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Contribution of Space Activities to Solving Global Societal Issues (2)

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VISION 2020 THEN AND NOW: AN INTERNATIONAL VIEW OF THE FUTURE

Abstract

In 1995, a group of young professionals (including the two authors of this paper) representing 16 different nations, participated in the International Space University Summer Session Program in Stockholm, Sweden and their Team Design Project sought to define what space activities would look like over the next twenty-five years. The resulting report tackled not just technological, but also social, political and economic objectives. Using techniques taught by Future Studies faculty as well as other experts, the team did not simply forecast logical increments of technological development out to 2020, but instead set goals for 2020 and “back cast” sequences back to the present year of 1995, identifying those technologies, markets and political initiatives which would fulfill those goals. The vision was not intended to be a prediction of the future, but rather a sequence of events and strategic plans for the evolution and maturation of the space sector internationally. One of the most interesting things to emerge from these activities that was different than the motivation shared by many of the faculty and lecturers was a space philosophy. Rather than a signature program or a sprint to a bold, audacious goal, the vision was for a wide-spread infrastructure showing how space technologies with the support of other societal institutions can improve the quality of life for humanity. And, this sustained demonstration of the critical value of space to society would undergird public support for more lofty pursuits of exploration and large, expensive endeavors.

As well as discussing various technological and political ideas that were suggested, this paper will share the space philosophy that was developed and discuss its influence on the resulting future that was projected. Also, the members of this ISU design team reflect the people that currently are in, or moving into, senior leadership positions. Overall, this paper will compare what has happened over the last twenty-five years, it will examine how this vision and philosophy appears in the space sector and how or where it has served the space sector, and it will provide insights for future strategies and visions.