Report of the SCAR Humanities and Social Sciences EG (HASSEEG)
Executive Summary

Title: Report of the SCAR Humanities and Social Sciences Expert Group


Introduction/ Background: Increasingly, Antarctic institutions and stakeholders acknowledge the costs and benefits of human activities in Antarctica not merely from an economic perspective but also from environmental, ethical, social, cultural and geopolitical standpoints. Policy-makers, educators, scientists and the wider public are required to consider multiple competing factors when forming opinions and courses of action in relation to Antarctica. Understanding the meanings, values, images and narratives that humans attach to the Antarctic has significant implications for human engagement with and activity in the region.

Important Issues or Factors: Social scientists and humanities researchers have the expertise and tools to lead an academic assessment of questions linked to human presence in the Antarctic, in particular its cultural, political, social and behavioural dimensions. The Humanities and Social Sciences EG (hereon “the group”) was initially established (as the Social Sciences Action Group) to carry out research targeted at understanding the range of values underpinning human engagement with Antarctica. With the granting of Expert Group status at the SCAR Delegates Meeting in 2014, the group was renamed to signal a broadening of disciplinary range, and developed a more diverse set of research foci, including those generated by the first SCAR Antarctic and Southern Ocean Horizon Scan. This expansion promises considerable long-term benefits, especially with regard to understanding human behaviour, impacts, influence and decision-making in an Antarctic context.

Recommendations/Actions and Justification: We request that the Expert Group be maintained into 2016 to consolidate its expansion of research foci, to continue to incorporate a wide range of social sciences and humanities disciplines, and to foster collaborations across these disciplines and with the physical and biological sciences.

Expected Benefits/Outcomes: The group will continue to raise the profile of SCAR in the public realm and in social sciences and humanities research communities by demonstrating that SCAR supports multi-disciplinary research efforts outside of the physical and biological sciences. Social sciences and humanities enquiries and analyses through this group will materially increase intellectual engagement with Antarctica as place and idea, thereby contributing to polar research, but will also help SCAR to better ground its scientific advice in a thorough understanding of the drivers of human engagement with the Antarctic. A range of academic publications resulting from this research effort will bolster SCAR’s scholarly record in the social sciences and humanities.

Partners: The group collaborates with the SCAR History EG, as highlighted by a joint SCAR History and Social Sciences conference with the theme “Antarctic Wilderness” (Fort Collins, Colorado, 20-23 May 2015), a joint session at the SCAR OSC in 2014 and 2015, and a joint workshop (Cambridge, UK, 1-5 July 2013). Future joint events are under discussion.

Budget Implications: The group requests the standard operating budget for SCAR Expert Groups ($5000 per year).
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SCAR Humanities and Social Sciences Expert Group

1. Rationale for the Group

The fiftieth anniversary of the adoption and entry into force of the Antarctic Treaty, the fourth
International Polar Year, and the centenaries of various Heroic Era Antarctic expeditions have increased
general awareness of the polar regions. Over the last few years, declared interest in joining the Antarctic
Treaty System by a number of states (most particularly Malaysia, Pakistan and Iran) has ensured regular
media interest in the region. Furthermore, in the midst of these developments, the historic international
activity in Antarctica – scientific cooperation between participants from now more than 60 countries –
appears to be strengthening. Media coverage (including popular books, films, and television programs) and
artistic representations and installations have brought information about the Antarctic continent to millions
of people around the world and have prompted them to consider the benefits that humankind receives
from the time, effort, and money invested in Antarctica, and to increasingly apply generic standards of
public scrutiny to policies, processes and established norms of behaviour there. In addition, the costs of
human activities in Antarctica, not merely from an economic perspective but also from environmental,
social and cultural points of view, are increasingly acknowledged. Policy-makers, educators, scientists and
the wider public are required to consider multiple competing factors when forming opinions and courses of
action in relation to Antarctica.

Understanding the meanings, values, images and narratives that humans attach to the Antarctic provides
insight into human interaction with the region and the decisions that are made in relation to it. Some of
these decisions will be limited to a local impact, while others may affect entire global systems, primarily via
their effects on climate, culture, and international policy. Social scientists and humanities scholars have the
expertise and tools to lead research into the sociocultural factors that underlie human engagement with
the region. They can offer different perspectives from those of stakeholders more directly involved in
Antarctic science and policy. The Social Sciences Action Group – now the Humanities and Social Sciences
Expert Group – was formed in recognition that the physical and biological sciences alone cannot answer all
of the pressing questions that humanity’s relationship with Antarctic poses; rather biological and physical
scientists need to work alongside and together with humanities scholars and social scientists to deal with
coming challenges.

2. Report on Progress

The group’s original aims were 1) understanding the range of human values associated with Antarctica and
discussing the ways in which these values may have an impact on human activity there; and 2) developing
an open network of social scientists and humanities researchers interested in the intersection of society
and polar activities.

In pursuit of these aims, members of the group organized, convened or contributed to a number of
conference sessions, including the IPY Science Conferences and the SCAR Open Science Conferences in
2012 and 2014. Furthermore, individual group members gave presentations about the group’s goals and
work in general and about specific research questions pursued by the group in particular (see Appendix B
for a list of sessions and presentations). Under the title Exploring Antarctic Values, the proceedings of the
group’s first workshop are now freely available from the group’s website (via http://antarctica-
ssag.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/SSAG-proceedings-2013.pdf). A bound volume (published under the
auspices of the Gateway Antarctica Centre of the University of Canterbury, NZ) is available on request.

At the SCAR Delegates Meeting in September 2014, the group was given Expert Group status, and
consequently changed its name to indicate officially a broadening of its disciplinary reach that was already
underway. Juan Francisco Salazar’s term as co-chair came to a close, and literary scholar Elizabeth Leane
was elected to the role, with a view to fostering the presence of the humanities as well as the social
sciences within the group. Daniela Liggett continued in the other co-chair position. In early 2015, the group also revised its processes and structures, concluding that a smaller executive committee would make decision-making more efficient. The group’s executive committee was accordingly reduced from 13 to 9 (including 2 ex-officio members), through an opt-in process.

With the broadening of the group’s official scope to include the humanities, and the achievement of Expert Group status, its goals have also widened. One new point of focus (in addition to the ongoing “Values” project) is “Antarctic Wilderness”: an online bibliographical resource was made available on the group’s website (http://antarctica-ssag.org/links-2/roswilderness/) and a conference on the theme was held at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, 20-23 May 2015. Publications from this conference are currently in development. Another focus is the questions generated by the first SCAR Antarctic and Southern Ocean Horizon Scan. In order to put it in the best position to address these questions, the group, jointly with the SCAR History EG, has submitted a White Paper to the Antarctic Roadmap Challenges (ARC) workshop in Tromsø, Norway. A third research node is the role of nationalism in the contemporary Antarctic, with several members of the executive committee working in close collaboration to produce articles and papers on this topic, with a view to producing a larger publication in the future. In addition to these foci, members of the group have published on a wide range of topics relevant to the sociocultural understanding of the Antarctic region, listed in Appendix C.

The relationship and linkages with the SCAR History EG have continued to strengthen. Individual members of the two groups have developed closer working relationships, and the Fort Collins meeting mentioned above was the second joint event the groups have organized (the first was in Cambridge); a third is currently being planned for Hobart in 2017.

Both groups will have considerable presence at the upcoming 2016 SCAR Open Science Conference, where they will hold a joint session, on the topic of “the role of the humanities and social sciences in Antarctic studies,” as well as their business meetings.

The group has continued to work with early-career researchers and the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists to develop future capacity in the field of Antarctic social sciences and humanities. In early 2015, as part of the structural review mentioned above, executive committee members elected to include a postgraduate/ECR role on the committee, and PhD candidate Hanne Nielsen took up this position. Some group members directly supervise or are associated with postgraduate students working on Antarctic value projects. These students have published on topics relevant to the group’s interests, and their publications are included in Appendix C as well.

The group’s achievement of Expert status has been pivotal in generating excitement and enthusiasm within its membership. Together with the History EG, the group has now established a pattern of a biennial conferences alternating with joint sessions and meetings at the SCAR Open Science Conferences. The networks fostered by the group are consolidating and new ones forming. The group is now in an excellent position to address relevant questions generated by the SCAR Antarctic and Southern Ocean Horizon Scan, as well as other challenges that face the region today.

3. Future Plans

Over the next year, the group intends to continue working on achieving its aims and will particularly focus on the following:

(a) Further promotion of the growth of the polar social sciences and humanities network established in the last five years through SCAR and the group’s presence at the SCAR Open Science Conferences, through the group’s own workshops and symposia, the group’s website, and other channels (e.g. academic publications, media, education and outreach);

(b) Dedicated multi-disciplinary sessions exploring the role of the social sciences and humanities in the Antarctic research domain, and other emerging themes, at the upcoming SCAR Open Science Conference in 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia;
(c) Preparation of a paper dealing with the history and evolution of the group for an academic polar journal;

(d) Continued collaboration with the SCAR History EG, and in particular, preparations for a third conference, held jointly with the SCAR History EG, provisionally scheduled for Hobart in 2017;

(e) Targeted research efforts addressing those questions generated by the first SCAR Antarctic and Southern Ocean Horizon Scan that require social sciences and/or humanities input;

(f) Increasing trans-polar collaboration with networks and organizations of Arctic social scientists and humanities researchers;

(g) Publication of further research on Antarctic values in the polar and non-polar academic journals; and

(h) Discussion regarding future research directions in the broader area of Antarctic social and human sciences.

4. **Budgetary Implications**

The group requests the standard operating budget for SCAR Expert Groups ($5000 per year).
Appendices

A. Group membership and Executive Committee

A core group of experts was formed in January 2010 and was then expanded over time to ensure a wide geographical and disciplinary representation. This core group assumed the role of an executive committee. The leadership of the group changed in May 2014, when Assoc. Prof. Juan Salazar’s term ended. In September 2015, the group achieved Expert Status, and in April-May 2015, conducted a review of its process and committee structure. As a result, a smaller executive committee was formed. Assoc. Prof. Elizabeth Leane was elected by the executive committee as Assoc. Prof. Salazar’s successor.

- Prof. Sanjay Chaturvedi (IN) (ex officio): Geopolitics
- Dr Alan Hemmings (AU/NZ/UK): Polar Governance and Policy
- Dr Daniela Liggett (NZ/DE) (co-chair): Environmental Management/Tourism
- Assoc. Prof. Elizabeth Leane (AU) (new co-chair): Literature/Cultural History
- Dr Jessica O’Reilly (US): Anthropology
- Assoc. Prof. Juan Francisco Salazar (AU/CL) (exiting co-chair): Anthropology/Media Studies
- Prof. Akiho Shibata (JP): Law
- Dr Gary Steel (NZ/CA; ex officio): Psychology
- Hanne Nielsen (AU/NZ; postgraduate/ECR member): Literary/Cultural Studies

Aside from the Executive Committee, individual researchers active in the Antarctic social sciences and humanities can sign up as members to the group through the group’s website. The wider group are contributing to SCAR-related Antarctic humanities and social sciences conferences, workshops, the SCAR OSCs, and participate in HASSEG meetings, which we hold as business meetings at SCAR OSCs and as open consultation and discussions at our joint SCAR History EG and HASSEG events in odd numbered years.

Note:
Country codes in parentheses indicate the country of residence followed by, where different, the country of origin.

AU – Australia; CA – Canada; CL – Chile; DE – Germany; IN – India; NZ – New Zealand; UK – United Kingdom; US – USA
B. List of conferences, workshops, conference sessions and presentations (2014- 2015)

Conferences

**SCAR History, Humanities and Social Sciences Meeting**
(Fort Collins, US, 20-23 May 2015)
“Antarctic Wilderness”
Convenor: Adrian Howkins
(Joint conference with History EG)

**IPTRN International Polar Tourism Research Network Conference IV**
(Christchurch, NZ, 29 August – 4 September 2014)
“Polar Tourism Gateways”
Co-convenors: D. Liggett, E. Stewart

(4 workshops during the 2010-13 period)

Conference Sessions

**SCAR Open Science Conference**
(Auckland, NZ, 25-28 August 2014)
“Imagination and Science” Roundtable
Convenor: Juan Francisco Salazar

**SCAR Open Science Conference**
(Auckland, NZ, 25-28 August 2014)
“The Presence of the Past & Methods and Innovations in Polar Social Sciences”
Co-convenors: D. Liggett, C. Lüdecke, G. Steel, E. Stewart, A. Elzinga

(4 conference sessions during 2010-13 period)

Presentations

**SCAR History, Humanities and Social Sciences Meeting**
(Fort Collins, US, 20-23 May 2015)

**Association of Polar Early Career Scientists Online Conference: New Perspectives in the Polar Sciences.**
(Online, 16 March 2015)

(Ottawa, Canada, 12-13 March 2015)

**The Arctic and Antarctica: Different Currents of Change (New Zealand Institute of International Affairs)**
(Wellington, NZ, 27 Feb. 2015)
**SCAR Standing Scientific Groups – Joint Session**
(Auckland, NZ, 25-28 August 2014)

**SCAR Open Science Conference**
(Auckland, NZ, 25-28 August 2014)

**IPTRN International Polar Tourism Research Network Conference IV**
(Christchurch, NZ, 29 August – 4 September 2014)

**Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) Symposium**
(Auckland, NZ, 24 August 2014)

**European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) International Conference**
(Tallinn, Estonia, July 31-August 4, 2014)

**Gateway Antarctica Research Meeting**
(Christchurch, NZ, July 2014)

**Antarctic Sovereignty: A Certain Uncertainty – An Expert Conversation**
(Sydney Democracy Network, University of Sydney, 10 June 2014)

**Aurora Expedition Centenary Symposium**
(University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia, 26 Feb. 2014)

**Travelling – Writing – Tasmania**
(Launceston, Aus., 6-7 Feb, 2014.

(Over 50 presentations during 2010-13 period)
C. List of publications (2014-15)

Forthcoming


2015


2014


**2010-13: over 100 publications (see previous reports)**