Think Tanks, Transparency and Accountability

Key organizations and information sources

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Accountability Principles for Research Organisations
APRO is run by One World Trust and is dedicated to enhancing the accountability of think tanks and research institutes. Their website appears dormant, but still contains multiple tools and other resources.

Accuracy in the Media (AIM)
Media monitoring group that produces many articles and research related to U.S. think tanks. Archive is easy to search.
http://www.aim.org/

Aditi Bulletin

Alejandro Chafuen’s blog
Forbes blog covering think tanks and scholarship. Focus on conservative institutions, especially free market think tanks located in Latin America.
http://www.forbes.com/sites/alejandrochafuen/

Bright Lines Project
Coalition of US nonprofits and tax law experts set up to propose rules to clarify IRS regulation of nonprofits’ political activities. Housed at Public Citizen.
http://www.brightlinesproject.org/

Canadians for Responsible Advocacy
Certifies organizations that adhere to its “accountable advocacy principles”. Target group includes Canadian think tanks.
http://responsibleadvocacy.org/

Center for Media and Democracy
A non-profit organisation that investigates the influence of corporations and “front groups” on public policy, including public relations campaigns and lobbying.
It runs two platforms that cover think tanks extensively:
- PR Watch (http://bit.ly/1IPkNX3)
- Sourcewatch (http://bit.ly/MzSHNI)

If you are aware of any relevant organizations or information sources that are not listed here, please contact us and we will update this list.

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www.transparify.org
Center for Political Accountability
A non-profit organization aiming to bring transparency and accountability to corporate political spending.
http://bit.ly/1gdUGBu
  - Publishes annual CPA-Zicklin index (http://bit.ly/1aBynQT)

CFR’s Research Links on Think Tanks on International Affairs
Provides directories, analysis of the functions, impact, and transparency of think tanks, and tools to search for think tank publications and events.
http://on.cfr.org/1wLshg2

Conservative Transparency
Tracks funding by major US conservative donors to recipients, including many think tanks. Large data set with precise funding sources and amounts per think tank.
http://conservativetransparency.org/recipients/

Edmond J. Edmond Safra Center for Ethics – Blog
Blog by center affiliated with Harvard University that occasionally covers think tanks in the context of “institutional corruption”.

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)
Media monitoring group that produces many articles and research related to U.S. think tanks. Archive is easy to search.
www.fair.org

Find the Data: Think Tanks
Aggregates information about think tanks, including financial information.
http://bit.ly/1aHguQJ

Find Policy
Aggregates search across think tanks, facilitating search for policy positions, donors and shared board members. Covers think tanks from around the world.
http://bit.ly/1fUBoBd
  (Disclosure: Find Policy is run by some of Transparify’s people.)

Glass Pockets
Service by the Foundation Centre in the US that is devoted to increasing the transparency and accountability of foundations. Includes tools and a blog.
http://glasspockets.org

LobbyFacts
Aggregates European Union lobbying data to make it more accessible. Has a dedicated “think tanks and research institutions” search category.
http://www.lobbyfacts.eu/

Lobby Watch
Organization that “helps track deceptive PR”. Provides background information on selected think tanks.
http://bit.ly/1dN1H7l

L’Observatori dels Think Tanks
Catalan and Spanish language blog on think tanks written by Francesc Ponsa.
http://bit.ly/1gYxqYL
Muckety
A website that maps connections between people and organisations, visualizing influence using interactive maps. Frequently covers US think tanks.
http://bit.ly/1fkjiaA

National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
Organization advocating for greater foundation transparency and accountability.
http://bit.ly/1b16J5x

Observatoire Français des Think Tanks
Acts as an information nexus for Francophone think tanks, publishing news, interviews and opinion pieces. Sometimes also features Spanish language content.
http://bit.ly/1mlSTMu

On Think Tanks
A lively blog dedicated to think tanks, including issues related to funding.
http://bit.ly/1bLL280
  - It has compiled useful list of think tank directories (http://bit.ly/1xOUJN0)
    (Disclosure: Transparify is affiliated with On Think Tanks Labs.)

Open Secrets
Website run by the Center for Responsive Politics that tracks money in US politics and its effect on elections and public policy. Strong focus on lobbying.
http://bit.ly/1iUpuYt

Philanthropy Roundtable
Organization dedicated to protecting and improving philanthropy in the US.
http://bit.ly/1cBHeTj
  - Its ACR project advocates for protecting the privacy and tax deductibility of contributions to think tanks
    (http://bit.ly/1nxA7R7)

Politics & Ideas
Initiative to encourage the consolidation of a community of practitioners focused on policy research in developing countries.
http://bit.ly/1bWTfbB

Powerbase
A collectively written online encyclopaedia of people, issues, and groups shaping the public agenda that was initiated by UK’s Spinwatch. Contains background info on many think tanks.
http://bit.ly/1JoASMi

Public Accountability Initiative
A non-profit organization “investigating power and corruption at the heights of business and government”.
http://bit.ly/1bu2jEj

Publish What You Fund
A non-profit organisation promoting aid transparency.
http://bit.ly/1eaC3iN

Spinwatch
British organization tracking lobbying activities and advocating for greater lobbying transparency. Frequently publishes reports linking UK think tanks to lobbying work.
http://www.spinwatch.org/
Sunlight Foundation
A non-profit organisation that advocates for more transparency in the U.S.
http://bit.ly/M826er

The High Horse
Blog about think tank ethics and governance by Marie Newhouse.

Think Tank Fund
An Open Society Foundations Program that gives grants to think tanks in Europe and the South Caucasus.
http://osf.to/1mJuAGC
(Disclosure: TTF funded the first project cycle of Transparify.)

Think Tank Initiative
Initiative aimed at “strengthening the capacity of independent policy research organizations in the developing world.”
http://bit.ly/1fUXA0p
(Disclosure: Transparify’s Hans Gutbrod is a former employee.)

Think Tank Map
Worldwide observatory that aims to provide a complete overview of every active think tank in the field of climate change economics and policy, including which projects are currently under development.
http://www.thinktankmap.org/

Think Tank Network Initiative
Supports the study of think tanks through a network perspective. Data on hundreds of think tanks and persons affiliated with them, and a blog.
http://thinktanknetworkresearch.net/

Think Tank Watch
A lively blog covering think tank “news, gossip, personnel, reports, studies, and pretty much anything else related to think tanks”. Strong twitter presence.

Think Tanked
http://wapo.st/1e9B90w

Think Tanks and Civil Society Program
University of Pennsylvania program that studies think tanks and conducts an annual ranking of think tanks around the world.
  ○ Currently runs the “Ensuring the Quality and Integrity of Public Policy Research Project” about think tanks http://bit.ly/1pXpxEQ

Think Tanks and Foreign Policy Program
A Foreign Policy Research Institute program that aims to connect regional and international organisations.
http://bit.ly/1eiU3Wz

Think Twice Think Tank Review Project
A National Education Policy Center project that reviews selected publications from think tanks focusing on education policy.
Transparency International
An international anti-corruption organization that promotes transparency and accountability. Currently working to define standards for NGO transparency.
http://bit.ly/1idOcCK
(Disclosure: Transparify’s Till Bruckner is a former employee and consultant.)

Transparify
Initiative rating the financial transparency of think tanks worldwide. Website includes a blog.
http://www.transparify.org/
  o  Hosts four annotated bibliographies on think tanks worldwide:
    http://www.transparify.org/publications-main/
  o  Regularly tweets out news related to think tanks via @Transparify

Who Funds You?
A UK initiative to promote think tank funding transparency that has rated several UK think tanks on their disclosure of donors. Note that their rating methodology differs from that used by Transparify.
http://bit.ly/1hcUVM6

Who’s Lobbying? – Think Tanks
Compiles data on UK lobbying and public affairs activity by think tanks, including lobbying firms retained, government meetings, and evidence given in parliament.
http://whoslobbying.com/uk/think_tanks

Transparify will release the results of its second round of think tank transparency ratings in early 2015.