23 Between representation and narration: analysing policy frames
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> So, too, there are occasions when we must wait until things are almost over before discovering what has been occurring and occasions of our own activity when we can considerably put off deciding what to claim we have been doing. (Erving Goffman)

INTRODUCTION

Frames and framing have become well-established concepts in the social sciences, now referred to by an increasing number of papers, books and articles. In policy studies particularly, frame analysis has been part of an intellectual movement that set out in the early 1990s to challenge the dominant technocratic, empiricist orientation in the field. Critics contend that empiricism neglects some of the most essential dimensions of politics and policy making, namely language, values, normative judgements, ideas and struggle over meaning, and thus misses the point of what politics is actually about (Fischer 2003; Hajer and Laws 2006; Wagenaar 2011; Braun 2014). So, some four decades since the publication of Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis*, from whence the introductory quotation is taken (1974, 2), it may be time to apply the invitation to frame analysis itself and consider 'what to claim we have been doing' when doing frame analysis.

This chapter argues that the concept of frame can be useful from a critical policy studies perspective in that it may serve to make visible dominant policy frames that operate as part of larger patterns of domination. Frame analysis, thus, may open up a space for exposing relations of inequality, exclusion, domination and power, to reconstruct social movements' struggle for social justice and democratic participation and thereby contribute to critical policy analysis in this sense. Yet, this chapter will argue, the concept of frame is not 'critical' in and of itself. It can be used in different ways, some of which remain within more empiricist or technocratic overall frameworks. Whether approaches to frame and framing are critical in the above-mentioned sense depends on how, to which end and within which larger framework they are employed and which normative commitments underlie these larger frameworks. In short, this chapter suggests, the value

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of the frame concept for critical policy studies is a matter of interpretation; it hinges on how we interpret 'frame' and how we interpret 'critical'.

In policy studies, frame analysis received a major impetus from Donald Schön and Martin Rein's *Frame Reflection* (Schön and Rein 1994). To speak of frame analysis as one major approach in policy studies today, however, would be misleading as there is no single, definitive methodological approach involving the concepts of frame and framing but rather an array of approaches that use these concepts in different ways. Critical policy scholars, over the past two decades, tended to emphasize the commonalities among different uses of the frame concept and its distinctiveness in relation to empiricist approaches rather than the differences. Now that the concepts of frame and framing have become widely established in policy studies, however, it might be time to look into the varieties and differences concerning overall purposes, research objectives, methodology, and research practices. This chapter does not attempt to present a comprehensive overview of all work referring to the frame concept in policy studies; the literature is too vast to do so. Rather, it seeks to point out some divergences within the field. As with any critical concept in politics and the policy sciences, concepts of frame and framing have multiple meanings, and frame analysis, accordingly, may mean very different things. One of the divergences concerning the nature of research practices and possible outcomes is the divergence between a representational model that strives to yield a correct depiction of a segment of social reality and a participational model that strives to yield a plausible narration of what has been going on.

In terms of definitions, interestingly, these differences are not immediately evident. On the contrary, there seems to be quite a homogeneous answer to the question of what frames 'are'; scholars from different subject areas and disciplines have defined 'frame' in similar ways. An early definition by Todd Gitlin still sets the tone. For Gitlin, 'frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters' (Gitlin 1980, 6). Scholars in policy studies put the emphasis more strongly on the practical dimension; thus for Schön and Rein, frames are 'underlying structures of belief, perception, and appreciation' which 'select for attention a few salient features and relations from what would otherwise be an overwhelming complex reality' (Schön and Rein 1994, 23, 26).

Frames are understood to give a coherent organization to these features and relations, describe what is wrong about a certain situation as well as what needs fixing, and thereby hint at what is to be done. A frame is, in short, 'a perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined, problematic situation can be made sense of and acted on' (Rein and Schön 1993, 146).

Concepts of frame have become increasingly popular in policy studies in recent years. Yet, while definitions of the concept converge widely, scholars do very different things when they do 'frame analysis'. Now, if it is the use of a word which actually gives the word its meaning, as Bevir and Rhodes (2010, 66) argue following Wittgenstein, a convergence of definition may well concur with a divergence of meaning. This chapter will look at four predominant ways of using the term in the literature, namely *frames as explanatory factor*, *frames as narrative*, *frames as resource*, and *frames as ideology*. In connection with these different understandings, I will make another distinction concerning the way frame analysis is actually done and what kind of results it may or may not yield. That is the distinction between representational and participational approaches. The former see frames basically as mental entities and aspire to arrive at as accurate as possible a representation of these entities through frame analysis. For the latter, frames are located in interaction, which inevitably takes place in time, and the purpose of frame analysis is to provide as plausible as possible an account of what has been going on. In order to understand the difference, it is worthwhile to take a fresh look at Erving Goffman's classic work, *Frame Analysis*.

'NOT MERELY A MATTER OF MIND': FRAMES IN GOFFMAN'S *FRAME ANALYSIS*

Most explications of the frame concept begin with a ritual reference to Goffman's 1974 *Frame Analysis* – and leave it there. It is worth noting though, that Goffman uses the frame concept in a manner different from most of the ensuing literature. Frames, for Goffman, are not conceived as cultural representations but as principles that organize experience and involvement. They are located in activity, not in text. They are of interest to sociologists because they determine the meaningfulness of an activity for the individual involved in it – not because they provide information about the individual's interests, preferences or identities 'behind' the frame. The key question for Goffman is: 'What is it that's going on here?' (Goffman 1974, 8). Importantly, that is first and foremost the key question for the individuals involved themselves, not only for the analyst. Put differently, the Goffmanian question is rooted in a participational perspective rather than one derived from representational epistemology.

Modern representational epistemology, as Taylor explains (Taylor 1995), starts from the notion of a disengaged, knowing subject who strives to provide a correct representation of an independent reality. In order to bridge the epistemological gap between the knowing subject and reality

'out there' and arrive at universally valid knowledge, the subject applies a neutral technique – a method – in order to see the object of study free from subjective distortions. Participational models, in contrast, start from the assumption that 'the mind participates in the being of the known object, rather than simply depicting it' (Taylor 1995, 3). The subject, conversely, is not taken for granted either but is taken as being affected, shaped, or defined by the interaction with social reality under study as well. Having a method may be helpful in allowing for recognition of what one is doing, but the quality and significance of outcomes does not hinge on the correct application of a neutral, formalized method since its neutralizing purpose is illusionary anyway.

Within the diverse field of frame analysis in social science and policy studies we find approaches that gravitate towards the representational model and approaches that gravitate towards the participational model. Both models have their merits and limitations, as will be argued here, but analysts should be clear which one they actually want to use. A problem arises when the participational model is judged against the standards of the representational model rather than on its own terms.

Goffman, as mentioned already, takes a participational perspective insofar as he locates frames, or frameworks (as he prefers to say) in interaction. Generally, frameworks are schemata of interpretation that are 'rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful' (Goffman 1974, 21). Thus, ordinary citizens do perform frame analysis in everyday life. The analyst's mission is not to enlighten actors about the frameworks they find themselves in, but to systematize the different types of frameworks and how they operate in social life. Frameworks are about meaning and interpretation, which are firmly located in activity and involvement; they thus 'are not merely a matter of mind but correspond in some sense to the way in which an aspect of the activity itself is organized – especially activity directly involving social agents' (Goffman 1974, 247). In such a participational approach, the object of study is dynamic, not static or timeless. The relation of analyst and acting individuals is, moreover, not simply one between the knowing subject and the objects of study. Rather, both the analyst and the individuals studied are participants in a frame analysis community, albeit with different roles. All are trying to make out what is going on and what renders the activity meaningful. Such frame analysis does not hinge upon a formal method. It may be useful both for the analyst and for the individuals studied to vary perspectives: to look at things from a distance, or from different viewpoints, or in a more systematic way, and reflect on what one is doing. Since participants in interaction are engaged in frame analysis quite regularly, however, there is no need for a neutral

intermediary instrument to bridge the gap between subject and object: there is no such gap.

From a policy studies perspective, the theoretical framework presented by Goffman does have its limitations, resulting largely from what Clifford Geertz called the game analogy (Geertz 1983, 33).[1] Based on a game analogy, Goffman's model focuses on face-to-face interactions in daily life. Fully-fledged, complex policy processes with aggregated interactions over long periods of time transcend the boundaries of this framework. Nonetheless, Goffman reminds us that frames are being *done* rather than being existent 'out there', that frames are not 'things' but activities. Goffman, therefore, is still highly relevant from a perspective of critical policy studies: his participation conception of frames may prevent us from reifying frames that had become dominant at some point in time. Additionally, it may invite us to engage with policy actors' perspectives, narratives and frame analytic capacities and treat them as participants in frame analysis rather than just passive objects of study.

FRAMING FRAMES: DIVERSIFICATION OF THE FRAME CONCEPT

Since the 1980s, the concepts of frame and framing have been employed across a range of disciplines and subject areas and have acquired a diversified set of meanings. In management and organizational studies, Kahneman and Tversky developed a behaviouralist, empiricist concept of framing as part of a formal decision theory they term prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Framing, here, denotes a phase of the decision process prior to and separate from valuation. Prospect theory holds that individuals' choices of action are strongly affected by the frame in which they were cast. The approach studies these effects under experimental conditions in order to establish empirical generalizations (Tversky and Kahneman 1992).

In linguistics and discourse analysis, in contrast, the concept of frame involves semiotics and social constructivism. Frames are construed as cognitive schemata that organize the way people perceive, interpret, organize and represent their knowledge of the world.[2] Frame analysis seeks to identify these hidden schemata by working its way from the surface of symbolic manifestations down to latent strata of texts and talk, employing what Wagenaar calls a representational epistemology of hermeneutic exegesis (Wagenaar 2011, 41). Frames are taken as cognitive entities that impact, if indirectly, people's thoughts, attitudes and behaviour. Hence, frames have an effect *on* action, they are not located *in* action.

In communication and media studies, the focus is more on framing *strategies* consciously exercised by media professionals (Gitlin 1980; Entman 1993; Scheufele 1999). In this vein, for Entman, '[t]o frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation' (Entman 1993, 52). Framing is a case of manipulative, strategic action deliberately deployed by actors. The task of frame analysis is to reconstruct the mechanisms and methods through which it is done and to detect the intentions, motives and purposes behind them. This is usually done through more or less formalized, qualitative or quantitative techniques of content analysis, applied to a well-defined selection of significant texts or text analogues.

A number of scholars in social movement studies have pursued a focus on selective representations (Gitlin 1980; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gamson 1995). For Gamson, media discourse produces selective representations of social issues, provides images and interpretations of what is at issue, obstructs and represses alternative views and so functions as a key site for the social construction of reality. To some extent, it may also form a site of framing competition, where social movements manage to challenge prevailing frames and offer alternative constructions. However, another approach to social movement theory, advanced by David Snow, Robert Benford and their associates, locates framing processes primarily in interaction, not in text or text analogues. Framing processes, they insist, should not be reduced to cognitive structures or mental schemata that would impact how individuals think or behave (Snow and Benford 2005, 207):

> Certainly, collective action frames are, in part, cognitive entities that aid interpretation and social action, but their essence, sociologically, resides in situated social interactions, that is, in the interpretive discussions and debates that social movement actors engage in among each other and in the framing contests that occur between movement actors and other parties . . .

Here, Snow and Benford also approach framing as strategic resource consciously deployed by actors.

Concepts of frames, framing or frame alignment – as developed in social movement theory – have proven increasingly useful in policy studies over the past 20 years. Policy scholars have applied these concepts to policy processes on the domestic, European, or international level. Research designs, however, vary greatly. A representational approach is, for instance, taken by Triandafyllidou and Foutio (1998) who studied the role of social movement organizations and institutional actors in

European environmental and transport policy. Their study aimed to show 'how social actors re-define policy options and promote solutions that are favourable to their interests and/or views through framing sustainability and sustainable mobility in different ways' (Triandafyllidou and Foutio 1998, 3.4). The authors used a formalized coding scheme to analyse interviews with key actors in these policy areas, scanning the interviews for occurrences of specific frames.

Frame analysis in this approach serves as a method that is supposed to guarantee rigour, reliability and validity of outcome. The privileged status of method here is indicative of a representational epistemology that strives to arrive at as accurate as possible a representation of social reality assumed to exist independently of the analyst. Johnston (1995) has pointedly argued this position. Confronting the accusation that too much loose interpretation was going on in frame analysis, as elsewhere in cultural analysis, he suggested micro-frame analysis as a systematic methodological strategy to determine mental structures of social movement participants within specific examples of written text or bounded speech. As with other calls for more systematic, rigorous techniques of frame analysis (Maher 2001; König 2005), his call bespeaks an equation of frame analysis and textual analysis that tends to reduce policy processes to authored texts (see also Lejano and Park, Chapter 15, this volume).

Systematic, formalized, micrological analysis of bounded speech or text may yield more reliable, intersubjectively valid results in terms of frame identification, measurement and validation. Yet, there is a price to pay: frame analysis becomes a rather static and microscopic affair and, additionally, brings about a methodological reiteration of what is already assumed to be known. König (2005), for instance, maintains that '[n]o matter which interpretative devices are used, the analyst should try to avoid creating a new set of frames for every study. Instead, interpretation should be guided by already established masterframes' (König 2005). Yet, if the relevant masterframes have been established already, why bother? Moreover, policy processes are moving targets, unfolding in time, demanding that the analyst be prepared to deal with puzzles s/he could not foresee and adjust her/his concepts, questions and categories as s/he goes. Although the adjustment may compromise the type of reliability to be gained from the application of preselected categories, the approach might enable us to find out something we did not already know.

Clearly, as suggested earlier, frame analysis cannot be reduced to one definitive approach or method in policy studies, but is rather a bundle of partly quite disparate approaches. For taxonomic purposes, I distinguish four main approaches to frame analysis in order to examine 'what the practitioners of it do' (Geertz 2000, 5), what kind of effort they undertake

and to what end. I will now examine each of these four approaches in turn: frames as explanatory factors, frames as narratives, frames as resources and frames as ideology.

FRAMES AS EXPLANATORY FACTORS: EXPANDING EMPIRICIST FRAMEWORKS IN POLICY STUDIES

One approach uses concepts of frame and framing primarily as factors by which to explain policy outcomes. Studies along these lines seek to expand the empiricist epistemology to include cognitive factors such as frames, values and ideas, which are conceptualized as one set of factors among others (e.g. Daviter 2007). Drawing on literatures that emphasize the role of cognitive elements in social life, such as social constructivism, the new institutionalism(s), the advocacy coalition framework or social movement theory, a growing number of policy scholars have promoted such an ideational perspective on policy processes and policy outcomes over the past 20 years and have employed, among other concepts, those of frame and framing to examine how the definition of political issues affects agenda setting, policy formation or institution building. Although they do assign meaning a crucial role within the policy process, the approach does not fundamentally differ from empiricist enquiries in that it uses hypotheses, factors, variables and hypothesis-testing in attempting to establish causal explanations. The analyst is asked to take an observer's – not a participant's – point of view and to refrain from subjective judgements or practical intervention.

A growing number of studies in recent years have, for example, utilized concepts of frame and framing to investigate EU-level policy processes, arguing that policy framing is particularly relevant in contexts typified by ambiguity, complexity, crisis or uncertainty – as is often the case with EU structures. Conventional approaches such as rational choice theory, neofunctionalism, or neorealist intergovernmentalism, these authors argue, cannot sufficiently explain how institution-building or policy formation did, after all, occur in situations where the nature of the policy concern, the competence of institutions, or the institutional prospects of the whole polity were unclear or contested. Policy outcomes, such as the creation of a single market (Fligstein and Mara-Drita 1996), a particular market for electricity (Nylander 2001), a particular market for defence equipment (Mörth 2000), or a European direct tax policy (Radaelli 1999), did not result from political pressure exercised by the most powerful actors, as rational choice theory and neorealist intergovernmentalism would

suggest, nor from increased levels of transnational activity as neofunctionalism would have it. Rather, these authors contend, it was a transformation of policy frames that crucially affected the dynamics at play, making preference alignment and coalition formation more amenable to conflict management and agreement (Eberlein and Radaelli 2010). Policy frames are here taken as cognitive variables that serve to fill in explanatory gaps left by other theoretical approaches.

Studies that have examined policy frames from an advocacy coalition framework or a social movement theory perspective differ from a rational choice perspective in that they point out the changing structure of actors' preferences and how a frame perspective may illuminates these changes. Yet, they do not abandon the rational actor model altogether. They picture frames as resources that actors possess and utilize to advance their own agenda. The rational actor here precedes the processes of framing, which are assumed to be under the actor's control. What falls outside the scope of this perspective is the possibility that dominant frames may precede and shape actors' perceptions, self-understandings and identities in ways that are not wholly transparent to them.

Studies that build frames into a neoinstitutionalist framework tend to gravitate to the opposite pole, reifying the power of institutions rather than the sovereignty of the rational actor. Lenschow and Zito (1998), for instance, start from the assumption that the impact of policy frames on policy outcomes depends on the 'thickness' of their institutionalization. Studying the evolution of EU waste management and agricultural policies, they identify three major policy frames that have shaped policy evolution in these domains: the conditional environmental frame, the classical environmental frame, and the sustainability frame. They conclude that due to the persisting influence of 'thick' institutions such as the Common Agricultural Policy, institutionalization of the sustainability frame, although increasingly prominent at the level of EU rhetoric, has largely failed to materialize in actuality (Lenschow and Zito 1998, 438).

One of the limitations characterizing the frames as explanatory factors orientation in this line of work is a focus on elites and elite strategies. Frame contests are studied as a largely intra-elite affair; efforts to challenge dominant elite frames from beyond come into view only through attention to elite responses, if at all. Furthermore, this work tends to subscribe to a causal model of explanation – couched in terms of hypotheses, variables and causal factors – which takes causal forces as being external to, and independent from, the processes they supposedly explain. Applying a causal model to policy processes thus means positing the purported causal factors – whether conceptualized in terms of interests, events, ideas, preferences or institutions – as forces that are not constituted, shaped or

transformed by and through the policy process itself, but that impact it from beyond. Hence, the approach posits the supposedly causal factors as stable and given, exempting them from further interrogation.

FRAMES AS NARRATIVES: THE ART OF REFRAMING POLICY CONTROVERSIES

The work by Schön and Rein (1994; cf. Rein and Schön 1993) has a different type of goal. Its main purpose is not to produce causal explanations of policy outcomes, but rather an interpretive exploration of pragmatic conflict resolution. Meaning is treated as a constitutive dimension of social life, not an additional factor among others. Furthermore, the approach is deliberately normative, clearly indicating its key value as being creative conflict resolution in liberal democracy. Framing and reframing are firmly located in interactions, not in cognitive structures manifest in text. For Rein and Schön, as Van Hulst and Yanow (2014) make clear, framing is a dynamic, situated interactional process through which actors seek to make sense of a certain situation through naming, selecting, categorizing and story-telling. Most notably, framing and reframing can display communicative – and not only instrumental – rationality.

Schön and Rein thus do not conceptualize framing as being essentially strategic. Policy practitioners, they insist, are capable not only of strategic action, but also of communicative action and practical reasoning. Framing – more exactly reframing and frame reflection – is one way of exercising these capacities. Occasionally, according to the authors, policy practitioners manage to creatively reframe contested policy issues, thereby making them amenable to pragmatic conflict resolution. Conflict resolution is ultimately the point of frame reflection. Similar to Goffman, but unlike most approaches discussed so far, Schön and Rein see frame analysis not as an activity monopolized by the analyst; policy practitioners are as capable as analysts of reflecting on how frames are structuring their interactions.

Schön and Rein indicate that conceptions of policy rationality are mainly derived from rational choice theory, the pluralist model, or more recently from models of mediated negotiation. All these approaches represent variants of instrumental rationality, resting on assumptions that take the interests of the actors in the policy process as given. As such, they are unable to account for both the existence and the resolution of intractable policy disputes. Such disputes are ones that cannot be solved by referring to the 'facts' or appealing to the contending parties' best interests, since actors hold conflicting frames which determine what counts as a fact and what the contenders see as being in their interests.

Frames, moreover, are usually tacit and not easily accessible to conscious reasoning. In order to study them in action, Schön and Rein suggest, it is useful to focus on stories. In policy controversies, actors will most likely present contesting stories about what it is that is going on, whether it is cast, for instance, as 'urban renewal' or 'gentrification'. A story about 'urban renewal' may refer to the same events as a story about 'gentrification' – while constructing the situation quite differently, pointing out different problems, identifying different culprits and suggesting a different course of action. Laws and Rein in later work clarify the connection between frames and stories; frames, they explain, are located in a particular kind of stories, namely normative-prescriptive stories, that 'wed fact and value into belief about how to act' (Laws and Rein 2003, 174). These stories mediate policy interaction and evolve over time. Note that a policy story, here, is not a stable piece of text that could be scanned for pre-given mental or cultural schemes. The task rather is to trace the redefinition of problems through the evolution of stories in policy interactions.

Writing in a US context, Schön and Rein view intractable policy conflicts – such as those on abortion, health care, or welfare reform – as a threat to liberal democracy, inasmuch as such conflicts strain intermediary democratic institutions and lead to stalemate or to the radicalization of positions (Schön and Rein 1994, 9). The point of *Frame Reflection*, however, is not so much to explain the persistence of policy controversies, but to demonstrate that even stubborn policy controversies can be, and in fact sometimes are, resolved through frame reflection on the part of policy practitioners. The analyst's task is to trace the trajectories of the different stories to see whether rapprochement has occurred over time and, if so, under what conditions. Frame analysis thus actually comes to mean frame reflection analysis. The eventual outcome is a story about stories.

Laws and Rein have taken this line of thought one step further by shifting 'from treating frames as stable objects or tools used by actors to command action and influence the distribution of resources to viewing frames as systems of belief that intertwine with identity and social action' (Laws and Rein 2003, 174). Neither frames, nor identities, they suggest, form stable entities. Rather, both frames and identities co-evolve within reframing processes. Combining Goffman with Bourdieu, they emphasize the critical dimension of practice for the dynamics of reframing. The evolution of the environmental justice frame in the US, for example, indicates that successful reframing requires not only a challenging of dominant beliefs and problem-definitions, but also the institutionalization of habits of thought and action in practices. Insofar as the environmental justice frame becomes more dominant from some point onwards, Laws and Rein may also draw our attention to the fact that the concept of 'dominant

frames' should not be confused with the concept of 'frames as part of relations of domination'. Fortunately, sometimes frames that challenge existing relations of power, exclusion and domination become more dominant as a result of social movements' struggles – which is not to say that they eliminate power relations altogether.

Overall, reframing, for Schön, Rein and Laws, involves conflict resolution, learning and reflection, and they thus suggest that reframing contributes to an increase in policy rationality. Yet, is conflict resolution per se a good thing, regardless of what it is about? Could it not be that conflict resolution at times stabilizes unequal relations of power and domination, for instance through co-opting the forces that struggle for social change? Would frame reflection and reframing necessarily form an antipode to unequal power, so that the more frame reflection takes place, the more such power gets diminished? Or could frame reflection and reframing just be involved in alteration and reformation of unequal power relations? As suggested by Herrmann (2010), reframing and conflict resolution may well be enacted as part of established power operations, contributing to mere modifications within established relations of power and domination, rather than substantially destabilizing and altering them. Much like Habermas in his later work,[3] Schön and Rein are more concerned about demonstrating that communicative rationality is both necessary and possible than being concerned about actually existing relations of power and domination.

Issues of power and domination will come to the fore as we turn to consider, first, frames as resources and, after that, frames as ideology.

FRAMES AS RESOURCES: THE CASE OF WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND THE UN AGENDA

Policy scholars who have employed the frame concept as involving situated interaction in the manner of Snow and Benford (2005) have taken yet a different route. Their aim is to recount the evolution of a policy through frame contests and realignment within a specific institutional context. In this vein, Jutta Joachim (2007) for instance studied agenda formation on the international level. She particularly examined the evolution of the Cairo Programme of Action, adopted in 1994 at the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The Cairo Programme established a reform agenda for international population policies that prominently featured the concept of women's reproductive rights and empowerment within the management of population growth. Joachim's study aimed at reconstructing how, and under what

conditions, NGOs managed to achieve the unlikely result of redefining the agendas of UN organizations so as to include the issues of violence against women and women's health and reproductive rights. Strategic packaging of policy ideas, Joachim holds, was critical for the process. In line with social movement theory, she conceptualizes framing as a strategic activity, deliberately deployed by actors in order to advance their case.

In regard to women's health and reproductive rights, the process can be traced back to the First UN Population Conference, held in Bucharest in 1974. At the time, the agenda of the international population policy establishment was controlled by governments of the global North, particularly the US government. Population growth in the South was perceived as a source of political instability and thereby a threat to US national security. This concern left no room for issues of women's health or reproductive rights. Joachim shows how small shifts occurred in the opportunity structure in the early 1970s when a bloc of states in the global South, together with some Communist countries, promoted a new linkage between population policy and economic development – a linkage that proved compatible with US foreign policy at the time. Women's organizations successively used this shift to reframe population policy, managing to inscribe into the UN agenda the idea that 'socio-economic development would be curtailed without the active participation of women' (quoted in Joachim 2007, 146). In the course of the 1980s and 1990s, these organizations managed to introduce a quality of care framework into the programming activities of international population policy organizations which these had hitherto rejected for being 'unrealistic' (Joachim 2007, 144). The policy perspective of women's health activists differed from that of international population agencies. The activists prioritized women's health, well-being and control over their lives, rather than simply population reduction in the South. Consequently, user-controlled contraceptives such as condoms or diaphragms, which would not damage women's health, were preferred over long-term, provider-controlled measures such as sterilization, intrauterine devices (IUDs), hormone implants, or injectables (Joachim 2007, 143).

Issue framing, however, was also a matter of conflict within the global women's health movement, including the predominance of women from the global North at international meetings and conferences. A controversy over the appropriate action frame erupted in preparation of the 1994 Cairo Conference over the question of whether, for strategic or other reasons, women's organizations should align their struggles with the population policy frame at all (Joachim 2007, 150ff.). Radical critics of population policy objected that using the population frame, even as a strategic means to advance women's health and reproductive rights, would feed the dominant notion that major problems such as poverty

or environmental degradation were caused by 'overpopulation' in the South. Framing the problem as a problem of overpopulation, so the critics argued, suggested an allegedly technical solution in the form of birth control for problems caused by power relations and inequality.[4] More liberal, pragmatic women's organizations contended that aligning with the population framework provided valuable strategic opportunities for introducing women's rights and health issues into the UN agenda.

The story Joachim recounts is a success story. In this story, radical and moderate organizations finally decided to work together and develop a division of labour; the moderates pushed for women's reproductive rights and health from inside the population establishment, the radicals built pressure from outside. Depending on your viewpoint, the Cairo Programme eventually reframed population policy either in terms of women's reproductive rights and health, or in terms of women's reproductive rights and health to the extent they are compatible with the goals of international population policy. However, whether Cairo was actually a success story remains a matter of contestation. For liberal and pragmatic feminists, it was a great achievement, but radical feminists denounced it as a case of instrumentalizing feminist struggles for purposes of domination and control because gender issues were disarticulated from issues of race, class, poverty and structural inequality (Schultz 2011).

Joachim presents a narrative version of frame analysis; she recounts the processes of framing and reframing as processes of conflict and interaction within specific historic and institutional contexts. The findings take the form of a story rather than a picture. Scanning a pre-delineated set of sources for pre-established schemes and categories makes little sense within a narrative research design. The analyst has to draw on a broad variety of data, complement it if necessary during the process, refine or adjust her/his categories, and assign differential weight to different data with regard to the context. Also, s/he is not merely an observer, but one who enters into interaction with the subject matter under study. There is no way of leaving subjectivity at the door when entering this type of research – even if there is a price to pay in terms of reliability and validation. Yet, as with any other approach, a narrative approach bears specific risks and limitations. A narrative approach faces a coherence requirement; in order to make a narrative, that is, the sequence of events has to have a beginning, an end, and a certain coherence – which might involve the temptation to straighten out discontinuity, ambiguity or loose ends. If the case is a success story, analysts may be tempted to play down or overlook ambiguity or failure. The reverse applies to stories of persistent failure or demise.

FRAMES AS IDEOLOGY: FRAME ANALYSIS AND TRANSFORMATIVE INTERVENTION

The approach that takes frames as ideology is primarily concerned with differential power relations, together with the possibility of intervening to change them. The focus here is not so much geared at explaining policy outcomes, illuminating the conditions of successful movement mobilization, or exploring the chance of policy conflict resolution. Instead, the point of the intellectual endeavour is to reveal the power dynamics obscured by the dominant discourses, not merely for analytical purposes but on the basis of a normative and political commitment. Frame analysis in this sense contributes to critical interventions into relations of power, dominance, exclusion and social inequality and thus can be considered a sort of critique of ideology. The concept of ideology here is taken from the Frankfurt School and does not simply denote false consciousness, nor a distinctive set of political ideas such as anarchism, socialism, or a stable, self-contained system of thought, but an inevitably contradictory effort to simultaneously legitimize and conceal relations of power and domination (Adorno 1974; Zizek 1994).

Critique of ideology, in this sense, presupposes a commitment to certain values such as political equality, social welfare or non-discrimination. It is the incoherence between the values proclaimed by those in power and actual policies and practices that makes critique of ideology possible. Ideology in this sense should not be mistaken for a merely ideational or mental phenomenon; it may be enacted in practices, policies and institutions and materialized in technologies and other artefacts. What distinguishes frame analysis as critique of ideology from the other strands of frame analysis discussed so far is its, more or less explicitly stated, purpose of destabilizing inequitable relations of power. The framing of policy problems, in this perspective, may be a crucial element of legitimating and thereby stabilizing power relations. At the same time, however, this perspective provides a point of entry for critique.

Many feminist scholars have pursued frame analysis in the manner of a critique of iedology.[5] A case in point is the feminist critique of development policy as formulated by Mary Hawkesworth (2012), who shows how framing the problem of global poverty in terms of development and underdevelopment has reinforced hierarchical gender, race and class relations. Hawkesworth recounts the message of the development narrative and contrasts it with efforts by feminists and women's organizations to introduce alternative frames. 'Development', she argues, can be understood as a variant of the modern narrative of overcoming backwardness, ignorance, poverty and other evils by using science, technology and planning

to transform 'traditional' agrarian subsistence economies into modern, industrialized, urbanized economies. The development frame dominated and shaped North–South relations for many decades. It offered a coherent account of the key problem – namely underdevelopment – and suggested a certain course of action, namely to foster economic growth. Moreover, the development narrative generated a host of practices and technologies, such as indicators, funding schemes, models and monitoring agencies, to tackle the global poverty problem. These practices and technologies regularly took the state as the unit of analysis – not gender, race or class relations within states – and they measured growth of the national economy in relation to other national economies, not in terms of the reduction of social inequality. In addition, indicators such as measures of earning or participation in the formal economy were largely drawn from the 'developed' world.

Casting the problem of global poverty in terms of development also defines what is *not* the problem and what does *not* require remedial relief – particularly dramatic inequalities of power and wealth. Within the development narrative, the poverty problem is construed as a technical one that requires technical expertise. It is not a political problem that would require redistribution of power and wealth. What gives coherence to the development frame as a whole is the assumption 'that factors internal to nations determined the stage of economic development' (Hawkesworth 2012, 123). Hence both problem and solution are located within the confines of the 'underdeveloped' state, and there is no need whatsoever for 'developed' countries to undergo transformation as part of the solution to global poverty.

A special narrative identified by Hawkesworth within the overarching development frame is that of overpopulation. Dating back to Thomas Robert Malthus's ideas of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a focus on overpopulation further gained popularity through the eugenics movement in Western societies in the 1920s and 1930s (Briggs 2002) and then again in the late 1960s through Paul Ehrlich's book *The Population Bomb* (1968). Variations on the overpopulation theme can still be found today in international population policy discourse, its core message being that the poor have too many children in relation to their means of subsistence and that, therefore, poverty can be attributed to the behaviour of the poor themselves. Since the 1960s, concern mainly focused on population growth in the global South. Poverty, hunger, poor health – also political instability and the threat of communism – were attributed to uncontrolled fertility in the South (Hartmann 1995). Deforestation, environmental destruction and the subordination of women were added to the list (Hartmann 2002; Schultz 2006; Joachim 2007).

The overpopulation frame acts as an organizing principle that integrates a vast array of phenomena into a coherent whole and identifies the root of the problem and, consequently, a way to solve it: namely, through the reduction of women's birth rate in the global South. The overpopulation narrative also informed a series of material strategies and practices such as 'sterilization festivals' and the widespread distribution of long-term, provider-controlled contraceptives, such as hormone implants or hormone injections. The frame selectively highlights specific aspects of reality at the expense of others. What remains obscured are, among other things, patterns of consumption and energy use in industrialized countries, too few people monopolizing too many resources, food export demanded by 'structural adjustment', priority of military expenditure instead of health and education (Hartmann 1995, 2002).

Feminist critics of the development frame have pointed out that indicators were oriented towards standards of Northern modernization that privilege growth, labour participation and income generation in the formal sector of the economy, generally dominated by men. Within the development frame, the solution to the 'women question', as it was called, was women's integration into the formal economy and thus adaption to male and Northern, androcentric standards. Feminist scholars have questioned these standards and pointed out that they covertly reinforce asymmetrical power relations both between North and South and within the South itself.

An alternative feminist policy framework, the gender and development framework, defines the major policy problem as involving poverty, the subordination of disadvantaged groups such as women, and unequal power relations. Economic growth and income generation in the formal economy, feminists argue, are not suitable indicators to measure the reduction of poverty, inequality and social subordination. Framing the problem differently requires other indicators and instruments, including but not limited to, improvements in infrastructure and in services, such as facilities and programmes providing access to sanitation and clean water.

Feminist critiques of development may serve as a particular illustration of the critique of ideology in frame analysis. Such critique strives to expose hegemonic power relations inscribed into a policy frame while calling attention to the representational practices that mask the operation of power (Hawkesworth 2012, 116). It is worth noting, though, that this type of critique is contingent on certain conditions; it is not applicable to all kinds of dominant power; crude, violent, fundamentalist forms of repression are not amenable to critique of ideology in this sense. The notion of unmasking dominant power through the critique of ideology presupposes that such power is masked in the first place. It is thus development policy's

illusory claim to reduce poverty and gender inequality that serves as a point of entry for feminist critique of ideology.

CONCLUSION

Framing approaches draw attention to the fact that defining policy problems is inevitably a selective and value-laden process. They can be extremely useful to shed light on underlying beliefs, values and assumptions that inform, structure and direct the way policy problems are tackled (or not) and thereby to refute technocratic claims that allegedly a certain course of action is without alternative or required by 'the facts'. However, doing frame analysis can mean very different things. Frame analysis can serve to make visible the contingent and political nature of constructing policy problems and their respective solutions and serve as a useful device for critical policy studies in that sense. Yet, this does not mean that frame analysis is critical of relations of power and domination per se. Concepts of frame and framing can only be as critical as the larger framework they are integrated into and they may be integrated into more or less empiricist frameworks as well as articulated to social critique and struggles for social change. Interpreting frames, for instance, as a set of factors among others assumes that one part of social reality is socially constructed and the other is not. The latter, then, is taken as given and excepted from critical inspection. Interpreting frames as a set of resources strategically employed by rational actors means to treat frames as means to an end while the ends as such as well as processes of subject formation are not examined any further. Interpreting reframing activities basically as a way to resolve policy controversies and increase policy rationality presupposes that resolving controversy is an end in itself without examining whether it stabilizes or destabilizes existing relations of inequality and domination. Even critics of ideology approaches, however committed to social critique, may have their blind spots in that they tend to compare social reality against official commitments to values largely derived from Western enlightenment without necessarily questioning these values as such. Unfortunately, or fortunately, a perfect methodological or epistemological approach does not exist and the lesson to draw from these insights is to reflect on these respective blind spots and consider whether and to what extent one wants to put up with them or not.

On a more fundamental level, critical policy scholars should consider whether they want to start from a representational or a participational model when embarking on frame analysis. In the literature, frame analysis is sometimes treated in terms of methodology, demanding a set of

universally applicable techniques in order to safeguard intersubjective validity, reliability and rigour. These demands, I would argue, respond to a problem that arises from an underlying representational model of social sciences. Within a representational model frames are construed as mental entities to be detected through the application of a more or less formalized method in order to yield a correct depiction of a segment of social reality. In order to bridge the epistemological gap, the analyst needs a neutral, universally applicable instrument: the method. Once we conceive of social reality differently, however – namely as an ensemble of practices and interactions among participants seeking to make sense of what they are doing inter alia in form of narratives and frames – the epistemological gap vanishes. The analyst turns out to be a participant in interaction, interpreting interpretations in order to come up with a plausible account of what has been going on. This chapter has argued that due to its idea of static objectivity the representational model has serious limitations when it comes to analysing policy *processes,* struggles, interaction and changes over time. Hence, narrative approaches, derived from a participational model of social reality, should be judged on their own terms, not against the standards of the representational model – and the requirement of a formalized method is put into perspective.

After all, being critical is not a matter of definition or methodology, but a matter of commitment; hence the question is not so much *whether* I use the frame concept but *how* I use it and whether I articulate it to the critical analysis of larger patterns of power, exclusion and domination.

NOTES

1. Geertz identifies three prominent analogies in the social sciences: the game analogy ('life is a game'), the drama analogy ('life is a stage') and the text analogy ('life is a text'). He himself clearly subscribed to the text analogy (Geertz 2000, 452).
2. For an overview see Fisher (1997) and König (2005).
3. Unlike the Habermas of, for instance, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962).
4. More on this controversy is found in Hartmann (1995) and Schultz (2006).
5. For a more representational variant of frame analysis as critique of ideology see for instance Verloo (2007) and Lombardo and Meier (2008).

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