

# The Tragedy of the Collective

Nobody asked but ...

There is a common misconception that a collection of people can do more than the sum of the accomplishments of its individuals. In *The Mythical Man Month* (free download), computer scientist Fred Brooks explains that you cannot do twice as much by doubling either the time or the people allocated to a project. That is because the adding of units increases the complexity — not in a straight line, but worse, geometrically, exponentially, depending on the number of parts in the project. If one cook can manage 3 concoctions, maybe two cooks can do 6 concoctions, if all of the resources are doubled (ovens, sinks, ranges, pots and pans, etc). And this leaves out the question of whether all the dishes will be ready at the same time. So what if you have 6 recipes? How well and how fast will they be executed if you assign 10 cooks? All you can guarantee in that case is that at some juncture, one chef will self-appoint herself as the head chef (a redundancy), and some number of chefs will take a break.

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