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A new study analysing how complex, highly-evolved societies are organised in nature has found that it is workers that play a pivotal role in creating well-ordered societies where conflict is minimised. For when it comes to determining who reproduces in ants, University of Leicester biologists have found the humble worker is queenmaker -- it is they who choose their queen.

This information is key to understanding the evolution of complex interdependent societies -- over 100 millions years old -- that have evolved mechanisms ensuring stable cohabitation and conflict resolution.

What the Leicester team discovered surprised them: While Spanish worker ants were ruthless in determining who became their queen -- and hence acquired the right to reproduce -- the same species of ants in France, Germany and the UK are known to be more 'apathetic'.

While Spanish workers bullied or even killed rival queens in order to choose their queen, UK workers are not aggressive at all and were loyal subjects to any number of queens.

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