



Geoengineering and the Governance of International Spaces

Event

[Discussion](#)

Date

22 April 2009

Location

Washington, DC, United States

Speaker

Paul Berkman
Ralph Czarnecki

There is growing interest in the idea of geoengineering, the purposeful and large-scale modification of the natural environment, especially since the article in Foreign Affairs "The Geoengineering Option" by David Victor and others. Jointly with the Foundation for the Good Governance of International Spaces, Ecologic Institute held this Transatlantic Luncheon in Washington DC on 22 April 2009. Guests of honour were Paul Berkman, Scott Polar Institute, University of Cambridge, and Ralph Czarnecki, Ecologic Institute.

Geoengineering is seen by some as a promising means to counterbalance the effect of greenhouse gas emissions, mainly carbon dioxide, and to reduce global warming. Examples are the shading the earth by blowing fine sulfur particles into the upper atmosphere to reflect sunlight, or the seeding oceans with iron in the hope of provoking algal blooms that would bind carbon dioxide as the algae die and sink to the ocean floor. Due to the nature of the concept, geoengineering never lacks ambition.

Much of the geoengineering would take place in or affect the natural environment of "international spaces", areas not governed by the laws of nation states, or global ecosystems such as the atmosphere. At present, the few rules that may be applicable to geoengineering are not well understood, and there is uncertainty about reliable ways to stop unilateral action with consequences at planetary scale, about impact assessments, liability rules in case something goes wrong, and ways to coordinate activities among the countries that may become more active in the field.

The Lunch served to explore the challenges, clarify the legal and political situation of international spaces, and discuss the necessary responses by the US, the EU, and by coordination at the international level.

The lunch was part of the [Launch Week for Ecologic Institute Washington DC](#) and marks the beginning of a strategic cooperation with the Foundation for the Good Governance of International Spaces.

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Paul Berkman
Ralph Czarnecki

Team

[Dr. Ralph Bodle, LLM](#)

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[Arctic](#)
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