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SESSION 39

**NEW APPROACHES TO ANTARCTIC AND
SOUTHERN OCEAN HISTORIES**



Peder Roberts

Joy McCann, Cornelia Lüdecke, Nelson Llanos, Andrew Avery

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The diplomacy and geopolitics of 'environmental impact' in Antarctica, 1970–1991

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Since the signing of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959, the protection of the natural environment has become a central issue of Antarctic diplomacy and geopolitics. Environmental protection has been both a substantive concern as well as a geopolitical tool of inclusion and exclusion. This paper analyses the changing meaning and force of the idea of 'environmental impact' in Antarctic geopolitics during the 1970s and 1980s, when the original signatories of the Antarctic Treaty were exploring how to manage the exploitation of fisheries and minerals, as well as managing the interest of outsider states (from both the industrialised north and the decolonising and developing south) in Antarctica and its varied resources. This paper will explore three cases to explore the broader trend: the US Department of State's use of Environmental Impact Statements as part of its treaty negotiating process in the 1970s; the entry of China into Antarctic affairs and its siting of bases in Antarctica in the mid-1980s; and Greenpeace's expeditions to the region in the late 1980s. The paper aims to illuminate the many registers of the concept of 'impact' and how to assess and prevent it, including how current environmental management might enlarge or change its concepts of impact.

Operational History and Analysis of United States Polar Icebreakers in the Antarctic 1956-2020

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The U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy have operated polar icebreakers in support of United States national interests in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean for more than six decades. These relatively large icebreaking ships with high endurance have provided the United States with a visible and effective maritime presence in Antarctic coastal waters. In the early years they were critical to logistical support in the building of research stations at South Pole, McMurdo and Palmer on the Antarctic Peninsula; their icebreaking capabilities have been key to the annual ice escort operations of supply ships in McMurdo Sound; these sovereign state vessels have conducted with embarked State Department officials many of the U.S. Antarctic Treaty inspections including several voyages that were notable circumnavigations of the Continent; and, they have supported U.S. and international research expeditions and projects in waters that had rarely been previously explored. An analysis of this long-term operational history indicates the linkages of these multi-mission, national assets to geopolitics and U.S. influence in Antarctica. New U.S. Coast Guard polar icebreakers, now designated as polar security cutters, are being designed to operate at both ends of the world, whether breaking ice in the Ross Sea near McMurdo for resupply or for sustained operations throughout a more accessible Arctic Ocean. These new polar and naval vessels are the primary maritime law enforcement ships of the U.S. wherever they sail. This review will conclude with how such polar ships of all nations may be employed in uncertain Antarctic futures.

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'Decolonizing' Antarctica: Antarctic Humanities and Post-Colonial Discourse

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In various humanities fields, the idea of Decolonisation, or Decolonising Narratives is becoming more prominent, and 'post-colonial' approaches to research and historiographies are being deconstructed, and reconstructed as newer, 'decolonial' approaches.

Critical, 'post-colonial' approaches to Antarctica have been pioneered by Antarctic humanities scholars. The work of Adrian Howkins, Klaus Dodds, Peder Roberts, Lize-Marie van der Watt and many more has raised questions about the ways in which we have viewed Antarctica historically, and their work has shed light on new narratives in Antarctic history, critically examining the dominant, eurocentric historiographies of the continent. This presentation will argue that a decolonising approach must build on this work.

This presentation asks how the move towards decolonisation as a critical approach can feature in the ways we, as Antarctic Humanities scholars, can approach our studies. How do we bring a decolonising approach to a space which, it has been argued, was never colonised to begin with? And how does the history of the way Antarctica has been imagined affect the ways in which we can begin to construct a decolonial approach to Antarctic Humanities?

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Looking Antarctica from the Legal History: 177 years of Chilean rules over the Seventh Continent (History of the Chilean Antarctic Law 1843-2020)

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To fully understand the human relationship with Antarctica, the history about this connection must be covered from several points of view (i.e., discovery and exploration's history, scientific history, political history, and others). One of these approaches is Legal History. That is the evolution of the enactment and application of legal norms to the people, things and acts that are in the Seventh Continent or are related to it. In this sense, the international law about Antarctica (mainly the norms that conforms the Antarctic Treaty System) have been subject of several studies. It is a topic that deserves more research and analysis, but that is generally well known. However, the domestic law of several States about Antarctica is a less worked field. The National States can enact domestic law about Antarctica at least with two aims: First, to implement their Antarctic Treaty System derived obligations; second, in the case of the Claimants States, to demonstrate some level of sovereignty exercise. In the presentation, the case of Chilean domestic law will be analysed, covering more than 300 acts and regulations enacted at least from 1843 to nowadays. Will be discussed the different phases of this normative history, its general historical context, the main topics covered, the technical legal aspects of these norms, among other issues. The presentation is based on an academic work that is now being editing for its publication later this year.

Transnationality as a method for studying the history of the Antarctic Treaty System

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Since decisions in the Antarctic Treaty System are taken in consensus, transnationality should be a self-evident methodological tool. All parties can potentially veto the decisions, thus the histories of the Antarctic Treaty that neglect any of the original signatories will inevitably be incomplete. Nevertheless, with a larger part of Antarctic humanities being either legal or institutional, the emphasis is still on the nation-states. Recently, transnational studies have been increasing, but even these are predominately using English-language materials, thus telling the story of the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Japanese, Russian/Soviet, Argentinian and Chilean perspectives are mostly published in their national languages and are thus conspicuously missing from the history of the environmental protection of the Antarctic. I argue that transnationality is particularly suitable for environmental history and histories of modern technology and science as none of these objects of inquiry can be neatly enclosed into a national context. National histories set nation states as primary units of analysis, essentialising nations as separate monolithic entities, whereas transnational history can follow the flows of information and materiality between the countries, independently of the official position performed at the ATCM floor. A transnational history that goes beyond the brotherhood of the Commonwealth nations and includes more neutral observer countries would give a radically different version of some key events at the CRAMRA negotiations. At the same time, I argue that transnational history is more suitable than global history, since ATS never became a global institution that dominates over national agendas.

Early Air – Sea-Ice Interaction in the Weddell Sea (1912)

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During the second German Antarctic expedition (1911-1912) Wilhelm Filchner planned to investigate whether east and west Antarctica were divided by a channel filled with ice or by land covered with an ice cap. Unexpectedly, Filchner's expedition ship "Deutschland" was trapped by ice and started a clockwise drift through the Weddell Sea in 1912, which was the one and only successful drift until today. Due to the new situation, oceanographer Wilhelm Brennecke continued to take soundings of the ocean depth. Besides the measurements of meteorological parameters, Erich Barkow started to investigate the upper air with captured balloon ascents up to more than 3000 m. Both scientists also included the observation of sea-ice while sailing south and during the drift in the later called Weddell Gyre. Even sea-ice temperatures were measured from the surface down to a depth of 50 cm. Finally the results were not published in a collective publication, because expedition members were completely disunited at the arrival in Grytviken (South Georgia). Barkow behaved neutral against the expedition leader Filchner while Brennecke was Filchner's main opponent. This situation prevented a collaboration in the evaluation of sea-ice observations, which might have led to the first publication of 11 monthly air-sea-ice interaction in the Weddell Sea. The paper will show the limitations of data analysis at that time, when the polar front theory was not yet established and climatology of 10 day, seasonal, and yearly mean values still prevailed in the early 1920s. However, the data were published and could still be analyzed today.

Byrd's Life at the Pole: How Advertisements and Satire reveal the relationship between media, sponsorship and exploration in Antarctica

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This paper argues that the relationship between media, sponsorship and exploration in Antarctica can best be understood by engaging with both historical artifacts and lesser known resources such as contemporary fiction relating to the topic. Taking American aviator Admiral Richard Byrd's Antarctic expeditions as the starting point to discuss the development and commodification of the "hero business," the paper focuses on a 1935 booklet entitled *The Romance of Antarctic Adventure*. This booklet provides insights into how expedition sponsorship was translated back into domestic advertising, bringing Antarctica to life for a wide public back home whilst encouraging them to participate by consuming the same products back home. This historical booklet is analysed alongside a close reading of Wolcott Gibbs' satirical novel *Bird Life at the Pole*. This contemporary satirical response to the world of polar exploration offers a cutting commentary of Byrd's exploration practices, demonstrating that the close relationship between media, commerce and Antarctic exploration was recognised and incisively parodied by Byrd's peers. When revisiting past expeditions it is useful to consider a wide range of media artifacts as well as other forms of cultural production such as fictional texts. These add further depth to how the historical material available in archives can be understood, thus helping us to better understand the motivations behind and reception of early Antarctic expeditions.

Creativity and organizational skills: a historical Italian approach to exploring Antarctica

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How does one organize the exploration of a hostile continent like Antarctica? Beyond the healthy madness that has always characterized exploration, Antarctica has presented a logistical and organizational challenge for all nations at the most advanced technological level. The Italian approach to Antarctica, on the contrary, was typical of the characteristics of Italian culture, which combines aspects of creative individualism with a high level of organization.

Following the example of other nations that raced to claim Antarctica at the end of the 1800s, Italy also attempted the expedition route but Lieutenant Giacomo Bove's project failed because the expense was too great.

The Italian conquest of Antarctica did not, in fact, take place until the 1960s. The years between 1968 and 1975 saw five expeditions; three government sponsored expeditions organized by CNR - CAI involving scientists and climbers, as well as two expeditions funded by private adventurers: Commander Ajmone Cat and Renato Cepparo (entrepreneur).

Commander Cat made the Antarctic crossing with a 16m felucca, making two expeditions (1969-71, 1973-74) crossing the Atlantic Ocean and the Drake Channel, reaching the Almirante Brown Antarctic base.

Renato Cepparo sold his film production company to finance the expedition and sailed from Lisbon on the Norwegian ship "Rig Mate"; in January 1976 he built a base camp on King George Island.

The two expeditions, the subject of intense media interest, raised awareness among the Italian political government, which later joined the Antarctic Treaty in 1981. The collections of these two expeditions are exhibited in our museum.

Gender - does it really matter?

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Gender – does it really matter?

Headlines such as “...First black woman to reach both North Pole and South Pole”(1) or “50 years women in the Antarctic”(2) give the impression that we meet the target of acknowledging the achievements of female pioneers in the Antarctic. It also shows that the history of women and indigenous people seems still a short one. Indigenous people, black men, black women, white women in the Antarctic – does gender matter? The answer lies already in the questions itself because we still make these inquiries.

Concerning women, however, there are strong voices supporting women in the Antarctic as L.N. Bernacchi and F. Debenham did bearing the idea of bringing women to the southern continent from the start. In some cases, indigenous women worked as sealers until a change of law made this illegal. Women were also an important factor back home although their history is often overlooked.

The gender and race question is still highly discussed even when there are some achievements, but there is still more to do to satisfy the demand for proper gender history. This paper will introduce some historic cases where women and indigenous people made their footprint on the white continent but have been often overlooked or were only presented as an example of good will.

(1) <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/26/us/barbara-hillary-dead.html?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur>

(2) https://twitter.com/hashtag/WomenInAntarctica?src=hashtag_click

What can historians of Antarctica learn from historians of the Arctic?

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This paper argues that historians of the Antarctic can learn three lessons from historical studies of the Arctic. The first concerns exceptionalism. The unique nature of the Antarctic Treaty and the continent's geographic remoteness, have reified its exceptionality with regard to the natural and social characteristics that dominate the rest of the world. Histories of the Arctic have by contrast emphasized connections and graduated difference, borne out in the late Louis-Edmond Hamelin's index of nordicity. The second concerns a more nuanced appreciation of the political value of science. While it is essentially impossible to write about the history of modern science the Arctic without the Cold War and its dynamics as integral to the nature of such research, we contend that histories of modern Antarctic research can be too quick to separate science from the political contexts in which its support made sense. Finally, we argue that histories of environmental management in the Arctic have often been more nuanced than those in the Antarctic due to greater appreciation for the historical context in which animal introductions, natural resource harvesting, and even pollution regulations made sense. We conclude that increased dialogue between historians of the Arctic and the Antarctic, and indeed historians of all kinds, can help to produce new and perhaps more revealing histories of human activity in Antarctica.

Wilkes Subglacial Basin: From a White Spot on the Map to Global Tipping Point

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Wilkes Subglacial Basin (WSB) is located inland from the inaccessible George V Coast in East Antarctica. The lack of outcrops and topographic features limits the sense of place for humans. In the past, WSB has only attracted minor interest of exploration parties and limited research focus. The area has remained a white spot on the Antarctic map.

New insight puts a spotlight on WSB and drastically changes our perception of this large geographical area. WSB is identified as one of the most important and irreversible tipping points in global climate models. Since International Polar Year 2007–2008, a number of studies have pointed out the immense volume of ice, and the potential instability of the ice sheet due to the low topography and rising ocean temperatures. Wilkes Subglacial Basin (and similarly e.g. the Thwaites Glacier, Totten Glacier, Aurora Subglacial Basin) already appear in daily news reports, and in the future, we might see media articles about the subglacial topography with the same precision and familiarity as when war journalism brings distant mountains, valleys, and deserts onto colorized and animated maps in television news and tabloids.

We record the early transition of WSB from an abstract obscurity to its emerging recognition and importance for humanity. We review known and documented visits, names of subglacial features and early mentions in media.

A new approach to the history of the first successful rescue in Antarctica in November 1903 and its implications in the international context

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This work was elaborated in the context of celebrating 200 years of Antarctic exploration and research, being an artistic transposition of the November 1903 event that has remained in history as the first successful rescue in Antarctica. An Education&Outreach project through Romanian-Argentine cooperation was initiated in this regard. Thus, two of a painting series on the theme "Argentine Corvette Uruguay saving in 1903 the shipwrecked Swedish expedition to Antarctica", evoking the rescue on Snow Hills (8.11.1903) and Paulet (10.11.1903) Islands, were achieved as a tribute. They were exhibited in Buenos Aires on the museum Uruguay Corvette on February 22, 2020 on Argentine Antarctic Day, 116 years after the establishment of Orcadas Station - the first Argentine Antarctic base to be the oldest stable human presence on the continent. This painting series continues with the rescue on Seymour Island (7.11.1903). The painting design involved careful documentation using the volume "Antarctic Challenges. Historical and Current Perspectives on Otto Nordenskjöld's Antarctic Expedition 1901-1903", offered by Sweden at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, Stockholm 2005, and sources available on the Internet, but also archival documents provided by the Argentine party. The paintings are accompanied by an extensive documentary paper on international implications and benefits of both the Argentine rescue mission and the Swedish Antarctic Expedition through its scientific results. The project is a symbol of deep appreciation for the President of the Argentine Antarctic Academy, Comodoro de Marina Marcelo Tarapow, and of other Argentine officials who supported us in the Antarctic activities of Romania.

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