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IMAGINING LUNAR DENIZENS: COLLABORATIVE CREATION OF A SPACE FUTURE

**Abstract**

50 years after the first moon landings, mid-20th century narratives of frontierism and progress, amongst others, continue shaping popular conceptions of outer space. With the return of humans to the moon through NASA's Artemis mission, the joint Chinese-Russian International Lunar Research Station, and ideas of a Moon Village spawned by the ESA as backdrop, it is necessary to examine what a human presence on the moon actually means beyond a spaceflight's engineering paradigm and a monocultural depiction of space futures.

Humanity's expansion to other celestial bodies prompts us to explore what Earthers' rules, habits, and practices we will carry with us. It is also an opportunity to reevaluate the relations we entertain with exploration, colonisation, the cosmos, and ultimately each other. How do we preserve or manufacture a sense of community? An ethic of mutualism? A sense of belonging? Will we inform a multicultural enclave? Or will we participate in the co-production of a new culture?

This paper describes Lunar Denizens — a three-part series of collective world-building exercises and design sprints focussed on imagining Mare Nectaris, a permanent moon dwelling, organised by the New School Policy and Design for Outer Space (NSPDOS), the Santa Fe Institute's InterPlanetary Project, and Very Very Far Away (VVFA) for the 17th Venice Architecture Biennale — and explores the ambitions, potentials, and importance of such events to provide insights and help us shape the culture informing our space futures.

Interplanetary success will require the mutual and dynamic interrelation of scientific and engineering expertise with human cultural and sociological factors. Using speculative thinking and fiction to help shape new understandings of the "real world", Lunar Denizens invited small and eclectic groups of scientists, artists, architects, and designers (and the enthusiastic audience) to imagine the arrival, the day to day, and departure from Mare Nectaris: What rituals? What routines and objects? What built environments? What paraphernalia? What social organisations do we imagine shaping the character of this fictional settlement?

The speculative nature of Lunar Denizens also generated opportunities to examine contemporary Earth-related issues at a different scale and with a different perspective, and shape new conversations with potential to create new insights on our contemporary condition; addressing our current attitudes and prejudices to propose alternatives anchored in a diverse reality.