

Smart Contracts Exercise 02: Decentralized Voting System

1 Introduction

In this exercise, you will implement a decentralized voting system on the blockchain. This will be a simple smart contract that allows address owners to vote for individual candidates and subsequently display the voting results. The goal of this exercise is to familiarize yourself with the basics of the Solidity language.

To get started, visit the following [GitHub repository](#) and clone it to your local machine. This repository contains a template in which you will complete this exercise. Your implementation will be in the file *contracts/Voting.sol*. To verify that you have implemented the contract correctly, you will also have access to tests.

1.1 Prerequisites

Ensure that you have already installed the following on your system:

- **Node.js** - <https://nodejs.org/en/> An open-source, cross-platform, back-end JavaScript runtime environment that runs on the V8 engine and executes JavaScript code outside a web browser.
- **NPM**: Node Package Manager, which comes with Node.js.

Open your terminal and run the following commands to verify the installations:

```
$ node -v  
$ npm -v
```

Both commands should return the installed version numbers of Node.js and NPM respectively. Node.js provides the runtime environment required to execute JavaScript-based tools like Hardhat, while NPM is used to manage the packages and dependencies needed for development. It is recommended that you use NPM 7 or higher.

1.2 Creating a New Hardhat Project

Create an empty working directory and then run the following commands to initialize a Hardhat project:

```
$ npm init -y # Initialize an npm project in the directory.  
$ npm install --save-dev hardhat # Install Hardhat in the directory.  
$ npx hardhat init # Initialize a Hardhat project.
```

Select `Create an empty hardhat.config.js` with your keyboard and hit enter.

2 Task: Writing Your First Smart Contract

Start by creating a new directory inside your project called *contracts* and create a file inside the directory called *Greeter.sol*. Paste the code below into the file and take a minute to read the code.

```
// contracts/Greeter.sol

// SPDX-License-Identifier: MIT
pragma solidity ^0.8.0;

/**
 * @title Greeter
 * @dev A simple smart contract that stores a greeting message.
 */
contract Greeter {
    // State variable to store the greeting message
    string private greeting;

    /**
     * @dev Constructor that initializes the contract with a greeting.
     * @param _greeting The greeting message to be stored.
     */
    constructor(string memory _greeting) {
        greeting = _greeting;
    }

    /**
     * @dev Function to retrieve the greeting message.
     * @return The current greeting stored in the contract.
     */
    function greet() public view returns (string memory) {
        return greeting;
    }
}
```

The Greeter contract is a simple Solidity smart contract that stores a greeting message, initializes it during deployment, and allows users to retrieve it via a public function. To compile the contract, run `npm run hardhat compile` in your terminal.

```
$ npm run hardhat compile
Compiled 1 Solidity file successfully (evm target: paris).
```

Hardhat compiled your Solidity smart contract and generated corresponding artifacts—including the contract’s ABI, bytecode, and related metadata—which are stored in the *artifacts* folder.

3 Task: Test your Smart Contract with Local Hardhat Network

3.1 Set Up Hardhat-Toolbox Plugin

In this task, you will write and execute a simple test case for the **Greeter** contract using Hardhat’s local network. For this task, we will need the *@nomicfoundation/hardhat-*

toolbox plugin. It integrates testing libraries, Ethers.js, and other deployment utilities. Run the following command in the directory to install the plugin:

```
$ npm install --save-dev @nomicfoundation/hardhat-toolbox
```

To include the plugin in your Hardhat project, add the following to your *hardhat.config.js* file in the project directory so that it will look like this:

```
// hardhat.config.js

require("@nomicfoundation/hardhat-toolbox");

/** @type import('hardhat/config').HardhatUserConfig */
module.exports = {
  solidity: "0.8.0",
};
```

For more information about plugins and how to test contracts in Hardhat, visit: [Hardhat Documentation](#).

3.2 Writing a Simple Test

Create a new directory named *test* in your project root and add a file called *Greeter.js* with the following content:

```
// test/Greeter.js

// Import the 'expect' function from Chai for assertions
const { expect } = require("chai");

// Test suite for the Greeter contract
describe("Greeter contract says Hello, Blockchain World!", function () {

  // Test to ensure the initial greeting is set correctly upon deployment
  it("Deployment should set the initial greeting correctly.", async function () {

    // Define the initial greeting message
    const initialGreeting = "Hello, Blockchain World!";

    // Deploy the Greeter contract with the initial greeting
    const greeter = await ethers.deployContract("Greeter", [initialGreeting]);

    // Wait for the deployment to complete
    await greeter.waitForDeployment();

    // Retrieve the stored greeting from the contract
    const greeting = await greeter.greet();

    // Verify that the retrieved greeting matches the initial greeting
    expect(greeting).to.equal(initialGreeting);
  });
});
```

3.3 Running the Test

Execute the test on Hardhat's local network by running the following commands in your terminal:

```
$ npx hardhat test
```

Congratulations! You wrote, compiled, and tested your first smart contract!

4 Task: Deploying to a Live Network

Once you have programmed and tested your dApp, you want to deploy it to a public blockchain so that others can access it. For the purposes of our exercise, we will not use the Ethereum mainnet because we would have to pay with real money, but instead a live testnet. A testnet mimics real-world scenarios without risking our own money. Ethereum has several [testnets](#); for our purposes, we will choose the [Sepolia testnet](#). Deploying to a testnet is the same as deploying to mainnet at the software level. The only difference is the network you connect to.

4.1 Prerequisites

In order to finish this task, you will need the following tools:

- **MetaMask:** A popular Ethereum wallet that allows you to interact with the Ethereum blockchain. You can download the MetaMask extension for your browser from the [official website](#) and set it up. But you can also use other wallets or simply create your own private-public key pair.
- **Infura API Key:** Infura provides access to Ethereum nodes without the need to run your own. Sign up at [Infura](#) to obtain an API key.
- **Sepolia Faucet:** Acquire Sepolia test Ether (ETH) from a faucet to fund your deployment. Some reliable faucets include:
 - [Google Cloud Web3](#)
 - [Metamask Sepolia Faucet](#)
 - [Alchemy Sepolia Faucet](#)

4.2 Configuring Hardhat for Sepolia Deployment

To deploy your smart contract to the Sepolia testnet, you need to configure Hardhat with the network details and your wallet credentials.

4.2.1 Storing Sensitive Information

It's crucial to keep sensitive information like your private key and Infura API key secure. We recommend using environment variables to manage these credentials.

- Install the dotenv Package:

```
$ npm install dotenv --save
```

- Create a `.env` file in your directory:

In the root of your project directory, create a file named `.env` and add the following content:

```
# .env

INFURA_API_KEY=your_infura_project_id
SEPOLIA_PRIVATE_KEY=your_metamask_private_key
```

Warning: Never commit your `.env` file to version control. Add `.env` to your `.gitignore` file to prevent accidental exposure.

4.2.2 Updating *hardhat.config.js*

Modify your *hardhat.config.js* file to include the Sepolia network configuration:

```
// hardhat.config.js

require("@nomicfoundation/hardhat-toolbox");
require("dotenv").config();

/** @type import('hardhat/config').HardhatUserConfig */
module.exports = {
  solidity: "0.8.0",
  networks: {
    sepolia: {
      url: `https://sepolia.infura.io/v3/${process.env.INFURA_API_KEY}`,
      accounts: [`0x${process.env.SEPOLIA_PRIVATE_KEY}`],
    },
  },
};
```

This configuration tells Hardhat how to connect to the Sepolia testnet using your Infura API key and deploy contracts using your wallet's private key.

4.3 Deploying the Smart Contract to Sepolia

With the configuration in place, you're ready to deploy your smart contract to the Sepolia testnet.

4.3.1 Creating a Deployment Script

- 1. Create a *scripts* Directory: In your project root, create a new directory named *scripts*.
- 2. Add a Deployment Script: Inside the *scripts* directory, create a file named *deploy.js* and add the following content:

```
// scripts/deploy.js

const hre = require("hardhat");

async function main() {
  // Set the initial greeting message
  const initialGreeting = "Hello, Blockchain World!";

  // Deploy the Greeter contract with the initial greeting
  const greeter = await ethers.deployContract("Greeter", [initialGreeting]);
  console.log(`Greeter contract deployed to: ${greeter.target}`);

  // Wait for the deployment to complete
  await greeter.waitForDeployment();

  // Retrieve the stored greeting from the contract
  const greeting = await greeter.greet();
  console.log(`Contract greeting: ${greeting}`);
}

main()
  .then(() => process.exit(0))
  .catch((error) => {
    console.error(error);
    process.exit(1);
  });
```

4.3.2 Executing the Deployment

Run the deployment script using Hardhat with the Sepolia network specified:

```
$ npx hardhat run scripts/deploy.js --network sepolia
```

Expected Output:

```
Greeter contract deployed to: <ContractAddress>
Contract greeting: Hello, Blockchain World!
```

You can verify the deployment by visiting the Sepolia Etherscan explorer and searching for your contract address: <https://sepolia.etherscan.io/address/<ContractAddress>>. Search also for your account address and see your interactions with the deployed contract.

4.4 Interacting with Your Deployed Contract

Now that your contract is live on the Sepolia testnet, you can interact with it using various tools:

- **Etherscan:** View contract details, read functions, and execute transactions directly from the Etherscan interface.
- **Web3 Interfaces:** Integrate your contract with frontend applications using libraries like `ethers.js` or `web3.js`.

- **Hardhat Tasks:** Write scripts or use the Hardhat console to interact programmatically with your contract.

Tip: If you run the deployment script without specifying the *-network* parameter, it will deploy to the local Hardhat network.

```
$ npx hardhat run scripts/deploy.js
```

4.5 Further Reading

For more detailed information, refer to the following resources:

- [Solidity Documentation](#)
- [Hardhat Documentation](#)
- [Chai Assertion Library](#)

Congratulations! You have successfully deployed your first smart contract to the live blockchain network! Stay tuned for the upcoming exercises!