

In Lecture #8, we will take some of the central concepts and issues that we have discussed in earlier classes and apply them to a specific issue-area; the global and regional management of hazardous chemicals. In addition to the general literature, there are two articles that will form the basis for the discussion (Krueger and Selin, 2002; Selin and Eckley, 2002). Discussion in class will revolve around the following questions:

How can the global “chemicals problem” be characterized?

- Growing use of “unknown” substances; the large number.
- Uncertainty where they will end up.
- Persistence and toxic bioaccumulations.
- Uncertainty about interacting effects.
- Strong economic interests.
- Transboundary implications; North and South

What does the global “system” regarding the management of hazardous chemicals look like?

- Ad hoc system; limited agreements
- Reactive
- Not precautionary

Who are the central actors and what are their interests?

- Driven by developed countries
- Scientists as knowledge filters
- IGO’s such UNEP, WHO etc.
- Producers and consumers
- Trade organization; WTO
- States, governments

What are the main future issues regarding the improved management of hazardous chemicals, and how do they relate to what we have talked about before about existing shortcomings in the “international system”?

- Better implementation the precautionary approach; health issues
- More research and action organic farming
- Better coordination in the system; explore linkages

We will also talk specifically about the role of science and scientific assessments in the management of hazardous substances. It is helpful if you prepare by thinking about the following questions before class:

How can the relation between science and policy in international environmental cooperation be characterized?

What is the role of scientific environmental assessments in international environmental cooperation?

- Create justification
- Need to define a problem
- Suggest solutions
- Regulatory science
- Generate “evidence”
- Monitor temporal progress

What is the role of the precautionary principle?

- Lower the bar

How can the design and use of scientific environmental assessments be improved to make international environmental cooperation more effective?

- More geographically diverse data; both developed and developing countries
- Set up international central scientific body
- Involve more people; community assessments
- Improve flow of information; producers and users of information