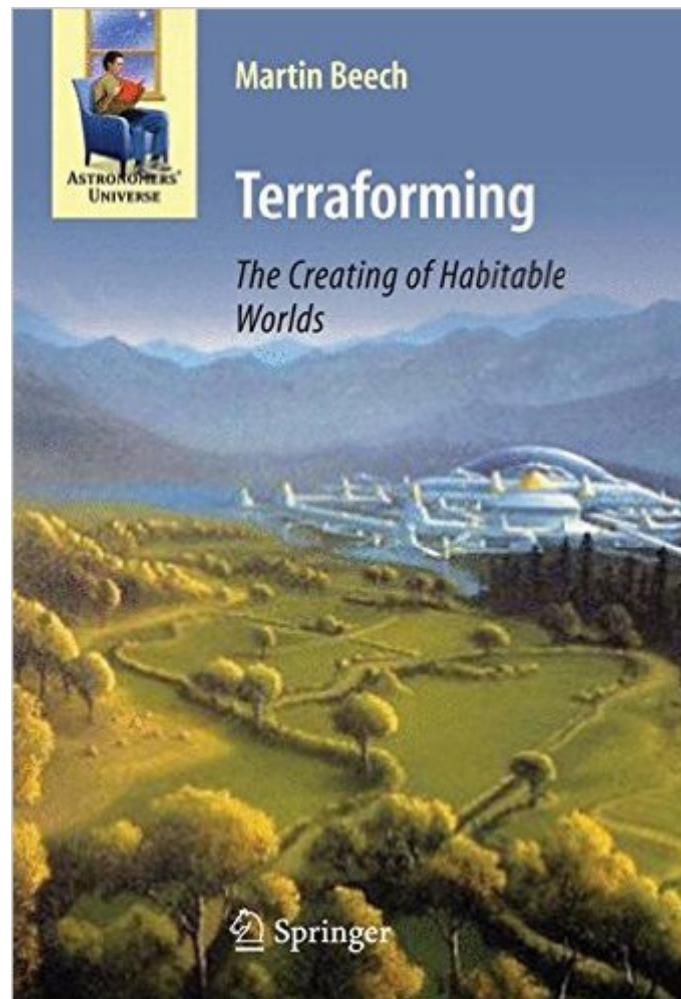


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Terraforming: The Creating Of Habitable Worlds (Astronomers' Universe)



Synopsis

The word "terraforming" conjures up many exotic images and possibilities. It is the idea that the world can be changed by direct human action. The ultimate aim of terraforming is to alter a hostile planetary environment into one that is Earth-like, and eventually upon the surface of the new and vibrant world that you or I could walk freely about and explore. It is not entirely clear that this high goal of terraforming can ever be achieved, however, and consequently throughout much of this book the terraforming ideas that are discussed will apply to the goal of making just some fraction of a world habitable. In other cases, the terraforming described might be aimed at making a world habitable not for humans but for some potential food source that, of course, could be consumed by humans. The many icy moons that reside within the Solar System, for example, may never be ideal locations for human habitation, but they present the great potential for conversion into enormous hydroponic food-producing centers. The idea of transforming alien worlds has long been a literary backdrop for science fiction writers, and many a make-believe planet has succumbed to the actions of direct manipulation and the indomitable grinding of colossal machines. Indeed, there is something both liberating and humbling about the notion of transforming another world; it is the quintessential eucatastrophe espoused by J. R. R. Tolkien, the catastrophe that ultimately brings about a better world. When oxygen was first copiously produced by cyanobacterial activity on the Earth some three billion years ago, it was an act of extreme chemical pollution and a eucatastrophe. The original life-nurturing atmosphere was (eventually) changed forever, but an atmosphere that could support advanced life forms came about.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I purchased this book thinking it was part of a series for science fiction writers and fans. I was wrong, of course, as it actually belongs to a series on academical discussions on cosmology and space science. If you are not into this kind of topic, the reading will be sure to put you to sleep in seconds. If, on the contrary, you enjoy learning about the science behind the possible engineering of planets in order to make them habitable by humans, this book will provide an excellent introduction to the subject. Even though the author (Martin Beech) tries very hard to make the book accessible to a wider audience, and even attempts to produce some fragments of literature, I must say he fails, though not terribly so. The average reader will not enjoy it, and only a handful will read through till the end, but if you take your science seriously, it is worth the effort.--JAO

I found this book to be an insightful look into humanity's future as a spacefaring civilization. Many of the spectacular proposals, such as converting Jupiter into a star, or refueling the burnt out Sun, are explainable by current physics, if not our current technology.

I knew next to nothing about terraforming. I am an economist so do not know much about the much of the science in the book. Yet I understood everything (almost) perfectly well and was much more knowledgeable about terraforming after reading the book than when I started it. My only complaint is that the book pays scant attention to "biological" terraforming - creating lifeforms to do transform environments. The book is much more about "engineering" terraforming. Nevertheless, a great book.

This book would be very good for someone who knew very little about physics and chemistry, but for anyone who has taken high school sciences and knows a little bit about astronomy this book will surely lack and be quite annoying. The author goes into great detail on the simpler common knowledge topics but tells you close to nothing about the slightly harder topics. Overall I thought it was a huge waste of time with maybe 2 or 3 bits of useful information (I am a college freshman with very little scientific background) if the book was shortened to maybe 50 or less pages it might be worthwhile.

I enjoyed this scientific book very much. It is full of futuristic, yet useful, terraforming ideas. Very forward-thinking philosophically too.

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