



A success story of German reunification

Speech by the President of the Max Planck Society, Professor Dr. Patrick Cramer

On the occasion of the ceremonial event "30 years of the Max Planck Society in Saxony"

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"At the start of September, I trust in the perfect new year", Zwickau born painter Rosa Loy once said. And indeed, September is something like a secret January. A new academic year lies ahead of us like an empty notebook.

The occasion of today's celebration is fitting for September, because it marks a beginning: 30 years of the Max Planck Society in Saxony. What a success story! Many of you are contributing to writing it. This is your story.

On that note, I would like to extend a very warm welcome - to our guests of honour, to the Members and the staff of the Max Planck Society, to each and every one of you!

First of all, a brief remark addressed to the Minister President: Dear Mr Kretschmer, you represent a science-friendly environment. A good education system, flexibility, seed funds. You are helping us in a very concrete way. The special funding provided for Evolutionary Anthropology - and we are talking about more than 28 million euros - is just the most recent example. Many thanks for all your support - to you personally and to the citizens of Saxony.

Dear guests, the year is 1990 and Germany is struggling to find its new, its old face. Reunited, full of enthusiasm, but also bewildered by its own reflection in the mirror; a little bit like one of Kafka's characters, alienated from itself and probing its own profile.

But in Saxony, things gain momentum very soon. After all, this was once one of the birthplaces of industrialization in Germany. With Heisenberg and Bloch, Saxony witnessed epoch-making discoveries in physics. It is the land where Wilhelm Wundt founded experimental psychology. Art and culture have a home here. In a nutshell: It is a Free State rich in history and full of promise for the future.

Kurt Biedenkopf and Hans-Joachim Meyer, the Minister President and the State Minister of Science, both know that science is a key to the future. On Minister Meyer the following words were written:



"Repeatedly, and even somewhat pushily, he voiced his strong interest in several Max Planck Institutes [...] as early as the spring of 1992 and several times after that."

Unfortunately, Mr Meyer had to decline today's invitation at short notice. Nonetheless, I want to thank him for his persistence! Today, Saxony has 6 Max Planck Institutes - comprising around 30 research departments and counting more than 2,000 staff members. Active and former Directors alone can boast 13 Leibniz Prizes.

As early as July 1993 - 30 years ago - the MPI for the Physics of Complex Systems took up operations in Dresden. With us today is the man who was there from day one. Welcome, Peter Fulde! The MPI for Cognitive Neuroscience in Leipzig quickly followed, from which the MPI for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences later emerged. In 1995, the MPI for Chemical Physics of Solids and the MPI for Mathematics in the Sciences were added, as was the MPI for Evolutionary Anthropology in 1997.

The wave of new foundations ends with a bang: Four colleagues leave Heidelberg for the Elbe to found the MPI for Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics. With their "Dresden Model", they establish a modern institute structure with a flat hierarchy. Talents from all over the world have come here to stay.

The institutes are blazing new trails, also in terms of content. It is this promise that makes them so appealing - not least for Angela Friederici. As founding Director, she moves from Berlin to Leipzig in 1994. She once called this opportunity to create something new, bringing neurology and psychology together, a dream come true. In Leipzig, researchers are breaking new ground. Also, the genetic material of the Neanderthal is to be deciphered there. And our mathematicians are cutting their way through almost inscrutable webs of data. They employ a new method to describe the instability of financial markets, for example. And here in Dresden, I was recently shown a delafossite - an amazing material that conducts electric current only in certain specific directions. Oh, what a variety!

Yet none of this would be possible without our partners. Besides the TU Dresden, I would like to mention the University, the University Hospital as well as the Zoo Leipzig, the Fraunhofer and Helmholtz Institutes - and, brand new on the list: CASUS in Görlitz.

Now it's September again and we're looking towards the future. So, what will be next?

Without a shadow of a doubt: We will continue to further develop both of our locations in Saxony. We're giving systems biology a permanent presence. For that we have just been able to recruit a new Director, Heather Harrington, from Oxford. Across the board, we will continue to appoint outstanding research personalities. In this respect, we are open to new topics. Because our mission is precisely to break new ground in research.



The future has also begun in two new large-scale research centres, the future has already begun. In the Central German mining district, the chemical industry is undergoing a transformation, away from oil and towards sustainable materials. Meanwhile, in Lusatia, researchers are reaching for the stars. Gigantic torrents of data from the depths of space will be revealing the secrets of the universe there. Thanks to all those pioneers of the new research centers, especially to Günther Hasinger, Michael Kramer and Peter Seeberger!

Dear guests, please let us never forget what it takes to attain such success: The fruits on the tree of knowledge can ripen only in a social climate of open-mindedness. After all, we have people from 127 countries working for us. Our most recent Nobel Laureate, Svante Pääbo, and the winner of the current Körber and Breakthrough Prizes, Tony Hyman, come from Sweden and Great Britain, respectively. They both have been here for decades, they feel at home here, and that, dear Svante, dear Tony, is something which makes us very happy!

This is of utmost importance to me: Research LIVES on freedom, diversity and cooperation. Therefore, I want to make it very clear: We stand AGAINST nationalist and anti-Enlightenment forces that are threatening freedom of science, an open society and international cooperation!

Dear guests, at this point I would like to thank those who have stood and continue to stand for free, open and lively research during the past 30 years. Among them are the former and current rectors of the TU Dresden and the University of Leipzig: Ursula Staudinger, Eva Inés Obergefell, Achim Mehlhorn and Hans Müller-Steinhagen are present here today. I would also like to mention the former State Minister of Science Eva-Maria Stange and her successor Sebastian Gemkow. Time and again, the name Annerose Beck comes up in the MPG - she is taking care of our institutes in the State Ministry of Science, Culture and Tourism. My thanks go to all those who helped pave the way. From among the MPG, I would like to mention in particular the late Presidents Zacher and Markl. But a lot of others were also involved: Administrations have rendered science possible. Among the central figures at the time were Beatrice Fromm and Andreas Trepte. Our Scientific Members elaborated concepts and founded, led and shaped institutes. Some more of the founding Directors are here today. I see Jürgen Jost, and I believe Frank Steglich is also here. My special thanks also go to many other people who cannot be mentioned by name here. I bow to their lifetime achievements.

Ladies and Gentlemen, what we have achieved together, we will continue together. Let's keep setting out to new beginnings! We must not let the notebook be taken out of our hands! Let's continue to write our success story together! And let's start now, in September!

Thank you very much and all the best.