

Chapter 17

Think Tanks

To appear in:

Schubert, Klaus/Blum, Sonja (eds.), 2012: Policy Analysis in Germany, International Library of Policy Analysis, The Policy Press Bristol.

Sven Jochem

University Konstanz

Mail: sven.jochem@uni-konstanz.de

1. Draft

Date: 06/03/12

1 Introduction¹

Think tanks are a “growth industry” in Germany, at least since the 1990s. Partly due to German unification, think tanks became more clearly visible in the public debate. In this respect, Germany followed an international trend (McGann 2011: 16), albeit with some delay – “(t)hink tanks have a ‘virus-like’ quality” (Stone 2004: 15) in Germany and the rest of the world. The ambition of this chapter is to present an overview of the development of German think tanks and to analyse how think tanks conduct policy analyses, how they try to influence the public debate and the crucial decision making and, finally, how successful they are. A special analytical focus rests on the supposed dualism between academic policy analyses and policy analyses conducted by think tanks.

In Germany, as well as in other parts of the world, the contours of think tanks blurred during the most recent history. While early research stated that think tanks are “universities without students” (Weaver 1989: 564), the increase in the number of advisory agencies created difficulties to differentiate think tanks from other organizations that provide policy analyses (or policy briefings), try to influence policy making or try to push forward specific policy interests in the process of democratic decision making. Hence, think tank is a “slippery term” (Stone 2004: 2). One prominent clarification of the term notes that think tanks are “privately or publicly financed, application-oriented research institutes, whose main function it is to provide scientifically founded, often inter-disciplinary analyses and comments on a broad field of relevant political issues and propositions” (Thunert 1999: 10).

Such a definition of think tanks implies that they provide *independent* scientific analyses for policy-makers, i.e. that they *independently* mediate between the ‘ivory tower’ and the ‘real world of politics’ – an assumption that has to be questioned. Think tanks provide policy analyses to the public, but at the same time they become more and more active entrepreneurs in policy communities. Furthermore, they act from self-interest in ‘empire building’, i.e. in defending their influence in the policy community vis-à-vis competitors on the political market – and sometimes vis-à-vis the dynamics of the political debate in a broader sense. In this respect, the policy analyses conducted by the German ‘universities without students’ fulfil sometimes academic standards, but serve as instruments to gain power and influence in the process of policy formulation and decision-making, too (cf. Stone 2007).

¹ The author would like to thank Patrick Simm for his marvellous research assistance! The usual disclaimer applies.

Contemporary research divides between advocacy think tanks, academic think tanks and mission oriented think tanks (cf. Weaver 1999). As Sharon Stone argues, these boundaries between these different ‘policy institutes’ blurred more or less. She assumes a process of convergence in the worldwide think tank development (Stone 2007). Nevertheless, in this chapter the differentiation between (originally) academic and (originally) advocacy think tanks serves as a conceptual framework. Additionally, think tanks are further differentiated in respect of how much they depend on public or on private funding (see Graph 1).

Graph 1: Conceptual Differentiation of Think Tanks and Case Studies

		Advocacy Think Tanks	Academic Think Tanks
Funding	State	--	Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB)
	Market	Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft (employers) WSI (trade unions)	Bertelsmann Stiftung

Think tanks – as well as other NGOs – strategically adapt to those requirements the political system implies for successful political action (‘political opportunities’). The German consensual democracy provides a multitude of “veto points” (Immergut 1992) in the decision-making process. Think tanks – as well as other interest organizations – therefore have a multitude of opportunities to influence the political debate or specific political actors at these “points of uncertainty” (Immergut 1992) in the German policy-making process. From an institutional point of view, the fragmented political system in Germany therefore is a fertile ground for think tanks.

The need for academic advice in policy making expanded recently. Not only because of the increasing complexity of policy making in the European Union, but because of the soaring needs for justification of policy decisions in the era of a multilayered ‘media democracy’. The locus of the political debate more and more moved from the parliament into the general public debate. Additionally, the opportunity to gather immediately information in the internet challenges the Members of Parliament to motivate their decisions on a solid, i.e. a (more or less) scientific ground. And furthermore, the occurrence of ‘New Public Management’-methods itself opened the doors for think tanks to enter the inner circles of public administration in Germany (cf. Färber/Salm/Zeitz 2011). Taken together, not only the institutional structure of the political system in Germany fosters think tanks but also the changing nature of the policy making process implies numerous opportunities for think tank activities.

This chapter shows how think tanks entered the core of academically informed policy advice since the 1990s (cf. Jochem/Vatter 2006). The main argument is that the dualism between academic policy analyses and applied policy analyses could be overcome by some think tanks. Some other think tanks, however, changed their strategy towards directly influencing the public debate, thereby successfully employing new media on the internet. It is difficult to explain why think tanks are following different strategies. But it seems plausible to argue that the closer think tanks are coupled with the academic community and the more they depend on public funding, the more it seems to be granted that policy advices are academically substantiated. The privately funded Bertelsmann Foundation is a somehow contradictory case in this respect, as the scientific foundation of the policy analyses is rather high despite its formal separation from genuinely academic institutions. The German employers, in contrast, decided to directly influence the public opinion in order to get their interests observed in the public debate, a decision that weakened the academic profile of the policy analyses but increased the impact on the public debate.

In the following section, a short overview over the development of German think tanks – and their policy analyses – is provided. In the next sections four case studies of think tanks prominently encouraged in the contemporary policy making process are analysed in depth (Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut, Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft). In each of the case studies, the organizational as well as financial developments of the respective think tanks are

reported. Additionally, it is shown how these think tanks try to influence the public debate with their policy analyses. The last section concludes and discusses open research questions.

2 The Landscape of German Think Tanks – An Overview

Think Tanks in Germany provide policy analyses, influence the public debate and are an essential part of the domestic policy community. Real-world think tanks differ in the degree of how far they fulfil these functions in German politics. In this section, a short overview over the development of German Think Tanks is provided. Based on this overview the selection of the four case studies is further established.

The number of think tanks increased significantly since the 1990s. Albeit it is difficult to gather exact data on this issue, several contributions in the literature provide estimates. Thunert argues that over 1.000 think tanks (in a broad sense) exist (Thunert 2006: 186). In a narrow sense of the term, he estimates the number of think tanks between 70 and 100. A private internet based report about think tanks in Germany and Europe, the ‘think tank directory’, counts about 130 think tanks current observable in Germany.² Other estimations provided by Speth affirm the number of 130 think tanks (Speth 2010: 395).

From a comparative point of view, the density of think tanks in Germany is very high. A comparative report on think tanks worldwide ranks Germany on the fifth place concerning the plain number of think tanks. On the first ranks, the United States, China, India and the UK are listed. For 2010, the report estimates that about 191 think tanks exist in Germany.³ Regardless of how many think tanks exactly are observable in German politics, the major conclusion is that there are (at least) many think tanks – and that the number is still increasing.

The legal status of think tanks in Germany differs from case to case. Immediately after World War II most think tanks in Germany were organized as branches from academic institutions or as branches from political institutions (i.e. from parties or interest organizations). Judicially, the form of a registered association (‘Eingetragener Verein, e.V.’) was dominant besides charitable associations. The share of public funding in these early think tanks was

² The ‘think tank directory’ is provided on the internet by Daniel Florian (<http://www.thinktankdirectory.org/>, accessed 27.01.2012).

³ The following data refer to McGann (2011). This report is based on e-mail surveys; hence, these data should be interpreted very cautiously.

extraordinarily high. In the most recent history, the German law alleviates the creation of foundations (and makes them an interesting organizational form with regard to taxation). Accordingly, an increasing number of privately financed foundations enter the political landscape in Germany (Speth 2010, Welzel 2006).

In the literature, the conceptual distinction between academic and advocacy think tanks is applied. An *academic think tank* created directly by the government is for example the ‘Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik’ (‘German Institute for International and Security Affairs’, since 1962) which is financed nearly entirely by the German chancellery.⁴ The SWP may be considered as a ‘child of the cold war’, as the government aspired to improve knowledge in foreign relations in these times (Zunker 2006). This think tank is very influential in foreign policies, peace research and global governance. In the beginning it was localized deliberately in Munich, i.e. far away from the centre of German politics in Bonn. In 2001, however, it moved to Berlin in order to simplify political exchange with decision-makers.

The largest group of academic think tanks are, however, Leibniz institutes. The ‘Leibniz Association’ (‘Leibniz Gesellschaft’) serves as an umbrella organization for different research institutes. Due to the federal nature of Germany, the federation and the federal states agreed in the 1960s to coordinate research investments. Since the 1970s, specific research institutes are co-financed by the respective federal state in which they are located and the federation (mostly on a fifty-fifty norm). One crucial aspect is that research of the member institutes is dedicated to provide knowledge and advice for the interest of the public (“*theoria cum praxi: science for the benefit and good of humankind*” as it is stated on the website).⁵ Currently, the Leibniz Association incorporates 86 research institutes, covering the whole range of possible scientific research. The budget for 2010 was in total 1.380 millions €.

The Leibniz institutes dominate the ground of academic think tanks. In economics, the most influential think tanks are for example the ‘ifo Institute’⁶, the ‘DIW’⁷, or the ‘Kiel Institute for the World Economy’⁸, to mention only a few. Other Leibniz research institutes cover social

⁴ Cf. for further information: <http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/about-swp.html> (accessed 27.01.2012).

⁵ See for further information: <http://www.wgl.de/> (accessed 27.01.2012).

⁶ Cf. <http://www.cesifo-group.de/portal/page/portal/ifoHome> (accessed 27.01.2012).

⁷ Cf. <http://www.diw.de/en> (accessed 27.01.2012).

⁸ Cf. http://www.ifw-kiel.de/kiel-institute-for-the-world-economy/view?set_language=en (accessed 27.01.2012).

sciences in a broad sense (as for example the WZB, cf. below) or mathematics, life sciences and educational research.⁹ The evaluation process of the Leibniz institutes is very challenging. All research institutes are committed to apply the principles of good scientific practice. This goal is regularly evaluated through external evaluation processes.

Further examples of genuinely state financed academic think tanks are the Max-Planck research institutes. The share of public funding is currently 80 percent and the total budget in 2011 was 1.400 millions €. The Max-Planck society has a dominant focus on natural sciences. However, it also includes social science research institutes as well as research institutes in humanities or jurisprudence.¹⁰

Think tanks with public funding dominate the section of academic think tanks, but academic think tanks with private funding are becoming more and more important. The major example for the latter branch of think tanks is the Bertelsmann Foundation (cf. below). Another example is the ‘Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik’ (‘German Council on Foreign Relations’)¹¹, or the Gemeinnützige Hertie Stiftung (‘Hertie Foundation’)¹², to mention again only few.

The other category contains *advocacy thinks tank*. This term implies that the core function of think tanks, i.e. to be independent ‘universities without students’, is to a certain extent limited because of the explicit connection of the think tanks to political actors. In Germany, the foundations of the major political parties dominate this branch. Because of the ‘semi-public’ status of parties in Germany, the party foundations are mainly financed with state transfers. They do not only provide policy analyses in specific areas but also provide financial aid to students and run specific establishments worldwide in order to foster democracy or to intensify international collaboration. The most prominent party foundations are the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation of the SPD (FES, founded in 1925), the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation of the CDU (KAS, founded in 1964), the Hanns-Seidel Foundation of the CSU (founded in 1967), the Friedrich-Naumann Foundation of the FDP (founded in 1958) and the Heinrich-Böll Foundation of the Green Party (founded in 1996). The Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation

⁹ For a comprehensive overview cf. the list of institutes on the website of the Leibniz Association with further links to the respective institutes (<http://www.wgl.de/?nid=ers&nidap=&print=0>, accessed 27.01.2012).

¹⁰ Cf. <http://www.mpg.de/en> (accessed 27.01.2012).

¹¹ Cf. <https://dgap.org/en> (accessed 27.01.2012).

¹² Cf. <http://www.ghst.de/english/hertie-foundation/overview/> (accessed 27.01.2012).

belongs to the Leftparty and was founded lastly in 1998. Thunert estimates that approximately 20 percent of all activities (and of the total budget) of these political foundations cover think tank activities (i.e. policy analyses), the rest of activities is targeted, according to him, to other activities such as international collaboration and networking (Thunert 2006: 194).

Other important advocacy think tanks are linked to specific interest groups. Traditionally, the think tanks of trade unions play an important role. These think tanks were founded in order to counteract mainstream economic research. In Germany, the WSI of the German Trade Union Federation is the most important think tank in this respect (cf. below). Employers and employers' federations foster think tanks, too. Traditionally, the German employers' federations have their own advocacy think tanks, mainly focusing economic policy making.¹³ However, since 2000, German employers in the manufacturing industries pushed forward a new kind of think tank, the 'Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft (INSM)' (cf. below).

Very recently, smaller think tanks emerged in German politics, which to a certain extent transcend these classical categories of contemporary think tanks. Some of these new think tanks were founded by some politicians in order to push forward specific policy solutions – for example the 'Institut für Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft (IWG)' that was founded by the CDU politician Kurt Biedenkopf and the economist Meinhard Miegel in 1977, and which in the beginning focused mainly pension policies¹⁴. Another example is the 'Institut solidarische Moderne (ISM)', which was founded by the former social democratic party leader in Hesse (Andrea Ypsilanti), a green Member of the European Parliament (Sven Giegold) and Katja Kipping, a Member of the German Bundestag for the Leftparty. The ISM has been interpreted as an organized attempt to deepen the programmatic cooperation between the SPD, the Green Party as well as the Leftparty – and to prepare in the long run a red-red-green coalition in Germany.¹⁵ Another trend very recently observable is to establish think tanks with a rather narrow academic perspective. One example to mention here is the 'Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit (IZA)', which is financed through the Deutsche Post Foundation and project related funding. This think tank is associated with the economics department at the

¹³ The counterpart of the WSI is the 'Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft (IW)', which is the economic research think tank of German employers' organizations (cf: <http://www.iwkoeln.de/Home/tabid/40/language/en-US/Default.aspx>, accessed 27.01.2012).

¹⁴ In 2007 the IWG was reorganized. Today the think tank is fused with the 'Denkwerk Zukunft. Stiftung kulturelle Erneuerung' (<http://www.denkwerkzukunft.de/index.php/englishdocuments>, accessed 27.01.2012). It is mainly financed through donations from the industry as well as by private persons.

¹⁵ Cf. (only in German): <http://www.solidarische-moderne.de/> (accessed 27.01.2012).

University of Bonn and provides high-standard economic analyses, policy advice and international networking of advanced economic research.¹⁶

Policy making is the art of coalition building and networking. In this respect, German think tanks provide resources for policy networking and information exchange. The ‘market of ideas’ is permanently fostered by think tanks. One example of networking is the close cooperation between the Bertelsmann Foundation and the Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Societies concerning the German ‘Bündnis für Arbeit’. In order to provide policy analyses and to combine economic advice with decision makers, both think tanks were directly integrated into the reform movements for the German social pact – that in fact failed in the end (cf. Schroeder 2003, Siegel 2003). Another example is the collaboration of (again) the Bertelsmann Foundation and the ‘Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung (CHE)’ in education reforms. Combined policy analyses and policy advice paved the way for the so called ‘Excellenzinitiative’ under the red-green government, i.e. the promotion of high-performance universities, (Speth 2010: 400).

Beyond networking, think tank activities are also directed towards the new media. Think tanks systematically try to use social networks in order to influence the public debate. A comparative study analyzing the visibility of think tanks in web-based social networks such as Facebook, Twitter etc. concludes that the ‘Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft’ is dominant in this respect. Perhaps surprisingly, the think tanks of the political parties range next, with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung on the second place of the ranking. The Bertelsmann Foundation, for some observers one of the most influential think tanks in Germany (Schuler 2010, McGann 2010: 25), is ranked only on the sixth place, the ‘Institut Solidarische Moderne’ on the seventh rank. As a common trend, the visibility of all think tanks covered in this analysis on the internet increased significantly these days.¹⁷

German think tanks are a growth sector. Not only is the number of think tanks steadily increasing. But also, the organizational patterns as well as the strategies of the think tanks are changing. Think tanks with public funding and high-standard academic profiles dominated in the 1990s. Since the beginning of the new century new think tanks occurred and privately

¹⁶ Cf.: http://www.iza.org/en/webcontent/index_html (accessed 27.01.2012).

¹⁷ The survey was conducted by pluragraph.de, an agency for non-commercial social media benchmarking in the German speaking countries (cf. <https://pluragraph.de/>, accessed 27.01.2012). The report is available at: <http://www.thinktankdirectory.org/blog/2011/11/22/think-tank-social-media-charts/> (accessed 27.01.2012).

funded think tanks – very often foundations – more and more entered successfully the ‘market for ideas’. This short overview provided some information in kind of a ‘snapshot’. In the following section, the work of four important think tanks is analyzed in depth.

3 Academic Think Tanks – mainly financed by the State: WZB

The establishment of the ‘Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin’ (WZB) was highly controversial. In 1969, 15 members of the German Bundestag, from the CDU/CSU as well as from the SPD, agreed to improve academic policy advices in Germany – and to strengthen Berlin as a centre for academic research activities. The intention was to attract leading experts worldwide to join the WZB. During the process of establishing the WZB, the leading academics from the Berlin universities argued to a very great extent against the WZB – many of them feared the loss of scientific autonomy, as the WZB was originally founded as a GmbH, i.e. a privately organized limited liability company. Those critiques feared a privatization of academic research in Berlin and a loss of academic independence.¹⁸ Today, the WZB is a well-established research institute and an influential think tank, densely embedded into the networks of international academic research and policy advices in Germany.

The WZB was originally founded in several separate institutes at different locations. Since 1988, all the institutes were joined in one building. And while the WZB was founded as a private company, it is today a public company financed by the federal government (75 percent) and the federal state Berlin (25 percent). In 2010, the WZB received 13.9 millions € inflows from public sources together and could fundraise additionally 3.3 millions € from other sources (Allmendinger 2011: 11). The WZB was organisationally reformed during the past two decades. While in the past ecological issues and issues of comparative society studies dominated, today the range of issues is broader. In official statements, the focus of the WZB is on all relevant issues reflecting the problems of modern societies and democracies (Antal/Kocka 2009). In 2010, 346 academics worked in the WZB, albeit most of them – we can assume – not as full time employees. It is difficult to measure the exact magnitude of the WZB, but it seems justified to assume that the WZB is one of the greatest socio-scientific research institutes in Europe (Harmsen 2009).

¹⁸ In a press meeting on the occasion of the establishment of the WZB, critics threw stink bombs. And in many forms, the academics in West-Berlin feared the private challenge in the public landscape of universities. One postulation of the critics in 1969 was to ‘crush the WZB’ (‘Zerquetscht das WZB’) (cf. Harmsen 2009).

The WZB is a pure research think tank. The standards of academic research are met for the projects and the cross-linking of the WZB to the rest of the academic world is encompassing and intense. Lately, new directors of the different research units overtook responsibility. It is noteworthy to mention that women are highly represented in the WZB – at least when the positions of research directors are counted.¹⁹ The WZB is a member institute of the ‘Leibniz-Gesellschaft’ (cf. above), and is therefore evaluated regularly by external reviewers. In the last evaluation from 2011, the external reviewers emphasised the WZB’s “extraordinary strength of performance”. All the research units were graded “excellent or very good”. And the external evaluation further emphasised that not only the research of the WZB is qualitatively very good, furthermore the transfer of knowledge into the public debate as well as via policy advices to political decision-makers were graded as outstanding.²⁰

The WZB is today one of the most influential academic think tanks in Germany. It covers a broad range of issues and provides plenty of information and data – both for the interested public and political decision-makers. In this respect, the dualism between academic research and think tank advice is to a great extent outdated. And the WZB is one of the most impressive success-stories of the political attempts to strengthen Berlin as a centre for academic research activities.

4 Academic Think Tanks – Privately Financed: Bertelsmann Foundation

In Germany, the most prominent think tank with private funding and academic research ambitions is perhaps the Bertelsmann Foundation.²¹ And it is perhaps the most prominent example for being intensively criticized in the public debate (Schuler 2010, Wernicke/Bultmann 2007). Already in 1977, Reinhard Mohn founded the Bertelsmann

¹⁹ Cf. the information provided on the website: <http://www.wzb.eu/en/about-the-wzb/organization> (accessed 20.02.2012).

²⁰ Cf. the press release of the WZB (25/11/2011) (<http://www.wzb.eu/en/press-release/excellent-grades-for-the-wzb>, accessed 20.02.2012) or the evaluation report (in German): http://www.wzb.eu/sites/default/files/u6/wzb_-_senatsstellungnahme_24-11-2011_mit_anlagen.pdf (accessed 20.02.2012).

²¹ McGann (2011) ranks Transparency International higher than the Bertelsmann Foundation. However, the Bertelsmann Foundation covers a broad range of political issues. Therefore, the following case study is focusing on this think tank only.

Foundation. He took over the Bertelsmann Corporation immediately after World War II and developed into one of the leading media enterprises worldwide.

One of the first policy domains covered by the Bertelsmann Foundation was training issues and practices of leading experts in the economic as well as in the political world. Furthermore, the health service and social policy issues in general were investigated. The incentive of Mohn was to provide new policy solutions in a globalised and increasingly complex world (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2007: 1). The decision of the Foundation in 1983 to invest in the first private university in Germany, the university Witten/Herdecke, was intensively discussed in the public debate. More and more, the Bertelsmann Foundation captured education issues, thereby not only providing policy analysis but also financial aid, for example to the small public library in Gütersloh in 1982, where the Bertelsmann Foundation has its head quarter.²² Today, the Bertelsmann Foundation is covering a very broad range of issues and induces a multitude of research projects. The total budget of the Foundation in 2010 was 60,3 millions €; in the head quarter of the Foundation, 316 employees worked at the end of 2010 (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2011: 88-91).

A prominent method of the Foundation of preparing policy analyses is to acquire academic knowledge. For example the ‘Sustainable Governance Indicator’ is accomplished by several academics worldwide. This indicator tries to make the quality of democratic government comparable.²³ Another academic research project covers the degree of democratic transformation worldwide. In this respect, the ‘Bertelsmann Transformation Index’ (BTI) tries to document success and failure of different roads to democracy.²⁴ Like in the first research project, the Bertelsmann Foundation acquires academic country surveys in this research project. Further examples employing the same academic approach are studies of the Bertelsmann Foundation trying to analyze the policy reactions to the global financial crisis since 2008²⁵ or the state of social justice in advanced welfare states (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2010). It is noteworthy that the Foundation – concerning the last examples – takes up

²² Cf the ‘timeline’ of the Bertelsmann Foundation, available at: http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-6020433E-94B04EFC/bst_engl/hs.xsl/2088_9614.htm (accessed 28.01.2012).

²³ The results as well as methodological considerations are available on the internet: <http://www.sgi-network.org/> (accessed 28.01.2012).

²⁴ The results as well as methodological considerations are available on the internet: <http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/en/bti/> (accessed 28.01.2012).

²⁵ Cf. <http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/en/crisis/> (accessed 28.01.2012).

academic research contributions and further develops the empirical as well as methodological research on this issue.²⁶ Besides the above mentioned projects, the Foundation invests in such issues as good daycare facilities for children or the future of the civil society in a broad sense (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2011).

These strategies of the Bertelsmann Foundation enable in general high academic standards in policy analyses. Because the Foundation acquires successfully academics and brings together worldwide policy information, such studies reflect high academic standards. Therefore, the Bertelsmann Foundation is a prominent example for a privately financed think tank that successfully overcomes the dualism of policy analyses in Germany. Critics argue, however, that the Bertelsmann Foundation still pursues policy goals from the Bertelsmann Corporation or the inner circle of the Bertelsmann Foundation (Schuler 2010). It is difficult to judge if the multitude of policy analyses conducted by the Foundation all mirror policy preferences of the persons mentioned. Nevertheless, the Bertelsmann Foundation has a liberal, market-oriented general alignment. But this does not hinder that the policy analyses meet rather high academic standards. As a consequence, these analyses are perceived to a great extent by the academic literature.

5 Advocacy Think Tanks – Classical Pattern: Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut (WSI)

The WSI may be seen as the counterpart of the ‘Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft’, albeit it is still a classical think tank connected with the German trade union movement. The WSI was founded in 1946 as WWI (‘Wirtschaftswissenschaftliches Institut’) by the trade unions in Germany – and it was an attempt to continue a tradition from the Weimar Republic, when the trade unions already had an own economic research institute. In 1972, the WWI was renamed WSI, and as late as in 1995, the WSI was incorporated into the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung. This foundation was established by the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) in 1977. In the foundation, several institutes and smaller foundations from the whole trade union movement were incorporated.

²⁶ It is noteworthy that the ‘Bertelsmann Transformation Index’ takes up important aspects of the research on ‘defective democracies’ (cf. Merkel et al. 2003, 2006) or of the research on social justice (cf. again Merkel 2002).

The Hans-Böckler-Stiftung is today financed through donations by members of the trade union movement who are board members in German stock companies, through general donations and by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The public funding, however, is dedicated to programs of studentships, the Hans-Böckler-Foundation is providing, too. In 2009/10, the Hans-Böckler-Foundation received from the Federal Ministry 18.3 millions € and additionally spend 6.4 millions € for various programs of studentships. Hence, the public funding does not cover the whole effort of the foundation. The WSI was financed in 2009/10 by the foundation with 5.5 million €, a sum that comes up to 18.4 percent of the total budget of the Hans-Böckler-Foundation (Hans-Böckler Stiftung 2010: 10-11).

The WSI is mainly active in labour market issues. In its self-description, the WSI as a research institute is dedicated to academic analysis of issues of practical relevance to industrial relations in Germany and Europe. In this respect, the WSI covers a wide range of different issues relevant for labour market dynamics. Social policies, the development of the German wage bargaining system or developments of management practices in times of economic globalization are issues the WSI takes up, too.²⁷ Some research aspects are important data sources for further academic research, as for example the wage-monitoring in Germany²⁸, the development of minimal wages in Europe²⁹, or the broad range of analyses dedicated to uncover the political, economical and social foundations of the new ‘German Job Miracle’ during the financial crisis. The WSI does not only provide academic advice to political decision-makers. It additionally tries to transfer academic information to volunteers, members of work councils or other persons being active in the trade union movement or in wage bargaining.

In contrast to the ‘Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft’ (cf. below), the main think tank of the German employers, the WSI is a classical think tank with only modest ambitions to improve public relation strategies. The main focus of the WSI is on collecting data relevant for labour market dynamics, to provide them to the public and to invest in academic research

²⁷ Cf. for further information the website of the WSI: http://www.boeckler.de/index_wsi.htm (accessed 20.02.2012).

²⁸ Cf. the ‘Tarifarchiv’ (http://www.boeckler.de/index_wsi_tarifarchiv.htm, accessed 20.02.2012). As an attempt to use the new media, the WSI (and the German trade unions) launched an internet based empirical project to monitor the wage developments for different jobs in different regions of Germany (cf. <http://www.lohnspiegel.de/main>, accessed 20.02.2012).

²⁹ Cf. the information provided on the internet: http://www.boeckler.de/wsi-tarifarchiv_7052.htm, accessed 20.02.2012).

connected to labour market issues in Germany and Europe. Therefore, this think tank pays particular attention to improve the information of people interested in labour market issues; it does not have the ambition – as the 'Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft' – to change political preferences of the whole German public.

The WSI is a rather small think tank. However, the academic employees are dedicated to academic research practices. The dualism between academic and think tank analysis is in this range rather narrow. In this sense, the WSI provides academic research that belongs to issues important for the trade union movement in Germany.

6 Advocacy Think Tanks – Recent Innovation: Initiative New Social Market Economy

The Initiative New Social Market Economy (INSM) was founded officially in 2000 and typifies a 'new' or 'modern' kind of think tank (Speth 2004, 2006). Originally, the German Employers' Association for Manufacturing ('Gesamtmetall') founded a PR-agency ('berolino.pr GmbH') in order to re-establish a market-orientated way of thinking with the help of public relation strategies in December 1999. In 2000, the INSM was founded. The INSM is financed by 'Gesamtmetall' and other employers' organizations – which are not mentioned in the official records. In 2010, the INSM had a budget of 10 millions €, hence, the INSM is financially very well developed (Speth 2004: 3). In 2010, the INSM moved its head quarter from Cologne to Berlin in order to be closer to the centre of German politics.

The overall ambition of the INSM is to 'reflate' the spirit of Ludwig Erhard in economic policy making. Ludwig Erhard, the 'spiritus rector' of the German 'Wirtschaftswunder' after World War II, demanded 'wealth for all' ('Wohlstand für alle'), a slogan the INSM changed to 'chances for all'. The goals of the think tank are to advocate competition, personal responsibility as well as just chances for all individuals to participate in the economic sphere (Gesamtmetall 2011: 84-85). Concretely, the INSM focuses on economic policies, employment policies and education policies. As mentioned above, the ideas of the INSM are highly visible in the classical media (Speth 2004, 2006) as well as in social networks on the internet.³⁰

³⁰ Cf. the report conducted by pluragraph: <http://www.thinktankdirectory.org/blog/2011/11/22/think-tank-social-media-charts/> (accessed 27.01.2012).

The organization of the INSM is very efficient. A small head quarter is completed by several ad hoc working groups. The latter are often experts in public relations and media coverage. Academic policy advice is provided by the ‘Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft’, the academic branch of the German Employers’ Association.³¹ From time to time, external academic professionals provide further policy analyses and policy information. One special linkage is between the INSM and the ‘Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach’, one of the leading public opinion research institutes in Germany.³²

Policy analyses fulfil to a certain extent academic standards, but the main characteristic of the INSM is to combine academic policy analyses with a broad range of PR-strategies. In this respect, the INSM provides a broad network of persons from the political as well as from the academic life. Those ‘ambassadors’ of the INSM are linked in an unspecified way to the INSM network; it is not always visible, in how far those ‘ambassadors’ for example take up the standpoint of the INSM in public debates or if they argue as politician or scientist. Prof. Hans Tietmeyer, a former president of the German central bank (‘Bundesbank’) serves as a chairman of this network.³³

Given the new strategy of this think tank, it is difficult to assess the efficiency of the INSM. The INSM aims to a very great extent at changing the public debate and influencing the preferences of the public in general. The INSM avoids criticising trade unions, for example, in a direct way. In contrast, the public is targeted via the old and new media. In this respect, this think tank simulates to a certain extent the strategies of new social movements (Speth 2004). However, it should be noted that this is a simulation, given the financial investment and the hierarchically organised head quarter of the INSM. The new think tank of German employers is highly visible in the public debate; it is devoted to combining academic policy analyses with public relation instruments; accordingly, the academic foundation of some of the programs seems to be of second order relevance for the INSM.

7 Conclusion

³¹ The ‘Cologne Institute for Economic Research’ provides several policy analysis, cf: <http://www.iwkoeln.de/> (accessed 20.02.2012).

³² Cf. <http://www.ifd-allensbach.de/> (accessed 20.02.2012).

³³ Cf. the information on the homepage of the INSM: <http://www.insm.de/en/The-INSM.html> (accessed 20.02.2012).

The ambition of this chapter is to show how think tanks in Germany changed their strategies and policy analysis during the most recent history. While think tanks are commonly understood as “universities without students” (Weaver 1989: 564), contemporary research argues that some (advocacy) think tanks changed their strategies in favour of public relation networking, lobbying and the attempt to influence the public debate in general. Therefore, it is a wide spread argument in the literature that think tanks changed gradually into ‘do-tanks’ (cf. Braml 2006; Speth 2006, 2010; Stone 2007). This generalization about think tanks worldwide comes true only to a limited extent for the four think tanks analysed in depth in this chapter.³⁴

Think tanks conduct policy analysis in different ways and with different degrees of academic substantiation. In a nutshell, there seems to be a trade off: The more think tanks try to influence the public opinion and work as public relation agencies, the weaker appears the academic robustness of the analyses provided. But there is no automatism in this development – and this development is not dependent on the source of monetary funding. The Bertelsmann Foundation is in the literature criticised because of its assumed overwhelming influence on the public debate (Schuler 2010). But the foundation intensified the academic foundation of policy analyses in recent years despite being a market driven think tank. In contrast, the ‘Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft’ (INSM) moved as advocacy think tank in the direction of a ‘do-tank’, which undermines the quality of academic policy analyses to a certain extent.

Think tanks financed mainly by the state, such as the WZB, meet still academic requirements of academic policy research. The same may be stated for the small WSI, the advocacy think tank of German trade unions. Both think tanks still strive for academic clearness in their policy analyses. Hence, taken all four strategies together, there is no automatism that think tanks mutate to ‘do-tanks’ in Germany, regardless of the funding sources. Of course, all think tanks want to provide policy advice – and all think tanks want to be heard in the political process. But only the ‘Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft’ obviously changed its strategy from being less a provider of academic information into being rather an actor in the public debate (Speth 2004, 2006).

³⁴ In this respect, the argument of Stone goes even further as she points out that “The brand name [think tanks, sj] has been so widely used that its meaning is becoming opaque” (Stone 2007: 262). If we should avoid the category of think tanks in political science all together, is a question that goes beyond the ambition of this chapter and needs further consideration.

It is difficult to assess the impact of these different think tank strategies. Comparative assessments do provide some evidence in favour of the thesis that ‘new strategies’, i.e. a more public relation orientated manifestation of think tank activities is better heard in the public and in the decision-making process. But there seems to be no clear evidence that ‘old strategies’ of think tanks are less influential. The WZB seems to be a special case here; its pure academic stance does not hinder its reputation as policy adviser. And even the Bertelsmann Foundation enhanced in recent years the academic substantiation of policy analyses and is still rather ‘old fashioned’ when public relations are considered. Hence, how great the impact of think tank strategies may be, and how the substantiation of conducted policy analyses may influence the impact of think tanks, and, finally, how they can under these different circumstances ‘sell’ the policy advice to the public and the decision-makers –, these questions are difficult to answer empirically. What can be said, however, is that all think tanks adapt to the openness of the decision-making process in Germany, the increase of lobbying strategies and the growing importance of new media which provide new frames and opportunities for political competition. Therefore, the dualism between academic and ‘non-academic’ policy analyses is contingent.

But the situation in the US may provide as a warning sign. There, the alienation between ‘the Beltway and the Ivory Tower’ increased very recently (Avey et al. 2012). As the academic world more and more favours quantitative research strategies and more and more departments in the US “became enamoured of game and rational-choice theory” (Heilbrunn 2010), decision-makers in Washington DC have growing problems to understand and/or use this kind of academic expertise. Under these circumstances, the imperative of academic success undermines a common language between the academic and ‘non-academic’ world of policy analyses – and both groups are aware of this (Avey et al. 2012). Hence, under these circumstances, “policymakers should avoid academics like the plague”, as Heilbrunn (2010) pointed out harshly. In Germany, such a situation is not observable – at least not yet.

Bibliography

Allmendinger, Jutta. 2011, WSI-Bericht 2010, Berlin: WSI.

Antal, Ariane B. und Jürgen Kocka. 2009. Immer einen Schritt voraus. Geschichte des WZB. Der Tagesspiegel (<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/geschichte-des-wzb-immer-einen-schritt-voraus/1468448.html>, accessed 20.02.2012).

Avey, Pual C./Desch, Michael C./Maliniak, Daniel/Long, James D./Peterson, Susan/Tierney, Michael J., 2012: The Beltway vs. the Ivory Tower, in: Foreign Policy Jan/Feb 2012 (online version).

Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2007. Satzung der Bertelsmann Stiftung. http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/bst/de/media/xcms_bst_dms_23917_23918_2.pdf.

Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2011: Die Bertelsmann Stiftung auf einen Blick. 2011. Menschen bewegen. Zukunft gestalten, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Braml, Josef, 2006: Wissenschaftliche Politikberatung durch Think Tanks, in: Falk, Svenja/Rehfeld, Dieter/Römmele, Andrea/Thunert, Martin (eds.): Handbuch Politikberatung, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 255-267.

Färber, Gisela/Salm, Marco/Zeitz, Dirk, 2011: Renaissance wissenschaftlicher Politikberatung? Eine Neubewertung wissenschaftlicher Politikberatung aufgrund veränderter Rahmenbedingungen und ihre Konsequenzen für die Akteure, in: Zeitschrift für Politikberatung 4, 1, 3-13.

Gesamtmetall. 2011: Geschäftsbericht 2010/2011, Berlin: Gesamtmetall.

Böckler Stiftung, 2011: Jahresbericht 2010, Düsseldorf: Hans-Böckler-Stiftung (<http://www.boeckler.de/HB1101rz.pdf>, accessed 20.02.2012).

Harmsen, Torsten. 2009. Am Anfang flogen Stinkbomben. Einst befehdet, heute international anerkannt: Das Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin wird vierzig Jahre alt. Berliner Zeitung (available: <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/einst-befehdet--heute-international-anerkannt--das-wissenschaftszentrum-berlin-wird-vierzig-jahre-alt-am-anfang-flogen-stinkbomben,10810590,10620318.html>).

Heilbrun, Jacob, 2010: Policymakers Should Avoid Academics Like the Plague, in: The National Interest (online version).

Immergut, Ellen M., 1992: Health Politics. Interests and Institutions in Western Europe, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jochem, Sven / Vatter, Adrian (eds.), 2006: Think Tanks, special issue, German Policy Studies / Politikfeldanalyse, 3, 2.

McGann, James G., 2011: The Global 'Go-To Think Tanks'. The Leading Public Policy Research Organizations In The World. The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program. International Relations Program. University of Pennsylvania. (available: <<http://www.gotothinktank.com/>>, accessed 25.01.2012).

Merkel, Wolfgang, 2002: Social Justice and the Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism, in: Archives Européennes de Sociologie XLIII/1: 59-91.

Merkel, Wolfgang/Puhle, Hans-Jürgen/Croissant, Aurel/Eicher, Claudia/Thierry, Peter, 2003: Defekte Demokratien. Theorien und Probleme, Band 1, Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Merkel, Wolfgang/Puhle, Hans-Jürgen/Croissant, Aurel/Thierry, Peter, 2006: Defekte Demokratien. Regionalanalysen, Band 2, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

Schuler, Thomas, 2010: Bertelsmannrepublik Deutschland. Eine Stiftung macht Politik, Frankfurt/New York: Campus.

Schroeder, Wolfgang, 2003: Modell Deutschland und das Bündnis für Arbeit, in: Jochem, Sven/Siegel, Nico A. (Hrsg.): Konzertierung, Verhandlungsdemokratie und Reformpolitik im Wohlfahrtsstaat. Das Modell Deutschland im Vergleich, Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 107-147.

Siegel, Nico A., 2003: Die politische Ökonomie der Konzertierung in Deutschland: Das Beispiel Bündnis für Arbeit, in: Jochem, Sven/Siegel, Nico A. (Hrsg.): Konzertierung, Verhandlungsdemokratie und Reformpolitik im Wohlfahrtsstaat. Das Modell Deutschland im Vergleich, Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 148-193.

Speth, Rudolf. 2004. Die politischen Strategien der Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft. Hans-Böckler-Stiftung (available: <http://www.boeckler.de/pdf/fof_insm_studie_09_2004.pdf>).

Speth, Rudolf, 2006: Advokatorische Think Tanks und die Politisierung des Marktplatzes der Ideen, betrifft: Bürgergesellschaft 24, Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Speth, Rudolf, 2010: Stiftungen und Think-Tanks, in: Simon, Dagmar / Knie, Andreas / Hornbostel, Stefan (eds.): Handbuch Wissenschaftspolitik, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 390-405.

Stone, Diane, 2004: Introduction: Think Tanks, Policy Advice and Governance, in: Stone, Diane/Denham, Andrew (eds.): Think Tank Traditions. Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas, Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 1-18.

Stone, Diane, 2007: Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks? Three Myths Regarding Policy Analysis Institutes, in: *Public Administration* 85, 2, 259-278.

Stone, Diane/Denham, Andrew (eds.), 2004: *Think Tank Traditions. Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*, Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press.

Thunert, Martin, 1999: Think Tanks als Ressourcen der Politikberatung. Bundesdeutsche Rahmenbedingungen und Perspektiven, in: *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen* 12, 3, 10-19.

Thunert, Martin, 2006: The Development and Significance of Think Tanks in Germany, in: Jochem, Sven / Vatter, Adrian (eds.), 2006: *Think Tanks*, special issue, *German Policy Studies / Politikfeldanalyse*, 3, 2, 185-221.

Weaver, Kent R., 1989: The Changing World of Think Tanks, in: *Political Science & Politics* 22 (1), 563-569.

Weaver, Kent R., 1999: The Changing World of Think Tanks, in: Mijakaw, Tadao (ed.): *The Science of Public Policy. Essential Readings in Policy Sciences*, London/New York: Routledge, 267-287.

Wernicke, Jens / Bultmann, Torsten (Eds.), 2007: *Netzwerk der Macht – Bertelsmann. Der medial-politische Komplex aus Gütersloh*, 2. erweiterte Auflage, Marburg: BdWi-Verlag.

Welzel, Carolin, 2006: Politikberatung durch Stiftungen, in: Falk, Svenja/Rehfeld, Dieter/Römmele, Andrea/Thunert, Martin (eds.): *Handbuch Politikberatung*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 275-289.

Zunker, Albrecht, 2006: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik: Die Neu-Berlinerin, in: Falk, Svenja/Rehfeld, Dieter/Römmele, Andrea/Thunert, Martin (eds.): *Handbuch Politikberatung*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 363-373.