Wicked Problems and ethical decision-making as a subject matter of political science

Since the foundation of Professional Schools, political science has tried to become a more practice-oriented discipline. Research and practice should coalesce to ensure that the results of applied policy research provide a practical benefit for politics and society. In order to fulfill this task, I am convinced that applied policy research must emancipate itself from a concept of science emulating the standards of natural sciences and rather reflect its roots in (practical) philosophy; in particular as regards to wicked problems, which are principally undecidable and for which no scientifically "right" or "wrong" solution exists. Political decision-making processes in this realm rather follow the course of normative judgments where distinctions between "good" and "bad" are made.

In the first part of my paper I will argue that public policy research is not able to adequately meet the requirements of wicked problems in political practice. Therefore I will next try to identify possible reasons for the lack of practical relevance in many policy studies. I consider the core problem to be a misguided scientism. Finally, I will discuss an alternative concept of policy research and will outline how applied ethics and applied political science could interact to contribute to political decision-making in practice.

1. Political Science and Political Practice

The trend towards practice-oriented research and teaching in political science is institutionally visible through the establishment of Governance Schools and the Public Policy programs. In Germany, for example, the University of Applied Sciences Bremen offers a BA program in "International Policy Management", the Technical University of Darmstadt has implemented a "MA Governance and Public Policy" program and at the private Zeppelin University in Friedrichshafen one can study a "BA / MA in Politics & Public Management". Despite the establishment of numerous governance programs, the relationship between political science and political practice is not without controversy. A link from public policy research to policy advice and finally to policy implementation is the exception rather than the rule.

In Germany the so-called actor-centered institutionalism by Renate Mayntz (2009) and Fritz W. Scharpf (2006) is still an important reference for the alignment of governance studies. Regarding the relationship between science and practice Scharpf takes the view that political science has not much to offer for substantive decision making in the realm of public policy management. According to

Scharpf, *problem-oriented policy research* (and consultancy) should be carried out by the disciplines responsible for the respective problem areas. Thus, economists should be responsible for the questions of substance in the field of economic policy, environmental scientists for environmental policy issues and the physicians for questions of health policy. The responsibility of political science and the *interaction-oriented policy research* respectively is rather to contribute to the understanding and improvement of those (institutional) conditions, "which put politics in a position to find effective and legitimate solutions for political problems" (Scharpf 2006: 36, translated by Grundmann).

The outlined division of labour between *problem-oriented policy research* and *interaction-oriented policy research* is contested. The American political scientist Lawrence M. Mead argues that a neglect of political content in political science will inevitably lead to a loss of relevance of the discipline. According to Mead a sub-discipline called "Public Policy" does exist in political science, but the majority of its representatives, as he is convinced, explore political decision-making processes instead of policy issues (Mead 2011: 130). Mead is not the only one who is concerned about political science. In an interview Joseph Nye, professor at the John F. Kennedy School of Government expresses a critical remark on the current status of political science:

> "What remains, though, is a nagging concern that the field is not producing work that matters. 'The danger is that political science is moving in the direction of saying more and more about less and less' (…) 'There are parts of the academy which, in the effort to be scientific, feel we should stay away from policy,' Mr. Nye said, that 'it interferes with the science.' In his view statistical techniques too often determine what kind of research political scientists do, pushing them further into narrow specializations cut off from real-world concerns. The motivation to be precise, Mr. Nye warned, has overtaken the impulse to be relevant" (quoted in Cohen 2009).

In Germany, political scientist Klaus Schubert complains that the majority of political science research has no longer the goal to develop practically applicable knowledge. It rather sees its task in theoretical investigations of political, social and economic relationships without practical relevance (Schubert 2003: 7). Jonathan Cohn (1999: 14) shares the criticism of Mead, Cohen and Schubert, adding that the scholasticism and the lack of relevance to political practice are directly linked with

the dominance of the rational choice approach in (American) political science.[1]   Alternative approaches and fields of expertise, such as the area studies, are claimed to be unscientific by representatives of the rational choice approach.

Despite the fact that the term governance is used as a concept of political practice, it is surprisingly apolitical with a lack of practical relevance. Regarding the genesis of the term "governance" Renate Maynth states:

> "The concept of governance [comprises] the main forms of action coordination. The 'political as such', the interventionist action, fades into the background: It is not the intervention, the measurements of agents, but control structures – however they came about – and their effect on subjected agents that come to the fore. There is a seamless transition from a governance perspective to an institutionalist mode of thought" (Mayntz 2006: 14, translated by Grundmann).

The neglect of policy issues and substantive decision-making in the context of governance studies is no coincidence but rather a consequence of a research focus on control structures. The self-imposed restriction of many governance studies results from the theoretical and methodological presuppositions.

> "Even the subfield of policy analysis which deals with processes and the substance of political decisions has left the concepts of 'decision-making' undiscussed or has consciously left it struck blind. Policy analysts charge the term 'decision-making' normatively by conceptualizing it as 'problem solving', without reflecting whether these decisions actually hold what they promise normatively" (Rüb 2012: 119, translated by Grundmann).

Regarding the aim of Governance Schools to educate prospective leaders in public and private sectors, these deficiencies pose a serious critique on their practices in research and teaching. Responsible positions in politics, associations and enterprises require the ability to form an evidence informed ethically reflected point of view in order to take part in political decision-making processes.

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[1]This criticism on political science indirectly also opposes the governance studies of the actor-centered institutionalism which is based on game theory. The actor-centered institutionalism models the effects of control structures which are determined by rational choice or the evolutionary success of efficient forms of regulation (Mayntz 2006: 16). In this sense, the actor-centered institutionalism is primarily an adaptation of economic theory for the explanation of (self-) control processes of governmental, social and economic agents.

Political science which rejects debates on (normative) structural issues for being ideological (such as Scharpf) cannot meet the promise to be practically relevant in times of morally charged conflicts such as climate change, the financial crisis or the refugee drama.

2. Wicked Problems and Ethics

The Archimedean point of political science is – not surprisingly – its notion of politics. The definition of the term "politics" determines how political scientists accentuate their field of study, what questions they ask and how they locate themselves in the canon of academic disciplines. According to a common definition in political science, "politics" is defined as "a human action, aimed at the creation of generally binding rules and decisions, within and between groups of people" (Patzelt 1992: 28, translated by Grundmann). Corresponding to this definition, political science focuses on the problems of the political organization of power, the distribution of power and the acquisition of power (Hennis 1977: 7).[2] Yet, what needs to be changed in the self-concept of political science in order to become an applied science which supports political practitioners in making difficult decisions, instead of being a mechanistic science of power?

In "Politics and Moral Philosophy" Wilhelm Hennis (1977) traces how the scientific analysis of politics has increasingly dissociated itself from practical philosophy. According to Hennis, the ideal of a value-free theory – inspired by modern natural sciences – eliminates ethics in scientific research (Westphalen 2007). However, based on the insight that a purely rational governance approach cannot be applied, Hennis' idea to rediscover ethics for political practice and to use ethical reasoning for guidance in political decision-making processes is gaining momentum.

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[2] Hennis' criticism also applies to governance studies. Governance, according to Mayntz (2006: 14), is limited to institutional control structures (however they came about) and their effects on political actions. In line with this model, governmental institutions become an apparatus of "political will formation", the constitutional order is converted into "transformation machinery", which translates "social trends" into "legal norms", and politics mutates into a "petty-minded" game of particularistic politicking (cf. Hennis 1977).

In the early 1970s, design theorist Horst Rittel and urban planner Melvin M. Webber published their treaty "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning" in which they discuss why the planning of policies and social, cultural or environmental problems solving cannot succeed. Problems faced by policy-makers are entirely different from problems natural scientists or engineers have to deal with. In this regard, Rittel and Webber distinguish between "tame" or "benign-problems" and "wicked problems".

> "The problems that scientists and engineers have usually focused upon are mostly 'tame' or 'benign' ones. As an example, consider a problem of mathematics, such as solving an equation; or the task of an organic chemist in analyzing the structure of some unknown compound: or that of the chess player attempting to accomplish checkmate in five moves. For each the mission is clear. It is clear, in turn, whether or not the problems have been solved. Wicked problems, in contrast, have neither of these clarifying traits; and they include nearly all public policy issues – whether the question concerns the location of a freeway, the adjustment of a tax rate, the modification of school curricular, or the confrontation of crime" (Rittel and Webber 1973: 160).

The cyberneticist Heinz von Foerster is convinced that societal and political problems – which the social sciences have to deal with – cannot be solved in the same way as problems in natural sciences. Pointedly he states:

> "The 'hard sciences' are successful because they deal with the 'soft problems'; the 'soft sciences' have to struggle because they are confronted with the 'hard problems'" (Foerster 1994: 337, translated by Grundmann).

Rittel and Webber (1973) specify ten characteristics which turn wicked problems into "hard problems" and by which they differ from "tame problems" in the natural sciences:

1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem.

2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule.

3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad.

4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem.

5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot operation"; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error; every attempt counts significantly.

6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan.

7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique.´

8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.

9. The existence of discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem´s resolution.

10. The planner has no right to be wrong.

Within the theoretical model of actor-centered institutionalism wicked problems do not exist. In regard to Scharpf´s concept of "problem solving", decisions arise from themselves because knowledge and determining reasons take the decisions about what has to be done (Scharpf 2006: 38 and 221f; Rüb 2012: 131). In contrast, Rittel and Webber (1973) realize that politics is contingent and therefore determining reasons for or against one particular policy often do not exist. For them a decision is, like for Hermann Lübbe, a commitment, where the uncertainty about the right or better option is neglected by determining what ought to be done (Lübbe 1971). The basis for decision making or commitment eludes scientific calculations and rather follows the trajectories of normative judgments, in which one decides between "good" and "bad".[3]

If wicked problems are negotiated in the categories of "good" and "bad", then they are a matter of normative judgment. Thus, as reported by Hennis (1977), the older science of politics – as a branch of practical philosophy – is predestined to provide policy makers with a set of skills for orientation in decision making processes.

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[3] "For wicked planning problems, there are no true or false answers. Normally, many parties are equally equipped, interested, and/or entitled to judge the solutions, although none has the power to set formal decision rules to determine correctness. Their judgments are likely to differ widely to accord with their group or personal interest, their special value-sets, and their ideological predilections. Their assessments of proposed solutions are expressed as 'good' or 'bad'" (Rittel and Webber 1973: 163)

According to Hennis, such an orientation is possible because in his opinion rudiments of a general consensus on ways of togetherness and cohabitation have persisted despite civil and religious wars until today (Hennis 1977: 56). Without this given telos human existence would have been impossible. For Hennis (1977) the ethos of community is an important key for policymaking.

> "Just as the law student learns to analyze a legal case, (...), a business economist must be able to provide all relevant considerations to a given operational task, so has the political scientist to be able to investigate his matter (....) to attain all relevant information for a problem solution" (Hennis 1977: 116). "Such a doctrine, to consider the right reasons – of course sub specie temporis, the specific situation but also the time-enduring purpose of political life – was the dialectic and the rhetoric in a simplified form" (Hennis 1977: 117, translated by Grundmann).

Although Hennis admits that the tasks of political scientists are much more difficult than those of lawyers or business economists, he considers it possible – provided the skills in the art of topics[4] – to find the better justifiable answers (and thus the better solutions) in the realm of politics.

Hennis' concept is highly controversial in political science because he clings to the idea that there is a general consensus on the way of societal togetherness. However, it is precisely this "telos" which is discarded in the modern age, as Max Weber (1994) points out in his notion of a "polytheism of values". The spheres of politics, economics or law hold individual evaluative schemas (government/opposition in politics, profit/loss in economics, legal/illegal in law). Ethics and politics are not necessarily congruent either. Particularly Machiavelli (2001) challenges the Aristotelian notion of a "unity of reason" by recommending the prince not to take a moral point of view as the baseline for political decision-making but rather evaluate decisions on behalf of their prospective outcome to gain or to obtain power.

A doctrine "to consider the right reasons" cannot convene on common grounds in contemporary society. A new "topics" needs to take the diversity of cultures, different forms of knowledge and the plurality of rationality into consideration. Therefore "topics" is no transformation-machine which

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[4] Topics is a part of Aristotle's works on logic and refers to the art of dialectical reasoning.

dissolves wicked problems into tame problems but rather a tool to systematically consider different perspectives in decision-making processes.

3. Systemics and Topics

The definition of a problem determines (the nature of) the approach to a problem. In my point of view the lack of practical relevance of political science is caused by a theory of knowledge, which is not appropriate to the object of research in political science. A reform of applied policy research must therefore begin at its epistemology.

So far, the mainstream in political science has tried to establish the discipline along the role model of natural sciences. The natural scientist and cyberneticist Heinz von Foerster explains why the strategy to apply the epistemological framework of natural science to societal and political phenomena cannot succeed.

> The research method of "hard sciences" can be explained easily. "If a system is too complex to be understood, it is broken down into small pieces. If these pieces are still too complex, they are crushed as well, and so on, until finally the pieces are so small that at least one of them can be understood. The wonderful thing about this process, the method of reduction, the 'reductionism', is that it inevitably leads to success. Unfortunately, the 'soft sciences' are not in this fortunate position. Just think of the sociologist, the psychologist, anthropologists, linguists, etc. If they reduced the complex systems they have to cope with – the society, the psyche, the culture, the language, etc. – in the same way, then, after a few reduction steps, they could no longer claim that they analyze the subject matter they originally wanted to investigate. This is because these scientists are dealing with essentially non-linear systems, whose distinguishing characteristics are embedded into the interaction between what one can perceive as the 'parts' of the system, while the characteristics of these 'parts' contribute little or nothing to the understanding of the functioning of these systems as a whole" (Foerster 1993: 337f, translated by Grundmann).

Contrary to natural scientists, political scientists cannot ignore the complexity of the object of study. The drawback of positivist analytical thought (scientism) is that it cuts off the connections between different parts which generate the emerging whole. Therefore, Heinz von Foerster suggests supplementing the (positivist) scientific framework with a complementary approach of systemics.

> "Science is about causality. Systemics is required, where relations are at the foreground" (Foerster und Floyd 2008: 59).

Consequently, systemic thought connects where scientific thought separates, systemic thought unites whereas scientific thought divides and systemic thought equates whereas scientific thought differentiates. In "Politics and Moral Philosophy" Hennis (1977) argues against the loss of systemic thought in political science. Due to the establishment of political science as an analytical science of reality, the heritage in practical philosophy and topics has dissolved.

> "With the repression of practice as an object of science, its specific method has almost been forgotten. We have already quoted Vico as an astute witness to the consequences of the modern concept of science for the disciplines of practical philosophy. (…) He has anticipated the risk that due to the decline of topics and rhetorical training modern scientists might become unable to grasp a matter in all its complexity" (Hennis 1977: 89, translated by Grundmann).

As stated in Hennis (1977), topical reasoning is conducted in a sphere of opinions, a sphere of the merely probable. No new knowledge is generated but all known aspects are compiled to reflect on a certain problem systematically.

> "The starting point of dialectical analysis is the prevailing beliefs of people. It is assumed that among these views some are more experienced and more reasonable than others; dialectical analysis appeals to 'understanding' and 'common sense'; its premises are not imposed, they want to be recognized voluntarily; its conclusions are always tentative by nature and therefore 'debatable'. All these peculiarities dispute the modern ideal of science, aimed at clear, doubtless knowledge" (Hennis 1977: 97, translated by Grundmann).

Topics has vanished in modern science but applied ethics can be regarded as its successor. Since the 1970s applied ethics has become an established field in practical philosophy to clarify moral issues.

Within applied ethics a multitude of tools, methods and techniques has been developed that help to reflect on moral problems in a pragmatic, open and unbiased process. One of these "tools" is the "Zurich model" of ethical decision making by Barbara Bleisch and Markus Huppenbauer (2011). The authors propose a model of ethical decision making in five steps of analysis:

1. Analyse the status quo

2. Explicate the moral issues

3. Survey the argumentation by comparison to normative theories

4. Evaluate possible proposals and formulate a decision

5. Choose the right means for political implementation

In the "Zurich model" the process of decision making is open-ended. Unlike in Hennis (1977) the concept does not require an ethos, which would predetermine the outcome. The process can be executed based on different assumptions, resulting in differing recommendations. Therefore, the "Zurich model" is a systemic approach because it gathers knowledge and interests from different parts of society (and from a multiplicity of social systems) to make a systematic, moral reflection possible. According to Foerster (1994) this type of ethics, understood as reflection theory of morality, is inextricably linked with constructivist epistemology and systemic thinking. In contrast to systemic thinking the orthodox (positivist) thinking constitutes authority while a responsible political practice and a reflexive ethics of decision are suppressed.[5]

> The orthodox point of view "draws its strength on the confidence that we are capable of accurately mapping the universe in its uniqueness – 'truth' – and that the properties of the observer do not interfer with this image – 'objectivity'. The categories of truth and objectivity guarantee the popularity of this attitude: Truth constitutes authority – 'It is how *I* say it is' –, objectivity eliminates responsibility – 'I say how *it is*' – By decoupling oneself from the universe, one also distances oneself from fellow human beings. One is now in a position, without consequences for oneself, to say to others: 'You should ... !' or 'You must not ... !' This method excludes reflexivity" (Foerster 1994: 353, translated by Grundmann).

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[5] The current rescue operations for speculating big banks demonstrate how supposedly objective "facts" and the narrative of "there is no alternative" is being used to make responsibility for political action to disappear.

Scientistic objectivism (as shown in the studies of Rittel and Webber) is inappropriate for political science and in fact could even cause harm. The sociologist Richard Münch (2012) warns against false expectations on the "scientific governance". In a brief case study he illustrates by using the example of educational policy how the "scientification" of the educational practice paradoxically results in quasi-religious dogmatism.[6]

Foerster deliberately turns away from scientism by deciding to conceptualize his role in science not as an "objective" observer, who only observes the world from the "outside", but rather as part of the universe (or society). This (metaphysical) decision of being a part of the universe binds Foerster to commiting himself and all his actions inextricably to all other human beings. Hereby this epistemological position becomes the prerequisite for a reflexive ethics of responsibility. With reference to Wittgenstein´s *Tractus* Foerster notes:

> "The first thought when introducing an ethical law of the form 'You should ... ' is: And what if I do not? But it is clear that ethics has nothing to do with punishment and reward in the usual sense. (...) There must indeed be some kind of ethical reward and ethical punishment but this must be embedded in the action itself. (...) In this case, ethics is implicit, the method is reflexivity and the instructions are no longer 'You should ... !', 'You must not ... ! ', but 'I should ... !' or 'I must not... ! '" (Foerster 1994: 354, translation by Grundmann).

If policy-makers cannot justify their decisions with the supposedly secure foundations of orthodox knowledge and the only certainty they have is the uncertainty of their knowledge, then they have to take the responsibility for their actions and consider their conscience in the decision-making. In the event of wicked problems this is by definition always the case, since there are no right solutions

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[6] Besides Münch the mathematician Serge Lang (1998) formulated similar criticism on political science. By means of a "one-man campaign" Lang prevented the admission of political scientist Samuel Huntington to the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Lang accused Huntington of exercising pseudo–science, using excerpts of Huntington's monograph "Political Order in Changing Societies" (1968) to make his point clear: "The results are shown in Table 3, p. 259, where the Union of South Africa is classified as having 'low systemic frustration'. As far as I am concerned, this conclusion, the Feierabend correlations of .625, .400, the eta calculation and Table 3 are nonsense. Note how Huntington´s political opinion about the Union of South Africa being a 'satisfied society' is embedded in a tissue of pseudo-science consisting of 'equations,' 'correlations,' 'decimal figures,' 'rations,' and a type of language which gives the illusion of science without any of its substance. Furthermore it is not a question whether the 'mathematics' is correct. The whole approach, accepted and purveyed by Huntington, is cockeyed" (Lang 1998: 42f).

resulting from a strictly logical analysis. However, the absence of principally decidable (political) questions is not a flaw. On the contrary, only questions which are fundamentally undecidable can be decided.

> "Why? Simply because decidable questions have already been decided by a determined theoretical framework the question was asked in. Rules have been established according to which each statement – within the frame – (...) can be linked to any other statement (Foerster 1994: 351f, translation by Grundmann).

If the matter of politics were (structurally) predetermined no politics, no (open-ended) conflicts and no unforeseeable consequences would exist. The course of history would be predetermined beyond human (i.e. political) influence. The term "contingency" means nothing other than "indeterminateness" and "undecidability" because there is no given frame for decisions. Therefore, the complementary concept of "necessity" in this sense is according to Foster not "randomness" but "freedom of choice".

4 Ethics and Political Management[7]

The term "Polical Management", introduced by Karl-Rudolf Korte (2010), refers to a connection between the actor's ability to control the political system and the controllability of the political system. The controllability of political systems implies that there is room for political decisions that can be filled by differing policy options. For democratic decisions some necessary and sufficient conditions must be met. The *necessary condition* for political decisions is a given "choice" between different courses of action. A decision without alternatives does not exist as it has been taken already. The *sufficient condition* for democratic decisions is the ability to win majorities because it is the only way to implement a decision into a democratic political system.

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[7] For a more detailed outline of the relationship between politics and ethics, I would like to refer to my article "Politik und Ethik. Geschichte und Gegenwart einer schwierigen Beziehung" (Grundmann 2014).

Practice-oriented political science could support "political managers" to use their freedom of choice in a responsible manner, since political science has various fields of expertise to offer, which include the *polity*, the *politics* and the *policy dimension*. *Polity* research has a large pool of ideas, theories and models which can illuminate the political process and help to consider alternative political strategies. The know-how on political processes (i.e. the *politics level*) can help to improve the legitimacy of decision-making processes and to implement political decisions more efficiently and effectively. Regarding the policy dimension political scientists (and sociologists) can contribute to a genuinely socio-scientific problem description in many policy fields. In some policy fields the expertise of social sciences is more obvious than in others. Foreign and security policy, development cooperation and social policy are examples for which the link between social sciences and political practice is beyond controversy, because problems in these policy fields apply to (deficient) social relationships. In other policy fields such as environmental and climate policy, economic policy or political strategies for the internet, the relation between social science research and political practice is less obvious. Since wicked problems – such as climate change, the excesses of neoliberal capitalism and mass surveillance by domestic and foreign intelligence agencies – consist of more than just one dimension, the task of political science and sociology it to specify the social and political dimensions of these wicked problems.

Within the Duisburg teaching model "Ethics and Political Management" we try to combine skills from political science and ethics to develop a systemic (topical) approach in applied political science (Grundmann 2013). In our conceptualisation ethics – understood as the scientific reflection of morality – does not become an integral part of political science and political science is not reduced to an empirical auxiliary science of ethics (Bieber and Grundmann 2014). Instead, our aim is to benefit from knowledge and skills of both disciplines (as different disciplines) so that our students (prospective policy analysts, policy advisors and policy makers) are able to orientate themselves in difficult decision making processes. Whereas the knowledge of political science in terms of stakeholder analysis and the expertise of political processes can help them with problem

descriptions, ethical reasoning can support them in making a choice between possible resolutions (Bieber and Grundmann 2014). The function of ethics is not to direct a certain action because ethics always demands morality as the essential liberty of mankind. The function of ethics is to provide information on how morally appropriate actions can be determined (Pieper 2007: 115f).

Politics is not a monological process. Difficult political decisions often result from hard political disputes. Therefore, our program "Ethics and Political Management" includes a trainee program for political communication and deliberation. In the framework of educational simulations our students are provided the opportunity to learn how to organize and facilitate an ethically reflective policy discourse. This requires knowledge of deliberative communication processes, a variety of social and communication skills as well as moral competences. In this regard Kenneth Winston (2012) in reference to Aristotle stresses the significance of virtues for good governance in a democratic polity:

> „In the Aristotelian tradition, a virtue is an excellence of character conductive to achieving a distinctive end or characteristic good, whether of a person or institution. One needs, then, a conception of the entity (person or institution) to give content to the idea of virtue. Accordingly, what counts as good governance depends on the polity; the competence of practitioners and the nature of the polity are inextricably linked. In a democratic polity, the virtues of practitioners, roughly speaking, are qualities (excellences) that enable democracy to flourish. In this way, the distinctive virtues of practitioners are derived from a political conception, not from general human virtues." (Winston 2012: 19).

The ethos of democratic leadership depends on the concept of democracy and how (this idea) it is being realized. It is difficult to conceptualize moral competences (of political managers) as democratic virtues because this kind of competence goes beyond a set of moral standards. Virtues are only in part a form of knowledge or theoretical know-how. In fact, virtues arise from an inner posture and show in actions, in practical do-how. Just as the practices of swimming, cycling or skiing cannot be mediated by book learning, the virtues of democratic practice cannot be internalized by appeals from moral philosophy alone. Therefore, we have designed our program "Ethics and Political Management" with practical elements including case studies, educational simulations and internships (Grundmann 2013).

Kenneth Winston (2012) characterizes good political management by the attributes of civility, balance, respect, proficiency, prudence and reflection. These qualities are in close relationship with the constitution of the respective polity. As early as in Aristotle's work, habituation, education and "good laws" (institutions) form the framework for a prosperous life in the polis (Schwaabe 2007: 67). However, it is important to remember that the political framework of a polity itself can be politicized and therefore become a subject of a political debate. In other words, the institutional framework of a political community is (with conflicting values and interests) in itself a wicked problem which is attempted to be tamed by a self-reflexive form of government (democracy).

Political decision-making processes which involve a wide range of different perspectives and reflect them ethically, can enhance the legitimacy of political decisions from a theoretical point of view. Finally, even those decisions are made politically, since there is no opportunity to circumvent the social, political, environmental, economic, moral and technical uncertainties of wicked problems.

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