This exercise will show you how to move through a process to create one or more wicked questions that relate directly to the complex problem you're working on.

The point in working to carefully frame these questions is that *a good, wicked question will lead you towards real innovation space*. It will open up your thinking to new possibilities and new directions to explore.

Here's an example of this. A team was working to think of how to see more genuine engagement of young people in communities. They started by describing the current problematic system as disrespectful and getting in the way of young people securing power. In looking for the positive values, they began to understand that those negatives could be seen positively as being careful and responsible about where power should lie on important matters.

They began to talk about how the older generation might even feel that they were being protective of community *and* young people, as well as worried or angry that their own experience was not valued.

This insight caused them to consider a number of wicked questions that drew on both sets of values, such as, *"How can the power imbalance between younger and older in communities be more genuinely shared while still ensuring caring, responsible leadership as well as a deep appreciation for experience?"* Their thinking was opened up to many new possibilities. and a major part of their strategy shifted from combatting against the older generation to enlisting their help.

This exercise has quite precise steps, many of which will take you some time to complete really well. So, we'll first review the entire exercise, and then give you a summarized step-by-step guide to follow.

It's also the kind of exercise that may be easier to do together with others who also are interested in the problem; but, it is possible to do it by your self.

The first step is to write a problem statement about the system that you want to change. For this part of the exercise, *you should only include negative aspects*, the things that you feel are wrong with the system. You could start with a bit of brainstorming, describing not just the elements that are a problem, but also why they're a problem. Describe exactly what's wrong and what needs to change.

Then work to get a clear problem statement written down in one or two sentences. It can be tough to get clear and concise here, but it's worth the effort! We'll show you some examples, below.

Now, similar to what you did in the nemesis exercise, create the opposite of the problem statement you just wrote. The opposite description

probably sounds a bit utopian. but also is a system that you would ideally love to see. Right? These opposite descriptions can be called your horns of the dilemma—the two poles that are in opposition to each other.

But what about the space, the reality, that exists *between* those two seemingly opposite situations?

The next step is to work now to define *both* horns positively. To do this, you will need to look at your negative problem statement from a different perspective. If you're passionate about your problem area, this is likely to be challenging!

In the nemesis exercise, you looked at negative qualities from the point of view of the person who displayed those qualities and asked: *how would he or she see the same quality that you feel is so bad?* To them, the quality is good and has value. You'll remember some of the examples Frances gave. While you think the person is selfish, he describes himself as able to ask for

what he wants; while you feel the other person is aggressive, she describes herself as proactive and forthright.

In working to shift your perspective on the problematic system, you need to do the same kind of thing. Spend time thinking about what *value* the system holds in its current state. Try thinking from the perspective of those who would probably oppose change: what do *they* value about the system the way it is?

Brainstorm a list of these values. You don't have to agree with the way in which these values are getting acted out. But try to identify genuine worth that you can see is part of *why* the system is the way it is.

For example if you described a system as being rigid and inflexible, perhaps the positive value others would give it would be that it is solid and reliable. If you described your problem system as full of greed, others who value the system may see it as industrious.

You may find that you can even agree that the value underlying the problem is important. It's not the value that you disagree with, but the way that value is currently made real in the system.

Could that value be preserved but live in the system in some new, better way? Thinking about the examples above: Can part of a system be both reliable and flexible? Can something be industrious but not greedy? These are good questions to lead into the final step of this exercise.

You should now have two horns that are both positive descriptions. Still different, but both described in terms of positive values and characteristics. The final task is to think about how to integrate the values of these two horns. Instead of choosing one or the other, can we imagine the best of *both* worlds? So your wicked questions will take the form of, "How can we *have this* **and** *also have that??*"

It can take some time to work through this step. You're getting somewhere when you start scribbling down questions that seem impossible to ever resolve! Yet, intuitively, you know that *if* you could begin to answer that crazy, wicked question, then you would *really* be innovating! The answers to wicked questions would really make a difference! And options that would answer this kind of question will be, by necessity, very innovative!

Here are two examples of wicked questions that students of social innovation have crafted in the past and then worked to develop a strategy that could attempt to answer such a question.

"How do we co-create an adaptive and flexible, yet focused and efficient, system that engages Indigenous youth to achieve their full potential?"

"How can Canadians capitalize on our energy sources to maximize social and economic prosperity while dramatically enhancing the environment?"

STEP	WHAT TO DO	WHAT TO REMEMBER AT THIS STEP
STEP 1	Brainstorm problems about the system you want to change.	These are the things you feel are wrong with the system.
STEP 2	Brainstorm and write down why these things are problems	Describe exactly what's wrong and what needs to change.
STEP 3	Now write a problem statement about the system.	Include negative aspects only at this stage.
STEP 4	Write the opposite of the problem statement.	You're describing the system you'd love to see!
STEP 5	Identify how the current system is valuable: what is valuable and worth preserving?	You're trying to see the problems differently—e.g., from the perspective of those who would oppose change.
STEP 6	Rewrite your problem statement as a positive statement.	You are trying to create two positive horns of a dilemma.
STEP 7	Brainstorm wicked questions.	You want to include both horns of the dilemma.
STEP 8	Keep working until you identify a really good question!	Now you can start thinking about how to develop a strategy to answer the question.