

Red: a full-stack, open-source toolchain for simple smart contracts and decentralized apps development

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ABSTRACT

Blockchain technologies will dramatically alter the landscape of many industries and the way human activities are managed, using a fair and trustworthy decentralized model. Smart contracts¹ are at the center of this revolution, yet contract development tools are crude, hindering the adoption and reliability of this new technology. The innovative Red programming stack² offers a better solution, which will greatly simplify smart contract development and improve their security. A new token, named Red Community Token (RED), has been created to fuel the growth of the Red open source programming stack and its community. The Red toolchain will be extended to ease the development of more secure smart contracts and Decentralized Applications³ (Dapps) superseding current, inadequate tools and their complex architectures.

1. MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Red team is to power the revolution promised by blockchains, smart contracts and decentralized apps, by lowering the barrier for smart contracts and Dapps creation and deployment using the innovative Red fullstack solutions.

2. STATE OF SMART CONTRACT DEVELOPMENT

Smart contracts, as general-purpose computations taking place on a blockchain, are the most promising part of blockchain technologies. They provide a programmable “partially or fully self-executing, self-enforcing” model, with different levels of capabilities⁴ depending on the blockchain type (Bitcoin, Ethereum, NEO,...). Such contracts are currently implemented using first-generation programming languages, capable of compiling to the bytecode used by the chains VM (Virtual Machines).

The most prominent smart contracts platform is Ethereum. Solidity⁵ is the language used most to program smart contracts on Ethereum.

Solidity is programming language for smart contracts with general-purpose capabilities. It allows the implementation of any kind of computation on the blockchain, at the price of high complexity and high security risks. Any mistake in a Solidity contract can lead to partial or total loss of Ether controlled by that contract when the security flaws are exploited by attackers. The only counter-measure is submitting the contract’s code to Solidity experts for auditing before deploying. This is both a slow and expensive procedure, which results only in reducing the risks, not suppressing them. Moreover, Solidity has notorious design issues^{6 7 8} that are further undermining smart contract development.

Another possible approach is to use templates for contracts, and parameterize them for a given use-case. This approach theoretically mostly eliminates the security issues, as the contracts code is always the same, so it can be audited extensively before been put into production. The drawback is that the application domain then becomes extremely limited, so that template providers need to produce a vast quantity of templates, covering the most used cases, in order to stay relevant. Still, with the advertised “no-programming” contracts, the “general-purpose computation” aspect of the blockchain is lost in the process, as well as the decentralization (template platforms are mostly controlled by single entities⁹) at the core of the blockchain philosophy. Templates could help smart contracts gain more popularity and traction in the early days, but they are not the usual way software is built, so this approach might never become mainstream.

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When the smart contracts are combined with a User Interface, they are then called “Decentralized Apps” (Dapps). Dapps are currently built as web apps, served online through a browser, or encapsulated as a standalone, downloadable executable (typically using Electron framework, like Ethereum’s official client, Mist). By running on a web stack, Dapps suffer from several issues:

- Security issues: the web stack, being so pervasive nowadays and having an extremely vast attack surface (25+ millions of lines of complex code), is a big target for attackers. When Dapps are distributed as standalone clients, constant updates are required to fix the security flaws and bugs of the underlying web stack^{10 11}.
- Heavy deployment: Dapp user interface are running in a webview (browser or encapsulated in Electron), but still require separate download and installation of a blockchain light client or node¹², making it a complex and/or expensive barrier for non-experts users.
- Webapp development, despite being in broad usage, still has a long learning curve as one need to master at least three different languages (HTML/CSS/JS), and a vast amount of quickly changing frameworks, feeding a growing complexity¹³.

All those issues described above, are real obstacles to the faster adoption of blockchain technologies. The Red team intends to tackle them with the innovative Red language stack and toolchain.

3. NECESSITY OF A LANGUAGE FOR BLOCKCHAINS

Blockchains are networks of virtual machines running specialized code. The ability to simply and efficiently create smart contracts and decentralized apps is critical to the success of any blockchain beyond just the speculative usage of its intrinsic fuel token. Templating solutions are barely scratching the surface of possible contracts use-cases, only a programming language can fulfill the promise of the “decentralized world computer” made by advanced

blockchains like Ethereum. Red will be the powerful enabler that allows a new wave of smart contract programmers and users to emerge. It will create opportunities for people that are currently only available to very well resourced individuals and organisations. Just as tools like Visual Basic for desktop development in the hands of many people, Red will do the same for smart contracts thanks to its simplified and effective programming paradigm.

4. THE RED FULLSTACK APPROACH

Red is an open-source programming language launched in 2011 by Nenad Rakocevic. Its goal is to provide a simpler and more cost-effective way to build software. Red is a very high-level language, capable of extremely expressive code¹⁴.

Besides the features¹⁵ that Red language can already accomplish, the biggest leverage provided by Red is the ability to easily implement Domain-Specific Languages (DSL). DSL are one of the most effective ways to reduce complexity in software development and Red uses them in a pervasive way. Several ones are already included to cover GUI programming, 2D drawing, pattern-matching, data extraction and system programming.

Thanks to those DSL, Red covers the whole range of software abstraction layers, and extends now horizontally across domains.

The Red toolchain is a zero-install, zero-configuration, single 1MB file¹⁶, containing its complete toolchain including a cross-platform native compiler, the whole standard library (more than 50 datatypes), 5 DSL, a cross-platform native GUI system and an interactive console. The codebase for all those features weighs about 100k LOC.

As an open-source project, with a transparent mode of operation, Red has a growing community of thousands of users and dozens of contributors working daily to improve Red and help newcomers learn it. The Red project already has 2960 stars on Github, 1.6M views on its web site and about 530 developers in the online chat room¹⁷ discussing about Red daily (at end of Dec, 2017).

5. RED FOR SMART CONTRACTS

Given the current obstacles that smart contracts and Dapps are facing, the Red stack is a perfect fit to help pass them and accelerate world-wide adoption of software powered by blockchains.

In order to realise that, the Red team will be providing a uniquely easy to use, integrated set of tools for smart contract development. This will include a smart contract programming language, a complete toolchain for building smart contracts and a library for building Dapps.

6. RED/C³ A LANGUAGE FOR SMART CONTRACT PROGRAMMING

Red Cross Chain Code (Red/C³) is the Red DSL for cross-chain programming and the key part of our solution. It will compile directly to the blockchain Virtual Machine (VM), using different backends targeting each blockchain (starting with Ethereum). The language itself is composed of two layers:

- A very high-level layer: a symbolic, highly declarative language with restricted computing semantics and restricted control flow (turing-incomplete), reading mostly like natural language (compared to mainstream languages). Coarse-grained code produced at this level by the compiler will exhibit higher safety, close to the level provided by templates, while still providing much greater flexibility. An intelligent, visual program builder will also be considered for pre-generating such code.
- A lower-level layer: a general-purpose, statically typed, subset of Red language, capable of general computations.

Contracts will be written in high-level code with the ability to locally drop to the lower layer for more general computations. Both layers will be able to call external contracts written using any other tools, so they will be fully interoperable with existing contracts. Using the new Simplicity¹⁸ low-level language as intermediary representation is considered. Red/C³ is currently still under design.

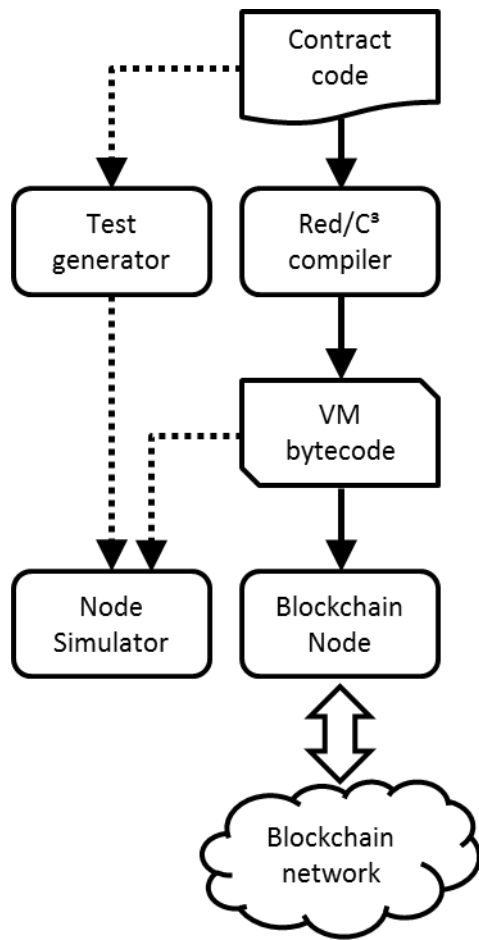
7. RED TOOLCHAIN FOR BLOCKCHAINS

The Red/C³ toolchain is a standalone toolchain, extending the existing Red toolchain, that can be run natively on users' desktop or mobile devices. It will include:

- A compiler to VM bytecode, with one backend per VM (starting with Ethereum VM).
- A generative test module for extensive contracts testing.
- Blockchain VM simulators written in Red/System¹⁹ for fast performance (starting with Ethereum VM target).
- Wrappers to separately downloadable minimal blockchain nodes for real deployment.

The Red/C³ compiler will be written in Red language, with no dependency on any other toolchain. The compiler's implementation main concerns are simplicity and shortness (a few thousand LOC is the target) in order to ease auditing and future formal proving of correctness.

Fig.1: Red/C³ toolchain overview



- a secure way to store and handle private keys required for sending transactions on the chains, including hardware wallet integration.
- a specific library for RED token management (for easing and encouraging RED-oriented Dapps creation), possibly based on AragonOS or zeppelin_os solutions²¹.

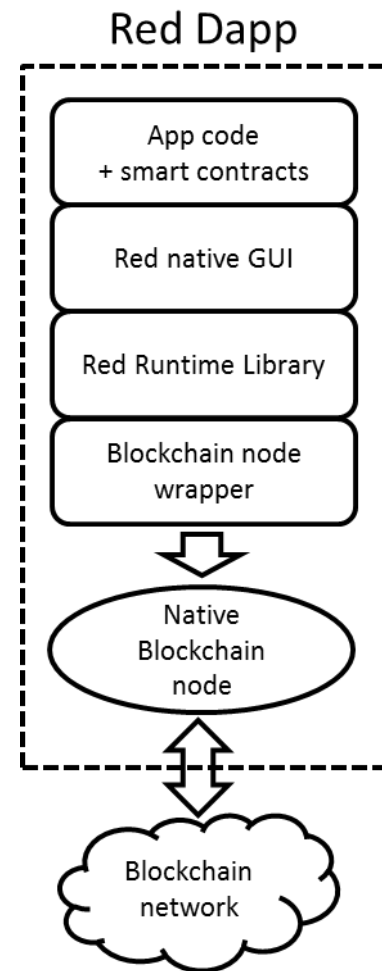
The hosting and distribution model of such Red-powered Dapps is not yet decided. Leveraging the decentralized Swarm²² and IPFS²³ infrastructures for those is strongly considered.

Fig.2 Red Dapps runtime stack

8. RED DAPPS

The web stack used so far in Dapps will be replaced by the Red one, which will be about 100 times smaller for standalone Dapps (1MB for Red's runtime vs ~120MB for Electron) and will provide an *integrated* native blockchain node, avoiding complex deployment requirements, that plague current Dapps. The Red regular language and all its built-in DSL will be fully available for Dapps building. The Red standard library will be extended to include:

- a wrapper for integrating a targeted blockchain node (using direct C API and/or JSON-RPC for interfacing).
- a high-level interface to operate the smart contracts and send transactions at run-time from regular Red code (equivalent to web3 or similar interfaces in web Dapps²⁰)
- a sandboxed I/O mode to enforce security on devices running Dapps.



9. RED: RED COMMUNITY TOKEN

The community has been a very important component of the whole Red project since the beginning. We are now willing to go one step further, and empower the Red community even more by

making it a Distributed Autonomous Organisation (DAO). This DAO will be enabled by a community-oriented transferable ERC-20 token called Red Community Token (RED). Holding RED tokens will be the pre-requirement to be a member of the Red DAO. The membership will provide privileges, including but not limited to, voting rights for new features and bug fixes of the Red software stack and Red Dapps. Transactions between community members themselves, including but not limited to, tipping other developers contributions and intra-community services will be done using RED tokens. The Red community will pave the way of a new economical model for open source projects communities, building community tools powered by Dapps and RED tokens, which could be used later on, by other open source communities.

In order to achieve these goals, all the Red open source project's assets will be moved to a non-profit foundation, which will define the rules of RED usage. We are closely following how the OAX foundation²⁴, Aragon and other DAOs are operating and will seek partnerships to help build an optimal organization. The voting rules and intra-community modes of operations for the RED will be defined by the foundation.

Specific Dapps using Red stack will be built, allowing deeper interconnection between community members. Such "community Dapps" would require RED tokens to operate. They would both power the community economics and serve as showcase apps of what the Red programming stack can accomplish. They would include, but not limited to:

- a RED wallet Dapp
- a community chat system
- a community code exchange place
- collaborative code editor

Providing more community Dapps will be actively encouraged by the foundation through a rewarding program using RED tokens:

Foundation to community:

- rewarding code contributions
- rewarding community management

- rewarding Red learning tutorials completion
- rewarding marketing actions (events organization, presentations and promotions)

Community to community:

- tipping chat posts
- tipping code contributions
- tipping direct peer to peer coding help and code snippet exchanges
- tipping community-provided learning materials
- paying for peer to peer services, like app development, code reviewing and debugging, assets (graphic/video/audio) design and editing, tutoring.

In the future, the RED token is also intended to serve as a "meta-fuel" token for smart contract execution across different blockchains, to abstract the different per-chain intrinsic fuel tokens.

10. RED FOUNDATION

The Red Foundation structure was set up at the beginning of January 2018 in Paris, France. The Red Foundation is kindly hosted by the EPHE²⁵, at the Human and Artificial Cognition research center.

For a brief overview, the Red Foundation structure is composed of several teams:

- an administrative team:
 - a president
 - a vice-president
 - a treasurer
- an operational team composed of regular members.
- honorary members, who act as advisors.

The role of the Foundation is to manage the whole Red open source project, and set up a new economic model for open source projects using the RED token. In order to achieve that, all copyright holders in the Red codebase on Github will be asked to transfer their rights to the Foundation. As Nenad is the copyright owner of the biggest part of the source code, he was the first one to do so²⁶(resulting in changing the copyright in the source files headers and license files to the benefit of the Red Foundation).

The tasks the operational team is also working on currently, are:

- a website for the Foundation, featuring:
 - a blog platform where regular reports will be made.
 - full information about the RED token (usages, reward rules and amounts).
 - contributing task bounties for the Red community (paid in RED tokens).
- defining the rules for retro-distribution of RED tokens for past contributions (since the opening of the Red github repo in 2011). We will proceed with the distribution as soon as the rules and correct amount of reward tokens are decided. This needs the list of contributions and contributors to be gathered.
- defining the decision processes in the operational team.
- defining the rules for membership of the Foundation.
- managing the re-design of the red-lang.org site and moving it to a new platform.

All those tasks and their results will be published on the Foundation website, for the sake of information and transparency.

11. THE TOKEN SALES

In order to kickstart the Red community economics and the new blockchain-related technical developments for Red runtime stack and toolchain, a token sale was held to cover the costs of hiring extra talents, and marketing campaigns, services and products.

This token sales process took place from January 8th to January 31st 2018, in three stages:

- Private Angel Investors : Jan 8th - Jan 11th
- Early Bird round : Jan 12th - Jan 15th
- Open round : Jan 16th - Jan 31th

The total fixed supply of RED tokens is 200,000,000. The allocations are:

- 10% (20,000,000) for private investors with a 3 months lockup period.

- 30% (60,000,000) for crowdsales (earlybird + open rounds).
- 15% (30,000,000) for the Red team with a 12 months lockup period.
- 35% (70,000,000) for Red Foundation.
- 10% (20,000,000) for marketing and strategic actions.

Exchange ratios with Ethers (ETH) are set as:

- Private Investors : 1 ETH = 3400 RED
- Early Birds : 1 ETH = 2750 RED
- Open round : 1 ETH = 2500 RED

Only Ethers are accepted, with a minimum of 1 ETH. Private angel investors also benefit from a 20% unlocking at the closing date of the token sales process.

All RED token provided for the sales were sold out, providing a final amount of 28137 ETH.

In order to participate, *all* token buyers needed to go through an online registration process (KYC), and provide the required credentials:

- First and last name
- Email address
- Nationality
- Passport photo
- Photo of the passport owner holding the passport

Strict control of those documents resulted in rejecting two third of applicants, for faked, invalid or suspicious credentials.

Citizens of countries that have banned or posed heavy regulations on such token sales were not allowed to participate.

The ETH resources global allocation plan is:

- 60% for team recruitment and operations in Hong-Kong and San Francisco offices.
- 20% for RED token sales expenses.
- 10% for marketing operations.
- 10% for outsourced software developments.

Those allocations will change depending on the conversion ratio of ETH with fiat money.

12.ROADMAP

The development schedule prioritizes for Dapps building as soon as possible, in order to kickstart the community infrastructure and usage of the RED token. As the Red stack is already in a usable state on both Windows and macOS platforms, the only missing part is the blockchain node wrapper in the Red runtime library, so this is the first task to complete and starting with the Ethereum network.

Q1 2018:

- Ethereum node wrapper for Red Dapps (alpha)
- RED wallet Dapp (alpha)
- Online Ethereum full-node for RED wallet and Dapps

The wallet currently supports only the Nano Ledger S hardware key (no software keys support for now). The wallet also uses by default the Ethereum full-node provided the Red Foundation.

For the Ethereum node wrapper, we have implemented a JSON-RPC library in Red, used by the wallet app. That library will be released alongside the wallet code. It only covers some basic features from the Ethereum node API for now. We plan to vastly extend the API coverage in subsequent versions. Once the 0.7.0 release of Red is out, we could wrap that library code in an eth:// port and provide a nice, human-friendly interface for it. We believe that enabling an easy way to interact with the Ethereum blockchain (and some others later this year), will raise the interest of existing Red coders for the Ethereum ecosystem, and set a new standard for high-level scripting tasks for blockchains.

Q2 2018:

- Red/C³compiler (alpha 1)
- Node simulator (alpha)
- Bitcoin node wrapper for Red Dapps (beta)
- REDwallet Dapp

Q3 2018:

- Red/C³compiler (alpha 2)
- Node simulator (beta)
- Community chat Dapp

Q4 2018:

- Red/C³compiler (alpha 3)
- NEO node wrapper for Red Dapps (alpha)
- Community code exchange place

Q1 2019:

- Red/C³compiler (beta)
- Collaborative code editor

Q2 2019:

- Red toolchain for Blockchains 1.0

13.LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The RED tokens usage will be deeply rooted in the intra-community operations and economics. RED tokens are not for speculative investment. No promises of any particular value or future performance of the RED are made. The Red stack provides integration with blockchain nodes, written by third-parties (like the Ethereum foundation), so risks associated with blockchain usages and especially smart contract deployment, buying or selling smart contracts using Red platform or provided Dapps are assumed solely by the user.

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PROPERTY ASSOCIATED WITH THE NETWORK OR ANY OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, CORPORATION, FOUNDATION OR OTHER ENTITY IN ANY JURISDICTION. THE TOKEN IS NOT THEREFORE INTENDED TO REPRESENT A SECURITY INTEREST.

<https://ico.red-lang.org/RED-whitepaper.pdf>

The most recent version of this document can be found at the following address:

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