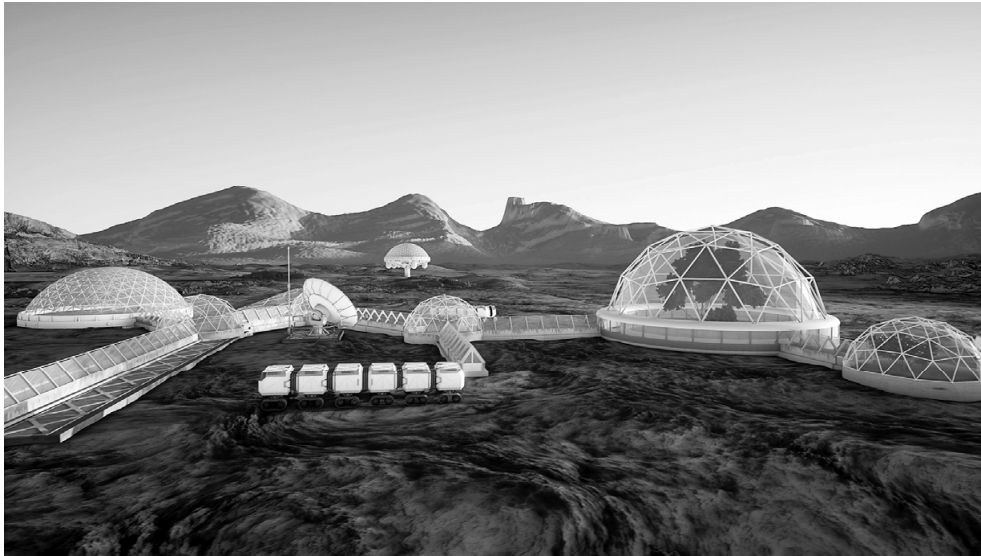


### Look up to the skies



- 1 I don't agree with Philip Ball's thesis (*Life on Mars? Sorry Brian Cox, that's still a fantasy*, 27 May). Ever since I studied planetary geology in the 1970s I have been excited by the idea of terraforming, and if you read Kim Stanley Robinson's trilogy you will find it eminently plausible. It's not about leaving this planet because we have trashed it and starting to do the same on another planet, but about us having overcrowded it so badly that we have to move a large chunk of the population to a new planet where we can revive a dormant landscape into a new paradise. It is all about vision and political will. If we could get all the fanatical warlords on Earth just looking up at the potential of space, we can do it. That is how we will get the drive and the money to start the colonisation of Mars. It will be just like the exodus of Europeans to the Americas in the 17th century.
- 2 Yes there will be thousands of people who want to take the one-way trip, and yes there will be various religious fanatics and self-serving people among them; but the survival difficulties on Mars will be such that they will be forced to cooperate. And this time we will not be subjugating an indigenous population or an existing biosphere; we will be creating our own new one. CO<sub>2</sub> to warm Mars will be generated by introducing plants and a new greenhouse effect from our activities. Just imagine!

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