

WHAT ARE WICKED PROBLEMS?



adapted from: *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning*
Horst W.J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber (Policy Sciences, June 1973)

source:wicked7.org

" [Wicked problems include] poverty, food and water security, obesity, social justice issues, cancer, sustainability and climate change."

Michael Quick, Neuroscientist at university of Southern California

"The real world is messy, circular and aggressive. Wheels within wheels lead to bigger messes and unintended consequences."

From 'the Price of Fish: A new Approach to Wicked Economics and Better Decisions'

HOW DOES GDCOO INTEGRATE WICKED PROBLEMS INTO THE CONVERSATION?

Leaders around the world are facing serious dilemmas as they try to wade through the muddle created by the pandemic. National leaders are in quandary over whether to be seen as incompetent by enforcing strict lockdown and letting the economy sink to the point of privation of citizens or to be seen as rapacious elites by opening up the economic doors at the expense of surging infections and deaths.

Similarly, the conundrums for the head of organizations and private companies are not easy either since they are also faced with challenging decisions under the pressure of uncertainty. For each sector, each business, each country and each organization the challenge is unique and yet just as inextricable. There is no clear choice. There is no correct answer. And there is no clear choice because most problems faced during the pandemic or because of it are wicked problems. They are unsolvable! The solution will only entangle the web of problems a little bit more so the correctness of the problem is not what we are concerned with rather the morality of it is more pertinent. Whether the decision was good or bad rather than right or wrong?

For how recently the concept of wicked problem has been coined it has gained serious traction in the discussions across disciplines, and sectors. From economics, to history, to sports and politics all deem wicked problems relevant. Is your institution facing a wicked problem? How might the issue of wicked problems be related to GDCOO's work? How could GDCOO's course modules help address different aspects of it?

Migration, climate change, terrorism and security are some of the well-recognized wicked problems. Strategy and critical thinking are eminent to begin thinking about decision making in the framework of the wicked problems since they have a one-shot solution, which is to say that the decisions or policies made addressing any issues surrounding the wicked problem will produce consequences.

So, how does one go about strategizing how to make decisions in the wicked problem framework? [Click here](#) to learn more about identifying and analysing how leaders are making decision regarding wicked problems during the pandemic by deriving relevant strategies. The methods of decision making of the leaders and their way of thinking also helps to anticipate future trends which is also an objective of this module.

The Module on "The Future of Europe" addresses how the EU is coping with wicked problems of its own. The migrant crisis has been an issue for long and its ongoing nature says that there perhaps aren't any solutions making it a wicked problem. Another recent ongoing issue in the EU is Brexit. The labyrinth of convolutions in the Brexit deals has also arguably made Brexit a wicked problem as well.

To understand these problems, one needs to refer to the history of EU and, the way it has dealt with problems up until now to immersed as an integrated union. Learn more [here](#).

Multilateral ties and sustainability are not directly related to wicked problems but climate change is one of the most pressing wicked problems of the time and sustainable development is one of the proposed solutions to deal with climate change. As we have established, there are no easy or unique solutions to wicked problems, so this module will discuss how to go about proposing a solution to climate change through sustainable development and what challenges entail in doing so? To what extent have sustainable development projects been successful in Central Asia? The module focuses on this question through assessment of different sustainability programs and providing the participants with the opportunity to propose their project. This module proposes a hands-on experience of dealing with wicked problem of climate change by proposing solutions in the field of green economy and sustainable development alongside promoting international cooperation by proposing multilateral projects. Learn more [here](#).