**Contention 1: The Space-Industrial Complex**

**Capitalism is not natural or inevitable, extending it to space is k2 sustain it. Empirics prove it will be disastrous**

**Penny 20**

(ELEANOR PENNY is a writer, poet and essayist based in London. She is a senior editor at Novara Media, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/space-privatization-future-technology-silicon-valley-elon-musk-jeff-bezos>, 12-17)

**Space is our birthright**. ​“Americans should have the right to engage in commercial exploration, recovery and use of resources in outer space,” President Donald Trump wrote April 6, 2020, issuing the ​“Executive Order on Encouraging International Support for the Recovery and Use of Space Resources.” In the stroke of a pen, Trump planted the U.S. flag on ​“the Moon, Mars and other celestial bodies.” As Trump declared these space lands and resources open for business, you could hear the cheers — mostly from ​“moonshot” corporations that have clamored to sweep away the patchy, unregularized Cold War-era space law in favor of new, unregulated corporate plunder of the solar system. While the institution of private land ownership is now widely taken for granted, it was — **like many so-called natural things — invented**. Before the muddied, grueling transition from feudalism to capitalism, peasants in Britain and much of Western Europe depended on their right to farm, forage and harvest on common, community lands. The land was controlled by local lords, but it belonged (in a loose, de facto sense) to the communities living on it and dependent upon it. Eventually, common lands were ​“enclosed” and became the private property of aristocrats. This exclusive right to land use (to own and profit from land) was the contrivance that established the new economic order. No longer held in common, the planet’s resources were parceled off to strictly private hands. No longer could peasants scrape by, subsisting on the commons. Instead, they depended on the grace and favor of a wage. Life in feudal times was no bucolic idyll, but enclosure was synonymous with **disaster, destitution and death for many people**. This model was mirrored in the capture, theft and enclosure of colony lands, the people (and resources) of which fueled the early capitalist transition and later the industrial revolution. **Capitalism must grow to persist,** and as it grows it must transform ripe, unregularized commons into private fiefdoms — at home and afar. So **it seems only ​“natural” to carve up the moon into stretches of valuable real estate**, just like Manhattan and the metal mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo. After all, Earth’s resources dwindle by the day, and boundless resources beyond the stratosphere could be a backstop for planetary scarcity. Never mind that our crisis of resources is, in part, **the result of this system of private ownership that rewards ruthless, short-term profiteering at the expense of the long-term survival of the natural commons.**This future access to a new natural commons is now a stress test on governmental priorities. As Trump proclaimed, ​“Outer space is a legally and physically unique domain of human activity, and the United States does not view it as a global commons.” Trump’s executive order to ​“encourage international support for the public and private recovery and use of resources in outer space” heralds yet another **public-private boondoggle, where nominally public institutions thrash out fresh boundaries of corporate activity**. As an example, look no further than SpaceX’s Crew Dragon capsule, which successfully transported NASA astronauts Bob Behnken and Doug Hurley to the International Space Station on May 31, 2020. The NASA-SpaceX crossover branding leaves no room for misinterpretation: The next small steps for mankind will be giant leaps for corporate America. Elon Musk, who founded SpaceX in 2002, talks misty-eyed about a relatively near future when humanity will have risen out of the mud, setting its sights on colonizing Mars — with SpaceX transportation rocketing there. In 2020, Musk began launching a cavalcade of thousands of satellites into low-Earth orbit to form the Starlink satellite system. As of November 2020, nearly 900 satellites had been launched (42,000 are planned in total). This network will potentially seed an **extraplanetary monopoly** for key economic infrastructure, such as domestic internet access. Fellow billionaire escapist Jeff Bezos, Amazon CEO, has been romanced by the wealth among the stars as well, founding his own aerospace company, Blue Origin, back in 2000. ​“We are going to build a road to space,” Bezos said in 2019. ​“And then, amazing things will happen.” Bezos has invited us all to cosplay his daydreams with the Amazon-funded, interplanetary sci-fi thriller The Expanse, in which a roll call of stock anti-heroes (the rogue policeman, the war-beleaguered pilot, etc.) tumble through a far future when only wise plutocratic innovators can plumb interstellar riches and deliver the solar system from interstellar war. Microsoft, too, has its fingers in the intergalactic pie, launching Azure Orbital in September 2020 to enable satellite operators on its cloud computing platform, along with a SpaceX partnership the following month. According to Forbes, **2019 was a record year for private space investments**, with ​“venture capitalists [investing] $5.8 billion in 178 commercial space startups worldwide.” As Earth’s billionaires burnish the power of new stratospheric tech, Trump launched Space Force, the first new branch of the U.S. military in more than seven decades. ​“Space is the world’s newest war-fighting domain,” Trump said. ​“Amid grave threats to our national security, American superiority in space is absolutely vital.” Space exploration has long been tied to military ambition. From its Cold War founding, NASA’s task was to advance the practical interests of the American state as it squared off against the Soviet behemoth. The new field of battle included space-guided missiles and satellite technology. Astronauts are still generally selected from the ranks of the military. Grumman (now better known as half of Northrop Grumman) made parts for both the NASA spacecraft that leapt into the great unknown and the military machines that waged war in Vietnam. As the shadow of nuclear war retreats in the bright light of a digital dawn, the mission of Space Force is to protect the economic and military infrastructure (communications and surveillance technology) seemingly threatened by rival global powers (namely, Russia and China) gearing up their own military space operations. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty, signed by the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, attempted to guard against the militarization and the privatization of our shared stratosphere. The treaty limited governmental (and non-governmental) bodies from sending nuclear weapons into space and prohibited the annexation of the moon and temptingly mineral-rich asteroids. As the treaty outlined, any country could use and explore outer space but there could be no ​“appropriation” of astral territory. It was, at heart, a disarmament treaty — one whose ropey legalities were enforced by the now-defunct Cold War brinkmanship between its main two signatories. The treaty never foresaw the dizzying rise of **private enterprise clamoring for a slice of the sky**. Nor did it foresee the slow shelving of publicly funded U.S. space exploration (especially the manned variety) **that would allow venture capitalists to stake their claim in a new space scramble.**

#### 4. Risks of private space activity vastly outweigh- government space programs are regulated and equitable. Private space risks handing a megalomaniac their own death star

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(Izabella is an FT Alphaville reporter <https://www.ft.com/content/02aac296-a920-11e3-bf0c-00144feab7de> 3-14)

For a long time the idea of commercial space was an eccentric billionaire’s pipe dream. A fanciful desire of those with a penchant for Isaac Asimov novels. Not so any more. Elon Musk’s SpaceX has been sending payloads to space on a commercially viable basis since 2010. Sir Richard Branson’s Virgin Galactic is on track to take its first fully paid-up customers into near-space by the end of this year, all of which was revealed by my colleague John Sunyer’s recent piece on property space wars. And a company called Planetary Resources is making serious attempts to identify asteroids for commercial mining missions in the not too distant future. Small surprise then that the issue of extraplanetary property rights has been raised by the likes of Robert Bigelow, founder of Bigelow Aerospace, a company hoping to put private living quarters in space. Above all, Bigelow is worried that if the capitalist west doesn’t go about annexing celestial bodies in the name of private enterprise, some other nation will go empire-building in its own name instead. The argument pro property rights is simple. What we’re approaching is a new Wild West period for humanity. A time when anyone ingenious or intrepid enough to get themselves into space should rightfully be rewarded with ownership and autocracy over the land masses they discover or forge. Especially since this time around there are no native inhabitants, or at least none that we humans can divine, to be displaced in the process. Call it the classic expansionist approach to property allocation. Or as comedian Eddie Izzard once joked, stealing countries with the cunning use of flags. If you can claim it and defend it, it becomes yours. The problem with this way of thinking is that the Wild West is a poor analogy for space exploration. First there’s the access issue. Getting to the New World may have been harsh and costly, but it was still exponentially easier – and thus more equitable – than getting to space. Second, when the pilgrims set sail for America, they never looked back. Yes, they still depended on trade, but they did so on an equal footing with their trade partners because they had just as many valuable resources, if not more, to exchange. The American war of independence was about shedding the yoke of the old land, which still desired to rule the colonies despite their self-sufficiency. The same clearly does not apply to the hostile territory of space. The chance that any colonist on Mars, the Moon or an asteroid will be self-sufficient enough to break their dependence on Earth is infinitesimally small. To the contrary, private missions are likely to remain dependent on national jurisdictions for launches and life support for decades if not centuries. Is it a risk, then, that nation-states will see this as an invitation to go empire-building in space instead? Unlikely. Article II of the UN Outer Space Treaty already sets out the parameters clearly: “Outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means.” It is a treaty we should be thankful for, not least because it paved the way to a truly unprecedented era of international co-operation, resulting in, among other things, the International Space Station. If any sovereign state dared to break it, say by invading the Moon, they would, without a shadow of a doubt, find themselves testing the international community, and consequently the established nuclear power balance here on Earth. That means, for as long as a space colony depends on Earth-based ties, the incentive for a nation-state to abide by Earth-based rules remains. It’s game theory. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for private enterprise. A power-hungry space baron could feasibly argue that the UN treaty does not apply to them since they are not a sovereign state. Then there is also the caveat that the treaty only refers to celestial rather than man-made bodies. This is what you could call the dark side of space commercialisation. The point at which open access to space creates a Pandora’s box effect that in the name of competition compromises space co-operation and disrupts the power balance we’ve achieved both in space and on Earth. The point when a power-hungry billionaire could find a legal path to building his own Death Star. Elon Musk’s testimony to the Senate appropriations hearing on March 5 speaks of the potential power play in hand. As he argued, US national security is being undermined by the country’s dependence on Russian parts and launches, especially in light of the latter’s de facto annexation of the Crimea region. It would be much better, says Musk, if the US transferred more of its business to private enterprises like SpaceX. To Musk, access to space should be treated the same way access to commodities is treated on Earth. The only problem with this analogy is that private corporations competing for commodities still have to abide by national rules. Commercial space enterprises, it seems, would prefer it if sovereign states became dependent on private enterprise instead – the surest way of exposing Earth to the risk of a megalomaniac that wants to rename Mars one day.

#### 5. Utopian space fantasies are precisely that, they will never happen. Their purpose is to distract the public from a new age of capital accumulation

Marx 21

(Paris Marx is a socialist writer and host of the Tech Won't Save Us podcast. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2021/07/billionaires-space-richard-branson-jeff-bezos-elon-musk> , 7-13)

But as these billionaires had their eyes turned to the stars and the media showered them with the headlines they craved, the evidence that the climate of our planet is rapidly changing in a way that is hostile to life — both human and otherwise — was escalating. Near the end of June, Jacobabad, a city of 200,000 people in Pakistan, experienced “wet bulb” conditions where high humidity and scorching temperatures combine to reach a level where the human body can no longer cool itself down. Meanwhile, half a world away, on the West Coast of North America, a heat dome that was made much worse by climate change sent temperatures soaring so high that the town of Lytton, British Columbia, hit 49.6ºC, beating Canada’s previous temperature record by 4.6ºC, then burned to the ground when a wildfire tore through the town. The contrast between those stories is striking. On one hand, billionaires are engaging in a dick-measuring contest to see who can exit the atmosphere first, while on the other, the billions of us who will never make any such journey are increasing dealing with the consequences of capitalism’s effects on the climate — and the decades its most powerful adherents have spent stifling action to curb them. At a moment when we should be throwing everything we have into ensuring the planet remains habitable, billionaires are treating us to a spectacle to distract us from their quest for continued capitalist accumulation and the disastrous effects it is already having. The Spectacle of Billionaires in Space Last May, we were treated to a similar display of billionaire space ambition. As people across the United States were marching in the streets after the murder of George Floyd and the government was doing little to stop COVID-19 from sweeping the country, Elon Musk and President Donald Trump met in Florida to celebrate SpaceX’s first time launching astronauts to the International Space Station. As regular people were fighting for their lives, it felt like the elite were living in a completely separate world and had no qualms about showing it. They didn’t have to make it to another planet. Over the past few years, as the billionaire space race has escalated, the public has become increasingly familiar with its grand visions for our future. SpaceX’s Elon Musk wants us to colonize Mars and claims the mission of his space company is to lay the infrastructure to do just that. He wants humanity to be a “multiplanetary” species, and he claims a Martian colony would be a backup plan in case Earth becomes uninhabitable. Meanwhile, Bezos doesn’t have much time for Mars colonization. Instead, he believes we should build large structures in Earth’s orbit where the human population can grow to a trillion people without further harming the planet’s environment. As we live out our lives in O’Neill cylinders, as they’re called, we’ll take occasional vacations down to the surface to experience the wonder of the world we once called home. Neither of these futures are appealing if you look past the billionaires’ rosy pitch decks. Life on Mars would be horrendous for hundreds of years, at least, and would likely kill many of the people who made the journey, while the technology for massive space colonies doesn’t exist and similarly won’t be feasible for a long time to come. So, what’s the point of promoting these futures in the face of an unprecedented threat to our species here on Earth? It’s to get the public on board for a new phase of capitalist accumulation whose benefits will be reaped by those billionaires. To be clear, that does not even mean anything as grand as asteroid mining. Rather, its form can be seen in the event last May: as Musk and even Trump continued to push the spectacle of Mars for the public, SpaceX was becoming not just a key player in a privatized space industry but also in enabling a military buildup through billions of dollars in government contracts. The grand visions, rocket launches, and spectacles of billionaires leaving the atmosphere are all cover for the real space economy.

**Capitalism causes unemployment, racism, and exploitation**

**Bonacich & Alimahomed-Wilson 11 – Edna Bonacich is Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Riverside. Jake Alimahomed-Wilson is Professor of Sociology at California State University, Long Beach (Edna & Jake, “Confronting Racism, Capitalism, and Ecological Degradation: Urban Farming and the Struggle for Social Justice in Black Los Angeles” Souls, Vol. 13, Issue 2,**<https://www-tandfonline-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/doi/full/10.1080/10999949.2011.574574>**) //gordon**

Humanity as a whole is faced with two major crises. First is the crisis of ecological degradation. In the words of John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, 3 there are “nine ‘planetary boundaries’ that are crucial to maintaining an earth-system environment in which humanity can exist safely.” Climate change is only one of them. They include such other items as ocean acidification and biodiversity loss. In some cases we have already crossed the boundary. For example, carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere now exceeds the tipping point where a catastrophic rise in sea level can be avoided. The ecological crisis is directly linked to capitalist economic development. Put simply, the argument is as follows: Capitalism depends on accumulation. It cannot tolerate a steady-state economy but requires continued economic growth. Growth inevitably hits against the limits of the earth's capacity, as a source of raw materials as well as a sink for the toxic by-products of increased economic activity. 4 The second crisis we **term the crisis of exclusion**. In Planet of Slums, Mike Davis points out that more than one billion people—almost one-sixth of the world's population—now live in urban slums. 5 Overlapping substantially with slum dwellers are the billion workers, representing one-third of the world's labor force, who were either unemployed or underemployed by the late 1990s. Most of them are in the Global South. Davis states: “There is no official scenario for the reincorporation of this vast mass of surplus labor into the mainstream of the world economy.” 6 **Accumulation normally occurs as a result of the exploitation of labor** in the formal sector. But a fundamental contradiction of capitalism is that continued accumulation inevitably results in “overaccumulation,” or an abundance of capital that cannot find sufficient investment opportunities. In 2008, global GDP was about $60 trillion, whereas global financial assets were valued at $167 trillion. These figures suggest that there was over $100 trillion in excess capital that had no productive economic activity in which to invest. The global recession of 2008 appears to represent a crisis of overaccumulation that resulted in the creation of ever more fanciful financial instruments to absorb the trillions of dollars that could not find profitable investments. David Harvey has developed **the concept of “accumulation by dispossession,” the current response to overaccumulation.** 7 One example of this type of accumulation is privatization, or the destruction of public resources (elimination of the commons) by private appropriation. In recent decades, **ecosystems all around the world have been plundered by transnational corporations**, including food and water resources, forest and timber, fisheries, and farming among other areas. This has led not only to an assault on biodiversity and ecological stability, but also to the destabilization of communities that directly rely on ecological resources, such as farming and fishing communities. Another example is the privatization of water, that is, transforming public water facilities into private, for-profit entities as occurred in Cochabamba, Bolivia, under the Bechtel Corporation's efforts to take ownership of the water supply of Bolivia's third-largest city. **Privatization provides new sources of capital accumulation, even as it drives people from an ability to sustain themselves.** This same logic has also contributed to processes that help to create the one billion people who are excluded from direct capitalist employment and are forced into scrabbling for a living by any means possible. Philip McMichael talks about “the casualties of progress,” including “those regarded as redundant and at odds with the values and history of capitalist modernity.” 8 He criticizes the World Bank's development model for global agriculture, which favors heavily subsidized corporate agriculture over smallholder peasant farming (comprising about 40 percent of humanity). The World Bank deems such subsistence agriculture inefficient, and in need of dismantling. The beneficiaries of such policies are the giant agribusiness corporations of the Global North. Meanwhile the new industrial jobs to which displaced peasants are supposed to move have proved to be mythical. For example, as a result of NAFTA, more than two million campesinos were displaced by cheap imports of U.S. corn and made “redundant.” 9 The result has been massive emigration, including, importantly, to Southern California. **The African American community of Los Angeles is another example of the crisis of exclusion**. A combination of capitalist neoliberal policies have led to the exclusion of far too many African Americans from access to decent jobs. The community has been devastated by deindustrialization and the loss of good union jobs in several industries, among them steelmaking, automobile manufacturing, and meat packing. Today, very few decent jobs are located in or near South Los Angeles, the area with the highest concentration of African Americans, and transportation to better job opportunities is notoriously poor in a sprawling city that was built around the automobile. 10 The Los Angeles black community has also been devastated by the intersecting social problems of crack cocaine, gangs, and high rates of incarceration (for African Americans are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of whites). 11 Couple this with a decaying public school system with a high dropout rate, and the problem of acquiring decent employment rises sharply. Many young African Americans, especially young men, simply cannot find work at all, as attested to by the focus group members who were quoted at the start of this essay. The much larger Latino population (44.6 percent of the 9,519,338 people residing in Los Angeles County in 2000, compared to 9.5 percent African American), much of which also resides in South Los Angeles, faces some of the same hardships. But employers seem to prefer Latino workers, especially new immigrants, over African Americans. 12 **Immigrants are seen as more desperate for work and more easily controlled**. The large undocumented population contributes to this racialized image, since undocumented people can be threatened with exposure and deportation if they speak up for their rights. In sum, **the same kind of exclusion from the capitalist labor force that is found in the Global South is also found among people of color in the United States**, and especially African Americans. The Los Angeles black community can be seen as an example of the Global South in the North.

**Profit motive makes equitable space exploration *impossible*-rejecting private appropriation enables socialization of space and its benefits**

**Marx 20**

(Paris Marx is a freelance writer, host of left-wing tech podcast Tech Won't Save Us, and editor of Radical Urbanist. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/06/spacex-elon-musk-jeff-bezos-capitalism>, 6-8)

The May 30 launch symbolized both Trump’s desire to project an image of revived American greatness and Musk’s need not only to bolster the myth that makes his wealth possible, but to set the foundations for a privatized space industry. The space billionaires — Musk and Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos foremost among them — **have little stake in the well-being of the majority of the population**. Their space visions are designed for wealthy people like themselves, with little mention of where the working class would fit in. They’ve built their wealth on **exploitation**, and their visions of the future are **little more than an extension of their present actions**. A History of Violence The business practices of Musk and Bezos are increasingly well known and have been on clear display during the pandemic. Musk tried to claim Tesla’s Fremont, California factory was “essential” until authorities forced him to close it; then he reopened it in defiance of health orders. As Tesla CEO, Musk has a long history of opposing the unionization of workers, presiding over a high rate of worker injuries (which the company tried to cover up), and even having a former worker hacked and harassed after he became a whistleblower. Meanwhile, Bezos has a similar history of abusing Amazon workers. Amazon’s warehouses are known for having higher injury rates than the industry average, the company has fought unionization, and the stories of the terrible conditions experienced by workers are legendary. During the pandemic, that has continued, with the company failing to enforce social distancing or provide adequate protective equipment until workers began walking out, refusing to be open about infection information, and firing workers who dared criticize the company, all while Bezos’s wealth has increased by more than $30 billion. But it goes beyond that, because **the worldviews** of these billionaires began to be formed long before they started the empires they currently lord over. Musk did not have a regular childhood, but rather a wealthy upbringing in apartheid South Africa. His father was an engineer and owned part of an emerald mine in Zambia, telling Business Insider, “We were very wealthy. We had so much money at times we couldn’t even close our safe.” In Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future, Ashlee Vance describes how Musk got money from his father when he was starting one of his original ventures. He also had a particular admiration for his grandfather, who moved to apartheid South Africa from Canada after rallying “against government interference in the lives of individuals.” Bezos has a not dissimilar story. His father was a well-off oil engineer in Cuba while Fulgencio Batista was in power. In Bit Tyrants, Rob Larson explains that Bezos’s father left the island after the Cuban Revolution and passed his libertarian views down to his son. Bezos’s parents invested nearly $250,000 in Amazon in 1995 as it was getting started. These **space barons made their billions through the exploitation of their workers and came from well-off backgrounds made possible from resource extraction**. When digging into their visions for a future in space, **it’s clear that they seek to extend these conditions into the cosmos, not challenge them in favor of space exploration for the benefit of all.**The Future They Want Musk and Bezos are the leading drivers of the modern push to **privatize and colonize space** through their respective companies, SpaceX and Blue Origin. Their visions differ slightly, with Musk preferring to colonize Mars, while Bezos has more interest in building space colonies in orbit. In 2016, Musk claimed he would begin sending rockets to Mars in 2018. That never happened, but it hasn’t ended his obsession. Musk is determined to make humans a multi-planetary species, framing our choice as either space colonization or the risk of extinction. Bezos says that Earth is the best planet in our solar system, but if we don’t colonize space we doom ourselves to “stasis and rationing.” **These framings serve the interests of these billionaires**, and make it seem like colonizing space is an **obvious and necessary choice** when it isn’t. It ignores their **personal culpability** and the role of the **capitalist system**they seek to reproduce in causing the problems they say we need to flee in the first place. Billionaires have a much greater carbon footprint than ordinary people, with Musk flying his private jet all around the world as he claims to be an environmental champion. Amazon, meanwhile, is courting oil and gas companies with cloud services to make their business more efficient, and Tesla is selling a false vision of sustainability that purposely serves people like Musk, all while capitalism continues to drive the climate system toward the cliff edge. **Colonizing space will not save us from billionaire-fueled climate dystopia.**But these billionaires do not hide who would be served by their futures. Musk has given many figures for the cost of a ticket to Mars, but they’re never cheap. He told Vance the tickets would cost $500,000 to $1 million, a price at which he thinks “it’s highly likely that there will be a self-sustaining Martian colony.” However, the workers for such a colony clearly won’t be able to buy their own way. Rather, Musk tweeted a plan for **Martian indentured servitude** where workers would take on loans to pay for their tickets and pay them off later because “There will be a lot of jobs on Mars!” Bezos is even more open about how the workforce will have to expand to serve his vision, but has little to say about what they’ll be doing. His plan to maintain economic “growth and dynamism” requires the human population to grow to a trillion people. He claims this would create “a thousand Mozarts and a thousand Einsteins” who would live in space colonies that are supposed to house a million people each, with the surface of Earth being mainly for tourism. Meanwhile, industrial and mining work would move into orbit so as not to pollute the planet, and while he doesn’t explicitly acknowledge it, it’s likely that’s where you’ll find many of those trillion workers toiling for their space overlord and his descendants. Space Shouldn’t Serve Capitalists In 1978, Murray Bookchin skewered a certain brand of futurism that sought to “extend the present into the future” and desired “multinational corporations to become multi-cosmic corporations.” Much of this future thinking obsesses about **possible changes to technology**, but seeks to preserve the existing social and economic relations — “the present as it exists today, projected, one hundred years from now,” as Bookchin put it. **That’s at the core of the space billionaires’ vision for the future.**Space has been used by past US presidents to bolster American power and influence, but it was largely accepted that **capitalism ended at the edge of the atmosphere.** That’s no longer the case, and just as past capitalist expansions have come at the expense of poor and working people to enrich a small elite, so too will this one. Bezos and Trump may have a public feud, but that doesn’t mean that their mutual interest isn’t served by a renewed US push into space that funnels massive public funds into private pockets and seeks **to open celestial bodies to capitalist resource extraction**. **This is not to say that we need to halt space exploration**. The collective interest of humanity is served by learning more about the solar system and the universe beyond, but the goal of such missions must be driven by gaining scientific knowledge and enhancing global cooperation, **not nationalism and profit-making.**Yet that’s exactly what the space billionaires and American authoritarians have found common cause in, with Trump declaring that “a new age of American ambition has now begun” at a NASA press briefing just hours before cities across the country were placed under curfew last week. Before space can be explored in a way that benefits all of humankind, **existing social relations must be transformed, not extended into the stars as part of a new colonial project**.

**Contention 2: A New Hope**

**Thus we defend the resolution: The appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust**

**There is no such thing as “space philanthropy”- private actors are interested in self promotion, not saving humanity. Their efforts directly gut government programs to allow market capture**

**Riederer 18**

(RACHEL <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/07/space-barons-review-elon-musk-bezos-thai-cave>, 7-19)

Bracketed for gendered language

**It is impossible for any reader living through the ravages of global warming to scan these sentiments without skepticism**. If someone is going to invest enormous amounts of wealth and time in an engineering project, gathering together some of the smartest scientists on the planet to develop and test creative solutions to an intractable problem, **in the interest of saving the future of humanity, how could you choose any focus but climate change**? Davenport doesn’t ask, taking at face value the space barons’ declarations that they are motivated by planetary rescue. For those interested in the movement to privatize space exploration and space itself, The Space Barons does serve as a useful primer, laying out the timelines and geneses of these companies. But it stops short of posing critical questions about what it means for such enterprises to be **privately held** — a line of questioning that, given the history of labor problems and tendencies toward monopolization at the barons’ non-space companies Amazon and Tesla, might be **very good questions to ask indeed.**It instead leans heavily on colorful anecdotes about the companies’ founders and their philosophies. Bezos, obsessed with the accomplishments of NASA ever since he watched the moon landing at the age of five, commissions an underwater search party to recover the Apollo-era Saturn V rocket engines from the floor of the Atlantic. Branson evangelizes about the “life-changing” effects of experiencing space and trains for spaceflight in a spinning centrifuge, declaring the adventure “rather fun.” A young Musk floats an idea for a Martian greenhouse project straight out of the sci-fi of Kim Stanley Robinson, “a P.T. Barnum-like stunt” in which he would launch a greenhouse full of seeds and growing medium onto the surface of Mars and make the red planet bloom. A more seasoned Musk sues the US Air Force for the right to compete for national-security launches alongside established aerospace contractors like Boeing and Lockheed Martin. Running through all of these engineering and business adventures is the rivalry between Bezos and Musk. Both are working toward the same goal: developing and producing rockets that can be reused on multiple flights, making regular spaceflight more efficient. When SpaceX successfully launched — and then re-landed — the Falcon 9 for the first time, in December of 2015, Musk was ecstatic. Until he saw a tweet from Bezos offering his congratulations and saying “Welcome to the club!” Bezos had done the same, with his rocket, the New Shepard, the month before. Musk took the success of the Falcon 9 as validation of his long-term goals. “It really quite dramatically improves my confidence that a city on Mars is possible,” he said. “That’s what this is all about.” Well, it’s part of what this is all about. **The desire to be beloved, to be seen as a great visionary rescuer**, is what’s so grating about Musk’s recent public announcements of altruism, and it’s present throughout the history of all of the companies profiled in The Space Barons. In addition to amassing billions of dollars in personal wealth and living out their rocket-launching boyhood dreams, the space barons insist on framing their pursuits as **inspirational and civic-minded**. The tension in the recent dust-up over Musk’s unused Thai-cave rescue pods isn’t about whether Musk and his engineers created the rescue pods, but why. Was it a good-faith effort to help a group of desperate kids, or a megalomaniacal attempt to place himself and his companies at the center of a giant news story? Musk wants the answer to be simple, defending his behavior by insisting that “something’s messed up if this is not a good thing.” **The space barons are fond of metaphors of exploration and frontiers**. They compare themselves to Shackleton and Magellan. “The thing that actually gets me the most excited about it,” Musk says, “is that I just think it’s the grandest adventure I could possibly imagine. It’s the most exciting thing — I couldn’t think of anything more exciting, more fun, more inspiring than to have a base on Mars.” This enthusiasm is fine, of course. **But it also shatters the notion that Musk and company are trying to thrust humanity into space to save us all from planetary disaster**. Outer space, a flooded network of caves — anywhere dangerous and sparsely visited will draw to it both adventurers and rescuers. But their work proceeds differently, and someone who’s out for a grand adventure shouldn’t **pretend to be a planetary EMT.** Perhaps the worst thing about the space barons is that they’re burnishing their reputation by rushing into areas **vacated by state divestment** — divestment that in many cases, **they themselves have helped promote**. Witness Musk’s recent pledge to “fund fixing the water in any house in Flint that has water contamination” **while lavishly contributing to the Republican Party**. Musk and his brethren have hoovered up billions of dollars, funded plutocratic causes — and then balk when anyone raises a peep about their narcissistic antics. “They were driven by the business opportunities in space, by adventure, and by ego,” Davenport writes of the group he profiles. “[I]magine the Promethean legacies they’d leave after opening up the Final Frontier.” Yet **Promethean legacy is a double-edge sword**: the trickster who stole fire from the gods and gave it to [hu]mankind is as much a symbol of tragic consequences as of human progress.

**Private space can’t solve earth problems- it requires inequality**

**Marx 19**

(Paris Marx is a freelance writer, host of left-wing tech podcast Tech Won't Save Us, and editor of Radical Urbanist. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/12/jeff-bezos-the-expanse-space-fantasy-sci-fi-syfy>, 12-14)

It’s worth wondering what Jeff Bezos thinks about the plight of Belters, but it’s likely he pays them little mind. His vision of space colonization makes no mention of the working class, placing far more emphasis on the lives well-off residents will be able to lead and the small percentage of people who will be lauded as geniuses. That blind spot echoes how Bezos treats the Amazon workers who are responsible for his great wealth, leaving them to toil in warehouses where they’re constantly monitored, afraid to take bathroom breaks, get injured at rates more than twice the industry average, and have to suffer through high temperatures needed so the robots keep working (the robots, the workers are told, do not function well in cooler temperatures). Bezos may well believe the Belters are in their rightful place and not think much more about it, but that’s not the only way The Expanse demonstrates how regular people could **suffer in a capitalist space future.** Sacrificing People for Power Just as Bezos has little consideration for Amazon warehouse workers, the powerful in The Expanse have a similar disinterest in the plight of common people. That’s demonstrated both by senior members of government and one of the richest men in the solar system, the show’s very own Bezos. Back on Earth, the UN of The Expanse has failed to maintain an economy, to use Bezos’s words, of “dynamism and growth” despite colonizing the solar system. UN deputy undersecretary Chrisjen Avasarala explains that the government is unable to provide enough opportunities for its residents, so while some of them work, many survive on a welfare payment called Basic Assistance. It’s similar to the basic income that Silicon Valley titans have called for in response to the threat of automation, but when the show leaves the UN’s halls of power to give viewers a rare glimpse of the streets of Earth, it’s clear that’s not working out as promised. When one of the main characters escapes the Martian embassy, she meets a group of people who live in shanties near the sewers despite receiving the payment. One of the men explains the difficulty of their lives: being denied medication from clinics, children exposed to radiation from nearby factories, drinking sewer water in the summers, and applying for vocational training at seventeen years old and still waiting at fifty-two because there are so few spots. A small cash payment doesn’t make up for the lack of education and employment, and there’s a later allusion to a class of undocumented people on Earth who aren’t even eligible for Basic. While the high-ranking figures of the UN are portrayed as being aloof from the suffering of the have-nots, wealthy industrialist Jules-Pierre Mao sees them as having no humanity whatsoever. It’s hard to imagine that Bezos doesn’t feel some connection to a character like Mao, who owns a massive conglomerate that secretly built its own stealth ships and is willing to sacrifice as many lives as it takes to control the “protomolecule” alien life-form. Mao believes the proto-molecule could be used as a weapon but also hopes it could be merged with humans to create a higher form of life. Bezos has no problem squeezing the last bit of labor from Amazon workers, then casting them aside when they’re spent, but Mao’s dehumanization of people below him goes much further. He infects a station of 1.5 million people and uses Belter children as live test subjects, all of whom die as a result of his experiments. At one point, Mao states, “our actions affect the lives of millions . . . billions . . . entire planets . . . in ways that few people can comprehend,” but he doesn’t feel a responsibility to those billions of people. Rather, he develops a god complex that leads him to feel that he alone can move humanity forward, not so different from the ideologies of billionaires like Bezos and Musk. Don’t Let Billionaires Chart the Future While Bezos and Musk might have deluded themselves into believing that space colonization will be our salvation, The Expanse suffers no such delusions. It gives us **a much more realistic glimpse** of what space colonization driven by capitalism might look like: **a terrible deal for anyone who isn’t enormously wealthy** or in a high-ranking position in government or the military. Most of us would still be under the boot of those in power, as the Belters find themselves, or cast off to survive on a poverty stipend. Just as workers in the present have to fight against colonial powers and abusive bosses, so do Belters. The OPA isn’t always populated with the most ethical people, but over the course of the first three seasons, it grows from being a disorganized advocacy group to a quasi-government with a ship fighting alongside the navies of Earth and Mars. It’s the most inspiring development of the series, and the fourth season seems poised to delve further into what it actually means for Belters to have power. Will they live up to the Belter proverb that states, “the more you share, the more your bowl will be plentiful”; will their newfound power corrupt their stated egalitarian values; or will that story line be cast off if the show’s new billionaire benefactor doesn’t care so much about Belters? While it might bewilder us that Bezos would ever swoop in to save a TV show as honest about class conflict as The Expanse, it could be that we’re just overthinking it. It’s likely he sees it as little more than part of a PR campaign to get people to buy into his ambition to profit from the resource wealth of asteroids and other space rocks. And while the show doesn’t shy away from depicting the viciousness of capitalism in space, for Bezos, it might be much simpler than that — any vision of capitalism dominating us even as we spread out through the galaxy is a vision, as far as he’s concerned, worth promoting. **Billionaires will never promote a future that breaks with capitalism because that would challenge their own positions of power and privilege** right here in the present. And while dreams of space can entice the imagination, our future — at least in the near term — **doesn’t lie among the asteroids**. Our future is here on Earth, building a society where ordinary people are **put before the rich and powerful.**

#### 4. No turns- space billionaires aren’t unique geniuses, they are accidents of history. Allowing them to control space guarantees the worst aspects of exploitative capitalism take over the galaxy

Spencer 19

(Keith A., Senior Editor, https://www.salon.com/2019/07/28/earths-robber-barons-are-salivating-over-bringing-authoritarian-capitalism-to-space/)

If the Nazis were to follow imperialism to the next logical step, and establish human colonies on other worlds — asteroids, moons, space stations, or on planets like Mars — a social and political system rooted in oppression, hierarchy and racial superiority would spread, like an infection, to other distant bodies where they would be far more difficult to extract. Part of that is due to an intractable communication problem: even between the most distant regions of Earth, the speed of light is not a noticeable constraint on the amount of time it takes to communicate. The same is not true in space. Authoritarians, of both the Nazi and the corporate variety, are not necessarily fond of free speech nor free communication; they are powerful tools for upsetting the social and political order. Even here in the United States, supposed bastion of liberal democracy, we've seen this play out before. In 2011, the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) public transit system suppressed communications networks in order to stifle dissent. As protests over the BART police shooting of Charles Blair Hill spread around the Bay Area, the regional transit system literally turned off the underground cell phone towers that would allow cell and data transmission while underground. The agency, unwisely, openly admitted it: "Organizers planning to disrupt BART service stated they would use mobile devices to coordinate their disruptive activities and communicate about the location and number of BART Police," the transit agency said. "A civil disturbance during commute times at busy downtown San Francisco stations could lead to platform overcrowding and unsafe conditions for BART customers, employees and demonstrators." The American Civil Liberties Union issued a harsh rebuke, and questioned whether the move was even legal for a government agency to do this. "All over the world, people are using mobile devices to protest oppressive regimes, and governments are shutting down cell phone towers and the Internet to stop them," said Michael Risher, a staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California. "It's outrageous that in San Francisco, BART is doing the same thing." If this is how an American governmental agency behaves when confronted with the prospect of a legitimate peaceful protest, imagine how pro-Martian colonizer Elon Musk — who notoriously detests labor — will behave when his Martian dishwashers strike for higher wages. My point is, if you think that social and political struggles are difficult on Earth, where oxygen is free and the outside is traversable without an airtight suit, just wait until you see what happens when you bring humans to Mars — a planet where round-trip communication with Earth takes forty minutes at a minimum, and nighttime surface temperatures vary between -100 and -195° Fahrenheit. On our capitalist planet, there are no workers whose employers can threaten to leave them stranded, 80 million miles from home, if they don't do their bidding. On Mars, a disgruntled worker's employer could compel them to work by threatening to ever let them go home to Earth again. The potential for slavery on the red planet cannot be underestimated. Historically, the worst capitalist labor abuses on Earth happen to the most powerless workers in situations where no one is looking. Horrific tales of sexual harassment in Antarctica made sense inasmuch as its barrenness makes it an ideal place to be manipulative without anyone noticing. Mines, given their remote nature, are often rife with exploitation — and the history of miner treatment should give us pause as to how workers on Mars or on one of Jeff Bezos's space stations might be treated. This warning is prescient currently because of the intense focus of both government and private actors on the potential to privatize space travel. NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine wants to create a "robust commercial marketplace" for space travel, has proposed a public-private partnership for the moon, and has spoken of privatizing the international space station. Elon Musk, one of NASA's suppliers in the brave new privatized world, is perfervid about building a Mars colony. Jeff Bezos, the richest human in the world, plans to build giant space stations; his rationale for space colonization is that "we are in the process of destroying this planet," something he actually stated with no palpable sense of irony. There are many who adulate Musk and Bezos, and view them as our generation's heroes. Yet the fact that these men honestly believe they are the ones to lead humans to space has nothing to do with any of their unique qualifications; it is due to a series of historical accidents that randomly thrusts sociopaths to the top of the capitalist food chain. Five decades of deregulation, neoliberal economic policy, and reduced taxation on the highest tax bracket have led us to a unique point in human history, where a few individuals are so wealthy that they have the ability to fund space travel. Again, this is not because these individuals are uniquely competent, nor qualified, to jumpstart colonization; it is an accident of history and economics that makes this situation possible. Nothing more. My fear with space colonization is that humans tend to think of it as inherently different than other political struggles, merely because humans haven't gone to space yet. The idea of space colonization as a cool, fun, exciting, sci-fi thing inhibits our ability to think critically about what it would actually mean to let a bunch of tech CEOs unilaterally colonize the solar system. There are precedents for the political aftereffects of space colonization: we have seen situations where a controlling institution tries to stifle communication on their property to prevent protest; we have seen how workers are exploited in cordoned spaces where their employers think no one is paying attention; we have seen how corporations entrap workers in hostile environments by giving them housing and food, and using that as a wedge to prevent dissent; and we have seen how corporations harvest the labor of the poor and vulnerable in order to avoid paying first-world wages to people who expect benefits. All of these scenarios seem likely to play out in our future if we don't fight back against the space imperialists. If you thought capitalism on Earth was horrific, wait till you see what it looks like in a vacuum.