

Practicing Perspective

CoLab.
Complexity | Collaboration | Co-design | Co-creation

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Systemic Design Community of Practice (SDCoP)



Systemic Design CoP

Our Aspirations:

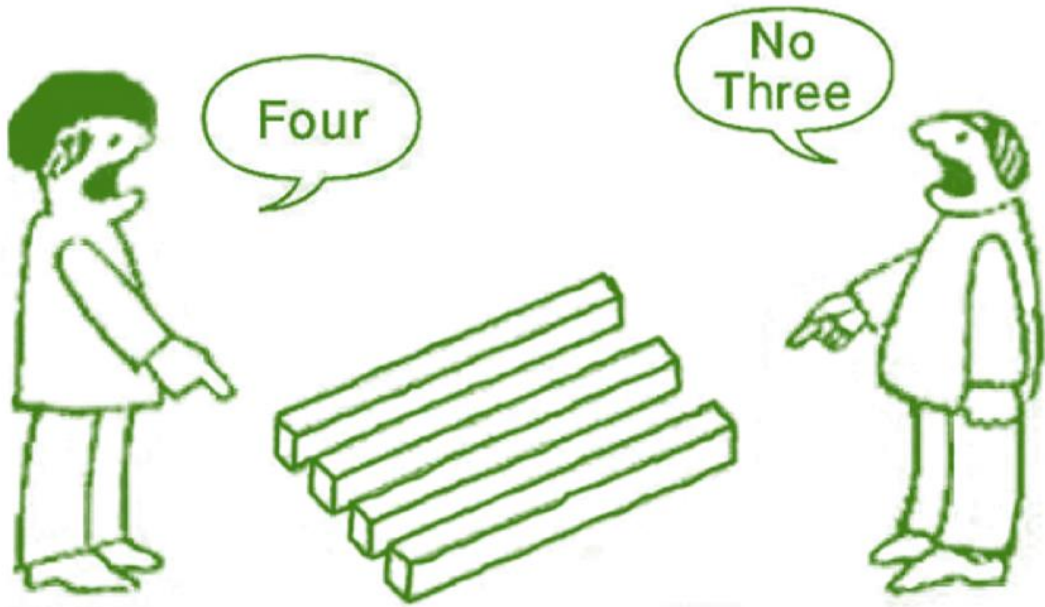
- ❑ **Build** the field of practice around systemic design and social innovation approaches in the GoA.
- ❑ **Catalyze** and **inspire** new ways of working on old problems.
- ❑ **Provide** a safe space for GoA staff to learn from each other, with each other.

We do this by:

- ❑ **Designing** sessions with a mix of theory and learning by practicing.
- ❑ Being **open** and willing to **share** our experiences with others.
- ❑ Having **fun** – we take our work seriously, not ourselves.

System change is catalyzed by
significant shifts
in the typical
RULES & RELATIONSHIPS

“What do you value and what do
you think of those who
[think-act-live-experience]
differently than you?”



Perspective – Standing Still – Us and Them Moments – Integrative Thinking

Individual Reflection



How do you think about perspective?

Expanding Attention



- Focus on the **margins**.
- Be curious – ask questions to **surface assumptions**.
- Apply to **yourself**, first.

Belief



Action

Belief



knowledge

Action

Individual Reflection

A black and white photograph of a kitten lying on its back. The kitten's front paws are held up near its eyes, and its hind legs are also held up near its chest. The kitten is looking down. The background is dark, and there is a reflection of the kitten below it, suggesting it is lying on a reflective surface. The text is overlaid on the image.

**We all run and stand still at times.
Where do you often find yourself?**

Group Work: Scenario

YOUTH in a community want to be genuinely included in the local government – to be heard in decision making across the entire spectrum of municipal issues.

From their perspective, they feel that:

- SENIOR OFFICIALS** only offer them token positions and roles related to what gets classified as ‘youth issues’.
- SENIOR OFFICIALS** continue to hold all real power and authority for planning and making change.
- SENIOR OFFICIALS** exclude and disrespect **YOUTH**.

Youth are asking:

How can we, the youth of this community, get more power from the senior officials who hold it all?

Shift your Perspective

Imagine you are the **YOUTH** in this community.

- ❑ Come up with a list of words that describe the **senior officials** – their attitudes, values, and actions.
- ❑ Next, come up with a list of words that describe the **youth (in this scenario, yourselves)** – your attitudes, values, and actions.

Shift your Perspective

Now, imagine you are the **SENIOR OFFICIALS** in this community.

- ❑ Come up with a list of words that describe the **youth** – their attitudes, values, and actions.
- ❑ Next, come up with a list of words that describe the **senior officials (in this scenario, yourselves)** – **your** attitudes, values, and actions.

Describing

Youth

Youth
describing
Youth

Youth
describing
Officials

Officials

Officials
describing
Youth

Officials
describing
Officials

Youth

Officials

Described

par·a·dox

/'perə,däks/

noun

1. a **seemingly** absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be **well-founded** or true.



Integrative Thinking

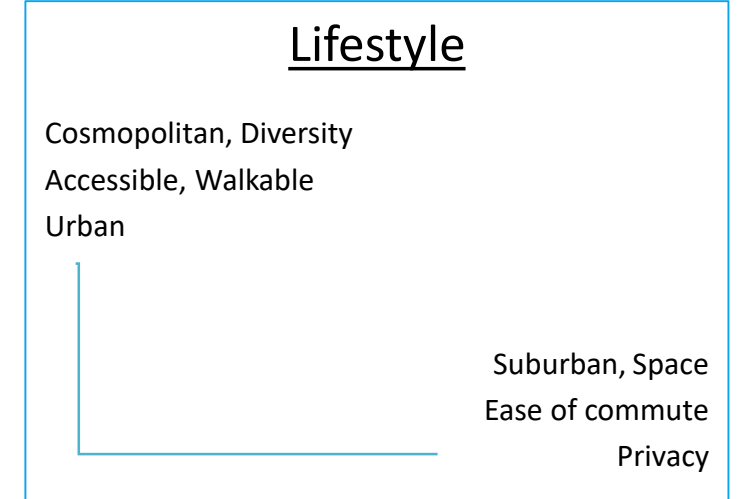
“The ability to face **constructively** the **tension** of opposing ideas and, instead of choosing one at the expense of another, generate a **creative resolution** of the tension in the form of a **new** idea that **contains elements** of the opposing ideas but is **superior** to each.”

- Roger Martin, *The Opposable Mind*

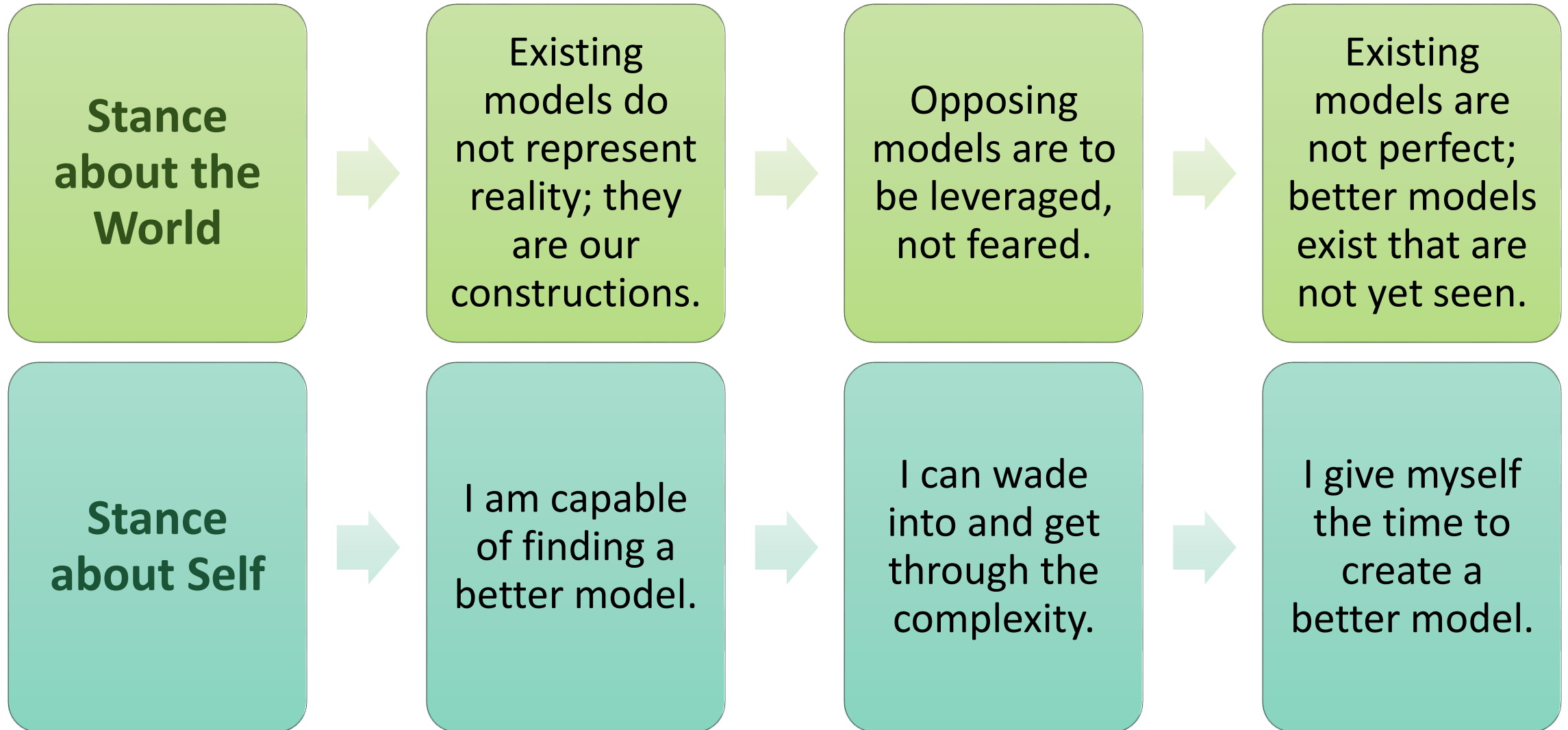


Integrative Thinking

- ❑ **Values** resist and oppose each other.
- ❑ **We can choose** between opposing values or create/identify innovative combinations.
- ❑ More potential value is created through **combinations**.
- ❑ The **harmony** of the integration can be no better than the harmony and mutuality of those who create it.
- ❑ Confronting dilemmas is both **dangerous** and **rewarding**, threatening on the one hand to disintegrate the organization and yet offering the potential for transformation of the problem domain.



Standing Still/Cultivating Stance



Do **not** have an **obvious answer**.

Contain the **embedded assumptions** we hold about a situation.

Wicked Questions

Contain a **paradox** or **tension** (the horns of the dilemma) that demands an **innovative/integrated response**.

Include a paradox that demands **reconciliation of perceived opposites**, both seen as **valuable**.

Shift your Perspective

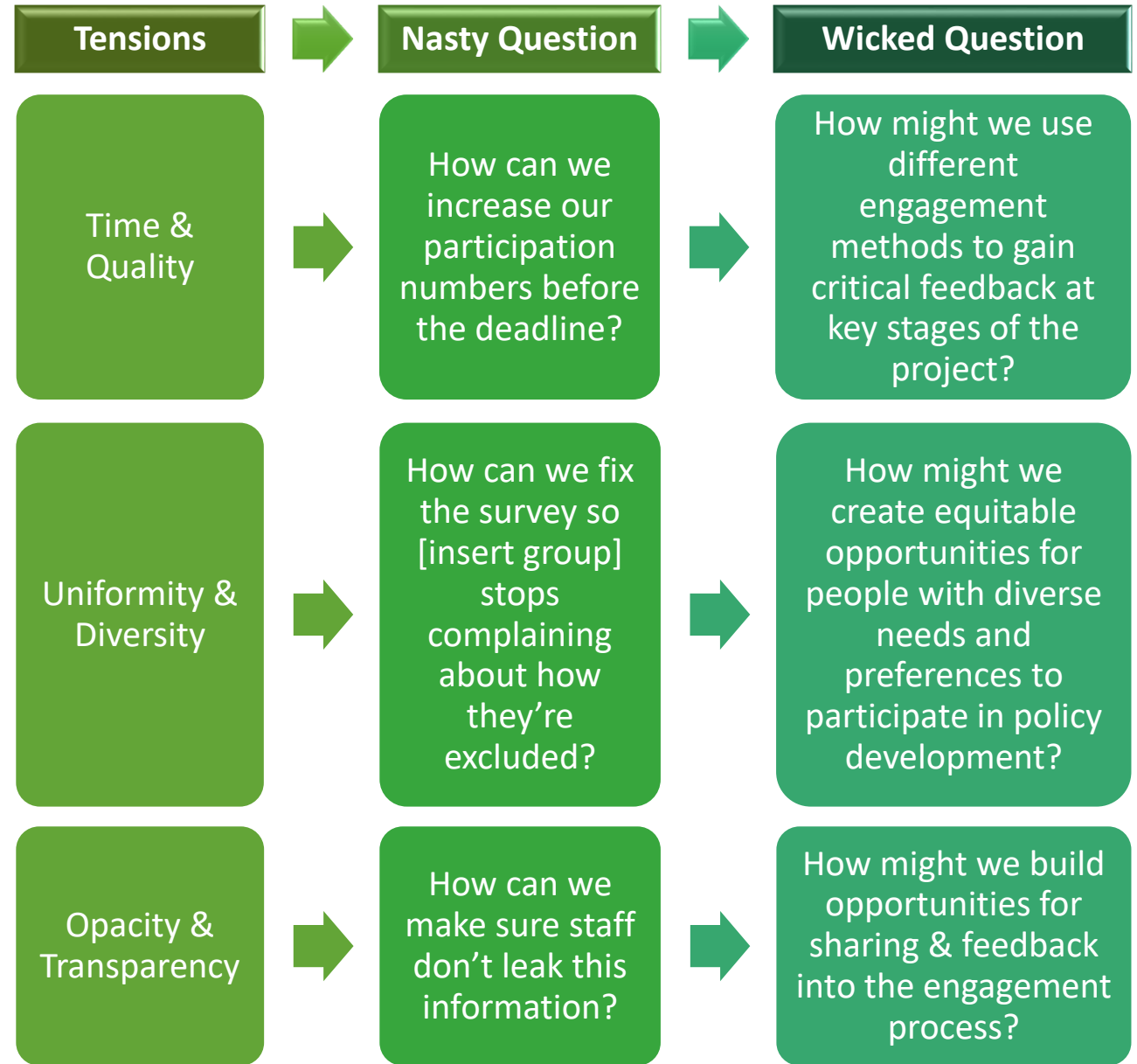
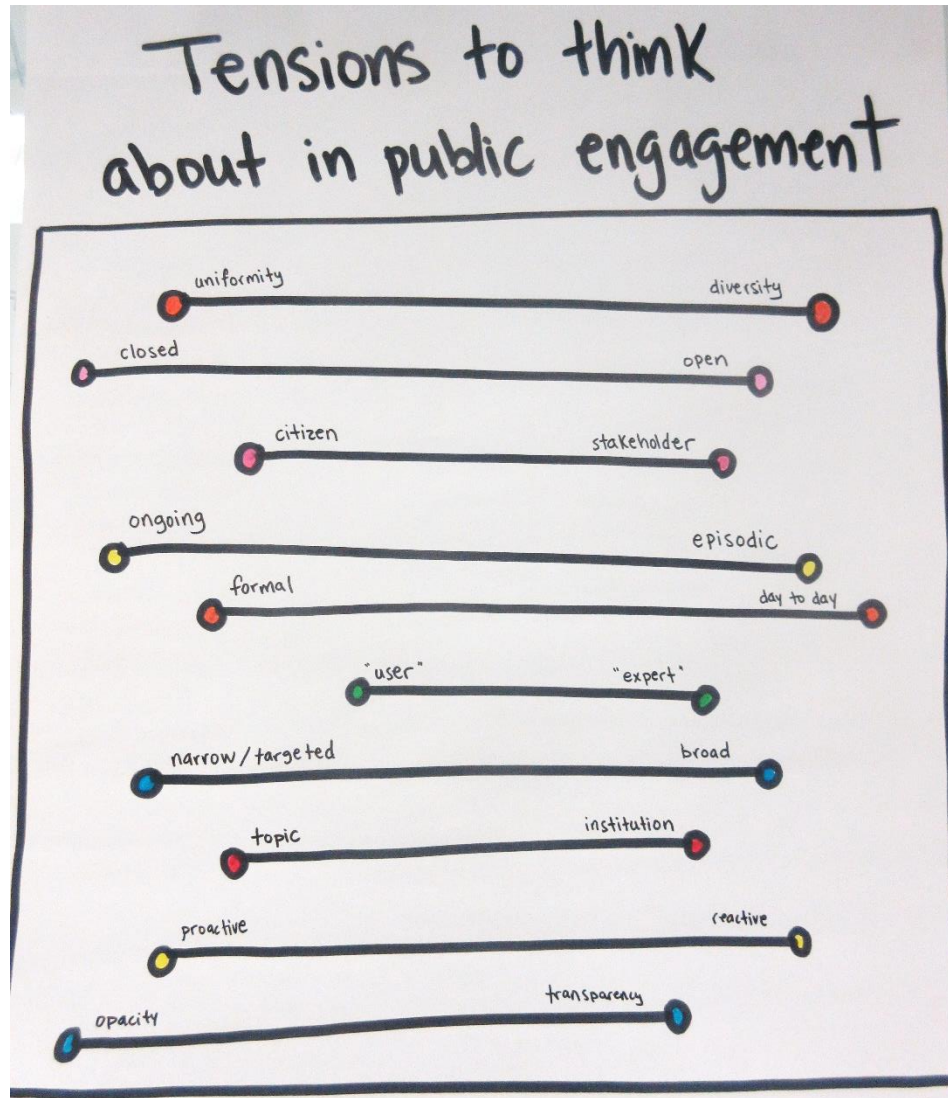
What new questions – that incorporate **both** perspectives (**youth** and **senior officials**) – might be useful for moving forward?

Wicked Questions

- ❑ Make sure you express **both sides** of the paradox in an **appreciative** form: “How is it that we are _____ and we are _____ simultaneously?” and not in opposition of each other.
- ❑ Avoid nasty questions that appoint **blame** or are **unbalanced** on one side. Here is an example of a nasty question: “How can we focus on our customers when we are forced to spend more and more time on the headquarters’ bureaucracy?”
- ❑ Avoid **data questions** that can be answered with more analysis.



Example



A black and white photograph of a small, fluffy kitten looking down at its paws. The kitten is the central focus, with its head tilted downwards and its front paws visible. The background is a dark, solid color. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

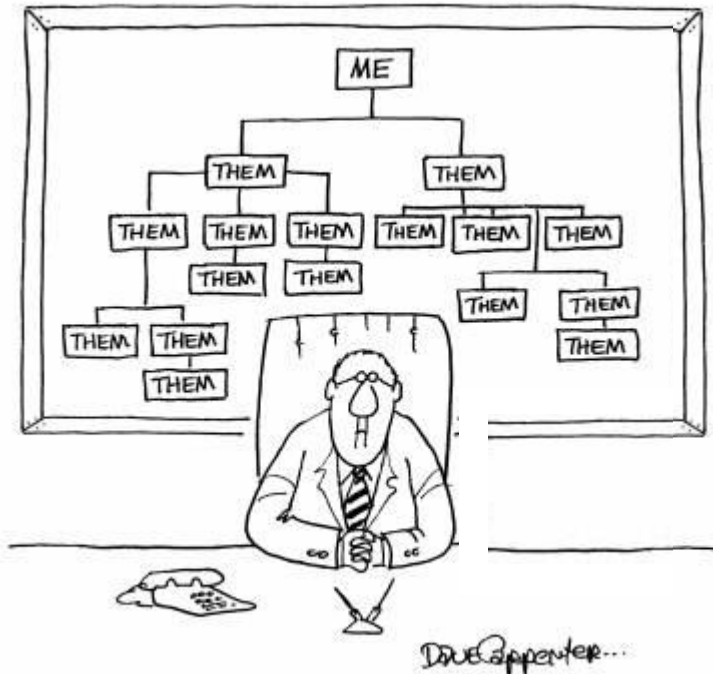
Individual Reflection

What is something in your work that can – and does! – easily slip into the categories of THEM AND US?

Find a new-to-you partner.

Share your **PERSPECTIVE** on something that shows up in your work that could easily fall into the category of

US AND THEM



- Work individually, in pairs, or alone-together to complete the worksheet. (30 min)
- Team up with another pair – briefly share your work. Spend more time sharing your thoughts and insights on your experience of practicing perspective. (15 min)

- ❑ 'Us and them' thoughts damage relationship.
- ❑ Relationships are foundational for change.
- ❑ We build relationships by seeking to understand before seeking to be understood.
- ❑ This requires us to stand still.
- ❑ Perspective matters – ours and others'.

Moving Beyond

- ❑ Practice **standing still**. Alone and together.
- ❑ Seek to understand the source – your own **perspective** and others’.
- ❑ Mix it up – **expand your attention**.
- ❑ Consider rules AND **relationships**.
- ❑ Set **expectations**. Help yourself and others be **accountable**.



Individual Reflection

Reflect on the session today.

What is front of mind for you?

How might you apply today's concepts in your work/life?