

**12.03.2026**  
**17:30**

**Auditorium P**  
**Plateau-Rozier**

**CARL H.** SARTON MEDAILLE

2025  
2026

**NIGHTINGALE**

Professor Carl H. Nightingale ontvangt de Sarton Medaille 2025-2026 voor de Faculteit Ingenieurswetenschappen en Architectuur. Het Sarton Comité, de Faculteit Ingenieurswetenschappen en Architectuur, de Vakgroep Architectuur en Stedenbouw nodigen u uit voor deze feestelijke gelegenheid. We sluiten de avond af met een receptie die u door de faculteit wordt aangeboden.

Op de volgende pagina vindt u een abstract van de lezing die Professor Nightingale zal geven. Michiel Dehaene spreekt de Laudatio uit.

Allen welkom! U kan zich [hier](#) registreren.

## LECTURE **Building Our Urban Planet: Terraformation in History, Theory, and Practice**

**Carl H. Nightingale** is Professor Emeritus stadsgeschiedenis en wereldgeschiedenis van de State University at Buffalo en coördinator van het Global Urban History Project. Hij is auteur van *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (2012), *Earthopolis: A Biography of Our Urban Planet* (2022) en *Our Urban Planet in Theory and History* (2024).

CARL H. NIGHTINGALE

# **Building Our Urban Planet: Terraformation in History, Theory, and Practice**

LECTURE ABSTRACT

How should urban historians approach the predicament of Our Time, when humans have achieved unprecedented, and obscenely unequal, power to change the relationship between Sun and Earth? Should we add the carbon footprint of urban buildings to that of car commuting then subtract the efficiencies of dense living and public transit? Should we simply treat both the planetary acceleration of cities and climate change as twin epiphenomena of advanced capitalism? Or can we offer a more nuanced diagnosis from our highly textured, multicausal, dialectical treatments of thousands of case studies spread across all six millennia of urban history?

Begin by recognizing that cities are power: the premier products and enablers of a series of specific practices or “verbs” arising from our gamble that making, growing, and using human space will allow us to make, grow, and use human power. A close look at one of these constituent verbs, to Build, forces us to stretch “the urban” to include both cities and many non-city spaces. To Build is thus best understood as “Earth-Making”: to Terraform. The larger Urban Condition, and its oft-interrupted growth to planetary scope, are a product of “terrapolitics,” the vexed historical relationship between geo-solar energies needed to build cities and the augmented power cities accord to humans over other humans, other lifeforms, and the changing geophysical condition of Earth and Sun.

This talk scouts out paths for urban historians to address the longest and largest contexts of our subject. Inspired by paleoclimatologists’ use of tiny observations to conjure narratives of Earth Time, I propose a historically informed theory of the terrapolitical dynamics by which urban space spread across Earth as a whole, creating Our Urban Planet.

**Lecture for the Sarton Medal 2025-2026**  
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