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Table of Contents

Dorota Stasiak

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Think Tanks in Poland: Policy Experts at the Crossroads

Abstract[1]

Development of the think tank sector in post-communist states is, at times, regarded as a self-evident consequence of the processes of democratization. However, the specific "environment of obstacles and opportunities" makes it neither automatic, nor easy for think tanks of the region to join the policy game. In particular, it is not clear to what extent the think tanks in transition democracies can or should engage in strictly political disputes. The alleged shift from academic towards advocacy profiles that is said to characterize Western think tanks evokes numerous questions in post-communist settings.

The paper provides an analysis of the development of the think tank sector in Poland and the challenges it faces on its way towards "maturity". It aims at getting some insights into perspectives of think tanks themselves. Building on a qualitative analysis of think tanks' mission statements, survey data and interviews with think tank managers, it analyses how they construct their positions of policy experts at the crossroads between politics, science, business and the media.

Keywords: think tanks, policy analysis, boundary work, expertise

[1] Paper prepared for presentation at the IPSA XXII World Congress, 'Reshaping power, shifting boundaries', Madrid 8-12 July 2012

Introduction

The processes of democratic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have made it clearer than ever that, as Hugo Heclo explains,

> Politics find its sources not only in power but also in uncertainty – men collectively wondering what to do. [...] Governments not only 'power' (or whatever the verb form of that approach might be); they also puzzle. Policy-making is a form of collective puzzlement on society's behalf; it entails both deciding and knowing.[2]

The necessity of knowing in order to decide – particularly in the context of transformation – makes it inevitable for "the world of politics" to seek expert advice. Even if modern experts do not rule, as the followers of the technocratic model of knowledge-politics relations would have it, they definitively have a say. According to Sheila Jasanoff,

> Experts have become indispensable to the politics of nations, and indeed to transnational and global politics. Experts manage the ignorance and uncertainty that are endemic conditions of contemporary life and pose

[2] Hugh Heclo, *Modern Social Politics in Britain and Sweden: From Relief to Income Maintenance* (Yale University Press: New Haven, Conn, 1974), 305. Cited after Richard Freeman, "Learning in Public Policy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. Michael Moran, Martin Rein, and Robert E. Goodin (2006: Oxford University Press), 372.

> major challenges to the managerial pretentions and political legitimacy of democratically accountable governments. Faced with ever-changing arrays of issues and questions – based on shifting facts, untested technologies, incomplete understandings of social behavior and unforeseen environmental externalities – governments need the backing of experts to assure citizens that they are acting responsibly, in good faith, and with adequate knowledge and foresight. The weight of political legitimation rests therefore increasingly on the shoulders of experts, and yet they occupy at best a shadowy place in the evolving discourse of democratic theory.[3]

This "shadowy" position of experts may have to do with the fact that experts are not (or perhaps: no more) easy to classify along the knowledge-politics divide. The paradox is that expertise, which at times is expected to make politics less "political" (that is: more rational, evidence-based) is not as "apolitical" (that is: free of values or ideology) as it may seem.[4] It would be hard to deny that knowledge has become

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[3] Sheila Jasanoff, "Judgement under Siege. The Three-Body Problem of Expert Legitimacy," in *Democratization of Expertize? Exploring Novel Forms of Scientific Advice in Political Decision-Making*, ed. Sabine Maasen and Peter Weingart (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 221.

[4] See: Michael Schudson, "The Trouble with Experts - and Why Democracies Need Them," *Theory and Society* 35, no. 5-6 (2006); Stephen P. Turner, "Political Epistemology, Experts and the Aggregation of Knowledge," *Spontaneous Generations* 1, no. 1 (2007).

more pluralistic than ever – the public fights of experts and counter-experts, the cacophony of expert opinions, and the questioning of unquestionable facts are proof of this development.

In Robert Hoppe's adversarial model of knowledge-politics relations, political expertise serves as ammunition. In this perspective, "[p]olitics is the non-violent power struggle between political parties and/or organized interest groups that, through processes of partisan mutual adjustment, leads to temporary compromises on the public interest". According to the model, "every interest involved will look for the type of scientific expertise that harnesses and legitimizes its pre-formed political stance". In the adversarial model, experts seem to be "guns for hire" and are ready to offer access to facts that suit the needs of their patrons, which is quite a disturbing picture. However, Hoppe remarks optimistically that "both empirically and normatively one may argue that scientific arguments as political ammunition improve the quality of political debate, at least if everybody has equal access to scientific expertise. To the extent that political controversies mobilize scientific expertise, they even contribute to knowledge use". The idea of "equal access" to knowledge is however easier to declare than to implement – "access to knowledge and expertise has itself become a source of conflict, as various groups realize its growing implications for political choice."[5]

[5] Robert Hoppe, "Rethinking the Science-Policy Nexus: From Knowledge Utilization and Science Technology Studies to Types of Boundary Arrangements," *Poiesis Prax* 3(2005): 210.

Experts may also become active players on the political stage, playing not only on somebody else's, but also on their own behalf. According to David Weimer and Aidan R. Vining, they may adopt one of three attitudes: that of an objective technician, that of a client's advocate, or that of an issue advocate.[6] This "engaged" side of expertise is well reflected in the dynamic development of think tanks (especially these with advocacy profiles). While referring to the ideals of scientific neutrality and objectivity, they lay out some interest-bound objectives. Think tanks are a modern way of combining "the apolitical" with "the political" for the sake of policy.

The period of transformation has given rise to the dynamic development of the think tank sector across most post-communist countries.[7] Although think tanks have been operating on the expert scenes of CEE countries already for over 20 years, there is still more than just a grain of truth in Krastev's diagnosis that "[i]n post-communist societies, a think tank is something everybody hears about but nobody actually knows much about".[8]

The gap in research on think tanks leaves much space for various investigations. The principal aim of the present paper is to characterize Polish think tanks in terms of legal, geographical, financial and personal factors. Building on this foundation, we would also like to introduce some concerns about organizational identities of think tanks in Poland,

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[6] David Weimer and Aidan R. Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice* (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005).

[7] According to a directory published by Freedom House (1997), soon after the transition over 100 of these institutions appeared in the CEE area.

[8] Ivan Krastev, "Post-Communist Think Tanks. Making and Faking Influence," in *Banking on Knowledge: The Genesis of the Global Development Network*, ed. Diane Stone (London: Routledge, 2000), 142.

and also assess the ways they try to find balance between "the political" and "the scientific".

The procedure of obtaining data we would further refer to has involved creating a database of over ninety Polish think tanks (on the base of information provided by mass media, international comparative studies, think tank and NGO's directories, analyses of expert networks etc.). Three analytical components involved qualitative analysis of mission statements of Polish think tanks published on their web sites, an Internet survey (with quantitative and qualitative elements) conducted in Spring 2011,[9] as well as semi-structured interviews with 12 think tank representatives (conducted in March and April 2011).

Defining think tanks

It is quite difficult to draw the lines of demarcation around the concept of a think tank, as these organizations "vary considerably in size, resources, areas of expertise and in the quality and quantity of the publications they produce".[10] For this reason it is not easy to give an example of a "typical think tank",[11] as "attempts to universally define the term think tank in a concise way are bound to fail due to substantial

[9] The survey contained 23 questions. The answers from 27 institutions (out of over 80 which received invitations) have been obtained.

[10] Donald E. Abelson and Christine M. Carberry, "Following Suit or Falling Behind? A Comparative Analysis of Think Tanks in Canada and the United States," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 3 (1998): 259.

[11] Donald E Abelson, *Do Think Tanks Matter? Assessing the Impact of Public Policy Institutes* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 8.

differences between scientific, technocratic and partisan varieties."[12]

Because of the history of the think tank phenomenon, the Anglo-American model of think tanks as "policy research organizations that are independent of government and universities" and "operate on a not-for-profit basis"[13] usually serves as a kind of role model. As explained by Krastev, "it is the American environment of policymaking marked by fragmentation and the separation of executive and legislative power, the American distrust for federal bureaucracy, the weak American party system, the American philanthropic tradition, and finally, the American tax regime which made policy research institutes ... into autonomous and influential players. Anglo-Saxon culture, founded upon the power of rational argument, is the proper context for understanding the power of twentieth-century independent policy research institutes in America and Britain".[14] At the same time, the development of think tanks across the globe makes it clear that think tanks can, and do, operate under alternative conditions. According to Stone, "there are a host of legal, political and economic reasons peculiar to the history and institutional

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[12] Dieter Plehwe and Bernhard Walpen, "Between Network and Complex Organization: The Making of Neoliberal Knowledge and Hegemony " in *Neoliberal Hegemony. A Global Critique*, ed. Dieter Plehwe, Bernhard Walpen, and Gisela Neunhöffer, *Routledge/Ripe Studies in Global Political Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

[13] See James G. McGann and R. Kent Weaver, "Think Tanks and Civil Societies in a Time of Change," in *Think Tanks & Civil Societies. Catalysts for Ideas and Action*, ed. James G. McGann and R. Kent Weaver (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 4.

[14] Ivan Krastev, "The Liberal Estate. Reflections on the Politics of Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe," in *Think Tanks and Civil Societies. Catalysts for Ideas and Action*, ed. James G. McGann and R. Kent Weaver (New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 274-75.

make-up of a nation as to why there is no one best model or trajectory for think tank development" and "[t]he notion that a think tank requires independence from the state in order to be 'free-thinking' is an Anglo-American norm that does not translate well into other political cultures".[15] Consequently, according to the so called "middle course definition" proposed by McGann and Weaver, think tanks can be characterized not by independence, but rather by "significant autonomy from government and from societal interests such as firms, interest groups, and political parties".[16]

For the purpose of our account of Polish public policy institutes, we propose to adopt a definition coined by Martin Thunert, who describes think tanks as "non-profit public and private organizations devoted to examining and analyzing policy-relevant issues and producing research outputs in terms of publications, reports, lectures and workshops, in most cases targeted to identifiable audiences with the hope of influencing decision-making and public opinion".[17]

Theoretical concerns (at the margin)

[15] Diane Stone, "Think Tanks and Policy Advice in Countries in Transition," in *Asian Development Bank Institute Symposium: "How to Strengthen Policy-Oriented Research and Training in Viet Nam"* (Hanoi 2005), 3.

[16] McGann and Weaver, "Think Tanks and Civil Societies in a Time of Change," 5.

[17] Martin Thunert, "Think Tanks in Germany," in *Think Tanks Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas.*, ed. Diane Stone and Andrew Denham (2004), 71. Although most think tanks in Poland operate as non-governmental institutions, there are some important analytical institutes with ties to government (such as Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych or Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich) or universities (Ośrodek Analiz Politologicznych UW), which perhaps should not be excluded from the think tank category by virtue of the very functions they perform.

On a side note to the main track of the present article, let us briefly remark that it is always useful to refer to a broader context of expertise, as well as to the knowledge-politics relation, while analyzing think tanks. Experts are namely a kind of "inbetweeners", who code and decode different forms of knowledge. They make use of two different language codes. The "downward code" is "limited by the low competences of lower circles in the field of formalized interpretation of the world". The "upward code" is limited by "experts" strong dependency on vivid and imprecise popular language".[18] Expertise does not equal scientific knowledge. It can instead be understood as knowledge transmitted in advisory processes. It is usually issue-oriented and aims to solve particular problems. Although it is usually scientists who become experts, their role in advisory settings is associated with various difficulties. As remarked by Sheila Jasanoff, "the questions contemporary policy makers ask of science are rarely of a kind that can be answered by scientists from within the parameters of their home disciplines".[19] The issues that are interesting for politicians are not defined by scientists. Rather, they are the result of the complex and urgent nature of social problems.[20] They are "trans-scientific" – although they are questions about facts and can be answered in the language of science, science cannot actually give any answers, as they transcend it.[21] Thus

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[18] Joanna Kurczewska, *Technokraci I Ich Świat Społeczny* (Warszawa Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 1997), 252.

[19] Jasanoff, "Judgement under Siege. The Three-Body Problem of Expert Legitimacy," 211.

[20] Steven Yearley, *Making Sense of Science: Understanding the Social Study of Science* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2005), 161.

[21] Alwin M. Weinberg, "Science and Trans-Science," *Minerva* 10, no. 2 (1972): 209.After: Yearley, *Making Sense of Science: Understanding the Social Study of Science*, 162.

think tanks are mediating institutions able to cope with trans-scientific questions.

In our analysis of think tanks, we refer to the theoretical framework of boundary work, which allows us to capture the think tanks' dynamic position between the spheres of science and politics (but, also between the media and business). The concept of boundary work was developed by Thomas P. Gieryn, who analyzed the discursive construction of boundaries around science. Gieryn's "cultural cartography" addresses the issue of dynamism in defining (or *mapping out*) epistemic authority, reliable methods and credible facts.[22] Being convinced that there are no fixed or given criteria of what is science and what is not,[23] [24] Gieryn was trying to track the processes of drawing boundaries and constructing authority of science by its practitioners.[25] He underlined that, considering some form of activity, science results in several practical consequences, such as gains in financial resources, prestige and legitimacy. For this reason, scientists are eager to take up activities

[22] Thomas F. Gieryn, *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line* (Chicago; London: Chicago University Press, 1999), 4. According to Gieryn, people having different beliefs constitute different „maps of science". Each map justifies why science should be considered something special. See Nicola J. Marks, "Opening up Spaces for Reflexivity? Scientists' Discourses About Stem Cell Research and Public Engagement," (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2008).

[23] Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 34.

[24] Robert K. Merton, *The Sociology of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).Rdz.13

[25] Marks, "Opening up Spaces for Reflexivity? Scientists' Discourses About Stem Cell Research and Public Engagement," 42.

aimed at enlarging material or symbolic resources, as well as securing their professional autonomy.[26]

According to Gieryn,

> "Boundary-work" describes an ideological style found in scientists' attempts to create a public image for science by contrasting it favorably to non-scientific intellectual or technical activities. Alternative sets of characteristics available for ideological attribution to science reflect ambivalences or strains within the institution: science can be made to look empirical or theoretical, pure or applied. However, selection of one or another description depends on which characteristics best achieve the demarcation in a way that justifies scientists' claims to authority or resources. Thus, "science" is no single thing: its boundaries are drawn and redrawn inflexible, historically changing and sometimes ambiguous ways.[27]

Gieryn's work has inspired many authors. Whereas his focus was on the ways science is differentiated from other spheres, that is to say, on

[26] Thomas F. Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 6 (1983): 782.

[27] Ibid.: 781.

boundary conflicts, authors such as Robert Hoppe and David H. Guston pay more attention to the mechanisms of cooperation (in spite of and because of differences), and to boundary organizations that occupy the space "between" the spheres with clearly demarcated boundaries.

According to Hoppe, boundaries can be drawn in two complementary ways: by demarcation (which is aimed "to protect it from unwanted participants and interference, while trying to ascribe proper ways of behaviour for participants and non-participants"[28]) and coordination (which "defines proper ways of interaction between these practices and makes such an interaction possible and conceivable"[29]). Demarcation and coordination are "two sides of the same coin".[30]

Guston[31] enriches the boundary work concept with the idea of "boundary organizations". As he explains, "first, they provide the opportunity and sometimes the incentives for the creation and use of boundary objects and standardized packages; second, they involve the participation of actors from both sides of the boundary, as well as professionals who serve a mediating role; third, they exist at the frontier

[28] Séverine Van Bommel, "Understanding Experts and Expertise in Different Governance Contexts. The Case of Nature Conservation in the Drentsche Aa Area in the Netherlands," (PhD-thesis, Wageningen University, 2008), 35.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Robert Hoppe, "From 'Knowledge Use' Towards 'Boundary Work'. Sketch of an Emerging New Agenda for Inquiry into Science-Policy Interaction," in *Knowledge Democracy: Consequences for Science, Politics, and Media*, ed. Roeland J. in 't Veld (Heidelberg: Springer, 2010), 10.

[31] David H. Guston, *Between Politics and Science: Assuring the Integrity and Productivity of Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); ———, "Boundary Organizations in Environmental Policy and Science: An Introduction," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 26, no. 4 (2001).

of the two relatively different social worlds of politics and science, but they have distinct lines of accountability to each[32]"[33]. [34].

The concept of "boundary organization" provides interesting insights for the study of expertise, because it underlines the double dependence of experts (and expert organizations) on their principles. According to Guston, the boundary organization must reconcile stability with the demands of its principals in order to succeed .[35] Such a type of organization "draws its stability not from isolating itself from external political authority but precisely by being accountable and responsive to opposing, external authorities. Boundary organizations may use co-optation, the incorporation of representatives of external groups into their decision-making structure, as a bridging strategy [...], but they

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[32] Guston, "Boundary Organizations in Environmental Policy and Science: An Introduction," 400, 01.

[33] ———, *Between Politics and Science: Assuring the Integrity and Productivity of Research*, 400, 01.

[34] According to Hoppe, "In the quest for best practice, for simplicity's sake, five conditions or attributes for boundary arrangements can be listed (...): - *Double participation* („people from both the policy/politics and the scientific world are represented and participate in the activities of the boundary organisation or arrangement"); *Dual accountability* („The leadership or management of boundary organisations and arrangements is accountable to representatives of science and politics, simultaneously"), *Boundary objects* („The creation and maintenance of a well-chosen set of boundary objects in generating a 'world' in which both scientists and policymakers feel at home and may successfully coordinate their activities"), *Co-production* („robust knowledge/power structures create social and cognitive order using negotiation, confrontation and mediation"), *Metagovernance and capacity building (*„This is the cross-jurisdictional, cross-level and cross-scale orchestration of distributed knowledge production). Hoppe, "From 'Knowledge Use' Towards 'Boundary Work'. Sketch of an Emerging New Agenda for Inquiry into Science-Policy Interaction," 22, 23.

[35] Guston, "Boundary Organizations in Environmental Policy and Science: An Introduction," 401.

attempt to balance it precisely between scientific and political principal".[36]

Although the above-mentioned theoretical concerns are not central to the present account of think tanks and research findings we want to present at this point, they are certainly useful and can provide much inspiration and guidance in analyzing think tanks within a broader framework of knowledge-politics interface.

Development of think tanks in Poland

Keeping theoretical concerns in mind, let us now turn to the task of sketching a picture of the think tank sector in Poland, in terms of its historical development and current shape.

In the late 1980s, think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe began to develop dynamically. However, some research institutes that could be considered think tanks (in the broader sense of the term) had existed long before the beginning of the process of transformation. Already in the interwar period in Poland, the scope of policy research was quite broad.[37]

After World War II, policy analysis in all the communist countries of the CEE was monopolized by the government and the respective dominant ideology, although there were several levels of

[36] Ibid.: 402, 03.

[37] Among others, there were a few renowned institutes that specialized in matters concerning Eastern Europe, such as The Scientific Research Institute of Eastern Europe (Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy Europy Wschodniej) (1930-1939), or Eastern Institute (Instytut Wschodni) (1926-1939); See Marek Kornat, *Polska Szkoła Sowietologiczna 1930-1939* (Kraków: Arcana, 2003).

freedom in the "knowledge industry" at that time. According to Krastev (2000), it consisted of *Academia* ("Heaven": maximum intellectual freedom), the *Ministerial World* ("Hell": neither intellectual freedom nor political influence) and institutions affiliated to the *Nomenclature* ("Paradise": guaranteed political influence, but not intellectual freedom). Policy research was usually conducted either at the government-controlled academies of sciences or at ministry-affiliated research institutes. Some of these units have stood the test of time and operate successfully to this day (for example The Western Institute, Instytut Zachodni).

Among numerous problems that plagued expertise under communism, the lack of broader *agora* for discussing alternative proposals with the wider public was a very important factor. Ideas were thus debated in more or less informal discussion circles, which influenced the climate of opinion among some groups of intellectuals, such as The Club of the Crooked Circle (Klub Krzywego Koła) or Experience and Future (Doświadczenie i przyszłość), although both their independence and influence are disputable.[38]

When the Solidarity movement broke out, the intellectual ferment gained visibility. Numerous experts engaged in advisory activities for the Union and – for a short time – ideas circulated within enthusiastic segments of Polish society. For example, the so-called Center for Social and Professional Works (Ośrodek Prac Społeczno-Zawodowych) served as an advisory and consulting body of the Union. Its tasks included conducting research, preparing analysis and

[38] Andrzej Friszke, "Początki Klubu Krzywego Koła," in *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 2004).

prognoses. It produced recommendations on economic and social matters relevant to the leadership of the Union, as well as educational materials and drafts of documents or programs.[39] "The carnival of Solidarity" was followed by repression under martial law. However, these ideas persisted and intellectuals from the opposition went on with their conceptual work, paving the way for future reforms. Some of the expert circles that "grew out at the heart of the solidarity movement" went on to become institutionalized as the first independent think tanks in Poland.

An important advisory structure was formed on 18th December 1988 by 135 intellectuals and activists invited by Lech Wałęsa to the The Solidarity Citizens' Committee (*Komitet Obywatelski "Solidarność"*), originally named "Citizens' Committee with Lech Wałęsa" (*Komitet Obywatelski przy Lechu Wałęsie*). Issues covered by 15 specialized commissions that operated within the structure included: unions' pluralism (Tadeusz Mazowiecki), political reforms (Bronisław Geremek), law and justice (Adam Strzembosz), health (Zofia Kuratowska), science and education (Henryk Samsonowicz), culture and social communication (Andrzej Wajda), local government (Jerzy Regulski), and associations and social organizations (Klemens Szaniawski). The Committee formed an intellectual base for the "*Solidarność*" during the Round Table talks and parliamentary elections of 1989. Despite internal conflicts that marked the late period of its

[39] Grzegorz Majchrzak, "Ośrodek Prac Społeczno-Zawodowych," in *Encyklopedia Solidarności*, ed. Adam Borowski, et al. (2010).

activities, its role as a repository and generator of ideas for the emerging ruling elites was crucial.[40]

The process of transformation opened the window of opportunity for alternative expert knowledge. Policy research institutions in Poland have entered the public scene as players aspiring both to play and to shape the game at the same time. In fact, they have kept this ambition until today.

Basic characteristics of think tanks in Poland

What does the think tank sector in Poland look like today? In light of my estimation, based upon the analysis of references from directories, books, articles, TV and the internet, as well as the databases of Polish NGOs and scientific institutes, there are over 80 active institutions that, as one can argue, can be labeled as think tanks.[41] To sketch their institutional profile, we will consider the legal, financial and personal factors, as well as the fields of specialization and activities they take up.

Legal status

There is no distinctive legal mold for think tanks in Poland. In fact, as allowed by the broader definition, their legal forms are quite diversified (See: Chart 2).

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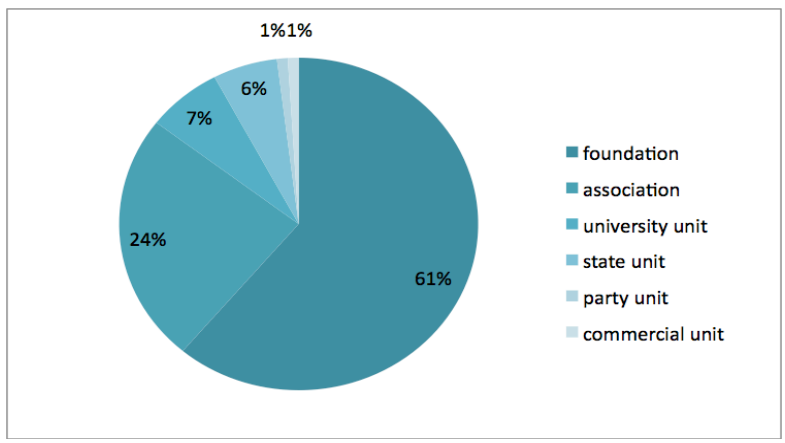
[40] Jaroław Szarek, "Komitet Obywatelski Przy Przewodniczącym Nszz „S" Lechu Wałęsie," in *Encyklopedia Solidarności*, ed. Adam Borowski, et al. (2010).

[41] According to Ziętara (and in line with James McGanns' think tank rankings), there are about 40 think tanks in Poland. Ziętara forecasts that their number should reach the level of about 60 in the next couple of years and thus stabilize.

Chart 2: The legal status of think tanks in Poland



Source: own research

85% of think tanks belong to the third sector: 61% as foundations (with such recognizable institutes as Adam Smith Center, CASE, The Gdańsk Institute for Market Economics, Institute of Public Affairs), and 24% as associations (including the Center for Political Thought, Global Development Research Group or the Institute of Geopolitics). The general legal framework for such activities is provided by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. In the 12th Article, it ensures "freedom for the creation and functioning of trade unions, socio-occupational organizations of farmers, societies, citizens' movements,

other voluntary associations and foundations".[42] More specific regulations are provided by The Act of April 6th 1984 The Law of Foundations, and The Act of April 4th 1989 The Law of Associations. However, to decide which of these associations and foundations can indeed be considered think tanks is neither easy nor indisputable.

Another group of think tanks, about 7%, operates within academic structures, as more or less autonomous entities. Examples include Ośrodek Analiz Politologicznych of the University of Warsaw (2010), Centrum Badań nad Terroryzmem Collegium Civitas (2005), and Centrum Badawcze Transformacji, Integracji i Globalizacji TIGER at Akademia Leona Koźmińskiego.

About 6% of the institutions belong to the public sector. These organizations are set up by separate legal regulations and are subjected to various governmental bodies. Most notable examples include the Polish Institute of International Affairs (Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, operating under the Act of 20 December 1996[43] and a statue[44]). PISM is a state organizational unit with legal personality. The Center of Eastern Studies (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnic), which used to be a state budgetary unit created by the act of the Minister of Economic

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[42] http://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/kon1.htmTHE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND OF 2nd APRIL, 1997 As published in *Dziennik Ustaw* No. 78, item 483

[43] "Ustawa Z Dnia 20 Grudnia 1996 R. O Polskim Instytucie Spraw Międzynarodowych.," in *Dz.U. 1996 nr 156 poz. 777* (1996).

[44] *Rozporządzenie Prezesa Rady Ministrów Z Dnia 5 Października 2009 R. W Sprawie Nadania Statutu Polskiemu Instytutowi Spraw Międzynarodowych.*

Cooperation with Abroad of 31 December 1990,[45] has been reorganized under the Act of 15 July 2011 and turned into a state legal body subjected to the Prime Minister.[46]

At the moment, there is just one party think tank in Poland, the Civic Institute (Instytut Obywatelski) – the expert division of the ruling party Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska) (although several other parties declare (and used to declare in the past) their will or first attempts to create similar institutes). In 2010, the Civic Platform submitted a bill to the Parliament, which provided for the creation of political foundations. For the time being, political parties may spend up to 15% of budgetary subventions on their expert fund (The Act of 27 June 1997 The Law on Political Parties). However, as there is no obligation behind this possibility, a lot of money is invested in TV advertisements or billboards. According to the bill, parties would have to create foundations and spend 25% of subventions on expert works and seminars. Possibilities for self-promotion would be seriously limited. Although the majority of political parties declared their support for the idea of extending expert activities of the parties, the project has not been accepted by the Parliament, notably due to limiting party subventions as such. Nevertheless, discussions concerning the

[45] *Zarządzenie Nr 15 Ministra Współpracy Gospodarczej Z Zagranicą Z Dnia 31 Grudnia 1990 R. W Sprawie Powołania Ośrodka Studiów Wschodnich.*

[46] *Ustawa Z 15 Lipca 2011 R. O Ośrodku Studiów Wschodnich Im. Marka Karpia.* See *Rozporządzenie Prezesa Rady Ministrów Z Dnia 12 Października 2011 R. W Sprawie Nadania Statutu Ośrodkowi Studiów Wschodnich Im. Marka Karpia.*

possibilities of introducing the system of party foundations have been restarted in the Sejm of the 7th cadence.[47]

Geography of expertise

The geographical distribution of think tanks in Poland is characterized by the prevalent dominance of Warsaw. 69% of organizations are located in the capital. There are also 8% in Kraków, and 4% both in Wrocław and Łódź. The concentration of analytical institutes around decision and media centers is a relatively general tendency. Although information technologies seem to reduce distance, they cannot change the fact that it is important "to be at hand" when new hot issues emerge unexpectedly. In addition, in the age of information overload, decision makers particularly value direct contact with experts.[48] The argument for developing regional think tanks results from the fact that many decisions that affect citizens to the largest extent are in fact taken at a local, municipal level. Moreover, creating expertise at some distance from capital cities sometimes allows for the consideration of alternative perspectives and the analysis of various subjects from different angles.[49]

Financing

Another aspect that substantially influences the everyday of the think tank sector is its financial structure. The financial standing of think tanks in Poland is still taking form. For a long time, Western donors provided

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[47] Marta Tumidalska, "Po Wraca Do Projektu O Przekazywaniu Części Subwencji Na Think-Tanki," *Polska Agencja Prasowa* 2012.

[48] See Anna Kwiatkowska-Drożdż, "Doradztwo W Zakresie Polityki Zagranicznej W Rfn," in *Doradztwo w polityce zagranicznej RFN - inspiracje dla Polski*, ed. Anna Łabuszewska and Katarzyna Kazimierska (Warszawa: Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, 2008).

[49] As underlined by one of the interviewed experts.

new policy research institutes with a substantial part of the necessary funds.[50] Foreign funding included that from private foundations (such as OSI, Olin Foundation, Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation and Ford Foundation), foreign government agencies or entrepreneurial funds (for example USAID, British Know-How Fund), public foundations (K. Adenauer Stiftung, F. Ebert Stiftung, etc.), international organizations (e.g. World Bank, IMF, OECD), and EU funds (structural funds, framework programs for research and development)[51]. With gradual consolidation of democracy in the region, some of the original sources of financial assistance "started moving eastwards"[52] and the EU's share of the funding of think tanks has thus increased remarkably.

Polish research institutions share financial problems that are typical for many think tanks across the world. They operate on a project basis and they usually have to search for funding to cover their core organizational costs. According to Schneider, "If they have limited funds their personnel (researchers) have to be affiliated to either academic institution (university, faculty, academy of sciences) or for-profit institution (consultancy, financial companies). Alternative arrangement means minimal staff with volunteers running a network of certified experts or limited staff on fundraising, project management, public

[50] Erik C. Johnson, "Central Europe's Think Tanks: A Voice for Reform," *Ideas into Action. Think tanks and Democracy.* 3(1996): 10.

[51] Jiří Schneider, "Think-Tanks in Visegrad Countries. (from Policy Research to Advocacy)," (Budapest: Center for Policy Studies, Central European University 2002), 13.

[52] Juliette Ebélé and Stephen Boucher, "Think Tanks in Central Europe. From the Soviet Legacy to the European Acquis," in *Think Tanks in Central Europe and Eurasia: A Selective Directory. Third Edition* (Budapest: Freedomhouse, 2006), 18.

relations and information technology (web page) while researchers are hired on specific projects."[53]

The need for patching up institutional budgets can (and often does) result in unsatisfactory financial transparency. Many think tanks still do not publish any information on their budget and donors. At the same time, it is increasingly suggested that think tanks' policies should not be considered in isolation from the broader framework of donor-recipient relations[54], especially with respect to foreign policy.

Although much investigation is needed to assess the sizes and structures of think tanks' budgets in Poland, our survey allows us to make a few working observations. First of all, the budgets differ in terms of size (for example for 2010 they ranged from 700 PLN to 8 435 000 PLN; only one organization had a budget near to the average of approximately 192 000 PLN). In comparison, the average budget of a NGO in Poland was 20 000 PLN, as it was for 2009.[55] Most financial resources reach think tanks through projects contracted by public administration and international organizations. The average volume of public resources equals 37%, although, if one excludes institutions financed solely from the public budget, it decreases to 12%.

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[53] Schneider, "Think-Tanks in Visegrad Countries. (from Policy Research to Advocacy)," 14.

[54] See Zdzisław Krasnodębski, "Po Koronacji Obamy," *Rzeczpospolita*, 27.01. 2009; Jan Filip Staniłko, "Między Cynizmem a Wartościami," *Rzeczpospolita*, 24.04. 2010; Jacek Kloczkowski, "Czasy Grubej Przesady," *Rzeczpospolita*, 01.08.2007 2007.

[55] Jan Herbst and Jadwiga Przewłocka, "Podstawowe Fakty O Organizacjach Pozarządowych. Raport Z Badania 2008," (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor, 2011), 64.

Insufficient diversification of financial resources, a subject often tackled in literature, is not a major problem for Polish think tanks. Most organizations have at least three alternative sources of financing their activities. The lack of stability seems to be much more important. Most think tanks do not have any financial reserves, which could enable them to operate independently of outside donations, and also to be self-sufficient when the flow of capital is blocked.[56]

This constant quest for money results in paradoxes. As remarked by Krastev, "[s]ome of the most respected East European think tanks exist because of their donors, on behalf of their donors, and for the sake of their donors ... They are inventive in producing proposals, ingenious in producing accounting reports, and professionals in not producing trouble."[57] Financial dependency, especially if some of the interests of potential donors are to be addressed in the research, may "turn think tanks into cheerleaders."[58] It is indisputably a challenge to reconcile the high level of intellectual production with a time-consuming fight for financing.

Human resources

The task of recruiting experts has posed a considerable challenge for the emerging market of think tanks in virtually all CEE

[56] Piotr Zbieranek, *Polski Model Organizacji Typu Think Tank* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, 2011).

[57] Krastev, "The Liberal Estate. Reflections on the Politics of Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe," 274.

[58] Tomasz Teluk, "Jak Bruksela Kupuje Intelektualistów," *Najwyższy Czas*, 13. 03. 2010.

countries. Reflecting on the first generation of think tankers in post-communist countries, Johnson cites three main sources of experts: poorly paid researchers from various disciplines who "sought to escape the often stagnant and inflexible academic environment, driven by the hope of playing a more active role in shaping the new institutions and policies of post-communist Central Europe"; members of opposition groups; and "frustrated – or sometimes replaced – officials from government."[59] It may be added that, in some cases, the backgrounds of some of the Polish think tankers combined all of the aforementioned characteristics.

The craft of "think tankery" was something to be mastered gradually. Initially, "university-educated researchers in the region often lacked practical training in policy relevant research and analysis [...] They tended to produce lengthy research reports, directed at identifying trends, rather than short, policy-oriented and problem-solving papers."[60] Problems in form overlapped with deeper structural problems of a Polish social science still recovering from the torpor of communism. Additionally, the scarcity of financial resources has affected employment policy amongst think tanks and, as a consequence, the output of many institutes: "[r]elying on unpaid expert or unskilled volunteer staff, for example, may have impact on the quality of policy research and advice, but it may also indicate the ability to attract a broad community that is interested in and agrees with the work think tanks undertake or the ideals they promote."[61]

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[59] Johnson, "Central Europe's Think Tanks: A Voice for Reform," 10.

[60] Ebélé and Boucher, "Think Tanks in Central Europe. From the Soviet Legacy to the European Acquis," 18.

[61] Roland Kovats, "Think Tanks: A Cornerstone of Democracy," (2000), 7.

Today, think tanks maintain relatively large network of specialists who occasionally participate in concrete projects. In terms of the average values obtained in our survey, one may observe that the base of experts who cooperate with Polish think tanks exceeds 11 (in case of permanent cooperation), and 36 (when occasional cooperation is included). The number who have full-time jobs at think tanks is much lower, as think tanks in Poland hire on average 13 experts and 3 administrative employees.[62]

There are several factors that explain the dominance of these *ad hoc* forms of cooperation with experts. Primarily, there are some limitations of the spatial and financial nature. It is not possible to maintain a huge staff of experts in think tank offices (if they even have offices). In addition, working on a contract basis is in line with global trends observed on the labor market. Due to high labor costs, many employers avoid employing their staff in established posts. However, there is also one notable, think tank specific factor: to a large extent, their organizational brands rest upon the reputations of the experts they cooperate with. The expert pools of many think tanks include renowned professors, businessmen, (ex)politicians etc. People with such positions do agree to join program councils and to provide analyses from time to

[62] There are big discrepancies behind these average values: 8 institution do not hire an employees, 9 hire less than 10 employees, 4 between 10 and 20 and 4 employ over 50 experts. In James McGann's research institutions hired between 6 and 1100 experts. See: James G. McGann, ed. *Think Tanks and Policy Advice in the Us Academics, Advisors and Advocates* (Routledge,2007), 23. Similarly, in case of administrative staff, the values vary considerably: 10 organizations have no administrative employees, 14 between 1 and 10 and two biggest have 15 administrative workers.

time. Yet, they usually treat think tanks not as a main field of their activities, but as a sort of add-on (except for those situations when the revolving door phenomenon occurs and think tanks serve as an emergency exit after losing another post). At the same time, being a think tank employee is very attractive for younger analysts who are still working for their reputation.

Think tank experts in Poland have varying backgrounds. They usually have experience in science, but also in the third sector, public administration and business. The least common backgrounds include the national parliament and the media.

What criteria are considered to be the most important for taking up cooperation with experts? Answers given in the surveys have shown that a certain mixture of "scientific" and "practical" experiences is most desired (although, as explained by one of the interviewed experts, "it is hard to answer such questions directly, because we conduct over 50 projects a year and different projects require different qualifications"). The elements of this mixture include specific knowledge in a given field, scientific qualifications, practical experience in a given field, and publications. Among criteria labeled as the least important there are political beliefs, experience gained in parliament and local administration (governmental administration is slightly more valued). Additional criteria, suggested by one think tank, consisted of "capacities of analytical thinking and finding access to information".

Placing political beliefs right at the bottom of the list of criteria considered in the process of recruiting experts provokes questions about translation of such declarations into reality. If think tanks wish to influence politics, then the political and ideological orientations of

experts may play an important role. At this point, it is important to differentiate between the political orientation of a think tank as an organization, and the political beliefs of individual experts who operate under its aegis. The first aspect will be discussed later – we are going to ask if, and to what extent, and to which extent can we talk about clear cut ideological and political profiles of Polish think tanks. As far as the second aspect is concerned, nobody officially asks experts about their political preferences. Many institutions declare in their codes of ethics or guidelines that all politically colored (at times generally all) statements are made by experts on their own, rather than on the think tank's behalf.[63] Some think tanks declare that they exclude experts from certain activities the moment they start performing some functions in the public administration or government. However, such preventive steps do not change a simple fact that experts do not exist in a political vacuum. Similar beliefs may attract each other beyond official channels and, over the course of time, take the form of epistemic communities.

The backgrounds of think tank experts, as well as the most important criteria of initiating cooperation with experts, show quite clearly that experts gain their symbolic capital outside the proper field of expertise. One may argue that only securing a high status in a different field (such as science, or public administration) makes it possible to speak authoritatively from expert positions. Another important characteristic of think tank experts, which was underlined both in the think tank's mission statements and in the interviews, can be labeled as "pro-activeness". It has to do with taking the initiative to search for important

[63] For example see http://case.indigo.pl/strona--ID-o_case_kodeks,nlang-710.html

research subjects, attracting the attention of potential publics and the media.[64]

Fields of specialization and activities

Another characteristic that seems to be important for drawing a fuller picture of Polish think tanks concerns the fields of specializations of these organizations. Most popular areas include foreign, economic and social policies (See Chart 2).

Chart 2: Most popular fields of specialization of Polish think tanks

European integration	65,4%
Civic society	57,7%
Foreign policy	53,8%
International relations	53,8%
Civic participation	50,0%
Economic policy	50,0%
Economics	46,2%
Social policy	42,3%

Source: own research

The least popular thematic fields include pathologies of social life and the natural environment (which is quite surprising when we think about how important ecological issues are in public debates and policies). The fact that legal and human rights issues are uncommon is also surprising. Few organizations take up "non-up-to-date" subjects, such as history and political philosophy.

[64] For example see www.inspro.org.pl

Most institutes operating on the Polish market of ideas have a broad or a very broad spectrum of interests. Just a few organizations specialize in narrow fields. Symptomatic is also a dose of flexibility and willingness to deal with new subjects that politicians, the media and donors are particularly interested in. This last group particularly influences the thematic profiles of think tanks (as admitted by several experts during the interviews). Another remarkable tendency is to take up innovative subjects. Think tanks willingly present themselves as pioneers who discover and popularize niche, but important subjects that otherwise would skip the attention of the media, politics and science.

A further feature of our characteristics is about the activities taken up by Polish think tanks. The spectrum is once again broad. Over 90% of organizations declare that they organize conferences, seminars and other events – both open to the general public, and behind closed doors by invitation only. Over 60% of organizations conduct their own research and publish academic research; almost 50% conduct practice-oriented research, and 56% propose solutions to practical problems. Interestingly, commenting on current events in the media has the same value. These results are interesting in the sense that they contrast with a rather popular image, according to which, conducting and popularizing research, combined with inventing policy solutions, is a key activity and sort of a trade mark of think tanks. In this sense, they confirm Diane Stone's remarks about the limited correspondence between the myths and reality.[65]

[65] Diane Stone, "Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks? Three Myths Regarding Policy Analysis Institutes," *Public Administration* 85, no. 2 (2007).

In the light of our findings, an "average" (or rather "averaged") think tank in Poland belongs to the third sector, its foundation has a legal status and its headquarters is in Warsaw. Its annual budget is approximately 192 000 PLN. It hires over a dozen experts and a few members of the administrative staff, although its network of *ad hoc* collaborators is much broader. Its main field of analysis includes international relations, and organizing conferences seems to be the most common form of popularizing its findings. However, if one looks beyond statistics, it becomes clearer that the microcosm of think tanks is certainly extremely diverse and – in spite of a few sharks – there is plenty of "expert plankton" which tries to fight for its own survival.

Balancing for identity

The basic picture of the Polish think tank sector presented above can be a good foundation for asking further questions – there are certainly many that can and should be asked. In the following section, we would like to address the issue of "political identity" of think tanks in Poland. Our study shows that unlike many other countries with established think tank traditions, where organizations with clear ideological and political profiles occupy most of the expert scene, the majority of the think tanks in Poland choose to rely on the image of "neutrality". In the following paragraphs, we are going to ask how think tanks shape and view their own activity "between the world of politics and independent analysis" and will try to interpret their strategies within the framework of the concept of boundary work.

Think tanks can be conceptualized as boundary organizations that draw from different cultural repertoires in order to gain recognition

in the public sphere and to realize their organizational goals. Basic points of reference for think tanks are provided by science and politics. Both on their websites and in the answers to our survey, Polish think tanks have declared that their most important values are scientific integrity, research independence, objectivism and the ability to be apolitical. On the other hand, they have been promoting certain political beliefs and representing social groups. It is quite surprising that the ambition to influence politics has been classified as quite low ,[66]

[66] The attempt to deepen the issue of influence in the interviews has shown that Polish think tanks – as some interviewed experts put it – "have aspirations but not illusions", "are aware of their limitations" and "are not driven by ambition of exercising influence but by an intellectual passion". Some think tanks try to influence legislative and decision processes (for example via preparing and assessing bills, monitoring), however most agree that "cooperation with the public administration is difficult". Although think tanks in Poland have made important achievements in the field of policy, in the course of the interviews they usually mention just that politicians build on their ideas or cite their formulations (often without referring to the source) from time to time. Most interviewed experts associated influence with being present in the media ("more visibility=better promotion"). In case of important and topical subjects, "the interest may be big" and "there is a chance of influencing the shape of public debate". At the same time, "it is difficult to initiate a broader discussion". It is much easier to start a debate among experts. "Improving content-related level of discussion also seems to be achievable". Zbieranek reaches similar conclusions: "The sector is trying to influence the public opinion in the first line, in the second particular bodies of opinion – scientists, politicians and civil servants. These groups, or, in other words, social actors think tanks concentrate their activities on, create the multidimensional nature of their influence. Firstly, through the sphere of the media the sector shapes the public opinion. Secondly, it tries to reach scientists and create together the scientific and intellectual climate. Finally, it is interested in group that participate in shaping public policies, that is politicians and civil servants". Zbieranek, *Polski Model Organizacji Typu Think Tank*, 169, 71.

although it is often regarded as symptomatic of think tanks.[67] Political influence is a complex category that allows for different interpretations. With regard to think tanks, Stone differentiates their three aspects – politically-bureaucratic, social and organizational.[68]

While "bridging" science and politics (in fact, this is one of the most popular images in the mythology of think tanks[69]), think tanks need to look for their own identity. To a large extent, science is a reference point for them. If we analyze the way they do it in terms of boundary work, we may observe that the mechanisms of coordination (dominating in the survey answers), co-exist with a clear demarcation (that also dominates in the interviews).

Ideals (that is: integrity, research independence, as well as being objective and apolitical) and organizational goals (providing the public debate with data, information and knowledge) of Polish think tanks, as well as and most valued experiences and characteristics of their experts, can be considered to be a clear reference to the language and cultural repertoire of science.[70]

Demarcation can be observed at two levels. First of all, interviewed experts underline that think tanks offer a "different" kind of knowledge – expertise that touches upon burning issues, recommends solutions and is implementable. Its language is said to be accessible not

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[67] Donald E. Abelson, *A Capitol Idea. Think Tanks & U.S. Foreign Policy* (Montreal, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), xv, xvi.

[68] See Stone, "Think Tanks and Policy Advice in Countries in Transition," 16.

[69] See ——, "Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks? Three Myths Regarding Policy Analysis Institutes."

[70] Por. Thomas Medvetz, "Think Tanks as an Emergent Field," (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2008).

only to peer-experts, but also to politicians, journalists and the general (though interested) public. Think tanks exceed disciplinary boundaries, cherish all forms of interdisciplinary and are flexible about methodologies and sources they consult.[71]

The second aspect of demarcation contrasts the ideal of scientific disinterestedness and neutrality with the think tanks' engagement and commitment to (at times political or ideological) values they want to pursue. Of course, there are different kinds of think tanks: advocacy and academic modes vary with respect to the degree of engagement. The literature on think tanks informs us of a tendency towards ideologization of think tanks' activities. More advocacy tanks have been created during the last few decades.[72] However, think tanks in Poland – at least in their official presentations - stick to the academic model and heavily draw from the cultural repertoire of science. Only a few organizations openly declare that they represent some ideological or political position. The survey confirms this observation. Only a few think tanks declared themselves to be "liberal" or "social democratic", or talked about ideas that inspire their activities (at the same time stipulating that they do not influence research outcomes). Most organizations claimed to be "neutral", "independent", "apolitical", or not to have any political or ideological orientation at all.

[71] Such an image seems to fit much of the mode 2 model of knowledge. See Helga Nowotny, Peter Scott, and Michael Gibbons, "'Mode 2' Revisited: The New Production of Knowledge," *Minerva* 41(2003).

[72] See R. Kent Weaver, "The Changing World of Think Tanks," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 22, no. 2 (1989).

Another perspective has been revealed in the interviews when experts said that "ideological identification is important" and that "there is no contradiction between vision and knowledge". It has also been confirmed that think tanks often gather experts with similar convictions (although the channels of selection are rather informal) and form an intellectual base of some political circles. In addition, several experts suggested that "neutrality" and "independence" (declared so important in the mission statements and survey answers) is in fact just a "façade" (of course only in the case of others). On the one hand, interviewed experts underline that "it is possible to declare one's beliefs in a think tank", which is "a healthy situation for the audience". On the other hand, it is "good to hang out banners, but not to wave with them too excessively". Generally (to use the words of some interviewed experts), Polish think tanks often "pretend that there is no politics", "experts screen themselves off from politics and just a few make a creative use of the fact of operating in the political reality", which can be described as a "childhood illness of being apolitical".

Such diagnosis inspires questions about possible reasons behind it. One can argue that the "neutral" attitude of most Polish think tanks reflects the ambition to create an image of institutions that are reliable due to their intellectual independence. Referring to American think tanks, Andrew Rich considered credibility to be the main capital of these organizations. According to Rich, in the USA, financial independence plays the most important role. Even think tanks with clear ideological or political profiles try to prove their independence from interest groups or

from the state.[73] In Poland, the efforts to gain the image of an independent and credible organization do not concentrate on the sphere of budgets, but instead on political affiliations.

Independence in regards to think tanks is indeed complex and contextual. Stone and Ulrich differentiate among its several aspects: legal (independence from state institutions), financial (manifested in diversification of financing sources), and scientific (the freedom to choose research subjects and to conduct research honestly).[74] Magued Osman and Nesreen El Molla understand independence as "the right of institution to function according to its own normative and organizational principles without external interference". They argue that "[f]or a think tank, this refers to the degree of self-regulation with respect to matters such as methods of conducting research, recruitment of policy for staff, internal workflow and the management of resources; whether generated from public or private sources."[75] They also differentiate amongst several factors of institutional and intellectual nature. Institutional independence is affected by funding modality, a clarified mission statement, internal management autonomy, an enlarged circle of beneficiaries, regulated links with a donor/ international organizations, accountability and external auditing. Furthermore, intellectual

[73] Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 12.

[74] Diane Stone and Heidi Ullrich, "Policy Research Institutes and Think Tanks in Western: Development Trends and Perspectives," *Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, Open Society Institute* 24(2003): 7, 8.

[75] Magued Osman and Nesreen El Molla, "The Politics of Independence. Can Government Think Tanks Act Independently? ," in *International Conference on the Role of Think Tanks in Developing Countries: Challenges and Solutions* (Cairo 2009), 7.

independence consists of setting own agendas, academic excellence and quality assurance, "advisory firewall", openness and publicity for the image of the building and prestige.[76]

A specific aspect of organizational autonomy is underlined by Enrique Mendizabal, in whose opinion think tanks should be able to decide their political affiliations, ideological stance and supporting parties or persons accordingly to their will.77 Mendizabal thinks that in the states where the think tank sector is not well-developed and rooted, such forms of independence may well encounter resistance, although:

> *The idea of independence as non-affiliation is damaging for think tanks in developing countries. It leads them to think that the only way of achieving it is to let the research speak for itself avoid any close relationships with political or economic powers, and this can, in some cases, stop them from exploring new ways of fulfilling their missions. Striking the right balance will not be easy -and in some contexts may be well beyond the capacity of the think tank itself- but not trying is not a sign of independence; on the contrary, it suggests that the think tank has its hands tied to one single path.* [78]

Conclusions

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[76] Ibid., 7-13.

[77] Enrique Mendizabal, "Independence, Dependency, Autonomy... Is It All About the Money?," in *On think tanks* (2011).

[78] Ibid.

Over the last twenty years, the think tank sector in Poland has been developing and self-strengthening. Various obstacles of financial, cultural or organizational nature do not change the fact that think tanks have become (to be considered) an important voice in public debate and policy making. With this process of transformation, think tanks in have Poland faced "the formidable task of teaching government [as well as the media, academics and business, one might add] who they are and how they can help".[79] However, at the same time, they had to – and still have to – answer these questions themselves and for themselves.

While constructing their identity as an organization, the spheres of science and politics serve as the main reference points for think tanks – not only in Poland. They constitute both a backup or reservoir, and a target. Therefore, constant "boundary work", and the act of balancing between "the scientific" and "the political" takes place. Although each

[79] Johnson, "Central Europe's Think Tanks: A Voice for Reform," 10. However, one could argue that the task was even more challenging and consisted of convincing both politicians and public opinion of the importance of expertise in general. In fact, consulting external expert sources is still regarded as a kind of extravagance or wastefulness in Poland. For example, some time ago the Ministry of Foreign Affairs came under fire for commissioning several think tanks to prepare policy analyses. The fact that diverse institutes were asked to draft parallel proposals evoked surprise amongst TV journalists. The Ministry's speaker had to explain that diversifying the knowledge base for political decisions may be indeed useful. At the same time, members of state analytic institutions complain about the lack of interest on the part of politicians. Government has no habit of ordering studies or listening to external experts. Although there are sins committed both on the supply and demand side of policy advice in Poland, most of the blame is attributed to politicians and their know-it-all attitude. See Wojciech Lorenz and Tatiana Serwetnyk, "Czy Politycy Zaczną Doceniać Ekspertów," *Rzeczpospolita*, 26.01. 2008; Wawrzyniec Smoczyński, "Raport O Think Tankach. Myślą I Rządzą," *Polityka* 2009.

specific organization tries to find its own balance, most think tanks in Poland choose the warning coloration of science-based "neutrality" and therefore avoid any ideological and political declarations.

Although in the collective characteristics of Polish think tanks the "scientific" element seems to dominate the "political" element, the latter is important in terms of gaining influence on politics, but also on policy. As Stone and Ulrich explained it, "Think tanks or policy institutes need to have some kind of engagement with government if they are to succeed in influencing policy. However, their desire to preserve intellectual autonomy means that most institutes try to strike a delicate balance between dependence on government and total isolation from it."[80] It is beyond any discussion that the task of "influencing the influentials [...] without being influenced by them" [81] requires a lot of effort. For this reason, think tanks' independence may be understood as actually keeping an appropriate distance. Too narrow political ties may result in political bias of the research and the lost of autonomy. An excessive distance, on the other hand, may make even the best policy research useless and unused.[82]

Think tanks are thus doomed to be "politically apolitical". As Adam Bodnar and Jacek Kucharczyk, two top Polish think tankers put it: "We understand being apolitical as an indispensable distance from political parties and independence from the government. It does not

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[80] Stone and Ullrich, "Policy Research Institutes and Think Tanks in Western: Development Trends and Perspectives," 7.

[81] Osman and Molla, "The Politics of Independence. Can Government Think Tanks Act Independently? ," 10.

[82] Eric C. Johnson, "How Think Tanks Improve Public Policy," *Economic Reform Today* 3(1996): 35.

mean that we dissociate ourselves from the influence on the politics of the public authorities. But we try to do so from independent and expert positions that result from the values – political values as well – related to the mission of our organizations."[83]

Due to the fact that think tanks are hybrid organizations[84] operating at the intersection of various spheres that they are supposed to bridge, their independence needs to be regarded as "managing distance". On the one hand, "[s]trong connections might limit the intellectual independence of researchers by politicizing their research priorities", while on the other hand, "too much distance between a think tank and government may result in research irrelevant to policymaking."[85] To a large degree, the same can be said to apply to the links with the media or with business.

[83] Adam Bodnar and Jacek Kucharczyk, "Romantycznie I Rozważnie," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19. 01. 2010.

[84] See Medvetz, "Think Tanks as an Emergent Field."

[85] Johnson, "How Think Tanks Improve Public Policy," 35.

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