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Australia in the Time of Crisis: Multidisciplinary Determinants

The 12th National Conference of the Australia, New Zealand and Oceania Research Association *Australia in the Time of Crisis: Climactic, Cultural, Economic, and Political Solutions*. Łódź, (December 11, 2019), The Faculty of International and Political Studies at the University of Łódź and the Australia, New Zealand and Oceania Research Association (ANZORA).

Abstract: The paper reports the conference on Australia, organized by the Polish research association based in Cracow (Australia, New Zealand and Oceania Research Association, ANZORA). The 2020 edition was already the 12th conference entitled *Australia in the Time of Crisis: Climactic, Cultural, Economic, and Political Solutions*. This year, the co-organizing unit was the University of Łódź, as every year, ANZORA promotes Pacific Studies at different Polish universities. The hosting faculty was the Faculty of International and Political Studies, with its Chair of British Studies and the Commonwealth Countries, as well as the “Australian Studies” Scientific Association. The panelists came from numerous disciplines and eight academic institutions from Poland and three from abroad. In total, there were 21 presenters: young scholars, experienced academics, independent researchers as well as enthusiasts of the Australian continent. Besides the University of Bergen in Norway, foreign speakers represented the Université de Bourgogne in France and the Australian Embassy in Poland. Three diplomatic missions have taken the honorary patronage over the event. Those were the Australian Embassy, the Embassy of New Zealand, and the Polish Embassy in Australia. The supporting institutions were the University of Bergen, the Polish Geopolitical Society, and the Academy of European Careers Foundation.

Keywords: *Australia, Oceania, Pacific, South Pacific, crisis, ANZORA*

On December 11, 2020, Doctor Joanna Siekiera organized the annual conference for the Australia, New Zealand, Oceania Research Association (ANZORA, Polish: Towarzystwo Naukowe Australii, Nowej Zelandii i Oceanii). This year the hosting institution was the University of Łódź. It was the 12th edition of the ANZORA international conference, which gathers every December many academics, independent researchers and enthusiasts of the Pacific region who are given a unique opportunity to share their research on the Australian continent. It has to be underlined that besides the ANZORA conferences, there are only two other conferences in Europe touching upon Oceania research, however they are not as cyclical as the Polish one: the biannual conference of the European Society for Oceanists (the Netherlands) and the New Zealand Studies Association roundtable (Great Britain).

ANZORA was founded in Cracow among the Jagiellonian University students who are now working as scholars or decided to shift their careers from the academic one but are still members of the Association. Pacific Studies, as a branch of science is not known in Europe and Poland. Thus, the main idea of the Association was and still is to promote knowledge of the Pacific region in Poland and among Polish scientists, travelers and enthusiasts. The annual conference gives the ANZORA members a chance to meet other researchers, with whom they might cooperate in the future to develop their own scopes of methodology, sources and form of research. Thus, each year in December, at a different hosting university in Poland, the members of ANZORA with the honorary guests can present their research results, academic problems connected with the Australian continent, the experience gathered during trips to Oceania, as well as to start a debate among themselves, which very often leads to new projects, like articles, books and other related seminars. For the first time in the ANZORA's history, the whole organizing process was made online, due to the restrictions made by the Polish government during the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic. The two main organizers, Dr. Joanna Siekiera (the author of this report) as well as Prof. Maria Łukowska from the University of Łódź, were sitting at the specially designed venue studio at the Faculty of International and Political Studies.

The 2020 edition's theme was "Australia in the Time of Crisis: Climactic, Cultural, Economic, and Political Solutions". The topic appeared the most desirable by most of ANZORA members to present the results of their research on climate change in Australia, including the fires from 2019 and 2020, security management during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the position of the Commonwealth of Australia in its region. In total, there were 21 speakers. Besides the University of Bergen in Norway, represented by the main organizer, foreign speakers represented the Université de Bourgogne in France the Australian Embassy in Poland in the person of Ambassador Lloyd Brodrick. There were representatives of 8 Polish universities: the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, the Cracow University of Economics, the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the University of Warsaw, the Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Cracow University, the War Studies Academy in Warsaw, the hosting institution being the University of Lodz, as

well as independent researchers from the Disciplinary Chamber of the Supreme Court in Warsaw, the Polish Geopolitical Society, and ANZORA.

The guests were warmly welcomed by the hosting university's representative, Dean of the Faculty of International and Political Studies at the University of Łódź, Professor Ryszard Machnikowski. His speech was followed by the Australian Ambassador, who shared his thoughts on the current role of his country in the Pacific region, as well as the Australian response to various kinds of crises in the 3rd decade of the 21st century. The honorary speaker was Professor Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney, Founder of the Information and Research "Australian Studies" Lab, as well as Dean's representative for the quality of education at the University of Łódź. Her speech highlighted the forms of cooperation with the Australian entities, mostly academic ones, through the activities of the "Australian Studies" Lab in Łódź. Three diplomatic missions have taken the honorary patronage over the event. Those were the Australian Embassy, the Embassy of New Zealand, and the Polish Embassy in Australia. The supporting institutions were the University of Bergen, the Polish Geopolitical Society, and the Academy of European Careers Foundation. As the conference was held in Polish and English, the enumerated institutions' representatives were present online during the meeting.

The conference was divided into three panels: Panel session I was entitled "Antipodal Geopolitics, Past and Present" and was moderated by Doctor Joanna Siekiera. Panel session II was entitled "Security in Times of Crisis", where the moderator was Dr. Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik from the hosting university, while the last Panel session III was moderated by the Founder of ANZORA, working at the Jagiellonian University, Doctor Dariusz Zdziech, responsible for the panel "Collision Course and Its Corrections". The first part of the 2020 ANZORA conference was devoted to geopolitics' various aspects in the Australian continents, from the historical and modern perspectives. The speeches touched upon the following subjects: the role of Australia in Wojciech Gutkowski's colonial dream *A Journey to Kalopeia*, the political system of Kalopea in the works of Wojciech Gutkowski, Australia's international position as a regional power, Australia's diminishing influence in Oceania, as well as Legal claims of the Republic of the Marshall Islands against the United States.

After the first break, indeed unusual, as each participant had to spend that time alone in front of the computer, while normally would have time for networking and following up panel discussions, the conference continued on the terms of security. Here the topics were focused on the recent threats to human and climate security: the culture of political violence of anti-lockdown protests in Australia, safety and social trust during the pandemic, Aboriginal legal subjectivity from the perspective of critical law studies, political, legal and social consequences of the 2019–2020 fires in Australia, fight for the clean Pacific in the context of the Australia-Oceania's dialogue on ecology, and finally Australian reactions to the rise of the Solidarity Movement in Poland 1980–1981.

The third panel began after the lunch break. It was the most varied when it comes to the presented topic and disciplines of the participants who were talking to the audience about the crisis in Australia, as well as possible and expected solutions to it. The speeches, given mainly

in English, concerned the following research questions: anger and trauma in the Australian culture, China-Australia relations during the pandemic, Regional Economic Comprehensive Partnership (RCEP) and its significance for the Australian economy, the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences for the Australian economy, climate crisis a central problem for the continent of Australia in the context of the semantic elements for the models of migration flows, and Muslim diaspora in Australia. Doctor Telecka closed up the 5-hours conference with her speech on Australian climate law.

The next ANZORA conference has already been scheduled, following the Association's custom, in December 2021. The organizers and the participants keep their hopes to meet in person. The speeches of the 2020 edition will be published in the special edition of the *International Studies. Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal*, at the University of Łódź, which Editor-in-chief is Professor Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney, Secretary is Doctor Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik, while editor of the dedicated issue will be Doctor Joanna Siekiera.