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EXPLORING EXTRATERRESTRIAL GEOGRAPHIES THROUGH THE HISTORICAL LENS OF THE CARIBBEAN ARC: PARALLELS, IMPLICATIONS, AND PERSPECTIVES - MICHELE BOULOGNE, MARIE-LINE MOURIESSE BOULOGNE

Abstract

In this session we will address extra-terrestrial exploration through the lens of the history of exploration of the Caribbean arc from 1492 on. As a duo of artist and anthropologist coming from Martinique, we will present precise examples of resource-driven colonization, drawing parallels between historical pursuits of steel, gold, amber, copper, pearls, and Brazil wood with contemporary quests for gases, ores, and water in extraterrestrial environments. The study traces in which way the presence or absence of precious ore have impacted on the colonisation and development of the archipelagoes and territories.

This research takes a closer look, on Earth, at former mineral-rich land such as the gold mines from the island of Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic); and pearl fishing from Coche, Cubagua and Ojeda (today's Venezuelan islands). It opposes them to land with fewer exploitable asset, such as today's lesser Antilles, former "Islas Inútiles" (in Spanish, useless islands). In outer space, we will present the multi-faceted relationship we can have with extraterrestrial ore. Starting from meteorites, sample return missions to classification of precious and structural metals on asteroids.

The keynote aims to enlighten both general audiences and space industry professionals by offering visual examples and parallels between Earth geographies and Outer space territories.

Our primary goal is to inform the long-term impacts of resource-driven exploration on both Earth and outer space. How to continue the mapping and understanding of these regions while being critical on epistemologies of exploration? We will study how maps can challenge the notion of rarity and provoke critical discourse. Given the remoteness and vastness of outer space, we experiment a redefinition of scarcity within an astronomical context and unveil its capital roots. Space being accessible to only a few, this research dives into the role of visual representations of distant environments in informing our current challenges, thus making space exploration exempt of embodiment and dependent to visual history and reported narratives.

This research will be presented as a talk on March 14th at the Paris Leonardo/OALTS Laser Talk "Une autre planète." It is a continuity of Mining the Sky, The pursuit of finitude, part of the group show Cosmological Elements on show at the Shanghai Fosun fondation in 2022-23.