Inga
GAIŽAUSKAITĖ

ADVANCING TRUST RESEARCH: LINKING CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS, STANDARD MEASURES AND THE PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL ACTORS

Doctoral Dissertation
Social Sciences, Sociology (S 005)

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Scientific supervisor:

Chief researcher Dr. Diana Janušauskienė (Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Social Sciences, Sociology, S 005).

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANES   – American National Election Studies
AGSS   – Australian General Social Survey
AfB   – Afro Barometer
ArB   – Arab Barometer
AsB   – Asian Barometer
BHPS   – British Household Panel Survey
CB   – Caucasus Barometer
CGSS   – Canadian General Social Survey
EB   – Eurobarometer
ESS   – European Social Survey
EQLS   – European Quality of Life Survey
EU-SILC   – European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
EVS   – European Values Study
GGSS   – German General Social Survey
GSS   – General Social Survey (America)
ISSP   – International Social Survey Programme
LB   – Latino Barometer
NORC   – National Opinion Research Center
OPOR   – Office of Public Opinion Research
SGTQ   – Social generalised trust question (standard)
SHP   – Swiss Household Panel
USA   – United States of America
WVS   – World Values Survey

LIST OF SPECIAL MARKS

<…> Text omitted for readability or shortening (in the dissertation text or authentic quotations of empirical research participants)

[text] or [*text*] Text included by the author in the dissertation text as a remark or explanation

{text} Text included by the author into authentic quotations of empirical research participants to enhance readability and coherence

<text> Technical remarks or nonverbal information included by the author into authentic quotations of empirical research participants

[[text]] Anonymised segment of an authentic quotation of empirical research participants

INTRODUCTION

*"Trust brings good things, and thus we should care
about it. We should care even more because trust is
becoming scarcer, and so are some of the good things
it brings" (Uslaner, 2001, p. 581).*

The focal point of the thesis is *trust*. *Why trust?* Trust is *important*. A considerable number of social scientists have proved trust to be an essential social resource at any level of social interaction and organisation. It is claimed that trust empowers and extends boundaries for individual action in conditions of uncertainty, unpredictability or risk that are features of complex contemporary societies (Giddens, 1990, 1991; Luhmann, 1979). Trust has been defined as a core element of interpersonal social relationships (Rotter, 1971). Trust is a constitutive element of cooperation and exchange (Kohn, 2008; Nooteboom, 2002; Putnam, 1993, 2000; Tyler, 2001). Trust promotes sociability, social activity and tolerance (Misztal, 1996; Sztompka, 1999; Yamagishi, 2001). Thus, it is an integral component of notions of civic culture, social capital and social networking (Almond & Verba, 1989[1]; Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Putnam, 1993, 2000). It is included in the analyses of the development and efficiency of wider systems (political, economic) (Fukuyama, 1995; Levi & Stoker, 2000; Misztal, 1996; Sztompka, 1999). Trust is related to the stability and integrity of social order (Barber, 1983; Giddens, 1990; Luhmann, 1979; Misztal, 1996; Rotter, 1971; Sztompka, 1999). Therefore, "(t)he dynamics of trust and distrust are central to understanding modern society" (Marková & Gillespie, 2008, p. xvii).

However, trust is a resource that cannot be easily accumulated. It is much easier to destroy trust than to create or regain it as it is a fragile and elusive resource (Kramer & Cook, 2004). Moreover, trust is a self-enforcing resource: "trust tends to evoke trust, and distrust to evoke distrust. Also, as trust erodes, the things causing distrust might first be considered as accidental incidents, but after repeated evidence of intentionality distrust takes over" (Blomqvist, 1997, p. 272). The absence of trust, it has been recognised, impedes relations in social, economic or political interactions and thus may be harmful or detrimental (Ben-Ner & Halldorsson, n.d.).

In contemporary social science increased interest in trust has coincided with observation of the decline in trust in people and political institutions in many advanced Western democracies from around the 1960's (Almond & Verba, 1989; Dalton, 2004; Przeworski, 1993; Newton & Norris, 1999; Uslaner, 2001). Trust is a phenomenon bound to a context (Welter & Alex, 2012); it has a special value and

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[1]   First published in 1963.

relation to democracy. Not all political systems need trust or require trust or are developed in an atmosphere conducive to trust (e.g. totalitarian states). Democracy, on the contrary, is a system based on trust (Sztompka, 1997). Trust positively influences a variety of features of democratic society. Paradoxically, the waves of democratisation across the world have been followed by an observed demise or lack of trust, including in the democracies that emerged after the collapse of the communist regimes in the 1990's. Lithuania is one example of it, as the levels of trust have been moderate or low through the decades after the restoration of the state independence (Gaižauskaitė, 2019). Therefore, the combination of the high importance of trust and at the same time its fragility and demanding conditions of creation has placed trust at the centre of studies of contemporary societies, especially those focusing on declining trust levels in democratic societies. Along with outlining the meaning and social necessity of trust, scholars have simultaneously searched for the sources of the demise or lack of trust.

Though diverse research methods may be applied when analysing trust (e.g. experimental games), research that focuses on the condition of trust in democratic societies has largely relied on survey type measurement of trust. The aforementioned observation of the decline in trust in people and political institutions under democracy was in line with the development of national and international survey programmes that started around the 1950s, many of which continue to this day (e.g. *American National Election Survey* (ANES) or *World Values Survey* (WVS)). To date, numerous studies and articles rely on survey data to explore levels, causes or consequences of trust in contemporary democratic societies and their citizens.

Despite the conceptual complexity of trust (Blomqvist, 1997; Hosmer, 1995; McKnight & Chervany, 2001; Nooteboom, 2002), survey based measurement of trust at the empirical level in research linked to the context of democracy largely relies on a limited number of variables. They include two forms of trust: trust in (democratic, political) institutions (or *political trust*; *trust in government*; *trust/confidence in political institutions*), and social (generalised) trust (i.e. *trust in "other people" in general, more specifically, strangers*). Conceptually, authors connect social generalised trust and political trust with a variety of qualities of democracy and society. It is claimed that social generalised trust fosters interpersonal interaction and cooperation between citizens and is linked to the functioning of institutions and wider socio-political systems (Fukuyama, 1995; Meikle-Yaw, 2008; Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2002, and many others). Likewise, scientists discuss political trust as an important element of democratic political order and legitimacy (Almond & Verba, 1989; Easton, 1965, 1975; Schneider, 2017, and many others). To date, decades of data have been generated from the same survey measures, followed by a tremendous effort to understand,

explain and reverse the trend of declining trust, as indicated by the massive samples of data (Hardin, 2006; Levi & Stoker, 2000).

Research problem

These measures of social and political trust have been present in surveys since the 1950's in an almost identical form. Thus, their value lies in the fact that for many countries (as well as for cross country comparison) they enable us to follow trends across a long timeline. However, over the past two or so decades there have been attempts to question the soundness and validity of standard (or stagnant) survey measures of trust. Authors have provided critical remarks and analysed in detail different aspects of the validity and reliability of social generalised trust question (e.g. Delhey et al., 2011; Glaeser et al., 2000; Lundmark et al., 2016; Sturgis & Smith, 2010) and noticed as well the lack of attention to methodological issues relating to measures of political trust or searched for more valid and reliable measurement alternatives (Seyd, 2016). One of the most important critical observations was that we lack a more thorough understanding of how social actors perceive trust and, accordingly, how they interpret and answer standard survey questions on trust. In this regard, applying a qualitative research approach, which is still limited in trust research (Goodall, 2012; Norris et al., 2019), may be reasonable. It could potentially be beneficial both to find suggestions for improvement of the measurement of trust as well as for alternative (or complementing) ways to research trust in the context of democracy. This also sets the boundary to the thematic scope of the thesis: the focus will be limited on trust as linked to democracy and respective methodological questions.

The *relevance of the thesis research*, therefore, lies in the need to look more carefully behind survey measures of trust, contextualising research on trust in the reality of social actors. It is presumed that application of a qualitative approach will contribute to future research on trust by providing insights as to how current theoretical and empirical social and political trust frameworks could and/or should be revised in the light of social actors' perceptions. Application of qualitative research is *novel* in the field of research on trust and democracy. Therefore, the thesis will have methodological implications and thereby enhance current knowledge on trust, expanding on the confines presumed to be put in place by standard survey measures. Qualitative research will be used to provide an overarching picture of trust as fluctuating across varied types of social interactions and levels bound to nuances of real-life contexts that tend to be lost in quantitative data.

Research aim: to critically evaluate the validity of the concept of trust and existing measurement tools in the context of researched social reality.

Research tasks:
1) To deconstruct the conceptual framework of trust as outlined in the current scientific literature and research.
2) To depict the limitations of current research on trust forms theorised as conducive to societies under a democratic order.
3) To propose a reasoning for the application of a qualitative research approach in research on trust.
4) To identify perceptions, dimensions and preconditions of trust formation via the perspectives of social actors.
5) To provide methodological implications to facilitate further development of research on trust.

Defensive statements:
1) The importance of trust in contemporary societies and specifically for research on democracy requires that research methods correspond to the complexity and multidimensionality of the concept of trust. The dominant, long-standing standard quantitative measures of social generalised and political trust are not sufficient to capture the nuanced manifestations of trust in social reality and therefore both advancement of quantitative measures of trust and application of alternative research methods is required.
2) The link between conceptual and operational definitions of social generalised and political trust is not consistent thus undermining the validity of current standard quantitative measures of these forms of trust. The wording of standard measures creates a gap between intentions of researchers and interpretations of respondents what potentially leads towards biased interpretation of results collected with the help of standard measures of trust.
3) Qualitative research methods have been underused in research on trust and democracy whereas the application of qualitative research allows for a more precise and detailed understanding of social actor's interpretations of trust. To advance research on trust, qualitative data is needed to fill in the gap between conceptual and operational definitions of trust and interpretations of social actors (potential respondents).

The thesis comprises four parts based on selected analytical and empirical methods:

1) a review of the scientific literature on the concept of trust
   a. analysis of the concept of trust in the context of contemporary societies
   b. analysis of definitions of trust
2) a review of the scientific literature on the concept of trust in the context of democratic frameworks
3) a critical review of the current research on trust
   a. overview of the methods used to research trust
   b. analysis of standard measures of social generalised trust and political trust
   c. a methodological review of current application of qualitative research approach to research on trust
4) empirical research: qualitative research conducted in the case of Lithuania using the method of individual semi-structured interviews (N=28).

The expected outcomes of the thesis are: 1) to link the results of empirical research with current theoretical frameworks on social generalised and political trust; 2) to suggest methodological implications for improvement of the current standard measures of social generalised trust and political trust and application of qualitative methods to research (dis)trust formation in broader societal contexts. The thesis seeks to connect three levels of analysis of the phenomenon of trust: conceptualisation, operationalisation *and* researched social reality, the latter being the key contribution to the current research on trust.

1. THE CONCEPT OF TRUST IN SOCIAL SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

*"How could coordinated activity of any kind
be possible if people could not rely upon others'
undertakings?" (Shapin, 1994, p. 8).*

The social importance of trust is reflected in numerous scientific accounts and uses of the concept. Over decades since about the 1960s and in particular the 1990s, theory and research on trust has accelerated (Barbalet, 2019). Studies of trust have generated a separate field of interest in the discipline of sociology (Sztompka, 1999). Moreover, trust has developed as an interdisciplinary concept. The study of trust has expanded not only in sociology but also in the fields of economics, management, organisational studies, political science, psychology, medicine, education, computer science, etc. However, the growing interest in trust has not only proved the significance of this social resource but also revealed its conceptual complexity. Reading the literature on trust resembles putting together a puzzle – one has to get a handle on a variety of definitions, levels, types, and dimensions of trust, trying to put them together into a coherent picture. Therefore, the first chapter of the thesis outlines in short the development of trust theory, focusing on sociological accounts and reasoning about the importance of trust in contemporary societies, as well as setting the boundaries of a conceptual framework that will further guide the thesis research.

1.1. The role of trust in contemporary science and society

1.1.1. An overview of the development of the concept of trust in sociology and other scientific fields

Trust is a concept widely used in everyday life; in both public and political discourse as well as in a variety of scientific fields. In the realm of social science (including classic social thinkers, writers on ethics, philosophers, social and political theorist, e.g. E. Durkheim, G. Simmel) trust has always been considered as a constituent element of society and social order. "Social theorists from antiquity to the present, writing in the most abstract or the most practical idiom, have all recognized and approved the trust-dependency of social order" (Shapin, 1994, p. 9). It is not the aim of the thesis to reason the significance of trust as a constitutive property of a society. The thesis takes as a reference point the consensus among social scientists about the necessity of trust for construction of sociable reality (Luhmann, 1979; Lewis

& Weigert, 1985; Bok, 1978; Govier, 1997; Uslaner, 2001, and many others). However, consistency of analysis requires a short overview of the development of trust in the social sciences and its path to sociology. Shapin (1994) traces the uses of trust in search for prerequisites of social order back to Roman and Greek social thinkers (e.g. Cicero). Barbara Misztal (1996) comprehensively outlines that the dependence of social order on trust has been recognised by classic philosophers and social theorists: Thomas Hobbes, John Lock, Alexis de Tocqueville as well as, later, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Toennies and Max Weber. Also, the concept of trust appears in the theories of Talcott Parsons and Georg Simmel, as for example, in the prominent statement of Simmel (1950, p. 318): "Confidence, evidently, is one of the most important synthetic forces within society".

However, the systematic study of trust, theories of trust, as well as studies that focus exclusively on trust, have evolved relatively recently. In the late 1950s and 1960s, empirical studies on trust started emerging. Social psychologist Morton Deutsch, in his article "Trust and suspicion" (1958), summarised an attempt to investigate trust experimentally. In 1967, psychologist Julian B. Rotter presented his prominent article "A new scale for the measurement of interpersonal trust". Philosopher Annette Baier wrote on "Trust and Antitrust" in 1986 and Sissela Bok, in 1978, presented "Lying: moral choice in public and private life", which highlighted the consequences of lying for trust and, subsequently, institutional order. It is important to note that part of the later evolvement of sociological trust research stems from socio-psychological roots, in particular the adoption of a measurement of interpersonal trust.

In 1979, sociologist Niklas Luhmann presented his influential theory on trust in "Trust and Power" (1979) and stated that there is a "regrettably sparse literature which has trust as its main theme within sociology" (1979, p. 8). Another sociologist, Bernard Barber, in "Logic and Limits of Trust" (1983) acknowledged his own vague use of the concept of trust and pointed out the failures to define trust in a variety of works by other scholars. Building upon the statements of Luhmann, Barber (1983, p. 5) confirmed that "with the exception of Parsons, social scientists have neglected a systematic analysis of trust and distrust in social relationships". In 1985, Lewis and Weigert appreciated the prominence of the works of Luhmann and Barber for placing trust at the centre of the sociological analysis of contemporary society: "Although trust is an underdeveloped concept in sociology, promising theoretical formulations are available in the recent work of Luhmann and Barber" (Lewis & Weigert, 1985, p. 967). Hereinafter, a number of influential sociological and related analyses on trust evolved: the collection of articles edited by Diego Gambetta in 1988; the model of trust in rational choice theory by James Coleman in 1990; trust in conditions of modernity by Anthony Giddens (1990) and later by Adam Seligman

(1997); the well-known analysis on the role of trust in economic systems by Francis Fukuyama (1995); trust searching for the basis of social order by Barbara Misztal (1996); a comprehensive sociological theory of trust by Piotr Sztompka (1999) and numerous works by Russel Hardin (e.g. 2002), Eric M. Uslaner (e.g. 2002), Mark E. Warren (1999a), Keneth Newton (e.g. 2001), and many others.

Recognition of the importance of trust and the development of theory on trust has been herewith followed by observation of the simultaneously problematic existence of trust in democratic societies. As Baier (1986, p. 549) well remarked, "(m)ost of us notice a given form of trust most easily after its sudden demise or severe injury. We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted". These observations were due to the emergence of empirical studies on trust in the fields of sociology and political science. It is a must to mention public opinion polls (primarily in the United States of America (USA)) and international comparative surveys (e.g. WVS) displaying changing levels of trust in institutions and people in societies across the world since circa the 1950's. The abundant literature on trust has taken as its core the observation that trust has been dramatically declining in established democracies (Almond & Verba, 1989; Dogan, 1997; Newton & Norris, 1999; Przeworski, 1993; Uslaner, 2001). For example, Uslaner (2001, p. 581) observed that "(o)ver the past four decades the share of Americans who believe that 'most people can be trusted' has plummeted from 58 percent in 1960 to 36 percent" in 1998. Likewise, a constant drop in levels of trust in political institutions has been observed since about 1960 in the USA and West European democracies; for example, Newton and Norris (1999, p. 4) concluded that from the 1980's (WVS wave 1981-1984) to the 1990's (WVS wave 1990-1993), "all the public institutions [state related] examined suffered a significant (if varying) decline in confidence". Newton and Norris (1999) noted, however, that the lack of trust was not a general problem affecting all aspects of modern life, but it was primarily related to political and governmental dimensions.

Furthermore, deficiency of trust remained an issue after the adoption of democracy in many societies around the world, starting with Southern Europe (Portugal, Spain) in the 1970's. The third wave of democratisation generated the establishment of democratic systems and/or institutions in many countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America (Huntington, 1991), as well as subsequently in Eastern Europe and the counties of the former Soviet Union. However, the tendency of levels of trust, especially trust in democratic political institutions, did not seem to go upward in line with the spread of democracy. Catteberg and Moreno (2006, p. 31) summarised the tendency consistently: "Today, the number of societies ruled by a democratic government is larger than ever. Paradoxically, our results show that political trust, understood as citizens' confidence in political institutions, has

declined in the new democracies during the last two decades and does not seem to have increased in the established ones either". Therefore, despite some examples of democracies that pertain to be highly trusting societies, such as the case of so called "Nordic exceptionalism" where countries have continuous high levels of social and political trust (Delhey & Newton, 2005), the general tendency over decades has been a reduction or lack of trust in many democratic societies. The case country of the thesis is not an exception. People in Lithuania demonstrated trust in the wake of democratic transformation in the 1990s; they were mobilised to reject the old regime. However, in the reality that followed the transformation such levels of trust did not persist. By the end of the first decade of restored independence and democracy in Lithuania the decay of trust was observable: "We had trust when we sang our revolution; however, it is almost absent today"[2] (Šaulauskas, 1997, p. 22).

Trust has been and continues to be a deficient resource under democracy: "Citizens report that they have less trust in their representatives than ever before; they report that they are less likely to trust professionals; and they report declining trust in others" (Lenard, 2005, p. 371). Thus, observing trends in the second half of 20th century sociologists and political scientists have paid a lot of attention to analysing and explaining these changes. Currently, it is hardly possible to record the variety of empirical studies on trust and its measurement.

Moreover, trust has evolved as a concept that transcends the boundaries of the scientific interest of specific disciplines (Delhey, 2014). Analyses of trust (or analyses where trust is one of the focal concepts) have formed separate fields of interest not only in sociology, psychology, philosophy, and political science, but also in economics, management and organisation studies (e.g. Kramer & Cook, 2004; Nooteboom, 2002; Bachmann & Zaheer, 2006; Bachmann & Zaheer, 2013), educational research (e.g. Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), health science and nursing (e.g. Hupcey et al., 2001; Meyer & Ward, 2009), even computer science (e.g. Artz & Gil, 2007) or construction (e.g. Cerić, 2015) and variety of other disciplines or interdisciplinary fields.

Möllering (2006) further observed that the field of trust research developed as an interplay between theoretical frameworks and empirical applications. According to him, the exploratory empirical studies of the 1960s and 1970s highlighted a variety of conceptual problems with trust, while later conceptual works were particularly fruitful for over a decade. At the end of the 1990s, empirical studies of trust accelerated and numerous works relied on survey, experiment or qualitative data to juxtapose theoretical concepts.

This short overview of the development of trust theory and research in social science and beyond reveals that the phenomenon of trust holds an influential place

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[2]   Original quote is in Lithuanian language. Translation here provided by the author of the thesis.

in analyses of contemporary social reality. As Kouvo (2011, p. 29) summarises, "trust seems to be one of the most studied phenomena in the social sciences nowadays. A lot of empirical and theoretical work has been done during the past two decades". It is relevant to discuss further *why* trust has become focal for the analysis of social reality.

1.1.2. Features of contemporary societies and the necessity for trust

The centrality of trust is related to general insights about changing societies and the challenges that make trust so urgent. Marková et al. (2008, p. 3) reasonably noted that fashions in social science "reflect more general and more fundamental changes in society as well as in the sciences". Sociologists Luhmann (1979), Barber (1983), Giddens (1990), Misztal (1996), Seligman (1997), Sztopmka (1999), who laid the ground for the development of theory on trust, did so in relation to features of contemporary societies. There is a general disposition that a variety of changes that appear in the structure and order of contemporary societies has heightened the need for trust in these societies. The current flow of trust theories and research places the concept of trust within specific features of these societies.

One of the most challenging features (or *a set of features*) of contemporary societies is the overwhelming *complexity* of the social world. Luhmann (1979, p. 24) highlighted the problem of complexity in this way: "The world is being dissipated into an uncontrollable complexity". Complexity can be pictured as an umbrella that unfurls from different, though interrelated, sources, and which thus acquires a variety of forms and meanings. Trust can be seen as a social mechanism that "constitutes a more effective form of complexity reduction" (Luhmann, 1979, p. 8). It is possible to grasp complexity from at least three perspectives: complexity of social interactions; complexity of social systems; and informational complexity.

Growing complexity inevitably changes *frontiers of social actions and interactions*. Contemporary societies are composed of proactive, self-determined social actors (Giddens, 1990). They encounter an increasing variety of options and alternatives; moreover, an individual has to cope both with the alternative options before themselves as well as the unpredictable pool of possible decisions made by other social actors. Social actors no longer fall into the category of "familiar"; in the contemporary social world one has to deal with extended numbers of unknown, *anonymous* other social actors about whom one has limited information and limited control. In the modern world "(p)eople range further, in person or via electronic networks, and frequently have encounters with people they never meet again" (Kohn, 2008, p. 5-6). Mobility more than ever expands interactions with people from different cultures and creates the necessity to act in unknown settings. There is much

more necessity to interact with unfamiliar people or strangers, or even impersonal actors, thus knowledge-based trust in close and familiar social circles is replaced with the necessity to trust when the bases for trust are not so clear. In addition, social order based solely on firmly set traditions no longer exists, but does so under condition of market economy, government control, globalisation, and technological expanse. In many banal or crucial every day issues one has to deal with a variety of actors (individual, institutional, systemic, and global, etc.) far beyond any line of familiarity or possibility to monitor or control, and which are, at the same time, *crucial for one's own undertakings*. Thus, it is basically impossible to "not trust", and therefore trust becomes the main mechanism that enables social interactions within the wide, anonymous, unfamiliar social environment (Govier, 1997).

Complexity penetrates *social environment and systems.* Contemporary societies feature a variety of institutional structures that compose complex networks. Sztompka (1999, p. 13) pointed out that this creates *opaqueness* of social environment: "The complexity of institutions, organizations, and technological systems, and the increasingly global scope of their operations, make them impenetrable to ordinary people, but often also to the professional experts". Trust becomes a strategy to deal with the opaqueness of social environment (Ibid.). Moreover, *system trust* becomes critical. As Lewis & Weigert (1985) claimed, the demographically large and structurally complicated systems featuring in contemporary societies exist in line with widespread anonymity, and thus trust in the functioning bureaucratic sanctions and safeguards, such as the legal system, becomes critical. In *complex, anonymous, changing* societies social interactions "would be too risky, unpredictable, or downright impossible if they had to be based only on personal trust" (Lewis & Weigert, 1985, p. 973-974). According to Shapin (1994, p. 15), "(i)n the past, we made judgements of other people; now we are obliged to trust in impersonal systems, for the cost of doing otherwise is unbearable".

Information and communication technology development creates *informational complexity* in the form of unimaginable flows of information. The internet, and all the other information and communication innovations that have become an indispensable part of our social life, has not only expanded our access to knowledge but also created "openness to deceptive traps" (Valsiner, 2008, p. x). Valsiner (2008, p. ix) has well described the effect of information flows on the everyday lives of contemporary people:

> *Every morning as I wake up and open my e-mail box I get myriad messages*
> *from sources that claim to be the banks I am using – about the need to update*
> *my account information – and giving them my passwords. These are usually*
> *followed by e-mails from the actual banks stating emphatically that they would*

never ask for sensitive information over e-mail. In the background of such "booming and buzzing" confusion are the many stories about "identity theft" that circulate around me. As a result, I trust none of them, and do not act.

Growing complexity is followed by the increasing *interdependence* of the social world at every level: between individuals, within a society and between societies, as well as in the global condition. Complexity places new pressures and demands for cooperation on any actor, set of actors or society, which is increasingly *dependent* on the cooperation of others; others who, as mentioned, are not familiar and specific but often undefined and opaque (Rotter, 1971). This again indicates outright the necessity for trust: "As our dependence on the cooperation of others grows, so does the importance of trust in their reliability" (Sztompka, 1999, p. 12). According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), interdependence in various areas of life makes trust functionally necessary in complex contemporary societies: "In short, in every facet of our lives, we are dependent on other people to behave in accordance with our expectations. It is imperative that we have confidence that our expectations of other people will be met" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2000, p. 549).

Furthermore, complexity associates with *uncertainty and unpredictability of the future* (Sztompka, 1999) as well as *risk* (Beck et al., 1994; Luhmann, 1979): in the face of numerous alternatives created by other social actors, systems and processes, none of the outcomes can be known for sure. Yet, again, trust is considered as a means "of enduring the complexity of the future" (Luhmann, 1979, p.16).

To sum up, theorists of trust highlight it as the fundamental strategy to deal with the complexity, ambiguity, and unpredictability of contemporary social reality. Trust lies at the basis of sociality. According to Warren (1999b, p. 2), "without trust the most basic activities of everyday life would become impossible". Contemporary societies are characterised by a variety of conditions that make trust highly important: complexity, unpredictability and uncontrollability of the future, as well as risk. Trust works as a strategy for reduction of the constraints placed on individual action by the above mentioned conditions. "Trust succeeds where rational prediction alone would fail, because to trust is to live *as if* certain rationally possible futures will not occur. Thus, trust reduces complexity far more quickly, economically, and thoroughly than does prediction" (Lewis & Weigert, 1985, p. 969). In this way, trust enables social actions and interactions that would not be possible in the face of the complexity of contingent futures. A trusting individual is not dependent on constant monitoring of the behaviour of others when engaging in a relationship where the possibility of vulnerability or risk subsists (Levi & Stoker, 2000). "More often than ever before we have to act in the dark" (Sztompka, 1999, p. 13) and "(t)rust becomes

an indispensable strategy to deal with the opaqueness of our social environment" (Ibid.).

However, it is not only the realisation that the features of contemporary societies make trust a necessity that made solving the puzzle of trust become focal in social and other sciences. Paradoxically, trust becomes more difficult to accumulate and maintain and thus the lack of trust is more noticeable. Trust is seen as a means to deal with complexity, but at the same time complexity and the related features of contemporary societies make development of trust relationships more difficult (Lenard, 2005). Thus solving the issues of trust (or more specifically – lack of trust) has become an inherent part of current studies on trust. The next section further depicts what benefits trust brings and, hence, why lack of trust is problematic in contemporary societies.

1.1.3. General benefits of trust in contemporary societies

Scholars have repeatedly and extensively discussed the benefits that trust creates in different realms of social reality. It is possible to outline the key arguments across different levels of social analysis.

Trust is beneficial for *individuals*. Trust allows an individual to *take an active stance* towards surrounding social reality and engage efficiently in a variety of social interactions. As Luhmann (1979, p. 4) puts it, "(t)trust <…> is a basic fact of social life" and without a modicum of trust an individual would not even be able getting up in the morning. Trusting individuals tend to engage into social interactions more readily, cooperate more actively and take risks, easier engaging into the creation of common good. Thus, they benefit more than by restraining from trust-enabled activities. As Govier (1998, p. 3) describes it, "if we distrust, we are not at ease. We are fearful and suspicious and feel a need to close off, try to protect ourselves, or control the relationship". Whatever the counterpart in trust relationships (another individual, institution or system), trust allows entering the relationship without the need to constantly monitor and worry about the other party's behaviour or intentions (despite the possibility of risk or vulnerability) (Levi & Stoker, 2000).

Yamagishi's (2001) research showed that those who are more trusting are, as a consequence, more socially intelligent in the conditions of risk than distrusters. He links *trust* and *social intelligence*, that is, the abilities and skills needed to efficiently engage into social interactions. Those with higher levels of trust are more sensitive to trust related information and thus are able to make better judgements about the trustworthiness of others (Yamagishi et al., 1999). Yamagishi (2001; Yamagishi et al., 1999) has argued that there is a way around the link between trusting/distrusting dispositions and an individual's ability to actively, and with benefits, engage into

social interactions, and vice versa the inability to become more socially intelligent and thus being stuck in a vicious circle of losing possible benefits (all of which happens in the conditions outlined above: risk, uncertainty, complexity). Yamagishi (2001) showed that:

1) Distrust prevents people from engaging in further (and especially risky but potentially fruitful) social interactions.

2) Unwillingness to engage in such social interactions does not allow distrusters to develop their social intelligence and also reinforces their distrustful stance, that is, prevents them from "correcting their depressed level of trust" (Yamagishi, 2001, p. 121).

3) In this way, they become even more vulnerable in such risky interactions. Thus, they become more gullible when they do engage in such interactions and, likewise, more evasive of such risky but potentially fruitful interactions.

Therefore, distrusters are limited by their distrust: "By engaging in such social interactions, they learn to distrust. By not engaging in such social interactions, they lose opportunities to learn social shrewdness and improve their social intelligence or their ability to understand their own and other people's internal states and to use that understanding in social relations" (Yamagishi 2001, p. 121–122).

Yamagishi (2001; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994; Yamagishi et al., 1999) further proposed an *emancipation* theory of trust and revealed the losses related to individuals' disposition of distrust:

> *Distrusters choose social isolation because they believe that "everyone is a thief". By doing so, they protect themselves from the risk of being victimised in social interactions. At the same time they pay opportunity cost. General trust supported by social intelligence, on the other hand, allows high trusters to seek opportunities outside the security of closed social relations and to save in opportunity costs (Yamagishi, 2001, p. 139-140).*

Apart (or beside) from empowering individuals, trust permits, strengthens, improves and makes more efficient *relationships* between people. Obviously, it is indispensable in the close interpersonal relationships of loving partners or parents and children (Giddens, 1990). However, it is also conducive to the relationships beyond immediate social ties. As Stroh (2007, p. 1) summarised, "(t)rust is the foundation of all successful human relationships. When trust is present, professional and personal relationships thrive. When trust is broken, relationships falter." Trust is involved in most simple and trivial everyday interactions. For example, when shopping one trusts a cashier to give back fair change and thus one does not have

to wait in line with anxiety and count the smallest coins immediately after receiving the change. Trust ensures the stability and smoothness of repeated interactions; for example, between two classmates, between a teacher and a student, a doctor and a atient, and so on.

Moreover, trust makes *cooperation* and exchange more feasible. Proposed by Putnam (1993, 2000), trust as a promoter of relations between people and groups in general is seen as a core component of social capital. Though social capital can be analysed and measured in a number of different manners, trust is always at the core of the concept. When trust is absent, people refrain from cooperation, they tend to focus more on their own interests and restrict the creation or maintenance of relations with other people. Kohn (2008, p. 38) highlighted that of course, "cooperation may be initiated and sustained without trust. But once trust becomes possible, it sustains interactions that would otherwise collapse, enhances the quality of cooperation, and threads the social fabric together". Numerous scientific works and studies link trust and cooperation at any level: either it concerns cooperation inside groups and organisations (as widely discussed by management and organisational studies, e.g. Kramer & Cook, 2004; Tyler & Kramer, 1996), cooperation between co-citizens under conditions of democracy (Putnam, 1993, 2000), or cooperation between individuals and the state in creating, for example, the possibility for an efficient welfare society (e.g. Bjørnskov & Svendsen, 2013; Misztal, 1996; Putnam, 1993; Sztompka, 1999).

Trust is also a means for lowering transaction costs in social, economic or political exchange relations (Fukuyama, 1995; Nooteboom, 2002; Tyler, 2001). When trust is lacking in an exchange relationship, people need to engage into actions that will protect them and prevent the consequences of the opportunistic behaviour of others (Limerick & Cunnington, 1993); whereas trust releases one from the necessity to monitor, control or even coerce the other party of an exchange, as well as the need for employment of costly mechanisms that would constrain and sanction the parties against perceived risk of deception, whatever the context and whatever the objects of exchange are (Ermisch et al., 2009). "Trust is important because it is a key antecedent of the willingness to cooperate voluntarily" (Tyler, 2001, p. 287).

This all leads to the benefits of trust for *society as a whole*. Trust, cooperation, and engagement in productive social exchange are linked with social, economic, political development. Why are some democracies more advanced than others? Why are some economies more efficient than others? Why are some regions better off than others? Why do some welfare states actually have "more welfare" than others? Numerous scholars have included trust as the key component in their explanation (e.g. Fukuyama, 1995; Hirsch, 1976; Putnam, 1993; Inglehart, 1999). At the societal level trust is seen as contributing to economic growth, efficiency and the stability of democratic government, social cohesion and integration, more equality and welfare

(Misztal, 1996; Sztompka, 1999). Trust facilitates social communication, achievement of public goods, and implementation of reforms (Sztompka, 1999).

Consequently, the all-encompassing benefits of trust once more highlight potential issues when trust is absent or lacking. According to Bok (1978, p. 26-27), when trust "is damaged the community as a whole suffers; and when it is destroyed, societies falter and collapse". It is, of course, possible for people to live and for institutions or systems to function when trust is scarce; however, scholars stress that the costs of such life are much higher and the quality of such life is much lower. Even though there might not be full agreement on how high the levels of such trust should be, it is commonly agreed that lack of trust *does* have a negative effect. As Lovell (2001, p. 30) puts it, "(n)o society can exist without some trust, but the lower its levels the more atomised, cynical and exploitative become the relations between its members". Erosion of trust in institutions or among people in everyday life signals unsteadiness of a social system and, consequently, a potential of a fundamental structural change (Lewis & Weigert, 1985).

1.1.4. Preconditions for trust

Having argued that trust is a necessary social resource in contemporary societies, it is further important to outline the social context preconditions requisite for trust. That is, in under what contexts and conditions we are talking about trust and not something else. For example, if we are fully in control of a situation, do we still refer to it as a situation of trust? Scholars point out that trust is relevant or that we talk about a situation of trust when certain preconditions are in place.

From a sociological perspective trust is *relational*. Psychological analyses consider trust to be a personality trait; however, sociology focuses on trust as an interpersonal phenomenon. That is, a phenomenon that is relevant in a context where interaction between two or more actors (objects) goes on (Blomqvist, 1997; Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Lewis and Weigert (1985) have argued that trust is a sociological concept because individuals would not need trust apart from in social relationships. Likewise, Blomqvist (1997, p. 272) has illustrated that: "the concept makes very little sense to a man on a desert island". Therefore, a sociological perspective on trust extends beyond trust as an individual, psychological trait. Only in social relationships with others does an individual need and enact trust. Trust cannot be reduced to an individual state; it is rather a property of collective social units such as a dyad, a group or a larger collective entity (Lewis & Weigert, 1985).

Therefore, trust is ongoing in interactions between two or more actors. One party is a trustor, and the other party is the trustee[3]. Generally, trust is defined as a certain expectation in the relationship between two parties; for example, trust "is usually based on an individual's expectations as to how another person will perform on some future occasion, as a function of the target person's current and previous claims" (Blomqvist, 1997, p. 283). From a sociological perspective, trust is perceived as being projected outside of the social actor, that is, into one's (re)action in relation to freedom and the actions of others (Blomqvist, 1997). As a relational phenomenon, trust is thus *reciprocal* (Blomqvist, 1997). Disposition of trust or distrust affects the course of social interaction and is reciprocally directed between the acting parties. Moreover, trust is rarely unconditional; commonly, trust refers to a specific trustee and the *conditioned* or limited content of trust (Kohn, 2008).

Trust is a *voluntary* relationship and cannot be produced in a situation of *coercion*. In the situations of coercion, excessive control or constant monitoring trust is not the binding element of social interaction (Misztal, 1996). Thus, trust cannot be forced, bought, or bribed. In such situations the relationship is not a trust relationship. Once again, trust is a projection in the relationship of independent, conscious social actors.

As discussed before, among the core preconditions for a trust relationship to be reasonable are conditions of *uncertainty, risk, and contingency*. If it were possible to firmly foresee the future or control the actions of others there would be no need for trust. We need trust when there is at least some opaqueness about how others will behave/what they will decide; therefore, we need to trust that their behaviour will be of a certain type, that is, compatible with our intentions or needs. As Misztal (1996, p. 18) claims, "(w)hat makes trust so puzzling is that trust involves more than believing; in fact, to trust is to believe despite uncertainty".

However, it is also claimed that there needs to be *some (even though imperfect) knowledge* or a level of *familiarity* with a trustee to regard a situation as one of trust (Blomqvist 1997; Lewis & Weigert, 1985). If one were omniscient, actions could be undertaken with complete certainty, thus leaving no need, or even possibility, for trust to develop. On the other hand, in the case of absolute ignorance there can be no reason to trust. Therefore, the possibility of trust relationships happening occurs only in situations in which the trustor is in possession of at least some, but also not complete, information about the trustee or the situation. In Simmel's (1950, p. 318) words, trust "is intermediate between knowledge and ignorance about a man.

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[3] There are diverse terms used in scientific literature to indicate the trust parties, for example, trustor, truster or trustee, trusted. In the scope of the theses, "trustor" and "trustee" will consistently be used to indicated the two parties of a trust relationship. "Trustor" is the one who vests trust whereas "trustee" is the one who has to meet the trust (is expected to be trustworthy).

The person who knows completely need not trust; while the person who knows nothing, can on no rational grounds afford even confidence".

Correspondingly, trust is extracted in situations of *risk*. Luhmann (1979) formulated the problem for trust as "a gamble, a risky investment" (p. 24). We trust in a positive outcome; however, there must be a chance for deception. If there were only positive alternatives in a situation, trust would not be required. The element of risk is linked to the inability of social actors to constantly monitor the behaviour of others and to the limitations of our knowledge about others (Misztal, 1996). Risk is related to *possibility of betrayal, unpleasant consequences* or *harm* stemming from the actions of the other party (Blomqvist, 1997; Luhmann, 1979). Trust situation also presumes an element of social actor's *vulnerability* in relation to others. "When we trust, we take risks and are vulnerable" (Govier, 1997, p. 4). Social actors subject themselves to vulnerability because trust presupposes a lack of guarantee about the outcome of the interaction and the absence of full information in order to predict the outcome. According to Govier (1997), trust comes into action when there are no guarantees; if one starts looking for the guarantees, it is an indication of lack of trust.

Next, trust concerns the future, or rather, to follow the above conditions, the *unknown future.* In a sense trust is "a response to expected future behaviour" (Blomqvist, 1997, p. 274). To have a trust situation, there has to be a time lapse; for example, between present anticipation about future actions and/or events or a link between experiences in the past and an estimate of outcome in the future (Misztal 1996; Salmond, 1994 as cited in Blomqvist, 1997). In relation to the future, trust is *optimistic* as a trustee maintains a disposition of an expected positive outcome in the future. For example, the expectation that the trustee will act in the trustor's interest, will not bring any harm, will respect certain obligations or traditions (Dekker, 2012; Hollis, 1998; Kohn, 2008).

Finally, the preconditions for trust include the possibility of *choice* and the notion of social actors as *independent agents*. With regard to much of what has been discussed above, in trust situations it is presumed that the trustee has a choice whether to grant or not the expectations of the trustor (Kohn, 2008). Kohn (2008, p. 14-15) gives an example that "slave-owner in the Americas might have been completely confident that his slaves would act in his interests, but that confidence would be based on control" and thus it cannot be regarded as a situation of trust as the other party (a slave) does not really have much of a choice. The possibility of choice must be genuine (Kohn, 2008) and there must be a possibility of freedom for a trustee to disappoint the trustor's expectations (Misztal, 1996). Likewise, trust situations presume action and participant stance on the part of the trustor (Holton, 1994; Misztal, 1996). As argued before, trust enables the trustor to engage into action and social interaction.

The above chapter offered an overview and explanation for the necessity of trust in contemporary societies and thus the extensive interest and use of the concept of trust in the social and other sciences. However, it is further crucial to ask – so what exactly is trust? The next chapter attempts to answer this question by analysing the existing definitions of trust in the scientific literature and later in the thesis paralleling them with the perceptions of trust in the social actors' perspective as revealed in the findings of empirical research.

1.2. Searching for the path in the labyrinth of trust: what is trust?

> *"There appears to be widespread agreement on the importance of trust in human conduct, but unfortunately there also appears to be an equally widespread lack of agreement on a suitable definition of the construct" (Hosmer, 1995, p. 380).*

Even though in the contemporary theory of social sciences the concept of trust has been acknowledged as a key building block, there is no common agreement on the meaning of the concept (Bauer & Freitag, 2018). Dekker (2012) points to the presence of multiple meanings of trust in everyday life and the diversity of conceptions in scholarly literature. Therefore, this chapter attempts to add to the discussion on the meaning of trust.

1.2.1. Conceptual confusion around trust

Trust is intrinsic to a wide range of social interactions and contexts, from the intimate relationship between two partners, to trust between business partners, doctors and patients, a bank and its customers, or to trust in more abstract entities. There is a plethora of social situations where trust is functional or fundamental. However, conceptually, a simple question "what is trust?" provokes complex (perhaps even impossible) answers. There is no commonly agreed definition of trust (Josang et al., 2007; Rousseau et al., 1998; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). The meaning of trust varies across fields of (social) science, authors as well as theoretical and empirical approaches.

The variety of studies and accounts of trust continue to create conceptual confusion around the meaning of trust. Under the label of "trust", different types, forms and dimensions of the phenomenon are meant, thus making it difficult to compare approaches and research on trust. "Making sense of trust requires deciding what trust is. Many theorists have devoted themselves to this task over the past two

or three decades, and have arrived at many different conclusions" (Kohn, 2008, p. 8). The outcome of the variety of the theoretical perspectives on trust is the absence of generally agreed or unequivocal definition. On the contrary, the more the concept of trust has been analysed, the more complicated it seems to become. "Social scientists have sliced and diced the concept of trust in various ways" (Maloy, 2009, p. 493) and thus trust remains "a concept that cannot be easily observed or even defined" (Lyon et al., 2012, p. 1).

Authors across disciplines and different timelines have come to the same conclusion: the concept of trust still needs systematic development of conceptualisation. In 1985, Lewis and Weigert (1985, p. 975) concluded that "the social science research on trust has produced a good deal of conceptual confusion regarding the meaning of trust and its place in social life". In 1996, Misztal (1996, p. 13) renewed the problem: "Even though trust has received considerable attention in recent years, the confusion continues with an increased mixture of approaches and perspectives. <…> Different disciplines in social science have attempted to study it, or at least register its presence, but without a great deal of effort being devoted to its conceptualization". In 1997, Blomqvist (p. 272) (trying to develop the concept of trust in a business research context) still claimed: "However, the various authors have used the construct [of trust] very differently and are thus actually describing different things. This is due partly to different contexts, but also to poor conceptualisation. There is a good reason to say that trust has not yet been distinguished from related constructs, and that its conceptual clarification is still too incomplete for scientific progress to be made". Nooteboom (2002) further highlighted the conceptual confusion surrounding trust and tried to provide a systematic overview of forms of trust. To continue, Bauer (2015; 2019) yet again highlighted the conceptual vagueness of trust in scientific works.

The conceptualisation of trust falls into a wide amplitude in regard to the boundaries it refers to. For example, Hardin (2002) presented the notion of *encapsulated trust* as limited to the interpersonal level whereas Uslaner's (2002) *moralistic trust* is a feature of societal context; trust can be conceptualised in narrow social contexts and in relation to specific situations (e.g. the patient and doctor relationship) or yet again, at a societal level (e.g. Sztopmka, 1999). In short, the concept of trust may be defined and conceptualised differently depending on the context or the discipline (Blomqvist, 1997). Moreover, Blomqvist (1997, p. 271) showed how "in some studies a definition of trust is given and in others merely implied", which continues to be true. Reviewing the literature for this thesis, the author encountered numerous works, including papers on empirical studies, that did not explicitly state their conceptual or working definition of trust. Also, operationalised measures of trust did not consistently have an explicit linkage to their conceptual counterpart.

To date, there is definitely no place for regrets about repudiation or ignorance as to the importance of trust as the key element of social reality and as a topic for theoretical and empirical sociological research. Contrarily, the burst of works on trust over several decades created both an extended amount of analytical insights and, at the same time, some confusion among the variety of accounts, theoretical models and empirical research. Therefore, the need to develop a systematic account on definition of trust remains. Though it is important to recognise that trust is a multidimensional concept, it is context-specific and bound to a discipline field, and therefore a one-size-fits-all definition may not be possible or even needed, although it is reasonable to look for common denominators constituting the essence of trust. Therefore, an analysis of existing trust definitions would be a valuable input to extract the core elements that constitute the concept of trust and to propose a working structure of a definition of trust that could be applied for specific purposes.

1.2.2. Approach to the analysis of definitions of trust

Before turning to an analysis of trust definitions, it is important to establish several boundaries. What is the purpose of such an analysis? The outcome of definition analysis is not a universal definition (which is hardly possible) but a systematically derived framework for a working definition to be flexibly applied in varied analytic contexts. The author of the thesis recognises that trust is a complex phenomenon and therefore it is not conducive to reduce it to a single dimension and, as stated, it acquires additional features depending on the context in question.

Pulling definitions together for analysis should allow to systematically grasp the main aspects which are included in the accounts of distinct authors or across disciplines. It should be possible to outline the main properties that are covert in the relationships of trust and to reach an overarching framework for a definition that could be used in the realm of research that involves sociability.

As mentioned before, trust has been studied in many social science disciplines. In light of the interdisciplinary trends of social studies, it is not easy (or even possible) to separate the scientific field to which a particular account on trust can be unilaterally attributed. Therefore, though the thesis aims at a sociological account of trust, in the analysis of definitions it inevitably encompasses other fields of the social sciences. The expansive use of trust has generated rather confusing conceptual intricacy. Separate disciplines highlight different aspects and features of trust as well as coining different overlapping terminology, thus making it even more complicated to trace the focal elements of trust.

Previous research on definitions of trust

There have been previous attempts to connect the puzzle of trust, including analysis of trust definitions (Blomqvist, 1997; Hupcey et al., 2001; Nannestad, 2008; Tamilina, 2018; Walterbusch et al., 2014; Watson, 2005), and others); leaning on them, though also recognising their limitations, the analysis of definitions in the thesis will complement them in several regards. First, the presented analysis of definitions of trust encompasses definitions stemming from the most prominent sociological works on trust (those that have not been included in the previous analyses of trust definitions, focused, for example, on slightly different areas such as information systems (Walterbusch et al., 2014), interdisciplinary field (McKnight & Chervany, 1996), inter-organisational trust (Schmidt & Schreiber, 2019), business relationships (Castaldo et al., 2010)). Second, the current analysis expands the timeline to include recent definitions of trust (up to 2019). Third, building upon previous attempts at analysis, the corpus of definitions is quantitatively larger (193 definitions) thus allowing for more detailed insights and to significantly complement the previous findings. However, it is important to recognise that the thesis incorporates previous attempts (by including definitions that have been analysed by other authors as well) and recognises the value of previous work though applying a thesis-specific analysis approach.

Method of definition analysis

Collection of definitions for the corpus for analysis. The collection of definitions was not limited to a specific disciplinary field. Keeping in mind the complexity and multidimensionality of the phenomenon of trust, the corpus encompasses several literature sources, starting with sociology as the main field of the thesis, but also including political science, psychology, philosophy, economics, organisational science, and other fields (including works that transcend the boundaries of a specific discipline). Theoretical and empirical articles, research papers, books or book chapters were included. The earliest work dates back to 1958 (a definition by Deutsch, 1958, p. 266) when the idea of trust started to be employed intensively in social science and thus the corpus covers a timeline of around six decades (to 2019).

The selection of definitions was based on the snowball sampling technique. The decision to reject the techniques of automated title or keyword based searches of literature sources relied on the fact that there are many works on trust that do not include any or explicit definitions of trust and such searches would result in quantities of titles not manageable in the limits of the thesis. Therefore, the author chose a strategy to start with the most significant sociological works on the theory

and research of trust (i.e. N. Luhmann, B. Barber, P. Sztompka) and continued to build the corpus in line with the analysis of literature for the purposes of the thesis. Using them as a basis, other works on trust were traced (searched) by reference to these works and additional works required to reach the aim of the thesis.

The author also reviewed and to large extent included definitions previously used for analyses by other authors (namely, Blomqvist, 1997; Walterbusch et al. 2014, and Watson, 2005[4]). From all the searched items, those which had a clear definition of trust (or a statement that could be considered as close to a definition as possible) were selected. Other accounts were excluded from the analysis of definitions (as either they did not present any or a clear definition of trust). Also, the definitions included from the named previous analyses have been double-checked to exclude repetition or definitions that were not clear enough as definitions. The final corpus included 193 definitions. Apart from the texts of definitions, the corpus included: author(s); date of edition, and full reference. Initially, disciplinary field was also included; however, the search of sources and definitions revealed that in many cases it is not possible to consistently specify the field and thus this element has been excluded. Appendix A5 provides a detailed list of sources of definitions included into the analysis.

Limitations. Only sources available in English were used, although generally the literature on trust in other languages could significantly complement the analysis. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suggest that future research focuses on linguistic analysis of trust definitions and related concepts as there are observable difference in the translation and use of the concept of trust across languages. The corpus of definitions is not representative in any regard; however, the broad scope of literature that it covers and its quantitative volume allows for presuming the scientific value of the result of analysis. Also, the analysis is limited to satisfy the tasks of the thesis even though the collected corpus of definitions would allow for a much more extensive and detailed work, which will be continued in the future.

Approach of analysis. Quantitative and qualitative analysis approaches were combined. The following dimensions of analysis were included:

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[4]   It is important to note that at the initial stage the author of the thesis collected the corpus of definitions independently and later, in the course of the work, found that part of the collected definitions overlapped with previous analyses. Therefore, it was decided to incorporate the remaining definitions as well so as to quantitatively expand the corpus for the purposes of the analysis.

- Terms used to define trust (coded and counted quantitatively).
- Terms used to indicate parties to a trust relationship (trust subjects) (coded and counted quantitatively).
- Structural analysis of trust definitions (qualitative approach coding the key parts that commonly appear in definitions and identifying examples of clusters of terms used in trust definitions based on their structural function).

For the analysis, the collected definitions and related information were compiled into an *Excel* file (a definition per line), including columns for the corresponding codes. In the first step, a defining term was determined (manually) in each definition and inserted into a dedicated column. If a definition had two or more defining terms (e.g. "Trust can be defined as the belief or perception <…> (Knack, 2001, p. 5) or "trust is <…> expectations, assumptions, or beliefs" (Robinson, 1996, p. 576), each term was regarded separately. If there was no explicit defining term, "n" was assigned. Correspondingly, the defining terms of subjects of trust relationship were determined, that is, what terms were used to define the party that vests trust (i.e. trustor) and the party that is a target of said trust (i.e. trustee). Further, the *Excel* function "Analyse data" was applied for *quantitative* calculation of the frequencies of terms in each column (i.e. defining term; trustor; trustee) and further manual grouping and colour coding were used to identify distinct groups of terms. This type of analysis allowed extraction of the dominating defining terms. It must be noted that in many cases definitions include multiple concepts that refer to/expand on the defining terms and subjects of trust relationship; however, for the purposes of the analysis, it was limited to those most directly reflecting "trust is…" notion and primary mentions of subjects if available.

In the next step, **qualitative** coding was applied to analyse the patterns of the structure of trust definitions, that is, what composing elements commonly compose trust definitions and what would be the over-arching structure if all identified elements were covered.

Validation of analysis. The analysis of trust definitions has been conducted by the author of the thesis, thus inter-researcher validation was not applicable.

1.2.3. Results of the analysis of definitions of trust

Firstly, the analysis looked at the frequencies of a *defining term*. The corpus of 193 definitions featured 228 defining terms overall[5], reflecting the fact that 30 definitions provided more than one defining term; 26 definitions had two defining terms; 3 definitions had three defining terms, and 1 definitions had four defining terms). Further, repeating terms and terms that connoted the same defining idea (e.g. "willingness to be vulnerable", "acceptance of a vulnerable situation" and similar assumed the element of vulnerability) were grouped, which lead to the final list of 20 defining terms and a category "Other". Table 1 presents distribution of frequency of defining terms directly indicating what trust is, that is, its conceptual core.

Table 1. Trust defining terms[6]

No.	Defining term (*trust is…*)	Frequency (*appeared in n definitions*)	% in all definitions (*N = 193*)[6]	Also included
1	**Expectation(s)**	**65**	33	Confident expectation; expectancy; expect; positive expectation; subjective expectation; a state involving expectations; mutual/mutually reinforcing expectations
2	**Belief(s)**	**44**	23	Confident belief; subjective belief; believe
3	Confidence	**19**	10	Mutual confidence; feeling of reasonable confidence; feeling of confidence; confidence estimate
4	(Willingness to be) vulnerable	**19**	10	Acceptance of vulnerable situation; judgement to accept vulnerability; intention to accept vulnerability; increase of one's vulnerability; attitude or propensity to allow to be vulnerable; willingness to make oneself vulnerable; becoming vulnerable
5	Reliance	**13**	7	Willingness to rely; rely; relying

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[5] The total number of terms in the dedicated column ("Defining term(s)), counting frequency of all terms (repeating terms included)).

[6] Does not add up to 100% as some definitions had more than one defining term.

Table 1 (continued).

No.	Defining term *(trust is…)*	Frequency *(appeared in n definitions)*	% in all definitions *(N = 193)*[6]	Also included
6	Psychological state	**7**	3	Mental state; psychological dispositions; state of mind; cognitive state
7	Attitude	**6**	3	Trusting attitude
8	Feeling(s)	**6**	3	Basic sense; preconscious condition
9	Dependence	**5**	3	Conscious regulation of dependence; willing to depend; willing dependency
10	Prediction	**5**	3	Predictability; state of being able to predict
11	(Taking) the risk	**5**	3	Incorporation of risk; willingness to submit to the risk; willingness to take risk
12	Assumption(s)	**3**	2	Assessment; individual's theory
13	Judgement	**3**	2	
14	Perception	**3**	2	Favourable perception
15	Relationship	**3**	2	Relation; normative relationship
16	(Subjective) probability	**3**	2	Subjective estimate of probability
17	(Handing over) control	**2**	1	Decision of handing over control; willingness to permit the decisions
18	Bet	**2**	1	Rational gamble
19	(Feeling of) security	**2**	1	Condition of commitment to the security of another
20	Trustee related	**2**	1	Treating as trustworthy; ascription of good intentions
21	(Willingness to) act	**2**	1	Willingness to engage
22	Other	**9**	5	Optimism; voluntary transfer (of smthg. to someone else); degree of assurance; willingness to open up; commitment of resources; reasonable satisfaction; knowledge; position about preferrable course of action; orientation

Source: composed by the author

The calculation of the share of each defining term, taken with regard to the corpus of definitions, shows that there are dominating terms that converge in over half of all the definitions. Further, the first five terms converge in 83% of definitions. Thus, despite the variety of perspectives that the definitions of trust came from, the core of trust can be seen comparably. The dominating dispositions defining trust are *expectation(s)* and *belief(s)*. Thus, the definitions presuppose a direction from trusting party towards trusted party or situation (e.g. expectations about the other party's behaviour, characteristics or stance, see more below). Only in a couple of cases, the mutual direction was explicitly assumed (e.g. mutual expectations). Confidence and reliance are also frequent defining terms for trust, even though there is a set of scientific literature discussing how trust, confidence, and reliance should be conceptually separated (e.g. Blomqvist, 1997; Luhmann, 1988). Willingness to be vulnerable appeared among the most frequent defining terms and was also manifested inside other elements of the structure of trust definitions. For example, when trust is defined as confidence, the content of what one confides refers to the other party not exploiting one's vulnerability (e.g. Sabel, 1993, p. 1133). Similar is with "taking risk" – though it was not the most frequent defining terms, risk regularly appears as a contextual prerequisite in the definitions of trust. The same could be said about confidence, reliance and other terms that were coded as defining – they also repeatedly appeared in other elements of the structure of definitions or accompanied the defining terms as adjectives (e.g., "confident belief"). Therefore, there is a level of overlap between what trust *is* and what trust is *about* in trust definitions.

The analysis of terms used to define *subjects of trust relationships* further detailed the presumptions pertaining to trust definitions. Though structurally (see also below) two parties are presupposed – a trustor and a trustee – the definitions tended to explicitly indicate the latter more often, whereas trustor remained "invisible" or "implied". The total number of distinct terms defining *trustee* was 202 (counting all repeated terms); however, it was possible to group them into 17 categories (see Figure 1, which provides groups of terms and frequency in how many definitions a respective term was used).

Figure 1. Terms defining trustee

Unspecified other (48) Another, other(s)	**Party (36)** One party, (other) (another) party(ies), trusted party	**Multiple list of trustees (20)** Another individual or group; another, a group, or an institution; another individual, group or organisation; some person or institution; object, or the occurrence of an event, or the behaviour of a person; actors or groups; person or system; organisation or person; trusted individual or institution; a person or thing; things or people; other person, group, or firm; individual or entity; those around or things unseen; somebody or something; another individual or groups of individuals
Person (17) (Other) people, (another) (other) person	**Partner (14)** Exchange partner, partner(s), partners in interaction, (potential) trading partner(s)	**Trustee (14)** Trustee(s), trusted, trusted person
Unspecified (person) (10) Alter, one, somebody, someone	**Unidentified (10)** No explicit naming of trustee	**Symbol (9)** B, Bj, Q, Y
Specified (person) (9) Authority, purchasing manager, salesperson, service provider, those in the relationship, those involved with us, those involved in exchange, those who have responsibility for making decisions	**Actor (3)** Actor, independent actor	**Member (3)** Member of an organisation, other members of community, other members of society
Personal pronoun (2) He, you	**Unspecified (non-person) (2)** Entity, something	**Agent (2)** Another agent, other free agent
Collective entity (2) Another company, society	**Specified (non-person) (1)** Brand	

Source: composed by the author

The total number of distinct terms defining trustor was 197; they were grouped into 15 categories (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Terms defining trustor

Unidentified (58)	Unspecified (person) (29)	Personal pronoun (23)
No explicit naming of turstor	Ego, one, someone	I, oneself, (s)he, us, you, we
Party (18)	**Person (16)**	**Trustor (14)**
(One) party	Individual(s), (one) person,	Entrustors, one who trusts, truster, trusting person, trustor
Symbol (9)	**Specified (person) (8)**	**Multiple list of trustors (5)**
A, Ai, P, X	Holder of the belief, consumer, customer, supplier, those in the relationship, those involved in exhange	Individual or group (of individuals); individual or collective actor; actors or groups; one person, group, or firm
Agent (5)	**Collective entity (5)**	**Partner (2)**
Agent(s)	Organisation, (trusting) firm	(Trading) partner
Other (2)	**Actor (2)**	**Member (1)**
Another, others	Actor	Member of an organisation

Source: composed by the author

Using trust definition as a unit of analysis in the coding process, the distinction of the category "Multiple list of trustees/trustors" in Figure 1 and Figure 2 designates that in the case of all other categories, a definition indicated one (even if unspecified)

actor as trustee or trustor. Such definitions, as can be observed, predominate. When multiple actors were listed in a definition of trust, they were coded correspondingly. The common pattern in the "multiple list" category was that it indicated that trustor or trustee can be regarded at the individual level (e.g. individual, person) or the collective level (e.g. group, institution, system) whereas in "one actor" definitions these levels were not explicit in many cases. Overall, the categories (and underlying terms) in Figure 1 and Figure 2 demonstrate that the trustee, and in particular the trustor, are more often unspecified or vaguely specified in trust definitions. It is clear that the category "Person" groups individual actors and the category "Collective entity" represents a collective trustor or trustee. However, most of the remaining categories do no provide a clear-cut presumption about the level of actors. For example, party, trustor, agent, partner could be interpreted as either individual or collective actors in a trust relationship.

Comparing Figure 1 and Figure 2, it is observable that there is no mirrored correspondence of how the trustor and trustee parties were identified in trust definitions. Trustee is more often explicitly named whereas trustor is predominantly omitted (i.e. unidentified) or unspecified (as can be seen, unspecified (person) or personal pronouns are much more often used for trustor than trustee). Combined with the dominating terms of trust as expectation(s) or belief(s), it is possible to conclude that trust definitions focus more on the side of the trustee; the trustee's behaviour or characteristics. The direction of disposition predominantly goes from the trustor to the trustee rather than vice versa.

The coding of the recurring patterns of the content of trust definitions allowed to identify *the key structural elements* of trust definition:

1) The main element is the *defining term* that represents the conceptual core or the key disposition. As shown above, trust is predominantly regarded in terms of expectations or beliefs. The vast majority of definitions explicitly provide the defining term.

2) The *subjects of trust*. Trust definitions presuppose *two* subjects in trust relationships: trustor and trustee. As revealed, the explicit point in trust definitions is the trustee, whereas trustor often remains "silent", omitted or implied in these definitions. Occurrence of the explicit naming of the trustor was less frequent (e.g. customer; party) whereas trustees were explicitly referred to as individuals, persons, actors, parties, or collective entities (e.g. organisation, firm, etc.).

3) *Content of trust*. The content of trust falls into three clusters: expectations about acts/behaviour of trustee; expectations about characteristics/traits of trustee; expectations about general societal norms or values (supposedly shared by trustee and trustor).

4) *Contextual prerequisites*. These are contextual conditions linked to trust. That is, they specify under what conditions the expectations of the trustor towards the trustee are implied (e.g. risk, uncertainty, opaque situation).

5) *Outcome of trust*. These focus on the consequences that come for the trustor by vesting trust in a trustee. It presupposes favourable (or at least not negative) outcomes for the trustor or the relationship.
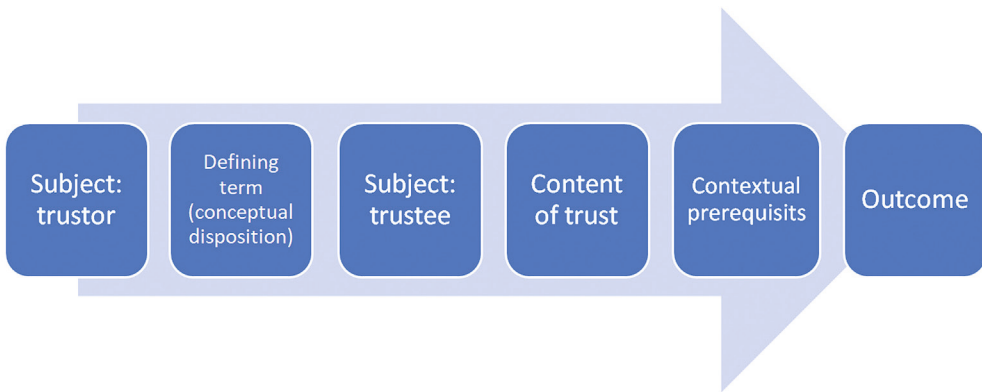
Figure 3 depicts the overall structure of trust definition *if* all the identified elements were present. However, the analysis of trust definitions revealed that trust definitions vary greatly in their content and level of abstraction or specificity. Generally, defining term, subjects of trust and, to some extent, content of trust are present in the structure of any definition (even though, as shown, the subject of trustor often remains implicit). However, some of the definitions contain only those three elements (e.g. "Trust is a [*subject: trustor – only implied*] bet [*defining term*] about the future contingent actions [*content of trust*] of others [*subject: trustee*]"[7] (Sztompka, 1999, p. 25) or even just two elements explicitly (e.g. "Trust is defined as a [*subject: trustor – implied*] willingness to rely [*defining term*] on an exchange partner [*subject: trustee*] in whom one has confidence [*implicit*]" (Moorman et al., 1992, p. 315). Moreover, the content of trust (as in the first highlighted example) may be provided in abstract or vague terms. Overall, the content of trust in definitions entailed a myriad of expectations about trustees characteristics (e.g. benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, concerned, open) or behaviour (e.g. will serve interests of trustor, will keep promises, will not harm) or shared common values (e.g. commonly shared norms, prevailing social norms). The content of trust mirrors presumption of optimism, as the focus is on positive behaviour (e.g. fulfil promises) or absence of a negative act (e.g. will not harm; will not exploit vulnerability) or, likewise, the expected characteristics of a trustee are positive (e.g. well intentioned; goodwill; competences).

Contextual prerequisites, and in particular the outcome of trust, are not consistently included in trust definitions. When identified, contextual prerequisites mirror the preconditions discussed in Section 1.1.4.; for example, risk, uncertainty, unpredictability. Outcome of trust is the least defined element in the structure of trust definitions. It is less present than other elements and it is often difficult to separate if the definition implies the behaviour of the trustee or the outcome of trust (as they seem to overlap, e.g. that the trustee will behave so as not to harm the trustor or will regard the trustor's interests are both requirements for the trustee's behaviour and the outcomes that one expects when vesting trust). Nevertheless,

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[7] Original quote: "Trust is a bet about the future contingent actions of others" (Sztompka, 1999, p. 25).

explicitly or implicitly, definitions of trust presume positive or at least non-negative outcomes for the trustor.

Figure 3. Structural elements of trust definition and examples of their manifestation

Subject: trustor	Defining term (conceptual disposition)	Subject: trustee	Content of trust	Contextual prerequisits	Outcome
Predomin-antly unidentified	Expectation, belief, Etc. <predomin-antly directed towards trustee>	Unspec-ified other Party Person Trustee Etc.	Certain types of actions/ behaviour of trustee Certain characteristics of trustee Shared norms or values	Risk, Uncertainty Possibility of being exploited Etc.	Positive outcomes No negative outcomes

Source: composed by the author

The systematic analysis of trust definitions has overviewed in detail the structural elements and their manifestations as proposed by the scholarly literature. It has shown that despite the abundant diversity of trust definitions, it is possible to identify the core structural elements that seem to be most important when defining trust. It is proposed, therefore, to regard these structural elements when providing a definition for the purposes of a specific study in a specific context. Even though a universal definition of trust may not be possible, it is important that studies do define what they mean by "trust" and cover the most important structural elements in their definition. Furthermore, the empirical research of the thesis will attempt

to capture social actors' perceptions of trust and see the level of convergence of the content of the "real-life definitions" with the elements and their manifestations contained in this analysis.

Discussion. Part 1 reviewed the place of the phenomenon of trust in contemporary societies and the place of trust in scholarly work. It has been demonstrated that because of the high relevance of trust at any level of social interaction and social organisation, trust has become a focal point of the analysis of contemporary societies. However, at the same time the review has revealed the complexity of both the phenomenon and concept of trust. Therefore, the thesis follows two further steps. First, taking in consideration the complexity and pervasiveness of trust, it narrows down the context of analysis (namely, trust under democracy). In the scope of the thesis, it is hardly possible to cover an all-encompassing analysis of trust. Second, it focuses on methodological considerations about how such a complex phenomenon can be studied empirically.

2. TRUST AND DEMOCRACY

"Both historical and contemporary evidence indicates that some societies develop robust cultures of trust, whereas others are pervaded with endemic distrust" (Sztompka, 1997, p. 11).

Though trust is in general important in modern complex societies, it has also been acknowledged that its manifestations are diversly linked to certain cultural, political or economic settings (Welter & Alex, 2012). As the interests of the author lie within the scope of political sociology, it has been observed that trust *is not universally* linked to any type of society or socio-political system. *Not all systems require, want or are able to produce trust.* Moreover, trust (as well as distrust) may produce different effects in different societies characterised by different types of social and political order. The functioning of trust is framed by the type of society and its political system. Some types of social order do not rely on trust; on the contrary, they might rely on distrust. Hardin (2002, p. 180) pointed out that "both for the initiation of social order and for the mere maintenance of social order, widespread trust seems not to be necessary", as shown, for example, in pure force-based social orders like Nazi-ruled Czechoslovakia. Similarly, "in traditional Islamic societies the central authorities based their effective rules on the destruction of subunits in urban societies, consequently destroying trust" (Gellner, 1988 as cited in Misztal, 1996, p. 63). Social order in the Soviet block was also based and maintained on widespread distrust, fostering it at all levels of society. Under these types of systems, the concern is not to create a culture of trust in the society but rather a culture of distrust, fear, fragmentation and, consequently, obedience. Contrarily, it is widely agreed that the democratic political system and society needs trust. Democracy to an extent breeds trust and institutionalises (dis)trust (Sztompka, 1999). Therefore, the thesis further focuses on trust in the context of democracy, in this part looking at how trust is conceptualised and in the subsequent parts how it is operationalised and empirically researched.

2.1. The linkage between trust and democracy

There is a general agreement that trust, as an essential dimension of social relations, accounts for the efficient functioning of the democratic political system. There is a group of factors linking society and politics: civil society, civic culture, political culture, social capital, mass attitudes, and other. Trust is included in all of

them. To put it briefly, the presence or absence of trust relates to many aspects of the working of democracy in a particular society or societies. This chapter briefly outlines the general interplay between trust and democracy.

Generally, scholars agree that trust is needed (necessary) for democracy (Braithwaite & Levi, 1998; O'Neill, 2002; Sztompka, 1999; Warren, 1999c). Democracy and trust go together; nevertheless, the link is not simple and self-evident. There are some conditions needed for trust and democracy to have a constructive link. Jamal and Nooruddin (2010) proved that by itself trust does not strive towards democracy. There has to be an established democratic regime; then trust becomes functional *for* the democratic regime. Trust can play a completely opposite role in a non-democratic regime, that is, it can be a functional element of *that* regime. Thus, it is not natural (straightforward) that only democracies can have trust or that all non-democracies do not have trust. Consequently, it is not straightforward that societies with high levels of trust are necessarily pro-democracy oriented societies. According to Jamal and Nooruddin (2010, p. 45), "(t)he degree of democracy determines the extent to which generalised trust becomes meaningfully linked to support for democracy". It means that trust is important for democracy; however, it is such *only* in already democratic regimes. Higher levels of trust do not naturally lead to democracy. Also, mere establishment of democratic institutions does not mean that trust will automatically be produced or present (Rose, 1994).

However, when democracy is established and aims at efficient functioning, trust becomes an inherent counterpart of it. Low levels of trust can be harmful for performance or even the legitimacy of democracy; democratic government cannot efficiently function without trust even if other types of government can (Offe, 1999; O'Neill, 2002; Warren, 1999a). O'Neill (2002, p. 31) linked trust to basic human rights and democracy claiming that "(w)ithout trust, we cannot believe that our governments or our fellow citizens will respect our basic rights and freedoms – even if we set up protective institutions of various kinds, these institutions must be operated by people to whom we must (and do) by and large extend our trust". Warren (1999b) highlights the mutually dependent link: the democratic order relies on trust; and the democratic order is conducive to the formation of trust. According to him, certain kinds of trust are necessary for the "stability, viability, and vitality" of democracy (Warren, 1999b, p. 310) and at the same time, it is important to figure out how democratic institutions could "protect, support, or generate" the relations of trust that are beneficial for them (Ibid.). According to Sztompka (1997), compared to other types of social order, democracy has exceptional potency to produce trust relations in society: "the democratic order has significant trust-generating force. All other things being equal, the culture of trust is more likely to appear in democracy, than in any other type of political system" (Sztompka, 1997, p. 16).

Nevertheless, social and political scientists have noted that democracy, trust and, paradoxically, *distrust* or suspicion are inherently connected (e.g. Braithwaite, 1998; Hart, 1978; Norris, 1999b, 1999c; Offe, 1999; Sztompka, 1997; Kohn, 2008) in the way of institutionalising distrust; in the attitudes of citizens towards those in the power, and between citizens. Hart (1978) revealed the paradox, demonstrating that on the one hand democracy presupposes the ability of people to govern themselves, whereas on the other hand, to function efficiently, democracy depends on maintaining a certain level of people's suspicion about those in power. Hart (1978) advocated a certain type of distrust as functional for democracy, one based on recognition of "a discrepancy between the ideals and realities of the political process" (Hart, 1978, p. xi). Hart (1978) and later authors (e.g. Norris, 1999a; Hardin, 1999) connected a certain level of functional distrust and suspicion to the qualities of a democratic citizenry, that is a citizenry that is informed, reasonably critical towards politicians, though adhering to trust in democracy as a political system. Likewise, Kohn (2008) pointed out that the structural foundations of democracy are based on distrust: "Liberal states take as given that those with power will be tempted to abuse it, so the powers of the state are separated into divisions intended to check and balance their exercise" (Kohn, 2008, p. 7). Complete trust can produce political apathy among citizens and diminish their input and influence over government decisions (Mishler & Rose, 1995). Democracy requires a certain degree of critical interest on the part of citizens to evoke participation and influence over the political process. A reasonable criticism towards governmental institutions and decisions is healthy for democracy. However, general lack of political trust may lead to the incapability of democracy and may have destructive consequences for society as a whole. As Blind (2010, p. 28) puts it, "although it is healthy for citizens to suspect that their political representatives might not act in line with the wishes of their constituencies, prolonged periods of social and political distrust on the part of the majority of the population can produce deleterious consequences for governments and governance."

Sztompka (1997) has highlighted that democracy institutionalises distrust, and he regarded it as a paradoxical mechanism: "the culture of trust is due precisely to the institutionalisation of distrust in the architecture of democracy. Most of the principles constitutive of democratic order, assume institutionalisation of distrust, which provides a kind of backup or insurance for those who would be ready to risk trust. <…> To put it brief, the more of institutionalised distrust, the more of spontaneous trust" (Sztompka, 1997, p. 16). Sztompka (1997, p. 16-19) provided a list of the constitutive principles of democracy that encapsulate the presupposition and confinement of distrust: legitimacy; periodical elections and terms of office; majority and collective decisions; division of powers; rule of law and independent courts; constitutionalism and judicial review; litigation; due process; civic rights;

law enforcement; universalism and fairness; open communication. According to Sztompka (1997), all these principles presuppose the possibility of misuse of power by the rulers (authorities, political actors). These principles provide mechanism that allows for precluding potential breaches of trust. "(P)eople are more ready to trust the institutions and other people if the social organisation in which they operate insures them against potential breaches of trust" (Sztompka, 1997, p. 20).

However, Sztompka (1997) outlined the mechanism of institutionalised distrust as a somewhat ideal-type democracy. The actual emergence or decay of trust depends on how democratic principles are implemented and how well democratic institutions perform (Sztompka, 1997; Braithwaite & Levi, 1998). Good performance of democratic governing institutions generates additional trust and it further supports (induces) good governance (Braithwaite & Levi, 1998), whereas poor performance of democratic institutions leads to increasing distrust and further negatively affects their performance (Mishler & Rose, 1998).

To sum up, if democracy works well (institutions perform well or are perceived to perform well) then trust is generated; if not, trust is humbled. Furthermore, if there is trust, the chances of well-functioning democratic institutions are higher whereas lack of trust may lead to deterioration of the system. However, as Warren (1999b, p. 310) highlighted, "not all kinds" of trust but "certain kinds" of trust are conducive for democracy. The next chapter looks into those types of trust that are claimed as being good for democracy and outlines the conceptual boundaries of them.

2.2. Trust or trusts: which types of trust are linked to democracy?

Considering the complexity of trust, it is not surprising that apart from the most general notion of trust analytically there are multiple notions of trust, or "trusts", rather than one all-encompassing "trust". In other words, there can be diverse types or forms of trust linked to varied societal contexts or situations and fulfilling distinct functions. However, before moving forward with an in-detail review of the link between the "good" types of trust and democracy, it is important to clarify the use of concepts in this regard.

In the relevant literature, several distinctions are made. The first one is rather straightforward and distinguishes between "social trust" as trust in which the two parties (trustor and trustee) are people and "political trust" as trust between people and political subject(s) (predominantly political institutions but it can also include political actors) (though, for example, Kwon (2019, p. 23) puts "institutional trust" as a type of social trust). For the purposes of the thesis, "political trust" is relatively unproblematic and hereinafter "political trust" and "trust in political institutions" will be used interchangeably as synonyms.

With regard to "social trust", there is a distinction based on the level of familiarity between trustor and trustee. One type of trust refers to trust in people who are familiar or come from a limited (close) social circle, whereas the other type of trust refers to trust in people in general or, more specifically, trust in strangers. As will be demonstrated later, across the trust literature the notion of this distinctions comes with diverse labelling (e.g. thick trust and thin trust) yet sometimes in a confusing manner. In principle, such often encountered labels as "interpersonal trust" (e.g. Kaase, 1999) or "social trust" (e.g. Lundåsen, 2010) do not immediately connote a specific dimension of trust between people; it can equally be perceived as trust in familiar people, trust in people in general or trust in strangers. To avoid confusion, for the purposes of the thesis the labels "social particularised trust" and "social generalised trust" will be used for the distinction.

Generally, in the realm of scholarly works on democracy, social generalised trust and political trust predominate as "good" for democracy, whereas social particularised trust is regarded as potentially limiting benefits to democracy (e.g. Uslaner, 2001; Kwon, 2019; Meikle-Yaw, 2008). The sections below will discuss these two types of trust in more detail, focusing on how they are conceptualised and what value they bring in the context of democracy. It will lay the ground for the analyses in Part 3 and Part 4, which in the scope of research on trust look specifically into how social generalised trust and political trust have been operationalised and how the operationalisation corresponds to current conceptual notions of these forms of trust.

2.2.1. Conceptualisation of social generalised trust

In the scientific literature there are varied concepts that comparably refer to the previously outlined distinction in social trust: trust that refers to trust in people *whom one personally knows* (social particularised trust) and people *in general*, that is, social generalised trust. Conceptually, authors refer to *social generalised trust* as trust in other people who are defined as those beyond personal experience (Uslaner, 2001), who are not personally known (Putnam, 2000) or who are different from us (Welzel & Delhey, 2015) (see overview in Figure 4). Williams (1988) distinguished between *thick* trust (or trust based on frequent interaction in close-tie relationships) and *thin* trust (or trust in people who are strangers, generalised other, that is, trust in society at large). Similarly, Putnam (2000) classified *thick* trust (in known others) and *thin* trust (in not personally known others). Thick trust is based on extensive knowledge and regular contact whereas thin trust is based on superficial knowledge and contact (Hosking, 2014). Thick or *specific* trust encompasses "narrow circles of familiar others" whereas *general*, thin or *diffuse* trust encompasses unfamiliar others (Delhey et al.,

2011, p. 786). Uslaner (2001; 2002) offered two axes of trust (both corresponding to the dimension of familiarity and commonality with the other): *strategic* trust ("(t)rust in people we know" (Uslaner, 2001, p. 571) and based on experience and knowledge of others) and *moralistic* trust (beyond personal experience and knowledge of others, namely, "trust in people whom we don't know and who are likely to be different from ourselves" (Uslaner, 2001, p. 572)); *particularized* trust (in those alike, or "your own kind" (Uslaner, 2001, p. 573)) and *generalised* trust (in most people). Freitag and Bauer (2013, p. 40), likewise, refer to particularised trust as "an intimate form of trust toward personally known people" and generalised trust as "a more abstract trust in unknown people, including strangers". Glanville and Shi (2020) refer to generalised trust in a more encompassing way as trust in people in general, or rather, an expectation about their trustworthiness; nevertheless, they counter it to particularised trust as trust in known others (thus presupposing the element of "unknown" in people in general). Nannestad (2008) sums up that particularised trust assumes trust in a particular person one knows or has information about, and it refers to a particular matter of trust, whereas generalised trust assumes trust in strangers and the domain of trust does not have to be specified. Kwon (2019) uses the terms *limited* and *generalised* trust, though content-wise the distinction remains the same: the former refers to "trust in family members, friends and members of groups or associations" (Kwon, 2019, p. 22), the latter to trust in strangers. OECD (2017, p. 11) provides a mirroring classification: generalised trust as "trust in people who are not known to the respondent or to trust in situations where the person being trusted is not specified" and limited trust as trust in "persons known to the respondent, including family, friends and neighbours". In line with these distinctions, Welzel and Delhey (2015) referred to *in-group* trust (limited to familiar people) and *out-group* trust (or trust in people who are not known or are of different origin).

Figure 4. Conceptual synonyms of social generalised trust vs. social particularised trust
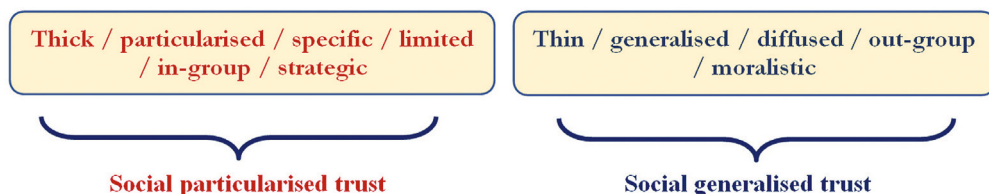
Source: composed by the author

To sum up, social particularised trust encompasses situations where trustor and trustee are well familiar, the trustor has experience with or information about the trustee, they belong to a close or inner social circle, they may be somewhat similar and the content of trust is specified or clear. Social generalised trust, in contrast, encompasses situations of interaction between people who are unfamiliar or strangers, information and knowledge are scarce or absent, the social circles of trustor and trustee presumably do not overlap and the content of trust is not specified. In the theory and research on trust, and more specifically, trust and democracy, it is argued that these two types of trust have different effects at the societal level.

It is claimed that social generalised trust is beneficial for society at large and is linked to societal properties that can be identified as desirable (Lundåsen, 2010). In contemporary complex societies, where daily life is bound to interactions with numerous unfamiliar others, social generalised trust is essential (Nannestad, 2008; Newton, 2007). It fosters reciprocity and cooperation between co-citizens as well as has a positive effect on the performance of institutions and larger societal systems (Fukuyama, 1995; Meikle-Yaw, 2008; Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2002; Zmerli & Newton, 2008); it has been positively linked to economic growth and prosperity (Knack, 2001; Zak & Knack, 2001) and, contrarily, found to be linked to lower levels of corruption, economic and gender inequality (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005). An abundant literature has highlighted social generalised trust as a core element of social capital, social cohesion, and civil society (Hooghe et al., 2007; Putnam, 1993, 2000; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005; Uslaner, 2002).

According to Uslaner (2001), strategic trust, which can help making decisions based on knowledge and experience, does not "take us very far" (Uslaner, 2001, p. 571). It does not transcend into agency at a societal level, such as charity or volunteer time, or having faith in people whom one does not know (Uslaner, 2001). Conversely, moralistic trust is based on the idea of commonly shared values and thus "provides the rationale for getting involved with other people and working toward compromises" (Uslaner, 2001, p. 571-572). Likewise, according to Uslaner (2001), particularised trust "is likely to exacerbate conflicts among different groups" (Uslaner, 2001, p. 573), while generalised trust supposedly leads towards social cohesion.

In line with the above described effects of social generalised trust, it is further seen as beneficial for democracy and as a quality feature of democratic citizenry. Apart from institutional arrangements, the ideal of democracy is also related to a particular type of society and citizenry. Democracy builds on active citizenry: efficient communication among citizens, cooperative relations, political participation and competence, tolerance and compromising (Sztompka 1999; Misztal 1995; Putnam 1993). Being conducive as a facilitator of cooperation among people in general, it better corresponds to democratic values and the values of civil society than social

particularised trust (Uslaner, 2001). Meikle-Yaw (2008) concluded that social generalised trust contributes to civic participation and, consequently, satisfaction with democracy (as opposed to limited trust). According to Meikle-Yaw (2008), in the communities where particularised trusters prevail, democracy is impeded. Lack of social generalised trust, therefore, inhibits formation of the type of citizenry that is needed under democracy and is a necessary condition for the production of collective goods and for the participation of individuals in voluntary collective institutions.

Furthermore, social generalised trust is linked with the legitimacy and efficiency of a democratic political system. It is claimed that democracy functions steadier in societies where people trust each other. As Blind (2010, p. 36) pointed out, "(i)n a society where people distrust each other and choose not to engage in meaningful activities in networks of societal associations, there is a high likelihood of the government and its representatives being accorded low political legitimacy". In their repeated analyses, Inglehart and Welzel (2003, 2005; Welzel, 2007) concluded that social generalised trust is one of the key elements providing support for effective democracy. In addition, Welzel (2007) revealed that trust in people belongs to the combination of attitudes that comprise a syndrome of "self-expression values" (or emancipative orientations) that are most conductive to democracy. In his analysis, Welzel (2007, p. 419) confirmed that "emancipative mass attitudes help both to sustain democracy in more democratic societies and to attain democracy in less democratic societies".

2.2.2. Conceptualisation of political trust

The concept of political trust generally falls under the umbrella of "institutional trust" or trust in (public, social) institutions. Some distinctions can be found there as well. Generally, "political institutions" (or governmental, authority institutions) are conceptually separated from other social or public institutions, such as business, non-governmental organisations, mass media, church and any other. For example, under institutional trust, the OECD (2017, p. 11) narrows it down to "trust in political, law and order and non-governmental" institutions.

The literature on political trust commonly entails that the trustor is the public, the citizen, or individual(s), whereas the trustee is a "political actor" (Bauer & Freitag, 2018, p. 16). Political actor, furthermore, refers to political institutions (Catterberg & Moreno, 2006; Turper & Aarts, 2017; Uslaner, 2017) or central government and/or political leaders (Levi & Stoker, 2000). In the context of democracy, obviously, political institutions mean national parliament, national government, political parties and, if relevant, the institution of president. Among the earliest definitions of

political trust is Gamson's (1968, p. 54) work, claiming that trust is "the probability <…> that political system (or some part of it) will produce preferred outcomes even if left untended". Conceptualisation (and, consequently, operationalisation) of political trust is also "system sensitive", the main division happening between Europe and the USA where the arrangements of governmental institutions are to an extent different. Definitions of political trust range from rather abstract (which seem to prevail); for example, Catterberg and Moreno (2006, p. 31) define political trust as "citizens' confidence in political institutions", to definitions that rely on performance dimension; for example, Hetherington and Rudolph (2008, p. 499) (focusing mainly on the USA) define political trust "as people's evaluations of how government is doing its job compared to their expectations of its performance". As Blind (2010, p. 23) puts it, "(p)olitical trust happens when citizens appraise the government and its institutions, policymaking in general, and/or the individual political leaders as promise keeping, efficient, fair, and honest". For Hooghe and Zmerli (2011) political trust as a general expectation of public that the political leaders will adhere to "the rules or the game" (p. 3) inherent in a democratic regime. Also, trust is often conceptualised in relation to government performance, that is, as a kind of a subjective assessment or evaluation of policy performance (e.g. Hetherington & Husser, 2011; Keele, 2007).

A level of public trust in political institutions is regarded as a necessary resource for democratic political order to function efficiently and pertain to legitimacy (Almond & Verba, 1989; Blind, 2010; Schneider, 2017; Sztompka, 1999). Lack of public trust in political institutions can impede the functioning of these institutions; withhold support for reforms and hinder their implementation, or disadvantage social, political and economic development in general (Gaižauskaitė, 2019). Public trust in political institutions provides them with a level of freedom to take necessary actions without constant pressure or resistance from the side of the public. Having the public's "credit of trust", as Sztompka (1997, p. 10) puts it, institutions are "temporarily released from immediate social monitoring and social control. This leaves a wide margin for non-conformity, innovation, originality, or to put it in brief – for more freedom of action". As observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the value of public trust in political institutions becomes particularly relevant under conditions of unpredictability and risk (Sniečkutė & Gaižauskaitė, 2021). When public trust is lacking, decision making and implementation, reforms, or crisis management may be hindered (Blind, 2010; Hetherington, 1998). Alternatively, according to Catterberg and Moreno (2006), when there is sufficient public trust in political institutions, citizens are more receptive to unpopular or difficult solutions; for example, to accept temporary constraints in times of economic hardship in exchange for the promise of an improvement in the indefinite future. Moreover,

confidence in the legitimacy of democratic government and the efficiency of political and legal regulations transcend into confidence in transactions in others spheres as well (e.g. economic) thus facilitating cooperation and creation of common good (Lovell, 2001; Raiser, 1999). Trust in political institutions is included into the conceptual framework of support for the political system (Linde & Ekman, 2003; Norris, 1999a) as an element of support for regime institutions (political institutions and institutions like legal system, police, military or state bureaucracy). Political actors are regarded as a separate element in the framework.

In summation, the above discussion outlined the value that social generalised trust and political trust provide for democracy. There is, furthermore, a reverse link. Though trust is requisite for democracy and contributes to its efficiency, at the same time democracy itself accounts for the creation of a culture of trust (Sztompka, 1999). A culture of trust means a system of rules that promotes the granting of trust and makes trust decisions much more probable even in spite of doubts about the trustworthiness of the objects of trust (Sztompka, 1999). According to Sztompka (1997), a democratic design is the most conducive for the promotion of trust. However, the actual emergence or decay of social generalised trust and political trust also depends on how close or far away is the realisation of democracy from its ideal model. The functioning of democracy and a particular government may lead to the formation of either trust or distrust dispositions. Bühlmann and Freitag (2009) have claimed that social trust develops when political institutions function to encourage cooperation between citizens; and vice versa, when government is perceived as untrustworthy, citizens lose reason to believe in the trustworthiness of the rest of a society. Lühiste (2006) concluded that "perceived levels of corruption are negatively correlated with trust, while a positive assessment of the regime's record in protecting human rights leads to higher levels of trust in political institutions" (Lühiste, 2006, p. 493). Thus, a culture of trust (reflected by substantial levels of social and political trust) is more probable when democracy is realised in line with its ideal institutional arrangements. Moreover, Sztompka (1997) supposed that malfunctioning democracy may be more destructive for a culture of trust than outright autocratic regimes: in the autocratic regime "people at least know what to expect, they have no illusions, whereas in the earlier case [democracy] their hopes are disappointed, their expectations violated, producing even stronger disenchantment" (Sztompka, 1997, p. 21).

Discussion. Part 2 discussed trust in a specific context, namely, in societies under democracy. It has been shown that there are two types of trust that are beneficial for the democratic system: social generalised trust and political trust. Theoretically, the discussion could expand further; however, for the purposes of the thesis, the author will refrain from deeper theoretical analysis and, following the research

aim and tasks, will take a closer look at how social generalised trust and political trust have been included into empirical research. Having established that these types of trust are of essential importance, it is observable that measures of social generalised trust and political trust have been extensively used in comparative research. The literature review, however, covered in Part 1 and Part 2, led to some issues that further analysis and research should cover. One relates to the sociological perception of trust as a relational and reciprocal concept. However, the conception of political trust inherently presupposes a one-directional link, defined as public trust in political institutions but not vice versa (Sniečkutė & Gaižauskaitė, 2021). It might be that such a phenomenon as "government's trust in its citizens" is not plausible at all, having in mind that political institutions are abstract entities. How then we can talk about "trust" but have the element of reciprocity missing? Furthermore, some claim that, in general, trust that is not specific enough might not make much sense (e.g. Hardin, 2001, 2002, 2006). Möllering (2006) paid attention to the fact that trust between people is one thing, whereas it is questionable if a person can trust a wider unity (e.g. organisation) or whether such unities can trust each other (e.g. trust between organisations). In other words, Möllering (2006) drew attention to an issue of the anthropomorphising of organisation (referring to Zaheer et al., 1998, p. 142 as cited in Möllering, 2006). Second, in conceptual definitions of social generalised trust, "people in general", "strangers", "unfamiliar people" have been used interchangeably. However, people in general and strangers are not one and the same; people in general could include anyone, whereas a stranger clearly indicates a limited category of people. Unfamiliar, yet again, could vary with degree of unfamiliarity. Moreover, as used in conceptualisations of social generalised trust, the one-dimensionality of the categories unfamiliar people and strangers seem to be presumed; however, in social reality, layers of "strangeness" may be very important and they could potentially affect the perception or assessment of one's trust. Third, social particularised and social generalised trust are conceptually separated, the sources of trust for the latter being mainly linked to general moral dispositions rather than information, knowledge or rational calculation. Is this distinction present in everyday life interactions as well? Or is it possible that there is an element of rationality behind trust in strangers as well? Finally, definitions of both social generalised trust and political trust are rather unspecific, mainly referring to the subjects of trust, with the trustee in particular, and other structural elements (as outlined in Section 1.2.3.), absent. These hesitations encourage a better look at how these types of trust have been researched, how much consistency there is between conceptual and operational levels, whether the validity of measures is reasoned enough and, moreover, how these conceptual notions are reflected in the real-life interactions of social actors.

3. DEVELOPMENT AND LIMITATIONS
OF CURRENT RESEARCH ON TRUST

Trust "is one of the most fascinating and fundamental social phenomena yet at the same time one of the most 'elusive' (Gambetta, 1998) and challenging concepts one could study" (Lyon et al., 2012, p. 1).

The fundamentality and complexity of trust makes it a challenging research topic. When a phenomenon is as conceptually multi-dimensional as trust, approaches and methods of empirical research must fit correspondingly. Lyon et al. (2012) have highlighted five aspects of trust that suggest methodological challenges when researching it: capturing the dynamic process of trust; grasping tacit elements of trust; researching trust in diverse cultures; the influences researchers may have in shaping situations of trust that they research, and research ethics. Möllering (2006) outlined that on the one hand, trust at different analysis levels (e.g. trust between people and their government or trust in intimate relationships) stimulates different research questions; however, on the other hand, in most of real life situations more than one level comes into play thus calling for multi-level and cross-level empirical studies on trust. Moreover, in line with the discussive remarks in Part 2, Nannestad (2008) highlighted the gap between conceptual and operational definitions thus reducing the meaningfulness of empirical findings when they are not thoroughly linked to specific theoretical frameworks. Among the driving forces for the author of the thesis to focus on methodological aspects of research on trust was a double-sided feeling that in some regards the field of trust research seems to be expanding, with development and innovations observed (Bauer & Freitag, 2018). In other regards, however, there seem to be some settled "traditions" in sub-fields of trust research that might be limiting and thus preventing the potential advancement of knowledge. This part of the thesis, therefore, overviews the approaches of current research on trust, placing research on social generalised and political trust in context; discusses in detail the observed limitations of the measurement of social generalised and political trust, and looks into potential application of a qualitative approach to researching trust that transcends circles of immediate familiarity.

3.1. Overview of current methods in research on trust

Möllering (2006) has outlined the broad range of empirical approaches in the landscape of work on trust, proposing six heuristics. First, according to him,

alongside works that focus on trust there are many relevant studies in which trust is not a central concern. Second, empirical works on trust may diverge depending on the stage of causal chain they focus on; for example, whether they look at preconditions of trust, antecedents of trust, manifestations of trust, or consequences of trust. Third, trust has been studied at all levels: macro (e.g. trust at the level of economic system), meso (e.g. trust in organisations), or micro (e.g. in interpersonal relationships). Fourth, empirical research on trust can be explorative (seeking to discover new questions or facets of trust), descriptive (aiming to present how empirical reality corresponds to analytical frameworks), predictive (looking for causal mechanisms between trust and a related variable), and normative (seeking to provide advice, e.g. to policy makers). Next, Möllering (2006) pointed to the viewpoint of operationalisation: empirical works on trust differ in regard to their focus on trustor (e.g. what induces trust in the trustor?), trustee (e.g. a question of trustworthiness), or a third party (e.g. someone from outside who has influence on a trust relationship). Finally, with regard to method of fieldwork Möllering (2006) distinguished quantitative, qualitative, and comparative studies on trust.

Encompassing the outlined variety, the review in this part looks at research in which trust is a central concern (or one of several central concerns) and focuses on the methodological approaches employed. Though increasing interest in trust has been reflected in the development of the wide range of methods applied (Bauer & Freitag, 2018; Saunders et al., 2015), the variety mainly falls into three broad research approaches (Hardin, 2006; Lyon et al. 2012; Nannestad, 2008; Saunders et al., 2015; literature and empirical research review by the author of the thesis):

- experimental design (observed individual decisions, behaviour, and reactions)
- quantitative (questionnaire based) surveys (measurement of self-reported trust)
- qualitative research (self-reported trust and/or observed behavioural aspects of trust)

Experimental design prevails when researching trust at the individual level. It aims at the behavioural dimension of trust rather than the attitudinal, exploring trust in dyadic or multi-actor interactions and more specifically, cooperation (Hardin, 2006; Murtin et al., 2018). Experimental design in trust research encompasses a wide range of so called trust games, conducted in controlled (including laboratory) environments (Lyon et al., 2012; Murtin et al., 2018). The behavioural measures of trust date back to the 1960s, Deutsch's (1960) laboratory game of the prisoner's dilemma being among those at the outset of experimental measurement of trust. Across the literature, experimental (game) design can be found under diverse labels or titles, such as the public goods game, the dictator game, risk ladder (Murtin

et al., 2018), the prisoner's dilemma, collective action, social dilemma (Hardin, 2006; Möllering, 2006; Murtin et al., 2018), investment game (Barrera et al., 2012; Berg et al., 1995) and many others. Trust experiments can vary from limited, isolated two party interactions to evolving, multi-party, multi-interaction games, including varied experiment incentives (e.g. monetary) as well as varied level of knowledge about or between the interaction parties (Hardin, 2006; Lyon et al., 2012; Murtin et al., 2018). It is claimed that experimental studies help to understand the conditions under which an interaction results in trust or, to the contrary, trust is prevented (Möllering, 2006). Despite expansive use of trust measurement via experimental games, it is also recognised that a controlled environment is limited in capturing the equivalent of "real-life" trust situations and thus can be detached from the notion of trust interactions in natural environments (Fehr et al., 2003; Ferrin et al., 2012; Hardin, 2006). Also, that which is observed as trusting behaviour may not be considered as such by the subject (Möllering, 2006). Therefore, in the field of experimental trust research developments tend to look into innovative ways to overcome these limitations (e.g. Ferrin et al., 2012), among which are noticeable attempts to integrate trust experiments with other data collection methods (primarily – attitudinal survey measures) (e.g. Barrera et al., 2012; Ermisch et al., 2009; Fehr et al., 2003; Glaeser et al., 2000; Murtin et al., 2018). Experimental design prevails among economists and organisational research, and (social) psychologists, while sociologists and political scientists tend to employ it less (Nannestad, 2008).

Quantitative (questionnaire based) *surveys* is another broad field in empirical trust research, the first measures dating back as far as the 1940s (Erskine, 1964). They rely on self-reported measures of trust behaviour and/or trust attitudes. Questionnaires entail either single items on trust or a series of statements or scales. Though the variety of survey-type trust scales and individual measures is extensive, to the authors best knowledge, they can, relatively, be grouped as follows: individual level measures of trust as a psychological propensity (i.e. such measures (scales, tests) stem from (social) psychology) (e.g. Rotter, 1964; Wrigtsman, 1991); trust in close relationships (e.g. Rempel et al., 1985); survey measures of interpersonal trust in specified (defined) settings (e.g. trust inside an organization, trust between social roles (see Gillespie, 2012)); trust in or between communities (e.g. Uslaner, 2002, 2015), and trust at a societal level, mainly referring to citizens' attitudes towards authority and other social agencies and/or interpersonal trust of an individual towards more or less general others (Hardin 2006; Möllering, 2006). Similar to the field of experiments on trust, in general, there is a great diversity in the survey measures available (e.g. Gillespie, 2012; Yamagishi, 1986; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). Survey-based measurement of trust, as can be predicted, has been widely applied across diverse

fields in the social and political sciences (including research on democracy, social capital and to some extent civil society), but also extended to other disciplines where the element of trust in social interactions has been researched (e.g. health research).

Application of **qualitative methods** also has its share in trust research. Lyon et al. (2012, p. 7) has pointed out that qualitative research has been of particular value "shedding light on the process of building trust and theory-building". Though (in-depth) *interviewing* as a data collection method dominates qualitative research on trust (Lyon et al. 2012; Möllering, 2006; Saunders et al., 2015) there are examples of uses of other qualitative approaches and data collection methods like in-depth ethnographies and (participant) observation or documentary analysis (e.g. Möllering, 2005; Tillmar, 2012; Zahra, 2011). The choice to employ a qualitative approach stems from the need to explore trust in detail, to delve into an understanding of the trust-building process, to capture the contextual and/or cultural factors behind trust as well as the perceptions of social actors in real-life. For these purposes, varied multi-method combinations and special techniques (e.g. card sorts, repertory grids) have been employed in relation to qualitative trust research (see research cases in Lyon et al. 2012 collection; also see Chapter 3.4. for more detail). An overview of qualitative trust studies by Möllering (2006) has well demonstrated the varied application of qualitative approaches such as autobiographical narrative (see Kramer, 1996), grounded theory (see Sitkin & Stickel, 1996), ethnographic studies (see Gambetta & Hamill, 2005; Tillmar, 2002, 2006; Uzzi, 1997) or case studies (see Huemer, 1998). Though the literature on current qualitative research on trust covers varied topics and research questions, applications in wider societal contexts (e.g. beyond organisation or community settings, defined social interactions like work relations) are scarce and thus remain to be explored, this thesis being an attempt to do so. Qualitative research has been applied to study trust in dyadic relationships (e.g. Cook et al., 2004; Kramer, 1996), relations in a research team (Newell & Swan, 2000), in interfirm relations (Uzzi, 1997), in business relations (e.g. Huemer, 1998; Tillmar, 2012), in entrepreneurial activities (Welter & Alex, 2012), in a trading system (Lyon, 2012), or within communities (e.g. Goodall, 2012) to highlight just a few.

Combinations of research approaches and methods are also characteristic of research on trust. It has already been hinted at in the discussion on multi-method applications in the quantitative or qualitative approaches. For example, a combination of experimental design and survey design has been applied to reduce the limitations of each method and build upon their mutual advantages (e.g. Fehr et al., 2003; Glaeser et al., 2000 or Murtin et al., 2018) or semi-structured interviews

and participant observations have been employed in cross-cultural comparative case studies (Tillmar, 2012). Barrera et al. (2012) employed a multi-method approach combining laboratory experiments, surveys and vignette experiments. Likewise, mixed method research designs, encompassing *both* quantitative and qualitative approaches (and respective data collection methods) have been employed in research on trust (Saunders et al., 2015).

Following the overview of available methodological alternatives and developments in research on trust, several important implications can be drawn in relation to the aim of the thesis. First, research on trust in relation to democracy and social capital predominantly, if not exclusively, relies on survey measures of social generalised trust and political trust (Goodall, 2012; Hardin, 2006; Patulny & Lind Haase Svendsen, 2007). Second, though acknowledging the value of quantitative measures on trust, some researchers have expressed concern that relying mostly on surveys is not enough to grasp manifestations of trust to a sufficient extent and thus suggestions have been made to expand the use of a qualitative approach in this regard. For example, Möllering (2006) maintained reservations about whether it is at all possible to understand trust in quantitative terms and thus advocated the use of qualitative studies that could delve better into the complexity of trust. Goodall (2012) referred to her research as a rare example of the application of a qualitative research approach in community research on trust, confirming that the "lack of qualitative community research on trust mirrors to an extent the situation regarding the concept of social capital; most research on social capital has been based on surveys and scales" (Goodall, 2012, p. 94). Moreover, Norris et al. (2019) have recently pointed out that when predominantly relying on surveys measures, researchers actually lack an understanding about social actors' perspective on social generalised and political trust; therefore, research on social generalised trust and political trust would benefit from the application of qualitative methods next to survey measures. Finally, there has been ongoing discussion scrutinising the validity of standard social generalised trust and political trust measures (Bauer & Freitag, 2018; Möllering, 2006).

The chapters below, therefore, will further concentrate on two tasks: one, detailed analysis of survey measures of social generalised trust and political trust, focusing both on their development and limitations; and two, assessment of the potential to apply a qualitative research approach to study trust that goes beyond the realm of social particularised trust relations.

3.2. Development and limitations of survey measures of social generalised trust

The chapter turns to a review of the history of social generalised trust measures; provides examples of their development (or lack of it), and attempts to contribute to the debate on issues of validity. Interestingly, there are two general observations to start with: one, despite some innovations, researchers continue to primarily use the modified measures (both of social generalised trust and political trust) that were introduced around the 1940s, 50s and 60s (whereas innovations remain confined to a few studies) (Bauer & Freitag, 2018; Reeskens & Hooghe, 2008); second, an abundant amount of studies, not only in sociology and political science, but also social psychology, economics and a variety of other fields, have been produced that rely exclusively on these measures to answer diverse research questions and draw important conclusions, yet, often producing conflicting or inconsistent results (Ermisch et al., 2009; Miller & Mitamura, 2003). The relative stability and extensive use of these measures, therefore, poses a peculiar issue if their validity can be reasonably questioned.

3.2.1. History and development of social generalised trust measures

A survey question about *one's trust in other people* may be traced back to the middle of the 20th century. The initial counterpart of the current standard social generalised trust question (further referred to as the SGTQ) was invented by German sociologist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and worded: "Do you believe [*think*][8] that most people can be trusted?" (Cusack, 1997, p. 82; Noelle-Neumann, 1981, p. 52). It has been used regularly in Germany since 1948, thus producing one of the longest series of measurement in the world (Cusack, 1997; Zmerli et al., 2007). However, it is worth noting that Erskine (1964, p. 517) referred to the data of public opinion polls in the USA, which included a trust in people question in 1942 (by *Office of Public Opinion Research*, OPOR), 1948 and 1964 (by *National Opinion Research Center*, NORC)

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[8]   It is difficult to clearly deconstruct the exact initial wording because there is limited accessibility to the original sources and it seems that secondary sources re-cite a slightly modified formulation. In Noelle-Neumann 1981, p. 52 the wording included "believe", while Cusack (1997) provided wording with "think" next to the data and referred to the later work of Noelle-Neumann (1994). Others (e.g. Zmerli et al., 2007) provided a standard new formulation ("believe" or "would you say") referring to Noelle-Neuman as a source of it, while not providing the original source or formulation. This leads to a confusion and distortion of the original question construction.

(worded: "Do you think most people can be trusted?") thus dating the origin of the trust in other people question even earlier.

Further, Morris Rosenberg (psychology)[9] constructed a Guttman scale composed of five dimensions of "faith in people", the first one referring to trust and worded: "Some people say that most people can be trusted. Others say you can't be too careful in your dealings with people. How do you feel about it?" (Rosenberg, 1956, p. 620; Wrigtsman, 1991, p. 405). The scale was first used in 1952 in a study of Cornell University students' values (Rosenberg, 1956). Later, it was widely adopted by national and international surveys. For example, Almond and Verba (1989) referred to Rosenberg's "faith in people" scale (all 5 dimensions included) and used it in their survey conducted in 1959-1960 in five countries (USA, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Mexico). In 1964, the ANES questionnaire (Political Behavior Program, Survey Research Center [PBP-SRC], 1999) also referred to Rosenberg's scale, though it included only three items from the "faith in people" scale and modified their original wording (PBP-SRC, 1999, Q69-Q71). The trust item was worded: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people" (PBP-SRC, 1999, Q69), whereas two other scale items referred to most people being helpful (or looking for themselves) and most people being fair (or taking advantage). Around the same time, a study of American high school students and their parent in 1965 (repeated in 1973, 1982 and 1997) used the same three-item scale, trust item (with slightly different wording) being "Generally speaking, do you believe that most people can be trusted, or can't you be too careful in dealing with people" (Sherrod, 2006, p. 604)[10]. In the following decades, SGTQ has been used in numerous international comparative surveys and regional as well as national survey programmes (see examples in Table 2 below) to identify or compare levels of trust in people within societies.

To trace if and how measurement of social generalised trust developed or changed, the author conducted a review of large scale (comparative) surveys questionnaires (see Table 2 and Appendix A4)[11]. The author collected questionnaires from the main repeated international and regional surveys and some examples of

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[9] It is worth noting that around that time other interpersonal trust scales, such as personality and social psychology attitudes measures, were developed as well (e.g. by Julian B. Rotter) (Wrigtsman, 1991), which have not been adopted by international social surveys to a large extent, mainly due to their length (Delhey, 2014).

[10] However, Jennings and Stoker (2004) refer to the same survey and refer to a new wording of SGTQ (p. 350). Thus again, clear deconstruction of the original wording is not available.

[11] The discussion in the chapter, examples of surveys and questions refer to information provided in Table 2 and Appendix A4, where references to both the surveys and the respective questionnaires are provided.

national survey programmes, searching for the use of SGTQ and (if available) other trust-related survey questions. The core versions of questionnaires in English were used (thus, the potential issues related to language use and effects of translation were not covered in the thesis).

The review revealed that despite attempts to develop original or extended trust measures (e.g. Evans & van de Calseyde, 2018; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994), these variations were more common for separate research projects, while in large scale (comparative) surveys the SGTQ item prevailed.

Some large scale (comparative) surveys include three items that originated in the "faith in people" scale (i.e. trust[12], people being helpful[13] and people being fair[14]); for example, *European Social Survey* (ESS) or some waves of *European Values Study* (EVS). The use of the three items is not consistent across surveys, though. For example, *International Social Survey Program* (ISSP) used the trust item and a modified fairness[15] item. ANES had all three items until the wave in 1992, whereas, for example, in the waves in 1996 and 1999 only the trust and fairness items were included. Similarly, *Asian Barometer* (AsB) included only the fairness item (apart from SGTQ), but not people being helpful[16].

There are also examples where apart from the SGTQ item surveys included additional trust related questions, mostly one's trust in some specified groups or categories of people. In the 1990 wave, EVS had an additional question[17] on trust in family and [*nationality*] people in general. In the 2017 wave, EVS included a question on trust in people from various groups (ranging from family to people of another

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[12] SGTQ wording.

[13] Survey question: "Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?" (PBP-SRC, 1999, Q60).

[14] Survey question: "Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance or would they try to be fair?" (PBP-SRC, 1999, Q61).

[15] Survey question: "How often do you think that people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, and how often would they try to be fair?" (e.g. ISSP Questionnaire 2004, Appendix A4).

[16] See e.g. AsB Questionnaire 2010-2012 or 2014-2016, Appendix A4.

[17] Survey question: "I now want to ask you how much you trust the following groups of people: Using the responses on this card, could you tell me how much you trust: Your family; [nationality] people in general (e.g. EVS Questionnaire 1990, Appendix A4).

nationality)[18], which previously has appeared in WVS since wave 5 (2005-2009)[19]. AsB (wave 2005-2008)[20] had a similar question on trust in relatives, neighbours, and other people one interacts with. Similarly, *Afro Barometer* (AfB) asked about trust in relatives, neighbours, other people one knows and other [*people of one's nationality*][21]. *Caucasus Barometer* (CB) (e.g. wave 2010) had a trust question that targeted professional groups of people, such as journalists in the country, clergy of one's religious denomination, judges in the country, medical doctors in the country, etc.[22]

Furthermore, AsB had an item "Most people are trustworthy"[23] and *Arab Barometer* (ArB) in some waves (e.g. 2010-2011) had *only* this question linked to trust (though SGTQ was included in other ArB waves, e.g. 2016-2017)[24]. An interesting example could be "intergenerational trust" (trust of older people in young people and vice versa) questions[25] used in WVS wave 1 (1981-1984). Other examples diverging from the SGTQ trust item were the use of a scale item: "There are many people I can trust completely" (*Canadian General Social Survey*, CGSS[26]); *British Household Panel Survey* (BHPS) item of willingness to take risks in trusting strangers[27], or the WVS (e.g. wave 2010-2012) item of one's self-assessment of being generally trusting[28]. In general,

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[18] Survey questions: "I would like to ask you how much you trust people from various groups. Could you tell me for each whether you trust people from this group completely, somewhat, not very much or not at all?" Groups of people: Your family; People in your neighbourhood; People you know personally; People you meet for the first time; People of another religion; People of another nationality (e.g. EVS Questionnaire 2017, Appendix A4).

[19] See e.g. WVS Questionnaire 2005-2009, Appendix A4.

[20]   Survey questions: "How much trust do you have in each of the following types of people?" (e.g. AsB Questionnaire 2005-2008, Appendix A4).

[21] See e.g. AfB Questionnaire 2005, Appendix A4.

[22] CB Questionnaire 2010, Appendix A4.

[23] Survey question: "Please tell me how you feel about the following statements. Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? Most people are trustworthy?" (e.g. AsB Questionnaire 2010-2012, Appendix A4).

[24] See ArB Questionnaire 2010-2011 and Questionnaire 2016-2017, Appendix A4.

[25] Survey questions: "How much trust do you think young people have in older people in Britain today?" and "How much trust do you think older people have in the young in Britain today" (WVS Questionnaire 1981-1984, Appendix A4).

[26] E.g. CGSS Questionnaire 2008, Appendix A4.

[27] Survey question: "Are you generally a person who is fully prepared to take risks in trusting strangers or do you try to avoid taking such risks?" Answer alternatives: Unwilling to take risks in trusting strangers / Fully prepared to take risks in trusting strangers (BHPS Questionnaire Wave 18, Appendix A4).

[28] Survey statement: "I see myself as someone who is generally trusting" (WVS Questionnaire 2010-2012, Appendix A4).

across individual survey programs and even waves, it is possible to find examples of more specific questions on trust in other people, indicating categories of people and/or content of trust (for more details see Appendix A4).

Despite varied use of additional trust related survey questions, SGTQ appears to be the most persistent measure across survey programmes and waves. It is also the key measure directly linked to a conceptual definition of social generalised trust and is often used as the *one* and *only* trust variable in research studies and papers, thus presuming that it is sufficient to assess the levels of generalised trust (Hardin, 2006; Lundåsen, 2001; Miller & Mitamura, 2015; Nannestad, 2008). The three item scale as a variant of the social generalised trust measure has not been used as consistently as the single SGTQ measure. Some researchers found the scale more suitable and confirmed it as comparable (Reeskens & Hooghe, 2008), relatively unbiased, and stable over time (Smith, 1997), whereas others doubted whether the three item scale increased or decreased the validity of the measurement of trust and if it is more consistent and useful than the single SGTQ item (Uslaner, 2012, 2015). Therefore, relying on review of conceptualisation and dominant use over empirical research, further the author focuses on development of SGTQ item only.

A review of the use of SGTQ over time is presented in concise form in Table 2 (more detail and references to survey programmes and questionnaires is provided in Appendix A4). The analysis revealed some variation in *question wording* and in particular in the construction of *answer alternatives* (these two aspects will be discussed in detail below). However, at the same time it showed an impressive stability (albeit stagnation) of the use of SGTQ and limited changes in the core wording.

Tables 2a – 2c were separated based on clustered patterns of use of SGTQ wording over time and across surveys. Based on the observed development, the following sections discuss the wording and the answer alternatives of SGTQ separately.

Table 2 (a-c). Versions of the social generalized trust question in selected large scale surveys[29]

Table 2a.

Standard SGTQ wording remained
General Social Survey (GSS) (including NORC) [USA]
Waves 1972–2018 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Most people can be trusted / Can't be too careful / Other, depends --- Wave 1983 [*additional question*] Do you think most people can be trusted? Yes / No --- Wave 2004 Generally speaking, would you say that people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? People can almost always be trusted / People can usually be trusted / You usually can't be too careful in dealing with people / You almost always can't be too careful in dealing with people --- Wave 2006 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Most people can be trusted / Need to be very careful --- Waves 2008, 2014, 2018 Both dichotomous (with standard answer alternatives) and categorical scale questions included

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[29] The table includes original wording retrieved from available English versions of survey questionnaires. The core answer alternatives have been included in the table (to condense the necessary information, answer alternatives like "Don't know" or "Other" were excluded).

Table 2a (continued).

European Values Study (EVS)
Waves 1981–2017 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Most people can be trusted / Can't be too careful

British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)
Waves 1998–2018 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Most people can be trusted / Can't be too careful

Swiss Household Panel (SHP)
Waves 2002–2018 Would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people, if 0 means "Can't be too careful" and 10 means "Most people can be trusted"?

European Social Survey (ESS)
Waves 2002–2018 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please tell me on a score of 0 to 10, where 0 means you can't be too careful and 10 means that most people can be trusted. *Includes note explaining the meaning of answer alternative "Can't be too careful":* *need to be wary or always somewhat suspicious*

European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Waves 2003–2016 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means you can't be too careful and 10 means that most people can be trusted.

Table 2a (continued).

Canadian General Social Survey (CGSS)
Waves 2003, 2008, 2013
Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?
Most people can be trusted / Cannot be too careful in dealing with people
International Social Survey Program (ISSP)
Citizenship module 2004 and 2014
Generally speaking, would you say that people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?
People can almost always be trusted / People can usually be trusted / You usually can't be too careful in dealing with people / You almost always can't be too careful in dealing with people
Eurobarometer (EB)
2004 Special Eurobarometer (Eurobarometer 62.2)
Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?
Most people can be trusted / You can't be too careful

2009 and later Special Eurobarometer (Eurobarometer 72.1; 74.1; 81.5)
Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where [1] means that 'you can't be too careful' and [10] means that 'most people can be trusted'.
Latino Barometer (LB)
Waves 1996–1997
Generally speaking, would you say that people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?
People can almost always be trusted / You usually can't be too careful in dealing with people
---
Since wave 1998–2018
Generally speaking, would you say that you can trust most people, or that you can never be too careful when dealing with others?
You can trust most people / You can never be too careful when dealing with others

Source: composed by the author

Table 2b.

Standard SGTQ wording modified
World Values Survey (WVS)
Since wave 1, 1981–1984 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted r that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Most people can be trusted / Can't be too careful In wave 3, 1995-1998: note for translation for answer alternative "Can't be too careful" = "have to be very careful". In wave 4, 1999-2004 and later waves: enerally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people? Most people can be trusted / Need to be very careful
Afro Barometer (AfB)
Wave 1, 2000 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Most people can be trusted / Can't be too careful --- Since wave 3, 2005 to 2012 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you must be very careful in dealing with people? Most people can be trusted / You must be very careful

Table 2b (continued).

Asian Barometer (AsB)
Wave 1, 2001–2003
General speaking, would you say that "Most people can be trusted" or "you can't be too careful in dealing with them"?
Most people can be trusted / One can't be too careful in dealing with them
---
Since wave 2, 2005-2008
General speaking, would you say that "Most people can be trusted" or "that you must be very careful in dealing with people"?
Most people can be trusted / You must be very careful in dealing with people

Arab Barometer (ArB)
Wave 1, 2006–2009
Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted?
Most people can be trusted / You must be very careful in dealing with people
---
Wave 5, 2018-2019
Generally speaking, would you say that "Most people can be trusted" or "that you must be very careful in dealing with people"?
Most people can be trusted / I must be very careful in dealing with people

Source: composed by the author

Table 2c.

Variated SGTQ wording
American National Election Studies (ANES)

Waves 1952–2008

General speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted
or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people.

Most people can be trusted / Can't be too careful

Wave 2008

Introduces new social trust question. Respondents were randomly assigned
to the standard social trust question version or to new social trust question.
New social trust question version as follows:

Generally speaking, how often can you trust other people?
Always, most of the time, about half the time, once in a while, or never?

Since Wave 2012–016

Only the new version of the social trust question: Generally speaking,
how often can you trust other people?

Always, most of the time, about half the time, once in a while, or never? /
Never, some of the time, about half the time, most of the time, or always?
(Forward/reverse response option order)

German General Social Survey (GGSS)

Waves 2000–2016

Some people think that most people can be trusted.
Others think that one can't be careful enough when dealing with other people.
What do you think?

Most people can be trusted / One can't be careful enough

Caucasus Barometer (CB)

Waves 2010–2019

Generally speaking, would you say that most people in [*country*] can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

You can't be too careful / Most people can be trusted

Note for translations provided (Wave 2011): "You can't be too careful" is equivalent to "Most people should not be trusted" – it basically says, no matter how careful you are, you are still potentially in danger".

Australian General Social Survey (AGSS)

Waves 2006, 2010, 2014

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
That most people can be trusted?

Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)

Wave 2013

Would you say that most people can be trusted?
Please answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means that in general you do not trust any other person and 10 that you feel most people can be trusted.

Wave 2018

To what extent do you trust other people? Please answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means that in general you do not trust at all and 10 that you trust completely.

Variable description provided: "The variable refers to the respondent's opinion/feeling. 'Social trust is […] a core value or belief; an abstract evaluation of the moral standards of the society in which we live.' (Sturgis et al. 2012)
Others should be treated as people with whom the respondent is **not** [*bolded in original*] acquainted (family, friends, neighbours etc. should be excluded)".

Source: composed by the author

Note on the wording of the standard social generalised trust question

Survey programmes fall into three clusters of treatment of SGTQ across time (waves). The biggest cluster (Table 2a) (10 out of 19 survey programmes reviewed) includes surveys that kept the initial wording of the question unchanged[30]. The minor variations are that SHP dropped "Generally speaking" at the beginning of the question and a slight variation in the wording of LB, which most probably is due to translation[31] into English rather that a methodological decision. Worth noting is that ESS included a note to explain the "Can't be too careful" fragment (i.e. it means "need to be wary or always somewhat suspicious") though maintaining the original wording across the waves, whereas specifically that fragment seemed to be considered as problematic by other surveys. Also, it may be related to translation difficulties in comparative survey programmes as, for example, from the point of view of the Lithuanian language, the linguistic construction "can't be too careful" is hard to comprehend literally[32]. American GSS seems to have experimented with the SGTQ over time, though more so with the answer alternatives' scale than the wording of the question, which remained standard.

Another cluster of survey programmes introduced an updated wording in keeping with the core of SGTQ (Table 2b) but re-wording the segment of "can't be too careful". In wave 3 (1995-1998) WVS included a note for translation referencing that "can't be too careful" is equivalent to "have to be very careful". Subsequently, since wave 4 updated the wording of the whole question, the wording has been used as presented in the English version of the questionnaire: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?". Regional barometer surveys (Asian, Afro, Arab Barometers) introduced this change in the wording as well.

Finally, some surveys developed a more diverged counterpart of SGTQ or added some additional fragments to the standard wording (Table 2c). An example in which the wording of the SGTQ was changed more sharply in subsequent waves is ANES. They had applied the standard wording since 1952. In wave 2008, next to SGTQ, ANES included a frequency of trust in "other people" question (Generally speaking,

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[30] Changes in answer alternatives (wording and scale) will be discussed in a separate section.

[31] However, it is difficult to access if the change in wording actually happened or if it is just translation related mismatch. The author of the thesis noticed that Spanish version of the question wording remained the same in all waves.

[32] This argument is based on the author's experience as well as discussion with other colleagues and respondents. However, it is not grounded in any scholarly linguistic analysis.

how often can you trust other people? Always; most of the time; about half the time; once in a while; never). Starting with the next wave in 2012, only the latter trust in people question remained. GGSS used a split wording of SGTQ, keeping the standard expressions of trust in most people, whereas AGSS formed a statement for respondents to agree/disagree, keeping the only "most people can be trusted" segment of the standard wording. CB applied SGTQ but specified "most people" as those in a specific country (e.g. "most people in Georgia"). EU-SILC kept the trust segment of the standard wording, whereas wave 2018 diverged further, asking about the extent of one's trust in "other people". To sum up, in this cluster the variations in wording still relied heavily on the standard SGTQ. The segment of trust in "most" or "other" people as the point of reference largely remained; however, these surveys tended to lean towards reshaping SGTQ into measure of frequency or intensity of trust in people. The next section therefore turns to an overview of the development of SGTQ answer alternatives across surveys over time.

Note on the scale standard social generalised trust question

The initial constructs of SGTQ were designed with a categorical dichotomous response scale (i.e. [*most people*] can be trusted / [*you*] can't be too careful (Cusack, 1997, p. 82; Wrigtsman, 1991, p. 405) or Yes [*can trust*] / No [*cannot trust*] (Erskine, 1964, p. 517). Yet again, in over half of the surveys under review the standard categorical dichotomous scale remained up until the latest waves.

There were two variations observed in the use of answer categories apart from the dichotomous response alternatives: a numeric scale or an ordinal scale. In the case of the numeric scale, 10 or 11-point scales were used while keeping the wording of the dichotomous response alternatives for the end scores. For example, EQLS used a 10-point scale from 1 to 10, whereas ESS used an 11-point scale from 0 to 1, with the lowest end score meaning "you can't be too careful" and the highest end score meaning that "most people can be trusted". EU-SILC also applied an 11-point scale, however, the end scores ranged from "in general you do not trust at all" and "you trust completely".

The surveys that applied ordinal answer alternatives, measured trust either across frequency or agreement scales. For example, ISSP applied a 4 statement frequency scale – two combined with a standard dichotomous answer alternative "people can be trusted" (almost always and usually), and two with "can't be too careful in dealing with people" (usually and almost always). Interestingly, in ISSP2010 module included with GGSS questionnaire[33] a 5-point numeric scale was used for SGTQ

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[33]   See GGSS Questionnaire 2010, Appendix A4.

keeping the standard dichotomic alternatives as the scale ends. AGSS used a Likert-type agreement of 5 alternatives scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) for the "most people can be trusted" statement.

Despite some observed variation in SGTQ wording or answer alternatives, it is possible to conclude that there was no essential development of the social generalised trust measurement. Surveys tended to keep the standard formulations even if some re-arrangements were made. The stability of SGTQ makes it valuable because of an impressively long timeline. However, there also have been attempts over past decades to question the soundness and validity of SGTQ as a measure of trust in other people (Glaeser et al., 2000; Delhey et al., 2011; Lundmark et al., 2016; Sturgis & Smith, 2010, and others). The author of the thesis aims to contribute to the discussion. In the sections below the author relies on the literature review and later enhances the discussion with the results of the empirical research of the thesis (see Part 4, Section 4.3.1.). The debates about potential issues of trust measurement cover various aspects (e.g. validity, reliability, consistency over time, and many others) (Bauer & Freitag, 2018). For the purposes of this thesis the author will mostly focus on the issue of linkage between conceptual definition, its operational counterpart, and respondent interpretations. The author predominantly questions if in the case of SGTQ, how respondents interpret the question is in line with the theory that researchers intended.

3.2.2. Limitations of the standard social generalised trust measure: What exactly does it measure?

As has been showed, "most people" as the target of trust has consistently been kept as a constant across versions of SGTQ. One of the key criterion of a survey question as a good measure of a phenomenon is correspondence between its conceptual meaning (i.e. how a researcher defines a concept; what meaning (s)he aims to communicate; what (s)he thinks (s)he is asking about) and the interpretation of a respondent who will answer the question. To sum up the survey methodology literature (e.g. de Vaus, 2014; Lenzner & Menold, 2016; Tourangeau et al., 2000), ideally all respondents in a survey interpret the question in the same way and this interpretation corresponds to the interpretation intended by a researcher and the outlined conceptual definition (see Figure 5). As Conrad and Schober (2021, p. 203) rightly claim, "survey questions can only work as intended if they are understood as intended". Herein, therefore, lie great risks for the intended quality of survey measures and, consequently, the results and conclusions that they produce. According to Conrad and Schober (2000), it is not rare that even when questions seem to be rather straightforward, respondents still interpret them differently than intended by researchers. Moreover, Conrad and

Schober (2000) claim that respondents not only have to understand (interpret) the meaning of individual words and phrases, but they also have to link the meanings to their personal situation, which adds up to the potential for divergence in perception of the question.

Figure 5. Consistency of meaning and interpretation of a survey question
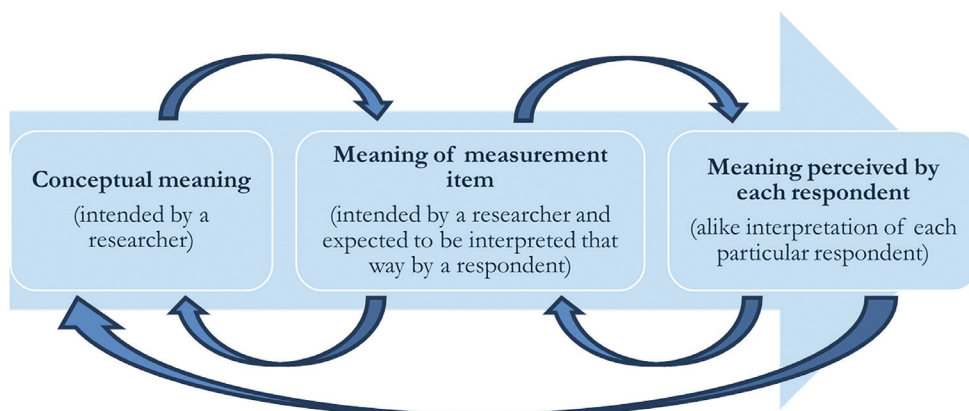
Source: composed by the author

One of the potential "glitches" that can happen in the cognitive process of responding to a survey question (Schwarz, 2008; Sudman et al., 1996) is that a respondent may not understand a question, may misunderstand it, or may interpret it differently than a researcher expects, thus answering a question that is to a larger or smaller extent different than the one intended by the researcher. The use of broad, vague concepts, relative terms or vague quantifiers in the question wording are commonly named as risks leading to poor survey measurement (de Vaus, 2014; Groves et al., 2009; Lenzner & Menold, 2016; Tourangeau et al., 2000).

The target of "most people" in SGTQ is therefore problematic in this regard. "Most people" is a very general notion that may evoke a variety of interpretations and thus obscure what people think it actually includes. Potentially, each respondent has a broad range of people to think about and varied configurations (s)he considers when responding. Which, in turn, leads to questioning *what* do respondents answer *about* (what exactly "most people" means from the perspective of respondents) and what kind of trust *does* SGTQ actually *measure* (i.e. how well this perception corresponds to the conceptual definition of social generalised trust)? It further causes an equivalence debate: do the differences between two respondents mean their

differences in trust or their differences in interpreting the meaning of the question (Bauer & Freitag, 2018). Thus, eventually, how can we interpret the results stemming from the application of SGTQ?

What does "most people" mean?

As demonstrated in Section 2.2.1., scholarly literature conceptualises social generalised trust as trust in people in general and beyond personal experience, more specifically describing them as strangers, unfamiliar people, people one does not know, or who are different from us, unlike us, or generally most people. SGTQ is thus commonly regarded as a corresponding measure to these conceptual frameworks. However, there is no clear or grounded support for this presumed linkage between conceptual definition and measurement item. First, the cognate concepts that have been used in conceptual definitions themselves do not precisely connote the same category of people. People in general and strangers do not mean the same; unfamiliar and different – it is not the same; even stranger and unfamiliar carry their own meaning of reference. Therefore, the conceptual boundaries of "most people" are rather wide, even though they connote a threshold that the targets of trust are people who are beyond immediate circles of familiarity (yet again – from a mundane point of view, "most people" or "people in general" could, actually, mean any configuration of people one subjectively conceives). Second, the wording of the SGTQ does not specify conceptual presumption or in any way indicate what the "most people" must mean to a respondent. Therefore, respondents can *and* have to make their own decision as to how to interpret what "most people" means and how wide or narrow circle of people to consider. Moreover, empirical studies that employ SGTQ rarely establish a clear (if any) linkage to the conceptual derivation of it. As an example, SHP puts a label of "General trust in people" next to the SGTQ item in the source questionnaire, thus potentially alluding to a conceptualisation of social generalised trust (see reference to respective questionnaires in Appendix A4). An example of a clear reference to the conceptual definition can be found in EU-SILC, which refers to a definition in Sturgis et al. (2012) and further indicates that "(o)thers should be treated as people with whom the respondent is **not** [*bolded in original*] acquainted (family, friends, neighbours etc. should be excluded)" (see Table 2c). As Delhey et al. (2011) revealed, the formulation by Noelle-Neuman intended to measure trust in other people treated "other" as a wide and *unfamiliar* circle of people (see also Uslaner, 2001, 2002) and thus hundreds of surveys opted for the "tried and tested" (Delhey et al., 2011, p. 787) SGTQ to measure social generalised trust. Yet again, the wording of "most people", as it is, in no way specifies the level

of (un)familiarity or provides any indication on the limits of the circle of people one has to consider.

The issues of *vagueness*, *broadness* and *inclination to multiple interpretations* of SGTQ has been repeatedly noted. Hardin (2006) summarised the issue as follows:

> <...> *respondents to these surveys have to create their own universe of people and objects to which they then apply the questions. You might narrow the population down from everyone to merely those with whom you deal, that is, to the category that would fit trust as a relational concept. Others might narrow it to those whom they might encounter on the sidewalks and in the shops of their city (p. 61-62).*

The range and combination of people one could consider as "most people" can be enormous. The wording of SGTQ itself does not provide a point of reference for the interpretation, neither about the group of people, or types of action or what might be at stake in trust relationships (Ermisch et al., 2009). As Reeskens and Hooghe (2008) put it, "(a)s researchers, we do not have a clue who the respondent has in mind when s/he thinks about ''most people''" (p. 516), which, as has been argued above, is not a characteristic of a good survey measure. Being a multi-layered phenomenon, trust can manifest in social life in varying ways. It is hard to expects that someone will trust anyone in regard to everything (Nannestad, 2008). The levels of trust may be different in regard to others or even the same person if matter or situations of trust changes. For example, if one trusts some people in the neighbourhood, (s)he can distrust other neighbours or one can trust a colleague to fulfil tasks on time but not in other spheres of activity (e.g. to lend money). The less specified the situation and actors are, the more potential variations there can emerge.

The absence of guidelines and limits for interpretation of the question makes respondents fill in the void themselves and the close to endless possibilities there makes the comparisons between individuals, groups, countries, cultures or times problematic (Nannestad, 2008; Reeskens & Hooghe, 2008). According to Nannestad (2008), if respondents somehow implicitly imply the same "moral community" (refers to Uslaner, 2002) when conjuring their response to SGTQ, the comparability would be possible; however, as the moral community is mostly self-defined, the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of such a community may vary greatly. Some empirical studies on respondents' interpretations of SGTQ incline to support the latter outcome.

Sturgis and Smith (2010) applied a retrospective "think aloud" method – they asked respondents to answer SGTQ and then tell who were the people they considered as "most people". Their study revealed that 28 per cent of respondents

indicated they were thinking about known others (compared to 35 per cent of those who considered unknown others). Further, Sturgis and Smith (2010) showed that those who considered known others, tended to choose the alternative of trust (rather than the alternative of "can't be too careful"). It means that the interpretation of "most people" affected the level of trust expressed via an answer. Thus, it is possible to presume that SGTQ not only includes wider circles of people than only trust in "unfamiliar others" but also implies another issue of measurement. There is a tendency that levels identified with SGTQ and interpreted as trust levels in people in general might be higher than real trust levels in people in general (*if* we would *only* include *unknown* others into consideration, as conceptual frameworks suggest).

According to Uslaner (2002, 2012), respondents do not have difficulty understanding the question (in the way intended). He reasoned his claim by pointing out that 72 per cent of respondents (ANES 2000 study), when asked what they think the question meant, interpreted social generalised trust in terms of general world view without reference to specific experience. However, responses also showed that 22.5 per cent of respondents actually *do consider* personal experience (Uslaner, 2002, 2012). Thus, the interpretation of slightly above one fifth of respondents did not correspond to the meaning intended by the conceptual content of social generalised trust as trust in strangers or trust based on general moral grounds.

As the wording of SGTQ does not specify what "most people" means, the standard question is also problematic in worldwide comparisons, highlighted Delhey (2014). Delhey et al. (2011) questioned if "most people" meant the same in different countries? They discussed if it were possible to make reasonable comparisons between countries because interpretation of what social generalised trust actually means may substantially differ between countries and cultures. Delhey et al. (2011) proposed a concept of *radius of trust*, which defined wider or narrower circles of people one (dis)trusts (see also van Horn, 2014). They reconceptualised social generalised trust via a) level of trust and b) radius of trust. Delhey et al. (2011) compared differences of radius of trust among selected countries and linked it to estimates of social generalised trust. They used SGTQ and an additional trust question in the WVS wave 5 questionnaire that specifies objects of trust in family, neighbours, people one personally knows (they all composed in-group trust) and trust in people one meets for the first time, people of other religions and people of other ethnicity (out-group trust). Delhey's et al. (2011) analysis of results in 51 countries revealed that high levels of social generalised trust do not necessarily mean a wide radius of trust. For example, in both China and Switzerland the level of social generalised trust was similarly high, but the radius of trust in China was narrower than in Switzerland. Therefore, Delhey et al. (2011) re-calculated

the results of countries, correcting levels of social generalised trust with radius of trust. In some countries the level of social generalised trust did not change; however, in other countries it clearly increased (e.g. Slovenia, Poland) or decreased (e.g. South Korea, China, and Thailand). Their study suggested two implications: on the one hand, SGTQ is a justifiable measure of social generalised trust because levels of trust did not change in part of the countries; on the other hand, we have to be careful when interpreting levels of trust in comparative research as the radius of trust may actually be rather narrow. Delhey et al. (2011) proposed to indicate object of trust when measuring it. They did not reject SGTQ; however, they concluded that it is necessary to try solving the issue related to the radius of trust both theoretically and empirically. Hooghe and Reeskens (2007; Reeskens & Hooghe, 2008) likewise concluded that cross-cultural measurement equivalence of SGTQ is problematic and therefore researchers should be careful using the results as the meanings can differ across cultures and languages.

Bauer and Freitag (2018, p. 22-23) presented the results of two student samples, whose answers to standard SGTQ were followed by probes on what they considered as "most people". Their findings showed a range of situations – from strangers to friends – that were considered. It yet again illustrated that in the minds of respondents "most people" does not exclusively mean strangers or unknown, unfamiliar people.

Lundåsen (2010) presented results of a qualitative pre-test with Swedish respondents, which showed that they tended to have different interpretations of SGTQ. For at least some of them the wording "most people" meant someone they knew. In the case of the Netherlands, Dekker (2012) used open questions and focus groups, asking people to elaborate on their choice between SGTQ answer alternatives ('most people can be trusted' and 'can't be too careful'). The results revealed that there were distinct grounds attached to negative and positive choices: 'distrust' responses tended to refer to experiences, whereas 'trust' responses tended to refer to some basic (moral or philosophy of life) decision (and seldom to experiences), thus providing another doubt on exactly what and how SGTQ measures?

To continue with the latter question, some researchers came to doubt if SGTQ is a measure of trust at all. For example, according to Glaeser et al. (1999), standard social generalised trust questions do not appear to measure trust but trustworthiness, therefore, "most work using these survey questions needs to be somewhat reinterpreted" (p. 33) and other instruments for trust measurement used. Glaeser et al. (2000) conducted analysis of data from two experiments and a survey with SGTQ. Their analysis confirmed the problem of content and interpretation of SGTQ. According to them, it is likely that SGTQ rather measures trustworthiness than trust. Naef and Schupp (2009) came to similar conclusion, claiming that SGTQ measures people's expectations about trustworthiness of others and not their own

dispositions of trust. Therefore, even if trustworthiness is an important element in trust judgement, it is not the same as trust. If SGTQ measures trustworthiness, it cannot be interpreted as measuring trust.

Dilemmas of answer alternative choices: how many and which ones?

As shown in Section 3.2.1., survey programmes "experimented" slightly more with the answer alternatives of SGTQ than its wording. This section follows the debate on two aspects: one, if standard dichotomous scales or other types of scales work better for trust measurement and two, the issues that researcher found with regard to the end points of answer alternatives.

Uslaner (2009, 2012) advocates the use of standard dichotomous answer alternatives to SGTQ, highlighting the troublesome "clumping" effect (tendency of respondents to provide answer around the mean, i.e. values 4, 5, and 6) of an 11-point scale. Therefore, he does not support replacement of the dichotomous measure with an 11-point scale. However, other authors see a dichotomous scale as too restricting and thus not corresponding to the complexity of trust and actual cross-variation across individuals (Hooghe & Reeskens, 2007; Lundåsen, 2001). According to Lundåsen (2001), a dichotomised variable does not allow for different degrees of trust: trust is either placed or not given at all. Hooghe and Reeskens (2007) compare it to a pregnancy, either you are pregnant or not, there is no middle ground, whereas in reality social actors can place varied degrees of trust. Hooghe and Reeskens (2007), therefore, advocate the use of an 11-point scale and demonstrate that it brings more performative measures of trust than a dichotomous scale.

Using survey-embedded experiments, Lundmark et al. (2016) performed a double check: both on how the different wording and different number of scale points worked. Lundmark et al. (2016) experimented with a minimally balanced version of the wording: "In your opinion, to what extent is it generally possible to trust people?" (People cannot generally be trusted; People can generally be trusted) and a fully balanced version of the wording (standard SGTQ): "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?" and three types of scales: a standard dichotomous scale, 7-point and 11-point scale. Lundmark et al. (2016) concluded that the minimally balanced question wording in combination with either a 7-point or 11-point scale worked best when measuring social generalised trust; correspondingly, they proposed against using a dichotomous scale as the measurement provided by several-point scales tends to be more valid and more substantively detailed.

Finally, in current surveys when either dichotomous or several-point scales are used, the end points more often remain standard, that is, the choice lies between

"most people can be trusted" and "you need to be/can't be too careful in dealing with people". The authors who have looked into it agree that these alternatives actually represent two dimensions. The positive alternative is about trust, whereas the negative end actually represents caution (Miller & Mutamura, 2003; Yamagishi et al., 1999). The respondents, therefore, choose between trust and caution (not trust-distrust or caution-incaution), which are not mutually exclusive or opposite and therefore should be measured separately (Miller & Mutamura, 2003; Naef & Schupp, 2009). Yamagishi et al. (1999) referred to factor analyses showing that the ends of dichotomy represent separate factors rather than being ends of a single factor. They also pay attention to the logic that "most people" are not "all people" thus "trusting" and "being careful" are not actually contradictory because one can be trusting of most people but be careful with those whom one sees as untrustworthy.

Discussion. Critiques of the SGTQ as a survey measure cast it to as "vague, abstract, and hard to interpret" Glaeser et al. (2000, p. 812), "ambiguous" (Miller & Mitamura, 2003, p. 62), "vague" and "glib" (Hardin, 2006, p. 72), which are not characteristics of a good survey measurement item. It has been argued that the wording of the SGTQ leads to inconsistent interpretations of what it asks about, and the choices provided in standard answer alternatives are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Measuring a complex concept with a single indicator is risky and reliability assessment of a single item is difficult (Freitag & Bauer, 2013; Lundåsen, 2010; Reeskens & Hooghe, 2008). Other authors, nevertheless, argue that the SGTQ should not be dismissed. For example, Uslaner (e.g. 2002, 2012) has repeatedly defended the SGTQ based on an observed strong stability of trust over time in panel studies. Looking at ANES panel data, Uslaner (2012) concluded that it is one of the four most stable questions repeated over three waves of the panel. Other authors also observed relative reliability of the SGTQ (e.g. Lundmark et al., 2016; Nannestad, 2008), thus claiming that the critique of its vague wording and lack of specification does not override the value of it (Nannestad, 2008). Moreover, the SGTQ *does* maintain consistency as the same item has been used for a very long time and across wide space (Delhey, 2014; Naef & Schupp, 2009; Nannestad, 2008). Therefore, Uslaner (2009) claimed, it would not be reasonable to sacrifice the comparability that decades of using the standard question allows. Yet, these arguments do not change the issue that despite stability over time we still have limited knowledge about the content and meaning that this variable actually refers to (Lundåsen, 2001; Reeskens & Hooghe, 2008) and as has been shown, it might not measure trust at all. Thus the risks of misinterpretation of actual trust levels or obtaining significantly different results, particularly when cross-cultural comparison is involved, is high (Miller & Mitamura, 2003; Reeskens & Hooghe, 2008). Finally, there is an observed gap between the conceptualisation

of social generalised trust and how its empirical counterpart works. According to Lundåsen (2001), in sociology and political science theoretical aspects of trust have received substantially more attention than its measurement issues. Hardin (2006, p. 63, 60) assessed survey work on trust as "ill-defined" and "a-theoretical". Therefore, Hardin (2006) rightly argues that from a methodological point of view there is no clarity as to what survey responses to general trust questions mean, and thus the data is not conducive to testing any particular theory or conception of trust. Hardin (2006) places responsibility on researchers – it is their responsibility for using such a-theoretical, vague and eventually, potentially ill-interpreted survey items. Therefore, the question about what the SGTQ really measures and what should be the future of this indicator remains open for discussion (Nannestad, 2008; Reeskens & Hooghe, 2008). It is, however, clear that more input into a better understanding of respondents' interpretations of the SGTQ is needed.

3.3. Development and limitations of survey measures of political trust

This chapter performs a similar exercise with respect to survey measure of political trust as in the case of the measures of social generalised trust: it briefly offers an overview of the history, examples of their development, and looks into the methodological discussion about the finesse of these measures.

3.3.1. History and development of political trust measures

Levi and Stoker (2000) associated the origins of political trust measurement with the 1962 work of Donald E. Stokes, even though his analysis never used the concepts of trust in government or political trust. Aiming to tap favourable or unfavourable public evaluations of government, Stokes introduced questions that gave impetus to the ANES trust in government questions and further work on the analysis of political trust (Levi & Stoker, 2000). Two later publications – by David Easton (1965)[34] and William A. Gamson (1968)[35] further prompted analysis of political trust (Levi & Stoker, 2000). Easton (1965, 1975) introduced the concept of political support, distinguishing specific and diffuse support, trust being an expression of the latter; and Gamson (1968) explicitly employed the concept of political trust. With the timeline of survey questions on political trust extending, a surge of work on political trust followed when downward tendencies of levels of trust in government

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[34] "A Systems Analysis of Political Life".

[35] "Power and Discontent".

in the USA (and in other democracies) were observed (Almond & Verba, 1989; Przeworski, 1993).

In the case of the USA, standard questions about trust in the "government in Washington to do what is right" have been in place since 1958 in ANES surveys (see Table 3a below). Shortly afterwards, a survey question on trust in central government was included in surveys launched by the USA media leaders (*CBS*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*) (Vavreck, 2015). Since 1972, trust and confidence in federal government in Washington (and other institutions) has been launched by Gallup (Gallup, n.d.). Since 1973, trust in political institutions has been measured by NORC (Smith & Son, 2013). To sum up, the level of political trust in the USA has been consistently measured since 1958 up until the present time.

In European and comparative international survey programmes, the standard questions on political trust includes trust or confidence in key political democratic institutions and, to some extent, international institutions and/or political actors. Trust in institutions questions, though, prevail most consistently. In this form, political trust has been measured for over four decades. It has been included in WVS and EVS since wave 1 in 1981-1984; in EB since wave 51 (Spring 1999) (European Commission, 1990[36]); in ESS since wave 1 in 2002; in EQLS since wave 2 in 2007 and so on (more detail in Table 3 and Appendix A4). In the case of Lithuania, the level of trust in political (and other) institutions can be most consistently monitored based on "Vilmorus" surveys conducted regularly since 1998 (Gaidys, 2016).

Table 3 provides an overview of examples of standard political trust measures as applied in large scale (comparative) survey questionnaires. The author collected the questionnaires of the main repeated international and some examples of national surveys programmes, searching for the use of political trust questions. The core versions of questionnaires in English were used. More detail and references to survey programmes and questionnaires is provided in Appendix A4.

Measurement of political trust reflects the characteristics of a particular political system, so at least two dominant variations appear: defining and measuring political trust in the USA context and political trust in the European context and other regional or national survey programmes (e.g. CGSS or LB) and international comparative surveys. Due to its exceptional institutional set-up, political trust in the USA surveys is primarily measured by trust in "government in Washington" and a number of specific USA political institutions and actors (see Table 3a). Meanwhile,

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[36] It refers here to the wave from which a consistent measurement of trust in both national and international institutions has been included. Some other trust measures were included earlier, such as trust in the European Court of Justice (e.g. in 1993); however, as the focus here is on the development of standard measures of political trust, a consistent review of other instances has not been conducted.

other questionnaires commonly ask respondents to indicate the level of trust in the listed institutions. Throughout the complete list of institutions (which, overall, includes not only political but also other public, private institutions or international/ supranational institutions), with regard to political trust as least two institutions appear most consistently: trust in (national) government and/or trust in (national) parliament. In addition, trust in political parties can be measured, and in some country cases, where relevant, trust in the presidency as well (e.g. Lithuania). In addition, trust in "supranational" institutions can be measured (e.g. trust in the European Union and/or its institutions; trust in the United Nations), which could also be regarded as linked to political trust. However, as this is not a dominant, either in the conceptualisation or operationalisation of political trust, it will not be discussed further given the limits of this thesis.

In separate cases there are examples of varied, extensive items of political trust (see e.g. Hooghe's (2011) reference to *British Election Study* 2009; Fisher et al., 2010); scales and questions that specify aspects of what trust in political institutions concerns (e.g. trust to speak the truth, trust to do the right thing for the country) or scales based on opinions towards individual political actors (e.g. distrust and cynicism scales) (Dekker, 2012). However, these attempts at a more detailed or insightful measurement of political trust are bound to specific studies or survey programmes and not commonly and repeatedly used comparatively. Predominantly, the answer to the question "(how much) do you trust [an institution]" constitutes the empirical work on political trust. The latter will be further discussed in more detail.

Table 3 (a-b). Versions of the trust in political institutions question in selected large scale surveys[37]

Table 3a. Standard political trust question versions in USA surveys[38]

Standard political trust question wording
American National Election Studies (ANES)
Trust in Government Index, four statements, waves 1958-2016 People have different ideas about the government in Washington. These ideas don't refer to democrats or republicans in particular, but just to government in general. We want to see how you feel about these ideas... 1) How much of the time [*how often, wave 2012*] do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right – just about always, most of the time or only some of the time? 2) Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people? 3) Do you think that people in the government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it? 4) Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked? [*replaced with corruption question, wave 2012*]

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[37]   The table includes original wording retrieved from survey questionnaire English versions. The core answer alternatives have been included into the table (to condense the necessary information answer alternatives such as "Don't know" or "Other" were excluded).

[38]   GSS America is not included here as being linked to the international survey program it uses standard trust in political institution questions. In some waves the GSS questionnaire include some political trust statements/questions specific to the USA context but the use is not consistent or regular (See GSS Questionnaires Appendix A4).

Table 3a (continued).

GALLUP surveys
Waves 1972–2019

A range of statements referred under the umbrella of "Trust in Government"

1) Statements 1 and 4 of the above ANES Index in identical wording (waves between 1992–2010).

2) Now I'd like to ask you several questions about our governmental system. First, how much trust and confidence do you have in our federal government in Washington when it comes to handling [International problems/Domestic problems] -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

3) As you know, our federal government is made up of three branches: an executive branch, headed by the president; a judicial branch, headed by the U.S. Supreme Court; and a legislative branch, made up of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. First, let me ask you how much trust and confidence you have at this time in the executive branch headed by the president, the judicial branch headed by the U.S. Supreme Court, and the legislative branch, consisting of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives – a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

4) How much trust and confidence do you have in the government of the state where you live when it comes to handling state problems -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

5) And how much trust and confidence do you have in the local governments in the area where you live when it comes to handling local problems -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

Under the "Trust in Government" umbrella GALLUP also puts trust and confidence in the following institutions and actors:

6) In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media -- such as newspapers, TV and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

7) How much trust and confidence do you have in general in the men and women in political life in this country who either hold or are running for public office – a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

8) More generally, how much trust and confidence do you have in the American people as a whole when it comes to making judgments under our democratic system about the issues facing our country -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all? (since wave 1974)

Source: composed by the author

Table 3b. Versions of trust in (political) institutions question in international, regional and national surveys

Standard trust in political institutions question wording
World Values Survey (WVS)
I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, uite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?[39]   Organisations: The churches; The armed forces; The legal system; The press; Television; Labor unions; The police; The government in [WASHINGTON/ YOUR CAPITAL]; Political parties; Parliament; The Civil service; Major companies; The Green/Ecology movement; The Women's movement; The European Union*; The United Nations.   * In all European countries; in North America, NAFTA; in other societies, ask about the most important regional organization.
European Values Study (EVS)
Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or none at all?[40]   List of items: The church; The armed forces; The education system; The press; Trade unions; The police; Parliament; Civil service; The social security system; The European Union; NATO; United Nations Organization; Health care system; The justice system; Major companies; Environmental organizations; Political parties; Government.

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[39] This version of wording is from the wave 1995-1998 questionnaire. In other waves there can be slightly different wording of contextual segments, though the core wording remained identical (e.g. in the wave 1981 questionnaire the wording was "Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or none at all?"). Also, the list of organisations across the waves can be different (for more details, see WVS Questionnaires, Appendix A4).

[40] List from the questionnaire of wave 2008 (EVS Questionnaire 2008, Appendix A4).

Table 3b (continued).

European quality of life survey (EQLS)
Please tell me how much you personally trust each of the following institutions. Please tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means that you do not trust at all, and 10 means that you trust completely. Institutions: The parliament; The legal system; The press; The police; The government; The political parties.[41]
European Social Survey (ESS)
Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust. Firstly… Institutions: [country]'s Parliament; The legal system; The police; Politicians; Political parties; The European Parliament; the United Nations?[42]
Eurobarometer (EB)
I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it? Institutions: The written press; Radio; Television; The Internet; Online social networks; Political parties; Justice / The (NATIONALITY) legal system; The police; The army; Public administration in (OUR COUNTRY); Regional or local public authorities; The (NATIONALITY) Government; The (NATIONALITY) Parliament; The European Union; The United Nations.[43]

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[41] Institutions list from the wave 2007 questionnaire (EQLS Questionnaire 2007, Appendix A4).

[42] List of institutions from the wave 2016 questionnaire (ESS Questionnaire 2016, Appendix A4).

[43] List of institutions from Standard Eurobarometer 88 (2017) (EB Questionnaire 88, Appendix A4).

Table 3b (continued).

Afro Barometer (AfB)
How much of the time can you trust President Mbeki[44] to do what is right? Is it: Never; Only some of the time; Most of the time; Just about always; Or haven't you had a chance to hear enough about it? How much of the time can you trust parliament to do what is right? How much of the time can you trust the [name of the province] government to do what is right? How much of the time can you trust your local government to do what is right? What about the following institutions? How much of the time can you trust them to do what is right? Institutions: South African Defence Force; South African Police Service; Courts of law; Overall criminal justice system; Independent Electoral Commission; South African Broadcasting Corporation; Press / Newspapers.
Arab Barometer (ArB)
I'm going to name a number of institutions. For each one, please tell me how much trust you have in them. Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all? Institutions: Prime minister; The Courts; Parliament; The Police; Political Parties[45].
Asia Barometer (AsB)
I'm going to name a number of institutions. For each one, please tell me how much trust you have in them. Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all? Institutions: The national government [in capital city]; Political parties [not any specific party]; Parliament; Civil service; The military; The police <Optional>; Local government; Newspapers <Optional>; Television; The election commission [specify institution by name] <Optional>; Non-governmental organizations or NGOs <Optional>[46].

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[44] List of institutions from wave 2000 (AfB Questionnaire 2000, Appendix A4).

[45] List of institutions from wave 1 (2006–2009) (ArB Questionnaire 2006–2009, Appendix A4).

[46] List of institutions from wave 1 (AsB Questionnaire 2001–2003, Appendix A4).

Table 3b (continued).

Caucasus Barometer (CB)
I will read out a list of social institutions and political unions. Please assess your level of trust toward each of them on a 5-point scale, where '1' means "Fully distrust", and '5' means "Fully trust". First, please tell me how much do you trust or distrust /country's/ …?   Institutions: Healthcare system; Banks; Educational system; Army; Court system; NGOs; Parliament; Executive government (Prime minister and ministers); President; Police; Media; Local government; Religious institutions to which you belong; Ombudsman; European Union; United Nations[47].

Canadian General Social Survey (CGSS)
Now I'd like to ask you about the level of confidence you have in various institutions. For each type of institution I name, could you tell me whether you have a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence, or no confidence at all in it. How much confidence do you have in: ...   Institutions: The police; The justice system and courts; The health care system; The school system; The welfare system; Federal parliament; The banks; Major corporations; Local merchants and business people?[48]

German General Social Survey (GGSS)
I am now going to read out a number of public institutions and organisations. Please tell me for each institution or organisation how much trust you place in it. Please use this scale.   1 means you have absolutely no trust at all   7 means you have a great deal of trust   You can differentiate your answers using the numbers in between. What about the – …   Institutions: Health service; German constitutional court; German Parliament; Municipal administration; Army; Catholic church; Protestant church; Judicial system; Television; Newspapers; Universities and other institutes of higher education [Hochschulen]; German government; Trade unions; Police; Job centres; State pension system; Employer associations?[49]

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[47]   List of institutions from wave 2010 (CB Questionnaire 2010, Appendix A4).

[48]   List of institutions from wave 2003 (CGSS Questionnaire 2003, Appendix A4).

[49]   List of institutions from wave 2008 (GGSS Questionnaire 2008, Appendix A4).

Table 3b (continued).

Latino Barometer (LB)
Please look at this card and tell me how much confidence you have in each of the following groups, institutions or persons mentioned on the list: a lot, some, a little or no confidence?
Institutions: The Church; The Armed Forces; The Trade Unions; The Judiciary; The Press; Large companies; Public administration; The Police; The National Congress (Federal in Mexico); The political parties; Company associations; Television; The Government.[50]

Source: composed by the author

Tables 3a and 3b show a clear distinction between political trust operationalisation in the USA and other surveys. The survey questions on the government in Washington and political incumbents not only ask directly about trust but some specific dimensions as well (e.g. dishonesty). Also, the trust question to an extent specifies the content of trust, that is, trust government "to do what is right", which is not common in standard measures of the dominant international comparative programmes (though separate programmes outside the USA do have similar measures; for example, trust that institutions will look after one's interests (see Duvold et al., 2020)). Nevertheless, these measures remained context bound. In comparative surveys, American respondents assess their political trust by standard trust in political institutions questions. For example, the WVS questionnaire[51] provides a clarification for the USA case next to the standard trust in government questions, namely, "government in Washington" (and general "capital" for other countries). Therefore, the specific American measures will not be further considered in detail, though they also receive their share of criticism (e.g. Gershtenson & Plane, 2012; Parker et al., 2015).

Based on Table 3b it is possible to observe that political trust measures demonstrate stability at the core element of the questions, namely, they ask respondents to evaluate "how much" they trust an institution. The *wording* itself does not have much variation: it is either "how much you (personally) trust each of the following institutions" (e.g. EQLS, ESS) or "how much trust/confidence you have in (certain institutions/organisations)" (e.g. WVS, EB) or "how much trust you place" (e.g. GGSS). These questions are usually accompanied by some introductory statement like "I am going to name a number of organisations" (WVS) or "Using

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[50] List of institutions from wave 1996 (LB Questionnaire 1996, Appendix A4).

[51] See e.g. WVS Questionnaire 1995-1998, Appendix A4.

a card, please tell me …" (ESS) or "I would like to ask you a questions about …" (EB) followed by core part of the question on level of trust. It is rare that surveys ask only about political institutions; commonly, political institutions are in the lists together with a variety of other institutions (e.g. the police, the legal system, church, the army, the media, also institutions like the European Union, the United Nations). These lists can vary extensively; however, if political institutions are included, then commonly (national) government, (national) parliament, and political parties appear consistently.

There is, however, one element in the wording of political trust questions that poses a kind of language dilemma. There are two words for trust in English that have been used interchangeably in political trust theory and research: trust and confidence. The surveys reviewed differ in their use of the key concept of trust in English: some surveys use "trust" (e.g. ESS), and others use "confidence" (e.g. EVS), while Gallup polls use a combination of "trust and confidence". Conceptually, some authors have argued that confidence better captures the essence of the attitude one can have towards institutions (i.e. that institutions are not to be trusted, but only relied upon) (Zmerli et al., 2007). Dobryninas et al. (2013) have pointed out the ambiguity related to the two terms. Trust could be linked to a social-psychological dimension, whereas confidence to the systemic-functional dimension of public attitudes; however, when measuring public trust in institutions or systems, commonly both dimensions are regarded (Dobryninas et al., 2013). There have been general discussions whether and how trust and confidence are conceptually comparable or divergent (Blomqvist, 1997; Luhmann, 1979); though analysis of trust definitions (see Section 1.2.3.) has revealed that there is no consistency in separating them and, for example, trust can be defined as confidence. To sum up, there is still no consensus and both trust and confidence have been used at both theoretical and measurement levels (often without justifying the linguistic choice or using both words as synonyms). By contrast, in the Lithuanian language, both trust and confidence primarily translate as "trust" (lit. *pasitikėjimas*). There is a lack of studies that look more consistently into language use and evaluate how the choice between the words trust and confidence works in cross-cultural surveys, and what effect it may have on measurement outcomes. For example, if conceptually trust and confidence differ but some languages (such as Lithuanian) do not have such a difference in everyday language (i.e. respondents' life) use, how do we deal with this? Attempts to understand the role of culture and language and context bound interpretations of words used for trust so far have been limited (Saunders et al., 2010).

With regard to *answer alternatives* in political trust questions, measurement ranges from dichotomous to categorical scales to an 11-point scale. An example of a dichotomous scale is the EB question asking if respondents "tend to trust" or "tend

not to trust". For example, WVS, EVS, CGSS use a 4-category scale of degree of confidence (great deal of confidence, quite a lot of, not very much or not at all); CB uses a 5-category scale (fully distrust, rather distrust, neither trust nor distrust, rather trust, fully trust); GGSS uses a 7-point scale (from 1 as "you have absolutely no trust at all" to 7 as "you have a great deal of trust"); a 10-point scale in EQLS (1 as "do not trust at all" and 10 as "trust completely"), and an 11-point scale in ESS (0 as "do not trust at all" and 10 as "have complete trust"). In the USA, ANES employs a 3-category scale of frequency of trust (just about always, most of the time, only some of the time). It can be seen that in the case of political trust measurement, wider than dichotomous scales are preferred. However, the variation of length is great across survey programmes. Contrary to SGTQ, the end categories of scales belong to the same dimension, that is, one has a choice to have complete trust or do not trust at all (rather than being cautious).

3.3.2. Limitations of the political trust measures: are respondents competent enough?

The standard version of the political trust question seems simple, short, clear, and concise. However, what does this question *mean to respondents*? And what is behind their answers? Many studies quantitatively evaluate reliability, stability, equivalence and other parameters of political trust measures based on collected data. However, attempts to look into the validity of the measure via analysis of subjective meanings are needed (Dekker, 2012). Linked to the *Dutch Citizens' Outlooks Barometer*, Dekker (2012) aimed to understand respondents' considerations when assigning trust scores to political and other institutions. Focus group discussions were used to receive respondents' explanations of their scores. According to Dekker (2012), the results showed that in their explanations, respondents rarely say anything explicit about trust, and assessment of trust in political institutions is most diffuse. Different institutions are assessed by different criteria, a level of confusion regarding institutions (e.g. between the Lower House of Parliament and the government) has been observed, and respondents found it easier finding reasons for low trust than for high trust. Summing up the extensive findings on understanding the trust scores, Dekker (2012) warned that too much weight should not be given to the interpretation of political trust scores (as well as scores for trust in other institutions) as respondents seem to consider very different things when giving trust scores, and in case of political institutions they do not give much more than a "general image perception" (Dekker, 2012, p. 16). Moreover, Dekker (2012, p. 18) claimed that the answers to political trust questions "stem from a mass lack of interest in and information about politics". Fisher et al. (2010) concluded that depending on

the institution under consideration, different forms of trust judgement prevailed. Schneider (2017) also questioned if respondents in different countries attached the same meaning to the measures of political trust (e.g. people living under different regimes).

Dekker's (2012) findings have already hinted that respondents might not be competent enough to respond to the political trust questions in the way researchers intend (or wish) them to. That is, can respondents competently answer the question and evaluate political institutions in terms of trust? Hardin (1998, 1999) considered that people's trust or distrust was rather unreasoned because it was based on limited knowledge about political institutions and actors. Hooghe's (2011) study showed that British citizens (regardless of their political knowledge or education) did not distinguish well between different political actors. Political trust in institutions, as it is currently measured, therefore, reflects an *overall assessment of the political culture* that is specific to a particular political system and that will determine the behaviour of individual actors in the field of politics (Hooghe, 2011). Both Dekker's (2012) and Hooghe's (2011) arguments show that there is a need to reflect on how we interpret the results of political trust measurement: do we actually measure trust or a much more general disposition towards the political sphere and hence it should be regarded as such? In line with this, Hardin (2006) further questioned if political trust questions measure people's trust in government or rather are proxies of their experience and implicit assessment of the trustworthiness or reliability of other actors (and thus, decline in trust actually means decline in perceived *performance* or *competence* of government). Duvold et al. (2020) also noted that the line between certain institutions and the *people* who fill those institutions may be blurred in the perceptions of citizens (i.e. respondents) even though survey items on trust in institutions presuppose the former.

Turning from the respondents towards *researchers*, the issue of the empirical composition of political trust measures appeared. Though Table 3 focuses on examples of trust in political institutions, the review of survey questionnaires shows that the lists of institutions are usually more extensive and institutions like the civil service, local government and the legal system can be included. In this regard it is possible to observe an interesting, yet to some extent worrisome, interplay between political trust theory and measurement. As has been demonstrated, conceptualising political trust is generally defined as reliance on the three main institutions of representative democracy – government, parliament, and political parties. At the level of data analysis, there are two debatable points: first, whether to analyse trust in each political institution individually or to compile composite indices; and second, in the case of a composite index what institutions should be included? It seems that both options have serious limitations (Tuper & Aarts, 2017). It is risky to reduce

the complex theoretical concept of political trust into one measurement item. Turper and Aarts (2017) have argued that in the case of a single variable, trust in a single political institution is analysed as political trust, when in fact it measures trust in only one object, and, moreover, the trust definition is reduced to what is measured by a single survey item.

In the case of the use of composite indices, a problem of the gap between the conceptual and operational definitions of political trust emerges: different authors enter different institutions into the composite index of "political trust", often relying not on the conceptual definition and theory but on the list of institutions available in a selected study. For example, Rose (1984, as cited in Listhaug & Wiberg, 1998) referred to the "government institutions" as the military, the education system, the courts, the police, the parliament, and the civil service. In their study on political trust in post-communist society, Mishler and Rose (2001) regarded political trust as trust in the parliament, prime minister (or president), political parties, and courts, police, and military. In operationalising political trust, Catterberg and Moreno (2006) included trust in political institutions as parliament (or Congress), the civil service, trade unions, and political parties. Hutchinson and Johnson's (2011) additive index of political trust covered the executive, electoral commissions, police, armed forces, courts, and media (managed by government). It seems, therefore, that it is not a theory that drives the operationalisation of measurement of political trust, but contrarily, the availability of empirical items that guides the process. Schneider (2017, p. 965) referred to such choices as a "kitchen sink" measurement approach, claiming that the rationale accompanying these item choices is scarcely reasoned and lacks theoretical consistency.

Researchers (e.g. Fisher et al., 2010; Fisher et al., 2011; Schneider, 2017; Turper & Aarts, 2017) have also paid attention to the lack of deeper and more detailed analyses and testing on how the composite measures work. It is potentially incorrectly assumed that each variable in the composite index carries equal weight in the latent construct of political trust (i.e. trust in each institution included in the index reflects the construct of political trust equally well and strongly) (Schneider, 2017; Turper & Aarts, 2017); yet, according to Turper and Aarts (2017), the reliability coefficients of the individual variables in the composite index vary strongly, and therefore appropriate adjustments should be made when applying the index in analysis.

Though the issue of the choice of answer alternatives for the political trust measure has not gained as much attention as in the case of the SGTQ (presumably because longer than dichotomous scales prevail), Ulbig (2009) has raised a peculiar problem. In his opinion, the categorical scale of 4 points[52] does not reflect the full amplitude of

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[52]   Ulbig (2009) study focused on the USA context and ANES measurement items.

the phenomenon, as it does not include possible active distrust of institutions. Ulbig (2009) performed a test with the addition of a 10-point scale[53] in which confidence ranged from +1 to +5 and mistrust ranged from -1 to -5. Although this test did not work (both scales performed similarly), Ulbig (2009) argued that the issue of the adequacy and reliability of the measurement scale should be further explored.

Discussion. While it is agreed that political trust is an important concept and variable, there does not seem to be an ideal way of measuring it, and the current way does not seem to be either satisfactory or even suitable (Parker et al., 2015; Seyd, 2016). Authors refer to political trust measures as "basic", "too simple" (Dekker, 2012, p. 1, 18) or "vague" (Hardin, 2006, p. 59). The discussion above has showed that researchers need to be more careful with the use of the current measures of political trust and, in particular, interpretation of results considering the potential gap between the meaning that the measures provides (i.e. the meaning(s) that respondents convey) and the meaning that the theory presupposes. Overlooking these issues and treating measures of political trust as "good enough" may lead to overestimation of trends and relationships (Turper & Aarts, 2017, p. 431). Keeping in mind how extensively the concept and measure of political trust have been (and will be) used, the scope of faulty interpretations may be huge. Seyd (2016) seemed to regard current trends of political trust measurement as rather inert and thus suggested that instead of "uncritically replicating existing ways of measuring trust, researchers should consider if alternative indicators might yield stronger measures of the concept" (p. 13). Seyd (2016) did not dismiss that more radical changes might be needed in order to gain a more accurate and effective measurement of political trust, even if the continuity of decades of conventional measurement were lost.

The reviews of measurement and related issues of social generalised trust and political trust have raised two fundamental questions: is it worth or even reasonable to continue using standard measures, and, if yes, how should we interpret the results? Though the issue of validity has been highlighted, it is not solely just an issue of validity. The question of validity commonly asks if we measure what we intended to measure (Bryman, 2012). In the case of SGTQ and political trust questions, it seems we might not actually know what we measure. The seeming simplicity and decades of undisrupted timeline make the standard measurement items influential and valuable. Therefore, it may be difficult (or even unnecessary) to fully discard them

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[53]   In the first stage, respondents were asked to provide their answer to a standard 4-point scale; those who responded "generally trust" were then asked to indicate their trust on a +1 to +5 scale (+1 meaning "very little trust" and +5 meaning "complete trust") and those who responded "generally not trust" were asked to indicate their trust on a -1 to -5 scale (-1 as "mistrust a little" and -5 as "completely mistrust" (Ulbig, 2009).

(even though the need to look for more efficient alternatives remains). However, to keep them as an asset, researchers should be more careful when interpreting the results obtained with these measures, recognising that what is imprinted into the concepts at the level of theory, may not be fully or consistently reflected in empirical results. Moreover, more research should be done into attempts to understand better what meaning(s) social generalised trust and political trust carry for social actors (i.e. potential respondents) in real life. Employment of a qualitative approach seems to be among the proposed strategies by those who question the validity of both the SGTQ and political trust measures.

It is also worth mentioning that apart from trust in political institutions questions, some surveys programs or waves in survey programs have included other questions related to political trust. For example, WVS included a new module on political trust, for example, with statements about politicians, people in government and government as institution[54]. LB has a question on factors determining trust in public institutions[55]. BHPS has a statement specifying the content of trust[56] and so on. It could be beneficial to make a more systematic analysis of available potentially political trust related questions and develop an alternative collection of measures to the standard trust in political institutions questions. The same applies to SGTQ – as can be seen in Appendix A4, there are many instances (though not regular and not consistently used) of more specific questions in various categories or groups of people, including more specified questions related to trust in strangers (see e.g. ANES Questionnaire 1972 question on being cautious with strangers).

3.4. Landmarks for application of a qualitative research approach to research trust

In relation to research approaches currently applied to the study of social generalised trust and political trust, the previous chapters have revealed two points: first, these two types of trust have been predominantly measured via surveys; second, though there have been calls to employ qualitative approaches more extensively, a big part of the qualitative research on trust still deals with a rather defined setting or limited boundaries of interaction. Qualitative research on trust in which research questions aim at trust in strangers or interactions with unfamiliar people have been employed less, and, yet again, commonly confined to a specific

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[54]   See WVS Questionnaire 2017-2020, Appendix A4.

[55]   See e.g. LB Questionnaires 2004 or 2017, Appendix A4.

[56]   Survey statement: "Governments can be trusted to place the needs of the nation above the interests of their own party". See e.g. BHPS Questionnaire Wave 2, Appendix A4.

setting or a limited matter. For example, Gambetta and Hamill (2005) conducted a research on interactions between taxi drivers and customers, focusing on how taxi drivers make trust judgements on the trustworthiness of their customers; for their purposes, they used informal conversations and interviews. Also, qualitative research on trust in communities could be considered a relatively close counterpart to the topic of social generalised trust. For example, Goodall (2012) conducted qualitative research on trust relationships in a community setting where the settled host community co-resided with new arrivals (i.e. asylum seekers and refugees). These and other examples of qualitative research on trust prove that it could be efficiently and beneficially employed to study trust in broader societal contexts, including social generalised trust and political trust.

Though Lyon et al. (2012, p. 1) have pointed out that "no method can provide the perfect understanding of a phenomenon", particularly when the phenomenon is so fundamental as trust, the examples where researchers employed qualitative approach both reveal the value of such an approach and provide material for methodological guidelines to further enhance the application of qualitative approach to research trust. This chapter, therefore, reviews qualitative research on trust, drawing out the main advantages and potential issues that have to be regarded. The analysis will further serve as the basis for constructing the empirical research design for the thesis (presented in Part 4).

3.4.1. Reasons to apply qualitative methods in trust research

Authors who have applied a qualitative approach in research on trust (either as the main method or in combination with quantitative design) have provided an array of reasons why qualitative methods are beneficial. They advocated that the nature and complexity of the phenomenon of trust suggested a turn towards qualitative research.

Alongside experimental studies on so-called trust dilemmas, Kramer (2012) applied qualitative techniques. Kramer's (2012) research focused on trust judgements in the context of hierarchical relationships (university professors and their graduate students (see Kramer, 1996); and physicians and their patients (see Cook et al., 2004)). The key argument was that open-ended type questions allowed research participants to highlight relevant variables from their perspective, thus complementing the in-advance definitions of the researchers: "In contrast with survey methods, where researchers determine in advance the universe of questions (and also how those questions are framed and anchored), researchers using more open-ended approaches allow their respondents to define for themselves the content and range of variables they consider valid, appropriate or diagnostic" (Kramer 2012,

p. 21). One of Kramer's (2012) aims was to explore trust-related judgements as they occur in natural settings and the qualitative design allowed for probing the research participants' (i.e. social actors') judgements while considering the natural setting. It allowed for understanding how people solve diverse real-world trust dilemmas, contextualising in real-life situations what they do or do not think about trust and what they pay attention to when facing real-world trust dilemmas. According to Kramer (2012, p. 20-21), qualitative techniques allowed to "capture the real-world thought processes of real-world individuals in real-world contexts".

Tillmar (2012, p. 102) claimed that the "choice of conducting qualitative case studies was not too difficult" because first, it was important to acknowledge that it is difficult to propose adequate quantitative measures for the complex and elusive social phenomenon of trust; second, she was especially interested in the contextual preconditions of trust and measurement approaches were not sufficient to explore them. Tillmar (2012) aimed to understand who business owners chose to cooperate with and why. Evaluating the experience of applying a qualitative data collection method (interview) for this purpose, the author concluded: "I believe that trust research (and social science research in general) would benefit from more qualitative cross-cultural comparative studies" (Tillmar, 2012, p. 108).

Welter and Alex (2012) turned to qualitative methods to be able to capture the process of trust building. Welter and Alex (2012) reflected upon the experience in research in which in order to study trust and entrepreneurial behaviour in west and east European countries they employed a survey, case-studies and expert interviews. They also proposed that for their purposes a longitudinal case-study approach would have worked better than the survey method. In their subsequent research, therefore, they turned to a qualitative approach that allowed them to look into the process of how trust was built and lost. According to Welter and Alex (2012, p. 54), "investigating trust empirically is difficult because of its elusive and habitual nature, which can only be inadequately captured by survey studies", particularly when cultural differences intertwine. A qualitative approach (despite its challenges), therefore, was essential to capture the motives, aspirations and experiences of the target group under interest.

Möllering (2006) recognised that all methods can contribute to an enhanced understanding of trust; however, he also advocated moving away from the measurement of predefined variables to capture trust experiences and interpretations from the perspective of social actors via qualitative methods. According to Möllering (2006, p. 152), methodological strategy "requires a process perspective, obtaining a rich (typically qualitative) picture of actual trust experiences, understanding the embeddedness of the relationships under investigation and taking into account the reflexivity not only in trust development as such but also in the research interaction

itself". It can be achieved either via observing the process of trust-building or via the social actors' interpretation of trust and the trust-building process. Möllering (2006) suggested that questions on one's level of trust should be followed by a question on how one came to trust at that level or if it changed over time. The complexity of trust experiences needs to be captured with sensitive methods that can generate rich detail from a participant's perspective that is bound to the context of the relationship or experience in question. At the same time, Möllering (2006) acknowledged challenges linked to the application of qualitative research approach, thus highlighting the importance of the reflexivity and self-criticism of researchers. For example, when interviewing, the interpretations of a research participant are induced by the interview process and her/his interaction with a researcher who must pay regard to this when analysing, interpreting and generalising the data.

It has been noticed that context-specific issues related to qualitative trust research may arise "depending on the sector of research (such as health services, manufacturing or other services), types of trust relationships being investigated (inter-organisational, intra-organisational), and whether the research is looking at specific trust relationships between individuals or more generalised trust in institutions or professions" (Lyon, 2012, p. 85). However, the common agreement was that the application of qualitative research brought the value foreseen in terms of a better understanding of trust in real-life contexts and from real-life social actors perspectives.

3.4.2. Trust as a sensitive topic and the issue of eliciting genuine responses

There is a common agreement that trust can be considered a sensitive research topic. For example, Tillmar (2012, p. 103) stated that "trust – and how it is built and given or not given to people – may be a sensitive issue", Lyon (2012, p. 85) named research on trust as frequently being of "a sensitive nature" and Saunders (2012, p. 110) referred to questions in trust research as "sensitive issues". Though it is possible to argue if trust is a sensitive topic overall or whether there can be specific aspects that make some of the research topics on trust sensitive, researchers have provided strategies on how to overcome issues that may arise from the sensitivity of the topic and how to build a sufficient level of rapport so that research participants reveal themselves about sensitive aspects related to trust.

Authors stressed that participants' perceptions of what is a sensitive topic vary, and individual participants may have different notions about whether research or specific topics are sensitive to them (e.g. Saunders, 2012; Goodall, 2012). Therefore, issues such as gaining access to research participants or increased non-participation, socially desirable or evasive answers to protect from potential

harm or embarrassment, and presenting themselves in a positive light or to please the researcher can be encountered in qualitative research on trust. Though these issues are commonly recognised in the qualitative research methodology literature (Hennink et al., 2011; King & Horrocks, 2010; Liamputtong, 2010), the sensitive nature of trust research requires the paying of special attention to planning how to overcome them. Saunders (2012) stresses the importance of explaining the research benefits to research participants and emphasising how privacy and anonymity will be respected. Saunders (2012) also observed that sensitising (that is, stressing the importance of trust in research) may lead to biased responses from participants. Thus, he paid attention to the dilemma of how to ethically present the purpose of the research to the participants (i.e. to provide sufficient information so that research participants can make informed decisions about their participation) and, at the same time, to avoid bias caused by sensitizing the topics of trust. In his research, Saunders (2012) chose to apply a distinct technique of card sort alongside an in-depth interview to help overcome these issues. It allowed discussion of trust topics in a more indirect manner, thus facilitating research participants' involvement.

Building rapport with research participants is another important step to desensitise the topic of trust. Some of the tips on how to do this will be provided in later sections, but for example, it can be done via participant recruiting strategies or interview facilitating techniques. However, authors (Saunders, 2012; Goodall, 2012; Lyon, 2012) also stressed the necessity of establishing a relationship (even if short lived) with research participants in such a manner that they felt safe to provide their true responses, felt assured that their responses will not be disclosed and did not feel "ambushed" with questions on sensitive topics. Authors stressed the initial stages of research, for example, interviews. They advised avoiding direct questions, particularly if they may be linked to upsetting or distressing topics, in the initial stages of interviews. Such discussion is only conducive when a research participant feels comfortable with the conversation and the rapport with the researcher has been established (Goodall, 2012; Lyon, 2012; Saunders, 2012). For example, Saunders (2012, p. 111) shared:

> *My experiences as a trust researcher have shown repeatedly the importance of building rapport with participants before asking questions about potentially sensitive issues such as reasons for their feelings of trust and distrust in relation to work colleagues. Asking such questions early on in the interview process is likely to result in either a noncommittal answer or, alternatively, a refusal to respond.*

Muethel (2012) pointed out that research participants commonly do not deliberately or systematically reflect on trust and trustworthiness before they take part in research. Thus, qualitative research on trust seeks to analyse a phenomenon that does not lie at the surface of individual perception; it is not actively recalled or pondered by research participants previous to the research and thus remains an unconscious part of individual perception (Muethel, 2012). Considering this feature of research participants' link to the question of trust, Meuthel (2012) applied a gamified research technique that indirectly prompted research participants to gradually immerse into reflections on their trust perceptions and experiences. The researcher (Muethel, 2012, p. 127) stressed the way how she presented the research to participants so as to avoid above mentioned sensitisation:

> *I presented the game from the very beginning as a tool for people to learn more about themselves than for me together data. As such I framed the data collection as a 'discovery journey' for participants to learn more about why they trust some people and others not. In consequence, the atmosphere was less about me collecting data, but more about the participant reflecting on his or her own subjective trust theory. At the end of the collection phase I asked whether or not they had learned something they did not know before about their own subjective trust theory – all participants agreed that they had.*

Lyon's (2012, p. 85) reflection pointed out for the understanding of researchers themselves how trust is "built and maintained in their own work" and thus how important it was to facilitate access to participants. He stressed the need of building researchers' trust with their participants when carrying out qualitative research; the importance of trust relationships increases when the topic is sensitive and/ or targeted groups may be harder to reach. The value of qualitative methods, for example, interviewing, lies in their potential to encourage participants to open-up, which may require particular attention from researchers when discussing sensitive issues (Lyon, 2012). Lyon (2012) reflected upon his own difficulties in accessing and building rapport with food traders in Ghana, who, in general, were suspicious of anyone observing them (as a result of negative government rhetoric and policy towards the traders). A substantial amount of time and effort were consumed to build trust with the traders, who eventually would grant their cooperation, which subsequently ensured the quality of the interviews.

The element of suspicion from the side of target groups has been noted by Welter and Alex (2012) as well. They reflected on the difficulty because of the "suspicion which entrepreneurs have of anyone approaching them and asking questions about their activities" (p. 56). Walter and Alex (2012) also recognised trust as a sensitive

topic and thus found it crucial to first build trust-based relationships with potential participants to assure the success of subsequent interviews. The sensitivity to large extent stemmed from the real-life context that was relevant for the research, namely, cross-border trade; apart from the challenges of recruiting and building rapport with their participants, Walter and Alex (2012) also pointed out that in most cases, because of sensitivity, interviews could not be recorded.

3.4.3. Guidelines for the application of a qualitative approach in trust research

The examples and discussion in the above section show the importance of building rapport with research participants in qualitative research on trust. This section will further highlight two aspects: 1) the process of recruitment and 2) special techniques employed during data collection (focusing on qualitative interviewing) to show how both may facilitate rapport building, thereby desensitising trust as well as facilitating the openness of participants. Overall, experiences with qualitative research on trust show that researchers have to carefully consider their choices, starting with how to present the research topic to the participants; how to communicate with participants in a way that leads to building trust and rapport (as already discussed); what recruitment strategy to use to both help build trust with research participants but also avoid bias, and how to construct data collection procedures to facilitate participants engagement.

Sampling in qualitative research on trust

Commonly, qualitative research rather relies on purposive sampling methods rather than methods of probability sampling (Hennink et al., 2011; Patton, 2002). Respectively, qualitative research on trust follows the same path, though researchers also touch upon the process of sampling in relation to building rapport with research participants. Lyon (2012) previously discussed that it was important to consider building rapport with research participants in the early stages of research planning. Lyon (2012) highlighted that in some cases, researchers relied on personal connections where there was already trust between a researcher and a potential research participant (particularly where access to participants could be limited because of the sensitive nature of trust research). Therefore, by building on existing relationships the snowball method can be used to access participants, enlisting other participants as bridging guarantors between the researcher and the researched. A level of familiarity between researcher and participant or the link of an intermediary's (gatekeeper's) recommendation can serve in advance as a facilitator of rapport building (Hennink et al., 2011; Saunders, 2006).

However, purposive, and in particular snowball sampling, can be prone to creating biases in the recruitment process (King & Horrocks, 2010). Based on experience with research on trust, Lyon (2012) also stressed the potential biases of purposive sampling. According to Lyon (2012), some people or groups could be excluded from the research because the researcher might not know about them, the gatekeepers may not reveal them, or the potential participants themselves may be reluctant to reveal themselves because of suspicion and mistrust. Researchers, thus, have to look for ways to reach the required target groups or participants. For example, to overcome the suspicion of cross-border traders, Welter and Alex (2012) used "intermediaries" (e.g. local relatives or colleagues) to get into contact with potential interviewees via recommendation in order to gain trust; also, researchers conducting the fieldwork were from the respective countries, thus representing common cultural understanding and, supposedly, being closer to the potential participants. Nevertheless, according to Lyon (2012), to some extent sampling in qualitative research is always prone to self-selection, and combined with the potential sensitivity of trust research (and, therefore, an additional level of difficulty in reaching participants) the risks of bias might increase. Similarly, using familiarity or recommendation as a recruitment strategy is prone to create a bias and limit the diversity required in qualitative research. Therefore, a combination of recruitment strategies, diversification of potential participants and the modes of reaching and contacting them (e.g. using different points of reference in snowball sampling or diverse gatekeepers, if possible) could be beneficial to overcome or reduce potential bias.

Interview facilitating techniques

Though there is some variety in the qualitative data collection methods applied in research on trust, interviews predominate (Lyon et al., 2012; Möllering, 2006). However, researchers have been looking to utilise varying techniques (e.g. card sorts, games, critical incidents) and distinct interviewing strategies (e.g. autobiographic narrative method) to facilitate participants' willingness and ability to discuss trust and trust-related situations.

In his study on university professors and graduate students, Kramer (1996, 2012) applied an *autobiographical narrative* method in which participants were asked to "recall and describe significant events in their lives" (2012, p. 22). This approach allowed Kramer (2012) to analyse in detail the content of trust judgements and unfold the cognitive structures behind them. In the study on physicians and patient, Kramer and his colleagues (see Cook et al., 2004) applied *semi-structured interviews* to explore the trust judgements of their participants. Kramer (2012) reflected that

the value of this study lay in the possibility to better understand the complexity of perceptions that lay behind the social actors' trust judgements. An important insight that Kramer (2012) made was that the subtle influences they uncovered with the help of qualitative methods would not have emerged in experimental design. Though acknowledging the usefulness of experimental studies, Kramer (2012) highlighted that the potential of qualitative research methods to contextualise trust judgements in real-life can be fruitfully employed to enhance trust research.

Goodall (2012), in research on trust in a community setting, used an approach of "building blocks" that was "designed to examine the factors likely to promote or hinder the building of trust as individual components" (Goodall, 2012 p. 94). Goodall (2012) avoided using direct questions on trust, or more specifically the term "trust", claiming that "(m)embers of the public are likely to have their own conceptions of what trust means for them and their community, and these could differ widely from person to person" (Goodall, 2012, p. 96). Goodall (2012) also indicated that asking direct questions in situations when participants may have to disclose their distrust in their neighbours or might feel reluctant (or even afraid) to discuss distrust in those in authority, would hinder the conversation and prevent the collection of genuine data. According to Goodall (2012, p. 96) "asking specific questions about trust is likely <…> to create defensiveness, and militate against robust collection of data, and a frank and open discussion between interviewer and respondent" Therefore, following Uslaner's (2002) conception on "building blocks" of trust, Goodall (2012) turned to indirect questions, asking research participants to reflect upon their life in their local community, what were their own and other's perceptions of their environment? what was is they enjoyed about their life in the community? or what concerned them? and so on. Such an approach allowed Goodall (2012) to look deeper into the phenomenon under study without engaging into overt discussions of trust. However, Goodall (2012) also paid attention to the fact that though this approach mainly worked well, some of the research participants still consciously avoided speaking about "politically incorrect" topics, their negative perceptions of asylum seekers for example; as they understood that their position is not socially acceptable.

To desensitise the topic of trust, Saunders (2012) used card sort technique combined with in-depth interviewing. Though there can be diverse sorting techniques (e.g. sorting pictures), card sorting, according to Saunders (2012)[57], is the simplest one. Each card contains a drawing, word or other relevant item and a research participant is asked to categories the cards according to a research-specific task. In research on trust, Saunders (2012) used cards to sort a variety of possible feelings in relation to the situation under study (namely, an organisational situation) and a further,

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[57] Saunders (2012) refers to Rugg and McGeorge (2005) as a reference source for the card sorting technique.

in-depth interview followed to explore the reasons and subjective meanings behind the sorting. In the act of sorting, the specific phenomenon of interest (e.g. trust and distrust) was not made focal (thus, was not sensitised) and such an approach allowed for the retrieval of a genuine participant perspective while categorising different feelings. The combination of card sorting and in-depth interview provided valuable, deeper insights that would not have emerged otherwise. However, Saunders (2012) also pointed out that the application of a card sorting technique together with in-depth interviewing required considerable preparation and time.

A somewhat similar approach, a board game method, was used by Muethel (2012) to retrieve universal and culturally different understandings of trustworthiness. Muethel (2012) used a board game with a number of values that previous studies had found were linked to trustworthiness. The study was initiated by first asking a participant to rank and define each value, to describe how each value would manifest in someone's behaviour, and, eventually, to explain the participant's logic behind the order of ranking. Muethel (2012) warned again though about the effort that the preparation and implementation of board game technique requires. The researcher concluded that the value lay in the interpretative power that it provided. Both Saunders (2012) and Muethel (2012) claimed that the techniques they applied were particularly helpful in dealing with the equivocality that is linked to researching such complex phenomenon as trust.

To enhance research on trust, Münscher and Kühlmann (2015) applied a critical incident technique[58], which helped in collecting "detailed descriptions of real-life situations in which trust is created, strengthened or destroyed" (Münscher & Kühlmann, 2015, p. 2010). In their research, Münscher and Kühlmann (2015) asked the participants (managers) to identify incidents that were critical for their judgement in trusting or otherwise their managerial partner. Critical incidents were collected using open interviews in Münscher and Kühlmann's (2015) application (though generally the data generated could be used both quantitatively and qualitatively or combined with different data collection methods). Münscher and Kühlmann (2015) found this approach beneficial because of the richness of the situated data that it provided, though they were not dismissive of the challenges it posed (e.g. hesitance of participants to disclose critical experiences, time and effort consumption that data collection and analysis required).

There are more variations in how interviews on trust can be facilitated or combined with other research strategies (e.g. repertory grids and narratives (Ashleigh & Meyer, 2015) or in-depth interviews and cases studies (Welter & Alex, 2012)), however, the key message that the above review bring is that researchers on

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[58] Münscher and Kühlmann (2015) referred to Flanagan (1954) as the source reference of the origin of the technique.

trust tend to look for more efficient ways for how to obtain valid, participant and context-driven data on trust alongside traditional qualitative interviewing and/or direct questions on trust. Though all the discussed authors agreed that facilitation techniques require additional effort to prepare and implement, the benefits that they bring in richness and novelty of data seemed to outweigh the challenges.

Discussion. There could be reservations relating to qualitative research on trust, however they are not phenomenon specific but rather repeat the common supposed disadvantages of qualitative research; for example the limits of generalisability with a small number of cases or that such research is resource intensive (Möllering, 2006). However, in line with the researchers reviewed in the above chapter, Möllering (2006) advocated that the richness of findings, detailed accounts, focus on social actors' perspectives, or "being there" when people actually make trusting choices proved that qualitative methods are required to capture the complexity of trust. In particular, a qualitative approach could enhance the areas of research on trust that have been mostly limited to quantitative data so far. The application of qualitative research, however, requires thorough consideration on how to best design a study to maximise rapport building and engagement with research participants, and researchers must remain flexible, self-critical and reflective (Lyon et al. 2012; Möllering, 2006).

4. AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO RESEARCH TRUST BEYOND CIRCLE(S) OF IMMEDIATE FAMILIARITY: THE APPLICATION OF A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

"Trust is, I would say, the basis for all other interactions. Without trust, not much can happen between people". (I3)

To briefly recap, the literature and research review in the previous chapters highlighted the importance of social generalised trust and political trust in the context of democracy; the limitations of survey type measurements of trust, and an acknowledgement of the limited application of a qualitative approach in research on trust, particularly when exploring trust interactions in wider social settings that transcend circle(s) of (immediate) familiarity[59]. Prompts to employ a qualitative approach more widely in research on trust so as to delve into the perceptions of social actors, and based on the analysis of cases of the application of qualitative research on trust, the author was led to the decision to use a qualitative research methodology for the empirical research of the thesis. The research is novel in two regards: first, it will contribute to expanding the field of qualitative research on trust and provide methodological implication for future research; second, it will enhance current knowledge on (dis)trust forms and processes from the perspective of the social actors themselves, based on their accounts of real-life experiences and subjective perceptions.

4.1. Empirical research methodology

Generally, the value of a qualitative research approach lies in its relative immersion into the researched social reality that it aims to understand, acknowledging the diversity of subjective perspectives that are linked with social and biographical contexts (Flick, 2014; Hennink et al., 2011). Combined with the potential advantages outlined by other researchers in Chapter 3.4., a qualitative approach is thus conducive to the tasks of the thesis by focusing on the perspective of social actors (in contrast

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[59] To detach from the confines of quantitative research on trust, for the purposes of qualitative research this formulation will be used to encompass the concepts of social generalised trust, political trust and any other potential manifestation of trust beyond the circle of close, familiar people and/or social settings. In this part, references to "social generalised trust" and "political trust" will only be made when specifically discussing the respective measurement items.

to deductive and survey measurement-based accounts on trust) and to gain a better understanding of the process of (dis)trust formation beyond immediate circles of familiarity. Apart from potentially receiving new knowledge on the phenomenon of trust as such, the research primarily focuses on methodological implications: exploring the feasibility of a qualitative approach in research on trust in wider societal contexts, and advancing understanding about social actors' interpretations, both of which are linked to the predominant current concepts and measures of social generalised trust and political trust.

The use of the concept of "social actor" is a deliberate choice reflecting the theoretical and methodological approach of the thesis author towards the analysis of contemporary society. The review on the need and value of trust (as outlined in Sections 1.1.2. and 1.1.3.) presumes active and socially conscious individuals who have to *make a choice* or decision *to take a risk* in trusting other active individuals (e.g. Giddens, 1990; Yamagishi, 2001). The element of pro-active social stance is inherent in the process of trust in complex contemporary societies.
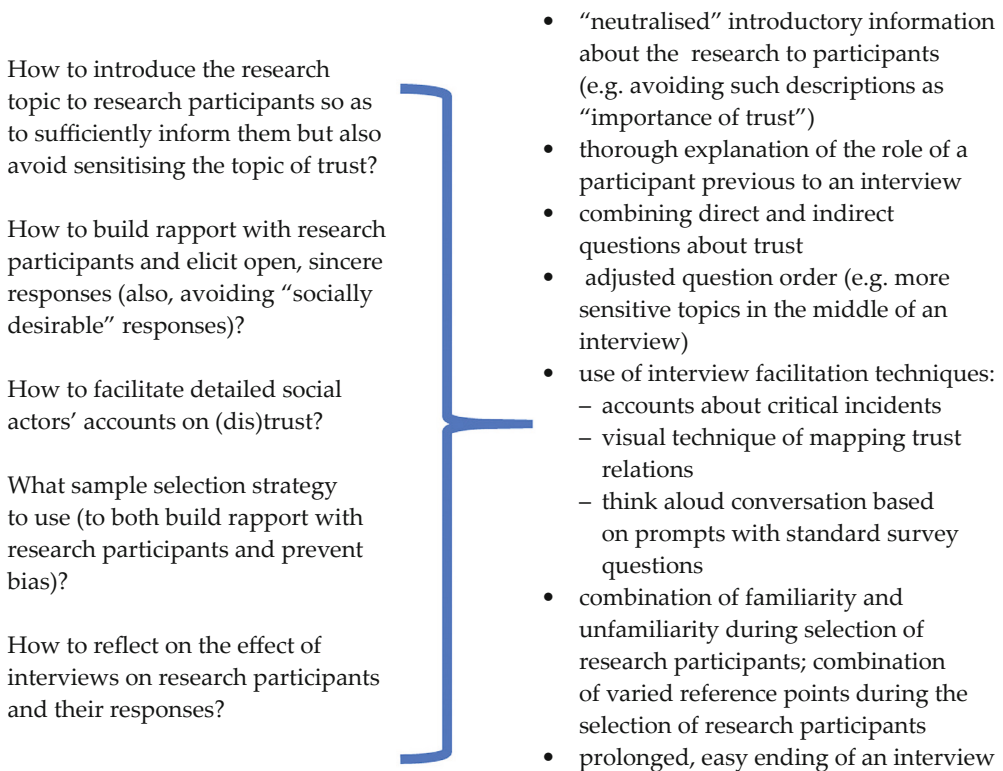
For the purposes of the thesis, qualitative research is based on presumptions of *analytic induction* as a guiding approach to data collection and data analysis. There are diverse understandings of analytic induction; originally analytic induction referred to the search for "universals" in social life as invariant properties (Ragin, 1994). However, Ragin (1994) suggested seeing analytical induction as a research strategy that guides researchers to constantly compare incidents or cases, establishing differences and similarities that appear across the category in question. Paying close attention to evidence that challenges an emerging image thus provides valuable clues to advance the category or concept (Ragin, 1994). According to Daly (2007, p. 45), "(i)n its most simple terms, induction is the scientific process of building theoretical explanations on the basis of repeated observation of particular circumstances". However, "<…> contemporary qualitative researchers more commonly consider the strength of analytic induction to be its ability to provide a rich understanding of complex social contexts – not its ability to provide a causal explanation of events" (Pascale, 2011, p. 2). Therefore, the thesis follows an analytic induction framework based on Ragin and Amoroso (2011), which outlines the following procedural elements:

- Constant comparative method
- Close attention to evidence that challenges images developed from evidence
- Establishment of similarities and differences among incidents
- Search for "negative cases"
- Inductive coding

These elements lead to an explanation of a significant phenomenon: the identification of common features and major dimensions of variation. The most important reason to use analytic induction for the purposes of the thesis is that analytic induction is less concerned with confirming evidence and more with refining the image of the research subject based on both confirming and disconfirming evidence (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011).

The data collection method used in the thesis was individual in-depth interviews, which allowed for collecting detailed individual accounts on perceptions of (dis) trust and experiences in (dis)trust situations. Interviews have been successfully used for previous qualitative research on trust (see Chapter 3.4.). The design of the interview-based qualitative research followed guidance stemming from previous qualitative research on trust. It regarded the risks of trust as a potentially sensitive and complicated research topic, thus choosing individual interviews (as contrasted to, e.g. group interviewing) and adjusting research design decisions accordingly.

Figure 6. Interview research design decisions

How to introduce the research topic to research participants so as to sufficiently inform them but also avoid sensitising the topic of trust?

How to build rapport with research participants and elicit open, sincere responses (also, avoiding "socially desirable" responses)?

How to facilitate detailed social actors' accounts on (dis)trust?

What sample selection strategy to use (to both build rapport with research participants and prevent bias)?

How to reflect on the effect of interviews on research participants and their responses?

- "neutralised" introductory information about the research to participants (e.g. avoiding such descriptions as "importance of trust")
- thorough explanation of the role of a participant previous to an interview
- combining direct and indirect questions about trust
- adjusted question order (e.g. more sensitive topics in the middle of an interview)
- use of interview facilitation techniques:
  – accounts about critical incidents
  – visual technique of mapping trust relations
  – think aloud conversation based on prompts with standard survey questions
- combination of familiarity and unfamiliarity during selection of research participants; combination of varied reference points during the selection of research participants
- prolonged, easy ending of an interview

Source: composed by the author

Figure 6 summarises the five key points and solutions that guided the interview design (detailed descriptions are provided in the respective sections below). It is important to note that generally the topics in the interview guide were not considered as sensitive as they were linked to rather neutral situations or contexts. However, following the guidance of previous research, the preparation for the interviews considered them as potentially sensitive. It was observed during the interviews that the risk of sensitivity depended on the experiences of the participants. Those who had some more critical incidents to tell about or who tended to reflect upon more personal experiences when answering general questions, could feel sensitive, particularly when situations of breaches of trust were discussed. Therefore, treating qualitative research on trust as potentially sensitive and preparing for interviews accordingly has proved to be a justifiable strategy.

The primary design entailed a face-to-face interview mode as being the most conducive to the purposes of the research and compliant with the nature of the topic of trust. Direct contact with research participants was presumed to facilitate rapport building with research participants before and during the interview conversation. However, the COVID-19 pandemic conditioned quarantine measures intertwined with the data collection plan and introduced the dilemma of either postponing data collection for some period or adjusting the research design to remote interviewing mode. After a certain period of delay and the realisation that the COVID-19 pandemic will likely be prolonged for the unforeseeable future, it was decided to use remote interviewing mode (Seidman, 2013) and complete the interviews no later than Spring 2021. The decision both placed a challenge to adjust the research design to elicit data comparable in quality to that from the face-to-face mode and provided grounds to draw additional implications on the applicability of the remote interview mode for trust research. Preparation, adjustment and implementation of data collection, processing and analysis continued through Autumn 2020-Summer 2021.

4.1.1. Sample formation

Sample selection primarily relied on the logic of the purposive sample (Hennink et al., 2020). The sample was built gradually to follow the logic of analytic induction and to ensure the principle of diversity (Flick, 2007a, 2007b; King & Horrocks, 2010). Purposive criterion-based sample (Patton, 2002) was used, aiming at diversity of trust-related life experiences via the criteria of gender, age, and place of residence[60].

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[60] Gradually building the sample, the criterion of place of residence turned into a "soft" criterion because in relation to the research topic, current place of residence was only important to ensure diversity and avoid bias, as a common pattern was that participants changed their place of residence during their life course. Therefore, they could (and did)

Following the guidance of previous qualitative research on trust (i.e. keeping in mind the implications a sampling procedure may have, both on building rapport with research participants and risk of bias), a purposive criterion-based sample was implemented in combination with two participant recruitment strategies: using "recommendation" in order to gain more trustworthiness (however, mutually unrelated reference points were used to contact potential research participants, thus assuring that the sample was not biased towards a specific social circle or category of social actors); and a combination of familiar and unfamiliar participants.

Overall, 28 individual interviews were conducted until a level of saturation (Hennink et al., 2011) in collected data was reached. All participants were adults, the youngest was 20 years old and the oldest 78 years old. Figure 7 demonstrates the characteristics of the final sample (a more detailed information about the recruited participants is provided in Appendix A3).

Figure 7. Empirical research sample composition

Age	n	Gender	n
18-30	6	Female	15
31-40	5	Male	13
41-50	6	**Familiarity**	**n**
51-60	4	Familiar	10
61->	7	Unfamiliar	18

Diversity in place of residence, occupation, employment status, family status

Diversity in life and (dis)trust formation experiences

Source: composed by the author

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reflect upon different trust-related experiences in their "place of residence of origin" and current place of residence (e.g. moving from a rural area to a city or vice versa; changing neighbourhood).

This sample formation strategy led to the desired level of diversity in terms of the research topic: the collected data encompassed participants who were generally trusting in others or, on the contrary, more inclined to be cautious; participants' trust levels in think aloud prompts were diverse; there were participants who had strongly affecting critical incident experiences in their life course but also those who did not experience (or did not remember) more explicit cases of breaches of trust. The range of participant age also provided the possibility to encompass reflection on the changing social, political and economic context, and to trace presumed inter-generational differences.
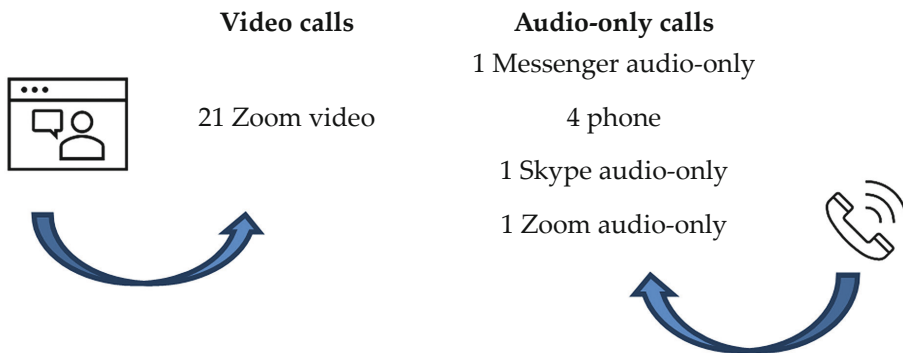
However, it is important to acknowledge that the sample formation strategy was challenging as it did not have clear or specified limits on the type of participants to be sought. For the purposes of the empirical research, "a regular social actor" or "a regular potential respondent" was considered as a target category that can be seen as vague. Nevertheless, the strategy was efficient to elicit diversity and allowed for exploration of set research tasks; it fitted the purpose of attempting to explore trust formation, including the most vague/undefined social interactions. It also allowed observation of the overall picture of the trust formation process without confining it to a specific context or trust target. Nevertheless, the data also confirmed the complexity of the phenomenon of trust as repeatedly outlined in theory and research on trust. Therefore, based on the findings of this empirical study, there is a definite need to go deeper into more specific areas of trust beyond circle(s) of immediate familiarity, focusing on details and nuances in varied, wider societal contexts or activities; for example, trust in (specific) political actors, trust in separate institutions, trust in civic participation, and so on. In those cases, samples strategies can be adjusted accordingly, drawing upon more specific sampling criteria, which was not conducive to the current thesis research.

4.1.2. Data collection process

Method. As already indicates, the final method choice was individual in-depth remote interviews (Bampton et al., 2013; O'Connor et al., 2008). Interviews were conducted via two communication tools (depending on interviewee's preference): the computer-based platform (*Zoom*, *Skype* or *Messenger*) or the telephone. Video-call communication was primarily suggested to a potential participant in order to create an interview conversation environment as close to face-to-face interaction as possible. However, the preference, and in particular the comfort of a participant with remote communication tools, was considered as an important adjustment necessary to build rapport with the participant. There were some (albeit very few) participants who felt more comfortable speaking via telephone or had technical barriers to using

video for conversation. However, it is important to note that technical and subjective barriers to participation in remote interviews did not appear as common or serious as could have been predicted. The delay with fieldwork also meant that to some extent potential research participants who might not have used such communication tools before or for whom the use was restricted, were simply forced to do so due to pandemic conditions. Nevertheless the author experienced relatively few issues related to the use of a remote mode of interviews in this regard. Figure 8 outlines the distribution of interview conversations by communication tool.

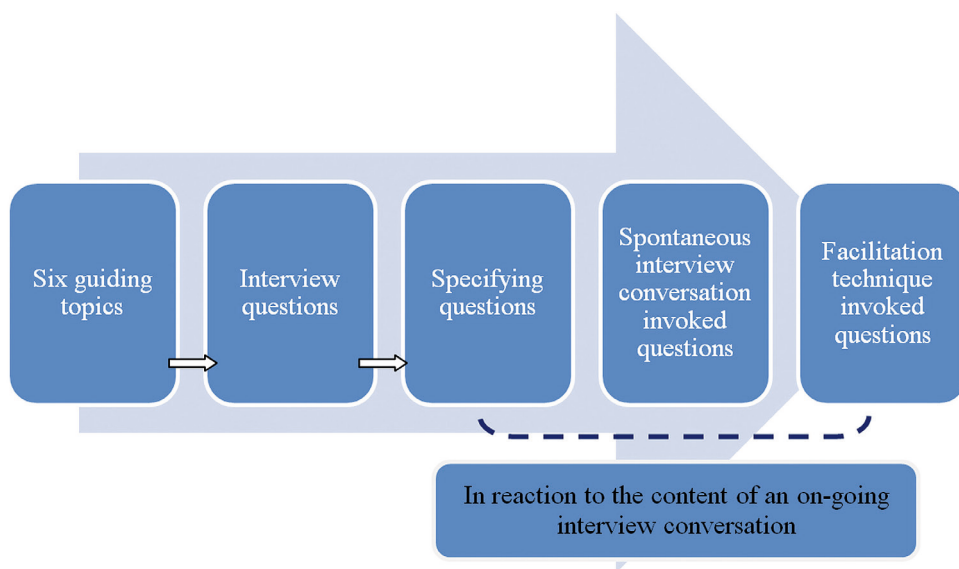**Figure 8.** Tools of communication for remote interviewing

Video calls

21 Zoom video

Audio-only calls

1 Messenger audio-only

4 phone

1 Skype audio-only

1 Zoom audio-only

Source: composed by the author

Interview guide. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide that kept the main course of the interview topics in focus but which at the same time allowed for flexibility and spontaneity (Alvesson, 2011; Patton, 2002). Figure 9 presents the structure of the interview guide. The interview guide is provided in Appendix A1.

The guiding topics were constructed based on the needs of research tasks and the insights from the literature review, and thus were aimed at eliciting a better understanding of general perceptions of trust; the perception of and formation of trust with familiar and unfamiliar people; experiences of trust during life course; trust in Lithuanian society; the perception of trust in institutions, and an overarching summary of trust perceptions and experiences using a visual technique. Each topic entailed several main interview questions and was followed by specifying and/or spontaneous questions, depending on the course and content of the interviewee's response to the main interview questions. The interview guide anticipated the following interview facilitation techniques:

Figure 9. Elements of interview guide structure

| Six guiding topics | Interview questions | Specifying questions | Spontaneous interview conversation invoked questions | Facilitation technique invoked questions |

In reaction to the content of an on-going interview conversation

Source: composed by the author

- think-aloud based on standard survey measures
- visual technique – drawing a map of trust relations (further referred to as trust map)
- simplified technique of critical incidents

Think-aloud technique. At the appropriate juncture during the interview, the researcher presented a standard SGTQ, the trust in political and other institutions question, and asked a research participant to consider it and provide the answer score. The participant was further asked to elaborate on her/his answer and, based on the content of the elaboration, further specifying and spontaneous questions followed. This technique served to gain deeper insight about the interpretations that research participants make when answering standard survey questions on trust and what they consider when choosing their trust scores. It also served as a facilitator of interview conversation, as it helped to move indirectly to a discussion of everyday life situations of trust and obtain details on trust formation when diverse trustees and contexts were involved.

Trust maps. Section 3.4.3. reviewed the usefulness of facilitation techniques like card sorts or games to facilitate and validate qualitative research on trust. Both

inspired by these examples and acknowledging the potential difficulties for research participants to discuss the complex and elusive phenomenon of trust (which, as the interview data showed, is often perceived rather intuitively or automatically in everyday life situations), the researcher looked for a possible solution for how to further prompt participants to reflect upon trust and validate verbal information with an additional type of data. Based on previous experience and knowledge, the researcher decided to employ a visual or graphic facilitation technique, namely, creation of a map accompanied by verbal elaboration. The researcher developed a trust map facilitation technique based on previous examples in other research fields (Copeland & Agosto, 2012; Juozeliūnienė, 2014; Juozeliūnienė & Kanapienienė, 2012). These techniques proved to be useful in qualitative research as an additional way for learning about personal understanding of complex or abstract ideas (Copeland & Agosto, 2012). Juozeliūnienė (2014) presented a "Family map" technique, which entailed three stages: making a list of family members, laying out a family map, and an in-depth interview conversation. The combination of the visualisation of the research participants' ideas and prompting them to verbally elaborate on them was a valuable innovation in research on family relations (Juozeliūnienė, 2014). Copeland & Agosto (2012) also noted that the map technique should not be used alone, as it has to be contextualised with the interview component and accompanied by appropriate instructions.

The map technique was adjusted to the needs of the thesis. The application of it followed three stages: 1) the task of laying out the trust map was introduced at the final step (last topic) of the interview. Therefore, it relied on the previous discussion in which varied people and trustees (including abstract entities such as institutions) were already discussed (i.e. it worked as a list of the potential points of the trust map); 2) the task asked a research participant to think over the interview conversation and put the people (or other trustees) that were discussed into a map. The main instruction was that the participant marks herself/himself approximately in the centre of a paper sheet and places others according to her/his trust relations with them; 3) further, the researcher asked the participant to elaborate on the layout of the map, followed by specifying and spontaneous interview questions. The researcher held a flexible approach towards the creation of the map, allowing participant to choose how they visualise the relations of trust – either with circles, arrows, or lines indicating the relative threshold where the trust relation changes. Initially, the researcher left it to the participants to decide whom to include into the trust map; however, during the follow up interview conversation, in some cases the researcher would come back to the previous interviewee responses and ask the participant to consider how some of the discussed categories of people or institutions would or would not be included into the map. The maps and verbal

elaborations were used to retrieve an overarching picture of the formation of trust, from the closest interpersonal relations to the wider societal context. An assessment of the application of the map technique will be discussed later in Section 4.3.4.

Critical incidents. In previous research on trust, critical incidents were used as a guiding technique of the whole interview process (see Section 3.4.3.). Such an approach was not conducive to the purposes of this thesis. However, the researcher decided to employ a simplified element of critical incident technique to prompt research participants to reflect upon more distinctive trust-related experiences. Therefore, research participants were asked to recall one critical incident, that is, one situation where their trust in others was significantly breached (or, vice versa, the incident was highly positively connoted). Beholden upon the principles of research ethics and the potential sensitivity of such a question, the researcher instructed participants that the exact details of people or situations were not required and asked them to provide only a general description of the critical incident. It was followed up by specifying questions on how participants dealt with the incident and if/how the incident could have further affected participants' trust dispositions or relations. It is worth noting that commonly, participants would easily recall a critical *negative* incident, whereas positive examples were mostly absent. Nevertheless, the approach of using a critical incident question as a part of the interview proved to be an efficient way to elicit participants' responses in a more tangible manner.

Interviews were completed with closing questions that allowed the participant to make their own concluding remarks and reflect briefly on the interview conversation and its topic.

Building rapport. Acknowledging the need to ensure rapport with research participants (as guided by both a qualitative approach in general (Davies, 2007; Seitz, 2016) and in relation to research on trust specifically as outlined in Chapter 3.4.), building rapport happened via several stages.

Stage one: sampling strategy. As mentioned above, the sampling strategy took into account the importance of trust relations between interviewees and researcher. Therefore, it was attempted to ensure a level of "proximity" with potential research participants, using intermediaries who would forward an invitation to take part in the research and "recommend" the researcher. This was particularly important and turned out to be efficient with participants who were completely unfamiliar to the researcher. For example, before the interview a few participants reflected that they only responded to the invitation because it was forwarded to them by someone they trusted. It smoothed the threshold of initial contact with the participants and

contributed to the facilitation of interview conversation. Based on previous research on trust, familiarity was also used to some extent to ensure rapport between researcher and research participants. However, to avoid bias, sample selection criteria were equally applied to these cases and it was ensured that familiar participants did not compose the main share of participants. Familiarity with participants did facilitate interview conversations; however, overall, the content of the data and openness of the participants did not seem to differ substantially. Nevertheless, either direct or indirect "familiarity" did work in favour of building rapport with the research participants.

Stage two: communication prior to interview. This entailed preparation of information for potential participants about the research. The first contact with a potential research participant included a less formal invitation to participate in the research. After a potential participant expressed an interest / preliminary agreement to take part in the research, an "Information about the research" and "Informed consent form" were presented to the participants (see Appendix A2). Based on the latter, participants were able to make an informed decision to take part in the research. After confirmation of the participation, an agreement about preferred time and communication mode for the interview were agreed. Finally, participants were reminded one or two days prior to the interview about the time of interview. Such multi-step communication prior to the interviews facilitated a further level of familiarity with the recruited research participants.

The introductory information about the research was "neutralised" to avoid sensitising the topic of trust; for example by avoiding such descriptions as "importance of trust" or otherwise stressing the direction of the future conversation. However, prior to the interview special attention was paid to a thorough explanation of the role of a participant to reduce potential worries related to ability and competence to participate (e.g. that a participant will not have enough knowledge to answer the questions or that (s)he does not have anything relevant to tell) (Mikėnė et al., 2013). Participants were repeatedly assured that participation in the research does not require any specific knowledge or skills, that their personal, subjective perspectives and experiences are of high relevance for the researcher and that the researcher commits to respect participants' decision to refrain from certain answers.

This stage also included agreements about the implementation of the interview. To make remote interview conversation as comfortable as possible, the researcher adapted to the participants' choices of communication tool, comfortable time, and always provided any technical help if it was needed.

Stage three: Ice-breaking at the beginning of interview conversation (prior to the start of recording). Remote calls with interviewees started with small talk; giving space for participants to ask questions about the research; reminding them about the recording, and an informal explanation about the role of the interviewee (assurance of the interviewee's competence and value as a research participant). Explaining in detail the role of the interviewee and acknowledging that the interviewer *is* looking for everyday (common) life experiences and the perspective of the interviewee in an informal way prior to the conversation again assured participants that special knowledge or "smart" speaking is neither required nor welcome. It is important to note that such a repeated assurances were not redundant, as some of the participants would still express doubts about the usefulness of their contribution during or after the interview conversation, thus requiring even more assurance.

Stage four: Mode of researcher's self-presentation and communication during the interview. A friendly, informal mode of communication was held throughout the interviews. The researcher attempted to acknowledge the participant's input and encourage that (s)he is doing well, but at the same did not show too much enthusiasm to avoid leading participants to believe that certain ideas are more relevant than others. The researcher also allowed space for the interviewee's narrative without interrupting with questions, writing down remarks for clarifications or specification to follow after the thought of the participants was finished. Nevertheless, the remote form of interviewing sometimes hindered the effort as occasional lagging of the internet connection would produce time overlaps in time of the participant's response and the interviewee's next question. In such cases the researcher would always apologise and prompt a participant to continue her/his thought if unfinished.

In cases when participants reflected on some sensitive experiences, the researcher would carefully observe their mood, slow down the pace of interview or avoid going into those experiences deeper that necessary. If participants expressed (explicitly or implicitly) unwillingness to discuss or elaborate on some topics, their request was respected.

Stage five: Post-interview feedback. After each interview, the researcher would switch off the recorder and provide some time for "small talk" to finish the interview conversation nicely and thank the participants. A common pattern was that the participant reflected their satisfaction with participation and surprise that they were able to tell much more that they initially thought they were able to. Also, participants repeatedly acknowledged that the interview conversation was interesting and made them think more about the phenomenon of trust than they ever did before.

4.1.3. Research ethics and data protection

Participation in the research was voluntary. The research utilised a written informed consent form based on detailed information provided on research and data protection (see Appendix A2). All participants received forms signed by the researcher prior to providing their consent to participate in the research. Due to the remote mode of interviewing, written informed consent forms were also collected remotely. The majority of the participants did not have difficulty in signing a .pdf document of the informed consent form or providing a scanned or photographed signed document (n=23). However, some participants were not able to technically sign informed consent forms; their consents were collected in the form of a personalised reply to the email containing the information about the research (n=3) or they provided consent verbally at the beginning of the recording of their interview, confirming that they received and were acquainted with the information about the research (n=2; both participants preferred to do the interview via phone as well). Participants were repeatedly informed about audio recording and explicit permission was received both via the informed consent form and prior to each interview.

Interviews were treated anonymously. A participant code was assigned each interview voice record and interview transcript. The transcript text was additionally anonymised where needed (e.g. names of children anonymised, titles of organisations or cities or other details anonymised). Contact details, signed informed consent forms and interview voice records are stored separately from anonymised transcripts. All collected data is stored in the password protected *Microsoft Office Cloud Storage* account of the researcher.

As mentioned previously, the autonomy of participants was respected: participants were allowed to avoid sensitive topics (if they regarded them as such) and no details were required if the interviewee described a situation that could be regarded as sensitive. The researcher upheld a supportive stance during the interview conversation. Participants also had a choice to refuse to engage in a facilitation task (for example, a couple of participants did not want to draw a "trust map" and chose to describe it verbally instead).

4.1.4. Data corpus and analysis approach

All interviews were audio-recorded and manually transcribed. All interviews and transcriptions were conducted in the Lithuanian language. The average length of one interview was 66 minutes. The shortest interview lasted 38 minutes and

the longest interview lasted 113 minutes. The overall volume of transcribed text is 433 pages (standard Word A4 page, single spacing).

The data analysis process was guided by a qualitative data coding approach that recognises the interplay between *both* induction and deduction (Hennink et al., 2011). The data coding combined inductive codes that emerged directly from a thorough reading of the interview transcripts but was also complemented with codes derived from the interview guide topics and theoretical concepts. Inductive and deductive strategies were further used for coded data searches and analytical comparisons (Hennink et al., 2011). The coded segments were complete sentences or short paragraphs. Coding was carried out manually using an *Excel* sheet. Each transcript segment for coding was inserted into a separate *Excel* sheet line, followed by a code. Furthermore, the codes were grouped into categories and subsequently linked to emerging themes. The *Excel* "Filter" function was used to facilitate the data search, combining code search, topic search and analytic search strategies (Hennink et al., 2011) to provide in-depth answers to research tasks.

Following the guidance of qualitative research methodology and analytic induction, preparation for data analysis and the data analysis itself was conducted gradually, flexibly and in a circular manner (Hennink et al., 2011; Ragin & Amoroso, 2011). Each interview was followed by short analytical memos completed by the researcher immediately after the interview was finished. As far as possible, interview transcripts were completed gradually, after each ~5 interviews, both to gain preliminary insights and to adjust the search for further participants in an attempt to include diverse cases in relation to the research topic. The researcher also chose manual transcription so as to be able to be more thoroughly acquainted with the data; each transcript was also fully read before the start of the coding process. During the analysis, data was constantly compared, looking for similarities and differences inside the texts linked to a code, a category or a theme. In the process of data collection, interview cases were also compared to assure diversity; however, for data analysis, comparison of subgroups of participants was not distinctly applied as for the purposes of the thesis the overall conceptual framework was of primary importance. However, the data showed that such a comparison could be meaningful for future research as certain trust-related experiences are obviously bound to social characteristics (for example, age appears to be an important interplay in the development of trust dispositions and the networks of social actors).

To support the researcher's statements, data demonstration is used in the form of translated quotations from interview transcripts. Each quotation is referenced with a respective participant code (e.g. I1). In quotations, <text> marks nonverbal or technical information; <…> indicates that some part of original quotation has been removed for the purposes of readability; {text} indicates that a text segment

was added to increase coherence and the "understandability" of the authentic quotation, and [text] indicates anonymised information. Otherwise, the language of the quotations remains authentic (apart from translation induced modifications; translations were made by the thesis author aiming to keep the authentic meaning and language style as much as possible).

The findings chapters that follow provide detailed description and interpretation of the data analysis outcome, structured by themes. Chapter 4.2. focuses on perceptions of trust and the process of trust formation; Chapter 4.3. discusses the findings on social actors' interpretations of the social generalised trust and political trust questions, and provides the methodological implications of the application of a qualitative approach to researching trust in a wider societal context, as well as an assessment of the implementation of research method and techniques. Tables and figures complement the thick description, highlighting the key aspects of the findings. The chapters on the findings include segments of Discussion, in which the empirical research findings are discussed in the light of previous research and the literature review. Appendix A6 presents the core of data coding scheme.

4.2. Findings of the empirical research: perception and formation of trust

It is important to note repeatedly that the aim of the thesis was to expand the boundaries of trust research rather than solely focusing on knowledge about the phenomenon of trust itself. Better understanding of how trust is perceived and experienced by social actors in everyday life interactions, therefore, is closely linked to the methodological implications for future research and, potentially, reconsideration of the interpretation of currently dominant survey research findings on social generalised trust and political trust.

4.2.1. The meaning of trust from the social actors' perspective

As demonstrated in the literature review, trust is a multifaceted concept. Therefore, one of the key tasks of the empirical research was to gain a better understanding of the connotations and meanings social actors[61] associate with

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[61] In the realm of empirical findings "social actors" will be used interchangeably with "research participants". Qualitative research does not allow for generalisation to population; therefore, such a use does not mean "social actors" in terms of a quantitative entity but rather as a category, indicating that the research focuses on micro level analysis. Generalisations have been made about the layers of the phenomenon of trust but not about the distribution of those layers among the participants or a population of social actors.

the phenomenon of trust. Spontaneous responses on the opening question on *what trust means* to research participants revealed core elements associated with the primary perceptions on trust, which were enriched with data stemming from further interview conversations. However, before turning to a more detailed explication of the meaning of trust, it is relevant to note several implications about the way the research participants attempted to conceptualise trust during interview conversations. It sets the ground for understanding how the concept of trust unfolds in everyday actions and interactions.

First, in line with the scientific literature (see Chapter 1.1.), research participants acknowledged the fundamental importance of trust in social life. Generally, trust was discussed as an intrinsic facilitator of social actions and interactions at every level.

> *Without trust... I can't imagine how a normal, healthy life can actually happen. (I23)*

> *No, it's a lot because... If you... if you don't trust somebody, well, there's no point. Well... like say, interact. (I25)*

Second, the concept of trust is vaguely formulated in the minds of social actors. Attempting to conceptualise their personal meaning of trust, research participants reflected on the task as "difficult" or "giving pause". Some research participants observed that "I trust someone" or "I distrust someone" are mundane expressions, though they did not have a ready to go answer upon the meaning they put behind them. The concept of trust seems "self-evident" in their minds; for example, "Well, {trust} that is what it means, that I trust" (I15). Research participants acknowledged that it is a rather intuitive, automatic occurrence which they find difficult to express in a tangible manner. As one of the participants illustrated:

> *Well... trust... <pause, 8s> To think of a formulation right away... Because it's more of an emotional thing. Either you trust or you don't trust. In the sense that you don't ask yourself questions, I mean. Yeah, that would probably be my answer. When you don't ask yourself the question whether you trust that person or not. In the sense that if you already start asking yourself, I mean, and you think: can I trust him here? Well, I think that is no longer trust. (I19)*

{This questions} (r)eally puzzled {me}. <pause, 13s> Listen, what a difficult question. It's as if you often say – I trust, I don't trust. And now I can't even find one word to describe what that is. (I20)

As shown later, however, in the course of interviews it was possible to deconstruct the research participants' perceptions linked to trust, and, more importantly, how these perceptions fluctuate when a trust judgement has to be made in different situations. Nevertheless, the primary spontaneous associations indicated that trust exists as a background sentiment rather than an active stance that participants constantly and consciously employ.

Third, research participants further acknowledged that in their daily social actions and interactions they rarely explicitly thought about or considered trust. Reflecting upon trust tended to be linked to incidents of breach of trust or the potential for breach of trust. This reiterates that trust is a given that permeates social life in an unintrusive way until incidents of deceit bring trust into focus. Explicit considerations about trust are tightly linked to the question of cautiousness.

Well, of course, it's mostly in situations where it's broken, that trust. That's when you start thinking <laughs>. Then you think - well, how it is like that now, right. Or sorry that... that... that trust is broken. That's it. And here... more it's just that I think that every time it's like, well, you don't think {about trust}, you just live and and... and just... (I27)

There were actually, there were phases when... I was thinking <smiles> about trust, what it is, and why... why it's like this and not like that. <...> It was <smiles> with critical events, and then there were other reflections, discussions maybe. (I3)

A... Well... <sighs> that... <pause, 2 s> I've talked about it very few times. Mostly it was m... well, such... I haven't spoken much actually. So specifically on trust, what it is. More maybe talking about specific people or with specific people. Well, in that sense... sort of trying to build a rapport... relationships. Well, in the sense that there were all kinds of projects and everything. And how much to involve someone reliable. Or unreliable. It was like that kind of exploration, maybe there was no open conversation that I or you, I can trust you. No. Well, what would you do, what you can do, right, in that sense. Caution. (I4)

Finally, in spontaneous primary answers on the meaning of trust research participants associated trust with familiar, close, sometimes only the closest, people and regular, repeated social interactions. Though further elaborations during interview conversations untangled the formation of trust in varied wider social circles and with abstract entities (e.g. institutions), it is important to note that social actors perceive whole-encompassing or "thick" (Putnam, 2000; Williams, 1988) interpersonal trust in familiar people as a reference point of trust perception, whereas other "trusts" could be seen as derivatives. As will be shown later, even though the main components of the concept of trust remain in relation to wider circles of interaction, the tangibility of trust diminishes and the boundaries of trust narrow with each subsequent circle, which is an important implication to be taken into account when scientifically conceptualising and operationalising trust in contexts outside circles of immediate familiarity, in particular social generalised trust, trust in institutions, or other abstract entities.

> *Well, as I'm saying, trust, at least as far as I read in the newspapers or look on the internet, where there is trust or distrust in, say, the Seimas[62] or the parties or something else, it's not clear to me what that means. I trust a particular person and I know that he will not cheat me. Or I do not trust him, that he will promise me and cheat me. (I21)*

The meaning of trust in the perceptions of social actors displayed two directions: from trustor to trustee and from trustee to trustor.

The direction *from trustor to trustee* entailed concepts of belief, expectation, knowledge, and certainty about the outcome of an interaction with the trustee or the characteristics of the trustee or her/his actions. Based on the interview data, these can be outlined as the trustee not deceiving the trustor; walking the talk (e.g. doing what was promised; actions corresponding to words); sharing common values; being responsible, or docile (e.g. not ridiculing a trustor because of what (s)he reveals). This direction corresponded to the framework of conceptual definitions of trust as derived from the scientific literature (see Section 1.2.3.).

> *It's difficult... because I don't know, it's kind of a state when you... when you... you believe in some values of the other person. <pause, 2s> Maybe the other person's values. And you know that he's not... he holds some kind of common... common attitudes maybe. Agreements. (I27)*

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[62]   Title of the national parliament of Lithuania.

The belief that <smiles> that things will happen as the expectations have been expressed, the agreements have been fulfilled, I guess so. The expectation that the agreements will be implemented. (I28)

Well, it seems to me that the root of the word gives it all away. That I believe what a person says, I know that he will do as he says. I know that he does not lie. I know that I won't have to worry, be anxious about it. If... because trust is either in the situation, or in the person, or in the well... a relationship, no matter what, it's... (I13)

The direction *from trustee to trustor* entailed a state or feeling that trusting another party brings to a trustor. In conceptualising the meaning of trust research participants repeatedly depicted how they *can be* or *feel* in a trust relationship with others and/ or what such a relationship enables. This direction is mostly omitted in scientific definitions of trust. The dominating (repeatedly appearing) concepts associated with the meaning of trust were the ability to open up to another person (lit. *atsiverti*) and safety. Again, *openness* and *safety* as requisites of trust are not commonly found in scientific definitions of trust.

A... Fuf... When you're confident and secure in certain, I don't know, processes and things. Well, there would be like synonyms maybe in this case. (I14)

It's a feeling that... well, which... a state maybe, which... m... <pause, 2s> well, if to describe that state, it's calm, balance, harmony, there's none of that... like an extraneous, that there would be something wrong or anxiety or there... or... sleepless nights, or stress. Well, trust. You just know that you trust like yourself. That there's an extension of you here, because you... he thinks the same way, he'll do the same things you think you'll do or say. It's like that, I don't know if I guessed <smiles>. (I13)

Obviously, it's such a very broad concept, but just... maybe the belief in a person that... he's going to give you that sense of security that, like, well... won't betray you in some... in a bad situation. So for me, trust manifest all the time maybe in those areas. That well... security... e... like comfort maybe even. These are associations with trust. Being yourself, too. Trust too, maybe even. That you can feel yourself and people accept you as such. That's what trust means to me. (I7)

Figure 10 depicts the myriad of concepts associated with the state that trust brings a trustor from the social actors' perspective. These concepts emerged both at the initial conceptualisation of trust by research participants (mainly having in mind closer social ties) and further elaborations on trust in wider social circles, including trust in strangers and institutions. Hence, these can be considered as core elements of the outcome of trust as specifically directed towards the trustor (i.e. her/his state, feeling).

Figure 10. Concepts associated with the trustor's state in trust relation
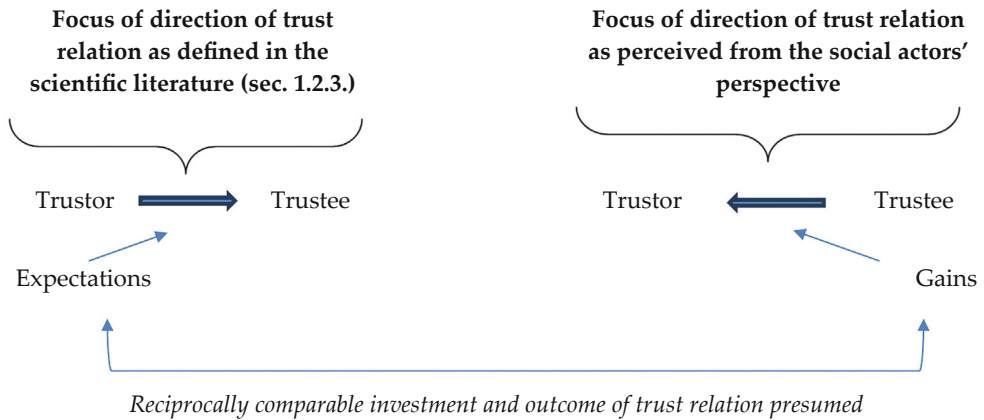

Source: composed by the author

Although the two directions discussed already connoted the reciprocal nature of a trust relationship, the reciprocal link between trustor and trustee was explicitly included in the conceptualisation of trust from the social actors' perspective. It entailed an expectation of comparable investment from both parties (e.g. willingness to open up, providing a sense of safety). Some participants noted that trust has to go both ways, that is, you have to feel that the other person trusts you in order to be able to trust her/him; and vice versa, if one vests trust in another person, there is more or less an explicit expectation that trust *will be* reciprocated.

> *Well, okay, so if to {say} bit by bit, it {trust} could be a close relationship... Well, a close relationship, immediate. Well, probably a close mutual relationship. When you can say anything to a person, well, in the sense of saying anything to a person and expecting them to say anything to you... No, not expect anything. And... <pause, 4s> m... <pause, 7s> <...> I don't. It's a close interconnection. That's what it would be like for me, you know. When you can also tell each other... Well, people can say to each other what they both dare and can, and what they might not dare to others. Well, and they expect that kind of... you must see that expectation that well... so... not necessarily a secret. Secrets can be in quotes here, right. E... that well... I don't know, won't hurt, won't go out, won't offend, won't go beyond some frame, boundaries. That's about it. (I20)*

> *So... well, trust is always two-way, so I would say the ideal, ideally, it is that both sides have that security. And that it is based on the principle of such a constant exchange. (I14)*

To sum up, the analysis of the meaning of trust has emphasised the bi-directionality of a trust relationship. Though scientific definitions of trust include an element of the outcomes of a trust relationship, it is mainly conceptualised as an outcome because of something the trustee does (or does not do), whereas the accounts of research participants revealed the importance of an outcome as directed towards the trustor, that is, what will the trustor *gain* when vesting trust, how (s)he will feel because of fulfilled trust. Figure 11 features how the social actors' perspective complements scientific trust definitions.

Figure 11. Social actors perception of trust vs. conceptual definition of trust

Reciprocally comparable investment and outcome of trust relation presumed

Source: composed by the author

As has already been briefly mentioned, in line with the scientific literature, there was a common agreement between research participants that trust is a necessary resource of social life. For a social actor to function there must be at least a basic level of trust in others. Otherwise, a social actor becomes restricted in ability to interact with others, her/his social actions become limited or (s)he must rely on costly and burdening alternatives to trust such as constant monitoring, control, and feeling unease.

> *Yeah, sure, because with me... it's much more complicated, it's... it's much more complicated when you don't trust someone. Or it's some unsafe space for you. So then, I mean, you have to think already. Not to enjoy, let's say, some moment, if there are some pleasant processes, but to think about how you won't be cheated or something. (I19)*

The value of trust can be best depicted as mirroring both what trust brings to social life and what happens when trust is absent or lacking in social life. Research participants characterise life with trust as "normal", "healthy" (I23), "more comfortable", "easier" (I27), "more simple" (I19). Conversely, from the social actors' perspective, life without at least a basic level of trust is either *impossible* or with social action-*hindering* complications.

> *It would be impossible to live then if you couldn't trust. (I27)*

Well, it seems to me that trust is important everywhere. After all, if... it would be difficult to work and exist if you didn't trust. (I17)

I think that's normal. Em... we are not all the same people and... maybe I feel like that here, when I'm like that... sociable and I want to communicate with everybody and know everything and share everything. But there are people who... who don't want to communicate or say anything at all, and they keep everything to themselves, and they don't trust anybody at all. They don't even trust their parents. I mean, there are people like that. And... somehow it just seems to me that it must be very difficult for them when you don't trust someone, when you can't tell them, because when you talk, then it's automatically easier for the person. And having someone else to trust is also very good. (I2)

Expanding on the previously discussed meaning of trust as outlined by social actors, Table 4 shows the dimensions of value of trust that emerged in the interview data. The value of trust is contrasted to states and outcomes when there is a lack of trust.

The example given below by one of the research participants explicitly reveals how presence and absence of trust affect social interaction and formation of social relationships:

When... with someone I trust, I can... go into some of these more open, deeper conversations. And em... say something more, even well... not even be afraid that they might not understand me. Because it's natural that we can't always understand each other, what I mean, what the other means. It's natural, we speak different languages sometimes, or it's just that everyone's perception is different. Still, each has his own experience or something. But I still so to say then... well, how to say... I will talk, communicate and so on. (I23) <...> And with the one where I don't trust right away, it's just e... Well, I can't say that I avoid contact, but well... You're civil, you're nice, but I just keep my distance. That kind of... emotional even, I'd say. Not that I ignore the person there, but just... I say, I'll be civil, I'll be nice, but not... I won't let him near me, in some of my serious conversations or whatever. I don't even have to discuss anything then... m... I rarely want to, so to speak. For me it's more like... withdraw. (I23)

Table 4. Dimensions of the value of trust from the social actors' perspective

Trust	Lack of trust
State of mind and wellbeing of social actor	
Easiness, openness, tranquillity I think it's important because it gives you inner peace, for one thing. Because you don't burden yourself a lot... (I27) {When you} (t)rust a person, e... <...> so to say, {you} less control. Because you know, well... less of a running around, so to speak, well... (I25) It seems to me that with that kind of trust everything is easier. Somehow you know, you still have those... those kind of supports, some kind of foundations, some kind of guides, you know, where you can get something, I don't know, help, support. (I1)	*Doubt & suspicion, uneasiness & difficulty, closedness* No, you have to trust people, because otherwise... otherwise you'll go mad, right. <...> Because if you really just burden yourself with such... suspicions, thoughts, right, then you yourself will have a bad life, because you will live with that, with that doubt. (I27) Well, you always have this - really? Did he really say that? Maybe you want something here? Something else. And it's hard to live with mistrust. I'm saying, it's very hard for me. It's very hard for me to look at a person and then think: did you really mean that? Or maybe not? (I23) <...> Well, for example, I would be uncomfortable being around e... a person I don't trust. <...> Because well... it would be difficult if you didn't trust. (I17)
State of relationship between social actors	
Enables closer, more open relationship It's when you trust and believe in someone else that you can really live more comfortably, because well, just... you take the load off yourself... in all the different situations in life. You don't have to be the controller or to control. You can just end up solving some problems for which, well, you met there, right, when something happened there. (I27) Well... <...> say, whom you trust more, then you know and you talk it out and stuff, there is something in common. (I25)	*Limits development of open, sincere relationship* If I cannot trust that person, there is a certain limit to which I speak. <...> I can talk about all kinds of things, but not about deep topics and what is inside me. Just don't go there. I won't open that. (I24) Because in practice, if I don't trust a person, I can't really tell him what I really think. My real opinion. Because I don't know what he will translate my opinion into if I don't trust him and so on. So trust is very fundamental and very important. (I21)

Table 4 (continued).

When... with that person I trust, I can... go into some more open, deeper conversations. And em... say something more, even well... not even be afraid that they might not understand me. <...> But I'm still, as it were, already... well, how to say... I'll talk, I'll communicate and so on. (I23)	
Possibility of collaborative action	
Enables collaborative action	*Disrupts collaborative action*
<...> maybe it's because if people trust you, well, that's a good thing, so they will recommend you. Not necessarily some benefit, but maybe others will want to interact with you in general. <...> For others, that {trust or distrust} might be in the general communication e... to communicate or not to communicate, to have a business relationship or not to have a business relationship, or to have some projects like that... project business, whatever it is. (I4)	<...> if I cannot trust a person and I need to have some kind of activity in common with him, it will be difficult for me somehow. I will always have to somehow keep my back safe and I will always have to think not about the action that is happening at the moment, but about whether I am here... whether I'm not going to be fooled here, whether I'm... am I going to get out of this situation dry and so on. (I19) Because if you talk about... say you have to give a job, you have to trust that person to give the job to that person. If you don't trust him at all, then you don't give him anything, not attention, not tasks, not at all. And there will be no communication automatically. (I2)
Possibility or continuation of interaction	
Allows to engage into interactions and form a network of relationships	*Disrupts or breaks interactions & limits potential of interaction or future relationship*
I think there is then, you know, if you don't trust, you are alone. Well, if you don't trust anybody or you don't have people you trust, then you're on your own, aren't you. <...> And that {trust} is important. Well, because of... I don't know, the breadth of communication, life in general. (I20)	<...> probably... as... it {trust}... when you associate it, especially with some kind of giving away of your possessions or giving your time to that person you... that you don't trust, well, it's a pity in the sense of somehow wasting that time, or something else, resources of some kind. (I4)

Table 4 (continued).

	<...> if you don't trust the person, well, there's no point. Well... as a matter of fact, to interact. (I25) <...> I don't associate with people that I don't trust at all, or a lot... I wouldn't trust a lot. (I28) Well yes, if there is no trust <...> then neither I will interact with him, nor I will ask him for something, nor I will give him some help myself if he asks me for something. (I3)

Source: composed by the author

Discussion. The section highlighted the primary meaning and value associated with trust in social actors' perspectives. The findings confirm scientific claims about the fundamental importance of trust for contemporary social life. There are, however, at least two important points to note that contribute to the current conceptualisation of trust. First, even though it is acknowledged that trust is relational and reciprocal (see Chapter 1.1.), the analysis of scientific definitions of trust revealed that the focus is placed on the *expectations* of the trustor towards a trustee or the trustor's belief in certain intentions, behaviour or characteristics of a trustee, whereas findings showed that the *gains* that vesting trust in another person brings back to the trustor are of equal or potentially greater importance for social actors. Therefore, the final element, which was less common in scientific definitions of trust, namely, outcome (or gains), should be included more consistently. The states of safety and openness were repeatedly highlighted as key outcomes of trust relationships for the trustor. Also, the reciprocity of trust relationships should be better reflected in the definition of trust. Second, the initial focus of the thesis is based on the concepts of social generalised trust and political trust, that is, trust in presumably unfamiliar, general, abstract "others" or "strangers" (see Section 2.2.1.). However, spontaneous, unfiltered and unbiased by researchers' questions associations of trust (as elicited by the opening question) were almost exclusively linked to *familiar* or even *very close* people. Such a confined meaning of "genuine" trust presumably makes necessary reconsideration as to whether there might be a limit across social circles or contexts of interaction beyond which we cannot meaningfully talk about (dis)trust, and that the dispositions expressed or referred to as "trust" are actually something else. Such a limit will be outlined in the next sections, which reveal in detail how experiences

(and, correspondingly perceptions) of trust fluctuate across circles of familiarity and contexts.

4.2.2. The process of the formation of (dis)trust

This chapter focuses on the process of the formation of trust as experienced by social actors, including how trust is formed when it transcends social circles of immediate familiarity, that is, manifestations beyond trust's primary meaning in close, familiar interactions.

As discussed in Chapter 2.2., authors commonly dichotomise trust based on the trustor's relative social proximity to the trustee, that is, between trust in familiar, close people and trust in unfamiliar, general others or strangers. Some authors have attempted to go beyond such polarisation; for example, Delhey at al. (2011) introduced the concept of radius of trust, even though it seems that the radiuses were based more on empirically available categories than a thorough conceptual framework. The findings of the thesis contribute to the field by connecting the ends of a continuum of trust manifestations, having trust in closer interpersonal relations at one end and trust in "other" people and abstract entities (e.g. institutions, systems) at the other end. Analysis of the research data allowed for retrieval of relatively distinct plots or circles of trust across the continuum and to detail what trust in each plot entails in terms of its scope, content and the key sources of trust judgement. The circles of trust emerged via analysis of the interview conversations and were validated via the visual technique of trust maps.

The continuum of trust: from inner circles to strangers to abstract entities

As has been observed, the primary meaning of trust in social actors' perspectives is confined to the closest circle of social relations. However, the focus of the thesis is trust beyond the immediate circle of familiarity, in particular trust in abstract, unfamiliar co-citizens, strangers or people one meets for the first time, and institutions, which, it has been argued (see Part 2), is conducive for the strength of civic society and the functioning of democracy. Therefore, trust in close and familiar people will only be included as a reference point for the analysis of subsequent circles of trust and as part of the general process of trust formation.

Figure 12 (see below) integrates the elements of trust formation that emerged during the data analysis. The figure attempts to illustrate that in everyday life interactions, trust is not easily dichotomised in terms of trust vs. distrust, trust in familiar people vs. trust in strangers or thick trust vs. thin trust. The circles of trust in researched social reality do not have definite boundaries – for example, a doctor

may be considered a stranger; however, this is a different type of stranger than someone we meet on the street. The content of trust also fluctuates; for example, even though trust in close relationships may be seen as "thick" or all encompassing, it still has boundaries or spheres of trust and caution when it comes to a specific familiar person. Therefore, this section discusses how the elements of trust formation are linked together and highlights the feature of fluctuation in almost every regard. The next section discloses the formation of trust via the process of trust judgement in more detail.

Based on the research data, it is possible to analytically distinguish *four relative circles of trust*. In researched social reality, however, these circles are not strictly defined and each circle can have inner layers of trust. That is, the same category of people is not necessarily placed in the same circle of trust. Circles of trust are closely linked to levels of *familiarity* and *regularity* of interaction. For example, when laying out and discussing their trust map, some participants differentiated between "relatives" – they would put some relatives into the closer circles of trust, whereas other relatives (e.g. those whom they do not know well or at all) they would consider as strangers. Similarly, research participants differentiated between "good best friends" and "friends", "close neighbours" and "other or unfamiliar neighbours".
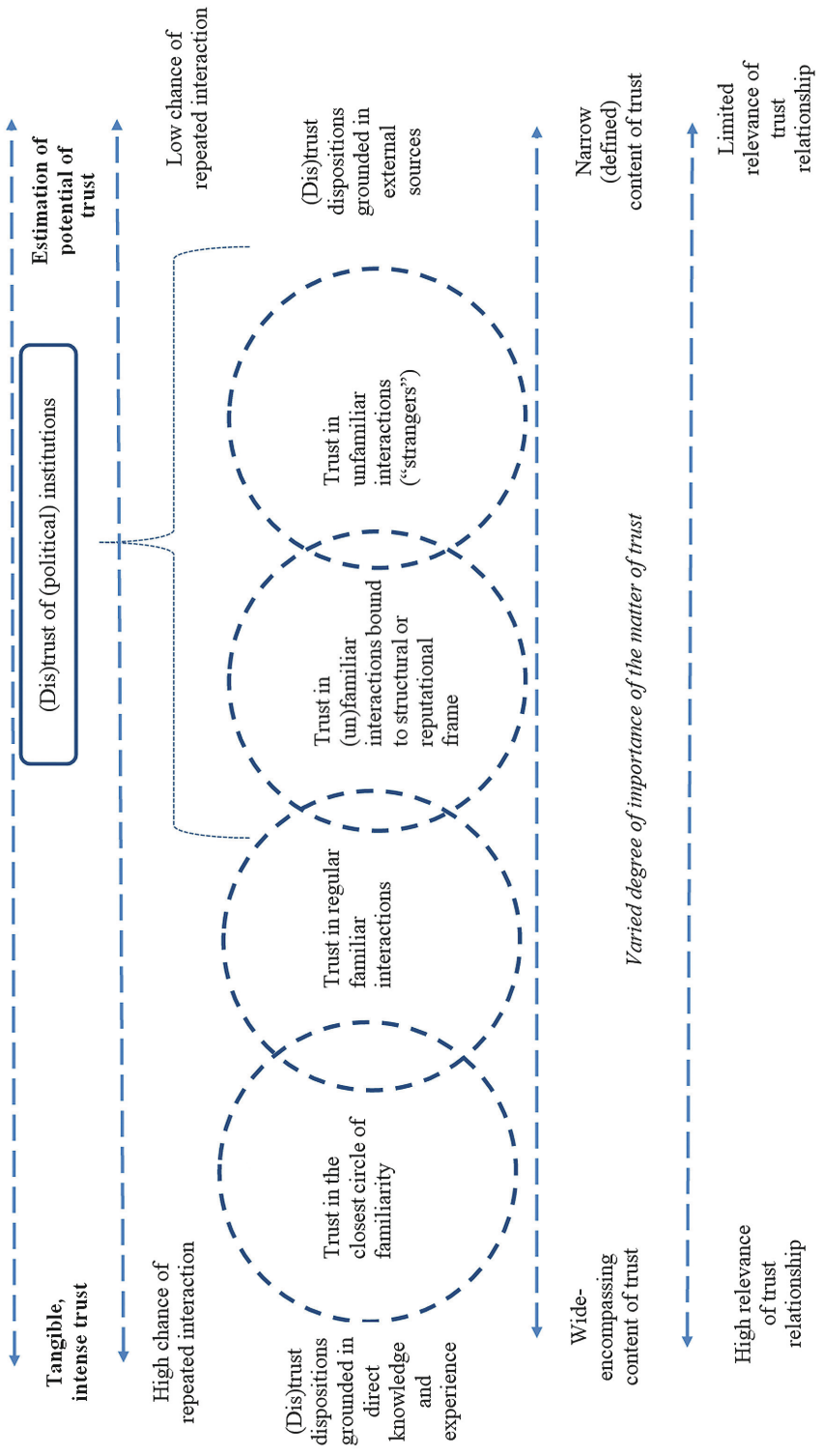
> *It's different with everybody, really, with every line. Just like friends and relatives, for example. I cannot attribute them. I may have drawn similar lines, but I cannot equate them. Because for me, I know friends more than relatives. And I trust them more than relatives. It's... (I2)*

Yet again, the primary association when assessing trust from the social actors' perspective is linked to "knowledge" about the trustee. Therefore, the first two circles could be regarded as *actual* circles of trust, whereas the further two circles are rather the circles of *potential* of trust or *dilemma* of trust, where one has to actually make a trust judgement rather that trusting automatically or genuinely. Research participants did not hesitate to explicitly call the close circle of familiarity a circle of trust, indicating that there they place those whom they trust highly. For example:

> *Well, family is obviously the closest. That is 100% trust. Even the family and I are probably the same, in the sense that it is a shared space. (I19)*

> *I am here. Well... the centre is me. I have... a mother, a husband, a brother, a brother's wife, one very close friend... a friend, a cousin. These are the people whom I, let's say, well... I trust 100%. Well, it's not perfect trust all the time, but it's well... almost the same. (I23)*

Figure 12. Process of formation of trust (*Source: composed by the author*)

Estimation of potential of trust

(Dis)trust of (political) institutions

Low chance of repeated interaction

(Dis)trust dispositions grounded in external sources

Trust in unfamiliar interactions ("strangers")

Narrow (defined) content of trust

Limited relevance of trust relationship

Trust in (un)familiar interactions bound to structural or reputational frame

Trust in regular familiar interactions

Varied degree of importance of the matter of trust

Trust in the closest circle of familiarity

Tangible, intense trust

High chance of repeated interaction

(Dis)trust dispositions grounded in direct knowledge and experience

Wide-encompassing content of trust

High relevance of trust relationship

Well, it's family members all the time, well, in the sense that you want to have a lot of faith and trust in them. (I1)

The first circle of trust commonly included the closest family members (e.g. a spouse or a partner, parents, children, close friends, or, to some extent, relatives). The second circle included other familiar people with whom social participants maintain more or less regular interactions (e.g. other friends, colleagues, neighbours, other relatives). In this circle, trust becomes less tangible and less encompassing, and research participants would start to discuss differentiation in trust levels. The next circle includes categories of people who border on unfamiliarity – there can be a level of acquaintance in it but it is either lower or indirect. This circle included such categories of people as specialists (e.g. "specialist of their sphere (with whom one has to interact one way or the other)" (I8)), or clients, acquaintances, people linked to institutions, as well as institutions as abstract entities. And finally, there is a circle of "strangers" (lit. *nepažįstamieji*) where trust is least tangible, which, as will be argued later, social actors do not tend to perceive as an actual circle of trust but rather as a circle of potential trust.

Along the line, the further we go, the less trust there is. It... the closest parallel to me is family and my other half. Because these are the people I trust the most, and who know me the best, and who I feel most at ease around. And... then behind them are my friends. M... who I trust, but also... I choose who to trust and who not to trust. Relatives... after the frie... maybe in parallel with friends. M... also not... I don't have any relatives who are very much there, who I can also trust completely and open up with my whole, full heart. <...> And the last place is the people I meet for the first time, at the very end, at the very corner, who I don't trust at all until you start to communicate. So that's it for now, unless I come up with something else, I'll do it. (I2)

The circles of trust primarily focused on categories of people. However, following the interview conversation, research participants also included social and political institutions into their trust maps. Commonly, they placed institutions among the outer circles of trust. Research participants' perceptions on trust in institutions will be discussed in detail later (see Section 4.2.3.). With regard to the overall process of trust formation, it is important to note that institutions seemed to be regarded as to some extent "acquainted" (e.g. via mass media sources) and thus preceding the circle of "strangers". Although in some cases, particularly those relating to political institutions as "authority" were also placed at the outer circle of trust with the intention of expressing a low level of trust in them. Also, the trust maps revealed

that research participants tended to place institutions that are more relevant, more important in everyday life, closer (e.g. medical institutions or the church), whereas less relevant institutions or institutions they see as less trustworthy were placed further along the trust continuum.

Research data indicates *four parallel axes* that intertwine the continuum of trust and shape the perception, content and judgement of trust. They can be outlined through the following questions:

1) How relevant in daily life is the (potential) trust relationship and/or how important is the matter of trust?
2) What level of familiarity exists between a trustor and a trustee or how much information does a trustor have/can acquire about a trustee?
3) Is it a (potentially) repeated interaction (and how intensive is it?) or is it a one-time (superficial) interaction?
4) How wide or narrow are the boundaries of what a trustor entrusts a trustee with?

The more important the relationship is between trustor and trustee, the higher the value of trust in that relationship, and the higher the harm done by breaches of trust and, consequently, the more detrimental is the lack of trust for the quality or continuation of that relationship. Similarly, the more important the matter at question is, the more value placed on trust, and, therefore, more effort may be put in or required to look for guarantees of trust (an example might be the search for recommendations and feedback to find a doctor one can trust to conduct serious surgery). To sum up, the more important a relationship is, and the fewer the alternatives one has to choose from, the higher the value of trust is. Conversely, if the trustor has alternatives, and the matter at questions is not very important or the relationship with a trustee is not very important, then lack of trust is not considered as an issue.

> *At work it's very... very those consequences can be, let's say, rather mild. Because if you don't trust a colleague and you ask for help and you just don't get it or something like that, there are still ways to do something, to come up with something yourself. <...> But I think maybe a better example would be, um... in the context of military service, I guess. In war, if you can't trust your comrades, who, hey <smiles> should carry you out of the danger zone, if necessary, wounded, then in the real sense of the word your life depends on it. <...> Well, that trust is absolutely, perhaps, related to all people, but perhaps not all people have the same effect on you as a human being. (I3)*

Moreover, the more important the matter of trust is, the more inclination there is to look for certain "trust insurance". Research participants mentioned various ways of how to "guarantee" an outcome from vesting trust; for example, in the form of a search for information, reputation, or clear communication of one's expectations (see more detail in the sections below).

A level of familiarity with a trustee is a fundamental prerequisite of trust from the social actors' perspective. The more a trustor knows about a trustee, the more grounded or automatic the trust judgement is and the more it is possible overall to say we are talking about a trust relationship and not something else. This reveals the issue of trust in strangers, where the level of familiarity or knowledge about the trustee may be low or absent. This issue will be discussed in more detail later; at this point it is important to note that *knowledgeability* about the potential trustee is constitutive of the process of trust formation, whether it is deep familiarity or some abstract notion of common human values.

> *No, well... with those... with those people who... In other words, I choose the people I interact with. And I choose the people I talk to who I trust. I don't interact with... People whom I wouldn't trust, but I would still have contact with them, I don't want to have to, there are very few that I wouldn't trust. There are some that I don't know very well, so to speak, and I don't have an opinion about trust. So far... I have no reason to distrust them. As I said, neighbours. Well, I do not have basis not to trust them. Now that I trust them, that I can tell them my secrets, well, I can't say that either. That's the word of the man I... I don't know very well and about the trust that I... have no opinion. (I21)*

The question of trust is more relevant when there is a chance of repeated interaction. Moreover, in relation to the question of familiarity, research participants repeatedly claimed that "real" trust can only form when the interaction is potentially repeated. The more continuous and intense the interactions between trustor and trustee are, the more important trust is in their relationship. Interestingly, however, the probability of a repeated interaction has a dual effect with regard to trust in strangers: it may induce trust and openness in a one-time interaction or, contrarily, one time interactions with strangers may be considered as being outside of the question of trust. Among research participants, there were some examples of "one-time complete trust" in a stranger when the trustor was sure (s)he will not meet the trustee ever again and thus could trust him/her with a level of openness that would have been restricted with familiar people. Another situation that requires an on-the-spot expression of trust in strangers is when one is in a state of emergency;

for example, when a car accident happens. This is a type of "coerced" trust that cannot be avoided and that is not much reflected upon in the situation (i.e. there is no actual trust judgement happening).

> *Well, with strangers, maybe more so... we talk about general topics, but with our relatives it's more about our personal lives... we expand. (I26)*

> *It's probably more accurate to say with people who have been tested. If it is about a deeper issue, a more open conversation, there is a need for credibility... (I24)*

> *I can certainly tell a stranger what I think. To a stranger whom I know I will not meet again. Well, that's how it is on a trip. Like some train journey. You get off, or it was an episode. You only know the name and you don't meet much in life. Then you can say what you think. If you feel that the person is close to your soul. Somehow acceptable. (I24)*

> *If a complete stranger came in there, unless there was some kind of crisis situation where it was close to panic and you needed someone to help you and then you'd be off... you have to trust unconditionally, and you can't change anything, can you. It's there in all sorts of emergencies and so on. That's it, you're glad that anybody who stops. You don't even know these people and you don't know. Then yes. (I27)*

Nevertheless, commonly repeated interactions and repeated experiences with a trustee provide a more solid ground for trust judgements and guarantees of the positive outcome of placing trust. One can also talk about more automatic trust; one already has a formed idea of the trustworthiness of the trustee or the situation and thus one does not raise the question of trust. *Time* is a prerequisite of further trust formation.

> *E... if I call a handyman, I mean, if he fixes my, say, running crane or something, for once. Then the next time I trust him. If he... leaves and it keeps running again, then I don't trust him the next time. In other words, first I have to feel, to find some kind of criterion for evaluation. Because if I don't have any criteria, I can't trust or distrust. (I21)*

Conversely, if an interaction is seen as being for a single-time or very superficial, there is basically no need for trust or only the need for a very minor positive

estimation of the potential of the trust required to be able to interact. There needs to be a certain "credit of trust" or initial level of inclination to trust that allows for getting into contact with a person. However, it is a very limited trust that either evolves further or otherwise. However, if there is no prospect of interaction, there is no need for trust.

> *Interact. It doesn't take much. But to trust... Well, up to a certain point, not much {trust} at all {is needed}, to be able to chat or something... (I24)*

> *And here, as you say, or a foreman, or a cashier in a shop, or there... which person you exchange a few sentences with, well, that doesn't require much trust. It's just communication, that's all. As I understand it. (I22)*

> *<…> if you see a person alone or... for the first time and you don't see him again, well, what's the talk about trust, so to speak? Well, you believe as much as you need to. As much as you need at that moment to communicate with him. (I22)*

> *But about trust, it's one of those again. An acquaintance... of course, not a friend, again, not maybe that close... communication, as I said, right, but trust from the other prism, that well, you don't necessarily have to let it in, but within this aspect of security, let's say. (I20)*

The boundaries of trust diverge across the continuum. Generally, trust is most encompassing in the closest circle of familiarity, whereas in the subsequent circles of trust it becomes narrower and concerns more specific matters of trust. However, it is also not unequivocal. Even though research participants primarily referred to trust in their closest one's as "all encompassing", "one hundred percent", more detailed analysis of trust situations revealed the conditionality of trust. Even in the inner circle of trust, one may differentiate between trustees; for example, one would trust a good friend to collect money for a party but would not trust the same friend to help in construction. In inner circles, this differentiation is based on familiarity, knowledge and experience with a trustee. When it comes to less familiar people, trust becomes either very diffuse (intangible) or focused on a specific matter.

It is important to note that though these axes may be seen as inter-linked, the linkage is not linier and analytical separation of the axes is beneficial for a more detailed understanding of the process of trust formation. On the end of continuum of trust that features the circle of close interpersonal relations, the relevance of trust relationship is high; the matters that are entrusted can be varied (both very important

and mundane; thus the content of trust is wide-encompassing); the trustor is well familiar and informed about the trustee, and there is regular interaction (or a long term history of interaction) between trustor and trustee. This combination reflects what constitutes the basis for "genuine" ("true") trust as perceived by research participants. Moving along the trust continuum towards the other end, relevance, familiarity (informativity) and regularity of interaction commonly decrease, even though the importance of the matter of trust may still be high (e.g. the trustor's health). The subsequent circles of trust feature more limited or narrower expressions of trust.

These axes also work as background pillars for trust judgements. The higher the level of familiarity with a trustee and the more regular the interactions (or longer the history of interactions), the more automatic is the trust judgement. During interviews narratives appeared of some research participants having a set network of trust-verified social relations (i.e. a circle of people with whom one is well familiar, has a history of interaction and has already confirmed their trustworthiness) where the question of trust does not arise. A level of familiarity and repeated interaction allows for a more automatic, pre-reasoned trust judgement, whereas the less familiar a potential trustee is, the more obscure the trust judgement may be or the more preparation the trustor may need to be able to claim to "trust" another. Moreover, as will be argued later, in the case of an interaction with strangers, the question initially is not about actual trust but rather estimation about the potential for trust. Certain knowledge ("familiarity") with the trustor or certain "trust inducing" contextual factors seem to be necessary for social actors to make actual trust judgements.

Finally, though Figure 12 identifies circles of trust, it is fundamental to recognise that they are relative and that the boundaries of those circles are not definite. In particular, the line between "familiar" and "stranger" is not so straightforward or binary as the scientific literature commonly claims. An example of how "familiarity" and "unfamiliarity" interplay stemmed from the trust map technique: in some cases, research participants would clarify that the category of people, such as relatives, in their map only included those relatives whom they know well or with whom they interact often, whereas other relatives may be moved to the category of "strangers" as a research participant does not have any relevant link to them or knowledge about them. Contrarily, research participants would stress that, for example, they place a friend into the inner circle of trust even though they haven't had frequent interaction with them for a prolonged time. The level of familiarity and length of history of interaction compensate the lack of regularity in terms of the trust relationship. To continue, strangers who are affiliated with institutions or professions, even if met for the first time, may be considered as "lesser strangers" than common people met for the first time. The research data highlighted that

the category of "strangers" is not unilateral and thus analysis of "trust in strangers" must regard the underlying nuances and sub-dimensions.

Therefore, it is relevant to presume that the opposing ends of the trust continuum also reflect how tangible or intangible trust is. At one end, we have tangible trust solidified with knowledge about and experience with the trustee and wide-encompassing content of trust. At the other end, trust is intangible, as the content of trust narrows and disperses and information for trust judgement is limited or absent. The intangible trust end, therefore, hovers on the margin of the concept of trust. The research data leads to the argument that at this end of the trust continuum we deal with an ***estimation of the future possibility of a trust relationship*** rather than actual trust or distrust. Even though research participants were able to deconstruct the path of trust judgement in a variety of everyday life situations, including interactions with strangers (or people they meet for the first time), social actors maintained that at least some familiarity or experience with a potential trustee is a prerequisite to name the disposition as "trust":

> *First of all, for trust to be, say... real, not that... theoretically, trust or no trust, you still have to know the person a little bit. (I23)*

> *M... well, the key thing I think is that... either you know the person or you don't. It's just that, up to the point where, let's say... well, a stranger becomes a familiar person. (I18)*

> *Because... I think that already if I can say the word that I trust, then I must already have experience. (I27)*

What is also important to note is that *the outer circle of trust cannot be considered as a circle of distrust*. Trust changes across the circles; however, research participants were not inclined to explicitly claim that the outer circle of trust, namely, trust in strangers, is actually a circle of distrust. There were examples when participants explicitly indicated that there are categories of people whom they can say they would completely distrust (e.g. thieves (I4)). Nevertheless, as has been argued, social actors rather estimate the potential for trust rather that the level of trust or distrust in relation to the outer circle of trust. Interviewees repeatedly claimed that you neither trust nor distrust a stranger; or that you cannot say that you trust them but you cannot say that you distrust them either. It is a trial that will be proved through further interaction. Thus, trust in strangers is rather a belief in people's benevolence; an assessment of situational factors; a reflection of the general disposition of the trustor

rather than an actual expression of trust. Such an estimation is further checked by reality and the sources of trust.

Discussion. The aspects of trust concentrated in Figure 12 demonstrate the complexity and multi-dimensionality of trust. Therefore, it is not conducive to employ general or all-encompassing notions of trust in analytical frameworks and in particular in empirical research. Interview conversations have revealed that in real life situations social actors perceive trust and place trust in defined terms and thus they may only very vaguely estimate their "all-encompassing" or "fit-for-all-cases" levels of trust in people, particularly beyond the circles familiar people. Even with regard to mere acquaintances or relative strangers, there is a difference on how much, how deep or how assured one is about trust depending on the category of a stranger or circumstances in which trust has to be placed.

Analysis of social actors' accounts on the (in)possibility of a "trust" judgement when information, experience or relevance with regard to the potential trustee is absent (or scarce) departs from current conceptualisations of social generalised trust. Uslaner (2001) and many others (see Section 2.2.1.) have proposed an explanation of social generalised trust as trust in unfamiliar people, strangers, and people that are different from us, and which is morally grounded in a belief in common values. From the social actors' perspective, belief in benevolence and common values with others is one of the sources for trust judgements that allows us to initiate or not reject an interaction and gives possibility to future potential of trust, which may or may not happen given the chance of repeated interaction. Moreover, if social actors presume an interaction as just one-time, they do not see the need to talk about trust, as belief in benevolence or situational factors are enough to have this interaction. From social actors' perspective, such an interaction does not "qualify" as an actual trust relation. As has been mentioned, there could be so called "one-time" trust in a complete stranger when repeated interaction is excluded or in the case of "coerced" trust; however, the common patter that emerged in the interview data is that, contrary to the literature on social generalised trust, to assess a relation or situation as a situation of trust, social actors presume a level of knowledge of a trustee. Beyond the first circle of trust, the formation of trust seems to be rather rational and instrumental.

Trust judgement across the continuum of trust

Departing from Figure 12, this chapter further focuses on the formation of trust along the continuum with regard to the process of trust judgement. Trust judgement here refers to the question: "how does one decide whether or not to trust a trustee?"

Following the focus of the research on trust outside the circle of immediate familiarity, the similarities and differences of trust judgements with regard to level of familiarity will be highlighted.

Based on the research data, it was possible to discern a list of sources of trust used in trust judgements. The sources of trust ranged from very specific signs and/or characteristics to general background dispositions. Sources of trust can derive from the trustor, the trustee, or can be external (contextual) (see summary in Table 5). Though in each specific trust judgement a combination of sources of trust can be used by social actors, it is also observable that different sources of trust prevail in relation to separate circles of trust across the trust continuum (see Figure 12).

Sources of trust related to the trustee. Sources of trust related to a trustee means that a trustor observes certain signs or characteristics of the trustee and/or assesses information about and/or experiences with a trustee. These signs are perceived as a reflection of the potential *trustworthiness* of a trustee and thus induce or hinder the trustor's inclination to vest trust.

– **Externally observable signs.** Across interviews, research participants depicted what they would pay attention to when having to make a trust judgement. However, they were not always able to specify what exactly, for example, in a person's body language (which they pinned as a source of trust) would induce their willingness to trust. Assessment of externally observable signs seemed to be highly subjective, even though it was possible to highlight some commonly mentioned patterns of sign assessment:

- appearance (e.g. clothes, style). For example, neatness is a sign that induces positive trust judgements, whereas certain styles (e.g. tracksuits) are seen as a sign of the need to be precautious;
- signs of social status. This is closely linked to appearance, however, here research participants referred to more specific social categories that initially induce precaution rather than trust (they seem to be based on social stereotypes); for example, inebriates (lit. *alkašiukas*), homeless people (lit. *bomžas*), people who are visibly intoxicated;
- facial features (e.g. mime, eye contact, eye movement, gaze). For example, a smile is an important sign for positive trust judgement, as well as the presence of eye contact.
- mood. For example, research participants referred to such descriptions as "pleasant to interact", "nice", "stable mood", "good mood" as inducing trust;
- body language (e.g. movements, stance, manners). Body language was mentioned repeatedly across the interviews; however, for research participants

assessment of body language fell into the "self-explanatory" category as they were not able/willing to depict what kind of body language exactly would induce trust or precaution;

- voice (e.g. tone). A rude, disrespectful tone and mode of communication reduces the chances of a positive trust judgement;
- language (e.g. culture of language). For example, cursing is generally seen as a sign to be precautious.

> *Yes, if... if I, if one speaks... inadequately to the environment, well. For example, if you swear to a stranger in a first conversation, well, that immediately creates... the image that the person has no respect. It's a question then of whether he will respect the agreements, or whether he will respect what he's... what you expect from him. (I28)*

> *Well, if a person looks, behaves in a cultured way, with proper manners, then of course he's going to look more trustworthy in the eyes than somebody with trainers, with three lines (orig. "poloski"), where he chews on his {sunflower} seeds (orig. "siemkės"), spits all over the place, and so on. Well, that's the contrast. That would be... that indicator. Just a general picture at first. (I3)*

> *Tone. What you say, how you say it. That's it... That's what's very important to me. Because... let's put it this way, it's difficult with chums <smiles>. I don't know how to talk back myself, or... nor how to say it, I feel uncomfortable in these situations. I feel all those vibrations very much. That's what makes me... more like trusting people who are... cultured, calm, who are respectful. (I23)*

Externally observable signs are most important with regard to trust judgements involving strangers or people one does not know well. These signs work as a threshold one either decides to overstep and to continue with the interaction, or to withhold from it (thus reducing any chances for trust formation overall).

– **Observable personal characteristics of the trustee** that are revealed during interaction and communication. For example, responsibility, sincerity, respect have been named as inducing trust. Some of these characteristics (e.g. responsibility) require repeated interaction so as to be revealed. However, other characteristics are observable in one-time interactions as well.

> *Well, I think the key to anything is respect. It is respectful behaviour. (I27)*

– **Content and style of communication.** This includes assessment of what a trustee says, how he communicates with the trustor and/or with others. This source of trust is linked to more specific signs (e.g. language culture) or personal characteristics (e.g. respect). However, for research participants the overall communication content is important. It is rather subjective, as research participants listed such features as "interesting", "simple", "no feeling of tension", "compatible" in relation to communication with a (potential) trustee. It is more probable that a trust judgement will be positive if one finds value or common interests in the content of communication with a potential trustee.

– **Actions and behaviour.** This mainly relates to situations of repeated interaction as research participants indicate the trustee keeping a promise; that is, perceived compatibility between the trustee's words and actions as a source of trust. It requires prolonged contact with a trustee in order to assess the actions and behaviour of the trustee. As shown below, external sources of trust, for example, checking the trustee's reputation with those who have had previous experience, can be an alternative. However, as a trust relationship is primarily confined to that between trustor and trustee, research participants further filtered external sources of trust with their personal experience where possible.

> *For what... how they behave, what they say, how they still... what they do, whether their words match their... their actions. How much does it matter to them, a word like... that word, the promise itself, some of that. That's the thing here. (I27)*

> *Of course, as time goes on, they say - don't trust him because he's such and such. Then I measure it in relation to myself. Because there have been a number of situations where I've thought - that's maybe your attitude, but it was all fine with me. I have no reason not to trust. Even though the vast majority say otherwise. Because I look at how it is for me. (I23)*

One time or repeated interactions between trustor and trustee build the trustee's *reputation*. Here, however, reputation is based on the trustor's personal experience and assessment of reputation (as opposed to an externally induced reputation, which will be discussed later). If the trustee demonstrates trustworthiness, the interaction continues and trust builds. Otherwise, further interaction is disrupted.

> *Em... Come to think of it, that thing is actually very, very much to do with reputation. It means that if... well, if we take an example from the work*

environment now. If, say, I have a lot of colleagues and I have a colleague who knows what he's doing all the time, who can be trusted to ask for help, who has never let me down, then in my eyes he has a high reputation, I trust him, and... I will be willing to help him as much as he will help me. And... I will know that some useful result will be achieved. Otherwise, if a colleague is ignorant, or uninterested, or... saying one thing, doing another, then automatically their reputation is not good and they're not doing something... not to be trusted. That's about it. (I3)

There are a few more aspects to be mentioned in relation to the trustee. First, most of the discussed sources of trust form the trustor's *first impression*. Even though research participants acknowledged that first impression can be misleading (e.g. appearances), they also acknowledged that it works for first time interaction and can only later be corrected. Therefore, if the first impression induces a barrier for repeated interaction, the formation of trust is more hindered.

Sometimes that first impression is one, but you... I don't know, you look at the tone, you feel that, oh, here's this person somehow, and... it's okay. That's why I think it's just... I'm more of a believer all the time that you can trust a person, unless my bodily senses immediately scream - no no no, keep away. (I23)

But but any after that, that thing turns out to be a false indicator. Because there could be a perfectly fine person and he'll be a complete, well, fraud. And again, we can't trust that person. (I19)

I don't know... It's just that if I don't know the person at all, I have practically no prejudices. If I've heard something about the person, well, it's from the rumours, the rumours, so to speak, that have an influence, obviously. And sometimes... other times they are even very deceptive. They make me... not to trust and you immediately go and talk to him very carefully, and then it turns out to be completely different. So it's different. (I21)

Second, although research participants tended to express the "socially desirable" dispositions that they avoided having presumptions about people or they "were willing" to believe in the benevolence of other people, a more detailed discussion of everyday life situations demonstrated that social actors *do* have presumptions that affect trust judgements (even if not intentionally). The threshold for trust is lower when trustor and trustee are somewhat similar, in terms of social status, social characteristics (e.g. age), personal traits or interests.

Sources of trust related to the trustor. Sources of trust related to a trustor means that there are pre-formed dispositions and/or personality traits that either facilitate the trustor's judgement towards trust or on the contrary, create a filter of precaution. Following the research data, there are three broad categories here:

– General disposition to vest the credit of trust. It is a particularly significant source of trust or precaution when the trust judgement is made in situations in which information about or experience with a trustee is absent or scarce. The accounts of research participants revealed the need for an initial credit of trust in primary interactions with an unfamiliar (or little familiar) social actor. Among research participants, three types of initial trust-related disposition towards strangers emerged: a neutral disposition (i.e. neither trust nor distrust; a lack of presumption); a disposition to firstly be cautious and then to observe as an interaction evolves, and a disposition to firstly trust as an impulse to primary interaction. The latter relies on the trustor's belief in the benevolence of people and the commonality of human values.

> *Well, I think it's just that people... most people are good, I think. Well-meaning, good. I think so. (I11)*

> *I allow access at first, no no... and then I look, either the communication just develops or it doesn't. (I26)*

> *When there are new kind of things... relationship, communication, then you just blindly try to trust because you believe that, well, people share the same values anyway. They... well, all people... some of it. Some of it is important. (I27)*

However, an important implication here is that from the social actors' perspective, the initial credit of trust cannot be considered as an actual trust relationship. There is a clear need for a repeated or prolonged interaction in order to actually be able to make a trust judgement. Research participants described this initial credit of trust as "blind trust" (I27), "intuition" (I24), "inner feeling" (I23), "presentiment" (lit. *nuojauta*) (I17). To form an actual (grounded) judgement of trust, social actors needed some level of information and/or experience of interaction with a trustee. The credit of trust works as a lift over a benchmark to open up the opportunity of interaction, which may or may not lead to a state in which a trust judgement is made and a trust or distrust relationship forms.

But that's well... it can be neither trust nor mistrust for a long time, because... just, well, a stranger who... is a tabula rasa, let's put it that way. (I21)

I'm generally in the sense of one of those people who is well... until the first bell rings, I mean I trust all the people I meet, but... in life. (I19)

Well, I can't say with a complete stranger that I really trust you. Because I don't really know that. So. It's... I can allow myself to trust you at the very beginning, but that's the test. Isn't it. To see how it goes. (I27)

Although neutral and trust dispositions facilitate the chances for trust relationship to evolve, it is important to repeat that these dispositions are only relevant a an initial step; the actual trust judgement requires more tangible information or experience.

But even so, I'm still more of a person who... first of all, he scores about 9 or 10 points, and then if I get slapped in the nails <...> and the facts come out that he's doing something wrong, or he's lying, or ... (I19)

– **Social characteristics.** Research participants referred to their own personality traits as either more or less conducive to formation of trust relationships. Quantitative surveys point (inconsistently) to gender, age, and education as variables linked to higher or lower levels of trust. This research did not aim at a comparison of these characteristics and analysis of them from the trustor's (i.e. the research participant's) side. However, some important implications emerged in the research data. One is related to the notion of a "social bubble", the compatibility of the social characteristics of the trustor and trustee. As mentioned in the section on trustee's characteristics, here it is possible to confirm that the trustor yet again mirrors her/his own social characteristics in a potential trustee and such a compatibility lowers the threshold for a positive trust judgement.

Second, *age* appeared as an important narrative during interviews. On the one hand, older age seemed to be a counter-factor to the formation of a wider, more dispersed, more generalised trust circle. With age (intertwined with life experiences) one forms a tested, limited circle of trust, and one does not need a wider circle of trust. There is less need to form a wider circle of social networks with the onset of age.

Well, there's no longer that environment where you could get to know them more or whatever. Because when in retirement, you spend more time at home anyway. The circle of socialising is much narrower. (I22)

You see, maybe they {new people} come, but... very rarely. I say, I... I sifted through my friends in my life. I trust them and when I'm talking, let's say, talking to my close ones, or my friends, whatever the subject is, I... There is no such a thought as: Oh, I'm going to say that I trust, or I'm not going to say that I don't trust. No. No. With those I trust, I don't even have that thought of telling them or not telling them here. To do or not to do here. No. It really doesn't. When you... When [[Name of intermediary]] called and said {about the interview}, I thought, "Well, that's an interesting topic, and what am I supposed to say?" That it's somehow... when I think about it, it's not really relevant to me right now {the topic of trust}. I have a circle of people that I talk to, that I'm friends with, that I trust and... that's it, so to say. <smiles> (I22)

So that's e... we've been in contact for years and even decades you could say, and I think we trust each other completely. (I21)

Conversely, older research participants noted that the current young generation is freer, that young people engage in interactions easier, they have higher self-confidence and, therefore, they are able to vest more trust in others than older generations.

The young people today, I think they are freer now. They are more trusting <...> not only in others, but in themselves. With us... we... there is maybe even the problem of self-confidence. Maybe that... the lack of self-confidence maybe also causes a lack of trust in others... <pause, 3s> how to say, well, such a deficit occurs. I don't know. I would think so. (I27)

Because basically well... you could say those 30 years of independence is a lot, you could say it's a little, but basically a whole new generation has grown up. A new generation of people. And now they've raised another generation. So I think that society is... changing. It's getting more modern and I think that's where that trust in each other comes from. (I18)

Some participants also perceived age as "naturally" entailing higher levels of precaution, linked to changes in the ageing human mind.

I mean, I think that since... it still goes with the years, maybe too. I've noticed also on, say, my mother, that she's becoming more and more closed, right, and less and less... opens up to people, trusts people less. With the years. (I26)

But then you get older, so you start to see things from a different point of view as you get older, to analyse the person and so on. And somewhere that disappears and... unconditional trust {disappears}. (I22)

But that caution comes, you know. And more mistrust comes. So here... well, really, in my mind, it's all about age. Because I've got a godmother who's 84. We're separated by 20 years, almost, and I can see how our views are also different. And the degree of trust is also different. Well, that's where... according to me here... age does everything and... life experience. (I22)

– Life experiences. Though all of the above could be broadly perceived as "life experiences", the label here signifies the transformation of the life experiences of social actors into a set understanding (strategy, algorithm) guiding her/his trust judgement. Analysis of research data highlighted the following facets of how life experiences underlie trust judgements.

First, there are two segments of life experiences: life experiences related to specific trustees (specific life experiences) and overall experiences with (dis)trust situations during the course of life. *Specific life experiences* encompass a wide range of information and knowledge, grounded in repeated interactions and higher than the basic level of familiarity. This segment is closely linked with the personal characteristics, communication, actions and behaviour of the trustee; however, it represents the trustor's perspective on their accumulated experiences with the trustee. Research participants' accounts show that the more intensive, long-time, regular or close the interactions with a trustee are, the more substantiated and at the same time automatic the trust judgement is. In the eyes of the trustor, via repeated interactions the trustee gains a reputation of trustworthiness, thus positive trust judgement occurs unwaveringly. Contrarily, previous experiences of the trustee's deceit lead to comparably automatic, negative trust judgements.

It is... it probably depends on the context. With people you know, well... you know more, the agreement is clearer. When you can know from your own experience, you can think, you can assess the situation more. <...> There are some people I would just never trust in certain areas. Well, I would just think

that this... we'd better not do this activity together because... because it's not good for me or good for the other person. That's it. (I28)

The research data shows that during the course of their life, social actors form a network of trustworthy people who become the core of their social life. This refers both to close interpersonal relations and social relations in the broader social circle; for example, a trustworthy colleague, a trustworthy family doctor, or a trustworthy plumber. Such life experiences also allow for strategic trust judgements when the trustor is able to reasonably vest trust in a specific person for specific matters but not in other matters. However, breaches of trust in the realm of this segment lead to the disruption of social relationships (ranging from complete termination to restricted interaction).

I have people I can trust, that's enough for me, and that's why I just communicate... naturally, and I don't even think about whether I trust or not. Somehow... somehow. (I23)

Yeah, it's totally different. And in that sense and really... it's really a situation where you've already been disappointed, disappointed in that person, so... I don't see how you can somehow get that trust back. I have no idea. (I19)

Overall life experiences function as a background source for trust judgements when information and knowledge about the trustee is absent or scarce. This segment reflects multiple experiences with trust situations throughout the course of life and form into a "data base" of strategies of how to respond when faced with an ongoing situation in which a trust judgement is relevant. Similarly to specific life experiences, overall experience seems to be manifested in an automatic way in trust judgements.

Some caution maybe... That's how experience happens. Perhaps experience how to do things. Then somehow... unconsciously it all fits together. (I27)

But I think that... first of all we always... I get some kind of first impression of a person. And even that {impression} is probably difficult to grasp, because the impression is that there's just some kind of file that contains the data. You just compare it with that data, whether it is a reliable person or not, I mean. (I19)

<...> I don't know, I don't think about that trust very often now. I have already categorised who I trust and who I don't. And I just have a certain... my understanding. (I28)

Overall life experiences are also linked with the trustor's disposition to vest credit of trust or to maintain a stance of precaution. The following patterns emerged in how overall life experiences transformed into research participants' general predisposition in trust situation:

a) The social actor generalises social interactions throughout the course of their life and trust situations as more positive overall, thus having no grounds for a disposition of primary precaution or distrust.

> *I think it is similar. I somehow... maybe it's just that I'm lucky in life. I haven't had too many relationships with bad people. Maybe if there were experiences in that sense... experience after experience, when things went wrong, maybe then I would react very differently, in that sense, to that trust in that sense. And of course maybe a different relationship. But somehow in my life normal people are there, it so happens. Somehow I don't have a reason to have too much of that maybe distrust. (I19)*

b) The social actor has had experiences of breaches of trust or critical incidents of trust throughout the course of their life; however, they maintained an (active) willingness to vest credit of trust because they perceived the value of trust for their wellbeing as higher than the potential losses of occasional breaches of trust. Thus, they were prone to further take risk and follow their disposition of primarily trusting others (until new experiences indicate otherwise in a specific case).

> *Experiences like that, all kinds of them... How can I say, I've had my share hurt in trust sphere. <pause, 3s> But I don't... I don't even know how to answer that question. Either to trust or not to trust. I say, my inner feeling guides me very often. To trust that person or not. And sometimes, of course, how to say it, you say to yourself - well, trust, it will go as it will go. But sometimes you feel maybe something, but you think - well, ok, let me be wrong. Well, I will be wrong. And then you don't condemn yourself, so to speak, but... Somehow give the person and yourself more of a chance, because no... It's cruel to live with mistrust. (I23)*

> *But I was like, at the time, I was like, what, am I never going to be able to trust people now? That moment was very strong. Do I not trust now? I do. Well, of course I do, because you can't live only in your own cave. <...> You know, m... Like, I thought I wouldn't trust, because there were a lot of emotions.*

You're well... you can imagine, can't you. It was really hard. That kind of sublime that not all people are good. Although I didn't have this illusion that all people in the world are good. Well... really, I don't live in a fairy tale world. But... did it affect my relationships with people? Well, I was wondering, I was thinking, children grow up, well, schools appear, kindergartens appear, new acquaintances through children with parents appear. Have I stopped bringing people home? No, I haven't. <...> It was a big shock for me at that moment. It was really very big. <...> But apparently at that time there were no new people coming my way where I wondered whether I could take people home or... to communicate or to trust or anything else. But you know, realistically, over time, did I start to look any more closely than I had before - no. Well, because not as much... Well, it's not written on your forehead whether I can trust you here, whether you're honest or not. So realistically, if it's finalised, it's... for a long period of time, it didn't have any effect. Practically. (I20)

c) The social actor has had experiences of breaches of trust or critical incidents of trust throughout the course of their life and they affected general disposition towards precaution or difficulty to vest credit of trust.

You know, I must have developed... a fear, or just a reluctance to be hurt by anyone else in life. The further away from openness. What's mine is mine. As much as I need to communicate, or somewhere, or something, I have people like that. And... they are there. Who just... are soulful. But to be too open... No. (I24)

Very changing indeed. You just start not trusting anyone. Or you're very cautious about letting other people near you. <...> Yes, yes. Generally just. (I26)

However, in each of the above experiences, breaches of trust and critical incidents of trust *do* have an effect on trust judgements as they correct the "data base" against which a specific ongoing trust situation is assessed. The data revealed that critical incidents highly affected interaction with the particular target of trust involved in the deceit. It is clear that the key effect was to disrupt further social relationship or (when it was not possible to completely disrupt the relationship) the interaction was limited and, of course, not based on trust.

It's like saying that you're after those... after those disappointments... you still analyse - what happened, why, and maybe I did something, maybe I provoked, maybe I allowed, maybe I... somehow that's... Of course, it {trust} wobbles.

Sometimes in certain situations it is very difficult to recover. And even when everything seems to be going well, and the person really admits the mistake and tries, but you feel that... well, that trust is very fragile. And it hurts you. But I still try to see it somehow... to believe that trust is possible, necessary, and... to somehow get on board like that. (I23)

Just if you don't trust that person, if that person makes you suspicious, well, you just take him out of some public space, I mean, so that he doesn't take part in your, well, in some kind of opinion formation and so on. Then you somehow distance yourself from that information with this person. (I19)

In general, the interview data revealed that an immediate effect of critical incidents relates to the case of deceit (i.e. with regard to the specific person who deceived), however, in the long term perspective it more or less obviously manifests through accumulation of experience and advancement of trust judgement. Participants acknowledged that one way or another, critical incidents of breaches of trust transformed their general dispositions. Some claimed that because of their life experiences they can make more intelligible trust judgements.

It is worth noting that from social actors' perspective, the outcome of vesting trust is linked not only to the trustee (i.e. if (s)he will not breach trust) but also to some extent it is the *responsibility of the trustor*. In other words, there is an element of responsibility for the trustor in the trustee's actions (fulfilment or breach of trust). Some participants referred to the potential gullibility of a trustor, the inability to formulate clear expectations, or an inefficient reaction to deceit thus inducing repetition of it, as indicators that one "allowed herself /himself to be deceived".

You know, so short... I'll keep it short. If the situation is that somebody cheats, or somebody does something, that means the problem is in me, if people see that there is some way... or cheat or something. And then you start looking for a solution. I mean... I'm wrong, if... I provoke that reaction. And then... well... you start to think differently as you get older. What to do differently, or if you don't want to be hurt, don't let those people in. (I24)

<...> So don't speak, don't even say it to others. Because the funniest thing is, when someone says - oh, I'll tell you, you just don't tell anyone. That's to me... It kills me, to be honest. That... just don't tell anybody. If you've already told somebody, you know there's a chance that a third and a fourth will find out. And don't be disappointed that they will. (I17)

External sources of trust. External sources of trust, to an extent, rely on sources that may be linked to the trustor and/or the trustee, but which are relatively outside the direct scope of the interaction or directly observable characteristics. They include other social actors (i.e. those who are not directly involved in a given (potential) trust interaction), varied sources of information (e.g. social media), reputation and reputational "stamp" provided by professional or institutional affiliation, context of trust interaction as well as the trustor's perception about the (trust) atmosphere in a society at large. External sources of trust are primarily relevant to the formation of trust in relation to unfamiliar people but also affect judgements of trust in familiar people as well.

– **Recommendation.** This source of trust serves for judgements of trust when dealing with unfamiliar or not well known social actors in more or less defined settings; for example, when looking for services or cooperation partners. It is a *rationally* and *instrumentally* grounded source of trust. It serves as a guarantee, an insurance to vest trust in another social actor. In a sense, it also places a responsibility on a trustor with regard to the outcome of vested trust, that is, the trustor makes preparation in advance to ensure that the chances of a positive outcome of the trust interaction increase. In cases of repeated interactions (e.g. in a set professional or service sphere), social actors tend to increase the guarantee for the trust outcome by establishing their network of "verified" relations; for example, to keep the contacts of people who did a good job previously (e.g. a doctor who was good, a carpenter who did his work well). Alternatively, if the trustee in the first interaction was not trustworthy, the contact is disrupted and the trust relation does not form. Recommendations mostly come from other social actors whom the trustor already trusts or whose opinion they at least regard.

> But those situations where you have to make a decision quite quickly in a maybe more complicated case, less complicated case, but again... again, maybe every day, whether it's... finding a foreman, or whatever. Well, you still have to find out something about him. Because everybody does, everybody knows marketing now, "we're the best firm", something like that. "We're the best at making terraces". So maybe find somebody who's done it well. If about construction, I'm still asking people who've done something, friends, and all that construction I've done... through friends. But that doesn't mean that it was all quality. (I4)

Well, if you put that person to the test, then that's the person who's... his contact details are under important addresses and include a mention - good, with a plus. Thus not random. (I24)

Well, let's say I'd call a service to find out something. It's... I'm already asking what I need to know. And... of course, the first thing is that I'm always looking for information myself. And when I can't find anything, or the information is presented in such a way that I don't understand, then I call, I look for some specialists. And... er... if I feel that I'm not being told something right, then, well, I feel, how can I say it, it happens sometimes. (I23)

– **Reputation.** Here reputation refers to external sources as opposed to reputation (positive or negative) that a potential trustee gains via direct interaction with the trustor. In other words, reputation is not based on the trustor's first-hand experience or knowledge but on external sources like important others and various publicly available sources (e.g. mass media, social media, feedback reviews, registry databases). Again, with regard to reputation, there is an element of the active involvement of a trustor and a level of responsibility placed on her/him. Research participants gave accounts of strategies for how they attempted to check the reputation of potential trustees in specific situations; for example, the search for reviews of doctors, service providers, teachers, and so on. However, there is also a less rationalised aspect of reputation. The research data showed that some participants rely on reputation as provided by certain professional or institutional affiliations. This means that they refer not to the reputation of a specific trustee but to the reputation of a broader entity (a profession or an institution) whose reputation transcends to the trustee. In some cases, this reputational "stamp" provides grounds for trust credit, whereas in other cases it induces precaution. For example, for some research participants the profession of doctor meant that you can mostly trust doctors because they are well trained, they took the oath and they are there to help people; therefore, doctors can be generally trusted. Contrarily, the reputation of handymen tends to evoke some level of suspicion. Furthermore, there is an element of "unavoidability" of trust in interactions with varied specialists. For example, research participants repeatedly reflected that if you have a health issue you *must* trust a doctor as you cannot solve the issue yourself. However, social actors try to set certain guarantees for their unavoidable trust, mainly, via the mechanisms of reputation and recommendation. Social media appeared as a useful source of a reputation check on unfamiliar people. Also, the belief in professionalism is higher for some professions, as seen when comparing doctors to handymen for example.

Easy, because this is a working relationship. If it is a craftsman or a doctor or whatever, I obviously trust those people who do things for you, you have to trust them. Because otherwise, well... how? How not to trust the doctor who treats me? (I22)

Because anyway, before you go to the doctor you ask your common acquaintances if they know. You look on the internet usually. Just like everybody else looks. Reviews, something else. So that's... That's what you do. Because with whom you have to interact more, you put them, according to some parameter, according to yourself. (I5)

<...> if I have a choice, I... a... a doctor, some kind of specialist, a handyman after all, I'm very interested. I look for recommendations and mostly through recommendations and... or I end up finding out about it through the comments. Well, let's say a doctor, let's say a specialist, let's say a specialist that I know, let's say that through an acquaintance, it's maybe difficult to get a recommendation, because, well, not everybody, let's say, deals with, I don't know, a traumatologists, so on, but then there's... that's what social media is for, the same comments, a... It's the same with the handymen. Well, I tend to always, always invite those who have already been checked, if I may say so <smiles>, with recommendations. That's it. (I18)

Well, anyway, of course, as I say, you look for those references, don't you. Just don't call for e... a person off the street, or you just ask for opinions and I don't know, as I say, nowadays social networking really brings a lot to it. The vastness of the internet, the comments, the feedback, it's... But when you invite, you're expecting him to sort it out, and you trust him, don't you, to some extent, to do the job right. (I26)

Recommendation and external reputation primarily relate to specified, defined settings or situations; however, they can also serve in the formation of more general trust dispositions (e.g. trust in political actors, as will be shown later). Similarly to how first impressions work, however, research participants also acknowledged that there is no universal judgement of trust and thus recommendation or reputation serves as an initial impulse to step over the threshold of trust but, further to this, a trustor adjusts her/his judgement based on direct interaction and experience with the trustee.

Knowledge, yes, of course. Of course, because you know... Anyway, if you go to your friends, you go to them, you say - I need a handyman, whom do you recommend? Right. It's... Of course, that opinion of others, or if there's a doctor there, you've looked at some Pincetas, right, the opinion of others, that a little bit in advance is still needed. Well, I... I wouldn't say that those prejudices are very... well... such a good thing, they can sometimes really... frame you and imprison you even, but still you have to have some of that... to make up an opinion and... whether you can trust then or not. (I27)

– **Contextual sources.** Apart from sources directly or externally related to the trustor or trustee, trust judgment is also influenced by context or the situation in which trust interaction takes place. These sources are of primary importance in trust interactions beyond the circle of immediate familiarity. Among them are the characteristics of the spaces in which an interaction goes on (e.g. a dark street, certain city districts, markets and night clubs are among the spaces mentioned by participants that raise the level of precaution) or, additionally, the composition of people that are around (e.g. the presence of at least some familiar people increases the chances of a positive trust judgement, even when interacting with a stranger).

I think it depends very much on the situation. If we are saying in some space where there is... some kind of like-minded space, well, automatically my trust can go up to 9. In that sense, it depends very much on the space you are in. I mean, if you're in a market, you immediately try to hide your wallet as deep as possible in your pocket, so somehow that trust in people goes down <laughs>. And if you're amongst your peers, you know, that's it, then immediately that trust goes up to... to 9, for example. (I19)

Another contextual source of trust is trustor's belief in or reliance on the existence of systems or mechanisms of control. These reduce the chances of deceit, and thus one can have automatic trust in the actions of people who operate under the supervision of such systems. Research participants mainly referred to various automated or information technology systems that do not leave opportunity for human mistakes or deliberate cheating.

Because there is enough control and... in the sense that those mechanisms are... You could say that maybe there's some kind of practice that has been established, I'm going back to maybe the same small trade again, because I can't think of it quickly right now, but that there's a culture that has developed where there are some processes and mechanisms that are stopping people, and people like

me are probably... well... how to say, don't stop and don't make me doubt them. That's right. (I4)

Like, well, in the shop I don't know, it doesn't affect me. There's a saleswoman, I... especially nowadays, when everything is done by computer, it's... and to trick me... she can't really. (I21)

Again, it is possible to refer to context-bound unavoidable trust. This refers to situations in which one is highly dependent on other people to receive what is needed (e.g. in cases of health issues or emergency situations). Research participants repeatedly referred to situations where, according to them, there is not much questioning of whether to place trust or not because otherwise, without some level of trust, even every day, mundane situations would become difficult or impossible.

Because still, either we want or not, we have to trust medics, we have to believe, because... you can't be self-medicating and you can't believe in quacks either. You have to believe in science. (I22)

But as I say, in an emergency, unexpectedly, it's... you go and help, well... you help or you get help. You are already asking for help from a stranger. But you... how to say, well, in an emergency it's... (I17)

And in transport, again... You take public transport, you have to trust the driver to get you there safely. Because... you don't even think. Automatically I think you trust. Because then you'd be phobic, you wouldn't be able to get in the car, and also because if you didn't think he'd get you there safely for example. If I'm right here, I don't know, that's the direction I'm going in. (I27)

– Perceived general atmosphere of trust. An atmosphere of trust is not a direct source of trust. However, it is in the background of trust judgements, particularly in social interactions with people beyond the circle of immediate familiarity and in larger societal contexts. The perceived atmosphere of trust reflects the trustors' general picture of the level of trust and trustworthiness in a society, community or social context. The interview data clearly depicted a social bubble effect. Among the research participants, a narrative repeated that "people around me trust each other", whereas "there is not much trust among people" in Lithuania. Also, outside one's social bubble, the features of social interactions and informal norms diverge, thus inducing a sense of precaution. For example, one participant described his

sense of unease when having to deal with people who are of a very different social background:

> <...> I don't know, I don't think about that trust very often now. I've already categorised what I trust and what I don't. And I just have a certain... idea. And then again, as I said, now my new working environment means that I'm probably going to go through that trust-not-trust category with strangers again... because... I'm getting out of my social bubble. <...> if you have an agreement with someone, you can more or less at least trust that communication... Again, it's probably just another social... another social bubble, and other rules of behaviour that I'm not fully familiar with yet. And I'm now, well, I'm getting out of my social bubble and I'm... in the work environment, and there... I see that people interact differently, and I haven't adapted yet, I haven't realised... the differences in vocabulary, in body language to the full {extent}. (I28)

Although during interviews research participants rationalised the benevolence of people and tried to demonstrate their belief that most (or more) people are good, at the general societal level the atmosphere of trust was perceived as restricted. There were some specific features of Lithuanian society that were seen as not conducive to the formation of an atmosphere of trust. One such feature was the mass media, which was perceived as a source of negativity and therefore negatively affecting the general perception of an atmosphere of trust.

> <...> how to say, if these positive examples, all these stories, we somehow... I don't know, if we had these things on the news every day, people would believe it more. Right now, it's more... Most of the time we think that we are each other's enemy, because that public space puts it so much in our head, even if you don't want to listen to it, it's still there. But when you meet face to face, we really help each other a lot. (I23)

Another feature was linked to the *legacies* of the former political regime. Research participants reflected that the culture of distrust that prevailed under the Soviet regime still had an effect on trust among people, particularly for the older generation. Interestingly, some participants observed that during Soviet times they had close circles of trusted people. However, the general atmosphere of distrust existing in Soviet society was acknowledged. There was no single assessment of the atmosphere of trust in Soviet times and the vitality of its legacy. On the one hand, it was felt that generally there existed double truths, and a culture of distrust and suspicion. On the other hand, some suggested that individually people were able to

have trust relations in their close circle. Some research participants claimed that one could maintain a close circle of trust even while recognising the general atmosphere of distrust.

The younger ones I think maybe they are already more free and and and... Because with that... well... that double, how to say... <pause, 2s> Well, we lived like that and when we were studying, one thing was how it was talked about and the other was well... how it was lived. It was a different way of thinking. In families, right, you knew there were two truths. Because that ideology was, how to say, one thing was being pushed through, and... it was being destroying what had come from before. So I think that kind of duality, maybe it also {affected} that trust, all the time you didn't know how much the person, well, how much he's real with you. (I27)

Here we go... Here again, there are aspects of it. I was very young in the Soviet era. I went to university. Our group was wonderful. We really trusted each other. Even though they used to explain that there were security people in every group, whatever. We were never persecuted, never betrayed by anybody. And we were in contact with a lot of people in the group for 40-odd years and all that. Somehow that youthful trust has remained. (I22)

As far as I can remember, even in those days, in the Soviet era, I used to be in contact and quite a lot, so to speak, with people of a more or less dissident bent. We were always completely open, we trusted each other completely. Nobody has ever, I mean, squealed on me, sold me out and so on. So I mean, well, there are people who... who you can always and everywhere trust. And whoever sells you and... there's always been such kind of people, there are. Although... they are... well, they're few, but they're there all the time. (I21)

M... m... some of that maybe there was some distrust of strangers, but... but of course they were under a lot of pressure from the Soviet era, from the desire to be guarded, to be secluded - you don't go, you don't say, you'd better keep quiet. It's a thing that's very present in them {older people}. But is it related, is it related to trust, I think it's related... to the system in which they grew up, in which they were formed. Well, it means that that system has made its stamp. In their lives. (I19)

Research participants noticed both positive and challenging aspects in the *development of contemporary* Lithuanians society that are related to perceptions of trust.

One aspect that is conducive to an atmosphere of trust is the increasing standard of living. However, research participants also named widespread materialism, individualism and selfishness, negativity, lack of respect towards others as features of Lithuanian society that disrupt the potential for trust at the societal level. There were also references to some national traits of Lithuanians, as being closed and less prone to easily trust others; particularly when compared to other European countries.

> *But overall, I think Lithuanians are... tend to enter into those relationships cautiously, and I don't think they have a lot of trust. (I19)*

Moreover, participants repeatedly reflected that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and triggered a lot of tensions in Lithuanian society, thus negatively affecting trust perceptions.

> *Of course, nowadays, with these realities, it's... because it's just that we're scared of that contact because of the disease, right, so what trust can there be now that there's a pandemic, what talk about it, you know, when... I feel like if I were lying in the street, nobody would come near you <smiles> because of the disease and because of, you know, <smiles> and because you're lying around, maybe a drug addict, you know, or whatever, a drunk. (I1)*

> *I don't know, somehow I can't say anything very good about Lithuanians <smiles>. I don't know, maybe because... at the moment media is a huge influence on people. Quarantine has had a huge impact. How people are, I'm not afraid of the word, how they've become as animals, how they don't know how to interact. I fully understand that there is no longer that civilisation, you do not see your friends anymore, you cannot talk to each other. You start gossiping on the Internet about people you do not know at all. It somehow seems that instead of... Lithuanians should support each other, be happy for each other's success. And here we... Aha, he won, so he bought it. Or whoever bought a new car, it means he's earning a crazy amount of money doing nothing. It's very absent that ability to be happy for others. (I2)*

The research data showed some duality with regard to trust formation and perceptions of an atmosphere of trust at the societal level. Interestingly, although the literature often links trust and *help* (reflected in Chapter 3.2. where being helpful is one of the three items in a standard composite trust measure), the research data in the case of Lithuania has revealed an interesting pattern: even if participants tended

to notice a lack of trust between people in Lithuania in general, they at the same time perceived Lithuanian people as prone to help others. This brings one to presume that trust and help are not directly linked: i.e. one does not have to have higher levels of trust in order to help other people. In particular, some research participants noted that the Lithuanian people's solidarity manifests when faced with common external threats or crises (once again, there is a duality – on the one hand, COVID-19 highlighted tensions in the society, on the other hand, it demonstrated people's ability to be helpful and show solidarity).

> *And in everyday situations, we do help each other. Maybe... not so much sometimes... people around us pay attention when something like this happens. We do help each other. We're friendly, but we're just very much in our shell... and that's why we're so... When we look globally, we say, oh, we hate each other. But in reality, if there's a situation, we all really throw our forces in. And we all contribute with our bit. (I23)*

Table 5. Sources of trust employed in trust judgements

Linked to trustor	Linked to trustee	External sources of trust
General disposition to vest credit of trust Social characteristics Life experiences	Externally observable signs Observable personal characteristics of the trustee Content and style of communication Actions and behaviour	Recommendation Reputation Contextual sources Perceived general atmosphere of trust

Source: composed by the author

* The sources marked in blue are primarily linked to trust in less familiar or unfamiliar people.

Discussion: The findings of the chapter depicted in detail an overarching process of how trust manifests and forms along the continuum from close social relations to broad societal context. Although the findings contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon of trust as such, for the purposes of this thesis it is important to highlight

how these findings can be used to enhance current approaches of empirical research on trust, and more specifically, to foster a better link between the conceptualisation and operationalisation of trust that transcends circles of immediate familiarity. First, the data supports the critique that the current notion of social generalised trust is too broad and vague (see Section 3.2.2.). It showed that the category of "unfamiliar" or "stranger" is far from unidimensional and has distinct layers in social actors' perceptions and experiences. Therefore, apart from the issue of "most people" being an equivocal measure, even the conceptual definition of social generalised trust as trust in unfamiliar strangers would benefit from incorporating these layers and, accordingly, constructing more specified measures of trust. The research data shows that social actors differentiate between unfamiliar targets of trust, and their assessment of trust is linked not only to the relationship between two parties but also to the matter (or content) of trust. In the conceptualisation and measurement of social generalised trust, the matter of trust is not explicitly regarded (e.g. Uslaner, 2001) thus presuming that trust in strangers encompasses everything, which, as the data shows, does not correspond to trust manifestation in researched social reality. Furthermore, moral grounds are not the sole source of trust when a trust judgement in unfamiliar people is made. Trust in strangers can be based on rational and instrumentally-bound sources of trust (which are commonly linked to trust in familiar people in the current literature) and there is an element of the pro-active stance of social actors in intentionally seeking to ensure a positive outcome from trust vested in unfamiliar people. However, as has been claimed, this strongly depends on what kind or type of unfamiliar people we consider and under what circumstances. This diversity must be regarded both in the conceptualisation and operationalisation of trust in broader social circles. It is clear, however, that summing up all the various connotations and manifestations of trust in widely varied, unfamiliar people in one concept and measure makes interpretation problematic.

4.2.3. From trust in people to trust in institutions

The chapter above has discussed the overall process of trust formation, relative circles of trust and trust judgement. It focused primarily on trust between people. However, following the literature review and the dominant quantitative measures of trust in the context of democracy, the research also attempted to cover trust in more abstract entities, that is, trust in institutions. An important task was to better understand perceptions of trust in institutions from the social actors' perspective; to see which sources of trust are used for trust judgements with regard to institutions, and thereby trace the link between trust in people and trust in institutions. In the scope of the thesis, trust in political institutions is the main focus.

Formation of (dis)trust in relation to political institutions

The case of Lithuania is peculiar because of its consistently low levels of quantitatively measured trust in political institutions (Gaižauskaitė, 2019). Although the thesis did not primarily aim to look into the causes of this deficiency in political trust, the qualitative data analysis has highlighted how perceptions of the political sphere and perceptions of the relationships between the political field and citizens shapes people's trust in political institutions.

– Images of the political sphere from the social actors' perspective. A general image and perception that social actors have about the political sphere as such sets the background for their perception and assessment of political institutions. Among the research participants, it was possible to observe the prevalence of a negative image of the political sphere. There were repeated narratives across the interviews reflecting personal negative perceptions, both by the research participants themselves and/or in their accounts on the perceived widespread public attitudes of others. Apart from direct questions related to trust in political institutions, there were instances of research participants explicitly declaring their distrust in political institutions (or even public institutions in general) in various parts of the interview conversation (e.g. I1).

> *Well, do you yourself trust <smile> those Seimas and the government, how they change and how they talk all kinds of nonsense? I don't know. I don't trust anybody now. I'm more, you know, I'm probably on the side of the people who <laughs>, so to say... anti-vaxxers of all kinds. (I1)*

A common pattern was that after a question about political institutions, in one way or another, the general negative perception of the political sphere emerged. For example, in her response, I26 started speaking as if the researcher presumed that her perceptions have to be negative or in such a way that everyone expects the political institutions to be assessed negatively. Moreover, even those research participants who ascribed relatively high scores of trust for political institutions on a probing question, discussed their trust in political institutions in terms of justifying the flaws rather than focusing explicitly on sources of trust (e.g. I28) or were providing normative responses (e.g. "one needs to trust", "they are important") rather than explicitly supporting the political institutions.

> *I don't think... it can't be that 110 you... that it is 10. But apparently it should be... e... at least 6 on that scale, right. Because democrat... of course, individually*

everyone and if you ask in a poll... Well, let's say the authorities are important, in that sense. For life. They are sometimes important for survival. And... that trust, it's well... e... it's important. It's... and the same institutions e... it {trust} sometimes supports and motivates. (I4)

I think that... the easiest thing to do is to judge people <smiles>, but... but actually to put yourself in their shoes and make some decisions is a difficult thing. It's still... I mean, I think that... they are not working to harm us probably, but they are making decisions that are appropriate for that moment. (I26)

This presumes that there exists a clearly perceived, observed and rooted gap between citizens and political institutions (authority institutions) functioning as a background atmosphere behind the judgement of trust. Therefore, the background perception of the political sphere functions similarly to a general belief in the benevolence of people. If one has a basic negative disposition, it further shapes social actor's perception of political actors and institutions and, accordingly, their judgement of trust. It hinders formation of credit of trust formation as well as the relationship between citizens and political institutions.

The trace of negative connotations of the political sphere in the perceptions of social actors was also reflected in their accounts of interest in political news, as well as the political news being a part of everyday socialising. Research participants commonly revealed that either they were not interested in following political realities or described topics related to the political sphere as causing tension. For example, I18 revealed thoroughly following sessions of the Lithuanian parliament; however, he also claimed he avoids discussing political issues with other people as this commonly leads to conflict. Moreover, the mass media was among the key sources of political information that added to negative perceptions. In any case, the outcome of either ignorance or interest generally added up to more grounds for negative trust judgements.

Well, I have my own radio <laughs>, my mother in law is sitting downstairs, telling me what... what there is interesting. But not really. They don't manage it themselves, do they. They're all setting up all sorts of lawsuits for each other, who's a bandit, who's not a bandit, you know, one said one thing, the other said another. (I1)

I don't know, that's my development... my reflections. Because, like... I don't really have a lot of friends or whatever you want to call it, where I socialise.

So... to be honest... we don't go into politics too much. We don't get involved. So maybe that's what we get along. I mean... not relatives, but, you know, so-called friends, acquaintances. We don't go into politics. Maybe that's why we don't get angry, because polit... where there is politics, there appears anger, because some people support those, others support those, so... It gets to the point of anger. When... you don't touch such painful topics, it's calm. Because anyway, you can't be all... well... all the same... to love everyone, or not to love everyone. Still, some people love some people, trust some people, God forbid to say anything bad about conservatives, to others don't say bad things about Brazauskas's bunch, for others about Karbauskis[63]. This... no no, politics... we ignore it. In conversations. That's... without it... you can't live without it, you need it, yes. A necessary part. That's it. (I17)

No. Not unless some... how to say, discussions on general topics that have some political weight. Or something that touches on left-right views. And so on. Not so much in terms of specific events. Unless it's some of the fatter scandals that come to the fore, that's it. (I3)

I should {be interested} more. Should definitely more and no... I can't lie and say that I know everything here and... and I know politics very well. What I know is mainly from the official news portals and what's on TV. And not really anything else at the moment. But I would need... and it would be worth looking into more. (I2)

– Relationship between citizens and political institutions. Normatively, research participants presumed the need for trust between citizens and political institutions as a source of the efficient functioning of the democratic order. Some normatively stressed the aspiration to have mutual trust between citizens and political institutions.

I don't know... they both {citizen and authorities} have to make an effort. To have common... again, that common order, that agreement. The rules of it, well... So that there is no chaos. (I27)

Well like, I imagine now as far as the media is concerned, they're now very well off and functioning without the support of the people <laughs>. But... but anyway, well... it's hard to comment here. Now is a very difficult time to comment on something, I say. But anyway, I imagine, well, they {authorities}

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[63] Names of previous/current political leaders in Lithuania.

have to be trusted. And what more? We have nothing to trust. Their word, their decisions will affect us. (I26)

However, the data revealed two directions of the disruption of the link between citizens and political institutions (which, in turn, hinders mutual trust):

1) *The quality of citizenry, more specifically, electoral and post-electoral behaviour.* With regard to electoral behaviour, some flaws in citizen attitudes and behaviour emerged. First, one has to fulfil the duty of voting to be eligible to express any critique or to have any requirements towards the elected institutions. Second, some participants criticised voting behaviour when citizens based their election choices on unclear or irrelevant criteria. Therefore, it is not clear what their actual expectations towards the institutions are and if those institutions are fundamentally capable of fulfilling those expectations. This indicates the perception that political education and levels of citizen political participation are indirectly linked to trust dispositions towards political institutions.

> *Another thing... you can really see, you can really feel that it's not just... that not only quarantine, but in general there is a... that there is a lack of trust, at least in the larger part of society. That's probably natural when you have, let's say, somewhere around 30, 40 per cent voting for the ruling party. No, it's probably less than that, 20 percent, because... because 50 per cent just don't turn out to vote or more. (I28)*

> *It seems to me that that's not quite the relationship we should be talking about, because in practice, as we said, we are now a democracy anyway, there is a government structure which is just as it should be but... in terms of society as a whole, there are many elements of this kind of ochlocracy in our society. That, let's say, the government is not elected on the basis of criteria of evaluation, but simply... the crowd hears some leader and runs after him to vote. In a word, it is not... and then they get disappointed and... But it is... the consequence of the fact that e... they do not really assess the attitudes, do not have their firm and true attitudes, and do not assess those... those same, let's say, parties, or candidates. Trust or distrust, but there is no evaluation. There is no criterion for evaluation. Why should they be, shall we say, believed? That this party or I vote for this party, why? Not because it means to bring me a better life, but because it has its own political views, it has its own way of expressing some of this... principles according to which it promises to run the*

life of the state. So I... and I don't think anybody really looks at this, and then gets disappointed about it. (I21)

With regard to post-electoral behaviour, yet again an element of political education appeared. It was observed that there is still a lack of acknowledgement or appreciation among citizens of how the democratic election system works.

> *<...> but I think it would be good if they... trusted, not that after... after... 100 days somebody would shout and collect signatures to resign someone. I think that this is fundamentally the wrong thing to do, which is to... no good... nor can it do any good, nor... take away. It seems to me that... you have to realise that even if you didn't vote for the political force that is now in power, that you have to respect the fact that the majority of the public has decided and elected that political force. (I28)*

2) *The quality of political institutions, the way they act and function.* A common, negative perception was repeated indicating that, from the perspective of social actors, political institutions do not provide many reasons to trust them or , further, the way they act disrupts reasons to trust. The key guiding criteria for this will be discussed in more detail in the section on sources for trust judgements in political institutions. To highlight briefly, *consistency* and *respect* are crucial for the formation of trust between citizens and political institutions. Both are lacking in the actions and functioning of Lithuania's political institutions, according to the perceptions of the research participants.

The research data provided insights into the mutual direction of the trust relationship. On the one hand, research participants reflected on the lack of citizen trust in political institutions. On the other hand, they also presumed that there might be a reciprocal lack of trust towards the citizenry on behalf of the political institutions (or rather political actors). For example, such descriptions as "they are afraid of people" (I19) or "they do not see citizen, they are disconnected from citizen" (I17) show the disruption of the relationship between the political institutions and citizens. Research participants presumed that reciprocal trust would be mutually beneficial: it would give freedom of action for the political institutions (e.g. to make unpopular decisions that will be more beneficial in the future (I28)) *and* more comfort and peace for the citizens so that they do not need to constantly question the decisions and orders of the political institutions (e.g. I27).

> *Hmh... Well... <laughs> apparently that does have an impact. With more trust, perhaps those institutions could do more. Perhaps more unpopular decisions could be taken without some sort of greater backlash and so on. Now... Now,*

> *I don't know if something more unpopular, but maybe... even if it was necessary but unpopular, it would still be like hands are tied, because... not enough credit to buy such a solution <smiles>. (I3)*

> *Well, there's no trust. When the Seimas is supposed to represent its citizens, but the Seimas doesn't even look that way. Well, there is no trust then. (I23)*

The mutual (albeit negative) link between political institutions and citizens is further depicted in the notion that political institutions are the *reflection of citizens themselves*. This brings the "responsibility of trustor" aspect of trust judgement into view. This maintains that citizens have an input into the formation of the institutions of authority and, presumably, in the case of Lithuania, citizens do not perform that input. Again, the perceptions of the research participants point to a vicious circle of a disrupted and detached relationship between the political field and citizenry, and, consequently, a lack of trust.

> *It's like in life, like everywhere, it's the same there, in a sense. Like it is said, that there is an image of society in the Seimas or something. You elect and choose based on yourself, right, it's like that. It's something like that, anyway. (I5)*

> *Hm... Well... Parliament... how to say... here I'm comparing just as if others where... Well, when, remember, I mentioned that they complain about absolutely everything all the time. People seem to forget that the Seimas did not fall from the sky. It's the same people, from the same... <smiles> hey, the same families, the same businesses, the same communities, the same churches and so on. The same people who... from the same society. There... there we are <underlines "we"> basically. So if we, hey <smiles>, are cursing on the Seimas without brakes, well, we are cursing on ourselves without brakes, that's the way it works. (I3)*

Furthermore, the disruption of the link between people and political institutions was revealed in the perceived effect that involvement with the political sphere has on social actors. The narrative continued that the political sphere has the effect of tainting even otherwise "good" people; some participants reflected self-critically that they were even unsure about themselves, should they attempt a role in politics. The common preconception is that people fall under the pressure of the negative features of the political sphere and subsequently either take care of their own interests or the interests of some groups but not those of the citizens or the country.

That distrust is based on the difference between people's words and their deeds. But perhaps the most important aspect of distrust is that e... I mean, that you understand and you realise that if you were to get into Seimas or into government, well, you would probably start to, in the sense that I'm talking about myself, you'd have to start behaving differently... well, not exactly... not quite what you have declared. (I19)

Seimas, first, I would say... Probably about 20, 30 per cent come to it wanting to do something, but the machine pulls them in and settles them down very nicely. The rest of them... are seekers of the good life. How can they benefit themselves. And what they... what's good for them. For them, not for the state. Talking one way and doing the opposite. And what's most interesting is that it seems that wherever these people are coming from, they're very quickly... re-educated. I had a few acquaintances here, and you could see how... e... they suddenly change. And on top of that, there are the forces that are... deliberately undermining the prestige. I can see that, too. (I24)

Trust judgements in political institutions. Analysing the formation of trust in political institutions, there appear to be two relatively distinct trust judgements:
1) A trust judgement linked to the democratic political system and it's functioning in general
2) A trust judgement linked specifically to political institutions

– Trust judgements linked to the democratic political system. There is credit of trust given to the democratic system as such – trust that it should work; that democratic institutions are needed; that there is not anything better: "any authority is an evil. But without authority it would be even worse" (I21). The credit of trust is also based on certain justifications for the potential malfunctioning of political institutions. For example, that it is a difficult responsibility to make decisions and thus it is easy to criticise them (I26) or that political actors and institutions do the best they can (I28). On the one hand, there is acknowledgement that political institutions represent democratic political order and are necessary for it. Also, that they function in a certain way and thus certain limits or restrictions are justifiable. On the other hand, features of the system can mean certain limitations or characteristics that do not evoke citizen trust.

But specifically what concerns us, what concerns the people, well, it's clear to me that the state is doing as much as it can. You can't jump above the navel, so to say. And from those resources. Well, you can't please everyone. (I22)

I... Well... I don't know, I'm like I said, It's not about that I don't trust, but I assess. I assess that the Seimas, the government, the presidency, the political parties, these are all institutions of a democratic state that must be there, and have to be there. (I21)

I would think that there is a need, because maybe... so to say, then maybe anarchy would start <laughs>. Because well, it's still necessary... order is necessary. E... there's a need, there's a need for somebody to regulate life, because people can't always make the right decisions for themselves, obviously. And politicians don't decide things correctly, in a sense, I mean, and people. (I5)

– Trust judgements linked specifically to the political institutions. *The* research data revealed two pillars of trust judgements with regard to political institutions:
- the perceived performance and characteristics of the political institutions
- the perceived performance and characteristics of the personalities/ individual political actors who represent (compose) the political institutions

It is possible to conclude that the latter pillar dominates the overall trust judgement. Even though the narratives of the research participants included aspects of the overall performance of the political institutions (e.g. assessment of legislation or assessment of certain regulations), the common pattern across interviews was that research participants *tended to focus on the actions and characteristics of individual political actors* and, accordingly, make their trust or distrust judgement about the respective political institution. Trust judgements in political institutions strongly relied on an anthropomorphic perception of those institutions. This is an important insight that clearly links trust in people and trust in institutions: to a large extent, trust in political institutions is a proxy for trust in the people who represent those institutions and, to a much less extent, trust in abstract entities (see more in Chapter 4.3. on methodological implications). Moreover, as will be discussed further, with regard to some political institutions (in particular government and presidency), citizens' trust judgements relies on perceptions about a limited number of the leading or most publicly recognised political actors.

Of course there are those politicians out there, certain personalities, who, so to say, who impose that distrust on the whole parliament... who are like... like I said before, that you see one thing that he declares, and then he turns out to be something completely different. Of course, the biggest one is Gražulis[64], maybe. Thinking like people do, when you see that he is for Christian values,

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[64] A member of Lithuanian parliament at the time of the interview.

for everything, and then you see that there is a child in one end of Lithuania and the other, and so on, and so on. (I5)

Well, as I said, trust is still about what... what you do. With actions. It's... the institution does some work, there's... <smiles> performs functions that bring certain results and so on. It's... if... Well, I'll be the one now... not even a devil advocate, just maybe more of a judge <smile>. When all these scandals come out about gold knives being bought, forks and so on, when well... money laundering scandals and so on, well, those things don't add to that trust. If an institution says 'We work in your interest', but it is clear from those actions, from those results, that one or two people are just using the position to work in their own interest, then... <pause, 3 s> Well... I say, it's not good for the reputation. And each person carries the reputation of the institution they work for on their shoulders. (I3)

Sources of (dis)trust in political institutions

Either regarded as an abstract entity or in terms of individual political actors, political institutions fall into the more distant circles of familiarity (see Figure 12). Therefore, in the case of trust judgements in political institutions, external sources of (dis)trust prevail (that is, the trust judgement is less based on direct interaction between a social actor and an institutions or its representatives but rather on externally formed reputation and general perceptions). In the section above, notions equivalent to "atmosphere of trust" and "general dispositions" have already been discussed as the perception of the political sphere and the citizen/political sphere relationship. Here, other sources of trust most conducive to trust judgements in political institutions will be discussed, namely, observable characteristics, in the form of the communication and behaviour of trustees, predominantly expressed in the *externally* built *reputation* that institutions and political actors carry. Firstly, common patterns related to trust judgement in political institutions will be discussed, then later turning to some aspects linked to each political institution (i.e. the parliament, the government, the presidency, and the political parties).

There are two major aspects in the performance of political institutions and the behaviour of individual political actors that appeared to be most influential for the perception of reputation on which trust judgements rely: (in)consistency and (dis) respect.

(In)consistency directly reflects the core element of the definition of trust – the *expectation* that a trustee will consistently hold on to a certain matter (or content)

of trust. In the context of political institutions, research participants almost in full agreement referred to (in)consistency of actions and/or (in)consistency between what is declared and what is enacted by political institutions and/or political actors. In the case of Lithuania, when discussing the reasoning behind expressed trust or distrust in institutions, research participants highlighted inconsistency as the major feature of political institutions in the country.

> *Again, those controversial, I will call them, maybe, maybe decisions. All that tossing around and... sometimes, sometimes... I think in particular, and not only for me, but for the public as a whole, that trust is falling because... a... because of the expectations that are created and then... <...> the radically different decisions taken. When some... the whole of society, including me, you already were expecting something. (I18)*

> *Well, maybe it's like everybody else, it's maybe politicians <laughs>. Like for most people, because you see some of them saying one thing and doing another most of the time, afterwards. Because... those whom you see in public. Those people. It's those things, because... you can't tell about the others if you haven't encountered them. So, that's... Maybe you'd be more careful with... if you had to deal directly, with politicians or something. Maybe so. Because it's often... that you see one thing on the screen, so to speak, and then it turns out that there was something else. (I5)*

> *Well, it's their actions. You see... especially now how much everything was shown, talked about. They say one thing and do another. (I1)*

An important aspect of (in)consistency was also linked to inconsistency in political ideology and declared values, particularly in relation to political parties. Some research participants observed that their own trust in political institutions wavered when, for example, the political parties that they voted for later, after elections, allied with ideologically distinct political parties or seemed to change the ideological position.

> *I don't know anymore if... those elections really make a difference. Because what really happens is that you vote for this, you elect that, and then you see that... the values are no longer the same, even though they are declared. After the elections, some coalitions are formed, where... ideologically they said "We will never unite, this is the opposite of us". Then after the elections, because of the power of some... Well, for the majority they start to join. And you think that's not what I voted for. I wanted it to be like this, you have to represent*

me, you promised, that's why I voted for you. And after the elections, you're already with your... enemies or something, and you are even doing things that you did not promise. So that's it, that's it. (I23)

(Dis)respect is linked with both the perceived (dis)respect of political institutions towards citizens and perceived (dis)respect as part of the culture of political institutions. Just as in the case of trust formation between people, the way institutions communicate or interact with others demonstrates respect or a lack of it. (Dis)respect can be observed both via the decisions or regulations that political institutions produce or via the actions of political actors. As perceived by participants, in Lithuania there is no culture of constructive political discourse and the relationship between citizens and political institutions is perceived as highly polarised. Lack of respect is linked to negative trust judgements.

> *<…> there is such a different attitude, and no respect really. Although there has been a lot of talk about how much respect there will be, and political culture. And now it's not there and you see some of that... these video clippings from meetings and so on, and the tone of them, the way they're talking, the way they're saying things... You don't see that in Panorama, but people catch it. Well, it's not really... <...> doesn't contribute to trust, because I'm saying that communication, that culture... the attitude, it's also very {important}. (I23)*

In the case of trust in political institutions, the perception of reputation is primarily based not on experience or direct interaction but on external sources – to some extent important others but mainly public information channels, *media* (both traditional mass media and social media) being the key. As in many aspects discussed by the participants in relation to political institutions, in the case of Lithuania media coverage induces distrust rather than trust. Even if some of the participants indicated their lack of trust in the media as well, still, it was clear that media is the primary source that shapes social actors' knowledge about political institutions. In research participants' narratives on how they judge their trust or distrust in political institutions, instances of negative media content were repeated, such as scandals, ridiculous situations, the outbursts of political actors, or bad decisions.

Among the more direct basis on which perceptions of reputation were built was the *deliberate interest* in the work of political institutions, that is, based on personal experience from being (currently or in the past) a part of political or related (public) institutions or from the experiences of others or their own (e.g. one participant specified that he regularly watched the transmissions of parliamentary sessions). It is worth noting that, yet again, in the case of Lithuania, when discussing these

sources of (dis)trust, research participants tended to depict negative connotations and more positive accounts were very rare across the interviews.

> As the saying goes, one... I had to attend one ball. And there was one member of parliament, and he said: "Well I thought that it will be good there in Seimas. But I didn't think it will be that good". Well, I was like... But this is serious, so to say, <laughs> I was there in a good ball, in that sense. He served one term. If he said so, well... you start thinking. (I25)

> I try to watch all... all the Seimas sittings as much as possible. <...> I don't see any of them, neither in the current {parliament} nor in the previous ones I don't see any constructive work. And... I see more just a... a clarification of relationships rather than a desire to actually do something. And... in many cases, one or other member of the Seimas or one or other group or... there is an elementary obstruction of work, obstruction of decision-making. Whether it's position or opposition. That is what I find fundamentally lacking in a... concreteness, and as I say, precisely, the work itself. Because if they come to work, as I come to work, then... I don't like to be pushed around, and I try not to do that myself. For me, it's all about the quality of the work, that my work is with quality. I can't give more than a 5, because I just miss the quality. Specifically in the Seimas... in the work of the Seimas. (I18)

> Well, the government is... you can write 8 of course. Yes, well, as I work in this structure myself, you can see that... Well, obviously, not all ministries maybe, but you don't know how much you come across, but well... that they work in a fairly stable way. That is... running that government. (I5)

This chapter provided an overview of aspects of political trust from the social actors' perspective. The findings will be further extended in later sections, where the implications of research participants' interpretations of political trust measures will be discussed, while at the same time highlighting the trust judgement process linked to each particular political institution.

Discussion. The analysis of political trust from the social actors' perspective complements current theory and research on trust in several aspects. It adds to the discussions that highlighted inconclusive or contradictory findings stemming from available empirical analyses, including linkages between social trust and trust in institutions (primarily survey-based) (Kim & Kim, 2021; Newton et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2015; Rothstein, 2004). As has already been argued, social actors primarily associated the perception of trust with trust in (familiar) people. Generally, they were

able to express or provide scores estimating their trust in political institutions (albeit with some difficulty and some also refusing to do so). Nevertheless, the interviews showed that an anthropomorphic treatment of political institutions prevailed. That is, trust in institutions is to a large extent an extension of trust in people, namely, the political actors in the institutions. Though the effect of institutional reputation or mechanisms on political actors was acknowledged, when it came to reasoning trust or distrust in those institutions, the reputation or perceived public image of political actors overrode the institutional level. Moreover, the general grounds for trust judgements with regard to political institutions mirrored the people-like assessment, namely, the inconsistency between "words and actions" and respect (or lack of it). Background perceptions are another aspect that should be regarded when interpreting what the actual responses on political trust mean. At least in the case of Lithuania, based on the interview data it is possible to presume that part of the political institutions' assessment reflected not an assessment of particular currently working institutions as such but was rooted in a negative perception of a political sphere that hinders the consideration of trust, fostering a "knee jerk" reaction to express a lower assessment of trust. There seems to be a heightened threshold that social actors have to step over to start *actually* considering if they trust political institutions or not, and why this is so. Furthermore, though theoretically trust is described as a reciprocal interaction, the mainstream literature does not capture reciprocity with regard to political trust, and political trust commonly refers to the direction from citizen to political institutions (Kwon, 2019). The research data revealed the relevance of a backward facing link: to some extent social actors grasp (dis)trust dispositions of political actors (and by extension political institutions) towards citizens. In the case of Lithuania, the link is disrupted by a perceived mutual distrust and the gap between the political sphere and the citizenry. Nevertheless, in line with the scientific literature, the need for trust between citizen and political institutions is acknowledged, highlighting the importance of credit of trust (Sztompka, 1999) for the efficiency of the democratic political process.

4.3. Findings of the empirical research: methodological implications

This chapter further focuses on the task of directly understanding how research participants (or potential survey respondents) interpret the standard social generalised trust and political trust questions. The findings are valuable, both to contribute to the discussion on the validity of current measures of trust and to provide insights into interpretations of what survey-generated results actually may mean. The previous chapter on findings has already touched upon these questions; here, more specific methodological aspects will be detailed.

4.3.1. Implications for the measurement and interpretation of social generalised trust

Following the observed issues around the standard social generalised trust measurement item by other scholars (see Chapter 3.2.), an interview facilitation technique was used to trace how research participants considered the survey question and how they reasoned an answer to it. The results confirmed that there is a gap, or at least a mismatch, between the conceptual and operational definition of social generalised trust and perceptions of the question by research participants (i.e. potential respondents). Also, the data highlighted important implications for how the measurement could be improved and/or how interpretation of the results should be regarded.

Following the research participants' think aloud responses, two implications will be discussed:
- the research participants' perceptions about the answer alternatives
- the research participants' perceptions about the question content, specifically – whom they considered as "most people".

Research participants' perceptions about the scale. For the purposes of prompting and think-aloud, a standard social generalised trust question with a 10 point scale was used. The end items corresponded to the standard version as well: "Most people can be trusted" or "Need to be very careful". Some participants found the scale inconsistent and its ends not balanced: "most people can be trusted" seemed to be a less intensive positive statement compared to "need to be very careful". Also, it may not be clear how to interpret what the ends mean.

> *Well, basically <...> score 1 and the description next to it, the need to be very careful seems so intimidating. Well, reading that... a... And that 10, "most people can be trusted", it's not, I would say maybe, with the 1, that description is so much more radical, with the 10 maybe not so much. (I18)*

> *I would say that might be... Well, that "be very careful" thing. Yes, you have to be very careful, but what does that "very careful" mean - is it to ignore these strangers altogether... <...> Well, let's have 2 on that scale. (I3)*

These considerations by the research participants show that there can be diverse interpretations of what the ends (or categories) of the scale mean and how these diverging interpretations affect the choice of scores by respondents. Furthermore, the potentially inconsistent and ambiguous interpretation of the ends of the scale

links to the diverse perceptions of who are "most people" (see the section below). For example, if one has in mind familiar people, then "need to be careful" may entail one connotation, whereas in the case of "most people" as complete strangers – another connotation may prevail.

An important inconsistency in the SGTQ scoring emerged with the help of the trust map technique. Previous to it, in the course of their interviews, research participants provided their scores to the SGTQ. As argued repeatedly, their interpretation of "most people" went much wider than the category of strangers or unfamiliar people. Nevertheless, when laying out the trust map and then elaborating on it, research participants would stop at the category of strangers and reflect that actually they are not able to explicitly say if they trust or do not trust strangers as they do not know them and do not have any knowledge about them.

Research participants' perceptions about question content. In their think aloud responses, research participants mentioned categories of people that go beyond the theoretically presumed notion of social generalised trust as trust in unfamiliar people and strangers (see Figure 13 below). When asked to think aloud about who the people were that they considered as "most people" in the survey questions, research participants fell into three groups: those who considered them as familiar (even very close) people; those who considered them as strangers and unfamiliar people; and those, who considered them to be both familiar and unfamiliar people. The details below highlight the diversity of interpretations of what is considered when answering the question and whom is perceived as "most people".

Among the *familiar*, research participants mentioned family members, friends, people one encounters in everyday practices, with whom one works, or people with whom one interacts regularly. In some cases, the consideration was focused on a specific familiar person; for example, "<…> I was thinking more about my mom" (I7). In other cases, there was a range of familiar people considered; for example, "Probably co-workers, <...> ex-colleagues, people with whom I have some kind of common, I mean, social activities" (I19) or "But the ones that you know. Where... Neighbours. Someone you've known for a long time, someone you've seen. A five for these. That wide circle" (I24). Also, there were examples of more vague familiar people taken into account; for example, "Those whom I have met, yes" (I12).

Among the *unfamiliar*, "most people" were thought of in general terms such as "those whom I do not know" (e.g. I18), "unfamiliar" (I10), people one passes by: "Here's well... random. {People} (m)et unexpectedly, impulsively, so to speak" (I17), "M... just passers-by, ordinary people that you haven't seen before and maybe won't see again in your life. Ordinary passers-by" (I3).

When both *familiar and unfamiliar* people were considered as "most people", again, various combinations were observed; for example, family members and people on the street (I1) or rather vague suggestions like "E... I probably tried to generalise, so that… to encompass all" (I28).

Apart from diversity in interpretations with regard to targets of trust, the considerations behind the answers also diverged along two more dimensions:

- specific or vague situations considered
- trust, distrust, or both situations considered.

In some cases participants recalled specific situations in the past; for example, I26 – situations with people whom she used to trust but they breached her trust, whereas other participants did not have specific or clear instances in their mind. For example:

> *M... Specifically, it's probably about none. If it's about the working environment, it's 10. If there's some kind of financial institutions, maybe 7. It's like, depending on the area. (I6)*

The above example also shows how the same question evokes multiple possibilities of score choice, depending on the individual respondent's recollection at the specific moment of the survey or her/his strategy of averaging scores if diverse situations came to the mind. There can be numerous ways a particular score is chosen when the limits of interpretation remain undefined.

Some participants primarily considered situations of trust (e.g. I7 in the case of mum), whereas others primarily considered situations of distrust or deceit: "Aha. Somehow... just reading that and thinking about what I... Well, whom I maybe... whom I can't trust, somehow immediately {thought of}... a... like events, like working relationships" (I2). There were also cases when both negative and positive instances of trust were summed up.

It is important to note that the considerations seemed to be linked to the trust score: among interview participants, a pattern can be observed that those who focus more on strangers or distrust situations, score lower, whereas when more familiar or close people were considered as "most people" or the trust situation was considered, the score was relatively higher. Likewise, the score was higher when both sides (trust and distrust) were included in the consideration. Some participants explicitly stated that if considering familiar or close people their score would be higher than in the case of "most people" being interpreted as strangers. For example, I18 gave a score of 6 when considering unfamiliar as "most people", whereas the score for familiar would be 8-9. Although qualitative type of data does not lend itself to specifying the exact medium score related to each category, the range of scores for familiar people

extended to 8-9 (although in some cases it was very low, e.g. 3, when a solely distrust situation was considered); when both categories were considered, in all cases the score was between 7 and 8; and when mainly unfamiliar people were considered, the core range was between 5 and 7.

Furthermore, some cases revealed very clearly the difficulty for research participants in interpreting the question or in choosing one score for their trust in "most people". For example, I15 provided a range of scores, discussing a variety of people from family members to strangers; however, he could not come up with a general score for "most people". According to the participant, one can only assess a specific case. I4 provided a score to the questions, however, his think-aloud illustrated well how "most people" could be differently perceived:

> *A... well, there's a word like "most people". So that majority probably not... also... it's a very conditional thing. Is it your majority, or the majority in general? But let's say it's my majority as well. So it's the majority of people I know to the point where we shake each other's hand by sight, right. So I think that if that majority... I thought, if that's the majority, I think it's still... of that majority, I would be less inclined to the right, well, to trust, because in that majority there's probably more... there would be more people that I would be wary of. That's a four, maybe. From the centre to... five no. (I4)*

This and other examples revealed the potential of multiple interpretations and difficulty in providing a response:

> *So, that's... it's not... I can't really answer to it exactly. That is, who are those "most", who constitute that "most" people. That would be the people you have to interact with. (I16)*

> *Well, you live in a community anyway. You have a m... neighbours, well, say, here if you start to analyse, let's say, e... I mean, in my environment here where I live, in our small village, where all are long-time residents, and our grandparents and great-grandparents were born and brought up here, we really trust each other a lot. In misery, in joy and in everything. Now, where new acquaintances are concerned, it takes time. Then I don't know. (I22)*

Though it is not quantitative research and thus quantitative estimation cannot be definite, it is worth noting that at least some "familiarity" element in the perception of "most people" was implied by over two thirds of research participants.

Figure 13. Social actors' interpretation of "most people" in standard social generalised trust question
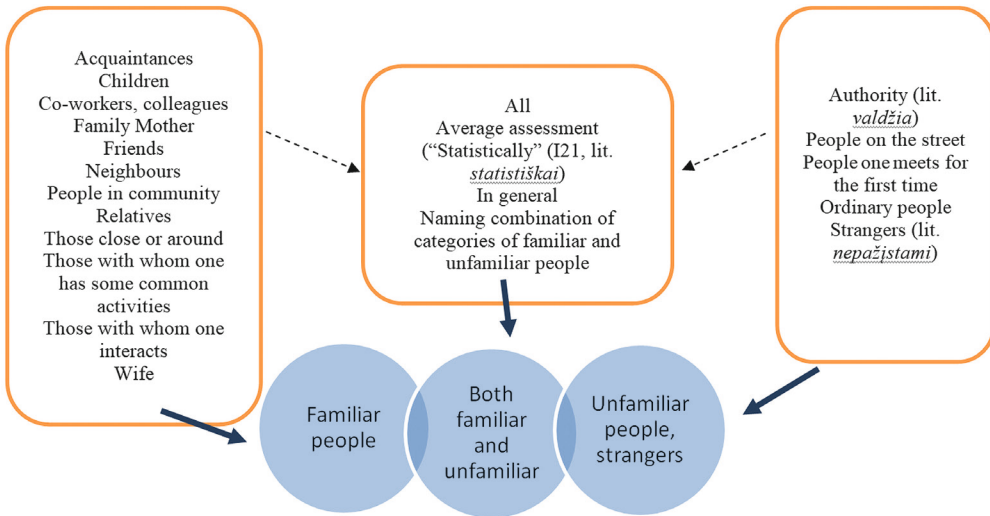
Source: composed by the author

To sum up, in line with the critical remarks provided in Chapter 3.2., the research data confirms that research participants' interpretation of "most people" does not correspond to the conceptual definition of it as trust in unfamiliar people or strangers. Also, almost every participant provided her/his own, unique and different from others interpretation of what (s)he considered during the response process. And moreover, familiar people seem to constitute a substantial part of trust in the "most people" response.

The problem of the SGTQ, therefore, could be outlined as follows in Figure 14.

Discussion. The findings of both the previous chapters and this chapter have specifically highlighted the validity of the SGTQ measure with regard to the gap between conceptual definition and the interpretation of social actors. In line with other authors, the research data showed that the response with the SGTQ scores cannot be interpreted as solely an estimation of trust in strangers. The scores encompass a wide range of categories of people, situations and contexts. To overcome the gap, three general solutions could be proposed: 1) to enhance the conceptualisation of social generalised trust so that it corresponds to what the main measure used in empirical research potentially provides, that is, an estimation of (dis)trust dispositions towards other people where "other" (or "most", as worded in the SGTQ) encompasses a variety of considerations about a broad range of familiar

Figure 14. Inconsistency of SGTQ measure and interpretation from social actors' perspective

Ideally	Currently	Problem
Conceptual meaning of social generalised trust	Defined as trust in unknown, unfamiliar, strangers	More narrow than measurement and respondent interpretation
corresponds to	*not specified in*	Presumably broader than conceptualisation
Meaning explicit in **measurement** item	"Most people"	
corresponds to	*diversely interpreted by*	
Meaning as **interpreted by respondents**	respondents, encompassing a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar people	Broader than conceptualisation and no uniform interpretation

Source: composed by the author

and unfamiliar social actors; 2) to broaden the interpretation of the empirical findings based on the SGTQ, that is, the sample score should be seen as an overall estimation of social trust (not only out-group trust or trust in strangers) because individual scores entail diverse limits across the radius of trust; 3) to develop updated or new social generalised trust measures corresponding both to the methodological guidelines of a good measure and following the insights that emerged from analyses of the perceptions of social actors. Part of the value of the SGTQ lies in its exceptionally long time-line of use and thus there is a level of hesitancy in replacing or discarding it. Solutions 1 and 2 to some extent refer both to the results of previous research and future research based on standard trust measures. If they are used, researchers must be more careful linking the results to theoretical frameworks and interpreting the meaning of the results. These interpretations must regard the observed content that research participants actually put in their responses. However, in line with other researchers (e.g. Bauer & Freitag, 2013; Nannestadt, 2008) the author of the thesis argues that it is reasonable to continue looking for alternative measures based on an expanded understanding of how respondents treat the question, perceive trust, and experience its manifestations in real life situations. Therefore, as a line for future research, the author strongly advocates a thorough inventory of available social trust measurement items that are more specific than the SGTQ and revision of them, not only by means of quantitative statistical analysis, but by incorporating

the perspective of respondents as well. Although good attempts have already been made to update the SGTQ; for example, by specifying the category of strangers in its wording and transforming the answer alternatives (e.g. Naef & Schupp, 2009) or using a list of categories of people from familiar to people met for the first time (e.g. Bauer & Freitag, 2013), the research data also paid attention to the fact that at the marginal end of the continuum, social actors do not really perceive their disposition towards strangers as trust, thus further complicating the potential use of such measures. The findings of the thesis demonstrate that trust in strangers is not unidimensional and it is not as abstract or morally-bound as presumed (Uslaner, 2002). There is a need to revise not only the specification of trustee but also the content and/or context of trust in relation to strangers or rather the diverse categories of people beyond the circle of immediate familiarity. Alternatively, relatively new measurement items could be developed, consistently connecting conceptual, operational and real life levels. Finally, though participants did not spontaneously reflect much on the scale length of the SGTQ, some additional implications to that revealed in Chapter 3.2. have emerged. One, the scale ends may be as equivocal as the wording of "most people" for respondents, that is, what actually being careful at the level of 1 or trusting at the level 10 means if linked to real social life situations? There seems to be a need to provide a more precise reference point for respondents. Two, depending on which situation or category of people respondents consider, their scores fluctuate. Thus, the tendency to move towards middle points may not be related solely to the effects of a numeric scale (Uslaner, 2009), but also to a kind of considered averaging of the estimations of the opposite ends (e.g. considering familiar people would evoke a higher score and unfamiliar people would get a lower score; if a trust situation was recalled, it would evoke a higher trust score, while distrust situations produce the opposite; if a respondent thinks about both ends when responding, (s)he presumably averages the score, thus coming to the middle). Which again leads to the question: how much is such a score a reflection of what the researcher is looking for or makes interpretations about?

4.3.2. Implications for the measurement and interpretation of political trust

Although previous literature discussed the potential issues of a scale effect in the standard political trust question and potential issues with the composite measure, the attempt in the thesis research to use a think aloud technique for the trust in political institutions question is relatively novel and thus provided valuable insights into how potential respondents perceive and answer the question.

In the case of the trust in political institutions question, research participants did not comment on specific scale related issues; however, the think aloud responses

revealed a difficulty in reasonably assessing and expressing trust in such an entity as "political institution" and to differentiate between trust in distinct political institutions. In some cases, participants reflected on their lack of interest and/or knowledge about political institutions and thus a difficulty assessing their level of trust in them.

> *What a difficult question, you know. It is, you know, such an alien sphere to me, and I have no interest whatsoever. Absolutely, you know. I mean, well... where I have no opinion. Well, I can be honest, right. It's... I can only... <pause, 3s> Wait, don't trust at all {reading the scale}. And here in the middle neither trust, nor distrust, right? (I20)*

Some expressed their doubts about how it is possible at all to feel "trust" in institutions and what this means or on what criteria the assessment should be based. For example, I21 refused to provide his scores and I23 explicated the difficulty (again pointing to the reference of trust in people in an institution as a counterpart of trust in the institution as such):

> *Well... well, if someone would force me, maybe {I would provide scores}. But it's difficult for me and I... I don't find the criteria. For this assessment. (I21)*

> *When it comes to some big communities... then for me... it's always awkward. Because there are actually individual, say, members of the parliament who are... well... where you know that really a person by his deeds, by his... actions, that he does what he says. That's why you can say - that person, that one. In general, the parliament, the government, the presidency, the political parties, now there really is no trust. I cannot say that it is {score} 1, but it is very low. (I23)*

Furthermore, even though the standard trust in political institutions question wording seems simple and concise, research participants' think aloud responses revealed diverse complications in perceiving the question and providing an answer to it. For example, some research participants asked aloud if the question asked about government in general (as an institution) or specifically about the current government (eventually, they chose the latter interpretation as the basis for their score). Likewise, a participant debated aloud what it means to "trust or distrust political parties":

Political parties are... the question here is whether... do I trust them as holding to the party line, or for implementing their programme, or that.. that... as an organisation which... which aspire for power and represent {people} well. Which one of these is here? (I28)

Similarly, with regard to political parties there were doubts if one has to assess trust in her/his preferred political party or political party as an institution, or some combination of the two? These clarifications on the part of research participants showed that despite the presumed simplicity of the political trust questions, there is a lack of specification and space for divergent interpretations (and thus the risk of respondents actually answering a different question based on their own solution as to how to treat it).

As the research approach was qualitative, the quantitative generalisations are not conclusive; however, a pattern emerged when analysing participants' scoring of political institutions. A cluster of participants tended to see political institutions as a unit (in particular the parliament, the government and the president) and thus provided them with the same score. Another cluster seemed to relate to an assessment of the parliament and political parties, giving them lower scores than to the government and the president. Political parties in general tended to receive lower scores (further discussion with participants also shed some light on that, see the section below).

Asking them to elaborate how they decided what score to give for which political institution not only provided data for understanding how the trust judgement process worked but also had implications for the interpretation of what lies behind the respondents' scores. Three clusters of institutions emerged with regard to research participants' assessment of (dis)trust:

- parliament
- government and president
- political parties.

Furthermore, the think aloud reasoning highlighted two implications suggesting that "trust in political institutions" scores do not explicitly represent *trust* in *institutions* but are proxies: one, *personalities* is a strong (albeit major) component of (dis)trust judgements in political institutions, that is, (dis)trust in political actors is a proxy for (dis)trust in the political institutions represented by those actors; and two, there is a mix of the assessment of participants' trust in and assessment of the *performance* of political institutions as a *substitute for trust*, that is, assessment of performance is another proxy for trust in specific institutions. Though the conceptualisation of political trust includes assessment of performance, the ambiguity of where the borderline between trust and performance is present.

In cases of government and president, it is possible to claim that (dis)trust in personalities representing these institutions is a rather direct or straightforward proxy for (dis)trust in these institutions. More specifically, in the case of *government*, trust in the *prime minister* is the primary proxy of a social actors judgement of trust in the institution. Further, trust in some of the most visible or most relevant *ministers* at a specific moment (e.g. minister of health or education during the pandemic) complements the judgement.

> *Well, you know, mostly it's Šimonytė[65] who gives that score 8, right, and... Other ministers, or other members of the government... in my opinion they would be of lower score <...> (I20)*

> *I haven't looked in detail at the performance of every minister. I am, how to answer, I mostly refer to the ones about which they talk {in public}. And those whose work you see in one way or another. Whether you see an article, or somebody is talking about it, or something that is relevant. (I23)*

> *The government, I would even say 6 or 7 maybe. Again, I appreciate the current government, and I personally like the people who make it up. I don't know all of them, but apparently the youth, the way they talk and not lying, at least as far as I've heard so far, that... More openness, both on Facebook, as far as I follow them and so on. That alone is impressive and, again, that trust means that the decisions... the decisions that they make, well, they still are going to be more considered, more, I mean, sort of thought through and weighed up and so maybe I won't like them very much all the time, but I think that trust is... means that they will be accepted e... more weighed. Not... <...> not out of populist motives or anything like that. (I4)*

In the case of the *president*, an assessment of the president's personality dominated considerations of trust scores in the institution of the presidency. In rare cases, the trust score reasoning included wider aspects (e.g. there were mentions of the president's advisers, the first lady or some aspects of the institution itself). Research participants discussed the characteristic or actions of the president as grounds for the trust judgement related to his performance; for example, "incapacity" (I20), "lack of concrete proposals" (I18), "lack of defined position" (I28), "indecision" (I5).

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[65]   Lithuanian Prime Minister at the time of the interview.

Presidency... Yes, the presidency... I'd probably put 5. <...> For me, it probably has mostly to do with... I... not events, but inactivity, perhaps, or... although I know that the president is the person who is supposed to represent the country most in foreign policy, right, but, well, let's say, a year back, what was happening, let's say, when the president's face was completely absent from Lithuania, because, well, let's say, many people still imagine that the president is a domestic... home... well, kind of a master, right. So when that face was absent or when it was so very melted, that's what gives that kind of distrust. The other thing that gives me a lot of distrust but I haven't gone into why, m... that there change very often... people. In the presidency, right. Let's say those... a... um... what are they called? Spokesman... (I20)

Interestingly, in the case of the president, a comparison between the current president and the previous ones was observed as a reference point for the trust assessment as well (some comparison was done with regard to the government and parliament, though to a lesser extent).

The presidency... {low} at all. Like... Grybauskaitė[66] was some more, Adamkus[67] some more, then it was possible {to trust}. Now with the current one... zero. (I17)

Well... how to say it. Who has the stronger personality... they somehow hold on. Just like... Adamkus brought western culture and... a different approach... character... a very different attitude towards... values. When he brought his team... a few philanthropists, something like that. They saw that it was possible to do it differently. Because from our society, after Brazauskas or then some... some fresher wind had blown. <pause, 4s> Well... Grybauskaitė, I have no opinion. I don't know too much about the work... works that... I heard all kinds of... it would be irresponsible of me to judge. With the current {president}, what I see are intrigues of ruling majority, and cruel intrigues. (I24)

<...> Well, for me it's because there is no face, no such very clearly tangible face. There is no visible leader in the country. For me, yes. Obviously, I'm talking... again, I'm comparing with the presidents before, I suppose. That is why the assessment is probably like that. And it's maybe still this score of 5 is good enough. (I20)

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[66] A former president of Lithuania.

[67] A former president of Lithuania.

Based on the research participants' responses, *parliament* enjoys the most generalised expression of trust in an institution. It is closest to an assessment of *an institutional arrangement*, encompassing varied pillars of trust judgements from personalities to system characteristics (though separate respondents relied on diverse pillars). Some participants assessed the performance of the parliament via its functionality; for example, a long process of decision making (I28) or a lack of efficiency (I14). Others considered the compositions of the parliament regarding tensions between the majority and the opposition (e.g. "I don't trust it very much, since there are more of political battles going on" (I5)). Yet again, personalities were also important as a proxy for trust in an institution. For example, "The Seimas... all kinds of Gražuliai are elected and so on, who gather there, I do not understand sometimes what kind of people at all" (I1). Therefore, there is a myriad of considerations as to what is being assessed under the umbrella of trust in the parliament.

Political parties seemed to be a somewhat disconnected element among political institutions. Based on the research participants' elaborate responses it is possible to presume that trust in political parties does not actually reflect trust in an institution but rather a pre-defined balance between one's assessment of preferred political party(ies) and competing political party(ies). In other words, because of the feature of a political party system, in which competing parties are inherent, an in advance "50/50" share of (dis)trust is programmed into the assessment. A constant average or lower than average trust score reflects an inherent contradiction between an assessment of one's own party and other competitive parties, rather than a trust assessment of political parties as an institution. As in the case of the SGTQ, where considerations that included opposite ends of experiences or perceptions tended to lead to some kind of averaged score, such an inclination was even more explicit in the case of political parties.

Commonly, two valuations were made: 1) participants would point out the features of a multiparty system and the presence of a myriad of parties, among which some are good and some are bad, thus, there is no other way to assess one's trust but to give a middle score (or lower, as a negative perception of the political sphere intervenes as well); 2) participants would claim that they may have trust in a party or parties they support but do not have trust or actively distrust the opposite (or all the rest) parties, which again leads to a middle or more negative trust score.

> *Political parties, well, if I choose my party, for example, then of course I have to trust it. And if, in general, well, again, if there is, for example, another political party, you know, where it is not acceptable to me, I can say I don't trust it at all, right. It is very difficult for me to decide here, political parties. (I27)*

*Political parties <...> apparently score 4 or 5, I somehow think, maybe 5.
Because apparently... it kind of reflects that division, that half of them are
like... the ones that I think are progressive, a... in line with my worldview, my
political views. Well, the other part is, which for me are still... I very much
dislike. It's... I mean then... Yes {confirms the choice of score}. (I4)*

If in cases of the government and the presidency social actors focused more on
their trust in personalities rather than the institution as such, in the case of political
parties, apart from looking into personalities, a very strong background for trust
judgements was an assessment linked to party ideology (or more specifically,
observed lack of clear or consistent ideology) and inconsistency in their political
behaviour.

*Then I think that many parties don't represent a particular line and... and on
the question of values and so on they are mixed and... more inclined to e... to
kneel on what the public wants rather than what they really... what they want
to achieve. So I would give them probably a 4 on this aspect. Because most of
the parties don't really have a clear line of values. There are maybe a little bit
of exceptions now, but well... they don't have a clear line in principle. (I28)*

*Political parties, as always. Probably... people come from an idea, but... with
an idea... probably 30 per cent, and the rest... the benefit seekers. {Looking for}
(e)xtra income. (I24)*

*And the political parties, well, the political parties, I mean, there are maybe
a couple of... three, maybe, that declare something, as they say, m... well... ...
earthly, have a programme, something else. All the others are just declarative
statements of some kind, so on, and so on. Because just... in case of some of
them just going to this Seimas revealed things. One question... they took
some single topic and go with it. Well, nothing more about the governance of
the state or anything like that, they don't have, they don't know, they don't...
people, that they answer to those questions. In some debate they show that
well... nothing. (I5)*

The data showed how mixed were the considerations related to trust in political
institutions and that even for the same institution, both what "trust" is about and
what "institution" is about varied across the participants.

4.3.3. Additional note on the "institutional trust" measurement

Although trust in political institutions was the focus of the thesis, to gain a better understanding on how research participants produce their answer to a standard survey question, they were also prompted to briefly discuss their trust in a list of *other (social) institutions*. It allowed to validate the findings related to political institutions and to provide better reasoned insights into critical points of institutional trust measures.

Several important aspects emerged. First, similar to the case of political institutions, research participants varied in their interpretation of, or were not sure what, exactly it is that the word "institution" connotated or encompassed. The interpretations ranged from (1) the system as a whole (e.g. health care system; education system), to (2) specific institutions within the system (e.g. hospitals; schools) to (3) people working in the institution (e.g. doctors; teachers). Potential respondents, therefore, in the absence of specification of her/his task may (and did) employ diverse strategies about what they answer. For example, one will answer about the system while another about the people or someone will provide an overall (somehow averaged) score encompassing all three aspects (or some combination of them). It was clear that social actors can and do have different trust across the three levels; for example, they may trust teachers but distrust the education system. The segmentation of three layers of interpretation of what "institution" entails further emerged in the verbal elaborations on the trust map, thus additionally highlighting the issue of interpretation.

> *Look, but for example, do I better write education system, or teachers, how do you think, {based on} what... <...> Aha, that's a very big difference for me. (I20)*

> *Healthcare well... I trust. We have good doctors, in that sense... (I5)*

> *Well I would give education a 7 too. Am... From what I see now when the kids are learning it's actually quite a challenge. And the teacher... The teacher is coping. But if the education policy, well then there is this distrust, because well, somehow our education is not pulling up. That's maybe the political part of it. That the results are getting worse, something else. But the actors in education that I deal with, the teachers of children, well, in this case, I trust them. Well then that trust I would give probably. (I4)*

> *Education. <...> Well, bullying may be an issue, but... Well, bullying may not be about education here, but I think it's still about the same thing, because*

education is probably more about school, isn't it, probably not... or is it about higher {university} education as well? Or should I think more about that secondary {education}? (I20)

Likewise, institutions such as the municipality (or local government) caused confusion regarding what exactly one has to trust: a specific municipality of place of residence or municipality as an institution? If the latter, an issue similar to that with political parties emerges as municipalities are diverse, and thus research participants average their score (potentially leaning towards the middle point as the narrative of "there are both good and bad municipalities" is repeated). There were also cases when participants expressed their trust score based on subjectively selected examples (e.g. "You know, I'd probably put a 9 for municipalities. I would say I trust municipalities. I have a few of them in mind" (I20)).

Municipalities, I tend to think, in general, I would lean towards distrust. I can say that I could write a 4 on that scale. <...> That's where I tend more... not for all municipalities but if there are 60 municipalities in Lithuania in general, well, I'm more on the side of distrust. It is precisely because the larger municipalities, they are probably more numerous in terms of population and also in terms of political things, I think it is more... I would give more trust to them. But there are not many large municipalities. And those small ones to me, they are probably a kind of bog. Again, maybe not everywhere. But that is the impression I get from entirety of the information. (I4)

Second, in research participants' perceptions some of the institutions were closely related to political institutions, and therefore, trust score at least partially reflected an extension of (dis)trust in political institutions rather than trust in the respective institution as such. Education, health care, municipalities, to some extent the police, and courts are marked with the flag of (dis)trust in political institutions.

Well, education and healthcare, because I work in education myself, right, so I imagine that, well, anyway, we... we and these institutions, they depend on the higher ones, the Seimas, the parliament, the the presidency. These are laws, orders that you just have to follow. And and and you cannot influence anything too much... no... cannot. So I think it depends on the higher institutions. And these institutions work as they work. (I26)

Third, next to the range of interpretations of what an "institution" means, there is also a myriad of interpretations regarding what the reference point for (dis)trust

in each institutions will be. That is, there is no single perception of what trust in the same institution is about for different participants, and moreover, the same applies between institutions. Therefore, the scores for trust in institutions cannot be regarded as always be composed on the same dimension. For example, trust in banks for some participants was linked to the fact that they function based on pre-installed mechanisms of control and risk management or, alternatively, distrust was based on the notion that banks are profit seeking institutions, whereas (dis)trust in education and health care institutions had a significant reference to the work of the people in those institutions and the quality of service. The measure of trust in institutions does not specify any particular dimension of trust that it measures. Therefore, there is an open space for interpretation (and, potentially, bias of interpretation) of what the obtained trust scores mean. Interestingly, common narratives appeared relating to some institutions in the trust assessment. For example, endless reforms of the education system; banks as institutions being of foreign origin (namely, Scandinavian); the police as having become more trustworthy over the years; municipalities as related to the political sphere and thus prone to corruption, mass media as biased, bought and full of negativity.

> *Well, the police has increased from zero to 5, 6. <...> I don't know why. But somehow their prestige has definitely increased. Because I remember the absurd distrust of the police. In the last decade there has been some increase in trust. (I24)*

> *M... education... well, there's a lot of with those... with education. There are a lot of nuances. They keep trying, trying to reform that education, but it still does not work. But basically, I would also say that I tend trust. (I18)*

Finally, research participants provided their scores and reasoning on trust in institutions based on varied levels of competence and/or grounds for trust judgements. In the case of some institutions, research participants had more personal or direct experience (e.g. healthcare, education); in other cases (e.g. the police) a combination of personal experience and public knowledge, whereas knowledge about some institutions was close to absent (e.g. courts). Nevertheless, research participants did not hesitate to provide estimates of scores, even acknowledging that they did not know much about the institution. Combined with the previous issues, this aspect provides additional argument for caution about what the trust in institutions scores mean and how substantial are the interpretations that can be made based on such scores.

Municipalities... I have no opinion on municipalities. Somehow... I have practically no contact with them. Very little. I think that... average, like 6 points, 7 maybe. (I19)

I don't know, what concerns courts, I can't really comment much, because I haven't had any encounters. (I26)

Well... I don't have personal experience with the courts... I think... No, I don't. Neither a criminal record <laughs> nor... probably ever had to attend a hearing. (I18)

To wrap up the section on implications of measurement of social generalised trust and trust in (political) institutions stemming from an analysis of the research participants' interpretations, there is one more inconsistency that has been revealed with the help for trust maps. The technique of trust maps did not require participants to provide trust scores for the categories of people or entities that they included into individual trust maps. They were only asked to place them according to trust relations with regard to a point representing the participant. However, as the participants did discuss their scores in relation to "most" people (in some cases also indicating scores for different categories that they considered in the process) and institutions, the spatial lay out of the same categories showed that the scores and comparable place on the map did not necessarily correspond. Some of the participants reflected on the inconsistency themselves in the process of laying out their map. That is, one would expect that the same score meant a comparable level of trust and thus categories would be placed in the same circle or at the same distance trust-wise on the map. However, categories that received different scores would be placed next to each other in the same circle or vice versa, categories that received the same score, would be distanced differently with regard to the trustor.

But you know, it is so interesting now when it comes to drawing. I think I said that I'm giving 10 points to the courts, right, but actually they're going to be somewhere far away on this map. Because they are like... distant, aren't they. (I20)

It once again reveals that trust is closely linked to the context of interaction and trust judgements intertwine with the intensity and relevance of the relationship in question. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the continuum of trust does not have trust/distrust at its ends but rather that higher or lower trust levels are present in each circle of trust, and that the scores between the circles may not be comparable

(i.e. score 10 does not carry the same meaning (or the same level of trust) when ascribed to different categories of trustees).

Discussion. Analysis of research participants' perceptions and assessment of trust in (political) institutions revealed that the seemingly simple and straightforward question evoked a myriad of interpretations, both generally, and related to specific institutions. In line with previous authors (Dekker, 2002; Fisher et al., 2010; Schneider, 2017), the findings advocate for a more careful treatment of survey findings and the need to consider an update in the use of standard measures of political trust. The data collected has highlighted that both "institution" and "trust" are not unidimensional in the trust judgements of social actors as presumed by standard survey measures. It is therefore important to develop trust measures that clearly specify what one has to regard as an "institution". The data showed that trust operates distinctly across different political institutions (as well as other institutions) and there is a range of meaning attached to the concept of trust with regard to the same institution. Therefore, more specific measurement items are needed in order to draw explicit conclusions and interpretations based on survey data. Currently, the content of trust remains obscure in standard political trust measures and as the data indicated, research participants fill it with varied connotations. As with the SGTQ, several solutions are in line. If standard political trust measures continue to be used, researchers should be more sensitive about the interpretation of data and regard it in the light of the findings of this and other research that focuses on the interpretations of social actors (e.g. Dekker, 2012). It is worth (albeit necessary) making an inventory of currently available more specified measures of political trust that provide better correspondence between the content of the measure and the content of respondents' interpretations. Measures that specify the dimensions of an "institution" (e.g. separate systematic level of an institution and level of people acting within an institution) and indicate the content of trust (following Hardin's (2001) three-way notion of trust) would leave less space for measurement and interpretation inconsistencies. Such items can be found in separate survey programmes (e.g. CB or AfB) and thus their applicability could be explored more extensively.

4.3.4. Implications for the application of a qualitative approach: did it pay off?

The attempt to advance research on trust by application of a qualitative approach to research trust in relations and interactions that extend beyond circles of immediate familiarity and therefore encompass notions of social generalised trust and political trust proved to be both challenging and rewarding. Following the experiences and lessons learned from previous applications of qualitative research on trust, the author

of the thesis anticipated certain advantages and difficulties. Based on this, a rigorous preparation for the field-work was implemented. However, qualitative field work tends to entail an element of the unexpected (Mikėnė et al., 2013). In combination with the complexity and sensitivity of the topic of trust and the fact that in the given context qualitative research has not so far been applied extensively, it is necessary to provide the researcher's (self)reflection and methodological assessment on the implementation of the research design. This will be done providing a general reflection and an assessment of the interview facilitation techniques.

General remarks on the application of qualitative research

The size and richness of the corpus of qualitative data obtained proved that a qualitative approach is conducive to research on the topic of trust, even when it touches upon less personal and defined social contexts. In-depth data contributed to augmentation of the current conceptual frameworks of social generalised trust and political trust, highlighting the layers of trust when the trustee is an unfamiliar social actor or an abstract entity. The detailed data on the interpretations that research participants provided with regard to standard survey measures allowed for outlining the issues that have to be solved to make survey measures more valid and comprehensive. Also, it provided further insights into how trust in people in general and in institutions is perceived and treated by social actors in their everyday lives. It is an important contribution for the advancement of interpretations of currently available quantitative data, thus avoiding biased or excessive generalisations (content-wise).

As demonstrations of the data in the form of authentic interview quotations revealed, research participants overall were willing and able to talk about trust. It was common that at the end of the interview research participants were surprised themselves by how much they were able to discuss about trust; also that it was interesting to think about trust in such a detailed way. However, it is also important to recognise that for participants it was not easy to articulate trust, particularly in more abstract contexts or situations. Social actors primarily associated trust with close social relations; therefore (as expected) it required the additional effort of the researcher (in the role of interviewer) to keep a focus on wider societal contexts and to extract nuanced elaboration from research participants about trust in people whom they do not know, or meet for the first time, etc. General types of questions do not prompt participants to respond about such societal situations, as they tend to lean towards discussing interactions with close, familiar people. Therefore, instead of asking participants to think about their own examples of everyday situations where trust in "unfamiliar" people is relevant, based on experience with the first

couple of interviews, the researcher further continued with a selection of several situations (e.g. people on the street, people in a shop, having to deal with diverse professions (foreman, doctor, employees in public sector)). The use of such specific examples emerged inductively during the interviews. Accessing these situations and discussing them across interviews facilitated participants in their task (ability and willingness to speak) and provided in-depth data on the fluctuation of trust in different types of situations. Therefore, even though the notion of social generalised trust presumes undefined social interactions, a level of specification is needed to elicit participants' responses and gain meaningful data. It helped to grasp the elusive phenomenon of trust beyond circles of immediate familiarity.

As guided by previous qualitative research on trust, an attempted was made to combine direct and indirect questions that would elicit research participant responses on trust perceptions and/or experiences. However, the balance of direct and indirect questions on trust moved more towards direct questions, as with the first attempt at qualitative application indirect questions were not always clearly perceived. For the purposes of the thesis, direct questions seemed to work better. In combination with facilitation techniques and discussions of selected situations, such questions elicited detailed responses. In cases of indirect questions (e.g. when asked to describe their neighbourhood) research participants still tended to directly grasp onto the concept of trust in their responses. Indirect questions could be more efficient when the contextual boundaries of a phenomenon were more defined.

The level of sensitivity was not high when talking about trust beyond circles of immediate familiarity. However, as the social actors primarily perceived "genuine" trust to be among those in close relationships, there was a risk of turning to sensitive topics when research participants reflected upon life experiences or critical incidents linked to breaches of trust. There were several instances when participants seemed to become a little emotional. As the detail of such personal experiences was not the focus of the research, the researcher attempted to unobtrusively re-direct the conversation towards a more neutral level to avoid harm or stress to the research participants. The important implication is that the level of sensitivity and how personal the topic of trust is perceived to be depended on each individual participant. Therefore, it was not possible to predict what might turn into a more sensitive reflection. The question on critical incidents was the only exception, and the researcher did prepare to manage the risk of sensitivity by offering an in-advance note that this question did not require going into detail and also being prepared not to push research participants if they were hesitant to discuss this overall. Otherwise, researchers have to be very observant during interviews on trust and be prepared to sensibly manage a conversation if it turns towards tense opening up by the participant.

The decision to move interviews to remote mode required additional effort. First, the researcher had to be flexible about the tool of remote communication and be ready to help participants with technical issues if needed. It required more time and effort to collect informed consents; in some cases, exceptions had to be made, adjusting to the technical possibilities and competences. To assure diversity, it was important that limits of technical competence did not prevent participation. Overall, the remoter interviewing mode did not have a substantial effect on building rapport with the participants and the quality of data. However, based on an overview of the length and depth of the interviews by tool of communication, it is possible to conclude that video conversations or computer-based audio conversation were close counterparts to face-to-face interviews, whereas phone interviews (n = 4) were observably shorter (on average they lasted for ~44 min. compared to an overall average length of 66 min.). Also, verbal interview facilitation worked efficiently, whereas the application of any visual material had to be adjusted and required additional effort both from the interviewer and research participants. It was not difficult to read out the standard survey research questions that were used in think aloud task instead of showing the prepared slides on the screen. Such an adjustment did not cause any disruption to the interview process. However, the use of the trust map technique did experience some hindrances and could not be implemented to its full extent in the remote form (particularly via phone interviews). The following issues have to be noted: 1) despite mutual effort, there remained a gap between researcher and participant when trust map layout was ready. The researcher had to mostly rely on memorising the overall map shown via screen for the follow up interview conversation or to memorise a verbal description provided by those participants who participated in audio mode only. This affected the potential of the depth and detail that this technique could provide when a more consistent review of a map was possible; 2) participants had to undertake an additional post-interview task to make a picture of their map and send it to the researcher to attach it to the collected interview data; 3) the researcher could not closely monitor the process of laying out the trust map and thus had to mainly rely on the verbal account of participants when drawing the map or in the follow up conversation. This also did not allow for use of the advantages of the technique to its full capacity. Despite these limitations, visualised trust maps were collected from 25 participants and 3 other participants provided verbal accounts on how they would lay out potential trustees on the map. Nevertheless, a face-to-face interview would be more conducive for such a technique. It could also be used for specific research topics if all participants were more technically advanced and certain interactive or co-creation tools could be used to overcome the gap between the researcher, the participant and her/his visual layout.

How did the prompting techniques work?

This section focuses on the verbal interview facilitation and conversation prompting techniques, namely, the think aloud task in relation to standard survey questions on social generalised trust and the trust in institutions, and critical incident question.

The use of standard survey questions as an interview conversation prompting technique was advantageous. It worked both as a think aloud task to collect methodological implications about measurement validity and also facilitated research participants to talk in more detail about their perception of trust and the trust judgement process. Think aloud followed by interview conversation allowed for tracing diversity and emerging patterns in more detail. Research participants were presented with a survey questions, then asked to provide their response in the form of a score, and, subsequently, were asked to elaborate what they were considering when coming up with the score. In contrast to standard survey procedures, participants felt free to start commenting upon the question even before providing their score; for example, contemplating aloud about the meaning of the question, voicing their difficulty in coming up with a unilateral interpretation and other methodologically important aspects. Though think aloud has been previously applied in relation to survey research, its combination with a primarily qualitative approach is promising in delivering more detailed highlighting of potential validity issues. A more extensive use of qualitative methods (interviews as in this case or focus groups as suggested by Dekker (2012) or Norris et al. (2019)) in combination with quantitative surveys (e.g. to assess the potential of applicability and validity with regards to respondents' interpretations of currently available, more specific survey questions on trust) should therefore be considered for the future methodological advancement of research on trust. It is important to note, however, that elaborating on trust in (political) institutions for research participants was slightly easier than on the social generalised trust question, which seemed to be too vague or elusive for research participants to grasp or discuss (in particular in the sense that the current conceptualisation of social generalised trust intends). This is yet another hint for further analysis of the concept of "social generalised trust" as it repeatedly proves to be problematic from the perspective of social actors.

The assessment of the use of the critical incidents question can have a twofold assessment. As mentioned above, it carries a risk of sensitivity if an incident recalled by a participant relates to a very personal or intensive situation. However, in general, it is a good technique to elicit more tangible aspects related to such an elusive phenomenon as trust. Leaning on real life critical incident situations, research participants were able to articulate their relationship to the situation and how it could

be linked to future interactions or similar situations. To sum up, questions including "down-to-earth" situations are an efficient way to prompt participants to articulate their trust related experiences, particularly when broader societal contexts are in focus. Participants do need to be directed to speak about broader contexts, because if not asked, they generally tend to focus on trust in close, defined relationships.

Potential of visual techniques

Overall, the application of a visual technique – trust maps – worked well and meaningfully complemented the verbal data. It allowed for both research participants and researcher to put the preceding interview conversation into an integrated perspective. Laying out the maps allowed re-confirmation of the previous verbal account using interviews, but it also (as already mentioned in the above chapters on findings) revealed some inconsistencies and helped in clarifying linkages across the continuum of trust. The following implication can be made regarding the usefulness of the visual technique in qualitative research on trust:

- As presumed by the guidance from previous applications of visual techniques (Copeland & Agosto, 2012; Juozeliūnienė, 2014), trust maps would not work on their own. They have to be produced either with simultaneous verbal elaborations or follow up verbal elaborations. They are crucially important to convey the meaning behind the visualised material.
- Despite preparation of instruction of what is expected in this task, in the beginning the research participants were commonly hesitant about it and would ask for various clarifications about how to lay out their maps. Nevertheless, the majority of participants were able to complete the map and were later eager to reflect and elaborate upon it, thus confirming that the task was not too difficult (even if was perceived as unusual). To understand how the capacities of the research participants worked on such a task, the researcher allowed for a high level of freedom and spontaneity in choosing the exact way of laying out the map (e.g. some participants would separate their circles of trust into actual circles, whereas others used rectangular frames, arrows or simply distance between the dots to visualise trust relations with varying categories of trustees). Participants were also allowed to choose if they preferred to first lay out their map and then elaborate on it or to speak while drawing it. In either case, the complete verbal explication happened after the main layout was done. Initially, research participants were free to include into the maps any categories of people they deemed relevant; however, later the researcher would refer to the preceding interview conversation and ask to discuss some of the omitted categories in addition. Such interplay between the

preceding interview, the visual lay out and the follow up interview proved to be advantageous to the quality and depth of the data acquired.

- The processing and analysis stage required additional effort to consistently link visualisation and verbal explications. For the purposes of the thesis, visualisation was treated as supplementary to the verbal data (i.e. as a facilitation technique to produce more in-depth verbal data). For data analysis, it was important to consistently connect what participants spontaneously (initially) laid out in their maps and what they added in later through the verbal elaboration. The researcher printed out each map and made markings and remarks with a different colour pen to produce a follow up map-related transcription text.

- For the purposes of the thesis, the visual technique was applied as a concluding part of a more extensive interview. However, based on the experience with the participants and the data that the technique elicited, there is the potential for varied uses of it. For example, a visual technique could be used as a core driver of a qualitative interview on trust beyond the immediate circle of familiarity instead of being a supplement to it. In the thesis research, a map of trust worked very well, putting the discussed categories of people and situations into an interrelated entirety and revealing new aspects that were not apparent during the interview conversation. However, it also took time to go into detail on all the aspects that were of interest. Therefore, the use of a visual technique followed by an in detail conversation and the inclusion of other prompting techniques could be a promising method to further explore trust from social actors' perspective.

CONCLUSION

The thesis has focused on the phenomenon of trust. More specifically it has attempted to understand how consistently the levels of conceptualisation, operationalisation, and researched social reality are linked in current research on trust. The existent scientific literature conveys a solid agreement that trust is a fundamental resource in contemporary societies. At the same time, it is recognised that trust is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon and thus a challenging object for research. These presumptions lead to the argument that there is a need to assess the appropriateness of current methodological approaches and data collection methods if we are to adequately research a phenomenon as important and complex as trust.

A separate field of research on trust has focused on the link between trust and democracy. Numerous theoretical and empirical works have focused on the issue of trust (i.e. decline in levels of trust and/or lack of trust) in contemporary democratic systems. The diagnosis of the erosion of trust, the analysis of the causes and consequences of this presumed erosion, and many other trust-bound research questions in the context of democracy were predominantly based on a quantitative research approach, and, more precisely, survey data. Despite decades of slicing and dicing survey data, some researchers (including the author of the thesis) have highlighted the limitations of a quantitative approach in trust research, noted the potential validity issues of existing standard survey measures, and advocated a more extensive application of qualitative approaches in trust research. A particular focus that the thesis took on was juxtaposing conceptual and operational notions of trust with the perceptions and experiences of social actors. The research revealed potential gaps between these levels and provided evidence-based methodological implications for the advancement of future research on trust. The thesis research highlighted and grounded the existence of a gap between the conceptualisation and operationalisation of trust and the gap between the operationalisation of trust and the researched social reality. In connection, in order to find solutions to bridge these gaps, the research results encourage to apply the insights from the researched social reality when revising some of the conceptual assumptions, in particular those underpinning empirical definitions of trust and the construction of measurement tools.

The gap between the conceptualisation and operationalisation of trust manifests in several regards. First, standard measures of trust do not reflect and correspond to the complexity of the phenomenon of trust. The analysed standard measures of trust reduce the phenomenon to a single dimension, whereas conceptually trust is multidimensional and multi-layered. This multidimensionality is also reflected in researched social reality. Second, in contrast to the logic of quantitative methodology,

the widespread use of standard trust measures means that the empirical results guide the theoretical implications. It is not theory and a thorough process of conceptualisation that lead the empirical level but rather the availability of standard measures and data. However, standard, unidimensional trust measures do not consistently reflect the nuances and needs of a particular theoretical framework. Third, the analysed measures of trust do not correspond well to the conceptual definitions. Yet again, the link between conceptualisation and operationalisation is not consistent. The operational formulation of the SGTQ in no way specifies the presumed conceptual definition of social generalised trust as trust in "strangers". Likewise, standard measures of political trust as trust in institutions narrow down the concept of political trust but, at the same time, remain too broad to comply with the methodological requirements of a good quantitative measure. What an "institution" and "trust in institutions" connote remain unspecified and open up to a myriad of interpretations. The scope or limits of interpretation of what has actually been measured also remain unclear.

This is further supported and amplified in combination with the other gap identified, namely, between operationalisation and researched social reality. Based on a chosen theoretical framework and a conceptual definition of trust, researchers placed their respective expectations about what the standard trust measures represented and how they should be interpreted by respondents (to correspond to the researchers' intentions). In a sense, they placed a bet that they will measure what they want to measure. However, the bet appears to be risky. Alongside the conclusion that standard measures of trust are not directly linked to a specific theoretical framework, the research data contained in this thesis revealed both a myriad of interpretations that social actors provide in relation to the standard measure and the inconsistency of those interpretations with those intended by researchers, the conceptual definition, and, consequently, the theoretical frameworks. The research data explored the gap between the scholarly intentions behind the standard, most widespread measures of social generalised trust and political trust and the interpretations made by research participants. "Social generalised trust" is not unidimensional. Conceptually and operationally the dimensions of trust in general others need to be specified both in terms of the trustee and the content of trust. The current wording of social generalised trust question produces a wide range of interpretations on the part of research participants in both regards, and to a large extent those interpretations do not correspond to the conceptual definition of it as trust in unfamiliar people and strangers. Moreover, "trust in strangers" appeared to be problematic overall as research participants do not think in trust terms when discussing interactions with strangers or people they meet for the first time. There is solid evidence for reconsidering whether the concept of trust should be used at all

in this regard; based on the research data, the phenomenon we deal with is rather a threshold that one steps over in order to engage in an interaction with a stranger rather than an actual disposition of trust. It is closely linked to moral dispositions and (dis)belief in benevolence and/or shared values with others; however, it is not perceived as a clear or tangible disposition of trust. However, if an interaction happens and continues, then the notion of "stranger" shifts to some degree of familiarity and grounds emerge for the idea of a judgement of trust. Therefore, if we presume that social generalised trust is linked to cooperation, civic participation and other desired expressions of citizenry, it is important to develop corresponding measures that both allow for assessment of the level of threshold one has to overcome to interact with general co-citizens and which further specify the content of trust, trusting co-citizen to respect other's rights or fulfilling civil duties, for example. Otherwise, even though research participants manage to provide their social generalised trust scores, the meanings behind them are highly varied and thus the scores can only be regarded as measuring the most derivative, abstract mix of those meanings; which can provide little knowledge about the actual levels of trust among the citizens.

Furthermore, the research data highlighted comparable issues with the standard measure of political trust. It is not reasonable to presume that trust in political institutions is unidimensional. Not only trust in each political institution, but all examples of institutions used in the research carried divergent meanings across the participants. That is to say that trust in the presidency is not the same thing as trust in political parties, and the dimension must be further regarded in both measurement and interpretation of survey data. Moreover, "institution" also produced a myriad of interpretations on the part of research participants, which is not a sign of good measurement item. Interpretation of quantitatively observed political trust levels should also recognise that trust in political institutions, at least partially, is a proxy of trust in the political actors representing them rather than trust in a system or institutional processes. Again, specification of the content of trust would produce a more grounded measurement of trust.

Apart from the two gaps revealed, insights from researched social reality prompt to review some aspects of conceptualisation of trust. The literature review showed that sociologically, trust is a relational phenomenon and a reciprocal direction of the relationship between trustor and trustee is presumed. However, definitions of trust focus on the expectations and beliefs that the trustor has in relation to the trustee, whereas in the perceptions of social actors the importance of a reciprocal linkage is highlighted. There is, therefore, a need to more explicitly acknowledge the dual-directionality of trust when defining it. Conceptual definitions narrow down even more with regard to the two forms of trust in question, namely, social generalised trust and political trust. They mostly define trust via naming the trustee and trustor,

whereas the content of trust remains presumed. Research data, however, has showed that in the experiences of research participants trust cannot be summed up into some general notion or one dimension. "Trust in strangers" manifest in a multi-layered way, encompassing moral grounds, life experience based intuitions *and* instrumental, rational trust judgements, linked to a particular context, trustee and content of trust. These nuances of the process of the formation of trust beyond the circle of immediate familiarity lead to arguments that the current concepts have to be expanded to include the underlying dimensions and refined in correspondence to researched social reality

In light of the gaps identified, the key question that follows is: "what does this mean for future measurement and research on trust?" Reducing the complexity of social generalised trust and political trust to one survey item, even if it is simple and efficient to use, does not seem to be methodologically robust enough. There is a need to both consider refinement of the standard measure of trust and to better link survey measures with the needs of a specific theoretical framework. The more extreme suggestion that could come from the detailed analysis of this thesis is to stop using the current standard measures of trust. However, the author acknowledges that it would result in the loss of the exceptionally long timeline of the comparative data. Also, before such a substantial change in long-term measures can be introduced, further work such as developing, checking and rechecking and finally validating potentially advanced measure of trust must be done. Based on the results of the thesis, there are several proposals. First, if, and as long as, current standard measures of trust are used, it is crucial that researchers recognise the limitations of those measures and accordingly adjust the scope of interpretations of the data derived from those measures. The methodological work of other researchers presented in the thesis and the empirical highlights of the thesis research can serve as guidance to critically assess reasonable limits of interpretation. Second, further substantial methodological work on potential alternatives to standard measures of trust is a necessity. The review of currently existing survey measures of trust showed that separate research programmes entail examples of more specified measures of both social generalised trust and political trust, which could become a collection of measures with a better methodological fit. However, there is a need to first make a thorough inventory of such measures and to assess those measures with respect to methodological critique and insights from researched social reality. It is vital that such development and testing of measures includes thorough analysis of how the measures are perceived by potential respondents and how those perceptions are compatible with both conceptual and operational needs so as to avoid gaps between conceptualisation, operationalisation and researched social reality. Finally, in this regard the thesis can serve as grounds for further methodological work on

the measurement of trust. A clear conclusion is that the *wording* of trust measures should be more specified in at least two regards. One, the target of trust must be clarified and indicate the boundaries along which potential respondents should be thinking ("most people", "institution", "political parties", or even "parliament" leave too much open space for interpretation). Two, for research participants to be able to estimate their level of trust, the *content* and/or *circumstances* of trust are important (i.e. to trust whom about what? to do what?). Although the respondents are able to give their scores in a very abstract way as well, it does not mean (as the thesis has argued) that such scores give us clear and well-reasoned answers to our research questions. Specification of the content and/or circumstances of trust would potentially require development of more than one statement/question for the measurement of social or political trust, however, the value of such measures should presumably be of higher scientific value. The thesis also suggests that *answer alternatives* have to be reconsidered. The author cannot provide a clear suggestion relating to the length of a scale for answer alternatives as it was not the primary concern of the thesis (though discussed as a consistent part of the research problem). However, the thesis research allows for suggesting other changes to the construction of answer alternatives. The ends of the continuum of social generalised trust (most people can be trusted/can't be too careful) are problematic from the perspective of researched social reality as they seem to carry an unbalanced load of intensity of trust assessment and they reflect distinct dimensions (trust vs. cautiousness). Also, based on the narratives of the research participants, the author does not support dichotomous answer alternatives to measure trust. Social actors make trust judgements across much more gradual lines and clear cut "trust/distrust" alternatives might not be sufficient (unless in the extreme cases of deceit or trust in those with the closest social ties). Furthermore, although the simplicity of a one statement measure is appealing, the author argues that it is not sufficient to measure such a complex phenomenon of trust. Trust *is* a multidimensional phenomenon and this should be reflected in the measures of trust. These suggestions are not really innovative or ground-breaking. On the contrary, as discussed in the thesis, they follow the rather basic methodological principles of good quantitative measures. However, the thesis recognises that the current standard measures of trust do not comply with them.

Finally, the thesis used qualitative research as an alternative approach to quantitative measurement of trust and as a way to draw researched, social reality grounded, methodological implications. Application of a qualitative approach to research trust in a wider societal context (i.e. interactions outside the realm of familiarity) proved to be fruitful yet challenging. The key difficulty was that trust is not a phenomenon easily articulated by social actors, particularly when discussing "general", "societal" contexts and interactions (which were the focus of the thesis).

Therefore, it is important to prepare facilitation and prompting techniques to guide research participants' accounts. Elaborating interview conversation around specific, even mundane everyday life situations proved an efficient way to help participants discuss elusive manifestations of trust. Though unusual for research participants, visualisation technique proved an efficient way to map trust relations into an overarching picture and additionally explicating nuances of research participants' perceptions. A qualitative approach should be further employed in research on trust in the context of democracy, focusing in more detail on the distinct areas in question. Examples could include: further exploration of topics of political trust, trust and political participation, and trust and citizen cooperation from the social actors' perspective. While not discarding the value of quantitative data, it is reasonable to argue that the use of qualitative data allowed for a better grasp of the complexity of the phenomenon, thus also setting additional grounds for revised interpretation of the currently available quantitative data on social generalised and political trust. To sum up, application of a qualitative approach is suitable and beneficial for research on trust in wider and less defined social contexts; exploration of social actors' perspectives enriches the existing conceptual and methodological frameworks on trust.

The empirical research of the thesis has been conducted in one country (Lithuania). However, the focus on a one country case does not reduce the relevance of the methodological implications. Starting with the development of standard measures of trust, the globe-wide comparative nature of research on trust has become a given. Therefore, the development of trust measures that would correspondingly fit well to any societal or cultural context is an additional layer of the challenge. Therefore, the perceptions of social actors in Lithuanian (and potential respondents) are relevant universally as these perceptions must be regarded from a comparative point of view. Moreover, utilisation of qualitative research with social actors from other countries so as to gain a fuller picture of how standard trust measures "behave" across cultures is among the suggested lines for future research. This should be based not only on quantitative analysis of reliability or consistency but also from the specific "field" point of view.

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