Paper presentation

Abstract title: Trusting the other or taking a chance? An investigation of chance, risk, and trust temporalities.

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Abstract:  
In the seminal works on trust by Niklas Luhmann (1980), James Coleman (1990) and Peter Blau (1964) trust is approached as a decision in the face of risk. The probability of undesirable future events is estimated to provide reasons to either trust or not. In this paper we suggest that this is based on a fallacious link between risk and trust, ignoring the difference between trusting and taking a chance.  
Building on Luhmann’s (1980) temporal analysis of events and continuity we reinvestigate risk, trust, and chance as different temporal ways of relating to the potential futures of present interaction. Trust, according to Løgstrup (Løgstrup, Jensen, and Gustafson 1971) and Seligman (1997), concerns the indeterminable agency of the other: trust is an act of surrendering oneself to an ‘Other’. Risk relates to the other as a source of calculable actions, adverse or otherwise. Chance relates to the other as a source of unpredictable action with both transformative and destructive capacity. Trust relates to neither actions nor outcomes, but to the indeterminable potential of the ‘transcendent face’ (Levinas 1979), the inaccessible alterity of the other. Consequently, it is our suggestion that trust relates to process – to present becoming – rather than to event or continuity. Becoming moves beyond our need to know; beyond our determination to control; beyond our desire to consume or possess. So becoming offers a radical conception of what life does.
discussing possibilities in Deleuze’s and concept of becoming (Deleuze & Gauttari 1987: 248), we argue, that this particular way of conceptualizing process includes the core temporality of trust. As temporalities of expectation, continuity is characterized by permanence and events belong in the future. Process - or becoming - however, resides in the present. Trust is argued to be the expectation of a present, rather than a specific expectation of things to come. Taking this point of departure we will argue that trust is a process that resides within the temporality of becoming.

From this analysis we argue that contemporary endeavors to analyze trust as rational or reflexive underestimate the significance of chance as well as risk in relating to the uncertainty of future events. Furthermore, we argue that trust is an ethical relation to alterity, directing expectation towards process rather than specific events.