

Law Issues and Public Awareness Related to Space Exploration (11)
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FROM SPUTNIK TO EXOMARS AND BEYOND - THE MOVING FRONTIER OF SPACE EXPLORATION - A 60 YEARS OVERVIEW

Abstract

While a new paradigm seems to be emerging for space activities, researching, studying and putting into perspective the manner in which space cooperation has come about is key to supporting forward-looking decisions. The sixtieth anniversary of the launch of Sputnik and the fiftieth anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty will provide in 2017 a unique opportunity not only to raise the public awareness about the substantial benefits that space exploration brings to mankind but also to build bridges between the various scientific and academic communities, thus supporting the fruitful cross-fertilization of natural or hard sciences and social sciences or humanities. Space exploration was enabled not only by scientific discoveries and technological breakthroughs but also by designing the appropriate legal framework and by shaping suitable cooperation mechanisms, that proved sustainable despite geopolitical changes and economic power shifts. Building on the impressive output of the History Project being conducted under the aegis of the European Space Agency, this paper will consider, adhering to an interdisciplinary, comparative approach, the human, cultural, and sociological dimensions of 60 years of space exploration, which is both source of inspiration and the subject of representations, while also analysing the geopolitical, strategic and legal stakes at play in scientific diplomacy. This requires analysing, on the one hand, of interconnections among spatio-temporal scales and, on the other, interrelations between the various actors and practitioners in the sector. Analysing the development of space law over the past decades, drawing lessons from major achievements and unexpected setbacks will also help to anticipate future evolutions and to overcome potential obstacles to space exploration.