

# SCAR Social Sciences Action Group

## Values in Antarctica Human Connections to a Continent

### BACKGROUND

The International Polar Year has increased people's awareness of the polar regions and stimulated high-quality scientific cooperation between participants from more than 60 countries. This increase in awareness has not been limited to the Antarctic community. Media coverage has brought information about the Southern Continent to millions of people around the world and has given them cause to consider the worth of Antarctica to humankind: the time, effort, and money put into work on the continent, and the benefits that humankind receives from this investment. These are questions of value – not only from an economic but also from a scientific, environmental, political, socio-cultural and intrinsic point of view.

Viewed from a human perspective, Antarctica has many aspects. It is, of course, a well-established site for the natural sciences. However, the continent has also been interpreted by artists, analysed by economists, written about by anthropologists, discussed by political scientists, reviewed by human geographers, and researched by psychologists. Such diversity makes it abundantly clear that perspectives additional to those of the natural sciences are important for a complete understanding of the overall value that Antarctic holds for humankind. Quite simply stated, human beings are the ones that travel to the Ice, form impressions about it, and decide what must be done in light of those impressions. Additionally, there are countless others who do not travel to Antarctica but nonetheless hold opinions about it and, most importantly, make or sway significant decisions based on those opinions. Some of these decisions will, collectively, affect entire global systems, primarily via their impacts on climate, natural resources, and international policy. Thus, understanding the extent and nature of the values that human beings place on Antarctica has large-scale and very serious implications.

### STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kees Bastmeijer [Law]  
Paul Berkman [Political Sciences]  
Sanjay Chaturvedi [Political/Cultural Geography]  
Alan Hemmings [Antarctic Governance]  
Bernard Herber (Advisor) [Economics]  
Elizabeth Leane [Literature]  
Daniela Liggett (Co-Chair) [Tourism]  
Gary Steel (Co-Chair) [Psychology]  
Emma Stewart [Human Geography]  
Machiel Lamers [Environmental Sociology]  
Juan Francisco Salazar [Anthropology & Cultural/Media Studies]



**Contact:**  
Daniela Liggett  
[daniela.liggett@canterbury.ac.nz]  
Gary Steel  
[gary.steel@lincoln.ac.nz]

[www.scar.org/researchgroups/via/](http://www.scar.org/researchgroups/via/)

### OBJECTIVES

The Social Sciences Action Group was formed in 2010. Its main objective is to offer a co-ordinated effort to document the multiple values that Antarctica may hold. The focus is on cataloguing the range of values human beings place on Antarctica. This includes both intrinsic values (such as symbolic and spiritual) and extrinsic values (such as economic and scientific). To this effect, the group strongly supports an inter-disciplinary approach by aiming to build an international network of polar social scientists and humanities researchers to explain the importance of each value, or category of values, with respect to SCAR's mission. The figure below gives a preliminary indication of the categories of values that may be addressed by this group, along with more specific values within each category. In the future the group will be coordinating a series of workshops and conferences as well as publishing academic research.

