

reification and stabilisation of the past policy discourse. Even though upfront, the forum was intended to gather different perspectives through including a range of actors in decision-making, thereby reaching a higher degree of objectivity (interview with PA11), the doors to the discourse coalition remained locked. According to Arnstein's classic "ladder of participation", public consultations as observed here thereby mainly serve to maintain the status quo of the institution in power (Arnstein 1969). In addition, the BMBF also secured its power over the direction of the policy discourse through the separation of different policy levels. The public fora did not address any concrete funding initiatives. Even though the FONA fora theoretically enabled deviating discursive directions, the BMBF could rely on a safety net which ensured discourse continuation.

## 7.4 Power in discourse production

As analyzed in the previous sections, the interaction with different groups of actors has different functions for producing policies and stabilizing discourse in the BMBF. In addition, the interaction is coined by and further coins the distribution of power among the actors involved.

Non-cooperation in policy processes characterizes the relation between the Sustainability Subdepartment and those actors which potentially endanger its institutional position – or are perceived to do so. Access to the policy discourse coalition and related speaker positions remain inaccessible to these actors. In the past, other ministries as well as the BMBF's International Department have been excluded from formulating policy initiatives as well as strategic documents such as previous versions of FONA. On the other hand, certain actors are invited to join the coalition. It is worthwhile to shed some light on the discourse coalition as such, pointing out the underlying benefits of each party in joining the discourse coalition, thereby also reflecting on the concept of the discourse coalition as such.

As spelled out in more detail in chapter 3, a discourse coalition is composed of actors whose "statements can be attributed to the same discourse" (Keller 2013: 73). This definition certainly applies to the policy making context of the BMBF and explains why a certain policy direction is taken, continued and prevailing. The admission of speakers and discourse contents in a coalition follows the potential speakers' symbolic, social, financial or cultural capital (Keller 2011b).

While SKAD generally stresses the interlinkage of knowledge and power in discourse, stating that discourse structures are power structures (Keller 2011b), there is a theoretical blind spot in the definition of discourse coalitions which becomes apparent in the case of policy making considered here. In the description of discourse coalitions, no reference is made to any potential power imbalances within discourse coalitions. Which coalition member decides about the admission? Who decides

which knowledge is relevant? In the power constellation as present in the case of policy making for research cooperation with developing countries and emerging economies, as a head of the discourse coalition, the BMBF is the sole actor in power to admit or neglect other speakers and thereby discourse contents. At the same time, the BMBF is in power to take policy decisions; and further in power to distribute financial resources. The term of a discourse *coalition* might therefore be somewhat misleading, as it rather implies a horizontal relation between its members, veto power and consensus. While among other members of the discourse coalition struggles about definitions are likely to occur, the ministerial position within the coalition grants it the power over decisions and definitions at all stages.

In case of the circle of actors admitted into the BMBF policy process, this power relation is revealed in the selection of speakers into the coalition. Selection – by the BMBF as head of the circle – is not primarily based on the speakers' capital. I argue that it is rather based on the discourse's external effects. Thus, actors gather around a common story line while additionally, all members of the community have in common to benefit from maintaining their (institutional and personal) position and related power. While being able to draw on certain resources is a precondition for speaker selection – such as the scientific credentials of the scientific experts consulted – the BMBF admits speakers primarily based on their previous conformity with the discursive direction. The ministry even strengthens institutions which follow the same direction in order to later draw on the external expertise provided through it, as the example of the German Water Partnership (GWP) in Box 7-2 shows.

Box 7-2: The case of the German Water Partnership as example of constructing expertise and gatekeeping the discourse coalition

The institutionalisation of the German Water Partnership (GWP) epitomizes the relation of experts and policymakers in BMBF agenda setting and illustrates the social construction of expertise in policy making: The GWP is a tool of legitimizing policy decisions based on evidence that exactly suits the BMBF's previous discursive direction. As "central coordination and contact office of the German water sector serving foreign partners and clients" (German Water Partnership 2015), the GWP was established by BMBF and BMU in 2008. Its creation aimed to foster international technology transfer and export of water technologies from Germany by branding a common umbrella for diverse activities.

At the same time, the GWP was meant to provide policy advice to the BMBF:

"The Federal Government will develop the future concept of positioning Germany in the international water sector together with the GWP. The GWP will also serve as a strategic forum for future activities in the lead market water for BMU and BMBF. The

BMBF's concept development in view of a new demand-oriented approach to science policy will be discussed with the GWP and contribute to the future research strategy of the BMBF" (BMBF and BMU 2008a: 21–22, *own translation*)

With the GWP, the ministry thus fostered an institution in line with its objectives, financially supported the organisation and aimed to seek the same organisation's advice in designing later funding initiatives. This exemplifies how a specific direction of science policy discourse, in this case fostering technology-oriented water research – takes on a self-reinforcing dynamic on its own. The GWP fulfils a double function for the ministry. Through providing an encompassing institutional and discursive frame for different actors of the German water business as well as researchers, the BMBF strengthened the discourse coalition on technology- and export-oriented water research. At the same time, the GWP serves as external instance of legitimating policies through proving external evidence to back up policies. The GWP is both a speaker within the discourse coalition as well as part of the dispositive which structures and maintains the policy discourse.

Observing the power of the BMBF over admitting and selecting other speakers in policy making processes relativizes findings within constructivist science-policy interface literature, which argues that the direction of science policy emerges in social interaction with external actors and depends on who is involved, and which interests prevail (Ely et al. 2010; Leach et al. 2012). While I do not want to neglect interests or needs of external actors involved in the process, the case investigated here especially highlights that policy makers themselves are no neutral entities but follow specific discursive lines.

I argue that the route to an economy- and technology-oriented science policy discourse, which becomes manifest in high level strategies such as the High-Tech Strategy as well as in policy initiatives such as IWRM (ch. 8, 9), is taken long before external experts are included in the process. In this sense, external actors reinforce and actualize a pre-existing accepted discourse, rather than *introducing* it. Thus, as exemplified in case of the GWP as well as in the selection of other experts, it is not their access to a resourceful position that leads to their inclusion in the discourse coalition on policy making, but their support of the established discourse's direction.

As such, the strand of discourse in policy for cooperation with developing countries and emerging economies as manifest in the IWRM initiative – strengthening German science and business while solving problems (ch. 9) – did not necessarily emerge because external advisors as members of the discourse coalition managed to lobby for their interests and influence policy makers. In acting as a gatekeeper to the discourse coalition, the BMBF ensures that previous policy discourse is *stabilized*. The selection of experts that fit in to the prevailing mindset thereby con-

tributes to a reiteration of a pre-existing discourse, instead of a change of direction. The BMBF's powerful position to actively neglect or enable entrance to its *circle of kings* of a discourse coalition of different actors stretches the boundaries of the concept of discourse coalitions. While it thus might not be an idealtype discourse *coalition*, the instance of BMBF policy making can be interpreted as an illustration of the relation of power, discourse and knowledge. Arguing with Keller (2011) that discourse structures are power structures, the discourse coalition here is not only an instrument of maintaining power over the discursive direction, but of safeguarding the own institutional status quo. The BMBF manages to maintain its power in relation to the other actors involved not only in view of the discourse's contents – by re-enacting its own discursive assumptions (“Deutungsmacht”) – but also in view of its institutional power.

This view does not necessarily contradict the position held in critical science policy literature, that external experts such as industry representatives are a powerful influence on agenda setting (such as Ober 2014) or that current directions of policy are the result of actor networks, as expressed by Sarewitz and Pielke who argue that the alignment of industry needs and policy “is not a result of serendipity, but of the development of networks that allow close and ongoing communication among the multiple sectors involved in technological innovation” (Sarewitz and Pielke Jr. 2007: 7). My argument rather shifts the focus to a different notion. Industry representatives as well as other experts involved in policy processes certainly try to influence the specific direction of science policy – as for example has been noted about the GWP, which interviewees have titled a lobby (interview with PP22).

However, in the specific instance of German science policy making, the ministry's power to include or exclude speakers in the coalition of agenda setting is decisive for maintaining or changing the direction of policy. As a further safeguard, external actors are only granted advisory roles, but no official decision-making power. As Hornidge (2007) argues in view of enquete commissions as advisors to the German federal government, the ministry maintains the final say about any policy programmes and initiatives.

## 7.5 A self-reinforcing equilibrium in science policy

While the apparent imbalance in the distribution of power between the ministry, project management agencies and the research community is notable, it is equally remarkable that only few researchers of those excluded from the discourse coalition openly contest the direction of policy or the underlying policy processes. For the BMBF itself as well as those members of the science community directly involved in the discourse community, the advantage of maintaining the current state of the