KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

MASTER OF EUROPEAN POLITICS AND POLICIES

EU Think Tanks in Brussels

Policy-Making Roles, Functions and Influence

Promotor : Prof. Dr. M. BRANS   MASTER THESIS
Second reader: Prof. Dr. G. BOUCKAERT   submitted to obtain the degree of Master of European
                                        Politics and Policies
                                        by
                                        Simon Nichelson

academic year 2008-2009

Contents

Introduction

Think tanks have long been considered of little importance in research on policy-making. The field used to consist of a few single case studies of mostly American origin, together with journalistic accounts of think tank *milieus*. In 2000 still, this situation led Diane Stone, a prominent scholar in this domain, to the lament that think tanks were a 'neglected phenomenon in the social science literature'. (Stone, 2000b, 149.) However, in the last decade, the attention for think tanks as significant policy-making actors has grown, not in the least because the think tank landscape has developed in such a way that it is hard to ignore their presence and significance. Over the last 30 years, many think tanks have evolved from "low profile actors seeking to inform policy in a detached non-partisan scholarly fashion', to self-conscious organizations, of which some overtly resorted to 'advocacy and […] more ideological positions". (Stone, 2000b, 150.) This new, more partisan attitude was reflected in greater attention for think tanks and went hand in hand with a tremendous rise in the number of think tanks.

The cradle of think tank research and development is certainly the USA and to a lesser extent the UK. The largest number of think tanks are located in the USA: In 1997, their number was estimated at some 1.200 (Stone, 2000b, 149.), while a 2008 study by James McGann sets their number at 1.777.[1] Western Europe, and increasingly Central and Eastern Europe, rank second and fourth, each with an estimated 1208 and 514 think tanks. Many think tanks on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean have been established over the last 20 to 25 years.

This mirrors a worldwide trend. However, what signified a rise in the number of think tanks in the US and Western Europe entailed an introduction to the phenomenon think tank for other regions: Before 1970, think tanks were scarce in non-western regions. Their number rose especially in Asia and Latin America, with Africa lagging somewhat behind. After the end of the Cold War, Eastern and Central Europe also experienced their think tank boom. Overall, during the 1990's more think tanks have been established worldwide than ever before. The emergence of this large number of think tanks all over the world has not gone unnoticed in the literature. Whereas older studies focused mainly on US think tanks, and some on British think tanks, (See Stone, 2000b.) think tanks are no longer seen as an exclusively

---

[1] http://www.fpri.org/research/thinktanks/GlobalGoToThinkTanks2008.pdf

Western phenomenon and studies reflect the cultural and national varieties of think tanks globally. A start with this attention for different national styles of think tanks was made by *Think Tanks Across Nations*. (Stone, Denham, Garnett, 1998.)

However, in recent years scholars have come to the conclusion that several trends in the development of the think tank landscape challenge the national approach of their studies. A first trend that arises, is that think tanks increasingly combine nationally focused research with interest in international policy. Many national think tanks are no longer exclusively interested in what happens within the borders of their own country and take a more international approach to policy-making problems. Second, and following the previous trend, think tanks tend to establish international links and thus build international networks. These networks serve as forums for the exchange of policy ideas and the coordination of research projects between these think tanks and their audiences. A third aspect of the transnationalisation of think tanks is the emergence of think tanks with an exclusive regional identity – and hence, without a national identity. Finally, a smaller number of think tanks addresses a global audience and seeks to advise global policy actors, such as the WTO or UN. (Stone, 2000b; 2000e; 2004a.)

'Euro-specific' think tanks are a typical example of the above mentioned category of think tanks with a regional identity and scope: they focus exclusively on European issues and centre their activities around European policymaking. Many of these regional Euro-specific think tanks came into being during the 1990s, although some of them, such as the *Centre for European Policy Studies* (CEPS), date back to the 1980s. (Day, 2000, 122.) Most , though not all, are located in Brussels. Apart from this rise in the number of Euro-specific think tanks, national think tanks have devoted increasing attention to EU issues. Virtually all major national think tanks have a programme for research on EU policy, often focusing on the link between national and European policies and politics. These Euro-specific and national Euro-oriented think tanks together make up the wider category of EU think tanks.

Due to the emergence of think tanks specifically devoted to European Union policymaking and the growth of national think tank attention for the EU, some, but little scholarly attention has been devoted to EU think tanks: In 2000, Philippa Sherrington explored the EU think tank activity, focusing mainly on issues of categorization and on the identification of think tank audiences. Heidi Ullrich, in a similar vein, described the plethora of EU think tanks, but also suggested some useful theoretical concepts for the analysis of EU think tank activity. (Ullrich, 2004.) Also in 2004, *Notre Europe*, an influential EU think tank, which was founded by Jacques Delors and is based in Paris, published the study *Europe and*

its Think Tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled.[2] This large descriptive study devotes attention both to organizational features and to the significance of EU think tanks for EU policymaking. Finally, Stephan Boucher, a staff member of *Notre Europe*, and Royo, published *Les think tanks - Cerveaux de la guerre des idées* in 2006. (2nd edition 2009) These few articles and studies are the only academic research at present that is devoted specifically to European Union think tanks. Clearly, research about EU think tanks is scarcely out of the egg.

The present study aims to contribute to this developing field by analyzing the roles and functions of EU think tanks. However, given the large number of EU think tanks, selection choices had to be made. For reason of clarity, this study examines only Euro-specific think tanks based in Brussels. The question this research seeks to answer is: *What are the roles, functions and significance of Euro-specific Brussels-based think tanks in the EU policy-making process and European governance? In which ways can they be said to have an influence on EU policymaking?*

The choice for Brussels-based think tanks has the advantage that it offers a clear geographical delineation and that the Euro-specific identity of these institutes is clear. The disadvantage is, however, that the conclusions of this research cannot be generalised for all EU think tanks. What are the differences between Euro-specific think tanks in Brussels and those elsewhere in Europe? In how far does the national dimension of Euro-oriented national think tanks diminish their chances to influence EU policymaking? What are the roles in the EU policy-making process of EU think tanks in member states? Since this research focuses only on Brussels-based think tanks another possibly important issue doesn't fall within the scope of this research: different European think tanks have established networks amongst them. What is the significance of these networks for Brussels-based think tanks and for EU policymaking? These questions make it clear that comparative research is needed.

In order to study the roles, functions and influence of EU think tanks I will use a variety of policy-making theories. In the first chapter, the governance concept is used to explain the rise in Brussels-based think tanks. The second chapter is divided according to three stages of the policy cycle model, namely agenda setting, policy formulation and policy evaluation. The roles of think tanks within the first two stages mentioned will be conceptualized using different theories of policy subsystems. Policy evaluation will be related to different concepts of policy learning. In the third chapter, the different dimensions of Brussels-based think tanks' influence will be analysed.

---

[2] *Europe and its Think Tanks* (2004): http://www.notre-europe.eu/uploads/tx_publication/Etud35-en.pdf

As this might make clear, the conceptualisation of Brussels-based think tanks' roles forms the nucleus of this research. Accordingly, theories have to be selected in order to grasp think tanks functions. In each chapter, I defend the selection of the theory used there. However, some theories which might have been interesting have not been used. Specifically, I didn't select any theory with a normative backdrop. Think tanks are hotly debated across the world and in the EU for their supposed or contested democratic qualities. I have opted to focus on the analytic side of think tanks' roles in policy-making. So, one issue that is *not* at stake here is think tanks' role in European democracy and civil society. I do refer to the normative dimensions of governance, but only within the limits of discourse analysis.

The empirical side of this research consists of interviews with think tank staff, on think tanks' websites and their publications, and some participant observation in events. The interviews were conducted during the months March and April of 2009. They are primarily intended as an informational resource about think tanks' place in the policy cycle and as a form of self-assessment. Since this research contains some sensitive material, I have chosen not to list the interviewees or think tanks. Caution should be taken as to how representative these interviews are: because of the theoretical focus, only 6 interviews were conducted. The selection basis largely was the availability and responsiveness of think tanks. The hypotheses which will be put forward in this thesis should be put to a more encompassing empirical test.

I have included a list of Brussels-based think tanks and their websites at the end of the study. When I refer to think tanks' websites, these can be found there. I compiled this list myself, based on the definition below. The list probably is not complete. When think tanks are not included, this is because of the fact that they don't fit the criteria proposed, or they are so small as to escape my notice.

One last question remains. What are think tanks? This question of definition has preoccupied much of the literature on think tanks, but up till now, no definition has proven itself as conclusive or even somewhat generally accepted. According to Donald Abelson, "these organizations elude simple definition, in large part because there is no consensus about what constitutes a think tank". (Abelson, 2002, 8.) The roots of the lack of consensus can be found in different places. First, there is a *normative* dispute: should think tanks be neutral organization or can they be partisan? The image of the political neutral policy research doesn't fit many organizations that openly and proudly confess to adhere to certain ideologies,

whereas many older think tanks stress their neutral stance and academic quality. (Abelson, 2002, 10.) In this way, this normative dispute reflects the evolution of think tank behaviour.

A further reason for definitional dissent can be traced back to the *organizational* diversity of think tanks. They "vary considerably in size, structure, policy ambit and significance". (Stone, 2004a, 2). The organizational think tank kaleidoscope is enhanced by a *cultural* stretching of the concept of a think tank. The worldwide spread of the think tank phenomenon does not entail the worldwide use of one single concept of think tank. The concept 'think tank' means something different in different political cultures and environments, notably when it comes to the concept 'independence'. Diane Stone remarks that "the notion that a think tank requires independence or autonomy from the state in order to be 'free-thinking' is a peculiar Anglo-American predilection that does not travel well into other cultures". (Stone, 2004a, 2.) Whereas 'independence' is an inalienable feature of British think tanks, blurry borders between think tanks and politics are common in France.

Finally, disagreement on a definition stems from *different scholarly approaches*: whereas somewhat older studies have focused on the 'organisational ingredients' of think tanks in order to explain the emergence and influence of think tanks, a functional school of think tank analysis has mainly regarded think tanks as "vehicles for broader questions about the policy process and the role of ideas and expertise in decision-making". (Stone, 2004a, 2.) These different analytic approaches have also resonated in different definitions, with the functional definition gaining ground: "Increasingly, 'think tank' is equated with a policy research function and set of analytic or policy advisory practices rather than a specific legal organizational structure as a non-profit or a private sector body". (Stone, 2004a, 4.)

So, there is not one definition of what think tanks are. James McGann, a leading American scholar in the field, even gave up defining think tanks, boldly stating: "I know one when I see one". (Quoted in Abelson, 2002, 8.) However simplistic, there may be some wisdom in his assertion: Despite the difficulties in putting together an exact definition of 'think tank', there does exist a general, consensual understanding of what think tanks are in the small think tank research community. As a guide for selecting think tanks, I chose to use Philippa Sherrington's definition of 'think tank':

> "Think tanks are relatively independent organizations, engaged in research on a broad scope of interests. Their primary aim is to disseminate that research as widely as possible with the intention of influencing policy-making processes". (Sherrington, 2000, 174.)

In the think tank directory at the end of this thesis I have included a wider list of criteria to help distinguish between think tanks and other organizations.

In order to understand the roles and functions of Brussels-based think tanks in the European policy-making process a number of theoretical concepts and analytic instruments will be used. In the first chapter, Brussels-based think tanks will be looked at from the perspective of governance theory. This theory stresses the cooperation between public and private actors in policy-making and thus seems fit to conceptualize the role of think tanks, which research and seek to influence policy-making.

In the second chapter, the analytic model of policy cycles will be put to use. This model allows for a localization of Brussels-based think tanks' activities. It will be argued that Brussels-based think tanks move inside of the so-called policy stream and that their activities can be described mainly as agenda setting, policy formulation and policy evaluation.

In order to understand the processes and activities within these different stages of the policy cycle, and to describe the role of think tanks in European governance, some theories with a more modest scope will be utilized. All of the selected theories focus on subsystems and make a connection between ideas or knowledge, and interests. Thus, they might enlighten think tank activity, since, as Diane Stone stresses, "these policy research institutes do not engage in disinterested research but seek […] some impact on the content of legislation and character of decision-making". (Stone, 2000b, 149.) Knowledge and interest are interconnected within think tanks. First, the network approach is a smaller-scale variant of governance theories. It studies how policy networks function and who is a member of such a network. Secondly, the Advocacy Coalition Framework focuses on the connection between belief systems and knowledge. Advocacy coalitions are built around certain issues they wish to get on the active governmental policy agenda. Think tanks can play an important role within such coalitions. Finally, theories on policy learning will be presented.

In the last chapter, Brussels-based think tanks' influence will be considered. This is a notoriously difficult task, so I have chosen to analyze different dimension of influence separately. In that way, Brussels-based think tanks' influence can be grasped to some extent.

1. Brussels-based Think Tanks and EU Governance

The term 'governance' has become extremely fashionable both within and outside political sciences. Consequently, it has been used in a variety of contexts and many different meanings have been attributed to it. Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden (2004) distinguish between nine different versions of the concept 'governance' in a variety of academic fields or schools, reaching from economics, to New Public Management to international relations literature. We will only be interested in certain uses of the word, explained below. All of the versions discussed here have in common that 'governance' means some form of political coordination of interdependent actions. (Wald & Jansen, 2007, 93.)

Governance as *multilevel governance* indicates the fact that in modern societies, there is often no strong power centre. Since hierarchical steering of society is often very difficult, policy actions are coordinated through multiple governance. So, governance can be defined as:

> "the production of authoritative decisions which are not produced by a single hierarchical structure, such as a democratically elected legislative assembly and government, but instead arise from the interaction of a plethora of public and private, collective and individual actors". (Christiansen, Føllesdal. & Piattoni, 2003, 6.)

The absence of a strong power centre and the interaction between public and private actors are the defining characteristics of the concept 'multilevel governance'. (Benz, 2004; Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden, 2004.) The ancestry of this concept lies in international relations literature on the one hand, and in the comparative European public policy analysis on the other hand. In the latter field of research, the concept of multilevel governance embodied a critique of the state-centrism characteristic of certain conceptualizations of the EU, or against the theory of intergovernmentalism in integration theory. These theories assumed that European policy was primarily the result of bargaining between EU member states and that national governments were the seats of power in the EU, thus reducing policy-making to a two-actor game (Nugent, 2003, 471-473). The concept of multiple governance was a reaction to this: it diffused power over several power centres, both inside and outside of the state, and stressed the interdependencies between them.

Brussels-based think tanks can also be analyzed with the conceptual tool of *policy networks*. Policy networks are "arenas in which decision-makers and interests come together

to mediate differences and search for solutions". (Nugent, 2004, 490.) In the literature, the concepts 'governance' and 'network' are often used as synonyms. More recently, Kohler-Koch and Eising (2000) have introduced the term 'network governance' and have in this way totally blurred the distinction between both concepts.

However tightly connected they may be, when analyzing EU policy making, there are some reasons to distinguish between both concepts. Both concepts describe different levels of the EU. Multilevel governance is generally regarded as a conceptualization of the political *nature* of the EU. What kind of a political system is the EU? Competing theoretical conceptualizations about the nature of the EU are notions such as federalism, where the EU is seen as (growing to be) a federal state, or the aforementioned state-centrism. These theories study the political nature of the EU as a whole. Policy network analysis is an instrument in studying the policy-making processes of the EU as a whole. How does policy-making in the EU function? Hence, network analysis applies to a more concrete level than multiple governance theory.

This distinction between 'general nature of the political system' and 'functioning of the policy-making' is in many respects equal to the distinction between structure and process of the political system. Although this might be right in some ways, this cannot be upheld when taking a closer look. First of all, multiple governance theory acknowledges the central role of (inter)national officials and institutions far more than network analysis. Hence, the warning of Richardson: "Describing certain stages of the policy process in network terms can be useful and illuminating, but we must not neglect the role of institutions". (Richardson, 2006, 10.) The analysis of informal networks cannot replace the analysis of formal decision-making. So, the scope of multiple governance theories is more encompassing than that of network analysis.

Next to multiple governance and network governance, the term 'governance' will be used in a third way. Different policy actors use *'governance' as a practical and normative notion*. I will study the place of think tanks in these discourses about governance. In order to do this, this analysis draws mainly on the Commission White Paper on Governance and on the mission statements of think tanks. These discourses will be regarded as functional discourses: people talk about governance because the concept fulfils a rhetorical function, notably a normative, legitimising function. This discursive analysis does not automatically entail that these discourses are false; it merely explains why the normative concept of governance is used in relation to think tanks.

First, the multilevel governance concept will be related to the evolution of the think tank scene in Brussels. The main reasons behind the development of Brussels-based think tanks will be discussed in terms of demand and opportunity. Afterwards, the place of think tanks in governance discourses will be analyzed. Some criticism will also be considered. Only in the next section will 'network governance' be used to sketch think tanks' role in agenda-setting. To avoid confusion, I will use Kingdon's term 'policy community' for these purposes.

Brussels-based think tanks don't operate in a void. A large part of the understanding of their activities can only be achieved by understanding their environment. Taking a macro-level perspective, this environment is the EU political system (and, for some of them, NATO). As argued above, the EU is a system of multilevel governance. This entails

> "that the EU is transforming politics and government at the European and national level into a system of multilevel, non-hierarchical, deliberative and apolitical governance[…]". (Hix, 1998, 54. Quoted in Nugent, 2003, 473.)

Stated negatively, this means that there is no strong power centre. Formulated more positively, one could say that there are many small power centres, resulting in a very complex system, which includes a variety of public and private policy actors. The involvement of a relatively large number of policy actors and the fragmentation of power is one of the reasons for the EU's openness. Peters also relates this openness to "the relative lack of institutionalization of the European system". (Peters, 2006, 62.) According to Richardson, the unpredictability of EU policy processes is – amongst other factors – a consequence of this openness: "Its multi-national and neo-federal nature, the extreme openness of decision-making to lobbyists, and the considerable weight of national politico-administrative elites within the process, create an unpredictable and multi-level policy-making environment". (Richardson, 2006, 3-4.)

Since the Maastricht Treaty and beginning (public) concerns about the democratic deficit of the EU, the Commission has tried to consult as many private and public interest organizations as possible. Apart from the legitimisation the Commission sought in this involvement of societal actors, there were two other benefits. First, since the Commission is a relatively small bureaucracy, it often lacks the informational resources needed to develop certain policies. Societal actors often do possess the information and knowledge required. (Bouwen, 2004.) Second, involving societal actors in the development of policies which they

are affected by, increases the chances of acceptance afterwards. For a system with few implementation monitoring and enforcement, this can be very valuable. (Jachtenfuchs & Kohler-Koch, 2004 88; Smismans, 2006, 2)

As a last feature of the EU environment, it must be noted that the wideness of the EU policy scope is not established. EU competences increased steadily over the last decades and the EU became involved in ever more policy areas. On the one hand, EU competences were deepened in areas already within reach. On the other hand, during the 1990s, the EU started to 'invade' new policy areas, notably second and third pillar policy areas. EU policy was thus growing more important in more and new policy areas.

These features of the EU's political system – multiple centres of power, its openness, the connections between public and private policy actors, and the expanding policy scope – form the background of Brussels-based think tank creation and activities. These features may be used to describe the growth in the number of think tanks in Brussels.

For a long time, think tanks were an almost unknown phenomenon in Brussels. Before 1980, The Kangaroo Group, the Brussels' office of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the European Institute for Research and Information on Peace and Security (GRIP) and some Belgian think tanks were the only ones present in Brussels. The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) became active in 1980 and was officially established in 1983. (Ullrich, 2004, 56.) A year later, the Observatoire Social Européen (OSE) was founded. After that, it took till 1990 before further think tanks were established: The Belmont European Policy Centre, now known as European Policy Centre (EPC) in 1990, the Robert Schumann Foundation a year later, in 1993 the Philip Morris Institute was established, followed in the next years by the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS), the Institut Européen de Recherche sur la Coopération Méditerranéenne et Euro-Arabe (MEDEA), the Academy Avignon, the International Crisis Group, the Open Society Institute (OSI), International Security Information Service (ISIS), the European Institute for International Relations (IERI), and the debate-oriented think tank Friends of Europe. The wave continued after the turn of the millennium: the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) was created in 2001, the Centre for the New Europe (CNE) and Security and Defence Agenda (SDA) in 2002, followed by the Lisbon Council for Economic Competitiveness and Social Renewal in 2003. Also in the last years, some think tanks were established, amongst which the European Enterprise Institute in 2004, the Brussels European and Global Economic Laboratory (BRUEGEL) in 2005, the European Centre for

International Political Economy (ECIPE) in 2006, the Carnegie endowment and RAND started their offices in Brussels in 2007 and 2008. In 2005 Brussels even witnessed a merger of think tanks, the first of its kind, to form the European Trade Institute (ETUI).

This dense enumeration makes clear that the number of think tanks has grown fast and over a rather short period. This explosion of Brussels-based think tanks was paralleled by a growing attention for EU issues in national think tanks and the establishing of some Euro-specific think tanks in member states. Heidi Ullrich sees "the rise in the number of EU think tanks […] as part of the more widespread phenomenon of increased policy-relevant activity by non-state actors, witnessed since the start of the 1990s". (2004, 52.) There are a number of explanations for this rise in the number of think tanks, all in some way related to multi-level governance. These explanations can be divided in terms of demand and opportunities.

The EU system offers a number of opportunities for policy entrepreneurs to influence policy-making. In terms of governmental architecture, the idea has been put forward that there is a link between federal systems and flourishing think tanks. In federal systems, such as the US and Germany, think tanks have more access points than in centralized systems. This is also true for the EU's multi-level governance system. The regions, the member states governments and political parties, the different EU institutions and influential private actors are all possible target groups for policy entrepreneurs. (Stone, 2004a, 6.) This theory might be a factor in explaining think tank development in the EU, but can hardly explain why EU think tanks only developed during the 1990s und not before.[3]

A further explanation may be found in changes in Brussels' political culture. A respondent suggested as much: "Brussels has for many decades been defined by a diplomatic and negotiation-based diplomatic culture. This also made the political climate quite secretive". In this argument, opportunities to influence policy-making have arisen from a changing attitude within the EU institutions. The Commission's discourse on government can be interpreted in this way, as we will demonstrate below.

A recurring explanation is summarized by Sherrington, suggesting that the rise in EU think tanks can "perhaps simply [be] explained by the deepening of EU competences, the increased impact of EU-policy-making on member states, and thus a heightened awareness of all things European". (2000, 173.) In other words, the EU's powers have increased *and* policy entrepreneurs realized this. This argument seems convincing. When we look at the policy areas in which Brussels-based think tanks are most active, two areas stand out. Most

---

[3] Furthermore, think tanks haven't been as successful in some federal systems, such as Canada, while in some centralized countries as the UK, they have been. (Stone, 2004a, 6.)

importantly, many think tanks focus on the area of exclusive competences of the EU, notably on the internal market, financial and monetary policy and trade. CEPS (mainly), EPC, ECIPE, BRUEGEL and some others all made this into their core business. Alongside these think tanks, we find a lot of foreign policy research institutes. Some are active in international relations in general, such as IERI, whereas others like EIAS concentrate on the relations between the EU and specific regions. Still other think tanks centre their activities around the issue of security. This might all be linked to the creation of the second pillar, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the Maastricht Treaty, signed in 1992. MEDEA links its creation explicitly to the start of the Barcelona Process in 1995. (Website MEDEA) The presence of NATO in Brussels is an extra element in this. While some foreign policy and security think tanks see NATO as a natural target of their efforts, SDA sees it purpose in providing "a neutral meeting point for defence and security specialists from NATO and the EU". (Website SDA) Some think tanks also refer to their American background and wish to contribute to relations between the EU and the USA. This might point to an awareness of the EU's foreign power across the Atlantic. The increased power of the EU thus seems to be an important factor in explaining think tank activity.

These three factors, the multi-level governance system, the more open political culture and the awareness of the increased powers of the EU, all explain the growth of EU think tanks in terms of opportunities. Closely linked to this are reasons of demand. First, as Sherrington points out, "as a consequence of increased policy activity at the EU level, the growth in think tanks may also have arisen out of institutional and national administrative needs for greater policy advice". (2000, 173.) In the words of Heidi Ullrich, "as the policy environment expands in scope and demands on government policy-makers in terms of time and expertise become greater, there is an increasing need for specialist knowledge, new ideas and policy alternatives". (2004, 52.) This is in particular true for the Commission. The Commission has limited internal resources to develop its policy proposals in comparison with member states' bureaucracies, so it has to rely on outside resources. (Sherrington, 2000, 175.) Think tanks can provide informational resources, such as ideas and expert knowledge.

Furthermore, this might also be true of EU parliamentarians. American scholars have suggested that there is a connection between the type of parliamentary system and think tank development. In stronger parliamentary systems political parties would "tend to be more cohesive and disciplined" than in the USA system of checks-and balances, where individual members of congress enjoy greater freedom vis-à-vis their political parties. With this freedom comes a need for information and advice. (Stone, 2004, 6.) This argument could be

transferred to the European Parliament. Peters, in his article on agenda setting in the EU, argues that "political parties cannot perform the function of coordinating policy priorities in the EU. […] The political parties within the European Parliament are themselves aggregations of national parties, so that the parties generally lack the unity required to produce a more coherent pattern of agenda-setting". (2006, 67.) Less disciplined parties, combined with the small staff each MEP has, can accumulate in a need for information and advice. The need for policy ideas that can unite a political party may also arise from the political party as an entity. The launch of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) by the socialist party in 2008 could be interpreted as an attempt to fulfill both the needs of the party and the individual MEP.[4]

Last but not least, money is a very important factor in explaining why EU and Brussels-based think tanks have developed. Without it, think tanks can't rent offices, hire staff, publish papers and organize events. Different Brussels-based think tanks have different funding models, making it hard to determine how money has recently come available. ECIPE (mostly) and Carnegie (fully) function on the funds of foundations (Carnegie is a foundation itself). BRUEGEL has developed a public private partnership model in which governments and the EU provide one part of the finances, and corporations another part. In 2007 CEPS mentions the funding of projects as a growing source of revenues, while corporate membership remains the most important financial source. (CEPS website) Although the business community is described as "a key constituency" of EPC (Sherrington, 2000, 182.), its funding is quite diverse and largely untied to specific programs. A large part of it comes from so-called strategic partners, such as the King Baudouin Foundation. Membership contributions provide for 28% of their budget. (EPC Website) It remains to be seen what impact the current economic crisis will have for think tanks with a large corporate share in their funding model.

Funding can be seen as a translation of a demand for think tank activity. Why contributors have this demand and what can explain the sudden availability of money, has to be investigated. This is important for two reasons: First, the lack of funding still forms a constraint for the further development of the Brussels-based think tank scene. In relation to this, an interviewee characterized the Brussels-based think tanks scene, as "still extremely immature and in its infancy. […] It's basically still a Klondike. If you want to do work here,

---

[4] According to a report of the official launch of FEPs on the website of FEPS, it was only in 2007 that the creation of political party think tanks was made possible by a regulation of the Commission. http://www.feps-europe.eu/index.php?id=205

you can take your axe and go out and do work, because there is basically no competition". To increase competition, more funding will be needed. The second reason why understanding the motivation behind funding is important, lies in the scholarly freedom that comes with financial independence. A diversified funding model means that no member has the power to impose a research agenda.

The opportunities inherent to the EU system, namely the availability of funds and the need and demand for advice, largely explain the described growth of Brussels-based think tanks. Opportunity and demand are largely communicating vessels: the demand for advice of course forms an opportunity for think tanks to influence policy-making. The complex problem of the motivation behind funding remains to be investigated. The explanations offered all fitted within the above described conceptualization of the EU as a multi-level governance system with increasing powers. However, one last explanation for the development of Brussels-based think tanks remains to be investigated. The Commission doesn't only desire think tanks to provide them with expert knowledge and advice, but sees them as a source of legitimacy too.

The EU's efforts to involve public interests organizations in policy-making are one of the factors explaining the growth of the number of Brussels-based think tanks:

> "Given the overwhelming dominance of business groups and the relative weakness of labor and public interests, the European Commission and European Parliament have undertaken considerable efforts in mobilizing these weaker interests on the European level and to involve them in decision-making". (Hosli, Nölke & Beyers, 2004, 48.)

This encouraging attitude towards societal involvement in EU policy making can be documented back to the first signs of 'the end of the permissive consensus', after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. The Commission recognized the need for more transparent policy making and made a start in the regulation of interest mediation. (Ullrich, 2004, 52.) Special contributions for a greater legitimacy of the Union were expected from civil society. Gradually, "the idea of civil society participation as a way to improve the efficiency and legitimacy of European governance [became] a recurrent part of policy discourses. (Smismans, 2006, 3.) Two aspects of 'governance' come together here. On the one hand, efficiency refers to the analytic dimension of governance: governance as a means to coordinate policymaking. On the other hand, legitimacy refers to the normative dimension of

governance. The debates on governance and its benefits finally resulted in the White Paper on European Governance. We will concentrate here on the normative dimension that was put forward in this White Paper.

The White Paper begins by stating that "many Europeans feel alienated from the Union's work" and talks about a "widening gulf between the European Union and the people it serves". (White Paper European Governance, 7.) The basic problem that the paper deals with is a (perceived) democratic deficit. As a means to combat this, the Commission proposes to reform governance: "The goal is to open up policy-making to make it more inclusive and accountable". The ways to do this would be to create a better and more open debate on the one hand, and to involve civil society on the other hand. According to the Commission, "civil society plays an important role in giving voice to the concerns of citizens and delivering services that meet people's needs". Recognizing that civil society's involvement in the EU; "offers a real potential to broaden the debate on Europe's role", the Commission expresses the wish to offer citizens "a structured channel for feedback, criticism and protest". (White Paper European Governance, 15.)

Although not explicitly mentioned, think tanks fit within this scheme. In the Commission's conception, they are part of civil society and thus 'voice' European citizen's concerns. The Commission combines the concepts of multi-level governance and civil society to argue that policy-making can be more democratic through involvement of organizations belonging to civil society (as distinguished from the market and the state). (Smissmans, 2006, 5, 9.) Implicitly drawing on pluralist conception, the Commission assumes that these societal organizations posses down-top structures: the head says what the rest of the body feels. In that way, the citizen can be involved in policy-making. (Cf. Hosli, Nölke & Beyers, 2004, 46-7.)

This conception of EU think tanks' roles within civil society has met with some criticism, not at least from think tank itself. On the one hand, think tanks partially confirm the Commission's discourse. Especially the fostering of debate is keyword in almost all think tanks' mission statements. For instance, BRUEGEL "seeks to contribute to European and global economic policy-making through open, fact-based and policy-relevant research, analysis and debate". (BRUEGEL website). Friends of Europe, renowned for organizing debates, "aims to stimulate debate beyond the Brussels elite by linking up with major think-tanks and media from across Europe's national capitals". (Friends of Europe Website) Most Brussels-based think tanks explicitly or implicitly refer to their efforts for public interest in some form, often expressed as 'contributing to better policy making'.

But, as far as I have analyzed, Brussels-based think tanks don't claim to improve *participatory* democracy. One respondent claimed that "the EU in Brussels is not the scene for participatory democracy", adding "that does not contradict that we contribute to more transparent and open discussions". Diane Stone, in a highly critical article about think tanks' pretentions, attacks the myth that think tanks 'serve the public'. She finds little evidence of interaction between research institutes and the public, pointing out that "relatively few think tanks have mechanism that allow feedback from society" and argued that think tanks "primarily cater to the economically and politically literate and are at some distance from the rest of society". In a passage where one could easily think of the European Quarter in Brussels, she cynically 'situates' think tanks:

> "A high proportion are located in the central business district of the national capital. They rarely venture outside the national parallels to, for instance, the Washington 'beltway' or the Parisian 'boulevard périphérique'. The organizational cultures of think tanks are not as open and accessible for the interested citizen as their web sites might be. The elite venues, dress-codes, jargon and scientific debates to keep the general public at bay and help to demarcate the boundaries of the policy community. Indeed, one role of certain think tanks can be cordon public debate to safe sites of discussion where only those with mastery of policy and social scientific communication codes can participate". (Stone, 2007b, 269.)

This passage may be a bit unfair to Brussels-based think tanks. As mentioned above, they do not depict themselves as being part of civil society or as contributing to participatory democracy. They are located in Brussels to influence European Union policy-making, not to represent a particular interest, nor to function as channel for participatory democracy.

Strangely enough has the Commission's discourse on governance turned into a fierce discussion, revealing something of the backroom opinion of some people in the Commission on think tanks. As a way of organizing civil society interests, The Commission has opened a register for all "'interest representatives', to be understood as anyone trying to influence the decision-making process". (Speech/09/181, 4.) Many Brussels-based think tanks refused to subscribe to the register, although a separate category was created for policy research institutes. They felt they were being put I the same row as lobby organizations. This feeling was strengthened by Commissioner Siim Kallas declarations during a press conference about the register and think tanks:

> "Later this month, Friends of Europe, co-organizes an 'international summit' […]
> This is obviously a very serious event, but with 2 senior representatives on the
> panel, it is also a lobbying opportunity for the company 'Total', the corporate co-

organizer of the event, putting it in touch with the EU Development Commissioner,
high EU officials, MEPs, etc." (Speech/09/181, 4.)

The declarations of Commissioner Kallas are exactly the perception think tanks want to avoid, namely that they are attached to private interests. One respondent complained that the Commission often had difficulties handling criticism, adding that the register shows that the Commission doesn't understand what think tanks are for: "They failed to differentiate between organizations that are clearly lobbying on someone else's behalf, and that call themselves a think tank, and think tanks that are clearly work for the public good". Kallas, in the press conference a few months after the interview, demonstrated the depths of the difference of opinion once more, stating: "Obviously, the 'greater good' is a useful and flexible concept, used through history also to justify anything from Marxism to libertarian capitalism". (Speech/09/181, 4.)

The governance approach allowed for a landscape overview of Brussels-based think tanks in their policy environment, namely the EU's political system. Now it is time to take a closer look at the actual roles and functions Brussels-based think tanks fulfil within the EU policy process.

2. A Closer Look at Brussels-based Think Tanks' roles

In this chapter, I will attempt to clarify what different roles and functions think tanks have in the process of policy making. The policy cycle model – also known as the stages approach or the stages heuristic – will serve as the overarching theoretical lens. Different theories will help to focus this lens on think tank activity within the different stages of the policy cycle model.

During the 1950s, the American scholar Harold D. Laswell developed his theory of the policy process, dividing them into seven separate stages of the process. The model was soon adapted in other public policy studies and became the dominant research model in public policy analysis, even to the extent of being called 'the textbook approach'. The most currently used model has been somewhat amended and usually contains five stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and policy evaluation. The main benefits of this model lay in the organization of diffuse knowledge about the sometimes opaque process of policy making. (deLeon, 1999, 19-23.)

The policy cycle model encountered heavy criticism during the 1980s. One of the fiercest critiques came from the pen of Paul A. Sabatier, who – often in cooperation with Hank C. Jenkins-Smith – developed the *Advocacy Coalition Framework* as an alternative to the stages heuristic. (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993b; Sabatier, 1993.) First, he claims that the policy cycles theory doesn't meet the standards of a scientific theory. It does not allow for predictions and that its hypotheses cannot be tested. Advocates of the policy cycle model replied that "the purpose [of policy sciences] is *not* prediction". (Brunner, 1991, 80-81. Quoted in deLeon, 1999, 24.) deLeon claimed that the model was not intended as a scientific theory, as Sabatier understood it, but "as a device (a heuristic, as it were) to help disaggregate an otherwise seamless web of public policy transactions". (deLeon, 1999, 24.) In other words, the policy cycle model is not a theory akin to natural sciences, but a descriptive model seeking to shed some light on the darkness of public policy.

Second, the policy cycle splits up the policy-making process in different sequential stages, portraying the policy-making as a sequence of activities of agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, etc… Scholars often researched just one stage at a time, with the consequence that both the picture and the research of public policy gradually disintegrated. Although this was not part of the theory, many studies "implied a certain linearity – for example, first initiation, then estimation… then (possibly) termination – as

opposed to a series of feedback actions and recursive loops […] that characterize the operations and politics of the policy process". This segmentation and linearity remains one of the shortcomings of the theory, although recent theoretical work stresses the interconnectedness of different stages and the non-linearity of the model. (deLeon, 1999, 24.)

Thirdly, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith claimed that "the stages metaphor fails to provide a good vehicle for integrating the roles of policy analysis and *policy-oriented learning throughout the public policy process*". (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993b, 4.) This criticism will be discussed below.

Not all stages of the policy cycle will be discussed in this study of Brussels-based think tanks. I will confine myself to an examination of agenda setting, policy formulation and policy evaluation. The roles of Brussels-based think tanks in decision making and policy implementation will not be studied, because the role of Brussels-based think tanks is thought to be marginal. For the decision making stage, I follow the suggestion of Wonka and Warntjen, who remind us that "as only public actors have the capacity to make final, binding decisions, they can be seen as central decision-makers, which can not be ignored in any analysis of public policy making". (Wonka & Warntjen, 2004, 11.) So, analysis of EU decision making should focus on what happens in the EU institutions. This does not mean that during the previous stages of the policy cycle decision making is not be anticipated in terms of shaping proposals or ideas to match criteria of feasibility. But the institutions make the final calls.

Brussels-based think tanks do not decide, nor do they implement the decisions made. Again, concerns about implementation go into earlier stages of the process. The generating of acceptance is one of the main reasons for the Commission's consultancies with other policy actors. But, in the end, Brussels-based think tanks have little to do with the actual implementation. They might evaluate previous implementations, analyze the feasibility of implementing a certain policy or advocate a certain policy and its implementation in member states, but they are not the ones who choose how to implement a certain policy.

These arguments, however rough and unelaborated, show that some segmentation of the policy process might make sense in the EU context, and indeed, in all political systems where agenda setting is a more open and public process, opposed to more reclusive institutional decision making.

. In the case of think tanks, the stages agenda setting, policy formulation, and policy evaluation seem to be tightly and almost inseparably connected. The reasons for this are quite straightforward. First of all, as one think tank director mentioned it, "few policies start from scratch". So, pointing to a problem one would like to see dealt with, often is the same activity as evaluating (the problematic part of) the current policy. Second, think tanks don't just point to problems and ask to solve them. They also have their ideas about how to solve them. Their solutions might be linked to the evaluation (looking for the 'root' of the problem) or represent more openly a political choice, but in all papers examined there is a clear reference to the way ahead, and how it might look. In a typical think tank paper, the stages agenda setting, policy formulation and evaluation are intertwined.

Despite this intertwinement of these stages in think tank reports, there might be added value in distinguishing analytically between these three stages. Following Richardson's intuition "that we might need to utilize rather different conceptual tools in order to fully understand the nature of the processes in each stage", I will apply different theories of subsystems to the first two stages, and describe think tanks' role in policy evaluation in terms of policy learning. (Richardson, 2006, 5.)

2.1. Agenda Setting and Policy Communities

The most influential study on agenda setting and policy formulation has been carried out by John Kingdon (1984), analysing agenda setting in the USA. His model draws both on the policy stages model and on the 'garbage can model' of organizational decision making, as developed by Cohen March and Olsen (1972). This last theory accentuated the anarchistic, chaotic character of organizational decision making, but can also be applied to agenda setting. In particular, as Guy Peters remarks, "the process of agenda-setting in the EU may […] be conceptualized as something very much akin to the now classic model of 'garbage can' decision making". Moreover, the model pays attention to the value of policy solutions in agenda setting. Kingdon's model therefore seems adequate for our purposes.

Theories and models of agenda setting deal with the question how issues get onto the governmental agenda. "At its most basic, agenda-setting is about the recognition of a problem on the part of a government". (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995, 105.) It's quite obvious that this

stage is crucial in policy-making: "No policy can be made if the issue to which it is addressed cannot first be placed onto the active agenda of a governmental institution". (Peters, 2006, 61.) Kingdon defines the agenda as "the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying serious attention at any given time". These items are 'selected' from many items that could be considered. So, "the agenda-setting process narrows [the] set of conceivable subjects or problems to the set that actually becomes the focus of attention". (Kingdon, 1984, 3.)

The agenda-setting process is basically a process of selection, much akin to that of natural selection. (Kingdon, 1984, 122-123.) Some problems or issues make it to the agenda, but many vanish during the process. In order to explain how these selection takes place, Kingdon distinguishes between three different streams, namely the problem stream, the policy stream and the political stream. The problem stream consists of a nearly endless list of problems government officials might pay attention to. Lots of problems are in some way recognized, but "problems abound out there on the government's environment, and officials pay serious attention to only a fraction of them". (Kingdon, 1984, 120.)

This list is narrowed down in the policy stream, where experts and policy advocates pay attention to certain issues and propose solutions for them. Kingdon starts his chapter on the policy stream as follows: "Picture a community of specialists: researchers, congressional staffers, people in planning and evaluation offices and in budget offices, academics, interest group analysts. Ideas float around in such communities. Specialists have their conceptions, their vague notions of future directions, and their more specific proposals". (Kingdon, 1984, 122.) This policy stream is the home of Brussels-based think tanks. They are part of the community of specialists. Moreover, as will be argued below, they fulfill specific functions within the EU policy stream.

Finally, the political stream consists of events, such as the 'national mood' or elections, which might be important factors in the agenda-setting process. The political stream is not to be confused with the political agenda. The events in the political stream only influence which items get onto the agenda. (Kingdon, 1984; Howlett & Ramesh, 1995, 115.) In cases of crisis events, 'policy windows' handy policy entrepreneurs can push their proposal ahead.

Kingdon portrays the agenda-setting process as struggle for 'policy worthy status' between competing issues. For decision-makers, it functions as a 'reduction of complexity'.[5]

---

[5] The term 'reduction of complexity' refers to Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems. Since Luhmann's theory sees the main problems of social systems in 1. reproduction 2. reduction of complexity 3. coordination of

They can only deal with a small number of issues at a time, so this 'natural' pre-selection is necessary for them. This might be even truer for EU agenda setting than member states' agenda setting. Richardson suggests "that the EU agenda-setting process is especially problematic because of its transnational nature and because of the wide range of state and non-state actors in the EU policy process". (Richardson, 2006, 4.) This problematic character refers to the chaotic complexity of what Kingdon called the 'policy primeval soup': "Much as molecules floated around in what biologists call the 'primeval soup' before life came into being, so ideas would float in these communities". (Kingdon, 1984, 122-123.) Elsewhere, he illustrates the variety of ideas that 'float around' with a quote by a member of a policy community: "There's hardly a bad idea that isn't being considered. If you think of a bad idea that isn't being considered, call me up collect. I'd like to hear about it". (Kingdon, 1984, 129.)

The policy stream of the EU can also be considered as a primeval policy soup. Peters argues "that the existence of a number of points of access, of a large number of influential policy advocates, and of a wide range of policy options that have been legitimized in one or more of the constituent political systems" is the reason for a "systemic openness" of the policy communities' agendas. (Peters, 2006, 62-63.) He claims in other words, that there are even more issues under discussion in the EU's policy stream than in those of member states. However, this "systemic openness is not an unconditional benefit and with it goes a great deal of indeterminacy and potential policy instability". There are too many ideas floating around in the EU's policy primeval soup to be handled adequately by the institutions. In the following analyses, I will argue that think tanks contribute to the structuring of the primeval soup.

Brussels-based think tanks are part of policy communities or, as they are frequently called in recent literature, policy networks.[6] Kingdon describes them as being "composed of specialist in a given policy area, […] scattered both through and outside of government. [… these specialists] have in common their concern with one area of policy problems". (1984, 123.) These networks can be more open or more lose, consisting of a range of actors, to only a few. An important criterion for inclusion is a shared knowledge base. Heclo stressed the importance of this for what he calls issue networks:

---

communications (action), it seems to me that his theory could also provide fruitful insights in policy-making processes.
[6] The concept 'epistemic community', as developed by Haas (1992) could also be used to describe the community of experts. I opted for Kingdon's concept of policy community because of it is embedded in a larger theory of agenda setting. Furthermore, Kingdon's concept leaves room for more inclusive and lose communities, as well for exclusive groups of experts and policy insiders.

> "An issue network is a shared-knowledge group having to do with some aspect (or, as defined by the network, some problem) of public policy. […] those in the networks are likely to have a common base of information and understanding of how one knows about policy and identifies its problems". (Heclo, 1978, 103.)

In some policy networks, there is a body of shared knowledge – a paradigm, almost – which is known by all participants and virtually uncontested. However, in other networks, there is a lack of such a 'common paradigm'. (Kingdon, 1984, 124.) There is only a small body of shared knowledge, and consequently there is no clarity among members about what the problems are. For networks, shared knowledge means a clear definition of what the policy issues at stake are. In Kingdon's words, "a more closely knit community generates common outlooks, orientations, and ways of thinking. […] As people have a common language, they can better communicate with one another". (Kingdon, 1984, 126.)

Brussels-based think tanks have two important roles to play in these policy communities. First, they provide for an infrastructural need. Brussels-based think tanks organize debates, information sessions, breakfast and lunch meetings, and other events on a regular basis. This is were members of the policy community meet and discuss, often in a more informal setting after the event itself. *Friends of Europe* organized more than 30 events on different themes in 2008. EPC and CEPS each organize about 2 events each week. When the presidency changes, CEPS normally has a session on the priorities of the presidency of that country. ETUI aimed at some 15 events in 2008. The office of Carnegie in Brussels regularly organizes private briefings between EU officials and well-informed directors of their other offices. In this way, Brussels-based think tanks provide a forum, where members of the policy community meet and discuss.

Secondly, Brussels-based think tanks have the ability to provide the policy community with knowledge and thus contribute substantially to the building and maintaining of a shared knowledge base. Brussels-based think tanks systematically produce an enormous amount of information and disseminate this actively. As mentioned before, the studies, policy papers, policy briefs… often starts with the definition of a policy problem. Brussels-based think tanks also keep stressing these problems. As one observant mentioned, "it makes little sense to produce a paper on a theme just once, because tomorrow it will be gone". Think tanks provide clear definitions of what 'the' problems to the policy. Here they function as 'catalysts for debate'. (Ullrich, 2004, 67.)

Of course, in order for policy communities to accept these definitions of a problem, some requirements have to be fulfilled. The most important of these requirements is probably the perception of objectivity and academic quality. When members of the policy community for whatever reasons do not believe that the problem analysis is (fairly) unbiased, they will not accept the problem definition as part of the shared knowledge, but merely as one opinion amongst many, one interest in the jungle of interests. All of the largest think tanks in Brussels go through great efforts to demonstrate their independence to the public. They go to even larger efforts to produce and demonstrate academic quality. As Diane Stone notes, "the worst fate for a think tank is to be seen as delivering unreliable and sloppy analysis". (Stone, 2007b, 275.)

One last remark is at its place here. The distinct supranational, European character of Brussels-based think tanks also implies – up-till-now – that they share certain values. Most of them explicitly recognize that they are supporters of the European project, and for some, as the *Fondation Robert Schuman*, this even is the main reason for their coming into being. Others take a more neutral stance, but still seem to identify in some way with the European project. One respondent noticed an inherent danger to this:

> "There is a problem built in to being a pan-European think tank. That problem has to do with euro-scepticism. There is a tension between being a pro-European project organisation and being an organisation that is able to criticize the institution. And I don't think we have separated them yet. What we don't yet have is a framework whereby think tanks or other organisations can critique European institutions without being seen as anti-European".

In other words, think tanks have to walk the line: On the one hand, it is expected that they developed ideas and criticism and evaluate policies on the base of their merits. On the other hand, they must beware to be seen as anti-European, because this would greatly diminish their reputation and chances of influences.

If Brussels-based think tanks succeed in shaping the community's understanding of a policy problem, they contribute to the policy process in a three ways. First, Brussels-based think tanks are a forum for debate. Second, they reduce the number of problem definitions. Instead of a multitude of problem perceptions, they offer a shared understanding of what 'the' problems in this policy domain are. It must be stressed that the perception of the quality and indecency of their work is a necessary condition for this. Thirdly, by defining problems, they function as enablers or catalysts of a somewhat structured debate, offering an arena for putting ideas to the test. In Heclo's words:

> But knowledge does not necessarily produce agreement. […] Increasingly, it is through networks of people who regard each other as knowledgeable, or at least as needing to be answered, that public policy issues tend to be refined, evidence debated, and alternative options worked out – though rarely in any controlled, well-organized way". (Heclo, 1978, 104. Quoted in Richardson, 2006, 9.)

Even if there is common ground to be found in problem-definition, this still leaves much room for different policy options. One problem can be solved in many ways. The problem of agenda setting in the EU, once more, is the sheer number of ideas discussed. However, "the absence of institutionalization and the loosely-articulated policy-making system […] may make moving any one version of the issue any further through the European policy process difficult". (Peters, 2006, 63.) One of the main determinants, as Kingdon points out, is the availability of a solution to the problem. Problems that are tied together with policy ideas are more likely to end up on the governmental agenda. At this stage of policy formulation, i.e. the formulation of different policy options, *advocacy coalitions* and *policy entrepreneurs* are very important. By actively looking to increase the support for a certain policy idea or proposition, they lift ideas to the top of the policy primeval soup.

2.2. Policy Formulation and Advocacy Coalitions

The advocacy coalition framework, developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, cleverly combines the role of knowledge and beliefs systems for policy change. Apart from a shared knowledge base, members of an advocacy coalition share "a set of normative and causal beliefs". (Sabatier, 1993, 18.) In other words, members of an advocacy coalition have the same political and ideological views on the policy issue discussed. These advocacy coalitions "seek to translate their beliefs into public policies or programs". (Sabatier, 1993, 28.) Advocacy coalitions can be seen as a subcategory of policy communities. They also consist of both public and state actors with a shared knowledge base. The policy community in one particular policy field is usually divided into several advocacy coalitions (rare cases of almost total dominance of one coalition being the exception), composed on ideological coherence or 'belief systems'.

Brussels-based think tanks and the people on their staff are *members* of such advocacy coalitions. Some Brussels-based think tanks, such as the EPC and the more recently established ECIPE, make no secret of their ideological orientation – in this case liberal – and even take pride in it. They partially follow an international trend, in which think tanks place "a higher premium on marketing and recycling ideas than on generating them". (Abelson, 2002, 10.) These think tanks have resorted to almost pure advocacy based on their belief systems. However, it would be unfair to say Brussels-based think tanks just market and recycle ideas. Academic research of high quality remains their top priority and their research is highly estimated by their peers and policy officials.[7] In this respect, they neatly fit the mixture of belief and knowledge, described by the advocacy coalition framework. "The framework assumes that learning is instrumental, that is, that members of various coalitions seek to better understand the world in order to further their policy objectives". (Sabatier, 1993, 19.) The objectives of the advocacy coalition are built around (the core of) their belief system.

Brussels-based think tanks and especially the more ideological oriented amongst them, can *contribute* to advocacy coalitions by providing them with knowledge to support their beliefs. They can deliver the intellectual ammunition in the '*guerre des idées*'. (Boucher, 2006.) Kingdon, in a more passionate passage, pleaded that this intellectual ammunition, i.e. rational arguments are not "mere smokescreens or rationalizations":

> "Political scientists are accustomed to such concepts as power, influence, pressure, and strategy. If we try to understand public policy solely in terms of these concepts, however, we miss a great deal. The content of the ideas themselves, far from being mere smokescreens or rationalizations, are integral parts of decision making in and around government. As officials and those close to them encounter ideas and proposals, they evaluate them, argue with one another, marshal evidence and argument in support or opposition, persuade one another, solve intellectual puzzles, and become entrapped in intellectual dilemmas". (Kingdon, 1984, 133-134.)

Brussels-based think tanks contribute to these debates between advocates of certain policies by providing problem analyses and arguments for certain policy options.

Moreover, Brussels-based think tanks are not only suppliers of arguments for debates, they and there staff members actively engage in these debates and have the capacity to act as *policy entrepreneurs*. Kingdon sees the main function of policy entrepreneurs as 'softening

---

[7] About the importance of quality for think tanks' influence, see under Chapter 3. Sources of Influence.

up', i.e., getting people used to the advocated policy ideas and building up support for them.[8] 'Softening up' is most often a lengthy process. Ideas have to repeated, recycled, recombined, described as if they were new, presented to people in different forms and formats, and so on. Brussels-based think tanks have the means to do this. Their publications, info sessions, meetings and debates are excellent ways of repeating ideas. They 'translate' academic research[9] into forms the policy-community can handle – given time constraints. "Think tanks are very effective organizations for translating dense ideas or abstract theory into 'sound bites' for the media, blueprints for decision makers and understandable pamphlets and publications for the educated public". (Stone, 2007b, 272.) However, in order to raise a real awareness amongst the community and the general public of the issue and the proposal, it is necessary to repeat this idea constantly. So, think tanks can be regarded as 'recycling bins' of ideas. (Term coined by Stone, 20007b.) Brussels-based think tanks recycle these ideas in different publication forms and during events. If the 'softening up' is successful, advocacy coalition gain in support and can put their footprint on policy formulation.

According to Peters, advocacy coalitions contribute to EU policy making, by filtering policy options through debate and argument:

> "As well as being about political interests, conflicts over policy are often about ideas and about the technical content of policy. In these instances advocacy of ideas is the means to create a viable consensus over one policy option. Although this progress cannot alter the fundamental perspectives of the participants (their 'core values'), argumentation over these more technical issues can often identify a zone of agreement and with that there emerges a possibility for effective policy". (Peters, 2006, 72.)

Advocacy coalitions reduce the number of policy options by gaining dominance or by finding the highest common denominator between them. This process presents decision maker with a manageable number of policy ideas. At the same time, advocacy coalitions keep alternatives alive. Even in situations of dominance, policy makers are still offered alternative ideas and concepts. This is important for maintaining their freedom of action.

The policy primeval soup is structured by advocacy coalitions. They reduce the number of ideas, but at the same time alternatives are kept alive. Brussels-based think tanks

---

[8] I use Kingdon's concept of policy entrepreneur here, because Sabatier sees their role as intermediates between competing coalitions. In my opinion is Sabatier's concept less useful to characterize think tanks, because his role is that of a political reconciliator. Think tanks are not political organisations in this sense.
[9] The term 'translate academic research' is contested. See the introduction of Chapter 3. 'Influence'. Also Stone (2000a) en (2007b).

are involved in to this process of structuring in several ways. As noted in the previous chapter, they are first of all enablers of debate. With regard to advocacy coalitions, as members of these coalitions, they are first of all participants in these debates between coalitions. Second, their expert knowledge and analysis fuel these debates and are important factors for the strength of the coalition. Finally, as policy entrepreneurs they are involved in the softening up of the policy community and in that way in gaining support for the coalition.

2.3. Policy Evaluation: How It Begins and Comes Back

> "What becomes part of the agenda is a
> function of developments up to that point".
> [Interview]

Constantly interacting with the stages of agenda setting and policy formulation is the stage of policy evaluation. Conceptually, this stage is situated at the end of the policy cycle. In reality, policy evaluation will be the start of agenda setting, will heavily influence policy formulation, and will be taken into account in decision-making the selection of implementation instruments. Moreover, policy evaluation may lead to loops. One respondent point out that, "if the facts change or somebody points out that the analysis is wrong, then obviously what we say can change as well". Policy evaluation can change or reinforce policy ideas that are already far advanced within the agenda setting process. They can also let the process of problem definition and advocating solutions start over again.

There is a lot of conceptual confusion in the theoretical literature on policy evaluation and policy learning. The objects, subjects and impact of learning have been estimated very differently by different authors. Bennett and Howlett made a synthesis of this literature and used 6 variables to schematize the different conceptions of policy learning. In this way, the attempt to demonstrate that policy evaluation can mean very different types of learning.

The ideas about government learning are developed by Lloyd M. Etheredge. He stresses that the subjects of learning are governmental organizations or government officials. "Government learning […] is bureaucratic learning and the agent of learning is the

bureaucrat". (Bennett & Howlett, 1992, 279.) Government learning is about increasing the 'intelligence' and 'flexibility' of bureaucracies. The increase in 'intelligence' and 'flexibility' should result in greater organizational effectiveness.

Brussels-based think tanks can be part of government learning mostly by providing the Commission and national governments with expert knowledge. Some Brussels-based think tanks participate in tenders and engage in contract research. Staff members are sometimes part of Commission expert committees and provide technical assistance in policy-making. Smaller, niche think tanks might provide detailed technical knowledge. It is not clear to what extent Brussels-based think tanks possess detailed and technical knowledge. The frequently used term 'expert knowledge' can mean many things. As I will argue when discussing the sources of influence in the next chapter, an analysis of the types of expert knowledge possess might provide better insights into the influence they (don't) have.

Second, *lesson-drawing* refers to Sabatier's advocacy coalitions.[10] He includes both state and non-state actors in the process of learning. Learning for Sabatier will in most cases mean that coalitions learn about the instruments they can achieve their objectives with. These objectives are defined by the 'core values' of the belief system of the coalition. These core values can also change by policy learning, but this is rare. Lesson-drawing influences program changes: if the former strategy and instruments weren't working, advocacy coalitions will try to formulate other solutions.

	WHO LEARNS	LEARNS WHAT	TO WHAT EFFECT
LEARNING TYPE			
Government learning	State officials	Process-Related	Organizational Change
Lesson-drawing	Advocacy Coalition	Instruments	Program Change
Social learning	Policy Communities	Ideas	Paradigm Change

Source: Bennett & Howlett, 1992, 289.

Brussels-based think tanks will in most cases evaluate policies in terms of effectiveness. In an interview, the typical think tank attitude was described as follows: "We are interested in

---

[10] In order to avoid conceptual diffusion, I changed 'policy network' into 'advocacy coalition'. Since Bennet and Howlett also refer to Sabatier for this type of learning, they can be equated. .

looking from the sidelines, from the outside. Overall, it's asking a very simple question: Does this really work? Is this an effective policy?" Brussels-based think tanks will not-so-much question existing policy goals, but concentrate on the means to achieve those goals. They will not challenge most of these goals because of the fact that they are generally supporters of the European Project in its current form. As already mentioned above, taking a too critical stance may also result in being labelled as 'Euro-sceptic'. Although further research is needed, my hypothesis is that Brussels-based think tanks often take the political goals, such as liberalization and integration, as a given by advocacy coalitions or by the institutions, but can be quite harsh in questioning the strategies and instruments to achieve these goals.

Thirdly, social learning is a wider conception, involving entire policy communities. Heclo and Hall are the main advocates of this model of policy learning.[11] Hall extend learning "to the goals of policy or fundamental ideas and beliefs by policy-makers", thus describing change in core beliefs as more frequently occurring than Sabatier. In this respect, policy learning can lead to a paradigm change.

As has been demonstrated above, Brussels-based think tanks play a crucial role in generating shared knowledge bases for policy communities. They can also be involved in sharing even the most basic understanding of policy issues. One could assume that think tanks in the current economic crisis would turn to the advocacy of more regulation by the EU and state actors. However, such a paradigm change has in my opinion not occurred. There was a genuine demand for financial regulation before the crisis, and the general consensus among economic think tanks such as BRUEGEL, CEPS, EPC and ECIPE about the basic liberal and anti-protectionist course the EU should take, seems to be unshaken. So, no example of think tanks roles in a true paradigm change has been found. Reasons for this might also be found in Hall's very wide concept 'paradigm change', which seems to point to a tabula rasa in policy making.

Since policy evaluation is the first step in agenda setting and policy formulation, further research on the type of policy learning they provide, is needed. Lesson drawing is the most obvious candidate to characterize think tanks' policy evaluations. In order to estimate the influence think tanks have within policy formulation, nearer research is needed about the types of expert knowledge they provide. According to Bouwen (2004), expert knowledge is an important 'access good', so mapping think tanks' expert knowledge will form an indication for their influence. Historical studies about think tanks' involvement in different policy

---

[11] Hall's answer to 'who learns' lies very close to Sabatier's advocacy coalition. However, the object and effect of learning fit better within social learning.

domains could point out if Brussels-based think tanks are involved in any way in 'paradigm changes'. I would suggest using James' more differentiated concept of atmospheric influence to study this. (James, 2000.) I will present this concept under 3.2 on Modes of influence.

3. Brussels-based Think Tanks' Influence

What is the influence or impact of Brussels-based think tanks on EU policy-making? A simple question, but – as the major study *Do Think Tanks Matter?* on US think tanks' influence concludes, unfortunately one to which "there does not appear to be a simple answer". (Abelson, 2002, 162.) Stone describes the differences in assessment by different scholars: "[Think tanks'] impact on policy thinking is often exaggerated, while other commentators refuse to acknowledge that think tanks can have any genuine input at all". (Stone, 2004a, 10.) The disagreement springs both from conceptual and methodological problems.

At the most basic philosophical level, the question about think tanks' influence on policymaking is about the relation between knowledge and power. How are knowledge and power connected to each other? Diane Stone has in several places suggested that think tanks often present themselves as 'bridges' between academia and politics, or between knowledge and power: "The metaphor of 'building bridges' between the research world and the world of politics has become a popular one. It conveys the sense that 'ideas' and 'knowledge' can be put onto a transmission belt into policy deliberations". (Stone, 2000a, 246.) This is a very instrumental approach of knowledge and of the role of think tanks. Ideas and knowledge appear as objectified tools, which can be 'transmitted' from science to policy and politics without much trouble.

Stone answers the question about the relation between knowledge and power in a constructivist way. She argues "that knowledge and policy is a mutually constituted nexus and that think tanks are not simple informants in transmitting research to policy. […] Many think tanks help provide the conceptual language, the ruling paradigms, the empirical examples, and then become the accepted assumption for those making policy". (Stone, 2007b, 276.) In this approach, think tanks deal in 'soft power' (a term coined by Joseph Nye) and shape the political communities' perception of the world.

This study argues that both approaches can be useful. In the majority of cases, policy proposals can't be traced back to anywhere. One of Kingdon's respondents stated that policies are "not like rivers. There is no point of origin". (1984, 77.) Richardson adds: "Identifying just where a policy 'started' in the EU is extremely difficult – hence the common response that 'policies seem to come from nowhere'". (2006, 17.) The constructivist approach seems

more fruitful to study how the political understanding of the problem was shaped and what were think tanks' contributions to this, than trying to trace back the policy idea to some study.

In some cases, ideas that are put forward by think tanks are taken up directly into policies. A report from Daniel Gros from CEPS and BRUEGEL's idea for the European Bluecard are examples for this. These examples neatly fit the instrumental approach to the relation between knowledge and power. There are, however, severe methodological problems in applying this. In order to enhance their reputation and demonstrate their influence to their members, think tanks will stress these examples over and over again. This creates an inflated estimation of think tanks' influence. Furthermore, as "it is rare to find uncontested examples of a one-to-one correspondence between a think tank report and a policy adopted subsequently", (Stone, 2004, 11.) the instrumental approach could suggest that all other ideas have vanished into thin air. In this way, the influence of think tanks is downplayed in an unrealistic way. In short, a two-track model of influence – instrumental and constructivist – is needed in order to grasp all dimensions of think tanks' influence. Think tanks' influence can be understood mainly in a constructivist way. In some cases more direct paths can help to explain where the adopted policy originated.

For the reasons noted above, it is hard to estimate think tanks' influence. In what follows, I will attempt to clarify the nature of Brussels-based think tanks' influence by exploring 1. the modes of influence, 2. the targets to influence, 3. the means of influence and 4. the sources of influence. Finally, I will present some factors that could limit their influence.

3.1. Modes of Influence

Simon James (2000) distinguishes between three *modes of influence*. Modes are basically descriptions of the scale of the object of influence. First of all, "the atmospheric influence involves influencing the general climate of thinking about policy and as a result changing the framework of reference of policy makers". (James, 2000, 163.) He divides this 'atmospheric influence' into three subcategories. Universal reordering occurs when the 'political cosmology' is rearranged. As I have argued while discussing Peter Hall's paradigm shift, Brussels-based think tanks have not taken part in such a dramatic and historical course of events. 'Atmospheric change' can also occur within one policy sphere, such as for instance

foreign policy. Finally, one policy program on a single issue can be the object of such a dramatic change in thought. Only specific research within particular policy domains can answer the question if Brussels-based think tanks have been involved in such 'atmospheric influence'. It is, of course, also possible – and this might be a more realistic expectation – that Brussels-based think tanks reinforce the existing atmosphere. Reinforcing can also be a way of influence. (James, 2000, 164.)[12]

Taking a step down, Brussels-based think tanks could try to influence the medium –or short-term agenda. This is generally the level Brussels-based think tanks indicate they are active at. Ullrich quotes a member state official who characterized think tanks' role as follows:

> "to develop ideas for the policy agenda for about two years down the line [since] there is a need to take up the issues of today and link them with the future [and] to pull policy makers away from the here and the now and get them to see the implications and deeper meanings of issues". (Quoted in Ullrich, 2004, 52.)

This quote also demonstrates the twofold character of agenda-setting and policy formulation. On the one hand, these stages are reactive processes that orientate themselves by what is already on the governmental agenda. One respondent explained that his research agenda is mainly determined by the themes that are going to come "down the pipeline during the next 9 to 12 months". Think tanks are on the other hand constantly trying to integrate long-term perspective in their work. In this way, reacting to the governmental agenda also implies trying to influence what will be the future agenda.

Finally, through micro-policy research and advice can try to put their mark on the 'detail' of policy. For many Brussels-based think tanks, this may be hard to achieve because of the need for very specific, technical knowledge and it might also not be within the realm of their highest ambitions. Members of staff might engage in such activities by participating in the Commission's expert committees. James suggests that micro-policy analysis might be a more suited working terrain for smaller niche think tanks. (James, 2000, 165.)

The smaller the object of influence seems to be, the more the instrumental concept of knowledge and policy seems to apply. On the other hand, atmospheric influence (and to a high degree think tanks influence on agenda setting) is the conceptual embodiment of the constructivist approach to this. Both concepts can also be related to the *means of influence*.

---

[12] I prefer not to use the terms direct/indirect influence because of possible confusion : Direct influence can indicate both direct influence on the policy, or directly communicating towards high-ranked policy-makers.

3.2. Influencing Whom?

Whom do Brussels-based think tanks try to influence? There are different approaches possible. One can for instance distinguish between the public, the policy community, policy influential people and decision makers. Another possible approach is to distinguish between the functions and ranks of officials. I will distinguish here between the public, private actors and institutional actors. As these typologies can be found elsewhere (Sherrington, 2000. Bouwen, 2004, Boucher, 2004.), I will provide only a short overview.

The (interested) public is a first target. By influencing the 'national mood' (Kingdon, 1984.), think tanks can have an impact on the chances of policy ideas to turn into an actual policy. The press is the way to communicate with the public. Hence, within the group of private actors, journalists are an important target group. Other targets include NGOs, business interest groups, the corporate sector, trade unions, employer associations, academics, other think tanks and other private organisations with an interest in EU affairs. Think tanks' influence here can best be understood in terms of 'softening up'.

I will present the institutional actors as institutions. Brussels-based think tanks mainly report that they try to convey their message to the three major institutions: Commission, Council and Parliament. Since the Commission initiates policy proposals, the Commission is think tanks' natural primary target. The Commission's need for expert knowledge, as well as the fragmentation between the different DGs offer chances for think tanks to influence agenda-setting and policy formulation. The Council still remains the principal decision-making body of the EU. Because of the national interests at stake in the Council, Brussels-based think tanks transnational identity might hinder their influence. The European Parliament has in many respects joined the Council as a decision-making body. Informational demands and interest in debate on policy ideas are high. As I have argued above, this fragmentation offers think tanks opportunities.

National governments also form a target for Brussels-based think tanks. They can be reached over the Council, but Brussels-based think tanks also try to establish direct contacts to them and to national parties. Other institutions that are targets, but are considered less important because they have little powers in agenda-setting and decision-making are the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee. The Council of Europe might also be added to this list.

This short overview might provide an impression of the number of actors think tanks try to reach. However, the private actors and the three big institutions, with the Commission coming in first place, are the targets where think tanks focus on. In the following section, I will discuss the means of influence think tanks use to influence these actors.

3.3. Means of Influence

James introduces two means of influence: public and private. "The first uses the skill of public relations, the second the skill of governmental lobbying". (James, 2000, 168.) Different means also implies different strategies, which I will describe below. As think tanks usually see both means as complementary, private and public approachs are used at the same time.

James describes the public approach as 'a scattergun technique'. (James, 2000, 168.) It is essentially related to reaching the policy community and the interested public through a variety of activities. When the research is done, the publication in which the policy idea is developed is of course the core product. These publications can have different forms. Each think tank uses somewhat different names for different types of publications, but the following are the most common. Research reports, blueprints or research papers contain usually between 60 and 100 pages and contain a thorough analysis of the subject together with some recommendations. Working papers are also published on websites, with the intention of encouraging expert feedback from outside the think tanks. In Brussels, books are a rarity, but some of the larger think tanks do publish some from time to time. Some think tanks provide reports of debates and events. Finally, policy briefs "are typically eight pages, easy to read, fact-based and targeted at an audience of executives and decision-makers, with an emphasis on concrete recommendations". (Website BRUEGEL) While observers stressed the academic importance of the research report, policy briefs were mentioned as their most important type of publication with regard to dissemination.

Another important way of conveying their message is the press. Opinion pieces and interviews in important news papers such as the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times, the Economist, European Voice, … are seen as a way to communicate with the public, the policy community and also with policy makers, because, as one observer put it, "if they are going to have 15 minutes of free time, they [policy makers] are going to read one of those papers".

Because it is important to get a clear message across in a concise way in policy briefs and newspapers, think tanks also value staff members having some journalistic qualities.
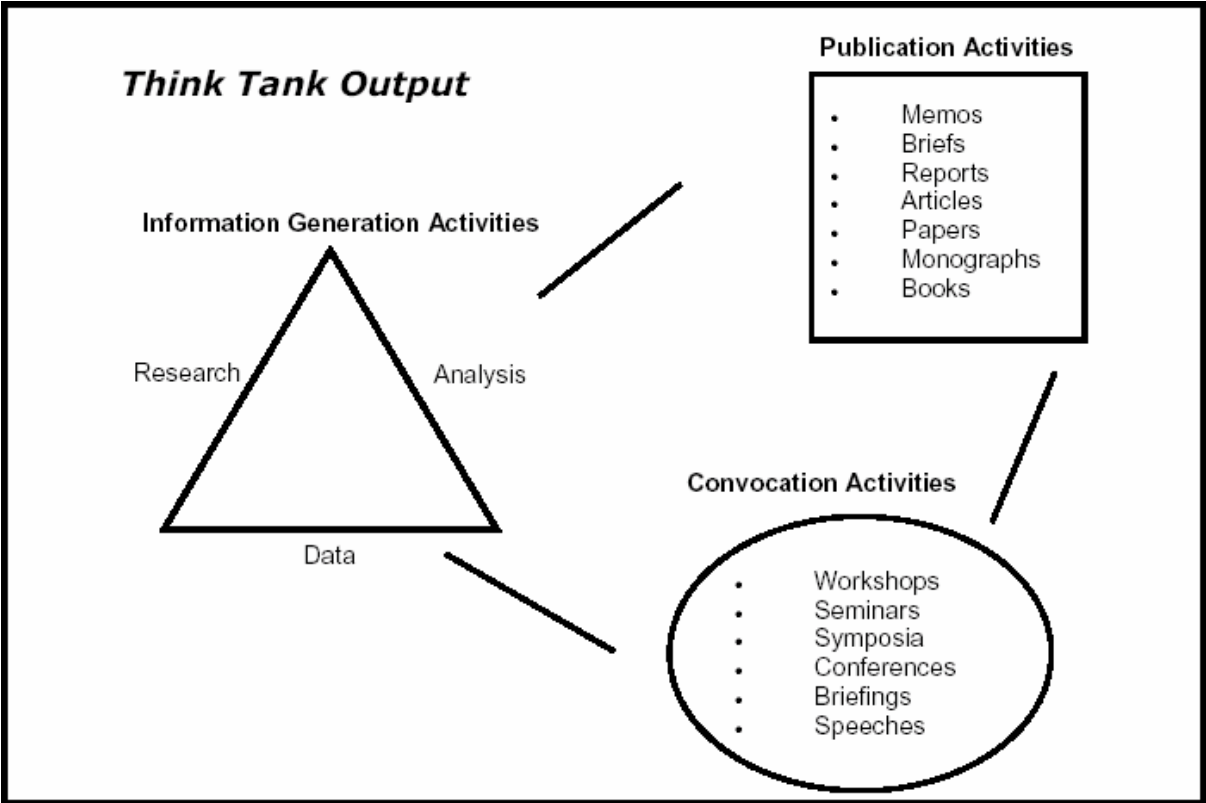
Source: Lindquist, 2000, 226.

In order to generate more attention for their policy ideas, think tanks use a number of convocation activities. Debates, speeches and presentations are the most important public events. These activities mainly target the policy community in Brussels. NGOs, country representatives, interest groups, 'policy influential people' and policy makers all attend these events.

"The private approach consists of targeting particular decision makers and selling the idea to them". (James, 2000, 168.) Convocation activities often are both public and private means of influence: public events do not only consist of presentations and debates, but also often include informal meeting opportunities afterwards. Specific private convocations events include private briefings, small roundtable meetings bringing together the most important people in a policy domain. The private approach also consists of trying to influence people in the direct environment of policy -and decision makers. Since Commissioners, their cabinets, and Director-Generals are 'slaves of the agenda' with very limited time, Brussels-based think tanks also try to talk with people working in their direct environment. James calls this private approach 'governmental lobbying' because "think tanks need to use the full range of lobbying

tactics: identifying their main decision makers; finding out what their preoccupations and interests are; discovering their attitude towards the issue the think tank is promoting; submitting to them a short reasoned case in support of the idea; and finding opportunities to meet them and to press the idea on them".

The public and private means of influence are complementary and often intermingle, for instance at debates where policy makers are present, or in reaching policy makers through newspapers. Effective and strategic dissemination and convocation are of paramount importance for think tanks' public influence. Networking capabilities ('knowing the right people') probably is one of the most important factors in private diplomacy. This brings us to the issue of the sources of influence. What are the determinants behind think tanks' influence? That is the theme of the following section.

3.4. Sources of Influence

Why do some Brussels-based think tanks have more influence than others? What are the factors determining their success? In the literature, there is no accepted body of determinants explaining the influence of individual think tanks as there is for differences in success between different countries. (Cf. McGann & Johnson, 2005.) I have compiled a number of determinants out of the literature and the interviews conducted.

1. *Expertise and reputation*

    a. When think tanks have a proven expertise in a policy field, members of the policy community will look for their advice. In this respect, its staff *is* a think tank's portfolio: established academics and experienced policy-makers bring with them their reputation.

    b. A further way of enhancing (the perception of) expertise and quality is consistency. A respondent pointed out that: "There is no point in doing just one paper and one event, because the next day, it's going to be forgotten. The policy-makers you are engaging with, they will understand that if you only do

one paper, then you are probably not an expert. When you have a systematic approach, write 10 or 15 papers over a longer time and organize several events. That ensures quality and will make sure the outside community understands. The world is full of people that are expressing their views, but don't have a clue what they are talking about. Most policy-makers can distinguish between a 'bullshitter' and someone that has something to say, who knows something about it".

c. Some think tanks have been around longer than others. Older think tanks often have a more established name. In the following passage, Heidi Ullrich quotes from an interview in 2001: "[CEPS] was the first EU think tank in Brussels, and is still considered by some outside CEPS to be 'the only true EU think tank'". (Ullrich, 2004, 56.)

d. The name of the director can also substantially contribute to a think tank's reputation. An excellent example of this is Friend of Europe's board, which has been described as a European who's who. (Ullrich, 2000, 57.)

e. The members might bring a certain status with them. Being recognized and sponsored by the Commission, governments and important corporate members entails a certain prestige.

2. *Policy community*

a. Brussels-based think tanks' status within specific policy communities depends on the perception of their work by the members of that policy community. As was noted in the discussion on agenda setting and policy communities, think tanks' ability to contribute to the shared, uncontested knowledge base of the community, is determined by the perception that the information they provide is neutral, that their analysis is qualitative and that their views are independent.

b. Think tanks' influence also depends on the long-term relations they can establish with influential people. If they have developed good and frequent contacts with high officials from the Commission, MEPs and national representatives, this can increase their influence significantly. Brussels-based think tanks tend to value private meetings highly. The establishment of relations will of course depend on the perception of their work and the networking capabilities of staff members. (Stone, 2000a, 253.)

    c. Networking can be an important way to look for clients who order research.

3. *Advocacy*

Think tanks' influence will highly depend on whether or not their analyses and ideas find a willing ear in advocacy coalitions. Chances for this can be substantially heightened by close affiliation (or of course membership) between the think tank and a well-placed and highly regarded policy entrepreneur.

Think tanks' final influence will of course depend in turn on the strength of the advocacy coalition.

4. *Balancing academic reputation and advocacy*

As has been noted by Diane Stone, there seems to be a tension between the perception of academic rigour and neutrality on the one hand and the emphasis on advocacy on the other hand. (Stone, 2007b, 275.)

My hypothesis: *A think tank's influence will depend to a great extent on its ability to match a neutral, qualitative and academic image with an active engagement in and contribution to advocacy at the same time.* In their publicity material, outspoken advocacy think tanks seem to stress academic standards even stronger than academic think tanks. This feeling was put to words by an interviewee: "If you are an institute which aims at influencing policy, then I think it becomes even more important that you demonstrate to the outside world that you have taken efforts to ensure quality".

5. *Strategy and dissemination*

    a. A clear and well-defined identity is very important for any think tank. It contributes to the exposure of the think tank. It is remarkable that two of most successful Brussels-based think tanks of the last years, BRUEGEL and ECIPE, both sought their inspiration in Washington, with think tanks like the Peterson Institute.

b. Relations with the press: For Brussels-based think tanks, the press is an extremely important way of communicating with policy influential people, policy communities and the interested public, both in Brussels and the member states. Hence, good relations with the press are important. This is proven by the fact that most Brussels-based think tanks keep a log of references to their work in the press.

   The relation between think tanks and journalists is also reciprocal. Specialized journalists know the Brussels-based think tanks and value the concise information they provide. James also notes that: "the successful use of the media by think tanks tends to feed upon itself: if think tanks provide good copy, media appetite for their output grows and think tanks find it easier to gain media time to air their views, with a consequently higher chance of influencing the public agenda". (James, 2000, 165.)

c. An effective dissemination of ideas is of paramount importance. (James, 2000, 168.) Think tanks' websites were described as 'our window to the world'. Download statistics are one of the ways Brussels-based think tanks measure their output, and are regarded as an indicator of influence. Some Brussels-based think tanks have completely developed and up-to-date websites containing all publicly available policy briefs, papers, etc. on it. Others, however, confine themselves to short presentation texts, don't mention who is their staff or director, don't publish anything on their website, haven't updated their sites in months and in one case, the link 'blog' led to a site about hotels in Brussels.

d. As one of the interviewees pointed out, timing is extremely important for an individual paper to have some influence: "You can do an excellent paper, but if it doesn't come on the right time, it will not have an influence".

6. *Funding model*

As mentioned before, money is extremely important to think tanks. The (non-) availability of funds and their origins can have an effect on influence because it determines the amount of work that can be done, the freedom to decide on their own research issues instead of having to engage in more contract research,

consequently it also influences the perception of scholarly independency, and the amount of money that can be invested in dissemination.

7. The political culture

The Commission's attitude towards criticism can also affect differences in influence between Brussels-based think tanks. Think tanks that 'go soft' on the Commission might enjoy an easier access. According to Sherrington, "favouritism [in the form of] Commission funding and preferences of particular think tanks may generate inequalities […]". (2000, 175.)

All of these factors together form a reasonable explanation for the differences in influence between individual think tanks. Remarkable is the importance of perception and reputation. Think tanks cannot fulfil their basic functions if their publics don't perceive them as independent policy research organizations, but as merely one amongst many interest voices. To some extent, Brussels-based think tanks can work on this perception by paying attention to academic standards, by attracting the 'right' names, by openness about funding and member's role in the think tank, and by other communication strategies.

These sources of influence vary considerably over different Brussels-based think tanks. There are, however, also some structural sources of (and constraints on) influence that – although not always in equal measure – affect all Brussels-based think tanks. Before proceeding to a final assessment of the Brussels-based think tank landscape, these will be presented.

3.5. Structural Sources and Constraints

In the expose on governance and think tanks, it was argued that the multi-level nature of the evolving EU largely explained the rise of EU think tanks in Brussels. There was a demand for expert advice, and the open political system provided a space for think tanks to deploy. There are a number of sources of influence and constraints on think tanks' influence present within this setting. They can be traced back to the concept of multi-level governance, to the nature of

decision-making in the EU and to organizational features of the think tank landscape in Brussels.

Although the rise in the number of think tanks in Brussels is spectacular, Brussels' think tank scene is still underdeveloped in comparison to Washington and Beijing. One respondent crudely judged that the Brussels' think tank scene is "still extremely immature and in its infancy. […] It's basically still a Klondike. If you want to do work here, you can take your axe and go out and do work, because there is basically no competition". Heidi Ullrich quotes a respondent who names a lack of competition as the weak point of Brussels-based think tanks: "There is not significant competition. As a result, they are not as good as they might be. They don't generate enough buzz". So, although competition is said to be rising in the study on EU think tanks by Notre Europe (Boucher, 2004, 97; 105-108.), there is a general feeling that more competition could lead to an improvement of think tanks' quality.

The question is if this is true. Apart from concerns about the fragmentation of resources, (Boucher, 2004, 97.) there is no proof that think tanks could perform better than at present. This is even more so because there is no consensus about what 'perform better' ight mean. There might even be a downside to more competition. First of all, "the presence of competing coalitions can result in situations where expertise is not seen as 'objective knowledge' but as 'contested information'. Policy thus becomes a battle of ideas". (Stone, 2000a, 253. Referring to Lindquist, 2000, 225.) As argued above, Brussels-based think tanks depend heavily on their objective image, so this could be a severe constraint to both think tanks' roles and their influence. It is not clear if more competition is a source of think tanks' influence in Brussels or a constraint.[13]

Incrementalism in decision-making forms a constraint on think tank influence. The incremental model portrays "decision-making as a political process characterized by bargaining and compromise among self-interested decision-makers. The decisions that are eventually made represent what is politically feasible rather than desirable". In this model, policies will not differ much from the old policy equilibrium. Changes in policies will only be marginal. If EU decision making mainly follows this model, think tanks' efforts will be largely in vain. However, considering the lack of an institutional equilibrium and expanding competences, this constraint doesn't seem severe. (Howlett & Ramesh, 1995, 143-144.)

---

[13] Furthermore, if one parallels the rise in think tanks and competition in Brussels with developments in the USA and Britain, "where the marketplace for ideas became more congested and competitive", doubts can be cast over the presupposition that the battle of ideas will lead to the prevailing of better ideas: "the best ideas do not always capture political attention and that much policy-relevant research would lie fallow without a dialogue with those in power". (Stone, 2000a, 245.)

Think tanks influence is also constrained by the simple fact that they are not policy-makers themselves and have no input in the political game whatsoever. This might seem obvious, but this forms a boundary for think tank influence. However important agenda setting and policy formulation are, participating in decision-making is the most direct way of influence. One respondent observed: "when you come to a point in the policy-making process when the framework of the agenda is set, then there is very little we can do. Then it's up to political diplomacy, political conflicts between various political parties, between various countries, lobbying for different interests, and that's a process in which we don't enroll. The part of the process where you can participate as a think tank is in evaluating past policies and in deciding what we should do next". A further concept that might point to a constraint on think tanks' influence is the distinction between high and low politics (a notion developed by Hoffmann; see Richardson, 2006, 5.) It would be interesting to research whether think tanks have as much influence in sensitive political issues as they do in 'low politics'.

All Brussels-based think tanks will be affected by the political culture of the EU. As mentioned in the discussion about the Interest Register, the Commission has an ambiguous view on think tanks and some think tanks suspected a lack of understanding of their activities. Since the Commission initiates all policy, its openness and capacity to handle criticism is a very important determinant of all possible influence of Brussels-based think tanks. If the Commission doesn't value think tanks' ideas and advice, think tanks could be talking to the ears of the deaf. However, the conflict between think tanks and the Commission seems to remain within the perimeter of the discussion about the Interest Register. A respondent sketched the general attitude as follows: "You will find differences between individual people in policy making. Some people feel threatened by the fact you now have institutes like us and others, that are basically analyzing and examining what they are doing. But most people feel engaged by it, are interested, and would like to participate in the discussion".

This can also be related to the theory of access goods. The theory of access goods is a comparative tool, developed to study business lobbying in the European Union. As an alternative to measuring their influence, Bouwen studies the access of business institutions to EU institutions. Access doesn't automatically result in influence, but can be seen as a major precondition for it. (2004, 337-338.) So, the research question is: "What determines the degree of access of business interests to the European institutions?" (2004, 338.) According to Bouwen, access goods and the demand for them determine access to the institutions. He distinguishes between three kinds of access goods, namely 'expert knowledge', 'information about the encompassing European interest' and 'information about encompassing domestic

interests'. The two encompassing goods should reflect the general interests at the national and the European level. If interest groups can provide the information needed by the institutions, access is granted. (2004, 340.)

Bouwen doesn't mention think tanks in his research. He argues that consultants have a "very limited capacity to provide access goods. […] They cannot provide the two encompassing goods". (2004, 344.) Consultants only have expert knowledge to offer. Extrapolating this argument, would imply that Brussels-based think tanks have two access goods, namely expert knowledge and information about the European interest. They provide access, which can be regarded as a source of influence. The lack of information about domestic interest implies a constraint on think tanks' influence.

In my opinion, Bouwen's theory isn't capable of capturing think tanks' influence or even access for two reasons. First, Bouwen fails to define what 'access to institutions' is. His institutional focus seems to imply that he only measures formal access, which is a severe shortcoming, since "informal routes used to influence policy […] play a crucial part in EU policy-making". (Sherrington, 2000, 175.) Second, the model only measures expert knowledge and information about interests. This ignores the significance of ideas in the policy-making process. The provision of legitimacy could also be regarded as an access good. For these reasons, Bouwen's model isn't adequate to measure think tanks' access or influence. However, it does raise the interesting question in how far policy ideas function as an access good for Brussels-based think tanks? Presumably, the access value of ideas is high for informal access, and lower for formal access to the institutions.

This concludes the study of Brussels-based think tanks' influence. Admittedly, there is something missing: there is no answer to the question of how far Brussels-based think tanks' influence does in fact reach. In many ways, influence is in the eye of the beholder. If one follows Gramsci in believing that think tanks are part of the hegemonic project of capitalism, than think tanks' influence will probably look seminal in the suppressing of the proletariat. If instead one considers influence through the lens of the instrumental concept of knowledge, one will find little evidence of one-to-one correspondences between think tanks' ideas and adopted policies, so one will have to conclude that think tanks influence is virtually non-existent.

Instead of a providing a half-hearted ambiguous guess, I have opted to leave this question open and explore the different dimensions of what influence could mean for Brussels-based think tanks. In my opinion, these dimensions provide a better understanding of Brussels-based think tanks' influence. In the concluding chapter, I will summarise my

findings and argue that any assessment of Brussels-based think tanks should incorporate both questions about the significance of think tank within the policy-making process, and questions about their influence.

4. Significance and Influence of Brussels-based Think Tanks

The question "Do think tanks matter?" had the same mesmerizing effect on scholars as the issue of definition. Nobody had a clear and satisfying answer, which only made the fascination for the issue grow. In my opinion, this fascination for influence has for a long time overshadowed the question of the *significance* of think tanks for policy-making. What are the functions think tanks fulfil within the political system? Put simply: What are think tanks for? One can fully map think tanks place in policy-making only once both these questions are answered. Furthermore, as the network literature demonstrates, both questions are intimately related. The structuring role in the chaos of policy ideas implies exercising influence, just as the influence of think tanks cannot be understood without referring to think tanks significance for networks. Influence and significance are the criteria on which the assessment of Brussels-based think tanks has to be based.

This research set out to answer two questions: First, *what are the roles, functions and significance of Euro-specific Brussels-based think tanks in the EU policy-making and governance process?* Second, *in which ways can they be said to have an influence of EU policymaking?* In the first chapter, think tanks' role within the European multilevel governance system was explained. On the one hand, it was argued that factors of demand played a role in the spectacular think tank development of the last two decades. Think tanks answer a need for expert knowledge and are seen as a source of legitimacy by the Commission. The growth of Brussels-based think tanks can on the other hand be related to the opportunities for influence that lay in Brussels. These opportunities can be explained by the multitude of access point in the multilevel system of the EU, the more open culture of EU policy making and the increasing competences of the EU. In short, there is more to get in the EU and there are opportunities to get it.

Another important condition for think tank development is the presence of funds. The reasons for the availability of funds will probably be related to the reasons for think tanks creation. Nevertheless, considering that many actors involved in the Brussels think tanks scene express a wish for a further growth of Brussels-based think tanks and increased competition amongst them, it is important to understand why these funds are (not) available.

The use of the policy cycle model allowed for a closer and more analytic look on think tanks' roles in the EU policy-making process. It was argued that Brussels-based think tanks

are mainly active in agenda setting, policy formulation and policy evaluation, stages of the policy cycle which seem to be intimately related to each other. Policy evaluation can be regarded as the initiation of agenda setting and policy formulation. In relation to this stage, three types of policy learning were distinguished. It was attempted to estimate think tanks contribution to the different types of learning. Attributing paradigm changes to Brussels-based think tanks seemed a bit too farfetched. The scope of think tank evaluations better fits so-called program learning. Interestingly, it was hard to answer the question in how far think tanks contribute to government learning. This is due to the fact that there is no clarity what the content of the expert knowledge of think tanks is. To what extent do think tanks possess technical expertise? Bouwen's theory of access goods suggests that this type of knowledge is an important source of think tank influence, so research on types of think tank knowledge might be a pathway to knowing more about think tanks' possible influence.

Think tanks' roles in agenda setting and policy formulation were related to two different types of subsystems. The analysis of think tanks roles and functions in policy communities and in advocacy coalitions showed that think tanks' functions in both subsystems are essentially contributions to the handling of the complexity of the policy primeval soup. The value of think tank functions in structuring the chaos of the European policy soup depends on how far the openness and broadness is seen as a problem for the efficiency and coordination of the European policy-making process.

The way in which think tanks function in the two different subsystems stand in a difficult relation to each other. The perception of objectivity, independence and quality is the core resource think tanks possess in their work to influence problem definitions within the policy community. On the one hand, think tanks' role in advocacy coalitions based on belief systems might prove difficult to reconcile with this perception. On the other, it must be noted that one think tank respondent saw this as an incentive to provide even higher academic quality.

This last statement suggests that Diane Stone's claim that knowledge and policy form "a mutually constituted nexus" – at least in the case of think tanks – has some punch to it. (Stone, 2007b, 276.) The hypothesis I formulated on the source of think tanks' influence basically uses the same argument: *A think tank's influence will depend to a great extent on its ability to match a neutral, qualitative and academic image with an active engagement in and contribution to advocacy at the same time*.

Bibliography

Abelson D.E. (2002). *Do Think Tanks Matter? Assessing the Impact of Public Policy Institutes*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's Press.

Atkinson, M.A. & Coleman, W.D. (1992). Policy Networks, Policy Communities and the Problems of Governance. *Governance*, 5, 154-180.

Bennet, C.J. & Howlett, M. (1992). The Lessons of Learning: Reconciling Theories of Policy Learning and Policy Change. *Policy Sciences*, 25, 275-294.

Benz, A. (2004). Einleitung: Governance – Modebegriff oder nützliches sozialwissenschaftliches Konzept? Benz, A. (Ed.). *Governance - Regieren in komplexen Regelsystemen*, Wiesbaden, Nomos, 11-28.

Boucher, S. (Ed.) (2004). *Europe and its think tanks: A promise to be fulfilled. An analysis of think tanks specialised in European policy issues in the enlarged European Union.* Notre Europe Studies and Research 35.

Boucher S. & Royo M. (2006). *Les think tanks - Cerveaux de la guerre des idées.* Paris, Editions Le Félin.

Bouwen, P. (2004). Exchanging Access Goods for Access. A Comparative Study of Business Lobbying in the European Institutions. *European Journal of Political Research*, 43, 337-369.

Christiansen, T., Føllesdal, A. & Piattoni, S. (2003). Informal Governance in the European Union: An Introduction. Christiansen, T. & Piattoni, S. (Eds.). *Informal Governance in the European Union*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 1-21.

Cohen, M., March, J. & Olsen, J. (1972). A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17, 1-25.

Day, A.J. (2000). Think Tanks in Western Europe. Weaver, R.K. & McGann, J.G. (Eds.). *Think Tanks and Civil Society in a Time of Change: Catalysts for Ideas and Action*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 103-138.

deLeon, P. (1999). The Stages Approach to the Policy Process. What has it done? Where is it going? Sabatier, P.A. *Theories of the Policy Process*, Oxford, Westview Press, 19-32.

Denham, A. & Garnett, M. (1998). *British Think-Tanks and the Climate of Opinion*, London, UCL Press.

Greenwood, J. (2007). *Interest Representation in the European Union*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Gupta, K.D. (2001). Analyzing Public Policy. Concepts, Tools, and Techniques, CQPress, Washington.

Haas, P. (1992). Introduction: Epistemic communities and International Policy Coordination. *International Organisation*, 46, 1-35.

Hall, P. (1993). Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: the Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain. *Comparative* Politics, 25, 275-296.

Heinelt, H. & Knodt, M. (2008). Einleitung: Politikfelder im europäischen Mehrebenensystem. Ibid. (Eds.), *Politikfelder im EU-Mehrebenensystem*, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2008, 7-20.

Hooghe, L. (2001). The European Commission and the Integration of Europe. Images of Governance, Cambridge, University Press.

Hooghe, L. (2005). *Cohesion Policy and European Integration: Building Multi-Level Governance*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Hosli, M.O., Nölke, A. & Beyers, J. (2004). Contending Political-Economy Perspectives on European Interest Group Activity. Wonka, A. & Warntjen, A. (Eds.). *Governace in Europe. The Role of Interest Groups*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 42-56.

Howlett, M. & Ramesh, M. (1995). *Studying public policy : policy cycles and policy subsystems*. Toronto, Oxford University Press.

Jachtenfuchs, M. & Kohler-Koch, B. (2004). Governance in der Europäischen Union. Benz, A. (Ed.). *Governance - Regieren in komplexen Regelsystemen*, Wiesbaden, Nomos, 77-101.

James, S. (2000). Influencing Government Policymaking. Stone, D. (Ed.). *Banking on Knowledge: The Genesis of the Global Development Network*, London, Routledge, 162-180.

Kingdon, J.W. (1984). *Agenda, alternatives and public policies*. Harper Collins, Michigan.

Kohler-Koch, B. (1997). Organized interests in European Integration: The Evolution of a New Type of Governance? Wallace, H. and Young, A.R. *Participation and Policy-Making in the European Union*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Ladi, S. (2005) *Globalisation, Policy Transfer And Policy Research Institutes*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Lindquist, E. Think tanks and the ecology of policy inquiry. Stone, D. (Ed). *Banking on Knowledge: The Genesis of the Global Development Network*, London, Routledge, 221-237.

Marsh, D. (Ed.) (1998). *Comparing Policy Networks*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Marsh, D. & Smith, M. (2000). Understanding Policy Networks: towards a Dialectical Approach. *Political Studies*, 48, 4-21.

McGann J.G. & Johnson E.C. (2005). *Comparative Think Tanks, Politics and Public Policy*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar.

McGann, J.G. (2007). *Think tanks and Policy Advice in the US: Academics, Advisors and Advocates*, London, Routledge.

Michalowitz, I. (2002). Beyond Corporatism and Pluralism: Towards a New Theoretical Framework. Warleigh, A. & Fairbrass, J. (ed.) *Influence and Interests in the European Union: the new politics of Persuasion and Advocacy*, London, Routledge, 35-56.

Nugent, N. (2003). *The Government and Politics of the European Union*. 5th Edition, Houndsmill, Palgrave Macmillan.

Peters, G. (2004). Interest groups and European Governance: A Normative Perspective. Wonka, A. & Warntjen, A. (Eds.). *Governance in Europe. The Role of Interest Groups*, Baden- Baden, Nomos, 57-65.

Peters, G. (2006). Agenda-setting in the European Union. Richardson, J. (Ed.). *European Union: power and policy-making*, London, Routledge, 61-76.

Rhodes, R. (1997). *Understanding governance: policy networks, governance, reflexivity and accountability*, New York, Open University Press.

Rhodes, R., Bache, I. & George, S. (2005). Policy Networks and Policy-Making in the European Union: A Critical Appraisal. Hooghe, L. (Ed.). *Cohesion Policy and European Integration: Building Multi-Level Governance*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 367-387.

Richardson, J. (2000). Government, Interest Groups and Policy Change. *Political Studies*, 48, 1006-1025.

Richardson, J. (2006). Policy-making in the EU: interests, ideas and garbage cans of primeval soup. Ibidem (Ed.). *European Union: power and policy-making*, London, Routledge, 3-30.

Sabatier, P.A. & Jenkins-Smith, H.C. (1993a). The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Assessment, Revisions, and Implications for Scholars and Practitioners. Sabatier, P.A. & Jenkins-Smith, H.C. (Eds.). *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. Boulder, Westview, 211-236.

Sabatier, P.A. & Jenkins-Smith, H.C. (1993b). The Study of Public Policy Processes. Sabatier, P.A. & Jenkins-Smith, H.C. (Eds.). *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. Boulder, Westview, 1-9.

Sabatier, P.A. (1987). Knowledge, Policy-Oriented Learning, and Policy Change. *Knowledge; Creation, Diffusion, Utilization*, 649-692.

Sabatier, P.A. (1993). Policy Change over a Decade or More. Sabatier, P.A. & Jenkins-Smith, H.C. (Eds.). *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. Boulder, Westview, 13-39.

Sabatier, P.A. (1999). The Need for Better Theories. Sabatier, P.A. *Theories of the Policy Process*, Oxford, Westview Press, 3-17.

Scherrington, P. (2000). Shaping the Policy Agenda: Think Tank Activity in the European Union. *Global Society*, 14, 173-189.

Sloat, A. (2004). Governance in the making: the future of the EU's (thought) experiment. Wonka, A. & Warntjen, A. (Eds.). *Governace in Europe. The Role of Interest Groups*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 66-75.

Smisman, S. (2006). Civil Society and European Governance: from Concepts to Research Agenda. Smismans, S. (Ed.). *Civil Society and Legitimate European Governance*, Cheltenham, Edwar Elgar, 3-22.

Smith, J.A. (1991). *The Idea Brokers: think tanks and the rise of a new policy elite*, New York, Free Press.

Stone, D.A. (1989) Causal Theories and the Formation of Policy Agendas. *Political Science Quarterly*, 104, 281-300.

Stone D. & Garnett M. (1998). Introduction: think tanks, policy advice and governance. Stone D., Denham A. & Garnett M. (eds.) (1998). *Thinks tanks across nations. A comparative approach*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1-20.

Stone D. (1996). *Capturing the Political Imagination. Think Tanks and the Policy Process*, London, Frank Cass.

Stone, D. (2000a). Knowledge, power and policy. Stone, D. (Ed). *Banking on Knowledge: The Genesis of the Global Development Network*, London, Routledge, 240-258.

Stone D. (2000b). Introduction to the Symposium: the Changing Think Tank Landscape, *Global Society*, 14, 2000, 149-152.

Stone D. (2000c). Non-Governmental Policy Transfer: The Strategies of Independent Policy Institutes. In: *Governance*, Volume 13, Issue 1 , 45 – 70.

Stone, D. (2000d). The Policy Roles of Private Research Institutes in Global Politics. Ronit, K. & Schneider, V. (Eds.). *Private Organizations in global politics*, London, Routledge, 187-206.

Stone, D. (2000e). Think Tank Transnationalisation and Non-profit Analysis, Advice and Advocacy. *Global Society*, 14, 153-172.

Stone, D. (2001). Think Tanks, Global Lesson-Drawing and Networking Social Policy Ideas. *Global Social Policy*, 1, 338-360.

Stone, D. (2002). Using Knowledge: The Dilemmas of Bridging Research and Policy. *Compare*, 32, 285-296.

Stone, D. (2003). Knowledge in the Global Agora: Production, Dissemination and Consumption. Andrea Krizsán (Ed.). *Reshaping Globalization: Multilateral Dialogues and New Policy Initiatives*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 41-62.

Stone D. & Denham A. (eds.) (2004). *Thinks tanks traditions. Policy Research and the Policy of Ideas*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.

Stone D. (2004a). Introduction: think tanks, policy advice and governance. Stone D. & Denham A. (Eds.). *Thinks tanks traditions. Policy Research and the Policy of Ideas*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1-16.

Stone, D. (2004b). Transfer agents and global networks in the 'transnationalization' of policy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11, 545-566.

Stone D. (2007a) "Public Policy Analysis and Think Tanks", in: *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*, Frank Fischer, Gerald Miller, Mara S. Sidney - Political Science.

Stone D. (2007b). Recycling bins, garbage cans or think tanks? Three myths regarding policy analysis institutes. In: *Public Administration*, 85, 259 – 278.

Struyck, R.J. (2002). Transnational think-tank networks: purpose, membership and cohesion. *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs*, 2, 83-90.

Thunert, M. (2000). Players Beyond Borders? German Think Tanks as Catalysts of Internationalisation. *Global Society*, 14, 191-211.

Ullrich, H. & Stone D. (2003). Policy Research Institutes and Think Tanks in Western Europe: Development Trends and Perspectives. In: *Open Society Institute Discussion Paper* Local Government and Public Service Initiative 24 (2003).

Ullrich, H. (2004). European Union Think Tanks: generating ideas, analysis and debate. Stone D. & Denham A. (eds.) (2004). *Thinks tanks traditions. Policy Research and the Policy of Ideas*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 51-68.

Van Kersbergen, K. & Van Waarden, F. (2004). Governance as a bridge between disciplines: cross-disciplinary inspirations regarding shifts in governance and problems of governability, accountability and legitimacy. *European Journal of Political Research*, 43, 143-171.

Van Waarden, F. (1992). Dimensions and Types of Policy Networks. *European Journal of Political Research*, 21, 29-52.

Wald, J. & Jansen, D. (2007). Netzwerke. Benz, A. e.a. (Eds.), *Handbuch Governance. Theoretische Grundlagen und empirische Anwendungsfelder*, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag, 93-105.

Wallace, W. (1998). Conclusion: ideas and influence. Stone D., Denham A. & Garnett M. (Eds.) *Thinks tanks across nations. A comparative approach*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 223-230.

Warleigh, A. & Fairbrass, J. (2002). The New Politics of Persuasion, Advocacy and Influence in the European Union. Warleigh, A. & Fairbrass, J. (Eds.) *Influence and Interests in the European Union: the new politics of Persuasion and Advocacy*, London, Routledge, 1-18.

Weaver, R.K. & McGann, J.G. (2000). Think Tanks and Civil Society in a Time of Change. Ibid. (Eds.). *Think Tanks and Civil Society in a Time of Change: Catalysts for Ideas and Action*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 1-35.

Wonka, A. & Warntjen, A. (2004). The making of Public Policies in the European Union: Linking Theories of Formal Decision-making and Informal Interest Intermediation. Wonka, A. & Warntjen, A. (Eds.). *Governace in Europe. The Role of Interest Groups*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 9-24.

Zahariadis, N. (1999). Ambiguity, Time and Multiple Streams. Sabatier, P.A. *Theories of the Policy Process*, Oxford, Westview Press, 73-93.

Websites

Commission's Register of Interest Representatives

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/transparency/regrin/welcome.do?locale=en#en

Eur-Activ :

http://www.euractiv.com/en/pa/think-tanks-join-eu-lobby-register-kallas-insists/article-181651

Funding Secrecy: CEO

http://archive.corporateeurope.org/docs/ThinkTankSurvey2006.pdf

Global Go To Think Tanks 2008

http://www.fpri.org/research/thinktanks/GlobalGoToThinkTanks2008.pdf

White Paper European Governance

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2001/com2001_0428en01.pdf

Speech/09/181: A more transparent and accountable Commission – And what about think tanks?

http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/09/181

Think Tank Directory

I opted to put together a set of features, originating from both organizational and functional definitions of 'think tanks'. There might not be a common definition capturing the 'essence' of think tanks, but there seems to be a common 'fishing net' to sort think tanks out of the policy-making water. That is why I opted to put together a set of features, originating from both organizational and functional definitions of 'think tanks'. These features functioned as my 'fishing net', as loosely used criteria to identify think tanks. Brussels-based think tanks will a varying degree possess these features.

I compiled this list myself, based on the definition below. The list probably is not complete. When think tanks are not included, this is because of the fact that they don't fit the criteria proposed, or because I simply don't know them, probably due to their small size.

List of Criteria

I. Private, non-profit organizations

Most Brussels-based think tanks are established as non-profit organizations under Belgian Law.

II. Relative autonomy/independence

Brussels-based think tanks can largely determine their own agenda. However, their financial autonomy is relative: Most Brussels-based think tanks are on a constant look-out for funds. Sometimes BEPA, the Commission's internal think tank is also seen as a think tank. Since they are fully dependent on the Commission, I did not include them. (Stone, 2004a, 2-3.)

III. Permanent organisations

This criterion is included to excluded the Commission's *ad hoc* committees, which are not permanent. Brussels-based think tanks are established institutions. (Sherrington, 2000, 176.)

IV. Not degree granting
Brussels-based think tanks are not universities. This criterion is meant to exclude university research groups with capacities similar to think tanks.

V. Not consultancy firms

Brussels-based think tanks do not work on a pay-per-project basis. Ordered research will only be a part of their research activities.

VI. Not philanthropic foundations
Think tanks are mostly not foundations. Foundations don't do research. An exception is the Carnegie Foundation, which also has an office in Brussels.

VII. Not interest groups
Think tanks do not represent any particular interests such as lobbying organisations.

VIII. Have a staff that produces in-house public policy solutions

Most Brussels-based think tanks conduct their own research and have staff for that.

IX. Active dissemination with the intention of influencing policymaking directly or indirectly
Think tanks disseminate their research and try to attract attention to it by organising events. They do this in order to influence policymaking

X. Interest in furthering and contributing to debate
Think tanks tend to express a genuine interest to participate in and contribute to debates. Friends of Europe is specifically devoted to this.

List Of Brussels-based Think Tanks

1. **Academy Avignon**

   http://www.academyavignon.net

   info@academyavignon.net

   Theme: Economic, special focus on craft and small enterprises.

   Founded: 1997

   Director: Not mentioned on website.

   Remarks: Close affiliated with interest organizations. Can be regarded as an
   interest organization.

2. **BRUEGEL, Brussels European and Global Economic Laboratory**

   http://www.bruegel.org

   info@bruegel.org

   Theme: Broad. Mainly economic and trade policy. Also: Climate change,
   governance, EU enlargement.

   Founded: 2005

   Director: Jean-Pisani Ferry

3. **Bertelsmann Stiftung**

   www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de

   Theme: Brussels office

   Remark: No website for Brussels office.

4. **Carnegie Europe**

   http://www.carnegieeurope.eu

   info@CarnegieEurope.eu

   Theme: International politics.

   Founded: 2007

   Remark: Brussels' office of international think tank. No research. Debates and
   meetings are core business.

5. CEPS: Centre for European Policy Studies

http://www.ceps.be

info@ceps.be

Theme: Encompassing.

Founded: 1983

Director: Daniel Gros

6. Centre for the New Europe

http://www.cne.org

info@cne.org

Theme: Mainly health issues. Some others. Overtly liberal.

Founded: 2002

Director: Not mentioned on website.

7. EWI: East West Institute: EWI

www.ewi.info

Brussels@ewi.info

Theme: International Security.

Founded: 1980 (USA)

Director: Not mentioned.

Remarks: No separate website for Brussels' office. Major audience is NATO.

8. EUR-IFRI: Institut Francais des Relations Internationales

http://www.ifri.org/frontDispatcher/ifri/recherche/eur_ifri_1115804290200

info.eurifri@infri.org

Theme: International politics.

Founded: Not mentioned.

Director: Susanne Nies

Remarks: Brussels office of Institut Francais des Relations Internationales. Small in-house research staff.

9. ECIPE: European Centre for International Political Economy

http://www.ecipe.org

info@ecipe.org

Theme: Economic and trade policies. Liberal.

Founded: 2006

Director: Fredrik Erikson

10. European Enterprise Institute

http://www.european-enterprise.org

info@european-enterprise.org

Theme: Economic and trade policy. Focus on advocacy of entrepreneurship. Liberal.

Founded: 2004 (?)

Director: Chris Horner

Remarks: Resembles an interest organization.

11. EIAS: European Institute for Asian Studies

http://www.eias.org

eias@eias.org

Theme: International Relations. Focus exclusively on Asia.

Founded: 1996 (?)

Director: Dirk Gupwell

12. IERI: European institute for International Relations

www.ieri.be

info@ieri.be

Theme: International Relations.

Founded: 1998

Director: ?

13. EPC: European Policy Centre

http://www.epc.eu

info@epc.eu

Theme: Economy, Integration, International relations. Liberal.

Founded: 1996 (re-established)

Director: Hans Martens

14.ETUI: European Trade Union Institute

http://www.etui.org

etui@etui.org

Theme: Labour and socio-economics issues.

Founded: 2005

Director: Philippe Pochet

Remark: The ETUI-REHS was created in April 2005 as a result of the merger of
three bodies: the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI); the European
Trade Union College (ETUCO); the Trade Union Technical Bureau (TUTB).
ETUI-REHS became ETUI in October 2008.

15.Fondation Robert Schuman

www.robert-schuman.org

bruxelles@robert-schuman.org

Theme: Broad. Dedicated to advancing integration.

Founded: 1991

Director: Pascal Joannin

16.FEPS: Foundation for European Progressive Studies

http://www.feps-europe.eu

info@feps-europe.eu

Theme: Democracy and diversity, Social issues, environment. Socialist.

Founded: 2007

Director: Ernst Stetter

Remarks: Creation initiated by PES. Claims to work under the motto: "Close to,
but independent from".

17.Friends of Europe

http://www.friendsofeurope.org

info@friendsofeurope.org

Theme: Broad. Devoted to debate.

Founded: 1999

Director: Gilles Merritt

Remark: Do not conduct research, since they concentrate solely on organizing debates.

18. Gallup Organisation Europe

www.gallup-europe.be

info@gallup-europe.be

Theme: Monotoring public opinion (Eurobarometer).

Director: Robert Manchin

Remark: Gallup Europe is not a think tank in the sense defined in my paper. They only conduct the Euro barometer opinion polls for the Commission. Because of the importance of feedback about public opinion, I added them here.

19. GMF: German Marshall Fund of the United States

http://www.gmfus.org/about/office.cfm?city=brussels

infobrussels@gmfus.org

Theme: Relations US – EU. NATO and EU.

Founded: 2001

Director: Ronald D. Asmus

Remarks: Brussels office of GMF.

20. MEDEA: Institut Européen de Recherche sur la Coopération Méditerranéenne et Euro-Arabe

http://www.medea.be

info@medea.be

Theme: Relations EU – (Arabic) Mediterranean.

Founded: 1996

Director: François-Xavier de Donnea

21. Egmont institute: Royal Institute for International Relations

www.irri-kiib.be

info@irri-kiib.be

Theme: International Relations. Institutional Affairs.

Founded: 1947

Director: R. Van Hellemont

Remarks: The Egmont Institute is a Belgian think tank. However, considering its location and the reputation of its European research program (since 1995), it cannot be overlooked.

22. International Crisis Group

http://www.crisisgroup.org

Theme: Global security and crisis management.

Founded: 1995

Director: Louise Arbour

Remark: Brussels is the global head quarters. It has a program on the EU and conflict prevention and management.

23. ISIS: International Security Information Service

http://www.isis-europe.org

info@isis-europe.org

Theme: International Security.

Founded: 1995 (officially established 2001).

Director: Giji Gya

24. The Kangaroo Group Movement for Free Movement

www.kangaroogroup.org

office@kangoroogroup.org

Theme: Informal debate; European unity.

Founded: 1979

Director: Liselotte Hallen

Remarks: No research. Informal debate between "members of the European Parliament, Commission and Council and representatives of industry and social organisations".

25. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

http://www.kas.de/proj/home/home/9/1/index.html

sekretariat@eukas.be

Theme: Broad. Representing the German foundation.

Founded: 1978

Director: Peter R. Weilemann

Remark: Brussels' office of Konrad Audenauer Stiftung. Christian Democratic background.

26. Lisbon Council for Economic Competitiveness and Social Renewal

http://www.lisboncouncil.net

info@lisboncouncil.net

Theme: Economic policy and innovation.

Founded: 2003

Director: Paul Hofheinz

27. OSE: Observatoire Social Européen

http://www.ose.be

info@ose.be

Theme: Social policy and employment.

Founded: 1984

Director: Pierre Jonckheer (a.i.)

Remark: Belgian think tank in origin, but with a very European perspective.

28. OSI: Open Society Institute

http://www.soros.org/initiatives/brussels

Theme: Democratic society.

Founded: 1997

Director: Heather Grabbe

Remarks: No research. Brussels' office. OSI is an advocate for democratic and open society values.

29.RAND Brussels

http://www.rand.org/about/locations/randeurope/brussels.html

reinfo@rand.org

Theme: Defence.

Founded: 2008

Director: Constantijn van Oranje-Nassau

Remark: RAND Brussels only does contract research. However, it is part of a internationally very reputed American think tank.

30.SDA: Security and Defence Agenda

http://www.securitydefenceagenda.org/AboutSDA/tabid/586/Default.aspx

Theme: Security and Defence.

Founded: 2002

Director: Gilles Merritt & Geert Cami

Remark: No research. Aims to provide "to provide a neutral meeting point for defence and security specialists from NATO and the EU".

31.The Senlis Council

http://www.senliscouncil.net

Theme: Global security. Public Health.

Founded: ?

Director: Not mentioned.

Remark: Brussels' office of international network. No website, e-mail or telephone number mentioned.

32.World Security Institute: WSI

www.wsibrussels.org

info@wsibrussels.org

Theme: Security and defence.

Founded: ?

Director: Not mentioned.

Remark: Established on initiative of WSI Washington.

33.Group for Research and Information on Peace and Security: GRIP

www.grip.org

info@wsibrussels.org

Theme: International security policy.

Founded: 1979

Director: Bernard Adam