



**The Future of Trust**

Post-Truth →  
Post-Trust →  
Post-Reality

Introduction

# Why Trust, Why Now

Trust has always been the invisible infrastructure. The glue that holds society together, the lubricant that makes commerce flow, the social contract we rarely see until it frays.

But we've moved from:

- Post-truth (feelings > facts) →
- Post-trust (cynicism > connection)

The question now: what comes after? If post-trust is the refusal to believe, perhaps the next frontier is post-reality - when you can't trust photos, videos, data, or even your own feed.

“  
Trust is how hope  
lives between  
people. By eroding  
trust, cynicism steals  
our present together  
and dampens the  
futures we can  
imagine.”

— Hope for Cynics,  
Jamil Zaki

We don't live in a trust collapse - we live in a trust remix. Trust hasn't disappeared, it's been redistributed: from institutions to individuals, from systems to vibes.

Part One

# Structural Levers of Trust

Trust isn't just vibes, it's infrastructure

## → Climate Disruption

As ecological systems destabilize, so does existential faith in leadership and industry. Planetary collapse becomes a trust collapse.

## → Geopolitical Realignment

Power's shifting south and east. Trust follows new trade routes - regional alliances, local resilience, digital non-alignment.

## → Demographic Shift

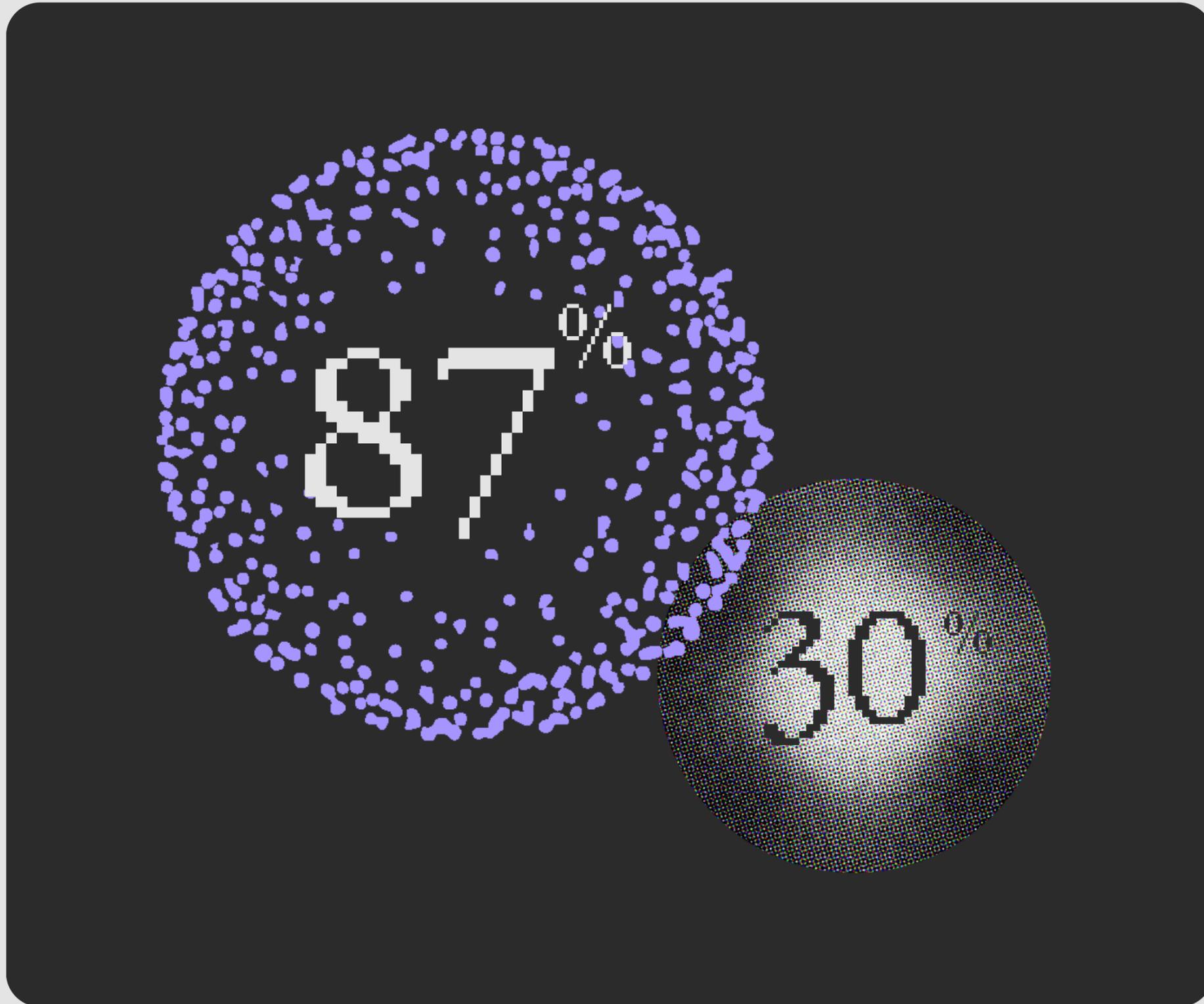
Gen Z's distrust of hierarchy rewires social contracts: trust local, mistrust global; trust peers, mistrust systems.

## → Tech Fragility

Each glitch, outage, or AI hallucination cracks belief in the digital - driving a return to the tactile, the traceable, the human-made.

## → Economic Precarity

In a world of gig work and hustle survival, people outsource institutional faith and build self-trust through side projects, peer collectives, and micro-economies.

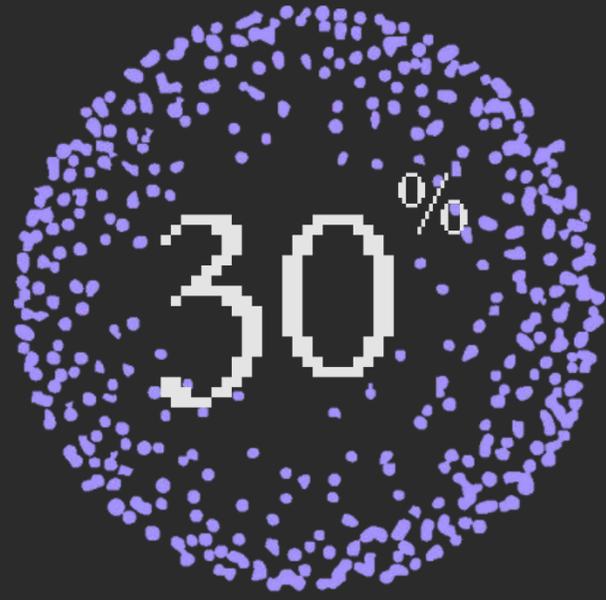


Part One

# The current state of trust

Trust Gap:

87% of business leaders think consumers trust them; only 30% do.



Part One

Fewer than 30%  
of people believe that  
“most people can be  
trusted”

(OECD, Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions, 2024)

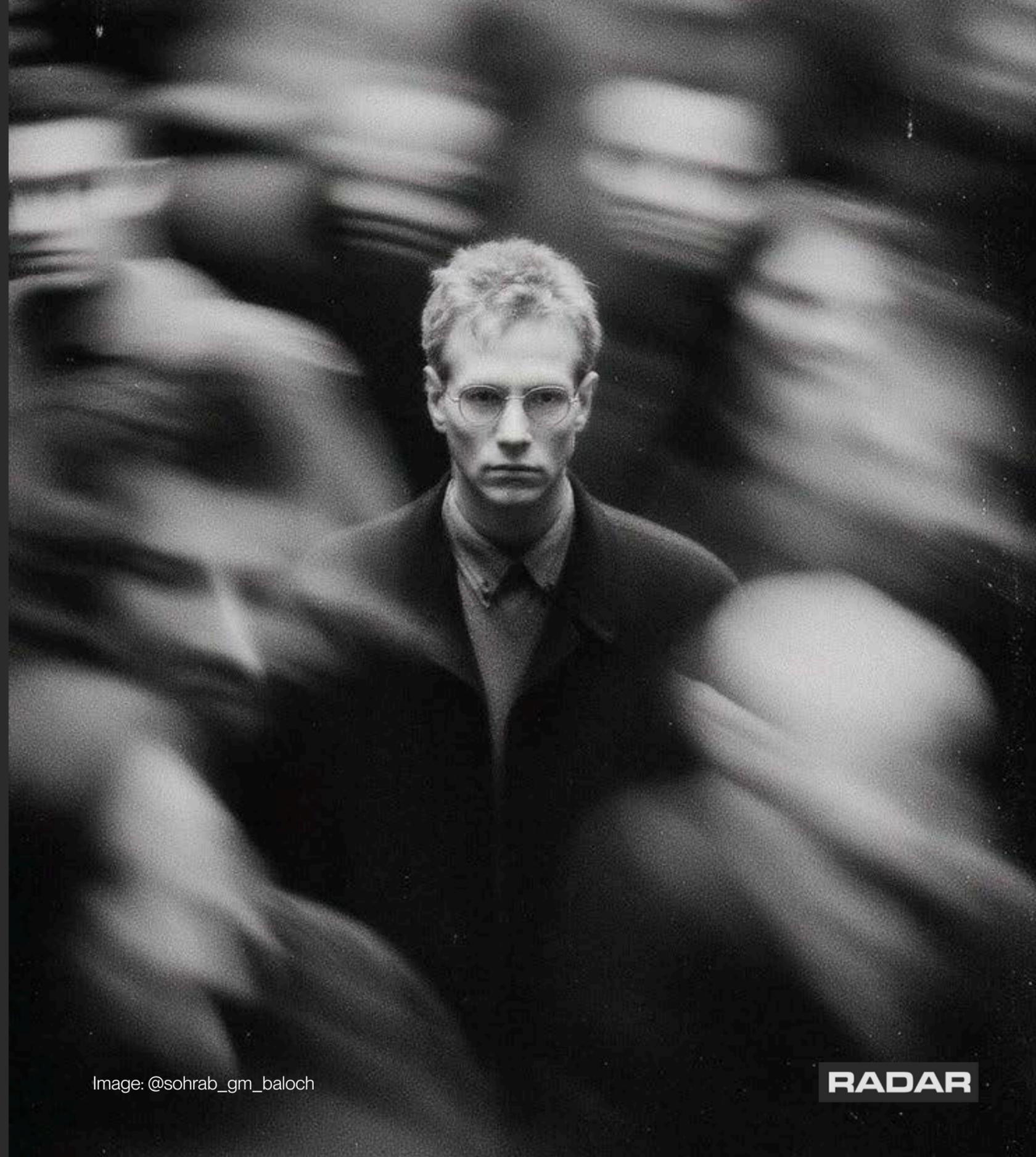


Image: @sohrab\_gm\_baloch

Part Two

# Post-Reality: The Trust Threshold

If post-truth collapsed our faith in facts, and post-trust collapsed our faith in institutions, then post-reality collapses our faith in perception itself.

The question is no longer who to trust, but what counts as real.

Generative AI has lowered the barrier to creation so far that we can no longer tell who (or what) is authoring the world around us. As explored in Centaur Futures 2023 report, this marks the slide from post-truth to post-reality: a world where even the ground of perception feels wavy.

Cyber-ethnographer Ruby Justice Thelot, reflecting on the Balkanization & Babelification of the Internet, warned us that

**“we’re approaching a realm where sharing reality may no longer be possible.”**



## Part Two

The dissolution of the single story opens space for plural truths, local knowledges, and collective sense-making. In this view, the disintegration of consensus is also the decentralization of narrative power.

In the post-reality era, trust becomes an act of composition - assembling provisional coherence between competing truths, remixing belief systems, and practicing hope in a landscape where reality itself has become a variable.

Implication:

**For companies, creators, and institutions alike, trust will hinge less on proving authority and more on curating coherence - showing your work, revealing your process, and inviting others into the act of sense-making itself.**

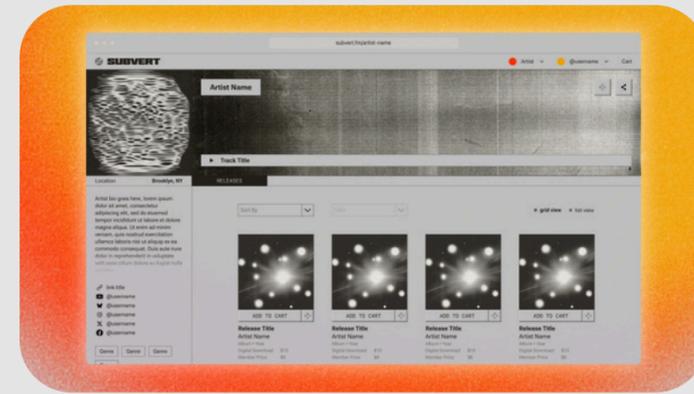
Image: Elia Pellegrini

# How New Models of Trust are Emerging:



A walkable village 90 minutes north of San Francisco, Esmeralda is a living prototype for regenerative community design.

Co-created by residents, the project rebuilds trust in place through transparency, shared stewardship, and collective imagination.



Subvert is a co-op owned by over 8,500 musicians and 1,500 labels designed as a new kind of artist-owned music marketplace.

It follows a democratic governance structure and believes in financial transparency - directed by its members rather than investors or capital.



Neighborhood Studios is a venture studio that partners with founders to build hyperlocal startups from the ground up. Based in Atlanta, it incubates small-scale, community-rooted ventures, proving ideas block-by-block.

By replacing VC distance with lived proximity, it models trust as participation and presence.



Live Near Friends helps people turn friendship into geography. The platform supports groups who want to co-locate -finding homes, rentals, or land so friends can live within walking distance.

By translating social networks into spatial ones, it reframes trust as proximity.

Trust is uneven, fractured,  
and culturally specific.

Part Four

# Trust Geographies

Trust is not collapsing everywhere - it's fragmenting along cultural, political, and economic lines.

Across regions, new architectures of belief are emerging, some top-down, some peer-built, some entirely informal.



## Government Trust Rising:

While Western democracies wrestle with distrust, nations like China, Indonesia, UAE, and Saudi Arabia are seeing renewed confidence in state-led systems - a reminder that institutional trust is not in global decline, just unevenly distributed.



## Virtual Influencers:

In Asia, AI idols like [AYAYI](#) (China) or [Rozy](#) (South Korea) command real emotional loyalty, signaling how synthetic personas can feel trustworthy (even aspirational) in cultures comfortable with mediated intimacy.

Part Five

# Beyond Post-Trust: What Comes Next

We've seen trust shift from institutions to individuals, from systems to networks, from proof to presence. What's next isn't a collapse but a recalibration - new frontiers where belief, technology, and belonging intertwine.

## Emerging Axes of Trust:

### → Post-Reality

Truth becomes plural; coherence becomes a collective act.

### → Post-Identity

Anonymity becomes authenticity; pseudonyms carry integrity.

### → Post-Self

Data doubles and wearables become arbiters of truth.

### → Post-Human

AI companions and synthetic agents join the circle of credibility and trust.

### → Post-Planet

Trust re-roots in ecosystems, not economies.

## Why it matters:

Each signals a deeper cultural rewiring as trust migrates into new infrastructures of sense-making, care, and connection.

Conclusion

# Implications for Brands + Culture

If trust is code, brands have to reprogram their role:

→  
Radical  
transparency

Show your work. Receipts, processes, and behind-the-scenes truth-telling are the new credibility

→  
Humanization

People, not platforms. Employees, creators, and customers become living trust interfaces

→  
Niche-ify

Speak to squads. Trust now scales sideways through affinity networks, not mass audiences

→  
Open-source  
caring

Collaborate visibly. Sharing IP, credit, and methods builds communal legitimacy

→  
Convenient  
compassion

Design for care. Make empathy the easiest default in products, policies, and UX

→  
Trust is no  
longer  
earned

it's co-manufactured in public, with witnesses.

Conclusion

# Trust as Hope

Trust is more than reputation management. It is an aesthetic of hope, the fragile faith that others will do the right thing.

If post-truth fractured facts, and post-trust fractured institutions, then the next horizon is about re-practising belief - not in systems, but in one another:

The future of trust won't be rebuilt by algorithms or governments, but through small, sustained acts of care: co-ops instead of corporations, micro-networks instead of monoliths, creative proof instead of perfect polish. In a post-reality world, hope itself becomes a design material - something we make, share, and maintain together.

The future of trust  
is not just about  
survival – it's about  
reimagining the  
social glue that lets  
us dream together.

# Thank You

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