

# Wicked problems



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# What is a Wicked problem

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- The term first coined by Horst Rittel.
- These problems are ill-defined.
- They cut across the traditional jurisdiction of organisations, divisions of responsibilities between layers of Government and the boundaries between the public, private and societal domains.
- Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.



# Characteristics

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- Wicked problems are difficult to define clearly
- They have many interdependencies and are often multi-causal
- Attempts to address wicked problems often lead to unforeseen consequences
- They are often not stable and usually have no clear solution.
- They are socially complex and involve changing behaviour.
- They hardly ever sit conveniently within the responsibility of any one organisation.



# Impact on public policy

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- Substantive complexity for actors involved in policy making, implementation or Public Service Delivery.
- Policymakers trying to solve these problems often face conflicting priorities.
- What works in one country or one location might not be the best answer for another.
- Necessary to enhance consensus about the nature of the problem and the status of the scientific knowledge needed for its solution
- Requires shift from a more traditional top-down way of solving problems to a more horizontal cooperative approach.



# Views of Stakeholders

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Type	Tame	Complex	Wicked
Nature of Problem	Agree	Agree	Disagree
Best solution	Agree	Disagree	Disagree



# Approaches to solve

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- Authoritative
- Rational
- Collaborate
  
- Tame problems can be resolved using a rational approach
- Complex problems may need authoritative or collaborative approach
- Wicked problems require collaborative approach



# Collaborative approach challenges

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- Building and sustaining networks
- Knowledge sharing among diverse participants
- Mind set of collaborative capacity builders

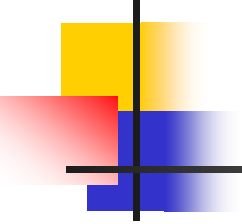


# Wicked Problem as an opportunity

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- The COVID crisis has been used to announce some needed reforms, particularly with respect to
  - the management of food supplies,
  - MSME sector,
  - Labour, and
  - The conduct of domestic trade in agricultural commodities.
- Other reform measures include- opening up coal mining to private operators; liberalisation of FDI in defence production, and so on.





**Thank you**