CHAPTER TWO: Food safety as an object of inquiry: logics of contestation

2.1 Introduction: Food (safety) as a contested issue

As the introductory chapter of this thesis emphasized, food (safety) cannot be confined within national boundaries, as live animals and food products are transported across Europe, the production chain frequently crosses borders, and it encompasses different physical locations. The basic premise of this chapter and the remaining part of this thesis, is that food (safety) does not only travel physically, but also discursively: Food (safety) touches upon a variety of policy premises, yet its meaning remains contextually contingent, depending on where food (safety) is articulated, by whom, and in which setting. In consideration of this fluidity of food (safety) as an object of inquiry and in view of the constant interplay of rival meanings across diverse discursive premises, I propose to consider food (safety) as a contested issue.

Through this lens, this chapter engages with the host of literature that has been produced over the past decade and deals with food (safety) policy. Rather than providing a standard format literature review, I use the writings to identify and address the 'logics of contestation' that expose food (safety) as a contested and fluid object. I begin by addressing Europeanization as a conceptual framework (subchapter 2.2) and the Europeanization of food (safety) as an empirical phenomenon of institutional integration (subchapter 2.3). After assessing the usefulness of these approaches for the purpose of this study, subsequently, subchapters 2.4-2.7 distil the empirical 'logics of contestation' underlying the subject matter, that is, the aspects that turn food (safety) into a highly topical and sensitive policy area. First, subchapter 2.4 discusses the status of scientific expertise in this policy area, given the role of scientific uncertainty in food (safety) policy (for instance, in the case of BSE), the criticisms that came to be directed at them in the interpretation of particular food risks in terms of their alleged 'secrecy, and the ways in which post-crisis institutional rearrangements have focused on the 'science/policy nexus' (Hoppe 2005). Subsequently, subchapter 2.5 discusses writings that are concerned with the role of consumers in food (safety) policy. Such a discussion is called for by the pervasiveness of 'the consumer' as the target group of food (safety) policy, but also by the recent merging of previously separate policy fields such as those of consumer policy, trade policy, and public health – a linkage where different notions of what it means to be a consumer become articulated and reproduced. Subsequently, in subchapter 2.6 I discuss writings on the concept of trust, given the common notion that the food scares over the past decade have caused a loss of trust among citizens. The final subchapter (2.7) addresses the conceptualization of food scares as a collective experience of risk, given (i) the uncertainty with which food (safety) is associated, (ii) the way it

informs the work of policymakers in interaction with scientists, and (iii) the prominence of the 'risk society' approach (for instance, Beck 1992) in this field of study. Even though the potentially relevant literatures cannot be discussed exhaustively here, by sketching out these rival approaches, identifying their main findings, and the ways in which scholars have arrived at them, this chapter further delineates the puzzle underlying the present study.

2.2 The Literature on Europeanization

2.2.1 From EU Integration to Europeanization

In order to further clarify my approach to Europeanization, and to explicate how my understanding of existing approaches has inspired this study, this section discusses how scholars have addressed the process of *EU integration*. In particular, I address the shift in this body of literature that occurred in the 1990s towards a '*Europeanization'* perspective.

The study of institutional change and the related expansion of EU regulatory competence form the core of the field of EU integration studies. For a considerable period of time, the academic (and indeed political) debates within EU studies concerned the distinction between *inter-governmentalism* (cf. Hoffmann 1966; Moravcsik 1993, on the one hand, and neo-functionalism or *supranationalism* (e.g. Haas 1958), on the other.[12] Intergovernmentalists would insist on a view of politics as taking place in an essentially anarchical international system where well-defined state entities negotiate integration based on clearly identifiable domestic interests. Neo-functionalists, in contrast, suggest a gradual weakening of the sovereign nation-state through 'functional spillover', such as the gradual development from an *economic* union (during the time of the European Coal and Steel Community, ECSC) towards a *political* union. While intergovernmentalists would explain European integration by assuming the superior importance of domestic political and economic agendas, neo-functionalists hold that national allegiances weaken as supranational institutions come to make more and more decisions.

Whilst these schools of thought can be considered pioneers of EU integration studies, their focus on formal institution-building is not only inadequate for the present study, but also risks a reification of conventional notions of domestic interests and national boundaries. Similarly, scholars in this field pay insufficient attention to the fluid nature of policymaking and to the dynamics of contestation and negotiation that bring together seemingly separate policy actors. The present study, in contrast, does not take the notion of 'interests' as given, but considers

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[12] For a useful discussion of Haas' neo-functionalism, see the introductory chapter to Niemann (2006). It is also important to note the existence of more reflexive accounts, such as Rosamond (2005).

them as fluid and contingent upon the discursive contexts in which they become articulated and mobilized in interaction with others.

The division between intergovernmentalists and neo-functionalists came to be weakened when, in the 1990s, the broad field of EU studies saw three important methodological shifts. *First*, the so-called 'governance turn' called for a re-conceptualization of not only politics in general, but also EU politics specifically (e.g. Jachtenfuchs 2001; Kohler-Koch and Eising 1999). In essence, the governance shift entailed that politics and policy could no longer be assumed to take place in any specified, delineable center. As Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) point out, the terminology of 'the state', 'government', 'sovereignty', and 'authority' was to an extent replaced by one of 'governance', 'complexity', 'networks', and 'deliberation' (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003: 1). This shift from 'government' to 'governance' frequently implied a methodological reorientation in political science scholarship. For instance, qualitative discourse analysis as well as ethnographic methods entered the field of policy analysis in order to understand micro-level interaction in deliberative policy practices.

The 'governance turn' shares features with sociological (neo-)institutionalism (e.g. Powell and DiMaggio 1991) and attributes significance to the role of ideas, norms, symbols, and values in institutions. Such a line of thinking is useful for the present study, as it directs attention to additional empirical dimensions to be studied, such as that of organizational culture. Beyond a stronger focus on agency and negotiation within and across institutional boundaries, the approach taken here is also applicable in studying how discourses (rather than free-floating 'ideas') inform agents within and across institutions and how particular notions of which these discourses are composed become *materialized*.

The *second* major shift in EU integration studies consisted in the emergence of 'multi-level governance' approaches (see for instance, Marks, Hooghe and Blank 1996), arguably in reaction to inter-governmentalism. Scholars of multi-level governance generally advocated a multi-sited approach in order to avoid the two pitfalls of either state-centrism or approaching the EU as solely operating at the supranational level ('Brussels'). Regarding the methodological implications of multi-level-governance studies, Maura Adshead (2000: 27) laments that they have too frequently focused on case studies, using the 'state form' (i.e. institutional configurations) in a given national context as the main or single independent variable for the purpose of explaining degrees of European integration (the 'dependent variable'). A sole focus on the state form in individual contexts obscures the reasons for which institutions develop differently, and why – even if the institutional structures are similar – the language that may accompany change varies. The present study, in contrast, shows that an analysis of the 'life courses' of particular discourses

and the key moments when new meanings are introduced into a given policy domain can account for the diverse ways in which food (safety) is taken up across contexts and over time. Beyond this comparative mode, this study investigates the ways in which a common, EU-based approach has been developed in spite of the diversity on national levels – a puzzle that has not been sufficiently considered in this field of study, not least due to a general lack of attention to the role of language in policymaking at the level of the EU.

The third shift in the scholarship on EU integration occurred in recognition of an advanced stage of European integration in the late 1980s, when political scientists moved from analyzing EU integration towards a *Europeanization* perspective. The recent division in this scholarship concerns the differentiation between bottom-up approaches and top-down approaches. The division is worth explicating here as it has informed diverse methodological orientations and empirical studies. In supranationalist thought, it is the member states who will push for Europeanizing a given policy area. Conversely, a 'top-down' notion of Europeanization suggests that it takes place at the supranational level ('Brussels'), and those EU policy recommendations or regulations are subsequently negotiated and adopted at a national level. The latter view reflects assumptions about the roles of elites in the process of Europeanization and holds that member states 'download' EU policies and translate them into national policies (see, for instance, Börzel and Risse 2000).

In contrast to the previous concern with EU integration as a process of institution-building on a supranational level, the literature on Europeanization addresses questions such as:

> Is Europeanization making the member states more similar? Or do different domestic political structures 'refract' Europeanization in different directions? Has 'Europe' changed domestic political structures (for example, party systems and public administration) and public policy? If so, what are the mechanisms of change? (Raedelli 2000: 1)

Within this research agenda, Claudio Radaelli (2000; cf. Adshead 2000) notes the predominant attention to 'policy networks'. Frequently borrowing from policy-analytical literature such as that of Adrienne Heritier (for instance, Heritier 1993), but also concepts in the field of international relations, policy network approaches consider the growing interlinkages between private and public, national and transnational, and governmental and non-governmental bodies that feature in systems of multi-level governance. The contribution of such scholarship lies in its recognition of the complexity of contemporary policymaking, taking into account its multi-sited and indeed multi-level nature. Yet this scholarship devotes little attention to the constitutive role of language in the policy process, and when assessing the relative stability of

policy networks, they offer insufficient tools to access the shared understandings that sustain such networks, for example at the EU level.

Moving further, Radaelli (2000: 4) proposes a more nuanced conceptualization of 'Europeanization' as

> [p]rocesses of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies.

As expressed in this quotation, Radaelli (2000) adds a cognitive, even discursive dimension to the concept. Nonetheless, he insists on the notion of a top-down process of Europeanization, that is, the idea that policy is formulated at the institutional level of the EU and then implemented in the member states. This presumes that policy issues are given and clearly identifiable in institutional sites of 'multi-signification' (Hajer 2006), that is, physical locations with diverse political, legal, and institutional traditions of viewing and defining policy *issues* as *problems*. Hajer, in contrast, recognizes that where different policy actors come together, they bring in different 'systems of signification' and hence have to work out common terms of understanding in order to tackle a given policy issue. In a similar way, the present study parts with the realist view of the policy process where objective problem identification, policy and solution formulation, and implementation follow one another in an uncontested manner, be it at the national or the transnational level.

Others in the community of Europeanization scholars seem to remain more embedded within the 'integration' view of Europeanization and take the term to refer to institutional dynamics on the supranational level, relating less to the study of the domestic level. In such a vein, Thomas Risse et al. (2001), for instance, define Europeanization as

> the emergence and development at the European level of distinct structures of governance, that is, of political, legal, and social institutions associated with political problem solving that formalize interactions among the actors, and of policy networks specializing in the creation of authoritative European rules (Risse et al. 2001: 3; cited in Olsen 2002: 929, emphasis added).

Again, the authors do not overcome the conventional institutional bias and fail to consider the role of language in the process whereby European rules (and roles) actually come to be authoritative and considered as legitimate 'ways of doing things'. Not unlike Radaelli (2002), the authors neglect to consider the qualities that EU-level policy discourses and the pertinent

notions must acquire in order to institutionalize and materialize. In other words, we are left with the question of why some notions become dominant, and hence come to form a coherent policy discourses, and others do not. Addressing this question becomes even more pressing when we see success in some cases of Europeanization, while failure to mobilize in other policy areas. The next subsection assesses writings on Europeanization in terms of their specific ability to answer the research questions posed in this study.

2.2.1 Moving beyond the Europeanization literature

From the perspective taken in this study, the literature on Europeanization is insufficiently suited to answer our research questions, which concern, on the one hand, the diversity of interpretations of food scares at the level of member states and over time, and, on the other hand, an apparent shared interpretation at the level of the EU. Four broad limitations in this scholarship have precluded the insights we require for answering the research questions of this study: the frequently exclusive focus on analyzing change, while neglecting the study of cases of resilience against Europeanization and hence continuity; the related methodological focus on technical policy contents (rather than in-depth analysis of the whole policy process, including processes of interpretation and meaning-making)[13]; the assumption of clearly identifiable national interests; and the insistence on the differentiation between the roles of policymakers, scientists, members of the industry, and citizen groups. I shall treat these four limitations in consecutive order here.

First, research in the field of Europeanization often focuses on *changes* in policy (discourse) affairs. An analysis of, for instance, Europeanizing legislative changes, is indeed able to point at the emergence of new regulatory mechanisms in empirical detail. A discourse analysis, however, can move beyond the identification of change, and may reveal that seemingly new policy discourses and actor constellations, such as in the German *Agrarwende*, are, in fact, a product of the rise of previously more marginal positions. At certain historical junctions, previously existing discourses may re-emerge - some of them out of a marginal position - and those who push for them may come to join in new actor constellations, not least in alliances with those discourses hegemonic at the pertinent historical juncture. Chapter three will explicate how 'dislocations'

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[13] Process-taking accounts of cases of Europeanization do, of course, look at the entire process. Yet, the conceptualization of the policymaking process usually relies on a linear view, where negotiation and contestation of meaning receive little or no attention. For instance, van Zwanenberg and Millstone (2005) provide an exceptionally detailed account of the BSE crisis in the UK as well as (though to a lesser extent) at the EU level and, in a useful manner, describe the politics of scientific committees and the wider policy communities. However, the production of meaning around BSE and the immediate interpretation of the disease receive insufficient attention.

(Laclau 1990), or sets of moments that cannot be understood within the dominant discursive framework at a given time, can help re-empower old discourses by providing a discursive opening. Drawing on discourse theory, I shall argue that any policy discourse can contain an amalgamation of new and old (re-empowered) discourses, and hence, is always about change and continuity.

Second, the related methodological focus on analyzing technical policy contents aggravates the problem of exploring only change, and not discursive resilience. Even though valuable at times for the purpose of constructing schematic overviews, the exclusive focus on policy contents obscures other empirical dimensions of the policymaking process. An interpretive understanding of 'policymaking' assigns more importance to processes of interpretation and sense-making, dimensions that are accessible, for instance, through in-depth interviews. By combining qualitative textual analysis with in-depth interviews, this discourse analytical study is able to (i) trace the origins and 'life courses' of policy discourses, (ii) to identify the key moments of transformation, and (iii) to provide a political analysis by exploring the political rivalry between relatively hegemonic and other, more marginal discursive formations.

A third, and related, limitation in the literature on Europeanization concerns the notion of 'national interest', particularly in studies dealing with the 'bottom-up' aspects of Europeanization. In much of this scholarship, insufficient attention is paid to the construction of national interest and the way in which discourses inform both change and continuity in policy.[14] The notion of a national interest as exogenously given conceals the fluid and dynamic nature of the policy process, in which interests and roles are constructed in interaction – be it at a national or a transnational level. In order to avoid the risk of reifying apparent 'national interests' in this thesis, I explore the rival discourses *within* countries.

Fourth, a similarly problematic reification in the literature on Europeanization and indeed the wider scholarship on policymaking concerns the assumed distinctions between the actor categories of 'policymakers', 'scientists', members of the industry, and 'citizens' (such as consumer groups and NGOs). Departing from this rather static and essentialist conceptualization of policy actors, I contend that these distinctions are socially (and indeed academically) constructed; they paint too rigid a picture of the policymaking process. In order to avoid reifying a static view of Europeanization, wherein simplified notions of interests, rationality, and power obscure the important roles of meaning-making and identities, one has to question the very categories that have been used to describe and analyze the policymaking

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[14] Exceptions within this literature can be found in some social constructivist writings on Europeanization. See, for instance, Diez (2001) and, to an extent, the work of Vivien Schmidt.

process. This study seeks to avoid an actor-centric conceptualization of policymaking and asserts the mutually constructed nature of discourses and actors. In order to understand the origins and 'life courses' of policy programs, I argue, we need to identify the discourses that dominate in them and how they come to do so. In turn, we need to examine the notions of which those discourses are composed, how they are related to one another and produce a recognizable policy discourse and how they are employed and reproduced in actor constellations between policymakers, scientists, members of the industry, and (groups of) citizens. Chapter three will further clarify this point and, in table 3.1, introduces the analytical framework employed in this study.

As one of the few authors in this field, Vivien Schmidt (2000; see also Radaelli and Schmidt 2005) has addressed the phenomenon of Europeanization by employing discourse-analytical concepts. Schmidt (2000) rightly points out that, for European integration to be 'successful', discourses that *legitimate* the process of Europeanization are highly important. She appears to assume, however, that it is policymakers who 'come up with discourses' (Schmidt 2000: 283) and essentially impose their view onto an entirely passive environment. In that way, Schmidt (ibid: 279) understands the function of discourses to be of an instrumental and indeed one-way, top-down, and elite nature. In her understanding of discourse, governmental officials construct discourse (Schmidt 2000: 286), while acknowledging that discourse may also be a 'product of policy experts, academics, the press, interest group leaders, and *even* social movements' (ibid.: 286, emphasis added). This thesis proceeds in an inverse way by considering the ways in which discourses inform agency, rather than viewing actors themselves as the independent and conscious producers of discourse. Schmidt's scheme may be of use in small-scale comparative research on elite policy discourse; however, it provides us with insufficient tools for an in-depth analysis of the construction of meaning and related changes and continuities in policy discourse.

An additional limitation in the writings on 'discursive institutionalism', a term originating from its primary exponent (Schmidt 2000), lies in the fact that they are not clearly situated in one or another ontological and epistemological approach. In contrast to a poststructuralist understanding of discourse as being at the very core of politics and policymaking, such as the one employed in this study, Schmidt (2000: 279) draws an analytical distinction between 'policy program' and 'discourse'. In other words, discourse is conceived of as a separate entity and differentiated from institutions and policy programs, as a result of which Europeanization remains primarily studied in terms of (quantitatively assessed) institutional integration. This study, conversely, explores the qualities of particular notions that have become the basis for EU policy discourse in the field of food (safety), as well as the quality of interaction between them in

order to explain its remarkably swift mobilization. Another set of distinctions whose usefulness remains insufficiently clear in Schmidt's work concerns the 'ideational', the 'normative', the 'coordinative', and the 'communicative' dimensions of discourse, respectively. This set of distinctions implies that one can distill the *neutral* speech elements in linguistic exchange and the *normative* dimension in communication, and it implies an understanding of discourses as a collection of 'ideas'. In contrast, this study departs from the notion that language can be a neutral means of communication and of representing 'the world out there'; instead, I consider language as constitutive of our understanding and definition of policy problems and possible solutions. There is no unmediated access to the 'world out there'; rather, definitions of what a particular policy issue stands for (and whether it is a *problem*, or just an *issue*) are always filtered through layers of sedimented discourses.

While Schmidt recognizes that discourses 'provide the basis for policymakers to come up with solutions to a wide variety of policy problems' (2000: 280), she paints a stylized view of the policy process (see also Radaelli and Schmidt 2005) based on the distinction drawn between 'interests' and 'discourse'. While the categories of 'interest' and 'strategy' are to be taken seriously, they can be better understood within a more comprehensive understanding of 'discourse': In such a perspective, discourses are seen as constitutive of interests; in other words, interests are socially constructed and cannot be considered independently of the context in which they become articulated. To sum up, discourses, here, are understood to be at the core of policy processes, rather than as an exogenous factor. Correspondingly, policy discourses are not merely 'made up' by policymakers: Instead, policymaking is a multi-faceted, interactive process, in which seemingly disparate policy actors and communities come together to produce shared meanings.

To conclude, as categories such as 'levels' (top/bottom), 'actors', '(national) interests', and the dominant definitions of policy issues have been taken as given, Europeanization scholars have not moved beyond an either strictly comparative format of study (remaining state-centric), or an elite-perspective, which overemphasizes the role of policy experts and 'interest groups' in producing policy. Likewise, the role of language – beyond its strictly linguistic connotation – has been left unconsidered. In contrast, the analytical framework employed here, which will be further spelled out in chapter three, seeks to elucidate both convergence and divergence by capturing food (safety) as a 'policy discourse'.

2.3 The Europeanization of food (safety): crisis and institutional development

2.3.1 Food (safety) as a Europeanizing object of inquiry

Building on the conceptual discussion in the preceding subchapter, this section presents the object of inquiry in more empirical terms and recounts the ways in which authors have analyzed (the Europeanization of) food (safety). In particular, I seek to highlight that this body of research is largely limited to the analysis of institutional integration, often in technical, policy-programmatic terms, and the ways in which food scares have been conceptualized as 'crisis moments' in this field of study.

As proposed in the introductory chapter, food - whether safe or not - travels across diverse discursive premises, whereby the meanings of 'safety' and 'quality' change. For instance, while on a farm, food (safety) is about efficient production, food (safety) acquires additional connotations throughout the 'food chain', such as environmental degradation through transport, hygiene, the public and private regimes through which food (safety) is governed, and eventually, public health, too. These different steps and movements can also be viewed as policy areas that have now increasingly been merging, not least as a response to the food scares experienced over the past decade. Alongside changing modes of food production, consumption, and mobility, new ways of governing became necessary. The need to make sense of these developments produced a new vocabulary that has arisen along the food chain, whereby 'governance', 'stakeholders', 'policy networks', and 'modern regulation' have been replacing – or at least modifying – previously sedimented concepts of regulation, which Hajer (2003) has termed 'classical-modernist'. What has this vocabulary implied for food (safety)?

In post-WWII times, shared understandings regarding food (safety) became sedimented across Europe, as food was primarily a matter of food security and agricultural productivity, rather than safety as such. Following the food shortages during the two World Wars, sufficiency of food supplies became the primary concern across Europe and made for the dominant paradigm of maximizing production in the subsequent decades. At least until the first major food scare of post-WWII times, the outbreak of salmonella in the UK (see Roslyng 2006), a silently given, largely unquestioned trust in food provision and food (safety) was reflected in the institutional handling of food (safety) policy, where solely governmental agencies were entrusted with food (safety). Those agencies, in turn, were largely informed by agricultural policy motives, rather than consumer protection and public health concerns (with the partial exception of Germany, as chapter five will show).

In line with these post-WWII policy objectives, concerns regarding the side effects of intensive agricultural food production as well as concerns about food quality were silenced behind the hegemonic policy discourse of food security. Simultaneously, the role of food chemistry (such as through improvements regarding food preservation) on the way food (safety) was governed increased and the position of the food and farming industry became fortified through the articulation of the said policy objectives. As Alan Swinbank expressed it in 1994, 'the CAP is a farm policy, not a food policy' (Swinbank 1994: 255).

At the same time, diverse traditions of food (safety) regulation persisted across European states, and, as mentioned in chapter one, the EU only intervened in cases where the internal market principle and the free movement of goods seemed to be at risk. This formerly overriding principle, however, underwent significant moments of transformation, whereby previously disintegrated policy areas came to merge and new policy areas emerged on the EU institutional agenda (developments that chapter seven explicates in detail). In other words, the constructed boundaries between feed and food, animal and public health, and national and transnational came to be called into question. These moments of transformation have frequently been captured in terms of institutional crisis and changing modes of 'governance', and I shall address the most prominent lines of thinking below.

2.3.2 Food scares as institutional crisis

A number of scholars have sought to capture food scares (in particular BSE) and their disruptive effects as instances of institutional crisis. Two lines of argument can be distinguished. *First*, a great part of the academic discussions of the BSE episodes have used terms such as 'policy failure' and 'policy disaster' (in particular in reference to the UK case, e.g. Ratzan 1998: ix; van Zwanenberg and Millstone 2003; Baggot 1998; Gerodimus 2004), a terminology that arguably assigns a purely negative effect to the experienced food scares. Similarly, a dominant line of analysis and explanation in the UK case, for instance, is one of 'vested interests', mainly relying on a critique of the 'double responsibility' of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Fishery (hereafter MAFF) in having to represent and promote the concerns of the industry and those of consumers at the same time (Atkins and Brassley 1996; Millstone and van Zwanenberg 2001). Others add that, in the UK, the strong involvement of the National Farmers' Union (NFU) further aggravated the 'undemocratic character' of this particular 'policy network' (Weir and Beetham 1999; Seguin 2000), and that this, in part, caused delays and ambiguity in the (mis)handlings of BSE.

The second line of argument similarly focuses on institutional shortcomings in terms of decision-making, both in the UK and at the level of the European Union. With respect to the EU, a recent collection of essays edited by Christopher Ansell and David Vogel (2006) is specifically concerned with the 'contested governance' of food (safety). Governance, they argue, becomes contested 'when a highly salient triggering event interacts with long-term trends and institutional tensions produce a pervasive loss of institutional trust and legitimacy' (Ansell and Vogel 2006: 24). The authors propose that tensions and contestation arise regarding 'who, where, how and on what basis policy should be made and implemented', and at the same time the 'scope of contestation' is expanded; furthermore, as a result of the interaction between loss of trust and the expanded scope of contestation, wholesale institutional reform will take place. While this collection of writings presents a highly significant contribution to the scholarship, the authors appear to assume at times that tension and contestation – and eventually institutional reform – will arise 'naturally'. On the contrary, from a discourse-theoretical perspective, I propose that the particular ways in which an event or a scientific discovery (or an accident) is constructed depend on the context in which this occurs, and on the available horizons of meanings within which the event can be understood. For instance, consider images of burning cows: Is what we see here an effective measure to limit the unintended consequence of industrialized agriculture? Is it fundamentally wrong, is it 'murder' of 'God's creation'? Is it a problem arising from the incapacity of slaughterhouse operators to limit the spread of a disease? Are consumers to blame, who reject meat produced from vaccinated animals? In order to answer these questions, we require an approach that can explain these different interpretations, trace their origins and 'life courses', and explore the political implications of this diversity in terms of the actor constellations that they produce. At the same time, the recognition of the convergence at the EU level – in terms of policy discourse – necessitates a framework that allows for both comparison and multi-sited analysis.

Giandomenico Majone (2000) is more concerned with the impact of BSE on institutional design and conceptualizes the BSE episode as a 'credibility' crisis, referring to the credibility of both the status of scientific expertise and EU institutional arrangements in a broader sense. He contends that the BSE crisis conveyed that the 'decentralized system of rule-making has proved to be inadequate' and that it exposed the 'serious shortcomings in the overall co-ordination of European policies on agriculture, the internal market and human health' (Majone 2000: 273). The remedy to these problems, Majone contends, lies in institutional redesign and moving towards independent European agencies that are embedded in transnational networks, in order to enhance subsidiarity, accountability, and efficiency (cf. Palau-Roque and Chaqués 2006).

Beyond Majone, scholars direct their critique at the inadequacy of coordination and negotiation procedures between the UK and other member states as well as the European Commission. The lack of a shared agenda, a number of authors argue (see Ratzan 1998), and the turning of a public health issue into a political controversy, was rooted in institutional characteristics such as the national veto right, the weakness of the European Parliament, and the culture of protectionism among the member states. Yet what is left out here is an investigation as to not only *why* the development of a shared agenda is frequently a slow, incremental, and highly controversial political process but also how shared understandings *have* eventually come about in a range of fields. By merely considering the phenomenon of protectionism as a result of national interest, one risks overlooking the discursive negotiation of the meanings of events (or 'crises') and hence, political agendas.

In contrast to these two groups of scholars, Ian Forbes (2004) departs from the notion that critical policy issues will 'naturally' be understood as triggering a 'crisis' in all contexts; instead, he suggests not only that terminologies of 'crisis' and 'policy disaster' indicate a political judgment, but that focusing on the weaknesses of the political and administrative system (such as the composition of the MAFF) and its lack of coordination with the Department of Health) forecloses important opportunities for lesson-learning (Forbes 2004). He expresses skepticism concerning those scholarly accounts of the BSE episode that, based on rationalist underpinnings, set them in a comparative context with, for instance, the Chernobyl disaster or even the 1956 Suez crisis (Millstone 2000). Conversely, Forbes underlines the particularity of the BSE case, in terms of the continuing uncertainties surrounding the issue (for instance, the possibility of BSE in sheep, but also regarding human health, including the possibility of infection via blood donors) (Forbes 2004: 344).

In similar conceptual terms, Mark Bovens and Paul 't Hart (1996) criticize the policy-disaster approach and point to the necessity of considering particular sets of criteria and contextual conditions under which events are defined as 'crises' (or not). They find that when it comes to domains of 'risks', government and its performance is more prone to be perceived as a failure. Fleur Alink, 't Hart, et al. (2001) draw on empirical analysis of institutional change and reform in different policy areas (Alink, 't Hart, et al. 2001; cf. Boin and 't Hart 2000) and come to reject the view that certain moments that seem to operate as triggers for a crisis are 'freak events'. Instead, they suggest that crises are in fact manifestations of a certain institutional vulnerability that can be traced back to developmental logics in the 'pre-crisis' period. For the purpose of the present study, such insights are valuable as they point to the elements of continuity in times of crisis.

Going beyond this institutional focus, in this thesis, I explore the discursive space of the 'pre-crisis period' in order to get a better understanding of change and continuity in policy discourse.

Critically drawing on the 'crisis-reform-thesis', this group of authors contend that 'crises not only signal the delegitimization of the status quo in a policy sector, they can also mark the beginning of institutional renewal' (Boin and 't Hart 2000; cf. Alink, 't Hart, et al. 2001). The emphasis here should perhaps be on '*can* mark', as the ways in which the crisis comes to be understood as such in the first place, and the discursive strategies employed in this process, will effectively determine the institutional-political responses and whether 'crisis management' is formulated as the need for 'restoring order' (i.e. going back to the pre-crisis status quo) or renewal and institutional redesign (Boin and 't Hart 2000).

In their exploration of policy renewal in the UK and in Germany in the aftermath of the BSE episode, Philip Lowe et al. (2003) suggest that the changes observed were not designed in reaction to the crisis experienced, but constituted an implementation of plans and ideas prepared previous to the discovery of the link between BSE and nvCJD. In the view of the authors, that moment constituted a window of opportunity for imminent political re-orientation, in the sense that it disrupted the previously institutionalized power balance between those forces that were in favor of agricultural reform and those who opposed it. This perspective is inspiring also for a discourse analysis approach, as indeed, seemingly radical institutional moves appear new to us at first, whereas at closer observation we can see that institutional change can be a product of an amalgamation of new and previously present, older discourses that may have been blocked from growing more hegemonic at particular historical moments.

Given their range of considerations, the authors discussed above contribute to our understanding of why we have witnessed diverse interpretations in regard to food scares across contexts. Nonetheless, their theoretical frameworks and empirical analyses do not allow for a sufficient understanding of the variety of discourses at play when it comes to *defining* and shaping a crisis and its outcome under similar conditions. Beyond this deficit, they fail to consider the puzzle emerging from divergence at the national level and convergence at the transnational level. The institutionalist and, in some cases, rationalist underpinnings of the writings discussed above, are reflected in the focus on the hegemonic interpretations and handling of a crisis ('reformist' or 'conservative', cf. Alink, 't Hart et al. 2001: 301), rather than the discourses that contest them.[15] Conversely, if one holds a crisis and its 'outcome' to be a product of discursive negotiation, one also needs to look at minor discourses that may not seem highly influential at

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[15] It should be noted here that the authors do not and probably would not want to use the term 'hegemonic'. I use it here in the sense of 'dominant'.

first, but that may very well have an impact on the policymaking process itself as well as institutional redesign.

Christopher Hood (2002) provides a further theoretically valuable analysis of policy dynamics by conceptualizing food scares in terms of 'risk-games' and 'blame-games'. The basic assumption is that politicians seek to maximize political support, which Hood defines as the aim to 'credit less blame from voters' in times of crisis (Hood 2002: 17-8). From this starting point, Hood conceptualizes 'the simplest possible version' of the blame game, in which politicians exercise a choice of direction or delegation within a policy domain as they seek to claim credit and avoid blame from voters, while the latter choose between praising or blaming those who have direct responsibility in public policy, in the face of benign or malign policy effects (Hood 2002). Institutional arrangements produced in the wake of the BSE crisis – according to Hood an exemplary 'blame-generating hazard' (Hood 2002: 20) – would thus leave politicians in a strategic position of 'being able to blame everyone else rather than being blamed themselves when things go wrong' (ibid.). Similarly, citizens ('voters'), Hood assumes, can then actively choose whom to blame, depending on the nature and outcome of the crisis.

Hood's perceptive analysis constitutes an important contribution to ways of thinking about the interaction between policymakers and their environment. Nonetheless, his analysis contains a few shortcomings. First of all, it falls short of empirical illustrations of the manner in which such 'games' translate into institutional practices, and how these may effect institutional changes in times of crisis. Secondly, the simplicity of the model compromises the attention paid to the cultural and historical contingency inherent in political institutions and agencies, and thus the very 'conditions of possibility' – contingent interpretations of a crisis-event - that enable the kinds of interactive 'games' he envisages. Furthermore, Hood's conceptualization of agency within blame-avoidance game situation remains insufficiently developed, and his ontological assumptions about individual policymakers' behavior limit the scope of his analysis.

Nevertheless, combined with a more thorough empirical analysis of the discursive construction of 'perpetrators' and 'victims', such as in the German media (Feindt and Kleinschmitt 2004), Hood might in fact contribute to a more relational, interactive, and dynamic understanding of policymaking in this context. Going beyond Hood's instrumentalist assumptions, it may be possible to conceptualize Hood's 'blame games' as a 'symptom' of dislocatory moments, or moments where the incompleteness and contingency of the policymaking structure (and here I include identities, rules, and roles in institutions as 'sedimented discourses') becomes evident. I would then propose to conceptualize 'blame games'

as a reshuffling of identities, hence moving away from their instrumental connotation; this would, of course, also imply moving away from Hood's rationalist ontology.

The scholarly contributions discussed above generate accounts with respect to the role of crises in institutional development when it comes to the study of food scares. Not least because of the wave of institutional rearrangements in the aftermath of the BSE episode, such accounts are useful in pointing out institutional continuity ('path dependency') as well as change. Yet all too frequently, institutional change, agency and/or structure, as well as the notion of crisis are taken as *given*. The causes of institutional crisis are taken for granted; that is, those approaches would find it difficult to account for the differences on the level of meaning across contexts. An additional problem with the institutionalist bias is the tendency to a) view institutions as well-defined bodies and b) agents within them as instrumental and strategic. The discourse analytical perspective taken here improves on this literature by offering the tools a) to understand the formation of institutional identities and practices as manifestations of discourse b) to empirically access the level of meaning and interpretation of events, and c) to investigate and explain the mobilization of shared understandings at the transnational level against the divergence of meanings at the national level.

Below, sections 2.4 to 2.7 are concerned with a critical discussion of four additional groups of scholarship in order to specify why and how food (safety) policy is a contested area, rather than merely a set of technical issues: the role of scientific expertise in the policy domain of food (safety); the role of 'the consumer' as a political category; the relation between food (safety) and trust; and the conceptualization of food scares as a collective experience of risk.

2.4 The role of science in food (safety) governance

Alongside a decline in public trust, the series of food scares over roughly the past decade provoked criticisms directed at both policymakers and scientists, as a consequence of which a number of institutional arrangements focused on the 'science/policy nexus' (cf. Hoppe 2005). As these criticisms have been at the center of, for instance, the BSE episode, and given their centrality in the empirical analysis of this study, this subchapter provides the context in which we must consider this role of scientific experts and subsequently sketches out the contributions of the relevant literature.

Prior to the BSE crisis, scientific experts held a firmly institutionalized role in food (safety) policymaking, which through the series of food scares was scrutinized and called into question. This important role of science in food (safety) policy is neither new nor surprising, but particularly after WWII, the authority associated with experts formed an important part of in the policymaking process: more generally, in the process of reconstruction (e.g. of infrastructure, but

also the rapidly progressing industrialization) and, more specifically, in the area of food (safety) policy. As a symptom of the increasing role of experts, in the 1950s and 1960s, not least because of concerns regarding malnutrition across Europe, a new food-related vocabulary emerged, wherein concepts such as an 'acceptable daily intake', 'a recommended daily allowance', and 'threshold limit values' came to govern consumption patterns. Based on such concerns and detailed empirical research, Sheila Jasanoff (1990) describes scientific experts in the United States (US) as the 'fifth branch' in the policy infrastructure, following the executive and legislative branches of government, the judiciary and the media. The food industry was thereby implicated in policymaking, too, whereas citizens remained the 'end consumers' of recommendations and food products and did not form significant counter-movements until later decades, as we shall see in the empirical chapters (see also Nestle 2003 for a critical analysis of contemporary nutrition policy in the US).

Some authors describe this post-WWII policy infrastructure as a 'technocratic model' of policymaking, a term derived from the Greek *tekhne* for skill, and *kratos* for power. According to Douglas Torgerson (2003), policy model of technocracy 'presupposes a *rational administrative sphere* capable of monitoring and regulating social systems efficiently and effectively through complex patterns of input, output, and feedback', and hence sustains 'basically oligarchic patterns' (2003: 114-5, emphasis added). In a slightly different manner, and with reference to the BSE crisis in the UK, Patrick van Zwanenberg and Erik Millstone (2005: 15) understand a technocratic policy model to be one that 'presupposes that the science and the facts are entirely objective and socially and politically neutral and that all the facts can be readily gathered'. Whilst it is doubtful that scientists then or now would actually subscribe to the view described by van Zwanenberg and Millstone (2005), we can consider the rhetorical emphasis on neutrality as a claim to authority on behalf of policymakers when meanings of particular subjects ('safety' and 'security' are exemplary terms) come to be contested. These claims to neutrality, moreover, and the appeal to expertise and knowledge skills, as we shall see across the empirical chapters of this thesis, have marked food (safety) policy discourse in important ways, often delimiting the definition of 'food safety' and 'food quality' in a particular way.

In the context of the EU system of expertise, Peter M. Haas (1992) develops the concept of 'epistemic communities' in order to account for international cooperation. Considering the need for a broad view of what 'policymaking' entails, Haas also points out that these epistemic communities are not exclusive to natural scientists.

> An epistemic community is a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area (Haas 1992: 3).

Along similar lines, authors such as Majone (1999) and Anthony Zito (2001) emphasize the importance of scientific expertise in regulatory governance in the EU context. In this model, expert opinions serve to legitimate the formulation and implementation of policy (Majone 1999). Radaelli (1999) suggests that at the core of this legitimating source are shared organizational structures and a shared cognitive base because of training and education, behind which differential 'interests' may disappear. By recognizing that diversity (of 'interests') can be hidden away behind a supposedly technical, neutral body of knowledge, these authors usefully point at the political implications of institutionalized scientific expertise. Yet such approaches cannot sufficiently account for how a certain body of knowledge (and those who produce it, who are informed by it) become dominant and why others remain marginal. For instance, the concept of 'food miles', or the ecological footprint of foodstuffs, represents a sound scientific method to many scientists in England, but the precise ways of calculating them remain debated, and some approaches may remain marginal. For such kinds of analysis, attention to empirical detail in discussions and their outcomes is warranted. Whilst scientific disagreements are not treated in analytical detail in this thesis, the empirical chapters do point to instances where divergent meanings of, for instance, 'natural food', are staged as scientific disagreements in policy discourse.

Writings in the field of science studies offer insights regarding the politics of scientific knowledge production itself. Highlighting the politics in food (safety) science, Marion Nestle (2002) uncovers the politics behind apparently purely scientific nutrition and health 'recommendations' in the food industry. She convincingly suggests that food safety in particular is less about science than about power and control and the interplay of industry and governmental regulation (Nestle 2003). Moreover, a number of authors agree (albeit to varying extent) that scientific expertise cannot be considered 'neutral' and free from value judgments (cf. Abell 2002; Edwards 1999; Frewer and Salter 2002; Hilgartner 2000; Jasanoff 1990, 1997; Miller 1999; Millstone and van Zwanenberg 2005; Weale 2001).

On a lower level of analysis, authors in the Science and Technology Studies tradition are concerned with the mechanisms and practices that makes 'experts' appear credible, how they come to particular conclusions, as well as the modes of interaction in that process. From a perspective of this kind, scientific advice to policymakers is not given in a political vacuum – rather, the legitimacy and authority of so-called scientific experts hinge upon the institutional

settings and socio-political rules in which they operate. Research in this tradition focuses on the interaction and the simultaneous constructions of boundaries between, for instance, 'scientific issues' and 'political matters', rather than taking such distinctions as given. A central insight in this literature is that regulatory practices result from a constant process of negotiation between, or are a 'co-production' of, 'science' and 'politics' (cf. Jasanoff 1990, 2004, 2005). Concretely, these processes of boundary negotiations take place among bureaucrats, scientists, regulatory scientists, research scientists, consultants, and those non-governmental parties that enter the policy process either directly through formal participation or more informally.

Brian Wynne's early work, in which he conceived of regulation as a dialectic of credibility (Wynne 1986), as well as Thomas F. Gieryn's concept of 'boundary work' (Gieryn 1983) are particularly insightful in their focus on practices using ethnographic methodologies, detailed participatory observations, and in-depth interviews. Gieryn (1983) argues that boundaries between science and policy are a product of constant negotiation. In a sense, this calls into question the idea of a closed laboratory: The very idea of a laboratory, in such a view, only acquires legitimacy within a wider set of beliefs and values, which – not least given the political implications of an assumed superiority and 'fixedness' of scientific expertise - should then become an important object of inquiry, as it does, indeed, in the discourse analysis of this study.

The authority associated with the 'truth claims' of scientific expertise, it appears, is not something given; rather, it constantly has to be reasserted and re-negotiated, which uncovers expertise as a fundamentally political realm, where forms of control and exclusion play important roles (Hilgartner 2000). Stephen Hilgartner (2000) has suggested considering expert advice as a 'public drama', as taking place on a stage. Drawing on Erving Goffman (1959), Hilgartner differentiates 'back-stage' activities (such as in the laboratory) from 'front-stage' activities, which take place in the 'public realm', such as the publication of reports. While these distinctions may be of use in, for instance, constructing research designs, however, they risk reifying the very distinctions that scholars in the tradition of Science and Technology Studies have tried to uncover as socially and interactively constructed. Likewise, Hilgartner's methodological focus on written reports hampers our understanding of how discourses inform scientific practices, and how the former are reproduced in, but also contested through the latter. This thesis, on the other hand, will renounce the distinction between discourse and practice by emphasizing the material aspect of discourse: discourses are productive in the sense that they invoke (rival) versions of 'reality'. Those conflicting images of, for instance, what BSE stands for, are reflected and reproduced in institutional practices, which I shall further conceptualize as

'performative practices' in chapter three. In other words, discourses are not simply 'out there', but can be captured in terms of real practice.

To conclude, given the importance of the science/policy nexus in the area of food (safety), the scholarship discussed in this subchapter is highly pertinent to this study. First, it allows a focus on specific sites of interaction (such as regulatory food agencies) and wide range of methods used in this field open up new empirical dimensions to be studied. In this study, the empirical analysis looks at the broader discourses that inform the practice of scientific experts, for instance, when scientists come to take on roles as 'consumer advocates'. In this manner, the analysis can move from a more 'macro' level to the level of organizational practice. Second, on a practical level, knowledge of this literature has facilitated interviewing scientific experts for this study: It allowed me to demonstrate the fluidity of the boundaries between 'science' and 'politics' and prepared me for a particular mode of conversation; as did my awareness of the traveling of food (safety) across different *discursive* premises, rather than merely physical localities *strictu sensu*. A recognition of the importance of continuous 'boundary work' that structures interaction between policymakers and scientists led me to ask more appropriate questions and, in fact, allowed me to draw my own boundaries in the interview itself.

2.5 The consumer in food (safety) policy

In many contemporary Western societies, 'the consumer' is a pervasive term used in all policy fields, including that of food (safety). Yet in the latter field, it has been used in different ways and has been institutionalized in different fashions across contexts and over time. For instance, usage of the term 'consumer' as the *homo economicus* or market agent stands in contrast to a notion of the consumer as irrational, uninformed, and in need of protection. The general ubiquity of the notion as well as the diversity of meanings associated with 'the consumer' as a discursive category warrant a discussion of the relation between food (safety) policy and the consumer in this section.

One way to study this relation would be to assess the effects of the former on consumption practices. In such a vein, consumption practices have been explored by means of in-depth interviews and household studies, thus focusing on the individual level within the particular group of 'consumers' (Halkier 2001; Kropp et al. 2005). From a sociological perspective, it is interesting to explore how food (safety) discourses are enacted in private homes on a micro-level given that particularly threats to the safety of meat, as Yannis Stavrakakis (2002: 3) puts it expose that 'the certainty which supported our way of life, which made our way of life possible – an integral part of that way of life was the consumption of meat – were not privileged and undeniable truths – as almost everyone was led to believe – but social constructions with limited

duration and validity'. When studying micro-level consumption patterns, it is difficult to disentangle, however, the different factors that may or may not affect consumption practices, as well as the effects of particular food scares and resultant policy programs on the self-understanding of consumers.

Some authors have emphasized the centrality of 'the consumer' as a political category employed in contemporary politics, in and beyond the field of food (safety) policy. Yiannis Gabriel and Tim Lang (1995), for instance, point out that consumption patterns differ fundamentally according to axes of 'class', social and cultural settings, and a variety of other factors. Even though food in particular can be considered a universal means to satisfy hunger, the meaning of food is historically and culturally contingent in the sense that 'societal norms and expectations […] inform how people acquire food, what they consume, and how they consume it' (Lang and Rayner 2003: 67). Food thus bears symbolic connotations beyond nutritious quality and quantity, and these connotations can be expected to vary across contexts (and over time).

Given this diversity, Gabriel and Lang (1995: 4) conclude that 'the consumer' is constantly facing attempts to be 'managed' (be it by governmental agencies, consumer associations, commercial agencies, or practices such as labeling and dietary recommendations) but remains 'unmanageable'. As the authors express it:

> There is a disparity between the fantasies of industrialists and retailers and those of consumers themselves. The former ever dream of managing consumers, while the latter's dreams make them ever unmanageable. The former seek to put their vision into practice; the latter subvert, refuse, accept, interpret, surrender or embrace. […] Consumers have proved that in spite of the best efforts to constrain, control and manipulate them, they can act in ways which are unpredictable, inconsistent and contradictory (1995: 191).

The authors' observation regarding the 'unmanageability of consumers' highlights the possibility of agency on the part of citizens when they come to identify themselves as 'choosing consumers' - even though the choices that citizens can exercise remain at best limited, if not fictional. The invocation of the notion of being a consumer also forms part of a neoliberal trend whereby 'the market' becomes a dominant frame around which socio-political identities are formed. Discursively legitimated in this trend, much of policy appears justified behind the discursive shield of 'consumer demand' – such as the taken-for-granted availability of strawberries all throughout the year, which bears repercussions for environmental sustainability.

From a legal perspective, Michelle Everson (2005; cf. Burgess 2001) offers an analysis of the role of legal instruments in the social construction of the consumer category. By tracing the

development of EU-based consumer protection strategies, she illustrates the productive effects of pieces of legislation in the sense that a changing notion of being a (European) consumer is managed, again, within the theme of the EU internal market. Consumer protection initiatives, she suggests, are often instrumental in furthering and upholding particular visions of what the EU internal market should look like. Such an analysis is particularly insightful as it helps reveal the political (indeed material) implications of moments when particular categories become incorporated (or not) into policy discourses. This study, however, will take this thought a step further as, rather than limiting the analysis to the study of legal documents, the analytical framework employed here allows for findings on three interrelated stages: how discourses make actors, what notions the discourses are composed of, and what discursive clusters of practices (actor constellations) emerge from those.

The insights we find in Everson (2005) and those of Adam Burgess (2001) regarding the significant role of consumer associations at the transnational level and the increasing merging between previously disparate policy areas raise further questions for this thesis. If the concept of consumer protection is a deep-rooted policy area integral to the internal market, how do policy areas such as health and consumer protection come to merge? What informs the changing meanings associated with 'being a European consumer' and what quality of language and interaction is required for such changing meanings to stabilize? How are the different traditions of consumer advocacy across EU member states integrated at the transnational level? A discourse analysis of the changes and continuities at the level of policy discourses and the notions of which they are composed can open up new points of access to the empirical subject matter and can indeed improve our understanding of the apparent discrepancy between diversity of meaning and interpretation across discursive premises and apparent convergence of meaning on the transnational level. Before embarking on developing such an approach further, a discussion of the notion of '(consumer) trust' is required here, given its pervasiveness in both academic writing and policy discourse, as well as its intrinsic relation with the category of the consumer.

2.6 Trust in food, politics, and science

Frequently in conjunction with the concept of the consumer discussed above, the concept of trust forms a core term both in the institutional reactions to food scares and in the existing scholarship on the subject. Given this pervasiveness, this section discusses how the notion of trust features in the existing scholarship on food (safety) specifically and assesses its relevance for the research questions of the present study. In order to understand the role of trust as a logic of contestation better, five inter-related aspects of trust in food (safety) are discussed below: the

role of trust in post-WWII Western Europe; consumption and trust in food (safety); the questioning of trust in science; the particular quality of food as a vital feature of life; and citizens' trust in those who govern food institutionally. Due to the fluid nature of the object of inquiry, this presentation will in part overlap with the foregoing subsections.

Trust-building in relation to food (safety) constitutes a hybrid and complex process, in which several factors and parties play significant roles. To begin with, the context of post-WWII Western Europe is particular in the sense that it provided the following generations with a certain degree of largely unquestioned trust in food supply and food (safety). This trust first came to be challenged in the course of the 1980s, when issues such as salmonella, listeria, *E-coli* bacteria (Escheria coli 0157:H7), and the discovery of anti-freeze in wines provoked public alarm. These earlier 'food scares', aggravated by later scandals such as the discovery of dioxin-contaminated food products imported from Belgium, brought about a re-politicization of food and farming policies (Smith 1991: 235). Beyond these developments, the outbreaks of salmonella and listeria in the UK in the 1980s also transformed the food (safety) policy community into an issue network marked by the '[t]he increased activity of interest groups, the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy and changes in the retail economy' (Smith 1991: 235).

Second, consumption practices and trust in food (safety) in Western Europe can be contextualized in wider processes of modernization and industrialization that have structured our relationship with the 'natural environment' and thus also food in particular ways.[16] The earlier confidence in a discourse of 'ecological modernization' legitimating ideas of progress in (food) production by way of 'exploiting nature'[17] in order to feed the population, it could be argued, suffered to some extent.[18] As chapter five will demonstrate, the *Agrarwende* policy discourse in Germany reflects a development of this kind.

Third, trust plays an important role in the ways in which scientific advice in the context of policymaking is taken up by the public. Brian Wynne (1992: 282) convincingly argues that trust and credibility rely on 'the social relationships, networks and identities from which these are derived'. An important insight in Wynne's work is his recognition that identities are contingent and constantly undergoing processes of (re-)construction. In turn, these fluid identities, which

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[16] For a thought-provoking conceptualisation of food scares as a 'symptom of an intensifying, multidimensional crisis in contemporary capitalist agriculture', see Benton (2001).

[17] The term 'exploitation' in this context is inherently evaluative and forms part of a radical environmentalist discourse. I use it here, first, to denote the tensions that mark environmentalist discourses and, secondly, to show how divergent meanings that are attributed to signifiers such as 'nature' can be.

[18] Ecological modernisation is a complex concept, but suffice it to say here that the uniting idea is that an ecologically modernised society relies on policy and practices that represent an overall belief that rather than environmental concern being a burden on the economy, it is potentially a source of growth and, therefore, advantageous to the economy (Carter 2001: 211-220; see also Hajer 1995).

hinge upon the divergent discursive premises in which they are formed and articulated, determine the way 'science' is *understood* by laypeople.[19] What follows from this is a more relational view of the public understanding of science.

Fourth, one could argue that, psychoanalytically speaking, our trust in food stems from the intimate relationship between parents and their children.[20] More specifically, food constitutes a primary moment through which a human being first faces the world and structures her or his relationship with it – arguably, this is an almost 'universal' dimension of trust in food (safety). A major difference between trust in the safety of, for instance, bridges or airplanes and trust in food lies in the basic nourishing function of food and the intimate familiarity a human being experiences with food from birth.

A fifth aspect of trust in relation to food scares concerns citizens' trust in those who govern food (safety). From Veronica Tacke (2001) as well as Unni Kjaernes (1999) we learn that institutional arrangements as well as the different ways in which risk or uncertainty is 'framed' in organizations and institutions affect trust in food (safety) and the ways in which institutional performance is experienced by the public. By means of survey data, Kjaernes (1999) further suggests that the ways in which 'mishaps' are portrayed in the media (either as 'events' or 'crises') significantly shape trust or distrust.[21] Beyond the reasons for the apparent breakdown of trust relationships, the attempts to rebuild trust are an interesting object of inquiry, given the role of the 'trusting citizens' for policymaking.

Regarding public trust in institutions, a distinction frequently drawn in the scholarship on 'trust' is that between 'passive' and 'active' dimensions of trust. First, *passive trust* does not only originate from and refer to the confidence derived from the constructed superiority of information received from governmental agencies and scientific experts, but is also fundamentally based on the intimate meaning of food in our lives. In this manner, 'passive trust' constitutes the basis for policymaking or for the legitimization of policies more generally.

The second category, *active trust*, refers to new forms of trust needed in contemporary 'risk societies'. In 'risk societies', the argument goes, trust can no longer be taken as given, according

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[19] See Frewer et al (2003) for a study of expert perceptions of laypersons in scientific risk assessments. Maranta et al. (2003) similarly provide an analysis of the role of the 'imagined layperson' in the work of experts across different fields of academic knowledge production and policy areas, such as environmental policy.

[20] Although this is an obvious factor, I consider it worth mentioning as it is mostly left out in analyses approaching the subject from a consumer-choice perspective.

[21] The Trust in Food project runs a regression analysis to explain trust (the dependent variable), using three factors as independent variables: (1) cultural features, (2) social practice and (3) institutional performance. Findings place Great Britain in a 'high levels of trust' category, while Germany (East and West) lies in a 'lower/medium level of trust' group of countries. See:
http://www.trustinfood.org/SEARCH/BASIS/tif0/all/publics/SDF?DOCU_TYPE=presentation&FORMFL_OB=Title&FORM_SO=ascend.

to risk society theorists such as Ulrich Beck (e.g. Beck et al. 1994; cf. Giddens 1981; see section 2.7). Instead, policymakers and 'reflexive experts' must come to actively gain the public trust that is needed for institutions that regulate the phenomena we are faced with. The relationship of trust, here, is no longer based on a one-way process of distributing scientific and other policy-relevant information as a means for public institutions to build legitimacy. Rather, 'active trust' refers to policymakers' and scientists' actions that become necessary in situations where democratic legitimacy no longer rests on making available documents and scientific results, but rather on interaction and negotiation between government and the citizenry. Trust, as Anthony Giddens (1981) argues, becomes 'trust in light of alternatives' in 'post-traditional' societies (see Lash 1994 for a useful discussion). Novel institutional practices in the area of food (safety) indeed point to this development - participatory and 'deliberative' practices have been introduced prolifically, wherein citizen groups (along with members of the industry) are invited to attend policy meetings and either act as a seemingly passive and silent 'audience' (such as in board meetings) or as 'stakeholders', that is, as active participants.

While for a long period of time, channels of 'interest representation' in this policy area consisted of informal interaction and consultation, public institutions have now shifted towards constructing specific mechanisms and sites through which civic stakeholders are supposed to become more involved in the negotiation of politics, scientific input and the very definition of the themes that must be dealt with and regulated (such as 'risk'). The process of policy-making, therefore, can be 'reconceived as a constant struggle over the very ideas that guide the ways citizens and policy analysts think and behave, the boundaries of political categories, and the criteria of classification' (Fischer 2003; cf. Fischer and Forester 1987). As a consequence, the 'public' becomes an indispensable part of the 'science-politics interface', as not just a recipient of policy but an actor in a reframed model of policy-making that features triangular interaction between scientific experts, policy-makers, and citizens (Bäckstrand 2003; Edwards 1999). The empirical chapters will show that the distinctions between the actor-categories of 'scientists', 'policymakers', and 'citizens' become blurred when one looks at how discourses that inform the policy process in both content and form.

While the five aspects of trust in food (safety) discussed above appear not only commonsensical but are also important features in the scholarly literature in this field, Forbes (2004) paints a different picture. Going against the bulk of sociological studies that claim to observe a decline in public trust produced by the series of food scares of the late 1990s, he contends that 'the [BSE] episode has not caused, but has revealed the existence of major doubts in the public mind about the balance between consumer and industry interests, and the

truthfulness of statements about safety' (2004: 354). Even though not based on extensive empirical research, Forbes' observation is valuable in that it further reveals the significance of the motif of trust in structuring the (academic) policy discourse in the field of food (safety), not least given the post-WWII conditions outlined above.

To conclude, different understandings and forms of trust feature both in scholarly and policy discourse. As study is not concerned with the measurement or maintenance of trust, but still wants to do justice to the multi-faceted significance of the concept, I take 'trust' to be a discursive category that has considerably shaped and re-informed policymaking practices in the domain of food (safety). In the case of food (safety) policy, the notion of a trusting citizen is moreover closely linked to the experience of food scares as risks. I shall treat the concept of risk in the following subsection.

2.7 Food (safety) as a collective experience of risk[22]

Beyond, and related to the notion of trust as discussed in the preceding subchapter, food (safety) and related 'crises' can be framed in terms of the collective experience of 'risk', especially in light of the uncertainty associated with, for instance, the aforementioned link between BSE and nvCJD. The concept of risk and the relevant literature is discussed here for two reasons: First, the 'risk society' approach constitutes one of the most frequently employed frameworks within which analysts have tried to capture the events related to food scares and environmental issues. Second, as chapters four to seven will show, the notion of risk is of considerable importance with respect to how policymakers and experts have tried to redefine their responsibilities within changing models of the three-stage risk analysis in policymaking. As will become clear, the boundaries between the three stage of this linear model – risk assessment ('science'), risk management ('policy'), and risk communication' are in praxis not as firm and stable as institutional setups declare them to be.[23]

Numerous authors have dealt with the concept of risk and its relation to public policy regarding environmental phenomena in the broader sense (Beck 1992; Lash, Szerszynski, and Wynne 1996; Draper and Green 2002; Dratwa 2002; Slovic 2001; Weale 2001). Notwithstanding the variety in this field, there seems to be a considerably broad consensus among academics that no universally applicable way has been devised to measure risk to the natural environment and human beings, alone a definition of what scale of risk should be regarded as tolerable. Beyond the inability to provide precise 'risk measurement', risk perception, as most would agree, has

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[22] Particularly the latter part of this section draws on Loeber and Paul (2005).

[23] This three-stage model of risk analysis is said to originate from the World Health Organization.

been established as contingent upon social and cultural factors, whereas the empirical chapters will show that this recognition has been employed in diverse ways in policy discourse.

Stephen Healy (2004) points out that the post-WWII years saw challenges in managing large-scale technological systems and the development of new means for quantifying 'risk'. These early stages of probabilistic approaches to risk management constituted new ways of 'making sense' of technological development and scientific innovations. From the 1970s onwards, however, new ways of studying risk produced insights regarding the incongruent risk 'calculations' and perceptions of risk by 'experts', on the one hand, and 'the lay public', on the other (ibid.). The work of Silvio Funtowicz and Jerome Ravetz (1993) and their understanding of 'post-normal science' are paradigmatic in this context. At a time when environmental issues gained prominence on the policy agendas of Western countries, the authors called for a rethinking of scientific assessment that would take into account the weaknesses inherent in logical positivist science and instead would consider 'lived experiences' and 'gut feelings' as valid factors (Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993). Similarly, drawing on 'cultural' approaches to risk, Stephen Healy (2001) calls for a 'post-foundational' interpretation of risk in order to overcome the binary opposition between subjective and objective risk. His conceptualization of risk as 'performance' relies on insights from Actor-Network-Theory and contributes to a more relational, dynamic understanding of risk (Healy 2001: 293-4).

In his conceptualization of the 'risk society', Ulrich Beck also recognizes the impact of the post-WWII technological advances (Beck 1992, 1999). In a nutshell, the concept of 'risk society' denotes developments alongside processes of modernization, industrialization and technological advance (although the term itself is part and parcel of modernization discourses) that have fundamentally shaped the ways in which we deal with every day life. Typically, these developments are shaped by 'a past characterized by the quest for scientific, ethical and social certainties […] [and] a present where the possibility of reaching absolute certainty – and hence absolute safety and security – is radically questioned' (Stavrakakis 2002: 5). One of Beck's most valuable contributions rests in the recognition that science and scientific experts have become, on the one hand, indispensable in light of technological advances within the modernization trajectory, while, on the other hand, their authority has so fundamentally been called into question. We shall see in the empirical chapters of this thesis how this crisis of expertise in the science/policy nexus has affected the seemingly distinct roles of policymakers, scientists, members of the industry, and citizen groups in the policymaking process.

For Beck, recent 'disasters' such as Chernobyl epidemic differ from earlier risks in that they constitute risk manufactured by humans themselves. This implies that Beck considers the

growth of risk, and the perception thereof, as an inherent and inevitable 'side effect' of late modernity (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994). In an implicitly realist manner, he posits that for their sheer size and destructive ability, the risks involved in modern 'risk society' are 'in fact a historical innovation', and that the 'simple modernization' of the past epoch – characterized by a linear increase in rationalization and economic growth – has brought the world to 'the brink of apocalypse' (1997: 31). Another realist assumption in Beck concerns the insufficient attention he devotes to the multiplicity of the meanings of risk and the discursively constructed nature of the term itself (Smith 2004). Whilst Beck does begin to consider risks as contestable and part of a power/knowledge construct - he ultimately insists on 'the reality of risk […] knowing no social or national difference' (Beck 1992:46, cited in Smith 2004: 315). The actual divergence we find at the national level regarding the interpretation of food risks, however, exposes Beck's realist view as both conceptually and empirically problematic.

In contrast to Beck, Yannis Stavrakakis emphasizes that the risks *per se* have not changed. Rather, what makes a 'risk society' so particularly challenging is 'the revelation of the constructed character of every certainty […] [and] the recognition of the constitutive character of uncertainty in human experience' (Stavrakakis 2002: 11). The two authors do, however, concur in Beck calls to stop 'dealing with the future in a way that is based on the institutional setting and the conceptual framework of the past'. Beck (1997) argues for a 'reflexive modernization', that is, a process of modernization that breaks away empirically and theoretically from the assumed linearity in progress and functional differentiation in current society. Stavrakakis, in a not dissimilar way, calls for 'an open political administration through democratic procedures and within a culture of openness' (ibid.) as well as the recognition of the task of civil society to re-politicize decision-making in these policy matters vis-à-vis 'the 'omnipotent' scientist, technocrat, company manager or politician' (Stavrakakis 2002: ibid., 13-16).

In Beck's perspective, a shift from simple modernity to reflexive modernization is deemed almost inevitable in the face of impending catastrophe. It was also expected to be an incentive to question the very way in which the political and social structure of society is organized. This expectation is found, for instance, in Peter Oosterveer's (2002) account of how four EU member states dealt with BSE institutionally. The author posits that '[i]f BSE is indeed a clear case of the new risks characterizing the risk society, the conventional risk policy instruments and institutions from simple modernity are no longer adequate' (2002: 216). Yet Oosterveer concludes that, although BSE had a profound influence on the handling of risks in the various countries, 'it goes one bridge too far' to state that 'mad cow disease' set in motion a development towards 'new reflexive risk politics' (ibid.). He concludes that, '[a]t best, we can

identify some innovations in some countries as an answer to the shortcomings of the simple risk politics in dealing with the BSE crisis' (Oosterveer 2002: 227).

While Oosterveer (2002) recognizes the variety in approaches developed across his selected cases, he makes no attempt at explaining this diversity. In fact, Oosterveer fails to recognize the inherent puzzle here, and does not offer the methodological toolkit to tackle it. The present study, on the other hand, provides an analytical framework within which we can both compare policy discourses across contexts and over time, and simultaneously study the negotiation of shared understandings at the level of the EU. Based on the insights derived from the scholarship discussed here, the next chapter develops such an approach.

2.8   Conclusions

The present chapter has further carved out the object of inquiry by situating it in the existing scholarship on the subject and through contextualizing food (safety) in the different 'logics of contestation' that are pertinent to the policy field. After discussing the existing literature on Europeanization, this chapter proposed to move beyond the institutionalist bias therein. I specifically problematized that in this literature (1) the present degree of harmonization as well as the notion of fixed national interests are taken as given, (2) (transnational) problems are seen as readily identifiable, and (3) a clear differentiation between actor-categories is taken as given, too (the policymaker, the scientist, members of the industry, and citizens). Such approaches lack the tools to properly account for the diversity of interpretation and meaning at the level of national contexts vis-à-vis the apparent convergence of meaning at the transnational, EU-based level.

The puzzle identified in the introductory chapter called for a further characterization of what food safety policy is, why it has been so widely discussed, and how it relates to other previously separate policy areas. To that end, I discussed the specific features of post-WWII Western Europe in regard to food and agricultural policy and highlighted the previous differentiation of food (safety), agriculture, health, and consumer protection policies.

Drawing on these insights as well as a wide range of literature, subchapters 2.4-2.7 identified four main logics of contestation that are particularly pertinent to a study of food scares: food (safety) as an experience of a crisis of scientific expertise; the growing construction of food (safety) as an issue of consumer protection and citizen trust; and food scares as a collective (European) experience of risk. By fleshing out the empirical logics of contestation that structure the policy domain of food (safety), this chapter accentuated the fluid nature of the object of inquiry.

Due to its physical and discursive travels, food (safety) touches upon a range of policy aspects that are specific to contemporary governance. An awareness of the multiplicity of meanings that food (safety) can take on across discursive premises is called for by the rise of a terminology of 'multi-level' Europeanization, which seems to be replacing the conventional top-down and bottom-up distinction: a terminology of 'governance networks' and 'deliberative spaces'; a language of consumer trust, consumer rights, and stakeholders; and the changing notion of the role of science in society. In other words, we require an approach that (i) can access those diverse locations on a comparative yet in-depth basis, (ii) is sensitive to the contingency of meaning and (iii) allows us to disentangle a seemingly coherent 'food safety policy' discourse in order to reveal conflict, contestation, and eventually the mobilization of shared meanings at the transnational level of the EU. The next chapter will lay out in more detail the theoretical and analytical framework and the methodological toolkit used for the purpose of this study.