

**The Public Discourse on the Abolishment
of the Dairy Production Quota in Germany
- a Sociology of Knowledge Approach**

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Abstract

The dairy production quota was a policy tool within the Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union which was in force from 1984 to 2015. In advance of its termination, the abolishment of the dairy quota was publicly discussed among a variety of different actors such as government institutions, farmers and industry associations, scientists as well as the public media. Upon those discussions partially contradicting knowledge claims with regard to the policy change could be observed. In this regard, this thesis aimed to investigate how the abolition of the dairy quota was constituted in the public discourse in Germany until its termination. By adopting a sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis, the study empirically reconstructed out of textual data the social processes, actors and power relations involved in the (re)production and transformation of the discourse. The study found that social actors which occupied powerful institutional positions constituted the abolition of the dairy quota as a fact ahead of the decision in 2008 to terminate the policy. Moreover, towards the actual abolishment in 2015, two distinct meaning patterns in the public discourse were identified: while the *liberal sub-discourse* constructed the dairy quota abolition as a chance and necessary step within the general tendency for liberalization in the EU policy framework, the critiquing sub-discourse warned about the increasing risks for the German dairy sector as well as for society and nature. Ultimately, the distinctive meaning patterns of the sub-discourses culminated in a central conflict about the legitimate definition of the dispositif to steer social change in the aftermath of the dairy quota. Therefore, the competing interpretations can be understood as the social construction of change which argue between the free market economy and state-led market interventions in the pursuit of a certain development paradigm.

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Table 1: Interpretations of the Competing Sub-Discourses

Table 2: Actors positions and discourse coalitions in the sub-discourses

List of Abbreviations

AbL	Working Group on Peasant Agriculture [own translation] <i>Arbeitskreis bäuerliche Landwirtschaft</i>
BMEL	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture <i>(Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft)</i>
BDM	Association of German Dairy Farmers (<i>Bundesverband deutscher Milchviehhalter</i>)
BLE	Federal Office of Food and Agriculture <i>(Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung)</i>
CAP	Common Agriculture Policy
CDU	Christ Democrat Union (<i>Christliche Demokratische Union</i>)
CSU	Christian Social Union in Bavaria (<i>Christliche Soziale Union in Bayern</i>)
DBV	German Farmer's Association (<i>Deutscher Bauernverband</i>)
DRV	German Raiffeisen Association (<i>Deutscher Raiffeisenverband</i>)
EC	European Commission
Die Grünen	Alliance 90/The Greens (<i>Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen</i>)
Die Linke	The Left (<i>Die LINKE</i>)
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDP	Free Democratic Party (<i>Freie Demokratische Partei</i>)
MIV	Association of the German Dairy Industry (<i>Milchindustrie-Verband</i>)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SKAD	Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse Analysis
SPD	Social Democrat Party (<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i>)
VDM	German Dairy Association (<i>Verband der deutschen Milchwirtschaft</i>)
WTO	World Trade Organization

ZMB

Central Reporting of the Dairy Market [own translation] (*Zentrale
Milchmarkt-Berichterstattung*)

1. Introduction

This thesis focuses on the public discourse around the abolition of the dairy production quota in Germany which took place in March 2015.

The so called Dairy Production Quota Regulation (dairy quota) was a policy tool introduced in 1984 by the founding countries of the European Economic Community¹ to regulate the production of surpluses which characterized agro-food practices at that time. The member states were assigned guaranteed quantities of dairy which they in turn transferred to producers and companies. Furthermore, the production of surpluses was subject to a penalty payment, the so called super-levy (Fitzpatrick, 1990, p. 92).²

The production of dairy is a significant economic activity in the agricultural sector of the European Union (EU) which is the biggest dairy producer worldwide with a global production share of 23% (Isermayer, 2007). Measured by its total production value, dairy makes up about 15% of the total agricultural output of the EU. However, about 70% of the total output stems from only a few countries, such as Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Poland, the Netherlands and Italy (EC, 2017b). Among the 28 member states, Germany is the biggest dairy producer (BMEL, 2016; Isermayer, 2007).

The introduction as well as the abolition of the dairy quota can be regarded against the backdrop of a paradigm change in the European Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), which has been shaping agro-food practices in member countries since decades. Over the years, policies have been shifting from productivism and trade protectionism towards an increasing market-orientation, including competition at trans-national levels. Authors refer to these changes as a the liberalization of the CAP and respectively the dairy market (Bartova, Fellmann, & M'barek, 2009; Isermayer, 2007; Lassen, Isermeyer, & Friedrich, 2008, 2009). Belo Moreira (2015) describes this shift with the rise of a neoliberal hegemony within the CAP, although this trend is not linear.

The abolition of the dairy quota was defined during the 2003 Mid-Term-Review reform and reconfirmed during the so called Health Check reform in 2008. This policy change implies that as of 2015, the European dairy sector operates according to offer and demand. In combination with the simultaneous decline of market-protective measurements upon the liberalization of the CAP, such as export subsidies, EU dairy prices will then assimilate to world market prices.

¹ Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

² The super-levy was equal to the target price which in most member countries exceeded the producer market price (Fitzpatrick, 1990).

Furthermore, additional measurements to phase-out the dairy quota system were defined. First, under the term "soft landing" a yearly increase of quota throughout five years prior to the termination was applied (Bartova et al., 2009). Secondly, the so called "milk package" policy aimed at strengthening the role of producer organizations and initiated the installation of a EU Milk Market Observatory (Tropea, 2015).

Discussions on the dairy quota abolition among different actors

Already in advance of the decision, the removal of the milk production quota was a topic of political discussion as well as of scientific studies in Germany where publications focused on estimating the effects on the German dairy sector. Moreover, the quota abolition was also of concern to different actors of the dairy value chain such as the different (dairy) farmers associations and organizations of the processing industry.

In the most general sense, the abandonment of the policy has been expected to bring further changes to the dairy sector, especially to farmers. However, the way how this change in policy was problematized varied between actors as well as over time. For example, among German farmers' associations there exist diverging positions towards the abolition of the quota. While some associations welcome the entrepreneurial freedom and the chance for dairy farmers to increasingly serve international demands with milk *Made in Germany*, others see it as an intensified dependence on a risky world market with a rise in pricing pressure.

Indeed, a central point seems to be the fear of lower milk prices which are perceived as threatening for milk producers. In this regard, the policy change is often put in relation to the ongoing decline of (dairy) farms in Germany to which actors refer to as structural change. According to a statistical overview from the Federal Office of Food and Agriculture (BLE), between 2000 and 2015 the number of farms involved in dairy production declined steadily from 138 000 to 73 000 (BLE, 2016a). However, the central government has argued that even the dairy production quota could not guarantee stable incomes for farmers and did not prevent the abandonment of farming.

Since 2014, dairy prices have been in decline, causing considerate financial stress for dairy producers. In this respect, discussions, especially from the political and public realm, did not abate and triggered actors to discuss the termination of the dairy quota policy as well as possible follow-up regulations. Moreover, around the time of the actual abolition in March 2015 the topic flared up in the popular media, where it was often presented in relation to the low dairy prices and the ongoing decline of

farms.³ It could be noted that many of the aforementioned actors used the media as a platform to voice their opinions on the topic in question.

Concluding from the previous paragraphs, there exist a variety of partially contradicting statements about the dairy quota and its abolition in the public realm. Therefore, such an observation makes it interesting to approach this topic via a discourse analysis in order to shed light on the social processes, actors and power relations involved in the construction of knowledge about this policy change in a German context.

The relevance to study agro-food themes through discourse analysis comes from the specific conditions of modern agro-food practices, which have introduced not only a spatial but also social distancing from food production, its commercialization and consumption (Oosterveer, 2007; Phillips, 2006). This means that possibilities for direct social interaction and to experience realities first hand have been reducing. This applies to a milk consumer in the city who has never entered a cowshed as well as to a dairy farmer studying the monthly market prices for dairy in an agricultural journal or listening about the latest political developments in Brussels at a meeting with fellow colleagues. Consequently, this social distance grants discourses a more prominent position in how social actors understand the world and themselves regarding the production, circulation and consumption of food. This makes the abolition of the dairy production quota a relevant topic for discourse analysis.

To the best of my understanding there has not been carried out any sociological discourse analysis regarding an agro-food topic.

1.1 Research Objective and Questions

This research aims at reconstructing the public discourse which has been arising around the abolishment of the dairy quota in Germany up to its abolition in March 2015. By choosing a research approach which understands discourses as social practices constituting realities they can become subject to empirical research (see chapter 3). In this regard, the thesis aims to answer the following (sub) questions:

1. How is the abolition of the dairy quota constituted in the public discourse in Germany?

1.1. When did the discourse appear and how did it evolve over time?

1.2. What social actors (re)produce/transform the discourse?

³ Meanwhile, further policy tools have been implemented and due to the ongoing price decline the discourse of the abolition of the quota has dragged on well beyond the date of its abolition. However, according to its extent, this minor thesis will only focus on events until the abolition of the dairy quota at the end of March 2015 (see also sub-chapter 4.3 on limitations).

1.3 What resources do the actors draw on?

1.2 Thesis Outline

This introduction chapter is followed by chapter 2 which provides a further background to the research topic by describing the quota introduction as well as its abolition against the backdrop of the CAP. Moreover, it gives insights into the handling of the quota policy as well as dairy production and consumption in a German context. Chapter 3 introduces the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD) as well as theoretical concepts while chapter 4 describes the research methodology adopted in relation to the discourse analysis by drawing on the methods of data sampling, collection and analysis. The results are represented in three sections of chapter 5: Sub-chapter 5.1 reconstructs the origins as well as the emergence of the public discourse on the quota abolition in Germany, while briefly introducing the main discourse producing actors. This chapter covers the time period until the actual decision on the policy termination in 2008. Sub-chapter 5.2 describes the two distinct sub-discourses with regard to the abolition of the dairy quota in Germany, which could be identified increasingly in the period after 2008 until the actual end of the termination of the quota in March 2015. The sub-discourses are presented according to the actor's common interpretation of the phenomena in question and give insights into key justifications, causalities, responsibilities and need for action as well as the underlying values within the respective sub-discourse. Sub-chapter 5.3 focuses on the relations among discourse-producing actors and the infrastructure (dispositif) within the respective sub-discourses to provide insights into power dynamics. The final sub-chapter 5.4 offers a synthesis of the research findings by relating it to the theoretical framework. Chapter 6 discusses the research findings in relation to the research questions and identifies as well possible areas for further research. Moreover, the chapter provides a reflection on the research approach and the overall contribution of the research to the knowledge gap. Chapter 7 states briefly the final conclusion of this research.

2. Background Information

In order to enlarge the background on this topic sub-chapter 2.1 seeks to provide an overview of the CAP and to clarify why the dairy production quota has been established in the first place and which socio-economic, political as well as environmental dynamics paved the way towards its abolishment. Section 2.2 describes the dairy production practices as well as the implementation of the dairy quota in Germany. Section 2.3 treats the topic of dairy consumption and provides a current market overview.

2.1 A Recap of the Common Agriculture Policy

The CAP has been shaping agro-food practices in Germany ever since its establishment in the 1960s and it is therefore important to describe how the paradigm shift of the CAP, namely from market protectionism to an increasing liberalization, has been evolving and how this relates to the production, circulation and consumption of dairy in Germany and beyond. The CAP is funded by the EC and makes up about 40% of the EU budget expenditures. In 2009, the annual CAP budget was 50 billion Euro. (Belo Moreira, 2015). Germany is the biggest financial supporter of the CAP, after France.

From the production of surpluses to the introduction of the dairy quota

The CAP was established in 1962 by the EU-member states Belgium, France, Italy, Netherlands, Luxembourg and West Germany. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the objective of the CAP was to increase agricultural productivity, wealth and to assure food security for a war-stricken European population. This objective was combined with a range of policy measurements aimed to protect the common European market and the modernization of agricultural practices (Poppinga & Thoma, 2013). At that time, agriculture was recognized as an important economic sector and was part of the overall expansion and reconstruction agenda under the Marshall Plan (Belo Moreira, 2015).

For political reasons family farms were promoted against collective arrangements or corporate farming, restricting the possibilities to expand via scale (Belo Moreira, 2015). This approach fitted the situation in Germany anyway, since the country exhibited "a small family farm structure, a strong cultural commitment to family farming, and a tradition of economic protectionism" (Wilson &

Wilson, 2001, p. 17).⁴ Consequently, to achieve the above mentioned objectives, family farmers received subsidies and credits to adopt modern technologies and practices such as the use of machinery and agrochemicals. Moreover, in order to create more certainty for indebted farmers prices and sales had to be stable (Belo Moreira, 2015). For the production of dairy, this included an "unlimited price guarantee" disregarding actual market requirements (Fitzpatrick, 1990, p. 90).

Furthermore, the common European market was characterized by the removal of trade barriers among the member states and protection from imports via taxes. Moreover, production surpluses were aided by export subsidies and public intervention purchases (Belo Moreira, 2015; Isermayer, 2007).

The focus on productivity in combination with technological modernization made dairy production ever more efficient leading to rampant production outputs (Fitzpatrick, 1990, p. 90). Until 1980s European agriculture was characterized by the production of surpluses.⁵ This also meant inefficient and exaggerated budget spending as surpluses had to be exported, stored or destroyed (EC, 2016). However, these interventions also had their limits since prices for agriculture commodities were rather high in the EU. In Germany, the terms *Milchseen* and *Butterberge* (literally: milk lakes and butter mountains) coined the immense surpluses during that era (Poppinga & Thoma, 2013). The unconditional price support became a major point of critique towards the EU prior to the introduction of the quota, causing increasingly resentment among tax payers. Financial aids to the dairy industry had been for years the biggest budget expenditure (up to 40% of the total EU budget for agriculture) (Fitzpatrick, 1990).

As a response the EC introduced the production quota and penalty system for dairy in 1984 (EC, 2016).⁶ The European dairy quota determined the respective national production outputs which likewise meant a relative stability of market shares among member countries (Lassen et al., 2009). Moreover, in combination with the market-protective measurements mentioned above, it allowed to maintain higher dairy prices in the EU.

⁴ After the Second World War, there were about 1,7 billion farms in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and about one-third had fewer than 2 ha (not even counting those with less than 1 ha) (Wilson & Wilson, 2001).

⁵ This did not only apply to dairy but also for example for sugar.

⁶ The introduction of quotas (e.g. milk and sugar beet) was discussed at policy level already in the mid 1970s as a means to decrease production outputs and public spending. At EU level it was hoped that dairy prices would increase and dairy would remain a viable economic sustain for family farms (Fitzpatrick, 1990).

After some years of adjustment, the additional cut of the quota in 1987 finally revealed the intended effects. European milk outputs decreased and throughout the 1990s, the European dairy sector was further characterized by stagnation (Fitzpatrick, 1990).

From 1993 to 2003: from market-support to increased market-orientation

Since 1993, CAP reforms are fostering the decline of market interventions and a shift to direct payments to farmers. Especially the Mac Sherry Reform in 1992/3 initiated a move away from market interventions, such as export subsidies, increasingly rendering European milk prices to world market prices. Moreover, objectives concerning the agrarian structure, landscape conservation and the environment entered the policy focus (Isermayer, 2007). Therefore, this reform also meant the acknowledgement of the multifunctionality of agriculture, instead of only seeing it in terms of productive outputs (Belo Moreira, 2015). In this regard, the introduction of the milk quota can be seen as a preparatory step to remove most obvious critique points (surpluses) and heavy budget spending for market-regulating policies. Furthermore, instead of price supports direct payments to farmers were introduced, which were meant to balance income losses arising out of this change in policy (Maack, Kreft, & Voss, 2005).⁷

It is important to see this policy shift against the backdrop of a variety of socio-economic, political and environmental dynamics at that time. First, there were ongoing discussions and critique at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the EU's market-protective stance.⁸ Second, it coincided with the Anglo-American "movement to deregulate" which promoted liberalization and privatization of economic and societal structures at that time (Belo Moreira, 2015, p. 179). Third, the economic viability of agriculture policies had to be as well reconsidered in relation to anticipated EU-enlargements (Maack et al., 2005). The EU meanwhile increased from the initial five founding members to currently 28 countries. In addition, the agriculture and especially the livestock sector had been confronted with declining societal acceptance due to concerns about environmental pollution (increase of slurry) and animal welfare (Belo Moreira, 2015; Maack et al., 2005).⁹

Further reforms such as the Agenda 2000 deepened the policy turn taken in 1992 when the CAP was reorganized in two pillars. While production support was addressed under pillar one, rural

⁷ At that time, the direct payments were based on the productivity of a certain region in the past (Belo Moreira, 2015).

⁸ Belo Moreira (2015) sees the Cairns group as a push factor for trade liberalization in the European Union. The Cairns group consists of 20 agricultural exporting countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

⁹ Moreover, parts of civil society increasingly critiqued the contradiction in public contributions to EU productionism in light of famines in the Global South (Belo Moreira, 2015).

development became its second pillar. However, pillar one has been continuously receiving the largest share of the budget (Belo Moreira, 2015).

Furthermore, at the Agenda 2000 the four member states - Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom - opposed the continuation of the dairy quota regulation. By drawing on their blocking minority power they achieved a review of the quota system during the Mid-Term Review in 2003, which put considerable political pressure towards abolishing the quota (Kleinhanß et al., 2002).¹⁰

Simultaneously, strong pressure to liberalize and to comply with WTO agreements persisted (Belo Moreira, 2015) as European agricultural products continuously distorted world market prices (EC, 2016). Isermayer (2007) states that the milk prices in the European Union were up to 50% above the world market price. This was possible because market-protecting policies were only gradually reduced so far. Next to the intervention purchases already mentioned, there were high import taxes as well as export subsidies and allowances to sell milk in the EU market (e.g. to bakeries and as animal fodder).

In this regard, the dairy quota was as well a policy tool to diminish internal offer and increase the EU market price of milk. Combined with export and domestic price subsidies this allowed to achieve relatively stable dairy prices for EU producers while remaining competitive in export trade (Isermayer, 2007).

Upon the Mid-Term-Review 2003 those subsidies were further reduced (Isermayer, 2007). Moreover, the EU agriculture ministers decided to prolong the dairy quota system until 2015 and increase the quota in anticipation of a possible abolishment in 2015 (Isermayer, 2006). Next to intensifying a market-oriented focus, the reform also included a strengthening of certain points raised under Agenda 2000 such as (sustainable) rural development and promoting competitiveness of EU agriculture systems. Important aspects were the decoupling of income support payments from historic production outputs to a single payment per farm. Moreover, environmental aspects and animal welfare were strengthened by lowering direct payments in case of non-compliance (cross-compliance) (Belo Moreira, 2015).

As of 2005 a simplification of the organizational and regulatory set-up of the CAP has been taking place. The Health Check of the CAP in 2008 was a further step towards a market-oriented agriculture. This was also when the EC finally decided not to continue the dairy quota beyond 2015, which was actually introduced as a temporary measurement in 1984 (Bartova et al., 2009).

¹⁰ The four quota opponents also formed the working group CAPRI with the objective to make suggestions for further reforming the EU milk market policy (Kleinhanß et al., 2002).

Reforming the CAP: sustainable and competitive agriculture systems

As of 2010 further reform plans for the CAP had been discussed with the objective to simplify legislations and make policies more effective. Furthermore, this meant "the first ever overhaul of the entire policy" (EC, 2013, p. 2).

The new directions taken under the policy have the goal to make European agriculture more competitive and sustainable. It fixes "viable food production, sustainable management of natural resources and climate action and balanced territorial development" as long-term objectives (EC, 2013, p. 2).

The most recent CAP reform continues the shift from price support to direct payments to farmers initiated in 1992. It is decisive to note that the CAP budget expenditures labeled as "market-supportive measurements" in 1991 amounted to 91% of the budget, while in 2016 this share declined to about 5%. At the same time expenditures labeled "direct payments" only made up 9% of the CAP budget in 1991, while in 2016 they have risen to about 73% (DBV, 2015b, p. 100).

The 2013 reforms mean that direct payments (*Basisprämie*) are given to farms on basis of their amount of land they work. Moreover, those payments are linked to environmental and climate requirements, the so called "Greening" (*Greeningprämie*). There are as well measurements to tackle the ongoing structural change in the agriculture sector such as special payments and arrangements for small-scale farmers and incentives for young farmers (BMEL, 2015).

According to the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, in the budget year 2014/2015 a German farmer received € 308 direct payment per hectare and a farm received on average € 30,770 in direct payments per year (BMEL, 2016). The German government justifies payments to farmers with their societal role in landscape conversation, social (rural) community life and the production of high quality food. Moreover, farmers in the EU have to meet higher environmental, consumer and animal welfare standards than many other countries. In order to balance a respective market disadvantage due to higher production costs, payments are necessary to remain competitive in international trade (BMEL, 2016).

In this regard, EU agriculture policies have built agricultural systems which are depended on financial aid to producers in order to function in a globalized world. Due to the high degree of technology application this may be especially true for the dairy sector. After all, direct payments mean (albeit indirectly) a market-support which is socially more acceptable among the population but also in international political arenas such as the WTO.

2.2 Dairy Production and the Quota System in Germany

The introduction of the quota system initiated a regional reorganization of farms as well as processing cooperatives and companies. The way how the quota regulation was implemented and adjusted over time has contributed to the regionalization of dairy production and processing to the most competitive regions (Isermayer, 2007).

Upon introduction, the quota was linked to land ownership of the farmer. Consequently, shifts in production shares were only possible by acquiring or renting land in the same province or district, given that it was previously used for dairy production. As of 2000, a dairy stock market was introduced where quota shares of 21 small quota trade areas (*kleinregionale Quotenhandelsgebiete*) could be traded. However, such an adaptation of the quota system still limited greater regional shifts and structural change in dairy production (Lassen et al., 2009).

As of 2008, the 21 trade areas were reorganized in two bigger quota areas (East and West) which intensified competition at trans-regional level (Bäuerle & Tamásy, 2012; Lassen et al., 2009). According to Isermayer (2007), a simplification of quota transfer between federal provinces facilitates an increasing relocation of dairy production to more competitive regions. Overall, quota shares shifted from South (smaller farms) to North (grasslands) (Bäuerle & Tamásy, 2012). It is expected that milk centers continue to gain further importance, especially grass land areas. This is an estimation which is closely connected with policy support of biogas production (Isermayer, 2007; Lassen et al., 2008).

Effects of the quota in Germany: a more competitive dairy sector

The tendency to relocate to the most competitive areas for dairy production is accompanied by what scientist call structural change (*Strukturwandel*) (Bäuerle & Tamásy, 2012; Isermayer, 2007; Lassen et al., 2009). Overall, the number of (dairy) farmers has been decreasing steadily since 1965 in Germany, while the average number of cows per herd and productivity increased. Such a trend can as well be observed in other member countries of the EU (Lutter, 2009). According to a statistical overview from the Federal Office of Food and Agriculture (BLE),¹¹ between 2000 and 2015 the number of farms involved in dairy production declined steadily from 138 000 to 73 000. For the same

¹¹ According to its German abbreviation BLE (*Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung*), the BLE is an institution of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) and fulfills various administrative tasks. It is the "German market-regulating agency for the Common Market Organizations (CAP), within the European Union," for a range of agricultural commodities including dairy. Moreover, it is responsible for issuing import and export licenses for transnational trade. BLE also does the planning to ensure national food security (2015a).

period the amount of dairy cows has diminished from 4,6 million to 4,3 million, while the average number of cows per farm has risen from 33 to 58.¹² However, overall dairy production output has risen, namely from 28, 3 million tonnes to 32, 7 million tonnes, so did the average daily milk output per cow (from 20 kg to 25 kg) (BLE, 2016a).

In addition, German farms are characterized by a relative high degree of technology application with the aim to increase mainly (economic) efficiency. This condition is commonly referred to under the term precision (livestock) farming (BMEL, 2016). In the dairy sector this can involve the use of innovations such as concentrated feed which is targeted to the milk outputs of the respective cow by using automatic feeding machines, the use of milking technologies such as the herringbone parlor, robots and carrousel with respective software recording the milk output of the herd, as well as artificial insemination.

To sum up, structural change in the German dairy sector means fewer dairy farms, but they are overall more productive.

The introduction of the dairy quota initiated as well a national (and regional) reorganization of the dairy processing industries, implying a concentration of companies in order to reduce the excess capacities (Fitzpatrick, 1990). Furthermore, product innovations and catering consumer tastes have become important capacities for industry growth and competitiveness (Everwand, Ingenbleek, & Backus, 2007). There has been an impressive spread of variety in dairy products, such as yoghurts and cheeses, after the quota introduction (Fitzpatrick, 1990).

According to Friedrich (2010), in Germany, dairies are mostly medium-sized, but have merged into corporate structures with a transnational orientation. Moreover, about 70% of German dairy producers are organized in cooperatives in order to commercialize their milk. In addition, there are as well international (dairy) processors such as Arla Foods, Friesland Campina, Nestlé or Danone operating in Germany.

In hindsight, it can be concluded that the way how the quota was handled in Germany ultimately contributed to a more competitive dairy sector in Germany, while the number of actors in the dairy value chain, meaning farmers and dairies, has been decreasing steadily.

¹² There are regional differences in farm/herd size, overall in the South (Bavaria) farms are smaller than in the Northern.

2.3 Dairy Consumption and Current Market Outlook

Leaving war-stricken and starving Europe behind, Europeans, nowadays, consume twice as much animal proteins compared to the global average. With 300 kilograms per year, dairy is the second most consumed source of animal protein among Europeans who consume three times more dairy than the world average. Actually, all EU member states are currently exceeding the recommended protein intake.¹³ Drivers for this increase are seen in economic prosperity as well as relatively cheap food prices (Westhoek et al., 2011).

In Germany, dairy products have become integral components of the diet as well. According to the market research institute ZMB,¹⁴ in 2015 the average German consumed 91,1 kg of fresh milk products (milk, yoghurt, quark, fresh flavored dairy drinks, cream, etc.); 24,5 kg cheese and 6 kg butter. These characteristics underscore how the production and consumption of dairy is entangled in current agro-food practices in Germany.

In 2014, Germany exported 49% (16 million tonnes) of its production, mostly in form of cheese and other less refined products such as raw milk and milk powder. Important export markets for cheese are EU countries such as France, the Netherlands and Italy, while Russia, the US and Japan are important international markets. In 2014, Germany imported 10,5 tonnes mainly from the Netherlands, Ireland, France, Austria and Switzerland. A great majority of imports are made up of cheese and butter. Still, this makes Germany a net export country of dairy (MIV, 2017; ZMB, 2015).

However, these consumption patterns also show that in Germany (and the EU) expansion is still possible, but rather limited. Likewise, the international market has become much more interesting for a growth-oriented economy.

The attraction of an international market

According to the current Agricultural Outlook report for 2016-2025 (OECD/FAO, 2016), the global market for dairy products is expected to grow further, especially in countries of the Global South. The projected population growth as well as expected growth of per capita income are seen as factors

¹³ The extensive consumption of animal proteins (dairy as well as meat) has been linked to with public health issues such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer due to saturated fats. The consumption of dairy makes up the greatest share of the intake of saturated fatty acids in European diets (Westhoek et al., 2011, pp. 19-21).

¹⁴ ZMB (*Zentrale Milchmark Berichterstattung GmbH*) is a Berlin-based market research institute focusing on national as well as international dairy markets. The institution regularly issues weekly and monthly reports under the title "DairyWorld". For further information, see: www.milk.de.

which influence the rising demand of agricultural commodities.¹⁵ Moreover, in those countries additional income tends to be spent on food which can mean the beginning of the so-called nutrition transition. This implies that food consumption habits are going to shift towards a diet richer in animal proteins and processed foods (among others) (see also Westhoek et al. (2011)). Therefore, it is assumed that dairy products become regular consumed foods including a trend towards overconsumption (OECD/FAO, 2016).

Those observations at global level translate into a steady and - most importantly - increasing demand for dairy products.¹⁶ The report concludes that European dairy exports are estimated to increase by 58,5 % between 2013-15 (base years) and 2025. Moreover, Germany is among the countries which have already incremented dairy outputs since the abolition of the milk quota in 2015. For the marketing year 2014-2015, milk production increased in Ireland (+ 18.5 %), the Netherlands (+ 11.9 %) and Germany (+ 3,7 %) (OECD/FAO, 2016).

However, such an overall "bright" outlook for a growing demand of dairy does not automatically translate into prosperity for the dairy sector in Germany, especially not for farmers. The global dairy market is shaped by weather variabilities, agricultural policies and shifts in trade modalities in key production and consumption countries (OECD/FAO, 2016). Especially, the Chinese import demand may have a big influence on the dairy market. International prices for dairy products have declined since 2013 (especially skimmed milk and whole milk powder) which is related to a sharp decrease for imports in China. It is assumed that China will further increase its domestic production, but skimmed milk products and cheeses might be still popular import goods (OECD/FAO, 2016).

In addition, European countries are not the only exporting countries. For the marketing year 2014-2015, dairy production as well increased in Australia, New Zealand and the United States (OECD/FAO, 2016, p. 110).

Despite economic estimates and outlooks, unexpected changes and price fluctuations seem to be common characteristics of a global dairy trade. An event which has influenced especially European (and German) dairy exports (e.g. cheeses) lately is the Russian import ban which was introduced in 2014 and is currently supposed to last until the end of 2017 (OECD/FAO, 2016). The import ban triggered the German government to intervene in the market via public purchases to balance a price decline (BLE, 2015b). As already mentioned, such market interventions were most extensive in the

¹⁵ Population growth is expected to increase from 7,4 bn (2016) to 8,1 bn in 2025 and about 6,7 bn of those people live in countries of the Global South (OECD/FAO, 2016).

¹⁶ For dairy products a more intensive growth of consumption, especially for fresh dairy products, is expected for the Middle East region as well as Asia (India, Pakistan, Indonesia) (OECD/FAO, 2016).

1970s and 1980s, but were also deployed during the global economic crisis in 2008 and 2009 when the milk price dropped significantly.¹⁷ Such price declines are an immediate challenge for farmers who sell their milk to processing companies at a price below their production costs.

¹⁷ It has been difficult to get a clear overview on the development of public intervention purchases by the Federal Office of Food and Agriculture (BLE). There have certainly been interventions during the global economic crisis in 2008 - 2009 and in connection with the Russian trade embargo in 2014. In 2016 the BLE announced public intervention purchases 50,000 tn of butter and 109,000 tn of milk powder (BLE, 2016b, 2016c). Moreover, the German government renewed its aid commitment to private storage interventions (EU regulation 2016/1238). This adds to the difficulties in obtaining a consolidated overview on market-intervening measurements.

3. The Research Approach and Theoretical Framework

Based on the research objective and questions chosen, the thesis aims for a discursive approach to investigate how knowledge is constructed with regard to the abolishment of the dairy quota in Germany. In the following paragraphs, the characteristics of such an approach will be outlined and its theoretical and conceptual definitions which are relevant for this research introduced.

3.1 Social Constructivism as the Basis for Discursive Approaches

Discursive theories and approaches assume that knowledge is constructed through social processes. Therefore, a discourse analysis can be theoretically situated in the realm of social constructivism which rejects the conception that reality exists outside "subjective or socially shared viewpoints" (Flick, 2004, p. 76). In order to engage in the study of social realities from a constructivist perspective, scientists deal with the process of how actors ascribe meaning (Flick, 2004).

In their seminal work on social constructivist thinking, Berger and Luckmann (1967 [1966], p. 13) offer a useful definition for the term *reality* by describing it as "a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot 'wish them away')". *Knowledge* is defined "as the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics". This means that subjects, or social actors, perceive phenomena as independent objects with certain characteristics, and *to know* about these objects or phenomena is to assume that they are *real*, at least to a certain extent.

However, what social actors perceive as being real can vary from their social contexts. A sociological approach to reality and knowledge, then, deals with the processes by which certain phenomena can become real for social actors regardless of their actual validity (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 [1966]).¹⁸ With regard to the abolition of the dairy quota, the task is then to analyze what actors claim as being "real" about the phenomena in question and how this is achieved. It is very important to note that a discourse analysis is not a quest for the encounter of an "absolute truth", but of what counts as being true in a given social context (Keller, 2013, p. 74).

In recent years, and certainly owing to the influential work of French philosopher Foucault (2002 [1969]); (2005 [1966]), there is an increasing interest to analyze the processes implied in the

¹⁸ It is important to distinguish a sociological inquiry into reality and knowledge from the long-standing tradition of philosophy to investigate these terms. Sociology does not offer answers to what is truth or whether truth exists, but it is a discipline well aware of that in different societies or social settings, people take quite different things for granted (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 [1966]).

construction of knowledge, namely how social practices, like speaking and writing, (re)produce meanings which form orders of knowledge (or systems of meaning). Generally speaking, discourse theories and approaches pay attention to the social actors, rules and resources which form part of these processes as well as the social consequences arising from them (Keller, 2012).

While discourse theories can be considered as theoretical underpinnings of how language is used, discourse analysis means the empirical analysis of discourses. However, discourse analysis is not a method, but can rather be viewed as a research perspective which takes discourses as its objects of research (Keller, 2012). Until today, various social sciences approaches have been developed under the label 'discourse analysis' (Flick, 2004; Keller, 2012, 2013).¹⁹ Therefore a more concrete definition of the approach chosen for this thesis will be provided in the following section by drawing both on theoretical and conceptual assumptions.

3.2 The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD)

For this thesis, a Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD) (Keller, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013) is adopted.

The SKAD has developed towards the end of the 1990s in Germany with two main intentions: First, to situate sociological discourse analysis in the realm of sociology of knowledge to expand the theories among the field of sociological hermeneutics²⁰. Second, to develop more qualitative research methods from which discourse analysis could benefit (Keller, 2011b, 2013). In the work of Foucault one hardly finds any methodological hints as to how to go about a discourse analysis practically. In this regard, Keller (2013) offers useful orientation on how to operationalize a discourse analysis on the basis of understanding sociology as an empirically-grounded science (see chapter 4).

SKAD combines theoretical underpinnings of the work of Berger and Luckmann (1967 [1966]) and Foucault (2002 [1969]); (2005 [1966]) with qualitative research methods. As indicated in the previous section, both theories are situated within a social constructivist approach on reality as they assume that "everything we perceive, experience, sense is mediated through socially constructed and

¹⁹ Theories, concepts and approaches relating to discourses have spread throughout multiple disciplines in the humanities and social sciences such as history, politics, linguistics and sociology. The approaches differ with their respective discipline as well as with the theoretically and methodological considerations. For example, some approaches pay more attention to linguistic aspects (such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), others focus on social interaction on micro-scale such as ethnomethodology (Keller, 2012).

²⁰ The importance of Foucault's work for SKAD is also based on the 'deficit' that sociology of knowledge in Germany has focused much on the analysis of knowledge at a micro perspective (e.g. such as in the field of *Hermeneutische Wissenssoziologie*) (Keller, 2013).

typified knowledge (e.g. schemata of meanings, interpretations and actions) - a knowledge, that is, to varying degrees, recognized as legitimate and 'objective' [emphasize in original] (Keller, 2013, p. 61).

The work of Foucault is deemed important to SKAD because it follows the author's achievement to take on a socio-historic perspective on discourse as *social practices being knowledge-constituting* while keeping linguistic approaches at distance (Keller, 2011a, 2012, 2013). Then, according to Foucault, such a perspective implies to:

" not (...) treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as *practices* that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this more that renders them irreducible to the language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this 'more' [emphasize in original] that we must reveal and describe (Foucault, 2002 [1969], p. 54).

According to such a view, *discourses* can be understood as "historically situated real social practices, not representing external objects, but *constituting* [emphasize added] them" (Keller, 2012, p. 53). Thus, reality is not represented for example by texts like newspaper articles or scientific publications, but *constructed* by actors through their engagement in social practices. This makes it possible to empirically investigate "'bottom up" [emphasize in original] how discourses are structured and how they are structuring knowledge domains and claims" (Keller, 2012, p. 53).

Theoretical roots from Foucault: Discursive formation and rules of formation

SKAD acknowledges the work of Foucault and especially its dedication to the historic analysis of knowledge emerging from institutions to highlight the power-dimension in knowledge production in a given social context (Keller, 2012). According to Foucault, discourses, understood as social practices, order knowledge and therefore define the subjective experience of the world. This kind of underlying order can be referred to as *structure* (or episteme, see Foucault (2005 [1966])). In his later work *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault refers to this structuring as *discursive formation*:

"Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation (Foucault, 2002 [1969], p. 41)".

Furthermore, according to Foucault, the formation of a discourse underlies certain rules, which can explain how those elements come into being. Continuing with Foucault:

"The conditions to which the elements of this division (objects, mode of statement, concepts, thematic choices) are subjected we shall call the *rules of formation*. The rules of formation are conditions of existence (but also of coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance) in a given discursive division (Foucault, 2002 [1969], p. 41)".

Foucault was interested in revealing the rules (of formation) by which meaning is created through institutionally embedded social (discursive) practices. These rules, then, can explain why in a given context specific statements can surge and others not. In other words, those rules legitimate and determine the possibilities of what can be said and what not, as well as by whom. Therefore, why certain statements appear, and others not, can be explained with the rules of formation they adhere to (Keller, 2011b). The task of a discourse analysis is to identify this rule-system from the empirical data and to describe how statements construct a discourse (Keller, 2012). This can reveal how institutions, such as science or governments, shape the use of language and construct knowledge claims (Keller, 2012). In practical terms, the researcher looks out for regularities in the empirical data (texts), for example, what has been said by whom and how often?, what scientific disciplines are involved?, or what has not been mentioned? in order to identify the principles by which the discourse is constructed (Keller, 2013).

From structure and rules of formation to discourse as performance

While acknowledging the above mentioned theorizations of Foucault, SKAD offers "both, an extension and correction" to the dominant focus of addressing discourses via practices at institutional level (Keller, 2012). According to Keller (2011b) Foucault did not provide a convincing conceptualization between the relation of individual discursive events and the structure of a discourse. More precisely, Foucault missed to introduce a criteria to distinguish whether regularities in discursive practices are based on contingent conditions, or whether actors, understood as "individual or collective producers of statements" (Keller, 2013, p. 72), are guided by a rule system. In sum, a conceptualization is needed to explain how a discourse *is* produced, reproduced and transformed.

To overcome the critique on of how discourses order knowledge and exercise power in the constitution of reality, SKAD combines Foucault's insights with those of Berger and Luckmann (1967 [1966]). In their seminal work on the *Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann (1967 [1966], p. 30) are concerned with a sociological theory around the question of how "subjective

meanings become objective facticities". Furthermore, similar to discourse theory, they grant language a prominent position in the way it "fills (...) life with meaningful objects" (p. 36).

From this position, the authors developed an interactive perspective on how knowledge, in the sense of what a subject deems to be true, is created out of the interplay of processes of social objectivization and subjective socialization. On the one hand, individuals draw on stocks of knowledge which are available to them as an "objective reality" [own emphasize] in the institutions they are surrounded with. This knowledge they share with others and there is common meaning of the world among those individuals even though this typified knowledge is not uniform and solid but rather heterogeneous and fluid. On the other hand, individuals process this knowledge through different processes of socialization and reproduce or transform meaning through the use of language in their daily interactions. Therefore, sign processing is always as well a subjective process. According to Berger and Luckmann (1967 [1966]), human consciousness (e.g. the ability to be reflexive) is central to the ways how social actors ascribe meaning to the world and (re)produce and transform symbolic orders (stocks of knowledge).²¹ With regard to discourses, this means that "individual or collective actors' complex involvement in discourses is socially regulated, but not determined" (Keller, 2011a, p. 51).

Keller (2013) relates this theorization of an interplay between (objective) orders of knowledge and (subjective) sign processing to Bourdieu and Giddens and respectively their concepts of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) and the *duality of structure* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Giddens, 1984). This is done to overcome the unproductive stance between agency and structure. Thus, by defining *discourse as being performed*, actors are granted agency, meaning that they are able to reflexively monitor their activities as well as what happens in their surroundings, and actively participate in the world (Giddens, 1984, p. 5). Accordingly, such a conceptualization changes the perspective on how discourses operate: actors consciously engage in the process of statement production and (re)produce typified knowledge (structure), but simultaneously possess the capacities to re-interpret and transform it (agency). Consequently, this enhances the theorization of the relation between statements and discourse as a contingent interplay. Nevertheless, dominance and hegemony in a discourse should not be excluded right away (Keller, 2011a).

Despite perceiving discourses as *being performed*, a discourse analysis can, ultimately, only deliver a snapshot of how meanings are ordered with regard to a topic during a certain period of time. However, by understanding discourses as performances the analysis can pay more attention to the *social processes* involved in how meanings become fixed in discourses (Keller, 2012). In this regard,

²¹ The authors base their theory on insights from Schütz and Mead among others.

SKAD aims to reconstruct "the processes of institutionalization and transformation of symbolic orderings" (Keller, 2011a, p. 48).

3.3 Basic concepts of SKAD

By combining theoretical considerations from social constructivism with Foucault's discourse theory, SKAD recognizes the importance of discourses as reality-constituting and the production, transformation and circulation of knowledge as a process to be researched empirically. Discourses can be analyzed with respect to the infrastructure involved in their production, their respective contents, the rules of formation and the impacts they have on practices. In sum, SKAD "considers the knowledge side and the 'power effects of discourses' implied in the production and circulation of knowledge [emphasize in original]" (Keller, 2011a, p. 63). Moreover, such a perspective assumes that meaning around a social phenomena is contested and that competitive discourses and symbolic battles are the norm (Keller, 2011a, 2012). The following concepts are suggested for the thesis:

Discursive field

SKAD can be applied to, both public discourses as well as special discourses such as those in the scientific realm. According to Keller, the discursive field can be understood as "social arenas, constituting themselves around contested issues, controversies, problematizations, and truth claims in which discourses are in reciprocal competition with one another (Keller, 2012, p. 60). In this sense, "the abolition of the dairy quota in Germany" functions as a thematic delineation of the discourse.

In general, the discourse on this policy change means the *public discourse*. By definition, the public discourse encompasses a rather heterogeneous speaker-structure consisting of media actors (journalists), politicians, scientists as well as the respective representatives of the actors of the dairy value chain in Germany such as farmers and industry associations as well as other organizations active in the field of agriculture (both with a commercial and non-profit character). All those social actors contribute with their statements to the public discourse such as via newspaper articles and multi-media contributions (for example the evening news), press statements and statements at public political hearings. That means that the main discursive field in this investigation is the public arena in which actors compete for the legitimate construction of the social phenomena of the abolition of the dairy quota.

However, in order to better account for the discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota, it was necessary to, at least, delve into other discursive fields such as the *scientific discourse*. This was

especially necessary to reconstruct the emergence of the discourse in Germany (chapter 5.1) or to follow-up on public statements (e.g. when a scientist's position was mentioned). When this was the case, it is made explicit in the thesis by referring to the discursive field as "the scientific discourse" for example, otherwise "the discourse" means simply the public discourse as defined above.

Interpretative scheme as an analytical tool

In order to be able to present the basic dimensions of the reconstructed discourse, the analytical concept of *interpretative scheme* has been chosen. The concept itself refers to a term used in German as *Deutungsmuster*, which means a "typified meaning pattern or interpretative schemes which organizes the way we interpret situations and act according to such interpretations" (Keller, 2013, p. 121). Although close to the concept of 'frame', it does not necessarily assume a strategic use by the actors, but simply aims at identifying "social patterns of meaning, circulating in societies" (Keller, 2013, p. 108).

The concept facilitates to link the utterances to statements²² and organize them into a more or less coherent meaning pattern consisting of core elements (justifications, effects, responsibilities, values, etc.) of the phenomena researched. These elements, referring to fixed meaning patterns among social actors in a given social context, then offer a common interpretation of, for example, what these actors believe to be the responsibilities regarding the abolition of the dairy quota. The output of this analytical approach is represented in table 1 (page 43-44) on which chapter 5.2 is based. Moreover, this table also facilitated to compile table 2 (page 46) which maps the discourse-producing actors and identifies their discourse coalitions within the respective sub-discourses to support the presentation of results in chapter 5.3.

Discourse strategies and discourse coalitions

As outlined above, the conceptualization of discourse as performance establishes actors as knowledgeable and pushes for an increasing process-oriented perspective in discourse analysis. Actors can deploy *strategies* to implement a discourse in the sense of using rhetorical arguments, choosing key speakers for the dissemination of their statements or organizing a protest to gain public attention for their arguments (Keller, 2013).

²² While utterances can be understood as "singular linguistic materialization of a discourse", statements are carriers of the "typical core 'content' [emphasize in original] and can be reconstructed from single utterances (Keller, 2013, pp. 72-73).

Moreover, discourse strategies can also become visible in *discourse coalition*. While entering into discursive battles about the definition of certain realities, actors can form discourse coalitions which implies that their "statements can be attributed to the same discourse" (Keller, 2013, p. 72). The formation of a discourse coalition can happen consciously as part of an actor's strategy to empower a certain statement by teaming-up with other actors. However, it can also happen implicitly, meaning that discourse producing actors are not aware of that and even may not acknowledge that they are part of the same discourse (Keller, 2013). In the latter case, it is up to the researcher's own interpretation to identify a discourse coalition.

An infrastructure of power: dispositif

While discourses can be actualized by linguistic practices of actors they are stabilized by *dispositifs* (Keller, 2013). Originally, *dispositif* (also *apparatus*) was coined by Foucault (1980, pp. 194-228) to refer to the interrelations of "discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions - in short, the said as much as the unsaid" (p. 194). However, Keller offers a more concrete conceptualization adopted for the thesis:

According to his definition, *dispositif* refers to the *discourse-producing infrastructure* as well as to *the arrangements meant to address the problem in question* to achieve certain social effects (Keller, 2013). Consequently, on the one hand, *dispositif* (in the sense of a discourse-producing infrastructure) encompasses the very institutions such as a certain scientific department/discipline or government ministries and departments, but also social arrangements such as meetings or public hearings. On the other hand, *dispositif* (in the sense of a problem-solving infrastructure) refers, for example, to policies/regulations or market observations and trainings. According to this definition, via *dispositifs* social actors and institutions can realize power and "mediate between discourses and the fields of practice" (Keller, 2011a, p. 55). This implies that actors can actually *do* something, by intervening and solve a certain problem by modifying social practices or by legitimizing how a certain problem should be dealt with.

Including *dispositifs* in the analysis means not only examining texts but to notice "the links between statement events, practices, actors, organizational arrangements, and objects as more or less historical and far-reaching socio-spatial processes" (Keller, 2011a, p. 56).

4. Research Methodology

This section introduces more practical aspects of data sampling methods, collection and analysis. The chapter closes by presenting the limitations of the research as well as some ethical considerations.

4. 1 Data Sampling and Collection Methods

In discourse analysis, the balance between demarcation and validity is a challenge: First, how to select material from a plethora of data, and second, how to make sure to come from the analysis of individual documents to a discourse structure²³ (Keller, 2013). In order to balance these concerns, the methods of data collection and sampling shall be described in more detail.

In order to get acquainted with the theme of this research, I conducted a literature review using the university (online) library, Google Scholar, internet search machines (e.g. Google, Google.News) as well as the search function of newspaper homepages. The key-words included: dairy/milk, production, consumption, quota, abolishment, abolition, European Union, Germany, policy and market. I used them in different combinations and also searched in German language. I included the documents which had a direct relation to the abolition of the dairy quota, meaning that carried this term in their title (or among the key-words) or otherwise treated the issue more extensively.

With regard to the public media discourse in Germany, I focused my search from the beginning on those actors with the biggest outreach in the population. These included the public-service broadcasting authorities ARD and (incl. TV and radio channels), whereas within the program of the ZDF no utterances could be found. Moreover, when selecting the newspapers I also paid attention to achieve a balance in their editorial political orientation. Therefore, I choose the two biggest trans-regional daily newspapers Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) as a conservative-liberal newspaper with a paid circulation of ca. 250.000 copies and the social-liberal Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) with a paid circulation of ca. 400,000 copies. Moreover, I selected the *Tageszeitung* (taz) with about 50,000 paid copies and a leftist-ecological editorial orientation as well as the *Handelsblatt* with a liberal orientation and a thematic focus on economic themes (ca. 125,000 copies). Among the weekly newspapers I selected *Die Zeit* with a social-liberal orientation and a paid circulation of about

²³ Please note as well the limitations of the study under section 4.3.

500,000 copies and the news magazine *Der Spiegel* which has a critical-investigative orientation and a paid circulation of ca. 770,000.²⁴

With this strategy it was possible to identify data, but also to get acquainted with the institutions which have repeatedly dealt with the abolition of the dairy quota in the German context. The documents and/or internet links have been saved and grouped into actors such as government institutions / Germany / Europe; research institutions Germany / Europe; farmers associations (Germany); industry associations (Germany); public media contributions (Germany).

The output was a data corpus consisting of mainly of text documents like scientific reports and articles, media contributions (online newspaper articles and videos), position papers, leaflets and press statements of actors and institutions involved in the construction of the discourse. Moreover, the respective homepages of actors such as the government parties or farmers and industry associations were as well sources for data collection. This material formed the "exemplary documentation of (...) [the] discourse" (Keller, 2013, p. 74). As I moved along with the analysis, I sometimes went back to search for additional data when, for example, encountering a new (yet) unknown actor.

Key informant interviews

Important relations or issues might be overlooked by working with textual ("dead") data as outlined above on a rather recent topic. Therefore, key informant interviews with four different experts in the field of dairy production in Germany were conducted. Three telephone/skype interviews have been conducted, whereas two of the interviewees were scientists with an academic background in agriculture and economics and another interview partner was a representative of a farmer's association. In addition, a two day encounter with a dairy farmer in the federal state of Hessen formed part of this research. The encounters consisted of participating in the daily routines around the production of milk, informal conversations and a semi-structured interview. The farmer was as well the local representative of a farmer's association.

The expert interviews represent a complementary method which allowed to triangulate findings and to enhance the validity of the results.

²⁴ Amount of paid circulations according to the actors own account for the year 2016. As meanwhile online journalism is well established, the potential reader numbers exceed the sold hard copies. Moreover, for the thesis, only newspaper articles which were available online could be taken into account.

4.2 Data Analysis

In a SKAD approach, data is neither objective nor subjective but regarded as "material manifestations of social orders of knowledge" (Keller, 2013, p. 84). An important difference to other qualitative studies is that a text (e.g. press statement, article, etc.) is not a case study or a discourse, but consists of *utterances* which can form *statements* and likewise be part of the discourse (Keller, 2013). Moreover, *dispositifs* are as well "data" subject to analysis. Generally, the analysis focused on the aforementioned units as well as their interrelations in order to reconstruct the discourse (Keller, 2013).

As data analysis always involves an interpretative effort on behalf of the researcher, it is important to describe the different steps taken. In order to make the analysis more systematic and transparent, I designed and followed an analytical "check list" by drawing on (Keller, 2013). This guide consisted in the following steps which translated into headings of a table (see example below) to record the output:

- 1) Positional state of the actor (who talks from where, for whom (addressees))
- 2) Formal structure of utterances (how and when, in which style²⁵)
- 3) Content structure of utterances (main theme/sub-themes, overall statement)
- 4) Comments (personal observations like on repeated aspects, difference to other statements, salient concepts/terminology)

Who talks	Addressees	Type of utterance	Style	Main theme	Sub-themes	Overall statement	comments
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By adhering to the checklist above, I began the analysis by reading, paraphrasing and commenting on the data using the above table to organize the data.

There was an additional table which contained the outcome of a public parliament hearing of different actors (from farmer's / industry association to scientists) with regard to the quota abolition and possible future market policies. This table was sorted according to the nine questions the actors had to prepare for the hearing.²⁶

²⁵ For example, "facts", scientific, polemic, evoking emotions.

²⁶ The questions ranged from "what means the quota abolition for you?", to "how will the dairy market further evolve?" or their opinion on the importance of export trade, the suitability and further development of market crisis tools, the position of dairy producers in the value chain and how to best preserve farm diversity.

As described above, the output were different tables from where I could easily compare the data, notice common patterns and differences as well as write further comments.

From there, the analysis was guided by the research questions and theoretical concepts chosen in the theoretical framework. The analytical concept of interpretative scheme mentioned in the theoretical framework was especially a useful tool to reconstruct the discourse and facilitated as well the identification of discourse coalitions of discourse-producing actors.

4.3 Limitations and Ethics

Due to time limitations and other limited resources the study is overall designed to be a desk research, meaning that the analysis is preliminary based on data which has been available online free of charge or via the WUR account. Therefore, many of the agricultural (non-scientific) journals in Germany were not included in the sample. Moreover, within the scope of the thesis, not all available data from different actors can be taken into consideration. Respective choices and justifications have been made explicit in the section on data sampling above.

Another important limitation is that this study is only focused on the discourse until the abolition of the dairy quota which has become effective by the end of March 2015. Being aware that the discourse has meanwhile carried and probably evolved to some extent, the period after the abolition could not be included in the research as it would have exceeded the time frame of this minor thesis.

In social science research there is no blueprint on ethical principles to follow. Ethical considerations always depend on the respective research context and topic (Bernard, 2006). However, an important aspect to consider when engaging with research participants (key informants) is to be transparent about the nature and purpose of the study. Therefore, formal consent from my interview partners was requested verbally before the interviews and the confidential treatment of their responses ensured.

5. Discourse Analysis on the Abolition of the Dairy Quota in Germany

The results are represented in three sub-chapters. Chapter 5.1 reconstructs the origins as well as the emergence of the public discourse in Germany, while introducing the main discourse producing actors and a rough time line of statement production. This chapter covers the time period until the actual decision on the policy termination in 2008. Chapter 5.2 describes two distinct sub-discourses with regard to the abolition of the dairy quota in Germany which could be identified increasingly after 2008 towards the end of the actual termination of the quota in March 2015. The sub-discourses are presented according to the actor's common interpretation of the phenomena in question. Chapter 5.3 focuses on the actor power relations among discourse-producing actors and the infrastructure of the discourse (dispositif). The final chapter 5.4 is a synthesis of the results and also relates the research findings to the overall theoretical framework.

5.1 Introducing the Discourse: Origins and Emergence in Germany

A discourse analysis aims to provide a snapshot of a discourse at a certain time. In line with the focus of this thesis, the following results refer to how the discourses around the abolition of the dairy quota had been socially constructed in Germany until the actual abolition of the policy at the end of March 2015. This chapter aims at familiarizing the reader with the main discourse-producing actors by drawing a timeline of their appearances in the discourse. Furthermore, the origins of the discourse of the abolition of the dairy quota shall be traced and its emergence in Germany reconstructed. It is argued that the EU, as an actor, and the CAP, as the corresponding policy infrastructure, are constituted as powerful elements in ordering the discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota in Germany.

5.1.1 Major Discourse-Producing Actors and Timeline of Utterances

While it seems that the dairy quota system had always been a disputed topic, the majority of utterances encountered in relation to its abolition were issued between the years 2006 and 2015.

As the dairy production quota was an EU market-regulating policy tool, it is not surprising that in Germany, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), as well as the state ministries are the central thematic actors within the German government. They are responsible for the administration of the agriculture sector and respective policies. The Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture

appeared as the major spokesperson on the government side in the discourse.²⁷ Moreover, the abolition of the dairy quota was also discussed among politicians of the central government as well as by opposition parties at the Commission of Agriculture and Food in the parliament. The utterances of government actors on the abolition of the dairy quota could be traced back to the year 2006 in preparation of the 2008 Health Check reform, when the quota ending was finally confirmed for the year 2015. Then, utterances among government actors surged again in 2015 just before the abolition.

It should be noted that no government statements could be found around the year 2003 when the abolition of the dairy quota was first defined at the EU Mid-Term-Review reform. This could be related to the change in government from the Social Democratic Party (SPD) to the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) by the end of 2005, which may explain the unavailability of statements by the previous government. However, other reasons cannot be ruled out completely. A similar finding could be made with utterances of representatives of actors along the dairy value chain such as farmers and industry associations, which only date back to the year 2007.

An exception are reports and articles of scientific institutions which could be traced back to the late 1990s until 2015. Most of those publications stem from federal scientific institutions such as the Scientific Advisory Board for Agriculture Policy (*Wissenschaftlicher Beirat*) and the *Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institut*, the Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. To a far lesser extent, utterances and statements of other academic institutions such as the *ife Institut für Ernährungswirtschaft*, an independent non-profit research center, or a private consultancy, formed part of the scientific discourse. However, these only appeared in 2014 and 2015 respectively. The most dominant group of researchers working on the abolition of the dairy quota are (agricultural) economists.

Next to scientific and governmental actors, the abolition of the dairy quota was a topic discussed also by different actors from the dairy value chain. The discourse on the dairy quota appeared most prominently the farmers' associations such as *Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft*, *Bund Deutscher Milchviehhalter* and *Deutscher Bauernverband*. Actors in the discourse representing members from the (processing) industry were the *Deutscher Raiffeisenverband*, *Milch-Industrie-Verband* and *Deutsche Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft*, while no utterances could be found from retailers or organizations representing food consumers. Utterances and statements of these actors range from 2006 until 2015.

²⁷ Germany, actually the Federal Republic of Germany, is constituted by 16 federal states. The administration of the government is organized in Federal Ministries at central level as well as state ministries in the respective federal states.

The majority of newspapers and public TV channels covered the abolition of the dairy quota close to its ending in March 2015. Here, the (ongoing) price decline of milk which started in 2014 seems to have spurred the public discourse additionally. In the different newspapers, the topic was situated in the economy or regional section or as a notice appearing in the evening news program.

5.1.2 Constituting the EU and the CAP as Discourse Ordering Elements

This chapter argues that the policy turns taken since the 1990s and especially the initial decision in 2003 as well as the reconfirmation during the Health Check reform in 2008 to end the dairy quota in 2015 can be seen as discourse ordering practices. The EU and respectively the CAP appear as a powerful actor and discourse producing infrastructure which are able to make other actors (re)order their statements.

Indeed, actors participating in the discourse on the quota abolition point to the EU/EC and the political course taken at CAP-level when constructing their statements. This is for example visible in the earliest utterance included in the study, a report by the Scientific Advisory Board for Agriculture Policy with the title "Integration of European Agriculture in the Global Agriculture Market" (Wissenschaftlicher-Beirat, 1998). Since then, most of the publications which were produced from federal research institute *von Thünen* refer to the abolition of the dairy quota as a looming policy move in light of the ongoing liberalization of the CAP. When in the year 2000 the EU member states Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom strongly opposed the continuation of the dairy quota regulation (Kleinhanß et al., 2002), the abolition of the quota was becoming more and more apparent and debated at political levels. This also coincides with the observation that the majority of scientific studies have been conducted as of this period until 2011. Those reports and publications aimed at evaluating political options (maintaining/abolishing the quota) and assessing the effects on the German dairy sector. They all recommended a quota abolition to be more favorable in the long run, whereas the political reorientation of the CAP was defined as a decisive determinant in coming to that conclusion. This can be illustrated by the following example:

In 2006, the economic department of the federal research institute *von Thünen*²⁸ got commissioned by the BMEL to evaluate different options (maintaining, abolishing, limiting quota) for future dairy market policies. This was first done in a quantitative study by applying different mathematical

²⁸ Back then, *von Thünen* Institute was still called FAL (*Bundesforschungsanstalt für Landwirtschaft* / German Federal Research Institute for Agriculture).

models (Isermayer, 2006).²⁹ The results were then spread and discussed at different events. However, upon those discussions the scientific actors were confronted with a "fundamental distrust" towards the quantitative results. Allegedly, this was based on the "non-understanding" of the economic complexities of the dairy market policies which prompted dairy producers to rather opt for maintaining the quota system. In the introduction of the qualitative follow-up study, Isermayer (2007) noted that unfortunately it gets overlooked that maintaining the dairy quota will even reveal worse results given the future set-up of the EU market policies, especially upon the cancellation of export subsidies. Likewise, in his conclusion Isermayer (2007, p. 29) states that "the option "quota abolition" [emphasize in original] is the best suited one to further develop the German dairy sector, in order to be internationally competitive in view of an advancing liberalization of agriculture trade policies".

This paragraph illustrates that federal scientific institutions were important in providing arguments to the BMEL to abolish the dairy quota. The knowledge produced by the scientists were based on the assumptions of an ongoing liberalization of the CAP. Furthermore, those results were used to diminish doubts towards the abolition of the dairy quota among the farming population and beyond.

5.1.3 A Quiet Political Discourse ahead of the 2008 Health Check Reform

However, it seems that in 2007 the central government made little use of such "academic facts" to publically argue for the abolition of the dairy quota or to take any position towards the dairy quota. Among government institutions, such as the central government and opposition parties, the abolition of the dairy quota entered debates in parliament increasingly ahead of the 2008 Health Check reform. At that time the central government and especially the former Federal Minister of Agriculture and Food, Horst Seehofer (CDU/CSU), did not adopt a clear position in the public realm ahead of the final decision. As of 2007, the oppositional party FDP and *Die Grünen*, although for different reasons, urged the central government to take a clear stance on the dairy sector's policies in preparation of the Health Check. At that time, the central government argued that the liberalization of the CAP was a policy move already initiated under the previous government³⁰, whereas he situated the final decision on the abolishment of the dairy quota in the responsibility of the EU. A statement of the political working group of the CDU/CSU in preparation of the Health Check shows that the party acted on the assumption, that "according to the current decision, the

²⁹ From 1990 - 2009, Prof. Dr. Folkhard Isermayer, was the head of the economic section of the *von Thünen* institute. As of 2009, he has been president of the institute.

³⁰ At the parliament, the central government (CDU) called the liberalization of the CAP in relation to the dairy quota an "entering of the exit" (*Einstieg in den Ausstieg*) (Bundesregierung, 2007).

dairy quota regulation of the EU will end on 31st March 2015" and that the EC shall be requested to present supporting measurements to phase-out the quota as soon as possible (CDU/CSU, 2008). In previous political statements, which appeared in newspaper articles, the quota abolition was as well constructed as a responsibility of the EC, while referring to the former EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mariann Fischer Boel (2004-2010), as being in favor of ending the dairy quota system.

A similar discursive strategy was pursued by the representatives of the biggest farmers' association *Deutscher Bauernverband* (DBV). Its president at that time, Mr. Sonnleitner, had already pointed towards the abolishment of the dairy quota as early as in January 2006. In the agricultural journal *top-agrar*, which has about 100,000 subscribers, it was stated that "the DBV has decided for the abolition of the dairy quota in 2014/15" (Top-Agrar, 2006). And by the end of the year, the DBV tried to place the responsibility of declaring the end of the dairy quota with the Federal Minister. After a meeting in November 2006 at the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), the DBV announced in a press statement that the Federal Minister had suggested the likeliness of a quota termination on 31st March 2015, given the current conditions (Jasper, 2007).

Interestingly, ahead of the Health Check 2008, the Federal Minister actually announced that he was going to take the position of the DBV into account. Despite having already spread the position of the DBV in public, it was determined again by a vote among delegates at the annual gathering during which also important government representatives, including the Minister, were present. Ultimately, 75% of the DBV representatives voted for the abolition of the dairy quota, while two regional associations (Bavaria and Hesse) opposed the quota abolition.

In its position paper, published after the annual gathering, the DBV states: "The EU Council of Agricultural Ministers has for the last time extended the dairy quota regulation until 31.03.2015. An extension of the dairy quota is only possible upon a proposal by the EU and in combination with a 75% majority of votes among the 27 EU member states. Due to the different interests among the member states, such a decision is not foreseeable (...)". The paper further urges "the central and regional governments to take a clear position and to advocate for an abolition of the dairy quota regulation. The dairy quota regulation ends definitely in 2015 and must not be prolonged. A timely decision shall be taken by the EU, at the latest during the Health Check 2008" (DBV, 2007).

The Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture as well as the DBV constructed the abolition of the dairy quota as being a policy decision taken by the EU. In this regard the central government avoided to take a clear position itself, while conveying the impression that signs pointed towards the abolishment of the dairy quota, constituting the German government as a powerless actor in

influencing the decision. The DBV followed a similar strategy and could ultimately obtain the majority among its members without the need to enter into extended public debates about the pros and cons of a quota abolition ahead of the 2008 Health Check.

Furthermore, to establish the abolition of the EU dairy quota as a likely policy change seems to have had a powerful impact on the public discourse in Germany, which made it difficult for other actors to challenge. In 2007, smaller farmer's associations like the *Bund Deutscher Milchviehhalter* (BDM) as well as the organic producers' organization *Bioland* still argued clearly in favor of the continuation of the dairy quota system. In this regard, the BDM carried out as well a vote among in January 2007 where 2,000 members decided unanimously for the continuation of a policy which regulates the dairy outputs (Jasper, 2008). Their central argument consisted in that without a limitation to dairy outputs, production is going to increase and prices are going to decline, which would pose an existential threat to dairy farmers. However, instead to continue arguing against the policy change, these actors adapted their statements as soon as the quota abolition was reconfirmed during the Health Check 2008. Opposing the abolition of the dairy quota had simply become obsolete.

5.1.4 Conclusion

This chapter argued that the abolition of the dairy quota in Germany was constructed as a *fait accompli* ahead of the final decision taken at the Health Heck 2008. This applies to scientific actors which situated their studies within the liberalization framework of the EU and produced scientific arguments for its abolition early on, but also to important political actors such as the Minister of Agriculture and Food as well as the biggest German farmer association DBV. Likewise, to "go solo" as a national government or as a farmer's association towards the looming abolition of an EU policy did not even appear as an option. In this sense, the EU and the CAP were constituted as powerful elements by the discourse producing actors. This allowed to keep the public discourse on national level silent, especially among dairy farmers, and to unite a great majority behind the decision to abolish the dairy quota as of 2015. Ultimately, all actors which were involved at that time in the public discourse, including those who spoke out against the policy change, were reordering their statements.

Moreover, it can be concluded that the discourse on the dairy quota abolition had been mainly situated in the scientific and political realm, the latter including the central government and the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture as well as the farmers associations DBV, BDM and to a lesser extent *Bioland*. Furthermore, there existed a close relation between the scientific and (central) political discourse as the majority of scientific statements came from federal research institutes.

5.2 Competing Sub-Discourses on the Abolition of the Dairy Quota in Germany

As concluded in the first chapter, as of 2008, social actors increasingly reordered their statements. Therefore, the discourse on the dairy quota in Germany shifted thematically and was increasingly centered on an ongoing justification of the termination of the policy, its perceived effects on the German dairy sector as well as on to the legitimate organization of dairy production practices in the aftermath of the quota. The discourse reappeared especially in 2015, the year of the quota abolition, in the public arena and is characterized by a high degree of polarization as it was furthermore, fuelled by the ongoing price decline of milk as of 2014.

With regard to the social construction of the abolishment of the dairy quota in Germany, two competing discursive strands (or sub-discourses) could be identified upon the empirical analysis of data. Their differences are based on the discourse producing actor's distinct interpretations of the abolishment of the dairy quota in relation to the German dairy sector:

The first sub-discourse argues for *the abolition of the dairy quota as a necessary step and chance for the dairy sector in a liberal market economy*. For easier handling, this discourse strand is here referred to as the *liberal sub-discourse*, while the term *liberal* has been chosen to highlight its approach to situate dairy practices in a liberal market economy and in fierce opposition to state-led market interventions.

The second sub-discourse constructs *the abolition of the dairy quota as a risk to the dairy sector, the environment and society as a whole*. It takes the position of a *critiquing sub-discourse* towards the liberal sub-discourse and warns about the negative effects of the liberal market economy on dairy production practices, but also for society and nature. An immediate need for implementing further market-intervening policies in the aftermath of the dairy quota results from such interpretation.

In the following sub-chapters the discursive strands will be reconstructed, by contrasting the interpretations of the phenomena which have been abstracted and generalized from the respective actor's utterances and statements (see table 1, page 43-44). The chapter is organized according to the core elements (meaning patterns) of the respective sub-discourse chosen in line with the analytical concept of interpretative scheme (see chapter 3.3).

5.2.1 Justifications for the Termination of the Policy

Both discursive strands depart from the position that the liberalization of the CAP, which has been on track at least since the May Sherry reform in 1993, was an important condition which lead to the

abolition of the dairy quota. Moreover, they emphasized that EU internal as well as external forces led to this policy re-orientation referring to the international pressure originating from WTO negotiations as well as the push of certain EU-member states. The liberal sub-discourse provided a range of additional justifications, whereas the critiquing discourse questioned those claims.

The liberal sub-discourse establishing the dairy quota as useless

Among the liberal sub-discourse, the dominance to justify the quota abolition was striking. A central interpretation of the actors was the uselessness of the dairy quota policy to prevent the ongoing decline of dairy farms, referred to as structural change. A second interpretation to constitute the dairy quota as useless were the continued price fluctuations in the German dairy market, which could be witnessed for example during the year 2008 and 2009. This interpretation is in line with the public discourse from about 30 years ago, when the government introduced the dairy quota with the following policy objectives: "price stability; maintenance of income of milk producers, prevention of the migration of milk production from unfavorable locations by linking quota to land; maintaining the landscape" (Kleinhanß, Offermann, & Ehrmann, 2010, p. 47).

Especially, the decline of the amount of dairy farms, despite a quota, was a strong argument because it is an observation which is shared by all actors of the discourse as being real. Consequently, it was used by the liberal sub-discourse to substantiate and objectivize the dairy quota as a useless policy tool and was the justifying statement most prominently presented in the public discourse. Likewise, the liberal sub-discourse is able to establish a powerful knowledge claim in order to construct a reality in which state-led market interventions are not able to prevent structural change and to secure the incomes of dairy farmers. In other words, the state is not able to influence the market to the benefit of dairy producers. This is a decisive statement on which the further interpretations of the liberal sub-discourse are based.

The dairy quota as an obstacle to international competitiveness and export markets

The liberal sub-discourse offered two further justifications for the abolition of the dairy quota which is that the dairy quota is an obstacle to growth and international competitiveness to the German dairy sector. In this sense, the liberal sub-discourse further legitimized the abolition of the dairy quota by highlighting the growing international demand for dairy products based on estimations for an ongoing population increase as well as a rise in economic wealth in countries of the Global South as predicted by international bodies such as the OECD and the FAO. Likewise, the liberal sub-

discourse constituted this outlook as a chance to serve potential new export markets with "milk made in Germany" to which dairy practices should align accordingly. During a public parliament hearing within the Council of Agriculture and Food, the DRV as a representative of the farmers cooperatives interpreted the export of dairy exports as being "of great importance" (DRV, 2015b), whereas the biggest farmers association DBV (2015c) even called it "existential". Other actors of the liberal sub-discourse highlighted the stagnating domestic demand for dairy products, which adds to establishing export markets as important for the ongoing existence and further growth of the dairy economy. Moreover, the advantageous position of Germany dairy practices due to a good ecological climate and efficient production of high-quality food was emphasized. In this sense, the quota was argued to be an obstacle to serve the rising international demands for dairy products as it limits the output of dairy.

Moreover, in view of the importance of export markets, it is argued that the quota means a cost factor for growth-oriented farmers which have to buy additional quota to expand their production, or have to pay a fine (super levy) when surpassing the amount of their quota rights. The importance of dairy practices to be internationally competitive is justified with the deregulation of the EU dairy market which also involves the elimination of export subsidies. According to the interpretation, then, this lack of policy support has to be made-up for by eliminating quota costs and by facilitating growth in dairy production in order to become more competitive via scale effects. Such interpretations are based on basic microeconomic causalities and rational thinking and therefore remain unquestioned by the critiquing sub-discourse.

The critiquing sub-discourse denouncing a misuse of the dairy quota policy

On the contrary, the critiquing sub-discourse denounced the abolition of the dairy quota as serving the interests of a dominantly growth-oriented European dairy sector. It argued that in the past, the dairy quota was handled and adapted in order to facilitate growth and export business disregarding current market signals and causing a price decline for dairy producers, while dairies could offer cheap milk products on international markets. Still, they deem that a market regulating policy tool can have a positive influence on market prices, given that it is handled in the interest of dairy farmers to keep prices stable and not to apply it with the dominant objective to facilitate growth via export markets.

Likewise, they constitute the international dairy market as a risky and uncertain terrain which has to be shared as well with other competitive export nations such as Australia and New Zealand, and is furthermore prone to unforeseeable shifts such as the recent trade embargo with Russia since 2014. However, the actors of the critiquing sub-discourse are not distancing themselves completely from

export practices. In this regard, the dairy farmers association BDM highlighted the importance of exporting high-quality and value added dairy products and distancing itself from dumping cheap exports of low-value products, such as milk powder, on markets of the Global South (BDM, 2015a).

However, overall the critiquing sub-discourse was not aimed to proof the usefulness of the dairy quota policy and to challenge the main statement of the liberal sub-discourse. Rather, actors of the critiquing discourse strand emphasized the general need for a continued market-regulation after the quota abolition by highlighting its negative effects for dairy producers, the society and the environment (see coming section).

5.2.2 Effects of the Quota Abolition on Dairy Practices: Risks or Chances

The critiquing sub-discourse identified a range of risks for the German dairy sector as well on the environment and animal welfare in relation to the termination of the dairy quota. In this regard, the critiquing sub-discourse brought forward a range of interpretations:

Actors argued that after the abolishment of the dairy quota, dairy outputs are going to increase and prices are going to decline which threatens the existence of dairy farmers. The external condition that dairy producer prices were in decline as 2014 helped the critiquing sub-discourse to objectivize this fear into a powerful knowledge claim. Simultaneously, this condition made the critiquing sub-discourses denounce as well the shortcomings of the growth and export driven dairy production practices within the liberal sub-discourse. Actors highlighted that especially those farmers who had followed the liberal discourse and invested in the expansion of their production, were forced to increase or at least to maintain their outputs in order to serve their pending monthly credit payments for their investments, and by that contributed to already prevailing market imbalances. In this regard, the actors warned of an ongoing destruction of a still diverse farming population in Germany and intensified structural change arising after the abolition of the dairy quota.

Moreover, the critiquing sub-discourse feared an increased competition among dairy farmers on national as well as international level, due to the dominant export focus as described above. According to the interpretation, this poses a threat to the existence of local as well as distant farming populations: while local farmers struggle to render dairy production ever more competitive and offer cheap milk for export, farmers of the Global South cannot compete with a competitive European agriculture sector.

Ultimately, actors warned that the focus on growth and competitiveness will compromise the wellbeing of the environment and animal welfare as farmers have to compete with international

market prices by which they are forced to gain an advantage via enlargement of their production and increased efficiency of production practices.

In sum, the critiquing sub-discourse constructed the effects of the quota termination as implying risks for the dairy sector as well as for society and nature.

In contrary, the liberal sub-discourse saw the effects of the abolition of the quota on the dairy sector as chances on the long-term. Although, it argued that price volatilities are part and parcel of an international market and eventually, market prices will be more favorable as compared to having maintained the quota in a liberalizing policy environment (e.g. elimination of export subsidies, import taxes). In the aftermath of the quota the German dairy sector will become more competitive and secure economic growth due to its ability to serve international demands. Actors of the liberal sub-discourse did not mention an ongoing (or even faster) decline of dairy farmers explicitly, but saw the coming years as an adaptation phase for the dairy sector in order to learn how to operate in a free market economy.

To conclude, the two competing sub-discourses associated very different effects with the termination of the quota policy. Whereas the critiquing sub-discourse predicted overall negative immediate and long-term effects of a quota abolition, the liberal sub-discourse emphasized the long-term benefits of the quota abolition. Departing from these interpretations, the actors formulated distinct responsibilities and rationales for action in the aftermath of the dairy quota.

5.2.3 Responsibilities and Needs for Action: Market or State?

This sub-chapter explores the assigned responsibilities and needs for action regarding the dairy sector and the abolishment of the dairy quota, which boils down into a competition for the definition of the legitimate problem-solving infrastructure (dispositif) and entity to steer social change in the public discourse.

Maintaining the achievement: the division between economy and politics

The actors of the liberal sub-discourse, argued that the market should operate freely, without state regulation, and that this will yield the best outcome for the German dairy sector and society in a globalized economy. Under such a perspective, state-led policy interventions, such as the dairy production quota, distort the interaction of offer and demand and are deemed in conflict with a

globalized market economy, especially when the objective consists in entering new international markets.

Consequently, tools and strategies to confront the market and possible market imbalances were situated within the freedom and responsibility of the actors along the dairy value chain. In the liberal sub-discourse, the dairy farmer is constructed as "the good entrepreneur" who embraces the entrepreneurial freedom which comes with the abolition of the dairy quota. The farmer possesses good management skills and knows how to produce efficiently according to actual market requirements. Second, there is the construction of the "clever farmer" who may have obstacles to become competitive via scale, but overcomes these obstacles by adapting its production and serve niche markets (e.g. regional or organic production, direct commercialization). In this regard, the liberal discourse strand emphasizes the agency of farmers and does not assign her or him the role of a victim of the market liberalization (see below). Moreover, this actor positioning also functions as depoliticizing: dairy farmers are creative, they deploy the right strategies to survive in a liberal market environment, why would they need state support then?

Out of such argumentation result the following responsibilities and needs for action:

The state shall retreat and must not additionally interfere with the newly gained entrepreneurial freedom. In this regard, the liberal sub-discourse, the so called basic security net of EU market-regulating policies consisting of public and private (stock keeping) interventions is deemed as the only market-intervening tool which shall be available to the German dairy sector, whereas liquidity aids and other financial benefits to farmers may be activated in severe market crisis. While arguing for a minimum of intervention, the state is assigned the task to secure further export markets via the negotiation of foreign-trade contracts, whereas structural deficits among disadvantaged farmers may be addressed via rural development policies situated in CAP pillar II, given that those farmers continued existence is deemed relevant for society and the environment (e.g. farmers in mountainous areas for landscape protection tourism). The above mentioned responsibilities situated within the state and were deemed the maximum of intervention considered within the liberal sub-discourse. These interpretations underscore that the liberal discourse is dedicated to defend a clear division between the dairy market and the state.

Furthermore, out of the interplay with a retreating state, the liberal discursive strand argued for a privatization of problem-solving infrastructure. Actors of the dairy value chain, especially dairy farmers and dairies, are to use for example commodity futures market³¹ or enter into individual

³¹ Commodity future markets refers to an financial exchange at a stock market in which people can buy a specific quantity of a commodity at a fixed price for a given date in the future.

contracts with fixed prices. Another concept which appears in this discursive strand is individual risk management, which means that farmers and dairies should employ strategies to minimize their risks as entrepreneurs such as a good liquidity management (e.g. to build up financial reserves in good times), whereas for farmers the DBV repeatedly brought up the topic of insurance systems like it has been practiced in the United States agriculture sector.³²

Politicization of the dairy economy: bringing the state back in

In contrast, the critiquing discourse strand called upon the state to authorize and implement further market-intervening policies after the quota abolition. The underlying rationale is that the market is seen as an entity which can and should be "manipulated" in order to maintain the balance between offer and demand and to achieve socially and environmentally inclusive social change. In this regard, the critiquing sub-discourse showed a tendency to construct the "dairy farmer as a victim" who needs to be protected by the state from the liberal market forces which threaten its existence.

Unlike in the liberal sub-discourse, the EU's basic-security-net (public and private interventions) are deemed as an outdated set of policies because they are not able to prevent a market crisis, defined as not-cost covering producers prices for an extended period of time. Therefore, actors participating in the critiquing sub-discourse proposed new preventive policy tools such as the Market-Responsibility-Program in connection with a strengthening of the EU Milk Market Observatory.³³ These aforementioned measurements were introduced to the public discourse by the farmer's association BDM which has developed the program together with the European Milk Board, an association of milk producers at EU level. The program aims at identifying imbalances between demand and offer early on and to initiate a collective effort among dairy producers to reduce milk outputs to bring the market back in balance (BDM, 2015b).³⁴ In contrary to the liberal sub-discourse, measurements to counter structural change and to preserve farm diversity under CAP pillar II are not deemed sufficient. Consequently, the critiquing sub-discourse argues that a cost-covering market

³² Private insurances have been long part of the United States dairy sector with an aim to protect farmers from heavy income losses during market crisis. The latest tool the *Milk Margin Protection Program* functions as a security net and applies when the difference (margin) between the average milk price and the average fodder price fall below a certain amount (Thiele, 2015).

³³ The *EU Milk Market Observatory* is aimed at enhancing the transparency of the dairy market and by disseminating market data. It was created in relation to the abolition of the dairy quota system (EC, 2017a).

³⁴ The Market-Responsibility-Program defines a market crisis with an index and works in three phases: 1. *Early warning*, when index falls by 7.5%, 2. *Crisis* when index falls by 15%, 3. *Obligatory intervention* by reduction of milk outputs when index falls by 25% (BDM, 2015b).

price is vital to secure farming incomes and farm diversity via the implementation of further market-intervening policies as suggested above. Furthermore, some actors of the critiquing sub-discourse also argued that the trade relation between dairy farmers and dairies is characterized by power imbalances with disadvantages on the producer side and therefore, the farmers position should be as well strengthened in this regard.

To sum up, the liberal sub-discourse saw the primer responsibility for social change in the aftermath of a dairy production quota in the private realm of the individual entrepreneurial capacities of the actors along the value chain operating in a free market economy organized by offer and demand. In contrast, the critiquing discourse strand assigned the state a central role in steering social change and to authorize and organize further intervention in the dairy market. Whereas the liberal sub-discourse constituted the free market economy as the legitimate entity, the critiquing sub-discourse argued for state-led market intervention, most prominently with the Market-Responsibility-Program facilitated by the farmers association BDM.

5.2.4 Values of the Sub-Discourses: Two Distinct Development Paradigms

By questioning which values are constituted by the (discursive) practices of the actors two distinct development paradigms underlying the aforementioned interpretative scheme of the respective discourse strands can be identified. Those development paradigms can be summarized as *development as securing prosperity via the freedom of markets* (liberal discourse) vs. *socially and environmentally inclusive development* (critiquing discourse).

The liberal sub-discourse is based on an idea of development with the aim to secure and advance prosperity via (economic) growth. The freedom of the individual and the market is the legitimate value to drive this change. This is expressed by the fierce defense of the increasing separation of (agriculture) economy and politics, a process which has been taking place at CAP level since the 1990s. In this regard, development of the dairy sector entails the enlargement of scale, the securing of new export markets, as well as the improvement of efficiency in dairy production practices via the use of technology and the application of innovations (e.g. milk robots and carrousel, enlargement of cow stables). Development is seen dominantly in economic terms, whereas societal and environmental values appear as secondary and are only considered when they pose a threat for prosperity or are enforced by the state (e.g. societal acceptance with regard to animal wellbeing in large scale dairy farming, nitrate limitations set by EU-regulations).

On the contrary, the critiquing sub-discourse promotes *socially and environmentally inclusive development* of the German dairy sector and has (international) social and environmental justice as a core moral value. This can be for example seen in the fierce defense of the diversity of dairy farmers and the critique towards structural change, a process which in the liberal sub-discourse is a means to achieve its goal, which is prosperity. In this regard, dairy farming is constituted as not only satisfying consumer demands but as a greater cultural good for the whole society as well as a practice that cares for the environment and animal wellbeing.

Under such a development paradigm social and environmental well-being is inherent to dairy practices and not an obstacle for economic growth: quality instead of quantity and domestic markets before cheap exports. Another central value is solidarity among human beings in order to achieve this development, however, in the current set-up of societies the development paradigm needs the state to intervene to set regulations and frameworks which enable such social change.

5.2.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the distinct interpretations available to the two sub-discourses on the abolition of the dairy quota in Germany and introduced the key causalities ascribed by the discourse-producing actors to the social phenomena in question.

The liberal sub-discourse presented the abolition of the dairy quota as a necessary policy move in light of the liberalization of the CAP and a chance for the German dairy sector and society as a whole to achieve a development which aims to secure prosperity via the freedom of markets. Competitiveness of dairy production was established as an important social practice which determines the future of the dairy sector. Likewise, the market is deemed as the legitimate entity to steer social change, while simultaneously constructing the dairy quota as useless policy tool and state-led market interventions as illegitimate practices to achieve the desired development.

In contrast, the critiquing sub-discourse questioned the interpretations of the liberal sub-discourse and argued that the abolishment of the dairy quota implies risks for the dairy sector as well as for society and the environment. This compromises the values of the sub-discourse expressed in a socially and environmentally inclusive development paradigm which should be inherent to dairy practices. Hence, the liberal market economy is not deemed to bring about the optimum for society and nature. An immediate need for action to implement further market-intervening policies in the aftermath of the dairy quota results from such argumentation.

Ultimately, it can be concluded that the aforementioned interpretations culminate in a central disagreement about the legitimate entity in steering social change: the liberal market economy versus renewed state-induced policy interventions in the dairy market in order to achieve the respective development paradigms defined within each sub-discourse.

Table 1: Interpretations of the Competing Sub-Discourses (adapted from (Keller, 2009, p. 237)

discursive strand / dimension	The abolition of the dairy quota as a chance and necessary step in a liberal market economy	The abolition of the dairy quota as a risk - a critique to the liberal sub-discourse
causes & justifications	<u>Liberalization of the CAP / EU dairy market</u> <u>The dairy quota as:</u> - useless policy tool - an obstacle to serve the international demand for dairy products - an obstacle to competitiveness in a liberal market economy	<u>Liberalization of the CAP / EU dairy market</u> <u>Misuse of dairy quota:</u> - dominant export focus and growth-orientation of hegemonic actors in EU/German dairy sector and political institutions
effects	<u>Chances</u> - German dairy sector to become more competitive - economic growth due to international demand - long term positive effects on dairy sector (higher prices)	<u>Risks</u> - higher production outputs lead to price decline and threatens the existence of dairy farmers - destruction of diversity of dairy farmers / speed of structural change - increased competition between farmers (globally) - increased negative effects on the environment and animal welfare
responsibilities	<u>The liberal market (economy)</u> - individual entrepreneurial capacities of actors along the value chain	<u>The state as a (market) regulating actor</u> - to guarantee fair prices - to put a limit to structural change (decline of farms)
farmers social positioning	- "the good entrepreneur" - "the clever farmer" (depolitization)	- "the victim of the liberal market economy"
need for action & problem solving	<u>The retreating state</u> - basic security net of current EU regulations - liquidity aids to farmers only in severe crisis - disadvantaged farmers to receive aids under CAP pillar II - the state to secure export markets - Privatization of problem-solving infrastructure (e.g. individual risk management, insurances)	<u>The state as a regulating actor</u> - to introduce new market-regulating tools able to prevent market crisis and with it structural change (e.g. Market-Responsibility-Program, Milk Market Observatory/Early Warning System) - to strengthen dairy farmers weak position in value chain (especially in front of dairies) - assistance via pillar II not sufficient
values	<i>Development as securing prosperity via the freedom of markets</i> - Germany and the EU as a growing and prospering (agriculture) economy thanks to focus in international export - individual and market freedom (production / consumption) - modernization of practices to make dairy production more efficient and competitive (via scale, technology application/innovations)	<i>Socially and environmentally inclusive development</i> - diversity of dairy farmers as a cultural good - quality instead of quantity: socially and environmentally responsible production - dairy sector as socially accepted, also internationally (not as a threat to farmers of the Global South) - solidarity (although enforced) through common influence on dairy market

5.3 Discourse and Power: Actors - Coalitions - Dispositif

This chapter aims at highlighting the power dimension of the sub-discourses by drawing on the discourse producing actors and how they form discourse coalitions within their respective sub-discourses. Moreover, the chapter also emphasizes the discourse producing infrastructure (*dispositif*) available to the actors.

Table 2 (next page) depicts a snapshot of the two competing sub-discourses on the abolition of the dairy quota in Germany. The sub-discourses introduced in the previous section are articulated by different social actors which form discourse coalitions. The actors' location within the respective sub-discourses is indicated in the below table. The actors who are positioned in the center could not be clearly assigned to one of the two sub-discourses as they articulated a mixture of both discourses. As an agriculture industry association with a focus on the dissemination of knowledge, the *Deutsche Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft* (DLG) appears in between experts/science and interest groups. The Federal States Ministries of Agriculture, or rather the Agriculture Ministers as their major spokespersons, are situated further to the right side as overall their articulations coincided more with the critiquing discourse. The actors who have been located within one or the other sub-discourse can be assigned clearly into either one. This table only shows tendencies which could be identified upon the empirical analysis.

Table 2: Actors positions and discourse coalitions in the sub-discourses (adapted from Keller (2009, p. 287))

Sub-discourses / actors	The abolition of the dairy quota as a chance and necessary step in a liberal market economy	The abolition of the dairy quota as a risk - a critique to the liberal sub-discourse
politics / administration	<p>Federal government /Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture (CDU/CSU)</p> <p>Federal State Ministries of Agriculture (7 headed by <i>Die Grünen</i>, 3 by <i>CDU/CSU</i>, 3 by <i>SPD</i>, 1 each by <i>FDP</i> and <i>Die Linke</i>, and 1 without party affiliation)</p> <p>Political parties: FDP, CDU/CSU</p>	<p>Political parties: <i>Die Grünen</i>, <i>Die LINKE</i></p> <p>Federal Cartel Office</p>
Farmer/civil society and industry interest groups (associations)	<p><i>Deutscher Bauern Verband</i></p> <p><i>Deutscher Raiffeisenverband</i></p> <p><i>Milch-Industrie-Verband</i></p> <p><i>Deutsche Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft</i></p>	<p><i>Bund Deutscher Milchviehhalter</i></p> <p><i>Arbeitsgemeinschaft Bäuerliche Landwirtschaft</i></p> <p><i>Bioland / WWF / German Watch</i></p> <p><i>AgrarBündnis</i></p>
experts / science	<p>Scientific and administrative experts</p> <p>Federal Scientific Council on Food and Agriculture (<i>Wissenschaftlicher Beirat</i>)</p> <p>Independent research institute: <i>ife</i></p> <p>Federal Research Institute <i>von Thünen</i></p>	<p>Private academic consultancy</p>
media	<p>Newspapers (e.g. <i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>, <i>Handelsblatt</i>)</p> <p>newspaper and public media channel (e.g. <i>ARD (Tagesschau)</i>; <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>; <i>Der Spiegel</i>)</p>	<p>Newspapers (e.g. <i>Tageszeitung</i>, <i>Die Zeit</i>)</p>

5.3.1 Tight Relations: a Discourse Block of Farmers' and Industry Associations

The most prominent government actor with regard in the discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota is the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (CDU/CSU) with the Federal Minister as its major spokesperson in the public discourse in Germany. Moreover, the Federal Minister is as well member of the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council in which he can take legislative co-decisions with the European Parliament and therefore is a powerful link between the central government and the EU.

The central government of the CDU/CSU can be clearly situated in the liberal sub-discourse. Moreover, appalling was the closeness of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture to the major farming and industry associations such as *Deutscher Bauernverband* (DBV), the *Deutscher Raiffeisenverband*, the *Deutsche Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft* and the *Milchindustrie Verband*, which repeatedly had been emphasized in public statements. For example, upon a so called top-level talk among the aforementioned associations with the Federal Minister (Christian Schmidt CDU/CSU) on 10th March 2015, a few days *ahead* of the quota abolition, the DBV announced in its press release that "there is a broad consensus between the Federal Ministry and the German dairy sector that state-regulated dairy production failed to achieve important objectives", therefore "the German dairy sector wants to make use of the chances provided by the liberal markets" (DBV, 2015a). While constituting a broad consensus of the central government and the biggest farmers and industry associations, it is important to note that the *Bund Deutscher Milchviehalter*, a dairy farmers' association situated in the critiquing sub-discourse, continuously formed not part of those meetings. This was also the case in 2006, when the Federal Minister (back then Horst Seehofer, CDU/CSU) discussed the upcoming decision on the dairy quota ahead of the Health Check 2008 and oriented its position on the DBV (Jasper, 2007).

In Germany, the biggest professional representation of farmers is the *Deutscher Bauernverband* (DBV) and its further affiliations consisting of 18 federal state and 300 district associations reaching out to farmers all over the federal state of Germany (DBV, n.d.). Furthermore, it is the actor among the farming and industry associations which appeared in the liberal sub-discourse most dominantly.

The DBV forms a discourse coalition with the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture as well as other agriculture and food industry associations, such as the *Deutscher Raiffeisenverband* (DRV), the *Deutsche Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft* (DLG) and the *Milchindustrie-Verband* (MIV). Moreover, their discourse coalition is also reproduced by the very set-up of the institutions: whereas the DRV is a full member of the DBV, the DLG and the MIV have an associated membership in the DBV. Together, the aforementioned associations, active in the liberal discourse, draw on an extensive network of

regional, national as well as international actors, offices and resources to advocate for their interests with regard to the dairy market:

The DRV represents the interests of the agriculture cooperatives in the agriculture and food sector in Germany with 2.186 members including retailers of the upstream and downstream agriculture industry. Furthermore, one publishing company as well as eight capital institutions form as well part of the cooperative association (DRV, 2015a).

The DLG is a political independent association of the agriculture and food industry with about 27,000 members. It is organized in 80 committees, working groups and commissions and is dedicated to knowledge exchange on topics related to the agriculture and food industry promoting "scientific and technical progress" (DLG, n.d.).³⁵

The MIV represents the interests of around 80 dairy processing companies, cooperatives as well as those of multinationals and constitutes a network of dairy (industry) actors at regional, national as well as international level. Moreover, in 2015 the MIV opened an office in China which is its second representation abroad next to Brussels (MIV, n.d.). Furthermore, the new office in Beijing was opened in cooperation with the Export Union for Milk Products and co-financed by the Federal Ministry with the objective to foster the expansion of market shares in China (MIV, 2015, p. 69). This underscores how export practices of the liberal sub-discourse are reproduced by those institutions. However, the DLG is compared to all other associations still the most globally-oriented with subsidies for example in China, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russia and Turkey, whereas the DBV and DRV only have offices in Berlin and Brussels. Together, these associations have a powerful infrastructure on national as well as international level at their disposal.

Moreover, the *Verband der Deutschen Milchwirtschaft* (VDM) is the platform of the milk industry associations at national level in Germany with Mr. Ludwig Börger as its Managing Director who is simultaneously the director of the dairy department of the DBV (DBV, 2016). Next to the observations above, this finding underscores the tight relations between the DBV, as the biggest farmers association, and the agriculture and food industry.

The statements of the DBV, DRV, DLG and MIV can be clearly situated in the liberal sub-discourse and together with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture form a powerful discourse block drawing on an extensive discourse-producing infrastructure. Their statements in the discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota are very similar and there is not much variation among the actor's utterances as they use the same concepts and terminology in arguing for a liberal (dairy) market economy in the

³⁵ As an actor which is dedicated to the exchange of knowledge, see also further observations on the DLG in the following sub-chapter 5.3.3 The role of a Dominant Liberalist Thinking in Federal Research Institutes.

aftermath of the dairy quota, which seems to fit the interests of their members they are representing.

Lastly, it should be noted that there is a plethora of producer and industry associations active in the dairy sector at national as well as EU-level and international level, who form part of the network of MIV.³⁶ However, the associations mentioned in this thesis only have been the most vocal ones in the discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota in Germany.

In conclusion, powerful discourse-producing actors such as the central government represented by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture as well as resourceful farmers and industry associations in terms of members and their international orientation of infrastructure appeared as, not only discourse coalition partners, but as a discourse block. Their discourse coalition could be clearly situated in the liberal-sub discourse, while their statements were of almost identical characters.

5.3.2 A Discursive Detour via Federal States Ministries: BDM and AbL

The *Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft* and the *Bund Deutscher Milchviehalter* are farmers associations which can be clearly situated in the critiquing sub-discourse and are furthermore the most prominent associations with regard to the production of discursive events.

The *Bund Deutscher Milchviehalter* (BDM) is a relatively new dairy farmers' association founded in 1998 and currently organizes around 20,000 active dairy producers via its regional affiliations (Top-Agrar, 2014). The central objective of the BDM is the continued existence of dairy farmers. Therefore, it requests that structural change in the dairy sector should take into account the economic, social and environmental viability of such a change. A central demand of the BDM is to achieve a milk price of € 0,50 per liter to cover the full production costs of farmers (BDM, 2015b). Therefore, the BDM has developed together with the farmer's association European Milk Board the Market-Responsibility-Program. It is due to this collaboration that the critiquing sub-discourse in Germany was able to present an opposing concept towards the free market economy proclaimed as the way forward by the liberal discourse.

Actually, the BDM surged as a counter movement towards the DBV, because it saw the interests of milk producers not sufficiently covered within the biggest farmer association, which aims to

³⁶ For example: the Association of State Dairy Federations, the Central Dairy Market Reporting, the Export-Union for Dairy Products, the German Federal Association for Dairy Products, the Central Association of German Dairy Producers, the German Federal Association of Private Dairy, the German Federation for Food Law and Food Science, the German Association for the Protection of Milk and Milk Products (MIV, n.d.).

represent the interests of all kinds of branches of agricultural production. Moreover, as outline above, the DBV maintains close ties with the agriculture and food industry which is perceived as undermining its position as an organization aimed at defending the interests of farmers. However, as mentioned in the first section, on central political level the BDM is not a direct interlocutor with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture.

Its most important discourse coalition partner among other farmers associations in Germany is the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft* (AbL), while the organic farmers association *Bioland* has become less vocal recently.³⁷ The AbL represents small and middle-scale farmers as well as other social actors in favor of an "agriculture with a peasant basis" and promotes a socially and environmentally compatible agriculture. It has regional affiliations in nine of the 16 federal states of Germany (AbL, n.d.) and shares as well a critical stance towards the representativeness of the DBV towards its farmers basis.

Compared to the farmers and industry associations of the liberal sub-discourse, the BDM and the AbL have a rather provincial set-up with own affiliations only within the borders of Germany. However, the BDM as well as AbL maintain an alliance with the Brussels-based European Milk Board (EMB), an association of European dairy farmers, with which it shares the advocacy for further market-regulating policy tools such as the concept of the "Market-Responsibility-Program".

AbL as well as BDM are not direct interlocutors with the central government, even though being - at least - invited to hearings at the parliament to convey their positions at central political level. For example, both associations, participated in a public hearing in March 2015 at the parliament to exchange their positions on the quota abolition and the status quo of milk market crisis tools with the parliament.³⁸

While encountering considerable obstacles to directly influence the central government, BDM and AbL formed successful discourse coalitions with government actors at regional level. Both associations share major interpretations about the dairy quota abolition with the coalition party *Die Grünen* (Environmentalist) as well as *Die Linke* (Leftist), as they all argued for a follow-up market-regulating policy tool. Even though discursive coalitions with those parties can be considered as

³⁷ *Bioland* appeared as a clear proponent of the continuance of the dairy quota in 2007, while meanwhile it only remains active as a discourse partner as a member of the *AgrarBündnis* (see also section 5.3.4). An explanation for the disappearance of *Bioland* could be that prices for organic milk have not been as much affected by the current price decline as conventionally produced milk. Since 2009, the share of organically produced milk in Germany in relation to milk produced conventionally has been amounting to ca. 2% (MIV, 2016).

³⁸ 31th Session of the Council for Food and Agriculture. Public hearing on "instruments for crisis intervention and management for the dairy market" on Monday, 23rd March 2015.

rather weak compared to sharing "broad consensus" (DBV, 2015a) with the central government (CDU/CSU), a considerate upgrading of the discursive coalition could be achieved in 2014. At the conference of the Federal States Agriculture Ministers on 5th September 2014 in Potsdam, the participants commonly claimed that further policies to tackle possible milk market crises are required and requested the central government to support the EC regarding the further evaluation of possible tools (Vogelsänger, 2014). This discourse coalition can be considered a rather powerful achievement to influence the central government to reconsider its retreating position and follow-up on the major claim of the critiquing discourse to consider further policies tools for the dairy market.

Noteworthy is that the SPD (Social Democratic Party) had generally a rather low appearance in the critiquing discourse, despite running three of the Federal States Ministries of Food and Agriculture and therefore forming part of the Federal States Ministers resolution (Vogelsänger, 2014) mentioned above. The SPD has been traditionally a political party which represents the interests of the manufacturing industry and the service sector as well as those of respective wage laborers. Therefore, the agriculture domain has never been a strong political focus in the history of the party and the SPD is generally deemed a rather weak discourse coalition partner, especially when comparing it to the opposition party *Die Grünen*.

Furthermore, the AbL as well as a private academic consultancy (Fink-Keßler, 2014)³⁹ formed a discourse coalition with the Federal Cartel Office by relying on its inquiries into the power relations of the actors along the dairy value chain in Germany (Bundeskartellamt, 2009, 2012, 2014). The Federal Cartel Office repeatedly pointed out that dairy producers have a less powerful position towards a concentrating processing industry and their diverging individual interests. This also applies to farmers organized in cooperatives as they are bound by contracts to "their" cooperatives which limits the choice in commercializing their milk. These utterances are used by the AbL and Fink-Keßler (2014) to argue for an improvement of trade relations between farmers and dairies in view of a more volatile dairy market after the abolition of the dairy quota. Remarkably, no actor in the liberal sub-discourse is drawing on the findings of the Federal Cartel Office, while pointing out that farmers have a sufficient strong position in the value chain as 70% of producers are organized in cooperatives.

In sum, the most involved farmers associations of the critiquing sub-discourse like BDM and AbL were able to make up for their seemingly less powerful infrastructure by building discourse coalitions with regional governments, respectively the Ministries of Food and Agriculture. Notably, the BDM, in corporation with the European Milk Board, was able to insert the so called Market-Responsibility-Program, a preventive market intervention tool into the critiquing sub-discourse and spread it to its

³⁹ The next paragraph describes more findings with regard to the scientific actors and their coalitions.

coalition partners. Moreover, actors like AbL and scientists formed discourse coalitions with the Federal Cartel Office. Both discourse coalitions were used to argue for an increased state intervention in the dairy market by which they were able to challenge the dominant position of the liberal sub-discourse from below.

5.3.3 The Role of a Dominant Liberalist Thinking in Federal Research Institutes

The dominant liberal sub-discourse is characterized by a strong presence of experts and scientists of the economic discipline which is dominated by economic liberalist thinking. The theoretical underpinnings of the discipline are based on concepts such as the market economy, the free market or free trade. In economic liberalism, liberalization implies "the loosening of regulations [such as] (...) those enacted by the state, with respect to the governance of the market (...), whereas freedom in such a thinking refers to a negative freedom which means that the state or other collective social arrangements are not supposed to intervene in economic relations (Gilbert, 2009, p. 195).

Providing knowledge and evaluating a market-regulating policy tool from such a theoretical perspective, it is of no surprise that research findings always provided arguments for the abolition of the quota (Federal Scientific Isermayer, 2006, p. 135; Offermann, Manegold, & Kleinhanß, 2002, p. 91; Wissenschaftlicher-Beirat, 1998, p. 15). Moreover, among those scientists, structural change is not considered to be a problem or something which has to be avoided, but rather as an economic mechanism which separates the wheat from the chaff, turning the German dairy sector into a more competitive one (as dairy production relocates to the best dairy producers). Furthermore, a development paradigm based on achieving societal prosperity via a liberal market economy goes largely unquestioned within such research. This observations is not meant to insinuate bias in research among federal research institutes, but to lay bare the relations between theoretical orientations, scientific disciplines, research models and the production of knowledge in the discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota.

As the majority of scientific knowledge on the abolition of the dairy quota outlined above originates from federal agriculture research institutions, a direct linkage of knowledge transfer to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food is established.

Moreover, explicit discourse coalitions between scientific actors and the agriculture and food industry association *Deutsche Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft* (DLG) could be as well traced. The DLG owns as well a publishing company which offers professional and scientific publications with regard to animal husbandry, economy and agriculture technology (among others). Moreover, it issues the monthly professional journal *Management Milch* (dairy management) as well as the journal *DLG-*

Mitteilungen (DLG notifications) which treats topics on agricultural management. In 2013, a scientist from the federal research institute *von Thünen* (department for market analysis) published an article on market regulating policies in the dairy sector carrying the polemic title "From pest to cholera" in which he argued against (dairy) market-regulating tools in view of the upcoming abolition of the dairy quota (Weber, 2013).⁴⁰ In this regard, the DLG provided an infrastructure for the liberal sub-discourse via its capacities as a publishing company which carries statements from the scientific realm into the realm of actors along the dairy value chain.

The dominance of the knowledge producing actors in the liberal sub-discourse may explain why the parliamentary group of the opposition party *Die Grünen*, an actor in the critiquing sub-discourse, has commissioned alternative research from a private academic consultancy on the liberalization of the European dairy sector with a focus on Germany (Fink-Keßler, 2014). Actually, this report was the only inter-disciplinary scientific report which also included sociological viewpoints. Moreover, it was conducted in collaboration with a farmer, notably a regional chairman of the farmers' association AbL. The collaboration on knowledge production between the opposition party *Die Grünen*, the report by Fink-Keßler and AbL underlines their common position in the critiquing sub-discourse.

Next to the above-mentioned publication, there is only one further scientific report by the *ife* (*Institut für Ernährungswirtschaft*) which can be situated in the critiquing sub-discourse, although it formulates its statements a bit more cautious. The *ife* is an independent non-profit research institute aimed at providing market and policy analysis with regard to the EU dairy sector. Compared to the experts statements from federal research institutes, the *ife* was a scientific actor less visible in the discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota and disposes of fewer financial and human resources as for example the federal institute *von Thünen*. However, it was together with the *von Thünen* institute as well invited as an expert at a public parliament hearing on *The state of the crisis tools available to the dairy market* in March 2015. Whereas *ife* raised concerns at the hearing with regard to the capability of current dairy market policies after the abolition of the dairy quota, it also remarked that there are various reasons for structural change in the agriculture sector, which are not necessarily related to the market. However, in its evaluation report on *Crises tools of the dairy market*, issued a few days after the abolition of the quota, *ife* situated itself closely to the position of the BDM. The author states that "state-led interventions during extreme price volatilities [regarding the dairy market] can promote the liquidity of actually cost-efficient producers" and further suggests "to develop parts of the market-regulating tool Market-Responsibility-Program suggested by the BDM"

⁴⁰ In this article, the author argues that market-regulating policy tools, discussed as a replacement for the dairy quota, are worsening the situation for dairy producers in Germany. Therefore, he concludes, that politicians should rather "trust the processes of selecting and steering originating from the competition [among producers]" and refrain from further market interventions (Weber, 2013, p. 59).

(Thiele, 2015, p. 56). This is a scientific interpretation on the abolition of the dairy quota which clearly supports the critiquing sub-discourse. However, the above mentioned "knowledge coalitions" among actors of the critiquing discourse only arose in 2014 and 2015 respectively, whereas the scientific knowledge production in the dominant discourse has had a longer tradition.

This section has shown that the liberal sub-discourse drew on a scientific basis which is dominated by economic liberalist thinking which provides core interpretations of economic mechanisms. Moreover, these actors are in close relationship with the central government as this knowledge originates from federal scientific research institutes. In contrast, the critiquing sub-discourse is based on trans-disciplinary scientific research, which is, however, less resourceful in the production and circulation of scientific knowledge among its discourse partners.

5.3.4 The Critiquing Discourse: Challenging from Below

Next to the dominant scientific actors and coalitions within the liberal sub-discourse, the actors and coalitions among the critiquing discourse strand may appear rather weak at times. However, the study has found that the critiquing actors deploy rather creative strategies and practices to support and spread their statements.

The AbL as well as the BDM have created their own knowledge platforms via monthly magazines such as the *BDM Aktuell* and the *Alternative Bauernstimme* (alternative farmer's voice) to spread their statements among their fellow members. Two issues of the *Alternative Bauernstimme* dedicated the dairy section to the abolition of the dairy quota (AbL, 2007, 2015). Those magazines are important mediums via which the critiquing discourse can spread and therefore pose alternatives to magazines of the critiquing discourse, like the *DLG Mitteilungen* and *Milch Management*, mentioned in the previous section.

In addition, in 1993, AbL united around one million members in the *AgrarBündnis* (Agriculture Alliance), an association of 24 independent organizations which work in the field of agriculture, environment, nature conservation and animal protection as well as consumer and development politics.⁴¹ The main project of the alliance is the issuance of *Der Kritischer Agrarbericht* (The Critical Agriculture Report), an annual report which contains contributions of members as well as like-minded scientists and administrative experts (AgrarBündnis, n.d.). In the past, various chapters of the report were dedicated to the abolition of the dairy quota, its effects and possible future market-

⁴¹ Members are for example the organic producers association *Bioland*, the environmental NGO BUND, *demeter*, an organic-anthroposophic agriculture association, and the *Slow Food* movement.

regulating policies (Fink-Keßler, 2015; Jasper, 2007, 2008, 2009). One of the authors is Fink-Keßler (2015), the academic consultant which prepared one of the two scientific reports on the liberalization of the German dairy sector in relation to the quota abolition (2014) mentioned above.

Moreover, the alliance between BDM and AbL can actually look back on a history of collaborations and they have again teamed up in January 2015, two months before the abolition of the dairy quota, to protest the declining milk prices at the industry association MIV. Furthermore, in the same year, AbL and BDM collaborated with the NGO German Watch on a non-fictional comic which discussed (inter alia) the effects of the abolition of the dairy quota for local farmers as well as those in the Global South.⁴² Via such networks and practices, the actors are able to make their perceived shortcomings of the dairy sector accessible to non-farmers and constitute dairy production as an issue of the whole society. Among the newspaper and media contributions analyzed, the BDM and AbL were twice as much mentioned than the DBV. For being comparatively smaller in terms of members and weaker in financial resources and infrastructure, it seems a remarkable achievement.

The aforementioned observations underscore the finding that seemingly less powerful individual actors in the critiquing discourse were able to empower the sub-discourse by creating discourse coalitions via the formation of alliances, knowledge platforms as well as through other creative means of collaboration. Moreover, they have been relatively successful in carrying their critiquing discourse into civil society by reaching out into the public realm.

5.3.5 The Twofold Role of the Media: a Magnifier and Discourse Coalition Partner

Media actors which appeared in the discourse of the abolition of the dairy quota contributed to the discourse by citing political positions of discourse actors and hence, multiplying their statements. Moreover, the majority of media contributions worked with "inside stories" of dairy farmers, which means that farmers were visited and interviewed at their farm and a description included in the media contribution. Among the analyzed data, the majority of those farmers also had a political affiliation to one of the farmers associations such as BDM or DBV. In this sense, this was another mean to reproduce, although more lively, the statement of those actors.

It could be observed that media actors such as newspapers and TV channels/programs coalesced with other actors in two ways: First, by reproducing the other actors utterances, but actually refraining from producing an original interpretation. In this sense, the media was an actor which

⁴² Check out their "non-fiction comic" Human Beings, Power, Milk (*Mensch, Macht, Milch*) (2015): <http://germanwatch.org/de/11822>.

provided a platform from where the conflicting statements of the sub-discourses got presented to the public. This was actually the case with a great amount of media contributions such as those from the public news channel ARD via its evening news *Tagesschau*, which has the greatest reach-out among the German population. However, those contributions were a mere sequences of different statements on the abolition of the dairy quota, which implies that those media actors cannot be assigned clearly to either one side of a sub-discourse.

Second, some media actors entered into discourse coalition with other discourse actors by adding their own interpretation on the topic in question, and therefore, contributed to either the liberal or critiquing sub-discourse. This was for example the case with media actors like *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and *Tageszeitung* (TAZ), whereas their interpretation of the abolition of the dairy quota was influenced by their political affiliation. Likewise, the FAZ, with a liberal-conservative orientation, formed a discourse coalition with actors of the liberal sub-discourse, while the TAZ, with a socialist orientation, could be clearly identified as coalition partner in the critiquing sub-discourse.

Ultimately, media actors enforced the conflicting dynamic between the discourse strands by polarizing between the liberal and critiquing sub-discourses on the abolition of the dairy quota and carrying this dynamic further into public. Overall, the liberal sub-discourse was more dominantly presented in newspaper articles, although a great amount of media actors remained rather neutral while reproducing and contrasting the interpretations of both sub-discourses. With a great frequency the actors such as BDM, DBV and the central government respectively the Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture and the opposition party *Die Grüne* were referred to, while AbL, DLG, DRV and MIV as well as actors of regional governments were named less.

5.3.6 Conclusion

The liberal sub-discourse is based on powerful actors such as the central government, represented by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, which formed discourse coalitions with the biggest farmers as well as agriculture and food industry associations. In addition, those actors are considered as powerful by means of their resources to reproduce the liberal sub-discourse. Moreover, the liberal discourse can also draw on a well-established and powerful scientific basis dedicated to liberal economic thinking providing their statements with academic credibility. In this sense the liberal sub-discourse can establish itself as hegemonic towards the critiquing discourse strand.

The media is an actor which transported the discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota from rather specialized arenas (political and scientific) into the public social arena by reproducing the sub-

discourses and adding to the polarization between them. However, overall the media reproduced the hegemonic position of the liberal sub-discourse.

The actors in the critiquing sub-discourse are considered less powerful, given their individual institutional set-up and financial resources available to them. However, those actors exhibited agency in discourse-production while forming extensive alliances among regional governments, independent research institutes and academic consultancies, farming associations and other organizations in the realm of agriculture. Moreover, the dairy farmers association BDM appeared as a central actor of the critiquing discourse as due to the BDM's collaboration with the European Milk Board, it is able to insert the market-regulating policy concept of the Milk-Market-Responsibility-Program into the critiquing discourse. Moreover, through creative practices the actors built means of knowledge production and circulation among themselves but also deployed strategies to successfully carry their critiquing discourse "from below" into the public realm. Through their discursive practices they can challenge the hegemonic knowledge claims of the liberal sub-discourse by positioning critiquing statements in the public discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota in Germany.

5.4. Synthesis of Research Findings

In line with the research questions, the results chapters aimed at reconstructing the public discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota in Germany ahead of its actual termination in March 2015. This section provides a synthesis of the main research findings by relating them to concepts of the theoretical framework.

The analysis identified two different sub-discourses on the abolition of the dairy quota within the discursive field: the *liberal* sub-discourse and the *critiquing* sub-discourse which were (re)produced by distinctive sets of discourse coalitions among social actors and dispositifs.

The liberal sub-discourse could establish itself as hegemonic within the discursive field as it is rooted in institutions which had a strong influence on the EU policy change such as the central government represented by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, federal research institutions as well as major farmers and industry associations in Germany. Moreover, the liberal sub-discourse was situated within the general discourse on the reorientation of the CAP towards a more market-oriented set-up of policies which enforced its objectivization. This dominant position made it possible for the actors to establish a knowledge order in which the termination of the quota policy was constructed as a *fait accompli* ahead of the actual decision in 2008. Back then, this meaning remained largely unchallenged by actors of the critiquing sub-discourse which occupied rather

marginal institutional positions within government, scientific and civil-society institutions in order to have an actual social effect on the decision on the dairy quota policy.

Therefore, the public discourse, which emerged increasingly ahead of the actual abolition of the policy in 2015, was rather a mobilization of disparate meaning patterns with regard to the quota abolition itself, culminating in a conflict about the legitimate definition of the dispositif to steer social change in the aftermath of the dairy quota. Ultimately, the public discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota can be understood as an example of similar discourses which negotiate the social construction of change between a free market economy and state-led market interventions in the pursuit of a certain development paradigm.

6. Discussion

This chapter is structured in three parts. Section 6.1 provides a discussion on the extent the research questions could be answered and highlights possible areas for further research. Section 6.2 offers a reflection on the research approach and how the choice of a discourse analysis has shaped the research findings by referring as well to its strengths and weaknesses. Section 6.1 offers a final reflection on the overall contribution of this study to the knowledge gap identified in the introduction.

6.1 Research Questions and Possibilities for Further Research

This thesis provided a discourse analysis from a sociology of knowledge perspective on the abolition of the dairy production quota in Germany, while the study focused on the public discourse until the actual termination of the policy at the end of March 2015. The following paragraphs discuss to which extent the research questions were answered and makes suggestions for possible future research.

The main research question asked *how the abolition of the dairy quota was constituted in the public discourse in Germany?*, while the sub-questions focused on the *emergence and further evolvement of the discourse* (1.1), the *social actors which (re)produced/transformed the discourse* (1.2), and the *resources they drew on* (1.3).

With regard to the research questions the study has shown that, due to their strong institutional positions, social actors of the liberal sub-discourse constituted the abolition of the dairy quota as a fact already ahead of the actual decision in 2008 to terminate the policy. Moreover, no major discourse battles on whether to change the policy or not could be identified within the study ahead of 2008. This finding was surprising to me in the sense that it shows a strong contrast towards how the public discourse on the policy change evolved up to March 2015, when the quota system was finally terminated. As indicated in the introduction of the thesis, at that time, the public arena around the abolishment of the dairy quota was filled with competing knowledge claims which have been assigned and reconstructed as part of the liberal and the critiquing sub-discourse during this study. Each sub-discourse was reproduced by different discourse coalitions among social actors from the government, farmers and industry associations, research institutions as well as other civil-society organizations and the public media. Moreover, each sub-discourse was based on a distinctive dispositif through which knowledge claims could be spread and social effects realized. However, the further evolvement of the public discourse consisting in the competing sub-discourses is not "about the abolition of the dairy quota", rather, those discourses use the policy change to justify whether

dairy outputs should be organized according to a regulation in the aftermath of the quota or not. Lastly, it was found that market figures showing the decline of dairy producers prices which had been on track since 2014 were an important historical condition in the public discourse as it contributed as well to an increasing resonance in the public media. On the one hand, this provided the statements of the critiquing sub-discourse with additional objectivization and hence, legitimacy, as the risks constituted in the sub-discourse, had been starting to materialize. On the other hand, it forced the liberal sub-discourse into a defensive position of explaining and justifying the quota abolition. As the public discourse on the abolition of the dairy quota and possible follow-up policies has not yet fallen silent, this hints towards an ongoing need for further research into the public discourse.

Areas for possible further research

With regard to the aforementioned observations, a further need for research is associated with the main finding that the public discourse around the actual decision to abolish the dairy quota in 2008 was dominated by the liberal sub-discourse and no bigger discussions "on the quota" ensued in the public realm. This issue could be addressed via further empirical research which sets out to investigate how for example dairy farmers or politicians have experienced the abolition of the quota in order to increase the understanding of the discourse from within the related institutions. Furthermore, this could also mean to adopt a completely different research design, such as for example ethnography, in order to make a contribution to the understanding of the topic in question.

Moreover, another need for further research results from the limitation that this study has only looked at the public discourse on the termination of the quota policy until its actual abolition which was in March 2015. Therefore, further research could analyze how the public discourse has further evolved as of that date. Depending on the resources available, the research could be extended beyond national borders and also include different actors at EU-level (EU parliament, EC, associations, think-tanks, etc.) to capture the interrelations of discourses, actors and other elements. To extent the focus to the EU seems to be especially important, because the German discourse culminated in competing knowledge claims about the necessity to implement further market-regulating policy tools at EU-level. Another research variant could consist in a comparative study of discourses with other EU member countries or other countries in which such a policy change took place (e.g. Canada).

6.2 Reflection on the Research Approach and Methods

This sub-chapter offers a reflection on the choice of the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis by drawing on its strengths and weaknesses.

As pointed out in the previous section, the research might not have fully answered the question on the origin as well as the evolvement of the public discourse around the decision on the termination of the dairy quota in 2008, or even from earlier periods on. The methodology applied could only cover textual data such as statements and position papers, reports and newspaper articles which were available within the limitations of the research. Therefore, the reasons why there was no major opposition to the abolishment of the dairy quota might not have been fully understood with the methodology applied for this research. The SKAD offers the combination with further methods such as qualitative interviews or other ethnographic methods, which is a methodological development already happening in this research program (see Keller, 2011b, 2013). However, due to the limitations of the research, these methods could not be taken into account in order to further investigate the public discourse from within the associated institutions.

Moreover, the question arises which meanings of the quota abolition had been circulating in the private arenas of farmers and their families or what had been discussed "off the record" in meetings of the organizations identified within this study? I believe that attempting to investigate the social construction of meanings in the private realm has to be tackled with a different research design, such as for example ethnography, as the SKAD is a design for discourses in the public and institutional realm. Moreover, findings from an ethnographic approach may challenge the results from a discourse analysis: would it still be possible to classify the findings neatly into two sub-discourses? Rather, I assume that I would have been confronted with a lot more ambiguity of meanings as ethnographic research is apt for deconstructing concepts and challenging established meaning structures. For example, the two sub-discourses identified in this thesis outline a rather rigid understanding of how social change occurs with regard to the dairy sector. Those interpretations are based on the market and respectively market-regulating policies to determine how social change occurs. On the contrary, ethnographic investigations may open up a whole range of other interpretations on what steers social change. Ultimately, this also raises the question whether it makes sense to distinguish between a private and public discourse when investigating a certain phenomena? In other words, what is the value of defining these analytical categories and what is the value of discourse research?

After all, I would argue that the usefulness of different research approaches is grounded in their complementary character and the possibility to compare results which enhance the overall understanding of a social phenomena.

The SKAD approach meant to adopt a different perspective on reality by looking beyond the surface of *what* has been said but inquiring *how* the things you are reading about came into being. It was not just noticing the different positions of actors towards a certain topic, but to investigate how actors engaged in creating, maintaining and transforming different realities through discursive practices. In other words, the research went beyond the dimension of content, but focused as well on the *how* to capture the enmeshments of actors, power relations and processes behind what is spoken, written and thought about the policy change of terminating the dairy production quota. In this regard, Keller (2012, p. 54) by drawing on insights from Clarke (2005), argues that "discourses are not contexts of situations, but constituting parts of situations. Qualitative research has to take care of them if it aims better to address the complexities of today's social phenomena". Therefore, coming back to my previous statement about the usefulness of different research designs, a major strength of this discourse analysis is its ability to open up a distinctive perspective and to answer different research questions with regard to how knowledge is created in public discourses. Hence, the analysis added to the overall understanding of how the abolition of the dairy quota is socially constructed in public debates. Simultaneously, the strength of discourse analysis described before can help to balance another weaknesses, namely that of its inability to have any practical implications for example on informing policy making. However, I argue that a discourse analysis might still retain its compelling character because it is able to highlight the social processes and starting points of knowledge and social practices and therefore contribute to the overall understanding of the topic.

Furthermore, a benefit to work with the SKAD as a novice in discourse research was certainly its ability to inform the methodological design to put into practice such an investigation. The methodological tool box provided by Keller (2013) was certainly of great help to carry out this research, especially with regard to data sampling and analysis. In this regard, the approach also helped to balance a general weakness in discursive research originating from the interpretative effort it requires from the researcher. The subjectiveness of discourse research can hardly be avoided completely. However, the study could balance these concerns by remaining transparent about the methodological choices in order to increase the replicability of this study and hence, the validity of the research findings.

In sum, these observations point towards the need for further research with additional resources which were not available to the present study. Moreover, this observation also applies to the limitation that the study could only look into the discourse until the end of the quota in March 2015.

In this regard, please also note the earlier suggestions on potential further research in the previous section.

6.3 Overall Reflection and Contribution to Knowledge Gap

When approaching the topic in the beginning of the research, the abolition of the dairy quota seemed to have been the focus of ongoing discussions where different social actors publically voiced contradicting statements about the social phenomena in question. To study the topic with a discourse perspective allowed to describe the social processes involved in how knowledge claims arose, were maintained or transformed over time. It also paid attention to the institutional set-up and power relations inherent to the discourse. In this sense, the study refined the assumptions made in the introduction and provided insights in to how the competing interpretations of the abolition of the dairy quota can be understood as *the social construction of change with regard to the German dairy sector* in the aftermath of the dairy quota. The two sub-discourses identified in the study constitute the ongoing negotiations among the actors of the legitimate entity to steer social change and how to organize the relations between dairy farmers, the market and the state. Moreover, this is the first study, to my knowledge, that takes on a SKAD perspective with regard to an agro-food topic in Germany. Ultimately, the study may also have provided an interesting starting point for follow-up research on the transformation of the public discourse in Germany after March 2015 and to further investigate potential social effects of the discourse.

7. Conclusion

This thesis provided a discourse analysis from a sociology of knowledge perspective on the abolition of the dairy production quota in Germany until its actual termination in March 2015.

The analysis identified two sub-discourses on the abolition of the dairy quota within the discursive field: the *liberal* sub-discourse and the *critiquing* sub-discourse which were (re)produced by different discourse coalitions among social actors and dispositifs. Whereas the liberal sub-discourse constructed the abolition of the dairy quota as necessary step and a chance for the German dairy sector in a liberal market economy, the critiquing sub-discourse questions the established knowledge order and constitutes the policy change as a risk for the German dairy sector as well as society and nature.

The liberal sub-discourse could establish itself as hegemonic within the discursive field as it is rooted in institutions which had a strong influence on the EU policy change such as the central government represented by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, federal research institutions as well as major farmers and industry associations in Germany. Moreover, the liberal sub-discourse was situated within the general discourse on the reorientation of the CAP towards a more market-oriented set-up of policies which enforced its dispositif. This dominant position made it possible for the actors to establish a knowledge order in which the termination of the quota policy was constructed as a fact ahead of the actual decision in 2008. Back then, this meaning remained largely unchallenged by actors of the critiquing sub-discourse which occupied rather marginal institutional positions within government, scientific and civil-society institutions in order to have an actual social effect on the decision on the dairy quota policy. However, the critiquing sub-discourse managed to challenge the knowledge claims of the liberal sub-discourse increasingly ahead of the actual abolition in 2015 as the condition that dairy producer prices have been in decline as of 2014 provided their statements with further objectivization.

Ultimately, the distinctive meaning structures of the sub-discourses culminated in a central conflict about the legitimate definition of the dispositif to steer social change in the aftermath of the dairy quota. Therefore, the competing interpretations of the abolition of the dairy quota can be understood as the social construction of change which argue between the free market economy and state-led market interventions in the pursuit of a certain development paradigm.

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