

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Space Culture: Innovative Approaches for Public Engagement in Space (8)

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THE VIEW FROM BELOW

Abstract

This paper will present the findings of a doctoral research thesis that builds a framework with which to account for space technology from perspectives outside of the space industry itself.

The cultural sector, or 'general public' is frequently inadequately accounted for from the perspective of the space industry. By approaching space technology 'from below' and from particularised and ambivalent perspectives, a richer sense of the social imaginaries of space technology can be gleaned.

The paper offers a critique that draws both on the experience of an artistic intervention into the mission of the Chandrayaan spacecraft to the Moon and on theoretical insights from subaltern studies. The artistic intervention involved mobility across physical spaces such as museums, space technology installations, scientific and educational institutions as well as social mobility into communities of science, art, learning and public engagement.

The research findings indicate that a dynamic field of interactions, interruptions, conjunctures and configurations are enacted across realms affected by spacefaring, but these are rarely accounted for or recognised from the perspective of the space industry community.

The workings of this dynamic cultural field, it is suggested, need to be held within a new kind of imaginary. That imaginary can be guided by the evidence produced in recent years through artist-led interventions. As a result of the pioneering work through art practice that has accessed a fuller and more visible sense of a rich and dynamic field of cultural uses of space technology, new topographies can be imagined that take account of otherwise elusive and undervalued connections that people make to spacefaring.

The papers offers a framework, guided by the visibility and performativity of cultural activities connected to space technology, to aid in the building of flexible imaginaries around what Space Culture could be.