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Oct 01, 2021 by [Nicholas J. Cull](#), [Simon Anholt](#)

People, Places, Power - Episode 23: Trust: The Linchpin of Reputation ^[1]

Note from the CPD Blog Manager: This post features the podcast *People, Places, Power* co-hosted by CPD Faculty Fellow [Nicholas J. Cull](#) and Good Country Index founder [Simon Anholt](#). The podcast is produced by Elizabeth Islas USC M.A. Candidate of Specialized Journalism (2021), and features Cull and Anholt in weekly discussion on international reputation, foreign policy and related issues along the way. Future episodes will further cover specific nations, building trust and more.

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Episode 23: Trust: The Linchpin of Reputation

This episode examines the crucial category of trust in communication and reputation with special reference to the findings of the 2021 Eldeman Trust Barometer. The findings of this survey are alarming, being summarized as "information bankruptcy." Unlike national images, trust seems volatile with the highest degree of trust shifting from NGOs to "people like the audience" to employers and businesses over the 20 years that the Barometer has surveyed publics around the world. Simon points out that the decline of trust in government presents a crisis for democracy. Nick softens the blow by arguing that trust in local government is increasing. The pair consider the impact of COVID-19 on trust, which seems to have boosted trust in one's own government but decreased trust in media. The local nature of trust is seen as a problem for the UN and EU. The diffusion of trust suggests that the only way to bring people together to address large issues is through a partnership of different kinds of actors with the ability to elicit trust from different sorts of people. Simon and Nick conclude that the best way to rebuild trust is to develop critical thinking, ironic perhaps given that this process includes a reasoned mistrust. Such a process is essential for a healthy democratic future.