

Let it snow: Antarctica and its frozen legal state

December 28 2021, by David Bradley



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Antarctica is a mysterious continent, we have barely scratched its icy surface in terms of exploration and within this frozen realm, there are unimagined resources that remain untapped. The continent lies without

state, nations stake claims to chunks of it but its legal status is frozen like its vast wildernesses. Now, a new paper in the *International Journal of Technology, Policy and Management* suggests an approach based on the anarcho-capitalist and heterodox-economist philosophy of Murray Newton Rothbard (1926-1995) that could allow the international community to assign equitable but limited property rights to Antarctica.

Of course, having a framework for the carving up of a continent might be perceived as a modern form of imperialism. Rothbard argued that all services provided by the "monopoly system of the corporate state" could be done far more effectively by private enterprise, he even argued that the state is "the organization of robbery systematized and writ large." How the notion of assigning state ownership to portions of Antarctica sits with such a view may well require its own standalone philosophy.

José Antonio Peña-Ramos of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the Universidad Autónoma de Chile in Providencia, Chile and Dmitri Amirov-Belova of the Pablo de Olavide University in Sevilla, Spain, explain that due to its isolated location and perhaps its [extreme temperatures](#) and [climatic conditions](#), there is no indigenous population or government. This contrasts starkly with the Arctic in the north, of course. They point out that several nations have territorial claims on the continent—Argentina, Australia, Chile, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom. There are several thousand people each year who spend time on the continent for scientific and other purposes.

The team offers much food for thought for those concerned for the future of Antarctica. Primarily, they suggest that a non-state-centric view of international relations may be needed to answer the questions we must answer about this frozen continent.

More information: José Antonio Peña Ramos et al, A Rothbardian approach for the assignment of property rights on the Antarctica

continent, *International Journal of Technology, Policy and Management* (2021). [DOI: 10.1504/IJTPM.2021.119702](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTPM.2021.119702)

Provided by Inderscience

Citation: Let it snow: Antarctica and its frozen legal state (2021, December 28) retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-12-antarctica-frozen-legal-state.html>

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