

# Saving the planet by being a hypocrite – Moral reasoning in the commons

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ABSTRACT of presentation to be held on **30 January 2014, room C82, 12.30 – 13.30 hrs., Leeuwenborch, Wageningen**

Peer sanctions are powerful mechanisms for enforcing social norms of cooperation, but they can be inefficiently costly, or even anti-social when used to punish cooperators. We develop a model of a community harvesting a joint resource to investigate whether peer sanctions enable a cooperative harvesting norm when individuals do not know how much extraction is sustainable. Surprisingly, we find that peer sanctions overcome social dilemmas if moral values change only slowly and own behavior is used as a moral benchmark. Thus, our findings may explain why social norms may evolve towards what is best for the group, even if such social optimum is unknown. Interestingly, a cooperative harvesting norms can be established because it allows for hypocritical acts, as the ones who promote certain norms are not necessarily the ones obeying it themselves. Unexpectedly, we find that sanctions are less efficient when not own, but average group behavior is used as the moral yardstick. Furthermore, our results underscore the importance of monitoring for successful peer sanctioning and reveal that the resilience of the resource system is a key factor facilitating the evolution of cooperative social norms. This suggests that systems characterized by slow feedbacks may not be adequately governed by peer sanctions only.



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