

# Too many cooks or not enough kitchens?

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I love open communities

# Open space... ?







<https://opensource.com/open-organization/resources/open-org-definition>

Open orgs are characterized by:

- Transparency
- Inclusivity
- Adaptability
- Collaboration
- Community



**The problem with successful open communities....**



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**is that people want to join them.**







**An open working space...**





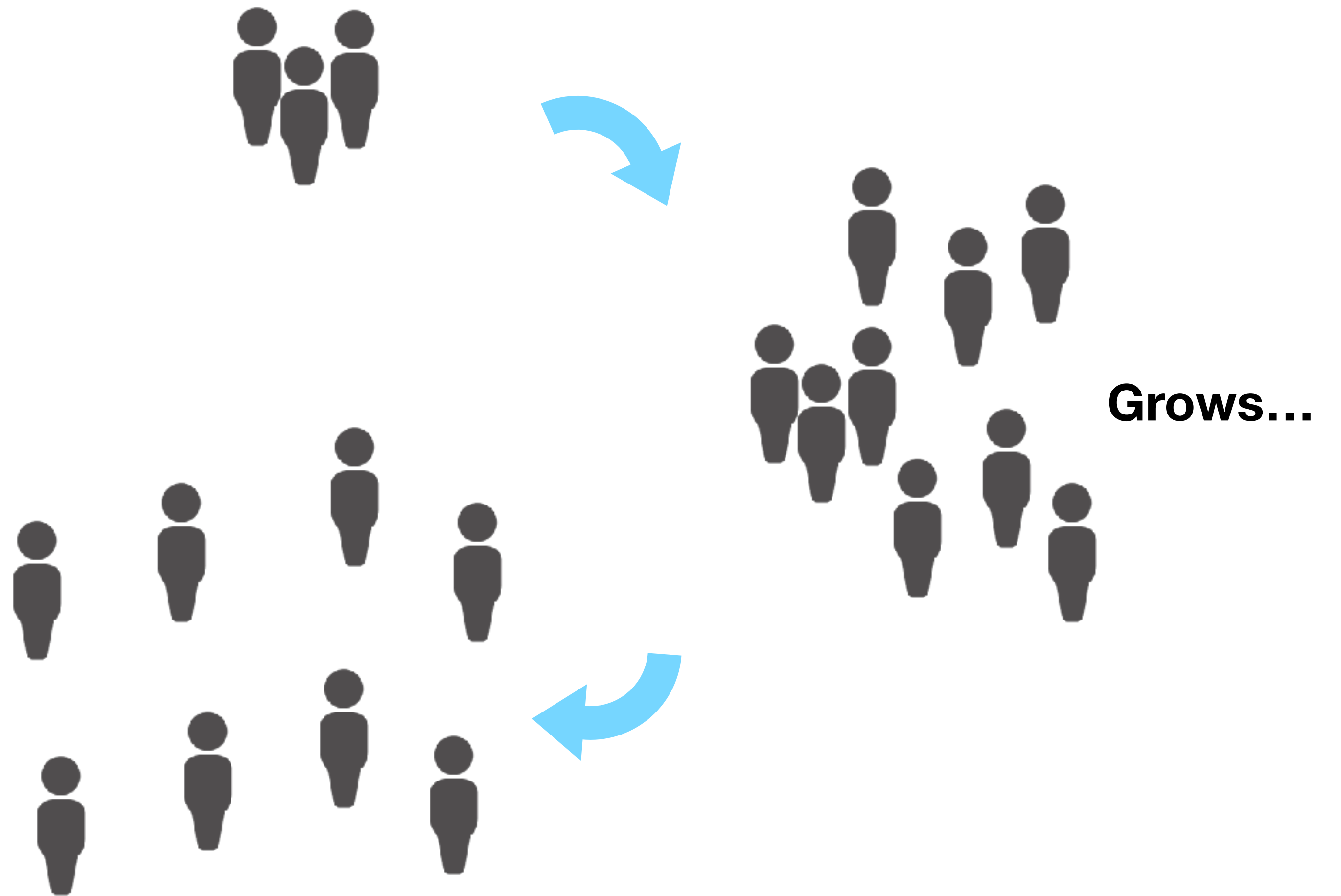
**An open working space...**



**Grows...**



**An open working space...**

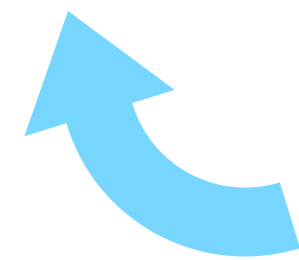


**Relationships deteriorate...**

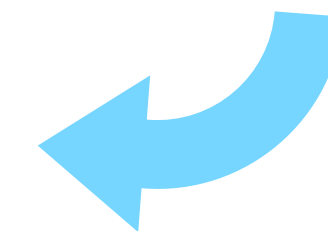
**An open working space...**



**And the space dies**



**Grows...**



**Relationships deteriorate...**







# Why does this keep happening?

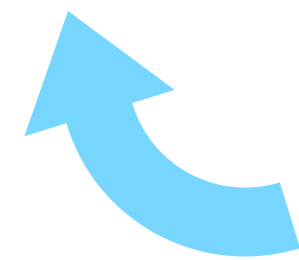


# The collapse of spaces

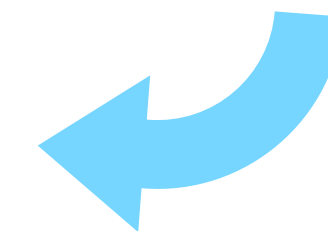
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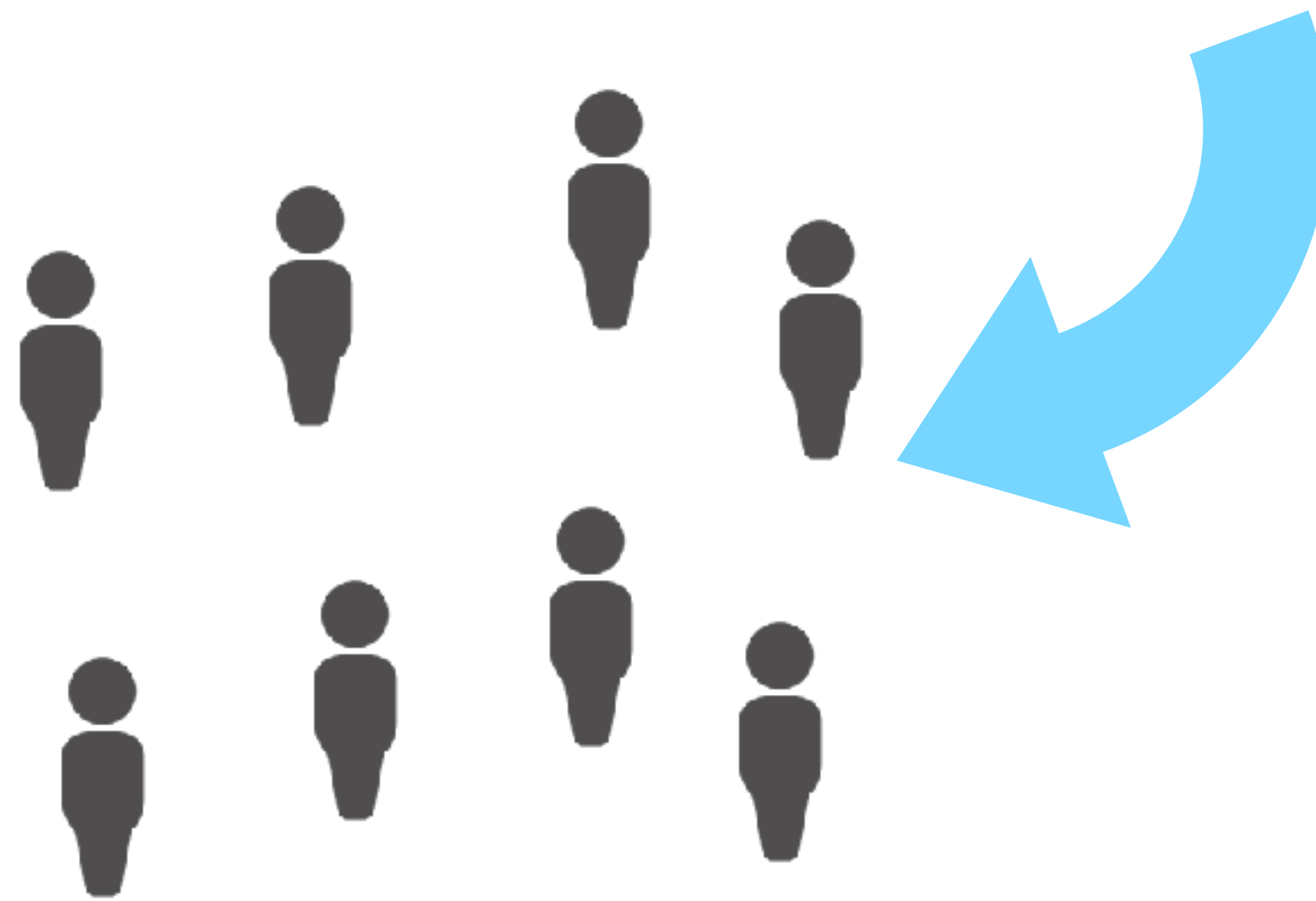
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# What's really going on here?



**Relationships deteriorate**



**Is there such a thing as “just too big”?**

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**Yes and no.**

**Business academics largely agree that yes, there is an optimal team size and optimal meeting size.**



# THE perfect team size:

Framework/Approach	Team Size
Scrum 2017	3 to 9
Scrum 2020	Less than 10
Scaled Agile Framework	5 to 11
Wider accepted number (magical number 7 plus or minus two)	5 to 9
Research from Hackman and Vidmar (perfect team size)	4.6
Research from Ivan Steiner (peak productivity)	5
Elon Musk from an interview (maximum number of people in a meeting)	4 to 5
Jennifer Mueller, Professor at Wharton	no more than 5

Apostolos in <https://www.leadingbeat.com/what-is-the-ideal-team-size-and-why-it-is-important/>

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  - find logistics manageable
  - deeply understand others' positions
  - feel psychologically safe

**The joy of structure**

**Any social group has structures, it's just a question of whether they're visible.**



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Effective movements raise leaders based on

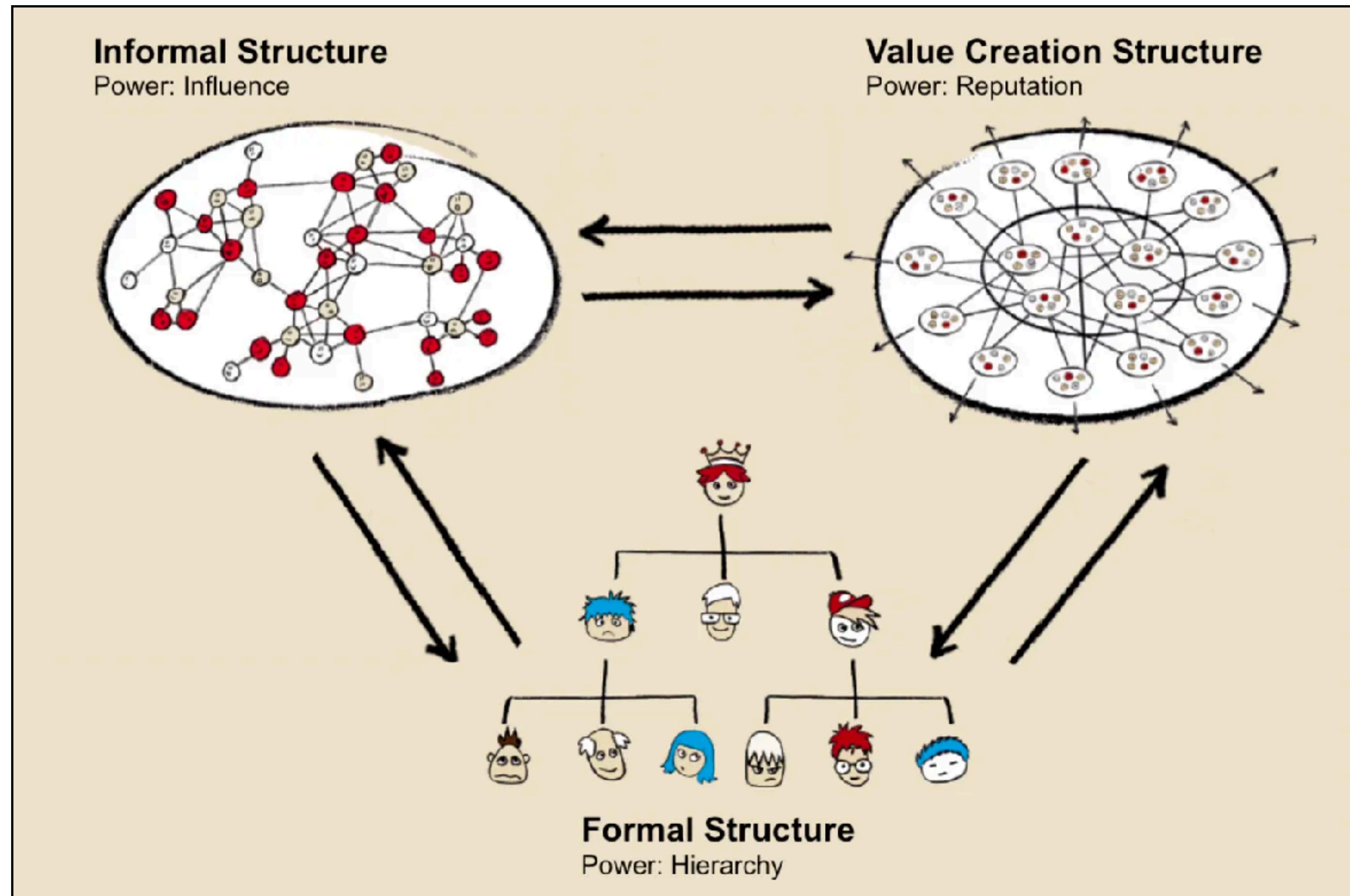
- Competence
- Dedication to cause
- Talents
- Potential contribution



**Make existing structures visible, then use agreed mechanisms for evolving them.**

For software companies, the problem is *three* structures in tension: informal, formal, and value-creating.

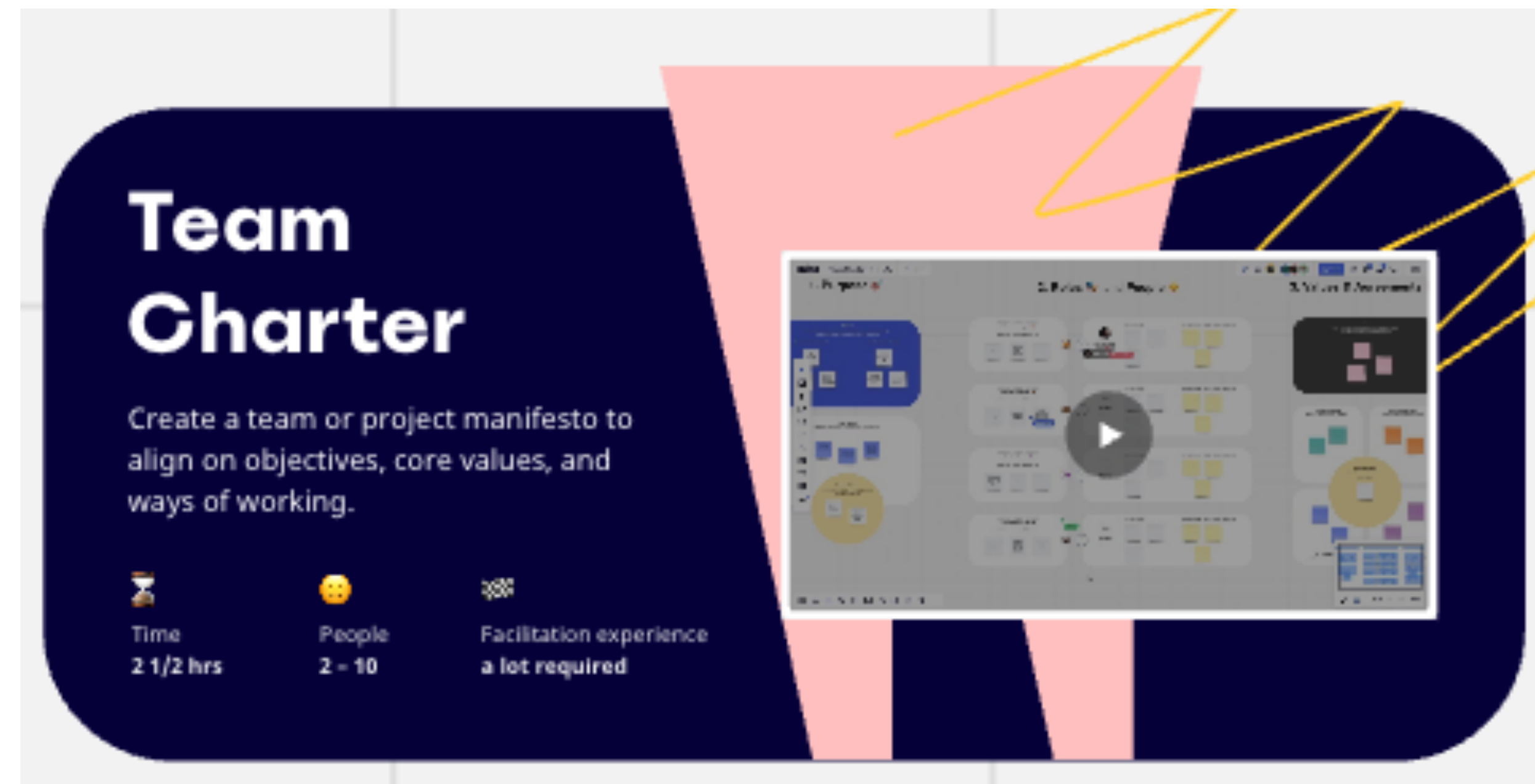
# Org Physics (Beta Codex)





# Team internals: Team charter (Miro)

1. Purpose 🎯
2. Roles 🎭 & People 🐥
3. Values & Agreements 📜



# Between teams: Team API (Team Topologies)

## Team API

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Date:

- Team name and focus:
- Team type:
- Part of a Platform? (y/n) Details:
- Do we provide a service to other teams? (y/n) Details:
- What kind of Service Level Expectations do other teams have of us?
- Software owned and evolved by this team:
- Versioning approaches:
- Wiki search terms:
- Chat tool channels: #\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_
- Time of daily sync meeting:

Team type: (Stream-Aligned, Enabling, Complicated Subsystem, Platform)

**Principle 1: Fundamental building block is the team.**

**Principle 2: Different techniques are useful for designing team spaces vs between-team spaces.**



**Principle 3: Team structures should serve the purpose, and always aim to be lightweight, visible, and regularly maintained.**

**Are networks of 5-8 person  
teams the only way?**

**No.**

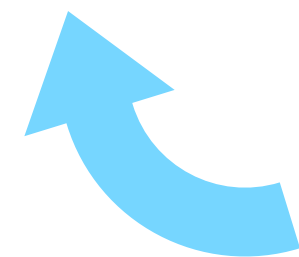
**Business culture creates an environment where networks of teams are a good answer.**



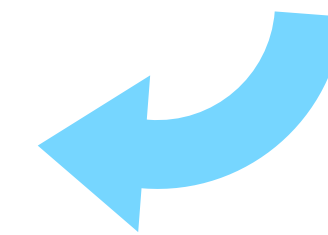
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# The Tragedy of the Commons







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**The Tragedy of the Commons is not real.**



Elinor Ostrom demonstrated that the Tragedy of the Commons is *not* inevitable.

She documented systems for sustainably managing resources.

# Design principles for common resource management (Ostrom)

- 1. Define clear group boundaries.**
2. Match rules governing use of common goods to local needs and conditions.
3. Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules.
4. Make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by outside authorities.
5. Develop a system, carried out by community members, for monitoring members' behavior.
6. Use graduated sanctions for rule violators.
7. Provide accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution.
8. Build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system.

**What makes this so hard?**



**Reason #1 this is so hard:**

**Excluding people is *really* difficult**

“Inviting people is easy. Excluding people can be hard. ‘The more the merrier,’ we are told from childhood....

At the risk of dissenting from millennia of advice along these lines, let me say this, you will have begun to gather with purpose when you learn to exclude with purpose. When you learn to close doors....

[T]houghtful, considered exclusion is vital to any gathering, because over-inclusion is a symptom of deeper problems — above all, a confusion about why you are gathering and a lack of commitment to your purpose and your guests.”

- Priya Parker, *The Art of Gathering*

**Reason #2 this is so hard:**

**It takes work. A lot of work.**

**So about “transparent”....**





Image: the glass house by Tom Hart



**Creating healthy spaces is high-value work.**

Is it really *work*?

**Is it really *work*?**

**Yes.**



# Glue work, aka “interpretive labor”, aka “non-promotable tasks”

- Directing attention to important risks
- Promoting standards
- Spotting misunderstandings
- Facilitating productive conversations
- Recording decisions
- Organizing team resources
- Improving working agreements
- Communicating outside team
- Seeking alternative perspectives
- Dealing with disagreement
- Fielding requests

- Onboarding new members
- Improving inclusivity
- Managing stakeholders
- Scheduling
- Making team materials accessible
- Hiring support
- Interpreting signals and data
- Giving feedback
- Making code shareable
- General humaning
- etc.

**Reason #3 this is so hard:**

**Commitment to purpose takes courage  
and determination**

**Without putting the work in, shared purpose diffuses and eventually evaporates.**





Image: [City Foodsters](#), CC BY 2.0 ,



# Is this the death of open?

**Is this the death of open?**

**No.**



# Purpose

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Transparency

Inclusivity

Adaptability

Collaboration

Community

# All the links

- **The Open Organization** <https://opensource.com/open-organization/resources/open-org-definition>
- **Ideal team size rollup** <https://www.leadingbeat.com/what-is-the-ideal-team-size-and-why-it-is-important/>
- **Tyranny of Structurelessness** <https://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>
- **Org Physics** <https://nielspflaeging.medium.com/org-physics-the-3-faces-of-every-company-df16025f65f8>
- **Example Team Charter** <https://miro.com/templates/team-charter/>
- **Team API Template** <https://github.com/TeamTopologies/Team-API-template>
- **Elinor Ostrom's 8 Principles of Managing the Commons** <https://www.onthecommons.org/magazine/elinor-ostroms-8-principles-managing-commons/index.html>
- **The Art of Gathering** <https://bookshop.org/p/books/the-art-of-gathering-how-we-meet-and-why-it-matters-priya-parker/588739>
- **Glue Work** <https://noidea.dog/glue>
- Bonus! **Transparency is surveillance** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JEzXL5OXPI>
- Bonus! **Team Topologies** <https://teampologies.com/book>
- Bonus! **The original blog post** <https://medium.com/@ElizAyer/organizational-boundary-problems-too-many-cooks-or-not-enough-kitchens-2ddedc6de26a>

# Thank you!

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