

PREFACE

TERRESTRIAL OUTREACH

Living the Stardome on Earth

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A number of factors make *StarLight: A Common Heritage* a remarkable vision, a supra-worldview. In April 2007, individuals and representatives from diverse academic and operational fields, from hard and social sciences, and from government and nongovernmental agencies and institutions gathered in La Palma, Spain, to spark the *StarLight* “territory”: majestically domed under the skyscape, as seen from the earthscape.

StarLight is a farsighted terrestrial outreach: to unite the already impoverished earth with its relatively undisturbed heritage above, viewable dimly and superficially during the night.

Understanding this whole—the earthscape, the skyscape, and all that is encapsulated in between—is indeed an uplifting visionary mission, significantly overarching and surpassing the new Live Earth movement, whose concerns are mainly earthbound.

Humans’ earthly journeys through time are well documented. The terrestrial home-ground has been discovered, mapped, developed, used, and abused in many ways, with some actions having already gone too far, to even damage life in its many forms. In a nutshell, this longterm history includes accounts of developments, growths, and accomplishments, often at the cost of depletion of vast amounts of scarce resources and even destructions and annihilations. Too quickly the earth is “burning” itself up and off, with overproduction and untold conspicuous consumption, to feed the insatiable appetites of its peoples with glittering acts and beaming desires, and at the same time making all that lies above—sights, sounds, hopes—hardly discernible, let alone incorporated into our total lives, to constitute our common heritage.

It is this rapid consumptive obliteration (often in the name of development or progress) which in the last century gave birth to environmental movements in support of sustainable ecosystems and biodiversity, then to today’s disturbing Live Earth script, with its frightening predictions. La Palma’s *StarLight*, an “initiative designed as an international campaign in defense of the quality of the night skies ...” figuratively provided a launching “pad” for the whole, here on earth and above, with the contributions published in this volume more fully speaking to the many issues and prospects ahead.

It was the emerging menu of challenges and opportunities, as well as rights and obligations, relating to the conference which some three years ago led the architects of the *StarLight* program to consider subjects for inclusion in the program, ranging from the past expeditions and experiences on earth to penetrating views of skies. In La Palma,

common to most presentations was discussion of rapid depletion of resources, particularly energy, excavated resources, air and light pollution; and, more closely attuned to the *StarLight* nomenclature, problems variably termed by speakers as intruding light, obtrusive light, sky glow, negative light emissions, artificial illumination, and the like, and the possible repeat of these and more in space. Being cognizant that the future inherits genes of its past, an aim was to learn from what has been done down here (earthbound) and what can be achieved or inspired here for application up and out there (skyward). As such, the conference scope made and kept its parameters unbounded, with the sky as its limit.

Therefore, it was the augmenting and inviting *StarLight* theme itself that presented the conference participants with a rich *carte du jour* to choose from—many topics “obviously” related and some seemingly not—for deliberation. Artificial lights, ongoing explorations, and mappings of the skies are examples of the former and tourism a case for the latter, which may require elaboration here, to show its relation to *StarLight*.

With its rapid expansion since World War II, tourism, this largest peacetime movement of peoples in the history of mankind, has also become the largest industry and a giant socioeconomic force worldwide. Many of its pursuits have contributed not only to development and growth but also to some of the concerns aired by Live Earth and its alerting climate change message.

Tourism’s past and present practices have been inward-looking, seeing and experiencing from within. Its earthbound forms more closely connecting to *StarLight* include desert tourism (to “hear” stars in the “loud” silence of this still relatively pristine sky-domed environment) and seascape tourism (for a different astronomical show, this time accompanied with the music of the sea, enjoyed under the heavensdome), both effectively integrating nature—in its purity *and* vastness—to the starred universe: for humanity to discover, experience, and incorporate into our common heritage. Significantly, tourism, this age-old phenomenon, in its diverse forms covering ubiquitous earthbound activities of peoples away from their usual habitats, will soon be entering and frequenting space itself, and hence the *StarLight* vision includes this take-off.

Viewed in this fashion, tourism—both in theory and practice—actually becomes an important means connecting the two domains of earth and sky, allowing people to experience diversity and richness of life here and to literally touch the stars above, soon for *in-situ* space visits. Thus, tourism, this “frivolous” activity in the minds of some, is about to expand the boundaries and the very meaning of our “global village”—which we thought had been framed and mapped—to “universal village”. Further, where science had to step back because of diminishing public finance to advance its space programs, tourism with its private economic muscle will step in (as it already has, with some initial strides), to open the heavens’ door, obviously not for scientific purposes but for selling its new “space packages”. This industry has proven to be among the few to quickly recognize and act upon promising opportunities.

Tourism is just one example of topics discussed at the La Palma conference, with a majority of contributions dealing with actually more “obvious” subjects, presented by astrophysicists, observatory experts, ecologists, government agents, and other *StarLight* stakeholders. The synergy of this gathering of the obvious and less likely stakeholders

was extraordinary, with a rich mix of hard and social science debates unfolding and explaining a theme unprecedented in its own right.

In my capacity as Chair of the Scientific Committee of the *StarLight* conference, obviously the theme in its entirety demanded my attention. Because of my academic background (tourism anthropology), I took steps to invite integrative tourism contributions to the debate, asking members of the Scientific Committee to bring expertise from other academic and practical fields they were representing, a task which was facilitated by the innovative program already defined and framed by its chief architect Mr. Cipriano Marin and his team. This multiplicity of treatments—most appropriately delivered in the biosphere reserve of La Palma and some of which appear in this publication—reveal the richness of the *StarLight* theme, as encoded in its Declaration, also included in this volume.

As the proceedings argue, “the sky, our common and universal heritage” offers us the opportunity to use science and technology to understand and to act as guardians of the *StarLight* in its totality for the next generations, without attempting to tame or harness it for today’s wayward purposes. This calls for international actions to anchor the earth to its roof, in defense of quality and purity of earthscape, skydome, and what lies in between: our universe.

Attempts to achieve such goals require hard and social sciences joining forces (as was the case in La Palma) to espouse holistic paths, for informed strategies and purposeful efforts which may for now be termed cieloscopy and defined as the arts and sciences of terrestrial skies. Initial steps (and the *StarLight* conference was one) in this direction will include formation of international networks of all related fields, including the less apparent ones, for orchestrated actions, as well as creation of a *StarLight* Foundation for shedding light on and nurturing this visionary mission and its agenda.

The proposal of La Palma to declare March 21 (the equinoctial earth day) as the “International *StarLight* Night”—to be celebrated globally—would awaken public awareness to the urgency of meeting the goals of Live Earth and at the same time to lift off for grander designs integrating us all—our earthscape habitat (in its totality and integrity) and its skyscape (still politically undivided, with its untapped and untold promises)—into a shared vision, our common heritage, for now and for horizons away.