



Published on *Ecologic Institute: Science and Policy for a Sustainable World*
(<https://www.ecologic.eu>)

[Home](#) > The Role of Think Tanks in International Environmental Governance

EVENT

Dinner Dialogue
Global Environment
Governance

The Role of Think Tanks in International Environmental Governance



On 20 April 2009, an Ecologic Dinner Dialogue was held in Washington DC in honour of Sonja Wälti, Assistant Professor of Public Policy, School of Public Affairs, American University, Washington, D.C. Sonja Wälti presented questions on the role of think tanks in the context of international environmental governance as an introduction for the discussion.

First, Sonja Wälti elaborated on her observation that global think tanks had emerged because of the globalization of public policy. She further pointed out that they were here to stay but that a great many of them would largely remain anchored in the domestic policy process. To underpin this statement, Sonja Wälti remarked that the creation of think tanks can be observed since the 1970ies but that there had been a boom in the creation of new think tanks within the 1990ies. She attributes this boom to several domestic and international push and pull factors (e.g. the democratization on formerly closed countries and the globalization process). Sonja Wälti came to the conclusion that we should rather speak of a globalization of (domestic) think tanks rather than global think tanks.

Second, Sonja Wälti remarked that the effectiveness of global think tanks depended on the policy process, and the institutional context in which the policy process was embedded, both domestically and internationally. In her opinion, think tanks are believed to be most important in the policy formation phase. However, there are differences regarding the EU and the US and regarding the domestic and the global level.

Finally, Sonja Wälti shared some thoughts on think tanks' impact to be easier on international environmental governance under the Obama Administration than under the Bush Administration. She

questioned this statement, but indicated that in her opinion, think tanks will be more effective than previously if they are granted access.

The subsequent discussion touched upon the following issues and questions:

- What differences exist between think tanks in the US and the EU? Some discussants saw major differences while others observed fewer.
- What roles do think tanks play in the domestic knowledge formation?
- There are hardly any international think tanks, as their staff, funding and venture is domestic. However, think tanks talk about international issues.
- (How) can think tanks be distinguished from consultancies or advocacy groups? Which ones are (more) science based? Are there any science based institutions at all?

Further Links:

- [Sonja Wälti](#) [1] (biography)
- [Social-ecological Research](#) [2] (BMBF)
- Ecologic Project: [Social-ecological research projects](#) [3] (Soef)
- Ecologic Project: [Global Environmental Governance and International Environmental Regimes](#) [4]
- Ecologic Project: [Research for Evaluating Environmental Policies](#) [5]
- Ecologic Project: [Sustainability Lounge](#) [6]

Sponsors: This event is part of the SOEF-Project [International Environmental Governance](#) [7], sponsored by the [German Federal Ministry of Education and Research](#) [8].

20 April 2009
Washington DC
[Sonja Wälti](#) [1]

Organizer

Ecologic Institute, Germany

Speaker

Sonja Wälti

Date

20 April 2009

Location

Washington DC, United States

Language

English

Source URL (modified on 10/19/2018 - 20:00): <https://www.ecologic.eu/2805>

Links

[1] <https://programs.online.american.edu/mpap/master-of-public-administration-and-policy/faculty/sonja-walti>

[2] <http://www.fona.de/de/19711/en/index.php>

[3] <https://www.ecologic.eu/soef>

[4] <https://ecologic.eu/node/2001>

[5] <https://ecologic.eu/node/1993>

[6] <https://ecologic.eu/node/1917>

[7] <https://www.ecologic.eu/2001>

[8] <https://www.bmbf.de/>