W02 / Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Definitions, Methods, Ethics and Uncertainty in Decision-Making

Topic : Wicked & Wild Problem Agenda Setting

Chair : Raul Pacheco-Vega (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Mexico)

Second Chair : Fausto Amador-Cid (FLACSO Mexico)

Third Chair : Camila Sanchez (FLACSO Mexico)

CALL FOR PAPERS

Call for Papers: Exploring Public Policy Issues as Wicked Problems: Methods, Ethics, Definitions, and Uncertainties

Over the past 50 years, the concept of "wicked problems" has gained prominence in various fields, encompassing complex, multifaceted issues that resist easy resolution. In this workshop we invite scholars, practitioners, and researchers in the areas of public policy and public administration to engage in a comprehensive exploration of wicked problems from multiple perspectives. We seek contributions that delve into four key dimensions of wicked problems: methods for their study, the ethical implications they pose, the challenges inherent in defining them, and the uncertainties that surround their understanding.

Our proposed workshop has four main tracks or avenues of research inquiry, as outlined below.

1. The Challenges of Defining Wicked Problems:

Defining wicked problems is an inherently complex task. This track seeks contributions that scrutinize the process of identifying and framing wicked problems, as well as the nuances that arise when attempting to establish clear boundaries and parameters. We encourage submissions that analyze the contextual, cultural, and epistemological factors that shape the definitions of wicked problems and influence the strategies employed to address them.

2. Methods to Study Wicked Problems:

This track invites submissions that elucidate innovative approaches, tools, and methodologies for effectively analyzing and tackling wicked problems. We welcome empirical studies, case analyses, and theoretical frameworks that demonstrate novel ways to dissect and address the intricate nature of these challenges. Submissions may encompass quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods approaches that shed light on the underlying structures, dynamics, and potential solutions of wicked problems.

3. The Ethics of Wicked Problems:

This track aims to foster discussions on the moral and ethical considerations associated with wicked problems. We invite papers that critically examine the ethical dimensions of decision-making, policy formulation, and implementation strategies in the context of wicked problems. Submissions may explore issues such as distributive justice, stakeholder engagement, and the ethical responsibilities of individuals, organizations, and societies in confronting these complex challenges.

4. The Uncertainties Associated with Wicked Problems:

Uncertainty is an inherent feature of wicked problems, encompassing a range of ambiguities, unpredictabilities, and unforeseeable consequences. This track welcomes papers that delve into the various dimensions of uncertainty in the context of wicked problems, including but not limited to modeling approaches, scenario planning, and decision-making under conditions of limited information.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstract submissions should be no more than 300 words and must clearly state the research questions, methodology, and key findings. If the paper is theoretical, then please state how your paper will advance the wicked problems scholarly literature. If your paper is methodological, please make clear which methods will be examined or tested. If the proposed paper is empirical, please state clearly the type of case study or policy area under analysis. Full papers should be no more than 8,000 words, including references and appendices. We will consider all formats for bibliography but prefer them formatted in APA style.

All submissions will be considered for one or more special issues on wicked problems in public policy and

as such, will undergo a double-blinded peer-review process.

Important Dates:

Abstract Submission Deadline: January 31st, 2024

Notification of Acceptance: February 16th, 2024

Full Paper Submission Deadline: May 30th, 2024

Conference Dates: June 26th-28th, 2024

We look forward to receiving your contributions and fostering a dynamic dialogue on wicked problems and their multifaceted dimensions.

For inquiries, please contact Dr. Raul Pacheco-Vega (raul.pacheco-vega@flacso.edu.mx)

ABSTRACT

Exploring Public Policy Issues as Wicked Problems: Definitions, Methods, Ethics, and Uncertainties in Decision-Making

Abstract

Public policy problems can be considered wicked problems if they are very complex, multifaceted, lacking a clear way of understanding of the phenomena and straightforward solutions (Head, 2022; Peters, 2017). Scholarship on wicked problems in public policy became quite popular in the early 2000s and has recently regained interest. In this workshop, we propose a fresh look on the value of wicked problems' theoretical underpinnings and their value in understanding complex public policy problems.

Wicked problems are multifaceted, intractable and complex issues. Many public policy issues require intersectional, multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches to problem-solving. Framing these challenging issues as wicked problems enables scholars to seek a holistic approach to understanding root causes and potential solutions' spaces. This workshop explores research questions around 4 themes: approaches to defining wicked problems, the ethics of wicked problems research, quantitative and qualitative methods to study wicked problems, and the role of uncertainty in managing wicked problems.

We seek papers that answer research questions seeking to explain the emergence of wicked problems in public policy, the challenges of defining a wicked problem, the different methodological approaches that can be used to better understand wicked problems, and the ethics of tackling wicked problems using public policy theoretical and empirical tools. We welcome theoretical papers addressing any of the four avenues of research we indicate. We also welcome empirical case studies that can offer lessons learned from applying the analytical lenses of wicked problems.

Bibliography:

Head, B. W. (2022). Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Understanding and Responding to Complex Challenges. Palgrave Macmillan.

Peters, B. G. (2017). What is so wicked about wicked problems? A conceptual analysis and a research program. Policy and Society, 36(3), 385–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2017.1361633

W02 / Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Definitions, Methods, Ethics and Uncertainty in Decision-Making

Chair : Raul Pacheco-Vega (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Mexico)

Second Chair : Fausto Amador-Cid (FLACSO Mexico)

Third Chair : Camila Sanchez (FLACSO Mexico)

Session 1Agenda and Policy Networks

Wednesday, June 26th 10:15 to 12:00 (AULA 3)

Discussants

Everardo Chiapa (Tecnológico de Monterrey / Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo)

Carolina Milhorance (CIRAD)

Agenda and Policy Networks in the Pánuco River Basin

Alex Caldera-Ortega (Universidad de Guanajuato)

LUZMA FABIOLA NAVA (Universidad de Guanajuato)

Embedded Evidence Review: a methodology to understand the 'wicked problem' of digital, cultural and social policy

Susan Oman (University of Sheffield)

Problem definition in the agenda setting process for the decriminalization of abortion in Central America: a very wicked problem

Jeraldine del Cid Castro (FLACSO México)

Gloria Del Castillo (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Sede México)

W02 / Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Definitions, Methods, Ethics and Uncertainty in Decision-Making

Chair : Raul Pacheco-Vega (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Mexico)

Second Chair : Fausto Amador-Cid (FLACSO Mexico)

Third Chair : Camila Sanchez (FLACSO Mexico)

Session 2Environment and Climate Change

Wednesday, June 26th 14:00 to 17:15 (AULA 3)

Discussants

Alex Caldera-Ortega (Universidad de Guanajuato)

Joan Munoz (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po))

The challenge of policy action for wicked problems: Unraveling the conditions of backlash to climate policy in OECD countries

Ksenia Anisimova (Utrecht University)

(Virtual) Exploring the Wicked Problems in a Multilevel Context: The Case of Green Transition in Italy

PAOLA COLETTI (Università degli Studi di Bergamo)

Governance puzzle: struggles to fit the disaster risk reduction and climate change frameworks at the local level

Jesús Robles Chávez (Universidad Panamericana)

W02 / Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Definitions, Methods, Ethics and Uncertainty in Decision-Making

Chair : Raul Pacheco-Vega (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Mexico)

Second Chair : Fausto Amador-Cid (FLACSO Mexico)

Third Chair : Camila Sanchez (FLACSO Mexico)

Session 3Social Policies and Human Rights

Thursday, June 27th 09:00 to 12:15 (AULA 3)

Discussants

Jeraldine del Cid Castro (FLACSO México)

Nikita Pandey (Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay)

The human rights-based approach in public policy: A supporting tool for addressing wicked problems

María Guadalupe Imormino De Haro (Universidad Autónoma de Coahuila)

Methods for Studying Wicked Public Policy Problems in the Context of Homelessness: A Case Study in Mexico

Fausto Amador-Cid (FLACSO Mexico)

Assessing Learning Outcomes and improving the Quality of Basic Education: the Mexican case

Cesar Guerrero-Arellano (FLACSO Mexico)

Religious Freedom Expansion as a Wicked Problem: A Comparative Public Policy Approach

Camila Sanchez (FLACSO Mexico)

W02 / Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Definitions, Methods, Ethics and Uncertainty in Decision-Making

Chair : Raul Pacheco-Vega (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Mexico)

Second Chair : Fausto Amador-Cid (FLACSO Mexico)

Third Chair : Camila Sanchez (FLACSO Mexico)

Session 4Public Health

Thursday, June 27th 14:00 to 17:15 (AULA 3)

Discussants

María Guadalupe Imormino De Haro (Universidad Autónoma de Coahuila)

Cesar Guerrero-Arellano (FLACSO Mexico)

“Elder Care Policy as a Wicked Problem: An Intersectional Approach to Understanding Policies for Older Persons

Raul Pacheco-Vega (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Mexico)

Unveiling the Invisible Pandemic: Adolescent Depression in Mexico as a Wicked Problem in Public Health

Everardo Chiapa (Tecnológico de Monterrey / Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo)

Alma Reyes (Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla)

(Virtual) Is attaining Universal Health Coverage a wicked problem in India?

Nikita Pandey (Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay)

W02 / Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Definitions, Methods, Ethics and Uncertainty in Decision-Making

Chair : Raul Pacheco-Vega (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Mexico)

Second Chair : Fausto Amador-Cid (FLACSO Mexico)

Third Chair : Camila Sanchez (FLACSO Mexico)

Session 5Natural Resource Management

Friday, June 28th 09:00 to 12:15 (AULA 3)

Discussants

Jesús Robles Chávez (Universidad Panamericana)

PAOLA COLETTI (Università degli Studi di Bergamo)

(Virtual) Wicked problems in sustainable management of marine and coastal zone resources

Harini Santhanam (Manipal University)

Pranab Patar (Global Foundation for Advancement of Environment & Human Wellness)

(Virtual) Powerless local government ? Discussing local food governance’s challenges in the face of climate change in the Breede valley (Western Cape province, South Africa)

Magalie Bourblanc (GovInn, University of Pretoria (South Africa)/ Cirad, Univ. Montpellier (France))

Carolina Milhorance (CIRAD)

The Social Impact of Water Resource Preservation Policies: Limitations and Prospects of Eco-Solidarity Water Policies

Joan Munoz (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po))