

Manifest Destiny Event Summary

The event “Manifest Destiny: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Mars Colonization” took place in the Central campus of the University of Edinburgh from the 22nd to the 24th of February. The event was held over three separate days at a timing which insured that all members of both the general public as well as university student and staff had an opportunity to attend.

Each day of the event had a specific focus. The first day focused on life-sustaining systems and the impacts of long-term space habitation on human health. The second day focused on the engineering and architectural challenges that we face when trying to establish a Mars colony/settlement. The third and final day focused more on the social science aspects of colonization, mainly the potential sociopolitical structure and whether it is indeed ethical at all for humans to colonize other planets.

The list of speakers and panelists for each of the days is shown below:

Day One: Life sustaining systems and Impact on Human Health

Panelists/Speakers: Professor Charles Cockell, Corinna Hartinger, Dr. James Wang

Day Two: Engineering and Architectural Challenges

Panelists: Julian Xu, Matjaz Vidmar, Professor Patrick Harkness, So Hyun

Speakers: Matjaz Vidmar, Professor Patrick Harkness, So Hyun

Day Three: Sociopolitical Structure and Ethics

Panelists/Speakers: Mikaela Springfield, Maximillian Kriz, Dr. Tony Milligan

During the first two days, we decided to include an interactive component to the event to make sure that the participants felt that they also had an opportunity to contribute. On the first day, we held an audience-led discussion of the different challenges we face with respect to keeping people alive on Mars. On the second day, we gave the students markers and an A2 sheet of paper and gave them free reign to draw their concept of what a Mars colony should look like.

There was an average of fifty people attend each of the days and the attendees were by vast majority students but also included members of the general public as well as University of Edinburgh staff.