

Abstract

«Misaligned interests and uncertainty. - Essays on environmentally friendly behaviour, authoritarian rule, and coercion»

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The first two chapters test for strategic ignorance, a fairly robust phenomenon where generosity in moral dilemmas is lower when the consequences of one's actions for another party can be ignored. Surprisingly, in laboratory experiments run at UiO together with Jo Thori Lind and Karine Nyborg reported in Chapter 1, generosity does not decrease when dictator subjects have the option to ignore which payment to an environmental charity is associated with a higher payment to themselves. When information can be forced upon by another subject, almost all dictators choose information themselves. However, this does not lead to higher generosity. Laboratory experiments in Chapter 2 conducted at UiO with another participant in the lab instead of an environmental charity as the recipient also find no evidence for strategic ignorance.

Chapters 3 and 4 propose signalling models applied to questions about authoritarian rule. Chapter 3 shows how repression may backfire by revealing that the government's preferences regarding a policy are misaligned with the population's interest and make political dissent more likely with than without repression. Chapter 4 shows that one explanation for threats with vague demands by secret services and criminal organisations is that the threatening party is uncertain about whether the recipient is actually able to fulfill a demand that requires a high level of compliance. Specific demands requiring a high level of compliance commit the sender to live up to her threat if the recipient does not obey by exposing her to more judgment from bystanders, hence ensuring certain compliance from a capable recipient. However, vague demands do not carry an equal risk of losing public support if the recipient is simply not capable enough, and still allow for a high level of compliance if he is capable, albeit not with certainty.