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HOORAY 4! DISSENT

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Moving Beyond a Culture of Conformity

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Value in Disruption



Chris Downer / *Bournemouth Gardens: concrete channel*

[File:Bournemouth Gardens, concrete channel - geograph.org.uk - 658903.jpg](http://geograph.org.uk - 658903.jpg)

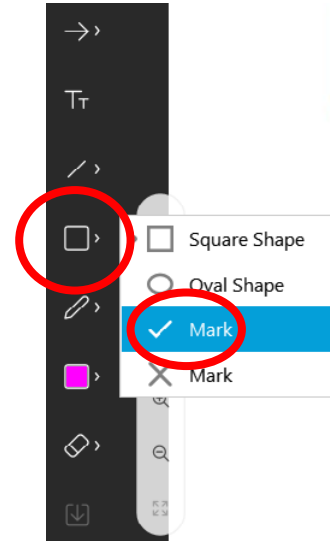


National Park Service, 2015

[Chilogatee Stream Restoration Project in Park Complete](#)

Annotation Tools

1. Mouse over slide to find **small pill menu** at far left
2. Select top **squiggle icon** to open annotation tool panel
3. Select **square** icon
4. Select **check mark**
5. Click on slide **to practice**



Your Turn!

Meaningful long-lasting change happens when who is leading?



A charismatic
Leader
with a **clear vision** who can
get it done
efficiently

A **Group**
of **Experts**
who are **well-**
connected, and
know how to
build trust with
people in power

Everybody
contributing their
voice, opinions,
experience wants,
needs and **solutions**

Dissent! means what exactly?

Dissent is an **action** in opposition to conformity, **against dominant power structures**, in recognition of systems of **privilege and bias**, towards decision making that incorporates more voices for outcomes that improve more lives.

M-W says

1 : to withhold assent or approval

2 : to differ in opinion

Conformity is actually very useful



Reasons for Dissent-- “Why”

- **Self-Interest:** Motivation is primarily to reinforce a personal perspective or release an emotion
- **Self-Improvement:** Awareness of your own habits that keep you from being an effective creator of the world you want to live in
- **Process Improvement:** Motivation is to improve efficiency and/or effectiveness of a specific process or function
- **System Interrelation:** Motivation is to draw attention to structural weaknesses in a given system and its impact on related systems
- **Justice:** Unwillingness to quietly witness injustice, bias, oppression, or exclusion



Laura. Starkleshop on Etsy

“Within the US Supreme Court alone, dissenting opinions . . . have become the law on well over 130 occasions.”

(Sunstein, 2019)

Manner of Dissent-- “How”

- **Anger:** Dissent with strong emotion
- **Contrarian:** Dissent not tied to purpose, often out of habit
- **Provocative:** Provoking of deeper thought or new lines of thought
- **Reframing:** Purpose-based, raises questions, refocuses, without providing the answers or taking a strong position
- **“Yes, and”:** Improves on discussion and ideas, adding new content without outright questioning of the old
- **Unilateral:** Complete shut down or direction change, requires power

*Not exhaustive, often combined

**The FBI
has not
been here**

[watch very closely for the removal of this sign]

Warrant Canary

Jessamyn West. 2014

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antipat4.png>

"As a librarian, I believe it is my duty and responsibility to speak out about any infringement to the intellectual freedom of library patrons."

Peter Chase, 2006

[Librarians Speak Out for First Time After Being Gagged by Patriot Act](#)

HOORAY **4!** ORG **DISSENT**

Arenas of Dissent-- “Where”

- **Internal:** Awareness of self-improvement areas; tolerance of discomfort in service of personal or professional intelligence development
- **Peer Relations:** Disruption in method or intention of one’s colleagues or peers
- **Stranger:** Vocalized disagreement with an incidental contact
- **Profession:** Dissent within one’s field of study or profession, within the framework of professional organizations, or more broadly challenging professional paradigms, ethics, values, or assumptions
- **Organization:** Dissent within one’s place of work
- **Community:** Disagreement within local political or social structures
- **National/International Politics:** Protest on issues of national/global concern



*Library Funding Rally
Queens Gazette, 2013.*

<https://www.qgazette.com/articles/queens-library-van-bramer-gentile-rally-against-cuts/>

"For the first time since 2008 there were NO cuts to the city library budgets.
. . . No Cuts!
No Closures!
No Layoffs!"

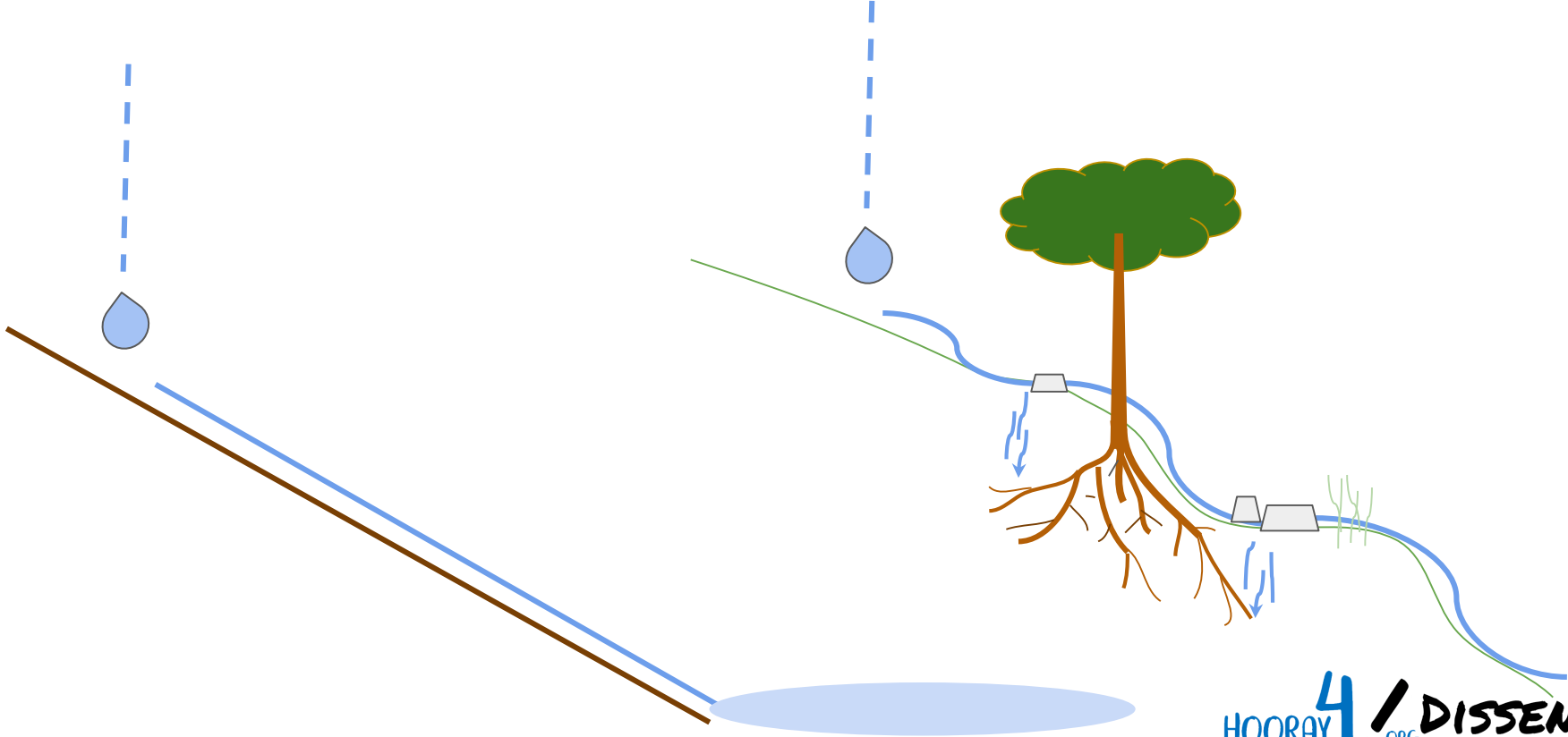
*Victory!,
Urban Librarians Unite, 2013*

<https://urbanlibrariansunite.org/2013/07/09/victory/>

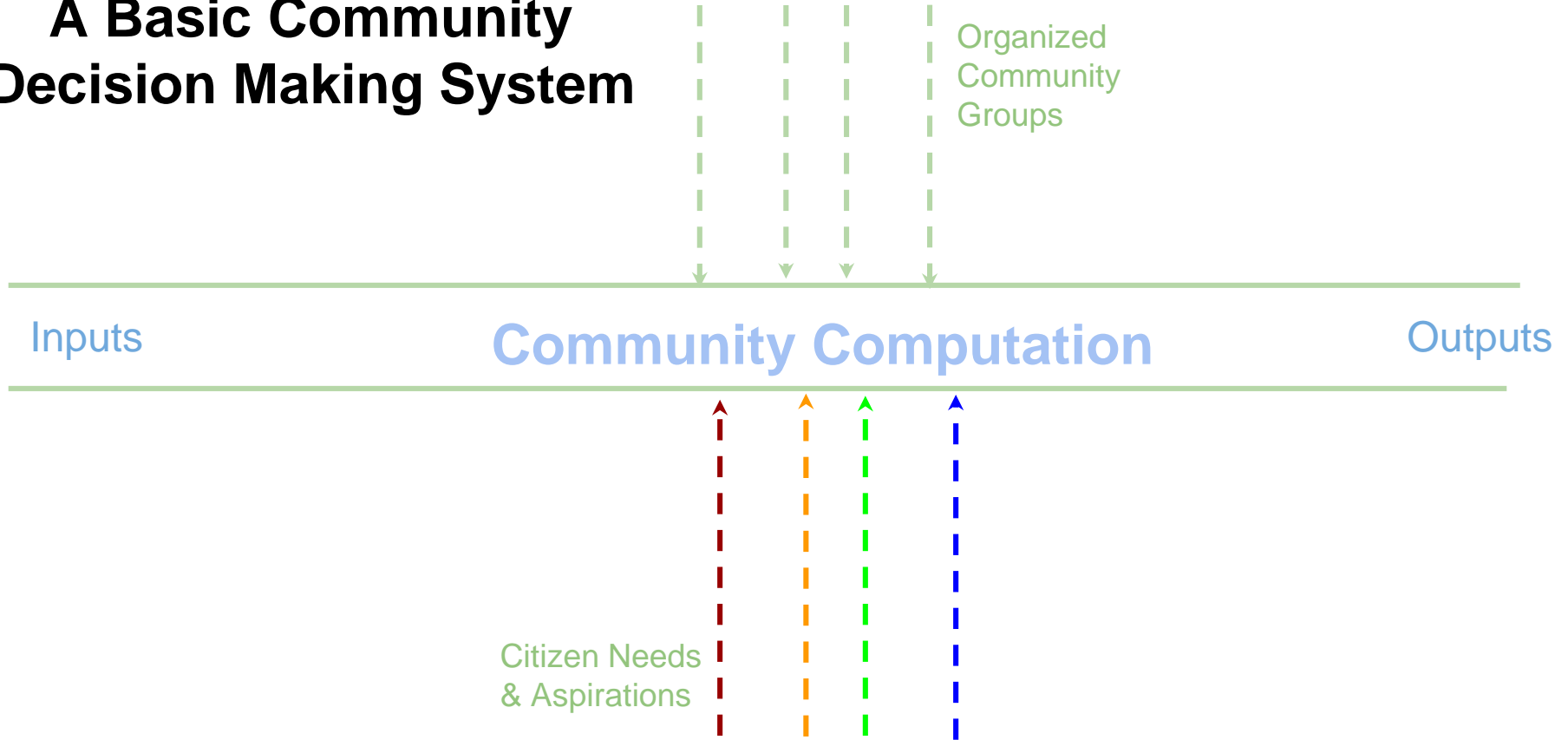
Some Types of Dissent-- “What”

- **Time Scale:** To recommend refocus on long term goals over short term goals
- **Friction:** Intentional slowing down of a design or decision-making process
- **Purposeful:** To highlight a lack of focus on a shared core purpose, or to suggest that desired outcomes are not shared universally by all stakeholders;
- **Missing Voices:** To bring in missing voices, or redistribute credit for an idea or accomplishment
- **Localist:** Advocacy for place-based solutions over imposition of best practices
- **Transparency:** Advocacy for broader access to review design of a process
- **Expertise:** Disagreement on effectiveness of a design or expected results of the design, that may lead to compromise, reconciliation, or neither

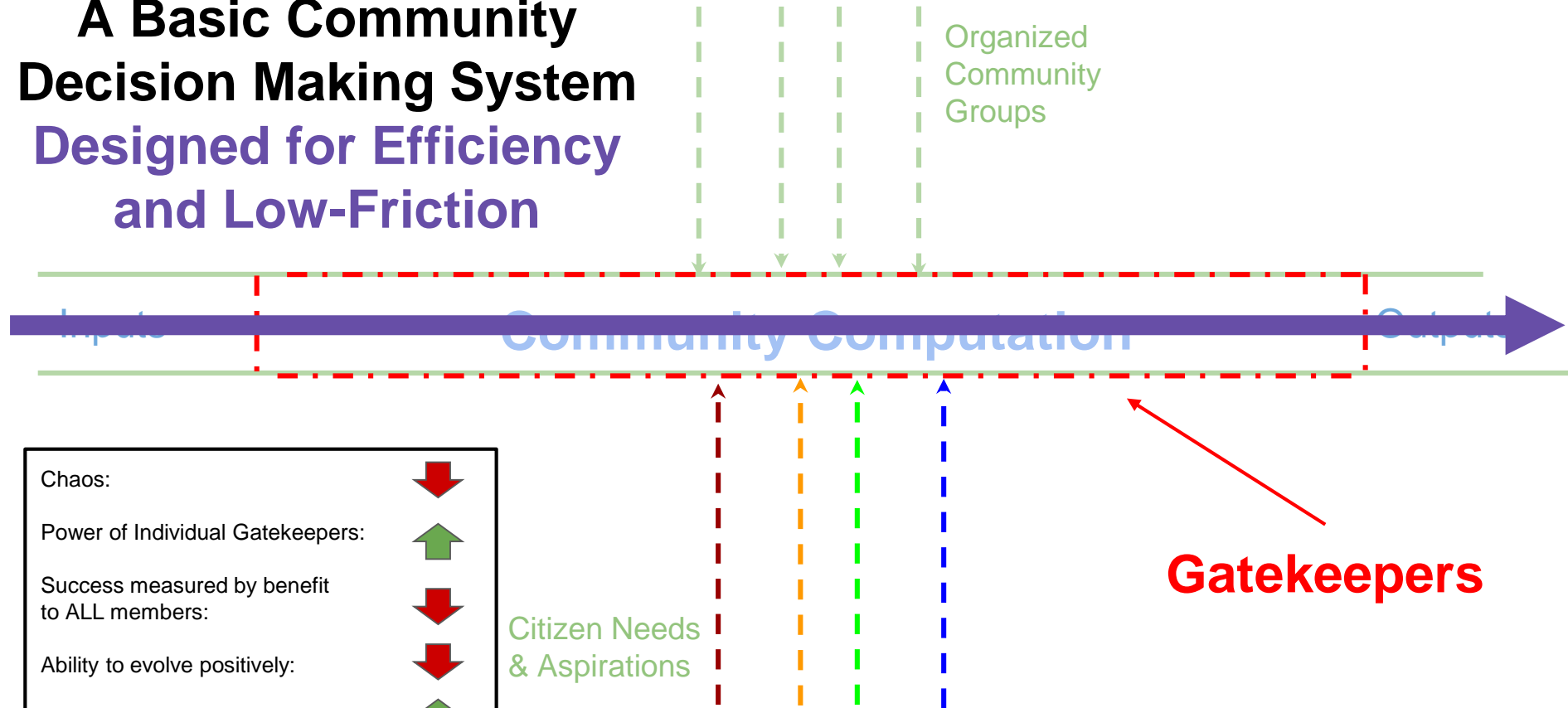
Friction in Ecology



A Basic Community Decision Making System



A Basic Community Decision Making System Designed for Efficiency and Low-Friction



Gatekeepers

Your Turn!

Continuum chaos/more voices, to efficiency less voices - how do you manage your library?



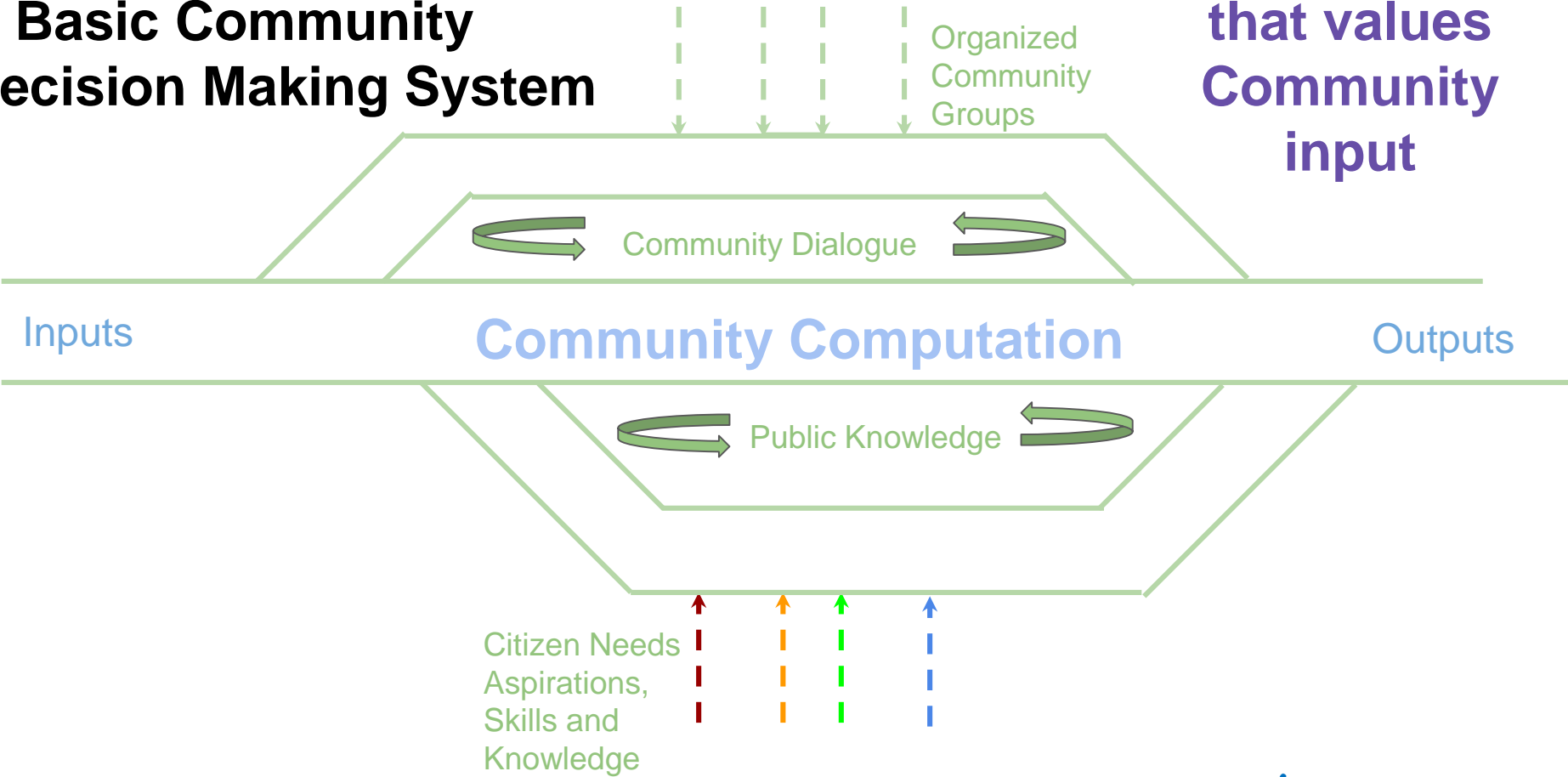
A chaos of
SLOW
committee
work and
iterative
feedback
loops where
everyone
impacted gets a say.

Group
feedback
solicited
when **major**
changes are
taking place

Efficient
clearly
assessed
goals based on
core **tasks** and
sound
leadership

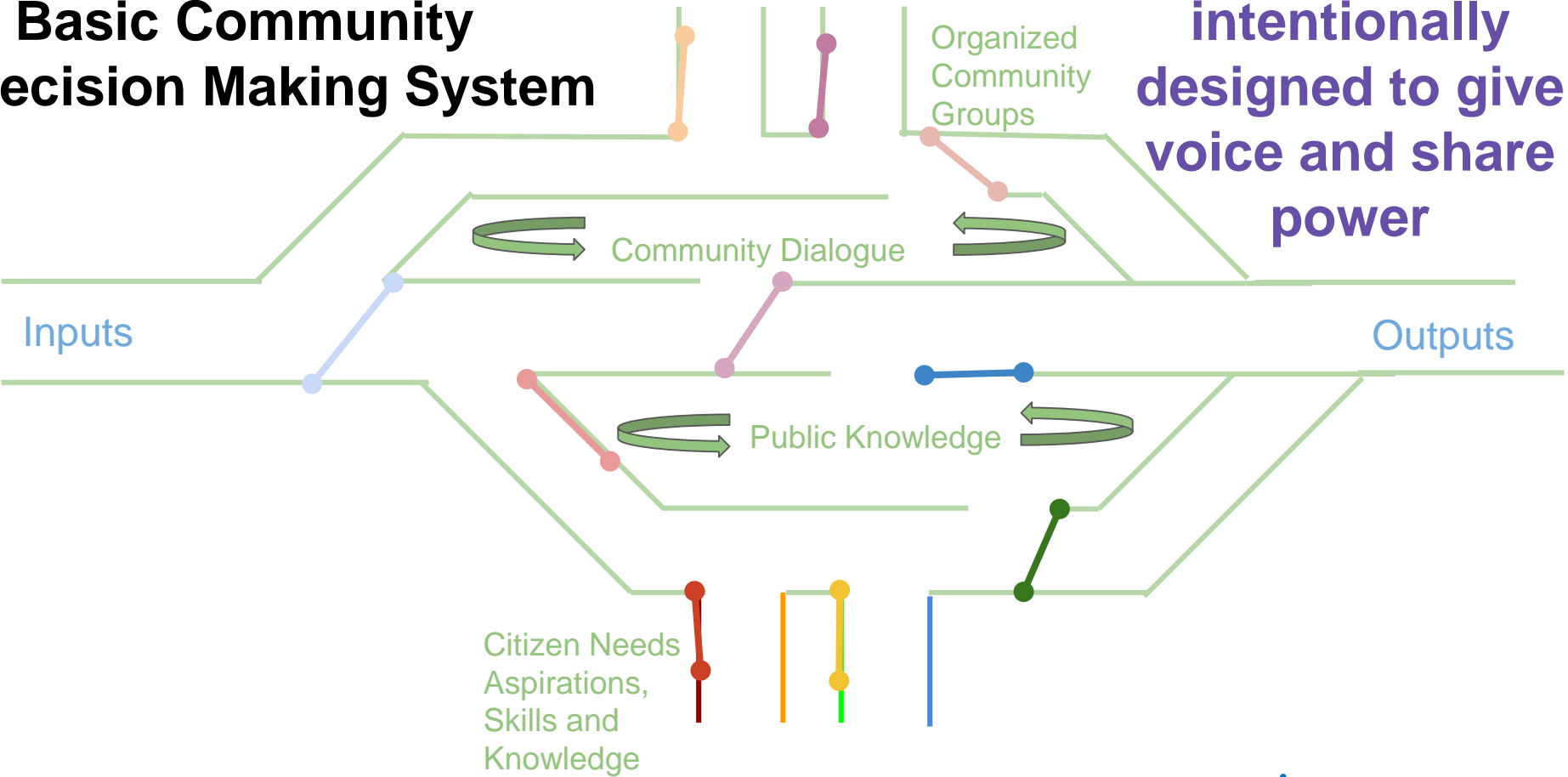
A Basic Community Decision Making System

that values
**Community
input**



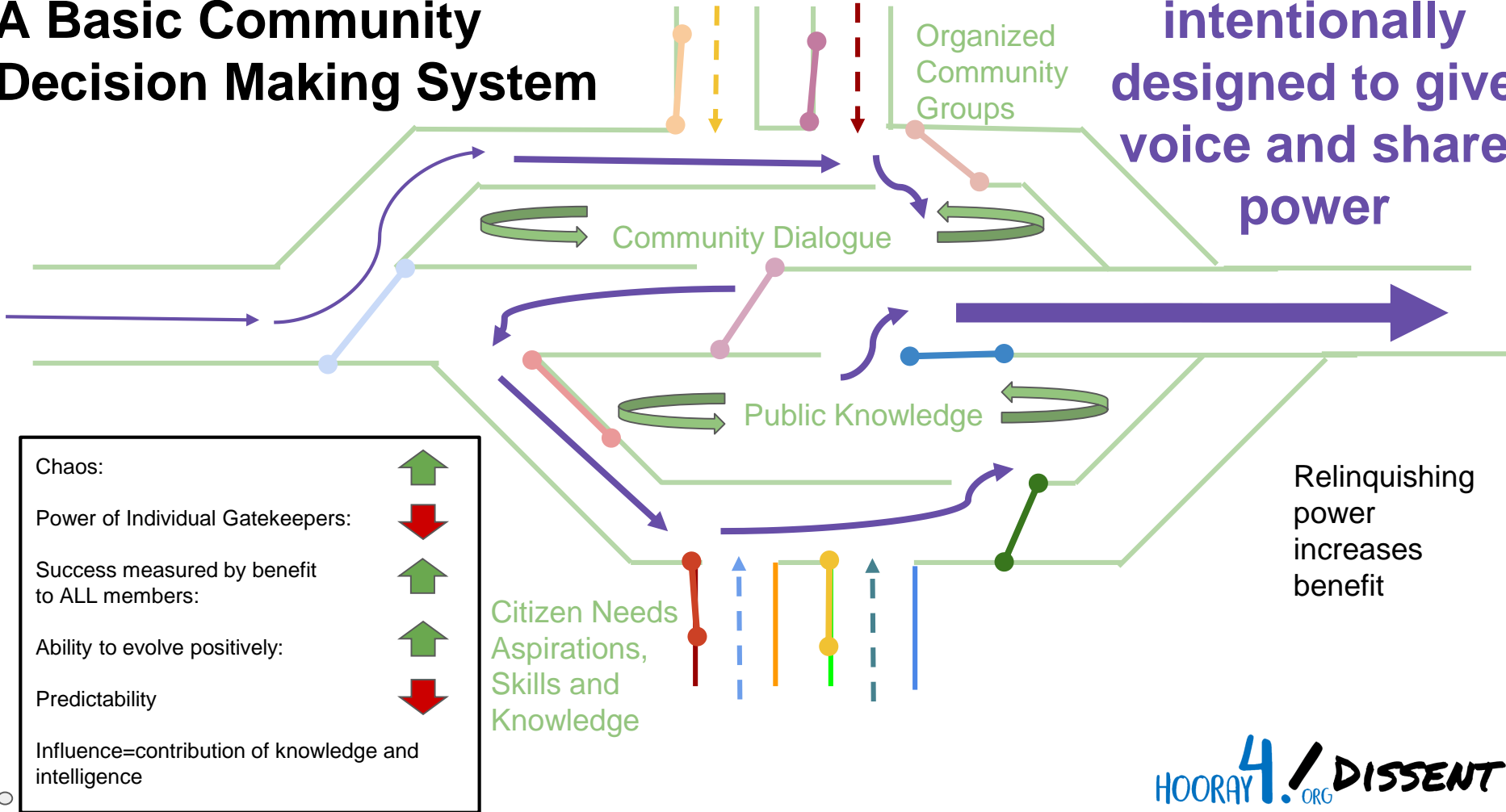
A Basic Community Decision Making System

intentionally designed to give voice and share power



A Basic Community Decision Making System

intentionally designed to give voice and share power

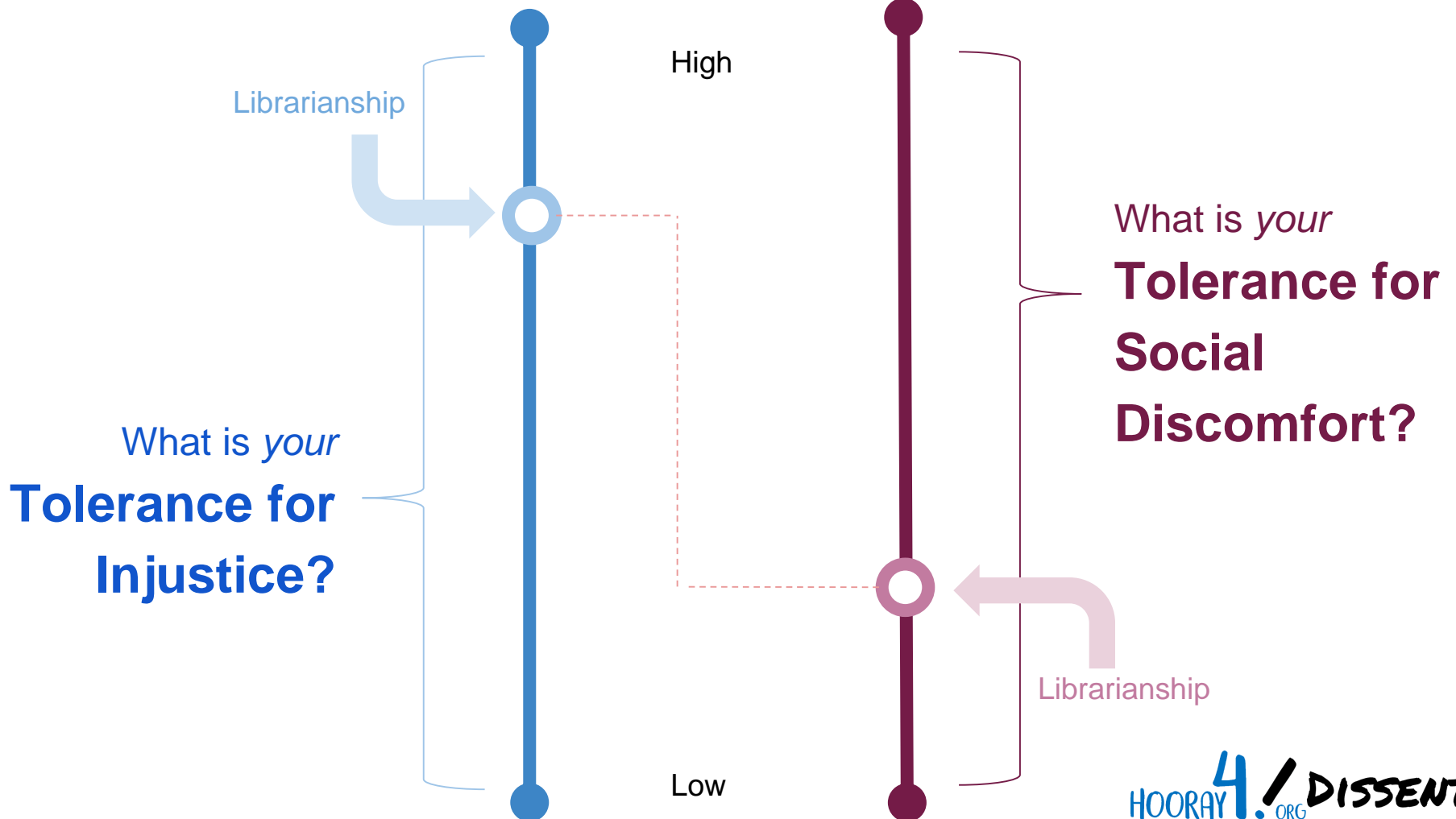


- Chaos:
- Power of Individual Gatekeepers:
- Success measured by benefit to ALL members:
- Ability to evolve positively:
- Predictability:
- Influence=contribution of knowledge and intelligence

Relinquishing power increases benefit

***What ideas never surface because
we imagine we already have
all the answers?***

--Cherie Moraga, Preface to the 4th Ed of *This Bridge Called My Back*



Intentionality in Self-Dissent

Awareness of your own habits that keep you from being an effective co-creator of the world you want to live in.

- **Authenticity and Motivation:** Emotions, purposefulness, tolerance for injustice, ability to speak with authority on behalf of others.
- **Level of understanding:** Do I understand the systems that will be affected by my action or inaction? What information do I need to seek or intelligence do I need to build to better understand the impact of my action or inaction?
- **Power and privilege:** What power structures, privilege, and/or oppression am I not considering. What injustice will occur if I do not dissent? Am I okay with that?
- **Alternatives:** Is this the best time, place, and manner? Are there other frameworks or modes of thought that might be more useful?
- **Risk:** Lastly, what are the risks if I voice dissent? Is the value gained worth the risk? What is the worst case scenario?

Dissent against “the Must”: resisting hyperbole

- **Reinforces unquestioned “best practices”** which have good intentions but reinforce an expert-imposter (or gatekeeper) problem, while diminishing place-based design, systemic thinking, and active criticism
eg. “Librarians must adopt data-driven decision making.”
- **Can value future trends over community knowledge** in design, seeing community members as at the whim of, rather than active creators of, the future
eg. “Libraries must focus on STEM programming to stay relevant.”
- **Can be a symptom of reductionist thinking** that seeks simplified solutions while distracting from tackling complex racial and socio-economic problems
eg. “Libraries must seek collection development efficiencies if we want to exist in 20 years.”

Toward a Culture of Criticism

Some questions to ask:

- **Structural:** Is the project openly accessible? Does the research reinforce unhelpful gatekeeping structures? Is a speaker referring to work you can't access because it's behind paywalls? Is an initiative's purpose and funding clear?
- **Contextual:** What is the context in which this initiative was developed? What were the motivations of those involved? What voices were not heard? Does it tackle big systemic problems, or just make tweaks to the current paradigm?
- **Power and Privilege:** Is this program designed to be supportive or subversive of dominant power structures? Is money or career advancement in play? Are leaders acting as gatekeepers rather than path builders and gate openers? Is it aware of oppression, or does it assume irrelevance of privilege?

Problems posited

1. Librarianship is a deeply little-c conservative field in practice (see neutrality, preservation, risk avoidance).
2. Library leaders favor design thinking minus critical thinking.
3. In its support of best practices, librarianship supports the current oppressive hegemony.
4. Inclusivity cannot be supported while also supporting the hegemony.

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