

IISL COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE (E7)  
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Author: Ms. Giuliana Rotola  
Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Italy, giuliana.rotola@spacegeneration.org

KAITIAKITANGA OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE SPACE FARING CIVILIZATION

**Abstract**

Humanity is gradually moving to space and aiming to create a multi-planetary civilization. To do so, it will need to sustain life, taking into account the needs of future generations. The sustainable use and exploitation of space resources are among the most debated topics in this context. With the approach of lunar missions and the hurry of several states to produce legislation that can allow effective use of resources, there is a parallel growing emergence of voices that have been weaker or ignored in the past. In particular, due to our own planet's environmental perishing, vital conversations emerge aimed at decolonizing practices hitherto dominating space exploration and recognizing the value of systems deemed unconventional for the guardianship of the terrestrial and space environment.

In this setting, when New Zealand joined the Artemis Accords, the Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta affirmed: "as one of only a small number of states with space launch capability, we take responsibilities of Kaitiakitanga of the space environment seriously." Kaitiakitanga is a form of guardianship, resource stewardship of the Maori culture, which aims at conserving resources for sustainable use of present and future generations, and it was mentioned for the first time on this occasion with reference to space. And recently, also in New Zealand, tribal leaders and the government came together to find a combined approach to the climate emergency, "where top-down government approaches and community-up approaches find the in-between space to jointly advance climate action."

As a spacefaring society, the coexistence of different practices, cultures will be essential. And through the inclusion of new governance models, we may perhaps be able to decelerate the processes of exploitation and destruction currently underway on our planet and change our ways of relating to terrestrial and space resources. Therefore, the project aims to identify new governance models to be applied to the exploration and use of space and its resources to ensure a future based on principles of sustainability and intergenerational equity.

The research will focus on answering questions about whether and how indigenous knowledge collides with western scientific knowledge on our expectations of sustainability and space, and how their blending can influence new governance practices of natural resources in space and on Earth.