Chapter 3

Trust in Habit: A Way of Coping in Unsettled Times

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1 Introduction: Why to Trust Habit?

With the re-conceptualization of modernity in terms of high levels of risk, complexity and uncertainty, trust has come to be seen as the essential asset in the unsettled times without which we can make no decisions and take no initiatives. More generally, trust is a fundamental resource, as with trust societies flourish and ‘when trust is destroyed, societies falter and collapse’ (Bok 1979: 26), thus it is the important condition of societal well-being. Presently, the growing demand for trust is accompanied by the growing deficit of trust. The current breakdown of trust is evident all over the world; it is observable in many Western political systems (Hosking 2014), it is noticeable among many industrialized nations (Sasaki 2016), there is empirical evidence of the erosion of trust in professions on the global scale (Drezner 2017) and the growing distrust of facts is reported around the world (Greenfield 2017). As the erosion of trust has reached a new global level, the loss of trust in established institutions is particularly evident; for example, in the United States, where people’s trust in Congress fell from 42 percent in 1973 to 7 percent in 2014. Americans have also lost confidence in unions, public schools, organized religion, business, healthcare, police and media; in 2016, a Gallup poll found that only three in ten Americans trusted mass media to accurately report the news (Drezner 2017: 23–5). The noticeable decline of the trust levels in the contemporary world, together with the continuous demand for it, calls for searching for new ways of regaining the feelings of continuity, security and strength to face change. In other words, as ‘we are doomed more and more to trust under complex conditions’ (Sloterdijk 2016: 161), we need to debate how to manage the discontinuity, risk and change without having ‘to combine trust with alarm systems’ (Sloterdijk 2016: 162).

This paper asserts that one of the ways to address the issue of trust deficit should start with the appreciation of the habit’s capacity to reinforce trust. While realizing that habit is still often seen as a very old-fashioned notion connected with such ideas as tradition, irrationality, reproduction and passivity, it focuses on trust’s links with habit and the habit’s plasticity (Bernacer, Lombo
Habit, like trust, is central to social life and it is particularly useful in unsettled times as the habit’s creative potentials enhance change, innovation and renewal of trust relationships. The importance of habit is connected with the fact that the great bulk of everyday action is habitual, that habits ‘are patrons saint of laid-out routes, pathways, and trails’, that they provide scaffolding for institutions (Latour 2013: 265, 280) and that habitual actions are one of the main practices on which people rely to solve problems (Joas 1996; Gross 2009). In the context of the growing demand for creative strategies for dealing with the complexities and uncertainties of today’s digitalized world, habit, defined as the disposition offering the basis of continuity and precondition for change, transformation and creativity, comes to be seen as one of the ways to negotiate the current conditions (Grosz 2013; Latour 2013; Sloterdijk 2013). Since habit is linked to trust through their common roots in familiarity, past experiences and risk avoidance and since both, trust and habit, perform the central role in shaping social relations, it can be argued that trust in habit could be our answer to the growing deficit of trust in the context of the changing nature of contemporary societies.

Taking into account the omnipresence of both habit and trust in social life and the reinforcing role of the indirect connections between trust and habit, this paper re-examines the role of trust in habit as a way to manage the discontinuity, tame the environment and expand our capacities for change. More specifically, trust in habit cannot be ignored as it helps to overcome challenges of the complex world in three ways. Firstly, trust in habit contributes to the establishment of continuity and stability of social relationships by making it easier to prevail over fractures. Trust in habit, like habit itself, makes ‘the world habitable’ by helping to overcome perceptions of discontinuity (Latour 2013: 268). Secondly, trust in habit can provide for more predictable, systematizing, quicker decisions which not only free our attention but also increase our feelings of renowned certainty and safety. Hence, trust in habit, by making the nature and organization of the surrounding seem normal, predictable, known, helps us to tame our surrounding (Grosz 2013). Thirdly, trust in habit can contribute to creative responses to change as we can rely on habit, seen as self-training and discipline, to enhance our capacities to address change and to strive for improvement (Sloterdijk 2013). In short, this paper argues for the relevance and importance of trust in habit in reducing the complexity of our choice, increasing the predictability of our lives and enhancing our potentials to adapt to change.

Since the notion of habit, in contrast to the concept of trust, which in the last few decades has become one of the most regularly invoked and debated themes in social science, has been devalued and overlooked in the social
sciences, the paper will start with scrutinizing sociological theories’ conceptualizations of good habit and understanding of its functions. Following the re-evaluation, the concept of habit, the papers’ focus will be on the relevance of trust in habit to manage the discontinuities of contemporary life, to reduce its complexity and to develop self-mastery required to deal with change. In concluding remarks, it will be argued that trust in habit becomes very important not only because of the pervasiveness of both in our lives but also because of the potential of trust in habit to provide some answers to the changing nature of contemporary societies.

2 The Importance of Habit

Since the late 1980s trust’s appeal to social scientists has resulted in the proliferation of middle-range theories about trust (Lewis and Weigert 1985; Zucker 1986; Gambetta 1988; Misztal 1996; Seligman 1997; Sztompka 1999; Warren 1999; Uslaner 2002; Mollering 2013). In contrast to the popularity of the notion of trust, the concept of habit, regarded as synonymous with stasis, fixity and as referring to rather non-reflective, routinized, rooted in the past experience ways of dealing with reality, has remained written out ‘of the whole history of modern social theory’ for decades (Camic 1986: 1076). And this is despite the fact that the importance of the ‘force of habit’ was already appreciated by the ancients, valued by the classical theory of habitus and was also recognized by some 19th century philosophers and social scientists, with Henri Bergson praising habits for their ‘leaping’ power and Emil Durkheim applying the metaphor of ‘lifting’ to emphasize habits’ capability to transcend bodily instinct (Carlisle 2013; Sloterdijk 2013; White 2013). In contrast to these initial appreciations of the enabling potential of habit, seen as implicated in the capacity for self-determination, in modern social theory’s under-theorized view of this concept, habitual activity is seen as proof ‘of irrationality’ (Latour 2013: 267) and as having limited potentials for creativity and spontaneity.

Yet, there are many reasons why habit should be one of the most useful tools of sociology. Since ‘humans are condemned to repetition’ (Sloterdijk 2016: 311) and since social reality is governed by habit, investigations of this relatively unexplored topic are essential. Of course, the applicability of this notion depends on its definition which, however, in itself is a problem as in the various sociological perspectives the notion of habit and its role are differently defined. For example, the pragmatists viewed habit as ‘acquired predisposition(s) to ways or modes of response’ of which people are usually not conscious in the moment (Dewey 1922: 42), while according to Bourdieu (1984) habitus refers to
people's entire system of durable thoughts and orientations toward behavior in general. Finally, in a more recent perspective which focuses on people's unequal capabilities to develop habits due to disabilities, habit is conceptualized as ‘constituted by a homology between an actor's embodied knowledge of a particular set of situations and the manifestation of those situations in his or her lived experience’ (Engman and Cranford 2016: 31). Yet, even though definitions of the concept of habit in different theoretical traditions vary and refer to the diversity of actions, all perspectives tend to acknowledge that the notion habit ‘generally denominates a more or less self-actuating disposition or tendency to engage in a previously adopted or acquired form of action’ (Camic 1986: 1044). All sociological theories of habit emphasize that the formation of habits is fundamental to human experience and generally view habits as ‘self-valorizing repetitive behaviors that can be performed with minimal conscious effort on the part of the subject’ (Engman and Cranford 2016: 31). Once a habit is formed, such a repeated, regular and non-conscious behaviour is integrating into the pre-existing stock of habits.

This raises questions: what is the role of habit in structuring people's lives and why do people form a repertoire of stable habits? The positive role of habit, according to Aristotle, is connected with the value of discipline in the cultivation of morality, while for Thomas Aquinas the power of improvement through repetitive actions enhances the possibility of the ‘virtuous within us’ (Sloterdijk 2013: 150). Thus, in both the ancient and in the classical theory of habitus the importance of habit was based on the assumption that habits – as essential tools in self-shaping – were constitutive of people's personal culture. Also, the American pragmatists, who defined action as either a habitually or creatively developed response to a problem situation which is always ‘interpreted through cultural lenses’ (Gross 2009: 366), view habits as behaviour determined by culturally mediated interpretations of the environment. Their conceptualization of habit as that ‘ordering or systematization of the more minor elements of human action, which is projective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation, and operative even when not obviously dominating activity’ (Dewey quoted in Camic 1986: 1046) reflects the pragmatists’ interest in habit as one of the main practices on which people rely to solve problems (Joas 1996; Gross 2009). The pragmatists do not simply equate habit with routine, they rather talk about a reflexive understanding of habit. According to them, because of the problem-driven nature of human actions, which all are creative enactment, to fully appreciate habit as a reflexive concept one must set it in episodes of creativity (Camic 1999: 283–92).

By seeing habits as practice which is learned through social experience or from previous individual attempts at problem solving, the pragmatist approach
Trust in Habit: A Way of Coping in Unsettled Times grants a central role in human activity to the notion of habit. The pragmatists assumed that habits stabilize our ability to solve problems because repetitious actions allow for the development of sets of behavior that can be applied to problems that are likely to be encountered frequently (Gross 2009; Joas 1996; Engman and Cranford 2016). However, habits not only stabilize our ways of dealing with the dilemma at hand, they also – when automatic procedure of action is not interrupted – allow us to focus our attention on other issues or problems (Engman and Cranford 2016; Joas 1996). Thus, habits are not only fused with creativity from the start as creative action always occurs against the background of pre-existing habit, but they are also additionally related to creativity as they could also free our capacity for more creative approaches to new problems or contexts.

Yet, as the pragmatist model suggests, even successful habits could be shattered, met with resistance, interrupted or not offer solutions. The only way out of such a phase of real doubts is the reconstruction of our perception of new contexts and the liberation of the capacity for new actions (Joas 1996: 128–33). In the pragmatists' theory, which can be seen as 'a theory of situated creativity' (Joas 1996: 133), a shift from habit to creativity takes place only when pre-existing habits fail to solve a problem. The pragmatists argued that 'humankind’s innate capacity for creativity comes into play as actors dream up possible solutions, later integrating some of these into their stocks of habits for use on subsequent occasions' (Gross 2009: 366). In a next stage, the creatively developed solutions to a problem situation become new unconsciously performed habits.

Pragmatism's suggestions that habits are always habits in a particular environment, and that habits’ re-evaluation occurs in dialogue with new and changing situations, offer a useful framework for exploration of how habits perform in the unsettled times. Furthermore, lessons from recent research employing the pragmatists' vision to study the experiences of people with physical disabilities, bring to our attention that in any discussion of the formation of habits it is fundamental to give ‘adequate consideration to the wide variability in people's capacities to form habits' (Engman and Cranford, 2016: 27). Hence, in researching trust in habit, as in any study of the habit formation, there is a need to recognize the existence of many barriers to habit construction, including an absence of all types of resources (physical, mental, financial, cultural). By adopting the pragmatist definition of habit as an active and creative way of dealing with the situational problems, we will focus here on habits as learned and reflexive actions that both rely on the past successes in solving the surrounding’s difficulties and that are manifestations of the re-evaluation of new and changing situations. Moreover, viewing habit as not limited to routine, repetitious and passive actions connected with tradition, will allow us to
recognize the importance of the plurality and plasticity of habits in the contemporary world in which the growing significance of reflexivity and individualization are challenging how people implement their practical knowledge of their environments.

Presently, moreover, the role of habit is getting new attention from human neuroscientists who are interested in habit’s capacities to release cognitive resources for creative responses to the context and who emphasize the plasticity of habit (Bernacer, Lombo and Murillo 2015). Additionally, also economists become appreciative of the role of habit in stabilizing market relations. For example, Skidelsky (2017), while observing that the continuity of British consumers’ habit to spend after the referendum to leave the European Union means that economic negative effects of the Brexit are not yet visible, concluded that habitual behaviour covers for the new discontinuity. Finally, there is evidence of the recent appreciation of the positive role of habit in the literature on information systems, research on use of social networking websites, and investigation of e-marketing, which all show the prominent role of habit in determining online actions (Chechen Liao et al. 2006; Chao-Min Chiu et al. 2012).

All these new approaches, studies, evidence and interests in habit indirectly suggest that our trust in our daily habitual practices is essential for the certainty, stability and creativity in our lives. Since without trust we would be living in a ‘state of permanent uncertainty’ (Luhmann 1979: 97) and since without habit ‘we would make new mistakes, no longer through ignorance of the various prepositions, but because this time, we would be limiting ourselves to them without heading toward what they designate’ (Latour 2013: 266), it can be argued that reliance on trust in habit could play role in stabilizing, structuring and changing people lives.

3 Trust in Habit: Managing the Discontinuity

To deepen our understanding of trust in habit, there is a need to say something about the nature or form of this type of trust. People not only trust ‘on the assumption that others trust’ but they also evaluate their conditions as less or more encouraging trusting dispositions, calculate the probability of some events and hold some specific beliefs to justify the specific relations (Luhmann 1979: 69). However, in modern societies, with the increased reflexivity and the indeterminability of interaction, the cognitive bases of trust are becoming more problematic and personal trust becomes increasingly difficult to establish (Luhmann 1979). What’s more, this decreasing potential of personal
trust is not anymore overcome by the system trust, which added, according to Luhmann (1979), to people's trust in the stability of the system. With trust, which is ‘indispensable in order to increase a social system’s potential for action beyond these elementary forms’ (Luhmann 1979: 88), being not anymore a property of the system, a question arises: how do people solve the problem of trust?

In solving the problems of trust, which comes to play in situations involving the vulnerability of one party to the other as well as unpredictability and uncertainty, people select strategies that reduce vulnerability, undermine unpredictability and control uncertainty. When people opt for habitual actions as a way of reducing these three core elements of trust, we can talk about trust in habit as a mechanism for coping in the unsettled world. The decision to trust habit is based on some information about the expected repetitiveness of the other party’s actions. It means that when deciding to trust habit, we do not follow our interests or moral standards, but we rather follow our knowledge about the predictability of observed actions. In other words, when we place trust in habit, we rely on information about the probable habitual actions as the basis for our assessment of trustworthiness of the other party, which means that we use observed habits as ‘proxies for more complete information’ about the other party’s trustworthiness (Cook 2001: xvii). Thus, given information limits, trust in habit can be referred to as ‘depersonalized trust’ – trust based on category, not personal information or experience. It means that we tend to trust one kind of settings or phenomena more than another; for instance, we can trust one type of behaviours more than other (we tend to trust more good habits rather than bad habits), and we tend to trust one category of people more than another one (we tend to trust more nurses than politicians) (Uslaner 2002; Warren 1999). Since trusting means that ‘certain possibilities of development can be excluded from consideration’ (Luhmann 1979: 25), trust in habit amounts to a selection of reliance on action which seems to appear capable of reinforcing the predictability, stability and continuity. In other words, trust ‘rests on illusion’ which ensures that everything is seen to be in proper order, which – in turn – increases our ‘trust in trust’ (Luhmann 1979: 32).

Since ‘our virtues are habits as much as our vices’ (James 1899: 64), a need for the differentiation between good and bad habit is recognized by many, including Latour (2013: 266), according to whom, the distinction between habits must be preserved as without good habits ‘no trajectory would ensue, the action would no longer follow any course’. While rejecting habit’s links to custom, tradition and irrationality, Latour (2013: 272) argues that ‘[h]abit – this is its virtue but also its danger – obtains effects of substance on the basis of
subsistence’. Habit makes explicit the majority of actions and therefore it could produce the images of ‘what stays in place on the basis of what does not stay in place’, thus trusting habit involves risk (Latour 2013: 268). Following Latour’s (2013: 268) attempt to restore ‘ontological dignity’ to habit by developing a subtler account of habit than is customary within the social sciences and by preserving the distinction between good and bad habits, we will examine the consequences of the habit’s quality and plasticity for the capacity of trust in habit to deal with discontinuities.

Habit veils but does not hide and carries out the smoothing operation through which ‘the phenomenon has to make the risky passage in order to subsist’ (Latour 2013: 272), thus trusting habit involves risk. Although habit keeps us from reflecting on what we are doing, still knowledge remains implicit in habitual skills and this implicitness is what makes habit useful and ensures that we strive forward. In contrast to the mechanical model of habit adopted by the ‘modernization front’ which links habit with irrationality and customary action, for Latour (2013: 10) knowledge is implicated in habitual skills. According to Latour (2013: 268), habit becomes a necessary form of short circuitry to enable living as it smoothes over discontinuities and engenders the continuity by helping us to veil, although not to hide, something. By bringing the veiling that habit accomplishes into consciousness, the connections between habit and institutions make discontinuities explicit (Latour 2013: 273). ‘Through habit discontinuities are not forgotten but they are temporarily omitted, which means that we remember them perfectly well, but obscurely in a particular sort of memory that we risk losing any time’ (Latour 2013: 267).

According to Latour (2013: 269, 273), good habits are characterized by their spontaneity, reflexivity and lightness, they ‘make us more and more skillful’, while bad habits are dysfunctional routines and not flexible dispositions, not allowing for switching between different habitual courses of action, so they are to ‘good ones what spam is to electronic messages’. For Latour, good habits are those that can be remembered – their assembling can be traced and their purpose recovered – whilst bad habits are those that have moved closer to the unconscious, not reflexive, rather numbing ones relying on which can lead to a crisis situation or catastrophe (Latour 2013: 275). As all habits have ‘the effect of rendering implicit the vast majority of courses of action’, bad habits can be made explicit by specifying ‘the key to reading that it veils while maintaining its presence through vigilant attention’ (Latour 2013: 273). By emphasizing a need for maintaining the good habits’ presence through the continuous monitoring, Latour (2013) highlights the urgency of keeping an eye on the distinction between good and bad habits. In an absence of such control, which can lead to the persistence of bad habits, many institutions can become routinized,
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artificial and repetitive. Even though the initial struggle against such institutions seems to be liberating and without any risk, its historical consequences, especially for the subsequent generation, can be devastating (Latour 2013: 278–9). While fighting for spontaneity and criticizing soulless institutions, we should avoid ‘slipping from critical spirit to fundamentalism’, and not undermine ways in which next generations can ensure continuity (Latour 2013: 278). However, good habits can help to define institutions positively and ensure the continuity and contribute to the maintenance of flexible institutions. Such habits can be reflexive and rational as they are able to presuppose and follow the tread of the particular reason and they can even preserve the presupposition (Latour 2013: 270–8).

The problem with the habits’ persistence is not that we place too much trust in habits but that ‘we slip unwittingly from omission to forgetting’ (Latour 2013: 275). Thus, a question arises how to prevent people from the error of forgetting that habit only veils discontinuities and that it does not provide an answer to everything. In other words, there is a need to avoid a blind trust in habit as such a trust, especially in a crisis or catastrophe, will make us totally lost, unable to find a way or too confused to start again. Too much unreflective trust in habit can transform ‘[w]hat was only a slight, legitimate veiling, a necessary omission... into oblivion’ (Latour 2013: 275). Yet, as underneath even forgetful and reflexive habits ‘something has remained awake’, something that can ‘take things in hand’ when necessary (Latour 2013: 265), it seems that the only way to deal with lack of trust or unrewarding trust is to persevere with repairing and managing discontinuities.

4 Trust in Habit: Taming of the Environment

Today, as the digitalization, globalization and the expansion of social media are new sources of anxieties, confusion and loss, habit, and subsequently trust in habit, can become a very useful tool in reducing some of those problems by taming the environment. To comprehend how habit can offer the possibility of lowering effort of choice and a need for monitoring, as well as the possibility of reducing the complexities of the surrounding while increasing the predictability of action, we may need to reject the view of habit that assumes that habit is guided by automated cognitive processes, that habit reflects people’s automatic behaviour tendencies, passivity and lack of reflexivity. Viewing habit as the disposition offering the condition not only for continuity but also for change, together with the pragmatists’ concern with the interaction between habit and specific concrete situations, could be one step in developing our understanding...
of the creative role of trust in habit in the course of practical challenges. By following the pragmatists’ notion of situation, which assumes that prevailing situations are imposed on us, but our reactions to them are not, and by appreciating the habit’s plasticity, we can focus on the habit’s role in the necessary dealing with specific contexts of action.

Viewing habit as a ‘change contracted, compressed, contained’, Grosz (2013: 219) asserts that habit’s capacities entail a new tendency to act and a new potentiality. Habits ‘bring about a new ability, the capacity to persist, thrive, change and grow in the face of a world that is itself subject to endless and often random change’ (Grosz 2013: 220). However, apart from habits’ ability to change actions, habit also ‘schematizes our ways of acting of living things and the effects of the forces that impinge on and affect living things’ (Grosz 2013: 220). Thus, as habit makes us ‘able to experience the unexpected’ (Grosz 2013: 220), it standardizes or normalizes the internal organization of a milieu. Habits, viewed as the contraction of past activities into present actions, enable us to get used to external surroundings, and thereby trust in such a habit could help us to tame the environment, thus making us feeling safe and in control.

Trust in habit in the situation underwritten by a high level of complexity and uncertainty plays an important role in creating a predictable environment by ‘ordering’ or ‘patterning’ our daily life. By its ability to make life simpler as well as its potential for making the complex and uncertain situation more predictable and normal, trust in habit tames the hazardous and full of anxieties world. When habit, established through repeated performance, offers positive experience and reduces a need for cognitive monitoring, trust in this habitual action, which gradually develops with repeated satisfaction, tames new or changing surroundings. In other words, in the case of the complexity of the context, trust in habit can free us from paying attention to numerous choices, abundance of information and various demands for decision; it can lower anxiety and ensure minimal energy expenditure (Grosz 2013). The taming of the complexity and uncertainty manifests itself in the expansion of trust in habit, which makes irregular events predictable and reduces the complexity of the system, is the result of ‘striving’ for security and consistent with people’s preference for normalcy (Misztal 2015). In short, trust in habit, seen as the purposeful action aimed at schematizing life to make shared existence the predictable one, helps us to tame the unsettled environment.

New examples of attempts at taming the complexity and uncertainty of surroundings by inventing and sustaining habits are indirectly provided by the growing number of studies of the expanding online commerce which examines the role of factors shaping customers’ loyalty. Until recently the focus of the marketing literature has been predominately on trust as the main factor
shaping clients’ faithfulness in the context of the open structure of the Internet, which means the spatial and temporal separation between consumers and web retailers, the increased complexity and range of choice and more uncertainty and higher risk are present. However, this prior research on online behaviour, which was mainly concerned with the role of trust in determining continued adoption or loyalty, overlooked the important role of habit. Yet, with the development of new types of e-commerce transactions, conducted through mobile devices, using wireless telecommunication networks and other wired e-commerce technologies, now many studies emphasise the role of habit as the major determinant of customers’ loyalty. Even more importantly, these new investigations of using m-mobile commerce (m-commerce), while attempting to explain how repeated behaviours, that is, habit, help us to predict customers’ behaviour, offer some potential, indirect, suggestions on the relationships between habit and trust.

For example, in their study of customer loyalty to online stores, Chao-Min Chiu et al. (2012) provide evidence of the moderating role of habit on the relationship between trust and repeat purchases. Their research shows that a higher level of habit reduces the effect of trust in the provider on repeat purchase intention. Chechen Liao’s et al. (2006) study of online repeat purchasing illustrates the positive effects of habitual activity on a web site user’s intention to continue using the web site. These investigations conclude that when habit is strong, or once the use of a specific web site becomes routine, people rely much more on habit than on external information and on choice strategies. Thus, the providers can trust their customers’ habit of using their web site, while customers’ trust their habits when making decisions to continue their online activities. Hsin-Hui Lin and Yi-Shun Wang’s (2006) data demonstrate that repeat mobile purchase intentions are also the product of habitual prior usage; that customer loyalty was affected by perceived value, trust and habit.

To sum up, the role of habit is of increasing concern to information systems and marketing researchers. However, while they view habit as the important predictor of customer loyalty or repeat purchase intention, their definition of habit, as an automatic, unreflective behaviour tendency developed during the past history of the individual, leads them to conclude that customers’ loyalty and trust are guided by automated cognitive processes, rather than by elaborate decision processes. Consequently, this type of study does not fully appreciate the role of trust in habit as they limit the role of habit to only moderating or deflating the impact of trust on repeat purchase intentions. Since these investigators assumed that habit’s repetitiveness is not preceded by a cognitive analysis process, they overlooked that habits provide the ability to change
people's tendencies, to reorient customers' actions to address new circumstances and that habit not only weakens 'passivity' but it also 'strengthens activity' as it accommodates 'passive impressions and gradually transforms them into desires of its own; and its own activity becomes easier and quicker, more accurate and successful, the more it occurs' (Grosz 2013: 220). As habit becomes more mechanical and 'mutes and neutralizes activity' (Grosz 2013: 220), it can be trusted to tame the environment.

5 Trust in Habit: Expanding Capacities for Change

The notion of habit as a vehicle for self-improvement and for self-determination, despite the decades of systematical devaluation of habit in modern social science, has not totally disappeared. Presently, the idea of the habit's potential to improve people's ability to perform the operation at the next repetition, after being appreciated by the ancient Greeks and the classical scholars, has been re-introduced by Sloterdijk (2013). Sloterdijk, like Latour (2013), argues for the distinction between good and bad habits and views good habits as means of self-improvement and locates them at the core of the personal culture. While referring to Rilke's poem, You must change your life, Sloterdijk (2013) develops a theory of habitus as 'a theory of training', which provides the basis for the argument that trust in habit can be seen as a way to elevate our capacity to cope with change.

Sloterdijk's approach is in a direct contrast to Bourdieu's (1977) theory of habitus, which until recently has been the dominant theory in sociology. Thus, while discussing the role of habit in the constitution of people's view of the world and attitude to it, we start by scrutinizing Bourdieu's claims that habit performs the essential function in the process of cultural reproduction. Bourdieu's (1977: 72) concept of habitus refers to the system of 'durable dispositions' to act that are produced by objective structures and conditions which are also capable of producing and reproducing those structures. The notion of habitus comprises strategies and practices through which social order 'accomplishes itself' and makes itself 'self – evident' and 'meaningful' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127–8). It assumes that our dispositions to act are determined by the past experience as it is 'a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles' (Bourdieu 1977: 82). Being 'the cognitive structures which social agents implement in their practical knowledge of the social world' (Bourdieu 1984: 468), habits are incorporated in social interaction
within an historically formed social context. As such, habitus organizes the way in which individuals see the world and act in it.

Thus, Bourdieu’s view of habitus as a system of practice-generating schemes which expresses identities and memories constituted by structural differences, accounts mainly for social reproduction (Gross 2009). Even if Bourdieu’s notion of habitus permits to conceive some scope of creativity as the interaction between habitual action and specific environmental conditions as it does not fully appreciate human’s creativity and the plasticity of habit as it does not adequately grasp ‘the individualized forms of existential self-designs’ (Sloterdijk 2013: 182). Bourdieu’s (1977: 82) main focus is on the role of class location in the structuring of habitus, seen as ‘principle of continuity and regularity’ is based on the assumption about people being motivated only by self-interested competition for status. In other words, Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, used mainly to explain how society infiltrates individuals and reproduces the existing social system, is too deterministic as it focuses on ‘social reproduction’ at the expense of social change and it is too reductive as it is mainly ‘usable for the purpose of a critique of power’ (Sloterdijk 2013: 182).

The weakness of Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, namely its failure to sufficiently account for the plurality of habits and their engagement with change, has been especially revealed by the contemporary processes which have been leading to the growing importance of the structuring role of generation, gender or ethnicity, and other factors for self-production of identity (Eyerman and Turner 1998). In other words, today, with the new significance of various structuring factors, which, moreover, are often overlapping, ‘the relevance of habitus began to decrease’ (Archer 2010: 273). Habitual forms are incapable of providing guidelines for people’s lives, hence the role of reflexivity increases. Now we live in the world which generates the diversity in people’s experiences and therefore one which is likely to enhance the plurality of habits. As habitus does not anymore organize the way in which individuals see the world and act in it, according to Archer (2010), the actor’s reflexivity, self-knowledge, self-making practices are becoming more important. Archer, who criticizes Bourdieu by arguing that presently habitus does not provide the cognitive structures to deal with the world full of discontinuities, views habit as repetitious and routinised action connected with tradition. However, habit – as the pragmatist perspective adopted here asserts – does not mean the absence of reflexivity and therefore it cannot be argued that now habit is being displaced in favour of reflexivity. Moreover, today, as people are more reflexive in order to compensate for the breaking of the basic security systems, their reliance on the plasticity of habit in adjusting to and dealing with changing surroundings
is increasing. Such an account of the role of habit is offered by Sloterdijk (2013: 150) who views habits as a very important means for dealing with change, getting into form and self-shaping.

Sloterdijk invites us to understand the 21st century not as the century of work or communication but rather as the period of exercise or training, with humans engaged in self-forming and self-enhancing behaviour. His theory of habit as a vehicle of self-improvement, argues that habit’s central role is a result of the fact that humans, seen as condemned to repetition, are creatures of habits and that they ‘live in habits, not territories’ (Sloterdijk 2016: 407). Sloterdijk (2013: 59) bases our common need for self-shaping or improvement on the fact that each of us ‘has good reason to understand their existence as an incentive for corrective exercises’. In his view, people’s only option in life is to select their exercises and practice them purposely or to be condemned to conventional repetitions. Unsurprisingly, humans desire to avoid unauthentic routines, and this aspiration is sustained by a widespread embrace of training techniques of self-improvement or getting ‘into form’ by the reliance on specific exercises for the training of the self (Sloterdijk 2013: 442). This human proclivity for self-remaking means that people, through the practice of ‘de-passivizing’ themselves, can achieve what really matters, that is, self-mastery (Sloterdijk 2013: 407). Aiming at exceeding yourself, or going ‘higher’ in every sense, is a way to overcome the probability of decline and to ensure self-renewal (Sloterdijk 2013: 408). In short, ‘being means being-in-form’, or achieving – through habit, that is, training practices – ‘de-trivialized life’ (Sloterdijk 2013: 408).

To sum up so far, the ‘de-trivialization of life’ can be achieved only by the cultivation of habits which are subject to conscious reflection and which are acquired voluntarily. For Sloterdijk (2013), getting into form is associated with distancing oneself from customary and not individually settled on habits and making space for consciously selected habits that can ensure a comprehensive transformation, can offer feelings of change and choice, and which are self designed and provide individualized freedom. Sloterdijk (2013:182) places such habits at the core of personal culture and defines them as key means for shaping the individualized self-transformation and as an inhibitor of decline. Good habits, which are the tools for reflexive self-designs, ‘are not given a priori but must rather be built up in longer periods of training and practice’ (Sloterdijk 2013: 150). Such new habits can help us to gain control over our most routine actions, intense passions and commonly shared opinions. What’s more, their role is not limited to providing control or solutions to emerging situational problems, but their function is also to enhance people’s transformation to the level at which ‘the impossible has become easy, the wondrous has become
habit, and detachment has become everyday’ (Sloterdijk 2013: 256). In other words, reflexive habits are aids to people's power of self-shaping as they increase people's capacity for wondering, that is, for a desire or curiosity to gather all that has been in the present, which further enhances the human's aspiration for self-improvement. Such a conceptualization of habits as tools of self-shaping and transformation, allows Sloterdijk to argue that people, who are conscious of the surrounding reality through habitual trainings, increase their chances for self-renewal.

Unsurprisingly, Sloterdijk (2013: 407) argues that habits are changeable, especially with radical changes of location. While discussing the art of controlling the habit formation, Sloterdijk (2013: 193) relies on the metaphor of stepping out of the river, which means ‘abandoning the old security of the habitus in the inherited culture’. Becoming interested in the search for new habits, and becoming attentive to the sphere of mental routine, is like exiting the mainstream of ordinary life. The beginning of the process of the individualization of one's habits starts with a first step ‘out of the river of emotions and habitus’ or the adoption of a certain distance from old routines, opinions and passions (Sloterdijk 2013: 191).

Of course, achieving personal development and self-mastery through training techniques is not equally available to all people; it depends on people's financial and time resources, their ages, health and physical capacities and moreover, keeping ‘fit for everything to come’ through sequences of exercise (Sloterdijk 2016: 200) cannot not be our task forever. Yet, habits' function as tools of self-improvement and means of gaining control over one's life should not be overlooked particularly in situations which call for solutions. The importance of this habit's role can be illustrated by a new American habit of ‘self-care’ which has just become a very popular social practice developed in the context of the increased ‘national stress levels’ (Kisner 2017). That habit is now as widely spread and popularized as social media, through images, pictures and videos, this keeps proliferating the vision of the art of self-care as a ‘gesture of defiance’ or political act of protest against a violent and oppressive culture (Kisner 2017). With the help of trust in the habit which calls for a person to show that she is ‘able not only to care for herself but to prove to society that she's doing it’ in the difficult surrounding, all challenges can be effectively met (Kisner 2017). Trusting the habit of self-care, which is rooted in the puritanical values of self-improvement and self-examination as well as in the American idea of full citizenship, could increase the chance for a successful dealing with individual and collective difficulties and changes.

This example illustrates that trust in habit is a trust in people's potential to use their power of self-shaping not only to address their individual problems.
'People should keep fit for everything to come' (Sloterdijk 2016: 200) and in the power of their situations to force or dictate change. The individual and collective improvements are dependent on each other as ‘one wants not only different society, one wants to go deeper, to transform oneself and to revolutionize relationships to be complementary “other”’ (Sloterdijk 2013: 151). Thus, with an increasing number of calls to address today’s global crisis, from climate change, immigration to financial breakdowns, trust in habits, understood as conscious exercises ensuring radical changes, can guard us against passivity and be a means to enhance our capacity to strive for change.

Trust in habit, defined as potentially flexible dispositions rather than an automatic routine rooted in the past experiences, refers to trusting the habit’s potential to increase our ability to react and adapt to changes, prepare for unknown and for self – transformation when the case demands it. To trust this new practice of self-improvement means to trust the people’s capability, achieved and sustained through the continuous discipline and training, to cope with the disturbing change.

6 Conclusion: Dealing with the Trust Deficit?

Habit is often perceived as playing the role of ‘conservative agent’ (James 1950: 121) that damages people’s creativity and openness, cuts off any spontaneous type of behaviour and lowers the capacity of individuals to choose actions appropriate for the situations. In a stable world, which is running smoothly and presents no problems of any kind, the development of habits requires a certain amount of repetition or practice and once they are formed, they can be performed routinely and automatically. However, when the context’s intricacy increases and the surrounding’s stability and security are broken, there is a need for a new set of habits which are both the basis of continuity and precondition for change. The contemporary processes of technological, economic and cultural change make social life often unscripted, requiring actors to improvise, thus old automatic habits could not be relied on in such a changing environment full of anxiety, confusion and uncertainties. Since our time is characterized by widespread risks and complexities, we embrace new habits to provide the creatively developed solutions to the emerging problems and to enhance improvements. Taking into account trust and habit’s prominent roles in social life as well as the fact that trust and habit are indirectly connected via their independent links with familiarity, past experiences and risk avoidance, it can be said that trust in habit can be one of the key tools to anchor us in the unsettled world.
In the unstable world of endless change characterized by the trust deficit, the trust in habit offers a very powerful proposition on how to manage the discontinuity, how to enhance the predictability of surroundings through compressing action and how to train for embracing progression and change. While Bourdieu's writing on the habitus, which has been criticized on a number of grounds, is not well suited to grasp challenges of continuous change, Grosz, Latour and Sloterdijk's approaches' values include their focus on the habit's plasticity and reflexivity and discipline involved. In keeping with their ideas of reflective, conscious habit, seen as located at the core of personal culture and as means for embracing challenges, this paper argues that habit is essential for the retraining and development of human creative capacities and that habit – by establishing discipline on the basis of accumulated experience – releases potentials for dealing with change. Since habit does not mean the absence of reflexivity and is a very important means for self-improvement and coping with change, trust in habit offers a way of managing the discontinuity, taming of the environment and expanding capacities for change. Since it is the common phenomenon that once a certain connection has been established, the connecting link itself disappears because it is no longer required, it can be concluded that once the function of the performance of trustworthiness is reinforced by relying on habit, the confidence in the system increases. Thus, trust in habit, by helping us to restore and preserve institutional continuity and renew our feelings of safety and control over one's destiny, could also be one of the solutions to today's deficit of trust.

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