
Re-commoning Civic Infrastructure

Principles before mechanisms

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**Public ownership
prevents private sale.**

**Civic stewardship
redirects purpose.**

**Commons governance
prevents re-enclosure.**

**What must be true of any
legitimate attempt to
protect and reorient civic
infrastructure?**

The polycrisis is a stress test...

Not just a list of crises — a test of the systems that make shared life possible.

Food, water, housing, energy, transport, digital networks, ports, land and waste systems determine whether a place can adapt, repair and leave real choices behind.

The task is not to predict every shock. It is to preserve collective capacity.

The core shift is:

FROM

**Infrastructure as
commercial investment**

TO

**Infrastructure as
shared life-support
capacity**

Principles decide whether this shift is real or only rhetorical.

The following 9 principles are a constitutional floor for any serious reform.

The mechanisms can vary. The principles must hold.

PRINCIPLE 1

Shared life-support capacity

Essential infrastructure must be governed for life, place and long-term capability.

Does it strengthen the ability of this place to support people, communities and ecosystems?

PRINCIPLE 2

Te Tiriti and tino rangatiratanga

Mana whenua authority is constitutional, not stakeholder input.

Does the model recognise authority, repair relationships and change how power is exercised?

PRINCIPLE 3

Protection from enclosure

Collective control can be lost without an outright sale.

What cannot be traded away through debt, outsourcing, concessions, leases or commercial partnerships?

PRINCIPLE 4

Real standing

Those who hold authority, maintain the system and depend on it need rights beyond consultation.

Whose knowledge, responsibility and lived dependency must shape governance?

PRINCIPLE 5

Stewardship before extraction

Maintenance, safety, affordability, worker capability, repair and resilience come first.

What gets the first claim on revenue — life-support duties or financial return?

PRINCIPLE 6

Resilience means reducing dependency

Efficiency without redundancy becomes brittleness.

Does this preserve options, local capability and multiple pathways for meeting needs?

PRINCIPLE 7

Binding duties to future life

Ecological systems and future generations must create limits on present-day power.

Are we leaving capacity, repair and choice — or debt, damage and dependency?

PRINCIPLE 8

Tools must serve the commons

Finance, expertise and technology are necessary — but they must not rule.

Does the tool enable transition without acquiring control?

PRINCIPLE 9

Fair distribution

Risk, cost, benefit and decision-making power must not be dumped on those with the least power.

Who carries the burden, who receives the benefit, and who gets to decide?

Practical pathways exist

The tools are available.

The principles decide whether they are legitimate.

Legal protection

Asset locks · Purpose clauses

Transition finance

Compensation without control

Governance

Treaty · Worker · Civic standing

Accountability

Ecological duties · Dependency audits

What principles should be non-negotiable in any attempt to protect and reorient the strategic infrastructure of Ōtautahi and Waitaha?

The mechanisms can be tested. The constitutional floor must be clear.

The challenge is not merely to keep infrastructure public — but to make it capable of sustaining shared life through an uncertain future.