

Antarctic Gateway Cities & Contemporary Mobility. A Comparative Analysis of the Two Antarctic Gateway Cities of Christchurch & Hobart.

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Abstract

The myth and reality of the desolate, ice-bound continent that is Antarctica, has been the subject of fascination and study for over two millennia. This fascination is stronger than ever and is no more prevalent than in the fact that more people, scientists and tourists alike, are travelling to the great white continent than ever before. The study of tourism in the Antarctic and its impacts has been the subject of a substantial body of work for more than a decade (Enzenbacher 1991; Headland 1994; Hall & Johnston 1995; Bauer 1994, 2001). Travel to the Antarctic is channelled through a select group of logistics gateways. Despite this intrinsic link between Antarctic travel and the gateways that serve as points of access to the Antarctic, sub-Antarctic and Southern Ocean, the body of literature all but ignores this premise of the importance of these gateways within Antarctica mobility. Subsequently, research into Antarctic gateway cities is conspicuous by its absence, in fact the paper by Hall (2000) stands alone in this field.

The purpose of this research sought to fill this void in the literature through taking a multidisciplinary and intermodal perspective, while extending on Hall's (2000) seminal paper; *The tourist and economic significance of Antarctic travel in Australian and New Zealand Antarctic gateway cities*. This study undertakes a comparative analysis of the two Antarctic gateway cities of Christchurch (New Zealand) and Hobart (Tasmania, Australia) as socio-technical constructs (Graham 2001a) and is framed around what Urry (2004) describes as the new mobilities paradigm.

The research was split into two stages. The first presented an in-depth background into Antarctic travel, the implications of Antarctic law on Antarctic Treaty signatories, and a theoretical and empirical analysis of the contemporary gateway cities. The second stage involved semi-structured interviews with key gateway stakeholders. A total of ten in-depth interviews were conducted between Christchurch and Hobart over a period of six weeks.

The results presented a contrasting picture of the Antarctic gateway cities of Christchurch and Hobart, in their construction, functions and operations. While both cities are socio-technical constructions, able to support the logistics of Antarctic mobility, Christchurch was found to be an Antarctic logistics enclave while Hobart, although an Antarctic logistics enclave, was found to operate with greater logistical friction and reduced efficiency compared to Christchurch. The two gateways displayed contrasting networking, tourism operations and promotion and it was concluded that despite simply being Antarctic gateway cities, Christchurch and Hobart are two unique, mutually exclusive constructions.