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Sommario/riassunto	<p>In a 1971 Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research report that reviewed polar contrasts in sea ice, Lyn Lewis and Willy Weeks made the following observation: "People who study sea ice in the Arctic Basin are commonly asked if they have ever studied ice in Antarctica, and they answer 'why bother, it's the same old stuff.'" Noting this was "fortunately true to a considerable extent," they added "It is clear that future work will depend critically on the logistics facilities available to allow surface observations beyond the fast ice edge at all seasons of the year. Of almost equal importance will be the development of instruments and recording equipment suited for use in the polar environment" (Lewis, E. L., and W. F. Weeks, Sea Ice: Some Polar Contrasts, in, Antarctic Ice and Water Masses, edited by G. Deacon, Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, Cambridge, 23-34, 1971). Lewis and Weeks made no specific mention of Earth-orbiting satellites, on which the first passive microwave sensor became operational in December 1972. Less than a year later the giant Weddell Polynya was observed for the first time. Perhaps more than any other development, this unexpected feature illustrated the potential to greatly expand our knowledge of sea ice through the application of spaceborne remote sensing. Simultaneously, it acted as a catalyst for a significant increase in the level of research.</p>

