

greater good (the interests of future generations). It is not unusual for a proposal to have a short-term disadvantage that achieves a long-term advantage. Stakeholders tend to focus on the short-term – their own generation – so they object. Second, preventive conservation (and risk management) are justified as the efficient protection of entire collections instead of the traditional one-special-object-at-a-time perspective of the public (and the bench conservator). Greene wonders whether one learns these professional utilitarian perspectives on the job, or one has them already, and is drawn to the professions that exercise them. Either way, sharing conservation decisions will involve resolving these opposing perspectives.

Finally, by exploring many variations of the ‘people on a train track dilemma’, Greene has uncovered some of the building blocks of our moral judgements, and it is not good news for our profession. Our ‘do-no-harm alarm’ is triggered only if the causal relation is simple and direct. Side effects from sending the train down another track does not trigger it. The decision is handed over to type 2, utilitarian thinking – which has no difficulty deciding that one death is better than five. However, the thought of using our hands to push the one person definitely triggers the ‘do-no-harm alarm’. Killing the five by doing nothing is too indirect to trigger the alarm. Hence the odd indifference to ‘collateral damage’. A conservation treatment is literally the placing of the conservator’s hands on a special thing, so the conservator is obviously the cause of whatever sacrilege or degradation occurs. I suspect that the life and death alarm bells that Greene has uncovered can be applied to judgements about things that are ‘priceless’ or ‘irreplaceable’ or sacred. If all goes well, we are heroes, if not, we are villains. One benefit of the sharing of treatment tasks is the shared ownership of the results.

## Conclusion

### When sharing a decision becomes difficult

Research on human reasoning and moral judgements summarized in this article has uncovered a complex but universal set of mental mechanisms that have evolved over millennia, sometimes labelled ‘type 1’ thinking or more colloquially as our ‘elephant’. The research also finds profound variations in the settings of these mechanisms between individuals and between cultures. We can expect, therefore, that if sharing a decision with stakeholders has become contentious, it is probably because of a variation in type 1 thinking between individuals or between cultures. It is important for leaders in the sharing process to understand that judgements based on values or feelings, especially when vociferous, are not something that a person can explain, they can only express. A decision matrix can help the sharing of difficult decisions in two ways: it partitions complex contentious issues into their fundamental value judgements (the criteria) and it captures the strength of each participant’s connection to those criteria.