

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Sending out a Signal: Innovative Outreach and Communications Initiatives (7)

Author: Prof. Michèle Lavagna
Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Dr. Lola Ottolini
Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Dr. Davide Fabio Colaci
Politecnico di Milano, Italy

SPACE TO SPACE: AN EXHIBITION-EVENT TO TALK ABOUT SPACE SCIENCE

Abstract

Nowadays to connect the world of advanced scientific research to the wider world of a generalist public, but fascinated and curious to explore spheres of knowledge that were previously closed to most people, is increasingly crucial. The challenge of disseminating and raising awareness of complex issues and topics, such as those of Space science and tech, today relies on various communication channels and is moving towards temporary events, aimed at broad and differentiated targets. A privileged area of diffusion and approach to themes relating to Space is undoubtedly that of temporary exhibitions which are attempting to leave the strictly museum context, and colonize downtown open spaces, intrinsically interesting, to be discovered and reinvented to host temporary exhibitions. The key elements of the experiences we deal with are: the temporary nature, the possibility of being used by audiences of different ages, cultures and backgrounds, localization in new and unusual places, but of extraordinary interest, the ability to use a mix of expressive languages capable of communicating the message with different means and levels of depth. To exemplify this approach and line of research, the paper illustrates the case study of the exhibition-event “space to Space. For the Next Larger Context”, curated by a team of architects and Space engineers from Politecnico di Milano and held at the Last Laboratory (crash test) where crash tests are normally carried out on land and air transport vehicles and where exceptionally “space to Space” took place. The initiative reinterpreted the history, present and future of “cosmic space” as a metaphor for “terrestrial space” and organized a story capable of staging the mutual connections. The space race, from Sputnik to the next return to the Moon, has always pushed technology towards unimaginable limits, peppering the present with discoveries, inventions and problems (scientific but also philosophical) capable of radically modifying humans’ life on Earth: bringing the general public closer to the complexity of Space research through the tangible consequences that everyone can experience was the key through which the entire exhibition story was constructed. Installations, audio, video and performances proposed new perspectives capable of giving the general public an in-depth analysis of apparently distant cultural contexts, but strongly linked to life on planet Earth. The “space to Space” exhibition-event, visited by 2,500 people four days is interpreted as a successful pathfinder to bring the community more conscious of how largely Space intersects our lives.