

Abstract Young Economists Conference 2022 – Track #5, Transformation vs. Kapitalismus

Think tanks in the Austrian media in the 21st century

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The media plays a central role in social and economic policy discourses (Ait Bihi Ouali, 2020; Schrape, 2017; Theine, 2019; Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer, 2010; van Aelst et al., 2020). Understanding the drivers of media coverage is thus essential for a thorough analysis of transformation processes. Recent research, for example, indicates a predominantly hostile coverage of wealth taxation in Austria and Germany (Dammerer and Hubmann, 2020; Leipold, 2019; Lichtenstein et al., 2016). Explanations for this development point towards ownership structures within the media, the importance of funding by corporate and political advertisers and the influence of elite institutions as providers of information (Dammerer et al., under review; Theine, 2019). The influence of the latter has likely increased in recent years, due to a decline of available resources for editorial practices and an overall reduction in the number of journalists in Austria over the last decades (Kaltenbrunner et al., 2020).

Establishing close ties with the media is a common strategy for think tanks to disseminate policy ideas and influence public opinion (Zhang, 2021). In this article, I aim at determining the relationship between Austrian think tanks and media, who – as suggested by e.g. Pühringer and Stelzer-Orthofer (2016) – play an increasingly important role in the Austrian political-economic environment in the last years. I look at three of the largest market- and social-liberal think tank in Austria: Agenda Austria, Eco Austria and Momentum Institute to determine the reception of their economic analyses and policy prescriptions in media debates. More specifically I want to answer the following research questions:

- How often are these think tanks featured in news media?
- How are the think tanks characterised in the articles?
- What topics and policy recommendations are presented in the articles?

To answer these research questions, I collect articles that mention the analyses and policy recommendations by these institutes or their employees between 2012 and 2022 in five Austrian daily and weekly newspapers and analyse them with a content analysis. First results show that the coverage of all institutes has increased strongly since their foundation. In 2021, the most recent year for which data is fully available, we find that analyses by Agenda Austria have been mentioned two and four times more often than content by Momentum Institute and Eco Austria, respectively.

Literature

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