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Author: Mr. Alberto Rueda Carazo
Universidad de Jaen, Spain, albertoruedacarazo@gmail.com

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF SPACE TOURISM: A LEGAL GUIDELINE

Abstract

“For wherever there’s something strange or beautiful or novel, people will want to see it.” With this statement Arthur C. Clarke foreshadowed what a decade later, at the beginning of the 21st century, began to emerge: Space tourism. Although, so far these trips for tourists have mostly been conducted in governmental transports and space stations, there is only a minuscule step to commercialization and exploitation of tourism in space by private enterprises. The environmental impact that space tourism could have on Earth and the possible legal guidelines to be followed for the prevention of the pollution of the Earth and Outer Space will be examined and discussed in this paper. Activities such as those of the UN Committee for the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space along with the European Union’s Code of Conduct for Space activities will additionally be taken into consideration. Furthermore, existing environmental laws pertaining to this matter will be determined. In this regard, the matter of delimitation and resulting differentiating liability will also be considered. The topic of this paper is a complex matter that deserves to be investigated, as space-touristic traffic would have an effect on the environment on both, the Earth and outer space. Although oftentimes associated with negative impacts on the environment, space tourism could also benefit the environment. With the already existing pollution it is of great importance to think ahead and prevent unnecessary contamination on Earth and in outer space to ensure that future generations will be able to benefit from a safe, secure and sustainable space environment.