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## In Search of New Dahlems: Biochemical Research Institutes in the Max Planck Society to ca. 1990

Preprint 21

### Abstract

In the early years of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, Emil Fischer set forth a program of collaborative research between chemists and biologists in the Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes of Dahlem, which might nurture a new discipline, synthetic-chemical biology. Three decades later, the destructive and divisive aftermath of the Second World War broke up the scientific community in Dahlem, raising the question of whether the collaborative ideal of Dahlem, and Fischer's disciplinary vision, might be realized in a different context, in the successor institutes of the Max Planck Society. The first part of the preprint focuses on Adolf Butenandt and Richard Kuhn, directors of Max Planck Institutes respectively for biochemistry in Tübingen (formerly Dahlem, later Munich) and for medical research in Heidelberg. These scientists exemplify contrasting types of institutional leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, and openness toward industrial support for academic research. In the 1950s, Kuhn's case was further complicated by the difficulties of trans-Atlantic research collaboration, Butenandt's by his move to Munich amidst the challenges of creating new institutes. The 1960s represented a major transitional period toward larger, multidisciplinary and collegially organized Max Planck Institutes under the guidance of Butenandt, now president of the Society. The latter half of the preprint examines the creation and early development of the biochemical research center in Martinsried near Munich, which united three previously independent institutes into an expanded Max Planck Institute for Biochemistry. This institute featured an innovative architectural design that was intended to (and to a great extent did) foster collaborative research among a dozen autonomous laboratory sections, reflecting a wide variety of disciplinary approaches including an increasingly successful integration of biochemistry and molecular biology by the end of the 1980s. This "mini-Dahlem" was a significant step toward Fischer's original vision of 1915.

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