

ABSTRACT:

Ann-Kathrin Koessler

University of Osnabrück

Perspective-taking: An effective mean to promote pro-social behavior in the environmental context

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Many environmental problems involve social dilemmas, where pursuing narrow self-interests leads to decisions not in line with the collective interest. Considering a perspective broader than one's own may motivate pro-social behaviour and help to overcome the dilemma.

This presentation discusses the potential of induced perspective-taking to promote pro-social behavior in the environmental context. The results of a lab-in-the-field experiment in a Peruvian watershed are presented, in which downstream users were induced to adopt the perspective of upstream farmers whose traditional and sustainable farming practices benefited the water quality and quantity downstream. The results show that the perspective-taking exercise led to heightened other-regarding preferences and increased pro-social behavior.

In the conclusion, complementary findings from a second study are considered in which perspective-taking was induced in the context of a global and more complex environmental challenge, namely that of climate change. The joint discussion of the results sheds light on how and in which situations perspective-taking has the potential to promote prosocial and pro-environmental behavior.