K people called bitcoin miners own the bitcoin "infrastructure" which has costed about 1 billion dollars (estimation)
 - they make money from newly created bitcoins and fees
 - at the same time they approve and check the transactions.
 - a distributed electronic notary system





Two Key Concepts

- initially money are attributed through Proof Of Work (POW) to one public key A
 - to earn bitcoins one has to "work" (hashing) and consume energy (pay for electricity)
 - in order to cheat one needs to work even much more (be more powerful than the whole network, for a short while)
- money transfer from public key A to public key B:
 - like signing a transfer in front of one notary which confirms the signature,
 - multiple confirmations: another notary will re-confirm it, then another, etc...
 - we do NOT need to assume that ALL these notaries are honest.
 - at the end it becomes too costly to cheat





Money Transfer

To: 1K2CcfWYW5sBL2xSeQWXpcmjPCgoXdi36

Amount: 1.0 BTC







In Practice

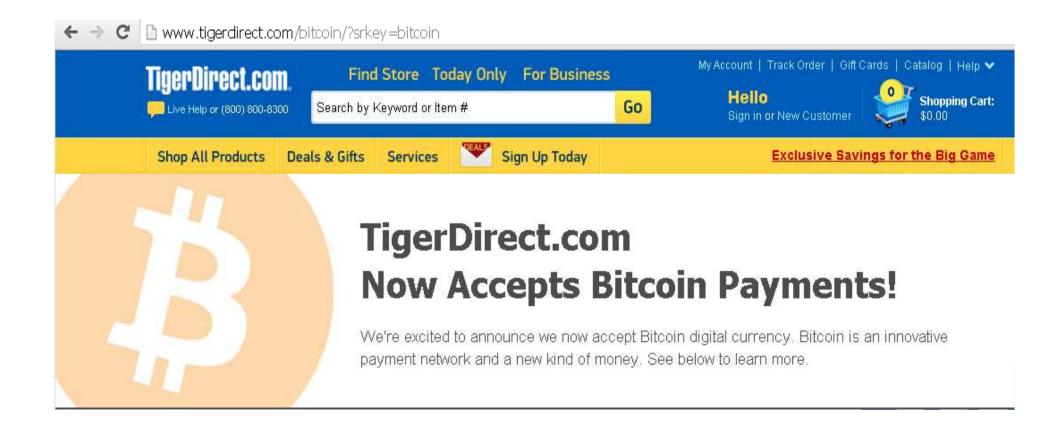






Who Accepts Bitcoin? (1)

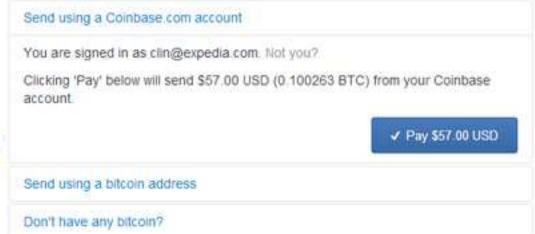






Who Accepts Bitcoin? (2)











Who Accepts Bitcoin? (3)



by the end 2014







Full P2P Client

http://bitcoin.org/en/download

Download Bitcoin-Qt

Latest version: 0.8.6 🔯





















Mobile Apps - Android









Is Bitcoin Money?



© 2014 Geek Culture





Money

Key invention in human history:

money



- here is some money for your research





Is Bitcoin Money?



- We will NOT claim it has all the characteristics of money.
 - it definitely has some!
 - they are traded against traditional currencies at a number of exchanges.
 - bitcoins are "legal" by default,
 - there were some attempts to regulate them and even ban them by governments.





2/3 Main Functions of Money

- 1. Store Value
- 2. Allow Payment
- (3. Unit of Account)





Hierarchy: 3. Is The Hardest To Achieve!

- ↑1. Store Value
 - 2. Allow Payment
 - (3. Unit of Account)



source: BOE report "The economics of digital currencies", 2014





Evolution of - 1. Store Value

- Precious natural resources: salt etc => evolution/selection=>
- Gold, Silver, Other Metals => Coins
- Paper Money

- Money as Electronic Record
 - + Legal Protection + Government Guarantee

21st century: Cryptographic E-Cash







Evolution of - 2. Payments

- Physical Cash (Bank Notes, Coins) = M0
- Cheques
- Electronic Bank Transfer 20 days => 15 min...
- E-Purse Systems: geldkarte, London Oyster
- Bank Cards
- Contact-less Bank Cards, e.g. MasterCard PayPass:
- 21st century: Cryptographic E-Cash.





difference?

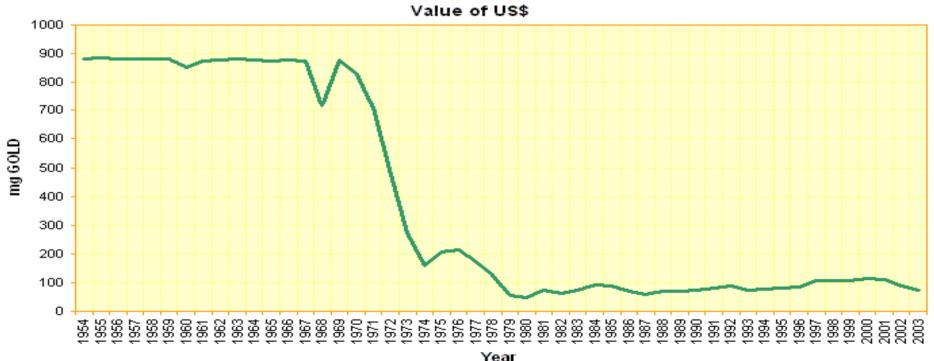


Gold = "Global Single Currency"??

Most countries abandoned the gold standard during the Great Depression,

one of the earliest was the Bank of England [1931].

Much later, in 1971: the United States abandons it. Nixon Shock





"Fiat Money"

Def:

Government-issued money not convertible for anything particular (E.g; gold, goods etc).

Its value is controlled by the monetary policy and managed by the central bank.

(the quantity of money in circulation can be increased or **decreased** at any moment)







BOTTOM LINE

- 1. Store Value
- 2. Allow Payment







CAN BE IMPLEMENTED DIFFERENTLY!

SEPARATION IS NOT FORBIDDEN





Bitcoin

Bitcoin =

... the most popular peer-to-peer payment and virtual currency system as of today





Bitcoin

Bitcoin =

... the most popular

The Telegraph

The coming digital anarchy

belongs to no one, anarchy











Crypto Currencies







Bitcoin



Decentralized peer to peer payment system which works as currency:

=> has units of value which can be exchanged for "real money". Currently 1BTC= 600 USD.

Based on cryptography and network effects.

Anarchy, not supported by any government and not issued by any bank.





*Disruption?

Disruptive Technology: def:

Allows to do things which just could not be done before...





**Citations

Bitcoin is:

Wild West of our time [Anderson-Rosenberg]

 There is no "undo" button for sth. like bitcoin [Mike Gogulski]





Krugman

- What's wrong with Bitcoin? [title]
- Bitcoin is ...
 - just one of possible ways to pay electronically [irony ©]

Paul Krugman,
 Nobel price in economics





More Krugman!

- Bitcoin is ...
 - "the anti-social network"
 - "bitcoin is evil" (he later claimed it was a joke)
- Paul Krugman,
 Nobel price in economics





Who Is Evil?

- "Bitcoin Prevents Monetary Tyranny"
 - Jon Matonis for Forbes

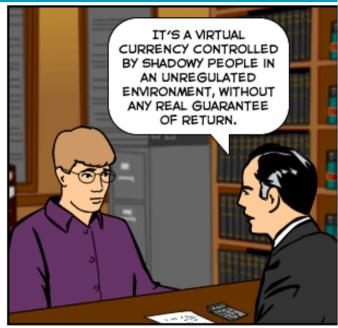
 "Just thinking about bitcoin makes you a better person" – Max Keiser



Crypto Currencies

Bitcoin vs. Banks











Fear?

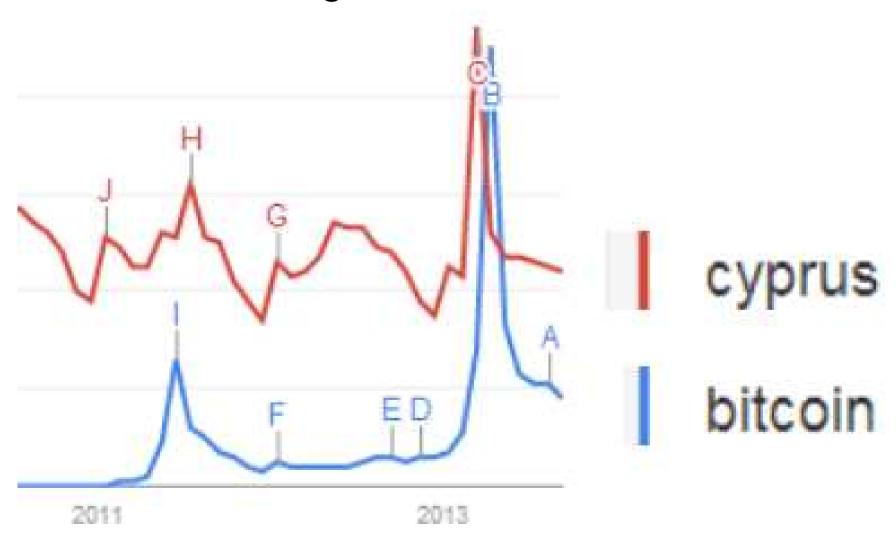
What do I fear? I fear stagnation and lack of progress. I fear never reaching my potential and being average.

I fear letting those I love down, letting myself down. I fear settling, giving in to the "that's just the way it is" mindset.



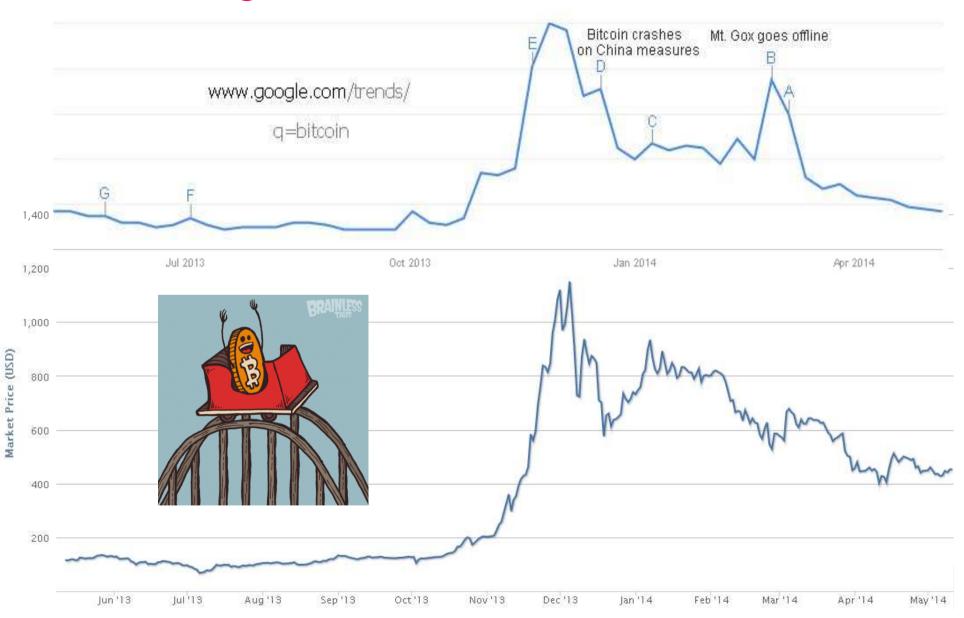


Cyprus vs. Bitcoin – April 2013 correlation in Google searches





**Google Searches vs. Price 2013/14





April 2013

- there was a Cyprus banking crisis... depositors were unable to recover 100% of their deposits
- opinions about how <u>crazy</u> it was that bitcoin could rise...





FINANCIAL TIMES

USA Thursday April 4 2013

Buying frenzy sends virtual currency on way to becoming next bubble



bubble?

they have seen nothing yet!





13 April 2013

The correction stops at around 50 USD.







13 April 2013

Bitcoin is:

Digital Gold! - The Economist





Jan 2013-Jan 2014

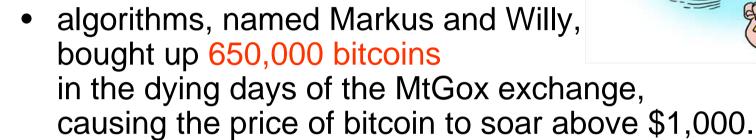
14 => 1000 USD





"Bots Caused Bitcoin Bubble"

Anonymously published Willy Report:



- "there is a ton of evidence to suggest that all of these accounts were controlled by MtGox themselves"
- "so if you were wondering how bitcoin suddenly appreciated in value by a factor of 10 within the span of one month, well, this may be why."
- …also claimed to be bought with customer money

http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/cryptocurrency-news-round-mtgox-bots-caused-bitcoin-bubble-darkcoin-dives-1450415





Another Nobel Price:

In Davos Jan 2014:

"It is a bubble, there is no question about it.



... It's just an amazing example of a bubble."

 Robert Shiller, Nobel price in economics, awarded specifically for work on asset

bubbles.





***Flash Crash 10 Feb 2014 before 6AM





Miracle Of Bitcoin

Removes two pillars of money:

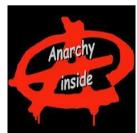


"trust"

=> Peer 2 Peer self-regulation based on self-interest?

legal/government protection and policing

=> anarchy!







Anarchy!

- #
- Until recently, we've needed central bodies banks, stock markets, governments, police forces – to settle vital questions.
 - Who owns this money?
 - Who controls this company?
 - Who has the right to vote in this election?
- Now we have a small piece of pure, incorruptible
 mathematics enshrined in computer code that will allow
 people to solve the thorniest problems without reference to
 "the authorities".

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/news/10881213/The-coming-digital-anarchy.html

[11 June 2014]



The Telegraph



Anarchy? Dark Side

- In Bitcoin community we are brainwashed every day: many things which are BUGS are presented as FEATURES:
 - monetary policy (or the lack of one) frequent criticism
 - dodgy cryptography =
 - anonymous founder syndrome, standardized yet TOTTALLY disjoint from normal industrial cryptography, NOBUS syndrome (NSA jargon)
 - decision mechanisms (the Longest Chain Rule)
 - no reason why the same mechanism decides which blocks are valid and which transactions are valid, by far too slow, too unstable, too easy to manipulate
 - 51% attacks ARE realistic feasible and ... INEXPENSIVE!
 - sudden jumps in monetary policy => genetically-programmed selfdestruction of many crypto currencies

See: Nicolas Courtois: On The Longest Chain Rule and Programmed Self-Destruction of Crypto Currencies http://arxiv.org/abs/1405.0534





Is Bitcoin Money? A Currency?







*Recall: Two Main Functions of Money

- 1. Store Value
- 2. Allow Payment
- (3. Unit of Account)







Are They Crazy?

Anything can be "money" if sufficiently many people accept it... (e.g. salt).

Question of:

popularity

legal tender, government standardization and regulation <= recently thousands of press reports about bitcoin

trust

trustworthy authority

<= assumption that majority of people are "honest" MUCH WEAKER...

NO NEED TO TRUST ANYONE





Play Money?

A distinction play vs. real money has almost disappeared recently.







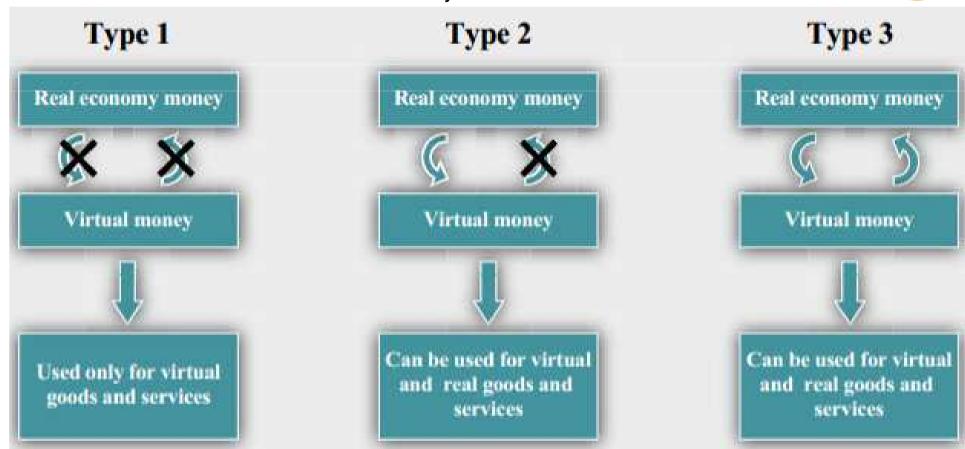
Types of "Virtual Money"

Source: ECB report, 10/2012

http://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/other/virtualcurrencyschemes201210en.pdf



cf. Oyster...





Is Bitcoin Money? Legal Side







Bitcoin Foundation Denial...

Ms. Tara Murphy
Assistant Attorney General
California Department of Financial Institutions
July 1, 2013
Page 3

operates out of offices in Seattle, Washington. The Bitcoin Foundation provides no direct money services to any California consumers. Several Bitcoin Foundation members may themselves operate in California. Some California-based members, from time to time, donate money or bitcoin to the Foundation. However, the receipt of a donation is not money transmission activity and does not otherwise indicate that the Bitcoin Foundation operates in California.

B. The Bitcoin Foundation Does Not Sell or Issue Payment Instruments.

The Bitcoin Foundation is not in the business of selling bitcoin to consumers and does not otherwise operate a bitcoin exchange. Even if it did sell bitcoin to consumers, however, the Foundation believes it would not be regulated as a seller or issuer of payment instruments because a bitcoin is not a payment instrument under California law. In California, a payment instrument is "a check, draft, money order, traveler's check or other instrument for the transmission or payment of money or monetary value, whether or not negotiable." A payment instrument "does not include a credit card voucher, letter of credit, or any instrument that is redeemable by the issuer for goods and services provided by the issuer or its affiliate."



**Can Bitcoin Circumvent Laws?

Like "this is not money"=>
therefore we don't do anything
which falls within remit of existing laws
(securities trading, gambling etc..)

Not so easy:

The Department of the Treasury Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) has clarified that cryptocurrency is <u>not money</u>, <u>but</u> all existing AML (Anti-Money Laundering) and KYC (Know Your Customer) regimes do nevertheless apply(!).

- Judge Amos Mazzant issued a memorandum arguing that bitcoin was "a currency or a form of money".
- SEC clearly stated that transactions in bitcoins are financial transactions like any other, and are within their remit.





Bitcoin Can Simplify Our Lives

Less money spent on lawyers.

Especially important for people and governments

they cannot afford legal costs





Bitcoin Is Subject To Laws!

Governments judges and regulators will apply the rules which they think applicable, they are emerging and they are being clarified.

Bitcoin laundry question:

- If I mix bitcoins with other people.
- UK: Proceeds of the Crime Act:
 - I have assisted sb. in money laundering,
 I must report it to the Police
 or I can be prosecuted and go to prison.





**US Regulation?

- Bitcoin does not share characteristics with instruments that we regulate as securities.
- Consequently, the SEC, like the Federal Reserve, is an unlikely regulator.
- [...] perhaps the Commodities Future Trading Commission (CFTC) will decide that it could supervise Bitcoin as a commodity.
- absence of a legitimate authority recognizing and attributing value to Bitcoin provides supervisory opportunity to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), which has as a mandate ensuring consumer financial safety
 - => all according to a Wall Street lawyer Maese.





**Block Chain Regulation

The same Wall Street lawyer also says that:

- The Block Chain technology could be SEPARATELY regulated (!!!)
 - not proposing that the weightiness of bank regulation [...] be applied to tech startups
 - codification of development standards that good developers already use could help the network become safe.

Cf. Vivian A. Maese: Divining the Regulatory Future of Illegitimate Cryptocurrencies, In Wall Street Lawyer, Vol. 18 Issue 5, May 2014.





**Open Source = Criminals' Best Friend?

...same Wall Street lawyer:

- The open-source nature of the developer population provides opportunities for frivolous or criminal behavior that can damage the participants in the same way that investors can be misled by promises of get rich quick schemes [...]
- a self- regulatory organization (SRO) [...] could be created to oversee and examine [...] the engineers who create the code [...]
- Regulations could ensure that cybersecurity requirements are engineered into the code and could ensure that the network would recover from a failure by building in redundancy. [...]
- One of the biggest risks that we face as a society in the digital age [...] is the quality of the code that will be used to run our lives.
- Cf. Vivian A. Maese: Divining the Regulatory Future of Illegitimate Cryptocurrencies, In Wall Street Lawyer, Vol. 18 Issue 5, May 2014.



*UK

Problem:

Initially UK HMRC have suggested that bitcoins are "VAT taxable vouchers"

when you buy bitcoins you should pay 20% VAT...

⇒ totally inappropriate classification, now abandoned.





Is Bitcoin "Electronic Money"?

Directive 2009/110/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council defines the concept of "electronic money",

Article 2: electronic money "means electronically, including magnetically, stored monetary value as represented by a claim on the issuer which is issued on receipt of funds for the purpose of making payment transactions [...], and which is accepted by a natural or legal person other than the electronic money issuer".





Is Bitcoin "Electronic Money"?

This has been disputed;

- YES "electronically stored monetary value"
- YES but stored in a diffused distributed way and valid if not spent and with regard to a majority of ASIC votes...
- NOT <u>"as represented by a claim on the issuer"</u>
- there is no "LEGAL" entity acting as issuer
- however
 - there is no legal obligation but a technical and practical claim which works, not a debt though,
 - and YES there exist issuers: miners,
 - or a collective issuer... "the bitcoin community"



Bitcoin in Northern Europe

Bitcoin is "private money" in Germany.

Denmark: very liberal, no tax.

Sweden:

Bitcoin = method of payment.

Finland: detailed rules, closer to a commodity.

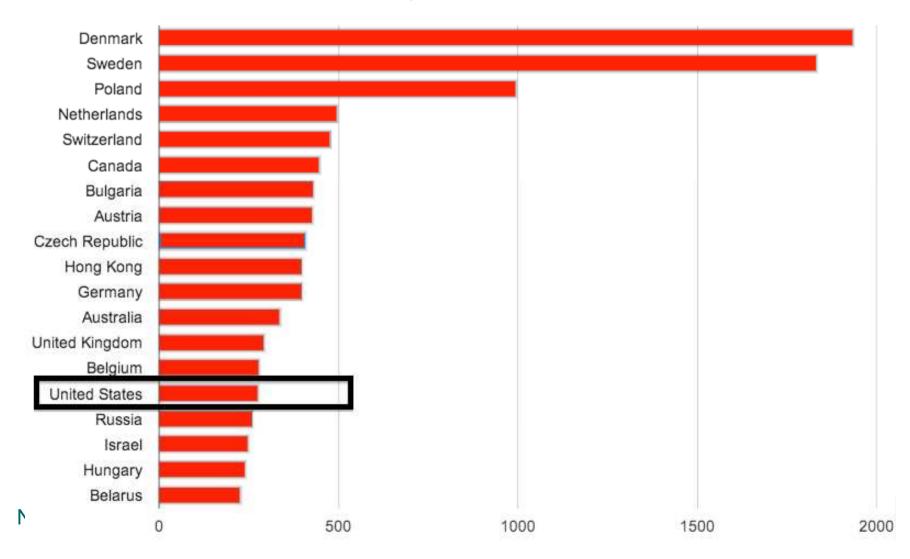




Bitcoin in Northern Europe!

http://www.businessinsider.com/bitcoin-is-going-to-take-off--just-probably-not-thanks-to-anyone-you-know-2014-6

YTD Bitcoin software downloads per million residents





Canada

Very good environment, ATMs, start-ups





Bitcoin vs. Paypal, WesternUnion Etc







Bitcoin is...

"a low-cost replacement for credit cards and other payment mechanisms"

Very close to the business of

- Western Union
- CurrencyFair
- PayPal
- Mastercard

Bitcoin is a direct threat to these companies.





Competition Before Bitcoin

Credit cards:

slow adoption:

it took 100 years to get people to use them!





Bticoin vs. Credit Cards



TERI BUHL

Smashmouth Investigative Journalism

Home About Contact Search this website...

Mastercard Hates Bitcoins

<u>22</u> oct

The new boss in charge of giving out a MasterCard licenses has no intention of allowing the brand or any bank that does private label cards to use Bitcoins. In fact, he nearly bragged to me about killing the BitInstant deal with a U.S. bank for the first planned \$BTC card this year.





**Blacklisting Bitcoin By Banks



Dear Nicolas,

Thank you for your email below and the associated correspondence, but we are not in a position to process your transfer instruction at this time. We currently have policies in place which prohibit the transfer of funds to any crypto currency exchange or any crypto currency related firm.

We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused you, and are happy, as gesture of goodwill to return your funds to EUR at no cost to you if you wish.

We have initiated our complaints process and your complaint will be processed as swiftly as possible in accordance with the regulatory requirements.

Best regards

```
Tim Porter - Associate Director

M + 4 , T + 44 20 3384 6290

E: timporter@currencyfair.com W: www.currencyfair.com FB:

www.facebook.com/currencyfair

CurrencyFair Limited CRO 469391 (Incorporated in Ireland)
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Registered Office: 26 Pembroke Street Upper, Dublin 2, Ireland



Beware!

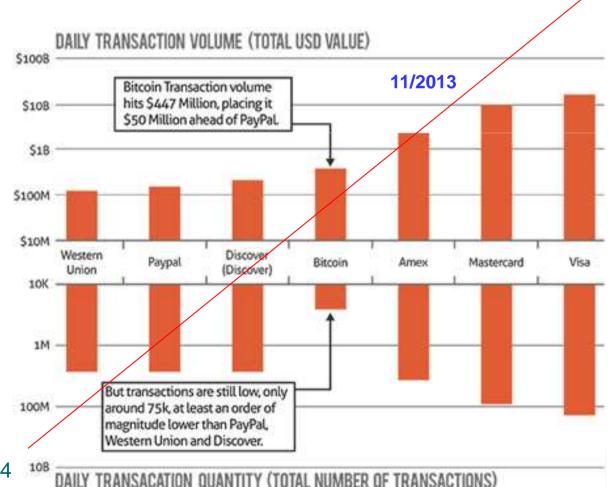
Bitcoin transaction volume: usually WRONG reports, includes amounts people return to themselves

Similar data:

coinometrics.com

=> controversy: "pitiful statistics out of BTC fairyland"

Reuters: Fitch:
Bitcoin Remains Small
in Comparison ...
68 M/day





More Lunatic Asylum Seekers

More WRONG reports, May 2014

Laureate Trust Claims BTC's Transaction Rate Will Soon Surpass Paypal

Posted On 24 May 2014 By: Ali Najjar 1 Comment Tag: Bitcoin, Paypal, USD Transactions

Laureate Trust is reporting that bitcoin is becoming the world's fastest growing payments option over the Internet. Almost \$300 million USD are moved each day through bitcoin transactions.



Laureate Trust

Bitcoin is currently on the road to overtaking Paypal in terms of transactional volume for the first time ever. Even with bitcoin's fluctuating nature, people are always making the digital currency work.

Laureate Trust's CEO Peter Tasca stated:



"Whenever you have an instrument that trades over 300 million US dollars a day, it must be recognized. The digital currency works, Bitcoin has greater volume transactions than Western Union and we anticipate it will overtake Paypal later this year."



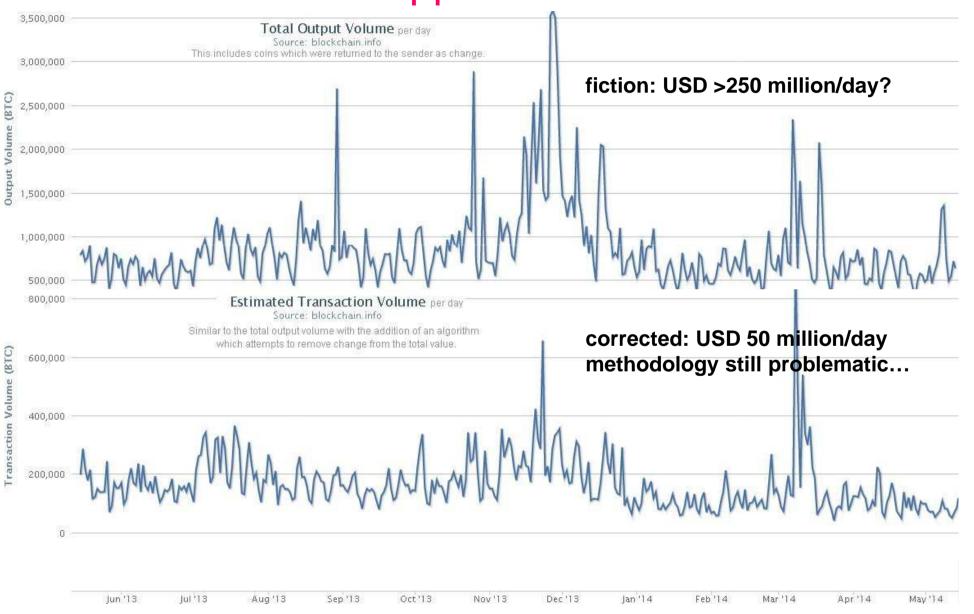
*Problems:

- It is very difficult to reliably estimate the transaction volume from the blockchain data alone.
- Blockhain.info provides both the misleading artificially inflated figures at http://blockchain.info/charts/output-volume and their estimation of the actual transaction volume by their own (imperfect) proprietary method cf.
 - blockchain.info/charts/estimated-transaction-volume,





Fiction Volume vs. Approximated Corrected One





*Why Is It Difficult To Estimate?

- Again truly accurate estimations are impossible to obtain.
 - A particular problem are the actions of some bitcoin addresses which hold very large balances and return change to themselves at new freshly created addresses.

Source:

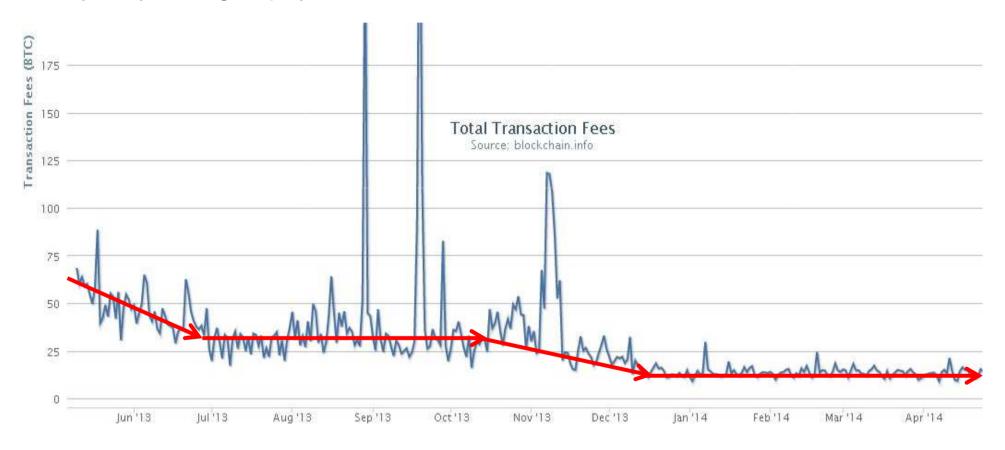
Nicolas Courtois: On The Longest Chain Rule and Programmed Self-Destruction of Crypto Currencies http://arxiv.org/abs/1405.0534





One Way To Measure Bitcoin Adoption in Payment

Anybody willing to pay transaction fees?

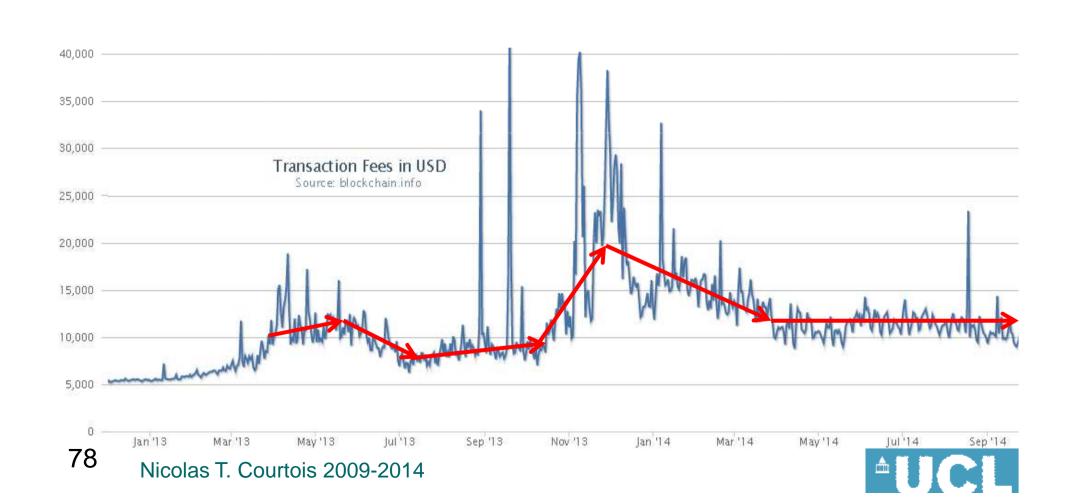






Fees In Dollars - Better

Relatively stable recently





Competition After Bitcoin [2014]

Alternative payments business is booming, growing 3%/year [McKinsey], faster than normal banking business, banks are almost totally absent!.

- Google wallet app and Amazon FPS allow to transfer money between customers
- Walmart, big telcos and many banks are developing their M-payment schemes in order to avoid Mastercard Visa etc fees...
- In Kenya, 43% of GDP transits through M-PESA, mobile phone system which is also a front-end to banks where banks play a secondary role.
- PayPal president's David Marcus:
 - initially they wanted to be independent from central banks and govs...
 - finally decided to became a bank, to become the biggest bank in the world?
 - has handled 180 billions in payments last year, 143 M customers
- Square new service example: at coffee shop:
 - no signatures, no cards, no barcodes
 - check in when you enter the store
 - tell cashier your name and that you are using square!
 - the store manager has your picture displayed, he knows it is you
 - the customer receives a text with the amount paid, for him to check





Is Bitcoin Dead?

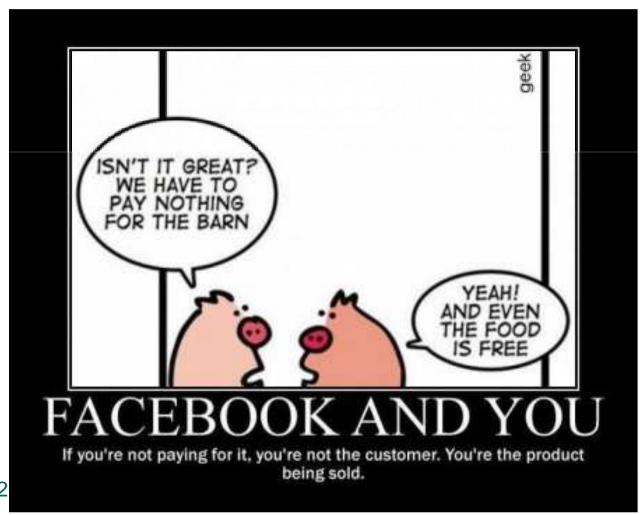
Not at all!





Key Problem:

After few brief episodes of capitalism, modern business favours slavery.





Bitcoin!

A payment system in which

- it is THE PAYER who initiates the transaction
- controls the amount being paid
- money and payments are stored outside of the banking system [most recent systems erode the dominant position of banks]
- money cannot be confiscated [cf. Cyprus banks].
- it challenges fractional reserve banking [new!] and forces finance to become more "transparent"

"Troubled" bitcoin [The Economist May 2014] is certainly is here to stay

=> but now must face all sorts of competition and technical reforms [our work]





Bitcoin vs. Fractional Reserve Banking







Abolish Fractional Reserve Lending?

Financial Times columnist Martin Wolf [24 Apr 2014]:

Strip private banks of their power to create money!

He proposes that

- the state, not banks, would create all money
- banks should be confined deposits/lending
- separation of
 - the provision of money [state]
 - the provision of finance [private sector].

http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7f000b18-ca44-11e3-bb92-00144feabdc0.html#axzz34H2zdhPn

He also writes: This will not happen now. But remember the possibility. When the next crisis comes – and it surely will – we need to be ready.

Related: Full Reserve Banking (Soveriegn Money, Chicago Plan,, Kaminska: The time for offical e-Money is NOW!)





**Q: Can One Circumvent Bitcoin Monetary Policy?

Idea:

Rent unused bitcoins for a short time => increase monetary supply.

How to guarantee that they are returned?

Maybe implement "fractional randomized reserve"? How???

