Distributed Inference Network (DIN)

Introduction

Across history, power structures periodically destabilise and reconfigure as their coordination costs, legitimacy failures, or incentive models break down. Emerging solutions require a fundamental rethink of authority, merit, and value structures. Communities that embody these changes can be described as post-democratic or participatory economies, as they function through interdependent, trust-based, and meritocratic governance, without the need for arbiters or representatives.

In these communities, day-to-day life is the governance model itself; their operations and values continuously evolve through active participation. Historically, such communities have been rare because they require a dynamic balance between autonomy and shared values. They must adapt fluidly whilst ensuring no single individual exploits collective autonomy.

A useful analogy: Imagine community values were sealed in an envelope and the governance system was tasked with continually deciphering and adapting to those values, serving the community's ever-evolving priorities without requiring constant explicit instruction.

In Spiral Dynamics terms, this corresponds to Yellow, Turquoise, and possibly Coral societal stages. Holistically evolved iterations of traditional tribal cohesion.

Scale and Stakes

DIN operates at multiple scales. At its smallest, a single DIM might govern a housing cooperative of 20 people. At larger scales, DIN becomes a mesh of interconnected DIMs; geographic communities and functional services coordinating laterally without hierarchical control. This could span thousands of communities and potentially millions of people, not through revolution but through gradual adoption as communities choose systems serving them better than existing alternatives.

We are at a critical juncture. Representative democracy designed for 18th century constraints cannot handle coordination challenges of unprecedented complexity: climate requiring global cooperation, economic concentration, institutional trust collapse, information warfare. The visible responses to this failure—authoritarian strongmen, revolutionary collectivisation, resigned apathy—are historically catastrophic. DIN provides a fourth option: sophisticated coordination without centralised control, participatory governance that can scale, and adaptation without revolution.

The Problem of Structurelessness

Some communities attempt governance through informal norms only: "no rules, just freedom." What often happens: a charismatic person emerges naturally and accumulates informal authority through social dynamics. They become de facto leader with no formal accountability because "no rules." The result is either dictatorship or capture. The community stays small and homogeneous, collapses from internal conflict, or gets captured by external forces.

Structurelessness is a structure, just one that's invisible, unaccountable, and favours certain personality types: the socially dominant, the persistent, those who think strategically. In the absence of explicit governance, implicit governance emerges and concentrates power in ways that can't be challenged or even clearly identified.

Even perfectly functioning internal governance must interface with external systems: taxes, property, contracts, suppliers, services. Legal entities, bank accounts, authorised signatories, stable negotiating parties are required. The membrane between DIN and external systems requires translation, which itself becomes a power concentration point. DIN makes this explicit and manageable rather than pretending it doesn't exist.

The Problems with Pure Consensus

Pure consensus has known failure modes at scale without structural support. It bogs down, gets captured by the most patient or manipulative voices, or dissolves into process worship. Endless meetings. Moral inflation. Decision latency so tepid that reality moves on without you.

The biggest issue with pure consensus models is unaccountability, who enforces decisions when nobody has defined authority?

Decision Paralysis: When everyone has equal power, nobody feels responsible for enforcing decisions. Older methods persist out of inertia. A community votes to improve waste management, but nobody takes responsibility for implementation and nothing happens. Consensus cost grows superlinearly with group size.

Selection Bias & Insular Thinking: Communities tend to attract like-minded individuals, unintentionally filtering out diversity of thought. This creates intellectual blind spots that limit innovation. A group promoting "holistic health" may reject valuable scientific insights because they unconsciously select members who reinforce existing beliefs.

Lack of Formal Mechanisms for Dispute Resolution: Without clear authority structures, social conflicts remain unresolved. Members hesitate to challenge issues for fear of causing conflict. A member subtly exploits others, but nobody speaks up because it's unclear who should intervene.

What DIN Does

What breaks at scale in consensus is not agreement. It’s signaling fidelity. As groups grow, voices don’t just get quieter, they get filtered. Social palatability, confidence, narrative fit, and stamina begin to dominate. The group stops sampling its own intelligence and starts sampling its status.

DIN changes this dynamic.

By rotating authority, scoping it tightly, and tying it to concrete proposals rather than personalities, DIN turns governance into a repeated sampling process. Every cycle is a fresh read of the active signal, not a referendum on past social capital.

DIN treats governance as a distributed signaling problem. Each cycle samples the entire active population of ideas, sentiment and energy. Authority rotates to prevent any single social dynamic from becoming self-reinforcing. Even socially awkward, unpopular, or counter-narrative ideas can be tested at low cost through pilots. What persists is not what feels right, but what survives repeated, collective contact with reality.

DIN assumes that most coordination failures are not caused by bad intent but by information distortion. By making proposals, decisions, roles, and outcomes visible by default, DIN reduces the surface area for unmerited power to hide. Accountability emerges through selection and non-selection, not punishment. Patterns emerge. Who proposes a lot and never delivers. Who blocks without contributing. Who coordinates well. Reputation becomes grounded in observable behaviour, not narrative control.

DIN assumes that outcomes should persist only as long as they remain beneficial under current conditions. Stability is achieved through repeated confirmation, not permanent exemption. What is genuinely good will tend to remain. What requires protection from questioning is already suspect.

DIN is trust-building without being trust-dependent. It creates conditions where trust can emerge through repeated interaction with visible outcomes.

Core Structural Principles

Time-bounded, scoped authority to prevent social capture.

Radical transparency to preserve signal integrity and accountability.

Mutability: Mutable rules may change with moderate, participation-scaled pressure. They support adaptation, tuning, and local optimisation.

Semi-immutability: Semi-mutable rules may change only with sustained, high participation and delay. They protect system stability, exit rights, and long-term coherence.

Consent to the frame, not every move: People don't need to agree on each decision if they agree on the legitimacy of the decision-making mechanism.

Clear roles: Flat hierarchies sound virtuous but perform poorly. What works is bounded authority: roles with power, scope, accountability, and expiry dates. Authority that is visible and revocable is less dangerous than de facto authority.

Exit must be easy and non-punitive: Nothing poisons consensus faster than hostage dynamics. If leaving is costly or shameful, people fight to control the system instead. Easy exit lowers stakes, reduces domination, and paradoxically increases cooperation.

Eligibility, Participation, and Legitimacy

DIN uses “member” pragmatically: anyone recognised by a community as eligible to use the process within that community. Each DIM decides its own eligibility boundary; DIN does not impose a universal membership ideology.

Recommended default: eligibility requires sustained presence and/or contribution for a minimum period (X time, or X cycles), and is maintained by a simple member list with social verification.

Exit is always available. Rejoining is permitted, but may include a cooldown (e.g., one cycle) before full voting rights return, to reduce opportunistic churn.
Participation is optional, but legitimacy is not free. DIMs may treat participation rate as a first-class health metric and adapt governance behaviour when turnout drops (see Voting Mechanics).

How DIN Works: A Scenario

Community size: 20 active members
Voting frequency: Monthly
Key issue for this cycle: Improving waste management

Step 1: Members Submit Proposals

At the start of the cycle, members submit their ideas for change privately to prevent political lobbying. Proposals can be about anything: implementing projects, changing arrangements, reversing decisions, modifying governance rules, creating or removing mechanisms. The proposal system is unrestricted.

Step 2: Voting Takes Place

Each member gets 3-5 votes (the community defines this) and can distribute them however they like across proposals.

When votes spread across many proposals and none reach majority:

Top N proposals that reach minimum threshold pass. Default: Top 5 proposals reaching minimum 40% threshold. Both conditions must be met: above threshold AND in top N. If fewer than N reach threshold, only those pass. Communities can adjust both N and minimum threshold via proposal.

Example:

10 proposals, 20 voters
Minimum threshold: 40% = 8 votes
Top 5 rule applies

Results:

1. Proposal A: 14 votes → PASSES
2. Proposal B: 12 votes → PASSES
3. Proposal C: 11 votes → PASSES
4. Proposal D: 9 votes → PASSES

5. Proposal E: 8 votes → PASSES
6. Proposal F: 7 votes → FAILS (below threshold) 7-10. All below 7 votes → FAIL

Proposals F-10 can be resubmitted next cycle.

Participation is optional each cycle. Quorum is implicit in thresholds, not enforced by mandatory voting.

Members may abstain on any proposal without penalty. Abstentions do not count towards thresholds. Failure to vote is treated as abstention, not tacit consent.

Any member may flag a formal objection. If objections exceed X percent, proposal auto-converts to pilot, delay, or requires revision.

Participation health: Track participation per cycle (and optionally a rolling average). If participation remains below a defined threshold for Y consecutive cycles, the DIM may enter a stabilisation: fewer irreversible changes, heavier use of pilots, and automatic review of ongoing arrangements.

Step 3: Facilitators Are Selected

The top 5 vote-getting proposers whose proposals passed become Facilitators for this cycle.

Example:

- Build composting system (Hana) - 14 votes → PASSES - Hana is Facilitator
- Organise skill-sharing night (Ben) - 12 votes → PASSES - Ben is Facilitator
- Install solar panels (Dan) - 11 votes → PASSES - Dan is Facilitator

Result: 3 proposals pass. Hana, Ben, Dan are Facilitators for this cycle.

What Facilitators Do

Facilitators are not leaders or decision-makers. They coordinate implementation of passed proposals.

Their role:

- Oversee implementation of their proposal
- Coordinate with other facilitators
- Run cycle meetings
- Track and report progress

Duration: One cycle only. Eligibility resets after cycle ends. Can be selected again if future proposals pass.

Selection is natural: Repeated facilitation demonstrates competence. Proven facilitators become Representatives for cross-DIM coordination. Competence is rewarded through continued selection. Poor performance leads to proposals not passing.

Step 4: Execution & Accountability

Hana coordinates the composting system implementation. Ben organises the skill-sharing night. Dan coordinates solar panel installation. At the end of the cycle, they document progress for transparency.

Step 5: Review & Next Cycle

If a proposal doesn't work, members can vote to modify or remove it next cycle. If it succeeds, it becomes part of the community's evolving system.

Proposal Scope and Formalisation

Not everything needs formalisation. Daily life requires fluid agreements between individuals and small groups.

Proposals are unrestricted. You can propose implementing projects, changing arrangements, reversing decisions, changing rules, creating mechanisms, removing mechanisms—anything. The proposal system contains all possible governance adaptations because it's radically open to its own transformation.

The boundary between informal and formal is itself governed by the community.

Default principle: Act unless someone objects, then formalise.

Any member may propose that a category of decision requires formal proposals. Any member may propose that a category no longer requires formalisation. These scope-change proposals follow normal voting rules and thresholds.

Bootstrap minimum for new communities:

1. Changes to shared physical spaces or resources
2. Allocation of community funds or collective property
3. Changes to explicit community norms or agreements
4. Changes to the governance system itself
5. Any decision where at least one member requests formalisation

This initial scope is temporary scaffolding. After the first cycles, the community may propose changes to scope itself.

Adaptive scope: Over time, scope naturally adapts. High-trust communities with smooth coordination may contract scope—fewer decisions need formal proposals. Communities experiencing conflict or coordination failures may expand scope—more categories trigger formalisation.

Scope boundaries compress where friction emerges and relax where behaviour stabilises.

Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest

To reduce covert capture and quiet side-deals, proposals may include a simple disclosure field: Material benefit to proposer or close collaborators: Yes/No. If Yes: briefly describe the benefit. Disclosure is not a moral judgement; it is a legibility tool. DIMs may choose to apply stricter thresholds, delays, or pilot defaults for materially self-benefiting proposals.

Scarce Shared Resources

If a proposal allocates scarce shared resources above a DIM-defined threshold (money, land, housing, critical infrastructure time), it should explicitly include: (a) what is being allocated, (b) who loses access or opportunity, (c) sunset/review conditions, and (d) fallback if the proposal fails or underperforms.

Ongoing Arrangements vs Time-Bound Work

Some proposals create time-bound implementation work: "Build a composting system," "Organise a skill-sharing event," "Repair the solar panels." The facilitator role exists only for the duration needed to complete the work.

Other proposals establish ongoing responsibilities: "Alice manages waste collection," "Ben coordinates tool maintenance," "Establish a weekly community meal rotation." These arrangements continue indefinitely once approved. They do not need to be re-proposed each cycle. The default state is continuation unless someone submits a proposal to change the arrangement.

Any ongoing arrangement can be challenged at any cycle: "Rotate waste management to Cara," "Split tool maintenance between Ben and Dan," "End the weekly meal rotation." If the challenge wins sufficient votes, the arrangement changes. If not, it continues unchanged.

Stable, working arrangements persist without administrative overhead. Poor performance or changing needs can be addressed quickly without waiting for fixed-term limits.

Obligations, Consent, and Non-Compliance

Obligations within a DIM only arise through **explicit consent**. An obligation exists if and only if a participant has:

- Voluntarily accepted a role,
- Agreed to an ongoing arrangement,
- Opted into a task, responsibility, or resource usage with stated conditions.

No member is obligated by default to labour, participation, or compliance beyond the scope they have explicitly accepted.

Failure to meet an obligation is treated as an **operational issue.**

The default response to non-compliance follows a simple escalation:

1. **Notice** – the unmet obligation is identified and communicated.
2. **Scope-limited restriction** – loss of access or privileges directly tied to the obligation (eg. stepping down from a role, loss of access to a resource governed by that role).
3. **Process-out** – removal of participation rights within the DIM if non-compliance persists or undermines shared functioning.

Sanctions are limited to **procedural consequences** (loss of access, role removal, or participation rights) and do not extend to punishment, asset seizure, or personal retaliation. Participants may always exit an obligation by resigning a role or withdrawing from an arrangement, subject only to any explicitly agreed transition conditions.

Re-confirmation and Anti-Entrenchment

Because ongoing arrangements may continue by default, DIMs may add a lightweight re-confirmation cadence to prevent silent tenure. Example: every N cycles, ongoing roles are re-confirmed, auto-renew unless objections exceed X%, or trigger a confidence check vote.
For high-leverage ongoing roles (finance, legal interface, safety), redundancy is recommended: deputies/shadowing, handover notes, and mandatory rotation or cooling-off periods.

Easy Pilot Framework

To enable innovation and experimental proposals that may not have majority support:

Any proposal can be framed as a pilot with limited timeframe, limited scope, defined evaluation criteria, and default sunset (expires unless renewed).

Lower threshold for pilots: Default 30-40% instead of 50%, because risk is bounded, changes are reversible, and pilots generate learning.

Example: Instead of "Implement permanent composting system community-wide," frame as "Try composting system as 2-month pilot in Zone A, evaluate after."

After pilot, results are presented to the community. Proposal to continue/expand requires standard threshold. Can sunset without stigma.

This preserves requisite variety, the ability to try unpopular ideas that might turn out to be good.

Proposal Limits

To prevent proposal spam while maintaining openness:

Default: 2-3 proposals per person per cycle. Communities can adjust via proposal.

Natural disincentive: Proposer of passed proposal becomes Facilitator. Facilitator role is work. Submitting frivolous proposals risks unwanted facilitation responsibility.

Social cost: Repeated low-quality proposals damage reputation. Future proposals less likely to pass.

Representatives and Cross-DIM Coordination

Representatives coordinate between DIMs when proposals affect multiple communities or require cross-DIM cooperation.

Selection: Proven facilitators from recent cycles (default: 3-5 most recent). Facilitators may collectively decide who represents them. If no agreement, the most experienced facilitator. Maximum term: 2-3 cycles before mandatory rotation.

Role: Carry information between DIMs. Negotiate coordination on behalf of their DIM (within bounds set by their DIM). Bring cross-DIM proposals back to their DIM for vote. Cannot make binding commitments without DIM approval.

Authority boundaries:

- Can commit to: information sharing, coordination timing, procedural details
- Must return to DIM for: resource allocation, binding agreements, major decisions

Representatives coordinate but don't govern. They are messengers and negotiators, not decision-makers.

Passing a proposal authorises coordination and commitment within the scope of that DIM. Implementation still depends on real capacity, and cross-DIM proposals require approval from each affected DIM. A proposal can pass and still fail socially or structurally if the required cooperation does not materialise.

Two Types of DIMs

DIN consists of two types of DIMs with different scopes:

Geographic DIMs are based on location/proximity. They govern shared physical space, local resources, neighbourhood norms. Examples: neighbourhood, housing cooperative, village, district.

Functional DIMs are based on shared service or function. They cross-cut geographic boundaries. People participate based on relevance. Examples: healthcare service, education network, infrastructure maintenance, care coordination.

Individuals can be in multiple DIMs (one geographic plus several functional). You vote in each DIM only on proposals relevant to that domain. Engagement varies by DIM—active in geographic, occasional in functional.

When geographic and functional DIMs conflict: Geographic DIM can choose not to engage that service. Functional DIM can choose not to serve that geography. Or: negotiate interface rules through Representatives.

Cross-DIM Coordination Mechanisms

DIMs are sovereign but often need to coordinate. This happens through Representatives.

Simple coordination: Representatives meet and communicate directly. Work out details. Report back to their DIMs. Binding commitments require DIM vote.

Proposals affecting multiple DIMs: Originating DIM's Representative brings proposal to affected DIMs. Each DIM votes independently. All affected DIMs must approve for proposal to proceed. If any disagree: negotiation, compensation, or stagnation.

Conflict resolution when DIMs disagree on resource allocation or proposals with ripple effects:

Compensation: Majority DIMs can proceed but must compensate affected minority DIMs. Terms negotiated by Representatives. Both sides must approve compensation.

Exit: Minority DIM(s) exit the cooperation. Find alternatives. No forced participation.

Stagnation is a legitimate outcome. If DIMs cannot reach agreement, the proposal fails. This is preferable to forcing compliance. Indicates cooperation model doesn't work for this issue. Drives better compromise or separation.

By the time complex coordination is needed—say, 6 DIMs sharing a watershed facing major resource allocation decisions—they'll have history with each other, established norms for negotiation, proven Representatives, trust or lack thereof. Context-specific solutions emerge from their actual relationship.

Boundary Constraints and Non-Negotiables

Some issues create irreversible externalities across DIM boundaries (e.g., pollution, safety hazards, shared watershed impacts). DIMs may define “boundary constraints”: non-negotiable limits on actions that impose irreversible harm on others.

Boundary constraints are adopted through explicit cross-DIM agreement (treaty-style proposals) and are enforced primarily through refusal of cooperation, withdrawal, and exit rather than forced compliance.

Scaling Through Mesh, Not Hierarchy

Traditional scaling works through nested layers: Local → Regional → National. Each layer governs the layer below, creating hierarchy and concentrating power at the top.

DIN scaling is lateral mesh. No super-governing layer. Representatives communicate laterally. Coordination is negotiated, not imposed. No DIM governs other DIMs. Disagreement means stagnation or separation, not forced compliance.

At 200+ people within single DIM: Chunk into 3-5 zones. Vote on proposals closer to you. Can vote on other zones if you choose. Top 5 facilitators coordinate across zones.

Beyond 200, don't nest, fork: Create multiple DIMs. Connected through Representatives. Lateral communication. No governing DIM above them.

At large scale: Web of DIMs, not pyramid. Geographic DIMs (place-based) and Functional DIMs (service-based). Representatives negotiate at boundaries. Distributed Inference Network.

Mesh governance instead of hierarchical. Resilient, no single point of failure. But slower for coordinated action. Requires voluntary cooperation.

Voting Mechanics

The requirements for any voting system: votes must be verifiable (you are who you say you are), anonymous (can't see how individuals voted), auditable (can verify count was correct), and accessible (people can actually vote).

Different DIMs will need different implementations based on size, tech access, threat model, and cultural norms.

We don't prescribe the solution. Your voting mechanism must achieve these properties. Here are some options. Pick what works for you. Evolve it as needed.

One approach that balances trade-offs:

In-person meeting component for freeform discussion, group decisions for non-contentious matters, proposal refinement, and non-binding "temperature checks."

Actual voting through paper ballots during meeting (for those present) and digital voting window (48 hours, for those who couldn't attend). Identity verification through simple passphrase plus social verification (you're on the member list, your community vouches for you). Anonymous ballots (identity verified but vote is private). Public results (total counts visible to all).

This balances accessibility, verification, anonymity, and simplicity.

All voting systems are gameable. The question is whether gaming-resistance is sufficient for the stakes. For internal DIM governance: probably yes. For high-stakes resource allocation or functional DIMs: might need more robust verification.

High-Stakes Proposal Classes

High-stakes proposals include, but are not limited to:

- Allocation of significant shared funds or property,
- Legal or financial commitments binding the DIM,
- Changes to governance structure or voting rules,
- Long-term exclusion or safety restrictions,
- Actions with irreversible cross-DIM externalities.

High-stakes proposals may require higher participation thresholds, longer delays, pilot defaults, or additional safeguards.

Turnout Floors and Stabilisation

Thresholds (e.g., 40% + Top N) protect against fragmentation among active voters, but do not guarantee broad legitimacy under low participation. DIMs may therefore optionally define turnout floors, particularly for high-stakes categories (funds, property, legal commitments, governance changes).

If turnout falls below X%: options include (a) only pilots can pass, (b) only reversible changes can pass, or (c) all proposals auto-delay. The chosen rule is itself subject to proposal.
Participation health can be treated as a rolling metric. If turnout remains below X for Y consecutive cycles, the DIM may enter a stabilisation mode: increased use of pilots, higher thresholds for irreversible commitments, and scheduled review of ongoing arrangements.

Participation Subsidies

To counter time-wealth bias, DIMs may allocate real money for participation subsidies: childcare, transport, accessibility needs, translation, facilitation time, and other costs that otherwise concentrate governance in the time-rich. These subsidies are scoped, auditable, and tied to reducing participation friction rather than policing motivation.

Transparency Surface and Privacy

Transparency by default applies to the governance surface: proposals, outcomes, role assignments, and execution reports. Personal disputes, sensitive personal data, and private communications remain private by default.

Record-keeping may be constrained to: proposal text, vote totals, role assignments, and DIM structure changes. Higher-stakes decisions may warrant stricter verification and stronger anti-coercion norms (e.g., no vote receipts, no mechanisms that allow individuals to prove how they voted).

Legal and Financial Interface

DIM/DIN operates on principles incompatible with most external legal systems. A translation layer is required.

Trust/Charity structure: Assets held by legal entity (nonprofit, cooperative, LLC). DIM governs the entity through its proposals. Officers rotate but entity persists.

Multi-signature financial controls: Bank accounts require 3+ facilitators to authorise transactions. No single point of financial control. Transparent to DIM members.

Cryptocurrency options: Multi-sig wallets requiring multiple facilitators. On-chain transparency. Cannot be frozen by external authority.

As DIN becomes economically significant, DIN-to-DIN transactions bypass external systems. Internal currencies and mutual credit emerge. Legal systems may adapt to recognise DIN entities. Traditional methods gradually replaced by DIN-native methods.

Funding and Anti-Capture Defaults

A single wealthy participant can attempt capture through dependency: funding essential needs, controlling assets, or attaching covenants to external contracts. DIMs may adopt simple funding defaults to reduce this risk.

Recommended defaults include: caps on any single donor/creditor as a share of the annual budget; acceptance of large contributions only in standardised forms (unrestricted donation, narrowly restricted donation, or loan with no governance covenants); and prohibitions on personal guarantees and private ownership of choke-point assets used by the community.

Membrane roles (bank access, signatories, legal interface) should be separated from major donor/creditor status, rotated, and bounded by explicit authority limits. External commitments that bind the DIM or its assets should require explicit DIM approval.

Interface with Hierarchical Systems

Some functions require hierarchical coordination: military (speed, secrecy, chain of command), emergency services (immediate response), critical infrastructure (cannot fail), international diplomacy (stable negotiating partners). DIN cannot replace these entirely.

When hierarchy makes decisions affecting DIN, information comes through Representatives. DIN votes on response/compliance. Decision is local—this DIM's relationship to that hierarchy.

Example: Infrastructure - Regional utility (hierarchical). Local DIM votes on: acceptance of service, payment terms, local standards. Can exit and create alternatives if possible. Or negotiate through Representatives.

DIN handles what can be handled locally/voluntarily. Hierarchy handles what requires speed/enforcement/scale. Interface is explicit negotiation. As DIN grows, more functions can be handled DIN-natively. But some hierarchical functions may persist indefinitely.

Economic Coordination and Value Exchange

DIN does not prescribe a single economic ideology. It operates as a coordination substrate upon which multiple value-exchange mechanisms may emerge and coexist.

At small scales, particularly within geographic DIMs where members share daily life and high-trust relationships, coordination may occur without formal currency. Labour is often motivated by shared identity, mutual care, reputation, and direct reciprocity. In such contexts, explicit accounting is frequently unnecessary and may even be counterproductive.

As coordination extends across DIMs, distance increases. Emotional salience weakens, time horizons lengthen, and participants may not share lived context. In these conditions, informal reciprocity alone becomes insufficient. Cross-DIM coordination therefore requires portable, legible signals of contribution and obligation that can persist beyond immediate social memory.

These signals may take many forms: time-based credits, mutual credit systems, scoped internal currencies, reputation-weighted contribution records, or other mechanisms developed locally. Regardless of form, effective value-exchange mechanisms share common constraints:

- Contributions must be legible beyond the immediate context in which they occurred.
- Accumulation must be bounded in scope, duration, or convertibility to prevent extractive dynamics.
- Credits represent contribution, not ownership or control.
- Exchange mechanisms are domain-specific where possible, rather than universal and fungible.
- Value systems remain subject to proposal, modification, and removal through normal DIN processes.

DIN distinguishes between exchange and accumulation. Fair value exchange is compatible with DIN at all scales. Unbounded accumulation divorced from contribution is not assumed, required, or protected by the system.

Economic mechanisms within DIN are expected to evolve. Early-stage communities may rely primarily on intrinsic motivation and informal reciprocity. As networks grow and interdependence increases, more explicit accounting may emerge to support complex coordination. No mechanism is permanent; all remain provisional and revisable.

DIN does not attempt to eliminate self-interest. Instead, it increases the accuracy of self-interest by tightening feedback loops between contribution, reward, and collective impact. As adoption grows, value exchange becomes increasingly contextual, relational, and visible, reducing the incentive for extraction without requiring moral enforcement.

Private Property, Use-Rights, and Extraction

DIN does not require abolition of private property. It distinguishes fair value exchange from extraction dynamics.

Recommended framing: (1) personal property is protected; (2) private productive property is permitted where it does not create dependency leverage over others; (3) commons property is governed by DIM proposals; (4) hybrid arrangements may exist where private title is paired with community use-rights.

Extraction risk increases when a private arrangement creates dependence (housing, essential infrastructure), enables rent without ongoing contribution, or concentrates choke-point control.

DIMs may adopt review triggers, right-of-first-refusal, and conversion/buyout paths for assets that become essential to community functioning.

Safeguarding and Grievance Track

DIN does not rely on ad hominem proposals for interpersonal conflict. Safety and grievance handling runs on a separate track designed to be fast, bounded, and minimally capture-prone.

Two-Track Structure

Safety track (fast): temporary, bounded measures that prevent immediate harm and reduce escalation.
Resolution track (slower): mediation and, if necessary, a community-backed process for longer-term constraints.

Safety Steward (Rotating) and Second-Key Backstop

A rotating Safety Steward receives confidential reports and can enact time-limited safety measures: separation at shared events/spaces, temporary no-contact rules in shared spaces, and temporary suspension of a specific privilege. Measures auto-expire (e.g., 7–14 days) unless renewed through defined process.

To reduce unilateral abuse, restrictive measures beyond a short window (e.g., >48 hours) require a second key: a co-signer (Safety Witness) who confirms scope and duration. Safety roles rotate and are subject to re-confirmation like other ongoing arrangements.

Mediation First

Where safe, voluntary mediation is attempted before escalation. Mediation may be internal (a rotating mediator) or external (preferred where local bias is high). Agreements can remain informal or be formalised as an ongoing arrangement.

Sortition Review Panel (Only If Needed)

If mediation fails or sustained restrictions are requested, a temporary review panel can be formed by random selection (sortition) from eligible members, excluding involved parties and clear conflicts of interest. The panel reviews evidence privately and recommends a time-bounded outcome.

Long-term restrictions (multi-cycle exclusion, revocation of participation access) are governance constraints and therefore require formalisation through the proposal system under the DIM's high-stakes rules.

Privacy and Legibility

Grievance content is private by default. A minimal public meta-log may record that a safety action occurred, its type, and its expiry, without exposing sensitive personal details.

Known Failure Modes and Limitations

Acute crisis requiring immediate unified action: Rolling cycles are too slow for true emergencies. Facilitators can make urgent decisions, but if crisis requires sustained centralised coordination beyond a few days, DIN may need to temporarily suspend normal operations or defer to specialised emergency systems.

Highly technical domains requiring deep specialisation: When 95% of members lack knowledge to meaningfully evaluate proposals in a domain, domain-scoped trust can concentrate into de facto permanent authority. Functional DIMs help but don't eliminate this.

Groups below ~15 members: Too small for meaningful rotation. Everyone knows everyone's capabilities intimately. Formal mechanisms add overhead without benefit. DIN is optimised for 20+ members.

Groups above ~200 members without subsidiarity: Direct participation becomes unwieldy. Zone chunking required, introducing new coordination costs and potential capture points.

When exit isn't possible: If members can't actually leave (economic dependence, geographic isolation, family ties), pressure builds. DIN assumes exit.

Ideological capture during formation: If the initial seed group is ideologically homogeneous and fork/variation mechanisms aren't established early, DIN can crystallise into just another rigid system.

What DIN Cannot Do:

Resolve fundamental value conflicts. If members have irreconcilable core values, no process makes them compatible.

Create trust where none exists. DIN can protect existing trust and slow its degradation. It cannot manufacture it.

Eliminate human status games. It can only make them more legible and less destructive.

Function without minimum participation. If 70% of members fully disengage, the system reduces to minority rule with extra steps.

Force genuine cooperation. Formal approval doesn't guarantee social support.

Social Reality and Formal Mechanisms

Formal governance can create accountability structures, decision procedures, and transparency. It cannot force genuine cooperation, prevent social dynamics, or resolve fundamental disagreements.

A proposal can pass formally but fail socially. If not enough people actually help, resources are "unavailable," or there's passive resistance, implementation fails regardless of formal approval. DIN cannot force genuine cooperation. This is a property of coordination among free agents, not a design flaw.

What DIN provides: Visibility (failure is legible, not hidden), accountability (clear who voted, who helped, who didn't), learning (can propose meta-solutions to coordination problems).

Oscillation: Proposals and counter-proposals can create thrashing. This arrives at homeostasis through cost of instability becoming visible. People propose dampening—longer windows, higher thresholds for reversals, pilot periods. Social pressure against constant reversal. Exit if chaos persists. Self-regulated through experience, not prevented by formal rules.

Informal power persists. Charisma, articulateness, social connection create influence that formal systems can't eliminate. DIN makes these patterns visible but doesn't abolish them.

Bad ideas can win if enough people vote for them. Democracy doesn't make people wise.

Apathy enables minority rule. If only 30% vote regularly, 16% of total membership controls decisions. No formal system fixes widespread disengagement.

Mitigations are possible without coercion: treat participation rate as a health metric, use turnout floors for high-stakes decisions, and subsidise participation costs (childcare, transport, accessibility) so governance does not default to the time-rich.

These limitations are inherent to human coordination. The alternative—strong-arm authority—trades these problems for concentration of power, abuse potential, ossification, and reduced adaptation.

Evolution and the Base Model

DIN provides a base (core architecture that must exist), seed configuration (starting parameters that enable viability), and evolution mechanisms (ways to adapt based on reality).

The base:

- Vote on proposals
- Threshold for passage
- Facilitators from passed proposals
- Transparency by default
- Exit always available

The seed configuration (all evolvable):

- Monthly cycles
- 40% threshold
- Top 5 facilitators
- 2-3 proposals per person per cycle
- In-person meeting required

Different DIMs discover different optimal configurations. Successful adaptations spread through observation and forking. Failed adaptations dissolve or iterate. No single "correct" configuration exists. Natural selection operates at the governance level.

Why Complexity Is Necessary

Simple self-interest on a finite stage creates cascading harm. Externalised costs return as crisis. "Not my problem" stops working when problems loop back.

We're at that moment. Climate (externalities manifesting as crisis). Inequality (instability from concentration). Institutional failure (short-term optimisation degrading long-term capacity). Social fragmentation (individualism creating collective weakness).

Accurate self-interest includes future self (long-term thinking), relational self (embedded in networks), ecological self (part of planet).

Upsides of Current Systems

Hierarchy exists because it solves real problems: speed (someone decides, everyone follows), simplicity (clear chain of command), scalability (nested layers handle complexity), enforcement (centralised power makes defection costly), stability (changes are slow and controlled).

These aren't accidents. They're responses to coordination problems.

DIN trades these benefits for different ones: participation over efficiency, adaptability over stability, visibility over simplicity, local autonomy over coordinated control, exit over enforcement.

This makes DIN appropriate for communities valuing these tradeoffs, contexts where costs are bearable, people who prefer DIN's costs to hierarchy's costs.

Inappropriate for contexts requiring speed above all, situations needing enforceable coordination, settings where stability is paramount, people who prefer delegation to participation.

Different tools for different contexts. Given widespread unhappiness with current systems, economic precarity and political alienation, rise of radicalisation, institutional trust at historic lows, DIN is likely to find appeal.

Path to Adoption

DIN cannot be imposed from above. It must prove itself through grassroots emergence.

Phase 1 (now - 10 years): 20-50 person communities try it. Document outcomes honestly. Build track record. Develop practitioner culture.

Phase 2 (10-30 years): Neighbouring communities see it working. Adopt because it demonstrates value. Network effects emerge. Larger federations form.

Phase 3 (30-50 years): DIN communities become viable alternatives. Demonstrate superior outcomes for participants. Younger generations raised in DIN contexts. Political pressure for legal accommodation.

Phase 4 (50+ years): DIN handles increasing share of actual coordination. Official government becomes increasingly nominal. Dual-track system emerges.

Parallel institution building. New systems can grow alongside the old, gradually becoming more relevant.

Historical examples: Corporations replacing guilds. Internet protocols replacing telecom monopolies. Science replacing religious authority.

Better coordination systems replace worse ones when the new system demonstrably works, enough people experience it directly, switching costs decrease, and old system's failures become undeniable.

Open Source

DIN is open source by design. Complete specifications are public. Anyone can implement, modify, fork. No licensing restrictions. No proprietary ownership.

Trust through verification. Competitive evolution. Distributed innovation. Resilience through replication. Cannot be monopolised or controlled. Cannot die if one implementation fails.

Even partial adoption influences other systems. Transparency principles spread. Seeds alternative futures.

DIN-Compatible Manifest

To reduce confusion and reputational contagion across forks, implementations may publish a simple “DIN-compatible” manifest: which base properties are implemented (proposal voting + thresholds, facilitator selection, role rotation/revocation, transparency surface, exit rights, cross-DIM coordination constraints), and which parameters differ from the seed configuration.

On Incompleteness

DIN is not a complete solution to human coordination. No such system exists or can exist.

The problems DIN addresses: power concentration, authority capture, coordination failure, trust erosion—are not fully solvable. They are inherent to human social dynamics. They can be managed, made visible, kept from becoming catastrophic. They cannot be eliminated.

DIN represents a trade-off between simplicity, flexibility, robustness, and honesty.

Complete specification, universal applicability, guaranteed fairness, and immunity to bad faith have been sacrificed. These sacrifices are acknowledgments of theoretical limits. Attempting to

eliminate them would generate the bureaucratic bloat and authoritarian creep that DIN exists to prevent.

The system works when members want it to work. This is the inescapable foundation of all cooperative systems. Mechanics can make cooperation easier, can make defection costlier, can make power visible. They cannot manufacture willingness to cooperate.

When cooperation breaks down despite structural support, the system's response is visibility (making the breakdown explicit), adaptation (changing what isn't working), and exit (allowing incompatible members or groups to separate).

DIN is meta-stable, not stable. It maintains itself through continuous adjustment, not through rigidity. The goal is to remain capable of seeking new equilibrium as conditions change, not to reach a perfect equilibrium.

The choice is between honest incompleteness and false completeness that masks dysfunction. DIN chooses the former.

Summary

DIN scaffolds consensus without prescribing outcomes. It responds to load. It makes disagreement manageable without making it disappear.

Vote on proposals. Threshold for passage. Facilitators from passed proposals. Temporary authority. Representatives from proven facilitators. Geographic and Functional DIMs. Cross-DIM coordination through Representatives. Compensation or exit for conflicts. Easy Pilot Framework. Unrestricted proposals. Adaptive scope. Transparency by default. Exit always available.

Base seed configuration plus evolution. Natural selection at governance level. Competence rewarded through demonstrated performance. Complexity serves where necessary. Mesh scaling, not hierarchical nesting. Open source by design.

Structure enables freedom. All governance is incentive management.

This is engineering for resilient pluralism.