

Questions that can support better understanding, to inform better strategy and design.

When exploring a problem and/or a possible solution

- **Why**
 - What values are being served by this solution (ie, what values do I see as being harmed or underserved by this problem)?
 - Which values are in a dialectic relationship with the values stated above?
 - What are the perceived tensions or tradeoffs between the seemingly opposing values?
 - How could the pairs of values be seen as complementary and interdependent rather than opposing? How could trade-offs be replaced with synergistic satisfiers?
 - Are there any new values that matter to factor the balance or integration of the values pairs?
 - How does factoring this wider set of interconnecting values affect the problem definition? How would the solution have to be updated to better serve all the related and affected values?
 - Are there social traps involved in driving this problem?
 - Are there perverse incentives or systemic choice architectures contributing to it?
- **Who**
 - Who is the problem harming/ who is the solution intended to benefit?
 - Who else might be affected by the full set of activities needed to enact this solution (including opportunity cost)?
 - Who doesn't/won't like this solution and why? What values do they see it as harming and/or what facts do they see it as misassessing and/or what alternatives do they prefer and why?
 - What might the effects of polarizing those people against this solution be? What would it take to modify the proposed solution in ways that meet the primary initial goals plus sufficiently meet these people's goals so that they don't oppose it?
 - Who is close to (various aspects of) this problem that might have knowledge or insights that should be involved in the solution-informing process?
 - Where are old tribal identities contributing to conflict about this solution that actually has little to do with this solution? What would it take to bring these people into more shared relationality?
 - Who has perverse incentives that benefit from this problem or are in conflict with the proposed solution?
- **What**
 - What are the relevant facts pertaining to this issue?
 - What is our basis for confidence and degree of confidence in these facts?
 - Which other facts that might also be relevant are missing?
 - How else could these same facts be interpreted?
 - Where are different camps emphasizing different facts? Where are they in disagreement about the interpretation of facts? Where do they disagree on the veracity or confidence of a fact? Which of these are the source of the

disagreement? What would it take to bring both parties to a shared perception or to make the disagreement less consequential?

- What are the primary causes of this problem? How do we know?
- What issues are upstream from this issue and affect it? Are all those elements factored into the solution? What might other causes be?
- What issues are downstream from this issue and are affected by it? What externalities (positive and negative, physical and psychosocial) might result from this solution being enacted?
- What nth-order effects of this solution might different specialists or people with different experience sets see that I can't?
- What are the effects on the whole ecology of not enacting a solution?
- What is the total scale of (the class of) this issue, and the timelines associated with it? Can this solution address the scale and timelines?
- How important is this issue relative to other issues that could receive the same time and resources?
- What assumptions about the problem framing might be worth questioning?
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- **How**
 - How could I see this problem totally differently?
 - What are totally different ways people could frame this problem?
 - What does it look like through the lens of various contexts (eg, culture, technology, economics, history, art, politics, etc)?
 - How could different epistemologies be employed to assess this situation (eg, developmental psychology, game theory, complexity science, education, cultural materialism, etc.)
 - How might new possibilities emerge that we can't currently think of (eg, question assumptions, bring more resources to bear, create new partnerships, resolve rivalries, think at different scales, engage more perspectives, create new incentives, etc.)
 - How would I know if the solution was creating externalities in areas I didn't know to predict? What type of monitoring/listening do I want to include in the strategy rollout to learn about unanticipated effects quickly?
 - How would I set up the governance of this solution such that it could factor info about unanticipated effects or changing contexts quickly and effectively?