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# ORBITAL IMPERIALISM

## Alessia Bertini, Sofia Gozzi, Chiara Salmini

*The unstoppable need for growth is already spilling out of the layer of Earth's atmosphere since the past century.*

### I Oversaturation

Terrestrial borders are blurring, the thin surface we are populating increasingly unable to contain human ambitions and expansionist intentions. The infinite sky has been the exclusive realm of spiritual and scientific projections until man took the first step in the House of the Unconscious: the Moon landing, worldwide televised and broadcast, altered the perception of the relationship between us and the unknown. The astral domain became another territory to conquer, and its meaning shifted from herald of divine power to emblem of technological progress. The actual scenario demands a further interpretative step, as space, resources and growth potential on earth are shrinking day by day.

### II CSLC Act 2015

In order to respond to the urge to reach out further, on May 21, 2015, the US Government approved the Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act (or Spurring Private Aerospace Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship Act). The amendment allows industries to engage in the commercial exploration and exploitation of space resources. The act raised polemics from other countries, who pointed their finger at the USA for having allegedly acted against the Outer Space Treaty, signed in 1967 by 14 UN member states, declaring space a free exploration field but forbidding any state to claim sovereignty over outer space or any celestial body. The White House expects to stop spending for NASA and the International Space Station by 2025 and looks into a future of commercially operated habitats in Low Earth Orbit (LEO). The Chinese government allows private companies to operate in the space sector since 2014. 2019 has seen the first outcomes of the past decade's space policies with the launching of 60 operational satellites delivered by a reusable rocket at the hand of SpaceX (Elon Musk), a rocket by Interstellar Glory Space Technology (a Beijing based company)

A



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B

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and Blue Origin (Jeff Bezos), successfully pursuing the launch of their third suborbital rocket into the Low Earth Orbit (LEO). The artificial constellation can already be spotted cat-walking amid Orion and Cassiopeia confusing and upsetting astronomers. The financial sector is meanwhile acknowledging the potential of space economy and promotes long-term investments in the LEO. A research publication released in April 2018 by UBS Global Wealth Management estimates that the global space economy will grow almost threefold by 2040 and lists out 14 major private US space start-ups reliable for investment, promoting rocket-based transportation business to lunar billboards.

### III Leo Cosmogony and Astral Race

Governmental research is aiming at further horizons (possibly even colonizing other planets). Concerning the Low Earth Orbit, the transfer of influence from State-owned agencies to private companies is now on schedule. In the soon urbanized LEO, states are delegating more and more to non-collective actors. The celestial space will be a constellation of minor and major powers, each one playing a specific role in the conquest of superhuman glory. The LEO cosmogony's tree lineages are branching off from the primordial fight between Cold War giants to tech-national superpowers, outlining the new generation of space explorers. Neoliberal major forces are entering the game, occupying the belt that will have the most impact on earth's balances, observing from Mount Olympus the movement of populations and the mutation of territories, guaranteeing by these means humanity's grandiose and safe future. LEO will host the catalyzers of mankind's gigantic ambitions, preparing the ascension up the Kardashev scale. In its actual state, LEO appears as a No Man's Land, housing the projections of post-human and post-national desires. The power of projection lays in its lack of context: it is situated in the substratum of ideas, therefore implying no consequences, banalities nor interferences. A projection is indeed a reflection of our selves, a narcissistic contemplation of longing to the outer sphere, as the thin surface we populate becomes more and more exhausted. The first step to evade towards the infinite is the materialization of desires that are no longer sustainable on earth.

### IV Transubstantiation of Desire and Normalization

This shift in narrative reflects its underlying fundamental plots: traditional governmental and military focus draws its cosmogony on humanity's goods and progress, while new private investments long for a polytheistic mythology of the individual's pulsions. Visceral desire of power, control, eternal beauty and richness will lead both the entrepreneur and the acquirer: the first led by the striving desire to embody an almighty character, finally

buying his parking slot on the Olympus; the second living the dream to be a demigod, detaining powers that are conceded by divine grace. New-born Chronos with his tech-titans is taking over the State-Uranus in ruling Earth.

But opposed to pelasgic cosmogony, the Father-State is not defeated or emasculated, it is instead sliding behind the atmospheric curtains and extending his reach to new, abstract horizons.

As LEO becomes an infrastructured space, sacred State-secret is shifting the projection even further out, to the spheres of trans-humanity and exo-colonialism, leaving the ongoing construction of the earthly satellitar? Control-sphere to the development of commercial actors, while preparing the ground for the next step.

Real-estatization of orbital ground will lead to a necessary normalization of its driving factors, industries need services and development produces waste and blind corners. It is not a silvery polished surface, but a modular assemblage of metallic pieces in need of maintenance.

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