

Power and its Logic – the New Standard Reference in Political Consulting, by Thomas Sigmund

translated from German

Dominik Meier and Christian Blum have presented a book full of smart insights. It has the potential to become a standard work for political consulting. The two authors draw from a wealth of experience as consultants with over 20 years of experience. The blurb does not promise too much when it comes to an analytically precise look behind the scenes of power.

The 420-page book, entitled "Power and its Logic: Mastering Politics" (review refers to German edition "Logiken der Macht: Politik und wie man sie beherrscht"), first presents the full range from conceptual basics up to the concrete tools of the industry. Then it dives right into the practice of political consulting. The rich footnote apparatus, the comprehensive index of persons, and the bibliography are impressive. This is not about publishing a superficial PR book for the authors' lobbying consultancy. On the contrary, the depth of the analysis is unique.

Meier is not only a lobbyist, but also chairman of the German Association of Political Consultants (de'ge'pol - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Politikberatung e.V.) and is thus committed to his office. A commitment that one can feel throughout the reading.

Politics is always about power. The authors deal in detail with the nature of power, its symbolism and its forms. The third chapter is dedicated to insights drawn from their practical experience. The authors describe the political competition as "power chess". It is important to win through smart gameplay. One's own pawns on the chessboard must be positioned correctly; one has to think about the moves of the opponent time and again.

The authors dissect razor-sharp that the goals in the field of economy are often different from those in the field of politics. Companies have to maximize their profits or increase their market share. Managers also think in these categories. Politics works differently. For Meier and Blum it is clear that political decisions should not give the impression of serving only the preferences of a particular interest group or even a single actor.

As an example of "how-not-to-do", Germany's Liberal Democrats are mentioned, who in 2013 could not manage to shake off the accusation of being a party of the rich and the privileged, which is solely concerned with the interests of hoteliers, pharmacists and tax consultants. Economic lobbying, too, is difficult to justify today without a reference to the common good.

Whatever consultants have to get across to their clients, decisions cannot be made permanently against the sentiments of the general public. Politics must take citizens' fears and concerns seriously and consider these either by better policy communication or by substantial course corrections.

A negative example of a wrong technocratic policy is the successive increase in power for the European Central Bank (ECB) in the course of the euro crisis. This has led to a great loss of confidence.

The greatest challenge for political communication in the 21st century therefore is digitization. Years ago, political messaging required leaflets, posters, articles in newspapers and television interviews. In the age of Twitter, Facebook, Reddit or WeChat, these parameters are obsolete.

The times of a purely analogue political communication are irretrievably over. The number of communicators is increasing, the pace of communication has accelerated, and the amount of content is raised continuously. Here too, the authors present solutions. We wish this book many readers. It conveys exciting insider knowledge on how the threads of power are spun in the Berlin Republic

This is a translated review of the German edition "Logiken der Macht: Politik und wie man sie beherrscht", 2018. Tectum.