

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Space Culture – Public Engagement in Space through Culture (9)

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WHAT WE MAKE SPACE TRAVEL TO BE - A STUDY ON THE FRAMING OF SPACE IN TERMS
OF SOCIETAL VALUES AND MEANINGS**Abstract**

Being a space faring civilization changes what kind of civilization we are. With the ever-growing endeavors and aspirations of the space industry, this relationship it is likely to become more important.

Yet, there is little scientific research into this interplay and even less consideration given to possible collateral damage. As a society, we allow ourselves to be onlookers as to what the changes will do to us. To be able to adjust the path we are taking, we need to know, where we stand with space. Using a postmodern approach, I analyze what space travel means to us by analyzing what we make it to be. Which narratives and images about space are discernible? Which values attributed? In short, what impact has space on society based on the motives that are culturally negotiated.

This paper presents the findings of an extensive 8 months research period entailing a wide variety of methods, ranging from interviews, discussions, and participant observation to various media and narrative analyses. It focuses on children and young people as well as the joint production of meaning by them and the media/events targeted at them. This follows the hypothesis, that we show young people the positive aspects, and not so much the problems and downfalls. Thus, here we can deduct, what we want spaceflight to be or to become. To start, I introduce key terms and showcase the research outline. This is followed by an overview of older, even ancient ideas of space travel to contextualize the current results. The findings can be grouped into two overarching themes:

a) In all its technicality, space endeavors are quintessentially about humanity. b) Leaving planet Earth is all about returning to it. Lift-off to touch-down.

Part three goes into detail about a), showing how the very engineered world of space, that is constantly invoked to inspire young people for STEM, is in the end all about human experience and qualities.

Part four then deals with b): how space travel looks back on Earth, how it is a political issue (and has been for millennia!), how it happens in the present, draws on the past, but is synonymous with the future.

In conclusion, this paper will recommend future studies and give an insight into the research project taking off from this foundation.