

## Returning trust and democracy to the internet



The KILT protocol ensures more trust on the Internet © HBM

*Ingo Rube, CEO of Botlabs, discusses trust in the internet and how it can be restored.*

In the recent European elections, anyone wishing to vote had to prove their identity. When we board a flight or attend a concert, we have to show a personalised ticket and form of ID. Whether we use an ID card, birth certificate, graduation certificate or some other type of document, proving our identity seems perfectly normal in the analogue world. A trustworthy entity – such as the state, the church, a university, a reliable person or a company – issues a document or certificate that the person in question can use as verification wherever it is accepted. This process is performed billions of times a day in the analogue sphere and has been around for centuries. But how does it work in the digital world? And what is going wrong?

### **The internet: data silos and loss of trust**

Over time, the nature of Web 2.0 and the way it is configured has led to the development of gigantic data silos belonging to just a small number of monopolistic companies. These companies are the winners of Web 2.0, and will take the lead in defining the dawning age of

artificial intelligence. After all, huge quantities of data are crucial to the success of machine learning.

Web 2.0 is now running counter to the basic principle of a free, democratic space. Business leaders and political decision makers have recognised the greatest threat to the digital economy and society: data monopolies treat people's data as their property and decide who can have what information and when. As a result, more and more people are losing trust in the internet.

### **Lack of technological alternatives**

In the age of GDPR, society has become aware that data created or generated by an individual belongs to that person and not to the provider who records the data – for example when the individual sets up a user profile. All the more reason why internet users want to protect their data. Up to now, however, the internet has lacked technological alternatives to the password-protected registration processes offered by service and platform providers. This common form of user identification is very attractive for hackers and highly susceptible to misuse, with immense quantities of passwords gathered in one place.

### **Common property, not individual control**

If we want to make the internet a democratic space again and regain people's trust, then we need blockchain technology, which creates trust at a technological level by replacing central units with "common good technology". Blockchain is trustworthy because it is a public technology to which access is not restricted – a decentralised, knowledge-free, independent index that belongs to the community rather than being controlled by a company or state. This infrastructure would be highly available, resistant to attacks and corruption and would bring all the advantages of analogue documents to the internet. Personal data would not be publicly available either. A system such as this could be used by companies and administrative bodies to provide GDPR-compliant software.

In the last 16 months, the Burda holding *Botlabs* has implemented a system of this type entitled KILT Protocol. It is [available here](#) together with a JavaScript SDK and a demo client. *KILT* is open-source and suitable for all situations in which an entity provides a person with a document that they can use to verify their identity. Thanks to the underlying blockchain, the infrastructure is no longer controlled by a public or private entity, but instead is common property.

### **Take responsibility!**

*KILT* may not be able to make the data silos disappear, but it does have the potential to prevent them from growing any more. An alternative to online data processing services, *KILT* offers new business opportunities to trustworthy companies. Only a small section of the population is aware of the problems presented by data silos, making it the responsibility of economic and political leaders to heighten awareness and offer alternative online

registration and identification processes as quickly as possible. It is now up to companies and administrative bodies to introduce systems like *KILT* and to provide their users with a technology that gives them control over their own data and thus creates a basis on which to restore and expand trust in the internet.

GDPR was a major step in the right direction. And now we have the missing technological link – *KILT*. The time has come to integrate and use this technology and to restore the internet to a level playing field for all!

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