Discourse Coalitions (Hajer 1993)

“A discourse coalition is the ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utters these story lines, and the practices that conform to these story lines, all organized around a discourse.” (Hajer 1993.: 47).
Global Warming and its Discourse Coalitions

A contemporary example of discursive politics is the controversy that has surrounded the attempt to ratify the Kyoto Treaty on global warming. Although European governments and more than 100 additional countries around the world have agreed to support for the treaty, the Bush administration has refused to sign it, arguing that it suffers from various technical problems related to its implementation. According to the administration’s argument, the treaty is bad policy because it is grounded in faulty empirical assumptions about its ability to achieve success. This would seem to support the ACF model of environmental politics. But supporters of the treaty generally don’t take issue with these factual contentions. Rather they have struggled to keep the treaty alive because it signifies a continuing commitment to global environmental protection. In this sense, it is a way of thinking about global environmentalism rather than a hard core set of accepted beliefs. That is, the basic issue is not the facts alone. Problematic for the Bush administration, at the same time, is its failure to come up with an alternative storyline.*

Given that the Bush administration has done little more than argue for more research, as if getting better facts was alone the issue, it finds itself increasingly positioned as the bad guys in the contemporary environmental narratives. One need not argue here that facts don’t count in politics to recognize that it is first and foremost storylines that drive this matter. Facts are important but only as they fit into storylines. As is evident from a closer look at the Europeans’ argument for supporting the Kyoto Treaty, the conflict is over a storyline about global warming and the narrative that supports it.

The storyline says there is a crisis and something has to be done; the situation requires attention. Even though we don’t know all of the causal relationships that create global warming, holding to the commitment to take action together preserves the possibility of continuing to work on finding a solution. The Bush counter-argument implies that the problem isn’t so urgent and that it is unwise to make a commitment before knowing the facts. What the Bush administration neglects is the powerful symbolic dimension that the treaty offers, independently of whatever effects it might or might not have. Kyoto, it fails to recognize, has become a symbol that creates a powerful emotive response. It is this emotive response that has generated the politics against the United States, not the facts. Factually, the United States is not necessarily wrong, but that is not what drives policy change, at least not alone.

*This is an essential issue in Roe’s (1994) discussion of narrative policy analysis, that is, the necessity to supply alternative narrative storylines, a topic we take up in Chapter 8.
A discourse coalition can be said to dominate a given political realm only if it fulfils two conditions:

1. it dominates the *discursive space* (*discourse structuration*)
   that is, “central actors are persuaded by, or forced to accept, the rhetorical power of a new discourse”

2. this is reflected in *institutional practices* (*discourse institutionalisation*)
   that is, the actual policy process is conducted according to the ideas of a given discourse.

Policy Narratives (Gottweis 1998)
Policy Narratives (Gottweis 1998)
Diskurs

Es gibt sehr viele verschiedene (widersprüchliche bzw. sogar konträre) Vorstellungen darüber, was Diskurse sind.

Eine Möglichkeit: Definition von Maarten Hajer (1993):

„Discourses frame certain problems; that is to say, they distinguish some aspects of a situation rather than others. (...) As such, discourse provides the tools with which problems are constructed. Discourses at the same time form the context in which phenomena are understood and thus predetermines the definition of the problem.“ (Hajer 1993: 45/6).

Literatur: