



An uncertain business: Industries Response to the Regulation of Nanotechnologies

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Abstract

This thesis is an account of international efforts to assess and control the possible human health and environmental effects of nanotechnologies. I show how the desire to reap the benefits of nanotechnologies has led decision-makers in America and Europe to adopt very similar policy strategies. While political reactions thus are largely comparable, industry responses however differ remarkably. The diverging industry reactions to comparable state policies invite a closer inspection of the institutional drivers of business behavior in regulatory politics. I trace the roots of the varied business responses through two case studies that explore how the institutions and processes of national chemical control regimes link to the strategic risk-benefit calculations of companies. I examine the policies developed to regulate the risks of nanomaterials in Britain, Denmark, Germany and the United States and compare the role of industry in the four countries' regulatory processes. I argue that the capacity of state bureaucrats to credibly commit to regulatory outcomes shapes the political behavior of business. In areas of high scientific and technical uncertainty, such as nanotechnologies, new information can exercise significant influence on regulatory agendas, priorities and policies. This can work in industry's favor, if disclosing information succeeds in convincing state bureaucrats to make decisions that benefits industry. Companies will however only volunteer information about their operations if they are confident that it will not be used to the detriment of their interests. I demonstrate how concentration of regulatory powers in executive bureaucracies and deliberative institutions structure business expectations about the probable behavior of state authorities, and how such institutions can convince companies to entrust state bureaucrats with sensitive information. The thesis in short speaks to the significant business influence over the outcome of regulatory politics that flows from the power to disclose, bias and withhold information from state authorities.



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Bio:

Pelle Moos holds a MA in Political Science from the University of Aarhus. During his MA, Pelle spent a year at the University of Toronto, where he studied comparative political economy and public policy. Before coming to the EUI, Pelle worked as a HR officer at the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Aarhus. At the EUI, Pelle worked on American and European policies to manage the possible human health and environmental risks of nanomaterials as well as the role of industry in the regulatory process. Pelle's research interests include comparative political economy, regulatory politics and environmental, health and safety policy.