ADGM Academy Research Centre

FINTECH TUESDAYS
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SECURING DIGITAL ASSETS:
CUSTODY, REGULATION & THE PATH TO GLOBAL STANDARDS

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Introduction

As digital ecosystems expand rapidly and the demand for trusted digital asset infrastructure rises, the ADGM Academy Research Centre, in collaboration with Fintech Tuesdays, hosted its second webinar in the ongoing Fintech Thought Leadership Series. Titled *"Securing Digital Assets: Custody, Regulation & the Path to Global Standards,"* the session convened a diverse panel of industry experts to address one of the most urgent topics in the Web3 era: how to create secure, scalable, and compliant custody models for digital assets.

Moderated by **Rauda Al Dhaheri**, Head of Research and Development at ADGMA Research Centre, the session featured speakers from **Zodia Custody, Swift, Global Blockchain Business Council (GBBC)**, and **Omla**, representing institutional custody providers, global messaging platforms, policy advocates, and consumer-focused fintechs.

Key Themes and Insights

Key Takeaways

Opening the session, **Zodia Custody's Dominic Longman and Zane Suren** emphasised that institutional-grade custody solutions must address far more than asset storage. They outlined how **custody serves as a foundation of trust**, covering multiple layers of operational resilience, compliance, and regulatory engagement. As a venture majority-owned by Standard Chartered, Zodia Custody provides regulated custody solutions tailored for both traditional finance players and digital-native firms.

Banks, hedge funds, DAOs, and blockchain protocols require comprehensive custody solutions that incorporate **KYC/AML compliance** alongside sophisticated key management systems, including **multi-party computation (MPC)** and v**aried storage approaches (cold, hot, and warm)**. Longman emphasised that inconsistent global regulatory frameworks—spanning ADGM, the EU's MiCA regulation, Singapore, and the U.S.—create operational challenges, advocating for greater international harmonisation to foster innovation.

Interoperability and Standards

Representing **Swift, Karin De Ridder** explored how the global financial cooperative is tackling the challenge of interoperability in tokenised markets. As more institutions adopt varied blockchain technologies and smart contract protocols, **fragmentation and lack of standardisation increase costs and risks.** Swift's objective is to **bridge traditional finance with digital asset markets** through the development of global business standards.

De Ridder emphasised the need for **collaborative innovation between custodians, regulators, and infrastructure players**, noting that Swift's ongoing proof-of-concept projects are designed to align post-trade settlement processes with the demands of blockchain-based systems. Lessons from traditional finance can help ensure **global compatibility and lower integration costs** in the digital asset ecosystem.

Global Standards	Bridging Systems	Collaborative Innovation	Proof-of-Concepts
Universal business standards to reduce fragmentation in tokenised markets.	Linking traditional finance with tokenised assets.	Working with custodians, regulators, and infrastructure.	Testing post-trade processes for blockchain readiness.

Governance, Access, and Digital Identity

Emma Joyce, speaking on behalf of **Global Blockchain Business Council**, reframed the discussion around the **evolution of custody itself.** In the Web3 world, custody no longer refers only to the safekeeping of cryptocurrencies or tokenised assets. It now encompasses **governance rights, access permissions**, and even **digital identity**.

Token holders in decentralised systems may now control voting power, membership credentials, and access to services – transforming custody into an active role in governance. Joyce called for **more inclusive policy frameworks**, driven by dialogue between regulators and the private sector, and supported by evidence-based use cases.

Beyond Safekeeping
Custody now includes governance, access control, and identity.

Policy Innovation
Calls for inclusive frameworks shaped by public-private dialogue.

Token Holder Power
Holders manage voting rights, credentials, and services access.

Real Use Cases Matter
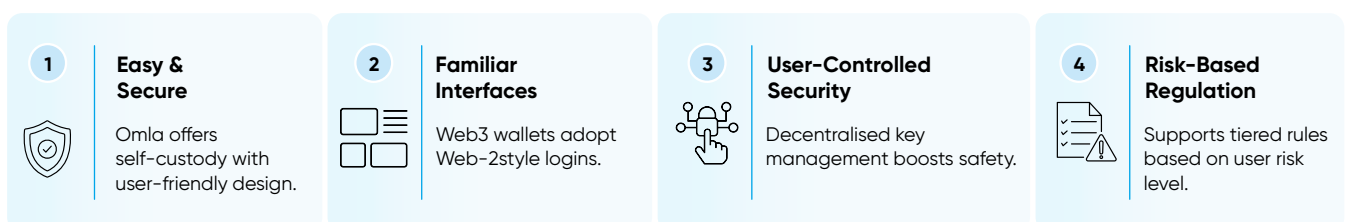Emphasis on evidence-based adoption to guide regulation.

Usability, Trust, and Consumer-First Custody

Jovana Jovanovic, founder of **Omla**, offered a crucial perspective from the consumer-focused startup space. As a platform designed to onboard mass-market users into crypto through **self-custody**, Omla operates at the intersection of simplicity and security. She argued that **usability and trust are no longer optional – they are everything**.

Jovanovic pointed to recent acquisitions by Stripe and Consensys as signals that the industry is moving toward Web2-like user experiences for Web3 wallets, using familiar logins and intuitive interfaces. She also suggested that self-custody can actually improve security in many contexts, especially when key management is decentralised and user-controlled.

However, she acknowledged the importance of tiered regulatory models, where **the level of compliance reflects the level of risk and transaction volume**—highlighting that current frameworks often treat low-risk users and institutional players under the same regulatory lens.

1 **Easy & Secure**	**2** **Familiar Interfaces**	**3** **User-Controlled Security**	**4** **Risk-Based Regulation**
Omla offers self-custody with user-friendly design.	Web3 wallets adopt Web-2style logins.	Decentralised key management boosts safety.	Supports tiered rules based on user risk level.

Innovations in Institutional Custody

When asked about the future of custody technology, Zodia Custody's representatives both emphasised the potential of **advanced MPC** to distribute signing authority across multiple institutions – creating **new forms of trust minimisation** and reducing single points of failure. This, combined with dynamic regulatory-compliant connectivity models (e.g. vetted DeFi gateways, institutional staking), positions custody providers as not only safekeepers but **gateways to the broader digital ecosystem.**

In the closing segment, speakers were asked, **"What is the single most important action required to build secure, scalable and compliant infrastructure for Web3 ecosystems?"**

The responses converged around three core themes:

Regulatory Clarity and Speed: The need for **quick, decisive regulatory guidance** to help businesses innovate with confidence.

Global Coordination & Proportionality: The need for **cross-border regulatory standardisation** to lower legal and compliance burdens for startups operating in multiple jurisdictions, combined with a call for collaboration to create common business standards across blockchain and traditional rails.

Co-Creation and Sandbox Approaches: The advocacy of **co-creation models**, such as sandbox regimes, that allow fintechs and Web3 platforms to test, scale, and improve financial inclusion responsibly.

A Call for Collaboration

Throughout the session, a consistent theme emerged: collaboration is critical. Whether through co-developing standards, sandbox programmes for startups, or regular industry-regulator roundtables, each speaker reinforced the importance of shared responsibility across stakeholders.

As ADGMA Research Centre's Rauda Al Dhaheri closed the session, she emphasised:

"It's clear that building trust in digital asset infrastructure is not the responsibility of any one player – it's a shared venture that spans innovators, regulators, custodians, and platform builders alike.

Access the Full Report

The discussion was focused on insights from ADGMA Research Centre's latest publication, "Securing the Future: Custody Best Practices for Web3, DAOs, and Blockchain Foundations."

Download the Report ⤓

Looking Ahead

The ADGMA Research Centre, in partnership with Fintech Tuesdays, remains committed to driving strategic dialogue and research around digital asset innovation, custody resilience, and policy development. Stay tuned for upcoming sessions in the series, and join us in shaping the future of finance – securely, collaboratively, and inclusively.

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