3   Discourse analysis in a policy setting

As outlined in chapter 2, the conceptions of science, science policy, innovation, (sustainable) development and their interlinkages are not stable. In contrast, their meaning is contested and controversially defined. It is therefore crucial to analyze closely which definitions and approaches towards science, innovation and development underlie policies that are designed to have certain kinds of impact – and why this is so. In this conceptual chapter, I will therefore introduce *policy* as a particular setting and *discourse analysis* as fundamental concept for analyzing my empirical data.

Science policy, as a specific field of public policy, can be viewed through multiple lenses and with different focal points of analysis: As in other social science research, manifold conceptual approaches exist as theoretical frames of policy in general, and science policy in particular. Policy processes have been considered from a variety of scientific perspectives, such as sociology and political sciences, anthropology, international relations, psychology, economics, or management sciences (Sutton 1999; McNie 2007).

Apart from disciplinary differences, the different approaches to policy also vary significantly in their focus and scale: Approaches centring on structures can be distinguished from those centring on actors or contents of policies, and those on macro scale can be contrasted to those applied to the meso- and micro level (Blum and Schubert 2011). In this chapter, I will give a short overview of major theoretical approaches before describing how I conceptualize my analysis.

A prominent approach to analyze policies, stemming originally from political sciences, but also used in other social sciences, is policy analysis, grounded on Lerner and Lasswell's seminal work (1951). In general, policy analysis is concerned with the internal dynamics of policy making and implementation, and less with the structural function of policy in view of society (see Hoppe 1999; Sutton 1999; Schneider and Janning 2006; F. Fischer et al. 2006; Howlett et al. 2009; Blum and Schubert 2011). Policy analysis zooms in on the field of policy making and asks which interests, objectives and motives lie behind particular fields of policy making, thereby questioning what is on the political agenda, why it is on the agenda, if

its targets are promoted in an effective way, and who is benefitting. Interests pursued by different groups of actors are often used as point of departure of analysis.

Traditionally, policy analysis has used a policy cycle model, emphasizing stages of policy making, which as an idealtype is ordered in a cycle consisting of a problem definition, agenda setting, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation, back to a problem (re)definition (Hoppe 1999; Jann and Wegrich 2006; Howlett et al. 2009). These are pictured as a sequential process based on rational decisions. Very often, the heuristics of the model are accompanied by (neo-)institutional theories to explain policy processes, often based on rational choice assumptions of actors and their interests (Nullmeier 2001). According to Shore and Wright, traditional policy analysis thus rests on "positivistic models of perfect or bounded rationality in which economic actors pursue purposeful goals, decision makers make fully informed strategic choices and analysts measure policy effects in terms of calculable costs and benefits" (2011: 6).

Critical scholars therefore argue that this linear view of the emergence and implementation of policy is too simplistic and unrealistic (Jann and Wegrich 2006; Lyall 2008; Leach et al. 2010; Shore and Wright 2011). As an opponent of the policy cycle, Keeley states that "[w]hile these approaches have some use, much experience shows that policy processes are often distinctly non-linear, inherently political and contested, and more incremental and haphazard than these models suggest" (2001: 9).

3.1   The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse for policy analysis

Next to applying a political science lens on policies, policies can also be investigated from a *sociological* perspective. Using a sociological approach to analyze policies and effects is more suitable to my research subject: The focus of analysis within this study is on the underlying ideas, beliefs and objectives of BMBF policies and programmes for cooperation with developing countries and emerging economies, the processes and actors involved and the effects of the specific conceptualisation. In contrast to political sciences approaches to policy, with my research I do not intend to address any questions in view of the political system, such as effectiveness of different forms of governance and policymaking or the role of state power in policymaking. These questions, however, centrally underlie many political science approaches (Shore and Wright 2011). Traditional political science approaches to policy often centre on the role of the state in policy making, pluralist or corporatist approaches look at collective political actors such as interest groups or organisations which shape policy (Howlett et al. 2009). More recent approaches to policy in contrast often focus on participatory approaches to policy as means of strength-

ening democracy, on transformative governance (Hoppe 1999; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Fischer 2006; Voß et al. 2009; Newig and Fritsch 2009; Newig 2011; WBGU 2016).

In my analysis, I will resort to the concept of *discourse* grounded in the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD) developed by Keller (Keller 2005; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2012; 2013). Discourse was coined by Foucault, who used discourse as a concept describing the inherent relations between the social construction of knowledge and power (among other publications Foucault 2005 [1966]; 1972a; 1982). Approaches to discourse analysis based on Foucault's concept exist in different social sciences, including anthropology, linguistics, history or sociology, and have also been applied in political sciences since the 1980s (Sutton 1999; Hajer 2002; Wagenaar 2011). Approaches in this line of political sciences, often termed interpretive or argumentative policy analysis, ask for knowledge, discourses, meanings, and interpretations of political actors – in contrast to the focus on interests, linearities and causalities in traditional approaches to policy. Constructivist takes on policy view objects and problems of policy not as objective facts, but as social constructs: It is recognized that social and political problems can be defined, interpreted and understood from different and competing angles (Nullmeier 2001; Hajer 2002; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Fischer 2006). However, scholars in this line of policy analysis, such as Fischer or Hajer, are still a minority among policy analysts (Nullmeier 2001). Habermas' concept of discourse has been more influential for studying policies, thus conceptualizing discourse in a different way; as an argumentative process that underlies political negotiations (Kerchner 2006). An example in this vein is Schmidt's discursive institutionalism which centres on the role of structures and institutions in the policy process (Schmidt 2012).

Being interested in the *what* and *why* and *who* of German science policy on a social science background, a sociological approach to analyzing policy discourse seems most adequate as a conceptual approach. The *Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse* (SKAD) seems suitable, as it is aimed at providing a "genuine social science perspective on discourse interested in the social production, circulation and transformation of knowledge" (Keller 2011c: 43).

In his works, Keller provides an encompassing conceptualisation of discourse rooted in the traditions of social constructivism based on Berger and Luckmann (1966), symbolic interactionism, Foucault's initial concept of discourse (Foucault 1972a) as well as hermeneutic sociology of knowledge (Keller 2011c). In integrating the rather abstract discourse concept of Foucault and further sociological theories of the social construction of knowledge, Keller aims at turning discourse into a usable concept for empirical sociology (Keller 2005). SKAD has been applied to and tested on different research subjects. A further advantage of choosing SKAD is its level of methodological and conceptual detail. It has been continuously developed further and extended in scope and concept as a research programme (Keller 2011b).

SKAD centres on how and why knowledge is defined as valid, in which processes it emerges, how it is transmitted, how knowledge is related to power and which functions it has in society (Jäger 2001). In Keller's words:

> "Discourses may be understood as more or less successful attempts to stabilize, at least temporarily, attributions of meanings and orders of interpretation, and thereby to institutionalize a collectively binding order of knowledge in a social ensemble." (2013: 2)

Social actors construct, produce and attribute meaning, and thereby reality, through discourse, in a process of objectifying subjective realities. In line with Berger and Luckmann, Keller argues that shared knowledge emerges through social construction: processes of internalisation, typification and objectivation of knowledge which is then institutionalized, maintained and reproduced through discourses (Keller 2013).

In contrast to the everyday usage of the term discourse as an equivalent of discussion, a discourse is not just an idea that is spoken about and debated. Beyond an idea, existing in language, a discourse is institutionalized and objectified in form of social practices, communication processes, institutions as well as physical objects (Keller 2011b). The objective of discourse analysis therefore is to lay open the processes of social reality construction in institutional settings (Keller 2013). As the setting of my study shows some of the specificities inherent to policy making, I will complement SKAD with some constructivist ideas on policy processes as well as with some insights on the institutional dimensions of policy from argumentative discourse analysis (Hajer 2002; 2003a; 2006).

3.2   The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse in empirical research

In SKAD, analyzing discourses may encompass the analysis of the contents, the actors involved and their practices in discourse production, the context of the emergence of a discourse, as well as the effects of a discourse (Keller 2011b). In my analysis, I will broadly follow this proposition. The analysis of the processes of producing and establishing the policy discourse is additionally inspired by constructivist policy analysis.

3.2.1   Actors, practices and interaction in the production of policy discourse

With reference to Gidden's concept of the duality of agency and structure (Giddens 1979), Keller explains that a discourse and its structures, its *dispositive* (ch. 3.2.3) persists in and through acts of agency – in being repeatedly refreshed, reproduced,