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Business without firms. A planetary design language for DAOs

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Business without firms. A planetary design language for DAOs

Abstract

Decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs) promise to be an incubator for a regenerative, mutualist, and democratic economy. But if business is no longer done in firms and workers are neither employed nor managed – what else? This paper argues that a new production architecture inevitably involves an uncomfortable look at the idea of ‘business’ itself, requiring us to reconsider deeply ingrained ideas of scale, ownership, and control. Here, you will find three provocations to institutionally re-imagine DAOs for a planetary-conscious future. Bear with me.

Doing business is synonymous with the organizational architecture of firms, employment, and management. Designed in the industrial era, these forms of collective action and production are premised on the imperialist idea of ever-expanding growth, consumption, and profit (Banerjee and Arjaliès, 2021). Even though we know too well that this setup nudges us to treat humans and nature as exploitable resources while avoiding the systemic consequences of shareholder maximization as mere ‘externalities,’ it proves hard to imagine alternatives (Mulgan, 2022).

In this paper, I look at DAOs as in-between creatures. Emancipatory spaces of collective imagination for a new regenerative production architecture oriented towards planetary thriving (Butler and Loacker, 2022), but also communities animated and burdened by Web3’s coin hype. The instability, fraud, and enrichment inherent to the blockchain ecology could thwart their aspirations within a day. Often attributed as “Discords with a bank account” (Kreutler, 2021), DAOs equip peer-to-peer forms of organizing with a decisive new feature: Multi-signature accounts, like Gnosis Safe Multisig that enable like-minded people scattered around the globe to hold funds together. By issuing a token, groups can make collective ownership, participatory budgeting, and collaborative decision-making significantly easier.

The vision goes like this: The power to build may soon rest in Web3 communities and their interconnected microeconomies. Here, people organize localized, sustainable production processes based on commonly held global knowledge resources. In such cosmological production networks (Papadimitropoulos, 2023; Ramos et al., 2021), workers turn into contributors and curators, unlocking the freedom of freelancing without the precariousness of the gig economy. As various DAOs integrate into a modularized production process, former stakeholders, like employees, customers, investors, communities, and natural habitats, become co-owners and thus equitable ‘relationholders’ (Woermann and Engelbrecht, 2019). Based on the democratic limits of self-organized teams, DAOs present a technologically induced opportunity to free cooperatives from their prison of the ‘firm’ structure (Hassan and de Filippi, 2021).

After the firm?

Nathan Schneider (this volume) reminds us that this seemingly unique opportunity for economic democracy is one we have had all along. I underscore his call to learn from the wins and misses of coops, communes, social movements, P2P communities, gaming guilds, or coworking spaces. However, there is a more profound reckoning waiting. If the Web3 crowd wants to use cryptocurrencies to solve the problems of funding and scale plaguing their predecessors, they must also unearth the mythopoetical foundations that invisibly govern our understanding of business and work. This means questioning the modern image of success and happiness based on our ability to control and possess – but also the modularization of work and life in mass institutions (Suzman, 2020), and, ultimately, our place at the center of the cosmos separated from nature, from each other, and ourselves (Arendt, 1958).

Beyond our culturally contingent horizon of ‘business,’ ‘work,’ and ‘the economy,’ DAOs are a window of opportunity to expand on what Yochai Benkler

(2017) sees as the limits of commons-based peer production: Combining self-governance, shared meaning, and intrinsic motivation characteristic of flash teams and ad hoc networks with persistent social relationships. Enjoying the freedom of freelancing while participating in equitable ownership structures and mutualistic venture communities. And most importantly, cultivating shared resources or commons as the soil on which markets, property, and more-than-capitalocentric (Gibson-Graham, 2006) values can grow. Maybe the historical moment of DAOs is to squander their giddy crypto resources for a carnival of collective imagination, a burst of denormalization to tinker with a new digital production architecture.

Building on the lessons of alternative organizing and social anthropology, I propose three main impulses to consider on this journey. First, instead of distributed firms, DAOs could be thought of as *nests*: interlaced, polycentric group constellations, not individuals as basic organizational design units, embracing ecological and multi-generational thriving as their measure of success. Second, in the digital era, the idea of owning resources, land, and other species turns into *stewardship* – a custodial stance operating, for instance, in stark contrast to the NFT philosophy. It is oriented toward regenerative impact, embracing more economic values than just transactions and profits. Third, the management of subordinates gives way to distributed leadership that invites participation: *weaving* connections, rhythms, and tools developed and maintained by a community of users without recreating ‘tyrannies of structurelessness’ (Freeman, 1972) as playgrounds for informal elites.

The contours of digital production architectures have been discernable before the advent of Web3, but DAOs may push networked localization to an unprecedented scale. However, technophile utopias promising effortless governance, trustless coordination, and federated NFT copyrights are undermining the realization of this very

potential. DAOs will inevitably fail. Hangover, crypto crisis, or the legacy of big money will kick in. In this essay, I argue that their true strength is to enable a carnivalesque celebration of renewal (Ehrenreich, 2007): Boundary-spanning experiments with different forms of collaborating, voting, enterprising, sharing, co-owning, and kin-making. An unregulated, exuberant space for collective imagination, yet another step along a journey that has neither begun with DAOs nor will it end with them.

In what follows, I propose nests, stewardship, and weaving as the outset of a design language for regenerative production architectures and caution against likely pitfalls to keep this party going.

First, a confession

My coding skills never went beyond HTML tags and Squarespace design. I am a social researcher, geeking out on new forms of work and cultural theory. I do love gadgets and gaming, though, and am fascinated by the impact of tech on society. My first encounter with Web3 was in 2016, when people in my vicinity started to invest or engage in crypto projects. Curiously, I observed how they bought houses or took time off to start passion projects. Since I was doing my Ph.D. and moving my family across the continents, money was scarce, and investments were a faint wish.

But so came the opportunity to put 500 Dollars into a Web3 project: An ethically inspiring DAO, an initial coin offering, a recent ditch in crypto stocks. The time was ripe! I consider myself a savvy user who never got ripped off, never caught serious malware. Soon, my Metamask and Coinbase accounts were set. I learned on their Discord and bought my tokens at an attractive price, silently wondering about the economics behind those insane gas costs. Nevermind. Instead, my mind started rattling: What if those 500 bucks multiplied 10x, 100x? Maybe 1,000x? Then, a minor technical

issue popped up. A helpful Discord support person guided me to a website. It looked cheap. I typed in my recovery phrase. Ouch!

It is still embarrassing to face how I got so caught up in my desires for fast money that I naïvely let down my guard. This is the Wild West, not a village in the Swiss Alps! At least my foolishness serves to make a point: The vibes that keep Web3 humming are caught between capitalist and communitarian desires. On the one hand, hyper-exaggerated expectations for growth, security, and success – a shortcut to modern longings for a house, car, pool, and holidays. On the other hand, the quest for fulfillment through belonging to a community that has your back and is guided by a shared purpose.

Research holds that only the latter can lead to sustained wellbeing and fulfillment. Prosocial behavior is the source of our species' success (Raihani, 2021). We are multiple times more collaborative than primates. Living in connected and stable social worlds adds ten years to our lifespan (Dunbar, 2022). Humans inherently want to belong to something bigger, to take over the baton, to perform good and valued work in a caring place, where it gets easier to walk the rocky path of life because we do it together.

Modular lives

Unfortunately, mass institutions have largely replaced communities as species-appropriate spheres of (re-)productive socioeconomic activity. Social anthropologist Ernest Gellner (1994) recognized that Modernity split historically integrated lifeworlds into differentiated areas with limited role expectations: work, family, church, club. The resulting 'modular personality fragments' (Kallinikos, 2003) could then be integrated into hierarchical mass organizations as 'human resources,' 'consumers,' or 'clients.' From day-care, through school, to the workplace, hospital, and retirement home – we

spend most of our time in institutions, showing up as functional pieces of ourselves. Pandemic work-from-home settings have made it palpable how onerous this separation of lifeworlds, genders, and generations actually is.

Robin Dunbar's (2022) primate research, relating neocortex size to cohesive groups, tells us that our cognitive limit for stable interpersonal relationships caps around 150 people. Here, at the community level, we know who each person is and how they relate to each other. At the margins of our socio-cognitive capacities, humans can maintain five intimate friendships but remember the names of 1,500 people. Historically, societies developed within these bounds as multi-level systems comprised of overlapping group constellations: families within bands, bands within communities, communities within tribes (Graeber and Wengrow, 2021).

Giving up layered group structures as the basic principle of organizational architecture in favor of mass-organized modular individualism was useful in controlling large aggregations of people, assets, and value chains. However, we have dangerously surpassed the lifespan of this design. It is ill-equipped to deal with the levels of environmental destruction, technological risk, and organized immaturity that it has spawned as 'externalities.' Moreover, in recent decades, the 'role module' work has dominated and marginalized the other modules, resulting in high levels of burnout (Petersen, 2019), excessive self-expression (Ekman, 2013), and loneliness (Dunbar, 2022).

My point is that underneath the challenge to tackle centralization, hierarchy, and bureaucracy is a deeper layer of organizational form and collective desire that needs to be transformed. Modularized individualism and socialized longings for wealth and consumption are the real obstacles to a regenerative, fair, and alive production architecture.

Nests: scaling across

In the knowledge economy, success results from relational quality, not efficiently assembling stuff. As creative and service-based components of products become the real deal, effective production relies on a collaborative spirit between us (Lee and Edmondson, 2017). It facilitates trust, serendipitous encounters, openness to fresh ideas, or the vulnerability to utter raw thoughts and silly questions. Togetherness, care, and creativity between people, as well as reciprocal connections between organizations and their ecosystems, are the pillars of digital enterprise. Just as the industrial imperative of ‘efficiency’ bore the ‘corporate firm,’ the primacy of ‘co-creative intimacy’ (Rouse, 2020) demands a new organizational form (Buterin, 2022a).

Heeding Dunbar’s multi-level design of social architecture, ‘nest’ is an intriguing metaphor to describe such an emerging digital form. *First*, nests are not based on individuals but on small, interdisciplinary, autonomous delivery teams held together by collaborative community spirit and shared purpose. *Second*, depending on the task, teams assemble an evolving fabric of interlaced group constellations on nested scales. The center of nests comprises a strong core providing governance and support. *Third*, collective wellbeing, healthy systemic relations, and people’s personal development are the most important guideposts. Such a nurturing stance is also expressed in fledgling groups and projects moving out to build their own nests. Nests are growing by ‘*scaling across*’ complex relationships instead of ‘*scaling up*’ individual report lines. They assemble into multigenerational flocks held together by a scaffolding conducive to connection, care, and co-creation on a human scale.

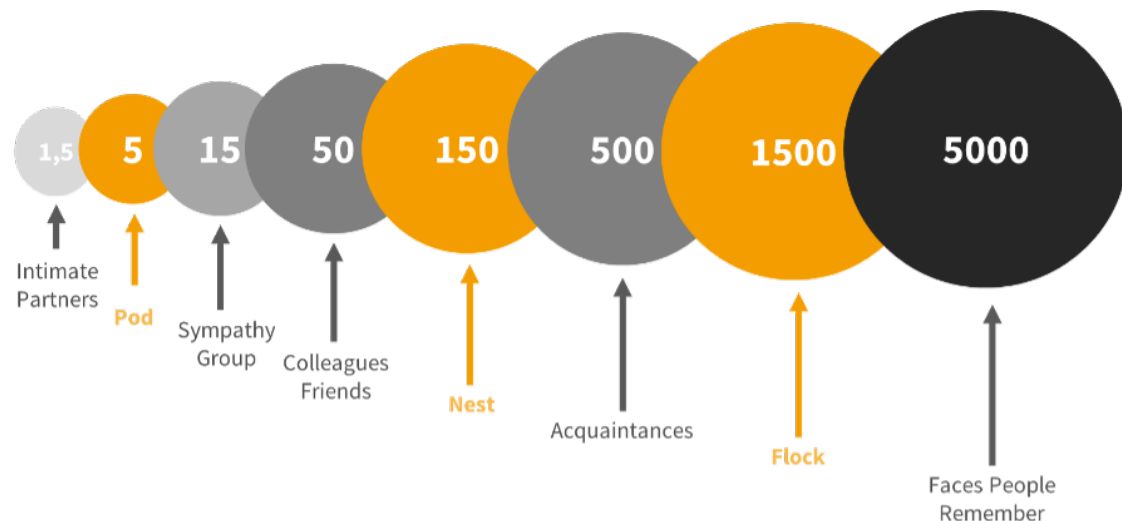


Figure 1: The pod-nest-flock structure, based on Dunbar's (2022) anthropologically grounded group sizes and fractal organizational composition.

The web knows a wild mess of names for these nested formations, but the main scales are crystallizing. Small collaborative groups, no larger than 5-7 people, are at the core, called *pods*, *squads*, or *crews*. Akin to an agile team, they are functionally integrated, deliver products closely interacting with the market, and embrace role portfolios instead of job titles. The main difference is that you would never apply for a job in a pod but engage in a community of co-owning peers. The next scale, themed *hubs*, *guilds*, *neotribes*, *metalables*, or henceforth nests, encompasses 100-200 members. Projects are typically developed in a modularized way – people within their pods take on work packages or, in DAO speak, *missions*, *milestones*, and *raids* (Kreutler, 2021). To keep up requisite variety, every person is engaged in multiple, partially overlapping pods intended to build products and earn livelihoods but also to facilitate communities of interest, peer support, or learning.

The ownership, budgeting, and participation infrastructure provided by DAOs is ideally suited to develop the following scale of around 1,500 people or several nests coming together in a flexible DAO ecosystem (Kreutler, 2021). As 'demodularized' spheres of work, life, and play, these associations might be called *flocks*. Here, the

carnavalesque and experimental character of Web3 communities is most needed. Projects like *Metagov* or *Metropolis*, which want to advance emergent organizing capabilities in DAOs, are breaking new ground. The trickiest challenge they face is blending the paradoxical cultural properties of collaborative communities – marked by vulnerability, trust, and reciprocity – with the instrumental, anonymous, and potentially isolating logic of networks (de Vaujany et al., 2019).

Research shows that self-organization historically faced the danger of *'falling out'* due to internal conflicts or *'selling out'* to traditional management structures. Jo Freeman (1972) coined the *'tyranny of structurelessness'* to warn against tacit hierarchies, friendship networks, and toxic behaviors of the cool kids as the inevitable outcome of community-first forms of organizing. DAOs can build on the experience of their predecessors in cooperatives (Rothschild, 2016), who realized that they need more, not less, structure compared to traditional corporate governance. Lessons can be learned in such different corners as agile corporations (*Spotify, Atlassian*), the creative industries (*Pixar, Valve*), bossless and self-organized firms (see *W.L. Gore, Haier*, or *Buurtzorg*), networked cooperatives (*Mondragon* in Spain or the Bologna region in Italy), freelancer coops, like *Enspiral, Dark Horse*, or *The Ready*, and open-source communities (*Drupal*).

Scaling across requires a 'prepared environment' to speak with pioneering educator Maria Montessori. Distributed leadership starts by agreeing upon and evolving a context of interaction. Clear participation architectures (Massa and O'Mahony, 2021) are inevitable: pod-nest-flock scales; dedicated spaces for newcomers and core contributors; a distinction between service, governance, and strategic pods in the center and delivery-oriented ones at the periphery; but also circular career paths, where veterans become coaches. Sharing practices, like check-ins to expand the emotional

repertoire of the organization and regular retrospectives to reflect how people work together, are essential (Resch and Steyaert, 2020). Similarly, explicit decision-making structures, like sociocracy (Pohler, 2022), synchronous and asynchronous workspaces (chats & forums), the embrace of dissent (Brekke et al., 2021), and open documentation of processes help avert the *'iron threat of oligarchy'* (Diefenbach, 2019).

Stewardship: custodial deeds

The move from firms to nests is undergirded by a mythopoetic leap from separation to entanglement, acknowledging the shape-shifting multiplicity of our existence, enmeshed and emerging with all that surrounds us, human or not, 'real' and not (Akomolafe and Ladha, 2017). Modernity's foundational myths of individualism, modularization, and massification have not only disconnected us from ourselves, each other, and nature but also brought up the idea that there is such a thing as the 'economy' removed from society.

Next to 'valuable' transactional activities, other economic practices such as contributing, sharing, caring, or commoning appeared relatively 'worthless.' The indigenous scholar Tyson Yunkaporta (2020) reminds us that this extractive commodification mentality, with its well-known downsides (externalities, exploitation, short-termism), is not without historical alternatives. Aboriginal Australians, for example, perceive themselves as a custodial species, focusing on multigenerational life cycles, composting, and commons. Similar to the knowledge economy, increasing relational quality to unfold potential in a human-nonhuman-ideational nexus becomes the economic *raison d'être*.

To legally embed such a nurturing custodial deed, stewardship has become a widely discussed concept. DAOs could build on the experience of traditional firms, like *Patagonia*, *Bosch*, *Carlsberg*, and *Zeiss*, which are owned by stakeholder foundations

safeguarding that all profits are reinvested in the company, used to cover capital costs, or donated. In line with the nest metaphor, profits become a means for purpose and regenerative impact. For DAOs, stewardship is an invitation to think ‘exit to community’ (Schneider, 2020) a step further: Developers, users, investors, regulators, communities, and non-human relationholders, like natural habitats, stewarding a nest or parts of its value chain as a commons. Here, the majority of voting rights are always held by people closely connected to the organization, its operation, and its values.

The open-source software scene has long grasped the revolutionary character of informational goods as non-rivalrous. They do not degrade when used. ‘You’ can get a copy without ‘me’ losing it (Papadimitropoulos, 2018). Paradoxically, the more people use them, the more valuable they get. Think of social networks, for example. Massively successful projects, like *Linux*, *Apache*, or *Wikipedia*, were built as a commons by communities of peers. On the soil of this stewarded produce, commercial offers could grow. DAOs as stewarded nests can provide the organizational backbone for the next wave of communities that grow their livelihood on design, engineering, and coding commons or simply steward empty shops on their high street and renewable energy production on their roofs. In that sense, crypto and Web3 have to be careful to use their superpower of non-fungible code, not in a way that erects artificial rivalrous containers around non-rivalrous goods.

Of course, one could ask: What would prevent people from selling out to a Web2 giant? Indeed, the spirit of commoning tends to crackle spectacularly fast (Waters-Lynch and Duff, 2021). Much like a social movement, such communities are highly active for some years, then the collaborative spirit fades. A major contributing factor to this phenomenon, especially in online self-organization, is the 1:9:90 rule. One percent of participants are usually highly engaged, nine percent are somewhat active,

and ninety percent are lurking. The inevitable consequences are frustration and burnout, leading to increasing inertia. The mission for Web3 collectives is to experiment with tools and practices that encourage rotating active participation by the many.

Research on successful commoning (Ostrom, 2015; Rozas et al., 2021) gives some clues. In contrast to Web3's dictum of trustless collaboration and openness, DAOs are advised to draw boundaries around their communities, for example, through carefully curated membership tiers (Pohler, 2022). Instead of one-size-fits-all algorithms, rules should be based on local conditions and be amenable to participatory governance. Moreover, mechanisms for rule monitoring, conflict resolution, and sanctions must be in place. Face-to-face events, from small, emergent drinks to carefully planned retreats, are another tool to foster togetherness, mutuality, and dissensus – the capacity to trust in recurring reciprocal exchanges, address problematic issues, and have a good fight (Resch and Rozas, 2024).

The legal genie is out of the bottle: If we can attribute rights to abstract entities like corporations, why can't we give them to rivers, too, as New Zealand did? Or why can't houses maintain themselves, with us as residents and custodial stewards (prototyped by *Dezentrum* in Switzerland)? In the end, we might even reckon that if we rediscover the singular value of shared things and places, their sacredness, they will hold ample opportunities for thriving livelihoods.

Weaving: Inviting participation

Conventional management techniques are poor instruments for coordination in collaborative communities (Gregg and Lodato, 2018). Professional 'community managers' typically feel overburdened, cannot sufficiently motivate voluntary contribution, and are in a precarious position regarding income and gender dynamics. Looking at collaborative leadership as a relational practice and not as a behavioral trait

of individual leaders, we have suggested weaving as an alternative lens (see Resch and Steyaert, 2020). Weaving is a form of distributed leadership that invites participation instead of managing outputs and delegating tasks. It works through instigating connections, rituals and rhythms, and seasonal learning. While some individuals might temporarily hold a professional role in creating scaffolding and weave by example, it is crucial to encourage broad and alternating participation from the community.

Weaving encompasses introducing and referring people to each other, internal journalism or blogging to keep the flow between hybrid work settings, and event organizing to create connections, strategic discussions, and trust (Ehrlichmann, 2021).

At the same time, it means fostering awareness of problems and momentum for solutions by establishing working groups, missions, and bounties or facilitating decision-making between consent and direct action (Chen, 2016; Leach, 2016).

Weaving also includes running retrospectives on how people work together, uncovering festering power dynamics and detrimental behavior. Harmony requires dissonance, and people in nests must learn to have courageous conversations. In that sense, weaving works as a distributed practice that sets up processes, rituals, and rules for relating, planning, working, and learning.

We should not think overly romantically about distributed leadership and fluid hierarchies in DAOs (Resch et al., 2021). Our research found that collaborative communities are held together by powerful collective longings for growth, purpose, and belonging – desires that motivate passionate voluntary contribution, intimate, co-creative relationships, and inquiry into personal growth issues. The dark side of all this dedication and self-discovery is frustration and overwork. In our case, unacknowledged care work clustered on the shoulders of leading female contributors, who consequently burnt out or left the organization. There is much to learn about inviting sustainable,

distributed contributions, especially regarding typically undervalued economic practices like sharing or caring.

Weaving is embedded in a mindset shift from navigation to wayfinding:

“knowing as you go” rather than *“knowing before you go”* (Nayak and Chia, 2011).

Instead of planning, forecasting, and fixing the future, wayfinding is a preference for feeling out questions in a participatory and collaborative manner. In this image, the goal is to learn from polycentric experimentation and to be able to take a greater variety of stances. Weaving challenges people to become more comfortable with the unknown, open to being transformed, grasping how the many shades of grey between right and wrong allow us to see how connections between things form patterns, how parts may embody the whole.

Just here for the cotton candy

I have argued that DAOs are successors in a long line of alternative organizing (Parker et al., 2014) that sought to replace the industrial production architecture comprising shareholder firms, employment relations, and hierarchical management. At the same time, Web3 is deeply interwoven with the industrial model, requiring computer chips, data centers, broadband cables, transport systems, and electric grids. It has also aroused the desires of established actors: from banks and insurance firms to mafia organizations, rogue governments, and Web2 giants. Amidst these clashing trajectories, it is crucial to realize that at the heart of the challenge for economic democracy are not decentralization, governance, and smart contracts but the squishy, emotional, and mutualist task of reinserting communities and commons into the enterprising process.

DAOs should not press themselves into the mold of the firm. They adapt corporate elements that work, like limited liability, but build on the social physics of layered group structures – pods-nests-flocks – laid out in social anthropology. Neither

fully hierarchically corporate nor democratically statist (Buterin, 2022a), they move between various polycentric modes of governance depending on the task requirements or environmental constraints. Here, weaving as distributed collaborative leadership rests on a paradigmatic shift to emergence, experimentation, and care. Most importantly, and curiously, in an environment that thrives on the prospect of exponential growth and non-fungibility, the DAO carnival could be living proof that belonging, meaningful work, and multigenerational responsibility are critical to much higher levels of happiness and thriving (Adler and Heckscher, 2018). Its legacy could be the prefiguration of stewardship, bringing systemic relations into view and making space for both transactional and reciprocal economic practices by breaking up Modernity’s ‘modular’ boundaries between the economy, society, and nature. Figure 2 summarizes the DAO design principles emerging from this paper’s argument.

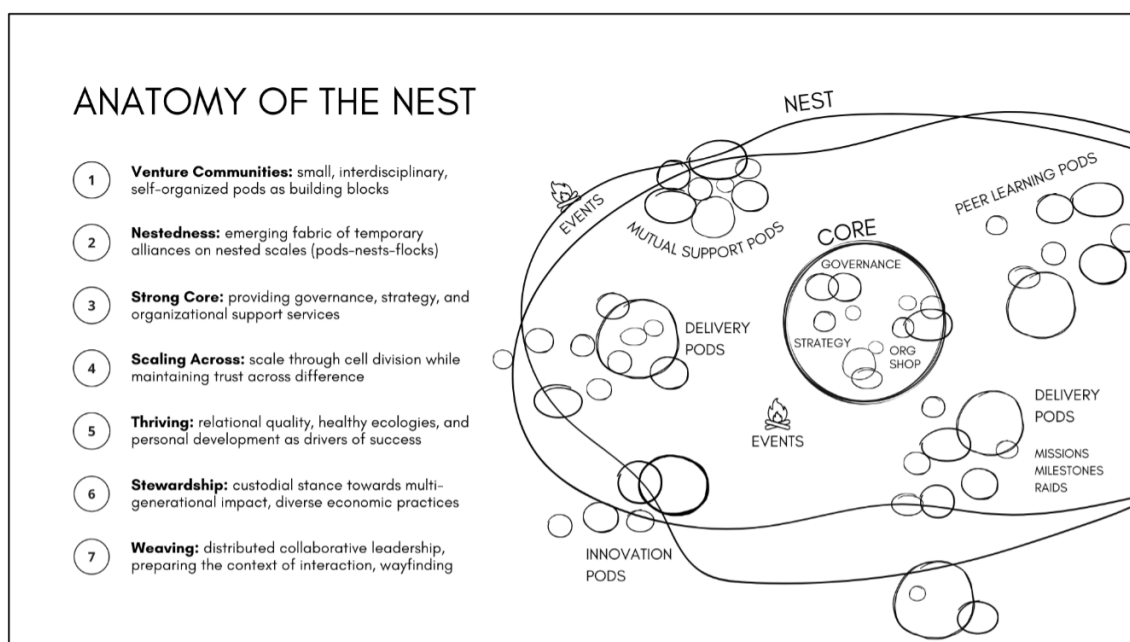


Figure 2: Anatomy of the nest: Seven design principles for planetary conscious DAOs

Within this framework, is it not conceivable that gig workers, trade unions, foundations, municipalities, and transnational bodies band together to fund a ridehailing

open-source software co-developed, stewarded, and used by ridehailing-DAOs in cities worldwide? Can we dare to imagine a food economy drawing on open designs for 3D-printed agricultural equipment, accessible vertical farming blueprints, and gene-editing peer learning platforms? Imagine if, instead of Monsanto, global open-source communities steward the synthetic biology revolution with multiple generations in mind. Our forbears upended the feudal social fabric of nobles, clerics, and farmers not by fighting against it but by collectively imagining and prototyping much more livable futures.

Like medieval cities providing respite for second sons, serfs, and tradespeople to develop their businesses, guilds, and councils, DAOs can be a home for today's misfits. If they heed the lessons of the past, they can be an incubator without repeating the bullying and abuse of their predecessors in coops, communes, and other movements. It is time for a carnival: mocking moribund systems, quitting bullshit jobs (Graeber, 2018), and slipping into new skins. The Web3 community might invite as many non-techies as possible into their celebration, focusing on accessible plug-and-play solutions to pool funds, steward value-creating ecosystems, and experiment with voting mechanisms. Many might just come for the cotton candy of fast wealth but end up infected by new ways of being.

A cautionary tale

At last, a warning: Every feast ends, every frenzy turns into a hangover. Deep down, these Web3 experiments force us to face that the Western civilizational model, its cosmology, and production architecture, on a planetary level, have brought environmental devastation, structural violence, and organized immaturity to all but a happy few. Even those at its center are traumatized and wounded by its separation, massification, and exploitation logic. Engaging with the mythopoetic paradigm shifts

from separation to entanglement, from ownership to stewardship, and from control to emergence is a necessarily painful process. It entails breaking away from the stories we grew up with, from cherished self-conceptions, and, worst, many possible cul-de-sacs.

Douglas Rushkoff (2022) reminds us that the medieval city economies with their guild-based community structures, their technological, institutional, and cultural innovations (Arvidsson, 2020), like market monies, which were issued in the morning and expired at the end of the day, were ultimately captured by the elites. The aristocracy wanted its monopoly over value creation back, so they “taxed the bazaar, broke up the guilds, outlawed local currencies, and bestowed monopoly charters on their favorite merchants” (Rushkoff, 2022). The history of Webs 1&2 taught us that such land-grabbing attempts are in store for Web3 as well.

Nevertheless, I am hopeful that the carnival can further prototype examples of a ‘soulbound’ (Buterin, 2022b) production architecture, creating so much thriving, connection, and contemplation that a decisive number of people obviously want to engage with it. After all, there is always an alternative. Collective imagination is the gift of our species. Current money systems did not arise spontaneously and teleologically out of free trading. They are a creation of emperors to maintain their governments (Doctorow, 2022). Research is only now uncovering how our species’ evolution from hunting and gathering to agriculture and cities is not a one-way street toward centralization and domination (Graeber and Wengrow, 2021). Human history knows many examples of democratically governed ancient cities and vast bureaucratically managed nomad lands. We craft our collective efforts through the stories we tell, the aesthetics we create (Freinacht, 2022), and the shared purpose we crave (Arvidsson, 2018). These are our shores to play.

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