Systems: Lesson 9

Wicked Problems Reading

# Reading Assignment

You have two papers to read. The first is the focus of this assignment and our in class discussion. The second is a critical analysis of the first that may help you to understand the essential argument.

1. **Rittel & Webber, Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning**, available at http://www.uctc.net/mwebber/Rittel+Webber+Dilemmas+General\_Theory\_of\_Planning.pdf
2. **Rith & Dubberley, Why Horst W.J. Rittle Matters**, available at http://www.dubberly.com/articles/why-horst-wj-rittel-matters.html

# Submission

Please answer each of the following questions with a few sentences. The first two questions are worth one point each; the third is worth two points.

1). In the introductory section of The General Theory of Planning, Rittel & Weber describe the following paradox they have observed with respect the current public perception of social policy professionals:

"It might seem that our publics are being perverse, having condoned professionalism when it was really only dressed-up amateurism and condemning professionalism when we finally seem to be getting good at our jobs."

According to the authors, what is the cause of this paradox?

2). In The General Theory of Planning, the authors make the following pessimistic assessment of a cybernetic approach to planning:

"And yet we all know that such a planning system is unattainable, even as we seek more closely to approximate it. It is even questionable whether such a planning system is desirable."

What is the their concern with a cybernetic approach to planning?

3). Describe a wicked problem with which you have personal experience. Give examples showing how this problem conforms to at least 3 of the 10 "distinguishing properties" given by the authors as characteristic of wicked problems.