



# DLT-based personal data access control with key-redistribution

Fadi Barbàra<sup>1</sup> · Mirko Zichichi<sup>2</sup> · Stefano Ferretti<sup>3</sup> · Claudio Schifanella<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Data management services frequently grapple with trust issues due to the easy access service managers have to server-stored data. Although decentralized data services and smart contracts offer solutions to the pitfalls of centralized authorities, they also raise concerns regarding compliance with data protection laws like GDPR. Historically, encryption has mitigated some of these issues but at the expense of hindering data sharing. To address this, we introduce the Key-Redistribution Proxy Re-Encryption (KeRePRE) system—a decentralized, encrypted data service that incorporates authorization servers as part of a threshold proxy re-encryption scheme. This system leverages a key-redistribution mechanism to seamlessly add or remove managers in a trustless environment, achieving proactive security. Our proof of concept, implemented via smart contracts on a Layer 2 of IOTA, showcases an access control list that authorizes read-only access by the servers.

**Keywords** Proxy re-encryption · Threshold scheme · GDPR · Data sharing · Decentralized file system

## 1 Introduction

Nowadays, data are of high value to individuals, businesses, and governments. The increasing amount of data generated by various sources like mobile devices, sensors, and social media has given rise to big data and data-driven decision-making. However, the volume and complexity of data have created significant challenges in managing, processing, analyzing, and protecting them, especially regarding the new directives related to data protection such as GDPR [1]. To overcome these challenges, data

intermediation has become crucial. A data intermediary acts as an intermediary between data holders and recipients, facilitating the flow of data while ensuring its quality and security.

Decentralized systems such as blockchains or Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLTs) have gained considerable attention in data intermediation. These systems allow data recipients and processors to be limited to the data holder's instructions through smart contracts, enabling intermediation with a higher level of control over data, see e.g. [2]. Decentralization, however, necessitates cryptography to secure decentralized systems and protect data while sharing it. In a trustless or semi-trusted decentralized system, comprehensive security is essential to maintain user trust. To solve these problems, approaches such as  $(t, n)$ -threshold cryptosystems involve multiple parties performing a cryptographic operation together, using a share of a secret in a secret-sharing scheme, in order to transform one central party into a committee. In particular, a Threshold Proxy Re-Encryption (TPRE) scheme delegates some data intermediaries (proxies) to re-encrypt the encryption key in favor of a data receiver [3–5].

However, most threshold cryptosystems assume that data intermediaries will protect their secret shares, which works as a theoretical assumption but does not reflect the real-world conditions. For example, Verichain recently

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✉ Fadi Barbàra  
fadi.barbara@unito.it

Mirko Zichichi  
mirko.zichichi@iota.org

Stefano Ferretti  
s.ferretti@unibo.it

Claudio Schifanella  
claudio.schifanella@unito.it

<sup>1</sup> Department of Computer Science, University of Turin, Turin, Italy

<sup>2</sup> IOTA Foundation, Pappelallee 78/79, 10437 Berlin, Germany

<sup>3</sup> Department of Computer Science and Engineering, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy

exposed a critical key-extraction attack [6], which invalidates implementations of commonly used threshold cryptosystems. Similarly, the security firm Trail of Bits found a critical bug in common threshold signature libraries [7]. In these cases, the presence of a key redistribution would have been put to good use, in order to remove the vulnerability from the present committee. In this paper, we propose a Key-Redistribution Proxy Re-Encryption (KeRePRE) for TPRES to manage situations where parties lose their share, are corrupted or faulty, in a semi-trusted decentralized environment. The mechanism enables key rotation, addition, or deletion [8] and helps manage compromised or leaked keys and handle situations when new parties are added or old parties are dismissed.

Furthermore, we focus on a specific strand of literature concerned with data access control managed using cryptographic techniques in a decentralized manner. The literature usually deals with personal data, which requires strong data protection and security mechanisms because they identify or render identifiable a data subject [2, 3, 9, 10]. We propose a DLT based Personal Data Store (PDS) to enable data subjects to decide how (through smart contracts) and where to store their data and handle data encryption and key distribution using TPRES with the key redistribution mechanism. The PDS comprises two main components, Decentralized File Storage (DFS), which stores the data to encrypt or decrypt, and a DLT, which avoids the typical drawbacks of server-based approaches, such as censorship or single-point-of-failure, and offers features like data traceability, verifiability, and smart contract execution.

## 1.1 Our contributions

In summary our contributions are:

- Our proposal, KeRePRE introduces a novel threshold-based proxy re-encryption scheme that supports key-redistribution and proactive security.
- To showcase the feasibility of our proposal, we have developed an independent implementation that comprises both the off-chain and the on-chain management of the data using smart contracts on the IOTA-based L2. The code is publicly available on GitHub.<sup>1</sup>
- We show that KeRePRE creates a decentralized Personal Data Store (PDS) linked to a Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) that is fully compliant with the GDPR regulations.
- We demonstrate that KeRePRE is secure in the real/ideal paradigm and achieves proactive security

<sup>1</sup> <https://github.com/dinocen/umbral-rs>.

## 1.2 Outline

The structure of this paper is organized as follows. In Sect. 2, we introduce the fundamental components of the KeRePRE system. Section 3 details the operation of KeRePRE within the Umbral system context. We then present the operational functionalities of KeRePRE and assess KeRePRE's performance in Sects. 4 and 5, respectively. Section 6 provides a security analysis of KeRePRE from cryptographic and data-compliance perspectives. In Sect. 7, we review related works in the areas of threshold proxy re-encryption schemes and personal data sharing mechanisms utilizing Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT). Finally, Sect. 8 offers concluding remarks.

## 2 Background

In this section, we give an overview of the system's architectural components needed to understand Sect. 3. Throughout this section, we assume two parties: a data-holder (DH) which has some data stored in a decentralized personal data-space (PDS) and a data-receiver (DR) which wants to access it.

### 2.1 Threshold cryptosystems

A  $(t, n)$ -threshold cryptosystem involves multiple parties in a set  $\mathcal{P} = P_{i \in \mathcal{I}}$  performing a cryptographic operation together. The key feature of this system is that a minimum number of parties, referred to as the "threshold"  $t$ , must participate for the cryptosystem to succeed. In other words, the cryptosystem will only work if at least  $t$  out of the  $n$  parties are honest and follow the protocol. Since generally a cryptosystem is used to give access to some information, we say that  $\Sigma = (t, n)$  is an *access structure*.

**Algorithm 1** LsssPrep for a  $(t, n)$  secret sharing

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**Require:**  $\mathcal{I}$ : set of identities of parties,  $t$ : threshold,  $s$ : secret

- 1:  $n = \text{len } \mathcal{I}$
- 2: **for**  $i = 1 \dots t - 1$  **do**  $\triangleright$  Initialize  $a_i$  for  $i = 0, \dots, t - 1$
- 3:      $a_i \leftarrow_{\mathfrak{S}} \mathbb{F}$
- 4: **end for**
- 5:  $a_0 = s$   $\triangleright q(0) = s$
- 6: Initialize  $q(\cdot) = a_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{t-1} a_i \cdot i$   $\triangleright$  Polynomial initialization
- 7: **for**  $i$  in  $\mathcal{I}$  **do**  $\triangleright$  The values of  $\mathcal{I}$  must be numbers in the field  $\mathbb{F}$
- 8:     Send  $(i, q(i))$  to party  $i$
- 9: **end for**

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Two research strands involve threshold cryptosystems: threshold signing and secret sharing. On the one hand,  $(t, n)$ -threshold signing, considered to have been introduced by Desmedt in 1987 [11], is a process where  $t$ -of- $n$  parties are involved into signing a message on behalf of all  $n$  participants. On the other hand, in  $(t, n)$  secret sharing a secret  $s$  is split into  $n$  different parts called *shares* (or *fragments*) such that  $t$  of them are necessary to reconstruct the original  $s$ . Among many secret sharing schemes, we focus on the Shamir Secret Sharing (SSS) one since it is the one used in both Umbral and the redistribution mechanism our work is based on.

The scheme is based on polynomial interpolation over a field. In a field  $\mathbb{F}$ , it is well known that given  $t$  points in the 2-dimensional plane  $\{(x_i, y_i)\}_{i=1}^t$  there is one and only one polynomial  $q(x)$  of degree  $t - 1$  such that  $q(x_i) = y_i$  for each  $i = 1, \dots, t$ . Assume a *secret* number  $s$ . As mentioned, this secret can be split and shared to  $n$  parties in such a way that  $t$  of those shares are needed to reconstruct  $s$ : see **LsssPrep** in Algorithm 1.

Since the shares are distinct points on a plane for polynomial  $q(\cdot)$ , the SSS scheme uses Lagrange Polynomials applied to the shares, as presented in Algorithm 2, to reconstruct the secret.

**Algorithm 2** LsssRec for a  $(t, n)$  secret sharing

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**Require:**  $\mathcal{I}$ : set of identities of parties,  $t$ : threshold

```

1:  $n = \text{len } \mathcal{I}$ 
2: Wait for  $t$  shares  $i_{j_1}, q(i_{j_1})$  from parties  $i_{j_1}, \dots, i_{j_t} \in \mathcal{I}$ 
3:  $L = 0$ 
4: for  $k = 1 \dots t$  do
5:    $\lambda_k = \prod_{w=1, w \neq k}^t \frac{i_{j_w}}{i_{j_w} - i_{j_k}}$   $\triangleright$  Create a Lagrange basis
6:    $L = L + \lambda_k q(i_{j_k})$   $\triangleright$  Use Lagrange polynomials to
   create  $q(0) = s$ 
7: end for
8: return  $L$   $\triangleright L = q(0) = s$ 

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## 2.2 Proxy re-encryption schemes

A well-known problem faced by data holders (DHs) in a decentralized PDS is the lack of direct control over the outsourced data in  $\mathcal{E}$  [12, 13], which raises security concerns, especially in (pseudo) anonymous settings.

One of the most effective ways to deal with this issue is for the  $DH$  to encrypt the data before uploading it to the PDS [14]. This naive solution, though, inhibits the delegation of access (i.e. “sharing”) to a data receiver  $DR$  of a piece of data  $pd_i$ , since the process requires  $DH$  to download, re-encrypt  $pd_i$  for  $DR$  and re-upload  $pd_i$ . To solve this issue Blaze et al. introduced the Proxy Re-Encryption

(PRE) scheme in [15]. A PRE is a semi-trusted proxy that transforms a cyphertext encrypted for  $DH$  to a cyphertext encrypted for  $DR$ , without decrypting the cyphertext or leaking the related plaintext. Specifically, with a PRE,  $DH$  can encrypt  $pd_i$  under its own public key before uploading it to the PDS. Then, after receiving the request of data sharing from  $DR$ ,  $DH$  can generate a *proxy re-encryption key* and send it to the PRE. The PRE is then able to re-encrypt  $pd_i$  into a cyphertext under the public key of  $DR$ .

While these cryptographic primitives solve the privacy problem (the proxy can not read the data stored/sent), it does not solve the *ensorship* problem: the proxy can block any request and decline any sharing of the data. In that regard, the proxy acts as a trusted and custodial (of data) party.

Similarly to other projects, it is possible to mitigate this risk by employing multiple nodes together and create a threshold cryptosystem for proxy re-encryption nodes, in other words a threshold PRE. One way to achieve that is explained in the work by Nunez [5], which is called Umbral. Umbral is a threshold PRE which uses a Key Encapsulation Mechanism (KEM) to obtain a Data Encryption Method (DEM). More explicitly, in Umbral, each file  $pd \in \mathcal{D}$  from a  $DH$  is encrypted with a symmetric key  $K \in \mathcal{K}$ . The encrypted file is a couple  $(\text{Enc}(pd, K), \text{Enc}_{pk_{DH}}(K))$ . The Umbral threshold PRE leverages the **ReKeyGen** procedure to output multiple shares of the re-encryption key via a SSS scheme. These shares are called fragments or more concisely  $kFrag$ , in [5], and are distributed to the node operators as part of the **ReKeyGen** routine. More formally:

**Definition 1** (TPRE) A  $(t, n)$ -threshold proxy re-encryption scheme (TPRE) is a tuple of algorithms  $(\text{KeyGen}, \text{ReKeyGen}, \text{Encapsulate}, \text{ReEncapsulate}, \text{DecapsulateFrag})$ :

- $(sk_A, pk_A) \leftarrow \text{KeyGen}(1^\lambda)$  On input security parameter  $\lambda$ , the key generation algorithm **KeyGen** outputs a pair of secret and public keys  $(sk_A, pk_A)$  for user  $A$ .
- $kFrag_1, \dots, kFrag_n \leftarrow \text{ReKeyGen}(sk_A, pk_B, n, t)$ : On input the secret key  $sk_A$  of user  $A$  (generally the  $DH$ ), the public key  $pk_B$  of user  $B$  (generally the  $DR$ ), a number of shares  $n$  and a threshold  $t$ , the re-encryption key generation algorithm **ReKeyGen** computes the re-encryption key  $rk_{A \rightarrow B}$  and then uses SSS scheme to share it in  $n$  different  $kFrag$ s, where  $kFrag_i = (id_i, rk_i, opt)$ , with  $id_i$  the identity of node  $i$ ,  $rk_i$  its share of the re-encryption key and  $opt$  optional arguments depending on the implementation.
- $(K, \gamma_K) \leftarrow \text{Encapsulate}(pk_A)$ : On input the public key  $pk_A$  of user  $A$ , the algorithm **Encapsulate** outputs a

symmetric key  $K \in \mathcal{K}$  used to encrypt the data and a capsule  $\gamma_K = \text{Enc}(K)$ .

- $cFrag_i \leftarrow \text{ReEncapsulate}(kFrag_i, \gamma_K)$ : On input a key share  $kFrag_i$  and a capsule  $\gamma_K$ , algorithm **ReEncapsulate** outputs a share (or fragment) of the capsule  $cFrag_i$  of the capsule  $\gamma_K$ .
- $K \leftarrow \text{DecapsulateFrag}(sk_B, pk_A, \{cFrag\}_{i=1}^{>t})$ : On input the secret key  $sk_B$  of user  $B$ , the public key  $pk_A$  of user  $A$  and at least  $t$   $cFrag$ s, algorithm **DecapsulateFrag** outputs  $K$  (note that it is the same  $K$  of algorithm **Encapsulate**).

Figure 1 highlights the flow of the procedures which we explain in details in Sect. 4

From Definition 1, it is easy to see that a PRE is an extension of a public key encryption scheme (PKE). Therefore a PRE must follow the security models of PKEs which present an interesting challenge. On the one hand, PREs have to guarantee confidentiality and validity of the cyphertexts as any PKE. On the other, PREs have to allow re-encryption of cyphertexts. A thorough overview of how different schemes deal with the challenge is presented by Nunez et al. in [5].

### 2.3 Key redistribution mechanisms

Most threshold cryptosystems, and particularly secret sharing schemes, assume parties will take good care of their share. In fact, if some party  $P_i$  loses a share, it is generally said that  $P_i$  is corrupted or faulty. No further analysis on  $P_i$  is done, since from the point of view of the threshold cryptosystem, no single party is important as long as the majority or minority of them is still honest, depending on the access structure of the cryptosystem.

On the other hand, real world deployments of these systems have to deal with such problems. For example in Proactive Secret Sharing schemes [16, 17] the participants refresh (or *rotate*) their key shares periodically, in order to avoid these kinds of problems or at least mitigating them. The process is known as key-refresh or key-rotation.

However, in proactive secret sharing schemes, the access structure is not changed: the set of parties required for threshold secret sharing are the same before and after the key-refresh. Therefore, the only way to extend or shrink the access structure once it is in place is by performing a new distribution of the shares. This is costly, since it requires  $DH$  to recompute all the shares. Consequently, new approaches have been proposed in the literature to deal with this issue.

Among those proposals, one that is beneficial for the goal of this paper is the process of *redistribution* of shares. Unlike key refreshing schemes, a redistribution of shares is performed by the AS, supports the change of the access

structure and requires no input by the  $DH$  (beside some authorization if needed by the general system).

In this proposal and proof of concept,<sup>2</sup> we use a redistribution method as presented by Desmedt et al. in [11]. The method leverages a SSS scheme once more and treats each share as a secret on its own. More formally, given a  $(t, n)$ -SSS scheme with shares  $s_1, \dots, s_n$ :

- $s'_1, \dots, s'_m \leftarrow \text{DesRedistr}(s_1, \dots, s_n)$ : On input  $t \leq k \leq n$  shares from a  $(t, n)$ -SSS for secret  $s$ , algorithm **DesRedistr** outputs  $m$  secret shares  $s'_1, \dots, s'_m$  such that  $k$  of them are needed to reconstruct  $s$ .

In practice **DesRedistr** transforms a  $(t, n)$ -SSS into a  $(k, m)$ -SSS.

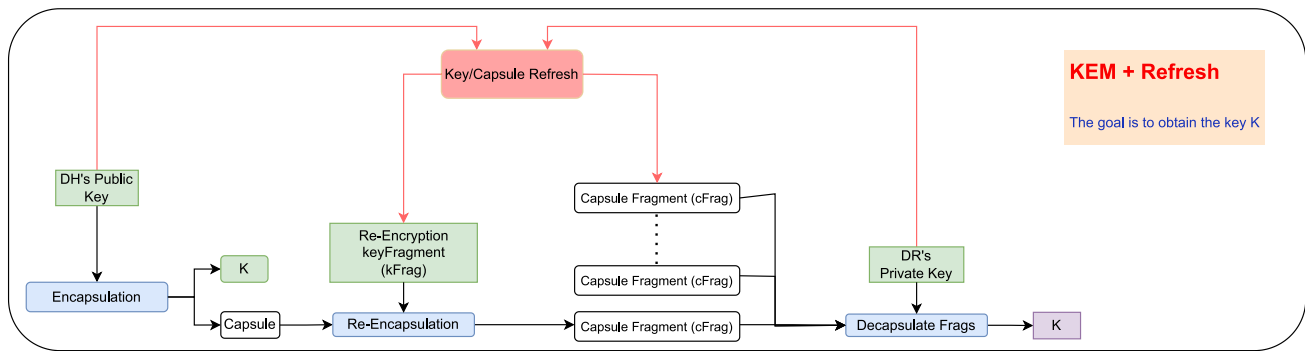
It is easy to see that if  $k = t$  and  $m > n$  then **DesRedistr** adds a new party to the access structure, while if  $t < m < n$  then **DesRedistr** removes party from the access structure. We will see in Sect. 6.1 the constraints on  $k$  and  $m$  related on  $t$  and  $n$ . A working example tailored to our purposes is presented in Algorithm 3.

### 2.4 IOTA

IOTA [18] operates as a DLT based on the Tangle, a decentralized data structure replicated across a network of nodes. The Tangle constitutes a directed acyclic graph of blocks (a block-DAG), where each new block is linked to multiple older ones. In the IOTA Tangle, participants seeking to issue a block containing a transaction must validate two preceding blocks, thereby replacing the conventional transaction fee concept. This validation process involves users contributing to the network's security and functionality by validating other transactions. To issue a new block, a user is required to perform a small Proof-of-Work (POW) computation, representing a cryptographic puzzle that demands a specific amount of computational effort to solve. Notably, the difficulty level of POW in IOTA is intentionally kept relatively low compared to traditional blockchain networks such as Bitcoin or Ethereum.

Furthermore, the IOTA ecosystem supports smart contracts through the IOTA Smart Contracts (ISC) protocol. While the IOTA Tangle functions as a Layer 1 (L1) network, the ISC protocol establishes a Layer 2 (L2) network of nodes executing an Ethereum Virtual Machine (EVM)-compatible blockchain. The EVM, standing for "Ethereum Virtual Machine," is a widely adopted virtual machine for running smart contract implementations, utilizing the Solidity programming language. ISC, as an L2 framework,

<sup>2</sup> A working implementation of the key redistribution for KeRePRE can be found at <https://github.com/dinocen/umbral-rs/blob/master/src/internal/keyredistrib.rs>.



**Fig. 1** The image represents the Umbral work flow with our key redistribution extension (in red). Either *DH* or *DR* can trigger a key redistribution procedure. The nodes in the threshold proxy re-encryption operate the *kFrag* and *cFrag* redistribution (Color figure online)

introduces quasi-Turing complete smart contracts to the IOTA technology stack. It operates as a versatile, multi-chain environment capable of running numerous parallel L2 Blockchains atop the L1 IOTA ledger. Each chain maintains an independent ledger state, utilizing an account-based model anchored to a specific IOTA unspent transaction Output (UTXO) ledger account on L1.

Each chain within the ISC protocol can host multiple smart contracts, fully composable via synchronous calls within the chain. Simultaneously, cross-chain transactions are facilitated through an anchoring mechanism on L1, promoting asynchronous composability. This design enables smart contracts to interact trustlessly across different IOTA Smart Contract chains.

### 3 Key redistribution

Umbral, which lacks a key redistribution mechanism, cannot be directly used for key rotation or redistribution. However, in this section, we demonstrate how we can expand Umbral’s capabilities to create a threshold PRE that is suitable for real-world use. We will explain in Sect. 4 how the system can be applied in a DLT-based PDS to enhance its security and perform tasks such as key addition, key deletion, or simple key-refresh. The terminology used is clarified in Sect. 3.1, where we also introduce the actors and the architecture model. The key-redistribution mechanism in KeRePRE is divided into two algorithms: one for managing the *kFrag*s (Sect. 3.3) and the other for managing the *cFrag*s (Sect. 3.4).

#### 3.1 Actors and architectural components

##### 3.1.1 Actors

We define different actors that have one or more roles in the system. In detail, we identify the following actors:

- Data subject (*DS*)—The natural person that uses a personal device that in turn generates personal data.
- Data holder (*DH*)—The legal or natural person who has the right or obligation or the ability to make available specific data (both personal and non).
- Data intermediary (*DI*)—The legal or natural person who mediates between those holders who wish to make their data available and data recipients. We have two specializations of data intermediary:
  - Storage Provider (*SP*)—The one that provides the access to the DFS. This actor provides functionalities attributed of storing and serving (encrypted) personal data.
  - Authorization Server (*AS*)—The one that provides the access to the DLT to the authorization service, i.e., takes part to the cryptosystem.
- Data recipient (*DR*)—The legal or natural person to whom the data holder makes data available.

Since the names of the actors involved in KeRePRE are different from the usual names due to the specific use case involved, we provide a comparison of the names for easy access in Table 1

##### 3.1.2 Architecture Model

In the following, we use a model to refer to the elements managed in the system.

- The data holder actor controls a set of personal data that have not been encrypted, i.e.,  $\mathcal{D} = \{pd_l \mid 1 \leq l \leq o\}$  where  $o$  is the amount of pieces of data *DH* has.
- Furthermore,  $\mathcal{K} = \{k_{pd_l} \mid \text{Enc}_{k_{pd_l}}(pd_l), 1 \leq l \leq o\}$  is the data holder’s set of keys used to encrypt personal data and  $\mathcal{E} = \{epd_l \mid epd_l = \text{Enc}_{k_{pd_l}}(pd_l), 1 \leq l \leq o\}$  is the set of encrypted personal data.
- Data holders and authorization servers control a set of capsules  $\mathcal{C} = \{\gamma_{k_{pd_l}} \mid \gamma_{k_{pd_l}} = \text{Enc}_{pk_{DH}}(k_{pd_l}), 1 \leq l \leq o\}$ ,

**Table 1** Comparison of the names between the Umbral project and our extension KeRePRE

KeRePRE	Umbral
Data Subject	N/A
Data Holder	Alice
DFS Provider	N/A
Authorization Server	Proxy Re-encryption Node
Data Recipient	Bob

where  $pk_{DH}$  is the public key of the data holder (see Definition 1), that contain a key used to encrypt a piece of personal data.

- We consider that all DFS providers  $SP$  store the data holders' set of encrypted personal data  $epd \in \mathcal{E}$  and the associated set of decentralized identifiers used to identify the  $epd$ . In this case, the decentralized identifier is equal to a hash pointer obtained by hashing the  $epd$ , i.e.,  $HP = \{hp_{epd_l} \mid hp_{epd_l} = \text{Hash}(epd_l), 1 \leq l \leq o\}$  where Hash is a predetermined hash function (e.g., in the IPFS DFS these hash pointers are CIDs). Thus,  $hp_{epd_x}$  is both the identifier of the  $epd_x$  datum in the DFS and the on-chain hash pointer, i.e., that will be stored in the DLT.

### 3.2 Threat model and security goals

We assume that all cryptographic primitives are secure and adhere to the established recommendations. Specifically, we assume that  $DH$ ,  $DR$ ,  $DS$  and the authorization servers utilize a permissionless blockchain based on elliptic curve cryptography (ECC) within groups where the discrete logarithm problem is difficult. We also assume that encryption algorithm chosen to perform asymmetric and symmetric encryption are secure and that the key encapsulation mechanism is compatible with those. Furthermore, the authorization servers must control less than one-third of the resources necessary to engage in the consensus algorithm, whether these resources are measured in hash rate for Proof of Work (PoW) blockchains or stake for Proof of Stake (PoS) ones. We also assume that users have the capability to access and read the blockchain at their convenience, though they are not obligated to do so at any particular time.

We assume every MPC protocol is secure in the real/ideal paradigm. In particular, we assume the threshold cryptosystem and the key redistribution mechanisms are secure. Furthermore we assume that the number of faulty or dishonest and colluding authorization servers for a  $(t, n)$  threshold cryptosystem is less than  $t$ . Consequently, we assume no adversary is able to corrupt  $t$  authorization

servers before being detected and sparking a key redistribution session (Sect. 2.3)

In the aforementioned threat model, we aim to create a protocol that is secure in the sense that it maintains the security of all the sub-protocols involved (see Sect. 6.1).

### 3.3 kFrag redistribution

We assume that either  $DH$  or  $DR$  triggers a key redistribution. Note that this triggering may be part of a notification system in the application that asks  $DH$  or  $DR$  if they want to act to mitigate a potential threat (such as a share corruption in one of the operator nodes). We show a representation of the dynamics of the extended system in Fig. 1.

A  $kFrag$  redistribution is a procedure that transforms a  $kFrag$  into a  $kFrag'$ . More formally:

- $(id, rk', opt) \leftarrow \text{kFragRedistr}((id, rk, opt))$ : On input a  $kFrag$ , the  $\text{kFragRedistr}$  algorithm outputs a new  $kFrag$  with the updated re-encryption key share.

In particular,  $\text{kFragRedistr}$  focuses on the update of the  $rk$  component into a  $rk'$  component. The complete  $\text{kFragRedistr}$  algorithm for a  $(t, n)$  threshold cryptosystem performed by each party  $P_i, i = 1 \dots n$  is presented in Algorithm 3.

**Algorithm 3**  $kFragRedistr$  for a  $(t, n)$  threshold scheme

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**Require:**  $kFrag_i = (id_i, rk_i, U^{rk_i} \dots), D, sid$

- 1: Get  $id_j$  from each party  $P_j$
- 2: **for**  $j = 1 \dots n$  **do**
- 3:     **if**  $j \neq i$  **then**
- 4:         Compute  $hid_j = H(D, id_j)$
- 5:     **end if**
- 6: **end for**
- 7:  $\{s_{i,j}\}_{j=1}^n \leftarrow \text{LsssPrep}(\{\{hid_j\}_{j=1}^n, rk_i\}_{j \neq i})$
- 8: **for**  $j = 1 \dots n$  **do**
- 9:     **if**  $j \neq i$  **then**
- 10:          $P_i$  sends share  $(id_i, s_{i,j})$  to party  $P_j$
- 11:     **end if**
- 12: **end for**
- 13: Wait for all shares  $\{(id_j, s_{j,i})\}_{j=1}^n$  from parties  $P_j$
- 14:  $rk' \leftarrow \text{LsssRec}(\{\{id_j, s_{j,i}\}_{j=1}^n\}_{j \neq i})$
- 15: Erase  $rk_i$  and  $s_{i,j} \forall j$
- 16: Output  $kFrag'_i = (id_i, rk'_i, U^{rk'_i} \dots)$

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To perform a key re-distribution, we use the Desmedt routine  $\text{DesRedistr}$  introduced in Sect. 2.3 (lines 7–14 of Algorithm 3). Instead of passing the  $id$  to the  $\text{LsssPrep}$  routine, as done in Algorithm 1, we pass the hashed id  $hid$  instead: this change is done to maintain compatibility with

the original Umbral protocol and does not affect the security of the Desmedt key-redistribution protocol. On the other hand, note that we pass the actual  $id$  as parameter in the `LsssRec` at line 14.

### 3.4 cFrag redistribution

As mentioned in Sect. 2.2, for each  $kFrag$  there is a  $cFrag$ . The latter is used by  $DR$  to recover the data after a `Re – Encryption` has been performed by the node operators.

**Algorithm 4** `cFragRefresh` for a  $(t, n)$  threshold scheme

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**Require:**  $cFrag_i, rk_i, rk'_i, sid$   
 1:  $(E_i, V_i, id_i, X_A) \leftarrow cFrag_i$   
 2:  $E'_i = E_i^{rk'_i/rk_i}$   
 3:  $V'_i = V_i^{rk'_i/rk_i}$   
 4: Output  $cFrag'_i = (E'_i, V'_i, id_i, X_A)$

---

Algorithm 4 shows how a  $cFrag$  is updated. Note that `cFragRefresh` must be performed after `kFragRedistr`, since knowledge of the new  $rk'$  is necessary to operate the update of the  $cFrag$ . To see why the change works note that:

$$E'_i = E_i^{rk'_i/rk_i} = (E^{rk_i})^{rk'_i/rk_i} = E^{rk'_i} \quad (1)$$

so  $E'_i$  is constructed as if it came directly from the `ReEncryption` function. Moreover, the change does *not* require the nodes operators to know  $E$  (which would be unfeasible because of the discrete logarithm problem). All these considerations works similarly for  $V'_i$ .

## 4 A DLT based PDS

This section outlines our proposed scheme: a DLT-based Personal Data Storage (PDS). The design of the PDS addresses two key issues: the lack of transparency in managing personal information and the inability to access and make personal data interoperable. Our PDS offers a user-centered model for managing personal data, where storage is separated from the application logic. Providers of personal data apps and data intermediaries can leverage PDS to demonstrate their compliance with regulations such as GDPR [19]. The resulting PDS system is GDPR compliant, providing protection to users' data, and promotes transparent personal data sharing.

Our system architecture relies on the use of DLTs and a decentralized file storage (DFS). DLTs offer technological guarantees for trusted data management and sharing, as

they provide a fully auditable decentralized access control policy management and evaluation via smart contracts. This feature enables the actors involved in data processing and control to demonstrate their compliance transparently. The DFS is combined with the DLT to overcome the scalability and privacy issues associated with DLTs while preserving the benefits of decentralization. A DFS is used for storing data outside the DLT through “off-chain” storage, and tracing all data references in the DLT through “on-chain” storage.

The proposed system has four operation: Data Storage, Data Sharing, New AS Addition and AS removal. In the following we describe the operations

### 4.1 Data storage

We assume each actor has a unique pair of asymmetric keys obtained via `KeyGen` (see Definition 1) In particular,  $DH$  has key-pair  $(sk_{DH}, pk_{DH})$ ,  $DR$  has key-pair  $(sk_{DR}, pk_{DR})$ , and  $SP_i$  has key-pair  $(sk_{SP_i}, pk_{SP_i})$ .

The data holder  $DH$  encrypts its personal data  $pd$ , obtaining  $epd \in \mathcal{E}$ , using a symmetric key  $K \in \mathcal{K}$  obtained through the function `Encapsulate`( $pk_{DH}$ ). As part of the `Encapsulate` function,  $K$  is placed in a capsule  $\gamma_K$  (see Sect. 2.2). The capsule is sent to the authorization servers AS.

The (personal) data  $epd$  is then stored in a DFS associated with a DS and it is accessible via a P2P network with data replication mechanisms, making it widely available.  $epd$  can be referenced with its hash pointer  $hp_{epd}$ . The pointer is based on the content hash digest, such as IPFS's content identifiers, or CIDs: this ensures data verifiability, since data may have been altered since it was stored in the PDS and must be audited.

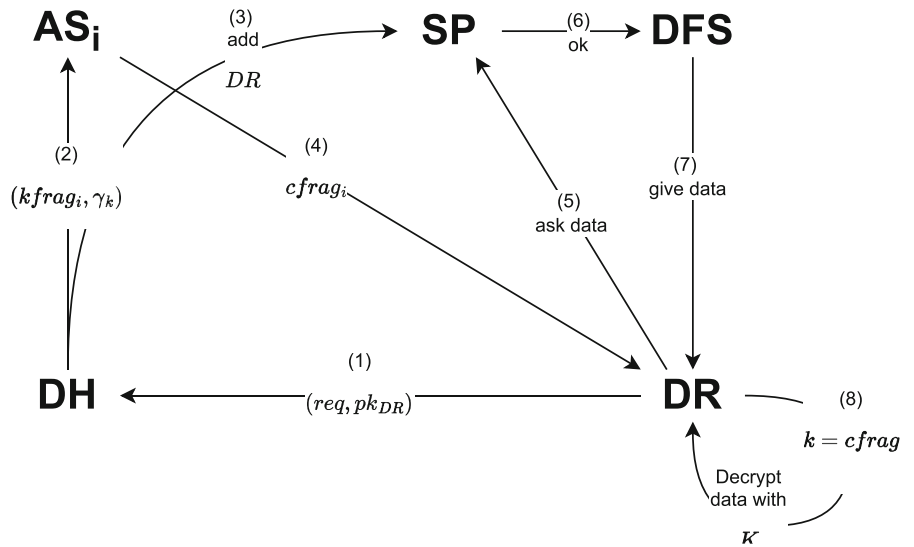
### 4.2 Data sharing

The whole process is explained in Fig. 2

If a user  $U$  wants to access  $pd$ , it has to ask  $DH$  for authorization. If  $DH$  grants it, then the user becomes a data receiver  $DR$ . In practice that means  $U$  sends its public key  $pk_U$  to  $DH$  as part of the request. By accepting the request,  $DH$  performs `ReKeyGen`( $sk_{DH}, pk_U, n, t$ ) obtaining the new key fragments  $kFrag$ .  $DH$  sends the  $kFrag$  to the ASs: each of them performs `ReEncapsulate` on the received  $kFrag$ . The state of  $U$  changes after being granted access, so it becomes a data receiver  $DR$  (its key pair is denoted  $(sk_{DR}, pk_{DR})$  from now on).

The pointer  $hp_{epd}$  is stored in a smart contract implementing personal data access control. Note that different DLTs and/or services can use the same data storage system, facilitating the creation of a PDS for data portability.

**Fig. 2** Data Sharing steps between the data holder *DH* and the data receiver *DR*



Therefore, the primary use of the DLT is the execution of smart contracts implementing personal data access control.

To obtain all the *cFrag*, *DR* has to prove ownership of  $pk_{DR}$ . To do that, *DR* can sign the message  $hp_{epd}$  with  $sk_{DR}$ . The signature can be either posted on a bulletin board monitored by the *AS*s, or sent to each *AS* directly, depending on the implementation.

Upon receiving the signature, each *AS* checks in the ACL in the smart contract if *DR* can access  $hp_{epd}$ . If so, each  $AS_i$  sends  $cFrag_i$  to *DR*.

Finally, after collecting all the  $cFrag_i$ , *DR* can obtain the symmetric key *K* and decrypt *epd*.

### 4.3 New AS addition

Assuming KeRePRE grows in its user base, it is important for the system to scale accordingly. On the one hand the ACL management can not scale: the ACL is managed by a smart contract, therefore scaling that part means dealing with the topic of blockchain scaling, which we discussed in a previous work [19]. On the other hand, it is possible to add new authorization servers to the PDS management. Using terminology from Sect. 3.1, this means that new *AS*s have to be added to the access structure.

To see how it is possible, assume the current access structure for a PDS is  $(t, n)$ , i.e. *t* *AS*s among *n* are needed to perform the ReEncapsulate algorithm for *DR* so that *DR* can obtain *K* via the DecapsulateFrag algorithm on the  $\{cFrag\}_{i=1}^t$  (see Sect. 3.1). Then, a new node  $SP_{n+1}$  can be added by performing kFragRedistr to create a  $(t, n + 1)$  access structure. Specifically, with reference to Algorithm 3, if it is possible to derive  $hid_j$  for  $j = 1, \dots, n + 1$  and LsssPrep can be called for  $\{hid\}_{j=1}^{n+1}$ . Furthermore, it is easy to see how the access structure can be incremented

not just by 1, but for arbitrary  $v > 0$  using the same method and in just one iteration create a new access structure of  $(t, n + v)$ .

### 4.4 AS removal

It easy to imagine that in the course of operations, at least a subset of nodes becomes faulty or are compromised. While ascertain when a *AS* has become malicious is outside the scope of the paper, we focus on how to deal with such cases.

As in Sect. 4.3, assume a current access structure of  $(t, n)$ . We split the explanation into two parts: we first deal with the case where there are still *m* honest nodes with  $t \leq m < n$  and then we deal with the case where  $m < t$ .

If there are *m* honest nodes,  $t \leq m < n$ , then it is possible to perform kFragRedistr involving only those *m* honest nodes and excluding the  $n - m$  malicious ones. Since the *m* nodes are honest by hypothesis, then we can trust them to perform data deletion, and therefore exclude the  $n - m$  malicious nodes forever, as we explain in Sect. 6.1. This procedure creates a new access structure of  $(t, m)$ .

On the other hand, if  $m < t$ , then the system is highly compromised and it is impossible to have a secure redistribution mechanism at this point, see proof of Theorem 1.

## 5 Performance evaluation

In this section, we present the methodology and results of the performance evaluation we carried out for the IOTA Smart Contracts (ISC) authorization blockchain. Our scope is to study the DLT side of our system proposal, as the implementation and performance evaluation of a PDS

implemented using IPFS was already provided in previous works [19].

We deployed all the smart contracts related to the authorization service in a local ISC blockchain, using the IOTA Wasp implementation [20]. Wasp is the node software that implements Smart Contracts on the IOTA Tangle. This software has support for EVM/Solidity smart contracts, as well as Wasm smart contracts, providing limited compatibility with existing smart contracts and tooling from other EVM based chains like Ethereum. The rationale behind this choice is to be able to implement smart contracts and transactions in a private network for protecting personal data stored on-chain by the Data Holders *DH*.

In this work, we are going to test our implementation of the KeRePRE protocol that was built on top of the TPRE Umbral libraries [21], openly available as source code [22]. This is executed by the Authorization Servers and thus integrated with the Wasp software. The client software and the smart contracts implementation is open source too and can be found in [23, 24].

### 5.1 Smart contracts implementation

As seen in previous sections, the interesting aspect of smart contracts is that an algorithm executed in a decentralized manner enables two parties, i.e., *DH* and *DR* (see Sect. 3.1 to see the notation), to reach an agreement in the transaction of the data. This not only increases the disintermediation in such a process, but also leaves traces to be later audited and provides incentives to all the actors to correctly behave. Figure 3 shows the UML Class Diagram of the smart contract Solidity implementation we are going to discuss in this sub-section.

Each *DH* has previously deployed a *DataHolderContract* in the ISC authorization blockchain. This holds an Access Control List (ACL) that enables Authorization Servers *AS* an immutable way of looking up which entities (ISC accounts in the form of addresses) are granted to access some data.

A Data Recipient *DR* can produce a data access consent request in a string form. In particular, the method *requestAccess()* is invoked in the *DataHolderContract*, with the associated hash pointer of the encrypted data in the PDS  $hp_{epd}$  and request as input (Fig. 3 shows  $id_*$  as parameter representing the  $hp_{epd}$  and an array of addresses *users* for representing the ISC accounts that will be granted access). A *NewRequest* event will reach each *DH*. Each *DH* decides to consent to the access to data based on the data access consent request received through the event. If so, the *DH* invokes the *grantAccessRequest()* method. The *DR* can

now access all content keys for the decryption of all the *DH* data through the *AS*.

### 5.2 Tests setup

During the test, we utilized the ISC consensus mechanism, which operates as follows [25]:

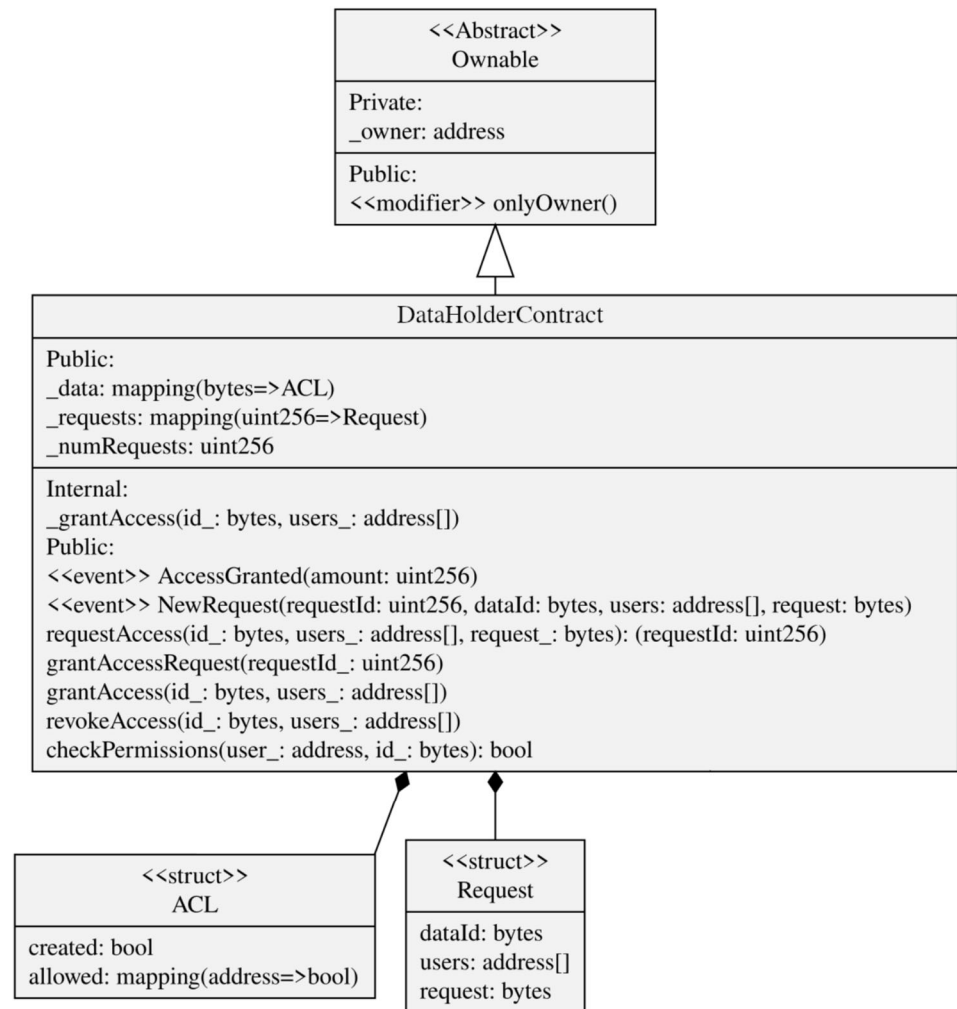
- Each ISC chain is operated by a committee of validators, each possessing a key that is split among all members.
- Each key share is useless on its own, but a collective signature grants validators complete control over the chain.
- The committee of validators is responsible for executing the smart contracts in the chain and calculating a state update.
- Once the next state is computed and validated, it is committed to each validator's database. Subsequently, a new block containing the state mutations is added to the chain, and the state hash is saved in the L1 IOTA Tangle.

Four validators nodes were deployed to the same machine to create the L2 ISC blockchain network and other two L1 Tangle network nodes were deployed to emulate the base ledger. Each ISC validator node executes the consensus mechanism with parameter values set up following the recommendations in [20]. Moreover, these nodes also execute the KeRePRE service. One validator node is used to expose the APIs for external clients to interact with the blockchain. Several client nodes are simulated to interact with these APIs.

In the following, we evaluate this set of operations that implement the KeRePRE protocol.

- (1) Request Access—this operation is executed by *DR* and consists of only one method invocation, i.e. the *requestAccess()* method in the *DataHolderContract*; we recall that this method requests access to the Data Holder's data.
- (2) Grant Access—this operation is executed by *DH* by invoking the *grantAccessRequest()*; this act will store *DR* public key  $pk_{DR}$  in the smart contract ACL in the form of ISC address.
- (3) Create KFrags—this operation includes three subsequent steps; firstly, *DH* generates  $n$  kFrag using *DR*'s  $pk_{DR}$  (see Definition 1) and sends a kFrag to each of the  $n$  *AS*s (i.e., ISC authorization blockchain nodes); finally, *DH* requests to the  $n$  nodes the creation of a cFrag using the kFrag they received (the capsule for the piece of data interested was sent in a pre-processing step, and is not accounted for the measuring).

**Fig. 3** UML Class Diagram of *DataHolderContract*. Some classes, attributes and methods have been removed to make the diagram clearer



- (4) Get CFrags—this operation is executed by *DR* to get access to the content key; *DR* first sign a challenge-response message using the secret key  $sk_{DR}$  associated to the  $pk_{DR}$ ; then *DR* sends a get cFragrequest to  $k$  different *AS* using the signed message; each node validates the signature and check if  $pk_{DR}$  is in the associated *ACL* in the *DataHolderContract*; if so, each node returns a cFragto *DR*.
- (5) Key Redistribution—this operation might happen in a different moment and it is used to transform a kFraginto a new kFragto allow for the addition or removal of an *AS*, see Sect. 2.3.

### 5.3 Results

We note that  $n$  corresponds to the count of ISC validators/ Authorization Servers and was configured to be 4. A round of operations is defined as the successful execution of the aforementioned procedures in sequence. The variables under scrutiny include the *threshold* ( $t$ ), ranging from 1 to

4, and the *number of DH* ( $k$ ), varying from 10 to 50 with increments of 10 each time. The measured dependent metrics in our tests encompass the *latency* (time taken for a response to an operation) and the system *throughput*, denoting the number of rounds of operations executed per second.

All possible combinations of independent variables were subjected to testing three times, with subsequent averaging of the results. In each trial, we initiated the round of operations ten times for every *DH*, employing an average interval of 1500 ms (derived from a Poisson Process with a mean of 1500 ms). Consequently, if the cumulative execution time of the operations exceeded 1500 ms, it was likely that another set of operations was launched in parallel. This procedure was repeated for each *DH*.

#### 5.3.1 Round of operations

Figures 4 and 5 depict the average response latency and standard deviation for each operation within a round. A notable observation is the significant disparity in latency

between the Request Access and Grant Access operations compared to the Create KFrags, Get CFrags, and Key Redistribution operations. This discrepancy arises from the involvement of the former two operations in writing to the ISC authorization blockchain’s ledger, illustrating the discernible impact of the blockchain on the overall system response latency.

Overall, the  $t$  value demonstrates minimal influence on the results. Conversely, as anticipated, the critical factor is the  $k$  value representing the number of  $DH$ . A gradual but consistent escalation in round response latency is evident between 30 and 50 Holders, starting from 1.5 s latency and peaking at 3.5 s for both Request Access and Grant Access operations. Beyond 40 Holders, the latency experiences a more rapid increase per  $DH$ . These trends seem linked to the initiation of a new round approximately every 1.5 s for each  $DH$ . Consequently, if a round surpasses the 1.5 s threshold, particularly from  $k = 40$  onward, a surge in parallel executions leads to an overall increase in response latency.

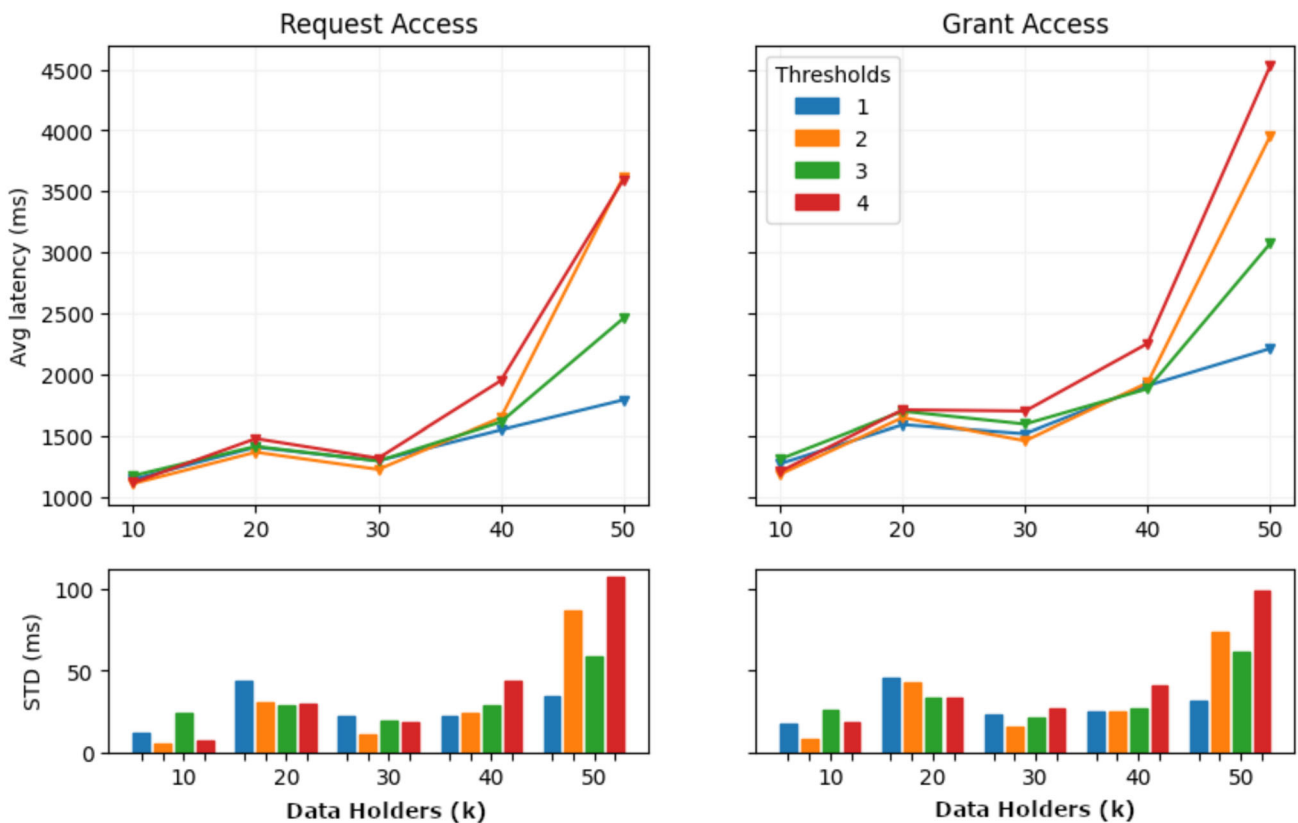
While operations dependent on blockchain writing take on the order of thousands of milliseconds (i.e., seconds), the Create KFrags, Get CFrags, and Key Redistribution operations operate in the range of tens of milliseconds. For

Create KFrags and Get CFrags, a direct correlation is observable between response latency and both  $t$  and  $k$  values. Specifically, with  $k = 10$ , latency values for the Create Kfrag operation hover around 20 ms, while for the Get CFrag operation, they are approximately 15 ms. These values do not exhibit a drastic increase even with  $k = 50$ . Notably, the Key Redistribution operation remains stable in terms of latency, seemingly unaffected by the  $k$  value within the range of 10 to 50, maintaining an average latency under 10 ms.

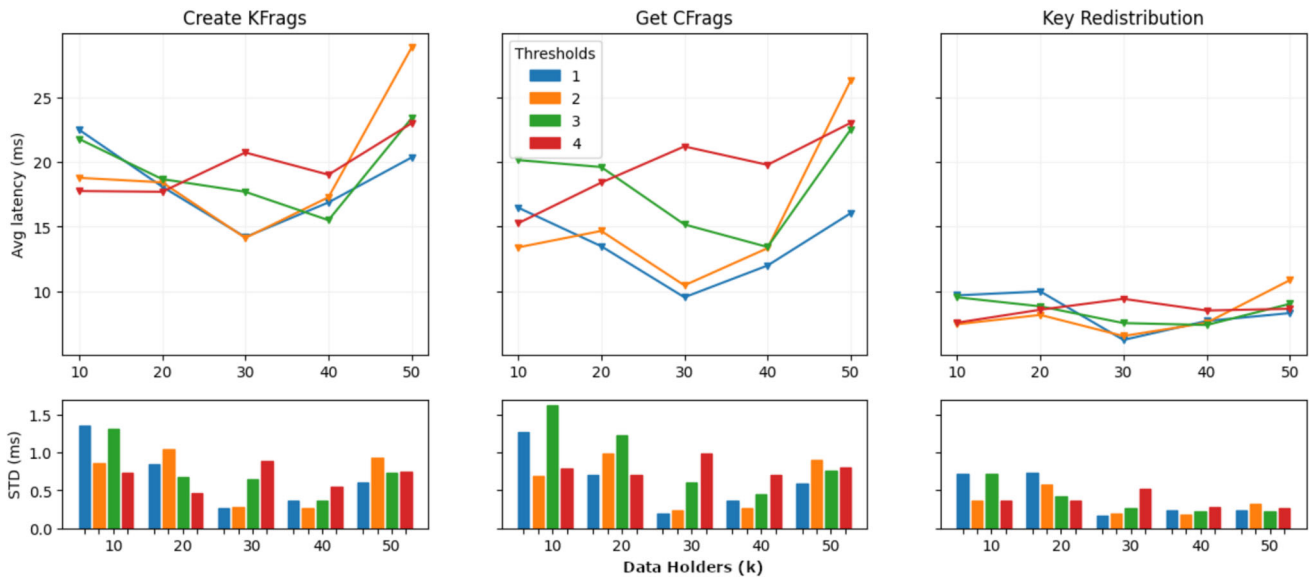
We stress that these results are not greatly affected by network latency because all the nodes were executed in the same machine.

### 5.3.2 System scalability

Figure 6 illustrates the outcomes obtained by treating the round as a single operation, aggregating the results for each Request Access, Grant Access, Create KFrags, Get CFrags, and Key Redistribution operation. The lower section of the figure displays the average latency for each round, while the upper section portrays the outcome of distributing the round’s latency across individual data holders, i.e.,  $latency/k$ , serving as a measure of scalability.



**Fig. 4** Average response latency when increasing the threshold  $t$  value and the number of Holders  $k$  for operations involving writing to the ISC blockchain



**Fig. 5** Average response latency when increasing the threshold  $t$  value and the number of Holders  $k$  for operations NOT involving writing to the ISC blockchain

The decrease or constancy of result values as  $k$  increases indicates the system’s scalability. Notably, the bottom section of the figure indicates a rise in average latency with an increase in  $k$ , particularly noticeable from 40 to 50  $DH$ . However, when contextualizing this latency result in terms of system throughput (upper part of the figure), it becomes evident that the system exhibits commendable behavior with the increasing  $k$  (at least up to 40  $DH$ ).

**5.4 Discussion**

Constrained to our conducted tests, it appears that an optimal ratio of completed rounds to response latency time is achieved with a number of  $DH$  around 30 and 40. Our observations underscore the substantial impact of writing in the ISC authorization blockchain on the overall system performance. Notably, the volume of requests pertaining exclusively to the KeRePRE operations (Create KFrags, Get CFrags, and Key Redistribution) demonstrates scalability to a larger number of  $DH$ .

In practical scenarios, the interaction of Holders with the system may exhibit a slower pace, resulting in an overall increase in round latency while concurrently reducing the system workload. For instance, envisioning the *New-Request* event triggered by the *requestAccess()* method being conveyed to the Data Holder via a smartphone notification, the reading and acceptance of which may take seconds, if not hours.

Nevertheless, we contend that the results affirm the viability of our approach, particularly considering the flexibility to adjust ISC authorization blockchain parameters and Wasp node hardware configuration. Furthermore,

the positive performance of the KeRePRE implementation provides grounds to consider relocating this module to another Virtual Machine that supports smart contracts but offers superior latency, potentially leading to further improvements.

**6 Analysis**

**6.1 Security**

One of the innovations of the proposed PDS is the ability to extend a TPRES to facilitate decentralized and encrypted data management with a dynamic access structure. The security analysis is focused on this aspect. Specifically, the security of adding members (Sect. 4.3) and deleting members (Sect. 4.4) needs to be demonstrated. To achieve this, a definition for security within the context of a share-redistribution scheme is introduced. It should be noted that an access structure  $(t, n)$  requires at least  $t$  out of  $n$  parties to reconstruct a secret  $s$ .

**Definition 2 (Secure Redistribution)** Let *Redist* be a share redistribution scheme form an access structure  $\Sigma = (t, n)$  to a access structure  $\Sigma' = (k, m)$  for a secret  $s$ , with  $m \geq t$ . Let  $\mathcal{P}$  be the set of parties for  $\Sigma$ ,  $\mathcal{P}'$  the set of parties in  $\Sigma'$  such that  $|\mathcal{P} \cap \mathcal{P}'| \geq t$ . Then *Redist* is secure if after its run parties from the set  $\mathcal{P} \setminus \mathcal{P}'$  are not able to reconstruct the secret  $s$  anymore.

We are now ready to state:

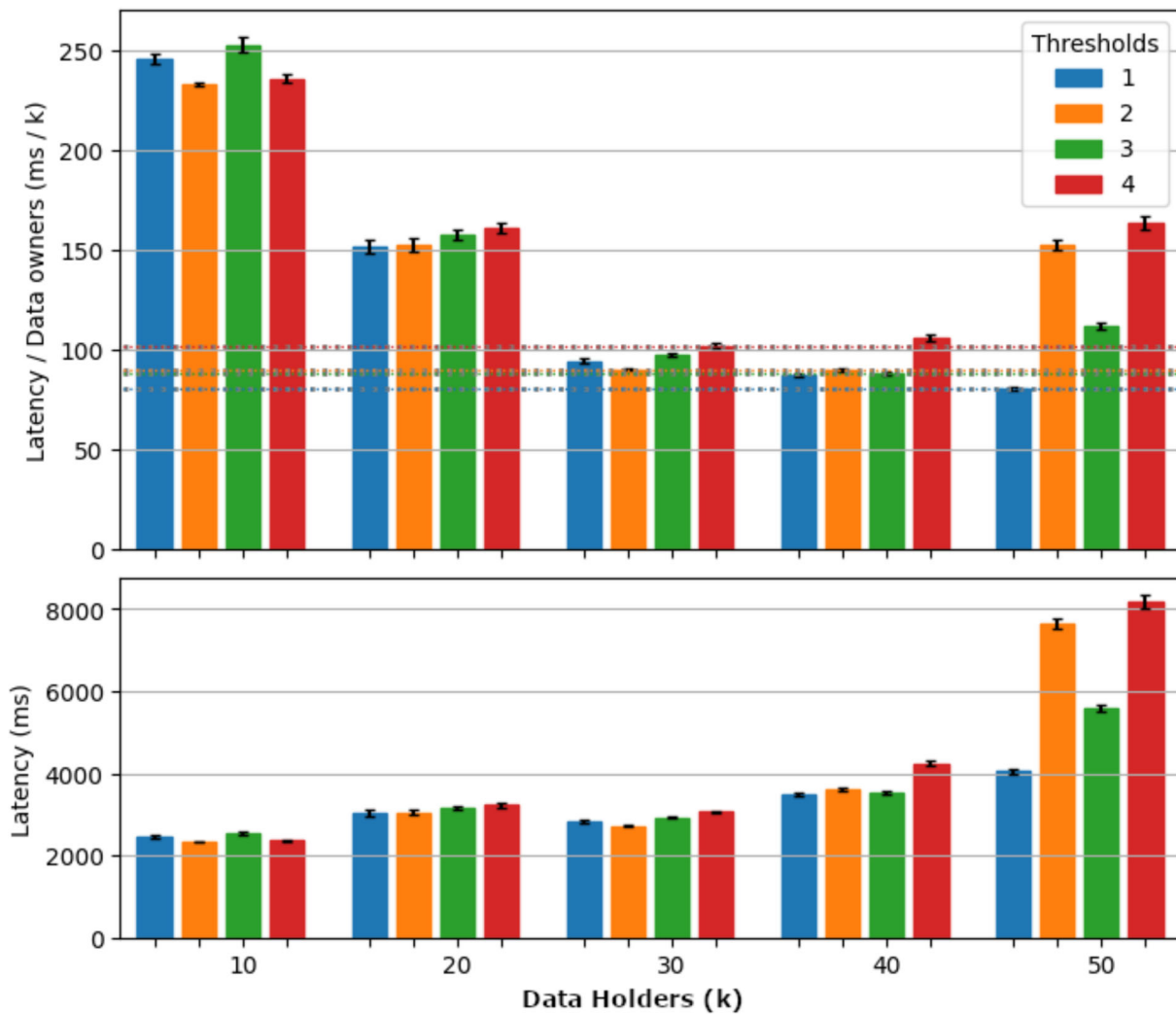


Fig. 6 System throughput considering a round as a single operation, i.e., aggregating the results for each single operation, while varying  $t$  and  $k$

**Theorem 1** (*Secure Redistribution for KeRePRE*) In the hypothesis of Definition 2, if  $2t > n$ , then  $kFragRedistr$  as presented in Algorithm 3 is a secure share redistribution scheme from  $\Sigma = (t, n)$  to  $\Sigma' = (k, m)$  with  $m \geq t$  and  $k \leq m$ .

**Proof** The proof strongly follows the work of Desmedt et al. [11], since the routine  $kFragRedistr$  is inspired by it.

First of all, note that a change from an access structure  $\Sigma = (t, n)$  to a access structure  $\Sigma' = (k, m)$  is feasible if and only if there are still at least  $t$  honest parties, otherwise it is impossible to reconstruct the secret  $s$  in the first place. This is equivalent to ask for a honest majority since  $t > \lfloor \frac{n}{2} \rfloor$ . Furthermore, note that if  $m < t$  then it is not possible to reconstruct the secret, since  $t$  is the least amount of number of parties in  $\mathcal{P}$  needed to reconstruct  $s$  according to  $\Sigma$ . If all the constraints are satisfied, then  $kFragRedistr$  is equivalent to the system of Theorem 1 in [11]. Consequently, it is possible to apply Corollary 3 of [11]

and conclude that it is sufficient that all the honest parties in  $\mathcal{P}$  erase  $rk_i$  and  $s_{i,j} \forall j$  to guarantee that parties in  $\mathcal{P} \setminus \mathcal{P}'$  can not reconstruct secret  $s$ . Parties are required to do this operation in Line 15 of Algorithm 3.  $\square$

We can now prove that the whole protocol is secure in the real/ideal paradigm. To do that we start by introducing a widely known theorem, called the *Sequential Composition Theorem* [26]. The theorem semi-formally states:

**Theorem 2** (*Sequential Composition Theorem* [26]) Suppose that protocols  $\rho_1 \cdots \rho_m$  securely evaluate functions  $f_1 \cdots f_m$ , respectively, and that a protocol  $\pi$  securely evaluates a function  $g$  while using subroutine calls for ideal evaluation of  $f_1 \cdots f_m$ . Then the protocol  $\pi^{\rho_1 \cdots \rho_m}$ , derived from protocol  $\pi$  by replacing every subroutine call for ideal evaluation of  $f_i$  with an invocation of protocol  $\rho_i$  in the real world, securely evaluates  $g$ .

Since we are in the ideal/real paradigm (see Sect. 3.2) we can Theorem 2 to prove security, noting that  $f_1 \cdots f_m$  are the idealized versions of the threshold cryptosystem used (Sect. 2.1) and the key redistribution schemes (Sect. 2.3), while  $\rho_1 \cdots \rho_m$  are their respective real world versions. It is now easy to prove:

**Theorem 3 (KeRePRE Security)** *Suppose that every ideal evaluation of  $f_1 \cdots f_m$  of KeRePRE is secure in the ideal world. Then the whole protocol KeRePRE is secure in the real world.*

**Proof** We start by noting that if every ideal evaluation of  $f_1 \cdots f_m$  of KeRePRE is secure in the ideal world then the whole protocol KeRePRE is secure in the ideal world.

Let  $\pi = \pi^{f_1 \cdots f_m}$  be the whole KeRePRE protocol in the ideal world. Then  $\pi^{\rho_1 \cdots \rho_m}$  is derived from protocol  $\pi$  by replacing every subroutine call for ideal evaluation of  $f_i$  with an invocation of protocol  $\rho_i$ . By Theorem 2, then,  $\pi^{\rho_1 \cdots \rho_m}$  securely evaluates KeRePRE in the real world, i.e. KeRePRE is secure in the real world.  $\square$

We conclude this section by proving that KeRePRE is a secure *proactive* protocol. Since we proved overall security in Theorem 3, we need to only show that the threshold cryptosystem achieves proactive security. In other words:

**Definition 3 (Proactive security)** Let  $\pi$  be a secure threshold cryptosystem. Then  $\pi$  achieve *proactive security* if  $\pi$  stays secure after each key redistribution.

**Theorem 4 (Proactive Security of KeRePRE)** *KeRePRE is proactively secure.*

**Proof** We already proved that KeRePRE is secure in the real world. One of the assumptions was that every subroutine was secure, including the key redistribution mechanism. If the key redistribution mechanism is secure, then for each call to the key redistribution functionality, KeRePRE stays secure. Therefore the conditions of Definition 3 are met, and KeRePRE is proactively secure.  $\square$

## 6.2 Data protection

As per Article 32 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) [1], data controllers, or *authorization servers* (Sect. 3.1), must adopt appropriate security measures to guarantee the confidentiality and integrity of personal data. Encryption is one among the recommended security measures to protect the data from unauthorized access, albeit not a perfect one. In fact, the disclosure of an encryption key is a considerable risk to the confidentiality and integrity of personal data. In such a scenario, data controllers must promptly take actions in compliance with the GDPR (as per Articles 33 and 34) [1].

In this paper, we assert that KeRePRE enhances the efficacy of certain steps that the data controller must perform in such an eventuality. The primary step is implementing corrective measure to prevent future breaches. This may include enhancing its encryption protocols and improving access controls. KeRePRE enables authorization servers to perform key deletion and addition procedures easily, thus allowing them to comply with the implementation of corrective measures.

## 7 Related works

### 7.1 Threshold proxy re-encryption

Blaze et al. [15] introduced Proxy Re-encryption (PRE), a primitive that enables semi-trusted proxies to transform a cyphertext encrypted under the key of a delegator to a cyphertext encrypted under the key of a delegatee, without decrypting the original cyphertext.

Over the years, PRE schemes have evolved across multiple dimensions, including security models, efficiency, and specialized properties. For a complete survey on the matter, see [27].

Since [15] was vulnerable to collusion attacks where the delegatee and the proxy could recover the private key of the delegator, Jakobsson [28] proposed quorum-controlled unidirectional PRE to mitigate this issue. Ivan and Dodis [29] introduced a single-use PRE by splitting the delegator's key, though their design required additional secrets and suffered from collusion risks.

Ateniese et al. [30] formalized PRE and introduced bilinear pairing-based unidirectional schemes with temporary delegation, though multi-hop unidirectional PRE remained open. Canetti and Hohenberger [31] later proposed a CCA-secure bidirectional multi-use scheme without random oracles, leaving further challenges for PRE development.

However, all of them still relied on a single proxy to handle the encryption operation, posing an enormous threat to the users. To solve this problem, new threshold based proxy re-encryption schemes decentralized the proxy into multiple proxies. To handle the coordination between them, a DLT is generally used.

In that regard, one of the first applications of TPRES into a DLT environment can be seen in the proposal by Chen et al. in [4]. The authors apply a TPRES to the access permission mechanism of a consortium DLT. On the other hand, Egorov et al. in [32] propose a management service in a decentralized network provide in encryption and cryptographic access control. Similar to our proposal, their TPRES reference software is Umbral [5]. Differently from them, we add a key re-distribution mechanism.

More recently, Chen et al. in [3] propose an architecture that converges TPRE and DLT consensus algorithm for the creation of a decentralized key management system tailored for the Internet of Things. This system too lacks a key redistribution mechanism. Bai et al. [33] propose a GDPR-compliant data storage and sharing framework using blockchain for smart healthcare systems where a PRE network is used to share the encrypted data. Also in their case, there is no use of key redistribution mechanisms. Furthermore, their PRE network solution does not involve a threshold scheme and can lead to single-point-of-failures.

## 7.2 DLT and personal data sharing

Several research works have proposed the use of DLTs for data management in order to create innovative smart services and promote social good applications [34, 35]. Typically, these approaches involve storing data off-chain while utilizing the DLT to provide data access transparency and granular control at the user level. Access control mechanisms that leverage DLTs and smart contracts have been proposed to solve centralization and privacy issues (see for example the proposal by Jemel et al. [36]) and to enable secure storage, sharing, and transmission of data. Many researchers have focused on designing data management systems that preserve user control over their data and meet GDPR requirements. For instance, Merlec et al. [9] present a GDPR-compliant system where users have control over their personal data collection and transaction history is recorded on the blockchain for data provenance. Similarly, Hawig et al. [37] propose a distributed architecture to exchange health data, while Koshina et al. [10] leverages smart contracts for consent to enable healthcare data exchange. In both cases, users can keep their medical data in a personal data account hosted on any cloud-based data management service and customize consent preferences using smart contracts. Chang et al. present DeepLinQ [38], a multi-blockchain architecture similar to our proposal. It facilitates privacy-preserving data sharing in healthcare by providing granular access control and smart contracts. Finally, Yan et al. [39] introduce a Personal Data Store (PDS) that enables users to collect, store, and share their data with third parties using a Secret Sharing scheme. However, this approach is not GDPR compliant since personal data is stored on-chain.

## 8 Conclusions and future works

This paper proposes a DLT-based personal data storage system that utilizes a threshold proxy re-encryption scheme combined with key redistribution

In particular, the use of smart contracts let users define and enforce access policies for personal data: smart contracts can provide a transparent and auditable mechanism for managing access control that is resistant to tampering and unauthorized modifications, while the immutability of DLTs ensures that access policies cannot be altered without the explicit consent of all relevant parties.

While an implementation of the key re-distribution is available online,<sup>3</sup> in the future we aim to complete the implementation of the whole system.

**Author contributions** F.B. and M.Z. wrote the main manuscript text M.Z. executed the tests All authors reviewed the manuscript.

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**Data availability** No datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare no competing interests.

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**Fadi Barbara** is a postdoctoral researcher specializing in cryptography, with a focus on provable security, multiparty computation, and distributed key generation. His work emphasizes designing secure and practical cryptographic protocols tailored to complex real-world threat models, particularly in the context of blockchain.



**Mirko Zichichi** is an Applied Research Engineer and Team Lead at the IOTA Foundation. He received a Ph.D. degree in Law, Science and Technology within the LAST-JD Joint Doctorate Rights of Internet of Everything, funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. He received a Master degree in Information Science for Management from the University of Bologna in 2019 and a Bachelor degree in Computer Science from the University of Palermo

in 2017 (all degrees conferred *summa cum laude*). His research focuses on Distributed Ledger Technologies and the design and development of protocols for smart contract implementation and optimization. In the past he worked for the development of decentralized systems for the protection and portability of personal data.



**Stefano Ferretti** is a full professor at the Department of Computer Science and Engineering of the University of Bologna. He received the Laurea degree (*summa cum laude*) and the Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University of Bologna. His current research interests include distributed systems, complex networks, data science and blockchain technologies. He is and has been in the editorial board, editorial committee and guest editor for several interna-

tional journals, such as the *Simulation Modelling Practice and Theory* (Elsevier), *Computer Communications* (Elsevier), *Electronic Markets* (Springer), *Concurrency and Computation: Practice and Experience* (Wiley), *Online Social Networks and Media* (Elsevier).



**Claudio Schifanella** is an Associate Professor at the Department of Computer Science, University of Turin, Italy. He received his master's degree and Ph.D. in Computer Science at the University of Turin. His research interests include Urban Informatics, Decentralized Technologies (blockchain in particular), Knowledge Representation. During his career, he has participated, including as coordinator, in different international and national research

projects in different fields, both relevant to basic and applied research. His career also includes a work experience at the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and one at the RAI research center, the Italian TV broadcaster.