

Think Tanks in America

Introduction

Initial Questions

- What are the definitions and themes of institutionalism, pluralism, and eliteism of think tanks theories?
- How does the book's new methodology of intersitual fields ammend the previous, inadequate views on think tanks?
- What is the ultimate goal of this type of analysis?
- What would widespread rhetorical adoption of this theory espouse and arouse?

Notes

Within think tank analysis there are three groups:

1. Elitists
2. Pluralists
3. Institutionalists

The elitist view of think tanks is one of solely power and influence within the political and authoritarian command strucutres of governmental regulation, achievement, litigation and so forth. A think tank is only as valuable as its network of politicians and legacy authorities

The pluralists view on think tanks is one of mechanistic policy making, not a servitude to a particular societal elitist class. This view is one of "openess", to the point that a think tank is only as valuable as the legislature passed, and the individual creativity inherent inside. Often ignoring the policy and agenda setting done "behind closed doors"

The Institutionalists view on think tanks espouses that a think tank is any group of intellectuals with prevailing conceptual adherence between them, expanding the discussion between the boundaries of elitist theories of agency, policy making advances and such and so forth. It is one of cooperation between individuals towards a set goal: epistemic communities.

In his analysis of early-Modern, 1900's, think tanks, he will go into greater depth of the conceptual transformation of the think tank identity.

The macroscopic view point can be thought of as a collaboration of segmented "ruling class" interests, but within a parallel analysis we can see it aswellas the "struggle interior to the upper class over the relative values of their different resources or media of power". This is essentially a

way of keeping in tact the agential differences between the ruling class, institutionally the way they enforce power, and the contemplation of what literal value is created from it.

Essentially, we can view the professionalization of the technocratic policy expert, sociologist, diplomat, etc. and the conservative "activist" experts response to such (and their eventual convergence through battles) gives rise to the identity of the think tank as we know it. It is no surprise, then, that the long held tradition of federalization of government within the conservative class has then birthed, once again, a new intellectual subcategory of american politics.

From here he will build a "social topology" of modern think tanks,

Chapter One "Indistinction"

Initial Questions

- What is the analytic methodology of Pierre Bourdieu?
- What are social spaces, fields, capital and fields of power as Bourdieu describes?
- What is the 3D view of think tanks?

Notes

The analytic methodology of Bourdieu is one of blurry, just capable enough, analysis in the post-structuralist tradition. Taking notes from Wittgenstein's "family of resemblances" and such, Medvetz takes this into the domain of politics. A think tank is ultimately separate from institutions by its "capital" towards assisting cultural advocacy items and goals.

This is noted in his terming of the idea institutional fields, one in which think tanks have developed a marginalized existence operating on the demarcation of institutions adjacent to themselves. It is never quite as simple as a plain old research group, media campaign, policy execution, etc.

It is a polarized existence between the amassing of social and cultural capital forms and the expollution of them. They come in, are transformed, and come out in a no longer usable fashion.

Think tanks have been semantically defined through whatever ties someone might have to them, such that a scholar will indicate their scholarly nature, politics qua think tank is deemed as politics qua politician, institution qua capital means think tank qua capital is think tank qua institution, etc...

This is a feverish and unrelentingly obtuse way to describe the occurrence of a new form of political power and its value-form.

He will continue to discuss the progenitors of think tanks (dressed in priestly regalia) and deciphering the power struggles of the elitist class.

Chapter 2 "Experts in the Making: On the Birth of Technoscientific Reason"

Initial Questions

- What were the five main values that proto-thinktanks inhabited (analytics, market analysis, etc)?
- What is technoscientific reason?
- How did the cultural separation of "technoscientific reason" become a sticking point for government operations, comparatively to their politically institutionalized variants?

Notes

The five waves of proto-think tanks were: civic federalists, municipal research bureaus, foreign policy research groups, national economic management groups, "defense oriented" technocratic centers.

The civic federalists were concerned with the datasets and history of public relations abuse in local v national government, which then led way to the larger broadened effort on municipal boundaries leading way to national economic budgeting groups.

Through the prevention and likely war-time efforts we saw a rise in foreign policy expertise.

Finally there were the informal strands of government which led the front of research initiatives for Pentagon interests.

Overall, the idea that these centers were "unbiased" and that prolific use of technological means to acquire said research was the main focus of cultural-reasoning and establishing the institutionalized norms present within modern think tanks.

The Ludwig von Mises and Hayek schools of economic review were birthed out of the national economic management group wave.

Chapter 3 "The Crystallization of the Space of Think Tanks"

Initial Questions

- Who were the two types of groups involved in the "crystallization" mechanism of think tanks from general "social and organizational relations"?
- How did these two groups merge together?
- If we consider history to be at once archeology and persuasion, then what is the archeology for think tanks, and how can we understand them?
- What is an initial field?

- How did think tanks re-invent the testimony of an activist-priesthood?
- Using the Brookings institution as an example, define the expansion of linguistic semiotics to definite changes in value creation structures

Notes

The processes integral in the crystallization of think tanks in the 1990s and 2000s appeared through three subjects: firstly, the intensification of network ties between actors, secondly the creation of previously non-existent intellectual products and lastly the development of intellectual repositories on think tanks (as a category)

The fourfold model employed is developed into these directions: heterogeneous and autonomous, closed and open. These refer to the relationships between provider and consumer. The ivory tower intellectual would be a mostly autonomous (esoteric) individual in a closed off space, whereas the public intellectual is its open counterpart. Technicians lie along the closed, dependent (heterogeneous) quadrant, etc..

semipersonal remarks:::

If we are to think back to the ritually domineering relationships of older mankind, we might remark on the linguistic differences between the creation of spoken words (a kind of spell casting if you will, that accomplishes a pre-determined role) versus the literalization and lateral movement from spoken words into new material products.

(This is represented by the grammaticalization of hierarchical power structures within society, or that is to say, how we provide and self-determine authority amongst our human constituents)

The "crystallization" of the think tank category, as the revelation of a new ostensive, is defined by the convergence of two fields: one is deeply embedded in the procedural decomposition of linguistic apparatuses of the (at the time) current-day activists into more technocratic media outlets. Whereas, the other older scientific "esotericist" technocrats of the late 60's and 70's were forced to then open up their ritual-semantic authority to comprehensibility (commemorative value) to the layman. The meeting of these two "fields" created a semiotic vacancy within their "valuation mechanisms". What Medvats describes as the "intersitial field" is simply the dissolving of declarative rule-sets and their recreation, after the new imperative structure becomes "calcified"; declarative reification of boundary lines (dos and don'ts of market viability) subsequently becomes a larger player in an organization's success. The creation of the "think tank" as a new category of organization, he describes mainly as determine-able "internal validity" and the judgement of their intellectual products, rather than just simply the linguistic codification of "think tank" as a parameter.

There is the semantics of the think tank, and the power structure which they have created and self-police in a dynamicism of market valuation.

Chapter 4 "The Rules of Policy Research"

Initial Questions

- What is the importance of the quadruple bind that Think tanks find themselves in?
- How would I describe the interstitial field more particularly?
- How do we delineate declarative boundary work from the imperative of a soiree class structure of elites?
- How does the creation of policy research relate to Deleuzian dynamics?
- Typology versus topology?
- How does time become a pressing issue? How does this relate to sovereignty?
- What motivates policy research? What are the four idioms structuring them?

Notes

Two novel forms of onomastics: typologies, and topologies. Typologies are depicted by categorical relationships and the averaging of a corporations objective, meanwhile topologies illustrate what an organization is predicated on but not categorized by.

Topology will externalize typological categories to unveil the underlying "assumptions" giving a "type" does to an organization. The four "poles" of a topological field, constituting a think tank, are: academic, economic, media, and political.

These are subdivided into two action types: universalistic and immediate temporal significance.

Generally, typifying a think tank's armory of authority within a kind of verbiage, such as credibility, misses the point. We must describe them in what they produce through abstract capital, literal or theoretical.

Think tanks have supplanted the usual rulesets of academic verifiability in favor of a politically flexible form of value. Resulting in "academic abivalence", a re-evaluation of social-scientific testimony and its relevance to the power of tradition.

Chapter Five "From Deprivation to Dependency"

Initial Questions

- What were the procedural differences between social scientists and think tank "affiliated actors"?
- How might we draw the line between the close-ness of intellectual rituals versus the political sphere in "developed nations"?

Notes

Using statistics and well established studies to his advantage, Medvetz sets up a clear divide in his thinking. The praxeological significance, he opts to show through a history of welfare reform, is exemplified through the "autonomous" social scientists being delegated to the peripherals of public debate and policy.

This was helped mainly through the explosion of think tanks onto the social scene at the time, delimiting the ritualistic significance of intellectualism through the "expert testimony of the ivory tower" as I'll put it. The constituents of the field of think tanks, by opting to exist between boundary lines of disciplinarians in the four poles of their field, have created a new type of organized collectivized judgement of values within social intellectualism. This actually is rather important to discuss as it is relevant to the work being done in these communities as emulatory to broader historical structures and dynamics.

Chapter 6 "Conclusion: Anti-intellectualism, Public Intellectualism, and Public Sociology Revisited"

Initial Questions

- What is the final verdict of the book? How should we define think tanks?
- What does Medvetz view the surrounding American Culture as?
- Anti Intellectualism? Public Intellectualism and Sociology?
- How did the positioning of think tanks dictate the "field of debate"?

Notes

The idea of anti-intellectualism is tied to the effervescent rise of heterogeneous knowledge "producers" in society.

The supposed bridging between political and academic life, espoused by think tanks, has actually led to increased boundary lines between autonomous intellectuals and their think tank counterparts.

Think tanks represent the subjugation of knowledge to political and economic demand, for better or worse.