

Study suggests present generation's negotiators ignore consequences for future generations

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In a new psychology paper titled "Present generation's negotiators realize their interests at the cost of future generations," researchers from

Leuphana University Lüneburg and the University of Hildesheim have uncovered critical insights into the challenges of intergenerational negotiations and their far-reaching implications.

The study is [published](#) in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.

To navigate societal challenges, for instance, at the upcoming UN Climate Conference in Dubai, [decision-makers](#) often resort to negotiations as a tried-and-true tool to resolve conflicts and find mutually beneficial solutions. These negotiations produce agreements that not only impact the immediate parties involved but also have profound and often dramatic delayed consequences for [future generations](#). As a result, negotiators find themselves engaged in [conflicts](#) on two fronts: with their present counterparts and with the interests of generations yet to come.

The research conducted across five social-interactive experiments involving 524 participants reveals a sobering reality: The present generation's negotiators tend to prioritize their immediate interests over those of future generations.

The study's key findings include the following:

- **Self-Oriented Tradeoffs:** When present negotiators were required to bear costs to realize the future generation's interests, agreements clearly favored the present generation's benefits.
- **Tendency to Ignore Future Interests:** Even when present [negotiators](#) only needed to consider and realize the future generation's preferences without bearing costs, the bias towards their own short-term gains persisted.
- **Persistence in the Face of Severe Consequences:** This

prioritization of present interests over future generations' interests continued even when the consequences for future generations became increasingly dire.

This paper serves as a call to action, highlighting the urgent need for interventions aimed at achieving a more equitable balance between present and future interests. It emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the long-term consequences of conflict settlements and underscores the responsibility that decision-makers bear toward future generations.

More information: Marie van Treek et al, Present generation's negotiators realize their interests at the cost of future generations, *Journal of Environmental Psychology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jenvp.2023.102126](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2023.102126)

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