

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

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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

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90 once again generating awkwardness including living re- 146
 91 source management and marine protected areas in the 147
 92 Southern Ocean and the future status of Antarctica as a 148
 93 global resource. As we pursue further studies of Antarc- 149
 94 tic nationalisms, amongst claimants and non-claimants 150
 95 alike, we will need to place our analyses into context. 151
 96 For example, the politics of labelling and interchanging 152
 97 East Antarctica with Australian Antarctic Territory is 153
 98 a relatively new innovation in Australian polar policy 154
 99 discourse but the invocation of ‘gateway’ is not. Earlier 155
 100 Australian governments and authorities have made claims 156
 101 regarding Hobart and indeed Australia more generally as 157
 102 a ‘gateway state’ (Dodds 1997). 158

103 The Australian example

104 The specific object of concern to this paper is a rather 162
 105 stilted (at least in my opinion) April 2016 press con- 163
 106 ference by the Australian Environment Minister, Greg 164
 107 Hunt, on the subject of the AP (Fig. 1.). Hunt made 165
 108 some important claims about Australia’s relationship to 166
 109 Antarctica, and the vision that the Australian government 167
 110 under the leadership of Malcolm Turnbull has for its 168
 111 future. The Environment Minister, warming to his theme, 169
 112 declared, ‘And as part of that vision, we want to be the 170
 113 world leading gateway to the Antarctic. And Hobart is 171
 114 the gateway to the Antarctic for the future. That’s what 172
 115 we are seeking to do and that’s what we are setting out 173
 116 as part of this process’. His references to Hobart and its 174
 117 future role were intended to placate others who had ru- 175
 118 minated over the funding, scope and vision underwriting 176
 119 Australia’s plans for Antarctica and the Southern Ocean 177
 120 in the future (for example, Bray 2016). 178

121 In the course of his public presentation (about seven 179
 122 minutes), the minister never mentioned that Australia 180
 123 claims 42% of the polar continent; rather than mention 181
 124 the word ‘claimant’ he picked the word ‘custodian’ and 182
 125 sought refuge with the expression ‘along with others’. As 183
 126 he stated, ‘we [Australia] are custodians of the Antarctic 184
 127 along with others, as an original signatory of the Ant- 185
 128 arctic Treaty... Beyond the interests of environment and 186
 129 science, we also have the great tasks of national security, 187
 130 and a peaceful cooperative Antarctica is a critical piece 188
 131 of a peaceful cooperative Southern Ocean, and if we have 189
 132 a Southern Ocean which is free of strategic competition, 190
 133 then Australia is safer and the costs for Australians are 191
 134 dramatically lower’ (Ministerial presentation for the AP 192
 135 2016). In his foreword to the AP, the Prime Minister 193
 136 observed that, ‘A strong and effective Antarctic Treaty 194
 137 is in Australia’s national interest’ and that he hoped 195
 138 the country would be ‘... a partner of choice in East 196
 139 Antarctica and to work even more closely with other 197
 140 countries within the Antarctic Treaty System’ (AP 2016 198
 141 and see Fig. 2.). But again he does not mention that 199
 142 Australia is a very large claimant state. Ultimately, both 200
 143 men thought that ‘a new era of Australian endeavour’ 201
 144 was being articulated in the AP. It would have been 202
 145 ‘awkward’ perhaps to mention a word like ‘claimant’ and 203

note the use of the geographical term ‘East Antarctica’. 146
 Henceforth, this paper deliberately uses the combination 147
 Australian Antarctic Territory/East Antarctica because I 148
 want to draw attention to its awkwardness. 149

While others have addressed the actual details of the 150
 AP, relating to infrastructure, science, gateways and Aus- 151
 tralia’s role in the Antarctic Treaty System (for example 152
 Bergin 2016), my focus is on how it might be indicative 153
 of an ‘awkward nationalism’. Australian historian Tom 154
 Griffiths’ elegant account of his voyage to Antarctica 155
 on the 100th anniversary of the 1911–1912 Mawson 156
 expedition inspired this investigation. He invokes well the 157
 materiality of Antarctica (the ice, the winds, the cold) and 158
 the symbolism of the place (the hopes, dreams and desires 159
 of those who went there and those who helped to induce 160
 others to go there). He links up well in other words with 161
 contemporary humanities scholarship on Antarctica. But 162
 then there comes a point in the article when he appears 163
 to realise that he is enrolled in an ongoing sovereignty 164
 project. The writing becomes ‘awkward’ almost coy in 165
 its explanation of the role of his body, his presence and 166
 his actions: 167

In my history of Antarctica, *Slicing the silence*, I 168
made a bit of fun of proclamation ceremonies in front 169
 of audiences of Adélies on windy, remote Antarctic 170
 coastlines. After all, claiming something as slippery 171
 as ice *is* laced with comedy, and narrow nationalism 172
 appears inapt on a continent of ice where just being 173
 human is so marginal and vulnerable. There’s a 174
 slightly irreverent chapter in my book called *Planting* 175
flags. And now, in January 2012, *I was suddenly in-* 176
involved in the ritual myself... Why would Australians 177
 today raise the flag in this international place? There 178
 is no doubt that by doing so we are quietly affirming 179
 Australian sovereignty over 42 per cent of Antarctica 180
 and that the penguins are not the only creatures with 181
 a colony here. *But this was also a deliberately modest* 182
ceremony. No anthem was sung, no cheers called for, 183
 no proclamation made, no mention of ‘territory’ by 184
 the prime minister, and the emphasis of the speeches 185
 was on the science of the Australasian Antarctic 186
 Expedition and its continuities with the scientific 187
 priorities of the Treaty era (Griffiths 2012, emphasis 188
 added). 189

As a reader, it is jarring. The idea that one would 190
 be ‘suddenly involved’ seems odd given the length of 191
 planning and effort involved in the 2011–2012 com- 192
 memorative voyage. The title of his article is anything 193
 but modest ‘Thus began the Australian occupation of 194
 Antarctica’. How one can make ‘a bit of fun’ is also 195
 intriguing – would it have been too rude if one had made 196
 a ‘lot of fun’ at the idea of a group of Edwardian era 197
 men cheering a flag being raised on a remote spot in 198
 Antarctica? (compare Collis 2004). *Pace* Griffiths, I think 199
 absence and modesty speak quite ‘loudly’ about Aus- 200
 tralian ambition: it is something instead to be carefully 201
 engineered and crafted. Here appeared to be a group of 202
 people preaching a stern and considered dedication to 203

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

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

227 My reaction to the article was affective and visceral.
 228 It made me think that it was all very odd and maybe
 229 more so because of Antarctica’s intersectional histories
 230 of human encounter in which white men have often
 231 taken to performing on the ice (for example Bloom
 232 1993; Glasberg 2012). I am using ‘awkward’ in the way
 233 that American cultural critic Todd Reeser (2011) uses it
 234 in his exploration of the affective politics of ‘awkward
 235 masculinities’, when the normative and hegemonic model
 236 of masculinity (for example heterosexual, white, able-
 237 bodied) is challenged, scrutinised and or undermined.
 238 Awkward as a term implies discomfort and squeamish-
 239 ness and, in the spirit of Sara Ahmed’s feminist work,
 240 provokes us to consider how an array of things, words and
 241 practices can and do disrupt hegemonic norms, values,
 242 practices and performances associated with hegemonic
 243 masculinities (akin to a ‘comfort zone’). As noted in
 244 her *The cultural politics of emotion*, hetero-normativity
 245 ‘functions as a form of public comfort by allowing bodies
 246 to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape’
 247 (Ahmed 2007: 148). She uses the example of the chair,
 248 and how the chair moulds around the sitting body and
 249 over time repeated acts of sitting leave an ‘imprint’ on the
 250 chair’s material. Scaling up she contends that social space
 251 for some people is like a chair, which can be normalised
 252 in so far that one barely notices it as an object with a
 253 particular design and associated affective properties (for
 254 example ‘comfortable’ and/or ‘relaxing’). The moulded
 255 chair can also be uncomfortable for others who try to sit
 256 in it thereafter. Or as David Day concluded, ‘... Australia
 257 can take some *comfort* from the existence of Mawson’s
 258 carefully preserved hut at Commonwealth Bay. Whatever
 259 the Russians might do, the hut was a potent reminder
 260 that the Australian involvement with the territory had
 261 preceded that of the Russians by several decades’ (Day

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

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

298 Using Ahmed’s analogy, the imprint of claimant states
 299 on the ‘Antarctic chair’ has had to endure other forms
 300 of imprinting. Other bodies, infrastructures, place names
 301 and interests have established themselves. Access, in-
 302 spection and freedom of movement across the region are
 303 the demands of the Treaty. By deliberately not aligning
 304 themselves with the claimants and their visions of na-
 305 tional territory, the non-claimants such as China and India
 306 and semi-claimants such as the United States and Russia
 307 have found ways to disrupt and unsettle the wellbeing
 308 of claimant states. As we know the Antarctic Treaty is
 309 in essence a device designed to manage unease, even
 310 squeamishness, about who owns Antarctica but how you
 311 put that into practice is demanding. Knowing when and
 312 where to articulate your sovereignty and security interests
 313 is problematic. Sometimes one might have to turn to
 314 objects like ice, ships and dead Antarctic explorers to do
 315 explicit sovereignty labour. On other occasions, words
 316 like ‘stewardship’ and ‘leadership’ might suffice and
 317 hopefully resonate with audiences. Walton and Dudeney
 318 (2012) provide a simple example when they assert that
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Fig. 1. Environment Minister Greg Hunt announces the 2016 Action Plan
 Source: <https://twitter.com/ausantarctic/status/725167639320895489>

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

333 My interest in ‘awkward Antarctic nationalism’ is
 334 underscored by a concern for how nationalism works on
 335 an affective register. A recent paper exploring Australian
 336 Antarctic sovereignty makes this point discreetly, ‘Aus-
 337 tralia claims sovereignty over almost 6 million km²
 338 of the Antarctic continent. The Australian Antarctic Ter-
 339 ritory (AAT) is not widely recognised internationally.
 340 Antarctic Treaty Article IV does not extinguish or di-
 341 minish Australia’s claim. Article IV does not prevent
 342 Australia, for example, from explicitly discussing the
 343 AAT in domestic politics. Discussing enforcement of
 344 Australian domestic law in the Southern Ocean, def-
 345 ending the territorial claim and *other emotive issues*
 346 related to Antarctica requires *some sensitivity* to broader
 347 international diplomacy’ (Hodgson-Johnston 2016: 183,
 348 emphasis added). The words ‘emotive’ and ‘some sensi-
 349 tivity’ are for me noteworthy. But how to demonstrate
 350 ‘some sensitivity’ while avoiding a ‘lack of sensitivity’?
 351 And what are those ‘other emotive issues’?

352 Australian ministers responsible for announcing and
 353 delivering on the AP hoped and expected that the prom-
 354 isory note of ‘action’ would function as a form of affective
 355 labour. In Michael Hardt’s terms, affective labour is a
 356 reproductive process in which awkwardness and unease
 357 can be managed even banished when it comes, in this
 358 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 reas- 359
 360 suring passengers about inflight safety, ministerial figures
 361 and academics alike engage in forms of ‘affective labour’,
 362 as they seek to assure citizens/readers that Australia’s
 363 claim to 42% of the polar continent is ‘defended’. My
 364 reference to Minister Hunt’s apparent awkwardness then
 365 is an entry point into both affective and counter-affective
 366 labour, when the very unease and anxiety that things like
 367 APs are supposed to mitigate do not resonate in quite
 368 the way that was imagined. Just because you do not say
 369 certain things, it does not guarantee that ‘awkwardness’
 370 is managed let alone dissipated. Like chronic pain it
 371 is something that needs constant attention even if it is
 372 something that one might want to wish away.

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



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

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

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

388 Over the last twenty years, a number of scholars have
 389 written about Antarctic nationalism and explored how
 390 and why nation-states have sought to engage and embrace
 391 their Antarctic territories. From a traditional geopolitical
 392 perspective, Jack Child was a pioneer of a strand of
 393 research that considered how South American military
 394 authors in the main used articles, books and maps to ar-
 395 ticulate a 'South American Antarctic' and in particular to
 396 advocate a view of Argentina and Chile being materially
 397 connected to the Antarctic continent (Child 1985, 2008).
 398 In that sense geo-politics might be more appropriate
 399 rather than the portmanteau term geopolitics, because
 400 the Argentine and Chilean writings of South America's
 401 relationship to the Antarctic were underwritten by the
 402 material intersection of South American and Antarctic
 403 rock, sea and ice. In the late 1970s, the corporeal also
 404 became another register to naturalise those connections
 405 further as Argentine and Chilean children were born
 406 and raised in Antarctica. The material and corporeal
 407 are important to what Michael Billig terms expressions
 408 of 'banal nationalism', where along with language (for
 409 example 'our territory') and practices (for example the
 410 waving of a flag) the nation-state reproduces itself (Billig
 411 1995; Benwell 2014).
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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,

472 leaving behind them flags and cairns of possession.
 473 Colonialism, however, involves the subsequent practice
 474 of spatial possession by occupation: the construction of
 475 settlements and the occupation of imperially claimed
 476 space. In Australia, as elsewhere, colonial spatiality is
 477 explicitly gendered as feminine, while imperial spatiality
 478 remains a masculine preserve' (Collis 2009: 515). Her
 479 work chimed with critical scholarship on Australia's in-
 480 terior colonialism and the gendered regime of settlement,
 481 exploration and mobility more generally (for example,
 482 Hains 2002).

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

515 Building on that critical Antarctic nationalisms lit-
 516 erature, the paper ties together the material and the af-
 517 fective, associated with those nationalisms. In Australia's
 518 delimitation of outer continental shelves, for example,
 519 rock samples played a crucial element in assembling
 520 the evidence needed by the UN body the Commission
 521 on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) but so
 522 did an administrative decision taken by the Australian
 523 government. In order to avoid awkwardness with the
 524 wider international community, the materials pertaining
 525 to the AAT were held back from formal consideration by
 526 the CLCS (Oude Elferink 2008, 2013; Press 2012). The
 527 decision was in effect a form of affective labour designed
 528 to reassure international audiences that Australia was a
 529 'modest' claimant. Anticipating the reaction of others

is not always straightforward however. The sudden and 530
 temporary upheavals and unsettlement caused by the 531
 mere mention of words like 'China' can and do un- 532
 settle members of the Australian Antarctic communities. 533
 Sometimes the fictional world can do that sort of unset- 534
 tling work rather well. The Australian novelist Louisa 535
 Larkin's 2012 polar thriller *Thirst*, imagines a Chinese 536
 military organisation attacking an Australian research 537
 station (named Hope). What's intriguing is how many 538
 Australian reviewers simply glossed over the geopolitical 539
 premise of the novel while the novel ran into difficulty 540
 with the Chinese censors. Were the reviewers simply 541
 assuming that, although fictional, the premise itself was 542
 not outrageous? Maybe the sudden twinges and even 543
 'gut feelings' that some might feel regarding the need 544
 for Australia to do more to protect its sovereignty and 545
 interests are rooted in this taken-for-granted geopolitical 546
 imagination of an Australia vulnerable to powerful Euro- 547
 Asian others: Russia, India and China. 548

Australia's Antarctic 2020 AP and the Australian 549 Antarctic Territory: bodies, cores and proximity 550

In an earlier paper with Alan Hemmings, we identified 551
 an inclination for what we termed 'frontier vigilantism' in 552
 some Australian commentators when discussing the chal- 553
 lenges and opportunities facing the Australian Antarctic 554
 Territory/East Antarctica (Dodds and Hemmings 2009 555
 and the response by Bergin and Haward 2009). Using a 556
 2007 report issued by the Australian Strategic Policy In- 557
 stitute (ASPI) entitled *Frozen assets: securing Australia's* 558
Antarctic future, we argued that there was a tendency 559
 to imagine and represent the AAT as a vulnerable and 560
 feminised space, at the apparent mercy of external parties, 561
 including China. Throughout the report, the authors of 562
 that report appeared to us at least to be calling on the then 563
 Australian government to do more; to invest more, to care 564
 more and to stop being complacent. 565

Invoking a form of polar 'Orientalism', we argued that 566
 some Australian commentators represent the AAT/EA as 567
 being at risk of 'penetration' and we argued, controver- 568
 sially, that the report was shot through with gendered 569
 language and analogy. As many critics have noted, in- 570
 cluding Susan Sontag, analogy and metaphor perform 571
 important discursive and affective labour, their usage 572
 can provoke us, reassure us, anger us and please us 573
 (Sontag 1978). While we can argue over who or what the 574
 'us' represents, these linguistic devices are tied up with 575
 affective economies. The 2007 report was not intended 576
 to reassure readers rather it was intended to provoke, 577
 to unsettle even scare the Australian federal government 578
 into taking action. 579

This trend to articulate China as a troubling 'presence' 580
 continues to this day with another commentary published 581
 in the ASPI's magazine *The Strategist* warning that: 582

China has developed a presence in the Antarctic 583
 through the establishment of four research stations, 584
 three of which are located in the Australian Antarctic 585

586 Territory (AAT). China has already bestowed Chinese
 587 names on 359 sites on Antarctica. Notably, China’s
 588 Kunlun (昆仑站) research station, which opened in
 589 Australian territory in 2009, is located 7.4 kilometres
 590 from Dome Argus Dome A, close to the centre of
 591 the continent—a demonstration of China’s commit-
 592 ment to Antarctica. Meanwhile, budget constraints
 593 placed on the Australian Antarctic Division have
 594 meant that Australia doesn’t possess the resources or
 595 equipment to develop a research base in this area.
 596 Moreover, China’s newest base, the Taishan (泰山
 597 站), which opened in 2014, is also located in the
 598 AAT... Australia has benefited from Antarctic co-
 599 operation from Antarctic research cooperation with
 600 its Chinese counterparts, but we must prepare for a
 601 possible future where national interest trumps friendly
 602 cooperation (Slevison 2016).

603 For cooperation with China, as we shall note, at least
 604 one analyst surmises that Australia’s northern neighbour
 605 cannot be trusted. We might say that this is indeed awk-
 606 ward, as multiple commentators in Australia complain
 607 that the country has been too slow, too miserly and
 608 too disorganised with its Antarctic and Southern Ocean
 609 strategic and scientific planning. The ASPI is strongly
 610 associated with the Australian Department of Defence
 611 and the 2016 Defence White Paper (Australia Depart-
 612 ment of Defence 2016). The White Paper notes, ‘The
 613 Australian Antarctic Territory faces no credible risk of
 614 being challenged in such a way that requires a substantial
 615 military response for at least the next few decades. It
 616 is in our interest to work with like-minded countries
 617 to prevent any militarisation of Antarctica, which could
 618 threaten Australia’s sovereignty over the Australian Ant-
 619 arctic Territory and its sovereign rights over its offshore
 620 waters. Australia is a strong supporter of the Antarctic
 621 Treaty System, which expressly prohibits any mining
 622 in Antarctica’ (Australia Department of Defence 2016:
 623 54). The report does not make clear who would be
 624 non ‘like-minded’ because presumably that would have
 625 been awkward. The reader is left to speculate and might
 626 reasonably conclude that ‘like-minded’ is a shorthand
 627 term for western countries like the US, Norway, New
 628 Zealand and the UK.

629 In the AP published some nine years later by the
 630 Australian government, not by a policy think tank, the
 631 tone and substance is rather different. While *Frozen*
 632 *assets* was a work of advocacy, the AP is the product of
 633 that underlying culture of advocacy and action. Before
 634 its release, the Australian government commissioned a
 635 review of Australian polar activities, led by the former
 636 Australia’s Antarctic Division director Tony Press, which
 637 led to the 2014 *20 Year Australian Antarctic strategic*
 638 *plan*. In his judgement, Australia only has a ‘narrow
 639 window of opportunity’ to act. As he contends, Australia
 640 must match its Antarctic aspirations with clear demon-
 641 stration of presence and leadership in the Australian
 642 Antarctic Territory. Australia should become the partner
 643 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).

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

675 In Antarctic nationalisms, the role of resonating is
 676 critical. Antarctic ambitions need be contagious, trav-
 677 eling long distances to connect certain individuals and
 678 communities with geopolitical ideologies. In other words,
 679 politicians and publics alike must *resonate* with Antarctic
 680 policies in spite of its physical distance. The stories
 681 associated with Mawson are important because they per-
 682 form a form of affective labour compared to a detailed
 683 policy-orientated report by Press. Is it also about creating
 684 imaginative geographies and histories removing physical
 685 distance through imaginary and affective resonances and
 686 registers. In his reading, Bergin implies that to ‘still re-
 687 sonate’ is critical to persuading and reassuring Australian
 688 audiences that Mawson’s legacy is being cherished and
 689 protected by the current generation of administrators and
 690 scientists responsible for AAT. And thus the juxtaposition
 691 with objects like polar vessels that he judged to be ‘old
 692 and tired’ is notable; memories of Mawson may be ‘old’
 693 but they are not ‘tired’ because they have the capacity to

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

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

722 Australian bodies

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

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

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

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

776 The first object was rock because samples of rocks
777 and fossils played a crucial role in forging a ‘connec-
778 tion’ with Australia and Antarctica. Building a geolo-
779 gical connection enabled an imaginative and material
780 stretching and connecting of the two continents. The
781 Southern Ocean performing as a mere ‘bridge’ between
782 two continental spaces, which were inextricably linked
783 with one another. As a geologist Mawson was interested
784 in rocks and initially intrigued by the fate of rocks
785 deposited by Antarctica’s glaciers. The rock samples col-
786 lected by his expeditions also offered up something else,
787 an opportunity to assert possession over the geological
788 record of Antarctica and by association Australia. The
789 rocks were then part and parcel of the origin stories of
790 both continents, and those ‘stories’ could also be told
791 to Australian audiences. What is intriguing is how the
792 tangible objects such as rocks were, and are, capable of
793 generating affect and resonances as they are used to invite
794 later generations of Australians to imagine Mawson’s
795 enduring fascination with Antarctica.

796 The second object of interest was, and is, the pho-
797 tograph, and the manner in which expedition members
798 have recorded their endeavours on and off the ice. While
799 books, paintings and diaries are clearly part of the media
800 ecology, the photograph has been a vital accomplice to
801 Antarctic expeditions. It served to record and to inform
802 others of the work of the expedition and was a vital ele-
803 ment in the settler colonial activities of the claimant state.
804 The formal ceremonies of possession were, wherever
805 possible, photographed. In the AP, the document is
806 littered with colour and black and white photographs
807 showing Australians past and present researching, admin-
808 istering and politicising their involvement in Antarctica.
809 One of the most significant sections of the AP deals with
810 ‘Australia in Antarctica’ (and it could have also been
811 termed ‘Antarctica in Australia’); in this section we fi-
812 nally get an admission that ‘Australia asserts sovereignty
813 over 42% of the Antarctic continent - the Australian
814 Antarctic Territory... Australia is an original signatory
815 to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, and is staunchly committed

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

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

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

870 **One million year old ice core**

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

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

899 There was another awkward moment, however, that
900 emerged at a conference hosted by Australia on the work
901 of IPICS in March 2016. Hosted by the Australian Ant-
902 arctic Division and the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems
903 Cooperative Research Centre, media reporting noted that
904 an Australian scientific organisation, the Commonwealth
905 Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO),
906 was preparing for job losses with climate research bear-
907 ing the brunt of the downsizing. Media reporting of the
908 initial announcement in February had been damning of
909 the organisation and an open letter signed by nearly
910 3,000 scientists condemned ‘The recent announcement
911 of devastating cuts to the Australian CSIRO’s Oceans
912 and Atmosphere research program [which] has alarmed
913 the global climate research community. The decision to
914 decimate a vibrant and world-leading research program
915 shows a lack of insight, and a misunderstanding of the
916 importance of the depth and significance of Australian
917 contributions to global and regional climate research. The
918 capacity of Australia to assess future risks and plan for
919 climate change adaptation crucially depends on maintain-
920 ing and augmenting this research capacity’ (Open Letter
921 to Australian Government 2016).

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

931 *Guardian* 2016). Internal memos from senior CSIRO
 932 staff suggest an organisation struggling over a number
 933 of years to reconcile public service science with the
 934 pressures imposed by national government and a broader
 935 trend towards the privatised science regime (Mirowski
 936 2011).

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

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

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

973 Beyond that, science is a key national interest. This
 974 funding today, and this strategy helps us in the search
 975 for the million-year ice core. This is one of the world's
 976 great scientific endeavours, and it is likely, on the
 977 advice I have from Dr Nick Gales and other scientists
 978 within AAD, that if the ice core is to be found, it
 979 will be found in Australia's Antarctic Territory (Hunt
 980 2016).

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

connection with Antarctica. The Australian Antarctic 989
 Territory occupies a unique place in our national iden- 990
 tity'. It remains a moot point about whether this is indeed 991
 felt by most Australians and the Prime Minister offers 992
 no evidence for such a claim. Finding the one million 993
 year ice core in the AAT might be more likely when one 994
 claims over 40% of the polar continent but it also resur- 995
 rects, by accident, a previous Australian encounter with 996
 India over the possible location of a research station in 997
 East Antarctica. Jessica O'Reilly dissected that particular 998
 encounter, and showed how India's claims to a geological 999
 connection with Antarctica (via the history of Gondwana- 1000
 land some 125 million years ago) can cause problems 1001
 in nationalising narratives on the part of claimant states 1002
 (O'Reilly 2011). 1003

Australian attempts to nationalise the one million year 1004
 old ice core are awkward however. In May 2015, *The* 1005
New York Times reported under the banner of 'China, 1006
 pursuing strategic interests, builds presence in Antarc- 1007
 tica' that Australia and China were collaborating with one 1008
 another through the gateway of Hobart and that, 'China 1009
 is betting it has found the best location to drill, at an 1010
 area called Dome A, or Dome Argus, the highest point 1011
 on the East Antarctic Ice Sheet. Though it is considered 1012
 one of the coldest places on the planet, with temperat- 1013
 ures of 130 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, a Chinese 1014
 expedition explored the area in 2005 and established a 1015
 research station in 2009' (*The New York Times* 2015). 1016
 In other words, the report suggested that there might 1017
 be a 'race' between China and Australia to see who 1018
 could obtain the first one million year old ice core. 1019
 And one could imagine that China would refer to East 1020
 Antarctica as the source area not AAT. Beyond that, 1021
 ice core recovery work, interpretation and analysis is a 1022
 multi-national affair, as other consortia around Vostok, 1023
 Dome C, Dome Fuji and Lake Ellsworth remind us 1024
 (more generally, Elzinga 2016). British academics, such 1025
 as Lewis and Maslin, have recently put to use the Law 1026
 Dome core to raise an argument regarding the onset 1027
 of the Anthropocene being initiated with the European 1028
 colonisation of South America (Lewis and Maslin 1029
 2015). 1030

For scholars of Antarctica, recent writings on the 1031
 more than human/non-human offer potentially rich pick- 1032
 ings to interrogate further the manner in which objects 1033
 such as the ice core are entangled in sovereignty projects. 1034
 The ice core in this reading become not an inert object but 1035
 something more active; a lively subject communicating 1036
 across time and space with a variety of audiences. In 1037
 so doing, it also raises to the fore awkward encounters 1038
 for claimant states such as Australia in terms of how 1039
 the planetary history of the Earth becomes embedded in 1040
 nationalist narratives and practices including images of 1041
 Australian hands holding ice core drilling equipment and 1042
 the role of Australian institutions in storing and archiving 1043
 the 2,000 year old ice cores. While it might well be so 1044
 that Australian hands are the dominant form of agency 1045
 here, the ice itself might prove 'disobedient' and even 1046

1047 awkward as it potentially evades Australian discovery
 1048 and/or reveals how ice cores archive past Australian
 1049 encounters with the carbon age through the use of leaded
 1050 petrol from the inter-war period to the 1970s (Wolff and
 1051 Suttie 1994).

1052 **Hobart as hub**

1053 Hobart as a gateway to Antarctica or 'hub' in Australian
 1054 Antarctic parlance has been a long time in the making
 1055 and is saturated with sovereignty politics (Elzinga 2013).
 1056 As a point of departure and arrival of Antarctic voyages,
 1057 the port-city enjoys a considerable historical provenance.
 1058 The city's historical connections with Antarctica and the
 1059 Southern Ocean have been interrogated in the aftermath
 1060 of news that a replica of 'Mawson's hut' has been added
 1061 to an expanding portfolio of polar tourist attractions,
 1062 which opens up an awkward encounter between Aus-
 1063 tralia's role as colonial settler power in the Antarctic with
 1064 a more trans-national reading of Hobart as a gathering
 1065 point for a more international encounter with Antarctica
 1066 (Leane and others 2016). As Elle Leane and colleagues
 1067 reflect, 'Mawson's hut frames touristic encounters around
 1068 highly familiar national and urban narratives, which un-
 1069 derpin much heritage discourse today ... What becomes
 1070 lost in such a framing is the opportunity to elevate the
 1071 hut and the heritage-scape surrounding it to a space
 1072 associated with the internationalism of Antarctica. Gov-
 1073 ernance and cooperation in the region continues to be
 1074 shaped by a complex and ambiguous political dynamic.
 1075 Seven countries claim territorial rights, with certain areas
 1076 subject to contestation from overlapping claims. The pre-
 1077 cariousness of this structure is complicated by Russia's
 1078 and the United States' refusal to recognise the seven
 1079 existing claims (while reserving the right to make their
 1080 own), and the increasing involvement of comparatively
 1081 new Antarctic players such as India and China' (Leane
 1082 and others 2016: 223).

1083 The AP highlights the crucial role of Hobart as the
 1084 home of the Australian Antarctic Division and gateway
 1085 to East Antarctica more generally and not just AAT (Fig.
 1086 3.). As Minister Hunt noted, 'And then last of all we have
 1087 the economic, and growth and jobs benefits to Hobart
 1088 and Tasmania, Hobart being the global gateway to the
 1089 Antarctic. This is about science jobs, education jobs, it's
 1090 about logistical jobs, it's about the attraction of Hobart
 1091 as a world class visiting point for the creation of climate
 1092 science, of environmental science, of Antarctic science
 1093 and for people to participate in that'. The Tasmanian
 1094 government has also been swift to promote the port as
 1095 a 'natural gateway' to 'East Antarctica and the Southern
 1096 Ocean and Macquarie Island with excellent port facilities
 1097 and regular flights to Antarctica'. Hobart has also ac-
 1098 quired a track record of acting as a logistical hub for other
 1099 national Antarctic programmes including France, Russia
 1100 and China but that is anything but 'natural'. To assume
 1101 any form of naturalness would be for any 'awkwardness'
 1102 about being a widely unrecognised claimant state to

be wished away by making a virtue of the point of 1103
 departure (Hobart) rather than the point of arrival (East 1104
 Antarctica/AAT). 1105

The choice of 'East Antarctica' as geographical de- 1106
 scription is a deliberate one designed to avoid further 1107
 'awkwardness' in respect of those international partners 1108
 who do not recognise AAT. It also refers to an even 1109
 more extensive part of the Antarctic continent than the 1110
 AAT itself, so paradoxically ends up being expansionist 1111
 in remit and even 'demanding' of further Australian infra- 1112
 structural investment such an ice runway at Casey station. 1113
 The East Antarctic Shield for, example, encompasses 1114
 over 70% of the continent compared to 42%, as repres- 1115
 ented by the AAT. Encompassing the East Antarctic Ice 1116
 Sheet, the shield area has as its heart the aptly named 1117
 Mawson craton, an extensive yet geological stable area of 1118
 the continental interior. But this huge area, including the 1119
 AAT, is also one that worries some Australian political 1120
 commentators. Writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1121
 Anthony Bergin is more forthcoming that the Action Plan 1122
 about the dangers involved in facilitating the access of 1123
 others to East Antarctica: 1124

The strategy talks about being a logistics collab- 1125
 orator of choice in East Antarctica. But it fails to 1126
 acknowledge the importance of our search and rescue 1127
 responsibilities. As we, and other Antarctic nations, 1128
 enhance their polar programs, with more personnel 1129
 and greater coverage of land and marine activities, 1130
 the risk of SAR incidences will increase in this harsh 1131
 environment. 1132

The strategy sensibly focuses on the importance of 1133
 our work in the East Antarctic region. That's congru- 1134
 ent with our core interest of sovereignty over our Ant- 1135
 arctic territory. But we should avoid any perception 1136
 that we're focused only on those waters surround- 1137
 ing our sub-Antarctic territories and our Antarctic 1138
 territory. 1139

Where to from here? If we're fair dinkum about 1140
 pursuing our Antarctic interests, we need to be active 1141
 in Antarctica. But our present capability means we 1142
 can't match what others are doing in our territory, let 1143
 alone lead (Bergin 2016). 1144

What the discourses and practices associated with 1145
 Hobart as hub in the AP and elsewhere reveal is how 1146
 the appeal to the gateway/hub functions in two inter- 1147
 related ways. First, as a national gateway for Australia 1148
 and Australian possessions in the Southern Ocean and 1149
 AAT; second, as a node for the performance of national 1150
 authority over others through legal and administrative 1151
 measures associated with air and sea-port state juris- 1152
 diction; and third, as a site for extracting profit from 1153
 being an international hub for the polar operations of 1154
 others. It is also an essential element in the formal 1155
 architecture of the Antarctic Treaty System. Hobart is 1156
 not only the headquarters for the Commission for the 1157
 Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine 1158
 Living Resources (CCAMLR) but also the place in which 1159
 Australia presents its Antarctic and Southern Ocean 1160

1161 interests. As the Tasmanian government notes it is the
1162 ‘perfect gateway’ because:

1163 Hobart provides natural access to the Southern Ocean,
1164 sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island and the vast East Ant-
1165 arctic region. It is the logical resupply point for East
1166 Antarctic stations and bases. Tasmania is the power-
1167 house driving Australia’s activities in Antarctica, the
1168 sub-Antarctic islands and the Southern Ocean. It is
1169 the preferred location for Australia’s assets relating
1170 to the Antarctic, with more than 830 Tasmanians
1171 employed in science, research and polar support activ-
1172 ities. Hobart is recognised around the world as one
1173 of five Antarctic gateway cities, with direct air and
1174 sea access to East Antarctica. The combination of
1175 expert polar businesses and infrastructure servicing
1176 Antarctic expeditions and our hub of scientific expert-
1177 ise, makes Hobart unique among the gateway cities
1178 (Tasmanian Government 2014).

1179 The notion of ‘perfection’ in this case is interesting
1180 because the sales pitch by both the Tasmanian govern-
1181 ment and the federal Australian government revolves
1182 around creating a double win. So while there may be
1183 economic gain for the state of Tasmania and geopolitical
1184 gain for the federal government, it might be tempered
1185 by the realisation that countries such as China threaten
1186 to expose Australia as an effective claimant state. As he
1187 contends, ‘If we’re not a big player in Antarctic affairs
1188 then our polar agenda will be driven by others. There’s
1189 now, for example, a risk of being left behind by China.
1190 China’s setting up its first air squadron in Antarctica this
1191 year. Last year it announced it was preparing to build
1192 a fifth research station on the continent’ (Bergin 2016).
1193 Even if both state and federal level government actors
1194 are working to extract profit and prestige from relative
1195 geographical proximity to Antarctica, others appear to be
1196 building things, flying things and simply doing things that
1197 imperil the settler colonial project in AAT/East Antarc-
1198 tica. Even if sovereignty claims are held in abeyance and
1199 one enjoys the right of inspection under the terms of the
1200 Antarctic Treaty, Bergin’s comments resurrect something
1201 that the current legal, scientific and political architecture
1202 (inspired by the IGY 1957–1958) cannot resolve, what
1203 one does and how one feels about the activities of others
1204 are two different things.

1205 For claimant states such as Australia and New Zea-
1206 land, ‘hub-talk’ had become one way of reconciling
1207 certain squeamishness about sovereignty and stewardship
1208 in Antarctica. Under an explicitly neo-liberal rubric,
1209 claimant/gateway states leverage and recast their geo-
1210 graphical proximity in a way that allows them to make
1211 financial and geopolitical capital. In the past, proxim-
1212 ity was used to advance sovereignty projects but now
1213 geography is being made to pay in other ways. New
1214 Zealand has a similar strategy with its promotion of
1215 Christchurch as a gateway for other operators including
1216 the United States and Italy (note Gateway Antarctica at
1217 the University of Canterbury in Christchurch). When the
1218 Chinese leader Xi Jinping visited in November 2014, the

Chinese icebreaker *Snow Dragon* was berthed in Hobart 1219
harbour and became part of the official visit. President 1220
Xi’s visit, while predominantly focussed around energy 1221
projects in the island state, became an opportunity for 1222
both Australia and China to engage in Antarctic hub 1223
geopolitics. The two countries’ leaders signed a bilateral 1224
agreement, which in essence confirmed Hobart as China’s 1225
preferred Antarctic gateway. But it was done so on a 1226
Chinese ship. The Tasmanian premier, Will Hodgman, 1227
noted at the time of the agreement: 1228

Tasmania and China have collaborated in Antarc- 1229
tica for the past 30-years and this agreement will 1230
strengthen our friendship with China while also 1231
providing a boost to the Tasmanian economy. The 1232
Antarctic sector makes a significant contribution to 1233
the state’s economy, contributing more than \$187 1234
million each year and directly employing around 1235
1,185 people, with Tasmanian businesses providing 1236
specialised cold climate goods and services, food and 1237
shipping supplies and fuel for ships and stations. 1238
Today is an important milestone for Chinese and 1239
Tasmanian Antarctic friendship and we look forward 1240
to a productive relationship into the future (Hodgman 1241
2014). 1242

The signing ceremony took place on *Snow Dragon*, 1243
the same ship that, earlier in the year, helped rescue the 1244
‘Spirit of Mawson’ expedition: an Australian led enter- 1245
prise designed to recreate some of the scientific work 1246
carried out decades earlier by Mawson and his expedition 1247
members. Unfortunately for the more recent expedition, 1248
their ship became trapped in sea ice and the helicopter 1249
attached to *Snow Dragon* played an important role in 1250
affecting a rescue of the non-essential crew members. 1251

Occasionally, however, ‘hub-talk’ does not offer quite 1252
the reassurance that is intended to Tasmanian and Aus- 1253
tralian audiences. With the emphasis on trade, science 1254
and logistical cooperation in Antarctic operations, a great 1255
deal of affective investment has been made by Australian 1256
stakeholders to reassure local and national communities 1257
that China’s role is either geopolitically benign and/or 1258
commercially advantageous. In their piece for *The Con- 1259
versation*, Indi Hodgson-Johnston and Julia Jabour ask at 1260
the end ‘Is the AAT under threat?’ They ask an awkward 1261
question that premiers and prime ministers in Hobart 1262
and Canberra do not want to articulate. As part of the 1263
preamble to their intervention, they note that, ‘The issue 1264
was raised this week with claims that Australian re- 1265
searchers should have been deployed to study an issue at 1266
the Totten Glacier, just 400km from the Australian Casey 1267
base. Instead, a US mission had been sent, *ironically* via 1268
Hobart. Faced with growing interest in the region from 1269
other nations such as China, South Korea, India, Russia 1270
and Iran, there was a call for an extra A\$10-20 mil- 1271
lion a year in Australian Antarctic research’ (Hodgson- 1272
Johnston and Jabour 2014, my emphasis). The keyword 1273
is ‘ironically’ because they use it, I think, to alert the 1274
reader to the apparently unexpected or even paradoxical 1275
occurrence of either a US mission departing from an 1276

1277 Australian port-city (as opposed to departing from a New
 1278 Zealand port) and/or a US mission that did the work an
 1279 Australian team should have done because the glacier in
 1280 question was *only* 400km away from an Australian re-
 1281 search station. Either way, the Americans used Australia
 1282 as a gateway and in effect exposed Australia failure to
 1283 use its gateway to further its geopolitical and scientific
 1284 interests. They then use that example to extrapolate and
 1285 warn readers that a whole series of predominantly Asian
 1286 states are also showing signs of 'growing interest' in the
 1287 region (which is shorthand for AAT).

1288 When answering their question 'Is the AAT under
 1289 threat?' they conclude with the following piece of prose
 1290 invested with a form of affective labour:

1291 In the most unlikely event that the Treaty should
 1292 end, then any rival claimant will need to submit to a
 1293 competitive process with Australia, bettering its long
 1294 standing history of effective occupation. Broader,
 1295 untested arguments of common heritage aside, it is
 1296 unlikely that another country could defeat Australia's
 1297 claim. We should acknowledge and celebrate the con-
 1298 sistent peaceful intentions embodied in the Treaty
 1299 and associated activities of other countries within the
 1300 AAT. Article IV makes the discourse of fear of other
 1301 countries' presence on Australia's territory a moot
 1302 point (Hodgson-Johnston and Jabour 2014).

1303 Their article is thus designed to reassure the assumed
 1304 Australian reader that Australia and specifically Hobart
 1305 acting as a 'hub' for others is not jeopardising Australia's
 1306 sovereignty over the AAT. They articulate the awkward
 1307 question and find an answer that offers reassurance.
 1308 Australia's long record of 'effective occupation' means
 1309 that settler colonial project is well established. Australia
 1310 has had over 80 years of settler history in general to
 1311 perfect its title to Antarctic territory and the AP is keen
 1312 to remind readers of that. The people and things that
 1313 pass through gateways such as Hobart are reinforcing
 1314 that sense of entitlement and in the process supporting
 1315 Tasmania as the 'natural gateway'.

1316 But the thing about hubs and gateways is that they
 1317 also end up supporting the counter-sovereignty projects
 1318 of others. In the 1950s, Australian and New Zealand
 1319 governments worried about Soviet vessels using their
 1320 ports while establishing their IGY Antarctic programme
 1321 (Gan 2009). As Irina Gan has shown, the Soviets had
 1322 no intention of leaving Antarctica despite speculation in
 1323 Australia and elsewhere about the long-term interests of
 1324 the Soviet Union. In an era characterised by rampant
 1325 anti-communism and poor Australian-Soviet relations,
 1326 Australia under Prime Minister Robert Menzies' lead-
 1327 ership felt pressurised into offering their port facilities
 1328 to the IGY Soviet programme. The Soviet vessel *Lena*
 1329 used the facilities at Port Adelaide before leaving for
 1330 Antarctica in March 1956 and the Australian government
 1331 was pressurised by the UK and the US into accepting
 1332 its presence. Douglas Mawson was one of the first to
 1333 visit the *Lena* and later the ship *Ob* also arrived at
 1334 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 Ant-
 arctic 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 Ant-
 arctica. 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 nation-
 alism 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 manage-
 ment, resource allocation and the relationship with envi-
 ronmental 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

1391 clearly the inter-relationship between sovereignty, secur-
 1392 ity and circulation. With sovereignty being about exer-
 1393 cising authority within a territory, security being about
 1394 managing uncertainty and circulation being preoccupied
 1395 with wanted and unwanted forms of mobility. What
 1396 we might say about contemporary Australian Antarctic
 1397 nationalism is that government ministers, journalists and
 1398 academics desperately seek to avoid awkward encounters
 1399 with others, and strive to assemble and enroll objects,
 1400 peoples, sites and ideas conducive to the continued claim-
 1401 ing and occupation of 42% of Antarctica. It is a tall, wide
 1402 and deep task and one that relies upon a degree of control
 1403 that is always going to be elusive and paradoxically ends
 1404 up producing the very awkwardness it seeks to avoid. But
 1405 it is not one unique to Australia even if it remains the
 1406 largest claimant state in Antarctica.

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