At Crossroads in Brussels

An exploratory study in the organizational structure of Brussels-based think tanks

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Abstract

Knowledge brokerage is an ambiguous concept that is increasingly embedded in different scientific disciplines. It was primarily introduced due to the rise of information and communications technology, which rendered scientific findings more accessible to the policy-making communities. This information boom made gradually more evident the fact that knowledge is not something produced in laboratories and disseminated to policy makers to solely satisfy their problem-solving demands. Instead this new trend saw knowledge communities acquiring an active role in policy-making and therefore directly affecting this previously independent realm. New knowledge centers, think tanks among them, entered the policy/knowledge nexus and influenced the way practitioners hypothesized and applied scientific results, while at the same time they guided scientific research to seemingly more practical orientations. Knowledge brokers are now considered to constitute the de facto linkages between scientists and policy makers, aspiring to bridge the two worlds. However, their emerging power has raised some criticism, as think tanks are currently trying to balance between their role of bridging scientific theory and policy-making and their function of fostering, and occasionally lobbying, certain agendas. In this thesis, I try to elucidate to what extent knowledge brokers, such as think tanks, still fulfill their original role and to what extent they have mutated into institutions promoting specific agendas.

Defining the Object of Study

"Scientia potentia est, sed parda"

Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan*

"Knowledge is power, but a minor one" is the literal translation of this Latin quote first found in the Latin edition of Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, part 1 (*De Homine*), Chapter X ("*De Potentia, Dignitate et Honore*"). In today's world this quote would certainly require further elaboration. Knowledge of what, created by whom, for what purposes and what particular interests? Abstractly, this constitutes the topic of this thesis; my aim being to provide a few, if limited, answers to these general questions.

Recent years have seen an ever-increasing complexity in the production of knowledge, whether in its origins; being no longer the only child of universities and research foundations but also think-tanks and (non-)profit organizations, or its application and/or motivation; originating not only from formulated hypotheses later verified or dispatched by empirical evidence, but also from preconceived notions aimed to promote certain agendas. In this thesis, I attempt to systematically examine where think tanks lie in the relation between these two concepts; are think tanks arenas where social scientists produce independent evidence-based knowledge as they claim in their statutes and mission statements? Are they instruments of power demands dressing interests and agendas of different power centers in the cloth of scientific expertise? Or do they rather lie somewhere in the middle, linking the two worlds by producing knowledge that is based on scientific methodologies and data which is at the same time informed by the tacit knowledge of policy makers? If the latter is the case, what means and processes do think tank members employ to achieve this linkage?

Structure of the Thesis

Initially, I try to provide a comprehensive overview of the approaches used by scholars to analyze the think tank phenomenon. I briefly criticize these approaches as governed by a "methodological nationalism" that employs a historical approach which focuses on measuring think tanks' influence within state boundaries, eventually leading to the

conclusion that think tanks are partisan organizations that advocate one or another pre-established ideology. I then survey the sparse literature that specifically focuses on Brussels-based think tanks and I try to explain why the former theoretical approaches fail to analyze these organizations that are still in their infancy. In the second section of the theoretical part, I introduce certain theoretical insights found in the scholarly analysis of knowledge brokerage from interdisciplinary perspectives, emphasizing the role of individuals in successful knowledge brokerage. This is required since my empirical analysis primarily focuses on think tanks' populations, namely the individuals and groups that constitute a think tank as an organization.

In the empirical part of the thesis, I describe some of the most important Brussels-based think tanks, their brokerage strategies and mechanisms. I use empirical evidence from interviews with think tank members I conducted in Brussels, along with some quantitative analysis of the occupational backgrounds of researchers and manager staff. I then set a hypothesis about the role of networks in the production of think tanks innovative contributions. Literature on Brussels-based think tanks is still in its infancy and think tanks do not date far back. For that reason, particular trends in their influence have not been systematically proven or their actual positions, in the European political and knowledge structures, accurately pinpointed. Therefore, I adopt an interdisciplinary perspective to analyze the information I retrieved.

As mentioned earlier, I introduce two scenaria, namely that (i) think tanks as research institutes adhere to an informative role, bridging research in social sciences and the corporate world/administrative agencies (ii) certain think tank members champion certain agendas, at either the research or the policy recommendation level. It needs to be stated from the outset, that the findings are not meant to strictly validate one or the other hypothesis. Instead, I seek to explore the possibilities for a synthesis of the two and in order to do so, I include in my analysis as many empirical elements as possible, especially given the aforementioned lack of corroborated evidence on how these specific European institutions function and the role they perform in the European environment.

The data used in this thesis and their relation to the theoretical framework are based on 7 individual interviews and one group interview conducted in Brussels, with think tank members during the period 4-9/5/2015. More specifically, five individual interviews took place in Bruegel office on Monday, May 4, 2015; 2 with the European Policy members on the 5th and 7th of May, while the group interview was held in Carnegie Europe on May 7th. Secondary resources such as memos, policy briefs, membership programs, reports and other publications collected during groundwork are also utilized. Interviews' analysis is based on discovering, as well as interpreting, common perspectives and practices with respect to the modes of brokerage examined. I include passages from the interviews whenever the personal opinions of the correspondents provide insights about their role in the think tank's function and their interpretation of the sort of research they produce. I consider the discourse used in these interviews in its informative dimension, as I regard interviewees as genuine insiders of this societal space, rather than ideologically predisposed individuals. Quantitative research is conducted to highlight some aspects of the professional backgrounds of think tank researchers, contributors and participants with the aim of proving their independence from political and corporate interests.

Introduction

The Lisbon Treaty strengthened the role of the European Parliament by expanding the policy areas for which the co-decision process is required. The EP is now a legitimate co-legislator with increased budgetary powers[1]. The European Parliament to better manage its increased workload is divided in specialized committees; "the committees draw up, amend and adopt legislative proposals and own-initiative reports"[2]. Among them, the Economic and Monetary Affairs committee has gained significant importance as it holds accountable the European Central Bank and it has the power to initiate legislation and provide input to the works of the European Commission and the Council.

A first look at the membership in the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee raises two important questions for anyone who wishes to investigate the professional backgrounds of the participating Parliamentarians. Firstly, their CVs are not always available in the EP's Committee website. This can be considered less grave since an online research can provide adequate information on their professional and educational backgrounds. The second problem, however, is somehow more important and it raises serious doubts about the ability of the Parliamentarians who take part in the Economic Committee to actually conduct economic analysis and initiate legislation that concerns the people of the European Union. An initial research showed that out of 61 permanent members of the Committee, only 37 of them exhibit an educational background in economics or similar disciplines[3]. This number includes Parliamentarians with a diploma or higher degree in business administration, public administration and economic law. The number drops substantially if one includes only degrees in economic science.

A diploma in economics is no proof of adequate knowledge of the economic science much as a master's degree in political engineering, for instance, is no sign of a lack of adequate comprehension of economic affairs. It is often the case that practical knowledge and

[1] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/20150201PVL00022/The-EP-and-the-treaties
[2] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/20150201PVL00010/Organisation-and-rules
[3] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/econ/members.html;jsessionid=4FF47C2DD190C6FA35C8F180FE9B7A72.node1

professional experience can replace or even provide a better background for understanding complex economic and monetary matters. However, it is beyond doubt that a number of these members, through their participation in this committee, are being introduced to a topic they do not necessarily understand. Moreover, they are asked to initiate legislation and to evaluate proposals on such topics that affect the lives of the people of the European Union. The importance for these members to receive adequate, brief but concise, information on economic affairs that are becoming more and more complex becomes evident. Equally evident is the importance of the sources of such information and the role of informed knowledge for policy-making overall.

In general, the reasons for this rising interest in the sources and dissemination of social sciences can be attributed to the rising complexities of the problems policy makers need to deal with. The advent of the information revolution that occurred due to the emergence of the Internet, the breakthrough technological innovations that revolutionized production eventually leading to commercial globalization, the rise of new participants in the knowledge producing and policy making processes have cumulatively posed serious challenges to efficient and well-informed policy making.

Simultaneously, issues were raised on the quality of the provided knowledge. Social scientists gradually shifted their base, from academic departments to other occupational settings, such as advisor companies, think tanks and administrative agencies, where they produce social science but for different reasons and for different purposes. The autonomy of the scientific field was put in question by this mobilization and that pitted the democratic character of the policy making process in jeopardy of competing interests and motivation. Given that think tanks possess a central role between policy experts and policy makers, they merit meticulous study, in order to unravel if they are indeed independent, or rather subservient, knowledge brokers and providers.

Part I. General Literature on Think Tanks

A common problem faced by scholars who have analyzed the think tank phenomenon is that it is extremely difficult to provide an adequate definition of think tanks. One of the first and most common definitions is the one provided by McGann and Weaver (2004 :4) with think tanks described as "non-governmental, not-for profit research organizations with substantial organizational autonomy from government and from societal interests such as firms, interest groups, and political parties". This definition has received criticism from other scholars who doubt that independence (from profit-seeking activities and an independence in organizational structure) actually constitutes a typical characteristic of think tanks (Pautz 2011: 421, Medvetz 2012: 24). From one such institute to another one can find differences in organizational structure, size, the degree of advocacy of policy recommendations, the plurality (or not) of their funding resources, the professional background of the personnel employed in them and so on. Trying to provide an exact definition threatens to guide research towards approaches that miss the plurality and controversy surrounding the think tank phenomenon altogether.

What is equally surprising is that what seems to be more important than actually defining think tanks is to describe and analyze what they do; what their main functions in the political environment they evolve are. Since think tanks have proliferated in the USA more than anywhere in the world, milestone analyses of think tanks have tried to examine their role in the major ideological debates of the US. James Smith for instance, wrote his book The Idea Brokers: Think Tanks and the Rise of the New Policy Elite (1991) where he presented a historical analysis of the rise of think tanks in 20th century America and the subsequent advent of policy experts as legitimate actors in the policy-making process. He employed a macro-level of analysis in order to investigate the role performed by think tanks in advocating ideas during the grand political debates of the United States. This historical form of analysis has governed most major works on the think tank phenomenon, guiding research towards a historical-institutional perspective that places think tanks within larger policy communities or advocacy coalitions that push their common beliefs and agendas in policy debates. Medvetz's sociological perspectives (2011), which will be discussed later in the thesis, also abide by this "methodological nationalism" that explicitly or unconsciously links think tanks to national partisan interests and ideologies. Diane Stone recognizes this

problem when she writes that “Anglo-American definitions of think tanks have prevailed in the scholarly literature and reflected the socio-political context in which think tanks were first constituted” (2008, 3). Her analysis of the transnational networks think tanks participate in can be interpreted as an effort to broaden these former approaches.

The historical evolution of the numerous American think tanks, which can be found in all relevant and most cited scholarly works on the topic (Weaver 1989, Smith 1991, McGann 1995, McGann and Weaver 2004, Abelson 2006 inter alia) reveals multifaceted interaction and intricate interplay between, on the one hand think tank policy experts and researchers and on the other, university departments, donors, foundations, political parties, public officials, corporations and the media world. This interaction and the subsequent inter-dependence are inherent in the nature of think tanks as organizations that lie in the middle of these different worlds. Historical analyses have provided valuable insights in how think tanks manage to balance between them in an effort to combine autonomy and heteronomy (Medvetz 2012).

The problem with these approaches in examining Brussels-based think tanks is that these institutes are, compared to their American counterparts, contemporary constructions. A historical approach is difficult to deliver definite results on how Brussels-based think tanks have been and are still participating in the power relations that take place in Brussels. Most such organizations share a 30 to 10 year old history and although there are instances of them participating in the big political and ideological debates guiding the process of the European integration, such an analysis would require immediate and inside knowledge of their exact role in this process.

Moreover, the nature of the political and governance system of the European Union mandates an approach that departs from the traditional national guidelines in which American think tanks proliferated. In the absence of clear ideological debates and within the boundaries of a depoliticized European project long left to European elites to unravel (Hooghe and Marks 2008), Brussels-based think tanks do not expose a degree of partisanship similar to the American ones. Ideology has, so far, played only a minor role in the European integration process and think tanks’ role seems to have been restricted to analyze particular issues, mainly economic ones, concerning the debate of “lesser” or more Europe.

In this point of view, the advent of less traditional power centers in the European Union and the multi-level mode of governance mandate a theoretical approach that explores think tanks' role in this mosaic of different interests in a more neutral manner, while providing only exploratory insights about the exact place think tanks occupy in European power struggles. The literature on knowledge brokerage offers such a framework. In the first part of the literature review I try to cover the majority of the approaches employed by scholars to unravel the think tank phenomenon. I then introduce insights from the knowledge brokerage framework which I make use of in the empirical component of my thesis.

Scholarly Analysis on Think Tanks

Medvetz (2012) and Stone (1998, 2004) offer a taxonomy of the scholarly analysis of the think-tank phenomenon. Think tanks have been studied through the prism of four main theoretical frameworks. Firstly, elite theory perspectives portray think tanks as instruments of elite groups and power centers that advance the particular agenda of the dominant class (Medvetz 2012 : 18; Stone 2004: 12; 1998: 13). Thomas Dye (1978) for instance, incorporates think tanks (private policy-planning organizations) in his oligarchic model of national policy-making. Dye examines cross-cutting memberships in three influential foreign affairs' organizations, the Council of Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institution and the Committee of Economic Development. His findings provide insight into how these organizations operate as negotiating environments for leaderships from various power groups, such as the corporate and financial sector, the foundations, mass media and influential government members (ibid. p. 312). According to this theory, these elites set the political agenda long before it reaches the "proximate policy-makers" (the elected law-making bodies) and constitute an integral part of "the means" of public policy (p.330).

Secondly, neo-Marxist, and more specifically neo-Gramscian scholars have tried to analyze the influence of think tanks and their function in national structures. Scholars in this category emphasize the role of classes and set think tanks against a background of dominant hegemonic projects, a sort of "critical elite perspective" which for reasons of parsimony can fall within the first category of elite theory approaches (Desai 1994; Parmar 2004: 19-33; Pautz 2011). Desai (1994) for instance, offers a meticulous critique of the role played by British think tanks, most importantly the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and the Center for Policy Studies (CPS), as vehicles of legitimization of Thatcherite policies. Similarly to Dye,

Desai paints a picture of these think tanks as laboratories of New Right economic ideology that Thatcher implemented when she came to power. Following Gramsci, she describes how after the Keynesian social welfare paradigm (Hall 1992) begun to be questioned, "intellectual sects" of the New Right, whose origins are traced back in the 1940's, came to the fore and struggled to fill in the vacuum of hegemony, while dominating the traditional intellectual world (Desai 1994: 38-40). In her words, think tanks were "proselytizers, not originators" and although they failed to render Thatcherism a dominant worldview, since it never succeeded in gaining the consent of the entire society, they succeeded in their most critical function of "working out aspects of this ideology into feasible plans and blueprints, ready for implementation" (ibid. p. 62).

Both aforementioned approaches, elitist and Gramscian are "essentialist" in character (Medvetz 2012, 19), adopting an instrumentalist approach to think tanks as a tool used by national elites to advance their particular interests. Thus, they tend to fail to adequately describe and understand the variety and multiplicity present within think tanks traditions. The pluralist perspective assigns to think tanks a role similar to other interest-based groups, such as lobbying firms, labor unions and other societal organizations that aim to influence public policy for promotion of their particular interests (Medvetz 2012 : 18-19, Stone 2004: 12-13). Therefore, pluralist studies incorporate think tanks within the bigger numbers of interest groups, lobbyists, NGO's, churches that promote informed-based opinion making by antagonizing with each other in the "democratic market place of ideas". These pluralist approaches emphasize the "intellectual characteristics" of think tanks and their role in expanding the market place of ideas and furthering democratic processes by bringing in their knowledge-based expertise (Weiss 1990). An intrinsic caveat of the pluralistic approach, in a rather similar fashion to the elite theories, is it disproportionately focuses on the effects of think tanks on and shaping public opinion and thus public policy, often underestimating more undiscernible effects that think tanks may exert on power centers in which they are situated (Medvetz 2012:19; Stone, 2004: 13).

Finally, institutionalism constitutes the more recent approach to analyzing think tanks (Medvetz 2012: 22-23) with Ronald Abelson (1998, 2002, 2004, 2014) and Diane Stone (1996, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2008) as its main exponents. The institutionalist approach aims to elucidate "the structural environments in which think tanks are embedded, the rules

and norms that shape their behavior and the organizational arrangements and processes to which they must respond" (Medvetz ibid. 22). Stone accordingly (2004: 13-15) places approaches as variant (but in essence all institutional) as "policy communities", "epistemic communities", "advocacy coalitions" and "discourse coalitions" under this general framework. In a 2001 article, Stone examines think tanks in the context of transnational knowledge networks where they operate in epistemic communities, as well as advocacy networks, to illuminate and influence global social policy (350-352). Drawing on Simon James' categorization of policy influence, Stone finds that think tanks advance knowledge and policy transfers through "lesson drawing" in interconnected networks of professional associations, NGO's, and policy makers. Through networks channels, think tanks participate in the genesis of ideas, their formulation and their implementation (ibid. p. 339). Stone's analysis is thorough and multidimensional, but the main problem remains as in every institutionalist approach to the think tank phenomenon; why study and try to measure think tanks influence if it is so difficult to pin down? In her own words, "…general statements about think tank influences on social policy are to be treated with caution" (ibid. p. 339) Maybe the initial question and hypothesis can be introduced on a different basis; namely, think tanks as organizations serve a different function that certain think tank members individually?

What both Stone and Medvetz agree upon is that all the above approaches, institutionalist included, fail to capture the specific "societal space" that think tanks occupy within the general institutional framework they are embedded in; think tanks "in the last instance operate alone" (Stone 2004: 15). This particularity is derived from the think tanks position in a milieu of political, intellectual, fund-raising and media fields (Medvetz 2012: 22) which determine not only think tanks' influence in the decision-making process but as importantly their characteristics and the ways they apprehend themselves as actors; in other words, their "distinctive social and organizational forms" (ibid. 24). Along the same lines, Stone states that "think tank impact is multifaceted and varies within different constituencies – within the media, politicians and political party, the general public, civil servants or within policy communities" (2001 : 339).

Thomas Medvetz (2012) drawing on different sociological approaches like Pierre Bourdieu's field theory (1984, 1985, 1991) and Gil Eyal's sociology of interventions (2010) researches

the history and functions of American think tanks. His findings lead him to describe think tanks as "members of an interstitial field or a semi-structured network of organizations that traverses, links, and overlaps the more established spheres of academic, political, business, and media production" (p. 31). For that reason Medvetz asserts, think tanks need to perform a complex balancing act; at one time they need to stress their independence from those parent fields, their cognitive autonomy. At the same time they need to signal their dependence on them, their willingness to subdue their research production to these other fields, in order to gain from the material and symbolic benefits they confer (p. 49). Unfortunately, this process has its repercussions for the scientific vigor of the research produced as "think tanks may still produce a nullifying effect on the value of expertise itself" (p. 166). Medvetz' s overall conclusion is that think tanks' growth has "undermined the relevance of autonomously produced scientific knowledge in the United States and that it should be set analytically against the backdrop of the subordination of knowledge to political and economic demand" (p. 204).

Medvetz has very eloquently captured and described the societal space that think tanks maintain within different social worlds in modern societies. Medvetz' analysis on the boundary work conducted by think tanks is a very useful tool to analyze the think tank phenomenon, mapping the sociological space it occupies and considering structural as well as individual power struggles as sources of social engineering. However, the conclusion that the knowledge think tanks produce is a kind of a "lesser knowledge", much as his think tanks can be considered a "lesser field", is somewhat precarious (163). It seems to me that his argument is somehow tautological; think tanks are dependent on the traditional fields of the political, corporate and media sectors for funding and symbolic resources, visibility and prestige. They also need to be independent from such sectors, in order to produce and disseminate vigorous research. But such total independency may be in reality unattainable, given that the corporate world, (inter)national institutions, state agencies are part and parcel of the kind of research think tanks engage in. Policy research that does not take into consideration the exigencies of the aforementioned think tank stakeholders would in all probability be policy research conducted in universities. Policy research conducted in think tanks is a kind of knowledge with practical applicability that resides in between these different fields, as Medvetz corroborates, but is at the same time informed and articulated

by them, namely by *knowledge brokering mechanisms* that I elaborate on in the empirical component of my thesis.

Literature on Brussels-based think tanks

Within the so far mentioned literature, research focusing on European think tanks is rather sparse. Ullrich (2004) offers a typology of European think tanks, as national and transnational actors. According to Ullrich, European think tanks function within a variety of conceptual approaches, policy communities, epistemic communities, advocacy coalitions and policy entrepreneurs (63-64). Accordingly, Stone (2008, 8) notices that networks "often represent the most feasible organizational mode through which transnational activity is secured". The most influential description and categorization of European think tanks came from a think tank publication in 2004. The Notre Europe think tank, led by Stephen Boucher, provided an analysis of national and Brussels-based think tanks that focused on European topics. In this report, drawing on previous scholarly analysis of think tanks, the authors provide nine criteria for what in their perception constitutes a think tank and which institutions they decided to include in their research (Boucher et al. 2004, 3). Subsequently, they offer a typology of think tanks, categorizing them in academic think tanks, advocacy think tanks, contract research organizations and political party think tanks. Missiroli and Ioannides in a BEPA paper (one of the internal Commission expert groups) in 2012 (p. 8) adopt nine criteria as a baseline for their categorization, though emphasizing their flexibility. This flexibility indicates the heterogeneity of think tanks and the difficulty in placing them into solely one of the above categories. It also confirms how the traditional institutional approaches fail to capture the complexity inherent in the think tank phenomenon.

At this point, it is also worth mentioning a concrete effort to link the theoretical knowledge brokerage framework and Brussels-based think tanks in a recent article by Marybel Perez (2014). Perez investigates how the institutional environment of the European Union shapes think tanks' brokerage functions and guides them to maximizing gains for these organizations. She recognizes four aspects of EU policy-making system that affect think tanks' knowledge brokerage functions i) the emphasis on participative processes ii) concern of stakeholders' representatives iii) development frameworks (brokerage platforms) facilitated by the EU settings and iv) the lack of an overarching European sphere (2014, 324).

I draw insights from this specific research to examine how European structures shape think tank knowledge brokerage roles. In my study I aspire to extend her findings on the effect of somewhat neglected in her article, aspect of knowledge, due to her primary focus on structural-institutional effects. Therefore, I base my empirical analysis primarily emphasizing the think tanks' internal organization and structure to examine how they affect knowledge brokerage and production.

The Rise of the Knowledge Broker

Knowledge brokerage is an ambiguous concept that is increasingly embedded in different scientific disciplines. It was primarily introduced due to the rise of information and communications technology, which rendered scientific findings more accessible to the policy- making communities. This information boom made gradually more evident the fact that knowledge is not something produced in laboratories and disseminated to policy makers to solely satisfy their problem-solving demands. Instead this new trend saw knowledge communities acquiring an active role in policy-making and therefore directly affecting this previously independent realm. New knowledge centers, think tanks among them, entered the policy/knowledge nexus and influenced the way practitioners hypothesized and applied scientific results, while at the same time they guided scientific research to seemingly more practical orientations. Knowledge brokers are now considered to constitute the de facto linkages between scientists and policy makers, aspiring to bridge the two worlds. However, their emerging power has raised some criticism, as think tanks are currently trying to balance between their role of bridging scientific theory and policy-making and their unexpected new function of fostering, and occasionally lobbying, certain agendas.

The idea that scientists and practitioners constitute two totally separate communities with different aims and different perspectives, rarely in touch with one another, was commonly found in the literature (Weiss 1976, Kaplan 1979). With the advent of communication and technological innovation this idea gradually gave place to a framework that dissociated scientific knowledge from its direct instrumental use for the policy makers, based on a linear model of basic research-applied research-development- application (Weiss 1979, 427). Instead, focus was shifted to a more "cyclical", interactive model that was meant to include more than one knowledge centers in the process of shaping political outcomes where policy

makers were the subjects of “tacit knowledge” accumulated through experience and interactions with many sets of participants other that scientists (ibid.). This model assumed that problems dealt with by policy makers were rarely explicitly identified and that the policy-making process was shaped “gradually without the formality of agenda deliberation and choice”, in other words “the policy accretes” (Weiss 1989, 382). This approach has implications also for researchers who engage in a constant dialogue with the policy makers seeking detachment from the policy making world, while in the same time are exploring communication strategies to provide service to the policy makers (Hutjes 1991, 12). The problem was that the scientific world lacked the know-how and resources to achieve these communication strategies and that puzzle brought to the fore the concept of *knowledge brokers* as intermediate individuals or groups that could serve as linkage agents. As bridges between the research and policy making communities the power and influence of knowledge brokers became evident and gathered more and more interest in scholarly analysis, gradually investigating the value of the exact position a broker occupied within a network of the two communities’ social relations.

An overview of the Literature on Knowledge Brokers

In organizational analysis “knowledge brokerage” is a research framework that tries to explain the process by which ideas and knowledge are diffused between different organizations, providing an explanation for the link between learning and innovation (Hardagon 2002). These organizations “move between multiple domains rather than pursue centrality within any one…moving ideas from one domain to another” (ibid. 46). Communication science has witnessed a growing interest in knowledge brokering in which “intermediaries link the producers and users of knowledge to strengthen the generation, dissemination and eventual use of that knowledge” (Bielak et al. 2010, p. 203). This is a result of the fact that “science must be socially distributed, application-oriented, transdisciplinary, and subject to multiple accountabilities. From a one-way linear process, science is evolving to a multi-party, recursive dialogue” (ibid.).

Linking knowledge brokerage and social network analysis Ronald Burt develops the idea that people who stand in between “structural holes”- those places in the network structure where information between the different clusters of the network is not redundant- exploit

brokerage mechanisms “building relations across the holes” (2004, 351). Situated in the interface between heterogeneous groups, knowledge brokers are more open to their influence, synthesizing ideas and perspectives that can later bring to their area of expertise, converting brokerage into social capital. Adopting Burt’s framework but focusing more on agency and individual behaviors rather than on structural antecedents of brokerage and social capital, Boari & Riboldazzi (2014) examine the process by which actors maintain and evolve their brokerage roles as well as how they develop new ones (ibid. p. 683). According to these authors, brokerage is an evolving mechanism that actors engage in, in order to manage but also reshape their network. From them I borrow a working definition of knowledge brokers as *individuals or organizations who function as bridges or gatekeepers that mediate the flow of knowledge and information between two unconnected actors, whether they belong to the same or different subgroups or networks (ibid.).*

Much research on knowledge brokers has come from Canadian scientists and researchers. A reason for that can be partly attributed to the technological and scientific advancement of the country as well as its political system, a mixture of federal, provincial and municipal modes of governance. The importance of multi-level governance for the advent of knowledge brokers will be further examined in this thesis in referral to the European Union. For the time being, I will briefly present some insights from Canadian writers on different areas of public policy where knowledge brokerage can be useful. In health policy knowledge brokering is “all the activity that links decision makers with researchers, facilitating their interaction so that they are able to better understand each other's goals and professional cultures, influence each other's work, forge new partnerships, and promote the use of research-based evidence in decision-making” (Lomas 2007: 129). Between the worlds of research and policy making this mediating function is performed through “the translation of opportunities constraints and findings between the two communities” (Lomas 1997: 440) that will otherwise maintain their “often misplaced ideas about each other’s environment” (ibid. 439). In 2003, the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF) presented the findings of a nation-wide consultation on the importance of knowledge brokerage and suggested strategies for its successful implementation. The importance of knowledge brokers in the Canadian Health system has also been examined in an often-cited paper by Oldham and McLean (1997). The importance of knowledge brokers, outside Canada, has also

been investigated in environmental policy (Sverisson 2001), development studies (Fisher & Vogel, 2008) and sustainable sanitation (Bijker et al. 2012). This inter (-) and transdisciplinary utilization of knowledge brokerage points to the ambiguity of the concept, and its applicability in different scientific fields. It is also manifest by the number of other concepts, such as knowledge translation (for an overview Greenhalgh and Wieringa 2011, Sverisson 2001), knowledge mobilization (Levin 2013), that share similar characteristics as in the above mentioned literature.

What is worth mentioning is that knowledge in most of these approaches is not used in its essentialist meaning[4], as something used with the purpose of bettering our lives (Liew 2007). Particularly in the literature that connects knowledge to networks, it is used as an asset, a resource used by skilled agents in order to advance their relational position in the network they occupy. It is congruent to learning processes that help an agent use insights from two or more different groups in order to come up with innovative ideas. This is most evident in Burt's analysis of structural holes and how they ameliorate an agent's social capital. In Burt's words "The social capital metaphor is that the people who do better are somehow better connected" (2001, 202).

In this thesis on Brussels-based think tanks the concept of brokerage will be used loosely defined, and the emphasis will be put not so much on what it means in theoretical terms, but how knowledge brokerage is performed in practice, through what mechanisms and strategies and what are the advantages that accrue to knowledge brokers. How the history of think tanks and the personal capital of their members, the networks in which think tanks have been established and developed, guide the knowledge brokerage function of think tanks and how do they enable or inhibit innovative ideas. Special focus will be given to the importance of social capital, built on knowledge and expertise, as a brokerage facilitator and eventually a source of power for think tank members. But before moving to the effect of networks of brokerage on agent's social capital I will try to shed some light on actual meaning of the word knowledge, as the specific research produced in think tanks; research which draws insights from academia, policy makers, institutions and empirical evidence. A common thread running the above mentioned contributions to the knowledge brokerage

[4] Knowledge is the (1) cognition or recognition (know-what), (2) capacity to act (know-how), and (3) understanding (know-why) that resides or is contained within the mind or in the brain.

literature is that knowledge brokers lie somewhere *in between* worlds, peripheries (Meyer 2010, 122), domains or occupations, thus they are *interstitial* by nature.

A community of knowledge Brokers?

The importance of social science knowledge and how it should be brought in and utilized in practical public policy has been a recurring topic in institutional and public policy literature. Radaelli (1995) provides an overview of the main theoretical approaches that seek to explain the relation between social knowledge and power. What is most interesting here, is that Radaelli, drawing on Lindquist (1998: 38) introduces the role of a "third community" between social scientists and policy makers a community that consists of individuals (political consultants, think tanks, idea brokers, directors of influential policy institutes) that participate and impact the various stages of the policy-making process (Radaelli 1995: 176-178). Their impact is most evident on the intermediate level of ideas in circumstances of uncertainty, with information data (retrieved mainly by university departments) at one end of the continuum and arguments (brought into the debate by advocacy coalitions) at the other. At a first glance it seems peculiar to include think tanks, as organizations, in the same category as individuals. In Radaelli's formulation think tanks serve as idea brokers at the micro-level of analysis, emphasizing the importance of single individuals, in a similar fashion as examining the role of unorthodox economists in exercising political influence.

However, think tanks are organized entities with an internal structure and hierarchy that comprise not only of experts with policy-relevant knowledge but also of researchers that provide data and conduct field work to assist and facilitate the work of the analysts, or work as administrative staff who oversees the well-functioning of the organization. Think tanks are usually governed by a structure of Member Councils and Director Boards that only independently participate in think tanks' management or research production. Nonetheless, think tanks, in the common use of the term are synonym to the more eminent figures of their organization, usually their Directors (i.e. Daniel Gross- CEPS, Guntram B. Wolff-Bruegel), their most eminent founding resources (i.e. George Soros-Open Society Foundations) or their founders (Jacques Delors-Notre Europe). It is exactly this peculiar co-existence of individual and organizational traits (in terms of how organizational structure

shapes the sort of knowledge produced) that characterizes the think tank phenomenon and makes it difficult to grasp. It is a synthesis of these two levels of analysis I will make use of in this thesis, doing justice to the numbers of young professionals, researchers who work and spend their time in think tanks' offices and libraries helping the advancement of the specific kind of knowledge think tanks produce, while examining the role of elite individuals, policy-experts that have connected their name to the organizations they represent.

Research Question and Three Main Hypotheses

My main focus is to shed some light on the role of these different think tanks constituencies, the different groups of professionals, one can find in the think tank hierarchy. I seek to answer the question: *what is the function of these different groups of people for the research conducted by Brussels-based think tanks* and in order to answer that I introduce three main hypotheses:

1) Brussels-based think tanks are more independent from their American counterparts for structural reasons but also due to the professional backgrounds of the researchers they employ.

2) Brussels-based think tanks are led by a minority of individuals who are part of an interconnected European elite network. This phenomenon blurs the boundaries between independent research and the promotion of specific agendas

3) The leverage and ability Brussels-based think tanks have to introduce innovative solutions is linked to their position in the Brussels-based network and to their history, small as it may be, in the process of European integration.

The first and second hypotheses seem, at least initially, conflictual in character. Knowledge brokers are supposed to be neutral intermediaries with no direct interests in the different worlds they are bringing. In the case of think tanks the boundaries between the policy research and the policy implementation communities are by definition blurred, since think tanks produce scientific research. They translate and disseminate their own research findings while linking the explicit knowledge of the researchers to the tacit knowledge of the corporate and administrative members that participate in their processes. However, this sort

of knowledge much as it takes into consideration the various interests of the different stakeholders, is meant to be neutral and based on rigid scientific methodologies. Neutrality and independency are the most crucial variables in this hypothesis and in order to operationalize their presence I analyze the professional backgrounds of the people who actually conduct the policy research in some eminent Brussels-based think tanks. I use tables to shed light on these people professional backgrounds and to see if I can find instances of direct involvement to the European policy making community. What is important here is to show whether this presence is more evident among the researchers (the resident think tanks members) or the more independent constituencies (Governing Boards and Members). Findings towards the former would point to a high level of biased research and doubt the neutrality of the knowledge brokerage framework whereas findings towards the latter to a greater degree of independency and an actual knowledge brokerage function. Adding to the quantitative research, I make use of the insights from the interviews I conducted in Brussels to see whether I can find instances of a lack of independency. Every think tank member has a legitimate interest in defending her institution's independency. This independency is formally stated in every think tank's statute and mission statement as well as in presentation of the formal agenda setting processes. Nonetheless, I do believe that a closer examination in these people's discourse, based on my face-to-face interaction with them, can reveal their own interpretation of these formal boundaries and the degree to which they are respected.

My third hypothesis is what establishes the unease connection between power and knowledge influence and as mentioned before, is more difficult to pin down and operationalize. The object of this hypotheses moves from the more general knowledge brokerage framework, according to the first hypothesis commonly found in all Brussels-based think tanks, to specific differences between think tanks themselves. What I am looking for here is instances, of policy recommendations attributed to specific think tanks. The problem here is that it is nearly impossible to trace the origin of an idea to a specific institution or to a particular person. In Diane Stone's words: "proof of influence is elusive…and it is a rare occurrence that a policy outcome can be attributed to one organization" (International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, 15670). Considering this conundrum, what I find more useful for this hypothesis is not try to examine the relation between a policy recommendation and its implementation or not, but the

variable of innovative suggestions, linking the knowledge brokerage framework to insights offered by network literature. In this case, it is *history* that offers insights and exploratory explanations on why one idea cultivated in the one or the other think tank. Much as Brussels-based think tanks, as stated earlier, are relatively new constructions there are examples in the literature and the press that allow us to hypothesize on the connection between the history of a think tank, its degree of establishment within the European environment and its capacity to offer innovative political and economic recommendations. According to this hypothesis, a higher degree of established liaisons and connections would point to a minimized capacity for innovative ideas whereas a lower degree of such established connections would allow for greater innovation.

Part II. Empirical Findings

Before I begin with the empirical component of my thesis I will briefly present three important reasons why I consider European think tanks different from their American counterparts. This analysis is needed since before going into the details of the organizational structure of the institutes under investigation, it should become clear that there are structural reasons why Brussels-based think tanks do not exhibit similar degrees of partisanship and politicization as in the US.

Firstly, there is the issue of membership: the majority of think tank researchers and analysts come from the academia and they have previous experience as researchers and analysts with only a few of them coming from political or corporate backgrounds. Second, the majority of Brussels-based think tanks have multi-faceted sponsorship and membership programmes seeking diverse funding resources. Lastly, the relative short history of these institutes within a political construction – the EU- that combines elements of different sorts of governance which are still evolving and reshaping. For think tanks, as institutes born in this multi-faceted environment, it is still uncertain what their actual role is. But this difficulty to discern their permanent functions from the more specific instances of influence is what makes the think tank world fascinating and worth studying.

Three reasons why Brussels-based think tanks are different from their American counterparts

A Sparse Exchange of Personnel

Brussels-based think tanks lack a Revolving Door policy. In the US, private research organizations have played a pivotal role in providing functioning expertise, operating outside government bureaucracies (International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, 11599). Controversy arises when such private organizations are manned with former personnel from those same government bureaucracies they try to assist. The struggles between technocratic bureaucracies and (Conservative) policy activists, that solidified think tanks' presence in the American political scene (Medvetz 2012), and the eventual

convergence of administrative agencies and such think tanks, was greatly promoted by an exchange of political and research personnel, severely limiting independent research.

However, at the time being, this "revolving door" phenomenon does not appear to be the norm in European think tanks. "European public administrations and political career patterns are still quite different – not only from the US but also from one another – and rarely show anything remotely comparable to the American "spoils system" (Missiroli & Ioannides 2012: 13). This belief in the relative independence of think tanks and the policy making world was in verbatim corroborated by an interviewee in the following passage:

"*US think tanks have the revolving door policy for instance, people move in and out, and when they move out they actually experience new learning processes which they can later adapt to their work if they go back to think tanks (from the academia)…in Brussels you do not have that, some people move from think tanks to the Institutions but they rarely go back…which means that it is harder to foster those learning process*". (Brussels Interview, Think Tank Programme Director, 7/5/2015)

Think tank members have every reason to defend their independent position from the European officials and bureaucrats, as this ensures independency in policy making and increased credibility to outsiders (Medvetz 2012: 23). In order to verify the introduced quote by Missiroli & Ioannides and to validate the statement of the aforementioned interviewee, I decided to examine whether this revolving door is indeed existent also in European think-tanks. By taking the professional backgrounds as my independent variable and checking the past occupational positions of permanent policy analysts in five eminent think tanks I corroborate that their majority is in fact not related to any such previous employments. Brussels-based think tanks are independently manned by people who do have experience as experts in European topics, proven by their consistent participation in European committees and testimonies. Nonetheless, as shown in Table 1, the majority of think tank analysts and researchers have not been previously employed in any European institution, thus indicating that the revolving door aspect is limited in the personnel of Brussels European think tanks. The data here refer to the permanent personnel of the think tanks under investigation and I examined the CV's of the analysts involved as evident from

the think tanks' websites. In the few cases they were not available I conducted an on-line research.

Table 1 (Number of think tank analysts' with previous positions in the EU)

	EPC	Bruegel	Carnegie	CEPS (senior staff)	Egmont
Total number of policy analysts (Resident only)	17+(17[5])	11	14	18	12
Former official EU employments	1+ (9)	2	1	5	3
Policy experts to a European Body[6]	7	6	3	11	3

Different legal regime and different sponsorship opportunities

Secondly, there is a difference in the legal regime concerning think tanks and their obligation to disclose their sponsors and donors. There is still controversy concerning the extent to which the need for transparency has positive or negative effects on think tanks. However, there is little doubt that Brussels-based think tanks are under pressure to reveal their connections to the corporate world and the degree of lobbying they exercise. In the US think tanks receive aid from the government in terms of tax exemptions and in Europe in the form of direct financing from the European Research Framework Programmes. However, in the former case that can be considered an incentive for private organizations to fund think tanks whereas in the later a source of discouragement.

In the United States most think tanks are tax exempt under the 501 (c) (3) section of the Internal Revenue Code that includes organizations with religious, charitable, scientific… or educational purposes (Harvard Law Review 2002, 1505-6). For private foundations that wish to contribute to these type of organizations the "expenditure responsibility clause" , which requires the grant provider and the grant receiver to report to the IRS and assure the charitable purpose of the grant, is not necessary. Thus, private foundations have a strong

[5] The number in the parenthesis refers to the external experts to EPC, who mostly provide guidance to the think tank. It is evident that the number of former European employees rises when we include external experts in the analysis. However they contribute only a small number of publications as will be shown later in the thesis.

[6] As advisors, committee participants, participating in testimonials etc. This is indicative not of a formal European political employment but a proof of transaction and immediate (personal) knowledge of European actors and processes

incentive to contribute to tax exempt think tanks (ibid, 1505). Moreover, much as a Congress initiative augmented the transparency of organizations falling under the 501 (c) (3) section, by forcing them to publically provide information about their purpose and financial status, they are still not required to disclose their donors (p. 1509).

The relative abundant resources for funding that the American system provided for think tank research and the fact that they usually come from a rather ideologically homogenous group of sponsors (more often Republican and to a lesser extent Democrat) partly explains the discrepancy in the number of think tanks in the US and Brussels. Brussels-based think tanks have been urged to sign up to the Joint Transparency Register of the European Commission and European Parliament and endorse its Code of Conduct in order to acquire access to European grants (Transparify, March 4, 2014). According to the Code, all interest representatives are required, next to stating the interests and aims they promote, to specify the clients they represent (Transparency Register, Code of Conduct (a)). Although the Register is on a voluntary basis and it is subject to selective disclosure and donor capture (Transparify ibid.), most Brussels-based think tanks have already registered.

The sparse funding options for European think tanks mean that they seek a plurality of donors, ranging from member states and corporations to international agencies and non-governmental organizations. Bruegel's membership for instance consists of 18 European states, 33 corporate members and 10 international institutions or agencies, such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank. Given this funding pluralism, witnessed in most European think tanks, it seems next to impossible for individual stakeholders to dictate strategies strictly tailored for their separate agendas.

Adding to that, Brussels-based think tanks have been severely hit by the current crisis, struggling to find access to funding resources. This urgency to diversify their sponsorship, which was evident even before crisis, can partly explain why not many European think tanks are now formed in Brussels (Boucher et al. p. 73). "Euro-think tanks are seeking to meet changes in their operating environment through more deliberate fund-raising, networks and cooperation, greater specialization, financial transparency, and even performance measurement" (ibid. p. 1). However, the value of think tanks as research institutions lies in

the quality of the research they produce and in order to attract membership they need to exhibit solid research. As the following interviewee hints, such diversification is a source of consensus–seeking, rather distant to the partisan role many national think tanks perform:

"…(due to the crisis) *there has been huge pressure on think tank market and some of them had to change, we had to make strategic decisions, but given the nature of the business you cannot compromise on quality and that is common knowledge to all think tankers...."* (Brussels Interview, Think Tank Programme Director, 7/5/2015)

The Political System

Lastly, the relative recent history of Brussels-based think tanks, relative to their American counterparts is directly linked to the process and shape of the European Union's mode of governance. Think tanks in Brussels are a result of European integration and although there are instances of them contributing to the shape and form of the European scheme (Ullrich 2004, 56), they are its products and not its initiators. In many national contexts, as is the case in the US, think tanks were advocators of ideologies and they served a specific function of promoting one research agenda over another, concerning the big American ideological debates over welfare policies (Medvetz 2012, 88-101).

In the European Union, the Europeanization process used to be a lot less politicized since it is a topic that largely departs from the traditional left-right partisan debates. Moreover, European integration was until the 1990's a process of the "permissive consensus" that gave insulated elites the right to negotiate the common European future (Hooghe and Marks, 2008). Think tanks' role in this process seemed to be to shed light on specific issues and policies concerning the degree of and the direction of European integration. The more governments stopped being the only legitimate source of authority and the more the European Union moved towards a multi-level mode of governance, "the possibilities for policy research disconnected from specific organizational settings has become increasingly feasible and fashionable" (Stone 2008, 11). In the absence of the traditional Republican-Democrat dichotomy the importance of think tanks as bridges between the different power centers and as interpreters of different interests rose. The exact place and function they can perform in this changing political landscape is still unclear.

Think Tanks' organizational structure

In this part of my thesis I try to depict the organizational structure of Brussels-based think tanks. My goal is to inquire the assumption that this organizational structure affects the nature of social knowledge think tanks produce. Using insights from the general literature on knowledge brokerage, I describe the interactions between what can be called "managing think tank constituencies" (Member Councils, Governing Boards) and the actual resident think tank staff, the people who eventually conduct and publish the research (Senior and Junior Analysts), with think tank Directors serving as a bridge between them. By providing a rather loose knowledge brokerage framework, I try to explain how these processes and mechanisms link the objective social knowledge that researchers aim for with the tacit knowledge that the managing constituencies provide.

Nowadays, most Brussels-based think tanks are organizations with distinctive internal management and governance structures. By examining the organizational models of the most eminent Brussels-based think tanks, as evident on their websites, I divide this structure into main organizational groups. Based on the interpretation of the interviews I conducted with some of these think tanks members, I analyze the specific role these groups hold in shaping their research agenda. It should be stated from the beginning that this does not constitute a clear-cut separation of responsibilities and boundaries. As a matter of fact, as I hope will eventually become evident, think tanks appear to have their own internal knowledge brokers and intermediaries, eventually raising the question of the relative value of these in-betweeners within the organizations. However, it is clear that not all think tank members participate in the research and analysis process.

As will be shown a great amount of think tank research is conducted by independent contributors, whether they are called, visiting fellows, visiting or non-resident scholars. These people publish an important portion of the different think tanks' papers and contribute significantly to the research and analysis production. This participation from individuals outside the organization can raise questions about who these people are and what their backgrounds and professional capital is. *Since it was induced that the revolving-door system cannot be found in think tanks maybe these independent members constitute a "hidden door" for former or even current EU officials or corporate members to present and*

advocate for their opinions against the backdrop of prestigious policy research institutes. In any case that could be indicative of a compromised autonomy on the part of think tanks. An analysis of who these independent contributors are provides no substantial evidence for such an inference. As a matter of fact, in their majority, these independent members are themselves researchers in the academia or in policy research institutes. In some cases, with CEPS as the most eminent example, they are members of an affiliate to the think tanks institute in one of its formal network associations (i.e. ENERPI[7]).

Brussels-based think tanks and the profiles of their Independent Contributors

CEPS

The Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS), which was officially founded in 1983, is chronologically the first European think tank. It maintains a strong in-house research capacity with 59 senior fellows and research staff, concluding a vast number of publications, 85 for the first half of 2015 so far. Economic policy occupies a majority of them, but topics on other areas such as security, justice and home affairs, energy, agricultural and foreign policy are also included. It is a generalist think tank with an academic character (Perez 2014) due to its commitment to high quality research. CEPS is an integral part of several EU research networks and funding from the Commission's Research Framework (E7) constitutes the majority of its resources (Missiroli & Ioannides 2012:15). Other than the European institutions (European Commission, Committee of Regions, European Parliament), a number of corporate members also provide resources for CEPS research. Daniel Gros, an eminent figure in Brussels political environment (Ullrich 2004, 56) is currently CEPS director and Karel Lannoo its chief executive. From the information found on its website, the highest governing body seems to be the Board of Directors, with 11 members, with a long history in eminent political and corporate positions, and two ex officio members who are also immediately involved in the think tank's management and research (Daniel Gros and Karel Lannoo).

Researchers are divided into senior and research staff with the former publishing the majority of papers with the research staff's assistance (Table 2). A significant portion of the publications comes from independent members who are to a great part university professors and members or directors of other policy research institutes (Table 3).

[7] http://www.enepri.eu/

Table 2. CEPS Publications Categorized by Staff Members (2015)

Independent Members	16	18,9%
Senior Staff	25	29,4%
Research Staff	11	13%
Co-edits. Independent+Senior	17	20%
Co-edits. Independent+ Research	4	4,7%
Co edits. Senior+Research	8	9,4%
Executive Member (Board)	3	3,5%
Total	85	98,9%

Table 3. Professional backgrounds of independent contributors to CEPS Publications (2015)[8]

University Professors and Institutional Affiliations	2	3%
Researchers	13	22%
Professors and Research Institute Affiliates[9]	39	65%
NGO members	1	1,5%
Corporate Members	5	8%
Total	60	99,5%

EPC

The European Policy Center (EPC) was launched in 1997 and is more policy analysis – oriented rather than focusing on in house research (Ullrich 2004, 56). It is, similarly to CEPS, a generalist think tank with less focus on economic topics and a broad European political analysis research agenda (Missiroli & Ioannides 2012: 17). Contrary to CEPS, the EPC emphasizes outreach activity, hosting numerous events and serving as a platform for communication and exchange of views between its members and EU or members state officials (Ullrich 2004: 57). It currently has 350 members from the corporate, business and institutional world. However, when the old generation of leaders changed, the new managers tried to augment its policy contributions and its policy shifted to a more balanced

[8] Wherever the CEPS website did not provide adequate information on the contributors a search online was used in order to retrieve the authors CVs. In two cases, this research did not provide adequate information and the members were not included in the data. Also in many publications two or more independent members co-worked

[9] They can either hold a teaching position in a University and/or running and assisting a research institute. All hold PhD degrees

output of analysis and events (Brussels interview EPC member, 05/05/2015). For the past years its research has been divided into five distinct programmes, each with each own director. Its governance comprises of a General Assembly of four members, which is the highest decision-making body of the EPC, approving its budget and accounts and a Governing Board of three members that guides its overall management based on the implementation of the organization's strategic plan. The Chief executive Fabian Zuleeg, who is also a Chief Economist, is accountable to the Board and assures the overall management of the EPC.

In accordance with the rationale that primarily "white-collar" researchers perform most research, and not members of the higher echelon of think tanks, EPC's residence staff publishes the vast majority of the analysis (Table 4). Moreover, in line with the previously stated hypothesis that European think tanks maintain a more independent approach to their research, largely due to increased numbers of academics amongst their ranks, a number of external experts with academic backgrounds contribute to the EPC's work (Table 5).

Table 4. EPC Publications Categorized by staff members (Two year period-2014/2015)

Senior Advisers	5	6,4%
Policy Analysts	44	56%
Independent	15	19%
Co-edits. Independent+Policy Analyst	12	15,3%
Independent+ Senior	2	2,5%
Total[10]	78	99,2%

Table 5. EPC Independent Members Publications (2015)

Professors/research Institutes	13	57%
Former Diplomats/Institutions[11]	8	35%
Researchers	1	4%
Journalists	1	4%
Total	23	100%

[10] Collective Publications as they appear on the publications list were not included

[11] In many cases these are former academics with a long experience in diplomatic services and/or international institutions. In most cased I chose to include them in the first or second category depending on the years that have passed since their last academic position but it remains an arbitrary distinction. It should be noted that their contributions include mostly publications on topics of foreign policy and geopolitics.

BRUEGEL

Brussels European and Global Economic Laboratory (Bruegel) held its first Board Meeting in January 2005 and as its name suggests it is a think tank specializing in economics. It was the culmination of a shared idea of two eminent French economists Nicolas Véron and Jean Pisani-Ferry (Bruegel's first director). It is not clear how this idea was picked up and turned into an initiative from Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder in a Joint Declaration in Paris in 2003 to create a European center of economic studies, but shortly afterwards the French and German ministries of finance established a bilateral working group with this purpose. Eleven European stated decided to support the project "conditional to successful fundraising from the private sector". Mario Monti served as its first Chairman, after leaving the European Commission and he still holds the title of the organization's honorary President.

Bruegel exhibits a solid organizational structure and an exemplary governance model which can be attributed to the quality of its personnel, managerial staff and a number of management and development specialists, as well to the plurality and relative abundance of its funding resources. Bruegel membership consists of 18 Member states whose contribution depends on each country's GDP, 33 corporations who all pay 50,000 euros annually and 9 institutional members including central and private banks. Its overall budget is around 4 million euros per year. The Member Assembly is Bruegel's highest governing body and it meets in May and November of every year. Its main function is to help design and approve the research programme through a process which was in detail described by one Bruegel administrator:

"*so they help us in terms of writing our research agenda, we meet with them they tell us what they think is going to be in the policy agenda and what Bruegel's value-added would be. We then, we then (emphasis by the speaker), write a draft agenda and we have bilateral consultations with all of our members and other stakeholders, and people outside Bruegel, to understand what the policy area is, what the question is, whether we are the right people to answer it… that is a consultation process that last about 6 weeks and then it is ratified by the Board. Once the research program is set we publish it and the Member's role is over, but that does not mean we do not talk to our members about the work we are doing*" (Brussels Interview, 7/5/2015)

The State and corporate members elect 3 members of Bruegel's Governing Board each and they appoint the other 5 (11 in total). The Board of Directors consists of eminent individuals with backgrounds in government, business and academia and other than approving the research programme and the budget it assists the overall management of the organization in direct access to Bruegel's Director. Jean-Claude Trichet is currently chairman of the Board. A quick look at the Board of Directors of Bruegel Institute counts 4 members that held or still occupy administrative or advisory positions within their national governments i.e. as Treasurers at their national Ministry of Finance, 2 members with important corporate backgrounds, 3 members with professional experience both as civil servants and corporate members and one member with an academic position that has also served in ministerial posts. Many of them have had some professional experience within the World Bank, from different positions.

As evident from the data there is a great number of independent researchers and analysts who do not hold a permanent position with Bruegel but nonetheless contribute significantly to its publications, nearly as much as the resident scholars (33% and 35% respectively). An examination of their professional background proves that in their vast majority they are current or former academic scholars with experience in research institutes. The data show no important inference of independent political or corporate figures in the contributions to Bruegel publications. That is largely in accordance with the high quality and the academic character of the research Bruegel promises to maintain.

Table 6. Bruegel Publications by authors (2 year period 2014/2015)

Non-Resident/Visiting Scholars	22	33%
Resident Scholars[12]	23	35%
Co-edits. Independent+Senior	9	14%
Co-edits. Senior+ Research Assistants	12	18%
Total	66	100%

[12] Director's publications were counted as part of the resident scholars publications and when they were co-authorships with independent members they were categorized accordingly

Table 7. Independent Members Contributions Bruegel (2015)

University and Institutional Positions[13]	16	62%
Institutional Positions[14]	6	23%
PhD candidates	4	15%
total	26	100%

CARNEGIE EUROPE

Carnegie Europe is part of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace a network of think tanks that begun with the expansion of the historic American think tank in different parts of the world. Carnegie Europe was founded in 2007 and is a small think tank with limited in house research capacities, focusing on topics of foreign policy and geopolitics. The bulk of its analysis comes from non-resident and associate members as well as visiting scholars with Judy Dempsey, an eminent figure with long experience in diplomatic correspondence signing a big part of its publications. Its governance is directly linked to the Washington Center and Jan Techau is its current director. Field work research revealed that the small number of young researchers, although they all have backgrounds on political science or relevant disciplines mostly conduct outreach activities, such as assisting in organizing events, establishing communications and seeking financial resources.

It makes little sense to try to analyze the backgrounds of the independent contributors to Carnegie's publications since this think tank occupies only a small permanent staff with mostly organizational responsibilities. Since Carnegie is a think tank that mostly focuses on geopolitics and foreign policy, the majority of its researchers are people with previous diplomatic experience and they exhibit in situ knowledge of the geographic area or topic they analyze. In my own interpretation, and in accordance with the hypothesis that European think tanks base their analysis on independent contributors, what is witnessed in

[13] Some serve as advisers to more than one research or policy institute but they have all held or still hold some position in academia (public or private universities). Some of them only hold their university positions at the moment but they have institutional experience (ECB EBRD, Ministries of Finance). The point is to show the relevance of the academic field in the think tank functioning (i.e. publications) and that is mainly inferred from their working experience in universities.

[14] That does not mean they do not have academic backgrounds but they are currently working in some institution or international agency. All Fellows at large fall into this category

Carnegie is typical of a think tank that originates in the American think tank world and the way it works. American think tanks are mostly based on people with practical experience and personal interference in the topics they analyze. This phenomenon is more evident in Carnegie than in any other of the think tanks under investigation and can be considered symptomatic of the different approaches European and Brussels-based think tanks employ in their organizational structure and work.

Table 8. Carnegie Publications categorized by authors (2015)

Non-resident/Senior Associate/Director	17	55%
Co-edits. Visiting Scholar+ Research Staff	5	16%
Independent	6	19%
Co edits. Independent+ Associate or Visiting	3	10%
Total	31	100%

Researchers and fellows publish their papers based on an agenda set and discussed in congruity with Members. But according to think tank researchers interviewed, the agenda is set under general guidelines and it is quire flexible. Here is what a think tank senior researcher replied when he was asked about the degree of independence in drafting his own papers and how it is different from the academia, where he was until recently participating. His answer is worth presenting in length:

"Once a year we also meet at the senior economists meeting, where we do a brainstorming with members, and we form an agenda for the next year, just to have a feeling of what is interesting at the moment in the policy world, but the agenda is flexible, if we come up with new ideas, we are not bound by it"

In a way academic papers are more done from a scientific point of view in the sense that you try to create knowledge whereas here the goal is to create policy recommendation, you use knowledge that already exists, you use data to discover some facts, but the goal is not to produce knowledge itself but to highlight some policy debate".

In academia your work is bounded within what is publishable, after you are in those boundaries them you can work on whatever you want- in the think tank world boundaries

exist within what is interesting to the policy world what is relevant from a policy point of view. ***The reasons why you conduct research*** *is what distinguishes the different boundaries" (Brussels Interview, Think Tank Research Fellow, 04/05/2015).*

The majority of the above described think tank researchers are people who have obtained Doctorate Degrees from various university departments. In Bruegel and CEPS this number, for senior researchers and scholars, almost reaches 100%. Some of them have occupied various institutional and corporate positions or have worked in other policy research institutes. Nonetheless, in their majority they share a very similar cultural capital in terms of education and previous employments. From this it can be extracted that they know what scientific methodologies and data analysis comprise of and what the "right way to do science" means. However, not all interviewees confirmed a connection to an academic approach to the kind of analysis they conduct

"Some of the things I do, I do not need to do a huge amount of research and reading because I have a sort of accumulated intellectual capital, which I can re-use and I can have the younger people to do the actual field research… but this is my biggest fear, what will I do if I run out of it…so what I am trying to do is to include in the projects I am working on a new component, something that will oblige me to do my own research, but I do not do much academic reading for instance" (Brussels Interview, 07/05/15 Think Tank Research Member)

It is open to debate whether policy research for societal, political or economic matters should be confined to technical issues, data analysis and mathematical- statistical models. For the think tank world it is essential to understand how the outcomes of the research might affect or draw reactions from the private and public worlds. In one above quote this research fellow very eloquently described the major difference between the two approaches; it is *the reasons* for conducting policy research in think tanks. It can be hypothesized that reasons also guide methodological choices and install a layer of interpretation, on the researcher's part, based on the interaction he has had with the immediate recipients of his findings; those that will be eventually affected by the outcome of the debate he participates, the think tank members. It is a very strong argument to say that this interaction limits the autonomy of a researcher, as a social scientist, as Medvetz deduces for the aggregate output of think tanks' social science research in America. Boundaries can be mostly understood as

framing the practical context within which a think tank researcher should guide his research. In Brussels-based think tanks this does not appear to be a limiting factor in the sense of guiding the results, but only in terms of how relevant these findings will be.

Moreover, as shown by the quantitative analysis, independent contributors to think tanks' publications are in their vast majority people from academic backgrounds with long experience in university departments. The general trend is that think tanks which focus on economic issues often collaborate with university professors from economic departments. Think tanks that are mostly concerned with foreign policy topics and geopolitics encourage the contributions of former diplomats and people with an inside knowledge of the area under analysis. As evident there are discrepancies from one think tank to another but overall the profiles of the independent members reveal a degree of academic consistency and scientific engagement that can be considered a sign of the independent character of the research they conduct.

Junior Researchers and their main functions

Senior researchers and resident staff constitute the majority of think tank members. Concerning their professional experience as researchers and the work they conduct in a think tank they stand somewhere in the middle of the think tank hierarchy with junior researchers and think tank directors occupying the two poles. The role of directors in the network of Brussels-based professionals will be only superficially examined here. To do justice to the young people that work in think tanks I will provide an overview of what their main functions are.

Brussels-based think tanks employ a significant number of young researchers who occupy assistant positions. In their majority, they have recently graduated from European university departments with master's degrees and are in the beginning of their career or are young professionals with small experience in the Brussels working environment. My personal impression of these people is that they are intelligent graduates, eager to learn in the competitive think tank world and happy to make part of the interconnected network of policy research and policy practice, maintaining their ideological orientations. The following abstract reveals the importance of participating in a think tank for these young researchers:

"In the previous organization where I worked we did not have the same sort of environment in terms of new ideas, it feels to me now that there is more openness in ideas, policy activism you do not expect to find here …in an institution or in academia even, it seems a bit vulgar to express strong opinions about controversial topics" (Interview Research Assistant, 4/5/2015)

This attribute may be characteristic of the younger think tank members, who enter the Brussels scene eager to discover the "rules of the game" with ideological tendencies that might subside in due time. Someone who has been working in Brussels for a few years described the first six months of working in that poly-centric, multicultural mosaic of corporations, NGO's and European institutions as *"the honey moon, where everything seems fascinating and interesting, you spend endless time at the office and you actually like it, it is a whole new world working there"* (Think tank researcher, personal correspondence).

Unfortunately these think tank members make only a marginal contribution to the think tank's research output. Often they assist the research fellows and members in drafting their papers by providing data analysis and information. However, most of the times they are occupied with administrative responsibilities and positions such as, communication assistants, events coordinators or assistants, exploring funding and membership possibilities. When they make part of the administrative team they serve a brokerage role as they need to maintain connections and the relations to potential members. This is an important function since keeping the flow of communication open between the researchers and the sponsors, while assuring the entrance of new members, is essential for a think tank's overall success.

"If they approach us for membership I have to maintain that contact and the relationship… I also need to approach certain companies to seek membership possibilities" (Brussels Interview, 04/05/2015 Think Tank Communications Assistant)

Climbing High in the Echelon: Think Tank Governing Boards and Directors

Think tank directors are eminent figures with an established presence in the Brussels professional environment, and backgrounds in one or more than one European institutions, the academia, International Organizations of economic and security orientation and very often they exhibit professional experience in more than one such position. They combine a

knowledge broker's personal skill set and they are able to perform the main brokerage functions (turning problems into questions, guiding research and establishing communication (CHSFR 2003: 1) with success. They act as representatives of the think tank researchers to the Board's members by linking the two groups. Moreover they encapsulate what Stone (1996) terms "competent policy entrepreneurs". They are in a sense charismatic figures that seem to gather an entrepreneur's required personal skill set; social acuity, defining problems, building teams and leading by example (Mintron & Norman 2009: 3, CHSFR 2003: 1) Their role as policy entrepreneurs/policy brokers and the importance of the social capital they bestow to the organization will be more extensively examined later in the thesis where the potential for innovative idea production in think tanks will be examined.

The Board of Governors and the Members' Council act as gatekeepers on behalf of the think tank to the policy and corporate community, with the aim of acquiring resources, building connections and bridges. Acquiring resources does not refer to fund raising processes which are conducted by the think tank's administrative staff, but it is rather the symbolic capital they bestow on the think tank, attracting the support of eminent figures and corporations of the Brussels world. An invitation to participate in a task force, a talk or any other sort of event carries a lot greater weight and prestige when it bears the signature of Jean Claude Trichet (Bruegel) for example. Their social capital in the network of Brussels professionals and civil servants can also be a source of attraction for high ranking officials to participate and give their opinions in panels and conferences organized by the think tank. They act as gatekeepers in the sense that they grant outsiders, corporate members and public officials, access to the think tank group (Gould & Fernandez 1989: 92).

Brokerage mechanisms: Network Brokerage and Knowledge Translation

These Mechanisms or "exercises" as think tank members call them include the transaction and communication fora that serve as platforms of communication between the researchers and the different stakeholders. They can be characterized as trust-building events between the policy makers and the researchers which serve to evaluate the credibility of the research produced. At the same time, and due to their "dialogical" nature these events help the

researchers appreciate different perspectives of the panel members as well as the extent to which knowledge disseminated by the think tank organizing a specific event is actually being taken into consideration and applied. There are different kinds of public and closed events organized by the various think tanks and they include; talks, debates, seminars, internal and external conferences, workshops, task forces and panels. I will briefly describe some of them to give a picture of what they consist of and using insights from the interviewees, shortly analyze how they can affect the research conducted in think tanks.

Task Forces are groups of experts consisting of 25-30 members, with balanced representation from senior members of different stakeholders that meet under a think tank's chairmanship to discuss specific topics under a more general framework. A prospectus is being disseminated many months in advance to the first meeting, to targeted individuals with provisional key topics to be discussed, a provisional meeting schedule, revised according to availability and participation. The think tank task force program anticipates three to four meetings within a period of four-five months in some cases with the participation of academics, stakeholders, regulators and supervisors for a topic on financial sector resolution. The discussions will be held in the think tank's premises and will be backed by research from think tank's members under the guidance of a senior think tank member who will chair those meetings.

Events are usually open to the public and they attract some of the most eminent figures of Brussels policy makers as well as corporate members. Membership to a think tank provides priority access to all events. For the researchers, the value-added to the events lies not only to the content presentations but on the discussions afterwards and the conflicting views that might emerge (Interview Brussels, Research Assistant 04/05/2015). The choice of participants in the panel is directly related to the think tank's visibility and prestige but also to the network position it has acquired in time:

"In the years we have developed two things a group of friends so there is a core of people who are specialists in Brussels, and we have also developed a strategy based on our objectives on who to reach out to and this is a process which is managed by the team and then once the idea is formed, we go to the scholar and the Director to get any substantive input in the content" (Brussels Interview 06/05/2015, Carnegie Europe researcher).

Knowledge Brokerage in Think Tank Publications

Thin tanks publish different sorts of policy papers, depending on their in-house capacities and the particular audience they try to reach out to. In Bruegel's publications one can find policy briefs which are directed to non-specialist policy makers and are on average 8 pages long. Policy Contributions are between 15-30 pages and they include more original research and finally there are Working Papers, the closest to usual academic papers that can be from 10 to 60 pages. Another kind of paper usually found in think tanks makes part of blogs, which can have a more specific focus (An Eye on Greece-Bruegel) or include more general themes with the contributions of various EU observers (Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe-Carnegie Europe). The approach adopted in writing these papers and the need for them to have some practical relevance is evident by the quote below and it is revealing about how think tankers perceive their position between academic production, news media and the policy world:

"There is no point in writing all these fancy papers with crazy technical models, hopefully where we position ourselves is somewhere where is not really academia and it is not just news media, if you like, and we try to reach a broader audience, but the foundations and the structure of thought is still academic and intelligent and it is not just pure opinion but is evidence-based" (Brussels interview Research Assistant, 04/05/2015).

The framing of a complex policy problem or debate in simple, but not simplistic terms, is what accounts for successful brokerage. Operationalizing this debate into concrete questions helps both the researchers to their study as well as the practitioners who know what particular aspects of a problem to focus on:

"When you look at banking union that really was our biggest contribution, to boil down banking union to seven questions that needed to be answered and what the answers might be and who might favor them and what might be the best option and in some cases the least worst option, that was fantastic because it actually gave a framework for the people who had to decide those things and to sensibly address each of these priorities" (Brussels Interview, Bruegel Secretary General, 04/05/2015).

I believe that if we think of Brussels-based think tanks in those terms then we should discern between the cultural capital of the researchers (educational backgrounds, university degrees) and the social capital of the members of Governing Boards and executives. If such a distinct categorization was possible then the model that examines think tanks as knowledge brokers would apply, with think tanks acting as intermediating arenas where social scientists and stakeholders with various interests and directions unite to exchange their approaches, and the overall result would be one of bringing the two worlds together in a neutral and scientific manner.

The problem arises when think tank researchers are themselves former corporate or public policy members who combine the two sources of capital to research results and knowledge production. This can be most evident in the role of think tank directors and a few eminent figures who sign the most visible papers in a think tanks publication's list. In each think tank actually there are 3-4 people who sign a majority of papers whether they are conjointly drafted or their own work. The real question is whether this truly constitutes a problem for the quality and the kind of social knowledge they produce, simply because these people do not limit themselves to drafting a good analytic paper, and there is little doubt that their papers are scientifically robust, but to the ideas they advocate and the policies they prescribe in those papers. It would be easy to suppose that due to their position in a certain knowledge network or issue network or advocacy coalition or epistemic community (since it is common supposition that ideas expressed by those communities strive to establish the common beliefs of that community), the ideas they express have been communally discovered and express the interests of a specific social group with shared beliefs and an interest to promote one policy over another.

Part III. Knowledge Brokers or Policy Entrepreneurs: The room for Innovation

In this part of my thesis I will depart from the organizational structure, which commonly characterizes the majority of think tanks under investigation, and move to more specific approaches and differences between them. I will first provide an example of different proposals made by Bruegel and CEPS concerning an important topic in the European agenda, namely the form of debt sharing among the European states and the mechanisms to achieve that. Secondly I give a brief overview of the different perspectives think tanks employed in their reaction to a joint initiative from the European Parliament and the European Union, namely the Transparency Register. For this second example I draw insights from the interviews I conducted in Brussels which revealed to me a discrepancy in the reactions to this initiative. These discrepancies in the two examples encouraged me to look further into the reasons behind them and to try to explain them examining the position of think tanks as institutes and of certain of their members in the network of European institutions and professionals situated in Brussels. It is important to stress the individual positions of eminent think tank directors as well as the structural position of the think tanks within the Brussels network in order to provide a preliminary answer to the question why certain think tanks prove more susceptible to innovation than others. Therefore, I begin with a profile overview of two eminent figures in the think tank world and I subsequently describe a short history of their respective think tanks.

An Answer to the European Debt Problem

Nicolas Véron is a French economist and a co-founder of Bruegel along with Jean-Pisani Ferry. He is also an independent board member to the Depository Trust and Clearing Corporation (DTCC) a global post-trade financial services (mainly securities) company and he has served as corporate advisor to the French Ministry of Labor and held other private sector positions. He has graduated from the French École Polytechnique and the French École Nationale Superieure des Mines de Paris. He is a visiting fellow in the American think tank Peterson Institute for International Economics. In September 2012, Véron was included in

"Bloomberg Markets second annual 50 Most Influential list with reference to his early advocacy of European banking union"[15].

Daniel Gros is a German economist who obtained his PhD from the University of Chicago in 1984, and he is the Director of CEPS from 1990 until now. Prior to joining CEPS he was working for the International Monetary Fund and he stopped his engagement with the think tank for a two year period from 1988 to 1990 to serve as advisor to the European Commission. During this period he drafted a report on the EMU which "reportedly worked its way up to senior German and EC officials, with some aspects reflected in the 1989 Delors report" (Ullrich 2004: 56). He has also taught in numerous universities and is the editor of two scientific journals focusing on international finance.

Amidst the European sovereign debt crisis, CEPS and Bruegel published working papers and made appearances in the press to provide possible solutions. Bruegel (2010) argued in favor of Bluebonds, a separation of public debts to a pooled 60% of GDP, guaranteed by all Eurozone countries with all other debt, above the 60% threshold, to remain under national responsibility. In 2011, Bruegel re-produced an IMF working paper that advanced the Bluebond concept and issued the prospect of "more ambitious projects" such as common Eurobonds. This paper drew considerable controversy and media attention. The Center for European Policy Studies on the other hand, in the same year proposed clearly more moderate alternative, partial bond insurance through the European Stability Mechanism. In a similar vein, Daniel Gros (CEPS' director) repeatedly argued against a joint Eurobond project in his personal column and in interviews to international media. The fact is that Eurobonds have not been part of the European response to the ongoing crisis, at least for the time. But Bruegel Institute, and Nicolas Véron in particular, was one of the first advocates of a project that gradually came into fruition into 2014, the European Banking Union. Both these projects, Bluebonds and Banking Union were rather radical and innovative at the time of their inception and they came from one and the same institute.

It is my hypothesis that the deeper a think tank has been integrated in the policy and knowledge networks of its environment, in this case the European union, the lesser the chances of it advocating innovative solutions to pressing problems. Accordingly, the greater

[15] http://www.bruegel.org/about/person/view/910-nicolas-veron/

its dependence on funding resources from the European Union, the margin for innovative solutions is decreased.

CEPS, due to its firm establishment in network ties that are a result of its relatively long history in the Brussels environment and its strong dependence on EU funding resources is rather subject to inertial effects. Much as it has gained a focal position in the center of research and knowledge network which is transmitted to the policy makers, this centrality lifts boundaries to the degree of radical proposals it can advocate. This network effect in turn shapes the agenda of its researchers, guiding them towards investigating problems and seeking solutions through a lens of incremental rather that more innovative change. The consensus-seeking, positive-sum perception of European policy making may have had an effect on the sort of approaches that are sought. Simultaneously internal networks also produce inertial effects. People who have been working together for a very long time and have built cohesion and trust in one another are less adaptable to new ideas and perceptions (Zaheer & Soda 2009: 5). In simple words, they trust in what and who they already know and their future decisions on choosing potential network ties will depend on the power they have historically amassed. This network power will lead them to make choices of networks closer to their already established affiliations, in such a manner that structural constraints inhibit individual innovation.

Bruegel, on the contrary with a 10 year old history and the plurality of its funding resources occupies a rather peripheral position in the Brussels scene; peripheral in the sense that is not centered within one world, corporate or institutional. But that renders it closer to Burt's notion of structural holes because it is easier to gather information and insights from different perspectives and that facilitates its margin for innovative solutions. By bringing together corporate and political interests, often of transnational origins and having invested in a resolute academic kind of research, it seems to avoid this inertial effect. At the same time the role of personal networks of eminent Bruegel members becomes more effective than in the structural limitations posed in CEPS. The smaller size of Bruegel's research team also seems to render it more open to change in personnel and ideas. Concerning the importance of size as a factor that makes a think tank more susceptible to innovation a similar effect was witnessed in EPC by one of its members:

"…this is very much the case in small think tanks like ours, a consequence of the people who work in it…in structures as small as ours personal initiatives can make a difference" (Brussels interview 07/05/ 2015, EPC Programme Director).

The Transparency Register

After a series of scandals in the European Union (Santer Commission resignation 1999, The Bangemann/Telefonica Scandal in the same year) the European Commission decided to take action in order to assure the transparent character of the interactions between interest groups and Commission officials. The European transparency Initiative was launched in 2005 that after a series of consultations culminated in the Lobbying Transparency Register in 2008 on a voluntary basis. Commissioner Calas was a firm exponent of think tanks registration to the catalogue[16] and that provoked certain controversy whether think tanks are actually independent research institutes or express interest representation. The question became pervasive by the fact that the European Commission was funding some think tanks through its Framework Programmes. The funding component raised the issue of the Commission setting the rules of the game and the think tanks following course. If the EU is funding these organizations it should at least have some influence on them (by asking them to publicize their funding sources and their members' CVs and declaration of interests). A configuration of power relations came to the fore with the Commission on the one hand assuring think tank funding through its research framework programs and think tanks on the other providing their knowledge and expertise but refusing to be included in the same category as lobbyists. Relational differences in the way different think tanks approached the Transparency register point to a conflict of interests between think tanks.

My research in Brussels introduced me to some unknown elements of this incident and the negotiation process that reveal a rarely found field of competition between Brussels-based think tanks. Bruegel was a strong opponent to the initial form and content of the Lobbyist register and it actively tried to "finess" its approach. Bruegel was already making serious efforts to safeguard the integrity and independence of its research and personnel and its researchers were already asked to sign a statement of scientific integrity.

[16] http://www.euractiv.com/pa/think-tanks-join-eu-lobby-regist-news-221611

"At the beginning we didn't sign up for a year. The Transparency Register was initially termed the Lobbysist register and we had a problem with that. Another problem was that we could not initially register as a think tank. And thirdly we could not be given the opportunity to explain how our model was not reflecting the interests or the opinions of our members. We tried to engage with the Commission, we wrote to Commissioner Calas. Other organizations also did not initially sign up…They wrote to us and said there was not an umbrella organization for Brussels-based think tanks and therefore we would have to fight among ourselves to represent all of us. We did disagree over who should go and I highlighted that our transparency efforts are not exhausted at the Register". (Brussels Interview, Bruegel General Secretary 4/5/2015)

The EPC was the first think tank to subscribe to the Transparency Register. This can be attributed to its commitment to the values of accessibility and openness but there are two, not so evident, reasons why it might have rushed to do so. Firstly, a 2009 report (Smith et al.) revealed that the EPC had received money from the British American Tobacco in the 1990's to push for the introduction of what is known as "EU Better Regulation Principles" [17] to assure that corporations, tobacco industries included, would make part of the early stage of consultations whenever a policy affecting them would be introduced. This incident suggests that the EPC was eager to signal a break from its past and the Transparency Register offered an opportunity to do that. On the other hand, the presence of many former European officials in the Center's Governing Structures and external experts' staff may have worked as a leverage mechanism to push the EPC to sign up. Its consolidated position in the Brussels environment may have worked again with an inertial effect, this time without allowing the think tank to defend its position as a research institute and to claim its right not to be included in the same group as lobbyists.

[17] http://www.tobaccotactics.org/index.php/European_Policy_Centre

Conclusions

One of the most interesting aspects of the think tank world is that in it the two communities of policy makers and policy researchers are in no case utterly separated. In practice, think tank researchers and analysts cannot simultaneously be active policy makers or corporate members, due to the conflict of interests and the need to be transparent. The string that unites these two worlds is the social capital of the agents. Think tank directors are not the only agents that through their social capital link the two worlds. As the empirical research shows, in every think tank there is a minority of research staff, directors included, that signs the most relevant publications in contemporary policy debates. In principle, that is reasonable since as was shown some think tank members are eminent figures in the networks of Brussels-based policy and corporate communities. That visibility is a result of the prestige and the trust they built with their expertise and professional experience in these circles (their social and cultural capital). But the effect these individuals' perspectives can have on the political dialogue, as expressed through the think tank's dissemination platforms, raises the question whether it is actually the scientific vigor that supports their ideas placing them high in the policy agenda or whether it is the position they maintain in the network of Brussels professionals that grants them access to policy makers.

By examining think tanks populations I tried to provide a preliminary answer to the question how think tanks internal organizational structure and hierarchy affects the independent character of the research they conduct. I tried to show that Brussels-based think tanks comprise of groups with distinct roles and that in order to evaluate the independence of think tanks' research we should firstly examine the professional backgrounds of the actual researchers and analysts. Under this framework, think tanks function as knowledge brokers between the world of policy makers, corporate interests and scientific research and they serve a very important role. Through the different brokerage mechanisms, publications and events, think tanks produce research and analysis that sheds light on complex policy problems. At the same time, through these interactions they contribute to the dissemination of a knowledge that considers the various stakeholders' interests and is practically relevant. These brokerage mechanisms add to the legitimation and validity of think tanks as institutions that produce well informed knowledge enhancing their position in the knowledge/power constellation. They also allow think tanks to reap financial rewards, in the

form of tenders, contracts and gain more members as well as social rewards in the form of more public visibility in the media.

On the other hand, these brokerage mechanisms conducted by think tanks as organizations accrue to the social capital of certain think tank members, augmenting their position in the networks that co-exist in Brussels. They allow these members to receive invitations to present their research in the highest political level, as in the informal ECOFIN meeting[18] . However, when these personalities presented their ideas to ECOFIN, they were representing not only their organization, as a research institute with its research analysis and findings, they were also representing themselves and their own ideas on what the European Monetary Union should look like. In that sense these figures act as policy entrepreneurs, "building" their expertise through these testimonies. I do not believe that the research revealed any sort of "invisible influence", but the role of networks and connections of think tank members is an area for fruitful research. In the end the two concepts knowledge and power co-habit the think tank world and these individuals grant their personal capital to the think tank they manage but they also benefit from the work of policy analysts who populate think tanks' offices and libraries.

[18] http://www.guntramwolff.net/cv/

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