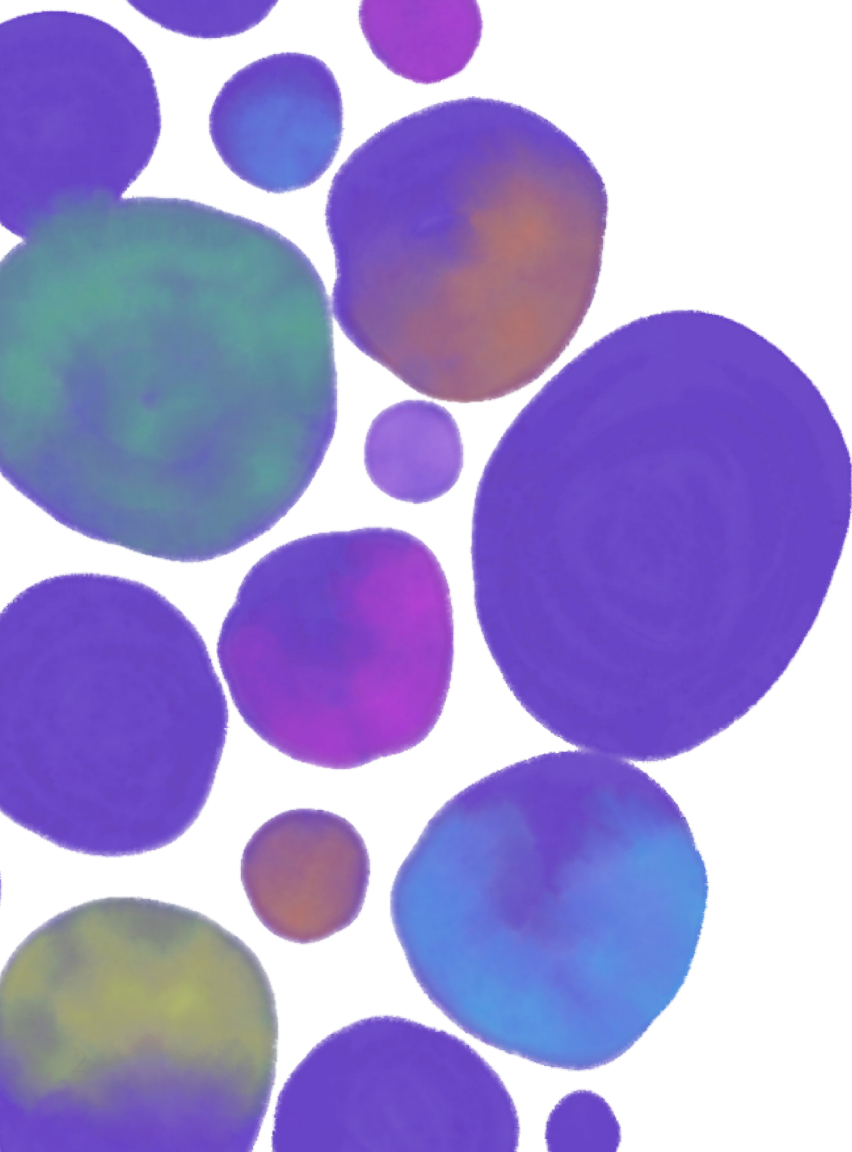


Episode #6

Decision stories

PurposePhil concept book





What you'll find here

- Introduction
- 1 How do we make decisions? / page 09
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*“Action indeed is
the sole medium of
expression for ethics.”*



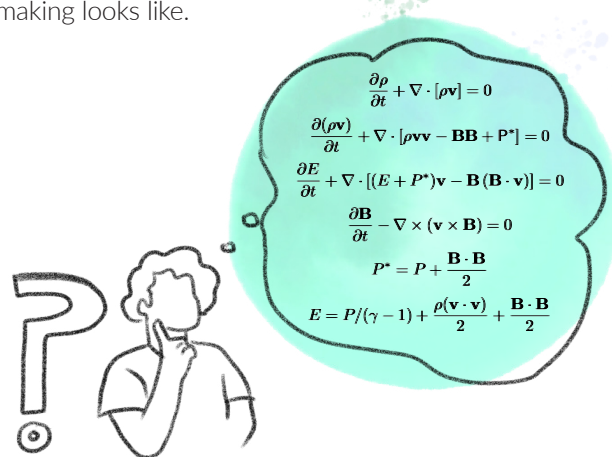
This business of improving the world is an uncertain one. We recognize that there are good and bad, right and wrong, better and worse decisions -- but how do we figure out what is what, especially when acting in real world situations where we don't have all the information, face time and resource pressures, and deal with multiple stakeholder groups?

How do we make ethical decisions in a context of uncertainty?

Here's where institutional purpose can be a guide. Institutions are collections of people and roles, organized into structures, with norms and values that reproduce themselves. Western style philanthropy is very much an institution, codified in legislation and embedded within our tax system.

Ethicists and philosophers tell us that making institutional purpose, values, and decision-making logics explicit is a necessary precondition for discerning right from wrong, and good from bad. To do that, we need a common language through which to identify the different moral bases for decisions. **This module tries to make visible different moral bases, frameworks, and processes for decision-making.**

Building on content from prior modules -- especially *Money Stories*, *Purpose Stories*, and *Boundary Stories* -- we zoom into community foundations as a type of philanthropic institution and ask: what are its moral & ethical obligations in stewarding collective assets? We profile four organizations who are re-imagining what representative, meaningful, and purposeful decision-making looks like.





1. How do we make
decisions?



Judgments in uncertainty

Humans are near constant decision-makers. Every day, we make upwards of 35,000 decisions; 285 of which are about food. We like to think we are rational actors who can parse through information to arrive at the best or right answer, but what if we don't always think before we decide?

In 2002, Daniel Kahneman won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work with Amos Tversky on human judgment and decision-making under uncertainty. They demonstrated how we humans use heuristics, or mental shortcuts, to come to judgments quickly, without having to think too hard. We do it unconsciously: it's just the way the brain works. Much of the time it works very well for us, but sometimes it causes us to be wrong. Why? Because those shortcuts have biases to them. He identifies three types of mental shortcuts:

Availability
heuristic

Representativeness
heuristic

Anchoring and
adjustment
heuristic

Kahneman & Tversky's heuristics

Availability heuristic

Imagining that things we remember (eg. instances of an ice storm) happen more frequently, are more probable, or important than those we have a harder time bringing to mind. It can blind us to other information; for instance, what sort of events get attention in the media and which are ignored.



Representativeness heuristic

Making connections based on perceived resemblance to a stereotype we hold. A cultural stereotype about a librarian as meek, details-oriented, and interested in helping others might lead us to make the assumption that someone who presents with a similar personality is more likely to be a librarian, ignoring that their male gender, for example, makes that statistically much less likely.



Anchoring and adjustment heuristic

When we're estimating a value, we tend to get stuck on an initial value suggested, however random it is. This is what's called the anchor. From there we may make incremental adjustments up or down, but they are often insufficient because we are biased toward the initial value, or anchor.



How could these sorts of heuristics be at work at Vancouver Foundation?



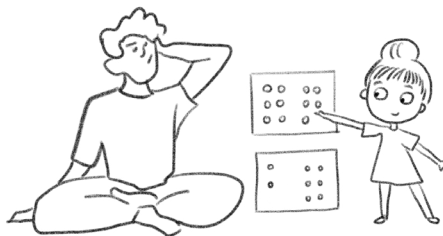
Kahneman says it's not that we are incapable of thinking more deeply to make a better decision, but that we rarely turn on that mode of our brain -- a slower, more effortful, and intentional mode -- if we can avoid it. These biases are employed intuitively and without reflection.

“ Put simply, **bias is the average error in judgments**. If you look at many judgments, and errors in those judgments all follow in the same direction, that is bias. ”



Moral decisions

Of the 35,000 decisions we make a day, not all are of the same type. Some are personal preferences: chili sauce or ketchup? Others are moral in nature: give \$5 to someone who asks? How we make moral decisions also comes down to default logics, informed by our sense of distributive justice.* Podcast guest **Josh Rottman studies the logics children and adults use by default when making distributive decisions, and whether it's possible to shift those defaults.** (Spoiler: it's a lot easier in children!)



**Distributive Justice refers to reasoning about the best and fairest way to distribute burdens and benefits within a group. The tax system is one of our most prominent attempts at distributive justice, but the term can also refer to how we slice up a dessert at a party, or allocate chores within a household.*

Why should we probe our own and others' sense of distributive justice?

- **Because it is at the heart of how we organize society.** *"Distributive justice is at the very centre of our moral beliefs. It is generally something really important that every society has strong beliefs about and strong norms around."* -- Josh Rottman
- **Because beliefs become ingrained in each of us, early on, without much reflection.**
- **Since we have a go-to logic for the fairest way to divide benefits and burdens, making a good decision requires that we seek out and actively consider unfamiliar or forgotten logics.**

Grantmaking as a moral decision

Kahneman's later research, in *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, shows that we can be blind -- as in literally failing to perceive information right in front of us, especially when our brains are overloaded -- and that we are blind to our blindness. That's the big idea of unconscious bias: we are not aware of our hidden defaults, associations and prejudices. And yet, **we consistently overestimate our ability to make sound decisions, particularly in situations of complexity and uncertainty**. This has moral implications when our decisions can benefit and/or harm others. Grantmaking involves lots of moral decisions in an environment of complexity and uncertainty.



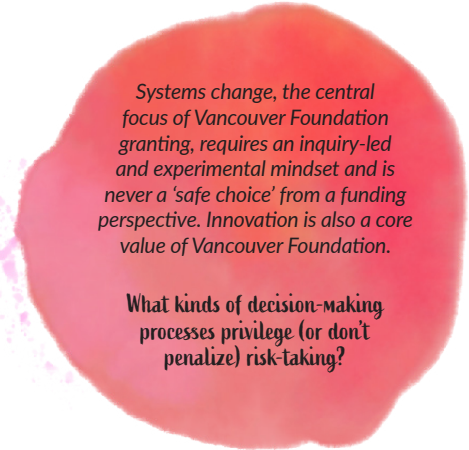
Ferric C. Fang and Arturo Casadevall looked at how granting committees at the USA's National Institutes of Health (NIH) decided which research projects to fund. Fang and Casadevall wanted to know whether grantmakers were able to identify the applications that would go on to produce greater value to the scientific community. The output of research projects is academic articles, so they defined successful projects as ones that produced papers that are more frequently cited.

Turns out, grantmakers weren't any better at selecting successful projects than if applications were chosen at random. A number of research studies have confirmed grantmakers' poor predictive skills. Why? Too few reviewers per application leads to random scoring; reviewers may not agree on criteria or their weighting; and discussion panels are often ineffectual, failing to improve the reliability of decisions.

Fang and Casadevall found that:

- While experts were unable to make good predictions, they vastly overestimated their ability to do so. Reviewers were able to differentiate between the strongest and weakest applications, but they found few good reasons to differentiate between projects in the middle of the pack.
- Experts trend cautious in climates of resource scarcity. One tension affecting reviewers was the mandate to select potentially revolutionary research (which requires risk taking) but with limited dollars and high demand. As Nobel Laureate Roger Kornberg has observed, *"In the present climate especially, the funding decisions are ultraconservative. If the work that you propose to do isn't virtually certain of success, then it won't be funded. And of course, the kind of work that we would most like to see take place, which is groundbreaking and innovative, lies at the other extreme."*
- Even small amounts of personal bias in reviewers can have a significant impact on funding outcomes.

In the end, Fang and Casadevall make the case for the NIH to switch to a modified lottery to decide which research proposals should be funded.



Systems change, the central focus of Vancouver Foundation granting, requires an inquiry-led and experimental mindset and is never a 'safe choice' from a funding perspective. Innovation is also a core value of Vancouver Foundation.

What kinds of decision-making processes privilege (or don't penalize) risk-taking?

A modified lottery is a method for maximizing the good reasons we have to make a decision, while sanitizing a process of the bad reasons or biases. It looks like applying filters to a pool of candidates before conducting a lottery, or sorting candidates into separate lotteries (eg. to ensure a particular representation of geographic zones).

In the case of the NIH grantmakers, they were most reliably able to identify proposals that were infeasible, badly conceived, or unable to advance knowledge/practice. Reviewers also did better at identifying the strongest proposals. The remaining, middle-of-the-pack applications would be entered into a lottery to randomly determine what will get funded. Research suggests that the results will, on average, be just as good as if the reviewers made the decisions. The results will also be more time efficient, and without the unintentional introduction of bias, or sending misleading signals to applicants about the quality of their proposal compared to others.'



2. The distributive logics we default to

Wait, what is distributive justice again?



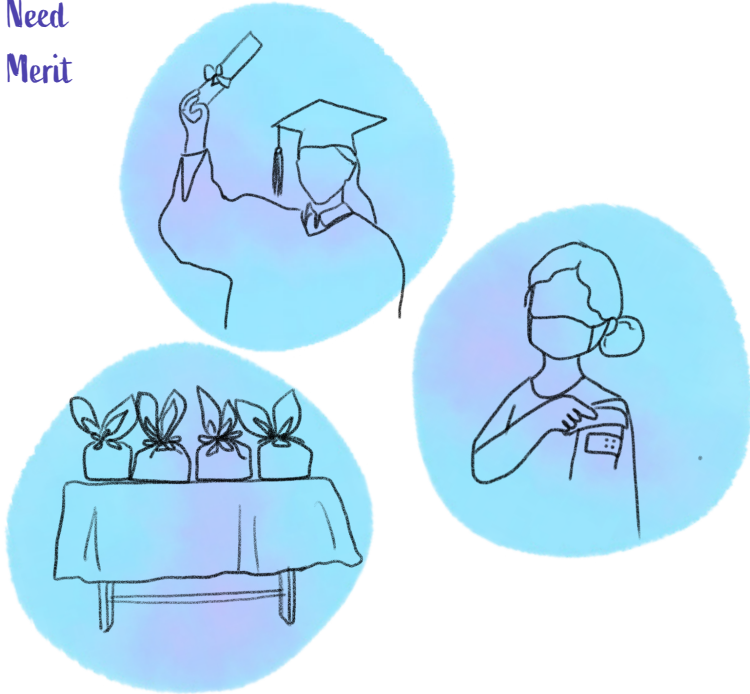
It's about **distributing benefits and burdens in society**. How should people [benefit] from whatever we produce collectively? To get a clear grasp on what distributive justice entails, you need to answer a couple of different questions: What are the benefits and burdens? What is it that we're interested in [distributing]? Welfare... happiness...health care, education, infrastructure, or access to public goods. There's the question about, **what are we distributing? What do we care about?** Then, there's the question about the pattern of justice. How should it be distributed? Should everyone have the same amount of whatever it is that we care about? Or are there other distributive patterns that societies or states should pursue? Distributive justice, in a nutshell, is a question about benefits and burdens and how they are distributed.



What are the most prominent logics we use to divide up goods justly?

Professor Josh Rottman sees three over and over again:

- Equality
- Need
- Merit



- **Equality:** "Potentially the most primary way, the way that even very young children tend to adopt readily is that resources should be distributed equally. If there are eight coins and four people, it just seems clear that we should split it up so that everybody gets two coins regardless of the identity or needs or anything else."
- **Need:** "Other kinds of distributive justice pay much more attention to the qualities of the recipients and the degrees to which they either deserve or need the resources, for example."
- **Merit:** "Another way is [to think] about whether people merit the resources that they're being given. If some people are more deserving -- either because they worked harder, or for some other reason, maybe we should give them more."

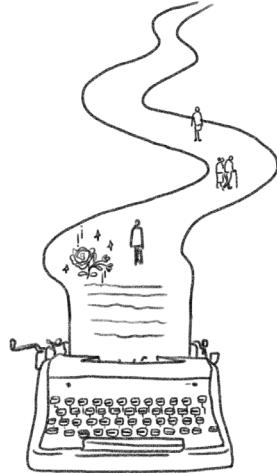
Distributive Logic	Most attentive to ...	For example
Merit	Quantity or quality of output	In a workplace, those perceived as producing more value, or working harder or longer, are rewarded with higher salaries.
Need/ Equity	Qualities or context of potential recipients	In a public health context, those individuals perceived as more vulnerable may be offered more supports or earlier access to opportunities such as vaccination.
Equality	Moral principle	At a party, identical goody bags may be divided evenly among guests, regardless of interest, behaviour, or how much a guest already has, to show fairness.
Purpose/teleos	How well the aims, qualities, or potential of a recipient fits with the purpose of a resource or opportunity.	A violin player passed away leaving two violins and two children. She bequeaths both violins to one child, a violinist, and none to the other child, who does not play violin, because she understands that a violin's purpose is to be played.
Stochasticism/ randomness/ lottery	The balance of good (well-reasoned) and bad (biased) reasons that a set of decision-makers might employ in making a decision. If the bad out way the good, stochasticism can have a 'sanitizing' effect.	A worker co-op has to lay off one worker for budgetary reasons. They decide to lay off the most recently hired person; however, there are two workers who were hired at the same time and who have comparable performance. The co-op elects to use a lottery to select one. The laid off worker is disappointed but understands that the choice is not a judgment on her performance.



3. Making ethical decisions

In the face of unconscious bias, uncertainty, limited resources, and lots of (often unexamined) moral beliefs, what does it mean to go about making ethical decisions?

Podcast guest Joan Harrington is the Director of Social Sector Ethics at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at the University of Santa Clara. The Center's mission is to engage individuals and organizations in making ethical choices that respect and care for others. Harrington boils ethical decision-making down to **rigorously applying clearly defined purpose and values.**



“

In your own lives, ethics is mostly a very natural decision that you make as you age.... It's a thought process... It is the same with organizations or boards of directors. Organizations also go through that process.

They have a bigger impact on what they're doing. Because they're giving more money, they definitely need to have a structure and a process for giving. The lenses that they should use first are the mission, vision, and values of the organization. We often find that the values statements aren't sufficiently developed.

”



Joan
Harrington

Harrington describes two

Conditions for ethical decision-making:

- *Having organizational values and purpose that are specific enough to offer guidance, known, and understood by all members of an organization.*
- *Making space for dialogue on how to apply values and purpose in different scenarios.*



Harrington says that often staff don't know how to employ organizational purpose and values in practical situations. They are too vague, too contradictory or paradoxical, and too anemic.

How values are understood and lived is something to talk about and make visible within organizations.

Rather than labeling decisions ethical/unethical, Harrington refers to a spectrum of better and worse decisions. Figuring out where a decision might land requires “trying on” different moral lenses. The first lens is your organization’s purpose and values. The next lenses are rooted in distinct moral traditions including justice, care, rights, utilitarianism, virtue, and the common good. These lenses enable organizational actors to surface their default logics, and carefully weigh alternative moral bases for decisions.

Markkula Center's Six Ethical Lenses

These six ethical lenses come from the fields of philosophy, ethics, and theology. They are a distillation of some of the key frameworks behind moral action.

1 The Rights Lens

This lens starts from the belief that humans have a dignity based on their human nature and their ability to choose freely what to do with their lives. On the basis of such dignity, **humans have a right to be treated as ends in themselves and not merely as means to other ends.**

More at <https://www.ethicsops.com/rights-test>



2 The Justice Lens

Justice is the idea that **each person should be given their due**, and what people are due is often interpreted as fair or equal treatment. Equal treatment implies that people should be treated as equals according to some defensible standard such as merit or need, but not necessarily that everyone should be treated in the exact same way. There are different types of justice that address what benefits and burdens people are due in various contexts: distributive justice, corrective justice, restorative justice, etc.

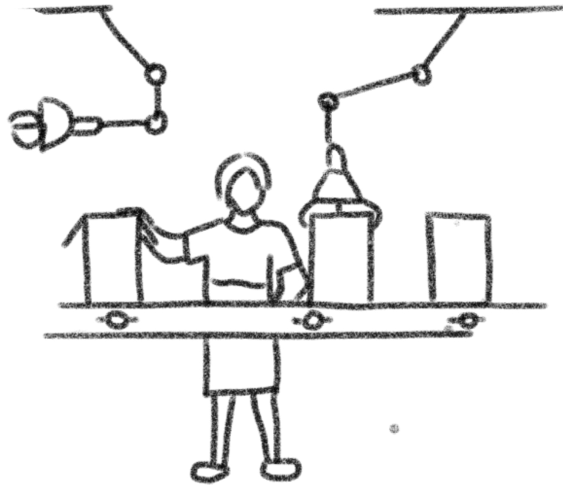
More at <https://www.ethicsops.com/justice-test>



3 The Utilitarian Lens

This lens starts by asking, “How will [X] decision impact everyone affected?” and **focuses on the consequences of our actions**. Utilitarianism, a results-based approach, says that the ethical action is the one that produces the greatest balance of good over harm for as many stakeholders as possible. It requires an accurate determination of the likelihood of a particular result and its impact.

More at <https://www.ethicsops.com/best-outcomes-test>



4 The Common Good Lens

This lens treats life in community as a good in itself and requires that our actions contribute to that life. Core to this lens is a belief that the interlocking relationships of society are the basis of ethical reasoning and that respect and compassion for all others—especially the vulnerable—drive decision-making. This approach also **calls attention to the common conditions that are important to the welfare of everyone**—such as clean air and water, a system of laws, etc.

More <https://www.ethicsops.com/common-good>



5 The Virtue Lens

This lens says that ethical actions ought to be consistent with certain ideal virtues that provide for the full development of our common humanity. These virtues are dispositions and habits that enable us to act according to the highest potential of our character and on behalf of our moral values. Honesty, courage, compassion, generosity, tolerance, etc. are all examples of virtues. Virtue ethics asks of any action, “What kind of person will I become if I do this?” or “**Is this action consistent with my acting at my best?**”

More at <https://www.ethicsops.com/character-test>



6 The Care Ethics Lens

Care ethics is **rooted in relationships and in the need to listen and respond to individuals in their specific circumstances**, rather than merely following rules or calculating utility. It privileges the flourishing of embodied individuals in their relationships and values interdependence, not just independence. It relies on empathy to gain a deep appreciation of the interest, feelings, and viewpoints of each stakeholder, employing care, kindness, compassion, generosity, and a concern for others to resolve ethical conflicts. Care ethics holds that options for resolution must account for the relationships, concerns, and feelings of all stakeholders. (A more recent addition, Markkula’s essay elaborating further on the care ethics lens is forthcoming.)

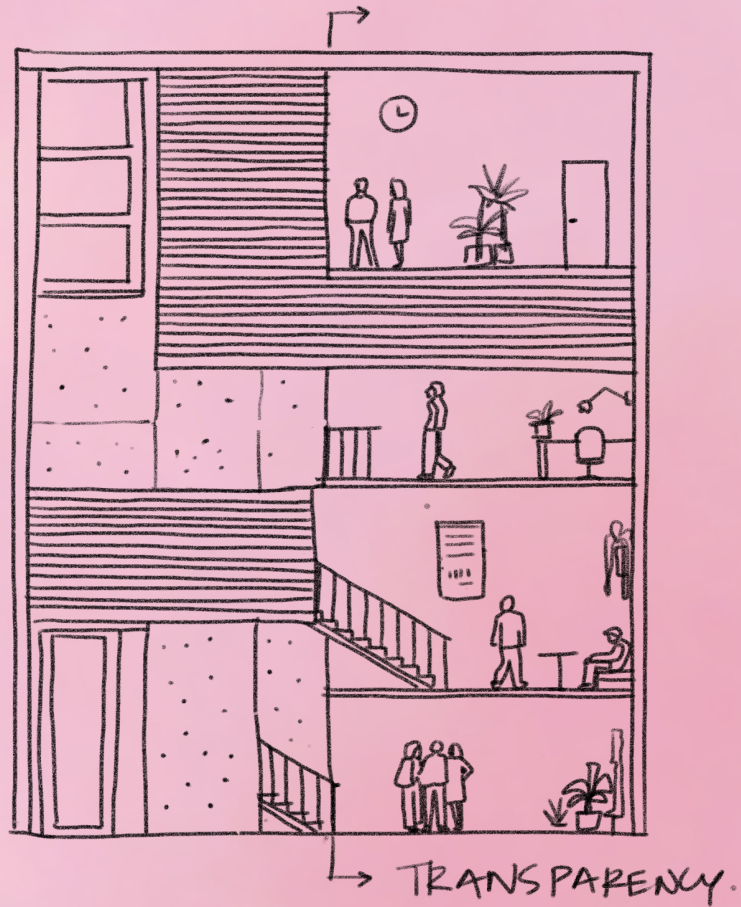


The lenses introduce different mindsets and standards of behaviour that can be considered right and good. Each of us will gravitate to some lenses (and their moral bases) more than others, and organizations will have better matches too, based on their values and purpose.

There may be disagreement about the content of specific lenses; for example, what constitutes the common good or what is considered a harm or a good. That's healthy. Only by experimenting with different moral bases, and engaging in open dialogue, can we achieve some of the rigour necessary for ethical decisions.

As Josh Rottman argues, a good decision often takes multiple logics into account. It often makes sense to come up with solutions that reflect a couple of core values, provided they are not contradictory, rather than one value in the extreme.





Legitimacy of decisions

Josh Rottman's research asks how hard it is to shift people's moral beliefs. He finds that it is much easier to do so in childhood, when children are more open to considering a different moral logic. With adults, Rottman finds interventions have far less effect.

One antidote to the rigidity of adult decision-making is transparency. Especially for organizations that serve a community, making transparent the moral beliefs behind a decision can confer legitimacy. Only when explicit can values and choices be contested or actively supported.



4. Organizational Case Studies

How can a clear statement on values and purpose translate into approaches to decision-making?

Below are four examples of how different types of organizations have iterated, developed or completely changed their decision-making frameworks to align with their values and purpose.



Bolivian Schools
Democratic lotteries



Mass LBP
Civic lotteries



Institute for Anarchist Studies
Consensus-based grant making



Kahnawake
Indigenous direct democracy

Democratic lotteries

Bolivian Schools



Description

Half a dozen Bolivian schools replaced traditional approaches to selecting student government representatives (ie. campaigns and ballots) with a democratic lottery. Assisted by Democracy in Practice, an organization focused on democratic experimentation, innovation, and capacity building, students were randomly chosen to represent their fellow students, received capacity-building support, filled shorter, 3-month terms, and rotated roles within a flat/non-hierarchical structure.

Sound byte

[Listen here](#)

What's being distributed?

Opportunities to (1) represent peers and build leadership capability, and (2) be represented by someone with similar lived experience

What's the pattern of distribution?

Random: the schools use a lottery process to select students for leadership positions

Purpose

Leadership development

Values

Equity, inclusion,
engagement

Problem being solved

Limited participation

- A small subset of those who may be interested in leadership roles tend to run as candidates in elections
- Electorates tend to reproduce biases towards those who resemble the powerful in society in their ballot choices; elected students are exposed to more opportunities

Skewed political agendas

- The format of most election campaigns favours populist messages over deeper engagement with issues
- Student government agendas are commonly biased towards a narrow subset of student issues (eg. social events) and may not tackle more serious issues (eg. of poor and working class children)

How does it reflect values and purpose?

The lottery approach gives each student a more equal chance to develop their own capabilities, but also to be represented by another student who understands their experiences, regardless of socioeconomic status, ability, race, gender, or other factors.

The more frequent rotation of student leaders (every 3 months rather than a year) enables more students to develop leadership skills. This reflects the mandate of schools to support the development of each child in a way that mitigates against greater systems of inequality and inequity rather than reproducing them.

Read more about it

[Democracy in Practice Website](#)

Civic lotteries

Mass LBP



Description

Civic lotteries make it possible for governments and public agencies to randomly assemble a broadly representative sample of people onto a “reference panel” to discuss and come up with recommendations for what should be done about a given issue, free from the pressures of outside influences.

In Canada, the organization Mass LBP has pioneered the use of civic lotteries.

Sound byte

“Imagine that you have a problem you want to solve. The problem is complex or values-based (or both) and those who will be affected by what you choose to do disagree about what ought to be done.” -- [How to run a civic lottery](#)

What's being distributed?

Opportunity and responsibility to exercise public judgment and steward the common good.

What's the pattern of distribution?

Random or lottery method to create reference panels, which involve many more Canadians in public decisions.

Purpose

MASS LBP's purpose is to bring more people to the table and bridge the distance between citizens and governments.

Values

MASS LBP is an organization founded on the radical proposition that the next stage of democracy is not only one where people can have their say, but where everyone has the opportunity and responsibility to exercise public judgment and act as stewards of the greater common good.

- Maximizing “civic fitness” (learning and exercising civic values)
- Equity of representation in the public realm
- Contribution

Problem being solved

- Low civic participation and too few representative opportunities
- A bias towards expressing preferences (eg. through voting) over making contributions
- Consultation methods that tend to engage a non-representative sample of the public

How does it reflect values and purpose?

Civic lotteries:

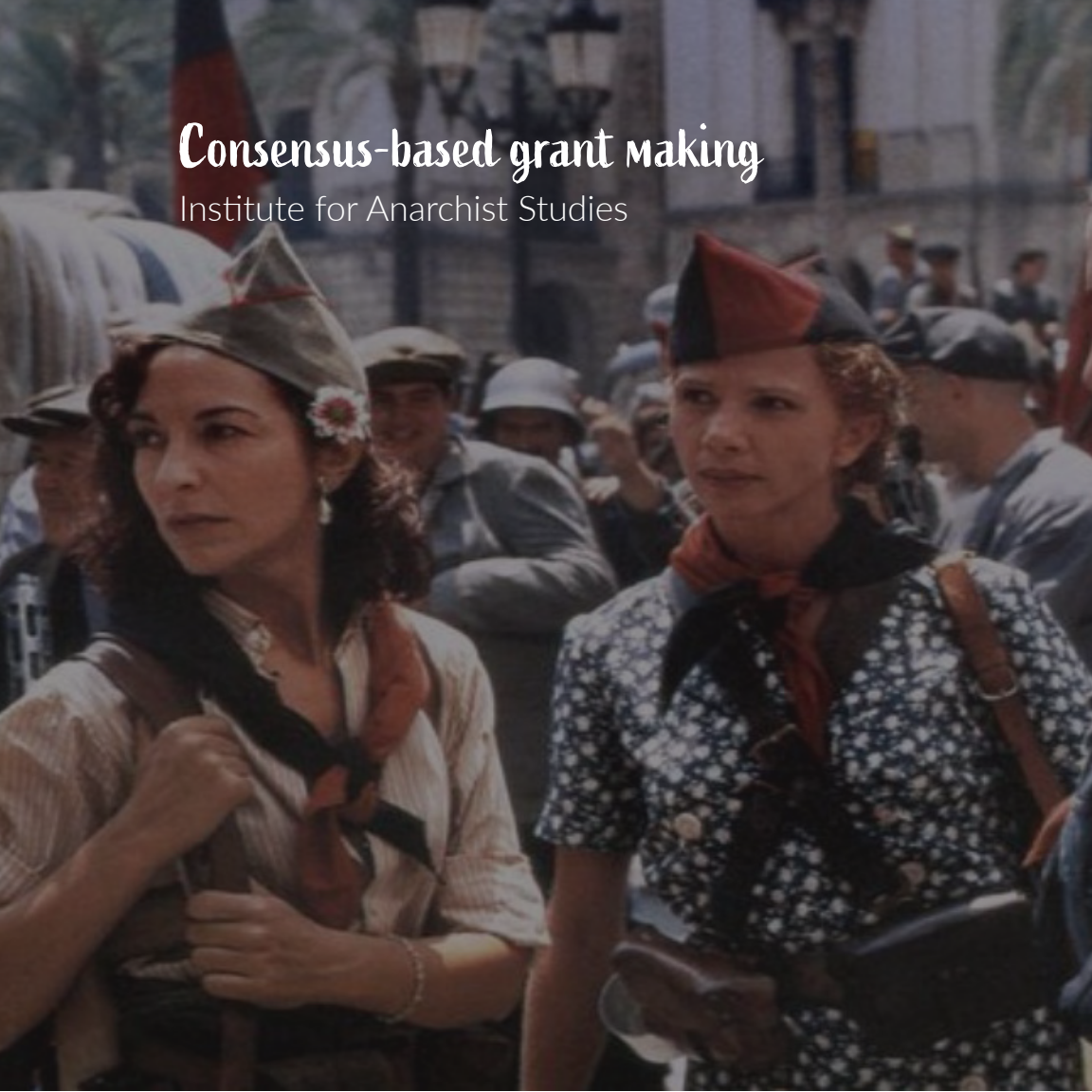
- Meaningfully involve more and different citizens in civic decision- making
- Are more broadly representative of the population
- Reflect a moral commitment to treat people as active agents who can self-govern, rather than as passive objects who must be governed
- When combined with a deliberative forum (like a citizen jury) build trust and produce more legitimate outcomes. That looks like people respecting decisions made by them or people like them.

Read more about it

[How to run a civic lottery](#)

Consensus-based grant making

Institute for Anarchist Studies



Description

The Institute for Anarchist Studies has a small grant fund (about \$2000 annually) distributed by its board of directors.

Over the last decade, the IAS has refined both its decision-making process and the purpose of its grants. Some of the standout features include:

- A consensus decision-making process
- An annual politically-focused meeting to define how best to express their purpose that year given current events
- A transition from making decisions about many applications over a concentrated period to a slower, drip-fed process that allows decision-makers to better manage workload and stress, and make more informed and consistent decisions
- A new decision-making rubric that relates directly back to the IAS' moral purpose

Sound byte

[Listen here](#)

What's being distributed?

Money to support the development of theory and research

What's the pattern of distribution?

Based on a logic that mixes **equity/need and purpose/teleos**. Grants are targeted at non-academic theorists with under-represented identities and lower access to resources and those addressing the issues that feel most pressing and least theorized from an anarchist perspective at any given time.

Purpose

The Institute for Anarchist Studies came into existence to attract and distribute material resources to advance contemporary anarchist thought. It also shares and demonstrates the principles of anarchy by applying them to its own operations.

Values

Anarchist principles:

- Direct democracy: systems and processes that give people agency to participate in decisions that directly affect them
- Sharing & mutual aid: if you have something to offer and share, you should give it. And, if you need something, you should be able to receive it.
- Solidarity: supporting others' efforts at freedom, regardless of whether one is directly affected.
- Direct action: When necessary, it is both moral and appropriate to intervene to oppose authoritarianism (not simply authority), which threatens individuals agency.

Problem being solved

Attracting the wrong proposals

- Too many applicants proposing over-represented topics, from over-represented perspectives
- Not receiving applications from the applicants for whom a small grant would make the most difference

Decisions not transparent, consistent, or reflective of criteria

- Deciding large volumes applications over concentrated periods was producing distortions in the committees decisions (decision paralysis, insufficient preparation, decisions affected by factors outside criteria like state of fatigue)
- Internal group dynamics holding too much influence over decisions (certain speakers holding too much sway, failure to agree on criteria, "horse-trading")

Inefficiency

- Failure to limit qualifying applications resulted in too great a volume of poor proposals
- Reviewers unable to accomplish or totally fatigued by preparatory reading
- Applicants' efforts wasted

How does it reflect values and purpose?

Creating the time as space for annual meetings focused on politics allows the IAS to get ultra-clear on how it can best enact its purpose that year. As a result, it produces a much more specific and limited grant call, garnering fewer responses that are better targeted to achieving their explicit purpose, mission, and values.

Monthly meetings throughout the year allow the board to engage more intentionally with each other, living out the values of anarchy, and evolving their interpersonal dynamic. For example, they are better able to engage in sharing & mutual aid with each other when not all exhausted by the same glut of applications and short deadlines.

Members cultivate a clearer, more commonly held sense of purpose and values through their work together.

When reviewing, the rubric creates the foundation for more consistent, transparent, and purposeful decisions which respects the agency of applicants.

Read more about it

<https://anarchiststudies.org/>

Indigenous direct democracy

Kahnawake

Description

Kahnawá:ke, a Kanien'kehá:ka or Mohawk community near Montréal, implemented a community decision-making process, even within the confines of the Indian Act system. It offers a direct-democracy style forum and consensus-building model that incorporates traditional principles to address governance issues under community control.

The approach was used to review the band's membership laws, which were unpopular. The first iteration of the process was lengthy (6 years) and consisted of bi-weekly meetings of community people, hosted by the Kahnawá:ke legislative Coordinating Commission Office. It produced a new membership law based on the concept of adhering to 'the will of the people'.

Sound byte

[Listen here](#)

What's being distributed?

Opportunity: (1) to speak, be heard, and influence decisions; (2) to engage in and learn about traditional culture.

What's the pattern of distribution?

Equality: inclusive of everyone who is old enough to participate (including children). There may also be culturally determined roles for people to play.

Purpose

In 1979 the Mohawk Council of Kahnawá:ke passed a mandate to move towards traditional governance including culturally-based, participatory decision-making. In cooperation with other community decision-making forums, the Council has begun a journey of transition that involves research, participatory demonstrations or tests, feedback, and iteration.

Values

Participation, agency, collectivism, listening, self-determination

Problem being solved

- Colonially-imposed decision-making system and bodies that remain the law through the Indian Act
- Values mismatch between colonial and traditional decision-making process
 - *Intent (best decision for individual vs. the collective)
 - *Format (debate vs. listening and adjusting)
 - *Speed (fast vs. slow)
 - *Participation (representatives vs. all of community)
 - *Focus (outcome vs. process)

How does it reflect values and purpose?

The Kahnawá:ke Community Decision Making Process is a response to the community's call for a more culturally relevant and inclusive process for making collective decisions and enacting local laws. The Process is a transitional measure towards traditional governance, and creates an opportunity to develop the skills and posture of traditional decision-makers.

The process is community-led, and traditionally informed even where that has meant departing sharply from colonial convention. "Although the Community Decision-Making Model at first glance may appear long and tedious, based on the research conducted to date, it also appears this is the direction in which the community wants to go."
Kahnawá:ke Legislative Coordinating Commission

Read more about it

[What does Indigenous Participatory Democracy Look Like?](#)
By Kahente Horn-Miller

Kahnawá:ke Community Decision Making [Website](#)

Your Turn!

How does Vancouver Foundation stack up?

Description

Choose a process to review:

1. *How Vancouver Foundation administers grant dollars through GCI using appointed community advisors to review applications and allocate funds?*
2. *How Vancouver Foundation stewards \$1.4 billion in assets?*

Key Quote

What's being distributed?

What's the pattern of distribution?

Purpose

Values

Problem being solved

How does it reflect values and purpose?

Where to read more about it? Where is the process made transparent?



5. Artists' reflections



Episode #6: Decision stories

Episode Cover by Kyla Yin James

For my illustrated interpretation of decision stories, I was deeply moved by the depictions of decision making as a collective process. Making sure everyone who's affected gets a chance to be heard and active listening as a form of mutual respect form the basis of my piece. The threads surrounding the people in my illustration represent all the considerations that go into decision-making and how the decision-makers are interconnected with the outcomes.



Episode #6: Decision stories

Complementary piece by Rawan Hassan

The part of the mind which decision making occurs is at the frontal lobe, hence the black circle hovering at the forehead of the silhouette. The black circle is also the central point for the white objects. Each object symbolises a different form of decision making. The scale being merit, the ballet is democracy, the beans are lottery, and the raised hands represent consensus. As your eyes move away from the black circle, the symbolic symbols expand outwards. Showcasing how decision making happens internally then expands outwards into an external choice.

The background of the slide is composed of numerous overlapping circles in various shades of yellow and orange, creating a vibrant, abstract pattern. A large, semi-transparent orange circle is positioned on the right side, serving as a container for the title text.

6. Reflection



REFLECTIONS Looking Inside

Experiences & Observations

1. What do you think of as the most important and consequential decisions you make in your work? Thinking of a decision you've been part of, to what extent, and in what ways, was the process and outcome informed by organizational values and purpose?

Reactions & Impressions

2. What did you notice about which lenses and distributive logics resonated most with you? Which logics have you consciously or unconsciously employed most at work, at home, or in your own personal giving choices?



Questions & Hunches to Test

3. Thinking of a decision-making process that is relevant to your professional role, consider what it could look like if you applied a different lens or distributive logic to bring organizational values alive.



REFLECTIONS Looking Outside

Experiences & Observations

4. Thinking about decision-making as it is practiced in the social sector, where have you seen or experienced the most transparent, values & purpose-led practice? Describe what has impressed you.

Reactions & Impressions

5. Whether it be what the judge ate for breakfast, or implicit competing values, what are some of the extraneous factors* that shape decision-making at Vancouver Foundation and among its key stakeholders? How do those factors come to bear on decisions?

**Extraneous factors could be anything that is not organizational purpose, mission, values.*

Questions & Hunches to Test

6. As an organization that prides itself on being responsive to, and inspired by community, how could Vancouver Foundation engage more British Columbians in stewarding the community assets and priorities at the foundation?
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Decision stories / PurposePhil

Concept Book / Episode #6



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