

## **The Precautionary Principle and Fair Distribution**

Espen Stabell

Is it fair to impose costs of precautions taken against environmental threats on groups or individuals struggling to escape poverty? The current paper explores how costs and benefits from taking precautionary measures should be distributed among parties involved in activities and processes where a precautionary approach to environmental risk is to be adopted. At first glance, the question of who should bear the economic burden of taking precautions may seem trivial in comparison to the question of the environmental and social costs of *not* taking precautions against environmental threats. In fact, however, these questions are closely connected. For, besides the fact that unfair distributions are morally problematic, they may also be problematic from a pragmatic point of view, since distributions that are perceived to be unfair are less likely to be accepted by the parties involved. The current paper undertakes to develop a conceptual framework for fair distribution of costs from taking precautions. It does this by tracing a set of distributional principles and discussing their rationale in relation to philosophical theories of justice. A case study of so-called deep sea mining is conducted to investigate how the framework can be applied in concrete cases.