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Title: *A changing Arctic, or A Labil Environment? What Inuit people know about the land and its inhabitants.*

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Over the past two decades or so the emphasis in polar research has been on the quick pace at which Arctic environments and cultures are changing nowadays. Although this is hardly questionable it is interesting to question the concept of change by putting it into the perspective of the Inuit knowledge of the land and its inhabitants.

As studies dedicated to traditional knowledge have shown, Inuit geographic knowledge stresses the great lability of arctic environments. Change is indeed the rule in an environment perceived as highly dynamic at any time-scale. From one moment to the next a situation might change completely. Except for the yearly cycle of light, one should not expect any regularity in seasonal weather conditions or game movements. One should, instead, be ready for the unexpected, the unusual. Therefore, one should not lament about change nor worry about it, as it is the very nature of nuna (the land in its wider sense, i.e: including the ocean, frozen or open) to constantly move as it is the very nature of its inhabitants not only to always be on the move but also to be constantly changing. The famous Inuit capacity of adaptation - a quality they often emphasize when defining themselves - relies on the Inuit knowledge of human beings which stresses, and values, their lability as well as their autonomy. A person moves through life and one is expected to develop various aspects of one's personality throughout one's lifetime. The environment as well as the animals, the social group and each of its members are all dynamic systems that interact with one another, and that all belong to the same global system at a more general scale.

This paper will first present the conceptual framework Inuit knowledge offers to apprehend what Westerners call "change" and then consider the implications on local responses to cultural and environmental change in Inuit communities and, potentially, on the scientific understanding of "change" in Arctic regions.