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The Role of Trust in Policymaking

Abstract. Most policy theories try to conceptualise the interaction between actors making choices and a complex policymaking system or environment which constrains and facilitates choice. To respond, actors seek ways to cooperate or compete with others, such as by following and shaping rules in organisations, coalitions, or networks. Such responses depend profoundly on *trust*, defined rather vaguely as the non-trivial belief of an actor in the reliability of other actors, organisations, or objects. In this paper, we connect discussions of trust within policy theories - to explain how people (a) prioritise information, and (b) cooperate with others, to (c) respond to their policymaking environment – to a wider literature that focuses more intensely on defining and conceptualising trust as a feature of individual and collective behaviour.

Introduction: what is trust, and what is its role in policymaking?

The study of trust in policymaking is essential but challenging. It has an almost intuitive meaning, but is difficult to operationalise. Academically, the concept has been defined and debated in different ways across a host of disciplines, including economics (Arrow 1963; Williamson 1993), organizational studies (Mayer et al 1995; Zaheer et al 1998), political science (Putnam et al 1994; Fukuyama 1995), psychology (Creed 1996; Misztal 1996), and sociology (Blau 1964; Luhmann 1979; Coleman 1990).

However, we can find general agreement on key points: (a) the production of trust helps boost the possibility of coordination without imposition, partly by (b) reducing the complexity or uncertainty of choice regarding the risk of making yourself vulnerable when relying on others, particularly when (c) people demonstrate trustworthiness (by developing a reputation for competence, honest, or reliability), (d) people combine cognition and emotion to produce a disposition to trust, and (e) formal or informal rules facilitate this process (Luhmann, 1979; Offe, 2001; Barber, 1983; McEvily et al 2003). As such, trust describes the non-trivial belief of an actor in the reliability of other entities, including actors, organisations, or processes. For example, trust informs our perception of the accuracy of information underpinning choice, the credibility of actors with whom we choose to cooperate, or the effectiveness of the institutions or political systems to which we pledge our loyalty. We may associate trust initially as a function of cooperation between individuals, but people often put their trust in actions or outcomes caused by people they do not know.

In policy studies, a focus on trust could form part of a wider focus on 'structure and agency', or actors operating in environments, with reference to three main concepts

1. Individuals combine cognition and emotion to process information and make choices.
2. They act within a complex policymaking system or environment over which they have minimal control.

3. To respond effectively, they seek ways to cooperate or compete with others, such as by following and shaping key rules of collective action, including the formal and informal rules associated with institutions, coalitions, or networks.

However, our systematic search of the literature suggests that only a small part of the literature takes the time to define and conceptualise trust as a feature of individual and collective behaviour, or situate these insights within a broader understanding of policy processes. Policy theories rely on the general notion of trust to explain how (a) people prioritise information, and (b) cooperate with others, to (c) respond to their policymaking environment. They acknowledge that effective collaboration, institutions and policy processes depend profoundly on trust and that our explanations of policymaking rely on well-defined and articulated stories about the role of trust. However, they do not connect strongly to more extensive, sophisticated, or interdisciplinary studies of trust.

Therefore, in this paper, we combine a review of two generally separate literatures – on trust in general, and on trust in the policy process – to set an agenda for the more meaningful consideration of trust in policy theories. First, we identify the main categories and definitions of trust from a wide range of typologies. Second, we begin to identify the mechanisms involved in trust formation and maintenance. Third, we show how these definitions apply to the most relevant themes in modern theories of public policy: why do individuals trust certain ideas, stories, or forms or sources of information; why do people form and maintain institutions or coalitions; and, therefore, what role does trust play in complex policymaking systems?

Categories and Definitions of Trust

As with definitions of 'policy', any short definition of trust does not sum up all possible aspects, and serves instead as a way to open discussion. To define trust as *the non-trivial belief of an actor in the reliability of other entities, including actors, organisations, or objects*: raises a series of issues about how we define in more detail, and categorise, key elements of trust (summarised in Table 1). For example, the (albeit often vague and unhelpful) distinction between micro-meso-macro processes help us describe individual (micro) behaviour in systems (macro), and the coalitions or institutions they develop (meso):

1. People must act despite uncertainty about risk, so they generate trust-related beliefs about desired outcomes and the characteristics of others.

This calculation or belief depends *partly* on another person or organisation's reputation for being *trustworthy* (Hardin, 2002). In many discussions, they are trustworthy if they are reliable, honest, competent and/or predictable, allowing others the ability to increase certainty when they calculate the risk of engagement. This reputation relates partly to a record of behaviour, and partly to (often belief-driven) perceptions of that record: 'the actual versus perceived intentions, motives, and competencies of a trustee' (McEvily, 2003).

However, it also depends on the *psychology of trust* based on *perceptions of another actor's motives* (Hardin 2002). The process of developing trust resembles the ways in which people combine cognition and emotion to address bounded rationality (McAllister, 1995). This thought process allows them to consider the probability of behaviour, and risk of outcome, and decide how to act despite uncertainty (Gambetta, 1988). They do not know what will happen, but must act nevertheless, since the alternative is 'chaos and paralysing fear' (Lewis and

Weigert, 1985). This calculation relates to confidence in the likelihood of an outcome and 'in another's goodwill' (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994).

2. Institutions can reflect high or low levels of trust.

The production and maintenance of formal and informal rules can reflect:

- *high levels of trust*, when effective practices – built on reciprocity, emotional bonds, and/ or positive expectations – become norms or are formalised; or
- *a need to deter its breach*, by introducing expectations combined with sanctions (such as in relation to contract or norm enforcement) for not behaving as expected (Rousseau et al 1998; Barber, 1983; McAllister, 1995; Gulati, 1995; Zucker, 1986).

In that context, *trust is an informal resource*, to help reduce uncertainty and transactions costs (e.g. monitoring behaviour, producing or enforcing contracts), and boost cooperation and coalition formation.

3. Trust is essential to social relations in complex systems.

Trust is largely a function of social relations, in which many people recognise their interdependence and need to find ways to cooperate. They often need to do so without knowing what will happen (Robbins, 2016). Instead, they generate an expectation of the behaviour of others and the likely outcomes, and this expectation forms part of their motivation to act (Deutch, 1958). We can analyse this process partly with reference to individual psychology, but a focus on societal interdependence is akin to the study of complex systems in which action and interaction cannot be simply broken down into individual action: 'trust must be conceived as a property of collective units … not of isolated individuals. Being a collective attribute, trust is applicable to the relations among people rather than to their psychological states taken individually' (Lewis and Weigert, 1985).

Further, the facilitators of trust come from several categories, including:

- *shared characteristics* (such as beliefs, norms, or expectations);
- *reputations* (for being reliable, predictable, honest; in a position of authority);
- *behaviour* (repeated interaction, face to face contact, 'evolution'); and,
- *power* (although perhaps the threat of rule and norm enforcement is better understood as a substitute for trust).

If so, it generally makes sense to refer to trust *production,* and *maintenance*, which is a short and long-term process. *Some* aspects may make it more or less likely for people to trust each other in the absence of previous interaction. For example, they may establish that they have shared expectations, interests, values, or beliefs, which help them compare their estimate of the risk of cooperation with its likely benefit. However, repeated exchange is also key to developing trust based on a perception of competence, reliability, and perhaps even selflessness, driven by evidence of behaviour (Barber, 1983; Zuker, 1986).

Table 1 Categories and themes in research on trust

| Theme	Subtheme	Exemplar quotation

Trust as reliability	*Interpersonal trust*	'an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon' (Rotter, 1967)
Trust as necessary to society	*Interdependence*	'trust may be thought of as a functional prerequisite for the possibility of society in that the only alternatives to appropriate trust are "chaos and paralysing fear"' (Lewis and Weigert, 1985)
Trust as an independent variable (to aid explanation) or dependent variable (to be explained)	*Trust as crucial to a positive outcome*	'the potential of trust to reduce transaction costs … facilitate cooperation … create social capital … and reduce the risks of uncertainty' (Khodyakov, 2007)
	Trust as a dependent variable	'the characteristics of trustees as a criterion for building trust … the role of the trust intermediaries' reputation … the impact of closeness, egalitarianism, and organizational structure on the development of trustworthy intra-organizational relationships' (Khodyakov, 2007)
The psychology of trust through the lens of the 'truster': cognition, emotion, behaviour, and 'evolution'	*Action based on the calculation of risk: assessing others*	'Trust is a bet about the future contingent actions of others' (Sztompka, 1999) 'An incorporation of risk into the decision of whether or not to engage in the action by acting based on estimates of the likely future behavior of others' (Coleman, 1990: 91)
	Action based on the calculation of risk: self-management	'Actors will … act in a trustworthy manner if they expect positive return from doing so. Alternatively they may act in an untrustworthy manner if the costs of doing so are low. Trust is thus based on a calculus of returns and risk' (Van de Walle, 2017)
	The willingness to take risks while vulnerable to the actions of others	'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action … irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party' (Mayer et al, 1995)
	Using cognition and emotion to address uncertainty and vulnerability	'Available knowledge and "good reasons" serve as foundations for trust decisions, the platform from which people make leaps of faith' (McAllister, 1995); 'a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon the behavior of positive expectations of the intentions of or behavior of another' (Rousseau et al, 1998)
	Social psychology in relation to 'social capital'	'you do not need to know each and every fellow citizen to arrive at rational beliefs, at a statistical level, about their intended behavior. Trust is the key to cooperation, social capital is merely a means to creating trust' (Dasgupta, 2000) 'generalized trust differs fundamentally from particularized trust by being extended to people on whom the trusting part has no direct information' (Fukuyama, 1995: 153)

	Tribalism	'Characteristic-based trust is tied to personal characteristics, such as family background and ethnicity' (Zucker, 1986)
Properties or behaviours of the 'trustee'; the people or organisations perceived to be trustworthy (in each case, information or knowledge about an actor's behaviour is crucial to this assessment)	*Competence*	'Trust as the expectation of technically competent role performance' (Barber, 1983)
	Reliability	'trust is defined as an expectancy that the promise of an individual or group can be relied upon' (Rotter, 1971)
	Performance	'institutional trust is more likely to be rooted in the effective performance of institutions than in the overall level of societal trust and citizens' participation in civil society' (Khodyakov, 2007, citing Parry, 1976)
	A degree of selflessness	'the expectation that some other in our social relationships have moral obligations and responsibility to demonstrate a special concern of other's interests above their own' (Barber, 1983)
	Or mutual self-interest	'You trust someone if you believe it will be in her interest to be trustworthy in the relevant way at the relevant time, and it will be in her interest because she wishes to maintain her relationship with you' (Hardin, 2002)
	Providing benefits (or no costs)	Trust can be defined as "the belief that others, through their action or inaction, will contribute to my/our well-being and refrain from inflicting damage upon me/us" (Offe, 1999, p. 47)
	Stated commitment to an obligation	'the condition involves the joint construction of the obligation in which the trustor assumes a risk and the trustee an obligation to justify the taking of that risk' (Seligman, 1999)
	Shared identity or values	'where actors who interact share socio-economic, ethnic or political values and backgrounds, where there has been prolonged and stable elite interactions, or where interactions are facilitated by shared values (such as nationalism or ideology)' (Van de Walle, 2017)

Mechanisms of Trust

A focus on mechanisms of trust allows us to clarify its production and maintenance by individuals and institutions or coalitions within complex systems. However, as with most simplified diagrams of organisational or policy processes, most really serve to identify the key factors and their mutually reinforcing effect, rather than laying out clearly defined causal processes (compare Mayer et al, 1995; Schultz, 2006; Bijlsma-Frankema and Costa, 2005; McKnight and Chervany, 2001). As such, they serve to prioritise one lens through which to view the production and use of trust. For example, we can situate the role of individual calculations within a wider institutional and systemic context:
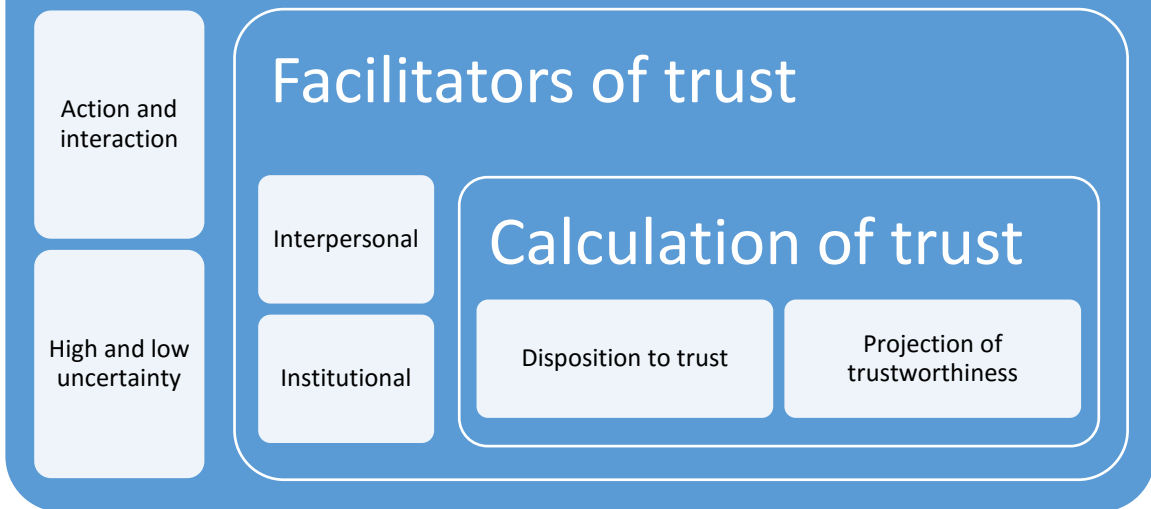
In such diagrams, our focus is on the interaction between:

- The *calculation underpinning a choice to trust another actor*, based on factors such as the expectation of an outcome and risk of an adverse outcome (in relation to an expected reward).
- The *disposition to trust someone*, based on the ways in which people combine cognition and emotion to calculate risk and assess another actor's reliability, competence, and motives.
- The *projection of trustworthiness* by other actors, based on a promise of reward in relation to their record of reliability and competence, authority, and/ or social background, values or beliefs.
- *Interpersonal facilitators*, including a history of working together in the past, or sharing common beliefs or goals.
- *Institutional facilitators*, such as formal rules, norms, or informal practices and expectations, coupled with some threat or record of enforcement.

Or, we can emphasise the individual – at the centre of an image - and consider the factors that influence their choices on who to trust, and why:
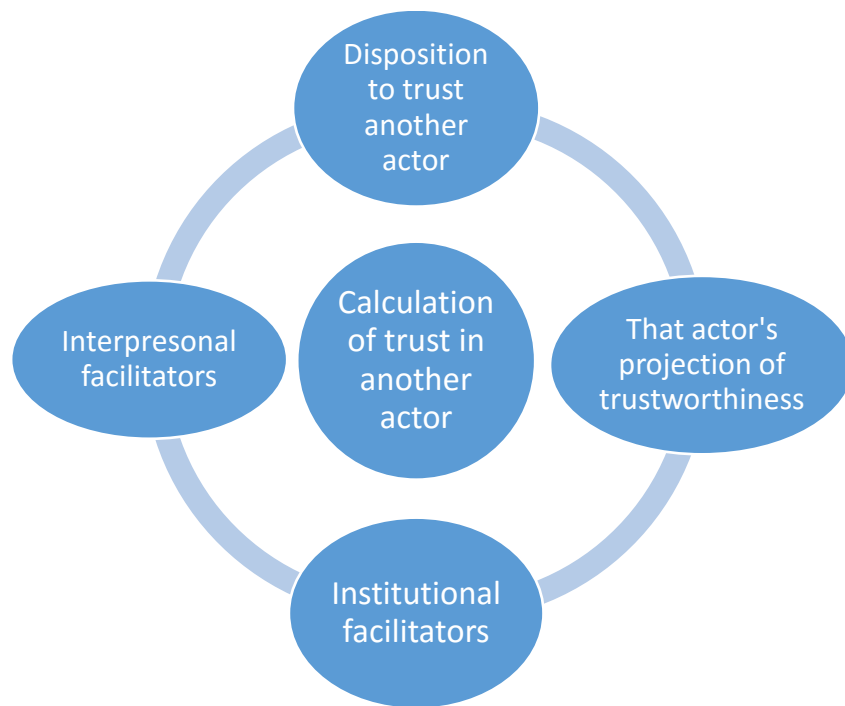
It may be as useful to develop *stories* of trust development through the lens of different levels of analysis, including individual, institutional and systemic. Therefore, in the following sections, we explore definitions of trust at those three levels of analysis, while noting that each type of analysis makes little sense without some sort of reference to the other two.

Key Trust Questions in Policy Theory: 1. How do individuals develop trust?[i]
An individual may wonder with whom to cooperate. They will make often-different assessments under different conditions, since their calculus, disposition to trust, and record of interpersonal cooperation will vary from case to case. Policy theories have a lot to offer such discussions, since they explore the ways in which actors address their own bounded rationality: they combine cognition and emotion to make choices despite uncertainty (in relation to limited knowledge of a policy problem) and ambiguity (in relation to limited agreement on how to define a policy problem). As such, they tap into an increasing focus – in the social sciences in general – on the psychology of choice as a departure from notions of rational, well-informed, calculating individuals. Rather, people are driven by the need to rely on cognitive 'biases' or 'fast and frugal heuristics' to make choices, about people and situations, quickly and efficiently (Kahneman, 2012: 20; Haidt, 2001: 818; Cairney and Kwiatkowski, 2017; Gigerenzer, 2001). This thought process underpins a trust development process.

For example, Kahneman (2012) describes a series of cognitive shortcuts that often feature strongly in policy theories (Lewis, 2013: 7; Cairney and Kwiatkowski, 2017), and can be connected to mechanisms of trust development. They include:

- Trust formation in relation to quick emotional and moral judgements about another actor's motives, competence, reliability and contribution to their idea of a common good. For example, policy actors use exemplars of social groups to represent general group experience, to describe why they should reward some target populations and punish others (Schneider et al, 2014).

- 'Prospect theory' describes people valuing the losses they fear more than the equivalent gains they might receive. It helps explain why actors in some advocacy coalitions (below) think that their competitors are more powerful than they are, and the resultant anxiety about poor outcomes may encourage them to trust their allies more (Sabatier et al, 1987).

- A 'need for coherence', to identify patterns and causal relationships, helps explain the power of narratives. People are susceptible to well-told stories with a simple hero and moral, and may be prone to trust an effective narrator, particularly if the narrator's story reinforces the story they tell themselves (Jones et al, 2014; Tuckett and Nicolic, 2017).

- The 'availability heuristic' (or 'processing fluency') suggests that people place higher value on information – and perhaps people - according to how easy it is to remember or imagine. So, for example, they may trust a person relatively highly if they already know, or feel like they know, them.

- Status quo bias, the 'sunk costs fallacy', and 'optimism bias', in which unrealistic expectations about our plans working out well when we commit to them, all help explain why people seem to invest disproportionate amounts of trust in certain organizations or institutions.

- 'Groupthink' and other aspects of organizational psychology place limits on comprehensive searches for policy relevant information. In other words, actors may be relying on simple, quick, and often ineffective ways to put their trust in some actors and processes.

There is an inevitable chicken-and-egg quality to such discussions, since beliefs or predispositions do not arise from nowhere. Consequently, many accounts of individual cognitive processes within complex systems accentuate the language of evolution to describe a continuous interaction between prior belief and ongoing action. For example, actors may engage in 'trial-and-error strategies' (suggesting that their investments of trust are not static; people learn continuously if their decisions were useful) or use their 'social tribal instincts' to rely on 'different decision heuristics to deal with uncertain and dynamic environments' (Cairney, 2013: 279; Lubell, 2013: 544).

2. What is the relationship between trust, coalitions, and institutions?

Game theory often provides the context for thinking about collective action problems, or potential for choices made by individuals to have an adverse societal effect when there is an absence of trust, obligation, or incentives to cooperate. People may have collective aims, beliefs, or interests that require cooperation, but these factors do not necessarily produce collective action. Individuals with the same beliefs, aims or interests may not cooperate well if they feel that they can benefit from the outcome of collective action without making a direct contribution, or if they favour their own short-term return over the long-term returns to a group. Further, there are 'transactions costs' involved in collective action. Or, members of different organisations, with different rules and incentives, may find it difficult to trust each other enough to work together even if they share the same beliefs or aims.

Yet, the Institutional Analysis and Development framework (IAD) describes impressive amounts of cooperation, such as to maintain 'common pool resources' (Ostrom, 1990; Heikkila

and Carter, 2017). The IAD presents positive account of non-market and non-governmental solutions to collective action problems based on rules, norms, trust and the monitoring and enforcement of collective agreements. In positive scenarios, people are social beings who make 'informed judgments about uncertain benefits and costs' while communicating regularly with others (Ostrom, 1990: 208). They share information, build trust by becoming known as reliable and predictable, and come together to produce, monitor and enforce rules for the benefit of the group and the planet. They can be trusted to cooperate to produce rules to solve their own problems, rather than relying completely on experts or governments to tell them what to do (Schlager, 2004: 168).

In such accounts, rules and norms represent the practices developed by many actors to overcome obstacles to collective action, but how do people find enough reason to cooperate, in the first place, to help produce these rules? In other words, a focus on institutions helps us explore the extent to which trust is treated, during analysis, as the dependent or independent variable (Table 1). This duality is a key feature of IAD: actors require high levels of trust to encourage norms of reciprocity, and norms/ institutions are key to facilitating trust (Poteete et al, 2010: 226). Further, trust is clearly an important explanation for cooperation; it combines with other factors - such as predictability and access to information - to reduce the costs of compliance monitoring and enforcement (Ostrom, 1990: 25-6).

How does the IAD explain trust development in the first place? Like many other approaches to policy studies, the IAD refers to the (often vague) language of *evolution* (Cairney, 2013). Actors have often learned about rule efficacy - to encourage cooperation and punish opportunism - through trial-and-error over a long period, beginning with simple, low-cost operational rules producing quick wins (Ostrom, 1990: 14; 34; 140-2). They have also been motivated to change rules over time, when the costs are low and the perceived benefits of improved cooperation are high (1990: 211). The latter helps explain how actors solve 'first-order' collective action problems, in which there are unclear incentives to invest resources to set up institutions in the first place (1990: 182). Indeed, Ostrom's (1990: 59) discussion of actors *discovering* rules together resembles complexity theory's discussion of locally 'emergent' rules and outcomes which are not explained simply by cost-benefit calculus or design factors such as the number of face-to-face meetings (Ostrom et al, 2014: 275). Trust may then develop when participants communicate regularly, share an understanding of their common interests, reciprocate each other's cooperation, and have proven reliable in the past (Ostrom, 1990: 183; Keohane and Ostrom, 1995: 6; Ostrom, 1998).

Likewise, approaches such as the 'institutional collective action' framework (ICA) help explain how - when policy problems transcend the responsibility of one government – policymakers come to trust each other enough to cooperate (Feiock, 2013). Swann and Kim (2018: 273) summarise the conditions under which such 'semiautonomous' governing bodies 'overcome barriers to collective action and reduce the risk and uncertainty of collaborative arrangements'. The most effective solutions appear to be:

- participating heavily in informal social networks and speaking directly with people, to help build 'social capital' and share information effectively (2018: 281-2)

- tailoring strategies to the nature of the task, such as to maintain closed networks between a small number of organisations when you need to 'defend against

opportunism', or flexible arrangements when you need to act quickly and reduce the burden of agreement (2018: 283)

- working with organisations who already share – or collaborating with them to encourage similar - values, ideals, policy preferences, and goals (2018: 284)

- keeping the costs and other barriers to participation low, to maintain high levels of 'transparency, accountability and equity' (2018: 285)

- producing 'small wins' then working incrementally to reduce the burden of cooperation on ill-resourced organisations (2018: 286; compare with Ansell and Gash, 2008).

The role of trust and trust development in coalitions

The advocacy coalition framework suggests that people engage in politics to turn their beliefs into policy. They form advocacy coalitions with actors who share their beliefs, and often compete with other coalitions. However, shared beliefs do not lead inevitably to shared or coordinated action (Schlager, 1995: 248). Some actors might be all-in, while others merely share information when required (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2018: 150). Therefore, what makes the difference between shared beliefs and actual coordination to do something about them? Partly following the IAD, the ACF identifies *trust development* as a key source of collective action (Schlager, 1995: 248; Zafonte and Sabatier, 2004: 78; Leach and Sabatier, 2005). The study of 'nascent' subsystems suggests that trust can develop in three main ways (Ingold et al, 2017).

First, shared beliefs help reduce some transaction costs when people begin to work together. There are low costs to 'weak participation', which primarily involves being aware of the strategies of one's allies and pursuing 'complementary strategies' rather than something akin to monitoring and enforcing a contract (Sabatier and Weible, 2007: 197; Sabatier, 1998: 110; Weible et al., 2009: 122; Princen, 2007: 21). Actors could use a reference to beliefs as a short cut to decide how much they can trust them, to begin to share information, or experiment with collective action (Ingold et al, 2017: 447). Or, their beliefs help them decide who *not to trust*. When issues are politically salient or actors have a strong emotional attachment to a potential outcome, they romanticise their own cause and demonise their opponents. The 'devil shift' describes coalition action built on distrust, anxiety and fear of the power of their competitors, which may heighten conflict. If so, people exaggerate the benefits of participation or do not feel that free riding is possible when the stakes are so high (Sabatier et al, 1987).

Second, the increased frequency of fruitful coalition interaction could foster greater trust. If so, it could reduce the costs they bear when sharing information and seeking agreements that each group perceives to be fair (Ingold et al, 2017: 449; Sabatier, 1998: 116; Schlager; 1995: 262; Sabatier and Weible, 2007: 195). Actors encourage further cooperation by co-creating and enforcing rules. Sabatier and Weible (2007: 194) note the normative institutionalist suggestion that 'Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected and legitimate' (March and Olsen, 2006b: 689). Such rules may *emerge* as 'the product of strategies by advocacy coalitions over time' (Sabatier, 1993: 37). Yet, there are many such 'rules of appropriateness', and 'individuals must pick and choose among influences and interpret the meaning of their institutional commitments' (March and Olsen, 2006a: 9; Peters, 2005: 26). Therefore, a combination of ACF and IAD insights may explain the *most widely understood and applied* rules that are particularly important: actors may use shared beliefs as the initial

basis of weak cooperation, and experience the feedback – such as quick wins - necessary to see the value of further investment in specific rules.

Third, when people know what they want, but are uncertain what to do, they often follow people with authority, such as leaders in formal positions of power or experts with scientific or policymaking experience (Ingold et al, 2017: 448; Ingold and Gschwend, 2014; Weible et al, 2010).

The study of negotiated agreements between 'previously warring coalitions' provides a fourth source of trust development (Sabatier and Weible, 2007: 205–7). Supportive factors include: a previous 'stalemate' that suits no-one; a realization that there is no better alternative, and a process of trust development involving frequent meetings and minimal turnover of staff, giving 'all relevant groups of stakeholders' the power of veto and chaired by a 'respected "neutral"';. The issue also has to be amenable to resolution though empirical research, rather than issues that are too mired in normative beliefs to allow participants to engage with each other in a meaningful way (Weible et al, 2009: 130; compare with Koebele, 2019a; 2019b on the ACF and collaborative governance).

3. What is the role of trust in complex policymaking systems?

Studies of complex policymaking systems suggest that cooperation cannot be explained well by breaking analysis down to individual calculations, and there is no single set of rules governing practices. Rather, individuals act and interact despite high uncertainty about the outcomes, and many rules or practices are in play. For example, the formation of specialist networks or institutions reflects a tendency for actors to insulate their activities by only cooperating within small parts of a wider system (Jordan and Maloney, 1997; Baumgartner et al, 2018). Or, the general idea of 'emergent outcomes' highlights the role of local actors developing different rules (in part to foster trust and cooperation) in different parts of systems (Cairney, 2012).

Similarly, in studies of trust, we find the argument that trust 'must be conceived as a property of collective units … not of isolated individuals. Being a collective attribute, trust is applicable to the relations among people rather than to their psychological states taken individually' (Lewis and Weigert, 1985). Further, trust takes on the properties of a 'functional prerequisite for the possibility of society in that the only alternatives to appropriate trust are "chaos and paralysing fear"' (Lewis and Weigert, 1985). This means that we rely more on general notions of social capital than individual predispositions to trust, and we may focus more on people seeking social cues (such as in relation to social characteristics or disposition to follow certain rules) to help them make quick decisions about how to cooperate with strangers. Or, in our analysis, we make greater reference to *assumptions* of how people make choices.

For example, the 'Ecology of Games' framework (EG) is built on the assumption that actors deal with bounded rationality primarily with reference to their 'social tribal instincts', emphasising: 'the importance of emotions, instinctual "fast thinking," cooperation, in-group biases, and social learning … [producing] some individuals who are altruistic, others who conditionally cooperate, and a minority who pursue their self-interest regardless of the welfare of others' (Lubell, 2013: 544-5). Actors form alliances based on strongly held beliefs, process new information to refine their beliefs and strategies, but 'never have complete knowledge' of the environment in which they operate (2013: 544). This action takes place in a 'self-organising system' in which policymaking 'fragmentation' has the potential to undermine cooperation

(2013: 546). Like ICA (above), the focus is on how many policymakers can cooperate under such circumstances, in which there are (for example) 'payoff externalities', when organisations with overlapping jurisdictions produce policies that undermine each other, and 'strategy externalities' in which behaviour that is useful in one game becomes damaging in another (2013: 546).

As in many such discussions, the general focus for solutions is 'collaborative governance' to develop widespread trust and social capital, rather than 'consolidating all decision-making authority into a single institution … [because] it is naïve to believe that an optimal system could be exogenously designed' (2013: 547). Rather, as Ansell and Gash (2008: 550) describe, this process is about trust-building via – hopefully - a 'virtuous cycle of collaboration', in which there are (a) 'starting conditions', such as distributions of power (many power imbalances help create distrust) and initial levels of trust based on incentives and previous experiences of conflict or cooperation (see also Weible and Heikkila, 2017), (b) facilitating factors, such as appropriate institutional design and leadership, and (c) self-reinforcing processes of 'trust building', relating to commitment, shared goals and values, dialogue, and 'intermediate outcomes' – such as 'small wins' - that facilitate positive engagement.

Figure 1
A Model of Collaborative Governance
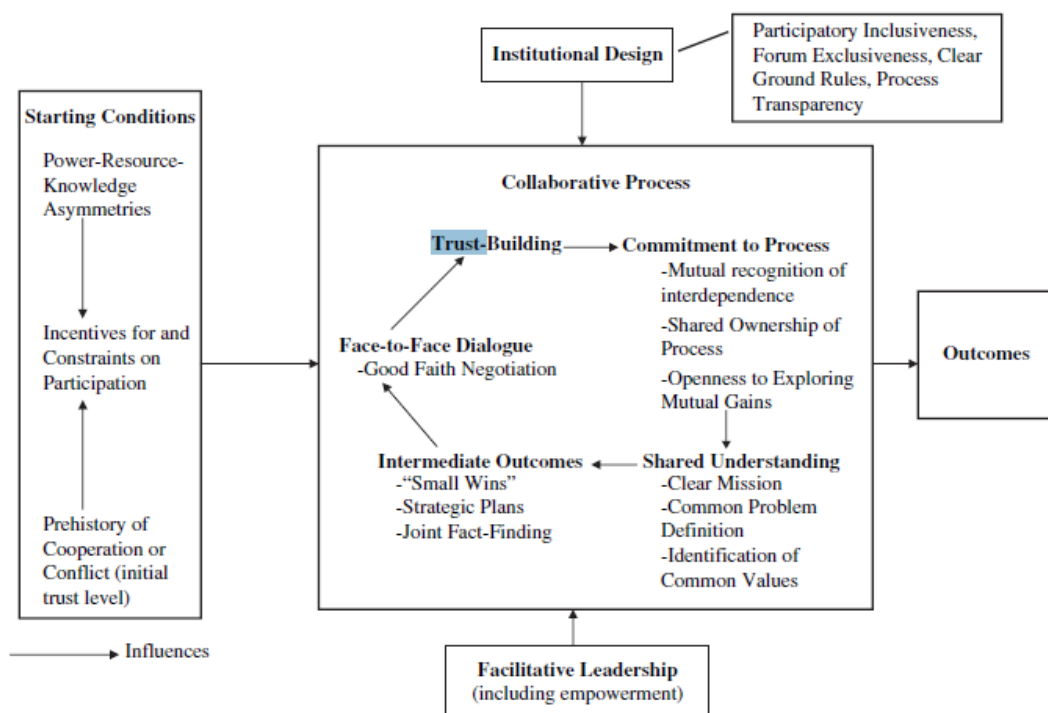
Source: Ansell and Gash (2008: 550)

In that context, the ongoing empirical agenda in EG is to identify *how* 'collaborative partnerships promote cooperation, learning, and bargaining', such as when actors recognise the benefit of 'participating in a portfolio of forums' to reduce strategy externalities (Lubell, 2015: 45; Mewhirter et al, 2018: 304). This approach must be flexible, because there are too many different – and often-changing - venues, institutions, and actors (with different motives) to produce a one-size-fits-all solution.

Conclusion

So far, this has been a whistle stop tour, in which we are beginning to identify connections between the general social science literature on trust and more specific applications in policy studies. The overlaps seem quite impressive, probably for two main reasons. First, many discussions of trust relate to common reference points, such as bounded rationality and individual/ social psychology. Second, several concepts – including trust – are often vague and elusive, with a tendency to use them loosely, partly based on the assumption that some words have an almost intuitive meaning. As such, it is often difficult to identify the mechanisms of trust development (except perhaps at the 'meso' level in which people form institutions and coalitions). Rather, to deal with a tendency to focus on policy processes, we often identify assumptions about trust development to help us model mass behaviour.

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ⁱ As currently worded, much of this discussion of policy theory comes from several chapters of <u>Cairney (2019).</u>
It is the classic solution for the overly-committed and under-worded scholar.