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Introduction

Trust and Narratives of Crisis and Catastrophe

The experience of crisis and catastrophe situations of all kinds is often accompanied by a loss of trust: the loss of trust that life will continue along familiar lines, the loss of trust in individual actors or political institutions that are held responsible for a given crisis or catastrophe, or not trusted to manage the situation adequately. Narratives that anticipate, respond to, or commemorate crises will accordingly often address issues of trust. This applies equally to fictional and factual narratives, even though texts may differ significantly in terms of both narrative form and communicative intention. Through a narrative exploration, crisis narratives can serve as analytical tools and, for example, tease out criteria for when trust is appropriate and when mistrust is warranted. The crisis situation can here serve to expose potential breaking points in social relations. Yet trust is often more than just a topic, since narratives can themselves be important means of building trust, or they can purposefully promote mistrust.

The four contributions to this special issue of *DIEGESIS* look at the relationship of trust and narratives of crisis or catastrophe from different angles and disciplines. What all contributions have in common is that they engage with relatively recent real world events which are conceived of as crisis situations undermining relationships of trust: an explosion at a German industrial site in 2021, the recent rise of Hindu nationalism in India, the 2008 financial crisis and its impact in Ireland, and contemporary refugee migration. The narratives investigated in the different articles have all been developed in response to one of these crisis situations, yet, as the analyses demonstrate, they each negotiate the role of trust and distrust in their own specific way.

In their joint contribution "Doing Trust and Crisis Communication. Narratives of the 2021 Explosion in the Chempark Leverkusen," Lucas Ferl, Frank Fiedrich, Tim Lukas, Cécile Stehrenberger, and Bo Tackenberg analyse a case of disaster-related crisis communication. In its public communications through different media channels Currenta, the company responsible for the explosion, aimed at presenting a crisis narrative which featured the company as a competent, transparent and trustworthy crisis actor. The authors of the article regard this strategy as a form of 'doing trust,' in the sense that the version of events presented by the company was intended to restore a trustful relationship between the public and the company. As the case study illustrates, such a form of 'doing trust' is a continuing process and has to adjust to changed circumstances

and react to competing narratives disseminated by other actors, which might articulate doubt and encourage mistrust.

The article "Losing Trust: Altaf Tyrewala's *No God in Sight* and Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Siege* as Threat Communication" by Sandra Heinen looks at two Indian English novels from the 2000s which represent the rise of Hindu nationalism in India as a social crisis. Although the novels are responsive to the same crisis, a comparative reading reveals that trust plays a very different role in the two novels. While Tyrewala's novel narratively stages and effectively mourns the loss of trust in intercommunal relationships, Hariharan's novel is shown to depict and encourage a specific form of 'particularised distrust,' which is seen as necessary to overcome the given crisis situation.

Katharina Rennhak, in her article "Narrating Crises of Trust in Post-Celtic Tiger Fiction," argues that "narrative fiction offers a perfect laboratory for the intersubjective negotiation of practices of trust" (p. 49). According to Rennhak, such a negotiation is necessary today, because we live in a world in which risks have become incalculable and trust consequently more important, even while trust itself is in crisis. Irish austerity fiction, Rennhak shows in her survey, represents not only the economic consequences of the financial crisis, which hit Ireland particularly hard, but also negotiates its impact on social structures of trust. The novels' character constellations, settings and plot structures become means to reflect on the crisis of generalised, particularised, and institutional trust.

Jan Rupp's article "Telling Y(our) Story: Precarity of Trust in Contemporary Refugee Life Narratives" focusses on the trust-building potential of narratives. In his outline of a narratology of trust in refugee life-writing, Rupp looks at narrative forms developed in refugee life-writing that counteract the precarity of trust inherent in the situation of migrants. Rupp introduces the concept of 'hospitable form' to refer to such narrative forms that function to mend mistrust and envision new relationships of trust. Fictional, non-fictional, and fictionalised accounts of migrants' lives are used to illustrate different narrative devices that promote, stage or enact relationships of trust.

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