

Networked Civic Trusts

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The submission proposes to create a network of civic trusts, a common law device for separating actual and beneficial ownership, where the functional owner is bound by law to exercise their ownership rights for the benefit of someone or a specific purpose. Global problems start local, and may appear completely unrelated, until an opportunity for collaboration arises in which the network aspect comes in. Networked civic trusts are an adaptable governance system of collective property ownership structures, engaging stakeholders in defining the value, use, and values of the assets they build. This would make the trusts customizable to the problems in need of solving, able to bridge the practical gaps unconstricted by national borders. Some trusts would work in the sole purpose of formulating and coordinating responses to global challenges.





1. Abstract

At core, the Networked Civic Trust model is based on the belief that through fiduciary governance of strategically coordinated assets, we can solve some of the problems posed by today's collective action structures – and unlock the solutions to the world's largest problems. Networked Civic Trusts are based on the common law trust, and make two key additions (1) they embed public governance structures into the management of trusts; and (2) they use private law to codify and coordinate the relationships between organizations seeking to solve a common problem.

Civic Trusts are based on the common law trust. In a trust, property is placed into trust for the benefit of someone else. A trustee manages the property, and is bound by the fiduciary duties articulated in the trust document. As the world is increasingly made up of property, trusts provide a means to explicitly marshal resources toward a broad purpose. Moreover, this construction empowers trustees with tactical flexibility to pursue and test a broad variety of activities in pursuit of global challenges.

Inspired by community trusts in the United Kingdom, this model adds a Civic component to trusts. Here, the beneficiary community of a trust is empowered to make decisions about the trust operation, including electing and replacing a trustee, or bringing a cause of action against a trustee for dereliction of duty. Our model adds an additional layer of governance: a board of governors, which provides a check against the most dramatic changes to a trust's character.

Finally, inspired by digital networks, this model adds a Network component to Civic Trusts, to move its scale from local to global. Here, this proposal contemplates aggregating and organizing trusts, to pool resources to meet common goals. This proposal also contemplates loosely joined networks of trusts, each governing key flows of resources that together must be managed to meet a global challenge.

This model argues that there are a growing class of global challenges—private, networked, cross-jurisdictional, rapidly evolving—that existing public institutions are not well-suited to address. It is not a replacement for public institutions, but a model to exist in parallel.

The model itself can be built incrementally, with each component independent from the others. Grantors need only to put property in trust and designate the goals of the trustee, the beneficiary communities (if different from all of humankind). At a certain scale, other trusts would be formed to aggregate and coordinate among smaller trusts, and pool resources toward addressing global challenges.



2. Description of the model

INTRODUCTION.

The world's governance mechanisms were designed for and by a different era, whose political economy, infrastructure, and connectivity didn't envision today's world. While there are many ways to understand and parse the world's greatest challenges, this proposal frames them as collective action problems.

Our most serious collective action problems emanate from the rate of global change outpacing the adaptive capacity of public institutions. Our public institutions were built for a world of deliberative decision-making, without the capacity or incentives to act on behalf of global populations, or to solve problems that are global in scope. Moreover, populations, capital, and risk are more mobile than ever, devolving power to new actors and spawning new arenas of competition.

Increased competition has brought increased need—people live longer, more interrelated, complex lives—overwhelming the limited capacity of publicly-funded systems. Private companies are taking over basic services like healthcare, billions of dollars are moving through 'trustless' cryptographic protocols amidst state confusion, and smaller nations are offering sovereign services to those outside their territorial boundaries. Amidst the sea changes of privatization, digitization, and globalization, traditional institutions are responding with retrenchment.

At the same time, humanity has never been more connected. The potential for individuals, communities, and industries to develop their own collective action infrastructure has never been greater. It is easier for individuals, groups, and organizations to globally coordinate their actions than at any time in human history.

Despite that, unstructured and temporary collectives lack the governance infrastructure and leverage to offset the concentrations of power held by traditional organizations. Most public interest governance efforts focus on improving existing institutions (top-down) or increasing the mandate of small group and individual rights (bottom-up). Both types of advocacy rely on their ability to change the incentive structures of traditional institutions. While this work is valuable, the best way to solve newly global problems is by building new global, collective governance infrastructure.

Our new collective governance infrastructure will necessarily be different than our existing institutions—it will be responsive to different types of problems, and based on different theories of value; it will rely on and interact with existing governance, market, and legal systems; and it will build new approaches to structuring participation and influence.

The Networked Civic Trust is that model. Networked Civic Trusts embed highly adaptable governance systems into collective property ownership structures, engaging stakeholders in defining the value, use, and values of the assets they build. They are based on early approaches to adaptive system design, with particular influence from the 'precision' movement—which customizes the structure of solutions to the needs of individual problems. Here, a single institutional infrastructure will not solve our growing list of shapeshifting global problems: instead, we need adaptable, configurable structures that build on the strengths of our institutions and compensate for their weaknesses.



This proposal breaks the description of Networked Civic Trusts into three components: (1) the role of property rights in building public governance systems; (2) the problems solved by, and problems of, civic trusts; and (3) the potential for structured aggregation and devolution of collective, private governance solutions.

I. PROPERTY IS POWER.

The world is more ownable than ever. But the way that we own property—and who owns property—is changing. Typically, the owner of an asset has a right to make decisions about how the asset used and by whom. But this conception was designed for a world where most assets were material, limited-use, and exhaustible. The rise of digitization and data raise upends this dynamic: digital assets are highly reusable, almost completely liquid, and nearly impossible to trace. Moreover, nearly any process, action, or even perception can now be bought, sold, and traded. In other words: world is commodifying and privatizing, and public institutions are less and less capable of protecting the public's interests.

Enclosure. Recognizing these trends, the private sector has invested significantly in new ways to generate, articulate, and enclose property. From large companies to institutional investors, private sector actors understand the value of unregulated markets, and the opportunities they provide to accumulate power. The massive increase in assertions of ownership is not only changing the definition of property, it's fundamentally altering the institutions that have historically governed markets.

Privatization. Public institutions, designed to both defend their own interests and solve complexity through deliberations, have been slow to understand the social justice implications posed by new forms of property. In their absence, private sector actors have pushed sovereigns to compete with each other for corporate investment; and developed private law infrastructure that defines and cements their rights of ownership. Both trends diminish public institutions: global competition among sovereigns enables companies to support the regimes that are favorable to their interests and private law infrastructure enables them to make decisions without understanding—or being accountable for—the public costs of their decisions. In turn, the comparative increase in private sector power has made public institutions more fragile, leading governments to retrench sources of power like taxation, market access, beneficial regulation, and enforcement power—and to cater to the fluidity of global markets, toward attracting the interest of wealthy private actors, often at the expense of the public interest.

Globalization. As a result of financial market liberalization, significant amounts of sovereign trade negotiation, and the technological capacity for transactions—property ownership is the single most globally interoperable, market-recognized, infrastructurally supported, institutionally enforced, and publicly distributed source of power in the world. No matter the country, system of governance, or currency—every public power structure recognizes the rights of individuals and organizations to own property. While there is certainly variation, there is more negotiated agreement and established international consensus on the rights and mechanics of property ownership, than almost any other source or type of rights protected by public institutions. Not only is there comparative consensus, there's a significant amount of legal, financial, and transactional market infrastructure to support the use of property.



The globalization of private property infrastructure is a double-edged sword—it substantially increases the size and fluidity of markets without a need for state intervention, but also makes it harder for public institutions to assert the influence necessary to protect the public’s interests. Public institutions have supported the creation of private law infrastructure that affords the owners of property a substantial amount of impunity in decision-making—even if those decisions have significant negative effects on the public. Said a different way, the combined role of privatization and globalization has increased the flexibility and scale of property as a source of public power and market, independent of sovereign action,—and in doing so, limited the power of sovereigns to protect the public’s interest. That power vacuum has created an incredible need, and opportunity, to establish private institutions whose singular duty is protect the public interest, using private law and property ownership as currency and leverage.

Public Governance in Private Property. The growth in infrastructure for private ownership creates an enormous opportunity—namely to build private sector institutions with the explicit and singular purpose of protecting the public’s interest in the use of private property. Despite rapid market centralization, individuals, communities, and public interest groups still own tremendous amounts of valuable property—which can be marginalized because of its fragmentation and distribution. There are thousands of examples of communities developing local, trusted infrastructure to pool assets for collective gain—from savings and loan alternatives to banking; to intellectual property pools like patent trusts; to public preservation of lands and natural resources for community use. Although the models exist—and in many cases pre-date formal property institutions—we still lack a trusted infrastructure to aggregate and consolidate leverage through property ownership at the scale necessary to engage in solving global problems.

II. THE MODEL: NETWORKED CIVIC TRUSTS.

Networked Civic Trusts use private law to embed public, fiduciary governance into the ownership infrastructure of private property. The model is designed for building flexible, principled public governance mechanisms in the core asset of class of private markets, instead of trying to convince private companies of the moral imperative or help public institutions exert their authority. By focusing at the asset level, we’re able to ensure that the governance mechanisms to protect the public’s interests aren’t subject to fluctuations in national regulation or market conditions. The operational goal is to build adaptable, configurable units of local governance that can aggregate their influence to mobilize at the global level, toward solving global problems.

The Networked Civic Trust model starts by recognizing trusts as the organizational unit, adapting their structure to include public governance that identifies, prioritizes, and organizes actions, and networking them to solve global using private property law systems as scaling infrastructure. Trusts are one of world’s oldest types of legal agreement—they appoint an individual or organization as stewards of a piece of property, to benefit an individual, or the public overall. Trusts have been used for centuries to protect everything from lands to pensions to scientific advances. Civic trusts, go one step further—they use participatory governance to directly engage the public in defining their community’s interests, priorities, and values in the way they use common property. Civic trusts are a modern, grassroots adaptation of the trust model—and tend to be used as community infrastructure around tangible assets.



Networked Civic Trusts take the model one step further, building connective tissue and legal infrastructure for communities to pool and govern a wider range of property, including data and digital assets. Importantly, Networked Civic Trusts are also designed to help individual trust to aggregate and mobilize their resources to leverage solutions across historical divides, whether those are sovereign, cultural, geographic, or economic.

Networked Civic Trusts build on a combination of distributed organization structures, using property as the atomic unit, locally defined governance as the ordering mechanism, and networked private law as the scaling infrastructure. There are significant market and public sector investments in defining and articulating property value and rights, though largely without the influence of independent public interest. The Networked Civic Trust model builds on the formation of early democratic systems, by recognizing the value of local, plural governance units, and building legal and market infrastructure that helps them aggregate influence across divides to solve modern and complex problems. These governance frameworks prioritize precision and devolution, attenuating the degree of governance required to the size and type of problem that trusts are attempting to solve.

Despite a large amount of precedent, infrastructure, and research, Networked Civic Trusts still present a number of complex issues, and could receive significant challenges from established interests and institutions—even if less so than other approaches to building people-powered governance. Rather than suggest Networked Civic Trusts as a panacea, we propose them as a desperately needed component of the intersectional, institutional landscape necessary to solve a growing litany of complex, global problems. This proposal focuses on (1) introducing trusts; (2) exploring the growing use and utility of civic trusts; and (3) describing the mechanics of networking publicly governed civic trusts to address global challenges.

Our proposal centers around the strategic use of networked civic trusts as a flexible architecture that maximizes the power of principled community governance to engage with and solve the world's largest problems.

A. An Introduction to Trusts.

This model is built on the trust, a common law device for separating actual and beneficial ownership. The distinguishing feature of a trust is that the functional owner of a piece of property—a trustee—is bound to exercise their ownership rights for the benefit of another person or group of people (the “beneficiaries”), or for a specific purpose.

The Origins of Trusts. Trusts predate many forms of institutional ownership agreements—and, like many forms of private law, were originally created to address a gap in governance between the role of public institutions and the public's interest in privately held assets. The earliest recorded use of trusts was during the Crusades, when soldiers departing for war left their homes in trust to people who stayed behind, so that they could return to kept homes at the end of the war. They evolved as a vehicle to protect the inter-generational interests of property owners, who wanted to bequeath assets to individuals and organizations with the legal duty to preserve their value for their inheritors. The complexity of maintaining the value and purpose of property assets in a changing world also



gave rise to a significant amount of legal institutions, processes, and norms. In other words, trusts were invented in private law to address the shortcomings of public institutions, and the compelled the creation of new public institutions that address and solve an emerging class of problems that were previously ignored by traditional forms of governance.

The Mechanics of Trusts. To form a trust, a grantor executes a trust document—which is a private legal contract. The trust document identifies an asset (or assets) to be put into the trust; a trustee to manage the assets of the trust; the duties and obligations of the trustee; the purpose for which the trustee uses the asset; and the people or organizations who will benefit from the trust. The basic mechanics of a trust seem simple, but vary highly based on the jurisdiction in which it's created, the type of asset in trust, the specificity of the purpose, and the definition of the beneficiary group—among many other variables. That variability, however, is a core strength of private law generally, as is the opportunity created for pluralism in the governance and use of private assets for public benefit. At a mechanical level, the simplicity of the trust model is also what gives it the flexibility to interact with other public and private institutions, while still enabling independent collective agency.

A trust creates a separation of powers between an asset's owner (the beneficiaries) and its steward (the trustee) toward directing the rights and duties that property creates, which can be used to enshrine principles, legally enforceable duties, and even collective governance. This separation of powers is unique in private law and opens the door to new methods of governance, which can be built into the text of a trust contract itself, and adapted through the evolving role of individual and groups of trustees. The evolution of trusts from single-purpose legal contracts into ongoing public governance bodies is most prominent in the growth of civic trusts, who demonstrate the flexibility, opportunities, and challenges posed by pluralized public governance.

A Note on the Jurisdiction of Trusts. Trusts are generally somewhat unique to common law jurisdictions. However, they are ultimately compatible with other legal frameworks. Civil and Islamic law jurisdictions are starting to adopt trust and trust-like concepts. The Hague Convention for Trusts provides guidelines for how trusts may be internationalized. Moreover, due to their increasing divisibility and portability, an increasingly wide range of assets may already be able to fit into trust-like frameworks, even in jurisdictions that don't recognize trusts.

The Application of Trusts. Global challenges are complex and uncertain, bedeviling efforts to build complete, permanent, institutional solutions. Even where institutional solutions work, they may only work for a limited time, due to countermoves from other actors, more benign private ordering by ordinary citizens, or shifts in the way the world works over time. A governance model suitable for global challenges must help reckon with this uncertainty, and enable a constant evaluation and evolution of solutions.

To the general public, trusts are perhaps known as tools of the wealthy for evading public law—particularly financial authorities. While there's no doubt that's true—the underlying dynamic points to a greater tension and opportunity: trusts enable property owners to take advantage of sovereign competition to ensure their property serves their interests. That's a powerful value proposition, and a largely



untapped opportunity for publicly governed interests to leverage influence in a globalizing world. This opportunity is not wholly untapped—there are a wide range of development, democratizing, and humanitarian actors that also use corporate structures to protect public interests from adverse institutions—but very few take advantage of the mechanical advantages of trusts.

At least in part, there are two popular features of a trust: (1) trustee autonomy and (2) flexible construction. Our model repurposes these features to provide a networkable, adaptable foundation for tackling complex, uncertain global challenges.

Trustee Autonomy. The creator of a trust is free to tailor specific duties for each trustee, or to build additional governance structures around the trustee, as we articulate for this model. The relationship and governance structures that define the role of trustees—who can be elected by a community to act on their behalf—have a legally binding duty to the beneficiaries, enabling participants to leverage public institutions to enforce good governance. Importantly, however, publicly governed trusts only require public intervention in the case of escalated enforcement, reducing overall reliance on public institutions in the design, implementation, management, and dispute resolution phases of property governance.

Within a single trust, trustees have broad tactical autonomy to pursue activities in furtherance of the trust’s goals. Similar to officers in a corporation, this autonomy acknowledges the long-term uncertainty in how best to pursue broad fiduciary duties and objectives. Effectively, this empowers a trustee to operate free of short-term political concerns, and rapidly adjust tactics to pursue long-term and global goals. The freedom and operational capacity to adapt, within a legally enforceable set of motives, is not just ideal for designing problem-solving solutions rapidly evolving global contexts, it’s a requirement.

Flexible Construction. This model does not presuppose a single trust, rather it proposes trusts as a single unit. Global problems start local—and may appear completely unrelated, until an opportunity for collaboration arises. Managing freshwater resources to mitigate the effects of accelerating climate change in the Indus River Delta requires different duties, priorities, and stakeholders than, say, preserving public access to cancer research in the face of institutional bankruptcy. As the needs of those beneficiaries intersect, however, trusts may be able to leverage their assets, networks, and value to contribute to collaborative, collective solutions to their mutual benefits. These links are not always obvious at the moment of inception, and it is impractical to designing a single institutional solution to address all possible problem combinations.

Instead, we need individual trusts with customized duties and purposes, run by trustees with specialized knowledge about how to maximize the value of property in the public interest. Trusts inherently support this level of granularity and customization, empowering grantors to build a broad range of configurations of property and purpose. One configuration is simple: key assets that implicate global challenges—whether uranium mines, fishery stocks, or personally identifiable data—could be placed in trusts that are focused on the related challenge. But this simple configuration only covers some set of property and challenges.



A more complex, robust configuration uses trusts as a conduit for aggregating resources and applying them toward global challenges. Grantors could put assets in holding trusts, to eventually be transferred to purpose trusts, aimed at solving a particular challenge. Property could be held in reserve to help address unforeseen future challenges. This model enables networks of resources to be marshalled toward an identifiable global challenge, without forcing a specific tactic to address that challenge.

B. Civic Trusts and Public Governance.

The popularly perceived function of trust—as a tool for managing land and dynastic wealth—is but one application of a versatile model. Trusts are also used to manage investment funds, medical research, and select charitable endeavors. The evolution of trusts from single-purpose legal contracts into ongoing public governance bodies is most prominent in the growth of civic trusts, who demonstrate the flexibility, opportunities, and challenges posed by pluralized public governance. Here, we take inspiration from civic trusts, a model with roots in the United Kingdom, where hundreds of local civic trusts make local land use decisions, based on resources and principled interests. Our proposal adapts the incredible power of trusts as legal instruments to the protection and governance of our common interests, using property as a way to give those decisions contextual leverage and value.

Civic Trusts create an interface for participation between an asset’s owner (the beneficiaries) and its steward (the trustee). This opens the door to new methods of governance, which can be built into the text of a trust contract itself, and adapted through the evolving role of individual and groups of trustees.

Here, this might manifest in two ways. First, beneficiaries—members of the public and/or members of specific identified sub-communities—have the power to influence trust decisions. Beneficiaries can elect and remove trustees, or participate in referendum on major trust decisions. Where trustees may be derelict in their duty, an individual beneficiary can bring a legal cause of action against a trustee.

Second, a trust may institute a board of governors to oversee a trustee, provides high-level oversight of the trustee, represents community interests, and serves as a backstop for actions that would alter the material character of the trust. Generally, the thresholds for board action are quite high, in most cases requiring supermajorities to effect major changes, such as the removal of a trustee. Depending on the trust architecture, governors may be elected from the community or represent other particular interests.

Civic Trusts empower users and communities to make decisions about how their property is used in their interests, and participate in its ongoing stewardship. This empowerment, in fact, is built into each trust: a trustee has a duty to present a meaningful interface for participation. This means that a trust must go beyond mere transparency: communities must be able to understand and execute meaningful decisions, and trustees and governors must be able to accurately assess community needs, and have a meaningful ability for acting on their assessments. Here, Civic Trusts add a critical layer of public participation to the trusts model, ensuring that when each individual trustee acts, it is doing so on behalf of an empowered community.



Civic Trusts are a better approach to governance – they act with a duty to the public, but with the speed of private actors. In addition, the power wielded by Civic Trusts is limited to the impact their property use can have, enabling them to specialize, act creatively, and respond when new information or opportunities become available. In other words, they have the duty to consider the ramifications of their actions – and are even more liable to public institutions where they violate that duty – but the flexibility and autonomy to act quickly within the powers afforded by the assets they control. The true power of Civic Trusts, however, lies not only in the way they close the loop between public and private institutional infrastructure, but in the ways they’re able to adaptively network their actions to solve global problems.

C. Networked Civic Trusts.

Global challenges require global solutions. Where existing institutions may not suffice, we need to build complementary collective action infrastructure. Public governance in a globally interconnected society must balance the interests of individuals and groups with the interests of the collective as a whole. National and international institutions have failed to strike this balance, threatening global order. Private companies, by contrast, manage global scale more adeptly than public institutions, but are able to focus exclusively on their own interests, and exploit the limitations of public institutions. The result is a patchwork system of governance, with aging public institutions and disinterested private organizations unable or unwilling to solve the large-scale coordination problems that global challenges present. Networked Civic Trusts can potentially bridge the gap between private and public governance, help allocate resources to solve global problems, and support institutional forms better suited for an interdependent world.

Bridging the Gap. Civic Trusts, as a blend of public duties and private institutions, have the potential to bridge the practical gaps that exist in aligning public governance with private action. The practical effect of Civic Trusts as public governance actors is that they’re able to absorb a significant amount of the costs and complexity of protecting the public interest, while still taking quick, flexible, and decisive action. Critically, civic trusts aren’t bound to single jurisdictions, enabling them to interpret their fiduciary duties beyond the traditional remit of public institutions. The creators of Civic Trusts can structure beneficiaries and purposes to be global in scope—meaning that their duty to manage their property can be interpreted in response to global problems, and their actions can prioritize mobilizing for global solutions. This structure creates an incentive for multiple Civic Trusts to collaborate and rapidly mobilize to address global challenges.

Mobilizing Resources. The biggest limitation on the impact of Civic Trusts is the lack of coordinating framework. That problem is increasingly solvable, not only because of the changing nature of property, but also because of exponential increases in connectivity. It is easier now to document needs, mobilize contributions, and distribute resources than at any time in human history, and Civic Trusts are the ideal structures to do it.

Civic Trusts are unique in that, unlike public or private institutions, they have an explicit fiduciary duty to their purpose and beneficiaries, meaning that their focus and their limitations is a core strength. The legally enforceable duty to focus also makes them ideal building blocks of larger, complex, global action. Networking Civic Trusts to solve global problems could mean building a class of Civic Trusts



whose core purposes are articulating needs, coordinating them with another class of Civic Trusts that mobilize resources, and transferring licenses to those resources to another group of Civic Trusts who manage distribution. Trusts could directly coordinate through compact and contract, or independent trusts could indirectly coordinate via mission alignment. In either case, the coordination does not have to be permanent—it lasts until resources are exhausted, a solution fails, or a community decides to try another path. Structurally, the strength of the solution is that any link in the supply chain can be built using Civic Trusts, but none of them have to be – and they can interoperate with the wide range of plural, public, and private governance structures that already exist.

With global problems, the sheer size and scale of the complexity involved can seem overwhelming, especially to individuals making decisions with limited resources. At the same time, there is more information, individual philanthropy, and public coordination infrastructure than has ever existed inside of public institutions. Civic Trusts can be the framework to harness those scattered resources and, bit by bit, marshal them toward global, pressing challenges.

Building Tomorrow's Institutions. Private sector actors are already coordinating to solve public problems. “Trustless” systems built on blockchains are attempting to redefine the requirements for human coordination. Cooperatives are seeing a revival, moving from collectives of freelancers to supporting free and open source software projects. Even philanthropy is experimenting with new forms, from basic research and experimentation to impact investing to shirking the charitable entity altogether.

We do not presuppose or preempt any of these forms. In fact, trusts can help support them. At heart, our model is built on the fundamental pairing of property and duty. The legal foundations for this pairing go back to the origins of law itself. Together, they support small, flexible, publicly accountable units that can coordinate and aggregate their resources to address larger problems. An organization could be housed inside a trust; a blockchain could be managed by a trustee in the event of an algorithmic error or unexpected capture; cooperatives could center around a trust, to better survive membership churn. Networked Civic Trusts, then, are not just a governance model but a governance architecture, designed for tomorrow's organizations, institutions, and coordinating bodies.

3. Motivation

1. CORE VALUES.

Networked Civic Trusts are uniquely capable of representing and responding to core values.

First, at a fundamental level, trusts can incorporate duties to support the good of all human kind, and to respect the equal value of all human beings. This means that a trustee's primary purpose is defined by their ability to pursue and defend decisions on the basis of a trust's values.



Second, trusts are mechanically designed to translate values into duties and actions. The duties and purposes outlined in a trust are intentionally broad and values-based, because while the precise strategy ahead is uncertain, what we value isn't. A trust structure not only has a built-in capacity to represent values, but is most able to manifest those values as actions.

Finally, for values that may be expressed by humankind, Networked Civic Trusts have built in community governance mechanisms to capture and respond to changing values and ideas. These mechanisms are designed to represent near-unified sentiment, and avoid capture by particularly vocal subgroups (as discussed *infra*).

Here, the core values of the good of all humankind and respect for the equal values of human beings can serve as moral and ethical guideposts for each node of a dense network of trusts, as they experiment and rapidly adapt to meet the global challenges of today and tomorrow.

2. DECISION-MAKING CAPACITY.

Networked Civic Trusts offer decision-making at the speed of private institutions, backed by public values and enforcement infrastructure.

First, trustees have broad tactical autonomy to pursue their duties with trust resources. Board and community oversight are generally only triggered when there is a material change in the character of the trust (such as a complete divestiture of assets), and requires large supermajorities to effect change. This means that trustees can act without fear of short-term political ramifications, and consider the longer time horizon that global challenges demand.

Second, as we move from a single trust to networks of trusts, trusts aggregate based on consent and mutually aligned values. In this way, trusts can rapidly pool resources to pursue scaled solutions that may not be possible with a single set of assets.

3. EFFECTIVENESS.

Networked Civic Trusts are uniquely capable of handling global challenges and risks.

First, the accumulation of property to a trust grants the trustee with powers of ownership, backed by the collective will of the beneficiary community. This means that on an individual level, a trustee is capable of implementing a solution they choose to pursue.

Second, a network structure is designed to organize around effective solutions. Here, trustees can use their individual tactical autonomy to experiment and find effective solutions. Once one is found, other trusts can rapidly focus resources on that solution, maximizing its effectiveness until a new one is needed.

Third, Civic Trusts are products of private law, meaning they operate within the global infrastructure of trade law, and are able to take advantage of the attendant institutions, markets, and connective infrastructure necessary to mobilize at the global level.



4. RESOURCES AND FINANCING.

Networked Civic Trusts self-evidently provide resources to execute on its decisions, and ensure the rapid reallocation of those resources to support better solutions.

First, at a unit level, trustees are empowered to use resources under their care to generate revenue for trust activities. If this is untenable, alternate means of financing can be articulated in the trust. Trusts themselves are relatively inexpensive instruments. As financing ebbs and flows, the core structure of a trust can adapt and persist until resources are again available to permit new activities.

Second, at a network level, aggregation trusts can spawn around specific causes, challenges, or solutions. Other trusts can devote resources to an aggregation trust, in a community-governed riff on philanthropic models. This model allows resources to move quickly to new solutions, represented by a trust with a mandate to carry out that solution, and a trustee empowered to do so.

5. TRUST AND INSIGHT.

Networked Civic Trusts have power that flows from beneficiary communities. Beneficiaries have a broad range of powers within the structure of a Civic Trust, including the ability to bring causes of action against a trustee, participation in the selection of governors, and contribute property to the case. As a result, Civic Trusts are designed to help community members understand and contribute to trustee decision-making.

This requires more than mere transparency, which merely presents the activities as they are. Global challenges are complex, and it is unrealistic to expect that beneficiaries will grasp this complexity immediately, or be able to invest the time necessary to become experts in this complex system. A trust model, then, must emphasize not only transparency but teaching—to help people build a progressive understanding of the trust's operations. Through consistently setting expectations, transparently executing participatory processes, and remaining accountable to the outcomes – Civic Trusts are practically designed to build trust, knowledge, and mutual insight at every step of the process.

This might be accomplished via a mix of interactive digital and analogue approaches, from explorable digital interfaces to automated conversational dialogue over SMS and voice, to ensure that communities without access to technology platforms are included in addressing global challenges.

6. FLEXIBILITY.

Networked Civic Trusts offer structural, tactical, and network flexibility.

First, trusts are structurally flexible. and allows for broadly customizable duties, assets, and communities. Moreover, every human and organizational component for operating the trust is replaceable: trustees and board members can all be rapidly replaced without changes to the structure of the trust. This enables an individual trust to grow and change as assets change.

Second, trustees are flexible. A trustee is empowered with tactical autonomy, and can rapidly implement dramatic changes in its core activities. This frees trusts from the trap of ineffective process, and enables trusts to respond rapidly to changing global challenges.



Finally, networks are self-organizing, allowing trusts to coalesce and aggregate around common values, asset classes, or solutions. This means that as the resources required to meet global challenges change, Networked Civic Trusts can adapt accordingly.

7. PROTECTION AGAINST THE ABUSE OF POWER.

Networked Civic Trusts offer unit and network-level protections against abuse of power.

First, individual trusts have built-in protections against abuse of power. A board of governors and community-derived causes of actions provide checks on a trustee exceeding their mandate or violating their duties. A trust document could stipulate that trustees serve limited terms, and allow for regular community selection of board members and trustee. In more extreme cases, beneficiaries can bring legal action against a trustee, or a supermajority of the board can oust the trustee. Finally, because the trusts model involves minimal interference with nation-state sovereignty

Second, networks based on consent ensure that power could not be accumulated and then abused. Led by their communities, can organize around a different aggregator trust or set of collaborators if the current network is abusing its power or is otherwise ineffective.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY.

Individual trusts and networks of trust feature built-in accountability mechanisms.

First, individual trustees' ongoing position depends on their effectiveness. A board or community can replace obviously ineffective trustees. Moreover, a trustee is obliged to explain its activities to community members, so that they can make informed decisions. This means that a trustee must not only be effective, they must be demonstrably effective.

Second, networks are accountable because of their reliance on ongoing consent. Networks are little more than collected, ongoing agreement on ideas or approaches. If those approaches are ineffective, trustees will shift to other networks, or be at risk of removal themselves.