

# METAPHORS WE SCAPE BY: THE POSSIBILITIES OF TERRAFORMING AS A NEW DESCRIPTOR OF LANDSCAPE

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## 1 ABSTRACT

*Vocabulary has been a longstanding focus of landscape theorists, who have not only debated the various meanings of landscape and their consequences, but also offered a number of alternatives and specifications of place terminology. Drawing on arguments that language and metaphor have material impacts on the shape of the world around us, this paper explores what kinds of relationships and practices become imaginable through one emergent term—terraforming. Terraforming has its origins in science fiction, but has increasingly come to be used both by theorists in Science and Technology Studies and the Environmental Humanities as a critical descriptor, and by a wide array of other voices in disparate contexts. The paper explores how these terms extend or refine our understanding of environments and their formation, and the agencies they reveal. This is accomplished through a content analysis of dozens of these non-fiction references to earthbound terraforming. These linguistic possibilities are especially relevant in debates regarding the Anthropocene proposal and its underlying assumptions about humanity's capacity to manipulate the planet's systems. Critics of this proposal often employ a relational worldview that attempts to situate humans within environments, rather than maintaining a division between nature and culture. This project is shared by a number of landscape theorists, who have been developing alternative linguistic formations around landscape. Accordingly, terraforming can be seen as a term relevant to both conversations that has already demonstrated distinct metaphorical capacities in a variety of contexts.*

### 1.1 Keywords

Terraforming, Relational Ontology, Anthropocene, Nonhuman Agency