Introduction

Approximating Mistrust

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When in 1968, the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (2014) wrote a book about trust, he noticed a surprising lack of empirically-backed knowledge about this phenomenon at the heart of social life. This deficit has long since been remedied as, over the last few decades, a significant variety of publications on trust have emerged. Trust, now, is seen as the glue of society, a substance supporting social cohesion and the functioning of institutions – particularly important under the conditions of modernity, which is characterized by a reliance on externalized expert systems beyond the reach of most (Giddens 1990).

Mistrust, in contrast, is noticeably understudied. If scrutinized at all, it is usually treated as the flip side of trust, as an annoying absence, a societal failure, or an obstacle to be overcome.[1] But mostly, there is just silence. For what reasons? Perhaps it is simply the inertia of not thinking about mistrust as a case sui generis or because many do not like to concede that mistrust is not an exception to their social rules, but the norm. But maybe, this silence is indicative of a blind spot in a larger agenda. This is not to be taken from granted, however. After all, the simple fact that something is understudied does not mean that it is relevant – not all social phenomena are equally worth studying and the mere fact of escaping the attention of most social scientists is not a good enough reason to demand further examination. One way to shed light on the silence

1 | This is slowly changing, however, and some ground-breaking publications have recently been published or are about to be published. The first to treat mistrust/distrust as more than the evil twin of trust was 'Distrust' by Russell Hardin (ed.) 2004. In 2016, a monograph dedicated to 'Figures of Mistrust' was published in German by Sinje Hörlin and a special issue of the journal Tracés on 'The Art of Mistrust' in French by Olivier Allard, Matthew Carey et Rachel Renault. Finally, Matthew Carey's book, 'Mistrust: An Ethnographic Theory' is scheduled for release in October 2017 – unfortunately I could not read it during the time of writing. My own analysis of mistrust is widely inspired by and based on the work of the above-mentioned authors.

surrounding the phenomenon of mistrust is to look at some other notions that have also been long overlooked by social anthropology and ask whether there is a common reason for the neglect of these concepts.

Maybe the most prominent example for a very present yet diligently overlooked phenomenon is the state. Nowadays, there is hardly any anthropological study that does not implicitly or explicitly acknowledge the presence of the state. Yet, until the 1970s the state was largely absent in ethnographic depictions of the world at large. This void is indicative of anthropology's colonial past and the accompanying tendency to neglect the power relations in which it is embedded. It is an active investment into an absence that is at stake here, the maintenance of the impression that something is not there.

In other cases, it is precisely the investigation of social phenomena construed as absences that are lacking in anthropological endeavours. Whereas, for example, sharing is a popular topic in recent anthropology, practices of not sharing are mostly overlooked or taken as inherently problematic – think of the often-invoked 'parallel worlds' or 'ethnic ghettos' as obstacles to arriving at a common sense of citizenship. In the field of interreligious relations, too, much attention has been paid to the sharing of sacred sites as venues for (real or potential) cooperation and the fostering of solidarities (Albera and Coroucli 2012, Hayden and Walker 2013, Barkan and Barkey 2015). Practices of not sharing sacred sites, however, largely go unnoticed, although in certain cases, keeping the sacra apart may contribute to getting along well (Mühlfried forthcoming).

Not sharing is often seen as problematic because it entails detachment from one's surroundings, at least spatially, it not emotionally. Detachment is another such concept that has only recently been brought to the fore. In a book dedicated to this issue, the editors write (Candea et al. 2015: 1):

> Engagement has, in a wide range of contexts, become a definitive and unquestionable social good, one that encompasses or abuts with a number of other seductive cultural tropes, such as participation, democracy, voice, equality, diversity and empowerment. Conversely, detachment has come to symbolise a range of social harms: authoritarianism and hierarchy, being out of touch, bureaucratic coldness and unresponsiveness, a lack of empathy, and passivity and inaction. Yet as this book argues, in a wide range of settings detachment is still socially, ethically and politically valued, and the relationship between detachment and engagement is not simple or singular.

With almost no changes, the same could be said about mistrust – only the word 'engagement' would have to be replaced by 'trust' and 'detachment' by 'mistrust'. Could it be that this coincidence helps to answer the question whether the omission of the notion of mistrust from academic discourse is indicative of a bias in social anthropology?

It seems that both mistrust and detachment are neglected by social anthropology because both concepts are taken to denote absences: in the first instance of trust, in the second case of relations. Trust and relations represent noteworthy presences, mistrust and detachment negligible absences, indicative only for the lack of trust or relations. The absence of trust and relations are equated with social failure. Within this logic, mistrust and detachment foster the disentanglement of citizens from each other and from institutions like the state. In a similar vein, practices such as fraud are seen as problematic because they entail the manipulation of social bonds for selfish aims. The neglect of these relations could indeed indicate a hidden agenda prevalent in social anthropology, namely the fetishisation of social cohesion. The problem then is not so much relational thinking, as the editors of 'mistrust' (Candea et al. 2015) are hinting at, but the focus on socially constitutive practices with the branding of the 'other' practices as (negligible) deviations.

This presupposition brands social anthropology as a 'moral' endeavour dedicated to improving understanding and thus fostering proximity. And for this reason, mainstream anthropology of morality discredits and pays no attention to 'disentangling from constitutive relationships' (Zigon 2014: 1) – a stance which stems, according to Jarrett Zigon (ibid), from a 'reliance on philosophical frameworks (…) of the neo-Aristotelian and Foucauldian bent'. Jörg Wiegratz (2016: 4) also sees a 'heritage of the takes on morality by major thinkers from Marx to Smith, Durkheim and Weber' as blocking our perception of social practices deemed problematic. It is thus necessary

> to 'unblock' existing research (…) from one of its core limitations: its focus on pro-social actors and practices, i.e. matters of altruism, solidarity; virtuousness, reciprocity, cooperation, care, social obligations and the like, and its neglect of the morals of actors and practices that are regarded by such approaches as bad, harmful, immoral or amoral (ibid: 8-9).

From my perspective, the agenda pursued here – unblocking our view on 'social practices deemed problematic' – is not new, but neglected. A case in point is Marcel Mauss's (1990 [1925]) authoritative work 'The Gift'. As an epigraph to his work, he cites few stanzas from the poem Havamal, part of the Edda. Among them:

> You know, if you have a friend
> In whom you have confidence
> And if you wish to get good results
> Your soul must blend in with his
> And you must exchange presents
> And frequently pay him visits.

But if you have another person
Whom you mistrust
And if you wish to get good results,
You must speak fine words to him
But your thoughts must be false
And you must lament in lies.
(ibid: 2)

Whereas the 'exchange of presents' mentioned in the first part is the centrepiece of Mauss' following elaborations, the 'right way to mistrust' declared in the second part is not paid any attention to in the book at all.[2] Hence, while topics such as mistrust and fraud appear, they are of no particular interest in contrast to techniques of bonding such as the exchange of gifts. The positive connotation of bonding is also reflected in the etymology of the word 'trust', which is 'probably the reflex of an unattested Old English *trust (perhaps cognate with Middle High German getrüste company, troop, and the Frankish etymon of post-classical Latin trustis retinue, bodyguard (...))' (OEC 2015).[3] According to this genealogy, trust is needed for the establishment and functioning of military and protective units. So we find that the very word that today represents a positively inflected emotion was once used for agents of, or protectors against violence. Mistrust, then, would be seen to undermine the essence of formations such as troops and bodyguards and thus be seen as unsocial from the point of view of governments.

Before getting into the actual ethnographies of mistrust, a few things need to be said in order to define mistrust as an empirical phenomenon, and this will be done in the following sections. These sections centre on the questions of how a.) mistrust relates to trust, b.) mistrust works, c.) mistrust differs from distrust d.) mistrust translates to the world, and e.) mistrust affects culture. These elaborations partly draw on references to the chapters in this volume.

How Does Mistrust Relate to Trust?

Without trust, Luhmann reminds us, we would not get out of bed in the morning, as '[u]ndetermined anxiety, paralysing horror' would befall us (Luhmann 2014: 1). That is not to say a mistrustful person would remain bed-ridden as, in all likelihood, even the most mistrustful people would develop strategies to reduce the complexity of the word – an essential function of trust for Luhmann. Like trust, mistrust constitutes a relation to the world, but the nature of the

2 | I owe this reference to Daniel Künzler who has found it in Ogino 2007.

3 | My thanks go to Bruce Grant for this hint.

relation is markedly different. If trust reduces the fear of failure in transactions and facilitates decision taking, mistrust initiates a search for 'defensive arrangements' (ibid, in German 'defensive *Vorkehrungen*'), i.e., ways to spread risks and weaken dependencies.

Both trust and mistrust are attitudes of engagement (Hartmann 2011: 57, in German '*Einstellungen des Engagements*'), which is why they cannot be understood as opposites (Reemtsma 2013: 37). They both emerge in situations of uncertainty; once certainty is obtained, trust and mistrust are obsolete. Trust also does not necessarily disappear with the advent of mistrust.

A striking example of the coexistence of trust and mistrust is provided by Jan Beek in this volume, who analysis cases of romance scammers in Ghana defrauding their victims by writing credible love letters. The scammers try to create credibility by drawing on globally shared idioms of romantic love. Once they have established rapport, they ask for money. Usually, their recipients react by scrutinizing the online representations of their ostensible lover and signalling their mistrust. At a certain stage, however, some women decide to suspend mistrust and to invest into trust, not least by sending money. As apparent in the email conversations, their mistrust never disappears but lingers on, flaring up again and again.

On a more abstract level, trust and mistrust have to be seen as mutually constitutive: mistrust needs to be possible for trust to come into existence (Reemtsma 2013: 37). The opposite of trust as a way of being in the world is rather crippling fear, or the 'paralysing horror' described by Luhmann. Trust and distrust are modes of relating to human beings and the world as a whole. In the case of trust, people invest in the strengthening of their relations, in the case of mistrust in the weakening of these relations or in alternative relationships. The effect, Luhmann argues, is the same: the reduction of complexity. Although he concentrates on the elaboration of trust as a functional means for reducing complexity, he also states the following: 'Whoever doesn't trust, (...) has to rely on functionally equivalent strategies for the reduction of complicity (...). Mistrust, too, supplies simplification, at times gross simplification' (Luhmann 2014: 93).[4] Yet, a mistrustful person must assume that a transaction may fail – in contrast to a trustful person who expects a positive outcome. A mistrustful person also does not know whether the effects of an encounter will be good or bad and is more prepared for unknown outcomes. This simple observation indicates that mistrust may precisely reside in the acknowledgement of complexity. Taking this into account, the relationship between mis-

4 | Jan Philipp Reemtsma (2013: 36) similarly sees trust and mistrust as complementary modes of reducing the unreliability of expectations ('*Reduktion von Erwartungsunsicherheit*').

trust and the task of complexity reduction is more nuanced and needs to be addressed empirically before coming up with sweeping generalisations.

Some of the chapters to this volume tackle this relationship, bringing arguments both in favour and against the idea that mistrust means simplification. The most outspoken critique of this paradigm is Michael Bürge who argues that mistrust 'urges people to inquire (...) into things as they are and possible alternatives and, thus, to engage with complexity' (page 110). His ethnography is situated in northern Sierra Leone, where trust is a scarce resource both socially and politically. Missing trust, Bürge argues, people try new practices and endeavour into unknown venues, at times even increasing their engagement with the particular individual with whom they had not been able to create trust.

Nicolai Ruh, by contrast, argues that 'mistrust is a functional equivalent of trust in that it allows the reduction of complexity against the background of uncertainty' (page 32), drawing conclusions from research into the political crypto community. 'Crypto community' denotes a network of globally dispersed internet activists who develop cryptographic tools with the goal of preserving social principles like autonomy, accountability and trust. What unites these activists as a community is their commonly shared experience of ontological mistrust, resulting from state-sponsored cyber surveillance that became public in the wake of the NSA scandal, as well their in-depth knowledge of the working principles of digital technologies.

My own chapter provides plenty of examples how profoundly mistrustful persons tend to investigate the reduction of complexity by dividing the world into 'trustworthy' and 'untrustworthy'. My focus is on a mode of mistrust oriented towards radical detachment, that is, the attempt to distance oneself from the environment as much as possible, resulting in the sacrifice of one's life. In order to outline the cultural syntax underlying such radical practices, I concentrate on three groups originating from the Caucasus over a period of two centuries: the bandit-come-rebels Abreks, elevated in the nineteenth century to resistance fighters, the 'thieves in law', a criminal elite caste originated from the Soviet prison camp system, and Caucasian jihadists committing suicide bombings in the Caucasus and beyond. While concluding that in all these groups mistrust translates into a gross simplification of the world, I nonetheless argue that such kind of simplification is only one mode of mistrust.

Lost trust in the world may lead to apathy and depression; if it translates into action, it may lead to extreme violence (see above). It may also spur investigation; a critical examination of the world with the aim to come to terms with it (unlike the characters above). The German word '*Auseinandersetzung*' reflects this well: it indicates separation ('*auseinander*', similar to the prefix 'dis-' in 'distrust') that triggers a process of investigation, albeit not a 'friendly' one, which is captured in the fact that this word also denotes quarrel. This is when mistrust becomes distrust. The effect of the 'distrustisation' of mistrust is sim-

ilar to the Cartesian idea of doubt as it fosters a radical and incredulous investigation of facts. It differs, however, as the locus of investigation is not a radically detached ego, but an entangled 'participant observer'. The ruthless distruster acts in the world just as we social and cultural anthropologists act in the 'field'.

One of the few thinkers who came to acknowledge the creative potential of mistrust in the production of knowledge was Friedrich Nietzsche. Against the grain of most other thinkers who see mistrust as an annoyance, for him mistrust is a virtue: 'the more mistrust, the more philosophy' (Nietzsche 1954 [1887]: 211). Trust, for Nietzsche, leads to inertia, whereas mistrust necessitates tension, observation and reflection (Nietzsche 1974 [1886|87]: 282). Once more, Nietzsche advocates a revaluation of values. And it is it this kind of revaluation in respect to the notion of mistrust that is at stake here.

How Does Mistrust Work?

Instead of lying in bed and doing nothing, it is thus much more likely that a mistrustful person would rise and make some arrangements with the world, albeit in a distanced manner. This 'defensive arrangement' (Luhmann 2014: 1) should allow for a 'tempering' or 'domestication' of unknown forces.[5] The mistrustful person does not know if these forces are beneficial or malevolent. A well-studied way of dealing with such a challenge is the tradition of hospitality (e.g. Pitt-Rivers 1968), which was established to help come to terms with the presence of a stranger, an unknown power with which it is difficult to establish trust (see also Luhmann 1998: 643). However, the stranger can be domesticated by means of integrating him or her into the rules of hospitality. The potential danger emanating from the stranger is not completely averted but integrated into the most central part of the household, at least temporarily. This creates bonds of solidarity permitting the host to participate in the power of the guest.

In addition to domestication, distancing represents another 'defensive arrangement' arising from mistrust. Such a distance is, of course, relative. It concerns reserving things, thoughts, emotions or spaces in such a way to limit the access of others. Not all resources are shared, some are kept behind in case the transaction fails (as the mistrustful assumes). In this way, not only risks are spread, but a particular mode of interaction is defined, a mode based on reservations. Interactions with the world are not avoided (as in case of being befallen by 'paralysing horror'), but never entered at full stake, in order not to deplete one's reserves (Hauschild 2008, 2003).

5 | For attempts to 'temper' or 'domesticate' the state, see e.g. Hann 1990 or Mühlfried 2014.

It is probably this trait of never totally subscribing to something or someone that makes a mistrustful person so objectionable. He or she does not seem to be willing to substantially share his or her thoughts, emotions, passions, riches, or belongings. Thus, it is difficult to know whom one is dealing with. Yet, 'holding back' forms the backbone of most transactions, as Annette Weiner (1992) has shown: value is crated by keeping certain objects out of circulation. In this sense, 'defensive arrangements' are part and parcel of everyday interactions.

Sometimes, the 'defensive arrangements' born out of mistrust are rather explicit. Ilya Utekhin in his contribution to this volume draws our attention to the inventiveness of the inhabitants of communal apartments in (Soviet and post-Soviet) Russia, who were constantly worried that their property may be damaged by their involuntary cohabitants. Some locked their fridges with chains, others kept their own toilet seat in the bathroom. For Utekhin, the behavioural patterns discernible in communal apartments are intrinsic to Russian culture, which places mistrust alongside denunciation as a particular way of relating to authorities.

In other cases, mistrust 'surfaces' in and then shapes the process of an investigation. This has been observed by Stephanie Bognitz, whose analysis is based on cases of mediation in post-genocide Ruanda, where mediation has been re-introduced in 2004 as institutionalized and regulated space for dispute settlement governed by law. Mediation embodies various modes of practices and articulations for actors in dispute. In the process of mediation, developing mistrust is not necessarily supressed, but rather fostered as a means of producing new encounters resulting in new possibilities for action, ultimately legitimising the idea that law is capable of dealing with mistrust.

Instead of 'surfacing', mistrust rather remains tacit yet omnipresent in Melanie Brand's analysis of domestic violence counselling in South Africa. During the initial counselling encounter, the stories women tell to legitimize their stay at a shelter are met with mistrust by the counsellor, who suspects they may be falsified. This mistrust, however, never becomes explicit. The kind of communication employed by the counsellors with their clients is thus marked by tacit mistrust. I suggest that in order for mistrust to remain tacit and not to become explicit – for example, in the form of accusations – mistrusting actors need to be able to walk a thin line, engaging in concealment and information-generating practices simultaneously. Here mistrust as a 'defensive arrangement' finds its expression in a distinct double-layered communicative strategy, in which one layer has to remain invisible – just like in some conjuring tricks that work with double-layeredness in a very concrete sense.

Are Mistrust and Distrust the Same?

Some authors try to differentiate the workings of mistrust and distrust. For Victor Vakhstayn (2016), mistrust is embedded in a general state of being like the state of nature outlined by Hobbes, whereas distrust is directed towards something or somebody. This definition is theoretically valid, but highly difficult to operationalize empirically, as it would involve an unreasonable amount of guesswork to differentiate between mistrust as a 'state' (of society or of mind) and a relational process. In quotidian usage, mistrust and distrust are used interchangeably (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms 1984: 263), which seems to suggest that in the logic of practices, they are interwoven into one fabric. Leonardo Schiocchet (this volume) argues for heuristically differentiating between empirical expressions of mistrust and distrust as an absence of trust. Distrust, for him, never exists in practice as an ideal type, whereas mistrust is a suitable sociological category that allows for ethnographic approximations.

This book deals both with mistrust as a mental and emotional state or attitude and with distrust as it manifests itself in relational practices of a certain kind. We do not try to disentangle attitude from behaviour and pay particular attention to individual and collective experience in informing states of mistrust and practices of distrust. Hence, we treat mistrust as a complex phenomenon including affective (emotional, attitudinal) as well as cognitive (knowledge, perception) aspects. The starting point for most endeavours, however, is cases of distrust, understood as ways of relating to the world based on mistrust. It is only when the mistrustful person described by Luhmann gets out of bed that mistrust becomes observable, hence when mistrust manifests itself in distrust without disappearing as a conviction, feeling, and motivation. This means that relational practices are in the fore of this book. We care for what people actually do or say when they mistrust, and how distrust affects their being in the world.[6]

On the semantic level, the concept of mistrust is intimately related to the notions of doubt, suspicion, and detachment. For this reason, the book contains conceptual interventions on the semantic fields of (1) doubt, suspicion and mistrust (2) mistrust, distrust and suspicion, and (3) mistrust and detachment. In contrast to the other chapters to this volume, these interventions are not embedded in ethnography, but situated on a meta-level. Therefore, they are not to be mistaken with staple contemporary anthropological journal articles but should be read as essays encouraging research on the given topic. Rather than

6 | The illustration on the front cover depicts the queen of the Isle of Lewis Chess Game, which is presumably about 1000 years old. She seems to be paralyzed by horror and the question is: will she remain seated or will she get up? Only if she got up would she qualify as an object of study in the given thematic scope. This. however, looks a rather unlekely prospect, given the expression of her face.

looking for indelible ethnographic proof of the chapter's suggestions, these are better understood as propositions, or starting points for new research avenues.

The first intervention is provided by Mathijs Pelkmans, who has recently opened up the field for ethnographic investigations and anthropological conceptualisations of doubt (2013), showing that a focus on doubt is indispensable for grasping the role of ideas in social action. In this text, Pelkmans takes off from the current 'post-truth' context, which is characterized by apprehension and loss of trust in experts, and, by implication, a loss of faith in 'truth'. In this situation of uncertainty, a new breed of politicians, who are often referred to as 'populists', try to capitalize on widespread sentiments of distrust towards the political establishment and the media by doubting existence of 'facts'. This in turn, increases the doubt of their opponents in their credibility.

Leonardo Schiocchet, who came to be interested in the dynamics between suspicion and trust while doing fieldwork in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, and then among Palestinians in different places in Brazil, Denmark, Austria, the West Bank and East Jerusalem (Palestine), investigates the tension between mistrust, distrust and suspicion under the title 'Essay on the Anthropology of the Fiduciary'. Semantically, he differentiates mistrust and distrust by referring to the first as 'misplaced trust' and the latter as 'the absence of trust'. The quest for trust, he argues, is especially urgent in cases of its absence and manifests in processes of 'entrustment' that are to be located both within the real of mistrust and of trust.

The relation of detachment to mistrust is tackled in the afterword written by Thomas Yarrow who is one of the editors of the previously mentioned book on 'Detachment: Essays on the Limits of Relational Thinking' (Candea at al. 2015). By revisiting the chapters of this volume, Yarrow takes up the question raised in this introduction whether the common unwillingness to study practices of detachment or mistrust empirically and address them in their own right is indicative of the current state of social sciences. In a socio-political climate of increasing mistrust in what was once accepted as truth, Yarrow furthermore argues, Foucauldian inspired deconstructions that have sought to make apparent a misplaced trust in experts should be reconsidered.

How does Mistrust Relate to the World?

Whether mistrust is always a mode of reducing complexity is still an open question. What can be said with certainty, however, is that mistrust is usually relational, a way of perceiving and relating to people, institutions or things. Thus, mistrust does not oppose engagement, but is rather a particular form of it and one that deserves attention in its own right. In contrast to trust that creates proximity, mistrust results in the cultivation of distance. Paraphras-

ing Weiner (1992), the working of mistrust is characterized by the 'paradox of withholding-while-participating' (a close relative of Weiner's 'paradox of keeping-while-giving').

As Alexei Yurchak (2006) demonstrated in respect to the late Soviet Union, irony can be a means of participating in a 'distanced' way. The citizens he is dealing with do not subvert or resist the state outwardly. At the same time they are not zealous or faithful followers. In order to understand them, one has to relinquish dichotomies of resistance and compliance. Yurchak's way of looking at irony thus bears some similarities to the way of making sense of mistrust outlined here: both phenomena are situated beyond the narrow frameworks of being-in-favour or being-against, and both phenomena entail forms of restraint and investment at the same time – forms which are fairly impossible to disentangle. The withholding of mental or material reserves during interactions are other relational forms of mistrust, as is the taming of the unknown in the form of hospitality referred to earlier.

Is mistrust thus always relational? Or are there also absolute forms of mistrust, resulting in the will to break free from all ties? Is it possible to completely detach one's identity from a surrounding that is profoundly mistrusted? Time and again, people have tried to completely disentangle themselves from the word. The musician Sun Ra, for example, claimed that he was born on planet Saturn (Grass 2009); by locating his identity in the elsewhere, he stopped belonging to the world he was living in. Religious groups like the Indian Jains try to detach their existence from this world as far as possible, some of them by fasting to death (Laidlaw 2015). Death, in the end, is the ultimate break with the world, and thus the symbolism of death often surrounds groups that try to break away from a world that does not deserve any trust (e.g. the Manson Family).

With the relocation of identity, trust is relocated, too.[7] This leads to a doubling of the world. The world 'out there' is radically distrusted and delimited from one's own world, in which trust is placed, for instance in the world of the family or the village. The sociologist Charles Tilly refers to these second worlds as 'networks of trust' (Tilly 2005). Often, these networks are based on metaphors of kinship, such as brotherhoods. The new brothers and sisters are united by mutual trust and mistrust towards the environment. Mistrust may thus lead to a displacement of trust.

The relation to the 'outer world' in trust networks differs. In some cases, the world is simply avoided (like in the case of secret brotherhoods like the Waldensians), in others it is ridiculed (such as in Sicilian fish markets). Keeping worlds

7 | Only very few groups such as the Jain ascetics do not relocate identity but tempt to get rid of identity (hence the world, hence themselves) altogether. In most cases, the detachment of identity is a relational process.

separate is often hard work, as demonstrated by the cryptographers studied by Ruh (this volume) who work against the intrusion of the state into private digital spheres. In other cases, the outside world is legitimate target of crimes (as for the Mafia or for politically motivated hackers). In yet other cases, it is to be destroyed (as for jihadists). Disentanglement, here, is again relational, and more often than not, the new world is embedded in the same semantic system as the old world (Mühlfried this volume). Radical forms of mistrust are difficult to live.

How does Mistrust Translate to Culture?

On the 25 anniversary of the German reunification on 3 October 2015, the German-based, internationally operating Volkswagen Company published a full-page advertisement in leading German newspapers stating the following:

> Actually, we wanted to say at this place how happy we are that Germany became one country again. Actually, we wanted to say how proud we are to have shaped this country during the last twenty-five years together with all. Actually, this would have been the right time to say thank you – for the trust of our costumers in our vehicles and the great popularity that Volkswagen enjoyed in these years in Germany. Actually, we wanted to pay tribute to the work of our employees and suppliers all over Germany. All this would have actually been right. But we would like to say only one sentence now: we will do all and everything to regain your trust.[8]

This 'trust campaign' of the Volkswagen Company was a reaction to a large-scale cheating scandal referred to as diesel-gate by some: the company manipulated the emissions of their cars so that less pollution would be noted in testing conditions. With these practices becoming public, the Volkswagen Company was obviously highly concerned about having converted the trust of their buyers into mistrust, and that this might affect their reputation and sale. They were afraid, in other words, that mistrust may motivate their former clients to cut their ties and to turn away.

The concern of Volkswagen is far from unique. When in 2013, Edward Snowden blew a whistle and revealed to which extent people worldwide are surveyed by the National Security Agency (NSA) and their partners, the scandal that followed was often said to undermine the trust of the citizens in the state – a trust which is proclaimed an absolute prerequisite to its functioning. Again, mistrust was frequently depicted as undermining essential relationships, in

8 | See: https://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article147187813/VW-entschuldigt-sich-mit-riesiger-Werbekampagne.html

this case with the state. Germany has been hit by another crisis recently that triggered similar concerns after a terrorist right wing group, referring to itself as the 'national-socialist underground' (NSU), was discovered in 2011. Subsequent police investigations revealed that state officials had been so deeply embedded in the structures of violent neo-fascism in Germany that many were either part of the movement themselves or were aware of the organisation but did not intervene. This scandal, too, was believed to corrode trust among citizens toward the state by many commentators in numerous articles.

Although mistrust would have been a reasonable reaction to all these crises, the undermining potentialities of mistrust have been brought to the fore in discrediting ways. Mistrust, according to the dominating voices, only seems to be able to destroy, not to constitute. But is this really so? As indicated above, mistrust may lead to a translocation of trust into trust networks. Here, mistrust is constitutive, but immediately replaced by trust towards the insiders. The question is, then, whether or not mistrust itself may be shared and if this sharing creates bonds. This is another open question that cannot be answered here, given the lack of empirical evidence on hand. As some studies in this book indicate, however, mistrust does seem to posses some constitutive potential. In Ilya Uetkhin's chapter on communal apartments in soviet and post-soviet Russia, the everyday interactions of the inhabitants are shaped by a high degree of mistrust, resulting in a mutual process of surveillance. Both the shared mistrust and the mutual surveillance transforms the inhabitants of communal apartments into members of communities of mistrust, defined by common practices and perceptual patterns. These communities may be seen us unhealthy, but they are still, nonetheless, communities.

In other cases, performances of mistrust articulate the needs and claims of unheeded communities (Somparé and Botta Somparé this volume). This was the case when, during the Ebola epidemics in Guinea, state-sponsored campaigns to curtail the crisis were met by attitudes of reticence and resistance in urban and rural communities. Resistance mostly revolved around the idea that the disease did not exist and was the result of a conspiracy organized by the state with the help of the international institutions. The epidemic constituted a specific configuration where mistrust was seen as the proper way to engage, and thus express mistrust towards the authorities, and, in more general terms, mistrust toward intellectual elites, who were perceived as corrupt and uninterested in the well-being of local people.

Beyond Academia

I would like to conclude this introduction with some remarks beyond the scope of academia. As an entry point, let me reformulate the opening question: is the popular discrediting of mistrust indicative of political concerns? I would argue it is for two reasons. First of all, there seems to be a general anxiety – shared, among others, by academics, journalists, politicians, and civil society members – that taking mistrust seriously means legitimising so-called *Wutbürger* ('angry citizens') and Trump voters. Both groups express open mistrust towards media coverage and political representation. *Wutbürger* started to flood German streets around 2010 and are nowadays mostly organized in far-right non-parliamentarian protest groups such as Pegida (abbreviation of 'Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident'). They often refuse to talk to the media because they mistrust their intentions and claim to be more legitimate in expressing the concerns of the people *(Volk)* than the government. Trump voters have equally expressed their mistrust in the media, electoral and political system before the elections and put their trust in Trump to overturn this system. Both Trump voters and *Wutbürger* are often said to live in a post-factual world by their adversaries, a world where mistrust-driven sentiments are valued higher than objective evidences. Taking their mistrust seriously is not be equated with taking their political positions seriously, however. And perhaps, acknowledging the sentiments of mistrustful people could contribute to more accurate election forecasts the next time.

Secondly, there is a concern that looming mistrust in the wake of the NSA crisis or diesel-gate may undermine the very basis of our polity: the state and the market. This would explain the frequent appeals of politicians and corporate spokespersons to regain the trust of citizens. For them, the worst-case scenario seems to be that when citizens lose their trust, they refrain from civic participation (or consumption) and thus stop 'feeding' the state (or the market). Hence, it is inertia that is mostly feared. This inertia, however, is not to be confused with mistrust. As Luhmann has elaborated, trust and mistrust are functionally equivalent strategies of engagement. It is the lack of trust and mistrust that results in inertia. Mistrust is not only a reasonable reaction towards the revelations, it may also be the first step towards critical political engagement.

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