Trust and the City
Analyzing Trust from a Socio-Spatial Perspective

Ulrike Gerhard, Judith Keller, Cosima Werner

"That's where the trust issues come in, because if people say to someone in the Lower 9thWard [neighborhood in New Orleans affected by Hurricane Katrina]: Oh, don't worry, we'll replace your house somewhere else. There's no trust that that is gonna happen, right? No, there is no trust. Historically, no reason to trust."
MA Sheehan, Lower 9th Ward Homeownership Association, New Orleans 2018

Introduction

Transformations of (authority and) trust manifest themselves in space, especially in urban space. As the quote by homeownership association's representative Sheehan illustrates, flourishing urban development relies on trust. It is here, on the neighborhood level, where trust relations matter (e.g., for buying or building a home, for feeling at home in a neighborhood) or where the erosion of trust creates anger and fear (e.g., failing public housing policies, the destruction of homes to make room for new developments, the policing of public spaces). These daily urban encounters of residents, citizens, and other actors tell us about recent societal, economic, and political transformations affected by the shifting meanings of trust in US society. We therefore suggest exploring different urban dimensions of trust by developing trust as a socio-spatial concept. Furthermore, we argue that trust relations are essential to understand the recent evolutions and transformations of the city.

Urban Studies have emerged into a major discipline that analyses societal changes from a broad theoretical and empirical agenda. It has become a massive interdisciplinary endeavor to understand globalization, the transformation from an industrial to a post-industrial society, and the increasing capitalization of culture and society. Trust, however, has seldom been used as a conceptual lens to understand urban developments. Even more so, it has hardly ever become a methodological tool to analyze recent developments in the city. So, while we outline trust as a socio-spatial concept by applying two quintessential urban geographic rationales to trust —the relational and the mobile—in the first two sections of this essay, we then suggest that scholarship needs more empirical accounts of the struggles, practices, and representations of trust in US cities. Subsequently, we detail related themes that help to grasp empirically the urban dimension of trust. These themes—cities as imaginative spaces, cities as social spaces, the temporal dimension of urban development, and the meaning of home and housing as spatial fixations—do not constitute a comprehensive list of research areas, but they are drawn from different long-term research projects that seek to understand recent struggles and increasing inequalities within US cityscapes. We contend that these issues are among the most important challenges that cities have been facing over the last decades. We therefore suggest that trust can help to conceptualize these issues in a profound manner and, vice versa, that the urban geographic perspective helps to better conceptualize trust in US society.

Relationality and Mobility as Geographic Concepts to Understand Trust

Trust can never exist by itself (Luhmann 1989). It emerges through relations to other objects: to persons (relationships, friendships, communities, etc.), to contexts (time frame, political systems, nation states, etc.), and to places (homes, cities, etc.). Without trust (in any of its possible definitions, see Gerhard/Keller 2019), there would not be any relationship nor bonding, just as any clear delineation would be impossible. As much as trust is relational, there is no absolute meaning, understanding, or measurement of trust. "How much" trust exists in governments, for example, is difficult, if it is even possible to answer (see, for example, Hartmann 2020). Most often, this problem is circumvented by the use of terms such as decreasing trust, which is then categorized as distrust. Distrust, however, is not the opposite of trust, but its

"functional equivalent" that always comes along with it (Luhmann 1989). It is, in simple words, a prerequisite for developing trust relations.

To comprehend the complexity of trust as a relational entity, an understanding of the different concepts of space is helpful. Following Lefebvre's metatheory of three dialectically linked dimensions (also: moments or formants) of the production of space (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]), geographer David Harvey (1973; 2006) identifies a tripartite division in the nature of space. Besides a mere *absolute* space defined by boundaries or mathematic equations that exists independently of matter, he distinguishes between *relative* and *relational* spaces. *Relative* space is demarcated and explained by the relationship between objects and only exists because objects exist and relate to each other (Harvey 2006). This type of space, for example, emerges through flows of people, things, and capital. *Relational* space, in contrast, is contained in objects in the sense that "an object can be said to exist only insofar as it contains and represents within itself relationships to other objects" (Harvey 1973: 13). *Relational* space, in this sense, can be demarcated by immaterial human desires, linguistic attitudes, or political opinions. It emerges from interactions, processes, practices between different actors or objects which bear these relationships within them. Foucault argues in the same direction, but with his own distinct conceptual terminology, when he writes, "we do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another" (Foucault 1986: 23).

The definition of relational space helps to describe trust, namely the *understanding* of another person (or institution, or object) as being trustworthy, which is established due to their mutual (or even shared) relationship. Consequently, we argue that trust plays out in relational space: Its relationality constitutes a certain space as much as it is constituted by it. Urban theorist Edward Soja's critical contributions add another helpful term here: the concept of *Thirdspace* (Soja 1996). Following Lefebvre's ideas on the production of space, Soja argues that the real (*first space*) and the imagined (*second space*) cannot be separated any longer; they have become one, as in *third space*. The usefulness of these different concepts for discussing trust from an interdisciplinary perspective can be illustrated by looking at the treatment of charismatic trust in this volume. It contains a spatial sense of authority, meaning the orientation and setting of an object in a certain landscape that shapes values, norms, or a so-called "vertical resonance" (Rosa 2016, 457ff). The assumed

relationships between object and surrounding landscapes connect the actors and thus produce relational places which we need to analyze and understand.

Studying relationality, however, is quite a challenge. How can we analyze trust in specific spaces (e.g., neighborhoods, cities) if they only exist through their relations to others, as nodes within networks? The locality debate or the discourse of relationality vs. territoriality in the field of geography offers a starting point here. Massey (1991), for example, demands a "global sense of place" and suggests that specific places have to be analyzed as dynamic spaces that are embedded in a broader context of networks and flows. These spaces are constituted by their relations to other places or scales as much as they are unique places and can be studied as such. We therefore can use specific places as "exemplars" for the understanding of broader contexts and processes (Massey 1993). McCann and Ward (2010) further develop this dialectic relationship by emphasizing the simultaneous nature of relationality (the global) and territoriality (the local, the urban, etc.). They suggest the concepts of "mobile urbanism" or "mobile policies" that emerge from the dual existence of circulating knowledge and embedded policies (177ff.). In this sense, policies are shaped by fixity and flows at the same time; both of which need to be researched.

This is what the (new) mobilities paradigm, mainly developed by Cresswell (2006) and Sheller (2014), emphasizes poignantly and which becomes crucial also for the understanding of trust. Since trust changes over time and space, possesses different meanings in relational contexts, and develops from stage to stage, its manifestations are fluid and historical. The mobilities paradigm outlines that we not so much need to focus on specific places but rather on the landscapes, routes, lines, and spaces in between them. We can look at flows (e.g., residential movements, evictions) and developments (e.g., planning cultures, housing policies) and try to understand what they signify, how fast they develop, and what changes they cause (e.g., among residents, in the neighborhood, on the larger urban scale). This holds especially true in an interdisciplinary and temporal context, as stressed by Sheller and Cresswell.

There has been a rapid growth in attention to mobilities across the humanities and social sciences since the turn of the millennium. This perspective underlines how the experience of globalization is in myriad ways defined through ever-increasing mobility: ranging from the concrete transportation systems enabling the flows of people negotiating everyday urban and global mobilities to the movement of capital and socio-economic classes into urban habitats; from the manufactured goods and hazardous wastes carried

across logistics networks to the diffusion of urban governance policies, practices, and ideas; and from the dynamics of those migrating by choice to those fleeing (or being left behind) in the face of war, natural catastrophes, or conflicts. Far from simply being a "marker of an era" or a "neutral means to an end," mobilities are deeply meaningful and embodied, gendered and racialized, bound up in social, cultural, and political struggles from the local to the global (Culver 2016). Mobilities thus directly relate to trust relations in the city. It is here where social interaction coincides on a micro scale. Cities themselves are "theaters of social interaction" (Mumford 1937), in which conflicts as well as co-operation among various actors proceed. Trust then can be a mobile phenomenon that links the different groups, actors, entities, and places. It is fluid and changeable, but also offers stability, authority, and reliability.

We can therefore consider the erosion of trust or the emergence of distrust as a sign of mobility, or better: immobility. Cresswell (2012), in his second report on mobilities, presents "stuckness" (649) and fixity as important aspects of mobility. It can be man-made (e.g., racial profiling in cities) but also natural (e.g., volcano eruptions, hurricanes), causing human responses or policies that then stop mobility and cause stillness. Such frictions illustrate the severe vulnerability and injustice that is inherent in the global urban spaces we produce. They are thoroughly incorporated into our mobility practices. Evictions, for example, are such a form of mobility: They trigger an involuntary movement, ending the fixity of the place called home. Yet, as a consequence, families are stuck in spaces of homelessness; the loss of home fixes them in a space of social marginality. We are going to discuss evictions as one urban dimension of trust in more detail in the latter part of the paper. We first, however, turn to outline trust as a socio-spatial concept with the help of relationality and mobility in order to analyze and understand transformations of trust in the city.

Trust as a Socio-Spatial Concept

Trust, first of all, is always embedded in a specific, local context. Being aware of the simultaneity of relationality and territoriality, trust relations depend on involved actors, political contexts, historic conditions, as well as social and cultural environments. In cities, we find social ties between landlords and renters, between public housing agencies and public housing applicants, or between municipal governments and private investors (public private part-

nerships), all of which form a unique environment for trust relations to develop. The relational spaces between them change, also over time. This is to show that context and time frame matter and can never be generalized: public housing estates tell a different story about trust relations than do condo buildings or suburban homes. As one example in urban development, public housing projects were widely espoused as a cure for social ills during the 1950s and 1960s, before they quickly merged into symbols of squalor and neglect. But not in every city or neighborhood: While some lasted only a few decades, others provided homes for generations of mainly African American families. Thus, the very specific locality of these public housing estates has to be taken into account when analyzing what spaces of trust are produced here. Depending on the surroundings, trust developed in different forms or, quite the opposite, has been severely damaged.

This, secondly, leads to the conceptualization of trust as being a highly contingent, context-bound phenomenon, as described by the mobilities paradigm. Trust does not follow rules, it cannot be planned or predicted—although most rational choice theories aim to do just this. It manifests itself in relationships between human beings (ongoing dyads, groups, and collectives), but not of isolated individuals. Or—following the rationale of the mobilities paradigm—trust is the line that connects two entities. Trust therefore contains different emotional, behavioral, and collective components that need to be acknowledged. It represents a complex social reality (Lewis/Weigert 1985) that penetrates the whole institutional fabric of society and therefore needs to be analyzed with the use of a comprehensive, and, most importantly, an interdisciplinary approach.

Thirdly, trust is not an intrinsic resource or an act that is always conscious, but emerges as a habitualized practice in daily lives and experiences. Therefore, it is closely related to social practices. According to Hartmann (2011), trust can only manifest itself in practices, with the practices again evoking trust (or reliability). If residents, for example, are used to go to a convenience store in their neighborhood, despite how high the prices are or how dangerous the trip is, the store itself and its surroundings become a relational, social space that offers reliability, shelter, social contact or, in contrast, fear and loneliness (Werner 2017). It is through those everyday practices of visiting the store (or routines, rhythms, see Cresswell 2012) that the social reality and thus relational space is being produced.

Fourthly, trust is a term, a discourse, and a social practice under continuous change. Due to certain eruptions, residents alter their behavior or political

programs change (e.g., new public housing acts, the opening or closure of a store or restaurant in the neighborhood). People are then not eligible to live in certain buildings anymore, they do not receive food stamps any longer, or they are evicted from their homes. Consequently, trust relations have to be reconfigured as new people move in and out of the related space, changing the network of trust relations and thereby the urban fabric. This holds true also for planning laws and urban narratives (e.g., the ideal of a homeowning democracy; the demonization of certain streets or neighborhoods as being dangerous, derelict, or ghetto spaces) which depend on public discourses, media attention, and architectural vogues that shape urban place-making (Busse 2019). Cities also function as imaginative spaces that are represented by literary texts, poems, music, film, or street-art and gain a specific meaning that strongly depends on shifting relations of trust. So, it is not so much the physical, absolute space of buildings and streetscapes, but more specifically the relational space that is being produced through trust relations.

We finally argue that the eruptions, shifts, practices, and movements that constitute these relational spaces need to be investigated empirically. Only then can we understand the role trust plays in urban development. Trust as a socio-spatial concept frames our empirical investigations by looking at different urban dimensions of trust. In doing so, another trust-related concept will come to light: authority. It helps to institutionalize trust relations. For example, housing agencies serve as an authority implementing urban development. Authority therefore also helps to understand implicit power relations between different agents on the urban scale.

The Urban Dimension of Trust

The urban context is the sphere where trust relations epitomize in space. While cities are specific, absolute spaces defined by boundaries and physical buildings, they are also relative and relational, hence an adequate arena for studying social transformations of trust. They are expressions of modern society that is increasingly described as urban society. So, it is in this context in which trust relations function like the gearwheels or lubricating oil of societal relations. Since we understand Urban Studies as an interdisciplinary endeavor, we not only study the temporal development of cities, but also how cities function as social spaces, arenas for political fights, and as the material which sparks our imagination. By analyzing these different urban arenas, we

show that urban space is permeated by trust relations. We call this the urban dimension of trust. Without trust, the urban as a theater of interaction evaporates. Trust relations are not only formed between different urban actors (mostly dealt with in urban geography) but are also a vital component in the representation of cities as utopian, trustful social spaces in fiction, which will be depicted in the next chapter.

Cities as Imaginative Spaces: The Cultural Representations of Trust in the City

We all have them in our minds: the images of the grand metropolises of our times. There is the glamorous New York City with the promise of an anything-goes urban lifestyle; there is Paris where lovers walk along the Seine while in the background the Eiffel Tower is glistening in the night sky; there is the progressive spirit of Singapore where the global elites touch ground; or, there is the ever-welcoming Rio de Janeiro with the open arms of the Redeemer and the joy of Carnival. Cities have never been mere physical, absolute places made of bricks, cement, and tons of asphalt—they have always also been the places we imagined them to be. Images of cities travel across and around our globe in the form of books, movies, TV shows, and, most importantly these days, social media. Cities become cultural representations and aesthetic experiences for global audiences with no physical connection to them other than the book they are reading or the Instagram account they are following. These texts, scripts, and images produce a second layer to an already existing cityscape; a layer that is made out of the fictional material that feeds our imagination. The city is thus not only New York, but the glamorous Sex-and-the-City-universe and, at the same time, the place where Betty Smith's Francie is coming-of-age and James Baldwin's Sonny plays the most beautiful blues and someone wants to have Breakfast at Tiffany's. So, while cities still are specific places with a specific locality, they are also global icons relating places, people, and things to each other. In the Harveyan sense, cities are truly *relational spaces* in that they can be understood only in their relations to other places and, vice versa, are constituted by those relations (Harvey 1973). This relational character is reflected in the images and texts, which, in some way or another, are all representations of the city. The city as a *third space* is not merely a mute backdrop to our imaginaries; it is simultaneously constituting of and constituted by them. Thus, as trust relations are strongly reflected in cityscapes, they are taken up and interlaced into cultural artefacts of all kinds. Fictional texts, for

example, are one source of this cultural representation of trust as they reflect in what ways changing notions of trust have shaped urban society over the centuries.

American cities, both as specific localities and global icons, play a key role in popular culture, reflecting on trust as a "formant" of urban space. Cities have become cultural authorities, providing in many cases a continuity and stability which seems to have been lost in so many other aspects of US-American society. For decades, therefore, works of fiction reflected trust in the progressive American city and its promise of endless opportunities. One might think of Fitzgerald's classic *The Great Gatsby* or Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* who captured like few others the spirit of the "Roaring Twenties" and its trust in constant progress. "*I like the way the City makes people think they can do what they want and get away with it*," says Viole(n)t in Toni Morrison's novel *Jazz* (1992: 8) when describing how she fell in love with New York after coming North during the Great Migration. There are millions of stories of those who left their homes in the countryside behind, trusting in an image they had of a city that would provide them with a better future (often only to find that a city is not a place where one should trust easily). On the flip side, the city has always been portrayed as a dreary and dangerous place, where, in a sphere of distrust and anonymity, each individual fights for her own survival. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is roaming the streets of New York all by himself, remaining unnamed and invisible to the world, while hard-boiled detectives in novels by Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, or James Ellroy fight off gangsters and femme fatales, never trusting anyone but themselves. Here the theme of the city as an "anonymous jungle" and the general attitude of mistrust have shaped an entire genre (Most 2006; Schmid 1995).

Yet, as cities change, so does the material that tries to capture their unique spirit and characteristics, as well as notions of trust and distrust on the urban scale. The concept of mobilities might be helpful here to understand those transformations. The positivity and excitement about change ("growth is gospel in America," Muller 2012: 303), which seemed to be omnipresent in the early 20th century, is long gone. The promise of endless liberties, riches, and opportunities has been replaced by a more sober picture: skyrocketing rents, evictions, homelessness, a fragile infrastructure, and a skyline which stands more than anything for an unpopular finance service sector. People have grown distrustful of cities as mere "growth machines" (Wilson 2018), embodied by big investors moving into their cities, powerful real estate businesses, creative city agendas, as well as municipal and national governments

who fail to find effective ways of creating a more egalitarian and inclusive city. Nowadays, we find works of fiction, such as Nathan McCall's novel *Them*, discussing gentrification and displacement in such ways that they could be interpreted as a root of distrust into urban development. Other novels address the 2008 financial crash and the subsequent American housing crisis, the tough reality in public housing projects, or the bankruptcy of cities such as Detroit. In her graphic novel *Creation*, Sylvia Nickerson takes a tour through a Rust Belt city which is simultaneously in decline and being upgraded by bohemians who find the shabby-chic inspirational. While her main protagonist, an artist, is endlessly searching for an affordable place to stay, two worlds collide: the young artist is confronted with the proximity of homelessness and severe poverty to her own life overshadowing her upward mobility. The dark images reflect those contradictions and an atmosphere of distrust so typical of the Noir genre. Similarly, natural and human catastrophes are treated as events which end mobility and cause stuckness in (and of) cities. For example, since 2005, Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath have been the subject of many works of fiction and non-fiction (e.g., Dave Eggers: *Zeitoun*; Tom Piazza: *Why New Orleans Matters* or *City of Refuge*) as well as documentaries and TV shows (e.g., Spike Lee: *When the Levees Broke*; David Simon und Eric Overmyer: *Tremé*). They all have one motif in common: as the city drowned, so did people's trust in their government and a post-racial America.

Here a new image of the city is constituted: one which tries to incorporate the harsh realities of American urban society into the fabric of our real-and-imagined cityscapes. It is thus necessary to analyze those texts and images to find what they tell us about trust and distrust in American urban society, and how those notions have shifted over the years. While in geography we believe that it is crucial to do in-depth studies of places—observing and interviewing people as well as participating in everyday city life—we support the idea that this can go hand in hand with an analysis of the cultural representation of those places in literature, film, music, and the visual art.

Cities as Social Spaces:
Daily Urban Practices on the Neighborhood Level

The field of Urban Studies researches social spaces and neighborhoods, but the corresponding theories barely analyze trust explicitly. However, it is only with a clear analytic focus on trust relationships that certain innovative

research projects can be undertaken—for example, in C. Werner's ongoing project on convenience stores in impoverished neighborhoods in the cities of Chicago and Detroit. While the analysis of texts and images allows a broad perspective on American cityscapes, this ethnographic project focuses on the microscale of the neighborhood. The ethnographic methods help to explain the social significance of these small-scale food stores in marginalized urban quarters, opening up new meanings of trust. These dynamics need to be emphasized more strongly in the constitution of social space. In the foreground are the everyday constitutions of the customers in relation to their life-worlds. To depict trust in practices not only highlights shifts of practice but also the hidden multidimensionality of trust. Therefore, trust can be conceptualized with the help of a praxeological approach (Hartmann 2011).

Trust determines the sphere of agency (*Handlungsspielraum*) in which people can move because they are trusted. The boundaries of this sphere become tacit knowledge but also emerge as rules and laws (Schatzki 2002). Boundaries convey unspoken expectations on the part of the person who has determined the sphere of agency: A person anticipates the trusted person to move within the given framework. If these limits are crossed, this usually harms trust and promotes the development of distrust. Let us illustrate this with an example from a Chicago store.

A regular customer tries to secure an income with occasional activities through the sale of stolen goods, used clothing, and single cigarettes. She finds her clients in the street, near the store. Sometimes she goes to the store to talk to friends or to warm up until she is asked to leave. On her last visit, she complains that she is starving. The employee is on the phone ordering some food for himself from the nearby eatery. Out of an empathetic gesture, he orders an additional dish for her—his treat. Just as he has placed the order, he catches her stealing some pastries from the store. Accompanied by loud words of disappointment, she is expelled and banned from the store forever. The employee immediately cancels her order.

The example illustrates that rules and laws define the sphere of agency, such as theft, as a punishable offense. It also demonstrates that a general understanding guided the employee's action: that if you are caring and generous to someone, the person will not turn against you. He did not expect that the customer would steal from him in the same moment he is taking care of her. She crossed a legal boundary, but more so, she triggered emotions of disappointment. Her crossing these boundaries was not only punished by banishing her from the store, but by distrusting her from then onwards. She is no

longer trustworthy. She risked being caught and has thus not only lost the trust that was placed in her, but has also forfeited the convenience store as a relational space for social (and economic) interaction.

Another example illustrated by an interview quote from a female resident shows the extent to which trust can affect individual mobility practices within the neighborhood. The interview has been conducted in the social space surrounding the store and reveals the following situation:

> [My son] didn't really have no fear [as a child]. But now, you kinna gotta little fear because of the violence that's going on. You know, and they don't care. It could be seven in the morning; it will be two in the evening, three in the evening. You know, when my son was probably in 2nd grade, you could let them walk to the school and back home. Versus now, we don't trust things like it used to be during that time. [...] So it's been a figure from 20 something years up until ... You just can't hide. You got to go out here and circulate, you know 'cause you gotta go to work, you gotta go pay bills, you gotta go to the grocery store. So you just try to be careful and act like as I say: Keep God on your side. An accident will cover you in blood out here". (female resident, Chicago 2017)

Goffman (1963) uses the term "unfocused interaction" (97), alluding to the fact that, while the public interactions between strangers take place in physically close space, they keep their social distance through "polite estrangement" (Giddens 1991: 81). One acknowledges strangers, maybe with a brief greeting, a nod, or a smile, but rarely anything beyond that. This practice allows people to assess situations in public spaces and behave accordingly. As a rule, people can trust that others will act according to this restraint. We experience it in everyday life: we have to screen situations for familiar patterns to decide whether to trust strangers. However, the female Chicago resident reveals that the conditions she used to be familiar with no longer apply. Continuous and even arbitrary violence shook her general appreciation of the neighborhood and her openness to judge everyday situations. The underlying assumption in the selected statement would be that children "normally" go to school alone because they need to have no fears in their neighborhood. Nobody would want to do them any harm as even strangers are entrusted with this shared set of believes. Some residents, however, such as those involved in gangs, break the norm of "polite estrangement" by using violence. In the full-length interview, she reports that the violence she has been exposed to in her lifeworld has changed the way she moves around. She is now afraid of passing through

the neighborhood for her daily errands. If she had the choice, she would stay at home. This situation stresses the mobile and relational character of trust. Trust relations in the neighborhood change due to the practices of its residents, while the atmosphere of distrust changes the mobility practices of the residents. This female resident doubts that political agendas and police actions can cope with the high level of violence in the neighborhood; only faith in higher authorities (in this case, God) seems to offer some respite.

Both examples show that the sphere of agency is both opened and limited by trust. The formulation of trust can be seen in the practices of "entrusting" (Baier 1986: 236). People trust each other not to endanger the well-being of others and not to abuse loyalty; and they expect the corresponding behavior. Also, trust must be bound to a subject who assesses whether the person is trustworthy or the situation familiar. The focus on trust and practices therefore identifies new dynamics and interactions in the study of social spaces and facilitates an understanding of why practices are carried out in a specific way.

The Temporality of Urban Development and Planning

Over the past decade, trust has gained attention as a decisive factor in urban planning (Mössner 2010; Lobeck/Wiegandt 2019). While trust is seldom analyzed conceptually, it is acknowledged as a necessary ingredient for the urban network to function, e.g. in neighborhood planning, urban mobility politics, or participatory planning processes. We argue, however, that trust should not only be a catchword on developers' agendas but has to be theoretically grounded and that its workings have to be analyzed in actual planning processes (Gerhard/Keller 2019). Trust here works not so much on the interpersonal scale, as in the convenience store discussed above, but rather on the institutional scale: it is placed in city planning departments of municipal and national governments or in private developers and corporations, which fulfill a quasi-institutional role. Often this form of trust is said to be one characteristic of modern societies, which tends to embed trust in institutions (Luhmann 1989; Giddens 1991). Yet, the idea of trust in city planning is by no means only a modern phenomenon. Similarly to the city as an imaginative space, cities have always been spaces of utopia. Some well-known examples are hundreds, even thousands of years old: Aristotle discusses urban citizenship in his *Politics* while Augustine examines Christian values in city life in his *The City of God*. One of the most productive periods for urban utopias was the late 19th century when, due to industrialization and mass urbanization, the cities were

on the verge of collapse. Overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, air pollution, epidemics, and many other pressing issues needed to be addressed. Daniel Burnham proposed the *City Beautiful*, Benjamin Ward Richardson *Hygeia*, the city of health, and Ebenezer Howard the famous *Garden City*. They all believed that they could change the way people behaved and form better and healthier citizens merely through design (Hall 1988).

This top-down, bureaucratic understanding of planning did not change in the decades following the so-called Progressive Era. Planners such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier assumed an authority and arrogated a level of trust for themselves which seems almost disconcerting in our neo-liberal age. Having said this, we too have to question the trust we place in city planning agendas and wonder who is claiming authority here and how those actors legitimize the trust placed in them. Buzzwords such as "creative," "smart," "green," and "mixed-income" are thrown around like confetti, often presupposing an almost blind trust because, who would oppose a more sustainable and inclusive city (Swyngedouw 2007). This matter-of-fact attitude of city planners has come to its limits in recent decades. Too often those mega-projects seem to come at a price which fewer and fewer urban citizens are willing to pay: rising rents, displacements, traffic congestion, etc. Grass root activism therefore increasingly opposes large redevelopment projects, claiming the need of citizen involvement in urban planning policies (Jacobs 1961).

In Washington, D.C., for example, the public housing project Barry Farm is being torn down and redeveloped as a mix-income neighborhood. While the project could not be stopped, activists were able to demand a historic marker on the grounds of Barry Farm's extraordinary importance to the civil rights movement and black culture in the capital. In September of 2019, they organized a history walk through the, by then, half-way torn down project, telling the stories of civil rights leaders as well as ordinary individuals who have recently lost Barry Farm as their home; the event ending with a concert of Barry Farm's own go-go band (*see photo 1*). With their actions, the activists were able to postpone the further demolitions until a suitable solution was found. Another example is Amazon's search for the new site of their headquarters. That New Yorkers were able to reject such a huge corporation has gained worldwide media attention in 2019 (Kort/Postinett 2019; Goodman 2019). Even though Amazon promised to bring many jobs to the city while following an equitable development plan, people distrusted their intentions. It would have been likely that the jobs created would not have benefited those who need them so badly but rather the highly skilled professionals who move to the city

for the jobs, putting even more pressure on the housing market (Schröder 2018). These examples show that in order for people to trust in city planning they need to be given a chance to voice their opinions and participate in the planning process. If people feel like decisions are being made for them and that those decisions are not for their own good, a wave of distrust is set off which can cause entire projects to fall. Yet, institutional trust should also not be understood as a one-way street. Trust as a relational entity has to work reciprocally. While citizens trust in municipal governments and city planners to work out highly complex plans and to come to wise decisions, those representatives should return the trust placed in them by respecting the needs expressed by the communities.

Photo 1: #DontEraseBarryFarm—That is the message of Barry Farm's own Go-Go-Band (The Junk Yard Band) playing after the History Walk on Sep 7, 2019

(Photography: Judith Keller 2019)

As a consequence of this, we should perhaps seriously rethink the relationship of trust and city planning. Maybe it is not enough to only focus on the trust relations of planning institutions and residents. Rather, trust should

be understood as an entity which is present from the very beginning and not merely a goal to work towards. The city itself should be understood as a space in which trust is constantly working between people and institutions. It is a relational phenomenon that cannot be understood in isolation, but only in light of those interactions and their spatial dimension. Again Lefebvre (1991 [1974])'s trichotomy of *The Production of Space* helps to understand that trust is perceived, conceived, and *lived* in space. As Hollis (2013) points out, trust in the city becomes a functional entity if we plan spaces which "allow us to be ourselves" and "behave and interact in trusting ways" (192). The work of Klinenberg (2018) supports this point. He analyzes the positive impact of social infrastructure—spaces of social interaction—in times of crisis and finds that people in neighborhoods with libraries, playgrounds, neighborhood parks, etc. fare better because they have built up a network of trust relations; in other words, the necessary social capital to survive. Trust then is not only the necessary ingredient for urban planning to work smoothly, but for the city to become a lived space and a home.

Fixity and the Fight for Urban Space: Home and Housing as Spaces of Trust

In the opening quote, MA Sheehan talks about the absence of trust in New Orleans's Lower 9th Ward. Literally cut off from the rest of the city by a canal, the neighborhood has always been disadvantaged and passed over. Little has been invested in its infrastructure, retail, and public transport accessibility. Tragically, this also left the Lower 9th Ward most vulnerable when Hurricane Katrina made landfall in August of 2005. The neighborhood's proximity to the canal was fatal. When its levees broke, the suddenness of the breach swept away entire houses and trees, burying the Lower 9th Ward under ten feet of water. People had to camp on their roofs with no help in sight—they were stuck for days. Yet, while Katrina prominently showed how a highly mobile urban society can instantly collapse into stillness, the residents of the Lower 9th Ward were not only physically stuck in place, but had been stuck economically, socially, and politically long before Katrina hit.

The Lower 9th Ward is exemplary for African American neighborhoods and other communities of color all over the United States. Almost all of them have a long history of discrimination, segregation, and displacement. Institutionalized racism in the form of Red Lining, the denial of federal housing loans, school segregation, defunding of supermarkets and retail, police surveillance

and brutality, etc. has kept an entire social group in a state of perpetuate marginality. Many people are both figuratively and literally stuck in place, as stressed by the new mobilities paradigm. In many cases, those neighborhoods are very isolated, having little relations to the rest of the city as canals, rivers, or highways separate them. If public transport is available, it is often heavily underfunded and thus scarce and unreliable. Yet, the stuckness refers not only to the actual mobility practices within the city, but also to the limited housing options. Even if families are working towards moving to other parts of the city, they often experience discrimination on the housing market. Many landlords do not house people of color in the first place or check their criminal histories and credit scores which then disqualifies them. The severe poverty and the lack of any economic potential in those neighborhoods excludes many people from the for-profit housing market. They depend on public housing or landlords which are willing to take their Section 8 housing vouchers.[1] Yet, many African Americans not only have trouble finding housing, but have experienced displacement and eviction for decades. African American communities are depicted as blight or slums in order to justify their removal (Wacquant 2008). They have to make room for highways, high risers, or, these days, mixed-income developments. Then, people are displaced, resulting in a constant form of forced mobility as they are being moved from one disposable place to the next (Desmond 2012). The African American urban experience has thus been one which led many people to distrust those institutions which are supposed to secure an inclusive urban society. They have been failed so many times that there is "historically, no reason to trust," to put it in MA Sheehan's words. While the situation in New Orleans might be especially grave due to the most recent history of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, it still reflects the general distrust towards institutions by a substantial part of American urban society.

It has already been mentioned that many people in those neighborhoods depend on public housing. The trust relationship between the state as a provider of housing and public housing residents is a very special one. The state here assumes the responsibility to provide its most vulnerable citizens with decent housing. The first generation of public housing was initiated by government funds during the New Deal Era with the National Housing Act of 1934 and the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937 (Gottesdiener 2013). Those

---

1   Refers to the Section 8 of the Housing Act of 1937. It establishes that the state pays rental assistance to private landlords in order to support low-income families.
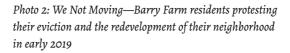
pieces of legislation helped many poor, working-class families who had been passed over by the for-profit housing market. The aforementioned Barry Farm in Washington, D.C.'s Southeast quadrant was built back then and was thus one of the oldest public housing projects in the United States. In the beginning, Barry Farm and similar projects—not yet high risers that turned into vertical ghettos, but neat row houses with a lot of green space—were seen as a success. Yet, starting with the Nixon presidency, funds for public housing were constantly cut and, at the same time, many white Americans left the cities, subsidized by the loans they were offered for a suburban home. What happened next is a well-known story: many projects collapsed under the weight of gang wars, drugs, violence, and other social issues, iconically captured by the pictures of the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe (Bristol 1991). Barry Farm has a similar story. Since the project was built in the 1930s, it has been lacking many amenities, and so, in the 1960s, civil rights activists fought for it to be remodeled (Schoenfeld 2019). From then onwards, Barry Farm received no further investments. Later, when the decision was made to tear down the project, its signs of serious neglect where held against its residents and thus their removal framed as the only logical consequence.

However, in contrast to public opinion and stereotypes, public housing, including Barry Farm, was and still is a necessity, and sometimes a success. Many people do not only find a home here but also a community which supports them. There are many urban residents who need public housing because they cannot afford rent from their (minimum) wage or because they are physically or mentally impaired and cannot work. Public housing is their safety-net, and yet, they witness how it is underfunded, torn down, and replaced by mixed-income developments. The trust they placed in their government is broken as they find themselves stigmatized, discriminated against, and moved around cities like a disposable entity, instead of being helped when in desperate need of a place to call home. In 2018 and 2019, this was also the fate of the Barry Farm residents. Many tried to resist the redevelopment of their community, but in the end, they were evicted, and their community torn apart (*see photo 2*). Those who were lucky and found a new home in one of the District of Columbia's other projects have learned that they should not think of themselves as out of harm's way. As one of the residents told us in an interview, she is afraid that her new home, the Kelly Miller-LeDroit Apartments, are next on the Housing Authority's list:

You think, you would consider it home but the whole time they [DC Housing Authority] don't (…). All of a sudden, they tell you: well, this was supposed to be temporary; or this is, you know, not fit for you to live. So, now we have to tear it down and do it all over again. And then they send you some place that might be worse or that they gonna come for shortly down the line, and you'd be doing it all over again." (former resident of Barry Farm, Washington, D.C. 2019)

And it is millions of Americans who feel this way: the uncertainty on the housing market and the few prospects for government aid leave many fearing that they are next to be swallowed by the massive wave of displacements, evictions, and foreclosures that rolls over the United States (Desmond 2016). There is no trust that the housing market or their government is going to show any mercy.

This very tense situation on the housing market is a root cause of poverty. Access to decent housing is in most cases the first step out of these deprived conditions towards self-sufficiency and participation in public life. If people are stuck in a perpetuate state of marginality, they cannot fight for what is naturally theirs: a "Right to the City." In the Lefebvrian sense, this entails more than merely housing; it is the right to partake in city life and to create and form the city as one desires (Lefebvre 2016 [1968]). As Munoz (2018) stresses, the Right to the City cannot be claimed if home and housing do not provide a safe sphere. People need the security of home in order to experience a form of empowerment that enables them to become activists and to fight for a more egalitarian urban society. As participatory observations of the activists fighting for urban space in New Orleans's Lower 9th Ward and Washington, D.C.'s Barry Farm have shown, it is the experience of home and the attachment to place which gives the activists not only strength but also a purpose.

Photo 2: We Not Moving—Barry Farm residents protesting their eviction and the redevelopment of their neighborhood in early 2019

(Photography: Judith Keller/Ulrike Gerhard 2019)

Conclusion

These examples from a range of US American cities document how trust as a socio-spatial concept works on all scales of urban space. It could be on the micro scale of the neighborhood between residents, but also on larger scales between investors and buyers or between citizens and municipal governments. As long as trustful relationships are maintained, cities function as social spaces. This paper argues that these trust relations are best described in terms of relationality and mobility, two concepts coming mostly from ge-

ography: If mobility and relationality are interrupted or suspended, be it by a natural disaster, an investment-friendly landlord, or a hungry shoplifter, trust ends. This affects general trust in urban space as well: The city no longer represents a safe space and a home (as often portrayed, for example, in fiction). This can be best observed when we look at the formation of urban space. If we detail cities not merely as absolute spaces, but as relative and relational entities, then we can understand the emotional, social, and economic meanings of trust relations in cities.

Trust as a socio-spatial concept sheds light on urban spaces that emerge through the stories told, the social ties developed, or the trauma experienced collectively. As shown by the different case studies, trust relations become prevalent not only in the planning and building of physical urban space, but also shape the daily practices of people living within them and the images which influence their behavior and attitude towards urban space. By looking at these case studies we learned that visions as much as realities of cities change over time and are sometimes expressed by new political agendas, or by changing tastes or socio-economic conditions. Trust relations, therefore, are never stable or consistent, but changeable und fluid. They develop around conflicts and crises, as much as they (try to) provide stability and the feeling of security.

While the empirical details touched upon in this paper are important, this article is only the beginning of a larger research endeavor on the shifting meaning of authority and trust in US American urban society. As a result, we suggest extended research on different cities to gain further insights into the specific relationality and mobility of trust. We portrayed four relevant urban dimensions of trust in this paper. This list, however, can easily be extended by further themes or topoi. Questions of surveillance and policing, for example, are highly relevant not only in US American cities—often sparked there by racial profiling and other discriminatory practices—but confront urban society in many parts of the world. This directly relates to different forms of trust relations: from the interpersonal (between residents) over the institutional (police presence), to the loss of trust in the state as a trustworthy authority. Also, mass media have a strong influence on trust relations in cities as they shape public discourses and thereby impact perceptions of urban space. And, finally, having suggested mobilities as a helpful paradigm for understanding trust in cities, we see mobility itself telling us a lot about trust: investments into driverless cars, for example, will only be successful if people trust the new technology. Trust and technology in cities, therefore, is a topic worthy of in-

depth research. With these (and other) examples in mind, our way forward is to argue for a framework that uses trust as a socio-spatial concept to analyze urban space. This space, being absolute, relative, and relational, is formed through social relations as much as it influences it. If we understand those urban processes, we can come to a new understanding of trust. Relationality and mobility help to conceptualize trust as a socio-spatial entity, yet they also reflect back on the concept of trust itself.

Works Cited

Baier, Andrea (1986): "Trust and Antitrust," in: *Ethics* 96(2), 231–260.

Bristol, Katherine G. (1991): "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth," in: *Journal of Architectural Education* 44(3), 163–171.

Busse, Beatrix (2019): "Patterns of Discursive Urban Place-Making in Brooklyn, New York," in: Viola Wiegand/Michaela Mahlberg (eds.), *Corpus Linguistics, Context and Culture*, Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton, 13–42.

Culver, Gregg (2016): "Moving forward or taking a stand?: Discourses surrounding the politics of Wisconsin High-Speed Rail," in: *Mobilities*, 11(5), 703–722.

Cresswell, Tim (2006): *On the Move. Mobility in the Western World*, New York & London: Routledge.

 (2012): "Mobilities II: Still," in: *Progress in Human Geography* 36(5), 645–653.

Desmond, Matthew (2016): *Evicted. Poverty and Profit in the American City*, London: Penguin.

 (2012): "Disposable Ties and the Urban Poor," in: *American Journal of Sociology* 117(5), 1295–1335.

Foucault, Michel (1986): "Of Other Spaces," in: *Diacritics* 16, 22–27.

Gerhard, Ulrike/Keller, Judith (2019): "'My home is my castle'—über die Rolle von Vertrauen im Wohnungsbau. Ein Blick auf US-amerikanische Städte," in: *Forum Wohnen und Stadtentwicklung* 6, 300–304.

Giddens, Anthony (1991): *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Goffman, Erving (1982): *Interaction Ritual—Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*, New York: Pantheon Books.

Goodman, J. David (2019): "Amazon Pulls Out of Planned New York City Headquarters," *The New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/nyregion/amazon-hq2-queens.html (accessed March 16, 2020).

Gottesdiener, Laura (2013): *A Dream Foreclosed. Black America and the Fight for a Place to Call Home*, Westfield, NJ: Zuccotti Park Press.

Hall, Peter (1988): *Cities of Tomorrow*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Hartmann, Martin (2011): *Die Praxis des Vertrauens*, Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Hartmann, Martin (2020): *Vertrauen. Die Unsichtbare Macht*, Frankfurt: S. Fischer.

Harvey, David (2006): "Space as a Keyword," in: Noel Castree/Derek Gregory (eds.), *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*. Malden, Oxford, & Carlton: Blackwell, 270–294.

 (1973): *Social Justice and the City*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Hollis, Leo (2013): *Cities Are Good for You. The Genius of the Metropolis*, London: Bloomsbury.

Jacobs, Jane (1961): *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Klinenberg, Eric (2018): *Palaces for the People. How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*, New York: Crown.

Kort, Katharina/Postinett, Axel (2019): "Amazon scheitert an New York," *Handelsblatt*, https://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/handel-konsumgueter/absage-des-milliardenprojekts-amazon-scheitert-an-ne-w-york/23989136.html (accessed March 16, 2020).

Lefebvre, Henri (1991 [1974]): *The Production of Space*, Oxford & Malden: Blackwell.

 (2016 [1968]): *Das Recht auf Stadt*, Hamburg: Edition Nautilius.

Lewis, J. David/Weigert, Andrew (1985): "Trust as a Social Reality," in: *Social Forces* 63(4), 967–985.

Lobeck, Michael/Wiegandt, Claus-Christian (2019): "'Can't buy me trust'—zur Rolle des Vertrauens in der Stadtentwicklung," in: *Forum Wohnen und Stadtentwicklung* 6, 289–294.

Luhmann, Niklas (1989): *Vertrauen: ein Mechanismus der Reduktion sozialer Komplexität*, Stuttgart: Enke.

Massey, Doreen B. (1993): "Questions of Locality," in: *Geography* 78(2), 142–149.

 (1991): "A global sense of place," in: *Marxism Today* (June), 24–29.

McCann, Eugene/Ward, Kevin (2010): "Relationality/Territoriality: Toward a Conceptualization of Cities in the World," in: *Geoforum* 41(2), 175–184.

Morrison, Toni (1992): *Jazz*, London: Chatto & Windus.

Mössner, Samuel (2010): *Integrierte Stadtentwicklungsprogramme—eine "Vertrauens-Konstellation"*: Beispiele aus Frankfurt a. M. und Mailand, Kiel: Selbstverl. des Geographischen Inst. der Univ. Kiel.

Most, Glenn W. (2006): "Urban Blues: Detective Fiction and the Metropolitan Sublime," in: *The Yale Review* 94, 56–72.

Muller, Edward K. (2012): "Building American Cityscapes," in: Michael P. Conzen (ed.), *The Making of the American Landscape*, New York and London: Routledge, 303–328

Mumford, Lewis ([1937] 1996): "What is a city?" in: Richard T. LeGates/Frederic Stout (eds.), *The City Reader*, London & New York: Taylor & Francis, 92–96.

Munoz, Solange (2017): "Urban Precarity and Home: There Is No 'Right to the City,'" in: *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 108(2), 370–379.

Rosa, Harmut (2016): *Resonanz: eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung*, Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Schatzki, Theodor (2002): *The Site of the Social—A philosophical account of the constitution of social life and change*, University Park, PA: Penn State Univ. Press.

Schmid, David (1995): "Imagining Safe Urban Space: The Contribution of Detective Fiction to Radical Geography," in: *Antipode* 27, 242–269.

Schoenfeld, Sarah (2019): "The History and Evolution of Anacostia's Barry Farm," *D.C. Policy Center*, https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/barry-farm-anacostia-history/ (accessed March 16, 2020).

Schröder, Thorsten (2018): "Queens kann einpacken," *Zeit Online*, https://www.zeit.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/2018-11/amazon-hauptsitz-new-york-queens-onlinehandel-protest (accessed March 16, 2020).

Sheller, Mimi (2014): "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," in: *Current Sociology Review*, 1–23.

Soja, Edward W. (1996): *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-And-Imagined Places*, Malden: Blackwell.

Swyngedouw, Erik (2007): "Impossible 'Sustainability' and the Postpolitical Condition," in: Rob Krueger/David Gibbs (eds.), *The Sustainable Development Paradox. Urban Political Economy in the United States and Europe*, New York and London: The Guilford Press, 13–40.

Wacquant, Loic (2008): *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*, Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press.

Werner, Cosima (2017): "Convenience Stores als Soziale Orte im US-amerikanischen Ghetto—Ein ethnographischer Feldbericht," in: Ulrike Gerhard et al. (Hg.): *Geographie der Extreme* HGG-Journal 31, 2016/2017. Heidelberg, 13–23.

Wilson, David (2018): *Chicago's Redevelopment Machine and Blues Clubs*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.