

”But I am not a Lion“, said the Chicken. ”That, however“, said the wise Owl sternly, ”does not interest me. I do consulting. The implementation is your problem.“

Scientific political consulting between economic and political reality

1. For economists, scientific political consulting is simple. On the basis of a decisionistic approach to the theory of economic policy à la Tinbergen-Weber, economists determine the optimal application of means to reach stated goals. This corresponds to the typical contract research of political consulting, even for formally independent experts, which allows the scientists to find the solution to an optimization problem with defined goals, means, and institutional conditions. In the most favorable case when formulating decisionistic qualitative economic policy, intuitional conditions may be considered and, in the sense of scenarios, be varied. Scientific recommendations follow as a result, to which political decision-makers can adhere and to which – much to the amazement of the scientific contractors – they sometimes do adhere. Economists optimize against the backdrop of a concept of efficiency under secondary conditions, extended catalogs of goals, right up to expansive systems of social indicators, making things more complicated, but seldom more complex: the one-stone-one-bird –theorem must be upheld, conflicts of goals lead to trade-offs and second-best solutions by the assessment of social costs and benefits, whose criteria are defined for the economic consultant.
2. If one asks, to use an aperçu from Churchill, 10 economists for their opinion, one receives 11 answers, even if Keynes himself is among them. The reasons for the diverse answers lie in the diversity of the opinions about economic functional mechanisms which determine their goal-means relationships. A proponent of the rational-choice-theory will interpret the effects of fiscal political instruments differently than a bastard-Keynesianer, who assumes the money-illusions of actors. The diversity of answers confuses political decision-makers, which then often suspect arbitrariness. This suspicion is false, if political consulting follows recognized scientific standards – logical correctness, falsifiability – and calibrates empirically replicably and verifiably. Politics must decide which recommendation among the conflicting suggestions it follows, or – if only one valid recommendation for the best solution exists – whether it prefers the second-or third-best solution to it. Politics will happily make this decision, since the political rationality lying at the heart of the political decision does not correspond at all to the goal-means-model at the heart of political consultant’s economic rationality.
3. The decision about the policy to be realized follows the determining social logic of consent in open societies. For the implementation of policies, the political decision-maker in democratic societies needs the consent of the sovereign, usually for the short-term, sometimes only in the middle-term, but certainly in the long term. Via the forming of individual preferences and influence of the selection process during the forming of social will, political decision-makers can,

even in the face of short-term rejection of policies, win majorities in the middle- or long-term. In any case, they must face the preferences of the voters at the election. This is true at least of open societies, in which, on the basis of democratic procedures, power is awarded for a time and peaceful (democratic) or less peaceful (revolutionary) loss of power always menaces. Which role economic efficiency or other objectives of political consulting play is an empirical question. This question is answered differently, on the basis of individual preferences in different problem situations and the perception of the constitutional selection process for the formation of social will. Political decision-makers search for majorities for their policies, consent and acceptance for a concept of social welfare, defined by them, which is to assert itself against competition not, as Arrow's impossibility theorem makes clear, is not created by simple aggregation of individual preferences.. The welfare function, at the heart of political rationality, to be maximized by politics under consideration of constraints, contains political variables such as the chances of reelection in the time horizons of the political system, but not those variables at the heart of the planning aims of economic political consulting. The economically best solution does not, as a rule, interest politicians when it is not executable without systematically threatening social conflicts which lead to the democratic loss of power or helps revolution to validity. Not only in Germany is order a relevant political paradigm, far more common than violent subversion.

4. Scientific political consulting, should it ever become politically relevant, comprises the task of formulating an optimal policy for winning, keeping, and expanding power under the secondary conditions of minimizing economic costs. The second part of the task falls upon the scientists, while the political decision-makers assume the first part themselves. In open societies, this is the best, because it is the most efficient, solution. The competition of political alternatives demands efficient decision-making between political alternatives and allows a social decision-making process, in which the bestowal of power for a time and democratic processes can take on a high degree of different opinions about the correct alternative. For the economic consultant remains only the role of the observer who, to take up another apercu, knows the prices but not the social values and is not able to judge their meaning. And that is a good thing, too.