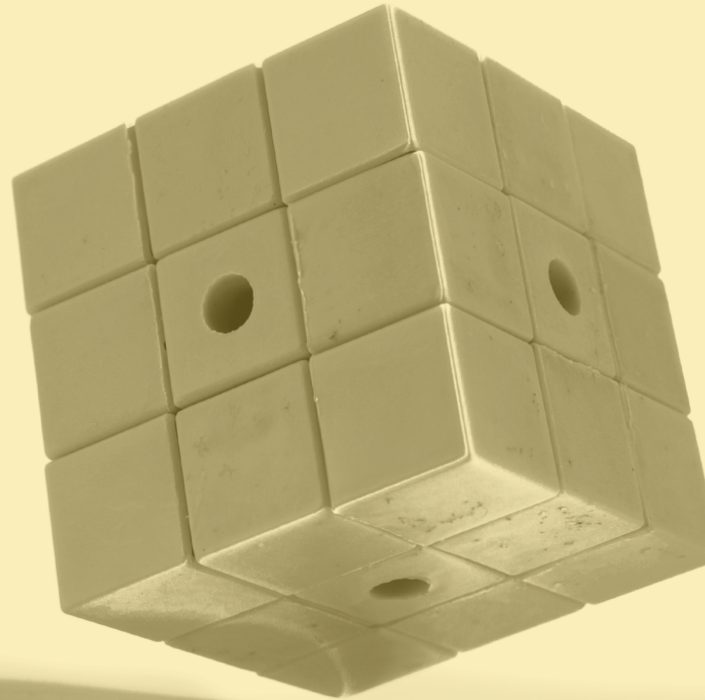




# **SYSTEMS ARCHETYPES**

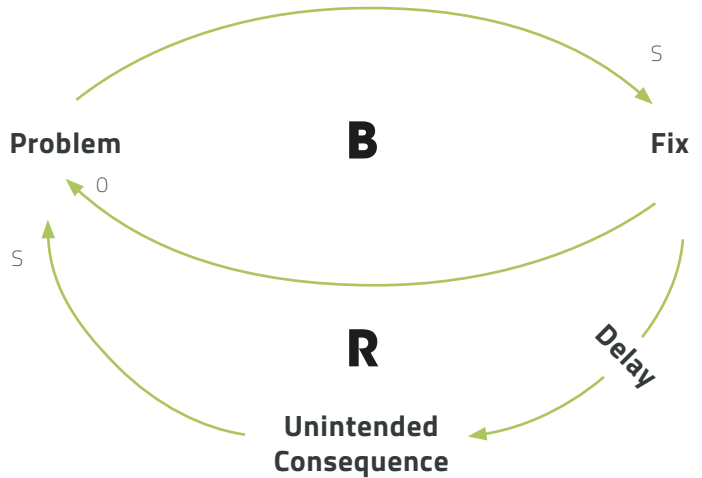


# Fixes that Fail

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In a "Fixes that Fail" scenario the encounter of a problem is faced by a corrective action or fix that seems to solve the issue.

However, this action leads to some unforeseen consequences. They form then a feedback loop that either worsens the original problem or creates a related one.

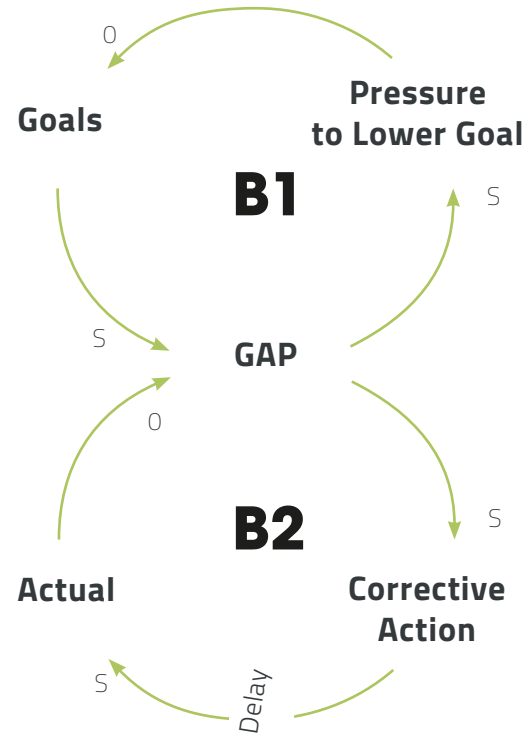


Source:  
Daniel H Kim, *Systems Archetypes at a Glance*

# Drifting Goals

A “Drifting Goals” situation starts when there is a gap between desired performance and actual performance. To close the gap, one choice is to take corrective action, which requires time, effort, funds, and attention.

The other choice is to lower the desired performance, or the goal, toward the level of actual performance. The gap disappears, but so does the pressure to take corrective action to improve the actual state.



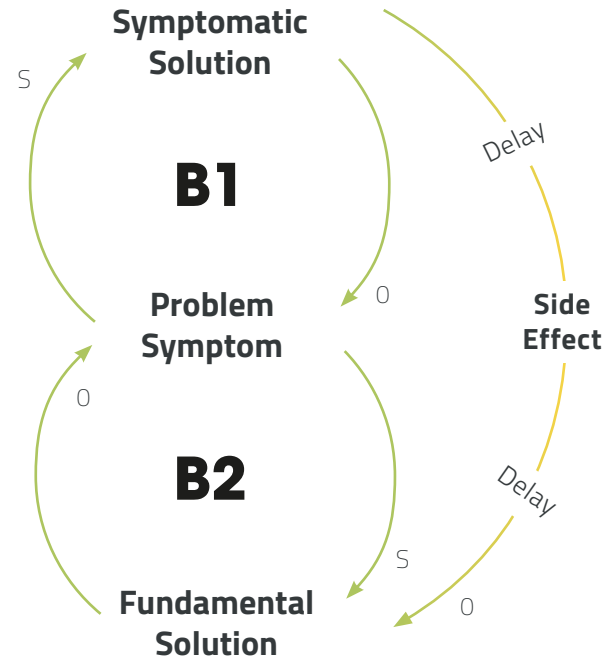
Source:  
Daniel H Kim, *Systems Archetypes at a Glance*

# Shifting the Burden

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The “Shifting the Burden” archetype usually begins with a problem symptom that prompts someone to intervene and “solve” it. The solution (or solutions) that are obvious and immediately implementable usually relieve the problem symptom very quickly.

But these symptomatic solutions have two specific negative effects. First, they divert attention away from the real or fundamental source of the problem. More subtly, symptomatic solutions cause the viability of the fundamental solution to deteriorate over time, reinforcing the perceived need for more of the symptomatic solution.



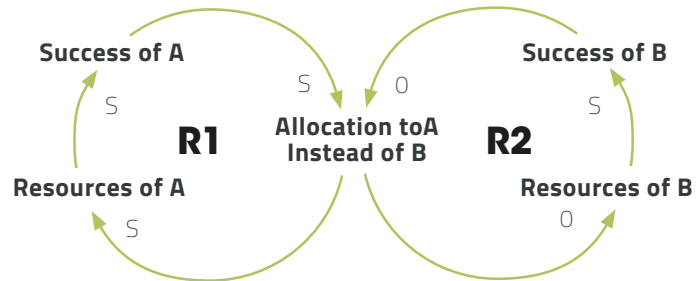
Source:  
Daniel H Kim, *Systems Archetypes at a Glance*

# Success to the Successful

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The “Success to the Successful” archetype suggests that success may depend as much on structural forces as innate ability or talent. Assuming both groups (or individuals) are equally capable, if A is given more resources, it has a higher likelihood of succeeding than B.

That initial success justifies devoting more resources to A and robs B of further resources (R1). As B gets less resources, its success diminishes, which further reinforces the “bet on the winner” allocation of resources. The structure continues to reinforce the success of one, and the eventual demise of the other.



Source:  
Daniel H Kim, *Systems Archetypes at a Glance*

# Limits to Success

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In a “Limits to Success” archetype, a system’s performance continually improves as a direct result of certain efforts. As performance increases, the efforts are redoubled, leading to even further improvement (R1). When the performance begins to plateau, the natural reaction is to increase the same efforts that led to past gains.

But the harder one pushes, the harder the system seems to push back: it has reached some limit or resistance which is preventing further improvements in the system (B2).

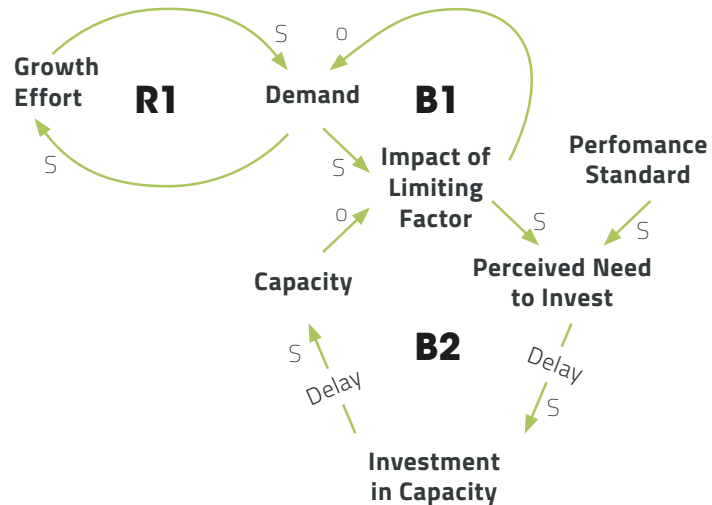


Source:  
Daniel H Kim, *Systems Archetypes at a Glance*

# Growth and Underinvestment

A “Growth and Underinvestment” structure is simply an elaborated “Limits to Success” structure where the growth inhibitor is part of another Balancing Loop with an external standard and some delay.

The real nasty thing about this structure is that the two balancing loops form a single reinforcing loop which inhibits growth.



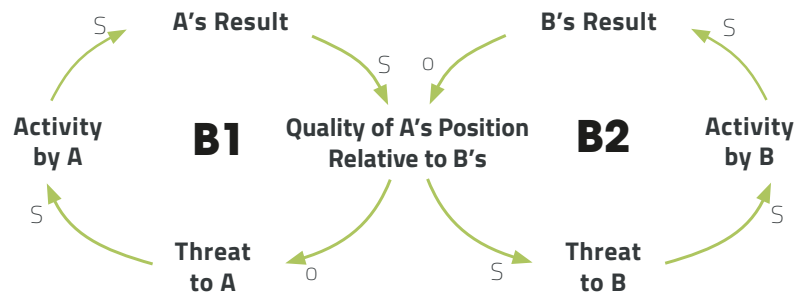
Source:  
Daniel H Kim, *Systems Archetypes at a Glance*

# Escalation

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An “Escalation” structure results from two or more competing entities with the competition taking them to somewhere none of them want to be.

This structure is based on two interacting balancing loops which provide the goals for each other and because of the paranoid behavior of the participants it oscillates back and forth as it grows, each one trying to outdo the other.



Source:  
Daniel H Kim, *Systems Archetypes at a Glance*

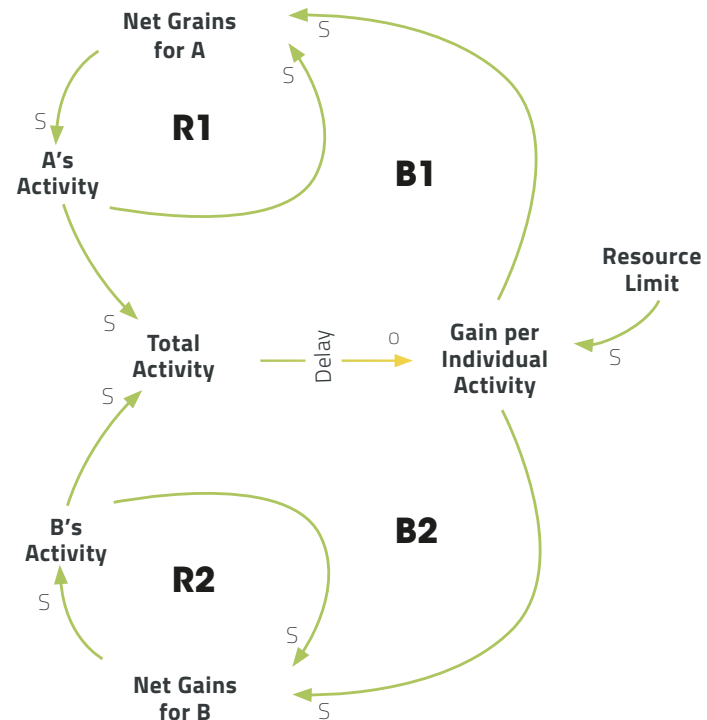


# Tragedy of the Commons

A “Tragedy of the Common” archetype starts with a shared resource with a number of individuals sharing this same resource. Each individual tries to optimize the use of the resource to his or her best advantage.

The growth of every individual’s use of this common resource ends up abusing the resource and even if the resource is a renewable one, it can still ultimately be destroyed.

It’s the problem of overgrazing, overfishing of the oceans, the behavior that lead to the elimination of all the trees on Easter Island.



Source:  
Daniel H Kim, *Systems Archetypes at a Glance*

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# The 11 Laws of Systems Thinking

1. Today's problems come from yesterday's solutions
2. The harder you push, the harder the system pushes back
3. Behaviour grows better before it grows worse
4. The easy way out usually leads back in
5. The cure can be worse than the disease
6. Faster is slower
7. Cause & effect are not closely related in time & space
8. Small changes can produce big results, but areas of the highest leverage are often least obvious
9. You can have your cake & eat it too but not all at once
10. Dividing an elephant in half does not produce two small elephants
11. There is no blame

Source: Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline:  
The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (1990)




## CONTACT INFORMATION

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