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"Mining in the Deep Sea and Outer Space to Benefit Humanity - The Role of Small States in the Extraterritorial Expansion of Extraction"

Abstract

"There is a recreational side, too. Space travel companies promise an exhilarating ride to the edge of our atmosphere and are actively offering seats on their future spacecraft."SpaceResources.Lu

In the first part of this paper I explore how Luxembourg and Nauru, with the help of international law, put to use their sovereignty in order to become global players in what can be considered extraterritorial landgrabs -- the turning of the deep seabed and outer space into realms of commercial exploitation through the allocation of exploitation rights. In the second part I inquire into the public interest justifications put forward in support of these governmental contributions to the expansion of extraction. Traditionally, states have supported mining for tangible economic benefits to government and their constituencies – the creation of large scale employment, supply of the domestic manufacturing industry with raw materials or the generation of public revenue. Yet, with respect to deep seabed and outer space mining these justifications become increasingly tenuous, replaced by vague notions of economic growth and appeals to the benefits that are to accrue from extraction to an undefined ‘humanity’. While state leaders such as Luxembourg’s minister of the economy may be in for an exhilarating ride, the newly emerging political economies of space and seabed resources appear to lack any moorings in a conception how the interaction between government and economy in facilitating extraction might contribute to the well-being of concrete communities.