

Cultures of expertise and technologies of government: The emergence of think tanks in Chile

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Critique of Anthropology

2016, Vol. 36(2) 145–167

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DOI: 10.1177/0308275X15614634

coa.sagepub.com



Abstract

This article analyses the relation between the formation of a corpus of technologies of government and the establishment of bodies of actors that lay claim to this type of knowledge. In order to investigate this phenomenon, I examine the major milestones in the emergence of think tanks in Chile with the intention of uncovering not only the political aspects of technologies of government but also cultural ones, which come into play through people's beliefs and practices. I approach think tanks in the following three ways, which appear to be different dimensions of the same phenomenon: (a) as global assemblages; (b) through the genealogy of their emergence and (c) within their spheres and 'sites' of activity. Despite their differences in ideas and values, think tanks share the characteristic of being sites where neoliberal governmentality can be reproduced through a migratory technology of governing that interacts with situated sets of elements and historical conjunctures. The effects of this phenomenon are manifested in the establishment of a market for expertise opened up by think tanks, 'freed' from state bureaucracy and underpinned by a logic of competition that is supported by networks that blur the boundaries between public and private institutions.

Keywords

Cultures of expertise, think tanks, genealogy, anthropology of experts, technologies of government, Chile

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Introduction

In the chasm between praxis and theories of practice, there is a tangled mass of archaic mythology concerning technical efficiency, discretion, profitability and objectivity. This article discusses certain crucial aspects of knowledge and expertise explored in recent anthropological investigations (Boyer, 2008, 2013; Holmes and Marcus, 2005; Riles, 2011; Shore et al., 2011; Strathern, 2006). In particular, I investigate the problem of the configuration of expert knowledge – that is to say, the process of its authorization and its institutional legitimization (Goodwin 1994; Hogle, 2002a, 2002b; Holmes and Marcus, 2006) – as a sovereign field. To achieve these ends, I focus on one of the most controversial facets of such knowledge – political expertise. Narrowing this focus, which is still too broad, I restrict my analysis to the emergence of think tanks in Chile. The study of this process sheds light on the conditions that facilitated the appearance and development of the expertise displayed by think tanks, on the configuration of their experts and on some of the cultural peculiarities of this phenomenon in Chile. In order to highlight the different dimensions of this singular proteiform phenomenon, I limit this analysis to the concepts, genealogy and geographical context of think tank expertise.

The rise of consultancy (Faust, 2013; Stewart and Strathern, 2005) is related to the growing complexity of decision-making processes in an increasingly uncertain and interconnected world (Callon et al., 2009). In this context, think tanks and consultant agencies appear as a privileged expression of what Stephan Collier and Aihwa Ong call ‘global assemblages’. They are sites ‘in which the forms and values of individual and collective existence are problematized or at stake, in the sense that they are subject to technological, political, and ethical reflection and intervention’ (Collier and Ong, 2005: 4). It is from this perspective that I explore the simultaneous formation of a corpus of technologies of government and of bodies of experts that lay claim to this knowledge. In order to investigate this phenomenon, I examine the major milestones in the emergence of think tanks in Chile with the intention of uncovering not only the political dimension of technologies of government but also cultural ones, which come into play through people’s beliefs and practices.¹ I approach think tanks in the following three ways, which appear to be different dimensions of the same phenomenon: (a) as global assemblages, (b) through the genealogy of their emergence and (c) within their spheres and ‘sites’ of activity. In addition to the genealogical analysis, I have explored think tanks in different contexts (such as in the daily routine of their offices, in conference rooms for businessmen, in memorials and religious ceremonies, in business districts where many of their experts work). Thus, for example, I had to assume different roles, such as volunteer assistant, intern, student, external consultant under contract, speaker in think tank meeting and interviewer by appointment. Furthermore, I was invited to all sorts of events: cocktail parties, book presentations, seminars, summits, public tributes, meetings of advisory councils, funerals and ceremonial openings.

Assemblages of technologies of government

What exactly do global assemblages consist of? How can they be identified? Where can they be observed? These questions are of interest to anthropology in that they reflect the discipline's inclination to explore diverse temporal regimes and socio-spatial contexts. Beyond the necessary recognition of the complexity of an interconnected world, a major challenge for anthropological approaches to technologies of government is focusing on the manner in which expert knowledge, its usages and its incarnations convert themselves into sites amenable to ethnographic and historical analysis. A series of recent ethnographies have creatively explored the political phenomena implicated in the formation of para-infrastructures, such as those involved in humanitarian interventions (Fassin and Pandolfi, 2010; Feldman and Ticktin, 2010) and the politics of AIDS therapies (Biehl, 2007; Nguyen, 2010). Think tanks and consulting firms in the field of public and corporate governance mirror human rights NGOs in terms of the transnational nature of the ideas and technologies they mobilize (Aedo, 2012; Pandolfi, 2002; Welker et al., 2011). The focus on these intermediate formations of power (Medvetz, 2012) presents new ethnographic dilemmas that have led anthropologists to rethink the ambiguity of political subjectivities (Biehl and McKay, 2012; Englund, 2006). These assemblages of technologies of government play an interconnecting role with their disposition to act as a hinge between the local and the global, between the public and the private and between technical impartiality and the overlapping of beliefs and values. In addition to this disposition, think tanks in Chile have emerged in tandem with the country's transition from dictatorship to democracy, which has inevitably imbued these global artefacts with attributes of the local political culture. Think tanks represent not only paradigmatic figures of the globalization of political expertise but also a challenge for anthropological exploration within a deepening process of neoliberalization (Gledhill, 2007; Peck and Tickell, 2002).

Networks of think tanks are involved in the shaping of a global market of expertise,² which, far from rejecting local political cultures, encourages – in the context of neoliberal governmentality (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002) – the creation of experts imbued with the idiosyncrasies of the national elites. From the perspective adopted in this article, think tanks form global assemblages in as much as they are nodal points in broader networks of expert knowledge. Think tanks are composed of heterogeneous elements such as experts and expertise, politicians and entrepreneurs, technologies and beliefs, and national and transnational patrons. How are these assemblages formed? What mechanisms are involved? In order to address this phenomenon without becoming bogged down in generalities or irrelevant details, I shall take these questions as a starting point for analysing the conditions that have made it possible for think tanks to emerge in Chile. By following this process, I will seek to shed light on how the 'assemblage' of components has led to the emergence of a new form of organization and a new breed of expert.

Historicizing think tanks and their expert knowledge as assemblages of ideas and global techniques located in specific times and places is, in a certain sense, a challenging method that is intended – in line with a genealogical approach – ‘to remove what is seen as immobile [like the status of expert knowledge], fragment what was thought to be united [like the figure of the expert]; show the heterogeneity of what was imagined to be consistent with itself [like the think tanks]’ (Foucault, 1994: 142, my parentheses). From this perspective, I will explore how ‘heterogeneous layers’ of events have formed a terrain conducive to the emergence of think tanks. I will discuss three aspects of this process: the advent of private research institutes independent of universities controlled by the military following the coup d’état by Pinochet; the collapse of public sources of research in social sciences and their replacement with the technical–financial support of foundations, consulting firms and inter/transnational institutions; and the emergence of a new kind of cosmopolitan expert with a steadfast belief in the principles of democratic rule and free markets (Friedman, 2007). These dimensions, ‘assembled’ in a historical process, enable us to understand, beyond the differences in structure, size and orientation that prevail between think tanks, the common ‘breakdowns’ that make their existence possible.

Experts in democracy, who came into being with the emergence of think tanks during the transition period, have played a key role in the articulation between global networks and local elites in Chile’s recent history. Through one of their fundamental functions – the translation of global knowledge – experts adapt the hegemonic imaginary that circulate in transnational organizations to local cultures and interests. This phenomenon creates an arena of influence in which control is exercised by the experts with the best networks and negotiating skills.

Each individual think tank is configured at a specific historical conjuncture, yet their identities remain fluctuant for a variety of reasons, such as the relations of power in which they are implicated, the events in which they participate (e.g. colloquiums, celebrations, consortiums, consultancies) and their specific interlocutory audience (e.g. government, parliament, business associations, universities, consulting firms, international financial institutions, foreign foundations, transnational think tank networks, philanthropists, venture capitalists). The instability of the assemblages of experts, philanthropists and politicians creates the conditions for the birth of new think tanks, but it also sows the seeds of failure for many such organizations. The evolution of these assemblages exhibits a sort of physics marked by countervailing forces of fission, fusion, federation and reconversion. Borrowing the image of rhizomorphic interconnections described in *Mille Plateaux* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980), one can conceptualize the morphology of think tanks as variable (in size and structure), unstable (in sources of financing) and composed of heterogeneous elements (economic, political, moral, historical), but also as containing points of reversible escape that drive the components (mainly experts) to metamorphose, changing their identities (e.g. as think tank expert, cabinet minister, professional lobbyist, academic intellectual, partner in a consulting firm).

A nomadic think tank

The dynamics of the assemblages may also be observed in particular places and practices linked to think tanks. Exploring different places offers an opportunity to observe the unstable and heterogeneous composition of these organizations. Urban spaces, such as neighbourhoods, buildings and offices, give significant clues to what the organizations and experts are ‘assembling’ in their regular activities. From an ethnographic point of view, practices of expertise are not unrelated to the places where those activities are carried out; in fact, such sites serve as genuine cultural markers for think tanks, consulting firms and even the experts themselves.

In order to explore more closely how think tanks are configured as global assemblages, I will focus on a particular case to analyse how think tanks are formed from interconnections of a wide variety of places, ideas, experts, politicians and patrons. The relationship of the *Expansiva* experts to the places where this think tank has conducted its activities over the years is significant. *Expansiva*, which was one of the most influential bodies of experts during the first administration of President Bachelet (Figure 1), is currently in the process of being rebranded as *Fuerza Pública*.

Given its essentially nomadic character, *Expansiva* offers insights into certain specific qualities of think tanks as global transnational assemblages. Prior to its installation in Santiago’s historic downtown in 2008, the think tank was largely itinerant. Rather than presenting an exhaustive list of the places where the group’s experts have met, I will discuss those that I consider to be the most significant.

In July 2001, most of the people who would become members of the general council of *Expansiva* met in the convention centre of the Banco Central, located in an upscale neighbourhood in the eastern part of Santiago. The event was led by Andrés Velasco, president of the think tank and professor of economics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. At the time, the core of *Expansiva* was formed mainly of young economists and political scientists with postgraduate qualifications from foreign universities – mostly in the United States – who had become interested in Chile not as a subject for their doctoral theses but as a field for political–intellectual investment.

The meetings of this think tank cultivate certain elitism. In fact, since its inception the identity of this organization has been marked by a strong sense of exclusivity. Most of its seminars are organized on an invitation-only basis, with guests chosen from the members’ social networks. As one guest researcher commented, seemingly unfamiliar with the *mise en scène* of that meeting of experts, ‘really it was very glamorous and lavish; I felt like the ugly duckling, everything was perfect and very well decorated’ (interview, 9 December 2008).

In 2002, *Expansiva* staff attended a seminar at the David Rockefeller Centre for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS) at Harvard University, which proved a significant milestone in the history and identity of this think tank. The seminar brought together about 70 participants, including several experts from *Expansiva*; ‘the new generation, almost all under 40 years old’, as a report from the David Rockefeller Centre pointed out (DRCLAS 2006: 35). Although most of

Andrés Velasco, Minister of Finance
 Marcelo Tokman, Minister of Energy
 María Olivia Recart, Undersecretary of Finance
 Jean-Jacques Duhart, Undersecretary of Economy
 Pablo Bello, Undersecretary of Telecommunications
 Daniel Fernández, Director General of Televisión Nacional de Chile
 Guillermo Larraín, Superintendent of Securities and Insurance
 Solange Bernstein, Superintendent of Pension Fund Administrators
 Carlos Álvarez, Vice President of the Chilean Economic Development Agency (CORFO)
 Mariana Schkolnik, Director of the National Statistics Institute
 Luis Felipe Céspedes, Senior Advisor of the Ministry of Finance (named Minister of Economy by President Bachelet in 2014)
 Alejandro Micco, Chief Economist of capital markets in the Ministry of Finance (named Undersecretary of Finance by President Bachelet in 2014)
 Eduardo Bitrán, President of the National Innovation Council for Competitiveness (Minister of Public Works from 2006 to 2008)
 Pilar Armanet, Chilean ambassador to France (Minister Secretary of Government 2009)
 Pablo Castañeda, Senior Analyst in the General Directorate of Pension Fund Administrators
 Alejandro Charme, Legal Counsel in the General Directorate of the Pension Fund Administrators
 Raúl Arrieta, Chief of Staff of the Undersecretary of Telecommunications
 Heidi Berner, Division Head of Management Control of Budget Department of the Ministry of Finance
 Paula Pacheco, Advisor to Counsellor of the Undersecretary of Regional Development
 Jorge Rodríguez, Head of Research Department of Budget Department

Figure 1. Members of *Expansiva* in the government in 2008.

the participants whom I interviewed remember the event with satisfaction, some hinted at the lack of political diversity among those present. As one think tank expert put it, ‘people were missing here. People with other perspectives, with different ideas’ (interview, 12 January 2009).

The physical distance from Chile, as well as the place where the meeting was held, Boston, considered an intellectual Mecca by many think tank experts, was (according to some of the participants) particularly conducive to reflecting about the challenges that lay ahead for Chile. The famous Harvard Square in Cambridge provided the backdrop for the meeting, which was held at the prestigious Harvard Divinity School. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a more inspirational setting for such a meeting. Carlos Franz, a Chilean intellectual invited to the event, described his unprecedented experience:

[. . .] it is possible that this kind of ecclesiastic refectory at the Harvard Divinity School was what elevated the imaginative, and therefore creative, thought of the participants.

Perhaps, it was the fact of being a prudent six thousand miles from national electorates and clients. In any case, it cannot be denied that the ‘young leaders’ rapidly saw the dream of reason united with the dream of imagination. (notes written by Franz a few months after the meeting)

The social and cultural ties among Chilean experts made it possible for them to create a familiar atmosphere several thousand kilometres away from Chile. After the Boston seminar, the experts from *Expansiva* resolved to recreate the experience in the southern hemisphere every summer. The first two meetings were held at the Valle Nevado ski resort near Santiago. This exclusive resort was transformed into a stage set for a real political prophecy. In fact, a year after the meeting in the Chilean ski resort, the founder of *Expansiva*, Andrés Velasco, was appointed Minister of Finance, and several of the think tank’s experts were given key positions alongside him in the government.³

The itinerant meetings of the expert network of *Expansiva* enabled Andrés Velasco – former chief of staff of another Minister of Finance, Alejandro Foxley (himself founder of a think tank called CIEPLAN) – to assemble a group of professionals specializing in government sciences and to position this at the crossroads of several political–professional networks. Before founding *Expansiva*, Velasco was a well-known technocrat and respected academic; the successful creation of the think tank assured his reputation among his peers and gave him the legitimacy to exercise a new kind of political expert leadership.

Towards a genealogy of think tanks in Chile

The formation of technocratic knowledge in Chile is configured in such a way that it can be examined from a diachronic perspective. As it is impossible to discuss all aspects of this vast subject, I will focus on identifying some of the more significant milestones in this process. This focus will shed light on how technologies of government have come about and how their ‘emancipation’ from state institutions came to fruition, was accepted and was even desired by certain actors, as reflected in the phenomenon of think tanks. Adopting a genealogical perspective entails a shift in the field of vision that has important repercussions for how one approaches the problem of the emergence of think tanks. From the point of view of a genealogist, understanding think tanks implies exploring how and from which strata of meaning these entities become established as objects of action and reflection (Bégout, 2000).

The advent of private research institutes

The coup d’état of 1973 and the subsequent military intervention in Chilean universities impelled NGOs to include survival strategies for social science investigation in their operation frameworks. Hundreds of research centres in public universities were closed (Garretón and Pozo, 1984). The situation was grave,

with more than a thousand professors being expelled from the University of Chile and the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile between September 1973 and September 1974 alone (Lladser, 1989). The private research centres that appeared during this period were in large part a reaction to these circumstances. The independent research organizations that existed prior to 1973 (e.g. CIDE, ILADES, FLACSO) were reconfigured in the wake of the political changes that the country was experiencing and offered refuge to prestigious investigators expelled from the public universities. The state resources allocated to higher education were reduced significantly, private universities began to multiply and the traditional public universities were dislocated into smaller units spread across the country (Brunner, 1982; Vasconi, 1996).

The institutionalized violence in the university field not only modified the conditions of the production of knowledge, but also forever altered the lives of numerous academics. In order to survive as researchers, many academics had to go into exile, while those who stayed in the country had to adapt to working in precarious and informal research institutions, dependent largely on foreign funds. This loss of material security and the destabilization of the fundamental parameters of intellectual practice produced a situation of radical uncertainty. According to a contemporary witness, 'the erosion of the criteria of normality [...] [provoked] not only a personal questioning, but, also, a perception of problems that [researchers] weren't accustomed to considering, such as everyday life itself' (Lechner, 1986: 4).

During the dictatorship of Pinochet, the Catholic Church enjoyed certain prerogatives over other non-governmental organizations. Church institutions were the only organizations that did not require the permission of the government to carry out meetings on their own property, and their publications were less exposed to censorship by the regime than those of other organizations. In 1974, a year after the coup, the Chilean Institute for Humanistic Studies (ICHEH) was created under the institutional protection of the church and with the financial support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. ICHEH pushed for the development of new research centres related to the Social-Christian movements (Brescia, 2001; Orrego Vicuña, 1991). In November 1975, Cardinal Silva Henríquez founded the Academy of Christian Humanism (AHC) in response to the military intervention in universities. From its creation, the AHC sought to establish cooperative ties with international foundations and agencies⁴ (Brunner and Barrios, 1987; Diaz et al., 1984; Lladser, 1989; Salazar and Valderrama, 2000).

In 1982, with the first economic crisis under the new neoliberal model and the start of another cycle of protests, a new historical conjuncture characterized by a relative political openness began. The gradual establishment of small spaces for public deliberation created favourable conditions for the emergence of new think tanks. In 1985, there were more than 40 think tanks dedicated to social issues in Chile. These organizations employed around 550 researchers (without counting research assistants or administrative staff), more than half of whom (65%) worked full-time (Barrios and Brunner, 1988: 32; Brunner, 1986: 26). The impact of these think tanks on the production of knowledge was considerable: the majority

of articles and books written in the field of social sciences by Chilean academics were linked to these new non-governmental assemblages of political leaders, experts and strategic communication technologies.

Technical and financial support from inter/transnational organizations

Prior to 1973, the majority of international financial agencies supported investigative programmes through the framework of university institutions. After the coup d'état, international cooperation agencies and foundations that were already participating in the development of national social sciences revised their financial policies. As a condition for their continued financial support, these international agencies required research centres to transform themselves into private independent organizations free of control from universities suffering from military intervention.

Between 1970 and 1980, scholars from European and North American universities regularly visited Chile, bringing with them information, ideas and support networks. In addition, universities as diverse as Stanford, Stockholm, Notre Dame, Duke, University of California San Diego and Oxford offered faculty positions, grants for postgraduate study and publication facilities to exiled Chilean academics. Non-university institutes, such as the Latin American Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington and the Center for Inter-American Relations in New York, organized conferences that permitted Chilean researchers to travel and meet with their foreign counterparts (Puryear, 1994: 50). These undertakings, which were unparalleled in both size and scope, encouraged the creation of transnational networks that helped experts, opposed to Pinochet, to develop action-research strategies and a medium-term work agenda.

Owing in part to the support of foreign academic communities, dissident Chilean intellectuals, although marginalized in their own country, remained connected to global networks of investigators. A large range of private and public philanthropic organizations in Europe and North America supported the new Chilean think tanks throughout the 17 years of the military regime. Foreign donors helped social scientists to remain professionally active in Chile, which dissuaded the latter from abandoning their academic activities or searching for foreign posts. These donors provided the initial capital for a vast network of new think tanks and continued to support these organizations for over a decade (Angell, 2002). Without this lasting input from foreign donors, the majority of transitional think tanks would not have survived.

The necessity to obtain funds in a highly competitive international market had important implications for the emergent think tanks. In general, foreign donors tended to value scientifically formatted works about technocratic themes, which, in turn, disincentivized critical essays in which the author's ideological positions were made clear. The subject matter, structure and scope of research projects had to conform to the standards of the international funding agencies involved. Social sciences research in Chile, like the country's economy, was opened up to international competition. In the words of a reputable intellectual and a minister during

the transition, researchers were subject to the formula ‘publish or perish, no-nonsense and accountability’ (Brunner, 1989: 138).

The think tanks behind the defeat of Pinochet

During the 1980s, small spaces for debate gradually emerged in the context of humanitarian associations. At this time, the think tanks took advantage of the few opportunities to influence the leaders of the opposition to Pinochet by setting the parameters of discussion on the Chilean democratic transition. The democracy experts, to borrow the expression of Nicolas Guilhot (2001, 2005), not only played the role of political advisers, they also served as intermediaries between the world of technocrats and that of politicians, and between the economic elite and civil society. These experts became key parts of the assemblages of technologies of government that engendered the new Chilean democratic regime.

The work undertaken by the experts of opposition think tanks contributed to the formation of a ‘theoretical’ foundation for the possible construction of political alliances that were less explicitly ideological and more oriented towards pragmatic concerns. As one of the intellectuals involved in this process stated, ‘I remember that in the year 1987, we, with a group of people made a sort of alliance between three centres, one was the Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies (ILET), the other was the Center for Development Studies (CED), and the last was SUR – Professional Consultants and we created the CIS consortium (The acronym CIS was formed from the initials of the three centers that participated in its creation – i.e. CED, ILET and SUR). We began make strong lobbying efforts, especially of all of the heads of the parties in favour of this notion of the *Concertación*⁵’ (Eugenio Tironi in Ortega and Moreno 2002: 162). The birth of this think tank reveals how the ‘offer’ of political expertise often preceded the requests of the heads of the political parties. In effect, as Jeffrey Puryear (1994: 139) observes, the CIS consortium marked the culmination of the think tank experts’ efforts to convey the implications of their studies to the political leaders. Guillermo Sunkel, who worked in a think tank during the Pinochet era, highlights an interesting aspect of the changes in the field of political consulting:

[...] the rebirth of public opinion polls didn’t obey a demand ‘exterior’ to its producers. The first interested in this type of studies were those who did them. [...] The political leaders of the opposition started to show interest only once the knowledge obtained through the surveys had gained legitimacy. These sectors where ‘conquered’ by their very producers. It was these leaders of the opposition that where subject to a work of ‘seduction’ that was part of the socialization of the product itself. Up until late 1987 the relation was always of a unidirectional character: from the producers to the political leaders and the media. (Sunkel, 1989: 5–6)

In the institutional context of the CIS consortium, in 1987 ILET members invited a team of experts from the international consultant agency Sawyer

Miller Group to Chile to help them improve their surveys and political analysis (Lladser, 1989). The local experts hoped that Sawyer Miller Group would bring them cutting-edge methods and technologies. This international agency, which was highly regarded in circles of democracy promotion, had recently provided technical assistance for the Philippines plebiscite that brought down Ferdinand Marcos – a political process that shared many characteristics with the Chilean referendum that led to the end of Pinochet's dictatorship. According to James Harding, this consulting agency was the vanguard of innovation during an era when television was redefining the terms of political debate. Harding, a former editor of *The Times* magazine, argues that the work of Sawyer Miller Group was decisive in the gestation of a new class of political professional:

[...] they grasped the supremacy of image; [...] they placed their faith in continuous polling; they championed the permanent campaign; they put greater emphasis on character than on policy; they sliced and diced the electorate into myriad little targeted constituencies. They did all this because it worked. [...] They did not invent the art of political communication, but they helped forge the massive modern industry. (Harding, 2008: 5–7)

The director of ILET, Juan Gabriel Valdés, who is known in the field of Latin American studies for his doctoral thesis on the Chicago Boys of Pinochet, was one of the first Chilean researchers to contact Sawyer Miller Group. During an internship at the University of Notre Dame in early 1987, Valdés was invited by the consultant firm to a meeting in New York. A few weeks later, Valdés travelled to New York with an idea in mind: to propose that the Sawyer Miller consultants visit Chile to observe the political process developing there. As Valdés himself describes, the experts of Sawyer Miller Group became fascinated with the 'Chilean case':

[The experts said] Look, we would like to go to Chile, but we need an intermediary there. So we're not going to charge for the trip. We'll go to Chile, and we'll explain to you on the ground what we do. Then we'll tell your people we are interested in doing a survey in Chile and that we would like to see what other kinds of social research you have. (Juan Gabriel Valdés in Puryear 1994: 139)

It was on this occasion that Valdés first heard about the use of focus groups. 'Until then, I knew nothing about them', he later recalled. A significant number of the opinion polls and focus group studies carried out by think tanks between 1985 and 1989 were funded by agencies like the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute and the Open Society Foundation (Brunner and Sunkel, 1993; Frohmann, 1996; Puryear, 1994). The 'democracy promotion' agencies played an important role in the circulation of new technologies for data analysis and strategic communication. In this context, Chilean think tanks

concentrated their efforts to translate intellectual influence into genuine political influence. One ILET consultant described this process as follows:

In order to get past the old role of the intellectual to actual political influence it was necessary, before carrying out opinion polls, to implement the notion of political consultancy. This was essentially a question of the 'advisor to the Prince'. In fact, the first question that we posed as members of CIS was that of how we could become 'advisors to the Prince'. (Guillermo Campero in Sunkel 1989: 25)

Through a process of persuasion and lobbying, which involved organizing meetings and preparing specialized documents, the members of Chilean think tanks caught the attention of political leaders by involving them in the 'expert' debate on transitional strategies. Democracy experts helped to introduce the imperative of expertise into the political rationality. The years of dictatorship had had a considerable impact on the depoliticization of civic culture and technical arguments acquired an unprecedented power of persuasion in broad sectors of the population. This situation facilitated the infiltration of the technocratic ideas promoted by think tanks into the world of political elites. One opponent of Pinochet noted precisely this symbiosis between experts and politicians during the last years of the dictatorship:

The political leaders of the opposition easily moved into the academic world. It was in this context of strong reciprocal relationships between social scientists and political leaders that the demand for expert knowledge emerged. The political professionals became customers and users of public opinion studies. However, these products were first placed in the market by the social scientists. (Sunkel, 1993: 214)

By laying claim to technical knowledge and scientific reasoning about the behaviour of the electorate, think tank experts played a decisive role in changing the strategies employed by the leaders of the opposition to Pinochet. This body of democracy experts put into practice new techniques of strategic communication and promoted ideas and models of negotiation, persuading the political elite of the utility of this new class of political consultant.

Places and entrepreneurs of expertise

Far from being the exception, the phenomenon of oscillation between activities of apparently different 'nature' seems to be characteristic of the practices of experts operating within global assemblages, such as think tanks. The exploration of the diverse spheres and sites of activity in which these actors operate will provide what I think may be a key to approaching this matter. In fact, a well-accredited expert can unite in his- or herself a set of work practices that are oriented in a multitude of directions: from transnational corporations towards consultancy for non-profit organizations; from the management of consulting agencies towards the honorary

patronage of new think tanks; from the internal supervision of a think tank's research programmes towards participation in presidential councils; from working as a simple university professor towards participation on the board of a university and from the regular publication of opinion columns towards the personal coaching of political and business leaders.

The higher the influence attributed to an expert, the more the scope of his or her capacities tends to fragment into increasingly heterogeneous fields of expertise. These activities are often complemented by periodic stays at renowned North American or European universities. Every so often, the entrepreneurs of expertise momentarily suspend or minimize the rest of their functions in order to convert themselves into quasi-academics. For a time, these actors are removed from the sale of their services and the demands of their clients, and, consequently, their normal imperative to implement new technologies of communication and government disappears from their intellectual horizons. For entrepreneurs of expertise, these academic exercises in foreign countries provide another type of prestige. More implicitly, this movement towards universities of the northern hemisphere carries with it the image of a pilgrimage – an action that recalls the original initiatory journey that enabled local experts to obtain scientific training and internationally recognized academic degrees.

In both the conventional literature on policy expertise and the exegesis given by the experts themselves, the space inhabited by the members of think tanks is a much overlooked issue. For example, the majority of Chilean think tanks assign a large part of their efforts to developing an active presence on the Internet. This drive has become so pronounced that various contemporary think tanks appear to exist much more in virtual spaces than in actual identifiable physical spaces. Nevertheless, this does not mean that think tanks can completely transcend the concrete spaces from which they inscribe and orient their practices.

The financial district of 'Sanhattan' (a hybridization of Santiago and Manhattan) reflects in the urban landscape of the Chilean capital a social utopia populated by skyscrapers, frequented by business elites and governed by the wealth symbolized by the Big Apple. Sanhattan acts as a magnetic pole of fortune in the cartography of consultant agencies and think tanks; indeed, the district contains the highest concentration of such organizations in the country. In fact, even without considering consulting firms or lobbying agencies, there are more than 20 think tanks within Sanhattan. Marc Abélès (2002: 44), writing of Silicon Valley, the mythical cradle of tech-business, notes that 'the principle of inter-knowledge is an essential element of the economic success of the valley'. This principle can also be used to characterize the social dynamic of the territorial axis of Chilean think tanks. The confined space of Sanhattan, which comprises just a few streets, is frequented by business managers, young executives and political leaders reborn as private advisors, who are linked by family ties, friendship or professional alliances. Figure 2 shows the distribution of think tanks in the Sanhattan field of influence; Figure 3 shows the three areas of Santiago with the highest concentration of think tanks.

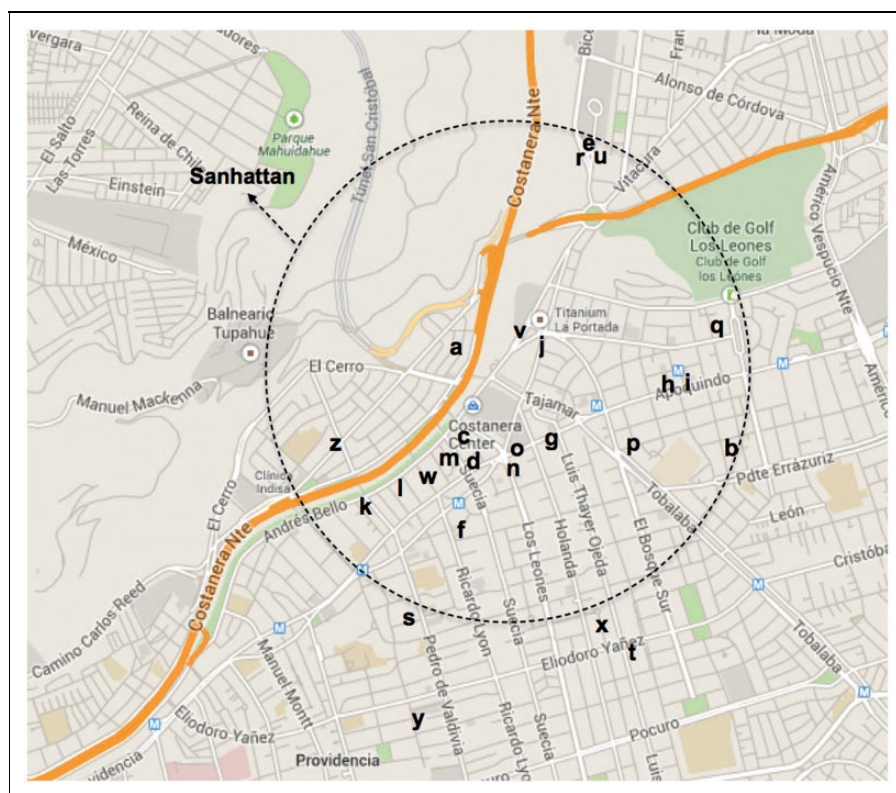


Figure 2. Think tanks in Sanhattan.

The specific areas in which think tanks are established, as well as the neighbourhoods in which they carry out their activities, give a geopolitical dimension to their identities. In effect, the choice of office site has strategic dimensions. The operative location of the think tanks in the capital's geography – whether it be in the financial district of Sanhattan, in the chic neighbourhood of Nueva Las Condes or around the Palacio de la Moneda – reflects aspects of their histories and interests. In the same manner, the sites used for academic activities (e.g. seminars, conferences), political events (e.g. summits, meetings) and rituals (e.g. commemorations, inaugurations) mark their organizational identities and offer clues as to the characteristics of their social networks and their aesthetic preferences. In this regard, the Centre for Policy Studies (CEP), an influential think tank promoting neoliberal reforms, supported by local businessmen and mentored by Friedrich Hayek, illustrates how these organizations, despite their transnational nature, locate their practices in areas frequented by their financiers and partners. The headquarters of the CEP is near Sanhattan, in a luxurious house surrounded by parkland.⁶ Right next to the offices of the CEP is the headquarters of the Confederation for Production

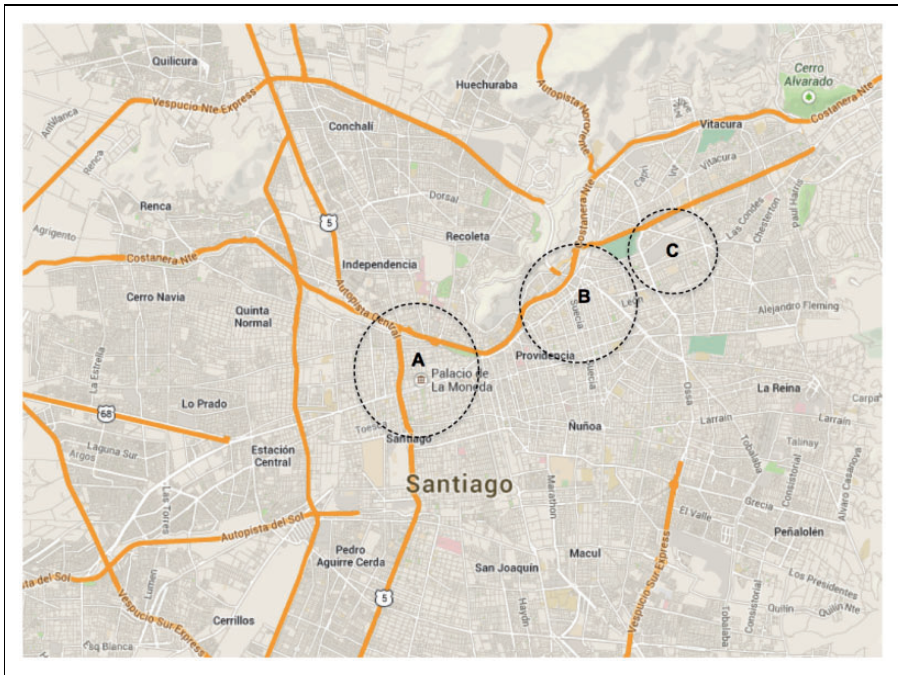


Figure 3. Main areas of concentration of think tanks: (a) historic downtown, (b) Sanhattan and (c) Nueva Las Condes.

and Commerce (CPC), the main advocacy body for Chilean business interests. The CPC comprised the six largest private economic groups in the country.⁷ The spatial contiguity between these organizations reflects an ideological proximity that translates into financial support for this think tank from several companies and businessmen. Also located nearby is the Federation of Chilean Industry (SOFOFA), the conference centre of which regularly hosts meetings between business leaders and CEP's experts.

A place of commemoration

Besides acting as a gravitational centre for business, Sanhattan is home to a place of commemoration dedicated to Jaime Guzmán Errázuriz, one of the most influential intellectuals during the Pinochet dictatorship and a central figure in the development of right-wing think tanks (Aedo, 2013). The friends and followers of Jaime Guzmán came together soon after his death in 1991 and found a think tank that bears his name. In recent years, members of the Fundación Jaime Guzmán (FJG) have promoted the transformation of an ordinary square in the business district into a place of memory as well as a site for political meetings. As an expert from this think tank commented, 'we realized that something was missing

in the city, an element that could make the figure of Jaime more familiar to people' (interview, 20 November 2008). The FJG wanted not only to install a memorial but also to create a place for meetings and commemorations, as Miguel Flores, the group's director, explained: 'We did not want to put up a bust, a statue, or a symbolic work. We set ourselves the objective of creating a place for reflection and action in a square that was irrelevant to many people' (interview, 15 December 2008). The members of this think tank had hoped to move their offices to the memorial site, but this plan was never realized due to a widening of the avenues in Sanhattan, which resulted in a reduction in the area available for the construction of the memorial.

On a sunny Sunday morning in November 2008, the UNESCO square in Sanhattan became the setting for an unusual ceremony. The guests filled every available space in the square. They had gathered to commemorate the life of Jaime Guzmán and inaugurate a place dedicated to his memory. After the tributes led by members of the FJG to Jaime Guzmán, the audience's attention turned to a large screen in the centre of the square, onto which photographs of Guzmán's life were projected. As the film played, a deep, serene voice discussed his character and outlined some of the events that marked his political and intellectual development. The projected images evoked the Guzman's reputed qualities of humility, piety, selflessness and generosity. A respectful silence fell over the audience as they listened attentively to the narration:

Jaime Guzmán was more than a politician, he was a spiritual leader [...] The young people, in whom he inculcated a vocation for public service [leaders of the UDI and experts of FJG today], face the challenge now of making sure that Jaimés spiritual energy sweeps over the new generations [...] Jaime Guzmán interpreted what God wanted in order to help rebuild democracy in Chile, for us and our children [...] The purest symbol of fraternity, of the implacable will of love for others rises up in this place. Jaime Guzmán Errázuriz, a great Chilean, a true Chilean, one of those who give everything for the fatherland, one of those who are never forgotten. (notes taken at the ceremony, 9 November 2008; my parentheses)

These words, pronounced without a visible subject, gave the impression of an 'inner voice', a strange sensation evoking a maelstrom of conflicting images, such as the criminal violence of the state, God, torture, politics and spiritual glory, as all the while the light of the midday sun glazed the mirrored walls of Sanhattan's skyscrapers. The modern buildings surrounding the memorial reflected signs of its support network. Just a few metres away was the Titanium building, which housed the offices of some of the patrons and experts close to various think tanks, including Carey, the largest legal and economic consulting firm in Chile. The senior partner, Jorge Carey, who was a classmate of Jaime Guzmán at the university, was one of the directors of the right-wing think tank Instituto Libertad. A few floors below were the offices of the Von Appen group, whose main shareholders were actively involved in several think tanks closely related to the business

world and the Chilean right. The offices of the firm headed by Jovino Nova, founder and director of the FJG think tank and a great friend of Jaime Guzmán, were also located in the Titanium building.

As should by now be apparent, there exists a dense network of relationships among think tank experts, businessmen and political leaders in Santiago's Sanhattan district. The link between the relational worlds of think tanks and their registration in specific territories enables one to analyse individuals' actions in concrete contexts. In following this path, I have looked to treat actors as instantiations of a much more complex process in order to highlight fragments of the social and cultural density of the world of experts and expertise. Instead of starting with a pre-established definition of what a think tank or consulting firm 'should be', I have sought to explore singular events in order to shed light on some of the connections, beliefs and topologies involved in their configuration.

Conclusion

During the Pinochet era, the forceful intervention of the military dictatorship in public universities, the expulsion of researchers, the closing of research institutions and the privatization of higher education led to the emergence of a genuine market (in the economic sense of the term) for think tanks. Without this space, which was 'emancipated' from the state, animated by an 'ontology of competition' (Madra, 2007), and guided by entrepreneurs of expertise, the conditions necessary for the emergence and subsequent proliferation of think tanks would not have come into being.

The translation into political influence, and later into public policy, of this new 'democratic expertise' required the progressive realization of a number of overlapping processes: (1) technical and financial support from inter/transnational organizations that promote democracy and free-market economic principles; (2) incorporation of a neutral speaking style and a set of global techniques such as market analysis, focus groups and surveys into experts' consulting practices; (3) experts' persuasion of local sponsors (corporations and businessmen) of the usefulness of expertise from think tanks and lobbying firms; (4) diversification of the activities of think tank advisors, and especially of their role as entrepreneurs of expertise (e.g. principal shareholders of consulting firms, directors of multinational corporations); (5) production of expertise aimed at overcoming the 'old' divisions between promoters of private enterprise and defenders of the state⁸; (6) appointment of experts to key roles in the state administration (since the end of the dictatorship, the positions of presidential and ministerial advisors, as well as of ministers and undersecretaries, have frequently been occupied by think tank experts); (7) 'capitalization' of skills and networks developed while holding government positions (e.g. creation of consulting and lobbying firms, founding of new think tanks).

The challenge of making a 'chronicle' of emergent assemblages through an anthropology of the contemporary – as Rabinow (2003) and Rabinow et al (2008)

suggest – has led me to explore think tanks as artefacts composed of technocrats and technique, politicians and convictions, philanthropists and personal interests, values and aesthetic preferences, objects and places. The analysis of these ‘non-identifiable political objects’ – to borrow Jacques Delors’ expression – reflects the constant reconversion of their components (i.e. actors, technologies, funds). In this regard, think tanks in Chile advocate a range of different measures, including the promotion of free enterprise and individual effort (e.g. Liberty and Development, CEP), the development of social protection policies (e.g. Chile 21 Foundation), the advancement of a conservative model of family and society (e.g. FJG) and the recognition of human rights and gender diversity (e.g. Iguales Foundation). The ability of think tanks to adapt to different socio-political contexts and survive in varying financial circumstances highlights how versatility is a condition for their successful reproduction. Beyond the intrinsic flexibility of think tanks, the concept of assemblage appears as a critical feature underlying a multiplicity of manifestations. This explains, in part, the way in which think tanks operate by inserting highly diverse elements into the varied ‘plateaus’ that define them as assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980; Patton, 2012).

Despite their differences in ideas and values, think tanks share the characteristic of being sites where neoliberal governmentality can be reproduced (Nugent, 2007) through a migratory technology of governing that interacts with situated sets of elements and historical conjunctures (Ong, 2007). The effects of this phenomenon are manifested in the establishment of a market for expertise opened up by think tanks, ‘freed’ from state bureaucracy and underpinned by a logic of competition that is supported by networks that blur the boundaries between public and private institutions.

A common criticism of expertise is that the expert figure is often covertly instrumentalized (Roussel, 2003), and thus their practice of expert knowledge is rendered problematic (Fassin, 2000). From an ethnographic point of view, power is not merely a theoretical problem, since it actively shapes our experiences in the real world. The actions of think tanks and the practices of their members reveal that the problem of truth, so central to philosophy, is inseparable from the cultural problem of credibility (Hirsch, 2004). Seeking to tell the truth about the effectiveness of a certain measure is seeking to be believed. Hence, for experts there is a need to build a good reputation and acquire a certain type of authority (Mosse, 2011). This article, instead of attending solely to individual subjectivity, has looked to bring into the analysis an aspect of the simultaneity of the dimensions of practice. To this end, I have sought to avoid hypostatizing the point of view of the experts, which is based on what the advisers themselves portray as one of their most valuable assets – their technical knowledge. It is in this sense that I have tried to approach the assemblages of technologies of government, viewing them as collective practices located in specific temporal and geographic contexts, and situating their experts within the dynamic movements of knowledge that encompass them. At these problematic intersections, this research has found a unique terrain on which to attempt to decentre think tanks from their ‘sovereign’ knowledge.

Acknowledgements

The following people have participated in various stages of this research and I am indebted to them for their insightful comments: Marc Abélès, Michel Agier, Laetitia Atlani-Duault, Alain Bertho, Paulina Faba, Jean-Francois Gossiaux, David Jobanputra and Luca Paltrinieri. The early research for this article benefited from discussions at the Institut Interdisciplinaire d'Anthropologie du Contemporain (IIAC, CNRS/EHESS). I am grateful as well to the inputs from my colleagues in the Department of Anthropology at the Catholic University of Chile (PUC), and the anonymous reviewers of the *Critique of Anthropology*, for their feedback. I would like to thank the ICIIS centre at Santiago and the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton for their logistical support during the writing and editing of this article.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Research supported by Interdisciplinary Center for Intercultural and Indigenous Studies-ICIIS, GRANT: CONICYT/FONDAP/15110006, Vice-Rectorcy for Research of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Concurso Inicio 2014, and CONICYT/French Embassy in Chile.

Notes

1. The field research on which this article is based took place over 18 months between November 2008 and December 2010 with the support of a CONICYT and French Embassy in Chile research award.
2. The tendency of think tanks to form networks across national borders can be illustrated by the 'Red Liberal de América Latina', a network of 30 right-wing organizations that promote the deregulation of Latin American economies. It includes Libertad y Desarrollo (Chile), Libertad y Progreso (Argentina) and the Instituto de Estudios Empresariais (Brazil), which are allied with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Germany), the Cato Institute (USA) and the Atlas Economic Research Foundation (USA). In the field of social democratic organizations, meanwhile, the Network of Progressive Think Tanks of the Southern Cone is composed of the foundations Chile 21, Perseu Abramo (Brazil), Liber Serengi (Uruguay) and CEPES (Argentina), and is associated with the European political foundations Friedrich Ebert (Germany), Pablo Iglesias (Spain), Jean Jaurès (France), Italianeuropie (Italy) and Alternativas (Spain).
3. In 2008, Andrés Velasco was chosen as 'Latin American finance minister of the year' by *Emerging Markets*, the official publication of the World Bank and the IMF.
4. Such as the Ford Foundation, the Inter-American Foundation, the Tinker Foundation, the International Development Research Centre and the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries.
5. The *Concertación* was a coalition of centre-left parties founded in 1988 that governed from 1990 to 2010 and was central in the process of transition to democracy.
6. Founded in 1980, the CEP is one of the major body of experts advocating neoliberal policies in Chile. According to the International Relations Program of the University of

Pennsylvania, the CEP is today ranked among the three most influential think tanks in Latin America (McGann, 2012).

7. The main economic branches associated with the CPC are as follows: the National Agriculture Society; the National Chamber of Commerce, the Services and Tourism; the National Mining Society; the SOFOFA; the Chilean Chamber of Construction and the Association of Banks.
8. According to one expert, 'one of the reasons for the confidence President Bachelet deposited in the Minister of Finance [founder of the Expansiva think tank] lay in the fact he was not molded by the Cold War so he didn't have to be converted to capitalism after having been a Marxist' (interview, 3 February 2009; my parentheses).

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