

Politics and protection of cultural heritage in Antarctica and Svalbard



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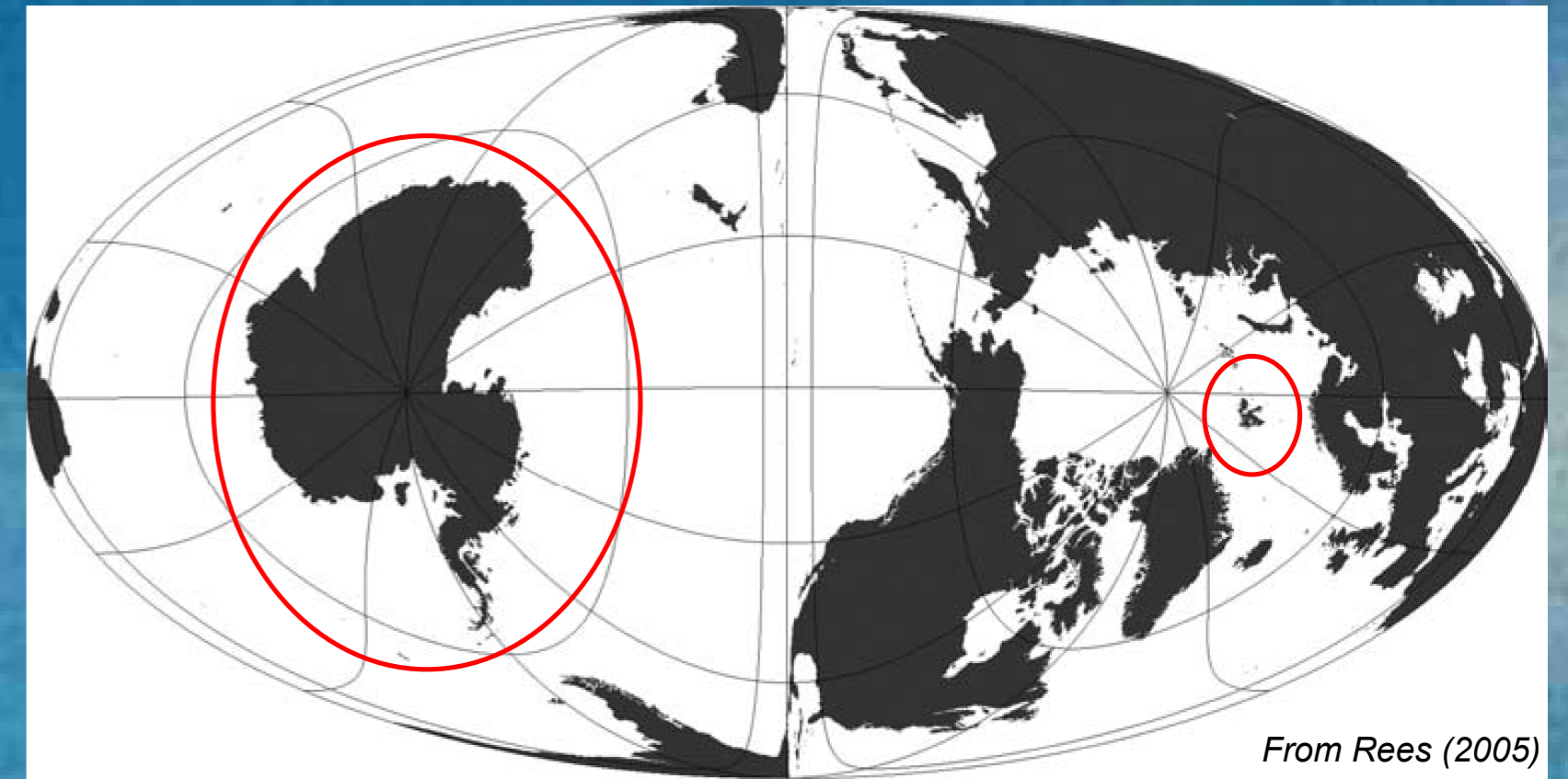


A component of LASHIPA—
LArge-Scale Historical Industrial
exploitation of Polar Areas

Introduction

Many sites and artefacts left by the early explorers, whalers, seal hunters, and scientists in Antarctica and Svalbard (Spitsbergen) are in need of protection from the combined effects of nature and contemporary activities. These material remains are significant because they tell the story of exploration and exploitation of the Polar Regions.

Both Antarctica and Svalbard have been regarded as *terra nullius* and generated territorial ambitions. In this context the remains of past activities may have not only scientific or socio-cultural significance, but also geopolitical significance. Their protection may not solely concern designation and management. It may also be a reflection of, and be affected by, regional politics.



From Rees (2005)

Research objectives

This research aims to produce a comprehensive insight on the relation between regional politics and the protection of the cultural heritage in Antarctica and Svalbard. This relation has not yet been fully investigated in the light of a compelling theoretical framework. The conceptual framework for this work is based on the models developed by Allison (1971) and Allison and Zelicow (1999) to explain and predict the behaviour of governments.

Research questions

- What forces drive (or hinder) the protection of cultural heritage in Antarctica and Svalbard?
- What is the relation between regional politics and cultural heritage protection in these regions?
- What are the similarities and differences between international protection of the Antarctic cultural heritage, and Norwegian protection of the cultural heritage in Svalbard?
- Is cultural heritage protection effective?

Antarctica is governed by the 1959 Antarctic Treaty and related instruments, notably the 1991 Protocol of Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. The Protocol protects those elements of the Antarctic cultural heritage that have been designated as Historic Sites and Monuments (HSMs).

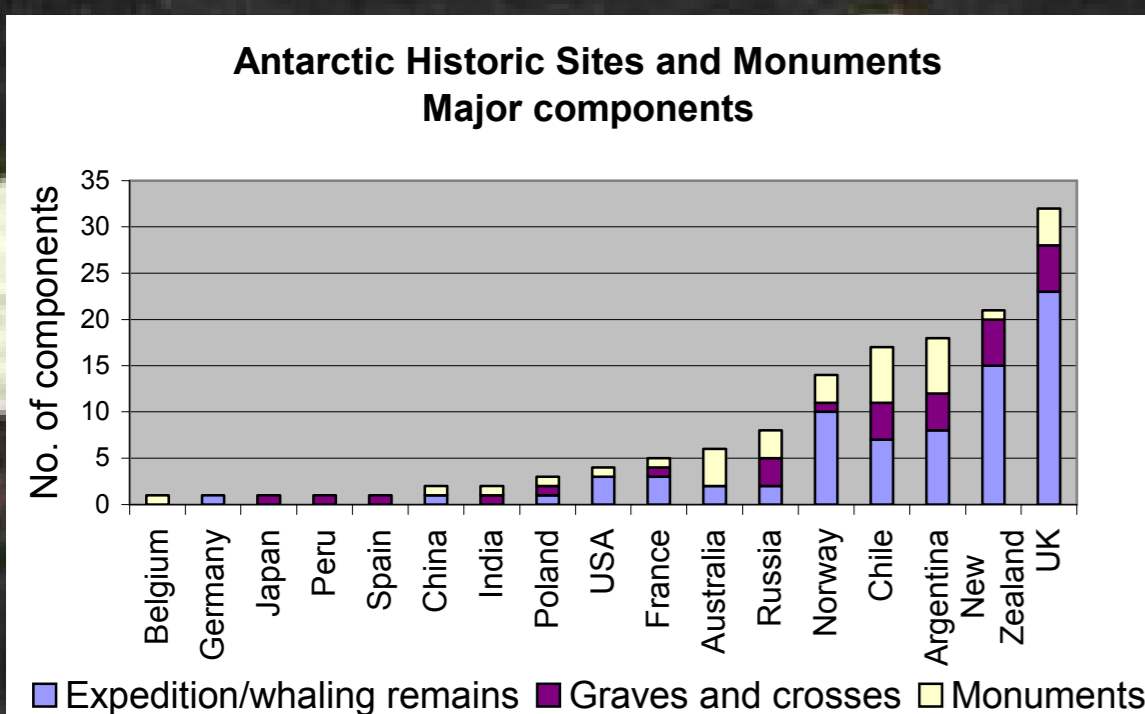
Seven nations claim sovereignty to parts of the Antarctic. Whilst territorial claims are “frozen” under the Antarctic Treaty, territorial interests are reflected in the contemporary political debate.



Installation of a monument at HSM 76 Ruins of “Pedro Aguirre Cerda” Station, Pendulum Cove, Deception Island, Antarctica, 2006 (Chile, XXIX ATCM/IP 118). It portrays a map of Chile’s territorial claims.



HSM 81 Rocher du Débarquement (Landing Rock) where Admiral Dumont D’Urville landed in 1840 (France, XXIX ATCM/WP 19). This is a natural feature that contains no remains of past activities.



Early XIX century sealers' shelter in the South Shetland Islands, Antarctica, 2006.



Coal transport towers at Longyearbyen, Svalbard, 2006

Methodology

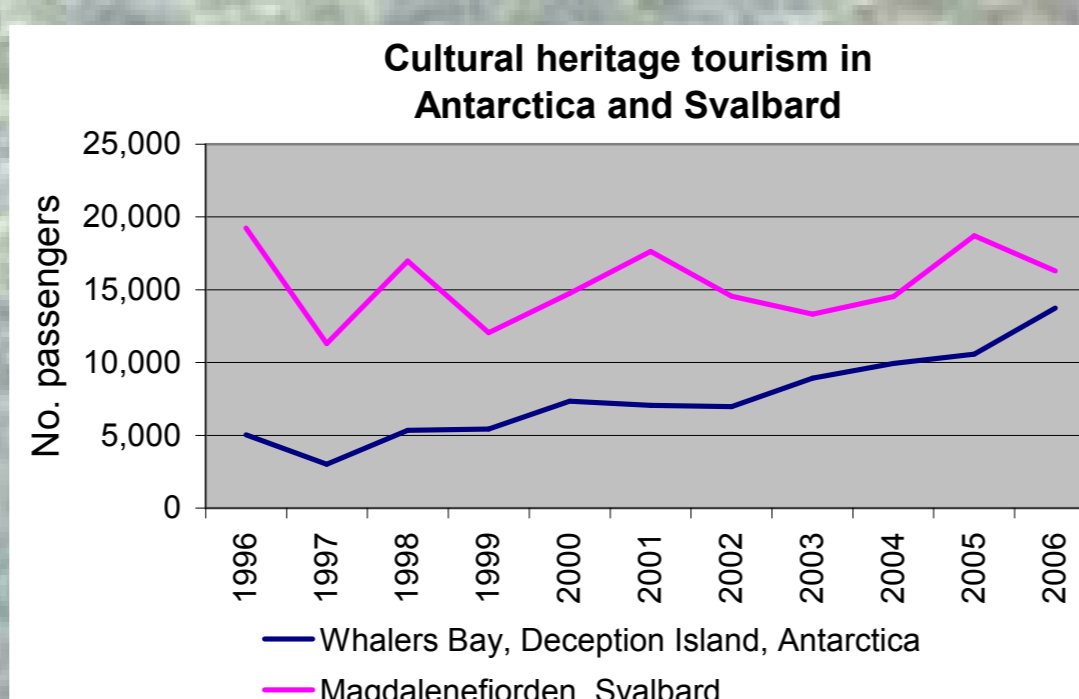
- A comparative analysis of cultural heritage protection in Antarctica and Svalbard will be conducted on the bases of multiple case studies.
- An empiric assessment of the condition of representative cultural heritage sites will be complemented with documentary research and interviews with key stakeholders.

Svalbard is subject to the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty, which grants the sovereignty of Svalbard to Norway while maintaining certain rights for other Treaty parties.

Svalbard’s cultural heritage is protected by Norway’s 2001 Svalbard Environmental Protection Act and managed by Norwegian authorities, regardless of its origin. There are several significant Dutch historic sites on the islands.

Cultural heritage tourism

Over the past two decades tourism in the Polar Regions has increased significantly. Cultural heritage sites are popular tourism destinations. Tourism may help to finance protection but facilitating tourism access may also result in an erosion of heritage values. Disturbances resulting from visitation can expedite degradation by natural processes.



Tourists at Whalers Bay, Deception Island, Antarctica, 2002.



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Background photograph: Scott's Hut at the foot of Mt. Erebus, Cape Evans, Ross Island, Antarctica, 1995. All photographs © R. Roura except HSMs 76 & 81.

References: Allison, G. (1971): Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis. New York: Addison-Wesley; Allison, G. and Zelikow, P. (1999): Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis. New York: Addison-Wesley; Rees W.G. (2005): "A new bipolar map projection." Polar Record 41 (218): 215–222.