

Rural electrification in India: A wicked problem

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Abstract-

Despite concerted efforts, several plans and policies of the government addressing rural electrification remained unrealized since India's independence. Although India attained near-complete grid connectivity in 2018, the problem of inconsistent, unreliable and unaffordable electricity persists, expressly in remote and rural areas. This paper conceptualizes issues of rural electrification in India as a 'Wicked Problem' – a systems thinking approach used vastly for understanding complex and multidimensional aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The problem is characterized as a sub-target of SDG 7 i.e. universal energy access. The stakeholders of rural electrification in India were approached - their feedback was mapped in the power-interest matrix. A causal loop diagram was prepared that helped in the identification of various themes through balancing and reinforcing loops. This study makes a methodological contribution to conceptual analysis prompting decision-making through mental models over existing frameworks used for addressing rural electrification in India.

Index Terms- causal loop diagram, power-interest matrix, rural electrification, SDG 7, systems thinking, wicked problem

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