

Space Polities

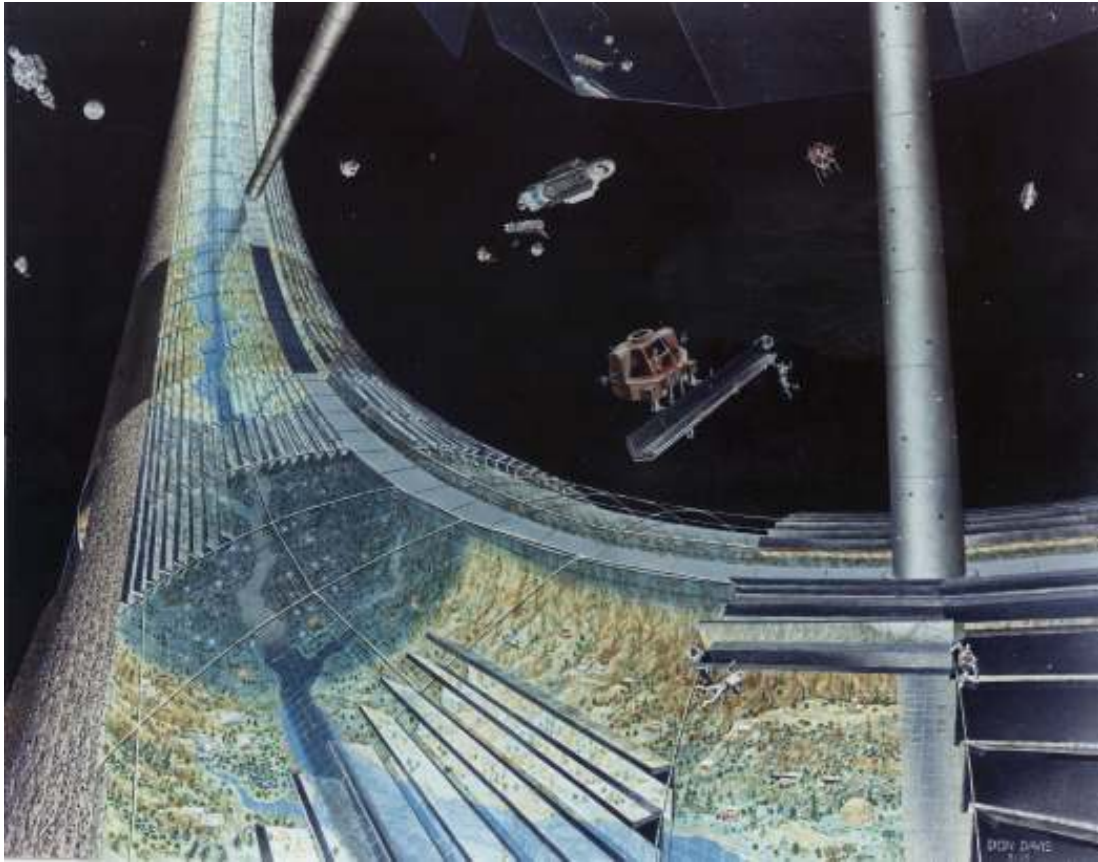


Figure 1: Toroid habitat (Don Davis)

*Standing on the hull I feel vertigo. The world is *inside out*. The vast emptiness around me makes no sense; it is like a nonphot virtual, deliberately alien from everyday life. Intellectually I of course understand what I see - the line of shining habitats extending towards apparent infinity, the solar corona around the black spot of eye-protection screening in my helmet, even the Earth "above" me.*

*Earth adds to the unreality. Brightly white, blue, tan and green it looks more like an icon than a real object. I know it is a place, but it looks like a symbol. I honestly wonder of anybody can live there. In space we *make* the places we live. There they just find somewhere and try to adapt to it. It seems so... dehumanizing.*

About half of the population in space lives in orbital habitats around Earth or the Moon. The main "population centers" are Earth geostationary orbit (GEO) and lunar orbit, with subpopulations in low earth orbit (LEO), at the Lagrange points (L4 and L5) and two habitats at Mars.

There are important economic and biopolitical differences between the habitats around Earth ("Earthside") and the moon ("Lunaside"). Earthside is affected by the informational presence of the Dragons and often accepts high levels of neogenetic activity within their habitats. Lunaside is

free from the Dragon influence and willing to use advanced information technology to power hard nanotechnology, robotics and syntronics.

LEO

Heaven Station

The first long-term space station. Formally registered to the Dominican Republic. Originally the spaceside seat of Phoenix Space Development, now formal home of OTA. It has been refurbished and improved several times, but still remains quaintly old-fashioned. Physical OTA meetings are held on the station, but the Spartan surroundings tend to keep them short.



Figure 2: Gagaringrad farming torus (Kolkhoz Inc.), a major supplier of traditional luxury foodstuff in LEO.

Gagaringrad

Habitat owned by the Baikonur Republic. A major transit point and PSD factory cluster.

Galatea

Transport hub habitat. The real “capital” of LEO at present.

Sun King

Energy satellite construction and maintenance.

Propensity

Transport station, center for OTA LEO rescue and repair services.

Rantaseppa

Formerly Japanese transit station, currently home several orbital cleaning, peace monitoring and communications companies.

Pacifica

Once a major transit point for US émigrés. Today it is a quiet habitat with strong American and Australian flair. Formally owned by Pacifica Space Systems in California.

Eureka

The main Australian transit habitat. It was extended with two extra modules, *Darwin* and *Cook*, in 2088, and is now the largest habitat in LEO. Eurekaans are famously competitive with the inhabitants of *Galatea*.

The Omega Archipelago

Archipelago of research and development habitats run by the Nekono group in LEO. Advanced nanotech, biotech, AI and space engineering. After the Spamocalypse the archipelago was partially relocated to Lunar orbit.

GEO

The encounter suit felt heavy and confining like a spacesuit despite being made of the latest artificial polymers. I recalled the horror stories father had told us about his rumspringa – he had actually once used a real space suit for over two days when he needed to visit a particularly infested habitat. I checked my suit with the same methodicalness I would have checked a spacesuit. A leak would not be deadly, but it would risk exile.

As the door lemniscated open the air of another world washed over me. My suit tried to translate the outside sensations: the dry, Mediterranean warm air with a hint of concrete and sage caressed my skin. Of course, that could be a complete fabrication of the suit or the habitat presentation system. The real air could have smelled of sewers or orchids, and I would not have noticed. As long as I did not come into contact with the unsecured biosphere I was fine.

Something that I did trust was the almost palpable sense of money. From my entry point at a high level terrace I could see sparse arcologies dotting the landscape. The sheer waste of space told me much more about who lived here and what they were than any online research.

Shen Kuo

Internationalist habitat with an asian bias. Known for its astronomical activity: the IAU has used it as physical meeting place and engineering testbed for the last 50 years. In constellation with the smaller habitats *Guo Shoujing*, *Quantum* and *Bellatrix*.

Luch

Baikonur registred laser propulsion array. The linked habitat is small, cramped and humorously infamous for its horrible conditions after the very successful 2074 comedy interactivity *Where the sun does shine*.

Disco Volante



Figure 3: Arcology mall in Disco Volante (MVRDV)

The largest habitat in GEO. An internationalist, neogenetic habitat with very open borders. It is the formal seat of the very influential Disco Volante Red network/cluster of foundations, corporations and research groups. Inhabitants are often heavily enhanced. In constellation with the laser propulsion arrays *Lixia* and *Victoria* as well as an entourage of smaller workshacks.

Gauss & Planck

Habitat pair owned by the GABE Credit Union and Blue Panther LivingSpace, flagged in Germany. Both companies have heavy German and internationalist contacts.



La Maîtresse

France's major space holding, a habitat in geosynchronous orbit keeping it above Europe all time.

L'Attitude

Sister habitat of *La Maîtresse*.

Lichtblick

The German geosynchronous habitat.

Nadezhda & Vyšehrad

General-purpose habitats originally constructed by a European consortium.

Rebis

Formally belongs to Nauru. Formally headquarters for Nekonospace. In practice merely a convenient address for a number of internationalist corporate networks. Inhabited mainly by lawyers, diplomats and biotech auditors.

Nivialis

Internationalist habitat registered on Sao Tome. One of the first orbital nature preserves. In constellation with *Rebis*.

Daedalos

Double habitat registered in the Dominican Republic. Headquarters of Phoenix Space Development. In constellation with *Kosinar*, a major laser propulsion array, and *New Hong Kong*, an internationalist habitat aiming to become a new transit hub

.

Lunar orbit

Kusanagi & Yamato

Major Japanese habitat pair and defense installation.

Akwizgran Discrepancy

Moresnet

Repubblica di Cospaia Nova

Irk

Russell's Wineryard

Internationalist habitats forming "Utopia Constellation", a dense constellation of habitats and manufacturing. It also includes the *Kayla* power and propulsion array.

Da Vinci

Old Phoenix Space Development habitat. In constellation with *Madhav & Sushruta*, a pair of biotech-oriented habitats built by *Astrologistics*. Da Vinci was originally industrially oriented but has switched to service, finance, insurance and healthcare. PSD still maintains a sizeable headquarter starscraper surrounded by a park here, but most of it is rented to various insurance companies and metareviewing firms. The whole constellation is sometimes called the "hospital cluster" for its emphasis on biotech, health and body modification.

Da Vinci replaced *Inanna*, the first major habitat in Lunar Orbit. Inanna still remains in constellation, but has been largely stripped and mothballed. Various rumors surround the old habitat, ranging from that it is used for pagan human sacrifices by the decadent PSD executives to that it houses the corporate war-fleet.

Xu Guangqi Agricultural Station

One of the major food production habitats in orbit. Exports nutrients and foodstuff to other lunaside habitats.

Ecce, Covenant, People Get Ready & Exoduster

Heartland habitat constellation.

New Kansas

The Heartland "capital". In constellation with *New Texas, Deseret* and *New Ohio*.

Solange

Originally Kore, PSDs first large-scale habitat. After a major ecological crash and emigration wave 2056-58 it was successfully rebranded as *Solange*. In fact, many people do not recognize that the habitats are the same. Located next to the *Zvezdnyy* laser propulsion station.

Ryusei Maru

Suisei Maru

Cyclers used during the Japanese migration. Today the two main liners between Earthside and Lunaside. Since so many people have migrated to a new life in them, they have reached a high cultural status.

Tenma Station

Japanese transit station. Once used for the massive migration, then left largely empty.

Akari

Japanese reflector station.

Outrageous

Located in a very low orbit, *Outrageous* boasts a spectacular view of the lunar landscape speeding past underneath. On average 20 km above the surface in a frozen orbit with 86 degree inclination, it moves 1.7 km/s. An exclusive entertainment and sports habitat, visited only by people with enough money to pay the hefty transport fees.

Koinonia

RE +1

CO +1

IC: -4

EX +2

UA: 0

SR -1

Koinonia was built by the RADE Group, a subsidiary of Phoenix Space development. It was intended as home for American refugees, but also became the headquarters of a few internationalist companies such as Pregon, Lytech and Dynanite.

Koinonia is run as a company state with the RADE habitat management acting as the government. Over time many of the values and ideas of RADE have become standards of the society, largely a result of the tireless efforts of Daniel Evans, the RADE memetics director. The effect has been an unusual hybrid of conservative Christianity and corporativism. RADE (and often subcontractors) run the legal system according to bland ethical principles, but the social pressures are strong and religious.

Children are usually enhanced genetically. The inhabitants do not rear children themselves, but rather make use of "optimal upbringing" crèches sponsored by the local churches and RADE. The society is quite equal gender-wise, but a competitive attitude ("good old-fashioned American spirit") is encouraged and young people are rewarded based on individual achievement and competence.

While the habitat is formally non-denominational and has freedom of thought, in practice society frowns very strongly on any impiety. While several churches exist going beyond their teachings tends to bring social sanctions. People that do not fit in are politely but firmly told to emigrate. The inhabitants are not by any means excessively devout but regard the rituals and community of the congregations as essential and healthy for their society. There is a strong emphasis on dependability, industriousness and wholesomeness contrasted to the reputed nihilism and

stagnation of the outside world. The past disasters have promoted a sense of self-reliance and saving for the future.

Koinonia produces elegant and solemn art, much of it earnest religious motifs. While the white bread evangelical society might appear limited to outsiders there is plenty of comedy (but just about suitable subjects). Many inhabitants participate in the numerous tournaments in games of skill like darts, low-gravity polo, Coriolis boules or virtual sacktens.

Illegalization: The government or market has banned a common feature of the economic system (such as inflation or private property). This leads to a situation where the official economy diverges from the real economy (SR: -1).

High Vegas

COL 0
SR: +2
UA: -1
EX: +2
LO: +1
PD: +2
RE: +1
IC: IC: +2

High Vegas is all about pleasure and entertainment. The main habitat is the original Vegas squared: glitzy casinos, outrageous architectures, any kind of entertainment or hospitality imaginable. In nearby habitats various leisure activities from “wilderness trips” to tropical holidays are possible. The whole constellation is a major nexus in the hospitality industry. People might play and enjoy online, but many want the unique experience of being there in the flesh. High Vegas aims at satisfying the most different customers, including the tricky business of allowing people from different ecosystems to interact safely.

High Vegas was built for Americans, and it still covers itself with americana and proudly boasts of its Americanness. In practice it is a syndicracy: everything is run by the High Vegas Consortium. The HVC nominally follows Nevadan law, but as owners of the “vehicle” High Vegas they have plenty of freedom to make up their own corporate rules. The legal system is pragmatic and “the house always wins” – few conflicts with the HVC are winnable. Law enforcement and punishment is contracted out to various security firms. On one hand it is strict: illegal activities are detected using state-of-the-art surveillance and stopped. On the other hand the banned areas are narrow: plenty of activities are legal. What is the point of an orbiting city of sin if people can’t sin safely?

The only organisation that can be said to be truly independent is the High Vegas Gambling Commission. The HVGC keeps track of what is going on inside gambling establishments using ubiquitous surveillance. It ensures that everything is above board, maximizing profits for HVC. This includes keeping track of enhanced visitors, discovering new cheating methods and preventing money laundering.

The profit of *High Vegas* is divided by the members of HVC depending on share; currently the biggest share is owned by Flare International Casinos Inc. HVC was founded by a group of Nevada casinos and corporations funding the original *High Vegas* habitat; this included the Phoenix Space Development group. According to a very popular myth the whole habitat was due to a gambling debt of one of the PSD astronauts, who after having wasted his pay on a very wild night made a bet with one of the mob bosses of Las Vegas that he could get the city into space. It is clear that he won it. The founders were crooks, but smart and long-term oriented crooks.

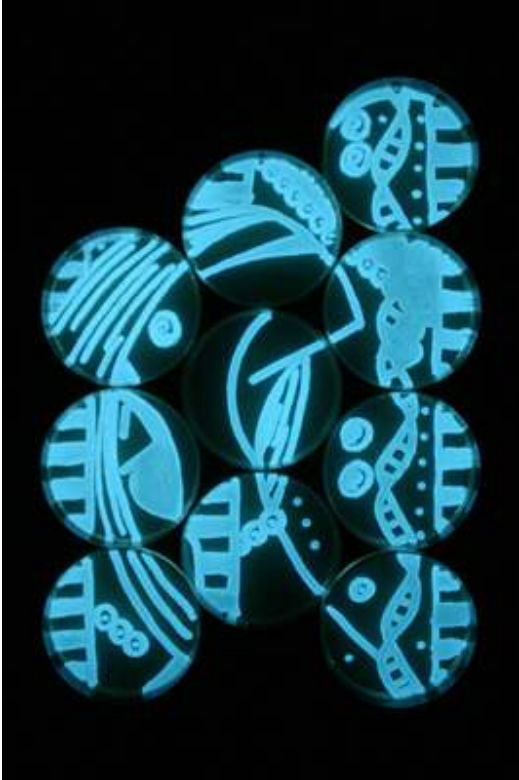


Figure 4: "Her own DNA" (Hunter O'Reilly)

It is an individualistic society with a strong emphasis on ambition. Being a mere follower and not making something of one's life (however weird) is looked down on: people are supposed to become something. But this does not mean people are supposed to be selfish: like most orbital societies people have realized their dependence on each other and the need to work together. At the lowest level this might mean entrepreneurship or trying to shine by making one's company successful. Big ambitions are aimed outward: *High Vegas* and its associated corporations pursue a very ambitious and aggressive strategy of expansion.

The underworld is limited. The old Vegas Mob to a large degree ended up folded into the *High Vegas* government. It might be acting legally now, but that is because it gets to set the rules. Doing anything criminal against the HVC or its allies is suicidal. However, the HVC is not too interested in helping other habitats hunt down their criminals or criminal networks. Hence many syndicates have established safe headquarters in *High Vegas* – adding to the desired ambience of not-quite-legal fun, profiting the HVC.



Figure 5: (Levi van Vleuw, Light)

While marriage rules are notoriously broad (marriages are contracts, and may be between any set of consenting mammals), most inhabitants live in fairly standard and stable nuclear families. Gardening in the small quiet private gardens forms a welcome break from the dazzle of the main habitat. There is a surprising number of religious sects and wisdom schools among the locals, often quite different from the megachapels dotting the main habitat.

High Vegas has originated a peculiar form of neurosophy, the Fortuna Complex. While gamblers everywhere have tried to find the patterns in games and ways of accumulating luck, some took it to another level by setting out to breed lucky neural networks. The networks are subjected to selection based on their “precognitive” or “lucky” abilities; the best ones are then implanted into customers. People “enhanced” by the Fortuna Complex often have strange compulsions to do certain random things; they claim they are following “the flow of fortune” using their pattern recognition senses. While the FC users are allowed into casinos (which they wouldn’t be if the HVGC could detect *any* kind of benefit using their massive data mining capabilities) there are widespread rumors that FC users do seem to lead strangely charmed lives...

High Vegas/HVC is ultra-internationalist politically. It does not recognize national sovereignty beyond the bare minimum, it does not accept outside interference and it collaborates only with other habitats and organizations it chooses.

Ralston Raconteur II



Figure 6: Office in the Ralston Dynamics starscraper, Toledo Hill seafront (Mondolithic Studios)

Habitat owned by Ralston Dynamics Llc. Originally flagged to Fiji, but after the breakdown of civil authority in 2050 RR II declared itself independent, and has been recognized by a number of polities (largely thanks to Cambridge lobbying). Ralston Dynamics in turn was originally registered in Venezuela, but nowadays it has merged with the state of RR II.

Jonathan Ralston is a British-born industrialist who built an empire in the transport business. He bought the habitat to get a foothold in space during the mid-century crisis, and successfully expanded his business to space transport and equipment. He owns a controlling interest in everything and was the de-facto autocrat of the habitat until his health began to fail ten years ago. While he is still around and influential, the everyday functions of the habitat and Ralston Dynamics are done by a number of employees and relatives. The situation is an increasing oligarchy, where different contenders seek to gain advantage or impress Ralston himself to be crowned his successor. He on the other hand is growing ever curmudgeonier. Always a bit misanthropic and skeptical, he has become fully convinced that human nature is evil. He prefers to watch his helpers fish for him rather than anoint a successor among the “vultures”.



Figure 7: Diver encountering a megalodon shark (BBC)

RR II is famous for its fishing and biodesign. As part of the design half of the habitat is set aside as an “ocean” for historical fishing: the sea contains biogineered historical horrors like *Carcharodon megalodon* and *Basilosaurus cetoides*. RR II has a thriving community of neogenetic lifeform designers working on the sealife and the ecosystem. They ensure that the big predators get enough food to grow large and fierce, yet do not attack each other. There is some work on making a *Dunkleosteus*, but releasing it would require retuning of the ecosystem and removing many of the other species. For the time being Ralston and his friends (as well as a few very rich tourists) are the only one “fishing” the megapredators.

The oceanic construction takes up much of the interior space, and the inhabitants live on “Toledo Hill”, a Malta-like Mediterranean town climbing the side of the habitat. On the opposite side lies New Bahamas, the biodesign center. New Bahamas is also home to the Fluxion, a data haven belonging to the University of Cambridge. When Ralston built the habitat he convinced the university to place its secure backups in the habitat, protected by both its structure and the charter. Since then the university and habitat has maintained firm links. Cambridge researchers often visit the local university (which is little more than an off-site department), and thanks to its extensive political connections the habitat’s declaration of independence was accepted by a majority of the international community.

The government is appointed by the board of Ralston Dynamics (and is a de facto subsidiary). The charter is strongly secular humanist, and a sizeable number of people chose to mirror Jonathan Ralston’s devout humanism.

Zega Habitat



Figure 8: Boutique Monaco (Mass Studies)

UA: -2
PD: -1
RE: 0
IC: +2

A typical internationalist bolo habitat. Flying under the Dominican flag the inhabitants are a melting pot of former nationalities. The government is democratic, with elections every four years. It was originally built by PSD, but sold to the Zega Consortium in 2065.

The overall ethos has been to unleash human potential, avoid major threats and safeguard diversity; by most accounts it has been successful. Zegans place great emphasis on gaining and maintaining good reputations, and regard both shamelessness and pointless rebellion as destructive. They are vigorously (and in their own opinion constructively) disagreeing on issues of human normality/abnormality: while many forms of enhancement are allowed, radical or “dehumanizing” modifications are discouraged or banned.

Although marriage law is open (a part of contract law between consenting adults), the most common family form is nuclear families with some remnant patriarchy. Childhood is regarded as a waiting stage before the young adult becomes fully autonomous and able to shape their life as they see fit.

Zega is one of the main centers of Hinduism in space, with a sizeable post-Indian minority. It is also home to a cluster of Gnostic churches, as well as the usual minority of post-US evangelicals. Zega University is famous for its mathematics department, which includes numerous of the

current leading lights. Many local artists espouse an aleatoric style, using contrasts between order and the broken resulting from generative art and random interference. However, the real cultural contribution of Zega may be the Dance Malls: the idea of combining shopping, individual DJing and dancing (including some extreme forms most akin to sport) started here.



Figure 9: Boutique Monaco (Mass Studies)

A number of major corporations have their headquarters on the habitat: Chambers Frontier Group (space colonization), Metal Horizons (advanced materials), Burch Paragon (education and placement), Delacruz Dynamics (tools, spacecraft parts and weapon systems), Butler Bank (a much respected retail bank), Mejia Research Data Software (Japanese software conglomerate), Herrera Apex (energy), Fabritechnics (microfactories) and McCarthy Astrocom (communications).

Zega is equipped with a powerful missile system, largely due to the development platform of Delacruz Dynamics and an early project intended to protect it from NEO accidents. While clearly stated to be defensive in nature, the habitat could in principle destroy nearly any habitat in Lunar orbit. Zega and other similarly armed habitats (plus Japan and Australia) compose the “Luna MAD Attractor” (also called “The Lunatics”), an organization seeking to ensure that no accidental use occurs and that nothing tries to upset the Lunaside equilibrium.

Zega’s main social problem is organized crime. While low-key, the high privacy level and mixed population has made it hard to police.

Najm al Din

“We are a nation of winners”
-Emir Mustafa ibn Fahd

PD: +5
RE: +4
IC: -2
LO: +1
SR: -2
EX: +2

The successor polity to the United Arab Emirates. The UAE was an early victim of the expansion of the dragons, forced to withdraw from the infected coast to makeshift cities in the desert interior. As space became available the rulers opted for having a habitat constructed. Officially it was intended as the first in a series, but it soon became known as the escape for the ruling class. In the end, the people who came to settle NaD were the nationalist elite and their servants – the rest of the nation ended up defecting to internationalism or joined other immune nations.

Najm al Din is owned by NaD Holdings Ltd, in turn owned by the various emirs. The resulting government has been described as feudal corporate fascism: through the Board, the rulers hold absolute sway, own everything and everyone. The legal system is religious, but allows different legal schools to compete (within reason). While the habitat is officially Sunni Muslim in practice the inhabitants are post-religious: religion is a comforting ritual without much emotional content. Being god-fearing and conservative is a good thing, but to actually *believe* is a bit odd.

The inhabitants have a strong phobia against neogenetics, partially due to their experience on Earth. The dragons and all things related to them fills the Dinites with disgust: it is parasitism and degeneration. Hence the habitat has instituted some of the harshest quarantine rules in the solar system on visitors.

NaD is infamous for its slavery. When the habitat was finished and everybody moved in there was no middle class, just masters and servants. Over the years this split has widened and these days the servants are literal slaves. While they are free to leave the jurisdiction if they want, they need to pay an exorbitant fee for their resource consumption (such as air) across their lifetime. Unsurprisingly outsiders are outraged (especially Muslims), calling the habitat one of the stains of the 21st century. The emirs ignore them, knowing that embargoes have little effect on their self-sufficient habitat.

NaD Holdings is an OTA member and supplies energy from some sizeable (if aged) solar farms. However, there is a strong R&D push inside the company for fusion power. The vision, set out by a group of administrators, is to be the one company to make the breakthrough to real fusion. To this end they are using most of the surplus budget. The company is a major importer of hydrogen and helium isotopes, one area where embargoes does hurt a bit.

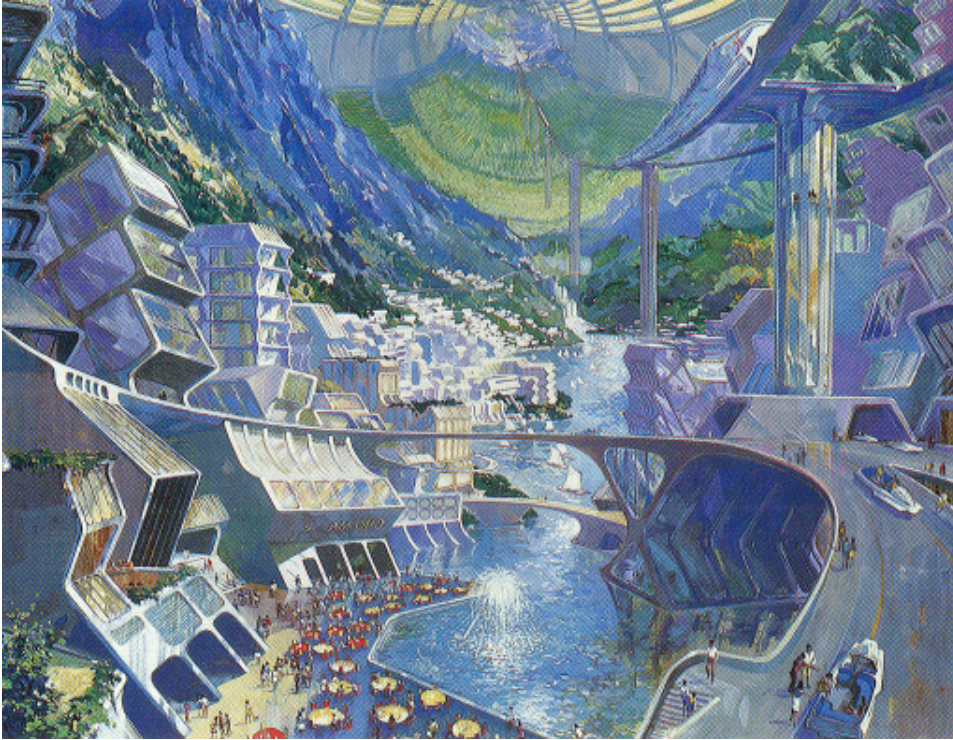


Figure 10: EPCOT torus

The interior is very un-Arabic in style. It is more like an alpine landscape with hills and mountains decorated with streams and waterfalls. Fishing is a popular pastime, and some of the emirs are known to be radical fishermen – Abd Basit ibn Nidal, the scion of the Emir of Al Fujairah, was so enthused by the historical fishing of the *Ralston Raconteur II* that he allowed his father to disown him so that he could stay there.

Banksville



Figure 11: Banksville, Destiny Spindle (Zoompic)

UA -2
PD -1
RE 0
IC +2
LO +2
SR -2
EX +1
CO -3

Banksville is a major syntronic habitat, mainly inhabited by people with extended brains. It is a nexus for banking, information laundering, syntronic networking and intelligence with a not too clean reputation. It is on the shady side of law and politics: not doing anything overtly illegal, but using its opacity and anarchic structure to shield a lot of corporations, people and activities from scrutiny. Outsiders often complain that while it refuses to divulge much information (citing very strong privacy laws) it is often meddling or spying elsewhere in human space.

Banksville is an anarchy. The inhabitants are free to do whatever they want unless others constrain them, and decisions are made by virtual group meetings. This works surprisingly well for two reasons: first everybody knows they have to work together or face extinction in space, and second the syntronics are more rational than normal humans (whether this is a true improvement in rationality or just placebo is unknown). It is a high trust society: although many strange and shady things happen, the sense of neighborliness among the inhabitants is palpable. If there is anything considered unforgivable it is being unfriendly or too proud to help other inhabitants with their habitat life (what they do virtually is another matter). Law enforcement is surprisingly firm for an anarchy: people don't like any threats or attempts to upset the tranquility. Unsurprisingly, immigration is very low.

*The best athlete
wants his opponent at his best.
The best general
enters the mind of his enemy.
The best businessman
serves the communal good.
The best leader
follows the will of the people.
All of them embody
the virtue of non-competition.
Not that they don't love to compete,
but they do it in the spirit of play.*
-Tao Te Ching, S. Mitchell translation. Written on the floor of the Ivory Tower Spindle.

In many ways the founders were traditionalist internationalists: firm believers in privacy, laissez-faire economics, radical technological change and an open future. They were early adopters of space life and quite willing to live ascetic lives for years if it meant they could maintain their valued pluralism, skepticism and pursuit of wealth (as Auguste LaTorra, one of the founders said: "Being poor is not a crime, it is a sin"). During the initial economic boom around Luna *Banksville* was extraordinarily successful, becoming a key node in the network of syntronic finance minds. The habitat was extended and improved with massive communications arrays. Unfortunately the Spamocalypse arrived: almost overnight the money and communications stopped and a sizeable number of people went mad with spam. *Banksville* has recovered but still remains a shadow of its former glory.



Figure 12: (Philips)

Many find the habitat eerie. There is plenty of locally produced art in the anatomical/allegorical style - some of it quite depraved. Many syntronics live cerebral lives, having their bodies spend

most of their time in zombie-like fitness and health programs while they concentrate on "real" issues. The interior is spare and ecologically simple. When it was rebuilt during the glorious 50s the focus was on durability - it should maintain itself even if there was little concerted action among the inhabitants. This has produced a bulky, old-fashioned style that makes many visitors uneasy in the same way that old Soviet engineering surprised Westerners. While the habitat is rock solid it looks dilapidated and dirty; maintenance is indeed relatively haphazard. This has also made transports to and from the habitat harder: *Banksville* has a hard time living up to modern transport security standards, so rather than try to maintain the cumbersome transport quality infrastructure it forces visitors to lease vehicles to get to and from the habitat.

The habitat is flagged at Cayman Islands, which puts it into a legal grey zone. During launch to orbit in 2051 the cabinet (newly defeated in an election) were killed in an accident, and since then there has been disagreement on exactly which polity and government is the successor of the nation. Since the legal uncertainty was useful to certain parties they have kept the issue from resolving. The "old Cayman" side, led by two surviving ministers and the central bank governor, are ruthless cleptocrats that refuse to give up their claim. The "new Cayman" side is represented by the elected parliament and spends much time in litigation against the "old". Then there is the agglomerate/quorum Cayman, a constituent assembly with office at High Vegas (and rumored ties to organized crime). Banksville citizens are supporting all three sides fiercely, since they consider legitimacy to be crucial - but they also find it very useful to be in the grey zone.

One area where Banksville is increasingly prominent is in the creation of VR roleplaying scenarios. A number of skilled scenarists (such as We Chandong, Esteve Fitzroy and Astute Arizona) live here and produce elaborate interactive theatre productions that are exported to other internationalist habitats or Japan.

The security services (and since they are organized ad hoc by different groups in the habitats) are mainly active outside, and quite meddlesome. Other habitats often complain about espionage, technology tricking, memetic manipulation and other bad behavior. But Banksville cannot speak for what individual citizens do - or foreign people *allegedly* in their employ.

There are rumors that *Banksville* also houses (or *is*) the famed "syntronic asylum" - a place where insane rich syntronics are kept discreetly out of the way.

The Corral (L4)



Figure 13: Habitat construction at L4 (synthestructure.com)

The volume around L4 where captured NEOs are stored and mined. This is a region of significant industrial activity, complex orbits and large amounts of low-velocity debris. Too far away from the economic centers of the Moon and Earth, it is regarded as a rough and provincial neighborhood.

Morzeny Industries

An industrial complex with an adjoining habitat, *Gotell*. Jointly owned by PSD, Kraus-Kline Industries and the Saxby Orbital. The largest habitat yards in the solar system.

Tew

Habitat currently located alongside Worksite Jarman. A smallish habitat, it is towed to suitable locations in the Corral to mine NEOs.

Szent-Györgyi

The largest L4 habitat, acting as the informal “capital”. It maintains facilities for ship repair, retooling and rapid responses. It is linked to the Syntropy Array, a large set of transport lasers used to control the movement of caught NEOs and traffic elsewhere.

Eureka

Chemical engineering focused habitat, owned by Nekonitrogen and with slots used by other volatile corporations.

Heaven II

The successor to *Heaven Station*, moved here to oversee PSD mining. As it became obsolete it was sold to Macrotech and Urgenta, who later sold it to other consortia. Today it is barely spaceworthy.

The opposite Lagrange point L5 is kept relatively clean, with just the small habitat/laser array *Lindhard* present. This is because the navigational utility of the point: cargo, ships and habitats using low-energy transfer orbits use it, and can avoid debris from the Corral.

Mars



Mars is subject to exploration from the *Angaraka* and *Soros* habitats, anchored near Phobos and Deimos respectively. They are supported by a sizeable constellation of power satellites, workshacks and communications arrays. On the surface there are a number of mobile settlements in interesting areas; the largest, Bahram, is located on the Tharsis plateau between Melas and Candor Chasma.

The possibility of terraforming Mars has been increasingly discussed across human space. Technologically it could be done with simple extrapolations of current technology. This would, in time, produce a new Dragon-free habitat for humanity. Skeptics warn that it would be far too easy to get a Dragon infestation in any terraformed biosphere, that the cost would be enormous and that there is too little human unity to achieve the project. The Martian Terraforming Network, the biggest pro-terraforming group, is also strongly interplanetarist.

NEOs

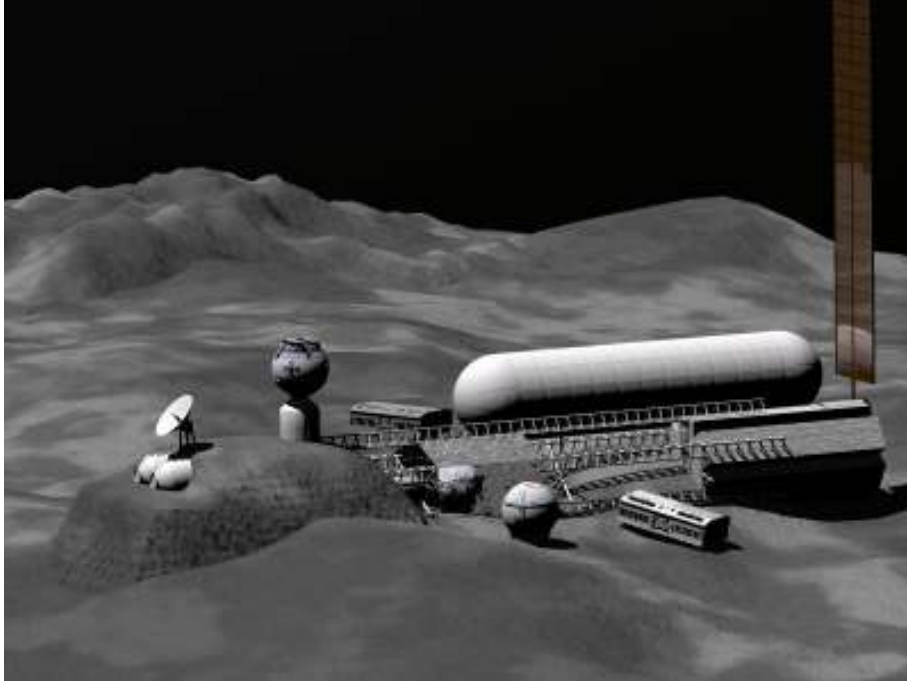


Figure 14: *Eurydice* buried in Orpheus 2044, forming the start of the first NEO mining base.

At any time, there are usually one or two operations going on among the near earth objects. Most are aimed at surveying them for exploitation, although occasionally they set up communications installations and in one case (a OTA mission 2099 to 2041 UX183) install a mass driver to ensure it did not pose a collision threat with the Earth-Moon system.

There are “homesteaders” in a few places; the most well known site is *Haunted Toad* (officially named *High Arran*) on Comet Encke. *Haunted Toad* was founded by the Kahn Foundation in cooperation with Urgenta and Humanodigital. It is an experimental settlement attempting to function in the risky environment of a comet. So far it has demonstrated that it is possible to survive for a few years, but it remains to be seen whether direct comet mining is feasible.

The Belt

A number of “homesteader” communities are setting up bases in the asteroid belt, with varying degrees of success. Most are little more than exploratory tinkering, but a few have found mineable deposits of volatiles on C-type asteroids or “black comets”. Many of them are strongly isolationist or extremist in view. Some of the more well known are *Stateful*, *House of Pain*, *Darling I*, *Left the Keys at Home*, *Iphicrates* and *Veritas*.

Venus

A few unmanned stations orbit the planet or explore the surface. The last real visit was the 2097 attempt by Alexandre Welkin to be the first human to actually walk on the surface. After his disastrous and televised failure Venus has been off the radar except for some more or less unlikely plans to “artiform” it using artilife.

Mercury

Nekonospace and the Innsbruck Foundation maintain a small base on Mercury (Barefoot Base), exploring its potential for industrialization. They are setting up a propulsion array in orbit to test new technology and help NEO miners, possibly the first in a series of inner-system arrays.

Jupiter

The Jupiter system is the new frontier. The first commercial activity was Nekonitrogen’s Utgaard mining base on Callisto. This was followed by the Golden Cup Magnetics Research Laboratory and *Zhang Heng*, both orbiting around Ganymede. These days more and more companies and people go to the system, hoping to discover something that will make them rich.

Nitrogen is essential for the entire space economy, but has to be mined in the outer system. This means that transport times are long, making nitrogen futures a relatively stable financial market. The nitrogen mining, packing and sailing industry in the Jovian system is supported and protected by the most powerful interests in human space.