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Master Thesis

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The German Council of Economic Experts and their influence on economic policymaking and the public debate in the context of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008/09.

A quantitative analysis of the effects of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008/09
on the most renowned German economic advisory council.

Under the supervision of Dr. Johan Christensen
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1. Introduction

“And while economists’ unique position gives them unusual power to accomplish changes in the world, it also exposes them more to conflicts of interests, critique, and mockery when things go wrong.” (Fourcade, Ollion & Algan, 2015: 91)

Everyday politics are made around a wide array of public opinion, electoral cycles, political agendas and different considerations and perceptions of reality. Building on that, contemporary policymaking is influenced by an interplay of political discourse and agendas, expert knowledge¹, independent media coverage and public opinion of the issues in question. As virtually every political issue has a scientific component to it, scientific expert advice becomes particularly relevant during times of crisis (Gluckmann, 2018) – the Covid-19-Pandemic has exemplified the need for expert knowledge in policymaking (for a recent survey amongst the general public in Germany see for example Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt, 2020). However, the ways in which political socio-economic crises interact with the influence of particular economic knowledge producing entities within knowledge regimes remains largely unexplored. Existing research has increasingly focused on “*How does economics influence policy?*” or “*What must be accomplished for economists and economics to have policy effects?*” (Hirschmann & Popp Berman, 2014: 780). Yet, changes in the role of academic knowledge in policy advice have not been systematically addressed (Christensen, 2018).

This thesis attempts to fill this gap by assessing whether the influence and purpose of expert knowledge in the policymaking process and the public debate were modified as a result of an economic crisis. This is investigated in the context of the German knowledge regime and the Global Financial Crisis of 2008/09 (hereinafter referred to as GFC) by analyzing the influence of the most renowned German economic policy advisory council (German Council of Economic Experts – *Sachverständigenrat zur Begutachtung der gesamtwirtschaftlichen Entwicklung*, hereinafter referred to as SVR) for five years before and after the GFC. Consequently, this thesis poses the following research question:

To what extent did the influence of the German Council of Economic Experts’ annual report on economic policy making in Germany change after the financial crisis in 2008/09?

This question is analyzed using new quantitative data that follows the theory of two-way policy influence (Dür, 2008b; Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). The dataset was compiled by

¹ Going forward, this thesis will treat the terms expert knowledge, academic knowledge, expertise and scientific knowledge as equivalent.

comparing the annual governmental economic reports to the annual SVR report to calculate numeric overlap scores and by quantifying the respective media coverage of the SVR in the highest-reach newspapers in Germany.

The story of the SVR starts in the early 1960s during the time of the German economic miracle (*Deutsches Wirtschaftswunder*). Back then, using scientifically backed economic advice as a “technique of government” (Christensen 2017: 167) was aimed to abolish the *Babylonian language confusion* in the assessment of economic concerns in Germany (former chancellor Gerhard Schröder in SVR, 2003: 15). German politicians² were seeking “authoritative support for the policies they propose to follow” (Weingart, 1999: 156). As a result, the law to establish the SVR (*SachvRatG*) was passed in 1963.

The SVR was founded with the intention to fulfill two tasks: to enable informed decision-making by political elites and to educate the public on economic matters by enabling and contributing to a public discourse through the media (Bundesministerium für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz, 1963; Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995).

Building on these tasks, the aim of this thesis is threefold. One, it will be investigated whether the SVR has had an influence on economic policymaking in Germany before the GFC. Two, the extent to which the GFC changed the influence of the SVR on economic policymaking will be examined. And three, this thesis will analyze the media coverage of the SVR report and the extent to which the reports exert an indirect influence on policymaking as a result of their relevance to the public debate.

The GFC has shown that globalization has made national economies more complex and that unpredictable shocks may have ramifications for every small unit of the economy. As the majority of economists did not predict a financial crisis of this sort (Stiglitz, Oszarg & Oszarg, 2002; SVR 2007; Krugman, 2009), the GFC has revealed a “systemic failure of the economics profession” (Colander et al., 2009: 1) and has resulted in an erosion of trust towards economic experts as a way to assign “responsibility for the debacle” (Metcalf, 2017). The aftermath of this erosion sparked an intense debate about the future of capitalism and a reorientation and pluralization of economics and its relevance for policymaking, particularly in advanced democracies (Feld & Köhler, 2011). Consequently, it is valid to hypothesize that the German government changed the instrumental influence of institutionalized economic expert councils within the policymaking process after the financial crisis to demonstrate receptivity and willingness to change.

² Going forward, this thesis will use the terms policymaker, decisionmaker, politician and political elites as synonyms.

1.1. Research Motivation and Academic Relevance

The political advisory system in Germany is a dense network of advice-seeking politicians and advising scientists (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008). In contrast to practices in the United States or the Netherlands, Germany has no binding guidelines on how expert councils and the knowledge that they produce should be dealt with politically (Siefken, 2019). Even if decision makers delegate authority, they “typically expect to remain in control” (Haas, 1992: 11) – this claim constitutes the foundation of this research.

The SVR was chosen as a research subject for three reasons. First of all it is the most prominent economic expert council in the German policy-realm (see for example Ahlswede, 2009; Rürup, 2015). Furthermore, the SVR is the “closest to power insofar as they report directly to the heads of the executive branch of the government” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 280). And lastly, because institutionalized policy advisory councils are assumed to be more influential in comparison to other knowledge producing entities within the German knowledge regime (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014).

The GFC was chosen as a *critical juncture* (Mahoney & Schensul, 2006) as it channeled future economic movement in a specific direction. As such, the GFC demonstrated that global trade with complex financial products and the interdependence of international capital flows can facilitate the escalation of local crises to a global level; that the “vision of an economy in which rational individuals interact in perfect markets” (Krugman, 2009) is flawed as markets can be subject to irrational and unpredictable behavior. Consequently, the GFC is assumed to have influenced path-dependent structures within the field of economic policy advice.

Existing research perceives this crisis as an opportunity for knowledge producing entities to “adapt to new circumstances [...] as well as to utilize these extraordinary conditions to claim their social necessity and political utility” (Hernando, Pautz & Stone, 2018: 126). Furthermore, the societal relevance of the GFC is still ubiquitous. Accordingly, investigations that analyze if the influence of particular advisory councils changed as a function of the crisis will be a relevant contribution to the existing body of scholarly work.

Over the past five decades, the SVR has been an integral part of the independent scientific policy advisory landscape in Germany and is said to have been particularly relevant to economic policy-making (see for example Eichhorst & Wintermann, 2003; Rürup, 2010; Tietmeyer, 2011). Yet, both the prevailing scholarly and public opinion suggest that the SVR’s influence has changed and decreased (Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995; see also Bachmann 2020). Following these assessments, this thesis will investigate if the GFC acted as a turning point of the SVR’s influence on economic policymaking and the public debate in Germany.

Albeit being the most prominent economic advisory council in Germany, the perception of the actual policy-influence of the SVR is ambiguous, making it an interesting subject to conduct research on. The public perception of the SVR is in line with what Paul Krugman (1999) once reported about his experience as an economic policy adviser in the United States:

“After a little while, however, I began to notice how policy decisions are really made. The fact is that [...] discussion [...] is primitive. Furthermore, many powerful people prefer to take advice from those who make them feel comfortable rather than from those who will force them to think hard.”

Ruediger Bachmann, a German economist from the University of Notre Dame in Indiana recently (March 2020) wrote an opinion-piece entitled *Why German economic policy-making needs top-level researchers (Warum deutsche Wirtschaftspolitik Spitzenforscher braucht)* and argues that the reports produced by the SVR only have minor, if any, relevance to policy making. He finds fault with the member structure of the council and the lack of contact with reality in terms of the applicability of presented policy options.

Despite being kindly regarded, the SVR has repeatedly been subject to criticism based on its inaccurate predictions regarding economic growth or the financial crisis (see for example Andersen, 2000; Weingart & Lentsch, 2008; Häring, 2014; Schmidt et al., 2015; Stachelsky, 2017). Furthermore, critics find fault with the academic relevance of the SVR: a keyword search in *EconLit* reveals that ever-since its creation the annual reports have received one mentioning on average (see also Schmidt et al., 2015). But not only economists have requested a reform of the SVR. Previous perceptions of political elites point to a changed political relevance of the SVR report:

- *The SVR does not know what they are talking about.* (Clement, as cited in Lamping & Schridde, 2011: 193) – Wolfgang Clement, former economics minister of the Federal Republic of Germany (2002 – 2005).
- *I cannot even comprehend the report.* (Gabriel, as cited in Gersemann, 2014) – Sigmar Gabriel, former vice chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (2013 – 2018).
- *The recommendations are not quite trivial to understand.* (Merkel, as cited in Gersemann, 2014) – Dr. Angela Merkel, current chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

These quotes shed light on how high-ranking decisionmakers from the German government might have perceived the annual reports by the SVR in the past. Critics argue that that the report has a limited political performance and has over time turned into a recurrent monotone medial experience with expectable results. The SVR reports have therefore lost their irritative effect on policymaking (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008: 109). Taking this one step further,

the SVR reports might only exercise a control function in the sense of a regulatory conscience of German economic policymaking, as the government is obligated to comment on them (Bundesministerium für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz, 1963: §6). The mission to promote judgement on clearly defined targets³ pave the way for scientific expertise to be compatible with political action only in theory (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008). Although, “no one wants to do without the advice of experts” (Kropp & Wagner, 2010: 813) policymakers perceive the SVR as one voice among many – it competes with a plethora of other knowledge producing entities within the German knowledge regime (Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995).

These perceptions motivate this research and follow a question Campbell and Pedersen ask in *The national origins of policy ideas* (2014): “To what extent do individual policy research organizations in a knowledge regime actually affect [...] policymakers?” (p. 276).

A thorough search of the relevant literature revealed that no empirical study has yet analyzed the SVR reports with regard to their influence on policy making in the context of the GFC. To this end, a systematic document analysis will gather data on the explicit reports from the SVR, whether the German government endorsed them, the extent to which the media covered the reports and eventually measure the exerted influence of the SVR on German economic policymaking and the public debate and a possible change thereof as a result of the GFC.

Even if the recent scholarly discourse has increasingly focused on policy advisory systems, “much of this new interest has been directed to the Anglophone world” (van den Berg, 2016: 64; see also Christensen, 2018). Furthermore, a lot of attention has been paid to the instrumental utilization of expert knowledge in policy-making; yet, neither a lot of attention has been paid to “the symbolic functions of knowledge” nor to the “conditions under which symbolic knowledge utilization may be expected to occur” (Boswell, 2008: 1-2). This investigation will aim to help fill this gap by focusing on a non-Anglophone knowledge regime and systematically investigating if a council’s policy influence was modulated as a result of a recent economic crisis.

1.2. Societal Relevance

Decisions made by political elites have been subject to increased levels of scrutiny (Transparency International, 2017); voices that demand a legislative footprint and thus a transparent dealing with the different sources of influence policymakers are exposed to have

³ The magic square refers to monetary stability, employment, the foreign trade balance and sustainable economic growth and will be outlined in a later section.

become louder in Germany. Thus, studying the influence of scientific policy advice during times of crisis is an important issue for society as it enables a more transparent understanding of how policies are actually made.

Two perceptions prevail in the field of knowledge regimes: on the one hand the utilization of expert knowledge is perceived as a way to ensure that policymakers always take notice of the bigger picture. As such, experts help to raise awareness amongst policymakers regarding the options that can be applied to alleviate arising problems by attributing epistemic authority to decisionmakers (Herbst, 2003; see also Gluckman, 2018). Existing scholarly work proposes that policymakers relying on expert knowledge helps a more rational policymaking (Christensen & Holst, 2017) as it enables problem-solving (Weiss, 1979; Boswell, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) – with the help of experts, policymakers can scientifically evaluate democratic concerns by applying efficiency and equity criteria.

In general, politicians seeking counsel is considered good practice; however the involvement of experts also results in an ambiguous relationship between politicians and the knowledge they are being offered: decision-makers face the *specter of technocratization* of politics between the decisions that are factually provided and those that are democratically justifiable (Weingart, 2019: 71). Decisionmakers ought not depend on scientific expertise, as this would grant experts decision-making power on the basis of their knowledge, rather than as a result of a democratic process.⁴ This means that scientific expertise is able to undermine the democratic mandate.

This *policy paradox* (Stone, 2012) calls for a systematic and thorough investigation on how influential existing expert councils are. The context of the GFC underlines the societal relevance – that is providing insight to whether the German government actively changed existing power dynamics within the policymaking realm which might have contributed to the (severity of the) crisis in the first place.

The theoretical argument of this investigation builds on existing scholarly work on the role of *economic* experts in the policymaking process. Albeit policymakers needing expert knowledge to inform their decisions, the scope of expert knowledge in the political sphere is versatile and determined by the intention to legitimize policies. Particularly times of crisis are able to shake the political climate, as they increase uncertainty and thus the demand for expert advice (see for example Campbell & Pedersen, 2014, 2015). Although the “superiority of economists” (Fourcade, Ollion & Algan, 2015) as compared to other social sciences, provides

⁴ It could however be argued that scientific reputation is acquired through a somewhat democratic process. See also Bourne & Barbour, 2011.

economic advisers with a “unique position” and “unusual power to accomplish changes in the world”, times of crisis expose economists to “more [...] critique and mockery” (p. 91). As such the GFC contributed to an “increased doubt in the value and usefulness of policy expertise and in its producers” (Hernando, Pautz & Stone, 2018: 125). Regardless of the diverging effects of crises on economic expertise, it is not clear how influential the SVR is and has been in the past. Thus, this thesis will thoroughly investigate said particular council to enable a more differentiated discussion.

In order to achieve this objective, the remainder of this thesis will proceed as follows: for a start it introduces the SVR. The second section presents the theoretical argument. Here, the literature on the two-way influence of expert knowledge on policymaking will be discussed, before elucidating the effects of (economic) crises on (economic) advisory councils. After describing the German case, the research design and data collections, this thesis analyzes to what extent the influence of the SVR on German economic policymaking has changed and explores whether possible effects can be attributed to the GFC. The final section will then discuss the results, attempt to explain the findings and draw broader implications.

1.3. The Council of Interest

Ever since its creation, the SVR, also known as the council of wise economists (*Die Wirtschaftsweisen*), has been a steady expert council that consists of five independent economic experts. Expertise refers to either holding teaching position with a (public) university or being an employee of an economic or social science institute (König, 2015). As a result of their engagement with science, experts possess “academic knowledge – that is, abstract knowledge generated within academic disciplines and acquired through extensive training” (Christensen, 2018: 293). The members of the SVR are appointed on an honorary basis for five years by the federal president in consultation with the ministers of economics and finance and the chancellor prior to a nomination by the parliament. State and labor unions are also involved, they each have a veto right (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). The SVR is an external, publicly funded, by law fully independent advisory body and not subordinated to the government (Bundesministerium für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz, 1963: §1). It is to be distinguished from *ad hoc* commissions – spontaneous reports are only produced on special occasions such as events of acute or impending undesirable economic developments (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008). The tasks of the SVR, the appointment of its members as well as its relation to the government are regulated in a separate law (*SachvRatG*). This law specifies the SVR’s statutory task to provide the government with a periodic assessment of the current economic situation in

Germany based on the magic square (*Magisches Viereck*) (Bundesministerium für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz, 1963: §2). These reports are considered their primary resource of social power within the realm of their “functional authority” (Schluchter, 1987: 297, as cited in Haas, 1992: 18). Every year the report is presented to the government during a formal handover. Hereafter, the government has to review and respond to the report as part of the annual governmental economic report (*Jahreswirtschaftsbericht*) produced by the ministry of finance within eight weeks (Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz 1963: §6). As a non-strategic actor the SVR provides decision makers with objective information, analyses, evidence and policy options for dealing with both current and future challenges and/or potential crises (König, 2015). While the SVR is not authorized to make specific recommendations for particular economic and social policies (Bundesministerium für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz, 1963: § 2), it may propose policy options and evidence to the recipients of the report (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008; see also König, 2015). This directive, however, has been disregarded repeatedly (see for example Weingart & Lentsch, 2008; Schmidt et al., 2015; Bachmann, 2020). Therefore, going forward, this thesis will treat policy options and recommendations as equivalent.

2. Theoretical Discussion

Decisionmakers in advanced democratic bureaucracies depend on expert knowledge to provide them with expertise to address (novel) policy problems. Moreover, various scholars argue that times of crisis reinforce this dependence as a result of increased uncertainty. The focus of this thesis is the influence of scientific expertise in the context of policy advisory systems during times of crisis. Following this focus, the applied concepts evolve around organizational actors supplying policymakers with advice to legitimize policies within the knowledge regime. Following this line of thought, this thesis will attempt to provide insight into the following theoretical question:

To what extent did a financial crisis modulate the influence of expert knowledge in a knowledge regime?

The theoretical argument that answers this question is composed of four successive sections. First, this thesis will discuss the literature on the theory of two-way policy-influence (Dür, 2008a, 2008b; Campbell & Pedersen, 2014, 2015), according to which policies are influenced directly by the council as a product of its interaction and involvement with political elites and indirectly through the media. In terms of direct influence, the literature (Weiss, 1979; Weiss, Murphy & Birkeland, 2005; Boswell, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) points to different functions of expert knowledge in the policymaking process.

Hereinafter, the theoretical discussion will draw on the literature on knowledge regimes (Hall & Soskice, 2001; Campbell & Pedersen, 2015) and to what extent knowledge regimes influence policymaking by focusing on the relevance of institutionalized scientific advisory bodies in coordinated market economies. Particular attention has been paid to economic expertise as a more legitimate source of reasoning (Hirschman & Popp Berman, 2014; Fourcade, Ollion & Algan, 2015; Christensen, 2017, 2018).

The context of the GFC will be outlined by a discussion of the potentially diverging effects of crises on the policy-influence of expert knowledge (Cambell & Pedersen, 2014; Hernando, Pautz & Stone, 2018). Being primarily an economic crisis, the GFC compromised the superiority of economists (Fourcade, Ollion & Algan, 2015) and helped to produce an epistemic crisis in the field of economic expertise (Veit, Husted & Bach, 2014).

The aforementioned concepts will be explained in the following sections by first discussing the theory of two-way influence of expert knowledge on policymaking.

2.1. The Two-Way Influence of Expert Knowledge on Policymaking

Including expert knowledge into the policymaking process builds on the intention to improve informed and efficient decision-making by policymakers. It follows logically that in order for policy decisions to be influenced, experts have to actually exert *influence* during the decision-making process in the first place. Existing scholarly work has identified “location-based” models in the field of policy advisory systems (Craft & Howlett, 2012: 81) where different levels of policy influence are associated with the location of advisors internal and external to the government. Here, political elites possess decision-making authority and consume knowledge produced by experts inside or outside the government. Moreover, scholars point to different channels of influence (Dür, 2008b; Campbell & Pedersen, 2014): external institutionalized expert advisory councils can directly influence the policymaker through an involvement in the decision-making process; and indirectly through the media. This thesis follows this distinction and will first discuss the theoretical implications of direct influence.

2.1.1. Direct influence

Following Dür (2008a, 2008b) and Campbell and Pedersen (2014), *direct influence* refers to an actor’s ability to shape a decision according to their preferences. Thus, direct influence refers to the actual exertion of influence by directly approaching the policymaker in order to contribute to the sense-making capacity of expert knowledge (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). This implies that the distributor of knowledge (partially) integrates their preferences into the political outcome (Dür, 2008b). Consequently, direct influence can be associated with all experts who are granted “face time with politicians” (Campbell and Pedersen, 2014: 281) as this provides the expert with direct access to the policymaking process. Yet, this does not imply that expert knowledge will substantially influence the content of future policies (Dür, 2008a). Following this line of thought, the following sections will outline the different functions of knowledge in the political process.

2.1.2. Knowledge Utilization in the Political Process

The utilization of expert knowledge in advanced democratic policymaking is an “extraordinarily complex phenomenon” (Weiss, 1979: 427), as expert knowledge fulfills a wide array of functions and whose success is dependent on the intention of the recipient (policymaker). This intention defines whether (or not) experts will be able to substantially influence the content of particular policies (Weiss, 1979). Consequently, different research-policy structures (Scholten & van Nispen, 2015) will result in different political functions of

knowledge utilization. As the state of influence of expert knowledge on policymaking is the main focus of this thesis, the following section will briefly outline said different functions.

2.1.3. *The Instrumental and Symbolic Function of Knowledge in Policymaking*

It is evident, that to a certain extent any policy was once developed based on some kind of idea (Schmidt, 2008). Taking this one step further, it is assumed that bureaucratic organizations utilize expert knowledge in a multiplicity of ways that can be mapped around the concept of legitimacy. Governments attempt to preserve both internal and external legitimacy through the application of expert knowledge. While internal legitimacy is critical for political elites in order to maintain their ability to work, external legitimacy is required to maintain their political position of power by not disappointing voters (Boswell, 2008). Securing both sources of legitimacy contributes to a more stable environment: behavior and decisions become more predictable and uncertainty is reduced (Boswell, 2008).

Weber (1922) distinguishes between the instrumental-legitimizing and symbolic-legitimizing functions of expert knowledge in bureaucracies. Accordingly, scientific knowledge can influence policymaking instrumentally to guide political elites; Weingart (1999) refers to this as the *scientification of politics*. Symbolic influence, on the other hand, as in the *politicization of science* (Weingart, 1999), refers to expert knowledge being used to justify given preferences, legitimize existing decisions and/or conceptually influence them and as such construct political ideas in the long-run (Hirschman & Popp Berman, 2014).

2.1.4. The Instrumental Function of Expert Knowledge

The *instrumental rationale* behind scientific advice in policymaking is evident: policymakers need information when dealing with complex issues and are expected to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the globalized world. Following a Weberian portrayal, the scope of rationality within bureaucracies is what characterizes them (Weber, 1922; Boswell, 2008). The concern to base decision-making on “sound [...] and empirical reasoning” (Boswell, 2008: 1) logically follows. Expert knowledge thus enables governments to adequately deliver their goals.

According to Weiss (1979), social science evidence can instrumentally influence the policymaking process in two ways: either the evidence precedes the policy problem and is incorporated in order to choose the best policy option. Or the “commissioning of social science research [...] to fill the knowledge gap”- policymakers have “specific informational needs to clarify their choice” (p. 428). As a result particular recommendations will, if they have an

“immediate applicability” to the policy problem, be used to “make a difference in plans, programs and policies” (Weiss, 1979: 428). Consequently, when expert knowledge serves as a base for (scheduled) policies in the short run, “instrumental use is in play” (Weiss, Murphy-Graham, Birkeland, 2005: 13). Furthermore, the instrumental function of expert knowledge can also influence policymaking in more subtle way – that is giving policymakers “a backdrop of ideas and orientations” (Weiss, 1979: 430). In short, the instrumental function of expert knowledge in the policymaking process refers to decision makers drawing on scientific research to improve their policy output.

2.1.5. The Symbolic Function of Expert Knowledge

Yet, the Weberian account also includes a more *symbolic function* of expert advice. Here, expert knowledge is intended to legitimize particular decisions and/or bureaucratic domination (Boswell, 2008). Although the current discourse on the relevance of expert knowledge in the political process has resulted in practices like *evidence-based-* or *data-driven-policymaking*, existing evidence points to policymakers using “scientific research for symbolic rather than instrumental purposes” (Scholten & van Nispen, 2015: 2).

Expert knowledge can be ascribed with two different symbolic functions in the policymaking process. The first of which is the symbolic-legitimizing function. This refers to the application of expert knowledge in the policymaking process as a signal of the “organization’s conformity to rational rules, underpinning the authority of policy-makers and their decisions” (Boswell, 2008: 1) “irrespective of its conclusions” (Weiss, 1979: 430). The symbolic-legitimizing function is relevant in situations where politicians “have taken a stand that research is not likely to shake” (Weiss, 1979: 429) and will only utilize information that will not contradict their opinion. The portrayal of the legitimizing-symbolic function of expert knowledge is in line with Peter Weingart (2019) – only knowledge that corresponds to the prevailing political conviction will influence pending policy decisions. Consequently, expert knowledge legitimizes policies and confers “epistemic authority” to decisionmakers (Herbst, 2003: 484).

However, the symbolic account of expert knowledge in the policymaking process also includes a symbolic-substantiating function (Boswell, 2008). As such, expert knowledge can confer authority to policy propositions, particularly in situations where decisionmakers are meeting opposition with regard to their policy priorities: policymakers “may find it expedient to draw on additional resources to lend credibility to their views” (Boswell, 2008: 5). Consequently, it is not the “content of the finding that is invoked but the sheer fact that research

is being done” (Weiss, 1979: 429). As such, expert knowledge substantiates particular policy propositions and lends authority to organizational preferences in political conflict situations.

2.1.6. Indirect Influence

Scholars (Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006) argue, that the scientific evidence provided by experts directly influences policymaking by either being instrumentally or symbolically utilized. However, they emphasize the relevance of *indirect influence* in the policymaking process and suggest that “taking access as a proxy for influence [...] is likely to lead to erroneous results” (Dür, 2008a: 1221). This thesis follows this line of thought and conceptualizes *indirect influence* as the influence that is exerted through the fourth estate which “serves as the central channel of communication between the public and politics” (Boswell, 2009a: 99) and thus determines what issues become politically important and as such indirectly influence policymakers (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 286).

The media is important for policymaking in three ways: for one, it determines the political agenda. Beyond that, politicians use the media to communicate their positions to the public and three, the media, as “the very fabric of the public sphere itself” (Herbst, 2003: 489) informs and channels the public debate. Consequently, media coverage determines the “resonance of political claims” (Boswell, 2009a: 90), as policymakers will devote more attention to issues and actors whose authority was enhanced through media coverage (Herbst, 2003).

The quality media enables a basic provision of information to the public in order to facilitate the formation of opinions. Ideas and orientations are communicated through the press, who “is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about“ (Cohen 2015: 13). Hence, the mass media confers authority to organizational actors and contributes to a “creation of [...] hierarchy” (Herbst, 2003: 482) by legitimizing their status. The influence of expert councils thus depends on the extent to which they get attention for their knowledge. Hirschmann and Popp Berman (2014) consider the indirect influence of expertise on policymaking to be “likely as important as the direct role” (p. 780): the spread of ideas produced by scientific policy advisors is said to reshape the agendas of policymakers and voters. As such, it is supposed help those without a respective background understand the complex issues of everyday (economic) politics.

However, the media also follows certain criteria, that contribute to a simplified and thus biased coverage of expert’s influence (Boswell, 2009a). This may be for different reasons: as the media has to present issues in “compressed and simplified form” (Boswell, 2009a: 100; see

also Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995) it is conceivable that they skip relevant facts in order to remain within a fixed narrative. As a result, the media will ignore pieces of information that either do not fit their specific narrative (Boswell, 2009a) or refrain from covering incidents that are not of sensational and/or emotive value and thus fail to fulfill the *newsworthy criterion* (Boswell, 2009a).

Another preoccupation of the media is the “disclosure of scandal” (Boswell, 2009: 100) – that is a series of actions or events that involve “certain kinds of transgressions which become known to others and [...] elicit a public response” (Thompson, 2000: 13 as cited in Boswell, 2009a: 100). By reporting a scandal, the media generates general attention and a feeling of concern and indignation that is shared among the public (Luhmann, 2017). As the media covers possible failures of the state and the institutions affiliated with the state, policy advisory councils are report-worthy entities not only during times of crisis.

Furthermore, policymakers employ a different use of expert knowledge than the media: while politicians prioritize the influence of expertise depending on whether voters can be politically mobilized, the media will use expert knowledge depending on its potential to expose a scandal (Boswell, 2009a). Certain issues and *buzzwords* will attract more readers which eventually will increase the sales of newspapers and ad space (Bowlin, 2020).

2.2. Knowledge Regimes and Policy Advisory Actors

The extent to which individual policy research organizations influence policymaking is a “notoriously tricky business” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 278). The exercising of influence is a multifaceted endeavor and various matters can affect the development of a policy. This includes but is not limited to different ideas, analyses, recommendations and ideas coming from various research institutions, universities, think tanks and lobby organizations (Scholten & van Nispen, 2015). Personal preferences and public sentiments, electoral cycles, thereto relating political horizons and framing of politicians are further confounding factors and difficult to assess – the policymaking process is considered to be a “garbage can with all sorts of things tossed in that may influence outcomes” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 279). Yet, knowledge producing actors have a considerable policy influence as they help policymakers to “make sense of the policy problems they confront” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2015: 680).

All “sense-making” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 3) institutionalized bodies that produce knowledge by generating data, recommendations and conducting research that contribute to a differentiated solution-finding process of policy problems are categorized under the concept of *knowledge regimes* (Campbell & Pedersen, 2015). Decisionmakers depend on

organizational actors within knowledge regimes whenever they are confronted with issues whose solving requires knowledge they do not possess. Consequently, knowledge regimes are organizational fields in which knowledge producing entities enable informed decision-making by policymakers. Taking this concept one step further, Landry, Lamari and Amara (2003) argue that scientific advice has a remarkable influence on policymaking within knowledge regimes. Independent research agencies that provide the government with useable knowledge “represent a distinct organizational solution to integrate scientific expertise into the government apparatus” (Veit, Husted & Bach, 2014: 90). As a consequence, government agencies make informed decisions based on scholarly research “to help eliminate inefficient uses of resources or wrong decisions” (Landry, Lamari & Amara, 2003: 192). Institutionalized policy research organizations are intended to contribute to a more effective and fact-based policy-making process in order to solve national (economic) problems (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 2).

2.2.1. Institutionalized Scientific Advisory Bodies

Following Campbell and Pedersen (2014) there are *four different organizational actors* within most knowledge regimes: scholarly research organizations, advocacy organizations, party research organizations/foundations and state research organizations. These actors differ in terms of funding and their public contract resulting from their affiliation with the government.

While scholarly research organizations are publicly funded and do not pursue research based on the government’s requirements, institutionalized research units always follow a similar mission – namely educating the civil society and the government on more general matters. Advocacy organizations are per usual privately funded and follow a partisan brief. Their main mission is to influence the public debate by framing the ideological climate. Party research organizations or foundations serve as sources of expertise for entities affiliated with the respective party or interest group. Lastly, state research organizations are organizational actors within the knowledge regime that serve particular governmental interests and are affiliated with certain ministries in order to advise branches of the government on specific matters.

The issues that per usual generate the most far-reaching public debate evolve around economic topics (Seethraman, 2019). As such, economic expert advice is particularly relevant in the policy realm. Hence, the following section will provide insight into the field of economic policy advice.

2.3. Economic Policy Advice

„But apart from this contemporary mood, the ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.“ (Keynes, 1936: 340f.)

The profession of trained economists has always worked on recommendations regarding policy making (Pitlik, 2001: 1). The progress and rise of complex methods and models for analysis have enabled a sophisticated forecasting which determine contemporary politics (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013). These developments “both permitted and demanded the employment of elaborate systems of technical support” to enable analyses that were then translated into policy options and particularly called for the “recruitment of economists” as policy advisers to “say what was needed and when” (Markoff & Montecinos, 1993: 43). As a result, economics is considered the most influential and relevant social science when it comes to policymaking (Hirschmann & Popp Berman, 2014; see also Fourcade, Ollion & Algan, 2015).⁵

Policy prescription based on economic expertise derives from the presence of market failures (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013), which create opportunities for the state to intervene by introducing (well-designed) policies and hence increase welfare (Varian, 2011). State interventions for most parts do not directly intervene with economic choices within the private sector but rather rely on the market mechanisms to contribute to the achievement of welfare-enhancing economic goals (Christensen, 2017: 6). As a result of globalization, economic affairs and matters have become central to political life – economic uncertainty has turned into anxiety “which confers great power on those who [...] possess the knowledge to dispel anxiety” (Markoff & Montecinos, 1993: 41).

Scholars point to different factors mediating the influence of economic experts on policymaking (Hirschmann & Popp Berman, 2014). As compared to other social scientists, economists are able to organize political interests and as such possess professional authority and “a general social wisdom” (Markoff & Montecinos, 1993: 58). This refers to the ability of economists who are faithful to their discipline to capture the different nuances of the world (Rodrik, 2015) and to ensure a continuous boost in economic performance and thus prosperity and growth (Christensen, 2018). However, as economic expert knowledge is rarely dramatic or

⁵ It shall be noted that this might not apply to the Covid-19-Crisis.

scandalous (Boukes & Vliegenthart, 2017), “it would be anticipated that the media would limit the coverage of research, and attach little weight to expert knowledge” (Boswell, 2009a: 100). Furthermore, scholars point to the ability of economics to shape the cognitive infrastructure of policymaking (Hirschmann & Popp Berman, 2014: 781; see also Christensen, 2018). Economic concepts and their implications have had a powerful impact on the political climate (see for example Fair, 2018): decisions and policies are made and designed based on economic rationales and “politics is largely absent from the scene” (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013: 173). Lastly, the influence of economists depends on the political level that their recommendations are targeting (Hirschmann & Popp Berman, 2014). While experts can influence policies that have technical implications (i.e. which policy instrument can alleviate a particular issue best), paradigmatic questions which will shape the nature of future policies (i.e. ordo-liberalism, social market economy) “are more likely to be determined by electoral politics” (Hirschmann & Popp Berman, 2014: 783). As the field of economics is able to find answers to problems that affect society as a whole, economics and economic expertise have not only had great power over policymaking in the past (see for example Campbell-Verduyn, 2017; Christensen, 2017) but have also proven indispensable for the informed public (Cassel & Baumann, 2019: 286). This particular relevance of economics is reflected in the advisory council landscape in Germany, where the majority of policy advising research institutions has an economic affiliation (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). It follows that economic expert advice plays a distinct role in the German knowledge regime. The latter will be outlined in the following sections by first discussing the particularities of *liberal* and *coordinated market economies*.

2.3.1. Liberal and Coordinated Market Economies

Knowledge regimes, namely the way in which knowledge influences policymaking, differ across the globe and have received scholarly attention within the field of comparative political economy. Here, Hall and Soskice (2001) have distinguished two different tendencies: liberal market economies (hereinafter referred to as LME) and coordinated market economies (hereinafter referred to as CME). While LMEs, such as the United States of America, rely on the market to structure economic activity, in CMEs, such as Germany, the political economy depends on non-market relationships where economic activity and related equilibria are prevalently resulting from strategic interaction among actors and networks. As a consequence, the knowledge regimes and decision-making processes follow different rules (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). In LMEs economic coordination is driven by competition while CMEs follow institutionally based cooperation. As a result, decision-making in CMEs evolves around a

variety of stakeholders with the objective to achieve a broad consensus among the parties involved.

As this thesis investigates the influence of one particular institutionalized advisory council in Germany, the characteristics of the *German knowledge regime* as a coordinated market economy are relevant to the theoretical discussion and will be outlined in the following section.

2.3.2. Germany as a Coordinated Market Economy

Including external expertise in the political decision-making process is not a particularly new development in *Germany*. It can be traced back to proposals from the administrative reformers Karl vom Stein and Karl-August von Hardenberg back in the early 19th century (Siefken, 2019). They recommended that ministries fill the *expert void* to include technical and scientific expertise from universities as well as professional practice in the preparatory stage of more complex decisions (Unkelbach 2001: 8). Today expert committees exist in all policy areas in Germany (Siefken, 2019).

The *German knowledge regime* is built around corporatism where the state is dependent on organizational actors within the knowledge regime to solve national policy problems (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). As a result, Germany is dominated by a variety of publicly funded independent scholarly research institutes (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014; see also Siefken, 2019). These knowledge producing entities are particularly relevant “when political consensus is fragile” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 13) and are the most influential organizations with regard to policy influence: German policymakers will mainly rely on scholarly research units than on the other types of aforementioned knowledge producing actors. As a consequence, in order to keep their renowned status, knowledge producing entities in Germany “are proud of their scholarly reputations which they do not want to jeopardize by excessive partisan advocacy” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 13). Taking this one step further, objective knowledge that was produced by an independent organizational actor within the knowledge regime is assumed to be superior to knowledge that has a partisan mission (Siefken, 2019).

As a CME Germany tends to have a more consensus-oriented knowledge regime which results in recommendations being more moderate and less innovative (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008; see also Campbell & Pedersen, 2014, 2015). Policymakers will thus request the input from a variety of advisory councils. As a result, the knowledge produced by particular expert councils becomes less important in a national comparison. This consensus-driven demand is reinforced by the tendency of the German government to form coalition governments and a

“mixed-member proportional representation electoral system” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 131). Furthermore, the two biggest established parties, the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland* and the *Christlich Demokratische Union* who have, over the past, always been part of the parliament, either as part of the government or the opposition, will “prevent much movement away from the center” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2015: 132). For this reason, in order to keep their influential status, organizational actors within the knowledge regime tend to avoid major conflicts and hence comply with the requirement to be moderate. Knowledge producing entities who have been an integral part of the German knowledge regime for a considerable period of time and who have followed a static public contract are thus less likely to have an irritative effect on either the policy cycle or the public debate (Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995; see also Weingart & Lentsch, 2008).

Existing scholarly work (Haas, 1992; Markoff & Montecinos, 1993; Hirschmann & Popp Berman, 2014; Christensen 2017) states that the influence of economists is modulated by the instability of the political situation. In order to analyze the possible change in influence of an institutionalized expert council in Germany, the following section will first investigate the theory that explains the effects on *expert knowledge during times of crises* in order to pave the way for a discussion of the effects of economic crises on economic expertise within the policymaking process.

2.4. Expert knowledge in times of crises

Times of crisis have (potentially) diverging effects on the influence of expert knowledge. As crises evolve, they produce increased ambiguity, uncertainty and consequently a concatenation of unfamiliar problems that call for unfamiliar policy prescriptions (Campbell & Pedersen, 2015: 680). As policy advice is built on the rationale to inform policy decisions and decrease uncertainty, it logically follows that policymakers need scientific-based knowledge to alleviate uncertainty and ambiguity when being confronted with novel policy problems particularly during times of crisis (Campbell & Pedersen, 2015: 3). Building on that, as times of crisis result in openings of windows of opportunity for policy change and agenda-setting they increase the demand for expert knowledge (Scholten & van Nispen, 2017).

At the same time however, crises can affect the level of scrutiny that expert advice has to cope with. Accordingly crises are hypothesized to have two potential consequences on the sense-making capacity of expert knowledge in the policymaking process (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). To begin with, the process to make sense of a problem can be prolonged as the decisionmaker requires more information. This may point to a change in the level of

influence of expert knowledge and a necessity to involve more parties into the decision making process to reach a consensus. Here, times of crises, might not leave epistemic authority unscathed. This can be attributed to the presumption that expert councils as epistemic communities “identify and interpret problems within existing frameworks” (Haas, 1992: 28) and according to protocols that have proven valid in the past. Thus, problems will be managed by using procedures that have worked in analogous cases. As a result, novel, significant problems that do not have a precedent, are neither recognized nor addressed as such.

Furthermore, existing scholarly work proposes a change to the sense-making apparatus as a second potential effect. Here the crisis is perceived as a *threshold effect* which may be able to “trigger major change” (Pierson & Skocpol, 2002: 9) with regard to the knowledge regime and the influence of involved organizational actors. Yet, a crisis per se does not ensure that policymakers are capable of changing *path dependent* structures within knowledge regimes all at once as “causal processes involve chains with several links which require some work to work themselves out” (Pierson & Skocpol, 2002: 9).

Building on these diverging effects of crises on (the demand for) expert knowledge, the following section will discuss and specify the effects of an *economic crisis on economic expertise*.

2.4.1. From Economic Superiority to an Epistemic Crisis of Economic Expertise

“It’s not just that they missed it, they positively denied that it would happen.” (Franklin Allen as cited in Stillman, 2009).

This thesis investigates a potential change in the influence of an institutionalized economic advisory council in Germany after the GFC. Given that the GFC was an economic crisis, existing theory suggests two diverging effects: on the one hand the demand for economic expertise to curb the negative effects of the crisis and resulting novel policy problems increased. On the other hand, the GFC severely eroded the trust towards economic expertise as economists failed to predict and are even assumed to have contributed to the crisis in the first place (Colander et al., 2009).

The established policy influence of economics is linked to the economic cycle: economists are assumed to be more influential during times of economic distress (see for example Markoff & Montecinos, 1993; Cambell & Pedersen, 2014; Hirschmann & Popp Berman, 2014; Christensen, 2017). This can be explained by the fact that economic advisers possess knowledge that is assumed to be socially relevant and “more sought-after” (Fourcade,

Ollion & Algan, 2015: 110) during times of economic distress. Furthermore, economic expert knowledge is considered to be more newsworthy and relevant to the public debate during times of crisis (Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995).

Yet, the GFC caught economists “asleep at the switch” (Campbell-Verduyn, 2017: 70). “During the golden years, [...] economists came to believe that markets were inherently stable” (Krugman, 2009): Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz found that the probability of an economic shock was substantially smaller than 0.0002% and that the likelihood of companies defaulting was effectively zero (Stiglitz, Orszag & Orszag, 2002). The SVR recommended, two years before their 2008/09 report, to limit further regulations on hedge funds (SVR, 2006). This shows, that despite sophisticated forecasting methods,, the likelihoods of global catastrophic events were significantly underestimated. Economists failed to predict and explain the GFC (see for example Krugman, 2009; Colander et al., 2009; Tett, 2013). Economic advisers “proved conducive to the creation of a false sense of security and over-confidence in the explanatory power and predictive potential of the models and tools” (Morgan, 2015: 522-3). This failure was even acknowledged among economists, as for instance the president of a famous German semi-public research institution (The German Institute for economic research, *Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung*) recommended that all research institutes stop forecasting in order to avoid further embarrassment (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 338). The GFC revealed that prevailing economic models (i.e. the neoclassical market paradigm) only depicted an economy isolated from reality; phenomena difficult to quantify or explain were simply excluded from the models (Marglin, 2009).

As such the GFC revealed the gap between the academic discipline of economics and its limited applicability to real world economic problems (Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik, n.d.; Stillmann, 2009). As a result, the GFC has contributed to an *epistemic crisis* in the field of economic expertise (Hernando, Pautz & Stone, 2018) and “the power of economists has become the subject of public debate like never before” (Christensen, 2017: 176). Knowledge that was previously assumed to be socially correct was unsettled and suddenly had to cope with growing skepticism and blame for having contributed, not predicted and prolonged a major financial crisis (Christensen, 2017). Yet, at the same time, neither economists nor policymakers have expressed a need for change in the field of economic policy advice (Christensen, 2017). Without adjusting the standards or boundary conditions, economic expert advice is, as it always has, supposed to ensure that a self-inflicted event resembling the GFC will not happen again (Hernando, Pautz & Stone, 2018).

Despite the negative effects the GFC had on the perception of economic expertise, leading economists still incorporated findings from other fields into their discipline (see for example Mankiw, 2010; Morgan, 2015). However, the majority of economists “persisted in analyzing the economy as if old rules still apply” (Campbell-Verduyn, 2017: 115) and critics compared mainstream economists to a cat stuck in a tree, reluctant to move.

Building on the aforementioned theoretical discussion, the following section will derive the hypotheses that this thesis is going to investigate. However, prior to that, the theoretical argument will be summarized.

2.5. Hypotheses

Democratic policymaking can be influenced by expert knowledge via two different channels: directly through face time with politicians and resultant connections or indirectly through the public debate in the media. The concept of direct influence comprises different functions of knowledge utilization that differ based on the intention of the policymaker. Here, expert advice can legitimize policies either for instrumental or symbolic purposes. While the instrumental function suggests that political elites need external information to deal with pressing policy problems, the symbolic account refers to authority being underpinned because research is being done.

However, direct influence does not always reach the general public. As a result, the indirect influence of experts on policymaking takes place through the fourth estate, and determines the political agenda by defining which issues become politically important. Issues and organizational actors that were awarded with a higher media coverage are assumed to be more newsworthy. Consequently, democracies are substantially influenced through the public debate.

Bureaucracies rely and depend on experts as organizational actors within knowledge regimes to make sense of problems and help a more efficient utilization of information. Experts hence contribute to the implementation of welfare- and efficiency-enhancing policies.

Economic expert advice is particularly relevant to policymaking as it addresses the issues with the highest societal relevance of the social sciences. Particularly during times of crisis, when ambiguity and uncertainty increase, expert knowledge gains importance as more windows to make sense of problems open. However, crises do not leave expert knowledge unharmed, as they change the sense making capacity of experts by prolonging the sense-making process and/or changing the sense-making apparatus itself. In coordinated market economies, like Germany for example, this implies that the consensus-orientation is intensified and that

further parties are involved in the policymaking process. As a result the field of economic expertise experienced and contributed to an epistemic crisis by failing to forecast the GFC.

Building on this theoretical argument, this thesis argues that said epistemic crisis also affected the policy influence of the SVR. Consequently the aim of this investigation is to assess whether both direct and indirect influence of the SVR changed as a result of the GFC. The first two hypotheses will focus on direct influence and will be formulated as:

H1: The degree to which the German government reflected the advice of the SVR report in their economic policymaking was decreased after the GFC.

H2: The mode of utilization of the government concerning knowledge produced by the SVR reports was less instrumental and more symbolic after the GFC than before.

As has been elaborated, the media is important in lending authority to experts. Hence the third hypothesis will focus on the indirect influence and will be formulated as:

H3: The degree to which the highest-reach German print newspapers covered the SVR and their annual report decreased after the GFC.

3. Research Design

Existing scholarly work in the field of analyzing the influence of experts in economic policymaking has predominantly focused on the use of interview data (see Campbell & Pedersen 2014, 2015). But as this investigation is interested in the actual influence that might have changed as a product of the GFC a different strategy was chosen that will be described in the following section.

3.1. Case Selection and Choice of Research Design

“The policymaking process is like a garbage can with all sorts of things tossed in that may influence outcomes. Disentangling all this is difficult.” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 279). This thesis indeed aspires to disentangle the influence of one particular German expert council in the context of a severe economic crisis. As has been mentioned, the SVR is the most prominent economic advisory council in the German knowledge regime and has been advising the government ever since its creation in 1963. Thus it is in many ways an ordinary example of an organizational actor within the German knowledge regime that has been demonstrably influential with regard to economic policy making over the past in the German knowledge regime (see for example Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995; König, 2015). Given the fact that the German government is by law required to review the SVR’s annual reports, this constellation is suited to empirically assess the extent to which the SVR has influenced German economic policymaking and whether this has changed as a result of the GFC. Although the financial crisis did not start on January 1, 2009, the 2009 reports are defined as the starting point, as reports issued before were not concerned with the crisis (SVR, 2007; Deutscher Bundestag, 2008).

The reasoning for selecting a small-N quantitative design is three-fold: First, it enables an assessment on whether the SVR’s influence on German economic policy-making has (or has not) changed as a result of the GFC. Second, it allows for an investigation of the extent to which the crisis has changed the status quo of the policy relevance of the SVR in Germany. And lastly, a time-span of eleven years limits selection bias and does not go beyond the scope of this thesis.

3.2. Research Design

As has been discussed, the theoretical foundation of this research assumes that expert advice is relevant to the formulation of policies. Although some have argued that “the specific influence of policy advice is extremely difficult to assess” (Veit, Husted & Bach, 2014: 100), this thesis proposes a novel way of examining influence of expert knowledge on policymaking. A particular model – i.e. the *Knott and Wildavsky scale* (Landry, Lamari & Amara, 2003) that

conceptualizes the utilization of knowledge at different stages – however misses the target, since this thesis assumes that all reports by the SVR are potentially influential and thus fulfill all respective stages of knowledge utilization but one:

1.	Reception	fulfilled	The handing over is a media-event (Bundesministerium für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz, 1963).
2.	Cognition	fulfilled	The government must review the entire report (König, 2015).
3.	Discussion	fulfilled	During the drafting the SVR consults with the recipients (König, 2015).
4.	Reference	fulfilled	The government reacts to the report within their own report (König, 2015)
5.	Effort	fulfilled	Fulfilled, idem (König, 2015).
6.	Influence	ambiguous	

Table 1: Own representation adapted from Landry, Lamari & Amara, 2003; see also: Knott & Wildavsky, 1980.

This *research design* is based on the claim that decisions are not made “on a single piece of research, but on a series of research converging toward one direction” (Landry, Lamari & Amara, 2003: 193). Thus, in order to assess whether the GFC changed the direct and indirect influence of expert knowledge produced by the SVR, data will be gathered by comparing the extent to which the German government endorsed the recommendations from the annual reports from the SVR, and evaluating to what extent the media covered the reports. Existing research refers to knowledge utilization as a process, not a discrete event (Landry, Lamari & Amara, 2003: 193). To this end, data five years prior and five years after the crisis will be collected. Thus the analysis will cover a timespan from 2004 to 2014 – eleven years in total. It shall be pointed out that the chosen variables are not capable of perfectly measuring the policy influence of the SVR. As this dissertation will not control for further possible channels of influence it might wrongfully attribute influence or lack thereof to the SVR. However the indicators are close to the theoretical implications and allow for a longitudinal comparison over time.

As the SVR’s reports have a statutory task to always cover the same topics, they are inter-comparable and enable the measurement of influence (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008). The government report contains an executive summary that entails a review of the entire SVR report as well as an overview of all scheduled policies, therefore the *influence* of expert advice on particular policies is traceable (König, 2015).

3.3. A Two-Step Analysis

This investigation comprises an *analysis consisting of two-steps* in order to assess to what extent the exerted influence of the SVR on German economic policymaking changed as a result of the GFC. In the course of the first step two dependent variables will be analyzed that are hypothesized to have changed as a result of the GFC (independent variable). Following the conceptualization, direct policy-influence refers to the extent to which the German government followed the policy recommendations by the SVR and indirect influence to the extent of media coverage of the SVR. Building on these findings, the second analysis will then provide a more nuanced assessment of the direct influence exerted by the SVR, which is hypothesized to have become less instrumental and more symbolic following the GFC. The following section will outline the operationalizations and data collections of the dependent and independent variables included in both analyses.

3.4. Dependent Variables

The *dependent variables* in this analysis will be operationalized following the aforementioned concept of two-way influence of organizational actors within knowledge regimes. Thus the first dependent variable (hereinafter referred to as DV_1) will measure the exerted direct influence of the SVR report on economic policymaking in Germany.

The second dependent variable will comprise a more nuanced version of the first dependent variable and measure the level of exerted influence on German economic policymaking.

As pointed out by Landry, Lamari and Amara (2003: 193; see also Veit, Husted & Bach, 2014) a validated measure of influence does not yet exist. Even though the German government reviews the SVR report, existing scholarly work suggests that “[t]he mere reception of knowledge by the potential user does not imply its use” (Landry, Lamari and Amara, 2003: 195), hence this thesis developed a simple measure of influence which will be operationalized as the *proportionate numeric overlaps between the SVR’s annual report and the government report*. Here, overlap is defined as the proportion of policies that adapted SVR recommendations one, relative to the number of SVR recommendations and two, relative to the number of scheduled government policies overall.

3.4.1. Dependent Variable 1 – Direct Influence: Measuring the Degree of Preference Attainment

Dür (2008b) identified three methods to *measure the influence* of interest groups: process-tracing, assessing the attributed influence or gauging the degree of preference attainment. Even if the SVR is not an interest group (Joos, 2014), Dür's (2008b) methodological distinction ideally matches with the focus of this research. Consequently his strategy is applied to a different organizational actor within the policymaking process.

Here, the method of *gauging the degree of preference attainment of the SVR on policymaking* was chosen. This method compares the outcomes of political processes, in this case particular policies from the annual economic report (*Jahreswirtschaftsbericht*) with the ideal points of actors – in this case the annual report published by the SVR and measures the extent to which the preferences of the SVR were attained by examining both reports. Influence is operationalized and thus measured as the percentual overlap of government policies to the ideal points presented by the SVR. A recommendation that has been utilized by the government will be operationalized depending on whether it can be found in both reports, hence a binary scheme was applied, where:

- 1 = a government policy endorsed a recommendation of the SVR report
- 0 = no policy reflects a recommendation of the SVR report

As a next step all implemented recommendations will be summed and then divided by two different numbers:

1. By the number of SVR recommendations issued in order to assess the extent to which the government implemented the advice. This measure will provide insight to the political applicability of the report as a whole. For example, if in one year the SVR recommends the implementation of 20 different policies and the government pursued 11, the percentual overlap amounts to $\frac{11}{20} = 55\%$.
2. By the number of government policies issued in order to assess the level of interaction. This number will indicate to what extent the government report was based on the SVR report. For example, if in one year the government implemented 150 policies out of which 10 reflect SVR recommendations the percentual overlap amounts to $\frac{10}{150} = 6.67\%$.

As (Dür, 2008b) points out, two problems arise when researchers try to quantify the degree of influence: first, the problem of multidimensionality of topics makes it difficult to detect a successful exertion of influence. As previously mentioned, the reports by the SVR as well as the structure of the economic reports from the German government follow similar

structures every year which facilitates comparability and traceability of possible influence. Policies are organized by policy-field and thus will only be multidimensional where the SVR intended them to be (König, 2015).

Secondly, Dür (2008b) points out, that per usual the most reliable results will be produced by combining different methods within one study. Hence, in an ideal world corroborating the empirical findings with interviews conducted with all involved parties – i.e. the SVR, the ministry of economic affairs and the editorial departments and/or journalists from the selected newspapers – would be desirable. However, interviews were not conducted for three reasons:

1. Due to the Covid-19-Crisis, the SVR is busy advising the government and issuing reports that reflect and consider the constant changes. Although they initially were open to being interviewed, given the development of the crisis, interviews were no longer possible as the SVR stopped replying.
2. According to Dür (2008b), “interviewees may consciously or unconsciously misrepresent a situation” (p. 563) and therefore provide biased information.
3. Campbell and Pedersen (2014: 297) follow this logic and point to a similar problem, that arises from policymakers not giving credit where credit is due.

3.4.1.1. Data Collection Dependent Variable 1 – Direct Influence

The annual reports published by the SVR are based on the economic goals of the magic square that are enshrined in the German stability law (Bundesministerium für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz, 1967): monetary stability, employment, the foreign trade balance and sustainable economic growth. The static rationale behind the reports makes them inter-comparable, as they follow a similar structure. Therefore, it is possible to gather equivalent data for every year of this analysis. The SVR reports to be analyzed comprise 500-600 pages, of which 20-150 pages are allotted to the recommendations/summary section. This analysis only covers explicit recommendations issued by the SVR that are part of the executive summaries; recommendations that logically follow from the analyses will not be considered. In addition to the explicit recommendations, the SVR report also includes an analysis of the respective overall economic situation and its foreseeable development. However, as this variable measures direct policy influence, digressions that explain and justify particular recommendations constitute an intermediary step in the exertion of influence and will not be included. Furthermore prevailing perceptions suggest that as a result from the sophistication of the reports (Campbell & Pedersen,

2015) the executive summary is the only section of the SVR report that is understood by *all* recipients (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008).

Every annual report produced by the SVR has a corresponding report issued by the government (*Jahreswirtschaftsbericht*). As the government is by law obligated to review the entire report, the *Jahreswirtschaftsbericht*, among other things, includes a response to the SVR's findings and suggestions (König, 2015).

To identify the recommendations of the Council of Experts, the individual topics which can be derived from the SVR reports served as orientation guides. In order to identify the particular recommendations the following strategy was applied: for example, if a subsection is entitled *Labor market policy: further reducing base unemployment* then the following statement will be considered a recommendation to reduce unemployment. Recommendations/policy options were then summarized in individual documents for each year. Hereafter, policy options or shortcomings of existing policies were compared to the policies that can be found in the government report. Whenever a policy particularly reflected something that was also to be found in the SVR report, it was highlighted within the report. I.e. if the SVR recommended a policy option to promote early-childhood education, and the government adopted a policy that endorsed exactly that, it was considered an exertion of influence. However, if i.e. the SVR advised for an improvement of the conditions for competition in general, and the government adopted a policy to deregulate the monopoly for long-distance bus services, this was not considered an exertion of influence. This strategy was applied to avoid wrongfully attributing influence to the SVR. Everything in the government report that refers to a change of the current law will be considered a single policy, even if it involves policies that were passed within a single legislative package. The government policies are summarized in boxes (*Kästen*) for the years 2004 and 2005; starting in 2006 the policy outlook in the appendix of the report provides insight to what policies are scheduled for the respective year. If the SVR pointed to two options regarding a particular issue, they will be considered two recommendations and the implementation of either will be considered a successful exertion of influence. Implementations of past reports will only be considered if the government explicitly sourced the respective SVR report. In general, this strategy will prevent a double-counting of implemented policies.

To assess the influence of the recommendations made by the SVR and whether the government reacted to the SVR's signals, the government's responses to the recommendations in the annual economic reports will be evaluated in a similar fashion as the SVR report. The fact that the government sources the SVR report (they refer to it as *JG*) functions as a counter-

security-agent as sections that were influenced but not recognized as such still are included in the analysis.

3.4.2. Dependent Variable 2 – Assessing The Level of Direct Influence

The *second dependent variable* will, instead of measuring the overlap numerically, assess the level of exerted influence and thus provide a more nuanced answer to the research question. Consequently only reports from years where the SVR actually influenced government decisions (overlaps < 0) qualify.

Policy options or shortcomings of existing policies were summarized and then compared to the policies that can be found in the government report. Here, the exerted influence will be operationalized by using an ordinal scale, where:

- Level of influence = 3: similar wording in both reports, meaning the SVR's report had **high influence** on policymaking (see also Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 292). Similar wording was assessed on either the government directly quoting the SVR or word searches within both reports that entailed similar results.
- Level of influence = 2: the policy is based on an idea from the SVR report but was subject to minor adjustments. Hence the SVR had a **moderate influence**. Moderate influence was assessed whenever the government policy reflected an idea from the SVR report.
- Level of influence = 1: **no influence**, meaning the government did not comment on the SVR's proposal. However, even if outcomes are not (perfectly) aligned with the SVR's preferences, this does not mean that they were not influential. It "may simply be that it [...] was influential in the sense that it avoided an even worse outcome" (Dür, 2008: 561). No influence was exerted whenever the government implemented a policy that was not based on an idea from the SVR report; in numerical words: the difference between all 'SVR-related' (*influence* > 1) policies and all other policies that can be found in the government report.
- Level of influence = 0: The SVR advised against something and the government pursued it, thus the SVR's recommendations **were ignored**.

The data was collected following the schematic example of the operationalization of the DV_1, and sections within the government report were highlighted in different colors.⁶ After highlighting each report the frequencies of either color were counted and summarized.

⁶ Green refers to influence = 3, blue/purple refers to influence = 2, yellow/no color refers to influence = 1, pink refers to influence = 0.

3.4.3. Dependent Variable 3 – Indirect Influence: Measuring Newsworthiness

The *third dependent variable* is assigned to media coverage. Following the theory of indirect influence, the extent to which the media confers authority to experts in the policymaking process is determined by the amount of coverage they (experts) receive (Herbst, 2003). Following this conceptualization the media coverage of the reports constitutes the indirect influence of expert knowledge in advisory processes.

3.4.3.1. Data Collection Dependent Variable 3 – Indirect Influence

The coverage from the highest-reach non-tabloid supra-regional daily print newspaper *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Weidenbach, 2020) as well as the highest-reach supra-regional weekly print newspaper *Die Zeit* (Schröder, 2020) will be quantified to measure indirect influence. While *Die Zeit* is a weekly newspaper, *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* is a daily newspaper and thus will in absolute numbers publish more articles. Both correspond the *quality-press-criterion* (Barranco & Wisler, 1999): they have a wide circulation and are politically moderate and reputable. However, both publications predominantly have a liberal-intellectual audience (Die Zeitungen im Medienland Deutschland, 2012). Thus there is likely to be an overlap among the readership of the two selected newspapers. Nevertheless, in an effort to remain as random as possible, this thesis only includes the two aforementioned publications. Media bias will not be a major confounding issue, as, even if newspapers change their political orientation over time, the political bias should be constant and changes in the discursive structure should still be observable (Leifeld, 2013). Media coverage will be quantified by searching the online newspaper archives manually, as neither *factiva* nor any other renowned media database was able to provide results prior to 2008. Given that in 2004 online journalism was not as relevant to the media landscape as it is today (Merz, 2017), this variable will not measure the extent to which the SVR was covered in the online media.

Data on the media coverage in *Die Zeit* was gathered proceeding in the following manner: first the website of the *Die Zeit* archive was visited, then all weekly editions that were published within the search period (November - March) were reviewed. Here, all articles from the business/economics and politics sections of the newspaper were selected (in German *Wirtschaft* refers to both); other sections were excluded due to their more normative journalistic style and rather implicitly than explicitly made arguments (Leifeld, 2013). Then a keyword search for the words: *Sachverständigenrat* and *Wirtschaftsweisen* (their colloquial description) was conducted within the articles. For articles to be counted a mentioning of either *Sachverständigenrat* or *Wirtschaftsweisen* was required. The search of articles was limited to

twelve weeks after the SVR report has been published. The SVR report is issued during the second week of November and the government report is published two months after the SVR report in January, all articles from November first up until March first were included. This time span was selected in order to limit a confounding bias resulting from the influence exerted through ad hoc reports or reports from other advisory councils. For the sake of completeness and transparency a list kept track of all articles, including their title, year, author and link to the archive to make sure that the results are replicable.⁷

Unlike *Die Zeit*, *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* has an online archive (<https://archiv.szarchiv.de>) that enables a simple keyword search. Thus in order to gather data on *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* the online archive was accessed and the search was limited to the following parameters (example 2004 report):

- Time span: 01.11.03 – 01.03.04
- Sources: SZ Süddeutsche Zeitung
- Department: economics, business (in German ‘Wirtschaft’ refers to both), politics
- All articles
- All dossiers

Next, two separate keyword searches for *Sachverständigenrat* and *Wirtschaftsweisen* were conducted.

Media coverage was operationalized following the newsworthiness-theorem according to which a higher number of articles reflects a more newsworthy content and thus a higher indirect influence of expert knowledge on policymaking. Newspaper articles were not analyzed in a qualitative manner, i.e. the tone of the coverage, as the requirement to code every article in order to fulfill the replicability criterion (Toshkov, 2019) is not feasible within the scope of this research. It would however be a promising extension.

Summing up, media coverage is operationalized as:

- A count of articles published per timespan per newspaper (November-March) in absolute numbers

As a result this investigation will be able to analyze the extent to which the SVR was part of the public discourse and if the media coverage changed as a result of the GFC.

3.5. Independent Variable

As has been elaborated, this thesis will assess the extent to which the GFC changed the influence of the SVR on German economic policymaking. Thus, in order to investigate said

⁷ This list is provided in the appendix.

extent, the state of the economy with respect to the crisis of 2008/09 (i.e., before crisis, during crisis or after crisis) is the *explanatory (independent) variable* that changed and is hypothesized to account for a change in the relevance of the SVR's annual report to policymaking.

3.6. First-Step Analysis

Based on the presented variables, in the *first step of this analysis* the size of the proportion of policies that reflect the SVR's recommendations in relation to the number of policy options proposed by the SVR and the media coverage will be investigated. Consequently the first stage will provide a general answer to the research question:

To what extent did the influence of the German Council of Economic Experts decrease after the Financial Crisis in 2008/09?

In order to provide insight, the change of influence in the first analysis will be measured by comparing the post-crisis influences adjusted for the pre-crisis averages (2004 – 2008) and thereby adjusting for the fact that they were not the same initially (Angrist & Pischke, 2015). If i.e. the direct influence was 35% in 2009 and the pre-crisis average amounts to 43%, the adjusted post-crisis average for 2009 will be computed as $35\% - 43\% = -8\%$.

3.7. Second Step Analysis

The *second step of the analysis* will paint a more nuanced picture of the possible change and will provide evidence for the second hypothesis. It will thus be investigated whether the level of influence has become less instrumental and more symbolic as a result of the GFC. Based on the theoretical concepts, less instrumental and thus more symbolic refers to fewer policies endorsing SVR knowledge: when expert knowledge *informs* policy-decisions, said knowledge will be reflected in a policy. If however the existence and prestige of an expert council *legitimize* policies without influencing them, the council rather serves a symbolic function. Again, the operationalization of a changed level of influence will be corrected for the pre-crisis average. If i.e. the average number of policies where the level of influence = 3 before the crisis amounted to 7 and in 2009 the number of policies was 5, then the adjusted post-crisis average will be computed as $5 - 7 = -2$.

In general, the following documents for each year will be analyzed:

- a) The annual SVR report
- b) The annual governmental economic report
- c) The extent of the media coverage of the SVR during the time both reports were published. This analysis will include both the highest-reach daily and weekly German newspapers.⁸

All of the aforementioned documents to be analyzed are accessible online and therefore make the results replicable (Toshkov, 2019).

⁸ A detailed document list is provided in the appendix.

4. Quantitative Analysis

As mentioned, this thesis will conduct one analysis that is comprised of two separate steps to enable a detailed and nuanced understanding of the SVR and its influence on German economic policymaking in the context of the GFC. In a first step this thesis will take a look at the overall influence (both direct and indirect), and whether it has changed as a result of the GFC. Then, in a second step, this thesis will investigate whether the level of influence has changed, by following Campbell and Pedersen (2014) who hypothesize, that a potential effect of times of crisis is a change to the sense-making capacity of expert knowledge.

4.1 Data

After having compiled the data, all indicators were summarized in a table. The data includes a time span of eleven years (2004 – 2014); for each year the following information was gathered:

- Year of both reports
- Number of articles published in *Die Zeit*
- Number of articles published in *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung*
- Number of recommendations in SVR report
- Number of policies scheduled by government
- Number of policies reflecting SVR knowledge
- Percentual overlap_1: the number of SVR policies that were implemented relatively to the total number of recommendations issued
- Percentual overlap_2: the number of SVR reflecting policies as a proportion of all policies scheduled
- Number of policies where Influence = 3
- Number of policies where Influence = 2
- Number of policies where Influence = 1
- Number of policies where Influence = 0

The indicators are summarized in the subsequent Tables 2 and 6.

Year	Σ articles Die Zeit	Σ articles Süddeutsche	Σ recommendations SVR	Σ of policies by government	Σ policies reflecting SVR idea	overlap_1	overlap_2
2004	7	25	30	93	15	50,00%	16,13%
2005	18	65	41	110	23	56,10%	20,91%
2006	6	35	48	115	15	31,25%	13,04%
2007	2	29	42	150	20	47,62%	13,33%
2008	3	17	25	176	8	32,00%	4,55%
2009	4	21	32	149	14	43,75%	9,40%
2010	3	17	49	130	20	40,82%	15,38%
2011	3	25	30	104	9	30,00%	8,65%
2012	1	28	53	117	10	18,87%	8,55%
2013	2	25	22	132	8	36,36%	6,06%
2014	7	23	34	114	12	35,29%	10,53%

Table 2: Collected Data included in the analysis. Own depiction.

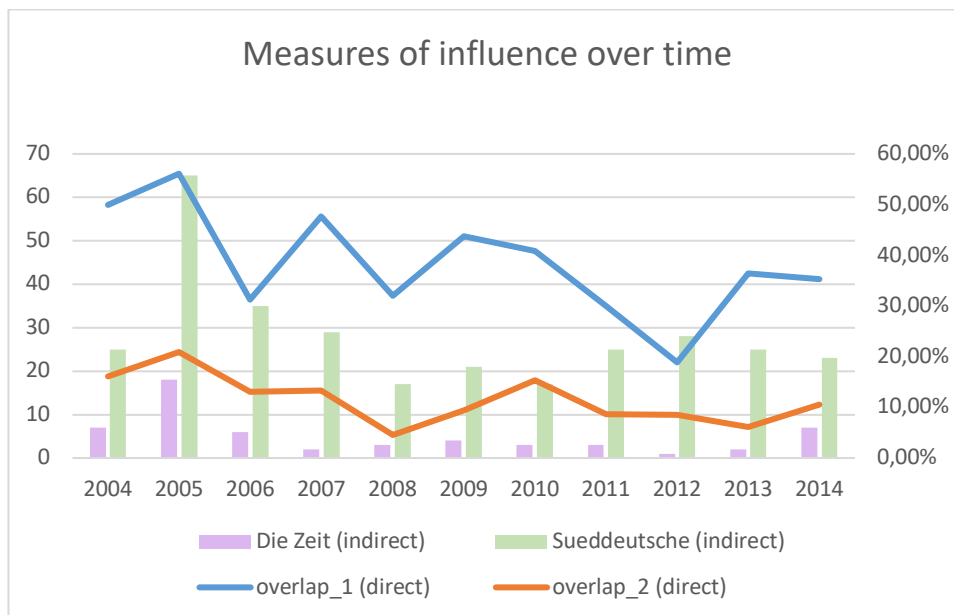


Figure 1: All measures of influence over time. Own depiction.

4.2. First-Step Analysis

As Table 2 and Figure 1 indicate, over the entire analyzed period of time (2004 - 2014), all measures of influence, direct and indirect, have a downward trend. In other words: there are only two occasions where the report's performance (overlap_1) increased while the relevance of the SVR to economic policymaking (overlap_2) decreased or vice versa: 2010 and 2013.

Furthermore, on two occasions the media coverage in *Die Zeit* differs from the media coverage in *Die Süddeutsche* – 2008 and 2012. Apart from these four occasions, from an aggregate perspective, the data is broadly consistent with aforementioned recent perceptions of the SVR (Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995; Bachmann, 2020): the SVR has, over time, become less influential with regard to economic policymaking in Germany.

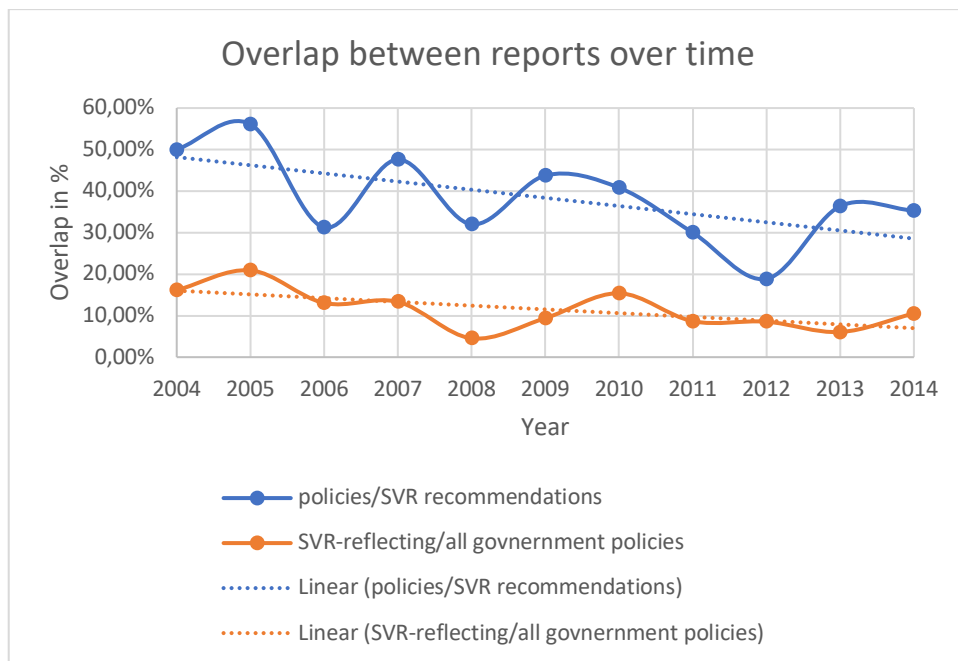


Figure 2: Direct influence over time (2004-2014). Own depiction

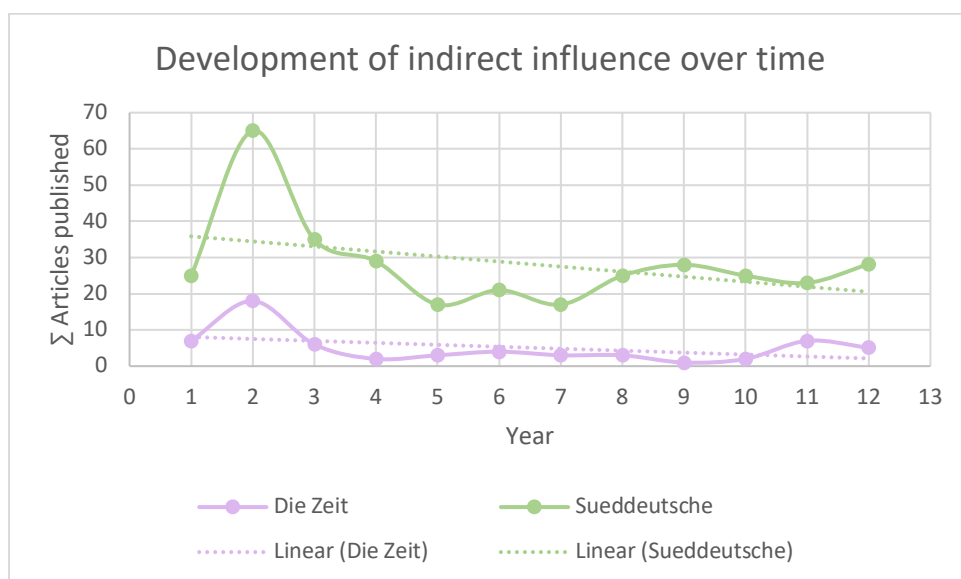


Figure 3: Indirect influence over time (2004-2014). Own depiction.

Figure 2 and 3 visualize the data from Table 2 and support this observation. Both graphs include the developments of the different indicators by accurately displaying the data on the solid lines and the deduced trends on the dotted lines.

Following the operationalization of direct influence, Figure 1 displays both measures of influence: the blue line shows the development of the implementation of SVR recommendations as compared to all SVR recommendations issued in the respective year, thus the political performance of the annual SVR report. It shows how much relevance was attributed to the SVR recommendations by the government. The orange line indicates the level of interaction, as it depicts the share of policies that reflect SVR knowledge relative to all other government policies during the respective years. It thus depicts the significance of the SVR report to German economic policymaking. In general both lines follow a downward trend indicated by the dotted line of the respective indicator. However, at times the indicators go in opposite directions. For instance the developments from 2009 to 2010, 2012 to 2013 and 2013 to 2014 work in opposite directions. Yet, albeit these occasional increases a downward trend is observable for both measures of direct influence. The data provides evidence that the direct influence of the SVR on German economic policymaking has decreased between 2004 and 2014.

Figure 2 depicts the observed change in media coverage following the operationalization of indirect influence. The higher number of articles that were published in *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* can be attributed to aforementioned different frequencies of publication: *Die Zeit* is a weekly newspaper, while *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* is a daily newspaper. Yet both follow a downward trend. After a sharp increase of published articles in 2005, both numbers of published articles decreased to a rather steady level from 2006 to 2014. When computing the differences between 2004 and 2014 however, in absolute numbers the indirect influence decreased by -2 with regard to *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the number of articles in *Die Zeit* remained constant ($= 0$). This means, that while the number of articles, and thus the indirect influence has decreased over time, it is not obvious whether this observed negative trend can be attributed to the GFC.

The decrease of influence (direct and indirect) visualized in Figures 2 and 3 is also corroborated when calculating both the averages of the percentual overlaps (direct influence) as well as the number of articles published (indirect influence) for the time span during the respective state of the economy:

1. The entire time span (2004 – 2014)
2. Before the GFC (2004 – 2008)
3. After the GFC (2010 – 2014)

The results are summarized in the Tables 3 and 4 and visualized in the subsequent Figures 4 and 5.

Indicator	Ø 2004-2014	Ø 2004 - 2008	Ø 2010 - 2014
overlap_1	38,37%	43%	32,27%
overlap_2	11,50%	13,59%	9,83%

Table 3: Changes in percentual overlap. Own depiction.

Newspaper	Ø 2004 - 2014	Ø 2004 - 2008 (before crisis)	Ø 2010 - 2014 (after crisis)
Die Zeit	5	7	34
Die Süddeutsche	28	3	24

Table 4: Changes in media coverage. Own depiction.

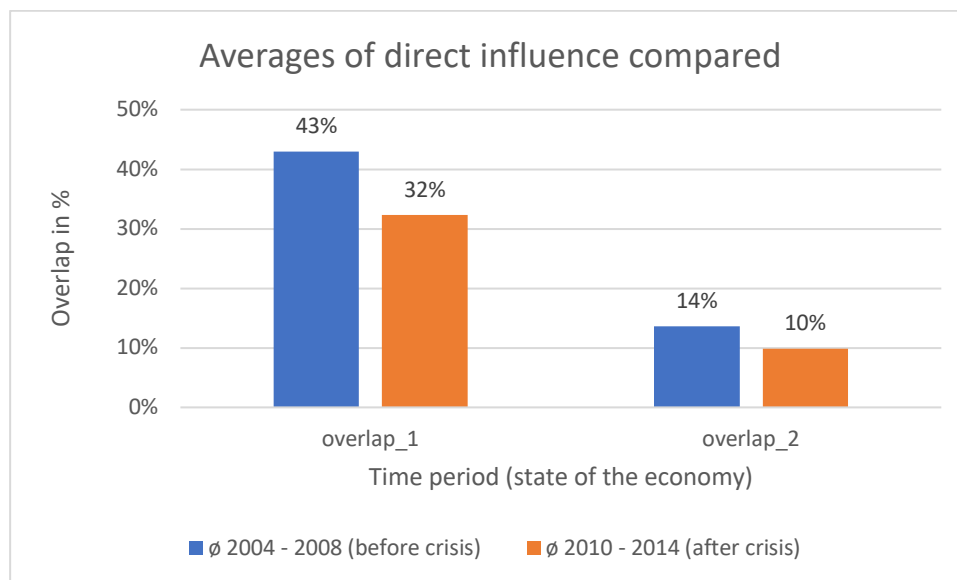


Figure 4: Averages of direct influence measures before and after the crisis. Own depiction.

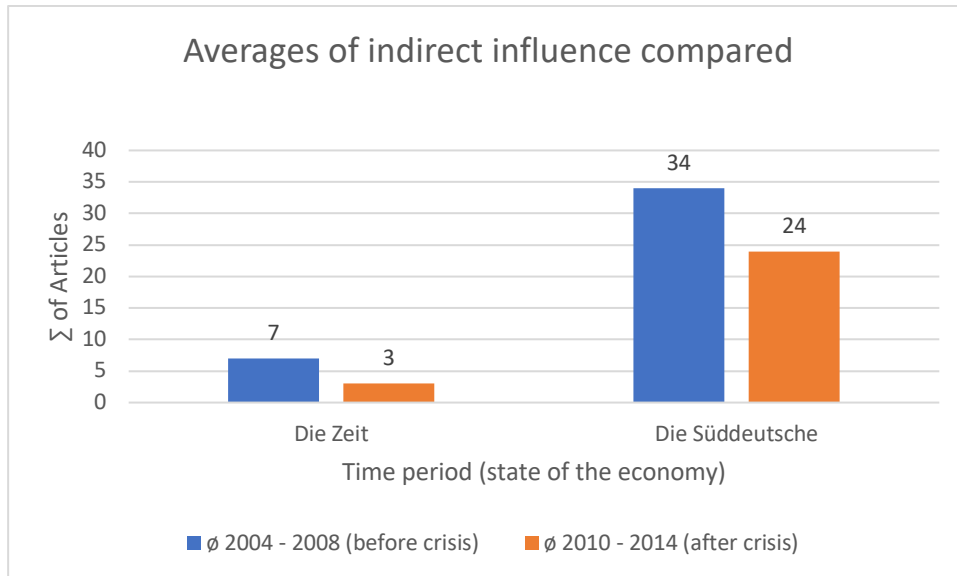


Figure 5: Averages of indirect influence measures before and after the crisis. Own depiction.

Consequently, this investigation confirms the prevailing scholarly opinion, that the influence of the SVR has decreased over time when analyzing all indicators of direct and indirect policy influence.

However, neither the tables nor the graphs indicate whether this downward trend was modulated or set off as a result of the GFC in 2008/09 and thus only provide a limited answer to the research question and the hypotheses. If anything, the data provides ambiguous evidence: on the one hand side, the overall trends indicate that the influence of the SVR on German economic policymaking and the public debate has decreased during the observed time period. Yet, at the same time, according to the data, both direct and indirect influence increased from 2008 to 2009. These increases are highlighted by the red lines in the subsequent Figures 6 and 7. Furthermore, as the orange line indicates, the share of SVR reflecting policies as compared to all economic government policies, continued to increase in 2010 while the performance of the SVR report decreased after 2009. This observation is indicated by the grey line in Figure 6.

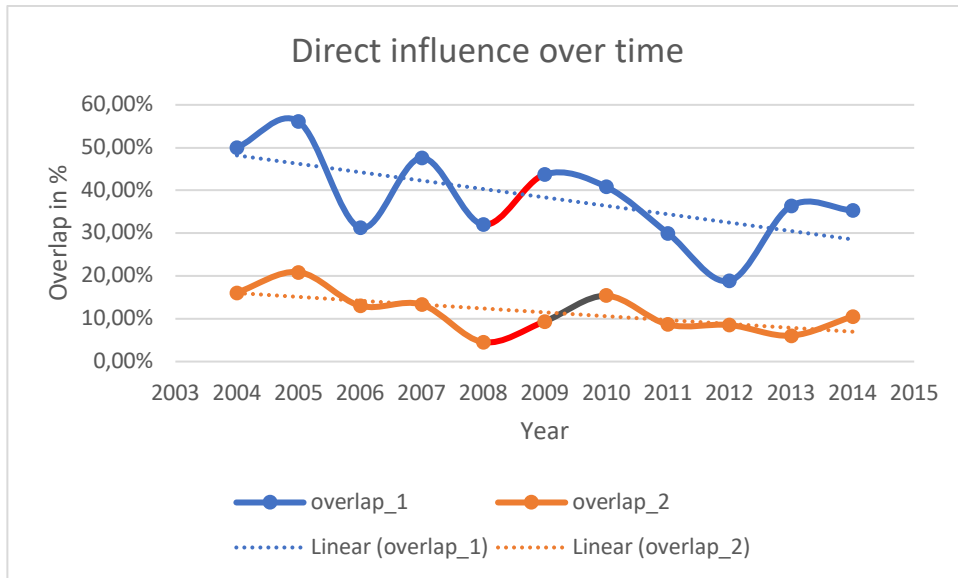


Figure 6: Development of SVR's direct influence over time. Own depiction.

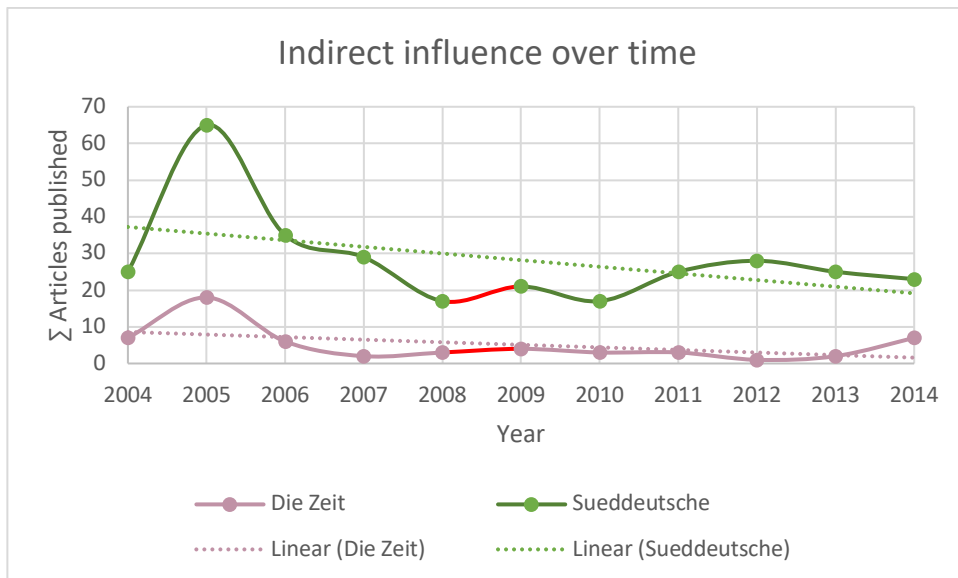


Figure 7: Development of media coverage over time. Own depiction.

Thus, in order to assess, whether and if so to what extent the GFC acted as a turning point and changed the influence of the SVR on German economic policymaking, the next step of this analysis is going to take a more detailed look at the changes of influence after the GFC.

In order to assess these changes and their direction, the post-crisis measures will be adjusted for the pre-crisis average in the following manner: first, the average of the measures of influence for the time periods before the GFC (2004 – 2008) will be computed. Second, the actual indicators of influence from 2004 to 2014 will be adjusted for the previously computed pre-crisis-average. As a third and final step this analysis will then assess the relative change rate after the GFC and consider it in relation to the average rate before the crisis. This method will reveal whether during the respective year the influence in-, decreased or remained constant

as compared to the pre-crisis-average. The same procedure will be repeated for media coverage (indirect influence). The results are summarized in the subsequent Tables 5 and 6.

Year	overlap_1	overlap_2	∂ _overlap_1	∂ _overlap_2
2004	50,00%	16,13%	6,61%	2,54%
2005	56,10%	20,91%	12,70%	7,32%
2006	31,25%	13,04%	-12,14%	-0,55%
2007	47,62%	13,33%	4,23%	-0,26%
2008	32,00%	4,55%	-11,39%	-9,05%
2009	43,75%	9,40%	0,36%	-4,20%
2010	40,82%	15,38%	-2,58%	1,79%
2011	30,00%	8,65%	-13,39%	-4,94%
2012	18,87%	8,55%	-24,53%	-5,05%
2013	36,36%	6,06%	-7,03%	-7,53%
2014	35,29%	10,53%	-8,10%	-3,07%
pre crisis \emptyset	43,39%	13,59%	-	-

Table 5: Percentual overlaps compared to pre-crisis average Own depiction.

Year	Σ articles Die Zeit	Σ articles Süddeutsche	∂ Die Zeit	∂ Die Süddeutsche
2004	7	25	0	-9
2005	18	65	11	31
2006	6	35	-1	1
2007	2	29	-5	-5
2008	3	17	-4	-17
2009	4	21	-3	-13
2010	3	17	-4	-17
2011	3	25	-4	-9
2012	1	28	-6	-6
2013	2	25	-5	-9
2014	7	23	0	-11
pre crisis \emptyset	7	34	-	-

Table 6: Media coverage compared to pre-crisis average. Own depiction.

Following Figure 1, it is observable that the negative development of the overlaps between the reports (direct influence) was refreshed after the GFC in 2009. Both measures of direct influence relatively increase from 2008 to 2009 and show a positive effect as compared to the pre-crisis averages.

While the percentual overlap₁, the government's relative receptivity as compared to all SVR recommendations issued that year, increased from -11.36% to 0.36%, and thus became positive, the percentual overlap₂, as in the influence of the SVR report on the governmental report increased from -9.05% to -4.20% and hence remained negative. Nonetheless, an increased negative trend can be observed after 2009 for both measures of direct influence.

The media coverage does not point to an equipollent effect. According to the data media coverage in both included newspapers became relatively more in 2009: it increased from -4 to -3 in *Die Zeit* and from -17 to -13 in *Die Süddeutsche*. However the numbers indicate that albeit this increase after the GFC, the number of articles published in either newspaper fluctuates between somewhat constant negative levels after the GFC. While the measures of direct influence strongly fluctuate before the GFC, the average measures of indirect influence have remained negative ever since their spike in 2005. Consequently the data does not provide sufficient evidence to attribute the changes in media coverage (indirect influence) to the GFC.

Summing up, the conducted first step of this analysis indicates, that from an aggregate perspective, the direct influence of SVR recommendations decreased after the financial crisis and hence confirms the first hypothesis. Even if the percentual overlaps of direct influence have changed and as a matter of fact increased between 2008 and 2009, when considering all other years on an individual level relative to the pre-crisis average a downward trend is observable. The results for indirect influence on the other hand suggest that the only sustained change in the data can be observed after 2005. The findings thus refute the third hypothesis.

4.3. Second Step Analysis

Although the results from the first step of this investigation provided insight into the adverse effects of the GFC on the direct influence of the SVR on German economic policymaking, they do not enable a nuanced understanding on the extent to which the GFC affected the sense-making capacity of expert knowledge in large bureaucracies (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). As the institutional framework (*sense-making apparatus*) of the SVR was not changed as a result of the GFC (Rürup, 2018), it is valid to investigate the extent to which the level of influence of the SVR's annual report changed. Consequently, as a second step, this analysis will attempt to fill that gap by analyzing the different levels of influence that can be

attributed to the SVR. As has been explained in the research design, different levels of word similarity, idea conformity or ignorance were operationalized as different levels of policy-influence.

- Level of Influence = 3: Number of policies reflecting **high influence**
- Level of Influence = 2: Number of policies reflecting **moderate influence**
- Level of Influence = 1: Number of policies reflecting **no influence**
- Level of Influence = 0: Number of policies that **ignored SVR advice**

The data is summarized in the subsequent Table 7 and illustrated in Figure 7.

Year	Influence = 3	Influence = 2	Influence = 1	Influence = 0	Σ of policies
2004	10	5	75	3	93
2005	10	13	78	9	110
2006	7	8	96	4	115
2007	1	19	126	4	150
2008	4	4	168	2	178
2009	9	5	129	6	149
2010	4	16	106	2	128
2011	1	8	94	0	103
2012	1	9	107	0	117
2013	3	5	119	3	130
2014	3	9	101	1	114

Table 7: Different levels of influence as shares of total Σ of scheduled policies. Own depiction.

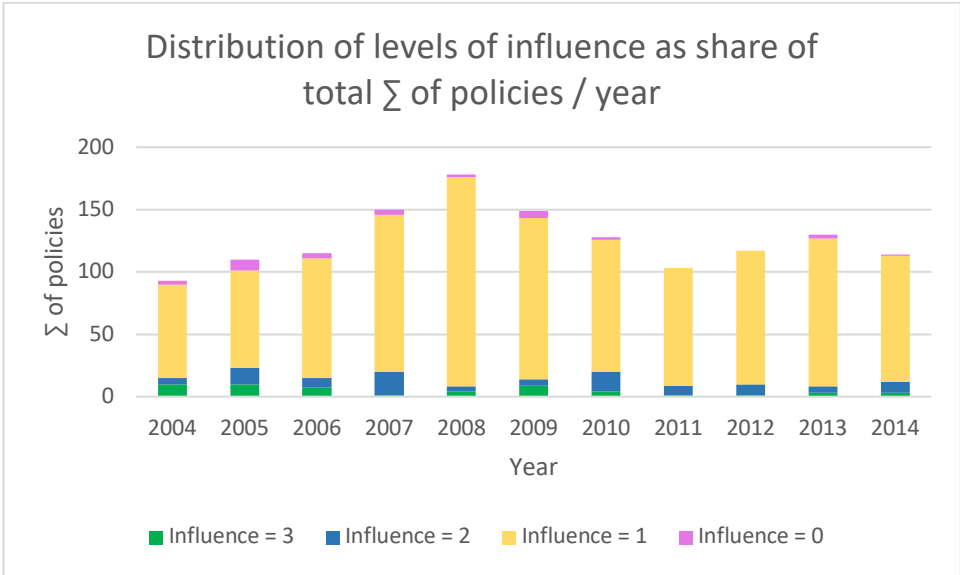


Figure 7: Distribution of modes of levels of influence as share of total Σ of scheduled government policies per year. Own depiction.

Table 7 summarizes the findings and Figure 7 visualizes them in a clustered bar chart. It is apparent at first sight, that the largest share throughout the entire analyzed time period can be attributed to a level of influence = 1, which is depicted as the yellow section of the respective bar and was operationalized as no influence of SVR expert knowledge in the German economic policymaking process in terms of endorsement of the recommendations. Thus the majority of policies that were passed between 2004-2014 was not explicitly influenced by the SVR report. Again, no detectable scheme can be identified that provides insight to a potentially changed level of influence. Following the method of the first analysis, next the data will be descriptively read by adjusting the levels of influence for the pre-crisis average of each category.

Year	∂ Influence = 3	∂ Influence = 2	∂ Influence = 1	∂ Influence = 0
2004	4	-5	-34	-1
2005	4	3	-31	-5
2006	1	-2	-11	0
2007	-5	9	17	-2
2008	-2	-6	59	2
2009	3	-5	20	-2
2010	-2	6	-3	-4
2011	-5	-2	-15	-4
2012	-5	-1	-2	-1
2013	-3	-5	10	-3
2014	-3	-1	-8	-3
pre crisis \bar{o}	6	10	109	4

Table 8: Compared levels of influence adjusted for pre-crisis average. Own depiction.

Table 8 summarizes the results and brings out the difficulty to identify a trend whether (or not) the level of influence has changed as a result of the GFC after 2009. This is visualized in the graphic representation of the data in Figure 8.

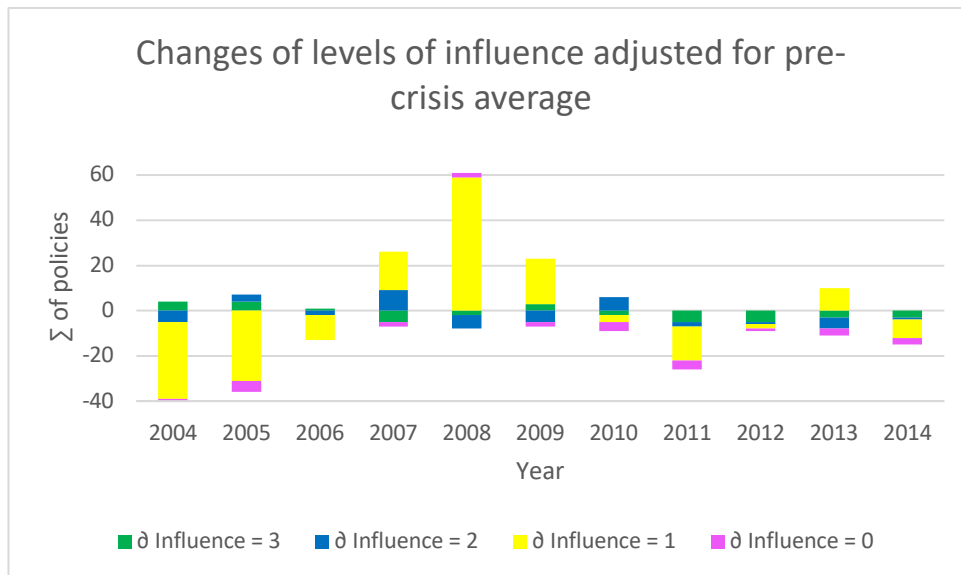


Figure 8: Changes in levels of influence adjusted for pre-crisis average. Own depiction.

Figure 8 depicts that all included influence categories (influence = [3, 2, 1, 0]) did not change to a detectable extent after the GFC in 2009. Although the number of policies that do not reflect SVR knowledge (Influence = 1, the yellow bar) spiked in 2008 and then decreased again, no similar trend is observable for the other categories.

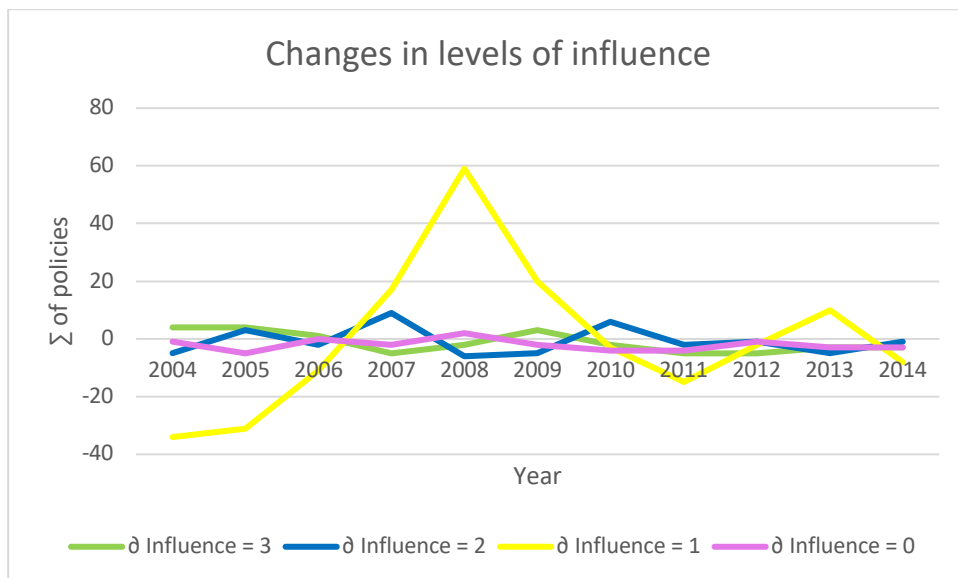


Figure 9: Changes in levels of influence adjusted for pre-crisis average. Own depiction.

Furthermore, as Figure 9 shows, only the yellow line (influence = 1) followed an observable negative trend after the GFC. However this negative trend was set off after the spike in 2008, and thus cannot be attributed to the GFC. Moreover, even if the number of policies that were not explicitly influenced by the SVR report decreased after 2008 and continued to do so in 2009, the data does not show a corresponding increase in any of the other categories. In

short, the data does not provide evidence whether the increased number of policies that was not influenced by SVR knowledge changed the performance of the other categories. Consequently the evidence is not sufficient to confirm the third hypothesis as the results neither indicate whether an instrumental function was prevailing before the crisis nor, whether the function of expert knowledge by the SVR can be attributed to a more symbolic function after the GFC. Consequently, based on the results, the third hypothesis is refuted.

All in all, the results of this investigation paint an ambiguous picture. The analysis from an aggregate perspective, which was conducted as a first step, and was aimed at providing a simple answer to the research question suggests that the direct influence of the SVR report on German economic policymaking has decreased. However, a downward development regarding the direct influence of the SVR already existed prior to the crisis, even if in 2008 things took a turn and direct influence increased. Nonetheless, the GFC has reinforced this downward development. The analysis thus confirms the first hypothesis according to which the direct influence of the SVR report has decreased after the GFC.

The second step of the analysis was aimed at enabling a more nuanced understanding of the observed change in direct influence. Followingly, the second hypothesis investigated whether the influence of the SVR became less instrumental and more symbolic as a result of the GFC. Here, the analysis yielded hardly any evidence; the only category that has detectably changed over the course of time was influence = 1 (policies that were not influenced by the SVR). Based on the data and evidence provided, the second hypothesis is refuted.

In terms of indirect influence the evidence paints a different picture. Although when comparing pre-crisis averages to post-crisis averages it seems as if after the GFC the number of articles published in the highest-reach German newspapers decreased; yet, as the analysis has shown, this development cannot be attributed to the GFC. When zooming in, no detectable change can be observed after 2008. Hence, the analysis refutes the third hypothesis – the indirect influence of the SVR report did not decrease after the GFC.

5. Discussion

Albeit the somewhat ambiguous results, the analysis suggests from an aggregate perspective that the direct influence of the SVR on German economic policymaking has decreased as a result of the GFC while the indirect influence did not change to a detectable extent. The following section will first discuss said findings and then point to the limitations of the research design, data collection and case selection.

5.1. The results and their implications

“One man’s loss is another man’s gain” (Tett, 2015: 218).

The aim of this thesis was to investigate whether the GFC changed the influence of the most renowned German institutionalized economic research council, the SVR, on economic policymaking in Germany. The hypotheses were built on the argument, that expert councils like the SVR are attributed with epistemic authority and thus possess a distinct policy influence. Decisionmakers who rely on expert knowledge builds on an instrumental function of expert knowledge and stems from the aspiration to utilize expert knowledge to enable a more efficient and welfare-enhancing policies. Yet, scholarly work also suggests that policymakers are prone to make use of expert knowledge for symbolic purposes (see for example van Nispen & Scholten, 2017). Consequently, both functions of expert knowledge influence policymaking, however in different ways. Moreover, this influence is assumed to take place on different stages: direct influence refers to experts being granted face time with politicians, while indirect influence takes effect through the media. Times of crises increase the demand for economic expertise in a knowledge regime: novel policy problems emerge as a result from increased uncertainty. Nonetheless the legitimacy of expertise, that of economists in particular, faced growing skepticism after the GFC. As such, the GFC triggered an epistemic crisis within the field of economic expertise. Building thereon, the hypotheses investigated whether and if so to what extent both the direct and indirect channels of influence were modulated as a result of the GFC.

H1 hypothesized that the GFC lowered the influence of the SVR’s annual report on German economic policymaking in general. Here, a simple binary scheme was applied where influence either was or was not exerted. Then the year-levels were adjusted for the pre-crisis effect and then the overall development assessed. The results provided by the analysis suggest that the influence was lowered and that, following the evidence, this development can indeed

be attributed to the GFC. This shows that the government drew consequences: from both the financial crisis, and what might have contributed to the crisis in the first place— after all it is the SVR’s purpose to help avoid crises of this sort.

Campbell and Pedersen (2014) suggest that times of economic distress either call for a change to the sense-making apparatus of expert knowledge or more involvement of knowledge producing entities in the policymaking process. Following this theory the evidence suggests that the financial crisis was not enough to “trigger major change” (Pierson & Skocpol, 2002: 703) with regard to the existence and purpose of the SVR as an organizational actor within the German knowledge regime: the SVR is an established body by means of legislation and as such independent by law. Consequently changing the body as a whole would be feasible, however difficult (Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, 1967) and efforts to explicitly change the SVR by law will consequently face “very high obstacles due to path dependencies” (Hederer, 2019: 369).

The underlying concept that is assumed to account for this effect suggests two things: one, the GFC resulted in an epistemic crisis of economic expert advice (Campbell-Verduyn, 2017; Hernando, Pautz & Stone, 2018), as renowned economic councils failed to forecast the crisis. And two, that the GFC resulted in a prolonged decision-making process with more knowledge-providing experts involved (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). This assumption was tested through the second hypothesis, which investigated whether the GFC resulted in a more symbolic function of SVR knowledge in the policymaking process. The results gently point to an effect that the GFC resulted in decisionmakers turning “to other, more responsive sources of policy advice” (Veit, Husted & Bach, 2014: 90) as the number of policies that were not influenced by the SVR increased over time. Following the evidence provided the only level of influence that did not remain somewhat constant after the GFC refers to policies that were subject to no influence (= 1), which depicted policies that were not explicitly endorsing SVR knowledge. Following this, the evidence suggests that decision makers refrained from changing the institutional framework of the SVR after the GFC and chose to extend the decision-making progress by utilizing more information from other knowledge producing entities. It could thus be speculated that the German government changed the policy influence of the SVR from instrumental to symbolic as a result of the GFC. Times of crisis therefore might produce conditions under which symbolic knowledge utilization might occur. However both the assessment and presumption must be treated with caution, as the other levels of influence did not change accordingly and the evidence provided does not confirm the third hypothesis.

Following the theory of two-way policy influence, the media is assumed to be equally important in influencing policymaking as are political elites. Existing scholarly work emphasizes the role of the media as a channel of communication between decision-makers and the general public. Followingly, the quality media is able to set the agenda, lend authority and influence policymaking to a remarkable extent. Consequently H3 hypothesized that the indirect influence of the SVR was lowered as a result of the GFC. While the results suggest that there is indeed a downward trend observable during the analyzed time period, no change can conclusively be attributed to the GFC. This could be attributed to the limitations regarding the data on media coverage: between 2004 and 2014 online journalism became more important than print; given the fast pace of information distribution it is thus conceivable that the SVR reports will rather be covered in online ad hoc coverage than in articles or essays in the print media. Another explanation could be the prevailing public perception before the crisis, according to which the SVR's influence had already declined regardless of the GFC and thus was assumed to be less newsworthy as compared to other political-economic content. The investigation also suggests that the prevailing opinion according to which their reports fail to be influential as a result of being recurrent medial experiences with repetitive results (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008) cannot be denied: even after the GFC, the SVR report did not adjust to the severe circumstances and did not provide the German government with precise policy options or analyses to curb the effects of the GFC. On the contrary – it kept recommending a harmonization of the health insurance market in Germany, a reform of the value added tax and efforts in terms of fiscal consolidation (SVR, 2009). These recommendations almost come off as ironic given the severity of the crisis and tell a story different from existing scholarly work according to which the GFC is perceived as an opportunity to either “adapt to new circumstances” and/or “claim their social necessity and political utility” (Hernando, Pautz & Stone, 2018: 126) for economic experts.

In addition to that, the vast number of research policy institutes in Germany might make it difficult for the media to cover each and every report to a similar extent; the biannually issued common diagnosis (*Gemeinschaftsdiagnose*), a joint economic report from several economic research institutes adversely affects this state. Given the static rationale behind the SVR report, the possible irritation effect of the report on the public has diminished over time (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008). Furthermore a few economists in Germany (Federal Bank of St. Louis, 2020; see also Bachmann, 2020) opine that the majority of the members in the SVR lacks fame, publicity and economic relevance. As a result of the extension of the public discourse through social media, more and more economists succeed in getting public attention for their statements

and positions (Federal Bank of St. Louis, 2020), removing further attention from the SVR (Bernau, 2019).

Another explanation might be the political topicality of the GFC and its implications for the general public. Even if it is the media's occupation to inform the public and reveal scandals, it is conceivable that other aspects of the crisis were more pressing and scandalous than the organizational actors that might have contributed to it. In addition to that the SVR was not the only renowned policy research institute that failed to forecast the GFC. Hence, even if the SVR is the most renowned amongst the German economic policy advisory councils, the media might have perceived not predicting the GFC as a collective failure of *all* economic advisory councils.

At the same time, scapegoating the dog-eat-dog-capitalistic methods that prevail in banks might have been more newsworthy than finding failure within the amorph structures of policy advice in Germany. Following this logic, exposing regulatory capture through lobby organizations will generate more public agitation than the static SVR and will contribute to an increase in the sale of newspapers. This has been exemplified by the Scrappage Premium (*Abwrackprämie*) in 2009 where the German government purposefully ignored the SVR's advice from the 2009 report. Here, the German government implemented a sector-specific measure to boost domestic demand by subsidizing the purchase of a new vehicle. Instead of implementing the SVR's advice, the German government followed the recommendations of the car-manufacturing industry. As a matter of fact, the Scrappage Premium was covered in the media, and characterized as *a prime example of absurdity during an election year* (Haase, 2009), or a *populist campaign gift by the government to secure votes* (Wenkel, 2009). It is thus inferable, that the media prefers to expose undemocratic power relations – that is the influence of lobby organizations, rather than reporting on the prosaic SVR. Consequently, extending the data by covering more years before the GFC and including the coverage of other expert councils and lobby organizations to have a reference level might provide interesting insights and details to further investigate H3.

The evidence provided for the first two hypotheses also suggests that the German knowledge regime follows the characteristics of CMEs. In general, the data does not display a sudden development that was set off after the GFC. This can be explained and attributed to the fact that Germany's knowledge regime is built around corporatist structures that, in general, call for a broader consensus among the involved parties in the decision-making process. Expert councils like the SVR, that have contributed to the decision-making progress for a long time and have done so in a static manner consequently might rather focus on medium-, long term and regulatory considerations.

Based on the evidence provided, the SVR thus fulfills the description of being the *regulatory conscience of German economic policymaking*. The analysis did not control for the contents of either the coalition treaties and/or party programs of the respective parties in power that had already been successfully communicated to the public during the election campaigns. Hence it is possible that direct influence was attributed to the SVR even if the government only picked the cherries out of the recommendations and then did what they had done anyway.⁹ This practice again emphasizes the alibi function of the council and thus shows that the SVR is used for symbolic rather than instrumental purposes; following the subtle results of the analyses, it is possible that this state was aggravated by the GFC.

Despite the insightful implications of the findings, several caveats concerning the data collection and analysis processes limit the generalizability of the findings presented in this thesis. Thus, in order to facilitate a differentiated understanding, the following section will discuss the limitations in terms of method and content.

Nonetheless, it shall be noted that both the findings and method constitute a methodological contribution as they are a novel extension to the study of what influences economic policymaking: this analysis is the first systematic recording of German economic policymaking with regard to the SVR's annual reports in the context of the GFC.

5.2. Limitations

5.2.1. Methodological Limitations

When it comes to methodological limitations, the biggest flaws of the research can be mapped around the quantity of data. Consequently, even if all reports five years prior and after a major focusing event (Birkland, 1998), the GFC, were studied, the findings do not allow for generalizations within the field of institutionalized economic expert advice in Germany simply because the amount of data is not sufficient (Landy, Lamari & Amara, 2003: 193; see also Dür, 2008b).

Given the selected time span, recommendations that were either issued before 2004 but still implemented or only implemented after 2014 by the government will not be included in the analysis. Furthermore, time-delayed influence (i.e. a recommendation issued in 2004, implementation in 2007) will only be considered if the annual government report refers to that particular SVR report. Also, the SVR repeats its recommendations. I.e. in 2004 they recommended an abolishment of the tax exemption for training supervisors (SVR, 2004). As

⁹ See for example König, 2015 who assumes that less communicated issues in party programs will lead to a higher influence of the SVR's recommendations.

the government did not implement a policy that reflected that recommendation (SVR, 2004; Deutscher Bundestag, 2004), the SVR repeated that particular recommendation in the reports of 2005 and 2006 (SVR, 2005, 2006). However, every recommendation was counted, and this analysis did not control for repetitions.

Furthermore, even if the GFC set off a downward trend regarding the policy influence, this observation might be confounded for another reason: recent journalistic investigations (see for example Greive & Hollstein, 2014) assessed that ever-since 2001, the SVR failed to correctly forecast economic growth (Gross Domestic Product, hereinafter referred to as GDP). As the GDP is a simple, yet very important economic indicator (Blanchard & Illing, 2017) it is possible that the German government already drew consequences here. Thus, including and controlling for wrongfully forecasted economic indicators would be an interesting extension/verification of the findings.

Albeit using the two highest-reach newspapers in Germany to measure media coverage, both publications predominantly have a liberal-intellectual audience. Thus there is likely to be extensive overlap among the readership of the two selected newspapers (Die Zeitungen im Medienland Deutschland; 2012). Consequently, future studies should include further newspapers to depict a more diverse political spectrum to achieve a more heterogeneous display of the structure of opinions in Germany.

One disadvantage of the measurement strategy is how to determine the preferences of SVR members (Tsebelis, 2005; see also Dür, 2008b). Although it is conceivable, that given their similar professional background the preferences of the SVR members can be mapped around presenting the best possible evidence for their claims (Rotblat, 1999) – a problem with social sciences, and economics in particular is, that there is usually more than one right answer (Netzwerk für Plurale Ökonomik, n.d.; see also Häring, 2001).

5.2.2. Content-Related Limitations

5.2.1. *Media coverage*

The economic issues that affect the general public usually evolve around the topics of unemployment, tax rates and national debt (Seethraman, 2019). As a result, according to the newsworthiness-criterion, it is valid to assume that, albeit implications being politically relevant, novel economic analyses within *mainstream economics* are not always considered newsworthy content. Incomplete analyses might yield particularly spectacular insights and will result in a higher media coverage (Comar, 1978). This is reinforced by policymakers' attempts to alleviate problems within existing frameworks (Haas, 1992). Hence, protocols that have

proven valid in the past will be repeated and again fail to become newsworthy due to their lacking innovative nature. As a result the public is not made aware of either.

This is exacerbated by the increased speed of media coverage and the decreased half-life of opinions. Consequently journalists are expected to publish and comment on the SVR's reports within a very short time even if it might take time for the reports to unfold their political relevance (Schmidt et al; 2015). As the media will only report on issues that are newsworthy at present (Gabiolkov et al., 2016), issues covered in the reports that lack immediate newsworthiness will not be included in the media coverage and will thus attract less attention. Furthermore it is possible that the reports in question gain political relevance at a later time but will probably be forgotten by the time they are needed (Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995).

Another limitation regarding the data on media coverage is a consequence of digitalization. During the investigated time span, online journalism started to supersede print journalism (Brandt, 2012). Consequently the number of articles that were found in the archives and measured indirect influence might be biased and would have been more insightful if online media had been included in the analysis.

Over time the competition regarding economic expert advice in Germany has tremendously increased; as a result the SVR competes with several other public institutions over policy influence (Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995; Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). At the same time the media is only able to absorb the most relevant forecasts and recommendations. This state is adversely affected by the biannual publication of the common diagnosis (*Gemeinschaftsdiagnose*) that is issued by several leading German economic research institutes prior to the SVR report and thus already soaks up quite a bit of the media capacity for economic expertise (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). Hence it is possible that only recommendations and assessments by the SVR that differ from the *Gemeinschaftsdiagnose* will be covered by the media and result in a bias in terms of media coverage (Schlecht & van Suntum, 1995).

All in all, there are several caveats concerning the data collection and analysis process employed in this thesis. Nonetheless this thesis paved the way for further, more thorough studies on the SVR and its policy relevance. The presented data shows that additional, more labor intensive work is warranted to further investigate the impact of expert knowledge produced by the SVR on German policy making during times of crisis.

This analysis has shed light on the way the GFC affected the SVR's range of influence in German policy making. The presented evidence suggests that the GFC contributed to an epistemic crisis within the field of economic expertise and as such scathed the epistemic authority of the most renowned German economic advisory council. This resulted in a decrease in the SVR's influence as a result of the GFC. No such change was observed for the indirect influence. Even though the GFC received extensive news coverage, it did not impact the extent to which the SVR was covered in the media. Furthermore, the evidence points to the possibility that the SVR reports fulfilled a more symbolic function as a result of the GFC.

Yet, a myriad of the determinants of and confounders with expert advice in knowledge regimes still remain unexplored. This thesis laid the foundation for a systematic investigation of the influence of expert councils and how one German institutionalized policy advisory council was affected by a recent and severe economic crisis. Further research should thus investigate (a) the extent to which the GFC modulated the policy-influence of similar councils and (b) the policy influence of the SVR in earlier years before the crisis in order to verify and extend the present results and (c) enable a cross-council comparison to identify key similarities and differences.

Appendix – Lists of documents included in the data collection

SVR reports per year		
Year	Title SVR report	URL
2004	Staatsfinanzen konsolidieren - Steuersystem reformieren	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/fileadmin/dateiablage/download/gutachten/03_ges.pdf
2005	Erfolge im Ausland - Herausforderungen im Inland	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/fileadmin/dateiablage/download/gutachten/04_ges.pdf
2006	Die Chance nutzen - Reformen mutig voranbringen	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/fileadmin/dateiablage/download/gutachten/ga05_ges.pdf
2007	Widerstreitende Interessen - Ungenutzte Chancen	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/fileadmin/dateiablage/download/gutachten/ga06_ges.pdf
2008	Das Erreichte nicht verspiele	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/fileadmin/dateiablage/download/gutachten/jg07_ges.pdf
2009	Die Finanzkrise meistern - Wachstumskräfte stärken	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/fileadmin/dateiablage/download/gutachten/ga08_ges.pdf
2010	Die Zukunft nicht aufs Spiel setzen	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/fileadmin/dateiablage/download/gutachten/ga09_ges.pdf
2011	Chancen für einen stabilen Aufschwung	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/publikationen/jahresgutachten/fruehere-jahresgutachten/jahresgutachten-201011.html
2012	Verantwortung für Europa wahrnehmen	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/publikationen/jahresgutachten/fruehere-jahresgutachten/jahresgutachten-201112.html
2013	Stabile Architektur für Europa - Handlungsbedarf im Inland	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/publikationen/jahresgutachten/fruehere-jahresgutachten/jahresgutachten-201213.html
2014	Gegen eine rückwärtsgewandte Wirtschaftspolitik	https://www.sachverstaendigenrat-wirtschaft.de/publikationen/jahresgutachten/fruehere-jahresgutachten/jahresgutachten-201314.html

Government reports per year		
Year	Title Government report	URL
2004	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2004 der Bundesregierung Leistung, Innovation, Wachstum	http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/15/024/1502405.pdf
2005	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2005 der Bundesregierung Den Aufschwung stärken – Strukturen verbessern	http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/15/047/1504700.pdf
2006	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2006 Reformieren, investieren, Zukunft gestalten – Politik für mehr Arbeit in Deutschland	https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/975918/779186/a2ab40f275de5c33a38890cdb01a63a8/2006-01-25-jahreswirtschaftsbericht-2006-data.pdf?download=1
2007	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2007 Den Aufschwung für Reformen nutzen	http://www.mathematik.uni-ulm.de/wipo/lehre/ws200607/vwIII/jwb0607.pdf
2008	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2008 der Bundesregierung Kurs halten!	http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/16/078/1607845.pdf
2009	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2009 der Bundesregierung Konjunkturgerechte Wachstumspolitik	https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/16/116/1611650.pdf
2010	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2010 der Bundesregierung	http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/005/1700500.pdf
2011	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2011 Deutschland im Aufschwung den Wohlstand von morgen sichern	https://www.bundesgerichtshof.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Bibliothek/Gesetzesmaterialien/17_wp/GWB8AendG/jwb2011.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1
2012	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2012 Vertrauen stärken – Chancen eröffnen – mit Europa stetig wachsen	https://www.arbeitgeber.de/www/arbeitgeber.nsf/res/jwb2012.pdf/\$file/jwb2012.pdf
2013	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2013 der Bundesregierung	https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/120/1712070.pdf
2014	Jahreswirtschaftsbericht 2014 Soziale Marktwirtschaft heute - Impulse für Wachstum und Zusammenhalt	https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Wirtschaft/jahreswirtschaftsbericht-2014.html

Key word search results in measure of media coverage *Die Süddeutsche*

Report/Year	Σ hits in total	Σ hits <i>Sachverständigenrat</i>	Σ hits <i>Wirtschaftsweisen</i>
2004	25	17	8
2005	65	41	24
2006	35	21	14
2007	29	14	15
2008	17	8	9
2009	21	8	13
2010	17	7	10
2011	25	10	15
2012	28	16	12
2013	25	12	13
2014	23	14	9

Articles included in measure of media coverage *Die Zeit*

Year	Date	Title	Author	Link
2004	13.11.03	Wer will eigentlich Rat vom Rat	Klaus Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2003/47/5weise
2004	17.11.03	Gibt es Alternativen zum Stabilitätspakt	Peter Bofinger	https://www.zeit.de/2003/49/Oekonom_I/komplettansicht
2004	27.11.03	Feinde des Campus	Friedrich Sell	https://www.zeit.de/2003/49/Forum_Sell/komplettansicht
2004	04.12.03	Die nützlichen Kinder	Bert Rürup	https://www.zeit.de/2003/50/R_9frup_2fSchmidt/komplettansicht
2004	08.01.04	Angela bleibt hart	Christian Tenbrock	https://www.zeit.de/2004/03/Szenario_II/komplettansicht
2004	05.02.04	Angst vor der Revanche	Kolja Rudzio	https://www.zeit.de/2004/07/IG-Metall/komplettansicht
2004	26.02.04	Im Mäandertal der Renten	Elisabeth Niejahr	https://www.zeit.de/2004/10/Rente/komplettansicht
2005	04.11.04	Im Haushaltsloch	Wilfried Herz	https://www.zeit.de/2004/46/Eichels_Klemme/komplettansicht
2005	11.11.04	Der 40-Stunden-Unsinn	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2004/47/Arbeitszeit
2005	18.11.04	Jeder sechste ostdeutsche Haushalt steckt in der Armutsfalle	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2004/48/Kasten_Einkommensverteilung
2005	18.11.04	Wie kommt der Karren aus dem Dreck	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2004/48/Konjunktur
2005	18.11.04	Verdammt zum Wachsen	Robert von Heusinger	https://www.zeit.de/2004/48/gedankenexperiment
2005	18.11.04	Beatrice Weder di Mauro	Robert von Heusinger	https://www.zeit.de/2004/48/P-di_Mauro
2005	18.11.04	Schulden: Elastisch	n.a.	https://www.zeit.de/2004/48/Schulden_Elastisch
2005	25.11.04	Kehren für die Statistik	Kolja Rudzio	https://www.zeit.de/2004/49/Ein-Euro-Jobs/komplettansicht
2005	25.11.04	Neues vom Anti-Sinn	Uwe Jean Heuser	https://www.zeit.de/2004/49/Rez__Bofinger/komplettansicht
2005	02.12.04	Spiel mit der Solidarität	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2004/50/Spiel_mit_der_Solidaritaet/komplettansicht
2005	09.12.04	Gleichgewicht der Macht	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2004/51/gleichgewicht_der_macht/komplettansicht
2005	09.12.04	Nachhilfe für Hans Eichel	Robert von Heusinger	https://www.zeit.de/2004/51/Nachhilfe_fuer_Hans_Eichel/komplettansicht
2005	30.12.04	Die kapriziöse Forscherliga	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2005/01/Die_kaprizioese_Forscher-Liga/komplettansicht
2005	05.01.05	Der Weisen letzter Schluss	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2005/02/Der_Weisen_letzter_Schluss
2005	20.01.05	Fünf Weise, tausend Seiten, ein Problem	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2005/04/Sachverst_8andigenrat
2005	03.02.05	Fünf Millionen Gründe	Kolja Rudzio	https://www.zeit.de/2005/06/Arbeitsmarkt

2005	03.02.05	Geld her, egal wofür	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2005/06/Aufbau_Ost/komplettansicht
2005	10.02.05	Mehr kann ich nicht tun	Bost/herz	https://www.zeit.de/2005/07/Eichel-Interview/komplettansicht
2006	17.11.05	Über Nacht gezimmert	Wilfried Herz	https://www.zeit.de/2005/47/Ueber_Nacht_gezimmert/komplettansicht
2006	29.12.05	Eine Frau pokert Hoch	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2006/01/Eine_Frau_pokert_hoch/komplettansicht
2006	12.01.06	Merkels Wundertüte	Klaus-Peter Schmid	https://www.zeit.de/2006/03/Konjunktur_Progn_/komplettansicht
2006	19.01.06	Darf's auch mehr sein?	Kolja Rudzio	https://www.zeit.de/2006/04/Lohnrunde/komplettansicht
2006	16.02.06	Steuern senken. Aber wie?	Wilfried Herz	https://www.zeit.de/2006/08/U-Steuern/komplettansicht
2006	02.03.06	Kollegen zweiter Klasse	Elisabeth Niejahr	https://www.zeit.de/2006/10/Arbeitsmarkt/komplettansicht
2007	07.12.06	Wer ist der Sozialste?	Cerstin Gammelín	https://www.zeit.de/2006/50/Wer_ist_der_Sozialste_
2007	01.03.07	Aufschwung für alle?	Rüdiger Jungbluth	https://www.zeit.de/2007/10/Aufschwung_fuer_alle/komplettansicht
2008	08.11.07	Die krasse Koalition	Elisabeth Niejahr	https://www.zeit.de/2007/46/Reformen/komplettansicht
2008	16.11.07	4,50 Euro pro Stunde	Bert Rürup	https://www.zeit.de/2007/47/Forum-Ruerup
2008	31.01.08	Meinungsfreudig	n.a.	https://www.zeit.de/2008/06/Meinungsfreudig
2009	30.10.08	Alles nur gepumpt	Rüdiger Jungbluth	https://www.zeit.de/2008/45/Eigenkapital/komplettansicht
2009	04.12.08	Mutwillig	Bernd Ulrich	https://www.zeit.de/2008/50/01-Merkel/komplettansicht
2009	04.12.08	Berliner Zahlenspiele	Kolja Rudzio	https://www.zeit.de/2008/50/Arbeitslosenstatistik/komplettansicht
2009	23.12.08	2009 - Kampf um jeden Job	Kolja Rudzio	https://www.zeit.de/2009/01/Arbeitsmarkt/komplettansicht
2010	30.12.09	Was gut ist an Steuern	Heiko Geue	https://www.zeit.de/2010/01/P-op-ed/komplettansicht
2010	14.01.10	Rüttgers I statt Hartz IV	Kolja Rudzio	https://www.zeit.de/2010/03/Argument-Hartz-IV/komplettansicht
2010	21.01.10	Berliner Listen	Marc Brost	https://www.zeit.de/2010/04/Haushaltsdefizit/komplettansicht
2011	01.12.10	Neue Zahlen für den Fortschritt	Petra Pinzler	https://www.zeit.de/2010/50/Alternatives-Wachstum
2011	05.01.11	Das muss ja so kommen!	Div	https://www.zeit.de/2011/02/Glaskugel-Wirtschaft-Prognosen
2011	17.02.11	Ein Falke fliegt davon	Mark Schieritz	https://www.zeit.de/2011/08/Weber-Merkel-Europapolitik/komplettansicht
2012	24.11.11	Technokraten an der macht	Uwe Jean Heuser	https://www.zeit.de/2011/48/Kapitalismus-Alternative/komplettansicht
2013	08.12.12	Das große Aber	Mark Schieritz	https://www.zeit.de/2012/46/Deutschland-Wirtschaft-Konjunktur-Krise/komplettansicht
2013	21.02.14	"Es braucht eine neue Wende"	Peter Dausend & Mark Schieritz	https://www.zeit.de/2013/09/Streitgesprach-Heiner-Flassbeck-Michael-Huether/komplettansicht

2014	14.11.13	Merkels Makel	Marc Brost, Petra Pinzler et al.	https://www.zeit.de/2013/47/koalitionsverhandlungen-angela-merkel/komplettansicht
2014	14.11.13	Gut gemeint, schlecht gemacht	Kolja Rudzio	https://www.zeit.de/2013/47/gesetzlicher-mindestlohn-sozialreform/komplettansicht
2014	21.11.13	Es ist gut, wenn wir ringen	Mark Schieritz, Arne Storn	https://www.zeit.de/2013/48/bundesbankchef-jens-weidmann/komplettansicht
2014	21.11.13	Eine Agenda für die Koalition	SVR	https://www.zeit.de/2013/48/agenda-bundesregierung-sachverstaendigenrat
2014	05.12.13	von wegen Vertrag	Mark Schieritz	https://www.zeit.de/2013/50/koalitionsvertrag/komplettansicht
2014	05.12.13	Misstrauen gegen uns alle	Michael Hüther	https://www.zeit.de/2013/50/koalitionsvertrag-kompromiss
2014	19.12.13	Wir waren im Dauereinsatz	Mark Schieritz, Arne Storn	https://www.zeit.de/2013/52/interview-ubs-manager-axel-weber/komplettansicht

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