

NeurodiVentures

Equipping autistic people for collaboration for life

divergent minds
deep innov**ation**
neuro **di v**entures

Autistic Collaboration

AutCollab.org acts as a hub for mutual support, and encourages neurodivergent individuals and ventures to connect and establish **long-term collaborations**.

Collaboration can take many forms, and different people have different needs and preferences. Autistic people learn and play differently, and only have a limited (if any!) interest in competitive social games. We communicate and enjoy ourselves by sharing information and knowledge, and not by negotiating social status.

– Jorn Bettin



<https://autcollab.org/about/>

Busyness as usual



<https://autcollab.org/2018/09/03/genuine-appreciation-of-neurodiversity/>

People **management** and **bullying**

Our society has been constructed such that certain forms of bullying are deemed acceptable / legal / necessary and such that other forms of bullying are deemed as unacceptable and illegal. Upon closer examination the boundary, which is inevitably fuzzy, is an arbitrary one.

This is why I consistently prefer to talk about coordination and **trusted collaboration at eye level rather than “management”.**

In “civilised” society “collaboration” is conceptualised as:

- negotiating social status and power gradients
- competing against each other using culturally defined rules

<https://autcollab.org/2019/08/05/people-management-and-bullying/>

NeurodiVentures

NeurodiVenture : *an inclusive non-hierarchical organisation operated by neurodivergent people that provides a **safe** and **nurturing** environment for divergent thinking, creativity, exploration, and collaborative niche construction.*

Don't worry if you are not yet part of a NeurodiVenture or autistic community. If you are interested in establishing a NeurodiVenture or in implementing a neurodiversity friendly operating model within your company, the open source operating model template from S23M may be a useful starting point.

<https://autcollab.org/community/neurodiventures/>

Prerequisites for a **neurodiversity friendly** culture

Language frames people's thoughts and emotional response. Consistently use words that can improve our lives:

- **Niche construction** and **symbiosis** rather than **competition**
– to create organisations and services that are fit for purpose and valued by the wider community
- **Company** rather than **business** – to focus on the people and things we care about rather than what is simply keeping us busy
- **Values** rather than **value** – to avoid continuously discounting what is priceless
- **Physical waste** rather than **wealth** – to focus us on the metrics that do matter
- **Human scale** and **individual agency** rather than **large-scale** and **growth** – to create structures and systems that are understandable and relatable
- **Competency networks** rather than **leadership** – to get things done and distribute decision making to where the knowledge resides
- **Coordination** rather than **management** – to address all the stuff that can increasingly be automated, management is often the biggest obstacle to automation
- **Creativity** and **divergent thinking** rather than **best-practices** – when facing the need to innovate and improve

<https://autcollab.org/2019/06/28/organising-for-neurodivergent-collaboration/>

Autistic culture

Autists are acutely aware that culture is constructed one **trusted relationship** at a time – this is the essence of fully appreciating diversity.

Inclusive culture is minimalistic.



<https://autcollab.org/2018/04/05/what-society-can-learn-from-autistic-culture/>

8 principles for value creation fuelled by **mutual trust** and zero capital

1. Clear purpose, a long term perspective, revenue sharing instead of salaries
👉 **resilience**
2. Purpose supported by 26 backbone principles
👉 an inclusive **culture of thinking and learning**
3. Employee ownership and zero debt
👉 **no distractions** by stakeholders with short term motivations and hidden agendas
4. Intensive 12 month induction and on-boarding process
👉 **a foundation of mutual understanding**
5. Organising around the talents and needs of specific people
👉 ability to benefit from an incredible **diversity of talents**
6. Relying entirely on equitable team-oriented incentives and zero individual incentives
👉 **elimination of in-group competition**
7. Operating an advice process instead of hierarchy
👉 **maximising learning opportunities**
8. Open source intellectual property
👉 **no barriers to flows of tacit knowledge**

**mutual
trust**

<https://autcollab.org/community/neurodiventures/>

Collaboration in a NeurodiVenture

Aligned with the purpose of **autistic collaboration**:

- interaction to learn from each other
- working with others towards a shared goal

The more we help each other to question in ways we otherwise wouldn't – and correspondingly discover new insights about the world and ourselves, the more we are able to learn from each other, and the more we start to understand each other.

The gift that members of NeurodiVentures bring to the world is the (re)generative potential of all the **trusted relationships** that they co-create.

<https://autcollab.org/2017/09/30/social/>

A simple **advice process** creates a learning organisation

Before making a major decision that affects others in the organisation

1. **A person has to seek advice** from at least one **trusted colleague** with potentially relevant or complementary knowledge or expertise.
2. **Giving advice is optional.** It is okay to admit lack of expertise. This enables the requestor to proceed on the basis of the available evidence.
3. **Following advice is optional.** The requestor may ignore advice if she/he believes that all things considered there is a better approach or solution. Not receiving advice in a timely manner is deemed equivalent to no relevant advice being available within the organisation. This allows everyone to balance available wisdom with first hand learning and risk taking.
4. **A few simple prosocial design principles provide guidance for dealing with people who regularly ignore relevant advice** (or consistently refuse to seek or give advice) and therefore regularly **cause downstream problems for others** as a result. Such situations are obvious for all involved. A persistent breakdown of collaboration either results in a significant change in behaviour once the downstream problems are recognised, or in the non-cooperative person leaving the organisation.

More information: Frederic Laloux, page 22 in *Reinventing Organisations* <http://www.reinventingorganizations.com/>

Creating **good company**

*“Study after study confirms that most people have about five intimate friends, 15 close friends, **50 general friends** and 150 acquaintances. This threshold is imposed by brain size and chemistry, as well as the time it takes to maintain meaningful relationships”, Dunbar says.*
– *Scientific American, September 2018*

These numbers guide my thinking on human scale and have shaped the NeurodiVenture operating model that limits the size of good company to **50 people.**

(in the case of S23M enforced by our company constitution)

Larger organisations that contain structures of command and control are not only learning disabled, they are also also detrimental to mental health and trusted collaboration.

<https://autcollab.org/2019/06/28/organising-for-neurodivergent-collaboration/>

Appreciating human cognitive limits

I could compile a long list of advantages of the NeurodiVenture operating model supported by 8 years of operating experience (following 10 years of lessons with various other operating models), but

many of these advantages are simply corollaries of the cognitive limits highlighted by Dunbar's research, which by the way are intuitively understood and adhered to by “uncivilised” societies.

<https://autcollab.org/2019/06/28/organising-for-neurodivergent-collaboration/>

Prosocial core design principles @ S23M

Applying evolutionary science to coordinate action, avoid disruptive behaviours among group members, and cultivate appropriate relationships with other groups in a multi-group ecosystem (the work of Elinor Ostrom, Michael Cox and David Sloan Wilson)

Supports an open and inclusive **neurodiverse** & creative team

Tailored Core Design Principles:

1. **Trusted relationships within the group** and strong understanding of purpose
2. Fair distribution of costs and benefits
3. Fair and inclusive decision-making
4. Fast and empathetic conflict resolution
5. Authority to self-govern
6. Appropriate relations with other groups
7. Tracking agreed upon behaviours
8. Graduated responses to transgressions to prevent a person or a subgroup from gaining power over others

A working **advice process** minimises the need for tracking

Fair and inclusive distribution of resources minimises the need for coercion

Sharing individual **competency networks**

Within a good company (smaller than 50 people) and especially within a team, everyone is acutely aware of the competencies of all the other members.

In a NeurodiVenture all members expose (write down and share) these so-called individual competency networks for the benefit of everyone within the company.

Transparency of individual competency networks enables meta knowledge (who has which knowledge and **who entrusts whom with questions or needs** in relation to specific domains of knowledge) to flow freely with an organisation.

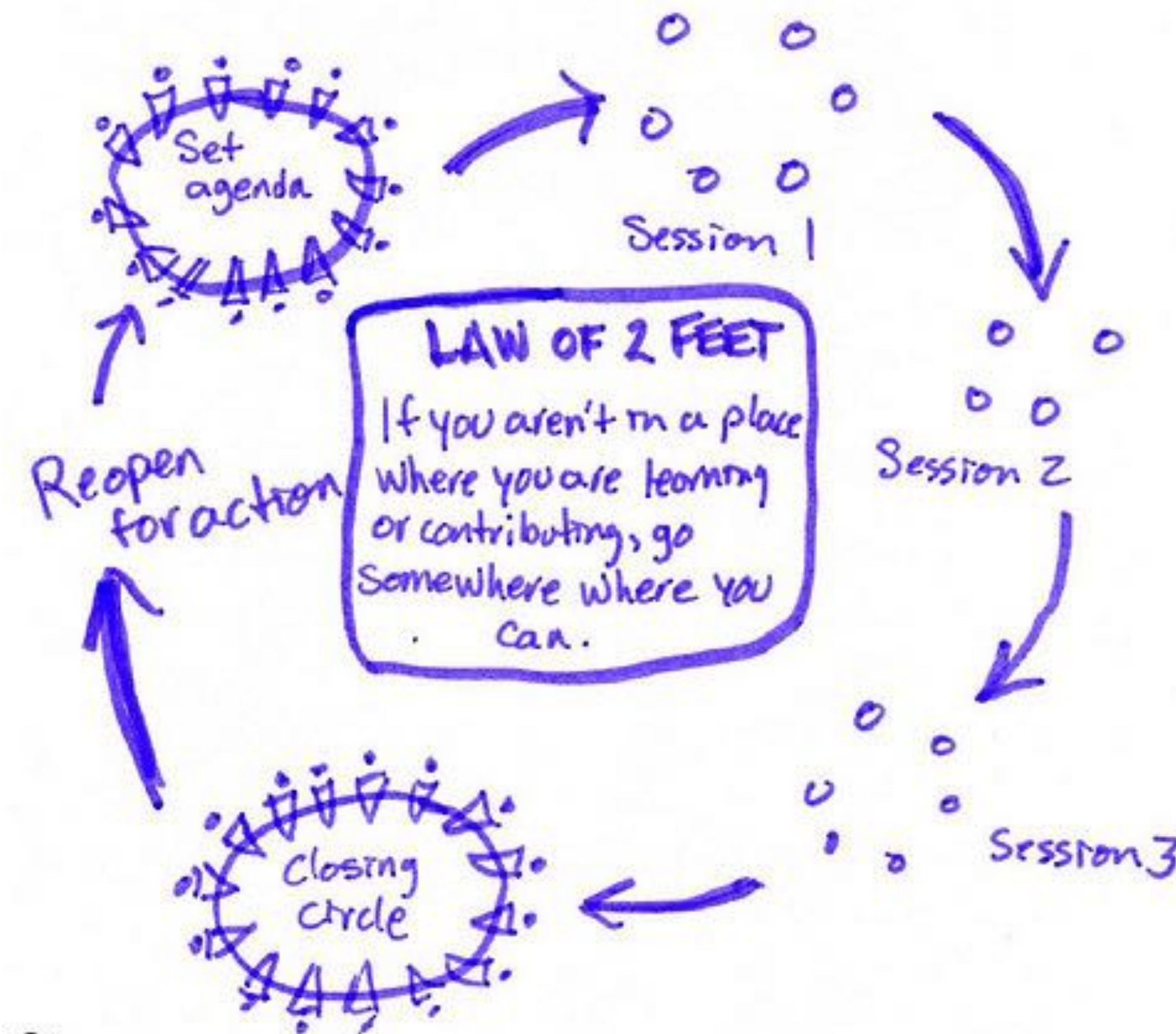
The result is an immensely valuable index of competencies consisting of up to 50 unique perspectives on the company. These perspectives are not merged into some absurd attempt to create a unique source of truth.

All perspectives are considered equally valid. Collectively their presence allows the company to rapidly respond intelligently and with courage to all kinds of external events, by drawing on collective intelligence in a very literal sense.

<https://autcollab.org/2019/06/28/organising-for-neurodivergent-collaboration/>

Using **Open Space** to catalyse knowledge flows

Whoever comes are the right people.
Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
When it starts is the right time.
When it's over, it's over.



Source: Owen

https://youtu.be/M_jhcvCYBbg

The collaborative sauce of good company

The three essential ingredients of the collaborative (not secret) sauce of good company:

1. Explicit individual competency networks
2. The 8 trust-reinforcing organisational principles and rituals
3. The more generic tailored 8 pro-social core design principles

The NeurodiVenture model is the result of incremental evolution.

The 8 trust-reinforcing principles and rituals are not unique to our approach and have proven their worth in various contexts. At S23M we started with these 8 orthogonal principles and rituals as an initial minimal viable operating model. Then several painful lessons prompted us to add the prosocial principles.

In summary: a NeurodiVenture creates an island of sanity and provides a sane interface to an insane outside world.

<https://autcollab.org/2019/06/28/organising-for-neurodivergent-collaboration/>

Example : S23M

The purpose of **S23M** is shaped by our core values. Our motivations relate to five dimensions:

1. *Symbols*: co-creating organisations and systems which are understandable by future generations of humans and software tools
2. *Nature*: maximising biodiversity
3. *Artefacts*: minimising waste
4. *Society*: creating a more human and neurodiversity friendly environment
 - Generating **more trust** – less surprising misunderstandings, more collaborative risk taking, less exploitation, more mutual aid
 - Generating **more learning** – more open knowledge sharing, less indirect language, less hierarchical control, deeper understanding
 - Generating **more diversity** – more appreciation of difference, less coercion, more curiosity
5. *Critical self-reflection*: balancing the other four dimensions in terms of sustainability, resilience, and happiness

<https://s23m.com/about/index.html>

The future of neurodivergent collaboration

Organisations are best thought of as **cultural organisms**. Groups of organisations with compatible operating models can be thought of as a **cultural species**. The **human genus** is the genus that includes all cultural species.

The NeurodiVenture operating model is the social DNA of an emergent cultural species that has developed an immune system that enables it to survive and even thrive in three complementary contexts:

1. within super-human scale societies afflicted by terminal cancer
2. within social environments that contain a growing number of NeurodiVentures
3. within social environments that contain other human scale cultural species within the human genus

<https://jornbettin.com/2019/07/29/evolution-of-social-ecosystems/>

Thank you!

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*Nothing beats capturing the knowledge flow
of leading domain experts to co-create
organisations & systems that are
understandable by future generations of
humans & software tools.*