This Thing Called Trust
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Civic Society in Britain

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Preface

We all know that politicians lie, or at the very least hold back the full truth. We also know that they make mistakes; they are after all human. But there is a fine line between a critical public demanding more trustworthy political elites and a cynical public unwilling to entertain politics at all. In Britain and across many western democracies there is a growing feeling that politics doesn’t matter and that politicians are generally all the same. Political cynicism is beginning to crowd out political activism. With it comes declining participation rates in ‘conventional’ politics like voting in a general election, and when votes are registered, they are less predictable than they have ever been. Since the turn of the millennium, pollsters have never had it so hard.

This is why trust is \textit{the} buzz word in today’s civil societies. Academics and politicians are increasingly realising that by ignoring the issue, generations of potentially active citizens could be lost to the realm of cynicism. Some individuals initially helped me to recognise this. In particular Andy Wroe first brought the trust literature alive for me and Paul Whiteley was a constant source of encouragement and all round knowledge and guidance, while Albert Weale, David Sanders and John Bartle also offered much needed advice. My thanks to all of them.