

**Buying into the Utopia:
Gateway Earth, the Future of Human Exploration of Outer Space and Me**

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In 2015 whilst attending a key Space Sector conference, my attention was drawn to a founding meeting of something called “Gateway Earth Development Group”, an initiative to propose new modular space access architecture, centred on operating a combined research space station and commercial space hotel in the geostationary orbit – the Gateway Earth complex.

At this location, robotic and crewed interplanetary spacecraft could be assembled, including in-situ (additive) manufactured components, and dock before they travel to, and return from, any Solar System destination. Moreover, it is proposed that space tourism would provide a significant part of the funding to build and maintain the complex. Various elements of this architecture are being developed independently by a range of different space firms and agencies, both internationally and in the UK. GEDG aim is to synthesize all these disparate actors and activities, and focus them on making the Gateway Earth concept possible in the mid-term future.

Intrigued and excited by this prospect I decided to immediately join this project and subsequently became one of the group’s four principal leads, with responsibility over policy.

This paper presents a participatory ethnographic account of my engagement with this group and points to some of its key elements. In particular, I will contrast business driven “new space” innovation (the subject of my doctoral research) with vision driven advocacy approach I experienced in GEDG, which though embracing new technologies, is relying more on the traditional innovation models and the existing Space Industry. Furthermore, this will be contextualised with other “citizen” “colonisation” projects, such as Lunar Mission One, Mars One and recent announcements from European Space Agency, SpaceX (Elon Musk) and others, including projects looking at asteroid mining such as Deep Space Industries.