

Poles Apart

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Bremerhaven, February 2016: Two days among marine and polar researchers in the [German Shipping Museum](#). In a roundtable discussion sponsored by the DFG, we explored the possibilities of a research project on the history of marine and polar research that would include historians and cultural and social scientists. Our aim was to produce an innovative history of science and technology, but also of the Cold War and the societies it involved.

This indeed opens up a research field that appears to offer excellent opportunities for investigating patterns of interpreting and classifying the "Cold War." This is because on the one hand, exploiting the polar regions was embedded in the great currents of the bloc confrontation: The militarization of the Arctic provides illustrative material just as the cooperation in the Antarctic issuing from the early days of détente, which also gave important impulses for agreements on the demilitarization of space. The complex also provides instances for placing local practices of science in the context of global orders of knowledge. Polar researchers, they now conclude, had no qualms at all about buying or otherwise acquiring equipment for survival in the ice from the "competition" or cooperating in every conceivable manner on the ground and generating local know-how. That included sharing data of



all kinds, because this was the only way knowledge could be gained. Measuring these relationships of exchange and tension more systematically and precisely would be enormously important for the history of science and technology in the Cold War. It would also recalibrate the frontiers of the Cold War in multiple respects.

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