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Guido Möllering

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The Trust/Control Duality

An Integrative Perspective on Positive Expectations of Others

Guido Möllering

Free University of Berlin

abstract: The article offers a fresh perspective on the relationship between trust and control by conceptualizing the two concepts as a trust/control duality instead of a dualism. This entails that trust and control each assume the existence of the other, refer to each other and create each other, but remain irreducible to each other. The duality perspective assumes that the basic underlying problem is how actors reach positive expectations of the behaviour of other actors by whom they may be positively or negatively affected. On the basis of an assumption of embedded agency, the duality perspective on trust/control holds that actors form positive expectations of others by interpreting complex interactions between structural influences on actors and the possibility of either benevolent or malevolent action. As certainty cannot be reached, positive expectations also require suspension. The duality perspective is illustrated and applied throughout the article by reference to the empirical case of a publisher who wrote a diary on the process of negotiating a book deal with a prominent author-politician. Implications of the proposed trust/control perspective are presented, discussing the pitfalls of ignoring or adopting it as well as the opportunities leading from embracing it.

keywords: control ♦ duality ♦ expectation ♦ suspension ♦ trust

Introduction

How could a publisher have positive expectations of an author who was dubbed 'The Most Dangerous Man in Europe' by a British tabloid (*The Sun*, 25 November 1998) and who, as a politician and member of

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government, disappointed many of his supporters and allies? It turns out that the publisher's expectations were based on both trust and control, supported by a leap of faith, and that the situation he faced is actually rather common – despite the extraordinary circumstances and the eventual disappointment of his expectations.

In this article, I offer an unusual perspective on the relationship between trust and control by proposing that the two concepts constitute a duality. Control has been such a long-standing and central concept, for example in management and organization studies (Pennings and Woiceshyn, 1987), that its absence from mainstream debates is conspicuous and attributable either to a certain taken-for-grantedness (Child, 2005) or, as critical approaches (e.g. Thompson and McHugh, 1995) would have it, to the problematic yet irreversible penetration of society by a combination of bureaucratic and capitalist principles. The concept of trust, however, has gained prominence more recently, not least because it is seen as a potential challenge to established principles of control (Adler, 2001). This challenge has become somewhat side-tracked, though, because the concept of trust turned out to be so elusive and suggestive that researchers, including myself, have devoted much effort to understanding trust per se first. More recently, as this special issue demonstrates, the question of how trust and control are related has been rediscovered. In the process, we not only realize that 'control' is actually an elusive concept as well (Child, 2005: 111), we also find more than just simple trade-offs or correlations between trust and control. To date, it has been common to frame trust and control as a *dualism* and to look for various connections between two *distinct* concepts.

It is the aim of this article to show that trust and control are less distinct than is typically assumed. I propose a *duality* perspective, which entails that trust and control each assume the existence of the other, refer to each other and create each other, but remain irreducible to each other. The difference between a dualism and a duality perspective is subtle, but important. For instance, philosophers have debated whether 'body' and 'soul' form a dualism (humans have a body on the one hand and a soul on the other) or a duality (to be human, the body needs a soul and the soul needs a body).¹

In the following, the need for this duality perspective is demonstrated by reframing the basic underlying problem with reference to embedded agency. I then describe the core elements of my perspective before highlighting some implications of applying trust/control as a duality. The empirical case of the publisher and the 'Most Dangerous Man' mentioned at the beginning of this introduction serves as an illustration and preliminary test of plausibility for my abstract conceptual ideas throughout this article.

The Need for a Duality Perspective

Some previous research on trust and control has already moved towards perspectives that allow for complex interconnections between the two concepts. While I acknowledge this at first, the aim of this part of the article is to show the value in reframing the basic underlying problem, namely the actors' ability to form positive expectations of others to whom they are vulnerable. Once modern social theory on structure vs agency (or: determinism vs voluntarism, i.e. the question of 'free will') is applied to this problem, the duality perspective on trust/control not only seems advantageous over conceptualizing trust and control as a dualism, it actually turns out to be the only perspective that does not oversimplify, or even deny, the reflexive nature of modern social relations in one direction or the other. The empirical case of contract negotiations between a publisher and a politician is introduced at the end of this section.

Previous Work on Trust and Control

Without attempting anything like a comprehensive literature review, Das and Teng's (1998: 495) convenient claim that 'there is little consensus regarding the relationship between trust and control' still seems to apply (see also Maguire et al., 2001; Bijlsma-Frankema and van de Bunt, 2003). Bachmann et al. (2001: v) equally observe that 'while concepts of "trust" and "control" have been prevalent in academic discourse and organizational practice for generations, this does not mean that they are well understood or unproblematic'.

There are several reasons for this. First, too little research actually addresses both concepts at the same time; instead, most studies focus on either control or trust. Second, the initial but superficial conceptualization of trust and control as opposites, where control equals distrust, survives not only in control-promoting sayings like 'trust but verify' or 'trust is good, control is better', but also in overly optimistic studies on the positive and enabling effects of trust, for example, in organizational or inter-organizational relationships that, ostensibly, would normally be governed by control (Fox, 1974; Mayer et al., 1995; Zaheer and Venkatraman, 1995; Sheppard and Tuchinsky, 1996; Adler, 2001; Child, 2001). Third, more recent research recognizes the potential value of both trust and control as well as the possibility of a positive relationship between them (Sitkin, 1995; Sheppard and Tuchinsky, 1996; Rousseau et al., 1998; Nooteboom, 2002), but has resulted in a variety of perspectives between supplementarity on the one hand and complementarity on the other (Inkpen and Currall, 1997; Das and Teng, 1998). This kind of work, as evidenced by this special issue of *International Sociology*, is still ongoing and may never result in a single dominant view.

While there is indeed no overall consensus, it is striking that much research on trust and control assumes a fundamental *dualism* of the two concepts (e.g. Das and Teng, 1998). In other words, trust and control are seen as somehow belonging together, but presenting themselves to the actor as distinct concepts and, crucially, as independent variables. Thus, when actors increase or decrease the level of trust, then the level of control is not adjusted automatically, as it were, but may or may not be altered separately upwards or downwards. In turn, a change in the level of control may or may not induce a change in the level of trust: 'While there are numerous examples in the literature where control chases out trust and situations in which trust seems to remove the need for control, there are equally as many examples of trust and control being complementary or going hand in hand' (Bachmann et al., 2001: v; see also Bijlsma-Frankema and Koopman, 2003: 551).

The perceived confusion regarding the relationship between trust and control results from this dualism perspective. It springs from conceptualizing trust and control in different spheres (e.g. Das and Teng, 2001). First, trust is defined mainly in terms of an actor's expectations towards another. Second, control is defined in terms of the level of constraint imposed on the other. Note that the two concepts are not defined with a view to the same target variable. Hence, the questions 'Whom do you trust?' and 'Whom do you control?' require separate grounds on which to be answered, since they address separate issues. If they did not, then we would need to be clear about what it is that the concepts of trust and control have in common. We would need to stop treating them as a dualism and begin to see that they are more than *just* 'different sides of the same analytical coin' (Reed, 2001: 203, with reference to Fox, 1974), suggesting that we conceptualize a *trust/control duality* (see note 1). In other words, we would need to reframe the original problem. Although this does imply a fundamental reorientation, I do not want to devalue previous work on trust and control as such. Instead, it should be interesting to analyse how the new framing challenges or confirms previous findings.

Reframing the Problem

As the starting point for the duality perspective on trust and control outlined in this article, I propose that the basic problem is the following: how can actors form positive expectations of the behaviour of other actors by whom they may be positively or negatively affected, i.e. to whom they are vulnerable (Bigley and Pearce, 1998)? When analysing this problem, everything depends on the kind of social theory we apply. In particular, assumptions need to be made clear regarding the fundamental and still controversial issue of structure vs agency (e.g. Reed, 2003). Extreme positions in this old debate entail that the actor is either completely

determined by social structures in his or her behaviour (determinism) or exercising agency in the sense of free will (voluntarism). Accordingly, actors base their expectations of others' behaviour either on structural influences on those others or on apparent intentions of those others.

Modern social theory (e.g. Giddens, 1979, 1984; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; Barley and Tolbert, 1997), however, has sought to move beyond the dilemma, rejecting its either/or character and devising instead notions of *embedded agency* (e.g. Garud and Karnøe, 2001: 9–11) where actors are still constituted and constrained by social structures (Meyer and Jepperson, 2000), but at the same time conceptualized as the originators and carriers of structure through their contingent and purposeful action (DiMaggio, 1988): 'action and structure are to be understood as a duality rather than a dualism' (Grey and Garsten, 2001: 231).² Thus, embeddedness represents a condition and an object of action (Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1997). Just as much as action is not determined, social structures are not immutable, and a process view (Giddens, 1984; Pettigrew, 1997) of the reflexivity between structure and action is called for. Clearly, this is a simplification of current debates, but the core idea is supported by many contemporary theoretical strands, albeit with more or less variation as to the exact position adopted: new institutionalism, structuration theory, discourse analysis, critical realism, poststructuralist network analysis, theory of path dependence and path creation – nowadays, in fact, it is hard to find social science theorists, outside economics, who would reject the significance of either structure or agency completely.

Hence, rather than flogging the proverbial dead horse or engaging in partisan arguments about theoretical detail, let us consider what the concept of embedded agency implies for the formation of positive expectations in general and for our understanding of trust and control in particular (see also Sydow and Windeler, 2003). The main point is that if social interaction as such is possible only if and when actors are embedded *and* retain their agency, then expectations of such actors by others will be based on both of these inseparable sides. In other words, when forming expectations of others, more or less consciously, the actor takes inseparable influences of structure and agency into account. And this is not a marginal issue, because the very social existence, i.e. identity, of particular others hinges on their simultaneous embeddedness and idiosyncrasy (e.g. Maguire et al., 2001).

This said, I propose that an analytical framework for control and trust can be devised that translates the duality of structure and agency specifically to the basic problem of the formation of positive expectations of others: when an actor rests positive expectations on structural influences on the embedded other, we speak of *control* (Leifer and Mills, 1996). When an actor rests positive expectations on an assumption of benevolent

agency on the part of the other, we speak of *trust* (Zand, 1972; Gambetta, 1988; Rousseau et al., 1998).

For reference, my concept of 'control' resembles Pennings and Woiceshyn's (1987) concept of 'systemic control', while my concept of 'trust' resembles their concept of 'trust control'. The main category for me, however, is 'positive expectations' instead of 'control' (regularity of behaviour) and I do not share Pennings and Woiceshyn's overall approach, in particular, for me trust is not a 'mode of control' (Pennings and Woiceshyn, 1987: 85). Moreover, their category of 'personal control' in the managerial sense of direct steering of individual behaviours is subsumed in the structure/agency duality.

In more conventional terminology, positive expectations are possible when the other is known to be constrained in certain ways *and* uses his or her (remaining) freedom in a non-detrimental way (e.g. Hagen and Choe, 1998). Put more positively, when an actor is structurally empowered *and* individually benevolent, this gives others a basis for positive expectations (e.g. Jepperson, 1991). This analytical distinction between control and trust defines the two concepts at the same level and suggests an immediate reintegration into a trust/control duality³ in analogy to the agency/structure duality (see also Sydow and Windeler, 2003). Das and Teng (2001) undertake a similar reframing effort, focusing on perceived risk, but – crucially – they maintain a dualism instead of a duality in their framework: 'trust and control are two separate routes to risk reduction in alliances' albeit with 'distinct linkages' (Das and Teng, 2001: 276).

The core elements and implications of the integrative perspective of trust/control as a duality are discussed later, but first I introduce the empirical case, which serves as an illustration of my abstract ideas throughout the article.

Introducing the Lindner/Lafontaine Case

This article seeks to contribute to the theory of trust/control at a high level of abstraction, but I use a concrete empirical case to illustrate my points and to give readers something tangible on which to gauge the value of the duality approach.

The case dates back to 1999 and concerns the positive expectations that Heiner Lindner, head of the German publishing house J. H. W. Dietz in Bonn, held towards the politician and author Oskar Lafontaine. I argue that Lindner's expectations rested on the trust/control duality when he negotiated a book deal with Lafontaine.

In March 1999, fewer than six months after the social democrats had won the general elections in Germany and formed a coalition government with the Greens, Oskar Lafontaine announced the resignation from all his posts: finance minister, party chairman and member of parliament. This

came quite unexpectedly for virtually everybody, despite Lafontaine's widely noted increasing political isolation and frustration. At the time, Lindner was the publisher of an earlier book on globalization by Lafontaine and his wife (Lafontaine and Müller, 1998) and one of the first guests at Lafontaine's private home after the resignation.

During April and May 1999, negotiations unfolded between Lafontaine and various publishing houses, including Lindner's J. H. W. Dietz, regarding a potentially revealing and scandalous new book appearing later as *Das Herz schlägt links* ([The Heart Beats on the Left] Lafontaine, 1999). In a published diary, Lindner (1999) has accused Lafontaine of having been unscrupulous, dishonest and avaricious in the negotiations over the rights to the book. Lindner has reconstructed the negotiation period very carefully and self-critically, describing how he was double-crossed by Lafontaine after they had concluded a deal for the book. The diary appeared in the German weekly *Die Zeit* coinciding with the book's launch in October 1999 amid much media hype about the damning revelations the book might contain. Despite Lindner's accusations (which Lafontaine rejected out of hand) and despite generally unfavourable reviews (e.g. *The Economist*, 23 October 1999: 161–2), *Das Herz schlägt links* became a best-seller.

What is interesting about this case is, first of all, that until his positive expectations were disappointed in May 1999, Lindner believed that he had a good relationship with Lafontaine in terms of business as well as politics and friendship. More important than whether this was actually justified, though, is the rich description Lindner has given in the diary of how he perceived Lafontaine and how he formed his expectations of him. I will use these descriptions as illustrations for what the trust/control duality entails. Note that I am quite aware of the double hermeneutics involved in interpreting a published diary and that the source – which is no unintended, undistorted remnant but a narrating source – may be highly unreliable if the aim were to establish historical facts (e.g. Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000: 52–109). My only goal here, however, is to study one example of an actor experiencing a process of forming and reforming expectations of another actor, and this is exactly what Lindner recalls very vividly in the diary, as will be shown.⁴

Core Elements of the Integrative View of Trust/Control

To propose that two concepts constitute a duality, instead of a dualism, has several implications (e.g. Giddens, 1984; Reed, 1997; Sánchez-Runde and Pettigrew, 2003). These are spelled out for the trust/control duality next and the concept of suspension is added at the end.

Trust and Control Assume Each Other's Existence

In common parlance, speaking of a trust/control duality means to say, first, that you cannot have one without the other: 'each usually requires the existence of the other' (Sydow and Windeler, 2003: 69). The analytical distinction whereby 'control' relates to embeddedness and 'trust' relates to benevolent agency is not something that the actor can apply strictly when forming expectations. Rather, assuming the benevolence of another also assumes the particular social structures in which such benevolence is recognizable, relevant and thereby already shaped in a particular way. Hence trust also assumes the existence of control. In return, an actor who assumes that certain social structures have a controlling influence on others must also assume that those others will not exploit malevolently the freedom that inevitably remains, or else the actor will not reach positive expectations. Control thus assumes the existence of trust, too, in the sense that control alone is not enough, if it is not supported by trust.

In the book negotiations between Heiner Lindner and Oskar Lafontaine, the main vehicle for 'control' was the exchange of written offers by fax, detailing various guarantees and royalty rates as well as the exchange of draft contracts. This is an expression of social structure in the sense that authors follow certain rules while negotiating with several publishers at the same time. In particular, as reported in Lindner (1999), one rule frequently expressed by Lafontaine himself was that 'whoever offers the highest royalties will get the deal'. Moreover, there is an important rule that the bidding is to end when the author has reached an agreement with one of the publishers. Only 'underhanded types' would continue bidding after the author has made a decision. Lindner has described the bidding and negotiation process in much detail and has emphasized the moment when 'Oskar Lafontaine has made up his mind; he closes the deal with us'. At that point, Lindner had positive expectations of Lafontaine's subsequent actions based on the fact that they closed a deal in accordance with the general rules of the trade and supported by past mutual experience.

Clearly, though, this also assumes the existence of trust not only in the sense that Lindner hoped that no malevolent publisher would continue bidding, but more importantly in direct relation to Lafontaine, of whom Lindner expected benevolent agency, i.e. resisting the temptation of breaking his verbal agreement with Lindner and continuing to negotiate with others in order to get an even better contract. Lindner has pointed out several times how strong his trust in Lafontaine was, for example: 'I have the feeling that there cannot be a better trust relationship between a publisher and an author'. Evidently, the control secured by a verbal agreement supported by social structures would not be enough; it only leads to positive expectations when it is supported by trust in the other's good will in honouring the agreement.

As it turned out, Lindner's positive expectations failed as Lafontaine broke both the trust and the verbal contract. Lindner tried to rescue the agreement – with a high degree of self-interest – by appealing to Lafontaine's integrity as well as to the legal fact that they had closed a deal. Thus, even in the failure of positive expectations, we see how trust and control are intertwined. Lindner's trust in Lafontaine was not blind or unconditional but tied to social structures regarding the conduct of negotiations. His trust was destroyed, because Lafontaine abused his agency, going against established social control mechanisms. And Lindner's positive expectations, in sum, were only possible, because control elements assumed trust and vice versa.

Trust and Control Refer to Each Other

If, as just argued, trust and control assume each other's existence, then it needs to be added that they do not merely always coexist, but they exist in a reflexive relationship to each other when they form the basis of positive expectations. This point has already been implied earlier but is addressed in more detail in this section. Taking the concept of embedded agency seriously, an actor forming expectations of others will perceive these others as actors who refer to structure but who also (re)produce structure through their practices. This process of reflexive structuration applies to the trust/control duality, too. Specifically, when asking whether an actor will use his or her agency benevolently, it also needs to be asked how much room for agency the relevant social structures actually leave. Hence trust refers to control. In return, how much room for agency particular social structures actually leave is a question of the assumed level of trust in the actors concerned. In this respect, control refers to trust. When actors form positive expectations of others, they generally need to be attuned to the reflexivity of trust and control as a 'complex interplay' between agency and embeddedness (Sydow and Windeler, 2003: 71).

How trust and control refer to each other was most obvious in Lindner's decision to be satisfied with a verbal agreement for a few days before signing the formal contract with Lafontaine, which he regarded as 'a mere formality'. Interestingly, Lindner's trust in Lafontaine was reinforced by the fact that they had concluded the deal in high spirits on the phone and that they also agreed mutually that it was not necessary to sign the contract immediately: 'We were going to meet up the following Tuesday anyway at the presentation of Ehrenberg's book. I should bring the contract along then.' Thus Lindner's trust referred to control, but in the decision not to insist on formalities immediately he also accepted a level of control, which referred to the strong trust he had in Lafontaine. Hence, when positive expectations are formed, there is a reflexive relationship between trust and control, as is typical for a duality. For Lindner this

turned out to be a trap, because he lost the deal eventually. He concluded that he had been 'fooled', and this is hard to deny, but the process by which he reached his positive expectations in the first place is a typical case of cross-referencing between trust and control.

Trust and Control Create Each Other

Gradually deepening the duality perspective, I argue next that trust produces control and control produces trust (see also Sydow and Windeler, 2003: 79–80). The logic here is far simpler and far less provocative than it may appear at first. For example, when actors generalize trust, in the sense that within particular social structures the assumption of benevolent agency is no longer tied to individual actors, but expected of all actors concerned (e.g. Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984; Zucker, 1986), then this generalized trust gains a control-like quality as actors become embedded in it: 'trust is a quintessentially social reality that penetrates not only individual psyches but also the whole institutional fabric of society' (Lewis and Weigert, 1985: 982). More generally, whenever actors are aware that their benevolent exercise of agency is assumed or even taken for granted by other actors, this can have 'an almost compulsory power' (Simmel, 1950: 348). Thus, effectively, control is produced by trust without eliminating agency as such. In return, control produces trust whenever actors refer to and maintain social structures despite the fact that structures can be contradictory and ambiguous or in some other way imperfect and open to interpretation, leaving room for benevolent or malevolent agency. In other words, an actor may reach positive expectations of others by observing that social structures induce others to use their agency benevolently in order to confirm those same social structures. Grey and Garsten (2001: 233) put it as follows: 'people behave predictably not despite, but by virtue of the choices they make. Nevertheless, these *are* choices and they might be made differently and so predictability is never total.'

The Lindner diary contains many passages that show how trust can attain a compulsory power on the trustee (in the eyes of the trustor) when it is generalized to the relationship and not restricted to specific issues. For example, Lindner has pointed out: 'My trust relationship with Oskar Lafontaine is so good that I could never lie to him. In return I presume that he tells me the truth on all points, too.' Lindner then assumed – wrongly, as it turned out – that this generalized trust was binding Lafontaine in the specific incidents involved in the book negotiations. Lafontaine partly confirmed the generalized trust during the negotiations whenever he presented himself as particularly open and friendly with Lindner, relating the details of other offers he had received. He thereby gave Lindner the impression that he accepted the responsibility implied

by the trust relationship. Hence, trust produced a kind of control on Lafontaine, because he knew that he was expected to use his agency benevolently.

In return, though, the Lindner diary also shows how control produces trust. It is no coincidence that Lindner's statement, 'For me the contract is concluded', is followed almost immediately by his claim that 'there cannot be a better trust relationship'. Lafontaine's apparent acceptance of control by making a verbal agreement and adhering to the rules of the trade confirmed his good intentions and trustworthiness to Lindner in that moment. At the same time, this example shows how control produces the need for trust in the first place, because it is clear that any contract, especially a verbal one, leaves room for the other party to exercise agency malevolently. Interestingly, however, the reaching of an agreement as such is already seen as a sign of good will and German contract law, for example, contains a highly generalized *bona fides* requirement (Deakin et al., 1997). It is therefore no contradiction at all to say that an actor trusts another, because they have a contract. In this sense, control truly produces trust, but without actually denying or eliminating the other's agency. Indeed, contracts capture the trust/control duality very well (see Bennett and Robson, 2004). Consider, for example, Hardin's (1991: 190) observation: 'When we trust strangers in important matters, we commonly prefer to bind them through contracts under law.' It implies that contracts convey *both* trust and control, since both are a precondition and an outcome of contracting (Möllering, 2002: 142–3).

Trust and Control are Irreducible to Each Other

It is important to note that the duality perspective does not entail that trust can be understood as a subcategory of control, e.g. 'social control', as is sometimes suggested or implied (Pennings and Woiceshyn, 1987; Bradach and Eccles, 1989; Sheppard and Tuchinsky, 1996; Hardy et al., 1998; Grey and Garsten, 2001), nor that control is a form of trust, e.g. 'calculative trust' (Williamson, 1993; Lewicki and Bunker, 1996) or 'institutional-based trust' (Zucker, 1986). If this were the case, it would go against the idea of a duality and allegations of 'conflationism' (Reed, 2003; see also Reed, 2001) would seem justified. On the contrary, postulating the embedded agency of actors of whom other actors have positive (or negative) expectations means to acknowledge and retain social structures and agency as mutually irreducible but intimately related concepts. Thus, while social structures may often entail that the malevolent exercise of agency is not legitimated, this institutional basis of expectation does not give a deterministic guarantee that all actors will in fact behave benevolently, because agency as such is retained at least in the theoretical possibility of malevolent action. The logic here is similar to what Giddens (1984:

374) calls the dialectic of control: actors always have the possibility to act against the social structures to which they refer and on which they depend, even if they normally would not: 'control is always imperfect – however powerful an actor might be' (Sydow and Windeler, 2003: 75). Grey and Garsten (2001: 233) point out that 'resistance and unintended consequences may – and probably will – occur'. Trust assumes contingency and would be '*frozen*', if it were based on compulsion (Giddens, 1994: 90).

This leads directly to the other side of this logic: trust cannot be reduced to control. Even when actors regularly use agency benevolently up to the point where this becomes taken for granted, such an institutionalization of trust (Zucker, 1986) does not mean that actors are now under the control of a deterministic regime, which eliminates their agency and forces them to be trustful or trustworthy (Misztal, 1996; Child and Möllering, 2003). Rather, the onus of acting benevolently or malevolently remains on the actor and is not removed by the fact that actors refer to social structures in order to find out how they *ought* to behave and what benevolence and malevolence *mean* in a particular context.

In line with this argument, Lindner denied neither Lafontaine's agency nor the applicability of social structures and he formed expectations on the basis of the interplay between agency and structure in the trust/control duality. For example, in his diary Lindner has often reflected on the fact that an author, like Lafontaine, who promotes social democratic views and values *should* not let himself be published by unmistakably conservative publishing houses or newspapers. Yet, at the same time, Lindner clearly saw the possibility that Lafontaine *might* do this, even though it would have gone completely against the image that Lindner had of Lafontaine. Even more explicitly, Lindner asked himself at one point 'Was Oskar Lafontaine going to break his word?' and answered immediately 'I cannot really imagine it.' This reveals that even the most general norm that promises have to be kept necessarily implies the possibility that they can be broken, which expresses the agency on the part of the one who made the promise.

That trust cannot be reduced to a form of control comes out even more strongly and is probably the most irritating experience for Lindner. The diary not only reports the book negotiations, but goes into much detail on how the relationship between Lindner and Lafontaine developed, how they became fairly close on business, politics and friendship dimensions: 'I had come to know Oskar Lafontaine ever closer in the past months.' This was the basis for Lindner's trust relationship with Lafontaine, which at one point Lindner has even described as 'unlimited'. Nevertheless, Lindner realized – partly only because he was forced to – that even this strong trust did not carry the kind of power that would control Lafontaine

in the sense of removing his option to act selfishly and, thus, malevolently towards Lindner.

Interestingly, the diary does not suggest that Lafontaine lured Lindner guilefully into trusting him in order to be able to harm him later. On the contrary, it seems that Lafontaine genuinely appreciated and nurtured his close relationship with Lindner and for a long time, but in the course of the negotiations over *Das Herz schlägt links* he did not feel controlled by the trust relationship. Instead, he realized his agency and used it in a way that Lindner has described as 'unscrupulous', 'dishonest' and 'avaricious'.

Whether Lafontaine truly risked his reputation and integrity is a different matter, but the interesting point here is that even a very strong trust relationship did not overpower his agency. For Lindner, however, positive expectations were based on the perception that structural influences and benevolence were playing together in such a way that he could conclude the deal with Lafontaine in the way he did. Note that the question here is how actors reach positive expectations by referring to the trust/control duality. The question is not whether such expectations – in this case those of Lindner – are objectively justified and on what grounds this might be answered.

Trust and Control Require Suspension

All the core elements of the trust/control duality perspective on positive expectations of others point to a third concept: suspension. The concept of suspension addresses the issue that either side of the trust/control duality as well as the duality as such always leaves the actor with irreducible social uncertainty and doubt. This is not an unintended side-effect, but another core assumption associated with conceptualizing dualities like structure/agency or trust/control. In order to make sense, dualities have to be somewhat open ended, but such contingency is potentially bewildering to the actors concerned.

Specifically, by rejecting the determinism of social structure, we also lose the certainty that such determinism offers. Moreover, by postulating agency, even when it is deeply embedded, we have to retain an element of voluntarism, which means that we cannot assume full certainty with regard to the actions of actors either: 'predictability is never certain' (Grey and Garsten, 2001: 233). Indeed, the concept of trust in particular would be obsolete if the possibility of breaking trust could be excluded, and many authors refer to the 'unknowable' as a typical aspect of trust (e.g. Simmel, 1950, 1990; Frankel, 1977; Luhmann, 1979; Gambetta, 1988; Seligman, 1997; some economists recognize this, too, e.g. Dasgupta, 1988: 53; James, 2002: 291). Altogether, when actors form positive expectations or, for that matter, any kind of expectation of other actors, it is conceptually required that these expectations can be disappointed. Suspension is

the process through which actors deal with this possibility by bracketing the doubt and uncertainty that it entails (Möllering, 2001). Positive expectations are reached whenever such a leap of faith beyond the trust/control duality is made (see also Giddens, 1991: 244). Suspension, however, does not *eliminate* uncertainty but makes it liveable with *for the time being*.⁵

Note that while I have argued for the need to recognize the role of suspension in trust before (Möllering, 2001), I extend it here to the concept of control as well, thereby also responding to Brownlie and Howson's (2005) important conceptual extension towards the embeddedness of trustors. This is not only inevitable once we adopt the trust/control duality perspective, but already suggests itself when considering the concept of control on its own once we accept that there is no such thing as perfect control in social relations. In sum, an actor reaches positive expectations of other actors by referring to a trust/control duality and by suspending remaining uncertainty, too. Positive expectations of others are not possible, if the actor fails to understand in a favourable way the embedded agency of those others and the uncertainty it entails. Aubert (1965) recognized this early on when he discussed the interplay of causality, choice and chance in sociological terms.

There are clear manifestations of suspension in Lindner's diary and, notably, they come through whenever the assertion that he was sure or had no doubt actually reveals an underlying uncertainty. For instance, Lindner has stated: 'I know Oskar Lafontaine so well that I am sure he has his good reasons', although at that point he did not know what the specific reasons were. Moreover, statements such as 'I have no doubt that Oskar Lafontaine had told me the truth' or 'I cannot really imagine [that he was going to break his word]' express the process of forming and maintaining positive expectations through suspension in the face of uncertainty and doubt. As Good (1988: 46) remarks: 'trust is remarkably robust' – thanks to suspension. Only when Lindner's expectations were clearly disappointed did he withdraw the benefit of the doubt. At the end of the diary, he has offered a drastic reinterpretation of Lafontaine's character, portraying him in utterly negative categories and concluding that 'this is the new Oskar Lafontaine as I see him today and, as I have to admit self-critically, it is also the old one'. Lindner's disappointment was exceptionally great in this case, but he experienced a completely normal process of reaching positive expectations on the basis of a trust/control duality mediated by suspension.⁶

Conclusions: Implications of the Trust/Control Duality Perspective

Having outlined and illustrated briefly what is meant by conceptualizing trust/control as a duality, I give some indication of the implications the duality perspective could have for social science research as well as practice. In the following sections, I address potential pitfalls of both ignoring and adopting the duality perspective, before highlighting some of its opportunities.

Pitfalls of Ignoring the Duality Perspective

To be sure, there are dangers in ignoring (or rejecting) as well as in adopting (or accepting) the duality perspective on trust/control. In particular, researchers who continue to treat trust and control as a dualism run the risk of failing to recognize the full range of the basic underlying problem, i.e. the question of how actors form positive expectations of other actors. Instead, they are likely to give fragmented answers on trust-building processes on the one hand and various mechanisms of constraint and manipulation against opportunism on the other. What may get lost, then, is a clear vision of how those two sides are not simply in correspondence or competition with each other, but produce a common outcome: positive or negative expectations. More importantly, whenever only one side of the duality is studied in isolation from the other side, all the important effects that the ignored side has on the other side are excluded from analysis and discussion.

For example, Lindner's trust in Lafontaine cannot be explained fully without taking into account how it interacts directly with Lindner's perception of social structures that have a controlling influence on Lafontaine. More generally, many studies of trust in the workplace treat the management systems in which relationships are embedded as *ceteris paribus* conditions and thereby leave out something that the duality perspective suggests as crucial. In return, comparative empirical studies of management systems miss a point if they fail to consider how much the social construction of any observable structure in a particular organization is shaped by (and shaping) trust and mistrust.

Individual actors in everyday situations could experience difficulties from failing to recognize the trust/control duality or, more generally, the reality of embedded agency if they formed expectations on the basis of either determinism or voluntarism as basic assumptions about human action. Especially when expectations are disappointed, it is not helpful to look for one-sided explanations, i.e. that the other had no choice or that the other was utterly malevolent. Lindner made such a one-sided attribution at the end of his diary when he called Lafontaine 'underhanded',

but could have invested more thought than he did into understanding the embeddedness of Lafontaine's actions. It is likely that instead of just a sudden reversal in Lafontaine's trustworthiness, Lindner would have found a simultaneous and contingent shifting of structure and agency in the weeks after Lafontaine's sudden resignation.

Pitfalls of Adopting the Duality Perspective

Admittedly, with a more comprehensive and balanced approach, Lindner may have found that there was nobody and nothing specifically that he could blame for losing such a lucrative book deal. This comment points to the pitfalls that loom in actually adopting the trust/control duality perspective. For researchers, some basic methodological implications could represent pitfalls. For practice, uncertainty and the requirement of suspension are an uneasy and risky affair.

Researchers adopting the duality perspective may find, first of all, that its descriptive power is greater than its explanatory power. Those especially who insist on hypothesis testing will find the duality perspective hard to apply, if only because the concept of 'independent' variables is undermined by the idea of a duality. The approach I have suggested here appears to be useful mainly for generating rich descriptions and *possible* explanations for how the interplay of trust and control supported by suspension leads to an actor's positive expectations, albeit with little in the way of hard 'proof'. Generalizations of some kind are only possible when in-depth longitudinal studies reveal recurrent patterns in dynamic social practice. The Lindner diary is useful, because it covers a longer period of time and contains vivid descriptions of experience and events. Admittedly, a full research project would need to go much further in this direction, but even the illustrations in this article indicate that a static, cross-sectional approach to explaining positive expectations could not do justice to the inherently processual trust/control duality. Therefore, while it may be easy to subscribe to the ideas behind embedded agency and duality, applying them in accordance with current scientific mainstream will be very difficult, if not impossible, without experiencing some 'epistemological angst' (Reed, 1997: 22).

This is not least due to another element inherent in the trust/control duality as presented in this article. As exemplified by the use of Lindner's diary, I propose that positive expectations spring from the actors' own interpretations of reality and we therefore need to see the world through the actors' eyes and seek an understanding of how they deal with the trust/control duality and suspension (Brownlie and Howson, 2005). As a result, researchers find themselves interpreting interpretation and the issues arising from such double hermeneutics are well known and by no means insignificant (Schwandt, 1994; Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). Any

attempt at 'verifying' interpretation only produces more interaction with the object of study or with fellow researchers, which raises as many new issues as it sets out to resolve. I do not believe that there is an epistemological trick to deal with this other than our own kind of scientific suspension, e.g. bootstrapping (e.g. Albert, 1985; Kauffman, 1995: 288; Ortmann, 2004: 56–61), but when researchers adopt the duality perspective they can at least be aware that this means buying into a post-Cartesian – although not necessarily postmodern – epistemology. Thus, we may not reach 'truth', but (some form of) understanding.

In this line of thinking, researchers as observers are not epistemologically privileged over any other actor engaging in social praxis. If the duality perspective were to become a sensitizing concept referred to by actors in daily interaction, then I would suspect that the element of suspension is the hardest thing to put into practice. For it is one thing to claim that whenever actors have positive expectations of others they also suspend doubt and uncertainty. It is a completely different matter to suggest normatively that such leaps of faith should or should not be taken or to try and specify when suspension is in order. Unfortunately, this is for individual actors to find out and the duality perspective of trust/control merely offers an interpretative scheme, not a manual to praxis.

Opportunities from Embracing the Duality Perspective

Having expressed that the trust/control duality perspective is not without its pitfalls, its advantages are considerable, too. As argued throughout the article, the duality perspective provides an opportunity for exploring the abstract notion of embedded agency in more practical terms. This alone is already a welcome service to social science, where the old structure vs agency 'dilemma' has been hard to overcome. Moreover, for research on trust and control in particular, the duality perspective puts long-established ideas about trust–control trade-offs or the superiority of trust over control (or vice versa) into question. After all, the trust/control duality implies not only a *potential* relationship between trust and control, but an *inevitable* connection and reflexive influence.

This conceptualization paves the way for a kind of deconstruction of one-sided accounts of trust on the one hand and control on the other. For instance, with the duality in mind, researchers will recognize more clearly the control elements in what would normally be seen as strong trust relationships, e.g. between lovers, relatives, friends or allies. In return, relationships apparently dominated by control would now reveal their trust elements, e.g. in prisons, capitalist workplaces, bureaucracies or religious cults. To be sure, the duality perspective of trust/control shows more than just the fact that the other side is there, too, as it were (see

note 1 again). By taking embedded agency seriously, it provides a way of understanding that the trust and control an actor perceives are inseparable: you cannot have one without the other and you cannot fully explain one without the other.

Consequently, we can reinterpret earlier studies that did not use the trust/control duality framework. For example, the well-known study of 'swift trust' by Meyerson et al. (1996) might be even more instructive than it already is, if the analysis of interactions in temporary work groups and teams were framed more explicitly in terms of embedded agency plus suspension. Specifically, the observation that 'people have to wade in on trust' (Meyerson et al., 1996: 170) expresses irreducible uncertainty, while at the same time there are, of course, certain social structures that the actors refer to (e.g. team roles) as well as crucial opportunities for enacting agency. The phenomenon of 'swift trust', therefore, matches the usual – and that means: complex, dynamic and contingent – interplay of trust, control and suspension.

The main opportunity of embracing the duality perspective, therefore, lies in generating richer accounts of positive expectations, recognizing complexity, reflexivity and contingency where other approaches remain simplistic, linear and deterministic. Returning to the empirical case of Lindner, Lafontaine and their negotiations, there is a big difference between, on the one hand, portraying Lindner as someone who simply relied on too much trust, too little control and a risky leap of faith, or, on the other hand, as someone whose positive expectations were the outcome of a process of communication and interpretation in which trust and control were intertwined, led to a clear and reasonable state of mind, but could not remove the uncertainty associated with the other's agency, which, in this case, was abused as described in the diary.

Finally, the duality perspective of trust/control as such is only a starting point. It gives an opportunity for studying that which actually matters most and that is the question of how trust/control is *enacted* (Reed, 2001). For, to say that you cannot have trust without control and vice versa is not to say that all kinds of trust/control in reality are desirable either from the actors' or an imaginary outside observer's point of view. The various ways in which actors form positive expectations of each other are full of love and hate, justice and injustice, support and abuse, respect and disrespect, equality and asymmetry, and so on. I propose that the conceptualization of the trust/control duality described in this article, on the basis of an embedded agency assumption, provides a framework in which to make more sense of such important social issues.

Notes

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1. My reviewers have pointed out that many dictionaries do not distinguish between *dualism* and *duality* and they asked me to clarify the difference between them 'in rather concrete terms'. Take the two sides of a coin. The *dualism* perspective notes that there are two sides to every coin and one of the sides ('head') is different from the other ('tail'); we can describe them separately. The *duality* perspective now stresses that coins need to have a head side in order to have a tail side and vice versa; when referring to head we imply a matching tail (e.g. in diameter, material) and the coin as such gains its meaning and value from head and tail together. Again, this may just be two different ways of looking at the same 'thing', but this change in perspective is exactly what this article is about.
2. Note that I refer to two dualities: agency/structure and trust/control; my argument builds on an analogy between these two dualities.
3. The use of the oblique in 'trust/control' to express the duality of trust and control is inspired by Reed (2001), but I do not subscribe to his insistence on critical realism.
4. Lindner's 'diary' as published in *Die Zeit* (14 October 1999: 22–4) is in the German language and I use my own translation for quotations in this article. There is no confidentiality issue in using the diary, because it was published in a newspaper and because Lindner has told me in writing: 'Of course you are quite free to use or quote my ZEIT dossier.' In the same letter of 25 November 1999, however, he also told me politely that he did not want to discuss the matter with me, because for him it was 'closed'.
5. See Brownlie and Howson (2005) for examples of suspension – and how difficult it can be – in an empirical study of vaccination practices where parents (and health care professionals) had to deal with the unknowns of child immunization against measles, mumps and rubella.
6. In this instance, I have to disagree with one of the reviewers who suggested that the Lindner/Lafontaine case was merely 'interesting, but anecdotal'.

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Biographical Note: Guido Möllering was a *Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter* at the Free University of Berlin, Institute of Business Administration. He received his PhD in management studies from the University of Cambridge, UK. In April 2005, after completing this article, he joined the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne. He has published in leading journals such as *Sociology and Organization Science*.

Address: Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Paulstr. 3, 50676 Cologne, Germany. [email: gm@mpifg.de]