

Human spaceflight as a matter of culture and national vision

Stephan Lingner

ESF/ESA/ESPI Conference „Humans in Outer Space“
Vienna, 11-12 October 2007

FAQs on human spaceflight

Too expensive?

Any commercial value expectable?

Poor science due to human interference?

Hostility of space?

Respecting Earth as natural border?

Too ambitious w.r.t. problems on Earth?

→ “wrong” questions: utilitarian bias; naturalistic fallacy; ethos of transcendence!



Culture matters - recall the matters of culture

System of legitime aims and means

- Politics/law: societal contracts/peace
 - Science/tech.: cognition and enhancement of human options
 - Arts: visions, new perspectives
 - *Economy: monetary values*
- Restriction of economical reasoning:
the case for **trans-utilitarian reasoning**



Human spaceflight as a legitimate cultural option

Cultural aims	Perspectives
Enhancing the human cultural sphere (→ „cosmic culture“)	World view; technology; human exploration/presence/settlements
Contributing to a polycentric world (→ multilateral political culture on Earth)	International co-operation; national share in new options; plurality of space exploring nations
Scientific yields	Knowledge; cognition (also from unmanned activities)
Adding (economic) value	Not yet foreseeable



Reasoning national visions

a.m. rationales mostly apply here, too.

Evaluation of specific motives:

- **Predominance** (see „cold war“). No universal solution; not acceptable for the community of states
- **Leadership?!** Ambivalent (see above) but may be necessary for practical reasons
- **Keeping existing spaceflight know-how!** Burden of reasoning for shut-down and loss of capabilities



Conclusion

Human spaceflight can be generally rational and legitimate.

But not with absolute priority; decisions have to weigh *all* cultural aspects.

Human spaceflight will enrich human opportunities and choices; it will overcome natural borders of human cultural development



„Bonus“: Rationales of spaceflight as a continuum

