

WHO WANTS TO LIVE ON PLANET TRANTOR? (WHY WE ARE AGAINST SPACE COLONIALISM)



SRI NEWSLETTER – June 30th 2023
by Adriano V. Autino

Historically, colonialism was initially predicated on a simple “rob and take home” concept. During the first colonialist age, the superpowers of that era (primarily England and France) used to send their agents overseas to obtain precious goods at very low prices, and to bring those goods back to their home countries, selling them at very high prices (today, such practices are far from being obsolete!). Such policies were often socially detrimental, especially when they boosted the use of drugs (e.g., stimulating opium dependence in several Chinese provinces). In many cases, colonialist policies lead to conflicts and wars (in order to ensure control over certain regions). In most cases, nothing positive remained for the colonized populations, since the colonialist behaviors primarily engaged populations with a culture based on robbery and exploitation – not to advance civil rights. Regarding the “new world” (America’s two continents), colonialists have also invaded these territories, stealing the land and natural resources from native inhabitants, and exterminating these inhabitants by any means. During the last age of colonialism (up to the 20th Century), the practice of depredation continued, in many cases retarding or preventing the development of colonized countries, notwithstanding the abundance of natural riches, from which native peoples could never benefit.

Ok, I am listening now to your classical objections. I, for one, have noted this several times while discussing space colonization: in the solar system there are no native intelligent beings, therefore we would not steal anything from anyone,

by colonizing territories on the Moon, Mars, Jupiter Moons and beyond. Of course, I am talking about the very essential part of colonialism: to take resources and bring them home. In our cases, to take asteroid and exo-planetary resources from the Moon, asteroids, Mars and beyond, and bring them on Earth surface – why would this be harmful?

Space colonialism would be both a dangerous and harmful undertaking for several reasons.

First of all, our planet is now subject to a very high degree of pressure: eight billion humans, (the majority of which are still on their way toward industrial development) are subjecting the natural environment of our mother planet to an unbearable stress, consuming more natural resources than naturally available assets. Retrieving raw materials from outside the Earth could possibly mitigate resources shortages. Yet this would unavoidably increase environmental issues. Augmented amounts of raw materials would imply an increased volume of industrial processing and production. If such increased industrial activity should take place inside Earth's atmosphere, several key indicators would signal a dramatic worsening regarding: energy demands, thermal burdens inside our atmosphere, enhanced environmental pollution, and CO2 production – just to mention the most relevant factors. In his famous trilogy of *The Foundation* [\[1\]](#), Isaac Asimov describes a planet, Trantor, fully covered by artificial building, iron and cement, where biological nature was eliminated. It is an extreme metaphor, yet well representative of what it could become planet Earth, should we keep it closed, and we would keep on bringing external resources to be processed and used on its surface.

Secondly, the resources obtained from space and brought to Earth's surface would be stolen from unborn space communities, who will not be able to utilize their territorial resources for their sacrosanct right to develop – primarily because the new predatory strategies of space colonialists will be based on automated machines – not upon the work of human miners. Given the growing emergence and role of artificially intelligent machines, the hypothetical role and future human space settlers would be lost. Where are those people now? They exist. They are our children and nephews, who don't find space and opportunities for social growth on Earth. They are the billions of people living in emerging countries, who are now trying to migrate to “advanced” countries, only to encounter “post-industrial” societies, where all human civil rights are increasingly questioned by unemployment and an increasing regression to slavish working conditions.

So, there are deep reasons why we at Space Renaissance International and the majority of the international space community (at least since our second world congress) have abandoned the terminology of “space colonists”. It is not just because we don't like the word (recalling ominous historical periods), but because we are definitely opposed to the concept of space colonialism.

The concepts of civilian space development, trans-terrestrialism, and universal space settlement, have nothing to do with space colonialism. All of the above concepts promote the use of space resources to develop space infrastructures, for the benefit of the incoming space communities in Earth orbit, in the cislunar space, around Mars orbit, the Asteroid Belt and beyond, to the Jupiter Moons, and the external Solar System. Mining the Moon and the near-earth asteroids will be essential from the very beginning, to produce fuel in space, to avoid bringing all essential resources from Earth, and to dramatically downsize the cost of space missions. Expanding civilization outside Earth, our home planet will progressively become a beautiful natural garden, and the immense future solar system economy will provide financial resources to fund the enterprises on Earth's surface, mainly: farming, touristic, naturalistic, educational, spaceport infrastructures and scientific centers.

[English language editing by Jim Crisafulli]

15 years ago a small group of visionaries, including me, founded the Space Renaissance, and we started to promote civilization expansion into outer space. In 2015 Space X kicked-off reusable rockets, making such a perspective feasible and sustainable. Nowadays, 43 (so far) space advocacy organizations[2] (including Space Renaissance International, the National Space Society, The Mars Society, Lifeboat Foundation, the Space Tourism Society, the Beyond Earth Institute), are proposing an 18th Sustainable Development Goal – **#Space18SDG Space for All, Civilian Space Development, on Earth and Beyond** –, to be added to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such initiative is strongly aimed to a 100% inclusivity, involving the whole Team Humanity, as it was stated during a recent speech at UN COPUOS in Vienna[3]. SRI is fully committed on such an historical campaign, a mission on behalf of whole humanity, as a species and as a civilization. This is the greatest opportunity, for space humanists, to get full visibility to the profound philosophical and ethical rationales backing the human expansion into the solar system. We will not resign, no matter how hard the struggle may become!"

Adriano V. Autino

15 September 2023: follow the #Space18SDG session at U.N. General Assembly 78 on the Space Renaissance Youtube channel: link will follow soon.

Sign the **#Space18SDG** pledge: <https://www.change.org/space18sdg>

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Watch and subscribe the Space Renaissance YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@spacerenaissance>

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_series

[2] See the complete list of the #Space18SDG Co-promoters <https://spacerenaissance.space/the-space18sdg-proposer-organizations/>

[3] <https://agora.spacerenaissance.space/the-18th-sdg-proposal-was-announced-at-copuos-66th-session-in-wien-the-5-june-2023/>