

## Book Reviews

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### Looking South: Australia's Antarctic agenda

Edited by L.K. Kriwoken, J. Jabour & A.D. Hemmings  
Federation Press, Annandale, NSW, 2007.  
ISBN 978 186287 675 6.

For many of the scientific community the fact that Antarctica is a political place is of almost no significance. As long as they can continue to pursue their science they care little for the agendas of their governments and often fail to engage in any dialogue with the political community. Each country has a different way of developing its own set of Antarctic priorities and whilst some see this as largely restricted to officials others have engaged in a much broader and public development of their position. Australia is one of those countries whose enthusiasm for the Antarctic seems to continue to grow year by year and where the development of the national agenda has been inclusive of government, academia and a wide range of NGOs. This volume is an interesting successor to earlier volumes edited by Stuart Harris (1984) and Julia Jabour-Green (2002), which brought to the wider public the important elements of the debate.

The 14 chapters in this volume are all authored from Australian institutions with the University of Tasmania as the most prominent. That in itself is a clear indication of the success of an original federal government policy to relocate the Australian Antarctic Division to Tasmania and encourage the university there to develop a lead in Antarctic affairs. For those interested in the larger scene all the chapters bear reading but there are some of especial interest to scientists.

One message that comes through clearly is that Australia is serious about maintaining its claimant status to 42% of the continent, with its first shelf claim in 1953 followed by further marine claims up to 1994 when it claimed an EEZ of 200 nm, and more recently the lodging of the UNCLOS claim to an extended continental shelf.

As is observed in Chapter 3 "Science is a necessary condition for influence within the ATS but, on its own, will not maximise influence". To anyone who has ever attended an ATCM this will appear self evident and yet throughout the book there are many clear references to how important science has been in establishing the agreements and instruments of governance, providing Australia with the ammunition it needed to press a case. Indeed, the various authors make it clear that Antarctic Division and its science objectives are a direct tool of the policymaking apparatus.

Key chapters for scientists are those on science by Rosemary Sandford, Southern Ocean fishing by Gail

Lugten, seabirds by Rob Hall, Macquarie and Heard islands by Lorne Kriwoken and Nick Holmes and climate change by Aynsley Kellow.

Especially interesting is Alan Hemmings' chapter on globalisation. He suggests that the development of communications, transport, and the fishing and tourism industries have effectively broken the special status of the Antarctic and incorporated it within the globalised system. He argues that this change to a regional manifestation of global activities has yet to be adequately recognised by the Treaty Parties especially where it crosses with new non-Antarctic legal instruments like the Law of the Sea.

In the final chapter the authors conclude that the responsibilities now heaped on AAD are too great, that in future policy may require more sophisticated development to unify the divergent opinions between different interest groups and that Australia seems to be failing to directly utilise expertise outside government institutions as other countries like Italy, Germany and the Netherlands have been doing. Whilst this might be seen as special pleading it does seem odd that government have not focussed on using the experts that previous policies have been directed at developing.

In a book such as this, despite the many references provided, there are still points I would question. One is the necessity to repeat the details in several chapters of the legal action against Kyodo Senpaku Ltd for whaling in Australian Antarctic Territory. In the tourism chapter there is no mention of the proposal that spare capacity at Australia's Antarctic stations could be used to house tourists, or the old Kerry Packer proposal for a hotel and air strip, whilst I found Sandford's suggestion that Australia could act as an honest broker in climate change negotiations surprising in view of its refusal, at the time the book was written, to sign Kyoto.

Kellow's chapter on climate change mentions carbon dioxide measurements at Moana Loa but not at South Pole, which started a year earlier in 1957. The concerns about a possible increased rate of ice discharge after loss of ice shelves has been borne out by recent work and, whilst I accept that the subantarctic islands are interesting, impacts of climate change on them are of much lesser global concern than on the continental ice sheets. There is no mention of Cryosat or how it is intended to improve the accuracy of the mass balance estimates, nor of marine research and how climate change might affect food webs and productivity. In my view he fails to indicate the importance and value of science in understanding processes so that modelling of key impacts can be done with more confidence. In discussing the cost of Antarctic operations Hemmings fails to mention the cost benefit analysis undertaken by Rex Moncur to establish value for

money of the Australian programme against the UK and other national programmes.

This is an interesting book with some probing assessments of why and how Australia has developed particular policies and what it appears to expect as a return on its substantial Antarctic investment. The continued development of the idea of Antarctica as part of the Australian cultural heritage mirrors in many ways the approach used by Chile and Argentina to their Antarctic territories, and it seems clear Australia will continue to see management of the continent and its surrounding sea as an important foreign policy objective.

### References

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### Antártida. Introducción a un continente remoto

Rodolfo A. Sánchez  
Albatros, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2007.  
ISBN 978-950-24-1211-5, 256 pp.

The literature about Antarctica from Spanish and South American authors has increased considerably in the last few years and there has been increased publication in Spanish of translations from authors of different languages. However, most of these books are on specific topics (such as science or history), accounts of personal experiences in Antarctica with some general information about the continent, or are large-format photography books.

This book adds to the existing available literature in Spanish an updated general and complete overview about

Antarctica, the administrative system and the environmental issues. The six main sections of the book are dedicated to natural features, life, history, Antarctic Treaty system, human activities and environmental protection. The three last mentioned issues occupy approximately half of the book, and they could have been an even larger component because of their interest for Spanish readers and the author's expertise in these fields. This is not to say that the other half of the book is not also interesting but some of this ground has been covered well elsewhere.

The text is informative, well documented, and written with rigour. The author has achieved an excellent synthesis and organized a large quantity of information on different topics. The fact that the chapters have many subdivisions makes it easy to locate and read the text appropriate to any particular subject.

The book contains 41 colour photographs, 20 tables and 12 black and white figures. They are all useful and appropriate, but additional colour maps at a larger size would have been valuable, although I recognize the limitations caused by the size of the book.

The parts of the book dedicated to the Antarctic Treaty system and to environmental protection reflect the author's personal experience and up-to-date knowledge about these fields due to his work as head of the Programme of Environmental Management and Tourism in the Argentinean *Dirección Nacional del Antártico*, his participation in international fora and his position as coordinator of the Antarctic Environmental Officers Network (AEON). Apart from this the author has a degree in geology and has participated in numerous Antarctic expeditions since 1990.

The book has been published as a contribution to the education and outreach activities of the International Polar Year 2007–2008. I believe that it can play an interesting and important role, especially in South America, in providing readers with comprehensive, rigorous and topical information about Antarctica and the Antarctic Treaty System.

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