A is for Ambiguity



"I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity" -Oliver Holmes





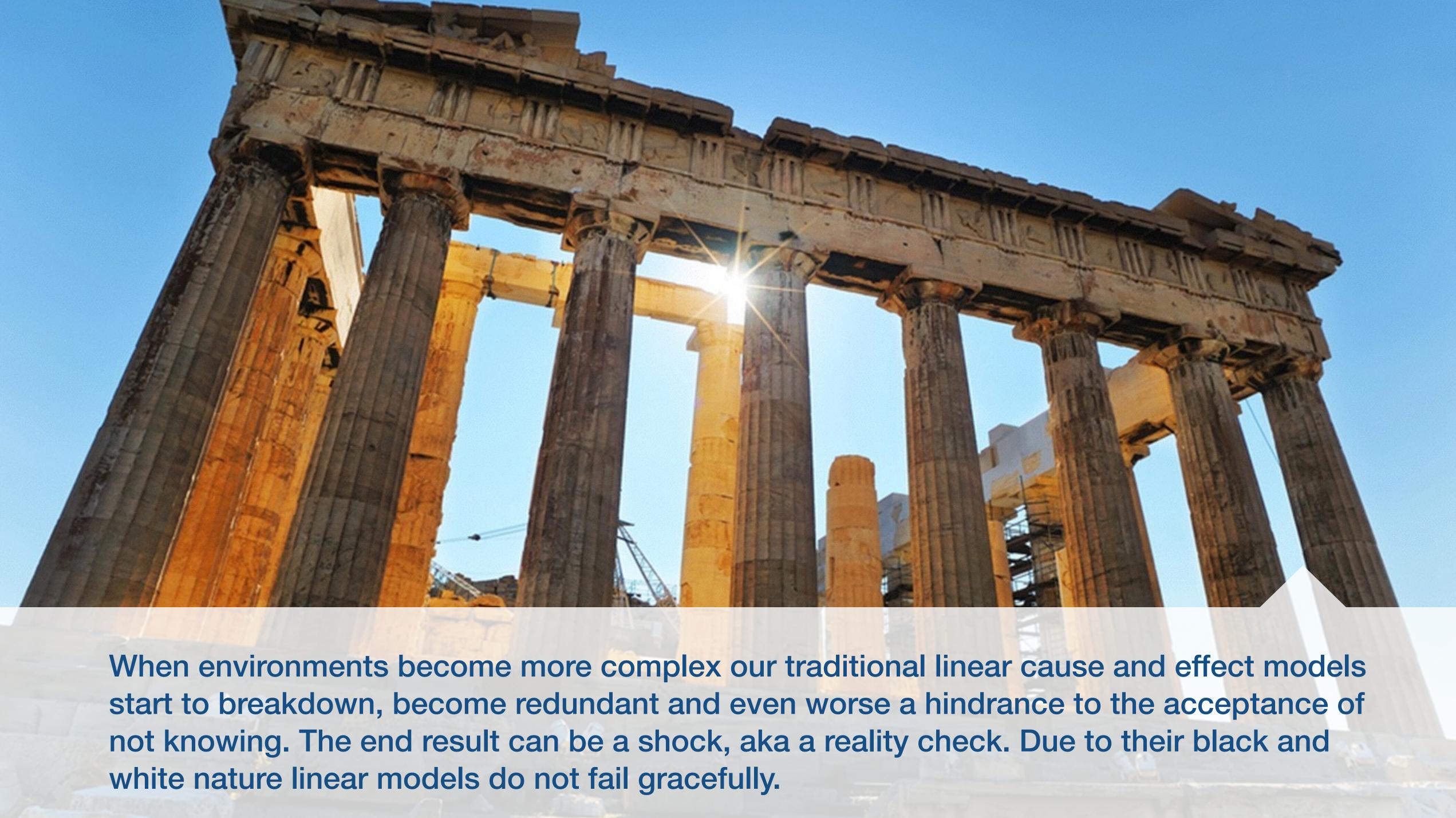
Ambiguity is the quality of being open to more than one interpretation. It results in the haziness of reality; the potential for misreading and mixed meanings to conditions. We can no longer see what is behind things, events just happen and they remain open to a number of different interpretations as to why.



Single Perspective

Traditionally we search for linear cause and effect models to explain phenomena within our environment, reductionism in management reduces our description of phenomena to a single dimensional perspective, this creates very brittle models that are black and white, either right or wrong.



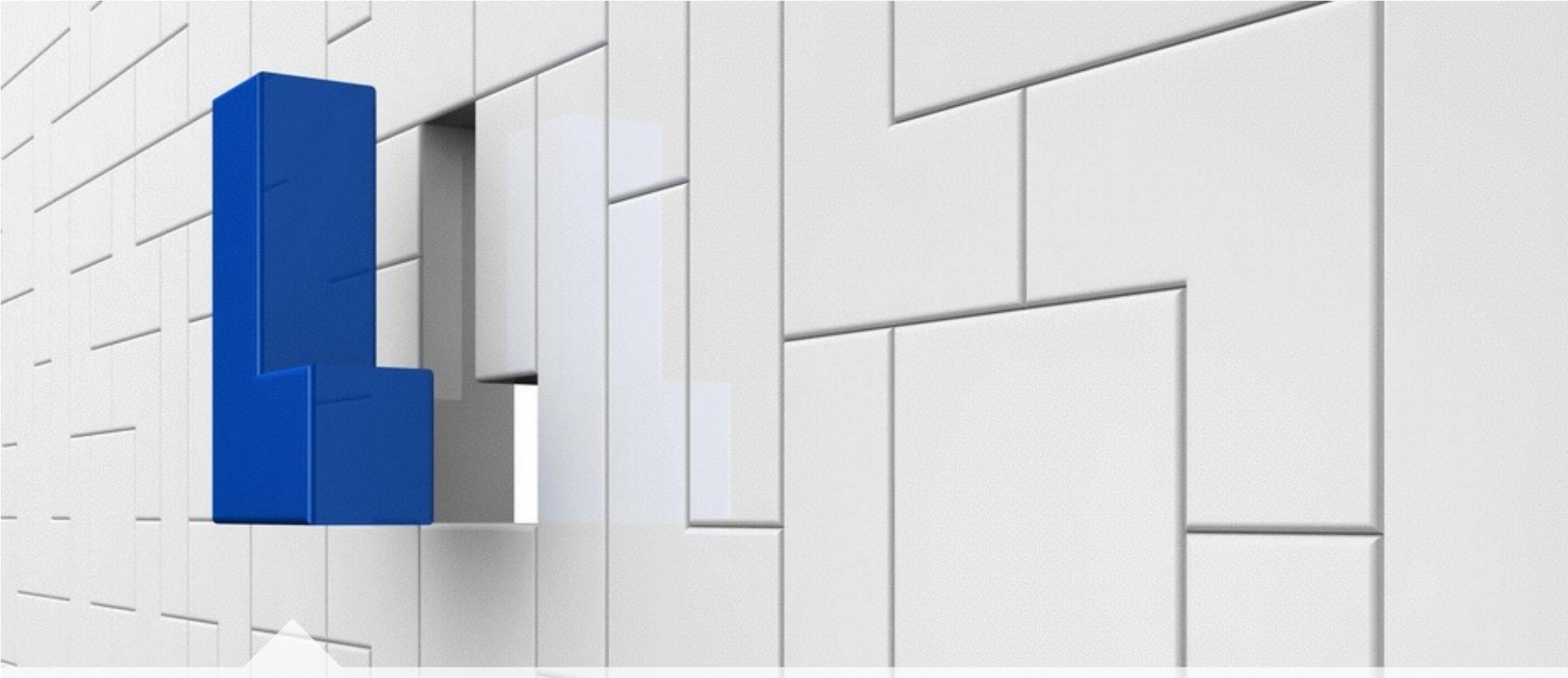




Context Is King

Complex environments require us to invest more in developing models that capture the context within which events play-out. This means a switch from trying to analyse and understand the events themselves in isolation to understanding the space around them that gives them context (what artist call the negative space).





This is where systems thinking comes in. Systems thinking places a greater enforces upon understanding the relations that give an object or event its place within some broader environment it is a part of.

Systems Thinking

Instead of trying to describe and understand the event by describing its properties, systems thinking reasons backwards, by first having an overview to the environment we can understand a system through its connections to other systems within that environment and thus understand it with respect to its place within the whole environment it is a part of





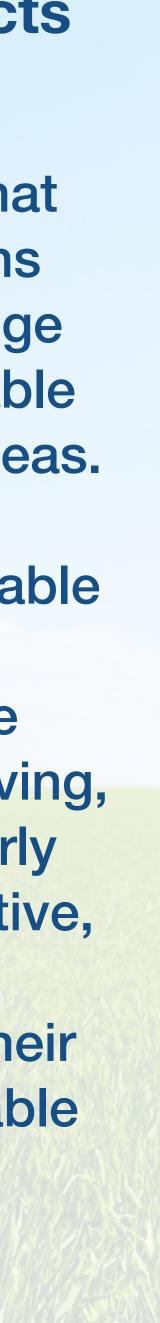
By looking at the whole environment that the event or object is a part of, we can gain multiple different perspectives (through each of its different connections) each perspective will give us a richer and more robust multidimensional understanding.





Decisions Without Facts

...thus it is still required that we learn to make decisions without absolute knowledge and information and are able to hold two contrasting ideas. Leaders in complex environments need to be able to handle ambiguity and make judgments when the 'facts' are unclear or evolving, in other words not be overly dependent upon quantitative, fact based methods of reasoning in supporting their decision making, but be able to respond to the overall context instead



- description for events.
- effects get losted to our vision in the haze of complexity.
- operating and this is where systems thinking comes in.
- Systems thinking tries to understand systems within the context of the overall environment they are a part of, using multiple different perspectives to building up a description of events or objects.
- In this way we can become better at contextualising events and less reliant upon a single, fact-based, description.

Summary

 In relatively simple environments we can have simple linear cause and effect models that are the product of a single perspective with a single right or wrong, black or white

In complex environments linear reductionist thinking breaks down, the causes behind

• This requires us to invest more in understanding the overall context within which we are



