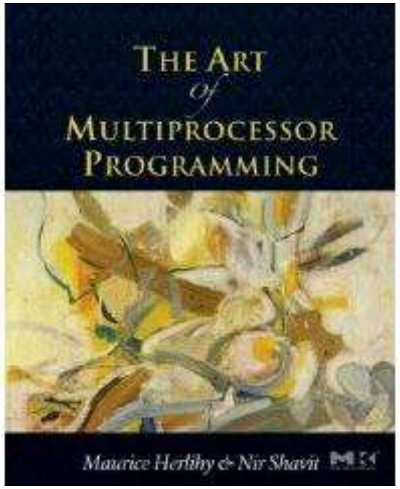
NON-BLOCKING DATA STRUCTURES AND TRANSACTIONAL MEMORY

Tim Harris, 17 Oct 2018

Lecture 3/3

- Problems with locks
- Atomic blocks and composition
- Hardware transactional memory
- Software transactional memory

Transactional Memory



Companion slides for
The Art of Multiprocessor Programming
by Maurice Herlihy & Nir Shavit

Our Vision for the Future

In this course, we covered ….

Best practices …

New and clever ideas …

And common-sense observations.

Our Vision for the Future

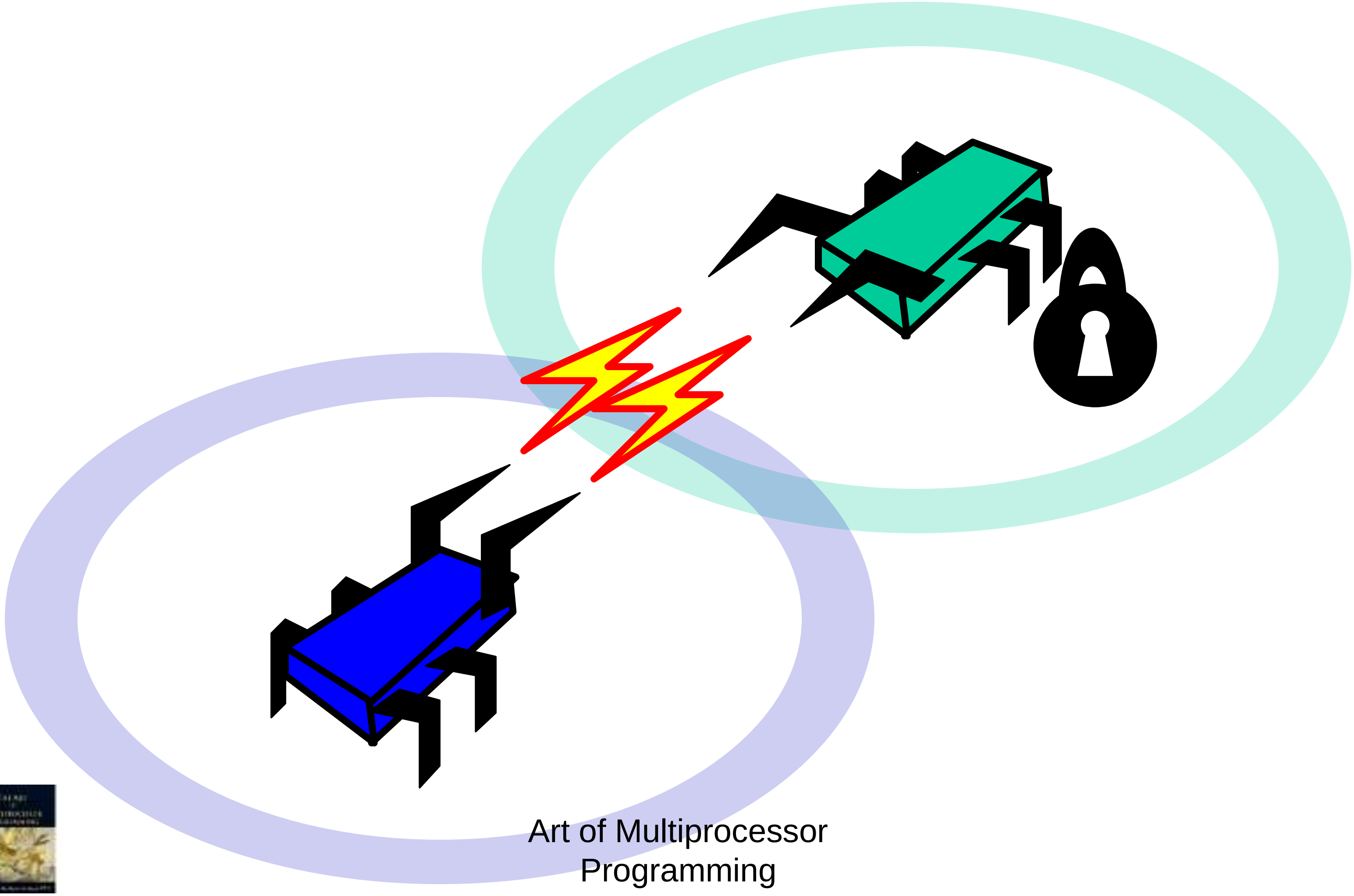
Nevertheless …

Concurrent programming is still too hard …

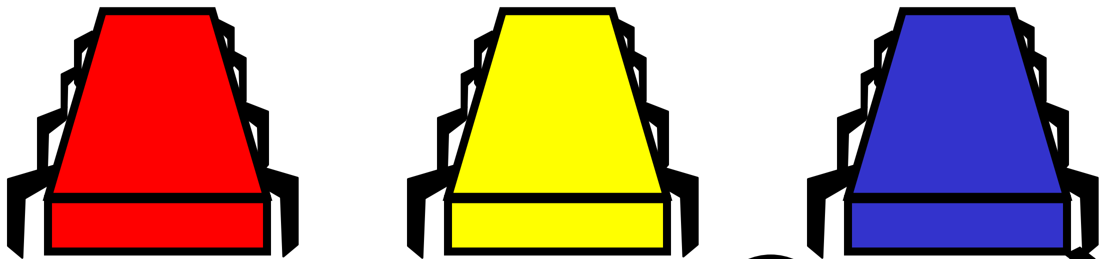
Here we explore why this is ….

And what we can do about it.

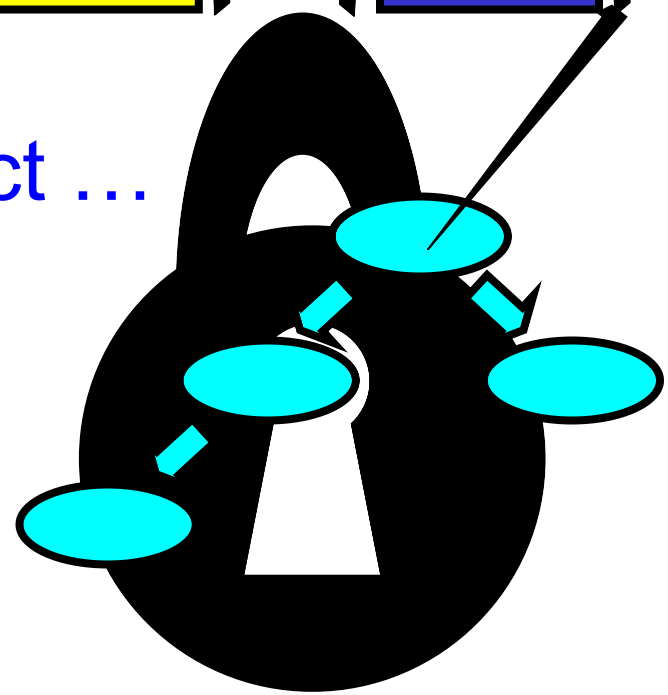
Locking



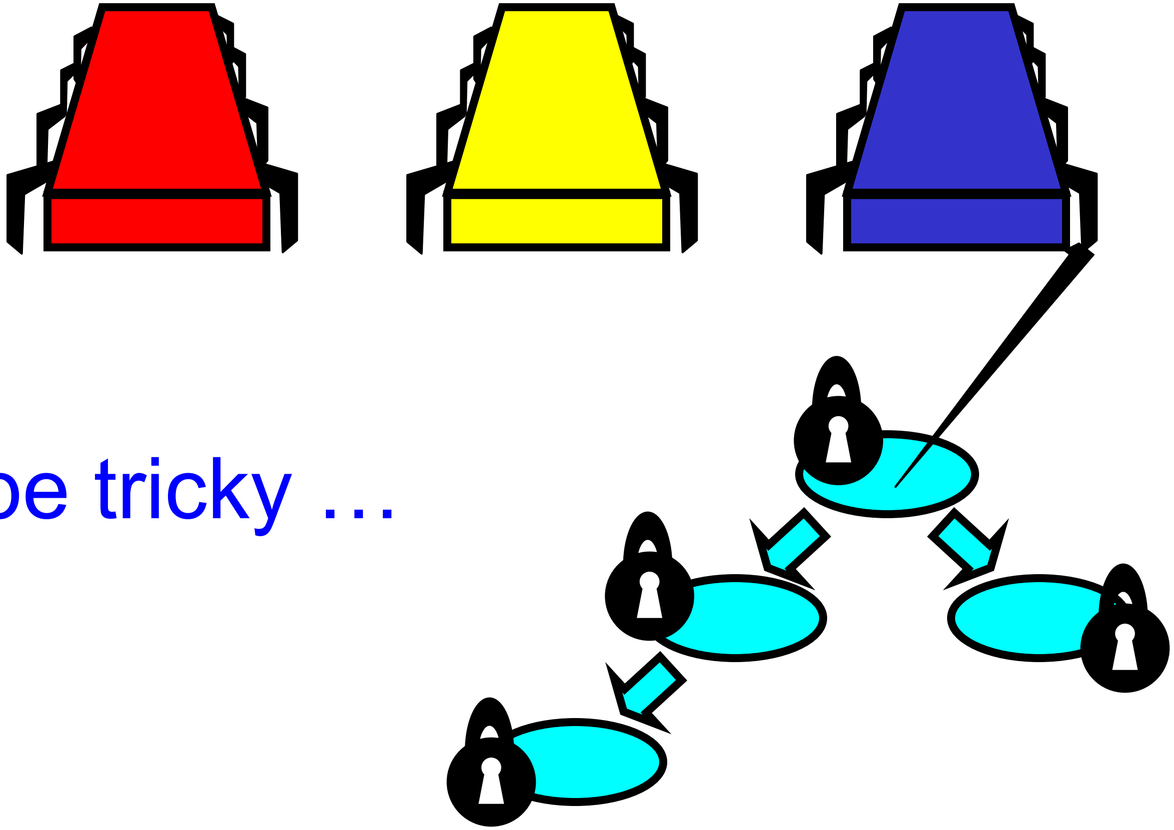
Coarse-Grained Locking



Easily made correct …
But not scalable.



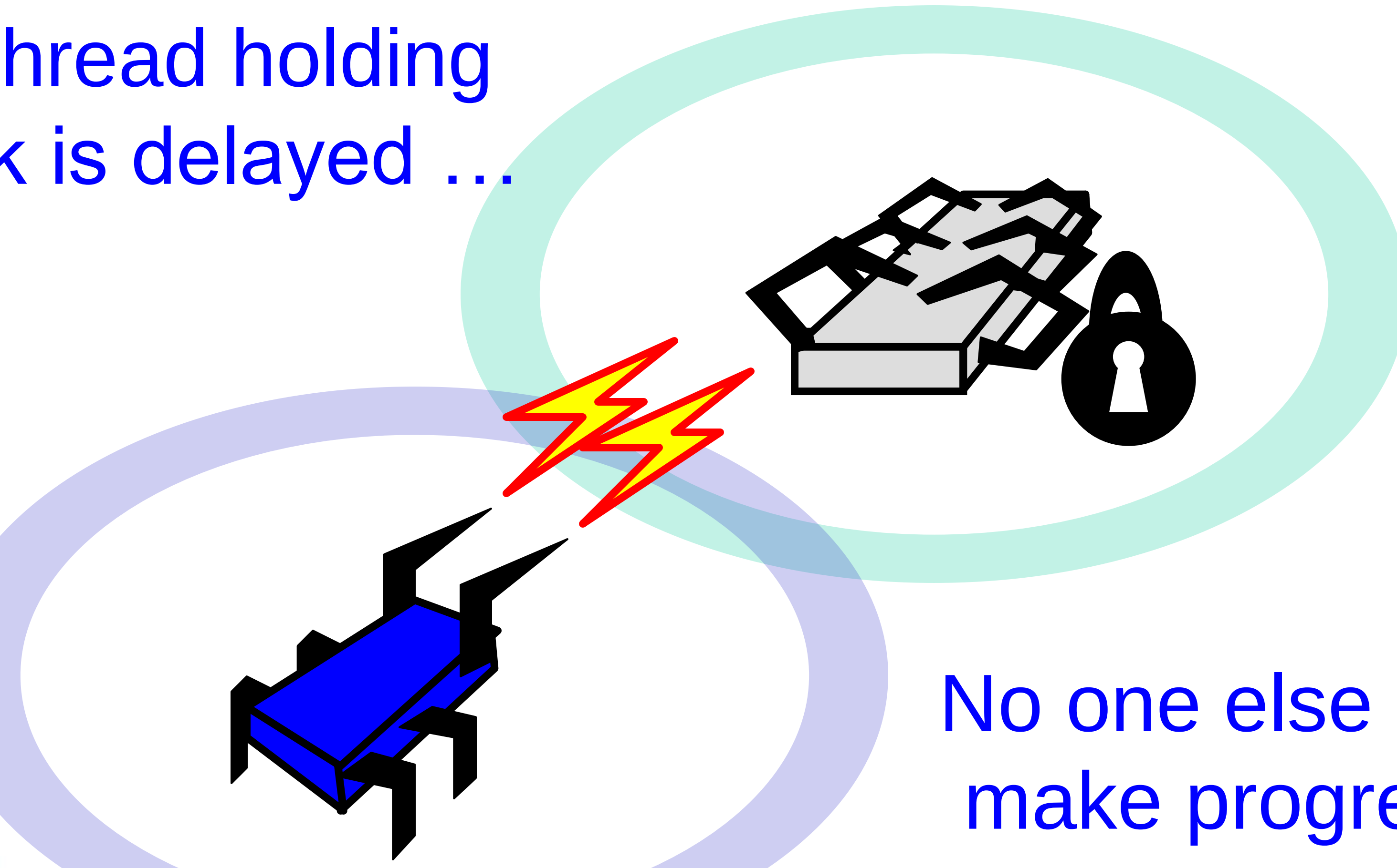
Fine-Grained Locking



Can be tricky …

Locks are not Robust

If a thread holding
a lock is delayed …



No one else can
make progress

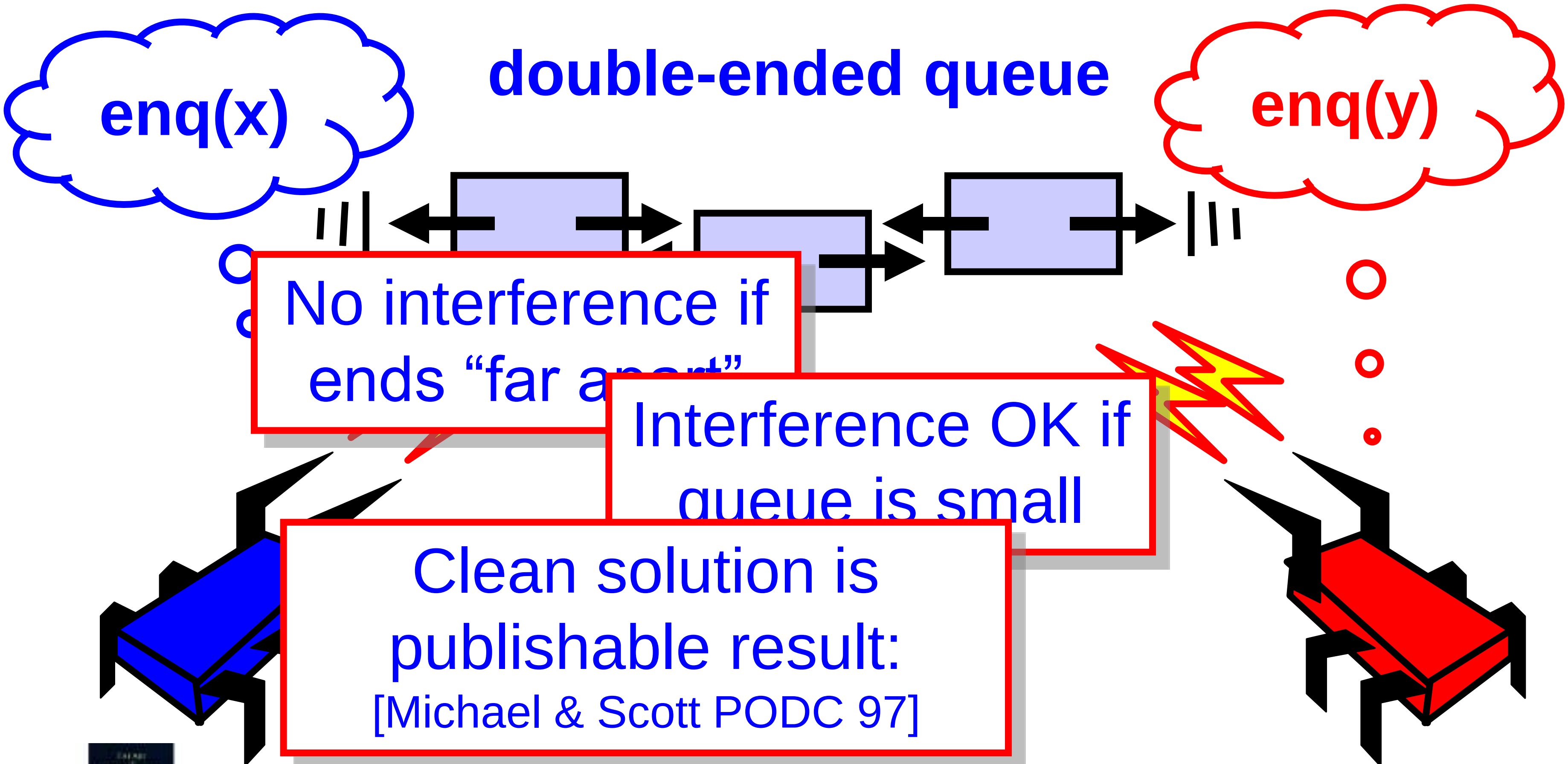
Locking Relies on Conventions

- Relation between
  - Locks and objects
  - Exists only in programmer's

Actual comment from Linux Kernel
(hat tip: Bradley Kuszmaul)

```
/*
 * When a locked buffer is visible to the I/O layer
 * BH_Launder is set. This means before unlocking
 * we must clear BH_Launder, mb() on alpha and then
 * clear BH_Lock, so no reader can see BH_Launder set
 * on an unlocked buffer and then risk to deadlock.
 */
```

Simple Problems are hard

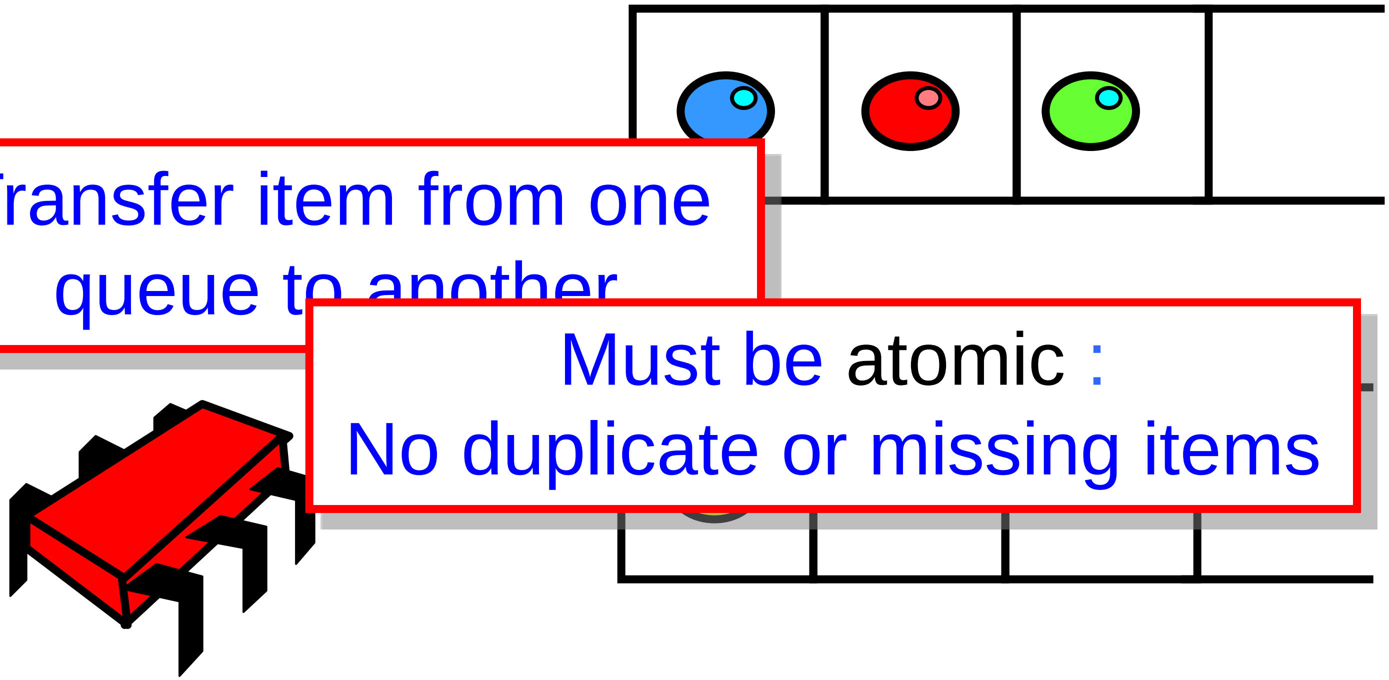


No interference if ends “far apart”

Interference OK if queue is small

Clean solution is publishable result:
[Michael & Scott PODC 97]

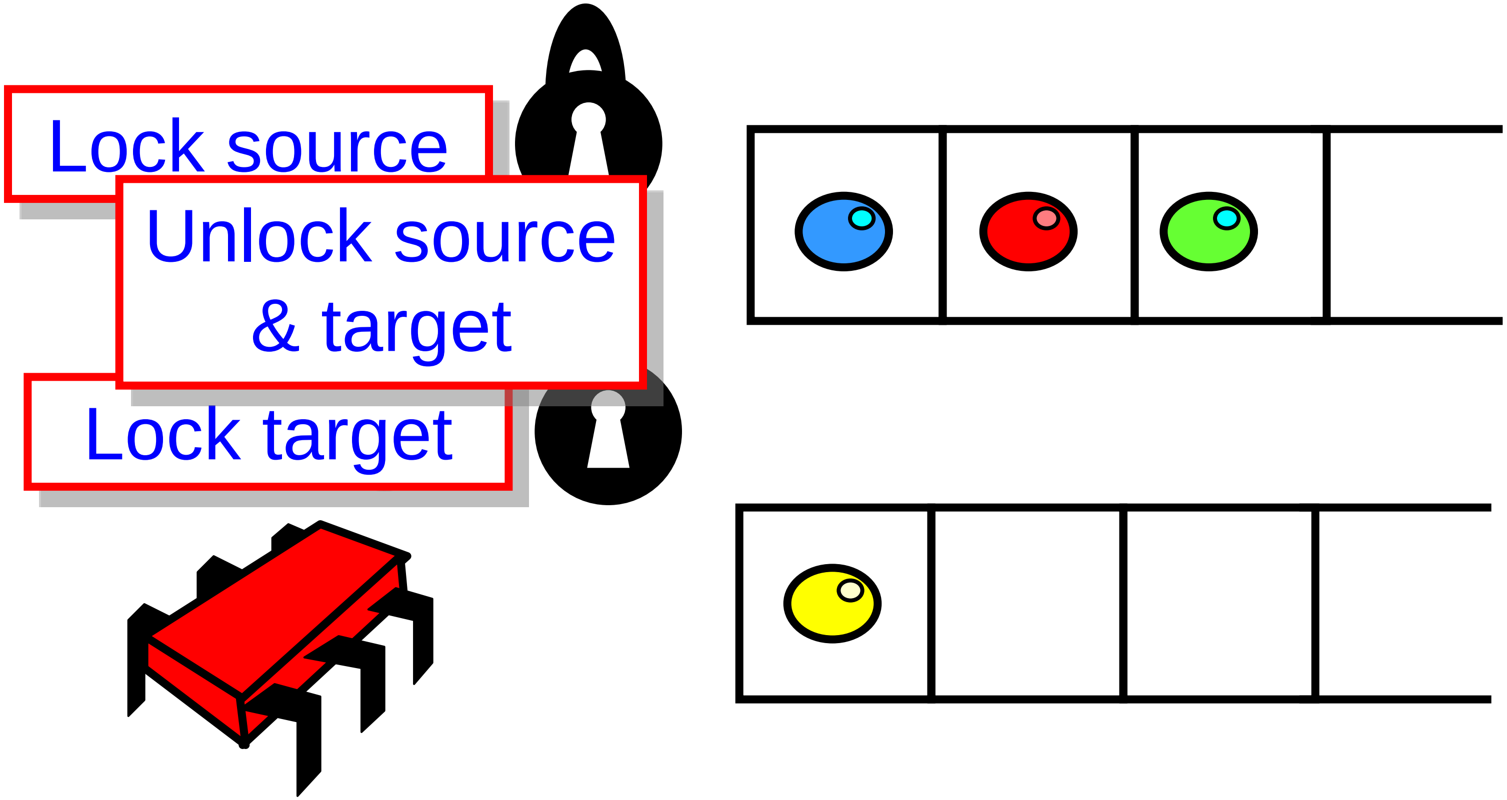
Locks Not Composable



Transfer item from one queue to another

Must be atomic :
No duplicate or missing items

Locks Not Composable



Locks Not Composable

Loc

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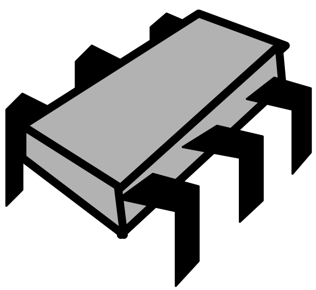
Lock targ

Methods cannot provide internal synchronization

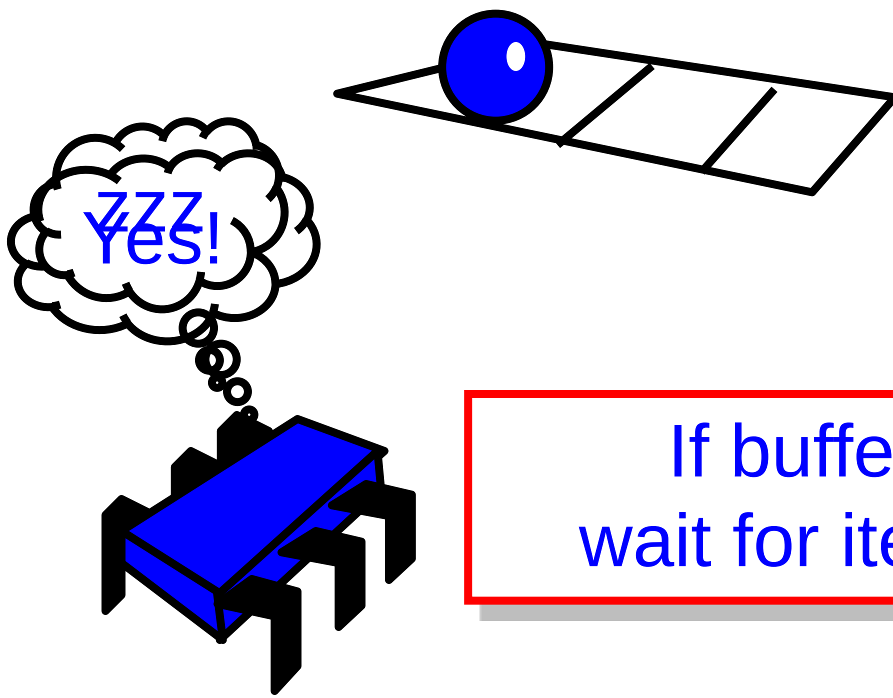
Objects must expose locking protocols to clients

Clients must devise and follow protocols

Abstraction broken!



Monitor Wait and Signal

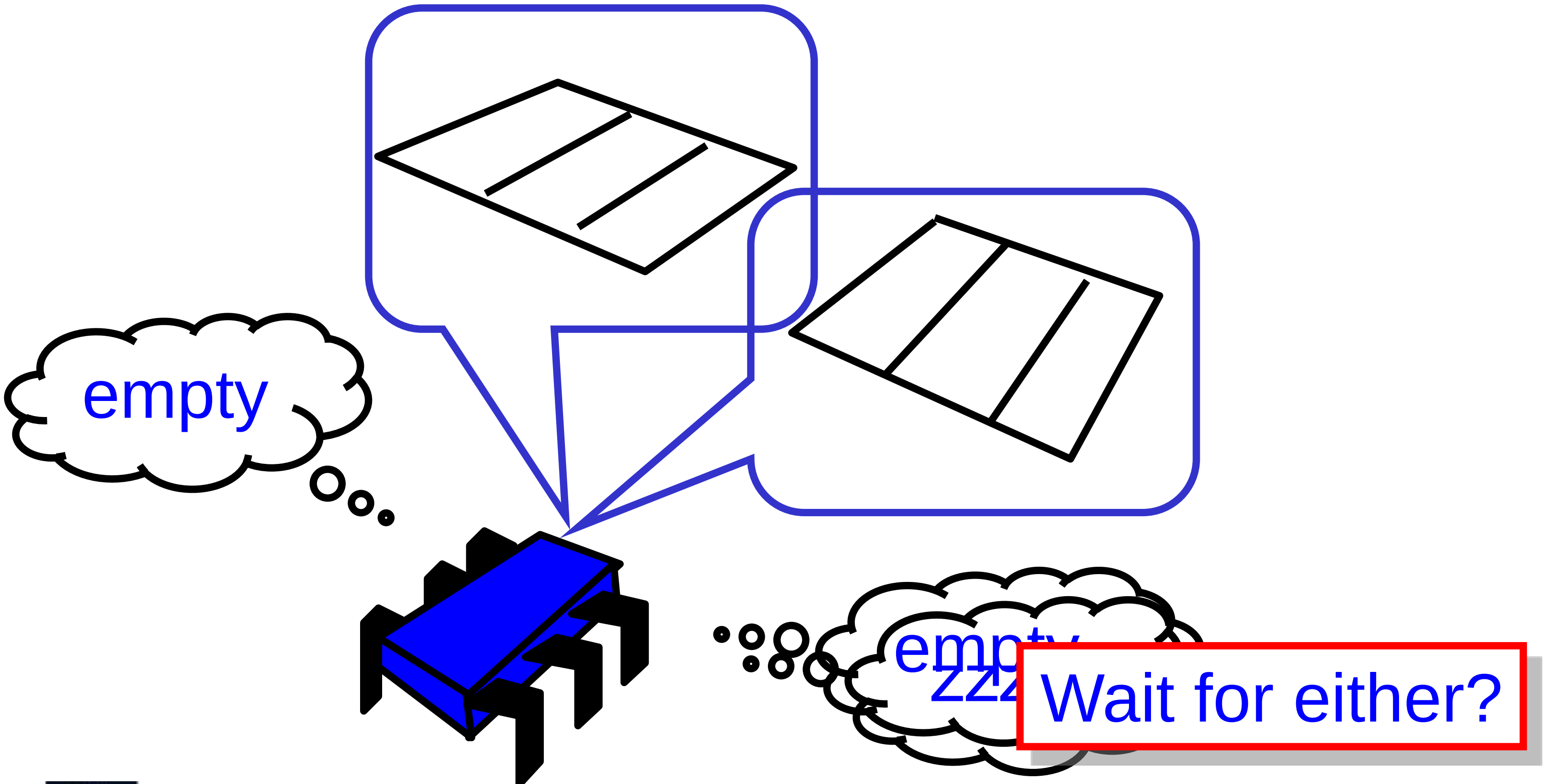


Empty

buffer

If buffer is empty,
wait for item to show up

Wait and Signal do not Compose



The Transactional Manifesto

- Current practice inadequate
  - to meet the multicore challenge
- Research Agenda
  - Replace **locking** with a **transactional** API
  - **Design** languages or libraries
  - **Implement** efficient run-time systems

Transactions

Block of code ….

Atomic: appears to happen instantaneously

Serializable: all appear to happen in one-at-a-time

Commit: takes effect (atomically)

Abort: has no effect (typically restarted)

Atomic Blocks

```
atomic {
 x.remove(3);
 y.add(3);
}

atomic {
 y = null;
}
```

Atomic Blocks

```
atomic {
 x.remove(3);
 y.add(3);
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atomic {
 y = null;
}
```

No data race

A Double-Ended Queue

```
public void LeftEnq(item x) {
  Qnode q = new Qnode(x);
  q.left = left;
  left.right = q;
  left = q;
}
```

Write sequential Code

A Double-Ended Queue

```
public void LeftEnq(item x)
 atomic {
  Qnode q = new Qnode(x);
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  left = q;
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```

A Double-Ended Queue

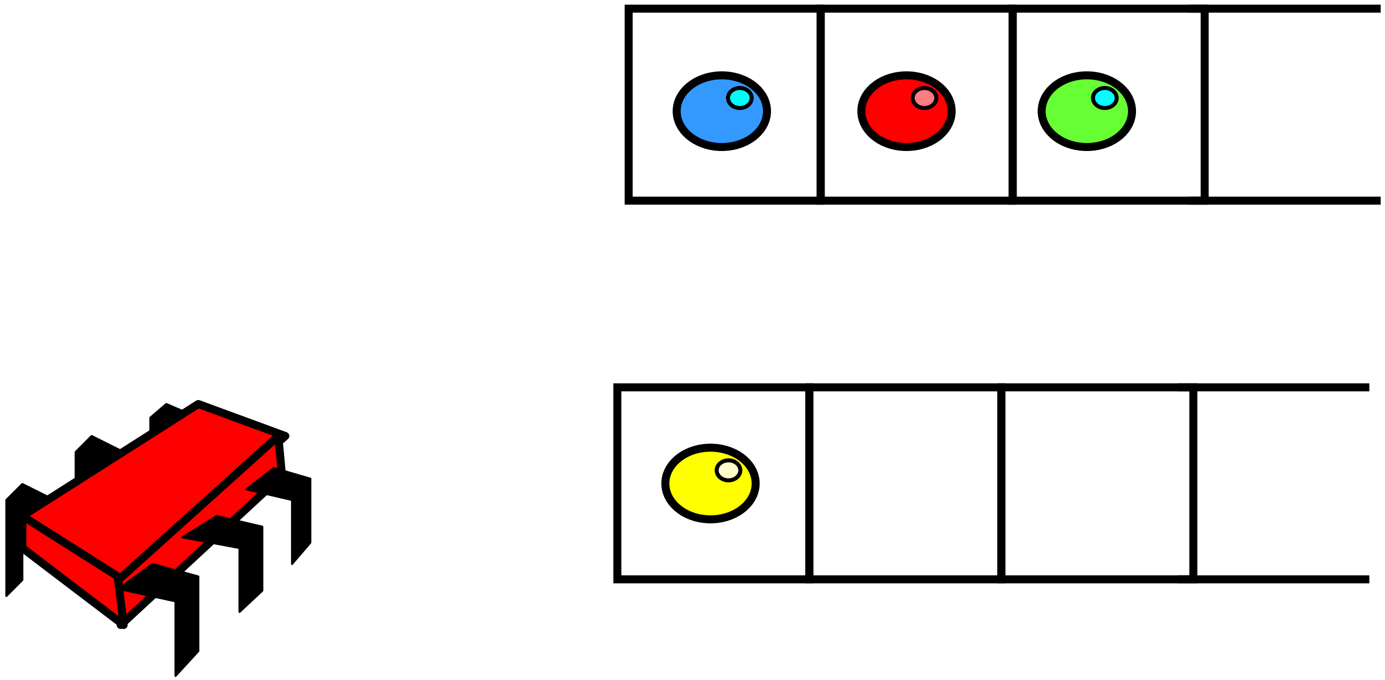
```
public void LeftEnq(item x) {
 atomic {
   Qnode q = new Qnode(x);
   q.left = left;
   left.right = q;
   left = q;
 }
}
```

Enclose in atomic block

Warning

- Not always this simple
  – Conditional waits
  – Enhanced concurrency
  – Complex patterns
- But often it is…

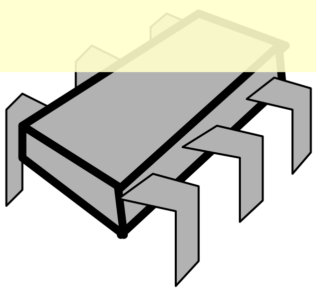
Composition?

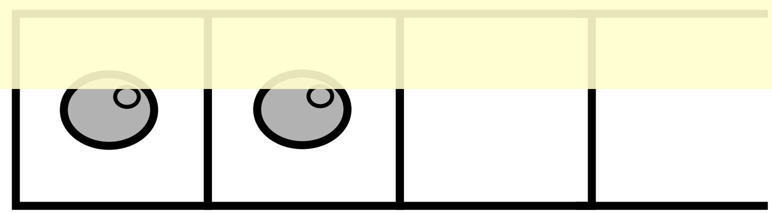


Composition?

```
public void Transfer(Queue<T> q1, q2)
{
  atomic {
    T x = q1.deq();
    q2.enq(x);
  }
}
```

Trivial or what?





Conditional Waiting

```
public T LeftDeq() {
 atomic {
  if (left == null)
   retry;
  …

 }
}
```

Roll back transaction and restart when something changes

Composable Conditional Waiting

```
atomic {
 x = q1.deq();
} orElse {
 x = q2.deq();
}
```

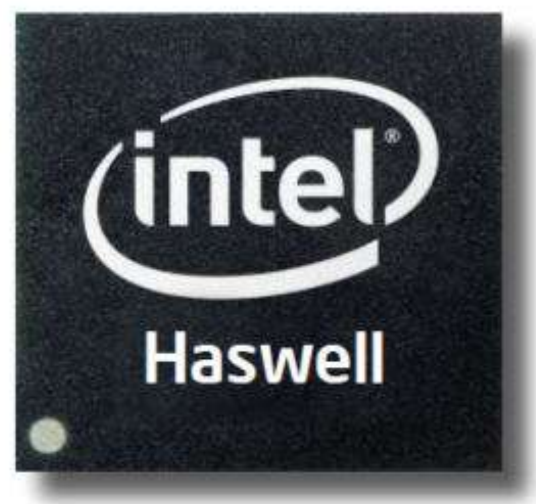
Run 1^{st} method. If it retries

Run 2^{nd} method. If it retries …

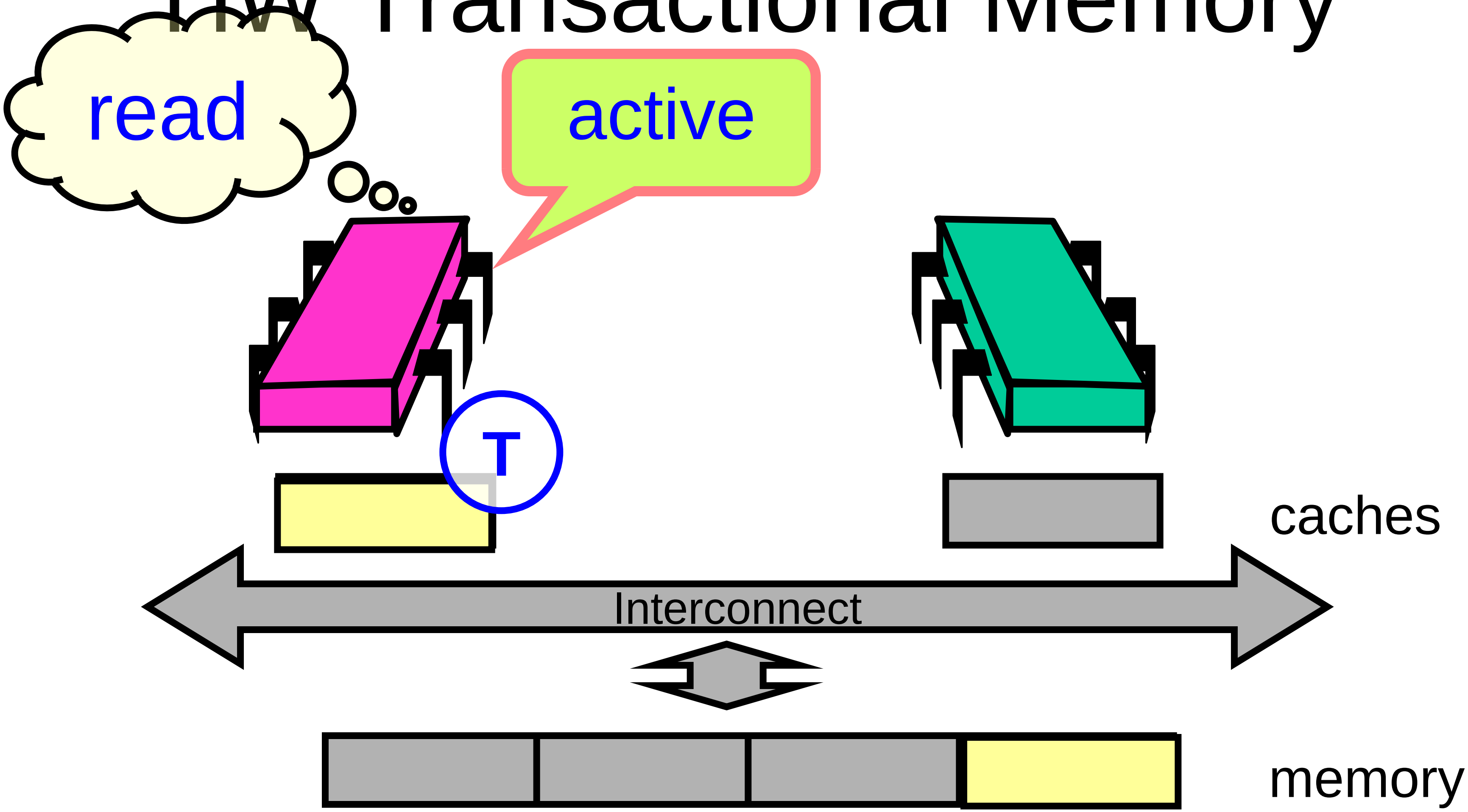
Entire statement retries

Hardware Transactional Memory

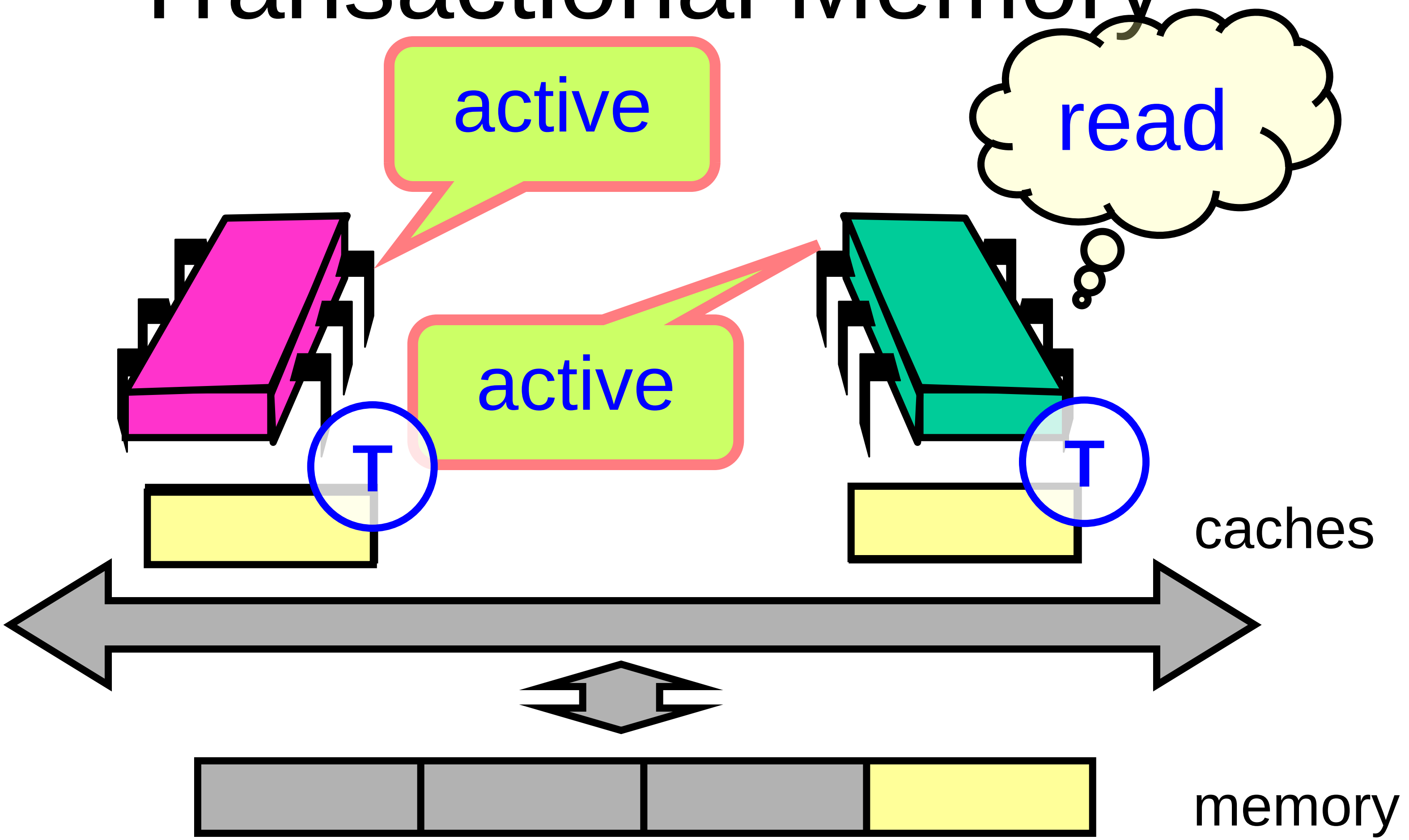
- Exploit Cache coherence
- Already almost does it
  - Invalidation
  - Consistency checking
- Speculative execution
  - Branch prediction = optimistic synch!



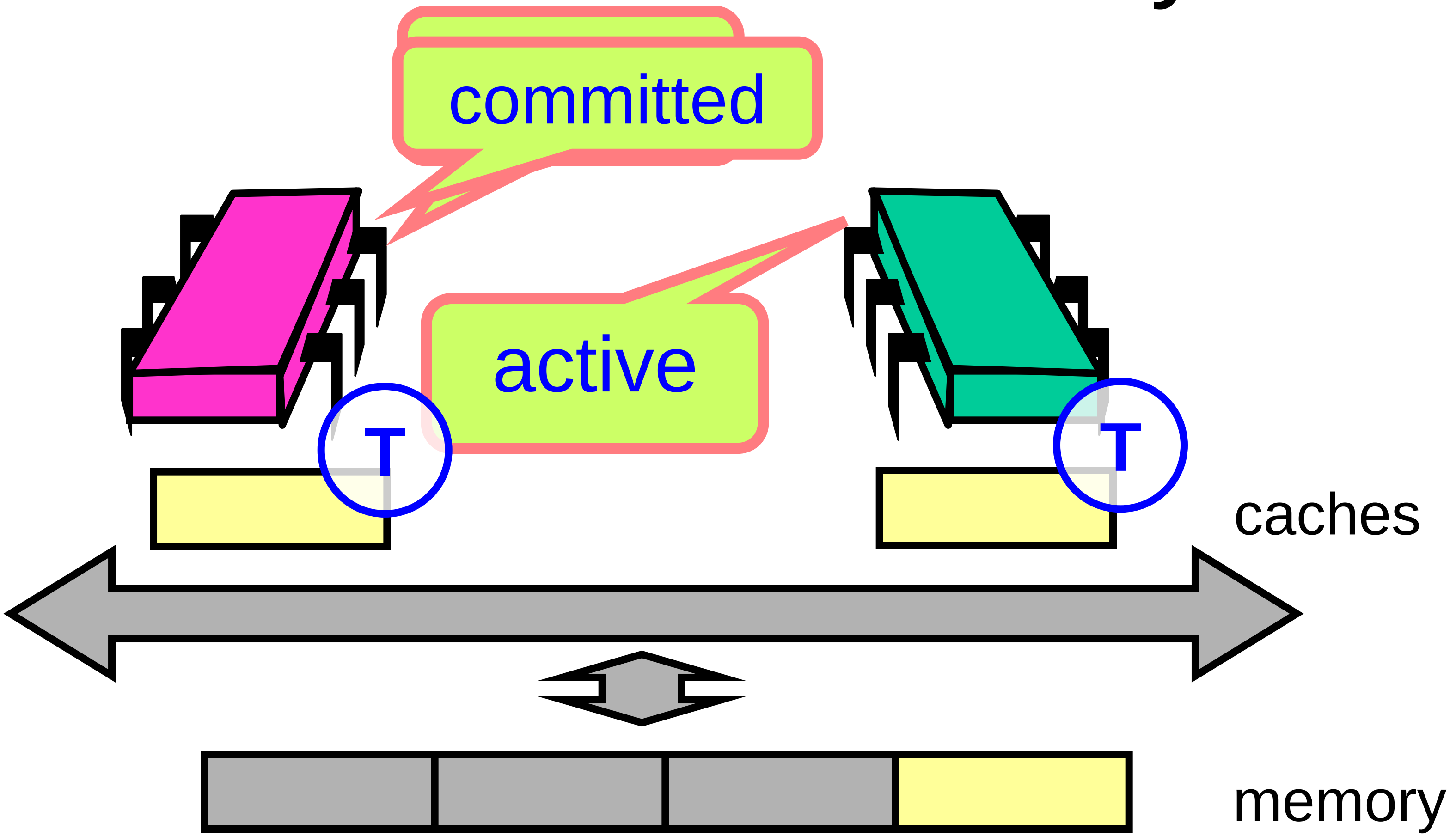
HW Transactional Memory



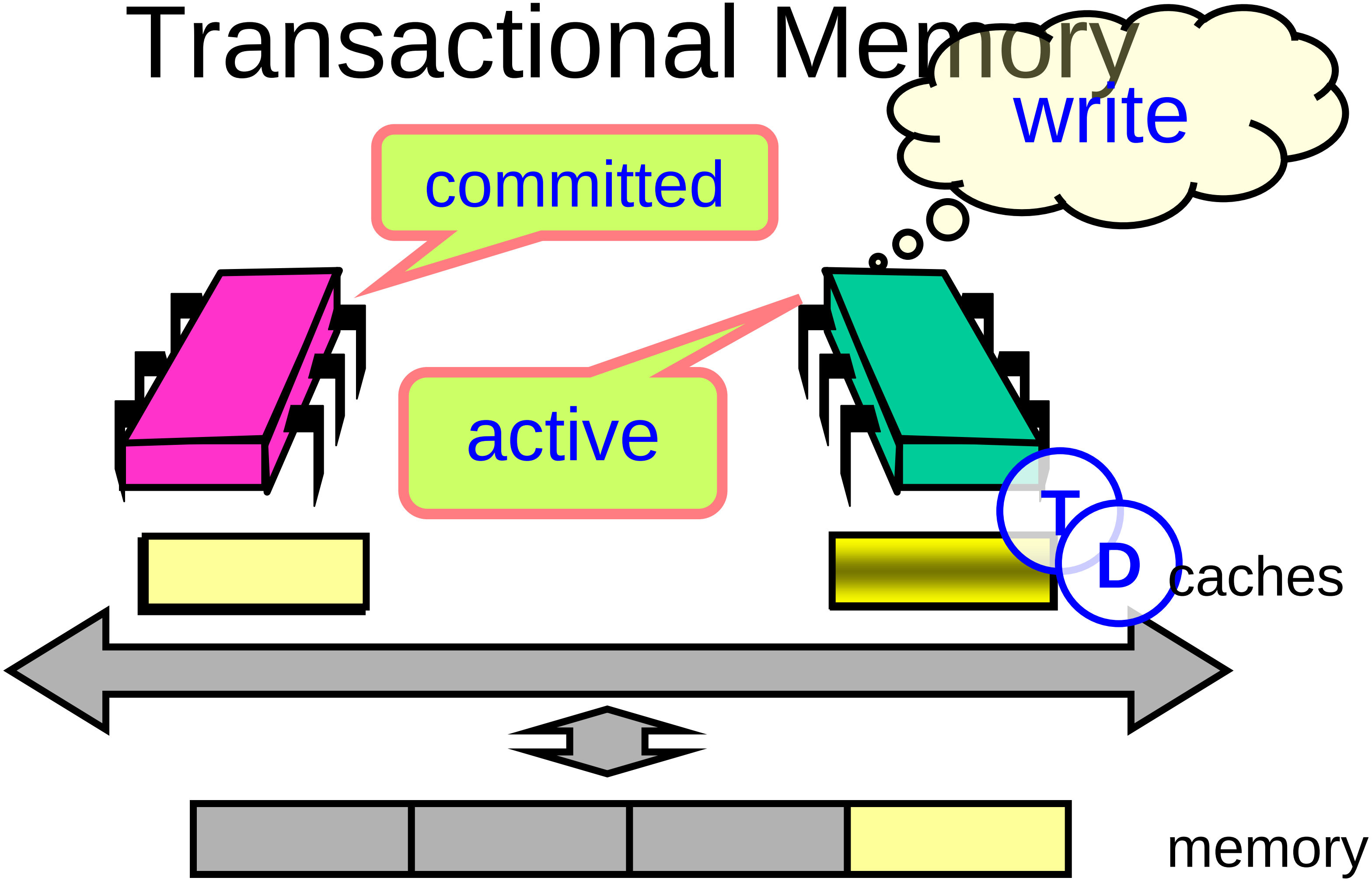
Transactional Memory



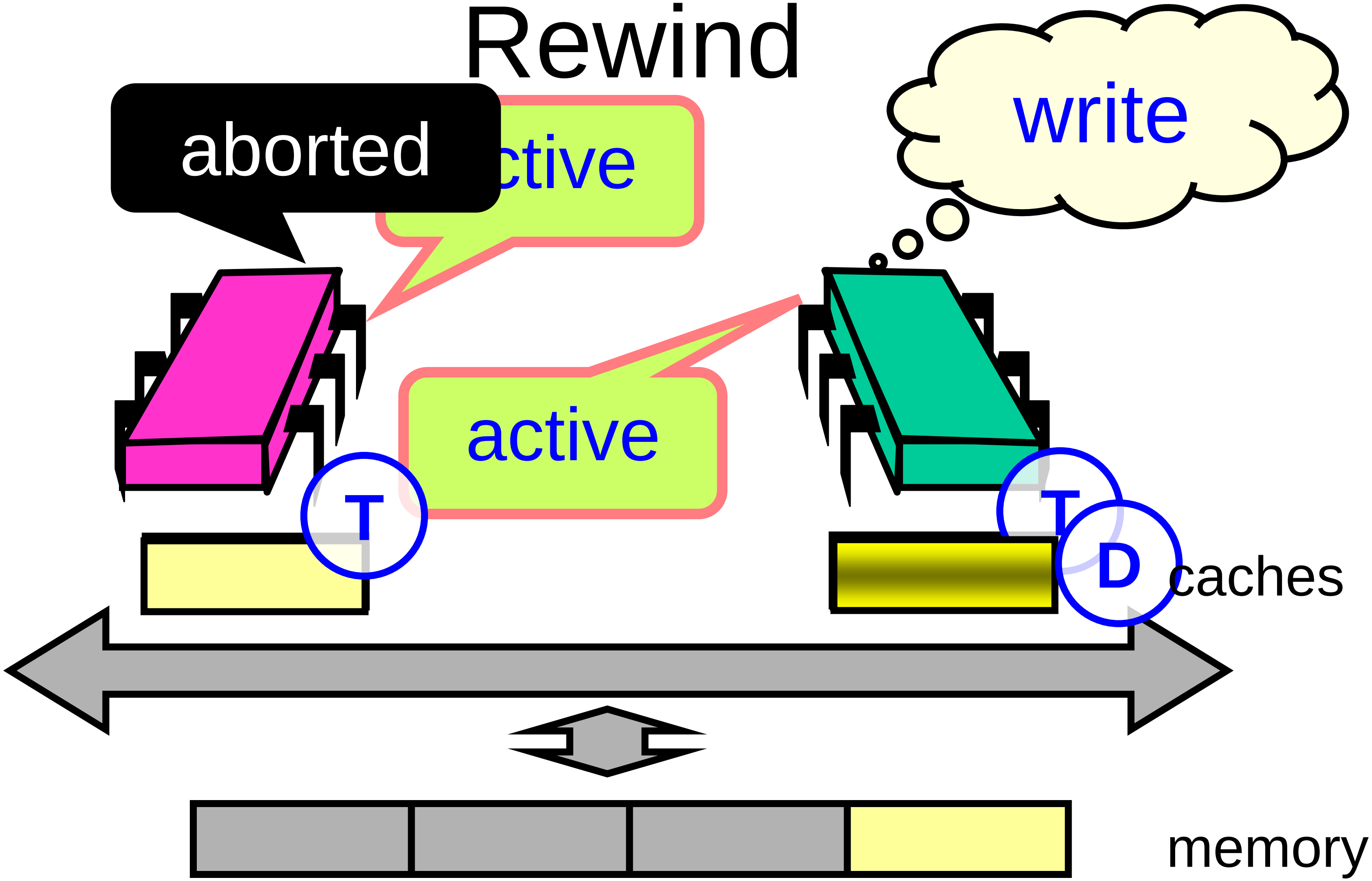
Transactional Memory



Transactional Memory



Rewind



Transaction Commit

- At commit point
  - If no cache conflicts, we win.
- Mark transactional entries
  - Read-only: valid
  - Modified: dirty (eventually written back)
- That’s all, folks!
  - Except for a few details …

Not all  and 

- Limits to
  - Transactional cache size
  - Scheduling quantum
- Transaction cannot commit if it is
  - Too big
  - Too slow
  - Actual limits platform-dependent

HTM Strengths & Weaknesses

- Ideal for lock-free data structures

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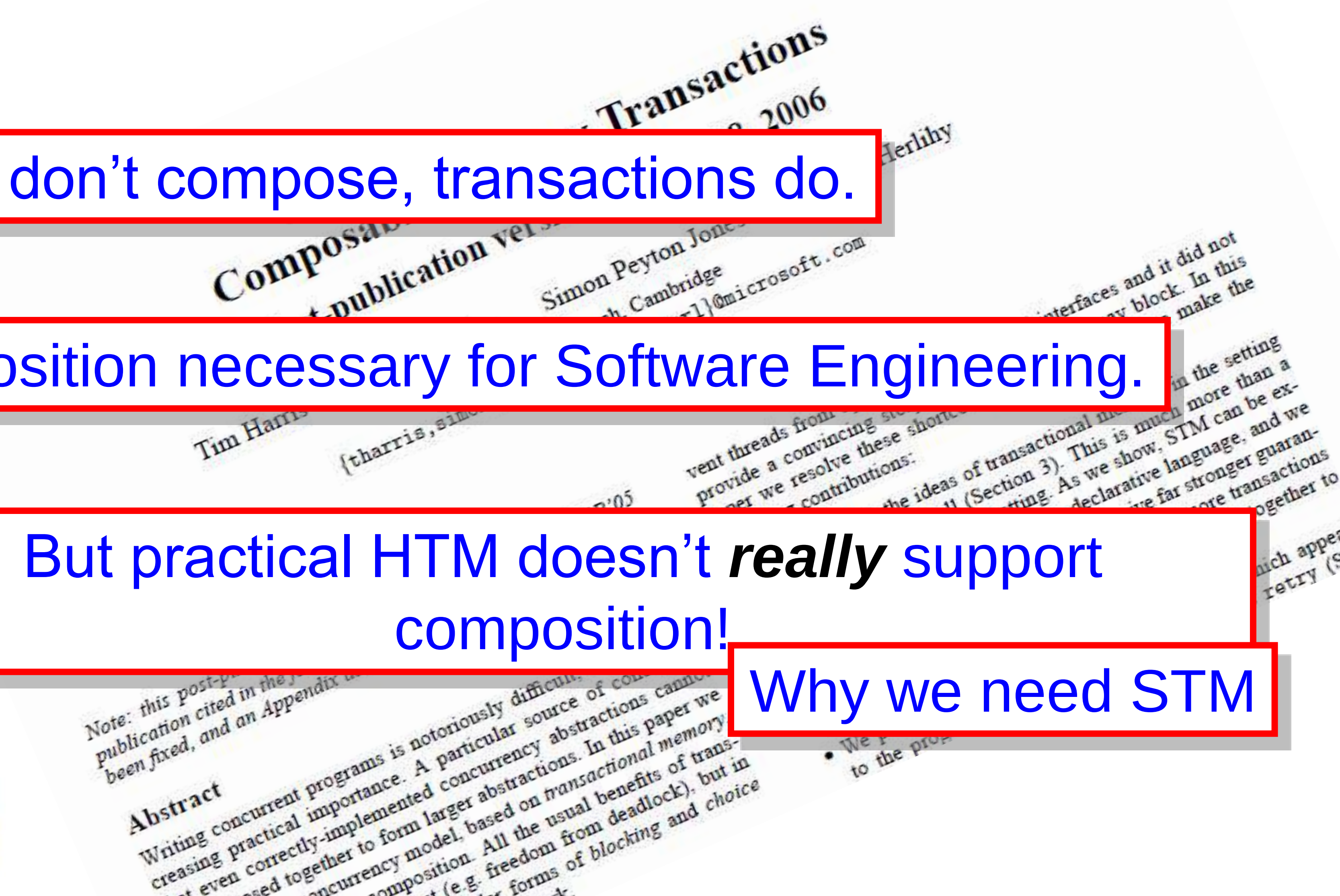
- Practical proposals have limits on
  - Transaction size and length
  - Bounded HW resources
  - Guarantees vs best-effort

HTM Strengths & Weaknesses

- Ideal for lock-free data structures
- Practical proposals have limits on
  - Transaction size and length
  - Bounded HW resources
  - Guarantees vs best-effort
- On fail
  - Diagnostics essential
  - Try again in software?

Composi



Locks don't compose, transactions do.

Composition necessary for Software Engineering.

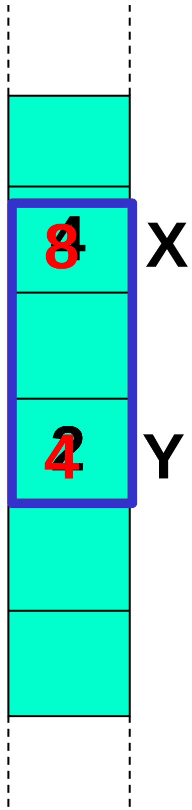
But practical HTM doesn't ***really*** support composition!

Why we need STM

Transactional Consistency

- Memory Transactions are collections of reads and writes executed atomically
- They should maintain *consistency*
  - *External*: with respect to the interleavings of other transactions (*linearizability*).
  - *Internal*: the transaction itself should operate on a consistent state.

External Consistency



Application
Memory

Invariant x = 2y

Transaction A:

Write x

Write y

Transaction B:

Read x

Read y

Compute z = 1/(x-y) = 1/2

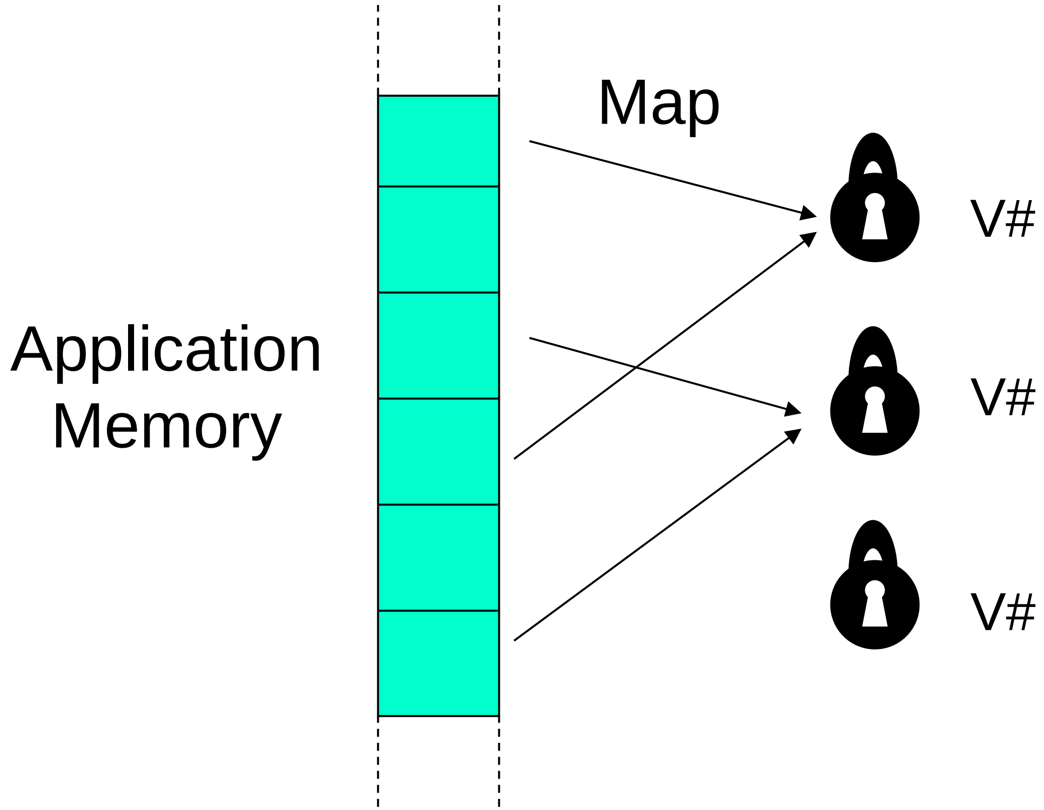
A Simple Lock-Based STM

- STMs come in different forms
  - Lock-based
  - Lock-free
- Here : a simple lock-based STM
- Lets start by Guaranteeing External Consistency

Synchronization

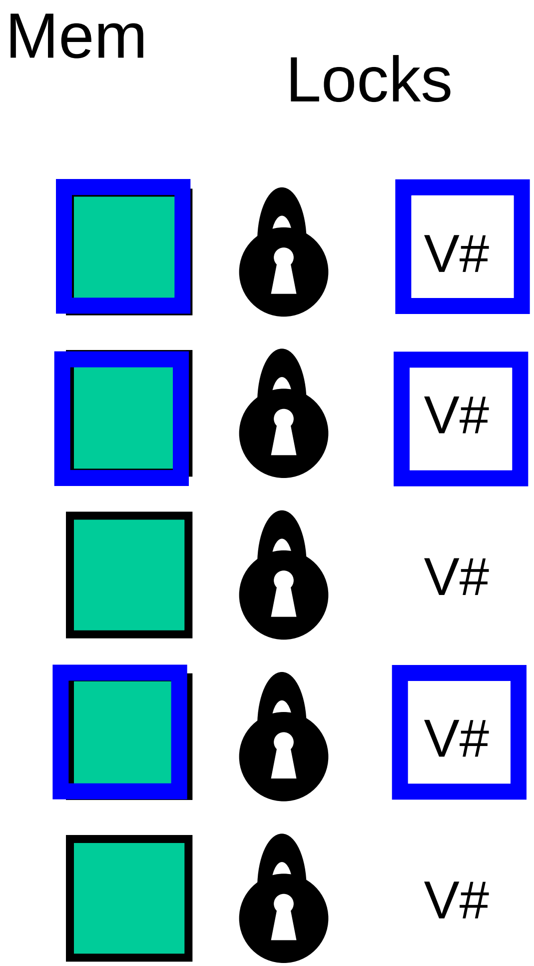
- Transaction keeps
  - **Read set**: locations & values read
  - **Write set**: locations & values to be written
- Deferred update
  - Changes installed at commit
- Lazy conflict detection
  - Conflicts detected at commit

STM: Transactional Locking



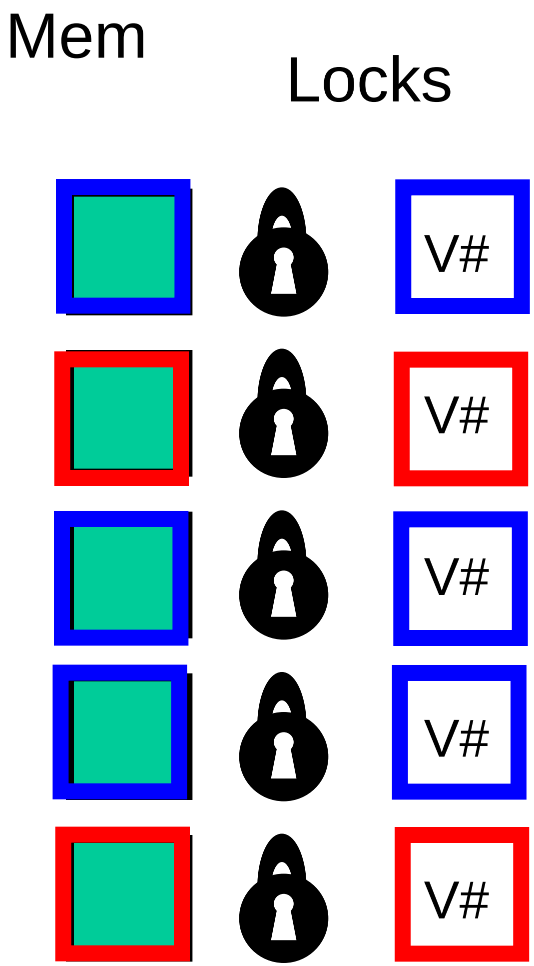
Array of version #s & locks

Reading an Object



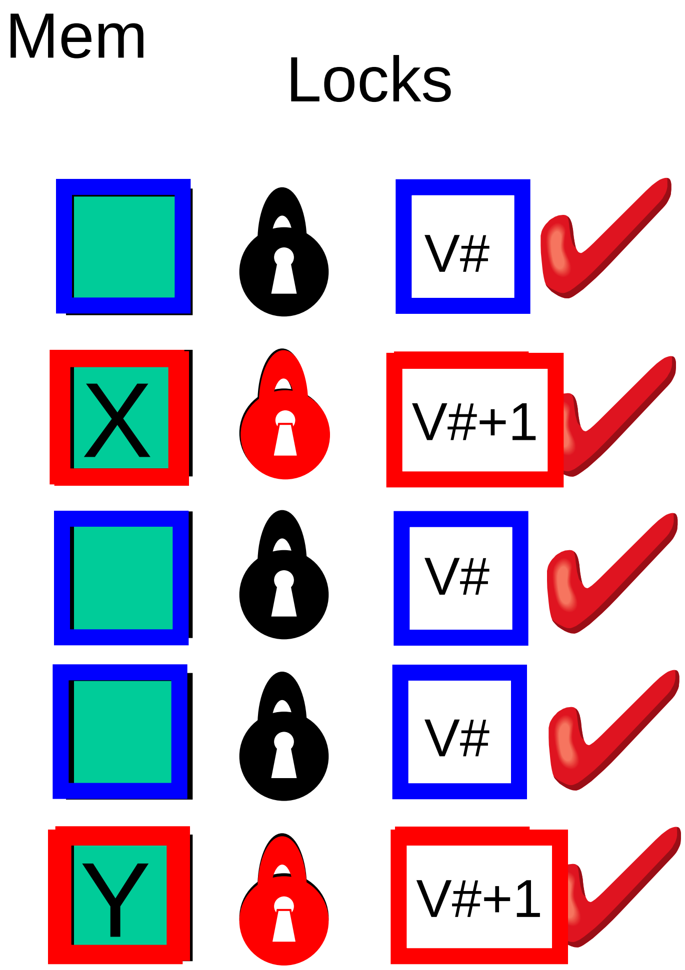
Add version numbers & values to read set

To Write an Object



Add version numbers & new values to write set

To Commit



Acquire write locks

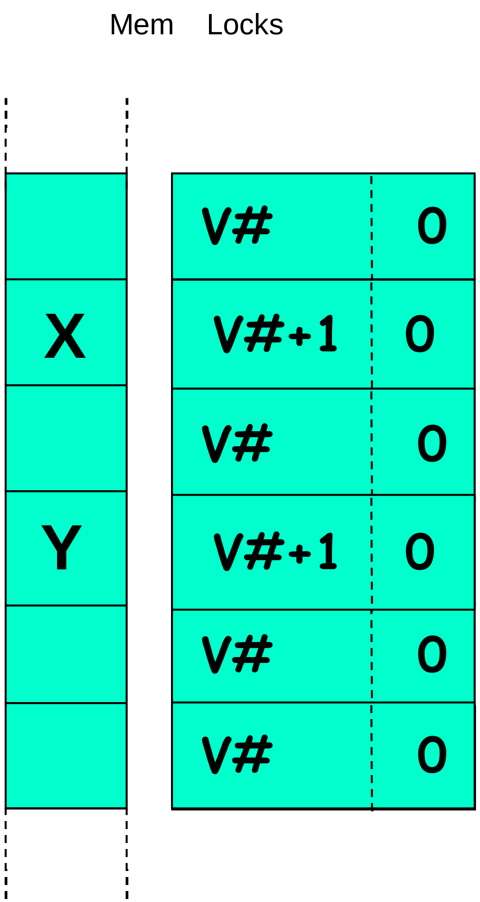
Check version numbers unchanged

Install new values

Increment version numbers

Unlock.

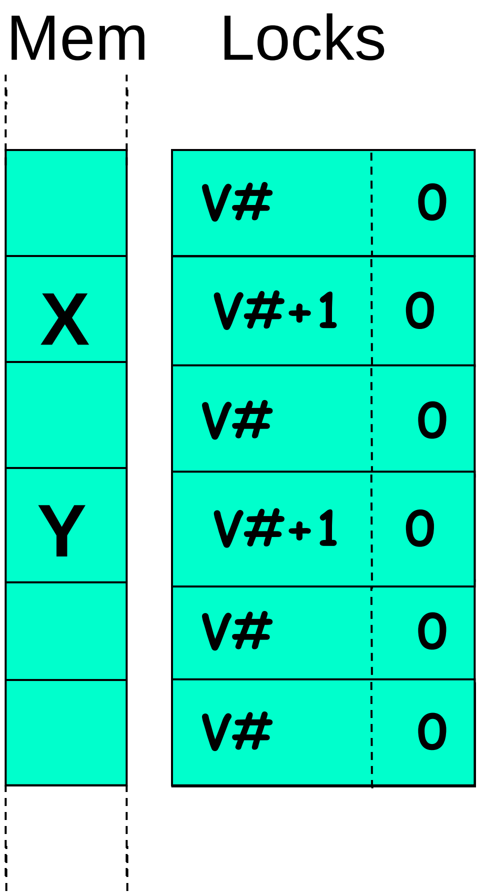
Encounter Order Locking (Undo Log)



1. To Read: load lock + location
2. Check unlocked add to Read-Set
3. To Write: lock location, store value
4. Add old value to undo-set
5. Validate read-set v#'s unchanged
6. Release each lock with v#+1

Quick read of values freshly written by the reading transaction

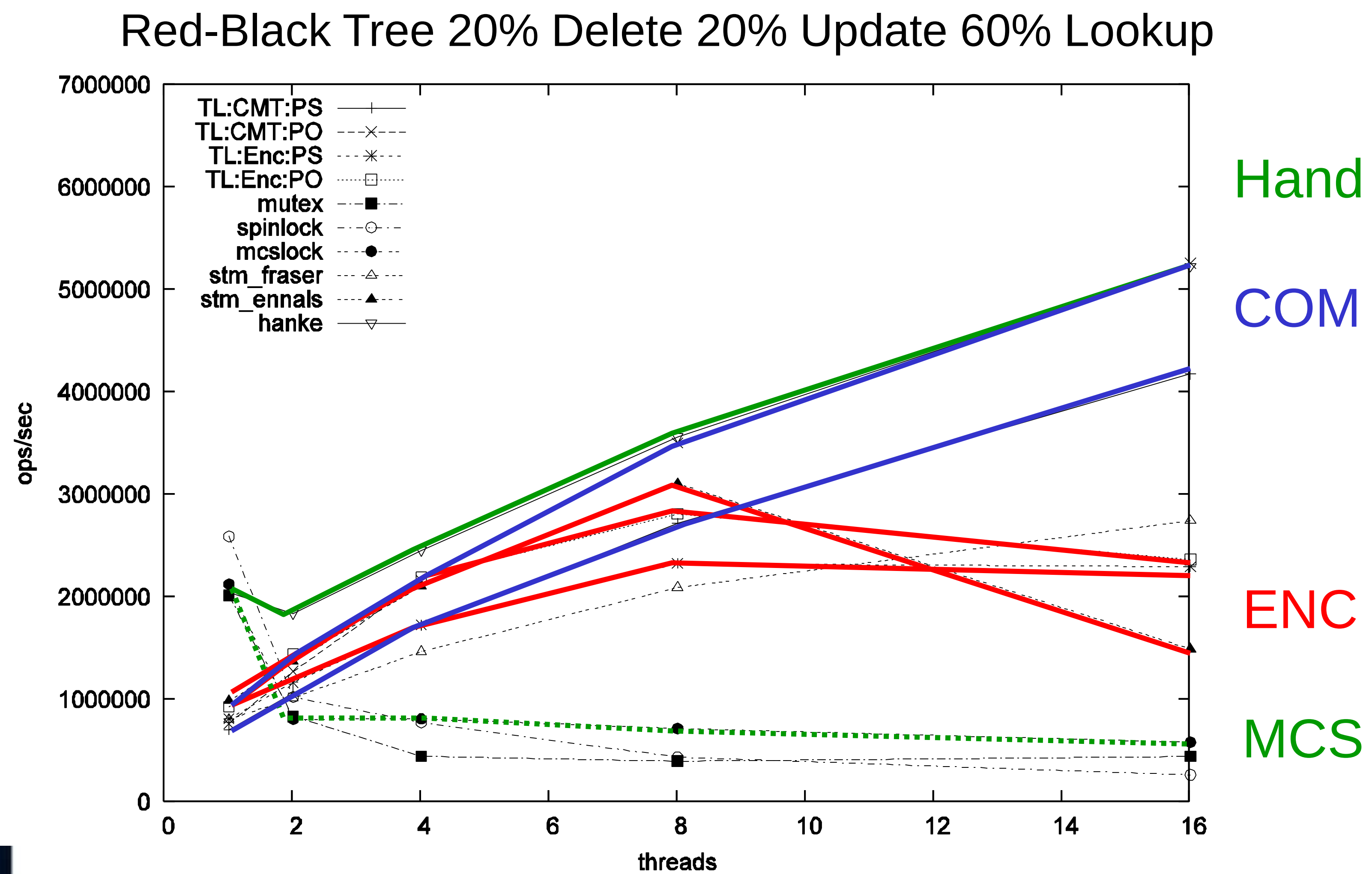
Commit Time Locking (Write Buff)



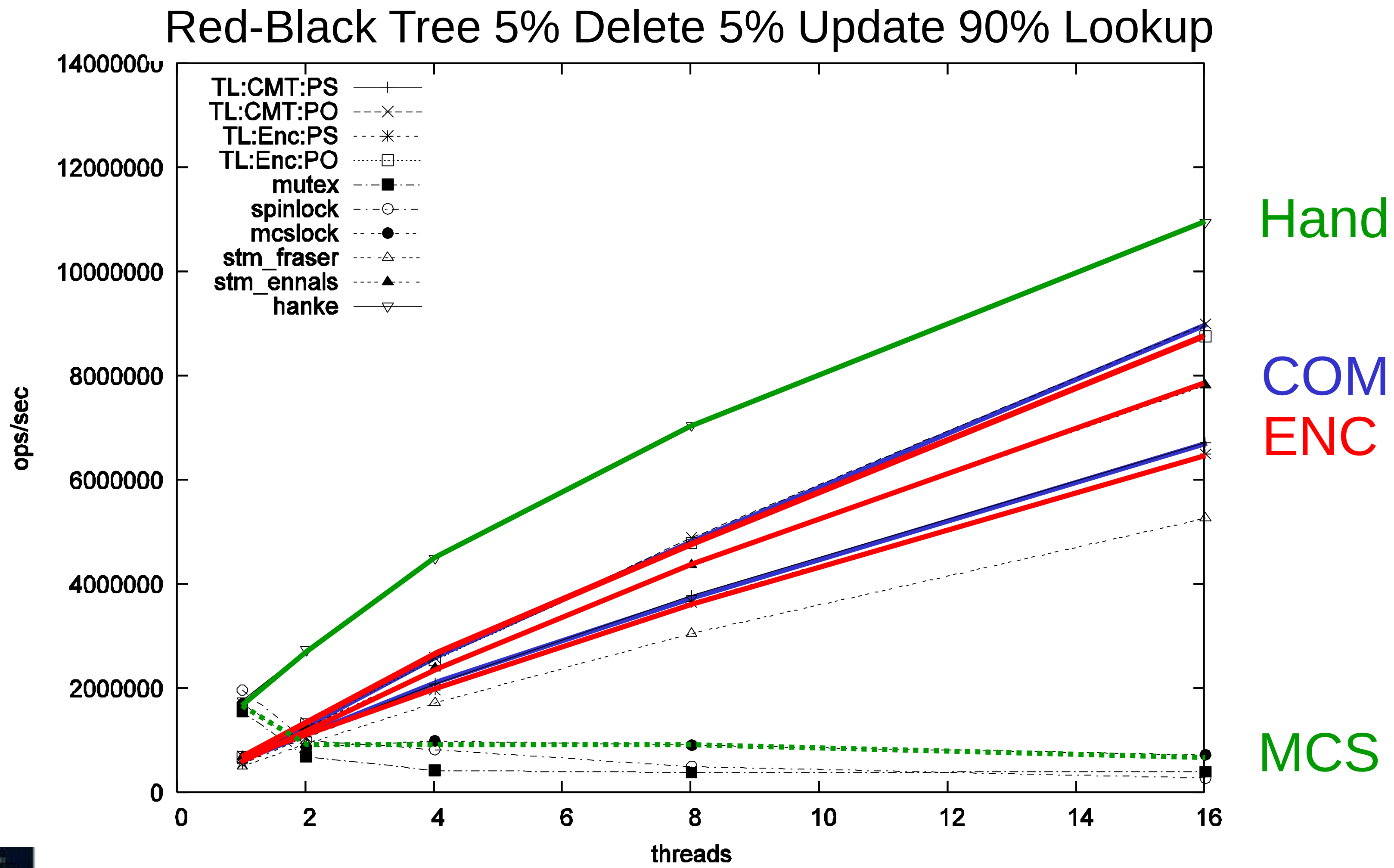
1. To Read: load lock + location
2. Location in write-set? (Bloom Filter)
3. Check unlocked add to Read-Set
4. To Write: add value to write set
5. Acquire Locks
6. Validate read/write v#'s unchanged
7. Release each lock with v#+1

Hold locks for very short duration

COM vs. ENC High Load



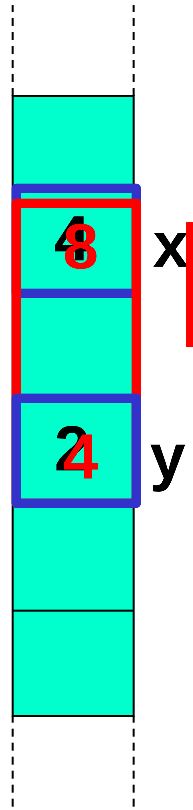
COM vs. ENC Low Load



Problem: Internal Inconsistency

- A Zombie is an active transaction destined to abort.
- If Zombies see inconsistent states bad things can happen

Internal Consistency



Invariant: x = 2y

Transaction A: reads x = 4

Transaction B: writes 8 to x, 16 to y, aborts A)

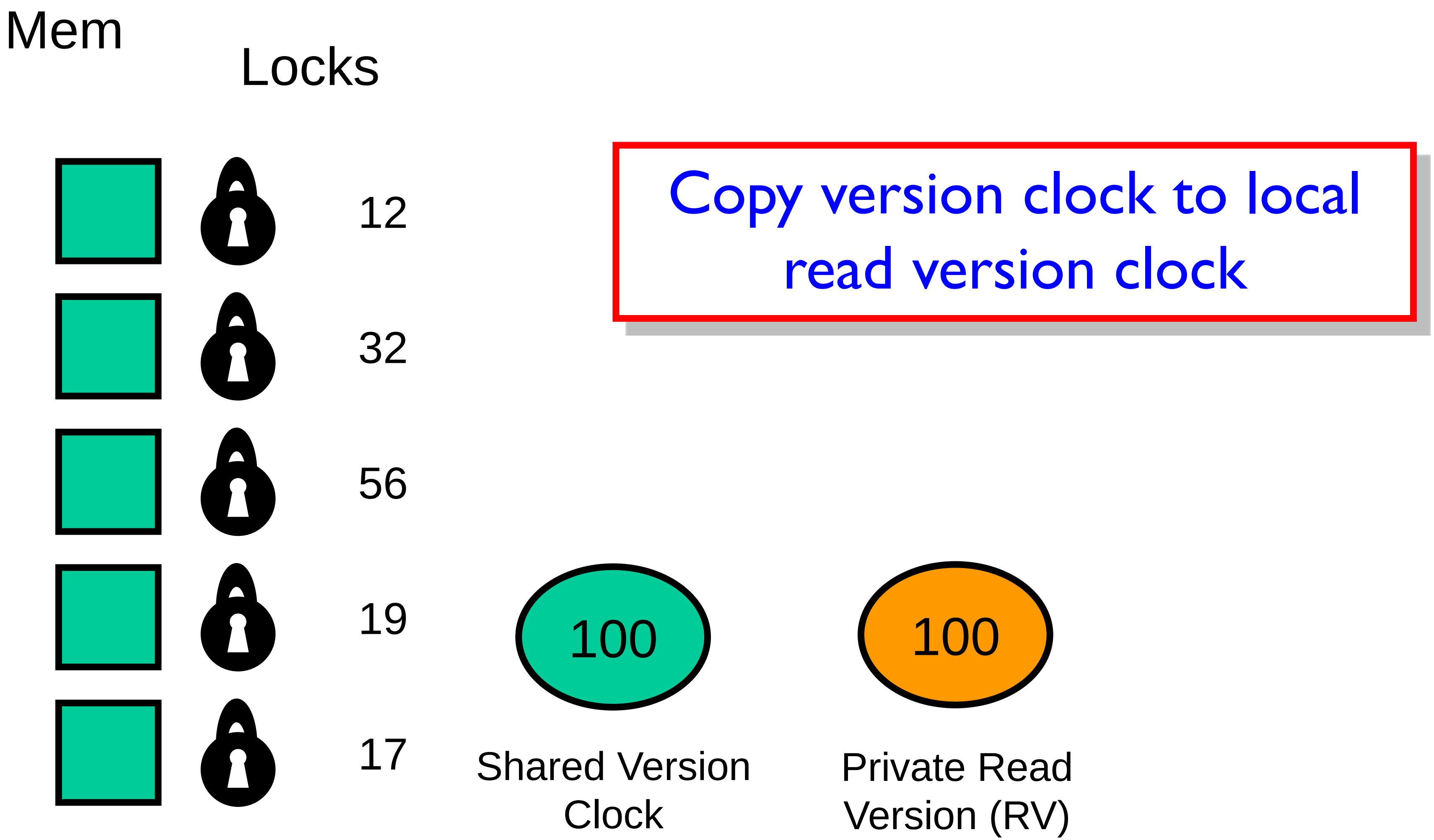
Transaction A: (zombie) reads y = 4 computes 1/(x-y)

Divide by zero FAIL!

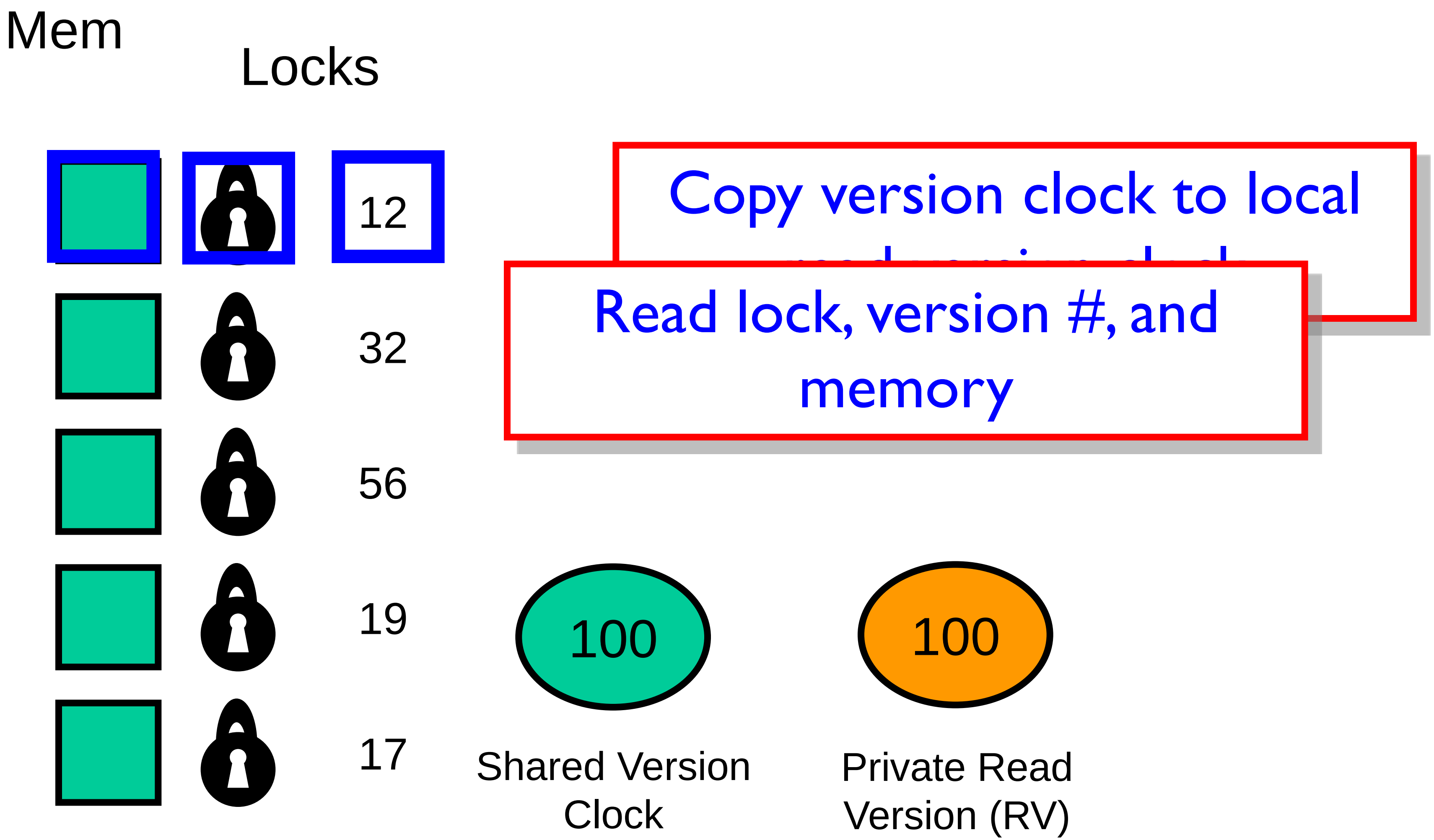
Solution: The Global Clock (The TL2 Algorithm)

- Have one shared global clock
- Incremented by (small subset of) writing transactions
- Read by all transactions
- Used to validate that state worked on is always consistent

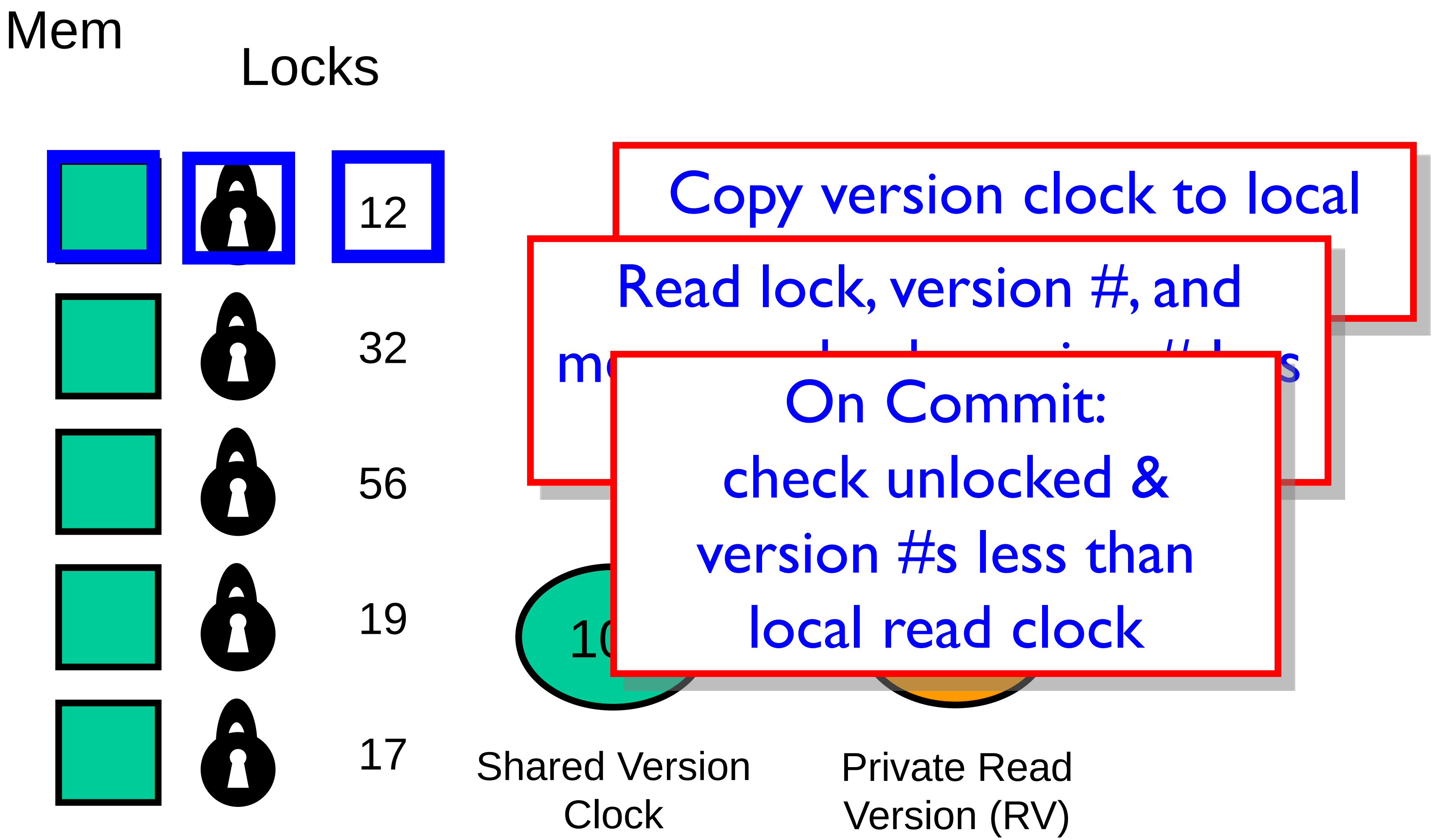
Read-Only Transactions



Read-Only Transactions



Read-Only Transactions



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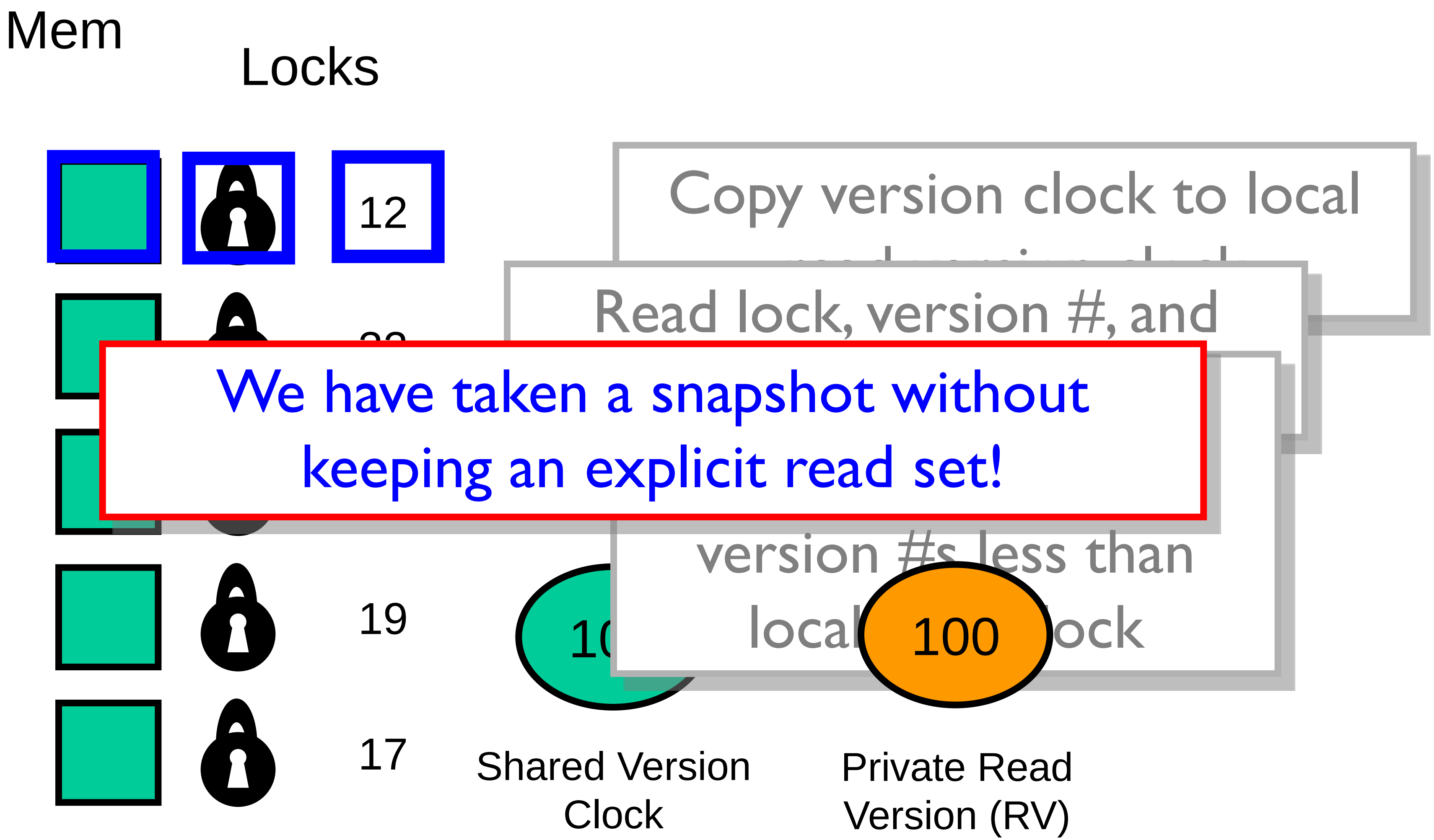
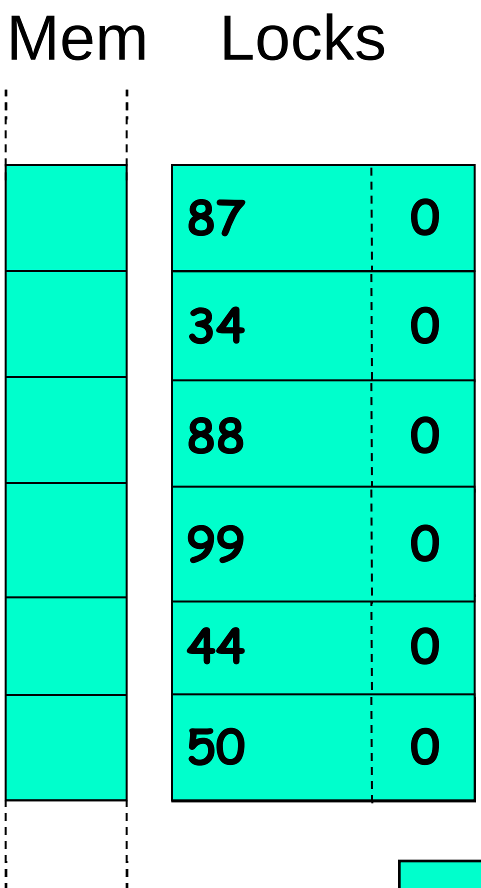


Example Execution: Read Only Trans



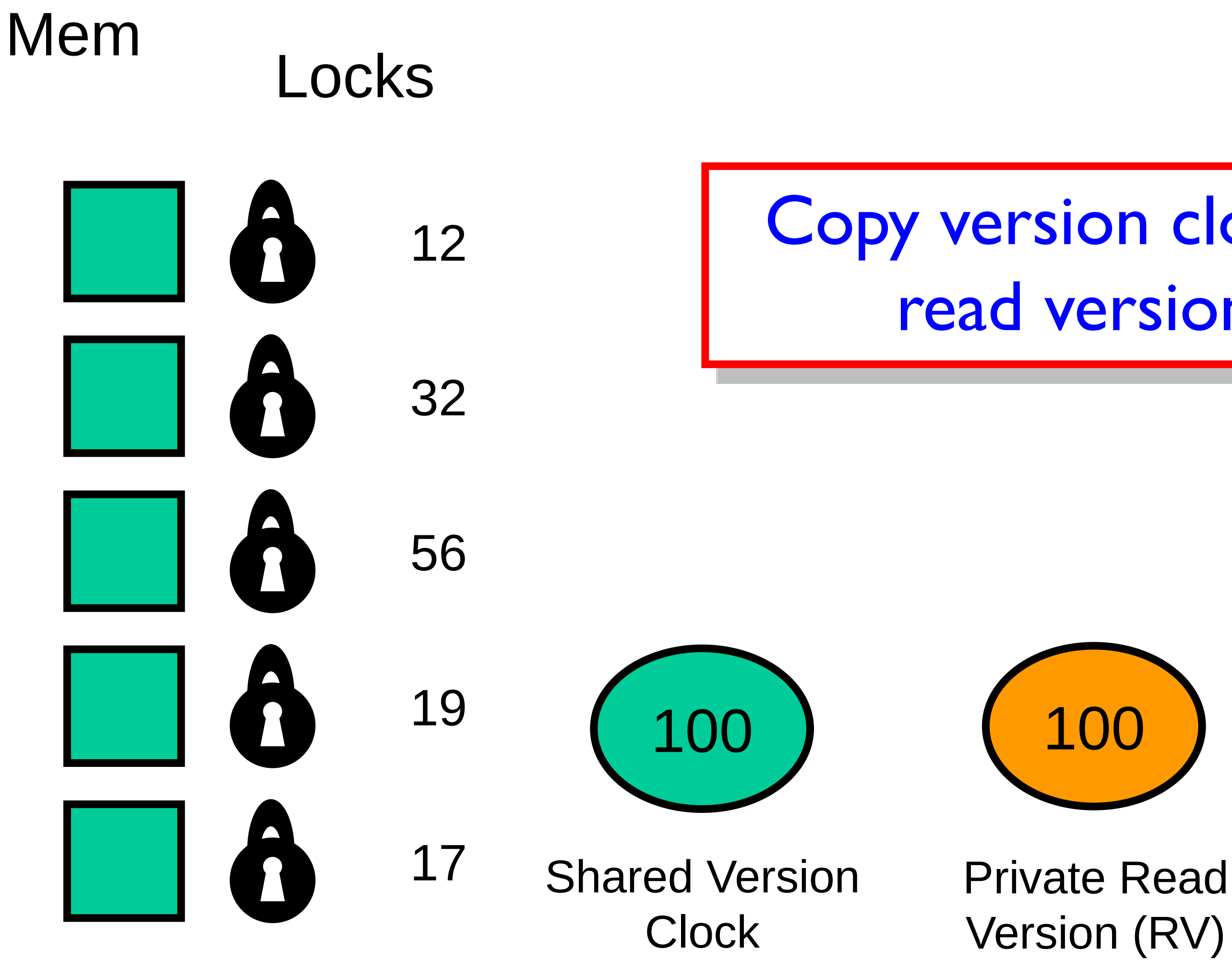
100 Shared Version Clock

1. RV ← Shared Version Clock
2. On Read: read lock, read mem, read lock: check unlocked, unchanged, and v# <= RV
3. Commit.

> Reads form a snapshot of memory. No read set!

100 RV

Ordinary (Writing) Transactions

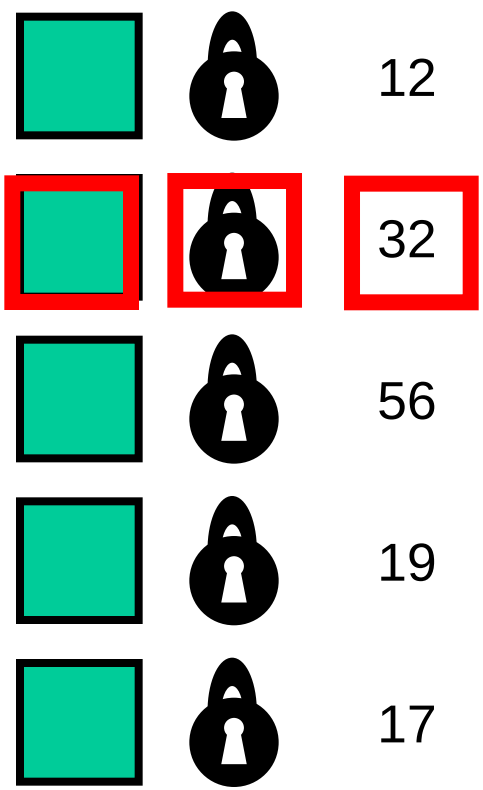


Copy version clock to local read version clock

Ordinary Transactions

Mem

Locks



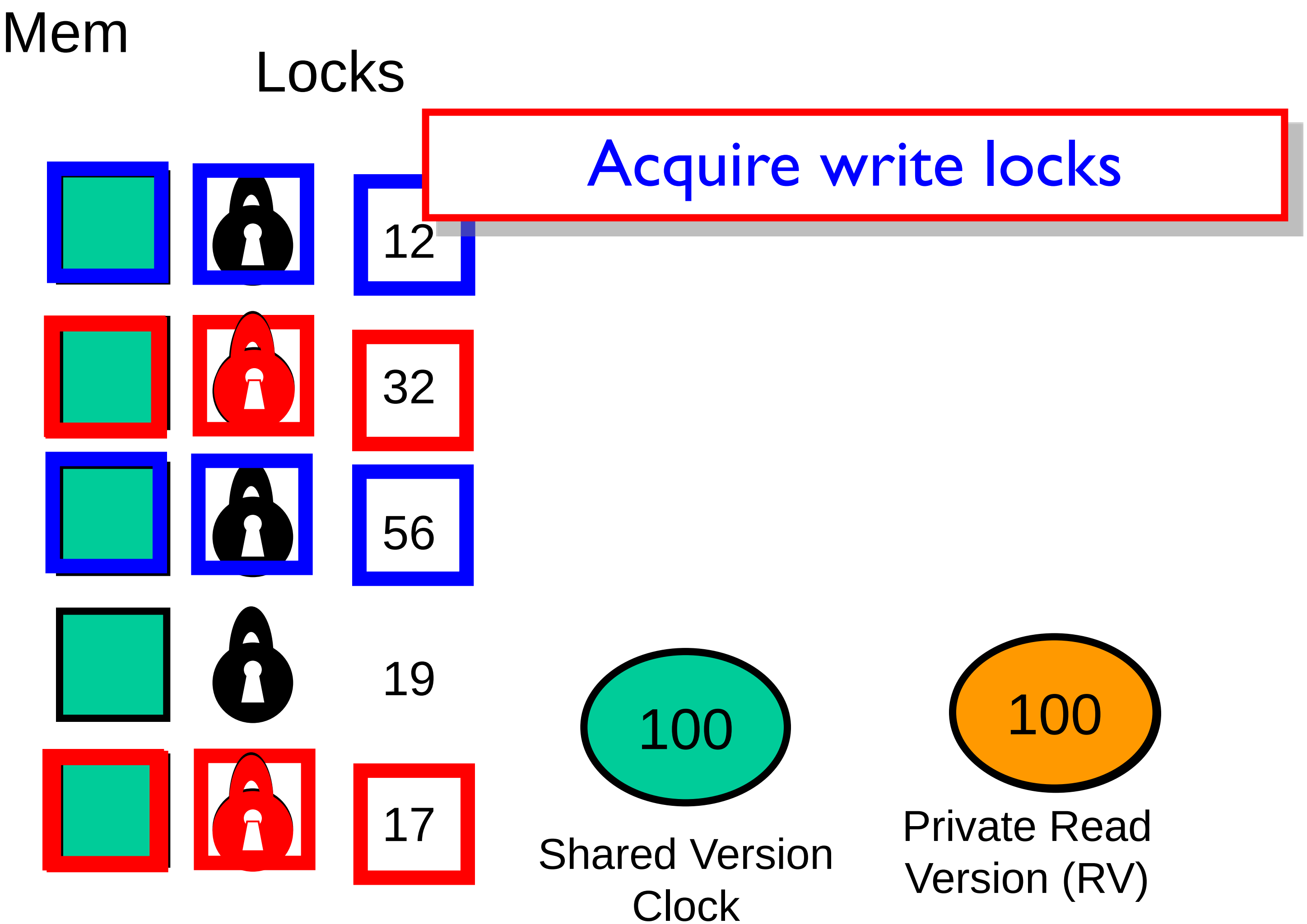
Copy version clock to local

On read/write, check:
Unlocked & version # < RV
Add to R/W set

Shared Version Clock

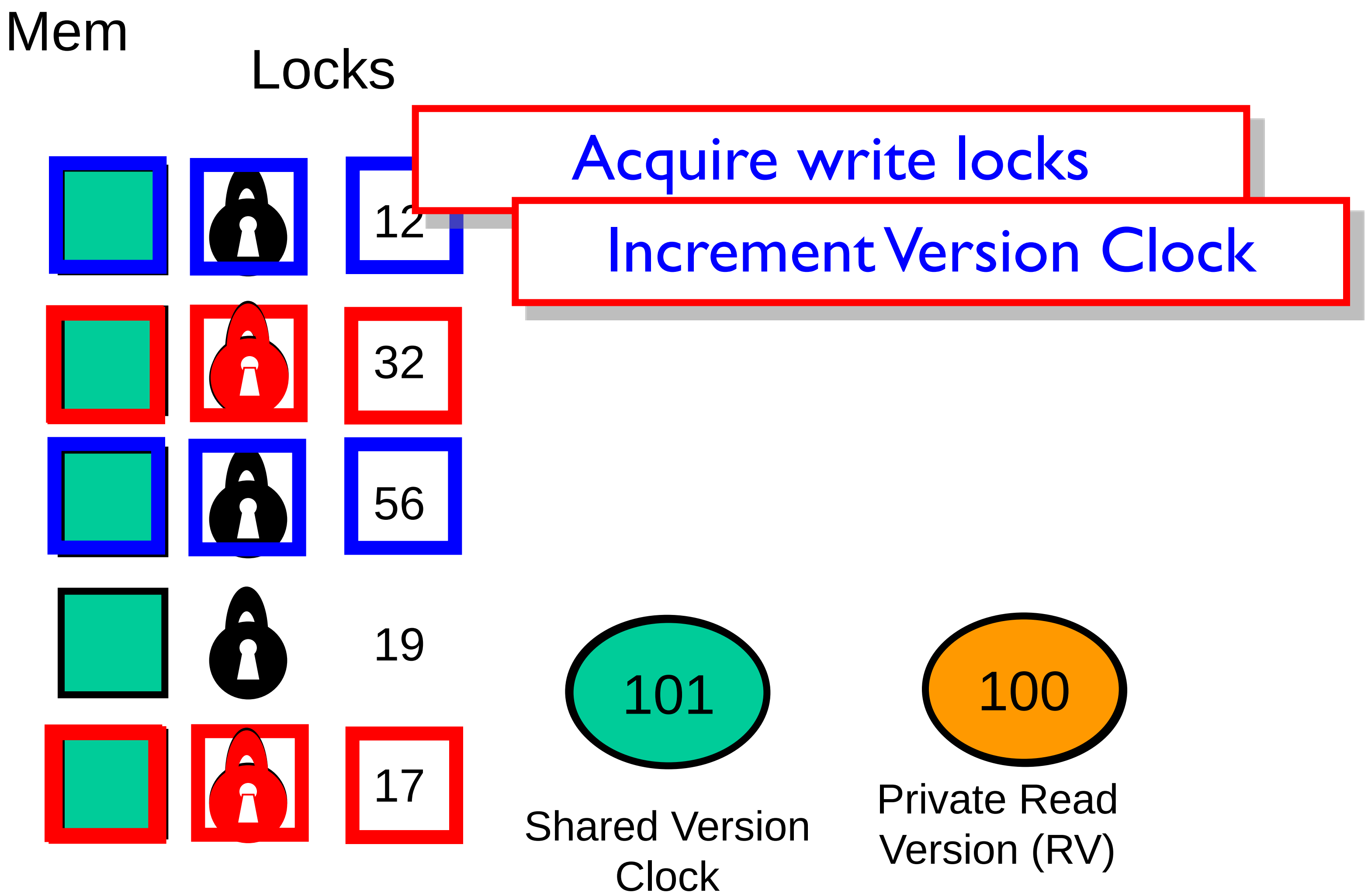
Private Read Version (RV)

On Commit



Mem
Locks
Acquire write locks
12
32
56
19
17
100
Shared Version Clock
100
Private Read Version (RV)

On Commit


Mem
Locks
Acquire write locks
Increment Version Clock
12
32
56
19
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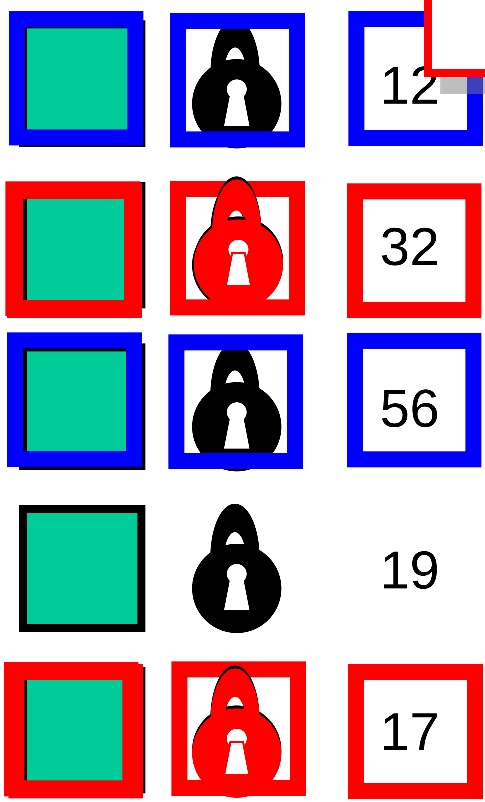
101
100
Shared Version Clock
Private Read Version (RV)

On Commit

Mem

Locks



Acquire write locks

Increment Version Clock

Check version numbers ≤ RV

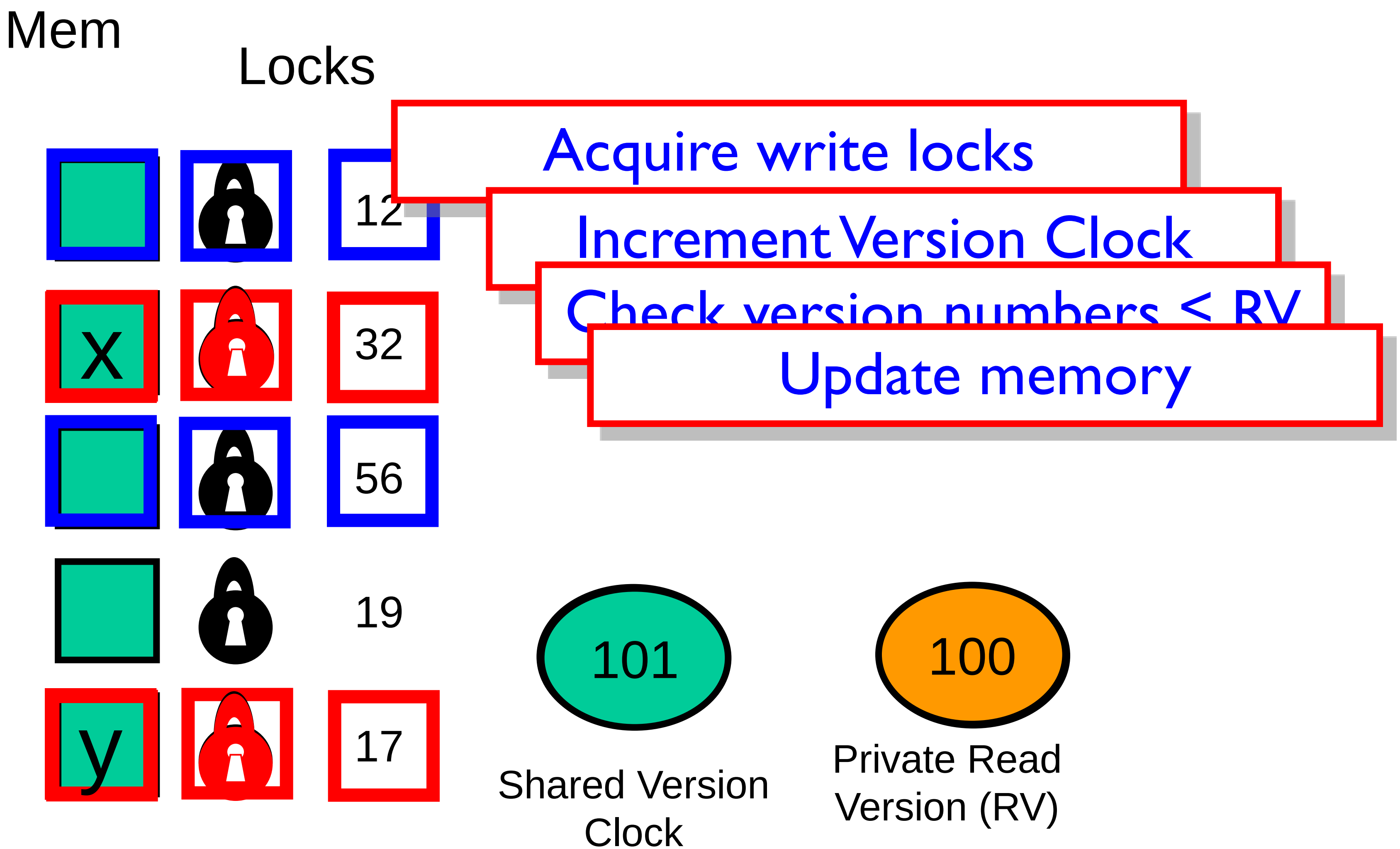
101

Shared Version Clock

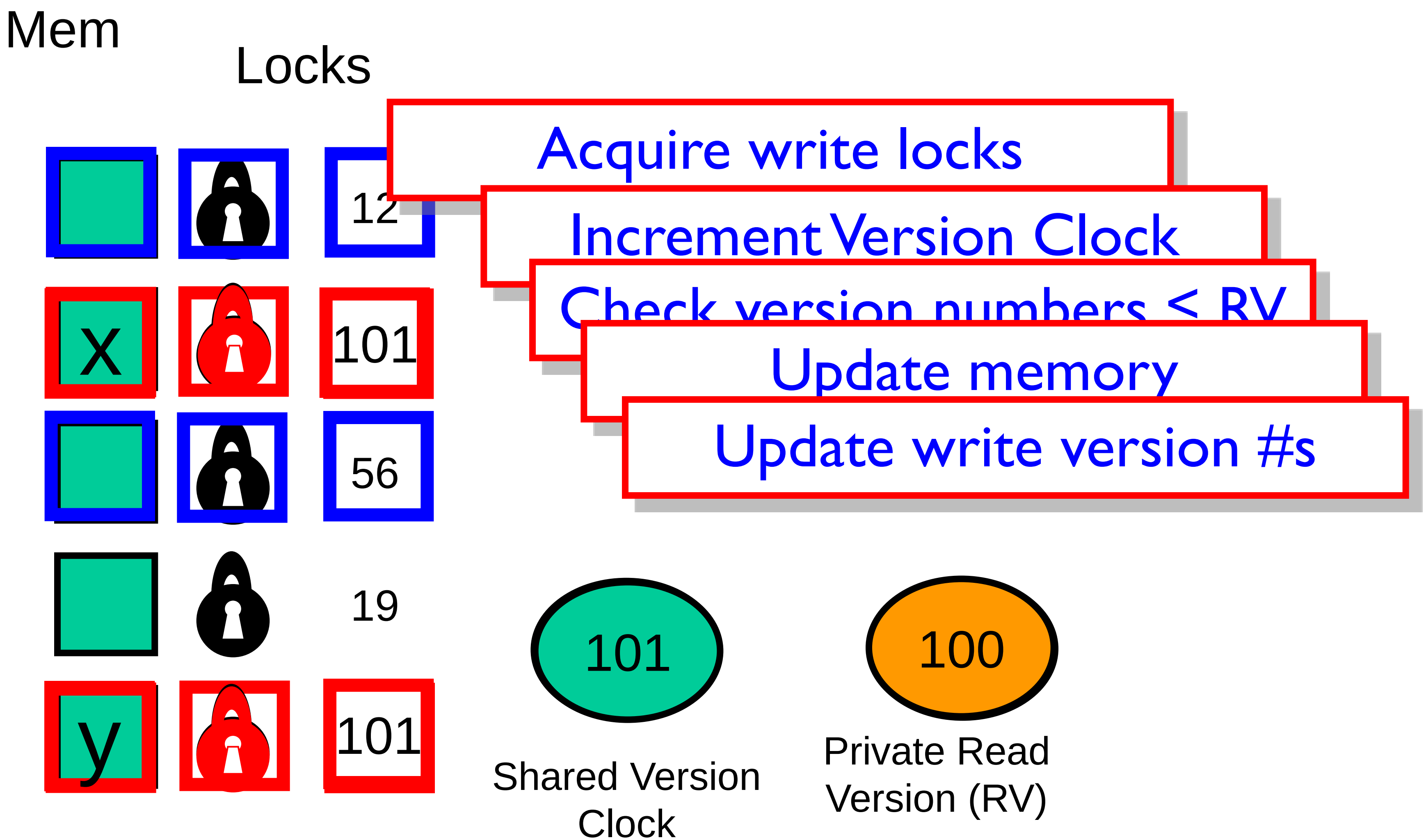
100

Private Read Version (RV)

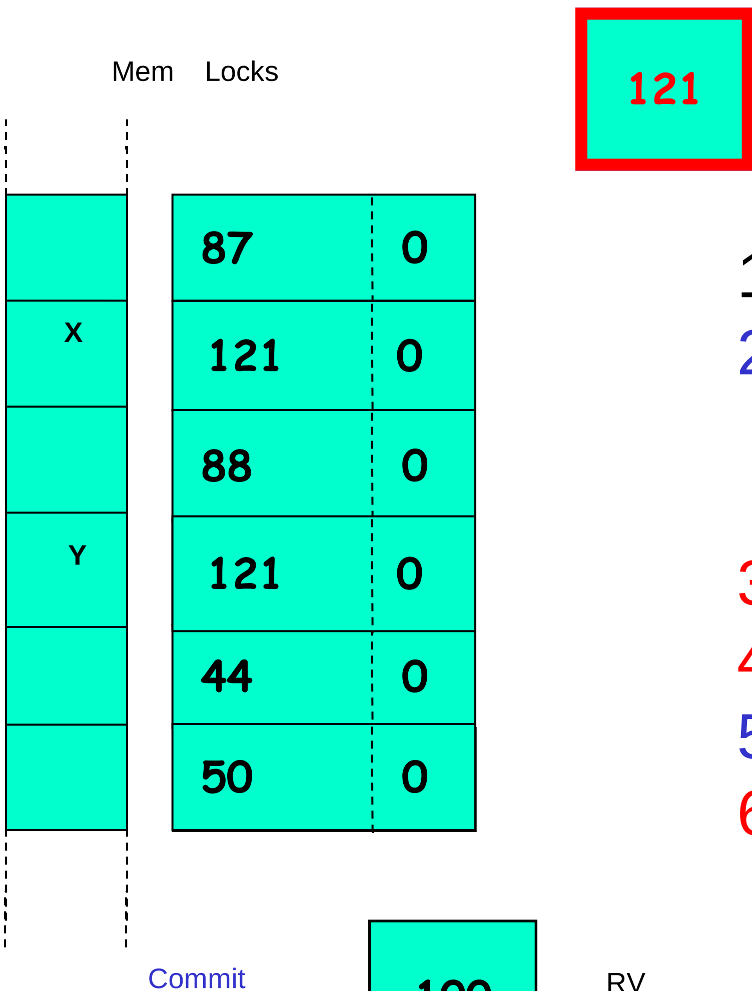
On Commit


Mem
Locks
Acquire write locks
Increment Version Clock
Check version numbers < RV
Update memory
12
x
32
56
19
y
17
101
100
Shared Version Clock
Private Read Version (RV)

On Commit


Mem
Locks
12
x
101
56
19
y
101
Acquire write locks
Increment Version Clock
Check version numbers < RV
Update memory
Update write version #s
101
100
Shared Version Clock
Private Read Version (RV)

Example: Writing Trans



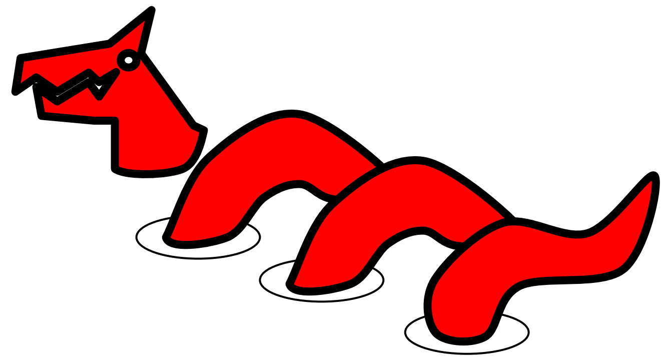
Shared Version Clock

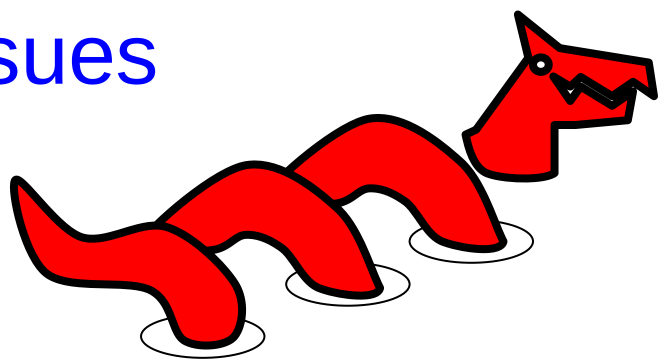
1. RV ← Shared Version Clock
2. On Read/Write: check unlocked and v# <= RV then add to Read/Write-Set
3. Acquire Locks
4. WV = F&I(VClock)
5. Validate each v# <= RV
6. Release locks with v# ← WV

Reads+Inc+Writes =serializable

TM Design Issues

- Implementation choices
- Language design issues
- Semantic issues





Granularity

- Object
  - managed languages, Java, C#, …
  - Easy to control interactions between transactional & non-trans threads
- Word
  - C, C++, …
  - Hard to control interactions between transactional & non-trans threads

Direct/Deferred Update

- *Deferred*
  - modify private copies & install on commit
  - Commit requires work
  - Consistency easier
- *Direct*
  - Modify in place, roll back on abort
  - Makes commit efficient
  - Consistency harder

Conflict Detection

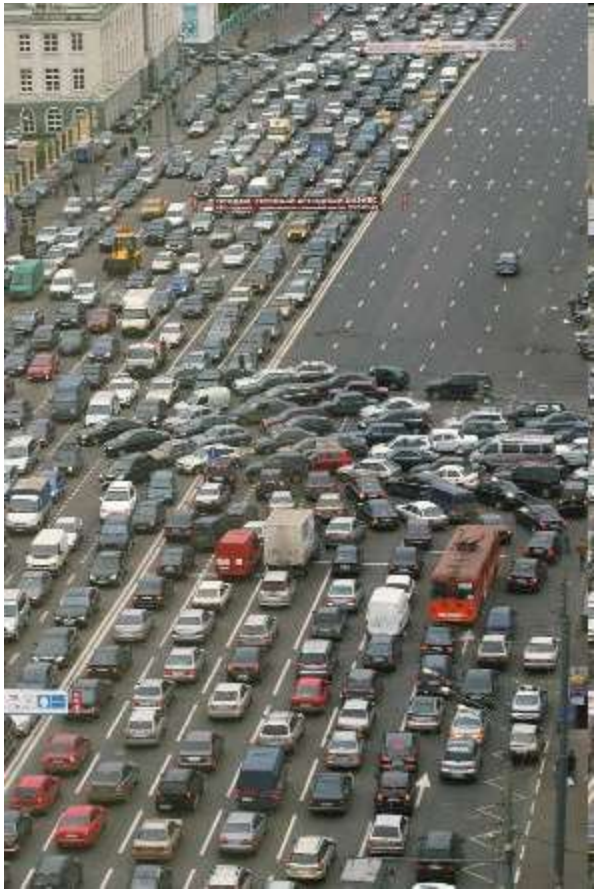
- Eager
  - Detect before conflict arises
  - “Contention manager” module resolves
- Lazy
  - Detect on commit/abort
- Mixed
  - Eager write/write, lazy read/write …

Conflict Detection

- Eager detection may abort transactions that could have committed.
- Lazy detection discards more computation.

Contention Management & Scheduling

- How to resolve conflicts?
- Who moves forward and who rolls back?
- Lots of empirical work but formal work in infancy



Contention Manager Strategies

- Exponential backoff
- Priority to
  - Oldest?
  - Most work?
  - Non-waiting?
- None Dominates
- But needed anyway

Judgment of Solomon

I/O & System Calls?

- Some I/O revocable
  - Provide transaction-safe libraries
  - Undoable file system/DB calls
- Some not
  - Opening cash drawer
  - Firing missile

I/O & System Calls

- One solution: make transaction irrevocable
  - If transaction tries I/O, switch to irrevocable mode.
- There can be only one …
  - Requires serial execution
- No explicit aborts
  - In irrevocable transactions

Exceptions

```
int i = 0;
try {
  atomic {
    i++;
    node = new Node();
  }
} catch (Exception e) {
  print(i);
}
```

Exceptions

Throws OutOfMemoryException!

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Exceptions

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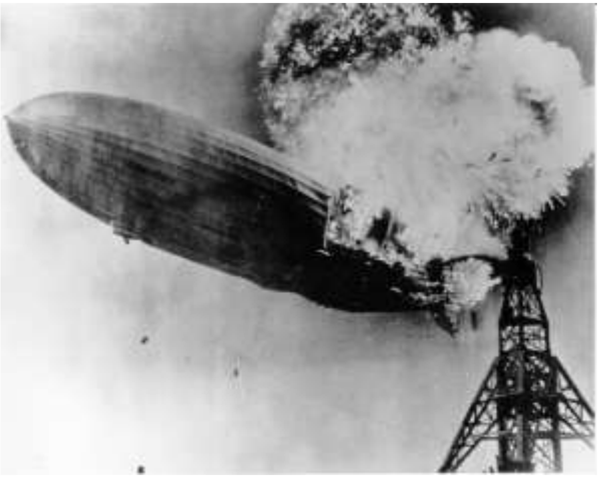
```

What is printed?

Unhandled Exceptions



- Aborts transaction
  - Preserves invariants
  - Safer
- Commits transaction
  - Like locking semantics
  - What if exception object refers to values modified in transaction?

Nested Transactions

```
atomic void foo() {
  bar();
}

atomic void bar() {
 …
}
```

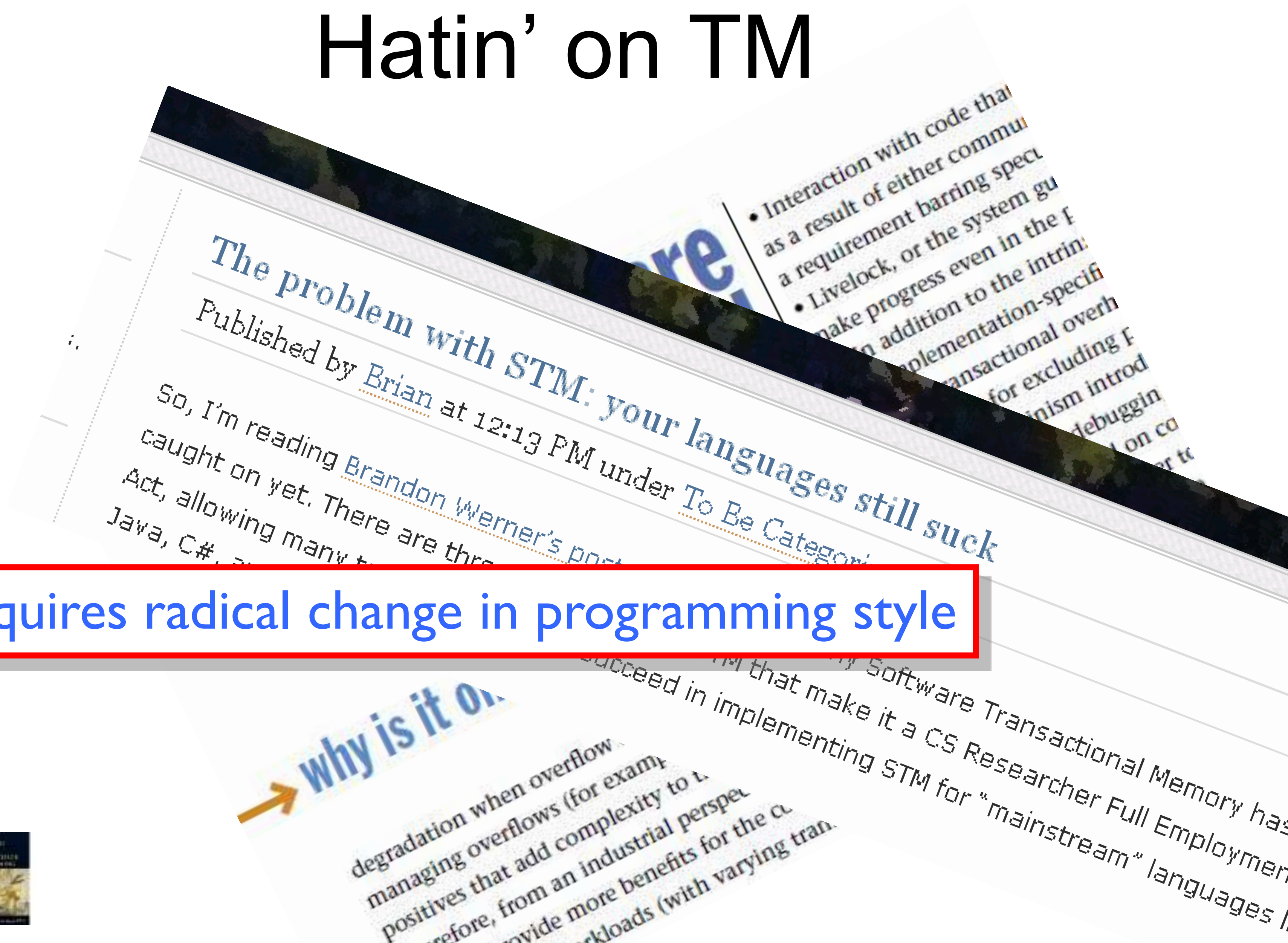
Nested Transactions

- Needed for modularity
  - Who knew that cosine() contained a transaction?
- Flat nesting
  - If child aborts, so does parent
- First-class nesting
  - If child aborts, partial rollback of child only

Hatin' on TM

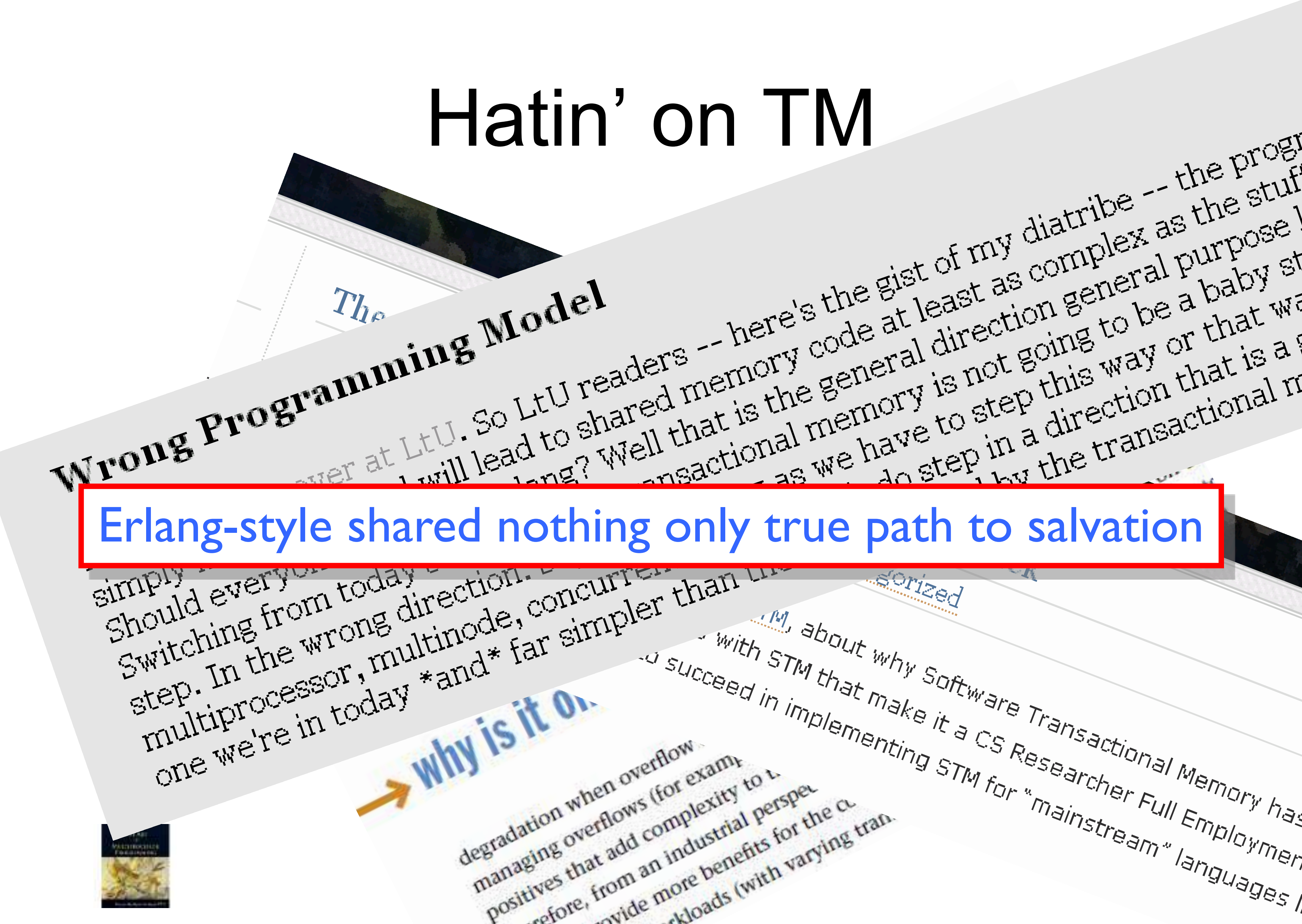
STM is too inefficient

Hatin' on TM



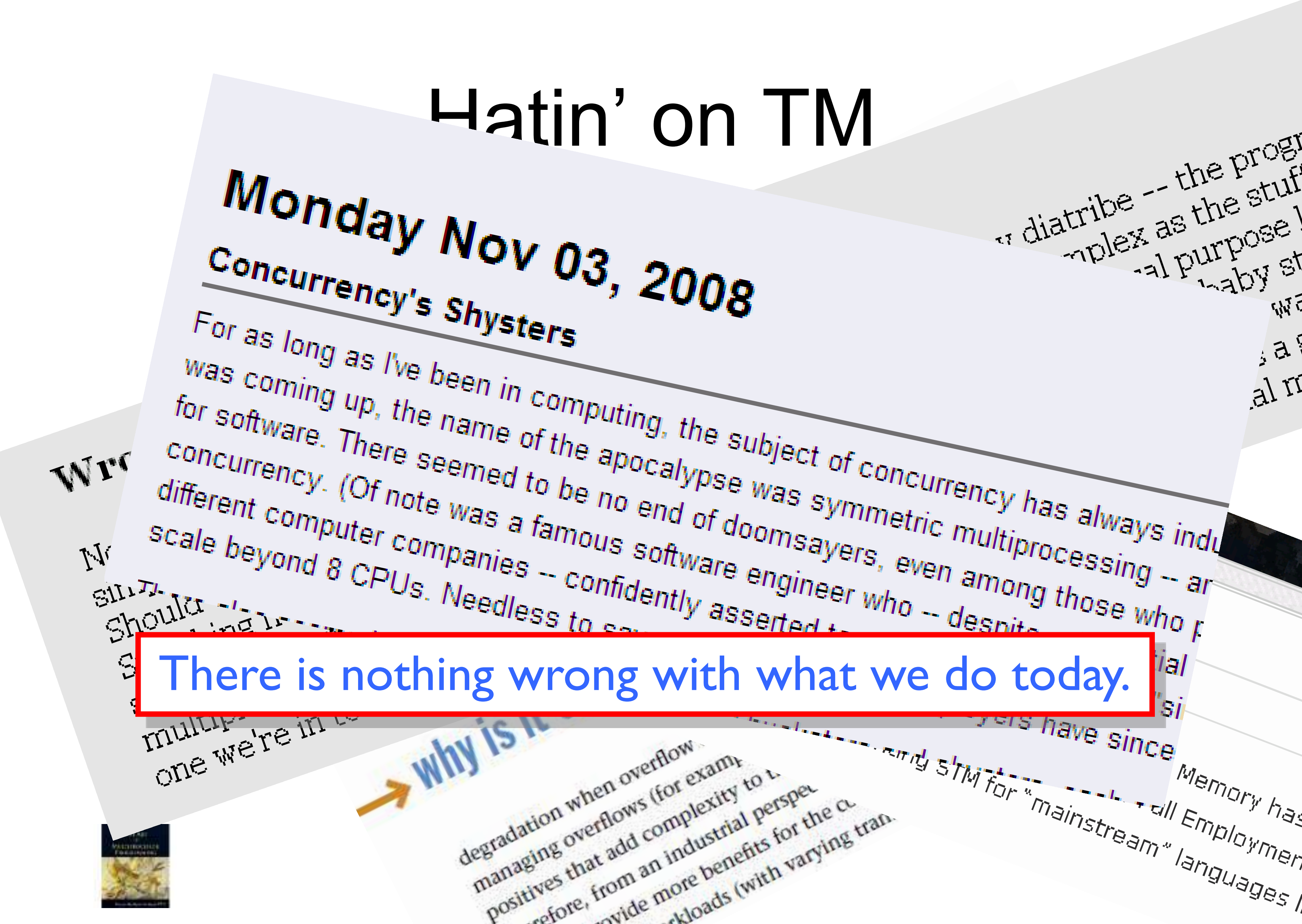
Requires radical change in programming style

Hatin' on TM



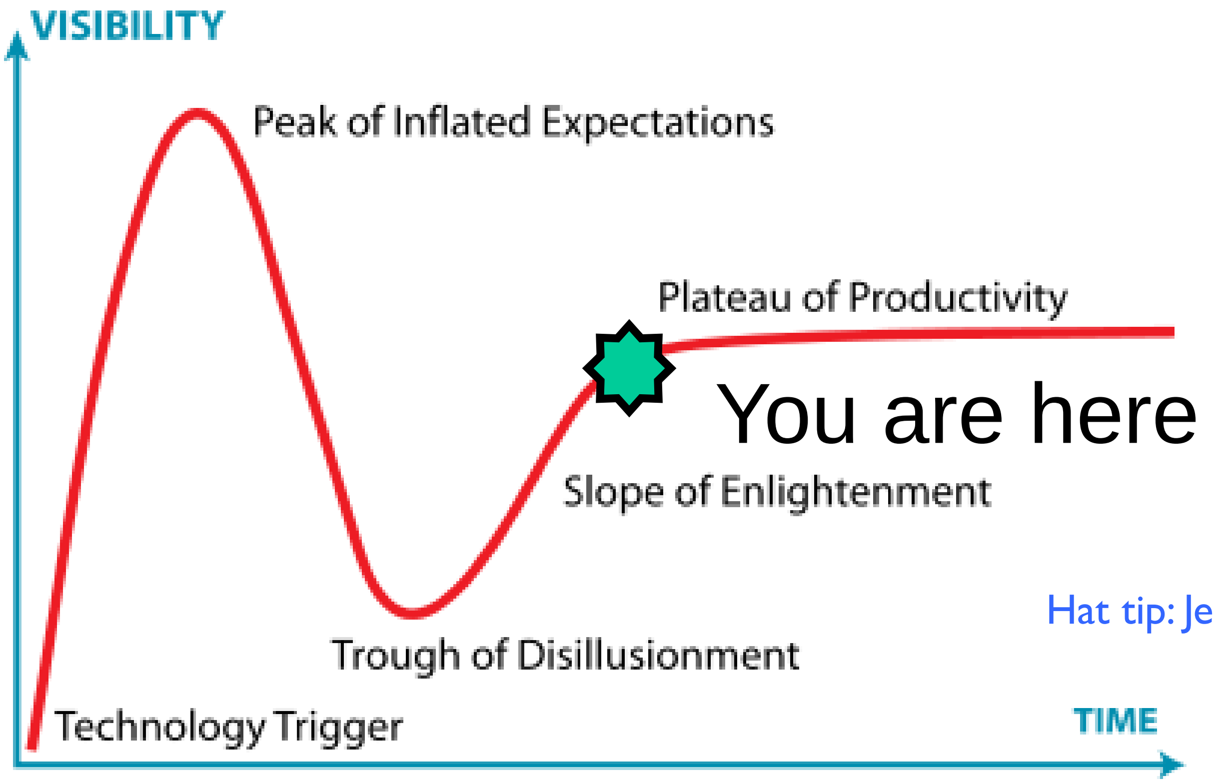
Erlang-style shared nothing only true path to salvation

Hatin' on TM



There is nothing wrong with what we do today.

Gartner Hype Cycle



Hat tip: Jeremy Kemp

Thanks ! תודה

Overview

- Building shared memory data structures
  - Lists, queues, hashtables, …
- Why?
  - Used directly by applications (e.g., in C/C++, Java, C#, …)
  - Used in the language runtime system (e.g., management of work, implementations of message passing, …)
  - Used in traditional operating systems (e.g., synchronization between top/bottom-half code)
- Why not?
  - Don't think of "threads + shared data structures" as a default/good/complete/desirable programming model
  - It's better to have shared memory and not need it…

Different techniques for different problems

Ease to write

Correctness

When can it be used?

How fast is it?

How well does it scale?