One session at the APA California Conference in Oakland–*Bay Area Sustainability: Wicked Planning and Conflict Identification at Local and Regional Scales*–addressed the value-laden challenges of sustainability planning and politics. This "class" of problem was christened "wicked" by Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber in their seminal 1973 article. As UCB Professors Charisma Acey and Karen Trapenberg Frick presented examples from their research and SF Planner, Scott Edmondson, provided the practitioner's perspective.

In the seminal article that gave birth to the concept of wicked planning problems, an argument was put forth that that the scientific approach to problem solving, designed to deal with "tame" problems, was not up to the task in social policy domains such as urban design and city planning. In these social arenas, problems are not merely complex, they are ill-defined, constantly changing, and represent conflicting values about what constitutes the greater good. The abstract from the article follows:

> *The search for scientific bases for confronting problems of social policy is bound to fail, because of the nature of these problems. They are "wicked" problems, whereas science has developed to deal with "tame" problems. Policy problems cannot be definitively described. Moreover, in a pluralistic society there is nothing like the undisputable public good; there is no objective definition of equity; policies that respond to social problems cannot be meaningfully correct or false; and it makes no sense to talk about "optinaal solutions" to social probIems unless severe qualifications are imposed first. Even worse, there are no "solutions" in the sense of definitive and objective answers.*

The concept of "wicked" problem is useful for designers, planners and policymakers working on issues ranging from environmental justice to climate change and more. Recent conflicts and lawsuits over the goals and process of implementing the Bay Area's climate mitigation plan reflect diverse formulations of the problem and thus priorities.

In this APA session, participants were introduced to specific tools for identifying conflicting values and land uses in local and regional sustainability planning in 11 Bay Area cities. The session also explored how planners can embrace the political theory of agonism to work through such conflicts by helping adversarial stakeholders retain their core values while finding some common ground. The session reviewed materials developed in work done over a year-long sequence of courses at UC Berkeley evaluating comprehensive planning for sustainability and Plan Bay Area, as well as research published by the moderators. The session presented two conflict identification models–the planner's triangle and the livability prism–which can assist planning professionals and other decision makers in identifying gaps or areas for improvement at various planning levels.

The topic can be pursued further through the following resources and by contacting the panelists.

Resources:

1. Link to slide deck *<<forthcoming>>*

2. Rittel, Horst W.J., and Melvin Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," Policy Sciences 4 (1973), 155-169, Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, Amsterdam, Scotland.

3. http://iurd.berkeley.edu/blog scroll down to the following IURD blog posts.

   Measuring Urban Sustainability: Evaluating the APA's New Sustainability Accreditation Criteria, posted February 3, 2015, by Charisma Acey.

   Is there Common Ground Between Planners and Tea Party, Property Rights, and Other Activists, posted on November 10, 2014, by Karen Trapenberg Frick

4. Trapenberg Frick, K. (2014). Can planners find common ground with Tea Party and property rights activists on means even if they don't agree on ends? California Planning and Development Report. Available at http://www.cp-dr.com/node/3536

4. Trapenberg Frick, Karen. "Actions of Discontent: Tea Party and Property Rights Activists Pushing Back Against Regional Planning," Journal of the American Planning Association, 79 (2013), no. 3: pp. 190-200. Available at http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01944363.2013.885312#.U03ZbMf6Bjc

5a. Trapenberg Frick, Karen, David Weinzimmer, and Paul Waddell. "The Politics of Sustainable Development Opposition: State Legislative Efforts to Stop the United Nation's Agenda 21 in the United States," Urban Studies February 2015 vol. 52 no. 2 209-232. Available at http://usj.sagepub.com/content/52/2/209.abstract

5b. A summary of the Agenda 21 legislation paper is posted on a London School of Economics and Political Science blog at http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2014/08/08/stopping-the-uns-agenda-21-policy-on-sustainable-development-has-become-a-rallying-cry-for-the-tea-party-across-the-u-s/

6.
Also, https://norcalapa.org/sustainability-blog/regional-local-sustainability-planning-11-bay-area-cities/

7.
And, https://norcalapa.org/sustainability-blog/apas-new-comprehensive-plan-general-planning-sustainability-accreditation-criteria-tested-11-bay-area-city-general-plans/

8.

And, https://norcalapa.org/sustainability-blog/apa-general-plan-sustainability-assessment-bay-area-cities/

[Post prepared by Scott T. Edmondson, AICP, founder/past co-director and Research Program Lead of the Northern Section's Sustainability Committee, one of the APA Sustainable Communities Division's Sustainability Champions, and a strategic sustainability planner-economist at the SF Planning Department.]