

Diving Down the Concurrency Rabbit Hole

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Expectations...

- Start to unlearn "traditional" approach to concurrency issues
- Assume some knowledge of concurrency approaches

Expectations...

- Provide the rationale behind alternative approaches
- Understanding why data/solutions are fundamentally different.

Expectations...

- First in a series of concurrency optimization talks
- Later talks provide examples
- Later talks provide common patterns and solutions
- Later talks focus a lot on lock/wait-free techniques

Expectations...

- There are "thinking points" in here
- Unanswered questions as exercises

Expectations...

- I like to go off on interesting tangents.
- But you may already know that.

Let's start w/
a well-known
"problem" and
work backward...

Reference Problem

But replacing locks wholesale by writing your own lock-free code is not the answer. Lock-free code has two major drawbacks. First, it's not broadly useful for solving typical problems—lots of basic data structures, even doubly linked lists, still have no known lock-free implementations.

Lock-Free Code: A False Sense of Security

Herb Sutter

<http://www.ddj.com/cpp/210600279>

PROBLEM:

THERE IS NO LOCK-FREE
VERSION OF A DOUBLY -
LINKED LIST.

PROBLEM:

THERE IS NO LOCK-FREE
VERSION OF A DOUBLE-
LINKED LIST.

OF COURSE
NOT!

VERSION OF A DOUBLY-
LINKED LIST.

BUT
WHY
NOT?

U'ST.

IT'S NOT
A
CONCURRENT
DATA
STRUCTURE!

Reference Problem

But replacing locks wholesale by writing your own lock-free code is not the answer. Lock-free code has two major drawbacks. First, it's not broadly useful for solving typical problems—lots of basic data structures, even doubly linked lists, still have no known lock-free implementations.

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As an aside, I disagree with the point above. But that's a topic for a different day.

Reference Problem

- The reference problem is just for context.
- No lock-free doubly-linked list here.
- Rather, background on why it's **not** an important problem.

Reference Problem

Should expect to understand:

- A doubly-linked list will not meet real constraints of a concurrent system.
- i.e. It's not going to be the solution/data to a concurrent problem.
- If it's used, it's only in a local context.

Reference Problem

Should expect to learn:

- Why and how concurrent data design is different.

PROBLEM:

THERE IS NO LOCK-FREE
VERSION OF A DOUBLY -
LINKED LIST.

IT'S NOT
REALLY
A PROBLEM.

PROBLEM:

THERE IS NO LOCK-FREE
VERSION OF A DOUBLY -
LINKED LIST.

...
MORE LIKE
AN
INTERESTING
PUZZLE.

PROBLEM:

THERE IS NO LOCK-FREE
VERSION OF A DOUBLY-
LINKED LIST.

IT'S THE
WRONG LEVEL
OF ABSTRACTION
FOR
CONCURRENCY.

Why would data structures be
different for concurrent
designs?

CREATING CONCURRENT
DATA STRUCTURES
REQUIRES AN EXTRA
DIMENSION OF INFO

CREATING CONCURRENT
DATA STRUCTURES
REQUIRES AN EXTRA
DIMENSION OF INFO

←
THIS SEEMS
OBVIOUS

Why would data structures change?

- Doubly-linked lists solve a particular set of problems
- The concurrent "version" is a different problem
- Data is designed around the problem(s) being solved.

DATA STRUCTURES
REQUIRES AN EXTRA
DIMENSION OF INFO

←
THIS SE
O BUI

SOMETIMES,
TRANS. DATA
STRUCTS CAN
BE USED,

DATA STRUCTURES
REQUIRES AN EXTRA
DIMENSION OF INFO

THIS S
O BUI

JUST LIKE
SOMETIMES
2D STRUCTS
CAN BE USED
IN 3D APPS.

DIMENSION OF INFO

BUT ONLY
IF YOU
PRESUME
CERTAIN
THINGS.

DIMENSION

Remember -
It's always
about the
data!

But
IF you
PRESU
CERTA
THIN

It's always about the data!

I will repeat this point a lot.

Why?

Because it's important!

Concurrency is
a data problem,
not a code problem.

Concurrency is
a data problem,
not a code problem.

↑
designing
code-first
will only
over complicate

The Question

Is something like this the best data fit for *any* concurrency problem?

```
struct Node
{
    Node*      next;
    Node*      prev;
    Packet*   data;
};
```

*The data structure itself implies a different kind of problem
(i.e. local)*

DOUBLY-LINKED LIST
PRESUMES SEQUENTIAL
ORDER.

**DOUBLY-LINKED LIST
PRESUMES SEQUENTIAL
ORDER.**



Well,
obviously it's
a definition
of an order, ...

Defining Order

```
struct Node
{
    Node*      next; <-- Defines an order
    Node*      prev; <-- (That's the point.)
    Packet*   data;
};
```

RESUMES SEQUENTIAL
ORDER.

But xforms
of the data
are also
implicitly
ordered.

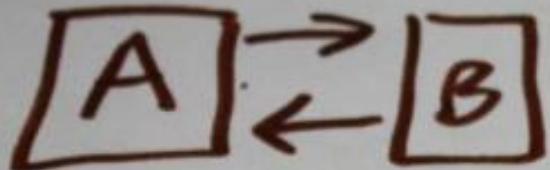
Transform Order

```
struct Node
{
    Node*      next; <-- But WHY is it defined
    Node*      prev; <-- this way in 1st place?
    Packet*   data;
};
```

Transform Order

```
struct Node
{
    Node*      next; <-- But WHY is it defined
    Node*      prev; <-- this way in 1st place?
    Packet*   data;
};
```

- It's to make certain operations easier.
- And give those operations certain properties.
- e.g. Insert, Delete



e.8
INSERT

- INSERT (C) AFTER (A)
- INSERT (D) AFTER (A)

HAS GUARANTEED RESULT:



Transform Order

```
struct Node
{
    Node*      next; <-- But WHY is it defined
    Node*      prev; <-- this way in 1st place?
    Packet*   data;
};
```

e.g. Insert

So that sequential insert instructions would:

- Have constant insert time
- Have a guaranteed (predictable) result
- Could be inserted before or after given any node
- etc.

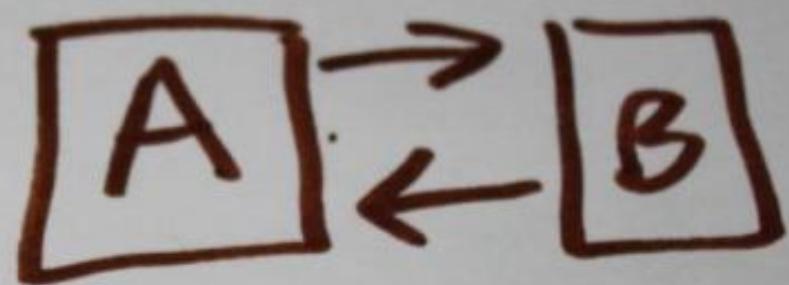
e.8
INSERT

All ops
have
predictable
results

E [B]

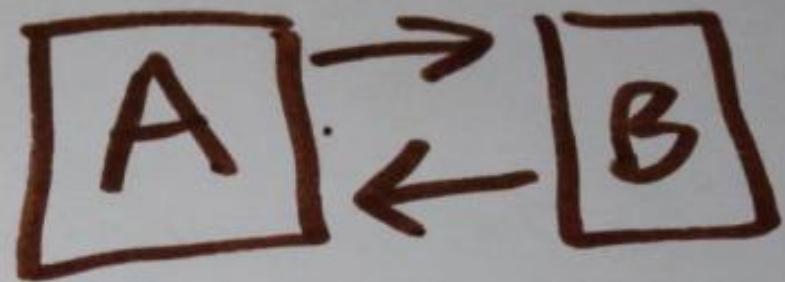
ER (C)
T (D)

The data
struct only
exists to
facilitate
the results.



- INSERT (C)
- INSERT (D)

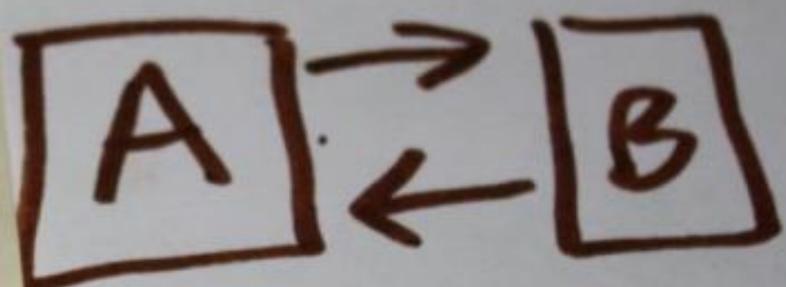
what
should the
results
be?



- INSERT (C)
- INSERT (D)

Need to define what the
transformations must do
before you can define what
the data is.

the
problem
isn't even
the same



- INSERT (O)
- INSERT (S)

So what
part of
the solution
would
be the same?

[A] ↗
↖

- INS
- INS

Operations in a concurrent system would not have the same meaning.

The properties of those operations (constraints) would also be different.

Let's look at the "same"
problem as a concurrent
operation...

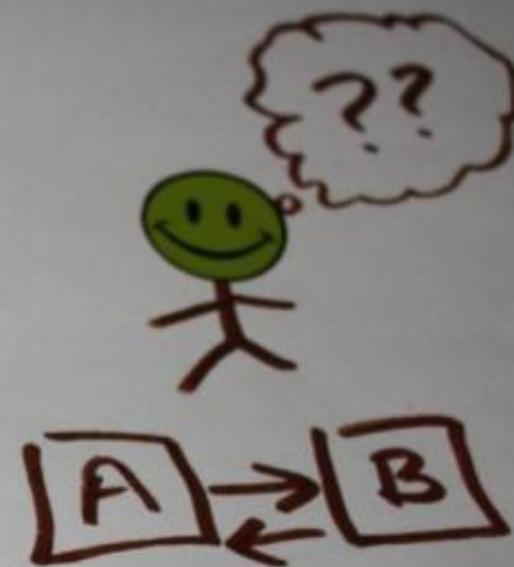
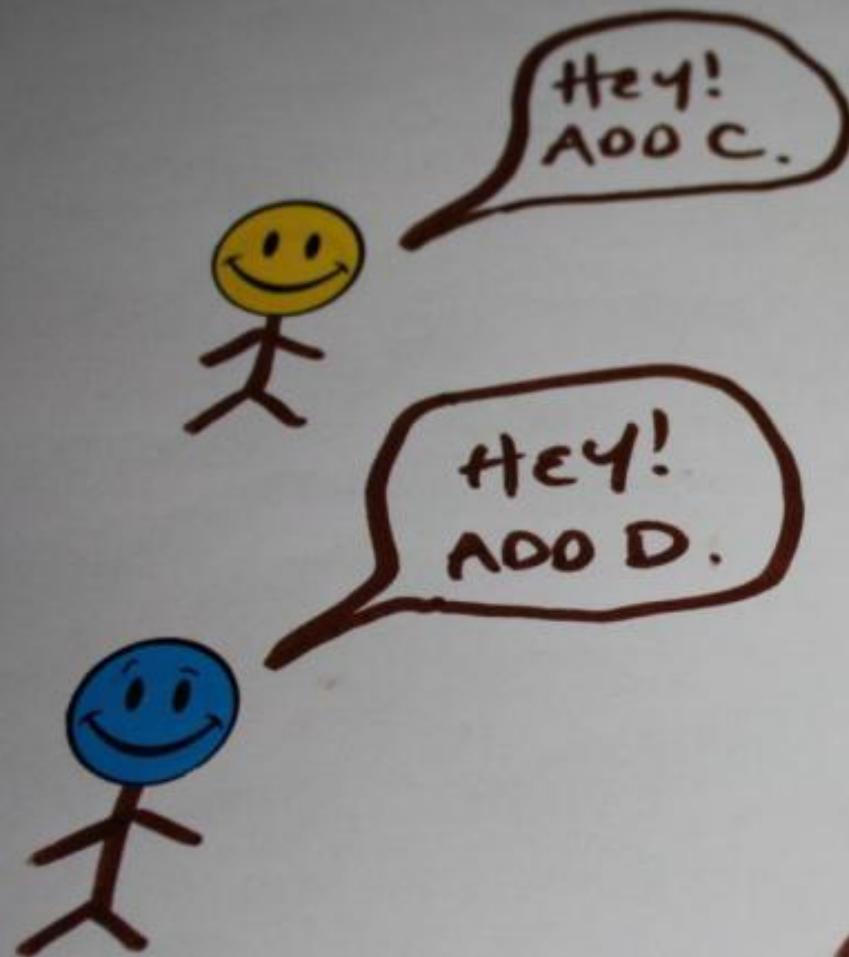
Problem:
Concurrent
insert of

Problem:
concurrent
insert of

T does
what
it mean?

Problem:
Concurrent
insert of

T. i.e
can't
define data
before even
knowing the
problem



WHAT CAN YOU
GUARANTEE ABOUT
THE ORDER HERE?



Don't ask,
"Which
one was
first?"



WHAT CAN YOU
GUARANTEE ABOUT



Hey!
ADD C.

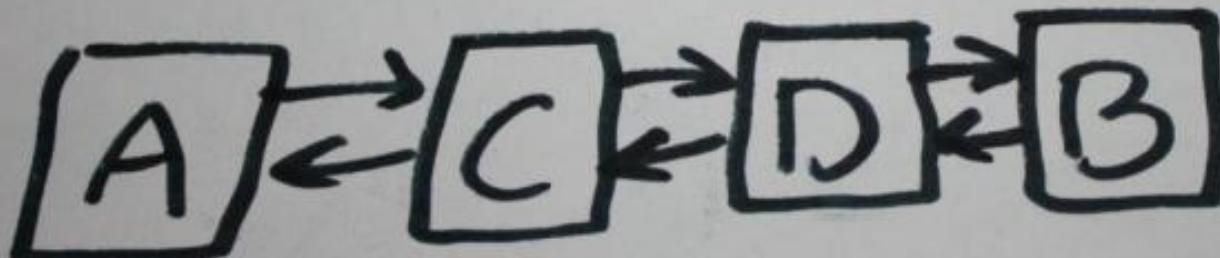


ASK, why
does order
matter for
the problem.

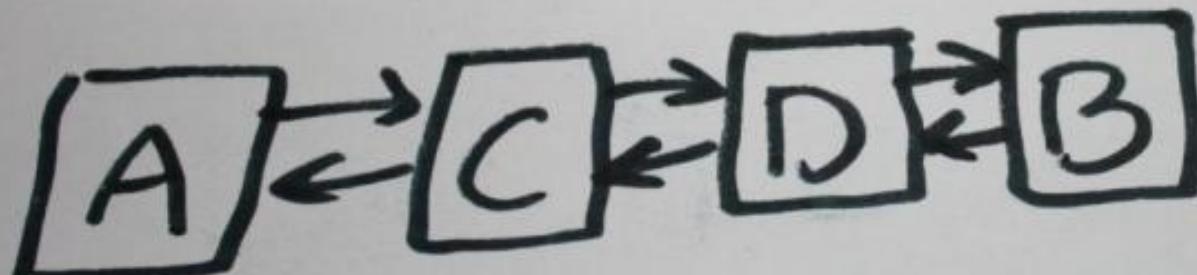
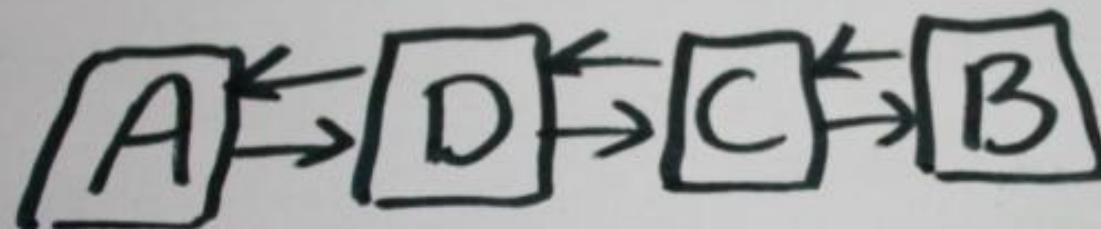


WHAT CAN YOU
SUGGEST AS

WHICH ORDER IS "CORRECT"?

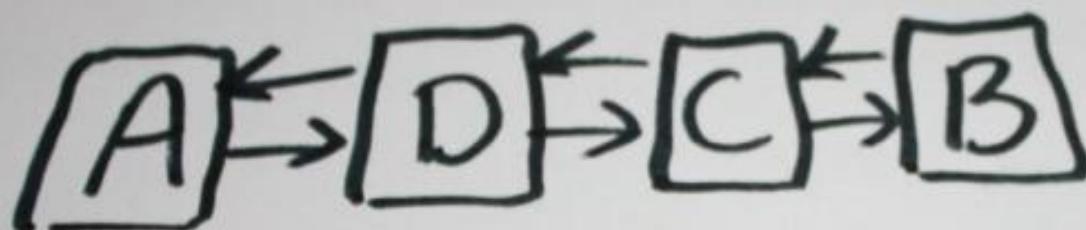


WHICH ORDER IS "CORRECT" ?



BOTH !

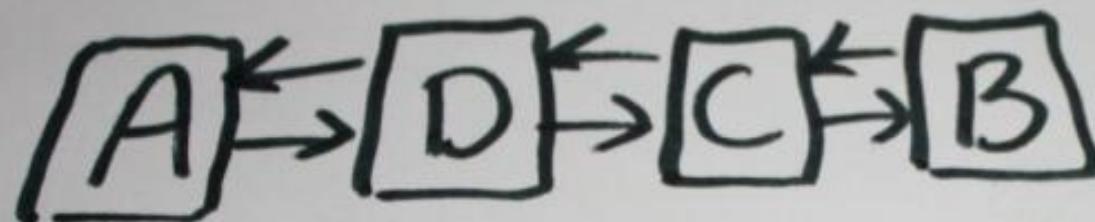
WHICH ORDER IS "CORRECT" ?



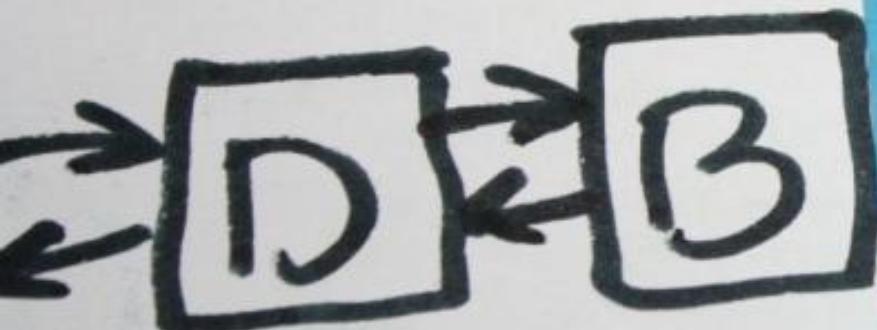
BOTH !

NEITHER !

WHICH ORDER IS "CORRECT"?



DEPENDS
ON
CONTEXT.



"CONTEXT"
INCLUDES
EXPLICIT
ORDERING
RULES.

Concurrent insert operation
needs explicit ordering rule.
(Extra dimension of info.)

The data structure would be different to accommodate ordering rule.

Is that all the extra information
needed?

Hint: No.

So how would we solve the concurrent problem?

BUT FIRST...

WHAT IS CONCURRENCY?

WHAT IS CONCURRENCY?

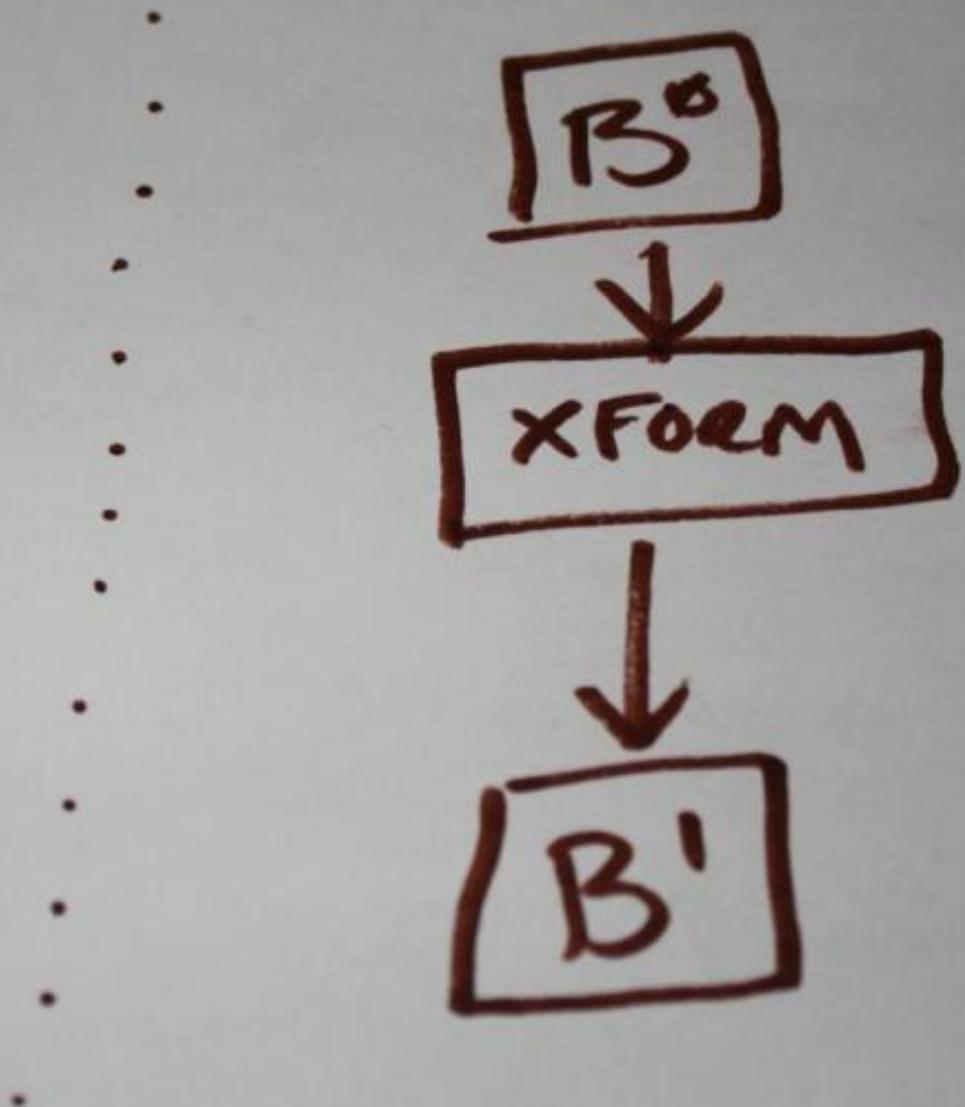
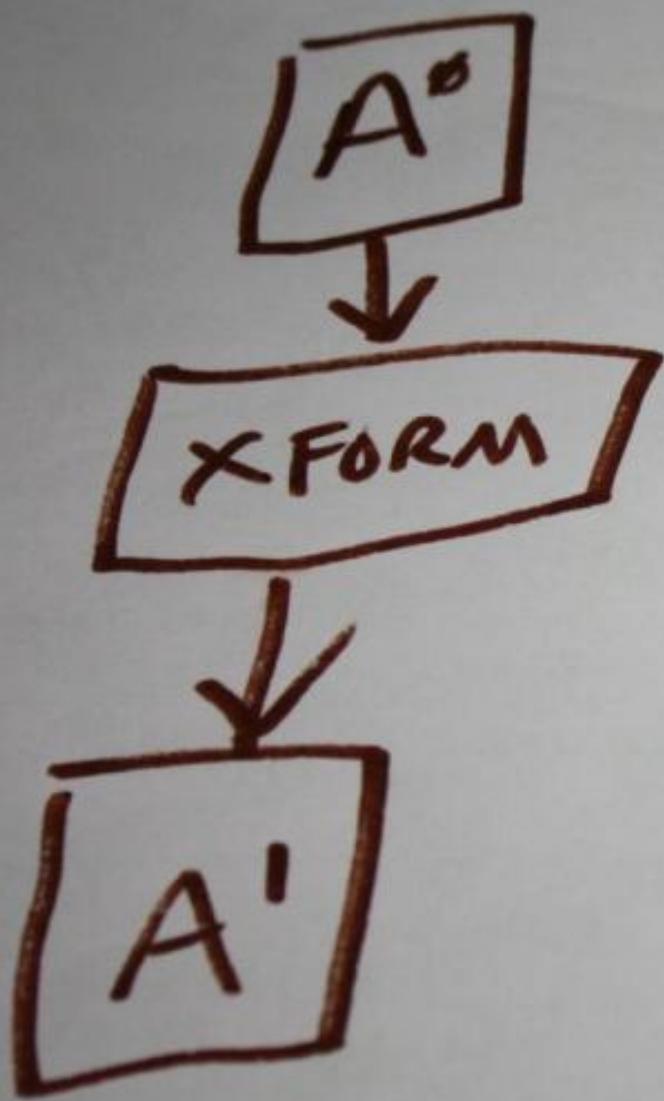
PARALLELISM
VS.
CONCURRENCY
ARGUMENTS...

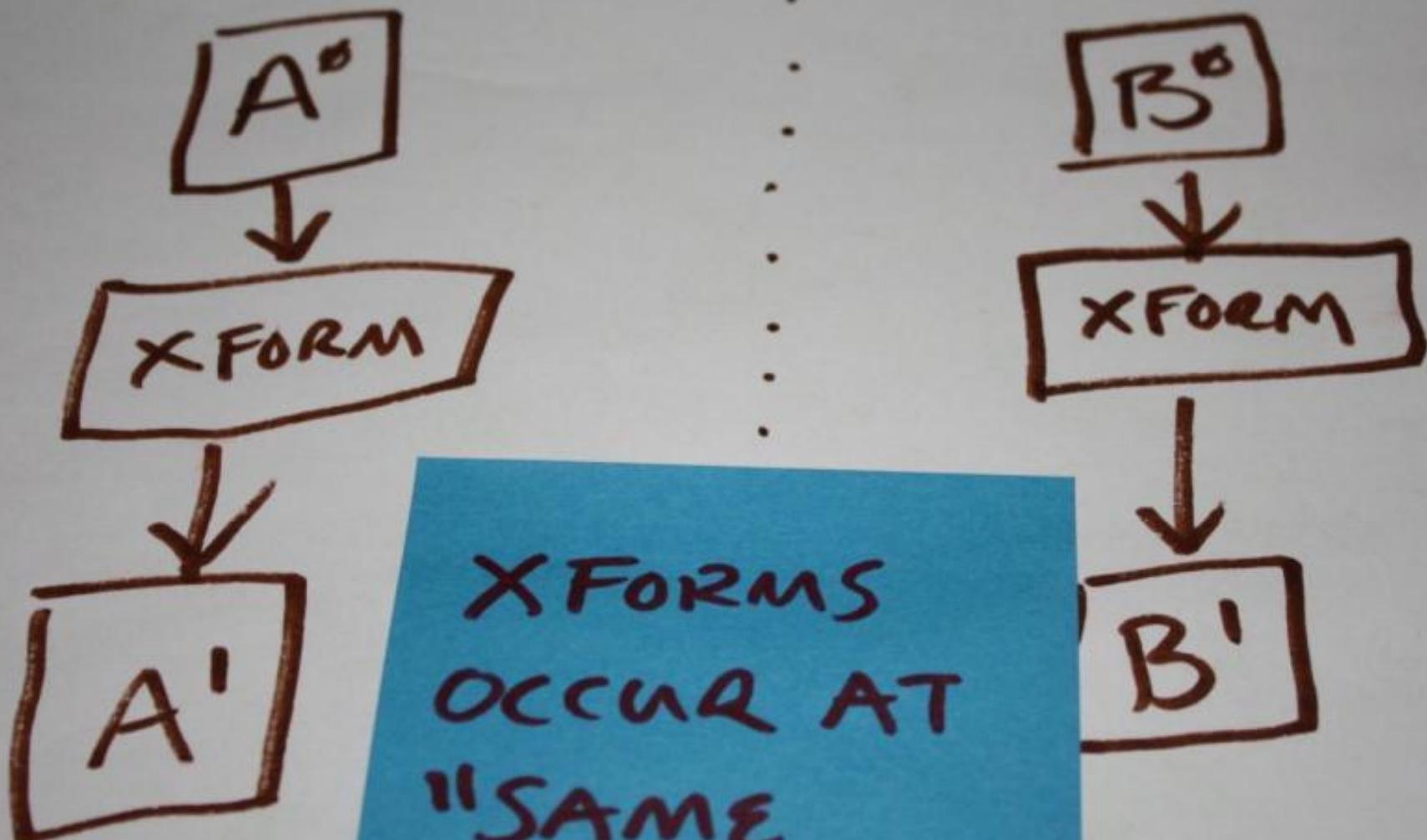
WHO CARES?!

NOT
IMPORTANT.

LEAVE IT.

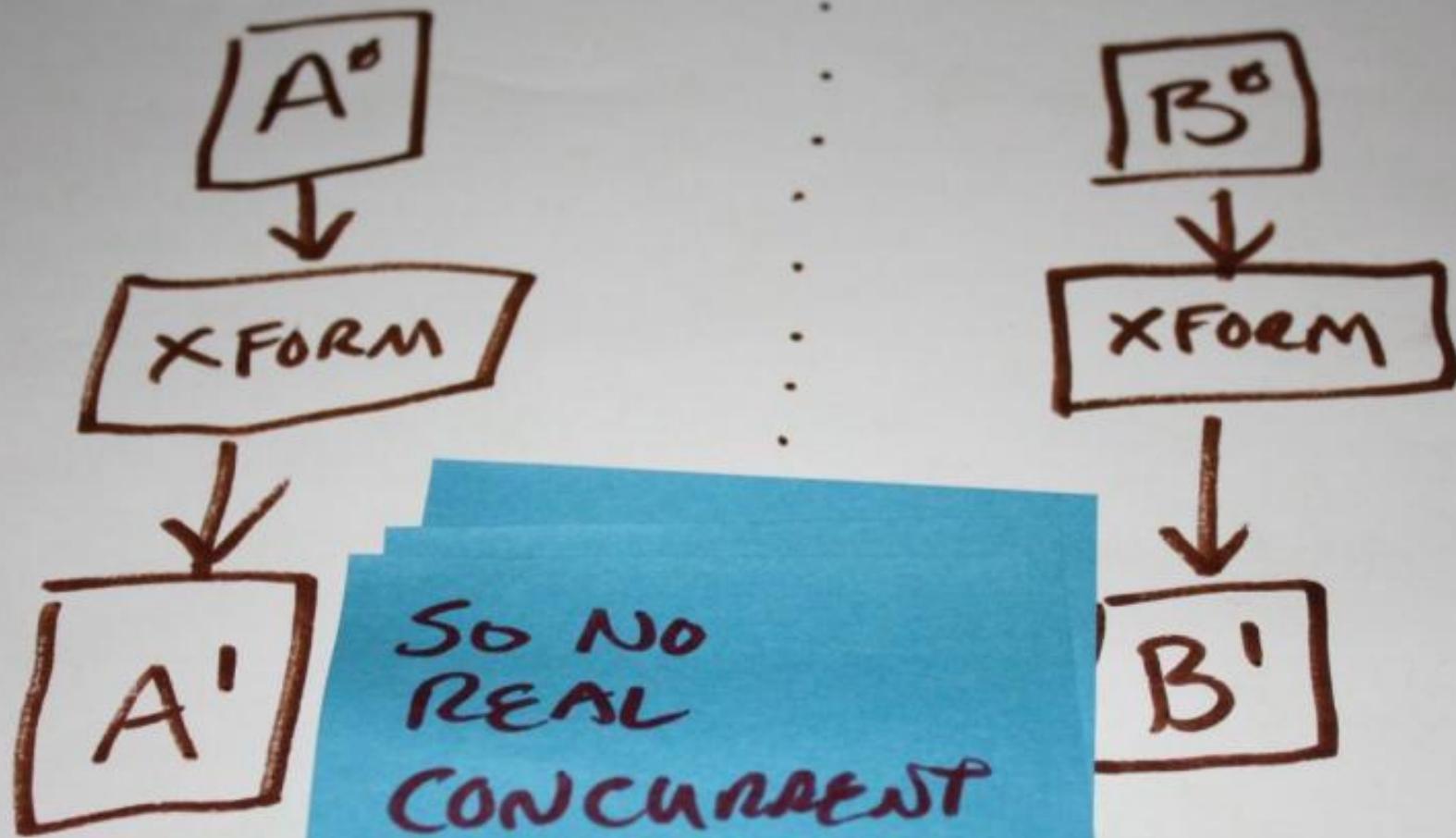
CONCURRENCY IS
TRANSFORMATION OF
SHARED DATA SET.





XFORMS
OCCUR AT
"SAME
TIME"





SO NO
REAL
CONCURRENT
OPERATION.



INSERT
SEMANTIC
ARGUMENT
HERE.

A'

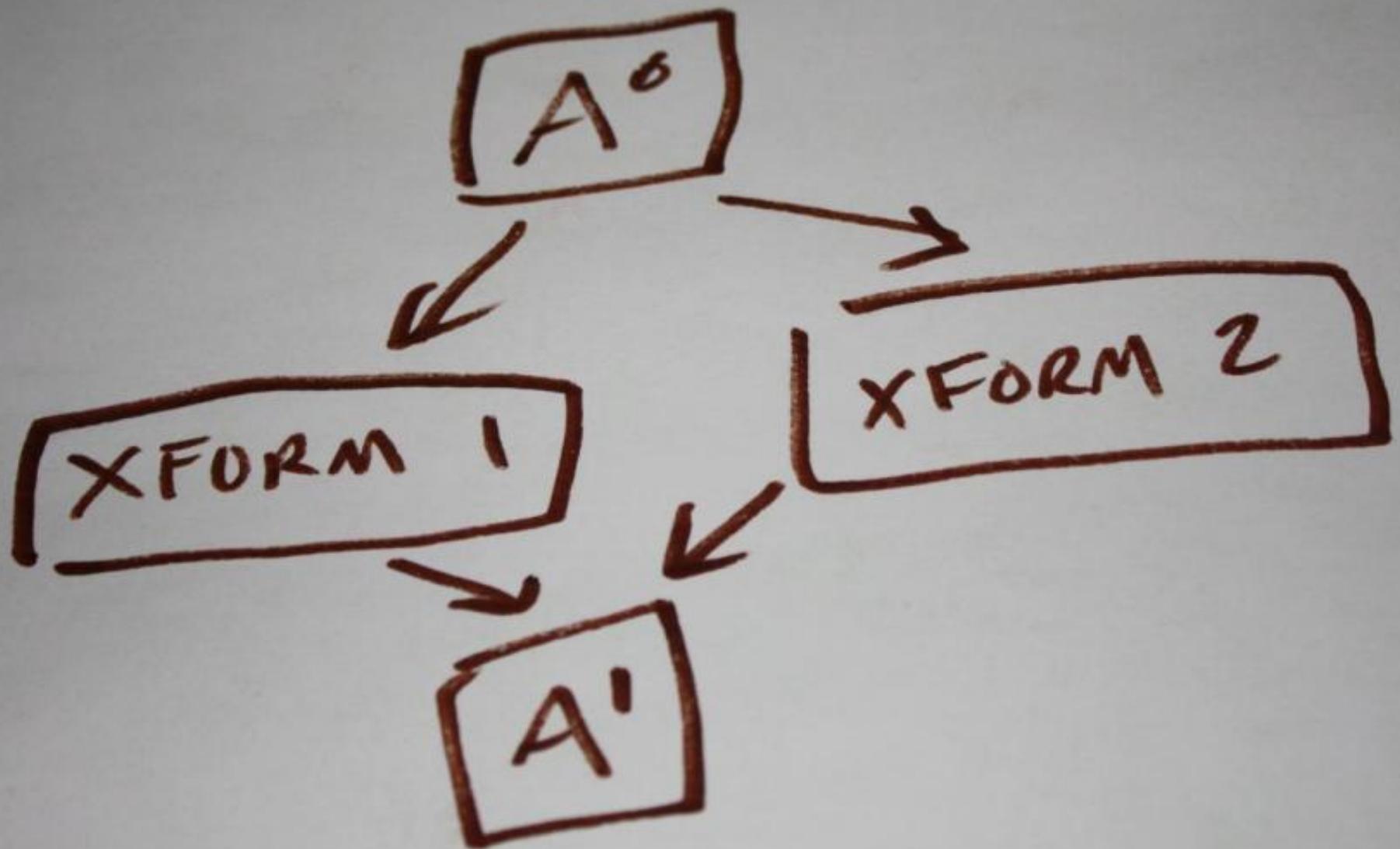
NO
CONCURRENCY
...
IN ANY
WAY THAT
MATTERS.

B'

NO PROBLEM
CAN
POSSIBLY
BE
CAUSED.

A'

B'

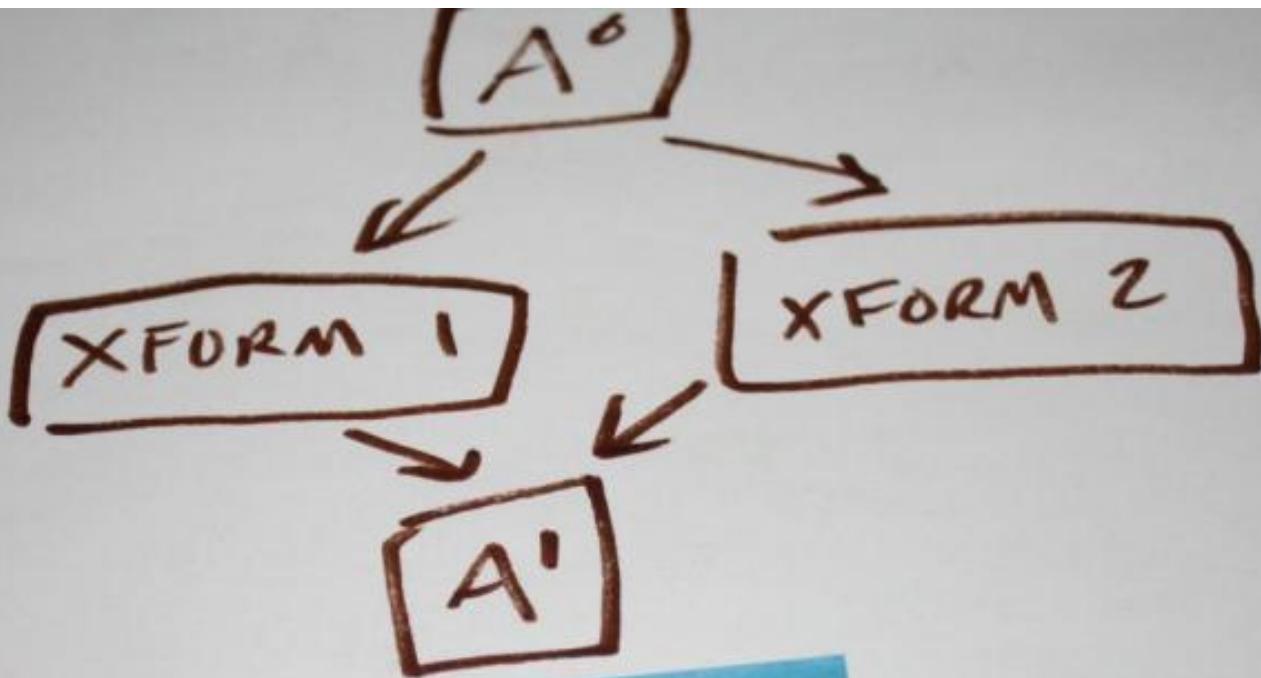


XFORM

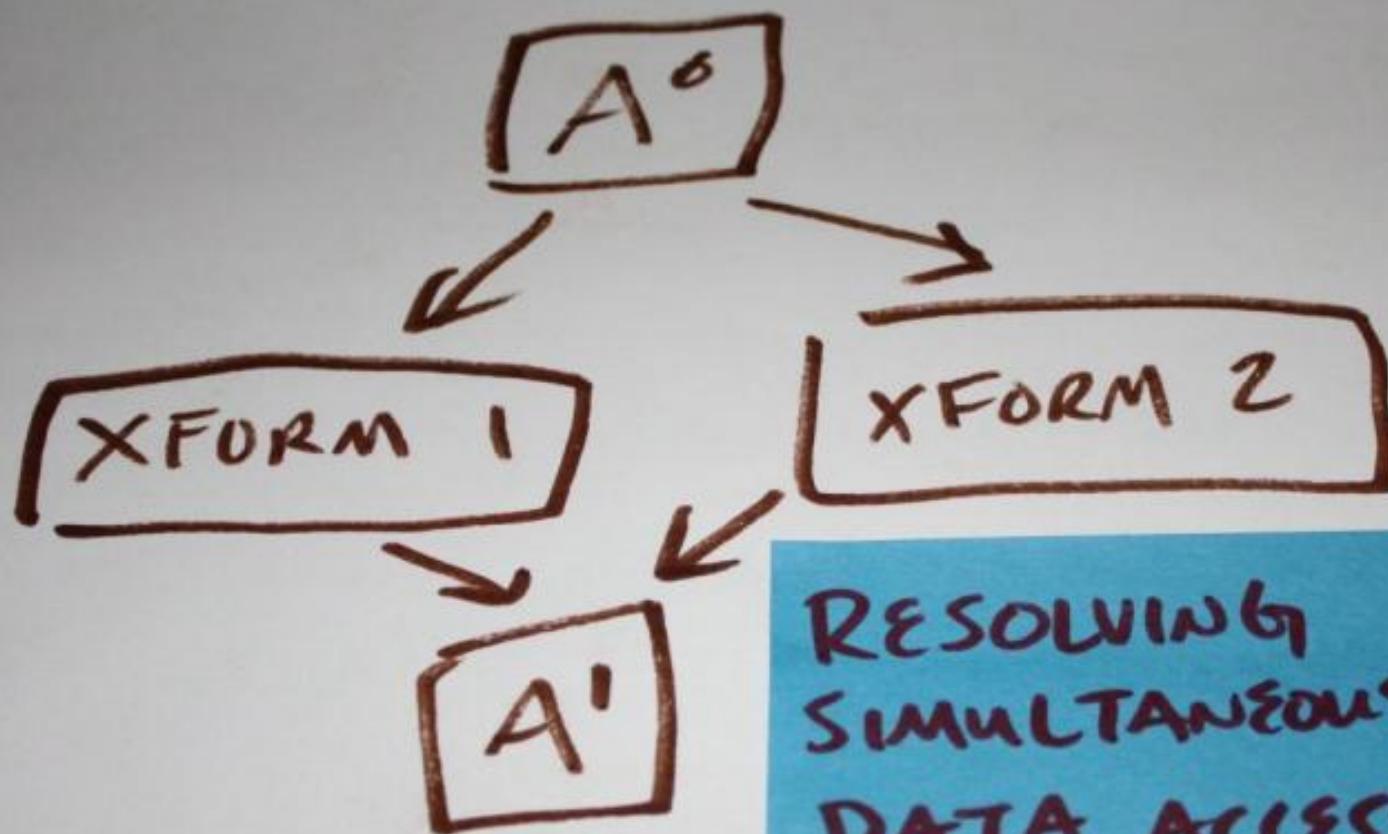
A⁶

FORM 2

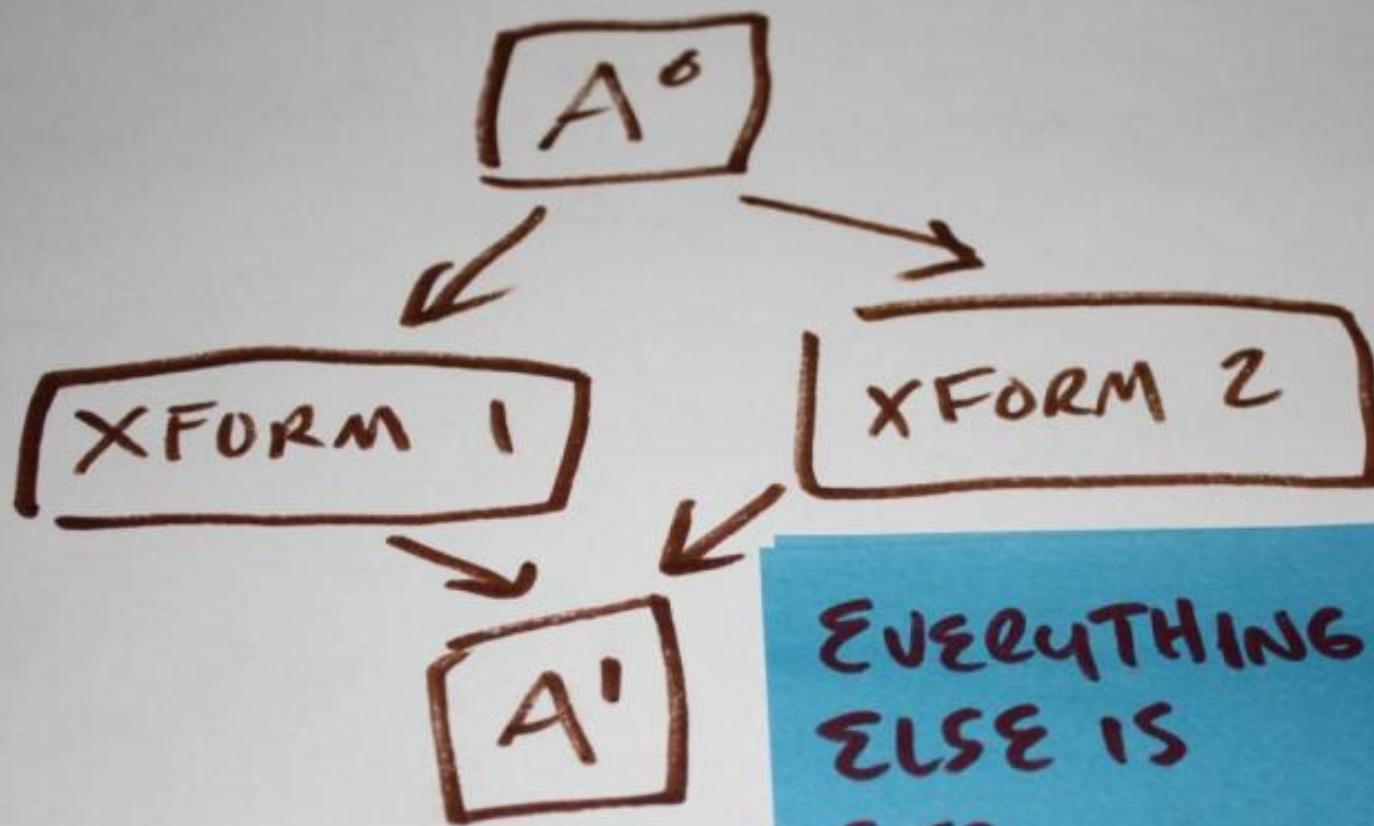
↑
SIMULTANEOUS
READS FROM
SAME DATA



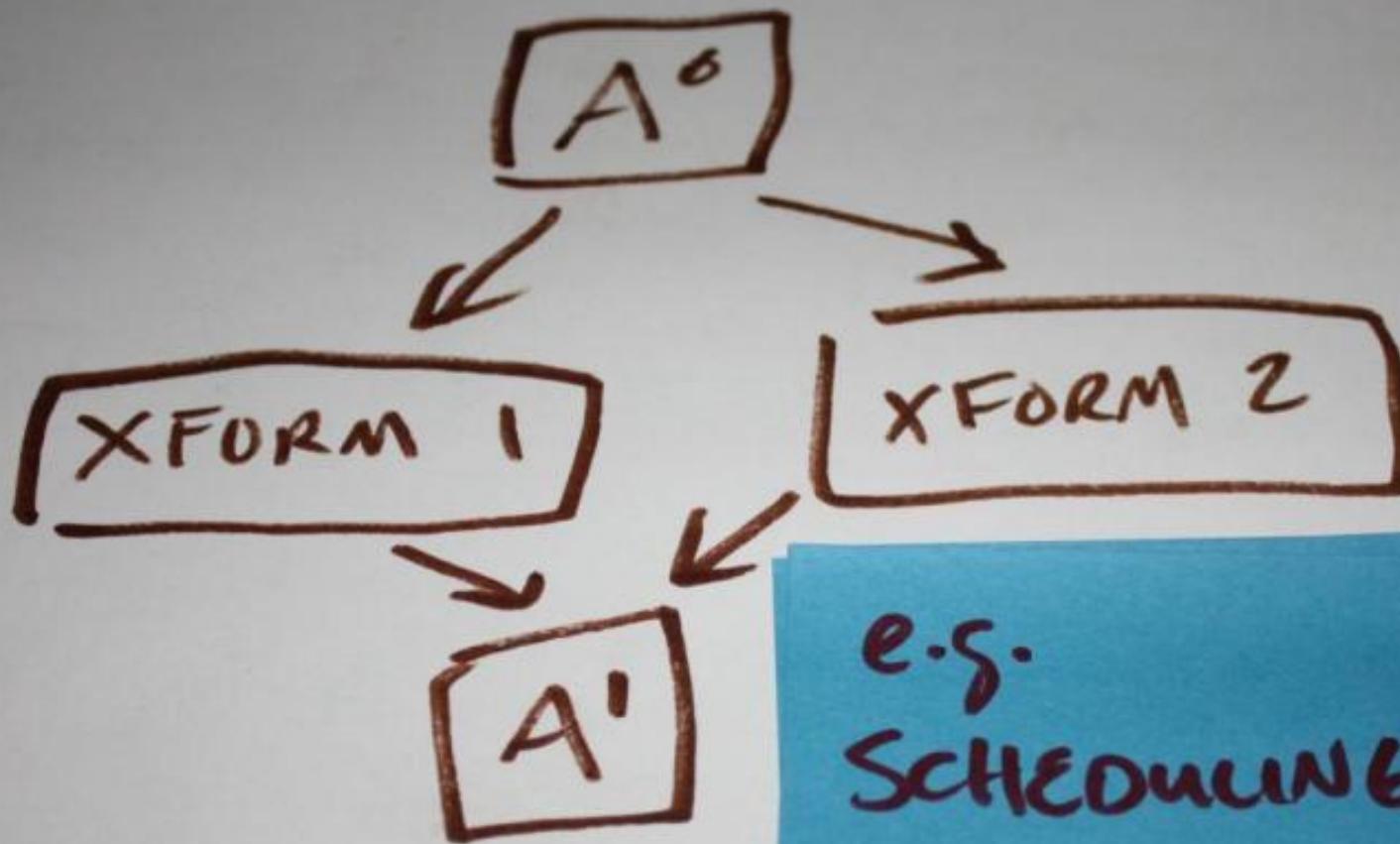
↑
SIMULTANEOUS
WRITES TO
SAME DATA.



RESOLVING
SIMULTANEOUS
DATA ACCESS
IS THE
CONCURRENCY
PROBLEM.



EVERYTHING
ELSE IS
STD.
RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT.



e.g.
SCHEDULUNG

Concurrent data would be divided in to shared and unshared data for xforms.

- Doubly-linked list makes no such distinction.
- All sequential data structs presume all shared.

Concurrent data would be
divided by
readers and writers of data.

- Doubly-linked list makes no such distinction.
- All sequential data structs presume anywhere read/write.

Look at any level of parallelism to see shared data for transforms.

FIRST - VARIOUS PARALLELISM

- INSTRUCTION LEVEL
- MULTI - THREADING
- MULTI - CORE, SHARED MEM
- MULTI - CORE, INDEPENDENT MEM
- MULT - MACHINES

WHAT DO ALL OF
THESE HAVE
IN COMMON?

SIMULTANEOUS
XFORM OF
SAME DATA FILE

Note:

Data file just generic term for organized data.

e.g.

- Registers
- Cache (lines)
- Main memory
- ...or actual file on disk.

Concurrency is not a system-wide property

Doubly-linked list data struct assumes all operations follow the same (sequential) rules.

CONCURRENCY IS
AN ATTRIBUTE OF
AN OPERATION.

CONCURRENCY IS
AN ATTRIBUTE OF
AN OPERATION.

WHICH
OPERATION?

Every concurrent operation
must have explicitly defined
rules.

Data is designed that satisfies
all the rules.

But sometimes, attempts are made to use "sequential rules"

For example...

WHAT ABOUT USING
TIMESTAMPS TO CONTROL
ORDER?

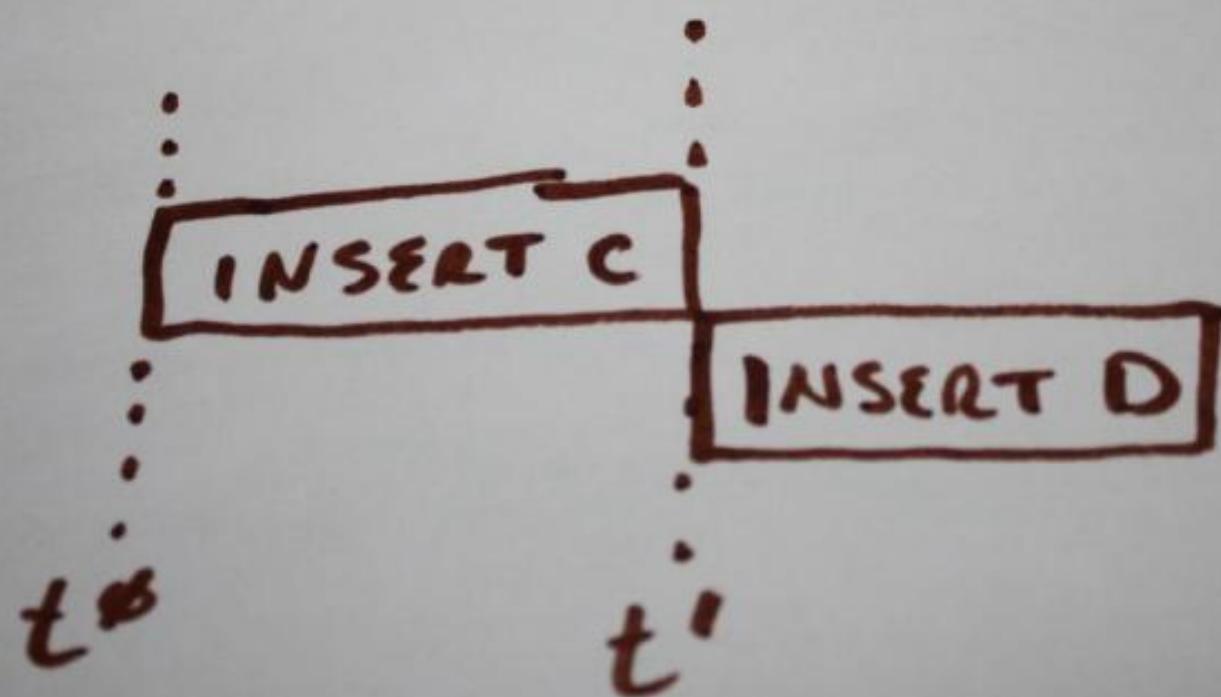
WHAT ABOUT USING
TIMESTAMPS TO CONTROL
ORDER?

I NEED
Perfectly
Sync'd
clocks...

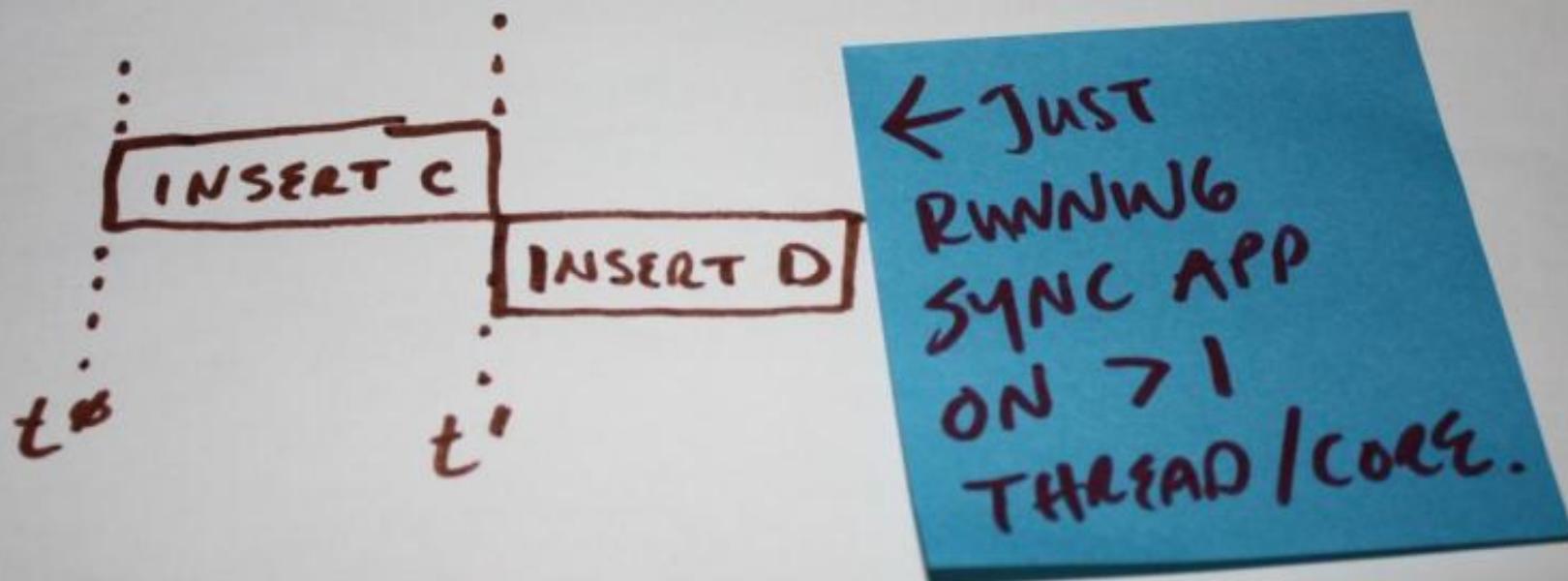
WHAT ABOUT USING
TIMESTAMPS TO CONTROL
ORDER?

...
which are
infinitely
accurate

#2 THIS IS NOT CONCURRENCY!



#2 THIS IS NOT CONCURRENCY!



#2 THIS IS NOT CONCURRENCY!

: However. . .

• • [

四

CONCURRENCY:

CPUs
aren't
fully
concurrent
either!

t^*

t

CONCURRENCY!

There is
a
clock

D

16

CONCURRENCY

There are
explicit
ordering
rules

t^* ————— t

Can't be
more
concurrent
than h/w
allows.

ti

So sometimes using
sequential rules work.

And sometimes it's the "right"
thing to do.

But it must be done in a well-informed way.

(Know that's what you're doing!)

What needs to be solved per
operation?

Concurrency is FIRST
ABOUT RESOLVING DATA
SYNCHRONIZATION
CONFLICTS.

Concurrency is FIRST
ABOUT RESOLVING DATA
SYNCHRONIZATION
CONFLICTS.

DEFINE
DATA IN
CONTEXT

Concurrency is FIRST
ABOUT RESOLVING DATA
SYNCHRONIZATION
CONFLICTS.

MINIMIZE
CONFLICTS

Concurrency is FIRST
ABOUT RESOLVING DATA
SYNCHRONIZATION
CONFLICTS.

CONFLICTS =
SEQUENTIAL
DATA
DEPENDENCY

RONIZATION

UCTS.

SEQUENTIAL
=
NOT
CONCURRENT

But how do you know what the conflicts are?

NEED TO ANSWER BASIC
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
DATA.

WHO WHAT WHEN
WHERE WHY HOW

NEED TO ANSWER BASIC
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
DATA.

WHO
CAN
READ /
WRITE?

WHAT

WHEN

WHY

HOW

0 TO ANSWER
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
DATA.

HAT

WHEN
CAN THE
DATA BE
READ OR
WRITTEN?

QUESTIONS DATA.

WHO
CAN
READ
WRITE

WHAT DATA
REALM
NEEDS TO
BE R/W?

WHEN
CAN
DAT
RE
W

QUESTIONS ABOUT DATA.

WHO
CAN
READ
WRITE

HOW IS
THE DATA
STORED?

WHEN
IN
DATA
READ
WR

NEED TO ASK
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
DATA.

WHO CAN READ
WRITING

+ HOW IS
THE DATA
ACCESSED?

IN THE
TA AND
WRITING

DATA IS
WHAT ARE
CONSTRAINTS.
WHAT ARE
CONSTRAINTS.
LATENCY.

WHAT & WHAT ARE
THE TAXE
LARGI THE OUTPUT
CONSTRAINTS? TA B
AD

TESTS
DATA.

QUESTIONS
DATA.

WHAT & WHY DO
YOU NEED
TO READ
CONNS' THE DATA? TO
ANSWER THIS

i.e. Understand the data!

(It always comes down to this)

Defining an concurrent
insert operation:

What would it mean?

CONCURRENT INSERT OP:

WHAT DOES IT
MEAN IN CONTEXT?

BUT...

- INSERT (C) AFTER (A)
- INSERT (D) AFTER (A)

HAS NO WELL-DEFINED
MEANING IN A GENERAL
CONCURRENT SYSTEM!

BUT...

- INSERT (C) AFTER (A)
- INSERT (D) AFTER (A)

THERE IS
NO "NOW"
IN

CONCURRENCY!

ED
ERAL

BUT...

- INSERT (C) AFTER (A)
- INSERT (D) AFTER (A)

w/out
"now",
THERE'S NO
BEFORE/AFTER

HAS NO
MEANING
EO
ERAL
I
SEQUENCE SYSTEM!

BUT...

- INSERT (C) AFTER (A)
- INSERT (D) AFTER (A)

TIME IS THE
EXTRA DIM
THAT MUST
BE DEFINED.

HAS NO MEANING.
CURRENT SYSTEM!

BUT...

- INSERT (C) AFTER (A)
- INSERT (D) AFTER (A)

HOW IS IT
HANDLED?

HAS NO
MEANING,
ALREADY
IN THE SYSTEM!

ED
ERAL
I

- INSERT (C) AFTER (A)
- INSERT (D) AFTER (A)

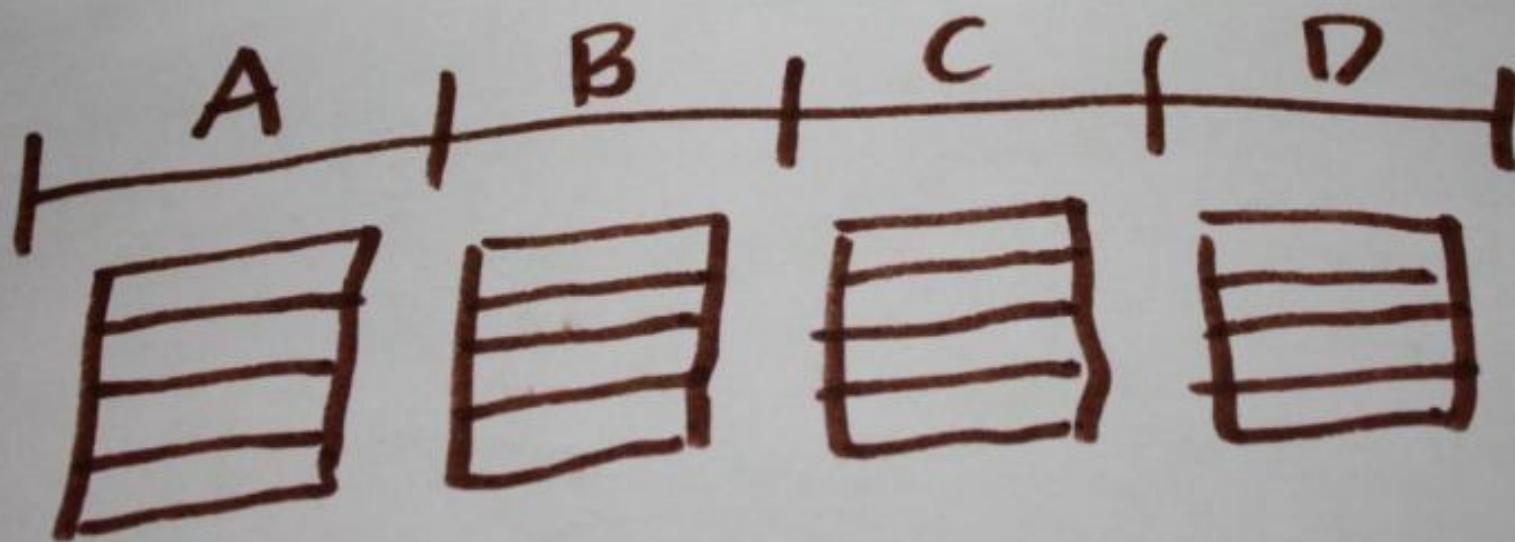
WHAT DOES
IT MEAN?

INSERT (D) AFTER (A)

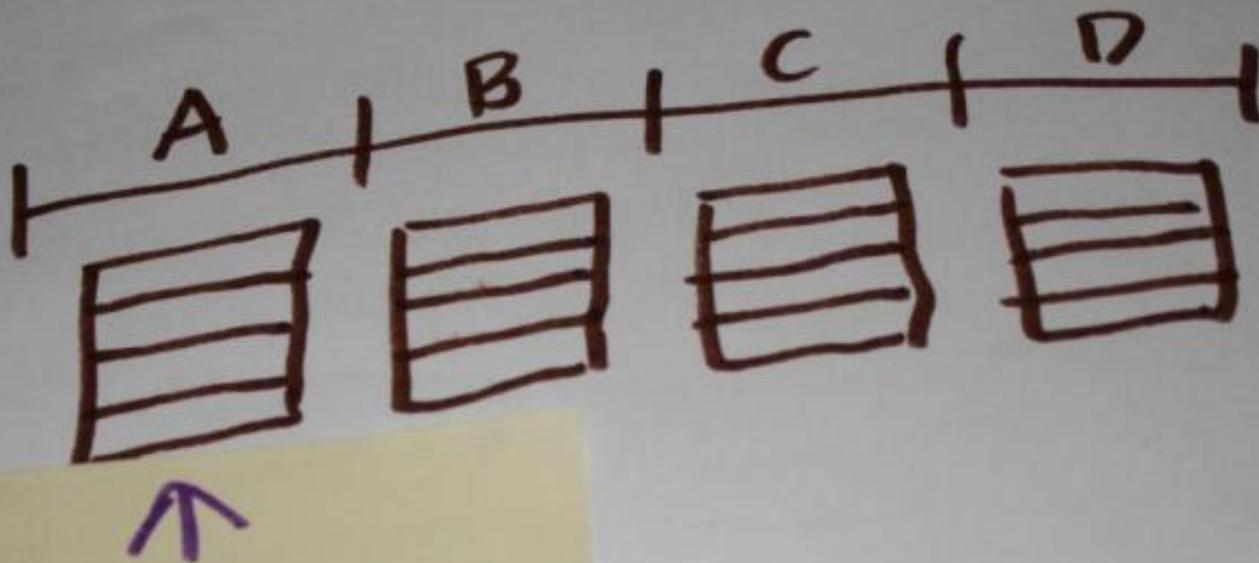
WHAT ARE
THE LIMITS
& RANGE?

How might you answer these
questions?

WHAT IS THE ACCURACY /
GRANULARITY OF GLOBAL
ORDER VALUES?

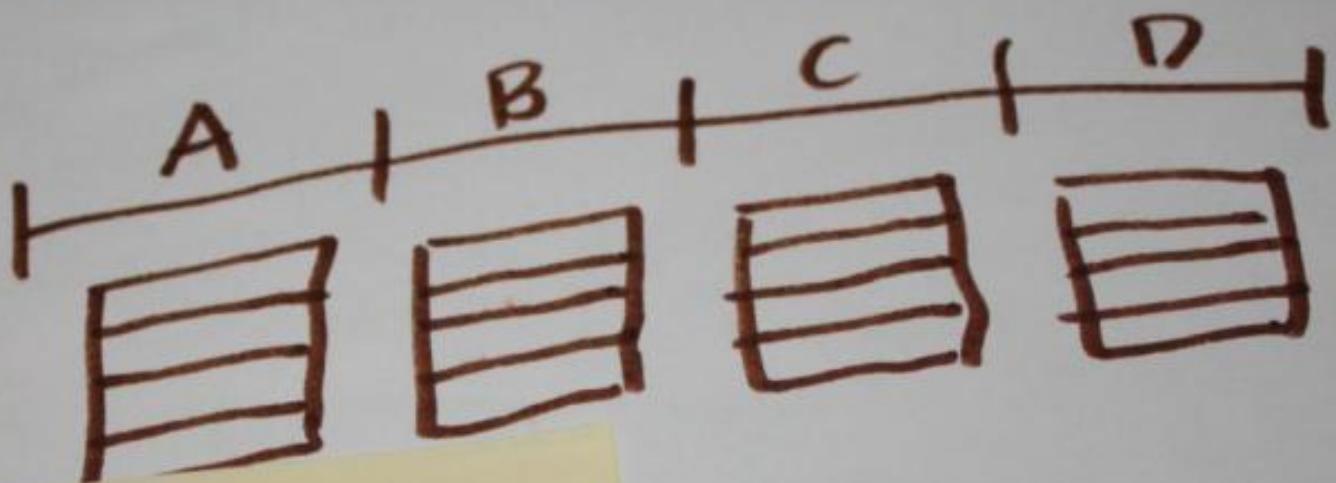


GRANULARITY
OF ORDER VALUES?



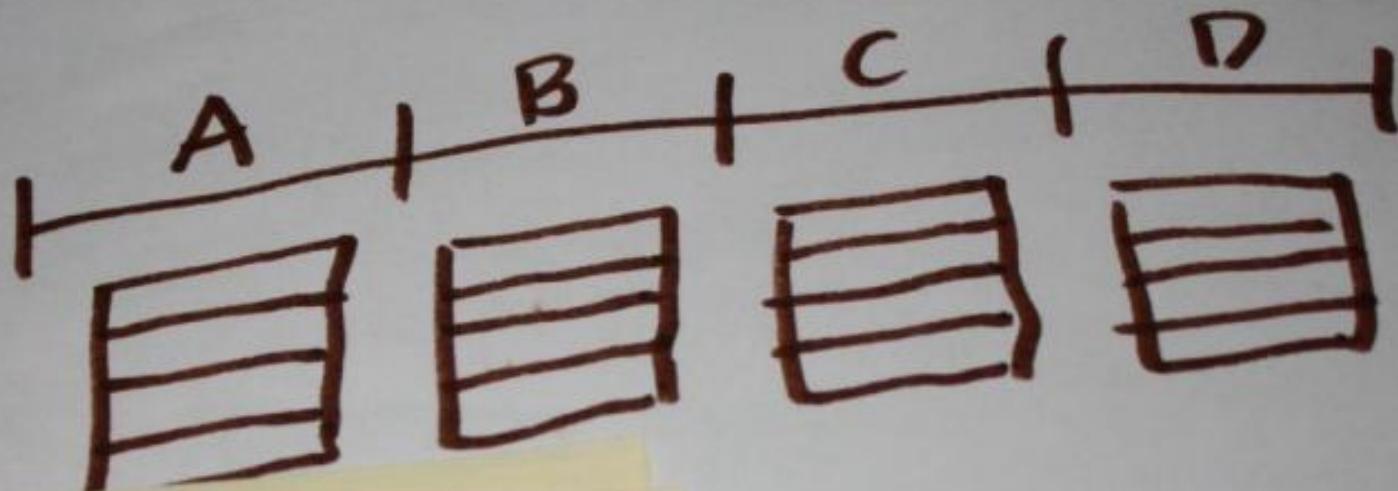
↑
Maybe
"Insert A"
means in
(A) bracket.

ORDER VALUES.



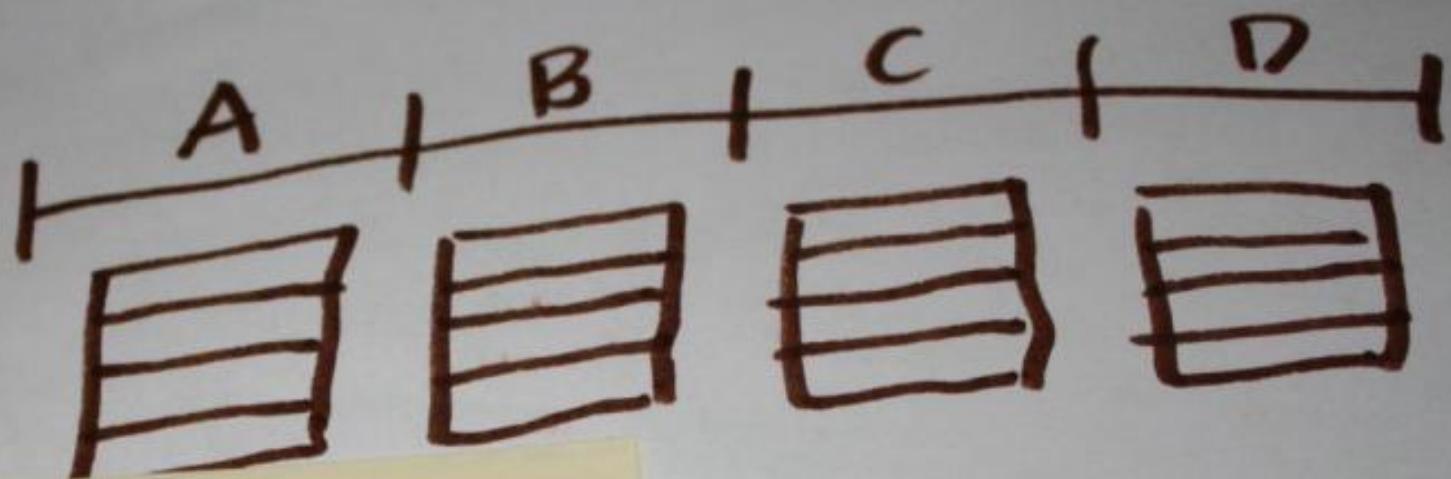
i.e.
Within some
acceptable
range.

order



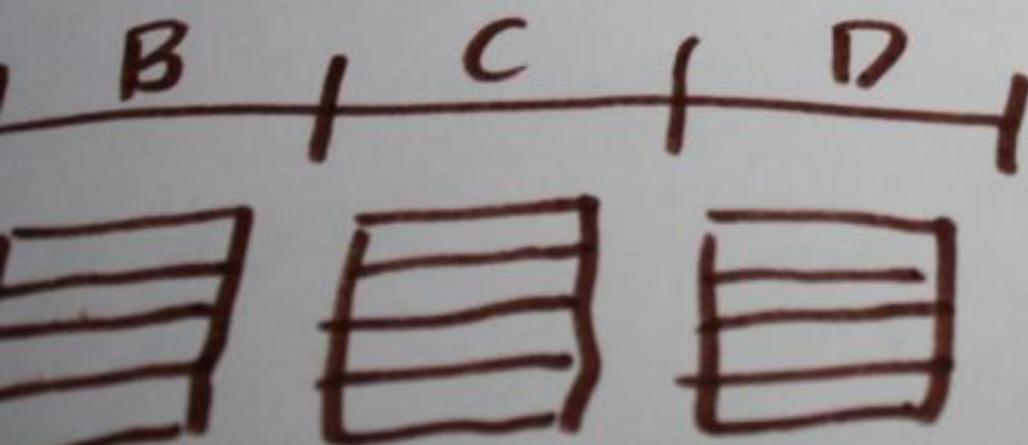
order in
brackets is
not
important

ORDER



but global
order is
well-defined.

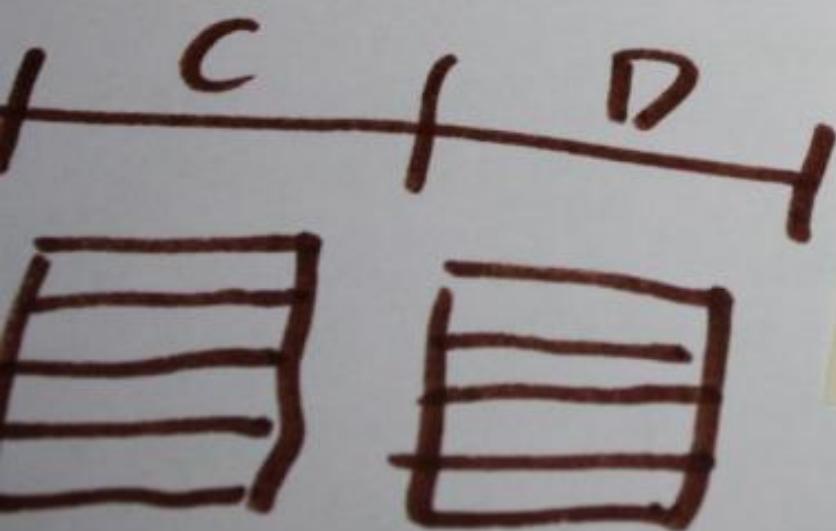
IS THE ACCURACY /
UNIQUENESS OF GLOBAL
VALUES?



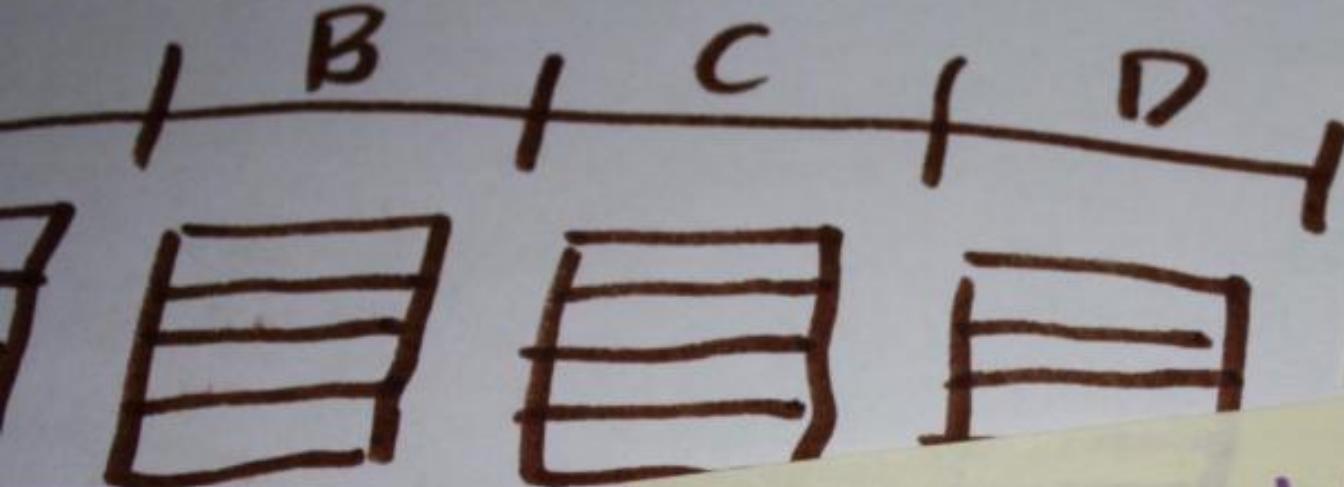
This is an example of an ordering rule.

W
n
d

THE ACCURACY /
PRECISION OF GLOBAL
VALUES?



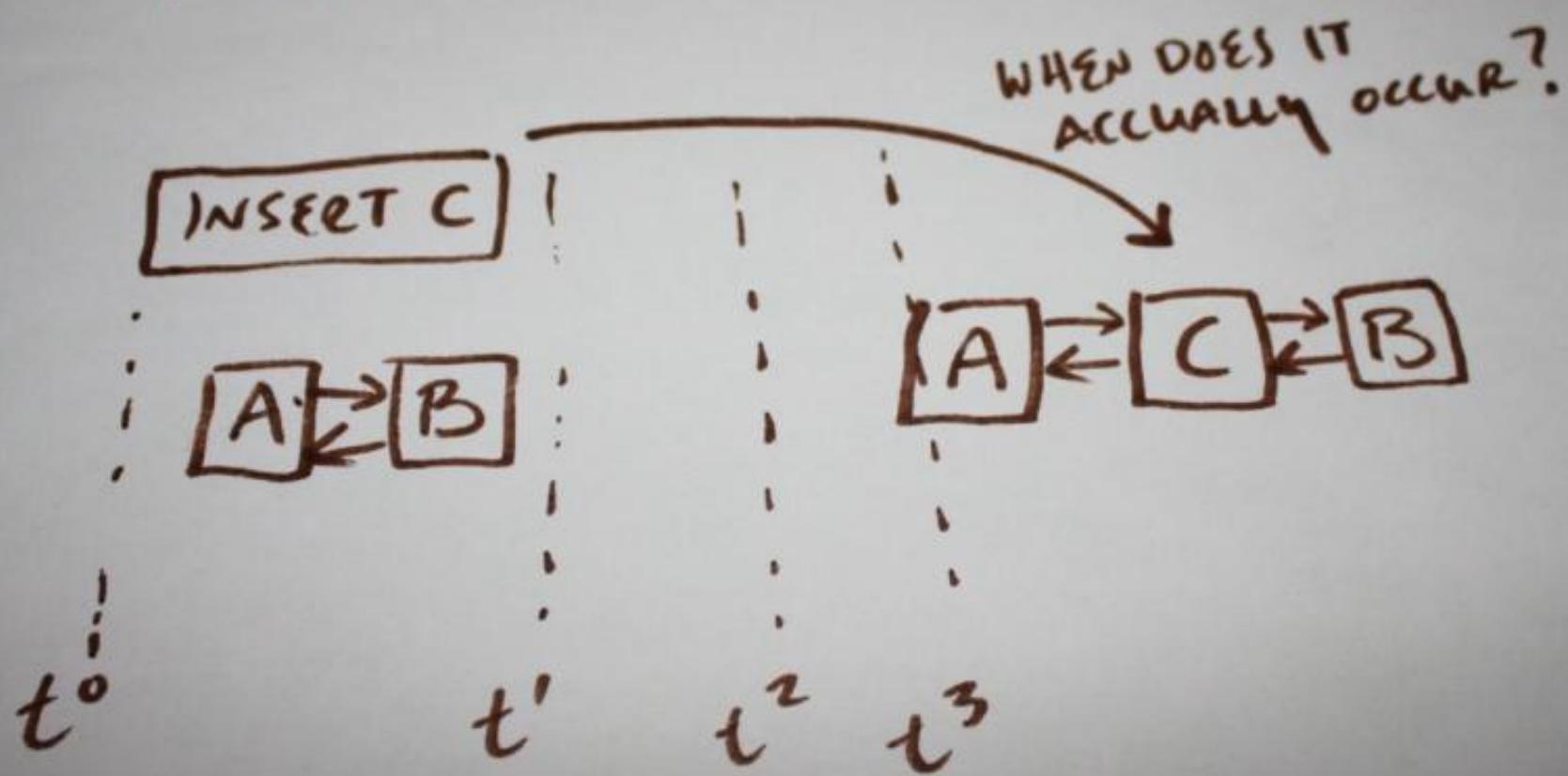
which is
necessary to
define in
concurrent
problems.



define in
concurrent
problems.

How would
this make
the insert
OP simpler?

WHAT ARE THE LATENCY
REQUIREMENTS OF THE
INSERT OP?



LESSON

DOUBLY-LINKED LIST IS
SEQUENTIAL DATA STRUCT.

PRESUMES:

- ZERO LATENCY
- GUARANTEED ORDER
(SEQUENTIAL)

CONCURRENT DATA STRUCTURES DEFINED

By:

- EXPLICIT LATENCY
REQUIREMENTS
- EXPLICIT ORDERING
RULES

But these requirements and
rules can only be defined
in context

WHAT ARE SOME
CONTEXTS W/IN YOU
WOULD USE DOUBLY-
LINKED LIST?

WHAT ARE SOME
CONTEXTS W/IN YOU
WOULD USE DOUBLY-
LINKED LIST?

I.e.
DON'T TRY
TO FIT THE
"SOLUTION"
TO THE
PROBLEM.

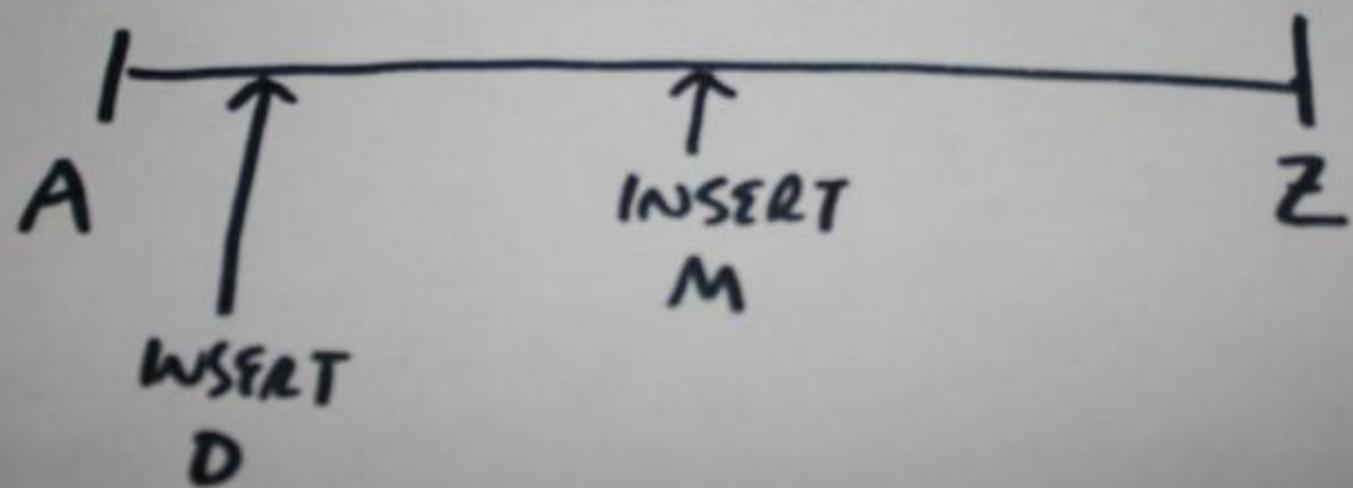
WHAT ARE SOME
CONTEXTS W/IN YOU
WOULD USE DOUBLY-
LINKED LIST?

i.e.: ... TRUE

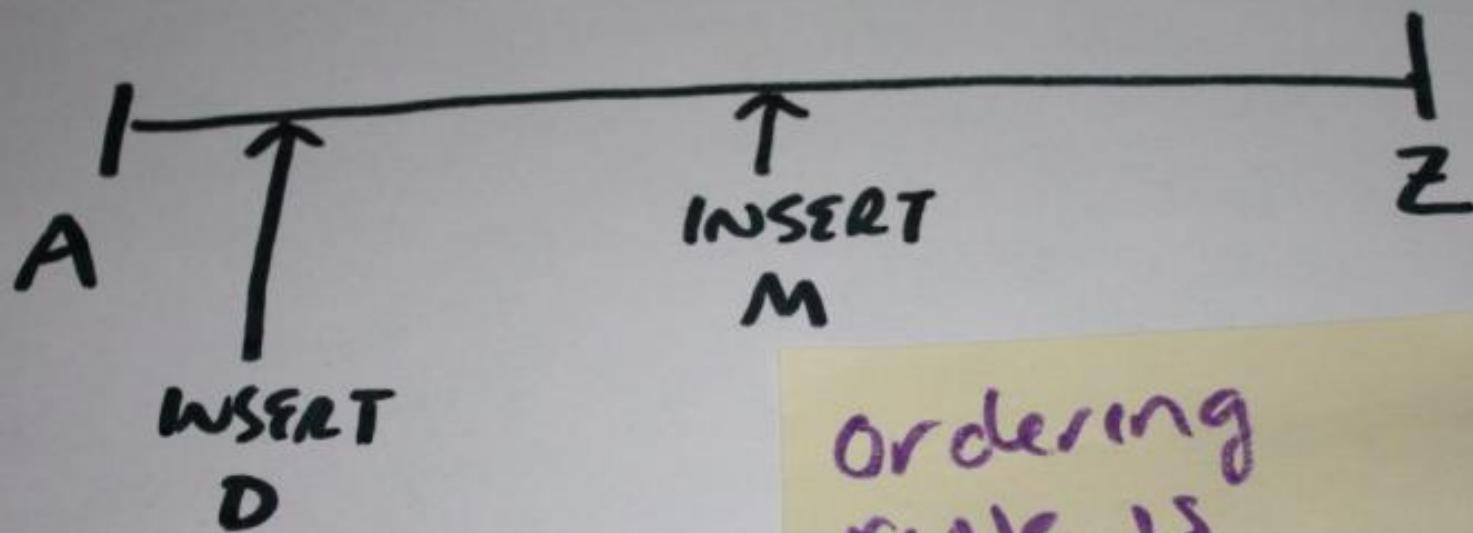
JUST
SOLVE THE
PROBLEM.

e.g. Insert
Sort

INSERT SORT MEANS
INSERT AT POSITION IN
GLOBAL ORDER



GLOBAL ORDER



Ordering
rule is
global
Sorting /
compare func.

AT POSITION IN
ORDER

↑
INSERT
M

But what
are the
latency
rules?

-

ordering

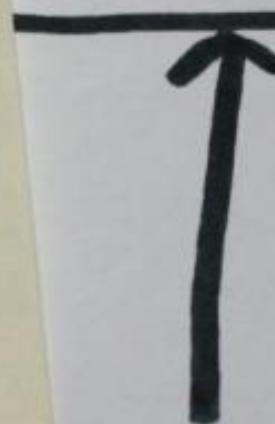
When does
the caker
need the
results?

↑
WSERT

When do
other
processes
need
results?

GLOBAL ORDER

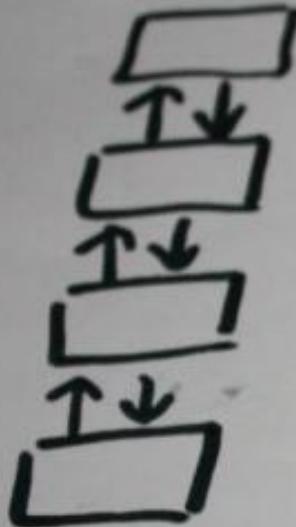
Do you think dbl
linked list
will be
right data?



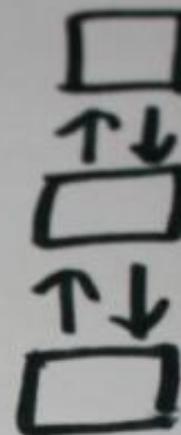
INSERT
D

Different answers to each question would change the data structure required.

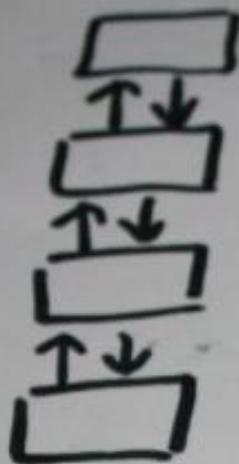
e.g. Resource Mgmt
w/ variable
life times



LIMITED
RESOURCE
LIST

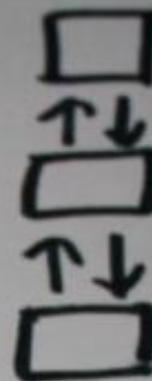
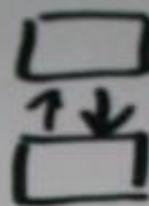


- SPARSE LISTS OF ALLOCATED NODES
- VARIABLE LIFETIMES
- DIFF "OWNERS", DIFF LISTS

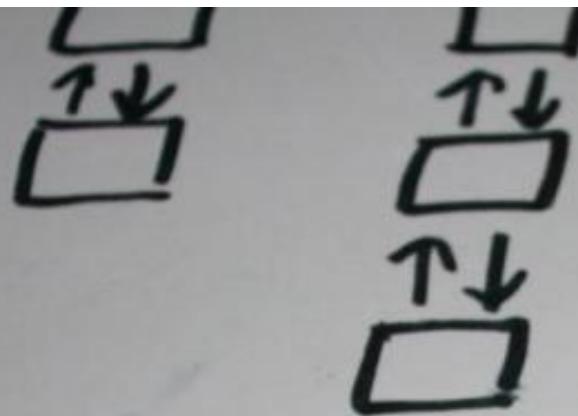


LIMITED
RESOURCE
LIST

↑
START w/
LIST OF
RESOURCES



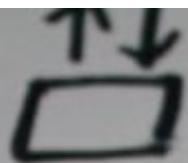
- SPARSE LISTS OF ALLOCATED NODES
- VARIABLE LIFETIMES
- DIFF "OWNERS", DIFF LISTS



[]

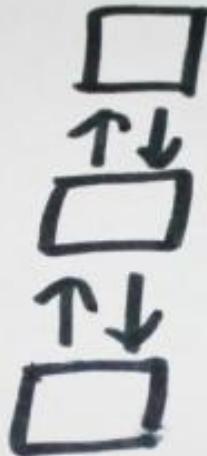
- SPARSE LISTS OF ALLOCATED NODES
- VARIABLE LIFETIMES
- DIFF "OWNERS",
DIFF LISTS

< AS they're
alloc'd, add
to new
"owner" lists.



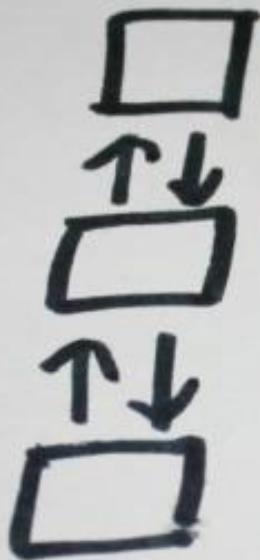
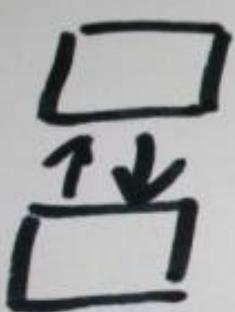
- SPARSE LISTS OF ALLOCATED NODES
- VARIABLE LIFETIMES
- DIFF "OWNERS",
DIFF LISTS

← When
"deleted"
remove from
list, return
to res. list.

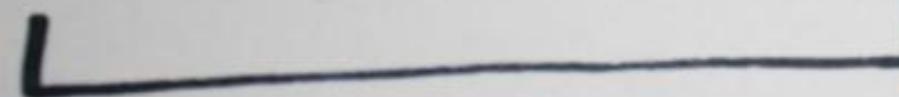


← APPEND
TO ENO.
ORDER NOT
IMPORTANT

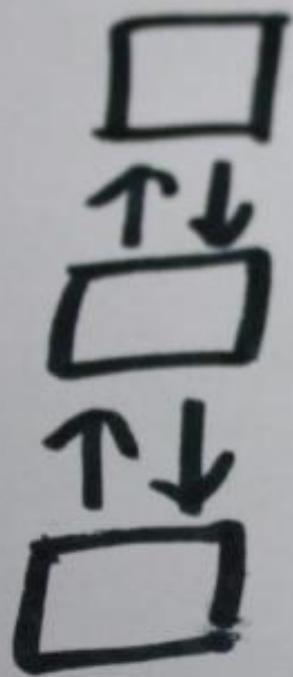
- SPARSE LISTS OF ALLOCATED NODES
- VARIABLE LIFETIMES



THIS IS THE
EXPLICIT
ORDERING
RULE



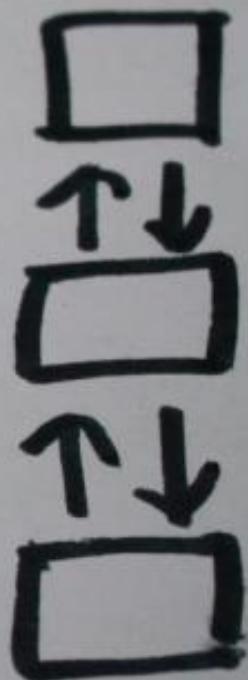
- SPARSE LISTS OF ALLOCATED NODES



NOTE, implies
insert to
middle \Rightarrow
not needed.

CHASE LISTS OF

Again,
what are
the latency
requirements?



LIMITED

- SPARSE LISTS

DATA FOR DIFFERENT
ORDERING RULES WILL
BE DIFFERENT.

DATA for different
latency rules will
be different.

Returning to the Question

Which answers/context does this structure match?

```
struct Node
{
    Node*      next;
    Node*      prev;
    Packet*   data;
};
```

Returning to the Question

Which answers/context does this structure match?

```
struct Node
{
    Node*      next;
    Node*      prev;
    Packet*   data;
};
```

NONE. Each set of rules for concurrent ops and requirements for latency, etc. would require a completely different struct.

So how to define what the
data would be?

Begin at
the beginning

Hardware is the beginning.

Concurrency problems can't
be abstracted from how
hardware works.

WHAT IS THE
"ASSEMBLY" OF
CONCURRENCY?

i.e. What are the basic
"primitives" to build
concurrency solutions with?

Mutexes?

Semaphores?

Mailboxes?

Events?

ASSEMBLY IS THE
ASSEMBLY OF
CONCURRENCY.

ASSEMBLY IS THE
ASSEMBLY OF
CONCURRENCY.

CRAZY,
RIGHT?

Concurrent

- How does
the H/w
work?

ATOMIC READ
ATOMIC WRITE

HOW DO THEY WORK
ON THE TARGET H/W?

Concurrency Starts with
atomic transaction



#1 Practical Take-Away:

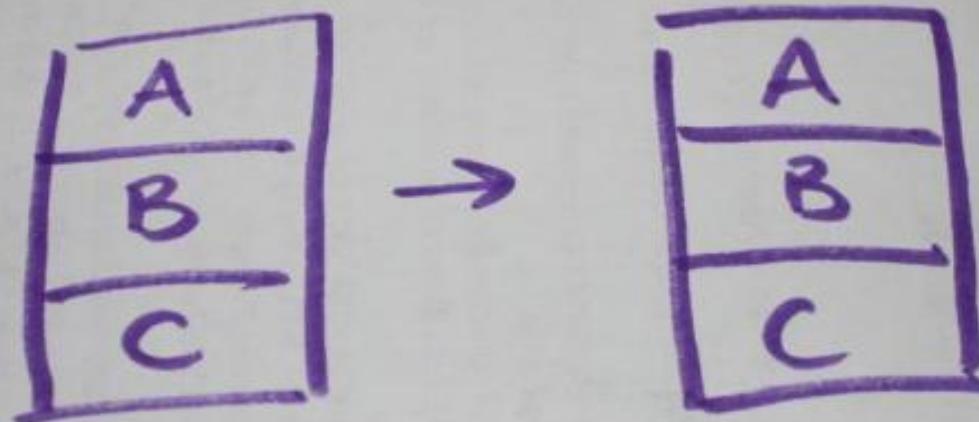
Know how to do lock-free
atomic transaction on your
h/w.

#1 Practical Take-Away:

Know how to do lock-free
atomic transaction on your
h/w.

- The fundamental data operation.
- Lock-free techniques built on top of this.

IN-ORDER STORES



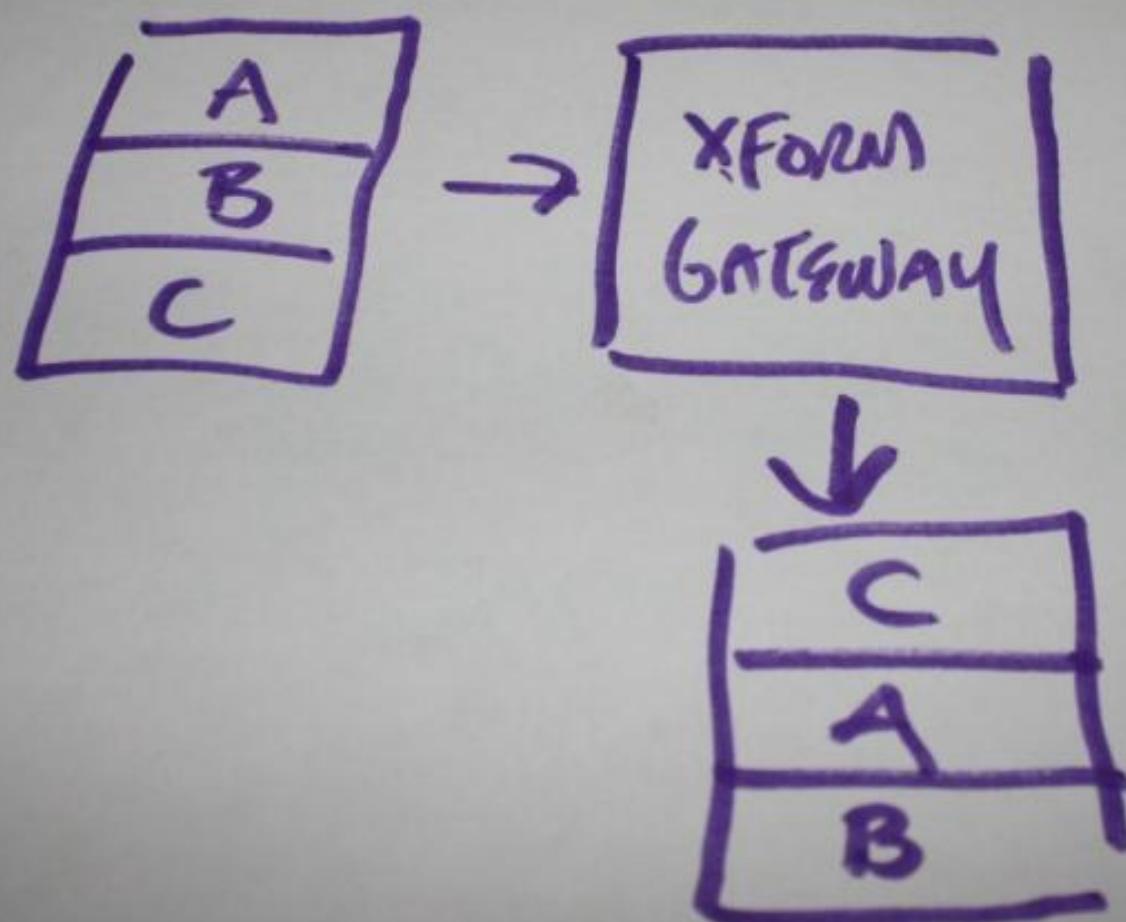
FIFO, NO CHANGE

IN-ORDER
PROCESSORS HAVE
IMPLICIT SYNC PT
EACH INSTRUCTION!

IN-ORDER
PROCESSORS HAVE
IMPLICIT SYNC PT,
EACH INSTRUCTION!

↑
HERE USE
PRE-EXISTING
SYNC PTS.

OUT-OF-ORDER STORES



OUT-OF-ORDER
PROCESSORS PROVIDE
ORDERING PRIMITIVES
(e.g. FENCE)

OUT-OF-ORDER
PROCESSORS PROVIDE
ORDERING PRIMITIVES
(e.g. FENCE)

BUT, MAY
BE EVEN
CHEAPER
OPTION!

PROCESSORS PROVIDE
ORDERING PRIMITIVES
(e.g. FENCE)

IF CAN
SUPPORT
HIGHER
LATENCY,
AND...

LESSONS IN
USING PRIMITIVES
(e.g. FENCE)

HIGH-
LEVEL SYNC
PT ALREADY
EXISTS.

Note

In-order and out-of-order refers to load/store unit.

AKA weakly-ordered loads/stores

AKA load/store re-ordering

e.g.

SPU is in-order processor,
but MFC on SPU is not (out of order DMAs)

ALSO NOTE
LANGUAGE/COMPILER

Compiler / optimizer re-orders
instructions by definition!

Prog. must force
order!

Knowing h/w allows adding
minimal sync points.

And..

Good concurrency
doesn't add unneeded
sync points.

GOOD CONCURRENCY
DOESN'T ADD UNNEEDED
SYNC POINTS.

BUT SHOULD
DESIGN
AROUND
PRE-EXISTING
ONES.

GOOD CONCURRENCY
DOESN'T ADD UNNEEDED
SYNC POINTS.

OR USE
CHEAPEST
ONES
AVAILABLE

Okay,

So now what needs to be defined BEFORE we can even begin to define the data?

NEED TO ANSWER :

- HOW WILL DATA BE TRANSFORMED?
- WHAT ARE THE CONSTRAINTS?

NEED TO ANSWER

- HOW WILL DATA BE TRANSFORMED?
- WHAT CONCERNED
operations
 - i.e.

- WHAT ARE THE
CONSTRAINTS?

↑
TO DATA

- WHAT ARE THE
CONSTRAINTS?



TO
TRANSFORMATION

- WHAT ARE THE
CONSTRAINTS?



TO
GROWING

- WHAT ARE THE
CONSTRAINTS?

↑

TO
LATENCY

- WHAT ARE THE
CONSTRAINTS?

↑

TO

GLOBAL
GUARANTEES

- WHAT ARE THE
CONSTRAINTS?

↑
TO
LOCAL
GUARANTEES

Do that and you're on your
way.

Next set of talks will apply these
lessons to optimizing data for
specific examples.

But the "optimized" part will introduce something new...

Here's a little teaser...

THE SECRET
of OPTIMIZED

Concurrent design.

IS...

DELAY*

* kind of ironic ,right ?

THE SOONER YOU NEED
SOME DATA, THE SLOWER
THE SYSTEM WILL BE.

THAT'S
IT!
END OF
CLASS." 

Thanks!

Great feedback from Bjoern Knafla (@bjoernknafla on twitter).
Plus he came up with the name for the presentation.

Also thanks for feedback: @MarcoSalvi, @rickmolloy

Also thanks Rob Wyatt for feedback - and for suggestions on even more fun problems and complex cases that we could cover to make the presentation even longer next time.