

# Dr. Urs Fischbacher: "Social Norms and Human Cooperation"

## Abstract

In the presentation, laboratory experiments on human cooperation are presented. In these experiments the standard economic model which assumes rationality and selfishness predicts complete free-riding. In contrast to this prediction the experimental evidence reveals that most subjects are endowed with social preferences, i.e., they cooperate if others cooperate and are willing to sanction those don't cooperate. We study the economic and political consequences of social preferences in different institutional settings. First, we show that conditional cooperation supports cooperation but due to the heterogeneity of preferences, cooperation is not stable. Second, in an environment that allows for sanctions, selfish subjects are disciplined and therefore high and stable cooperation rates can be achieved. Finally, we show that systems competition does not necessarily lead to efficient outcomes and that social preferences may actually reduce efficiency. Our results show that a proper understanding of human cooperation must take social preferences into account. As a consequence social preferences are relevant for the design of policies and institutions, which aim at improving ecological sustainability.

## Curriculum Vitae

Urs Fischbacher has a PhD in Mathematics from the University of Zurich and now works at the Institute for Empirical Research in Economics at the University of Zurich. His research focus is social preference where he has done both experimental and theoretical work.

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