



A YEAR TO REMEMBER  
CRISTINA BICCHIERI

---

Cristina Bicchieri is Professor of Philosophy and Social and Decision Sciences at Carnegie Mellon University. She has worked on the foundations of game theory, social philosophy, and, more recently, social norms. Publications: *Rationality and Coordination* (Cambridge University Press, 1993, second edition 1997); (with R. Jeffrey and B. Skyrms) *The Dynamics of Norms* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); (with R. Jeffrey and B. Skyrms) *The Logic of Strategy* (Oxford University Press, 1999); (with Y. Fukui) “The Great Illusion: Ignorance, Informational Cascades and the Persistence of Unpopular Norms.” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 9 (1999): 127–155. “Covenants Without Swords: Group Identity, Norms, and Communication in Social Dilemmas.” *Rationality and Society* 14, 2 (2002): 192–228. – Address: Department of Philosophy, Carnegie Mellon University, 135 Baker Hall, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, USA.

I came to Wiko with a clear and adamant goal: to finish a book on social norms that I had left on the back burner for too long. I left with a few chapters, many new ideas, a renewed interest in philosophy, and some new friends. What happened in between? During the interminable lunches, dinners, seminars, and afternoon teas that punctuated my stay, I had a chance to compare notes, discuss, fight, and reconcile with a number of interesting and at times difficult characters. We had a group on social norms that met every Tuesday, and almost every Tuesday we went over – again and again – what it means to say that something is a norm, not a habit, not a convention, not a fleeting behavioral regularity ... just a norm. We critically pored over our work, developed ideas for new experiments, and invited psychologists, economists, and sociologists to tell us what they thought. It is not clear

to me whether we came out of it with a unified view, but certainly it was an intellectually enriching experience. Most important, it brought me to consider with renewed respect what philosophers do, which is to clarify what we mean when we use our vague and imprecise concepts. It is a daunting task, but I believe I am better at it just because of this long year in Berlin.

In my free time I explored and enjoyed the city, its street markets, galleries, museums, and parks. When the Berlinale film festival came, I saw on average five movies a day, which left me completely satiated for at least a year. I could have this leisurely life because people around me helped with the food, the car, the apartment, and, last but not least, my child. When I left, some of the Wiko personnel had become so familiar that I felt sad to go, the only comforting thought being that I can always come back, at least as a passerby.