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SHIFT



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from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

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## INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION TO ISSUE NINETEEN

By Laurie Moberg, Editor

The articles for this issue started to come together in the midst of the global pandemic, as our usual practices were upended, our concerns reprioritized, our social lives reorganized and often curtailed, our lives—both private and public—in a tumult. Even now, as we’ve moved past the initial phases of crisis and more of us have moved back into shared workspaces and participated in social gatherings, many uncertainties remain. As I read the early drafts of these thoughtful articles, I found them pulling me into a space for reflection. Rather than focusing on the challenges in this period of seemingly constant transition, these articles reminded me to slow down and remember the promise and possibilities of change. As my colleague and I discussed

the thread that ties these pieces together, their common commitment to the potentials of shifting priorities, shifting perspectives, shifting landscapes, and shifting structures led us to our theme for the issue: shift.

In stream morphology, we understand that rivers are constantly in flux and that the shifts in a river’s flow are created through the interactions of many environmental processes and conditions—influxes of water, eroding banks, and sediment load among others. Shifts in our social flows are similarly complex. In this issue of *Open Rivers*, the articles draw attention to shifts in myriad ways, from physical shifts in the landscape to reconsiderations of institutionalized practices



*Santa Monica Pier by Omar Prestwich.*

and the ways we do work to provocations for altering personal perspectives and commitments. In many cases, the articles each speak to more than one dimension of shifting at once.

Some of the articles explore changes in practice. The Tropical Rivers Lab, for example, demonstrates how lab members' scientific commitments are shaped by their own positionalities. Citing rivers as powerful conveners for relationships and research, the members of the lab reflect on their roles and priorities as researchers and simultaneously model a shift in how we think about the production of scientific knowledge: who can be considered a "scientist" and how do we do this work collaboratively?

Angie Hong discusses the effects of changes in her practice, explaining how she moved her work toward different kinds of communication strategies for community engagement and education with the East Metro Water Resource Education Program. Reciprocally, this work shifted her connection to people, place, and community. Lark Weller's article focuses on how she gradually refocused her water resources work as also anti-racism work. Her article, republished from an earlier issue of *Open Rivers*, explores Ta-Nehisi Coates' book *Between the World and Me* as a text that changed her perspective on her work and moved her toward different practices.

Other articles center shifting landscapes as the impetus for changes in perspective, understanding, and relationships to place. In an article republished from *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Eleanor Hayman and her collaborators, Colleen James and Mark Wedge,

center Indigenous languages and ways of knowing to discuss changing glaciers. They suggest that relationships between humans and nonhumans—people and glaciers in this case—have the potential to fundamentally reconfigure how we understand environmental problems, change, and possible solutions.

Focusing on a different landscape—that of the Hackensack Meadowlands—Evelyn Dsouza explores the tension between the mutability of the landscape and human strategies for documentation. Rather than immortalizing places in text, Dsouza considers the possibilities of a practice "of writing that actualizes, looks forward, and initiates into being." Joanne Richardson revisits her trip to the Old River Control Structure as a teenager, explaining how this visit shaped her understanding of the Mississippi River. While the Old River Control Structure is striving to prevent shifts in the flow of the river, Richardson details how her experience of it shifted her perspective and informed her ongoing studies and professional career.

Finally, the collection of readings in our In Review column offer readers resources that might shift our own perspectives. Recommended by members of the Water, Equity, and Justice Fellows cohort at the University of Minnesota, these resources point us to present problems, complex histories, and future possibilities.

Collectively, the articles in this issue invite us as readers to consider how we might shift our own practices, perspectives, and commitments—and to imagine and even embrace what the effects of those shifts might be. Enjoy.

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## About the Author

Laurie Moberg serves as editor for *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community* and as the project manager for the Environmental Stewardship, Place, and Community Initiative at the University of Minnesota. She earned her Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Minnesota in 2018. Her doctoral research investigates recurrent episodes of flooding on rivers in Thailand and queries how the ecological, social, and cosmological entanglements between people and the material world are reimagined and reconfigured in the aftermath of disasters. In her work at the University of Minnesota, Laurie brings her ethnographic sensibilities, attention to story, and interest in human-nonhuman relations to questions of water and absented narratives closer to home.