

Chapter 11

The Challenge of Building Trust Digitally

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ABSTRACT

If COVID 19 has taught us anything, it is that it is hard to keep faith or trust in what we previously considered to be normal, conventional, or orthodox. Currently, worldwide, there is a massive trust deficit in society, with old institutions and entities such as bankers, journalists, and politicians facing the brunt of this. The simultaneity of the pandemic and the lockdown showed complex globalised fragility never experienced before. This paper explores the role of inter religious dialogue in pushing a responsibility towards the individual to building that trust. Dialogue is the underpinning of trust that is needed to build peace within communities and institutions.

INTRODUCTION

If COVID-19 has taught us anything it is that it is hard to keep faith or trust in what we previously considered to be normal, conventional, or orthodox. Currently, worldwide, there is a massive trust deficit in society, with old institutions and entities such as bankers, journalists, and politicians facing the brunt of this. The simultaneity of the pandemic and the lockdown showed complex globalised fragility never experienced before. The effects of the COVID-19 lockdown show us that we are in postnormal times where the “conventions about how society is supposed to function have been undermined. The assumptions that served as the bedrock of the global order have also evaporated. We find ourselves face to face with new

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and emerging realities that we have yet to grasp” (Sardar, 2010, p. 10). Nothing describes the post normal reality of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and the breakdown of trust between people than what has happened within the space of faith and religiosity. In addition to a transformational change in faith practices and approaches to spirituality and by extension a change in the religiosity of people (Saleem, et al., 2021), many faith institutions and leaders were accused of being super-spreaders of the virus, especially at the start of the pandemic. This has led to a severe shortage in trust with faith leaders and communities, and in some places has led minority faiths to be challenged by their majoritarian governments (Abdur Razak & Mohamed Saleem, 2021)

This distrust is mirrored in other parts of the world where there is a massive trust deficit in society, with old institutions and entities such as bankers, journalists, and politicians facing the brunt of this which has been worsened by COVID. The 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer has revealed that there is a trust paradox that despite an era of strong economic performance and nearly full employment (over the past two decades, more than a billion people around the world have lifted themselves out of poverty), the 4 major societal institutions —government, business, NGOs and media— are not trusted at all (Edelman, 2020).

This is in part due to globalisation which has disrupted the social fabric that helps individuals define themselves and assess their social roles. The shifts of the 21st century have upended traditional structures of authority, relocated centers of power, and allowed a flood of perspectives on how life should be lived. These shifts have unanchored lives, challenging the traditional structures and networks that guided peoples’ behaviour in society, such as learning from the teachings of our forefathers, by trial and error and following the models of others. In times of rapid social change these networks are erased or shifted to a degree that they become unrecognisable. This frantic pace has unsettled people to such an extent that they yearn for agents of constancy to provide an oasis in the shifting sands of today. This unsettling has also led to a decrease in trust in the institutions that have traditionally played that role of an agent of constancy, mainly because they have failed to keep up the pace to address: (Jurgensmeyer, Griego, & Soboslai, 2015).

- A Search for Social Identity – the increasing mobility of people and the ease of global communications seems almost to make it possible for everyone to live everywhere. As a result, huge new multicultural populations are emerging around the world that have mixed identities- grounded in their new homelands but in touch with countries of heritage. Thus today one’s social identity is fluid and often determined by changing global circumstances and remains a paradox.

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