Mis(sing) Trust for Surviving

Confronting Complexity and the Un/Known in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone

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> 'To see a person is not to know him/her'.
> Temne funeral song[1]

You know Michael, everything is about money in these days. Some people have to live on 2000 Leones [around 0.30€] a day. Those who have money, they cannot get enough. People try everything to get money. But it is not that easy. When you have money, it disappears very quickly. (...) You know, how our people are. (...) If you want to make business, you have to protect yourself. They come to your place and ask for money. Others try to destroy you to get money. They have bad hearts (bad at). They use local medicine. You must not have a stiff hand. You need an open heart and to share. But it is not enough. That's why I went to Kabala. The [traditional] doctors there are more powerful. (...) You need to have sense. You have to know how to play (sabi fɔ ple) the game. (...) You know that I lived in Freetown. I went to Conakry. I'm a drɛg man, a real rarray man. I worked in different places. (...) You have to play tricks. Don't show people everything you have. Don't show everybody what you do and what you know. Give them also a wrong impression. (...) But you also need trust (trɔs). You need the right connections, sababu[2]. (...) You have to diversify. The business, the connections. The way you appear. (...) You need to try and to learn. If you only remain in Makeni and do always the same things, you will not move ahead. It's your people, your brothers who want to destroy you. Keep your eyes open. I have sense, you know. I made new experiences. I saw different things and I know much. Gold, timber, diamonds, clothes or shoes. I know the business. (...) It is difficult to have trust these days. (...) Many of our people do not

1 | The original is 'Ke-nenk w-uni ke ye ke tara ko' (see Shaw 2000:42). Ka-Temne is the dominant 'indigenous' language spoken in Makeni.

2 | In its local usage, *sababu* is largely synonymous to trust *(trɔs)* as I develop in this chapter. It denotes the material support, belief and commitment but also the supporting person (Bürge 2009; D'Angelo 2015).

know how to make money. Some have tried many different things. (...) They trusted so many people. They had hope and invested much. (...) But only disappointment.
(Patrick, Makeni, Conversation with Author, 3 April 2013[3])

I knew Patrick from 2007, when he was one of the young men whose lives circled around commercial motorbike *(okada)* riding – the overarching topic of my research back then (Bürge 2011). At that time Patrick was in his early twenties, earning money not only as an *okadaman* (commercial motorbike rider) but also by engaging in petty trade with clothes, food and agricultural products between Makeni, where he was born and resided again in 2007, some surrounding villages and Sierra Leone's and Guinea's respective capitals Freetown and Conakry. After the civil war (1991-2002), he had lived in Freetown for some time, where he had earned a living as a *jew man*, that is, dealing in second hand clothes and other imported, and sometimes stolen, goods (Christensen, Utas, and Vium 2011).

When I returned to Makeni in 2011, it was immediately visible that Patrick had been successful during my absence. He had grown bigger, put on quite some weight. Some people called him 'big man' or '*bɔbɔ bɛlɛ*', literally 'belly boy' (Shepler 2011:48-49; Ferme 2001:159-86; Utas 2012).[4] He had earned money: first in Freetown between 2008 and 2009 and afterwards back in Makeni. He was not riding somebody else's motorbike anymore but owned seven motorbikes that he rented out to some of his 'brothers'. He was not continuously roaming the streets looking for a good deal. As a big man, Patrick 'issue[d] commands, normally from a seated position, while subordinates [did] the running', (Nugent 1995:3; Utas 2012) for benefitting from his socio-economic success.

Patrick repeatedly sustained that he had capitalized on his 'sense' or 'mind', his cleverness and his ability *(sabi fɔ)* to explore unknown places and practices and to knit new relations with people. He had appropriated powers that were unfamiliar and often invisible for most people in Makeni (Shaw 2002; Ferme 2001; Bürge 2017). Whereas his knowledge and experiences had been highly beneficial for his economic progress, Patrick and his activities were also object of rumours in the neighbourhood. He was the target of malicious gossip and even more malevolent 'local practices' that aimed at harming his social position and thereby his existence. People, particularly close ones, members of the family and 'brothers' that felt insufficiently included in his benefits, doubted the morality and sustainability of his practices. Some accused him of working with illegal and antisocial occult powers harming the community (D'Angelo

3 | All names are anonymized.

4 | Having a 'big belly' or being called a *bɔbɔ bɛlɛ* points at an individual's socio-economic success, which might also had come about by illegitimately ('greedily', 'corruptly') appropriating or 'eating' (chop) others' properties.

2014b:278-81). As Patrick states in the quote above, he had little trust for the people around him. Many had no trust for him either.

The quote above came from a conversation I had with Patrick in April 2013 in front of his tiny shop about the various economic activities on which people pinned their hopes when attempting to improve their living condition. People had to experience that many of these efforts revealed to be disappointingly unsuccessful; Patrick's accounts of the challenges and opportunities for improving his life under such conditions were typical of the difficulties many other people faced when trying to find new trajectories and values to elevate their lives beyond mere survival. Opportunities seemed to increase in Makeni, while personal success was limited. People had difficulties establishing the right activities and relationships for generating money and other capital. Many of my interlocutors, particularly young men, were clear that lack of trust *(trɔs)* caused their social immobility: 'If there is no trust, there is no progress *(yu nɔ ebul fɔ go bifɔ)*'.[5] Success in moving forwards and upwards was often very elusive – as generating trust was.

On the following pages, I elaborate how people in Makeni tried to improve their lives and what role trust and its absence played therein. For this purpose and faithful to the title of this book, I approximate mistrust mainly ethnographically. However, I also draw upon some central theoretical elaborations about mis/trust. Most importantly, based on empirical insights I problematize and offer a different view on the relationship between mis/trust and the un/known. Luc Boltanski's (2014) elaborations about mis/trust, making inquiries and the *savoir sur/vivre* (the art of living and surviving) were of particularly importance.

What became particularly clear with Patrick's and other interlocutors' stories, was that Boltanski's – and other authors' – supposition about the relationship of familiarity or social proximity and trust was not valid for the people in northern Sierra Leone. Here, when 'persons and things in close proximity were involved (...) habit and common sense [did not] suffice to engender an acceptable degree of trust' (Boltanski 2014: 208) for making things easy. The 'immediate environment', 'friends, colleagues or family members' (ibid.) were not the refuge of trust. People in Makeni knew too well about the ambivalence and indeterminacy of the intimate and seemingly known. The house, home and

5 | The insights I draw upon stem from fieldwork up to 2013. The lack of *trɔs* in Sierra Leone has become even more crucial with the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in 2014 (see Somparé in this volume). Suffice here to say that people who lacked trust in measures taken by the government and international interventions investigated into their own solutions. In line with the argument I put forward here, missing trust, not only as the 'belief' in the government, but also in its more material form and support, urged people to look for alternatives (Shepler 2014b; Benton 2014; Yamanis, Nolan and Shepler 2016; Richards 2016; Bah 2015).

kin could be 'comforting yet at the same time inherently dangerous' (Geschiere 2013: ix). They were homely (*heimelig* in German) and uncanny *(un/heimlich)*.

Based on their 'sensory data' about their 'disturbed' social environment (Boltanski 2014), people had thus good reasons not to turn a blind eye to their relations with close ones for suspending doubt (Geschiere 2013:32) and pretending 'as if' everything was ok (Möllering 2006). As in the case of Dar Es Salaam's shoe vendors of Alexios Malefakis (2014), people in Makeni had difficulties generating trust with their close ones because they knew them so well. At the same time, there was something uncanny *(un/heimlich)*, not completely known but neither fully hidden, that people could not ignore in their everyday lives, if and when they had to collaborate with the people in their vicinity. Therefore they had to 'undertake inquiries' (Boltanski 2014: 209; also Klaits 2016: 417) and to engage with their doubts when considering various alternatives to improve their lives.

In other words, trust and social proximity were not pre-given by the context or some physical properties. Trust was the imagined but unattainable 'solution' to uncertainty that drove people's lives. Trust is not an embodied or existent function that substitutes incomplete knowledge and suspends uncertainty to keep society together (Simmel 2011:191; Giddens 2008). It had to be wrought from uncertainty and ambivalence. Mistrust was the active and constant engagement – and detachment – with the uncanny, the known and the unknown. Questioning and inquiring into them was elementary for survival. Mistrust could rework and transcend the local to create social intimacy. Aiming at calming and purifying troubled waters, though, people's acting often had contrary outcomes.

Mistrust as to Miss Trust

This chapter elaborates on empirical findings what mistrust means in northern Sierra Leone, and what people do when they mistrust. Fundamentally, I argue that mistrust means to miss trust. This is not just a playful change in spelling. What I want to emphasize is that mistrust is not the opposite or negation of trust. The English prefix mis- does not simply express a negation. It is etymologically directly related to to miss and implies a more complex alterity or divergence. Putting forward a concept of mistrust signifying to miss trust means to take vernacular understandings and conceptualizations seriously. In locally spoken Krio, Sierra Leone's lingua franca, I am not aware of a dichotomous relationship as it is at least assumed to exist in common English usage between trust and mistrust. Whereas there is a formal equivalent to English trust, *trɔs*, Krio does not have a word like *'mistrɔs'* (see Fyle and Jones 1980). In other words, for elaborating on practices of mistrust in Sierra Leone, as 'to miss trust' *(nɔ gɛ trɔs* or *trɔs nɔ dae)*, I must digress and develop this idea in

relation to trust. However, it should become clear that trust does not exist prior to missing trust. Trust is not the productive social normalcy and missing trust its antisocial deviance. Trust emerges from and in the relation to it.

Trɔs is semantically more encompassing than common and conceptual understandings of trust in English. *Trɔs* does not only refer to the general and rather elusive, 'hard to describe' belief in something to happen in a certain way (Simmel 2011:192; Möllering 2006:1; Gambetta 1988). *Trɔs* in Krio literally means credit, an advance of valuables (Fyle and Jones 1980). Hence, the notion bears a decidedly material (ist) meaning that still can be found in more specialized usage of trust (e.g. investment trust) in English (Oxford English Dictionary).[6] During the periods of my fieldwork, money was perhaps the most valuable credit or investment in Makeni. 'Everything is about money'. Yet money was only meaningful and valuable in social relations and practices that were, in turns, indispensable for generating money and wealth (Bledsoe 1990; Shaw 2000; Guyer 1993). One could not substitute for the other.

Trɔs is in other words the multifaceted 'capital' (Bourdieu 2002) generated in and translated and invested into social relations and economic activities. *Trɔs* thereby always refers and relates to something else, spans and limits multivalent networks. It links people, objects and practices and is produced in their relating. It is not stable but always eludes people's grasp. However, these networks cannot expand infinitely and relations are not inherently benign (Strathern 1996, 2014). *Trɔs* is and has to be limited. Information and knowledge are key to generating and stabilising *trɔs* – and not substituted by it. One has to know how to arrange the various potential forms and sources of *trɔs,* how to make valuables meaningful, where to invest what and when properly and for getting what. One has to know what to exclude. People in Makeni could often not generate and maintain enough of this capital. Saying that they did not have *trɔs*, people implied that they did not receive as well as could not give enough *trɔs*. Circulation, reciprocity and stabilization was hampered. *Trɔs* was hard to realize. People did miss *trɔs*.

As stated, in Krio no term such as *'mistrɔs'* exists that might oppose *trɔs*. Ontologically, *trɔs* is not prior to 'something' that might negate it. People felt a lack of and the thirst for *trɔs*. As Patrick commented above, people tried incessantly to produce it. They had ideas of what came along with *trɔs*. They invested in various social relations and economic activities to realize and materialize their aspirations. Often their attempts failed. Actors and practices diverted *trɔs*. It could be withheld and rejected and thus not be realized in a particular activity and relation. Practices of perceiving and pursuing *trɔs* might fumble and

6 | Georg Simmel elaborates his influential thoughts about trust in a passage where he discusses the transition from material money to credit money (Simmel 2011:190-92; also Möllering 2001).

misdirect *trɔs*. People were (increasingly) uncertain about how exactly to locate and grasp *trɔs*. They lacked crucial information. They erred. The result was often again a personal feeling of a void and insufficiency.

On the pages to come, it is important to read mistrust as to miss trust in such multiplicity and polysemy. That is, both to miss and trust have multiple meanings that allude to elusiveness and the desire to stabilize them. Mistrust is not normatively hierarchically related to trust. To miss means to long for, trying to locate and to understand how to reach. To miss trust also means to fail to realize trust, not locating it properly and thus not hitting or grasping, but only brushing it or going in another or the wrong direction altogether. Longing for and failing in producing trust never ceases. It is recurrent. To miss trust produces (unintended) material and immaterial outcomes that are constitutive of emerging socialities. It produces provisional forms of trust. To miss trust is to try to constantly produce and transform trust and by implication, the way one relates to other people and objects.

Suggesting such a concept of mistrust that is not the opposite and negation of trust but the multifaceted and recursive quest for trust, implies that I do not conceptualize it as just another way of reducing complexity, a 'functional equivalent' to trust as Luhmann has it (1979). To put it perhaps better: reducing complexity can be seen as one facet of mistrust but definitely not the essential function of it. People possibly aim at reduced complexity, a distant ideal outcome when everything is clear and without challenges. I argue that mistrust implies distinct positioning and acting in the world (Endreß 2012; Hörlin and Ellrich 2013; Schweer et al. 2009). It is inextricably related to trust – yet not in a dichotomous 'dualism' but rather in a mutually productive or 'recursive duality' (Giddens 1984, 2008: 139). Trust and mistrust coexist, as Mühlfried lines out in the introduction. Their relation is however tense. To miss trust indicates a dissatisfaction with the things as they evolve and the knowledge one has about them. It means to problematize the status quo. To miss trust urges people to inquire (Boltanski 2014; Klaits 2016: 417; Whyte 1997) into things as they are and possible alternatives and, thus, to engage with complexity. It suggests opening up in order to challenge yet unknown and invisible practices, actors and realms involved in improving one's life (Bürge 2017). Vulnerability and precariousness are fought with increased and diversified engagement with more actors (Newell 2012: 68, 88). At the same time, to miss trust also entails being alert and seeking to reduce the dangers emerging from the assumedly known (Endreß 2012:86; Malefakis 2014) and the increased exposure to the (unknown) world (Bürge 2017). Mistrust produces knowledge and connections that change the way one engages in the world (Jackson 2011: 42-44). In the words of Klaits, it is trust's 'uncanny twin' (2016: 416).

The quest for betterment in the future could imply a backward or nostalgic orientation towards the past or 'temporary suspension of temporality' (Herz-

feld 2005:175). The assignment of responsibilities for failures and disappointments might be internalized or externalized (Jackson 2008: 70-71). Importantly, in Makeni they were mostly personalized and seldom ascribed to structural problems.[7] In Sierra Leone we can observe feelings, practices or processes that might resemble what general 'lay' theories call (symptoms of) mistrust or distrust and conceptualize as the (dysfunctional) opposite of trust (Schweer et al. 2009). Continuously missing trust could manifest in what might be qualified as 'psychosomatic stress', 'paranoid cognitions', 'witchcraft', 'anxiety', 'nostalgia', 'drug consumption', 'fear', 'deceit', 'mobbing' or 'violent behaviour' (Giddens 2008; Boltanski 2014; Geschiere 2013; Molé 2012).

However, such corporeal, mental and social positions towards the world are neither the negations of trust or the opposite and functional equivalent of trust in Luhmann's sense (1979, 1988). They do not just 'swallow up' trust. They are the outcome and point of departure in processes of missing trust. They produced and were products of particular forms of and relations to trust. They triggered particular social relations and acting in the world, in which actors oscillated between detachment from and encompassment of actors, distancing from and engaging in the world (see Mühlfried this volume). Local conceptualizations of the mental, bodily, social and spiritual symptoms or manifestations just mentioned, second, reflect this productive potential and the ambivalence of how individuals miss trust. 'Anxiety', 'jealousy' or 'mobbing' do commonly not exist as such in northern Sierra Leone's local languages and cosmology. Missing trust can lead into particular states of mind, soul and body such as what is locally called 'bad hearts', 'warm hearts', 'spoilt hearts'; symptoms that require and yield various bodily and social practices that have their specific socio-economic significance and productivity. Missing trust did not result in uniform activities.

What people do when they miss trust has thus to be investigated ethnographically. This chapter is a first tentative contribution to this effort. It investigates the 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' social forces at work in the practices triggered by the missing of trust (Malefakis 2014: 56-57, 110). It sheds light on how people sought a better apprehension of trust, how they tried to make experiences and to uncover the secrets of how to be more successful. On the following pages, I account for the ambivalently dis/entangling properties of trust and its missing. People suspended certain practices and social relations they deemed to be obstructive and sought people that could help and involve them in favourable enterprises (Bürge under review). They tried to work on themselves and change personal attitudes and impression. In brief, they tried

7 | To 'personalize' responsibility does not mean to ascribe it to inhering in the individuated person but to the multiple relationships in which persons emerge (Jiménez 2011:180). 'Betterment' thus needs a more 'holistic' apprehension of the multiple – social, economic, moral – forces that make up for persons (Shaw 2000).

new practices, endeavoured into unknown venues with the associated dangers this involved. They wanted to '*go bifɔ*', that is, to progress, without leaving their past and the known behind.

Elusive Trust and the Secret of Progress

My fieldwork took place between 2005 and 2013, a period when most people in Makeni, the capital of Sierra Leone's Northern Province, lived in rather precarious conditions and faced 'chronic crisis' (Vigh 2008). People struggled for their daily survival, producing just enough capital to regularly afford sufficient food (Bolten 2008, 2012a, 2012b). Despite high statistical national economic growth and visible development after the arrival of new multinational companies investing in the exploitation of natural resources in the 2010s,[8] people literally lived 'on 2000 Leones a day', around 0.30€ in 2013, not knowing what the next day would bring.

Precariousness in Makeni was not only about existential goods and the struggle for survival. People had ideas and aspirations about a better and more 'enjoyable' and 'comfortable' life that others lived – often elsewhere, in Freetown, Ghana, Europe and the US – and from which they perceived themselves as being excluded. Such feelings of exclusion from the benefits of economic development, education, and general 'promises of modernity' were not new (Bolten 2008; Bürge 2009). People learned in school that, during colonial times, Makeni and most of the territory that belonged now to Sierra Leone, had been part of the British Protectorate where people were differently treated than the Krios in the Colony around Freetown (Fanthorpe 2001). The civil war (1991-2002) isolated Sierra Leone as a whole from the 'progress' happening elsewhere and brought only destruction. The little 'development' that reached the country during those years and particularly during the reconstruction of the country afterwards was diverted to the south by the 'tribalistic' government of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). Since independence in 1961 changing governments have given emphasis to the development of the south. People narrated that even northern Presidents Siaka Stevens (1967-1985) and Joseph Saidu Momoh (1985-1992), who allegedly worked for the north, benefitted rather restricted circles and different areas around the country. For decades, if not centuries, Makeni people had been united in marginalisation and suffering.

8 | Sierra Leone's annual GDP grew by 15.2% and 20.7% respectively in 2012 and 2013 before declining in 2014 (4.6%) and particularly 2015 (-21.5%) due to the Ebola epidemic and the collapse of the iron ore price. Despite this exponential growth, the GDP per capita was still among the lowest in the world – and the GDP per capita does not consider how capital is distributed among the people.

In late 2007, everything changed in Makeni, or, at least, that is what people thought. They elected Ernest Bai Koroma of the All People's Congress (APC) as their president. Born in Makeni, he was the president of the north. Multinational companies soon came to northern Sierra Leone, pouring investment into infrastructural improvements designed for their purposes, either to further the extraction and export of mineral resources or to transform fields used for subsistence farming into sugar cane plantations for producing bio fuel. All of a sudden, 'development' and the good life were highly present. People could see it as close as they never could before; they could almost touch it. It was just a step from their grasp. And a good number of young men made this step. The multinational companies employed them, mostly for menial labour and on short-term contracts. For the first time in their lives they earned a monthly salary. People from all over the country and from abroad came to Makeni to secure an employment. Nobody in Makeni could remember anything like this having happened before. People had always been forced to move to Freetown, to the 'diaspora'[9] to get ahead in life (Jackson 2008, 2011).

Still, the majority of the residents and the new arrivals were not able to benefit decisively from these economic developments in the long term. Rising prices for food, necessities and rents came to determine their everyday existence, eating into any increased earnings they had enjoyed. Most houses were still without electricity and periods of fuel shortage slowed down the local economy. After the initial period of labour intensive infrastructure work came to a close, the multinational companies increasingly rejected new job applications and did not renew expiring contracts. Many people were left with debt and could not keep up their newly acquired standards in life.

Most people in Makeni could not consolidate a place for themselves in the 'good life' that they had expected. Yet, this 'good life' was still taking place somewhere else; very close to them they could see that others 'enjoyed' themselves, while they still suffered and could not generate any capital. Instead, things increasingly took a turn for the worse. The social relationships and economic practices upon which people had relied and pinned their hopes did not deliver as expected. Feelings of exclusion were even stronger. Thus, things had to change thoroughly. People wanted to bridge the gap between themselves and what they wanted to achieve, the position in which life was more 'comfortable' and 'enjoyable'. They had to put an end to and avoid unproductive activities and relationships and, instead, discover those that would let them progress *(lɛ dɛn go bifɔ)* instead of pulling or tying them down *(pul dɛn doŋ)* (Bolten 2013: 164-65; Bürge 2017: 147, 155). For this purpose, people had to understand

9 | The word 'diaspora' in Makeni did not refer to a group of people but to the places of migration. It was synonymous to 'overseas', the US, UK. Therefore, diaspora is a place one went to rather than something one joined.

why they failed. They had to understand why others succeeded and how to replicate their success. They had to relate to them. It was obvious that success came along with new practices, people and goods from outside. The question was how to access and comprehend them. Apparently, people in the community who were equal or at least similar by birth and upbringing and had engaged in rather similar activities for a long period, all of a sudden started performing much better. If they had been economically successful under the new conditions, by logic, they must have uncovered the secret and hid it from the others (Shaw 1997; Bürge 2011, under review). Those still suffering wanted such secrets to be disclosed.

As said, not every secret to progress and to economic prosperity was invisible or ungraspable simply because it was new for the people in Makeni. Certain practices and relations did not require much investigation; it was clear for the people that they were particularly detrimental to them while making others prosper. These were public secrets (Taussig 1999) and extant routines for the people. They learned from radio, newspapers and public discussions that the government had attracted foreign investors with attractive tax conditions or even complete exemption. Land leasing agreements with multinational companies were signed without parliamentary consultation. The president sent his most powerful 'witch doctors' to catch the *dɛbul den,* the invisible spirits inhabiting the bush that had been uprooted and left haunting the construction area of a railroad for exporting iron ore. Instead of looking for a solution to pacify the spirits or compensating those forcibly displaced from the area, the president prioritized the interests of foreign investors.[10] The Anti-Corruption Commission investigated against the mayor of Freetown. Al-Jazeera aired a documentary in which the vice-president allegedly accepted payments from foreign businessmen who wanted to circumvent the export ban on precious timber (Samura 2011; Akam 2011). People started to talk about the striking coincidence between the mushrooming construction of opulent mansions for high-ranking politicians, the improvement of the roads leading there and the awarding of profitable contracts to the same 'Chinese people' who had built the mansions. People felt betrayed by the multinational companies that failed to provide the expected employment opportunities but, instead, brought in expat workers to exploit the country. And they became increasingly ambiguous and critical toward 'Pa' Koroma's neoliberal politics to which they tried to adapt without receiving much back in turn.

10 | See Lorenzo D'Angelo's fascinating work on various manifestation of the *dɛbul* as a social and political actor in Sierra Leone (D'Angelo 2014a, 2014b).

Intimate Enemies and Miss Trust

Nonetheless, people in Makeni could not do much about these elite actors and the way the latter marginalized or even excluded them from 'development'. For one, people were used to the 'rotten system' of not being included into reciprocal networks of trust with national politicians and foreign business people (Bolten 2012a; Bürge 2009). People never lost hope they might personally benefit from political and socio-economic changes and improve their personal position within these networks (Bolten 2013). Disappointment, though, had become part of their routine or 'constant crisis' (Vigh 2008). In addition, elite actors were seen as too powerful and too distant; people could not grasp their actions. In other words, people could not apprehend their doings fully and they could not make them directly accountable.[11]

Instead, people concentrated on or were absorbed in more 'immediate struggles' with the 'immediate enemies' to their progress (Foucault 1983: 211). Here they sought to bring about change and to generate trust. In people's everyday experiences, fellow citizens denied their job applications to the multinational companies. The peers with whom they had grown up, did not share their benefits with them. Neighbors gossiped about them. Brothers went overseas and lost contact. Others disappeared with motorbikes and other valuables with which they had them entrusted. In short, people identified the causes and remedy for their personal suffering in more intimate relationships (Shaw 1997: 866-68; Geschiere 2013). Their 'brothers' prospered while and because they suffered in this zero-sum universe (Austen 1993:92; Newell 2012). They accused their 'brothers' of having a 'bad heart' *(bad at)*, being stingy and jealous, instead of having an 'open heart' *(opin at)*, being generous and sharing their benefits. People missed trust in these relationships, as they did not receive what they expected or needed.

My very close friend Mamadu often lamented the problem of trust in Makeni, particularly among people one knew or thought to know.

> They are my brothers (...) we grew up together. I perfectly know them. But I cannot trust them. Without trust you cannot advance in life. Some are just childish and cannot think into the future. Others are wicked. (...) They try to destroy you. Because they are jealous. (...) For this reason, I go to other places and meet with more developmental people. There I can make cool heart.
> (Mamadu, Makeni, Conversation with the Author, October 2007)

11 | However, people silently and precariously acted on the more powerful economic and political actors (D'Angelo 2014a: 26). They discussed politics, developed hypotheses and rumours about elite people's occult practices, circulated stories about the invisible presence and the retaliating appearance of *dɛbul den*, and recurred to hidden activities of sabotage.

Mamadu's problem, the trust he missed, was not mainly related to those who did better than him and did not share their profits and knowledge. He did not apply for jobs. He had been relatively successful as a self-entrepreneurial motorbike rider and wanted to progress within the transport business. His problem was that those close to him by birth tied him down and depleted his few savings (Bolten 2008; Bürge 2009, 2011). As others in Makeni, Mamadu increasingly questioned the point of investing time and energy into such relationships in the expectation of reciprocity or, perhaps, if it would not be better to give up.

Giving up on relationships and looking for more promising networks was only one possible solution when engaging with situations and feelings in which people missed trust. Another way was to increase one's efforts and to engage even stronger with those particular individuals with whom one had failed to create the expected levels of trust. Mamadu was a target rather than the actor of such intensified engagement or tying. People in his surroundings acted more intensely on him and tried to enforce links. They aimed to disrupt or break the bonds he entertained with other people, localities, and property that they viewed as not useful to their common relations and shared network. They controlled and levelled him socially (Bolten 2015). In other words, these people primarily sought to change the lives of others to generate trust; they did this not exclusively for themselves but in correspondence with and for the benefits of others – the targets of their engagements. Benign intent, though, often became threatening for the one acted upon. He reacted to or anticipated the encroachment of others by avoidance, exclusion or aggression.

Young men, such as Patrick, Mamadu and many more of my friends, were a common target of such double-edged practices of increased engagement aiming at disentangling them from other practices and actors.[12] In many people's eyes, young men 'wasted' their money for momentary enjoyment, instead of long-term and more inclusive development. It was seen as all the more deplorable that those young men who had been lucky enough to find employment with a company preferred to spend their salaries immediately on clothes, electronics, gambling, drinks and girls. They proved to be *bɔbɔ den*, 'little children' that did not yet have 'mind', enough 'sense', to make proper use of money. They were immature. They had to be taught to be responsible adults and cautiously initiated into society (Hoffman 2003: 299-300; Shepler 2014a; Ferme 2001).

12 | This 'primacy' of young men has various reasons: As I argue here, for some they were the hope of the future, while others saw them as again potentially leading to the ruin of the country (Honwana and De Boeck 2005). This is because young men had played a crucial role in the civil war (Peters 2011; Peters and Richards 1998; Fanthorpe and Maconachie 2010). Another reason is demographical, as the majority of Sierra Leoneans are under 30 years. Finally, young men figure prominently in discourses and practices of missing trust, as they were my primary interlocutors.

Increased engagement with those who erred was in order to discipline them and halt their 'wasteful' spending of money and direct them towards, from the point of view of the interloper, more 'meaningful' practices.

Coming back to my argument about the relationship between mis/trust and the un/known, it is important to highlight that people who criticized the lifestyles of these young men only partly knew and saw where and how the latter 'wasted' and generated their capital (Bürge 2011; Newell 2012). Most of their doings were not public or at least not for everybody. Knowledge about young men's doings was often based on assumptions, generalizations and projections. True, people inquired into the lives of others and questioned their morality; yet their investigations often remained at the surface. As I have argued elsewhere (Bürge 2017), people could find convincing evidence of their fellow citizens' antisocial practices. Yet, I further argue there that people could also yield more positive evidence about their social productivity if they asked different questions about and emphasized other aspects in how, where and when people produced trust. Knowledge and ignorance about the other were selectively, or better conjuncturally produced. Reality was highly complicated and to miss the truth was easy. Patrick and Mamadu were telling examples.

Both of them earned and spent their money beyond their most restricted social environment. They imported and exported goods from and to Guinea, worked for longer periods in Freetown and spent much time roaming around Makeni. They worked in the bush and in the night, themselves realms of highly ambivalent forces (Shaw 2002; Ferme 2001). They visited hidden places where drugs and alcohol was consumed. They not only consumed but produced and invested into social networks with 'more developmental people', locally highly reputable people, who also frequented those places. Both supported members of their family outside Makeni, while neglecting others. They rented out their motorbikes and invested into the lives of their peers. Obviously, they could not meet the demands of every person. Both made 'real friends' beyond Makeni, for whom they felt 'real love' and with whom they wanted to collaborate. Both were *okadamen*, commercial motorbike riders, the contemporary embodiment of the 'rebel' (Bolten 2012b: 505), that ambivalent figure that had haunted Sierra Leone for a decade (Bürge 2017: 160-61). Both had had contact with the 'rebels' when the latter occupied Makeni. Even then, though, in doing this they struggled for their own and other people's survival (Bolten 2012a). Mamadu was forcefully recruited and did menial work for the rebels while also supplying foodstuffs to his mother that they could sell together. With his savings, he first bought bicycles for renting out and later on his first motorbike.

Mamadu owed much of his relative success as an *okadaman* to trust. He was only able to purchase his first commercially used motorbike in the early 2000s due to the trust of Saidu, a local businessman. Saidu advanced him money, believing in his reliability and ability to use it properly. Saidu trusted Mama-

du because the latter had proven before that he knew how to handle money and to make business. Mamadu paid his debts and invested marginal profit in other peeople. When he felt that those he invested into did not reciprocate his efforts, that people asked for more support and muddied his reputation in the community if he refused, Mamadu had to try other venues. He increased his journeys outside Makeni – which obviously fuelled criticism – and one day in 2007 left for good to live in Freetown. There he found a group of likeminded young men with whom he founded Trust for Life, an association organized around the place they met several times a day to maintain their motorbikes and themselves. Life in Freetown was not easy for Mamadu. But he had found trust there. Although the young men had little, they helped each other, raised funds for new bikes and parts and shared their ideas.

Mamadu's story was exemplary in showing how people longing for trust often missed their goals with the measures they took. Instead of convincing others to include them into their networks and to share trust, often forcefully binding them, they drove them further away. Trying to suspend the continuously growing gap, people could also resort to more radical practices for changing what others do, cutting and reworking relations and 'trying to destroy [people] to get their money', as Patrick has it, such as publicly destroying their reputation in order to isolate them socially (Shaw 2002). People could recur to a 'local doctor', use special medicine or witch guns *(fangay)* to harm, (socially) kill and tie other people. The motivations for and forms and extent of aggressive measures differed. The outcomes, although also differing in scale, were more uniform. It perpetuated the conditions for which people did miss trust (Bürge 2017).

People's more or less aggressive attacks on fellow citizens and on the existential foundations of their economic, social and moral personhood, which they launched due to their longing for trust, affected the general atmosphere in Makeni. The individual, as for example Mamadu, targeted by straightforwardly destructive measures but also by more well-intentioned critique had to find an answer to these challenges. Otherwise, relations with other people could disintegrate due to a damaged reputation and other forms of 'social killing'.[13] Trust in its material and immaterial forms would be lost. Those attacked had to protect and defend themselves. They had to calm the agitation. They had to avoid an excess of force as well as to become 'petrified' (Le Courant 2016: 30). As Mamadu explained, they had to 'make cool heart', control their temper and bodies. They had to escape the attempts of others to 'tie' or 'pull them down' (Bolten 2008; Bürge 2009), practices that aimed at destroying their social forces for progressing. They had to defend their personhood and subjectivi-

13 | 'Social killing' refers to the various practices that aim and lead to 'social death' (Vigh 2006).

ties, which was not 'simply aimed at protecting social honour or, in Goffman's terms, "saving face", but involve[d] matters of life and death' (Boltanski 2014: 209). People had to anticipate their own victimization and become active before being approached or attacked.

'Not having a stiff hand' but opening one's heart and appeasing people by sharing would obviously have been a good solution. One could comply with the immediate critique and change patterns of relating. Patrick knew however that 'this was not enough'. Demands and jealousy outweighed by far the possibility for appeasement. There was just not enough socio-economic capital to satisfy everybody's desires (Bolten 2012b: 499). Furthermore, complying with the immediate request and satisfy people's desires was often seen as not beneficial personally on the long run. Beneficiaries would not be able to reciprocate trust but rather continue to ask for 'charity'. People had to find other ways of pre-empting attacks or apprehension by others and of generating trust elsewhere. In the quote at the beginning, Patrick lists some of those that he and Mamadu applied themselves. People hid their wealth and the ways they generated it. They left Makeni, sometimes in order to generate more capital and satisfy those back home. Sometimes they turned their backs on those who tried influence them, cutting them off from their networks (Bürge 2011). People resorted to local doctors for protective but also preventive medicine – or were at least suspected and accused of doing so. People slandered others before and after being muddied themselves. They tried to stay ahead of potential threats to their existence. In brief, people reacted to or rather anticipated attacks from their fellow citizens with practices that confirmed and provoked the critique of the latter. Thus, this became a self-fulfilling prophecy, which ratcheted up people's urge to inquire and intervene in the doings of their fellow citizens. Actions and reactions of mistrust became perpetual and circular (Molé 2012). I would now like to outline this in more detail.

Life is a War

Trust, for Boltanski is the 'more economical' possibility of acting without suspecting or questioning any interaction (2014: 14). 'Endless inquiries', he writes in the chapter with the same title, 'beyond what [is] reasonable in the ordinary circumstances of life', is one symptom of paranoid people (ibid: 170-223). However, excessive inquiry into 'reality'[14] is for Boltanski not exclusively a manifestation of mental disturbance. It is normal and appropriate under 'stressful', that is, heavily disturbed socio-political conditions. In war zones, intense inquiries are part of indispensable survival skills *(compétence du savoir-(sur)vivre)* as Bol-

14 | See Boltanski (2011, 2014) for his distinction between 'reality' and 'world'.

tanski's doctoral student Suarez Bonilla has shown in the case of Colombia (Boltanski 2014: 208-9; Suarez Bonilla 2010).[15]

Even if the civil conflict in Sierra Leone ended in 2002, in the early 2010s life was 'still like a war' in Makeni, *'layf na wa-o'*, a point with which many of my interlocutors agreed. They 'suffered' and 'strained' (Finn and Oldfield 2015) just to get enough food for the day. Witch guns *(fangay)* were substituted for the AK-47. People did not have to fear anymore incursions by fighters or of being delivered to them by a neighbour who wanted to settle scores (Jackson 2004). Now neighbours betrayed them for their jobs and other economic aspirations and hampered their reputation with malicious gossip in public places. The bush encroached increasingly upon the town. Danger to one's existence lured everywhere. Survival skills *(savoir survivre)* had long since become part of the ordinary skills *(savoir vivre)* of daily life (Boltanski 2014: 209; also Vigh 2008).

Not only excessive inquiries – missing trust – have excessive costs as they 'endanger most social relations and gradually consume all the strength one needs in order to act' (Boltanski 2014: 208). Trust also comes at a price, I argue. Boltanski's 'reasonable expectations' are only enabled by the 'leap of trust' (Möllering 2001), the suspension or bracketing of the unknown, uncertainty and doubts (Geschiere 2013: 32). Such trust means to suspend, blind out what and that we do not know. In a 'stressful' environment not to inquire into and pause the course of action but just to pretend as if one knew that everything would be ok, would not simply be inadequate but a dangerous and potentially deadly act of self-deception – an example of totally missed trust.

I argue that the *compétence du savoir-(sur)vivre*, or 'survival skills', is thus most centrally the competence to cut or to avoid properly, that is, to cut the right thing at the right time. People need to develop the competence to cut dangerous relations and processes, which they first have to uncover. At least as much, they need the competence to cut the endless 'extension of an inquiry' and to open up again for interaction. They have to cut loops and routines in order to avoid remaining stuck and isolated (Suarez Bonilla 2014: 143).[16]

In Sierra Leone, people know many nuanced forms or degrees of and terms for their skills to survive – *sabi fɔ* – the contemporary 'war' and to make 'marginal gains' (Guyer 2004) at the increasingly broad margins of society. Most

15 | Boltanski writes that the 'tendency to see, beyond the appearances of phenomena' is not only distinctive of the 'paranoids' and those living in war zones but also of the 'sociologist' (2014:176), the one that penetrates surface for explaining people the truth underneath.

16 | See Strathern (1996) on cutting social networks and networks of inquiries. See Shaw (2000, 2002) and Jackson (2011) on the dialectic and challenge of balancing of opening and closure in social relations in northern Sierra Leone.

generally, people 'managed' *(manej)*. Individual people's everyday lives and well-being differed due to their capacity to manage *(sabi fɔ manej)* their social and economic relations, that is, their competence in relating and detaching adequately and thereby generating – more – trust. Most people in Makeni perceived their lives as mere survival or suffering, devoid of trust, living on 2000 Leones a day and being exposed to the charity and goodwill of others. They were managed instead of managing other actors. They 'struggled', 'suffered' (Bledsoe 1990) and 'strained' (Finn and Oldfield 2015). They aimed at more 'enjoyment', increased 'comforts' and a 'better life' – more *trɔs*.[17] Some made a (slightly) better living on their wits – *sabi fɔ drɛg* – as *jew men* or *rarray men* (Hoffman 2011: 52-53; Abdullah 2002).

Patrick knew how to *drɛg*; he proudly ascribed his success to the fact that he was 'a *drɛg man*, a real *rarray man'*. He had been economically and socially successful because he was street-wise, educated by the war and life in Freetown's 'urban jungle' (Christensen 2007). Patrick claimed to have the *savoir-(sur)vivre*, to be savvy *(sabi fɔ drɛg)*. He was able to decipher intentions of other persons and to anticipate dangers. He got 'sense' and had 'open eyes'. He was attentive and had control over the information others could get about him. He knew when to share money and secrets and when to keep them. He had been able to relate to the right persons and activities, and detach from the unproductive ones. He was sensible to the contemporary context and at the same time to more general idea(l)s about social action and personhood in northern Sierra Leone as Rosalind Shaw has elaborated on (2000: 40-44): He was conscious about the necessity of balancing openness – making inquiries and being attentive, but also sharing with others and nurturing relations – and closure – controlling knowledge and other valuables, but also putting an end to inquiries and to the suspension of trust. Therefore, he was progressing. He was not suffering anymore, running after any opportunity and depending on the (good)will of others. He was a big man now. He had his own dependents and opportunities running after him (Utas 2012; Nugent 1995). He was the manager of his and others' lives. He knew how to live the good life *(sabi fɔ enjɔy)*. Patrick proudly underlined the importance of being 'gallant' and claimed to 'know to live European life'. However he also could emphasize (and embody) his suffering, being still in need and not able to support others, if needed.

Patrick knew too well about the fragility of his success. Although he praised his capacities to read signs, to dissimulate his appearance and to balance between sharing and keeping, he likewise lamented how difficult and endan-

17 | Suarez Bonilla's French term *savoir-(sur)vivre* grasps this tension between mere survival and 'good life' more elegantly than it is possible in English (survival skills vs. art of living). Krio *sabi*, linguistically related to French *savoir*, Spanish and Portuguese *saber*, but also English *savvy*, encompasses this multifaceted skilfulness.

gered success was. In the early 2010s, his situation was more comfortable than of those who had to inquire continuously how to generate just enough trust to buy a plate of rice a day. He still had to defend actively his slightly privileged position at some cost to himself, constantly checking for threats and possibilities. Under current socio-economic conditions, Patrick had to invest much time, energy and money to perpetuate his social and economic capital. Not everything was under his control. He was not enough of a big man but still had to grow more. Other people decided how and if to relate with him. His information was also only partial. He did not know about everybody if they reciprocated or aimed at destroying his trust. Patrick diversified his activities and relations. He tried to access as many sources as possible for generating more trust and for substituting for defaults in reciprocity. At the same time, this also exposed him to threats and he risked failure.

No Conclusion – Miss Trust Continued

On the long run, things did not work as Patrick thought. He did miss trust. He had invested his money and energy in the wrong people and activities. He could never finish his house as the government confiscated the land and offered only minimal compensation. He lost money in an attempt to mine gold. He lost his job with the multinational company as the young man who had 'rented' his contract revealed the fraud. Patrick struggled to keep sources open to access cheap petrol, which he had not only sold on the black market but had also used to fuel important relationships with important people in Makeni. For some time, he could benefit from some of the relationships in which he had invested his money before. Trust was still reciprocated. This was only for a while, however. Trust had to be nurtured. When the sources petered out, one had to discover new ones.

Some people refused to reciprocate and reproduce trust due to the bad reputation Patrick had acquired by some of his dubious activities and by the derogative 'gossip' of those people that he had not included in his networks. They opted for investments that were more promising in the future – the same logic that Patrick also always followed. Others could not reciprocate, or at least not to the extent that Patrick aimed at, as they also struggled to generate trust. Many people lost their jobs with the construction companies and downstream suppliers when the infrastructure construction had been finished and the highly mechanised iron mining started. Patrick did increasingly miss trust. People increasingly avoided him and he avoided them again.

When I saw him last in Makeni in 2013, he still lived a relatively good life. Ebola and the decreasing prices for iron ore, though, were an additional blow to his efforts to generate trust. By the end of 2016, Patrick had to readjust his

survival skills again. He has again cut off many of his links with Makeni and retreated to other less visible places. I do not have contact with Patrick. Some of my friends – most not close friends of Patrick (anymore) – claim that they have him seen roaming the surrounding villages buying and selling sheep. Perhaps this is true. It is also possible that he deals with other things. In the villages, one can still find precious goods. Patrick very likely knows where and how. Perhaps people do not know what he is doing. Perhaps they know.

Mamadu, the other protagonist of this chapter also continued to miss trust. His friends in Trust for Life, the association, could suspend small monetary exigencies, advance money for medical treatment or spare parts of a motorbike. When Mamadu lost money to a so-called money doubler (Bürge under review) and motorbikes in a fire and to a thief and later on could not pay his rent anymore, his friends could not replace the losses. Whereas people in Makeni who learned about his failures felt themselves confirmed in their opinion about Mamadu's antisocial and unsustainable practices whose price he now had to pay, his friends at least offered him a temporary place to stay and rented him a bike. Still, Mamadu was back in the subordinate position he thought he had left behind.

In this chapter, I have given an insight what mistrust means in Makeni and what people do when they mistrust. I have argued that mistrust is not the opposite or negation of trust. Mistrust means to miss trust. I argued that both *to miss* and *trust*, as *trɔs*, have multiple meanings. *Trɔs*, in Krio is not only a 'belief' but has more material(ist) facets, which, however cannot be realized easily. To miss *trɔs* expresses these difficulties, people's longing and failing. It stands for their inquiries for grasping it and for understanding the obstacles to it. To miss *trɔs*, thus, is engagement with and not reduction of complexity and depth. To miss *trɔs* is costly. In (contemporary) Sierra Leone, though, there is no alternative. People could not just pretend as if everything would work fine, if they relied on their routines and did not problematize them – a rather common definition of the function of trust. They could not know. They could not bracket this blind spot. Their conditions triggered them to question and illuminate it. Routines with new developments did not exist beforehand. Extant routines were also full of contradictions. One had to produce routines and understand how to go about it, to become critically knowing or savvy *(sabi fɔ)*.

Trust, thus, itself did not exist. It was not a magical social glue, whereas mistrust does cause disintegration. Trust does not precede mistrust. Trust, the 'bridge' or 'leap' (Giddens 2008; Möllering 2001) in its more or less material form, had to be constantly produced. There was no pre-given or enduring pattern or form of relating, an almost natural 'desire to protect (local) social arrangements' (Boltanski 2011:54). In the words of Candea and co-authors, 'neither relations nor entities come first' (2015: 3). Relations and entities emerge together in the continuous oscillation between cutting and relating (Strathern

1996), the interaction of centrifugal and centripetal social forces (Malefakis 2014; Newell 2012), between new opportunities and extant practices. I have shown how to miss trust is not only about cutting of social relations and interactions, but also about intensifying them.

How exactly this has to be done was the most important and persistent question for people in Makeni. People's relating and cutting, pausing and continuing, their orientation toward the new or the old continuously went on in order to improve their conditions. I have accounted for some of these attempts in this chapter. Some people were more successful than others. Success, though, was precarious, as I have shown. We should not forget, *trɔs* in Makeni is increasingly monetarized – without fully doing away with its less material facets. The uncertainty how to bridge this tension and the constant scarcity and drain of economic capital made people miss trust.

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