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# Trust, Public Trust And Communication Management. Some Theses

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## POSSIBILITY OF TRUST – LEVELS OF TRUST

### ➤ Trust

- is possible between personal actors (in everyday life and public perceivable persons),
  - is possible / can be developed between personal actors and organizations (companies, political, cultural, etc. organizations, NGOs,)
  - can be (more or less) developed between personal actors and larger societal subsystems (health system, pension system, bank system, financial system, etc.)
  - or the society as a whole
- Therefore trust is existent and can / should be analyzed on three levels

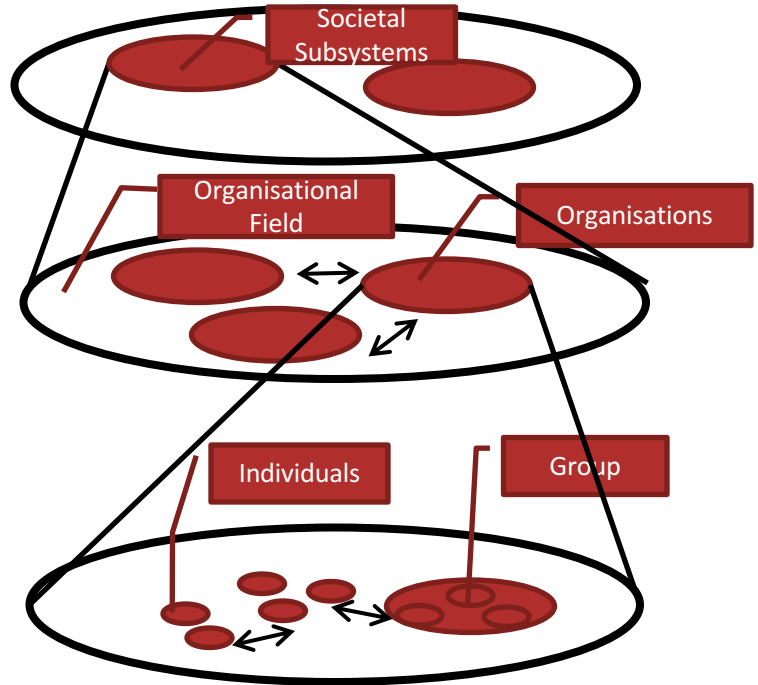
## Three levels of Public Communication

**Macro level**  
(public trust in societal subsystems & society)

**Meso level**  
(public trust in organizations)

**Micro level**  
(personal trust)

Ch. Sandhu (2011, 87)



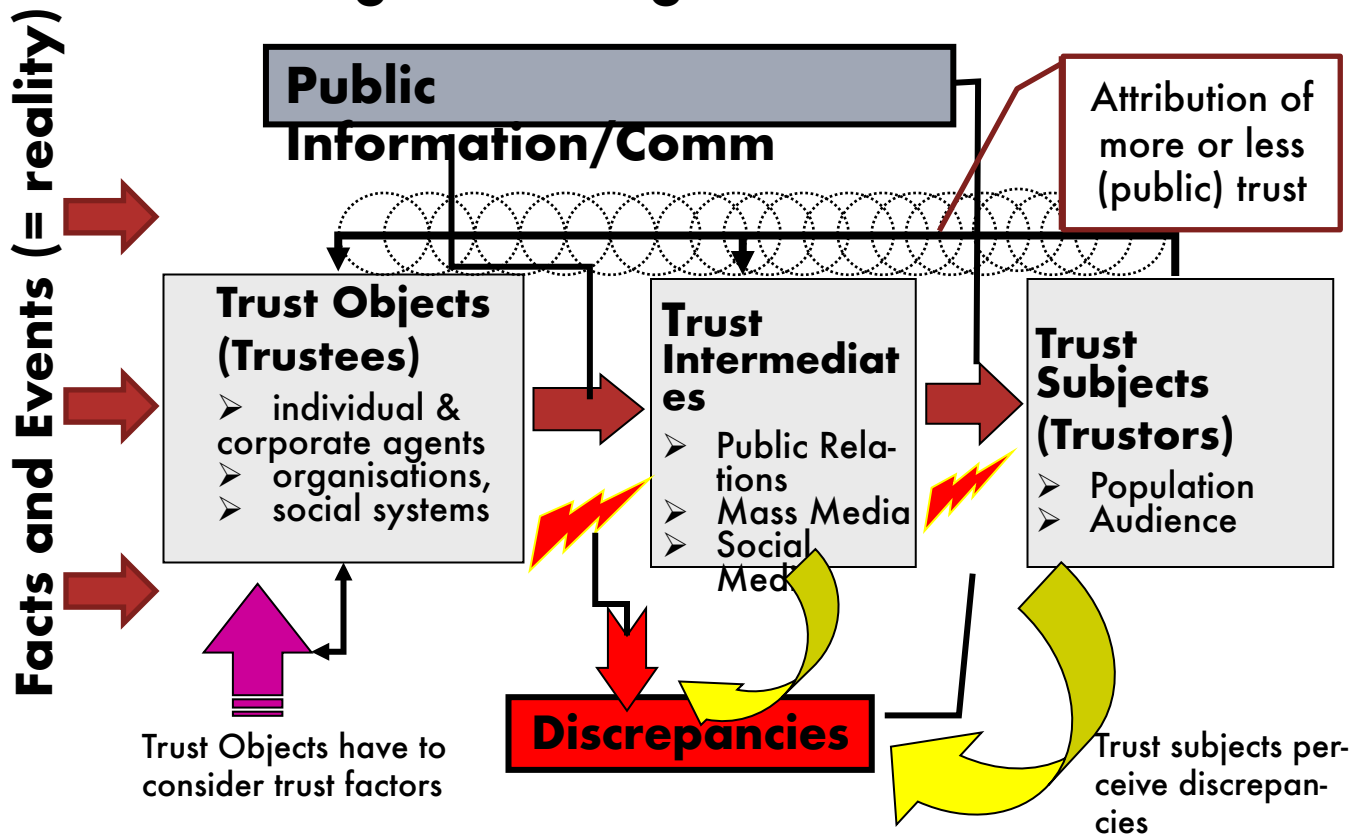
## TRUST IN PR PRACTICE AND PR RESEARCH

- Trust and public trust - important categories for PR practice and for PR research / PR science during the past 20 to 25 years
- For PR practice, trust (towards organizations) has more or less "always been" an important goal of all communication activities of organizations
- Since the early 1990s, trust has become an increasingly important topic for research, especially empirical research. Several regularly conducted (representative) trust studies (e.g. the Edelman Trust Barometer) exist, which provide a lot of data, but which remain on a rather descriptive level, do not advance deeply into the explanatory dimension.

## MEASURING TRUST – PUBLIC TRUST

- Trust is measured here not as trust in organizations but in types of organisations (politics, business, etc.).
- In the mid-1990s, my “Theory of Public Trust” (Bentele 1994; Bentele/Seidenglanz (2013, 2015, etc.), has been developed: there is an explanation for the “mechanisms” of losing trust: perceptible discrepancies
- Discrepancies (7 types!)
  - between communication and action,
  - between different communications or
  - between communication and reality are the primary causes of loss of trust.

## Building and Losing Public Trust:



# ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST AS A REGENERATIVE SOCIAL RESOURCE

- Organizational trust, even when it is built (or lost) as public trust, is a decisive (socio-communicative) resource that is never lost totally or lost forever, when it decreases. Trust is not finite like the physical resources coal or oil, it can be rebuilt/regenerated.
- However, there are preconditions on the meso level: Solution of factual problems, acceptable solution of communication problems, no discrepancies in acting and communication
- Resolving and elimination of discrepancies, etc.
- Research should deal more with building and rebuilding trust and less with losing trust!



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# THANK YOU!

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**QUESTIONS?**