

# **New Tools for Resolving Wicked Problems: Mess Mapping and Resolution Mapping Processes**

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## **Executive Summary**

Wicked Problems (equivalently, Social Messes) are seemingly intractable problems. They are composed of inter-related dilemmas, issues, and other problems at multiple levels society, economy, and governance. These interconnections—systems of systems—make Wicked Problems so resilient to analysis and to resolution.

Wicked Problems include issues such global climate change, healthcare in the United States and elsewhere, the AIDS epidemic and perhaps other emerging diseases, pandemic influenza, international drug trafficking, terrorism, homeland security, and nuclear energy and waste.

Since 1999, one of us (Horn) has been developing an approach to resolving Wicked Problems that combines interactive group processes with Visual Analytics to produce (among other outputs) detailed graphical representations and analyses of Wicked Problems.

Another of us (Weber) has been a leader in applying a particular form of scenario planning that we call Resolution Scenario Mapping. Resolution Mapping is a knowledge-based, highly interactive group process for analyzing contingent Events and divergent outcomes. Participants can choose their most desirable and attainable outcomes and those milestones or Events that lead logically to the desired outcome. Implementing key Events substantially increases the likelihood of resolving the Wicked Problem at hand, at least for a period of time.

In this paper, we show how Mess Map diagrams and Mess Mapping and Resolution Mapping processes can be used to represent, analyze, evaluate Wicked Problems and then to choose actions that ameliorate the Wicked Problem at hand.

Resolution Mapping and Mess Mapping are each powerful process and analytic tools for helping stakeholders resolve Wicked Problems. These tools can be successful where others have failed (or have feared to tread) because both incorporate or address uncertainty and risk, complexity, systems interacting with other systems, competing points of view and values, different people knowing different parts of the problem (and possible solutions), and intra- and inter-organizational politics.

“C-level” executives, Boards of Directors, thought leaders, authorities, and change agents will find Mess Mapping and Resolution Mapping indispensable for creating consensus, choosing specific actions, and determining responsibilities for implementation.

A copy of the complete White Paper can be downloaded from:

[http://www.strategykinetics.com//New\\_Tools\\_For\\_Resolving\\_Wicked\\_Problems.pdf](http://www.strategykinetics.com//New_Tools_For_Resolving_Wicked_Problems.pdf)

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