



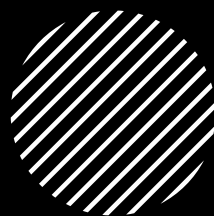
School of Thinktankers (First day – recap)

*Starting a journey of discovery and
learning*





A first day...



Warm up (Andrea – Marilia – Enrique):

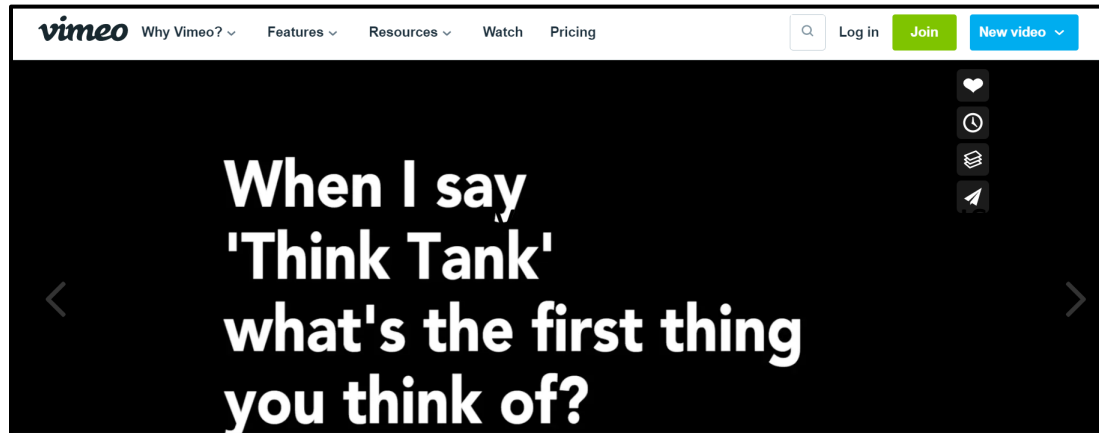
- For reviewing the program / modules.
- For identifying expectation / challenges.
- For introducing participants (Virtual Fondue).

Initial discussion on Think Tanks (Enrique):

- What are Thinktanks?
- What do they do?

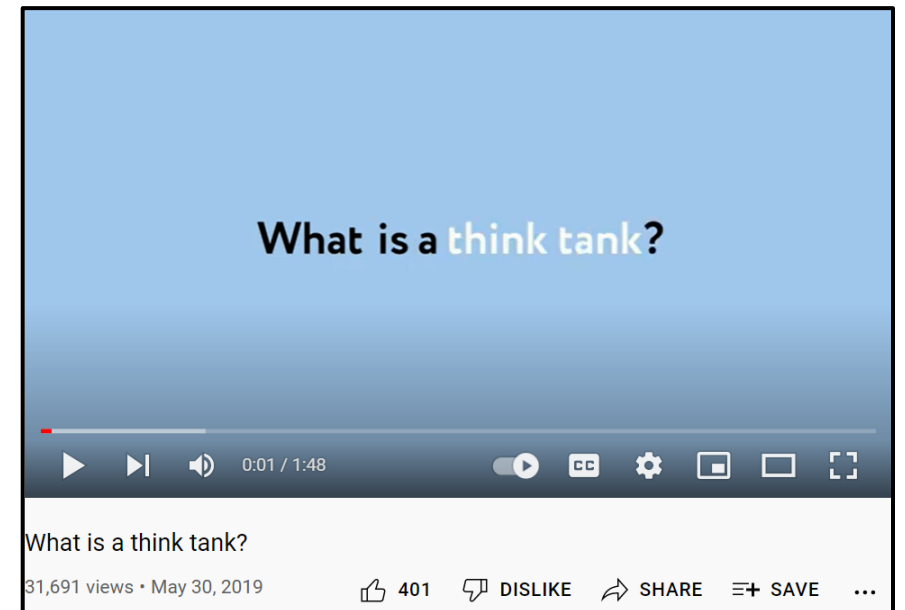


Videos to open the discussion on Think Tanks*



<https://vimeo.com/328023181>

* This videos were shared by Andrea (Slack).



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4IF2MIF9KM>

What are Thinktanks?

- Diverse models of organizations (different names / nominations)...
- Which look for influencing policy / practice based on research...

Think Tanks as an Emergent Field

By Tom Medvetz

For the scholar who wishes to understand the think tank and its place in American politics, the fundamental problem is that the central concept is fuzzy, mutable, and contentious. As Simon James aptly noted in 1998, "Discussion of think tanks...has a tendency to get bogged down in the vexed question of defining what we mean by 'think tank' – an exercise which often degenerates into futile semantics."¹ In the decade since James wrote those words, the scholarly discussion surrounding think tanks has grown in scope and sophistication. Yet I will argue that the so-called "dilemma of definition" has never truly been resolved.² The purpose of this brief paper is to outline an approach to the study of think tanks that overcomes the most pressing difficulties associated with the concept.

A murky object

One common premise links existing scholarly definitions. This is the tenet that think tanks comprise a distinctive class of organizations that are formally autonomous from states, markets, and universities. The emphasis is plain, for example, in Stone's encyclopedia definition of think tanks as "relatively autonomous

¹ Simon James. 1998. Review of *Capturing the Political Imagination: Think Tanks and the Policy Process*, by Diane Stone. *Public Administration* 76(2): 409-10.

² I take this phrase from Stone and Denham, who devote several pages to it while noting that, "Virtually all of our contributors point to this dilemma." Diane Stone and Andrew Denham, eds. 2004. *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 2.

[Microsoft Word - Medvetz.docx \(slack-files.com\)](#)



What do they do?

- Generate ideas...
- Define unaddressed public problems...
- Propose (new / reformed) approaches for addressing issues...
- Influence the policy process...
- Transit between governmental and non-governmental entities (technical members / technocracy / experts).
- Provide acceptability / validity to policies, ideas, and practices...



Summary

- Copy of models is not recommended.
- Own context define its boundaries / purposes / contributions.
- Organizational transparency is an important asset (ideology / purposes / funders / etc.).

