

BOOK REVIEW

Review of *Exploring Antarctic values*, by Daniela Liggett & Alan D. Hemmings (2013). Canterbury: University of Canterbury. 158 pp. ISBN 978-0-473-24851-2 (paperback), 978-0-473-24853-6 (iBook). Available online as a pdf at <http://antarctica-ssag.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/SSAG-proceedings-2013.pdf>.

For over the past 50 years the tag line for Antarctica has been “A continent for peace and science,” leaving the rest of human activities rather adrift. Yes, there have been several valiant attempts to look at non-scientific subjects other than exploration history, geopolitics and international law but there was little on a continuing basis until the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) agreed to host the Social Sciences Action Group and the History Expert Group. These offered a focus for a growing diversity of humanities scholars to come together and develop a stream of ideas complementary to the river of science running alongside. This book is the output from the first SCAR Social Sciences Action Group Workshop held at Gateway Antarctica in December 2011.

The workshop was concerned with exploring linkages between environmental management and value systems and the eight principal chapters offer a mixed bag of subjects, some of which have been grappled with before without a great deal of success.

The concepts of human values—for example, goodness or worth—are routinely applied by us all in daily life but examining them in terms of the continent is tricky and well beyond the purview of science. Yet the term “intrinsic value” occurs in Article 3(1) of the Environmental Protocol and has already been the subject of inconclusive discussions at Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings. Englebartz, Liggett and Steele set out to try and describe how such intangible elements play a part in Antarctic governance and decision making, and how the psychological approach is especially helpful when trying to understand the relationships between humans and nature. This probing of perceptions, of how cultural differences may be manifested in opinions and beliefs, is given some real context by Summerson’s chapter in which he attempts to define wilderness and aesthetic values, also features listed in Article 3 of the Protocol and as yet without any agreed definition. His approach was to conduct an international survey of over 300 people using

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90 Antarctic images linked to a series of questions. This generated data which could be statistically tested and plotted so he can show, for example, multidimensional scaling of landscape descriptors, mean aesthetic ratings for six different classes of landscape and point out that there are no significant differences between nationalities in the overall responses of survey participants. His conclusion that landscapes without humans or infrastructure are universally recognized as wilderness is unsurprising but helpful in showing that legislation for protection based on this premise could easily satisfy both those who go there and those who have never been.

A quite different approach was taken by Salazar’s questioning of Chileans about their attitude to Antarctica. His telephone survey of 900 in Santiago and Punta Arenas showed that, disturbingly, over 60% had little knowledge about Antarctica. Apparently many saw it as an important element of Chilean identity and sovereignty

but overwhelmingly the respondents chose a future for the continent as a science facility and global common rather than an area for human establishment. His enquiry begins to delve into how Antarctic geopolitics has expanded into other dimensions, such as environmental management, science, cultural development and economics, and to what extent public opinion is actually in line with National Antarctic Policy. We do not have survey data like this from other Antarctic countries, offering considerable research opportunities for the future.

Hemmings, in his chapter on environmental management, and Jabour, in hers on Antarctic inspections, both take very political subjects. Hemmings' contention is that environmental management is not conducted simply for good scientific reasons but rather as another political weapon in the pursuit of national agendas. He makes a number of interesting assertions about the intent of state parties (which may well be true but for which there is limited available evidence) and uses examples, such as protected areas, bioprospecting and tourism cast in new ways, to make his case—which is certainly thought provoking. Meanwhile Jabour provides a brief overview of Antarctic inspections under the Treaty, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources and the Protocol, noting that there was no incentive to name and shame, that reported bad behaviour was apparently not modified and that the quality of inspections is highly variable, as is the reporting. She implies that it is not clear that they contribute to protecting Antarctic environmental values but they clearly do support political values.

The final three chapters deal with theoretical approaches to conceptualising environmental values and their relationship to South African history, the role of human values in environmental domain analysis and the Ross Sea toothfish fishery and its conflict with concepts of rational use. The South African chapter by Becket and Prozesky left me confused as why I should see a lack of interest from less developed countries in the Antarctic Treaty as in any way undermining the legitimacy of the Antarctic Treaty System. I felt that they had useful arguments about the different cultural views of what constitutes the environment but had undermined the generality of the case by focussing on South Africa. The chapter by Morgan on environmental domain analysis is probably the most scientific one in the book and whilst, like any other management tool, the classification is linked to human values I see its relevance to the theme of the book to be fairly marginal. In considering Southern Ocean fishers, Ainley and Brooks are the only ones to directly address the conflict between economic drivers and conservation values, asserting that rational use has become a “politically expedient and misused concept” with tragic consequences for the global commons. This is a very pertinent issue in light of the debate over marine protected areas.

Overall the book is both interesting in what it attempts to do and challenging in the way several authors contest existing paradigms. It suggests to me that the developing interaction between science and social science in Antarctica is likely to produce unexpected insights, which may in turn affect policy making.