



Popularising European space policy: Introduction



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In the wake of austerity, space programmes around the world are coming under increasing budgetary pressure. The newly elected US President Donald Trump has promised to implement an ambitious tax reform which will reduce US tax revenue by up to 40% over the next 10 years [1]. This will place parts of the NASA budget under significant pressure [2], especially earth and climate science, which in turn will impact ESA and the EU space programme, which co-operates with NASA on nearly every level. Apart from the uncertainty regarding the future of Europe's transatlantic relationship, the EU and ESA's member nations themselves continue to struggle with austerity. On top of these financial pressures, the recent EU-ESA Joint Statement grants insight into a paradigmatic shift in the way space is approached. The statement thus summarises Europe's ambitions in space:

"By 2030, Europe should be able to fully benefit from its space solutions to implement its policies, to strengthen European values and security, improve knowledge and foster prosperity" [3].

The EU is increasingly aiming for the economic self-sustainability of its space activities. Space activities are seen primarily as solutions for earth-based needs, which may put the inspirational potential of space exploration and planetary science in jeopardy.

In the light of these considerable challenges, the popularisation of all aspects of space activities, including for example exploration, navigation and earth observation, is critical, if Europe is to remain a key player in space. The reader will find different definitions of the popularisation of space in the articles of this special issue. The

editors do not pretend to know what the popularisation of space entails better than the authors. In this introduction, we do not want to spoil the rich findings of the individual papers. Rather, we would like to give a necessarily eclectic picture of our understanding of European space policy and the importance of access to information on space for the general public. Popularisation of space policy may in that sense add up to a narrative within the European integration process, particularly within the light of the aforementioned likely withdrawal of NASA from particular aspects of space activity. Through its popularisation, space could indeed become part of the process of creating an ever-closer European identity, which could in part be centred on Europe's space endeavours. European identity cannot be built artificially, but it needs to arise organically through the involvement of the public. If space can step beyond its technical roots to become a policy of European integration, then it ought to be popularised. In our view, the popularisation of European space policy therefore builds on the ideals of enthusiasm for space and further integration in European citizens.

1. The papers

The origins of this special issue on the Popularisation of European Space Policy lie in the 7th ESSCA Space Policy Workshop in collaboration with the Italian Space Agency and the University of Rome, Tor Vergata, April 2016. The workshop was generously funded by the Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF). Before that, the Re-EUUnion Conference of the Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Commerciales d'Angers (ESSCA) in cooperation with the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES), which was entitled *A European Space Policy – 40 years after the ESA Convention*, on 29–30 May 2015, had brought together scholars of European Studies, space scientists and decision-makers in space policy at the ESSCA campus in Paris. The ESSCA standing research group on European Space Policy has already produced several ground-breaking publications in the past: a special issue of *Space Policy* [8], an edited volume called *European Space Policy*, edited by Paul Stephenson and Thomas Hoerber, which has been published with Routledge (2016) and a second edited volume, called *Theorizing European Space Policy*, edited by Emmanuel Sigalas and Thomas Hoerber with Lexington Publishers (2017). The current special issue continues this line of publications on European space policy.

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For the last ESSCA space policy workshop in April 2016 in Rome, we invited paper proposals from researchers and practitioners in the field which were new and dedicated to the particular topic of the popularisation of space in films, books and the media. These papers were meant to address particularly the link between the public and space, e.g. how popularisation of space endeavours to change the perception of space policy and its impact on life. The outcome of this call were the papers, which make up this special issue, plus several noteworthy additions which came in the wake of the call for papers and which adhere to the same general topic. It was also important to the editors to allow for ideas to be freely developed and to include ideas of young academics in this publication.

One of those examples was Marine Alalinarde, who had only just finished her Master's Degree at the University of Nantes. She addressed the following topic: *Star Trek as an early mind-opener for space endeavours*.

"Space: the final frontier": thus begins the famous science-fiction series *Star Trek*. All the movies and TV series set in this universe emphasize exploration: the public follows the adventure of a crew exploring the universe in a ship called the *USS Enterprise*. Science, through exploration, is the ultimate aim, above the personal conflicts. In *Star Trek*, science symbolizes hope and faith in the future. The *Star Trek* universe is based on an idealist, utopian society where tolerance towards diversity is promoted. Science is an opening to the world, a philosophy that evaluates the place of humans in the world. On the basis of such reflections, the series encourages people to reconsider their situation in our current society. This paper analyses how science is presented in *Star Trek*, as a trademark of that series, harbouring the intention of being a mid-opener to the societies their TV audience live in. A good example for that critical analysis of society is Lieutenant Uhura. A black woman as an officer was unheard of in the United States of the 1960s, when the original series was broadcast. This inspirational character of questioning the basis of our societies has made up the popularity of *Star Trek*, up and until the 1990s. It is remarkable that with the advent of fantasy movies and series, such as the *Lord of the Rings* and *Game of Thrones* two changes seem to go along; first, the orientation toward the past, in the two mentioned example a mediaeval past; secondly a reorientation of the general interests away from an idealistic improvement of society towards a more cynical view of society, the elites and political institutions. Conspiracy logic seems to become more and more acceptable, not least in recent election campaigns, e.g. by Donald Trump.¹

Antonella Forganni, a lawyer by training, looks at *The Potential of Space Tourism for Space Popularisation: An Opportunity for the EU Space Policy?*

This article examines space tourism in the perspective of popularisation of space, to determine its potential role, with a special focus on the possible implications for the development of the EU Space Policy. After a preliminary analysis of space tourism and an overview of the technology required to make it happen, distinguishing between orbital and suborbital flights, the article outlines some legal and political issues related to this emerging sector. It discusses, further, the possible consequences of space commercialisation. The positive trend and the progress made in this domain suggest that space tourism could actually become a factor of space popularisation. At the same time, the existing legal framework does not seem to respond efficiently to the challenge. Rather than

adapting the current air space and outer space rules, it would be preferable to establish a comprehensive special regulation. In the European context, in particular, space tourism could contribute to the evolution of the EU Space Policy, which is still at an early stage. This article finally looks at the positive impact a European space policy may have on the European integration process in the future.

Léa Gringé also just finished her Master's degree at Nantes and looks at the connection between *Science, Space Exploration and Science Fiction*.

There has always been a dialogue between the aerospace sector and the imaginary. While Science Fiction appears as a mirror of human ideals, fears and preoccupations, science and space exploration fulfil aspirations to discover another world. Science Fiction narratives have offered infinity of opportunities to the public. This article is a reflexion on that, without any definitive answer. However, it argues for the recognition of Science Fiction as an available and relevant tool of the aerospace sector to engage the public. The article explores the fundamental human need of exploration, which can be found in *Star Trek* fans and Space engineers alike. It also talks about the aesthetics of space, as portrayed in Science Fiction, using a method borrowed from Media Studies.

Nathalie Kerstens and Christina Giannopapa, present primary qualitative research on a model of how to make the European space industry economically viable and stable. The title of the paper is: *Down to earth: a Dutch collective for the popularisation of geo information services*.

The popularisation of geo-information services contributes to achieving Europe's 2020 goals to become a "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth economy" [4]. Earth observation data has been made publicly available by various European earth observation initiatives for the use by industry. However, the end-users frequently cannot easily utilize raw earth observation data in their business processes. In order to make geo-information services more widely available, a stronger value-adding industry – that transforms raw earth observation data to geo-information services – is necessary. This implies the important, yet challenging, alignment between industrial activities and government policy. This paper discusses the emergence of a private collective of companies in the Netherlands which finds its business activity in making geo-information services available to a wider public. Our case study shows how structural barriers can be overcome by forming a collective among value-adding companies. In that structure they gain the necessary capabilities to link downstream needs (market pull) with upstream availability (technology push). The results elaborate on policy actions for market stimulation, as well as the developments within the value-adding industry to strengthen their market scope. As such, this study provides insights into how to make the European value-adding space industry economically viable and how to promote the wider use of earth observation data services. This trend may well be seen as an element of the popularisation of space in Europe through providing concrete applications from space technology for a greater number of people.

Harald Köpping Athanasopoulos takes us into the direction of a European dream, under the title: *Where no European has gone before: representations of Europe(an integration) in science fiction*.

This article is meant to begin an investigation into the role of Europe and European integration in science fiction. After a brief discussion of methodology, it reviews a number of key novels, films and bandes dessinées of science fiction and analyses their references to Europe and European integration. The references are placed into four categories: surveillance state, conspiracy theories, environmental disasters, and space exploration. References to European integration in this genre are rare and in the case of the first three categories they are dystopian. While this can partially be attributed to a general tendency within the genre towards

¹ See J.D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*, Harper Collins, New York, 2016, see also Isaac Chotiner, 'Donald Trump ou les maux de l'Amérique blanche', in: *Courrier International*, No. 1357, 3–9 November, 2016, pp. 57–59.

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