

International Cooperation for Space Exploration (1)
International Cooperation for Space Exploration (2) (2)

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MAPPING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN SPACE EXPLORATION

Abstract

This paper suggests that there is a legal duty of international cooperation in space activities and presents new empirical research that may reveal how the increase in the number and diversity of space actors affects such cooperation. International cooperation is a core foundation of modern world order and the global economy and is manifested as such in international law and, specifically, space law. It is enshrined in the UN Charter, the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States, and the Outer Space Treaty. Read together, they constitute a legally binding duty of international cooperation in space exploration, the meaning and modes thereof are prescribed in the 1996 Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space. However, there are numerous obstacles to international cooperation, notably the age-old problem of collective action. Research on common-pool resources, notably Elinor Ostrom's Nobel winning study, demonstrated that some polycentric networks can self-organize, and that large-scale cooperation can be amassed gradually from below. These insights are important also beyond the context of natural resource management, to addressing the collective action problem. A new empirical research project funded by the Canadian Research Council will enable to explore the possible emergence of polycentric networks of space cooperation among the pool of all space actors. The project collects data and maps the space actors and their inter-connections. Analysis of the results using Social Network Analysis will reveal patterns of connections, presently and over time, and will enable to look at the myriad of cooperation agreements as a system with a structure. It will also enable us to draw conclusions on the effects of the growing number and diversity of actors on space cooperation and whether the increasing complexity opens new opportunities and correlates with an increase in international cooperation in space activities.