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# Ethical foundations of biodiversity communication

Uta Eser\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nuertingen-Geislingen University (NGU) – Schelmenwasen 4-8 D-72622 Nuertingen, Germany

## Abstract

Communication, participation and education (CEPA) are considered key to the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). To improve official biodiversity communication, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation commissioned an ethical expertise on good arguments in favour of biodiversity. This paper presents major findings from our analysis of the German, Austrian, Swiss and EU biodiversity strategies with regard to their concepts of communications and ethics.

First, we found a predominantly strategic use of the term "communication": It is used with a direct object rather than with an indirect object. Hence, communication is understood as a unidirectional rather than as a reciprocal process. This has consequences for what is considered to be a good argument. From a strategic point of view, an argument is good if it is effective. From a philosophical point of view, however, an argument is good if it is plausible and coherent.

Second, we found an equalisation of "ethical arguments" with "intrinsic value of nature". To broaden this restricted understanding of environmental ethics, we distinguished between prudential, moral and eudemonic arguments. In order to make this distinction accessible to practitioners, we framed it in lay-terms as 'Prudence', 'Justice' and 'The Good Life'.

Third, we found a predominance of prudential arguments that present conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity as a mere matter of enlightened self-interest. I will argue that such a communication wrongly neglects issues of justice (within generations and between generations) and issues of a Good Life.

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\*Speaker