

# Small steps and giant leaps

**Thomas Hoerber, co-editor of *European Space Policy: European integration and the final frontier*, speaks about the motivations behind his book and the potential of his research topic.**



*The book you edited with Paul Stephenson is, to our knowledge, the first comprehensive state-of-the-art on European space policy. Jokingly, one could say the book is ‘a small step for a man or two, but a giant leap for mankind’. More seriously, what was the major objective of this publication, and how does its structure serve this purpose?*

The purpose is to put European space policy on the map of Political Science and particularly European Studies. The table of contents shows the classical political science division of Politics, Policy and Polity, and the European Studies aspect comes out in every singly chapter which show different facets in the formation of a European space policy. Why is that important? Because the editors and the authors think that European space policy has a role to play in the European integration process, in its politics, its policies and the formation of a European space polity.

*The methodological approach to your topic is firmly anchored in framing theory. Can you briefly describe what this approach consists in and why it was chosen?*

In a collective volume, the editors need to provide a red line which runs through the whole book. That is usually the theoretical approach, in this case framing theory. This was a pragmatic choice, providing some guidelines for the authors of the individual chapters and at the same time accommodating existing research which came out of over the years in our workshops and meetings. Framing theory has a relevance that is well described in Paul Stephenson’s chapter ‘Framing as a tool for analysing European Space Policy’, but it also provides a uniting bond between the chapters without strangling the authors’ freedom.

*The European Galileo Project is several times referred to as a ‘game-changer’ in space policy. What are the implications of this project that justify such an assessment?*

It’s very simple: money and the political decisions resulting from big money. Galileo is the biggest space infrastructure project with an overall budget of several billion Euros. Its political consequences for European integration are important. The European Space Agency (ESA) had been running smaller space projects of technical importance for decades. Galileo, in contrast, is of political relevance. First, it is too big to fail, which is why the EU took over the financing of Galileo from the failed Public Private Partnership. Secondly, spending several billions of public money on Galileo needs political legitimacy. This is why the European Commission and the Council stepped in. The accountability comes in through the European Parliament – a strong advocate of European Space Policy – which has to sanction the budget. I would call this progress in integration where European institutions play their proper role in the democratic process of a big European infrastructure project.

*Following this rather complete inventory of space policy, what can come next in the academic study of this topic?*

The next book is earmarked for an application of European Integration Theory to space. With space policy we are still at a stage where a lot of technical knowledge about space applications exists, particularly in ESA, but where not many have thought about the political consequences of this growing policy field. This book should come out in 2016 with Lexington Publishers and will provide some theoretical answers to where space policy may lead in European integration. From that point of reflection one can explore linking this research to actors in the space industry and the wider public in social science phenomena such as science fiction films and literature – I am just thinking about the current hype about the new Star Wars film. Making this link between research, industry and the general public seems a big enough target for the next years.



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