

The Telegrafenberg in Potsdam, a fruitful biotope for school - science outreach

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Since the late 19th century scientific institutes are located on the Telegrafenberg (telegraph hill) in Potsdam near Berlin, Germany, including one of the few continuously operated long-term meteorological stations. The historical buildings and picturesque setting attract many visitors throughout the whole year. It is also an appealing destination for school classes.

As the other institutes currently situated on the Telegrafenberg, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) gives school classes the opportunity to combine the visit of the historical site with up to date information about climate research. Many members of the PIK have actively and voluntarily supported schools by giving talks about their actual research topic. Teaching material and two board games were developed, Keep Cool and Winds of Change, both dealing with politics and economics related to climate change.

Since 2005 a project especially dedicated to climate science education at PIK is funded by the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU). In this project PIK cooperates with a local school and the didactics department of Potsdam University. Four courses in 11. grade (age around 16 years) are involved in the project. The geography and the IT course build a webserver with teaching material focusing on PIK research topics. The history and the arts course are working together to build a permanent exhibition on Telegrafenberg dedicated to Reinhard Süring, the former director of the long-term meteorological station, the history of the Telegrafenberg buildings and meteorology.

In addition, Keep Cool is used to involve more students in the subject. A workshop already tested at another school will be organized with all students of the 11. grade. Before and after playing the game, the students have the opportunity to reflect on the socio-economic issues concerning climate change. At the end of the workshop a world climate conference takes place with all students playing different interest groups.

The didactics department of Potsdam University accompanies the collaboration between PIK and the school to study how and what the students learn in this project.