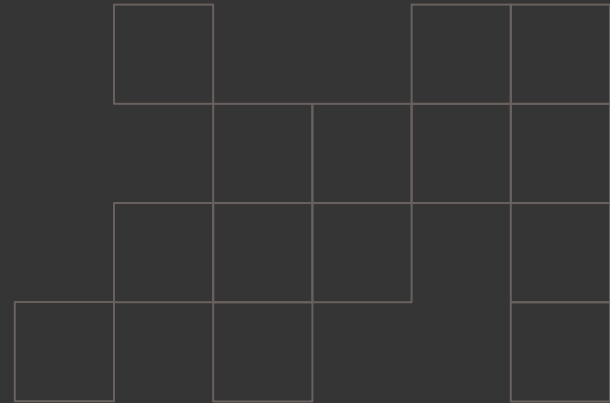


# Term Paper: The Tragedy Of Commons

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By: Ryan Fouzdar and Andrew Toreja



# Summary: The Tragedy of Commons

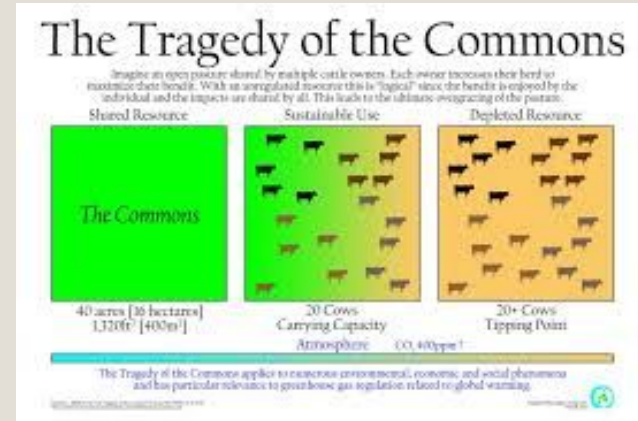
Hardin says that a common is a shared common resource such as land, water or air

Uses an example of an herdsman who tries to increase personal gain by adding livestock but it leads to overgrazing caused by the animal population and the eventual degradation of the shared resource(land).

The individuals rational behavior leads to the collective irrational consequences which he calls a tragedy.

Hardin's solution is mutual coercion mutually agreed upon such as laws, taxes and regulations to protect these commons

Hardin's paper relates to Utilitarianism, Contractualism and Egoism and each theory has its own take on the ongoing climate crisis we are facing



# Utilitarianism: Greater Good

Utilitarian main goal is to apply the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people.

In relation to climate change, changing our ways now by enforcing greater laws and taxes on deforestation or overgrazing would be for the collective greater good for later generations

Hardin's essay emulates this idea since he believes that we must stop our overuse of shared resources now to protect the future generations



# Utilitarianism: Is it really the Greater Good?

Even though stopping these destructive practices would be good in the long run, the devastation it would cause to our economies and current generation would be irreparable if there was a sudden drastic change to our practices

Ex: Mandatory Fossil Fuels Shutdown->  
If we all stopped using fossil fuels today, our technology such as cars wouldn't be able run but our future generations would have a chance to live full and long lives and let the planet heal from climate change.

Would this be worth it in the long run?



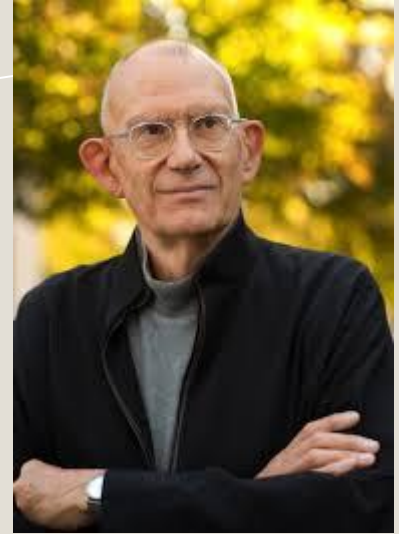
# Contractualism: Morality Through Mutual Agreement

Reasonable Rejection says an action is morally wrong if others can reasonably reject because it is unfair or harmful

This connects back to Hardin's concept of "mutual coercion" – voluntary constraint to protect shared interests and resources

Climate Example: Companies hiding emissions data harms the public and is widely rejectable

Real World Example – Paris Accord reflects contractualist thinking – Nations agreeing to limit emissions for the global good



# Can Moral Agreement Alone Solve the Climate Crisis?

**Trust in Moral Motivation:** Contractualists believe people will follow fair principles without needing enforcement

**Hardin's View:** Hardin believes that laws, taxes, and penalties are necessary – moral agreement isn't enough by itself to stop overuse.

**Ethical Divide:** Contractualism relies on shared values  
Hardin demands enforceable structure to ensure compliance

**Limitations:** Contractualist approach doesn't account for non-cooperative factors, unequal power, and those who ignore global consequences and contracts



# Egoism: Acting Ethically Through Self-Interest

Rational egoism: Ethical behavior is driven by long term self interest, not emotional or collective concern.

In Hardin's grazing example, a rational egoist may limit their cattle to avoid destroying the land.

Conditional Sustainability: Egoists support conservation if it helps them avoid future harm or cost

Aligns with Hardin idea in the fact that global environment collapse will threaten individual well-being



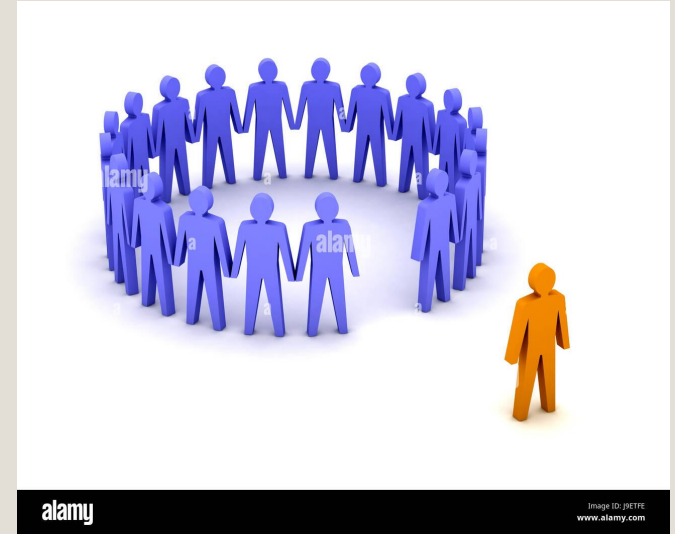
# Where Rational Egoism Conflicts with Hardin

**Hardin's Demand:** Believes individuals must sacrifice and call out harmful behavior even at personal cost

**Egoist Inaction:** May refuse to intervene unless there is a clear personal reward or reputation benefit

**Policy Rejection:** Could oppose climate policies if they cause significant consequences that outweigh long term gain

**Selective Morality:** Egoism encourages cooperation only when it benefits the individual - not out of duty





# Takeaways

- Hardin speaks of a world that is similar to this current one. Without drastic changes, future generations won't survive. For the greater good, we must try to curb the onset of climate change.
- Hardin's warning about the exploitation of shared resources underscores the need for ethical action, not just innovation. Among the theories explored, a utilitarian approach offers a clear path forward and aligns closely with Hardin's belief that only through shared sacrifice and responsibility can we avoid irreversible harm.



Thank You