

Empathy

Kaner (2014) stresses empathy (putting ourselves in another's shoes) as an essential tactic for participatory decision-making. Technocrats might dismiss this as a touchy-feely platitude, but I think Haidt's work makes it clear that, for value-based decisions, we have no choice but to try and understand our own elephants and those of others.

Accountability

When difficult heritage treatment decisions are being shared, it is usually the case that some, if not all, the actors have significant legal and fiduciary responsibilities. In government, decision tools are invoked for transparency and accountability. One might as well make the best of them rather than consider them a hindrance.

Technical overreach

Technical overreach refers to the tendency of experts to presume control of the whole decision process, to presume to represent the groups affected, such as stakeholders and the public. At best this is naïve, at worst it is offensive.

As Renn (2004) makes clear for the field of public risk decisions, and Chirikure and colleagues (2010) make clear for world heritage sites, it is essential that technical experts bring as much relevant knowledge as they can to the analysis stage, but for the final stages of the decision, they must hand it over to the affected groups. I suspect that our profession is even more prone to overreach because technical issues often merge with value issues within our own domain.

Reflection, the key?

I think that it is obvious that reflective thinking is the key to good decisions. We can recognize it in every culture's aphorisms about wisdom and thoughtfulness, but we can also recognize it in the evidence and advice I have compiled here – it is Kaner's "groan zone" and it is precisely what is missing in Nutt's number one blunder – "rush to judgement". It is, presumably, what was missing in the sharing and decision failures documented in our own field of heritage. After all, we do not think that these failures were due to a lack of intelligence, or evil intentions, do we? If reflection is the key, then a primary purpose of our tools and our tactics must be the facilitation of reflection.

Sharing with several people will always favour reflection: first, there will be a higher chance that someone is innately reflective, and second, there will be a higher chance of initial disagreement, which might then trigger constructive reflection.

Tools, such as the decision matrix, decision tree, secret ballots, and voting charts facilitate reflection by capturing the easily neglected insights of introverts, and allowing complex structures to emerge that belong to the whole group. Software versions of these tools projected