When I begin the writing process, I try to start with a title. I figure that if I get that right, then the rest will fall into place. When I saw the title of this new book by Klaus Dodds and Mark Nuttall, *The Scramble for the Poles*, my attention fixed on the word 'scramble', and it immediately resonated with me that this might be yet another polemic on the actions of polar states to shore up favourable access to polar resources in the future. And then I discovered that the authors actually devote a whole page in the Preface to explaining and justifying their use of this (and similar) terms, which was quite simply because they are in use in the everyday lexicon of polar commentary (p.xiii). So yes, in some respects this is yet another polemic – but at the same time, different.

Dodds and Nuttall play with terms such as 'scramble' and 'scrambling' in a variety of ways in the first chapter to illustrate the purpose of their work, which is to "reflect somewhat critically on the nature of this discourse [i.e. polemics on scrambles for the poles] and what lies behind it and in front of it" (p.21). What Dodds and Nuttall attempt to achieve in this book is to unscramble – or as they term it, 're-scramble' – the historical geopolitics of the polar regions and give the reader new insights into contemporary perspectives through the authors' eyes.

Semantics aside, this is a well-written book that showcases the talent of the two authors, both of whom have strong track records in polar commentary. The chapters do not provide new knowledge, *per se*, but rather alternative views through the authors' re-interpretation of the geopolitics of the polar regions in a changing climate. The reason why is not clear, but perhaps it is because they take exception to the lack of breadth and depth of the traditional 'scramble' discourse. The authors admit to having been inspired by "a counter-reaction to the febrile reporting, speculation and imagining about the futures of the Arctic and the Antarctic" (p.172) and that is a good enough reason to write a book.

The work exposes the naivety of traditional notions of Arctic and Antarctic exceptionalism, and introduces the more complex elements of "processes, actors, objects and places" (p.23) into this contemporary re-examination. The authors undertake this task in order to explore new "power-geometries" (p.32) that are affecting the polar regions today. They identify a set of six drivers of historic scrambles: globalization, securitization, polarization, legalization, perturbation and amplification, and the role that each has played/is playing in our imagining

of the polar regions. But the authors note that some of these drivers (particularly, globalization) are not necessarily novel – just more complex – today. Some of the drivers they identify are more convincing than others, and some of the interpretations given as evidence are nothing short of fanciful, for example that Australia's action against Japan in the International Court of Justice over whaling was, by extension, taken to shore up its territorial claim in Antarctica (p.94). But overall the approach works.

The work is generally knowledgeable on the nuance of Arctic and Antarctic history, governance, institutions, science, people, culture, resources, the environment, and geographical and geopolitical renderings. The most meaningful chapter for me was on new resource frontiers (Chapter 5), in which the authors state what, to many, is obvious: just because oil, gas and mineral resources are found, it does not mean they will be commercially exploitable; and just because sea ice is changing (in extent, thickness and duration), it does not necessarily mean that the operating environment becomes more benign (p.117). Although they say this in relation to the Arctic, the same could also be true for the Antarctic. When commentators write about scrambles for the poles, their underlying assumptions about the poles as 'resource frontiers', as the authors term them, usually go unchallenged, and are largely uninformed by political, legal, social, economic and environmental *realities*. And the 'scrambles' are almost always framed in the pejorative sense of the *destruction* of the polar regions as a result. Such resource expectations do not necessarily lead to economic development, but this notion sits rather uncomfortably with the experiences of people who live in places where resource development in the Arctic (if not the Antarctic) has already taken place, and has resulted in legacies of environmental degradation, and economic, social and cultural disenfranchisement.

This leads to what could almost constitute 'cognitive dissonance' identified by Dodds and Nuttall between the desires of governments to protect valued commodities such as the environment and the rights of the people, while concurrently advancing desires to develop the polar regions.

Material in the book is naturally skewed towards the Arctic, since – to my mind – it is people who matter most. And this leaves a gap in trying to understand the Antarctic in the same way; the Antarctic does not have the same cachet in this conversation because there is no southern constituency. Theoretically this should make things easier, yet arguably decision-

making about the development of Antarctic resources v. Antarctic conservation – and here the authors use the example of unsuccessful proposals for Marine Protected Areas in the Southern Ocean – is still problematic.

In view of this, the final chapter concentrates on the demands that polar regions will make on geopolitical decision-making into the future. The demands, as seen by the authors, will come from climate change, resource exploitation, indigenous rights and sovereignty (p.173) – none of which can be ignored and all of which will shape the way we will view, and treat, the polar regions in the future.