Lesson 1.1: Introduction to Systems Thinking

Overview

Read the material on this page to learn about the basic idea of a system.

Article: "Introduction to Systems Thinking"

This article by Daniel Kim explains both what a system is and what it is not. Kim gives the defining characteristics of a system and discusses systemic patterns and structures, then looks at systemic behavior. Finally, using an extended example, Kim shows you how a system really works.

The article contains 16 pages of text, plus an appendix, a glossary, and a list of suggested further readings. Please pay particular attention to pages 1–5.

Read "Introduction to Systems Thinking."

Key Points

- A system is a group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent parts that form a complex, unified whole with a specific purpose.
- A collection is a group of parts without interrelationships or a unified purpose, or both.
- Systems contain events, patterns, and organizing structures.
- Systems are viewed as having feedback loops rather than linear cause-and-effect patterns. Feedback loops create reinforcing and balancing processes.

Attributions and References

Reference

Kim, D. (1999). *Introduction to systems thinking*. Pegasus Communications, Inc. https://thesystemsthinker.com/introduction-to-systems-thinking/

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