

Acting with systems thinking: complex responsive processes and systems intelligence

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Systems thinking has a long established tradition. However, it is still asked why systems thinking is not more widely adopted in organizations. Arguably, there needs to be more emphasis on the process of acting with systems thinking. We approach this by reflecting on two recent theories, the complex responsive processes of Stacey and his collaborators and systems intelligence of Hämäläinen and Saarinen. Contrary to the claim of the former, we conclude that the complex responsive processes perspective fits well with the systems thinking tradition. We see it as a tool for understanding the process of acting with systems thinking. Systems intelligence offers an action-oriented outlook on systems practice that emphasizes the individual who is always embedded in the system when seeking opportunities for improvement from within. We believe that the personal challenge stimulated by the fact that we can operate with greater or lesser degree of intelligence will result in improved competence in real-life systems practice.