TIGTECH

3 KEY FINDINGS

Learn more about the different aspects of trust and 2 new trust concepts outlined for discussion

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This was created as part of the final findings of the TIGTech, Trust in Tech Governance initiative

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To know more about TIGTech and the 3 Key Findings of the Tech report, please contact Hilary Sutcliffe on hilary@societyinside.com

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TRUST AND TECH GOVERNANCE – TOWARDS A MORE ENGAGED, COLLABORATIVE, COMMUNICATIVE, APPROACH

3 Key Findings

Hilary Sutcliffe, Director
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Why trust matters to tech governance

We make many trust-based decisions each day. Every time we pay for something, choose what to eat, what to buy, or who's advice to act upon, dismiss or endorse – we consciously and unconsciously place trust in institutions, information, people, processes. Without these generalised and specific acts of trust our societies simply wouldn't work.

A great many of these decisions also show an implicit trust in governance – in the effectiveness of the rules, regulations, standards, procedures and institutions which help ensure products are safe, elections are fair, values are upheld and institutions of all types do what they are supposed to.

A trustworthy governance system for technology which we can (and do) trust will allow us to get on with our lives, confident in the belief that risk of harm to people and the environment is managed and complex values and ethical trade-offs resolved in the wider public interest.

> **"I don't know what all the fuss is about. If something bad happens, I will hear about it on the news".**
>
> TIGTech conversation with citizen demonstrating trust in governance.

It is perhaps only when it is visibly not working well do concerns about governance take a high profile in the mind of citizens, which we are seeing now – for example difficulties policing the impacts of algorithms, data privacy, facial recognition, concerns about the direction of neurotech, gene editing and others.

Citizens start to question – how is this allowed to happen? Where is the regulation? Who's job is it to get this right? Who is looking out for us? The question for governance then becomes focused on whether it is even worthy of trust if it is not effective in doing the job society expects it to do. Trust is eroded and potentially lost. Trust promotes cooperation, collaboration, compliance. It allows organisations to innovate to adapt to changing circumstances. Distrust does the opposite. Fundamental societal distrust of regulators and governance would have many damaging repercussions for policy making, tech innovation, even social cohesion.

> **"The question 'How can we restore trust?'... is on everyone's lips. The answer is pretty obvious. First be trustworthy. Second provide other's with good evidence of your trustworthiness"[1].**
>
> Baroness Onora O'Neill

Trust is an outcome. It is based on our perception of the trustworthiness of others. So, inspired by this understanding we considered for tech governance first what it is to be seen as trustworthy and then what it may look like to provide evidence of trustworthiness. This is obviously a complex subject, not easily reduced to simple answers. However we identified three ideas for governance institutions to consider in trying to earning trust and shine a spotlight on three new competencies which may be required.

New opportunities

1. **Be more engaged, more visible – show your impact**
2. **Detach governance from hype and ideology – build trusted environments to focus on the public interest**
3. **'Nothing about us without us' – get good at ethics, values and stakeholder involvement**

New competencies

1. **Evidence of trustworthiness – a new approach to communication**
2. **Building trusted environments for collaborative governance**
3. **'Nothing about us without us' – Involving citizens**

1

Be more engaged, more visible – show your impact

Citizens trust governance most when they can see it is working – when governance institutions visibly stand up for the public interest; when they can see values upheld, laws enforced, breaches published. They are most likely to lose trust where they see regulation failing in that role – in the governance of the financial sector or recent issues with governance of the digital space for example.

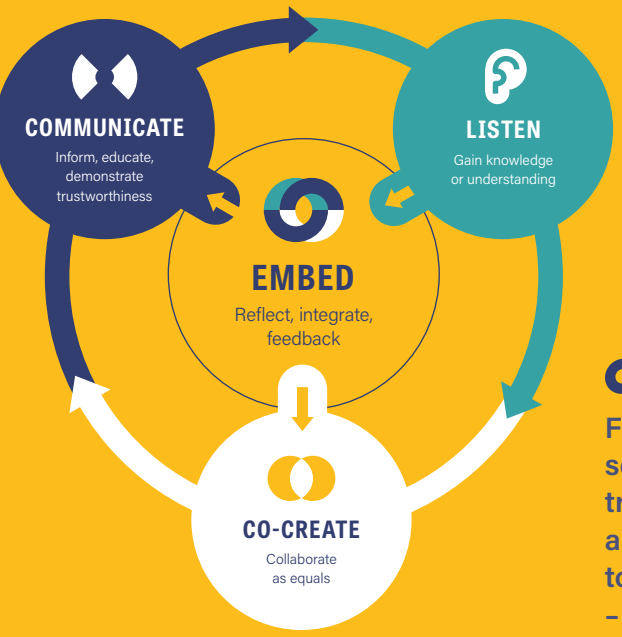
Traditional regulation and regulators appear to be largely trusted by citizens, though data on trust in regulators of tech innovation is scarce. It is often bundled with statistics on trust in government or social justice (such as that from OECD TrustLab[2]) or focused on trust in technology itself, not the governance (such as Edelman Trust Barometer[3]).

In the UK for example, 83% of citizens see regulation as a force for good; both for themselves and for business. But at the core of this trust is an expectation and a belief in the effectiveness of traditional regulation – mandatory & enforceable rules and laws.

What citizens want from regulators:

- Be more visible, show your impact
- Be more inclusive, listen to us
- Be more human, talk to us
- Help us help ourselves, educate and empower us

TECHTech analysis of public dialogues on tech and governance.



For more detail see Evidence of trustworthiness – a new approach to communication – page 35

New governance challenges brought about by the speed of development, complexity and international reach of new tech is severely testing this traditional approach, with regulations potentially out of date before the ink is dry. As part of the response, new 'agile' or soft law governance approaches are proposed to fill the gaps and provide the flexibility which may be needed – for example multi-stakeholder initiatives, professional guidelines, private standards and codes of conduct, sandboxes and policy labs. These new forms of governance can set frameworks and create expectations but are not directly enforceable by governments. They may struggle to earn (or even deserve?) public trust when one of the biggest drivers – the sign of governance working in the public interest through evidence of assertive enforcement – is absent.

The 7 Drivers of Trust provide a framework for understanding the basis for these governance instruments to be seen as trustworthy and be trusted. It is not a trivial task to develop effective governance in these challenging circumstances. Shaping the development of these powerful technologies in a way which upholds the public interest without causing more problems than they solve is perhaps one of the biggest challenges of our time. But our research shows that where trustworthiness and trust are absent so are the trust drivers. Where it is present they are clear to see.

2

Detach governance from hype and ideology and focus on the public interest

The main cause of distrust in tech governance, particularly of citizens and civil society groups, is the perception that governance is more concerned with smoothing the path of tech, prioritising economic development for political purposes and making money at the expense of societal values, people and planet.[4] This problem is not helped by political and media hype about technology progress – *electricity too cheap to meter* (Nuclear Power[5]), *an end to hunger* (GMO's[6]) *elimination of cancer by 2015* (Nanotechnology[7]) *the end of work and melding our minds with machines* (AI[8]). When – surprise, surprise – these wonders fail to materialise, public trust in the tech may be challenged (though citizens are surprisingly sanguine about the over-promise and under-deliver nature of most of tech development[9]). But the more corrosive problem this brings for trust is that this can 'infect' governance processes with an inflexible ideology about technology benefits and even a sense of immunity against challenge.

> **Promising 'an end to hunger', GMO's were positioned as a juggernaut powering through the food system – with Monsanto in the driving seat. The only way to stop a juggernaut is to step in front of it and make it put its brakes on. As it turned out, if I'd have known GM was going to be such a nonevent I wouldn't have wasted the last ten years campaigning against it"**[10]
>
> (Prominent anti-GM NGO, personal conversation)

This hype reinforces perceptions that a gung-ho view – 'tech's the answer, now what's the question' – is the driving force of policy and governance. This can easily appear unalienable, with anyone who thinks otherwise seen as too precautionary; a luddite, selfishly depriving society of transformational benefits.

To help avoid what can sometimes appear a valid perception, a clear and visible focus on the public interest is essential. Furthermore governance has to be, and clearly seen to be, independent of tech hype and the potentially narrow interests of any one stakeholder group – business, politicians, scientists, or the simply the loudest voices of civil society groups or citizens.

To achieve this, process matters. An important component of success will be the development of a trusted environment for governance design which will inspire a mutually held view by all stakeholders that a fair and inclusive process will be and was undertaken and outcome achieved.

See Building Trusted Environments for Collaborative Governance

Get comfortable with navigating ethics, values

The greatest concern of citizens, civil society groups and many academics focuses on the ethical, moral and social aspects of new technologies. Concerns not just about different applications – 'should it be allowed to do this or that,' or 'is that safe', but rather 'should we use this tech at all?' 'What is it doing to society?' and 'How do we prevent these potential harms while retaining the benefits?'

These are complex challenges and often involve conflicting ethical or values-based decisions – privacy and human rights in artificial intelligence for example, naturalness and business models with GMOs, the fundamentals of what it is to be human in neurotechnologies, to name just a few. Big stuff. Rarely with clear or right answers often requiring uncomfortable trade offs, and with strong and heartfelt opinions from many different perspectives. Navigating these choppy waters is not just for politicians, it is increasingly part of the job of governance. It's not easy and requires new skills that assessing safety and risk did not really prepare regulators for.

Furthermore, citizens and civil society groups are increasingly demanding their views are incorporated in governance of technologies that are changing society – 'nothing about us without us' to borrow a phrase from the accessibility community.[11] This requires trusted processes which are inclusive, collaborative, designed to build consensus and do not allow conflict to escalate or the loudest voices to dominate. This also means embedding deep listening and co-creation, including with business and citizens – beyond simply looking at data or passive requests for written contributions.

Perhaps the most valuable finding of the TIGTech project is the importance of respecting and taking seriously the views of others – particularly those we don't agree with or whose values and beliefs clash with our own. Not just to demonstrate respect and understand concerns, but also gain new knowledge, diversity of input and spot early warnings of potential problems.

> **"The ability to listen, understand and interpret the attitudes, behaviours and values of the people we serve is essential if one is seeking to deserve the trust of citizens, customers, employees, members, shareholders and other stakeholders."**[12]

See 'Nothing about us without us' – Involving citizens

Finding the right balance is not easy – but trust is worth it

It is not simple to get the right balance between collaboration and independence, inclusion and forward momentum, evidence of trustworthiness and pure self-promotion, being more open whilst maintaining confidentiality, remaining respectful and potentially making what to some will be unpopular decisions in the public interest. It takes a conscious commitment and considerable effort. But then things worth having – like trust – most often do.

We conclude that the earning of trust is both a science and an art.[13] The 'science' focuses on institutional alignment with the values and competencies which drive trustworthiness and trust, and the 'art' is the self-reflection, humility and compassion required to engage and align technologies and their governance with the shifting (and sometimes conflicting) ethics, values and beliefs of innovators, citizens and cultures.

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