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RETHINKING WATER, PLACE & COMMUNITY



CLIMATE, CHANGE & PEOPLE

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from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

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The cover image is a view of the Chixoy River, Guatemala. Image courtesy of Brent K. S. Woodfill.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO ISSUE FOURTEEN

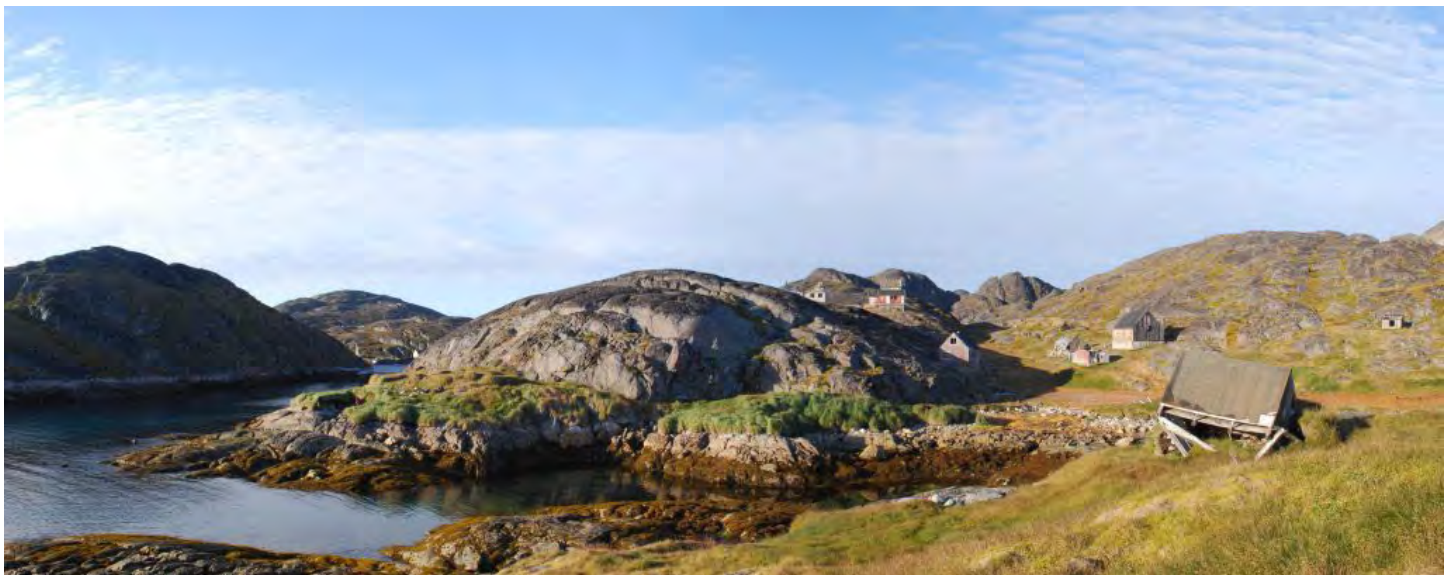
By Patrick Nunnally, Editor

Climate change has virtually exploded as a subject of news reports, scientific analysis, and advocacy attention in the past six months. In November, the United States Global Change Research Program released its Fourth National Climate Assessment. And this spring, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) released its finding that a million species are threatened with extinction. These attention-grabbing headlines have overshadowed the long-standing debates about the relative importance of mitigation and adaptation.

What has been missing, though, is a systematic look at how human societies have adapted themselves to living in a particular place over a very long period of time—centuries, if not millennia. Archaeologists, scientists trained to discern

patterns of past cultural life from extant material fragmentary evidence, have unique windows into how societies such as the Maya or the groups that peopled Southeast Asia lived with, adapted to, and even altered the biological and physical systems of a particular region.

As it happens, we at *Open Rivers* know some archaeologists who were very agreeable to guest editing this issue of the journal on Climate, Change & People. We wanted to bring to the fore questions of how people have adapted to changes in their environment over a long duration of time. The guest editors' introduction, written by Lewis C. Messenger Jr. and Brent K. S. Woodfill, contains a clear description of what they intend with the various components of the journal. No single volume or collection can be comprehensive, of course, and this issue makes no pretense to very



From “Libraries Burning,” this issue. The settlement of Kangeq in Southwest Greenland was abandoned in the 1970s. The site has been occupied for thousands of years. Photographer Jørgen Hollesen, National Museum of Denmark. Used with permission.

broad coverage of adaptation strategies or even an inclusive regional sensibility that addresses all parts of the inhabited earth. We hope that readers interested in these subjects will pursue their own leads.

One piece in this issue falls outside the Messenger/Woodfill purview, which addresses climate change directly, but we thought it complemented the issue's other pieces by centering artistic expressions in response to the landscape. We republish an exhibit review of *Desert River Sea: Portraits of the Kimberley* that describes and illustrates a number of stunning works of

art that come from deeply intimate engagement with the landscapes of northwestern Australia. Although climate change is not explicitly mentioned in the review, changing patterns of biological and physical systems, and human adaptation to them, are ever-present in these works.

I am convinced that climate change, and the impacts it brings, will be part of our culture for the foreseeable future. I hope we can learn from the examples of people who have lived in place for time periods we can only imagine.

Happy reading.

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About the Author

Patrick Nunnally coordinates the River Life Program in the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Minnesota. He serves as editor for *Open Rivers* and was one of the lead scholars for the University's John E. Sawyer Seminar, "Making the Mississippi: Formulating New Water Narratives for the 21st Century and Beyond," funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.