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Future and current space missions: including and expanding all aspects of human life on-board and in other worlds (1)

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UNSETTLED SPACE: FOOTPRINTS OF THE STATE, MARKETS, AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN
OUTER SPACE

Abstract

Current uncertainty in securing funding and setting long-term goals might have unsettling impacts on the future of colonizing space. Moving into the forefront in the project of space exploration is an entreaty to commercialism to provide future financial support. As we consider the commercial uses of space and celestial bodies, however, many pressing questions arise. Who will regulate the extra-terrestrial free market and what strategies will regulatory efforts require? Will outer space be accorded serious scientific status like Antarctica? Or will it be a new "wild west" where lawlessness is law? How big of an incursion will outer space tourism be? Can space as extra-terrestrial amusement park fulfill the commercial funding quest? How will the UN's emphasis on uses of space for peace, square with capitalists aggressively seeking fun or profit or, more likely, profitable fun? Are we ready to envision colonizing of space if it means dragging all of our terrestrially engrained bad habits along? Are some uses of space just too frivolous or dangerous to consider? Crucially, just because we can afford to colonize space, should we? What effect might recent corporate endorsements of the goal of sustainability have, especially with inevitable competition based on lowered prices (and lowered expectations)? Possibly the most important question is who makes these decisions and how. Are we in an era like the 17th century high seas when Grotius got the major nations to mutually agree upon treaties? Or are we in the state of nature of Locke or of Hobbes or the lawless/lawmen societies of the American frontier? But since society is comprised of market, state, and civil society, all of these sectors will have to be involved in civilizing space settlements and excursions. Previously, the state has been the major force in space exploration. Entreaties for commercialism to fund future exploration will surely result in the market's role getting larger as questions above are answered. Finally, civil society will provide in this adventure, as it has with all other human excursions and settlements, the ultimate problem and solution, with humans in space leaving unintended and intended footprints.