

**Think Tanks in the Policy Process:  
The Case of Hungary**

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## **Abstract**

By analyzing the Hungarian think tank sphere, this thesis sets out to contribute to the ongoing debate about the role and nature of think tanks and how these change when these institutions are operating outside of their original political environment. The research makes use of a number of theoretical lenses, namely pluralism, elite theory and corporatism, that serve to interpret the basic roles of think tanks in the policy process. The normative framework is tested against the empirical evidence of four think tanks selected as case studies based on which conclusions can be made on the role(s) that think tanks play in the Hungarian policy-making process. The lessons of the thesis demonstrate that think tanks in Hungary at this point in time are not sufficiently involved in policy-making to be able to contribute to the formation of an open policy process and democratic debate. However, their activities aiming to shape public discourse and exert pressure on policy-makers from the bottom-up can contribute to an environment that creates the need for more inclusive policy-making.

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## Introduction

Think tanks have been attracting growing attention over the last two decades both in academia, as well as among the general public. Even though think tanks have been around since the early 1900's in the Anglo-Saxon culture, this new-found interest can be attributed to the wide proliferation of these types of institutes around the world in the last two decades. This process was aided by the spread of democracies and democratic governance structures world-wide. Nevertheless the concept still remains primarily an Anglo-Saxon one with little consensus around its understanding. This lack of a homogeneous definition of think tanks is due precisely to the fact that these institutes have spread beyond their original environment. The American political culture that is frequently described as a pluralist democracy with a policy process that is open for external input, provides a good ground for the functioning of think tanks. However, they can now be found in countries that do not necessarily offer the same kind of political environment for the operation of these institutes. A closer look at how think tanks function in countries outside of their original surrounding is therefore necessary.

This thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing debate about the role and nature of think tanks around the world, by introducing an analysis of think tanks in Hungary through some prominent case studies. Hungary is a good testing ground for the functioning of think tanks, as it is a post-communist country whose political culture is markedly distinct from the Anglo-Saxon one. There are a growing number of think tanks functioning in the country that aim to fulfill similar roles as their counterparts in the US. This thesis looks at the specificities of think tanks operating in Hungary and interprets their roles in the policy process. Based on the analysis, the

thesis aims to identify to what extent the Hungarian political culture fosters open policy deliberation and democratic debate.

The literature on think tanks in Hungary is rather limited. While it is true that there is a growing literature on think tanks in general, Hungary has not frequently featured in such examinations. Often, global or regional cross-country analyses simply do not include the country (UNDP 2003, Stone et.al. 1998), or the analysis is very limited (Notre Europe). Other times, lengthier case studies of Hungarian think tanks (McGann and Johnson, 2005) do not go beyond a mere listing of think tanks and their exact role in the policy process is not explored. Even if some comparative studies of think tanks in the region get some of the basics right (Kimball, 2000), the focus of analysis (think tanks themselves) is increasingly out of touch with the reality on the ground. Struyk's (1999) otherwise very thorough and careful analysis of think tanks in Hungary must also be re-examined due to the mere fact that a decade has passed since its publication. All of this prompts a re-visiting of the 'think tank community' in Hungary in 2009 and a closer analysis of their activities in general and their participation in public policy-making.

Acknowledging that the concept of think tanks is contested and there is no general agreement on what really the term constitutes, the paper adopts a broad approach to its definition. The Anglo-Saxon definition of think tanks emphasizes the independent nature of the entities engaged in policy research and advocacy (Stone et.al 1998). In the Central European region, however, the term 'think tank' has been applied to institutions engaged in policy research and policy advice regardless of their independence (or the lack of it) from government or political parties (Stone and Denham 2004). Therefore, in order to analyze the Hungarian think tank community, it is more suitable to adopt a definition that under the umbrella term of 'think tanks' encompasses various entities including non-profit university-based research centers and

research institutes run by the Academy of Sciences, government-run research institutes, independent research centers and also for profit consultancy firms engaged in policy analysis.

The research makes use of a number of theoretical lenses that serve to interpret the basic roles of think tanks in the policy process. Scholars frequently resort to employing either a pluralist or an elitist view of public policy when analyzing think tanks. The pluralist approach to public policy assumes that participation in policy-making is open to various actors and therefore think tanks share an equal part in the competition for decision-makers' choices. Elite theory on the other hand holds that only a limited number of actors are allowed to participate in policy-making (think tanks among them) and those with access to policy makers are part of the political elite. Both of these theories are useful and can provide some interesting insights into different aspects of think tanks. Nevertheless, one novelty of this thesis is that it will employ a third theory that is usually not used in analyzing think tanks, namely, corporatism. According to this theory, only a limited number of external actors have access to shaping public policies and these actors are selected by decision-makers themselves. While this lens has not been put to use in the study of think tanks, this thesis will prove that it can also offer an interesting perspective on the working of think tanks in Hungary and their access to policy-makers. The three theoretical lenses together will provide a suitable framework for studying think tanks' roles, as each will reveal new insights into the Hungarian think tanks sphere.

The normative framework will be tested against the empirical evidence that is gathered through interviews. Four think tanks have been selected as case studies that will serve as a basis for generalizations on the role(s) that think tanks play in the Hungarian policy-making process. In addition, it is necessary to look not only at the supply side of policy analysis (provided by think tanks) but also to analyze the demand that exists for think tanks products. For this reason,

an interview will also be conducted with a policy-maker that is in the position to be in touch with think tanks and whose contribution into the debate on the role of think tanks is also indispensable.

The paper will start out with an overview of the existing literature on think tanks, followed by a review of the theoretical context, introducing the basic features of the pluralist, elitist, and corporatist framework of democracy while also focusing on the role of think tanks in each of them. Chapter two introduces the Hungarian case by providing a detailed account of the experiences of select Hungarian think tanks in the policy process. Based on the empirical evidence, the paper follows with an assessment of think tanks' roles in policy-making in view of how they fit the three models of public policy, the pluralist, elitist and corporatist models. In conclusion, more widespread implications can be drawn with regard to the type of policy-making in Hungary. By answering the question whether think tanks contribute to democratic debate and deliberative policy-making the paper also offers an alternative view of the state of democracy in Hungary currently.

## **Chapter 1: Think Tanks – A Theoretical Overview**

The chapter provides an overview of the existing definitions of think tanks and reviews their basic functions as institutions of policy analysis and advice. Based on the various approaches, the paper adopts a definition of its own, one that suits the case analyzed in the paper (Hungary) the best. The concept of think tanks is then situated in the wider context that think tanks operate in. The policy process and the role of think tanks in it is conceptualized by invoking three theoretical lenses - the pluralist, elitist and corporatist frameworks are introduced in order to serve as tools for interpreting the way think tanks operate in a given political environment.

### **1.1 Think Tank Literature**

Any analysis of think tanks must begin with a definition of the term. Most scholars of the field today agree that there is no general consensus on what the term precisely constitutes (Medvetz 2008, Krastev 2000, Rich 2004, Abelson 2002, McGann and Johnson 2005, Stone and Denham 2004) and therefore there is no universally applicable definition either. What is beyond contestation is that the term and the concept have a strong Anglo-Saxon correlation. The term originates from the United States where the first research institutes were established in the early 1900's with the intention of providing a basis for sound policy decisions (Abelson 2002, p.22). Over the last two decades, however, the term 'think tank' has gained global use not only in western democracies but also in the developing world, with reference to a wide variety of institutions (Stone and Denham 1998, p.1). Reasons can be traced not only to the proliferation of democratic governance structures, but also to the need for research-based policy analysis.



However, regardless of its global use, the use of the term still provokes an identification with the Anglo-Saxon world.

There is a certain degree of agreement among scholars on some core features of think tanks. One aspect that most point out when defining the work of think tanks is that they are institutions that engage in analyzing public policy issues. Stone, Denham and Garnett (1998) in their “Think Tanks across Nations” as well as McGann and Johnson (2005) place emphasis on the research and analysis aspects of think tanks’ activities. They point out that the evidence-based and thoroughly researched knowledge provided by them can serve as a sound basis for decision-makers to make informed choices on public policy issues. Thus, it is “intellectual argument” (Stone, et.al 1998) that think tanks produce with the aim of facilitating good policy solutions. In addition to research, James (UNDP 2003) and Rich (2004) also underline the advocacy aspects of think tanks’ activities. Think tanks according to their definitions equally importantly engage in actively advocating policy recommendations and solutions. Aiming to leverage policy outcomes is thus a core rationale of think tanks missions. In this view, think tanks “have the skill of effective government lobbyists” (James in UNDP). Regardless of the emphasis that these scholars attach to the given activities, the basic roles of think tanks crystallize from them: policy analysis and advice.

There is more disagreement over the degree of independence that think tanks may possess. The traditional Anglo-Saxon definition of the word requires that think tanks be truly independent, non-governmental, non-partisan institutions (Abelson 2002 p.9, Rich 2004 p.11., Stone 2007 p.261). This however presupposes a philanthropic culture that can maintain support for the existence of institutions of various sizes, as well as a political culture that is open to external input into the policy process. Today, however, many scholars (McGann and Johnson

2005, Stone et.al 1998) accept that complete independence is rather an ideal state that is difficult to reach, especially outside of the Anglo-Saxon political and philanthropic culture. Therefore, more cautious wording is adopted by many to describe think tanks such as “relatively autonomous organizations” (Stone et.al 1998) or that they “have significant autonomy from government” (McGann and Johnson 2005). This wording also reflects the various types of institutions that today call themselves think tanks around the world. This kind of categorization therefore allows the inclusion of such variety of bodies as university-based research institutes, policy analysis firms with for-profit consulting services and even policy units that are associated with the government - so long as they also fulfill the conditions specified above regarding their activities.

This thesis therefore views think tanks as an “umbrella term” (Stone 1996) and drawing on definitions from Medvetz (2008), Stone (1996, 2007), McGann and Johnson (2005) defines think tanks as quasi-independent organizations that carry out policy research with the aim of influencing policy-making and/or the policy environment. This kind of wording ensures enough flexibility to include a wide variety of organizations operating in Hungary – the focus of this thesis – that refer to themselves as think tanks. At the same time, based on this definition, it also must be acknowledged, that there is a “considerable degree of overlap between think tanks and other organizations in society” (Stone et.al 1998 p.4). It goes beyond the scope of this thesis to point out the differences between think tanks and interest groups, NGOs or trade unions. Nevertheless, this broad definition provides a framework that makes think tanks easily identifiable for the purposes of this work.

## 1.2 Thinking of Think Tanks – Three Theoretical Lenses

Think tanks naturally do not operate in a vacuum, therefore when studying the phenomenon, it must be placed in a wider context, in this case, the democratic policy-making process and democracy *per se*. The section will review the three theoretical lenses used by this paper in order to facilitate the interpretation of the roles that think tanks can fulfill in the policy process. While pluralism and elite theory are frequently used to understand the functioning of think tanks, the paper also introduces corporatist theory in addition.

### 1.2.1 Pluralism

Given that think tanks have Anglo-Saxon roots, it is the American political environment that serves as the best framework for understanding the work of think tanks (Krastev 2000 p.275). Some defining features of the American political system such as the checks and balances between the various branches (legislative and the executive most prominently) and the separation of powers resulted in an open process of policy formulation and decision-making. The open policy process, through the incorporation of various stakeholders, guarantees wider policy alternatives in the deliberation phase and ensures the adoption of more informed decisions that are responsive to the needs of the public (UNDP 2003). These basic principles and tools for opening up the policy process can increase the legitimacy and acceptance of decisions and promote good governance and transparency throughout the world (UNDP 2003).

The open policy process outlined above is what most essentially defines the concept of a pluralist democracy, one of the theoretic frameworks that this thesis employs to explain the work of think tanks. Proponents of the pluralist view (most important early exponent of them being Robert A. Dahl) believe that political power in the state is dispersed among many actors that

each contribute to the process of policy making. Dahl in his seminal work *Pluralist Democracy in the United States* (1967) advances the view that alongside the formal governmental structures, “multiple centers of power” (p.27) exist that channel their input into the formation of national policies in order to minimize conflict and the adverse affects of political decisions. It is important to place this viewpoint in its historical context and recognize its innovative nature. At the time of its writing, political science was mostly relying on the work of formal political institutions to analyze national policy-making. The significance of pluralist democratic theory historically is that it shifted focus away from formal political institutions and pointed out the existence of groups and associations representing citizens’ interest who in fact also take part in shaping the political agenda and policy outcomes (Ainsworth p.5). Political power in the pluralist view is therefore distributed among several groups (formal political institutions constituting only one such group), policies emerge from popular demand originating from these various power centers and conflict is mitigated through constant negotiations and securing consensus among the actors (Dahl 1967, p. 23).

Pluralism is a useful tool for conceptualizing the work of think tanks because through this lens they can be identified as organizations that contribute to policy-making from outside. Scholars that study think tanks within the pluralist framework look at them as one of the many voices that compete for the attention of policy-makers and ultimately for influencing policy-making (Abelson, p.52). In accordance with the pluralist theory the democratic process of policy deliberation is open to all actors, which allows think tanks (similar to interest groups, trade unions or other autonomous associations) to provide recommendations for decision-makers in the policy process. Think tanks are therefore essential for the functioning of the democratic process, because they provide important external contributions for policy makers to make

informed decisions. According to the pluralist view, the involvement of think tanks fosters democratic decision-making, an open policy-making process and policy deliberation.

### **1.2.2 Elite Theory**

Elite theory was developed as a response to the pluralist democratic theory (most importantly by C.Wright Mills), emphasizing that “elites, not masses, govern all societies” (Dye and Zeigler 1993, p.2). As opposed to pluralism which underlined that everyone can enter the democratic policy-making process, elitism holds that only those who have access to vital resources such as money, education, status, or knowledge can participate in governing. These few who have such access belong to the elite of the society who are in possession of political power. In accordance with elite theory, public policy does not respond to the interests of the masses based on negotiations between competing groups, but rather follows the interests and values of the elites (Dye and Zeigler 1993, p.4). While elitism acknowledges the existence of independent civil society groups, it claims that they are also in need of leadership and those leaders also belong to the elite. The producers of cultural capital and knowledge are members of the intelligentsia that compose part of the elite of society that have access to resources most importantly to power. Therefore, from this perspective, think tanks themselves are looked upon as elite institutions because of their access to knowledge and even more importantly, to decision-makers.

Elite theory is usually applied to the study of think tanks in order to point out the prominent ties that they hold with political leaders, and to emphasize the privileged position that these organizations have in leveraging policy-making. Some even go as far as to assert that “think tanks often serve as instruments of the ruling elite” (Abelson 2002, p. 50). Elite theory as

a tool for looking at think tanks can also remind us that think tanks do not in fact represent any social interests unlike civil society groups. Rather they are composed of a small group of people belonging to the intellectual elite of the society and therefore their legitimacy is questionable. When advancing policy proposals and advocating recommendations, their involvement in the policy process must rest on the objective nature of the knowledge that they produce which helps policy-makers make informed choices minimizing adverse affects of the decisions. If the knowledge that think tanks produce is not sound, then indeed the legitimacy of their involvement in the policy-process becomes questionable. If the interests of those few that direct think tanks can be traced in their proposals and recommendations, than indeed the elite theory of democracy seems to be a better suited lens for viewing reality.

### **1.2.3 Corporatism**

The third theoretical framework that this thesis uses to facilitate the understanding of think tanks in Hungary, that of corporatism, has not been employed to the study of think tanks so far. Corporatism as a theory acknowledges the “incorporation of groups in the policy-making processes of the state as a mode of overcoming the conflicts of interest between labour and capital” (Parsons 2003, p. 257). The concept that aims to explain interest representation developed as a result of the concentration of economic power in the hands of private owners that made bargaining of the state with employers as well as employees more important than previously. Corporatism essentially refers to those tripartite bargaining mechanisms that include the state, employer organizations (corporations) and employee groups (trade unions). While pluralism views political power as dispersed between competing independent interest groups, corporatism accepts that those with access to political power are hierarchically organized non-

competing groups (Parsons 2003, p. 257). In other words, it recognizes that some organizations have privileged access to decision-makers while others lack this. Those with access participate in the tripartite negotiations, whereby the state selects a few interest groups or stakeholder groups that it deems representative of private interests and grants them access to shaping policy-making by providing channels for regular negotiations (Hill 1997, p.67). As opposed to pluralism and elitist theory, corporatism is not conventionally brought into connection with the United States, but is more frequently used in the European context to describe the political interest representation and negotiations in the welfare state.

This thesis interprets corporatism beyond its original reference to tripartite negotiations and places emphasis on the feature that participants in corporatist structures have quasi-monopolized access to government. Following the pluralist theory, think tanks compete with each other in the market of ideas for achieving leverage on policy-making. On the other hand, in accordance with elite theory, think tanks in general have a privileged position by being part of the power elite with access to decision-makers. In contrast to the previous two lenses, corporatism can be thought of a middle ground between pluralism and elitism. It will be useful to apply the corporatist framework to the study of think tanks from this perspective, because it will help to explain why certain think tanks may be more influential than others. This may be especially helpful in Hungary, where the involvement of think tanks in the policy process is far from automatic.

The chapter provided an introduction into the existing literature on think tanks and put forth three theoretical lenses that will be used to interpret the think tank sphere in Hungary. It has been pointed out that both the concepts of think tanks as well as the pluralist democracy that is the most natural environment of think tanks emerge from the Anglo-Saxon culture. Therefore the

question of how think tanks that are founded and operating outside of the Anglo-Saxon political culture behave is even more interesting. This issue will be analyzed throughout the rest of this paper, with the following chapter introducing the experiences of the think tanks that served as case studies in Hungary.



## Chapter 2: The Hungarian Think Tank Sphere

In Chapter 1, a broad definition of think tanks was adopted for the purposes of this paper, as one that would best suit the Hungarian model. Indeed, there are several research institutes, centers of policy analysis and consulting firms in Hungary that may or may not identify themselves as think tanks, but nevertheless fulfill the requirements of think tanks set up in the previous chapter. In fact, the lack of the use of the name ‘think tank’ in Hungary is not an indication of the institute’s standing. The label think tank is little known in the country, is difficult to translate<sup>1</sup> and therefore, institutes do not always apply the term. (A full account of Hungarian institutes that qualify as think tanks in accordance with the used definition, is provided in the Appendix of the paper.) From the large number of samples available, this thesis uses four institutes as case studies for analyzing the work of think tanks in Hungary and their role in public policy.

Given the large number of samples available, before the introduction of the selection criteria, it is useful to establish a typology that accounts for the various types of institutes that exist in the think tank sphere in Hungary. Due to the lack of consensus on a definition of think tanks, various typologies have emerged by different scholars that were set up to categorize mainly American think tanks. The most commonly used typology was set up by Weaver in 1989 who distinguished between universities without students, government contractors, and advocacy tanks (cited in Abelson 2002, p. 18-21). McGann and Johnson (2005) on the other hand categorize think tanks into seven groups based mainly on their source of funding: autonomous and independent, quasi independent, university affiliated; political party affiliated; government

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<sup>1</sup> The term think tank has been translated to Hungarian as ‘agytrösz’, meaning something like to ‘brain factory’.

affiliated; quasi governmental (McGann and Johnson 2005, p. 14). It has however, also been pointed out by several scholars (Krastev 2003, Kimball 2000) that these American categorizations are largely meaningless in the Central European context, because of the different policy environment that the think tanks operate in. Therefore this thesis adopts a categorization on its own that can account for the wide variety of institutions that the definition specified earlier includes. This typology relies on the categorizations listed above but is adopted to the Hungarian context. It includes the following institutions<sup>2</sup>:

- consultancy/ public affairs firms /research institutes;
- value-based think tanks;
- Academy of Sciences network;
- university affiliated centers;
- (partially) government sponsored think tanks.

The case studies selected in this thesis are representative members of the various categories identified above. Due to space and time constraints, however, not all categories could be featured among the case studies and covered by in-depth interviews that formed the most essential part of the data gathering exercise on the cases.

## 2.1 Empirical Evidence - Case Studies

The empirical research conducted for this paper focused most especially on think tanks that are the primary subjects of the thesis. Nevertheless, as it has been pointed out above, think tanks must be situated in the environment that they operate in. For this reason, not only think tanks are examined, but also the demand for the products and services produced by think tanks. As part of

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<sup>2</sup> Details of think tanks belonging to each category is provided in the Appendix.

the empirical research, an interview was made with a decision-maker, who represents the demand-side of the relationship between think-tanks and policy-makers.

The four think tanks selected as case studies include one consulting – public affairs company, one research institute that is a member of the Academy of Sciences network, and two value-based think tanks. In addition to representativeness, case studies selected also satisfy the following criteria: they have been in operation for more than three years; throughout their years in operation, they have been continuously producing policy analysis; and they are well-known among policy institutes whose members feature regularly in the media. As a result of their representativeness, the general conclusions drawn from the experiences of these think tanks can serve as a basis of broader conclusions (provided in the following chapter) that can be applied across Hungary. The section that follows provides a full account of the information gathered through interviews with the leadership of the selected case studies carried out over July 2009. The topics discussed with the leaders of the selected think tanks centered on their cooperation with decision-makers and on their views about the role of their think tanks in the policy process in Hungary as well as the role of think tanks in general in the country.

### **2.1.1 Századvég Foundation<sup>3</sup>**

Századvég Foundation has been functioning in its present form since 1993. The foundation does not define itself around certain ideological values, however when asked about it, István Stumpf acknowledged that Századvég leans more towards conservative values. This conservative standpoint frames its approach to policy research in terms of political theory. Stumpf emphasized

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<sup>3</sup> The information contained in this section were gathered through an in-dept interview with István Stumpf, president of Századvég Foundation.

however, that these values do not mark a clear ideological watershed, but rather serve as an orientation point for Századvég.

Századvég is an independent think tank that does not have any institutional cooperation with any political party. Nevertheless because of the founder Stumpf's role in the Young Democrats' Alliance's (Fidesz) led government as Minister in charge of the Prime Minister's Office, public opinion does connect the foundation with the right-wing party. Stumpf himself stated that his "ministerial position in the Fidesz government is a stigma on the whole institute" (Stumpf 2009).

As far as the cooperation between Századvég and decision-makers is concerned, the organization has mixed experiences due to its relatively long history of existence. As a positive example of cooperation, Stumpf cited the period between 1996-98 when there was a continuous and good cooperation between the leaders of Fidesz and Századvég who provided objective analysis in Fidesz's preparation for governance. However, as far as the period since 2002 is concerned (characterized by a social-liberal government), Stumpf emphasized that their cooperation with decision-makers at national level has not been very good. He claimed that the social-liberal government viewed Századvég as a source of criticism only, and therefore the institute could not have much leverage on policy-making at national level. Stumpf attributes this to the cleavage that exists between ruling and opposition parties. Because of strong ideological and political differences, intellectual input that originates from institutes that are considered to be on opposing side of the political spectrum is incapable of breaking into the policy discourse at national level.

Századvég has been more successful in shaping the policy environment in some cases than in providing specific recommendations in the last 8 years, according to Stumpf. He

underlined that governmental decision-makers look at the research products of Századvég. At the same time he stressed that “even if there are professionally valid ideas, if those do not originate from the inner circle of government it is almost considered a treason to seriously consider them” (Stumpf 2009). Therefore, it is not common practice that decision-makers at national-level would proactively seek the contribution and opinion of Századvég or other institutes that do not share the same political values and ideological background as the government. There have been a few exceptions, where Századvég has been able to shape the policy environment or where their ideas were implemented,<sup>4</sup> but the general trend has not been of cooperation.

At the same time, Stumpf underlines that cooperation with decision-makers is much better at local level. He emphasized that Századvég has been successfully influencing policy-making and preparing strategic decision-making at local level indirectly<sup>5</sup>. These were executed through contracts that Századvég had in some cities (eg. Hódmezővásárhely, Esztergom) to carry out policy-analysis.

Nevertheless, Stumpf is hopeful for the future. On the one hand he states that “politics cannot afford to ignore intellectual input” (Stumpf 2009). On the other hand, he believes that the current situation could change within a few months when Fidesz starts preparing to govern. “Századvég is closer to conservative-right wing political ideas, the consequence of which is that if such political forces are in a governing position, then the openness towards Századvég will probably increase from the side of the central government” (Stumpf 2009). Although it is still to be seen what type of cooperation this could be. He also emphasized that a good model of

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<sup>4</sup> One such example Stumpf provided was Századvég's proposals for civil society financing schemes.

<sup>5</sup> It must at the same time be acknowledged that at the level of local government the conservative party is dominant.

cooperation should be worked out – one where the think tank can keep its integrity and autonomy while at the same time having a constructive cooperation with policy-makers.

Stumpf concluded that cooperation between policy-makers and those carrying out policy analysis and providing external input into policy-making is still immature, and is to be developed. He added that the success of think tanks is not necessarily that their recommendations are implemented but rather that they create an environment where analysis and knowledge become important parts of policy-making, and where the objective of policy-making is no longer vote maximization but rather professionalism.

### **2.1.2. Political Capital (PC)<sup>6</sup>**

Political Capital Policy Research & Consulting Institute (Political Capital) does not institutionally define itself as a think tank and is in a sense an outlier from the other case studies in that it is a profit-oriented company providing services for clients but at the same time operating a policy research branch. However, despite the apparent differences in organization from a traditional think tank, Political Capital is worth examining, because it is a prominent actor in Hungarian public debate on politics and is a source of external pressure on policy-makers.

When asked about the self-definition of the institute, Krisztián Szabados emphasized that PC does define itself as a think tank, but does not use the wording because it is unknown in Hungary. He stressed however, that PC is a for-profit company. PC has two independent and completely separate divisions offering consultancy and policy research services respectively. The consulting branch provides advising in political communication, while the policy research division primarily provides analysis for its clients and to a lesser extent also carries out policy

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<sup>6</sup> The information contained in this section were gathered through an in-dept interview with Krisztián Szabados, one of the two managing directors of Political Capital .

analysis on its own initiative. The majority of their policy research therefore is prepared for their clients (private companies, and embassies for instance) who receive periodical analysis on political trends that PC deems important for the clients' specific needs. In other words, most of the products that PC prepares are not addressed to political decision-makers but rather to the clients.

Despite that fact that primarily their work centers on the needs of their clients, Political Capital at times also prepares analyses on its own initiative<sup>7</sup>. These publications usually receive considerable attention from the side of the media, politics and the general public as well, and it is these activities that qualify the company for the title of a think tank. The papers and analyses that Political Capital prepares on their own initiative can be grouped into two categories. Some tackle issues that are not on the political agenda (or to a very little extent), because they are considered non-issues (such as campaign finance reform, or election reform). The main goal of these publications is to generate a public debate and thereby exert pressure on policy-makers to address the problems that PC identifies as crucially important. The other types of analyses that PC produces on their own initiative are forecasts and early-warnings calling attention to certain political trends or phenomena that they identify as important.

Even though PC does disseminate publications and policy proposals to decision-makers directly, it is not through access to policy-makers that they hope to achieve results, but rather by shaping the public discourse. In fact, according to Szabados, it rarely happens that their policy recommendations are directly implemented. While policy-makers find their publications relevant, and at times even agree with their content, the positive feedback usually remains at the

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<sup>7</sup> Policy analysis originating from their own initiative may not be the most typical activity of PC, nevertheless I concentrate on these activities and their effects, because it is these types of activities that qualify PC as a think tank.

level of rhetoric. As Szabados claims, most frequently “it is not in the interest of decision-makers to change policy practice on the sensitive issues that PC raises, because they are afraid of the political consequences” (Szabados 2009). Therefore, policy-makers also shy away from engaging the proposals of PC directly. The best strategy that they can adopt under such circumstances is to “exert pressure through shaping public debate” (Szabados 2009). Circulating messages of their policy recommendations in the media and generating a public debate is done with the intention of creating an environment where the pressure rises from the bottom-up for policy-makers to address certain issues. As a consequence, despite the lack of real cooperation with policy-makers, their efforts will pay off in the long-run, because public discourse is being shaped. However, this is a long process that will yield results only with the passing of decades. While policy-makers may block their initiatives today, it will be impossible to ignore the pressure that will emerge from the bottom-up demanding changes in the way policy-making is done with the passing of time.

Cooperation between decision-makers and external actors, according to Szabados, is hindered by the fact that politicians reject criticism. He claimed that “it is not in the interest of the political elite that an independent civil sphere, or an independent think tank sphere emerge. The political elite does not see that an independent think tanks sphere would serve the interests of the country” (Szabados 2009). Political power is viewed from the perspective of vote maximization, and an independent civil sphere that delivers criticism would work against this goal. “Civil sphere cannot be controlled... therefore the political elite creates artificial civil organizations and think tanks so that they provide advice and mainly echo those solutions and ideas that political parties deem correct” (Szabados 2009) As a result, it can be said that an independent civil sphere in general and the think tank sphere in particular is „artificially



suppressed” (Szabados 2009) in Hungary. This lack of cooperation between ruling elite and external actors is, however, unlikely to change even in the middle-run. Policy-making is so politicized in Hungary, and one political force has such leverage over policy outcomes that it is unlikely to seek the consensus of several actors.

### **2.1.3. Demos Hungary Foundation<sup>8</sup>**

Demos, like Századvég, was selected among the case studies in the paper as one of the organizations that has an ideological value base and conviction. The ideological standpoint of Demos reflects left-wing values, originating in the progressive democratic ideas. The director of the institute, Tibor Dessewffy, is close to former socialist Prime Minister, Ferenc Gyurcsány. Because of this, Dessewffy himself and Demos as an institute were many times “accused” of being advisors to the former socialist government - a charge that Demos rejects, emphasizing that they have no institutional links to the socialist party.

When asked about the situation of think tanks in Hungary, László Ágoston, research director of Demos underlined that the concept of think tanks is completely unknown in Hungary which in itself is a constraint on their activities. In case of media appearances or other types of interviews, terminological clarifications take up half of the time. Moreover, it is not comprehensible to the Hungarian media and the public that an institute is ideologically close to a party, but is not connected to it institutionally. This misunderstanding distracts attention from their actual research work and policy proposals.

Ágoston stressed that the aims of the institute are two-fold, to influence policy-making and to generate public debate. The main audience of the institute are political and economic

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<sup>8</sup> The information contained in this section were gathered through an in-dept interview with László Ágoston, Research Director of Demos.

decision-makers and the media. Through the media they also aim to inform and educate the general public. According to Ágoston, Demos has considered several times before whether they should pursue a more aggressive advocacy role, however, they rejected the idea, because they feel that would push the institute into the 'lobbying sphere'. In their follow-up activities of publications, Demos therefore sticks to dissemination, event organization on given policy issues and media activities (op-eds, etc). Ágoston emphasized that the impact of Demos on policy-making is indirect rather than direct. There have been instances when it played a role in the implementation of a certain policy, however it is usually not the wording or the exact content of the legislation that they aim to influence, but rather they achieve that the issue appears on the political agenda. In other words, when they have leverage, they play the role of a policy initiator.

According to Ágoston, “the experience of Demos is that close political ties can enhance cooperation with decision-makers but it can also hinder the work of a think tank. On the one hand, the close ties between Gyurcsány and Dessewffy made some decision-makers more open to their proposals and ideas, but on the other hand, many times these ties backfired, and it distanced other people from the policy research work of Demos for the same reason” (2009). The media also only focused on those research works of Demos that could be easily politicized and put in the framework of a socialist connection. Ágoston felt that policy-makers as well as the general public overrated the importance of this relation between Gyurcsány and Dessewffy. Once the institute was categorized as a 'left-wing' institute, the attitude towards them changed. The result was that with the popularity of Gyurcsány declining over time, so the openness of decision-makers to proposals from Demos also changed.

Ágoston emphasized that a frequent and open cooperation between external actors providing objective analysis and decision-makers is still far away in Hungary. When Demos was

founded in 2005, they believed that they could play the classical role of think tanks in the policy process – that is, to provide independent policy analysis and recommendation, and they would be able to break into the policy process. They believed that they could be catalysts for a new type of policy-making that builds on external input. However, they realized that this approach was a bit naïve. Demos has grown to realize that most of the time it will not work that they simply provide recommendations, but rather they need to create a general environment where need for policy change is dominant. However, in order to create such an environment, the formation of several other think tanks are needed so that policy-making can become a truly open exercise. Ágoston feels that it will take several decades until this is state is reached.

#### **2.1.4. Institute of World Economics<sup>9</sup> (IWE)**

IWE has considered it one of its missions since its establishment to provide information and knowledge for the Hungarian government to help decision-making especially in the field of economic policy. Therefore, director of IEW, András Inotai, confirms that its primary goal is to influence economic policy-making but also to inform the public and shape public debate. It defines itself an independent think tank. Being part of the network of the Academy of Sciences, member institutes receive a certain amount of core funding from the central budget, that they couple with grants and contracts. Therefore the institute can afford to remain independent and stay out of partisan affiliation.

The institute focuses on long-term strategic issues and trends rather than short term analysis of current policy issues, and therefore has a future-oriented strategic thinking. IWE does three different types of research. Research that concentrates on long-term strategic questions are

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<sup>9</sup> The information contained in this section were gathered through an in-dept interview with András Inotai, Director of the Institute of World Economics.

usually initiated by the institute itself and cannot be financed from the market (through contracts). He adds: “The demand of policy-makers for these types of research products is rather weak, as they tend to think in terms of 4-year political cycles instead of overarching strategies” (Inotai 2009). Research focusing on short-term policy issues on the other hand are normally financed from contracts that IWE gets from government agencies, interest groups or private companies. These normally formulate recommendations and are result-oriented. International projects, the third type of projects, are financed from European research funds, and normally target European decision-makers.

When asked about the nature of IWE’s cooperation with decision-makers, Inotai confirms that policy-makers do seek the opinion of the institute on certain issues. However, these are not usually the strategic questions that IWE analyzes, but rather more concrete issues that require specific recommendations. On a more general note, Inotai underlines that “decision-makers in Hungary are normally not interested in the objective knowledge coming out of think tanks. Strategic thinking is lacking among Hungarian decision-makers and the civil service in general” (Inotai 2009). The result is that overarching trends are not addressed systematically by decision-makers in general.

Inotai feels that the think tank sphere in Hungary is quite politicized. “Hungarian politicians make the mistake of categorizing think tanks in terms of political sides... If a given politician or political party does not like the ideas contained in an independent research analysis, then the think tank delivering that material is categorized as an ‘enemy’. On the other hand if they can embrace the policy analysis, then they can think of the think tank an ally” (Inotai 2009). In other words, think tanks are expected to say what politicians want to hear and to strengthen the agenda that they are pushing for. Even if a think tank is in principal independent, it is judged

as supporter of one or the other political side. In addition, the fact that politicians place a political label on think tanks constrains the possibilities of those think tanks. By default their independence becomes questionable and people will develop certain prejudices against them – their input will not be sought typically.

On a more positive note, Inotai concluded that the work of think tanks will receive more attention in the future. It is true not only in Hungary but elsewhere in the world, that governments frequently lack strategic long-term thinking. However, according to Inotai, as the problems and issues that require a strategic approach beyond the 4-year political cycle become more numerous (such as environment, economic restructuring, welfare reforms, demographic changes) so will the interest of politicians increase toward the work and contribution of think tanks.

### **2.1.5 The Policy-maker's view<sup>10</sup>**

Having examined the think tanks sphere the paper now introduces the viewpoint of the other actors – namely policy-makers. For this reason, a Member of the Hungarian Parliament (MP) was interviewed who in fact mainly echoed the major points raised by the leaders of think tanks above. He emphasized that the inclusion of think tanks in the policy deliberation phase would be highly desirable, but acknowledged that this ideal state is far from daily practice in Hungary. At the same time, he underlined that some positive developments could be observed during the period prior to EU accession which was a goal that was backed by consensus from all political sides. Some think tanks offered their expertise on questions concerning pre-accession tasks, which was welcomed from the side of policy-makers. However, since that time, policy question

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<sup>10</sup> The information contained in this section were gathered through an in-dept interview with a Hungarian member of Parliament who is to remain anonymous.

that would enjoy the backing of all political sides are rather rare. This lack of consensus results in a political cleavage and policy-makers are not interesting in dissenting voices. The MP confirms “At the end of the day, political parties want to hear only those ideas that are in line with their programs.”

The MP made a distinction between two different types of activities of think tanks. Political parties or decision-makers provide think tanks with projects on contractual basis. This is common practice, especially in writing programs of political parties. In these cases, the products delivered by think tanks are indeed used. (Although it must be acknowledged that the parties in such cases cooperate with those value-based think tanks that are closest to their ideology.) The other types of products that think tanks deliver, policy analysis springing from their own initiative, are not typically taken into consideration by politicians. These may be critical in tone, or might raise issues that are sensitive, and therefore are rather sidelined. Only if, as pointed out above, the message conforms with the line of reasoning of policy-makers then a publication may be embraced. He concludes: “One of the most important functions of think tanks, to hold a mirror for decision-makers and to deliver constructive criticism, is feared by politicians in Hungary.”

In sum, the MP has confirmed the arguments of think tanks that cooperation between them and policy-makers is still to be developed. Moreover he acknowledged that policy-making is so polarized that think tanks are also categorized based on their political ideas, which marginalizes them as independent sources of policy input. The MP has not voiced the usual criticism that think tanks normally receive from policy-makers, namely that their products are not policy-relevant or that their format is not suitable for the use of decision-makers (Stone 2002 p.289). In fact, based on his comments, it seems he agrees that it is in fact policy-makers who

have to do more in order to achieve the more proactive incorporation of think tanks to the policy process.

## **Chapter 3: Lessons Drawn**

Chapter 1 of this paper provided the existing theoretical information on think tanks as well as some frameworks that serve to better understand the working and roles of think tanks. In Chapter 2, a detailed account of the interviews with the select case studies followed. This Chapter connects the theoretical frameworks with the empirical evidence and draws lessons from the juxtaposition of the two.

### **3.1 Situating Hungarian Think Tanks in the Think Tank Literature**

The definition set up in Chapter 1, in concert with most definitions of think tanks, states that they are institutions that engage in policy research and analysis – in other words knowledge production on public policy issues. The case studies analyzed in this paper, in accordance with the selection criteria employed, are all institutes that have been conducting thorough research on issues of public interest. It became clear from the interviews that one interesting trait perhaps distinguishing think tanks in Hungary from their western counterparts is that many of them engage in the analysis of politics itself rather than certain policies specifically. The second important distinguishing trait referred to in our definition of think tanks is that they aim to influence the policy-making and/or the public debate. All of the selected think tanks agreed that influencing policy-making was among their goals – albeit to a differing degree. Political Capital in its analyses draws attention to non-issues or political trends that they judge as crucial, however, they believe that influencing policy-making in many cases cannot be done directly through policy-makers. The three other think tanks studied also agree that directly influencing policy-making is difficult, and therefore exerting pressure by way of shaping public opinion becomes an important tool.



The fact that all four think tanks studied place such emphasis on shaping public discourse at the same time means that the advocacy pillar of their activities is somewhat secondary. The evidence of Demos demonstrates that aggressive advocacy is basically equated with lobbying, which is a sphere that these institutes shy away from. István Stumpf of Századvég also specifically stated that the institute does not wish to conduct lobbying activities. Political Capital does not necessarily shy away from advocacy activities, however, based on its past experiences when its proposals were mostly sidelined by policy-makers, it also hopes to advance its causes more through public debate. IWE formulates recommendation mostly in case of works that were commissioned and does not push the results of its own research initiatives very aggressively. Therefore, it can be stated that active advocacy activities going beyond the media activities and conference organization are not typical either because think tanks suspect that the recommendations would fall on deaf ears, or because they do not consider these activities proper for think tanks to pursue.

As far as cooperation with decision-makers is concerned distinction has to be made between the two value-based think tanks studied, and the two other institutes that are considered to be less politicized. Századvég and Demos have both political ties on either side of the political spectrum. While neither of them have any institutional ties to political parties, both institutes have some informal relations with leaders of the two major parties in Hungary (MSZP and Fidesz respectively). These political ties, while sometimes open doors and ears to their proposals, it may also alienate them from the other side. Moreover, the situation that Stumpf described as his formal political post being a “stigma” on the work of his institute,<sup>11</sup> seems to be true of Demos. Therefore, due to the politicization of these institutes, while they have good cooperation

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<sup>11</sup> Although he has cited some positive examples as well.

with some decision-makers, they have no cooperation with others. IWE manages to remain out of these categories and has good cooperation with decision-makers normally. As for PC, Szabados claimed that all political sides seek their opinion on certain political trends or issues.

All four think tanks analyzed confirmed that public policy-making in Hungary is not open to external input, although they identified different reasons. The two value-based institutes referred to their political relations as the reasons why they were not able to break into the policy process – or why they were able to do so. PC on the other hand believes that the political elite is not interested in the existence of an independent think tank sphere that delivers criticism on their work.<sup>12</sup> In their view, only those think tanks are welcomed to provide input into decision-making schemes that support the existing policy initiatives. IWE on the other hand blamed the lack of strategic thinking from the part of decision-makers for not being interested in think tank contribution into policy-making. Interestingly, even the Member of Parliament representing the political elite for the purposes of this study agreed that it is up to decision-makers to initiate more actively the participation of think tanks in the policy process. Everyone interviewed seems to agree though, that it will take several more years, if not decades for the policy process to open up for external input, and believe that it will require the proliferation of new independent think tanks as well, for that to happen.

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<sup>12</sup> The idea that an independent sphere outside of politics that provides criticism is considered a threat by policy-makers has already been voiced in one of the few pieces on the topic in Hungarian literature (Csizmadia 1998, p.17)

### **3.2 Hungarian Think Tanks through the Lenses of Pluralism, Elitism and Corporatism**

Applying the pluralist theory of public policy to the Hungarian think tank sphere points out the fact that there are indeed dissenting voices outside of political actors who are aiming to leverage policy-making. As pointed out earlier (in Chapter 1) one of the vital contributions of pluralist theory has been to direct attention towards the forces operating outside of political institutions that aim to influence them. In fact, the evidence of the four think tanks studied in this paper proves that there exist views originating from outside of political circles that aim to break into the policy cycle in Hungary. All four think tanks regularly produce analyses that promote policy solutions or shed light on problematic areas that need to be tackled by the political elite. The studies produced by think tanks are disseminated to decision-maker and are usually followed-up by conferences or other forums of debate often with the involvement of policy-makers. The analysts of all case studies use the media as tools for advancing their ideas and thereby exerting pressure on policy-makers. In addition, the shaping of public debate is also a primary target of the think tanks studied which in a way advances policy deliberation and serves as a mean to exert pressure on political institutions.

The existence of external actors however does not mean that there is an open policy process or that policy-making would be open to the ideas promoted by them – as put forth by pluralist theory. In fact, the experiences of the think tanks studied show that policy-making is frequently a closed exercise of formal political institutions and actors. The think tanks interviewed agreed that the cooperation between decision-makers and think tanks is still in an immature state and should be developed. The Member of Parliament also emphasized that the inclusion of think tanks' input in the policy deliberation is not daily practice in Hungary. The

claim of pluralist theory that policy proposals put forth by external actors compete for the attention of policy-makers on an equal footing is also not true for Hungary. Századvég, for instance, pointed out that because political elite as well as the public associates them with right-wing political forces, their proposals are sidelined in most cases from the beginning. András Inotai of IWE also pointed out that think tanks are categorized by policy-makers as allies or foes, and their ideas are embraced or rejected accordingly. Therefore, the idea that there would be an open competition of policy proposals is not applicable to the Hungarian political sphere. Thus, pluralist theory demonstrates that there are indeed numerous actors outside of political institutions however their participation in policy-making is not standard procedure. If and when their involvement happens it is not based on the merit of their ideas.

Elite theory, that places emphasis on the limited number of actors that have access to policy-makers, can also to a certain degree be applied to the Hungarian case. As a response to pluralist theory, as it has been pointed out earlier, elite theory underlines that entry into the policy process is not open for all, but is rather limited to those belonging to the political and intellectual elite. Indeed, the case studies analyzed in this paper confirm that ties to political leaders are essential for making one's voice heard. László Ágoston of Demos confirmed that their political relations have been able to open some doors – even if at the same time it may have closed others. István Stumpf's comment that their association with the right wing political ideas may increase their involvement during a government led by such political forces also proved that access to decision-makers advances chances for potential participation in policy deliberation. The Institute of World Economics for its part has been providing policy recommendations since its establishment in 1973 and therefore can be considered to be a constant part of the elite sphere that has easier access to decision-makers. Political Capital has also links with political parties

(HVG 2009). All institutions can therefore claim to be in privileged positions with access to intellectual resources and contacts that in fact make them part of the political elite in a way.

What elite theory cannot account for is the temporary exclusion of certain think tanks from the circle of those with access to the ruling political elite. This is most of all true for the two value-based think tanks, who are easily categorized by decision-makers as ‘friends’ or ‘foes’ (as articulated by Inotai). As pointed out by Inotai as well as others interviewed (Stumpf and Ágoston) even independent think tanks are easily put into political boxes by the Hungarian political elite. The result is that either they are granted access to decision-makers or they are sidelined as well as the policy proposals advanced by them. This cannot be interpreted in terms of elite theory which claims that those with access to resources – be they financial, or intellectual – are part of the elite and in possession of some kind of political power. What happens in Hungary, however, is that even those institutions that form part of the political elite in accordance with elite theory, are not necessarily in possession of political power due to their real or assumed political and ideological orientation.

It is the corporatist framework that can provide explanations for this distinguishing feature of the Hungarian think tanks sphere that neither the elite nor the pluralist theory can explain. The corporatist framework can indeed help to interpret why certain think tanks may be more influential than others. Chapter 1 pointed out that corporatist theory grew out of pluralism with the recognition that some organizations have privileged access to decision-makers. While the original concept of corporatism refers to employer and employee organizations that are granted access in shaping public policy choices, the analogy is nevertheless similar. In the tripartite bargaining procedures, governing bodies unilaterally choose those organizations that

they deem to be the most important and influential thereby sidelining other potential organization and cutting their access to policy-makers.

The lessons of the interviews conducted with think tanks and the decision-maker reveal that the think tank sphere in Hungary seems to conform best to the corporatist frame. The experiences of the two value-based think tanks are the most obvious examples. Due to their ideological considerations and the policy ideas that spring from that, they are either embraced by the ruling elite or rejected. In other words, similarly to the corporatist framework, the government selects those think tanks that it looks upon as partners and involves only them in the policy process, or considers ideas originating from them in the policy deliberation phase. As a result, these think tanks have a quasi-monopolized access to decision-makers. While there are other potential institutes outside of political institutions that may produce useful ideas, they are rather sidelined. Moreover, it has also been pointed out by Inotai, Szabados and the Member of Parliament interviewed that the political elite is in fact only interested in proposals that reinforce their own existing initiatives. This further specifies the selection process that the ruling elite may employ in the selection of those few think tanks that it decides to involve in the policy process. Those that echo existing or planned proposals of policy-makers may enter the inner circle of policy-making, while those that provide criticism are ignored. This selection process of the ruling elite based on the political and ideological categorization of think tanks as well as the conformity of the ideas proposed by them can serve as an explanation for the influence of some think tanks over others in Hungary. It must at the same time be acknowledged that there are exceptions from these generalizations – some of these were also pointed out by the think tanks interviewed. They emphasized some efforts of bipartisan approach to open up the policy-process, nevertheless these still seem to be the exception rather than the rule.

## Conclusion

By analyzing the Hungarian think tank sphere, this thesis has set out to contribute to the ongoing debate about the role and nature of think tanks and how these change when these institutions are operating outside of their natural political environment. Three theoretical frameworks (pluralism, elite theory and corporatism) were put to use to interpret the findings that would be the result of the empirical research conducted for the paper. The lessons that can be drawn from the interviews confirm that without corporatism it would be difficult to explain the way think tanks operate in Hungary today. Each theory has been useful in pointing out certain important features of the Hungarian think tanks sphere that could be backed by the experiences of the case studies analyzed. Most important, however, was the lesson that policy proposals of think tanks do not compete on an equal footing for the attention of decision-makers but rather only a select few are granted access. The basic premise that the existence of think tanks rests upon is that objective analysis can enhance democratic decision-making and foster policy deliberation that is open for many dissenting views. In such a political system the cooperation that exists between think tanks and the political elite describe the open policy process where the incorporation of external input serves democratic debate and transparent decision-making mechanisms. The lessons of the thesis demonstrate that such a state in Hungary is still far from reality. All those interviewed pointed out that the cooperation between think tanks and decision-makers should be enhanced with nearly all agreeing that it will be a long-term task to achieve this in Hungary. Partisan politics and the great cleavage between opposition and ruling forces permit only a few think tanks to enter policy-making circles from outside. Even those few that are granted access are done so based on the presumption that they will not be providing criticism. The idea that think tanks

could provide constructive criticism by offering research results is therefore not sufficiently embraced in Hungary at this point in time.

Acknowledging that there are some promising signs that show diverging examples, think tanks in Hungary in general cannot be equal partners either to each other or to policy-makers. The extent to which the think tanks analyzed were involved in the policy process demonstrates that policy-making practices are far from open and the policy deliberation phase does not routinely involve external actors. This however does not mean that the numerous think tanks operating in Hungary would not be able to fulfill their core activities as think tanks. It simply means that they have to resort to their other core audience, that of the general public, in order to exert leverage from bottom up. This is done by shaping public discourse, educating public opinion on some vital issues of public interest and by exerting pressure on policy-makers through the use of the media. It is precisely these activities of think tanks that could lead to a change in the attitude towards them. By presenting dissenting views and other policy alternatives, they will be able to contribute to an environment that creates the need for more inclusive policy-making. Thus, the creation of new think tanks as well as the acceleration of existing activities should in the long-run contribute to the development of a more open policy process where think tanks have an essential role to play.



## Appendix: A Mapping of Think Tanks in Hungary, 2009

Based on the definition provided in chapter 1, and the categorization provided in chapter 2, below is a typology of institutes that qualify as think tanks in Hungary in 2009.

1. Consultancy /Public Affairs companies /Research institutes
2. Value-based think tanks
3. Academy of Sciences network
4. University affiliated think tanks
5. (Partially) Government sponsored think tanks

### **1. Consultancy / Public Affairs companies / Research institutes**

#### □ *Vision Consulting*

Year of establishment: 2002

Website: <http://www.visionconsulting.hu/>

Mission: The institution deals with political analysis. Vision Consulting sets out to explain the world of politics to its partners.

Focus areas: political agenda, political prognosis and risk analysis

Staff: 5

#### □ *Political Capital*

Year of establishment: 2001

Website: <http://www.politicalcapital.hu/>

Mission: Offers services to political and economic decision-makers and analysts. Their goal is not only to supply information and analyze events, but also to help clients make strategic decisions, diminish the risk of such decisions, and prepare for upcoming socio-political and economic changes.

Focus areas: political trends, political parties, party finance, campaign finance, extremism

Staff: 20

#### □ *Nézőpont Intézet [Perspective Institute]*

Year of establishment: 2006

Website: <http://www.nezopontintezet.hu/>

Mission: The Institute is the union of a for-profit company and a non-profit foundation. It is a market-based closely held polling, analyses and strategic consulting firm.

Focus areas: political analyses, campaign finance

Staff: 6

#### □ *GKI Economic Research Company.*

Year of establishment: 1928 originally, reestablished in 1992

Website: <http://www.gki.hu/hu/>

Mission: GKI delivers independent macroeconomic analyses and forecasts.

Focus areas: economic policy, competitiveness, employment policy, financial analysis, international economy, etc  
Staff: 20

□ *TÁRKI Social Research Institute*

Year of establishment: 1985

Website: <http://www.tarki.hu/>

Mission: TÁRKI is an independent research organization that specialises in policy research in the fields of social policy and the social consequences of economic policies.

Focus areas: social policy, labor market, pensions systems, health care, family policy etc

Staff: 13

□ *Kopint-Tárki Institute for Economic Research Ltd.*

Year of establishment: originally 1964 as Kopint-Datorg, reorganized in 2007

Website: <http://www.kopint-tarki.hu/>

Mission: It aims to fill the gap in the approximation of economic and social research. It defines itself as an independent institute with a critical spirit that wishes to work as a modern institute in close cooperation with social research, producing results of significant quality on both a national and international level.

Focus areas: macroeconomic policy, fiscal and monetary policy, competitiveness, labor market,

Staff: 17

□ *Eötvös Károly Institute*

Year of establishment: 2003

Website: <http://www.ekint.org/>

Mission: The Institute wishes to contribute to raising professional and general public awareness and to shaping the political agenda.

Focus areas: party and campaign finance, education, transparency, human rights protection,

Staff: 3

□ *International Center for Economic Growth, European Center (ICEG)*

Year of establishment: 2002

Website: <http://www.icegec.hu/>

Mission: ICEG is an independent research institute, providing high quality economic research and consultancy services.

Focus areas: macroeconomic developments, economic growth and competitiveness, knowledge-based economy

Staff: 10

□ *Metropolitan Research Institute*

Year of establishment: 1989

Website: <http://www.mri.hu/>

Mission: The Institute undertakes research and consultancy assignments, organizes conferences and designs and provides training.

Focus areas: housing policy, urban development, local government finance research

Staff: 11

## **2. Value-based Think Tanks**

### **□ Századvég Foundation**

Year of establishment: 1993

Website: <http://www.szazadveg.hu/>

Mission: Századvég sets out to shape public discourse, provide objective analysis and research, and the dissemination thereof.

Focus areas: voting behavior, party preferences, governance, civil society, and youth policy.

Staff: 25

### **□ Demos Hungary Foundation**

Year of establishment: 2005

Website: <http://www.demos.hu/>

Mission: The goal of DEMOS is to act as a bridge between academia and political decision-makers, developing new policy solutions that meet the social, economic and political requirements of our age. Demos owns another institute, *Progressive Institute*, that delivers political strategy and communication consultancy services and also sets out to contribute to the debate on public policy. Website: <http://www.progresszivintezet.hu/>

Focus areas: social policy, budgetary planning, health policy, urban planning in Budapest, foreign policy

Staff: 7

### **□ Republikon Institute**

Year of establishment: 2009?

Website: <http://intezet.republikon.hu/>

Mission: Republikon is independent institute based on liberal values. It provides political analyses, consultancy and political communication services.

Focus areas: economic policy, cultural policy, foreign policy

Staff: 4

## **3. Academy of Sciences Network**

### **□ Institute for World Economics**

Year of establishment: 1973

Website: <http://www.vki.hu/>

Mission: The Institute carries out research and formulates policy recommendations about the underlying trends and factors behind global and regional economic developments.

Focus areas: global economic transformation, development, European integration

Staff: 30

### **□ Institute of Economics**

Year of establishment: n/a

Website: <http://www.econ.core.hu/>

Mission: It focuses increasingly on the analysis of the contemporary market economy and the transformation of the Hungarian economy.

Focus areas: globalization, EU integration, convergence, macroeconomics and growth, labor market,

Staff: n/a

□ *Institute for Political Science*

Year of establishment: n/a

Website: <http://www.mtapti.hu/>

Mission: The institute conducts theoretical, empirical and comparative research primarily in the field of political science, and to a considerable extent in the field of related social sciences as well.

Focus areas: Hungarian policy making related to EU integration

Staff: n/a

#### **4. University affiliated**

□ *Center for Policy Studies (CPS), Central European University*

Year of establishment: 2000

Mission: CPS aims to advance teaching of public policy in the CEE and CIS region and to promote greater use of social science research in policy making.

Focus areas: good governance, social diversity and equal opportunities, European integration and policy making, rural development, social capital, poverty research initiative

Staff: 20

□ *Institute of Strategic Defense, Miklós Zrínyi National Defense University*

Year of establishment: 1992

Website: [www.svki.zmne.hu/](http://www.svki.zmne.hu/)

Mission: In order to help prepare security and defense policy decisions in Hungary, the institute conducts research and analysis and disseminates its publications.

Focus areas: European security and defense architecture, Central and Eastern European security

Staff: 20

□ *Regional Centre for Energy Policy Research (REKK), Corvinus University*

Year of establishment: 2004

Website: <http://www.rekk.eu/>

Mission: The aim of the REKK is to provide professional analysis and advice on networked energy markets. REKK performs comprehensive research, consulting and teaching.

Focus areas: electricity, gas and carbon-dioxide markets

Staff: 16

#### **5. (Partially) Government sponsored think tanks**

□ *Hungarian Institute of International Affairs*

Year of establishment: 1972

Website: <http://www.kulugyiintezet.hu/>

Mission: The institute aims to develop a consistent foreign policy whilst encouraging free and open debate about it so as to broaden the views and understanding of decision makers, scholars and other interested parties.

Focus areas: foreign policy

Staff: 17

□ *International Centre for Democratic Transition*

Year of establishment: 2005

Website: <http://www.icdt.hu/>

Mission: ICDT collects the experiences of recent democratic transitions and shares them with those who are determined to follow that same path.

Focus areas: democratic transition

Staff: 18

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