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Institutional Diversity

the blog of the Center for the Study of Institutional Diversity, Arizona State University. We will post information relevant to governance of our commons, from natural resources to digital commons.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2007

→ The tragedy of the commons in evolutionary biology

In the December issue of *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, Daniel Rankin, Katja Bargum and Hanna Kokko from Finland review some fascinating recent research on the study of commons dilemmas in non-human context such as plants competing for light and virus phages overharvesting a host bacteria. After they discuss a number of examples, they discuss the ways biological systems have overcome the dilemmas. The main explanatory process is group selection, which may favor groups where individuals have found ways to cooperate. Such a cooperative solution could be restraining to cheat ("social norms") and punishment (like eating eggs from egg-laying workers in social insect societies). Future work may provide insights in possible genetic foundations of solving collective action problems.

Posted by Marco Janssen at [8:27 PM](#)

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