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Bachelor Thesis:

**When an Idea's Time Has Come –
How the Home-Care-Benefit Became Prominent on the
Agenda in Germany**

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1. Introduction

“It is no longer the endeavour of family policy to dictate people how to live, but rather to enable people to live how they want.” (BT-PlPr.17/178, 2012, p. 21095, translated by the author)

With the quotation above, Kristina Schröder (CDU¹), current federal minister for family affairs, defends the introduction of a home-care-benefit² in a speech to the German Federal Parliament. As of January 2013 the benefit shall be provided for families who want to care for their children at home and opt against a place in a publicly financed day-care nursery. Initially the home-care-benefit was stipulated within the *Kinderförderungsgesetz* (KiföG, children advancement act) that became effective in December 2008. Back then it was pushed by its advocates as inextricably linked to the reform initiative of the former minister for family affairs, Ursula von der Leyen (CDU), to significantly expand childcare facilities for under-three-years old. The main argument put forth for the adoption of a home care benefit is the recognition of different family models and the facilitation of real ‘free choice’ for parents. Though the home-care-benefit ranks highly from the perspective of parental choice (Plantega & Remery, 2009), it has been controversially discussed back since 2007 and is until today. Proponents of the home-care-benefit are blamed being reactionary (Ostner, 2010), as “recent reforms triggered a departure from the established policy path, moving West Germany toward the adult worker model³, which had already been predominant in East Germany” (Fleckenstein, 2011, pp. 546-547).

The ambition of my thesis project is to detect the driving forces for the home-care-benefit to emerge on the political agenda and lead to an agreement in 2008. As I am interested in the causes that engendered this agenda, I take on a process-related perspective. The multiple streams framework (MSF) developed by Kingdon (1984) has proved to be very suitable for the analysis of the home-care-benefit, as the perspective adopted by the MSF assumes that policy-making cannot be accurately described as a rational decision-making process, but rather as the temporal simultaneity of different components which lead to agenda change (Kingdon, 2011).

¹ CDU stands for *Christlich Demokratische Union* (Christian Democratic Union)

² As there is no technical term for the German *Betreuungsgeld*, I determine to translate it that way.

³ In an ‘adult worker family model’ it is assumed that all adults are in the labour market, whereas in a ‘male breadwinner family model’ a gendered division of labour exists, with the men engaging in paid employment and women being expected to care for the children at home (Lewis, 2001).

1.1 Background and Central Problem

At the backdrop of an increased influx of women into the labour market the European Commission early recognised the need to reconcile family obligations and paid work as one of the ‘new’ developments, that generate demands for states to take on new responsibilities (Commission of the European Communities, 1994). This notion is based on the observation that in a post-industrial society “it can no longer be assumed that care (...) will be provided as an unpaid labour of love by women within the private realm of the family” (Mahon, 2002, p. 345). However, the request of the EC in the early 1990s to provide formal care arrangements in order to facilitate the reconciliation of paid work and family obligations – particularly for women – was quite progressive with regard to the institutional setting of some European welfare regimes.

This refers particularly to the Conservative welfare state⁴ in Continental Europe, where the traditional division of gender roles was at the heart of the Bismarckian welfare edifice and made the provision of childcare services obsolete; consequently, the defamilialization⁵ degree was very low. However, the norms and ideas underpinning the Bismarckian welfare state edifice were considerably challenged by the welfare state crisis, which emerged in the mid-1970s. The manifestations of high unemployment rates and the arise of atypical employment forms constituted for all European welfare states, but particularly for the Bismarckian welfare regime, “a powerful and continuing source of pressure” (Pierson, 2001, p. 99) to reform their agenda in order to meet the ‘new risks groups’ that emerged with the shift from industrial to post-industrial economies and societies (Bonoli, 2006).

As new social risks reforms are shaped extensively by the existing policy regimes (Palier & Martin, 2008), the Bismarckian welfare state was – in comparison to the Social Democratic- and Liberal welfare state clusters – the most challenged one by the new economic circumstances; but also the most rigid ones in terms of structural change (Aust & Bönker, 2004). However, as Taylor-Gooby (2004) argues, “new social risks policy is influenced, but not governed, by old risk regimes” (Taylor-Gooby,

⁴ The systematic comparison of welfare regimes was facilitated by Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990), who developed a threefold typology of welfare state clusters, embracing the Liberal-, Conservative- and Social Democratic welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In his seminal work Esping-Andersen (1990) went beyond the prevalent approaches to compare welfare states on the basis of the aggregated social spending and asked particularly for what and why welfare states spend the money (Blum & Rille-Pfeiffer, 2010).

⁵ De-familialization measures the extent to which family responsibilities are relaxed either by state or by market provisions (Esping-Andersen, 1999). An example for a defamilializing measure is e.g. affordable high quality child- and elderly care.

2004, p. 226). Accordingly, in the 1990s many Continental European countries began to perceive themselves as ‘sick’ economies (Palier, 2010, p. 342), and it became a widely shared diagnosis that the combination of ‘labour-shedding policies’ (Esping-Andersen, 1996) and low birth rates have exacerbated the dependency burden (Morel, 2008).

Since the onset of the new millennium a paradigm shift is discernable in Germany particularly with regard to family policy, which acknowledges the necessity to facilitate the reconciliation of paid work and family obligations. It might be argued that the German paradigm shift was accelerated by the adoption of the EU’s Lisbon Strategy⁶, which set a landmark for higher female employment levels and improvement of childcare provisions (Ahrens, 2011). With the Barcelona Targets, which have been set at the Barcelona summit of the European Council in March 2002 as part of the Lisbon Strategy, the Member States are asked to ensure that by 2010 for at least 90 per cent of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age childcare provisions are provided and at least for 33 per cent of those aged three or below (Council of the European Union, 2002). The former has already been reached in Germany (Commission of the European Communities, 2008), whereas the latter has been targeted with the children advancement act.

The observations as set out above reveal that German family policy has adjusted with great effort to the new demands of a post-industrial society. Thereby, the expansion of formal care arrangements appears as reasonable measure to comply with the increased demand to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family of adult worker couples (see Plantega & Remery, 2009, p. 40). In contrast, and this is the concern this thesis is dealing with, it is not obvious why the current government parties – CDU/CSU⁷ and FDP⁸ – choose, against all odds, to adopt a re-familializing policy measure, which is accused by its opponents to erode the departure in German family policy that has been put through with recent reforms and even faces largely rejections in the population (AWO Bundesverband e.V., 2012).

⁶ The ambitious goal of the Lisbon Strategy, on which the Member States agreed in 2000, was “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (Council of the European Union, 2000)

⁷ CSU stands for *Christlich Soziale Union* (Christian Social Union)

⁸ FDP stands for *Freie Demokratische Partei* (Free Democratic Party)

1.2 Research Question and Structure

The main research question arising from the afore-mentioned considerations is the following: *How did the home-care benefit - as re-familializing policy option - manage to get on the political agenda and reach agreement in 2008?*

In order to examine the research question, I will proceed as follows: in the subsequent chapter the theoretical approach applied in this thesis project, the MSF according to Kingdon, will be presented and elucidated in its main facets. In Chapter 3 the methodological conceptualization of my bachelor thesis is introduced in order to clarify the proceedings as well as to make my findings inter-subjectively verifiable. Within chapter 5 I apply the MSF on the case of the home-care-benefit. I will present the empirical findings as detected in my research, which enables me to draw a final conclusion and answer the main research question.

2. Theoretical Conceptualization: Multiple Streams Framework

The MSF ranks among the new theoretical frameworks of the policy process, which were developed in response to arising criticism on the stages heuristic (Sabatier, 2007a). Based on his longstanding examination in the fields of transportation and health policies in the United States (Zahariadis, 2007), Kingdon argued, that neat stages do not describe the policy-making process well, as “they do not necessarily follow one another through time in any regular pattern” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 78).

Kingdon was considerably inspired by the ‘garbage can model of organizational choice’ as put forth by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972), which Kingdon depicts as “the point of departure” for the development of his theory (Kingdon, 2011, p. 84).

In the following I will briefly sketch out the assumptions of the garbage can model and present what Kingdon borrowed for his theory. Afterwards I will present the main structural elements of the MSF. A critical reflection of the MSF and possible adjustments in terms of the present case will be addressed within the conclusion of this paper, after I conducted my empirical study.

2.1 The Multiple Streams Framework in the Tradition of the ‘Garbage Can Model’

Within their seminal work ‘A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice’ Cohen et al. (1972) examine decision making within organizations, which they call ‘organized anarchies’. Based on their examination they argue that policy making in orga-

nized anarchies cannot be accurately explained from a rational choice point of view, which makes it necessary to find other explanation for how decisions are made. In the following I will illustrate what characterizes an organized anarchy, sketch out the explanation Cohen et al. (1972) offer to describe the decision making process, and finally I will point at the objective of the MSF as developed by Kingdon.

Cohen et al. (1972) depict organizations that are considered to be organized anarchies as characterized by three general properties: problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation.

With regard to the first property it is argued that political actors do not define their goals and preferences very precisely, due to either unwillingness or inability (Kingdon, 2011). Besides, quite often time-constraints force politicians to make decisions without having formulated precise preferences (Zahariadis, 2007). Accordingly, organizations “can be better described as loose collection of ideas than as a coherent structure”, as “it discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preferences” (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972, p. 1).

In terms of unclear technology, Cohen et al. (1972) claim that members of organized anarchies do not understand the organizations’ processes very well: “The left hand doesn’t know what the right hand is doing” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 85). Against this backdrop, organizations “operate on the basis of simple trial-and-error procedures, the residue of learning from the accidents of past experience, and pragmatic interventions of necessity” (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972, p. 1).

The third property, fluid participation, refers to the fact that participants drift in and out of decision making. “As a result, the boundaries of the organization are uncertain and changing; the audiences and decision makers for any particular kind of choice change capriciously.” (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972, p. 1)

As indicated at the beginning of this section, measured against such extreme conditions theories based on rational behaviour are of limited utility (Zahariadis, 2007). To understand situations of decision making under goal ambiguity Cohen et al. (1972) figure a choice opportunity as a garbage can, into which various kinds of problems and solutions are dumped by participants as they are generated (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). At this, decisions are the outcome of four separate streams⁹ that are running through the organization, whereby the outcomes are “heavily dependent on the coupling of the streams – couplings of solutions to problems, or participants; the

⁹ The four streams, as put forth by Cohen et al. (1972) comprise problems, solutions, participants and choice opportunities.

fortuitous or purposeful absence of solutions, problems, or participants – in the choices (the garbage cans) that must be made” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 86).

Kingdon has incorporated constitutive elements of the garbage can model into the multiple streams theory. Based upon his initial question “what makes an idea’s time come”, Kingdon seeks to understand “why some subjects become prominent on the policy agenda and others do not, and why some alternatives for choice are seriously considered while others are neglected” (Kingdon, 2011, pp. 2-3). His theoretical concept is geared to explain agenda setting and alternative specification in the presidential federal system of the USA. Nikolaos Zahariadis (2003) has applied the multiple-streams framework in his own research and modified it to be also applicable for parliamentary party systems (Sabatier, 2007). Furthermore, the research of Zahariadis and other scholars has proved that the MSF can even be used to explain the entire process of policy formation (Zahariadis, 2007). Yet, regarding the research concern of the bachelor project, the processes of agenda setting and alternative specification are of particular interest. Accordingly, the period of investigation as determined in Chapter 3.2.1 does not cover the legislative procedure of the children advancement act (see BT-PIPr 16/163, 2008; BT-PIPr 16/180, 2008), as this would exceed the scope of a bachelor thesis.

2.2 Main Structural Elements

Kingdon describes five structural elements – problem stream, policy stream, political stream, window of opportunity, and policy entrepreneur – whose intersection provides an explanation for policy and agenda change in federal governments. As part of these five structural elements Kingdon identifies three streams running independently from one another through the system, according to its own rules and dynamics (Kingdon, 2011). When these become coupled into a single package, the probability of an item rising on the decision agenda¹⁰ is dramatically increased (Kingdon, 2011). The coupling of the three streams does not happen randomly. The other two structural elements – the window of opportunity and the policy entrepreneur – provide pat-

¹⁰ Kingdon distinguishes between two forms of agenda, *videlicet* governmental agenda and decision agenda. The governmental agenda includes subjects to which people in and around government are paying serious attention to at any given point in time. Within that governmental agenda there is a smaller set of items that are subject for some sort of authoritative decision, such as legislative enactment. Being on the decision agenda does not insure enactment, but is a more active status than being on the governmental agenda (Kingdon, 2011, p. 166).

tern to the coupling of the three streams. In the subsequent sections I will portray each structural element.

2.2.1 *Problem Stream*

Within the problem stream Kingdon considers why some problems capture the attention of policy makers while others are ignored. At that he focuses on three intra-system factors, which structure the attention of the political system and of the actors operating in it: indicators, focusing events and feedback.

Although these factors call attention to certain conditions, this does not automatically define them as problems. As Kingdon asserts, problems contain a “perceptual, interpretative element” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 110). Before turning to the question how conditions come to be defined as problems, I will elucidate the three attention-structuring factors more in detail.

Concerning *indicators*, these signify the existence or the magnitude of a condition as well as discern changes in the condition compared to a previous state. However, as Kingdon argues “indicators are not simply a straightforward recognition of the facts” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 94). Whether the condition becomes to be defined as a problem is heavily dependent on what interpretations are placed on the facts and, particularly, whether ‘one’ succeeds to get others to agree to its worth (Kingdon, 2011).

A *focusing event* – a disaster or crisis that comes along, a powerful symbol that catches on or the personal experience of a policy maker – can have powerful effects on the agenda prominence of an item (Kingdon, 2011).

In terms of the third attention structuring factor *feedback*, governmental officials receive feedback about the operation of existing problems. This includes information on current performance that may not square with legislative or higher administrative intent, a failure to meet stated goals, exaggerating costs of a program and unanticipated consequences of a public policy (Kingdon, 2011). Governmental officials receive such feedback either formal (e.g. routine monitoring) or informal (e.g. complaints from citizens) (Kingdon, 2011).

Regarding all three factors *problem-load* matters, which refers to the amount of issues the governmental system is confronted with at a specific point in time (Rüb, 2009). Is the governmental system overloaded with problem demands, it is less receptive to problem signals.

Although these factors act as catalysts for certain conditions to capture attention of policy makers, it is not assured that policy makers will take action. As Kingdon points out, for a condition to be a problem, people must become convinced that something should be done to change it. Thereby, values, comparisons and categories contribute to the translation of condition into problems. Zahariadis (2007) puts it in a nutshell: “People define conditions as problems, by letting their values and beliefs guide their decisions, by placing subjects under one category rather than another, by comparing current and past performance, and by comparing conditions in different countries” (Zahariadis, 2007, p. 71). It is crucial to understand that - apart from the straightforward impulse to identify problems and solve them - there are many reasons for agenda status (Kingdon, 2011, p. 114).

2.2.2 *Policy Stream*

The policy stream describes the processes by which “proposals are generated, debated, redrafted and accepted for serious consideration” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 143). Akin to molecules floating around in a “primeval soup” (e.g. Kingdon, 2011, p. 116), Kingdon describes how diverse ideas survive and flourish in policy communities¹¹. The policy primeval soup does not simply consist of well-defined alternatives among which governmental officials choose, rather a wide range of ideas is possible and considered to some extent (Kingdon, 2011). The logic, whereupon ideas rise into or fall from time to time, follows an evolutionary selection process which produces a short list of ideas decision makers draw on. Hereby, Kingdon depicts three characteristics that enhance the likelihood of an idea’s survival within the policy community: technical feasibility, congruence with the values of community members, and anticipation of future constraints. Proposals that do not square with these standards are less likely to survive.

With respect to the criteria of *technical feasibility*, proposals must be “worked out and capable of being implemented” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 143).

Concerning the second component, proposals that do not fit with *specialists’ values* have less chance of survival. “These values include not only notions of the proper role and size of government, but also concepts of equity and efficiency.” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 143)

¹¹ Kingdon considers policy communities a composition of specialists, “scattered both through and outside of government” in a given policy area, which generate a short list of ideas decision makers can choose from for seriously consideration (Kingdon, 2011, p. 117).

As to the last criteria, specialists in policy communities have to *anticipate future constraints* that their proposal will face. They have to be confident that the program is feasible in terms of the budget, that the mass public as well as the specialized public will acquiesce, and that there is a reasonable chance that government official will approve the proposal (Kingdon, 2011).

However, ideas do not float around completely free within the policy primeval soup while exposing themselves to the selection process. So called policy entrepreneurs (see section 2.2.5) “attempt to ‘soften up’ both policy communities, which tend to be inertia-bound and resistant to major changes, and larger public, getting them used to new ideas and build acceptance for their proposals” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 128). Though the softening up process often takes years which may be frustrating for advocates of proposals, an idea is likely to “fall on deaf ears” without this gestation period (Kingdon, 2011, p. 128). If an idea is repelled by the policy community it never utterly vanish; it will come back redesigned, “combined with something else” (Kingdon, 2011, pp. 141-142).

2.2.3 *Political Stream*

The political stream¹² is comprised of three components: swings in national mood, demands of organized political forces on the government, and events within government itself such as turnover of key personal and battles over jurisdiction.

With regard to the first component, government officials assume that they can sense a *national mood* as well as shifts in the mood. The governmental participants’ sense of the national mood contributes to create the ‘fertile ground’ for higher agenda status for certain items, whereas it also serves as a constraint for other ideas that are fading into relative obscurity. “A shift in climate (...) makes some proposals viable that would not have been before, and renders other proposals simply dead in the water.” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 149)

Organized political forces form the second component of the political stream. Government officials judge the degree of consensus among those forces. They either observe broad consent among organized political forces which constitutes favorable conditions to follow their direction, or the diverse interest groups and organized forces are divided over a certain issue, so that political leaders have to “balance between

¹² Zahariadis(2007) uses the term politics stream.

those for and those against” a given proposal or an item seeking for agenda prominence (Kingdon, 2011, p. 150).

As to the third component *events in the government itself*, it comprises the turnover of key personnel and turfs over jurisdiction as having effect on agenda change. Changes in key personnel can have effect on the prominence of items in the ways that “either incumbents in positions of authority change their priorities and push new agenda items; or the personnel in those positions changes, bringing new priorities onto the agenda by virtue of the turnover” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 153). Concerning jurisdictional competition, this sometimes promotes the rise of an item on the governmental agenda or results in a stalemate; referring to Kingdon this seems to be dependent on the perceived popularity of the issue.

It is important to distinguish how consensus is built in the political stream and policy stream. Whereas in the policy stream consent is created by persuasion, the political stream is governed by bargaining and concession-making.

2.2.4 *Window of Opportunity*

Kingdon defines a policy window as an “opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solution, or push attention to their special problems” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 164). Policy windows open frequently, but they do not stay open long. If policy entrepreneurs fail or refuse to take advantage of an open window of opportunity, they have no choice as waiting for the next opportunity to come along.

A window of opportunity results from both “changes in the political stream (...) or because of a new problem that captures the attention of governmental officials and those close to them” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 168). In case of a political window, such as a change of administration, officials reach into the policy stream for a solution that suits their purposes best. In case of a problem window, such as an environmental disaster, officials reach into the policy stream for a solution that can be attached best to the pressing problem. Hence, the two types of windows call for different borrowings from the policy stream.

With regard to the short list of ideas policy communities generate (see section 2.2.2), a open window of opportunity can influence the priority of the items on that list: “Participants move some items ahead of others, essentially because they believe the proposals stand a decent chance of enactment” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 166). Hereby, it is the challenge for policy entrepreneurs to seize the opportunity and take advantage of

it (Kingdon, 2011). Notwithstanding that entrepreneurs also try to couple the streams without the perspective of an open window – to attach a solution to a problem that is compelling enough and make the political climate receptive for the proposal –, “the items rise most dramatically and abruptly on the agenda when the windows are open” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 183).

Another important aspect, which helps to understand why some items capture the attention of policy makers while others are ignored, are ‘spillover’ processes. “The appearance of a window for one subject often increases the probability that a window will open for another similar subject.” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 190) In section 4.3 I will come back to the relevance of spillover processes.

2.2.5 Policy Entrepreneur

The prior sections already indicate that the policy entrepreneur forms a central figure with regard to the softening up process and the coupling of the stream.

Policy entrepreneurs “can be found in many locations” and is not just dedicated to bureaucrats (Kingdon, 2011, p. 179). In the terminology of Kingdon policy entrepreneurs are “advocates who are willing to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, money – to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive, or solidary benefits” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 179). To the more successful policy entrepreneurs belong those, who have the following qualities: greater access to authoritative decision makers, more resources (such as the ability to spend more time, money, and energy to push their proposals), political connections and negotiating skills, and persistence (Zahariadis, 2007; Kingdon, 2011). Incentives for policy entrepreneurs to be active are e.g. the promotion of self-interests (such as promoting one’s personnel career), the aspiration to promote of their values or to shape the public policy, or they just like the game (Kingdon, 2011).

Although the pursuit of self-interest is integral for policy entrepreneurs’ activities, the strategic use of information and the manipulation strategies applied by the entrepreneurs provide from the point of view of the system primary “meaning, clarification, and identity” (Zahariadis, 2007, p. 69). Kingdon puts it the following way: “During the pursuit of their personal purposes, entrepreneurs perform the function for the system of coupling the previously separate streams. (...) Without the presence of an entrepreneur, the linking of the streams may not take place.” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 82) This quotation of Kingdon highlights the central role of policy entrepreneurs,

who contribute essentially to the functioning of the ‘organized anarchy’, whilst being not just advocates of proposals, but also “power brokers and manipulators of problematic preferences and unclear technology” (Zahariadis, 2007, p. 74). “It is precisely the inability on the part of policy makers to formulate interests that make entrepreneurs rationalists in the narrow pursuit of their pet proposal but meaning suppliers and identity providers in their coupling efforts.” (Zahariadis, 2007, p. 69)

With regard to the theoretical assumptions of the MSF it becomes apparent that Kingdon considers choice as joint effect of several factors that come together once (Kingdon, 2011). This perspective on policy making appears very fruitful for the empirical examination of the home-care-benefit, as it is – with regard to recent family policy reforms – hardly comprehensible why the current government attend to the idea of a home-care-benefit. With the depiction of the five structural elements and by suggesting pattern to its intersection, the MSF will be applied on the home-care-benefit in order to gain insights for how the home-care-benefit became prominent on the agenda in Germany.

3. Methodological Considerations

Before starting the empirical inquiry of the home-care-benefit gaining agenda status in Germany there is a need to clarify the methodological proceeding. This comprises the research strategy, data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Strategy

To draw conclusions from the empirical analysis in order to answer my main research questions, the determination of a research strategy is required, since - according to Yin (2003) - each research strategy (be it a case study or an experiment) represents a different way of collecting and analysing empirical evidence. In terms of my research concern – to acquire an in-depth understanding of the driving forces, which enabled the home-care-benefit to get on the political agenda – conducting a ‘case study’ seems most appropriate. Particularly as Blatter et al. (2007) point out that case studies have a particular strength in theory-formation and theory-modification. In the literature several definitions exist concerning the term ‘case study’, which leads Gerring (2004) to the conclusion that the term case study is a “definitional morass” (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). Based on several perceptions and characteristics of a case

study described in the literature, Blatter et al. (2007) developed a definition derived from approaches which stress the differentiation between case-centred and variable-centred designs. According to Blatter et al. (2007) a case-study shall encompass two strategies of analysis to acquire descriptive or causal inferences: a) process-analysis within single-cases and b) a theoretical based comparison of factors and processes in a single or in several cases. Blatter et al. (2007) attribute a particular strength to case studies in terms of descriptive analysis. They argue that case studies facilitate a more substantial and more precise picture of single cases. The definition of a case study offered by Blatter et al. (2007) as well as its particular strength in descriptive analysis gives point to the case study as the appropriate research design for my bachelor project.

Nevertheless, Yin (2007) indicates that each research strategy brings along its specific advantages and disadvantages. Though the particular strength of case studies – as a distinctive form of empirical inquiry – is its in-depth analysis at an exploratory stage, many scholars are considering case studies “as a less desirable form of inquiry than either experiments or surveys” (Yin, 2003, p. 10). Thereby a common concern about case studies is that they provide little basis for scientific generalization (Yin, 2003). In this context Gerring (2004) argues that “single-unit research designs often fall short in their representativeness – the degree to which causal relationships evidenced by that single unit may be assumed to be true for larger set of (unstudied) units” (Gerring, 2004, p. 348). Whereas case study research is all about “casing” (Gerring, 2004, p. 350), variable-centred designs may work with a thinner set of empirical data, but across a large number of units and with a more determinate (fixed) definition of cases, variables, and outcomes (Gerring, 2004).

Such considerations and criticism concerning case study designs have to be regarded while drawing conclusions from my empirical analysis. In fact, it is not the intention of my research project to generalize my empirical findings over other cases, but to the theoretical propositions of the multiple-streams-framework: “in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies” (Yin, 2003, p. 10).

3.2 Structured Content Analysis

After determining the case study as appropriate research strategy, the research method as applied in my bachelor thesis has to be specified. As I seek to acquire an in-

depth understanding about the circumstances of the home-care-benefit gaining agenda status, a qualitative content analysis as conceptualized by Mayring (2010) seems very suitable. The qualitative content analysis presents a method of systematic interpretation, based on qualitative components, that is systematized by specific rules and steps of analysis (Mayring, 2010, p. 48). Mayring distinguishes three types of analysis within the qualitative content analysis. As the choice of a specific type of content analysis approach depends on the theoretical and substantive interest of the researcher and the problems being studied (Mayring, 2010), the type ‘structuring’, more specifically its subcategory ‘content structuring’, corresponds best with my research concern. The structured content analysis suggests the deductive application of categories, implying that certain text components are extracted from the material that corresponds to the pre-defined and theory guided evaluation criteria.

3.2.1 Pre-specifying the Units of Analysis (Step 1)

The structured content analysis requires to pre-determine the units of analysis. In the present case it comprises to narrow down the period of investigation which meets the standards of a bachelor thesis and to determine the sampling unit.

Concerning the former, I chose to narrow down the period of investigation from the 01/04/07 – 31/08/07. This period is orientated on two key events, videlicet the first and second child-care summit in 2007. At the 2nd April 2007 the first child-care summit took place, where the federal government, the *Länder* (federal states) and the municipalities agreed upon expanding childcare facilities for under-three-years old at a 35 percent coverage rate within 2013. The first child-care summit can be considered a starting point for several debates that aroused, including the venture of the CSU to push the proposal of the home-care-benefit.

The 31st of August 2007 terminates the period of investigation, as within August the second child-care summit took place, where the Federal government, the *Länder* and the municipalities negotiated a draft which was decided about within the cabinet session at the 5th of September 2007 (Schneider, 06/09/2007). This draft included financial issues, the statutory right after the first year of age, as well as a tentative inclusion of a home-care-benefit. Though the adoption of the home-care-benefit was still discussed within the next months, the wording within the children advancement act concerning the adoption of a home-care-benefit was the same as stipulated in the draft version of the second child-care summit. Therefore the period, as shown above,

seems reasonable as it adequately covers the agenda setting process as well as the specification of alternatives.

Second, as I take on a process-related perspective within my bachelor project, a data source seems appropriate which mirrors the dynamic processes factual and most objective. The use of plenary protocols as sampling unit seems most reasonable, as these constitute a primary source, which guarantees the most objective depiction of the events. At that, political actors could be identified who are mainly involved in the debate of a home-care-benefit. However, within the determined period the German Parliament was in summer recess, wherefore from the 06th of July 2007 to the 11th of September 2007 no parliamentary debates concerning the home-care-benefit took place.

Next to plenary protocols as a sampling unit a daily newspaper, which is published nation-wide, not considered party-affiliated and with a high circulation seems qualified to reconstruct the political processes realistically at that time. The digital archiving of newspapers even facilitates the proceeding within the empirical analysis.

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* appears to be an appropriate data source with respect to several reasons. First, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* was market leader in terms of nationwide newspaper-subscriptions in 2007 (Kopper, 2007, p. 382); furthermore, according to the study ‘Journalismus in Deutschland 2005’, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* is the newspaper German journalists most frequently draw on (Weischenberger, Malik, & Scholl, 2006). Assuming that media used by journalists constitute a kind of opinion leader among journalists, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* can be considered as crucial orientation help.

After determining the relevant data source is moreover necessary to restrict the amount of published articles within the period of investigation to those, which are relevant for my research in terms of content. Beforehand I tested several catch words independently and in combination, such as ‘*Betreuungsgeld*’ (home-care-benefit), ‘Edmund Stoiber’, ‘*Krippenausbau*’ (expansion of day-care nurseries) and ‘Ursula von der Leyen’. In order to capture all – at least almost – articles that are dealing with the political discussions of the expansion of external childcare for small children as well as with the home-care-benefit, I chose a broad definition of the catch words. Hence, just articles shall be regarded that include those terms beginning with ‘*Krippen-*’ (day-care nursery) or ‘*Betreuungs-*’ (care), excluding op-ed articles¹³.

¹³ I exclude op-ed articles, such as editorials, as these specifically mirror the opinion of a certain person (e.g. executive editor) towards an issue. As this thesis is not about a valuation of a home-care-

Since the home-care benefit is part of a federal law and political discussion followed at federal level, I furthermore decided to consider solely articles published within the nationwide edition of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, while articles from regional sections of the newspaper, such as Bavaria, are excluded.

I will complement my empirical research with secondary literature, which is inevitable in order to interpret the extracted findings and see them in the broader context.

3.2.2 *Constructing a Category System (Step 2, 3 & 4)*

The structured content analysis is characterized by its deductive application of categories.

Considering the second step, structural dimensions have to be defined that are theoretically justified. In fact, the MSF already suggests the nomination of the structural dimensions, as it provides five structural elements – problem stream, policy stream, politics stream, window of opportunity, and policy entrepreneurs – that comprise the perspective for the analysis of how policies are made by national governments.

Regarding the third step, the process model of the structured content analysis plans to differentiate the structural dimensions by breaking these down in separate manifestations. These manifestations shall then, step four, be compiled to a category system. Accordingly, it must be clearly defined when a text component falls under one category.

In contrast to the basic description of step 3 and 4 I will proceed slightly different.

As stressed before, the MSF already sets the structure that shall be extracted from the data material, but it gives ample scope within its application to the case. This thesis intends to prove whether the assumptions of the MSF apply to the home-care-benefit gaining agenda status or not, and if yes, what insights can be acquired. Accordingly, the intention of my thesis project is not testing hypotheses, which is why I decided to restrain from constructing a category system. Instead, I present five sub-questions that allow for a more open approach to the data material but under pre-defined structural dimensions that permit just certain text components to be extracted from the data material. The sub-questions deriving from the MSF are the following:

1. What is perceived as compelling problem?
2. Which ideas are capturing the attention of policy makers?

benefit, but about a reconstruction of the political setting at that time I did not regard any form of an op-ed article as they do not reflect a relative objective coverage of the process, but a personal opinion.

3. What is the broad range of opinions on that item?
4. Did a window-of-opportunity open?
5. Who can be identified as policy entrepreneur?

As the sub-questions are oriented towards the main features of the MSF, the theoretical assumptions guiding each sub-question refer to the theoretical considerations in chapter 3. The sub-questions structure the data collection and data analysis; thereby relevant information shall be classed with the structural features of the multiple-streams framework.

It will become apparent that the usage of secondary literature, which focuses on the impact of ‘old ideas’ in the ‘new’ German family policy and point to ideational leadership and ideational change, is essential for comprehending why at that time being a certain condition is perceived as main problem, why certain ideas are flourishing in the policy primeval soup, and why e.g. the political climate is not receptive for certain proposals.

4. Case Study: What Made the Grand Coalition Attend to the Idea of a Home-Care-Benefit?

In the upcoming sections the idea of a home-care-benefit gaining agenda status shall be examined in an empirical analysis. Before starting the empirical inquiry I will briefly illustrate the conservative legacy of the West-German welfare state and point to the redirected programmatic stance of the Christian Democrats concerning family policy. As one respondent of Kingdon categorically asserts “there is nothing new. We are resurrecting old dead dogs, sprucing them up, and floating them up to the top” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 173), section 4.1 intends to contribute to the understanding of the complex picture of rationales and policy logics in German family policy.

4.1 Re-directing German Family Policy: From the ‘Male Breadwinner Model’ towards the ‘Adult Worker Model’?

In the literature, post-war West-Germany is usually the reference case for the Conservative welfare state, resembling most closely the characteristics as identified by Esping-Andersen (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

A main objective of the Conservative welfare states is the preservation of the status-quo and the protection of the male industrial worker, which is manifested in the wage-centred social insurance scheme, geared “to secure the ‘achieved living stand-

ard' of the male breadwinner and his family during old age, disability, sickness, and unemployment" (Seeleib-Kaiser, 2008, p. 71). With "the housewife and dependent children being entitled to social insurance benefits derived from the male breadwinner's employment relationship" (Bleses & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2004, pp. 23-24), the unpaid-sphere of child-rearing was located in the family accompanied by the normative view that it is the "natural role of mothers to care for their children" (Seeleib-Kaiser, 2008, p. 73).

The male breadwinner model became firmly entrenched at the core of West-German family policy (Stiller, 2010, p. 183), which developed against the backdrop of the post-war situation (Mätzke & Ostner, 2010). Postwar West-Germany sought to build a family policy that stands in stark contrast to both Nazi Germany's and East Germany's interventionist stance towards family life (Ostner, 2010).

Not at least due to the dominance of the Christian Democrats in the federal government during the 1950s and early 1960s, West-Germany has drawn on older Weimar and pre-Weimar Catholic social traditions, "that provided important ideas and features of the old (West-)German family policy model" (Mätzke & Ostner, 2010, p. 137). The philosophy of the Social Catholic teaching "based state intervention in family matters on the principle of subsidiarity" (Mätzke & Ostner, 2010, p. 138). This thinking underlines the priority on the "smallest viable entities of society" being responsible for their members (Seeleib-Kaiser, 2008, p. 70). Accordingly, the state is only supposed to step in when the family or community member fail to solve social problems (Blum & Rille-Pfeiffer, 2010).

Based on the principle of subsidiarity it was a dominant view among Christian Democrats that it is the key responsibility of the family to bring up the child, while it was considered as the state's responsibility to protect the family as an institution (Bleses & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2004). With conceiving family as having important ordering and stabilizing functions (Mätzke & Ostner, 2010), policies were designed on the one hand "to strengthen couples' and parents' rights to decide about family matters" (Ostner, 2010, p. 220) and on the other hand to support families (only) in ways that "further familial self-reliance and self-help" (Mätzke & Ostner, 2010, p. 138).

Consequently, measures that were regarded as threats to the self-help capacities of those closest to the problem (e.g. public subsidized childcare provisions were conceived as depriving families of their original tasks) were precluded, and instead social policies measures such as 'family wage' and supplementary cash benefits were favoured (Mätzke & Ostner, 2010). "Many of the social entitlements aimed at safe-

guarding care work in Germany are based on the status of the women as dependent family members and are tied to marriage, e.g. joint taxation of couples and widow's or widower's pensions." (Henninger, Wimbauer, & Dombrowski, 2008, p. 291)

However, socio-economic changes since the mid-1960 – falling fertility rates, high divorce rates and the diversification of family forms – forced particularly the Christian Democrats to rethink principles of marriage and family laws, as the normality fiction of the male breadwinner in standard employment and the functioning of the ideal standard family did not reflect “the vitality and disordered reality of family structures” (Mätzke & Ostner, 2010).

With German unification considerable influence has been exerted on the development on family policy (Clasen, 2005), as two contrasting family models were merged: Whereas the deeply engrained feature of the male breadwinner model in West-Germany has resulted in a poor service infrastructure, East-Germany's emphasis on the adult worker model has early provoked the provision of childcare facilities (Ostner, 2010).

Since the late 1990s the discourse on a ‘social investment state’ emerged in German debates, emphasizing the rationale that social policy expenditures are considered as investments in the future (Jüttner, Leitner, & Rüling, 2011). With regard to family policy this view stressed on the one hand that investing in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) of children will have positive returns for society and economy and on the other hand, providing high-quality childcare will enhance the labor force participation of both parents, prevent more families from poverty and will increase birth rates (Jüttner, Leitner, & Rüling, 2011).

Whereas until the late 1990s family policy has been considered as turf of Christian Democrats, it became a core issue of the 2002 election campaign of both SPD¹⁴ and CDU/CSU (Mackroth & Ristau, 2002). At that, family policy marked a central dividing line between Conservatives and Social Democrats (Mackroth & Ristau, 2002). Whereas the SPD promised to facilitate the reconciliation of paid work and family obligations, the CDU/CSU favoured – guided by a traditional understanding of a gendered division of labour– a generous transfer payment to families (*Familiengeld*) with small children (Jüttner, Leitner, & Rüling, 2011; Mackroth & Ristau, 2002).

The defeat in the federal election in 2002 alarmed the party leadership of the CDU to revise their programmatic stance towards family policy in order to regain ground in the political center (Fleckenstein, 2011).

¹⁴ SPD stands for *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland* (Social Democratic Party of Germany)

Within the second legislative term of the red-green coalition, Renate Schmidt (SPD) took over the ministry for family affairs, which was crucial for the re-orientation of German family policy. Schmidt succeeded to establish a new paradigm dubbed as ‘sustainable family policy’¹⁵, wherein childcare was re-framed in a demographic and economic context (Rüling, 2010; Jüttner, Leitner, & Rüling, 2011). Schmidt made greater use of evidence and especially economic research in policy making (Rüling, 2010) and proved previous family policy – consisting of transfer payments to families – leading to “low birth rates in Germany and high levels of childless (especially higher qualified) women in international comparison” (Jüttner, Leitner, & Rüling, 2011, p. 99). The paradigm shift in German family policy was accelerated by the adoption of the EU’s Lisbon Strategy, which recognized the consequences of demographic and societal changes for the families (Ahrens, 2011).

Under the aegis of the conservative family minister Ursula von der Leyen (2005-2009) the Grand Coalition “continued on the policy trajectory of its predecessor” and even “accelerated the departure from the male breadwinner model” (Fleckenstein, 2011, p. 552).

Notwithstanding that Germany has recently implemented far reaching policy changes (Blum & Rille-Pfeiffer, 2010), the debates about the home-care-benefit indicate that the revised programmatic stance of Christian Democrats in terms of family policy has not been stabilized yet and is still very much disputed within both the CDU and CSU (Fleckenstein, 2011).

In the subsequent sections I will present the findings of the newspaper review, which have been structured by the five sub-questions as listed in section 3.2.2 (step 5 & 6 of the structured content analysis). I referred to secondary literature whenever it seemed necessary to comprehend the observations by linking it to the knowledge and empirical findings of other scholars. At the beginning of each section I will get the gist of each structural element and approach the sub-question subsequently.

¹⁵ The sustainable family policy is measured according to several indicators, such as higher birth rates, better reconciliation of work and family, lower poverty rates of children through enabling both parents to engage in paid work, higher levels of education, especially through the improvement of externalized ECEC as well as strengthening the competences of parents in the upbringing of their children in order to ensure good child development (Rüling, 2010; Jüttner, Leitner, & Rüling, 2011; Ristau, 2005; BMFSFJ, 2005).

4.2 Problem Stream

“Getting people to see new problems, or to see old problems in one way rather than another is a major conceptual and political accomplishment. Once a particular problem comes to capture the attention of important people, some whole classes of approaches come into favour and others fall from grace.” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 115)

The quotation above puts the illustrations from the prior section in a nutshell. The former SPD-minister for family affairs, Renate Schmidt, was successful in replacing the “previous ideological debates on the role of mothers and ideals of a good childhood” (Jüttner, Leitner, & Rüling, 2011, p. 99) by establishing a nexus between family policy and demographic and economic concerns. Thereby she added great ponderosity to the irreconcilability of paid work and family obligations as undesirable condition and the necessity to invest in ECEC as pre-emptive social policy (Jüttner, Leitner, & Rüling, 2011), which supplanted the ‘old’ principles of subsidiarity and familialism.

In the following I will present the empirical findings of the newspaper review that corresponded to my first sub-question ‘what is perceived as compelling problem’.

Thereby the reconstruction of the problem-recognition prior to the period of investigation enables me to interpret the empirical findings.

Beforehand, it has to be mentioned that the *Süddeutsche* articles rather illustrated the undesirable conditions with regard to policies that are supposed to address these. Therefore, in the following I will outline the undesirable conditions and benefits that are addressed by the reform initiative to dramatically expand childcare facilities for under-threes and the proposal of a home-care-benefit.

4.2.1 What is Perceived as Compelling Problem?

With regard to the expansion of childcare facilities for children below the age of three, several undesirable conditions are considered within the selected articles.

On the one hand emphasis is placed on the well-being of children and the value of ECEC. Against the backdrop of an increasing amount of adult worker couples as well as single parents it is instanced that the state has to ensure the education of children in the first place, as every child has the right on ECEC (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 12/04/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 16/04/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 01/08/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 02/08/2007; Roß, 14/08/2007; Schneider, 19/05/2007). Thereby, childcare provisions for under-three-years old are described as important places for social inclusion, integration and the development of language and social compe-

tences (Grassmann & Schneider, 23/05/2007; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 24/05/2007). In this context Hermann Kues (CDU), state secretary in the ministry for family affairs, stressed that it is out of question whether childcare provisions for children below the age of three are actually required, but rather how it can be arranged that all children get the best out of it (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 02/08/2007).

A further argumentation-line is put on the positive effects of the expansion of external childcare facilities for small children. These are illustrated as facilitating the reconciliation of paid work and family obligation, which in turn is associated with higher female labour force participation, higher birth rates and positive economic side-effects. Within a *Süddeutsche* article (Schneider, 04/05/2007) the author refers to the results of a research study of the *Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach*, which draws attention to the difficulty to reconcile paid work and family obligations for working parents in Germany. In a comparison between Germany and France the research study revealed that German and French respondents at the age of 16 to 49 have very different notions towards children and the evaluation of the reconciliation of work and family. Whereas 65 per cent of the German respondents believe that family obligations and paid work are hardly reconcilable, 62 per cent of French respondents consider paid work and family obligations as good reconcilable. Thereby, German childless parents mostly associate with parenthood disadvantages in their careers (*Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach*, 2007; Schneider, 04/05/2007). Drawing on the study's findings Ursula von der Leyen emphasized that French people experience every day the possibility of an independent life with children, whereas in Germany the desire to have children is stunting as it is difficult to reconcile work and family (Schneider, 04/05/2007). From the statement of Ursula von der Leyen a positive valuation of the reconciliation of paid work and family obligations in terms of fostering birth is discernable.

A research study edited by the CDU related *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung* focuses attention on the lag of German family policy in terms of the reconciliation of work and family in international comparison (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 02/08/2007). European Benchmarking demonstrates the necessity of Germany to catch up with regard to the reconciliation of work and family. In this context, raising childcare provisions to 'European level' is often cited as minimum standard that needs to be obtained (Schneider, 04/04/2007).

Furthermore, the *Süddeutsche* articles put forth, that investment in formal childcare arrangements fosters economic growth. This argument is supported by a report of the

Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln, which compared the growth dynamics of Germany, the European Union and the USA. It revealed that with a sustainable family policy (see above) considerable positive effects on growth dynamics can be achieved (*Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln*, 2007; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 05/06/2007).

In contrast to the newspaper's extensive description of the benefits of the childcare expansion for under-threes, the elucidation of the home-care-benefit's worth is rather skimmed and not supported by scientific studies.

The consent to invest in reconciliation policies is accompanied by notions that the state should equally acknowledge other family models. As recent family policies geared towards the facilitating of the reconciliation of paid work and family obligations it is instanced, that the state should not force parents to follow one certain model. Instead, the state is supposed to enact measures that give parents 'real free choice' to decide whether they want to follow a traditional or rather a dual-earner/career family model (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16/04/2007).

It is indicated that an overwhelming majority of parents opt for home-based care in order to be with their children at the first two or three years of age, which must not be neglected by politicians (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 02/06/2007; Fried, 06/08/2007). To treat different family models equally Johannes Singhammer (CSU), speaker for the working group family, suggested that next to the expansion of publicly financed childcare facilities the services provided within the realm of the family shall be financially appreciated in order to establish financial fairness (Bielicki & Schneider, 25/05/2007; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 11/04/2007; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25/04/2007).

Although the home-care-benefit might rank high for improving parental choice, the large majority seems not receptive for it at that time being. Rather the extraction of text components revealed that the perception of the irreconcilability of paid work and family obligations as well as the necessity to invest in ECEC captured much more attention than the notion that the state discriminates family models other than the 'adult worker model'.

This finding might be an indication that the new paradigm of a sustainable family policy has significantly influenced the problem perception of the people. As the main argumentation put forth for the introduction of a home-care-benefit – to give parents a 'real free choice' to decide whether they want to follow a traditional or rather a dual-earner/career family model – is rather re-familializing in nature and fits well with

the ‘old’ principle of subsidiarity (Morel, 2008), the low receptiveness to it might suggest that it is not dominant in the problem stream.

4.3 Policy Stream

Although Kingdon suggests to consider the three streams as flowing independently from one another through the system, it has to be clarified that there are “hints of connection” between the streams (Kingdon, 2011, p. 88). With regard to the examination of the policy stream one has to bear in mind that the establishment of the new paradigm of a sustainable family policy has affected the flourishing of certain ideas in the policy primeval soup and made them more likely to be adopted.

Accordingly, Ursula von der Leyen has shown great continuation with the policy course of her predecessor Renate Schmidt and pushed forcefully for employment-centred policies guided by the adult worker model. The parental leave reform in 2007 can be even considered a system shift in German family policy (Blum, 2010). The parental leave reform in 2007 provided, that the pre-existing leave has been fully replaced by an income-related parental benefit (*Elterngeld*), which provides a replacement of 67 per cent of the former net income, with a ceiling of € 1,800 and a minimum amount of € 300 per month. Furthermore, paid leave is shortened from two years to one year. One main objective of the parental leave reform in 2007 was to enable both parents to be in the long run more successful in securing their economic livelihood (BT-Drs. 16/1889, 2006).

The expansion of external childcare for under-three-years old can be regarded as a logical consequence arising from prior reforms. By contrast, the proposal of a home-care-benefit providing a flat-rate benefit paid to parents at the first year of age of the child can be understood as a substitute for the child-raising allowance (*Erziehungsgeld*) which was paid for two years, but is no longer applicable (see e.g. BT-PIPr.16/100, 2007, p. 10189).

4.3.1 Which Ideas are Capturing the Attention of Policy Makers?

Guided by the second sub-question, this section intends to reveal how the idea of a home-care-benefit came to the fore. The answer to the sub-question will be approached by examining each survival criteria within the policy primeval soup: congruence with the specialist’ values, technical feasibility and anticipation of future constrains.

Concerning the first survival criteria, processes described by Kingdon as spillover turn out to play a crucial role in the specialist's valuation of a home-care-benefit at that time being. Therefore it appears necessary to sketch out how ideas guided by the new paradigm of a sustainable family policy – reconciliation of paid work and family obligations and investment in ECEC – have diffused policy communities and gained gradually broad acceptance, which in turn pushed proposals that provide cash transfers to families to the background.

Augustin-Dittmann (2010) demonstrates, that as a reaction to the shocking first Pisa-results (2000) – which revealed that German pupils perform poorly in international comparison and that Germany is leading the scale of social selectivity – the proposal of all-day schooling as alternative to the traditional half-day model became generally accepted. Augustin-Dittmann (2010) uncovered that the formation of the federal investment program *Zukunft Bildung und Betreuung*¹⁶ (IZBB, Future of Education and Care) has had spillover effects on the conception of German family policy: on the one hand it was the first program that promoted a extensive offer of day-care, and on the other hand it brought about a change in the former conservative family ideology associated with an increasing positive evaluation of working mothers (Augustin-Dittmann, 2010).

In accordance with Kingdon's observation that once a new principle has been established "public policy in that area is never quite the same" (Kingdon, 2011, p. 191), successive family policy reforms followed the new direction taken with the launch of all-day schools. The breakthrough in childcare policy was achieved with the *Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz* (TAG, day-care expansion act) that passed parliament in 2004 (Jüttner, Leitner, & Rüling, 2011). The parental leave reform in 2007 confirmed the new family policy path informed by the adult worker model.

Derived from these considerations it becomes apparent that 'new' ideas have gradually diffused the policy communities, making the specialists more receptive for new ways of thinking and promoted the implementation of employment-centred family policies: "Establishing a principle is so important because people become accustomed to the new way of doing things and build the new policies into their standard operating procedures. Then inertia sets in, and it becomes difficult to divert the system from its new direction" (Kingdon, 2011, p. 191).

¹⁶ It provides to put four billion Euros at the federal states disposal to invest it into the development of all-day schools from 2003 to 2009 (Augustin-Dittmann, 2010).

However, the emerging debate about a home-care-benefit reveals that proposals reflecting the ‘old’ family policy path have never utterly vanished, but come back recombined when there might be a reasonable chance. Considering the drafting of the proposal of a home-care-benefit, the impression is given that the traditional wing of the Christian Democrats have sensed the opportunity to prolong paid parental leave again by pushing for the proposal of a home-care-benefit, framed as reasonable complement to the expansion of external childcare facilities in order to establish real parental choice (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 01/08/2007).

Whereas the intent to increase parental choice is largely shared (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 11/04/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 16/04/2007), there is strong disagreement whether the home-care-benefit is the right instrument to achieve. Opponents argue that the idea of a home-care-benefit is problematic as such a bonus sets incentives for women to stay at home – phrased in the populist term *Herdprämie* – (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 02/06/2007; Hulverscheidt & Käppner, 29/08/2007) and increases social selectivity, which finds expression in the concern that particularly low-income families will be in favour of the benefit (Schneider, 19/05/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 24/05/2007).

The heated controversy about the adoption of a home-care-benefit may be an indication that there has already been disagreement among the specialists within the policy community. Generally specialists approve or disapprove similar approaches to problems, but that is not the rule (Kingdon, 2011). Kingdon points out that in the case of disagreement among the specialists, “conflicts spill over into the larger political arena” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 133), which is discernable with regard to the proposal of a home-care-benefit.

Concerning the survival-criteria technical feasibility, the home-care-benefit might have had the advantage towards other alternatives in the policy stream – which also address the issue of parental choice – in that it has been already proved in that form in some Scandinavian countries, namely Finland, Sweden and Norway. The idea of Ursula von der Leyen to introduce a voucher-model instead, which allows parents to choose by themselves from early-education-offers has been rejected by the CSU, which sticks to the home-care-benefit (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 05/06/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 13/08/2007; Schneider, 23/06/2007).

As to the last criteria anticipation of future constraints, the newspaper analysis showed that the then finance minister Peer Steinbrück (SPD) was not willing to carry the costs of € 150 per month for parents who do not enrol their children to a publicly

financed childcare facility, which would - according to calculations of the SPD - amount to about 2, 7 billion per year (Hulverscheidt & Käppner, 29/08/2007). However, there is a reasonable chance that politicians will acquiesce the proposal of a home-care-benefit, as it is increasingly supported by the CDU, albeit grudgingly (Hulverscheidt & Käppner, 29/08/2007).

The newspaper review demonstrated that the home-care-benefit is pushed as primary instrument to achieve parental choice in combination with the expansion of childcare facilities for under-threes. Other ideas, such as the introduction of a 'voucher-model' to ensure that the money was spent on children met severe opposition by the CSU (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 01/08/2007). This leads to the assumption that the CSU particularly favours the option of a transfer payment to parents with small children.

Although the home-care-benefit is highly controversial discussed it managed to get to the fore. This possibly indicates that the re-orientation of German family policy guided by the new paradigm of a sustainable family policy has not stabilized yet. Particularly the CSU seems to be torn between the more traditional constituents of the CDU/CSU and reform-proponents, whereby the proposal of a home-care-benefit may be interpreted as intent to sharpen the conservative profile of the CDU/CSU (Grassmann & Schneider, 23/05/2007).

4.4 Political Stream

Surprisingly, under the aegis of the Conservative family minister Ursula von der Leyen path-breaking reforms were put through, indicating a revised programmatic stance within the Christian Democrats with regard to family policy. By proving deft political leadership Ursula von der Leyen successfully played off the interests of the CSU as partisan veto-player¹⁷ by strengthening strategic alliances, which was most discernable in the course of the parental leave reform in 2007 (Henninger & von Wahl, 2010).

However, when the family minister proposed the ambitious goal to raise the total number of childcare facilities for small children at a coverage rate of 35 per cent by 2013 – without communicating with the faction beforehand (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 02/04/2007) – reform-opponents were well positioned and invoked fierce intra-party conflicts when pushing forcefully for the adoption of a home-care-benefit (Blum,

¹⁷ Tsebelis (1995) labels all those individual or collective actors whose approval is necessary for policy change as veto players. He distinguishes between institutional veto players (such as the second chamber which has to approve a subject in the legislation process) and partisan veto players (e.g. two parties of a coalition government) (Blum & Schubert, 2011).

2012; Henninger & von Wahl, 2011). Although the conservative wing of the Christian Democrats was still stunned by the emergence and quick progress of the parental leave reform in 2007, it seemed as if the conservative politicians of the CDU/CSU have pulled themselves together and the idea of a home-care-benefit had blossomed in the meantime (Henninger & von Wahl, 2011).

4.4.1 What is the Broad Range of Opinions on that Item?

At the first child-care summit Ursula von der Leyen and the delegates of the *Länder* agreed to expand childcare facilities faster than originally laid out in the day-care expansion act. On the 16th of April 2007 the heads of SPD and CDU/CSU agreed to expand the amount of childcare facilities for under-threes up to 750,000 places. A subject of debate was the home-care-benefit.

The Social Democrats claimed that the introduction of a home-care-benefit was not decided yet and the coalition committee has just issued an audit mandate (Schneider, 19/05/2007). By contrast, CSU-Chairman Edmund Stoiber and Peter Ramsauer (CSU), chairman of the regional faction within the CDU/CSU parliamentary faction, asserted that the coalition committee had resolved on the home-care-benefit. Thereby the agreed statutory right on a place in a day-care nursery, as put forth by the Social Democrats, would only be put into practice in combination with the home-care-benefit, as it constitutes a package deal (Schneider, 19/05/2007; Grassmann & Schneider, 23/05/2007).

From then on, a highly controversial debate concerning the proposal of a home-care-benefit began and divided the minds within the German party system. Leading family politicians of the SPD pronounced against a cash benefit paid to parents who opt against a place in a day-care nursery. Nicole Kressl, vice-president of the SPD, argued that the proposal has counterproductive educational effects and Christel Hummel, speaker for family affairs within the Social Democrat's parliamentary group, stressed that the home-care-benefit constitutes a trap for women (Schneider, 19/05/2007). The proposal was not solely refused by the Social Democrats but also raised concerns within the CDU. Friedbert Pflüger, member of the CDU-Chair pointed out that the proposal of the CSU may be meant well, but it goes in the wrong direction. According to Pflüger such proposals erode the departure in family policy, which has been put through by Ursula von der Leyen (Grassmann & Schneider, 23/05/2007). Also Ursula von der Leyen expressed reservations about the home-care-

benefit. She cautioned against that additional government spending on parents fail to have the desired effects (Bielicki & Schneider, 25/05/2007). Besides, the state already spent about 30 billion for the taxation of married couples (*Ehegattensplittung*) and for the non-contributory health- and nursing care insurance (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 23/04/2007).

Next to politicians, particularly church representatives raised their hands in the debate about a home-care-benefit. The Augsburg Catholic bishop Walter Mixa protrudes as opponent of the new orientation of family policy under the aegis of Ursula von der Leyen, accusing her to pursue an ideologically driven policy of increasing women's participation in employment and reduce them to 'child-bearing machines' (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 11/05/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 02/06/2007). In contrast, Karl Lehman, chairman of the council of catholic bishops, confirmed that there is overall broad support for the plans of Ursula von der Leyen among the 27 bishoprics (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 11/04/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 16/04/2007).

Edmund Stoiber stands out as prominent advocate of the home-care-benefit. He accused Ursula von der Leyen to ideologically defame the CSU-aspired home-care-benefit and thereby disregards that a large majority of parents engage to be with their children in the first two- or three years of age. At the *Deutscher Städtetag* (German Association of Cities and Towns) Edmund Stoiber even alerted that there will be no agreement on the intended expansion of childcare without the home-care-benefit, as these are inextricable linked (Bielicki & Schneider, 25/05/2007). Stoiber announced massive resistance from the CSU if Ursula von der Leyen sticks to her line. He argued that about 70 per cent of the Bavaria inhabitants as well as a large majority of the CDU welcome the home-care-benefit. That is why the CDU would be well-advised to take up the will of the large majority (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 30/07/2007). Despite continued resistance, also from members of the CSU itself, Stoiber adhered to the idea of a home-care-benefit and even presented a draft bill early August (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 31/07/2007; Fried, 06/08/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 08/08/2007). The way how Stoiber staked out the position of the CSU and refused to compromise on the CSUs' principles reminds on what one respondent of Kingdon mentioned, who stressed that it is from strategic benefit that "you stake out a position, because if you don't, you won't have anything to compromise with" (Kingdon, 2011, p. 161). This quotation is extracted from the context where Kingdon describes that consent in the political stream is built by bargaining, by which "potential coalition supporters are enticed into support by promises of some benefit" (Kingdon,

2011, p. 161). Consequently, one has to stake out its position rigidly in order to be in the game and bend the outcome to ones' own purposes, because as said above, "if you don't you won't have anything to compromise with" (Kingdon, 2011, p. 161). This depiction seems to eminently describe the bargaining processes that were at work with regard to the home-care-benefit.

Although Ursula von der Leyen originally strongly rejected the plan of a home-care-benefit, she indicated in a statement that the achievement of a better reconciliation of paid work and family obligations has priority, but that the proposal of a home-care-benefit surprised her. With reference to the conflict situation within the Grand Coalition she placed emphasis on the necessity to reach a winning coalition for the further expansion of childcare for under-threes (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 05/06/2007). This statement underlines that she still had reservations about a home-care-benefit, but to adopt the necessary bills in order to push through the further expansion of childcare for under-three-years old a compromise has to be reached that creates the necessary majority. Thereby, such a compromise had to consider many diverse interests: the Social Democrat's claim on the statutory right on a place in a day-care nursery from the first birthday of the child, the negotiation between the *Länder* and the federal government concerning the federal state's contribution to the costs of the expansion, and the demand of the CSU – with Edmund Stoiber leading the way – on a cash benefit for parents who care their children at home.

In order to preserve the internal peace and -cohesion within the CDU/CSU-faction, the CDU increasingly backed the proposal of a home-care-benefit in the course of time (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17/08/2007; Hulverscheidt & Käppner, 29/08/2007). Mid-August Volker Kauder, CDU/CSU faction-chef, ranged himself for instance with the CSU by arguing that he appreciates the demand of the CSU to award a bonus to families who care their children at home (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17/08/2007).

By late August compromise was in the air and the parties involved realized that "rigid adherence to one's original proposal" (Kingdon, 2011, p. 161) would rather lead to a stalemate than being beneficial for one's own purposes. At the second child-care summit the federal government and the *Länder* agreed upon the following: until 2013 childcare facilities for children under the age of three shall be expanded at a coverage rate of 35 per cent, which corresponds to the creation of 750,000 places; the federal government contributes € 4 billion, with € 2.58 billion arising from a special property of the federal government (*Sondervermögen*) and the other part is given to the federal states by increasing their part of the value-added tax (*Umsatzsteuer*); as from 2013

parents have a statutory right to a space in such a facility (from the first birthday of the child); and the Conservatives succeeded to push for the backdoor introduction of a home-care-benefit.

Although the children advancement act passed parliament with a tentative inclusion of the home-care-benefit,¹⁸ leaving the decision whether to introduce a home-care-benefit until 2013 to the coalition government of the succeeding legislative period, it is discernable that Ursula von der Leyen has successfully enticed the support by the CSU by promising to include the home-care-benefit in the draft of the children advancement act.

4.5 Coupling of the Streams: the Window of Opportunity and Policy Entrepreneurs

In the prior sections the political setting was reconstructed in which the home-care-benefit developed as valid policy option.

The examination of the problem stream has demonstrated that the irreconcilability of paid work and family obligations was prioritized to be addressed by political action, whereas the improvement of parental choice – to let parents choose between home-based care and a place in a publicly subsidized childcare facility – just played a subordinated role. Accordingly, the policy idea to expand childcare facilities for under-threes featured high on the agenda of policy makers. That was not least enhanced because of European benchmarking in the form of the Barcelona Targets as well as several scientific studies, which pointed attention to the German backlog in terms of the qualitative and quantitative enhancement of external childcare for under-three-sears old. Though the examination of the political stream revealed that the home-care-benefit was highly controversial discussed und lacked largely political backing, it became apparent that the CSU's position as partisan veto-player within the Grand coalition has been crucial for the home-care-benefit to move on the decision agenda. However, the tentative inclusion of the home-care-benefit does not guarantee its enactment from 2013. Most likely the home-care-benefit would have been dropped as policy option when a red-green coalition came to power after the federal election in 2009. This signifies that the home-care-benefit was not firmly fixed on the decision agenda, as it would be in the case of all three streams being coupled in a single pack-

¹⁸ § 16, 4 of the children advancement act provides that from 2013 parents who opt against a place in a publicly financed day-care nursery shall receive a monthly paid transfer payment (for example a home-care-benefit).

age (Kingdon, 2011). Rather the case of the home-care-benefit is akin to a process described by Kingdon as partial coupling. Partial coupling refers to situations where not all three streams have been coupled completely, but e.g. “solutions to problems, but without a receptive political climate; politics to proposals, but without a sense that a compelling problem is being solved; politics and problems both calling for action, but without an available alternative to advocate” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 202).

4.5.1 Did a Window of Opportunity Open?

The previous observations lead to the assumption that events within the political stream have acted as impetus for the enforcement of a home-care-benefit. As Kingdon instanced, in the case of a window that is opened by events in the political stream, officials reach into the policy stream for a solution that suits their purposes best (Kingdon, 2011). Hereby, Zahariadis (2007) adds that in the case of an open politics window the process is ideological: “What matters more is the solution to be adopted rather than the problem to be solved” (Zahariadis, 2007, p. 77).

The newspaper review give the impression that the sudden rushing ahead of the family minister has on the one hand opened a window for Conservatives to vehemently push for the home-care-benefit as being inextricable linked to the larger reform, but on the other hand increased the likelihood to push through the enterprise to considerably create more access to childcare, as the financial conditions at that time as well as the cooperation with Peer Steinbrück (SPD) were highly favorable (Hoffmann, 07/05/2007). As campaigner for the expansion of childcare facilities for children under the age of three and in virtue of a good economy, Peer Steinbrück immediately promised a federal state’s contribution of 4 billion to the costs, which constituted a fertile ground for the negotiation with the *Länder*. It may be even argued that 2007 was a fortunate point at time to realize the further expansion of childcare facilities for under-threes.

4.5.2 Who Can Be Identified as Policy Entrepreneur?

The review of the selected newspaper articles revealed that Edmund Stoiber is frequently brought up as main advocate of the home-care-benefit, whereby the venture to push for a home-care-benefit it is even depicted as his initiative (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 16/05/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 16/05/2007a; Grassmann & Schneider, 23/05/2007; Bielicki & Schneider, 25/05/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 02/06/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 30/07/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 31/07/2007; Süddeutsche

Zeitung, 01/08/2007; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 08/08/2007). When taking a look in the plenary protocols of the parliamentary sessions within the period of investigation, Johannes Singhammer is protruding in defending the introduction of a home-care-benefit (BT-PIPr.16/100, 2007; BT-PIPr.16/106, 2007).

However, the examination of the newspaper articles and the secondary literature used within this thesis does not provide enough evidence to identify Stoiber and/or Singhammer as genuinely policy entrepreneurs (see section 2.2.5). There is also the possibility that they are rather “pseudoadvocates”, which are characterized as not being “genuinely interested in pushing the cause”, but push for their proposals in order “to be able to be in the game in case something is going to happen” (Kingdon, 2011, p. 162). Due to methodological constraints it was not possible to trace the softening up process of the idea of a home-care-benefit, which is actually the major task of policy entrepreneurs. Hence, it is not obvious whether Edmund Stoiber and/or Johannes Singhammer already tried to soften up both policy communities and the larger public prior to the expansion plans as pronounced by the family minister in February 2007. Hence, I cannot answer with certainty whether there has been a genuinely policy entrepreneur and accordingly the attempt to make the public and policy community receptive for the proposal of a home-care-benefit.

5. Conclusion

At the beginning I raised the question *how the home-care benefit - as re-familializing policy option - managed to get on the political agenda and reached agreement in 2008*. Guided by the theoretical considerations of the MSF I reviewed relevant newspaper articles of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in a determined period of investigation, at which the usage of secondary literature was vital in order to interpret the extracted findings and integrate them in the broader context.

By applying the MSF on the empirical case of a home-care-benefit I examined the processes of agenda setting and alternative specification. At that, the empirical examination, as conducted within this thesis, provides an explanation of how the home-care-benefit came to be prominent on the political agenda, but also why the home-care-benefit has not been up for a legislative decision within the 16th legislative period. As to the former, the examination of the policy stream revealed that the home-care-benefit was highly favoured by the Conservative wing of the CDU/CSU in order to appease the more traditional constituents who have been left out by recent family

policy reforms guided by the adult worker model. As partisan veto-player within the Grand Coalition the Conservative wing succeeded to enforce their demand for a cash benefit – provided for parents who opt for home-based care of their small children – as a compromise. As the improvement of the quantitative and qualitative extension of care facilities for small children constituted a great concern of family minister Ursula von der Leyen, the concession of the cash bonus was made in order to guarantee the enactment of the children advancement act. Concerning the latter, Kingdon argues that joining all three streams – a problem is compelling enough, a proposal is “worked out” and “ready to go” (e.g. Kingdon, 2011, p. 142), and the political climate is receptive for the idea – is a necessary condition for a proposal to move on a position for an active decision. As there just has been a partial coupling of the streams it is reasonable that the choice concerning the home-care-benefit was passed on to the coalition government of the succeeding legislative period.

When considering the findings of the empirical examination it becomes apparent that the event of the home-care-benefit gaining agenda status could not have been accurately described from a rational choice point of view. Rather the theoretical assumption of the MSF, that the temporal simultaneity of different components lead to agenda change, explains reasonably the “fertile” (e.g. Kingdon, 2011, p. 77) ground that enabled the home-care-benefit to become prominent on the agenda in Germany. However, the elucidation of the home-care-benefit also exposed a limited theoretical scope of the MSF, whereby certain adjustments have to be made when applying the MSF on the case of a home-care-benefit. As the original conceptualization of the MSF is based on the presidential federal system of the USA, it is reasonable that Kingdon attached more importance to the impact of interest groups and specialists in public policy making than to political parties. However, in European countries party programs play a major role, which influence all three components of the political stream; e.g. interest groups direct their claims directly to the governing party/parties, or the public opinion is affected by the governing party/parties (Augustin-Dittmann, 2010). With regard to possible veto-players, it has to be considered that coalition governments, which are typical in Germany due to the suffrage, necessitate the willingness of the political actors to compromise, which can – as in the present case – strongly influence the agenda status of certain items. Although the negotiations between the federal government and the *Länder* was not central for this thesis, one has to bear in mind that in the case of disagreement between the federal government and the *Länder* concerning the federal government’s contribution to the costs, the whole

enterprise, including the venture of a home-care-benefit, could have been disrupted. Hence, the position of power of the *Länder*, to invoke a stalemate in the *Bundesrat* (second chamber), has to be taken into consideration.

With regard to the critical reflection on the methodological aspects, I have already outlined in section 3.1 that the case study as research design has methodical flaws in terms of generalization over other cases (Gerring, 2004). But, as previously argued, this is not the aspiration of this thesis project either. The intention is rather to generalize the empirical findings over the propositions of the MSF. Furthermore my empirical findings have to be considered in the light of the method of data collection and data analysis I chose (compare chapter 3.2., 3.2.1, 3.2.2.). I restricted the data collection and data analysis on a certain type of newspaper (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*), narrowed down the period of investigation and restricted the amount of relevant newspaper articles by pre-defining catch words. With regard to the type of newspaper, an examination of another type of newspaper, e.g. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, might add greater ponderosity to the improvement of parental choice, which could lead to different conclusions concerning the research question. Due to the scope of a bachelor thesis I restricted the period of investigation to just a few month that concentrated on the agenda setting process of the home-care-benefit. The enlargement of the period of investigation could reveal interesting findings. As the home-care-benefit was stipulated within the children advancement act, it can be valuable to include the legislative procedure of the children advancement in order to figure out more clearly the justifications as put forth by the advocates of the home-care-benefit and to explore the impediments at that time for a binding stipulation. Besides, conducting expert interviews could have probably been very beneficial to get greater insights into the policy communities and the flourishing of the idea of a home-care-benefit.

As the decision whether to implement a home-care-benefit or not was passed on to the governmental parties of the 17th legislative period it is interesting to observe whether the advocates of a home-care-benefit are persistent enough to hold on their pet solution and actually succeed to join all three streams. In the 2009 federal election a coalition of Christian Democrats and Liberals came into power and the introduction of a home-care-benefit was actually stipulated as objective within the coalition agreement (CDU,CSU & FDP, 2009). However, the enactment of a home-care-

benefit is still highly controversial discussed as e.g. the *Hammelsprung*¹⁹ at the 15th of June 2012 demonstrated, which eventuated in the lack of a quorum of the German Federal Parliament (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 15/06/2012). Recently the FDP conditioned its approval of a home-care-benefit on the CSU's approval for the tax-equalization of same-sex-couples (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 18/08/2012). Such occurrences underline that the home-care-benefit is a subject of bargaining. This gives the impression, as stressed in section 4.5.1, that it is mainly about the adoption of a home-care-benefit as to solve a certain problem.

As the chances for enactment are considerably enhanced when all three streams are coupled into a single package (Kingdon, 2011), it can be expected that advocates of the home-care-benefit further attempt to join all three streams.

¹⁹ The *Hammelsprung* is a voting procedure where members of the parliament re-enter the floor through one of three doors.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Heiland', written in a cursive style.