Reflexive and experience-based trust and participatory research:
Concept and methods to meet complexity and uncertainty in organisations[*]

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In the course of general changes in work, informal processes are becoming ever more important, and the question emerges how to understand and organise them. This is a great challenge for research. Quantitative research methods are confronted with the problem that complex processes cannot be investigated and understood by simple inquiry. Qualitative methods are more adequate but should be complemented by participatory research methods in order to really grasp the phenomena. This article demonstrates the potential of participatory research to meet this challenge, using the concept of reflexive experience-based trust as a regulation resource in enterprises. This leads to a discussion of basic questions of social research: the separation of researcher and "object of research" is called into question as well as the separation of means, ends and objects of research. A concrete research and design project is presented which exemplifies the potentials of participatory research and the notion of reflexive experience-based trust.

Key words: trust, participatory research, sociology of work, organisation, qualitative methods

1. Introduction: Growing complexity and reduced plannability – methodical conclusions

In this paper we will first point out the methodological implications of growing complexity and uncertainty in enterprises, using the research on trust in organisations as an example. Then we will explain why trust can be seen as a response to current challenges of work organisation. In this context we present a new definition of trust: reflexive experience-based trust. We argue that there is a close relationship between our approach to trust and interactive/participatory qualitative research methods. Finally a concrete research and design project is presented which allows for insights into the potentials of participatory research and the concept of reflexive experience-based trust.

Because of changes in work labelled as growing complexity and reduced plannability, increasing attention is currently being paid to processes and issues that are of an implicit nature and are thus not or only partially amenable to explication and quantification. Therefore, it may be assumed that there is a growing relevance of qualitative research projects as opposed to quantitative ones. But in order to grasp the processual dimension in complex contexts characterised by uncertainty, there is a need not only for qualitative methods like interviews and observation, but also for participatory methods.[1] Only by monitoring and active co-design of work processes is it possible to really grasp complex and implicit social processes, as is the case in the research of trust as a regulation mechanism in flexible enterprises.

Acting on the diagnostic assumption that trust as an organisational regulation mechanism is becoming increasingly attractive with the growth of complexity and uncertainty, the following thesis will be presented: just as trust in practice resists a purely explicit and instrumental, i.e. objectifying approach

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[1] There are generally two motives for participation. First, participation as a research method opens up an access to insights that cannot be obtained in another way; second, participation as a democratic issue is important for contextual and normative reasons since satisfactory practice is only possible if the subjects (here: employees) are actually able to influence both the change process and the research process (Fricke 2013). In this paper, we emphasise the methodic-instrumental side of participation, but also place value on the indispensability of democratic features, both for design and research. As far as possible in our research setting, we incorporated democratic elements into our practical procedure.

because of its predominantly implicit nature, trust as a research object should be investigated by empirical methods that are apt to generate experience. Here approaches based on design and intervention: like the action research approach, suggest themselves. It will be argued that there is a systematic connection between a rich theoretical concept of trust and the methodical approaches that are used to investigate it. This connection is, again, used as an example for general requirements of empirically oriented management studies that serve the research of uncertainty and complexity and elaborate ways of coping with it.

2. Trust as a response to current challenges in the organisation of work

Enterprises react to the challenges of the current changes of work, like globalisation, growing market pressures and increasing necessity for innovation and flexibilisation, by demanding an active integration of subjective potentials and orientation into work on the part of the employees (Baethge, 1991; Knights & Willmott, 1989). This goes along with a blurring of the borders between work and life, and with a tendency to pass the market pressures over to the minimal entities, as teams and even individuals. Conversely, the employees express increasing demands with respect to sense-making and creativity in their work (ibid.).

Consequently, there is a change in control and governance problems in enterprises. The "transformation problem" (Braverman, 1980) takes on a new form. Taylorist control methods with detailed specifications for procedural steps and work sequences are not efficient any longer (Eisenhardt, 1989). But forms of indirect control (Kratzer, Dunkel, & Menz, 2010; Glißmann & Peters, 2001) replacing minute process specifications by rigid control of performance indicators and obligatory documentation, are also reaching their limits. Indirect control not only proves to be very costly, but also does not meet the increasing requirements of innovation and flexibility since it fails to consider the employees' subjective potentials, thus implicitly or explicitly negating them. However, it is just these potentials that become more and more important for the performance of enterprises, as they are indispensable for coping with uncertainty and complexity.

But the employees have a similar control problem, too. Their traditional control methods are increasingly inappropriate for coping with the risks the change of work implies for them. In many cases, requirements such as life-long learning and support adapted to life stages, employment security and recognition can hardly be appropriately secured by generally binding formal regulation, e.g. on legal terms. However, procedures without explicit formal regulation are usually seen as hardly enforceable. Often, interests of employers and employees are conceptualised as contradictory and incompatible, following the pattern of trade disputes. In this perspective, each effort to solve a problem is *a priori* confronted with the fear to be fleeced by the other party.

Thus, both sides seem to have problems to satisfy their reciprocal demands either by formal embedding or by market mechanisms (e.g. financial incentives). There is an increasing relevance in looking behind the well-rehearsed regulation forms (hierarchy and market) and getting insights into regulation "beyond contract" (Fox, 1974). A mutual interdependency is present: enterprises depend on their employees' subjective potentials, but they can neither enforce nor control whether the employees expend these potentials in their work. Employees depend on leeway and support instead of rigid control, otherwise they are not able to do "good work." A possible solution for these mutual control and governance problems in the context of informal and non-formalisable demands and performances is trust: an option which is, however, ridden with prerequisites. But particularly in the perspective of contradictory interests between employers and employees, trust is often seen as a deficient or even naïve approach. For this reason, we intend to present a rich concept of trust that is tested in practice and clearly separated from reduced conceptualisations.

Subsequently, the individualistic perspective of the rational choice theory and the strongly systemic perspectives of Giddens and Luhmann are used for the demarcation of such a rich concept of trust, which is then introduced under the label of "reflexive experience-based trust." In the following chapter the thesis is worked out in detail that the said change processes in work demand a new role of participatory research methods (Fricke, 2013). For a better understanding of and coping with uncertainty and complexity not only requires sensitive theoretical concepts but also adequate methods of research.

3. A new definition of trust: reflexive and experience-based

3.1 Demarcations: neither reduction to risk calculation nor marginalisation to close social range

We posit that trust systematically resists a rational-choice approach (cf. Williamson, 1993). Rational choice theory concepts assume that a relationship of trust emerges if the (probable) "cost" of a betrayal is less than the (probable) "outcome" value of the co-operation.[2] This idea of "calculated trust" conceptualises trust analogous to an act of market exchange regarding exchange on the basis of opportunism with advantages for both sides (Coleman, 1974; Diekmann & Voss, 2004), thus ultimately equating trust with risk calculation (Williamson, 1993). For estimating the probable difference between the value of co-operation and the cost of opportunist behaviour, monitoring, and transaction (Coase, 1988; Williamson, 1990), information is seen as the main indicator, e.g. in the form of the reputation (see Dasgupta, 1988) of the potential co-operation partner. Good reputation and other signals preceding an alleged decision to trust are focused, rather than a genesis of trust in the process of action. In this perspective, explicit information produces trust and allows for a decision to trust. However, this also means that the more information about a formerly uncertain issue is available, the less trust is needed.

Thus, a kind of trust that is conceptualised as dependent on explicit information and relying on planned decision makes itself unnecessary. To put it more precisely: The less I need trust, the more I am able to trust. This contradiction shows that this approach is not capable to sufficiently grasp trust as a "fait social" with a life of its own (Durkheim, 1982, p. 144). Actual trust that goes beyond calculation can only be understood if it is not conceptualised as a one-sided singular act but a social phenomenon. Consequently, Williamson disagrees with applying the perspective of rational choice theory to trust, and suggests maintaining the concept of "risk" instead (1993, p. 463).

However, we do not agree with Willliamson's conclusion (ibid.) to reduce trust to a phenomenon of close social range, valid only in fields like love and

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2   Williamson (1993, p. 466): „V = qG + (1 – qB)."

family. This would amount to a marginalisation of trust, and to its exclusion from economic and political fields on the macro level. For just as objectifying action based on explicit knowledge only covers a part of our everyday actions and we permanently depend on implicit knowledge and situational, subjectifying, experience-based action (Böhle, 2013; Böhle, Bürgermeister, & Porschen-Hueck, 2012), risk calculation is never the only option and trust always remains relevant. But this does not mean that we want to conceptualise trust as an essential part of every human action; this would mean an inflationary use of the term that we refrain from.

3.2 Demarcation: against universalized and abstracted ideas of trust: Luhmann's and Giddens's perspectives

Luhmann (2000) defines trust as an elementary part of any social life. Thus, he has not a fundamental sceptic attitude to trust. To be sure, he sees trust as a risky input in advance that is always in danger of being disappointed or socially sanctioned, but also as a necessary mechanism for the reduction of social complexity (Luhmann, 1979). A characteristic feature of his concept of trust is the differentiation between trust in persons and trust in systems. Trust in persons is generated and deepened by interaction and is a genuinely reciprocal phenomenon. The issue of trust is relevant in all kinds of social interaction, human action is always potentially the object of a test on trustworthiness. Trust in systems, however, is necessarily one-sided since systems are not able to practice trust (with the exception of the psychical system). Accordingly, an employee can trust in the enterprise that employs him, but the enterprise cannot reciprocate it. Consequently, it remains uncertain whether the employee's trust was justified, and even what exactly was the object of trust. Therefore, systemic trust always has an air of nebulosity in Luhmann's writings. Luhmann himself localises trust in the region of a lifeworld familiarity, understanding it as a kind of "basic trust" in lifeworld functions that have to be taken for granted. To be sure, systemic trust does not rely on "matters of course" but its rationale and its anchoring remain diffuse. In our view, the reason is that the idea of systemic trust necessary fails to fulfil either the functional logic of trust (interactivity, reciprocity) or the specific

constituents of systems (Sauer, Schilcher, & Will-Zocholl, 2013). Hence, Luhmann's conception can be criticised from two directions. On one hand, Luhmann, at least implicitly, locates trust in the context of the pre-modern era. In the context of modernity, it is conceptualised as a mechanism to compensate for the loss of certainty caused by the emergence of new unpredictabilities and imponderabilities, hence a compensatory mechanism necessary because of the complexity of modernity. On the other hand, Luhmann's conception of trust seems to support a general negation of trust as a principle of regulation, especially in the contexts of work and industrial relations, and most particularly in the representation of employee interests.

The approach of Giddens (1990) also implies that systemic trust is gaining more and more relevance in the era of modernity, since modernity is characterized by growth of spatial and temporal distances, disembedding and permanent and reflexive re-arrangement of social relations. Thus, Giddens also sees trust as a medium to support action under conditions of uncertainty and imponderability (Giddens, 1982). Consequently, trust has more or less the function of a universal, pre-reflexive mechanism. Giddens does not make such a clear difference between systemic and personal trust as Luhmann does. How these two forms of trust are exactly related, and how it is possible to evoke trust under the specific conditions of modernity, these questions remain largely unanswered on a concrete level.

In demarcation from the prominent approaches to trust discussed above, now we present our concept of a reflexive and experience-based trust.

4. Reflexive and experience-based trust

Starting point for a concept of reflexive experience-based trust (Böhle et al., 2014a; Böhle, 2010) is the idea that trust cannot be objectivated resp. objectified: whenever explicit knowledge or formal rules and sanctions are disposable as a basis for decisions, the situation is not characterised by trust. On the contrary, trust comes into play in situations where there is a lack of explicit knowledge whether expectations will be fulfilled, meaning a lack of formal means to regulate the fulfilment of expectations. Hence, the peculiar quality of trust as a mode of orientation and social regulation of action is its potential

to deal with uncertainty and insecurity. According to our concept, trust deploys its virtues on the basis of a peculiar experiential knowledge (cf. Böhle et al., 2012; Böhle, 1994), and it is embedded in concrete situations and practical actions. Conscious perception of these aspects of situational and experience-based trust and its necessary preconditions allows for a reflexive integration, framing and modeling of trust.

In the following chapters, the concept of reflexive and experience-based trust will be introduced by presenting six central dimensions (cf. Böhle et al., 2014a).

4.1 Cognitive foundations: experiential knowledge and feeling

Trust is not blind, but all the same it does not rely on rational-intellectual cognition and knowledge. Drawing on Simmel's definition of trust as a "middle position between knowledge and ignorance" (Simmel, 1908, p. 263), trust may be located between *explicit* knowing and not-knowing. This inter-mediate position "in between" brings to bear a peculiar *implicit* (experiential) knowledge. Its basic feature is a combination of knowing, practical action, and feeling. For instance, trust is described as a "distinct feeling" in situations where "rational statements come to an end" (Götz, 2006, p. 61), or compared to a "climate": we live in this climate "as we are living in our atmosphere; we perceive trust like the air, i.e. only if it gets scarce or is polluted" (Baier, 1994, p. 42). Focusing this feeling, Baier particularly emphasises the trust-worthiness of the person who trusts: "If someone wants to receive trust for his or her promise, he or she has to have a feeling when the promise must be kept and when it may be broken" (Baier, 2001, p. 70). This feeling or sensation refers to a peculiar experiential knowledge and is to be clearly demarcat-ed from a feeling of trust that is often called blind or naïve. Rather, the "distinct feeling" is linked with understanding. Understanding is "under-pinned by a consolidated impression", in the words of the philosopher Schmitz (1993, p. 86). Against this backdrop, our concept of reflexive and experience-based trust draws on related concepts as subjectifying (work) action and the correspondent experiential knowledge (cf. Böhle, 2013; Böhle et al, 2012; Böhle, 1994) as well as experience-based co-operation and

communication (Porschen-Hueck, 2012; Porschen, 2008; Böhle & Bolte, 2002).

4.2 Structural foundations – cooperation and interdependency

Trust is tied to an implicit expectation that other persons will cooperate. Consciously or unconsciously, trust is based on fundamental orientations, conceptions of action and of the human being, and on expectations derived from these basics, concerning sociality and social (self-) commitment. The essential feature is that a "common sense" of co-operative communality is presupposed: one might call it a "co-operative rationality." This is especially striking in situations where there is not enough time to establish trust within long-term, stable social relationships. In sociology of work, the concept of "swift trust" (Zolin & Hinds, 2004) is applied to this phenomenon.

   A predominant idea especially in the realm of economy is that social relationships do not primarily rely on co-operation but rather on market exchange and hierarchical co-ordination resp. organisation. However, sociological research has repeatedly shown that even in market-related and power-related social relationships a complementation and foundation by (trustful) cooperation is necessary and actually practised (see also Huchler, Voß, & Weihrich, 2007; Böhle 2006). The other side of the coin is, however, that distrust can also be appropriate and can be supported by real evidence. Thus, distrust is often mentioned as a correction mode for (alleged) trust relationships (Luhmann, 2000; Endreß, 2012). Since our concept of trust refers to and relies on social orientations and relationships, not only persons but also institutions and systems can be trusted. The crucial point is that the trustor not only relies on certain features or competences of a technical or social system; rather he or she relies on the 'intentions' behind them, on the integrity of the system.

4.3 Social commitment: appeal and obligation

Trust implies a message that the trustee is given credit for being capable of fulfilling the expectation. Escape from such a positive attribution is not easily done. If a person does not want or is not capable to fulfil the expectation, a pressure for justification emerges, or at least an irritation that one was given

credit for something that one cannot or does not want to do. Because of this implicitly obliging quality, trust may also become a burden for the trustee. So trust loses its non-committal nature to the extent it is communicated, i.e. to the extent that not only trustworthiness but trust as confidence itself is actually perceived and perceivable. To be sure, "silent trust" is possible in principle, but in this case the characteristic potentials of trust for the constitution and regulation of social relationships are not redeemed. Conversely, the communication of trust opens up the possibility to reject it, to reject the correspondent expectations, or to point out in advance that the confidence might be disappointed.

4.4 (Self-)Representation: trustworthiness

Not only communication and perception of trust is an essential precondition for the emergence of trust, but also the display and demonstration of trustworthiness. Trust is not at all a one-sided matter of those who trust; it is equally important whether the person (or system) who is (to be) trusted represents his or her trustworthiness and makes it accessible to perception and experience. Trustworthiness in this sense does not only refer to the execution of certain tasks in a distinct context and with respect to distinct objects (Mayer, Davis, & Schoormann, 1995, p. 717). Trustworthiness is acquired in concrete contexts and situations (cf. Hartmann, 2011) but not by display of strictly defined objectifiable indicators of trustworthiness resp. reputation (Dasgupta, 1988)[3], rather by implicit signals (see 4.1) of a co-operative attitude (see 4.2) which relays commitment (see 4.3).

4.5 Communication: – materiality and symbolic interpretation

In the communication of trust as well as trustworthiness, it is particularly necessary not only to perceive the "material" actions and facts as such, but also to understand and interpret their "symbolic" meaning referring to trust. Considering only the production of certainty by means of explicit promises

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[3]   An example is the attempt to define certain personal features (like facial structure, expression, clothing) as indicators for trustworthiness vs. lack of reliability.

and settlements would fall short of the phenomenon of trust. One and the same action is capable of evoking trust or distrust. The crucial question is *how*, in which way the concrete action is relayed and understood symbolically, particularly with respect to the intention "behind" the action as the expression of a co-operative attitude and orientation. Two dangers are looming here: on one hand that the material action has no effect, on the other hand that trust and trustworthiness might simply be staged. For this reason, Hartmann (2011) emphasises the importance of the guiding values and principles in a practical action context, the negotiability of these values and principles and the shared commonalities and basic understanding with respect to them.

4.6 Development and intervention: reflexive

Drawing on the concept of reflexive modernisation and the differentiation between First and Second Modernity (Beck & Bonß, 2001; Beck, Bonss, & Lau, 2003), the terminus "reflexivity" will subsequently be understood in the sense of a (self-) reflection about the foundations and limits of reflection. "Reflection" is used in a broad and open sense, encompassing intellectual reflection as well as sensual and experience-based awareness and reflecting. This includes not only reflection "about" practical issues and circumstances but also the chances to exert practical influence upon them and to actively shape and mould them. In this sense, reflexivity resists the simple opposition of rational reflection and pre-reflective orientation to habits, traditions or affective moods.

4.7 Interim conclusion: reflexive, experience-based trust and research methods

The characteristic features of trust elaborated above have consequences for the empirical research of trust. Research has to focus on experiences as its object, experiences that require involvement with the concrete processes in practice, rather than on explicit knowledge or facts. Research methods have to be sensitive for sensations and feelings that must not be excluded from analysis as potentially subjective distortions. This also means an empathic

involvement on the part of the researchers, without giving up a critical distance.

This conception of research also entails consequences for modeling and intervention: a conception of reflexive and experience-based trust demands acknowledgement and recognition of the peculiar structure and logic of trust as well as a search for ways to actively influence the development of trust and to find models in order to shape and mould it. To be sure, it is impossible to "produce" trust in an instrumental way, because of its implicit nature and non-objectifiability (Böhle et al., 2014a; Böhle, 2010), but trust is all the same not inaccessible to intentional design. Just as rational-intellectual reflection is challenged to recognise its own limits and to admit "other" insights, just so is design and intervention challenged to transcend an approach of planned and instrumental "production" and to envision and support the "emergence" of trust in and by practical action. This means that the design of trust faces a seemingly paradoxical requirement that may be compared to the task of "organising the informal" (Bolte & Porschen, 2006). There is a systematic relationship between the theoretical concept of trust and application-oriented and participatory methods for empirical research: both depend on each other. A rich understanding of trust both depends on, and is needed for, this kind of methods: and the other way round.

5. Methodical implications: on the scent of trust by means of active design

One of the theses underlying this paper is that the change in work entails consequences and phenomena that are to be investigated most adequately by qualitative and participatory research. We are using the issue of trust as a regulation resource as an example, both for possible responses to the change in work and for adequate research of this change. Subsequently we shall outline why the phenomenon of trust is better grasped and understood by qualitative than by quantitative research, why we prefer an indirect proceeding ("coming on the scent of trust"), and why it is necessary to actively integrate the dimension of design and intervention. We want to show how the dimensions of action and practice as well as context-sensitive understanding

can be included in a kind of step-by-step procedure if qualitative (instead of purely quantitative) and participatory (instead of uni-directional) elements are integrated into the research process. First we shall look at the dimensions of action and practice.

Whereas quantitative social research tries to operationalise as unambiguously as possible, a special asset of qualitative social research is to keep complexity open as long as possible. Abstraction is usually done within the process of analysis and not beforehand (Kelle & Kluge, 2010; Silverman, 2013), which permits the collection of other forms of knowledge (informal knowledge) and other forms of practice (complex practices). For instance, qualitative methods, e.g. in the context of a narrative interview about a situation, allow for a systematic differentiation between objective interdependences as well as individual orientations on one hand and the intended "subjective meaning" of the narrator on the other hand: also beyond the reflective capabilities of the interviewees. Participatory research methods offer additional resources by permitting the researchers to actually experience the objects of research. Such experiences are also made in interviews and especially group discussions but participatory research methods provide a much wider range of possibilities: for instance a recursive mix of repeatedly alternating phases of empirical inquiry, theory-based analysis, and design with regard to intervention. Additionally, participatory approaches put the "research objects" in a new position: they are not pure objects any longer but can also play the role of research subjects: bringing in a much wider range of their experience and interests. The following examples from research and design projects show that the systematic integration of design activities into the research process has very favourable effects, especially upon the understanding of issues that can hardly be made explicit, like trust in work.

5.1 Demarcation: quantifying attitude research

First, our approach to trust research will be demarcated from the mainstream of research about trust. Psychological and political trust research usually applies quantitative methods and procedures. In psychology, trust is measured by degrees, using more or less comprehensive operationalisations and

scales; in political science, a lot of studies is devoted to the issue how much political institutions and politicians are trusted. Following the quality criteria of quantitative research (Bryman, 2012), research may then lead to results like this: German citizens are placing more trust in trade unions than in the German federal government, but less than in the police (Schweer & Thies, 2003, p. 49). There are also international comparisons about the degree of trust in trade unions, enterprises or "capitalism."

This kind of research, also present in sociology, meets with criticism in two important issues: on one hand, the concept of trust often remains unclear and indistinct. An everyday idea of trust is implicitly presupposed, without trying to clarify the meaning of the concept. In this way, the idea of trust tends to assume a somewhat "commonplace" and arbitrary quality (Diekmann, Petendra, Sauer, Schilcher, & Ziegler, 2010), a problem we met above when looking at the notion of "systemic trust" with Luhmann and Giddens. On the other hand, the dimension of practice and action is completely excluded in such research. What does it mean if I do not trust politicians, trade unions, my employer: what are the consequences from my lack of trust or even distrust, which effects will it bear in my everyday work action, in my co-operation, in my work orientations? Quantitative trust research usually refrains from giving context-sensitive answers to these questions, restricting itself to attitude research. Psychological efforts to define the concept of trust often refer to game theory, but such abstractified definitions are not adequate to throw light on the role and function of trust in situational action contexts.

Quantitative methods alone are hardly qualified to respond to narrations and descriptions of individual "trustors", to understand, reconstruct, and interpret their actions and attitudes (Diekmann et al., 2010). We try to tackle these tasks by an orientation to qualitative research, which we shall now outline with respect to the dimensions of practice and action.

5.2 Practical and perceptional dimensions: on the scent of trust

Qualitative research in sociology of work and industry is often done in enterprise case studies, focusing on the concrete work activity and work experience of the employees (Yin, 2009), to the end of getting deeper insights into

the performance of actions, the organisational framework and the attribution of subjective meanings. In this context, a direct question about trust and its role in work contexts is only of complementary value, for instance as a question *ex post* in an expert interview. Relevant as the general attitude to trust may be, trust is a too subtle phenomenon to be tracked down by means of a concrete, objectified inquiry. For trust is in several dimensions prone to a social desirability bias and cannot be separated and abstractified from the specific context in which it emerges. Thus, in our perspective important questions are how trust is expressed in practice, which effects it has upon practice, how situations of trust (and distrust) are perceived and interpreted. In this chapter, we look at these questions in detail.

As trust is sociologically relevant mainly because of its influential role in social situations, we try to come "on the scent of trust" by understanding and reconstructing the effect of trust (or lack of trust) in specific concrete situations in a specific concrete context (Diekmann et al., 2010). We are focusing situations that are characterised by uncertainty and imponderabilities, situations that are rather the rule than the exception especially in modern work processes. These are crucial situations where the question is answered: is it possible, in a specific case and context, to find solutions based on mutual trust or one-sided "credit of trust": which means demonstration of trustworthiness, solutions that might be characterised as a specific venture without explicit formal safeguarding, or not? Depending on whether this is successful or not, processes can be promoted and accelerated or they can stagnate, falter, or even fail.

It seems relevant to us to view these situations and processes, not in an isolated manner but in a twofold context. The first context is represented by the context and history of the specific situation. For instance, if informal co-operation "through unofficial channels" fails in a strictly hierarchical enterprise, with little leeway for employee action and rigid documentation obligations, this failure will be explained for the most part by this context, and not primarily by the situation itself. The second context is that action always interacts with the perception on the part of the actors (which, again, is also dependent on the first context). Perception is here used in a wider sense than just recognizing the situation, it also includes experience-based interpretation.

Experience-based interpretation is to a considerable extent acquired and localised in work contexts but can deepen even to a general image of the human being. The ability to adequately "dose" trust in and according to the "right" situations can thus be seen as a specific competency of the human labour capacity (Arbeitsvermögen) (Pfeiffer, 2014) and experiential knowledge. This twofold contextualisation has the consequence that one and the same action may promote trust in one context, and promote distrust in another context, is perceived as generating trust or generating distrust depending on the context. For instance, if a person invokes formal contractual regulations within a co-operation relationship, this may contribute to the generation of a certain basic trust in the context of a relationship that up to then was not very trustful. But if a person does the same thing in the context of a strong trust relationship, this invoking of formal regulations might evoke distrust and disturb the trust relationship.

In conclusion, experience-based situational trust can be investigated by looking at the concrete practices, their contexts and the perceptions related to them. Adequate instruments for research are qualitative methods like narrative interviews, group discussions, and observations. But particularly the dimension of perception indicates a necessity to transcend these methods. It proves adequate, not to solely rely on inquiry but to actively participate in specific processes characterised by trust (or the lack of it). This permits us to come "on the scent" of deeper, in part even pre-lingual perception patterns and their motives and conditions, and it allows for an active inclusion of the employees into the research process: including an active incorporation of their interests into the research process and a more democratic organisation of the research project and its findings (cf. Fricke, 2013). In the following chapter, we shall discuss this in the context of a differentiation between *what* is done (resp. what happens) and *how* it is done (resp. how it happens).

5.3 Participatory research as a response to the challenge of the perceptive dimension of trust

An important reason why trust to a high extent resists instrumentalisation is its perceptive dimension outlined above. Focusing upon this dimension, the

aspect of communication and demonstration comes to the fore. In reflexive, experience-based trust, the concrete actions and their contents are not the only essential issue, but their form is also vital. A crucial point is that it is indispensable for trust that a co-operative attitude has to be communicated as an underlying intention. This intention is bound to materialise in actions but in a way that points beyond these singular actions as such. Relevant is not only the context of the action but also the concrete "doing" of the action that might promote trust (or distrust). This means that the *how* of acting is addressed, the concrete execution, display and communication of the actions, as well as their effects within a specific context. In order to grasp this *how* of trust actions, e.g. if the research question is how trust in enterprises may be promoted, it proves adequate to actively initiate, accompany, monitor and, above all, experience processes of creation and design of trust. Making their own experiences within the process of research and intervention, getting involved in concrete situations of work and co-operation together with the employees, widens the horizon of researchers and research, especially if social meaning and sensual experience are the object of research. The sensual and meaningful expression of phenomena like trust can thus be re-lived and re-constructed much more directly and immediately than in the form of an interview or the like. To put it pointedly: where explicit and exact measuring becomes more and more difficult and even impossible, not only deep inquiry but especially experience in and of the research process comes to the fore as a means of gaining knowledge. For this constellation, participatory intervention within a shared process of researchers and practitioners which can be designed and shaped by both sides offers the greatest potential.

This also means that the "objects of research" get an enhanced, in part also a new role: they are no longer exclusively "objects", but active co-producers of research through their everyday work action in the context of modeling and design approaches. Sometimes they will even discover fresh ground, in case the interventions yield alterations in processes and procedures for them. For instance, where it is possible to record a lack of trust in the interviews, participatory design in the form of monitored change processes offers the chance to practically try out and experience mutual trust: as well as

the changes engendered by this experience in work and organisation process-es (cf. chapter 6).

This process should not simply be conceptualised as generating mutually independent and isolated perceptions and experiences on the part of the researchers and the "objects of research" but as a process of interaction and dialogue (cf. Gustavsen, 1992) between the actors in science and practice. The shared experience of the process of research and intervention is meant to allow for an active evocation and interactive exchange of implicit knowledge and implied interests. Here trust is indispensable. So, trust takes on a new role: it is not only the object of research, but at the same time a vital means of research and a precondition for the research process. The more implicit and "subjective" the object of research, the more important is a trustful openness in the process of investigation. Again, this openness is most intensely avouched for by shared experience within the design and intervention process. For interventions are particularly trust-sensitive, even more than inquiry and investigation, since they have a definite effect upon work reality. This is one more reason to approach the object of trust in reorganisation processes in enterprises by means of participatory research.

5.4 Trust as an object of research and as a medium of research

As stated above, trust cannot be comprehensively researched without investigating its concrete effects in practice and their contexts. Quantitative attitude research is neither sufficient for investigating trust in practice, nor is it capable of grasping the attitude dimension itself, since trust includes a "depth dimension" well into fundamental conceptions of the human being that cannot be accessed by quantified and operationalised "attitude items." In analogy, trust as a means or an instrument of research is not to be viewed in a one-sided way. Trust is not simply an instrument to a specific end, to be produced and utilised arbitrarily and on short term, trust cannot be generated any time it is needed for the research and design process. Rather, trust is bound to grow in a specific situation. This is true for participatory research, but also for a research process of any kind. Even interviews implying the disclosure of details of work and cooperation processes on the part of the

interview partners, details and experiences that are known only to the employees themselves, cannot be successfully conducted without a minimum of trust. This trust can be justified and deepened by feeding back the research process into the employees' work reality. Here feedback loops prove adequate: provisional research results are mirrored back to the employees, permitting them to respond to them, and their responses and contributions are integrated again into the further research process (Diekmann et al., 2010). But participatory research should not only involve the employees into the research and design process, but also include concrete methods to give them the possibility to directly or indirectly communicate their interests and influence the further process.

In a shared intervention process like this, mutual trust is even more necessary: and possible. The researchers depend on the co-operation of the "research objects", they usually do not use any organisational lever to protect themselves against a lack of willingness to co-operate. On the other hand, the practitioners are directly affected by the changes induced within the design and intervention process, and these changes will have much more long-lasting and intense effects upon them than upon the researchers. Under these preconditions, trust becomes possible by referring to a shared interest, which is the interest in "good work." All participants, employees, researchers and enterprise representatives, are bound to share and display a comprehensible and trustworthy interest in "good work processes", efficient and standing up to market competition, but also sustainable, devoid of excessive stress and considering the employees' needs and demands. A shared proceeding has to be balanced between openness and predictability of the design processes, and this balance has to be found for the specific context and situation respectively. For if intervention approaches are chosen and expressed too openly, or even too assertively, they might be rejected because of reservations either on the part of the enterprise or the employees, but the same might be true if the respective interests are either ignored or too rashly preconceived (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2011). For similar reasons the intervention approach should not be overstrained, which might happen if the regulations are too strict or else if it is so open that implementation in practice is hardly possible. In conclusion, context-sensitivity of trust and orientation to the "how" of

doing are in many respects important in the details of the research and design process.

Trust as a medium of research is as multi-dimensional as trust as an object of research, its complexity must not be reduced prematurely. In this perspective, a research-and-design process is both a process to better grasp trust as a research object, and a process to deepen and justify trust as a medium of research. In the direct co-operation for an establishment of trust-based "good work", the researchers get the chance to prove themselves as trustworthy, leaving their interview partners a better and more sustainable legacy than just words on paper. Only the trust they have gained by their work and the perceived closeness between researchers and practitioners enable them to induce genuine and sustainable changes in organisational processes (Svensson, 2007).

6. An example for establishment of trust

The investigation of trust referred to in this paper took place within the frame of a publicly funded research project (see footnote 1). The proceeding was first oriented towards theory-based case study research as it is well tried and tested in the sociology of industry (Yin, 2009). It was characterised by a double perspective: on one hand the actors' concrete actions and experiences, on the other hand the enterprise structures were focused. This double perspective also applied for the design process, which both aimed at a change of the structural framework and served as a platform for analysis and intervention. Hence, the duality of case and enterprise could not be eliminated (Pflüger, Pongratz, & Trinczek, 2010, p. 19). The first stage of the case study procedure mainly included interviews and group discussions, complemented by documentary research. The interviews were conducted with employees who were competence carriers and thus experts in their respective work areas. The interview topics were the work situations and organisational contexts of the employees' work activities, rather than the persons themselves and their biographies (cf. Meuse & Nagel, 2005, pp. 72f.). As a complementary aspect, however, we also inquired about biographical data. The next steps were group discussions in the form of feedback workshops: the provisional results

of the interview analysis were presented to the interviewees and discussed with them as experts in their own work. Their responses and evaluations served to verify, complement, and enhance the research results (Diekmann et al., 2010). Now step by step concrete intervention measures followed, like changing the steps of the process planning, defining another role for the factory manager, changing the rules for interdepartmental co-operation. All these steps had both the aim of promoting a culture of reflexive experience-based trust, and were implemented according to the "rules of trust". Each step was again discussed with the employees. The interventions formed an essential feature of the progressing research and reflection process. Within the process of intervention and discussion, the analytical insights could be considerably deepened and enriched by new accentuations.

Finally, the results were reworked for generalisation, in order to be useful beyond the range of the respective case enterprise. Transferability was supported by the specific selection of the case studies: they were conducted in small and medium-sized enterprises that can be regarded as typical for German SMEs in terms of their lines of business (mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, software/IT) and their sizes. The case studies had different core themes and different procedures respectively. We shall now illustrate our proceeding in one of the enterprise case studies.

Self-organisation in the enterprise A inc. – from distrust to mutual trust

A inc. is a medium-sized manufacturing enterprise in the low-wage sector, led by its owner and employing about 70 workers, mostly semi-skilled females. Its products are components manufactured in piece production without much automatisation. Since the range of products is relatively broad, the piece numbers are small, and the orders are on short term and highly volatile, there are high requirements for flexibility and efficiency of production. Moreover, the management is very small, consisting only of three persons (including the executive director), with two of them frequently absent due to sales activities. Therefore, management has decided to increase the rate of self-organisation all over the company, since permanent and sustainable success is hardly possible in this segment and under these preconditions without a high participation and

an active commitment of all the employees in the administrative and operative areas.

So the central idea of intervention in the enterprise case of A inc. was to promote and support the employees' self-organisation for future challenges under the circumstances of growing complexity and unplannability. Self-organisation, however, requires trust with corresponding measures that support and promote trust. Or conversely: A properly working self-organisation is an expression of trust as a properly working regulation mechanism in the enterprise.

In this case we first conducted interviews with employees of all enterprise departments in several intervals, afterwards presenting the results to the employees and to management and discussing them with both parties, on one hand in separate sessions, on the other hand in moderated meetings with all participants. This allowed for the disclosure of partially hidden potentials for self-organisation but also of barriers and obstacles. Now concrete ideas for the growth of mutual trust as a general mode of labour policy began to emerge. However, one barrier could be identified that was present all over the various issues discussed (targets, process control, collaboration and communication beyond departments, forms of leaderships, values, etc.) and that resisted all efforts in the form of moderated meetings or impulses from reflection of the collected material. On the part of the management, the employees were predominantly viewed as lacking in willingness to perform and develop. The management offers focused on individual incentives and abstract perspectives of development but were hardly accepted by the employees. The rationalisation processes, with their one-sided orientation, yielded only short-time participation at best. The values developed and communicated by the management could not be "lived" and experienced in everyday work. On the part of the employees, the perception prevailed that self-initiative beyond the pre-determined process documentations was not welcomed by the management, even though it would have been necessary for successful work. Moreover, the targets derived from the communicated values proved to be incompatible with the targets of other departments of the enterprise, and what is more, they also proved incompatible with the employees' internalised general values, as product quality, customer satisfaction, and

reliability. The management did nothing to mediate these contradictions, but rather consciously maintained and perpetuated them in order to boost performance. Moreover, the resources necessary for an increase of self-organisation (as time and information) were provided very sparingly. In short, because the management distrusted the employees and the employees in their turn also distrusted the management, the implementation of more self-organisation faltered.

In order to tackle this barrier and to create better preconditions for mutual trust and more self-organisation, a workshop was arranged in co-operation with the group leaders in the manufacturing department. The researchers created a protected space for discussion and participation which, after several confidential bilateral consultations (e.g. on phone) and an open discussion, was accepted by the employees as an opportunity to voice their interests under safe and supported conditions. The first thing systematically elaborated in this workshop were the ideas of "good work" on the part of the employees. The result was that the employees placed a very high emphasis upon properly working processes, avoidance or at least early detection of mistakes and errors, exchange of positive as well as negative feedback and due recognition of their work and performance. In short, they had a very high interest in successful work. This was coupled with a high acceptance of flexibility with respect to time as well as to work contents – in case the demands for flexibility are due to "real" requirements and their willingness is not, in their perspective, exploited or taken advantage of. Based upon these results, concrete suggestions for organisational change were devised. It was for the employees to decide which results should be presented by whom and in which way to the management. Some conflict matters were presented (argumentatively embedded and scientifically supported) by the researchers in the name of the employees.

This situation induced a decisive change on the part of the management, concerning their view upon the employees. Due to the authentic presentation of the employee motivation by the employees themselves and due to the common activity of further concrete elaboration of the employee suggestions, the managing director felt encouraged to promise a reorganisation according

to this mutual agreement before the meeting was over, and with an explicit confirmation of the date.

This was the foundation upon which first steps of reorganisations could be implemented in A inc., still within the duration of the project, measures that allowed the enterprise to display and communicate its trustworthiness to the employees. Not before the enterprise had proved to be trustworthy for the employees through concrete actions, were the employees capable of bearing the new risks that go along with trust-based work, more self-organisation and self-co-ordination.[4] That means, the fear and resistance on the part of the employees had been based upon concrete experience. They had to be taken seriously and addressed – and the best way to do this were participatory methods and concrete intervention processes.

7. Methodical implications for coping with complexity and uncertainty

Researching implicit phenomena that have been getting more and more characteristic for work reality during the last years requires qualitative methods, which was our assumption in the beginning of this article. Moreover, by combining qualitative research with participatory elements deepened insight is possible, both for researchers and "research objects." Researchers are enabled to directly participate in the process, beyond indirect access by qualitative methods like interviews and observations. The "research objects", who are no longer restricted to the state of research objects in participatory approaches, gain novel access to the issue that is researched and a better chance to address their interests. Rather than being limited to talk *about* the issue, e.g. situations of uncertainty and complexity in the daily routine of work and organisation, and whether trust is a solution for the problems going along with those situations, they can undertake monitored and accompanied steps to provide a solution. In this way, the research issue can be experienced

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4   Self-organisation goes along with typical risks as intensification of work, overstrain, lack of recognition, lack of formal support for "silent" and "invisible" performance, transfer of risks (like market volatility, problems with customers, illness of colleagues) and typical conflicts (like the conflict between quality and cost) to the individual employees (Böhle et al. 2014b).

by both researchers and "research objects." This is illustrated by our example (chapter 6): Instead of just talking about the distrust abundantly present in their work reality, the limitations engendered by it and the frustration going along with it, they could actually try out forms of mutual trust and experience the effects of it. Especially in situations and constellations that are characterised by uncertainty and complexity, this proceeding is instructive both for researchers and "research objects."

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