



ALFRED-WEGENER-INSTITUT
HELMHOLTZ-ZENTRUM FÜR POLAR-
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Potsdam

AWI Potsdam: Celebrating 25 years

Alfred Wegener Institute inaugurates new annex on the Telegrafenberg

[26. September 2017] **The founding of the AWI Potsdam 25 years ago represented the successful reunification of German polar research. In honour of this occasion, today representatives of the scientific community and politics will look back on a quarter century of polar research at the Alfred Wegener Institute's Potsdam facilities - including Brandenburg's Minister for Science, Research and Culture, Dr Martina Münch, and Karl-Eugen Huthmacher from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. They will also inaugurate a new annex on the Telegrafenberg.**



For the German polar research community, once the Berlin wall came down it was extremely good fortune that the scientists in East and West Germany had dovetailing focus areas. Brought together in the wake of German reunification, they were able to begin work at the Research Unit Potsdam, part of the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research (AWI), on 11 March 1992. Ever since, the site has stood for outstanding research on the polar regions - particularly on the atmosphere and Arctic permafrost.

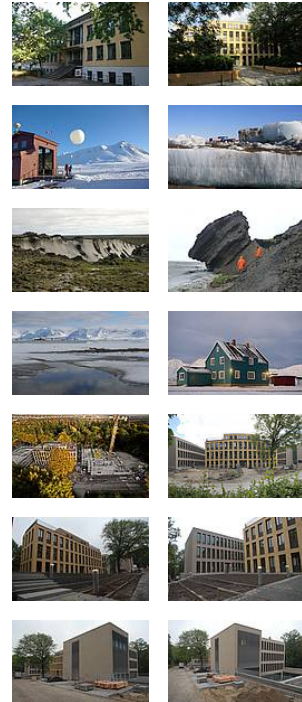
Today, representatives of the scientific and political worlds will gather on the Telegrafenberg to celebrate this successful and productive chapter in the history of German polar research. At the same time, they will inaugurate the now-complete annex, which will help provide the growing research facilities with a modern infrastructure. "25 years ago, seven researchers began working here in Potsdam, led by Prof Hans-Wolfgang Hubberten. Today we are home to 107 employees, in addition to numerous students and visiting researchers. The dawn of the new millennium marked a major growth phase, which continues to this day," says Prof Bernhard Diekmann, head of the Research Unit.

"During that time, the AWI Potsdam has gained an impressive international standing, and is known around the world for its expertise concerning the Arctic climate system and permafrost research," adds AWI Director Prof Karin Lochte.

All the while, the close and historically based ties to Russia have been maintained - and paved the way for the collaborative research now being conducted in Siberia's vast permafrost regions, especially near Russia's Samoylov Station in the Lena River Delta. Another success story made in Potsdam: the AWIPEV Station on Spitsbergen, which is jointly operated with France's Institut Polaire Francais Paul Emile Victor (IPEV).



In addition to extensive research, the Potsdam site is home to international offices and hosts important committee work and international conferences.

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The German Arctic Office, which serves as an informational and collaborative platform for all German scientific, political and commercial actors in the Arctic, has been based at the AWI Potsdam since 2017. This year, it was joined by the offices of APECS (Association of Polar Early Career Scientists), an international and interdisciplinary organisation for students and early-career scientists pursuing polar research.

“For 25 years now, the AWI researchers on Potsdam’s Telegrafenberg have been investigating climatic and environmental changes at both poles,” says Karl-Eugen Huthmacher, Head of the Department of Provision for the Future – Basic and Sustainability Research at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, praising the AWI’s contributions. “Especially their research on the role of the polar atmosphere in global climate developments, and on the dramatic impacts that changes in the permafrost regions mean for the climate and ecosystems, are excellent examples of how relevant their work here in Potsdam truly is.”

Because of its continuing success story, the site ultimately needed to expand. The tender went to Potsdam-based architect Reiner Becker, who envisioned a pragmatic extension to the semi-round building on the Telegrafenberg in the form of two flanking wings. Construction was completed after roughly two years, at a cost of 15 million euros. Funding was generously provided by the federal government and the State of Brandenburg.

Over the past quarter-century, the AWI Potsdam has become a fixture in the scientific landscape of Berlin-Brandenburg. “Brandenburg is a frontrunner in climate and energy research – and the AWI Potsdam’s outstanding research expertise in the climate and geosciences has greatly contributed to that status,” stresses Brandenburg’s Minister for Science, Research and Culture, Dr Martina Münch. “I’m delighted that, with the state-sponsored extension, we were able to provide the distinguished research institute on the Telegrafenberg with focused support, and to further intensify the collaboration between universities and non-university research facilities.”

With ca. 2,400 square metres, the new extension offers ample room for 79 office spaces, an auditorium, conference rooms, a deep-freeze for preserving samples, and a library. In the course of the expansion, a building from the GDR era was traded for three historical residences located across from the new annex – a step that, for the first time, provided the AWI Potsdam with an enclosed campus in the Albert Einstein Science Park, where it can create and maintain vital scientific and administrative ties to the University of Potsdam and other research institutes, such as the Helmholtz Centre Potsdam German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ), the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), and the Leibniz Institute for Astrophysics Potsdam (AIP).

When Prof Bernhard Diekmann assumed leadership of the Research Unit in April 2015, it marked the beginning of a new generation at the AWI Potsdam. Together with an appointment at the University of Potsdam, in September 2016 Prof Guido Grosse succeeded Prof Hans-Wolfgang Hubberten as Head of the Periglacial Research Section. In October 2016, Prof Markus Rex also received an appointment from the University of Potsdam, succeeding Prof Klaus Dethloff as Head of the Atmospheric Physics Section. Since October 2017, these two long-standing sections have been joined by the new research group Terrestrial Environmental Systems, led by Prof Ulrike Herzschuh.



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