



Australian
National
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CRAWFORD SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC POLICY

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ANZAM Conference, Cairns

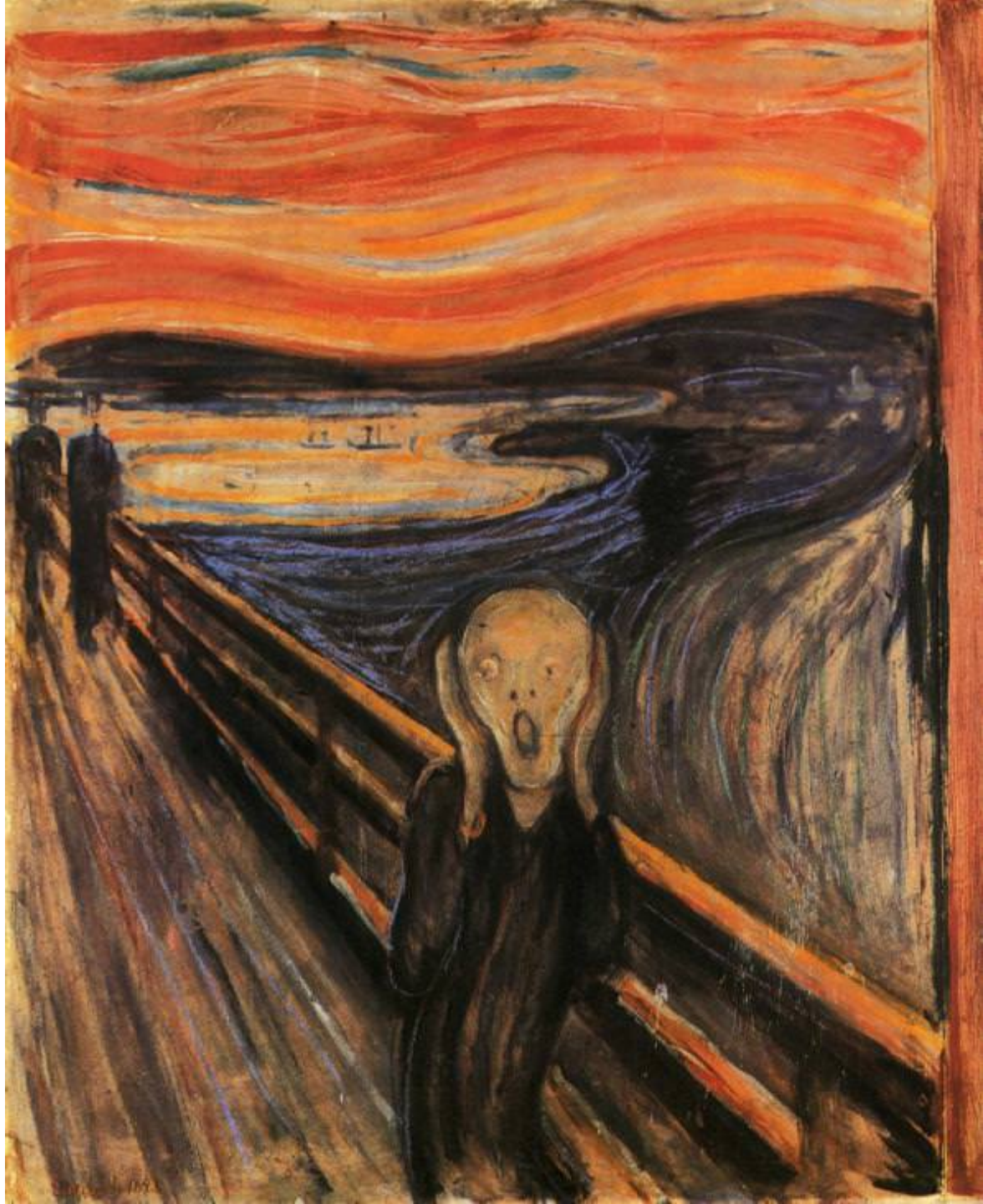
Wicked solutions to wicked problems: The challenges facing management research and practice

5 December, 2019

COLLABORATIVE FUTURES IN COMPLEX TIMES

Collaboration and
public policy
Helen Sullivan
(forthcoming...still)

*The book
that might
never be
finished*



Outline

- Collaboration as the ‘new normal?’
- Thinking about collaboration in public policy
– a framework
- A word about ‘wicked problems’ using the framework
- What is required of us in practice?

Definition

Collaboration, defined here as,

“ a more or less stable configuration of rules, resources and relationships generated, negotiated, and reproduced by diverse yet interdependent actors that enable them to act together in the pursuit of public purposes”

(Sullivan, forthcoming)

Collaboration as political practice

- requires action, or interaction, between individuals, or between human and non-human actants
- ‘important features of the world we inhabit as something routinely made and re-made in practice using tools, discourse, and our bodies’. (2012:2).
- the consequentiality of everyday actions in producing the structural contours of social life, Feldman and Worline (2016:310)

Actors, Agency

- ‘People do not only make sense of situations which confront them by reflecting upon them within the context of traditions, belief systems, or ideologies, They also move about in the world in a more or less effective way by acting upon the situation at hand’ (Griggs, 2014:15).
- Interactions across places, spaces, scales

An anti-collaborative moment?



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Turkey Tribune



Source: Rajesh Kumar/AFP

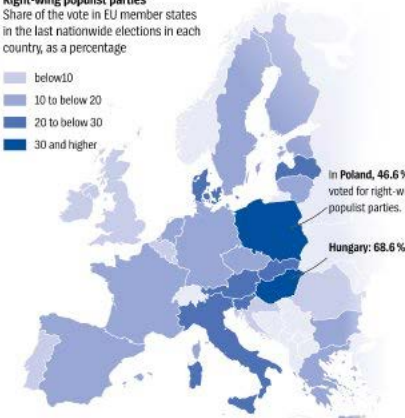
The Right-Wing Populist Plan to Destroy Europe

Europe's right-wing populists haven't been stopped by the scandal in Austria. They are working hard to destroy the European Union from within its own institutions and the European elections may show how close they are to success. *By DER SPIEGEL Staff*

Politics of Fear

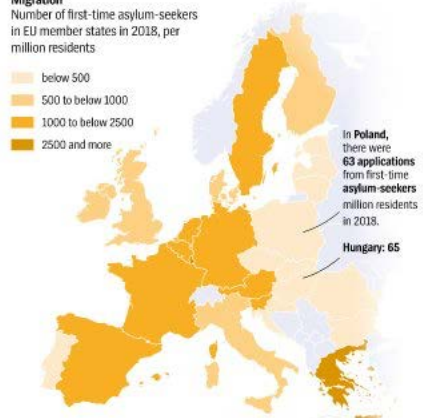
Right-wing populist parties
Share of the vote in EU member states in the last nationwide elections in each country, as a percentage

- below 10
- 10 to below 20
- 20 to below 30
- 30 and higher



Migration
Number of first-time asylum-seekers in EU member states in 2018, per million residents

- below 500
- 500 to below 1000
- 1000 to below 2500
- 2500 and more



WTO chief warns of worst crisis in global trade since 1947

By Daniel Gallas
South America Business Correspondent

Collaboration as the ‘new normal’

- Collaboration has always existed
- Specific enthusiasm for it in public policy
1990s/2000s ‘third way’ politics (Giddens, 1999)
 - Disruption
 - Wholesale change of governance and management
- Global Financial Crisis and austerity
 - Collaboration’s ‘discursive plasticity’

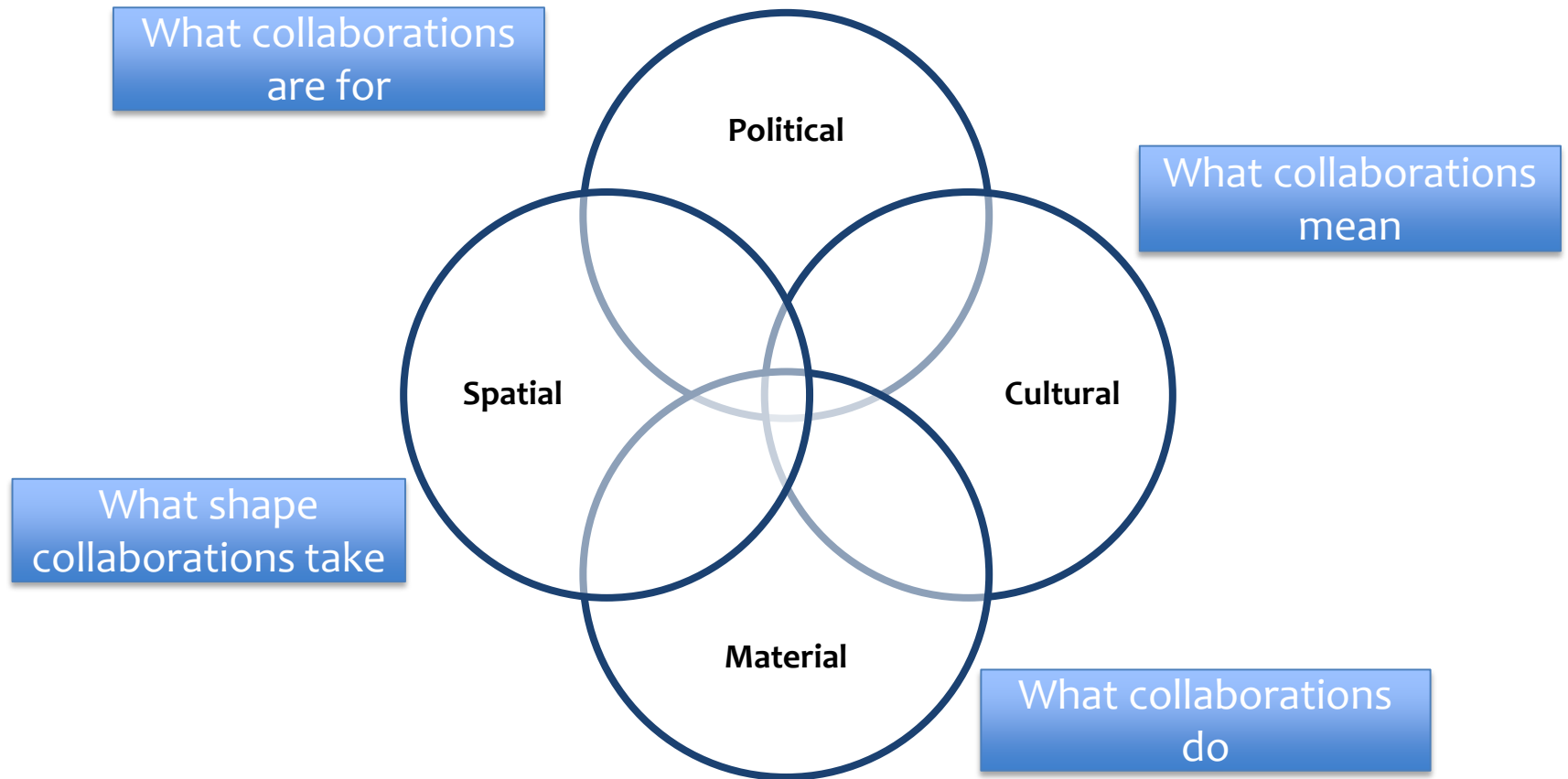
Underlying challenges of contemporary governance

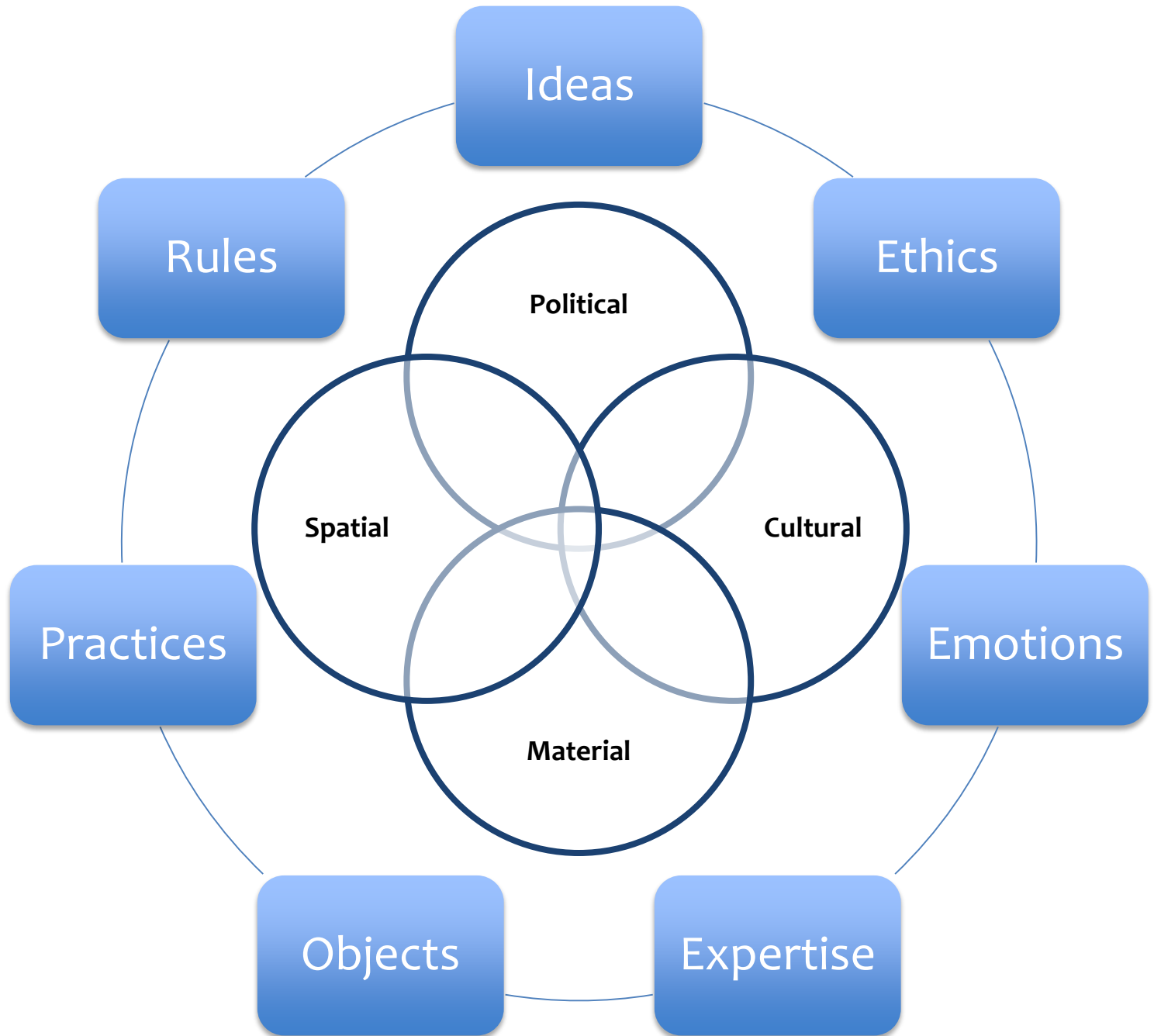
- The challenge of collective action problems
- The challenge of the changing nature of 'the public'
- The challenge of a public policy in flux

Underlying challenges and features of contemporary governance

- The challenge of collective action problems
- The challenge of the changing nature of 'the public'
- The challenge of a public policy in flux
- Interdependency
- Diversity
- Hybridity

Framework for Collaboration





A word about 'wicked problems'

- Return to Rittel and Webber (1973)
- Climate change

1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem (the nature and scope of the problem including its root cause/s is ambiguous and contested)	The science of climate change is agreed by the majority of scientists but hotly contested by a minority and by political groups/leaders, who dispute among other things the significance of anthropomorphic climate change.
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule and in the absence of a definitive formulation, there is no clear point at which the problem-solver can recognise that his job is done	The current focus on reducing global warming by x degrees will not solve the problem of sustainable development, and there are likely to be unintended/unforeseen consequences because of interdependencies
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad (The presence of multiple parties with diverse interests and values ensures this)	There are winners and losers: fossil fuel dependent countries, new technology promoters, developing countries at more immediate risk, consumers in developed countries (prices)
4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem (Because of interdependencies solutions will 'generate waves of consequences' over an extended period of time, the repercussions of which are impossible to accurately calculate)	Sustainable development is the ultimate aim of some, but not of others. It is not possible to predict the outcomes of action for SD.
5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot operation" (Solutions leave traces that cannot be undone due to the dynamism introduced by interdependencies)	Actions to mitigate or adapt to climate change have their own impacts that are not completely foreseeable.
6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or an exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plans.	A range of adaptive, mitigative, and/or responsive proposals for climate change offer ways towards addressing the issue. But solutions remain a way off.
7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique (there are no classes of wicked problems in the sense that principles of solution can be developed to fit all members of a class'.)	Climate change is unique
8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem (According to Rittel and Webber successful attempts to resolve one element of a wicked problem invariably leads to the emergence of higher level problem)	From one standpoint climate change is a symptom of our inability to address the challenge of sustainable development
9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution	Climate change is not just a science problem, it is a social and cultural problem, and this means it is framed in many different and often competing ways.
10. The planner has no right to be wrong (Problem-solvers 'are liable for the consequences of the actions they generate' which usually have significant impacts on citizens. Being 'wrong' therefore has significant real-world consequences.)	The science of climate change sits outside of the planner's dilemma, but the policy related to climate change is entirely within a political context that punishes 'getting it wrong'

Climate change as a 'wicked problem', Sullivan, forthcoming, (Rittel and Webber adapted in Alexander et al 2015)

The power of ideas

‘The full story of climate change is the unfolding story of an idea and how this idea is changing the way we think, feel and act. Not only is climate change altering our physical world, but the idea of climate change is altering our social worlds.’

Hulme (2009)

The power of ideas cont.,

‘our discordant conversations about climate change reveal, ... all that makes for diversity, creativity and conflict within the human story – our different attitudes to risk, technology and well-being; our difference ethical, ideological and political beliefs; our different interpretations of the past and our competing visions of the future ’ (Hulme).

These ‘discordant conversations’ have material impacts on public policy possibilities but they are different eg Australia vs. Germany

What is required of us in practice?

- Public policy as more of a ‘craft’ than a ‘science’

Collaboration as practice highlights the importance of *informed persuasion* in negotiating and implementing public policy and focuses attention on *relationships* and *processes* as well as outcomes.

What is required of us in practice?

- Development of a ‘collaborative self’ (Sullivan, 2015)
 - actor’s individual and collective collaborative *identities*, and
 - their enactment or *performance* of these identities in practice
- A ‘collaborative self’ then is performative as it is the product of multiple factors interacting – individual, discursive, and situational – and affording identity to actors and practices (Butler, 1997)

What is required of us in practice?

- Practices of collaboration
 - Endeavour: ‘like housekeeping, endless work that continues needing to be done’
 - Negotiating interdependence and diversity:
 - listening, empathy, judgement, integrity and humility