

**SPACE RENAISSANCE ACADEMY**  
**Committee: Near Future Narratives**

**Director/Chair:** Dominik Irtenkauf

**A short bio:** Dominik Irtenkauf, born 1979, studied German Philology and Literature, Comparative Literature and Philosophy. A growing interest in science fiction literature showed brought him to specialize in journalism and science fiction literature. He's become a member of L.O.K.I. Verein zur Förderung der Phantastik (in English: Association for promoting fantastic literature). This association organizes the MetropolCon 2023 in May 2023 in Berlin-Wedding, a stream with panel discussions, readings, and lectures. Currently he is mostly interested in literature, philosophy and science fiction literature.

**What is the Subject?**

In science and speculative fiction, often space exploration is depicted in a rather spectacular way. Explosions, hostile contact with alien entities, violent confrontations and killings, big technologies no reader or viewer can really understand, misleading patterns due to Hollywood understandings of human interaction might invite a big audience to the cinemas, but the real challenges and opportunities of space settlement and exploration get displayed in a distorted way.

Since 50 years one of the leading science fiction currents was a dystopian one, in which humans are blamed for wasting, polluting and destroying the natural environment of planet Earth. In such an extremely critical vision of the world, science and technology are anymore seen as evolutionary tools, yet as the main culprits.

Near Future Narratives appeals to writers, poets, artists in general to come up with more utopian, or better eutopian, or at least non dystopian, takes on space exploration and living in space.

**What are the questions and why is it of interest?**

What role can (science fiction) literature play in spreading the idea of space settlement, exploration and living in space? Science fiction movies reach mass audiences and belong to the best-selling formats today. However, is there still a chance of serious literature which is in contact with science and humanities to reach further goals in outer space?

**Context, background, aims, possible risks and opportunities**

In the so-called Golden Age of science fiction literature – in the 1950s and 1960s – space exploration has been connected to conquering planets. Sometimes it happened without battles, sometimes the colonizers had to fight. So it depended on the writer's will and the suspense that was needed to entertain the readers. The advantage with such big-scale scenarios was to gain visions and get ambitious. Nowadays, the literature turned to be more realistic, following NASA and ESA protocols in passages to be close to reality. During the first decades of the new millennium, a more mature current has born, paying more attention to the psychology of the characters, their human relations and interactions. Science and technologies are seen again as useful tools, in a broader vision, encompassing culture and arts, that seems to prelude to a finally post-kopernican futurist *and presentist* weltanschauung. However, it seems to be necessary to collect some evidence on how contemporary science fiction deals with space challenges. Important here is to ask the writers themselves what they are interested in when it comes to space settlement and exploration, and how they perceive the literary SF tradition and new scientific & technological knowledge. Also, the artistic strive for authenticity and freedom must be considered. Imagining normal human life in space, and how the great dimension and inherent freedom of space could influence the view, the feelings, the dreams and the projects of ordinary and non-ordinary people. How being outside in small communities, and looking outside, to the infinite space ocean, where the common enemy is the emptiness, and the human hostility appears in a distant perspective, could generate a new romanticism, a space romanticism. All of the above seems to be more interesting, nowadays, than replicating worn-out killing scripts, based on eternal templates. Literature will never be scientific alone. Near Future Narratives will be developing in many directions. This group is interested in working on a first overview and then to develop possible Near Future Narratives in accordance with the other groups' results.

**This Committee Objectives:**

- to actively participate in the discussion of these topics from a multidisciplinary point of view
- to invite other researchers, artists, philosophers, space enthusiasts to contribute and exchange ideas, proposals, suggestions for the development of the knowledge about this committee
- to forward proposals more oriented to the benefit of humankind and civilization
- Relating to UN SPACE 2030 Agenda Items: [INSERT Agenda Item [X - DESCRIPTION], Agenda Item [Y - DESCRIPTION], etc.]

**Current Efforts & State of the Art** (here shall be attached references to existing literature, policies, agreements and formal recommendation made by the specialists)

- A huge collection of written science fiction / speculative fiction literature dealing with space exploration
- Plans to organize a panel discussion at the MetropolCon 2023 convention in Berlin in May 2023 to invite writers, artists, scholars and philosophers to join a general movement about how to write about space.
- Small articles on the topic for German-written and international science/speculative fiction magazines to raise interest among writers, journalists and readers.
- Resources (A list of organizations and offices working on this topic and a literature list).

**Development Plan(s), Agenda, Current Works, Projects, Meetings****E.g.:**

- Webinar series, specialized on the topics of the committee
- Small interviews with science fiction authors on the topic
- Participation to webinars, conferences, workshops made by other organizations
- Position papers on the subject of the committee
- Stimulate the creation of spin-off research groups / startups
- Networking to help researchers and startups

**Partnerships**

- Can we partner with ESA, NASA and other agencies to act as extension of their educational network?
- Can we start a study or survey with the space agencies?
- Can we connect with the IAA and AIAA?
- Which magazines and publications might support a “contest” for new Near Future Narratives?