Figures of Trust – Changing Organisational Identity in the Banking Sector

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Klaus Neundlinger

Abstract
Our theoretical paper focuses on trust as a fundamental social practice for the changing of an organization's culture. The empirical basis of our reflections is an organizational development process carried out on behalf of a banking institute. Due to a longstanding misguided engagement on the financial markets, the institute risked insolvency and was sold to a hedge fund. By re-boosting the retail business as the institute's core activity, the new owners achieved an economic recovery. Still, the new executive board has not yet successfully re-established trust as a pillar of organisational culture and necessary precondition for the acceptance of strategic change. The aim of our intervention was to transform a problem that initially was represented as a task of change communication into a process apt to resolve the underlying collective action dilemmas. The problem of changing organizational identity was addressed by establishing collective action modes and actor-networks that are "enacted" as exemplary figures of trust. By spreading their trust-based culture across the organisation, these actor-networks contribute to the re-building of organisational identity.

Keywords: *actor-network-theory, change communication, value-based management, organisational culture, organisational development, organisational identity, social capital, social practice, trust.*

1. Trust (I) – Social complexity and social practice

We can hardly think of an area in economy that bases its functionality and transactional efficacy to such an extent on trust as the banking sector. One could go as far as to assert that the banking system is the *exemplary economic institution* for the translating of trust into an almost infinite number of modes of economic acting. In this paper, our intention is to extend the view on trust and to conceive of this attitude not so much as a mechanism of reducing social complexity (Luhmann, 1968), but as a social practice that serves as a condition for organisational identity and change. We will try to show how the trust related values defining the identity of a bank as an organisation must be addressed and dealt with both from the point of view of instrumental rationality and from a non-instrumental perspective. Trust, as a social practice, cannot contribute anything to a sustainable change project if the decisions taken and the processes carried out are not entrenched in intrinsic value sets.

1.1. Trust as a resource for economic activities

Whichever "real" economic endeavour, be it in the real estate or the high-tech sector, be it in the steel industry, the assurance, the alimentary or the fashion business, is necessarily accompanied by a "speculative" framing of the planned activities, by the formulation of expectations, business goals, forecasts, evaluative statements of any kind. The finance sector (Orléan, 1999) is specialized in the development of a language that allows the respective actors to interpret and communicate the aims, expectations, needs, ideas and practical solutions for given technical problems, the satisfaction of needs, the fulfilling of desires and the creative exploration of tastes, fashions and other aesthetic and symbolic codes. If any activity ought to be represented as having the potential to create value in the economic sense of the term, the related intentions and objectives to be realized have to be translated and expressed in figures apt to arouse trust. To be more specific in the use of the terms: the planning, building up and organizing of economic activities not only do require investments in form of money, time, knowledge, experience and so on. They also require a substantial investment of trust, an attitude that serves to yield and justify motives and reasons where reliable information and the possibility of a secure prediction of the future events as well as the decisions of other actors involved lack.

By adopting (in a first step) Luhmann's definition of trust as a mechanism of reducing complexity we intend to foreground the "public" character of this attitude, its nature of being a "common good". We refer to trust as a resource in form of a general belief, of an atmosphere that influences and shapes modes of acting, particular expectations and decision-making processes. The banking sector draws on trust as a primary resource for the shaping and organising of these processes. It helps to translate a general atmosphere into concrete forms of producing, servicing and consuming and enables economic actors to make a private, an economic use of a generally accessible resource. Hence, the banking sector has the function of serving as an interface between an immaterial resource that shapes expectations, hopes, fears, forecasts and perspectives and the specific action modes deriving from the interpretation of the expectations, perspectives, fears and hopes. Since it is highly dependent on the general atmosphere as a fundamental resource for the developing of its own activities, the banking system derives its legitimacy not only from the ability to contribute to the building up of innovative businesses and the extension of technologies and services, but also from a responsible, sustainable dealing with the general atmosphere of trust (Hartmann, 2011: 296-300).

1.2. The current crisis as a crisis of trust as currency

The profound crisis the world economy has been undergoing since 2008 has largely been conceived of as initially caused by a breakdown of "systemic" trust in the banking sector. The banks as *exemplary institutions* for the translation of trust into economic activities had lost their ability to provide the global economic system with this symbolic currency particularly from the moment the transactional routines of the interbank market had begun to collapse. This time, the conclusion emerging from the transactional dynamics did not need any further translation: if banks cease trusting each other, how can we keep trusting the banks? A sudden "climate change" with respect to the general attitude towards the international financial system led to the spreading of distrust.

This attitude turned out to be reasonable and largely justified by the facts that were subsequently revealed regarding the harmful decisions and practices that had become "normal" within the sector: toxic assets, insufficient equity endowment, irresponsible mortgage origination practices and so on. However, the diffusion of such harmful practices had its own "deeper" history that had begun more than two decades earlier. From the 1980s, the various processes of deregulation under the aegis of monetarist financial policies and the neoliberal reframing of economic policy had been fostering attitudes that tended to establish a rather reductive view on the transformation of trust as a common good into an economic – and this means purely instrumental – use of trust. We will return to this point.

Due to the severe difficulties on the interbank market caused by the real estate crisis in the US, the aforementioned essential role of the banking system for the functioning of the economy as a whole had been completely overthrown: while banks should have continued to provide economic activities with the ability of translating trust into figures, the figures – i.e. the managing and accounting practices – produced and presented by the banks themselves were suddenly subject to widespread suspicion and mistrust. Although several banks were saved by state intervention with the justification that their persistence was inextricably bound to the survival of the economy as such (Stern, Feldman, 2004), in many official statements and analyses "real economy" was revaluated and praised to represent an alternative pillar apt to re-establish growth, optimism and stability in the global economy. Yet, as we pointed out at the beginning, any kind of activity in the "real" economy necessarily depends on the creation of "speculative objects" such as expectations, plans, forecasts, projects and so on. This applies to the future dynamics of a market or sector as well as to the dynamics of the various forms of competing and cooperating.

Hence, economic acting is not possible without an investment of trust – and, of course, an investment *in* trust. As an immaterial asset, trust represents a symbolic currency companies have to deal with, to analyse, to manage and to govern. The necessity to draw on trust as an immaterial asset to be developed by a common practice does not disappear by virtue of any attempt to exorcise the "speculative" dimension of economic acting and return to "good old" real economy.

1.3. Reassembling the bank: returning to the counter as starting point

If this is true and trust is an immaterial asset to be sustainably organised, then we will have to revise the conception of trust as a mechanism of reducing social complexity. Recently, trust is being discovered as in itself a complex, multifaceted social practice (Hartmann, 2011), a critical immaterial resource that faces huge challenges on the macro as well as on the micro level of society. In fact, the crisis' origins must be ascribed not only to apparently sophisticated operations carried out by specialists in financial and assurance mathematics, but also to the preceding widespread practices of mortgage origination, assurance policy selling and other financial services in the retail area.

Amongst other critics of the economic institutions, Joseph Stiglitz illustrates well how, due to the diffusion of irresponsible ways of extending their product offers, many banks in the US decided to further evolve the wrong type of services. They began to misunderstand their position as an interface between the "speculative" goods like expectations, forecasts and perspectives and the concrete modes of economic acting. Instead of systematically underestimating the risks related to housing mortgages and adopting ever more complex and sophisticated instruments for the spreading of credit default risks, they should have concentrated e.g. on the creation of services and instruments in the area of cashless payment transactions (Stiglitz, 2010).

Hence, it is not only from analysing and criticising the sophisticated financial mathematics behind the toxic assets we have to start if we want to grasp what the *management of trust and risk* can contribute to the development of a bank's organisational culture. Rather, we have to revisit the original meaning of the Italian term "banco", to the "desk" in the sense of the *bank counter*, in order to reconstruct the complex practices of the "figures of trust" that were lost and rediscovered after the crisis—at least—by some actors within the system. In this way, the "banco" ceases being a simple *intermediary*, a taken for granted meaning denoting an object "just being there", completely ignored by managers and consultants. It is transformed into a *mediator*, an object able to reassemble the actor-networks (Latour, 2005) inside and outside the institution named "bank".

2. Trust (II) – Institutional conditions and organisational culture

In the first section, we have referred to a well-known conception of trust, i.e. to its definition as a mechanism of reducing social complexity. In economic and social science, trust has been analysed and addressed as an attitude that essentially enters the scene of interacting when other, *rational* forms of motivating decisions fail, e.g. when decisions are to be taken while information lacks and things get to complex to be subject to any form of calculus. Trust as a concept often serves as a substitute of other, "more" rational forms of acting (Hartmann, 2011: 9-15).

Treated in this way, trust ends up as a residual category for modes of interacting that are considered as deficient in comparison to action modes that fully correspond to the ideal of instrumental rationality. Trust is then not an option amongst others but appears to be "reasonable" only in case of necessity, when all other options are not available. In the following section, we will challenge this point of view and introduce an alternative view on trust. This will enable us to address the problem of how to strengthen trustful attitudes and acting in an organisational culture by avoiding at the same time to be trapped in an enthusiastic advocating of trust as a ready-made solution for all problems of cooperation in the organisation.

2.1. Conditions of trustful acting and the governance of trust

If banks as institutions (or the bank system as a collective actor) attempt to re-establish trust that has been harmed or destroyed because of the crisis, they deal with a twofold meaning of the term "trust".

2.1.1. Political and institutional conditions

On the one hand, they have to face the aforementioned *necessity* of re-establishing trust on various levels. Since the mistrust towards the institution "bank" or the "financial system" is justified with reference to a whole series of management failures, irresponsible practices and harmful decisions, the conditions of interacting between costumers and banks, but also amongst banks (interbank market) and also inside the single organisations have to be revisited. One could call this the "political" part of the whole issue. The question is how new forms of regulating the financial market can contribute to the creation and re-construction of a general atmosphere of trust.

Criticism had been raised after the abolition of the affiliation restrictions that had been introduced by the Glass-Steagall-Act in the US during the economic crisis in the early 1930s. This further step in the direction of deregulation was held responsible for the disastrous situation of many banking institutes in 2008. Although this is a controversial issue (Kregel 2010), from the point of view of many experts, the return to a clear separation between commercial and investment banking, abandoned after 2000, could represent a regulatory intervention apt to re-establish trustful modes of acting and servicing in the financial sector. In the EU, besides coordinated measures aiming at guaranteeing financial stability to the Union's economy, several political and also technical measures like the "bank stress test" have been taken in order to reassess risk in the banking sector and to re-establish trust towards the system. Obviously, all these measures pre-eminently deal with the institutional framing and conditions of trustful interaction and practice. One can assert that at the level of the political and institutional framing, trust is being treated as a desirable attitude, so that the measures taken are characterised not only by instrumental, but also by normative objectives.

2.1.2. Trust as a problem of organisational culture

On the other hand, there is a meaning of "trust" that refers to the level of concrete governance, to the question how the conditions of trustful acting and interacting can be transformed into a particular organisational culture. In fact, in the last years, several books and essays in management and organisational theory have been published with the intention to stress the value of cooperation and trustful intra- and inter-organisational acting (Nooteboom, 2002; Mayer, Davis, Schoorman, 1995). Obviously, it is not "blind trust" organisational theory is interested in, understood as an un-reflected attitude of diffuse mutual comprehension. Following to Hirschman's (1984) "heterodox" analysis of immaterial resources (like public spirit), we conceive of trust neither as a scarce resource nor as an infinitely augmentable skill. The organisational theory of trust should deal with the possibility to establish learning processes and management practices that contribute to the development not of mechanical, but of reflexive modes of trustful acting. Trust has to be carefully organised and reflected on in the context of organisational development processes. It hast to be understood not so much as a subjective attitude, but rather as a common practice.

2.2. Options, relationships, accepted vulnerability

Therefore, it is not the simplicity of "trust" as an alleged universal feeling towards the others that we assess having the potential to enhance cooperation and productivity in organisations. Trust, as a mode of cooperating and of living relationships in projects and departments, has to be (1) matched with the organisation's declared values and (2) experienced in everyday organisational life. Again, trust gains attention and relevance not as a feeling or a subjective attitude, but as a *common practice* that is complex and fundamental to any kind of cooperative process.

Especially Hartmann (2011) works out the importance of insisting on the intrinsic value of trust in these types of interaction. He points out the fact that an instrumental or scientific approach to trust and cooperation, for example as it is advocated and brilliantly developed in evolutionary game theory (Axelrod, 1984; Nowak, Highfield, 2012), is not sufficient to understand the properties and characteristics of a sustainable social practice based on the attitude of trust.

In order to give an inclusive account of the instrumental *and* the intrinsic, value based characteristics of trust in the context of a given context of social interaction, three conceptual conditions have to be taken into consideration (Hartmann, 2011: 71-106):

1. Trust is not a substitute of rational acting, but an *option* amongst others.
2. Trust evolves in the context of a *relationship* that is not exclusively instrumental.
3. To trust each other means to *accept being vulnerable*.

While, to take up the example described above, rebuilding trust on the interbank level doubtlessly represents a *necessary* agenda with respect to the regulatory institutional conditions, it turns into a question of culture when trustful attitudes evolve against the background of diverse *options* regarding the question which banking institute or other actor in the financial system to cooperate with. In this case, the concrete behaviour and the consistence (or inconsistence) of declared values and displayed attitudes form the basis of a value-based decision upon whether to build up or maintain a relationship or not.

In the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, many banking institutes have launched commercial campaigns in which the retail business is represented as the core of the bank's activities. The message was that the banks "know what life is all about", that it is the people's needs or people themselves "that really count" and so on. However, a credible return to the "banco", to the desk as mediator of needs and networks of relationships cannot be sufficiently managed by limiting the activities to change communication towards costumers. Relationships are lived and evolve also "behind the counter", i.e. inside organisations, as crucial part of the organisational culture and identity. Costumers should be considered as highly sensitive regarding this aspect. Any campaign in change communication that is directed towards outside, towards costumers and the socioeconomic environment, can therefore only succeed if it is accompanied by a reflexive transformation of the internal relationships. Change communication that is taken seriously necessarily raises an issue in terms of organisational development.

If the relationship between a bank and its clients or its environment ought to be re-established in the sense we have been describing it, i.e. as a virtuous relationship of transforming general expectations into specific economic actions, it is precisely starting from the counter the issues of (1) optionality, (2) of a non-instrumental relationship and (3) of the accepted vulnerability have to be subject to a practice of mutual experiencing, coaching, reflecting and learning.

3. The development process – trust and social capital

From 2011 to 2014, our institute designed and carried out an organisational development process on behalf of a banking institute founded and formerly held by a Trade Unions Association. Due to severely misguided engagement on the financial market including the investment in questionable funds and toxic assets, already a few years before the subprime crisis the institute risked a total breakdown, could be saved only by means of governmental intervention and was subsequently sold to an international hedge fund. Since then, almost all members of the executive board have been changed more than once. In the meantime, the bank has been reconstructing its "commercial" identity by focussing its activities on the retail business. In this sense, it has tried to return to the "banco".

As in other occasions, the concept for the whole development process was based on a social capital approach (Gucher *et al.*, 2015). We conceive of an organisation's social capital as a dynamic asset that appears in two distinct fundamental types. On the one hand, it equals to the benefit individuals derive from their participation in networks or groups. To be endowed with social capital, in this sense, means to obtain access to other individuals' knowledge, competences, contacts and other resources (Coleman, 1990). On the other hand, the opportunity to access other peoples' or a group's resources is not sustainably manageable if the individuals' acting is not based on principles, norms, rules or values. In this sense, social capital refers not only to the way individuals use their reciprocal talents and competences in order to cooperate, but also to the shared values and norms that bind the members of networks and groups. One can assert that, like in the case of trust as social practice, also in the case of social capital an instrumental and a non-instrumental view on human interaction are combined.

In a first stage of the development process, focus was laid on the potentiality of the organisational networks, on the modes of cooperating, of building reliable and productive teams and strengthening the "bonding" social capital of the people working in the branches or operating in the sales division. Reciprocity and the construction of a common understanding of what to do and how to do things are essential in this sense (Ostrom, 2000). While the bonding social capital of the bank's teams was at a rather satisfying level, it turned out that the "bridging" social capital, the building up of networks of knowledge exchange and support beyond the branches and divisions had to be addressed and further enhanced (Iseke, 2007). The corresponding issues could be discussed and developed rather well in a second stage, by means of a series of seminars in which common reflection was combined with the working out of concrete measures for the extension and strengthening of networks. Still, the topic remaining for the third stage of the development process was the enhancement of the "linking" social capital (Badura, 2013; Jans, 2011): how could the relationships between executives on various levels and collaborators in branches, projects and departments be improved? A lot of cooperative spirit and trust had been created on the lower levels of hierarchy, yet there seemed to be no recognisable common practice of trusting each other that could have served as a link between the hierarchical levels. The situation at the beginning of this stage could be described as follows: whereas in terms of team building, knowledge exchange and customers' relationships, things were going better, up to that point the executive board had not successfully re-established trust as an overarching element of organisational culture.

3.1. Collective action, change communication and executive modes

There are two major reasons for a relatively high intra-organisational uncertainty and the difficulty to establish sustainably trust-based relationships across the hierarchical levels. One lies in the fact that due to a continuous process of organisational change after the takeover by the new owners, once steady structures and routines have been challenged, abolished or transformed. The other reason is that for the first time in the organisation's history the executive board's decisions appear as a process based on the division of labour and responsibilities. In other words, leadership turns out to be collective action. After decades of a reportedly patriarchal, autocratic, authoritarian executive style, people on all hierarchical levels have to get accustomed to a many-voiced executive mode.

Although the executive board officially communicates with one voice, against the background of continuously changing organisational dynamics, processes and structures, single board members from time to time find themselves trapped in a conflict of loyalty. They face collective action dilemmas due to the splitting of their responsibility as a board member on the one hand and as a representative of a particular business area within the organisation on the other. One effect of tending to give preference to the loyalty towards the own business area was that more than once delicate decisions were diffused inside the organisation before being officially communicated by the board. This was a practice that turned out to be rather harmful for the employees' trust towards the institution. Furthermore, CEOs who behaved in a loyal way towards the board risked to loose reputation among the people working in the area of their own responsibility. When they kept their commitments to the board, the appeared to be disloyal to the executives and collaborators of the division they direct.

As we have already stated, our approach in organisational development is to analyse and work on the mode of moulding and managing the social relationships forming the organisation. It is not trust as an allegedly absolute value we intend to introduce into the organisation, but a reconfiguration of the relationships according to the values already existing or having been declared by the organisation itself. If values are to be effective in the context of an organisation, they should not be treated detached from the dynamics of interacting in every day business. We start from actor-networks, from questions and challenges raised by people, situations, events or structures and try to elaborate and frame reflexive forms that enable us to develop measures together with the single or collective actor involved. As we have already stated, it would have been reductive also in this case to try and simply re-design the communication practices of the board as a principle collective actor within the organisation. Rather, we tried to take up the issue of trust, raised by a series of internal surveys dealing with work satisfaction—as well as in particular by one of the executive board members—in order to reconstruct and change the diffuse social practices existing in the organisation.

3.2. Working on trust within processes of identity change

The aforementioned surveys carried out in all divisions of the bank had made the fundamental problem visible: employees, commenting their feelings of uncertainty regarding job security and their uneasiness considering the ongoing change processes, made clear references to the fact that they ascribed their disappointment to executives' behaviour. Furthermore, general work overload, stress and a lack of general orientation among employees suggested that any attempt at re-establishing trust via improved communication practices was likely to result counterproductive. A reason for this is that in any organisation the social practice of trust evolves on two levels: the trust displayed in relation to single persons and the trust as generalised attitude towards the organisation. From the point of view of the individual actor, these two levels are conceived of as different *areas of interaction*. In this sense, the single actors keep two distinct "trust accounts" for assessing the actions and interactions they observe or they are involved in. Trying to simply change communication practices will probably not improve the relationship in terms of trustful interaction.

Hence, it was not change communication to start with, but interaction. And interaction had to be analysed, to be reflected on and to be transformed step by step. Executives had to develop a certain awareness of the fact that, under the condition of profound uncertainty, interaction in the sense of strong links between their statements, commitments, forecasts or decisions and the way other executives and employees react to (and implement or oppose against) these performative acts could not be taken for granted. On the contrary, a certain fundamental reliability and robustness had to be re-established by means of focussing on trust as vulnerable social practice.

3.2.1. Executive mode: personal credibility

Like perhaps in many banking institutes after the crisis, it was precisely the passage from the trust in persons to the systemic trust that had to be worked on. The initial stage of our process consisted in a series of coaching units with one of the executive board members in order to raise his awareness and reflexivity with respect to some fundamental characteristics that contribute to a higher credibility in everyday interaction (Covey, 2008). Again, this training was carried out with the aim to go deeper into the analysis of a single person's way of interacting than an analysis of the communicative abilities and modes of this person usually would do. Rather, the aim of the coaching units, operationalising Covey's concepts, consisted in an analysis of (1) personal integrity, on the ability and possibility to keep given promises, to commit oneself to determined values, to pursue clear principles while at the same time remaining receptive and open for the needs and opinions of others. (2) In order to interact in a credible way, it is also essential to learn to unveil the motives of one's actions and to try and declare one's intentions. Only by doing so, a person can link her own objectives to other persons' motives and try to take them into account instead of pursuing personal interests or other hidden agendas. (3) The construction of linking social capital will only succeed if people have the possibility to understand and assess the decisions and actions taken by an executive. In order to trust him or her, it is essential for them to have a realistic picture of his or her knowledge, skills and competences. Thus, executives should not try to "hide" their competences. (4) In order to generate trust, it is necessary that the executive take over the responsibility

for the results of his or her acting. This applies also to a situation in which problems appear, i.e. when it is particularly uncomfortable to be judged on the basis of the outcome of one's work or the work of the group one represents.
According to other rules and principles presented by Covey, trust as a social practice has a lot to do with a sincere examination of reality, with the willingness to show respect, to create transparency, to listen and to deal with expectations. All these principles can be trained and developed in everyday interaction with the wider objective to re-establish trust in the organisation as a system. The individual coaching units served as a setting for the reflection on the executive's (inter-)action modes and for the linking of the principles and rules worked out by Covey to concrete situations in the organisational life.

3.2.2. From individual coaching to circles of trust
The complementary task was then to spread trustful attitudes across the organisation. In collaboration with the CEO and his team, we worked out a six-steps process that should serve to enhance and stabilise the passage of trustful interaction from the level of personal to that of systemic trust.
(1) The first step has already been described as a process of reflection on personal credibility. In this step, the aim is to develop, in series of individual coaching units, the ability to adequately assess one's own contribution to the building up of a trustful atmosphere. As already illustrated, the process consisted in the analysis of the personal interaction patterns and of the potentialities of the personal level of one CEO as a starting point for the further steps.
(2) In the second step, the objective was to "create trust together". As the setting for this step, we instituted the "first circle of trust", in which the executive team directly cooperating with the CEO went through collective learning processes. Their task was to recognise and define the group's responsibility regarding the issue of trust and to define realistic goals for a change in the direction of an increased systemic trust.
(3) The third step consisted in individual coaching units with the single members of the CEO's executive team. Since every member of the team is responsible for a distinct business area, he or she ran through the same individual reflexive processes as the CEO had done before, analysing the personal interaction patterns and working out measures and objectives apt to foster the spreading of trust in his or her area.
(4) Every member of the executive team also directs a group of executives operating on a lower hierarchical level, so that it was possible to repeat the step of "creating trust together" and to institute the "second circle of trust". The aim was the same as in step two, i.e. the stimulation of collective learning processes and the definition of the group's responsibility and possible contribution to the fostering of trust within the organisation.
(5) Only in the fifth step, the issue of change communication was directly addressed. The aim was to focus the attention on the future development of the bank. All the executives and employees of the division directed by the CEO were invited to participate in an informative event where the strategic aims for the next three years were presented. But also in this case, the design of the event was made up from the point of view of organisational culture. Focus was laid on the "how", i.e. on the interaction modes and possible common values that should form the basis of the realisation of the strategic aims. All the participants were given the opportunity to express and exchange their expectations regarding the future evolutions. If concerns were expressed, executives tried to react with attention and respect. By doing so, the executive team intended to lay the basis for a constructive and trustful culture of interacting.
(6) Since it appeared to be necessary to check and ascertain the results of all this work, we proposed to hold regular meetings in which the members of the executive team had the possibility to exchange and reflect on the aims set in the context of the common process, to evaluate if the aims have been attained or not, where they perceived successful change and where evolutions seemed to be blocked.

4. Conclusion: Figures of trust
Can trust be translated into figures? At the beginning of our paper, we hypothesised that one of the fundamental functions of banks as institutions is exactly to provide economic actors with a language that transforms trust into figures. Still, in the course of our considerations it has turned out that from the beginning our intention was to draw the attention to another meaning of the term "figure". The whole financial sector has lost credibility in the last years, so that it is necessary to rebuild relationships of trust. From our view, it is not sufficient to change communication in order to regain the trust of costumers as well as of collaborators. We conceive of trust as a common practice that can make a major contribution to any organisation's identity. Yet, it is a complex issue to handle in organisational development

processes. Trust has to be worked out starting from the credibility of single persons in their relationship and interaction with others in every day organisational routine. By reflecting on their modes of relating to others, executives, managers or collaborators can become "figures of trust". They do so by displaying exemplary forms of behaviour and trying to spread trustful interaction in their networks. It is not by imposing a given general concept of trust that an organisation succeeds in changing organisational identity, but rather starting from concrete problems, questions, fears and expectations. Only by linking the concept of trust to the concrete values, routines and behavioural patterns of an organisation it will be possible to develop a common practice of trustful interaction.

By conceiving of trust as a social practice, we referred to Hartmann's (2011) profound philosophical analysis of this concept. In his systematic description of the term, he works out three fundamental aspects of the practice of trust. (1) The first condition is that the decision to trust somebody must represent an *option* for acting amongst others. Hence, the practice of trust is not a substitute for other, more rational forms of acting based on a calculus when these are not available. It must include intrinsic values and be related to specific reasons or motives. Trustful interaction contributes to organisational culture *not* because people decide not to distrust each other, but rather because they *do not behave in an indifferent way* towards the others. They care, and this is the reason for a possible disappointment, not a cost-benefit calculus. (2) Trust evolves within a relationship or within a network. Relationships and networks are not durable if they involve exclusively instrumental motives. They need to be developed according to a common understanding of how and why things are to be done, an understanding that is continuously challenged and reflected on. This is the reason why "figures of trust" are so important, because they link the various actors and networks not only due to their exemplary behavioural patterns, but also by inviting the others to judge, to assess, to give and receive "offers" and, in that sense, to bring change to institutionalised patterns. (3) By trusting each other we accept being vulnerable. What this vulnerability implies with respect to organisational culture is to be elaborated in organisational development processes. Does vulnerability end up in sarcasm or even cynical behaviour? Or can it be transformed into modes of expressing emotions, of dialoguing and continuing to offer something in a dynamic, open relationship?

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