

Ethical Implications for “Measuring community decentralisation” proposal

For many people in many contexts, standards such as indices have long been tools of domination. Standards are powerful, and never truly neutral.

How are standards powerful, and why aren't they neutral?

- Every standard is an [ontological assertion](#), staking a representational claim to and authority over some level of reality.
- Every standard privileges some things and excludes many things. This privileging and exclusion shapes perception and controls narratives.
- A preponderance of standards have historically been intended and used for domination, exploitation, extraction.
- A preponderance of standards have historically justified and empowered all manner of horror.

Measuring Community Decentralisation can redress that abusive use of standards. What gives standards and measurements their power is their ability to reflect, amplify, and impose the beliefs of the human-created systems they emerged within. Which means that if we want to create a standard that supports transformation, we have to transform the beliefs that drive our making of the standard. And that requires a disruption of the seemingly innocent activity of measuring and creating standards.

As Community Decentralisation Index developers we recognize that impact starts with us.

Knowing that who we are and how we show up impacts everything around us, including the standards we create, we strive to practice - to the best of our ability in any given moment - living into the shift that we believe a Community Decentralisation Index is developed to support.

Thus we're never scoping or developing in isolation from any/many of these interconnected practices:

- Strengthening networks and building communities
- Regenerative, sustainable ecosystems
- Supporting differences as the source of the energy of transformation
- Re-connecting people and their environments
- Listening to, and being informed by trauma, healing and anxiety in communities

- Advancing our understanding of systems and our capacity for dealing with complexity
- Supporting generative economic models and practices
- Working to resolve intentional and/or unconscious patterns related to dominance, supremacy, extraction, exploitation
- Working at the intimate scale of one-on-one interactions to affect global outcomes
- Supporting, exploring, and helping to develop wiser forms of governance, deep democracy, power-sharing, and subsidiarity

A decentralisation index is in service to a broader global shift from systems of dominance to systems of connection

By its nature, this would indicate that it must be carried forward by a community of practice rather than a centralised commission.

- As a group or community, we come together to become carriers of a culture of transformation
- We seek to leverage the potential we see in an open standards index
- **We understand that an index can be powerful, and is never completely neutral**
- We recognize that in order for a standard to be truly transformational, we bear an ethical responsibility to scope and develop it in ways that are contrary to how standards have historically been scoped and developed
- Avoiding standards and measurement is **not** a solution. Standards are an emergent property of beliefs and worldviews, and their ability to reflect and amplify comes from this relationship.

Co-Production around standards of decentralisation

Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.

~ [Paulo Freire. Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#)

Development of a decentralisation index will require learning, practice and field -building and -participation. We must understand and become personally skillful in both undermining historical standards development as well as adopting praxis for shifting patterns.

- We recognize that the paradigm from which we develop a decentralisation index informs the outcome of that development. If we practice a mechanistic-reductionist worldview, we may find that we accomplish very little. We may even do harm.
- This indicates 3 interwoven pathways in the journey of such an index:
 - Learning about the processes and technologies of open standards, and the contexts within which a Community Decentralisation Index may be useful
 - Practicing the interpersonal/relational pattern-shifting skills needed to undermine the disconnection of stakeholders in communities from the scoping

and developing of standards and move into a regenerative relational paradigm:

- Listening and being informed across differences (trauma, anxiety, culture, language, etc)
- Narrative and/or qualitative data
- *Showing up together* in coherent ways
- Engaging the praxis of working together in a complex adaptive system, connecting complex adaptive communities
 - Putting into practice the tools, teachings, models and methods of complexity
 - Being comfortable with imperfection and ambiguity
- We braid these pathways together so that we can bring what we learn from our community of practice, how we support the development of the index, and the communities the index supports, together in ways that helps each reach its greatest transformative, paradigm-shifting potential.

How we can show up together

Knowing that none of us has all the answers, none of us has perfected anything (nor need we aim for perfection) - when we gather together, each one to the best of our ability in any given moment can show up:

- Imperfectly
- Authentically
- Transparently
- Without posturing
- Resisting urgency
- Learning-out-loud
- Making space for all voices
- Finding the energy in difference
- With a spirit of not-knowing and inquiry
- Acknowledging and processing our tensions
- With reverence for and sensitivity to one another
- With a spirit of exploration and willingness to take risks
- Willing to disrupt unhealthy or dysfunctional patterns (even when coming from 'leaders')
- Willing to accept disruption and to support pattern-shifters
- Willing to care for one another (for instance - when others are straining beyond their own comfort zones and can't process everything needed at every level in the given moment. For instance - when the risks we take cause unintended pain)

How we can work together

For those of us stewarding and co-creating this proposal and community of practice, we can adopt explicit principles in how we support the work and its outputs:

- Pattern-spotting - seeing, understanding and influencing them
- Iterating as we go - slowing down reactivity and using models and methods that help us step outside of our own mental habits and find our blind spots
- Embracing complexity - ambiguity, questions having priority over answers, constant learning
- Seeking out and accepting the wisdom indigenous to contributing ecosystems
- Awareness of context
- Understanding that 'problem-solving' can be premature in most instances
- Many small experiments supported by frequent reflection