A systems thinking view

What is systems thinking?

An approach to problem solving that considers the overall system as well as its individual parts. It's 'a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns rather than static snapshots.' Peter Senge. (2006). The Fifth Discipline, 2nd edition.

Conventional thinking	Sytems thinking
Focus on connection between problem and cause – it's a linear process and can be traced.	Focus on relationships between problem and cause – it's not obvious and takes deeper delving.
Others are to 'blame' for the problem and must be the ones to change.	We unwittingly create our own problems and can have influence through changing our own behaviours.
Focus on inwards improvements – usually treating a symptom. Improvement is in silo and quick fixes.	Quick fixes have unintended consequences elsewhere in the system. Look wider and collaborate.
To optimise the whole, we must optimise the parts we are involved in.	To optimise the whole, we must improve the relationships among the parts in a system.
Rapid, multiple independent initiatives carried out – usually repeatedly.	A few key coordinated changes focused on, to scale up as large system change that's inclusive.

Adapted from: Wilson, K. (2021). Reflections Upon 'Sytems Thinking' for Creating Change in a Complex World

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