

‘Awkward Antarctic nationalism’: bodies, ice cores and gateways in and beyond Australian Antarctic Territory/East Antarctica

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Received May 2016; first published online 11 October 2016

ABSTRACT. This paper explores ‘awkward Antarctic nationalism’ and builds on the critical scholarship that explores the contours and contradictions of everyday, mundane, banal and even hot polar nationalisms. The emphasis on ‘awkward’ is designed to draw attention to the resonances and affordances that are associated with Australian polar nationalism in and beyond the Australian Antarctic Territory/East Antarctica. Using the 2016 *Australian Antarctic strategy: 20 year action plan* as a starting point, it considers how bodies, ice cores and gateways are put to work in order to address a fundamental pressure facing all claimant states. That is how to reassure domestic audiences that claims to territory and access are safe, sovereign and secure without alienating others with whom one wishes to do business within a particular area of Antarctica. More broadly, the paper concludes that both claimant states and non-claimant states are rubbing up against one another in areas such as custodianship, environmental stewardship and polar science and logistics. This has implications for how we interrogate the ideals and practices of the Antarctic Treaty.

Introduction

This paper is intended to be a provocation. It is inspired by critical geopolitical scholarship and humanities scholarship affecting both the Arctic and Antarctic (Brady 2012; Goodsite and others 2015; Salazar 2013; Hemmings and others 2015; Howkins 2015; Paglia 2015; Leane 2016; Roberts and Paglia 2016; Dodds and others 2017). This varied body of work has been highly effective in showing how the imaginative resources and stories about Antarctica have resonated, through a variety of sites, objects and even affects, in public and policy-making arenas. Southern rim countries such as Argentina, Australia, New Zealand and the UK, through its overseas territories, have attracted some sharply focussed research on Antarctic nationalisms. What I think is also refreshing about this work is a resistance to thinking about the stable pre-formed preferences of actors such as the Australian government and a willingness to interrogate manifestations of polar identity politics. The analysis here builds further on that vein of work, and explicitly addresses the awkwardness of being a claimant state in Antarctica. Such work has also begun to flag the role of the non-human in shaping material-semiotic entanglements with Antarctica, and the materiality of ice, water and air in producing, sustaining and undermining Antarctic nationalisms.

Why awkwardness? As scholars such as Elspeth Probyn and Sianne Ngai have argued, there is some value to be secured by recuperating what might be thought of as ‘bad affects’ and/or ‘ugly feelings’ such as shame (Probyn 2005; Ngai 2007). For settler colonies such as Australia, shame might be a powerful affect in the sense of forcing the settler colonialist to reconsider their hegemonic presence. Could awkwardness be a productive affect? Does it, in effect, make us reflect further on hegemonic norms and values and how and where awk-

wardness makes itself present? While our bodies might manifest awkwardness, sites and spaces can also become enrolled in expressions of awkwardness as well. One obvious area of relevance to international regimes such as the Antarctic Treaty System, with its consultative parties and formal architecture of meetings and working groups, might be when to say or not say something or where to raise an issue or not.

Using Australia’s recent *Australian Antarctic strategy: 20 year action plan* (henceforth AP 2016) as an example, the paper is intended to be an entrée and an invitation to others to address other possible examples and expressions of awkward Antarctic nationalisms involving claimants and non-claimants. What awkwardness might also do is to further the conversation about the settler politics enveloping Antarctica without predetermining outcomes of such encounters. Just because one feels or exhibits shame or awkwardness, however, does not mean that a more progressive form of politics materialises. So confronting and placing awkwardness into the foreground is not akin to a proverbial magic bullet; no claims are advanced here regarding palliative intervention. So if there is an outer limit to awkwardness, it might reside in something more modest namely an opportunity to ponder what is awkward and what the corollary might be in terms of comfort and ease within Antarctic nationalisms; what forms and manifestations provoke awkwardness on the one hand and comfort on the other hand, and how do they get managed through accompanying affective economies. The Antarctic Treaty and the Antarctic Treaty System, for example, play a vital role in constraining, structuring and facilitating Treaty parties, including the claimant states.

Finally, in terms of introductory framing, the timing of the paper is not coincidental. Like others before me, I believe that there is plenty of evidence of inflamed Antarctic nationalisms and that a plethora of issues are

once again generating awkwardness including living resource management and marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean and the future status of Antarctica as a global resource. As we pursue further studies of Antarctic nationalisms, amongst claimants and non-claimants alike, we will need to place our analyses into context. For example, the politics of labelling and interchanging East Antarctica with Australian Antarctic Territory is a relatively new innovation in Australian polar policy discourse but the invocation of ‘gateway’ is not. Earlier Australian governments and authorities have made claims regarding Hobart and indeed Australia more generally as a ‘gateway state’ (Dodds 1997).

The Australian example

The specific object of concern to this paper is a rather stilted (at least in my opinion) April 2016 press conference by the Australian Environment Minister, Greg Hunt, on the subject of the AP (Fig. 1.). Hunt made some important claims about Australia’s relationship to Antarctica, and the vision that the Australian government under the leadership of Malcolm Turnbull has for its future. The Environment Minister, warming to his theme, declared, ‘And as part of that vision, we want to be the world leading gateway to the Antarctic. And Hobart is the gateway to the Antarctic for the future. That’s what we are seeking to do and that’s what we are setting out as part of this process’. His references to Hobart and its future role were intended to placate others who had ruminated over the funding, scope and vision underwriting Australia’s plans for Antarctica and the Southern Ocean in the future (for example, Bray 2016).

In the course of his public presentation (about seven minutes), the minister never mentioned that Australia claims 42% of the polar continent; rather than mention the word ‘claimant’ he picked the word ‘custodian’ and sought refuge with the expression ‘along with others’. As he stated, ‘we [Australia] are custodians of the Antarctic along with others, as an original signatory of the Antarctic Treaty... Beyond the interests of environment and science, we also have the great tasks of national security, and a peaceful cooperative Antarctica is a critical piece of a peaceful cooperative Southern Ocean, and if we have a Southern Ocean which is free of strategic competition, then Australia is safer and the costs for Australians are dramatically lower’ (Ministerial presentation for the AP 2016). In his foreword to the AP, the Prime Minister observed that, ‘A strong and effective Antarctic Treaty is in Australia’s national interest’ and that he hoped the country would be ‘...a partner of choice in East Antarctica and to work even more closely with other countries within the Antarctic Treaty System’ (AP 2016 and see Fig. 2.). But again he does not mention that Australia is a very large claimant state. Ultimately, both men thought that ‘a new era of Australian endeavour’ was being articulated in the AP. It would have been ‘awkward’ perhaps to mention a word like ‘claimant’ and

note the use of the geographical term ‘East Antarctica’. Henceforth, this paper deliberately uses the combination Australian Antarctic Territory/East Antarctica because I want to draw attention to its awkwardness.

While others have addressed the actual details of the AP, relating to infrastructure, science, gateways and Australia’s role in the Antarctic Treaty System (for example Bergin 2016), my focus is on how it might be indicative of an ‘awkward nationalism’. Australian historian Tom Griffiths’ elegant account of his voyage to Antarctica on the 100th anniversary of the 1911–1912 Mawson expedition inspired this investigation. He invokes well the materiality of Antarctica (the ice, the winds, the cold) and the symbolism of the place (the hopes, dreams and desires of those who went there and those who helped to induce others to go there). He links up well in other words with contemporary humanities scholarship on Antarctica. But then there comes a point in the article when he appears to realise that he is enrolled in an ongoing sovereignty project. The writing becomes ‘awkward’ almost coy in its explanation of the role of his body, his presence and his actions:

In my history of Antarctica, *Slicing the silence*, I made a bit of fun of proclamation ceremonies in front of audiences of Adélies on windy, remote Antarctic coastlines. After all, claiming something as slippery as ice is laced with comedy, and narrow nationalism appears inapt on a continent of ice where just being human is so marginal and vulnerable. There’s a slightly irreverent chapter in my book called *Planting flags*. And now, in January 2012, I was suddenly involved in the ritual myself... Why would Australians today raise the flag in this international place? There is no doubt that by doing so we are quietly affirming Australian sovereignty over 42 per cent of Antarctica and that the penguins are not the only creatures with a colony here. *But this was also a deliberately modest ceremony*. No anthem was sung, no cheers called for, no proclamation made, no mention of ‘territory’ by the prime minister, and the emphasis of the speeches was on the science of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition and its continuities with the scientific priorities of the Treaty era (Griffiths 2012, emphasis added).

As a reader, it is jarring. The idea that one would be ‘suddenly involved’ seems odd given the length of planning and effort involved in the 2011–2012 commemorative voyage. The title of his article is anything but modest ‘Thus began the Australian occupation of Antarctica’. How one can make ‘a bit of fun’ is also intriguing – would it have been too rude if one had made a ‘lot of fun’ at the idea of a group of Edwardian era men cheering a flag being raised on a remote spot in Antarctica? (compare Collis 2004). *Pace* Griffiths, I think absence and modesty speak quite ‘loudly’ about Australian ambition: it is something instead to be carefully engineered and crafted. Here appeared to be a group of people preaching a stern and considered dedication to

science that has been sanctified by rituals, sacred texts, and even in the case of the British explorer Robert Scott and his party a sense of sacrifice (a fate that Mawson was lucky to escape). ‘Deliberate modesty’ seems awkward because it is forced.

Griffiths’ visit coincided with 100th anniversary celebrations of the Mawson expedition. For this, there was a plethora of documentaries/news stories released on Australian television channels, and a flotilla of boats led by the polar vessel *Aurora Australis* sailed along the Derwent River in Hobart, as part of a reconstruction of the original Mawson journey from Tasmania to Antarctica. In that commemorative context, I was struck by Griffiths’ assertion that modesty was secured by not doing certain things. As if to suggest that it would have been truly ‘awkward’ even ‘tacky’ if he and his party had sang an anthem, cheered loudly, mentioned the word ‘territory’ and made a new proclamation. Instead, in his judgement this was avoided because the party *just* spoke about Australian historical and scientific engagements with Antarctica: a set of stories about heroic white men going about their proverbial business some a hundred years ago.

My reaction to the article was affective and visceral. It made me think that it was all very odd and maybe more so because of Antarctica’s intersectional histories of human encounter in which white men have often taken to performing on the ice (for example Bloom 1993; Glasberg 2012). I am using ‘awkward’ in the way that American cultural critic Todd Reeser (2011) uses it in his exploration of the affective politics of ‘awkward masculinities’, when the normative and hegemonic model of masculinity (for example heterosexual, white, able-bodied) is challenged, scrutinised and or undermined. Awkward as a term implies discomfort and squeamishness and, in the spirit of Sara Ahmed’s feminist work, provokes us to consider how an array of things, words and practices can and do disrupt hegemonic norms, values, practices and performances associated with hegemonic masculinities (akin to a ‘comfort zone’). As noted in her *The cultural politics of emotion*, hetero-normativity ‘functions as a form of public comfort by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape’ (Ahmed 2007: 148). She uses the example of the chair, and how the chair moulds around the sitting body and over time repeated acts of sitting leave an ‘imprint’ on the chair’s material. Scaling up she contends that social space for some people is like a chair, which can be normalised in so far that one barely notices it as an object with a particular design and associated affective properties (for example ‘comfortable’ and/or ‘relaxing’). The moulded chair can also be uncomfortable for others who try to sit in it thereafter. Or as David Day concluded, ‘... Australia can take some *comfort* from the existence of Mawson’s carefully preserved hut at Commonwealth Bay. Whatever the Russians might do, the hut was a potent reminder that the Australian involvement with the territory had preceded that of the Russians by several decades’ (Day

2012: 522, my emphasis). But it is not quite clear how far ‘some comfort’ might extend; comfort in the fact that the hut is preserved, in the fact that the Russians would have to at least acknowledge a prior Australian presence or in the fact that it was a potent, as opposed to a feeble, reminder even though it might not be enough to prevent anything the Russians want to do. Day is, of course, referring to the important Russian activities in the Australian Antarctic Territory during the International Geophysical Year and after.

Contemporary Australian Antarctic scholarship is often quite quick to skate over awkwardness. There is a general consensus that Australia manages its claimant status competently and that the Antarctic Treaty System works well for this particular claimant. But instead of skating over things, I am going to pause and focus on awkwardness. There is, after all, a trade-off between being assertive and confident about one’s claim at the same time not being *déclassé*. Seven claimant states (Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, Norway, New Zealand and UK) make claims to the Antarctic but the vast majority of the international community does not recognise those claims. The terms and conditions imposed by the 1959 Antarctic Treaty and associated legal instruments call for abeyance and restraint. But I also think it demands forms of modesty even deferment for claimant states in particular, in which judgments have to be made about when and where to engage with others. This can and does provoke feelings of awkwardness. As Matt Benwell shows in his work on Argentine polar nationalism, sometimes national governments can resort to ‘blatant’ displays of territorial sovereignty and strategic interest, which might bring comfort to some and awkwardness to others (Benwell 2014). To return to the Ahmed analogy, claimants want to make a strong imprint on the ‘chair’ but they can never entirely relax given the views and actions of others.

Using Ahmed’s analogy, the imprint of claimant states on the ‘Antarctic chair’ has had to endure other forms of imprinting. Other bodies, infrastructures, place names and interests have established themselves. Access, inspection and freedom of movement across the region are the demands of the Treaty. By deliberately not aligning themselves with the claimants and their visions of national territory, the non-claimants such as China and India and semi-claimants such as the United States and Russia have found ways to disrupt and unsettle the wellbeing of claimant states. As we know the Antarctic Treaty is in essence a device designed to manage unease, even squeamishness, about who owns Antarctica but how you put that into practice is demanding. Knowing when and where to articulate your sovereignty and security interests is problematic. Sometimes one might have to turn to objects like ice, ships and dead Antarctic explorers to do explicit sovereignty labour. On other occasions, words like ‘stewardship’ and ‘leadership’ might suffice and hopefully resonate with audiences. Walton and Dudeney (2012) provide a simple example when they assert that



Fig. 1. Environment Minister Greg Hunt announces the 2016 Action Plan

Source: <https://twitter.com/ausantarctic/status/725167639320895489>

Antarctic Treaty leadership is equated with scientific prowess; a relationship that appears awfully, rather than awkwardly, convenient for claimant states like Australia and the United Kingdom. Elsewhere, claimant states have made a virtue out of their geographical proximity to Antarctica, seeking to earn money and establish influence through the promotion of polar tourism, and by advocating collaboration in logistical/scientific matters usually with major non-claimant and semi-claimant states. Terms like ‘gateways’ are the *lingua franca* in Argentina, Chile, Australia and New Zealand (for example with regard to tourism, Hall 2015) and ‘gatekeeping’ is an important element for these claimant states.

My interest in ‘awkward Antarctic nationalism’ is underscored by a concern for how nationalism works on an affective register. A recent paper exploring Australian Antarctic sovereignty makes this point discreetly, ‘Australia claims sovereignty over almost 6 million km² of the Antarctic continent. The Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT) is not widely recognised internationally. Antarctic Treaty Article IV does not extinguish or diminish Australia’s claim. Article IV does not prevent Australia, for example, from explicitly discussing the AAT in domestic politics. Discussing enforcement of Australian domestic law in the Southern Ocean, defending the territorial claim and *other emotive issues* related to Antarctica requires *some sensitivity* to broader international diplomacy’ (Hodgson-Johnston 2016: 183, emphasis added). The words ‘emotive’ and ‘some sensitivity’ are for me noteworthy. But how to demonstrate ‘some sensitivity’ while avoiding a ‘lack of sensitivity’? And what are those ‘other emotive issues’?

Australian ministers responsible for announcing and delivering on the AP hoped and expected that the promissory note of ‘action’ would function as a form of affective labour. In Michael Hardt’s terms, affective labour is a reproductive process in which awkwardness and unease can be managed even banished when it comes, in this case, to protecting even enhancing Australia’s status as



Fig. 2. Front cover of the 2016 Action Plan (with the distinctive and long established identification of Australia and Antarctica on a tilted globe)

Source: <http://www.antarctica.gov.au/about-us/antarctic-strategy-and-action-plan/20-year-action-plan>

claimant state (Hardt 1999). Like a flight attendant reassuring passengers about inflight safety, ministerial figures and academics alike engage in forms of ‘affective labour’, as they seek to assure citizens/readers that Australia’s claim to 42% of the polar continent is ‘defended’. My reference to Minister Hunt’s apparent awkwardness then is an entry point into both affective and counter-affective labour, when the very unease and anxiety that things like APs are supposed to mitigate do not resonate in quite the way that was imagined. Just because you do not say certain things, it does not guarantee that ‘awkwardness’ is managed let alone dissipated. Like chronic pain it is something that needs constant attention even if it is something that one might want to wish away.

Hardt’s point about ‘affective labour’ helps us better understand what forms ‘awkward Antarctic nationalisms’ might take. Objects like fictional novels, press releases, public statements and action plans contribute to the geopolitical cultures of Antarctic claimant states such as Australia. They not only represent those interests but they also operate within affective economies, which induce, provoke and circulate fear, dread, hope and comfort. They challenge us to think about the role of affective labour in reinforcing the foundational ideals and practices



Fig. 3. Hobart as Polar gateway
 Source: https://twitter.com/cain_train71/status/725286998131372032

of the Antarctic Treaty System operating in a world in which an array of countries working at the intersection of science, economics and stewardship (in fields such as biological prospecting and fisheries management) are vastly different to those imagined in the 1950s and 1960s.

Awkward Antarctic nationalism: geopolitics, sovereignty and (counter) affective labour

Over the last twenty years, a number of scholars have written about Antarctic nationalism and explored how and why nation-states have sought to engage and embrace their Antarctic territories. From a traditional geopolitical perspective, Jack Child was a pioneer of a strand of research that considered how South American military authors in the main used articles, books and maps to articulate a 'South American Antarctic' and in particular to advocate a view of Argentina and Chile being materially connected to the Antarctic continent (Child 1985, 2008). In that sense geo-politics might be more appropriate rather than the portmanteau term geopolitics, because the Argentine and Chilean writings of South America's relationship to the Antarctic were underwritten by the material intersection of South American and Antarctic rock, sea and ice. In the late 1970s, the corporeal also became another register to naturalise those connections further as Argentine and Chilean children were born and raised in Antarctica. The material and corporeal are important to what Michael Billig terms expressions of 'banal nationalism', where along with language (for example 'our territory') and practices (for example the waving of a flag) the nation-state reproduces itself (Billig 1995; Benwell 2014).

In Antarctica, the relationship between the corporeal and material has been essential to expressions of polar nationalism. Claimant states such as Australia, Britain and New Zealand invest heavily in their historical and geographical records of explorers and exploration. They along with other claimant states have accumulated, archived and harvested Antarctica for its rocks, wildlife, ice, bones, eggs and other artefacts. Scientific relics became objects of national veneration (Roberts 2011). They have registered their presence through infrastructure and used museums, libraries and public spaces to record and represent their polar heritage. Rock, plant life and ice have been powerful accomplices to the meaning-making practices that underscore Antarctic nationalisms. Soil samples, bones and blocks of ice have been moved from Antarctica and transported elsewhere. In Chile, for example, blocks of ice were carefully preserved and moved to the 1992 EXPO in Seville (see Korowin 2010), in a gesture that was seen by some scholars as indicative of a democratic Chile eager to articulate a vision of the country very different to the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1989). The ice was intended to exemplify the natural beauty of Chile (including Chilean Antarctic Territory) and allow for a new form of place branding. Henceforth, Chile would (it was hoped) be thought of as a safe tourist attraction open to international business and investment.

More recent scholarship has interrogated the assemblage of Antarctic nationalisms (more generally, Sassen 2008; Delanda 2016), by which we mean the objects, the practices, the sites and spaces, the ideas and the bodies involved in its genesis and reproduction. As assemblage, it draws attention to the national-sovereign labour and to the elements including objects and stuff involved in its construction and reproduction (Salter 2015). Work in matters of assemblage neither prioritises particular actors (human, non-human, environmental) nor does it assume a pre-given scale of analysis and direction of travel. Christy Collis's examination of the British-Australian explorer Sir Douglas Mawson's expedition to Proclamation Island in 1930, for example, ruminated on the role of male bodies, flags and plaques, international law and sovereignty performances involved in making Australian Antarctic Territory (Collis 2004). In another publication, Collis explored the awkward politics of masculinity, and the manner in which the fit, active heteronormative male body was imagined to be an essential accomplice in the making and reproduction of Australian Antarctic sovereignty (Collis 2009). As the AP itself acknowledged, the men attached to the expedition established bases, travelled great distances and flew flags but those achievements and performances did not make Australia's occupation of Antarctica straightforward. They surveyed and mapped, and endured the very worst polar weather imaginable and the mobility of the men was always essential to the settler colonial project. As Collis articulated, 'Imperial spatiality involves motion: explorers trudge ever further into continental interiors,

leaving behind them flags and cairns of possession. Colonialism, however, involves the subsequent practice of spatial possession by occupation: the construction of settlements and the occupation of imperially claimed space. In Australia, as elsewhere, colonial spatiality is explicitly gendered as feminine, while imperial spatiality remains a masculine preserve’ (Collis 2009: 515). Her work chimed with critical scholarship on Australia’s interior colonialism and the gendered regime of settlement, exploration and mobility more generally (for example, Hains 2002).

Alan Hemmings and colleagues have, in a number of publications, explored the contours and formations of Antarctic nationalism, noting how challenging it can be for claimant and non-claimants alike to develop, project and circulate nationalisms in which the object of concern (Antarctica) is geographically remote and even culturally marginal to many metropolitan territories and societies (Hemmings and others 2015). They warn us that if Antarctic nationalisms go unchecked then there is a danger that the delicate political-legal order, as embodied by the Antarctic Treaty and associated legal instruments, might be imperilled if signatories and other parties start to associate nationalism with territorial and resource-based exploitation and competition. From my point of view, their work considers the foundations for Antarctic nationalism. They identify over ten bases upon which Antarctic nationalism might materialise and they range from legal instruments and declarations and national identity politics to infrastructure and public culture. Resources clearly matter as do regional and global rivalries and historic associations with the Antarctic. Their analysis is very helpful in setting out the diverse settings and forms that Antarctic nationalism might take. Without explicitly using the schema of Michael Billig’s banal nationalism (Billig 1995), one can imagine how those bases could contribute to the production and reproduction of not just banal and everyday nationalisms but also ‘hot nationalism’, a nationalism that takes us more closely to conflict and disorder. For the most part, the Antarctic nationalisms identified by Hemmings and colleagues pivots around the banal, the taken-for-granted and the mundane (Hemmings and others 2015).

Building on that critical Antarctic nationalisms literature, the paper ties together the material and the affective, associated with those nationalisms. In Australia’s delimitation of outer continental shelves, for example, rock samples played a crucial element in assembling the evidence needed by the UN body the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) but so did an administrative decision taken by the Australian government. In order to avoid awkwardness with the wider international community, the materials pertaining to the AAT were held back from formal consideration by the CLCS (Oude Elferink 2008, 2013; Press 2012). The decision was in effect a form of affective labour designed to reassure international audiences that Australia was a ‘modest’ claimant. Anticipating the reaction of others

is not always straightforward however. The sudden and temporary upheavals and unsettlement caused by the mere mention of words like ‘China’ can and do unsettle members of the Australian Antarctic communities. Sometimes the fictional world can do that sort of unsettling work rather well. The Australian novelist Louisa Larkin’s 2012 polar thriller *Thirst*, imagines a Chinese military organisation attacking an Australian research station (named Hope). What’s intriguing is how many Australian reviewers simply glossed over the geopolitical premise of the novel while the novel ran into difficulty with the Chinese censors. Were the reviewers simply assuming that, although fictional, the premise itself was not outrageous? Maybe the sudden twinges and even ‘gut feelings’ that some might feel regarding the need for Australia to do more to protect its sovereignty and interests are rooted in this taken-for-granted geopolitical imagination of an Australia vulnerable to powerful Euro-Asian others: Russia, India and China.

Australia’s Antarctic 2020 AP and the Australian Antarctic Territory: bodies, cores and proximity

In an earlier paper with Alan Hemmings, we identified an inclination for what we termed ‘frontier vigilantism’ in some Australian commentators when discussing the challenges and opportunities facing the Australian Antarctic Territory/East Antarctica (Dodds and Hemmings 2009 and the response by Bergin and Haward 2009). Using a 2007 report issued by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) entitled *Frozen assets: securing Australia’s Antarctic future*, we argued that there was a tendency to imagine and represent the AAT as a vulnerable and feminised space, at the apparent mercy of external parties, including China. Throughout the report, the authors of that report appeared to us at least to be calling on the then Australian government to do more; to invest more, to care more and to stop being complacent.

Invoking a form of polar ‘Orientalism’, we argued that some Australian commentators represent the AAT/EA as being at risk of ‘penetration’ and we argued, controversially, that the report was shot through with gendered language and analogy. As many critics have noted, including Susan Sontag, analogy and metaphor perform important discursive and affective labour, their usage can provoke us, reassure us, anger us and please us (Sontag 1978). While we can argue over who or what the ‘us’ represents, these linguistic devices are tied up with affective economies. The 2007 report was not intended to reassure readers rather it was intended to provoke, to unsettle even scare the Australian federal government into taking action.

This trend to articulate China as a troubling ‘presence’ continues to this day with another commentary published in the ASPI’s magazine *The Strategist* warning that:

China has developed a presence in the Antarctic through the establishment of four research stations, three of which are located in the Australian Antarctic

Territory (AAT). China has already bestowed Chinese names on 359 sites on Antarctica. Notably, China's Kunlun (昆仑站) research station, which opened in Australian territory in 2009, is located 7.4 kilometres from Dome Argus Dome A, close to the centre of the continent—a demonstration of China's commitment to Antarctica. Meanwhile, budget constraints placed on the Australian Antarctic Division have meant that Australia doesn't possess the resources or equipment to develop a research base in this area. Moreover, China's newest base, the Taishan (泰山站), which opened in 2014, is also located in the AAT... Australia has benefited from Antarctic cooperation from Antarctic research cooperation with its Chinese counterparts, but we must prepare for a possible future where national interest trumps friendly cooperation (Slevison 2016).

For cooperation with China, as we shall note, at least one analyst surmises that Australia's northern neighbour cannot be trusted. We might say that this is indeed awkward, as multiple commentators in Australia complain that the country has been too slow, too miserly and too disorganised with its Antarctic and Southern Ocean strategic and scientific planning. The ASPI is strongly associated with the Australian Department of Defence and the 2016 Defence White Paper (Australia Department of Defence 2016). The White Paper notes, 'The Australian Antarctic Territory faces no credible risk of being challenged in such a way that requires a substantial military response for at least the next few decades. It is in our interest to work with like-minded countries to prevent any militarisation of Antarctica, which could threaten Australia's sovereignty over the Australian Antarctic Territory and its sovereign rights over its offshore waters. Australia is a strong supporter of the Antarctic Treaty System, which expressly prohibits any mining in Antarctica' (Australia Department of Defence 2016: 54). The report does not make clear who would be non 'like-minded' because presumably that would have been awkward. The reader is left to speculate and might reasonably conclude that 'like-minded' is a shorthand term for western countries like the US, Norway, New Zealand and the UK.

In the AP published some nine years later by the Australian government, not by a policy think tank, the tone and substance is rather different. While *Frozen assets* was a work of advocacy, the AP is the product of that underlying culture of advocacy and action. Before its release, the Australian government commissioned a review of Australian polar activities, led by the former Australia's Antarctic Division director Tony Press, which led to the 2014 *20 Year Australian Antarctic strategic plan*. In his judgement, Australia only has a 'narrow window of opportunity' to act. As he contends, Australia must match its Antarctic aspirations with clear demonstration of presence and leadership in the Australian Antarctic Territory. Australia should become the partner of choice in East Antarctic logistics and science' (Press

2014). The report invokes both Australia as a claimant state (underlined by a black and white photograph of men—not all of them Australian it should be noted—waving their hands as the flag is raised over a base at Cape Denison in 1912) and as geographical partner of choice to others who want to work in East Antarctica (using maps of East Antarctica to show the location of other countries' scientific stations).

The 2016 AP builds on the Press review of 2014 and pivots around the idea that Australia's claimant status can be better protected by a programme of long-term investment and development on the one hand and on the other hand by using its geographical proximity and Hobart as hub to its commercial and geopolitical advantage. In his assessment of the Press review, Anthony Bergin reminded his readers that there were some 'awkward' things that needed to be borne in mind, 'But the Press review presents some cold facts: new Antarctic players, such as China, India and South Korea, are increasing their investments in Antarctic logistics and science. China has a new icebreaker and more stations in our territory than we do, two of which are new. In contrast to the Chinese, our Antarctic infrastructure is old and tired. While the recent commitment to a new icebreaker to replace the ageing *Aurora Australis* is a significant investment, the review finds that increased resources are necessary to strengthen our presence in Antarctica and modernise our bases' (Bergin 2014). Rather than reassure his readers, Bergin raises the prospect of an 'Antarctic cold rush', a potential scramble to fish more, to prospect biologically more, and to send more tourists to the region all to the potential detriment of Australia's sovereignty. He identifies other things that might resonate with the Australian public at the end of his article, 'Australia is rightly proud of its history in Antarctica and the story of Douglas Mawson, geologist, explorer and hero, still resonates' (Bergin 2014). It is his use of the word 'resonates' here that I want to probe further as we consider why 'resonating' matters.

In Antarctic nationalisms, the role of resonating is critical. Antarctic ambitions need be contagious, traveling long distances to connect certain individuals and communities with geopolitical ideologies. In other words, politicians and publics alike must *resonate* with Antarctic policies in spite of its physical distance. The stories associated with Mawson are important because they perform a form of affective labour compared to a detailed policy-orientated report by Press. Is it also about creating imaginative geographies and histories removing physical distance through imaginary and affective resonances and registers. In his reading, Bergin implies that to 'still resonate' is critical to persuading and reassuring Australian audiences that Mawson's legacy is being cherished and protected by the current generation of administrators and scientists responsible for AAT. And thus the juxtaposition with objects like polar vessels that he judged to be 'old and tired' is notable; memories of Mawson may be 'old' but they are not 'tired' because they have the capacity to

be catalytic, to encourage affective ‘state-change’ and in this case to excite, to provoke and to be demanding.

Using the AP as our example, three themes are used to illustrate how contemporary manifestations of Australian Antarctic nationalism pivots around relationships between objects, bodies and affective economies. As Eric Paglia (2015) noted with his argument pertaining to Svalbard and the ‘tele-coupled Arctic’, there is an interesting relationship to be teased out between claimant states (or sovereign state in the case of Svalbard – Norway) and their relationship to other stakeholders who contribute to a ‘global Antarctic’. In Arctic discourse, the eight Arctic states have been able to position countries like China and India as non-Arctic states. While China has defined itself as a ‘near Arctic state’, its relationship to Antarctica is anchored in stakeholder narratives emphasising trans-continental environmental change, polar science and logistics, and resource/environmental stewardship, with a strong interest in the current and future resource potential of the Antarctic region (Brady 2012).

Australian bodies

The Prime Ministerial foreword to the AP expresses the opinion that, ‘Australia has inherited a proud legacy from Sir Douglas Mawson and the generations of Australian Antarctic expeditioners who have followed in his footsteps – a legacy of heroism, scientific endeavour, and environmental stewardship’. As Peder Roberts has noted, Mawson’s association of environmental management with imperial authority is critical to sustaining and nourishing claims to Australian polar sovereignty. The Anglo-Australian explorer and geologist has a lot to answer for in this particular reading of Australian engagement with Antarctica and beyond because Prime Minister Turnbull also notes that the Mawson legacy, ‘has forged for all Australians, a profound and significant connection with Antarctica’. By any reading that is quite a ‘claim’ to make; to perform a discursive scale-jump in which the actions of one man come to represent Australia as nation-state. While not unusual in terms the wider canon of imperial heroes, it is striking nonetheless to see such a wide claim made about the capacity of a former Antarctic scientist and explorer to affect, we might say, ‘all Australians’.

The fascination with Mawson, at least with some Australians, is intriguing and it is worth thinking about how his body (‘including his footsteps’) proves so useful as a geopolitical strategy? The white imperial explorer-hero, as other scholars have noted, such as Max Jones’ investigation of Captain Robert Scott, prove tremendously productive in mobilising audiences and asking them to remember and to commemorate their expeditions and associated legacies (Jones 2003, 2014). Moreover, what films such as *Scott of the Antarctic* (1948) did was to ‘trade’ imperial memories of polar exploration for a fable about heroic endurance and stoicism about the brutal conditions facing the party attached to the *Terra Nova*

expedition (Dodds 2012). But as the complex legacy of Captain Scott and more latterly Cecil Rhodes reminds us, imperial heroes can also be lampooned, ridiculed and/or become the objects of post-colonial anger.

In this case, the AP explicitly assumes that the legacy of Douglas Mawson is an assured one for Australian officials and political leaders eager to promote and propagate the idea of Antarctica as integral to the Australian nation-state. Mawson and the later generation of explorers and scientists such as Philip Law and the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) provide a seamless history of white settlement, visitors seeking to not only explore and administer but also erase all traces of their visitation as ‘conquest’. What could have been ‘awkward’ was by-passed by a form of settler colonialism in the Antarctic, aided and abetted by objects and practices designed to reassure both expedition members and audiences back home.

The first object was rock because samples of rocks and fossils played a crucial role in forging a ‘connection’ with Australia and Antarctica. Building a geological connection enabled an imaginative and material stretching and connecting of the two continents. The Southern Ocean performing as a mere ‘bridge’ between two continental spaces, which were inextricably linked with one another. As a geologist Mawson was interested in rocks and initially intrigued by the fate of rocks deposited by Antarctica’s glaciers. The rock samples collected by his expeditions also offered up something else, an opportunity to assert possession over the geological record of Antarctica and by association Australia. The rocks were then part and parcel of the origin stories of both continents, and those ‘stories’ could also be told to Australian audiences. What is intriguing is how the tangible objects such as rocks were, and are, capable of generating affect and resonances as they are used to invite later generations of Australians to imagine Mawson’s enduring fascination with Antarctica.

The second object of interest was, and is, the photograph, and the manner in which expedition members have recorded their endeavours on and off the ice. While books, paintings and diaries are clearly part of the media ecology, the photograph has been a vital accomplice to Antarctic expeditions. It served to record and to inform others of the work of the expedition and was a vital element in the settler colonial activities of the claimant state. The formal ceremonies of possession were, wherever possible, photographed. In the AP, the document is littered with colour and black and white photographs showing Australians past and present researching, administering and politicising their involvement in Antarctica. One of the most significant sections of the AP deals with ‘Australia in Antarctica’ (and it could have also been termed ‘Antarctica in Australia’); in this section we finally get an admission that ‘Australia asserts sovereignty over 42% of the Antarctic continent - the Australian Antarctic Territory... Australia is an original signatory to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, and is staunchly committed

to maintaining its strength and effectiveness'. Juxtaposed next to the bald statement about being a claimant are pictures of the 1929–1931 BANZARE expedition team celebrating in front of expedition huts (furnished with a Union flag) and an expedition member securing a plaque announcing the establishment of Mawson research station in 1954.

The men's bodies either with arms aloft and/or holding a hammer seem apposite given the claims made in the document itself. Underwriting the history of Australian Antarctic expeditionary and scientific labours is an appeal to the corporeality of those endeavours. We are informed that, 'Australians completed some of the greatest land-based expeditions ever made in Antarctica, traversing thousands of kilometres across East Antarctica'. With the help of other objects and bodies, such as dogs, tractors and aircraft, the men attached to these expeditions and programmes were integral to the settler colonization of the AAT/EA. These exclusively white and male 'Australians', as Christy Collis reminds us, were contributing to a history of exploration and scientific investigation where rock and photography were vital accomplices in this vast project. The images contained within the section on 'Australia in Antarctica' are those portraying men at work, and interestingly for all the claims about travelling across vast areas of East Antarctica (not the AAT/EA we might note) the two images are fundamentally about immobility and even anchorage.

If there is 'awkwardness' here then it pivots around the gendered histories of Australia's encounters with Antarctica, one in which also indigenous and other non-white Australians have played a very marginal role in the settler politics. The claim pertaining to 'Australians' is a slippery one, and it is interesting to note how invoking the legacy of Sir Douglas Mawson contributes to a form of affective labour reassuring the reader that some Australian men have for the last hundred years played a substantial role in the exploration, discovery and settlement of AAT/EA. Unlike Scott, Mawson survives his polar exploration and continues to contribute to Australian public culture and an Australian polar station is named after him while he is still alive (compare Scott base in New Zealand's case). What the AP is rather less forthcoming about is the role of other nations and their exploratory and scientific work in East Antarctica and AAT. In the 1950s, the Soviet Union was a major investor in polar science and established bases in the AAT/EA as part of its contribution to the polar programme of the International Geophysical Year of 1957–1958. The Soviets famously carried out their own spectacular expeditionary trek across the ice in the creation of Vostok station, at the pole of relative inaccessibility. Latterly, other countries and in particular China established their own scientific stations including at the remote point of Dome Argus.

One million year old ice core

In the AP, the prospect of 'finding' the one million year old ice core is described and evaluated. It is clearly an

exciting prospect for scientists and for those responsible for managing AAT/EA. When we put Minister Hunt's presentation with the AP itself, however, there is evidence of 'awkwardness' as the international and the national rub up against one another. The international provenance of the Ice Core project is acknowledged, 'Through the International Partnership in Ice Core Sciences (IPICS) Australia has contributed to an array of 2,000 year old ice cores across Antarctica. Some of these have helped identify important climate linkages between Australia and Antarctica... [a one million year ice core] would allow us to extract a direct record of carbon dioxide and see what role if any, it may have played [in shifting ice age cycles]'. The IPICS involves over twenty nations including the US and UK and operates in both Antarctica and Greenland. It was established in 2002 and IPICS aims to create a network of ice core histories (spanning 2,000 years to 40,000 years) in order to improve understanding of past climates and glacial-interglacial shifts. It also aims to retrieve, with relevance to Australia, a one million year record from Antarctica. Scientists have postulated that the ice core is likely to be sourced somewhere in the East Antarctic Ice Sheet (Fischer and others 2013). So the search for the 'oldest-ice' core, therefore, is just one of a number of objectives for IPICS (for a wider discussion see Elzinga 2016).

There was another awkward moment, however, that emerged at a conference hosted by Australia on the work of IPICS in March 2016. Hosted by the Australian Antarctic Division and the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre, media reporting noted that an Australian scientific organisation, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), was preparing for job losses with climate research bearing the brunt of the downsizing. Media reporting of the initial announcement in February had been damning of the organisation and an open letter signed by nearly 3,000 scientists condemned 'The recent announcement of devastating cuts to the Australian CSIRO's Oceans and Atmosphere research program [which] has alarmed the global climate research community. The decision to decimate a vibrant and world-leading research program shows a lack of insight, and a misunderstanding of the importance of the depth and significance of Australian contributions to global and regional climate research. The capacity of Australia to assess future risks and plan for climate change adaptation crucially depends on maintaining and augmenting this research capacity' (Open Letter to Australian Government 2016).

The rationale was underpinned by a neoliberal vision of industrial collaboration and commercialisation of science. The decision to cut and re-purpose came in the wake of budget cuts, earlier staff losses and a new chief executive hired from the United States with a background in digital technology. The new chief executive, Larry Marshall, later admitted in the Australian Senate that the proposed job cuts at CSIRO and the loss of climate researchers had been badly handled (*The*

Guardian 2016). Internal memos from senior CSIRO staff suggest an organisation struggling over a number of years to reconcile public service science with the pressures imposed by national government and a broader trend towards the privatised science regime (Mirowski 2011).

Marshall's public awkwardness was made manifest in the public scrutiny that followed. How critics contended could a leading scientific body make 275 job cuts in the aftermath of the 2015 Paris Climate Change talks? The decision to announce that Hobart would host a new national climate research centre employing some 40 people was welcomed but widely thought to be rather modest and opportunistic given the government's desire to concentrate activity in Hobart as premier polar gateway. But what is perhaps notable is the manner in which climate change science is still being put to work here in terms of demonstrating polar engagement. As a report in *Nature* noted, the new centre was not going to do much to shift the perceived severity of the original cuts themselves:

Opposition to CSIRO's cuts, the result of a strategic shift away from basic climate science, has been strong. Almost 3,000 scientists have signed an open letter [sent in February 2016] to CSIRO and to Australia's government, raising concerns over the effects of the move on the nation's climate research capacity. Rallies have been held in major Australian cities, and CSIRO management has been questioned by the Australian senate about its decision, as part of an on-going inquiry scrutinizing government budget cuts (Gough 2016).

The materiality of Antarctic ice is clearly significant because the core and the process of coring offers up something rather tantalising to Australian audiences. The prospect of drilling through Antarctic ice and reading not only further into deep geologic time but using the past to read off possible futures. As the drill pushes through the ice, one senses from the AP that Australia's geophysical and geopolitical connection to the continent deepens. And as Minister Hunt noted in his presentation this is what makes the Ice Core project intrinsically exciting:

Beyond that, science is a key national interest. This funding today, and this strategy helps us in the search for the million-year ice core. This is one of the world's great scientific endeavours, and it is likely, on the advice I have from Dr Nick Gales and other scientists within AAD, that if the ice core is to be found, it will be found in Australia's Antarctic Territory (Hunt 2016).

Australia can thus claim a *nationalised* provenance over one million years of planetary history; thanks to a possible accident of geography, law, history and politics. The ground zero of ice core dating 'belongs' to Australia and by association a connection to Antarctica that goes far beyond the one invoked by the Prime Minister in his foreword to the AP when he noted, 'Mawson's legacy has forged, for all Australians, a profound and significant

connection with Antarctica. The Australian Antarctic Territory occupies a unique place in our national identity'. It remains a moot point about whether this is indeed felt by most Australians and the Prime Minister offers no evidence for such a claim. Finding the one million year ice core in the AAT might be more likely when one claims over 40% of the polar continent but it also resurrects, by accident, a previous Australian encounter with India over the possible location of a research station in East Antarctica. Jessica O'Reilly dissected that particular encounter, and showed how India's claims to a geological connection with Antarctica (via the history of Gondwanaland some 125 million years ago) can cause problems in nationalising narratives on the part of claimant states (O'Reilly 2011).

Australian attempts to nationalise the one million year old ice core are awkward however. In May 2015, *The New York Times* reported under the banner of 'China, pursuing strategic interests, builds presence in Antarctica' that Australia and China were collaborating with one another through the gateway of Hobart and that, 'China is betting it has found the best location to drill, at an area called Dome A, or Dome Argus, the highest point on the East Antarctic Ice Sheet. Though it is considered one of the coldest places on the planet, with temperatures of 130 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, a Chinese expedition explored the area in 2005 and established a research station in 2009' (*The New York Times* 2015). In other words, the report suggested that there might be a 'race' between China and Australia to see who could obtain the first one million year old ice core. And one could imagine that China would refer to East Antarctica as the source area not AAT. Beyond that, ice core recovery work, interpretation and analysis is a multi-national affair, as other consortia around Vostok, Dome C, Dome Fuji and Lake Ellsworth remind us (more generally, Elzinga 2016). British academics, such as Lewis and Maslin, have recently put to use the Law Dome core to raise an argument regarding the onset of the Anthropocene being initiated with the European colonisation of South America (Lewis and Maslin 2015).

For scholars of Antarctica, recent writings on the more than human/non-human offer potentially rich pickings to interrogate further the manner in which objects such as the ice core are entangled in sovereignty projects. The ice core in this reading become not an inert object but something more active; a lively subject communicating across time and space with a variety of audiences. In so doing, it also raises to the fore awkward encounters for claimant states such as Australia in terms of how the planetary history of the Earth becomes embedded in nationalist narratives and practices including images of Australian hands holding ice core drilling equipment and the role of Australian institutions in storing and archiving the 2,000 year old ice cores. While it might well be so that Australian hands are the dominant form of agency here, the ice itself might prove 'disobedient' and even

awkward as it potentially evades Australian discovery and/or reveals how ice cores archive past Australian encounters with the carbon age through the use of leaded petrol from the inter-war period to the 1970s (Wolff and Suttie 1994).

Hobart as hub

Hobart as a gateway to Antarctica or 'hub' in Australian Antarctic parlance has been a long time in the making and is saturated with sovereignty politics (Elzinga 2013). As a point of departure and arrival of Antarctic voyages, the port-city enjoys a considerable historical provenance. The city's historical connections with Antarctica and the Southern Ocean have been interrogated in the aftermath of news that a replica of 'Mawson's hut' has been added to an expanding portfolio of polar tourist attractions, which opens up an awkward encounter between Australia's role as colonial settler power in the Antarctic with a more trans-national reading of Hobart as a gathering point for a more international encounter with Antarctica (Leane and others 2016). As Elle Leane and colleagues reflect, 'Mawson's hut frames touristic encounters around highly familiar national and urban narratives, which underpin much heritage discourse today... What becomes lost in such a framing is the opportunity to elevate the hut and the heritage-scape surrounding it to a space associated with the internationalism of Antarctica. Governance and cooperation in the region continues to be shaped by a complex and ambiguous political dynamic. Seven countries claim territorial rights, with certain areas subject to contestation from overlapping claims. The precariousness of this structure is complicated by Russia's and the United States' refusal to recognise the seven existing claims (while reserving the right to make their own), and the increasing involvement of comparatively new Antarctic players such as India and China' (Leane and others 2016: 223).

The AP highlights the crucial role of Hobart as the home of the Australian Antarctic Division and gateway to East Antarctica more generally and not just AAT (Fig. 3.). As Minister Hunt noted, 'And then last of all we have the economic, and growth and jobs benefits to Hobart and Tasmania, Hobart being the global gateway to the Antarctic. This is about science jobs, education jobs, it's about logistical jobs, it's about the attraction of Hobart as a world class visiting point for the creation of climate science, of environmental science, of Antarctic science and for people to participate in that'. The Tasmanian government has also been swift to promote the port as a 'natural gateway' to 'East Antarctica and the Southern Ocean and Macquarie Island with excellent port facilities and regular flights to Antarctica'. Hobart has also acquired a track record of acting as a logistical hub for other national Antarctic programmes including France, Russia and China but that is anything but 'natural'. To assume any form of naturalness would be for any 'awkwardness' about being a widely unrecognised claimant state to

be wished away by making a virtue of the point of departure (Hobart) rather than the point of arrival (East Antarctica/AAT).

The choice of 'East Antarctica' as geographical description is a deliberate one designed to avoid further 'awkwardness' in respect of those international partners who do not recognise AAT. It also refers to an even more extensive part of the Antarctic continent than the AAT itself, so paradoxically ends up being expansionist in remit and even 'demanding' of further Australian infrastructural investment such as an ice runway at Casey station. The East Antarctic Shield for, example, encompasses over 70% of the continent compared to 42%, as represented by the AAT. Encompassing the East Antarctic Ice Sheet, the shield area has as its heart the aptly named Mawson craton, an extensive yet geological stable area of the continental interior. But this huge area, including the AAT, is also one that worries some Australian political commentators. Writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Anthony Bergin is more forthcoming that the Action Plan about the dangers involved in facilitating the access of others to East Antarctica:

The strategy talks about being a logistics collaborator of choice in East Antarctica. But it fails to acknowledge the importance of our search and rescue responsibilities. As we, and other Antarctic nations, enhance their polar programs, with more personnel and greater coverage of land and marine activities, the risk of SAR incidences will increase in this harsh environment.

The strategy sensibly focuses on the importance of our work in the East Antarctic region. That's congruent with our core interest of sovereignty over our Antarctic territory. But we should avoid any perception that we're focused only on those waters surrounding our sub-Antarctic territories and our Antarctic territory.

Where to from here? If we're fair dinkum about pursuing our Antarctic interests, we need to be active in Antarctica. But our present capability means we can't match what others are doing in our territory, let alone lead (Bergin 2016).

What the discourses and practices associated with Hobart as hub in the AP and elsewhere reveal is how the appeal to the gateway/hub functions in two inter-related ways. First, as a national gateway for Australia and Australian possessions in the Southern Ocean and AAT; second, as a node for the performance of national authority over others through legal and administrative measures associated with air and sea-port state jurisdiction; and third, as a site for extracting profit from being an international hub for the polar operations of others. It is also an essential element in the formal architecture of the Antarctic Treaty System. Hobart is not only the headquarters for the Commission for the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) but also the place in which Australia presents its Antarctic and Southern Ocean

interests. As the Tasmanian government notes it is the ‘perfect gateway’ because:

Hobart provides natural access to the Southern Ocean, sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island and the vast East Antarctic region. It is the logical resupply point for East Antarctic stations and bases. Tasmania is the powerhouse driving Australia’s activities in Antarctica, the sub-Antarctic islands and the Southern Ocean. It is the preferred location for Australia’s assets relating to the Antarctic, with more than 830 Tasmanians employed in science, research and polar support activities. Hobart is recognised around the world as one of five Antarctic gateway cities, with direct air and sea access to East Antarctica. The combination of expert polar businesses and infrastructure servicing Antarctic expeditions and our hub of scientific expertise, makes Hobart unique among the gateway cities (Tasmanian Government 2014).

The notion of ‘perfection’ in this case is interesting because the sales pitch by both the Tasmanian government and the federal Australian government revolves around creating a double win. So while there may be economic gain for the state of Tasmania and geopolitical gain for the federal government, it might be tempered by the realisation that countries such as China threaten to expose Australia as an effective claimant state. As he contends, ‘If we’re not a big player in Antarctic affairs then our polar agenda will be driven by others. There’s now, for example, a risk of being left behind by China. China’s setting up its first air squadron in Antarctica this year. Last year it announced it was preparing to build a fifth research station on the continent’ (Bergin 2016). Even if both state and federal level government actors are working to extract profit and prestige from relative geographical proximity to Antarctica, others appear to be building things, flying things and simply doing things that imperil the settler colonial project in AAT/East Antarctica. Even if sovereignty claims are held in abeyance and one enjoys the right of inspection under the terms of the Antarctic Treaty, Bergin’s comments resurrect something that the current legal, scientific and political architecture (inspired by the IGY 1957–1958) cannot resolve, what one does and how one feels about the activities of others are two different things.

For claimant states such as Australia and New Zealand, ‘hub-talk’ had become one way of reconciling certain squeamishness about sovereignty and stewardship in Antarctica. Under an explicitly neo-liberal rubric, claimant/gateway states leverage and recast their geographical proximity in a way that allows them to make financial and geopolitical capital. In the past, proximity was used to advance sovereignty projects but now geography is being made to pay in other ways. New Zealand has a similar strategy with its promotion of Christchurch as a gateway for other operators including the United States and Italy (note Gateway Antarctica at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch). When the Chinese leader Xi Jinping visited in November 2014, the

Chinese icebreaker *Snow Dragon* was berthed in Hobart harbour and became part of the official visit. President Xi’s visit, while predominantly focussed around energy projects in the island state, became an opportunity for both Australia and China to engage in Antarctic hub geopolitics. The two countries’ leaders signed a bilateral agreement, which in essence confirmed Hobart as China’s preferred Antarctic gateway. But it was done so on a Chinese ship. The Tasmanian premier, Will Hodgman, noted at the time of the agreement:

Tasmania and China have collaborated in Antarctica for the past 30-years and this agreement will strengthen our friendship with China while also providing a boost to the Tasmanian economy. The Antarctic sector makes a significant contribution to the state’s economy, contributing more than \$187 million each year and directly employing around 1,185 people, with Tasmanian businesses providing specialised cold climate goods and services, food and shipping supplies and fuel for ships and stations. Today is an important milestone for Chinese and Tasmanian Antarctic friendship and we look forward to a productive relationship into the future (Hodgman 2014).

The signing ceremony took place on *Snow Dragon*, the same ship that, earlier in the year, helped rescue the ‘Spirit of Mawson’ expedition: an Australian led enterprise designed to recreate some of the scientific work carried out decades earlier by Mawson and his expedition members. Unfortunately for the more recent expedition, their ship became trapped in sea ice and the helicopter attached to *Snow Dragon* played an important role in affecting a rescue of the non-essential crew members.

Occasionally, however, ‘hub-talk’ does not offer quite the reassurance that is intended to Tasmanian and Australian audiences. With the emphasis on trade, science and logistical cooperation in Antarctic operations, a great deal of affective investment has been made by Australian stakeholders to reassure local and national communities that China’s role is either geopolitically benign and/or commercially advantageous. In their piece for *The Conversation*, Indi Hodgson-Johnston and Julia Jabour ask at the end ‘Is the AAT under threat?’ They ask an awkward question that premiers and prime ministers in Hobart and Canberra do not want to articulate. As part of the preamble to their intervention, they note that, ‘The issue was raised this week with claims that Australian researchers should have been deployed to study an issue at the Totten Glacier, just 400km from the Australian Casey base. Instead, a US mission had been sent, *ironically* via Hobart. Faced with growing interest in the region from other nations such as China, South Korea, India, Russia and Iran, there was a call for an extra A\$10-20 million a year in Australian Antarctic research’ (Hodgson-Johnston and Jabour 2014, my emphasis). The keyword is ‘ironically’ because they use it, I think, to alert the reader to the apparently unexpected or even paradoxical occurrence of either a US mission departing from an

Australian port-city (as opposed to departing from a New Zealand port) and/or a US mission that did the work an Australian team should have done because the glacier in question was *only* 400km away from an Australian research station. Either way, the Americans used Australia as a gateway and in effect exposed Australia's failure to use its gateway to further its geopolitical and scientific interests. They then use that example to extrapolate and warn readers that a whole series of predominantly Asian states are also showing signs of 'growing interest' in the region (which is shorthand for AAT).

When answering their question 'Is the AAT under threat?' they conclude with the following piece of prose invested with a form of affective labour:

In the most unlikely event that the Treaty should end, then any rival claimant will need to submit to a competitive process with Australia, bettering its long standing history of effective occupation. Broader, untested arguments of common heritage aside, it is unlikely that another country could defeat Australia's claim. We should acknowledge and celebrate the consistently peaceful intentions embodied in the Treaty and associated activities of other countries within the AAT. Article IV makes the discourse of fear of other countries' presence on Australia's territory a moot point (Hodgson-Johnston and Jabour 2014).

Their article is thus designed to reassure the assumed Australian reader that Australia and specifically Hobart acting as a 'hub' for others is not jeopardising Australia's sovereignty over the AAT. They articulate the awkward question and find an answer that offers reassurance. Australia's long record of 'effective occupation' means that settler colonial project is well established. Australia has had over 80 years of settler history in general to perfect its title to Antarctic territory and the AP is keen to remind readers of that. The people and things that pass through gateways such as Hobart are reinforcing that sense of entitlement and in the process supporting Tasmania as the 'natural gateway'.

But the thing about hubs and gateways is that they also end up supporting the counter-sovereignty projects of others. In the 1950s, Australian and New Zealand governments worried about Soviet vessels using their ports while establishing their IGY Antarctic programme (Gan 2009). As Irina Gan has shown, the Soviets had no intention of leaving Antarctica despite speculation in Australia and elsewhere about the long-term interests of the Soviet Union. In an era characterised by rampant anti-communism and poor Australian-Soviet relations, Australia under Prime Minister Robert Menzies' leadership felt pressurised into offering their port facilities to the IGY Soviet programme. The Soviet vessel *Lena* used the facilities at Port Adelaide before leaving for Antarctica in March 1956 and the Australian government was pressurised by the UK and the US into accepting its presence. Douglas Mawson was one of the first to visit the *Lena* and later the ship *Ob* also arrived at Port Adelaide. In each case, Mawson was central in the

welcoming party but he also embodied controversy when it became clear the Menzies government tried to extract some form of recognition from the Soviet Union that they were travelling towards the AAT. The crew of *Ob* were also invited by the Australia-USSR Friendship Society to visit other Australian cities but the federal government vetoed this proposal on the basis of the security risk the crew and the vessel posed. As is well known, this awkward encounter did not produce a desirable outcome for Australia; the Soviet Union did not acknowledge Australian sovereignty and they continued in the event to use Australia's port facilities, as would have been expected given the prevailing ethos of the IGY and later the 1959 Antarctic Treaty. They also established the bulk of their IGY Antarctic programme in the AAT and have never left.

Conclusion

Anthony Bergin writing in the aftermath of the release of the AP told his readers that, 'We sometimes forget that we assert sovereignty over 42 per cent of the Antarctic continent, roughly the size of mainland Australia minus Queensland' (Bergin 2016). He certainly was not referring to himself in the category of 'we'. He has been a passionate advocate of Australia's occupation of Antarctica. For him and others, there are a constellation of objects, humans and affective resonances that can and do get assembled in order to ensure that Australia does more to ensure that its interests and rights are protected. The constellations themselves are multiple, complex, mobile and dynamic and include infrastructure, proclamations, APs, ceremonies of remembrance, information papers to the Antarctic Treaty System, hosting others in places like Hobart and the like. Sometimes words fail to move us, and sometimes objects behave in a disobedient manner such as when sea ice traps an Australian led expedition ('The Spirit of Mawson') in Antarctica, which then has to be rescued by a Chinese polar vessel. Longer-term, China's scientific and logistical investment in Antarctica (and the Arctic) reveal interesting insights into how that country positions itself as a pre-eminent stakeholder (Brady 2016) and ice core research is a constant reminder of how a great many stakeholders intersect with one another.

The exploration here of Australian Antarctic nationalism is by no means comprehensive but one designed to open up debate. The term awkward is intended to be provocative; to catalyse on moments of unease and anxiety so that it might be possible to better understand contemporary manifestations of Antarctic nationalism in the light of commentaries, which warn of growing tension over the future of Antarctica in terms of fisheries management, resource allocation and the relationship with environmental protection, and the commercial exploitation of the biological life of Antarctica. In the spirit of Michel Foucault, we might conclude by saying that Antarctic nationalisms, while not unique, perhaps reveal most

clearly the inter-relationship between sovereignty, security and circulation. With sovereignty being about exercising authority within a territory, security being about managing uncertainty and circulation being preoccupied with wanted and unwanted forms of mobility. What we might say about contemporary Australian Antarctic nationalism is that government ministers, journalists and academics desperately seek to avoid awkward encounters with others, and strive to assemble and enroll objects, peoples, sites and ideas conducive to the continued claiming and occupation of 42% of Antarctica. It is a tall, wide and deep task and one that relies upon a degree of control that is always going to be elusive and paradoxically ends up producing the very awkwardness it seeks to avoid. But it is not one unique to Australia even if it remains the largest claimant state in Antarctica.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Peter Adey, Rachael Squire, Peder Roberts and Aant Elzinga for their very helpful comments on an earlier draft. My appreciation also goes to the referees for their incisive analysis of the paper. The usual disclaimers apply, however.

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