

Discussion Facilitation Group Questions

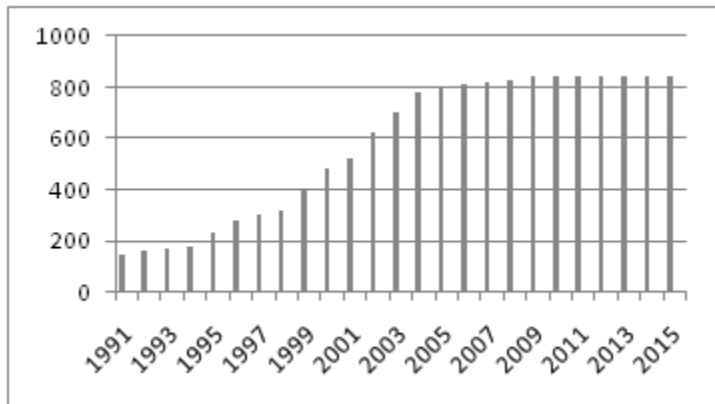
In "Global perspectives on e-waste", the authors mention Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) which places the producer of the electronics responsible for the proper recycling/disposal after the products have reached their end-of-life. Enacting an EPR policy would cause the price of electronic products to increase in order to cover the cost of shipment, treatment, and disposal of e-waste. Should this kind of policy be implemented here in the United States? Should this policy have a government-mandated e-waste management system that is funded by the electronic companies, or should each company manually dispose of their own e-waste using their own resources?

Both readings discuss the dangerous and polluting methods of recycling and disposing of e-waste, and include proposals for new policies to curb this behavior. Widmer et al. argue that there should be a global policy, similar to the Basel Convention, which enforces proper e-waste management techniques, while Agarwal et al. pushed for policy changes within India to properly manage the e-waste recycling companies. Who should enforce e-waste management policies? Should there be a global committee which regulates countries, or should each country regulate itself?

In the "Scrapping the Hi-Tech Myth" article, the authors state "Each new discovery has the capability of doubling the obsolescence rate as the consumer, targeted by advertisements and offers, finds it cheaper and more convenient to buy a new computer machine than to upgrade his old one." (Agarwal, 2003). Should governments create regulations to force companies to create technology that can be upgraded easily to reduce the amount of E-waste?

Figure 10 on page 16 in the Widmer article shows the removal process of copper from the printed wiring boards. This process involves people manually removing the varnish, without gloves, submerging PWBs for 12h in sulphuric acid followed by boiling off H₂O using PWB residues for fuel. This process creates 12 jobs at high external costs. Is it ethically okay for our country to dump our WEEE on third world countries and force them to be affected by the consequences of e-waste?

From the Article "Global perspective on e-waste" has a chart on page 443, which describes how many PCs are in use and Annual Waste from them. Do you think at some point we will level out and won't need faster computers anymore? With Microsoft new Windows 7(which came out in 2009), you only need 16 gigabytes of hard drive space compared to Windows Vista (came out in 2006) which needed 40 gigabytes. In other words it would begin to level out as seen on the chart I've made below.



The article "Global perspective on e-waste" talks about how much waste comes from old and unused PCs. So if your computer gets old, what would you do with it? 33.9% e-waste comes from old Information technology equipment. In 1994 20 million PCs became obsolete(7 million tons). Tacoma has one very good electronics recycler in which I've used a few times called "Better PC Recycle".

