



DE DETAILED ANALYSIS

2024-05-21 Der Talk vom 21. Mai

Programme: Markus Lanz | 2024-05-21 | Analysed on: 2026-03-12 19:06

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OVERALL SCORE

4.6/10

Considerable imbalance

0 = balanced, 10 = strongly one-sided/manipulative

POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Classification according to Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) 2024

The Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES 2024) is an academic survey of 609 political scientists in 31 countries. Each party is rated on a scale from 0 (far left) to 10 (far right).

Party	Linke	Greens	SPD	BSW	CDU/CSU	FDP	Freie W.	AfD
CHES	1.23	2.28	3.41	3.78	6.23	6.54	6.77	9.10
Spectrum	Left	Left	Left	Left	Right	Right	Right	Right

The overall tendency is displayed on a 0–10 scale (0 = strongly favouring the left, 5 = balanced, 10 = strongly favouring the right). The calculation is based on the difference in the average favouring of left vs. right parties (grouping according to CHES 2024).

TENDENCY (L – R)

5.8 / 10

Balanced

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

← Left

Right →

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2024 — chesdata.eu | [Jolly et al., Electoral Studies, 2022](#) | Thresholds: [Pew Research Center](#)

This section serves for political classification and does not feed into the overall score.

PROGRAMME INFO AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

Programme data

- Date: 21.05.2024
- Moderator: Markus Lanz
- Guests:



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Actors	Function	Party/Affiliation	Political spectrum
Wiebke Schein-Schwarzwäller	Mayor of Zossen (Brandenburg)	FDP	Centre-liberal
Dagmar Schulz	District Administrator of Lüchow-Dannenberg (Lower Saxony)	Not explicitly stated (non-partisan/close to Greens due to Gorleben context)	Centre-left to left-ecological
Oliver Schmidt-Gutzat	Mayor of Heide (Schleswig-Holstein)	Not explicitly stated	Centre (municipal politics)
Richard Arnold	Lord Mayor of Schwäbisch Gmünd (Baden-Württemberg)	CDU	Centre-right/conservative

Main topic

The programme addresses the challenges of municipal politics in Germany — from bureaucracy, financial hardship and juvenile delinquency to migration and integration, threats against local politicians, and the question of why everything in Germany has become "so arduous".



CHAPTER 1 — DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE 15 CRITERIA

Hard facts — 9 techniques that are countable and scientifically robust

1. EXPERT SELECTION

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Expert 1: Wiebke Schein-Schwarzwäller — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: bureaucracy, bats, initial reception facility, jetties — Classification: FDP mayor from Brandenburg, represents a liberal deregulation perspective — Missing countervoice: No representative to explain why species protection or safety regulations are necessary.

Expert 2: Richard Arnold — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: criticism of bureaucracy, migration experience, pilot clause — Classification: CDU Lord Mayor, "Robbie Williams of the Swabian CDU", reform-conservative-pragmatic — Missing countervoice: No representative of the coalition government to defend the federal perspective.

Expert 3: Oliver Schmidt-Gutzat — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: juvenile delinquency, Northvolt, justice too slow — Classification: Municipal politician without discernible party affiliation, pragmatic — Missing countervoice: No youth judge, no criminologist.

Expert 4: Dagmar Schulz — Timestamp: throughout — Statement: financial hardship, public transport, civic education, ecological model region — Classification: District administrator from the Gorleben region, ecologically oriented — Missing countervoice: No business representative to bring in the economic perspective.

Missing expert groups: Federal representatives, justice representatives, academics, those affected (refugees, young people), trade unions, business.

Summary: Four municipal politicians form a homogeneous group with a nearly identical perspective: "We at the grassroots are fighting while those above make it hard for us." This selection inevitably produces a one-sided picture because structural counterarguments are absent. The guest selection is more regionally and politically diverse than is often the case with Lanz (Brandenburg, Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Baden-Württemberg; FDP, CDU, non-partisan), but the functional homogeneity (all municipal politicians) is the problem.



2. SOURCE SELECTION

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Claims without primary source = penalty points (rumour check)

Source 1: Timestamp: approx. middle — Source: "Bild am Sonntag" report on Ukrainians and citizens' income — Classification: Lanz cites a report from Bild am Sonntag as the basis for his statement about the lack of work motivation among Ukrainians. — Missing counter-source: Statistics from the IAB (Institute for Employment Research) on the actual employment rate of Ukrainian refugees, which show that the rate is steadily rising.

Source 2: Timestamp: juvenile delinquency segment — Source: "Cast e.V., Kiel Anti-Aggression Initiative" (cited by Schmidt-Gutzat) — Classification: Local initiative whose survey serves as evidence for the 50/50 distribution (migration background/Germans). — Missing counter-source: Police crime statistics, academic studies on juvenile delinquency.

Source 3: Timestamp: bureaucracy segment — Source: Open letter from Arnold, Palmer, Klopfer to the Chancellor — Classification: Three CDU-affiliated/liberal lord mayors as a source for criticism of bureaucracy. — Missing counter-source: Statement from the federal government, evaluations of deregulation measures.

Summary: The source selection is one-sided. Bild am Sonntag as a source for the migration discussion, local initiatives instead of science, and an unanswered open letter as evidence of government failure — all of this reinforces the narrative without scrutinising it.



3. TIME DISTRIBUTION

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Estimated speaking time (based on text shares):

- Richard Arnold: (28%) — clearly dominant
- Wiebke Schein-Schwarzwäller: (22%)
- Oliver Schmidt-Gutzat: (19%)
- Dagmar Schulz: (12%)
- Markus Lanz: (19%)

Summary: Richard Arnold (CDU) clearly dominates the programme and receives the most opportunities to elaborate his positions. Dagmar Schulz, as the only representative of a more left-ecological perspective, receives the least speaking time. Lanz's own share of speaking time is high and substantively positioned (not merely questioning).



4. OMISSION (Selective Omission)

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Omission 1: Context: In the discussion about juvenile delinquency in Heide, the question of criminal non-responsibility under the age of 14 is raised, but the legal and criminological debate about it (why the threshold is set at 14, international comparisons, effectiveness of punishment for children) is completely omitted. — Relevant in: juvenile delinquency segment — Effect: The impression is created that the solution is simply "harsher punishments, faster proceedings", without the complexity of the issue becoming visible.

Omission 2: Context: In the bureaucracy discussion, only absurd individual examples are cited (bats, jetties, drinking fountains, parking permits). The question of why these regulations were introduced (accidents, lawsuits, EU law, health protection) is never asked. — Relevant in: entire bureaucracy segment — Effect: Bureaucracy appears as a pure end in itself, not as a (possibly excessive) response to real problems.

Omission 3: Context: The Northvolt settlement is presented as a success story, but the critical debate about the subsidy race, the financial stability of Northvolt (the company already had financial difficulties in 2023/24) and the question of whether 900 million in subsidies for 3,000 jobs is economically sensible is not conducted. — Relevant in: Northvolt segment — Effect: Uncritical portrayal of an industrial policy decision.

Omission 4: Context: In the migration discussion, the figure "1,500 capacity for 22,000 inhabitants" in Zossen is mentioned, but not contextualised: How does this compare to the federal average? What is the overall distribution in Brandenburg? What federal funds are flowing? — Relevant in: migration segment — Effect: The figure appears dramatically in isolation, without a comparative framework.

Summary: The reasons for existing regulations, the complexity of reform processes and critical counterarguments to the positions presented are systematically omitted. This reinforces the one-sided narrative of "the state as an obstacle".

Missing voices

- Federal minister/state secretary (interior, labour or construction): Could have explained why certain regulations exist and what reforms have already been initiated.
- Representative of the judiciary (judge/public prosecutor): Could have explained the reasons for long procedural durations and brought in the perspective of the rule of law.
- Refugee actors / migration advisors: Could have described the experience of those affected with bureaucracy, labour market integration and social participation.
- Criminologist/social scientist: Could have empirically assessed whether youth violence is actually increasing and what causes are documented.
- Trade union representative (ver.di/public service): Could have explained why administrations are understaffed and what working conditions prevail.
- Administrative scientist: Could have scientifically contextualised structural reform options (federalism reform, digitalisation, reduction of standards).



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- Representative of the AfD or BSW: Could have brought in the perspective of the parties that benefit from the described dissatisfaction.
- Entrepreneur/employer from the region: Could have specifically described how bureaucracy and a shortage of skilled workers impede operations.



5. MANIPULATION OF FIGURES

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Complete figures include: absolute value, share (%) and trend

Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. first third — Figure: "1,500 capacity for 22,000 inhabitants" (initial reception facility Zossen) — Missing context: How does this compare to the federal average? How many are actually accommodated (1,096)? How long do people stay? What federal funds flow for this? — Effect: The figure appears dramatically in isolation (almost 7% of the population as capacity), without contextualising that initial reception facilities are state facilities and the municipality receives compensation for them.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. middle — Figure: "Average pension is between 1,100 and 1,200" (Arnold) — Missing context: The average pension in Germany in 2024 was approx. 1,100 euros net (significantly higher for men, significantly lower for women). The comparison with citizens' income is misleading because citizens' income pays rent separately, while the pension does not. — Effect: A false picture of injustice is created because apples are being compared with oranges.

Finding 3: Timestamp: Northvolt segment — Figure: "900 million in subsidies" — Missing context: What does the sum consist of? How much of it is EU money? How does it compare to other industrial subsidies (e.g. Intel in Magdeburg: 10 billion)? — Effect: The figure stands in the room without its dimension being contextualised.

Summary: Several figures are presented without sufficient context. The pension-citizens' income comparison in particular is methodologically problematic and is not corrected by Lanz.



6. GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

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Association 1: Timestamp: opening — Quote/context: The video of the attack on the Greens politician in Dresden is shown directly before the question about the AfD in Zossen. — Technique: Implicit linking of violence against politicians with the rise of the AfD, without explicitly proving the causal connection. — Effect: The viewer emotionally associates the aggressive scene with the AfD, even though the attackers in the video are not identified as AfD supporters.

Association 2: Timestamp: juvenile delinquency segment — Quote (Schmidt-Gutzat): "I actually thought of National Socialism." — Technique: Lanz asks about historical parallels, Schmidt-Gutzat draws the NS comparison. Lanz responds only with "Okay." and does not follow up. — Effect: An NS comparison for today's juvenile delinquency is historically inappropriate and is not contextualised.

Summary: Guilt by association is not used systematically, but the linking of the violence video and the AfD question, as well as the uncommented NS comparison, are problematic.



7. TIMING

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Finding 1: Position: programme opening (00:00–05:00) — Content: Video of the attack on the Greens politician in Dresden — Timing effect: The emotional opening with violence against politicians sets the tone for the entire programme: Germany is a country in which democracy is under threat. This emotional anchor influences the reception of all subsequent topics.

Finding 2: Position: end of programme — Content: Dagmar Schulz's perspective on the ecological model region, Cradle to Cradle — Timing effect: The only truly alternative perspective (ecological transformation, common good economy) is placed right at the end and signed off by Lanz with "Okay, so. I note that it is always commendable." It receives no further exploration.

Finding 3: Position: middle of the programme — Content: Detailed account of the acts of youth violence (setting hair on fire, cigarette in the face) — Timing effect: The most emotional, most drastic accounts are placed in the middle of the programme, where attention is at its highest. The more differentiated contextualisation (50/50 migration background, Corona consequences) comes only afterwards.

Summary: The timing of the programme follows a classic pattern: emotional opening, escalation in the middle, bureaucracy anecdotes as "entertainment" in the final third. Alternative perspectives are pushed to the end.



8. SELECTIVE OUTRAGE

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Outrage = bias. Selective outrage reinforces the finding. Score = degree of outrage (0–5) + selectivity (0–5)

Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. middle — Reaction (Lanz): "And I found that sentence scandalous" (about a Ukrainian man who prefers citizens' income) — Comparable without outrage: When Arnold describes that 900 million in subsidies are flowing to Northvolt and Baden-Württemberg is disadvantaged in the subsidy race, Lanz shows no outrage about the level of subsidies or the race. — Asymmetry: Outrage about the individual behaviour of a refugee, no outrage about the structural misallocation of tax funds.

Finding 2: Timestamp: bureaucracy segment — Reaction (Lanz): "Insane." / "You can't be serious." / "Very insane." / "Because of 20 centimetres." — Comparable without outrage: No outrage about the fact that the open letter to the Chancellor went unanswered — which would actually be the bigger scandal, if true. Lanz accepts it with "Nada. Nothing at all." — Asymmetry: Outrage about bureaucratic details, not about political indifference.

Summary: Lanz's outrage is selective and follows the narrative of the programme: outrage about bureaucratic absurdities and about the lack of work motivation among refugees, but no outrage about structural problems (subsidy race, unanswered letters, underfunding of municipalities by the federal government).



9. COMPLETENESS							7/10		
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The programme follows the narrative of an "overwhelmed municipality": committed local politicians fight against bureaucratic hurdles, financial scarcity and social brutalisation, while the federal and state governments act too slowly, too paternalistically and too far removed from reality. The implicit worldview is reform-oriented-pragmatic: the state must deregulate, become faster and give municipalities more freedom. Migration is presented as a challenge that must be "managed", with the basic attitude being integration-friendly but critical of implementation. Systemically critical or fundamentally different perspectives (e.g. radical redistribution, growth criticism, AfD positions as independent arguments) do not appear.

Share of perspectives covered

Inverted: original value measures coverage (higher = better). Displayed as deviation (higher = greater gaps).

- [A] Perspective of the federal government / federal politics: why certain regulations exist, which reforms are already underway
- [B] Perspective of state politics: role of the states in bureaucracy, school construction, police
- [C] Perspective of the federal opposition (CDU/CSU, AfD, BSW, Linke): alternative concepts
- [D] Perspective of refugees/migrants themselves: their own experiences with integration, bureaucracy, the labour market
- [E] Perspective of the judiciary: why proceedings take so long, lack of resources at public prosecutors' offices/courts
- [F] Perspective of social scientists/criminologists: causes of youth violence, empirical contextualisation
- [G] Perspective of trade unions/employee representatives: shortage of skilled workers, working conditions in the public service
- [H] Perspective of citizens (non-political): how do ordinary citizens experience the situation?
- [I] Perspective of business/employers: experiences with bureaucracy, shortage of skilled workers, integration
- [J] Perspective of constitutional lawyers/administrative scientists: structural analysis of federalism, reform options

[A] Federal government — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. middle of the programme — Quote: "Nancy Faeser has in fact set in motion that one can also acquire German language qualifications alongside professional activity." — Assessment: Federal politics is portrayed almost exclusively as the cause of problems; a defence or explanation of the federal perspective is completely absent.

[B] State politics — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. final third — Quote: "the Association of Cities of Baden-Württemberg has really achieved something great, a so-called pilot clause" — Assessment: State politics is mentioned in passing (pilot clause, subsidy policy), but no state representative is given a voice.

[C] Federal opposition — OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: Neither CDU federal politics nor AfD, BSW or Linke are addressed with their federal political alternative concepts. The AfD is only mentioned as a local election result phenomenon.

[D] Refugees/migrants themselves — OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: Refugees are spoken about exclusively in the third person. Their own voice, their experiences, their perspective is completely absent.

[E] Judiciary — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. first third — Quote: "the further processing of cases is always a problem" / "in cases of violence it is always very, very difficult to investigate" — Assessment: The judiciary is criticised, but no representative of the judiciary can explain the reasons (staff shortages, procedural rights).

[F] Social science/criminology — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. first third — Quote: "covered by some sociologists that after the lifting of the Corona restrictions we discovered an unleashing of youth violence" — Assessment: Only as a claim by a guest, no expert present, no empirical contextualisation.

[G] Trade unions/employee representatives — OMITTED

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Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: The shortage of skilled workers in the public service is lamented, but the perspective of employees (pay, working conditions, attractiveness) is absent.

[H] Citizens — INDICATED

Timestamp: opening — Quote: Video from Dresden with attack on Greens politician — Assessment: Citizens appear only as aggressive attackers or as an abstract "dissatisfied population", not as differentiated voices.

[I] Business/employers — INDICATED

Timestamp: approx. middle — Quote: "I have a shortage of skilled workers here, I also have the corresponding personnel [...] They could immediately have an employment contract with me, but are not allowed to" —

Assessment: Only conveyed indirectly through the municipal politicians, no company representative present.

[J] Constitutional law/administrative science — OMITTED

Timestamp: — — Quote: — — Assessment: The structural analysis of federalism, the distribution of competences and possible constitutional reforms is completely absent.

Completeness score: 3/10

Justification: Of ten relevant perspectives, three are merely indicated (federal government, judiciary, social science) and four are completely omitted (opposition, refugees, trade unions, administrative science). The programme exclusively reflects the perspective of municipal officeholders, who by their nature share a similar viewpoint. Any form of counterweight is absent — neither a federal representative defending regulations, nor an affected person, nor an academic expert.



Soft facts — 6 qualitative techniques

10. FRAMING (setting the frame)

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Finding 1: Timestamp: 00:00–01:30 — Quote: "Why has everything in this country suddenly become so arduous?" / "A charming bat family has so far successfully prevented the new children's day care centre she urgently needs." — Manipulation: From the outset, the programme is framed as a "Germany is broken" narrative. The ironic bat anecdote sets the tone: bureaucracy as an absurd obstacle. — Why problematic: This framing excludes from the outset perspectives that could explain why certain regulations (species protection, safety regulations) may be sensible. The question "What is working well?" is never asked; only "What is not working?" is.

Finding 2: Timestamp: 01:30–03:00 — Quote: "There is no longer a single district in Lower Saxony with a balanced budget." — Manipulation: Framing of the municipal financial situation as a widespread catastrophe without contextualising the causes (e.g. deliberate investment decisions, economic conditions, interest rate policy). — Why problematic: The statement is presented as fact without differentiating between structural deficit and cyclical deficit, between investment debt and consumption debt.

Finding 3: Timestamp: opening of juvenile delinquency segment — Quote: "Heide has been making headlines for months with juvenile delinquency" — Manipulation: The town of Heide is introduced primarily through juvenile delinquency, even though the Northvolt settlement is actually the bigger news. — Why problematic: The crime framing creates a sense of threat that emotionally charges the subsequent discussion about migration and security.

Summary: The programme is consistently framed as "Germany is over-regulated, overwhelmed and unsafe". This framing is not wrong, but it is one-sided — any counter-perspective that illuminates successes, progress or the rationality of existing regulations is absent.



11. CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS

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Finding 1: Timestamp: approx. middle — Quote (Lanz): "This paternalism" — Manipulation: Lanz adopts and reinforces the criticism of state structures through evaluative choice of words. "Paternalistic" is a politically charged term that portrays the state as patronising. — Why problematic: A moderator should contextualise terms, not introduce evaluative fighting words himself.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. middle — Quote (Lanz): "I found that sentence scandalous" (about the Ukrainian man who prefers citizens' income) — Manipulation: Lanz evaluates a single statement from a report as "scandalous" and thereby implicitly generalises. — Why problematic: A moderator who evaluates a single anecdote as "scandalous" sends an emotional signal that steers the discussion towards "citizens' income as a false incentive" without examining the statistical reality.

Finding 3: Timestamp: opening — Quote (Lanz): "charming bat family" — Manipulation: Ironic trivialisation of species protection. — Why problematic: Species protection is framed by the choice of words as a ridiculous obstacle, not as a legal obligation with an ecological justification.

Summary: Lanz repeatedly uses evaluative terms and emotional assessments that reinforce the narrative of "the state as a problem". The choice of words is not neutrally moderating, but takes a position.



12. MODERATION BEHAVIOUR

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Lanz is known for provocative follow-up questions — what stands out here is that he moderates almost exclusively in an empathetic and affirming manner.

Finding 1: Timestamp: throughout — Quote (Lanz): "Insane." / "You can't be serious." / "Very insane." / "Because of 20 centimetres." — Analysis: Lanz responds to bureaucracy examples throughout with outrage and affirmation. He never once questions whether the regulations mentioned could have a purpose. Comparison: With guests from the federal government or from the Greens, Lanz is regularly considerably more confrontational.

Finding 2: Timestamp: approx. middle — Quote (Lanz): "I just have such an insane sense of déjà vu. I also don't even know how long we've been telling each other all this. [...] My question now, quite openly: why don't we just change it?" — Analysis: Lanz openly positions himself here as an ally of the guests against "the system". The "we" includes him. A neutral moderator would ask: "Who specifically is blocking this and why?"

Finding 3: Timestamp: juvenile delinquency segment — Quote (Lanz): "It's not about putting anyone in the pillory at all. What we actually want to do is trace the question of where this comes from." — Analysis: Lanz formulates an apparently open question, but steers the emotional direction through the preceding detailed account of the acts of violence (setting hair on fire, cigarette in the face). The question "where does this come from?" is then not answered scientifically, but with the everyday theories of the municipal politicians.

Summary: Lanz moderates in a noticeably non-confrontational manner in this programme. He affirms, expresses outrage alongside the guests and positions himself as their ally. The hard follow-up question typical of Lanz is almost completely absent — which suggests that he shares the programme's basic thesis and does not question it.



13. QUESTION ASYMMETRY

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Asymmetry 1: To Arnold, throughout: open, inviting questions — "The big question perhaps for you, Mr Arnold" / "How did you approach that?" [inviting, respectful] — To Schein-Schwarzwaller: "Where does the AfD stand with you?" / "Do you have people looking out for you?" [more confrontational, personal pressure]

Asymmetry 2: To Schmidt-Gutzat: "How do you explain this brutalisation?" [open analytical question] — To Schulz: Significantly fewer questions overall, often only brief follow-up questions or transitions. Her perspective (civic education, common good economy) is almost cut off at the end: "Okay, so. I note that it is always commendable..."

Asymmetry 3: Lanz does not ask Arnold a single critical question (e.g.: "Isn't the CDU partly responsible for the bureaucracy you are complaining about? You have been governing in Baden-Württemberg since 2011."). Arnold is consistently presented as a likeable doer.

Summary: Arnold receives the softest, most inviting questions and the most airtime. Schulz is kept shortest. Critical follow-up questions to the guests regarding their own responsibility (e.g. CDU co-responsibility for bureaucracy, FDP co-responsibility in the coalition government) are completely absent.



14. FALSE BALANCE

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Finding 1: In this programme, the problem does not lie with false balance (artificial equalisation of unequal positions), but with the opposite: there is no balance at all. Four guests with a nearly identical perspective discuss without any opposing position. This is not a false balance problem, but a balance deficit that is captured under the other criteria (expert selection, omission).

Summary: False balance in the strict sense is not present. The problem is the absence of any opposing position, not the artificial elevation of a minority opinion.



15. AGENDA-SETTING

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Finding 1: Agenda element set: "Bureaucracy as Germany's main problem" — Timestamp: entire second half — Evidence: bats, jetties, drinking fountains, parking permits, residential care regulations, cake sales — Alternative: One could equally have set the underfunding of municipalities by the federal government, federalism reform or the digitalisation of administration as the main topic. Bureaucracy anecdotes are entertaining, but they distract from structural causes.

Finding 2: Agenda element set: "Juvenile delinquency as a growing problem" — Timestamp: first third — Evidence: Detailed account of the cases in Heide — Alternative: The police crime statistics show a more differentiated picture. Juvenile delinquency has risen in some areas, but not in others. A scientific contextualisation would have relativised the agenda-setting.

Finding 3: Agenda element set: "Migration as a burden on municipalities" — Timestamp: throughout — Evidence: initial reception facility Zossen, citizens' income debate, skilled worker discussion — Alternative: Migration as an opportunity (skilled workers, demographic balance, cultural enrichment) is only mentioned in passing by Arnold, but not set as an independent topic.

Summary: The programme's agenda — bureaucracy, juvenile delinquency, migration as a burden — corresponds to a conservative-liberal catalogue of topics. Alternative agenda elements (underfunding, federalism reform, successful integration) are not set.



CHAPTER 2 — OVERALL EVALUATION

Results

Dominant techniques

- 1. Expert selection / missing opposing position (score 6):** The functional homogeneity of the guests (all municipal politicians) creates an echo chamber in which everyone mutually affirms each other. Any structural opposing position is absent — no federal representative, no academic, no affected person.
- 2. Framing (score 5):** The "Germany is broken" narrative is set from the very first second and never questioned. Successes, progress and the rationality of existing regulations are systematically blanked out.
- 3. Moderation behaviour (score 5):** Lanz does not act as a neutral moderator, but as an ally of the guests. His outrage, his choice of words and his absent critical follow-up questions reinforce the one-sided narrative.

Justification: The programme shows a slight to moderate tendency. It is not propagandistic or manipulative in the strict sense, but it suffers from a considerable balance deficit. The guest selection creates an echo chamber of municipal political perspectives, which is reinforced by Lanz's affirming moderation behaviour. The choice of topics (bureaucracy, crime, migration as a burden) corresponds to a conservative-liberal agenda-setting. In accordance with §26 MStV, the programme is not to be assessed as a serious violation, since talk shows are permitted to have a certain thematic focus — but the complete absence of counter-perspectives is difficult to reconcile with the ZDF's public service mandate.

CONCLUSION

The programme "Markus Lanz" offers an authentic and informative insight into the challenges of municipal politics in Germany. The guests are competent, their accounts credible and their concerns legitimate. However, what is problematic is the complete absence of counter-perspectives: no federal representative explains why regulations exist; no academic contextualises juvenile delinquency or migration figures; no affected person (refugee, young person) is given a voice. This creates a one-sided picture in which committed municipal politicians fight against a dysfunctional state — a narrative that, while reflecting elements of reality, impermissibly oversimplifies the complexity of the issues. In accordance with §26 MStV and the ZDF State Treaty, public broadcasting is obliged to reflect "the diversity of existing opinions" — this requirement is not met by the programme as a whole.



CHAPTER 3 — PARTY-POLITICAL BIAS

Party	Score (-5..+5)	Concrete evidence
CDU/CSU	+3	Arnold (CDU) receives the most speaking time, the softest questions and is presented as a likeable reformer. "Robbie Williams of the Swabian CDU." No critical follow-up question about CDU co-responsibility for bureaucracy (16 years of Merkel government).
SPD	-2	The SPD is implicitly portrayed as part of the problem (federal government, citizens' income debate). The Chancellor does not answer the open letter. Nancy Faeser is only briefly mentioned positively (opening up the labour market), but also criticised as unrealistic (police presence).
Greens	-1	The Greens appear only as victims (attack on Mosler in Dresden). Species protection (bats) is implicitly framed as green over-regulation. No defence of Greens positions.
FDP	+1	Schein-Schwarzwaller (FDP) is presented as a committed mayor. The FDP's core topic of deregulation is the main topic of the programme. No criticism of FDP co-responsibility in the coalition government.
AfD	-1	The AfD is only mentioned as a symptom of dissatisfaction, not as a political actor with positions. Implicit linking with violence through timing (video → AfD question). No AfD voice in the programme.
BSW	0	Not mentioned.
Linke	0	Not mentioned.
Freie Wähler	0	Not mentioned.

Party bias summary

- Most favoured: CDU/CSU, score +3 — Richard Arnold receives the most prominent role, the most speaking time and the softest questions. CDU core topics (order, pragmatism, economic promotion) dominate the programme.
- Most disadvantaged: SPD, score -2 — The federal government (SPD-led) is consistently portrayed as the problem (unanswered letter, paternalism, citizens' income false incentives), without an SPD representative being able to explain the perspective.
- Conclusion: The programme shows a moderate bias in favour of the CDU/CSU and to the detriment of the SPD-led federal government. This results less from explicit partisanship than from the guest selection (CDU lord mayor as the main figure), the choice of topics (CDU/FDP core topics) and the absence of any defence of federal policy. In a programme about municipal challenges, a certain degree of criticism of the federal level is to be expected — but the complete absence of a countervoice shifts the balance.



CHAPTER 4 — LEGAL CLASSIFICATION (§26 MStV / ZDF State Treaty)

Assessment under §26 MStV

Violation 1: Diversity of opinion (§26 para. 1 MStV in conjunction with §5 ZDF State Treaty)

Norm: §26 para. 1 MStV obliges public broadcasting to reflect "the diversity of existing opinions in essentially complete form". §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty specifies: "The ZDF shall in its offerings [...] provide a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life."

Facts: The programme exclusively reflects the perspective of municipal officeholders. Essential counter-perspectives (federal government, judiciary, science, those affected) are completely absent. Of ten identified relevant perspectives, four are completely omitted and three are only indicated.

Evidence: Entire programme — not a single guest represents an opposing position to the basic narrative of "the state as an obstacle".

Assessment: A single violation in a single programme does not yet constitute a serious legal violation, since the requirement of balance can also be fulfilled across several programmes (internal pluralism). However, the one-sidedness of this particular programme is remarkable and would, if systematically repeated, be assessed as a violation of §26 MStV.

Violation 2: Objectivity and impartiality (§6 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty)

Norm: §6 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty: "The programmes of the ZDF shall [...] be committed to truth, and shall report objectively and impartially."

Facts: Lanz's moderation behaviour is not impartial. He positions himself through choice of words ("scandalous", "insane", "paternalistic"), through gestures of outrage and through the absence of critical follow-up questions as an ally of the guests.

Evidence: "I just have such an insane sense of déjà vu. [...] My question now, quite openly: why don't we just change it?" — Lanz uses "we" and thereby positions himself as part of the critics, not as a neutral questioner.

Assessment: For talk shows, a certain latitude for provocative moderation is recognised. Lanz's behaviour does not drastically overstep the boundary into partisanship, but moves at the edge of what is permissible.

No violation discernible in:

- Duty of truth: The facts presented are essentially correct, even if contextualisation is lacking.
- Youth protection: Not relevant.
- Personal rights: Not violated.

Overall assessment §26 MStV

The programme shows a considerable balance deficit that results primarily from the homogeneous guest selection and the affirming moderation behaviour. §26 MStV obliges public broadcasting to safeguard diversity of opinion as the basis of democratic will formation. The ZDF State Treaty specifies this through the duty of objective, impartial reporting and a comprehensive overview of all essential areas of life. The present programme fulfils these requirements only to a limited extent: it offers an informative but one-sided insight into municipal challenges, without providing the counter-perspectives necessary for balanced opinion formation. The ZDF Television Council as the responsible supervisory body would be required, in the event of systematic repetition of such patterns (homogeneous guest selection, affirming moderation behaviour, one-sided agenda-setting), to consider a programme complaint. For a single programme, the identified tendency is to be classified as a "slight imbalance" that could be compensated for within the framework of internal pluralism by other programmes — provided this actually occurs.



OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE 15 CRITERIA

Individual scores — All 15 criteria

No.	Criterion	Score	Classification
1	EXPERT SELECTION	6	•••
2	SOURCE SELECTION	5	•••
3	TIME DISTRIBUTION	4	••
4	OMISSION (Selective Omission)	6	•••
5	MANIPULATION OF FIGURES	4	••
6	GUILT BY ASSOCIATION	3	••
7	TIMING	4	••
8	SELECTIVE OUTRAGE	5	•••
9	COMPLETENESS	7	•••••
10	FRAMING (setting the frame)	5	•••
11	CHOICE OF WORDS AND TERMS	4	••
12	MODERATION BEHAVIOUR	5	•••
13	QUESTION ASYMMETRY	4	••
14	FALSE BALANCE	2	•
15	AGENDA-SETTING	5	•••

HARD FACTS SCORE (1-8)

4.9/10

Considerable imbalance

SOFT FACTS SCORE (9-14)

4.2/10

Considerable imbalance

OVERALL SCORE

4.6/10

Considerable imbalance

Averaged from hard facts and soft facts



KEY — Meaning of the scores

Individual scores per criterion (0–10)

0	No finding	No relevant anomaly identified.
1–2	Weak finding	Slight anomaly without material impairment of balance.
3–4	Slight to moderate finding	Discernible tendency; relevance of effect low to moderate.
5	Moderate finding with relevance of effect	Relevant imbalance that influences the opinion-forming potential of the audience.
6	Considerable finding (threshold)	Scores from 6 onwards are reported as "considerable findings".
7	Considerable finding	Clear, well-documented imbalance with marked relevance of effect.
8–9	Serious finding	Pronounced imbalance; several documentable individual findings in this criterion.
10	Maximum manifestation	Systematic, pervasive imbalance in this criterion.

Aggregated deviation index — interpretation ranges

0.0 – 2.5	Unremarkable	No material patterns discernible; programme meets the requirement of factual accuracy.
2.6 – 4.0	Slight imbalance	Isolated anomalies; statistically visible, but still within the tolerance range.
4.1 – 6.0	Considerable imbalance	Several considerable findings; relevant impairment of the diversity of perspectives.
6.1 – 8.0	Serious deviation from the requirement of balance. High degree of deviation	Pronounced, cross-programme patterns; high relevance of effect.
8.1 – 10	Fundamental systemic one-sidedness. Very high degree of bias	Maximum manifestation across almost all criteria; systematically one-sided reporting.

Party-political bias (-5 to +5)

-5 to -3	Strongly disadvantaged	Party is clearly treated worse in portrayal, speaking time or framing.
-2 to -1	Slightly disadvantaged	Discernible, but weak disadvantage.
0	Neutral	No discernible preference or disadvantage.
+1 to +2	Slightly favoured	Discernible, but weak preference.
+3 to +5	Strongly favoured	Party is clearly preferred in portrayal, speaking time or framing.



Legal and methodological classification

No finding of fact	The results presented do not constitute findings of fact about individual persons, editorial teams or programmes. They are to be understood as the result of a standardised operationalisation, not as a determination of individual responsibility.
No legal ruling	The aggregated deviation index does not replace a legal assessment within the meaning of §26 MStV. The determination of whether a specific programme violates statutory requirements is the exclusive responsibility of the competent authorities (in particular media regulators).
No proof of causality	Statistical correlations are not to be interpreted as proof of causal relationships or editorial intentions. Deviation values may be influenced by topic selection, news situation, political controversy or format logic.
No finding of intent	The analysis measures observable structural characteristics of programmes. A score of 7 means that a considerable imbalance has been identified — not that the editorial team intended this. The methodology makes no statements about motives or strategic objectives.
Heuristic comparison instrument	The index serves the comparative identification of patterns across thousands of programmes, not the precise metric measurement of individual contributions. Threshold values serve as heuristic orientation, not as sharp legal qualification.



APPENDIX: CANTONAL/STATE LEGISLATION

Legal basis Germany — ARD, ZDF

Law

Media State Treaty (MStV, 2020)

Relevant articles

- §26 para. 1 MStV: Public broadcasting institutions shall in their offerings provide a comprehensive overview of international, European, national and regional events in all essential areas of life. They shall thereby promote international understanding, European integration and social cohesion in the federal government and the states. Their offerings shall serve education, information, advice and entertainment. They shall offer contributions in particular to culture. Entertainment shall correspond to a public broadcasting offering profile.
- §5 para. 1 ZDF State Treaty: Obligation to objectivity and impartiality of reporting, consideration of diversity of opinion.
- ARD State Treaty: Public service mandate with objectivity and impartiality.

Core obligations

- 1. Diversity of opinion (internal pluralism):** All relevant perspectives must be represented in the overall programme
- 2. Objectivity and balance:** Moderators must treat guests to the same standards
- 3. Contribution to opinion formation:** The audience must receive sufficient information for independent opinion formation

Supervisory authority

- Broadcasting councils of the state broadcasting institutions: supervision of ARD institutions (BR, WDR, NDR, etc.)
- ZDF Television Council (§19 ZDF State Treaty): supervision of ZDF programme
- Legal supervision: respective federal state (ZDF: Rhineland-Palatinate)

Complaints procedure

1. Programme complaint to the responsible broadcasting council or ZDF Television Council
2. Administrative court action



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APPENDIX 2: SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS

Literature

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Unbalanced reporting is the response to the halving initiative in Switzerland: here the manipulation techniques are explained in detail, starting with the selection of staff and source selection. Subsequently, 15 principles are explained: omission, framing, temporal framing, guilt by association, emotionalisation, removal of context and many more, illustrated with many examples. In addition, it becomes apparent where we ourselves apply these techniques — this promotes not only insight but also empathy.

Optionally the book comes with **playing cards**

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The interview is not a conversation. It is a stage — and someone else has written the script.

Those who do not know this provide material. Good quotes that are cut incorrectly. Correct statements that end up in the wrong context. Honest answers that are framed as confessions.

This book is not a media criticism book. It is a toolbox — for everyone who has a microphone in front of their face and wants to know what they can do about it. 7 chapters. 7 tools: What an interview really is. The 7 most common traps. The three basic principles of sovereignty — anchoring, reframing, setting boundaries. Preparation in one hour. Body and voice. What to do when things go wrong. And what counts after the interview.

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You think you see the world. In reality you see the frame that someone has placed around it. Framing is the oldest and most elegant manipulation technique in the world. It does not change the facts — it changes what we make of the facts. How we feel. What we believe. How we decide. And it works — because we all participate. Daily. Unconsciously. You too. This book is not a dry textbook. It is a workbook — playful, direct, full of examples from real life. You learn not only how others frame you. You learn how you yourself frame — and how you can use it consciously and fairly.

Because those who understand framing see the world more clearly. Listen to the news differently. Conduct conversations with more confidence. And no longer allow themselves to be so easily forced into a frame that someone else has chosen.

With many exercises and concrete examples from politics, media and everyday life — and the occasional smile.

Framing with style. Because the frame changes everything.



The SRG collects 1.56 billion francs per year — compulsorily, from every household. Those who feel unfairly treated can lodge a complaint. There is even a body for this: the IGAC, the Independent Complaints Authority for Radio and Television.

Only: it is not independent. It has no sanctioning powers. And in 99.6% of all cases it decides: nothing.

This analysis lays bare the system — factually, precisely, without polemic. Procedures, personnel, powers, costs, statistics, legal recourse. And the constitutional law review that shows: the IGAC system meets none of the three fundamental criteria — it is not appropriate, not subject to separation of powers, not market-based. The body that is supposed to protect citizens protects above all the system it was supposed to control.

Essential reading for everyone considering a complaint — and for everyone who wants to understand why genuine media regulation in Switzerland is still outstanding.