

Week 1

Going into this week, I needed more perspective on how planners address and think about wicked problems such as climate change. Engaging with the class and task and discussion, which had us classifying various issues into simplified, complex or wicked, I learnt how important it is to consider outside perspectives as other groups had considerably different views to mine. I already held a lot of beliefs and assumptions about climate change due to personal interest; however, through learning what wicked problems are and how difficult they are to define and address, I gained sympathy for planners at a local government level that is trying to tackle climate change; whereas previously I was pretty critical due to what I perceived as inaction. I also learnt that planners must use available data to make plans; however, data is ever-changing, so trajectories and different potential pathways must be considered. This was demonstrated to me because we discussed installing a seawall at Mission Bay and how designing said sea wall would require considering what height to build it at, which depends on highly changing climate predictions. My most significant contribution to the group this week was pushing the group to think about and complete the tasks set out in the modules. Moreover, having done the IPCC reading, I contributed to discussions regarding the potential impacts of climate change. The most vital thing I learnt was that to be able to address a wicked problem, you must first define it.

Week 2

Going into week 2, I approached the definition of climate change as a wicked problem by finding evidence. This led to me learning to see and extract historical metrological data using Cliflo. Using this data, I could, with evidential backing, claim that rainfall has been increasing and, on average, days have been hotter. My thinking regarding climate change evolved as I engaged with wicked problems with no perfect response or stopping rule. So much circular thinking is involved in defining wicked issues due to their complex nature. This was demonstrated to me through utilising PESTEL analysis and seeing the immense variety of the connecting problems. As I transition from a public member to a professional, I gain more sympathy for how difficult it is to address the issues I previously criticised planners for struggling to address. Planners have no right to be wrong and often need more resources to be right due to the political economy. My vital contribution to the group was coming up with and creating visualisations for the assignment, including various maps using ArcGIS, which I previously needed to learn how to use.

Week 3

This week, I learned how to use systems thinking and analyse balancing and reinforcing relationships between different factors. By drawing a causal loop diagram, I could recognise which issues were the most vital to address due to their reinforcing nature. This also led to a significant assumption of mine as I learnt that the things that may be contributing most to the risk are not necessarily hazards themselves, but variables such as social deprivation can play a massive part due to increased vulnerability. I also learnt that professional planners continuously expand and update their knowledge of climate change and its effects. This was emphasised through Nancy's lecture, which dove into how many reports on the impacts of climate change that we have been using have only been recently developed by Auckland Council to build a capacity for addressing and understanding climate change.

Week 4

Week four exposed a critical mistake my group had made. We were so focused on reaching the end line and choosing an issue that we should have engaged with the problem synthesis process, which is time-consuming and evidence based. Our biases from seeing flooding in the media had led to that being our chosen issue, with no clear evidential backing as to why it is the most prevalent issue. We were forced to step back and focus on gathering evidence and finishing our causal loop. This helped us differentiate our problem by examining the intersection of flooding and land use. This week, I emphasised how mistakes like these can not be made in the professional field because, as planners, we have ethical obligations and no right to be wrong; therefore, biases must be addressed, and procedures must be followed.

Week 5

This week, I learnt how difficult but crucial it is to break down complex issues like climate change into bite-sized stories so that a) regular people can understand them and b) the audience can be hooked and engaged. I learnt how important it is to utilise visuals as they can often demonstrate very complex thinking clearly. I also learnt how every word must be carefully chosen when formulating a problem statement or policy. We often use language like "may", but in these scenarios, one must be confident and have evident backing.

Week 6

This week, I learned how difficult it can be to communicate wicked problems. The final CRIT led to questions such as if I needed clarification and about the visual design of our storyboards, so I learnt how important it is to have a narrative or storyline to allow people to understand a complex problem quickly. I think I also learnt that my wicked problem thinking had failed a bit, as one of the comments we received was that we did not focus enough on vulnerable groups and subgroups and did not drive home the point that certain groups would be much more susceptible than others.

Week 7

This week, we had the chairperson for the Henderson-Massey Local Board with us. His experience in both central and local government was highly illuminating. My belief was enormously changed as I came to view the political economy as a wicked problem within itself, and its interaction with climate change was fascinating. I saw how wicked problems can be so significant in scale and difficult to define and address. But by coming up with the best possible solution now and engaging in an iterative process, we can, bit by bit, build capacity for dealing with such complex issues. I feel the most daunting task of this assignment has been coming up with the "perfect" solution or definition, but there is no perfect. Here is a person who worked on and passed the Local Government Act 2002, which, over the last two years in University, I have learnt several critiques and shortcomings of, but he was happy because he knew he did the best he could give the political context. Solutions are often highly constrained due to feasibility, but we can improve the future by doing what is possible.

Week 8

My beliefs did not necessarily change this week; instead, they were reinforced. The guest lecture provided a grounding, reminding us that, as planners, we must serve and protect the public. This assignment is about climate change, which is a significant issue, but we must be reminded at all stages that the solutions we propose must serve the people we are planning for, including those most vulnerable. I also learned how important the policy cycle is to professional planners and their approach to wicked problems, and I will include a methodological approach in my assignment. Moreover, I was amazed at the discussion regarding central government, Plan Change 78, natural hazards, and how politics can potentially lead to bad planning.

Week 9

Through trying to design a strategy to address climate change, I am learning to recognise the potential unintended consequences of my plan. Due to the complex and interconnected nature of wicked problems, any possible action must be carefully considered, as it could have lasting knock-on effects. Our group is leaning towards a nature-based response because it has the least unintended effects; however, even if it is not without impact, it can lead to unaffordability and worsening social deprivation.

Week 10

This week, we were able to finalise our response, which was difficult due to the absence of several group members. This required the group members present to consider the opinions and points of view of those not there and is a skill I believe would prove essential in the planning field as well. My contribution to the group this week was suggesting the responses that we are going to consider, and I was able to do so because of engaging with the previous week's work, where we thought about the potential pros and cons of different approaches. Designing a strategy has been difficult as all strategies have their negatives. However, I have chosen a water-sensitive design as it is an issue with few negatives that can be proactively mitigated.

Week 11

This week, I saw that my skills and capabilities in addressing wicked problems paid off. Through the creation of the final strategy and poster design, I had to think about the actual complexities of wicked problems, such as unintended consequences, the pros of my approach and the evidence I can use to justify my selection and work on communicating such a complex response to a complex definition. One thing that has become clear to me is that one of the most significant roadblocks in addressing wicked problems such as climate change is the political acceptability of solutions proposed. If a strategy is expensive or politically unpopular, it can be unfeasible; therefore, feasibility limits the implementation methods.

Week 12

This week was the final crit. Observing other students' presentations and completing my own made me clear about some things. Mainly because my understanding of wicked problems had considerably grown. Before becoming a planning student and before this studio, I often thought that local and central governments' inaction on wicked problems such as climate change or affordable housing was simply due to a lack of will. However, by engaging with the course content, hearing from guest lectures, and learning how difficult it is to define wicked problems and even harder to design solutions, I started to see how progress is constantly being made. However, because of the vast and complex nature of these issues, there is no correct response, and there are feasibility constraints that lead to designed solutions often being smaller in scale than someone like me before this studio would like. The vast and complex nature of climate change was demonstrated to me on crit day by seeing groups defining the wicked problem as biodiversity loss, emissions, or flooding and seeing an even more comprehensive range of solutions designed, ranging from community initiatives to policy and infrastructure solutions, all of which are "right" solutions to wicked problems as the solution is dependent on the definition of the problem. The other thing that became clear to me in the way I used to observe central and local government solutions is that I would often approach them in a critical stance, for example, the creation of urban motorways in past years; however, now I see that planners are often trying to design solutions with limited information leading to what in hindsight can be seen as "wrong" solutions being implemented. This emphasised how difficult it is for planners to design solutions, as we often have limited information and limited capacity but simultaneously have no right to be wrong. My most significant contribution to my group this semester overall was helping to lead. Often, the group would go silent and even not respond to proposed questions; I tried to take the lead and come up with ideas and spur engagement from other team members and then took the initiative to organise these ideas, which I believe was highly useful to the group. The main critique of the presentation for me was the lack of visuals. It again emphasised to me how, as planners, the central aspect of our job is serving the public, and therefore, whatever our problem or strategy synthesis, the primary skill we require is being able to communicate those ideas with other planners to get projects off the ground, and with the public to get them on board and engage with them and hear their concerns.