

WORKSHOP

“From Personal to Impersonal Trusted Exchange in The Physical and Digital Domains: An Evolutionary Perspective”

Gruter Institute and Berkman Center Roundtable Series

Harvard Law School

Cambridge, MA

April 27, 2005

Gruter Institute and Berkman Center Roundtable Series 2004 - 2005

From Personal to Impersonal Trusted Exchange in Physical and Digital Domains:
An Evolutionary Perspective

Trust is a cornerstone for all forms of human exchange. Recent research from several disciplines – evolutionary psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, evolutionary game theory and behavioral economics – has given fresh insight into the role of trust in social and economic exchange. This series will have launched discussion about the implications of this research on the design of digital social exchange platforms such as eBay and building peer governance platforms.

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One of the key challenges for contemporary institutions and organizations is how to scale trust from the personal to the impersonal. This is not just true for creating economic and civil institutions in the developing world, but also for governing large scale institutions and bureaucracies as well. To date the governance of organizations has been based upon principles grounded and perhaps limited by the physical world. With the rise of global forms of social and economic exchange, digital technologies may provide new ways for scaling trust and governance.

This all day workshop built upon the Gruter/Berkman Roundtable series over the last year in which the issues of trust, reciprocity, governance, social signaling, and reputation were examined from legal, evolutionary, neuro-economic and neuroscientific perspectives. Many of the previous speakers returned to join in a cross disciplinary discussion and to encourage new approaches for thinking about building, scaling and governing digital organizations and institutions. As before, conversation by all who attend was encouraged.