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Institute for Culture
and Society

Antarctic Cities and the Global Commons: Rethinking the Gateways

The project

How we care for Antarctica is key to the planet's future. As pressures on the continent increase, five gateway cities will become critical to its future.

These five cities, Cape Town, Christchurch, Hobart, Punta Arenas, and Ushuaia have complex histories of engagement with the Antarctic. Located in zones with intense interconnectivity to the Antarctic, they are formally recognised international gateways through which most travel to the region flows. All significant engagement with the Southern Polar Region is coordinated through them, but the ensuing competition for economic advantage that this traffic offers is not always constructive.

This project is the first substantial comparative program to investigate how gateway cities might both reimagine and intensify their relations to Antarctica and each other. In doing so, constituents across the Antarctic gateway cities of Hobart, Christchurch and Punta Arenas will be drawn into an ongoing partnership to research the significance of their Antarctic connection.

The aims of this project is to demonstrate how ecological stewardship, political cooperation, cultural vibrancy, and economic prosperity can be mutually reinforcing, and determine how these cities see themselves into the future in relation to Antarctica and to each other.

This project also intends to revitalise these relations through assessment and research processes that include supporting citizens to frame future forms of engagement. It will develop a platform of tools (including a connectedness index and a collaborative online game) to instigate a more robust Antarctic custodial network of partner organisations to support these cities in evaluating and valuing the impact of their Antarctic connection in an integrated way. This also includes working with youth across the five cities to instigate the engagement of young people in debating the future of these cities and the futures of Antarctica.

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