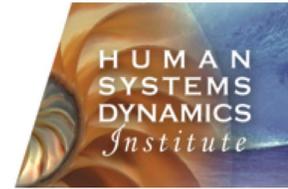


Taming Wicked Issues with Human Systems Dynamics

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At the Human Systems Dynamics Institute, we specialize in wicked issues—the wickeder the better.

How many of your issues are wicked? A wicked issue:

- Keeps coming back, even after you think you have solved it.
- Involves so many parts that you can't think of them at the same time.
- Is totally new so no one, including you, has a reliable roadmap.
- Transforms itself so quickly that you never know what to expect.

In the past, we had to be satisfied with wishing wicked issues away, settling for the temporary fix, waiting for them to solve themselves, or blaming others for creating or failing to solve them. None of these approaches was effective, but we simply didn't know what else to do. That is no longer true. Research and practice in human systems dynamics—at the intersection of complexity and social sciences—have uncovered a variety of simple models and methods to help you tame wicked issues.

You can explore many HSD approaches at our wiki give URL here, but I'd like to share one particular one here. It is called Same & Different, and it is one of the simplest and most powerful ways to engage with wicked issues.

You begin by drawing a simple diagram like this

My wicked issue is . . .	
Same	Different

Then you frame a question about similarities and differences that might influence your wicked issue. Examples include:

- How is this issue same as and different than it was yesterday (or last quarter or last year)?
- What are the similarities and differences between this wicked issues and related issues that are less wicked?
- How would I like the future with regard to this issue to be the same as and different from how it is today?
- How do multiple people view the issue similarly and differently?

In answering the question, you brainstorm similarities and differences. Very often, this process itself generates new and innovative options for action. If not, you can focus more closely by asking three additional questions:

- Which of these similarities and differences have no significant effect on the wickedness of the issue? (Put 0 in front of those.)

- Which ones make the issue worse (Put – in front of those.)
- Finally, which of the similarities or differences make the issue better? (Put + in front of those.)

Again, this step may uncover a new way to engage with your wicked issue. If not, then move to action by choosing one of the items and planning action to shift it. You may want to strengthen a positive one or weaken a negative one. You may focus on increasing or decreasing similarities or on increasing or decreasing differences. Whatever you choose, take the action and see what happens. How does your wicked issue transform? Then begin the process again.

This simple approach isn't always easy, but it does always generate new insights and options for action to reframe or remove the most wicked of your issues. Try it. Let us know how it goes at our social networking site at hsdcommunity.ning.com follow me at:

