

Jared Diamond – Collapse – How societies choose to fail or succeed

Possible Factors/Generalizations that may lead to a societal collapse

1. Anthropogenic induced environmental damage
 - a. Due to ignorance (e.g. soil erosion, water contamination, CO₂ production)
 - b. Fragility of the environment
 - c. Both
2. Climate change/Natural hazards
 - a. Natural cooling
 - b. Heating (today's situation)
 - c. Human short-term memory/life
 - d. Catastrophic earthquakes / volcanic eruptions
3. Hostile neighbors
4. Decreased support from once friendly neighbors (e.g. dependence on fossil fuels)
5. The societal response to its problems (wicked problems)

Wicked Problem – 'defined' ...

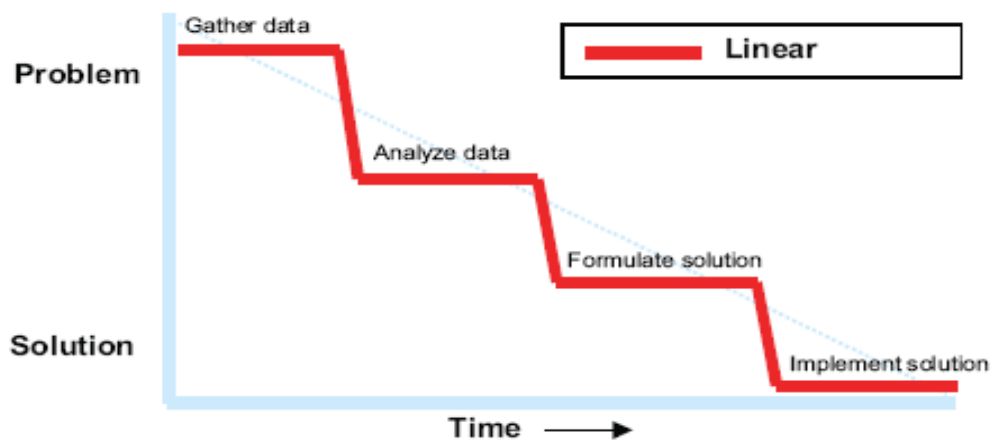
- A. You commonly don't understand the problem until you have tried to develop a solution...
- B. Wicked problems have no stopping rule / No ONE solution
- C. Solutions to wicked problems do not fall into simple right or wrong categories...
- D. Every wicked problem is essentially unique and novel...
- E. Every proposed solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation'
- F. Wicked problems typically do not have any obvious alternative solutions...

Factors that make Wicked problems difficult to address...

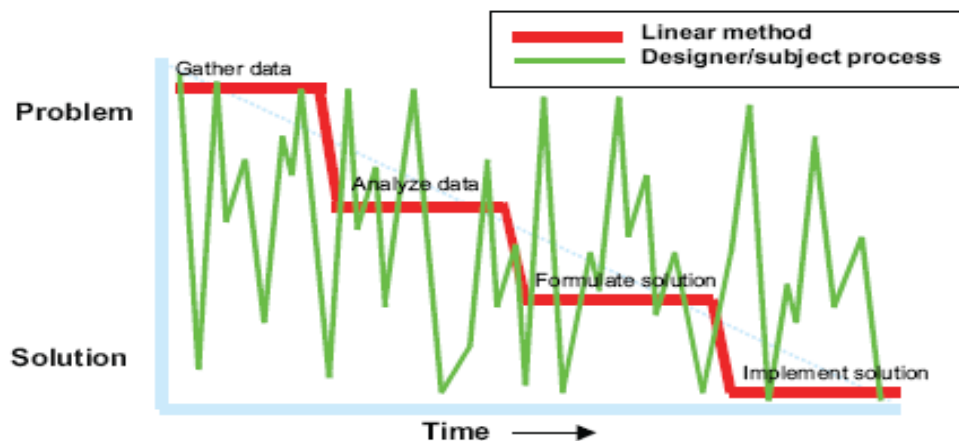
1. Working together to address a shared problem is difficult. Collective intelligence is a natural property of socially shared cognition, a natural enabler of collaboration.

Complicating factors of working together include – A. Increasing the number of people working on the problem, B. Diversity of people working on the problem (gender, ethnicity, political and or religious affiliations etc.)

2. Forces of fragmentation – Natural forces that challenge collective intelligence / Forces that doom projects and make collaboration difficult to impossible.
3. Simple/tame problems vs. Wicked problems – Simple/tame problems tend to be linear



Wicked problems are not linear



4. Wicked problems require making decisions, doing experiments, launching pilot programs, testing prototypes, and so on.

Study alone leads to more study, and results in the condition known as 'analysis paralysis,' a Catch 22!

We can't take action until we have more information, but we can't get more information until someone takes action.

5. The condition of apathy
 - a. The problem does or will not directly affect me, so why should I spend time working on it...
 - b. The problem is so big and complex, I cannot even think of how to start addressing it, - *There are so many other pressing issues in my life work/school, bills, family* , in end you 'unconsciously' choose not to address the complex problem... (procrastination)

Taming a wicked problem

1. Lock down the problem definition - Develop a description of a related problem or a sub-problem that you can solve, and declare that to be the problem
2. Assert that the problem is solved - Since a wicked problem has no definitive solution, the whole point of attempting to tame it is so that a solution can be reached
3. Specify objective parameters by which to measure the solution's success - This taming approach amounts to locking the problem down (point 1), however, because what is measured becomes, officially and by definition, the problem. Whatever is not measured is then free to absorb the real problem
4. Treat the problem as unique do not use the solution to a similar problem...
5. Declare that there are just a few possible solutions, and focus on selecting from among these options - A specific way to do this is to frame the problem in 'either/or' terms, e.g. "Should we attack Iraq or let the terrorists take over the world?"
6. How can a group reach an acceptable solution if the stakeholders cannot agree on what the problem is? The answer to this question – and the *Holy*

Grail of **effective collaboration** – is in creating shared understanding about the problem, and shared commitment to the possible solutions.

7. Shared understanding - Shared understanding does not mean we necessarily agree on the problem.

Shared understanding means that the stakeholders understand each other's positions well enough to have intelligent dialogue about the different interpretations of the problem, and to exercise collective intelligence about how to solve it.

Because of social complexity

Solving a wicked problem is fundamentally a social process. Having a few brilliant people is no longer sufficient.

