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“Tracking Criminals by Following the Money”

Bitcoin is a crypto-currency that enables peer-to-peer payments in a way that is partially anonymous and which requires no central authorities. These features are attractive to many criminals, as it is difficult to track and shut down Bitcoin payments — difficult, but not impossible. In this talk, I present novel approaches to trace the flow of bitcoins in two types of criminal operations: (i) human traffickers that advertised sex services on Backpage [KDD ’17]; and (ii) ransomware, which encrypts files and demands bitcoins in exchange for decryption keys [IEEE S&P ’18].