

Permafrost Politics: Toward a Relational Materiality and Design of Arctic Ground

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ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

Permafrost—continuously frozen ground for more than two years—is one of the defining landscape elements in the Arctic. In the U.S., its development as an idea has paralleled mid-twentieth-century territorial struggles in Alaska and is inextricably linked to permafrost science and frontier engineering. Permafrost is more than a scientific category and engineering risk subject to correction and control; it is a foundation for dynamic socioecological and cultural expressions in arctic landscapes. In response, a relational approach is taken to examine permafrost's cold, vibrant and plural materialities, with an aim of generating design possibilities that are attuned to these dynamics. In the Arctic where science continues to play a central role in determining putative futures, the article further suggests to creatively instrumentalise scientific forms of landscape inquiry, highlighting thermo-material interactions and multiplicities of arctic ground. © 2020 Landscape Research Group Ltd.