



Press release  
March 31<sup>th</sup> 2021

## **“In the beginning is trust”**

***This webinar considers the concept of trust in view of the establishment of a European single market for data and the changing regulations.***

Institut Mines-Télécom’s Values and Policies of Personal Information research Chair (VP-IP) explored a central concept of our digital society: trust. Mark Hunyadi, Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy at the Catholic University of Louvain and Associate Member of the VP-IP Chair, is the author of the book titled: “*Au début est la confiance*” (In the beginning is trust). During a webinar on March 11, he presented his unified theory of trust, which the Chair’s professors then compared with application cases. Trust conditions the individual’s relationship with the world and the things that compose it, including objects, institutions and digital platforms.

### **The theory of unified trust**

Trust implies a relationship with the world, because nothing can be done without the *expectation* that things will happen in a certain way. It is therefore fundamentally defined as a *wager on expected behavior*, i.e. the behavior of others when you interact with people and the behavior of things or institutions that you are connected to. The same general structure is applied to each case differently.

Digital technology is increasingly becoming the necessary mediator between us and the world (things, people, institutions). With digital technology, we have fewer direct, natural relationships with each other: we must first use the method imposed by technology. For example, to validate an authentication process, we comply with the behavioral expectations decreed by technology, which is progressively becoming a substitution for our natural relationships with the world. We are now obliged to go through the technical section almost blindly and if we are asked for our opinion, it is only after 127 pages of terms of use that we are politely asked to accept without having either read or understood.

### **Trust in the digital system**

Trust tends to be placed in the system itself, which must provide the user with indications. To reassure themselves, the user chooses classical trusted third parties or systems based on the evaluation of other people or Blockchain. In this sense, the digital world leads us to believe in the ideal of a purely functional world that is *relied upon to fulfill its function* without the participants having to trust each other. “*We are in a cockpit world, a society on auto pilot. This is the horizon of meaning of this world without trust,*” says Mark Hunyadi. Trust is silently turning into security, because the expectations are based on calculations. Everyone is satisfied, because each cockpit is custom-designed.

### **Network security**

In this world dominated by platforms, the libidinal subject (who seeks satisfaction in every aspect of their experience) is governed by technical devices which simply *execute* their desires and wishes. The system is designed so that the user, guided by their own desires and wishes, clicks as fast as possible without exercising any judgment.

In this digital environment, trust falls back on so-called security and is based on different criteria such as reputation. Distributed systems rely on the transitivity of trust: A trusts B who trusts C, so A trusts C. And this chain that can be much longer! In concrete terms, the user simply needs to use Facebook Connect to identify themselves within one or several other services.

Paradoxically, the more secure the system, the less trust they need. Computer security is becoming a substitute for trust. When a system is trusted, it is placed in charge of the security of the interactions between users, who no longer need to exercise trust.

### Lack of definition

The concept of trust is omnipresent in legal texts (Law for trust and the modernization of the State in 2005, Law for a school of trust in 2009 etc.) but without ever being given a strict definition. It is a functional concept whose meaning is supposed to be shared by all. Legislators and judges enjoy a certain flexibility of action by not defining it. Trust is not only interpersonal; it also concerns institutions or objects and is a guiding value in our societies. Do we not talk of trustworthy “artificial intelligence” or “trust in the market”?

### At the European level

The question of trust is the subject of many texts highlighting its importance: without trust, there can be no market economy - trust goes beyond the contractual assurance of the proper execution of a contract. For example, Recital 7 of the GDPR evokes “the importance of creating the trust that will allow the digital economy to develop.”

Developments in regulations (the recent proposals for regulations from the European Commission) on data sharing and governance constantly emphasize its importance.

- DMA – *Digital Markets Act* - encourages trust by promoting effective competition in digital markets,
- DSA – *Digital Services Act* – regulates the provision of online services by creating a new “trusted flagger” category, i.e. a public or semi-public entity or an NGO to flag illegal content to the platforms that distribute it,
- DGA – *Data Governance Act* – aims to govern data available for use by increasing trust in data intermediaries through strengthening data sharing mechanisms across the EU.

Watch the webinar on replay:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XgpU1nNIXY>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XgpU1nNIXY>



### About the Values and Policies of Personal Information research Chair

<https://cvpip.wp.imt.fr/accueil/>

The Chair aims to help companies, citizens and public authorities in their reflection on the collection, use and sharing of personal information, i.e. information about individuals (their personal lives, professional activities, digital identities, contributions on social networks etc.) including information collected by the smart objects that surround them (smartphones, smart meters etc.)

**About Institut Mines-Télécom** [www.imt.f](http://www.imt.f)

Institut Mines-Télécom is a public higher education and research institution under the aegis of the French Ministry for the Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs, which groups together 8 graduate schools, 2 subsidiaries and a network of strategic and affiliated partners. Its activities in the fields of engineering sciences and digital technology support the education of engineers and managers, partnership-based research, innovation and economic development. Always attentive to the economic world, IMT combines strong academic and scientific legitimacy, close corporate relations and strategic positioning in the key transformations of the 21st century: digital technology, industry, energy and ecology, and education. IMT is a founding member of the Alliance for the Industry of the Future and co-founder of the Franco-German Academy for the Industry of the Future with Technische Universität München (TUM). It is recognized by 2 Carnot Institute accreditations for the quality of its partner-based research. Each year, IMT trains over 1,200 students, enters into nearly 70 million research contracts, and hosts some 100 start-ups in its incubators.



**About the Fondation Mines-Télécom** [www.fondation-mines-telecom.org](http://www.fondation-mines-telecom.org)

The Fondation Mines-Télécom is recognized as being of public interest and supports the development of IMT and its eight schools in their training, research and innovation activities. It groups together over 90 corporate partners and 3,000 private donors who are committed to supporting practical projects with high technological, industrial and societal impacts within the fields of digital technologies, energy and the industry of the future, as well as solidarity with students. Thanks to the support of its founding partners (BNP Paribas, Nokia and Orange), alumni and students' parents, the Fondation Mines-Télécom also finances some ten or so programs in the fields of education (scholarships, open-innovation program for students, MOOCs), research (theses, awards of excellence, Franco-German Academy and teaching and research chairs), innovation (interest-free loans for start-ups and incubation support) and forward studies (publications), as well as actions in support of the development of IMT schools (scholarships, social awareness, state-of-the-art equipment, international mobility support).

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