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Brazilian think tanks and their search for identity and recognition[1]

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ABSTRACT

In Brazil, the study of think tanks is still at its beginning, even if this is far from being a new object of research worldwide, mainly in the United States. No matter if it relates to the nature of this kind of institution *per se*, or to the way think tanks were received in Brazil, the truth is that there are just a few relevant works about this theme. The aim of this paper is to contribute to fill this gap in, mapping the most visible Brazilian think tanks, and also trying to reach a definition more adequate to Brazilian political culture reality. Therefore, I could argue that the growth of this South American country in international scene, as well as of its responsibilities, and the incipient knowledge about these institutes and its power of agency are reasons strong enough to justify this paper. The author was also inspired by the assumption that think tanks can play a pivotal role in Brazilian policy making. This means I consider them as a possible meaningful category of political institutions. To address this issue, I intend to interview key people, among which prestigious scholars in Political Science and International Relations fields, diplomats, and directors of some already recognized Brazilian think tanks. As a result of this work, we expect to help to broaden the understanding of these institutes in Brazilian political and Academic mainstream.

Key-words: Brazilian think tanks – research institutes – foundations – politics.

Introduction

Brazil has only recently started to study think tanks (TTs[1]), in a more detailed way, as an institutional model and as an important means in elaborating, discussing and monitoring public policies. An indication of the rise of interest in the country for this type of study center – who they are, what they do and what are their goals – can be noticed in the increasing number of papers and essays about them and in the expanding debate locus of this topic. Both at the academic and political levels, and also in the press (Barcellos, 2006; Sá, 2011), think tanks, especially North American ones, have been, increasingly, targets for curiosity and attention. As Williams Gonçalves, Professor of International Relations from Uerj, affirms "these institutes are not new. The change came from the theoretical discussion about their actions. That's what has awakened the need to discuss the knowledge and the ideas that they generate."[2]

The first challenge was to verify their existence in the country, and then, to start thinking about conceptualizing a Brazilian model. It was decided we were going to embrace the analysis found in the academic literature, both Brazilian and foreign, together with the empirical observation and with the respondents' perceptions, in their diverse universe. Reactions to think tanks (in a broad manner and in Brazil) cover an ample scale in the interviews: it starts with lots of doubts related to their growth, expansion and relevance to the country, as well as a distrust in regard to their ideological profile, and ends with the certainty that they are essential to any democratic system and the enthusiasm with their possible actions, their results and positive contributions to the political scene.

The next challenge was discovering institutional specifications to try to draw a line into what could be a Brazilian think tank. Professor Manuel Domingos Neto[3], from Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), alerts that "it isn't part of the proceedings to transpose processes, practices and renowned institutions in some countries to other countries of very different culture, dimensions and political processes. But, obviously, it is possible to find nuclei of intellectuals in Brazil that are able to achieve a level of influence on some important government decisions."

This way, in Brazil, where little is still known about them, the lack of conceptual clarity makes it easier for an improper use of the term, whether intentional or not, and makes it more difficult to identify and categorize them. Until the present moment, this

concept seems to be accepted by the institutions as something essentially positive, something that often leads to self-titling due to marketing goals.

The study of think tanks in the country (be them Brazilian or not) is still restricted to a specific niche, with work targeted to category analysis and specific fields, as the ones in International Affairs. We can mention as examples the Institutos Liberais (IL), studied by Gross (2004 and 2003); the applied economics institutes, researched by Durand (1997); the ones related to Foreign Policy, such as the Centro Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais (Cebri) and the Instituto de Estudos do Comércio e Negociações Internacionais (Icone), studied by Soares (2011); or those that deal with what we are going to call think tank *clusters*, what Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV), researched by Lima (2010), seems to be.

Do Brazilian think tanks have specific characteristics? What are the obstacles to their growth? Please note that, despite of the United States reference, this is not a comparative study. How can they legally fit in Brazilian legislature if there is not a word in Portuguese to describe them? Are they restricted to the Third Sector? These are some of the questions we will try to answer. As hypotheses, we suggest:

1) The occurrence of a type of “government protection”, as the government was the first to propel and induce what would be known as Brazilian think tanks and that research in Brazil is still, essentially, a government investment;

2) The fact that the Brazilian State and foreign foundations, such as the Ford Foundation, have been the major promoters and financiers of the birth of Brazilian think tanks, has been a strong determining factor to their identity and to how they operate;

3) In Brazil, think tanks are not only quasi-governmental organizations (like the social organizations/OS, in the acronym in Portuguese, and the civil society organizations for public interest/OSCIPs, in the acronym in Portuguese), encompassing also autonomous government agencies and public foundations;

4) The existence of think tank *clusters*, notably major Brazilian universities and learning institutions, with their research nuclei and centers;

5) The existence of hybrid think tanks, such as foundations (be them affiliated with political parties or not) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of renowned competence that work trying to spread or influence a specific political agenda.

This article's importance lies on the little inside knowledge about these institutes and their power as an agency, where they work, as well as the little transparency (both theoretical and practical) among the nature and the work of those think tanks and the one from other non-governmental organizations, universities, or lobbyist groups as well as pressure groups. When we think about think tanks in Brazil, there is an almost instant connection to the Foreign Policy and Economic areas, which leads to the oblivion, or reduces the importance, of activities that happen in other areas that comply with the country's public policies, such as health and education.

This research is also relevant, if we take into account what has been happening in Brazil: an evolving democratic society and all the factors that make the *status quo* possible have been strengthened (such as public hearings in the Congresso Nacional [Congress], or the influence of participative forums) and an increased positioning in the international market. Until recently, there was a lack in the Brazilian academic field, of papers in Portuguese about TTs, both in a general sense, and also about Brazilian TTs, and the increased discussions about that, are a sign of Brazilian society's gradual evolution and progress.

This process cannot be separated from the accelerated Westernization (Americanization) that has been going on internationally ever since the end of the Cold War. As professor Cesar Guimarães (Uerj)[4], one of the founders of the former Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas do Rio de Janeiro (Iuperj), says:

"this proliferation has a lot to do with the increased importance given to scientific knowledge, Social Sciences and such, taking into account how fast those can be put in practice […] The commercialization of science […] is very fast. Very frequently, studies centers start being called think tanks. […] The world is globalized. Certain things, certain institutions, almost work by copying others. […] It is pretty obvious there will be an increase in the numbers of think tank*s* both in Brazil and in other countries. […] I believe think tanks will be here permanently, as another kind of activity. And, again, despite the challenges we face to define them."

Therefore, we believe the present work is important for two reasons.

To most Brazilian academics and politicians, understanding the dynamics of think tanks can contribute to optimizing the national political process; establishing more effective channels to converse between academics, politicians and specialists from those institutions, benefiting civil society; intensifying an exchange of ideas between them; and improving their capacity to solve problems or to being one step ahead of them, which

would lower political and economical costs that are usually unwelcomed. To those that study the worldwide evolution of think tanks and to those that are interested in Brazil, understanding how their significance was adapted to the country is of utmost importance to understand Brazilian history and its institutions.

Taking into account that there is no agreement about what exactly a think tank is, even in those countries where they have already been established as institutions, and the fact that this concept is constantly being challenged (Acuña, 2009; McGann, 2011; Medvetz, 2008), we don't expect to find a consensus with this article. Mainly, we hope to contribute to a broader image of its existence in Brazil.

Methodology

This is an exploratory and qualitative research, of a descriptive nature, non prescriptive, that was done based on a bibliographical review, document analysis, institutions' websites analysis and a survey with semi-open questions (via e-mail), which was also used as a guide for semi-structured interviews (in person or via telephone). The selection of institutes was done according to specific literature – especially a ranking put together by McGann (2012), with its 81 Brazilian TTs, and the Rosa-Soares's Master thesis (2009), with 20 TTs – and by the answers obtained on the interviews, that spontaneously mentioned about 100 supposed TTs[5]. During this phase of the work, our major difficulty was hearing back from probable respondents, something that reduced our sample representation.

We have sent 258 e-mails, 40 have not been replied, 20 were rejected (due to lack of subject knowledge, interest or time); 149 respondents have agreed to take part in the survey; and 99 have effectively replied. This way, 99 specialists were interviewed, among academics, inspirational authors of Brazilian social thinking, diplomats, former ministers, Brazilianists and think tank members (with the intersection of papers in many cases), giving us the following profile:

1) *work area*: Human Sciences (Political Science/International Affairs and History) and Applied Social Sciences (Economics and Communication); **2)** *titles*: Master, Ph.D., post-doctorate; **3)** *present professional-academic affiliation*: Johns Hopkins University, University of California (San Diego), Al Akhawayn University (Ifrane) and others from major Brazilian universities; **4)** *other affiliations*: Itamaraty, Ipea, Fundação Lemann and other institutes mentioned in this paper.

We propose to list the major differences in institutional handling between TTs and other usual factors in the political system such as distinguishing factors of the Brazilian and the American social political *ethos*. We will also try to systematize its institutional specificities, followed by the description of the most relevant challenges and tendencies that are being projected to those public policy research and analysis institutes in Brazil.

USA x Brazil

Whenever you talk about a think tank
it is similar to someone inquiring
about a samba school in the United States.
You will eventually find one or something similar
– Professor Carlos Milani (Uerj)[6]

In the same way Policy Analysis' studies have started in central nations, especially in the United States, and have become a paradigm to the academic debate in other countries, the same can be said about think tanks. To some respondents, it is essential to look at the American model to understand this type of institution in Brazil. "In order to be identical [to the American think tanks], it would need to have the same characteristics", stressed Professor Carlos Milani, in the same interview from the quote above. After all, "[…] think tanks are an American invention, and their development is largely an American phenomenon" (McGann, 2011:35).

To the majority of respondents (78.79%), think tanks are already a type of institution that is part of the Brazilian life (please see **Graph 1**), with answers varying from "yes, certainly" to "a few", "rudimentary", "beginners", or "on a really 'watered down' way", as political scientist Fábio Wanderley Reis[7], Professor Emeritus of Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFMG), has declared. In his opinion, "there are no ambitious research goals". Or, as Fundação Casa Ruy Barbosa's president and Political Science Professor, Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos states[8], "yes, some – few in comparison to the importance and complexity of their agenda and the size of the country and its academic community."

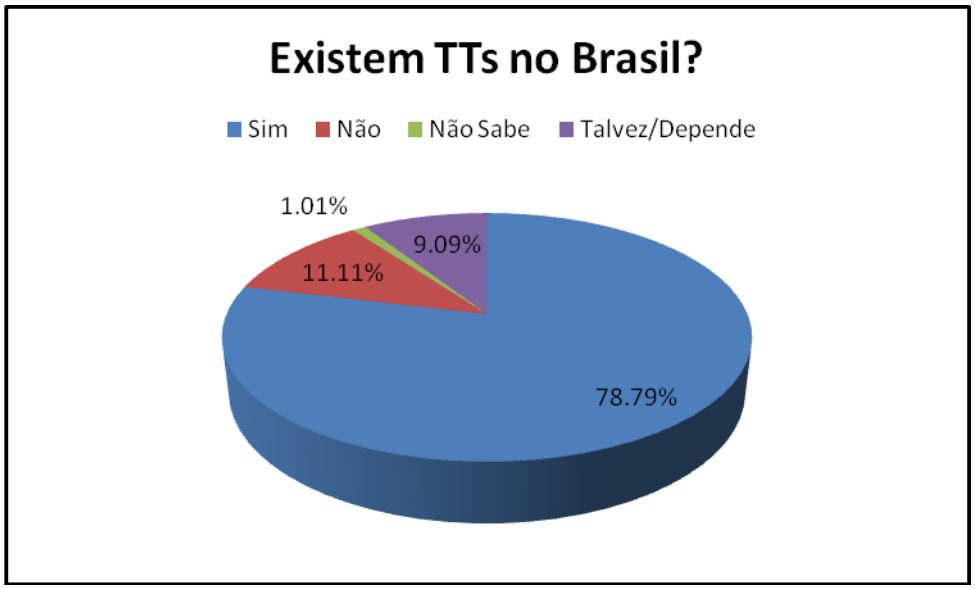
Many believe it is impossible to talk about think tanks in Brazil in the American sense (*stricto sensu*), but as Strategic Studies Professor, Thiago Rodrigues[9] (UFF), has stated "there are similarities but they're still essentially different." In reality, the answer to this question is closely related to the definition that might be adopted to describe a TT.

Nowadays, these public policies research and analysis institutes that have been originated in the Anglo-Saxon political scene are everywhere. The way they adapt to

different social-political contexts only makes them harder to be studied. In this sense, it is considered that, in order to understand the nature of an institution, it is necessary to understand the type of institutional environment that institution is situated on and the respective political environment profile.

Until now, the United States has been the country with the largest number of favorable conditions, ideal and simultaneous to the growth and survival of TTs. Among the reasons already studied (McGann, 2005; Teixeira, 2007), we could mention the large number of institutions with a power to influence things, with a checks and balances system incredibly responsive to external factors; a strong civil volunteerism, with help and financial contributions from individuals and corporations to those institutions; a tax system that favors and encourages donations from the private sector; independence and constant exchange between the academic and the political communities; and a strong government interest in research and development.

Graph 1 – Think tanks in Brazil



In the United States, think tanks have strengthen their position especially due to the need to better understand the country's role in the world and the world itself, specifically, in the post 1945 period, with a focus on high politics. In Brazil, think tanks still focus on thinking much more about the country itself and, trying to find their own model, one that can deal with the challenges the American one doesn't face. In Brazil, it is unusual to see large fortunes being donated to research organizations, which just makes financing even harder. In the United States, not only this is a common occurrence, as it is part of the

origin of those institutions. They can count on donations from individuals and corporations to help them operate and/or to help with individual and short-term projects. Therefore, in Brazil, these institutions have a small staff, small structure, modest budgets, and more specialized (as opposed to generalized) institutes.

According to International Affairs Professor Sebastião Velasco e Cruz[10] (Unicamp), "the system that finances social research in Brazil is essentially a public one and that makes it difficult to compensate researchers financially." Simon Schwartzman[11], researcher from the Instituto do Estudo do Trabalho e Sociedade (Iets), makes the same observation: "The main issue is financial survival. Brazil does not have a strong tradition of private philantrophy benefiting research institutions, and those institutions depende on that to get research contracts and projects."

Also, if we were to compare them, Brazilian think tanks don't have a 'holding tank' characteristic, or one of incubators, as in the US (Teixeira, 2007). Whenever a high ranking government official leaves his/her post in Brazil, that official usually heads to the private sector, as a consultant, takes back his/hers old job at an university (most of the times, a public/government funded one), or runs for elections.

As it is seen in the classic literature about this subject, independence from the government and the political parties is mentioned as an important factor to show how these institutes operate, something that has been rendered not so important in the most recent papers about think tanks. But even in the United States, talking about a 'pure think tank', an expression used by Professor Scott Desposato[12], seems to render their reality too simple. One of this subject's most prolific authors, McGann (2011:17 and 22), updates the debate about autonomy and independence:

> In other parts of the world, sponsorship by a government ministry is a legal necessity for a think tank to exist […] in regions where resources for policy research are extremely scarce, for-profit linkages to university or contracting relationships with the private sector may be the only way to cover a research institute's core personnel and facilities costs. **A middle course in defining think tanks therefore makes the most sense** [author's choice]. Think tanks are policy research organizations that have significant autonomy from government and, by inference, from the corporate world as well. But autonomy is a relative rather than an absolute term. […] their main interest is not profit but influence, defined according to the agenda of the particular institution […] These ideal think tanks have served as models for new organizations being established or points of departure for existing institutions that wanted to reinvent themselves. But most think tanks do not fit neatly into any one category, and the distinctions among them are becoming increasingly blurred.

We just need to think about Rand Corporation's beginning, Center for American Progress's ties with the Democratic Party, or Heritage Foundation's ties with the Republican Party, to realize we cannot discard the importance that this type of connection and political placement have. Other North American examples of these connections, as mentioned by Medvetz (2008), and that contribute to reinforce the need for a conceptual remodeling, are the Urban Institute (with ties to a government agency), the Hoover Institution (with ties to a university) and the Progressive Policy Institute (it does research for the Democratic Party).

In a way, North American think tanks have a political and/or ideological basis, and the same happens in Brazil, as many take political sides. According to Professor Ricardo Bielschowsky[13] of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and economist to the Comissão para a América Latina e o Caribe (Cepal), "in a broad sense, they have a thinking place, like a computer hard drive. There are its own characteristics to be extracted from that place, to be taken to and placed in the government to help make and shape policies […] Some institutions have a theoretical mark […] Think tanks are known because they have a strong opinion about something."

Not to mention it would be impossible to completely define the institutional frontiers between think tanks and other types of organizations for academic research[14] and for advocacy. In Brazil, this frontier between foundations, NGOs, *think tanks*, universities and consulting firms is very fragile, which allows, in many cases, the existence of hybrid institutions. The concrete proof of such mixed definition is that, in many examples of institutions mentioned by the respondents, there is a disagreement and/or doubt whether or not they are think tanks – as it is the case of FGV and Ipea.

In order to minimize these distortions, Professor Cesar Guimarães[15] suggests that "it is good to look for a less flexible characterization, otherwise any institution that is called an institute or a center will become [a think tank]. And I think this is happening a bit when it comes to how this term is used […] I believe this is due to the mobile frontier among some think tanks and advocacy groups, lobbies… They are all very flexible. Think tanks have started to think of themselves as such, or whoever studies them has started to list them as such because this definition is in the spotlight right now."

According to Professor Sebastião Velasco e Cruz[16], "the term think tank is used to define very different types of organizations – different in size, in the kind of relationship they have with the government and the world of politics, and in the way they operate [...] this universe has mobile and porous frontiers with the world of academic institutions, of

political parties' organizations." And this is the case of Instituto Pólis, of Ibase and of Iets (NGO/think tank); of Cindes, Cebri and Caeni (consulting/think tank); of Ipea (government agency/think tank); or of FGV (think tank/learning, consulting institution). Another big misunderstanding is that, in Brazil, the idea of a Third sector has become very wide, taking in the most diverse terms and means of operation.

Think tanks in Brazil

The label is charged with social consequence.
– Medvetz (2008:2).

Less than ten years ago, Chacel (2005:567) has realized that "the think tank concept is alien to Brazilians". Nowadays, even though a broader debate about this is not common[17] and few researchers take their time to study this, the concept is not so obscure. After the disclosure of the last edition of McGann's (2012) annual ranking, at least six Brazilian institutions (BPC, Cebrap, Cebri, Cindes, FGV and iFHC) have publicized the news on their websites and/or by sending e-mails to their target public (the academic community, partners and contributing members) and celebrated their positions in the ranking.

The deliberate and conscious inspiration in the North American model (as it is Cebri and Cindes' case) is a fairly recent phenomenon – approximately from the 1990-2000 years and after. The reality in Brazil is that we start to think and debate about TTs in a world that already is very different from when they were created. Having this in mind, we like to reaffirm that the main goal of this article is to offer a general reference to these institutes, not to offer ideas on how they should operate.

As the president of the Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (Ipea), one of the institutions most mentioned as a Brazilian *think tank*, Marcio Pochmann[18], affirms: "in Brazil, even though the term *think tank* is used frequently in an informal way, it neither has an official definition nor a legal concept. Furthermore, there is nothing similar in Brazil to a traditional North American *think tank*'s operation. The most specialist and academic ones in Brazil are linked to universities, the media, political parties or NGOs."

In search of a definition

To be consistent with this article's purpose, we consider that, in Brazil, the idea of a TT is more linked to its performance and the work it develops than to its legal framework, or to a specific definition, rendering essential its concept's constant flexibility. Although it is

not exactly relevant, that conceptual independence can lead us to question if, due to its existence, we will have a new type of institution or one that is slightly different from the original. But the reality is that, legally, there is not only one possible way to define them.

Even though, we take into account a few basic criteria to identify them (please see **Chart 1** with respondents' answers): not an *ad hoc* group; being a collective actor; updated works; presence in literature, media and/or being mentioned by respondents; does research, promote events, such as seminars and *workshops*; have publications, varied sources of income; and intervene in the public agenda and debate.

There are also many differences in the public policy areas (health, security, social, etc) these institutes chose to work on and a history of non-governmental organizations' intervention on each of these areas.

For instance, in the area of foreign policy, Itamaraty's high level and professionalism have discouraged the creation of truly active think tanks. Although this area has many institutes, their profile is more of a consulting institute than just that of a think tank. But, nowadays, with the change in Brazil's international positioning, with more responsibilities and demands, and facing the depth of current issues and the need for a more technical knowledge in the international forums and organizations, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO); it will be necessary to resort even more to think tanks.

That is what Maria Regina Soares de Lima[19], coordinator of the Observatório Político Sul-Americano (Opsa) and professor of International Affairs of Uerj, suggests:

"I know that health policy traditionally has the participation of the civil society in many ways. Foreign policy does not. It is more interesting […] to think about what public policies are and how the debate about them starts. […] Each area will have a different dynamic […] be it in the making of the policy, be in the debate about its international plan, this is what you increasingly need, a technical basis to the public policy debate […] Increasingly, these policies have a technical element, an element of knowledge. The government, in its most comprehensive way, many times does not have a way to supply [this technical knowledge]."

Rosa Soares (2009) suggests that 'organizações de pesquisa e aconselhamento em políticas públicas' (public policies research and counseling institutions) should substitute the use of the term *think tank* in Portuguese. Clearly, the proposal for a term in Portuguese to the *think tank* concept represents an increase in the study and interest in such a thing in Brazil. But, if we take into account that semantics really matter, wouldn't it be better to keep the name in English? If a Brazilian institution calls itself a *think tank*, does

that mean it sees the need to adapt to an international standard and that it is claiming it does something others don't? Wouldn't keeping the name in English (and not think about translating it) mean something? After all, does being a think tank mean being an institution with a global profile? Will the future of those institutions be walking towards a standard in the same way knowledge and know-how are related to politics and how they make a connection between the society and the government? These are, possibly, secondary concerns to our present work and quite useful to reflect on.

Chart 1 – Definitions for Think Tanks

Most mentioned characteristics	Times mentioned*
Thinking, research and knowledge production center	55
Influence in political decisions	33
Specialization/specific subject study	17
Politically conscious institution/ideological bias	17
Independent research	14
Place for debates	13
High level/expertise research	13
Independent from the government	10
Researchers community/policy experts	10
Applied research/instrumental characteristics	9
Non-profit organizations	8
Fixed researchers and staff	8
Public-private financing	8
Bridge between society, the Academic world, government and corporations	7
US born Organizations	7
Affiliated to political parties/governments/interest groups/corporations	6
Public-private Institutions	5
Consulting	5
Make/provide agendas for political parties and the government	5
Clear orientation for a specific clientele	5
Develop political projects for institutions, parties and the states	5
Comes up with ideas	5
Virtual community	5
Produces, systemizes and makes specific knowledge widely known	5

* Number of mentions among 99 respondents.
Each respondent could mention more than one item. Analysis based on the interviews.
** Other 53 characteristics have been mentioned between 1-4 times

In a didactic way, the categories mentioned in this article are related to the ones mentioned by McGann (2011:23):

1) *Independent and autonomous* – organization of public policies with significant independence from any interest group, or donor, and autonomous in the way it operates and in its government financing;

2) *Semi-independent* – autonomous from the government, but controlled by an interest group, donor or financing agency, which provides a large part of its funding and has a significant influence over the TTs' operation;

3) *Affiliated to a university* – a research center in a university;

4) *Affiliated to political parties* – formally affiliated to a political party;

5) *Affiliated to the government (federal, state or city)* – part of the government infra structure;

6) *Semi-governmental* – runs exclusively with government funds and contracts, but it is not part of the government's formal infra structure; and

7) *For profit* – runs as a for profit business.

We add to this list the category of *think tank clusters*, to refer to institutions that have think tanks like universities (USP, FGV, PUC, Unicamp and UFRJ), potential clusters, with their diverse study nuclei and research centers (although not all of them have an effective visibility and relevance). Celso Castro[20], the director of the Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil (CPDOC-FGV), explains why he considers FGV a TT. Even though, to him, it is a rather a flexible than a permanent attribute:

"We make a connection between knowledge and how to put that in practice. Now, the Fundação is different because it produces knowledge, it doesn't simply deal with existing knowledge. Fundação is incredibly *sui generis*, if compared to other *think tanks* that I know […] because of this. It is not a university, because it doesn't have the structure of one. It is way too complex. It is an institution for higher learning, but it is not a university […] Maybe a *think tank* is less of an institution, an organization, than of an operational practice. Is that what Fundação represents? Yes. And sometimes it isn't. You have operational facets that have nothing to do with what a think tank does. And you cannot identify a morphologically placed group, 'this is the think tank'. It's the way they operate."

Another valid category to think about in Brazil, is the vanity/legacy think tanks (Abelson, 2006), affiliated, most of all, to political authorities, like former presidents. In the

United States, it is usual for former presidents and secretaries (of State, for instance) to make their collection available for the construction of libraries in universities, like the one of Herbert Hoover, made available by Stanford University. As time goes by, these libraries become public policies study and research centers.

It has also become more usual that presidents themselves establish these libraries, especially after the 1980 decade. Some of them have obtained success and public opinion support when they were at the White House. Others, many times due to the necessary and imperative constraints of power, or by unfavorable domestic or international circumstances are remembered only by what they were not capable of doing. Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon are good examples.

Formal or informal, structural or circumstantial, the fact is that these limitations can lead to a restricted showing of such values, and even of their reformulation. This way, these think tanks also acquire the functionality of filling this gap. It is also a search to avoid being forgotten, the same way those presidents want to be remembered in History, what leads to trying to focus on their victories and the positive aspects of their administrations, or to make other achievements to eclipse past failures.

The Instituto Lula (Instituto Cidadania's substitute) and the Instituto Fernando Henrique Cardoso (iFHC) can be thought of as Brazilian examples of this category. In this case, we recommend caution to avoid the risks of an excess of the debate's politicization and ideology and that we pay extra attention to avoid seeing these institutes become electoral stages, or representatives of a party agenda and of private interests.

"We worry about the public relevance of what we do, but we don't have the goal to 'mark our territory' and directly influence the making of policies", has declared to the author one of the respondents of the iFHC that has asked not to be identified. In Instituto Lula's case, internally, it seems this identity is still being shaped, as one of its members, Brazilian ex-minister of Human Rights, Paulo Vannuchi, reports: "The recent established Instituto Lula has been already structured in some areas, and three of those certainly have characteristics of what is usually called a Think Tank. They are Iniciativa América Latina, Iniciativa África and Memorial da Democracia."

Challenges

According to the respondents, the most important problem to overcome is financial[21], and that is directly linked to the challenge of having enough funds to pay high profile researchers to work on long term projects and to ensure the survival of those

institutions. “There is the obvious problem of lack of funding. The private sector sees little significance in think tanks (they prefer simple and straightforward lobbying). International foundations nowadays only fund projects and not the fixed costs,” has affirmed one of the respondents, asking not to be identified. Among other challenges mentioned and that are directly related, we could point the precarious Brazilian educational level and the lack of good researchers.

Chart 2 – Bigger challenges?

Challenges	Times mentioned*
Do not know/Did not answer	6
Lack of resources/lack of financing interest	49
Lack of interest from politicians	13
Lack of a philanthropic tradition/political entrepreneurs/sponsors	13
Lack of support/civil society interest	10
Have/Keep independence	9
Have/Keep autonomy	8
Strong government financial support	8
Conceptual challenge (wider knowledge of its meaning and how it is different from NGOs, lobbies, consulting and academic organizations)	7
Patrimonialism	7
Society’s lack of organizational skills	6
Lack of critical thinking	6
Institutional and democratic immaturity	5
Government lack of long term projects	5
Big influence of government’s technical red tape in research	5
Brazilian population educational level	5

* Number of individual mentions among 99 respondents.
Each respondent could mention more than one item. Analysis based on the interviews.
** Other 72 topics were mentioned 1-4 times.

Many institutes studied by the author (please see notes) already consider themselves think tanks even if they are not. In those cases, there is a need to gather a larger number of cumulative elements among those mentioned in this chapter, in a way to gather all that is expressed in North and Latin American literatures and in the interviews. To some, there is a lack of strength in their analysis, or relevance and visibility; to others, activities or continuous work flow.

In a broad sense, Brazilian think tanks still speak too much to themselves and to their peers. Except when it comes to agencies that belong to the government itself, like

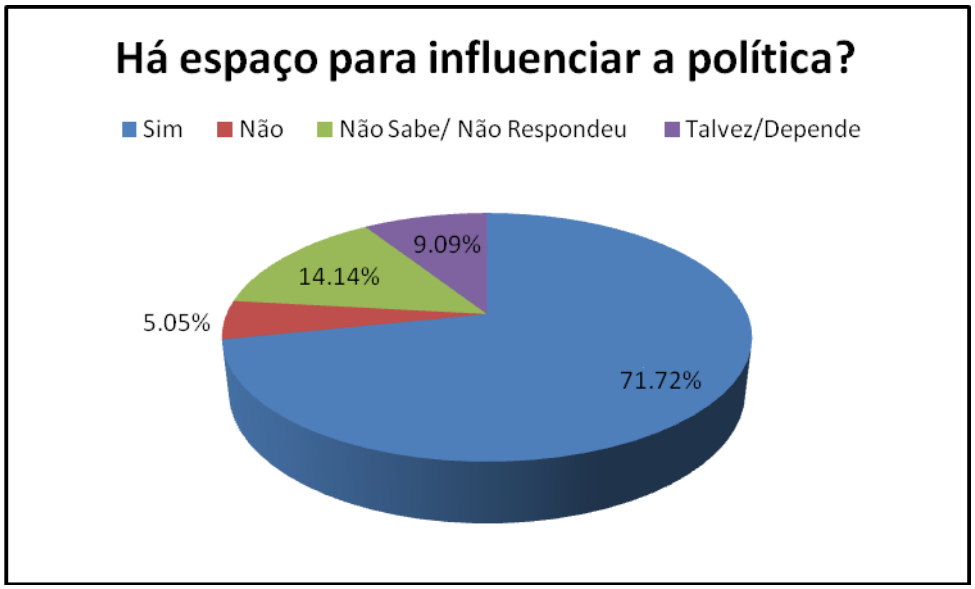
Ipea, there is a less pronounced interaction with the government, and they function more as an information maker, a debate place and a data and analysis supplier. “They timidly intervene in the public debate and the media – in general, by their members’ individual opinions, and not by institutional diagnostics” (Sá, 2011).

According to the editor of Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional (RBPI), Paulo Roberto de Almeida[22], “[...] there isn’t a big tradition of ‘osmosis’ among government institutions and independent research organizations, even though some government agencies are exclusively corporative, not allowing anyone that has not been admitted through extensive testing, or through political influence to hold positions there, even temporary ones. In the United States, and in a lesser extent in Europe, the mutual influence of individual specialists and of public functions in the government apparatus is more common.”

There is not yet a habit of consulting *think tanks* (except in cases like Ipea, which is a public foundation), or a direct, wide and frequent influence on the different phases of public policies’ cycles, which are: 1) problem identification; 2) agenda setting; 3) thinking about alternate options; 4) decision making; 5) implementation of ideas; 6) evaluation; 7) monitoring; 8) elimination of the problem.

The majority of respondents believe, however, that it is possible for these institutes to intervene in a more significant way in the public life (please see Graph 2).

Graph 2 – Political influence



Final remarks

Just because some concept is still unknown to us, it doesn't mean the phenomenon isn't already in action, or in the middle of being put together. But, it might still not be possible, in Brazil, to think about an ideal type of think tank. A change in concept is still a work in progress. That is why we suggest a more hybrid concept than the North American one. Actually, in the interviews we have conducted, we have found a big convergence in analyzing what is a TT. But this consensus disappears when we talk about Brazilian TTs and the nature of these institutions.

The reactions we have gotten to TTs cover a wide spectrum: they begin very pessimistic toward their growth and relevance in the country, together with a sense of distrust toward their ideological profile, and end with a certainty that they are essential to every democratic system and with a sense of hope toward how they can work and contribute positively to the political scene.

That means orthodox definitions are still insufficient to understand this phenomenon in Brazil and, at least for the time being, their legal placement is still not relevant. As the director of the Instituto Brasileiro de Estudos de China e Ásia-Pacíficio (Ibecap), Severino Cabral[23], has suggested, understanding their institutional essence is more useful than simply trying to put them in a category.

Apparently, in Brazil, being a think tank is a positive qualification if seen under the perspective of the institutes, but seen not so positively from some scholars in academic community. Also, there is a high level of criticism concerning Brazilian political debate and the resistance to some historical elements of Brazilian political culture, related to the political grammars written by Nunes (2003).

As it has happened in the United States, our institutes have started to adapt to the public agenda, incorporating important subjects to our government and people, like the creation of a national identity, our development, the privatization of companies and, more recently, the social policies and Brazil's world positioning. We believe the subjects these TTs study will become, over time, more flexible and more mobile – as Pedro da Motta Veiga[24], director of the Centro de Estudos de Integração e Desenvolvimento, has affirmed, referring to Cindes's focus and growing work interest.

We also expect to see a more internationalized institutional profile, due to the growth in exchange and partnerships with foreign institutions, be it to obtain resources, or to exchange ideas and experiences. We also are going toward having more personalized (based on presidents, politicians and other public personas) and specialized institutes.

Among the challenges faced, we can cite overcoming a historical standard and establishing network development (national and foreign), as a way to soften the impact due to lack of financing.

As this term gets more importance in the Brazilian academic vocabulary, there is an expectation that this kind of work will bring more transparency to the debate about this very particular type of organization and the way it operates as one of civil society's puzzle pieces, but also as a possibly renewed and important part of the Brazilian political system.

Finally, we conclude that researching the evolution and growth of a new type of institution in Brazil also means observing a country that has been thinking of and debating about itself and its place in the world a lot.

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APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF ACRONYMS

BNB	Banco do Nordeste do Brasil
BPC	Brics Policy Center
CEF	Caixa Econômica Federal
CEBES	Centro Brasileiro de Estudos de Saúde (Fiocruz)
CEBRAP	Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento
CEBRI	Centro Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais
CEDEC	Centro de Estudos de Cultura Contemporânea
CEPON	Centro de Pesquisas Oncológicas
CEPESC	Centro de Estudos e Pesquisa em Saúde Coletiva (IMS/Uerj)
CICEF	Centro Internacional Celso Furtado de Políticas para o Desenvolvimento
CINDES	Centro de Estudos de Integração e Desenvolvimento
C&T	ciência e tecnologia
CNPq	Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico
DIEESE	Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e Estudos Socioeconômicos
EESP	Escola de Economia de São Paulo (FGV-SP)
ESG	Escola Superior de Guerra
FGV	Fundação Getúlio Vargas
FINEP	Financiadora de Estudos e Projetos
FUNAG	Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão
FUNCEX	Fundação Centro de Estudos do Comércio Exterior
FIOCRUZ	Fundação Oswaldo Cruz
FPA	Fundação Perseu Abramo
HEMOSC	Centro de Hematologia e Hemoterapia de Santa Catarina
IBASE	Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas
IBRI	Instituto Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais
IE	Instituto de Economia
IEA	Instituto de Estudos Avançados
ICONE	Instituto de Estudos do Comércio e Negociações Internacionais
IEDI	Instituto de Estudos para o Desenvolvimento Industrial
IETS	Instituto de Estudos do Trabalho e Sociedade
iFHC	Instituto Fernando Henrique Cardoso
IMS	Instituto de Medicina Social
IPEA	Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada
IPRI	Instituto de Pesquisa de Relações Internacionais
IRI	Instituto de Relações Internacionais
ISEB	Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros
IUPERJ	Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas do Rio de Janeiro
ONG	organização não-governamental
OS	organização social
OSCIP	organização da sociedade civil de interesse público
PP	políticas públicas
PUC-Rio	Pontifícia Universidade Católica-Rio

TT	think tank
UFF	Universidade Federal Fluminense
UFJF	Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora
UFPel	Universidade Federal de Pelotas
UFRJ	Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro
UnB	Universidade de Brasília
UNICAMP	Universidade Estadual de Campinas
USP	Universidade de São Paulo

[1] For acronyms, please see *Appendix 1*.
[2] Author interview.
[3] Author interview.
[4] Author interview.
[5] Os entrevistados citaram categorias e instituições, e alguns institutos foram apontados várias vezes. Todas as instituições listadas foram mencionadas nas entrevistas. A listagem a seguir não reflete a opinião da autora. Por categoria: **alguns centros de pesquisa em universidades públicas (10)**; **fundações partidárias em geral (6)**; centros de pesquisa aplicada vinculados ao Ministério da Ciência e Tecnologia; associações e organizações patronais e de classe (Associação Brasileira de Imprensa/ABI, Associação Nacional dos Bancos de Investimento/Anbid, Associação Brasileira das Entidades dos Mercados Financeiro e de Capitais/Anbima, Associação Nacional dos Centros de Pós-Graduação em Economia/Anpec, Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais/Anpocs, Confederação Nacional da Agricultura/CNA, Confederação Nacional dos Bancários/CNB, Confederação Nacional da Indústria/CNI, Central Única dos Trabalhadores/CUT, Força Sindical, Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil/OAB); movimentos sociais (feministas, negro, LGBT); revistas (*Ciência Hoje*); alta hierarquia militar e diplomática; alguns intelectuais de grande projeção (ex-ministro Antônio Delfim Netto, ex-presidente Fernando Henrique Cardoso, professor Luiz Gonzaga Belluzzo) e outras personalidades (editorialistas dos grandes jornais); federações de banqueiros, industriais e exportadores (Federação Brasileira de Bancos/Febraban); entidades regionais (Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo/Fiesp); ONGs voltadas para a defesa de causas sociais; principais empresas de consultoria econômica; e escritórios de advocacia mais modernos. Por organização: Ação Educativa; Agência Brasileira de Desenvolvimento Industrial/ABDI; Banco Central do Brasil/Bacen; Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social/BNDES; Centro Brasileiro de Estudos de Saúde/Cebes-Fiocruz; Centro Brasileiro de Infra-Estrutura/CBIE; Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Físicas/CBPF; Centro de Desenvolvimento e Planejamento Regional de Minas Gerais/Cedeplar; Centro de Direito Internacional/Cedin; Centro de Estratégia, Inteligência e Relações Internacionais/Ceiri; Centro de Estratégias em Recursos Naturais e Energia/Cerne; Centro de Estudos e Pesquisa em Saúde Coletiva/Cepesc-IMS-Uerj; Centro de Estudos Internacionais sobre Governo/Cegov-UFRGS; Centro de Estudos das Negociações Internacionais/Caeni-USP; Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas Josué de Castro; Centro Interdisciplinar de Ética e Economia Personalista/CIEEP; Centro Internacional Celso Furtado de Políticas para o Desenvolvimento/Cicef; Centro Josué de Castro; CPDOC-FGV; Centro de Tecnologia, Relações Internacionais e Segurança/Cetris; Centro dos Trabalhadores da Amazônia/CTA; Conectas–Direitos Humanos; Coppe/Instituto Alberto Luiz Coimbra de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa de Engenharia/UFRJ; COPPEAD/UFRJ; Conselho Empresarial Brasileiro para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável/CEBDS; Departamento de Economia/PUC-Rio; Departamento Intersindical de Assessoria Parlamentar/Diap; Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária/Embrapa; Escola Brasileira de Administração Pública e de Empresas/Ebape-FGV; Escola de Economia de São Paulo/EESP/FGV-SP; Faculdade de Economia, Administração e Contabilidade/FEA-USP; Fase-Solidariedade e Educação; Fórum Universitário Mercosul/Fomerco; Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão/Funag-Ipri; Fundação Brasileira para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável/FBDS; Fundação Centro de Educação do Trabalhador Florestan Fernandes; Fundação do Desenvolvimento Administrativo/Fundap; Fundação Dom

Cabral; Fundação de Economia e Estatística/FEE; Fundação de Estudos Políticos e de Administração Pública Tarso Dutra/Fundep-TD; Fundação Instituto de Pesquisas Econômicas/Fipe; Fundação João Pinheiro/FJP; Fundação Joaquim Nabuco/Fundaj; Fundação Lemann; Fundação Maurício Grabois; Fiocruz; Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados/Seade; Fundo Garantidor de Crédito; Grupo de Análise da Conjuntura Internacional/Gacint-USP; Igreja Prebisteriana do Brasil/IPB; Instituto Agrônomo de Campinas/IAC; Instituto de Altos Estudos/IAE-Unicamp; Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor/Idec; Instituto Brasileiro de Direito e Política de Segurança Pública/IDESP-Brasil; Instituto Brasileiro de Economia/Ibre-FGV; Instituto Brasileiro de Estudos de China e Ásia-Pacífico/Ibecap; Instituto Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais/Ibri; Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística/IBGE; Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística/Ibope; Instituto de Ciência e Tecnologia em Políticas Públicas, Estratégias e Desenvolvimento/INCT-PPED; Instituto de Economia/IE-Unicamp; Instituto de Economia/IE-UFRJ; Instituto Educacional de Desenvolvimento Sócio Cultural e de Pesquisas-Instituto INNOVARE-Gestão e Inovação; Instituto de Estudos Avançados/IEA-USP; Instituto de Estudos Brasil-China/Ibrach; Instituto de Estudos Empresariais/IEE; Instituto de Estudos da Religião/Iser; Instituto de Estudos em Saúde Coletiva/Iesc-UFRJ; Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Políticos/Iesp-Uerj; Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos/Inesc; Instituto Ethos de Empresas e Responsabilidade Social, Instituto Fernand Braudel de Economia Mundial; Instituto Federalista/IF; Instituto de Gestão Pública e Relações Internacionais/Igepri; Instituto Liberdade/IL-RS; Instituto Ludwig von Mises-Brasil/IMB; Instituto Mário Alves; Instituto Nacional de Altos Estudos/Inae; Instituto Nacional de Ciência e Tecnologia para Estudos sobre os Estados Unidos/Inct-Ineu; Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira/Inep; Instituto Nacional de Matemática Pura e Aplicada/Impa; Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais/Inpe; Instituto Observatório Social; Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia/Ipam; Instituto de Pesquisa de Relações Internacionais/Ipri; Instituto de Políticas Governamentais do Brasil/IPG; Instituto de Relações Internacionais/IRI-PUC-Rio; Instituto Rio Branco; Instituto Roberto Simonsen/IRS; Instituto Socioambiental/ISA; Instituto Sul-Americano de Política e Estratégia/Isape; Instituto Tecnológico de Aeronáutica/ITA; Instituto Trata Brasil; Movimento Brasil Competitivo; Núcleo de Estudos da Cidadania, Conflito e Violência Urbana/NECVU-UFRJ; Núcleo de Estudos Ibéricos e Ibero-Americanos/UFJF; Núcleo de Estudos da Violência/NEV-USP; Núcleo de Estudos em Políticas Públicas/Neppu-UFPel; Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisa em Políticas Públicas, Governo e Gestão/NP3-UnB; Núcleo de Pesquisas sobre a América Latina/Nupesal-UFRGS; Núcleo de Pesquisa em Políticas Públicas/Nupps-USP; Observatório da Juventude/UFMG; PUC-Rio; Rede Globo; Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos de Empresas Transnacionais e Globalização/Sobeet; Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência/SBPC; Transparência Brasil; UFRJ; Unicamp; USP; Viva Rio. Mais citados e número de citações individuais: **BPC (8); Cebrap (26); Cebri (50); Cedec (11); Cindes (12); Dieese (5); ESG (5); Funcex (5); FGV (28); FPA (16); Ibase (6); Instituto Cidadania (5); Icone (12); Iedi (7); Iets (7); iFHC (25); Instituto de Estudos de Política Econômica-Casa das Garças (12); Instituto Liberal (8); Instituto Lula (5); Instituto Millenium (12); Ipea (32); Instituto Pólis (7); Iseb (8); Instituto Teotônio Vilela (7);** e o **(antigo) Iuperj (8)**.

[6] Author interview.

[7] Author interview.

[8] Author interview.

[9] Author interview.

[10] Author interview.

[11] Author interview.

[12] Author interview.

[13] Author interview.

[14] See Abelson (2007 and 2006), Goodman (2005), Pinto (2010), Rosa-Soares (2009) and Teixeira (2007).

[15] Author interview.

[16] Author interview.

[17] See Almeida (1989), Chacel (2005), Ducoté (2007), Gamarra (2009), Miceli (1989), Paulics and Bava (2002) and Truitt (2005).

[18] Author interview.

[19] Author interview.
[20] Author interview.
[21] Lardone e Roggero (2011).
[22] Author interview.
[23] Author interview.
[24] Author interview.