

## **Haas – “Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination”**

Epistemic communities are networks “of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area” (3). Members of the community share a set of normative and principled beliefs, causal beliefs, notions of validity, and a common policy enterprise. Members of such a community are often drawn from government and academia.

Haas argues that systemic constraints and domestic political considerations are not the only determinants of states’ preferences and actions. Within these constraints there is a process of learning and the articulation of causal mechanisms that have a direct impact on states’ preferences and therefore types of international policy coordination. Specifically epistemic communities help states articulate preferences in situations where preferences are not clear. Often epistemic communities are influential in highly technical policy areas where the causal linkages between policy and outcomes are especially unclear.

Shocks to the systems – failures or unexpected outcomes – will prompt leaders to rethink policies and consider ideas generated by epistemic communities. There are three causal dynamics through which epistemic communities exert influence over preferences and outcomes: uncertainty, interpretation, and institutionalization. Decision-makers facing uncertainty will turn to epistemic communities to clarify substantive causal relationships and linkages with other issues, define the interests of states, and formulate policy. Ideas become institutionalized through the efforts of transnational networks, often bureaucrats within governments or employed by international organizations. These coalitions push for the adoption of policy measures corresponding to the consensus of the epistemic community. The shared normative commitment of epistemic communities distinguishes them from other professional groups.

Power still matters. Epistemic communities are consequential only when their proposals are consistent with systemic and domestic political constraints or when it can persuade decision-makers to support a specific policy. When there is disagreement within the community political criteria, rather than technical ones, will be used to make a final decision. The “success” of ideas is also dependent on power, as a policy option is more likely to be adopted when a powerful state has committed itself to that option.