

WSP062/762,CW3: Learning Journal

Week Ending 19/10/2025

Applied Systems Thinking taught week.

The intensive week of teaching for the Applied Systems Thinking module (WSP062). During this the fundamentals of Systems Thinking were taught and the Soft Systems Methodology was presented. Time was given to apply these foundations in groups and to develop them with supervisor guidance. Additionally, a very strong critical thinking lecture was given and we were then encouraged to apply this with daily analysis of selected papers.

Insights:

- I was struck by my tendency to be convinced by a paper by its simplicity and elegance and be unconvinced by its complexity or what I deem “superfluous” information (e.g. Cynefin framework). The week helped remind me to ask who is writing the paper, funded by whom, to what end? A lot of information can be hidden in this that can change a critical view on a paper and its applicability.
- I was caught out in one exercise by not having numbers to back up my argument. Whilst it was a time-pressured exercise, it drove home the importance of being evidenced and having a leg to stand on.
- Interrelations and interactions are something that has always been in my mind when thinking about systems, but understanding that everything is a system (or could be argued to be a system) and expanding my understanding of elements, interconnections, and emergence to soft systems was a paradigm shift.
- The teaching solidified my focus on system boundary, with the additional guidance of asking what can be controlled or influenced.

Helped:

- Smaller groups with flipped learning was a good way for me to learn, as I found it very helpful to have the material in advance and then work on solidification in class.
- Learning alongside other professionals was enlightening, as many of them had insights and experience that is invaluable at this stage of my career, which I found enhanced my ability to learn.
- A friendly and competent group to work with throughout the week was excellent as it fostered a culture of fearless learning and security to ask questions. It also made the assignments less stressful and a better learning experience.

Hindered:

- The intense, packed schedule was challenging, as a significant amount of information was given in that time. I am competent and understanding lots of things quickly, but having to apply what was learnt so quickly (often the same day) was difficult.
- Returning to university was a little daunting, as I did not entirely enjoy my undergraduate degree (mostly due to the pandemic) and was glad to have left it behind. This made being in the environment at the beginning more stressful than I would have liked, though this improved throughout the week and I no longer feel this way about the taught weeks.

Future Strategy:

In the future, I would prepare more in advance. Some elements would have been more useful if I had done some reading around the topics beforehand, not just that which was prescribed. Additionally, asking more questions in the class would have been an excellent way to deepen my understanding and get more out of the week. I however thought that my enthusiasm for the course was a boon that I would like to encourage

again, and that a “do what you can in the time you have” mindset was key to me performing well during the week.

Week Ending 26/10/2025

PDR Preparation Work

This week focused on preparing the slide deck for a PDR, with systems engineering content from colleagues coming in and needing to be added. It was the first chance to understand what development of the project looked like, and I took a critical view of their work to ensure that it flowed properly for the review.

Insights:

- This was the first chance as well to see systems engineering in anger through the systems thinking lens. I found this exciting and also a great learning opportunity. It showed the parallels between what was learnt and what happens in the workplace.
- Understanding and editing my colleagues’ work with respect to boundary and intended outcomes of the review was directly applying what was taught. Asking what our priorities were and what other projects took ownership of was crucial to managing work levels and slide deck size.
- The intended audience includes multiple key stakeholders, so predicting their worldviews and using that to see the project different and answer expected questions was a useful exercise in reacting to environmental and wider system of interest factors.

Helped:

- Oversight and guidance from experienced colleagues allowed me space to understand their work at my pace and to reflect properly on what I was learning.

Hindered:

- Not knowing the stakeholders well proved challenging as worldviews can only be made through other my colleagues’ impressions of them in prior work. This divorces the worldviews from the project in some cases.
- Project lead is out on leave, making it difficult to answer some questions and causing a backlog of work.

Future Strategy:

- I think spending more time understanding the stakeholders would allow me to tailor the presentation more to them and constrain the work needed, reducing the backlog and streamlining the process - showing the importance of stakeholders in a system’s development.

02/11/2025

09/11/2025

16/11/2025

23/11/2025

30/11/2025

07/12/2025

14/12/2025