

# Pro&Pro

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Contextual Environment

# Think Tanks



EUROPEISKA  
UNIONEN  
Europeiska  
regionala  
utvecklingsfonden



Region  
Västerbotten



Mittuniversitetet  
MID SWEDEN UNIVERSITY

The report "Contextual Environment - Think Tanks" was conducted by Pro&Pro within the cooperation project IoT Testbeds where Mid Sweden University is the head party together with the research institution RISE. The projects is financed by the Europeand Regional Development Fund, Region Västernorrland, Mid Sweden University, 19 companies and the cooperation aggrements with Sundsvall, Örnsköldsvik, Timrå and Härnösand municipalities.





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## Introduction

This report is a contextual environment analysis on the topic of think tanks. The analysis is conducted to enable the design of the IoT Think Tank that will be started in the project IoT Testbäddar.

The report follows the following structure:

1. Timeline: Looking back in order to look forwards
2. Contextual environments
3. Trend and uncertainty analysis
4. Think Tank Processes
5. Think Tanks in Sweden

## Defining Think Tank

The term think tank has evolved throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their beginnings were as smaller study groups that could support policy development. However, in the present, think tanks are often larger institutions or organizations with full-time employees.

Their topics cover a diverse range of policy issues and ideologies and their funding can be from a broad range of sources. What think tanks have in common is that they are:

- Not government organizations
- They provide advice to policy makers
- They are not the implementors of policy

There are several ways of defining think tanks. Following is a selection of definitions:

*“think tank: an institute, corporation, or group organized for interdisciplinary research (as in technological and social problems)-called also think factory.” - Webster Dictionary, 1959*

*“A Think Tank is a group of experts brought together, usually by a government, to develop ideas on a particular subject and to make suggestions for action”- Cambridge Dictionary*

*“A think tank, or policy institute, is a research institute that performs research and advocacy concerning topics such as social policy, political strategy, economics, military, technology, and culture. Most think tanks are non-governmental organizations, but some are semi-autonomous agencies within government or are associated with particular political parties or businesses.” – Wikipedia*

*“Definition of think tank: an institute, corporation, or group organized to study a particular subject (such as a policy issue or a scientific problem) and provide information, ideas, and advice”  
– Merriam-Webster*

Think tanks are not:

- University units – even though to conduct research they do not offer courses
- Philanthropic organizations because their funding is focused on research not on taking action
- Government advisory organizations – because they are independent from government
- Pressure groups or interest groups – think tanks are based on the memberships on individuals, not on the support of campaigns or ideology.



### Target Group:

IoT Testbäddar, MIUN

### Purpose:

Create an understanding of Think Tanks, their purpose and their methodology

## Three Types of Think Tanks

### 1. Politically affiliated Think Tank

There are many ways that think tanks can be categorized. For instance, by their topics, ideology or their source of funding. One such categorization, is the separation into the three categories'; politically affiliated think tanks, thematic think tanks and 'think and do' think tanks

### 2. Thematic Think Tank

A politically affiliated think tank is one that by its core is related to a political party, most commonly by their source of funding but also by where their results are received. These think tanks emphasize the importance of representative democracy and political parties. Their purpose is to renew the political ideology and support the political decision making of the affiliated party. These think tanks are not specialized by topic instead they cover a broad range of topics related to their political ideology. They often work with lobbying of ideas to the affiliated party and can thus be compared to advocacy groups.

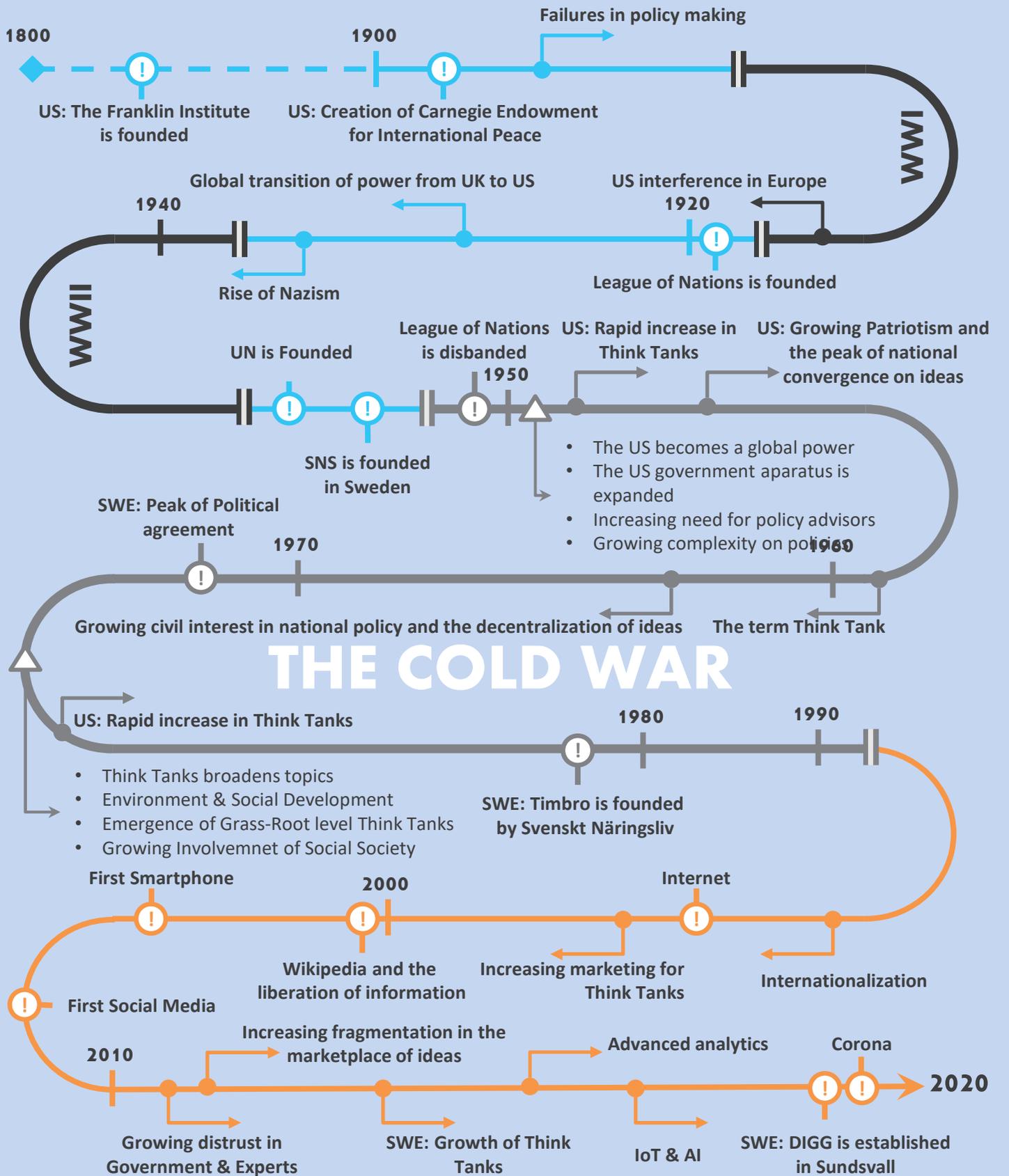
### 3. Think and do Think Tanks

Thematic think tanks instead; are focusing their research on a single topic or theme of topics. These can be environmental topics, social topics, technological topics etc. These think tanks are not usually affiliated with a political party as their focus is on non-partisan solutions to their problem formulations instead of applying and renewing existing ideologies. They emphasize expert knowledge and insights and gather value, information and data to enhance an understanding of their theme.

'Think and do' think tanks are think tanks focusing on acting upon their ideas. They are often lobbying or funding charities and organizations that act in accordance to their research. They emphasize competing ways of working and the need for new institutions. They are often experimental and try to find new solutions, establish new institutions and develop financing schemes. In a sense, these think tanks are not purely think tanks, more accurately they resemble non-governmental organizations which uses research to guide their actions.



# TIMELINE



**Legend**

- Beginning of Trend
- Important Event
- Comment

## Timeline: Looking back in order to look forward

In order to understand the growth of think tanks, their purpose and their relationship with governments and policy making we need to look back and follow the history that created the circumstances for their growth.

### 1800s – WW1

Although they weren't called think tanks at the time, their origin is commonly attributed to the 19<sup>th</sup> century USA. Where the tradition of private over public funding led to policy development and research being sourced to privately funded groups of scholars and researchers.

Their goal was to aid the government in finding efficient policies for instituting reform. At the time, the amount of think tanks was low, however they were highly influential. The separation between the think tanks and government were seen as a sign of their non-partisanship, which at the time were considered important.

Prior to the first World War, the US had been unsuccessful in implementing policy and building foreign relations. This led to a decreased trust in the government's ability to lead the nation independently.



### WW1 – WW2

Following the end of the first World War in 1918, the amount of think tanks grew because of several important global events, that increased to complexity of policy development, foreign relations and military strategy:<sup>1</sup>

1. Global leadership transitioned from the United Kingdom to the USA.
2. US intervention in Europe during and after WW1.
3. The failures in policymaking ahead of the First World War.
4. League of Nations were founded, which was a collective security project like the United Nations that came after.
5. The Russian Revolution in 1917
6. The Rise of Nazism

During the second World War the term Think Tank started to become standard for a place where military plans and strategies could be discussed.

Liberal internationalism is a foreign policy doctrine that argues that **liberal states should intervene in other sovereign states** in order to pursue liberal objectives.

- Wikipedia

Following the war, think tanks were driven by their commitment to liberal internationalism, believing that intergovernmental organization were essential to sustain peace in the aftermath of WW1 and WW2.<sup>2</sup>

After the second World War, another increase in the number of think tanks happened. Mainly as a result of two influences.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup><https://www.britannica.com/topic/think-tank>

<sup>2</sup><https://medium.com/chatham-house/a-history-of-think-tanks-12-things-you-should-know-4283b76b2da3>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/think-tanks>

1. The United States had become a global power. Therefore, their government apparatus had expanded which led to a greater need for policy advisors.
2. The nuclear threat of the Cold War stimulated the development of governmentally funded defense-policy think tanks.

Following the failure of League of Nations, which was unable to interfere in WW2, the victors of the war became determined to build durable international institutions. The result was the United Nations, UN. Several of the think tanks of the time played a key role in designing the UN and other post-war organizations. This started a period of geopolitical stability, which in turn, led to a period of economic growth.<sup>3</sup>

## The Cold War

During the Cold War, think-tanks started sprouting in European cities and across the US. Think tanks started returning to their original purpose to debate policy issues instead of military strategy. Additionally, think tanks started to evolve from informal study groups into centers of expertise with full-time staff.<sup>2</sup>

At this time, think tanks focused on the competition between the West and the Soviet Union, nuclear deterrence and energy security. The focus had shifted, and their goal of the 1920s-1940s to achieve global peace was no longer. Instead, the focus was to ensure the West in an era of bipolar competition.

During the 1960s the influence of think tanks increased even more. The think tanks of this period became dedicated to the applied social sciences, such as statistics, economics and social experimentation.<sup>3</sup>

By 1968 Sweden had seen its peak of political agreement with the Social Democrats having 50.1% of votes. Even though at the time some think tanks had been founded in Sweden their influence was very low because of the strength of government.

During 1970-1990 think tanks started working with the topics of environment and sustainable development. Additionally, the emergence of grass-roots level think tanks started as international funding agencies believed that policy would be improved by involving civil society.<sup>3</sup>



## 1990- 2010

By 1990, the competitive space for think tanks had intensified. To spread their ideas, they had to start focusing on their marketing.

*“In an environment where think tanks had to aggressively compete to promote their ideas to policy makers. developing effective marketing techniques to influence decision-makers, rather than engaging in scholarly research, became the primary concern for many new think tanks.”*

(Abelson 1996)

At this time, many think tanks became more concerned with their ability to influence policy makers and thus many transitioned towards lobby organizations.

By the turn of the millennia the internet became the most important marketplace for ideas and information. By 2004, Wikipedia made information publicly available for free, and the cultural shift that followed drastically improved think tanks ability to conduct research and lobby ideas.

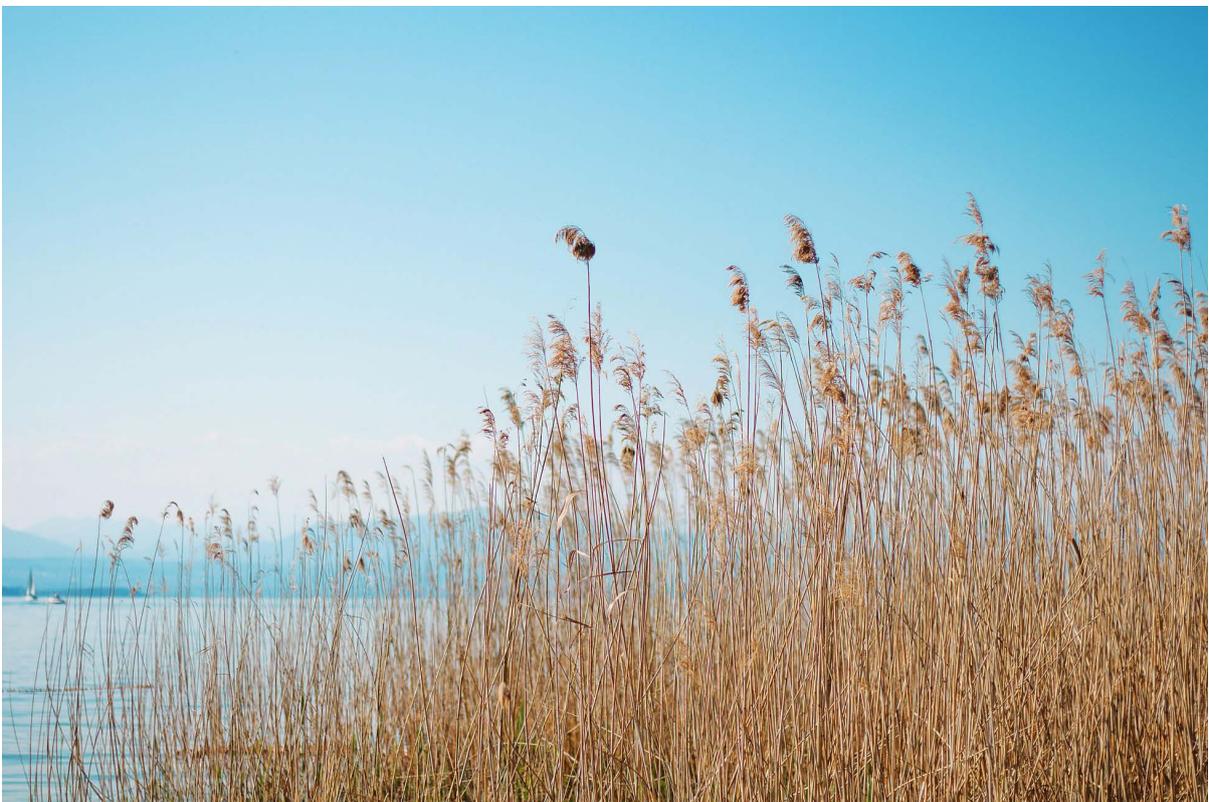
<sup>4</sup>Abelson, Donald E. American Think-Tanks and Their Role in US Foreign Policy. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.

## 2010- 2020

Social media became a big player around 2010, with both Facebook and Twitter launching around that time. Following the growth of social media came a fragmentation of the marketplace of ideas into silos of people sharing ideology.

By 2008, Sweden had a total of 65 think tanks, by 2019 the number had grown to 90 . Which can largely be attributed to the increased availability of information and marketing capability that the internet and social media created.

The growth of AI, IoT, Big Data and advanced analytics that started during the 2010s, is surely going to set the foundation for think tanks in the 2020s.



<sup>5</sup>TTCSP Global Go To Think Tank Index Reports - [https://repository.upenn.edu/think\\_tanks/](https://repository.upenn.edu/think_tanks/)

# Contextual Environments

Fig 2.1

## CONTEXTUAL UNCERTAINTIES

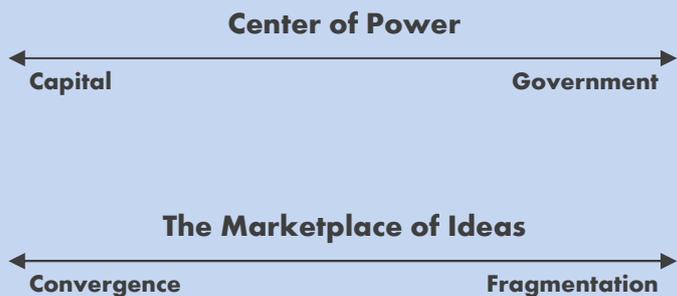


Fig 2.2

## CONTEXT MATRIX

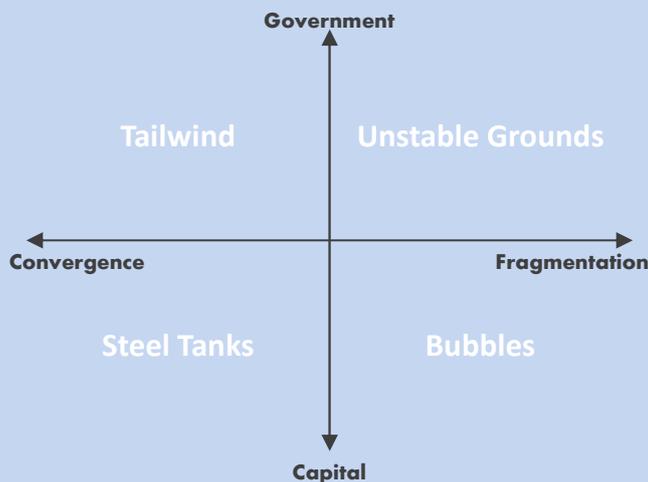
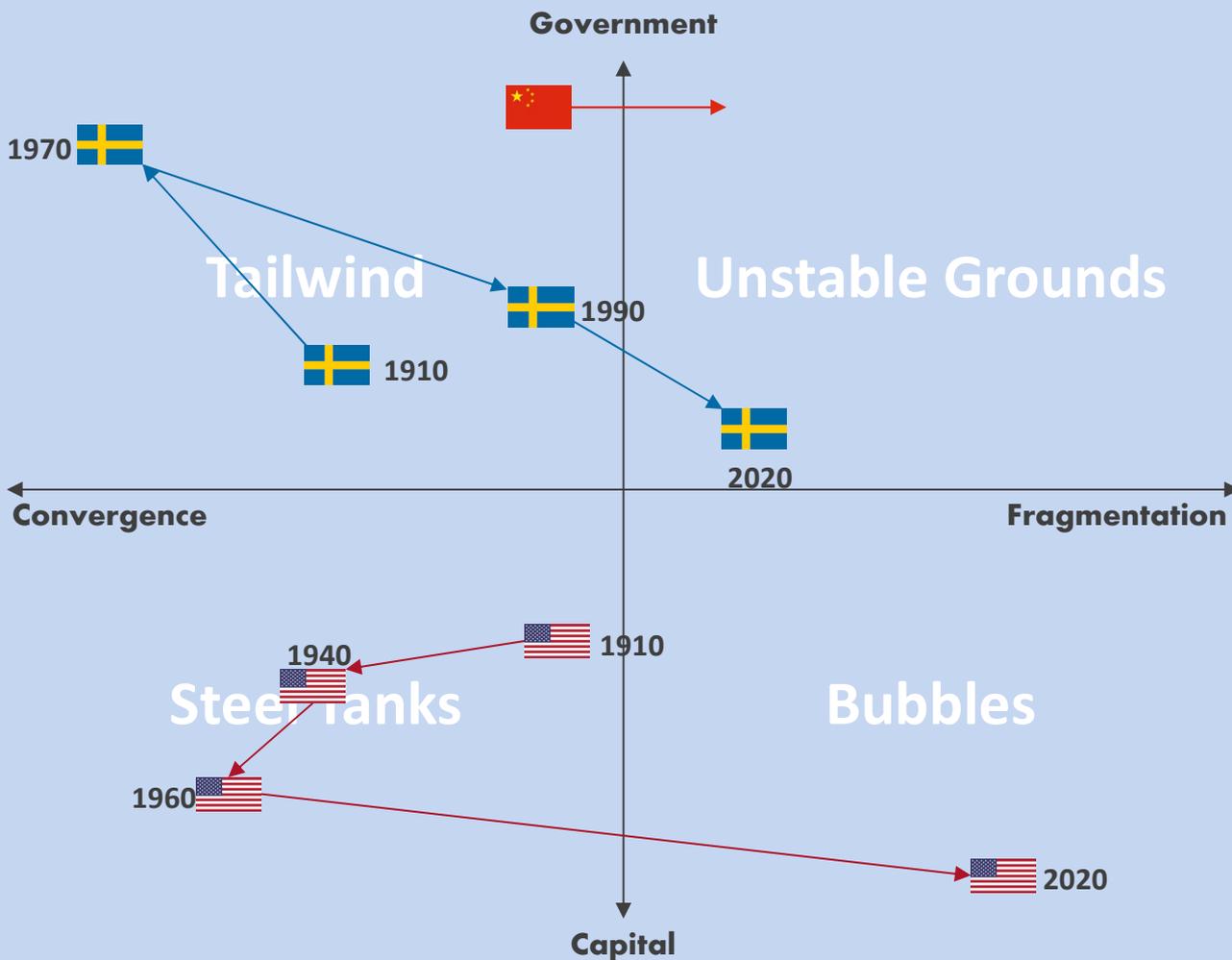


Fig 2.3

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT



## How Contextual environments shaped the history of Think Tanks



A Think Tank is a **group of experts** brought together, usually by a government, to **develop ideas** on a **particular subject** and to make **suggestions for action**

- Cambridge Dictionary

Think Tanks growth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is clearly attributed to their prevalence in the US. What makes the US rather special is the context that existed within the US for Think Tanks. In most other countries the context was different and so the development of Think Tanks was much less. Instead many countries, among which is Sweden, focused on developing government institutions.

In this section, the contexts and how they create the circumstances for Think Tanks will be explored. By simplifying the complex system of government and public opinion into two uncertainty dimensions, center of power and the marketplace of ideas, a context matrix can be used to understand the development of Think Tanks in the US and to attempt an understanding of their future in Sweden.

### Contextual uncertainties fig2.1

#### Center of Power

Center of power is a measure of a nation's relationship between the state and the capital. A government in a context where the center of power is towards the capital is in general weaker and has an increased complexity for policy implementation as non-governmental organizations and companies can impact it. On the other hand, a government where to power is centered in the state has a comparative ease in the implementation of policy as the government can implement without the resistance of the market.

#### The Marketplace of Ideas

The marketplace of ideas is a symbolism for the competitive space in which ideas are tested by the public. The marketplace is the population of people who have an impact of government policy through their voting power. The marketplace can either be convergent towards similar solutions, such as a set of solutions which have similar characteristics, or it can be fragmented meaning the marketplace consists of many ideas that do not share characteristics.

### Context Matrix fig2.2

#### Tailwind

By developing a strong government, policy development and implementation is easy. There is a strong ideology, or a few that are similar, that is driving the direction of policy development. Because of a strong convergence of ideas, complexity of policy development is low, and thus the government can rely on government institutions for policy research, development and implementation. Privatization of government is low and citizens in general are satisfied with the government's policy development.

Think tanks are rare, but they can sometimes have an advisory role on topics that require expertise or that are very complex.

#### Steel Tanks

There is a strong anti-government culture, which despite a convergence of ideas are causing resistance to the implementation of government policy. Commonly, this context is heavily focus on liberal ideas and limiting government interference. Policy development is not trusted purely in the hands of the government and thus private organizations develop and fund research, propose policy and lobby to voters and government.

Think tanks are relatively few in numbers, but they are highly influential. In this context the involving civil society through privately funded research and policy development is the main method of designing and implementing policy. These tanks are often bound by ideology but are not politically affiliated.

### Unstable grounds

Although and unlikely state in a democratic nation, this context can be unstable as it relies on government strength being able to withstand the fragmentation of ideas and ideology. This context can be held by having a strong military power and a government that acts without public interference. However, mostly this state is a transitions state before idea convergence or a change in government strength.

In this context think tanks exist to advice they government on policy developments however, they are often politically affiliated and attempt to please the many.

### Bubbles

Having the center of power in the capital in a fragmented landscape of ideas creates a large opposition to policy development as the government becomes weak. This state is, for democratic nations, achieved by polarization or fragmentation of the marketplace for ideas in countries where the government is reliant on private organizations. Following the current developments of many European nations, with weakening governments and growing disagreements on ideology, this context is likely to become more prevalent.

In this context think tanks or equivalent organizations are popping up regularly. They are many and they are only able to achieve smaller audiences which already agree with their ideology. They easily burst if their ideas or policy proposals are not in line with their audiences.

### Historical movements fig2.3

The context is changing over time within nations. The US has had a relatively weak government throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the marketplace of ideas has changed. Following WWI, the US patriotism skyrocketed and achieving international peace and having a strong military became a shared ideology, which together with the long existing culture of liberal ideas made the perfect circumstances for developing highly influential think tanks. By the 2000s the marketplace of ideas became more fragmented and the trust in government as well as agreement on policy has never been lower. Therefor think tanks are becoming more common, weaker and focusing on lobbying of ideas.

In Sweden instead, the government was very strong during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1970 the social democrats were at their strongest following the success of social policy developments after WWII. Thereafter, political agreements started to decline, and the marketplace of ideas fragmented. Currently the Sweden democrats have disrupted the political landscape and the state of Sweden is becoming unstable. Following the decline in government strength, in the 1980 think tanks started becoming more prevalent in Sweden and is currently at its strongest however, mostly tied directly to political parties.

### Future developments

As Sweden is currently in an unstable position in the context matrix, a future movement is very likely. Following the current trends of increasing fragmentation of ideas and growth of power for private organizations; Sweden is likely going to move toward the *Bubbles* scenario in the near future. Implying a growth in the number of think tanks with an increase in their collective influence, but a decrease in their indivial influence.



# 15

## Trends

that will shape  
the future of  
Think Tanks

- 01 Increasing complexity of problems facing society
- 02 Increasing availability of advanced analytics tools
- 03 Fragmentation of the Marketplace of Ideas
- 04 Increasing population of highly educated people
- 05 The Network Economy
- 06 Increasing demand for information "in the right form, the right hands, at the right time"
- 07 Artificial Intelligence, IoT and Big Data is changing society
- 08 Increasing Political Polarization
- 09 The world is becoming more multi-polar
- 10 Growing distrust in experts and expert opinion
- 11 Decreasing confidence in Institutions, Government and Elected Officials
- 12 Increasing percentage of private funding for Think Tanks
- 13 Think Tanks and other institutions are becoming more specialized
- 14 Fake News is increasingly spreading deliberate misinformation
- 15 Interest in the EU is decreasing



## Trends that will shape the Future of Think Tanks by 2025

The trends presented in this section is selected by their impact on the future of Think Tanks. In total, 15 trends have been identified using the EPISTLE-M framework through trend spotting in news articles, scientific studies and other journalistic sources.

The trends have been identified in order to understand the global developments that will shape the competitive landscape of Think Tanks in the future. Some trends may be considered certain, meaning that the future development of the trend is predictable. Other trends can be regarded as uncertain, meaning that their future development is inherently unpredictable. The time frame of the certainty-uncertainty distinction is set at the year 2025.



A Trend is a **general development of change** in a situation or in the way that people are behaving.

- Cambridge Dictionary



### Increasing complexity of problems facing society

The complexity of problems that societies are facing is growing. Currently, we are facing global warming, environmental decay, economic collapse and pandemic disease. As the capabilities of humanity is increasing, so does the complexity of issues that arise. Globalization, industrialization and digitalization have improved the lives of countless people. However, the most pressing current problems are stemming from those developments. As our capacity so solve these problems increase, so will the complexity of the problems that follow.

### Increasing population of highly educated people

Both globally and in Sweden, the education level of the population is increasing. However, not only is the education level on average increasing, the population of highly educated people is rapidly increasing in developed countries. Perhaps due to the decreased availability of jobs with low skill requirements leading to an insurgence of young people into higher education during 2000s.

### Increasing Political Polarization

The political landscape in democratic nations have seen an increased polarization of public opinion as well as between political parties. This is clearly exemplified by the growing movement of national populists in Europe and the clear distancing from those ideas that the other parties have practiced. Following is three drivers of this trend:

- The growing complexity of problems are hindering the development of consensus on ideas and solutions.
- Social Media and the growing availability of information is creating silos with ideas from a limited perspective.
- People are increasing deriving their personal identity from ideas and group belonging instead on patriotism.

### Increasing availability of advanced analytics tools

Historically, computational power has been the limiting factor in advanced analytics with Big Data. However, as the growth of cloud platforms have enabled cloud computation for big data analysis, the cost of using these analytics have increased. Analytics have become increasingly available and even though the market for cloud computation is still developing, many players are offering solutions that drastically outperform local computation and analytics.



### The world is becoming more multi-polar

The global political power structure is changing. The domination of the US as the only global superpower is ending following the rise of China, the resurgence of Russia, the growth of India and the developments in Africa. The world will no longer be mono-polar as it has the last decades or bi-polar as it was during the cold war, instead the world is becoming increasingly multipolar.

### Growing distrust in experts and expert opinion

The public relationship with experts has changed and the trust that democratic nations put on experts has declined. Globally, we are seeing growing denial of concerns raised by experts and governments and leaders going against expert and scientific consensus. This is driven by an increasingly common view that experts are to blame for failures in policy development.

### Increasing demand for information “in the right form, the right hands, at the right time”

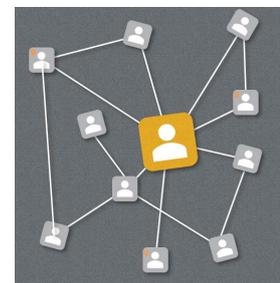
The information age, brought by the internet and social media, is changing our information habits. The cost of information has decreased significantly and the demands we hold on information is increasing. At the same time, the amount of information being collected and stored has increased drastically leading to an inability to comprehend data without proper analytics. Information is becoming a commodity that needs to be in the right form, in the right hands, at the right time in order to be useful.

### Artificial Intelligence, IoT and Big Data is changing society

New technologies are driving digitalization. AI, Big Data and IoT are enabling the digitalization and advanced analytics of the physical world. Through the interaction of these technologies the digital and physical world is merging, changing society as we know it.

### The Network Economy

The growth of the information society is creating a new economic order known as the Network Economy. This is where products and services reach consumers through their relation to social networks instead of physical or digital stores. However, this is not only true for products and services, but also for the marketplace of ideas. Public opinion is currently shaped through digital social networks, which means that for lobbying organizations their ability to diffuse ideas through the network economy will be crucial.



### Fragmentation of the Marketplace of Ideas

The Marketplace of Ideas, meaning the competitive space of ideas and beliefs, is becoming fragmented by the separation of people into silos that is generated by the development of Social Media and the Network Economy. The fragmentation is creating competing marketplaces which instead of leading towards large-scale consensus is only generating consensus within competing silos of growing political polarization.

### Fake News is increasingly spreading deliberate misinformation?

The economic incentives from the business models in the network economy is emphasizing the importance of attracting attention by clickbait headlines and is deflating the importance of proper journalistic methods. Fake News is growing despite intervention from Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms. It is becoming apparent that business models that is not relying on ads is necessary to prevent misinformation however, if it is possible by 2025 is highly uncertain. Left alone, fake news will continue to polarize the political landscape as well as fuel the growing distrust in experts.

### Interest in the EU is decreasing?

Following the Brexit discussions of 2017-2019 many European countries have started discussing their relationship with the EU. Additionally, the failure of the EU to coordinate action on the Corona virus is likely going to spark those discussion. EU is highly unlikely to be resolved by 2025, however its membership numbers and financing might be questioned.

### Increasing percentage of private funding for Think Tanks?

As society is changing so does the role Think Tanks plays in policy development. Currently, many Think Tanks in Sweden are primarily funded by political parties however, some are primarily funded by private organizations. The future of funding for Think Tanks is uncertain and very dependent on the development of their future relationship with policy makers. The amount of private funding, therefore, can go either way by 2025.

### Think Tanks and other institutions are becoming more specialized?

Specialization is a natural consequence of competing for expertise, it is also highly useful in scenarios where policy makers needs expert opinion. However, as complexity rises the need for specialized or generalized competences might change. Think Tanks, therefore, might be either.

### Decreasing confidence in Institutions, Government and Elected Officials?

There is a growing mistrust in governments and institution both globally but very noticeable in Sweden. Following the chaotic forming of government in 2018 which ended up in a relatively unstable coalition called Januariavtalet the public opinion on governments and institutions has decreased. This is also exemplified by the breakup of both of Sweden political blocks which has fragmented the political landscape. However, it is very possible that the new paradigm of smaller parties with more cooperation will counteract the decreasing confidence by allowing for effective compromising. The outcome of this uncertainty will highly impact the relationship between Think Tanks and governments as their necessity is shaped by where the public place their trust.



# Think Tank Processes

Fig 4.1

## ODD-LOOP

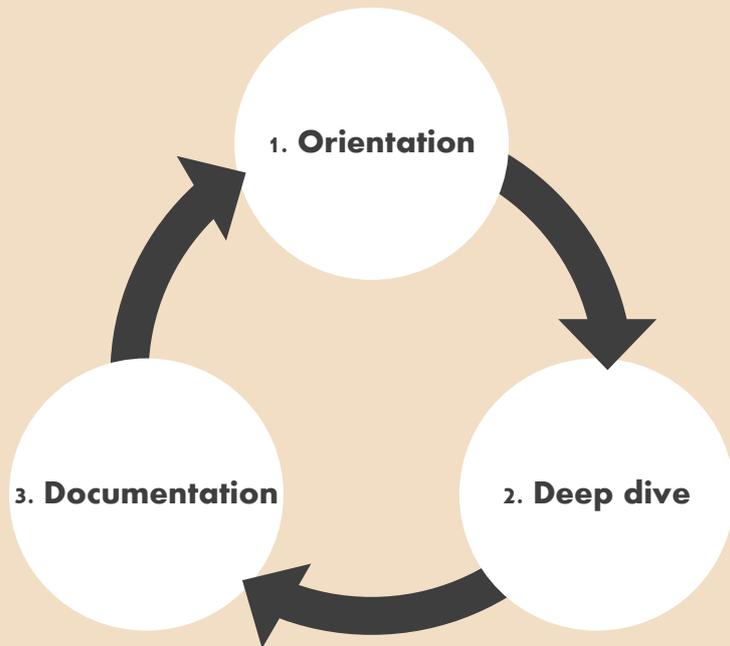


Fig 4.2

## BREAKING OUT

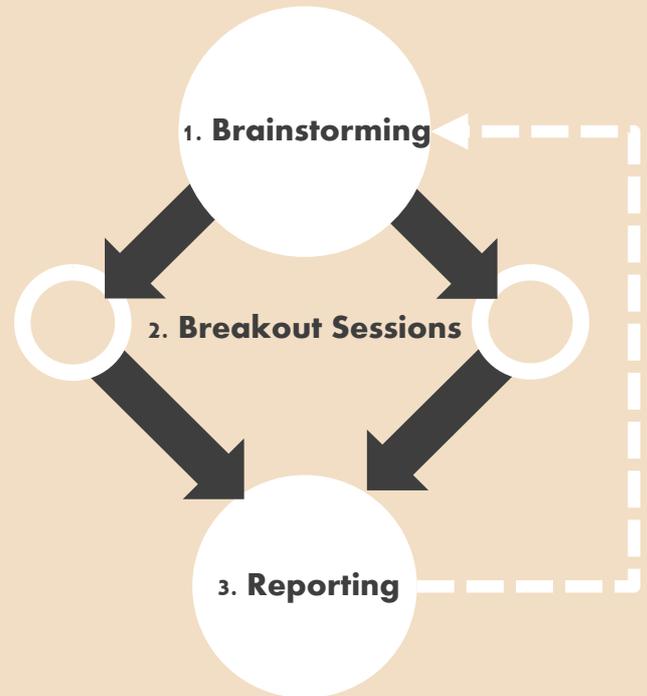
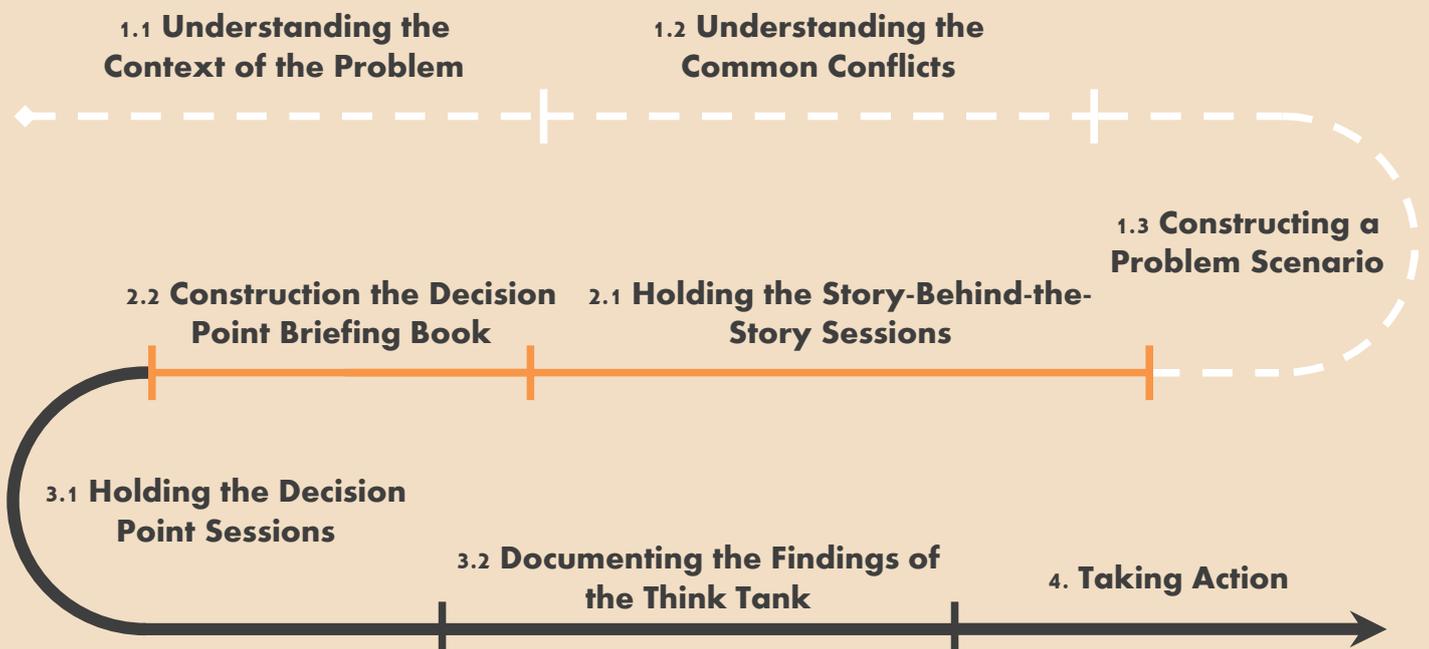


Fig 4.1

## CMU-PROCESS



## Think Tank Processes

Not all think tanks work in the same way. Some are heavily focused on the research, others on the policy development and some is mostly focused on lobbying and changing public opinion. Therefore, there is not common think tank process.

In this section, three work processes used by think tanks are explored. These processes are mostly focused on the research part of a think tank and not on lobbying or acting.

### ODD-Loop fig4.1

The first type of Think Tank process that will be explored is the **ODD-Loop** which is a process that consists of three phases. ODD stands for:

- Orientation
- Deep dive
- Documentation

In the orientation phase the think tank is construction the problem formulation, delimitations, and clarifying the problem. The purpose is to have a basis for phase 2 – Deep dive. In this phase, the Think Tank is conducting their research and designing solutions. In the last phase, the documentation phase, the Think tank is working with compiling the results, producing reports and holding seminars.

This process is very simple but by combining research and solutions into the deep dive phase it risks deemphasizing one of them. Instead the deep dive phase should be divided into the Deep Dive phase and the Solutions phase.

### Breaking Out fig4.2

The second type of Think Tank process is the **Breaking Out** process is a work process instead of a research process. The process begins with the entire think tank brainstorming both problem formulations and eventual solutions. After, the group is divided into breakout groups which conducts research separated from other groups. By doing this, the think tank enables the development of competing solutions which, in the end is discussed in the reporting phase where the entire think tank compiles the solutions a creates reports and seminar material.

This process can be used in conjunction with the ODD-Loop or other research processes. It is very useful in decentralized think tanks.

### CMU-Process fig4.1

The **CMU-Process** named such as it is the process used by the CMU Think Tank follows four main steps:

1. Constructing the problem formulation
2. Constructing the Decision Point Briefing Book
3. Deciding and Documentation
4. Taking Action

Constructing the problem formulation is done by analyzing the context of the problem, meaning the environment in which the problem exists, followed by analyzing the common conflicts which the problem creates. These two analyses are then used to construct a problem scenario, which is a description of the world in which the problem plays out. This should be in the future; however, it can be both short term and long term.

The Decision Point Briefing Book is created by first holding Story-Behind-the-Story sessions, in which

the timeline for arriving at the problem scenario is discussed. This enables the think tank to find trigger points and events that will move the world into the problem scenario. By doing this, the Decision Point Briefing Book can be used to take decisions and design policy that will avoid the problem scenario.

The third step, Deciding and Documentation, is the step in which the Decision Point Briefing Book is used to take decisions and design policy by holding Decision Point sessions. The results of these sessions are then documented and is the foundation for taking action in step four.

The way in which a think tank takes action varies. Some think tanks conduct lobbying activities to change public opinion. Others work directly with political parties and tries to sway their policy development.

### The distributed Think Tank

Think tanks can be using any of three different network architectures:

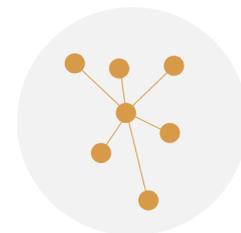
1. Centralized
2. Decentralized
3. Distributed

A centralized think tanks is one in which all activities and decisions are taken by the think tank as a whole. This is very limiting as it requires the entire process to be coordinated with the entire group. Although possible, interregional and international cooperation is difficult.

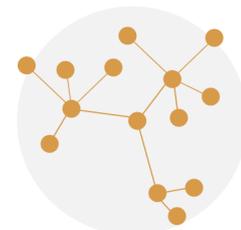
A decentralized think tank is one in which work is conducted in smaller groups but coordinated at a higher level. The Breaking Out process is an example of a decentralized process. Its strength is in its ability to view the problem from different perspectives and to encourage out of the box thinking. However, as the groups are smaller the discussions can be more limiting.

A distributed think tank is one in which the group does not have a central point. The think tank is instead a group of individuals that can coordinate to work on some problems. It can be very difficult to coordinate a distributed think tank there is no centrality. However, when done properly, the groups can be highly effective and dynamically change as needed.

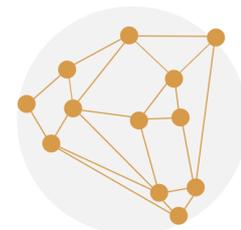
**Centralized**



**Decentralized**



**Distributed**





# Swedish Think Tanks

Fig 3.1

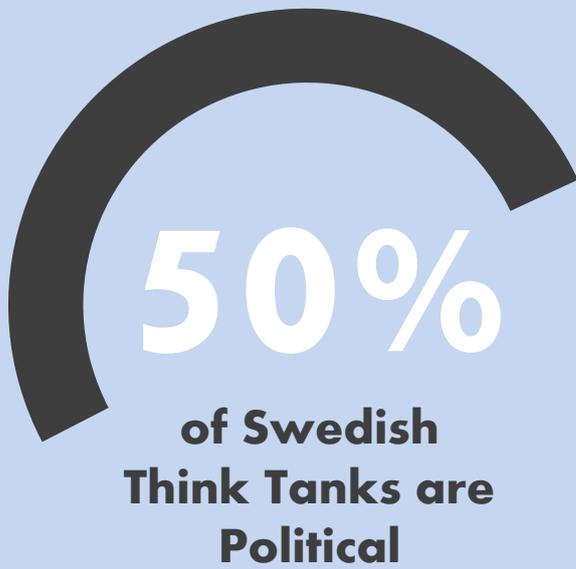


Fig 3.2

## Most Political Think Tanks have a mixture of topics

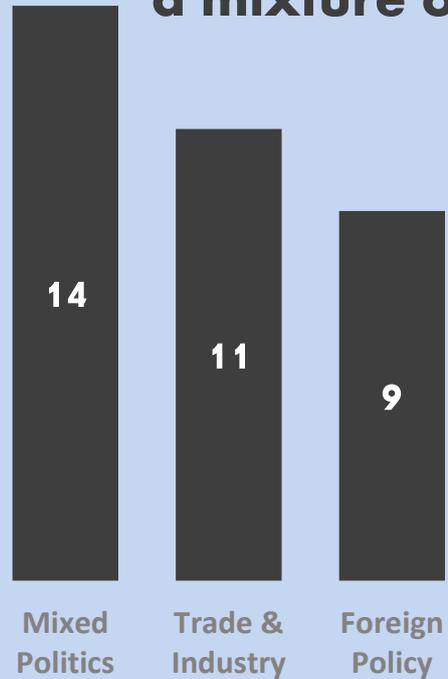
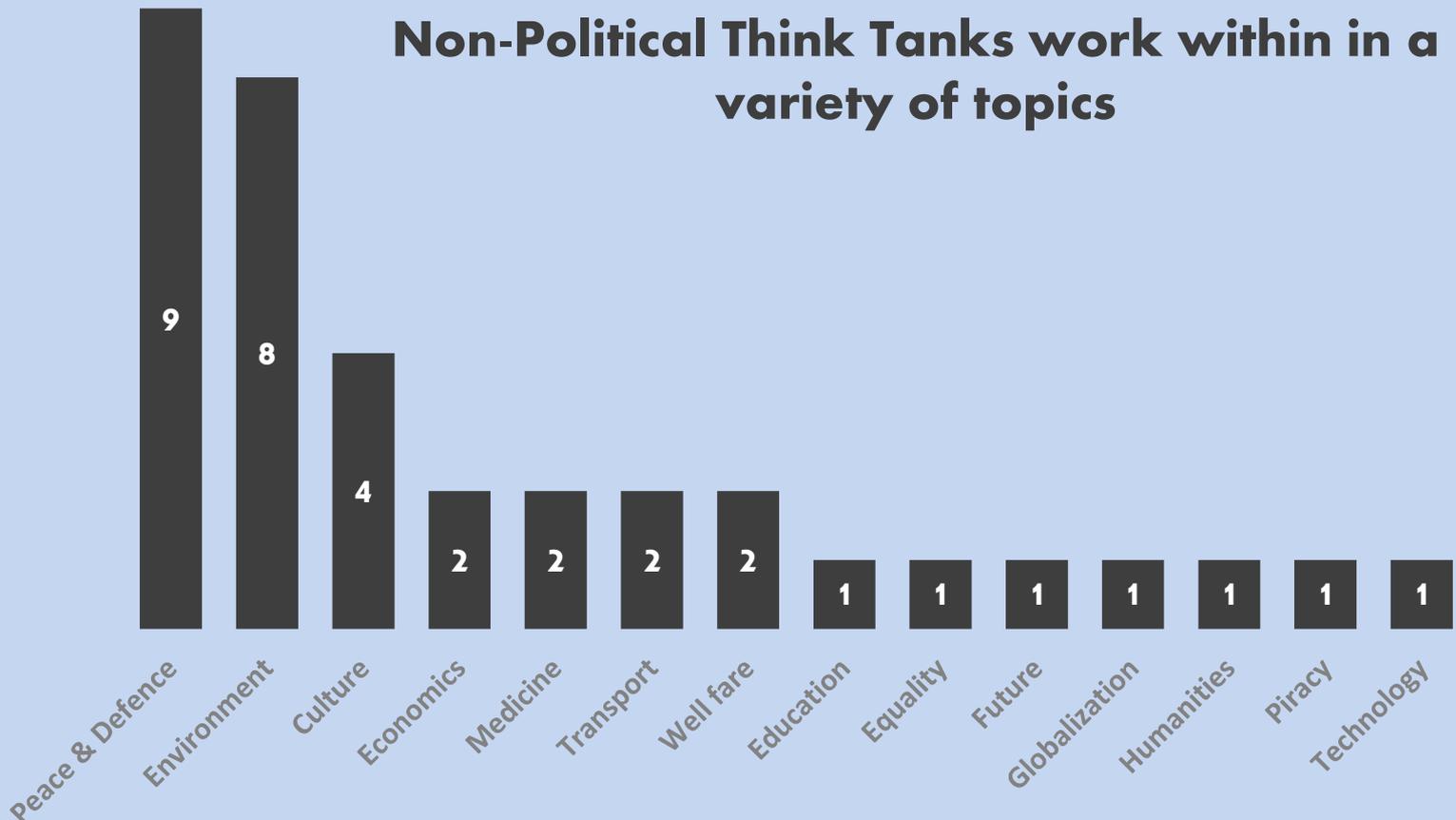


Fig 3.2

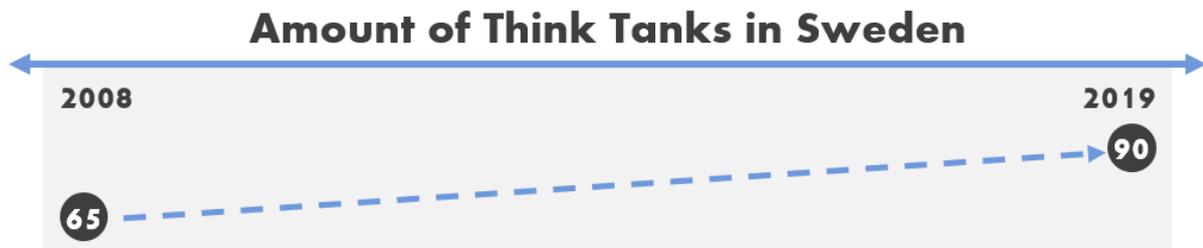
## Non-Political Think Tanks work within in a variety of topics



## Swedish Think Tanks

This section will explore Think Tanks in Sweden by amount of think tanks, topics and ideology and sources of financing. Lastly, possible future developments for think tanks in Sweden will be discussed.

According to TTCSP's Global Go To Think Tank Index Reports Sweden has consistently had the 14th most think tanks in the world since 2008 when the count in Sweden was 65. By 2019, Swedish think tanks had grown by 38% and is now at 90 think tanks.<sup>1</sup>



### Topics and Ideology

Roughly 50% of Sweden's think tanks are focused on a mixture of political topics, trade & industry or foreign policy development. Not all of these are affiliated with political parties although many of them are. These think tanks are generally ideological, meaning that they have a broad range of political problems which is to be solved by a very limited set of ideological solutions instead of focusing on a limited set of problems by using a broad range of solutions.

Think tanks that are not political and instead focus on solving a set of problems have a much smaller scope. Most of them are focused on Peace & Defense or Environmental issues which is mostly the result of the areas in which historically think tanks have been prevalent.

Specialized think tanks are often without competition or have very limited competition. These are think tanks that are set towards solving a very limited type of problem, mostly in the area of welfare and culture, but there are some which have an even more specialized scope such as:

- Future – The Institute of Future Studies
- Piracy – Piratbyrå

### Financing

There are four types of think tank financing used in Sweden:

1. Financing from affiliated organization or political party
2. Private funding
3. Government funding from Vinnova or Tillväxtverket
4. Voluntary work

There is no available statistics on the source of funding for think tanks, however it is likely that most think tanks are funded from their affiliated organization or political party. This means that a think tank is limiting their possible solutions and problem formulations to be within the scope of the funding organization.

Globally, the amount of private funding for think tanks is growing and it is likely the case in Sweden as well however perhaps not to the same extent.

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<sup>6</sup>TTCSP Global Go To Think Tank Index Reports - [https://repository.upenn.edu/think\\_tanks/](https://repository.upenn.edu/think_tanks/)



# Conclusion

The context for Sweden's think tanks is changing. The weakening of government, the fragmentation of the marketplace of ideas and the growing complexity of problems is directly creating the circumstances for many small think tanks to come into existence, however with a decreased individual influencing power.

It is likely that the amount of think tanks in Sweden is going to increase rapidly during the 2020's. However, the decreasing public trust in experts might prove to be hindering their ability to lobby or implement policy.

The source of funding for think tanks in Sweden is likely going to become more privatized either by crowd sourcing or by strong links to affiliated organizations. Independent think tanks might become rare as their source of funding is not as secure.

The success of think tanks in the 2020's is dependent on how they adopt to the context that will exist. For success, think tanks needs to consider:

- How they are going to use experts to analyze the growingly complex problems in a decade with limited trust in experts.
- How they are going to successfully diffuse ideas in a time where clear politically polarized views are essential.
- How they are going to maximize spread of ideas through the network economy without getting stuck in silos of agreement.
- How they are going to balance research and marketing in a world that might not be able to combat fake news and differentiate true from false.











The report "Contextual Environment - Think Tanks" was conducted by Pro&Pro within the cooperation project IoT Testbeds where Mid Sweden University is the head party together with the research institution RISE. The project is financed by the European Regional Development Fund, Region Västernorrland, Mid Sweden University, 19 companies and the cooperation agreements with Sundsvall, Örnsköldsvik, Timrå and Härnösand municipalities.



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