

Research in pristine environments: impact of logistics vs the importance of scientific results: the work of the Italian National Antarctic Programme

Italy is present in Antarctica since 1985 with a governmental scientific programme: the Italian National Antarctic programme (PNRA). Because of its geographical position and physical characteristics Antarctica is home of a unique flora and fauna and thanks to the distance from the main sources of pollution, it provides the opportunity to study global phenomena from a remote observation point. The activities in Antarctica are regulated through the Antarctic Treaty and the Protocol on Environmental Protection. Antarctica is indeed a unique continent devoted to peaceful uses where freedom of scientific investigation and cooperation among Parties is fundamental. However, research in such a unique and hostile environment requires a significant logistic effort that has an environmental impact. The Protocol requires the Parties to conduct environmental impact assessments for their Antarctic activities, and provides levels of assessment. The presentation will illustrate the work of the Italian PNRA, the main impacts of its activities and the efforts to limit and mitigate them.