

# Does modern science fiction have a role in accelerating civilian space development

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## Abstract

This paper examines the multifaceted role of modern science fiction in accelerating civilian space development, arguing that the genre functions as a critical driver of progress through three interconnected mechanisms: inspirational and recruitment functions, public discourse and policy shaping, and economic and commercial modeling. Drawing on recent scholarship and contemporary examples, the analysis demonstrates that science fiction operates not merely as entertainment but as a "common global language" for imagining possible futures and as a "performative" force that influences real-world space sector actors. The genre serves as "a place where debates play out about what the future of space should entail", addressing fundamental questions of governance, labor, and social organization beyond Earth. Works ranging from *Star Trek's* utopian vision of multicultural cooperation to *The Expanse's* exploration of interplanetary tensions provide narrative frameworks for considering policy alternatives. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that science fiction "can serve as a reflection of our relationships with current law and policy, and a way of building future generations thoughts and perspectives on shaping policy". The genre's exploration of both hope and fear—from utopian scientific exploration to cautionary tales about corporate domination or technological loss of control—helps calibrate public expectations and concerns, creating the cultural conditions under which civilian space initiatives gain legitimacy and support. The economic dimension of science fiction's influence has grown increasingly significant with the emergence of "New Space" capitalism. The genre now offers explicit representations of space-based commercial activity, with films such as *Space Sweepers* and series like *Salvation* depicting the dynamics of private space enterprise. These narratives both reflect and influence public perceptions of figures like Elon Musk and the broader space industry. Importantly, science fiction serves as what researchers term a "performative" force, shaping the imagination of actual entrepreneurs and policymakers.