

# **Problem Structuring Methods, Wicked Policy Problems and the 2009 Australian Repco Rally**

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## **Abstract**

Rapid change and increased diversity in the policymaking environment over the last few decades have confronted policymakers with new challenges, including dealing with and overcoming wicked problems (i.e., issues highly resistant to resolution). Wicked problems always involve multiple actors with diverse goals and finding optimal solutions that satisfy all policy actors are often impossible to find. Three methods in particular have been used to address wicked problems. Overall however, these methods have not proved as effective as Problem Structuring Methods (PSMs) which were designed specifically to assist diverse groups address a problematic situation of common interest, characterized by high levels of complexity, uncertainty and conflict.

The event policymaking environment is not impervious to wicked problems as events do not operate in isolation but are tightly linked to the community in which they occur. Indeed there is a diverse array of policy actors within the event policymaking environment which often results in a lack of consensus in goals and problem definition. Not surprisingly then, policy actors are increasingly seeing the emergence of wicked problems in the policymaking process of events, yet little attention has been paid to addressing such policy issues.

The purpose of this paper is to address this gap in the research and to provide readers with an insight into PSMs by discussing the potential application of PSMs to the 2009 Australian Repco Rally. This international racing car event which was held in the Northern Rivers region of NSW, Australia, clearly demonstrated a wicked problem involving multiple actors from various institutional backgrounds with divergent perspectives and goals. Complex problems emerged during the policymaking process of the event and this culminated in a high degree of uncertainty, controversy and conflict during the event policy making process. The broad aim of this paper then, is to enhance understanding of PSMs by demonstrating that when the method is utilised in a collaborative environment, it can provide an approach that will assist event policymakers in dealing effectively with a wicked problem.

**Keywords:** events, problem structuring methods, wicked problems, policy making, world rally championship.

## **Introduction**

The event industry continues to flourish as governments, corporations, communities and individuals around the globe reap significant socio-cultural, economic, environmental and political benefits from the production of diverse array of events (Getz 2009). Initially, the potential economic benefits derived from events were instrumental in instigating the expansion of the event phenomenon (Allen, O'Toole, McDonnell & Harris 2001; Yeoman, Roberston, Ali-Knight, Drummond & McMahon-Beattie 2004). Increasingly however, the socio-cultural and environmental benefits of events, such as improving community cohesion and sense of local pride and raising environmental awareness, are being recognised as equally significant outcomes of the event industry (Fredline, Raybould, Jago & Deery 2005; Sherwood 2007; Tassiopoulos & Johnson 2009). Yet to date, despite rapid changes in the event policy context over the last few decades, very little attention has been paid to the political dimensions of events (Hall & Rusher 2004; Getz 2008). As a result of such change, policymakers have been confronted with new challenges, the most significant of which involves dealing with 'wicked problems', that is problems which involve multiple actors with diverse goals operating interdependently and which are highly resistant to resolutions (Rittel & Webber 1973).

Not surprisingly, wicked problems are characterised by a high degree of complexity, uncertainty and conflict that go well beyond the capacity of any one organisation to understand and respond to (Australian Public Service Commission 2007). Efforts to resolve this type of problem by traditional analytical approaches have proved inadequate and have often led to conspicuous failure. As a result, a new family of methods, designed specifically to tackle wicked problems was introduced to the Operations Research/Management Science field throughout 1970s and 1980s. The family of methods was named Problem Structuring Methods (PSMs), reflecting its focus on identifying a problem. This paper thus has two main aims: to provide readers with an insight into PSMs and to discuss the potential application of PSMs to the event policy environment by utilizing a clear example of a contemporary wicked policy problem in event context with a case study of the 2009 Australian Repco Rally. To achieve this, the paper will first describe the policy context in which wicked problems emerged, the characteristics of wicked problems and the challenges they pose to policymakers. Next, the PSMs literature is reviewed, identifying why PSMs

have a better chance to succeed in dealing with wicked problems when other methods have failed. The final section will discuss a conceptual analytical framework utilizing the 2009 Australian World Rally Championship as a case in point.

### **Wicked problems**

In the past, the policymaking process in organisations or central governments was fairly simple, with most policies being generated from authoritative decisions made by a policymaker or a coherent group of policymakers who shared a unitary set of agreed objectives (Van der Heijden & Thissen 1996). This is what Van de Riet (2003) called single-actor policy setting, characterised by a consensus between those involved in the process on the problem definition as well as the goals and objectives of the policy. Small populations and lack of cultural exchanges often led to the development of predominantly homogeneous cultures in which most people shared similar values and beliefs and held common aims (Rittel & Webber 1973). Hence, general interest decisions made by the government would commonly receive public support.

In contemporary society however, issues and activities became more complicated and more interrelated. Globalization, along with a rapid increase in population and cultural diversity, has created a multitude of different socio-cultural groups, each with different backgrounds, interests and value systems. Policymakers have started realising they are operating in “interconnected networks of systems” (Rittel & Webber 1973, p. 22) or a “multiple-actor policy setting” (Van de Riet 2003, p. 159), where resources (i.e., knowledge, money, support) are spread across various interdependent policy actors and where goals are achieved by pooling together these resources. It is within this complex network that actors find themselves not only facing the challenge of overcoming problems which are not clearly articulated but also where the relationships and interdependence of these problems are very hard to identify. Coming from diverse backgrounds, the policy actors also have a diverse knowledge base, values and world views, leading them to see problems very differently. Reaching a consensus in problem definition is thus much harder, as opportunities for all parties to communicate and understand the full picture of the problem are limited. Often, each party also believes they are holding the truth and are not always willing to

communicate with others. Moreover, the policymakers cannot ignore the paradox where finding solutions that satisfy all policy actors are virtually impossible, but where opting for solutions that achieve the goals of only some actors will inevitably upset others (Van de Riet 2003). As a result of this lack of consensus, which often instigates long lasting debates or even political deadlocks, policy problems become highly persistent and 'wicked'. In contrast, 'tame' problems are clearly defined, have readily identified solutions and can be addressed primarily by experts with little or no involvement of stakeholders (Batie 2008).

Although every wicked problem is essentially unique, it is often considered to be a symptom of another problem (Rittel & Webber 1973; Australian Public Service Commission 2007). In essence, wicked problems are substantive, strategic and result in institutional uncertainty (Van Bueren, Klijn & Koppenjan 2003). Importantly, there is no immediate or ultimate test for solutions to wicked problems. Not surprisingly, wicked problems have been detected in almost all aspects of public policy and planning, from public infrastructure (Van de Riet 2003), healthcare system (Periyakoil 2007), land and water management (De Kruijf 2007), to global issues such as climate change, poverty (Australian Public Service Commission 2007) and alternative energy (Simon 2006). Wicked problems however, have rarely been mentioned in the tourism and event literature, with the few exceptions of Jenkins and Hall (1997), Ioannides and Debbage (1998), Lew (2007), Brown (2009) and Dredge, Ford, Lamont, Phi, Whitford and Wynn-Moylan (2010). It is our intention to address this gap in the literature.

### **Wicked problems in events**

Events do not operate in isolation but are tightly linked to the community where they take place (Allen et al. 2001). For instance, events involve a multitude of stakeholders (Reid & Arcodia 2002) including increasing government involvement (Dredge et al. 2010; Hall & Rusher 2004) resulting in, among other things, a complex event policy community (Whitford 2005). Arguably then, events are breeding grounds for wicked problems which must ultimately be addressed by government policy.

Governments' role can no longer be seen as 'secondary' or 'behind the scene' in the event policymaking process as government involvement in the event industry has

become increasingly active via the investment of public money and the use of other public assets (i.e., public areas, emergency services). Indeed, according to Reid (2004) government is a primary stakeholder of the event industry while Whitford (2009) maintained that half of the event policy community constituted government actors. Furthermore, the complex event network also comprises not only of those who are directly and indirectly involved or affected by the events but also any organizations and individuals who will be affected by governments' decisions in the use of public assets (i.e., public parks, money of tax payers) (Getz 2009).

Undoubtedly, the various policy actors bring to the event policymaking table very diverse interests and perspectives as to why an event should or should not be held, how it should be managed and what the desired outcomes are. For instance governments, residents and specific community groups may have an interest in social, environmental and economic issues pertaining to events, yet their level of interest in each element may greatly vary (Hede 2007). Additionally, many governments focus primarily on the economic benefits of events to assess their success (Mules & Faulkner 1996). Yet even within the government, goals often conflict between different levels of government, with some local governments using events mainly to foster the social-cultural benefits while state or national governments tend to aggressively pursue events for economic benefits (Whitford 2004).

In addition, the event policy making process often occurs in a closeted policy community (Whitford 2009) which restricts necessary communication to foster consensus on problem formulation and goals. This kind of practice not only limits what could be a diverse array of perspectives (Kerr 2003) but also presents a high risk to policymakers as they may 'lose touch with the true complexity and normative volatility of the problems as experienced by other groups' (Hoppe & Hisschemoller, 1995 p. 42). Thus too often, agreement on 'what the problems and/or desire outcomes are' does not occur, resulting in the creation of various wicked event policy problems. Such was the case with the 2009 Australian World Rally Championship.

### **Tackling wicked problems with Problem Structuring Methods (PSMs)**

There are two general approaches to tackling wicked problems: one aims to reduce uncertainty and diversity in the policymaking process while the other adopts a more

collaborative approach, accepting that uncertainty and diversity are now a permanent part of policymaking (Arentsen, Bressers & O'Toole 2000). The collaborative approach encourages all policy actors to participate in the policymaking process (Rhodes 1997; Runhaar, Dieperink & Driessen 2006; Dredge et al. 2010; Getz 2009, Hall and Rusher 2004) and is regarded by many policy actors as an effective way in dealing with wicked problems (see Alford & Head 2008; Australian Commission 2007; Bardach 1998; Chrislip & Larson 1994; Gray 1989; Huxham 1996; McLagan & Nel 1995; Roberts 2001). Nevertheless, in a practical setting like the 2009 Australian World Rally Championship, there are many challenges to using the collaborative approach including the facilitation of effective communication and collaboration between policy actors (Emery & Purser 1996; Jacobs 1994; Roberts 2001). Too often for instance, actors' different perceptions and goals get in the way, influencing them to talk past one another and engage in the 'dialogue of the deaf' instead of communicating with each other (Bohm 1990; Van Eeten 1999). Too often then, communication efforts can and do turn into heated debate. As conflicts between actors increase, their positions become more rigid and agreement becomes even more difficult to achieve (Roberts 2001). Concomitantly, policy actors often try to influence the policymaking process to their advantage (Hardy & Phillips 1998) and/or the process might produce 'negotiated nonsense' which is supported by policy actors but it is not scientifically valid (Van de Riet 2003).

In recognition of the need to assist diverse groups address problematic situations (i.e., high levels of complexity, uncertainty and conflict) (Rosenhead & Mingers 2001), PSMs were specifically designed to facilitate collaborative decision-making processes. The key word in PSMs is structuring. At the beginning of the collaborative process, the wicked problem is highly unstructured as each policy actor has a version of the problem and its desired solutions (Gray 1989). Actors also distrust each other and invariably do not accept information that others bring to the table. Thus, PSMs advocate intervention by facilitating the development of a transparent, participative and interactive structuring process to enable actors to gain a much better understanding of the problem and how their actions affect each other.

The PSM process is transparent in the sense that 'little or nothing happens in the back rooms or black boxes' (Rosenhead 1996 p. 120) as the data used for intervention is

wholly contributed by policy actors and any results are open for examination. Transparency significantly limits the possibility of actors trying to manipulate the intervention process (Franco 2006), in turn helps increase credibility and validity of the results, making them more likely to be accepted by all actors.

The PSM process is participative as actors engage in a process where they enjoy equal positions and openly exchange their perspectives and ideas to jointly construct a multi-perspective problem definition and develop a portfolio of solutions relevant to the defined problem (Checkland 2001; Rosenhead & Mingers 2001; Roberts 2001). Such active participation helps produce strong ownership of the formulation and implementation of the problem (Rosenhead 1996). Concomitantly, actors experience a shared sense of social and political responsibility which invariably promotes a more collaborative and trusting environment. According to Head & Alford (2008 p.19) ‘to the extent that they trust each other, actors will be more likely to take the risk of disclosing information that may make them vulnerable to other parties, thereby enhancing the extent to which differential knowledge is brought in to bear on the problem’. Consequently, by accommodating multiple perspectives and increasing understanding and ownership through the PSM process, actors are able to establish commitments to act (i.e., recommendations, plans or policy) and develop workable solutions to shared problems (Franco 2006; Hoppe & Hisschemoller 1995; Rosenhead 1996).

### **Analytical framework for Problem Structuring Methods**

Using PSM intervention as the core process, Figure 1 presents a collaborative analytical framework to tackle wicked problems. The following section will discuss the framework in more detail using the 2009 AWRC case study to show how the framework can be used to tackle wicked problems associated with the event policymaking process.

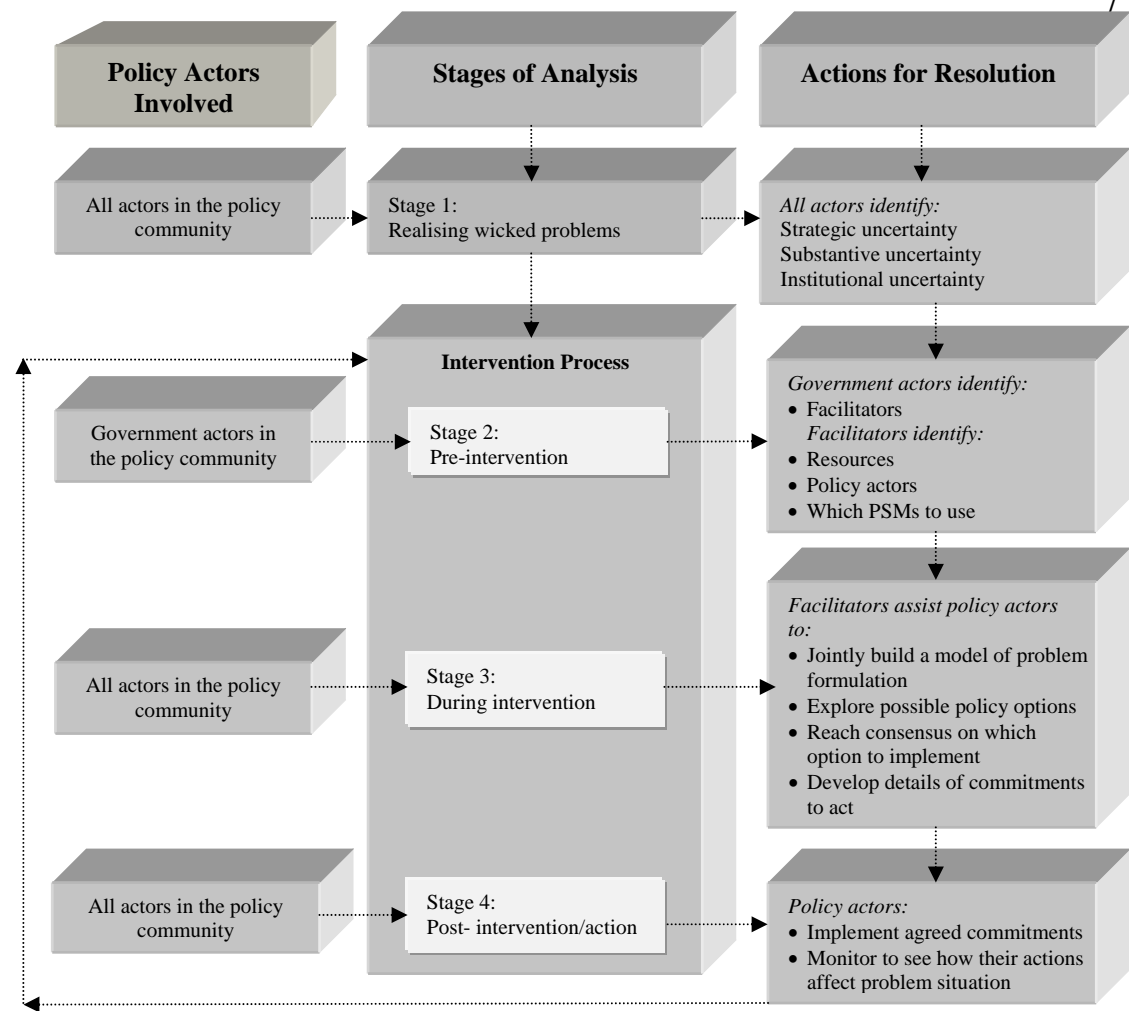


Figure 1: Analytical Framework for Problem Structuring Methods

### 2009 Australian World Rally Championship

In 2007, the New South Wales State Government was presented with the opportunity to host the World Rally Championship (WRC). Seeing the event’s great potential to boost the regional economy, EventsNSW (i.e., a private corporation created by, and operating on behalf of, the NSW State Government) entered into negotiations with the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport (CAMS) but with little to no discussion or consultation with the other stakeholders in the policy community. Nevertheless, an agreement was reached and an announcement was made on 10 September 2008 that the Rally would be staged in the Northern Rivers of NSW every second year until 2017, with an option to extend for a further five events.

The event organisers and NSW State Government promoted the event as a vehicle to provide in excess of \$20 million worth of economic benefits to the region. Not surprisingly then, the decision to stage the Rally was initially welcomed by both local residents and local councils. Concerns soon emerged however, when the host

community learned that Rally cars would race through rural public roads and even pass through protected national parks. Numerous questions about the social and environmental impacts of the event were raised and when it was deemed that these questions were not addressed adequately by the event organisers, opposition to the event began to grow. Concomitantly, the event's economic benefits were also questioned when policy actors realised that the Western Australia State Government chose to discontinue hosting the event due to its high costs and low economic returns. Increasing protests and negative media about the Rally arguably gave organisers and the NSW State Government cause for concern about the fate of the event.

Under normal circumstances, all stakeholders would have had the opportunity to formally voice any concerns about an event via a Development Application (DA) which is lodged with local government. Yet the concerns of stakeholders about the event were never heard as the DA was never lodged by the event organisers. Instead, special legislation, titled the *Motor Sports Bill 2009* was passed by the NSW State Government in June 2009, enabling the event to bypass local council and local citizens' decision-making powers. Not surprisingly, this move by the government quickly received attention from not only those involved with the event but from many others who were concerned about the apparent lack of democratic process in public policymaking.

Arguably, NSW State Government's attempt to limit the participation of many policy actors from the event's policymaking process triggered a heated debate around the interrelated economic, social, environmental and political sub-problems associated with the hosting and staging of the event. The conflict associated with the debate was exacerbated by the array of divergent perspectives of actors constituting the policy community of the Rally. As the debate escalated, the community was divided between those who supported the event and those who opposed the event. Nevertheless, the first event took place amidst various obstructing activities from protestors. A wicked policy problem was evident and in need of resolution.

### **Wicked problems emerge**

The NSW State Government and organisers of the 2009 Repco Rally typically demonstrated top-down responses to numerous wicked problems that arose during the

development and implementation of the event. For instance, the NSW State Government overrode and streamlined the established DA process by introducing special legislation. The *Motor Sports (World Rally Championship) Act 2009* was passed on 24 June 2009 effectively removing the requirement for approvals under existing legislation including the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*, the *Threatened Species Conservation Act*, the *Forestry Act*, the *Water Management Act*, the *Fisheries Management Act* and the *Local Government Act*. As a result, policy actors were unable to voice their concerns about the event through formal legal channels. An array of policy actors reacted negatively to this heavy handed approach adopted by government and the event organiser. Those policy actors who were opposed to the Bill engaged in numerous activities to prevent the policy implementation, including protests, petitions, passive obstructions and even the instigation of a lawsuit. Not surprisingly then, conflict increased between the diverse array of policy actors involved (i.e., event organisers, State and local governments, environmental and political groups, host community, local businesses) in the development and implementation of the 2009 Repco Rally.

Arguably, adopting PSMs is an effective approach to assist in resolving the type of conflict and distrust experienced by the various policy actors of the Repco Rally. PSMs enable policy actors to engage in a participative, interactive process where, among other things, all values, aspirations and opinions are heard and taken into consideration. In this transparent, participative and egalitarian environment, policy actors will be more likely to develop creative options that can generate a breakthrough to problematic situation such as the wicked problem of the Repco Rally. Importantly, the first step in achieving a successful solution to a wicked problem is to acknowledge there is a problem in the first instance.

### **Stage 1: Realising wicked problems**

Low awareness and a lack of recognition of wicked problems are common. According to Conklin (2006 p.4), 'a big feature of wicked problems is that many people come to the table believing that the problem actually is not wicked at all - they think they know what kind of problem it is and what kinds of solutions are valid'. Therefore the first stage of analysis in the PSM framework is for policy actors to realize a wicked situation has emerged. For instance, in 2007, EventsNSW entered negotiations with

CAMS to stage the entire WRC in the Northern Rivers region of NSW (Murray 2009). After almost a year of closed door meetings between EventsNSW and Rally Australia it was officially announced that the WRC was coming to the Northern Rivers of NSW. This initial public announcement apparently came as a surprise to the residents and local councils in the Northern Rivers Region and arguably heralded the point in time in which a wicked problem emerged. Actions for resolution taken at this stage revolve around the analysis of the problem's context and its characteristics which include substantive uncertainty, strategic uncertainty and institutional uncertainty (Koppenjan & Klijn 2004).

Substantive uncertainty relates to a lack of 'useful knowledge' (i.e., it can withstand tests or scientific acceptability and see) or 'negotiated knowledge' (i.e., is accepted by all actors involved) (Edelenbos & Van Eeten 2001; Van de Riet 2003). Substantive uncertainty happens for two reasons. First, the necessary information is unavailable or not available on time (Koppenjan & Klijn 2004). In the case of the 2009 AWRC, the event was to be held for the first time in the Northern Rivers region of NSW and none of the actors had reliable or valid evidence to substantiate either the positive and/or negative impacts of the event. Second, the policy actors' different 'frames of reference' often influence them to select and interpret available information differently (Rein & Schon 1993). For instance, in relation to the economic benefits of the 2009 AWRC, many argued that the Rally provided Western Australia (i.e., the previous host state) with at least \$20 million each year. In contrast, other actors questioned this outcome claiming that Western Australia dropped the event because of a low return on investment and high costs. Both claims were based on well-documented facts and it depends on individuals' choices to interpret the information one way or another.

Strategic uncertainty relates to unexpected strategies being carried out by many actors who are involved in the wicked problem. Strategic uncertainty happens as these actors are not in sub-ordinate – super-ordinate relationships with each other and have a certain degree of autonomy and discretion to make their own choices (Rosenhead 1996). Each strategic move also changes the nature of the problem, making the situation evolve in unpredicted ways. For instance, fearing that the 2009 AWRC would be rejected by local councils, the event host organization apparently negotiated

with the NSW State Government to issue special legislation and hence bypass local governments' decisions in the policymaking process. Some policy actors responded to this with an unsuccessful injunction (based on environmental grounds) to stop the Rally just few days before the event took place. These actions from policy actors facilitated the development of social, environmental and politically oriented problems and contributed to strategic uncertainty.

Institutional uncertainty suggests that wicked problems do not only involve many policy actors but these actors also come from diverse institutional backgrounds (March & Olsen 1989). This leads to a high degree of uncertainty about how interaction processes between these actors should be developed (Koppenjan & Klijn 2004). In the case of the 2009 AWRC, a formal process was not developed to facilitate interaction and engagement between all the policy actors of the event. For instance, at the outset, Events NSW negotiated the whole process with CAMS and failed to engage any other policy actors. Sometime later in the process, the extent to which interaction between the local community, local councils and the event organiser occurred remains a point of contention, with some actors maintaining there was ample consultation while others were adamant that only minimal consultation occurred at several community meetings.

The application of these characteristics as guidelines to realise wicked problems, provides policy actors with a better understanding of the complexity and conflict pertaining to the problem. Ideally, government will take the lead at this stage and communicate relevant information to other actors, encouraging them to participate in a collaborative approach to find a way forward. However, in the event policymaking context, where governments often prescribe to neoliberal ideology and adopt a top-down mindset to policymaking processes, other policy actors may have to act as the driving force and pressure government actors to recognize wicked problems and the subsequent need for participative policymaking.

## **Stage 2: Pre-intervention process**

The pre-intervention process first involves choosing and recruiting an independent team to identify policy actors and later to facilitate discussions. A government actor or in this case, the NSW State Government is again best suited to take the lead role in

recruiting and giving the team the resources needed to prepare and conduct the intervention. The recruiting process however, should be done with care, following strict criteria to ensure the policy community's acceptance of the team. The facilitators usually are consultants or researchers (Rosenhead 1996). In particular, they should have:

- high credibility/high reputation in their work
- strong skills and knowledge in using PSMs to deal with wicked problems
- never publicly taken any position in the debate or even have little to no knowledge of the debate before being recruited.

The chosen team should conduct an analysis to identify resources available for the intervention. Generally, the available time and cost of organising workshops are the two most important resources. These will significantly influence the choice of PSMs used and the design of the workshop (e.g., number of participants, number of workshops held, time gap between workshops). Additionally, the PSMs will also be chosen based largely on the facilitators' background and expertise (Rosenhead & Mingers 2001).

At the same time, the team starts the process of identifying policy actors involved in the situation. Although there are many techniques available to help identify actors (Bryson 2004), we advocate the use of the approach by Mathur, Price, Austin and Moobela (2007). This approach first builds a broad generic list of policy actors by using Whitford's (2009) event policy community map by as a guide. Once the list is established, a snowballing technique is used to complete the list. All identified actors are contacted and invited to an intervention workshop. A large group, such as the actors identified in the 2009 AWRC (see Table 1) affect the workshop design.

**Table 1: Actors identified in 2009 AWRC**

7th Generation (local protest organisation)
Aboriginal Land Council (government peak representative body in Aboriginal Affairs)
Confederation of Australian Motorsport (not-for-profit member-based organisation)
Department of State and Regional Development (government)

Environmental Defender's Officer Northern Rivers (not for profit community legal centre)
EventsNSW (government)
Kingscliff Chamber of Commerce (not for profit organisation)
Kingscliff Ratepayers' Association (not for profit organisation)
Growing Kyogle Events (local government)
Kyogle Chamber of Commerce (not for profit organisation)
Kyogle Community Economic Development Committee (local government)
Kyogle Council (local government)
Murwillumbah Chamber of Commerce (not for profit organisation)
National Parks and Wildlife, the Department of Water and Land Conservation (government)
No Rally Group (local protest organisation)
North Coast Environment Council (regional organisation for community conservation and environmental groups)
NSW Department of Local Government (government)
NSW Department of Planning (government)
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (government)
NSW Parks – Murwillumbah (government)
Premier's Department - Community Engagement & Events (government)
Rally Australia (private organisation)
Roads and Traffic Authority (government)
Tweed Chamber of Commerce (not for profit organisation)
Tweed Economic Development Corporation (local government)
Tweed Monitor Group (local watchdog and lobby organisation)
Tweed Shire Council (local government)
Tweed Tourism (local government tourism organisation)
Tweed/Byron Police Area Commander (local government)

Shaw, Westcombe, Hodgkin & Montibeller (2004) suggest that PSMs can be applied for large group interventions by splitting participants into sub-groups and adapting the selection of key issues through voting.

### **Stage 3: During intervention**

Although government takes the lead role in the previous stages, during the intervention stage, government actors should assume an equal footing to all other policy actors. At this point, success or failure of the intervention depends on the skills

of the facilitator to not only promote the exchange of actors' perceptions but to also help them explore possible options. The facilitators' roles are very demanding in the sense that they have to manage both the complexities of the problem content and the group's interpersonal processes (Rosenhead 1996). The intervention workshop should engage participants in different activities based on the PSM chosen. However, no matter what PSM is used, actors must explore and reach consensus on policy options before developing commitments to act.

In the case study of 2009 AWRC the intervention process did not occur. Nevertheless, media reports and parliamentary transcripts were used as an alternative way to capture actors' perceptions in the debate. Together with content analysis, Cognitive Mapping, the modeling technique of Strategic Options Development and Analysis (Eden & Ackerman 2001), were used to develop the model of 2009 AWRC problem situation shown in Figure 2. This particular model is abstract and does not fully represent the perceptions of all actors in the 2009 AWRC debate due to time and resource limitations associated with this research. Nevertheless, it does provide a useful illustration of one of the tangible results of a PSM intervention (Franco 2006). The model can also be distributed later to actors who did not attend the workshop. It will not only help increase their understanding of the problem's multiple dimensions but it will also become a 'negotiative' device (Eden 1995) that facilitates dialogue associated with future actions (Cushman, Franco & Rosenhead 2006).

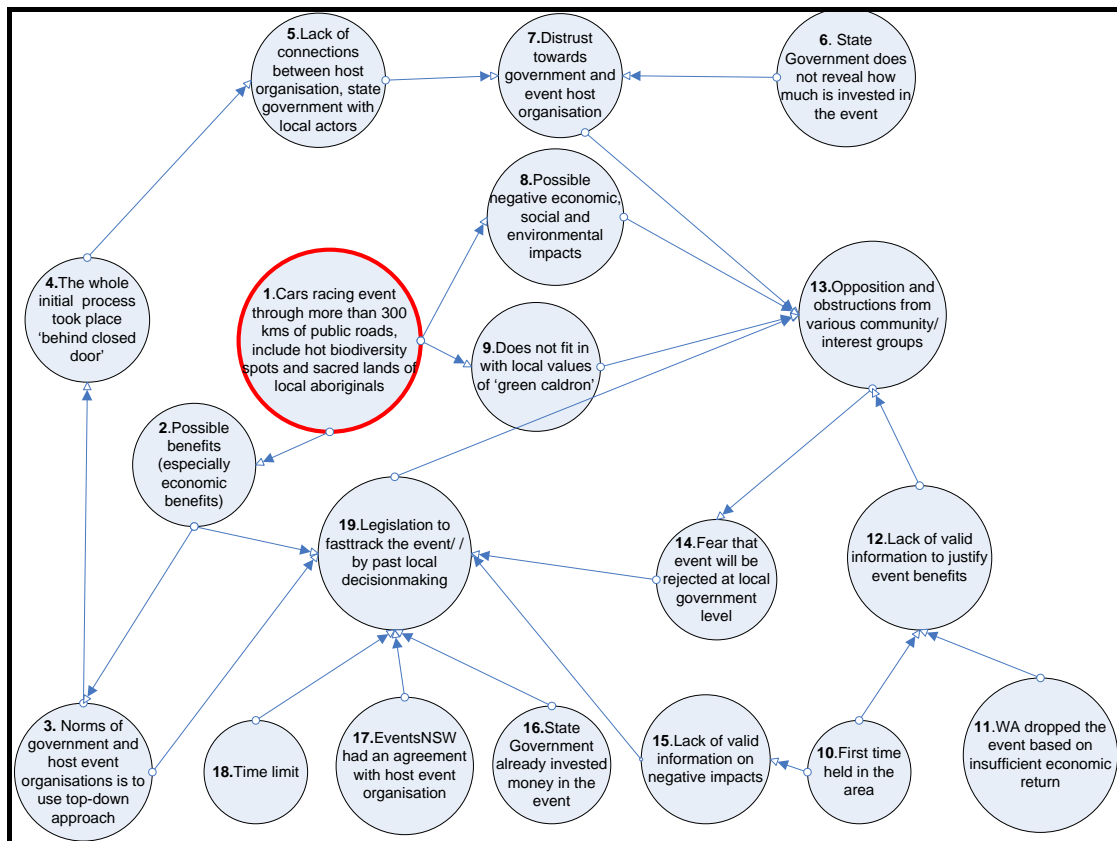


Figure 2: Model of the 2009 AWRC problem situation

Figure 2 reveals the problem structuring process is non-linear, which means practical actions can be considered at the same time as the problem is being formulated (Eden 1992). While Cushman et al. (2006) argue that this helps to encourage the dynamics of group discussion, Ritchey (2008 p.5) maintains that the participants should 'remain in the mess' long enough to explore the problem as fully as possible before starting to formulate policy options. Considering options too early, without giving sufficient time for understanding and taking into consideration the values and goals of others, will likely turn the intervention into a heated debate where actors might attack each others' options in an attempt to protect their own interests. In fact, it is useful to spread the intervention over a few workshops so that participants can think about and discuss what they have learnt from the previous workshop. The time gap also gives the facilitators an opportunity to complete the models so actors can confirm and or revise the model before exploring policy options (Horlick-Jones & Rosenhead 2007).

The policy options of the 2009 AWRC for example, could be determined using the model of problem formulation (Figure 2) and include:

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Option 1 | Cancel the event   |
| Option 2 | Relocate the event to another area   |
| Option 3 | Allow the first event to take place as planned and all actors monitor the impacts carefully to decide if the event should return to the area, be relocated or cancelled in the future. |

Arguably, the first option to cancel the event would not be feasible primarily due to commercial agreements reached between the event organizer and the government. The State Government had already invested too heavily in the event. Furthermore, canceling the event may also have been detrimental to the reputation of both the local region and the State Government and impacted negatively on future bid attempts for major events. Importantly however, the jury is still out on the extent to which the event has generated substantial 'negative economic, social and environmental impacts'. Therefore, cancelling the event on these grounds would have been premature and without substance at this stage.

The second option was also not feasible. The short lead time to the commencement of the event did not allow the host organization or event organiser to relocate the event. Additionally, relocation would also have incurred more costs at a time when the impacts of the event continued to be debated.

The last option was arguably the most feasible. Allowing the first Rally to take place ensured the State Government had an opportunity to realise the proposed benefits of the event. Additionally, policy actors could implement strategies to prevent or minimize potential negative impacts.

After agreeing on the policy option, actors must develop commitments to act. Rosenhead (1996) suggests that given the actors' different agendas, these commitments will likely be partial rather than complete. Commitments to implement the third option of the 2009 AWRC might have included, but would not be limited to:

- jointly build and negotiate conditions to prevent or reduce negative impacts from the event

- jointly discuss and appoint the personnel/authority to monitor and evaluate the impacts from the event
- jointly discuss and develop strategies to ensure the impacts of the event are monitored and evaluate
- jointly negotiate criteria to determine if the event is to return, be relocated or cancelled in the future.

It is imperative that policy actors jointly develop the model of problem formulation (Figure 2) and explore options as the actors come to understand the whole problem and are more likely to agree on the most appropriate policy option. Such participation will lead to a shared ownership of the policy, which in turn facilitates smooth implementation.

#### **Stage 4: Post-intervention or action**

In the last stage, the policy developed during the PSM intervention will be implemented. As each actor clearly understands his responsibility/duty in the overall plan, unexpected and uncoordinated actions, such as the development of special legislation and lawsuits pertaining to the 2009 AWRC, will also be reduced significantly.

It is important to note however, that although the policy should receive support from all actors, this does not guarantee that wicked problems will be resolved. By using PSM to explore future scenarios, only part of the uncertainty is managed. As such, policy actors are required to frequently monitor the problem(s) to evaluate how the policy is affecting the situation. Either good or bad, actions taken to implement the policy will certainly lead to changes in the problem and wicked problems will continue to evolve. New policy to address these changes may be needed and actors will be required to restart the intervention. The intervention process is thus shown in the framework as iterative, reflecting the fact that there is no definite solution to wicked problems and the process often ends, not when the 'correct' solution is identified, but when resources are exhausted (e.g., deadlines are met) (Australian Public Service Commission 2007). In the event context, many events are not one-off occurrences, but continue to be staged over a long period of time. As a result, policy

actors should look at the whole situation as a learning process (Barry & Fourie 2001) instead of a problem-solving process.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to explore PSMs as theoretical and applied concepts, and discuss their relevance to the policymaking processes of events. It has become apparent that wicked problems exist in the event context, although event policymakers appear to be unaware of, or disinterested in their existence. This case study of the 2009 Repco Rally suggests that wicked problems, too often emerging as a result of neoliberal approaches by government, should not be ignored by policy actors, but rather can be addressed by employing PSMs.

The second objective of the paper was to discuss the potential application of PSMs to the event policy environment by utilizing a clear example of a contemporary wicked policy problem from the case study of the 2009 Australian Repco Rally. In short, a wicked problem emerged when the NSW State Government fast tracked special legislation to ensure the 2009 AWRC took place in the Northern Rivers of NSW. The Government's top-down, heavy handed approach to this wicked problem was problematic as evidenced by the conflict which occurred between the various policy actors before, during and after the Rally. Arguably, by applying collaborative PSMs to address the wicked problem, policymakers would have been able to better manage the wicked problem. The PSM process manages substantive, strategic and institutional uncertainties by 1) bridging the knowledge gap of the situational problem between actors, 2) reducing emotional conflicts and distrust by involving actors in interactive and participative activities and 3) assisting actors to produce a joint agenda where each actor knows their responsibility in the overall strategy.

It is important to note however, that the application of the proposed framework still poses challenges. For instance, event policy actors have little to no appreciation of the capacity of the PSM framework to address complex wicked problems. Consequently, there is a need to increase awareness among event policy actors about the benefits of utilising the PSM framework to address wicked problems. Undoubtedly, increasing awareness and promoting the benefits (to event policy actors) of employing PSMs to address wicked problems will take considerable time and require substantial effort by

the proponents of PSMs. It appears that even when policy actors recognise the wicked nature of a problem, they have a tendency to use traditional, more familiar approaches as their 'choice of methods to use is as much a product of their knowledge, experience and skills as it is about the nature of the problem itself' (Heyer 2004, p. 21). Therefore, the extent to which policy actors and government actors in particular, will adopt this new collaborative approach to addressing wicked problems and share decision-making powers, still remains a question that can only be answered through practical application over time.

Another limitation of the PSM framework is that the literature pertaining to PSMs' application for large groups (e.g., 2009 WRC) has not been fully developed. Shaw et al. (2004) found that to date, the focus of PSMs has mostly been on small groups of less than twenty, whose members are not only stakeholders but also key decision-makers. Arguably, involving a larger number of policy actors from different arenas (even those with little or no authority over the final decisions) will lead to more valid and successful intervention results. Large groups surely provide a more diverse array of perceptions and knowledge about the problem and enhance ownership of the results by the entire policy community (Mingers and Rosenhead 2001). Yet pioneers such as White and Taket (1997) and Shaw et al (2004) have identified significant difficulties in using PSM for large groups, not only in managing the overwhelming complexity of information that is generated but also in reaching consensus on problem formulation or proposed policy. Therefore, there is an opportunity for further research to investigate how PSMs can be effectively adapted for large group intervention in the event policymaking context. Additionally, research is required to investigate how the wickedness of a problematic situation can be minimised by adapting the PSM framework to effectively manage actors' different perspectives at a very early stage of the event lifecycle (e.g., bidding phase or planning phase of the event). Clearly then, a proposed framework that uses PSMs as the key method to tackle wicked problems in the event context requires further validation and revision through practical application. Nevertheless, this paper provides a starting point for future research about wicked problems in the event policymaking process.

Undoubtedly, as the event phenomenon continues to evolve, wicked problems will continue to emerge and escalate from, among other things, the inability of policy

actors to communicate their diverse viewpoints, values and goals. Arguably then, early intervention into planning and decision making processes will provide actors with greater opportunity to communicate their differences which in turn, will at the very least, minimise the development of future conflict and complexity in the event policymaking process.

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