

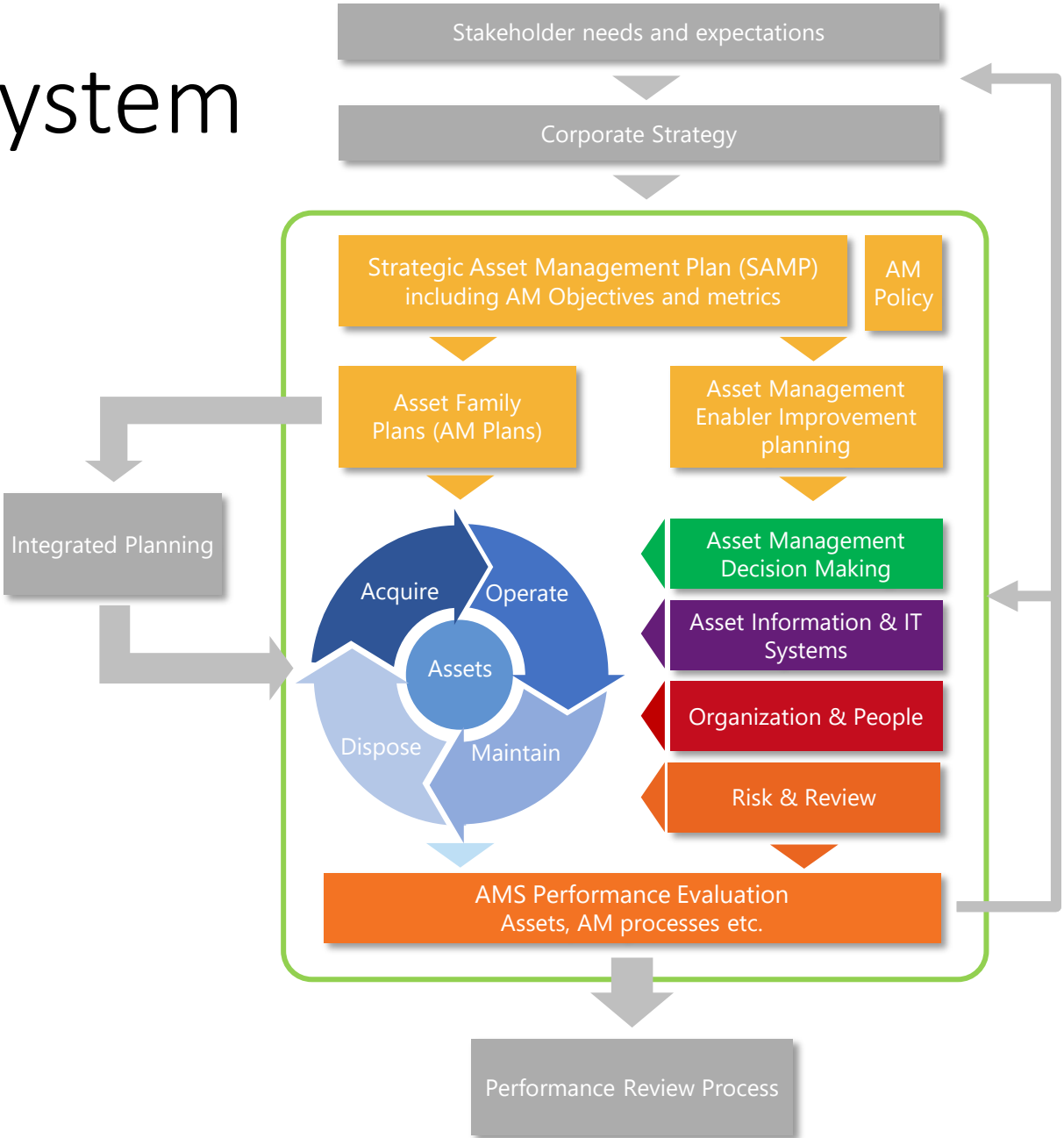


System Thinking Archetypes for Change Management Success

Julie DeYoung – Tacoma Public Utilities

Todd Shepherd - AMCL

Asset Management System

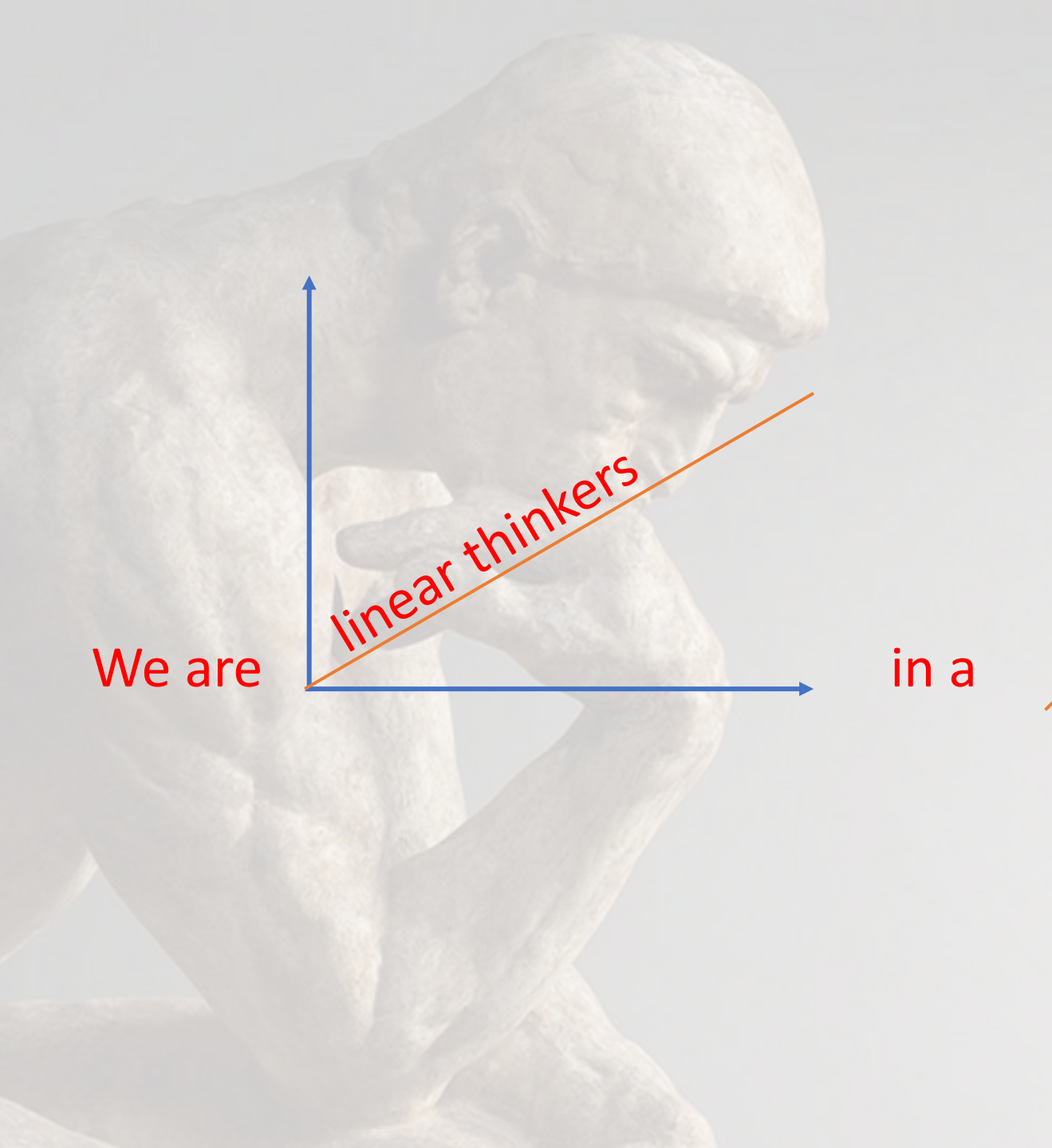


What is a system?

1. It has identifiable individual parts
2. The parts affect each other
3. Together, these parts create a unique effect
4. This effect can be replicated in many situations

Systems Always surprise us.

Following are three reasons why.

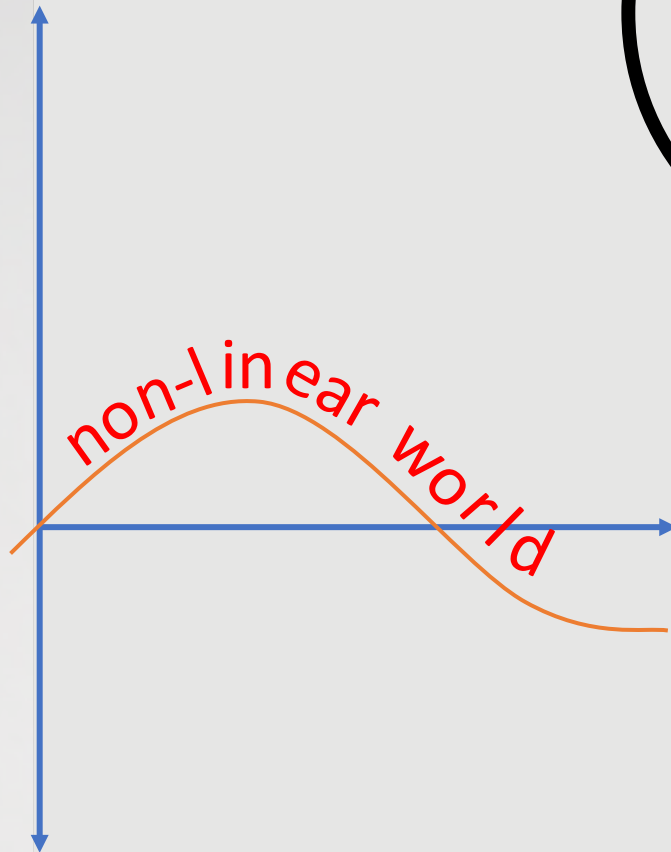


We are



linear thinkers

in a



non-linear world



Formal education rewards linear thinking

Research with young children indicates that we have latent skills as systems thinkers that are undeveloped, even repressed, by formal education.

Language shapes perception

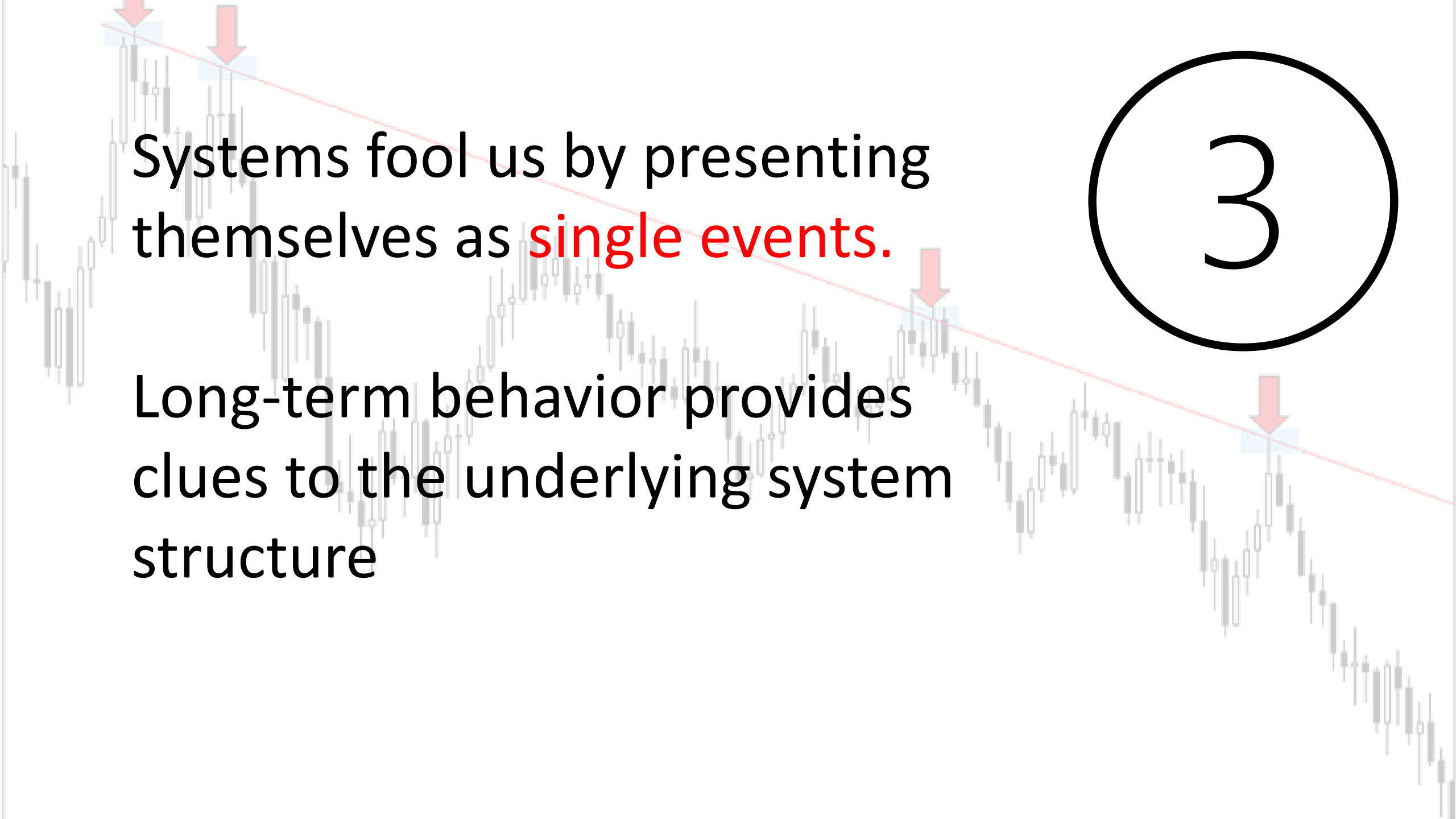
Western languages are biased towards a linear world view because of their subject-to-verb object structure. This structure trains our brains to link together thoughts in the same way.

In the real-world boundaries
don't exist

In decision-making, **rationality of
individuals is limited by the
information they have**

Individuals are also inhibited by
their mental models

2



Systems fool us by presenting themselves as **single events**.

Long-term behavior provides clues to the underlying system structure

3

System Archetypes

Balancing Process

Reinforcing Feedback Loop

Limits to Growth

Shifting the Burden

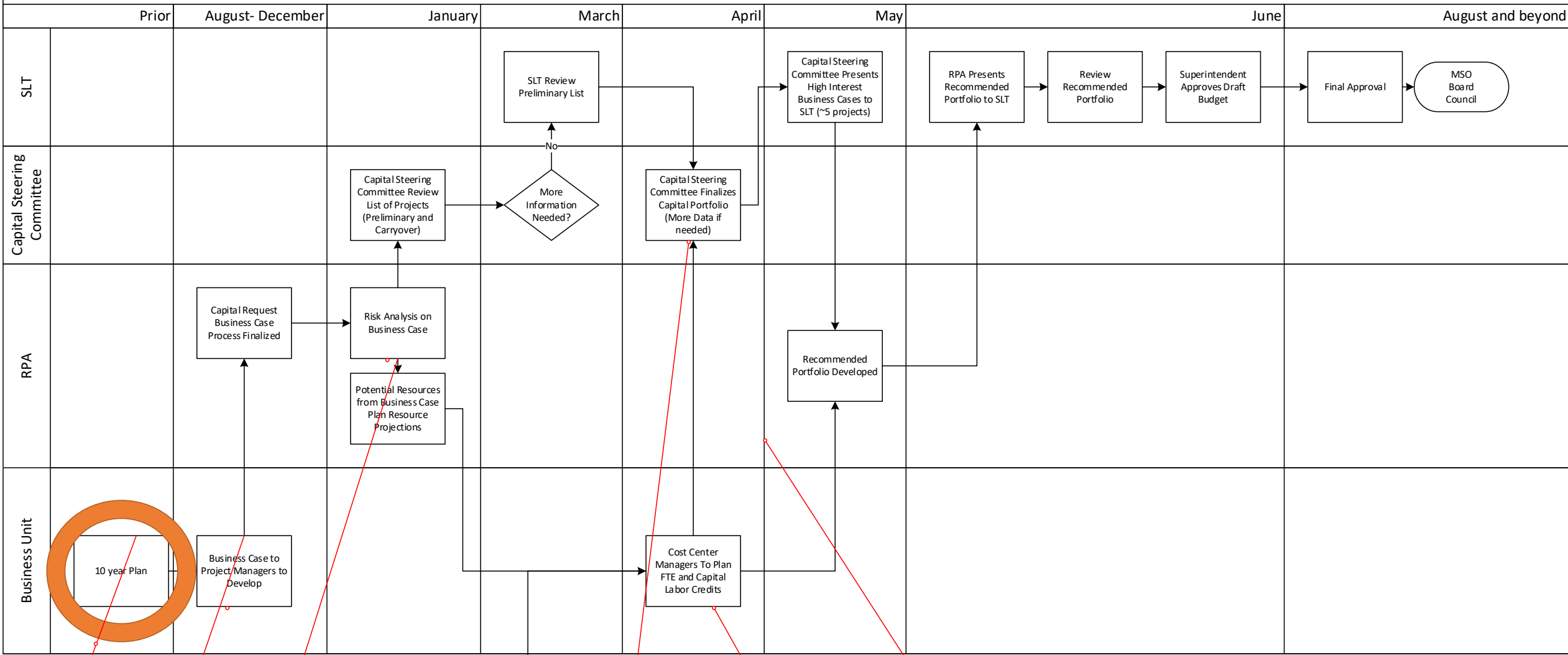
Tragedy of the Commons

Fixes that Fail

Eroding Goals

Recognize the importance of addressing systemic issues in change management and how system thinking archetypes can guide this process.

AIF Team High Level Capital Budgeting Process, Used to Identify System Traps

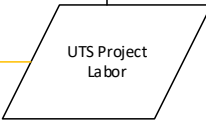


Shifting the Burden

Eroding Goals

Fixes that Fail

May be missing process here



Analysis Paralysis

Tragedy of the Commons

Delay in Process

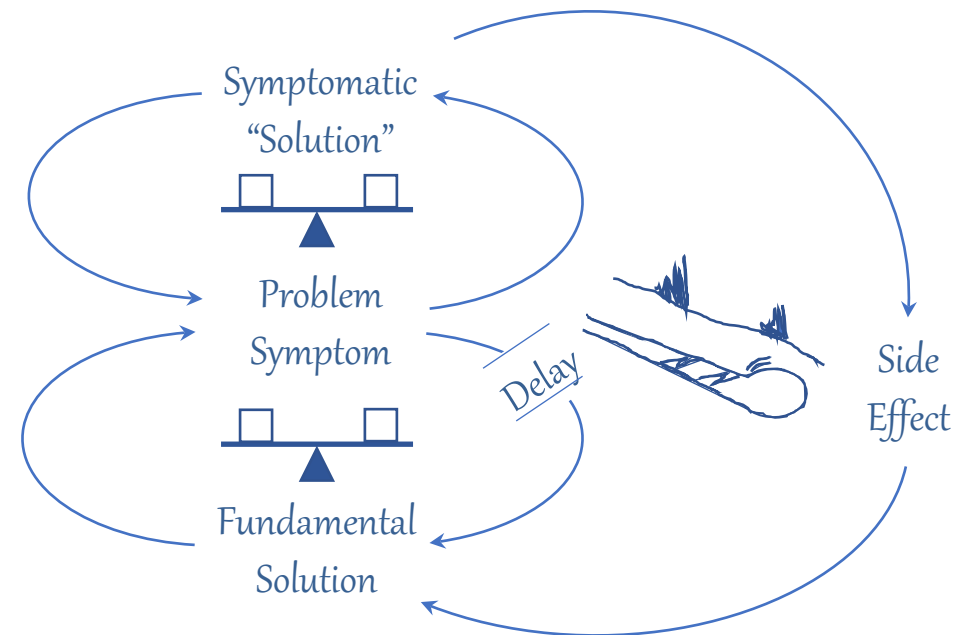
Shifting the Burden

Description: A short-term “solution” is used to correct a problem, with seemingly positive immediate results. As a correction is used more and more, more fundamental long-term corrective measures are used less and less. Over time, the capabilities for the fundamental solution may atrophy or become disabled, leading to even greater reliance on the symptomatic solution.

Early Warning Symptom: “Look here, this solution has worked so far! What do you mean, there’s trouble down the road?”

Management Principle: Focus on the fundamental solution. If symptomatic solution is imperative (because of delay in fundamental solution,) use it to gain time while working on the fundamental solution.

Structure:

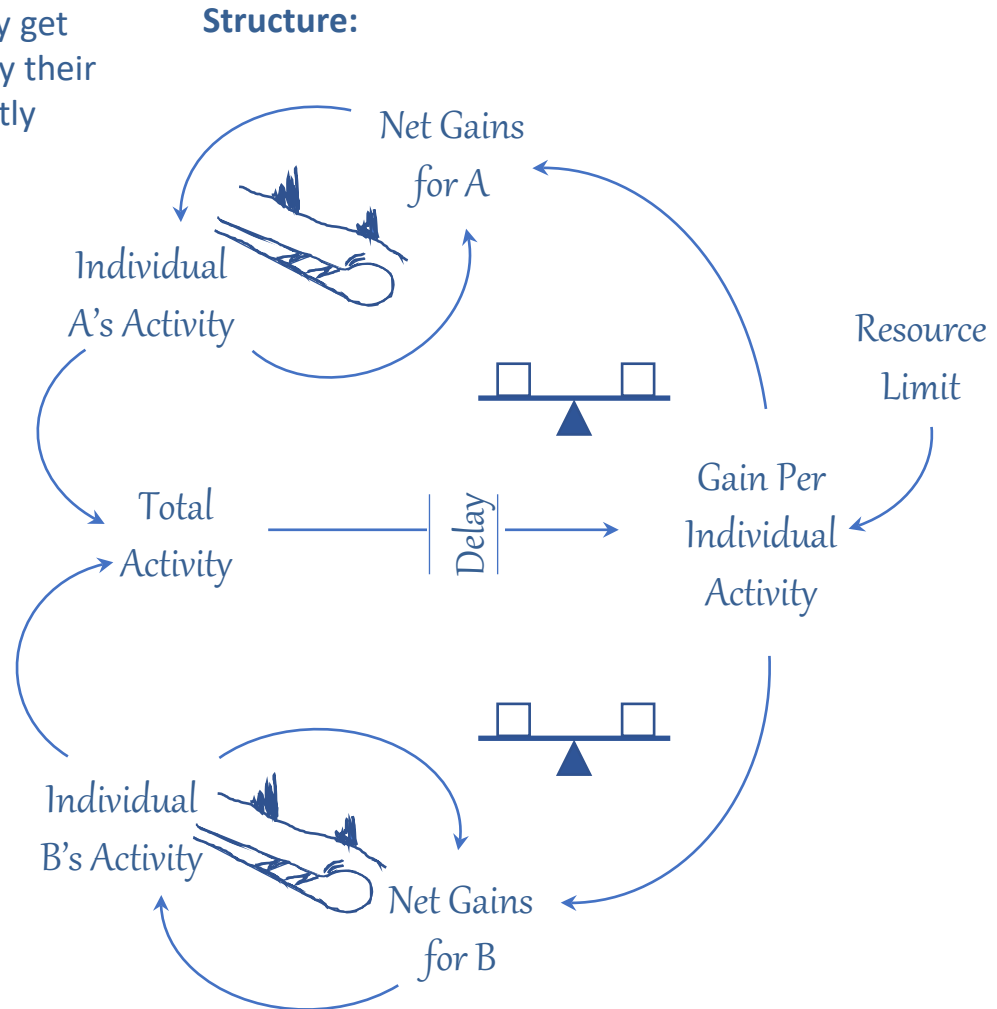


Tragedy of the Commons

Description: Individuals use a commonly available but limited resource solely on the basis of individual need. At first they are rewarded for using it; eventually, they get diminishing returns, which causes them to intensify their efforts. Eventually, the resource is either significantly depleted, eroded or entirely used up.

Early Warning Symptom: “There used to be plenty for everyone. Now things are getting tough. If I’m going to get any profit out of it this year, I’ll have to work harder.”

Management Principle: Manage the “commons,” either through educating everyone and creating forms of self-regulating mechanism, ideally designed by participants.

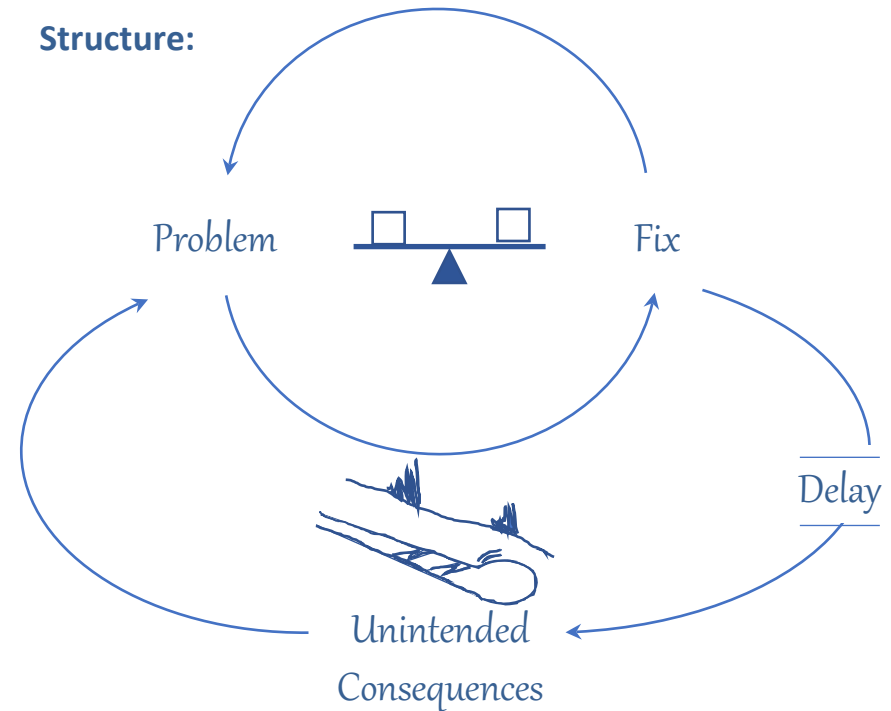


Fixes that Fail

Description: A fix, effective in the short term, has unforeseen long-term consequences which may require even more use of the same fix.

Early Warning Symptom: “it always seemed to work before; why isn’t it working now?”

Management Principle: Maintain focus on the long term. Disregard short-term “fix,” if feasible, or use it only to “buy time” while working on long-term remedy.



Every model simplifies the complexities of the real world. The level of detail to be portrayed is at your discretion.

There are no definitive answers. When mapping out a system, it uncovers a range of possible actions you can consider. As your proficiency in systems thinking grows, you'll develop the ability to discern the outcomes of various interventions.

The connection between cause and effect may not be immediate or localized. Avoid seeking solutions near the symptoms of your issue.

Success in a complex system requires incorporating multiple perspectives. Think about who else you can involve to enhance the depth of your system model.

Trust your intuition when dealing with archetypes. It's not imperative to select the precise archetype – if it resonates with your narrative, it serves as a suitable starting point.