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Trust—A monolithic panacea in land use planning?

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ABSTRACT

Although trust research has been extensive and substantial, the constitution and actual merits of trust in land use planning remain nebulous. What do participants of a local land use planning process actually mean when they say they trust the planning committee? How important is participants' trust in the planning committee in shaping their perceptions of the planning process and their cooperation in it? To explore the everyday meaning of trust in the specific context of local land use planning, semi-structured interviews with the participants of a local planning project in Switzerland were conducted ($n=9$). Based on these results, the constitution and the relevance of trust in the responsible planning committee among a wider circle of participants were assessed ($n=66$). The results show that participants trust the planning committee if they perceive its members as competent, honest, open, fair, reliable, reciprocating, respectful and committed. Interestingly, a considerable part of trust in the planning committee hinges explicitly on whether the committee incorporates the personal interests of the participant. Trust is indeed vital to participants' belief that a meaningful discussion and cooperation with the members of the planning committee is possible. However, trust is neither a guarantee for people's approval of planning decisions nor for their cooperation. One implication of the findings is that in order to evaluate trust-building practice comprehensively, it is necessary to first understand the specific everyday meaning of trust for 'real people' in real planning processes.

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Introduction

The literature on the constitution and the relevance of trust is extensive. The merits of trust and trusting relationships for sound land use management are expected to be manifold and substantial. As academic work does not tire of emphasising the importance of trust, policy programmes and tools have been developed to facilitate the building or restoration of people's trust in decision-makers (e.g. Renn, 2006). The flourishing of tools for participatory planning and management has been an important result of this work. Nevertheless, it is still not clear what actually constitutes trust in the specific context of local land use planning. Should land use planning literature treat trust as a monolithic phenomenon or as a context dependent construct that consists of different and complex dimensions? To contribute to this question, the present paper examines the everyday meaning of trust for people involved in a local planning process in Switzerland. Furthermore, the paper investigates

whether it is justified to expect trust to be a panacea for resolving challenges in the planning process such as gaining participants' acceptance and cooperation.

Trust—a timeless concern

Trust is a phenomenon that has intrigued generations of scholars in various fields. A large body of literature undertakes to define trust, distinguish forms of trust and to examine in what situations trust might be relevant and why. Over half a century, researchers have offered an abundance of trust definitions and they have tried to understand the essential role that trust plays in social systems, from global to local levels (e.g. Barber, 1983; Kramer and Tyler, 1996). In short, trust refers to a person's beliefs in or expectations towards another party. Interestingly, some researchers have described trust as an 'impersonal structural construct', whereas others have characterised it as a personal or interpersonal construct (for a review see McKnight and Chervany, 1996). While the first idea refers to structures and characteristics of a non-personal object, the latter alludes to a person's beliefs about the attributes of a trusted party (another person or a group of persons). Indeed, the perception of the attributes of the trusted party and therewith its trustworthiness appear to play a key role in psychological trust research (e.g.

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Butler, 1991; Mayer et al., 1995; Clark and Payne, 2006). The number of attributes or dimensions that researchers have adopted to conceptualise and to measure trust usually ranges from one to three (e.g. Barber, 1983; Husted, 1990), though some work (e.g. Butler, 1991) has included more (e.g. competence, reliability, openness, honesty, caring, consistency, fairness). Some dimensions, however, appear to be more transferable between contexts than others and are thus more often used to empirically assess trust. Competence, honesty and a complex referred to as caring, commitment or fiduciary responsibility (act in the best interest of another party) are used with remarkable frequency across contexts (McKnight and Chervany, 1996). From a rational choice perspective, however, trust is intimately connected to the realisation of interests. Accordingly, people are rational actors that choose to trust another party if they expect a personal gain in so doing (e.g. Sydow, 2000). In combining such a rationalistic view with cognitive concepts of trust Hardin (1991) has argued that trust is an expression of an 'encapsulated interest'. "In other words, to say that I trust you means I have reason to expect you to act, for your own reason, *as my agent* with respect to the relevant matter. Your interest encapsulates my interest" (Hardin, 1999; p. 26, italics original).

Adding to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of trust, many researchers have proposed that two distinct yet interrelated types of trust can be distinguished: a general personal disposition to trust other people (general trust) and a context specific trust that varies among situations, settings and contexts. For example, trust in a very abstract policy institution at national level presumably does not consist of the same dimensions as trust in the members of a small and local planning committee. Since members of the latter usually have a more intensive and frequent exchange with locals and are selected to represent specific interests, trust is likely to have a different constitution than trust in national government. Due to differences in people's subjective trust theories, the relative importance of trust-related dimensions is likely to differ between individuals as well (Schweer and Thies, 2003).

Trust—a concern in land use planning

In the environmental and land use planning literature trust has remained a rather fuzzy and malleable concept. Nuanced understandings of trust have emerged in the context of environmental risk and resource management (Petts, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Poortinga and Pidgeon, 2003). Johnson (1999), for instance, suggests competence, care and consensual values as three distinct 'rubrics' of hazard-related trust. The latter implies that we trust another person if we believe this person shares our values. Particularly complex is 'care' spanning the dimensions fiduciary responsibility, fairness, honesty and respect. When evaluating proposals to site a hazardous facility, authorities are expected to fulfil their responsibility to serve the 'public interest' (e.g. evaluating the risks for the public, protecting the public from harm) rather than acting in their private interest. Risk managers are furthermore expected to facilitate fair decision-making processes in which people can have their say, to honestly admit risks and mistakes, and to treat people's comments with respect. However, the care rubric is ambiguous and not particularly straightforward. As Johnson (1999) points out, it is not necessarily clear whether authorities' caring for concerns means that they are expected to do what the trusting person wants them to do or whether authorities are expected to solve problems in a way that benefits the public as a whole. The latter case can involve measures that are not necessarily favoured by the trusting person. Similarly, Smith and McDonough (2001) show the ambiguous everyday meaning of the trust related dimension 'fairness' in natural resource management. On the one hand, fairness can imply people's wish for a neutral and equal consider-

ation of all concerns raised, and thus refer to the impartiality of the decision-making body. On the other hand, fairness might just as well allude to the outcomes of a process. Accordingly, a person perceives an outcome as fair if it is desired. An outcome is desired if it either fulfils the interests a person shares with others in the community or serves the personal interests of that person. Dimensions of the rubric 'care' might thus refer to the expectation that the trusted party is committed to common ends or committed to a personal interest of the trusting person. What becomes clear from the foregoing is that trust in environmental decision-making bodies appears to depend on the perception of certain attributes of these bodies and on the perception that they represent the interest of the truster (Petts, 1998; Solitare, 2005). The interest of the truster, however, might be a common good or a particular personal interest.

Although it is now widely accepted that trust is multidimensional, in the specific context of land use planning, trust is still largely treated as a one-dimensional phenomenon. This is unfortunate since the building of trust has been repeatedly highlighted as a goal and indicator of success criteria in participatory planning projects (e.g. Beierle and Konisky, 2000; Chess, 2000; Swearingen White, 2001; Tress and Tress, 2003). Previous evaluation efforts, however, largely fall short of a nuanced assessment of trust. Beierle (1998), for instance, has suggested to assess trust either by directly asking for trust or by measuring public's perception of the competence and the fulfilment of the fiduciary duty of the body in question (i.e. that the body will do what is right). Similarly, Halvorsen (2003) has approximated trust in a forest management agency via people's beliefs in the responsiveness and the performance of a forest management agency, in terms of both doing the 'right thing' and performing well. Deepening our understanding of trust in the particular context of participatory land use planning is hence vital for future studies.

The relevance of trust in land use planning

Considering the wide array of meanings of trust, the enormous expectations that rest on trust and its effects on attitudes, perceptions and behaviours come as no surprise. In the context of environmental and land use planning, though, trust is widely regarded as having an impact on people's support for and acceptance of planning practice. Numerous authors have argued that locals are more likely to accept proposals, outcomes or measures if they trust the responsible decision-making body (e.g. Swearingen White, 2001; Webler and Tuler, 2002; Connick and Innes, 2003). Even unpopular measures are more effectively 'sold' if the body in charge is perceived as trustworthy. Unfortunately, however, it remains for the most part unclear what makes decision-makers trustworthy and to what extent acceptance is actually related to trust.

It is also widely assumed that trust in responsible authorities is intimately connected to people's perception of the planning process. Frequently it has been argued that to trust the actors who rule the game means to have confidence in the procedure and the quality of engagement (Lauber and Knuth, 1999; Smith and McDonough, 2001; Webler and Tuler, 2002; Parkins and Mitchell, 2005). In particular, the perception of procedural justice or 'fair' participation is regarded as being influenced by the public's perception of the decision-making body (Iillsley, 2003).

The study of trust in various contexts has nurtured the belief that trust is necessarily related to cooperative behaviour. While some researchers have argued that trust is neither a panacea nor even a precondition for fostering cooperation (e.g. Mayer et al., 1995; Raymond, 2006), the tenor in the planning literature is that trust and cooperation are directly connected (e.g. Kumar and Paddison, 2000; Connick and Innes, 2003). It has also been frequently argued

that trust is the basis on which planning and implementing agencies rely since it creates favourable conditions for cooperation (e.g. O’Riordan and Ward, 1997). Moreover, it is not only cooperation in the implementation of measures that is regarded as hinging on trust, but also people’s intention to participate in planning processes in general. The dominant assumption appears to be that participation and cooperation increase with trust in a linear fashion. Recent empirical work in the field, however, has found that trust and participation are not necessarily related but can develop independently from each other (e.g. Payton et al., 2005; Höppner et al., 2007; Jongeneel et al., 2008).

The context of the study

During the last decade, land use planning in Switzerland has become increasingly open to more integrative and inclusive approaches. In aiming to better integrate diverse interests, a number of Swiss federal and cantonal guidelines as well as best practice reports have recommended setting up planning committees at the local level. Such committees usually consist of key stakeholders that represent a variety of specific interests in the use of local land. Local planning committees have been increasing in number, a trend which is in line with a wider international shift towards participation by key stakeholders stemming from a general emphasis on interest-based planning practice (Parkins and Mitchell, 2005; Billgren and Holmén, 2008). Hence these emerging planning committees can be understood as the materialisation of the ‘standard stakeholder approach to participation’ (Wilson et al., 2008). In terms of the make-ups of these committees, members should preferably have a local reputation for being trustworthy people (Bossard, 2001). Indeed, Swiss official documents and reports frequently refer to trust either as a genuine outcome of a successful planning process or as a crucial precondition for establishing wide support for planning processes and their outcomes (e.g. ARV, 1999; Bossard, 2001). It is furthermore widely assumed that trust fosters the cooperation of locals in the implementation of planning measures (e.g. StremLOW et al., 2003).

A number of Swiss municipalities follow official recommendations and establish planning committees consisting of a wide range of stakeholders. These committees have no official decision-making authority but are responsible for developing plans which are then subject to approval by local authorities. Consequently, the committees are not directly accountable to the general local public.

In 2002, Uster, a municipality in the peri-urban area of Zurich with a population of around 33,000, decided to launch a major planning effort to review and eventually redesign the use of the municipal non-built up area. Divided into two major phases, the planning work was officially finished in 2006. The planning approach taken by Uster was innovative in a number of ways. Firstly, it aimed at developing local land uses in an integrative way rather than treating them separately. A main challenge was thus to consult and to coordinate a variety of needs, concerns and interests. Secondly, participatory techniques were core elements of the planning process since they allowed for hearing the diverse voices of directly or indirectly affected locals. Thirdly, in contrast to conventional planning approaches, Uster’s planning effort was explicitly aimed at fostering cooperation among participants in the long-term, beyond the official planning phase.

As a first step a planning committee was established to guide and to run the project. This committee, the driver of the project, comprised eleven members, representing local farmers, nature conservation groups, local forestry associations, hunting associations, resident associations, neighbourhood groups, local planners and authorities. Four of these representatives had been recruited from Uster’s Commission for Nature Conservation and Landscape

Planning. Seven other members had been asked to join the committee since they were known for their local engagement. During monthly meetings and field inspections the committee discussed general aims, schedules and progress. Furthermore, the members of the committee were responsible for organising the involvement of wider parts of the local population, directly or indirectly affected by potential measures. Field inspections, information events, ‘round table’ meetings and workshops were held in order to consult concerns, needs and the interests of locals. The role of the members of the planning committee was to collect these interests and to decide which could be practically considered. Since the overall aim of the project was to reorder municipal land use, half of the approximately 70 local farmers attended these encounters at some point. Due to a tight financial budget, the members of the committee decided to organise and to moderate these encounters themselves. In this way, the committee had been visible to participants throughout the process.

Aims and research questions

The first aim of this paper is to bring to light the actual constitution of trust in the context of interest-based planning practice. Specifically, the paper aims at understanding what locals actively engaged in a land use planning project mean when they say they trust the responsible planning committee. The second aim of the paper is to contribute missing empirical evidence for the effects of trust on people’s planning process-related perceptions, beliefs and behaviour intentions.

Using the case of Uster’s land use planning process, the specific research questions are as follows:

- (A) What are the dimensions of the everyday meaning of trust in a planning committee?
- (B) To what extent, if at all, is trust in the planning committee related to (1) the participants’ expectations regarding the quality of cooperation with the committee, (2) their perception of the quality of the process (assessed along the criteria fairness, transparency and inclusiveness), (3) their acceptance of the planning process, (4) their confidence in the outcomes of the planning process and (5) participants’ intention to participate and cooperate in the future.

Materials and methods

To examine the everyday meaning and the relevance of trust in the specific context of land use planning, qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied in a sequential fashion (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). In a first step, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants of the land use planning project in Uster to explore the constitution of trust in the planning committee. In a second step, the results of the qualitative phase were directly fed into a questionnaire to measure trust and its relevance among a larger number of participants.

The interviews

Since the formation of trust is widely regarded to be influenced by the actual history of exchange between the person who trusts and the object of trust, interviewees were selected primarily according to the form of their interaction with the planning committee. In total, interviews with nine people were conducted. Since the study included a relatively homogeneous population and had fairly narrow research objectives, this number allowed data saturation (Guest et al., 2006). Interviewees’ face-to-face experience with the planning committee ranged from no previous exchange

at all to extensive exchange on various occasions. All interviewees knew about the planning process, had at least read about the committee's activities and showed a general interest in local land use. By means of semi-structured interviews, interviewees' subjective theories of trust were examined. In other words, they were asked to what extent, if at all, they trust the planning committee and what makes them trust or not trust the committee. Interviews were between 1 and 3 h in length. They were tape recorded and completely transcribed. NVivo served as the content analysis tool (Mayring, 2000).

The survey

Data were collected through a mail survey conducted at the end of the planning process in 2006. The survey was part of a comprehensive evaluation of the process. The target sample consisted of around 75 locals who had actively participated in the planning process by attending a workshop, a field trip or a round table meeting. Since the planning committee did not keep a list with the details of these participants, the questionnaire was mailed to all 190 local residents who had originally been invited to the planning process. The list of these 190 potentially interested locals had been built up by municipal authorities over the years. The file assembled those residents who had either affirmed their interest at some point or who had previously participated in any form and in any planning process to do with the spatial development of the municipality. All members of the sample were sent a questionnaire, an accompanying letter and a return stamped envelope. The letter explained how and why people had been selected for the survey, guaranteed anonymity and included instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire. A response within 3 weeks time was requested. The letter furthermore established that each response would contribute to the overall evaluation of the process and would help to improve future planning practice in the municipality. Members of the sample were also given the option to request a summary of the survey results. Approximately 1 week after the questionnaire was mailed, a follow-up postcard was sent to all members of the sample thanking those who had already responded and reminding those who had not. In total 66 people completed the questionnaire. From the 66 respondents 54 had directly interacted with the planning committee at some point by attending at least 1 of the interactive events, while 12 others had only attended an information event. The survey was successful in including the majority of the approximately 75 locals actively involved in the planning process. Some 21 participants could not be reached for they were either not on the original invitation list but had been attracted to the process through local media and leaflets or refused to fill in the questionnaire.

What becomes clear is that the land use planning process had attracted only a small number of locals. As discussed elsewhere, this situation can be explained by the relatively low profile of landscape issues amongst the local population (Höppner et al., 2008). The majority of the 66 respondents (63%) were people already engaged with local land use issues, either as professionals (30%) or as volunteers (33%). Hence, these people very likely had specific interests, which they wished to realise through participation.

The questionnaire was divided into the following domains of inquiry:

Trust in the planning committee: Dimensions of trust derived from the interviews were transferred into a set of eight items, using one item to assess each dimension of trust. Furthermore, an overall trust item was included to test the explanatory power of the dimensions. As response options, 7-point rating scales were given, ranging from 'applies not at all' to 'applies absolutely' (see Table 1 for item wording).

Five planning process-related perceptions and behaviour intentions: Respondents were asked to rate (1) their expectation regarding the quality of cooperation with the planning committee, (2) their perception of the quality of the process (fairness in the sense of equality, transparency, inclusiveness in the sense that all people that should be included have the opportunity), (3) their acceptance of the planning process, (4) their confidence in the outcomes of the planning process, and (5) their intention to participate in the future by: attending a workshop, attending a field trip, attending small group meetings with other participants, and by cooperating in the implementation of measures. Again, 7-point rating scales were given as response option, ranging from 'applies not at all' to 'applies absolutely' (see appendix for item wording).

All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 16. A linear regression analysis was performed to test to what extent the trust dimensions explained overall trust in the planning committee (research question A). Furthermore, five linear regression models were used to examine the direct relationships between trust and respondents' process-related perceptions and intentions (research question B). For each of the five process-related perceptions and intentions the mean of the items was used in the regression models. All models were tested for outliers and their possible influence on the models' performance using scatter plots and residuals statistics. Furthermore VIFs and tolerances were used as indicators for multicollinearity. In the models presented in this paper multicollinearity was not a problem since all VIFs were below 2.0 and tolerances were above 0.4.

Results

Exploring the dimensions of trust in the planning committee

When asked whether and why they trust the planning committee, interviewees usually embedded their responses in a story about past experiences with the committee; some dimensions of trust were mentioned explicitly whereas others were expressed implicitly. Eight dimensions of trust in the planning committee were derived from the interviews. Content analysis of the interviews showed that the relevance of specific dimensions of trust in the planning committee differed among interviewees. Accordingly, each interviewee showed a somewhat different belief in what their personal trust in the committee consisted of. What is interesting, however, is that some interviewees explicitly stated that their trust depends on whether the members of the committee are perceived as committed to interviewees' personal interests.

In the following a description of the eight dimensions is given.

Reciprocity

This dimension refers to a perceived balance in the relationship between interviewees and the committee. Interviewees repeatedly indicated that their trust hinges considerably on a balanced 'give and take' between themselves and the members of the committee. If the members of the committee are believed to hold attributes that prevent them from behaving in an exploitive and selfish manner, interviewees consider them much more trustworthy.

Fairness

For most interviewees fairness is a critical dimension of trust. Some interviewees used the term fairness to refer to the extent to which they think the committee treats the concerns of all participants in an equal manner. For other interviewees, however, fairness had a different meaning. Their perception of fairness was explicitly

Table 1
 Item wording, descriptive statistics, and correlation coefficients for dimensions of trust and overall trust in the planning committee.

| Item wording for dimensions of trust and overall trust | Number of respondents | Mean | Standard deviation | Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (2-tailed) between dimension of trust and overall trust |
|---|-----------------------|------|--------------------|---|
| The planning committee. . . | | | | |
| <i>Reciprocity</i> | | | | |
| '...not only takes but also gives.' | 54 | 3.72 | 1.31 | 0.65** |
| <i>Fairness</i> | | | | |
| '...treats all concerns equally.' | 57 | 3.68 | 1.18 | 0.80** |
| <i>Honesty</i> | | | | |
| '...is honest and members say what they think.' | 55 | 3.67 | 1.30 | 0.53** |
| <i>Respect</i> | | | | |
| '...takes comments seriously.' | 53 | 3.60 | 1.39 | 0.76** |
| <i>Openness</i> | | | | |
| '...informs transparently about everything to do with the project.' | 57 | 4.00 | 1.15 | 0.62** |
| <i>Reliability</i> | | | | |
| '...is reliable.' | 57 | 4.23 | 1.03 | 0.72** |
| <i>Competence</i> | | | | |
| '...and its members are competent.' | 56 | 4.29 | 1.42 | 0.75** |
| <i>Commitment to participant's personal interest</i> | | | | |
| '...is committed to act in my personal interests.' | 55 | 3.51 | 1.30 | 0.64** |
| <i>Overall trust</i> | | | | |
| 'I trust the planning committee.' | 57 | 4.18 | 1.43 | 1.00 |

Note. Means are based on a 7-point rating scale ranging from 0 = 'applies not at all' to 6 = 'applies absolutely'.
 ** $p < 0.01$.

conditional on whether their personal interests were actually taken into account.

Honesty

That the committee is honest in its communication and its members speak what they think was a further important dimension of trust in the planning committee.

Respect

That the members of the committee are respectful towards participants was repeatedly mentioned as a key for a trustful relationship. Interviewees expect the committee to consider them as serious and capable partners. Furthermore, interviewees need to feel that the planning committee esteems their engagement and their work.

Openness

Interviewees highlighted openness as a characteristic that makes the committee trustworthy. However, openness had apparently a number of different meanings. On the one hand, interviewees referred to it as the extent to which they believe that the planning committee is open to hear about their personal interests. On the other hand, interviewees meant transparency and referred to the perception that the committee informs openly about affairs, facts and circumstances.

Reliability

This is a very broad dimension that is strongly related to the form and intensity of the relationship between the interviewee and the members of the committee. Interviewees who knew the members of the committee well and had worked with them intensively referred to reliability as the extent to which the members are consistent in their work. This consistency made it easier to predict and thus to rely on the committee's performance. Regardless of the form and intensity of the relationship, all interviewees found it important that they could rely on the committee to stick to agreements and to keep promises.

Competence

This dimension refers to the interviewees' belief that the planning committee has the capabilities, competency and expertise that are necessary to perform properly. Specifically, the committee was expected to make informed and sound decisions, to know related legal and planning procedures, to be able to foresee consequences of decisions, and to understand the needs and the work of different land users.

Commitment to participant's personal interest

This dimension describes the extent to which an interviewee believes that the members of the planning committee are committed to the interviewee's personal interests and act accordingly. Interviewees stressed the need to see that the committee was dedicated to actions that would help to realise their personal interests.

Assessing trust in the planning committee

To gain a general idea of the level of respondents' trust in the committee, Table 1 displays means and standard deviations for each dimension of trust. Respondents showed highest trust in the competence and reliability of the planning committee, whereas they were least convinced that the committee was actually committed to their personal interests. Interestingly, the average level of trust was relatively high for all dimensions. Standard deviation scores indicate considerable inter-individual differences.

Subsequently, the statistical relationship between the dimensions of trust and overall trust was tested. Table 1 shows that the eight dimensions of trust were assessed using eight items. Pearson correlation coefficients between the overall trust item and the eight trust items were positive and significant, ranging between $r = 0.62$ and $r = 0.80$. The eight dimensions of trust produced an adjusted R^2 of 0.72 ($F(8,45) = 15.65, p = 0.000$) for the prediction of respondents' overall trust in the planning committee.

Trust literature and interview findings suggest that trust relates to both perceived attributes of the trusted party and the perception that the trusted party is committed to act in the personal interest of the trusting person. In a next step it was thus tested to what extent participants' trust was related to the committee's trust relevant attributes (competence, reliability, openness, respect,

Table 2
Standardised coefficients, *t*-values and adjusted R^2 for five linear regression models examining the effects of interest-independent trust and interest-dependent trust in the planning committee.

| | Expected quality of cooperation | | Perception of process quality | | Acceptance of planning process | | Confidence in process outcomes | | Intention to participate and cooperate | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|--|----------|
| | Beta | <i>t</i> | Beta | <i>t</i> | Beta | <i>t</i> | Beta | <i>t</i> | Beta | <i>t</i> |
| Interest-independent trust | 0.89 | 7.92*** | 0.61 | 4.29*** | 0.62 | 3.77*** | 0.59 | 3.66*** | 0.19 | 0.99 |
| Interest-dependent trust | 0.11 | 1.02 | 0.08 | 0.60 | 0.12 | 0.71 | 0.07 | 0.44 | −0.12 | −0.65 |
| <i>N</i> | 52 | | 53 | | 53 | | 54 | | 54 | |
| Significance | 0.000 | | 0.000 | | 0.000 | | 0.000 | | 0.388 | |
| Adjusted R^2 | 0.65 | | 0.43 | | 0.27 | | 0.27 | | 0.00 | |

*** $p < 0.001$.

honesty, fairness, reciprocity) on one hand and the perceived commitment of the committee to act in participants' personal interests on the other. For this purpose the eight trust items were divided into two different sets. The seven items not referring to respondents' personal interests but to the committee's attributes were assigned to set 1, which is subsequently labeled as 'interest-independent trust' ($M = 3.88$, $S.D. = 1.08$, Cronbach's alpha 0.93, for item wording see Table 1). Set 2, labeled as 'interest-dependent trust', consists of the item assessing the dimension 'commitment to participant's personal interest' ($M = 3.51$, $S.D. = 1.30$, for item wording see Table 1). A linear regression analysis was performed using the two means of the sets as independent variables and the overall trust item as the dependent variable. Linear regression revealed a significant and positive relationship between overall trust and interest-independent trust (beta = 0.68, $t = 6.64$, $p = 0.000$). The relationship between overall trust and interest-dependent trust was positive and marginally significant (beta = 0.20, $t = 2.04$, $p = 0.047$).

Assessing the effects of trust in the planning committee

Five linear regressions models were performed to test the direct relationships between respondents' trust and five planning process-related perceptions and intentions (see appendix for item wording). The results are shown in Table 2.

- (1) *Expected quality of cooperation with the planning committee*: The positive and significant relationship between trust in the planning committee and respondents' belief that it is possible to discuss issues with the committee in a constructive and cooperative manner is remarkable. The model explained 65% of the total variation in respondents' belief. Noteworthy is that only interest-independent trust had a significant influence in the model.
- (2) *Perception of the process quality*: The relationship between trust and respondents' perception of the planning process as fair, transparent and inclusive was positive and significant. The model accounted for 43% of the variation in perceived process quality. Only interest-independent trust was significant as predictor.
- (3) *Acceptance of the planning process*: Linear regression revealed a positive and significant relationship between respondents' acceptance of the process and their trust in the planning committee. The model explained 27% of the total variation in the dependent variable. Again, only interest-independent trust had a significant linear relationship with respondents' acceptance of the planning process.
- (4) *Confidence in the outcomes*: The relationship between respondents' trust in the planning committee and their confidence in the outcomes of the planning process was positive and significant. Independent variables explained 27% of the variation in

respondents' confidence. Only interest-independent trust was a significant predictor in the model.

- (5) *Intention to participate and cooperate*: Linear regression revealed no direct relationship between respondents' trust in the planning committee and their intention to participate and cooperate in the implementation of measures.

Discussion and conclusions

Is trust monolithic?

In the planning literature it is usually not specified what the word trust actually means. Often it is left to the reader's imagination what the author had in mind when suggesting that trust is important for successful planning processes. Consequently, the chance that the reader can learn about people's trust in local planning committees is relatively small. This situation is unfortunate since a general trend in increasing key stakeholder participation in land use planning has led to a flourishing of local planning committees, not only in Switzerland. Empirical efforts to understand what locals actually mean if they say they trust or do not trust members of a planning committee are thus vital.

By exploring the everyday meaning of trust for 'real people' in 'real situations' (Johnson, 1999), this study could explain a large part of local people's trust in a land use planning committee. The study has shown that locals' trust is certainly a multifaceted construct consisting of different and complex dimensions rather than a monolithic phenomenon. This finding corresponds with previous work in the fields of environmental and risk management (e.g. Petts, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Poortinga and Pidgeon, 2003) and adds to the understanding of trust in the context of participatory land use planning. An important implication for future evaluation efforts is that it is inappropriate to only assess one or two dimensions of trust (e.g. Beierle and Konisky, 2000) if the aim is to comprehensively examine the development of trust through participation.

In the case presented, locals trusted the planning committee if its members were perceived as competent, honest, open, fair, reliable, reciprocating, respectful and committed to fulfilling locals' personal interests. While there are clear similarities to the dimensions usually found in the literature, there are also some striking differences. That competence is relevant to trust matches with literature on trust in various fields and situations (e.g. Barber, 1983; Butler, 1991; Petts, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Poortinga and Pidgeon, 2003). Furthermore, the finding that fairness, openness, honesty, respect and reciprocity are trust relevant attributes is in accordance with previous work on the dimensionality of trust in environmental risk management (e.g. Johnson, 1999). To foster trust members of the committee have thus to treat people in the ways noted above.

Indeed, these dimensions related to attributes and qualities of the planning committee are most relevant for people's trust. Importantly, however, the findings add to previous empirical work (Smith

and McDonough, 2001) on the ambiguities in the everyday meaning of trust dimensions. Specifically, this study has shown that perceived fairness can either hinge on whether the members of the planning committee are ascribed to treat all concerns equally or whether they actually take into account the personal interests of the trusting person. Similarly, the everyday meaning of openness can refer to the perception that decision makers inform openly about affairs, facts and circumstances or to the committee's openness to hear about specific interests.

The findings diverge from previous research in that participants did not expect the committee to have a fiduciary responsibility to act in the interest of the general local public. Particularly in the field of environmental and risk management official bodies are expected to act according to such a fiduciary responsibility, e.g. to protect the public from harm (e.g. Baxter et al., 1999; Johnson, 1999; Leahy and Anderson, 2008). This finding might indicate a difference in the constitution of trust in impersonal public bodies that are obliged to act for the common good (e.g. Barber, 1983) and non-elected stakeholder committees in a local setting. The study has furthermore shown that some participants perceived members as trustworthy if they believed members were committed to act in the participant's personal interests. This finding fits into previous work arguing that people trust a specific other if they perceive a shared commitment to an interest (e.g. Hardin, 1999). Accordingly, participants trust the members of the committee because they have reason to believe the members' interests encapsulate their own. Given that the situation in this study is a very specific though common one in which local people are called to bring in their specific interests, the relevance of interest realisation for trust is not too surprising. In showing that trust is based neither solely on perceived attributes and characteristics nor solely on the perception of shared interests but on both, this study has augmented our understanding of trust in local stakeholder committees. The realisation of personal interest might be less important for trust in cases in which the planning process focuses on consensus building through extensive deliberation (Innes, 1996; Carr and Halvorsen, 2001) as opposed to merely consulting and aggregating individual interests as in the case presented. In such situations the belief that the people responsible for developing plans are committed to achieving ends shared among all participants might be relevant for trust. The perception of shared values rather than shared interests might be important where trust judgements cannot be based on personal interaction, as has been shown for trust in distant risk management agencies (Earle and Cvetkovich, 1995, 1997; Siegrist et al., 2000).

Is trust a panacea?

Trust is an important ingredient but far from a panacea in land use planning, as this study has shown. Indeed, trust is intimately connected with people's belief that a meaningful discussion and cooperation with members of the planning committee is possible. As claimed by previous studies on the subject, trust can create favourable conditions for cooperation (e.g. Shindler and Cramer, 1999; Kumar and Paddison, 2000). However, as the study has demonstrated, trust in the planning committee could not explain people's intention to actually participate and cooperate in the implementation of measures. This finding corresponds with recent empirical research by Jongeneel et al. (2008) who found that farmers' trust in government is not necessarily a strong predictor for their willingness to participate in government led activities. Hence, participation and cooperation are not contingent on trust in the committee but might be spurred by other factors. For example, the perception that the costs of non-cooperation are higher than those of cooperation and trust in fellow participants may be relevant (Payton et al., 2005; Raymond, 2006; Weible, 2008).

Trust in the planning committee was directly and positively related to the acceptance of the planning process and confidence in its outcomes. This study thus supports findings from previous qualitative research (e.g. Swearingen White, 2001; Connick and Innes, 2003). However, trust could only account for a part of people's support which corresponds with previous quantitative research in the field of risk regulation (Poortinga and Pidgeon, 2005). Consequently, it would be inappropriate to regard trust in a planning committee as a guarantee for people's approval of planning outcomes. Rather it is likely that acceptance and confidence in the outcomes are influenced by further factors such as the opportunity to participate in the planning process, economic subsidies and the process' perceived room for manoeuvre within the local and supra-local planning system (e.g. Luz, 2000; Höppner et al., 2007; Schenk et al., 2007).

Moreover, this study contributes empirical evidence for a widely assumed positive relationship between trust in the decision-making body and the perception of a planning process as fair, as transparent and as inclusive (Lauber and Knuth, 1999; Smith and McDonough, 2001; Parkins and Mitchell, 2005). These widely promoted quality criteria for good planning practice are indeed strongly related to the performance of the responsible actors. If the planning process is perceived as flawed then this is likely to have consequences for trust in the responsible committee. Although this relationship was strong in the presented case, participants' assessment of process qualities could not be explained by their trust alone. Rather, findings suggest that the perceived quality must be related to further factors, which may not be entirely in the hands of the planning committee, such as the exercise of power by other participants or the willingness of locals to participate.

The study furthermore contributes the idea that the perception of trust relevant attributes and the perception of shared interests may have different relevance for people's perceptions of a land use planning process. In the case presented, people who believed that the planning committee treats them in a reciprocal, reliable, respectful and equal manner, is honest, performs competently and informs transparently were more likely to have positive views of the planning process. Although relevant for participants' overall trust, the members' commitment to act in participants' personal interest did not significantly affect participants' views. Given these findings, members of planning committees would do well to focus on the quality and impartiality of their performance rather than on merely promising the incorporation of individual interests. While pursuing individual interests of participants might increase trust of some participants, the resulting trust is less likely to support positive perceptions of the planning process and to foster favourable conditions for cooperation.

Limitations and further research

The present study has shown that to approach trust as a one-dimensional phenomenon is not appropriate, and does little to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the relevance of trust in local planning processes. A more detailed description of what is exactly meant when writing about trust and a more consistent assessment of trust across planning projects is thus desirable. Firstly, it would allow sound comparisons. Secondly, it would allow a more nuanced understanding of the role and relevance of specific dimensions of trust. Thirdly, it would help researchers and practitioners to learn from each other and to progress in the long-term.

The eight dimensions derived from interviews with participants of a local land use planning process in Switzerland explained trust in the responsible planning committee to a large extent, however, not completely. Thus, future studies should include additional items

to assess further sub-dimensions of such broad dimensions as fairness, openness and reliability. Future research should take up the challenge of developing trust scales for the context of land use planning. Such scales will be crucial to evaluate and compare efforts to build trust comprehensively. In this context it will be vital to closely examine the interrelationships between trust dimensions.

Naturally, this paper could only partly resolve the phenomenon of trust in local land use planning. The results of this study apply only for those people who were directly involved in the planning process rather than for the general local or even wider public. Although further studies are needed before the results can be generalised to other situations, the similarity of some trust dimensions with the ones found in the literature indicates that they are pertinent across situations and contexts.

Future work should clearly specify whether dimensions such as commitment and fiduciary responsibility refer to a public interest and common goals or a personal interest of the trusting person which may or may not be compatible. The ambiguous meaning of some dimensions such as fairness and openness should be considered in future studies. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine whether the constitution of trust differs between participants of consultative and deliberative planning processes.

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Appendix A. Item wording, means and standard deviations for process-related perceptions and behaviour intentions

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- (1) *Expected quality of cooperation* ($M = 4.43$; $S.D. = 1.17$):
'I think it is possible to cooperate with the committee in a constructive and cooperative manner.'
- (2) *Perception of the process quality* ($M = 3.81$; $S.D. = 1.15$):
'The planning process is fair.'
'All decisions in the planning process are made in a transparent way.'
'The planning process includes all people who are concerned.'
- (3) *Acceptance of planning process* ($M = 4.51$; $S.D. = 1.28$):
'I think the planning process is a good thing that deserves to be supported.'
- (4) *Confidence in the outcomes* ($M = 3.86$; $S.D. = 1.39$):
'The planning process brings something good about.'
'I think the planning process solves existing problems.'
- (5) *Intention to participate and cooperate* ($M = 3.65$; $S.D. = 1.40$):
'I am ready to ...'
'... attend a workshop.'
'... attend a field trip.'
'... attend group meetings.'
'... cooperate in the implementation of measures.'
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