Think Tanks, Transparency and Accountability

Key organizations and information sources

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compiled by Transparify
www.transparify.org

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 contains multiple tools and other resources.  

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:
   o PR Watch (http://bit.ly/1iPKnX3)
   o Sourcewatch (http://bit.ly/MzSHNJ)

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

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”.  
http://bit.ly/1IMIo56

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.  
(Disclaimer: Find Policy is run by some of Transparify’s people.)  
http://bit.ly/1fUBo8d
The High Horse
Blog about think tank ethics and governance run by Marie Newhouse. Aims to “generate practical new ideas as well as a set of best practices for think tanks”.

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

L’Observatori dels Think Tanks
Italian language blog on think tanks written by Francesc Ponsa, a scholar based in Barcelona.
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
OFTT acts as an information nexus for Francophone think tanks, publishing news, interviews and opinion pieces. It sometimes also features Spanish language content.
http://bit.ly/1mI5TMu

On Think Tanks
A blog dedicated to think tanks, including funding related issues.
http://bit.ly/1bLL280
( Disclosure: Transparify’s Hans Gutbrod is a regular contributor, and Transparify itself is affiliated with On Think Tanks Labs, a collection of innovative ventures in policy research.
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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 encyclopedia of people, issues, and groups shaping the public agenda that was initiated by 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

Sunlight Foundation
A non-profit organisation that advocates for more transparency. Focuses on lobbying and campaign finance.
http://bit.ly/M826er

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 funds the current 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 Watch
A blog covering think tank “news, gossip, personnel, reports, studies, and pretty much anything else related to think tanks.”
Think Tanked
A blog reporting on US think tanks. Hosted by the Washington Post until early 2013, now defunct, but old posts are still available.
http://wapo.st/1e9B90w

Think Tanks and Civil Society Program
University of Pennsylvania program that studies think tanks and conducts an annual rating of think tanks around the world.

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.
http://bit.ly/1fa6FqI

Transparency International
An international anti-corruption organization that promotes transparency and accountability.
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 and annotated bibliographies on think tanks.
http://www.transparify.org/

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

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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